

SCROOGE

A Junior Theatre Collaboration Fall, 2009

Adaptation by
Daniel DP Sheridan

Ebenezer Scrooge, a miser

Fred, nephew to Scrooge

Beggar # 1

Beggar # 2

Beggar # 3

Bob Cratchit, Scrooges assistant

Mrs. Cratchit, his wife

Tiny Tim, his son

Martha, the oldest daughter

Belinda, the middle daughter

Betty, the youngest daughter

Bob, another son

Peter, another son

Marley's Ghost, Scrooge's former business associate

Christmas Past

Christmas Present

Christmas Future

Fannie, Scrooge's Sister

Ebenezer, Young Scrooge

Belle, Scrooge's former love

Young Boy, who buys the goose

Ensemble, varies from production to production

(As the audience enters, the theatre is filled with the spirit of Christmas. A soundscape fills the theatre. Bells jingle in the distance, carolers pass by, people are heard yelling “Merry Christmas” and “Happy New Year.” Everything in this setting should bring about joy and happiness. That is, for all but one.)

Play Opens

(As the lights shift and the show begins, we are swept into a flurry of activity. Street vendors wander, handing out goodies. Children play and chase one another, bundled in their old Christmas clothes from the year before. A group of carolers enters singing. Anything else that can be created to add joy, an overwhelming sense of Christmas.)

(SCROOGE enters the stage. He clearly stands out from the rest of the merriment. With a crook in his back that has formed from a lifetime of counting money, he bemoans all who tell him Merry Christmas. He mutters as he passes them all. The audience cannot make out what he is saying. SCROOGE arrives at his door and meets three beggars.)

Scrooge: Get away from my door. Begone, ye beggars! I’ve nothing for you.

Beggar 1: Only a shilling, sir, for a Merry Christmas.

Beggar 2: A small shilling would help put food on our table during this cold and peaceful night.

Scrooge: I said, GET AWAY FROM HERE! *(Scrooge charges onto his porch, beggars retreat from porch.)* Get away from here or I’ll call the police.

Beggar 1: It’s only a Shilling, sir.

Scrooge: Not even a penny. I have other places to put my money.

Beggar 2: But our Christmas meal –

Scrooge: Christmas meal? Christmas meal? There is nothing so special about Christmas.

Beggar 1: But –

Scrooge: Go on, now. You don't get a cent. Not a penny!

(SCROOGE begins unlocking the door)

Beggar 2: All right, sir. Merry Christmas, just the same sir.

Beggar 3: But Mama, I'm hungry...

Beggar 1: And may kindness find a way into your heart.

(As Scrooge turns the key, the office door spins to reveal the interior entrance. He opens the door, and slams it shut behind him. All the lights shift to a single spot on Scrooge and the whole stage is silenced immediately.)

Scrooge: Bah Humbug!

(SCROOGE enters his home. The spirit of Christmas is gone. We find ourselves in Scrooge's office. It is a creaky, old place.)

Scrooge: A merry Christmas?! A merry Christmas? Bah... Howling idiots! Give 'em a shilling, eh? I'd like to give 'em six months in a work house, I would. If they be like to die they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. *(To himself as he takes off his coat)* Absolutely the worst time of the year. Cold, beggars, terrible off pitch carolers - and they think singing like that brings joy? - bah...

(During this speech, the office has taken shape. A large desk is where SCROOGE works from. CRATCHIT has a small, homely desk from which he works out of a book that barely fits his table. A small stove is seen. Sparse.)

Scrooge: Cratchit!!!

(CRATCHIT enters carrying a few coals)

Cratchit: Yes, sir!

Scrooge: Where have you been?

Cratchit: I was just getting a few coals for the stove, sir. Just to warm us up a bit, sir.

Scrooge: You let my coals alone. (*SCROOGE points to his desk, CRATCHIT timidly set the coals there.*) Now get back to work. I'm not complaining about the cold, am I? And I'm an older man than you are. Back to work!

Cratchit: Yes, sir.

Scrooge: You better leave my coals alone if you expect to keep your job. I'm not a millionaire. Understand? (*loudly*) Understand?

Cratchit: Yes, sir, I understand.

(*CRATCHIT shivers and wraps his scarf about his throat, and warms hands on candle.*)

Scrooge: Here it is, three o'clock, the middle of the afternoon, and two candles burning. What more do you want? You only need your fingertips warm to write! Do you want me to end up in a poor house?

Fred: (*Calling from offstage*) Uncle! Uncle! Where are you? Merry Christmas, Uncle.

(*Fred enters, laughing, and comes down center*)

Scrooge: (*looking up from his work*) Oh, it's you, is it?

Fred: Of course it is, Uncle.

Scrooge: (*Muttering, Fred almost overlaps*) You let in a draught.

Fred: Merry Christmas! And God save you!

Scrooge: *(with disgust)* Merry Christmas! Bah! Humbug!

Fred: Christmas a humbug, uncle? You don't mean that, I'm sure.

Scrooge: I don't, eh? Merry Christmas! What cause have you got to be merry? You're poor enough.

Fred: *(Laughing good naturedly)* Come, then. What right have you to be so dismal? You're rich enough. So, Merry Christmas, uncle.

Scrooge: Out upon your Merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money – a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer? You 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 has it ever done you!

Fred: Christmas is a good time, uncle – a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time – the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely and to think of people below them in the social scale. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, "God bless it. God bless Christmas!"

Cratchit: *(Who has been listening eagerly, claps his hands)* Good! Good, indeed! Bravo!

Scrooge: Let me hear another sound from you and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your job. Get to work!

Cratchit: Yes, sir. *(Resumes working on his ledger)*

Scrooge: *(to Fred)* You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go in to becoming a politician.

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

Scrooge: Dine with you? Me? I'll see you hanged first. Dine with you? I wish you were boiled in your own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through your heart! (*Cratchit sneezes violently, Scrooge turns on him*)

Fred: (*overlapping scrooges next line*) Bless you.

Scrooge: What's the matter with you? (*Back to Fred*) I'm a busy man. Good afternoon.

Fred: Come, Uncle. Please say, "Yes."

Scrooge: No

Fred: But why? Why?

Scrooge: (*savage*) Why? Why did you get married?

Fred: Because I fell in love.

Scrooge: Bah! (*resumes his work*) Good afternoon.

Fred: I want nothing from you. I ask nothing from you. But why can't we be friends?

Scrooge: GOOD AFTERNOON.

Fred: (*goes to Cratchit*) And a Merry Christmas to you, Bob Cratchit.

(*Cratchit gets down from stool and they shake hands then hug warmly.*)

Cratchit: (*speaking privately*) Merry Christmas, sir. God bless, it!

Fred: Ay, God bless it!

(*Fred begins to leave office.*)

Cratchit: And a happy New Year.

Fred: Ay, Bob. And God bless that, too.

(Fred hugs SCROOGE. SCROOGE freezes and ignores the hug. When the hug is done, he immediately continues working.)

Fred: And again, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you, Uncle! God bless!

(FRED exits. CRATCHIT is warming his hands, lost in the spirit.)

Scrooge: Cratchit, get to work.

Cratchit: Yes, sir.

Scrooge: Fifteen shillings a week and a wife and six children and you talk about a Merry Christmas! Humph!

(CRATCHIT closes his book and blows out candle)

Cratchit: Is there anything more, sir?

Scrooge: You'll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?

Cratchit: If it's quite convenient, sir.

Scrooge: Well, it isn't; and it's not fair. If I'd dock you a half a crown for it, you'd think I was ill using you, wouldn't you?

Cratchit: I don't know sir...

Scrooge: And yet you expect me to pay a full day's wages for no work.

Cratchit: It only comes once a year, sir – only once a year.

Scrooge: A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December. But I suppose you've got to have the whole day. But you be here all the earlier next morning.

Cratchit: Oh, yes, indeed, sir.

Scrooge: I'll stay here a bit and finish up the work, *all – by – my – self*.

(CRATCHIT grabs his hat from off his desk. He timidly approaches SCROOGE.)

Cratchit: I'm going now sir.

Scrooge: *(not looking up from his work)* Alright.

Cratchit: *(standing by the door, finally gaining the courage)* And a Merry Christmas, sir!

Scrooge: *(as CRATCHIT scurries out)* BAH! HUMBUG!

(SCROOGE finishes his work and rises from his desk. Somehow a transition is created so that SCROOGE'S room forms around him. His over layer of costume is also removed, so he is easily found in his pajamas. A large four-poster bed arrives onstage. This bed is on wheels and can move about the stage. It is SCROOGE'S sanctuary, the one place where he finds peace. His bed is clearly made in a tight, perfect, and meticulous way every morning. We get to witness SCROOGE'S bedtime routine, whatever that may be. He finally rests.)

(The lights shift to SCROOGE sleeping. A clock is heard tolling at midnight. Slowly dragging chains and moans begin to fill the air. SCROOGE awakens as the ghost of his former partner is seen in the room, MARLEY. MARLEY speaks in a raspy, pained voice.)

Scrooge: How now? Who are you? What do you want with me?

Marley: Much.

Scrooge: Who are you, spirit?

Marley: Ask me who I was.

Scrooge: Well, who were you then?

Marley: In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley. *(he moans in pain)* It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men. And if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to wander after death.

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, -- the heavy chain of greed. Now I must make amends for the opportunities, I neglected in life.

Scrooge: But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

Marley: Business? Business?!?! *(he howls with a mix of laughter and pain)* Mankind should have been my business. Kind actions, charity, mercy, love – all should have been my business. I am here tonight to warn you – to warn you, Ebenezer Scrooge, that you have yet a chance of escaping my fate.

Scrooge: You were always a good friend to me.

Marley: You will be haunted by three spirits.

Scrooge: If it's all the same to you, I think I'd rather not be.

Marley: Without their visits, you cannot hope to escape my fate. Expect the first spirit when the bell tolls one.

Scrooge: Couldn't I take it all at once and have it over Jacob?

Marley: *(he laughs and howls in pain)* Foolish man, in a foolish world. Lessons rarely come all at once, but one at a time. Tonight, you shall either learn what it is to be a man on this earth or be forced to wander like me, in pain and agony. *(He cries out again)*

Scrooge: Oh dear ghost. Will they have no pity on you?

Marley: None... Remember my warning and heed the message, and you may yet be saved. My time is over. *(It is as if he is being drawn*

away) Remember what I have said, for there is still time. Farewell, farewell, farewell!....

(A loud crash of thunder rips through the house. MARLEY is gone.)

(SCROOGE climbs into bed and secures himself to be on the lookout for the ghost. Time passes. The clock strikes one. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enters. She is fairy like, perky, whimsical. The exact opposite of the terrifying ghost for which SCROOGE is bracing.)

Scrooge: Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

Past: I am she and that is me.

Scrooge: Who and what are you?

Past: *(Curtsey or Greeting)* I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

Scrooge: Long past?

Past: No. Your past, Ebenezer Scrooge... Your past.

Scrooge: What brings you here?

Past: Your welfare, Ebenezer, your happiness, your education, your salvation...

Scrooge: This “salvation”... how much will it cost?

Past: Dear me, what a crotchety old thing you have become. And to think you used to be so cute; running around in your little diaper, staying up late to see if you could see your gifts being put under the tree... ahh... Nevertheless, we shall see what can be done! Rise and walk with me.

(SCROOGE is a coward in his bed and shakes his head)

Past: It is okay, Ebenezer. Take my hand.

(SCROOGE slowly comes to the edge of the bed, still refusing to take her hand, moaning with fear.)

Past: Do calm yourself, Ebenezer. Try not to raise such a terrible clamor.

Scrooge: But I am mortal and full of fear...

Past: Take my hand. Come. Be young again.

(SCROOGE takes PAST'S hand. Immediately, an area of the stage is lit that was dark before. Sounds of Christmas fill the air. A sleigh and bells is heard approaching and coming to a stop. Children run about the stage playing. One child, sad, walks in alone and sits himself in the cold.)

Past: Look about you, Ebenezer. Do you remember where we are?

Fan: *(From off)* Ebby! Ebby! Where are you?

Scrooge: Fanny... oh Fanny! I'm here!

Fan: *(Entering)* There you are Ebenezer.

(At first we think she may be talking to SCROOGE but then we realize it is the little boy. The young SCROOGE, EBBY)

Scrooge: Yes! It is me!

Fan: Come Ebby, come. Father has come to take us home. Ebby. Dear Ebby, we're going home for Christmas!

Ebby: Home? Is it true, Fan?

Scrooge: That's me?! How young I once was...

Fan: Yes, home one and all. Home for ever and ever. Things are better now. Father wants us all at home. We'll attend school nearby, but first we're to be together at the Christmas holidays and have the merriest time in all the world!

Ebby: Oh Fan, dear sister, hooray! We'll be together every Christmas forever and ever. Just like I always dreamed!

(They exit together.)

Past: She died quite a young woman, I believe.

Scrooge: Yes... dear, precious, wonderful Fan... my sister.

Past: Did she not leave children of her own?

Scrooge: One child. My nephew.

Past: Oh, really. Huh... that congenial young man who stopped by to wish you good cheer today? That young man was your own dear sister's child?

Scrooge: Yes, spirit.

Past: That same youth whom you wished boiled in his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart?

Scrooge: Spirit, show me no more. Conduct me home.

Past: Soon, Ebenezer, but not yet.

(BELLE enters. The lights change yet again. SCROOGE now interchanges between interacting with BELLE and PAST. Note – As SCROOGE he speaks to PAST, as EBENEZER he to BELLE.)

Scrooge: Oh spirit. Who is this you bring to me?

Past: Someone you've always wished for on Christmas.

Scrooge: Belle... oh my Belle...

(SCROOGE crosses to BELLE and takes her hands. He goes from being young to old throughout the scene.)

Ebenezer: Your fingers are cold, dear.

Belle: Ebenezer, I need to talk to you.

Scrooge: Spirit, show me no more! Conduct me home.

Belle: These are but shadows of the Past, Ebenezer.

Scrooge: Why do you delight to torture me?

Past: I delight to remind you.

Scrooge: (*gazing at Belle*) So beautiful...

Past: One shadow more.

Scrooge: (*Breaking away from Belle*) No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more.

Belle: You've changed Ebenezer. When our contract was made and our love began, you were a different man.

Ebenezer: I was but a boy. Now I am a man of business who has learned how to prosper in this hard and cold world. I am no longer a boy.

Belle: I fear your business has your heart and the affection you once shared with me. I can see that an idol has replaced me in your eyes.

Ebenezer: What idol?

Belle: A golden one. Made of golden coins. Perhaps your coins can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do.

Scrooge: (*quickly*) No please, spirit.

Ebenezer: Belle, what are you talking about?

Belle: I release you from your contract Ebenezer. I release you from our engagement.

Ebenezer: Have I sought release?

Belle: In words, no.

Scrooge: (*quickly*) You fool.

Ebenezer: (*indignant*) In what then?

Belle: In a changed nature, an altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your eyes. I can no longer make you smile, no longer do I make you laugh. Your only joy lies in a profit that might be had, a gain that might be realized.

Ebenezer: Is it wrong to try to escape the jaws of poverty? My only concern is that our future marriage may prove to be prosperous.

Belle: I'm sorry, Ebenezer, I can't view marriage as a business which makes it a poor bargain for both of us –

Scrooge: (*Overlapping BELLE*) Oh no...

Belle: So I release you with a heart full of love for the man you once were.

Scrooge: (*Overlapping*) No you fool, stop her.

Belle: May you be happy in the life you have chosen and may your new profit comfort your heart and warm your bed when you are old.

Ebenezer: ...

Belle: No words, love.

Ebenezer: ...

Belle: Very well. Goodbye.

(*BELLE exits. SCROOGE replaces EBENEZER, exhausted from the desire to have her stay.*)

Scrooge: Belle...

Past: Come, Ebenezer. You poor old fool, come.

Scrooge: Belle...

Past: Back to bed with you, for another spirit will soon wish to have a word.

(PAST has taken SCROOGE by the hand and delivered him to bed. PAST disappears. A soundscape fills the air of lines that have just come and memories from SCROOGE'S past. Suddenly, the clock begins to toll two. The ghost of Christmas PRESENT enters.)

(Christmas PRESENT is generally board of her job and has little patience with others. At times she is rather sarcastic.)

Present: Arise, arise, Ebenezer Scrooge and learn to know me better.

Scrooge: *(still muttering in his dreams)* Belle... Ebenezer... I was just... I don't know how to go ba...

Present: *(hitting him with something)* Arise and learn to know me better, you old brute.

Scrooge: Huh? Oh... uh... I don't believe I ever met you before?

Present: Probably not. I am neither here nor there, then or soon. I am the spirit of Christmas --- the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

(PRESENT has attempted to become intimidating but failed miserably.)

Scrooge: The Ghost of Christmas Present?

Present: Plain and simple, cut and dry, this is what I've come to do. And yes – I am under a contract. I am going to show you your present misdeeds. It is my mission to show you the love and

comradeship of Christmas today. I travel amongst the common people. My torch is a benediction. If there is a slight quarrel or if there are any misunderstandings on Christmas Day, I simply throw on them the light of my torch. And then they say it is a shame to quarrel on Christmas Day – the day of peace and love. And so it is! *(aiming the torch or light or energy at SCROOGE)* And so it is! God bless it! God bless Christmas Day!

(PRESENT is concentrating very hard to infect SCROOGE with her light, making grunting and effortful sounds.)

Scrooge: Spirit, are you not well?

Present: What? I said *(trying again)* “And so it is! God bless it! God bless Christmas Day!

(PRESENT is once again concentrating, making grunting and effortful sounds.)

Scrooge: Are you alright spirit?

Present: Am I? I’m... uh... Oh forget it.

Scrooge: Very well. Off to bed with me then.

Present: No! I mean... hmm... great... this one is going to be harder than I thought. And on Christmas Eve?!... Alright. Stay where you are and let me show you something that is taking place on this eve.

Scrooge: What is that? What do you intend to show me?

Present: I intend to show you the house of happiness.

Scrooge: Is it a wonderful place made of gold and diamonds?!

Present: Is it a? – Be quiet will you - I have to get into character. *(Clears throat)* The house of happiness is a humble little kitchen. In fact, the kitchen of your poor clerk, Bob Cratchit. Bob, with his wife and six children, with his shabby clothes and his humble, shabby manners – Bob, with his little four-room house and his struggle to

keep the wolf from the door. The Ghost of Christmas Present blesses his abode. Behold!

(The stage is flooded with warm light. A large table is rolled on with a modest feast on display. If possible, the house could be flooded with the smell of delicious food.)

(Enter MRS CRATCHIT and BELINDA. There is much hubbub all about, of which MRS CRATCHIT is in control of. It should seem that it is no easy task preparing the Christmas Feast, with people everywhere helping setup and children playing. MRS CRATCHIT seems to handle it with a sort of grace and joy.)

Mrs. C: Hurry, Belinda. We must set the table right away. How's the taters, Peter?

(Peter enters carrying a large dish filled with potatoes.)

Peter: Boiling, mumsy, boiling. Ouch! Hot, hot, hot.

Mrs. C: *(helping PETER secure potatoes on table)* Foolish child. It is too hot for your bear hands. *(they have secured the potatoes)* There. Give me your hands. *(MRS. C kisses each hand)* All better?

Peter: Yes, Mother.

Mrs. C: Now go play. It is almost Christmas!

Peter: Yeah!

Mrs. C: Here Belinda, carry the _____ over there.

Belinda: Yes, mum.

Mrs. C: *(taking off her apron)* And now where's my nice necklace that you children gave me last Christmas?

Belinda: Here it is mumsy.

Mrs. C: Whatever is keeping your precious father I wonder? He and Tiny Tim have been at the church these three hours.

(Enter BOB and BETTY. They run down and kiss MRS. CRATCHIT. As BOB and BETTY speak, all slowly gather around to hear of the delicious goose.)

Bob: Oh, mumsy, we saw the goose – we did. We peeped in through the bakery window and we saw the goose we did.

Betty: And we smelled it, too. And we went inside – we did. And the baker asked us what we wanted. And Bob said he wanted to know which goose was the Cratchit goose.

Bob: And he pointed to the very biggest one, mumsy. Didn't he Betty?

Betty: And it was all nice and brown on top. And he said it would be ready in about twenty minutes. Didn't he Bob?

Bob: And it was the best looking goose I ever saw – it was! It just made me hungry to see it and smell it baking.

Betty: And it had sage and onion stuffing, mumsy. Didn't I Bob?!

(BOB is lost in a trance, remembering the delicious goose)

Mrs. C: I'm sure there never was such goose before, and I'm sure there never will be such a goose again. How's the taters, Peter?

(As if with eyes in the back of her head, MRS C has caught PETER attempting to sneak a potato. PETER immediately drops the lid.)

Peter: Still boiling, mumsy, boiling.

Bob: Oh, Peter's got on Father's shirt collar – Mumsy, Peter's got on Father's shirt collar.

Peter: If I didn't have to watch the potatoes, I'd show you!

Mrs. C: I can't think what's keeping your father and Tiny Tim. And Martha wasn't as late last Christmas Day by half an hour.

(Martha enters)

Peter: Here's Martha, mumsy.

Bob: Here's Martha, mumsy.

Betty: Oh, Martha, there's such a goose! Isn't there, Bob?

Mrs. C: Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

Martha: We'd a deal of work to finish up last night. I was on my feet all day, too. Oh, why won't people learn to do their Christmas shopping early? If they'd only stop to give a moment's thought to the poor clerks! We all have families!

Mrs. C: There, there, my dear, sit down now. Sit yourself down. Well, never mind, as long as you're home at last, Martha. God bless you. How's the taters, Peter?

(PETER is caught sneaking again)

Peter: Boiling mumsy, boiling.

Martha: Oh, mother, ain't this heavenly? The older I get the more I realize; Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

Betty: Father's coming! Father's coming!

Bob: Hide yourself, Martha. Here, here! We'll surprise him.

Betty: Hurry! Hide!

Peter: Hide, hide!

(MARTHA hides. CRATCHIT enters, carrying TINY TIM on his shoulders. TINY TIM is carrying a little crutch.)

Cratchit: Merry Christmas all!

Tiny Tim: Merry Christmas!

(CRATCHIT is swamped by all his children surrounding him with hugs and yelling Merry Christmas. As the initial assault subsides-)

Mrs. C: Merry Christmas, dear.

(MRS. C kisses CRATCHIT on the cheek.)

Cratchit: *(suddenly realizing)* Why, where's our Martha dear?

Mrs. C: Not coming.

Cratchit: Not coming? Not coming *(setting down Tiny Tim)* – on Christmas day... why those who would make their fellow man work on days of celebration should consider the intent within their hearts!

(MARTHA leaps out from hiding.)

Martha: Merry Christmas!

(The children all yell "Surprise" after MARTHA'S line)

Martha: It was only a joke father! Here I am; father, here I am. Home where I belong on Christmas Day!

Cratchit: Oh angel!

(They embrace.)

Betty: Come on, Tiny Tim, out to the wash-house. We've got something to show you. Ain't we, Bob?

Bob: You bet we have, Tiny Tim. Come and hear the Christmas pudding singing in the wash boiler. Come on! It's even got chocolate in it! Come on!

(All the children exit to see the pudding)

Mrs. C: And how did Tiny Tim behave in the church, dear husband?

Cratchit: As good as gold and better. Richer than gold. 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 to them to remember, upon Christmas Day, who it was who made lame beggars walk and blind men see. Little Tim is growing stronger and more hearty every day.

Mrs. C: Our poor, wonderful Timothy.

Cratchit: Because of his experience in this life, he is wise beyond his years.

(Enter TINY TIM)

Tiny Tim: *(Thrilled)* I heard the pudding singing a song in the wash boiler – I did.

Mrs. C: Everything is ready then. Bob, you and Betty run across the street to the Baker's and fetch the goose.

Bob: Come on, Betty.

(BOB and BETTY bolt offstage without bundling up.)

Mrs. C: Your coats, dears! Remember your... oh dear!

Cratchit: They do love Christmas.

Mrs. C: Indeed, they do. Well, I've got the gravy to heat, right away. Peter, mash the potatoes. Belinda, sweeten the apple sauce. Martha, the hot cider.

Belinda: We haven't got enough chairs, mumsy.

Cratchit: This young man can sit on my knee.

Mrs. C: Peter, setup the chairs.

(PETER places chairs around table. Enter BOB and BETTY carrying a roast goose in a baking pan. TINY TIM climbs on his father's lap. MARTHA and MRS. C have exited and returned with their items and continue in the setup.)

Bob: Here it is, mumsy.

Betty: Here's the goose!

Belinda: What a wonderful goose!

Marha: And how big it is!

Bob: And doesn't it smell so good?

Betty: Hooray for the Christmas Goose!

Tiny Tim: *(Clapping)* Hooray!

Cratchit: Come all, gather round.

(The family gathers in their seats around the table. CRATCHIT takes them all in and sighs, overwhelmed by the sight of his beautiful family.)

Cratchit: God bless this Christmas Day, and forgive our short prayer in anticipation of this wonderful meal. Let's eat!

(They begin to gather the food.)

Cratchit: I've got some employment in my eye for Master Peter.

Peter: Employment for me?

Cratchit: Yes, sir, for you. Full five and six – pence weekly.

All others: Oh, Peter! - Wonderful – Grand – Etc.

Bob: He is going to assist the clerk at the bank. Peter will be a man of business one day. Won't you, Peter?

Peter: What'll I do with all that money?

Cratchit: Invest it, invest it my lad. It's a bewildering income.

Martha: Who do you think was in the shop yesterday? You'll never guess. A countess and a real lord!

All Others: Oh neat! – I saw a lord once – Was she beautiful? – Etc.

Martha: A real live Lord, with clothes as fine as silk and riding gloves like you've never seen.

Cratchit: (*Giving money to Peter*) Here's an advance on that sixpence, Peter. If you work hard enough, someday you too can live like a Lord.

Peter: Thank you, sir, Merry Christmas, sir. Thank you so much!

Belinda: And now, let's dish out the pudding.

Betty: Oh, suppose it should break in turning it out?

Martha: Or suppose it isn't done enough.

Bob: Suppose someone should have snuck over the wall in the backyard and stolen it while we were all here eating the goose!

Mrs. C: Nonsense! I'll get the Christmas Pudding.

(*MRS. C exits*)

Betty: Could someone have stolen the pudding, father?

Cratchit: No one stole the pudding, Betty. Be sure of that.

Mrs. C: (*From offstage*) Oh no! Oh dear!

Children: Oh no! – It was stolen – we must have pudding! – Etc.

(MRS C enters with pudding)

Mrs. C: Oh no, oh no. This pudding isn't as good as last years...

Children: *(Disappointed)* Awww....

Mrs. C: It's even better!!!

Children: Yeah!!!

Bob: Oh, it's a wonder, mother. It's a wonder.

Betty: It looks like a little speckled cannon ball.

Bob: But just wait will you taste it!

Cratchit: Everyone, I have a toast. *(They all get their glasses and quiet down)* To Mr. Scrooge. The founder of this feast. God keep him on this eve.

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

Cratchit: My dear, the children. Christmas Day.

Mrs. C: He's an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man. You know he is, Robert. Nobody knows it better than you do.

Cratchit: My dear, Christmas Day!

Mrs. C: Then I'll drink his health, for your sake and the Christmas Day's. Long life to him. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! He'll be very merry and happy with his money, I have not doubt.

Cratchit: And now a Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us.

Tiny Tim: And God bless us, every one!

(The Christmas Feast drifts into darkness and we return to SCROOGE'S room. SCROOGE is found with a huge smile on his face, that slowly fades.)

Scrooge: Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

(A seat is lit with a crutch by it)

Present: I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney corner, and a little crutch without an owner. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

Scrooge: No, no kind spirit! Say he will be spared.

Present: If he be like to die, he had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Your very words, Scrooge. Decrease the surplus population. Your very words. Man, if man you be in heart; will you decide what men shall live and 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.

Scrooge: Forgive me. Forgive me!

Present: You have seen the Spirit of Christmas bless this poor dwelling. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their clothes were scanty and their shoes far from being waterproof, but they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another and contented with the Christmas Time. Have you learned your lesson?

Scrooge: What lesson is it you teach?

(The clock begins to strike three.)

Present: My hour is spent. I only hope you will be led to understanding from your final visitor.

(PRESENT begins to exit and SCROOGE pursues, off bed.)

Scrooge: No spirit! Don't leave me!

(The chiming finishes. SCROOGE is alone onstage. The stage is very dim. A slender phantom <FUTURE>, extremely tall and thin, glides in. It is draped and hooded. Perhaps it rises out of the bed itself? SCROOGE cowers in terror in front of it.)

Scrooge: Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas yet to come? You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not yet happened, but will happen in the time before us. Is that it spirit? Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any specter I have yet seen. Will you not speak to me? Lead on then, dread spirit – lead on.

(FUTURE leads SCROOGE to one corner of the stage and then raises a long and bony arm towards a spot in front of the Scrooge & Marley sign.)

Scrooge: Spirit, the case of this unhappy man might be mine own. This is a fearful place. Let us go. Let me see some tenderness connected with a death.

(The spirit now points to another part of the stage, where the Cratchit family is discovered. MARTHA is reading from the Bible while MRS. C is sewing. PETER, BELINDA, BETTY, and BOB sit forlornly listening to MARTHA.)

(Passage Being Read, only use as much is needed before text of scene begins or however is seen fit by director: “In those days a decree went out from Caesar that all the world should be taxed. And Joseph went with Mary his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. / And in that region there were shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them and said to them. “Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good news of great joy. For to you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord. You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”)

Mrs. C: (*Fighting Tears*) Oh my, the color of this cloth hurts my eyes. I shouldn't want to show weak eyes to your father. Yes, now they're better. It must be near time for your father to be home.

Peter: Past it rather. I think he has walked slower than he used to these past few evenings, mother.

Martha: I have known him to walk with Tiny Tim on his shoulders very fast indeed.

Betty: So have I – often.

Mrs. C: But our Tim was light to carry and your father loved him so they seemed to float along together.

Belinda: Here comes father, mother.

(*CRATCHIT enters*)

Mrs. C: You're late Bob. It gave us cause to worry for you.

Cratchit: I took some flowers-primroses. Tim used to love the colors so. It would have done your heart good to see how green the place is... Oh, I saw old Scrooge's nephew in the street today. He was heartily sorry about Tim and asked to be remembered to my good wife. How he ever knew that, I don't know.

Mrs. C: Knew what, my dear.

Cratchit: Why, that you were a good wife.

(*Everyone giggles.*)

Bob: Everybody knows that.

Cratchit: And Peter, he asked me to convey to you, my boy, the offer of a fine new situation.

Mrs. C: Oh, Peter, do you hear that?!

Martha: It won't be long now before Peter starts keeping company with someone and setting up a family for himself.

(There is laughter and teasing of PETER, who blushes)

Peter: Oh go on. Stop it now.

Mrs. C: One of these days.

Cratchit: Yes, one of these days. But however and whenever we part from one another, I'm sure we'll none of us forget poor Tiny Tim, shall we? Or the first parting there was amongst us.

(SCROOGE begins to weep and starts to move towards the family to console them, but they slowly fade from view. He is too late.)

Scrooge: Spirit, are these shadows of things that *will* be, or are they shadows of things that *may* be, only?

(FUTURE begins to withdraw.)

Scrooge: Stay Specter. Something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. Before you leave me, tell me what man I am that I was not there for this family in a time of great need. Oh spirit, where was I to be found?!

(FUTURE points his ghostly arm towards a haunting image. A large tombstone slowly drifts. SCROOGE crosses to the tombstone. As he approaches the marker, voices are heard intoning "Ebenezer Scrooge." The tombstone confirms as much.)

Scrooge: No... No! *(kneeling at the tombstone)* I may yet change these dread shadows.

(SCROOGE rises searching for the spirit, who has departed. He is alone in the darkness and uncertain future.)

Scrooge: I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all year. *(growing frantic)* I will live in the Past, Present, and Future!

(The tombstone begins to disappear.)

Scrooge: Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone.

(By the time he looks about, the tombstone has abandoned him. SCROOGE starts to race about the stage, alone.)

Scrooge: Oh no, no. Please not alone. Spirit hear me! I am not the man I was – no, no – I am not the man I was.

(SCROOGE falls weeping onto his bed which has since reappeared, without his real knowing it. SCROOGE climbs into the bed, it feels as though he is being pulled in and under the covers.)

Scrooge: Please spirit! I can change. I can become a better man. I know now. Please spirits. Spirits please allow me the chance to change.

(Over the course of this text the lines have become muttering and SCROOGE is in his bed. The sun has risen and we are returned to SCROOGE'S room. He shoots upright in his bed, alive.)

Scrooge: Why, the bedpost is my own. The bed is my own. The room is my own! Best and happiest of all, the time before me is mine own, to make amends. *(he takes a deep and full breath of life)* Oh, Jacob Marley and the Christmas Spirits be praised for this. The shadows of the future may be dispelled. And so they shall. Whoop, hurray! I don't know what to do? Must get dressed. Where's my shoes? I'm as light as feather and happy as an angel. I shall siiinnnnngggg *(briefly holds a note with lots of vibrato)* Where's my muffler? I'm as merry as a school-boy! Where's my shirt? My shirt? *(he feels his chest and realizes he's wearing it)* Ha! I'm already wearing it! I've got to get started. Can't waste any more time. Time? I don't know how long I've slept?

(SCROOGE climbs to his window and opens it. He yells out to the street below.)

Scrooge: Merry Christmas everyone! Hello! Heavenly sky, sweet fresh air, merry bells ringing. Oh glorious, glorious.

(A young boy enters)

Scrooge: Hello! You there! What's today?

Young Boy: Eh, sir?

Scrooge: What's today? What's the date my fine fellow?

Young Boy: Today? Why it's Christmas Day, sir.

Scrooge: Christmas Day? Christmas Day!! I haven't missed it. I haven't missed it. – In one night, do you hear? – Christmas! The spirits have done it all in one night! – Boy, do you know the poultry shop on the next street, the one at the corner?

Young Boy: I should hope so.

Scrooge: An intelligent boy, a remarkable boy. What's your name?

Young Boy: Simon, sir.

Scrooge: Well, Simon, do you know whether they've sold that prize turkey that was hanging there? Not the little one, the big one.

Young Boy: What, the one as big as me?

Scrooge: What a delightful lad. Yes, the biggest one!

Young Boy: It's hanging there right now.

Scrooge: It is? Go and buy it.

Young Boy: You can't be serious, sir.

Scrooge: I am in earnest, my lad. *(he laughs and throws him a purse of money)* Do it and I'll give you an extra shilling as a gift on this Christmas Day.

(YOUNG BOY runs off, SCROOGE shouts after him.)

Scrooge: Be back in less than five minutes and I'll give you half a crown! I'll take it to Bob Cratchit's house. The turkey is twice the size of Tiny Tim. Ha, ha, ha.

(During the last line he has exited from the window and the stage has begun to shift into the Cratchit home again. Something about this setting is homelier, simpler, sparser... real.)

(The children, BELINDA, PETER, BETTY & BOB are finishing setting the table and decorating it with sprigs of holly. They are singing as they work.)

Mrs. C: Betty, fetch me another fork.

Betty: Yes, mother.

(Peter sneaks a sprig of holly onto one of the chairs as a trap.)

Mrs. C: Now, Peter! That is not very nice now, is it?

Peter: It was meant to be a joke, mother.

Mrs. C: I know dear. But that's no way to behave, particularly when you're dressed so fine.

Belinda: He looks almost like a grown man, doesn't he mother?

Betty: *(entering with fork)* Where did you get your new clothes, Peter?

Peter: Father gave them to me. To wear for Christmas dinner.

Mrs. C: You'll make a fine man, Peter. Your sleeve wants turning. Here, let me help you. I wonder what's keeping your father and Tiny Tim. And Martha wasn't this late last Christmas.

Peter: *(tired of being fussed with)* I'll go watch for them.

Belinda: You look lovely tonight, mother.

Mrs. C: Why thank you dear. But soon we'll have to have Martha take this up so you can wear it. You're getting to be such a lady.

Peter: (*rushing back in*) Here comes Martha, Martha's here.

Betty & Bob: Martha's here. Hooray, hooray! Martha's here.

Martha: (*entering*) Merry Christmas, everyone. Merry Christmas.

Betty: Look at the table, Martha. I helped set the table.

Belinda: Mother says she's going to give me her dress. Will you take it up for me, Martha?

Peter: You should see the goose we're having. It's this big. I picked it out.

Mrs. C: (*breaking into the melee*) Enough, children. Enough. Let Martha catch her breath. (*kissing her cheek*) Merry Christmas, dear. My your hands are like ice. And how late you are, dear.

Martha: I got away as soon as I could. You know what it's like at Christmas. Everyone still feels the need to hustle and bustle and keep the whole town working, even on the holidays. (*to PETER*) My how grown up you look. (*to MRS C*) All the ladies just had to have their dresses for today! I didn't stitch my last hem until two o'clock this morning, and then had to finish when I awoke!

Mrs. C: Well, never mind, so long as you're home. And before Father and Tiny Tim. They're at the church. Are you well, my dear?

Martha: (*clearly tired, but reassuring*) Yes, mother. Not to worry.

Mrs. C: Come now, have a seat.

Peter: Here comes father. Here comes father.

Belinda: Hide, Martha, hide!

Martha: Where?

Bob: Under the table!

Belinda: In the wash house!

Peter: Behind the door!

(MARTHA indeed hides under the table. CRATCHIT enters with TINY TIM on his shoulders.)

Tiny Tim: Whoa, horsey. Whoa!

(CRATCHIT puts down TINY TIM, as the children flood their father with hugs and “Merry Christmas” and stories of the food they are about to eat.)

Cratchit: My don't you look fine, Peter? But, where's our Martha?

Mrs. C: Not coming.

Cratchit: Not coming? Not coming on Christmas day?

Tiny Tim: Martha's not coming?

(TINY TIM is close to tears. The rest of the family can barely control their laughter.)

Cratchit: Now Tim, don't cry.

Martha: *(coming out from hiding)* Surprise, father! Surprise, Tim! Merry Christmas!

(Carolers are heard approaching in the distance.)

Betty: May we ask in the carolers Mother, to sing?!

Belinda: Yes, oh please, oh please!

Mrs. C: Well, of course, but we've so little room and what can we give them?

(PETER heads to the door to welcome the carolers. Stops dead in his tracks when he sees SCROOGE, appearing to be his "old" self.)

Peter: Why, Mr. Scrooge.

Cratchit: Mr. Scrooge! This is a surprise!

Scrooge: *(nods)* Cratchit.

(SCROOGE then nods at the rest of the family with one curt nod.)

Scrooge: Mrs. Cratchit. Sorry to interrupt. Cratchit, I've come to collect those mortgage papers you carried home last night. They are completed, are they not?

(The family has grown solemn, CRATCHIT's demeanor has changed. All eyes fall upon him.)

Cratchit: Well, not yet, they're not, Mr. Scrooge. But I can assure you I'll have them on your desk first thing in the morning.

Scrooge: Indeed? Well, you, sir, can be assured that you're finished earning fifteen shillings a week from me.

Cratchit: *(cowering, embarrassed in front of whole family)* But, Mr. Scrooge, it is Christ –

Scrooge: *(attacking with words)* From now on, you'll be earning THIRTY shillings a week!

Cratchit: But Mr. Scrooge... I only... huh?

Mrs. C: Oh Bob! Oh, Mr. Scrooge!

(SCROOGE changes before our very eyes, indeed.)

Scrooge: Merry Christmas, Bob.

(SCROOGE shakes CRATCHIT'S hand. Someone enters with the large goose and sets it at the center of the table. The children are in awe of such a sight.)

Scrooge: For you, Cratchit's. On this Christmas Day.

Cratchit: Mr. Scrooge – sir – I can't – I don't know – Mr. Scrooge?!?!

Scrooge: My nephew tells me that he has a doctor friend who'll look round tomorrow to see you, Tiny Tim. That is, if it's quite convenient with you Mrs. Cratchit?

Mrs. C: But Mr. Scrooge...

Cratchit: We can't afford a doctor.

Scrooge: Never fear, the bill will come to me Cratchit.

(There is a celebration of cheers!!! SCROOGE is somewhat awkward about this. As the cheers subside -)

Scrooge: Well... I must be off.

Mrs. C: But won't you stay for dinner?

Tiny Tim: Oh yes, stay to dinner. After all, that goose is twice as big as me.

Scrooge: No, my fine lad. I'm off to Christmas dinner with... with my own family. *(he is a bit choked up)* Well then. I wish you a Merry Christmas, Tim. With all my heart. God bless you lad. And Merry Christmas to all!

(SCROOGE begins to exit. The family speaks in divine unison.)

All: Merry Christmas and God Bless you, Mr. Scrooge.

(SCROOGE freezes in his tracks. Back to the audience. This is likely the first time someone has ever blessed him in his adult life. After a momentary pause, a deep breath, SCROOGE departs without looking back. Overcome.)

Tiny Tim: *(as if to the family and audience, the only time we break the fourth wall)* Merry Christmas and God Bless Us, everyone!

All: Amen!

(Carolers are heard in the distance as the family gathers around the table and begins the feast. Lights fade to the sounds and joys of a family feasting and to the spirit of Christmas)

THE END