

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by Charles Dickens

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ACT 1

**SCENE 1: THE COUNTING HOUSE**

(NARRATOR stands in spot on apron. He should be dressed as a 19th-century English gentleman. We should feel that the NARRATOR had been a contemporary of Scrooge's.

Spot: dim on opposite apron where we see a high desk and a low desk.)

NARRATOR:

*Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatsoever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was considered good for any piece of business he chose to put his hand to. Marley was as dead as a doornail.*

*Now, I don't know what there is particularly dead about a doornail. I would think a coffin nail would be a deader piece of iron; but, far be it from me to change the expression, or the country's done for. So, permit me to repeat, once again, emphatically, that Marley was dead as a doornail.*

*Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he had been partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole friend, and the only man who mourned him...if Scrooge can be said to have mourned at all. And the mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.*

*Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterward, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.*

(Spot comes up slowly on apron opposite. Enter SCROOGE and CRATCHIT to fill out the scene. Lights slowly up on stage as CAROLERS begin to enter, quietly humming “**Here We Come A-Wassailing.**”)

NARRATOR:

*It was bitterly cold and the fog was thick as pea soup on that Christmas Eve of 1843, when Scrooge sat busy in his counting house, with his clerk near by trying to warm himself at a candle. But since he didn't have much of an imagination, he failed.*

(Stage lights full, CAROLERS at full volume, singing “**Here We Come A-Wassailing.**”)

FRED enters. Volume down on CAROLERS as FRED crosses to apron. Spot up full. There SCROOGE is seated at a high desk, with CRATCHIT seated at a low desk to his left, partially facing away.)

FRED: A Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: (surprised) What?

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FRED: I said, A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, Uncle! Surely you don't mean that!

SCROOGE: Of course I mean it! Merry Christmas, indeed. What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED: Come, Uncle. What reason have you to be dismal? You're rich enough. Ha ha!

SCROOGE: *BAH!* Away with Merry Christmas! What's Christmas to you, but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older and not an hour richer? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

FRED: Uncle!

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

FRED: Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then! A lot of good it has done you.

FRED: Well, there are many things from which I have benefited, even if they didn't show a profit, I dare say. Christmas among the rest. But if anything belonging to Christmas can be considered apart from the sacred source of its name and origin, I am sure I have always thought of Christmas as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time of year I know of when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and think of others as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave. And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of silver or gold in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!

(CRATCHIT bursts into applause at this, then stops at SCROOGE'S scowl)

SCROOGE: Another sound out of *you*, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your position!

(CRATCHIT slinks back to his work.)

FRED: Don't be angry, Uncle. Come and dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE: I'll see myself in hell first.

FRED: But why, Uncle?

SCROOGE: Why? *Why?* Let me ask you a question: Why did you get married recently?

FRED: Because I fell in love, of course.

SCROOGE: Love! You fell in love! Ha! Good afternoon, nephew.

FRED (bending toward Scrooge): But you never came to see me before I married. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE (not looking up): Good afternoon.

FRED: I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you. Why can't we be friends?

SCROOGE: Good *afternoon*.

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FRED: I am sorry to find you so resolute. We've never had a quarrel, you and I. But I came all this way to give you greetings of the season, and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle!

(FRED hurries off.)

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

(FRED poking back in)

FRED: And a Happy New Year! (hurries off)

SCROOGE: *Good afternoon!!*

FRED (poking back in): And a Merry Christmas to you, Bob Cratchit!

CRATCHIT (looking up, surprised): Thank you, sir! A Merry Christmas to you!

SCROOGE: There's another fellow, my clerk, with fifteen shilling a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

(JEEVES AND HOWELL, Charity solicitors, enter.)

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

SCROOGE: Marley's dead. In fact, he died seven years ago this very night.

MR. JEEVES: Oh, I am quite sorry to hear it. But I have no doubt his generosity is well represented by his surviving partner.

(SCROOGE scowls.)

MR. HOWELL: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and needy, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of basic needs; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, Sir.

SCROOGE (looking up): Are there no prisons? Did they disappear?

HOWELL: Oh, no, sir. There are still plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: And the workhouses for the poor? Still in operation, I assume?

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

SCROOGE: The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigor, then?

HOWELL: Yes, very busy, sir.

SCROOGE: Oh, well, I was afraid from what you had said that something had stopped them in their useful course. I'm glad to hear it.

JEEVES (exchanging glances with HOWELL): Given that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer to the multitude, a few of us are trying to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and some means of warmth. We choose this time because it is a time, above all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

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JEEVES: Ah! You wish to be anonymous, then?

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. I am taxed for the institutions I have mentioned, and they cost enough. Those who are badly off must go there.

HOWELL: But many can't go there; and many would rather die.

SCROOGE: Oh, well, if they'd rather die, perhaps they should go ahead and do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides, I wouldn't know anything about it.

HOWELL: Well, you could know it, sir.

SCROOGE: It's none of my business. I have too much of my own business to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly, and I'll thank you to leave me to it! Good afternoon, gentlemen!

(As SOLICITORS exit, a few CAROLERS enter, including a few children. One boy steps up to regale SCROOGE as they sing **"God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen."** CRATCHIT is pleased.)

SCROOGE (seizing a ruler): Get away from here, you! I didn't ask to be bothered with that noise!

(Child, startled, retreats to the CAROLERS, who rush off.)

SCROOGE (to CRATCHIT): You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT: If it's quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient. And it's not fair. If I was to hold back half a crown for it, you'd think you were being abused, no doubt. 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: Hmph! A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December. But I suppose you must have it. Be here all the earlier next morning!

CRATCHIT: Oh, yes, sir, I shall. I certainly shall.

(SCROOGE exits. CRATCHIT dons scarf and hat, snuffs his candle, and turns to meet TINY TIM, hobbling on with crutch, face aglow.)

TINY TIM: Father!

CRATCHIT: Hello, my dear son!

(They embrace.)

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 there, too, playing with them!

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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 am to have the whole day off to celebrate with my family.

TINY TIM: Hoorah for Christmas!

(NARRATOR appears right and watches as CRATCHIT picks up TINY TIM and bears him off, they breaking into a carol together. Fade to black as NARRATOR crosses to apron. Curtain. Spot on NARRATOR.)

NARRATOR (over scene change to Scrooge's bedroom, piano under):

*Oh, Scrooge—he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, he was. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner, to be sure! Secret, self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. He carried his own low temperature with him everywhere he went; he iced his office in the dog-days, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.*

*Scrooge always took his melancholy dinner in the same melancholy tavern, and this night was no different. He read all the papers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, before he took himself home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner.*

*They were a gloomy suite of rooms. It was old and dreary, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.*

*Upon arriving in his chambers, Scrooge took off his cravat, put on his dressing gown, slippers, and his nightcap and sat down before the fire to take his gruel; for he had a cold in his head. It was a very low fire, indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel.*

### **SCENE 2: THE BEDROOM.**

(Lights up on Scrooge, sitting in front of an empty fireplace in his dressing-gown, slippers, night-cap, eating his gruel, mumbling occasionally. His bed is near by. Suddenly calling bells begin to ring, startling SCROOGE. It begins slowly at first, then becomes faster and louder, more insistent. It stops just as suddenly, leaving Scrooge momentarily frozen. He goes back to his gruel, mumbling. We hear the sound of heavy chains being dragged across a floor. Scrooge looks up, spooked.)

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MARLEY (off stage left, In a booming voice): *Scrooge!*

(Scrooge springs up from his chair, dropping bowl and spoon.)

MARLEY: *Scro-o-ooge!!*

SCROOGE (after a pause): Humbug! I won't believe it!

(MARLEY enters slowly, a grayish-white figure bound in cash-boxes and thick ledgers on oversized chains secured with huge padlocks, all of the same color. He stops center stage.)

SCROOGE (eyes wide, incredulous): How's this?! What do you want with me?

MARLEY (proceeding in a dark, low tone): Much!

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I *was*.

SCROOGE: Alright, who *were* you then?

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

SCROOGE: Ha—I don't believe it.

MARLEY: What evidence would you have of my reality, beyond that of your senses?

SCROOGE: I don't know.

MARLEY: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You might be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are! Ha ha!

MARLEY (screaming monstrosly): *AAHHH!*

SCROOGE (dropping to his knees): Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

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

SCROOGE: I do. I must! But why have you come to me?

MARLEY: It is required of every man that his spirit should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit does not go forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared, and turned to happiness! Oh, woe is me!

SCROOGE: You are fettered. Tell me why.

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

(Scrooge looks about him on the floor, seeing nothing.)

SCROOGE: Jacob, old friend, please, speak comfort to me.

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MARLEY: I have none to give. I have little time. I cannot rest, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole. Oh, not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused! Yet such was I! Oh, such was I!

SCROOGE (starting to stand): But you always were a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY: Business?! Humankind was my business! (Scrooge falls to his knees again.) The common welfare was my business! Charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence, were all my business! The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! Oh, why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me? (beat) Hear me! My time is nearly done!

SCROOGE: I will, Jacob. But don't be hard on me!

MARLEY: I am here to warn you, that you have yet a chance of escaping my fate, a chance I have procured for you, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: You always were a good friend! Thankee!

MARLEY: You will be visited by three Spirits.

SCROOGE (nervously): Is...is that the chance you mention?

MARLEY: It is.

SCROOGE: Oh, well, then I, I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY: Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE (standing): Can't they all come at once, and have it over with, Jacob?

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 ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and for your sake, take care that you remember what has passed between us!

(MARLEY backs up, exits L. We hear screams of remorse and suffering off stage.  
Scrooge attempts to shake the whole thing off.)

SCROOGE: Oh, humb...

(It doesn't work. Lights dim. NARRATOR appears. Piano.)

### **SCENE 3: THE BEDROOM.**

(As NARRATOR speaks, we see Scrooge pace the floor, crawl into bed, then tossing and turning.)

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NARRATOR: *And so, Scrooge lay in his bed and thought, and thought, and thought it over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavored not to think, the more he thought.*

*Marley's spirit bothered him exceedingly. Every time he resolved within himself, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again, like a strong spring released, to its first position and presented the same problem to be worked all through.*

(Spot on the bed. SCROOGE sits up, looks around.)

SCROOGE: Was it a dream, then? (Lays back down.)

(We hear the CATHEDRAL CHIME.)

SCROOGE (sitting up): A quarter past.

(CHIME.)

SCROOGE: Half past.

(CHIME.)

SCROOGE: A quarter to it.

(CHIME.)

SCROOGE (jumping out of bed) Ha! The hour itself,...and nothing else!

(Pleased with himself, he gets back into bed. A figure emerges and takes position at the head of SCROOGE'S bed. A figure emerges at the head of the bed. All lights up to full.)

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST (SCP): *Scrooge!*

SCROOGE (startled, sitting up): Ahh!

(His head swivels left, as of its own accord. He sees SCP, a striking female figure with bright flowing hair in a white robe bedecked tastefully with summer flowers, and a silver sash. Her expression is bright, full of life and hope. She holds a branch of green holly. A bright light accompanies her. Her voice should be firm, yet light.)

SCROOGE: Are you the Spirit whose coming I was told about?

SCP: I am!

SCROOGE: Who, and what, are you?

SCP: I am the Spirit of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE (looking her over): Long past?

SCP: No. Your past.

SCROOGE: Perhaps you could turn down that light that accompanies you?

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SCP: What! Would you so soon put out the light I give? Yours are the dark passions that would extinguish the light of truth!

SCROOGE: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend. (beat) What brings you here?

SCP: Your welfare, of course!

SCROOGE: I can't think of anything more conducive to my welfare than a night of uninterrupted sleep.

SCP: Your reformation, then! Take heed! Rise, and walk with me!

(SCP takes hold of SCROOGE'S arm. He rises and walks with her. Set transforms to country scene in winter. CAROLERS heard quietly off stage with **“Carol of the Bells.”**)

### **SCENE 4: OUTDOORS.**

SCROOGE: Good heaven! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!

SCP: Your lip is trembling. And what is that upon your cheek?

SCROOGE (weeping a little): What's what?...oh, nothing. It must be a pimple. Lead me where you would, Spirit.

SCP: Do you remember the way, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: Remember it! I could walk it blindfolded!

SCP: Strange, that you've forgotten it for so many years.

(A small group of boys, 3 or 4, runs on, laughing, jostling, joking, celebrating holiday from school. They stop and huddle. Scrooge looks on, wide-eyed.)

SCROOGE: Why, that's David Masterson! And Robert Estes! Hello!

SCP: These are merely shadows of the things that have been. They are not aware of us.

BOYS (breaking up): Well, Merry Christmas!...Merry Christmas!...Say hello to your sister for me!...Don't eat too much figgy pudding!...Ha ha! (They split up and exit.)

(Stage lights to dim, spot up on apron. We see a small boy sitting at a small school desk. He is reading a book. He looks sad. Scrooge notices him.)

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

(SCROOGE approaches apron.)

SCROOGE: Poor boy! My mother died giving birth to my sister. My father grew morose and seemed to begrudge us both ever after. (beat) I wish...but it's too late, now.

SCP: What is it?

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SCROOGE: It's nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something. That's all.

(Spot out, stage lights up, revealing Ebenezer as a young adult, pacing back and forth, agitated. FAN enters, throws her arms around him. SCROOGE and SCP watch the scene.)

FAN: Dear, dear brother!

EBENEEZER: Fan! Little Fan! You've grown!

FAN: I have come to bring you home, dear brother! (All aglow, quite beside herself with joy.)

EBENEEZER: Home, little Fan?

FAN: Yes! Home, for good and all! Father is much kinder than he used to be. He was in a pleasant mood just the other night, so that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and he sent me to bring you. Ebenezer, Father has arranged an apprenticeship for you. You're to be a man, and begin your career! You'll never have to spend another moment in this dreadful school. But first we'll be together all Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world!

(They stand in tableau under the following.)

SCP: Your sister was a frail creature, and often ill; but she had a large heart.

SCROOGE: So she had. You're right about that, Spirit. I'll not contradict it, God forbid!

FAN: Come, Ebenezer, pack your things. The carriage is just outside!

SCROOGE: Are you sure father is ready to have me home?

FAN: Oh, yes! I am sure of it!

EBENEEZER: But where am I to be apprenticed?

FAN: You will work for a wonderful man, Mr. Fezziwig, who keeps a warehouse. Now come! We mustn't keep the carriage waiting!

(They exit.)

SCP: Your sister died a young woman, but she did have a child, as I recall.

SCROOGE (thoughtful): Yes, a son, my nephew. His name is Fred Hollowell.

SCP: Your nephew, Ebenezer; the only family you have left.

SCROOGE: Yes, that is true.

SCP: Come along, Ebenezer. It is time to see another Christmas.

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### SCENE 5: FEZZIWIG'S ESTABLISHMENT.

(FEZZIWIG is seated at a high desk, busily engaged. Piano under with “**Deck the Hall.**”  
A table laden with bolts of cloth or other goods sits center stage. A handful of workers,  
including EBENEZER, are busy there.)

SCP: Do you know this place?

SCROOGE: Know it! This is where I was apprenticed! Look! It's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart!  
Fezziwig, alive again! And there's Dick Wilkins! We were the best of friends!

(FEZZIWIG lays down his quill, stretches, rubs his hands together and claps.)

FEZZIWIG: Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick! No more work tonight, my boys! It's Christmas  
Eve! Clear all this nonsense away, all of you, we must make room. Life is too short for all work  
and no play. I say it's time for a party! Hilliho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

(All go to it. Table is cleared and moved up or off, desk is moved back. More revelers  
appear, including a fiddler with his fiddle, and MRS. FEZZIWIG and her daughters. They  
greet one another. Fiddler strikes “Sir Roger de Coverly” and they begin to dance.  
SCROOGE stands by, enjoying all of this. BELLE is at the party. She is targeted by  
EBENEZER during the dance and revelry. We should see that he is clearly smitten.)

### THE DANCE.

(As dance ends, all greet MR. and MRS. FEZZIWIG, sharing greetings of the season. We  
see EBENEZER saying goodbye to BELLE, who exits with others.)

SCP: It's such a small thing, to make these silly people feel so much gratitude and joy.

SCROOGE: Small thing!

SCP: Is it not? After all, what did he do, this Fezziwig? Spent a few pounds on a party. Does he  
deserve such praise as this?

SCROOGE: It isn't that, Spirit. Why, Mr. Fezziwig has the power to make us happy or unhappy.  
He can make our work pleasant or miserable, just in the way he looks at us, and the way he  
addresses us! A thousand such little things add up, you know, until the happiness he gives is as  
great as if it cost a fortune, and...

(Lights dim to black, leaving SCROOGE and SCP in spot.)

SCP: What is it?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

SCP: Something, I think.

SCROOGE: No, no. It's...it's just that I would like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk  
just now. That's all.

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SCP: Come, Ebenezer, my time grows short. Look!

NARRATOR: *This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to anyone whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was a little older now, a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years, but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.*

### **SCENE 6: OUTDOORS.**

(Lights up, revealing EBENEZER and BELLE, seated side by side on a bench.  
BELLE is weeping, a handkerchief to her face.)

BELLE: I know it matters very little to you. Another idol has displaced me, and if it can make you as happy as I would have tried to do, I have no reason to cry.

EBENEZER: What idol has displaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

EBENEZER: 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. All your other hopes have merged into the one hope of eluding the disdain of others. I have seen your nobler virtues fall away, one by one, until nothing is left but one master-passion—the pursuit of profit. It consumes you.

EBENEZER: What then? Even if I have grown wiser and more astute, I haven't changed my feelings toward you.

BELLE: Oh, Ebenezer, our promise to one another is an old one. We made it when we were young and poor, and happy to remain so until we could improve our fortune together by patience and hard work. But you've changed. You are not the same man. (beat) Tell me, Ebenezer: if all of this had not happened, would you seek me out and try to win me now, a poor dower-less girl with nothing to bring to a marriage?

(EBENEZER looks down, unable to answer the question.)

BELLE (standing): Just as I thought. You may feel sad now, Ebenezer, but I've no doubt that you will dismiss the thought of me very soon, as if you were glad to have awakened from a bad dream. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

(Exits. Lights out. Curtain. The following take place on apron.)

SCROOGE: Spirit! Show me no more! Conduct me home! Why do you enjoy torturing me?

SCP: There is one more shadow we must see.

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SCROOGE: I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!

(SCP takes hold of SCROOGE. Two GENTLEMEN appear opposite.)

GENTLEMAN 1: I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.

GENTLEMAN 2: Oh? Who was it?

G 1: Take a guess.

G 2: Why, surely you don't mean old Ebenezer Scrooge!

G 1: The very same. I passed his office window. His partner, Jacob Marley, lies upon the point of death, I hear. And there he sat, old Scrooge, all alone. Quite *alone* in the world, I do believe.

G 2 (shaking his head): Miserable wretch!

(They exit.)

SCROOGE: Spirit! Remove me from this place!

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

SCROOGE: Please, I beg you. Take me away from here! I can bear no more. *No more!*

(Lights out.)

### **SCENE 7: THE BEDROOM**

(NARRATOR on apron. Piano: “**Carol of the Bells,**” slowly.)

NARRATOR: *After this mighty struggle, if that can be called a struggle, Scrooge was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness, and, further, of being in his own bedroom once again. He barely had time to reel to bed before he sank into a heavy sleep.*

(SCROOGE wakes himself from a “prodigiously tough snore” and sits up in bed to dim spot. He looks around, expecting another ghost. Just as he goes to lie down again, he hears...)

Spirit of Christmas Present (SCP): Ha ha ha ha! *Ha ha ha Ha ha! A-HA HA HA HA HA HA!*

**SCROOGE! EBENEZER SCROOGE!**

(As SCROOGE alights from bed, lights up to reveal SCP seated on a throne upon a platform lit with a thousand lights, bedecked with mistletoe, and heaped with a feast fit for a king. He is an impressive figure in full beard, wearing a green robe trimmed in white fur and crowned with a holly wreath. He holds a golden torch in his hand which is filled with start dust. SCROOGE approaches gingerly.)

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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SCP: Come! Come here and know me better, man!...I am the Spirit of Christmas Present. You have never seen the likes of me before, eh? Ha ha ha ha!

SCROOGE: No, never.

SCP: You've never walked forth with any of my elder brothers born in these later years?

SCROOGE: No, I don't think I have. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?

SCP: Ha ha ha! More than eighteen hundred! Ha ha!

SCROOGE: A tremendous family to provide for.

SCP (standing): Take hold of my robe, Ebenezer Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Where, pray tell, are we going?

SCP: You will see!

(SCROOGE reaches out nervously and touches the robe. Lights out, curtain.)

### **SCENE 8: CRATCHIT HOME.**

(CAROLERS, as merchants and shoppers, appear in the aisles from back of house, singing “**I Saw Three Ships.**” They make their way forward to stage over scene change. Curtain opens to street scene. There is a great happy bustle of chattering, greeting, a bit of good-natured market haggling. SCROOGE and SCP appear. As they make their way among the crowd, SCP sprinkles star dust on those who pass by.)

SCROOGE: Is there a peculiar flavor in what you sprinkle from your torch?

SCP: There is, indeed. My own.

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

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

SCROOGE: Why to a poor one most?

SCP: Because it needs it most.

(Crowd exits, leaving SCROOGE and SCP alone on stage. Scrim down for scene change to Cratchit's.)

SCROOGE: Spirit, why do you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment?

SCP: *I?*

SCROOGE: Well, you would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, when markets are closed, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all. Wouldn't you?

SCP: *I?*

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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SCROOGE: You seek to close these places on the seventh day, and it comes to the same thing.

SCP: *I seek?*

SCROOGE: Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family.

SCP: There are some upon this earth of yours who claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name, who are as strange to us, and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doing on themselves, not us!

(Scrim up, lights up on the Cratchit family table.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: What has ever got your precious father then? And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha wasn't this late last Christmas by half an hour!

(Just then, Martha enters.)

MARTHA: Here I am, Mother! (To the cheers and greetings of the younger children.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: Oh, Martha! How late you are!

MARTHA: We had a great deal of work to finish at the milliner's last night, and a great deal to clear away this morning!

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, never mind. You are home now! Sit down and warm yourself, dear.

BELINDA: Father will be home any minute. Hide, Martha, hide!

(MARTHA hides herself. CRATCHIT enters just then, bearing TINY TIM, holding his crutch. He is enthusiastically greeted by his family, kissed by his wife.)

CRATCHIT: But where's Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT: She won't be coming for Christmas this year, I'm afraid.

CRATCHIT: What? Not coming for Christmas!

MARTHA (popping out): Oh, here I am, Father!

(She embraces him. All cheer. CRATCHIT covers her in a thousand kisses.)

TWO YOUNGER CRATCHITS: Come, Tim! Come hear the pudding singing in the copper!

(They bear him off.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: And did little Tim behave himself in church?

CRATCHIT: He did. 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, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant for them to remember, on Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see... But he's growing stronger every day, I just know it!

MRS. CRATCHIT: Martha, help me with the goose. (Children cheering.)

PETER: There's such a goose, Father, such as we've never had before!

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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(MRS. CRATCHIT re-enters in high procession with a small goose on a platter, followed in parade by MARTHA and THE TWO YOUNGER CRATCHITS. It is placed on the table and all are seated.)

THE CHILDREN: Such a goose!...Just smell the sage and onion!...Mother outdid herself this year...We got it for a good price, Father!...It wasn't expensive at all!

CRATCHIT (standing and raising his cup): A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

ALL: God bless us!

TINY TIM: God bless us, everyone!

(Lights dim on the table as dinner is served, under the following.)

SCROOGE: I had no idea Cratchit had a crippled son.

SCP: I wonder why.

SCROOGE: Tell me, Spirit. Will the boy live?

SCP: I see a vacant seat at this table, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCROOGE (startled): No, no, that cannot be. Say he will be spared.

SCP: If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, none other of my race will find him here. But what difference does it make? If he is likely to die, then let him die, and decrease the surplus population!

SCROOGE (stung): You use my own words against me.

SCP: Yes! So that in the future perhaps you will hold your tongue until you have discovered what the surplus population is, and *where* it is. Who are you to decide who shall live and who shall die? It may be that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child!

CRATCHIT: And now, dear ones, a toast. I give you Mr. Scrooge, the founder of our feast.

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

CRATCHIT: My dear. The children. Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: It should be Christmas Day, when one would drink the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Ebenezer Scrooge. No one knows it better than you, Bob.

CRATCHIT: My dear. Have a little charity.

MRS. CRATCHIT (after a pause): Oh, alright, then. I'll drink his health, for your sake and the Day's sake, but not for his. (raising her cup) Long life to him! A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I've no doubt he'll be very merry, indeed, and very happy!

CRATCHIT: To Mr. Scrooge.

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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MARTHA: To Mr. Scrooge.

ALL: To Mr. Scrooge.

(All drink. SCP approaches and sprinkles star dust liberally on the Cratchit table. At which the family brightens up.)

CRATCHIT: I think it's time for a song.

TINY TIM: A Christmas Carol!

MRS. CRATCHIT: What shall we sing?

(TINY TIM begins **“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!”** All join in.)

(Curtain.)

### INTERMISSION

(Perhaps a choral medley of Alfred Burt carols for the last five minutes?)

## ACT 2

### SCENE 1: HOLLOWELL HOME.

(Curtain opens to a small crowd at a party on Christmas Day. They sing a stanza of **“Good King Wencelas.”** After which, they DANCE. Afterward, all are holding drinks. SCROOGE and SCP enter to behold the scene.)

FRED: He said that Christmas was a humbug. He believed it, too! (laughter)

JANET: More shame for him, Fred!

FRED: He's really a comical old fellow, and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offenses carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.

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

FRED: But his wealth is of no use to him. He doesn't do any good with it. He doesn't make himself comfortable with it. And I sincerely doubt he would ever consider benefiting *us* with it. Ha ha ha! (general laughter)

JANET: Well, I have no pity for him.

FRED: Oh, but I have! Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I mean to give him the same chance every year,

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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whether he likes it or not. I think I may have cracked the old boy yesterday, if I do say so myself! Ha ha ha! (general laughter). He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here's to Uncle Scrooge!

ALL: Uncle Scrooge! (laughter, as all drink.)

(Lights fade. Spot remains on SCROOGE and SCP.)

SCROOGE: I would normally take offense at such tasteless banter and laughter at my expense. However, in view of the general gaiety of the occasion, I am inclined to overlook it.

SCP: That is quite noble of you!

(We see something at SCP's feet. SCROOGE notices it.)

SCROOGE: Forgive me, Spirit, if I am not justified in asking, but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding there, from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?

SCP: It might be a claw, for all the flesh there is on it. Look here!

(SCP draws aside the folds of his robe to disclose WANT and IGNORANCE—two thin, dirty, wretched, scowling waifs crouched and clutching at his feet. We hear “**Coventry Carol**” off, quietly.)

SCROOGE (alarmed): Spirit! Are they yours?

SCP: No! They are yours! Do you not know them? This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their kind, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see written the word DOOM, unless the writing be erased. I dare ye to deny it! I dare ye to slander those who claim otherwise, and see where it leads!

SCROOGE: Have they no refuge or resource?

SCP: 'Are there no prisons? Are there no *workhouses*'?

(Suddenly the chime of twelve is heard. Lights to black. A loud, stormy noise. Wind and thunder.)

### **SCENE 2: THE DARKNESS.**

(Spot on Scrooge, standing, dazed. Sound of wind and thunder. SCP has disappeared and in his place approaches the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come (SCY) in fog. It is a tall figure, entirely cloaked and hooded in black. All that we will see of this figure are its bony hands.)

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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SCROOGE: I take it that I am in the presence of the Spirit of Christmas Yet To Come?

(SCY slowly nods.)

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

(SCY nods.)

SCROOGE: Spirit! I fear you more than any specter I have seen. Will you not speak to me?

(SCY lifts its arm and points beyond SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE (seeing that he is powerless to engage it): Very well! Lead on, then! The night is passing fast, and it is precious time to me. Lead on, Spirit!

(SCY walks slowly, SCROOGE following. Opposite, a small band of brokers appears in spot.)

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

(SCY only points to the group of men.)

BROKER 1: No, I don't know anything about it, either way. I only know he's dead.

BROKER 2: When did he die?

BROKER 1: Last night, I believe.

BROKER 3: Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

BROKER 1 (yawning): God knows.

BROKER 4: What has he done with his money?

BROKER 1: I haven't heard. Left it with his company, perhaps. I only know he hasn't left it to me.

(all laugh)

BROKER 2: Well, it's likely to be a cheap funeral. I don't know anybody who would go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

BROKER 3: I don't mind going if a lunch is provided. But I must be fed, for all the trouble it's worth. (laughter)

BROKER 4: Well, it matters little to me either way. I never wear black gloves, and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go, if anyone else will. Well, off to business. Goodbye!

ALL: Goodbye!

(SCROOGE looks up at the SCY, perplexed.)

SCROOGE: Have these men no sense of decency or decorum? Spirit, what is this? Why am I seeing this?

(SCY turns and points in the opposite direction, at which a spot comes up opposite, revealing a greasy, bedraggled old man sitting on a chair and surrounded by an odd

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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collection of junk in and out of boxes—old iron, rags, old clothes, moldy books, bottles, etc. Two old crones and a man in black slink into the scene, carrying bundles, as SCROOGE observes.)

MRS. OLIVER: I was here first! Mrs. Dilber shall be after me, and then the undertaker's man can be third. Isn't this something, Joe. All of us met here without meaning it.

OLD JOE: You couldn't have met in a better place. Come in and sit! Don't be shy, we're all suitable to our calling. We're well matched, to be sure! Ha ha! Come in!

(MRS. OLIVER throws her bundle to the floor and plops herself down on a stool with a sigh.)

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

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

MRS. OLIVER: Well 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?

MRS. DILBER: No, indeed!

MR. TACKLETON: We should hope not.

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

MRS. DILBER: No, indeed!

MRS. OLIVER: 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 when he was struck with death...instead of lying, gasping out his last there...all alone...by himself.

MR. TACKLETON: It's the truest word that ever was spoke, Mrs. Oliver. It's a judgment on him.

MRS. OLIVER: I wish it was a little heavier one; and it should have been, you can count on it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Now, open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know it's value to ye. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin to see to one's livelihood.

(MR. TACKLETON steps forward, not to be outdone, and produces his plunder.)

OLD JOE: Aha! Mr. Tackleton has been a busy man...Let's see, a seal..a pencil-case...a pair of sleeve buttons...hm...I'll give ye one pound eight—and not another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?

(Mrs. Dilber presents her bundle. OLD JOE brings out sheets, towels, a few articles of clothing, some silver.)

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

---

OLD JOE: Ah, quite a stash, Mrs. Dilber!...Of course, I always give too much to the ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin meself. Ha ha! (all laugh). Three pounds even, Mrs. Dilber. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half a crown.

MRS. OLIVER: And now undo *my* bundle, Joe! I was the first.

OLD JOE: Ah, and what do you call this? Bed-curtains!

MRS. OLIVER (laughing): Ah! Bed-curtains! Ha ha!

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

MRS. OLIVER: And why not? He wasn't apt to catch his cold without 'em, I dare say.

OLD JOE: I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?

MRS. DILBER: Don't you be afraid of that.. I wasn't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about if he did! (they laugh)

(OLD JOE pulls out a fine silk shirt.)

MRS. OLIVER: Ah! You may look through that shirt till your eyes ache, but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one, too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.

OLD JOE: And what do you call wasting it?

MRS. OLIVER: Why, putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure!

(Laughter. OLD JOE figures sums in his head, then opens a money bag filled with coin, and counts out into her hand.)

OLD JOE: Four pounds, six shillings and twopence—and not a penny more if I was to be boiled for it!

MRS. DILBER: And this is how it ends. He scared every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha ha ha!

SCROOGE: Spirit, this is a fearful place. Surely there can be no reason to bring me to this God-forsaken part of the city, except that the case of this unhappy man might be my own. Yes, the items they have stolen are similar to mine. I see the point. But surely there is someone who feels some emotion caused by this man's death. Show that person to me, I beg you!

(SCY turns and points opposite. Lights come up on a family table, where two children are seated. The mother is pacing back and forth. Her husband enters. He is sober but not without hope.)

CAROLINE: Oh, finally you've come, Thomas. What have you heard? Is it good, or bad?

THOMAS: It is bad, I'm afraid.

CAROLINE: Are we ruined, Thomas? Did he deny you the extra time you asked for? Has he evicted us?

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

---

THOMAS: No. There is hope yet, Caroline.

CAROLINE: Only if he repents, that old miser. Nothing is past hope if such a miracle has happened.

THOMAS: He is past repenting, dear. He is dead.

CAROLINE: Dead! Oh, God be praised! Oh!...Lord, forgive me!

THOMAS: I thought he was merely trying to avoid me. But what I had been told is quite true. Not only was he very ill, but he was dying, even then.

CAROLINE: To whom will our debt be transferred?

THOMAS: I don't know. But before that time we will be ready with the money. And even if we weren't, it would be bad fortune indeed to find a creditor who was as merciless as he! We may sleep tonight with light hearts, Caroline! (spot out)

SCROOGE: Spirit! I ask to see some emotion connected with this man's death, and you show me only pleasure. I demand to be shown some tenderness connected with a death!

### **SCENE 3: CRATCHIT HOME.**

(Sound of wind and thunder. SCROOGE turns to see the Cratchit family table. The children are seated quietly. MRS. CRATCHIT and the older girls are sewing. 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. CRATCHIT (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. CRATCHIT: 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.

ALL: And so have I.

MRS. CRATCHIT: 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?

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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(She stands to greet CRATCHIT as he enters. They all greet him. He sits, a child on one knee.)

CRATCHIT: I went by there 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)

CRATCHIT: 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, that am I 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 told me that he has been able to secure an apprenticeship for you. You'll begin at eight shillings a week, starting Tuesday next!

PETER: Eight shillings a week!

MARTHA: Soon you will be keeping company with a young lady, Peter, and setting up house for yourself! (laughter and teasing)

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

ALL: No! Never, Father!

MRS. CRATCHIT: And I know, as well, my dears, that when we remember how patient and mild he was—although he was a little, little child—we shall not quarrel among ourselves, and forget our little Tim in doing it.

ALL: No...we won't, Mother! Never!

(Hugs all around, and PETER proudly steps up to shake his father's hand. Lights come down on the scene, leaving SCROOGE and SCY in spot.)

### **SCENE 4: GRAVEYARD.**

SCROOGE: Spirit, something tells me that the moment of our parting is at hand. I know it but I don't know how. Tell me, the man who was spoken of, the one who died, tell me who he was.

(SCY points opposite—or to apron—where lights come up on a graveyard scene. SCROOGE is hesitant, loathe to go. Piano quietly under.)

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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SCROOGE (nervous and afraid): Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that *will* be, or are they the shadows of things that *may* be, only?

(SCY points to the gravestone.)

SCROOGE (desperate): The course of a man's life, if persevered in, will determine certain ends; I accept it. But if he departs from those courses, the ends must change. Say it is so with what you show me!

(SCY continues pointing. SCROOGE creeps toward the stone, trembling. Seeing the name inscribed there, he falls to his knees.)

SCROOGE: No, no, it can't be! Am I that man?! Am I the man who died whom no one mourned? Say it isn't so, Spirit! Say it isn't so!

(SCY points to SCROOGE and back to the stone.)

SCROOGE (crying now): *Spirit!* Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for your intervention. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?

(SCY hand begins to shake.)

SCROOGE: Surely your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I may yet change these shadows you have shown me, by a changed life!

(SCY hand continues to tremble.)

SCROOGE: I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will remember the lessons of the Past; I will live in the Present; I will live toward the Future. The spirits of all three will strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me that I may sponge away the writing on this 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. Curtain.)

### SCENE 5: THE BEDROOM.

(We hear CAROLERS off stage with **“We Wish You A Merry Christmas”** as lights come up on SCROOGE'S bedroom at right, as before. He is “waking” from a sob. Lights up. The chimes are tolling EIGHT.)

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! Woo-hoo! (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 school-boy!

(He runs to his window, looking out. A boy appears, R. He is the same boy who attempted to sing to SCROOGE at the counting house.)

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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SCROOGE: Hallo! You, boy! What day is it?

(BOY, seeing SCROOGE, makes to turn and run)

SCROOGE: Wait, don't be afraid my boy! What day is it?

BOY: What day is it?

SCROOGE: Ha ha ha! Yes! What day is it today?

BOY: Why, it's Christmas Day!

SCROOGE: Christmas Day! Are you quite sure, my good fellow?

BOY: I should say I am.

SCROOGE: Then the Spirits have done it all in one night. Why, of course, they can do anything they like! Of course they can. Ha ha! Hallo, my fine fellow!

BOY: Hallo!

SCROOGE: Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?

BOY: I should hope I did.

SCROOGE: What a wonderful boy. A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there?

BOY: What, the one as big as me?

SCROOGE: What a delightful boy! A pleasure talking with him. Yes, my buck, the one as big as you!

BOY: It's hanging there now.

SCROOGE: It is? Why, then you must go and buy it. Yes, go and buy it now.

BOY (looking around): Police!

SCROOGE: Oh, no, no. I really do mean it. Go and buy it, and tell them to bring it 'round, so that I can give them directions 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 turns and is off like a shot.)

SCROOGE: Ha ha ha! (beginning to dress) I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's! He won't know who sent it. I won't tell him! Ha ha! It's twice the size of Tiny Tim! Oh...Tiny Tim...Tiny Tim will live. On my soul, Tiny Tim will live!...They did it all in one night!...The Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future shall strive within me! (on his knees) Oh, heaven and Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, dear Lord, on my knees! (jumping up) A Merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Ha ha ha!

### **SCENE 6: OUTDOORS.**

(Bedroom is whisked off R. SCROOGE is dressed.)

(BOY returns R with POULTERER.)

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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BOY: Halloo!

SCROOGE: Ah! Here's the Turkey! Hallo! How are you, my boy! I was right, ha ha, this turkey is twice the size of Tiny Tim! It's twice the size of *you*, my lad! (to the poulterer, who is looking a bit dubious) Merry Christmas, my fine fellow!

POULTERER: Merry Christmas, sir.

SCROOGE: Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town. You must have a cab, sir!  
POULTERER: Camden Town, sir?

SCROOGE: Yes! This splendid turkey is to be delivered immediately to the home of Bob Cratchit and family, in Camden Town. Here, I've written the directions down. And here is the money for the Turkey!

POULTERER: Thank you, sir.

SCROOGE: And here is the money for the delivery!

POULTERER: Thank you, sir.

SCROOGE: And here is a tip for you, sir!

POULTERER (smiling by now): Thank you, sir!

SCROOGE: And here is half a crown, for you, my boy! Well-deserved. Yes, well-deserved!

BOY: Thank you, sir!

(BOY and POULTERER run off L.)

SCROOGE: And a very Merry Christmas!

POULTERER and BOY: Merry Christmas!

(MR. JEEVES and MR. HOWELL enter R, quietly chatting. SCROOGE turns, sees them, hurries to them.)

SCROOGE: My dear sir (taking JEEVES by both hands) How do you do? I hope you did well yesterday. It was a very good thing to do. A very good thing.

JEEVES (incredulous): Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE: Yes. That is my name. I fear it isn't pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your forgiveness. And yours, too, sir!

HOWELL: Yes, sir.

SCROOGE: And will you have the goodness—(SCROOGE whispers in HOWELL'S ear)

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

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

HOWELL: My dear sir, I don't know what to say to such generos...

SCROOGE: Don't say anything, please. Come and see me sometime! Will you come and see me, both of you?

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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JEEVES & HOWELL: We will! We will!

SCROOGE: Thank'ee. I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you both, and a Merry Christmas!

(SCROOGE, JEEVES, and HOWELL exit. Lights out. Curtain.)

### SCENE 7: HOLLOWELL HOME.

(Spot on apron L, NARRATOR appears. We hear “Sussex Carol” off.)

NARRATOR: *Would you believe it if I told you, that Scrooge went to church that day? He did. And walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head as they passed, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk, that anything at all, could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon, he turned his steps toward his nephew's house.*

(Curtain, lights up on HOLLOWELL home.)

JANET: Oh, Fred. It's beautiful! And it's too much. You shouldn't have spent so much!

FRED: But I love you, my dear, and my wife shall have the best on Christmas Day.

JANET: Oh, Fred. I love you so...but not just for this!

FRED: I know, my dear! I know. (they embrace)

(There is a knock.)

JANET: Now who can that be?

FRED: I don't know. No one's expected at this hour.

(FRED answers door off. He reappears, walking backward, with SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE: Hello, Fred!

(JANET gasps.)

FRED: Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE: The very same! It is I, your Uncle Scrooge. I recall an invitation you made to me yesterday, to come and dine with you. If that invitation is still in force, I should like to accept.

FRED (with a look at JANET): Why, I don't know what to say!

SCROOGE: Well, you could say bah-humbug—a retort I heartily repent of and shall never use again—or, you could say, Come in!

FRED: Come in? Why, of course! Of course you shall come in! Hoorah! Uncle Scrooge, you have made us both very happy! Oh, may I introduce my wife, Janet? Janet, my Uncle Scrooge.

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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SCROOGE (approaching her, taking her hand): My dear (kissing it). It is plain to me now why my nephew chose you among women. You are indeed every bit as lovely as I have heard.

JANET: Why, thank you...Uncle Scrooge. We are very happy you are here!

SCROOGE (turning to FRED): I am sorry for the things I said about Christmas. And sorry for the poor reception I gave you yesterday, of which you were so undeserving. I see the image of my sister in your face. I loved her, you know. And she, you.

FRED: I know it, Uncle Scrooge. She loved you very much, and wished until her dying day that we should always be close.

SCROOGE: And so we are, Fred, and so we shall be. So we shall be.

(Lights out. Curtain.)

### SCENE 8: THE COUNTING HOUSE.

(Lights up on Apron R. We are back in SCROOGE'S counting-house. It is the day after Christmas. SCROOGE is sitting at his desk with a mischievous smile on his face, humming to himself as he works. “**Caroling, Caroling**” off quietly. CRATCHIT enters.)

SCROOGE (looking up with a feigned scowl and growl): What is this?

CRATCHIT: Morning, sir.

SCROOGE: Mr. Cratchit, you are late, sir.

CRATCHIT: Yes, sir.

SCROOGE: What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?

CRATCHIT (terrified): I am very sorry, sir. I *am* behind my time.

SCROOGE (alighting from his desk): Step this way, if you please, Cratchit.

(They meet at CRATCHIT'S desk.)

CRATCHIT: It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, with my family.

SCROOGE: Now, I'll tell you what, my friend. I am not going to stand for this any longer. And therefore...and therefore...

(From behind his back he produces a leather bag full of coins)

SCROOGE: And therefore...*I am going to double your salary!* (throws the bag on the desk and crunches CRATCHIT in a magnificent embrace) Yes, Bob Cratchit! Ha ha ha! I am going to double your salary, sir. A Merry Christmas to you! A merrier Christmas than I have given you for many a year! And from now on I will endeavor to assist your family in any way I can...And as for Tiny Tim, he will walk again. I know it! Now, you needn't say a thing. Come with me. We will discuss the particulars over a bowl of smoking bishop before you so much as dot another i, Bob Cratchit!

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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(SCROOGE and CRATCHIT exit L. Lights up on stage. CAROLERS appear, singing. NARRATOR stands at left apron, as before.)

NARRATOR: *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 appears L with TINY TIM in hand, who is walking without his crutch; and the CRATCHIT family following.)

NARRATOR: *He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew.*

(SCROOGE and CRATCHIT'S center stage, surrounded by CAROLERS.)

NARRATOR: *And ever afterward it was always said of Ebenezer Scrooge that he knew how to keep Christmas, and keep it well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed...*

CAST: GOD BLESS US, EVERYONE!

(CAST breaks out in “**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!**”, audience to join in, under bows.)

**THE END**