

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.
2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.
3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.
4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.
5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!

Product Code: A0573-F

Mark Twain's A CHRISTMAS CAROL

**by
Charles Carr**

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED**

**Performance Rights Available Exclusively through
Heartland Plays, Inc. at heartlandplays.com
playsnow@heartlandplays.com
customer service: 406-431-7680**

Copyright © 2021 by Charles Caratti

Mark Twain's A CHRISTMAS CAROL

CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

CAROLERS: *Townsfolk (Drawn from cast members)*

MARK TWAIN: *Narrator*

EBENEZER SCROOGE: *An ill-tempered,, tight-fisted businessman*

BOB CRATCHIT: *Scrooge's long-suffering clerk*

STREET URCHIN: *A boy or girl who approaches Scrooge for a donation*

MRS. CRATCHIT: *Bob's cynical wife*

FREDERICA: *Scrooge's niece; age 20-40*

MR. SIMMONS: *A person collecting for charity*

MR. RYE: *Another, also collecting for charity*

JACOB MARLEY: *Scrooge's former partner*

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: *A young woman; lovely and ethereal*

BOY SCROOGE: *Scrooge at approximately 10-14 years of age*

FANNY: *Scrooge's sister, age 6-12; can also play Belinda Cratchit*

FEZZIWIG: *A kindhearted, jovial madame; owner, "Mrs. Fezziwig's Home for Neglected Women"*

MR. FEZZIWIG: *An amiable, somewhat foolish man*

FEZZIWIG'S PARTY ATTENDEES: *(May be cast by actors from other scenes)*

ALICE MAY: *Dancer at Mrs. Fezziwig's Christmas party*

YOUNG SCROOGE: *At 20-30 years of age*

BELLE: *Scrooge's lost love*

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: *A deceptively jolly traveling salesman*

MARTHA: *The eldest Cratchit child; can also play Belle*

BELINDA: *Another of the Cratchit children*

PETER: *Another*

TINY TIM: *The youngest Cratchit child; frail, ill*

JACKSON: *Frederica's husband; about same age as Frederica*

PENELOPE: *Frederica's sister-in-law; an adult of almost any age*

TOPPER: *A friend of Frederica and Jackson*

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE: *A young woman in a goth-like style*

MR. GRAVES: *The undertaker*

MRS. DILBER: *A thief who works at the mortuary*

CLEMENTINE: *Another thief who works at the mortuary*

BOY: *Dressed like Tom Sawyer; a young boy sent to buy a turkey on Christmas day*

THE SETTING

The U.S. South around 1870

SCENES

PROLOGUE (VOICE-OVER)

ACT I

- Scene 1 Scrooge & Marley office and warehouse
- Scene 2 Marley and Ghost of Christmas Past entrances
- Scene 3 Boy Scrooge, Fanny
- Scene 4 Fezziwig's party - Young Scrooge, Belle
- Scene 5 Ghost of Christmas Present's entrance
- Scene 6 The Cratchit home on Christmas
- Scene 7 The Ladies of the New South Christmas Party

INTERMISSION

ACT II

- Scene 1 Ghost Of Christmas Future's entrance
- Scene 2 Mr. Graves, Mrs. Dilber, and Clementine
- Scene 3 The Cratchit home (without Tiny Tim)
- Scene 4 Scrooge's tombstone
- Scene 5 Scrooge's dream (voice-overs/video montage)
- Scene 6 Scrooge awakens
- Scene 7 Scrooge sends boy to buy a turkey
- Scene 8 A Cratchit Christmas dinner & celebration

**SEE PROPERTIES & FURNITURE LIST
AT END OF SCRIPT**

Mark Twain's
A CHRISTMAS CAROL
by Charles Carr

PROLOGUE

(Voice-over)

The management would like to thank each and every one of you for attending this performance featuring the world-famous author and celebrated raconteur, Mr. Mark Twain. You might wish to know that, for this performance, Mr. Twain will be smoking a cigar – one of 15 he delights in consuming per day. Rest assured, though, that the instrument he will be enjoying this evening is an entirely new doohickey which emits some kind o' steam instead o' the caustic fumes which have been known to make ladies faint and rile up small dogs. Uh... or maybe vice versa.

(Beat)

You might also be interested to know that Mr. Twain is an early investor in this new technology, putting a significant portion of his operating capital into the venture on the advice of some from pretty clever-sounding Yankee types that he may be confident of reaping enormous financial returns... an adventure which, he hopes, turns out better than the Kaolotype engraving process, the magnetic telegraph, the steam pulley manufacturer, the Fredonia Watch Company, the railroad stocks, the silver stocks, and the gold stocks.

(Beat)

And... the timber rights, the Vaporizer which was represented as removing 99 percent of the steam from coal, the five-thousand-pound Paige typesetting machine, the optic liniment, and the button-on elastic strap to help pants hang more gracefully.

(Beat)

AND... the self-pasting scrapbook, the baby bed clamp to keep infants from kicking off their sheets, the spiral pin which permitted women to keep their hats on in gusty weather, and the German powdered food supplement derived from waste products normally fed to pigs.

(Beat)

On all of which Mr. Twain lost great amounts of money and, as a result, fervently wishes each and every one of his former business partners and northern scalawags burns in perdition for all of eternity. Or longer.

(Beat)

In the moments remaining before the show begins, the management hopes you might consider purchasing a beverage or treat from our concession stand.

(Beat)

Thank you for attending the show. We hope you will tell your family and friends about our little thing we got goin' here.

ACT I - SCENE 1

SETTING: *The U.S. South around 1870. Dusk; SCROOGE & MARLEY OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE. Scrooge's company, "Scrooge & Marley - Mississippi River Freightage" runs much of the shipping throughout the area.*

A tiny clerk's desk and chair sits between a window and a doorway SL. On the desk are a feather pen, an ink well, and a ledger. A shawl is draped over the back of the chair. Near the US center is door leading to the street; beside it, a coat stand. A standing safe is located against the back flats, roughly between the center door and the window. A podium is set up far SL, near the edge of the stage, angled toward the center of the audience.

AT RISE: *When the Audience is seated, CAROLERS gather on the street outside the office.*

CAROLER 1 is a middle-aged woman; CAROLER 4 is a male. Among the carolers in a CHILD CAROLER; the others can be any gender of any adult age.

CAROLER 1

I told you they was all in here!

CAROLER 3

And here they is, all in one boodle!

CAROLER 2

I was worried Jonah scared 'em off with his singin' outside!

CAROLER 3

More like yeowlin'!

CAROLER 4

(Pretends to be hurt)

Well, I thought I was in fine form!

CAROLER 2

Reminded ME of a polecat in heat!

CHILD CAROLER

(Shivers)

Hot? Who's hot? I'm freezing!

CAROLER 3

No mind. 'Sides, someone around here might give us a donation!

CHILD CAROLER

I'm gonna get us a silver eagle 'fore the night's through!

*The CAROLERS position themselves
DSC, very near to the Audience.*

CAROLER 1

(Referencing the Audience)

Well, lookee all these smilin' faces!

CAROLER 4

Well, bein' as the gang's all here, I say let's do one more ditty!

CAROLER 1

Fine by me!

CAROLER 1 whispers to the others.

CAROLER 2

Oh, I don't think anybody here knows that. It's pretty new.

CAROLER 1

Pshaw.

*CAROLER 1 separates herself from the
others by moving a bit further DS.
Somewhat nervously, she smooths out her
dress, fiddles with her hair, and clears
her throat.*

CAROLER 1 (*Cont'd*)

Iffin' it would be to y'all's pleasure, the choir would now like to perform the beloved hymn, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," words by America's author of renown, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, regardin' our very own Civil War – days not that far agone.

CAROLER 1 takes out a pitch pipe, blows on it; gestures that each singer try to hit the note. CAROLERS 2 AND 3 hit the note, CAROLER 4 sings an obviously sour note. CAROLER 1 plays it again. Again a sour note, then pitch pipe again and sour note again, repeating faster and faster until CAROLER 1 abruptly stops, puts her hands up, and comments drolly.

CAROLER 1 (*Cont'd*)

Perfect.

ALL CAROLERS, *Singing*

*I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play
And mild and sweet their songs repeat
Of peace on earth good will to men*

*And the bells are ringing
Like a choir they're singing
In my heart I hear them
Peace on earth, good will to men*

The CAROLERS buzz with excitement.

CAROLER 1

Well, that was a huckleberry above a persimmon, if I do say so myself.

CHILD CAROLER

I'm happier'n a bug in a rug!

CAROLER 2

Well, I'm happier'n a clam at high tide!

CAROLER 3

Well, I'm happier'n a possum eatin' a sweet tater!

CAROLER 5

Well, I'm happier'n an old dog lyin' on the porch chewin' on a big ol' catfish head!

The OTHER CAROLERS make sounds of disgust.

As LIGHTS FADE, the group moves US to a position SR of the center door. The CAROLERS become motionless, but not 'frozen'.

NOTE: Until the final scene, no character ever looks at Twain or acknowledges his presence in any way.

MARK TWAIN enters through the house and stands at a podium – as he will do between most scenes. He is carrying a manuscript and a feather pen – his narrations at the podium may be read from the manuscript.

TWAIN is dressed in his iconic three-piece white linen suit with all the accessories: gold watch and chain, boutonniere, shirt studs, gold cuff-links, etc. He is 'smoking' a cigar – a prop cigar which has a glowing tip and creates non-toxic vapor 'smoke). With a great flourish, he pulls open the suit coat, flashing his entire ensemble to the Audience, prompting a round of applause.

TWAIN

My best Sunday go to meetin's outfit. Clothes make the man. (*Winks*) After all... naked people have little or no influence on society!

TWAIN does a little bow, again prompting more applause.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

I've worn these duds with politicians and nefarious scalawag malefactors alike... (*Does a double-take*) Did I just put politicians in the same sentence as nefarious scalawag malefactors? I'm so sorry. I want to apologize to... nefarious scalawag malefactors everywhere! (*Laughs*) Politics. Can we talk about politics for a moment? (*Ponders*) Of course, in the future there certainly won't be the problems with politicians that we've got these days... (*Responding to what should be Audience laughter*) Well, what do we have here? An audience of fortune tellers... or a posse o' cynics? (*Chuckles*) Well, I guess I agree with you. Selfishness, avarice, greed... they've been with us forever. (*Chuckles*) And if you think you understand somethin' about the human heart, well, someone's just done a bad job of explainin' it to ya! (*Picks up manuscript; puts it down*) It's not what we don't know that gets us in trouble. It's what we know for sure that just ain't so. (*Picks up manuscript again*) What we've got for you here is a phantasmical tale concernin' the human heart and its connection to the immortal soul, set in the time followin' our nation's tragic lover's quarrel between the North and the South. (*Beat*) But it's a story that coulda happened anywhere, anytime. (*Beat*) Let's begin:

TWAIN makes a sweeping gesture with his arm. As he does so, STAGE LIGHTS UP FULL.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

A street deep in the American South on Christmas Eve. A nondescript office. Houses and shops decorated for the holidays. Memories of times past and loved ones long gone. On that subject, we should get one thing straight right from the git-go: Rumors of Jacob Marley's death were not greatly exaggerated. (*Chuckles*) No, dear old Jacob was dead alright. No question about that. The county register of his burial was signed by the preacher, the courthouse clerk, the undertaker, and the next of kin. Even Scrooge set his John Hancock to it.

TWAIN remains standing at the podium. The CAROLERS, still located US and SR of the center door, move DSC again. The CHILD CAROLER suddenly points to the "Scrooge & Marley - Mississippi River Freightage" sign.

CHILD CAROLER

Let's go to... SCROOGE'S!

CAROLER 2

Yes, let's!

CAROLER 4

C'mon!

CAROLER 1

(Moving away)

Well, y'all can warble 'til the cows come home for all I care, but count me out! That old buzzard doesn't deserve even a bird's chirp. Not that he'd be able to appreciate – or recognize – the Lord's own angel choir!

CAROLER 4

(Imploring)

Fer goodness' sake! What good is Christian charity if it be withheld from men such as Mr. Scrooge?

The OTHER CAROLERS continue to gesture to the sign and doorway.

ALL CAROLERS BUT CAROLER 1

Come ON!

CAROLER 1

(Sighs)

Well... *(Beat)* ... FINE. *(Takes a step halfway toward the others, then stamps her foot petulantly)* But I... won't... sing... *(Stamps)* ... well!

CAROLER 1 joins the others and the CAROLERS begin to sing or hum softly.

TWAIN

Where was I? Old Marley was as dead as a doornail... which never made a heap'a sense to me in that bein' dead implies that the thing in question had to have been alive in the first place. *(Waves hand dismissively)* But never mind. Scrooge and Marley were partners for...

TWAIN pauses to scratch in his manuscript. This only needs to happen once or twice to establish that he is weaving this story in real time.

TWAIN *(Cont'd)*

... thirty... no... *(More scratching)* ... um, forty... let's just make that... a peck'a years. Scrooge was Jacob's sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. But, if we're tellin' the truth here, even Scrooge hisse'f didn't get all that dreadful worked up by the sad event. Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name on the plaque aside the door... *(Gestures to plaque)* ... not out of any tender feelin's or sentimentality, mind you, but because, as Scrooge himself said, "Well, now, that just makes things simpler, don't it?" There it stood, years afterwards: *(Gestures)* "Scrooge & Marley - Mississippi River Freightage."

SFX: Distant church bells.

BOB CRATCHIT enters through the Audience, greeting Audience members as if they were townspeople with great geniality as he progresses: wishing them a Merry Christmas, shaking hands, patting backs, etc. He takes his time.

BOB makes his way across the length of the stage until he reaches the doorway, where he pauses at the "Scrooge & Marley - Mississippi River Freightage" sign and, with pride, shines it up a bit using his coat sleeve and even straightens out its position on the wall. Then he stops and rolls his eyes upward and sighs, seemingly in anticipation of something. That 'something' is CAROLER 1, who has been carefully watching BOB as he passes in front of the singers. The OTHER CAROLERS move US emphasizing an as yet unexplained connection between CAROLER 1 and BOB. CAROLER 1 suddenly hurries over to BOB, revealing herself as his wife, MRS. CRATCHIT.

CAROLER 1/MRS. CRATCHIT

Bob! Bob! (*Shrieks*) BOB!

MRS. CRATCHIT/CAROLER 1 intercepts BOB at the doorway before he can enter. She takes him by the lapels, looks him over and brushes off his coat.

MRS. CRATCHIT (*Cont'd*)

(*With pride*)

There's my Bob.

She fusses over him then points at the sign near the doorway.

MRS. CRATCHIT (*Cont'd*)

Now, remember: Christmas Day.

BOB CRATCHIT

(Smiles patiently)

Yes, wife. *(Holds her hand in his)* You are too hard on Mr. Scrooge. There is more good in him than meets the eye.

MRS. CRATCHIT sighs at Bob's predictable naivety.

MRS. CRATCHIT

(Frustrated)

He's gonna milk that cow as long as it'll stand, if you let him.

BOB appears resolute. Finally, MRS. CRATCHIT pats his chest with both hands and speaks the same words she just uttered – only this time with fatalistic resolve.

MRS. CRATCHIT *(Cont'd)*

There's my Bob. *(Beat)* I best be gettin' home. Martha might nearly be a grown woman now, but them grandkids are a handful even for her.

MRS. CRATCHIT turns BOB around and actually gives him a little push through the doorway. BOB passes through the doorway and into the office. He hangs his coat and hat on the stand. heads to his tiny clerk's desk and begins working.

TWAIN

A tight-fisted hand at the grindstone was Scrooge! Harder than a two-penny jawbreaker. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. A man without the slightest regard for human sympathy. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.

BOB shivers and retrieves the shawl from the back of his chair and puts it around shoulders. EBENEZER SCROOGE enters from the back of the house and makes his way through the Audience, scowling and glaring at various people in stark contrast to Bob's genial entrance.

SCROOGE

Bah!

SCROOGE stops, takes out his pocket watch and looks at it. He then twirls the watch chain so that it wraps around his finger, untwirls it, then puts it back in his pocket – a signature gesture. TWAIN continues.

TWAIN

A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas. External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say with cheerful greeting, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" 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 keep its distance. *(Beat)* Scrooge spent very little time thinkin' about other human beings. So little, that he was almost entirely unaware of the real reasons that were the source of his own true nature. *(Chuckles)* The hottest summer I ever spent was a winter in the Deep South. But that was not this winter. It was cold, bleak, biting weather. People wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them.

TWAIN exits. SCROOGE scowls at the CAROLERS, parts them with his cane and makes his way toward the door. At the door, he pauses, squints at the sign and returns it to its original position. The CHILD CAROLER approaches SCROOGE. The OTHERS frantically gesture to stop the CHILD, but it is too late. They cringe as the CHILD holds out a cup, arm outstretched.

CHILD CAROLER

Merry Christmas, sir...

SCROOGE slowly raises his head, turns, and appraises the child.

SCROOGE

Bah!

Frightened, the CHILD freezes in place.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Vamoose, guttersnipe!

The CHILD flees as the OTHER CAROLERS, including MRS. CRATCHIT, look at SCROOGE angrily as they, too, begin to exit. Surprisingly quick, SCROOGE makes a move as if he might chase after them as they quickly scatter. Satisfied, he grunts, turns, and enters through the doorway and then into his office. SCROOGE hangs up his coat and hat. Bob, who had been hard at work, rises nervously.

BOB CRATCHIT

Good afternoon, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE

Have you finished those letters, Cratchit?

BOB CRATCHIT

I'm nearly done, sir.

SCROOGE

Don't be thinkin' you'll be leavin' here today until you do. (*Gestures to things off*) All that stuff back there isn't going to ship itself up the river.

FREDERICA, enters, making her way to the office door, catching SCROOGE's eye. He looks out the window, sees her and scoffs to himself.

BOB CRATCHIT

Yes, Mr. Scrooge. I was... I was wonderin' if it might be possible to add another coal or two to the fire? It's getting quite—

SCROOGE

(Cutting him off)

Well isn't that just precisely the reason I keep the coal scuttle in my own room! Damn foolish to be wastin' it this late in the day. Now, get back to your work.

BOB CRATCHIT

Y... yes, Mr. Scrooge.

BOB returns to his desk FREDERICA takes a deep breath and bursts into the office.

FREDERICA

A merry Christmas, Uncle! God bless you!

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug! I can rightly do without you, Frederica, comin' here, bird doggin' me every Christmas.

FREDERICA

(Laughs)

Why would you ever say Christmas was a humbug, Uncle? *(Aside to BOB)*
He don't mean that, I am sure.

Through the following conversation, BOB acts as if he doesn't want to become involved but, as the conversation proceeds, begins to steal looks at the two, quickly putting his head down whenever SCROOGE shoots a disapproving look his way.

SCROOGE

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

SCROOGE pulls out his pocket watch and absentmindedly twirls it by the chain around his finger.

FREDERICA

Come, then. What reason have you to be such a grump? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE

Bah! Can your clients even manage to recompense you?

FREDERICA

When they have no money, people pay me what they can afford and that's fine by me: a goose, a pie, a...

FREDERICA pulls, of all things, an egg out of her coat, looks at it, then spontaneously offers it to SCROOGE.

FREDERICA (Cont'd)

(Gently goading him)

Many happy returns, Uncle!

SCROOGE waves off the egg, grunts. FREDERICA holds up the egg.

FREDERICA (Cont'd)

To the family who gave it, that egg represents a greater share of their wealth than... well, than that fine gold watch of yours, Uncle. And I value it all the more.

SCROOGE huffs grumpily. Holds his watch up next to the egg.

SCROOGE

It's an egg. *(Beat)* Care to trade, little miss priss?

FREDERICA

(Waves him off)

Don't be this way, Uncle.

SCROOGE

'Sides, you should be home cookin' that egg – for your husband!

FREDERICA smiles and offers it to BOB. BOB gazes longingly at the egg, but first looks to SCROOGE for permission, who makes a dismissive gesture. BOB ferrets it into his own coat pocket and returns to work, head down.

FREDERICA

Times are changin,' Uncle.

SCROOGE

They are NOT. Not this century anyways. *(Turns away then quickly back, finger pointed)* – and not NEXT century neither! *(Mumbles)* Women doin' like men. *(Beat)* Right, Cratchit?!

BOB CRATCHIT

(Meekly)

Uh... you haven't met my wife, have you, sir?

Not understanding, SCROOGE looks at BOB, then waves him off.

SCROOGE

Fanny shoulda learned you better... Frederica.

FREDERICA

(Teasing)

If it makes you feel any better, Uncle, you may call me... Freddie. You as well, Mr. Cratchit. *(BOB looks nervous; beat)* Tarnation, Uncle! It's a sin to grouse at Christmastime!

SCROOGE

What else can I be when I live in such a world of dimwits as this? Merry Christmas! Out with your merry Christmas! What's Christmastime to you but a time for payin' bills without money; a time for findin' yourself a year older, but not an hour richer? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled in his own puddin' and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!

FREDERICA

Really, Uncle!

SCROOGE

Yes, really... Niece! You go on, now, and tend to Christmas in your own way and let me tend to it in mine.

FREDERICA

(Aside to BOB)

But he don't tend to it.

BOB looks nervously at FREDERICA, then at SCROOGE, who is scowling at him, then immediately puts his head back down to his work.

SCROOGE

Let me leave it alone then! As much good as it's ever done you.

FREDERICA

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 always thought of Christmastime as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely. And therefore, Uncle, though it don't put a scrap of silver or gold in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

BOB jumps up and spontaneously applauds with such vigor that he nearly knocks over his desk. He rights it, then quickly sits again when he sees SCROOGE glowering at him. Angry, SCROOGE moves toward BOB but is blocked by FREDERICA.

MR. SIMMONS and MR. RYE, two solicitors for charity, enter and make their way toward the office door. They stop outside and quietly converse, gesturing occasionally toward the doorway and the "Scrooge & Marley – Mississippi River Freightage" sign.

FREDERICA (*Cont'd*)

Don't be vexed, Uncle. Come be with us tomorrow at the annual charity ball. Jackson extends his welcome as well.

SCROOGE

There's another thing. Why did you get married?

FREDERICA

(With incomprehension)

Well... because... because I fell in love, of course!

SCROOGE

Because you fell in love! The only one thing in the world more preposterous than a Merry Christmas! My experience has taught me that most would do better to forego marriage entirely. *(Waving her off dismissably)* Good afternoon to you.

FREDERICA

(Laughs all the same)

We'll expect to see you all the same. I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you in such a cantankerous and mule-headed state. *(Again goading lightly)* But, I intend to keep my Christmas humor no matter what. So a merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon, Niece!

FREDERICA

(Rubbing it in)

And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE

Go on. Git!

SCROOGE urns his back to both.

FREDERICA extends her hand to BOB who, after first checking that SCROOGE isn't looking, heartily returns the greeting.

FREDERICA

(Loudly)

Merry Christmas, Mr. Cratchit!

BOB CRATCHIT

(Sotto voce)

And to you, ma'am!

FREDERICA exits. SCROOGE, who has overheard the previous exchange, speaks aloud.

SCROOGE

There's another fella, my clerk. Barely seven greenbacks a week and here he is jawin' on about it bein' a merry Christmas. I'd a powerful sight sooner sign up for my own retiracy.

Outside the office, FREDERICA runs right into the two solicitors for charity MR. SIMMONS and MR. RYE. FREDERICA nods.

FREDERICA

Greetings, gentlemen.

RYE

Evenin,' ma'am.

SIMMONS

And a merry Christmas to you, ma'am.

FREDERICA

Beware my uncle. He has yet to find his Christmas spirit this day... (*Darting a quick glance at SCROOGE who, looking out the window pretends not to hear*) ...or ANY! (*Laughs again and exits off*)

SIMMONS

Ah! Scrooge is slicker'n snakes. You best follow my lead. This feller's like a crocodile lazin' in the bayou sun. By the time you sees him, it's too late.

RYE

Oh, my heavens, no. Mr. Scrooge should be treated with the kindness and generosity of spirit due every living creature!

SIMMONS

(Chuckles)

So, it's a competition is it? Alright, then.

SIMMONS gestures grandly towards the door. RYE enters, followed by SIMMONS. SCROOGE warily eyes the two.

SCROOGE

(Groans)

And here come yonder chuckleheads, right on schedule for the season. And what's this?

SIMMONS stands rigid as he speaks, barely moving a muscle throughout the following exchange.

SIMMONS

(With crisp efficiency)

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

SCROOGE

(Glibly)

Marley? You just missed him. Jacob's only been dead for seven years... *(Realizing something)*
... this very evening.

SIMMONS

(Firmly)

Oh, I see. Well, we have no doubt his generosity will be well represented by his surviving partner.

SIMMONS puts his pen to his book, preparing to make a quick, easy entry.

SCROOGE

Bah. You boys'd puzzle a dozen Philadelphia lawyers to make any sense.

SIMMONS looks up from the book, rebuffed. RYE crosses behind SCROOGE effectively sandwiching him between himself and SIMMONS. He speaks floridly with great passion and emotion.

RYE

(Effusively)

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

SIMMONS

(Sternly)

Even though the war is some years past, I'm sure you realize that there will always be many among us in need our help...

SCROOGE

(Interrupting)

Did they close up all the prisons?

SIMMONS

(Taken aback)

Well, no... there are still plenty of prisons, but...

SCROOGE

How about the poor farms? Are they still in operation?

RYE

(Imploring)

They are, still, though I wish I could say they were not.

SIMMONS

(Recovering)

Mr. Scrooge, some of us are endeavoring to raise funds to buy the poor some food and drink and means of warmth...

RYE

(Floridly)

We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when want is keenly felt, and abundance rejoices. We give so that their own Christmases might be merry!

*RYE's works himself into a frenzy,
reaching out to embrace SCROOGE
appearing to believe SCROOGE will
return the gesture in kind.*

SCROOGE

(With no emotion)

I don't get myself all "merried-up" at Christmas and I can't afford to merri-up a heap o' loafers. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned -- they cost me plenty; and those who are ailing or unmotivated can go sit under their Christmas tree.

SIMMONS

But...

SCROOGE

Let the poor farms take care of your poor and destitute. It's enough for a man to tend to his own business and keep his big snout out of other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good day!

RYE

(Passionately)

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

SCROOGE

(With building anger)

If they be like to die, they had best do it and decrease the surplus population! *(Darkly)* These people you fret over... I wonder... If one or two should fall off the earth, would it not keep spinnin'?

SIMMONS digs in his heels, raising his book and locking eyes with SCROOGE.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Say please.

SIMMONS AND RYE

(*Stammering*)

Wh-Wha-?

SCROOGE

You didn't say please.

SIMMONS AND RYE

Please.

SIMMONS

What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE

Put me down for...

SCROOGE herds RYE toward Simmons; SIMMONS appears truculent, RYE hopeful. Suddenly, SCROOGE appears somewhat amiable. He apprises one solicitor, then the other, then walks over to the safe. He sighs as if in resignation, chuckles, and pulls the safe open, SFX: Safe door creaking open, revealing quite a bit of cash.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Put me down for... (*Slams safe door with SFX: safe door slams shut*) ... NOTHING!

SCROOGE faces THE SOLICITORS.

RYE

(*Stammering slightly*)

Oh... uh... I see. You wish to left anonymous... ?

SCROOGE

(*Snorting*)

I wish to be left alone!

SIMMONS

But... but you don't understand. Many are in need of our desperate cause and noble charity.

SCROOGE

Nooo-sir! What YOU don't understand is this ain't about your desperate cause and it ain't about your noble charity... it's about MY GALL-DARN MONEY! And you boys won't get a Continental dollar outta me! Now, pack up yer traps and GIT! (*Opens the door; glares at THE SOLICITORS*) Good afternoon... gentlemen!

SCROOGE gestures toward the door, waiting. SIMMONS and RYE look at one other, then helplessly to BOB, whose expression conveys that he doesn't dare intercede on their behalf. The two finally appear to realize that there is no 'best' approach when it comes to prying money away from SCROOGE. SIMMONS snaps his book shut with finality. In a huff, they exit.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Well, that settled their hash.

BOB CRATCHIT

(Preparing to leave)

Er... my work is all done, Mr. Scrooge.

BOB cautiously stands and approaches SCROOGE, who looks at his watch.

SCROOGE

Fine.

BOB CRATCHIT

(Stammering)

Sir... I, uh... (*Beat*) er... I was... uh, my wife wanted me to...

SCROOGE

I suppose you'll be wantin' all day tomorrow off, WITH PAY, like all the other freeloaders this time of year?

BOB CRATCHIT

(Blurts)

If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE

It is not convenient and it is not fair. Who does everybody think I am? The Christmas Spirit? If I was to dock you a day's pay so you could go off and cavort with the forest elves or whatever you people do this time o' year... Well, I reckon you'd get yourself all worked up in a tizzy, wouldn't you? But you don't reckon me taken advantage of when I hafta pay a day's wages for no work!

BOB CRATCHIT

But...

SCROOGE turns, faces BOB, and waves his hands gesturing to an area off.

SCROOGE

I told you. All this stuff here don't give a diddly squat it's Christmas. *(Beat)* Which makes two of us.

BOB CRATCHIT

B... b... b... but it's only one day a year, sir.

SCROOGE

A poor excuse for holdin' man at gunpoint every 25th of December. *(Sighs)* Alright... but if you must have the whole day, you get y'self in here before the rooster next morning or you'll know the reason why.

BOB CRATCHIT

Word of honor, Mr. Scrooge. *(Sticks out his hand to shake SCROOGE'S)* Merry... *(Withdraws hand)* ... er, good day, sir.

BOB grabs his coat and hat and heads out the office door, As he exits off, he has a look of pride.

SCROOGE

(Darkly; watching through the window)

Bah.

SCROOGE gathers his papers, puts on his coat and hat, and exits through the office door as LIGHTS FADE OUT.

TWAIN enters and stands at his podium as the scene changes to SCROOGE'S BEDROOM.

TWAIN

Bob set off for home, already warm in the glow of the praise he would soon receive from his wife. On his way, he honored Christmas Eve by playing with the street boys, sledding twenty times down the hill from city hall right to the gates of the cemetery, allowing himself to forget for just a few moments that his own boy had been interred within those very gates scant years afore.

Scrooge did as he always did: same old dinner at the same old tavern. He read all the newspapers, snorting his disapproval at each and every entry. He then worked on ships' manifests and bills of lading until the sun finally gave up the ghost.

As he walked home and to bed, for reasons he could not understand, he began thinking of bygone times; recalling old scenes, and summoning half-forgotten faces out of the mists of the past; listening, in fancy, to voices that long ago grew silent for all time, and to once familiar songs that nobody sings now.

He passed the ancient tower of a church, still pretty shot-up from the war, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window. Invisible, it struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there.

Scrooge had quarters far up Broadway in an expansive old building whose upper stories had formerly been occupied by his deceased partner, Jacob Marley. As he climbed the stairs, an inexplicable, superstitious dread again came over him. He shuddered as one who had encountered a phantom.

As the moon rose he turned down the wick: Darkness is cheap and Scrooge liked it. He got into bed, drew close the covers, and lay listening to the rain and wind and the faint creaking of distant shutters until they finally lulled him to sleep.

TWAIN exits.

ACT I - SCENE 2

SETTING: *SCROOGE'S BEDROOM - LATE EVENING.*

PRODUCTION NOTE: If possible, an image of a lion's head doorknocker changes to a JACOB MARLEY peering into the window.

AT RISE: *SCROOGE enters through the bedroom doorway carrying an oil lantern. He wears a nightgown and cap. SCROOGE sets the lantern down on the night table. Twice before getting into bed SCROOGE does a double-take as the image the doorknocker switches from the doorknocker to MARLEY and back again. Finally SCROOGE gets into bed, and starts to drift off to sleep.*

After a few moments, we hear footsteps and what sounds like something heavy being dragged. SCROOGE is startled awake and quickly sits up.

SFX: Wind, chains. The sound stops.

SCROOGE

Bah... the wind.

SCROOGE attempts to go back to sleep.

SFX: The sounds begin again, then stop.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Humbug. Ridiculous nonsense. I won't believe it.

SFX: Wind, chains, footsteps. JACOB MARLEY appears in silhouette in the bedroom window. Unseen by SCROOGE, he passes slowly toward the door as the sounds grow louder.

MARLEY enters the bedroom encircled by a heavy chain and dragging a ship's anchor intertwined with seaweed. He is wearing a sea captain's uniform and hat. A BLUE LIGHT casts his shadow across the floor in SCROOGE'S direction.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

(*Squinting*)

What... Who in blazes are you?

MARLEY

(*Chuckles darkly*)

Who do you reckon I was?

SCROOGE gets out of bed, walks halfway to MARLEY and peers at him.

SCROOGE

But... it's impossible... Jacob... Marley?

MARLEY

I never knowed you to doubt your senses before... Ebenezer.

SCROOGE

Wha?... Uh, well, that's 'cause a dyspeptic condition affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes you an unreliable apparition, Jacob. Why, you might be a bit of an undigested fried green tomato. (*Beat*) Or that crawdaddy in the jambalaya might be bitin' me back. (*Beat*) Or that puhtatuh in the sawmill gravy... (*Snaps fingers*) That's it! There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are! Humbug, I tell you! Humbug!

MARLEY

(*Quietly*)

Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE

(*Not convinced*)

Why should spectres roam this earth, and what business would they have with me?

SCROOGE dismisses the spirit and turns away. SFX: Chains, thunder. MARLEY lunges forward forcefully, arms outstretched shaking the chain and towering over SCROOGE.

MARLEY

(Powerfully)

DO YOU BELIEVE IN ME OR NOT?!

SCROOGE falls to his knees.

SCROOGE

(In terror)

Yes! Yes! I will believe in you, dreadful nightmare!

SCROOGE regains a modicum of composure and looks more carefully at MARLEY. He points to the chain.

SCROOGE *(Cont'd)*

Jacob, is... How can it be you? *(Beat)* You are fettered. Tell me why.

*SFX: Water, waves, men yelling.
MARLEY speaks as if underwater or drowning; struggling for air, choking.*

MARLEY

(Holds up chain)

I wear the burden I wore in life. A chain of lies, deception, and greed. Though I am its captive, I willfully made it, yard by yard, and girded it of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you, Ebenezer? *(Beat)* I wonder if you know the weight and length of the chain you bear yourself? *(Gestures to net)* It was as full, as heavy, and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago, Ebenezer. You have labored on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!

SCROOGE

Jacob, for bein' an angel in my own dream, you're scarin' the hell out of me!

MARLEY

I ain't no angel, Ebenezer. Far from it. I dwell between the living... and the damned.

SCROOGE

(Recovering somewhat)

Jacob, I've always wondered: How exactly did you die?

MARLEY

I was skimmin' off the books. Been doing it for years. *(Gestures to the room; chuckles)* Didn't you ever wonder how I got all these rooms?

SCROOGE

Oh... and so God struck you dead!

MARLEY

(Low laugh)

Well, that'd only be a mortal sin in your bible, Ebenezer. *(Beat)* I was overloading our steamers and pocketing the difference. Until that last time. We'd laded the riverboat too much. It broke 'er back clean in two and she started sinkin.' The crew got over the side, but ... *(Beat)* ... as I watched them boys make for the shoals, I realized there was only one thing I truly wanted.

SCROOGE

To know how to swim?

MARLEY

(Chuckles darkly)

No... *(Beat)* Staring into the depths, Ebenezer, I suddenly realized that it was my time to hang up the fiddle. That nothin' was ever going to change. That, one way or t'other I'd be in the 'xact same situation again... probably worse. *(Holds up chain)* And in that moment... I began to want... *(Beat)* ... to crave... *(Beat)* ... judgement. *(Beat)* And so, as the black waters rose, I ... I wrapped the anchor chain around my neck and... *(Laughs darkly)* I beat that steamer to the river bottom by ten fathoms.

SCROOGE

Why have you come here? I haven't vexed you.

MARLEY

(Laughs)

It is at this time of the year I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down? That is no light part of my penance. *(Directly to SCROOGE)* I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE

Jacob, you're pilin' up the agony a little too steep. As you were always a good friend to me, I'll thank you now to leave! *(Turns away)*

MARLEY

Ebenezer, it's time you acknowledged the corn. You will be haunted by three spirits.

SCROOGE

(Turns back)

I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY

Without their visits you cannot hope to avoid the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow when the bell tolls one. The second will come on the next night at the same hour. And the third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. For your own sake remember what has passed between us! (*Smiles without humor*) Time's up, Ebenezer. (*As exits*) This is your only hope... your only hope...

SCROOGE

Marley... MARLEY! Bah. (*Beat*) Must have been that puhtatuh. (*Returns to his bed*) Knew there was somethin' not quite right about it.

SCROOGE tries to sleep.

SFX: Bell strikes one. THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST, seen in silhouette, passes by the bedroom window.

SFX: Ethereal music/sounds with wind.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enters the bedroom. She is lovely; both innocent and sensual at the same time. As she walks into the light, SCROOGE sits up in bed and rubs his eyes.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Are... are you the spirit Marley was talkin' about?

CHRISTMAS PAST

I am.

SCROOGE

Well, then, if I am dreaming, let me never wake! Who and what are you?

CHRISTMAS PAST

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE

Long Christmas past?

CHRISTMAS PAST

No, your Christmas past. I am here for your restitution.

SCROOGE

I can't help thinkin' a good night's sleep would be more conducive to a man's restitution than all this commotion's been goin' on here.

CHRISTMAS PAST

(Smiles faintly)

Then humor me, Ebenezer. But take heed: You may see more this eve than you can abide.
(Gestures) Now, rise and walk with me.

SCROOGE

(Rises from bed)

But I am mortal and liable to fall.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Bear but a touch of my hand and you will be upheld in more than this.

SCROOGE

Oh, my! *(Shivers slightly as he touches her hand)* Well, this is turnin' out to be the best damn dream I EVER had! *(Beat)* Lead on... *(Beat)* ... puhtatuh!

CHRISTMAS PAST

Come... let us begin.

SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST exit.

Again, TWAIN enters.

Scene changes from

SCROOGE'S BEDROOM to A CITY PARK with a fence and a signpost that reads "Magnolia Lane" and "Harbor Blvd".

TWAIN

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground. The spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. Above the entire city, he was conscious of a thousand odors floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten.

SFX: Ethereal music/sound.

SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enter.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

They soon arrived at a city square. It was a large town square, filled with many lost souls and broken fortunes, scraping to get by, some still dressed in the only decent clothing they had ever owned – the now moth-eaten and faded Butternut uniforms, like their owners, relics from a conflict now more than a decade passed – a time which many in this era were all too eager to forget.

There was an earthy savor in the air, a chilly bareness which associated itself with the ever-present cold at this time of the year and of not getting too much to eat. They went, the spirit and Scrooge, across the park to a hidden corner, tucked away in a blind alley and, as such, near invisible to even the most curious eye.

TWAIN exits.

ACT I - SCENE 3

SETTING: A CITY PARK – DAYTIME.

AT RISE: SFX: People laughing/happy voices.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Do you remember this place?

SCROOGE

Good heavens, I do! (*Pointing off*) There are all my old friends. Hey, there! Orson! Valentine! Wellington! Ali Baba! It's me, Ebenezer! Hello! Hello!

SCROOGE holds out his hand as if to touch his old friends then pulls it away and looks at it, fingers spread, as if sand has run through them.

CHRISTMAS PAST

These are but shadows of the things that have been. They have no consciousness of us. Do you recollect the way?

SCROOGE

Recollect it? I could walk it blindfolded!

CHRISTMAS PAST

We shall see. Let us go on.

Drawing closer to the fence, THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST and SCROOGE enter a school yard. SFX: Howling wind.

CHRISTMAS PAST (*Cont'd*)

It is Christmas Eve many years ago. People hurrying this way and that, preparing for the holidays, innumerable families with innumerable places to be. All but one. A solitary child, neglected by all, is left there still. Do you know him?

BOY SCROOGE, wearing the jacket of an old Civil War era uniform, quietly enters and stands upstage of the fence, hiding. He occasionally peeks out from behind the fence.

SCROOGE

Poor boy! It is me. What am I doing here?

CHRISTMAS PAST

So you have forgotten? Watch!

A girl, FANNY, enters carrying a brown paper bag. She appears to be searching for someone.

SCROOGE

Why, it's Fanny! My own sweet sister!

FANNY

(Searching)

Ebenezer! Ebenezer! Where are you, Eb? EB!

BOY SCROOGE

I'm over here, Fanny!

FANNY spots BOY SCROOGE behind the fence and runs over to him. He takes the bag from FANNY, and opens it.

BOY SCROOGE *(Cont'd)*

Finally!

SCROOGE ravenously tears into the food inside the bag.

FANNY

Ebenezer, I can't keep doin' this. Daddy's figured out I'm helping you and told me to tell you to git back t'home.

BOY SCROOGE

I don't give a diddly-squat what Pa thinks.

FANNY

Well, it's your fault, too, Eb *(Beat)* What you did.

BOY SCROOGE

(Confused)

Huh?

FANNY

Daddy's watch.

BOY SCROOGE

Oh, that. Well, he should be thankin' me. I sold that old piece of junk for double what the gold in it was worth.

FANNY

But, Eb, it was Daddy's and his daddy's afore him. It meant a lot to him and, 'sides, you had no right...

BOY SCROOGE

Things is worth what things is worth. *(Beat)* What does he want? I gave him a fair share of the profits!

FANNY

Tarnation, Eb! It's a sin to grouse at Christmastime! *(Beat)* You can't keep livin' out here like this. Just look at you. *(Pokes at him)* Why, you ain't even got enough meat on you to make a flea's dinner. *(Sniffs, whiffs air with hand)* And, Eb, you smell.

BOY SCROOGE looks slightly offended.

FANNY *(Cont'd)*

'Sides, Daddy says it's time you two ended this feud.

BOY SCROOGE

Him first!

FANNY

That's what I'm tryin' to tell you... he's forgiven you!

BOY SCROOGE

He what?! *(Beat)* What changed his mind?

FANNY

Ebenezer, Daddy spoke so gently to me t'other night that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home.

BOY SCROOGE

How brave you are, little Fan!

FANNY

And he said yes, Eb!

BOY SCROOGE

I can't scarce believe it! (*Suspiciously*) Has he stopped drinkin'?

FANNY

Oh, yes! He's so much better than he used to be! He's sweeter'n a pie supper!

FANNY claps her hands together. THE BOY stands and they embrace.

BOY SCROOGE

Oh, Fanny, I ain't at all been happy in this place but I'm skeered and bashful o' goin' back home!

FANNY

Be skeered no longer, brother! You are never to come back here!

BOY SCROOGE

And we shall be together!

FANNY

Yes, we shall be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world! Forever and ever!

THE TWO join hands and dance in a circle chanting, "Forever and ever!" They embrace, then sit and continue to speak quietly.

SCROOGE

(Sighs)

My father's "forever and ever" lasted barely a fortnight. That man sure could hold a grudge – and a whippin' switch – better'n he could hold his liquor!

SCROOGE takes his watch out of his pocket and twirls it on the chain. THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST shakes her head disapprovingly. SCROOGE acknowledges her reproach with defiance.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Years later I tracked that watch down and bought it back just to get that old man's goat. (*Beat*) And I did. (*Beat*) Fanny was right about one thing. I never went back to that place again. The next time I ran away was when Fezziwig found me.

BOY SCROOGE and FANNY exit.

CHRISTMAS PAST

(Gesturing to FANNY)

Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered. But she had a large heart!

SCROOGE

So she had, spirit.

CHRISTMAS PAST

She died young but not before giving birth.

SCROOGE

One child.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your niece, Frederica.

SCROOGE

Yes. This dream seems to be takin' a decidedly pestiferous turn! *(Sighs)* Do your worst... puhtatuh!

CHRISTMAS PAST

Come.

*SCROOGE AND THE GHOST OF
CHRISTMAS PAST exit as TWAIN
enters, speaking as the scene changes to
MRS. FEZZIWIG'S HOME FOR
NEGLECTED WOMEN."*

TWAIN

Although they had but that moment left the town square behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battle for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmastime again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up. One large house in particular looked particularly inviting. They went in. At sight of a jolly, bawdy woman holding court in an enormous wig that, had she had been two inches taller, she might well have knocked her head against the ceiling. A woman with a heart so large that everybody's grief and everybody's joy found welcome in it, and hospitable accommodation.

ACT I - SCENE 4

SETTING: *A PRIVATE CHRISTMAS PARTY - EVENING*

AT RISE: *SFX: Music; a happy lilt. MRS. FEZZIWIG and her husband, MR. FEZZIWIG, enter through the center door as MEN AND WOMEN ATTENDEES of all ages enter from all directions. It is a festive group.*

As the revelry progresses, SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enter.

CHRISTMAS PAST

And do you know this place?

SCROOGE

Know it? I was apprenticed here! There's old Fezziwig, bless her heart! *(Looks around)* This home saved the life of many a young woman lost on the river. *(Beat)* It's Fezziwig alive again... and...

YOUNG SCROOGE enters.

SCROOGE *(Cont'd)*

Why, it's... can it be? Is that... me?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Yes. That is you.

SCROOGE

I'd never realized before how much Frederica looks like me when I was younger...

Several YOUNG WOMEN flock around YOUNG SCROOGE. He is polite but rebuffs their more amorous advances.

CHRISTMAS PAST

When Fezziwig found you on the street, she brought you here and gave you a home. It was here you truly came into your own, performing miracles straightening out her books, paying salaries, and wisely reinvesting profits.

SCROOGE

Look, spirit. I was quite the dandy.

CHRISTMAS PAST

You were. But see how you rebuff their advances? That is because another love has already taken possession of your heart. *(Beat)* As you shall soon see.

BELLE enters through the doorway and joins YOUNG SCROOGE. Without comment, the YOUNG WOMEN gravitate away to the other men.

CHRISTMAS PAST *(Cont'd)*

And her?

SCROOGE

It's... no, it cannot be...

CHRISTMAS PAST

It is.

SCROOGE

Belle. Lovely, lovely Belle! She was the apple of my eye, spirit.

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Yo ho, my boys and girls! It's Christmas Eve! It's been a fine year for us here at the home and there's much cause for celebration! Drink up and be merry this Christmas!

MRS. FEZZIWIG moves away to chat with other partygoers.

PARTY ATTENDEE 1

(Confidentially to TWO OTHERS)

My barges are filled to capacity!

PARTY ATTENDEE 2

It has been a good year, not just for Mrs. Fezziwig, but for all of us what make our livin' on the river.

PARTY ATTENDEE 3 beckons to YOUNG SCROOGE who excuses himself to BELLE joining the THREE MEN.

PARTY ATTENDEE 3

And none more so than this young man here his'self.

YOUNG SCROOGE

I don't believe we've met... ? Name's Scrooge.

PARTY ATTENDEE 3

(Offers hand)

Jacob... Jacob Marley. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

*THE TWO MEN shake hands.
SCROOGE and MARLEY join BELLE,
while THE OTHERS stay behind talking
between themselves.*

PARTY ATTENDEE 1

Young Scrooge there has become a wizard with the dollar, alright!

PARTY ATTENDEE 2

And now he's started makin' moves into our businesses!

PARTY ATTENDEE 1

(Darkly)

He'll earn his weight in gold and won't be happy until he's made beggars of us all!

*THE TWO MEN laugh, somewhat darkly,
then move aside as MRS. FEZZIWIG
returns.*

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Y'all! Y'all! Let's have the shutters up afore a man can say Jack Robinson! *(Sharply claps hands)* I would like to present a very special entertainment for this evenin'!

SFX: Up tempo dance music.

*ALICE MAY, who had previously been
fawning over YOUNG SCROOGE,
pushes away from a group of YOUNG
MEN.*

MRS. FEZZIWIG *(Cont'd)*

Alice May here has just come down the river from Missouri. She's is gonna start dancin' right here on the Delta at The Palace nightclub next week— *(Excitedly)* But tonight we got her all to ourselves!

ALICE MAY grabs a mug from one of the men and downs the entire contents in seconds. She tosses the mug back to its owner. OTHER ATTENDEES open a circle around her. She Dances as SFX: Music increases tempo.

ALICE MAY dances into the group and throws a feather boa around MR. FEZZIWIG'S neck, drawing him into the dance with her. MR. FEZZIWIG responds enthusiastically – and somewhat ridiculously – causing the group to cheer and clap in time with the music. MRS. FEZZIWIG crosses her arms and feigns her disapproval at her husband's antics. Suddenly, MR. FEZZIWIG nearly collapses, pulling a muscle. He stops cold; he's in real pain—that is until all the women gather around, cooing and fussing over him. With their help, MR. FEZZIWIG happily hobbles out followed by a chastening, but smiling, MRS. FEZZIWIG.

The OTHER PARTY ATTENDEES, all except YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE, quietly exit off as

SFX: The lively up-tempo music morphs into a dramatic classical piece. YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE dance.

SCROOGE

Ah, Fezziwig. How can it be I have barely thought of her once in all these years?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Why not indeed?

SCROOGE

It was Fezziwig who took me in when my father threw me out. She taught me how work with money.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST
raises her arm, points in the direction of
YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE.*

CHRISTMAS PAST

The happiness she gave was quite as great as if it cost a fortune.

SCROOGE

Ah, lovely Belle. What a beauty she was! Oh, she did love me, spirit! And I would have gone to hell across lots to get to her. *(Beat)* I have often tried to remember how we grew apart.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Ah, memory, that rascal. But, quick! My time grows short! Watch!

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST
smiles grimly as BELLE stops dancing,
pushing YOUNG SCROOGE away.*

BELLE

Ebenezer...

YOUNG SCROOGE

Yes, Belle?

BELLE

Don't hate me...

YOUNG SCROOGE

Hate you? I don't hate you! *(Attempts to dance)*

BELLE

(Resisting)

Ebenezer, I will marry another. He has asked for my hand before, but now...

YOUNG SCROOGE

Now?

BELLE

I matter 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

(Gruffly, demandingly)

What do you mean? What "idol"?

BELLE

A golden one.

*YOUNG SCROOGE begins a lecture;
one BELLE has heard before.*

YOUNG SCROOGE

This thing that's got you all riled up is the way of the world, Belle! At the same time it punishes the poor, it pretends to condemn those who pursue wealth! All I'm tryin' to do is avoid the first one and then make enough money that we together can ignore the second!

BELLE

No. You love it. *(Looks at him deeply)* You love it because you fear the world so 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, leaving this one to engross you. *(Tugs at his coat)* Have I not?

YOUNG SCROOGE

(Pulls away)

So what? What does it matter to you that I have become so much wiser? Why should you care? *(Touches BELLE)* I am not changed towards you.

BELLE

(Backs away)

Ebenezer, our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and didn't mind being so until, eventually, we could improve our worldly fortune in our own time, at our own pace. Since you made your declaration of love, much has changed. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.

YOUNG SCROOGE

I was a boy.

*SCROOGE pulls out his pocket watch,
distractedly checks the time, twirls the
chain around his finger, then replaces it.*

BELLE

You were not what you are now. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. But it has long been my wish that you would come back to me.

SCROOGE

(Angry)

Well, how would I know that, Belle?

BELLE

Oh, Ebenezer, because I was wishin' it right out loud. *(Wipes a tear)* But no matter. Now. *(Beat)* Sadly, the time has passed, irrevocably. *(Beat)* As you see the world differently, so now do I see you differently, despite my wish that it be otherwise. *(Beat)* And so, it is enough that I have thought of it, and 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 another atmosphere of life. I would happily think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows.

BELLE holds up the ring on her finger, looks at it sadly. She brings her hand up to her lips.

SCROOGE

See, spirit? She's kissing my ring! Just as I remembered it!

CHRISTMAS PAST

(Angrily)

She's not kissin' it. She's spittin' on her finger so she can get it off quicker! Watch!

BELLE

(Hands ring to SCROOGE)

And so I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were. In a very, very brief time, 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.

Confused and upset, BELLE exits.

YOUNG SCROOGE

(Heartbroken)

Belle! *(Suddenly angry)* Do you realize what you're doing? *(Angrier; shouting)* What you're throwing away?

YOUNG SCROOGE strikes the wall in anger. He prepares to hit it again, then looks at his hand. He looks toward where BELLE exited. He holds up the ring, inspects it for a moment, then tosses it up a few inches in the air and catches it in his fist. Finally, he puts it inside his jacket's breast pocket. He utters a single contemptuous word, perhaps for the first time.

YOUNG SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Bah!

YOUNG SCROOGE quickly exits.

CHRISTMAS PAST

'Twas a time you were climbin' the stairs to her heart (*Beat*) takin' 'em two at a time.

SCROOGE

Well... well... she made the biggest mistake of her life. A life of comfort, security... respect. (*Beat*) Well... no matter... My experience has taught me that most would do better to forego marriage entirely.

CHRISTMAS PAST

(*Dryly*)

I have heard that.

SCROOGE looks pensive.

CHRISTMAS PAST (*Cont'd*)

What is the matter?

SCROOGE

Oh, nothing.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Something, I think.

SCROOGE

Only that I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all. (*Waves off the thought; angrily*) Spirit! Remove me from this place!

CHRISTMAS PAST

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

SCROOGE

Liar! Remove me! Haunt me no longer... *(Beat, then scathingly)* ... puh...

SCROOGE can't finish the world 'puhtatuh.' He puts his hand to his head, thinks about what has occurred.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Come.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST exits but just as SCROOGE is about to exit, he turns back. Making sure no one is watching, he removes from his breast pocket what appears to be the same ring YOUNG SCROOGE just pocketed. He kisses it, checks again to make sure no one saw him, then exits off.

SFX: Rain. TWAIN enters; the scene changes to SCROOGE'S BEDROOM.

TWAIN

Alright, now that we're hummin' a theme, let's hear the rest of the song.

By this time, old Scrooge was just about startin' to catch on that there might be something to this whole "three- ghosts-are-going-to-scare-the-livin'-bejesus-out-of-you" business and so, waking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, he began to suspicion maybe, just maybe... that it wasn't the puhtatuh.

ACT I- SCENE 5

SETTING: *SCROOGE'S BEDROOM – EVENING.*

AT RISE: *SCROOGE in his bed; suddenly sits up.*

TWAIN

He sat up in bed and immediately began to formulate a plan of action in anticipation of the second phantom, real or imagined.

He knew he would require all his wits about him to challenge the impending messenger and established a sharp look-out all round the bed, for he wished to challenge the spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise and made nervous.

SCROOGE rises quickly and checks under his bed.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

He even looked under the bed.

Scrooge was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and nothing between a baby and rhinoceros would have astonished him very much. Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing. And, consequently, when the bell struck one...

*SFX: Bell strikes one. SCROOGE looks around frightened and begins to tremble.
SFX: Wind; ghostly sounds.*

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

... and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. At last, however, he began to think -- as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the predicament who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT passes slowly behind the window, appearing momentarily in silhouette before moving to the bedroom doorway.*

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

At last, I say, he began to think that the source and secret of a ghostly light he perceived as appearing faintly through his doorway might in some way be connected to the appearance of the next spirit. As this idea took full possession of his mind, he gathered his courage and spoke...

*TWAIN exits. SFX; Howling wind.
SCROOGE looks about.*

SCROOGE

Spirit? (*Nervously*) Who's there?

VOICE OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT (*Off*)

It is I!

*SFX: Light, comical classical music.
THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT bumps about outside the door.*

SCROOGE

Who is "I"? (*Sits up*) Who's there, I say?

VOICE OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT (*Off*)

Me!

SCROOGE

Then show yourself!

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT appears again in silhouette
through the window. Shortly after, he
enters through the door carrying two
large carpetbags, stumbling about.*

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT is dressed in a most painfully
gaudy jacket with mismatched pants and
an immense fluffy bow-tie. Perhaps worst
of all, he has a cooked turkey leg jammed
between his teeth. Finally, seeing
SCROOGE, THE GHOST OF
CHRISTMAS PRESENT approaches.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(With a mouth full of food; in a southern drawl)

Ah, there you are! And, more importantly, here I am! *(Aside)* Never quite sure how these little journeys will end! *(Beat)* Scrooge I take it?

SCROOGE

What in the Sam Hill are you?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(Like a huckster or carnival barker)

It's not what I am, friend, it's what you are. And that's LUCKY! Lucky that I just happened to be passin' by on this fine day! *(Slaps SCROOGE on the back)* It boggles the mind. What are the odds I would be standin' right outside that window there *(Gestures)* and hear all this moanin' and carryin' on comin' from this general direction? And so I thought to myself, well, right inside there is a troubled soul who could use just a little bit o' help... and an opportunity for me to make a brand-new friend!

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT offers SCROOGE his hand,
but SCROOGE simply ignores it. THE
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT,
always the salesman, also completely
ignores the rebuff.*

SCROOGE

Well, I'm not troubled. And I'm not interested in friends.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I can see you're a busy man! *(Beat)* Not that I'm not a busy man myself. Why, I got me a couple sugar mamas way up north that require my constant attention *(Nudges SCROOGE, winks)* if you know what I mean, fr...

SCROOGE

Don't say 'friend'. *(Beat)* Who are you?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Why... I'm the Ghost of Christmas Present, of course. *(Laughs; strikes a comical pose, balancing a wiggling turkey leg on his extended hand)* You've never seen the like of me before!

SCROOGE

Well, there's something we can agree upon.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

And I'm to be your guide tonight.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT takes a bite of the turkey leg,
turns back toward the bed and extends it
to SCROOGE.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (Cont'd)

Hungry? You'll need your strength, man, for what lies ahead! (*SCROOGE pushes away the turkey leg*) Well, perhaps you'll like what I've got in here more!

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT puts the turkey leg on the bed,
then bends down and opens one of the
two carpet bags. An intense light shoots
straight up to the ceiling illuminating him
as he begins rummaging through the bag.*

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT leans down and opens the
second carpetbag which when opened,
illuminates Scrooge in the same ghostly
manner that the first bag illuminates THE
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (Cont'd)

Well now let's just see what we got here... (*Rummages*) ... I wonder if I could interest you in my new line of household curatives?

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT continues to rummage. As he
speaks the following lines, he quickly
moves from bag to bag.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (Cont'd)

Uh... oh, look. Here's Dr. Sellers' Infallible Imperial Oriental Optic Liniment and Salvation for Sore Eyes; Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People; Dr. Batty's Sure-fire Asthma Cure Cigarettes; Dr. Fowler's Malaria and Arthritis Cure – now with even more arsenic; Dr. Digby's "Powder Of Sympathy" made with earthworms, pigs' brains, and select bits of mummified corpses; Dr. Clive's Home Appendectomy Kit...(*Gathers the products and stands*) I don't know about you, friend, but I thank goodness there are so many devoted members of the medical profession doing so much invaluable humanitarian research!

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT again digs into his bags.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (*Cont'd*)

Uh... speaking of which. Here's some advanced medical degrees from Colombia (*Wink*) – the country, not the college! (*More rummaging*) ... insurance policies for things that are never gonna break anyway... I'm thinking of calling them... extended warranties... ice cubes for Eskimos... and, finally, here's a patented dandy!... (*Beat*) Packets of dehydrated H₂O, (*Beat*) just add water!

SCROOGE

Sounds like a buncha notions to me, confected from equal parts confabulation and Yankee hooley.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(*With fanfare*)

Ohhh. And here, ahhh... HERE is what I believe will be my greatest seller ever. (*Takes a bottle out of the bag; stands*) Oh, yes, this is something entirely new; invented it myself! It's a sure-fire cure for anything and everything that ails ya. (*Holds up bottle triumphantly*) Snake oil! (*Pulls out what is obviously a snake prop*) ... which is not an easy thing to come by, I'm tellin' you. First you gotta get ahold o' the varmint, then throw it down on the ground and stomp on it a little (*Stomps*) until it's in the mood to be cooperative, then kind of ringin' it out like a wet sock... (*Holds up bottle*) ... while holdin' it right over this tiny little hole in the top of the bott—

SCROOGE

I don't understand a single thing you've said since you got here.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT puts the bottle and snake back into one of the bags. He clears his throat, straightens his clothes, and smooths his hair with his fingers then walks over to the bag nearest SCROOGE and closes it.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You know... (*Closes other bag*) ... there just might be a thing or two you can teach me. (*Crosses to the window; darker, losing his southern drawl*) But I doubt it. (*Beat*) C'mere. In preparation for our journey, come to the window.

SCROOGE gets out of bed and joins THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT at the window.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (*Cont'd*)

Now, look out over the city. Tell me what you see.

SFX: Sounds of city, people.

SCROOGE

What is there to see? A busy city: buildings, bridges, carriages, lights...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You see everything but the people, man! Good, hard-working people, many of scant means. Can't you see them flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces, emerging from scores of streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, in preparation for the glorious celebration ahead?

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT grabs SCROOGE by the
shoulders shaking him.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (*Cont'd*)

And why? Because it's Christmas, man. Christmas, (*Most excitedly*) God love it!

SCROOGE

Why do you favor the poor most?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(Becoming darker; more serious)

Because they need it most.

SCROOGE

Forgive me if I am wrong, but their fates have been cast in your name by many.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT removes his coat revealing a
more conservative-looking vest beneath.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(Untying his tie)

There are some upon this earth of yours who lay claim to know the purpose of those such as myself, and who perform their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name. These people are, to us, as strange as if they had never lived. Be sure to blame them for the things they do, not us.

*SCROOGE clears his throat somewhat
self-consciously.*

SCROOGE

Spirit... conduct me where you will. If you have anything to teach me, let me profit by it.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(Holds out hand)

Come. Touch my hand.

SCROOGE touches THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT's hand. They exit.

TWAIN enters. The scene changes from SCROOGE'S BEDROOM to THE CRATCHIT HOME.

TWAIN

(Rubs hands together)

Scrooge and the spirit passed over the city streets on Christmas morning, where – for the weather was severe – the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant, kind of music in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings and from the tops of their houses. It was mad delight for the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snowstorms.

SFX: Church bells, faintly in the distance.

TWAIN *(Cont'd)*

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces.

ACT I- SCENE 6

SETTING: *THE CRATCHIT HOME ON CHRISTMAS DAY – EVENING. The home is simple but comfortable; a table Center.*

AT RISE: *SFX: Bells stop ringing. MRS. CRATCHIT, BELINDA and PETER enter.*

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

In time, though the bells ceased... and the bakers were shut up, there was yet a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too. And perhaps it was the pleasure the good spirit had in showing off this power of his...

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT laughs as he and SCROOGE enter.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

... or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him.

TWAIN exits as MRS. CRATCHIT shakes out a tablecloth. BELINDA and PETER, excited for Christmas, help her prepare for a special dinner. PETER goes to the window checking for MARTHA, BOB, and TINY TIM. BELINDA sets the table with simple plates and cups as SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT look on.

SCROOGE

Spirit, where are we? Who are these people?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Don't you recognize the home of your faithful clerk?

SCROOGE

Cratchit? (*Distastefully*) So this is Bob Cratchit's house?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

And what do you surmise from that?

SCROOGE

(With surprise)

I pay him enough to afford... children?!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You know how much – or how little – you pay him.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Peter, help Belinda finish setting the table. Dinner's almost ready.

PETER

Where are Pawpaw and Tiny Tim, Gran?

MRS. CRATCHIT

(Sighs; perhaps worried dinner is getting cold)

Lord willin' and the creek don't rise, they should be home presently.

PETER returns to the window.

BELINDA

I'm sure they will be here soon, Gran.

MRS. CRATCHIT

And where in the world is Martha? I swear, that young'un arrives a little later every Christmas!

MRS. CRATCHIT looks at a wall clock, then toward the door.

PETER

(At the window)

Oh! Here's Martha now, Gran!

MARTHA enters. BELINDA runs to her and hugs her.

BELINDA

(Jumping up and down with joy)

Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Land sakes alive, child. How late you are!

MRS. CRATCHIT hugs and kisses MARTHA. She helps MARTHA remove her shawl and hangs it on a coat rack then helps MARTHA into an apron and bonnet from the rack.

MARTHA

I'm sorry, Gran. We had a mess o' work at the shop last night and then had to clear it all away this morning.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Well, never mind just as long as you are here. Now, sit yourself down, dear, and have a cup o' warm, Lord bless you.

MRS. CRATCHIT looks to BELINDA who has a mug ready for MARTHA. MARTHA sits at the table with her drink. PETER sees his Pawpaw through the window.

PETER

(Excitedly)

Here comes Pawpaw!

BELINDA

Hide, Martha, hide!

BELINDA and PETER pull MARTHA aside as MRS. CRATCHIT grabs the mug at the last moment before it sails off into the air. MARTHA hides behind the table.

BOB enters through the door with TINY TIM on his shoulders. TIM is carrying a crutch. BOB carries TINY TIM over to a small chair near the fireplace. He then removes his shawl and hat and gives them to MRS. CRATCHIT, who covertly uses them to cover MARTHA'S shawl.

BOB CRATCHIT

We're back.

MRS. CRATCHIT embraces BOB, feeling something unexpected in his coat pocket. BOB pulls from his pocket the egg he received earlier from FREDERICA and holds it up for all to see. MRS. CRATCHIT looks at BOB quizzically.

BOB CRATCHIT (Cont'd)

(Pleasantly)

Er... a Christmas present from Mr. Scrooge's niece, Frederica. *(Proudly)* And she said I may call her Freddie!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Well, first the entire day off, then now confabulatin' with the bosses! Well, Mr. Cratchit, you're getting' as smooth as a Yankee scalawag!

BOB pretends to toss the egg to his wife, who puts up her hands, afraid to catch it. Playfully, he backs up and again pretends to toss it. She puts her hands on her hips with mock-sternness. He moves a bit further away, turns his back to her, winks to the children, and pretends he's going to toss it blindly over his shoulder. THE CHILDREN laugh. BOB bends his arms, squawks like a chicken and pretends to lay the egg. THE CHILDREN squeal with delight. BOB turns back to MRS. CRATCHIT and actually tosses it. The egg sails through the air. MRS. CRATCHIT catches it, fumbles it several times, then ultimately drops it. She ducks behind the table, searching for the egg. Suddenly her head pops up from behind the table, holding up the unbroken egg.

MRS. CRATCHIT (Cont'd)

(Giving BOB a stern look)

Hard boiled! *(Crisply)* Well, all the better for Christmas dinner! *(Exits to kitchen with egg)*

BOB turns his attention to THE CHILDREN who are giggling and not doing a very good job of blocking the area where MARTHA is hiding.

BOB CRATCHIT

Why... *(With mock suspicion)* ... where's our Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT enters, looking at PETER and BELINDA who give her a "don't let on" look.

MRS. CRATCHIT

(Suppressing a giggle)

Uh... not coming. It's a tragedy.

BOB CRATCHIT

Not coming?!

BOB smiles and begins searching around the room. MARTHA moves behind one sibling then another, ultimately taking a spot partially hidden by the tablecloth. ALL try to suppress their giggles as BOB looks in the sugar bowl, teapot, under PETER'S cap, and several other small items.

BOB CRATCHIT *(Cont'd)*

Not coming... upon Christmas Day? *(Looks in PETER'S ear)* Nope. Nothin' in there!

BOB gives PETER a quick hug allowing him to see MARTHA who laughs and attempts to flee behind the table. BOB blocks her way so she quickly moves around the back of the table. BOB quickly reverses direction, 'catching' MARTHA near the head of the table. The game over, they embrace warmly.

MARTHA

Merry Christmas, Grandfather.

BOB CRATCHIT

It's good to have you home again, little one. Our family together as one!

PETER

(Sullenly)

Unless something bad happens again.

BOB CRATCHIT

(Reacting)

Alright, now. On that subject, all you poppets gather 'round. I want to speak plainly to you for a moment. C'mon, now. *(Pulls up chair next to TINY TIM as OTHERS gather round)* Good. Good. *(Takes a deep breath)* Now, listen. *(Beat)* Yes, it's true we lost your mama to the fever and your daddy – our little boy – to the war. *(BOB and MRS. CRATCHIT exchange a heartfelt look)* But we want every one of you to always know you're with us, now, and nothin' bad is ever gonna happen to you. Ever. You don't have to worry. And that's a promise.

MRS. CRATCHIT

(Changes subject; wiping away a tear)

And how did little Tim behave in the town?

BOB CRATCHIT

As good as gold and better.

TINY TIM

Pawpaw says I'm growing strong *(Coughs)* and hearty!

BOB CRATCHIT

That he is! Oh, yes. This little feller's... full o'the dickens!

BELINDA

(Standing)

Can you smell the goose, Pawpaw?

BOB CRATCHIT

Roast goose! Is there a finer aroma in all the world, Christmas or any other day?

MRS. CRATCHIT

Well, then, let's go get it 'fore it flies away! *(To PETER)* Come help, Peter.

PETER

(Stands)

Yes, Gran...

MRS. CRATCHIT and PETER exit to the kitchen.

BOB CRATCHIT

So, Martha, tell us about life at the milliner's shop.

MARTHA

(Sighs)

The life of an apprentice is not an easy one. The work is hard and our days are long.

BOB CRATCHIT

(Looking from CHILD to CHILD)

Each of you will earn a trade, so you won't be havin' to work 16 hours a day in the sweat shops, like so many children nowadays. *(Puts his arm around MARTHA)* Martha, we're all very proud of you.

BELINDA

Pawpaw, I want to be an apprentice like Martha!

MRS. CRATCHIT and PETER enter with the goose on a platter.

MRS. CRATCHIT

That you will when the time comes.

As they set the goose on the table, BOB crosses to PETER, placing a hand on his shoulder.

BOB CRATCHIT

Your father – bless his soul – and I had our eye on a position for this one which will bring in a full four-bits a week!

PETER

Ohhh... then I shall have to deliberate what particular investments to favour when I come into the receipt of such a bewildering income!

ALL laugh.

BELINDA

And I will soon have a job like Martha and Peter as well, Pawpaw!

BELINDA helps put the finishing touches on the table.

BOB CRATCHIT

Ah! Such wonderful children! We are truly blessed! Now, let the feast begin! (*Inspecting the table*) Indeed. Was there ever such a glorious spread!

MRS. CRATCHIT claps for attention.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Everyone, come to the table. Let us begin the meal. Come, sit down, children.

BELINDA, PETER, and MARTHA go to TIM and offer to help him to the table. TIM takes up his crutch.

TINY TIM

I can do it!

TIM walks with difficulty to his seat between BOB and MRS. CRATCHIT, who help him into his chair.

SFX: Solemn music. THE FAMILY holds hands for a moment. Then...

TINY TIM (*Cont'd*)

(Pounding table with his fork)

Hurrah!

ALL CHILDREN

Hurrah!

SFX: A happier lilt. ALL begin to eat with much chatter and laughter.

SCROOGE crosses to the table and points at the goose.

SCROOGE

'Glorious'? Are we looking at the same goose? Why, that is the leanest bird that never flew! These folks're poor as Job's turkey – only with a goose!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

To them, it is a feathered phenomenon without equal.

BOB CRATCHIT

A very merry Christmas to us all, my darlings. God bless us!

TINY TIM

God bless us, every one!

*BOB lovingly holds TIM'S hand, pats it.
Looks at him, trying to disguise his
sorrow.*

SCROOGE

Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT crosses towards TINY TIM'S
chair.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

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.

SCROOGE

No, no. Oh, no, kind spirit. Say he will be spared.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Is that not as you hold? (*Gestures to the CRATCHITS*) If one or two should fall off the earth, would it not keep spinning? (*SCROOGE hangs his head*) Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? (*Gestures toward TINY TIM*) 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 grandchild.

BOB CRATCHIT

Everyone. Everyone. (*Stands for a toast*) I give you... 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 toast upon!

THE CHILDREN look about uneasily.

BOB CRATCHIT

(Stammering)

B... b... b... but, my dear, the children! Christmas day...

MRS. CRATCHIT

It should be Christmas day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such a stingy, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.

BOB CRATCHIT

(Imploring)

M... m... my dear... Christmas day.

MRS. CRATCHIT

(Snorts)

Fine. I'll drink to his health because of the day, and because you wish it... but not because he deserves it.

MRS. CRATCHIT reluctantly stands and raises her glass. She points to PETER, who makes a 'who me?' gesture then pretends to be SCROOGE. She walks over to him, shakes him by the shoulders in a sign of mock-disrespect. THE GIRLS giggle; PETER tries to stay in character.

MRS. CRATCHIT *(Cont'd)*

Long life to you, Mr. Scrooge. A merry Christmas and a happy new year to you, sir. *(As CHILDREN laugh, she tries to conceal her own laughter)* I'm sure you'll be very merry and very happy, your royal highness, I have no doubt!

MRS. CRATCHIT gives PETER a small kiss on the top of his head. BOB and MRS. CRATCHIT sit. She touches BOB's shoulder. They hold hands as ALL resume eating and celebrating.

SCROOGE

They are so poor...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

And yet they are grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time. A happy family.

Once again, SCROOGE looks pensive.

SCROOGE

I wish...

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(Crossing to SCROOGE)

What's the matter?

SCROOGE

Oh, nothing. Nothing. There was a child singing a Christmas carol at my door last night. I would have liked to have given her something is all. *(Dismisses the thought)*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Well, well. Now, come. *(Crosses to doorway)* This night is not yet over. Let us look in on your own family...

SCROOGE

My niece, Frederica?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(As if he knows her)

Ohh! You mean Freddie!

SCROOGE

(Dryly)

Let's get this over with!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Come...

SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT exit. LIGHTS DOWN on the CRATCHIT FAMILY. They exit as TWAIN enters. THE CRATCHIT home is struck to a FESTIVE DINNER PARTY.

TWAIN

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlors, and every sort of place, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cozy dinner party... with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness, and couples gathering to celebrate the day. The very lamplighter, who ran on before dotting the dusky street with specks of light, and who was dressed to spend the evening somewhere, laughed out loudly as the spirit passed. There, all the people of the town were coming in from the snow to meet their sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and beloved friends.

ACT I - SCENE 7

SETTING: *LADIES OF THE NEW SOUTH CHARITY BALL – EVENING. A “Ladies of the New South Annual Christmas Charity Ball” banner is hung above the doorway.*

AT RISE: *SFX: Dance music. A DANCING COUPLE sweep into the room. THE MAN deftly grabs a shaker of salt from the table (Under the window) and, reaching over his partner’s shoulder while they dance, casually sprinkles salt on the floor ‘preparing’ the surface for an evening of dancing. OTHER COUPLES join the dance as SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT enter.*

TWAIN (*Cont’d*)

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh.

FREDERICA enters accompanied by her husband, JACKSON, PENELOPE, and TOPPER. They visit with one another as they hang festive streamers, put a festive table cloth on the table, a pitcher, glasses, and a few simple food items.

TWAIN (*Cont’d*)

It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his own niece's and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, filled with happy people and the spirit standing smiling by her side, and looking at that same niece with approving affability.

TWAIN exits.

SFX: Christmas music. A group dance is about to begin. DANCERS and PARTY ATTENDEES pair up. THE LADIES curtsy as the DANCERS form a large circle holding hands. They dance. The dance finishes with a flourish and cheers.

SFX: A lighter version of the same Christmas song. FREDERICA AND HER FRIENDS clap as the DANCERS bow and exit. Still chatting and laughing, FREDERICA, JACKSON, PENELOPE, and TOPPER move the table Center. FREDERICA continue to make final adjustments to a decorative wreath as the OTHERS take their seats at the table.

SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT observe.

FREDERICA

(Laughing)

He said that Christmas was a humbug, if you can believe it!

JACKSON

Oh, I believe it, Freddie! A humbug? What does that expression even mean?

FREDERICA

On and on he went... *(Imitating SCROOGE)* ... Christmas! Bah, humbug!

ALL laugh as FREDERICA joins them.

PENELOPE

I cannot countenance that man! Pitchin' a fit at Christmas!

FREDERICA

He do get all tetchy but I haven't given up on him!

TOPPER

Oh, Freddie, you should just keep outa his way! You don't learn nothin' from the second kick of a mule! *(Leans in toward PENELOPE)* He's especially ornery all December.

PENELOPE

And the last four weeks of November...

TOPPER

(Laughs)

... don't forget the first three weeks of October! *(Beat)* He fits right in at Halloween!

ALL laugh.

FREDERICA

Now, now...

PENELOPE

That man could start an argument in an empty house, Freddie! Why does he get hisself all het up like that?

JACKSON

I did the calculation... If we had a million dollars for every time he said something nice to any of us... we'd still be... too poor to paint and too proud to whitewash!

They laugh all the more.

TOPPER

That man's blind in one eye and can't see out t'other!

FREDERICA

Y'all are terrible! *(Laughs)* Yes, I know... I know, but... but his offenses carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.

JACKSON

I'm sure he is very rich, Freddie. That's what everyone says.

FREDERICA

What of it, Jackson? His wealth is of no use to him...

PENELOPE

... short of standin' on top of it and hollerin' for attention.

They laugh again.

TOPPER

That's the codfish aristocracy for you! Always got to be the biggest tadpole in the puddle!

FREDERICA

(Chuckles)

He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking that he is ever going to benefit anyone else with it!

FREDERICA gets up and walks to the window, parts the curtains slightly, and peers through the glass impatiently. She's looking for SCROOGE, hoping he might still show up.

FREDERICA (*Cont'd*)

Well, I am truly sorry for him and couldn't be angry with him if I tried.

JACKSON

You're a better man than I, Freddie!

ALL laugh.

FREDERICA

The way I reckon it, Jackson, is that he's the one who suffers most from his orneriness; himself, always. (*Again, looks out the window*) Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and share the holidays with us. What's the consequence? He can sit stewin' in his own mush 'til the raisins become grapes again, but he's the only one worse off for it.

PENELOPE

Fine dinner, Freddie. I'm as fat as a tick in a mattress! (*Groans*) Why I ate so much I have to loosen my... my bracelet! (*Pretends to loosen her bracelet*)

JACKSON

Well, good on you, Penelope... I mean, iff'n you take that to be good cookin'!

PENELOPE

Jackson, no!

FREDERICA

(Smiles)

Don't mind Jackson, Penelope. This boy's been dippin' my pigtails in the inkwell since third grade!

JACKSON

(Stifling a belch)

Can't fool you, Freddie! What do you say, Topper?

TOPPER

Oh, don't ask me. (*Gestures to banner*) In this "New South" a man like me ain't nothin' but a wretched outcast who has no right to express an opinion on any subject!

PENELOPE stands and rushes over to comfort TOPPER.

PENELOPE

Oh, poor, poor Topper!

TOPPER coos and casually places his left hand on Penelope's leg.

PENELOPE (*Cont'd*)

But truly, Freddie, that uncle of yers is one amazin' ignorant old coot! Don't he rile you?

PENELOPE offhandedly reaches down and slaps TOPPER'S hand. We hear it. TOPPER retracts the hand, grinning slightly.

JACKSON

(*Groans*)

Ohhh... don't crank 'er up again!

FREDERICA plows right in.

FREDERICA

The result of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments. Certainly better than sittin' (*Gestures off*) yonder in his moldy old office with his moldy old thoughts, gettin' extraordinarily sulky and grim.

JACKSON

Watch out!

Although she can't see him, FREDERICA walks toward SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

FREDERICA

(*Ignores JACKSON*)

Well, I for one am not afeared to face the lion in his own den! I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may yammer at Christmas till he dies, but (*Toward SCROOGE*) if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying, "Uncle Scrooge, how are you?"... (*SCROOGE looks dismissive*).. well... well, I believe the clover'll come up through it.

JACKSON

She'd headin' toward the shoals! Lord, take the rudder!

FREDERICA

(*Getting increasingly worked up*)

... even if it only puts him in the disposition to leave his poor clerk and his grandchildren a few greenbacks, that's something. (*Lost in thought*) And I think I shook him yesterday.

JACKSON

Now, Freddie, c'mon. It's Christmas. Let's change the subject, have some fun. Let's play "Yes and No"!

TOPPER claps his hands with glee.

TOPPER

Oh, I always win at "Yes and No"!

SCROOGE

Ah! Here's a new game, spirit! One half hour, only one.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT smiles at SCROOGE in
agreement.*

FREDERICA

Alright. I'll begin. I'm thinking of... an animal.

TOPPER

Alive?

FREDERICA

(Thinks)

Uh... technically!

JACKSON

Is it a savage animal?

*FREDERICA stomps around the room
growling and grunting.*

PENELOPE

So it growls and grunts? All the time?

FREDERICA

(Points at Penelope; laughs)

Most of the time!

JACKSON

Does it talk?

FREDERICA

No shortage of opinion!

TOPPER

So, not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, and certainly not a bear.

FREDERICA looks from person to person, but they all continue to appear confused. Finally, she smiles, pantomimes pulling a watch from her pocket and twirling it around her finger.

JACKSON

I have found it out, my dear. I know what it is! I know what it is!

FREDERICA

(Smiling)

What is it?

JACKSON

Why, it's... it's...

JACKSON leans over to PENELOPE and whispers.

JACKSON AND PENELOPE

UNCLE SCROOGE!

FREDERICA, JACKSON, PENELOPE, and even THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT laugh.

TOPPER

(As if he's been cheated)

But you said it wasn't an ass!

TOPPER gets the joke and bursts into laughter causing everyone else – except SCROOGE – to laugh even harder, so much so that THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT nearly falls over. He slaps SCROOGE on the back.

FREDERICA

(Returning with OTHERS to the table)

He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS

PRESENT picks up a glass from the table and takes a sip.

FREDERICA *(Cont'd)*

(Raising her glass)

And so, I raise this fine spirit, courtesy of Bourbon County, Kentucky, to him. To Uncle Scrooge!

ALL

To Uncle Scrooge!

ALL drink.

FREDERICA

A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to him, whatever he is. He wouldn't take it from me, but now he has it whether he likes it or not.

FREDERICA, glass in hand, returns to the window and looks out.

SCROOGE

Spirit, let us leave this place. I have no interest in these things.

*FREDERICA sighs and turns away from the window. As she speaks, she crosses once again towards SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT.
SFX: A soft musical lilt.*

FREDERICA

But... to tell the truth, I'm fond of the old fellow in spite of everything. And so I drink to his health.

FREDERICA raises her glass. THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT raises his own again as well. The two glasses are directly in front of SCROOGE, framing him.

FREDERICA (*Cont'd*)

Merry Christmas to you, Uncle, all the same!

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT crosses to the table and puts
his glass down. He points a cautionary
finger at SCROOGE.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You know, my friend... if you ignore people long enough... (*Gestures to those at the table*)
... they will eventually forget you ever existed.

*SCROOGE ponders the thought then
shakes it off.*

SCROOGE

This game ain't worth the candle, spirit. Let us return.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Fine. My time here is nearly spent. Midnight approaches.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT starts to exit, beckoning for
SCROOGE. He puts on his gaudy coat
which has been draped over his arm all
this time.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (*Cont'd*)

The Ghost Of Christmas Future lies ahead!

SCROOGE LOOKS FRIGHTENED.

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT finishes putting on the coat,
smooths it with his hands. Until now, he
has been speaking without his southern
drawl but now switches back.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (*Cont'd*)

(*Points at SCROOGE*)

In the time ahead, remember: Sometimes you just got to hunker down like a mule in a hail storm and take it! Now, I'm gonna git! (*Winks*) You know, I still got me them sugar mamas up North in need of my urgent attention!

*THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
PRESENT exits. SCROOGE watches for
a few moments, then also exits as
LIGHTS FADE OUT.*

END OF ACT I

INTERMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT

See you back here in 10 or 15 minutes.

The ending' is brief and very dramatic. As Mr. Twain himself always says: "I like to wrap things up quick and with a pretty good bang!"

ACT II - SCENE 1

SETTING: SCROOGE'S BEDROOM – EVENING.

AT RISE: SFX: Howling wind. SCROOGE sits on the edge of his bed, completely alert; watching and listening.

SCROOGE

Spirit? Spirit? I am returned... and yet, Marley said there would be one more...

SFX: Dark, ominous music.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE enters, first seen in silhouette at the window. SCROOGE looks terrified.

SFX: The bell strikes twelve as TWAIN enters.

TWAIN

As the bell struck out twelve, the shrieking of the winds outside softened to a wail and the angry beating of the rain against the panes diminished to a tranquil patter. One by one the noises in the street subsided, until the hurrying footsteps of the last belated straggler died away in the distance.

Scrooge heard muttered sentences; half-uttered screams, and the swish of invisible garments, and the rush of invisible wings. He then became conscious that his chamber had been invaded and that he was not alone. Scrooge waited and listened, weak with fear. Beaded drops of sweat stood upon his forehead. He felt more dead than alive.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE enters through doorway.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

Presently, Scrooge heard a footstep in his room unlike anything human and beheld a solemn phantom coming towards him like a mist along the ground. The very air through which it moved seemed to scatter gloom and mystery. It was difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded save a spectral twilight. Its mysterious presence filled Scrooge with a solemn dread, yet thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror to know that behind the dusky shroud there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him. He beheld the last of the spirits.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE slowly, gravely, silently moves into the room. She is a lovely young woman wearing a long, slender, black dress terminating in tendrils of cloth that move along the floor like spider's legs. Her face is ghostly pale, her lips blood-red.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE points at SCROOGE.

SCROOGE

I am... in the presence of the Ghost of Christmases Yet to Come?

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

I am.

SCROOGE

But you are lovely... *(Beat)* ... and terrible. *(Shudders)* Are... are you the savior?

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

I cannot save you.

SCROOGE

Then why are you here?

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

To provide an opportunity for your improvement.

SCROOGE

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?

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

I am.

SCROOGE

Ghost Of Christmas Future, I fear you more than any spectre I have seen.

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

(Pointing off)

Come. Witness time's jagged edge.

SCROOGE

Yes... lead on. The night is waning fast, and I have come to see that this time is precious to me. Lead on, spirit.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE exits. SCROOGE follows, looking unsure and fearful. SFX: Funeral organ music.

TWAIN

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it. They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognized its situation, and its bad repute.

The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offenses of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery. And within all the filth and misery, a room to house the dead.

SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE enter.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon a bier; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.

TWAIN exits.

ACT II- SCENE 2

SETTING: *A FUNERAL PARLOR OR MORTUARY. There is a covered body on a bier. Near the entrance hangs a sign: "Graves Mortuary and Inhumation For the Benefit of the Bereaved".*

AT RISE: *MR. GRAVES, MRS. DILBER and CLEMENTINE, wearing black formal attire weep and wail as they enter through the Audience.*

MR. GRAVES

(Wiping a tear)

Oh, my, yes, yes. We all grieve his passing.

MRS. DILBER

(Holding a candelabra)

He was truly a selfless and generous man!

CLEMENTINE

(Carrying a large bag mostly hidden behind her back)

His kind heart touched so many lives!

MR. GRAVES

He was a pillar of the community! His passin' will be an immense loss to everyone who knew him! *(Shaking hands with Audience members)* Of course, of course. Thank you so much for being here. We'll see you this afternoon over at the grave site.

THE THREE wait outside the door, observing. SFX: Door opening and closing. The instant the door closes they explode into action, setting the candelabra and bag on the floor then removing their formal outer clothing revealing common attire beneath.

MRS. DILBER

Finally!

CLEMENTINE

Thought them people'd never leave!

MRS. DILBER

Well, if that don't beat all, Mr. Graves! I guess I were wrong about that old geezer all these years. That were a right respectable turnout!

CLEMENTINE

I didn't expect nobody to show!

MR. GRAVES pulls a flask from his pocket, unscrews the lid, and takes a swig, grinning broadly, somewhat maniacally.

MR. GRAVES

Nobody did show, Clementine.

CLEMENTINE

Huh? What're you talkin' about? There was a couple score o' people here cryin' and carryin' on for that old codger. *(Gestures to body on the bier)*

MR. GRAVES

(Wipes mouth with sleeve)

No, there weren't nobody here — at least nobody that weren't paid to be here.

MRS. DILBER

(Stunned)

Do tell!

CLEMENTINE

I don't believe it!

MR. GRAVES

Every last one of them folks was brung in as per the terms o' his will! *(Points to THE WOMEN)* Just like the three of us was!

THE WOMEN gasp.

MR. GRAVES *(Cont'd)*

That's right. Actors actin' for other actors, all just in case his lawyers decided to come over here and check up on us!

MRS. DILBER

Well, slap my butt and call me Sally!

CLEMENTINE

'Far as I'm concerned, the devil can take 'im! (*Gestures at body*) Old Scratch has got his own at last. When'd he die?

MR. GRAVES

Last night, I believe.

MRS. DILBER

Can't of been too long. He were still quite... juicy when I were trowlin' on his makeup!

CLEMENTINE

(*Shivers*)

He were cold as ice as I was dressin' 'im – which is still about fifty degrees warmer than when he was kickin'!

They laugh.

MR. GRAVES

Death made him a more agreeable fella, Mrs. Dilber.

MRS. DILBER

(*Pointing down*)

Well, he'll be plenty warm soon enough – if you get my meanin' – (*Nudges Clementine*) ... and he ain't bein' cremated! (*They laugh*) Truth be told, I were surprised when he finally died. They say the good die young. So I reckoned 'eed make it to... a thousand!

They laugh again.

CLEMENTINE

(*Holds up bag*)

Every person has a right to take care o' hisse'f. (*Gestures toward body*) He always did.

MRS. DILBER

That's true, Clem. He couldn't let a red cent fly for a street waif but then went and bought hisse'f the biggest headstone in the cemetery!

MR. GRAVES

(*Claps his hands; rubs them together with excitement*)

Now! What have you got for old Graves-y, dearies?

MRS. DILBER

We paid a little visit to the former premises of the dearly departed with the reasonable certainty ee'd be otherwise detained!

All laugh. CLEMENTINE pulls items out of the bag and begins handing them to MR. GRAVES.

MRS. DILBER (*Cont'd*)

(Ticks off items)

Let's see, now. Sheets and towels, a little wearin' apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs...

CLEMENTINE

And lookit... Here's the cooch day grow!

CLEMENTINE turns back and picks up the candelabra. She attempts to appear refined but ends up anything but:

CLEMENTINE (*Cont'd*)

Look at this fine chandle-abber!

MRS. DILBER takes the candelabra from CLEMENTINE, puts it on the table near the body, then returns quickly to MR. GRAVES and CLEMENTINE.

CLEMENTINE (*Cont'd*)

... oh... and... *(Pulling a section of elaborately-embossed curtains from the bag)* ...these lovely brocade curtains.

MR. GRAVES

(Inspecting, then with surprise)

You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him just lying there, did 'ja?

CLEMENTINE

(Pretending to be hurt)

What kind of people do you take us for, Mr. Graves?

MRS. DILBER pulls a curtain rod with ornate ends out of the bag and waves it triumphantly

MRS. DILBER

We nicked 'is curtain rod, too! *(Laughs darkly)* And why not? I certainly ain't gonna hold back my hand, when I can get anything in it by just reachin' it out, especially for a man such as he was, *(Gestures to body)* I promise you, Mr. Graves.

MR. GRAVES

Mrs. Dilber, Clementine. You two were born to make your fortune and you're gonna do it!
Pulls a shirt out of the bag; inspects it; sniffs it) I hope he didn't die of anything catching. Eh?
(Holds the shirt at arms' length)

CLEMENTINE

I ain't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things.

MRS. DILBER

Ah, you kin go on an' look at that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place neither. It's the best he had, and a fine one too.

CLEMENTINE

And he'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for us.

MR. GRAVES

What do you mean by 'wasted it'?

MRS. DILBER

Well... puttin' it on him to be buried in, to be sure.

MR. GRAVES shudders and drops the shirt in disgust. MRS. DILBER picks it up and puts it back in the sack.

MRS. DILBER *(Cont'd)*

Somebody was jackass enough to do it, but we took it off 'im again, right Clementine?
(Laughs) Well, that's about the end o' the line fer this feller.

CLEMENTINE

Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose. *(Laughs)*

MRS. DILBER

If'n he wanted to keep 'em after he'd gone toes up – the wicked old screw – well, he shoulda had somebody look after him when he was struck with death, instead of lying there gasping out his last, alone by hisse'f.

CLEMENTINE

Well, it's a judgment on him, Mrs. Dilber.

MR. GRAVES

(Handing MRS. DILBER and CLEMENTINE some coins from his purse)

There you go, and I wouldn't give you another two-bits if I was to be tarred and feathered and drug outta town by wild horses for not doing it.

THE WOMEN pout. MR. GRAVES looks at them, and surrendering, gives an extra coin to each. At this point, MR, GRAVES begins coughing grossly, hacking up phlegm. The thieves look at one another, unsure what to do.

MRS. DILBER

(Points to the urn)

The urn! The URN!

CLEMENTINE quickly retrieve the brass urn and holds it out in front of MR. GRAVES who spits inside it. CLEMENTINE plunks the bottom of the urn with her finger.

MR. GRAVES

(Wiping his face with his sleeve)

My God, the ladies do love me!

MRS. DILBER

He skeered everyone away from him when he were vertical, to profit us when he were horizontal. *(Laughs)*

MRS. DILBER takes the brocade curtain, and drapes it across CLEMENTINE'S shoulders then hands her the curtain rod. CLEMENTINE looks at the curtain rod, then raises it, striking a regal pose. MRS. DILBER picks up the candelabra and holds it atop CLEMENTINE'S head.

MRS. DILBER *(Cont'd)*

Your Celestial Majesty!

CLEMENTINE

(Grandly)

Bow before me, shiftless rabble!

CLEMENTINE holds the candelabra in place as MRS. DILBER plays along, bowing before her in supplication. MR. GRAVES remains detached.

MRS. DILBER

Mr. Graves! Mr. Graves! (*Tugging on his pant legs*) Izz the Queen o' England herself, ain't it?!

MR. GRAVES

(*Darkly*)

I bow before no queen, much less the likes of you. MY kingdom. MY domain. I command a vast army which I alone ferry to the gates of Heaven... or the pits of hell! (*Looks at the TWO WOMEN until they acquiesce*) Enough. Let's return to the business at hand. (*Holds up silver spoons; gestures toward body*) You know what I always say... where there's silver, there's gold! (*Goes to body*) There's more in there... (*Rubs jaw*) I feel it. Hows about givin' 'im another lookover for Old Graves-y?

THE WOMEN nod and go to the body.

MR. GRAVES (*Cont'd*)

And luvvies... (*Smiles broadly, revealing rotten teeth*) Don't forget to check... the pearlyies!

They laugh. SFX: Thunder clap.

MR. GRAVES waits with anticipation as the TWO WOMEN search the body. Delighted, CLEMENTINE finds two coins and holds them up to the approval of MRS. DILBER. CLEMENTINE finds SCROOGE'S pocket watch and holds it up by the chain. MRS. DILBER is pleased, placing the watch in the bag.

Having disturbed the body, its arm falls out from beneath the burial cover. Wrapped around the hand is a chain with a ring on it. The chain and ring fall out of the hand onto the floor. It is the same chain and engagement ring SCROOGE wore around his neck. MRS. DILBER holds the chain and ring up high, then puts the chain around her own neck and models it. CLEMENTINE approves. At this, SCROOGE becomes incensed and tries to chase them off.

SCROOGE

Go on! Git! Leave this poor soul to its peace! Go! Leave!

THE WOMEN, unaware of SCROOGE gather their finds to show MR. GRAVES. Satisfied they have it all, THE THREE THIEVES exit.

SCROOGE cautiously approaches the body.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Merciful Heaven, what is this?

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE moves toward the covered body.

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

Look.

SCROOGE

Spirit, I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. (*Approaches*) Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion. If this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts. Avarice, hard-dealing, griping cares. They have brought him to a rich end, truly. (*Bargaining piteously*) Look... Can I buy some time? Can I put off this end? I am a wealthy man!

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

How can you bargain over an outcome you have not yet seen? (*Points at head*) Look. Closer.

SCROOGE

I understand you, and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, spirit. I have not the power. Spirit, this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go.

CHRISTMAS FUTURE

Come.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE exits. SCROOGE follows. TWAIN enters. The Scene changes to THE CRATCHIT HOME.

TWAIN

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen.

ACT II - SCENE 3

SETTING: *THE CRATCHIT HOME and the street outside.*

AT RISE: *THE CAROLERS, outside, hum a mournful dirge. Inside, MRS. CRATCHIT, in a dark shawl, sits at the table darning. PETER and BELINDA fold napkins while MARTHA sits near the fireplace reading a book.*

SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE enter.

TWAIN (*Cont'd*)

They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before. Quiet. Very quiet. The formerly noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues at the table, and sat looking up at Martha, who had a book before her. The grandmother and children were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet.

THE CAROLERS exit.

MARTHA

And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them.

TWAIN

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The young woman must have read them out as he and the spirit crossed the threshold. Why did she not go on?

TWAIN exits. SFX: Howling wind.

SCROOGE

I have visited this place before in happier times.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Your grandfather should be home.

PETER

But, I think he's walked a little slower than he used to, these few last evenings, Gran.

MRS. CRATCHIT speaks in a steady, cheerful voice, that falters near the end.

MRS. CRATCHIT

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

PETER

And so have I. Often.

BELINDA

I have, too.

MARTHA

So have we all.

MRS. CRATCHIT

But he was very light to carry and his grandfather loved him so, that it was no trouble – no trouble at all. (*BOB CRATCHIT approaches*) And there is your grandfather now at the door!

MRS. CRATCHIT hurries to meet BOB at the door. Concerned, She helps him in, takes his hat and scarf and hangs them on the coat rack.

BOB sits near the fire. He picks up Tiny Tim's crutch and fiddles with it absentmindedly. After a few moments, BELINDA goes to him, sits on the floor, and puts her head on his knee.

BELINDA

Don't mind it, Pawpaw.

BOB CRATCHIT

I'm just a little down, you know.

PETER

(Goes to BOB; kneels beside him)

Don't be grieved, Pawpaw.

MARTHA

(Goes to BOB; stands beside him)

We'll find our way through it, Grandfather.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Sunday. (*Gently*) You went today, then, Robert?

BOB CRATCHIT

Yes, my dear. I wish you could have gone. 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 Sundays. *(Bitterly)* Promised. *(Looks at his family)* I made him a promise; a promise that nothing would ever happen to him. *(Sobs)* And I... I couldn't even protect a child from the coldness and indifference of this world. *(Straightens up)* I broke a promise... to a child. *(Breaks down)* My little, little child! My little child! *(Pulling himself together)* I will do better by you children. I swear I will do better!

MRS. CRATCHIT goes to BOB.

BOB CRATCHIT *(Cont'd)*

I... uh... I ran into Mr. Scrooge's niece, Frederica, the other day. She is the pleasantest-spoken young woman you ever heard.

MRS. CRATCHIT

(Urging gently)

Didn't... didn't she ask you to... to call her Freddie?

BOB CRATCHIT

Yes, yes. Freddie. "I am damnably sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit," she said, "and for your good wife as well." *(Beat)* Although, by the by, how she ever knew that, I don't know."

MRS. CRATCHIT

Knew what, dear?

BOB CRATCHIT

(Tenderly touching her face; attempting to smile)

Why, that you are a good wife. "Sorry," she said, "for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way," she said, giving me her card.

BOB takes a card out of his inside coat pocket and looks at it as if he's looking at Frederica.

BOB CRATCHIT *(Cont'd)*

It really seemed as if she had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I'm sure she's a good soul.

BOB

I am sure none of us will forget poor Tiny Tim— Shall we? This sad parting of the family we got here?

CHILDREN

Never, Pawpaw!

BOB CRATCHIT

And I know, I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.

CHILDREN

No, never, Pawpaw!

BOB CRATCHIT

Then I am very happy. I am very happy!

MRS. CRATCHIT kisses BOB on the cheek. THE CHILDREN do the same.

SFX: Soulful music. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE begins to exit, gesturing for SCROOGE to follow.

SCROOGE

(Following)

Oh, wretched spirit! Is this all that the Ghost Of Christmas Future holds? Is life no more than the prelude to death?

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE exits. SCROOGE follows off. TWAIN enters. The scene changes to THE GRAVEYARD.

TWAIN

Scrooge joined the spirit once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. The two entered a churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place!

TWAIN exits.

ACT II - SCENE 4

SETTING: A GRAVEYARD – EVENING; Dark, gloomy, deserted; filled with fog – A solitary gravestone concealed by vines and webs.

AT RISE: SFX: Foreboding music; Howling wind. SCROOGE and THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE enter. They are alone. THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE, now cowed in such a manner that her face cannot be seen, points toward a solitary gravestone.

SCROOGE

Spirit, you are now concealed. (*No response*) Why will you not reveal yourself?

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE does not respond; only points to the gravestone.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

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?

Again GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE does not answer; points downward to the grave.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me. (*Beat*) Am I that man who lay upon that bed?

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE remains unmoved. SCROOGE creeps towards the gravestone, trembling. Finally, madly, he tears away the vines and cobwebs revealing his own name: EBENEZER SCROOGE. SFX: Thunder/Lightening. SCROOGE falls to his knees.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE points from the grave to SCROOGE, and back again.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

No, spirit! Oh no, no!

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE continues to point.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

(Rising)

Dreadful apparition, hear me. I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been. Why show me this, if I am past all hope? Good spirit, assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life. (*With dread*) Spirit, I ask again: Why is your face hidden from me? Your sweet, sweet face. I beg you... let me see it!

SCROOGE grabs the cloak of THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE. The hood drops revealing a skeleton's face. SFX: Thunder and lightning. SCROOGE shrieks, drops to his knees, then collapses to the ground.

SCROOGE (*Cont'd*)

Noooo!

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE exits. As SCROOGE continues to lie on the floor amidst the fog, A MONTAGE OF SCENES PLAYS AS IF IN A DREAM.

While the Dream Montage plays, the scene changes back to SCROOGE'S ROOM.

ACT II - SCENE 5

SCROOGE'S DREAM - VOICE OVERS AND VIDEO MONTAGE

AT RISE: *A video montage of key moments.*

SFX: Ethereal music or sound effects.

THE DREAM SEQUENCE

FREDERICA

Though it don't put a scrap of silver or gold in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

MARLEY

I wonder if you know the weight and length of the burden you bear yourself? It is a ponderous creation!

CHRISTMAS PAST

These are shadows of the things that have been. That they are what they are!

BELLE

I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, leaving this one to engross you. A golden idol! *(Beat)* Oh, but Ebenezer, I was wishin' right out loud.

YOUNG SCROOGE

Do you realize what you're doing? What you're throwing away? Belle! Belle!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

In the sight of heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child.

MRS. CRATCHIT

It should be Christmas day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such a stingy, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.

CLEMENTINE

Well, Old Scratch has got his own at last!

MR. GRAVES

Death made him a more agreeable fella!

MRS. DILBER

He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead!

The THIEVES laugh.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Are there no prisons? Are there no poor farms? *(Beat)* If one or two should fall off the earth, would it not keep spinnin'? *(Beat)* I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

CHRISTMAS PAST

If you ignore people long enough, they will eventually forget you ever existed.

BOB CRATCHIT

My little, little child! My little child!

MARLEY

Your only hope, Ebenezer. Your only hope. *(Fading)* Your only hope. Your only hope...

ACT II - SCENE 6

SETTING: *SCROOGE'S BEDROOM – MORNING.*

AT RISE: *SCROOGE lies in the same spot as before. SFX: Birds chirping; Church bells ringing.*

SCROOGE slowly stands and looks around with wonder. An expression of complete surprise and delight creeps onto his face.

SCROOGE

Where am I? I'm back in my own house! I'm alive! I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. (*Drops to his knees*) Oh Jacob Marley, Heaven, and the Christmastime be praised for this. I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees! (*Spreads arms joyfully*) This room; it is my own! (*Jumps up and runs to his bed*) This bed; it is my own! All mine! And best and happiest of all, the time before me is my own in which to make amends! I will live in the past, the present, and the future! The spirits of all three shall strive within me. I am here – the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be! I know they will. I don't know how long I've been among the spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite the youngin'. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a youngin'! I don't even know what day it is! (*Suddenly worried*) But have I missed it? Is it too late? (*Shaking it off*) So much to do... so much to do!

*SCROOGE exits as TWAIN enters.
Scene changes to a SCROOGE's
bedroom window overlooking the street
below.*

TWAIN

No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious! Shaving was no easy task. His hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking plaster over it, and been quite satisfied.

ACT II - SCENE 7

SETTING: *OUTSIDE SCROOGE'S HOME – MORNING. A window overlooks the street.*

AT RISE: *A YOUNG BOY in coveralls, bare feet, and frayed straw hat enters with a twig of hay in his mouth. He looks about, tries the locked door and continues to snoop. He is at best an imp, at worst, a thief.*

THE YOUNG BOY, perhaps because he knows it is SCROOGE'S house, prepares to throw a rock through the window. He raises the rock high over his head and winds up for the pitch. Suddenly the window bursts open and SCROOGE'S head pops out.

SCROOGE

Boy. Boy! You there! What're you doin' down there, you young border ruffian? Cuttin' up didoes? [Pronounced "Die-dos"]

BOY

Uh... Hallo, sir!

THE BOY, surprised, quickly hides the rock behind his back.

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

PROPERTY AND FURNITURE LIST NEXT PAGE

PROPERTY AND FURNITURE LIST

ACT I – SCENE 1

feather pens (Twain, Scrooge, Bob)
ink wells (Twain, Bob)
pitch pipe (Mrs. Cratchit)
egg (wooden, Frederica)
tin cup (child caroler)
shawl (Bob)
pocket watch (Scrooge)
letters, papers (Bob)
notebook (person collecting for charity)
writing desk and chair (Bob)
safe
hat rack other optional pieces

ACT I – SCENE 2

bed (Scrooge)
small table (Scrooge)
book (Scrooge)
lantern (Scrooge)
chains with anchor (Marley)

ACT I – SCENE 3

bag of food (Fanny, Boy Scrooge fence with ivy
watch (Scrooge)

ACT I – SCENE 4

ring (Belle)
pocket watch (Young Scrooge)
ring on necklace (Scrooge)

ACT I – SCENE 5

bed
small table
bedspread (Scrooge)
two carpetbags (Christmas Present)
turkey leg
documents referred to (real or imagined, Christmas Present)
items referred to (real or imaged: ice cubes for Eskimos, snake oil bottle, snake, dehydrated H₂O, etc.)

ACT I – SCENE 6

table with five chairs (or two benches, Cratchits)
tablecloth, dishes, bowls, platter with goose, cups, etc. (Cratchits) crutch (Tiny Tim)
emaciated Christmas tree tiny chair (Tiny Tim)
woodstove or fireplace

ACT I – SCENE 7

salt shaker (dancing couple as scene opens)
decorated table
other decorations & food
four glasses (Jackson)
bracelet (Penelope)

-INTERMISSION-

ACT II – SCENE 1

Scrooge's bed, small table, bedspread, etc.

ACT II – SCENE 2

Stretcher/bier with covered body on it
bag for stolen items
brocade curtain
prop hand of body holding same necklace and ring that Scrooge wears around his neck
shirt
two coins (eyes on body)
two silver teaspoons
candelabra
sugar tongs
curtain rod with ornate ends
pocket watch (body)
urn (Mr. Graves uses as a spittoon)

ACT II – SCENE 3

book (Martha)
Frederica's business card (Bob)
candle
tiny chair (Tiny Tim)
crutch (Tiny Tim)

ACT II – SCENE 4

gravestone (reads "Ebenezer Scrooge")
fence with ivy skeleton mask (or makeup)
removable vines or cobwebs on gravestone

ACT II – SCENE 5

(Montage)

ACT II – SCENE 6

blanket (Scrooge's bed)
small table

ACT II – SCENE 7

rock (Boy)

ACT II - SCENE 8

platter with large turkey

two covered baskets (filled with additional Southern food items)

emaciated Christmas tree

decorated Christmas tree

additional decorations

various wrapped gifts