

Christmas Blvd.

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A one-act parody

By Rom Watson

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## Cast

Martha, mid 20's to mid 30's  
Bob, mid 20's to mid 30's  
Norma, 66 years old  
The Ghost of Joe Gillis, 30's  
Young Norma, mid 20's  
Cecil B. DeMille, 46 years old  
Young Max, early to late 30's  
Max, late 60's  
Rabbi Laszlo Berkowits, 38  
Peter, mid 20's to mid 30's  
Mr. Dilber, late 40's to late 60's

The roles can be played by 2 women and 3 men if:

The roles of Bob, Young Max, Rabbi Berkowits and Peter are played by one actor.

The roles of Martha and Young Norma are played by one actor.

The roles of Cecil B. DeMille, Max and Mr. Dilber are played by one actor.

The time: Friday, December 23, 1966.

The place: Bullock's Wilshire department store, 3050 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA

SCENE 1

The lights rise on a unit set that will serve as a number of locations. The main location is the gift-wrapping department of Bullocks Wilshire, an elegant department store that caters to the Hollywood elite. A long table or counter serves as the work area, and is laid with boxes, wrapping paper, ribbon, bows and adhesive tape. MARTHA and BOB wrap gifts as they converse. If the wrapping paper proves too noisy, cloth may substitute for paper.

MARTHA

Can you believe she's late again?

BOB

Of course. What I don't believe is that ridiculous claim that every morning she has her chauffeur pick her up at the prison and drive her here.

MARTHA

I didn't believe it either till I saw it with my own eyes.

BOB

When did you see this?

MARTHA

Yesterday. I was on a break, and this fancy old foreign car pulls up outside. The chauffeur stops the car, gets out, opens the rear door, and out she steps.

BOB

So she really does have a chauffeur. Must be nice.

MARTHA

Why do you think she's serving time?

BOB

I heard she got put away for murder.

MARTHA

Murder? Who did she kill?

BOB

I don't know, but she probably looked them in the eye and turned them to stone.

MARTHA

Shhh, here she comes.

NORMA DESMOND enters. She is older than she was in the film *Sunset Boulevard*. She wears a long gown that is too elegant for her current job. She carries her lunch in an old metal lunch box or a brown paper bag.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Good morning Miss Desmond.

Martha gives Bob a nudge with her arm.

BOB

(reluctantly)

Good morning, Norma.

NORMA

What's good about it?

Norma puts her lunch under the table and takes her place next to Martha. She selects a box and begins to wrap it.

MARTHA

Cheer up, it's almost Christmas.

NORMA

Why is that anything to be cheerful about? What's Christmas but "a time for finding yourself a year older."

MARTHA

You look very good for your age, Norma.

BOB

Yeah; besides, at your age, what does it matter?

NORMA

It matters because I was a great star of the silver screen.

MARTHA

You were?

NORMA

People all over the world saved up their pennies all week to see a Norma Desmond picture. Her Guilded Cage; Teddy at the Throttle; Beyond the Rocks . . . I starred in dozens of pictures.

BOB

That would explain your attitude; but how come we've never heard of you?

NORMA

They stopped making silent pictures.

MARTHA

Silent?

BOB

You must be even older than I thought.

NORMA

Stars are ageless. That's what makes one a star.

BOB

But since you don't make movies anymore, what does it matter how old you look?

NORMA

Idiot! A woman always cares about her looks.

MARTHA

He's not an idiot. Men don't understand how much a woman's appearance means--

NORMA

He is an idiot. The whole world is filled with idiots.

BOB

How did you get to be so sour?

NORMA

From spending the past sixteen years in prison.

MARTHA

Well look on the bright side. Tomorrow is the twenty-fourth, so it will be your last day to wrap gifts.

NORMA

Today is my last day at this job. The work-release program only lets us work Monday through Friday.

BOB

Hallelujah.

MARTHA

Bob.

BOB

Sorry.

MARTHA

I'll actually be sad to see this job end.

BOB

Me too. Most temp jobs are a pain, but I've actually enjoyed this one.

Martha and Bob look at each other and smile.

BOB (CONT'D)

Martha, . . . can I take you to lunch today?

MARTHA

Why thank you. Yes, I would like that.

BOB

Good, then it's set.

NORMA

Finally. I thought you were never going to ask her out. Maybe now you'll both stop staring at each other like brain-damaged cows.

BOB

(sarcastically)

Well Merry Christmas to you too.

NORMA

“What reason have I to be merry?”

BOB

That doesn't mean you have to ruin Christmas for the rest of us.

NORMA

I hate Christmas.

MARTHA

You don't mean that.

NORMA

What good has Christmas ever done anyone?

BOB

Christmas reminds us to be nicer to one another.

MARTHA

More forgiving.

BOB

It's the one time of year when men and women let down their guard and open their hearts freely. Most of the time we treat people like strangers to be wary of, instead of what they are: "fellow-passengers to the grave." So, even though Christmas is expensive and a lot of work, "I believe it has done me good, and will do me good."

MARTHA

Christmas is a time to rejoice in all our blessings.

NORMA

I don't have any blessings. Stop trying to sell me something I don't want. Can't you leave me to wrap these awful packages in peace?

MARTHA

Don't be angry, Norma. Come to lunch with us.

NORMA

No thank you. Christmas cheer doesn't work on me. Save it for someone who cares.

MARTHA

Is that how you really feel?

NORMA

Yes. And if people are passengers to the grave, they should take the express.

BOB

Is that what you wish?

NORMA

"I wish to be left alone."

Fine.

BOB

Thank you.

NORMA

They continue to wrap in silence. The lights fade.

SCENE 2

The lights rise on the same scene, but now it is noon.

Lunch time.

BOB  
(Looking at his watch.)

They finish wrapping.

The morning flew by today.

MARTHA

I'll take the ones we've finished to the customer service window.

BOB

Bob takes some wrapped gifts offstage. Martha grabs her purse from under the table.

MARTHA

I'm so glad they moved us into this room. Last Christmas we had to wrap gifts out in the open. Some of the customers were very demanding.

Bob returns.

Where are we going to lunch today?

BOB

You pick. Norma, would you like us to bring you back anything?

MARTHA

NORMA

My manservant packed a lunch for me. I'm sure it will taste better than anything they serve at whatever grubby little diner Bob can afford.



BOB

I hope you choke on your lunch.

MARTHA

Bob!

BOB

Well I do. You'd think she'd be thrilled to have any job that got her out of prison for eight hours a day.

MARTHA

I'm sure she is.

BOB

Then why is she mean and nasty? I've never met anyone so arrogant.

MARTHA

I'm not going to let her spoil our lunch.

BOB

Right. Let's have a wonderful time in spite of her.

MARTHA

Enjoy your lunch, Norma.

Bob and Martha exit.

NORMA

Imbeciles.

Norma gets her lunch bag from under the table, then sits. She stretches, and perhaps yawns.

NORMA (CONT'D)

If I wrap one more package I think I'll go mad.

She puts her crossed arms on the table and rests her head on her arms to take a nap. She falls asleep. The lights change and THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS enters.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Norma.

Mmm.

NORMA

Wake up, Norma.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

She awakens and looks up.

NORMA

Joe!

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

No, I'm dead, remember?

NORMA

Am I dead?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

No, that won't happen for many years. If you play your cards right.

NORMA

It's good to see you Joe, even if you are just a ghost. But why are you here?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

I always shop at Bullocks. It's very popular with ghosts.

NORMA

You're joking. I like it when you joke. Why have you never visited me before?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

You shot me three times, remember?

NORMA

I can't forget it. No matter how hard I try.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Well, no hard feelings; we don't hold grudges in the spirit world.

NORMA

I am sorry I killed you. More than you know.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

I know everything. That's why I'm here, Norma. To warn you.

NORMA

Warn me about what?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

About you.

NORMA

I don't understand.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

You will. Follow me, Norma. I have a few things to show you.

The lights change as The Ghost of Joe Gillis walks to another part of the stage and Norma follows.

NORMA

Why does everything suddenly look so old?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

This is the past.

NORMA

You mean we can go back in time? How wonderful! I can be young again!

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

No, Norma, we can't go back. No one can. But I can show you the past.

CECIL B. DEMILLE enters. Perhaps he wears his pants tucked into knee-high boots.

NORMA

Cecil B. DeMille.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Wasn't he your favorite director?

NORMA

We made twelve pictures together. Mr. DeMille! Mr. DeMille! Why can't he hear me?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

He's not actually here, Norma. We're looking at "shadows of the things that have been." Like we used to do when Max would screen one of your old movies.

YOUNG NORMA enters.

NORMA

It's me.

## THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

You were a lovely young woman.

## NORMA

Look Joe; look at my skin. I'd give anything for my skin to look like that again.

## THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

We're not here to swoon over your complexion.

## YOUNG NORMA

You wanted to see me, Mr. DeMille?

## THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Your speaking voice was perfectly fine. Why didn't you make talking pictures?

## NORMA

Because I can say anything I want to with my eyes. Talking pictures are a vile aberration. The art of cinema should always be silent.

## CECIL B. DEMILLE

Yes, Norma. I have a surprise for you.

## YOUNG NORMA

A Christmas gift?

## CECIL B. DEMILLE

No, --well, yes, but not a gift that comes wrapped in a box with a bow.

## YOUNG NORMA

What is it?

## CECIL B. DEMILLE

A part in my next picture. If you're interested in playing a famous historical figure.

## YOUNG NORMA

Of course I'm interested. Who is it? Queen Elizabeth? Pocahontas? Sacagawea?

## CECIL B. DEMILLE

No, though I'd love to see you play all three of those women. It's Joan of Arc.

## YOUNG NORMA

What a wonderful part! But do you think anyone will believe me as a woman who's delusional and hears voices?

CECIL B. DEMILLE

I think you'll be very convincing.

NORMA

I had so much potential. Life held so much promise.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Smarts, wit, talent, heart: you had it in spades. And you were "so full of gratitude."

NORMA

Back then I had something to be grateful for.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

You still do.

NORMA

Humbug!

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Drop that attitude.

YOUNG NORMA

And what can I get you for Christmas, you dear, sweet man?

CECIL B. DEMILLE

Oh, I don't need anything.

YOUNG NORMA

A new riding crop? Some actors are awfully stubborn.

CECIL B. DEMILLE

No thank you, I'll keep the one I have. Actors are more apt to stay in line if my riding crop looks used and worn.

NORMA

Why are you showing me this?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Can you figure it out yourself?

YOUNG NORMA

But I must get you something. To show my gratitude at how happy you've made me.

CECIL B. DEMILLE

Norma, just give me a good performance. That's all I ask.

YOUNG NORMA

I will, Mr. DeMille, I'll work very hard.

CECIL B. DEMILLE

Good.

YOUNG NORMA

I love Christmas. I wish every day was Christmas!

CECIL B. DEMILLE

Let's have champagne to celebrate.

They exit.

NORMA

It was good to see DeMille again. I've missed him.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Why is that?

NORMA

Because he had the power to make the people he worked with happy or unhappy; to make their job a pleasure or a pain.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

How?

NORMA

With his words, and the way he would look at you. With something so insignificant as a smile.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

If a smile makes others happy, did you ever think that it might not be so insignificant?

NORMA

(Realizing this applies to her.)

Oh.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

What?

NORMA

Nothing.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Uh huh.

NORMA

Don't look at me like that. What are you going to show me now?

Young Norma enters with a thin wrapped gift.

NORMA (CONT'D)

There I am again.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Yes, a few years later.

YOUNG MAX enters with a small wrapped gift. He speaks with a German accent.

YOUNG MAX

You are radiant as always.

YOUNG NORMA

Thank you Max.

(She hands him her gift.)

Merry Christmas.

YOUNG MAX

Merry Christmas, Norma.

Max hands her his gift.

YOUNG NORMA

You first.

Young Max opens his gift. It is a gold bracelet or a gold watch.

YOUNG MAX

It is beautiful.

YOUNG NORMA

I'm glad you like it. It's the last Christmas gift you'll get from me.

YOUNG MAX

What do you mean?

YOUNG NORMA

I want a divorce. I'm not in love with you anymore.

YOUNG MAX

No, no, tell me you are joking.

YOUNG NORMA

You're a good director, Max, but a lousy husband.

YOUNG MAX

I am sorry. Very sorry. I deserve to be spanked.

Young Max bends over and offers his backside.

YOUNG NORMA

Not now, Max.

YOUNG MAX

I must be punished.

YOUNG NORMA

I'm through spanking you. It's over.

YOUNG MAX

No. No. I can't imagine spending my life without you.

YOUNG NORMA

I'd rather spend the rest of my life alone than spend any more of it with you.

YOUNG MAX

I will not give you a divorce. I love you too much to let you go.

YOUNG NORMA

Yes, you love me too much. But I want someone *I* can love.

YOUNG MAX

Who is he?

YOUNG NORMA

There's no one. Yet. But I intend to find someone.

YOUNG MAX

How did you get to be so cruel?



YOUNG NORMA

I'm not cruel, I'm pragmatic. I wanted certain things when I agreed to marry you. I have them. I want other things now.

YOUNG MAX

So you are finished with me.

YOUNG NORMA

Yes. I'm sick of you staring at me with those sad eyes. Like an old basset hound with indigestion.

YOUNG MAX

You must let me stay. I will do anything you ask.

YOUNG NORMA

Anything? Hmm. I could use a chauffeur.

YOUNG MAX

Yes.

YOUNG NORMA

And a butler.

YOUNG MAX

Yes, I will be your servant.

YOUNG NORMA

My servant. I like the sound of that.

YOUNG MAX

And you will still spank me?

YOUNG NORMA

Only if you're good.

YOUNG MAX

I will be the best butler you have ever seen.

YOUNG NORMA

You can move into the servants quarters and I'll start paying you a salary. A very meager salary.

YOUNG MAX

That is all I deserve, Norma.

YOUNG NORMA

From now on you will address me as “Madame.”

YOUNG MAX

Yes, Madame.

YOUNG NORMA

You can start by taking this away.

Young Norma returns his gift unopened.

YOUNG MAX

You are so mean.

YOUNG NORMA

Get used to it.

YOUNG MAX

This is what I get for marrying a shiksa. [SHICK - suh]

Young Max exits. Then Young Norma exits in the opposite direction.

NORMA

Joe, get me out of here.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Not your finest moment, was it.

NORMA

I said get me out of here.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

But we’re just getting started.

NORMA

“Take me back, Joe, please. Haunt me no longer.” I think I’ve learned the lesson you brought me here to learn.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

What’s your rush? You have no pressing engagements.

NORMA

I suppose not.

(Suspiciously.)

What else have you to show me?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

This way, Norma.

The Ghost of Joe Gillis walks to another part of the stage and Norma follows.

NORMA

Everything looks normal again.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

We're back in nineteen sixty-six.

NORMA

How are you able to travel through time?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Ghosts can go anywhere.

NORMA

This reminds me of a picture I once saw. Will I be visited by two other ghosts?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

No, just me.

NORMA

Oh.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

If you wanted to see more ghosts you should have killed more people.

NORMA

Where are we?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

A small restaurant two blocks from Bullock's. Not grubby at all, is it.

NORMA

What are we doing here?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Eavesdropping.

Bob and Martha enter and sit at the table.

NORMA

Why would I care what those two peons have to say? I want see more of me.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Shhh.

MARTHA

I feel sorry for Norma.

BOB

Why would you feel sorry for that witch?

NORMA

Can I slap him?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

No.

MARTHA

Being in prison at her age; not having any friends.

BOB

She could have friends if she weren't such a nasty old hag.

NORMA

I've made friends with some of the inmates.

MARTHA

And what's she going to do when she gets out?

BOB

She's got money. She's always talking about her oil wells in Bakersfield, 'pumping, pumping, pumping.'

MARTHA

By the time she's paroled she's going to be too old to enjoy it.

BOB

She's already too old.

NORMA

Stars are ageless.

## THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Be quiet.

MARTHA

I mean, what's the point of having wealth if you don't do any good with it?

BOB

I agree.

MARTHA

She decides not to like me, and “what’s the consequence?” She loses my friendship.

BOB

Right.

MARTHA

You know who suffers the most from her rotten attitude?

BOB

We do.

MARTHA

No, she does. Her personality carries it's own punishment.

The Ghost of Joe Gillis walks to another part of the stage and Norma follows. Bob and Martha exit.

NORMA

They think my personality is my punishment? Perhaps I have been a bit cross lately.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

A bit cross? Norma, you’ve been a royal pain in the keister. Why do you think I’m here after all this time?

NORMA

You’re trying to help me, aren’t you. To show me the error of my ways.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Now you’re catching on.

NORMA

What else have you to show me?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

The future. It's time to take inventory of your prospects.

The lights fade.

SCENE 3

MAX VON MAYERLING enters and sits in a chair facing downstage. The lights rise as The Ghost of Joe Gillis walks toward him, followed by Norma.

NORMA

Where am I? I mean, what scene is this?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Can't you guess?

NORMA

The only reason Max would be sitting in a chapel would be for somebody's . . .

She doesn't finish her sentence.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Good guess.

NORMA

You mean . . .

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Yes Norma.

NORMA

Is Max the only one here?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

I'm afraid so. Too bad you didn't have any other friends.

NORMA

And the press coverage?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

'Yesterday's glamour queen, convicted of first-degree murder, dies alone and forgotten.'

NORMA

That's it?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Plus one paragraph on the obituary page.

NORMA

But where are all my fans?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

What fans? Norma, nobody remembers silent pictures anymore, much less the people who starred in them.

NORMA

But my career was my whole life.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Yes, it was. Sad, isn't it. But that was the choice you made.

NORMA

Yes, but I . . .

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

When people stop working, all they have left are their connections to other people.

RABBI LASZLO BERKOWITS enters and crosses to Max. Max speaks with a German accent.

RABBI BERKOWITS

Sorry to interrupt your grieving, but it's time. We need this room for the Finkel bar mitzvah.

NORMA

What kind of chapel is this?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

It's actually an all-purpose room at Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills.

NORMA

I'm not Jewish.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

I know. But Max got a great deal on the room.

MAX VON MAYERLING

Of course, Rabbi.

RABBI BERKOWITS

Thank you. One more thing. We're not going to have time to move the coffin, so we thought we'd cover it with a table cloth and seat the younger kids around it. They won't know the difference.

MAX VON MAYERLING

I do not think Madame would mind.

NORMA

Of course I mind. I never liked children.

RABBI BERKOWITS

The dead seldom mind. Thank you.

Rabbi Berkowits exits.

MAX VON MAYERLING

(To an offstage coffin)

Goodbye, Norma. You were the greatest star of them all.

Max Von Mayerling rises and exits.

NORMA

(Calling after him)

Max! Don't go!

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

But he does.

NORMA

I always . . . You were . . . I mean . . .

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

If you had something to say to Max, it's too late now.

NORMA

Too late.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Still want me to take you back to Bullock's?



NORMA

I hope to be a changed woman when this is over. Show me everything.

The Ghost of Joe Gillis walks to another part of the stage and Norma follows.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Recognize this place?

NORMA

It's my home. But why is it empty?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Max held an estate sale.

NORMA

My things; my clothes, my jewelry--

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Gone. Sold.

NORMA

So there's nothing left of me.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Just what people remember about you. Too bad you only made silent pictures. If you'd made some talkies they would have been shown on television.

NORMA

It's as though I never existed. Did my life mean nothing?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

That's between you and yourself.

NORMA

I've seen enough. Take me back.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

But Norma, I have one more scene.

The Ghost of Joe Gillis crosses to an edge of the stage and Norma follows. They face offstage and The Ghost points straight before them.

NORMA  
What am I looking at?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS  
A long term contract with no options.

NORMA  
Where?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS  
Between those two men.

NORMA  
Wait, what is that?  
(She peers closer and then sees it.)  
Oh.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS  
See it now?

NORMA  
I would have thought my gravestone would be much more imposing. A monument to my talent and fame, not that measly marker.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS  
Don't complain Norma, you could have been buried in your backyard next to your monkey.

NORMA  
Chimpanzee.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS  
I stand corrected.

NORMA  
Well, I guess it can't get any worse than this.

PETER and MR. DILBER enter from the direction of the grave. They both carry shovels. Peter carries a skull. The Ghost of Joe Gillis and Norma watch them.

MR. DILBER  
Stop. I need to rest for a minute.

They lay down their shovels.

PETER

That was a waste of time.

MR. DILBER

Sorry. I read in the paper she was buried wearing a ton of jewelry.

PETER

Don't believe everything you read.

(Tossing the skull in the air.)

At least I found this.

MR. DILBER

Are you really going to keep that?

PETER

You said she was an old-time movie star. It's a souvenir.

MR. DILBER

It's creepy.

PETER

This? Nah, this is just a keepsake. Here. Catch.

Peter tosses the skull to Mr. Dilber.

MR. DILBER

(Catching it.)

I don't want to touch it!

He tosses the skull back to Peter.

PETER

Hot potato!

Peter tosses the skull to Mr. Dilber.

MR. DILBER

Stop!

He tosses the skull back to Peter.

Now we're having fun.

PETER

Peter tosses the skull to Mr. Dilber.

No. We're not.

MR. DILBER

He tosses the skull back to Peter.

Go long!

PETER

Peter reaches his arm back to toss the skull.

Oh alright.

MR. DILBER

Mr. Dilber backs up and Peter throws the skull to him. He catches it.

Touch down!

PETER

The crowd goes wild!

MR. DILBER

Still think it's creepy?

PETER

Macabre is a better word.

MR. DILBER

He tosses the skull back to Peter.

Gruesome?

PETER

It becomes a game. They pick up their shovels and begin to exit.

Ghoulish.

MR. DILBER

Morbid.

PETER

MR. DILBER

Spooky.

PETER

Grisly.

They exit.

NORMA

This is how I end up? Joe, tell me you're joking.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

I'm all out of laughs.

NORMA

And when does this happen?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Sooner than you think. You said that if people are passengers to the grave they should take the express. Well, you take the express.

NORMA

No! "Oh, no, no!"

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Did you notice the gravestone next to yours?

NORMA

No, why?

(She looks.)

Oh.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

(Reading.)

'Max Von Mayerling.' He dies of grief a few months after you do.

NORMA

Joe, these scenes you've shown me; are they things that will be, or things that might be?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

That's completely up to you, Norma.

NORMA

I see.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

So now you know the score.

NORMA

Joe, tell me I can “change these shadows you’ve shown me.”

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Do you have the courage to change?

NORMA

Yes! I will change! I’ve changed already, just by witnessing these things.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Is that so.

NORMA

And why show me these things if I were past all hope?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

No one’s past all hope. Not even Norma Desmond.

The Ghost of Joe Gillis crosses back to the table  
and Norma follows.

NORMA

Joe, why are you being so kind to me, when I’m the one who shot you?

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

That’s the way we do things in the spirit world. Try to do things that way in your world.

NORMA

I will, Joe, I will. I will honor Christmas, not only with gifts but with my heart. And I will strive to keep it in my heart all year long.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Good. “Remember what has passed between us.”

NORMA

I will, Joe. I promise.

THE GHOST OF JOE GILLIS

Goodbye, Norma.

NORMA

Goodbye, Joe. And thank you!

The Ghost of Joe Gillis exits.

NORMA  
(Sitting.)

I must rest a moment.

Norma puts her crossed arms on the table and rests her head on her arms and falls asleep. The lights fade out.

#### SCENE 4

The lights rise. Norma awakens.

NORMA  
Mmm . . .where . . .?  
(She looks around, then looks at her watch.)  
There's still time! Thank you Joe. Thank you!

Bob and Martha enter. Norma stands and greets them.

NORMA  
(She smiles at them.)  
There you are you dear people. How was your lunch?

MARTHA  
Uhh . . .it was very nice.

NORMA  
I hope it will be the first of many lunches for the two of you.

BOB  
You're in a good mood.

NORMA  
(Smiling.)  
"I'm as light as a feather. I'm as happy as an angel."

MARTHA  
What happened to you?

BOB  
She's on drugs.

NORMA

No, I've seen the error of my ways.

BOB

Not a moment too soon.

NORMA

Why don't I finish wrapping the rest of the packages. That way the two of you can go for a walk in Lafayette Park.

BOB

Is this some sort of joke?

NORMA

No. You can laugh at me if you like; my own heart is laughing at me as well. But I'm not joking. You were right, Bob, I have been mean and nasty, and I'd like to make it up to you both.

BOB

That's very kind of you.

NORMA

It's a start, anyway. I can't buy you anything for Christmas; as a prisoner, I'm not allowed access to my funds. I can, however, give you the afternoon off.

BOB

You would do that for us?

NORMA

I'd do more if I could. But for now it's all I have to offer. I'll wrap all the boxes, then sign you both out before I leave at six p.m.

BOB

You think you can forge our signatures?

NORMA

Of course I can. I haven't spent the past sixteen years in prison without learning a few tricks from my fellow inmates.

MARTHA

It would be nice to have the afternoon off.

NORMA

Of course it would. You two lovebirds can take a nice long walk and get better acquainted.



MARTHA

“I don't know what to say.”

NORMA

“Don't say anything, please.” Just let me do this for you.

MARTHA

That would be lovely, Norma.

NORMA

“Bless you!”

BOB

(As they start to exit.)

I guess no one's immune to the spirit of Christmas.

NORMA

Not if they have any heart at all.

Bob and Martha exit.

NORMA

(Calling after them.)

Merry Christmas!

Norma starts to work wrapping gifts. The lights fade.

## SCENE 5

The lights rise. Norma's lunch bag is gone, and so are the festively wrapped packages. Only one package remains on the table. Norma sits down.

NORMA

I can't wait to see the look on his face.

MAX VON MAYERLING enters.

MAX VON MAYERLING

Good evening, Madame.

NORMA

(Pretending to be angry.)

Why are you so late? It's after six.

MAX VON MAYERLING

“I am very sorry” Madame. It shall not happen again.

NORMA

“I’m not going to stand for this sort of thing any longer.” You know what I’m going to do?

MAX VON MAYERLING

(Chastised.)

What, Madame?

NORMA

I am going to “raise your salary.”

She smiles at him.

MAX VON MAYERLING

Madame is not angry?

NORMA

No, Max. I should have raised your salary a long time ago.

MAX VON MAYERLING

Thank you . . . I . . . I . . . Madame is very generous.

NORMA

(Greeting him warmly, with a kiss on the cheek.)

Merry Christmas, Max.

MAX VON MAYERLING

Merry Christmas, Madame.

NORMA

And that’s not all.

She gives him the wrapped gift.

MAX VON MAYERLING

For me?

NORMA

I wrapped it myself.

He unwraps the gift.

MAX VON MAYERLING

A new pair of white gloves.

NORMA

Your old pair was looking a little dingy.

MAX VON MAYERLING

Thank you, Madame. You are very good to me.

NORMA

I haven't been, but I will be now. I promise.

MAX VON MAYERLING

But where did Madame get them?

NORMA

I'm working in a department store, Max. I stole them.

MAX VON MAYERLING

You have been in prison too long, Madame.

NORMA

Yes, much too long.

MAX VON MAYERLING

I am sorry, Madame, but I have no gift for you.

NORMA

You're here. After the way I've treated you. And after all this time. That's enough for me.

MAX VON MAYERLING

I am speechless.

NORMA

Merry Christmas, Max.

MAX VON MAYERLING

Merry Christmas.

NORMA

"A merry Christmas to *everybody!*"

MAX VON MAYERLING

God bless us, every one.

She takes his hand. The lights fade to black. End of play.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A CHRISTMAS CAROL  
By Charles Dickens. c. 1843

Dialogue within quotation marks (“”) are quotes from A CHRISTMAS CAROL by Charles Dickens.