GREAT LAKES THEATER

THE 34TH ANNUAL
A CHRISTMAS CAROL
WRITING CONTEST

GENEROUS SUPPORT PROVIDED BY

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CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT
The Thirty-Fourth Annual “A Christmas Carol” Writing Contest

Every year since 1989, Great Lakes Theater has partnered with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in producing our annual "A Christmas Carol" writing contest. Over two thousand CMSD students per year, in grades six, seven, and eight compose original stories inspired by the universal themes in Charles Dickens’ timeless classic. Then, each school selects one winner per grade level to submit to Great Lakes Theater for judging. Of these submissions, a panel of judges vote for the top six grand prize-winning entries.

Each grand prize winning writer will receive a plaque commemorating their achievement, a beautifully illustrated hardcopy of *A Christmas Carol*, and audio recordings will be created featuring Great Lakes Theater acting company members reading their work.

The 2022 grand prize stories are:

“Transformation at Its Best” by Za’Riyah Moore – page 1
Grade 6, George Washington Carver School, Teacher: LaWanda Tolbert

“A Freezing Christmas” by Chloe Robicheaux – page 2
Grade 6, Warner Girl’s Leadership Academy, Teacher: Willa Theus

“A Void to Be Filled” by Sophia Filippi – page 4
Grade 7, Wilbur Wright School, Teacher: Lynne Bures

“A Sad Quest for Redemption” by Rashiya Stewart – page 10
Grade 7, Nathan Hale School, Teacher: Dr. Shalest Rushton

“Hope Is What I Have” by Khadija Mohammad – page 13
Grade 8, Wilbur Wright School, Teachers: Lynne Bures

“Love” by Jhanna Urena – page 18
Grade 8, Walton School, Teacher: Kristen Danna

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*Great Lakes Theater “A Christmas Carol” production photography by Roger Mastroianni.*
TRANSFORMATION AT ITS BEST

BY Za’Riyah Moore

In the big city of New York, there was a homeless and scared dog named Bluey. Bluey decided to walk down to the hot dog shop where the people always seem to drop their food instead of eating it. Bluey loved hot dogs, so this was his favorite spot! The men at the shop loved Bluey and would make sure something was left for him. He could count on them for pats, rubs, food and making him happy.

One day Bluey saw a cute cat, but he knew cats do not like dogs! Bluey approached the cat to say "hello." The cat took his paw and scratched Bluey. Bluey begins to whine. The cat said, “dogs are so irresponsible,” then she turned around and walked away. Bluey felt sad most of the day. He went back to his box and saw his sister, Bingo, and told her what happened. Bingo said, "Bluey, dogs aren't irresponsible! They are good, smart and man's best friend!"

The next day Bluey went back down toward the hot dog shop where he saw the cat again. The cat was just staring at the men and food, but they all kept shooing the cat away. Then Bluey decided to help the cat get at least one hot dog. One of the men dropped a hot dog for Bluey and he took his paw and swatted it over towards the cat. The cat grabbed it and ran just far enough from the table where no one could take her food.

Bluey went towards the cat again. This time the cat turned toward Bluey but said nothing and went on eating. Bluey said, "I'm not irresponsible, I am good, smart and man's best friend!" The cat looked sad and told Bluey she was sorry she called him irresponsible. Bluey accepted the apology from the cat. The cat and Bluey became friends but only met at the hot dog shop!

~ End ~
The year is 1994, the year Netscape Navigator became the market leader, South Africa held its first multi-racial election, and NASA's STS-62 took place. In this same year, a young boy named Jack lives with his grandparents. Jack didn't have any friends at school or in his neighborhood. Jack never belonged to society, he never stayed after school for extracurricular activities, he did not take part in events at the neighborhood rec, nor did he join youth groups at church. But he just knew that this Christmas would change his life. Jack wishes for a lot of snow this Christmas. Jack had wished for a lot for Christmas because he loves snow and winter because he loves freezing weather.

The day was Christmas Eve. Jack was excited to get presents for Christmas. But the most important present that he wished to get was snow. Jack was looking up at the starry night sky, and he saw a shooting star. Jack wished for snow and then he had fell asleep. The next day it is Christmas morning, and he is excited to unwrap his presents that his grandparents had gotten him. Jack looks outside and notices something, something very unexpected.

Outside there was twenty-five feet of snow! He said to his grandparents that this was the best Christmas ever. Jack was incredibly happy because he got what he wished for. Jack then unwrapped his presents and was even more excited because he got a red toy car, and he thought it was cool. After he had finished unwrapping his presents he wanted to go outside.

So, Jack had opened the door and then a bunch of snow was in front of him, and it covered the whole door. Jack walked through the snow, and it felt like a whole different world. He then woke up to the freezing air and found out that he wasn't at home anymore. It wasn't a dream though. He could touch the snow. Jack found himself in a snowy and foggy place. Jack couldn't see or breathe. He was walking for miles, then he saw something. Something familiar.

He started running towards it and it was his red toy car. Jack realized it really wasn't a dream. Jack then grabbed it and started walking again. Jack had been walking for what felt like years. But then he had thought of an idea. Jack then started
clawing at the ground trying to find a way out, but the more he dug there were layers of ice, and he couldn't get out. Jack gave up and just stopped in his tracks and sat down. He just sat there waiting for something to happen.

The year is now 2022. Jack wakes up, he is still a child, he looks around he sees himself in a type of lab. Jack then gets up and sees lab scientists. He asks them where he is, and they start screaming in excitement. Jack is confused and they start running tests on him. A scientist comes up to him and says, "You were frozen for almost three decades!" Jack was very confused and didn't believe them.

The scientist said he found out his grandparents passed away. Jack was incredibly angry and sad then he started crying and the room turned freezing cold. As Jack got more emotional ice started coming out of the ground and the scientist's called security because they thought Jack was going to attack them. Jack then lost control and made the room a blizzard and they pressed the alarm button. Jack then put his hand out and then he sent icicles toward the security, but they dodged it. Jack then makes the room snowy and foggy so he can get away.

Jack had finally got out and saw that it was snowing outside. He then started walking and saw a city. Jack saw the decorations and saw that it was Christmas. He goes towards the city and starts to feel incredibly angry that he has missed all this for decades and that his grandparents died without seeing them before they died. Jack makes the snow coming down worse and it starts hailing and blizzarding.

People start going inside, but Jack doesn't want them to leave, so he makes ice come out of the ground and blocks the area where he is, so people won't get out. Then he starts to injure people because he is so angry. Then he makes a big ice dome so he can be in it, then he sees a kid and he realizes that he injured his parents.

Jack feels bad. But he doesn't let them go free. The police are breaking the walls down. But Jack didn't notice that because he was thinking about what to do with the other kid. Then after a while the police broke down the walls, Jack attacked then but an officer went behind Jack and arrested him. Jack says that he will break free and take revenge on Christmas next year.

~End~
Great Lakes Theater’s 34th Annual “A Christmas Carol” Writing Contest

A Void to Be Filled
By Sophia Filippi

The Ghost of Christmas Present (Leilani Barrett) makes an impressive and magical entrance.

Now

I stare out at the icy world. I watch as the sky cries frozen tears through the thick glass. I look over at my heater sitting in the corner. It looks so lonely. If only it had a heater friend, it would be much happier. So much happier.

My thoughts are interrupted by a hard knock at my door. I ignore it. Another knock. I ignore it again. A third knock, this time with a grunt. I roll my eyes as I get out of bed, torn away from the silence. I grab onto the door handle and pull it open quickly. I look up to find two, blue orbs staring back at me. My father is smiling brightly at me, with his hands behind his back.

My father has taught me to walk with confidence, with pride. Just like he does. Arms behind his back with a tight smile plastered across his face. He learned that in the navy. I remember that because he told me when I was nine. He was teaching me how to stay strong and walk tall. That's how he's always been and will be.

He clears his throat and that bright, tight smile has now disappeared. His eyes look tired. He must miss them so much. I can't imagine what it's like to have loved someone for most of your life and then suddenly lose them in just one night.

"Dinner's done. I was hoping you would come downstairs and eat with me." he says, his eyes now hopeful. When I don't answer him, he sighs and his head falls. He stares at the ground for a moment before looking back up.

"Please, I would really appreciate the company. It would mean a lot to me, Sarah." he says, his eyes now hopeful. When I don't answer him, he sighs and his head falls. He stares at the ground for a moment before looking back up.

"Okay, great. I'll set the table while you make your way down." he's smiling now, from ear to ear. He turns around and starts to make his way down the hallway. I watch as he resists skipping down the steps. I can't help but smile as I shut my door and head downstairs.
When I step into the dining room, I see my father scooping noodles from the large pot in the middle of the table onto his plate. I walk over and take my seat next to him. As I scoot my chair in, I can feel his eyes boring a hole into the side of my head. He hands me the spoon as he smiles welcomingly at me. I take the spoon gently and dip it into the pot. I scoop my noodles up, but I get distracted by the two empty chairs across from me. I haven't sat at this table since that night. It suddenly feels lonely in this room. As if I'm the only one here.

My father follows my sight of vision and takes the spoon from my hand. He continues to put the noodles on my plate. My sight is focused entirely on the two chairs. It's strange. You think that losing a family member would be depressing. You imagine it would be sad but you'd get over it eventually. Well, you're wrong. Losing them hasn't been sad or depressing. It's been lonely. It cancels out everyone else in your life and suddenly, they were the only people that mattered. It leaves an empty space in you. A void. One that you imagine can't be filled. One that feels as if it's been there forever.

My father puts his hand on my shoulder, and it causes me to glance up at him. His smile is apologetic, his eyes are sad. He's trying to comfort me. I can see that. Though, in this situation, nothing can truly comfort you. Not even your father.

"I'm fine, really. I just thought I saw a spider or something." I lie, smiling like nothing's wrong. For some reason, it seems embarrassing to let your guard down in front of others. It's really nothing to be embarrassed about, but it just is. I pick up my fork and twirl it around in the noodles. I do this for about ten minutes before my father sighs. I look over at him and his plate is already cleared.

"I'm sorry. I'm not really hungry. Is it okay if I just head up to bed?" I say, my voice almost a whisper. He looks at me for a moment and nods slowly.

"I'll put your food away. Just go upstairs and get some rest. I'll be gone by the time you wake up, so if you need anything call me. Okay?" he smiles, his voice low. I nod and scoot my chair out. I hear him take my plate into the kitchen while I go upstairs. I make my way to my room and shut my door quietly behind me. It's dark and silent in my room. I walk over to my bed and sit down. I rest my back against the headboard as I close my eyes and take a deep breath.

One Year Ago

My brother bursts into my room and jumps on my bed before I can even blink my eyes. He wraps his arm around the back of my neck and starts to scratch my head. I struggle as I push him off laughing, annoyed by his "sneak attack" antics. I kick him off my bed and pinch his ear.

"Ow! What was that for?" he screams, acting as if I stabbed him in the chest.

"For being you." I roll my eyes, laughing. He slaps his hand against his chest, trying to look offended. I walk back to my bed and sit down. My brother follows
and lays down. He grunts and rolls onto his side to look at me.

"So guess what I saw today." he says, smiling his "I'm up to no good" smile.

"What did you see today, Marcus?" I sigh, rolling my eyes. He laughs a little and clears his throat.

"When I was unloading the groceries from mom's car, I saw that skateboard you've been asking for."

My face lightens up when I hear that. I've been asking for that skateboard for almost two years now. I can't help but smile at the thought of me on my skateboard down at the park. Boarding up and down the rails sounds like a dream. I think my brother notices me smiling because he ruins the moment.

"I never said it was for you." he stares at me blankly. That takes the smile right off my face. I didn't even stop to think of that. My parents could have gotten it for another family member. My brother stares at me for one more moment before he bursts out into laughter.

"I'm joking! Obviously it's for you. How many people do you think mom and dad know that like to skateboard? Exactly, none." he rolls his eyes and pulls himself off of my bed. As he gets up, I attempt to smack his back. Before I can, he turns around quickly and yells "too slow". He laughs and runs out of my room, leaving my door wide open.

I hear a noise in the distance, something like a scream. I look over to where the noise is coming from. I see a figure going straight at a quick speed. It seems as if they're chasing after someone or something. They're coming at me quicker now, becoming clearer.

Whatever the figure was chasing is coming towards me now. It's getting closer and closer.

I feel like I should probably be running or something, but I simply can't move.
Whatever's coming towards me is probably a rabid animal and it's probably gonna try to kill me. Most likely, it will. That's if I don't move or try to fight it off. I think it's testing me, seeing if I choose to live or not. Marcus would want you to.

I start to get up, but the animal jumps on me. I hear a gasp come from my mouth and suddenly I'm laying on the ground. My face is being licked, which is odd behavior for a rabid animal. Whatever the animal is, it's extremely heavy. I know this because it's standing on top of me.

"Down, Conrad! Down, boy!" I hear someone yell. His voice is deep and familiar. Very familiar. The animal jumps off of me, and it extracts a grunt out of me. My eyes are still closed when I'm being pulled up. I open my eyes slowly, readjusting to the light. When I open my eyes, there is a guy standing in front of me. Who looks like –

Oh my gosh.

He's smiling brightly and saying something. I'm not sure what he's saying because I'm too busy paying attention to his face. The resemblance is uncanny. Very uncanny. I don't think it's possible to look so much like one person. It's actually kind of creepy, to be honest. I can't help it, suddenly I burst out laughing. My laughter filling the whole park. The guy is staring at me like I'm crazy. Maybe I am, I don't know.

"I'm – I'm sorry, you just look a lot like –" I can't stop laughing. I think I'm scaring him, too, but I just can't stop laughing. As I'm laughing, I see the guy holding the animal by a leash. It's a dog. The dog is staring at me too. It thinks I'm insane. Suddenly, I'm not laughing anymore. I'm just staring at the dog as it stares back at me. I look back up to find the guy with concern clouding his face.

"Are you okay?" he says, and he looks scared. Or worried. Or all of the above. I force myself to smile as I nod slowly. I look down at the ground as I gather my thoughts. I should tell him that he looks like Marcus. Like really looks like Marcus. He probably doesn't care though. He doesn't even know me. Maybe I should just come up with an excuse. Or I could just tell him. Either sounds good.

"Yes, yes. I'm fine. I'm sorry if I freaked you and your dog out."

"Oh, no. You're fine. I'm sorry if me and my dog freaked you out. I don't know what got into him. He's always been a good walker, but today he kept pulling me towards, well you." I laugh a little, and so does he.

"I'm Dylan and this is Conrad, nice to meet you." he nods his head towards the dog and puts his hand out.

"I'm Sarah, nice to meet you too." I take his hand and shake it. I let go and sit back down on the grass. Conrad pulls Dylan and sits next to me. Now, me and Conrad are staring out at the sunset, along with Dylan. I think Conrad is my new best friend.

"So, what did you find so funny about me? You said I looked like someone, but you didn't say who." Dylan says, looking over at me. I look over at him. I have to move a little to see his face because Conrad is blocking the way.
"I know this sounds crazy, but you look almost exactly like my brother. It kind of freaked me out."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"There's no need to apologize. It was nice to see his face again. So thanks for looking exactly like him."

"And, uh, where's Marcus tonight?"

Now, this question causes me to look at him. He's genuinely fascinated, you can tell from the look on his face. It takes me a while before I answer. How do I answer this question? I haven't answered a question like this because everyone already knows. Finally, I take a deep breath and answer.

"He died. Four months, five days, and twenty-six minutes ago to be exact." I look down at my feet as I say this because I don't want to see the reaction on his face. It's almost ten minutes when he speaks.

"I'm so sorry for your loss. I wouldn't have asked if I knew." He says this with sincerity, remorse. He stands up and wipes the grass off of his pants. It's almost dark now, I should definitely get going. Talking with him was nice. I want to talk to him again. Maybe it's because he reminds me of Marcus, or it's because I like his dog. All I know is that I want to keep talking to him, so I blurt something out.

"My mother died, too. She was picking my brother up from his soccer match when it started raining. It was too dark and the roads were too wet." He stops picking the grass off of his pants and just stares at me. Conrad is laying on my lap, snoring louder than anyone or anything I've ever heard. Dylan sits back down and starts talking. He talks about his family, himself, and all about Conrad. For a while, I forget about what has happened. He's trying to distract me and it's working. He's talking when a phone rings. It's my phone ringing. I pick it up and it's from my father. I forgot how late it was. I answer quickly.
I'm reading this week's news report when the doorbell rings. I get up from my chair and head towards the door. As I open the door, my father comes downstairs. Dylan is standing with Conrad by his side, with a smile on his face.

I kneel down and give Conrad a kiss on his head. My father greets Dylan and heads toward the kitchen to get the snack ready. I stand up and the two of them come into the house. Dylan unleashes Conrad and hangs it up by the door.

"So what movie are we watching tonight?" Dylan asks, taking off his shoes. Every Sunday we have had a movie night ever since Dylan started coming over. It has become a thing that we do every week. Dylan has become a part of our family, bringing me and my dad closer together.

"I was thinking Beetlejuice for tonight's movie."

"Okay, sounds good." He smiles and my father walks into the room with a large bowl of popcorn and some sodas. He sets them down on the table and we tell him the movie. My father smiles to himself as he gets it ready. We all get comfortable on the couch and start off our movie night. Happy Birthday, Marcus.

~ End ~
Great Lakes Theater’s 34th Annual “A Christmas Carol” Writing Contest

A SAD QUEST FOR REDEMPTION
By Rashiya Stewart

There was once this troubled young boy. He never listened to any adult and ordered other kids around. This boy is Michael Kane, and he is 13 years old. He was very selfish and only cared for himself, especially during Christmas.

Master William (Parker Towns) and Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) marvel at the spectacle in front of them.

What he did not know was that his perspective of the world would change forever that Christmas. At his school there was this new teacher. He was a very calm and respectful teacher, that teacher would be Mr. Carlson. Michael did not like the idea of having a new teacher. One day Michael decided to pull a prank on Mr. Carlson. He set up a huge bucket of paint over the door early before class.

Michael waited for Mr. Carlson to open the door, then it happened. Mr. Carlson was drenched in blue paint. Michael was expecting Mr. Carlson to be furious but he was not. He just carefully walked over to his desk and started to wipe the paint off his eyes. Michael thought, "so this one's a little tough, let's see how much he can take," with a devilish smirk on his face.

The next day Michael set up a trip wire that traveled through the classroom. It started at the door then ended at the power switch of a fan. It was set up so that when Mr. Carlson opened the door, the fan would flip on. A bucket of glue would fall onto him. One more surprise, there was a bunch of feathers in front of the fan pointed at the door.

One moment, Mr. Carlson was clean. The next, he was standing there covered in glue and feathers. But once again, Mr. Carlson stayed completely calm and started to try and clean himself again. He then said, "Wow, Michael, that was very clever." with a warm smile. Michael gritted his teeth and said, "you cannot keep that act up forever, I will make your life a living hell and make you quit." Michael got up and walked out of the classroom, pushing past Mr. Carlson.

Day after day for weeks the pranks never ended. They just got worser and messier each time, but Mr. Carlson's reaction was the same each time. One day while setting up a prank on a ladder Mr. Carlson came into the classroom unexpectedly and spooked Michael. The ladder shook and was starting to tip backwards. Luckily, Mr. Carlson was quick on his feet and caughted him before he fell.
The next thing you know, there was a chilling silence with quieting echoes of the ladder that fell. Also, Michael’s heavy panting in shaky breaths. Michael hurriedly got out of Mr. Carlson’s grasp and started to rush to the door. When he reached the door, he shot back a quick glance and mumbled a shy thank you. The next day and forward there were no pranks.

Michael avoided Mr. Carlson as best he could after that day. He would sit quietly at the back of the classroom. He would hope that Mr. Carlson would not call on him during class or try to talk about what happened. Mr. Carlson understood that and did not make a fuss about it and just let him be. But Mr. Carlson could not help but wonder what was with his sudden change in attitude.

Michael could not sleep at all for the next three days. He would go into school completely drained. He slept through all his classes, all except Mr. Carlson’s. He stayed fully awake in his classroom so Mr. Carlson would not assume anything. For some strange reason Michael thought that his mom would like Mr. Carlson.

Michael did not like talking about his mom. His mother was in the hospital with Stage 2 cancer and no support from her family except for her own son. Her family was against her having a child so young and they kicked her out on the streets. She only wanted what was best for her son and always put him first. She found a decent job and was able to find a stable house to raise her child in. But sadly, fell terribly ill and was diagnosed with cancer when Michael was just eleven.

He figured the only way for people to not look down on him was to make them fear them. He did not want to be known as the boy whose mom has cancer. Michael was at school staring into space and starting to nod off to sleep. He suddenly snapped back when he heard the classroom phone ring. Mr. Carlson looked up at Michael with sorrowful eyes and asked him to step out into the hallway to talk to him.

Mr. Carlson told him gently that he needed to visit his mom in the hospital. Though right after he told him that everything was okay, and it was incredibly good news. Michael was too in shock to speak but Mr. Carlson took the words in his mind and put them in words when he said, "come on bud I'll drive you to the hospital." Michael flashed a shy smile and ran to the door and waited for Mr. Carlson as he told the office about the situation.

Michael calmly fell asleep as Mr. Carlson’s car smoothly drove to the hospital. He had not slept that well for years as he would have bad dreams and feared being alone. He had not ever felt that safe with anyone else except his mother. After a while he started to feel guilty and terrible about all the pranks he pulled on Mr. Carlson. He sucked up his pride and said, "I'm sorry for all the pranks I've pulled on you, I should not have done that."

Mr. Carlson was proud of him for confessing that and saying sorry. But that was not what he said he just simply said "I accept your apology." Then they reached the hospital and Michael's heart was pumping profusely. They walked into the hospital and started to check in. Michael then led them to
the room and then they walked into the room to see Rosaline standing again. She and Michael had a huge smile on their faces and rushed into each other's open arms.

Rosaline then asked if it was really the Mr. Carlson she went to school with. She smiled shyly and went over to hug him as well. Michael was distraught with his mouth open. His mom then said "me and your teacher used to go to school together, we were close with each other." Mr. Carlson then asked if they wanted to spend Christmas together if they did not have any plans. They were overjoyed and excitedly said yes.

But before that Mr. Carlson had asked Michael to do him a favor. Mr. Carlson had asked Michael to apologize to all the people whose feelings he hurt. Michael wrote a handwritten apology and presented it to the entire school. And in the note, he explained why he was so mean and hurtful and said his sincere apology.

After that, he and his mom spent Christmas with Mr. Carlson. Michael got plenty of gifts and hugs of love from his mother.

Michael was once again distraught when he found out that Mr. Carlson’s real name was also Michael. After some time, Mr. Carlson and Rosaline fell in love and married. Michael dared not to say anything rude or hateful to anything or anyone else ever again. Michael even made some friends with some people.

~ End ~

“A Christmas Carol” Writing Contest School Winners
(with Leilani Barrett and Lynn Robert Berg)
onstage at the Mimi Ohio Theatre.
I woke up this morning unhappy to attend school. I went to brush my teeth but to my horror when I looked in the mirror my face had changed. It looked muscular, shorter hair and green eyes. I repeatedly pinched myself hoping it was a dream, but it wasn't, it was all real. I swapped bodies with someone I know way too well. My enemy.

So, a little backstory … yesterday during lunch someone thought it would be a good idea to start a debate whether girls have it hard or boys. And that resulted in a food fight with my enemy, Grey being their leader. After lunch he sat next to me and started going on about how he was right and how boys have it ten times harder. I tried not to listen, but it was hard. Let's just say we ended up in the principal's office with a three-day suspension next week.

And now here I am sitting on my bathroom floor debating what I should do, go downstairs tell my dad, just go to school, or call my best friend. I have no idea what to do. I sit there for a good twenty minutes until I hear my dad calling my name. I went to my room and threw a hoodie on. And climb down through my window. I walk to the only place I can think of. My enemy's house,

I go through the back where his window is and hope he hasn't left for school yet. I picked up a decent sized rock and chucked it at his window. A couple seconds later I heard the window open and someone with long hair peered their head out the window. It took me a minute to recognize who that was. It was me, but not me since I was my enemy. Very confusing. He looked at me in horror for a second then motioned for me to climb inside. I went inside and surprisingly it was clean and organized. He sat on the floor while I sat on the bed. It was silent for a few seconds until I decided to speak up.

"So, did we magically switch or what?" He looked at me with a blank expression, then went over to his desk, got out a piece of paper and wrote, I hate how your voice sounds, so I don't want to speak. I glared at him for a good minute until he gave in and spoke.

"Look Indigo, we both don't know how or when this happened so let's just swap lives until maybe this curse thing ends." I looked at him like he was crazy but after a
while the idea seemed quite convincing. So, I agreed.

It's currently 6:20 AM on a Friday, and I can't sleep. My alarm goes off a couple minutes later. I go to the bathroom, still not used to how my face looks. Let's see how this day goes. I hear Grey's mom call me and head downstairs. We both thought it would be a good idea if we swapped houses too and just not tell anyone about this whole situation. I walk into the kitchen, his mom is preparing breakfast and his little sister is talking to her pet fish, cute. I sit at the table and his mom or should I say my mom sets down a plate in front of me and serves eggs, jam, and toast.

Before my mom died, she used to cook delicious meals for me every day, but now that it's just me and my dad, he attempted to cook a couple of times, but it ended badly. So now we just eat cereal most days in silence, I don't think my dad has gotten over my mom's death yet. And honestly neither have I.

We ate breakfast and I got dressed, Grey's mom drove me to school, I don't think I've ever been this stressed about school. As I was walking to school doing my best to copy how Grey walks, I saw some of his friends, Kai, Frank, and Michel by the school gate, they waved to me, and I waved back. As we were entering school, I saw Grey. It was really disturbing to witness.

He was standing on top of a table dancing to some ridiculous diver license song. He was enjoying this way too much. I slowly crept my way past his friend group hoping they didn't notice me leaving. After my second class I went to my locker to get my notebook since Grey's notebook had little to no notes. I saw Grey talking to my best friend, I really hope he didn't say anything embarrassing.

I went to my next class hoping the day would end sooner. After that boring math class, I made my way to lunch. As I was standing in line, I saw Grey talking to my friend and having a fun time which was surprising. I turned around and one of Grey's friends looked at me weirdly.

"Am I the only one who has noticed you've been looking at Indigo a lot today," said Kai.

"And last week you kept on complimenting her." added Frank.

Wait, Last week we didn't switch bodies, so that means Grey complimented me. I was lost in my own thoughts before Kai snapped a finger in front of me.

"Hey, are you ok, seriously you've been out of it the entire day."

I stared at him before answering "Yeah, I'm fine... just tired."

After lunch we headed back to our class and this happened to be the only class I had Grey in. And we sat next to each other. I started on my assignment but got interrupted by Grey poking me with his pencil.

"What do you want, I'm trying to work!" I whisper yelled, he placed his hand over his heart as if he was hurt by what I said.

"Really Indigo, I didn't expect you to be this heartless, why are you so mean." He dramatically started fake crying.
"Grey, why are you being so dramatic?"

He looked at me and grinned. "I'm trying to replicate you, aren't you always dramatic. Crying over stupid silly things."

I glared at him. "Listen Greybear sweetheart" I said, knowing he hates that nickname, "say one more word and I'll make sure you don't live to see another day." He did not in fact stop talking, but I decided I would be the bigger person and ignore him the rest of the day.

It was Saturday morning and I'm sitting on Grey's bed watching Netflix. It was nice and peaceful until my phone started vibrating, I picked it up and it had Grey's caller ID, since when did Grey had my number.

I was planning on declining but thought against it. When I picked it up it had Grey's caller ID, since when did Grey had my number.

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He started shaking again and stuttered out," I-I got a text s-saying my g-grandma p-passed away." I knew how close he was to his grandma so I wrapped him in another hug and started swaying side to side. Something my mom did to calm me down. He calmed down and eventually fell asleep. I laid him down on my bed and sat on the floor spacing out.

It was evening and the sun was setting. Luckily my dad wasn't home today, so I went to the kitchen and made Grey phone, he still hadn't said anything which worried me but luckily our houses were close to each other. I went through the backyard and climbed to my window.

I used to climb up to my window a lot when I was a kid, that's how I got the scar on my left cheek from trying to climb it, my mom even nicknamed me spider man.

My window was open, so I just climbed in hoping he was the only one in my room. I didn't want my dad to think I was sneaking someone in. He was sitting in my bed just staring into space with tears streaming down his face. Maybe it was the fact that he looked like me or that he was crying, but at that moment I would've done anything to take his pain away. I went up to him and engulfed him in a tight hug, he returned the hug and we just stayed like that for who knows how long.

Once his cries turned to sniffles, I pulled away and looked at him. I never really got to see my face closely but honestly, I looked quite ugly, I ignored my self-consciousness and lifted his chin with my fingers, "Hey Greybear, what's wrong, why are you crying?"

He started shaking again and stuttered out," I-I got a text s-saying my g-grandma p-passed away." I knew how close he was to his grandma so I wrapped him in another hug and started swaying side to side. Something my mom did to calm me down. He calmed down and eventually fell asleep. I laid him down on my bed and sat on the floor spacing out.

It was evening and the sun was setting. Luckily my dad wasn't home today, so I went to the kitchen and made Grey
some food, it wasn't anything special, just some pasta with garlic bread. I took it back to my room and sat it on the table beside the bed, Grey started shuffling and sat up on the bed rubbing his sleep filled eyes. I sat next to him and waited till he was fully awake.

"Wake up sleepy head, I made you food." He looked like a child who had just gotten the biggest Christmas present in the world.

And that kind of made me happy for some reason.

I watched as he slowly took a spoonful of pasta, his eyes lit up and he started devouring the tray of food. He finished eating his food and muttered a small thank you. I sat next to him, and we just stared at each other. It wasn't the awkward or weird kind of stare but the comforting and warm kind.

After a while I decided to speak up. "I'm sorry for what happened, I know what it feels like to lose someone."

He stayed quiet for a while before responding. "It just feels like I keep losing everyone, and I don't like being alone."

"You're not alone, Grey, you have me, even though you don't seem to like me" I muttered the last part.

"I know I was mean, but I guess it was because I liked getting your attention in some way." I was so shocked I couldn't respond for a while, Grey did not hate me all this time. "Listen Indigo I know I was stupid, and it was the wrong way to approach you but, maybe we can start over and get to know each other for real this time."

He softly smiled at me.

"Grey I would love to."

I knew my dad wouldn't get home till midnight, so we stayed up watching movies and getting to know each other better. It was 11:00 PM and I decided I should go back to Grey's house.

"This was really fun but my dad will be home soon so I should get going" Grey looked kind of sad but complied.

"I would love to do this again as long as we're in our own body next time." He said something after that, but I couldn't quite hear him, my eyes started going blurry and I heard someone calling my name.

Suddenly I woke up feeling sweat on my forehead. I looked around and I was in my room, my dad was calling my name, I rushed to the bathroom only to be met with my own face. Then it hit me. This was all a dream, none of it happened. I threw on whatever I could find and went downstairs and saw my dad sitting at the dining table.

"Hey sweetheart, how was your sleep."

"It was good. I'm going to be late for school, bye dad." I left before he could reply. On my way to school, I had a hundred thoughts running through my mind. Why did I have that dream, why did it feel so real, why am I disappointed that it was all fake.

I got to school and saw no sight of Grey, I guess he didn't come today. I got through the first half of school. On my way to lunch I was passing an empty classroom when suddenly, I got pulled in by someone's harsh grip. I looked up and my eyes met up
with none other than Grey, he let go and told me to sit down, I did.

"I need to get this off my chest so I'm just going to say it. Indigo, I had a weird dream last night and it's been bothering me all day. I don't want to get into detail, but I somehow thought I should tell you."

Could it be that me and Grey got the same dream?

"The dream didn't happen to be about us switching bodies, did it?"

He looked shocked but continued, "Yes, and I'm guessing you know the rest of the dream, right?"

I nodded my head. He shook his head then chuckled, "I don't know how that happened, but it did. Also, I checked in on my grandma and she's doing fine." I was glad to hear that.

"Well, we should get back to lunch. I'm hungry." He nodded and walked towards the door but stopped and came back to my small figure. He bent down and whispered in my ear.

"Also, I never said I didn't like you sweetheart." With that he left and went to the cafeteria.

And I guess that gave me hope for our future.

~ End ~

Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) relives memories of Fezziwig’s party as Fezziwig’s guests (Aled Davies, Jessie Cope Miller, Leilani Barrett, Laura Welsh Berg, Joe Wegner, Michael Burns, and Hanako Walrath) celebrate.
What do you think love is? Love can be a difficult topic to talk about because there are so many different opinions about it. Do you believe in real love? Do you believe that there is someone who you truly belong to and who understands you better than you understand yourself? Do you believe that love can truly change a person for the better? Whatever your answer is, people view love very differently because of their mindset. A lot of people are hateful towards it because they are hurt and broken. Some people think that the world is nothing without "love." Whatever your opinion is whether it's bad or good I hope that maybe this story will allow you to change your mind or at least to look at things from a different perspective even if it doesn't and you still are hateful towards it it's alright because the main character in this story thought the same way.

Her name is Crystal. Crystal is what people would call "selfish" or "unkind" or maybe even "heartless", but she didn't really care what people thought about her, she stopped caring a long time ago. Crystal had long beautiful brown hair, gorgeous eyes but somehow managed to make them look cold and intimidating. She had only a slight tan on her skin since she didn't really go out that much, I guess you can say it was her natural skin tone. Crystal was fourteen years old. People would always give her nasty looks at school because you know how people are, they crave and feed into other people's suffering. At least that's what Crystal thought. She didn't have any friends because when people see another person that's not "normal" or like them, they automatically frame them to be weird but like I said Crystal didn't care. Her days were always bland, and every day seemed like the same day repeatedly. I guess you could say she was just living to die, right?

One day there was finally something new happening in Crystal’s life, a new student in her class the teacher announced. Crystal immediately thought, Oh great, another person that's going to think that I'm heartless. She said that as a little joke in her head because like I said she does not care. The new student walked in, it was a boy. Of course, the girls were already drooling over him the minute he walked through that door. The teacher told him to introduce himself.
His name was Elliot, but his friends call him Elli. He was tall with blond overgrown hair and basic blue eyes he looked like your average white boy. At least that's what Crystal thought.

Elliot sat next to Crystal which startled her a bit because nobody ever wanted to sit next to her but she just shrugged it off because she knew that he would just move seats the second he found out about the person she is because she knew other people would say things like "don't hang out with her she's weird" or "she doesn't talk to anybody don't bother" and in a way Crystal found some peace in that because again she did not care. Soon enough her thoughts got interrupted, it was Elliot.

He looked at her and gave her a soft kind warm smile almost as if he was asking to be friends, she didn't smile back and just turned her head away because she got used to ignoring people without feeling any guilt. Soon enough lunch came, and right when the bell rang half of the girls ran to Elliot as if he was some sort of magnet to them. Elliot ignored them and ran straight to Crystal to catch up with her because she had already left the classroom for lunch.

"Hey buddy," Elliot said to Crystal.

"I'm not your "buddy" you don't even know me," Crystal said.

"Ouch, okay then classmate want to eat lunch together?" Elliot asked as he matched her energy jokingly.

"How about you ask one of those girls that are drooling all over you and leave me alone" Crystal said. Elliot goes quiet, Crystal starts walking away but then she looks over and sees Elliot behind her, so she immediately starts walking slightly faster just to see if he really is following her, she looks over again and she sees Elliot again but this time with the same soft kind warm smile as before, but the smile was bigger than before like if he's about to burst out with laughter.

“What's wrong with this kid," Crystal thought to herself. She soon gets tired of being hateful towards him and decides to just stay quiet and ignore him. He stuck to her the whole lunch period, at the lunch table even though Crystal wasn't saying anything he somehow started up a conversation even though Crystal was not talking at all. For a moment Crystal started enjoying hearing him talk about whatever he was talking about but she soon realized what she was doing and disciplined herself. She almost got attached, yes, I know it's quick but that's the main reason Crystal is how she is she gets attached easily and that's a problem for her because she thinks everyone is going to leave her all the time.

Lunch was over and he even stuck to her to go to class, soon enough school was over, and it was time to go home “Finally," She whispered to herself. She stepped outside, and a cold breeze hit her face for some odd reason it felt kind of nice on Crystal’s face. While she was waiting at the bus stop, she was looking around at her surroundings. Crystal really enjoyed the snow. There was sparkly white pretty snow all around her since it was almost Christmas, she didn't really feel any excitement for
Christmas, for her it was just another day. Another bland day like all the other ones. The bus finally arrived, and she took a seat at the back of the bus and mainly started thinking about Elliot.

"I wonder when he’s going to realize that I'm not worth spending all that energy on," she thought to herself.

The next day was the same as yesterday but this time the girls started spreading rumors but like I said Crystal does not care. A week passes by, and Crystal slightly starts to warm up to Elliot. It was the day before Christmas

"Aren't you excited!? Tomorrow's Christmas!" Elliot said.

“It's just another day what is there to be excited about." This is the first time Crystal responded to Elliot in a full sentence. Elliot noticed but he didn't say anything so that maybe she could keep talking to him.

"What do you mean there's a lot to be excited about!!" Elliot said. Elliot started talking nonstop about Christmas. He was talking with so much joy, Crystal just couldn't ignore so she started listening. While she was listening, she noticed how pretty his eyes were and how they would always light up every time he talked about something he loved or liked. She never really got a good look at his face, at least not this up close. She continued to look at him almost as if she was admiring him in a way. She caught herself again, she knew what she was doing but this time she didn't discipline herself for some odd reason she allowed herself to feel this emotion or feeling she didn't know exactly what it was, but it felt kind of familiar. Elliot noticed the staring he didn't want to ask but what if there's something wrong he thought to himself.

“Uhm. You okay Crystal?” Elliot asked concerned.

"Yeah Elli, everything's fine" she said with a warm smile. Elliot got filled with enjoyment when she called him Elli, but he didn't show it even though it was noticeable he was trying to play it “cool”, but he did let out a big smile. They left the courtyard because lunch was over and went to class. Soon enough school was over, Crystal was waiting at the same bus stop as always and sat down on the bus at the same back seat but this time with a smile on her face.

It's Christmas! There was no school that day because they said the students should spend time with their families, but Crystal didn't really have anyone, so she just stayed at home. She lays down on her couch her eyes started slowly closing, but right when she was about to fall asleep, she heard a knock on the door. It was Elliot, he had a blue and red sweater on with a reindeer on it and he was holding a big present with a red ribbon on top.

"That is the ugliest sweater I have ever seen," Crystal said jokingly with a slight smile on her face.

“You know you love it," Elliot said matching her energy. “I brought you a present, but you can't open it right now, let's go have fun!” Elliot said.
“Do you really think I'm going to agree to that Elli,” Crystal said.

“Oh, c'mon please Crystal” Elliot said jokingly with a pouted lip.

“Alright,” Crystal said. She went inside and changed her clothes and put the present on the side of her bed. They went to the carnival, and they had a blast. After they were finished, they saw a big tree and decided to sit in front of it and it started snowing

"Wow, the snow is so pretty today," Crystal said.

"Not as pretty as you" Elliot accidentally said out loud. Crystal startled she didn't know what to say but her heart was pounding like crazy.

"You don't have to say any —" but before Elliot could finish "You're not too ugly yourself too Elli," Crystal said with a warm smile on her face.

Crystal started feeling an emotion she was having a hard time trying to understand what she was feeling. Was it excitement? Was it joy, happiness, fullness?

But then she finally figured out what she was feeling on this snowy cold day it was love, she had fallen in love with Elliot. She had fallen in love with his eyes, his smile, his laugh maybe this "average white boy” wasn't so basic after all.

~ End ~
ABOUT GREAT LAKES THEATER

Charles Fee, Producing Artistic Director

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, offering an annual series of student matinees and, for over 30 years, an acclaimed school residency program led by teams of specially trained actor-teachers.

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