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Charles Dickens'
A
Christmas
Carol

Adapted by
A. D. Hasselbring

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Charles Dickens' A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Adapted by A.D. Hasselbring

THE TIME: 1843 / 1908

THE PLACE: London

THE CHARACTERS:

SARAH	THIRD SPIRIT	MARTHA
SCROOGE	MR. FEZZIWIG	THOMAS
CRATCHIT	MRS. FEZZIWIG	MARY
FRED	YOUNG SCROOGE	PETER
MARLEY	BELLE	BELINDA
FIRST SPIRIT	MRS. CRATCHIT	TIMOTHY CRATCHIT
SECOND SPIRIT	TINY TIM	

THE ENSEMBLE TO PLAY:

CAROLERS	SHOPPER TWO	SECOND MAN
BOY	KATHERINE	SECOND WOMAN
BOY SCROOGE	TOPPER	FIRST CHIMNEY SWEEP
FAN	RACHEL	SECOND CHIMNEY SWEEP
SCHOOL MASTER	ELIZABETH	WIFE (CAROLINE)
DICK WILKINS	MICHAEL	HUSBAND
YOUNG WOMAN	BOY (Ignorance)	OLD JOE
FIRST GENTLE WOMAN	GIRL (Want)	CHARWOMAN
SECOND GENTLE WOMAN	FIRST MAN	LAUNDRESS
SHOPPER ONE	FIRST WOMAN	UNDERTAKER'S MAN

PRODUCTION NOTES

REGARDING MUSIC:

All the songs included in this adaptation are Christmas standards in the public domain. They are intended to be performed a cappella or accompanied by live piano or small ensemble. The traditional style of the carols should be observed, although the overall musical concept may be adapted to fit the individual performance space.

REGARDING STAGING:

Although the play is broken down into numerous scenes, each scene may be represented by simple set pieces and props and through the lighting of various areas about the stage. Although more elaborate descriptions of various scenes may be provided in the script, they are intended as imagery to inspire choices that will help create the mood and sense of each scene.

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Charles Dickens' A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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ACT I; Scene 1

(AT RISE: A small, well-lit portion of the stage near the Audience. Christmas Day. Otherwise, the stage remains dark. A SPOT UP on SARAH. She is young, extremely charismatic, and clothed in a simple dress from the turn of the century. Behind her, unseen in the darkness, are the TOWNSPEOPLE and CAROLERS. SARAH addresses the audience.)

SARAH

Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. But Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name above the office door. Sometimes people new to Scrooge and Marley's counting house called Scrooge "Scrooge" and sometimes they called him "Marley," but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him. Oh, but he was a tight-fisted old man, Ebenezer Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner, hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him made his eyes red, and his thin lips blue, and he carried winter with him wherever he went. Nobody ever stopped him in the street to gladly say, "My dear Scrooge, how are you?" Even the blind men's dogs seemed to know Ebenezer Scrooge, and when they saw him coming, would pull their owners off the street and out of his grasp. But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to stay away. And on this particular Christmas Eve, no winter wind blew colder than he...

(SARAH starts to exit, but then stops and turns back to the audience.)

SARAH *(Continued)*

But Marley was dead. There is no doubt whatsoever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

(SPOT OUT. SARAH exits. END SCENE.)

ACT I; Scene 2

(AT RISE: A large vibrant English park on a cold Christmas Eve morning. The TOWNSPEOPLE and CAROLERS are revealed. CHILDREN are playing, people are laughing. Packages are being carried, baked goods exchanged, and snow covers the ground. A group of CAROLERS sing "JOY TO THE WORLD" to a crowd of happy onlookers. All are dressed warmly and in top hats, bonnets, and scarves, displaying their Christmas best, whatever it may be.)

CAROLERS, *Singing*

(“JOY TO THE WORLD”)

JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD IS COME
 LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING
 LET EVERY HEART
 PREPARE HIM ROOM
 AND HEAVEN AND NATURE SING
 AND HEAVEN AND NATURE SING
 AND HEAVEN, AND HEAVEN AND NATURE SING

NO MORE LET SINS AND SORROW REIGN,
 NOR THORNS INFEST THE GROUND
 HE COMES TO MAKE HIS BLESSING FLOW
 FOR AS THE CURSE IS FOUND,
 FOR AS THE CURSE IS FOUND
 FOR AS, FOR AS THE CURSE IS FOUND

HE RULES THE WORLD
 WITH TRUTH AND GRACE
 AND MAKES THE NATIONS PROVE
 THE GLORIES OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS
 AND WONDERS OF HIS LOVE
 AND WONDERS OF HIS LOVE
 AND WONDERS, AND WONDERS OF HIS LOVE
 AND WONDERS, AND WONDERS OF HIS LOVE

(There is applause from the onlookers and cheers of joy as the CHILDREN start a playful snowball fight nearby. Enter SCROOGE; “A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner, hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him made his eyes red, and his thin lips blue, and he carried winter with him wherever he went.” SCROOGE is not a nice man. He is well-dressed, but in clothes that are not new or particularly in style. His shoulders are rolled forward, his hat dips over his eyes, and his nose seems to come to a point where his glasses firmly sit. When he enters, the warmth and joy of the people in the park disappears and no one moves...except for one BOY caught in the throes of the youthful snowball fight. He lets fly with his final shot which unwittingly hits SCROOGE squarely in the chest. The world seems to stop as SCROOGE brushes himself off. All wait for a reaction.)

SCROOGE

Humbug!

(SCROOGE surveys the park for the offender. One of the other nearby children gives the offending BOY a shove toward SCROOGE like a lamb tossed to the wolves.)

BOY

S-s-sorry, Mr. Scrooge.

(There is silence.)

SCROOGE

Sorry? *(Pause)* Sorry for what, my dear boy? *(No one moves. SCROOGE stares at the trembling BOY. Then, suddenly, SCROOGE grabs the BOY by the ear and pulls him downstage.)* For your insolence, for your disrespect, for your violent assault on my person? SORRY? For your insufferable youth, for your intolerable running about, and your incoherent chatter? I will give you something to be sorry about!

(SCROOGE raises his umbrella, which he always carries, to strike the BOY. Before he can land the blow, a YOUNG WOMAN rushes to the BOY's defense.)

YOUNG WOMAN

No, Mr. Scrooge, please!

(SCROOGE freezes mid-blow.)

SCROOGE

Bah!

(SCROOGE releases the BOY. The YOUNG WOMAN grabs the BOY and scurries him away. SCROOGE ignores the crowd of people who stand staring at him. He continues on his way. LIGHTS FADE.)

ACT I; Scene 3

(AT RISE: Later that day. Scrooge and Marley's countinghouse. Inside the Countinghouse sit SCROOGE and his clerk, CRATCHIT. They work in silence. CRATCHIT wears gloves and is huddling to try and keep warm. After a moment, he stands and crosses to add a piece of coal to the furnace. SCROOGE glares at CRATCHIT, who puts back the coal and instead doubles his scarf around his neck and returns to his desk. About to enter is FRED, Scrooge's only nephew. He is a gregarious, good-natured young man. From OFFSTAGE we hear FRED singing. He enters hurrying towards the countinghouse.)

FRED, *Singing*

("O CHRISTMAS TREE")

*O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE
HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES
IN SUMMER SUN AND WINTER SNOW
A DRESS OF GREEN YOU ALWAYS SHOW
O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE
HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES*

*O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE
 WITH HAPPINESS WE GREET YOU
 WHEN DECKED WITH CANDLES ONCE A YEAR
 YOU FILL OUR HEARTS WITH YULETIDE CHEER
 O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE
 WITH HAPPINESS WE GREET YOU*

(FRED opens the door and enters the office where he finishes his song in full voice, much to the delight of CRATCHIT and the despair of SCROOGE. CRATCHIT applauds. FRED bows. SCROOGE glares at them both.)

FRED, *Continued*

A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you! Merry Christmas, Bob!

CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, Fred!

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

FRED

Christmas a humbug, Uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure!

SCROOGE

I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED

Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? What right have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE

Bah! *(Pause)* Humbug!

FRED

Don't be cross, Uncle.

SCROOGE

What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmastime to you but a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and finding every item in them dead set against you? You owe more than you make. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!

(Both FRED and CRATCHIT are horrified.)

FRED

Uncle!

SCROOGE

Nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED

Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE

Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED

There are many things from which I might have derived good by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have thought of Christmastime when it has come around as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable time. The only time I know of in the long calendar of the year when men and women open up their hearts freely. And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

(CRATCHIT merrily applauds at this and is about to voice a hearty "hazzah" when he is silenced by an icy stare from SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE

(To CRATCHIT) Let me hear another sound from you, Cratchit, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. *(Slowly turning back to FRED)* You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED

Don't be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE

I shall dine with you.

FRED

You shall?

SCROOGE

When the fires of Hades freeze over and the sun no longer shines!

FRED

Should I count that as no, then, Uncle?

SCROOGE

Humbug!!

(FRED laughs as SCROOGE loses his composure. FRED makes a final heartfelt plea.)

FRED

But why, Uncle? Why do you refuse to join us?

SCROOGE

Why? Nephew, why did you get married against my wishes?

FRED

Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE

Because you fell in love! Bah! Good afternoon!

FRED

Nay, Uncle, but you never came to see me before I was married. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE

(Sharply) Good afternoon!

FRED

I want nothing from you, I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

FRED

(Pause) I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So a Merry Christmas, Bob, and to you too, Uncle!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

FRED

And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE

(Drawing out each syllable in a rage) Good afternoon!

(SCROOGE slams his fist down on his desk in exclamation and pauses, hunched over at his desk as he has so often done before. FRED takes this opportunity to lean over, quickly remove his uncle's hat and kiss him on the top of the head. He waves a hasty but friendly goodbye to CRATCHIT, and vanishes out the door, singing again as he leaves.)

FRED, *Singing*

(Refrain: "O CHRISTMAS TREE")

*O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE
HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES
IN SUMMER SUN AND WINTER SNOW
A DRESS OF GREEN YOU ALWAYS SHOW*

*O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE
HOW LOVELY ARE YOUR BRANCHES*

(FRED's voice trails off as he exits.)

SCROOGE

Bahhhh! HUMBUG!

(CRATCHIT laughs quietly to himself until he again feels the frosty gaze of SCROOGE boring into him. He stifles his chuckle and returns to his work.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

(At first to CRATCHIT, then to himself) There's another fellow. My clerk, Bob Cratchit, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a Merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

(CRATCHIT pretends not to hear this and continues with his work. ENTER TWO GENTLE WOMEN.)

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Do I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE

Jacob Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night; this is my establishment.

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

We've no doubt Mr. Marley's liberality is well-represented by his surviving partner.

(CRATCHIT guffaws at this and quickly gathers himself and goes back to his work as SCROOGE shoots him another glance. SCROOGE turns back to the GENTLE WOMEN.)

SCROOGE

What is your business here, madams?

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time.

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE

Are there no prisons?

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE

And the union workhouses? Are they still in operation?

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

They are. Still, I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE

Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth.

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

We choose this time because it is a time, above all others, when want is keenly felt, and abundance rejoices.

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

Now, what shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE

Nothing.

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE

I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, madam, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the prisons and the workhouses with the substantial taxes that I pay; and those who are badly off must go there.

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

Many can't go there; and many would rather die!

SCROOGE

If they would rather die they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides, it is not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon!

(SCROOGE opens the door of this office and glares at the two GENTLE WOMEN.)

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

Well, I never!

(CRATCHIT looks sadly down at his work. He has seen this scene before. EXIT GENTLE WOMEN. SCROOGE slams the door and returns to his desk. Both SCROOGE and CRATCHIT return to their work. From outside the countinghouse door, a YOUNG CAROLER begins to sing; beginning OFFSTAGE, softly at first and growing louder as he approaches and stops outside the office. SCROOGE slowly cringes as the music infringes upon his work day. He grows increasingly agitated throughout the song...)

YOUNG CAROLER, *Singing*

(“GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN”)

*GOD REST YE, MERRY GENTLEMEN
LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY
REMEMBER, CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR
WAS BORN ON CHRISTMAS DAY
TO SAVE US ALL FROM SATAN'S POWER
WHEN WE WERE GONE ASTRAY*

*O TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY,
COMFORT AND JOY
O TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY*

*NOW TO THE LORD SING PRAISES,
ALL YOU WITHIN THIS PLACE,
AND WITH TRUE LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD
EACH OTHER NOW EMBRACE;
THIS HOLY TIME OF CHRISTMAS
ALL OTHERS DOTH DEFACE*

O TIDINGS OF COMFORT—

(SCROOGE can no longer bear it. He grabs a ruler and bolts out of his chair and to the door.)

SCROOGE

Devil, be gone! Stop polluting these streets with your insufferable noises. Be gone! I say! BE GONE, ye DEVIL! Be GONE!

(The YOUNG CAROLER EXITS in terror. SCROOGE slams the office door and turns his back. Just then, a snowball flies from OFFSTAGE and hits the countinghouse door. SCROOGE flinches and holds his shoulders about his ears before relaxing.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Humbug. *(CRATCHIT is staring in horror at his employer.)* And you'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT

(Stammering) If—if—if quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE

It's not convenient. And it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll wager?

CRATCHIT

Yes, sir.

SCROOGE

And yet, you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.

CRATCHIT

It is only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE

A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!

CRATCHIT

Yes, sir! I will, sir! Thank you, Mr. Scrooge!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

CRATCHIT

Good afternoon, Mr. Scrooge, and Merry Chr—

(SCROOGE has collected his hat and umbrella and started for the door, then sharply turns his head and glares at CRATCHIT once more, before slamming the door and leaving the office. EXIT SCROOGE.)

CRATCHIT, *Continued*

—istmas, Mr. Scrooge.

(CRATCHIT slowly bundles himself in the cold office and returns to his desk. He shivers as he diligently continues his work. LIGHTS FADE.)

ACT I; Scene Four

(AT RISE: Later that evening. The street outside Scrooge's house. SCROOGE is walking up to the door of his house, stoop-shouldered, with his hat pulled down over his eyes and his umbrella in his clutches. SCROOGE arrives at his door. The door is an accurate representation of his solitary house in which he leads his solitary life. The formidable, oversized entryway makes SCROOGE seem even less significant than he is. There is a large, silver door-knocker at the center of the towering door. SCROOGE removes his keys from his coat pocket, but suddenly stops and leaps back in fright. The door-knocker has now become the ghostly face of MARLEY staring back at his former business partner and kindred spirit, SCROOGE. Taken aback for a moment, SCROOGE shakes his head a time or two and MARLEY disappears.)

SCROOGE

Humbug.

(SCROOGE starts to enter the house, then stops and takes one last look around outside. He takes a moment to rest his eyes on the door-knocker, and again shakes his head. SCROOGE shuts the door. BLACKOUT.)

ACT I; Scene Five

(AT RISE: Scrooge's bed-chamber, later that night. SCROOGE sits in a large chair in his bed chamber. He has drifted off to sleep with papers and account books in his lap and at his side. On a nearby table sit the remnants of a late night snack. Suddenly, he is awakened by a flash of light coming from the nearly extinguished embers of the fire and a low, moaning, ghostly voice inside the room.)

MARLEY

Ebenezerrrrrrrrrr!

(Silence. From his chair, SCROOGE glances around the dark room but finds nothing.)

SCROOGE

Bah. *(Pause)* Humbug.

(SCROOGE rests his head back and closes his eyes again, and at once is awakened by a flurry of light and sound. Enter MARLEY. Papers and books fly off of SCROOGE's lap as he jumps to his feet and is greeted by the ghostly presence of MARLEY crossing the room toward him. MARLEY is engulfed in fog, wrapped in bandages, and carrying chains connected to money boxes. He moves slowly and methodically. The moans of death and the sounds of his chains follow him. He is a frightening sight to behold.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

How, now! What do you want with me?

MARLEY

Much!

SCROOGE

Who are you?

MARLEY

Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE

Who were you, then? You're particular – for a shade.

MARLEY

In life, I was your partner. Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE

Jacob? *(Pause)* Well, can you sit down?

MARLEY

I can.

SCROOGE

Do it, then.

(They both sit.)

MARLEY

You don't believe in me?

SCROOGE

I don't.

MARLEY

Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE

Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them wrong. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!
(SCROOGE holds up a toothpick from off the table.) Do you see this toothpick?

MARLEY

I do.

SCROOGE

You are not looking at it.

MARLEY

I see it, notwithstanding.

SCROOGE

Well! I have but to swallow this, and for the rest of my days be persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you – humbug!

(MARLEY lets out a tormented cry and rattles his chains. SCROOGE drops to his knees.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY

Man of the worldly mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE

I do. I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?

MARLEY

It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world – oh, woe is me! – and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!

(MARLEY lets out another woeful wail, and rattles his chains.)

SCROOGE

You are fettered. Tell me why?

MARLEY

I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I made it of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is a ponderous chain!

SCROOGE

Jacob, speak comfort to me, Jacob.

MARLEY

I have none to give. It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. A very little time is permitted for me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. Mark me! In life, my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our countinghouse; and weary journeys lie before me!

SCROOGE

Seven years dead and traveling all the time?

MARLEY

The whole time. No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.

SCROOGE

You might have covered a great quantity of ground in seven years.

MARLEY

(Crying) Oh! Captive, bound. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Yet such was I! Oh! Such was I!

SCROOGE

But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY

Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were...all...my...business. At this time of the rolling year, I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down? Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE

I will. But don't be hard upon me! Don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!

MARLEY

How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many a day. That is no light part of my penance. I am here tonight to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate.

SCROOGE

You were always a good friend to me.

MARLEY

You will be haunted by three Spirits.

SCROOGE

(Dismayed) Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY

It is.

SCROOGE

(Pause) I – I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY

(Raging) Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tonight, when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE

Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over with, Jacob?

MARLEY

Expect the second at the toll of the next hour. The third when the stroke of three has ceased to chime. Look to see me no more; and for your own sake, remember what has passed between us!

(MARLEY backs away from SCROOGE and disappears into a fog. SCROOGE is left alone. He nervously glances around the room. BLACKOUT.)

ACT I; Scene 6

(AT RISE: 12:59 A.M. Christmas day. Scrooge's bed chamber; SCROOGE asleep in his bed. He is dressed in a nightgown and cap and seems to have dismissed the night's events completely. The clock strikes one. A moment later, a bright light begins to fill the room. Enter FIRST SPIRIT. SCROOGE wakes with a start and shields his eyes from the light. Standing before SCROOGE is the FIRST SPIRIT, dressed completely in white.)

SCROOGE

What? Who's there? Who is it? A-a- are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

FIRST SPIRIT

I am!

SCROOGE

Who, and what, are you?

FIRST SPIRIT

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE

Long past?

FIRST SPIRIT

No. Your past.

SCROOGE

Must you be so bright? You're hurting my eyes.

FIRST SPIRIT

Would you so soon put out the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions hide what I might show to the world?

SCROOGE

(With a giggle) I suddenly want very much to see you in my cap!

(SCROOGE chuckles at the thought, then regains his composure.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

(Hedging his bet) Though I have never had any intention of bonneting your light unto the world. Now tell me, what business have you with me? What brought you here, at this ungodly hour?

FIRST SPIRIT

Your welfare!

SCROOGE

Unbroken rest would benefit my welfare this night.

FIRST SPIRIT

Your reclamation, then. Take heed! *(Holds out one hand)* Rise! Walk with me!

SCROOGE

What?

(SCROOGE is taken aback by the thought of walking about in his night cap and dressing gown at this hour. But the gaze and outstretched arm of the FIRST SPIRIT draws him in.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

You are a most persuasive Spirit, indeed. I find myself unable to resist you. Where are you taking me, Spirit?

(The FIRST SPIRIT gestures toward a window that flies open allowing the howling winds to enter the bed chamber. The FIRST SPIRIT moves toward the open window holding SCROOGE's hand. SCROOGE breaks the hold and backs away from the window.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

But I am mortal, Spirit, and liable to fall. I cannot go that way!

(The FIRST SPIRIT approaches SCROOGE and reaches out to him.)

FIRST SPIRIT

Bear but a touch of my hand, and you shall be upheld in more than this!

SCROOGE

Very well, Spirit. Though I hardly think that –

(The FIRST SPIRIT moves a reluctant SCROOGE toward the open window again as SCROOGE lets out a fearful scream. BLACKOUT.)

ACT I; Scene 7

(AT RISE: In an instant, the FIRST SPIRIT and SCROOGE emerge safe and sound aside an old country road on a clear, cold winter day. Nearby, an old schoolhouse. It is the town of Scrooge's birth. The fog of their travels through time surrounds them. TOWNSPEOPLE stand frozen in suspended animation.)

FIRST SPIRIT

Do you know where we are?

(The FIRST SPIRIT waves its hand and the town comes to life. People moving, shaking hands, quietly greeting each other with laughter and joy. The FIRST SPIRIT and SCROOGE move DOWNSTAGE through the crowd.)

SCROOGE

Good Heaven! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here. *(Looking about in astonishment)* Can they see us?

FIRST SPIRIT

These are but shadows of things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

(SCROOGE watches the people from his boyhood.)

FIRST SPIRIT, *Continued*

Your lip is trembling, and is that a tear I see upon your cheek?

(SCROOGE gruffly wipes his cheek and shoves his hands in his pockets.)

SCROOGE

No! It is a pimple. Conduct me where you will.

FIRST SPIRIT

To a small school house. Do you remember the way?

SCROOGE

Remember it! I could walk it blindfolded.

FIRST SPIRIT

Strange to have forgotten it for so many years! Let us go on.

(The FIRST SPIRIT moves past SCROOGE to lead the way, but stops as SCROOGE surveys the sights and sounds of his childhood. ENTER more TOWNSPEOPLE and CAROLERS singing.)

CAROLERS, *Singing*

(“WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED”)

*WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED
THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT
ALL SEATED ON THE GROUND
THE ANGEL OF THE LORD CAME DOWN
AND GLORY SHONE AROUND
AND GLORY SHONE AROUND*

*“FEAR NOT,” HE SAID, FOR MIGHTY DREAD
HAD SEIZED THEIR TROUBLED MINDS
“GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY I BRING
TO YOU AND ALL MANKIND
TO YOU AND ALL MANKIND”*

*“ALL GLORY BE TO GOD ON HIGH
AND TO THE EARTH BE PEACE;
GOODWILL HENCEFORTH
FROM HEAVEN TO MEN
BEGIN AND NEVER CEASE
BEGIN AND NEVER CEASE!”*

(EXIT CAROLERS and TOWNSPEOPLE, slowly. SCROOGE is visibly touched.)

FIRST SPIRIT

What is it?

SCROOGE

Nothing. Nothing. There was a child singing a Christmas carol at my door yesterday. I should like to have given him (*Her*) something. That’s all.

(The FIRST SPIRIT redirects SCROOGE’s intention to the road ahead.)

FIRST SPIRIT

The school is not quite deserted. A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

SCROOGE

I know it. Poor boy.

(SCROOGE is suddenly filled with pity and near tears. Enter BOY SCROOGE. BOY SCROOGE is dressed in a school suit and sits on a small suitcase. His chin is in his hands as he stares down at his feet. ENTER FAN. She is SCROOGE's sister, a girl near his age, pretty, and wearing her best dress. FAN runs to BOY SCROOGE and hugs him mightily.)

FAN

Dear, dear brother. I've come to bring you home, dear brother. To bring you home, home, home!

(FAN laughs.)

BOY SCROOGE

Home, Fan?

FAN

Yes! Home, for good and all. Home, forever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home.

BOY SCROOGE

I thought I might never see home again.

FAN

And he said yes, you should come home, Ebenezer; and he sent me in a coach to bring you. And you are never to come back here; and we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world!

BOY SCROOGE

Oh, my dearest Fan! You're quite a woman, little Fan!

(FAN clasps her hands together and giggles. There is a terrible voice from OFFSTAGE.)

SCHOOL MASTER, *Offstage*

Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there.

(Enter SCHOOL MASTER. He is a large, frightening man. BOY SCROOGE cowers as he approaches. Then, suddenly, the SCHOOL MASTER thrusts out his right hand. BOY SCROOGE hesitates, then shakes the large hand, more out of fear than anything else.)

SCHOOL MASTER, *Continued*

So you and your father are getting on now, are ya? Good on ya, boy. Good on ya.

BOY SCROOGE

Th – Thank you, sir.

SCHOOL MASTER

Journey safe. I don't expect we'll be seeing either of you around here any more. Good-bye, good-bye.

BOY SCROOGE

Good-bye, sir.

FAN

Good-bye.

(Exit BOY SCROOGE and FAN.)

SCHOOL MASTER

Safe travels, safe travels, and God speed, God speed. Well, now...well, now. Where was I going?... *(Looks around, befuddled)* Where was I going?

(Exit SCHOOL MASTER.)

FIRST SPIRIT

Always a delicate creature, your sister. Whom even a breath might have withered.

SCROOGE

Indeed.

FIRST SPIRIT

But she had a large heart.

SCROOGE

So she had. As large a heart as I have ever known.

FIRST SPIRIT

She died a woman?

SCROOGE

Yes.

FIRST SPIRIT

With a child?

SCROOGE

One child.

FIRST SPIRIT

Your nephew!

SCROOGE

My nephew. Fred. Another who came to see me yesterday.

FIRST SPIRIT

Another you turned away?

(SCROOGE looks away. The FIRST SPIRIT waves a hand. LIGHTS DOWN as they are again transported.)

ACT I; Scene 8

(AT RISE: Christmas Eve, a few years later. The interior of the Fezziwig and Co. Warehouse where SCROOGE worked as a young man. The FIRST SPIRIT and SCROOGE stand alone in warehouse.)

FIRST SPIRIT

Know you this place?

SCROOGE

Know it! I was apprenticed here!

(Enter FEZZIWIG. FEZZIWIG is an incomparable joy of a man. He is loud, friendly, and full of life. What he lacks in stature, he makes up in smiles.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!

FEZZIWIG

Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

(Enter YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK WILKINS. The two young men are dressed in work clothes and aprons.)

SCROOGE

Dick Wilkins! To be sure! He was very much attached to me, he was. Poor Dick Wilkins.

FEZZIWIG

Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, my boys. Now, let's have the shutters up before a man can say "Jack Robinson!"

YOUNG SCROOGE

Yes, sir!

WILKINS

Yes, sir!

(YOUNG SCROOGE and WILKINS hurriedly place shutters and prepare the warehouse for the night's party. SCROOGE and the FIRST SPIRIT look on.)

YOUNG SCROOGE

Clear away, Wilkins! Clear away!

WILKINS

Right, Ebenezer!

FEZZIWIG

Well done, boys! Well done! An extra half a crown to you both for working with such high spirits!

(There are cheers from the two young men and laughter from FEZZIWIG.)

FEZZIWIG, *Continued*

A song, boys! A song will make our work go faster!

(FEZZIWIG bursts into his favorite song. YOUNG SCROOGE and WILKINS quickly join in.)

FEZZIWIG, *Singing*

(“THE WASSAIL SONG”)

*HERE WE COME A-WASSAILING
AMONG THE LEAVES SO GREEN*

FEZZIWIG WITH YOUNG SCROOGE & WILKINS, *Singing*

*HERE WE COME A-WAND’RING
SO FAIR TO BE SEEN
LOVE AND JOY COME TO YOU
AND TO YOU YOUR WASSAIL, TOO
AND GOD BLESS YOU, AND SEND YOU
A HAPPY NEW YEAR
AND GOD SEND YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR*

(ENTER MRS. FEZZIWIG and BELLE. MRS. FEZZIWIG is full of joy and laughter. She is the perfect complement to her jovial husband. BELLE is demure, but also full of life. She is as beautiful in appearance as her spirit is contagious. YOUNG SCROOGE stops and stares as she enters. MRS. FEZZIWIG and BELLE join the men in song.)

ALL, *Singing*

GOOD MASTER AND GOOD MISTRESS
 AS YOU SIT BESIDE THE FIRE
 PRAY THINK OF US POOR CHILDREN
 WHO WANDER IN THE MIRE
 LOVE AND JOY COME TO YOU
 AND TO YOU YOUR WASSAIL, TOO
 AND GOD BLESS YOU, AND SEND YOU
 A HAPPY NEW YEAR
 AND GOD SEND YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR

(SCROOGE watches and begins to lose himself in the moment. He starts to sing and trails off when he realizes that the FIRST SPIRIT is watching him. Some of the GROUP's actions in setting up the party mimic those of the song, in which they take great delight.)

ALL, *Continued Singing*

BRING US OUT A TABLE
 AND SPREAD IT WITH A CLOTH
 BRING US OUT A CHEESE,
 AND OF YOUR CHRISTMAS LOAF
 LOVE AND JOY COME TO YOU
 AND TO YOU YOUR WASSAIL, TOO
 AND GOD BLESS YOU, AND SEND YOU
 A HAPPY NEW YEAR
 AND GOD SEND YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR

GOD BLESS THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE
 LIKEWISE THE MISTRESS, TOO
 AND ALL THE LITTLE CHILDREN
 THAT ROUND THE TABLE GO
 LOVE AND JOY COME TO YOU
 AND TO YOU YOUR WASSAIL, TOO
 AND GOD BLESS YOU, AND SEND YOU
 A HAPPY NEW YEAR
 AND GOD SEND YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR

(The five have succeeded in preparing the room for the party. BELLE stands beside MRS. FEZZIWIG. YOUNG SCROOGE has finished his work and again stands captivated by BELLE from across the stage.)

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Ebenezer! You have a visitor.

(YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE stand for a moment looking at each other and then run to one another, meeting at the center of the room in an embrace. MR. and MRS. FEZZIWIG giggle and turn their backs as WILKINS smiles and shakes his head before turning back to his work.)

YOUNG SCROOGE

Hello.

BELLE

Good afternoon!

YOUNG SCROOGE

I didn't think I would see you before tonight.

BELLE

Mrs. Fezziwig needed some sugar for the pudding.

YOUNG SCROOGE

The pudding? It was made this morning with the rest of the –

(MR. and MRS. FEZZIWIG burst into laughter and the young lovers blush at the ruse.)

MR. FEZZIWIG

Now, my dear. I think you have caused enough mischief for today! Let's leave these two alone. Engaged couples have much to discuss, you know.

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Mischief?! Why, never in my life! *(Laughing with her husband)* But of course you are right, husband! Off we go.

(MR. & MRS. FEZZIWIG start to exit than turn back towards WILKINS, who stands looking at them. He suddenly understands.)

WILKINS

Oh! Well? Uhhh. I must be sure that the...uh...musicians have their...well...whatever it is that musicians need. Instruments--?

(WILKINS shyly smiles and begins to follow the FEZZIWIGS as they exit. As he passes the happy couple, he very matter-of-factly bids YOUNG SCROOGE good-bye, saying...)

WILKINS, *Continued*

Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE

Wilkins.

(Exit WILKINS. YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE are left alone. They kiss.)

BELLE

Christmas is indeed a magical time of year.

YOUNG SCROOGE

It must be. Wilkins hasn't broken a single dish all day long.

BELLE

Ebenezer.

(They kiss again.)

YOUNG SCROOGE

There are so many things I am going to give you once we are married, so many places I want to take you once I get my start.

BELLE

The only thing I need in all of England is you.

YOUNG SCROOGE

And you shall have that, too. But I want to give you more. Once I find a situation that suits me, there is nothing for which you will want.

BELLE

There is nothing I want for now.

YOUNG SCROOGE

There are many things that I want for. Things that are important, that will change our lives, things that will...

(BELLE puts her hand to YOUNG SCROOGE's lips and silences him. She gently kisses him again, takes him by the hand, and leads him OFFSTAGE. Exit YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE.)

FIRST SPIRIT

She loved you very much.

SCROOGE

And I loved her.

(ENTER WILKINS to find an empty room.)

WILKINS

Ebenezer—

(WILKINS stops looks around shaking his head. FEZZIWIG enters.)

FEZZIWIG

Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer! The guests are arriving.

(ENTER MRS. FEZZIWIG dressed in her party-going best.)

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Now leave them alone, husband. They have worked all day. Let them have their fun.

MR. FEZZIWIG

Well, of course they are going to have fun. They're young, wife. Everything is enjoyable when you are young.

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Then you, husband, are the youngest man I have ever known!

MR. FEZZIWIG

Ahhhh. Mrs. Fezziwig! You are a saucy girl!

(As he chases her about the room, and around the musicians, who are setting up for the evening's entertainment YOUNG SCROOGE enters. HE and WILKINS cross DOWNSTAGE and out of the way. SCROOGE is listening in.)

WILKINS

Can you imagine a better apprenticeship, Ebenezer?

YOUNG SCROOGE

That I cannot, Wilkins. Can you imagine a better employer than Mr. Fezziwig? Or a better man?

WILKINS

None in all of England!

YOUNG SCROOGE

In all the world!

FIRST SPIRIT

Was he truly that fine of a man?

SCROOGE

He was the finest, most generous, even-handed man I ever knew. His death hurt me deeply.

(The GUESTS begin arriving. MR. and MRS. FEZZIWIG take their places at either side of the door to greet their friends and neighbors. The music begins. YOUNG SCROOGE greets them all as well, but he awaits only one. ENTER BELLE. There is music and dancing, clapping and laughing. THE FEZZIWIGS show off their dancing talents to the enjoyment of the room. BELLE and YOUNG SCROOGE watch one another from across the room. The partygoers continue with a boisterous group dance. Through it all, the two young lovers keep their eyes on each other while laughing and dancing with others among the group.)

MR. FEZZIWIG

Now, my dear friends, a Christmas waltz! May I, my love?

(MR. FEZZIWIG holds out his hand to his wife, who gladly takes it and prepares for the waltz. The GUESTS couple off and YOUNG SCROOGE makes his way across the floor and extends his hand to BELLE. They take their place on the dance floor. The couples waltz. During the waltz, the other couples fade away as do the rest of the people in the room. YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE are left to dance alone. EXIT ALL except the FIRST SPIRIT, SCROOGE, YOUNG SCROOGE, and BELLE. YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE waltz, dreamlike, in no time or place. They hold to each other as the music fades. SCROOGE and the FIRST SPIRIT watch them.)

FIRST SPIRIT

You were quite different then.

SCROOGE

The world was quite different then.

(YOUNG SCROOGE kisses BELLE. She again takes him by the hand and leads him away. Exit YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE.)

FIRST SPIRIT

So full of hope and dreams. So full of joy and gratitude.

SCROOGE

I was deeply grateful. We were all grateful!

FIRST SPIRIT

To whom?

SCROOGE

Old Fezziwig, of course!

FIRST SPIRIT

Why?

SCROOGE

For his exuberance, his vitality, his generosity.

FIRST SPIRIT

A small matter, to make those silly folks so full of thanks.

SCROOGE

Small! We praised him highly.

FIRST SPIRIT

Why? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves such praise?

SCROOGE

It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy. To make our service light or burdensome. What, then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune...

FIRST SPIRIT

What is the matter?

SCROOGE

Nothing particular.

FIRST SPIRIT

It is something, I think.

SCROOGE

No, no, I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk, Bob Cratchit, just now. That's all.

FIRST SPIRIT

My time grows short. Quick!

(The FIRST SPIRIT waves a hand. LIGHTS FLICKER.)

ACT I; Scene 9

(AT RISE: A few years later; a park on a cold Christmas night. Enter YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE. Both are older and dressed in finer clothes. They sit on a park bench in silence on a cold winter's eve.)

SCROOGE

Where are we?

(SCROOGE gasps and puts his hand to his mouth.)

FIRST SPIRIT

Do you recall this Christmas scene?

(SCROOGE does not answer.)

BELLE

It matters little to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

YOUNG SCROOGE

What idol has displaced you?

BELLE

A golden one.

YOUNG SCROOGE

This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

BELLE

You fear the world too much. All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, gain, engrosses you. Have I not?

YOUNG SCROOGE

What, then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what, then? I am not changed towards you.

(She shakes her head.)

YOUNG SCROOGE, *Continued*

Am I?

BELLE

Our contract is an old one. When it was made, we were both poor and content to be so. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.

YOUNG SCROOGE

I was a boy.

BELLE

Your own feeling tells you that you are not what you were. I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, when you were lost in my eyes, is fraught with misery now that we are two, and so I can release you.

YOUNG SCROOGE

Have I ever sought release?

BELLE

In words? No. Never.

YOUNG SCROOGE

In what, then?

BELLE

In a changed nature, in an altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? *(He looks away.)* Ah, no!

YOUNG SCROOGE

You think not

BELLE

I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows. But if you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl – you who weigh everything in gain? Or, in choosing her, regret would surely follow. I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.

(YOUNG SCROOGE moves toward BELLE. She stops him.)

BELLE, *Continued*

I hope you may, for a time, have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

(BELLE turns to leave and stops. BELLE is looking right into the eyes of SCROOGE. SCROOGE melts at the sight of her. She looks right through him, then down at her hand. BELLE turns back to YOUNG SCROOGE. She removes the engagement ring from her finger, hands it to YOUNG SCROOGE, and kisses him. Exit BELLE. SCROOGE cannot endure the pain again.)

SCROOGE

No! You stupid, stupid boy! Tell her you're sorry! Tell her that you love her. Don't let her leave!

(YOUNG SCROOGE starts after BELLE, but stops himself and looks at the ring in his hand. He looks up right through SCROOGE to where BELLE has exited.)

YOUNG SCROOGE

Bah. *(Pause)* Humbug.

(He turns and walks away. Exit YOUNG SCROOGE. SCROOGE clutches at his own chest and begins to go after his younger self before he realizes and stops.)

FIRST SPIRIT

But you did see her again?

SCROOGE

Once. Years later. She was with her family. With her husband – and her children.

FIRST SPIRIT

Had she changed?

SCROOGE

(Pause) Not in the slightest.

FIRST SPIRIT

Had you?

(SCROOGE cannot take this any more. He pleads.)

SCROOGE

Spirit! Remove me from this place.

FIRST SPIRIT

I told you these were shadows of the things that have been. That they are what they are, do not blame me!

SCROOGE

Remove me! I cannot bear it! Leave me. Take me back. Haunt me no longer! I beg of you!
(Approaching and grabbing the robes of the FIRST SPIRIT) HAUNT ME NO LONGER!!!

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT I; Scene 10

(AT RISE: Scrooge's bed chamber; on the night of his reclamation. SCROOGE is alone in his bed. He clutches the sheet. He sinks back in terror, pulling his bed clothes up around him. He looks frightfully around the room, then settles in under the covers, still very much afraid. LIGHTS DIM for a moment, then...In the darkness. The clock tolls. As the chime ends, there is the sound of laughter that floods the bed chamber. It is the deep, rolling, jovial laugh of the SECOND SPIRIT.)

SECOND SPIRIT

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

(LIGHTS UP. SCROOGE sits up straight in his bed. He again clutches his bed clothes. He has no idea what time it is or how long he has been asleep. He peers out of his bed toward a light that is again filling the room.)

SECOND SPIRIT, *Continued*

Come here, come here and know me better, man!

SCROOGE

No.

(The SECOND SPIRIT laughs.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Why are you laughing? What are you?

SECOND SPIRIT

I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me!

(SCROOGE emerges from his bed. He is amazed at what he sees. Standing before SCROOGE is the SECOND SPIRIT. A giant, boisterous spirit, wearing long robes, a laurel wreath, and holding a large cup and horn of plenty. The SECOND SPIRIT struts before SCROOGE.)

SECOND SPIRIT, *Continued*

You have never seen the like of me before!?

SCROOGE

Never.

SECOND SPIRIT

Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning – for I am very young – my elder brothers born in these later years?

SCROOGE

I don't think I have. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?

SECOND SPIRIT

More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE

A tremendous family to provide for!

(The SECOND SPIRIT laughs.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth before on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. If you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

SECOND SPIRIT

Touch my robe!

(SCROOGE reaches out and touches the SECOND SPIRIT's robe. As soon as he does, there is fog, lights, and a burst of bells ringing.)

ACT I; Scene 11

(AT RISE: A busy street market; that same Christmas day. SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT have been transported to a bustling city street. SHOPPERS are rushing by, people are selling baked goods, and children are playing. Enter SHOPPER ONE and SHOPPER TWO. Both are hurried and not looking where they are going. They collide directly in front of SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT, spilling their bags. The two SHOPPERS hurriedly gather their things.)

SHOPPER ONE

Oh! You clumsy fool!

SHOPPER TWO

Clumsy? Why, if you had been looking where you were was going...My dinner is ruined!

SHOPPER ONE

Just look at my packages. Clumsy, clumsy, clumsy.

SHOPPER TWO

Gawd almighty! Of all the stupid imbeciles in London! Blimey!

SHOPPER ONE

Ohh! If I wasn't a lady!

SHOPPER TWO

A LADY? HA! Why, if you're a lady, I'm the blooming...

(The SECOND SPIRIT waves his hand and sprinkles a touch of magic over SHOPPER ONE and then SHOPPER TWO.)

SHOPPER TWO, *Continued*

...clumsiest fool in all of England. I am so sorry. Let me help you.

SHOPPER ONE

I am the one who should be sorry. Just look at what I've done!

SHOPPER TWO

No, no. This is my fault. If I had only been looking where I was going.

SHOPPER ONE

Oh, your dinner is ruined!

SHOPPER TWO

It's not important. What's important is that you're not hurt.

SHOPPER ONE

No, no, no. I feel just awful.

(The SECOND SPIRIT tosses a little more magic on SHOPPER ONE.)

SHOPPER ONE, *Continued*

I have an idea! Why don't you and your family join us for Christmas dinner?

SHOPPER TWO

Oh, we couldn't!

SHOPPER ONE

I insist!

SHOPPER TWO

But I have fourteen children!

SHOPPER ONE

That's alright. My husband is extremely rich!

(The two SHOPPERS laugh and walk off together. SCROOGE looks at the SECOND SPIRIT.)

SCROOGE

Is there a particular flavor in what you sprinkle?

(The street begins to empty. The SECOND SPIRIT sprinkles a little magic on a MERCHANT or two as they pass by. Exit TOWNSPEOPLE.)

SECOND SPIRIT

There is. My own flavor.

SCROOGE

And would it benefit anyone on this day?

SECOND SPIRIT

Any to whom it was kindly given. To the poor the most.

SCROOGE

Why the poor, more than others?

SECOND SPIRIT

Because they have more need of it. Remember that well.

SCROOGE

Oh, I will, I will.

SECOND SPIRIT

Now, listen!

(Enter CRATCHIT holding TINY TIM upon his shoulder. TINY TIM is a small boy dressed in shabby clothes. He wears a scarf and cap, and he carries a crutch. They sing.)

CRATCHIT & TINY TIM, *Singing*

(*"I SAW THREE SHIPS"*)

*I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY
I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING*

*AND ALL THE BELLS ON EARTH SHALL RING
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY
AND ALL THE BELLS ON EARTH SHALL RING
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING*

*AND ALL THE SOULS ON EARTH SHALL SING
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY
AND ALL THE SOULS ON EARTH SHALL SING
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING*

(*CRATCHIT and TINY TIM laugh. TINY TIM coughs.*)

SCROOGE

Why, it's my clerk, Bob Cratchit!

CRATCHIT

(*To TINY TIM*) Are you cold, my boy?

TINY TIM

No, Father.

CRATCHIT

Well, let's get you home anyway, lad. Perhaps your good mother has made you a pudding!

TINY TIM

A pudding!

CRATCHIT

A pudding!

(*CRATCHIT tickles TIM, who laughs and then coughs again. CRATCHIT hugs his son and lifts him up on his shoulders again. The SECOND SPIRIT sprinkles a bit more Christmas Cheer upon them and they continue on their way.*)

TINY TIM

Sing it again, Father!

CRATCHIT

Again?

TINY TIM

Yes, Father!

CRATCHIT

Alright! Next verse!

(CRATCHIT starts to sing and TINY TIM joins in.)

CRATCHIT & TINY TIM, *Singing*

("I SAW THREE SHIPS" Refrain)

*THEN LET US ALL REJOICE AGAIN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY
THEN LET US ALL REJOICE AGAIN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING*

(Exit CRATCHIT and TINY TIM, singing.)

SCROOGE

Fifteen shillings a week.

SECOND SPIRIT

What?

SCROOGE

He makes fifteen shillings a week and he supports a crippled child.

SECOND SPIRIT

The burden must be great.

SCROOGE

Can't you do something for them, spirit?

SECOND SPIRIT

I?

SCROOGE

To ease their trouble?

(The SECOND SPIRIT laughs at the notion.)

SECOND SPIRIT

Let us see more of their “trouble.”

(The SECOND SPIRIT waves his hand as LIGHTS FADE.)

ACT I; Scene 12

(AT RISE: The interior of the Cratchits’ house later that same day. SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT are now just outside the house. Laughter can be heard inside. THOMAS and MARY, the two youngest Cratchit children, rush past SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT.)

THOMAS

Mother, Mother, Mother!

MARY

Slow down.

(THOMAS and MARY burst through the front door, leaving it standing wide open. The SECOND SPIRIT gestures for SCROOGE to enter. SCROOGE enters the tiny house and the SECOND SPIRIT follows him. They are now standing in the corner of the already-crowded room. With them are now THOMAS and MARY, as well as MRS. CRATCHIT, dressed in a tattered skirt but adorned with ribbons, BELINDA, the second oldest daughter, and PETER, the Cratchits’ eldest son. They are all dressed in their best for this festive day. THOMAS tugs at the skirt of MRS. CRATCHIT.)

MRS. CRATCHIT

What is it, dear?

THOMAS

Mum! I smelted a turkey!

MRS. CRATCHIT

What?

THOMAS

A turkey! I smelted a turkey!

MARY

We smelled a turkey, Mother. The big one, that’s cooking in the poulterer’s window.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Ahhhh, I see! The great big one?

THOMAS

Yes! We pretended it was our turkey, Mum. For Christmas dinner!

MRS. CRATCHIT

(Laughing) Well, wouldn't that be a wonderful thing! But we already have our goose, and it's been cooking all day, too! Now, where is my hug?

(THOMAS throws his arms around his mother's neck. Then MARY does the same.)

MRS. CRATCHIT, *Continued*

That's better! What has ever kept your precious father and your brother Tim?

PETER

They'll be here, Mother.

(Enter MARTHA, the eldest of the Cratchit children. She opens the door to the house and quietly shuts it behind her, leaning her back against it out of sight from her distracted mother.)

MRS. CRATCHIT

And what of Martha? I did hope she wouldn't be late this year!

MARTHA

Here's Martha, Mother.

THOMAS and MARY

Here's Martha!

PETER

Hurrah!

THOMAS

There's such a goose, Martha!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Why, bless my heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

(MRS. CRATCHIT rushes to MARTHA and kisses her, lovingly removing her shawl and bonnet.)

MARTHA

We had a great deal of work to finish up last night, and had to clear it all away this morning, Mother!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Well! Never mind so long as you have come. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye.

(MRS. CRATCHIT kisses MARTHA again and goes back to her cooking. MARY and THOMAS have rushed to the window, catching sight of CRATCHIT and TINY TIM in the distance.)

MARY

No, no! There's Father coming! Hide, Martha, hide!

THOMAS

Yes, hide, Martha!

BELINDA

Yes, yes, do hide, Martha! Father was so afraid that you wouldn't come.

(There is a chorus of "hide, Martha!" from the CRATCHIT CHILDREN.)

MARTHA

Alright, alright, very well, then! I shall hide!

(The CHILDREN shout "hurrah" as MARTHA hides herself behind MRS. CRATCHIT and PETER, who stand shoulder to shoulder, waiting to greet CRATCHIT and TINY TIM, who are about to enter the room. Enter CRATCHIT with TINY TIM on his shoulders.)

CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, all!

(The CHILDREN return a joyful "Merry Christmas" to him. BELINDA takes TINY TIM and hugs him on her lap. TINY TIM coughs and BELINDA quickly wraps him in another scarf.)

MRS. CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, dear!

CRATCHIT

All here? Where's our Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT

(After a pause and very sadly) Not coming.

CRATCHIT

Not coming? Not coming upon Christmas Day?

(MARTHA cannot bear her father's disappointment. She leaps out from behind her mother and runs into her father's arms.)

MARTHA

Oh, Father! Here I am.

CRATCHIT

Martha! You have come!

(There are cheers from the family and hugs all around.)

MRS. CRATCHIT

Come, now! Everything is almost prepared. Peter, set the table. Belinda, please help him. Mary, Thomas, and Tim, please take your seats.

CRATCHIT

Yes, yes, everyone to their places. Mrs. Cratchit, a word with you.

(MRS. CRATCHIT goes to her husband, who grabs her and kisses her. She laughs and pushes him away while the CHILDREN set the table.)

TINY TIM

I can hear the pudding singing in the copper kettle.

PETER

Come, Tim. I will lift you up so you can see it.

MRS. CRATCHIT

And how did little Tim behave today?

CRATCHIT

As good as gold, and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you've ever heard. He told me coming home that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made the lame beggars walk and the blind men see.

MRS. CRATCHIT

My word.

CRATCHIT

Indeed. But he is growing strong and hearty nonetheless. I can bear that out from the weight I felt upon my shoulders on our journey home!

BELINDA

The table is set.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Oh! Very good, children! I'll get the goose!

(There is again cheering as the CHILDREN and CRATCHIT take their seats. MRS. CRATCHIT returns with the bird prepared on a small platter. It is hardly large enough to feed the two adults, let alone all the children. Still, "oh's and "ah's could be heard on every lip.)

CRATCHIT

A most elegant feast, my dear.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Thank you, husband. One fit for our king.

CRATCHIT

(Smiling) There never was such a goose, and to be sure, there never was such a goose cooked!

(There are more cheers and THOMAS, MARY, and TINY TIM pound upon the table with the handles of their knives in agreement.)

SCROOGE

Why, that bird's no bigger than my fist!

SECOND SPIRIT

It will be more than enough for them. They are used to doing without.

TINY TIM

What about the pudding, Mother?

MRS. CRATCHIT

Oh dear! I nearly forgot the pudding!

(She leaves to fetch the pudding.)

TINY TIM

I think it's the grandest pudding I have ever seen!

PETER

And Tim does know pudding better than anyone on earth!

(The FAMILY laughs. MRS. CRATCHIT returns with the pudding. Again, there are cheers of excitement. She places it at the center of the table and takes her seat.)

CRATCHIT

A grand pudding, indeed! I think I shall eat it all myself!

CHILDREN

No, Father, no!

CRATCHIT

Very well, very well! I will share if I must.

CHILDREN

Hurrah!

(CRATCHIT quiets his children.)

SCROOGE

They certainly seem pleased for such a meager feast.

SECOND SPIRIT

They are pleased with each other.

SCROOGE

It is most touching.

CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

(The family echoes, and then TINY TIM raises his voice above the rest.)

TINY TIM

God bless us, every one!

SCROOGE

Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

SECOND SPIRIT

I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die, and none other of my race will find him here.

SCROOGE

No, no! Oh no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared!

SECOND SPIRIT

What, then? If he be like to do, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child.

(SCROOGE hangs his head in shame at hearing his own words. But CRATCHIT's voice draws him back in.)

CRATCHIT

To Mr. Scrooge! The founder of the feast!

MRS. CRATCHIT

The founder of the feast, indeed! I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

CRATCHIT

My dear, the children! Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT

It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!

CRATCHIT

(Softly) My dear, Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's not his. Long life to him! A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt! *(Pause, as she lifts her glass)* Mr. Scrooge.

ALL

Mr. Scrooge!

TINY TIM

God bless him!

(They all laugh and drink.)

SCROOGE

A very large family, Spirit.

SECOND SPIRIT

Made larger for the love that is between them.

SCROOGE

Yes.

CRATCHIT

Now a song, children?

ALL

Yes, a song.

CRATCHIT

Martha?

(MARTHA, seated beside TINY TIM, reaches over and pulls him onto her lap.)

MARTHA

What shall we sing, Tim?

(TINY TIM whispers something in her ear. MARTHA smiles. MARTHA and TINY TIM start the song, and the family joins in.)

MARTHA & TINY TIM, *Singing*

("O HOLY NIGHT")

*O HOLY NIGHT
THE STARS ARE BRIGHTLY SHINING
IT IS THE NIGHT
OF OUR DEAR SAVIOR'S BIRTH*

ALL, Singing

*LONG LAY THE WORLD
IN SIN AND ERROR PINING
TILL HE APPEARED
AND THE SPIRIT FELT ITS WORTH*

*A THRILL OF HOPE
THE WEARY WORLD REJOICES
FOR YONDER BREAKS
A NEW AND GLORIOUS MORN*

*FALL ON YOUR KNEES
O HEAR THE ANGEL VOICES
O NIGHT DIVINE
THE NIGHT WHEN CHRIST WAS BORN
O NIGHT, O HOLY NIGHT
O NIGHT DIVINE*

*O NIGHT, O HOLY NIGHT
O NIGHT DIVINE*

*TRULY HE TAUGHT US
TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER
HIS LAW IS LOVE
AND HIS GOSPEL IS PEACE*

*CHAINS HE SHALL BREAK
FOR THE SLAVE IS OUR BROTHER
AND IN HIS NAME
ALL OPPRESSION SHALL CEASE*

(The SECOND SPIRIT waves his hand and slowly the LIGHTS FADE on the CRATCHIT FAMILY. Their singing grows more distant and SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT travel on. The Cratchit scene slowly fades away.)

ALL, Singing

(Fading)

*SWEET HYMNS OF JOY
IN GRATEFUL CHORUS RAISE WE
WITH ALL OUR HEARTS
WE PRAISE HIS HOLY NAME*

*CHRIST IS THE LORD
THEN EVER, EVER PRAISE WE
HIS POWER AND GLORY
EVER MORE PROCLAIM*

*HIS POWER AND GLORY
EVER MORE PROCLAIM*

SECOND SPIRIT

Do they seem “troubled” to you?

SCROOGE

They have troubles, yet they do not seem troubled.

SECOND SPIRIT

All have troubles, Ebenezer. Not all are troubled by them.

SCROOGE

Where are we going, Spirit? Out to sea? SPIRIT!

SECOND SPIRIT

Fear not, you will not fall. For I am known across the seas as well. Look!

SCROOGE

It is a light house. With people exchanging gifts with one another. In the middle of the ocean!

SECOND SPIRIT

It is their home.

SCROOGE

Why are we moving so fast, Spirit?

SECOND SPIRIT

We've not much time left.

ACT I; Scene 13

(AT RISE: A minter's camp, far away, that same Christmas day. SCROOGE peers into the emptiness. In the darkness he sees a dimly-lit table and a group of MINERS gathered around it, hardly visible.)

SCROOGE

What place is this?

SECOND SPIRIT

One of the darkest and gloomiest on earth.

SCROOGE

It's horrible – so damp and solitary.

SECOND SPIRIT

It is a place where miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth. But they know me here, too. See!

SCROOGE

They are sharing a drink, and laughing.

SECOND SPIRIT

Indeed they are. Listen.

SCROOGE

Spirit! They're singing!

(MEN's voices begin to ring out in the darkness. SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT listen.)

MINERS, *Singing*

("GOOD KING WENCESLAS")

*GOOD KING WENCESLAS LOOKED OUT
ON THE FEAST OF STEPHEN
WHEN THE SNOW LAY ROUND ABOUT
DEEP AND CRISP AND EVEN*

*BRIGHTLY SHONE THE MOON THAT NIGHT
THOUGH THE FROST WAS CRUEL
WHEN A POOR MAN CAME IN SIGHT
GATH'RING WINTER FUEL*

*HITHER, PAGE, AND STAND BY ME
IF THOU KNOW'ST IT, TELLING
YONDER PEASANT, WHO IS HE?
WHERE AND WHAT HIS DWELLING?*

*SIRE, HE LIVES A GOOD LEAGUE HENCE
UNDERNEATH THE MOUNTAIN
RIGHT AGAINST THE FOREST FENCE
BY SAINT AGNES' FOUNTAIN*

*BRING ME FLESH AND BRING ME WINE
BRING ME PINE LOGS HITHER
THOU AND I WILL SEE HIM DINE
WHEN WE HEAR HIM THITHER*

*PAGE AND MONARCH FORTH THEY WENT
FORTH THEY WENT TOGETHER
THROUGH THE RUDE WIND'S CRUEL LAMENT
AND THE BITTER WEATHER*

*IN HIS MASTER'S STEPS HE TROD
WHERE THE SNOW LAY DINTED
HEAT WAS IN THE VERY SOD
WHICH THE SAINT HAD PRINTED*

*THEREFORE, CHRISTIAN MEN, BE SURE
WEALTH OR RANK POSSESSING
YE WHO NOW WILL BLESS THE POOR
SHALL YOURSELVES FIND BLESSING*

SECOND SPIRIT

Even here, my presence is felt.

SCROOGE

Have they no families?

SECOND SPIRIT

They are each other's.

SCROOGE

I fear that I have ignored my own flesh blood.

SECOND SPIRIT

But he has not ignored you, Ebenezer. We must hurry.

(The SECOND SPIRIT waves his hand and again they are whisked away. Over land, over sea, and to a place more familiar to SCROOGE.)

ACT I; Scene 14

(AT RISE: Fred's house, that same Christmas day. In the darkness, we hear the well-voiced laugh of SCROOGE's nephew and then LIGHTS UP revealing FRED, his wife, KATHERINE, TOPPER, RACHEL, ELIZABETH, and MICHAEL. They are jovial, drinking, and laughing.)

FRED

He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it, too!

KATHERINE

More shame for him, Fred!

FRED

He's a comical old fellow. That's the truth, and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment and I have nothing to say against him.

KATHERINE

That's because, I'm sure, he is very rich, Fred. At least you always tell me so.

FRED

What of that, my dear? His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking – ha, ha, ha! – that he is ever going to benefit us with it.

KATHERINE

I have no patience with him.

ELIZABETH

No patience at all!

RACHEL

Neither have I! The old goat!

FRED

Oh, I have patience for him! I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner.

KATHERINE

Indeed! I think he loses a very good dinner.

ELIZABETH

An excellent dinner!

MICHAEL

I greatly enjoyed my meal, Fred.

RACHEL

Perhaps you ate at the wrong house tonight, Fred!

MICHAEL

Indeed!

TOPPER

Here, here!

(They all laugh.)

FRED

Well! I'm glad to hear it, because I haven't great faith in these young housekeepers. What do you say, Topper?

TOPPER

As a bachelor, completely unattached to anyone, therefore a wretched outcast – I am most thankful for any free meal I might obtain, particularly as fine a one as I had prepared for me here tonight! Besides, I am sure a bachelor such as I has no right whatsoever to express any opinion on this subject.

(They all laugh.)

KATHERINE

Do go on, Fred. He never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!

FRED

I was going to say that the consequences of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is that he loses some pleasant moments. I pity him. He may rail against Christmas until the day he dies. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he like it or not! I'm going to go to him there, in good temper, year after year, and say, "Uncle Scrooge, how are you?" If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something; and I think I shook him yesterday.

(There is laughter.)

MICHAEL

Shake Ebenezer Scrooge? Not possible.

KATHERINE

Oh, Fred!

FRED

I tell you I did.

(There is more laughter. FRED laughs, too, before moving on.)

FRED, *Continued*

Alright, then! Now, time for some games to merry our spirits! I say Blind Man's Bluff!

TOPPER

Oh! I love this game!

FRED

Then you, my dear Topper, shall go first!

MICHAEL

Bravo!

(FRED blindfolds TOPPER –though not completely – spins him around three times, and lets him go in the direction of ELIZABETH, who moves out of the way. TOPPER makes a big show of bumping into things, though all are getting the idea that he can see. He continues after ELIZABETH. There is laughter.)

SCROOGE

I remember this game!

SECOND SPIRIT

You?

SCROOGE

Yes, and I was quite good at it! Perfect balance, you know!

SECOND SPIRIT

You don't say!

(SCROOGE is becoming absorbed in the game.)

MICHAEL

No, Topper. No cheating!

ELIZABETH

No fair! I say this is no fair!

RACHEL

Run, Elizabeth!

FRED

No running, now.

TOPPER

Ahhha!

(TOPPER grabs ELIZABETH, who does not put up much of a fight. He pulls off his blindfold and kisses her as the rest of the room hoots and hollers until FRED breaks it up.)

FRED

Alright, alright!

KATHERINE

A song, Fred, a song!

FRED

Indeed.

ALL

Yes, yes – a song, Fred!

FRED, *Singing*

(*“IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR”*)

*IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR
THAT GLORIOUS SONG OF OLD
FROM ANGELS BENDING NEAR THE EARTH
TO TOUCH THEIR HARPS OF GOLD*

(*OTHERS join in and sing.*)

ALL, *Singing*

*PEACE ON THE EARTH, GOODWILL TO MEN
FROM HEAVEN’S ALL GRACIOUS KING
THE WORLD IN SOLEMN STILLNESS LAY
TO HEAR THE ANGELS SING*

*STILL THROUGH THE CLOVEN SKIES THEY COME
WITH PEACEFUL WINGS UNFURLED
AND STILL THEIR HEAVENLY MUSIC FLOATS
O’ER ALL THE WEARY WORLD*

*ABOVE ITS SAD AND LOWLY PLAINS
THEY BEND ON HOVERING WING
AND EVER O’ER ITS BABEL SOUNDS
THE BLESSED ANGELS SING*

*FOR LO! THE DAYS ARE HASTENING ON
BY PROPHETS SEEN OF OLD
WHEN WITH THE EVER-CIRCLING YEARS
SHALL COME THE TIME FORETOLD*

*WHEN THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH SHALL OWN
THE PRINCE OF PEACE, THEIR KING
AND THE WHOLE WORLD SEND BACK THE SONG
WHICH NOW THE ANGELS SING*

(*SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT watch as the GROUP fills their glasses and toast each other and Christmas.*)

SECOND SPIRIT

Very well, Ebenezer. But we’ve not much more time together.

(SCROOGE is focused on the party as a new game begins.)

FRED

Alright, the game is called Yes or No! You may ask any question so long as it can be answered with a yes or no. I shall go first!

SCROOGE

Oh, Yes or No! One of my favorites when I was a young man.

FRED

Guess who I am!

ELIZABETH

Are you living?

FRED

Yes!

MICHAEL

Are you living in London?

FRED

Yes!

TOPPER

Are you a plant?

FRED

No.

KATHERINE

Are you an animal?

FRED

Yes.

MICHAEL

A disagreeable animal?

FRED

Yes.

KATHERINE

Are you a savage animal?

FRED

Yes.

RACHEL

Do you snort and grunt at times?

FRED

Very much so!

MICHAEL

Only yes or no, now!

RACHEL

I have it, I have it! You are a ferocious hippopotamus!

FRED

In London?

RACHEL

Oh. *(Pause)* No?

FRED

No!!

ELIZABETH

Are you living in a menagerie?

FRED

No.

TOPPER

Were you ever killed at market?

FRED

No.

TOPPER

Are you a cow?

FRED

No.

MICHAEL

A rabid dog?

FRED

No, but very close!

KATHERINE

Only yes or no, Fred!

RACHEL

Are you a tiger?

FRED

No.

KATHERINE

A bear?

FRED

No.

TOPPER

A bull?

FRED

No.

SCROOGE

A wild pig!

SECOND SPIRIT

They can't hear you, Ebenezer.

KATHERINE

Are you a human animal?

FRED

Yes!

ALL

Ahhh!

MICHAEL

Are you male?

FRED

Yes!

KATHERINE

And you snort and growl?

FRED

Yes.

MICHAEL

And you are savage?

FRED

Yes!

ELIZABETH

I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred!

FRED

What is it?

ELIZABETH

It's your uncle – Mr. Scrooooooooooge!

FRED

Yes!!!

(They all laugh.)

KATHERINE

Well, then the answer to “is it a bear?” should have been YES!

(More laughter.)

FRED

He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure. And it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, "Uncle Scrooge!"

ALL

Well! Uncle Scrooge!

FRED

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is! He wouldn't take it from me, but he may have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!

(They all toast and drink. The SECOND SPIRIT waves his hand and the party fades away. Only SCROOGE remains with the SECOND SPIRIT by his side.)

ACT I; Scene 15

(AT RISE: A dark, empty street except for a dim light on SCROOGE and the SECOND SPIRIT. That same Christmas Day; SCROOGE still lost in the joy of his nephew's celebration.)

SCROOGE

Oh, the joy, the frivolity, the merriment! It puts me in mind of my days with old Fezziwig, when we... *(Looks at the SPIRIT)* Spirit. You've grown old!

SECOND SPIRIT

I shall not exist much longer.

SCROOGE

Are Spirits' lives so short?

SECOND SPIRIT

My life upon this globe is very brief. It ends tonight.

SCROOGE

Tonight?

SECOND SPIRIT

Yes. The time is drawing near.

SCROOGE

Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask, but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from behind your robe. Is it a foot or a claw?

SECOND SPIRIT

It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it. Look here. Oh, Man! Look here.

(The SECOND SPIRIT reveals two small, hungry CHILDREN huddled about his feet.)

SCROOGE

(Shocked) Spirit! Are they yours?

SECOND SPIRIT

They are Man's. And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it, and abide the end!

SCROOGE

Have they no refuge or resource?

SECOND SPIRIT

Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

(The SECOND SPIRIT waves his hand and there is a flurry of light, noise, and fog. The SECOND SPIRIT is gone. Enter the THIRD SPIRIT. The THIRD SPIRIT is a frightening phantom whose face cannot be seen. Tall and haunting, the THIRD SPIRIT has fingers like bones and does not speak. The THIRD SPIRIT moves slowly toward SCROOGE, who cowers and falls to his knees. SCROOGE is gripped by terror and throws his hands up to shield his view of this horrible apparition. BLACKOUT.)

END ACT I

ACT II; Scene 1

(AT RISE: Moments later; the same street. SCROOGE is still upon his knees with his arms up, shielding his face, trembling in fear as he was at the end of ACT I. The THIRD SPIRIT stands before him, silent and still. SCROOGE peeks out from around his arms. The THIRD SPIRIT points to him with a bony finger and then motions for SCROOGE to rise. SCROOGE slowly stands.)

SCROOGE

I – I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

(The THIRD SPIRIT does not move, but still holds his upturned hand out to SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us. Is that so, Spirit?

(The THIRD SPIRIT slowly nods his head.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?

(The THIRD SPIRIT does not move or speak.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!

(The THIRD SPIRIT slowly waves a hand. LIGHTS UP on two COUPLES on the other side of the stage, all well and warmly dressed. They stand on a street-side. The background remains hidden.)

FIRST MAN

No. I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead.

SECOND MAN

When did he die?

FIRST MAN

Last night, I believe.

SECOND WOMAN

Why? What was the matter with him?

FIRST MAN

God knows!

FIRST WOMAN

I thought he'd never die.

SECOND WOMAN

What has he done with all that money?

FIRST MAN

I haven't heard.

FIRST WOMAN

Left it to his company, perhaps.

SECOND MAN

Well, he hasn't left it to me. That's all I know!

(They all laugh.)

SECOND WOMAN

It's likely to be a very cheap funeral.

FIRST WOMAN

I don't know anybody who would go to it!

(More laughter.)

SECOND MAN

Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

FIRST WOMAN

I don't mind going if a lunch is provided. But I must be fed, if I am going to attend.

SECOND WOMAN

Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all, for I never wear black, and I never eat lunch.

(They laugh again.)

FIRST MAN

Well, I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; we said hello once when we passed in the street.

SECOND MAN

That's more than he ever gave me.

SECOND WOMAN

That's more than he ever gave to anyone!

(Uproarious laughter.)

FIRST WOMAN

Well, bye, bye.

ALL

Good-bye! Merry Christmas!

(Exit ALL except SCROOGE and the THIRD SPIRIT, who stand looking on from afar. Enter TWO CHIMNEY SWEEPS. Both are young, covered in soot, and in a very good temper. They meet and shake hands.)

FIRST CHIMNEY SWEEP

How are you?

SECOND CHIMNEY SWEEP

How are you?

FRIST CHIMNEY SWEEP

Well! Well! Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?

SECOND CHIMNEY SWEEP

So I'm told! The poor old bugger!

(They laugh.)

FIRST CHIMNEY

Come to us all, don't it? Even him! Cold, isn't it?

SECOND CHIMNEY SWEEP

Seasonable for Christmastime, I'd say.

FRIST CHIMNEY SWEEP

So it is, so it is. Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!

SECOND CHIMNEY SWEEP

Merry Christmas.

(Exit BOTH CHIMNEY SWEEPS.)

SCROOGE

Spirit. Why are we here? What bearing can these conversations have on my life to come?

The THIRD SPIRIT again waves a hand. Enter TOWNSPEOPLE. The lights grow slightly brighter.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

I know this street. Why, I see these people here every day. I do business with them. But I do not see myself. Spirit, where am I? Why can't I see my future self?

(The THIRD SPIRIT again waves a hand and the lights reveal Scrooge and Marley's countinghouse. The building is dark and boarded up.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

(Confused) Spirit, why have I closed the countinghouse doors? *(Growing increasingly agitated)* What is the meaning of this? Where is my future self? Why am I not among these people? I walk this street every day. Have I changed in the future? Spirit, why won't you speak? Spirit—

(The THIRD SPIRIT sharply moves a hand and harshly points at SCROOGE, who immediately silences himself. The THIRD SPIRIT pauses for a moment pointing at SCROOGE, then slowly waves a hand once more.)

ACT II, Scene 2

(AT RISE: That same future Christmas. LOW LIGHT reveals a dark, strange place. An old and falling down shop filled with knickknacks. Behind the counter lit by an oil lamp, stands OLD JOE. He smokes a pipe, is dressed in shabby clothes that are far too big for him, and a well-worn top hat. He is the king of this castle and acts like it. The door to the shop stands wide open and the THIRD SPIRIT motions for SCROOGE to enter. The two stand in the corner of the ramshackle building. Fog surrounds them as the scene unfolds. Enter CHARWOMAN, LAUNDRESS, and the UNDERTAKER'S MAN. All are carrying bundles.)

CHARWOMAN

Let the charwoman alone to be the first! Let the laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it.

OLD JOE

You couldn't have met in a better place. Come in to the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two ain't strangers. Stop till I shut the door to the shop. (*Shutting the creaky, weathered door*) Ah! Ha, ha! How it skreeks! There ain't a more rusty bit of metal in the place than its own hinges! And I'm sure that there's no such old bones in here as mine! Ha, ha! We're all suitable to our calling. We're well-matched. Come now, come.

CHARWOMAN

What odds, then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did!

LAUNDRESS

That's true, indeed! No man more so.

CHARWOMAN

Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?

LAUNDRESS

No, indeed! We should hope not.

UNDERTAKER'S MAN

No, indeed!

CHARWOMAN

Very well, then! That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.

LAUNDRESS

No, indeed.

CHARWOMAN

If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, the wicked old screw, why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.

LAUNDRESS

It's the truest word that ever was spoke. It's a judgment on him.

CHARWOMAN

I wish it was a little heavier judgment! And it should have been, you may depend on it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We all knew what we was doing, trying to stay alive! It's not sin. Open the bundle, Joe!

UNDERTAKER'S MAN

No! I brought mine first, and first shall I be! Out of my way! Here ya go, Joe.

LAUNDRESS

Ya never could be a gentleman and wait your turn!

CHARWOMAN

Gentleman? Him? Ha!

UNDERTAKER'S MAN

Why, I got more breeding than the both of yas! And I got these two fists to prove it.

CHARWOMAN

I'll teach you some respect!

OLD JOE

Shut up all of ya. The bobbies'll be here and we'll all get a free night's stay for our trouble!

CHARWOMAN

(To the Undertaker's Man) After you.

OLD JOE

Alright, let's see. A seal, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value.

(OLD JOE tallies up the account and hands the UNDERTAKER'S MAN a small coin.)

OLD JOE, *Continued*

That's your account.

UNDERTAKER'S MAN

Why, it's robbery, I say, as sure as I'm standing here, it is!

OLD JOE

And I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?

LAUNDRESS

I'll go next!

OLD JOE

Let's see here. You got his sheets, towels, a vest and a coat, two silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a pair of boots. (*Impressed*) Very nice, Mrs. Dilber. Very nice indeed. Here you are. (*Handing over her share*) I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine. And that's the way I ruin myself.

LAUNDRESS

Joe! For a friend of years? A friend of dears!

OLD JOE

That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, and make it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half – a – crown.

LAUNDRESS

Oh! Ya heartless old screw!

OLD JOE

Ha, ha!

CHARWOMAN

And now undo my bundle, Joe.

OLD JOE

I will indeed! What do you call this? Bed curtains!

CHARWOMAN

Ah! Bed curtains!

OLD JOE

You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?

CHARWOMAN

Yes I do, why not?

OLD JOE

You were born to make your fortune, and you'll certainly do it.

(*OLD JOE inspects the curtains, holding the lamp near to them.*)

CHARWOMAN

I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I might put some money in my pocket! Not for the sake of such a man as he was. Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now.

OLD JOE

His blankets?

CHARWOMAN

Whose else's do you think? He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say.

OLD JOE

I hope he didn't die of anything catching!

CHARWOMAN

Don't you be afraid of that. I ain't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! You may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one, too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.

OLD JOE

What do you call wasting of it?

CHARWOMAN

Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure. Somebody was fool enough to do it! (*Looks at the UNDERTAKER'S MAN with a smile, then back to OLD JOE*) But I took it off again. If calico ain't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything.

LAUNDRESS

Ha, ha! It's quite as becoming to the body.

CHARWOMAN

He can't look uglier than he did in that one.

(*They all laugh.*)

UNDERTAKER'S MAN

Shhhh!

OLD JOE

Alright, alright. Here you are, my pretty! That's your account, and a fine one it is! Now, let's have a drink. After all, it's Christmas Day! Take your money, my dear.

CHARWOMAN

Ha, ha!

OLD JOE

Now why are you laughing?

CHARWOMAN

This is the end of it, you see! He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!

(They all laugh. OLD JOE sits back and starts his favorite Christmas song. The OTHERS join in.)

OLD JOE, *Singing*

(“GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN, REJOICE”)

*GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN, REJOICE
WITH HEART AND SOUL AND VOICE
GIVE YE HEED TO WHAT WE SAY
NEWS! NEWS!
JESUS CHRIST IS BORN TODAY*

(All FOUR THIEVES now begin to drink and sing “GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN, REJOICE.”)

ALL, *Singing*

*OX AND ASS BEFORE HIM BOW
AND HE IS IN THE MANGER NOW
CHRIST IS BORN TODAY
CHRIST IS BORN TODAY*

*GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN, REJOICE
WITH HEART AND SOUL AND VOICE
NOW YE HEAR OF ENDLESS BLISS
JOY! JOY!
JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN FOR THIS*

*HE HATH OPE'D THE HEAV'NLY DOOR
AND MAN IS BLESSED EVERMORE
CHRIST WAS BORN FOR THIS
CHRIST WAS BORN FOR THIS*

*GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN, REJOICE
WITH HEART AND SOUL AND VOICE
NOW YE NEED NOT FEAR THE GRAVE
PEACE! PEACE!
JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN TO SAVE*

(As the lights begin to fade on the FOUR THIEVES, their song softly fades as well.)

ALL, *Singing*

*CALLS YOU ONE AND CALLS YOU ALL
TO GAIN HIS EVERLASTING HALL
CHRIST WAS BORN TO SAVE
CHRIST WAS BORN TO SAVE*

SCROOGE

Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now.

(SCROOGE and the THIRD SPIRIT are transported with a wave of a hand. THEIVES LIGHTS OUT.)

ACT II; Scene 3

(AT RISE: A lonely bed chamber that same future Christmas. Across the stage, in a dim light, we see a BODY lying on a bed, covered by a sheet from head to toe.)

SCROOGE

Merciful heaven, what is this?

(The THIRD SPIRIT slowly points SCROOGE toward the body. SCROOGE walks behind the BODY.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Is this that poor soul that those vultures stripped bare? Spirit. This is a fearful place.

(The THIRD SPIRIT still points at the covered corpse. SCROOGE begins to uncover the face of the victim but is gripped by fear and steps back. The THIRD SPIRIT still points.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

I understand you, and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the will, Spirit. I have not the power to lift this veil. Oh, Spirit! If there is any person in this town who feels some emotion towards this man's death, show them to me. I beseech you!

ACT II; Scene 4

(AT RISE: A small rented house in a crowded part of the city; that same future Christmas day. Enter a weary and tired HUSBAND. He sits upon an entryway bench where his WIFE meets him and takes his head in her arms, hugging it against her body. She was expecting him. In a cradle nearby sleeps a baby. SCROOGE and the THIRD SPIRIT watch.)

WIFE

My dear, dear husband. Tell me, what is the news?

HUSBAND

I cannot bear to tell it.

WIFE

Why, husband? Is it good or bad?

HUSBAND

Bad.

WIFE

We are quite ruined?

HUSBAND

No. There is hope yet, Caroline.

WIFE

(Amazed) Did he forgive our debt a while? Oh! Nothing is past hope if such a miracle has happened.

HUSBAND

He is past forgiving. He is dead.

(The WIFE puts her hands to her mouth in astonishment, fear, joy, and shame.)

HUSBAND, *Continued*

I had tried twice to see him about obtaining a week's delay, and was told he was gravely ill. I had thought it was an excuse to avoid my plea. But it appears to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then.

WIFE

To whom will our debt be transferred?

HUSBAND

I don't know. But before that time, we shall be ready with the money.

WIFE

Oh, to be free of such a merciless creditor.

HUSBAND

It will matter not who they find as his successor. We may sleep with light hearts tonight, Caroline.

(The COUPLE embraces. SCROOGE is dismayed. He turns to look directly at the THIRD SPIRIT.)

SCROOGE

Oh, Spirit, no! Please remove me from this place. Let me see some tenderness connected with a death, or that dark chamber and veiled corpse will be forever present to me.

(The THIRD SPIRIT waves a hand. LIGHTS DOWN on couple.)

ACT II; Scene 5

(AT RISE: The Interior of the Cratchits' house, that same future Christmas day. SCROOGE and the THIRD SPIRIT stand in the doorway. Unlike the first visit, there is no laughter – only the faint voice of PETER reading from the Bible with THOMAS nearby. MRS. CRATCHIT, BELINDA, and MARY are sewing. MARTHA sits alone, looking out the window.)

PETER

(Reading) And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them. And Jesus said, “Whosoever receiveth this child in my name, receiveth me.”

MRS. CRATCHIT

The colour hurts my eyes.

(She puts her work down and rubs her tired eyes. Her three DAUGHTERS look to her with concern. She quickly regains herself and starts back to work.)

MRS. CRATCHIT, *Continued*

They're better now again. It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home for the world. It must be near his time.

PETER

Past it, rather, but I think he's walked a little slower than he used to these few last evenings, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I have known him to walk with...I have known him to walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very quickly indeed.

PETER

And so have I. Often.

MARY

We all have.

MRS. CRATCHIT

But he was very light to carry. And his father loved him so that it was no trouble. No trouble. And there is your father at the door!

CRATCHIT

(Entering) Merry Christmas, family.

ALL

Merry Christmas, Father.

THOMAS

Don't be sad, Father.

(CRATCHIT picks up THOMAS.)

CRATCHIT

I won't, my boy. I won't. After all. It's Christmas.

(He fights back tears. CRATCHIT picks up some of the sewing that his WIFE and DAUGHTERS were doing and runs his hands over the fine work.)

CRATCHIT, *Continued*

My, my. Such fine, delicate work you all are doing. A fine display of Cratchit industry if I do say so myself.

BELINDA

We worked all afternoon, Father.

CRATCHIT

A fine thing on a Sunday afternoon, my dear.

MRS. CRATCHIT

You went today, Robert?

CRATCHIT

Yes, my love, I did. I wish you could have gone, too. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday now and then and always on Christmas Day. *(Pause)* My child. Oh, my little, little child.

(CRATCHIT sits down and clutches TINY TIM's crutch. The CHILDREN rush to him.)

CHILDREN

Don't cry, Father. Don't cry. It's Christmastime.

(CRATCHIT puts down the crutch and pulls MARY and THOMAS up on his lap and hugs them.)

CRATCHIT

I'm sorry, my children. My dear, dear children. You are such a comfort to me.

MARY

We all miss Tiny Tim, Father.

CRATCHIT

I know, my dear. But we have each other. We must always remember that. We are indeed very blessed. And what's more is we have our loving friends, too.

(CRATCHIT lifts the CHILDREN off his lap and stands. He crosses to MRS. CRATCHIT.)

CRATCHIT, *Continued*

Friends that we didn't even know we had, my dear. Just today, I had a happy meeting with Mr. Scrooge's nephew, Fred. Why, we've not met more than a handful of times, but he spoke to me as if we had known each other all our lives. And he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard. He asked after all of you, and after our dear Tiny Tim. Upon hearing, he said, "I am heartily sorry for your good wife." By the by, how he ever knew that, I don't know.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Knew what, my dear?

CRATCHIT

Why, that you were a good wife.

PETER

Everybody knows that!

(They all laugh and agree.)

CRATCHIT

Very well observed, my dear! I hope they do. “Heartily sorry,” he said, “for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way, pray come to me.” And then he gave me his card. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us. A most remarkable young man.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I’m sure he’s a good soul!

CRATCHIT

You would be sure of it, my dear, if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn’t be at all surprised, mark what I say, if he got Peter a situation.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Only hear that, Peter.

MARY

And then Peter will be keeping company with someone, and setting up for himself.

PETER

Get along with you!

CRATCHIT

Someday he will, to be sure, though there is plenty of time for that. Still, however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim – the first parting that there was among us?

MARTHA

Never, Father.

ALL

No, never, Father.

CRATCHIT

I am very happy. And very proud of you all.

THOMAS

Father?

CRATCHIT

Yes, Thomas?

THOMAS

Do you miss Tiny Tim very much?

CRATCHIT

Oh, I do, Thomas, I do.

THOMAS

Me, too.

MRS. CRATCHIT

We all do.

CRATCHIT

I miss his laugh.

MARY

I miss his smile.

BELINDA

I miss the thoughtful things he used to say.

PETER

I miss how much he loved Christmas.

MARTHA

And how Father used to carry him through the door on his shoulder.

CRATCHIT

Yes, I miss all those things, too. But do you know what I miss the most?

ALL

What, Father?

CRATCHIT

I miss how he loved to sing. (*Singing*)

*I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY
I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING*

MARTHA

Yes, I miss that, too.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Like an angel was here in the house with us.

CRATCHIT

Come now. Let us have a song! A song for Tiny Tim.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I think he would have liked that idea.

CRATCHIT

Yes. Martha?

MARTHA

(Pause) I – I don't know if I can, Father.

ALL

Oh please, Martha, a song.

(Another pause, then singing "SILENT NIGHT")

MARTHA, *Singing*

("SILENT NIGHT")

*SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT
ALL IS CALM, ALL IS BRIGHT
ROUND YON VIRGIN MOTHER AND CHILD
HOLY INFANT, SO TENDER AND MILD
SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE
SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE*

*SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT
SHEPHERDS QUAKE AT THE SIGHT
GLORIES STREAM FROM HEAVEN AFAR
HEAVENLY HOSTS SING ALLELUIA
CHRIST, THE SAVIOR, IS BORN
CHRIST, THE SAVIOR, IS BORN*

CRATCHIT hugs his CHILDREN and reaches up, taking hold of his WIFE's hand. They ALL join in on the final verse.)

ALL, *Singing*

*SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT
SON OF GOD, LOVE'S PURE LIGHT
RADIANT BEAMS FROM THY HOLY FACE
WITH THE DAWN OF REDEEMING GRACE
JESUS, LORD, AT THY BIRTH
JESUS, LORD, AT THY BIRTH*

(THE LIGHTS FADE on the family.)

SCROOGE

Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead. I fear I already know. Remove me from this house, Spirit. Let me behold what I shall be in days to come.

(The THIRD SPIRIT again waves a hand. LIGHTS DOWN.)

ACT II; Scene 6

(AT RISE: The gates of a churchyard; that same future Christmas day. SCROOGE and the THIRD SPIRIT stand at the gate.)

SCROOGE

This churchyard is very near my place of business. And I can see my house from here.

(The THIRD SPIRIT enters the yard and turns back to SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Am I now to see what the future holds for me, Spirit?

(The THIRD SPIRIT slowly nods.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Direct me where you will, Spirit. I must know.

(The THIRD SPIRIT raises a bony finger and points SCROOGE toward a darkened headstone.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows of things that may be, only?

(The THIRD SPIRIT stands as silent and still as a statue and points to the headstone in front of SCROOGE. SCROOGE inches forward and stops.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Spirit, I must know. Am I that man who lay covered upon the bed?

(The THIRD SPIRIT points at SCROOGE, then back at the stone. The lights on the headstone grow brighter to reveal the name "EBENEZER SCROOGE." SCROOGE falls to his knees.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

No, Spirit! Oh, no, no!

(SCROOGE clutches at the THIRD SPIRIT's robe, but the SPIRIT slowly backs away, one hand still pointing at SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Spirit! Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been to lead me to this end. Oh, phantom, why show me this, if I am past all hope? Oh, take pity on me, Spirit!

(The THIRD SPIRIT's hand begins to tremble.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Good Spirit, assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!

(The hand trembles more.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, Present and Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!

(SCROOGE, in desperation, has moved nearer and on the last line lunges to grab the THIRD SPIRIT's outstretched hand. He does and the THIRD SPIRIT holds him at bay. SCROOGE is on his knees, again clutching the hand before him. BLACKOUT.)

ACT II; Scene 7

(AT RISE: Scrooge's bed chamber; Christmas day in the morning after his reclamation. SCROOGE awakes in his own bed.)

SCROOGE

My own room. I am here in my own room. I am alive. Oh, Jacob Marley, Heaven and Christmastime be praised!

(SCROOGE leaps from his bed and falls to his knees.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees! *(Feeling his bed)* My bed is intact! *(Feeling his chest)* I am intact! I am here! The shadows of the things that would have been may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will! *(Elated, jumping back on the bed)* I don't know what to do! I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A Merry Christmas to everybody! A Happy New Year to the whole world! Whoopee!

(SCROOGE leaps off his bed and runs to his window. He throws it open.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all the world! *(To himself)* Oh, I don't know what day it is! I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby.

(Enter BOY on the street outside the window.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Hello! Whoop! Hello, there!

BOY

(Frightened out of his wits) Agggghh!

SCROOGE

Oh, don't be frightened, my fine young lad! What's today?

BOY

Sir?

SCROOGE

What's today, my fine fellow? What day is it?

BOY

Why, Christmas Day!

SCROOGE

It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can.

(The BOY starts to exit, shaking his head in confusion, and jumps with a start when SCROOGE speaks again.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Hallo, my fine fellow!

BOY

H – H – Hallo?

SCROOGE

Do you know the poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?

BOY

I should hope I did.

SCROOGE

An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize turkey: the big one?

BOY

The one as big as me?

(SCROOGE slaps his knee and laughs out loud.)

SCROOGE

What a delightful boy! It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my young buck! The one as big as you!

BOY

It's hanging there now.

SCROOGE

Is it? Go and buy it!

BOY

Buy it?! What are you, daft?!

SCROOGE

Ha! A charming young boy! Daft! No, son, I have never been more sound! And I am in earnest. Go and find the poulterer, come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown!

BOY

Yes, sir!

(The BOY runs off.)

SCROOGE

(To himself) I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's! He shan't know who sent it! It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. How surprised they will be! Oh, there is more to do. I must shave! Oh, and get dressed, too! Ha, ha! I have so very little time, and so very, very much to do. I must hurry!

(LIGHTS FADE.)

ACT II; Scene 8

(AT RISE: The Cratchit's house; the Christmas day. The table is set as it was before. We see the BOY struggling to carry the large wrapped turkey. He approaches the Cratchits' door.)

CRATCHIT

A grand pudding, indeed! I think I shall eat it all myself!

CHILDREN

No, Father, no!

CRATCHIT

Very well, very well! I will share if I must.

CHILDREN

Hurrah!

(With great effort, the BOY knocks on the door.)

MRS. CRATCHIT

Now, who could that be?

MARTHA

On Christmas Day?

THOMAS

It's Father Christmas!

MARY

Yes! With presents for us all!

(ALL laugh.)

CRATCHIT

Yes, perhaps it is. Let us see.

(CRATCHIT opens the door.)

BOY

Merry Christmas!

CRATCHIT

Well, Merry Christmas, lad! What have you there?

BOY

A turkey, sir! It's for you!.

CRATCHIT

For me?

BELINDA

For us?

BOY

Are you Mr. Robert Cratchit, sir?

CRATCHIT

I am, but...

BOY

Then it's for you, sir, for you and your family to enjoy this Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Why, I never!

BOY

(Pause) Sir?

CRATCHIT

Yes, lad?

BOY

Please take this turkey, sir! It's really quite heavy.

CRATCHIT

(Taking the large bird) Oh, yes. Why, of course.

BOY

(The BOY is very relieved.) Merry Christmas, sir.

CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, lad, and thank you!

ALL

(As the BOY exits) Merry Christmas.

PETER

Is it really all for us, Father?

MARY

For all of us?

CRATCHIT

It appears so, children.

MARTHA

Well, who sent it?

CRATCHIT

I don't know.

BELINDA

It's a Christmas miracle!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Indeed it is.

CHILDREN

Indeed!

TINY TIM

Father?

CRATCHIT

Yes, Tim?

TINY TIM

We are blessed, aren't we?

CRATCHIT

Very much so, Tim. Very much so, indeed.

(LIGHTS FADE.)

ACT II; Scene 9

(AT RISE: A crowded street; that same Christmas day. Enter SCROOGE. Now dressed and walking cheerfully down the street. He passes by people and wishes each and every one a Good Morning or a Merry Christmas. TWO GENTLE WOMEN approach. They do not see SCROOGE until he addresses them.)

SCROOGE

(With a smile) My dear madams!

(The TWO GENTLE WOMEN stop dead in their tracks. SCROOGE walks up to them and shakes their hands vigorously.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

How do you do? I do hope that you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you to come to my workplace! A Merry Christmas to you both!

BOTH GENTLE WOMEN

Mr. Scrooge?!

SCROOGE

Yes. That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness to take this small contribution from me?

(SCROOGE hands them a large sum of money.)

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

Lord bless me! My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?

SCROOGE

If you please. Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

My dear sir, I don't know what to say to such munificence!

SCROOGE

Don't say anything, please. Come and see me. Will you come and see me?

SECOND GENTLE WOMAN

I will, certainly.

FIRST GENTLE WOMAN

We both will, Mr. Scrooge. God bless you!

SCROOGE

Thank'ee. I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you, good women! Now I must leave you. I have a very important dinner invitation. Merry Christmas!

BOTH GENTLE WOMEN

Merry Christmas, Mr. Scrooge.

(SCROOGE bounds off with a smile. Exit ALL. LIGHTS FADE.)

ACT II; Scene 10

(AT RISE: Fred's house a little later on that same Christmas day. All the GUESTS are inside.)

FRED

Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment, and I say, "Uncle Scrooge!"

SCROOGE

(Offstage) Merry Christmas!!!

KATHERINE

What on earth could that be?

(Enter SCROOGE.)

FRED

Uncle Scrooge?!

KATHERINE

(To guests) Why, it's Fred's uncle! Mr. Scrooge! Ha, ha!

(KATHERINE pauses. Looks at her stunned GUESTS and then back at SCROOGE and passes out into FRED's arms.)

FRED

Why, Uncle! You've given us quite a shock!

(The GUESTS rush to KATHERINE, who is beginning to recover.)

SCROOGE

Oh, I am sorry. I am rather new at this.

(SCROOGE goes to KATHERINE and takes her hand.)

SCROOGE, *Continued*

Are you alright, my dear?

(KATHERINE is still a bit worse for wine and for shock.)

KATHERINE

I thought I saw Scrooge.

FRED

Yes, my dear, you did.

KATHERINE

No, Fred! I thought the old buzzard was here!

FRED

He is, my dear, he is.

(KATHERINE looks again at SCROOGE.)

KATHERINE

Oh, dear!

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes