

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
By Charles Dickens

Adapted for the stage
By Richard Casey

ACT 1

PROLOGUE: Mr. Dickens
SCENE ONE: Marley's Ghost
SCENE TWO: The First of the Three Spirits

ACT II

SCENE THREE: The Second of the Three Spirits
SCENE FOUR: The Last of the Spirits
SCENE FIVE: The End

Christmastime, in the City of London
(Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, when he was 31.)

THE CHARACTERS

Charles Dickens	Belinda Cratchit
Ebenezer Scrooge	Martha Cratchit
Bob Cratchit, his clerk	Tiny Tim Cratchit
Fred, his nephew	Fred's wife
A Pleasant Gentleman/woman	Her married sister
Another Pleasant Gentleman/woman	Her brother-in-law
The Ghost of Jacob Marley	Her unmarried sister
The Spirit of Christmas Past	Topper, a bachelor
Ebenezer, as a boy	The Spirit of Christmas Future
Fan, his sister	A Businessman
Mr. Fezziwig, his employer	Another Businessman
Dick Wilkins, his young friend	A Third Businessman
A Fiddler	Old Joe, a rag and bone man
Mrs. Fezziwig	Mrs. Gamp, a charwoman
Ebenezer, a young man	Mrs. Dilber, a laundress
Belle, his fiancée	And Undertaker's man
The Spirit of Christmas Present	A small boy in the street
Mrs. Cratchit	Poulterer
Peter Cratchit	

Street musicians, carolers, vendors, passers-by, schoolboys, Christmas celebrants, party-goers, and children apparitions.

ACT I

As lights come up, a group of carolers, dressed for the winter streets of London, 1843, appear on set singing an appropriate Christmas Carol. They share sheets of music. One has a tambourine. Shoppers pass, pausing to listen. Others gaze into windows of shops. Some carry presents. Some have baskets of food. One could have a goose hanging upside down. One may have a sled. Children run and dodge through. A seller may have a large basket of vegetables (fish) that someone stops to look at. A cart could come on with some sort of hot drink. All the while the carolers sing and at the end of each song the tambourine is passed for coins.

Charles Dickens enters from Stage R and crosses to listen to the carolers. Scrooge enters from stage L and crosses downstage of Dickens. As he nears the carolers, they finish and the tambourine is offered to Scrooge.

Lad: Merry Christmas, Sir!

Scrooge: Bah! (*He knocks the tambourine to one side*) Christmas! Humbug!

Dickens watches Scrooge with interest as Scrooge continues to walk stage R muttering "Christmas! Humbug!" Dickens deposits some coins in the tambourine and crosses L but turns to watch Scrooge who has stopped to look at his pocket watch.

Lad: Thank you, Sir! Thank you!

Carol Don't you know who that is? (*Lad shakes head "No."*) Why that's Charles Dickens, the writer.

Lad: (*Shouts to Dickens*) Thank you, Mr. Dickens!

Dickens: (*Waving back*) Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas to everyone!

Scrooge: (*Focusing on watch*) Merry! Humbug!

Dickens laughs merrily. Scrooge holds his watch to his ears, shakes it and winds it.

Caroler 2: Oh, yes. That's Charles Dickens. He wrote Oliver Twist! Merry Christmas, Mr. Dickens!

All Carolers: Merry Christmas, Mr. Dickens!

Everyone FREEZES, except DICKENS who appears on the stage L platform above Scrooge's door. Dickens removes his outer garments. He turns and looks at spot lit Scrooge who is frozen winding his watch. Dickens, gets an idea and chuckles as he sits, picks up a quill pen, scratches the side of his head. He looks again at Scrooge and dips

the quill in the pot and begins to write. The scene comes to life again. Carolers sing as they move stage L. Scrooge pockets his watch and retraces his steps. As he reaches DC, a small boy, being chased by another, bumps into Scrooge. Scrooge cries out and raises his walking stick and the scene freezes into another tableau. DICKENS puts down his pen, picks up the manuscript and reads aloud what he has written.

Dickens: A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens. Scene One: Marley's Ghost. Marley was dead to begin with. There is no doubt about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker - and the chief mourner, Ebenezer Scrooge, signed it. There is no doubt that Marley was dead...as dead as a doornail. *(He looks up from manuscript)* This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to tell you. *(He rises and comes to the front of the table)* You will therefore, permit me to repeat emphatically that Marley was as dead as a doornail!

The lights come up again. The passers-by come to life. The Carolers resume with their song and the small boy who had run into Scrooge apologizes.

Boy: Sorry, sir.

Scrooge: Bah! *(He lowers his stick and continues around the stage stopping outside the door to his office, as Dickens continues)*

Dickens: Ebenezer Scrooge. Did he know that Marley was dead? Of course he did. They had been business partners for I don't know how many years. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name.

The street has gradually emptied. The voices of the carolers fade into the distance and the lights slowly dim. Scrooge comes to a halt in front of his door. He turns front, looks up at the steeple clock and checks his watch again.

There stood the sign, years afterwards, above the counting house door.

Scrooge signals the clock to chime and the clock strikes 3. Scrooge gloats that his watch is accurate. As he enters the door, the office pieces come on - a stool and desk for Cratchit. A coal scuttle with shovel. A coat rack holds Cratchit's hat, long white scarf. On his desk is a ledger, a quill and ink bottle, and a lighted candle.

As Scrooge enters, Cratchit is shivering and wearing fingerless gloves. He is bent over the coal scuttle, adding coals to the fireplace. He rises, as if caught, with a chunk of coal in his hand.

*****the door moves as Scrooge walks through revealing inside of office? Fireplace with scuttle and a platform with Scrooge's desk. I want Scrooge elevated from Cratchit showing dominance. Door moves more CS for outside entrances. ***Scrooge's table made into Cratchit's dining table?***

Scrooge: Mr. Cratchit! So I catch you with that coal shovel in your hand once again! I predict it will be necessary for you and I to part company and you to seek employment elsewhere.

Bob: Yes, sir. Sorry, sir. It won't happen again sir. *(As he is apologizing he guiltily dumps coal back into scuttle and starts to return to his desk. He realizes he still has shovel and returns it to scuttle)*

Scrooge: Humph! *(enters office and removes coat, hat and muffler. Climbs up the steps to his desk on platform)*

Dickens: *(Through all of the above)* Oh, he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, that old Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner! He carried his own low temperature with him everywhere he went; he iced his office in the summer, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

Fred: *(Enters through door with a tinkle of the bell. Acknowledges Cratchit and walks boldly to Scrooge who is now sitting, busily counting money.)* A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

Scrooge: Bah! Humbug!

DICKENS smiles and sits again with pen at his writing table. Lights dim.

Fred: Christmas a humbug, Uncle? I hope that's meant as a joke.

Scrooge: Well, it's not. Come – what is it you want? Don't waste all day, Nephew.

Fred: I only want to wish you a Merry Christmas, Uncle. Don't be cross.

Scrooge: What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools? Merry Christmas! Out with Merry Christmas! What's Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money? A time for finding yourself a year older but not an hour richer? If I could work my will, every foolish person 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: Uncle!

Scrooge: Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.

Fred: But you don't keep it.

Scrooge: Then leave it alone, much good it may do you. Much good it has ever done you.

Fred: Well, there are many things from which I have benefited, even if they didn't show a profit, I daresay, Christmas being one. And though it has never put a scrap of gold in my pocket, I believe it has done me good and will do me good, and I say God bless it!

Cratchit: *(He's been listening and reacting while trying to write. Claps his hands)* Hear, hear! *(Stops and not knowing what to do with his hands, puts them under his armpits and studies the ceiling)*

Scrooge: *(Rising and pointing at Cratchit)* Let me hear another sound from you, and you'll keep Christmas by losing your job! *(Cratchit grabs his quill and writes furiously. Scrooge addresses Fred)* You are quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder if you'll go into politics.

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

Scrooge: I'll dine alone, thank you.

Fred: But why?

Scrooge: Why? Why did you get married?

Fred: Why? Because I fell in love with a wonderful girl.

Scrooge: And I with solitude. Good afternoon.

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

Scrooge: Good afternoon.

Fred: I am sorry with all my heart to find you so determined. But I have made the attempt to respect Christmas, and I'll keep that good spirit to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle.

Scrooge: Good afternoon!

Fred: And a Happy New Year!

Scrooge: GOOD AFTERNOON! *(FRED hesitates as if to say something more, but SCROOGE has gone to get a book off a shelf. Fred turns to leave)*

Fred: *(To Cratchit)* Merry Christmas, Mr. Cratchit.

Cratchit: Oh!....and to you, sir. Merry Christmas. *(He follows Fred to door and gently closes it. He glances guiltily over at Scrooge, clears his throat and returns to his work)*

Scrooge: *(Muttering to himself as he slams books around)* There's another lunatic! My clerk, with fifteen shilling a week, and wife and children! Talking about Christmas! I'll retire to bedlam!

The BELL tinkles, as two pleasant (men or woman?) enter. They bow to Scrooge after removing hats. Books and papers in hand.

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

Scrooge: Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago - *(surprised at the following)* this very night. *(Composes self)* What is it you want?

Second: I have no doubt Mr. Marley's generosity is the same as yours. Here, sir, my card. *(He/She hands him a business card)*

Scrooge: Generosity? *(Scoffs)* What is it you want? *(He goes back to counting coins or referring to book)*

First: At this festive season of the year...

Scrooge: It's winter and cold. *(Never looking up. The two visitors glance at each other with raised eyebrows)*

Second: Yes...yes it is, and the more reason for our visit. At this time of the year it is more than usually desirable to make some slight provision for the poor and destitute who suffer greatly from the cold.

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

Scrooge: Are there no prisons?

Second: Many, sir.

Scrooge: And the workhouse; is it still operational?

Second: It is. I wish I could say it was not.

Scrooge: The poor law is still in full vigor then?

First: Yes, sir.

Scrooge: I'm glad to hear it. From what you said, I was afraid someone had stopped its operation.

First: Well they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind and body to the poor. A few of us are endeavoring to raise funds to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. We chose this time because it is the time, of all others, when want is keenly felt and abundance rejoices.

Second: What shall we put you down for, sir?

Scrooge: Nothing.

Second: You wish to remain anonymous?

Scrooge: I wish to be left alone. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. But I help support the poor house and the prisons...they cost enough...and those who are poorly off must go there.

First: Many can't go there, and many would surely die.

Scrooge: If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Besides, it's not any of my business.

Second: You might make it your business.

Scrooge: It is enough for one man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. *(Stands)* Good afternoon.

Both: Good afternoon. *(they exit and Cratchit nods to them with a slight smile)*

Scrooge: *(Sits and pages through books. Muttering)* Heh! No prisons? No workhouses? Heh, heh. Then they had better die! Heh, heh! So as to decrease the surplus population!

Just as he resumes his work, the door bursts open and a small boy caroler begins to serenade him with "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, let nothing you dismay..." SCROOGE seizes a ruler and rushes at the boy.

Scrooge: Out! Out! Be off with you! Out! *(BOY exits hurriedly. SCROOGE walks back to desk)* Bah! Humbug, humbug, humbug!

*The wall **clock ticks** (Video?) loudly as SCROOGE and CRATCHIT scratch away with their pens. CRATCHIT looks up at the clock. Only 4 o'clock. He resumes his scratching. At last, the hour hand reaches six and the clock **CHIMES** six times. CRATCHIT takes up his candle and looks expectantly at SCROOGE, who chooses to ignore him.*

Cratchit: It's time, sir.

Scrooge: Oh, very well, very well. You may go. (*CRATCHIT blows out the candle and bolts for his hat. As he heads to the door*) You'll want all day tomorrow off, I suppose.

Cratchit: If it's convenient, sir.

Scrooge: It's not convenient. And it's not fair. If I was to hold back half-a-crown from your wages, you'd think yourself ill-used. (*CRATCHIT half smiles*) And yet, you don't think me ill-used when I 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 25th of December! I suppose you must have the whole day. Well, be here all the earlier the next morning.

Cratchit: Indeed, sir. Indeed I will.

Scrooge: Then off...off.

Cratchit: Yes, sir. And Merry Christmas, sir!

Scrooge: Bah!

As CRATCHIT exits through door, the door moves over in front of SCROOGE, hiding him as he continues to look through books. Cratchit's table and the coat rack move off. Out in the streets, people gather again. CRATCHIT is straining looking for something as we hear carolers or musicians singing/playing "Noel, Noel." CRATCHIT sees Tiny Tim!

Tiny Tim: Father!

Cratchit: Hello, my dear son! (*He crouches down.*)

Tiny Tim: Father, I have been waiting for you!

Cratchit: Let's go by Corn Hill, and watch the children play. Someday you will be able to play with them!

Tiny Tim: I feel that I'm getting stronger every day.

Cratchit: And do you remember what tomorrow is?

Tiny Tim: Christmas Day!

Cratchit: And I have the whole day off to celebrate with my family.

Tiny Tim: Hoorah for Christmas! (*CRATCHIT hoists Tiny Tim onto his should and exits*)

The lights are dimming suggesting the late hour. SCROOGE comes out of the door to his office. He turns to lock the door, and heads down the street, scattering boys with a threatening stick and a few "Bahs" and "Humbugs." SCROOGE exits. Lights come up on Dickens who puts down his quill and picks up the papers reading...

Dickens: Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and was enthralled with his bankbook the rest of the evening. Then he went home to bed.

SCROOGE appears in darkness (Spot follows him) He looks about him, picks his teeth, warps his muffler more securely and sets off for home (Stage L).

He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner, Jacob Marley. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in them but Scrooge.

Scrooge groping his way through darkness, arrives in front of a dimly lighted, Georgian entryway, which boasts a very large doorknocker in its door's upper half. He takes out his key and inserts it.

Now it is a fact that Scrooge had not thought about Marley at all since the mention of him earlier that afternoon.

A Ghostly chord/sound, as Scrooge gasps and recoils from the large doorknocker, which lights up in a semblance of Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was Marley's face. Not a doorknocker, but Marley's face. And then, as Scrooge stared fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a doorknocker again.

SCROOGE opens the door and peers cautiously behind it.

Scrooge: Bah! Pooh! Pooh!

Scrooge goes through the door as it is moved revealing the bed and a chamber for him to sit. He mutters as he removes his hat, muffler and great coat and hangs them up. He puts on his dressing gown and night cap. As he does these things, he hears the echoes of Marley's voice saying his name. He looks around to silence and "Bahs, humbugs and it's all humbug." He sits in his chair picking up a book, reads, sneezes a couple of time and nods off in his chair. A bell starts to chime awaking him. He sits up confused and in enters the Ghost of MARLEY - in his pig-tail, waist coat, tights and boots. His spectacles are on his forehead and a folded kerchief is bound around his head and chin. The chain he drags is clasped about his middle. It is long and winds

about him and over his arm. A great clanging sound echoes as he drags his heavy burdens across the floor towards SCROOGE.

Scrooge: It's humbug still! I won't believe this. *(Marley moans)* What do you want of me?

Marley: *(Voice might be recorded and played while Marley 'acts' the part)* Much!

Scrooge: Who are you?

Marley: Ask me who I was.

Scrooge: Who were you then?

Marley: In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

Scrooge: He's DEAD.

Marley: Seven years this night, Ebenezer Scrooge.

Scrooge: Why do you come here?

Marley: I must. It is commanded me. I must wander the world and see what I can no longer share, what I would not share when I walked where you do.

Scrooge: *(Indicating the chains)* And wander thus?

Marley: The chains? Look at it, Ebenezer; study it. Links I forged each day when I sat in these rooms. Greed, Ebenezer Scrooge, wealth. Feel them, know them! Your chain was this heavy seven years ago. Yours is a ponderous chain.

Scrooge: Jacob! Old Jacob Marley...speak comfort to me, Jacob!

Marley: I have none to give, Ebenezer Scrooge. I know not how you see me this night, I did not ask it. I am commanded to bring you a chance, Ebenezer. Take heed so that you have the hope of escaping my fate!

Scrooge: I will, I will! Thank you! You were always a good friend to me, Jacob.

Marley: You will be visited by 3 spirits.

Scrooge: Is that the chance and hope you mentioned?

Marley: It is.

Scrooge: I think I'd...rather not.

Marley: Then you will walk where I do, burdened by your riches, your greed. Expect the first tomorrow when the bell tolls one.

Scrooge: Could I take them all at once, Jacob, and have it over with?

Marley: Expect the Second on the next night at the same hour, the third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ended. *(He picks up his chains and prepares to leave)*

Scrooge: But, Jacob...

Marley: *(He raises his hand to stop SCROOGE and starts to back away. Sounds of sadness fill the air as he continues)* You will see me no more; and for your own sake, remember what has passed between us.

Marley disappears. SCROOGE follows Marley's path and when seeing nothing mutters "Humph...humph..." He crosses to his bed with muttering. He looks underneath his bed and behind some of the curtains, pillows, etc. "Humbug!" He climbs into bed and closes the curtains, peeks out, yawns and goes back in.

A pause. A church bell CHIMES (Indicating the 15 minutes) and then the deep sound of ONE. A bright light floods the bed and SPIRIT ONE appears. Curtains open revealing SCROOGE snoring. Spirit of Christmas Past (SCP) is there.

SCP: Ebenezer!

Scrooge: *(snort)* Huh? Wha-? *(Sees Spirit and sits up)* Ah! Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

SCP: I am. *(Spirit is dressed in pure white and holds a branch of fresh green holly. Dress is trimmed in flowers and she wears a crown of lighted candles. (A candle flame is Dicken's metaphor for memory.)*

Scrooge: Who and what are you?

SCP: I am the Spirit of Christmas Past.

Scrooge: Long past?

SCP: No, Ebenezer Scrooge. Your past.

Scrooge: May I make so bold as to inquire what business brings you here?

SCP: Your welfare, Ebenezer.

Scrooge: Oh...Well, I'm much obliged, I am sure. But I can't help thinking that a good night's sleep would be more conducive to that end. *(He begins to climb back into bed. Spirit stops him)*

SCP: Rise. Walk with me.

Scrooge: I am mortal still. I cannot pass through air.

SCP: My hand. *(Scrooge grasps her hand tightly, and a BELL RINGS SOFTLY. Scrooge shakes his head as if to remember something. Bedroom set is gone. Bright lights – screen outdoor pines with snow?)*

Scrooge: Good heavens! I know this place. I was a boy here! A thousand thoughts and hopes and joys and cares long, long forgotten, come flooding back to me! *(He chokes a bit and sees a group of boys enter. Excitedly)* I know them all! They were the boys I knew at school. Look! There's Tom! And George Jenkins! And little Jimmy Little! *(He yells Hello! Scrooge continues to act as if he's part of the group of boys. Platform of Scrooge's desk is bench for Young Scrooge)*

SCP: They cannot see you. They are but shadows; shadow of what has been.

Boy 1: Merry Christmas!

Boys/Scrooge: Merry Christmas!

Boy 2: See you in a fortnight!

Boy 3: George, don't eat too much figgy pudding!

George: I can't get enough! *(Boys/Scrooge all laugh and say Merry Christmas, goodbye, etc as they exit the scene)*

SCP: *(Crossing up to Scrooge)* Oh, happy schoolboys...going home for the jolly holidays! The school, however, is not quite deserted. Do you remember?

Scrooge: *(Saddens)* Yes, I do. I remember. *(As he turns to look back, LIGHTS reveal a school bench and a boy reading)*

SCP: *(Crossing to boy)* A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still. Do you know him?

Scrooge: Yes. It is myself. My poor, forgotten self, as I used to be! *(He moves closer and looks down at the boy)*

Child Scrooge: *(Holding a bear and looking at the cover)* Ali Baba.

Scrooge: Yes that was it! "Ali Baba!"

Child Scrooge: Genii, take me to the Gate of Damascus.

Scrooge: Yes, O Master, and jewels I shall bring you, and gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Child Scrooge: And they put him down – *(to Bear)* do you remember – that silly one, at the Gate of Damascus, in his underdrawers – asleep!

Scrooge: *(Excitedly sits by the boy as if the boy can hear him)* Oh yes! The Genii turned the Sultan's groom upside down and stood him on his head – served him right, I say! *(Laughs and slaps his knee)*

Child Scrooge: *(To bear)* And remember when we read Robinson Crusoe?

Scrooge: Ah, yes! *(Excited)* And that parrot. Oh my!

Child Scrooge: And that parrot. I loved him the best. And Robinson Crusoe sailed around the island and he thought the parrot said...What did it say...

Scrooge: *(Imitating a parrot)* Robin Crusoe, where have you been? Awk! Robin Crusoe, where have you been?

Child Scrooge: And when Robinson Crusoe saw his parrot in the tree, he knew he hadn't escaped. He was still there. Still all alone.

Scrooge: Poor Robinson Crusoe.

Child Scrooge: Poor Robinson Crusoe.

Scrooge: Poor boy...*(Stands and crosses in front of boy to Spirit)* poor boy...I wish...But it's too late now.

SCP: What, Ebenezer? What is too late?

Scrooge: Nothing. Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas carol last night. I should like to have given him something, that's all.

Fan: *(enters and runs up steps to Young Ebenezer)* Ebenezer! Ebenezer!

Child Scrooge: Fan? *(Rising)* Fan? *(She runs in and throws her arms around him)*

Scrooge: It's Fan! My little sister, Fan!

Fan: Dear Brother! Dear, dear brother! I have come to bring you home. To bring you home, home, home!

Child Scrooge: Home?

Fan: Yes, yes, yes! Home for good! Home forever and ever!

Child Scrooge: Oh, Fan! But how? Why?

Fan: Oh, Ebenezer! Father is so much kinder than he used to be. Home is like heaven now. I was not afraid to ask him once again if you might come home. He said "yes!" Come on, or the coach will leave without us! *(Lights dim as they run out laughing)*

Scrooge: Little Fan...poor little Fan.

SCP: *(Crosses DC as scene is set for Fezziwig)* Always a delicate creature. But she had a large heart.

Scrooge: *(Crosses with SCP)* So she had. I will not deny it, Spirit.

SCP: She died while still a young woman; and she had, as I believe, children?

Scrooge: One child. Yes. One boy child.

SCP: Ah...yes. *(Smiles)* Your nephew.

Scrooge: *(After an uneasy pause, clears his throat)* Yes. Fred. My nephew. *(Reflective. Then gathers himself)* Well all of us have that, haven't we? Childhoods? Sadness? But we grow and we become me, masters of ourselves! *(Spirit gestures for music and moves as the scene grows into a party)* What? *(Crosses to SCP)* I have no time for this! Music and all your Christmas trappings. *(Fezziwig, Young Ebenezer, and Dick appear, busily preparing for the party)*

Fezziwig: Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

Scrooge: Why it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig, alive again! *(they run in from the Each side. Each coatless, wearing work aprons and tape measure around his neck. Each carries a broom. They come to attention side by side and grin at each other)*

Scrooge: Dick Wilkins, to be sure! Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear.

Fezziwig: Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick! Christmas Eve, Ebenezer! *(They each nod and grin)* Clear away, my lads! Let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer! *(FEZZIWIG mimes lowering the chandelier as it comes down for him to affix mistletoe and then mimes raising it back up. The boys are clearing off boxes and enter riding on mops and carrying a bucket. Scrooge is joining, clapping and enjoying the scene)*

Dickens: *(Watching from his post)* Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every moveable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life forever more. *(Dick and Young Ebenezer crossover with broom and water bucket)* The floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire. *(Dick and Ebenezer enter with armloads of wood)* The warehouse was as snug and warm and dry and bright a ballroom, as you would desire to see on a winter's night!

Fezziwig: *(The boys have rushed back in and stand on either side of him, surveying the room)* Well done, my lads! Well done!

A FIDDLER enters and the following others as Dickens describes them. DICK and EBENEZER run off to take off their aprons.

Dickens: In came a Fiddler with a music book, and went up to the loft and made an orchestra of it. He tuned his fiddle like fifty stomach aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast, substantial smile. In came the two Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and loveable.

Fezziwig has placed himself under the mistletoe. Each who enters approaches him in greeting. Women kiss his cheek. Men/boys shake his hand.

In came two young admirers with eyes for the Fezziwig lasses.

Fezziwig, who has been offering his cheek for kisses, does so with the lads and then realizes his mistake and shakes hands instead.

In came the Housemaid, with her cousin, the Baker.

The Baker dressed for the party, still has on baker's hat. Housemaid reminds him and he stuffs it in his pocket.

In came the cook with her bother's friend, the milkman.

She is removing her apron. Hands it to the milkman. He shakes hands with Fezziwig, who winds up with the apron. It then winds up in the hand of the boy from "over the way."

In came the boy from over the way, trying to hide himself behind the girl next door. In they all came, one after another. Some shyly...some boldly.

Fezziwig goes to confer with the Fiddler. Two arriving young girls present their cheeks to be kissed, eyes closed, but Fezziwig is gone. A newly arrived Dick Wilkins boldly steps in and kisses them both.

Some gracefully. Some awkwardly.

One of the Fezziwig daughters waves at one of the Admiring boys. He strides grandly to her and trips.

Some pushing. Some pulling.

DICK and a girl push and pull EBENEZER under the mistletoe, where he is kissed by both young girls.

In they all came. Anyhow and everyhow. Old Fezziwig cried out:

Fezziwig: Well done! *(Claps hands)*

Dickens: And clapped his hands to start the dance.

All take up dance positions and look expectantly at the FIDDLER who is taking a long drink from a pint. He stops mid drink, looks at the dancers, salutes with his stein and begins the music. Dancers chuckle and begin their dance. Old SCROOGE joins in the fun, weaving in and out amongst the dancers, prancing and clapping. The dance comes to an end and they cheer and clap for themselves. Freeze as Scrooge goes to Spirit, who crosses down C. Dancers quietly exit upstage as dialog continues.

Scrooge: Isn't old Fezziwig a remarkable man?! See how everyone loves him!

SCP: Just because he gave a small party?

Scrooge: Small?!

SCP: He spent a few pounds of your "mortal" money, three, four at most. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

Scrooge: But it wasn't the money. He had the power to make us happy, to make our service light or burdensome. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it had cost a fortune. That's what...*(his voice slows)* a good master is.

SCP: Yes?

Scrooge: No, no, nothing.

SCP: Something, I think.

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

SCP: But this is all in your past. Your clerk, Cratchit, wouldn't be here.

Scrooge: Of course not. And idle thought. Are we done?

SCP: Nearly. *(Bells tinkle and we see a beautiful young woman sitting on a park bench Stage R trying not to cry. Older Ebenezer [OE] stand poised, fashionable dressed. He leans on his stick, hat in hand; coolly waits for her to compose herself)*

Scrooge: Oh, heavens! It's Belle...beautiful Belle!

SCP: And yourself. Grown, now. Quite affluent.

Belle: I know it matters little to you. Another "idol" has displaced me. And if it can make you as happy as I would try to do...*(she turns to him and tries to smile)* I have no cause for sorrow.

OE: What "idol" has replaced you?

Belle: A golden one. Money.

OE: Now, there's a double standard for you! All the world speaks so vehemently against poverty, yet it condemns the pursuit of wealth just as harshly!

Belle: You fear the world too much, Ebenezer. You are so afraid of the world's criticism. I've seen all your hopes and dreams for a better world drop away – one by one – until at last only one passion engrosses you.

OE: And what, pray tell, might that be?

Belle: You know what it is, Ebenezer. Gain. Profit! Gain...and more gain!

OE: What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser in the ways of the world, what then? I am not changed towards you, am I?

Belle: You are changed, Ebenezer. The man I loved and promised to marry was a very different man than you are now.

OE: I was a boy!

Belle: We were of one heart then. Now we are of two. And a future together is fraught with misery. *(She removes her ring)* I have thought of this - long, and deeply. That I have thought about this is enough! And I can release you.

OE: Have I ever sought release from our engagement?

Belle: In words? No. Never.

OE: In what then?

Belle: In a changed nature; in another vision for your life. In everything that once made my love of any worth to you. *(He shakes his head)* Ebenezer, tell me, if we had never been promised to each other, would you see me out and try to win me now? *(Several beats of silence. Scrooge wants to prompt OE)* Ah, no!

OE: You think not.

Belle: I would gladly think otherwise, if I could, heaven knows. But can even I believe that, if you were free today, you would choose an orphan, like me, with nothing? You, who weigh everything by gain, choose me? I think not and I release you...*(She takes hold of his hand and puts the ring into it)* with a full heart for the love of what you once were.

Scrooge: Belle!

Belle: *(Stepping back, looking into her hands)* You may have pain in this, Ebenezer. The memory of what is past half makes me hope you will. *(She looks up at him mildly, steadily)* A very, very brief time and you will dismiss this and me as an unprofitable dream. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

She crosses L and leaves. Scrooge softly cries "Belle, no!" OLDER EBENEZER looks down at the ring in his open palm. He closes his hand over the ring in a determined, upraised fist, puts on his hat, coldly turns on his heel and departs out R. Scrooge follows in anger, "Don't let her go! Fool!" Scrooge turns back to Spirit.

Scrooge: Spirit. Remove me from this place. Conduct me home, I beg you. Show me no more. Why do you delight to torture me?

SCP: These were the shadows of things that have been. That they are what they are, do not blame me!

Scrooge: I cannot bear it! Remove me! Take me back! *(Scrooge's bed appears)* Leave me! Haunt me no more.

As we hear tinkle bells and the faint toll of the church bell, the Spirit disappears in fog and Scrooge climbs into bed and pulls the curtains shut. Lights dim to black.

BLACK OUT – END OF ACT 1

INTERMISSION

At intermission the Marley/Scrooge office is preset for the Cratchit family.

ACT II

As the HOUSE LIGHTS dim, the deep SOUND of the church bell is tolling the hour of midnight. Lights up at the stroke of 12 on the curtained bed and then lights up on Dickens at his writing desk. He rises, a finger marking the page in the manuscript, perches on the front of his writing table and addresses the audience.

Dickens: Awaking in the middle of a prodigious snore

(SCROOGE, behind the bed curtains, snores a prodigious snore. He cries out, as he sits up and a violently thrown out hand ruffles the curtains)

and sitting up in bed, to get his thoughts together...

(SCROOGE peers out between the curtains)

Scrooge had no need to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of one. He felt that something must have wakened him, just in the nick of time, for it was time for his second conference with a spirit as foretold by Jacob Marley. He established a sharp lookout – all around the bed.

SCROOGE cautiously circumnavigates the bed, just as we hear the quarter of the clock sounding nearly one.

He was now prepared for almost anything, but he did not wish to be taken by surprise this time. It made him nervous.

As the CLOCK TOLLS ONE, SCROOGE has completed his circuit and is peering under the bed. LIGHTS suddenly and brilliantly reveal the Spirit of Christmas Present who roars out a booming laugh. SCROOGE leaps up with a yell and spins around to see. The Spirit of Christmas Present (GCP) is a jolly fellow dressed in a long green velvet robe trimmed in white. He wears a gold tinged wreath of holly. Around his middle he wears a gold scabbard with no sword.

GCP: Come! Come here and know me better, man! I am the Spirit of Christmas Present! Look upon me! You have never seen the likes of me before! *(Bed goes off)*

Scrooge: Never.

GCP: Have you never walked with any of my previous brothers, man?

Scrooge: I am afraid I...I don't think I have. Do you have many brothers, oh Spirit of Christmas Present?

GCP: Since that first morning in the little town of Bethlehem, there are more than eighteen hundred of us!

Scrooge: A tremendous family to provide for. Spirit, last night I went forth against my will; but tonight, if you have aught to teach me let me profit by it. Conduct me where you will.

GCP: You have but to touch my robe. *(SCROOGE grabs his garment and lights up on the town. Christmas bells ring. People are flocking to church in their best clothes. Others carry their dinners to and from the bakeshops. Lights up on Dickens.*

Dickens: The Christmas morning steeples called good people all to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes and with their happiest faces. At the same time, there emerged, from scores of side streets, people carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops. On Sundays and on Christmas day, when the law forbade the bakers to bake their own bread, the poor people of London, who did not possess ovens of their own, would carry their dinners to the bake shops to cook, so they might have at least one hot meal a week. The sight of these poor revelers seemed to interest the Spirit very much. *(As they pass with their food, the SPIRIT reaches into his golden cornucopia and sprinkles golden dust on their dinners)*

Scrooge: Is there a particular flavor in what you sprinkle on their dinners?

GCP: There is. My own.

Scrooge: Would it apply to any kind of dinner this day?

GCP: To any kindly given. To a poor one most.

Scrooge: Why to the poor one?

GCP: Because the poor need it more.

Scrooge: Spirit, I am surprised that you should wish to put a stop to their poor people's chance for innocent enjoyment.

GCP: I?!

Scrooge: You seek to close all the bakers' shops on Sundays and holidays, do you not?

GCP: I seek?!

Scrooge: Forgive me if I'm wrong, but it has been done in your name, or at least in the name of your family.

GCP: There are some people on this earth of yours, my friend, who lay exclusive claim to know – us. They do their deeds of passion, pride, ill will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness – in our name! These people are as strange and unrelated to us, as if they had never lived. Remember that my friend, and charge their doings to themselves. Not to...us.

Scrooge: I will: I promise you. (*BELLS tinkle. SPIRIT turns and sprinkles the golden seasoning onto the doorway of a house*)

Scrooge: Whose threshold is this, upon which you sprinkle your beneficence?

GCP: This is your clerk's dwelling. Bob Cratchit lives with his family in these modest rooms.

The door opens as Spirit and SCROOGE cross through. The door moves to stage L to reveal the inside of the home. Mrs. Cratchit is dressed poorly and working to set the table. Peter is mashing the potatoes in a pot. Peter is wearing a shirt that is obviously too big for him. Belinda enters and removes her shawl.

Belinda: I just passed the baker's shop on my way home and I could smell a goose cooking. I just know it was ours!

Peter: Oh, yum! Could you smell all the sage and onion too?

Belinda: (*helping her mother set the table*) I did! And Peter, look at you! Aren't you splendid in Father's shirt collar. So grown-up and fashionable!

Peter beams with pleasure at the compliment.

Mrs. Cratchit: Whatever has kept your precious father and Tiny Tim?

Belinda: They were just behind me coming out of church. I think Father took Tiny Tim for a slide down the ice on Cornhill Street. Have you started the plum pudding yet?

Peter: Yes, Belinda. It's bubbling away in the copper boiler back in the washhouse.

Belinda: I love plum pudding!

Peter: Me too!

Mrs. C: And where's your sister, Martha? She wasn't this late last Christmas!

Martha: *(Entering)* She's here, Mother!

Peter: She's here! She's here!

Belinda: *(overlapping Peter)* Martha! You're here!

Mrs. C: *(Kissing her and helping her with hat and shawl)* Why bless my heart alive, my dear, I was worried about you.

Martha: There was such a rush at the shop today. Everyone was buying last minute bonnets for Christmas! *(She gives Belinda a hug and gives Peter's collar an approving tug. Then she warms her hands at the fire)*

Mrs. C: Well, never you mind, my dear, so long as you are here. Sit you down and warm yourself.

Bob Cratchit enters from stage L and crosses singing or chanting (Find song)

Peter: I hear Father! Hide Martha! Let's surprise him!

Belinda: Yes! Hide Martha! Over here, over here! *(They grab her and drag her to a place where she is somewhat hidden. Cratchit enters with Tiny Tim and puts him down. Cratchit looks at the family and knows something is up)*

Cratchit: Why...where's our Martha?

Peter: She's not here, Father! *(Suppressing a laugh)*

Belinda: *(More convincing)* She's not coming.

Cratchit: Not coming? Not coming home on Christmas Day?

Martha: I'm here, Father!

Peter/Belinda: Surprise! Surprise!

Martha: Merry Christmas, Father!

Cratchit: *(giving her a hug)* Well, you did give me a turn! Merry Christmas, my dear!

Tiny Tim: Martha, the goose is cooking at the baker's shop!

Martha: *(Going to Tim)* Oh, my! That's wonderful.

Mrs. C: Belinda. Peter. It's time for you to go fetch the goose. Off you go! *(The kids cheer and run for their hats and mufflers)* Mind you don't drop it in the street!

Peter: Come on Tiny Tim!

Tiny Tim: Hurrah! *(He limps after them)*

Mrs. C: *(Martha stirs mashed potatoes. Mrs. C finishes table)* And how did Tiny Tim behave at 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. He told me that he hoped the people saw him in church because he was a cripple. He said maybe they would be reminded of who it was that made cripples walk and blind men to see. *(His voice breaks)* I really do believe he is growing stronger...and heartier... don't you?

The women avoid his gaze. The youngsters return from the bakeshop, with a modest roast goose on a platter. They quickly set more chairs and a tall stool for Tiny Tim, all talking at once. CRATCHIT taps his plate gently with his spoon and rises. All settle down with clasped hands and bowed heads.

We thank Thee, oh Lord, for these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive – on this Thy birthday. And we especially thank Thee for the gift of good health. *(He glances at Tiny Tim as do the others)* Amen. *(Everyone repeats Amen. CRATCHIT lifts the cover from the roast)* Well! Let's have a look at this famous goose. *(A delighted "AH!" from all around the table. Tiny Tim says "Hurrah!")* CRATCHIT sharpens the knife and plates are passed; all talks at once.)

Dickens: Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. With applesauce and mashed potatoes the dinner was just sufficient for the whole family. Everyone seemed to have had enough. And the youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows.

Children: *(banging their spoons on the table)* the pudding! The pudding!

Dickens: Mrs. Cratchit left the room to remove the plum pudding from its boiling copper pot in the washroom out back...

Mrs. C: I'm so nervous.

Dickens: Too nervous to have witnesses come with her. Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have gone over the wall of the back yard and stolen it, while the family was merry with the goose.

Peter: Oh! I'd strangle them!

Belinda: So would I.

Tiny Tim: Me too!

Dickens: All sorts of horrors were supposed. But Mrs. Cratchit returned in half a minute, flushed but smiling proudly! *(Ooohs and ahhs from the family as she sets it on the table. Then an applause from the family)* It was perfect! And Bob Cratchit said he did not believe there ever was such a plum pudding.

Cratchit: I do not believe there ever was such a plum pudding! *(Dickens light out)*

Cratchit: *(Rises with mug)* A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us.

Cratchits: God bless us!

Tiny Tim: God bless everyone! *(Lights fade on them as their raised mugs slowly lower)*

Scrooge: I never knew Cratchit had a crippled son. Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim lives.

GSP: I see a vacant seat in the poor corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.

Scrooge: Oh, no, kind Spirit, tell me he will be spared!

GSP: If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, next Christmas will not find him here. But what of it? If he dies, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population! *(Scrooge penitently hangs his head. The light on the family restores)*

Cratchit: Mr. Scrooge! I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast!

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

Cratchit: My dear...the children! It's Christmas Day.

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

Cratchit: My dear! Christmas Day!

Mrs. C: Well...I'll drink to his health for your sake. And for the sake of the day...not for his. *(pause)* Long life to him! A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! He'll be very merry and happy, I have no doubt. *(She sits abruptly)*

They all sit and quietly drink the toast. The mention of his unpopular name has cast a shadow on the festivities. As they sit silently, the light fades out on the family and lights up on Dickens.

Dickens: They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from waterproof; their clothes scanty. Young Peter might have known the inside of a pawnbroker's. But they were happy, grateful and were pleased with one another. *(Spirit throws a handful of dust in the air and the lights dim out on the Cratchits just as CRATCHIT is taking a knife to the plum pudding.)* and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the Spirit's bright sparklings, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially Tiny Tim, until the last.

Bright music softly plays as Dickens continues. The Spirit points out the various activities to Scrooge, sometimes towards the audience, sometimes on stage.

By this time it was getting dark, and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the snowy streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens preparing for cozy dinners. Children were running into the cold to greet their married brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles and aunts, inviting them into celebrating warmth. Groups of handsome girls, all hooded and chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbor's house, where upon the single man who saw them enter was in a glow. But if you had judged from the number of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there.

The Spirit flings a handful of glitter upstage.

Scrooge: Whose house is this upon which you bestow your generous hand?

GCP: Know you not the entrance-way to your very own nephew's house?

Lights up on a tableau of a Christmas part in progress. Fred, Wife, Single Sister, Married Sister, Bro in Law, and a bachelor named Topper are present. A Christmas tree, chair, loveseat and side table with punchbowl and cups complete the scene. Fred is standing on a chair adjusting the star on top of the tree. They are all suspended in the middle of an uproarious laugh.

You have been offered its warm hospitality often enough. Come in, man! Come in!

Fred: He said that Christmas was a humbug! He said that (*stepping off chair and imitating Scrooge*) every foolish person who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding! (*They laugh uproariously*) and buried with a stake of holly (*they hold laughter*) through his heart! (*More laughter. When it subsides*) As I live! He believed it, too!

Wife: More shame for him, Fred!

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

Wife: I'm sure he's very rich, Fred. At least you always tell me so.

Fred: But his wealth is of no use to him.

Fred replenishes guest's drinks. Topper sits on a footstool at the feet of Wife's single sister. He tugs at the ribbon of her skirt and she coyly slaps him.

He doesn't do any good with his wealth. He doesn't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't even got the satisfaction of thinking that he will benefit us with it! (*laughter*)

Wife: I have no patience with him!

Married sister: Nor I.

Fred: Oh, I have. I am sorry for him. I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers most by his bad nature? Only himself! He won't come and have Christmas dinner with us. What is the result? Well...(*teasing as he puts his arms around his wife*) I guess he doesn't lose much of a dinner! (*laughter*)

Wife: Oh! Indeed! (*she slaps him*) Well, I think he lost a very good dinner. (*Guests chuckle with "hear, hear!"*)

Fred: Oh? Well...I am very glad to hear it, because I haven't had much faith in our private cooks!

Wife: Private Cooks! You, smarty! (*slaps him again with fan*) since when can we afford private cooks! (*laughter*)

Fred: What do you say, Topper?

Topper: (*he's been looking at the single sister*) What? Oh, well, in as much as I am the only bachelor present, I don't believe that I have any right to an opinion on

the subject. *(He winks at the single sister, who giggles and taps him playfully with her fan, then hides behind it)*

Wife: Do go on Fred. *(explaining to guests)* He never, ever finishes what he begins to say. He is so ridiculous. *(She leaps up and bestows a kiss on his check and demurely resumes her seat. More laughter)*

Fred: I was going to say...that I mean to invite him every year, whether he likes it or not. I feel sorry for him. He may rail at Christmas 'till he dies! But how can he help thinking better of it, if he finds me going there year after year, always in good temper, saying "How are you, Uncle Scrooge!" If it only puts him in mind to give his poor office clerk fifty pounds, that is something! Enough now, fine guests. I say, let's play a parlor game!

Wife: Oh yes! Let' play "Yes or No!"

Married Sister: Oh, yes! Let's do!

Scrooge: *(excitedly)* Oh, I love this game. *(To Spirit)* I love this game. *(Scrooge continues to be excited and tries to join in the game at every chance, laughing, agreeing, clapping, etc. Guests can neither hear nor see him)*

Bro in law: How in the world does one play "Yes or No?"

Wife: Well, first you...uh...oh, Fred, you explain it. I have such a fuzzy head when it comes to explanations.

Fred: *(Kissing the top of her head)* It is a very pretty head, nevertheless!

Wife: Oh, you silly! You go first...you're so smart! *(Laughter)*

Fred: All right. Now! I will think of one particular thing; and you must guess what it is by asking questions of me. I can only answer "Yes or No."

Topper: All right. I get it!

Bro in Law: Wonderful. Fred, are you ready?

Fred: Wait a minute. *(Looks up, thinking. Scrooge says, "Come on Fred! Think!")* Ready! *(Scrooge claps)*

Single sis: Is it animal, vegetable or mineral?

Scrooge: But she can't...

Fred: Yes! *(laughter)*

Single Sis: Well? Which is it?

Scrooge: *(stepping forward)* He can only answer “Yes or No!”

Wife: He can only answer “Yes or No,” silly.

Single sis: Oh!

Topper: *(teasing)* Silly!

Single Sis: *(Tapping him with her fan)* Stop it! *(then smiles at him)*

Wife: Is it a vegetable?

Fred: No.

Married Sis: Mineral?

Fred: No.

Single Sis: Then it must be an animal! *(Laughter)* Well! *(Hands on hips)* It has to be an animal!

Scrooge: He can only answer “Yes or No!”

Wife and Married: He can only answer “Yes or No!”

Single Sis: Oh, yes....or No! *(She giggles as guests laugh)* I mean...is it an animal?

Fred: *(in mock relief)* Yes!!

Scrooge: *(To Spirit)* It’s still her turn!

Married Sis: It’s still your turn. You must keep asking questions until you get a ‘No.’

Single Sis: Oh! Well..is it...is it...a dead animal?

Fred: No.

Single Sis: *(Defeated)* Oh...I got a NO!

Topper: *(mock comfort)* There, there. It will be all right! *(laughter)*

Wife: It’s your turn Topper.

Topper: Is it a live animal?

Fred: Yes.

Topper: A savage animal? *(he growls at Single Sis. She shrieks and everyone laughs)*

Fred: *(Contemplates)* Mmmmm...no.

Bro in Law: A tame animal?

Fred: Rather a disagreeable animal.

Scrooge: You have to answer Yes or No!

Wife: Fred! Yes or No.

Fred: *(Ignores her)* It growls and grunts sometimes.

Scrooge: You're not playing the game right.

Wife: Is it a bear?

Fred: No.

Married Sis: Does it live in the country?

Fred: No.

Topper: Can it be found in London?

Fred: Yes.

Scrooge: *(excitedly playing again)* Can it walk in the streets?

Topper: Can it walk in the streets?

Fred: Yes.

Scrooge: *(To Spirit)* I got a Yes!

Topper: Is it sold at the butcher's?

Single Sis: Ugh!

Fred: No.

Bro in Law: My turn. It's a cat!

Fred: Nope.

Scrooge: It's a mouse!

Wife: It's a wild boar!

Fred: In the streets of London? *(laughter)*

Scrooge: It's a mouse! It's a mouse!

Wife: Well, what is it!?

Topper: I'm stumped.

Scrooge: It's a mouse!

Married Sis: Give us a hint!

Fred: OK...it says "Bah!" and "Humbug!"

Single Sis: I know! I know! It's my turn!

Scrooge: *(is now in the middle of the group)* Well, what is it, for mercy's sake?

Single Sis: It's your uncle

All: Scrooge! *(They all laugh and congratulate Fred. Scrooge moves to Spirit saying "I don't get it")*

Wife: *(As laughter wanes)* You should have said "Yes" when I said "a boar!" *(more laughter)*

Fred: Well, he has given us lots of fun, I'm sure, and I think it would be ungrateful of us not to drink to his health. So I say *(Lifting his glass)* "To Uncle Scrooge!"

All: *(Raising their glasses)* Hear, hear! To Uncle Scrooge.

Fred: And a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, wherever he is! Uncle Scrooge!

Scrooge is standing near the center and looks pleased.

Spirit: Come, sir. We must be on our way.

Scrooge: *(he walks to Spirit as lights dim on party)* Oh, must we go? Can't we stay for just a little while? Just one more game! One half hour, Spirit?

Spirit: *(Fog begins to swirl at his feet)* My time grows short. We have but until midnight.

A small, gaunt hand emerges from behind the Spirit and grips the skirt of his gown. Another hand does the same from the other side. SCROOGE steps back in shock

Scrooge: Forgive me, but what is it that you conceal behind your robe? *(We hear a DEATH toll)*

Spirit: Oh, Man! Look here! Do look down here! *(From the folds of his robe appear two wretched children – frightened, hideous. They kneel at its feet and cling to its garment. They are a boy and a girl.)*

Scrooge: *(Appalled)* Are these yours? *(Faint sound of church clock tolling midnight)*

Spirit: They are Man's. Do you not know them? This boy is IGNORANCE. This girl is WANT. Beware of them both. But, most of all, beware of this boy, for on his brow I see written the word DOOM, unless the writing be erased.

Scrooge: Have they no refuge? No one to care for them?

Spirit: Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses? *(Church bell tolls the sound of twelve. At the last stroke, LIGHTS reveal a shrouded phantom [SCY] across the stage, draped and hooded, moving towards SCROOGE in a low fog. Sounds of wind/storm)*

Scrooge: *(Turning to Spirit who has disappeared along with children)* Oh, Spirit of...

Scrooge turns back to SCY who is closing in on him. Scrooge falls to his knees

Scrooge: Am I in the presence of the Spirit of Christmas Yet To Come? *(Death toll)* Spirit of the Future I fear you most. But I know your purpose is to do me good. And I hope to be another man than what I was. I will bear your company with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me? *(Spirit's hand points straight before them)* Lead on, Spirit.

Light reveals two businessmen, standing under an umbrella. The bell continues to toll in the distance

Why, I know those men! And this place – it is the stock exchange. It's a second home to me.

First: When did he die?

Second: Last night, I believe. *(A third man runs in with collar upturned and shares the umbrella)*

Third: Brrrr...cold rain, isn't it?

Second: Seasonable for Christmastime.

Third: Did you hear? Sounds like the Devil got one of his own last night! *(Men chuckle)*

First: So I'm told.

Second: I thought he would never die!

First: What has he done with his money?

Third: I haven't heard. He hasn't left it to me, I know that! *(All chuckle)*

Second: It's likely to be a very cheap funeral. Upon my life, I don't know of anybody to go to it.

Third: Suppose we make up a party of volunteers! *(laugh)*

First: Well, I don't mind going if a lunch is provided; but they'll have to feed me first! *(Another laugh. Third Man holds out his hand. The rain has stopped)*

Third: Well...Merry Christmas. *(He leaves)*

Others: Merry Christmas. *(Puts down umbrella and leaves)*

Scrooge: Tell me Spirit of the Future, who can this poor wretch be, for whom no one is moved to mourn at his death. *(SCY doesn't answer, but raises his hand to point in another direction. The bell tolls on)*

The corner of a cluttered filthy garret appears in the light. Assorted old junk is around the area. Sitting at a charcoal brazier is an old rascal in a battered hat and clothes. Down the stairs comes CHARWOMAN carrying a large bundle of cloth. She is followed by MRS. DILBER with a similar bundle. Last to arrive is the UNDERTAKER'S MAN wearing black and a tall hat, tied carelessly with a wide black ribbon.

Charwoman: Let the Charwoman be the first! Let Mrs. Dilber go second and the Undertaker last. Look here, old Joe. What's the chance that all three of us show up at the same time!

Joe: You couldn't have met in a better place. Come in! Sit! None of you ain't strangers to this old Rag and Bone Shop! And I'm sure there's no such old bones here as mine! Ha! Come in!

Charwoman: *(Throwing her bundle down and sitting on a low stool)* What odds, then? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. Always did!

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

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

Undertaker: No, indeed!

Mrs. Dilber: We should hope not!

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

Mrs. Dilber: No, indeed! *(They all laugh)*

Charwoman: If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, the wicked old screw, why wasn't he more natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him – instead of lying there gaspin' his last breath, alone by himself.

Mrs. Dilber: It's the truest word that ever was spoke. It's a judgment on him, that's what it is!

Charwoman: It would have been a littler heavier judgment; you may depend on it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else! Open that bundle, Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty well we were helping ourselves before we met here. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.

Mrs. Dilber: Oh, no, upon my word, Mrs. Gamp. You don't have to go first. Does she?!

Undertaker: Oh, no Mrs. Gamp. You don't have to go first.

Joe: Well, somebody go first! *(The two women look at each other, then they both look at the Undertaker's Man)*

Undertaker: Oh! Very well then, I'll go. *(He presents Joe with his plunder, wrapped in a handkerchief)*

Joe: A seal, a pencil case, a pair of sleeve buttons, a brooch of no great value and the handkerchief for good measure. *(He chalks up the sum)* There's your account – and I won't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it! Who's next?

Mrs. Dilber: Here ya' go.

Joe: Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar tongs, and a few old shoes. *(He chalks up her account)* I always give too much to the ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself. That's your account. If you were to ask me for another penny, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half a crown!

Charwoman: And now, undo my bundle, Joe.

Joe: *(On his knees, undoes a sheet and brings out a heavy roll of dark fabric)* What do you call this? Bed Curtains?

Charwoman: Aye! Bed curtains.

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

Charwoman: Yes, I did. Why not?

Joe: You were born to make your fortune, Mrs. Gamp, and there's no two ways about that! *(She chuckles as he rummages more)* You got his blankets?

Charwoman: Whose else do you think? He ain't likely to take cold without 'em, I daresay! *(They all laugh. Joe pulls out a shirt)* Eh! You may look through that shirt 'till your eyes ache, but you won't find a hole in it. It's the best he had. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me!

Joe: What do you call a-wastin' of it? *(He tallies her score and from a bagful of coins, doles out their pay)*

Charwoman: Puttin' it on him to be buried in, to be sure. Somebody was fool enough to do it! *(Looks at the Undertaker's Man)* So's I took it off him. Calico shirt is good enough for him. He can't look uglier than he did in that one. Ha! *(All are chuckling)*

Mrs. Dilber: Mrs. Gamp! You took it off him! *(Laughs heartily)*

Charwoman: Well, he frightened everyone away from him when he was alive. So's we profit when he's dead! *(Loud laughter as Joe blows out lamp and light go out)*

Scrooge: *(Shaken)* How horrible! What dreadful, obscene demons! I see now, Spirit. The case of this unhappy man might even be my very own. But Spirit, is there no one who mourns this poor man's Death. Show me some tenderness connected with death. I beseech thee.

The Spirit points to the other side of the stage and lights up on the Cratchit family. The children are on the floor or stool. Mrs. Cratchit is on a chair sewing. The girls are sewing too. Peter is reading from the Bible.

PETER: "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them. And he said to them, 'Whenever you welcome a little child, you welcome me.'"

MRS. C: *(briefly overcome with emotion, setting down her work, endeavoring to recover quickly)* This color hurts my eyes...There, better now. The candlelight makes them weak, and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home. Not for the world. It must be near his time.

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

MRS. C: Yes..I've known him to walk with...I have known him to walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.

PETER: And so have I.

BELINDA: And so have I.

MRS. C: But he was very light to carry. And his father loved him so that it was no trouble, no trouble at all. *(listening)* Is that your father now? *(she stands and greets him. The children all gather round him and he sits with one on his knee)*

Cratchit: I went by the grave today, is why I'm late. I wish you could have been there. It would have done you good to see how green it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there every Sunday; to visit him, you see... *(he recovers; hugs from the children)* But guess whom I saw today? Fred Hollowell, Mr. Scrooge's nephew. I met him on the street. He saw that I was a little down, and, well, he is the most pleasant speaking man you ever heard, and so I was not afraid to tell him. And this is what he said to me: 'I am heartily sorry, Mr. Cratchit, heartily sorry.' And he pledged to be of any service he could to us. He even gave me his card, and said I should call on him at home. But it's not for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, for that I am thankful. It really seems as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us...And I've got good news for you, Peter!

Peter: What is it Father?

Cratchit: Mr. Hollowell has offered you an apprenticeship! You'll be offered 8 shillings a week starting next Tuesday!

Peter: Eight shillings! Wow!

Mrs. C: Congratulations, Peter!

Martha: *(Tossling his hair)* Oh Peter! Just think. Soon you'll be keeping company with a young lady and setting up house for yourself! *(Everyone chuckles)*

Cratchit: That will happen soon enough. But however and whenever we are parted from one another, I'm sure none of us will forget our poor Tiny Tim, shall we?

All: *(pick one of these phrases. They are all said at the same time)* No, never. I'll never forget him. Never, Father. Of course, not Father. *(Hugs all around and Peter stands and shakes his father's hand at lights out)*

Scrooge: Spirit, I know not how, but something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. Tell me what man has died so all alone, the one that was spoken of.

The SPIRIT points over to a gravestone that is down stage. Audience does not see the name on the headstone. Spirit crosses to the grave and points down at the name.

Scrooge: Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of things that will be; or are they shadows of things that only may be? *(Spirit continues a steady point)*

A man's course will foreshadow a certain end, to which it must lead. But if he departs from that course, the end will change. Say it is so with what you show me!

A terrifying chord sounds. The letters on the gravestone glow as the Spirit traces them

Ah! Is my name on that headstone?!

Spirit points to him and to grave

No! No, Spirit, no! Hear me! I am no longer the man I was! I will not be that man! Why show me this, if I am past all hope!?

Bell tolls first stroke of six, to indicate dawn. In the darkness, the Spirit has moved across the stage and lights up on him and low light on SCROOGE.

Good Spirit, tell me I may sponge away the writing on that stone! Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me! 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!

He rises to go to Spirit who now disappears and appears next to Scrooge's curtained bed! SCROOGE crosses to bed and Spirit

The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me that I may sponge away the writing on the stone!

SCROOGE grasps the SCY'S hand, grabs at the robe, pleading, crying, pulling the figure down into a pile of black as he pleads, as spot dims to black.

We hear the clock toll eight as lights come up on SCROOGE'S bedroom. We hear offstage Caroler's singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas!" SCROOGE wakes with a cry.

Scrooge: Wha...? Where am I? Wait...what day is this? It's morning, but what day? How long have I been with the Spirits? I don't know. *(pinching himself)* But I'm alive. I'm alive! *(grasping the bed curtains)* They are still here! They're not torn down. They are here. I am here! Woohoo! *(jumping on the bed like a boy)* I don't know what to do! I feel light as a feather. I'm happy as an angel! I'm as merry as a schoolboy! *(Sitting he exchanges his slippers for his shoes)* There's where old Marley stood. It's all right, it's all true. It all happened!

Removing his nightshirt and nightcap, he puts on a coat.

I don't know how long I've been gone. I don't know what day it is. I don't know anything! I'm like a baby! I don't care. I'd rather be a baby!

Joyous Christmas church bells ring out as he runs to the window and flings it open

Oh glorious! Glorious! Hey! Boy! What day is this?

Boy: What?!

Scrooge: What day is today, my fine fellow?

Boy: Today? Why, it's Christmas Day!

Scrooge: It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it! The Spirits did it all in one night! Of course they did – they can do anything they like. Hello my fine fellow!

Boy: Hello, sir.

Scrooge: Do you know the poultry shop in the next street, at the corner?

Boy: I should hope I do.

Scrooge: An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging in the window? The big one?

Boy: The one as big as me?

Scrooge: What a delightful boy! Yes, my lad!

Boy: It's hanging there now!

Scrooge: It is? Go and buy it!

Boy: Go on!

Scrooge: No, I mean it! Go and tell them to bring it here, that I may tell them where to deliver it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half a crown!

Boy: Yes, sir! *(With a whoop, he is off like a shot)*

Scrooge: Remarkable boy! *(He puts on his street coat, hat and scarf. The door covers the bedroom and the window is gone. People start entering in the background on their way to houses. They carry food, presents, etc. The Boy and the Poulterer, who is carrying a bag with the huge turkey appear on the stage.)* Hello, fine sir! I want to you take that turkey to Number 16, Bayham Street. But you can't carry that all the way to Camden Town. You must take a cab. *(SCROOGE produces coins)* Here is for the turkey; and here is for the cab; and here is for yourself. Merry Christmas!

Poulterer: *(Tipping his hat)* Well, Merry Christmas to you, sir! Thank you. *(He exits)*

Scrooge: *(Turning to Boy)* And here's for you, my lad.

Boy: Thank you, sir! And Merry Christmas! *(He runs out)*

Scrooge: Merry Christmas! *(We hear a distant brass quartet playing a carol. SCROOGE smiles and says Merry Christmas, Good Morning as people pass. He sees the gentlemen/women who asked for charity the day before and approaches them)*

Scrooge: My dear sirs/ladies. How do you do? *(He shakes their hands as they look at him with surprise)* I hope you were successful yesterday. It was very kind of you. A Merry Christmas to you!

First/Second: Mr. Scrooge?

Scrooge: Yes, that is my name and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon for my behavior yesterday. And, for your Christmas Fund for the Poor, will you accept...*(He whispers in the First's ear)*

First: Lord bless me! My dear, Mr. Scrooge, are you serious? *(He whispers the amount in Second's ear)*

Second: My word, Mr. Scrooge!

Scrooge: If you please, not a farthing less. A great many back payments are included in that, I assure you.

Second: My dear sir, what can we say to such generosity?

Scrooge: Don't say anything, please. Just come and see me. Will you come and see me?

First: Of course we will!

Second: We will, indeed. Bless you. *(They shake hands again)*

Scrooge: Thank you. Thank you! I am much obliged to you. Merry Christmas!

First/Second: Merry Christmas!

Lights up on Dickens and Marley's and Scrooge's office. Dickens rises and comes to the front of his writing table as Scrooge hurriedly unlocks his office and hangs up his hat and coat.

Dickens: Scrooge was early at the office the next morning. Oh, he was very early, there. If he could only get there first and watch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thought he had set his heart upon. And he did it, yes, he did it!

Scrooge takes his seat, takes his quill pen in hand and looks at the clock. The clock chimes nine times.

The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob.

Bob comes running down the street

He's a full eighteen and a half minutes behind his time when he at last arrived.

CRATCHIT pauses at the street door to catch his breath; gingerly and silently opens the door, just far enough to slide in, and quietly shuts it. On rapid, silent tiptoes, he hangs up his hat and muffler, and slides onto his stool. He takes up his quill and writes furiously. All this while SCROOGE has been sitting with pocket watch in hand.

Scrooge: Ah-hah! What do you mean, sir, by coming in here at this time of day?!

Cratchit: I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time, I know.

Scrooge: You are? I think you are, indeed! Yes! Step this way, sir, if you please.

Cratchit: *(Slides down from stool and approaches)* It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated, I promise you. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.

Scrooge: Now, I'll tell you what. I am not going to stand for this sort of thing any longer. And therefore...*(He leaps from his stool and gestures with his ruler coming down the steps. CRATCHIT cringes)* and therefore...I am going to raise your salary! *(CRATCHIT, frozen in a defensive posture, slowly turns and looks at SCROOGE open-mouthed!)* A Merry Christmas, Bob! *(Scrooge shakes Bob's limp hand and then shakes the other)*

Cratchit: What?

Scrooge: A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary and from now on endeavor to assist your family. And as for Tiny Tim, he will walk again! I just know it. Now, you needn't say a thing. Come with me. *(Cratchit and Scrooge get hats and mufflers)* We will discuss the particulars over a bowl of Christmas punch yet this day before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!

The door moves in front of the office. They emerge on to the street as Dickens continues.

Dickens: Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second Father.

Scrooge has his arm around Cratchit after they enter the street. Fred enters with Tiny Tim on his shoulder. Tiny Tim has his crutch but no leg brace. Mrs. Cratchit and sisters and brother follow them. Fred sets him down; Tim holds his crutch up for Scrooge to see, hands it to Fred; and skips across the stage and into the arms of Scrooge. The family comes together moving downstage as the rest of the cast enters.

Dickens: *(Now downstage L, with manuscript, in front of the cast)* He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old city knew; and it was always said of Ebenezer Scrooge, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. *(Pause and take a step or two towards center)* May that truly be said of us, and all of us! And so *(closes the manuscript)* as Tiny Tim observed:

Tiny Tim: God bless us everyone!

*Intro to 'Deck the Halls' as cast raises arms together and bows. Then they all sing!
At the end of the song, the cast shouts Merry Christmas!*