

SCROOGE'S CHRISTMAS

By Ken Jones

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SCROOGE'S CHRISTMAS

Based on *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

Adapted by Ken Jones

SYNOPSIS: In Ken Jones' adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic tale, *A Christmas Carol*, a group of actors portray all the characters of this Christmas tradition. The ensemble provides the songs and sounds as the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge is confronted by the Spirits of Past, Present, and Future. This unique telling can play to an audience in an intimate or large setting using nothing but costumes and a few props. This remarkable adaptation is perfect for schools and community theatres, and running at just an hour, it is the perfect version for family audiences.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 females, 9 males)

ACTOR 1 (m)	Plays: Scrooge (157 lines)
ACTOR 2 (m)	Plays: Bob Cratchit, Marley (45 lines)
ACTOR 3 (m)	Plays: Nephew [Fred], Christmas yet to come (35 lines)
ACTOR 4 (m)	Plays: Gentleman 1, Christmas Present (44 lines)
ACTOR 5 (m)	Plays: Gentleman 2, Fezziwig, Mr. Haversham (39 lines)
ACTOR 6 (f)	Plays: Mrs. Cratchit (29 lines)
ACTOR 7 (f)	Plays: Niece, Christmas Past (49 lines)
ACTOR 8 (m)	20-25 years; Plays: Young Scrooge, Joe, Thomas (39 lines)
ACTOR 9 (m)	15-18 years; Plays: Peter Cratchit, Boy-in-the-street (17 lines)
ACTOR 10 (f)	18-22 years; Plays: Fan, Martha Cratchit (19 lines)
ACTOR 11 (m)	Plays: Tiny Tim, Boy Scrooge (3 lines)
ACTOR 12 (f)	Plays: Belinda, Belle's Daughter (11 lines)
ACTOR 13 (m)	Plays: Dick Wilkins, Belle's Husband, Balladeer (23 lines)

ACTOR 14 (f).....Plays: Woman 1, Fiancee (Belle), Polly
(39 lines)

ACTOR 15 (f).....Plays: Woman 2, Mrs. Fezziwig, Mrs.
Haversham (30 lines)

Setting: An empty space.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play can be done in any theatrical configuration: proscenium, arena, thrust or alley. The action of the play takes place in and around the city of London on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning of the year 1843.

The acting area should allow the actors easy access to the audience without destroying the atmosphere created by the action of the play. The actors are always present.

SUGGESTION: A small wooden desk and two stools should suffice in representing Scrooge's office; a stool for the schoolroom; and a table and chairs for the Cratchit's household.

SOUND EFFECTS

All sound effects should be created by the actors either with their voices or small sound effects props such as wooden blocks and chains.

During the course of the play, the changing of locations should be represented by props and simple furniture pieces carried on and off stage by the actors.

COSTUMES

A representative period costume should be worn by each actor. Items such as scarves, gloves, capes, and shawls will create the needed costume changes except for the more elaborate characters like CHRISTMAS PAST, CHRISTMAS PRESENT, CHRISTMAS YET TO COME and MARLEY.

A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY:

Scrooge's Christmas premiered at the University of Virginia in the Helm's Theatre. After five more full productions at various colleges, the play was reworked and produced at the University of Notre Dame. It has since become a seasonal favorite with universities and high schools.

DO NOT COPY

AT START: *A bell begins to toll. Soon, many bells begin clanging. In the shadows, figures can be seen weaving in and out until they are all positioned at different points about the acting area. The figures begin singing: "GOD REST YE, MERRY GENTLEMEN."*

ALL:

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN
LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY.
REMEMBER CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR,
WAS BORN ON CHRISTMAS DAY
TO SAVE US ALL FROM SATAN'S POWER
WHEN WE HAVE GONE ASTRAY.
OH, TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY, COMFORT AND JOY,
OH, TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY.

They repeat the song.

GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN
LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY...

ACTOR 2 steps into the light. The PEOPLE freeze.

ACTOR 2: Marley was dead to begin with. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. *(They sing on.)*

ALL:

REMEMBER CHRIST OUR SAVIOR
WAS BORN ON CHRISTMAS DAY...

ACTOR 2: There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come from this story.

They sing.

ALL:

TO SAVE US ALL FROM SATAN'S POWER
 WHEN WE HAVE GONE ASTRAY.
 OH, TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY, COMFORT AND JOY,
 OH, TIDINGS OF COMFORT AND JOY.

SCROOGE enters. He circles the acting area, growling at all he passes. He finally, sits upon his stool and leans over his writing podium.

ACTOR 3: Now, Scrooge was his sole executer, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole friend and sole mourner. But even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event nor by any event for that matter.

ACTOR 4: He was, in short, a tight-fisted at the grindstone...

SCROOGE: —Scrooge!

ACTOR 5: He was a squeezing...

ACTORS move about the stage around SCROOGE. He growls and snorts at each passing body.

ACTOR 6: ...wrenching.

ACTOR 7: ...gasping...

ACTOR 8: ...scraping...

ACTOR 9: ...clutching...

ACTOR 10: ...covetous old sinner!

ACTOR 2: Hard and sharp as flint.

ACTOR 3: The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait...

ACTOR 4: ...made his eyes red, his thin lips blue...

ALL: ...and spoke out in his grating voice!

SCROOGE: BAH, HUMBUG!

ACTOR 6: He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

ACTOR 7: Once upon a time – of all good days in the year, on Christmas Eve – old Scrooge sat busy at his counting house.

SCROOGE is busily scratching away with a quill into his ledger.

Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal.

BOB CRATCHIT is revealed at his small chair.

CRATCHIT: *(To audience.)* But Bob Cratchit, the clerk, couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room so he tried to warm himself by the candle; but not being a man of strong imagination, he failed.

BOB turns back to his papers. Scrooge's NEPHEW enters. He mimes opening a door. The ACTORS create the sound of the door opening and shutting as well as the sound of the wind.

NEPHEW: A merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

NEPHEW: Christmas a humbug? You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE: I do! Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

NEPHEW: Come, then, what right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money! 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!

NEPHEW: Uncle!

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

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

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then.

NEPHEW: I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely. God bless it!

CRATCHIT breaks into applause.

ACTOR 6: Bob Cratchit involuntarily applauded: becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

SCROOGE: Let me hear another sound from you, Bob Cratchit, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. (*To his NEPHEW.*) You're a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

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

SCROOGE: I'd rather be roasted for the Christmas goose.

NEPHEW: But why, Uncle?

SCROOGE: Why? Why did you get married?

NEPHEW: Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE: Because you fell in love?

ACTOR 7: Scrooge growled as though 'love' was the only thing in the world more ridiculous than 'Merry Christmas'.

NEPHEW: Nay, Uncle, you never came to see me before, why give this reason now?

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

NEPHEW: I want nothing from you, but to be friends.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

NEPHEW: I am sorry with all my heart, but I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So a Merry Christmas, Uncle!

The NEPHEW opens the door.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!!

NEPHEW: And a happy New Year!

SCROOGE: Humbug!!!

The NEPHEW exits. The wind pushes against him as HE leaves.

ACTOR 8: When Scrooge's nephew went out, two other men came in.

GENTLEMAN 1 mimes knocking on the door. The sound effect is achieved by an ACTOR. Two GENTLEMEN enter.

ACTOR 7: They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office.

GENTLEMAN 1: *(To CRATCHIT.)* Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

CRATCHIT points to SCROOGE.

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.

GENTLEMAN 2: Yes... well... at this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at this present time.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

The ACTORS, who are all about the stage, moan.

ALL: Ooh.

GENTLEMAN 2: Plenty of prisons...

SCROOGE: And the workhouses? Are they still in operation?

EVERYONE moans a little louder.

ALL: Oooohhh!

GENTLEMAN 1: They are. Still. I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE: I help support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough, and those who are badly off must go there.

The loudest moan of all.

ALL: OOOHHHH!!!!

GENTLEMAN 1: Many would rather die.

SCROOGE: If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon, Gentlemen.

ACTOR 3: Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew.

They exit complete with ACTORS creating wind and door sounds.

ACTOR 10: At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. Bob Cratchit snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

SCROOGE: You'll want the whole day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT: If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient, and it's not fair.

CRATCHIT: (*To the audience.*) The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

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 the next morning!

ACTOR 6: The clerk promised he would and Scrooge walked out with a growl.

The wind is excessively loud when he opens the door.

ACTOR 4: Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern...

SCROOGE tries to cross the street, but as he does a huge crowd of people carrying packages enter from all sides. He is swallowed in the crowd.

...and then he went home.

SCROOGE looks both ways for the same CROWD, but he does not see them. Happily, he steps into the street, only to be swallowed by the CROWD again, hustling and bustling from side of the stage to the other. SCROOGE is spun in a circle.

SCROOGE: Humbug.

SCROOGE disappears into the darkness as the lights capture a group of CAROLERS singing: "THE CAROL OF THE BELLS."

ACTORS:

HARK HOW THE BELLS,
SWEET SILVER BELLS,
ALL SEEM TO SAY,
THROW CARES AWAY
CHRISTMAS IS HERE,
BRINGING GOOD CHEER,
TO YOUNG AND OLD,
MEEK AND THE BOLD,
DING DONG DING DONG
THAT IS THEIR SONG
WITH JOYFUL RING
ALL CAROLING
ONE SEEMS TO HEAR
WORDS OF GOOD CHEER
FROM EVERYWHERE
FILLING THE AIR
OH HOW THEY POUND,
RAISING THE SOUND,
O'ER HILL AND DALE,
TELLING THEIR TALE,
GAILY THEY RING
WHILE PEOPLE SING
SONGS OF GOOD CHEER,
CHRISTMAS IS HERE,
MERRY, MERRY, MERRY, MERRY CHRISTMAS,
MERRY, MERRY, MERRY, MERRY CHRISTMAS,
ON ON THEY SEND,
ON WITHOUT END,
THEIR JOYFUL TONE
TO EVERY HOME
DING DONG DING DONG... DONG!

The SINGERS disappear to the shadows. SCROOGE appears hunched over as he approaches his door. NOTE: The door can be a black cloth held by TWO ACTORS. A flap of fabric near the top on the backside hides the hole for MARLEY's face. MARLEY merely steps behind the cloth and places his face in the spot of the door knocker.

ACTOR 15: Arriving home, Scrooge approached the door of his house.

ACTOR 14: There was nothing particular about the door.. except that it was very large...

ACTOR 13: And of course, there was the door knocker...

MARLEY's face in the door.

MARLEY: Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Marley?

SCROOGE turns away to check his senses. MARLEY steps away from the cloth, and replaces the flap of fabric. He has disappeared. SCROOGE turns back.

I see. My mind playing tricks on me.

ACTOR 10: Scrooge went inside and straight away to his bedroom.

ACTOR 5: As he dressed for bed...

ACTOR 8: ...strange sounds begin to fill his room.

SCROOGE throws a nightshirt over his clothes and places a night cap upon his head. The COMPANY begins to create howling noises and moans. Chains can be heard shaking.

ACTOR 7: Ebenezer...

ACTOR 3: Scrooge!

ACTOR 5: Eb – e...

ACTOR 6: ...ne...

ACTOR 8: ...zer...

ACTOR 7: Scrooge.

ACTOR 4: Scrooge!

ACTOR 10: Ebene...

ACTOR 5: ...zer...

ACTOR 3: Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Humbug!

Dragging chains are heard. NOTE: A member of the COMPANY should use two large chains to create the sound of MARLEY walking. This ACTOR should try to coincide the chain steps with MARLEY's steps and movements.

MARLEY: Scrooooooge!!!

SCROOGE: It's humbug still! I won't believe it!

ACTOR 8: It was Marley's ghost! His body completely transparent.

ACTOR 6: Now, Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he never believed it until now.

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: Can you... can you sit down?

MARLEY: I can.

SCROOGE: Do it then.

ACTOR 4: Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair.

MARLEY mimes as though he were sitting on an invisible chair.

MARLEY: You don't believe in me?

SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of underdone potato.

ACTOR 5: At this, the Spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chains with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge fell upon his knees.

MARLEY rises as a scream develops deep from within. The sound is picked up by the ACTORS sitting about who add their own 'screams' to his one. The NOISE should be overpowering.

MARLEY: AaaaaaaAAAAAAHHHHHHH!

SCROOGE: Mercy! 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 walk abroad among his fellowmen; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death! Oooooohh... wooodoe—

ALL ACTORS pick up the "woe" again adding to the volume.

ALL: —oooooooooooooooooooo—

MARLEY: —is me!!!

MARLEY shakes his chains which hang about his body.

SCROOGE: You are fettered. Tell me why?

MARLEY: I wear the chains I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I gathered it on 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 was full as heavy as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. It is a ponderous chain!

SCROOGE: Jacob, speak comfort to me.

MARLEY: I have none to give, Ebenezer Scrooge. I have nothing.

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

MARLEY: *(Yelling.)* Bus—

ALL: —iness!!

MARLEY: Mankind was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all, my business! *(He pauses and adjust the cloth holding his jaw in place.)* Hear me! My time is nearly gone! I am here to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate.

SCROOGE: You were always a good friend to me.

MARLEY: You will be haunted by three Spirits.

SCROOGE: Is that the chance you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY: It is.

SCROOGE: Then... I'd rather not.

MARLEY: Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE: Couldn't I take them all at once, and have it over, Jacob?

MARLEY: Expect the second on the next night at the same hour.
The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate.

MARLEY begins to move backwards.

ACTOR 10: When the apparition had said these words, he walked backward into the darkness.

ACTOR 12: Scrooge moved to within two paces of the being.

ACTOR 13: But Marley held up his hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

MARLEY backs into the darkness.

MARLEY: Beware! (*MARLEY disappears. Only his echo is heard.*)
Beware!

SCROOGE: Humbug!

ACTOR 7: Scrooge went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

Lights fade on SCROOGE in his bed. A man lighting the streetlamps is seen. He begins to sing "O HOLY NIGHT." SUGGESTION: The streetlights are represented by ACTORS placed about the stage holding large candles. The MAN walks from ACTOR to ACTOR lighting these candles as he sings.

THE BALLADEER

O HOLY NIGHT, THE STARS ARE BRIGHTLY SHINING,
IT IS THE NIGHT OF THE DEAR SAVIOUR'S BIRTH.
LONG LAY THE WORLD IN SIN AND ERROR PINING
TILL HE APPEARED AND THE SOUL FELT HIS WORTH.
A THRILL OF HOPE, THE WEARY WORLD REJOICES,
FOR YONDER BEAMS A NEW AND GLORIOUS MOURN.
FALL ON YOUR KNEES!

OH, HEAR THE ANGEL VOICES!
O NIGHT DIVINE!
O NIGHT WHEN CHRIST WAS BORN!
O NIGHT DIVINE!
O NIGHT, O NIGHT DIVINE!

The MAN FINISHES the song. All the ACTORS (STREETLAMPS) blow their candles out on cue. SCROOGE is snoring loudly.

ACTOR 4: When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber.

SCROOGE snorts himself awake and sits up.

SCROOGE: I can barely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of my chamber.

ACTOR 4: I just said that.

SCROOGE: (To ACTOR 4.) Sorry.

ACTOR 6: Suddenly, the clock bell sounded.

All the WOMEN of the ENSEMBLE.

WOMEN: DING!

All the MEN.

MEN: DONG!

ACTOR 5: Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and standing before Scrooge stood a strange figure.

The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST appears. THIS GHOST is soft and gentle. Its robes and gown seem to flutter in the night air. The SPIRIT is delicate and glowing.

ACTOR 3: It was a figure - like a child; yet not so like a child as an adult, viewed through some supernatural medium.

SCROOGE: Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

The GHOST speaks with a low, harsh voice.

PAST: I am!

ACTOR 2: The voice was soft and gentle...

The GHOST acknowledges the NARRATION and attempts another VOICE. This time it works.

PAST: I am.

ACTOR 2: It was singularly low, as if instead of being close beside him, it was at a distance.

SCROOGE: Who, and what are you?

PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long past?

PAST: No, your past.

ACTOR 4: The Spirit put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

The SPIRIT grabs SCROOGE a little too hard.

SCROOGE: Ouch! Gently!

PAST: Rise! And walk with me!

SCROOGE: I am but mortal and liable to fall.

PAST: Bear but a touch of my hand there and you shall be upheld in more than this!

SCROOGE touches his hand. The lights create a sense of motion and/or flight. ACTORS make the noise of 'wind'.

ACTOR 2: As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either side. The darkness and the mist had vanished leaving a clear, cold winter day, with snow upon the ground.

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

ACTOR 6: Scrooge was immediately conscious of a thousand odors floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, hopes, joys, and cares long, long, forgotten!

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

SCROOGE: Nothing.

PAST: Do you recollect the way?

SCROOGE: Remember it! I could walk it blindfold.

SCROOGE spins slowly breathing in all the memories.

PAST: Strange to have forgotten it for so many years! Let us move on.

Once again the idea of motion is achieved. PEOPLE mill about the stage.

ACTOR 3: The meadow was filled with joy.

ACTOR 14: Boys and girls in great spirits, running happily.

ACTOR 15: Shaggy ponies...

ACTOR 5: ...snowballs and...

ACTOR 12: ...snowmen.

ACTOR 13: Fresh baked-pies.

ACTOR 4: The smell of spices.

PAST: These are but shadows of the things that have been.

SCROOGE is caught up in the festive mood. He begins to greet the people, but they do not notice.

SCROOGE: Good day. *(Pause.)* Hello. *(Pause.)* Hello there.

PAST: They have no consciousness of us.

The CROWD clears revealing a small boy, BOY SCROOGE, sitting alone on a stool.

SCROOGE: My old schoolhouse!

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

The BOY sighs.

BOY SCROOGE: Um-humph.

SCROOGE: I remember. *(They move on. The BOY exits to his place.)* I wish... but now it's too late.

PAST: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing. Nothing. There was someone singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something, that's all.

ACTOR 2: The Ghost smiled thoughtfully.

PAST: Let us see another Christmas.

YOUNG SCROOGE is now seated on the same stool as before, in the same position that BOY SCROOGE had been in. A young woman, FAN, rushes on.

FAN: Dear brother!

SCROOGE: Fan!?

FAN: Ebenezer!

SCROOGE extends his arms, but the girl runs past SCROOGE to YOUNG SCROOGE.

SCROOGE: My sister! Fan! Alive again.

FAN: *(To YOUNG SCROOGE.)* I have come to bring you home, dear brother!

YOUNG SCROOGE: Home, little 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. He spoke so gently to me one 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 he sent me in a coach to bring you! And you are never to come back here again! We are going to have the merriest time in the world!

YOUNG SCROOGE: You are quite the woman, little Fan!

YOUNG SCROOGE and FAN exit together.

PAST: Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered, but she had a large heart.

SCROOGE: So she had. You're right.

PAST: She died a woman and had, as I think, children.

SCROOGE: One child. She died bringing him into this world.

PAST: Your nephew.

SCROOGE: Yes.

They pause for a moment, and then move on.

ACTOR 4: The ghost moved to a certain warehouse, and asked Scrooge if he knew of it.

SCROOGE: Know it! I was apprenticed here.

FEZZIWIG enters. He is a large, jolly man. He is carrying wrapped gifts.

Why it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!

FEZZIWIG: Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK WILKINS enter.

DICK: Here we are, Mr. Fezziwig!

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

FEZZIWIG: Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick! Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up before a man can say Jack Robinson!

The BOYS mime putting up the shutters.

DICK: Ebenezer, there's a dream I have quite often.

YOUNG SCROOGE: And what may that be, Dick?

DICK: One day... one Christmas Day I hope to hold as great a party as good old Fezziwig.

YOUNG SCROOGE: I've dreamt the same myself.

DICK: Then we'll hold our parties as one, and we'll invite all our friends—

SCROOGE: (*SADLY.*) —friends long forgotten—

DICK: —and there will be food—

YOUNG SCROOGE: —and drink—

DICK: —and presents for all!

YOUNG SCROOGE: And you and I will be hailed as the kindest of gentlemen.

DICK: And everyone will love and admire us!

MRS. FEZZIWIG enters. She is as jolly as her husband.

MRS. FEZZIWIG: And who's admiring who?

DICK: Good evening, Mrs. Fezziwig.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Good evening, ma'am.

MRS. FEZZIWIG: Boys! Tonight will be a great night! A night to remember!

MR. FEZZIWIG: Ah, there's my beautiful wife! *(They hug.)* Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here!

MRS. FEZZIWIG: We have dancin' to do!

MR. FEZZIWIG: And who better to choose for a dance partner than my own wife!

MRS. FEZZIWIG: You're assuming that I'll accept your proposal?

MR. FEZZIWIG: For twenty-five years you've been accepting my proposals, I see no reason you'd stop now!

ACTOR 2: Suddenly, in rushed people each wearing a substantial smile!

ACTORS rush on from both sides. Ribbons in their hair, hats, and colored scarves are used to represent their party clothes. They make two lines for a traditional dance.

ACTOR 9: Beautiful women—

ACTOR 6: —followed by their young broken-hearted suitors.

ACTOR 4: Housemaids, cooks, barbers and bakers!

ACTOR 14: The Fezziwigs saw no class structures. They saw no positions of wealth and prestige. They saw only good hearts and good souls.

The ACTORS sing: "DECK THE HALLS." They all begin to dance. Soon, SCROOGE is swept into the dance weaving in and out of the unaware lovers.

ALL:

DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY

FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA!

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY

FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA
DON WE NOW OUR GAY APPAREL,

CHRISTMAS PAST silences everyone in mid-dance. SCROOGE continues on singing and dancing.

SCROOGE:

FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA!

He realizes they are dancing without music or noise.

PAST: He made people so full of gratitude. A small matter.

SCROOGE: Small?

PAST: Why! Is it not? He spent but a few pounds of your mortal money; three or four pounds, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

PAST claps and the ACTORS finish the song.

ALL:

TROLL THE ANCIENT YULETIDE CAROL
FA LA LA LA LA LA LA!

The MEN and WOMEN divide into couples and rush off in all directions.

SCROOGE: Spirit! He had the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome: a pleasure or a toil. The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.

ACTOR 10: Scrooge stopped.

PAST: What's the matter?

SCROOGE: I should like to say a word or two to my clerk just now!
That's all.

PAST: My time grows short! Quick!

Lights reveal YOUNG SCROOGE talking with his FIANCEE, BELLE.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Don't be ridiculous!

BELLE: Ebenezer, I am not being ridiculous, and even if I were, isn't it proper to be ridiculous when you're in love?

YOUNG SCROOGE: I don't have time to be ridiculous. I have a career to think about!

BELLE: Do you have time to be in love?

YOUNG SCROOGE: Love is for fools.

BELLE: Than I am a fool who loves a man who does not love me. I matter little to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; 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.

YOUNG SCROOGE: What idol has replaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

YOUNG SCROOGE: This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty...

SCROOGE tries to stop the young shadow of himself from speaking.

SCROOGE: Don't go on...

YOUNG SCROOGE: ...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 hopes have merged into hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach.

YOUNG SCROOGE: I am not changed towards you.

BELLE: You are changed. When you made your promise to me, you were another man.

YOUNG SCROOGE: I was a boy. I am a man now. I must consider making a living. This world demands a certain status, if I do not achieve that status we will always be forced to struggle. I do all I do for you.

SCROOGE: You fool!

BELLE: For me?

YOUNG SCROOGE: Money is the key to all things.

BELLE: No, Ebenezer, love is the key. Companionship.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, I do love you, but I cannot afford to live without means. It is not fair to you or myself.

BELLE: Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so.

SCROOGE: No more...

BELLE: Your own feelings tell you that you were not what you are.

You say you love me, but you also love wealth.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, must we continue on with this?

BELLE: We were one heart, but sadly, we are now two.

SCROOGE: Oh, my dear Belle, we are still one...

BELLE: I release you from your promise.

YOUNG SCROOGE: I do not seek a release?

BELLE: In words, no.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Then, in what?

BELLE: Tell me Ebenezer, would you seek me out and try to win me now?

YOUNG SCROOGE: I must think of my career.

BELLE: Would you seek me out now?

YOUNG SCROOGE does not answer.

SCROOGE: Answer her, you idiot! Answer her!

Silence.

BELLE: I thought not. May you be happy in the life you have chosen, Ebenezer.

She exits.

SCROOGE: Spirit! Show me no more! Conduct me home! Spirit remove me from this place!

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

SCROOGE: Haunt me no longer!

PAST: One shadow more!

SCROOGE: Spirit, why do you delight to torture me?

PAST: Follow and listen!

They move about the set.

ACTOR 15: There was another scene and place—

ACTOR 5: —a room, not very large or handsome—

ACTOR 2: —but full of comfort!

BELLE, now older, is sitting with her daughter.

ACTOR 10: Across the room sat the woman who he had loved.

ACTOR 8: The same woman he had let go those many years before.

SCROOGE: Spirit! It's Belle, again. But how can it be? She looks older. Mature.

BELLE: Another Christmas Eve.

DAUGHTER: And a beautiful night, it is!

BELLE: All Christmas Eve's have their own beauty.

DAUGHTER: Do you think father will be home soon?

BELLE: If he doesn't wander off distracted by some beautiful gift meant for his lovely daughter.

DAUGHTER: Oh, Mother! Won't you tell me what he's gotten for me?

BELLE: You'll have to wait.

SCROOGE: She looks so beautiful. Look at the lashes of her eyes. The waves of her hair. I would dearly like to kiss those lips.

The HUSBAND enters. BELLE rushes to help him with the load of packages.

HUSBAND: Belle! I missed you so!

BELLE: And I you.

They kiss.

SCROOGE: Spirit! It is only with cruelty that you force me to witness her love of another man.

PAST: Why? You said love was for fools.

HUSBAND: Belle, I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.

BELLE: Who was it?

HUSBAND: Guess.

BELLE: How can I?

HUSBAND: Humbug!

BELLE: Mr. Scrooge?

HUSBAND: Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and I could scarcely help seeing him.

DAUGHTER: His partner, Marley, lies upon the point of death, I hear.

HUSBAND: And there he sat alone.

BELLE: Quite alone in the world, I do believe.

SCROOGE: Spirit!

BELLE: He was a good man once. A kind, caring soul.

HUSBAND: Now they say he has no soul.

SCROOGE: Remove me from this place!

HUSBAND: But I do know that his loss... is my gain.

He hugs BELLE. They exit.

PAST: That these shadows are what they are, do not blame me!

SCROOGE: Remove me from this place! Haunt me no longer!

Blackout. SCROOGE lights a candle.

ACTOR 5: Scrooge found himself alone.

ACTOR 6: Very alone.

ACTOR 9: The Ghost had disappeared magically, leaving Scrooge in his bedroom.

ACTOR 3: It was his own room. There was no doubt about that.

ACTOR 12: He was exhausted.

ACTOR 14: His mind reeled from all that he had seen...

ACTOR 13: Was it a dream... or was it...

ACTOR 3: Suddenly, the clock bell rang.

ALL WOMEN: DING!

ALL MEN: DONG!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT is at one end of the room.

PRESENT: Come in! Come in! And know me better, man!

ACTOR 5: Scrooge hung his head before the Spirit.

PRESENT: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me!
You have never seen the likes of me before!

SCROOGE: Never.

ACTOR 7: And never had a truer statement been spoken.

ACTOR 8: The Ghost enormous in size wore a large robe, lined in fur.

ACTOR 9: And upon its head was placed a wreath of holly.

ACTOR 10: Bearded by curls, the large mouth spoke...

PRESENT: Have ye never walked forth with the younger members of my family?

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

PRESENT: More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE: A tremendous family to provide for! Spirit conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you must teach me, let me profit by it.

PRESENT: Touch my robe!

The same effect as before is used to create a sense of motion. PEOPLE of all kinds: butchers, grocers, cobblers, etc., should move, weaving in and out of the light. The ACTORS all sing: "I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN."

ACTORS: *(Singing.)*

I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY;
I SAW THREE SHIPS COME SAILING IN
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
AND WHAT WAS IN THOSE SHIPS ALL THREE,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY?
AND WHAT WAS IN THOSE SHIPS ALL THREE,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING?
OUR SAVIOR CHRIST AND HIS LADY,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY;
OUR SAVIOR CHRIST AND HIS LADY,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
PRAY WHITHER SAILED THOSE SHIPS ALL THREE,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY?
PRAY WHITHER SAILED THOSE SHIPS ALL THREE,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING?
O THEY SAILED INTO BETHLEHEM,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY,
O THEY SAILED INTO BETHLEHEM,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.

AND ALL THE BELLS ON EARTH SHALL RING,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY;
 AND ALL THE BELLS ON EARTH SHALL RING,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
 AND ALL THE ANGELS IN HEAV'N SHALL SING,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY;
 AND ALL THE ANGELS IN HEAV'N SHALL SING,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
 AND ALL THE SOULS ON EARTH SHALL SING,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY;
 AND ALL THE SOULS ON EARTH SHALL SING,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
 THEN LET US ALL REJOICE AMAIN,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY;
 THEN LET US REJOICE AMAIN,
 ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.

After the song is finished, the ACTORS leave the stage revealing the CRATCHIT's home; a few stools are placed around a small table. MRS. CRATCHIT, PETER, and BELINDA are at the table.

SCROOGE: Bob Cratchit's home? Spirit, why do you bring me here?

PRESENT: Shut your mortal mouth and listen.

MRS. CRATCHIT: What has ever got your precious father and your brother, Tiny Tim? Not to mention Martha late by half-an-hour.

BELINDA: Here's Martha.

MARTHA enters.

PETER: Here's Martha, Mother!

MRS. CRATCHIT: 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. CRATCHIT: Well! Never mind so long as you are here! Lord bless you!

PETER: Father's coming! Hide Martha, hide!

MARTHA hides. BOB CRATCHIT enters carrying TINY TIM on his shoulders.

BOB: Why, where's our Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT: Not coming.

BOB: Not coming! Not coming upon Christmas Day!

MARTHA: Here I am, Father!

She runs into his arms.

BOB: How's my dear Martha?

MARTHA: Good, Father.

MRS. CRATCHIT: And how did little Tiny Tim behave?

BOB: As good as gold and much better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in church, 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.

ACTOR 3: Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

MARTHA: His active crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, and escorted his sister to the dinner table.

MRS. CRATCHIT: The goose is served.

The entire FAMILY sits around the table. MRS. CRATCHIT enters with a ridiculously small goose on a platter.

TIM: What a wonderful goose!

SCROOGE: Is that all they have, Spirit?

PRESENT: That is all they can afford.

TIM: What a splendid goose!

BOB stands to propose a toast.

BOB: Ladies and gentlemen, may I propose a hearty salute to all of us. A merry Christmas to us all, my dears, and God bless us!

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