

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
By Charles Dickens

ACT ONE

Charles Dickens enters.

DICKENS I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little story, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put you out of humour with yourself, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt your houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it. Your faithful friend and servant – Charles Dickens. December, 1843.

Dickens exits. Narrators enter.

NARRATOR 1 Marley was dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. Mind, this must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a doornail.

NARRATOR 2 Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event but that on the very day of the funeral, he was an excellent man of business.

NARRATOR 1 Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, 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.

NARRATOR 2 Oh! But he was tightfisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge, a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, made his eyes red and his thin lips blue. Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, "My dear Scrooge, how are you?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways.

NARRATOR 1 But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance. Well, once upon a time – of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve – old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already and the door of Scrooge's counting house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

Narrators exit. Scrooge is working behind his desk.

SCROOGE Cratchit!

Cratchit enters.

CRATCHIT Yes sir?

SCROOGE Has that shipment arrived from Pickerings yet?

CRATCHIT It's being delivered now sir.

SCROOGE Bring me my ledger.

Cratchit turns to leave and encounters the Charity Solicitors who have just entered.

CH. SOL. 1 Scrooge and Marley's, I believe.

Cratchit points to Scrooge and exits. The Charity Solicitors approach Scrooge.

CH. SOL. 1 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, this very night.

CH. SOL. 2 At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities.
CH. SOL. 1 Hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.
SCROOGE Are there no prisons?
CH. SOL. 2 Plenty of prisons.
SCROOGE And the Union workhouses? Are they still in operation?
CH. SOL. 1 They are. Still. I wish I could say they were not.
SCROOGE Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

CH. SOL. 2 Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are attempting to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth.

CH. SOL. 1 We choose this time, because it is a time of all others, when Want is keenly felt and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?
SCROOGE Nothing!
CH. SOL. 2 You wish to be anonymous?
SCROOGE I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there.

CH. SOL. 1 Many can't go there; and many would rather die.
SCROOGE If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.
Good afternoon!

CH. SOL. 1 Well, I must say Mr. Scrooge that I am shocked ...
CH. SOL. 2 Good afternoon, Mr. Scrooge.

Charity Solicitors quickly exit, almost bumping into Fred who enters unnoticed by Scrooge.

FRED A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!
SCROOGE Bah! Humbug!
FRED Christmas a humbug, uncle? You don't mean that!
SCROOGE I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

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

SCROOGE Bah! Humbug.
FRED Don't be cross, uncle.
SCROOGE What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this - Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas. 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. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say. Christmas among the rest. And therefore, uncle, though it has

never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that Christmas has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

Bob Cratchit, along with the other delivery men, have been listening to Fred's speech and applaud at its conclusion.

SCROOGE Let me hear another sound from you and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.
FRED Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.
SCROOGE Good afternoon.
FRED I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why can't we be friends?
SCROOGE Good afternoon.
FRED I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So a Merry Christmas, uncle!
SCROOGE Good afternoon.
FRED And a Happy New Year!

With that, Fred throws several of Scrooge's papers in the air quite merrily.

SCROOGE Good afternoon!

Fred starts to leave the room On his way out the front door, he quietly gives a few coins to Bob Cratchit.

FRED Something for you and the missus.

Fred leaves, happily humming a holiday tune.

SCROOGE And you! Fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

The bell tolls the end of the day. Scrooge looks at his pocket watch..

SCROOGE You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?
CRATCHIT If quite convenient, Sir.
SCROOGE It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound? 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, Mr Scrooge.
SCROOGE A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December. But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!
CRATCHIT Yes sir.

As Scrooge is exiting, a ghostly "Srooooooge" is whispered. Scrooge and Cratchit both stop, startled. Scrooge whirls on Cratchit who stares petrified for a moment at Scrooge and then turns and looks behind himself. Seeing no one, he turns back to Scrooge and unsure of what to do, makes a small bow. Scrooge considers him for a moment.

SCROOGE Bah, humbug.

Scrooge exits. After a moment, Cratchit grabs his own coat and rushes out as well.

NARRATOR 1 Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern and having beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner, Jacob Marley. Fog

and frost hung about the black old gateway of the house and the yard was so dark that even Scrooge who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands.

NARRATOR 2 Now it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact that Scrooge had seen it night and morning, during his whole residence in that place. Then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, not a knocker but Jacob Marley's face.

Marley's voice is heard: "Scrooooooge." Severely frightened, Scrooge jumps back.

SCROOGE Humbug, I tell you. It's humbug still, I won't believe it!

Scrooge enters his home.

NARRATOR 1 Quite satisfied there was nothing on the door, he locked himself in; double locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he prepared himself to retire and sat down to take his gruel.

As Scrooge starts to eat, all of the clocks in the home begin to chime simultaneously.

SCROOGE What's that? Who's there? Show yourself! I'll call the authorities! Who's there? Show yourself!

The clocks grow louder. Suddenly, Scrooge's bed begins to move unnaturally and a figure appears as the ghost of Jacob Marley claws his way up through the bed.

SCROOGE How now! What do you want with me?

MARLEY Much!

SCROOGE Who are you?

MARLEY Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE Who were you then?

MARLEY In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE (*doubtfully*) Can you -- can you sit down?

MARLEY I can.

SCROOGE Do it, then.

MARLEY You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE I don't.

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 cheat. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

A massive thunder crash shakes the room.

SCROOGE Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

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

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

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

Another thunder crash.

SCROOGE You are fettered. Tell me why?
MARLEY I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will, I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It is as full, as heavy, and as long as this. It is a ponderous chain!

SCROOGE Jacob. Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.
MARLEY Hear me! My time is nearly gone. I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate Ebenezer.

SCROOGE You were always a good friend to me. Thank'ee!
MARLEY You will be haunted ... by Three Spirits.
SCROOGE Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?
MARLEY It is.
SCROOGE I -- I think I'd rather not.
MARLEY Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls Two.
SCROOGE Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?
MARLEY Expect the second on the next night at the hour of One. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us.

During this last speech, Marley is pulled backwards from whence he came until he vanishes into the fog. As Marley disappears, all light is extinguished blanketing Scrooge and the room in complete darkness.

The bells toll two and the lights return to find Scrooge sometime later sleeping in his bed. He awakens with a start at the sound of the bells.

SCROOGE Two? It was past three when I went to bed. *(checking his pocket watch)* Hmmph! Clock must be wrong. Icicle must have got into the works. Why, it isn't possible that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night.

At that moment, brilliant light fills the room as the Ghost of Christmas Past appears. Fairy-like in her appearance, she is timeless yet filled with a deep wisdom and the kindest of hearts.

SCROOGE Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?
PAST I am.
SCROOGE Who, and what are you?
PAST I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.
SCROOGE Long past?
PAST *(amused)* No. Your past.
SCROOGE I didn't mean to offend. What business brings you here?
PAST Your welfare!
SCROOGE Well, I'm much obliged, but I wonder if a good night's sleep wouldn't be more conducive to that end.
PAST *(laughing gently)* Your reclamation, then. Take heed! Rise and walk with me!
SCROOGE I'm mortal. And I'm liable to fall.
PAST Bear but a touch of my hand there and you shall be upheld in more than this!

As she touches Scrooge, the lights shift and dissolve into another time, another place. YOUNG SCROOGE is seen sleeping, head down on a desk.

SCROOGE Good Heaven! I was a boy here!
PAST You remember it?
SCROOGE Remember it! I could walk it blindfold.

PAST Strange to have forgotten it for so many years! The school is not quite deserted. A solitary young man, neglected by his friends, is left there still.
SCROOGE I know it. Poor lad.

Suddenly, we hear a young girl's voice echo through the school room: "Ebenezer! Ebenezer!" A young girl bursts into the room. She sees young Scrooge.

FAN Ebenezer! Dear, dear brother! I have come to bring you home, dear brother!
Y. SCROOGE *(stunned)* Home, Fan?
FAN Yes! Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven!
Y. SCROOGE For you, perhaps. But not for me. He doesn't know me or even what I look like. Same as I hardly know you, now that you've grown up.
FAN He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man! And are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world.
Y. SCROOGE You are quite a woman, Fan!

Fan and young Scrooge run out.

PAST Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered. But she had a large heart!
SCROOGE So she had.
PAST She died a woman. And had, as I think, children.
SCROOGE One child.
PAST True. Your nephew, Fred!
SCROOGE I beg you, Spirit, lead me where you would.
PAST Let us see another Christmas!

The lights shift again, this time to a warehouse.

PAST Know it?
SCROOGE Know it! I apprenticed here!

Fezziwig enters looking at his pocket watch, Scrooge lets out a gasp and turns to the Ghost behind him.

SCROOGE Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!
FEZZIWIG Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Jacob!

YOUNG SCROOGE and YOUNG JACOB both enter, almost racing each other.

SCROOGE It's Jacob Marley, Jacob, to be sure! Bless me, yes. There he is. Poor Jacob!
FEZZIWIG Yo ho, my boys! No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Jacob. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the furniture cleared away before a man can say, Jack Robinson!
Y. SCROOGE Yes sir!
Y. JACOB Yes sir!

Young Jacob and young Ebenezer charge offstage clearing the room as they go.

FEZZIWIG Hilli-ho! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here for the guests! Hilli-ho, Jacob! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

As the furniture is cleared, party guests pour into the room. A lively dance begins. Throughout it all Scrooge re-lives every moment. Following the dance, the guests file into the next room for refreshments. Scrooge and Past are left behind.

PAST A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.
SCROOGE Small!
PAST Why? Is it not? He spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much?
SCROOGE It isn't that. It isn't that, Spirit. The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.
PAST What is the matter?
SCROOGE Nothing particular.
PAST Something, I think?
SCROOGE No. No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all.
PAST My time grows short. One shadow more!

The room shifts abruptly one more time. Scrooge turns to see BELLE, visibly upset, quickly enter with Young Scrooge not far behind.

BELLE It matters little, to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.
Y. SCROOGE What Idol has displaced you?
BELLE A golden one.
Y. SCROOGE This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!
BELLE You fear the world too much. All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?
Y. SCROOGE What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.

Belle shakes her head.

EBENEZER Am I?
BELLE Our engagement is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.
EBENEZER I was a boy. 'Tis true, I am not now what I was then.
BELLE I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I have thought of it, and can release you from our engagement.
EBENEZER Have I ever sought release?
BELLE In words? No. Never.
EBENEZER In what, then?
BELLE In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no.
EBENEZER You think not.
BELLE I do; and I release you from our engagement. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.

She starts to leave and then stops.

BELLE May you be happy in the life you have chosen.

She turns and leaves him. After a moment, young Scrooge leaves in the opposite direction.

SCROOGE Spirit! Show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?

PAST They have no consciousness of us ...

SCROOGE No more! No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more! Spirit! Remove me from this place.

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

SCROOGE Remove me! I cannot bear it! Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!

As Scrooge pleads, the Ghost turns and walks away from him, leaving him alone in a pool of light which too is extinguished.

The chimes strike one. Scrooge is back in his bed. He jumps out of the bed and looks under it to see if there are any ghosts hiding under there. He then checks the wall through which the Ghost of Christmas Past entered. Satisfied that he's finally alone, he sits on the edge of his bed when the Ghost of Christmas Present appears behind him suddenly.

PRESENT I am the Ghost of Christmas Present! Look upon me! You have never seen the like of me before?

SCROOGE Never.

PRESENT Have never walked forth with my elder brothers born in these later years?

SCROOGE I don't think I have. I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?

PRESENT Approximately eighteen hundred and forty-two.

SCROOGE A tremendous family to provide for!

The Ghost of Christmas Present considers Scrooge thoughtfully for a moment and then startles Scrooge with a booming laugh. Scrooge attempts to join in the laughter, entirely unsure of exactly what was so humorous.

PRESENT Come! Come know me better, man!

SCROOGE Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

PRESENT Touch my robe!

Scrooge does as he's told, and holds it fast. The room melts quickly into the home of the Cratchits with all getting ready for the return of Mr. Cratchit.

MRS. CRAT. What has ever got your precious father then. And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha wasn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!

MARTHA enters.

MARTHA Here's Martha, mother!

MRS. CRAT. Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

MARTHA We'd a deal of work to finish up last night and had to clear away this morning, mother!

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

BELINDA No, no! I just saw father and Tiny Tim coming back from church. I have an idea! Hide, Martha, hide!

Martha hides herself just as Bob Cratchit enters with TINY TIM upon his shoulder. He sets Tim down gently.

CRATCHIT Merry Christmas, my dears! Why, where's our Martha?
MRS. CRAT. Not coming.
CRATCHIT *(heartbroken)* Not coming! Not coming upon Christmas Day!
MARTHA Surprise father!

Bob hugs Martha.

CRATCHIT Oh Martha! Thank heavens! It wouldn't be Christmas without you! Now, you and Belinda help Tiny Tim wash up for dinner.
MARTHA Come along Tiny Tim!
MRS. CRAT. And how did little Tim behave in church?
CRATCHIT As good as gold, and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people in church saw him, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see. *(a long pause)* He's growing stronger and heartier every day, isn't he?
MRS. CRAT. *(quietly)* Yes, dear. He is.

Tiny Tim re-enters with Belinda and Martha

CRATCHIT And here he is, the master of ceremonies! Did you three wash up!
MARTHA Yes father! Mother, the Christmas goose smells marvelous!
MRS. CRAT. Thank you my dear!
BELINDA Do you need any more help with the table mother?
MRS. CRAT. No thank you my dear.
CRATCHIT *(lifting Tiny Tim into his seat)* Here we are Tim! Now, are we all settled? Very well – a merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!
ALL God bless us!
TINY TIM God bless us every one!

The scene freezes as the lights change and both Scrooge and Present advance on the table.

SCROOGE Spirit ... tell me if Tiny Tim will live.
PRESENT I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.
SCROOGE No, no. Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.
PRESENT If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race will find him here. What then? *(assuming Scrooge's voice)* If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Man, if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child.

The lights restore. Bob Cratchit raises his mug.

CRATCHIT Mr. Scrooge! I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!
MRS. CRAT. *(slamming her mug down as do the rest of the children)* The Founder of the Feast indeed! I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.
CRATCHIT My dear, the children; Christmas Day.

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

CRATCHIT My dear, have some charity. It's Christmas Day.

MRS. CRAT. I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's, not for his. Long life to him. A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt! To Mr. Scrooge!

ALL *(except Bob)* To Mr. Scrooge.

CRATCHIT Thank you my dear. And now, let us take a moment to say grace on this most special day of the year.

As the children bow their heads, we hear laughter behind Scrooge and Present. As they lights shift, we see FRED and TOPPER, ELIZABETH and JULIA enter.

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

ELIZABETH More shame for him, Fred!

TOPPER I should very much like to meet your uncle, Fred. The droll way in which you portray him makes me curious.

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

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

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

ELIZABETH I have no patience with him.

JULIA Nor I.

FRED Oh, I have! I am sorry for him.

SCROOGE How's that? Sorry for me?

FRED I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always ...

TOPPER True, here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He doesn't lose much of a dinner.

ELIZABETH Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner.

JULIA But do go on, Fred.

FRED I was only going to say, that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something; and I think I shook him yesterday.

JULIA But enough of your uncle, let's have some games. What do you say, Topper?

TOPPER Very well, how about a simple game of Yes and No?

Everyone agrees excitedly.

TOPPER *(to Fred)* Since you're the host, you'll go first.

FRED Very well, I have it. I'll allow you 20 questions. You may begin.

TOPPER You've thought of something?

FRED Yes. 19 left.

ELIZABETH Oh Fred!

TOPPER Is it vegetable?

FRED No.

JULIA Mineral?

FRED No.

There is a pause. Scrooge rolls his eyes.

SCROOGE *(hisses)* Animal!
ELIZABETH Animal?
FRED Yes!
TOPPER Is it a savage animal?
FRED Yes!
JULIA Oooh. A savage animal! Is it a bear?
FRED No!
ELIZABETH Is it a tiger?
FRED No!
TOPPER Does it live in a menagerie?
FRED Wouldn't go near it.
JULIA Does it live in London?
FRED Yes!
ELIZABETH A savage animal in London? Is it sold at market?
FRED No!
JULIA A savage animal not in a menagerie but in London?
FRED Is that a question?
ALL No!
ELIZABETH Is it on display at the circus?
FRED No.
TOPPER I say, a savage animal in London ... I ... oh no, ... wait, no, no ... does it walk about the streets?
FRED Yes.
TOPPER Does it growl and grunt?
FRED Most definitely.
TOPPER Does it speak?
FRED Yes.
JULIA Oooh – is it a savage parrot?
TOPPER No, no, I think I have it. I think I know.
ELIZABETH I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!
TOPPER As do I, it's ...
ELIZABETH It's your Uncle Scrooge!

Everybody, even the Spirit, roars with laughter, except Scrooge.

FRED He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. I say, 'Uncle Scrooge!' A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is! He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!
ALL Uncle Scrooge!

Fred and his guests exit leaving Scrooge alone with Present.

PRESENT My life upon this globe is very brief.
SCROOGE Are spirits' lives so short?
PRESENT It ends to-night.
SCROOGE To-night!
PRESENT To-night at midnight.
SCROOGE Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask, but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?
PRESENT It might well be a claw, for all the flesh there is upon it. Look here.

Present reveals two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable.

PRESENT Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!
SCROOGE Spirit! are they yours?
PRESENT They are Man's. And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.
SCROOGE Have they no refuge or resource?
PRESENT Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

Blackout.

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO

The church bell strikes twelve. A solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, appears. It neither speaks nor moves.

SCROOGE I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?

No response.

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

Nothing.

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

Slowly, the ghost points straight ahead.

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

The lights change and reveal the charity solicitors counting donations.

CH. SOL. 1 No, I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead.

CH. SOL. 2 When did he die?

CH. SOL. 1 Last night, I believe.

CH. SOL. 2 Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

CH. SOL. 1 God knows.

CH. SOL. 2 What has he done with his money?

CH. SOL. 1 I haven't heard. Left it to his Company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to charity. That's all I know.

CH. SOL. 2 It's likely to be a very cheap funeral, for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

CH. SOL. 2 I don't mind going ... if a lunch is provided.

CH. SOL. 1 Well, I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. Something to think of. *(She holds up a large bill)* Good morning!

CH. SOL. 2 Good morning!

The charity solicitors gather their things and exit.

SCROOGE Spirit! Let us go! In leaving this place, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me.

The lights shift. An old pawn broker, MRS. DILBER, enter with a lantern. A moment later, there is a knock on her door.

MRS. DILBER I'm coming, I'm coming!

She walks back to the door. The charwoman, the laundress and the undertaker enter.

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

MRS. DILBER You couldn't have met in a better place. Come into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two ain't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! There ain't such a rusty bit of metal in the place as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no such old bones here, as mine. Ha, ha! We're all suitable to our calling, we're well matched. Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour.

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

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

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

LAUNDRESS No, indeed!

UNDERTAKER 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!

LAUNDRESS No, indeed!

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

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

CHARWOMAN I wish it was a little heavier judgment, and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, Mrs. Dilber, 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 that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Mrs. Dilber.

But the undertaker plops his wares down first

CHARWOMAN Hey!

UNDERTAKER Hssssssss!

MRS. DILBER A seal, a pencil case, a pair of sleeve-buttons and a brooch of no great value. That's your account.

UNDERTAKER What?!

MRS. DILBER (*harshly*) And I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. (*sweetly*) Who's next?

LAUNDRESS My bundle! I'm next!

MRS. DILBER Sheets and towels, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and ... three boots?

LAUNDRESS He was an odd sort.

They all laugh at that.

MRS. DILBER There you are. 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.

LAUNDRESS (*protesting*) Now hold on a moment ...

MRS. DILBER (*severely*) And if you ask me for another penny, and make it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half-a-crown.

CHARWOMAN And now undo my bundle!

MRS. DILBER What do you call this? Bed-curtains?

CHARWOMAN Aye! Bed-curtains!

MRS. DILBER You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there?

CHARWOMAN Yes I do. Why not?

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

CHARWOMAN I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you.

Mrs. Dilber uses a lantern to examine the blankets.

CHARWOMAN Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now.

MRS. DILBER (*horrified*) His blankets?

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

MRS. DILBER I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?

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

MRS. DILBER What do you call wasting of it?

CHARWOMAN Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure. Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico ain't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one.

MRS. DILBER Ha, ha! This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha! Now come into the kitchen for a drop of tea.

The scene melts away leaving Scrooge alone with the Spirit.

SCROOGE Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. That is the lesson I am to draw from this poor man's fate, is it not? If there is any person in the town who feels emotion caused by this man's death, show that person to me Spirit, I beseech you!

Another scene appears. Caroline is sitting, waiting at a table. Suddenly, Charles rushes in. Caroline stands.

CAROLINE Is it good ... or bad?

CHARLES (*out of breath*) Bad.

CAROLINE (*sitting*) We are quite ruined.

CHARLES No. There is hope yet, Caroline.

CAROLINE If he relents, there is. Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened.

CHARLES He is past relenting. He is dead.

CAROLINE Oh, thank heavens! I am thankful in my soul to hear that! May God forgive me for having said such a thing.

CHARLES When I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay, his charwoman told me he was ill; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me, turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then.

CAROLINE To whom will our debt be transferred?

CHARLES I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be a bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!

Charles and Caroline disappear.

SCROOGE Spirit, please let me see some tenderness connected with a death.

The scene shifts to the Cratchit home.

MARTHA Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him....

Martha looks up to see Mrs Cratchit lay her work upon the table and put her hand up to her face.

MARTHA Shall I stop reading?
MRS. CRAT. No, no. It's only the colour. It hurts my eyes. They're better now again. It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.
MARTHA Past it rather. But I think he has walked a little slower than he used to these last few evenings, mother.
MRS. CRAT. I have known him walk with -- I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.
BELINDA And so have I. Often.
MRS. CRAT. But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble.

The sound of the door opening and closing is heard.

MRS. CRAT. And there is your father at the door! Sunday! You went today, then, Robert?

Bob Cratchit enters.

CRATCHIT Yes my dear, I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child! My little child!
SCROOGE Dear God...
CRATCHIT *(after a moment to recover)* I ran into Mr. Scrooge's nephew in the street today. He thought I looked a little - just a little down, you know - and he inquired as to what had happened to distress me. On which, for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him about our loss to which he said, "I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit, and heartily sorry for your good wife." *(pause)* By the by, how he ever knew that, I don't know.
MRS. CRAT. Knew what?
CRATCHIT Why, that you were a good wife.
MARTHA Everybody knows that.
CRATCHIT Very well observed - I hope they do. "Heartily sorry," he said, "for your good wife. And if I can be of service to you in any way, be sure to let me know." At that, he handed me his card. Now, it wasn't for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.
MRS. CRAT. I'm sure he's a good soul.
CRATCHIT You would be surer of it, if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he got Martha a better job at the factory.
MRS. CRAT. Hear that, Martha?
CRATCHIT It's just as likely as not, one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that. *(to all)* But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim -- shall we? -- or this first parting that there was among us?

Thunder crash and black out. The lights restore and a graveyard has appeared.

SCROOGE Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how.

The Spirit points to a large stone in the center.

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

Nothing.

SCROOGE Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!

The Phantom is immovable as ever. Scrooge creeps toward the grave, trembling; And following the finger, wipes the dust from the neglected gravestone to reveal his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge falls to his knees.

SCROOGE Am I that man? No, Spirit! Oh no, no! Spirit! Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intervention. Why show me this, if I am past all hope? Good Spirit. Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life! I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!

Thunder crash and black out. The lights restore to show Scrooge in his own bedroom. He gasps in delight.

SCROOGE I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees! They are not torn down. They are not torn down, rings and all. They are here: I am here: the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will! I don't know what to do! I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo! There's the saucepan that the gruel was in! There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha! I don't know what day of the month it is! I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby! A merry Christmas to all!

Scrooge's butler, ALFRED enters.

SCROOGE Ah yes my good man! What's to-day?

ALFRED I'm sorry sir?

SCROOGE What's to-day, my fine fellow?

ALFRED To-day? Why, Christmas Day.

SCROOGE It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. *(to Alfred)* Hallo, my good sir!

ALFRED Hallo!

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

ALFRED I should hope I did.

SCROOGE An intelligent man! A remarkable man! *(to Alfred)* Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey; the big one?

ALFRED What, the one as big as me?
SCROOGE *(to himself)* What a delightful man! It's a pleasure to talk to him. *(to Alfred)* Yes, my buck!
ALFRED It's hanging there now.
SCROOGE Is it? Go and buy it.

Alfred stares in disbelief for a moment.

ALFRED Walk-er!
SCROOGE No, no, I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the directions where to take 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!
ALFRED Yes sir!

Alfred exits quickly as Scrooge exits his home and walks out into the London streets.

SCROOGE I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's! He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim

Scrooge sees the two charity solicitors walking down the street towards him.

SCROOGE My dear ladies. How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you both!
CH. SOL. 1 *(confused at Scrooge's change of heart)* Mr Scrooge?
SCROOGE Yes. That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness to accept ... *(whispers in her ear)*
CH. SOL. 1 Lord bless me! My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious?
SCROOGE If you please. Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?
CH. SOL. 2 My dear sir. I don't know what to say to such munificence.
SCROOGE Don't say anything, please. Come and see me. Will you come and see me?
CH. SOL. 2 We will!
SCROOGE Thank 'ee. I am much obliged to you both. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!

As they leave, Fred and his wife enter.

FRED He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it too!
SCROOGE Fred!
FRED Why bless my soul! Who's that?
SCROOGE It is I. Your uncle Scrooge. I will come tonight as you asked. Will you let me in, Fred?
FRED But of course!
SCROOGE *(as they exit)* Can we play games tonight? How about Yes and No?

The lights shift as the scene changes to Scrooge's office.

NARRATOR 1 Scrooge was early at the office the next morning! Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

Scrooge settles himself as the clock chimes 8:00 am. A moment later, the shop door bell is heard and Cratchit enters only to stop dead in his tracks at the sight of Scrooge hunched over his desk. Cratchit attempts to quietly sneak to his post but Scrooge catches him.

SCROOGE Cratchit! You're late! What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?

CRATCHIT I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.
SCROOGE You are? Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please.

Bob reluctantly approaches.

CRATCHIT It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.
SCROOGE Now, I'll tell you what, my friend. I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore ...

A pause.

SCROOGE ... and therefore I am about to raise your salary!

Bob gasps, trembles, and inches away from Scrooge, picking up a nearby ruler to use in self-defense.

SCROOGE A merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! *(quietly)* I'm going to raise your salary. And if you'll let me, I'd like to try to help your family.

An incredulous Bob stares at Scrooge for a long, long moment.

SCROOGE *(laughs)* Well, let's discuss it this afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Now, make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another "i", Bob Cratchit.
CRATCHIT Yes sir, Mr. Scrooge!

Cratchit rushes off. Scrooge returns to his desk, takes a wad of money and tucks it into Cratchit's desk. He then takes his hat and cane and exits.

NARRATOR 2 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. He became as good a friend, as good a master and as good a man as the good old city knew, or any other city, town or borough, in the good old world.
NARRATOR 1 He had no further visits from Spirits but lived in ghostly abstinence ever afterwards. And it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed:
BOTH God Bless Us, Every One!