

Yuletide

at the

Wade



By Chloe DuBois + Elise Peterson

~ YULETIDE AT THE WADE ~

In Verse.

Being
a Ghost Story of Christmas.

Written by Chloe DuBois and Elise Peterson

Illustrated by Chloe DuBois

Adapted from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

First printing December 2023
Because all good publishers date their work.

STAVE I ~

Mudd's been dead and buried deep
These seven lengthy years,
Dead as nails of any sort.
This fact must be made clear.

Dr. Stein knew Mudd had died—
They'd often been coauthors—
Yet Stein still published with both names,
Which really was a bother.

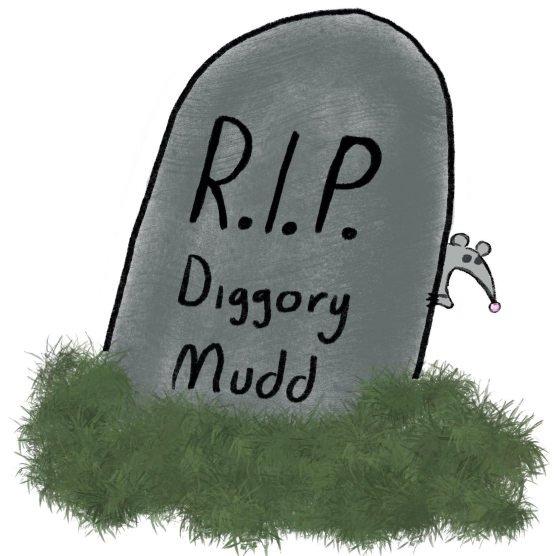
The practice peeved the archivists,
Made labeling a pain.
But since nobody read their works,
It wasn't a great shame.

So now that this has been laid out
As plain as plain can be,
I'll show you to Stein's research desk
One fateful Christmas Eve.

Stein's doodling. He often does,
As other scholars might,
But not always upon the page
Of Sayers's *Gaudy Night*.

Poor Laura would have stopped his sin
But she was buried deep
'Neath articles he'd riffled through
And books he'd left in heaps.

She'd hoped to spend the day with John
Where the love light gleams,
But sadly, she'd be home for Christmas
Only in her dreams.



“Oh, Laura!” Dr. Stein called out.
“I’ve read my fill of hacks.”
He shoved *Phantastes* in her face.
“Now get me more from Stacks!”

With weary eyes, the archivist
Gazed glumly at the clock.
“It’s ten to four,” she protested.
“The room will soon be locked.”

“Well, I don’t give a sugar-plum!”
The stubborn scholar cried.
“Is this a Reading Room or not?
I’m researching!” he lied.

“I’m sorry, sir, you have to leave.
The Reading Room is closed.”
You can’t imagine what it took
For her to stay composed.

Dr. Stein looked down his nose
And answered her with scorn:
“If you won’t let me stay in here,
I’ll see you Christmas morn!”

Before the archivist could speak,
Stein flew into the hall.
Hope waved goodbye to no reply.
He stormed into the squall.

He muttered underneath his breath,
“Bah, humbug, to the Wade!
Who needs your dull librarians,
Your interfering aid?”



“Those people cannot keep me out!”

He chuckled with a grin.

“I’ll wriggle down the chimbley

And I’ll nimbly sneak on in.”

He hid himself behind a bush

And quickly looked around.

But to his great dismay, there were

No reindeer to be found.

Did this stop Dr. Stein? Alas!

He would not be deterred.

He waited ‘til they’d all gone home

So he would not be heard.

And then, with deft agility,

He leapt onto the roof.

To look at him, you’d never know

He’d vaulted in his youth.

He squeezed himself into the hole

And slithered down the flue.

If portly Santa Claus could fit,

Then Dr. Stein could, too!

Now on the floor, he looked around

The dusky Reading Room.

No researcher was stirring there,

T’was quiet as a tomb.

An evil grin deformed the face

Of dreadful Dr. Stein.

“I should have done this years ago,

At last, the place is mine!”

He hurried to the bookshelves and
Began selecting tomes.
He dropped an armful on a desk
And made himself at home.

He'd hadn't even read a page
When way down deep in Stacks,
He heard a *bang* so frightening
It stopped him in his tracks.

Was Jill reshelving books down there?
That would explain the sound,
But not the clink of heavy chains
Dragging on the ground.

Dr. Stein was so afraid
He couldn't move at all,
But whimpered as he heard the door
Bang against the wall.

He spun around and there beheld
A sight that chilled his blood:
A near-transparent phantom form,
The late Professor Mudd!

The specter dripped with paper clips
Linked like lengths of chain.
He dragged a filing cabinet
And moaned as if in pain.

Dr. Stein could not mistake
The face of that old haunt,
So he surpassed the pleasantries
And squeaked, "What do you want?"



“I’m here to warn you!” Mudd declared,
With Stein’s arm in his grip.
“I wear the chain I forged in life!”
He shook the paper clips.

“I made each link by breaking rules
And damaging the Wade!
You don’t know what a gift it is
These works remain maintained.

“Stop using pens, stop eating snacks,
Be sensible, dear Stein!
The chain that hangs about yourself
Is longer still than mine.”



Though Dr. Stein was terrified,
He wouldn't hear the plea.
He shook off Mudd's cold hand and said,
"You're not the boss of me!"

Professor Mudd looked miserably
At his pigheaded friend,
And with a sigh, he said these words
Before the visit's end:

"Tonight, you will be haunted by
Three spirits of the Wade.
At twelve and one and two o'clock,
They'll come here for your aid."

With that, he gathered up his chain
And flew into the night.
Stein dropped into a nearby chair,
Exhausted by the fright.

"My dinner must have turned on me,"
He muttered with a frown.
"I've never dreamt like that before.
A book will calm me down."

He chose a book at random,
But his brain was not engaged,
And in no time, he was asleep
And drooling on the page.

STAVE II ~

When Stein awoke upon the hour,
His senses surged with light,
He blinked three times, then gave a start
And promptly screamed in fright.

Beside his desk there stood a man
With wispy, wind-blown hair,
His pockets stuffed with walnut shells,
His Oxfords scuffed with wear.

His face emitted childlike joy
Without a trace of woe,
And as he grinned at Dr. Stein,
He almost seemed to glow.

“W-who are you?” our villain asked,
His trembling uncontrolled.
“Are you the apparition, sir,
Whose coming was foretold?”

“I am!” the Spirit chuckled
With an earnest, Southern smile.
“The name is Dr. Kilby.
Haven’t seen you in a while!

“See, I’m the Ghost of Wade Past
And the Founder of the Wade.
You’re not supposed to sleep here,
But you might be glad you stayed.”

Stein glared at Kilby, unconvinced.
“What business brings you here?”
“Your welfare! Please believe that my
Intentions are sincere.”



And with these words, he took Stein's hand
And drifted through the wall,
Across the quiet campus
Up the hill to Blanchard Hall.

"Good heavens!" whispered Dr. Stein.
"Why, I recall this place!
I used to be a student here
Before I fell from grace."

"You recollect the way, then?"
Kilby asked with twinkling eye.
"Remember it!" Stein shook his head.
"I'll know it 'til I die!"

His escort smiled and stepped inside
With Dr. Stein in tow.
"Well, there's no need to follow me
If you know where to go."

He pointed to a modest sign
That read "The Wade Collection."
But Dr. Stein stopped short, because
He'd spotted his reflection!

Or was it his reflection?
Startled Stein could not be sure.
The culprit was a lanky boy,
Reserved and immature.

His jet-black hair was slicked with grease.
He polished geeky glasses.
He wore an ochre turtleneck
And dressed his best for classes.



And as he shuffled down the hall,
Books pressed against his chest,
Poor Dr. Stein stared after him,
Appearing quite distressed.

“The building’s almost empty,”
Dr. Kilby said at last.
“Except the solitary boy
You noticed walking past.

“Now come, sir, shall we follow him?
We surely won’t be seen,
For these are simply shadows of
The beings that have been.”

Stein ran his bony fingers through
His greasy, graying hair,
And with a stubborn scowl, he said,
“Alright, but I don’t care.”

But care he did, and Kilby knew
The sight had touched Stein’s soul,
Despite the fact his hardened heart
Was black as lumps of coal.

The scholars stepped into the Wade
Behind Stein’s younger self,
Who made a beeline for the books
And slid one off the shelf.

But rather than profaning it,
The student seemed to think.
He didn’t spill his coffee and
He didn’t write with ink.

Instead, he read the manuscript
Like saintly scholars do:
With honor and decorum and
The proper reverence, too.

“I love the Wade,” sighed student Stein,
“Above all of my classes.”
And as he spoke, a single tear
Glissaded down his glasses.

Kilby glanced at Dr. Stein,
Who said, with sour look,
“If I could travel back in time,
I think I’d steal that book.”

“Or would you?” Dr. Kilby asked.
“I’m not sure I agree,
For in your younger years, Stein,
You were quite the devotee.”

Before the words had left his lips
In moseyed Mr. Mudd!
But not the spirit Stein had seen;
This Mudd was flesh and blood!

His forehead creased and crinkled
When he spotted student Stein,
And picking up a random book,
He promptly snapped its spine.

“Jeepers creepers, Mortimer,”
Mudd muttered in a huff.
“You’re back again? I can’t believe
You really *like* this stuff.”

Poor Morty Stein went flaming red.

“I don’t—I mean—you see—
If you just read them, Diggory,
I’m sure you’d think like me.”

But Diggory was not deterred.

He merely rolled his eyes.
“That ‘charitable reading’ junk
Is just a pack of lies.

“See, Barfield doesn’t matter much
And Chesterton is dim,
Tolkien’s books are allegories—
No one studies him!

“If women are not human, well,
Then that discredits Sayers,
And why should we read Williams’ work
If he was just a player?

“MacDonald was a heretic
Who nobody remembers.
Because of Christianity,
Jack Lewis lost his tenure!

“You really want to spend your time
With seven British quacks,
Who aren’t of any relevance
And write like frightful hacks?

“I’ll show you how a *scholar* reads—
With scathing, searing pen!”
Producing one of crimson ink,
He glanced around, and then...

He grabbed a Barfield manuscript
And set the pen to page.
He knew full well his heinous crime
Would likely last an age,

“But a proper scholar disregards
The many *and* the few,
And thus, transcends the masses.
Morty, you and I can, too.”

Mudd’s lies convinced his trusting friend,
And with some hesitation,
Mortimer picked up the pen
And joined Mudd’s desecration.

Anxious reader, understand
The two felt no remorse.
They capped the murder weapon
And returned the ruined source

To the unsuspecting archivist
Who hadn’t seen their sin.
And hitching up his checkered pants,
Mudd murmured with a grin,

“Now, let’s go pull the wardrobe drawers
Since no one is around,
And doodle on the Lewis desk
With fountain pens I found.”

With that, the students sauntered past
As Dr. Stein looked on.
He thought of Sayers’ *Gaudy Night*,
Of Laura and of John,



Of all the weary Wade staff
Who had suffered from his vice.
With twinge of guilt, he wondered:
Am I naughty, then, or nice?

The Spirit touched him on the arm.
“Don’t take this night for granted.
A prisoner in prison
May not know his world’s enchanted.

“Recall the sense of wonder
That you relished as a boy.
Heed these admonitions, Stein,
And don’t forget your joy!”

But the Screwtape on Stein’s shoulder
Disregarded Kilby’s pleas.
“Bah, humbug!” Dr. Stein remarked.
His voice betrayed unease.

“Good Spirit, I’ve no time for this!
Remove me from this place!”
The Spirit simply gazed at him
With sorrow on his face.

“These are but shadows, Dr. Stein,
Mere pictures of the past.
But if you wish to be removed,
My work is done at last.”

And with a blinding flash of light,
Stein found himself once more
Alone inside the Reading Room,
Face down upon the floor.



STAVE III ~

Well after that, of course, poor Stein
Could hardly go to bed.
He waited for the second ghost,
His stomach clenched with dread.

But rather than a blazing light,
There came from down the hall
A gentle glow like candles and
A laughing, friendly call:

“Come in and know me better, man!”
The merry Spirit urged.
Stein quickly put his books away
And went without a word.

He crept to the museum room,
His wonder sparked anew,
And there he met a great surprise:
Not one phantom, but two!

Stein could not believe his eyes!
He thought that they were clowning.
The Ghosts of Present Wade research
Were both the Drs. Downing!

They sat enthroned upon the chairs
Where Lewis once had dined,
Surrounded by their favorite books,
All written in and signed.

The joy of research at the Wade
Was sparkling in their eyes.
Their happiness caught Dr. Stein
Completely by surprise.



“Come look into the wardrobe!”
Mr. Dr. Downing urged.
“We’ve lost a couple kids there,
But it’s safe. You have my word.”

His wife hissed, “Da-vid!” unimpressed,
Not falling for his ruse.
To Stein, she said, “There’s much to see!
We’ve got no time to lose.”

The Downings opened wide the doors
And pushed him half inside
Until it wasn’t coats that he
Was forced to brush aside...

But the spiky boughs of Christmas trees
In countless cozy homes
Where parents and their children sat
And read from dusty tomes

Of jolly Father Christmas
And a swiftly melting frost,
Or else a silly Polar Bear
Who made poor Santa cross.

Stein watched as folks around the world
Exclaimed with great delight
As they unwrapped the very books
He’d criticized that night.

One scholar’s work, Stein noticed,
Wasn’t wrapped up like a toy:
It seemed *his* books could never bring
That kind of Christmas joy.



Although the Ghosts had many more
Examples still to show,
Stein cross his arms and glared at them,
Then asked if they could go.

The Downings saw it was no use;
Stein felt naught but contempt.
They guided him back Wade-ward
For their last reform attempt.

The calendar on Laura's desk
Said this was Christmas day,
Yet there she was, refiling things
And putting books away.

Jill Walker, too, was making sure
That nothing went amiss.
And even student workers had
Forgone their break for this.

The Wade had every hand on deck
And had them working late,
For Dr. Stein had left the place
In quite a sorry state.

And yet, despite the grueling work,
Not one let out a whine.
The workers made the best of things!
This baffled Dr. Stein.

Their faces shone with merriment
As they exchanged bad puns
For if they were together,
Any Christmas could be fun.



Stein squinted at the happy scene,
Not knowing what it meant.
“They’d rather be at home, and yet,
They’re staying quite content.”

“So are they glad they’re here or not?
I just don’t understand.”
Mrs. Dr. Downing smiled
And wisely said, “Both/and.”

Before Stein could consider this,
He heard an irate noise
As Laura found a document
He’d recently destroyed.

She looked more grave than gravy
And she seemed to steam with rage.
What looked to be a mustard blot
Had stained the priceless page.

Poor Jill was also quite distressed.
Her books were all in shreds!
Between Stein’s inky notes, the words
Could only just be read.

“Is this what you had hoped to see?”
The Ghosts asked with a glare.
Stein waved his hand dismissively
And said, “Don’t really care!”

“It doesn’t take a mastermind
To desecrate a page.
My research is what you should fear,
The *real* threat to the Wade.”

“Once people actually read my work,
They’ll finally understand.
These authors are a bunch of frauds.
Their books should all be banned!”

He could have ranted on like this
For pages (as you know),
But, thankfully, he didn’t,
For the Ghosts had turned to go.

“It seems, poor Stein, there’s little hope
For your volitional plight.
If you’d just look along the beam,
You’d *truly* see the light.

“We must be off,” the Spirits said.
“There’s research to be done!”
They drifted toward their offices
And left Stein standing, stunned.



STAVE IV ~

A clanging shook the silent night.
The Edman bell struck two.
Recalling Mudd's prophetic word,
Stein shivered in his shoes.

He heard a raspy, rattling breath,
And lifting up his gaze,
He saw a solemn Spirit
Swathed in misty, murky haze.

The Spirit wore a pitch-black cloak,
Its fringing singed with flame,
Its mantle made of manuscripts
That Dr. Stein had maimed.

It raised a frightening finger
From within its soiled shroud,
And pointed it at Dr. Stein,
Who dared not cry aloud.

Instead, Stein shook and shivered
With a dreadful sense of doom.
The chill that filled his hardened heart
Engulfed the Reading Room.

"Are you, perhaps, the Spirit
Of the Wade that's Yet to Come?"
The Spirit simply bowed its head.
Stein felt himself go numb.

"And will you show me shadows
Of the Wade that's yet to be?"
Again, the Spirit nodded
In a silent guarantee.



“Lead on!” Stein whispered hoarsely,
“For the night is waning fast.”
But in his heart of hearts he thought,
This trial will end at last!

The phantom granted Stein’s request.
The backdrop blurred to black,
And presently, Stein found himself
Once more deep down in Stacks

Where Mrs. Dr. Downing
Shone a flashlight through the shelves,
Assisted by the Wade staff
Who conversed amongst themselves.

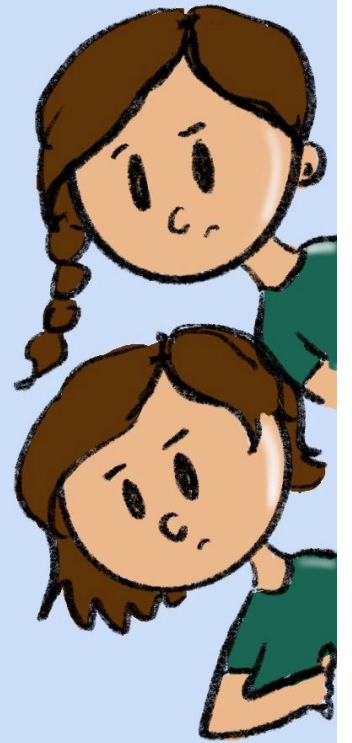
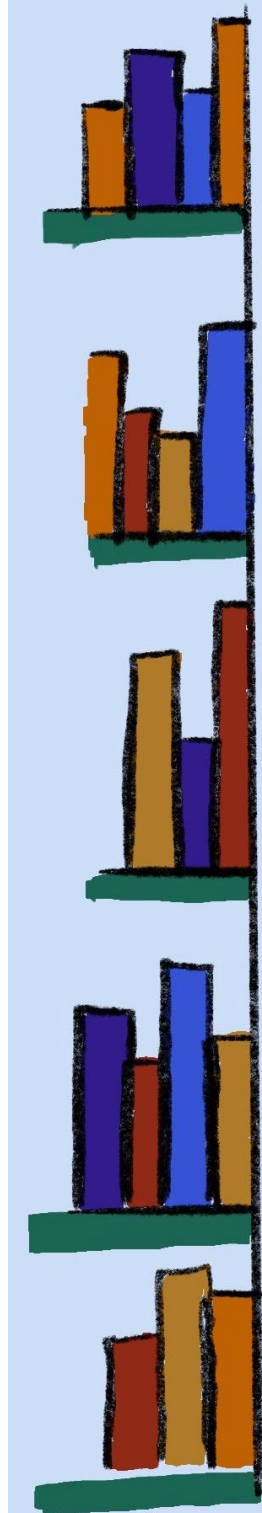
“Now, where’d you find the body?”
Dr. Downing turned to Jill.
She pointed to the crime scene
Where the victim had been killed.

“Were there many clouds of witnesses?
Whose body did you find?
Was he murdered with strong poison?
Does a suspect come to mind?”

They answered all her questions
With no trace of hesitation,
And peering through a monocle,
She muttered, “Suffocation.”

Poor Dr. Stein was quite unnerved.
Who was this murdered man?
Had the killing been an accident,
Or had his fate been planned?





“Lead on,” he croaked a second time.
Stacks disappeared from sight.
And through the darkness, Stein discerned
A faintly flickering light,

But not the warm, inviting glow
Of chestnuts on a fire.
His ghostly guide had led him to
A fiery, flaming pyre!

A sooty, soiled smokestack
Belched exhaust into the air.
The smoggy sky, now choked with smoke,
Rained ashes everywhere.

Was this perhaps a vigil
For the victim who had passed?
Had Stein arrived in Orthanc,
Or had doomsday come at last?

He snatched a piece of parchment
That was drifting through the sky,
And squinting through his spectacles,
He gave a gleeful cry—

Why, he recognized this handwriting!
The hand was cramped and tight,
The “F”s were shaped like hockey-sticks,
The script was slanted right.

The Lewis letter smoldered
In the scholar’s iron grip.
He tucked it in his pocket,
Hardly caring if it ripped.

Then, like a kid at Christmastime,
He gladly looked around.
He spotted soiled manuscripts
Disfigured on the ground.

No loyal lamppost welcomed him.
No greeter gave him flyers.
The garden, too, was overgrown
With thistles, weeds, and briars.

The busts of Jack and Tollers
Seemed to quake and shake with dread,
For both now sported spectacles,
Scrawled on with pencil lead.

But wait! What of the wardrobe
He had seen this very night?
Stein turned around and there beheld
A very scary sight:

A splintered stack of wardrobe wood
Piled high for all to see,
Was set ablaze for many days
To fuel the factory.

“It seems the beacons have been lit,”
He chuckled with a sneer.
“The burning of this Yule Log
Fills my heart with Christmas cheer.”

The screech of steel drowned out his words
As bells and whistles whirred.
Stein strode towards the assembly line
And this is what he heard:



An oddly catchy workers' song
Was blaring overhead:
"Where there's a whip, there is a way!"
The Orcish chorus said.

Stein squinted through the stifling smoke
And just suppressed a laugh:
The miserable assembly line
Was manned by former staff!

The office packaged lumps of coal
While students stoked the fire.
Directors shredded letters
Labeled "Recently Acquired."

They worked beneath a neon sign
Proclaiming "BANKRUPTCY!"
Was this the sorry outcome
Of the Wade still Yet to Be?

Stein's heart shrunk several sizes
As he gave a shout of mirth:
"O holy night! O happy day!
At last, there's peace on earth!"

He turned to thank the Spirit,
But recalled it couldn't speak.
He sensed its eyes upon him
And he felt his knees go weak.

An inkling stirred inside him—
Could it be a hint of *fear*?
The silent Spirit pointed to
A figure drawing near:

Stein's nemesis, the archivist,
Emerged from former Stacks,
Her arms piled high with bags of books
The size of Santa's sack.

A look of triumph on her face,
She handed some to Jill.
They chucked them in the furnace
With finesse and expert skill.

And as they burned the beat-up books,
Stein scrutinized the spines.
With ever-growing dread, he read:
"By Dr. Morty Stein."

His face went pale. His limbs felt frail.
He clutched the phantom's cloak.
"But that's my famous scholarship!
Is this some kind of joke?"

"How could they burn my articles,
My books and my reviews?
How could they trash my livelihood
And subjugate my muse?"

"I'm just a simple scholar
With a penchant for my pens,
But if the Wade goes bankrupt,
My career is at an end!"

"No researcher will read my work!
No visitor will care!
No archivist will save my books
When they are old and rare!"



“Good Spirit, take me home again!
I vow to save the Wade!
I'll donate to facilities
Until my debt's repaid!”

Stein clutched the Spirit's outstretched hand.
It trembled in his grip,
And as it sought to free itself,
He heard a mighty rip

As its mangled mantle dwindled
To a torn and inky tome.
The sunlight scorched Stein's eyeballs
And he found himself alone.

STAVE V ~

He knew this book! He knew that desk!
He knew those wooden shelves!
And leaping up, he tra-la-la'd
Like Tolkien's merry elves:

"Why, they are here and I am here!
They're not destroyed at all!"
And with a jolly cry of joy
He sprinted down the hall

And hugged the famous wardrobe
He had snubbed this every eve.
"Merry Christmas, one and all!
I think I'll never leave!"

But as he spoke these happy words,
Melissa stepped inside.
She spotted sheepish Dr. Stein,
Who had no time to hide.

Before she dialed 911,
He cried, "Melissa, wait!
Although I quite dislike the Wade,
My scholarship is great,

"So I'd like to buy a postcard, please,
And donate, if I may.
The broken Wade has been remade
This blessed Christmas Day!"

Melissa simply stared at him.
Had Dr. Stein improved?
"I'll speak with the directors,
Though I'm not sure they'll approve."



She quickly called her co-workers
Instead of 911.
They left their unwrapped presents
'Til the deed was said and done,

And watched with total disbelief
As Stein filled out a check.
He handed it to Marj and said,
“Well, what did you expect?”

“If it hadn't been for Tolkien
And that good-for-nothing Clive,
Then no one would have heard of me!
My work would not survive!”

“Does this mean you're reforming?”
Laura frowned and crossed her arms.
“Will you safeguard precious artifacts
And promise not to harm

“Our manuscripts, our letters,
And our every dish of orts?”
Stein shook his head, still smiling.
“I'll do nothing of the sort,

“But I *will* become a donor
So the Wade will be prolonged!”
And with these words, Stein broke into
A pithy, pitchy song:

“O, blessed be directors
Who acknowledge my career!
O, blessed be the office staff,
Who sell my work all year!

“O, blessed be librarians,
Who catalog my books!
O, blessed be the archivists,
Despite their dirty looks.

“O, blessed be the book snakes
And the folders, acid-free!
O, blessed be Wade Center,
Immortalizing me!

“Before I up and leave you
On this lovely Christmas day,
One piddling proposal, please,
And I’ll be on my way:

“You feature seven authors here,
But why not make it eight?
I’ll double my donations
And I’ll pledge my whole estate.”

They answered his proposal
With an overwhelming “NO.”
“Well, worth a try.” He shook his head.
“It’s time for me to go.”

The scholar swaggered out the door
As everyone stared on,
And I’m very glad to tell you
Laura spent her day with John.

Employees had their Christmas off,
The Wade was not destroyed,
And giving doubled overnight,
Which left them overjoyed.

Stein was better than his word,
But did his vice remain?
Did he ever make the nice list?
Were the hauntings all in vain?

Dear Reader, you may never know.
This Yuletide tale is done,
For as a crippled boy observed,
God bless us, every one!

THE END