

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
THE TALE OF EBENEZER SCROOGE

Adapted by

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From the story by
Charles Dickens

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ACTOR ONE: Ebenezer Scrooge

ACTOR TWO: Bob Cratchit, Mr. Gerome, A sailor

ACTOR THREE: Fred, Dick Wilkins, Mr. Raleigh, A sailor

ACTOR FOUR: Mrs. Dilber, Mrs. Fezziwig, Madge

ACTOR FIVE: Jacob Marley, Ol' Fezziwig, William, Christmas Future

ACTOR SIX: Fan, Catherine,

ACTOR SEVEN: Jolly Gentlewoman, Mrs. Cratchit, Belle

ACTOR EIGHT: Jolly Gentleman, Mr. Westcott, Christmas Present,
Old Joe

ACTOR NINE: (pianist) Belle's husband, Mr. Blunt

ACTOR TEN: (violinist) Martha, Topper, Townsperson

CHILD ONE: Christmas Past, Young Girl

CHILD TWO: Tiny Tim

CHILD THREE: Young Boy, Young Scrooge

CHILD FOUR: Peter Cratchit, Tommy Deloraine,

CHILD FIVE: Abigail Fezziwig Janet, Belinda Cratchit, Want

CHILD SIX: Charlie Wray, Ignorance

CHILD SEVEN: Marcus, Young Ralphie Fezziwig

ACT ONE

A theatre. It's beautiful, though it bears the marks of faded glory. A tattered curtain. A bare stage. A book placed on a podium centerstage.

If one looks closely, snow seems to be lightly falling on the book, as if through a hole in the ceiling.

Upstage, there are "A" frame ladders, draped with cloths.

A chorus of children runs onstage, with great energy. They are throwing snowballs and laughing wildly. They sing.

CHILD 1

Here we come a-Caroling!

CHILD 2

Here we come a-Caroling!

CHILD 3,4,5

Here we come a-Caroling!

All The Children join in and sing together.

CHILDREN

A-Caroling!

The music takes a slightly ominous though excited turn, transforming into a medley of recognizable traditional Carols, akin to a carnival haunted house comprised of Christmas songs. The Chorus hums along as-

The Adult Company enters, carrying puppet like effigies of ghostly apparitions held aloft on sticks. The "Ghosts" fly as if in a dance. The entire Company, children and adults alike, join as a Chorus to sing-

CHORUS

Deck The Hallllllls....!
Fa la la la laaaaaaaa!
Tis The Seasonnnnnn....!
Fa la la la laaaaaa! LA LA LA LA!

The music continues as ACTOR TWO steps out and addresses the audience. The Ghosts continue to be held high.

ACTOR TWO

Good Evening, and welcome to our
Christmas Carol.

(MORE)

ACTOR TWO (CONT'D)

We will endeavor tonight, in our ghostly little play, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which we hope shall not put our audience out of humor with yourselves, with each other, with the season, or with your humble actors. May It haunt this house -and yours- pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it. And, so!

The ghostly apparitions vanish.

CHORUS

Fa la la la la! La la la-

All gather round the book. A Young Boy (Child 3) stands at the podium. He clears his throat. The others shush each other. The Boy Opens the book. The music finishes.

ALL

Marley was dead! To begin with!

The others murmur a bit to each other, excited by the start of the play.

ACTOR THREE

Oh, well done. Finely played indeed.

ACTOR FOUR

Lovely! Just lovely! I think it's going rather well already.

ACTOR SIX

A famous opening line like that, you can't go wrong.

ACTOR FIVE

"Dead to begin with?" Bit scary for a Christmas tale, don't you think?

ACTOR SIX

Well, you know, it is a ghost story. What do you expect?

CHILD THREE

Oh! A ghost story! Oooh! I love ghost stories!

ACTOR EIGHT

And, you're going to love this one. There's quite a few ghosts in it!

ACTOR THREE

Excuse me! We're not even past the first line, yet! Don't you suppose we should pick it up a bit? And keep let's going this time!

ACTOR TWO

Right then! Shall we? Once more! With feeling!

ALL

Marly was dead to begin with!

They pass the book to each other as the lines are exchanged.

ACTOR EIGHT

There was no doubt whatsoever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and... the chief mourner.

A voice barks from behind them.

SCROOGE

Humbug!

The company breaks apart, frightened. Scrooge stands at the podium, working furiously in a ledger.

ACTOR EIGHT

One Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge.

CHILD FOUR

Is that him?

ACTOR TWO

Yes, child. Steer clear of him if ya can.

CHILD FIVE

He's a mean one, isn't he?

All agree.

ACTOR THREE

Oh, Absolutely. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner was Scrooge!

CHILD TWO

Scrooge knew about Marley being dead, didn't he?

ACTOR THREE

Of course he knew about it!

SCROOGE

Marley and I were partners for a good many years. I was his sole executor, sole administer-

ACTOR SIX

His sole friend?

SCROOGE

No need to get weepy over it. The point is-

ALL

Marley was dead, to begin with!

SCROOGE

Dead as a doornail.

ACTOR FIVE

What exactly does that mean? Dead as a doornail? I don't think I understand what that means.

ACTOR FOUR

Yes, what's particularly dead about a doornail?

SCROOGE

It's a figger of speech!

ACTOR FOUR

I might have said a coffin nail or something like that.

ACTOR FIVE

Oh, that's good. I like that! Yes, a coffin nail.

SCROOGE

Get on with it.

ACTOR TWO

Now, Marley's funeral is as good a place as any to begin our tale. So, let us repeat emphatically, that Marley was-

SCROOGE

Dead! To begin with. Yes, we know!

ACTOR SEVEN

This must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come from the tale we shall relate for you tonight.

The Company constructs the counting house. A door, small cabinet. A little workstation for Cratchit. A standing window frame. Scrooge remains at the podium as the scene is built around him. Music accompanies. "Good King Wenceslas..."

ACTOR TWO

Once upon a time, of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve, Old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather, with fog pouring in at every keyhole. The city clocks had just chimed three o'clock-

The chimes are heard.

ACTOR FIVE

Yet, it was quite dark already. Candles burned brightly in every window from The Lord Mayor's house down to the warehouses by the river. But not in the window of 'Ol Scrooge's counting house.

Actor Two, as Cratchit, takes a stool at his work station.

CRATCHIT

So cold. So cold.

ACTOR SIX

See it now. The counting house. "Scrooge and Marley."

A little shingle is hung by the door.

ACTOR SIX (CONT'D)

Scrooge had never painted out Marley's name. There it stood, a full seven years later above the warehouse door, the names unchanged. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge, Scrooge, and sometimes they called him Marley-

SCROOGE

What do I care so long as they pay
their bills on time?

ACTOR THREE

He was hard and sharp as flint, was
he. Secret and self-contained and
solitary as an oyster.

SCROOGE

Humbug.

ACTOR FOUR

Once upon a time-

ACTOR FIVE

Of all good days of the year-

ACTOR SIX

On Christmas Eve-

ACTOR SEVEN

Old Scrooge sat busy at work, -

ACTOR FIVE

And so begins our tale.

CHILD ONE

The tale of Ebenezer Scrooge.

ACTOR EIGHT

Once upon a time-

ALL

Once upon a time. On Christmas Eve.

The Company vanishes, along with the book.

The door to the counting house bursts open with bit of
merriment. It's Fred, Scrooge's nephew, come to visit.

FRED

Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save
you!

SCROOGE

What? Oh. It's you.

FRED

Indeed it is. Hullo, Bob! Merry
Christmas!

CRATCHIT

Hullo, Mr. Fred. Merry Christmas!

SCROOGE
Humbug! "Merry Christmas."

FRED
Christmas, a humbug, Uncle? Surely, you don't mean it.

SCROOGE
Surely, I do!

Scrooge blows his nose.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
What right have you to be merry?
You're poor enough.

FRED
What right have you to be dismal?
You're rich enough.

SCROOGE
Fool. Going about wishing people a
"Merry Christmas." Bah!

FRED
Oh, come now. It costs nothing to
say the words. Give it a try.
Pucker your lips, there you are,
and say, "Merrrrryyy".... Oh, yes,
it's on the tip of your tongue now,
isn't it? Say "Merrrrryyy...."

SCROOGE
Humbug!

FRED
Merry Humbug? Well, not quite. Try
again?

SCROOGE
Bah! Out upon a Merry Christmas! If
I had my way, every idiot who goes
about with "Merry Christmas" on his
lips, should be boiled with his own
pudding, and buried with a stake of
holly through his heart.

FRED
I fear you're not quite in the
Christmas Spirit, Uncle.

SCROOGE
Christmas Spirit...

FRED
What was that?

SCROOGE
There's nothing so ridiculous as
the Christmas spirit.

The wind whistles and the door blows open. Cratchit closes it.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Pure... frivolity. What's Christmas
to most but a time for paying bills
without money? A time for finding
yourself a year older, but not an
hour richer?

Some Carolers sing softly outside. Scrooge raps on a window. They flee.

FRED
Uncle!

SCROOGE
You keep Christmas in your way and
let me keep it in mine!

FRED
But, that's just it. You don't keep
it at all!

SCROOGE
There's no profit in Christmas.

FRED
There are many things which have
rewarded me, without profit to my
pocket. Christmas is chief among
them. I find it a kind, forgiving
and charitable time when good
people open their hearts freely,
and think of others as we really
are- as fellow-passengers to the
grave, and not just another race of
creatures bound on merciless
journeys. And so, Uncle, though
Christmas has never put a scrap of
gold or silver in my pocket, I say
God bless it!

Cratchit, still at his desk, claps enthusiastically. Scrooge stares him down and the cheer subsides.

SCROOGE

Another sound from you and you'll
keep Christmas by losing your
situation!

CRATCHIT

Yessir.

FRED

Don't be cross, Uncle.

SCROOGE

I live in a world filled with
fools. Are we finished?

FRED

We are most certainly not. I come
today with an invitation.

SCROOGE

An inva- what?

FRED

An invitation. To Christmas dinner.
Come to our house. You've yet to
meet my wife. She's is preparing a
turkey!

SCROOGE

You wish me to eat... a turkey?
At... your house?

FRED

Well, yes. It's not unheard of! And
I shall uncork a bottle and we will
toast the day with Christmas
spirits of a different sort
altogether!

SCROOGE

Did you not hear me? I have no
interest in Christmas spirits of
any kind whatsoever. Not today, not
tomorrow, not ever!

FRED

Catherine will be disappointed. She
was so hoping-

SCROOGE

Who?

FRED

Catherine, my wife. I'd like you to know her.

SCROOGE

Tell me again, why ever did you marry?

FRED

Why? Because I fell in love!

SCROOGE

Fell. In. Love. Bah.
Good afternoon.

FRED

Why can't we be friends, Uncle? We are the sole blood relatives in our line, after all, and-

SCROOGE

I said "good afternoon."

FRED

Very well. I'm sorry with all my heart to find you so resolute. But I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last.

Fred takes his hat and goes to Cratchit.

FRED (CONT'D)

Bob, my very best wishes to all the Cratchits.

CRATCHIT

Thank you, Sir.

FRED

Especially your boy. How is Tiny Tim?

CRATCHIT

We're hopeful, Sir. Hopeful, indeed.

FRED

I'm glad to hear it. You're in our thoughts.

CRATCHIT

Kind of you, Mr. Fred. Very kind. A Merry Christmas to you and your lovely wife.

SCROOGE

Another one. My clerk. With fifteen shillings a week and a wife and family. Only an idiot would go about wishing people a-

Two Jolly Gentlepersons blow through the door..

JOLLY GENTLEPERSONS

Merry Christmas!

SCROOGE

Bah!

They slam the door.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

A bitter one out there, eh? Why hello! We represent the Victoria Society, you see.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

Now, which one of you is Mr. Scrooge and which one is Mr. Marley?

FRED

Oh, you'll have to speak to that cheerful fellow over there. He's very generous, I hear.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

Ooooh, is he now? Good to know, good to know.

FRED

Here! A little something for your collection.

Fred hands them a coin.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

Thank you, Sir!

SCROOGE

Weren't you leaving?

FRED

I wish you a very Merry Christmas!
And a -

SCROOGE

Don't you dare!

FRED

Happy New year!

SCROOGE

Bah!

Fred dashes out. The Gentlefolk approach Scrooge. Cratchit watches intently.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

Now then. Do we have we the
pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge?

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

Or is it Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE

Mr. Marley... is dead. To begin
with. Seven years ago. This very
night.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

Dead, you say?

SCROOGE

Dead as a doornail.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

I'm not sure what that means.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

It's a figger of speech, love.
We're terribly sorry to hear about
Mr. Marley, of course. But, I've
no doubt his generous spirit lives
on in his partner, if I'm not
mistaken.

SCROOGE

You are.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

What?

SCROOGE

Mistaken.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN
Are we, Sir? Oh, he's very humble.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN
Very humble indeed.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN
Now, Mr. Scrooge, it's true we've never met-

SCROOGE
And why ruin a good thing?

JOLLY GENTLEMAN
A good thing, exactly. That's why we're here. You see at this festive season of the year we find it is desirable that we all should make some slight provision-

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN
For the poor-

JOLLY GENTLEMAN
And the destitute-

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN
Who suffer so greatly.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN
So very greatly at this time of year.

SCROOGE
The poor, you say?

JOLLY GENTLEMAN
That's right, Sir. The poor.

SCROOGE
And the destitute?

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN
The destitute. Exactly. Now, you understand.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN
We at The Society wish to raise funds to buy them food-

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN
And drink-

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

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

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

Now, then. What shall we put you down for?

SCROOGE

...Nothing.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

Nothing?

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

Oh! I see, I see, I see! He wishes to remain anonymous!

SCROOGE

He wishes to be left alone.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

I beg your pardon?

SCROOGE

Alone! I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

But the poor-

SCROOGE

Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

There are, Sir.

SCROOGE

Oh! I'm very glad to hear it. You see, I help support those costly establishments. Those who are badly off must go there.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

Many can't go there.

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

Many would rather die.

SCROOGE

Well, if they would rather die,
they had better do it and decrease
the surplus population.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

But it is our business to-

SCROOGE

It's not my business! It's enough
for a man to understand his own
business, and not to interfere with
other people's!

A Young Boy and Young Girl (**Child 3 and Child 5**) sing at
Scrooge's door. "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Enough! Enough with all of you!

Scrooge opens the door.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Sounds like a bag full of drowning
rats! Off with you!

The children flee.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

There will be no handouts here! Do
you understand? No free meals, no
Carols - no Christmas!

He shoos the Jolly Gentlefolk out.

JOLLY GENTLEMAN

How rude!

JOLLY GENTLEWOMAN

For shame, Sir!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

He turns to see Cratchit, standing by his desk.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Back to work, you.

CRATCHIT

Well, it's closing time now, Sir.

SCROOGE

Huh. Is it? You'll want the whole day off tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT

If it's quite convenient.

SCROOGE

It is NOT convenient. And not fair! If I were to hold back half a crown for missing the day, you'd think me cruel. Yet you don't think it cruel for me to pay a day's wages for no work.

CRATCHIT

It's only once a year, Sir.

SCROOGE

A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty fifth of December. Be here all the earlier the next morning.

CRATCHIT

Yes, Sir! Thank you, Sir! And a very merry-

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

CRATCHIT

Right Sir. Sorry, Sir.

Cratchit leaves. Scrooge closes up shop. Outside, Cratchit is met by his son, Tiny Tim (Child 2), who leans on his crutch.

TINY TIM

Father! Father!

CRATCHIT

There's my little jockey! Come, let's be on our way, shall we?

Bob places Tim on his shoulder and they hurry along, joining other Londoners busily going about their Christmas business. The Young Boy and Girl (3 and 5, you might recall) sneak to a different corner and sing. The boy has his hat in hand. Scrooge hears them and freezes.

YOUNG BOY

SIRE, THE NIGHT IS DARKER NOW
AND THE WIND BLOWS STRONGER.

(MORE)

YOUNG BOY (CONT'D)
 FAILS MY HEART I KNOW NOT HOW
 I CAN GO NO LONGER.

YOUNG GIRL
 MARK MY FOOTSTEPS GOOD, MY PAGE,
 TREAD THOU IN THEM BOLDLY

BOTH
 THOU SHALL FIND THE WINTER'S RAGE
 FREEZE THY BLOOD -

Scrooge looks up and charges to the door. He flings it wide open. The boy cowers.

SCROOGE
 Did you not hear me! I told you no more!

YOUNG BOY
 We're sorry, Sir. Very sorry.
 We was singing for our supper, is all.

YOUNG GIRL
 It was just a Christmas Carol, Sir.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)
 A penny a song. Do you like "Good King Wenceslas?" We can sing any Carol you like-

SCROOGE
 You'll do no such thing!

Scrooge advances on her, in the street.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
 Ignorant boy! Wanton girl!

YOUNG GIRL
 Please, Sir! I'm sorry Sir!

YOUNG BOY
 Leave her alone! Leave my sister alone! D'ya hear?

SCROOGE
Your....sister?

Scrooge catches himself. Something has struck him deeply, something which he cannot name. He holds himself against the door.

YOUNG BOY

Sir?

SCROOGE

Don't touch me. Get away. And don't come back. Understand?

The Young Boy ushers his sister away. The Company breaks apart the counting house.

Scrooge puts on his hat and coat.

ACTOR THREE

Foggier now and colder still. The old bell in the tower strikes the passing hours. The shops twinkle with their lights. Making pale faces ruddy as they pass.

ACTOR FOUR

And as for ol' Scrooge, he took his dinner in his usual melancholy tavern. Alone. He read his evening papers. Alone.

ACTOR FIVE

And then set off for home. Alone.

ACTOR SIX

A piercing, searching, biting cold. A dismal, sickly London fog which hung about the gateway. So thick, he could hardly see. And then-

There is a shudder, the chilling sound of wheezing breath. It sounds like..... "Scroooge."

Scrooge stops.

SCROOGE

Eh? Who's there?

There is no response. Scrooge continues on.

ACTOR SEVEN

But nothing.
Scrooge knows every stone of these streets, yet even he finds it difficult to grope along the path. Until finally...

The door to Scrooge's home appears in the fog. It is adorned with an impressive knocker.

SCROOGE

Home. At last. Home. My keys. My keys.

The wind picks up. The chilled wheezing sound returns.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

What in...?

A twisting of steel. A rattling of chains. The ornate door knocker transform. It pushes out towards Scrooge, who falls to his knees. A face appears in place of the knocker.

THE VOICE OF MARLEY

Scroooooooge!

SCROOGE

Marley? Jacob... Marley?

Thunder rumbles. The door snaps back to normal.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Humbug! I refuse to believe it!

He advances gingerly to the door. The door opens!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Aaah!

It's Mrs. Dilber, a frumpy housekeeper.

MRS. DILBER

There you are! You're late! I was jus' about t'leave, I was. Whatchoo doing down there, Mr. Scrooge? You look like you've seen a-

SCROOGE

Mrs. Dilber? It's only you.

MRS. DILBER

Only me? Who were you expecting, the Queen, swinging by f'tea?

SCROOGE

That'll do from you.

MRS. DILBER

Always the charmer, eh? I've washed your clothes and mended your Calico shirt. Linens're all clean. And I've rearranged the dust and cobwebs in every room.

SCROOGE

And my gruel? I like it very particularly-

MRS. DILBER

By your bedside, I know, I know. I done it. It's a cold night, so if you want me to light a fire, say it now or forever hold your-

SCROOGE

Never you mind. I'll do it myself.

MRS. DILBER

All right. Then I'll see you-

SCROOGE

Tomorrow.

MRS. DILBER

Tomorrow is Christmas Day, Sir. My sister lives in Leytonstone. I intend to be there.

SCROOGE

You are my housekeeper. This is my house. Intend to be here.

MRS. DILBER

Heartless heathen.

SCROOGE

Simple minded vulture.

MRS. DILBER

Miserable ogre.

SCROOGE

Hog faced horswoggler.

MRS. DILBER

Malmsy nosed flapdoodler.

SCROOGE

Rump roasted hedge creeper.

MRS. DILBER

Tight fisted old....Scrooge!

SCROOGE

What did you call me?

MRS. DILBER
The worst thing I could think of. A
Scrooge.

SCROOGE
Tomorrow! Or don't come back.

She pauses.

MRS. DILBER
I don't have a choice, do I?

SCROOGE
Choice? We none of us has a choice.

MRS. DILBER
Tomorrow then.

She starts to leave.

SCROOGE
Tomorrow.

She turns.

MRS. DILBER
You're a mean one, Mr. Scrooge.
That's not an insult, that's a
fact. I'd like to say one more
thing, only because I know you
loathe it... Merry....

SCROOGE
How dare you!

MRS. DILBER
...Christmasssssss.

She leaves. Scrooge opens his front door and enters. The door
closes with a rumble and disappears. He surveys the dark
house. He finds a candle.

SCROOGE
Hello?

There is an echo, spoken by the actors in the wings.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
I am not a man to be frightened by
echoes. Ah! A candle.

He lights it. The stage is dark, save for the flickering
candle.

Though some items appear onstage, we are only faintly aware of the actors who deliver them. Like shadows in the darkness, they scurry along, unseen.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Darkness. Darkness is good.
Darkness is cheap.

He surveys the house.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Sitting room, bedroom, larder. All
as they should be. Nobody under the
table? Or... the sofa. Nobody under
the bed, nor in the closet.

A ghostly figure is discovered in the darkness.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Aaaaaaah!

He looks closer.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Only... my dressing gown.

His dressing gown and nightcap hangs upright on a hanger. He puts them on. A chair and table appear. On the table is his gruel and a service bell. He places his candle on the table. The bell lifts into the air. It begins to ring, ever so softly. Then, the candle goes out.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
What is this?

Other bells appear ringing with abandon. A chain rattles.

THE VOICE OF MARLEY
Scroooooooge!

The horrible rattling grows louder, like an engine from hell being revved.

SCROOGE
Humbug still! I won't believe it!

The bells stop. A cellar door is flung open.

An ashen ghost emerges from the floor, dragging chains behind him. The Ghost stands before Scrooge pitifully. It's Marley, or some version of him. He's dead, to begin with.

MARLEY
What- what do you want with me?

MARLEY (CONT'D)

Much!

SCROOGE

Who are you?

MARLEY

Ask me who I was!

SCROOGE

Very well! Who... were you, then?
You're very familiar, for a ghost.

MARLEY

In life I was your partner, Jacob
Marley!

SCROOGE

Oh, my goodness. Oh Jacob, yes. It
is you! Excuse me. This is a bit of
a surprise, you know. Aren't you
dead, to begin with?

The ghost exhales a terrifying breathe and struggles to walk toward Scrooge, the chains dragging behind him. Scrooge back up in fear.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Can you sit down? Well, no, perhaps
someone in your... condition
cannot. This is all very unreal.

MARLEY

You don't believe in me?

SCROOGE

No. NO! In fact, I do not. There's
an explanation for you! You might
be a symptom of indigestion, you
see? Or an undigested bit of beef,
a blot of mustard or a fragment of
an underdone potato. There's more
of gravy than of grave about you,
sir, whatever you are.

Marley screams.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Mercy!

MARLEY

Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE

Very well! I do! If I must. But why should any spirit walk the earth?

MARLEY

It is required that, if a man's spirit does not go forth in life, he is condemned to do so after death, doomed to wander through the world and witness the happiness he might have shared on earth!

SCROOGE

Condemned? Is that why you bear those chains?

MARLEY

I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, yard by yard. I made it of my own free will and of my own free will I wore it. Do you not know the weight and length of the chains you bear yourself? Yours was as heavy as long, seven Christmases ago. You have labored on it since!

SCROOGE

Oh, dreadful apparition. Tell me no more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.

MARLEY

I have no comfort to give. I shall never know comfort again. A weary journey lies before me. I am allowed only this brief moment with which to make you hear me!

SCROOGE

But why condemned? You were always a good man of business Jacob.

MARLEY

Business! Mankind was my business. Charity, mercy, the common welfare, that was my business. Yet, I walked through crowds with my eyes turned away from needs of others! That is why I suffer now.

The chains pull him backwards. He resists.

MARLEY (CONT'D)

No! Not yet! Scrooge! My time is nearly gone! Hear me!

SCROOGE

I do! I do!

MARLEY

It is too late for me! But, I am here tonight to warn you- you have yet one chance of escaping my fate, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE

Oh, Jacob. You were always a good friend. Tell me what must be done. I'll accept anything. Anything!

MARLEY

You will be haunted this night-

SCROOGE

Anything but that.

MARLEY

Haunted by three spirits!

SCROOGE

Yes, but, oh, I'd much rather not be, you see. I don't care for hauntings.

MARLEY

Then there is no hope for you. Expect the first spirit tonight, when the clock strikes twelve.

SCROOGE

But couldn't I take all three at once and have it over quickly, Jacob?

MARLEY

Expect the second upon the stroke of two and the third upon its own good time. Look for me no more. But, remember all that has passed between us!

Hundreds of other ghosts appear out Scrooge's window. They are akin to the ghosts from the prologue, help aloft by the company.

SCROOGE
I will! I will!

MARLEY
Remember me, Scrooge! Remember me!
Remember me! Remember!

The other ghosts swirl high above London. Ethereal voices wail in an anguished symphony of regrets.

Marley is swallowed back into the ground. The ghosts vanish abruptly. The candle relights.

It is quiet. Scrooge is alone. He is frozen with fear.

SCROOGE
Jacob? Hallo? Jacob? Are you there?

Silence.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Knock three times if you're still
about?

Silence.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Nothing. I've lost my sanity. Jacob
Marley, in this very room. It could
not have been. No. And yet...
To bed.

A bed appears. He climbs into it.

A clock bell strikes.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
A quarter past.

DING!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Half past.

DING!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
A quarter to.

DING!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
The hour itself. And nothing else.
Nothing!

Now, the familiar, cantankerous Scrooge momentarily returns. He gets out of bed.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Marley, you humbug. Nothing but a dream. I must be going mad, dealing with fools wishing me a Merry-

The Spirit Of Christmas Past appears, leaping to life from the bedsheets. She glows brightly. The bed disappears. She walks towards Scrooge and smiles. Ethereal chimes, which accompany her movements. She glows brightly. Scrooge backs away.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Hello. Yes? How do you do? Friend of Jacob's are you?

CHRISTMAS PAST
Hello.

SCROOGE
AAh! Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold me?

CHRISTMAS PAST
I am.

SCROOGE
I'm going to look away and count to ten. And when I look back you shall be gone, do you hear me?

As he counts, the Spirit moves to his other side.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10!

He opens his eyes.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Ah ha! I knew it! Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!

He turns and sees her.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Oh, no, no, no, no, no... Who and what are you?

CHRISTMAS PAST
I am the Ghost Of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE

Long past?

CHRISTMAS PAST

No, silly. Your past!

SCROOGE

My past? What business brings you here?

CHRISTMAS PAST

You are my business. Your welfare is my business.

SCROOGE

Ah, very kind of you. But you see, and this is quite true, I do not believe I need your services at present. But thank you for stopping by, especially on a night like this. And I'm sure a ghost like you has other hauntings to attend to? I'll take care of my own welfare-

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your welfare and your reclamation!

SCROOGE

My recla-what?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Take heed, Ebenezer Scrooge. Rise. And walk with me.

She rises above him.

SCROOGE

But... Where are we to go?

CHRISTMAS PAST

The past, of course.

SCROOGE

The past? What past?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your past!

SCROOGE

Yes but you see it's the middle of the night and I'm in my slippers and a dressing gown. Why don't you just go on ahead and I'll catch up with you later-

CHRISTMAS PAST

Come!

He begins to lift off of his feet.

SCROOGE

Oh! No! I don't care for this. You see, I dislike heights. I'm mortal, and liable to fall and break my hip. And that will be on your conscience, you know! It will be on your conscience! You don't want that, do you?

CHRISTMAS PAST

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

SCROOGE

UHHHHH- HUMBUG!

Scrooge takes her hand and bedroom breaks away. They fly over London. The Company shifts the "A" frame ladders, carrying little dioramas of London, as the travelers remain "aloft"-high atop one of the ladders.

The company sings-

CHORUS

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN
LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY
/BRIGHTLY SHINE THE MOON THAT
NIGHT
THOUGH THE FROST WAS CRUEL/
TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY
COMFORT AND JOY
REMEMBER...

Scrooge and The Ghost alight in a field. An empty stage. An openness, an echo as in a dream, a lovely sense of light. A gentle snow.

SCROOGE

Where are we, Spirit? No... not where. When? Isn't that right? I know this place. Good heavens, I know this place! I was a boy here! This country road. The little town in the distance. Come!

CHRISTMAS PAST

You remember the way?

SCROOGE

Remember it? I could walk this road
blindfolded!

CHRISTMAS PAST

Strange to have forgotten it for so
many years.

SCROOGE

No, not forgotten! I recognize
every gate, every post, every tree.
It is all exactly as I recall. Oh!
I remember.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your lip is trembling. And what is
that on your cheek?

SCROOGE

A pimple. Nothing more.

A boy, Tommy (Child 4) brandishing a snowball approaches
Scrooge.

TOMMY

I've got you now! There's no
escaping!

SCROOGE

What?

Another boy, Marcus, stands on the other side of Scrooge with
a snowball. It becomes clear they do not see Scrooge.

MARCUS

Not if I get you first!

They throw their snowballs at each other. Scrooge ducks. The
boys laugh.

SCROOGE

Tommy Deloraine? Marcus? And is
that...Charlie Wray?

Two more boys enter and join the fight. (Child 2 and 7)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I know those boys. Lads! It's me!

TOMMY

Come on! We'd best get back before
ol' Westcott knows we're gone.

CHARLIE

I can practically hear him now. "A snowball fight? You should be working! You're a disgrace. Bah!"

TOMMY

Race ya!

They scurry off.

SCROOGE

Boys! Come back! It's Ebenezer!
It's Scrooge. It's... me. Spirit,
did they not see me?

CHRISTMAS PAST

These are but shadows of things
that have been.

SCROOGE

Shadows?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Shadows of times past.

SCROOGE

How lovely to see them all again.
But then, I'd quite forgotten,
hadn't I? They were fellow
students, you see.
At my... School.

A group of children (all the children in the company!) dressed as schoolboys enter, singing, facing a wicked snake of a man who stands at a blackboard. Their backs are to the audience.

THE CHILDREN

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY
WHEN THEY ARE BOTH FULL GROWN
OF ALL THE TREES THAT ARE IN THE
WOOD
THE HOLLY BEARS THE CROWN.
OH THE RISING OF THE SUN
AND THE RUNNING OF THE DEER
THE PLAYING OF THE MERRY ORGAN
SWEET SINGING IN THE CHOIR
AMEN

SCROOGE

My School? Yes. This is my school.
This is-

MR. WESTCOTT
 St. Bernard's School for Boys
 prepares its students to be proper
 citizens. NOT hooligans. Not
 criminals! Do you hear me?

ALL (INCLUDING SCROOGE)
 Yes, Sir.

MR. WESTCOTT
 This morning I was...hit. In. The.
 Head. By a snow'd...ball.

The boys snicker. Scrooge laughs, hesitantly.

MR. WESTCOTT (CONT'D)
 Disgraceful! Snowball fights. When
 you should be working! I will find
 out which one of you did it! Of
 that you may be sure. And when I
 do. There will be consequences. But
 not today is the end of term.
 Your... parents are at the main
 gate to take you home for holiday.
 But when your... festivities have
 ended, I will still be here. I will
 always be here. Remember that. For
 now...I can do nothing but dismiss
 you. Go!

The children bolt for the door.

MR. WESTCOTT (CONT'D)
 Except you.

One boy sits. Alone.

SCROOGE
 I know this boy. This solitary boy.

CHRISTMAS PAST
 The boy you were.

Westcott picks up one of the boy's books.

MR. WESTCOTT
 Have you read of these, Scrooge?

The boy nods.

MR. WESTCOTT (CONT'D)
 Well. You've been a busy boy.

He studies the book.

MR. WESTCOTT (CONT'D)

You're wasting your time with fantasies. There's no profit in stories. You'll learn that. The real world is cruel and hard. There are no happy endings. Your father sent a letter. He isn't waiting for you outside. Doesn't wish you home for Christmas. You're to remain here.

The boy nods.

MR. WESTCOTT (CONT'D)

Look at me when I speak to you. Do you understand, boy?

The boy nods.

MR. WESTCOTT (CONT'D)

Bah. Humbug.

He leaves.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Alone at Christmas. Without friends or family.

SCROOGE

No, never alone. He has his books. Oh, his wonderful books. Don Quixote, Ali Baba...

YOUNG SCROOGE

Robinson Crusoe...the parrot.

SCROOGE

At night I'd sing myself to sleep. The songs my mother sang before she passed.

YOUNG SCROOGE

SIRE, THE NIGHT IS DARKER NOW
AND THE WIND GROWS STRONGER
FAILS MY HEART I KNOW NOT HOW
I CAN GO NO...NO LONGER...

Young Scrooge weeps.

SCROOGE

Poor child.

The boy wipes his face with his cap. He throws it to the ground and rushes out. Scrooge picks up the cap.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I wish...

CHRISTMAS PAST

Yes?

SCROOGE

There was a boy singing a Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something. That's all. He was with... his sister.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Let us see another Christmas.

The schoolroom changes- it is now in disrepair.

CHRISTMAS PAST (CONT'D)

The years pass. The boy is older now.

The voice of a young girl, Fan, is heard offstage.

FAN

Ebenezer?

SCROOGE

Spirit! Is it her?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your sister.

SCROOGE

Oh, my little Fan. My dear sister Fan. Spirit, may I see her?

CHRISTMAS PAST

You may.

SCROOGE

And might she see me?

CHRISTMAS PAST

She might.

Scrooge puts on the schoolcap. Fan runs onstage. She sees him.

FAN (CHILD 5)

Oh Brother! Brother dear!

SCROOGE

Fan! Fan! It is you. My word. But it is you!

FAN

Are you surprised?

SCROOGE

More than I can say.

FAN

Well. Here's another surprise. I've come to bring you home!

SCROOGE

Home, yes, I remember-

FAN

Home for good and all! For ever and ever! Isn't it wonderful? How I've missed you!

SCROOGE

And I you, little Fan!

FAN

Father is so much kinder than he used to be. He's been ill, you see. And he wishes to see you!

SCROOGE

Fan. I can't believe it.

FAN

I told you to have faith and he'd come around. And then the other night after dinner, Father spoke so gently to me. He said that I should not be afraid to ask him once more if you might come home. And he agreed! He sent me in a coach to bring you! Oh, this is a day to remember!

SCROOGE

I will. I do.

FAN

And there's more! You're never to come back here.

SCROOGE

Never?

FAN

You're to be a gentleman! He has plans for you!

SCROOGE

Look at you, dear Fan. You and your sweet, crooked smile. All these years, I didn't forgot-

FAN

Pack your trunk. We're to be together all the Christmas long! We'll have a feast and sing songs like Mother used to! The coach is outside! Come!

She exits, singing.

SCROOGE

Fan! Don't leave, Fan. Don't go away. My little Fan.

CHRISTMAS PAST

She was always a delicate creature, your sister, whom breath might have withered. But she had a large heart.

SCROOGE

So she had, Spirit. So she had.

CHRISTMAS PAST

She died a woman. And had children, did she not?

SCROOGE

One child.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your nephew.

SCROOGE

Yes. Her only son, Fred. My Father was dead by the time we returned home. I felt nothing. He had never been a true father to either of us. But Fan wept for him. I suppose she always believed he could change.

Scrooge places his cap on a stool.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

May I see her again, Spirit? Just for a little while.

CHRISTMAS PAST
Her time has passed.

SCROOGE
How cruel you are.

CHRISTMAS PAST
The past is only what you remember.

The Company enters, singing.

CHORUS
DING DONG MERRILY ON HIGH,
IN HEAVEN'S BELLS ARE RINGING;
DING DONG VERILY THE SKY
IS RIV'N WITH ANGEL SINGING
GLORIA, HOSANNA IN EXCELSIS!
GLORIA, HOSANNA IN EXCELSIS!

The Company strikes the schoolroom. They replace it with another set, suggested by ladders, long tables bedecked by candles and overstuffed drawers. A coatrack with two coats. A front door with a sign: "Fezziwig and Company"

The company members become passers-by, singing and greeting each other on their way.

CHRISTMAS PAST
Another Christmas. The years pass on.

SCROOGE
This busy old street! This narrow,
bumpy lane. We're at the old
warehouse, aren't we?

CHRISTMAS PAST
Do you know this place?

SCROOGE
Know it? I was apprenticed here!
This is the warehouse of dear Ol'-

A foppish man comes hustling down the street, carrying a box tied with string.

FEZZIWIG
'Scuse me! Pardon me! Hot Soup,
coming through!

SCROOGE
Dear ol' Fezziwig. Alive again!

Fezziwig enters through the door.

FEZZIWIG

Yo- Ho there! Ebenezer? Dick?
Where are you, lads? Come along,
now!

Dick Wilkins enters, carrying stacks of boxes with papers coming out of them.

DICK

Present and accounted for, Mr.
Fezziwig!

SCROOGE

Bless me. Dick Wilkins? Can it be?
He was my best friend, Wilkins was.

FEZZIWIG

Good lad! And where's Ebenezer.
It's rare to see Wilkins without
Scrooge or Scrooge without Wilkins!

DICK

Can't say as I know.

He drops his box and papers go flying.

SCROOGE

Oh, Dick!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Oy! There you, are, 'Neezer! Don't
just stand there with your mouth
hanging open. Help me, will you?

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

What? Oh, yes, hello, Dickie!

Scrooge steps into the scene. He's now actively remembering the past.

FEZZIWIG

Yo-ho, my boys! Do you observe the
time? Seven O'clock! Christmas Eve!
Our guests will be here any minute!

SCROOGE

Mr. Fezziwig, I want to tell you
how-

FEZZIWIG

I know, you're going to warn me not
to spend so much money on the
party, 'Neezer. You're good with
the books, I know.

(MORE)

FEZZIWIG (CONT'D)

Perhaps too good! We make our money so we may spend money on the things that matter most. Remember that!

SCROOGE

Yes, but-

FEZZIWIG

I know, business is a bit down this year. But something will turn up! Something always turns up!

SCROOGE

Yes, Sir.

FEZZIWIG

And before I forget, here's a little bonus for you both. As a thank you. You're very special to me, boys. I'm most grateful for ye.

DICK

Thank you, Sir. Very kind.

FEZZIWIG

Now, Hilli-ho! Hilli-ho m'boys! Clear the room! I want those shutters up quicker than you can say Jack Robinson! Remember to hang the mistletoe! And put on your best clothes and comb yer hair!

The three clear the room and set up the party! From a box comes a garlanded wreath, and candles are lit, tables straightened.

Scrooge puts on a coat from the rack. He now fully looks the part of a partygoer. Dick puts on his coat and ties his tie.

SCROOGE

Old Fezziwig's parties, I'd forgotten how grand they were!

DICK

I think he invited everyone he knows!

SCROOGE

Cost a fortune.

DICK

'Neez, Ethel Kunkle is coming tonight! And guess what? I think I'm in love with her.

EBENEZER

In love? Weren't you in love with Mary Underfoot?

DICK

Oh I was in love with Mary Underfoot. But, then I fell in love with Mabel Hickenlooper. That was before I met Ethel Kunkle. Ethel Kunkle is different. I really do love her. She just might be the future Mrs. Wilkins! So, I need you to do something for me.

SCROOGE

I'd always do anything for you, Dickie! And you for me.

DICK

Brilliant! I want a moment alone with Ethel, but I'm supposed to be looking after my little sister, tonight. So, could you?

SCROOGE

Your sister? Your sister.

DICK

Yes, Isabelle. The one with the silly curls and buck teeth and squinty little eyes. I know she's a pest, but she's only a kid. Just dance with her for a little while and keep her out of my hair. Can you do that for me?

SCROOGE (REMEMBERING)

Yes, yes. Of course. Your sister.

DICK

How can I ever repay you?

FEZZIWIG

Clear away, boys! Clear away!
They're coming! Hilli-ho, Dick!
Chirrup, Ebenezer!

The entire company pours into the warehouse, though Scrooge sees many more people in his mind's eye. There is a hubub, the buzz of Christmas excitement.

SCROOGE

Oh! Spirit, I know them all! I recall them, each and every one!

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

There's the fiddler, and the baker
Mr. Card. And here's Mrs. Fezziwig!

MRS FEZZIWIG

Hallo, Love! Getting a bit
handsome, now Ebenezer, aren't you?
Give us a kiss, won't you?

SCROOGE

And the little Fezziwigs! Abigail
and Ralph!

YOUNG RALPH FEZZIWIG

I made a cake!

YOUNG ABIGAIL FEZZIWIG

And I helped!

SCROOGE

Of course you did! And look! Those
fellows, they all worked for
Fezziwig's rivals, didn't they? And
oh! Rita and Tom and Annie Burke
from down the street!

A girl passes Dick without giving him a second look.

DICK

Ethel, may I have a word? Hello?

SCROOGE

And of that's Robert Card, the
candlemaker, and oh, oh, oh her- I
forget her name- but it'll come to
me. And-

Fezziwig takes the floor.

FEZZIWIG

Friends! Welcome! Mrs Fezz and I
wish to say... Well, we look around
this room, ever changing as the
years go by... We count our
blessing for the family and friends
who share this journey with us. Oh!
And look at these children! Don't I
always say, "Christmas is for
Children?" Where would we be
without them?

(MORE)

FEZZIWIG (CONT'D)

Of course, remembrance like a candle burns brightest at Christmas, and some of our dear ones cannot be here tonight, and some have crossed over this year into that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns. We miss them all, we do. But, they're are in our hearts, of course. And to the rest of ye, you'll always be welcome at our Christmas table. And that's a promise!

Mrs. Fezziwig blubbers!

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Sorry! I can't help it, I love his speeches! I love this man! I do! I do! I do! I do!

FEZZIWIG

There, there, my love!

DICK

Long live The Fezziwigs!

ALL

Long live the Fezziwigs!

FEZZIWIG

And, so let us join in a jubilant chorus! Fiddler! Play on!

ALL

Huzzah!

The musicians play a medley of folksy Christmas Carols. The company dances with joy. The children are featured most of all, because, as Fezziwig says, Christmas is for children! There is much laughter and merriment. Couples swing their partners. Dick dances with more than one girl. Scrooge is shoved through it all, uncomfortably. At one point the Fezziwigs are surrounded by the Company and they dance with reckless abandon, seeming to almost lift off from the ground.

At one point, the Company joins hands in a circle and rushes to the center. Then, all break apart and only two are left in the middle. It is Scrooge and a beautiful young girl, Belle.

The company seems to be in a different world than Belle and Ebenezer, time operates in a different way as the two begin a beautiful dance together. It is slow, earnest and uplifting. The beginning of something perhaps a little more than special. A waltz as light as air.

BELLE

Hello.

SCROOGE

...Yes. Hello.

BELLE

My name is Belle.

SCROOGE

My name is... It's... I can't remember.

BELLE

It's Ebenezer.

SCROOGE

That sounds familiar.

BELLE

We've met before. My brother Dickie is your best friend.

SCROOGE

You? The girl with the curly hair?

BELLE

And the buck teeth.

SCROOGE

And the beautiful eyes.

The dance ends. The Company applauds.

BELLE

Will you... Will you call upon me?

SCROOGE

I will.

Belle curtsies and runs back to her friends. Scrooge is dumbstruck.

CHRISTMAS PAST

A lovely spirit she was.

SCROOGE

This night. I remember everything about it. I wished it would never end.

The clock chimes.

FEZZIWIG

We've done it again! Until next year! Merry Christmas to all!

MRS. FEZZIWIG

And to all a good night!

The guests leave, kissing and hugging, some children asleep in their parents' arms.

SCROOGE

Fezziwig's party... As soon as it was over, he started dreaming about the next one.

Scrooge and Dick begin cleaning up after the party. Christmas Past hovers in the shadows.

FEZZIWIG

We'll clean up in the morning, lads.

DICK

Sir? 'Neezer and I just want to say... thank you. It was a grand party.

FEZZIWIG

You're a pair of princes, you know that? Merry Christmas, boys.

DICK

Merry Christmas, Sir.

Fezziwig departs. Dick continues to straighten up. Scrooge turns to The Spirit.

SCROOGE

He did it every year, Spirit. Turned this droughty old warehouse into something like a palace.

CHRISTMAS PAST

A small matter to make his many friends so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE

Small?

CHRISTMAS PAST

He had spent little of your mortal money, three or four pounds, only. Is that enough to deserve your praise?

SCROOGE

You don't understand. We were only his apprentices. He had the power to render us happy or unhappy. But, his true power was in little things... looks and words you couldn't count in a ledger.

CHRISTMAS PAST

What troubles you?

SCROOGE

I should like to be able to say a word or two to my own clerk, Mr. Cratchit, just now, that's all.

DICK

'Neezer, I've big news. I've decided to propose to Beatrice Rumble.

SCROOGE

What happened to Ethel Kunkle?

DICK

Oh, it didn't work out with Ethel. But, Beatrice is the one for me. Don't you agree?

SCROOGE

Oh, Dickie! I forgot what fun you were.

DICK

Did you meet anyone tonight, 'Neezer? A girl to fancy?

SCROOGE

As a matter of fact, I did.

DICK

That's my boy! See? That shyness is an act! I knew it! Who is it? Millicent Dingle? Marjorie Pidgeon? Doreen Fishhook?

SCROOGE

Not exactly.

DICK

Well who is it, then? What's her name?

SCROOGE

...Belle.

DICK

Belle. I don't know a Belle. No, I can't think of a one. Only Belle I know is my...

It hits him.

DICK (CONT'D)

My sister? Ebenezer? My little sister?

SCROOGE

I know.

DICK

And did she fall for you, too?

SCROOGE

I believe she did.

DICK

Oh, that's disgusting! Well, not disgusting! But it's... it's so wrong! So very, very wrong! She's... she's...

SCROOGE

Yes?

DICK

...She's The most precious thing in the world to me, 'Neezer. And she's be lucky to have you. You have my blessing. Just remember-

SCROOGE

Yes?

DICK

If you break her heart, I'll never forgive you. Remember that!

SCROOGE

Yes, Dickie. I'll remember that.

DICK

We'd better turn in. It's Christmas tomorrow. Another year past. Good night, Ebenezer. And Merry Christmas!

He leaves.

CHRISTMAS PAST
My time grows short. Come!

SCROOGE
Spirit, no.

The scene changes. The stage is empty.

CHRISTMAS PAST
A different Christmas. Some time later, is it not?

SCROOGE
This field. I remember this day, too.

Belle stands in the field.

BELLE
Another idol has displaced me.

SCROOGE
I asked her- "what idol?"

BELLE
A golden one. And if that is what brings you comfort or joy, I don't wish to hold you from it.

SCROOGE
Belle. Be reasonable! I didn't wish to condemn us to life of poverty.

BELLE
You fear the world too much. And credit it too little. I have watched helplessly as you lose yourself little by little to your pursuits until all you think on is money. You've changed.

SCROOGE
Perhaps so. But, I did not change towards you!

BELLE
Our contract to marry is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and young.

SCROOGE

I was a boy! There is nothing on which life is so hard as poverty.

BELLE

Ebenezer, I release you from our contract.

SCROOGE

Did I ever seek release?

BELLE

In words, no.

SCROOGE

In what then?

BELLE

In an altered spirit. If we hadn't made promises long ago, Would you willingly choose me today, as I am now? You are a man who weighs everything by gain. I am a penniless girl with no dowry.

SCROOGE

I made a promise.

BELLE

And I release you from that promise, with a full heart and love of the man you once were.

She hands him her ring.

SCROOGE

Belle?

BELLE

You may feel pain in this, for a brief time, and then I suspect you'll forget. Think it an unprofitable dream. May you be happy in the life you have chosen.

She leaves.

SCROOGE

Belle, no. No. No, no, no.
(To himself) Why didn't Go after her? I let her go. Why didn't I try? Fool.

CHRISTMAS PAST
One shadow more.

Actor 9, seated at the piano plays and sings "Bring A Torch, Janeatte Isabella." The children scurry from all corners and join round him, singing in harmony.

BELLE'S HUSBAND
BRING A TORCH JEANETTE ISABELLA!
BRING A TORCH AND QUICKLY RUN!
A CHILD IS BORN, TELL THE FOLK IN
THE VILLAGE
THE CHILD IS BORN AND ALL ARE
CALLING
AH! AH! BEAUTIFUL IS THE MOTHER,
AH! AH! BEAUTIFUL IS THE CHILD!

The assembled children clap. Scrooge surveys the scene.

SCROOGE
I don't know this memory.

CHRISTMAS PAST
Another place. Another room.
Another Christmas.

BELLE'S HUSBAND
Lovely! Lovely! I don't think I've
ever heard a finer choir on earth!

Belle enters. She is older. She decorates a small Christmas tree.

BELLE'S HUSBAND (CONT'D)
Belle, our children have the voices
of Angels, I daresay!

BELLE'S
Well, they must take after their
father! Now, who wants to help
finish trimming the tree?

The children yell, "Me! Me!" and run to put up some decorations. One child, Janet stays at the piano.

JANET
I want to practice. I almost have
it.

BELLE'S
You go right ahead, Janet.

Belle's husband pulls her aside, momentarily while Janet tentatively plays the chords of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

BELLE'S HUSBAND

Belle. I meant to tell you. I saw an old friend of yours the other day.

BELLE

Oh? Who was it?

BELLE'S HUSBAND

Guess!

BELLE

Tell me!

BELLE'S HUSBAND

How about this? Humbug!

BELLE

Oh. Are you sure? It's been years.

BELLE'S HUSBAND

I was down Parson's Court. Passed his office window and I spied him at his work, with a candle by his side. I could scarcely help seeing him. But there he sat, alone. Quite alone in this world, I do believe.

SCROOGE

Spirit, remove me from this place.

BELLE

I'm sorry to hear it. Poor Ebenezer.

BELLE'S HUSBAND

Yes. And, you know, seeing him there... I could only think... Belle, You've been happy, haven't you? I know it hasn't always been easy, and we may not have-

BELLE

Oh, my sweet. Listen carefully. I am thankful every day. And our children are fortunate to have you as their father. You're a gift.

BELLE'S HUSBAND

A gift, eh? I could wear a little bow and sit under that tree, if you'd like.

BELLE

Silly. Now, unfurrow your brow. It's Christmas.

JANET

I've got it! I've got it! Come sing! God Rest ye, Merry gentlemen, let-

The others join in, Belle's husband returns to the piano. The singing is filled by voices from the wings. Belle stands alone. After a moment, she feels a chill. She pulls her shawl over her shoulders and retreats upstage to the shadows.

SCROOGE

Spirit! Take me from here! You delight in tormenting me!

CHRISTMAS PAST

I told you, these are but shadows of things that have been. They are what they are. You must not blame me.

SCROOGE

You show me Shadows! Things long past! Things lost to me! You haunt me with what might have been!

The singing becomes stronger. Others appear in the dim light.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

You show me the fragments of faces I have known!

Fan appears. She sings.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Friends long lost, people long gone!

Dick and the Fezziwigs appear. They sing, too.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I cannot bear it. Remove me from here! I demand it of you! Spirit!

Mr. Westcott appears. The rest of the Company fills in from the shadow. The singing grows louder.

Scrooge charges at the Spirit of Christmas Past! He grabs her cloak, and she vanishes. He holds the cloak in his hands and clutches it to his heart.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Haunt me no more! No more... Have
mercy.

He falls to his knees. The Company surrounds him, singing.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Have mercy.

CHORUS
TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY!
COMFORT AND JOY-

Scrooge collapses. The music halts-

CHILD 5
What happens next?

ACTOR TWO
Good question. Come back in fifteen
and find out.

The chorus sings a strong finish-

CHORUS
Oh-OH TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY

Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

A red curtain swag hangs elegantly stage right. "Good King Wenceslas" plays. Child 5 runs out to the audience. She thinks for an uncomfortably long moment, as if trying to remember her lines.

CHILD 5

Marley was dead, to begin with!

The company comes rushing on. Bellowing in dismay!

ACTOR TWO

No, no, no! We're beyond that! Way beyond!

ACTOR SIX

Don't you remember?

ACTOR THREE

First, Scrooge yelled at Fred for saying Merry Christmas!

ACTOR TWO

And then he got upset with Bob Cratchit for leaving!

CHILD THREE

And then he was upset with the street urchin and his sister for singing!

ACTOR FOUR

And at Mrs. Dilber for cleaning!

ACTOR SEVEN

And then Marley upset Ol' Scrooge!

CHILD ONE

And then Christmas Past showed him-well, his past!

ACTOR SEVEN

Which was all very upsetting, too, I dare say. I almost felt sorry for him. Almost. But not quite.

ACTOR FOUR

Where is the ol' bugger, anyway?

The sound of loud snoring. The Company parts like the Red Sea. Scrooge is discovered sleeping on the floor, his ass in the air. Everyone shushes each other.

ACTOR FOUR (CONT'D)

Let's not wake him. The next part
is just about to start.

They all tip toe off stage. ACTor Two lingers.

ACTOR THREE

Now, having seen those many visions
from the past, you may think
Scrooge would certainly be ready
for any manner of strange
appearances...

Scrooge snores loudly and wakes himself up.

SCROOGE

Huh? What?

ACTOR TWO

Yet, being prepared for anything,
he is by no means prepared for
nothing...

Actor Two departs.

DING!

SCROOGE

One o'clock. I suppose Spirits are
not as punctual as one would think.
Hello? No? Very well. Ah, well,
perhaps they have decided not
to....

A deep laugh. "The Twelve Days Of Christmas" plays. The silhouette of a large figure, almost a giant, appears as a shadow behind the curtain swag. Scrooge approaches the curtain. The laugh bellows again. The swag lifts like a curtain, revealing the laughing figure of The Ghost of Christmas Present. He is seated on a regal throne attached to one of The "A" frame ladders. He wears a beautiful, regal green coat. He somewhat resembles Santa Claus, with a garland of candles about his head.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Come in! Come in and know me
better, man!

SCROOGE

Who... who are you?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Ha! I am the Ghost of Christmas
Present.

SCROOGE

I should have guessed as much.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You've never seen the likes of me before, I take it?

SCROOGE

No, no, I don't believe I have.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Have you never walked with my brothers and sisters?

SCROOGE

I don't think so. Have you many siblings?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Eighteen hundred and forty two, give or take.

SCROOGE

Quite a family to provide for.

The Spirit laughs heartily.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Yes, yes, very funny.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Now, then, shall we make our way?

SCROOGE

Earlier tonight, I was an unwilling traveller. But I know why you are here, now. You wish to teach me, don't you? I will do anything, anything you ask.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Then let us take to the sky!

SCROOGE

Anything but that. Don't you Spirits ever walk?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Ha ha! We have much to do! Come, Ebenezer Scrooge. Touch my robe!

Scrooge steps on to the ladder. The Company aids the ladder in traveling the stage.

SCROOGE

Very well, if I mus- AHHHH!

A small town appears, depicted by dioramas nestled in the two other "A" frame ladders. The Company sings.

CHORUS

PAGE AND MONARCH FORTH THEY WENT
 FORTH THEY WENT TOGETHER!/
 DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY
 FA LA LA LA LA!
 LA LA LA LA!
 TIS THE EASON TO BE JOLLY
 FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA!

Present and Scrooge alight on a city street. The Company pass each other, waving a greeting, hurrying about.

SCROOGE

A city street? What are we doing here?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

It's Christmas morning. Camden Town. See the good people tumbling their way home to prepare their meals? Look about these streets. You may recognize someone here.

SCROOGE

If you're hoping to show me visions of an old girlfriend, your friend beat you to it. Tell me what I'm supposed to be-

Two Townspeople (Actors 5 and 6) carrying baskets bump into each other.

TOWNSPERSON

Oy! Look where you're headin', now, eh?

TOWNSPERSON #2

Me? Why don't you-

The Spirit sprinkles something magical over them.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Right then. So sorry. Merry Christmas.

The Townspeople depart.

SCROOGE

What did you sprinkle over them as they passed?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Just a little Christmas seasoning. An old family recipe, you might say. It helps a bit.

SCROOGE

And is every person welcome to your offering?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Oh, yes, indeed. The poor ones most of all.

SCROOGE

Why the poor?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Because they are the ones that need me most.

SCROOGE

I see.

They arrive before a doorway.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Here now! Our destination.

SCROOGE

Whose home is this?

A woman opens the door!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Get in here! Right now!

SCROOGE

Oh, dear. Oh!

A girl runs up the street.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Belinda Cratchit! I told you to come straight home!

SCROOGE

Cratchit? This is Bob Cratchit's home?

The girl runs into the house, Present and Scrooge follow.

BELINDA

Sorry, Mother. There was a line at the baker's! And the streets were so busy this morning. Here you are, a loaf of bread.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Thank you, daring. Peter? How are my potatoes coming along?

Peter comes from the kitchen, he's got a spoon of mashed potatoes and a face full of food.

PETER

Delicious, Mother!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Peter! You're supposed to be stirring, not eating! Now put that down and help me set the table!

PETER

Sorry, Mother!

MRS. CRATCHIT

There's a boy.

SCROOGE

These are Bob's children? And his missus.

BELINDA

That's your prettiest dress, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Well, I only pull it out for a special occasion.

BELINDA

Father always smiles at you when you wear it.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Oh, does he? I didn't notice. And you, lovely with those ribbons in your hair! Now then... Your father and Tiny Tim will be home soon! And where is our Martha? Late half an hour.

Martha enters.

MARTHA

Here I am, Mother!

MRS. CRATCHIT

My Goodness! Come in! Come in! I was startin' to worry.

MARTHA

Oh! You always worry!

MRS CRATCHIT

With good reason! I'm a mother! That's what mothers do! Worry! If you're lucky you'll worry too, someday! What kept you?

MARTHA

We had a deal of work to finish up and Mrs. Ackroyd made us stay late. I had to run all the way from the milliner's shop!

MRS CRATCHIT

That horrid woman! She's a regular Scrooge.

SCROOGE

What did she say?

MARTHA

Can I help you, Mother?

MRS CRATCHIT

No, no! Sit! You catch your breath!

Two voices sing. Bob Cratchit approaches, carrying Tiny Tim on his shoulder.

MRS CRATCHIT (CONT'D)

Ah! That'll be your father, now. With Tim!

BELINDA AND PETER

Hide, Martha! Hide!

Martha hides behind the table. Bob and Tiny Tim enter.

CRATCHIT AND TIM

A-AAND WON-DERS, AND WO-O-ONDER-RS OF HIS LOVE!

CRATCHIT

Let word go forth! The biggest
Cratchit and the littlest Cratchit
are now home!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Thought you'd never get here!

TINY TIM

Hello Mother!

MRS. CRATCHIT

Hello, m'sweet. My brave little
boy. Wipe ya nose, dear. Not you,
your father.

CRATCHIT

Is that a new dress? You look
lovely.

MRS. CRATCHIT

This old thing? I jus' threw it on.

BELINDA

I told you.

CRATCHIT

And, where's our Martha? Where is
she, now?

SCROOGE

She's behind the table, Bob.

MRS CRATCHIT

Oh, Bob. I'm sorry to tell ya, but
she's not coming.

CRATCHIT

Not coming?

SCROOGE

She's behind the table!

CRATCHIT

Surely Mrs. Ackroyd doesn't expect
her to work on Christmas. I have a
good mind to go down there and-

Martha pops out and runs into an embrace.

MARTHA

Here I am, Father!

SCROOGE

Oh, Bob! For goodness sake! I told you!

CRATCHIT

Martha! You devil!

The family crowds around Bob, laughing.

MARTHA

We were just teasing! Come sit with me, Tim.

TINY TIM

I knew you wouldn't miss Christmas dinner, Martha!

MRS. CRATCHIT (ASIDE)

And how was Tiny Tim in church?

CRATCHIT

As good as gold, and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. On the way home, he said that he hoped the people in church saw him, because it might be right for them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see. I... I think perhaps He's growing stronger and heartier every day. Much stronger. Don't you think?

MRS. CRATCHIT

Perhaps so, Bob. Perhaps so.

Peter enters with a punch bowl. They gather round the fire.

PETER

I've made the egg nog!

CRATCHIT

Oooh! A little something before we eat! Come along, then!

Tim claps happily. Peter and Bob pour cups for everyone.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Don't spoil your appetite, I'm cooking a goose, you know!

TINY TIM
Will there be potatoes?

BELINDA
There will be!

TINY TIM
And a bit of pudding, too, I
shouldn't wonder!

MRS. CRATCHIT
Only for you children, I'm watching
my figure!

CRATCHIT
I've been dreaming about this goose
since last Christmas! So tender, so
delicious.

MRS. CRATCHIT
So cheap. But I think it'll do -

CRATCHIT
My love, it will be the finest
success achieved by you since our
children.

PETER
Tim, you can have my potatoes, if
you're still hungry.

MARTHA
Aren't you sweet, Peter?

Scrooge and Christmas Present survey the scene.

SCROOGE
There isn't really enough for all
of them, is there?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
And yet, no Cratchit present would
dare to hint at such a thing.

CRATCHIT
I'd like to make a toast! To Mr.
Scrooge. The Founder of the Feast.

SCROOGE
Spirit, my ear must have played a
trick upon me. Did he say-

MRS. CRATCHIT
 Founder of the feast indeed. The
 miserly ol' skinflint!

SCROOGE
 I don't believe she cares for me.

CRATCHIT
 My dear. It's Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT
 Drink to him? That odious, stingy,
 unfeeling little man? You know he
 is, Robert! Nobody knows better'n
 you. I'm only speaking the truth!
 That's what mothers do!

CRACHIT
 Darling, the children. It's
 Christmas.

MRS. CRACHIT
 Oh, Christmas, it is. Very well.
 I'll toast him for your sake, but
 not his.

She raises her glass defiantly.

MRS CRATCHIT
 Long-life-to-him-a-very-merry-
 Christmas-and-a-happy-new-year!
 There!

CRATCHIT
 Thank you, Mother. A Merry
 Christmas, to us all, my dear ones.

MRS. CRATCHIT
 Hear, hear.

They drink.

SCROOGE
 Spirit. Tell me. Tiny Tim, will he
 live?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
 I am not able to speak of the
 shadows to come...

SCROOGE
 Tell me, please.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Very well. I see a vacant stool in the chimney corner. And a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered, the child will surely die.

SCROOGE

Oh, no! Spirit! Surely, something can be done. Can't he be spared?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

If he be "like to die, he had better do it. And decrease the surplus population." Is that not what you said? Will you decide what men shall live and what men shall die? It may well be, that in the sight of heaven, you are and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child.

The Cratchits sit by the fire. Peter plays an accordion.

CRATCHIT

How about a song, then, Tim?

The others gently egg him on. Tim sings.

TINY TIM

LO HOW A ROSE ERE BLOOMING
FROM TENDER STEM HATH SPRUNG
OF JESSE'S LINEAGE COMING
AS MEN OF OLD HATH SUNG.
IT CAME A FLOWERED BRIGHT
AMID THE COLD OF WINTER
WHEN HALF SPENT WAS THE NIGHT.

Peter plays softly on an accordion.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

There is nothing of high mark here. They are not well dressed, their shoes are far from dry. Still, they are happy, are they not?

CRATCHIT

God Bless you, my darlings.

TINY TIM

God bless us every one.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Let us not tarry. There is much to
see. To see! To sea!

A rumble of thunder.

The family vanishes.

Several in the Company, dressed as sailors. Arrange a sailing
ship, bounding over the waves. A penny whistle and the sound
of the sea fill the night air. They sing a haunting version
of-

CHORUS

I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY ON CHRISTMAS DAY
I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN-

SCROOGE

Were are we now?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Aboard a ship, where seafaring men
labor in the depths of the ocean.

They sing the close to "The Wexford Carol."

CHORUS

JUST AS THE ANGELS ALL FORETOLD
WITH THANKFUL HEART WE SHALL BEHOLD
ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT, WHER'ER WE ROAM
A STAR TO LEAD US SAFELY HOME

The sailors hold still as the ship sails on.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Every man here holds in his mind a
Christmas dream, tinged with
thoughts of home.

SCROOGE

Spirit why have you shown me this
scene?

ACTOR SIX

Even here, at the edge of the
world, Christmas is present. These
men think on loved ones far away
and dare to wonder if someone,
somewhere, is thinking of them in
return. Who ashore thinks of you
this Christmas, Ebenezer Scrooge?

There is a joyous and hearty laugh. The scene is transformed into a modest drawing room.

Scrooge finds himself at Fred's house. Fred is surrounded by CATHERINE, MADGE, FRANK, WILLIAM and TOPPER. Fred is laughing with the others.

FRED

Upon my word, he looked me straight in the eye and said, "Christmas is a humbug!"

CATHERINE

A humbug? Oh, Fred.

FRED

Oh, everything's a humbug to him, Catherine.

Scrooge and the Spirit mill about the room.

SCROOGE

This...this is Fred's home.
And is this Catherine?

CATHERINE

Well, more shame for him, then.

MADGE

He's just an ol' fool!

FRED

But he isn't a fool, really. He's a comical fellow, I suppose, and not so pleasant as he might be.

CATHERINE

I know how it disappoints you so, Fred.

Drinks are passed around.

SCROOGE

Thank you. Perhaps just a sip. Oh.

But the drinks are passed right by him.

MADGE

I'm sure he's very rich.

FRED

But is he? His wealth is of no use to him. He does no good with it. Not even for himself.

CATHERINE

I don't like the way he speaks to you.

FRED

Oh, I'm not angry with him.

CATHERINE

But it bothers you. And so it bothers me.

MADGE

Freddie, don't dwell. Your Uncle is positively cruel and everybody knows it.

FRED

Yes but, who does he hurt, really? Only himself. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't even come to meet my dear wife. What does that earn him?

TOPPER

He loses a very good dinner, I'd say.

FRED

Agreed, Topper!

GUESTS

Hear! Hear!

WILLIAM

Down at the Exchange, do you know what it means to be called a Scrooge?

MADGE

It's the worst kind of insult!
"Why, you miserable Ol' Scrooge!"

They laugh. Scrooge is embarrassed.

SCROOGE

I'm sure that's an exaggeration.

Nobody hears him, of course.

TOPPER

It's funny to think you're related to him, Freddie. I would never call you a Scrooge.

FRED

Yes, but I am one. Scrooge was my Mother's name, you know. I never knew her, but I am told she had a sweet, crooked smile and the kindest of hearts. And, she loved her brother dearly, so... I...

MADGE

He never finishes what he begins to say. Old Freddie!

CATHERINE

It's all right, Fred.

FRED

He has always been my only relation. And it grieves me that we should both miss out on the pleasures of family. And when our household grows, he shall miss even more. I pity him. Well, he may rail at Christmas till to the end, but I'll still go round year after year to say "Uncle Scrooge, Merry Christmas!"

WILLIAM

I admire your determination!

FRED

If only to put him in the mind to leave poor Bob Cratchit and his family fifty pounds, that's something.

CATHERINE

Your mum would be proud were she present.

TOPPER

Oh! Presents! Shall we exchange presents?

Present summons Scrooge to the door.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

It is time for us to depart.

SCROOGE

Oh no, Spirit! Let us stay. Just a little longer.

William pops up.

WILLIAM

How about a game, first!

MADGE

Yes, a game! A game of YES OR NO!
We all ask questions and guess the
answer! Freddie, you first!!

FRED

Oh, no, I'm dreadful at this sort
of thing!

CATHERINE

Nonsense, there's nothing to it!

WILLIAM

I'm not sure I understand the
rules.

MADGE

Oh, William, don't be daft. You'll
pick it up!

WILLIAM

I might even win!

MADGE

Not unless I do, luv!

CATHERINE

Oooh, I love games!

TOPPER

Shall we give it a go, then?

FRED

Alright, let's have it!

WILLIAM

Very well! Are you animal,
vegetable or mineral!

MADGE

Yes or no, darlin', it has to be
yes or no!

WILLIAM

Oh, rats.

TOPPER

Are you thinking of an animal?

FRED

Well, yes.

WILLIAM
Living or dead?

SCROOGE
Yes or no, yes or no! It's not that
hard! Pay attention! He'll never
win, Spirit, he hasn't the mind for
it.

MADGE
Honestly, brother, it's not that
hard! Apply yourself.

SCROOGE
Listen to her!

WILLIAM
Ah! Is it living?

FRED
Yes! Yes!

WILLIAM
Now, I've got the hang of it.
Is it a pig?

MADGE
Not your turn! Is it a wild animal?

FRED
No. (laughs)

TOPPER
Can it be found in London?

FRED
Yes.

SCROOGE
Is it a bird?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Sssh.

CATHERINE
Does it growl?

FRED
Yes.

MADGE
Is it frightening?

FRED
Yes!

WILLIAM
Its not a pig?

FRED
It's not a pig!

TOPPER
Is it alive?

FRED
Of course!

CATHERINE
Is it disagreeable?

FRED
Yes!

WILLIAM
Pass.

TOPPER
Is it a horse?

FRED
No!

MADGE
An ass?

Fred and the others roar with laughter.

FRED
No!

SCROOGE
A cow? Is it a cow? It's a
cow!

WILLIAM
Does it scurry?

FRED
Yes!

TOPPER
Is it a rat?

FRED
No! Well, you might think so.

CATHERINE

Ah! Is it a man?

Fred suppresses a giggle, not giving away the information.

MADGE

I know it. I know what it is. You cheeky boy!

CATHERINE

Tell us!

WILLIAM

Yes, what is it? Tell us!

MADGE

Why, it's your Uncle Scrooooge!

FRED

It is!

They laugh! So does Scrooge.

SCROOGE

It's me! Imagine that! It's me!

WILLIAM

I was going to say that! I was thisclose!

FRED

We're not being particularly charitable.

CATHERINE

Well it's not as if he can hear us.

SCROOGE

Oh, it's quite all right, dear. I haven't played a game in years.

FRED

Well, he has brought us much merriment today. Shall we drink to his health? "Uncle, wherever you are, a Merry Christmas to you. You wouldn't take it from me, but you'll have it nevertheless. To Uncle Scrooge!"

ALL

Here, here.

They sing in a round as the scene vanishes.

THE CHORUS
 PRAY GOD BLESS/ALL FRIENDS HERE!/ A
 VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS/ AND A HAPPY
 NEW YEAR!

The Spirit looks older and now walks with some difficulty.

SCROOGE
 Spirit, are you unwell?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
 I must rest, now. My time is
 drawing near.

SCROOGE
 Are Spirits' lives so short?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
 My life upon this globe is very
 brief. It ends tonight at midnight.

In the shadows, there appears the sorrowful silhouettes of
 men and women. This is unfamiliar territory.

SCROOGE
 Such a little time. Forgive me if I
 am not justified in what I ask, but
 where have you taken me? I see men
 at hard labour. Women suffering on
 the street. An almshouse, a
 hospital. A jail. These places seem
 not to be belonging to yourself.
 Where is there Christmas here?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
 Did it not occur to you? I must
 check on all of my children this
 night.

Scrooge spies two emaciated children. They are frightful
 sights, wretched in their behavior. They scurry to Present's
 side.

SCROOGE
 Spirit, are these children yours?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
 They are Man's. And they cling to
 me. This brother is Ignorance. This
 sister is Want. Beware them both,
 but most of all the boy, for on his
 brow is written Doom unless it be
 erased.

SCROOGE

Have they no refuge?

IGNORANCE AND PRESENT

Are there no prisons?

WANT AND PRESENT

Are there no workhouses?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Your very words, are they not?

The children escape into the void. The clock strikes 12. Christmas Present begins to vanish. He takes stock of his body as it vanishes.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT (CONT'D)

Our time is over. How quickly it has passed. In the blink of an eye. Oh, but what a gift it was, this night, this life. What a gift.

SCROOGE

A Christmas Present.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Now, a Christmas Past.

He is gone. Thunder rumbles.

Scrooge finds himself alone onstage for the first time. Thunder rises. From the mist, a slow moving figure appears—The Spirit Of Christmas Future. He is unnaturally tall and thin, many feet taller than Scrooge. His face is obscured, save for two glowing, red eyes. The long, black frock coat he wears is tattered, clinging to a slender frame. His hands, like talons, dangle with unnatural length. A top hat and walking stick give the impression of a nightmare version of Scrooge himself as we saw him at the beginning of the play.

SCROOGE

Am I in the presence of The Ghost
Of Christmas Yet To Come?

The spirit does not move.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, I am prepared to bear you company in this lonely place and do it with a thankful heart.

The Spirit does not move.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Will you speak to me?

The Spirit does not move.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Lead on. What do you wish me to
see?

The spirit raises a bony hand. As if in the Spirit's grasp, he is violently turned to face a scene of three oncoming businessmen. The Spirit disappears and Scrooge drops to his knees.

MR. GEROME
Did you hear? Old Scratch got his
own at last, eh?

MR. RALEIGH
Is that so? When did he go?

MR. BLUNT
Last night I believe.

MR. GEROME
Didn't even know he was ill. I
thought he'd never go.

MR. RALEIGH
God knows.

MR. BLUNT
And what has he done with his
money, I wonder?

MR. RALEIGH
He hasn't left it to me, that's all
I know.

MR. BLUNT
Nor I! Quite!

MR. GEROME
Well, it's likely to be a cheap
funeral. I can't imagine anyone
will attend. You don't suppose we
need volunteer?

MR. RALEIGH
Do you think lunch is provided?

MR. GEROME

Yes, I'll go if there's lunch.

MR. BLUNT

Oh, I hate funerals and I never eat lunch. I don't wish to go at all.

MR. GEROME

And you were always his most particular friend, weren't you?

MR. BLUNT

Was I? Come to think of it, he did stop and speak to me once.

The men laugh.

MR. BLUNT (CONT'D)

I say, let's go to the club instead and have a little drinkie!

MR. GEROME

Oooh! A capital idea!

They continue on their way as the Ghost reappears.

SCROOGE

I recognize each of those men. I'm on this corner every day by the Exchange, yet I see no likeness of myself here. Spirit, speak to me. Where am I in this vision?

The Spirit raises his hand again, accompanied by a chilling, strangulated breath. A death rattle.

Mrs. Dilber, carrying a bundle appears at a pawnshop which is represented by a few hanging cloths.

MRS. DILBER

Joe! Joe! You in here?

SCROOGE

Mrs. Dilber?

OLD JOE

Why, Mrs. Dilber. Don't you look lovely..

MRS. DILBER

Quit your flirting, Joe, I'm here on business.

OLD JOE
The shop is closed for Christmas.

MRS. DILBER
I got a bundle for you to sell.
Belonged to Old Scratch. Did you
hear? He's finally died.

OLD JOE
Is that so? The Old Fool. Dead.

DILBER
As a doornail. Whatever that means.

OLD JOE
Does anyone know yet?

MRS. DILBER
Happened this evening. HE was alone
at the end. And seeing as I'm out
of a job, I helped myself to a few
thing. I don't suppose I should
have, but-

OLD JOE
Pish! Every person has a right to
care for themselves. Lord knows, he
always did.

MRS. DILBER
See here.

He rummages through the bundle.

OLD JOE
Pencil case, spoons, some buttons.
Gloves. A leather boot? Only one?
Well, you never know. The bed-
curtains?

MRS. DILBER
I did took em down rings and all!

OLD JOE
Oh, you're beautiful, you are.
beautiful, love!

MRS. DILBER
Oh, ya sweet talker. And here!
Don't forget the blanket!

OLD JOE
You took his blanket?

MRS. DILBER

Well, he isn't likely to be cold without it now, is he?

OLD JOE

He didn't go an die of anythin' catchin', I hope.

MRS. DILBER

I weren't so fond of his company I'd hang about him if he was sick. Ah! Did you see the shirt? A fine one. Not a hole in it! Couldn't let it go to waste.

OLD JOE

They'd have only buried him in it.

MRS. DILBER

I dressed him in the calico for his journey to the side. This is the end of it, you see. He frightened every one away when he was alive, and so we profit now he's dead. Strange isn't?

OLD JOE

I'll give you something for it. I always like to help a pretty lady. It's a weakness of mine.

MRS. DILBER

Joe, you scoundrel! Nice to hear a flattering word, even from you!

OLD JOE

A Merry Christmas for us both!

They vanish, laughing.

SCROOGE

Spirit, where are you? I fear to know... of whom do they speak?

The Spirit appears and points, with a bony finger. Scrooge turns violently, as if by command. An undertaker crosses the stage pulling a carriage which holds a plain coffin.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Such a lonely procession. I see now. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way now. Is that what you mean?

The undertaker pauses to rest. Scrooge approaches.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I would open this lid to look at
this dead man's face. If I could.
But I have not the power.

The undertaker carries on and exits.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Is there any tenderness connected
with death? If there is, show it
now or this funeral will forever
haunt me!

Music plays. "O Little One Sweet, O Little One Mild." Mrs. Cratchit is sewing by a fire. Peter, Belinda and Martha huddle together. . Peter reads from a book. MARtha cradles Belinda, who buries her head in her knees.

MARTHA

Are you all right, Mother?

MRS CRATCHIT

What? Yes.

MARTHA

Sit by the candle. Sewing in the
dark will hurt your eyes. I wonder
where Father is? It must be near
his time.

PETER

Past it rather.

MARTHA

He's walked a bit slower than he
used to these past few evenings.

PETER

I've know him to him walk with Tiny
Tim upon his shoulder, very fast...
indeed.

MARTHA

So have I.

MRS.CRATCHIT

So have I.

MARTHA

Father loved him so. He loved him
so. We all did.

Bob enters.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
And here's Father, now.

PETER AND BELINDA
Father.

CRATCHIT
My dears. Hello.

2The children sit near him.

MARTHA
How are we, then, Father?

CRATCHIT
Fine, fine. Thank you. How are you,
Mother?

Mrs. Cratchit stares quietly into the hearth.

CRATCHIT (CONT'D)
You're coming along quite well with
your sewing, m'love. You'll be done
long before Sunday, I'm sure.

MARTHA
You went there today, did you,
Father?

CRATCHIT
Yes, dear. And how I wish you could
have gone. It would have done you
good to see how green a place it
is. I promised him... that we
would go there... on a Sunday. To
sit by him. And keep him in our
hearts.

Our Tiny, tiny Tim...

He weeps.

BELINDA
Oh, Father. Please. Please don't be
grieved. Father.

CRATCHIT
There now. I'm all right. I'm all
right.

MRS. CRATCHIT

...

He embraces his wife. She clutches him in return.

CRATCHIT

There, there, my love. It's all right. We're all right, my dears.

PETER

But, Father...

CRATCHIT

We're going to be all right. You know, I ran into Mr. Scrooge's nephew today. He said, "Bob, I'm heartily sorry for you and your good wife. Please do let me know if I can be of service to you in any way" - and he handed me his card.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Oh.

CRATCHIT

Yes. Mr. Fred. He's a good soul, he is. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he got Peter a better situation before long.

MARTHA

You hear that, Peter? Perhaps you'll be a gentleman.

PETER

I don't want to be a gentleman. I want always to stay here with Mother and Father.

CRATCHIT

Oh, Peter. There will come a time. And however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget our poor Tiny Tim. And this first parting that there was among us.

PETER

Never, Father.

CRATCHIT

Oh, my sweet family. I'm happy. Very happy.

The family kisses him.

MRS. CRATCHIT
My boy. My boy is...

CRATCHIT
Come along, Mother. You need to rest.

Martha and the children escort Mrs. Cratchit offstage.

Cratchit turns towards Scrooge. Their eyes seem to meet, but not on an earthly plane.

SCROOGE
Oh, Bob. Bob.

Cratchit walks past him. The home vanishes. The Ghost Of Christmas Future stands behind Scrooge. Thunder. A bell tolls.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Spectre, something tells me that our parting is at hand. Tell me, Spirit! Tell me, are these the shadows of things that will be? Or things that may be, only? If these courses are departed from, might their ends surely change?

Thunder bellows. A grave opens in the ground before him.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
A churchyard?

A gigantic tombstone appears behind Scrooge.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Spirit! Am I the man whose funeral passed, lying dead in his coffin? The man of whom these many you have shown me speak?

The headstone begins to burn, as if the letters were melting ice away. A name becomes clear: EBENEZER SCROOGE.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Oh, Spirit! The grave is mine! Is it not? Jacob spoke of hope and reclamation. Is there none for me? Only now, when it is too late, only now do I understand his warning. My business was man! I have failed my brothers and sisters.

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Spirit! Oh Spirit, hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I have been. Spirit, I wish to change these shadows you have shown. I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future. All three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Please, tell me that I may sponge away the writing on that stone.

Spirit! Where are you? I don't want to be alone! I am alone. Alone...

He falls to his knees, weeping. A crack of thunder, unlike the others. The weather changes.

The wind subsides. A light snow begins to fall all around him. It is morning.

Far upstage, the young boy and girl who sang carols at Scrooge's door hesitantly approach. The sister follows, keeping a distance.

BOY

Sir... Sir?

Scrooge softly cries.

BOY (CONT'D)

Sir, are you all right?

Scrooge looks up. He sees the boy and recoils.

SCROOGE

Aaah...!

The boy does the same, but delicately.

BOY

Do you need help, Sir?

SCROOGE

What? But... Where am I?

BOY

You're here, sir. In the street. Newman's Lane.

SCROOGE

Am I... Am I alive?

BOY
I believe so.

SCROOGE
I'm alive?

Scrooge pinches himself.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
I'm alive! I'm alive! Alive! Oh,
Heaven and Christmas be praised!
I'm alive! I am here. Here I am!
The shadows of things that *would*
have been will be dispelled! I know
they will! And- and what is this?

Something bubbles deep within him and escapes - in fits of
laughter!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Ha! Ha ha ha! It's a laugh! Really,
I'm so out of practice I don't know
what to do with it! I don't know
anything! I'm a little baby! But I
don't care! Ha!

The Boy starts laughing with Scrooge. His sister approaches.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
You there! Boy! What day is this?

BOY
Why it's Christmas Day, Sir!

SCROOGE
Christmas Day! I haven't missed it!

BOY
No, Sir!

SCROOGE
The Spirits have done it all in one
night. Of course they have! They
can do anything they like. They're
Spirits!

Scrooge slips.

BOY
Careful, now!

SCROOGE

My fine boy! Do you know the
Poultry shop on the next street at
the corner?

BOY

I do! Careful, Sir!

SCROOGE

An intelligent boy! A remarkable
boy! Do you know if they've sold
the prize turkey in their window?

BOY

It's hanging there now.

SCROOGE

Well, go and buy it! I shall give
them directions on where to take it
and give you a shilling if you're
quick about it! No, two shillings!
Ha ha! Woo-hoo!

Scrooge slips on the ice outside his door.

GIRL

May I help you up, Sir?

SCROOGE

Ah! But you already have, child.
You were the brother and sister who
sang outside my door last night,
were you not?

BOY

We're sorry, Sir.

SCROOGE

But, you musn't be. I heard your
Carol. The most beautiful sound I
ever heard. It sparked something
deep within me. A memory lost but
regained. You must sing loudly,
child, let all the world hear you.
For a Christmas Carol can save your
mortal soul! Now, run, children!
Run!

BOY

Walk-ER!

The Boy and Girl run, singing!

SCROOGE

The prize turkey! I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's. He won't know who sent it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim, I'm sure!

The door to Scrooge's home appears.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

My house! My house! Oh, how I love this funny old knocker! What a dear old honest face!

He rubs it! He runs into his home and begins to dress.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

And there! My own room. My own bed curtains. And over here- this is where Ol' Jacob Marley stood. He said, 'Scrrrooge!' Oh that scared me! Ha! And then right over here was "Christmas Past!" And in the corner, oh I'll never forget that laughter- "Come in and know me better!" Ha! That was a real wallop in the ol' bread basket! Oh! My! It's all true. It all happened!

Mrs. Dilber enters.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Ah! Mrs. Dilber! Mrs. Dilber! I don't know what to do! Marley was dead to begin with, and now I am as light as a feather, happy and merry as a school-boy. Oh! I've always meant to tell you- Mrs. Dilber, you're beautiful!

Mrs. Dilber screams in horror and runs from Scrooge!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Oh! My apologies! Terribly sorry!

He steps outside, fully dressed!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Oh! Look at the people filling the streets on their merry way!

The stage transforms into a street scene.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas, my friends!

Two people bump into each other, as they did before.

TOWNSPERSON

Oy! Look where you're headin', now,
eh?

TOWNSPERSON #2

Me? Why don't you-

Scrooge intercedes.

SCROOGE

A Merry Christmas to you both!

The two are seized with the sentiment.

TOWNSPEOPLE

Right, then. Merry Christmas! Merry
Christmas!

SCROOGE

That's the spirit!

He spies the Kindly Gentlefolk.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Oh. My good neighbors. You're the
pair who came to my counting house,
are you not?

KINDLY GENTLEMAN

Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE

Yes, that is name, sir, though I
fear it may not be pleasant to you.
Allow me to beg your pardon. And
will you have the goodness to
accept a gift to the tune of-

Scrooge whispers in their ears.

KINDLY GENTLEWOMAN

Bless me! Mr. Scrooge, are you
serious?

SCROOGE

Not a farthing less. A great many
back payments are included I assure
you. We must take care of each
other, musn't we? For that is our
business. We are all fellow
travelers, a family of brothers and
sisters.

KINDLY GENTLEMAN
I don't know what to say.

KINDLY GENTLEWOMAN
Nor do I!

SCROOGE
Don't say anything. But promise you
will come to see me. Will you do
that?

KINDLY GENTLEWOMAN
We will! Thank you!

SCROOGE
And I thank you fifty times and
bless you!

The streets are filled and bells are ringing.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Bells, glorious bells!

A gaggle of children skate pass!

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
Hello, children! Careful, now!
Here, now, I'll take some of those!

Scrooge purchases flowers from a vendor.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
I have never dreamt that such a
walk could give me so much
happiness. I could walk all day and
never tire of meeting these
wonderful people!

He stops before a doorway. He dares open it to enter. On the
other side, Catherine readies for the party.

CATHERINE
Hurry, my love, our guests will be
here soon!

FRED
You must rest, Catherine. Stay off
your feet. To think, at this time
next year, our little family will
be one larger. I shall count our
blessings daily.

CATHERINE

I'm very glad you're happy, my love. But your brow's furrowed. Something is troubling you. What is it?

FRED

It's nothing to dampen a merry Christmas. Nothing at all.

CATHERINE

I know. It's him, isn't it? The way he spoke to you. You're disappointed after your meeting with your-

Fred see his Uncle in the doorway.

FRED

Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE

Hello, Fred. I wondered if your invitation might still stand. I should like to come to dinner. If you'll have me?

Fred is dumbfounded, his mouth agape.

CATHERINE

Of course, of course you're most welcome here. Come in, Uncle. Close your mouth dear.

SCROOGE

Dear Catherine. I'm sorry it has taken me so long for this introduction. I should have come sooner, but somehow, I lost my way.

CATHERINE

You needn't apologize. You're here now.

FRED

With your family. Welcome home.

SCROOGE

Fred, your mother would be so proud.

He hands him the gift. A bottle with a bow.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

This is for you.

FRED

Ah, a Christmas Spirit!

SCROOGE

A Christmas present.

Catherine takes the bottle.

CATHERINE

Come in, come in! The others will be here in moments. It's going to be a party, at long last.

FRED

A wonderful party!

SCROOGE

Do you like games, Fred? I think I would be very good at games! Ha ha!

The chorus assembles the counting house. Fred steps out as Actor Two. The entire Company enters and watches the following scene from the outskirts of the action.

ACTOR THREE

The next morning was Boxing Day.

ACTOR SEVEN

On The Feast Of Stephen.

ACTOR EIGHT

The snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even.

ACTOR TEN

Scrooge was early at the office.

ACTOR FOUR

Oh, how he wanted to catch Bob Cratchit coming late. For that was the thing he had his heart set upon.

CHILD ONE

The clock struck nine, but no Bob Cratchit.

ACTOR EIGHT

A quarter past. No Bob Cratchit. And then....

Scrooge is at his desk, looking at his watch. Cratchit runs in like a madman.

SCROOGE
Cratchit! You're late!

CRATCHIT
I am very sorry, Sir, I'm behind my time.

SCROOGE
A full eighteen and a half minutes behind your time.

CRATCHIT
It won't happen again. I was making rather merry yesterday. A large turkey somehow-

SCROOGE
I don't want to hear about turkeys. And I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore... and therefore... I am going to raise your salary!

CRATCHIT
No! Please! Sir! I.... Sorry?

SCROOGE
A Merry Christmas, Bob! A Merrier Christmas, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year!

CRATCHIT
Sit down, Sir. I'm going to call the doctor.

SCROOGE
I'm going to raise your salary and add your name to the shingle!

He reveals the shingle which reads "SCROOGE MARLEY AND CRATCHIT."

SCROOGE (CONT'D)
And if you'll let me, I'd like to try to help your family. And Tim. We must help poor Tim. We'll find him the finest doctors we can, Bob. And does he like books? I have a collection of books for him. The boy will be well, Bob.

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I promise you that. I shall make it my business.

CRATCHIT

Oh. Oh, Mr. Scrooge.

...Thank you.

SCROOGE

Now, put some coal on the fire. Do you want us to freeze in here?

The Company assembles onstage.

ACTOR TWO

Scrooge was better than his word.

ACTOR SEVEN

He did it all and infinitely more.

Scrooge comes in to the street and picks up Tiny Tim.

SCROOGE

And to Tiny Tim, who did **NOT** die, he became a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master and as good a man as this good old city ever knew.

ACTOR FIVE

He reclaimed his family name and became that wonderful thing called... a "Scrooge."

ACTOR SIX

He had no further visits by Spirits. Their lessons had been learned.

ACTOR THREE

Some people laughed to see the change in him, but he let them laugh.

ACTOR EIGHT

For, what of it? It was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas in his heart, if any man could.

SCROOGE

May that truly be said of us all. And so, as Tiny Tim observed-

TINY TIM
God bless us, everyone!

A Christmas tree is revealed. It snows from heaven!

ALL
HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING
GLORY TO THE NEW BORN KING
PEACE ON EARTH AND MERCY MILD
GOD AND SINNERS RECONCILED
JOYFUL ALL YE NATIONS RISE
JOIN THE TRIUMPH OF THE SKIES
WITH ANGELIC HOST PROCLAIM
CHRIST IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM
HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING!
GLORY TO THE NEW BORN KING!

The players exit the stage in celebration! It's Christmas!

FIN.