

Cromwell's Christmas

Cast: (in order of appearance)

Narrator

Soldier's Wife

Soldier 1

Soldier 2

Soldier 3

Direction

Act I

The stage is empty as the NARRATOR enters STAGE LEFT. As the opening lines are delivered the SOLDIER'S WIFE enters STAGE RIGHT.

Narrator: We have a play for you see.
It's December 1653

King Charles the First has lost his head
And Cromwell now does reign,
It's said he's cancelled Christmas fun,
Because he's Purita(i)n.

So herein lies our potted tale
of history (but tongue in cheek)
About three fellows, fresh from war,
With aching limbs and quite foot sore
Who now will find their Christmas bleak.

So enter now our gallant troupe,
Roundheads one and all.
They're off duty now for Christmas
And mean to have a ball.

NARRATOR exits to
PULPIT as
SOLDIERS enter
STAGE RIGHT

Soldier 1: I'm home.
But not alone!

I've brought the lads to share the cheer
Pull up a chair I'll get the beer

Wife: There'll not be any drinking here
Neither now, nor any day this year

All Soldiers: No beer!

Soldier 2: Well how about some mead?
That's more high class you must concede.

Wife: Er no, I'm sorry pet
But mead's off too, and I'm not done yet!
In fact, I have a list, you see,
of all things banned, signed Ollie P!

All Soldiers: Ollie? Who on earth is he?

Wife: Why, The Lord Protector.
Don't you see?

Pointing to the
signature on the list

Soldier 2: Well what is there that's on this list
There must be loads of things he's missed.

Other Soldiers laugh

The Soldier's wife opens up the scroll, clears her throat
and reads as if a proclamation.

Wife: I hereby ban all merriment
All sports, even with good intent.
Gluttony, I cannot stand
And drunkenness is strictly banned.

All Soldiers: What!

Wife: In fact,
No alcohol, except for wine...

All Soldiers: Phew!

Wife: If in communion - that is fine

The Soldiers groan
and put their heads in
their hands

Soldier 3: Well, what's for dinner anyway?

Soldier 2: Turkey and stuffing?

Soldier 3: Yeh, hurray!

Soldier 1: With apple pie and custard too?

Soldier 3: Then presents. I've even one for you

Soldier 3 hands a
small packet to
Soldier 2.

Wife: Turkey! Oh no, that's far too grand
It has to be some fare that's bland
as well as being food that's wholesome
to cleanse and purify the soul, some.

Apple pie is Pagan food
and cannot do you any good.

Soldier 1: Where are these rules from anyways?
He's been in office just 9 days!

The Soldiers leave STAGE RIGHT and the Wife goes UP
STAGE to the Altar.

Narrator: Christmas came and Christmas went
With not a sign of good intent.

Every year was just the same
with Oliver the one to blame.

We're now at Christmas number four.
Here's our fellows at the door.

WIFE comes DOWN
STAGE from the
ALTAR

Soldier 1: We're home. I guess there's nothing new?
Soldier 2: I think I'm getting thinner too.

Patting his stomach

Soldier 1 looks at his
wife with a puzzled
expression

Soldier 1: Your face is looking rather plain
Wife: That's 'cause make-up's banned. Again!

Indignant

There's been a new Protector's list.
One or two things that he missed!

She unrolls a new
scroll that reaches to
the floor

Mincemeat's off, and no Yule logs
No more betting on the dogs
Mistletoe has got to go,
The Devil's berries, don't you know.

Soldier 3: We'll go to a show.
It's at least a start
Soldier 2: A Masque, or comedy in part?
Wife: No, only Opera. A virtuous art!

All Soldiers: Opera!

Soldier 1: All that screeching's bad for health,
And not for men of the Commonwealth.

They all come to
attention!

Soldier 3: I've got it. A Yuletide walk
A breath of air and time to talk.

Wife: A walk to prayers is what I say.
All Soldiers: What! Go to church? On Christmas Day!

All exit STAGE
RIGHT, Soldier 3
playing a tune on his
penny whistle.

Narrator: Cromwell died in '58
He's son took on the Common State.
But 2 years after Cromwell's fall
Saw his head on a spike at Westminster Hall.
For now Charles 2nd was here to stay

Taking power on his birthday.

The 3 soldiers enter STAGE RIGHT wearing capes and hats with feathers.

Wife: You're looking rather, Cavalier!
Soldier 1: A bit less cheek and a lot more beer!

Wife: And what's with the feather in your hat?
Soldier 1: I'm a Royalist now.
Wife: Well, fancy that.

Soldier 2: So now you see, we're quite converted
Fancy capes, and all white shirted.

Wife: So Cromwell's lists go in the bin
As having fun is NOT a sin?

The WIFE makes to put the scroll in the bin.

SOLDIERS 2 & 3 exit STAGE RIGHT, SOLDIER 1 STAGE LEFT as the NARRATOR comes onto stage to join the WIFE.

Narrator: And so a new era began
With a Merry Monarch for the common man.

Wife: For this was the time of the Restoration

Narrator: Righting wrongs for the English nation

Soldier 3: Even religious factions meet

Soldier 2: And there's as much apple pie as we can eat.

SOLDIER 1 enters STAGE LEFT carrying a Boar's Head on a plate.

Soldier 1: The boar's head in hand bear I
Be-decked with bays and rosemary
I pray you, my masters, be merry
Quot estis in convivio

All: Caput apri defero, Reddens laudes domino

Soldier 1: As for Charles, not everything went fine

Narrator: But that's another story, for another time.

CURTAIN CALL

Fine