

A Christmas Carol

DRAFT

Subject to Revisions

West Bend Theatre Co., Inc.

Script based on Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol" Novella

Production Design, Musical Selections, Adapted for Theatre in the Round – Nancy Storrs

Scene 1A — London Streets/Scrooge's Office

[House in total darkness. SCROOGE and CRATCHIT enter to positions in office and freeze.]

DICKENS enters to center or east end (wherever lighting dictates) and freezes. Choir sings first verse of *"To Drive the Cold Winter Away"* slowly and quietly offstage, a cappella. When they get to final phrase, lights come up slowly to half on office set. When first verse ends, lights come up to full on DICKENS.]

DICKENS: Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a doornail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a doornail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? 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... Marley's sole friend, and sole mourner. Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge. Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire. He carried his own low temperature about with him always — he iced his office in the dog days, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

And Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut-up by the sad event of Marley's death, but being an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, he solemnized it with an undoubted bargain. Now, the mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point from which I began. Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am about to relate.

[DICKENS NARRATOR fades slowly and quietly from the scene, bowing as he introduces....]

[SCROOGE and CRATCHIT break their tableau, begin moving about] Once upon a time — of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve — old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house.

[LONDONERS enter singing the first two versus of *"The Holly and the Ivy."* They greet each other, interact, then continue to hum quietly under DICKENS' narration (which follows) and gradually begin to exit, humming until offstage.]

It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already: it had not been light all day: and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighboring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms.

The door of Scrooge's counting house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

[DICKENS steps aside and into shadow, but still in view of audience]

[LONDONERS disappear, except for NEPHEW FRED, who approaches and enters SCROOGE's office door]

SCENE 1 — SCROOGE'S OFFICE

FRED: A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, uncle! 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.

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

SCROOGE: Bah! [*pause*] Humbug!

FRED: Don't be cross, uncle!

SCROOGE: [*turning to address FRED directly*] What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmastime to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books, and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months, presented dead against you? 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. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas-time, when it has come round — apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that — as a good time; 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 as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. 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!

[*CRATCHIT jumps to his feet, smiling and applauding, but realizing his impropriety, recovers his meek demeanor and hurriedly returns to filing papers*]

SCROOGE: [*to CRATCHIT*] Let me hear another sound from *you*, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! [*turning to FRED*] 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 tomorrow.

SCROOGE: Dine! Tomorrow! Bah!

FRED: But why? Why?

SCROOGE: Why did you get married? *[as if getting married were the most foolish thing a person could ever do]*

FRED: *[bemused]* Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE: Because you fell in love! *[derisively]* BAH! Good afternoon!

FRED: Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE: *[lightly]* Good afternoon.

FRED: *[a hint of despiration now]* I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you. Why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE: *[firmly]* 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 have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So... *[putting an arm around SCROOGE]* a Merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE: *[removing FRED's hand from his shoulder]* Good afternoon!

FRED: *[looking not at SCROOGE but forward now and smiling]* And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE: *[at wit's end]* Good afternoon!

[upon blindly hearing this reaction, FRED smiles even more broadly and exits with a spring in his step]

SCROOGE: *[muttering]* There's another fellow, my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a Merry Christmas. Absolute absurdity!

[LAMB and POOLE ad lib recognition of 'Scrooge & Marley' exterior signage and enter the office]

LAMB: *[referencing a list]* Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

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

POOLE: *[presenting a business card to SCROOGE]* We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

SCROOGE brushes the credentials back, knocking the card to the floor... POOLE stoops to retrieve it, blowing the dust from it and returning it to his coat pocket]

LAMB: *[producing a pen]* 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

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at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

POOLE: *[incredulous]* Plenty of prisons.

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

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

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

POOLE: Both very busy, sir.

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.

LAMB: Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. 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!

POOLE: *[a single nod, as if confident in his understanding]* 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.

LAMB: 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. Besides — excuse me — I don't know that.

POOLE: But you might know it.

SCROOGE: It's not my business! It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon!

LAMB : *[looks up at the sign above the door as they exit, takes a book and quill from his pocket, and scratches out a name from his list, then mutters...]* Scrooge!
[LAMB and POOLE exit in disbelief]

DICKENS: *[emerging from shadows as clock chimes five]* Meanwhile, the fog and darkness thickened, and the cold became intense. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a gothic window, became invisible, and struck five in the clouds with tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there.

[by now, CRATCHIT has risen from his stool and stands beside Scrooge, hat in hand, clearing his throat]

SCROOGE: *[his eyes still fixed on his work]* You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT: *[cautiously cheery]* If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: *[turning now to CRATCHIT]* 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: *[smiling faintly]* But sir, Christmas comes but once a year...

SCROOGE: *[bitter]* A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! *[resignation]* But I suppose you must have the whole day. *[pointing a finger at CRATCHIT]* Be here all the earlier next morning!

CRATCHIT: *[barely containing his joy as he dons his hat]* You have my promise. Thank you, sir!

[a smiling CRATCHIT exits, appreciates that snow is beginning to fall and clicks his heels together]

SCROOGE: *[now in half light, continues tallying his ledgers while mumbling to himself]* Paying for a day of frivolity... picking my pocket.

*[CAROLERS including BUCK approach the exterior of SCROOGE's office door and sing the first verse of **Four Pence A Day**]*

SCROOGE: *[his irritation growing in proportion to the volume of the singers]* Bah!... Christmas!... Humbug! *[at last, Scrooge goes to his door and shouts]* Be gone, you miserable little beggars! Take your infernal Christmas carols and get away from my door!

[SCROOGE shoos them with his hands... before purposefully startling them]

SCROOGE: Bah!

[SCROOGE turns to discover he has inadvertently separated BUCK from the rest, and stands towering over the trembling child]

SCROOGE : *[even more sinister now]* Baaaaahhhh.

[BUCK extricates himself. Exits hastily... Scrooge dons his cap and scarf. Fog fills the house.]

SCROOGE: *[punctuating the exit]* Humbug!

SCENE 2 — COURTYARD OF SCROOGE'S RESIDENCE

*[DICKENS emerges from shadows as CAROLERS sing- Offstage Voices Continue « **Four Pence a Day** » in haunting redundant chorus.]*

DICKENS: *Moves to EAST as he speaks*

DICKENS: Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and 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. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a dreary old house, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark, and the fog and frost so hung about him, that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands.

[SCROOGE arrives at front door of his residence]

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; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the City of London. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven-year's dead partner that afternoon. And 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, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face.

[on the word "face," MARLEY's image appears and Scrooge recoils]

To say that Scrooge was not startled would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle. [SCROOGE, with back to audience, twists bulb on battery-operated flicker candle]

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall and up the stairs — trimming his candle as he went. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. That said, having ascended the stairs, he walked through his room, slowly too, to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Nobody under the table; nobody under the bed; nobody in his dressing gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Quite satisfied, he sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could extract the least sensation of warmth. The fireplace was an old one, built by some Dutch merchant long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures. If each smooth tile had been a blank at first, with power to shape some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of Scrooge's thoughts, there would have been a copy of old Marley's head on every one. Instead, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together.

[MARLEY'S GHOST enters from southwest and walks the length of the house moaning and dragging his chains]

They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

[*DICKENS retreats*]

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SCENE 3 — SCROOGE’S BEDCHAMBER

“A Soalin” song variation may be included in this scene

MARLEY’S GHOST: Ebeneeeeeeezer. Ebeneeeeeeezer.

[MARLEY’S GHOST enters the bed chamber, to SCROOGE’s great surprise]

MARLEY’S GHOST: *[moaning]* Scrooge! Ebenezer Scrooge!

SCROOGE: *[positions himself with chair between himself and MARLEY]* How now! What do you want with me?

MARLEY’S GHOST: Much!

SCROOGE: *[frightened]* Who are you?

MARLEY’S GHOST: Ask me who I was...

SCROOGE: *[uncertainly]* Who *were* you then?

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

SCROOGE: *[looking doubtfully upon MARLEY]* Can you — can you sit down?

MARLEY’S GHOST: I can.

SCROOGE: Do it, then.

MARLEY’S GHOST: *[MARLEY sits]* You don’t believe in me.

SCROOGE: *[assuming a certain bit of confidence]* I don’t.

MARLEY’S GHOST: What evidence would you have of my reality beyond your own senses?

SCROOGE: I don’t know.

MARLEY’S GHOST: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because, a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. *[fumbling for more of an explanation — more to reassure himself than for MARLEY’s benefit]* You may be an undigested bit of beef... a blot of mustard... a crumb of cheese... a fragment of an underdone potato. Yes, yes! *[more certain now]* There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are! Humbug, I tell you! *[pauses as he hastily produces a toothpick from his dressing gown pocket]* You see this toothpick?

MARLEY’S GHOST: I do.

SCROOGE: *[upset that the ghost is not cooperating]* You are not looking at it.

MARLEY’S GHOST: But I see it, notwithstanding.

SCROOGE: Well! I have but to swallow this and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you. Humbug!

MARLEY'S GHOST: *[rising from the chair and shaking his chains]* Aieeeeeeeeeee! Man of the Worldly Mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE: *[recoiling in horror to his bed]* Mercy! I do. I must. Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me? Why come to me?

MARLEY'S GHOST: 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 — oh, woe is me! — and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth... and turned to happiness! *[wailing and shaking his chains]* Aieeeee!

SCROOGE: *[examining the ghost's chains]* You are fettered, Jacob. Tell me why.

MARLEY'S GHOST: I wear the chain I forged in life — link by link, 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 was full as heavy and long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is a ponderous chain!

SCROOGE: *[he looks briefly for a chain, then falls to his knees and clasps his hands in front of his face]* Jacob. Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!

MARLEY'S GHOST: I have none to give. It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting house. Mark me! In life, my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our moneychanging hole! *[sobbing]* And weary journeys lie before me.

SCROOGE: *[still on his knees, and looking down]* You must have been very slow about it, Jacob.

MARLEY'S GHOST: Slow?

SCROOGE: Seven years dead, and traveling all the time!

MARLEY'S GHOST: The whole time. No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.

SCROOGE: You travel fast?

MARLEY'S GHOST: *[seemingly exhausted]* On the wings of the wind.

SCROOGE: You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years.

MARLEY'S GHOST: *[wails and rattles his chains]* Oh, captive, bound and double ironed! Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its own little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! Yet such was I! Oh, such was I!

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

MARLEY'S GHOST: *[turning toward SCROOGE]* Business! Mankind was my business! The common welfare was my business! *[backing SCROOGE, who has risen to his feet, into his chair with one step per word]* Charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business. *[the anger now replaced by a tortured voice]* Oh, and it is at this time of the rolling year that I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise

them to that blessed star which led the wise men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me*? *[turns to see SCROOGE trembling]* Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: I will! But don't be hard upon me! Don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!

MARLEY'S GHOST: How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. That is no light part of my penance. I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet a hope and chance of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: You were always a good friend to me, Jacob. *[managing a meek smile]* Thank'ee!

MARLEY'S GHOST: You will be haunted by three spirits.

[SCROOGE's smile is instantly replaced by a look of dread]

SCROOGE: Is that the hope and chance you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY'S GHOST: It is.

SCROOGE: I — I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY'S GHOST: *[sadly]* Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow when the bell tolls One.

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

MARLEY'S GHOST: Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third on the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. *[crossing to an imaginary window in the chamber]* Ebenezer! *[pointing at a woman huddled with her infant downstage]* Look out this window. That poor woman and her infant huddled on the doorstep below! Look that you may see for your own sake.

SCROOGE: Ghosts!...chained... just like yourself! They surround the woman! But, they're not haunting her, they're... pleading! Doesn't she see them? Why do these ghosts lament, Jacob? Why do they wail?

MARLEY'S GHOST: *[looking out the window]* They seek to aid her. They seek to do good in human matters, but have lost their power... forever. *[now turning to SCROOGE]* Look to see me no more, but remember what has passed between us, and beware their fate, Ebenezer. Beware!... Beware!... Beware! *[wailing]* Aieeeee!
[MARLEY'S GHOST exits the way he entered, through the southwest door. SCROOGE jumps into his bed, covering his head with the sheets as first the lights, then the fireplace, fade to black]

SCENE 4 — SCROOGE'S BEDCHAMBER

[DICKENS narration is from the south transept area, MARLEY'S GHOST walking past him as he begins to speak]

DICKENS: When Scrooge awoke in his bed it was so dark that he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He endeavoured to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters... So he listened for the hour.

Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly. Every time he resolved within himself, after mature inquiry, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through: "Was it a dream or not?"

Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three quarters more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled One. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was passed; and, considering that he could no more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was, perhaps, the wisest resolution in his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

[FIRST SPIRIT enters from the northwest door and quietly proceeds to the north transept area as its lines begin. As dialog continues, FIRST SPIRIT walks all the way to Scrooge's bedchamber]

FIRST SPIRIT: *[as if making a statement of fact]* Ebenezer... Scrooge.

SCROOGE: *[frightened]* Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold?

FIRST SPIRIT: I am!

SCROOGE: Who, and what are you?

FIRST SPIRIT: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long past?

FIRST SPIRIT: No, your past.

SCROOGE: What business brings you here?

FIRST SPIRIT: Your welfare! *[upon noticing a look of skepticism on SCROOGE's face]* Your reclamation, then. Take heed! Rise! and walk with me!

[SCROOGE arises slowly from his bed. FIRST SPIRIT beckons him to follow, leading him to walk. He proceeds a few steps, but then stops]

SCROOGE: *[warily]* I am a mortal, and liable to fall.

FIRST SPIRIT: Bear but a touch of my hand, *there [touching his heart]* and you shall be upheld — in more than this!

[FIRST SPIRIT leads SCROOGE to north transept area]

SCENE 5 — A COUNTRY LANE

[At west end of house, in front of Scrooge & Marley office, FIRST SPIRIT waves its hand, and a pair of young boys, CHARLES and JOHN, enter — one chasing the other, both laughing as they dodge each other's snowballs]

SCROOGE: Good Heaven! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here! Look! There's Charles and John.... They're going to take the Norfolk coach — taking them home for the Christmas holiday. Hallo! Johnny! It's me, Ebenezer!

[By now the boys have disappeared again, and SCROOGE appears wistful... MRS. WHITEWOOD carrying a parcel enters from where the boys had exited and passes in the opposite direction]

SCROOGE: *[shouting and waving]* Yo ho, there! Mrs. Whitewood!

FIRST SPIRIT: These are but shadows of the things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

SCROOGE : *[attempts another greeting as MRS. WHITEWOOD exits]* Yo ho...

[SCROOGE sadly drops his hand]

FIRST SPIRIT: You were a schoolboy... let us go there. You recollect the way?

SCROOGE: Remember it! I could walk it blindfold!

[SCROOGE and the FIRST SPIRIT move downstage in front of the platform, as if onto the road where MRS. WHITEWOOD had been]

FIRST SPIRIT: Your face so lit up as they went past... you must have had fond memories of them... and this place. *[with mild incrimination]* Strange to have forgotten it for so many years.

SCROOGE: Bah.....

SCENE 6 — SCHOOLHOUSE

[As lights come up on south transept area, BOY SCROOGE enters from southwest door, carrying a stool and a book, and singing “Oh Come, All Ye Faithful.” Ends singing as he places stool and sits in south transept]

FIRST SPIRIT: The school at Christmas time. But it is not quite deserted. A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

SCROOGE: I know it. *[begins to sob]*

[SCROOGE moves cautiously behind the, reading over his shoulder, and the spirit follows... SCROOGE flips the pages absently, unnoticed by the boy]

SCROOGE: *[wiping his eyes of tears to better focus on the book]* Why, it’s Ali Baba! It’s dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes I know! One Christmas time, when this child was left here all alone, this boy read Ali Babba.... *[flipping pages]* And the Sultan’s Groom! *[flipping more pages]* And the Genie! *[in turn nearly laughing and crying as he reminisces]* There’s the parrot! Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like lettuce growing out of the top of his head. Poor Robin Crusoe. The man thought he was deaming, but he wasn’t. *[to the FIRST SPIRIT]* It was the Parrot, you know. *[back to the book]* There goes Friday! Running for his life! *[excitedly]* Halloo! Hoop! Halloo! *[drifting off SCROOGE stops, observes the child, steps back, and then moves away]* Poor boy. *[SCROOGE cries again]*

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

SCROOGE: It’s... nothing. *[he wipes the tear using the cuff of his robe and he sniffs]*

[SCROOGE and the FIRST SPIRIT distance themselves from BOY SCROOGE]

SCROOGE: I wish... But it’s too late now.

SPIRIT: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: *[sadly]* Nothing. Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something; that’s all.

SPIRIT: *[smiling thoughtfully, touches Scrooge’s heart]* Come! Let us see another Christmas...

SCENE 7 — SCHOOLHOUSE [SEVEN YEARS LATER]

[BOY SCROOGE exits as TEEN SCROOGE enters and sits on the same stool]

SCROOGE: Why, it's me! Years later... but still away at this dismal school... alone on Christmas.

FAN: *[calling from offstage beseechingly]* Ebenezer? *[then jubilant upon locating him]* Ebenezer!

SCROOGE: It's Fan! My sister! My beloved Fan!

[FAN runs to and is lifted and twirled by TEEN SCROOGE]

TEEN SCROOGE: Fan, my darling sister! You're here!

FAN: Dear, dear brother. I have come to bring you home, dear brother! *[laughing and clapping her hands]* To bring you home, home, home!

TEEN SCROOGE: *[surprised]* 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 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 the world.

TEEN SCROOGE: You are quite a woman, little Fan!

FAN: Let us go!

[they exit running, FAN pulling TEEN SCROOGE by the arm]

FIRST SPIRIT: Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered. But she had a large heart!

SCROOGE: So she had. You're right. I will not gainsay it, Spirit. God forbid!

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

SCROOGE: One child.

FIRST SPIRIT: True. Your nephew!

SCROOGE: *[uneasily]* Yes. *[FIRST SPIRIT touches SCROOGE's heart]*

SCENE 8 — FEZZIWIG'S WAREHOUSE

[FEZZIWIG is seated on a high stool, preferably at a high desk on the Scrooge & Marley platform]

FIRST SPIRIT: Tell me, Ebenezer, do you know this place?

SCROOGE: Know it! I was apprenticed here! Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart! It's Fezziwig — alive again!

FEZZIWIG: *[checks his watch, smiles, and shouts toward offstage]* Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve!

[YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE and DICK WILKINS enter from opposite sides of platform and shake hands in high spirits]

SCROOGE: *[to FIRST SPIRIT]* Dick Wilkins, to be sure! Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!

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

[YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE and DICK WILKINS exit, replaced by FEZZIWIG CHORUS, which begins singing "Gloucestershire Wassail" with great spirit as actors and carouse with each other... at the conclusion of the song, the boys return and await their next instruction]

FEZZIWIG: Hilli-ho! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

[BELLE enters last and seeks out YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE. FEZZIWIG, MRS. FEZZIWIG and eventually the entire FEZZIWIG CHORUS begins singing and dancing "I Saw Three Ships." YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE partners with BELLE. SCROOGE stands to the side, clapping along with the music in spite of himself. FEZZIWIG CHORUS claps at conclusion of song.]

FEZZIWIG: *[laughing]* Well done!

[FEZZIWIG CHORUS exits on farewell lines, as party begins to disperse.]

FEZZIWIG CHORUS: *[ad lib in turn under FIRST SPIRIT and SCROOGE dialog as they exit]* Thank ye Old Fezzi, Thank ye!

God Bless Ye and Merry Christmas

Thank ye and the Missus., too

Bless & Thank Ye, Fezzi.

[FEZZIWIG and MRS. FEZZIWIG exit. SCROOGE and FIRST SPIRIT move to the east end of the house]

FIRST SPIRIT: A small matter, to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE: *[quite offended]* Small!

FIRST SPIRIT: *[feigning anger]* Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

SCROOGE: *[heatedly]* It isn't that. *[softening]* It isn't that, Spirit. *[pauses, and then whistfully]* He has 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.

FIRST SPIRIT: *[noticing the change in SCROOGE]* What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing particular.

FIRST SPIRIT: 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.

[FIRST SPIRIT allows the thought of his clerk to linger in SCROOGE's mind for just a moment]

SPIRIT: *[smiles knowingly]* My time grows short. *[touches SCROOGE's heart, and this time SCROOGE puts his hand there, too]* Quick!

SCENE 9 — BELLE 'S PARLOR

[A chair/loveseat has been placed in front of Scrooge & Marley office set at west end of house. YOUNG BELLE enters delivering first line, as if the argument had began in another room, with YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE following her]

YOUNG 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.

YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE: What idol has displaced you?

YOUNG BELLE: *[sitting on loveseat]* A golden one.

YOUNG ADULT 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!

YOUNG BELLE: You fear the world too much. All your hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of poverty's sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you.

YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE: What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.

[YOUNG BELLE only looks into his eyes]

YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE: Am I?

YOUNG BELLE: Our contract 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.

YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE: *[impatiently]* I was a boy.

YOUNG BELLE: *[standing to face YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE]* Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are. 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.

YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE: Have I ever sought release?

YOUNG BELLE: *[she sits]* In words.... No. Never.

GROWN SCROOGE: In what, then?

YOUNG 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? *[noticing his reluctance to answer, she whispers]* Ah, no.

YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE: You think not.

YOUNG BELLE: I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows! When *I* have learned a Truth like this — and I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free today,

tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl? No. You weigh everything by Gain. So I release you. With a full heart, for the love of who you once were.

[YOUNG BELLE rises and takes the hands of YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE in hers]

YOUNG BELLE: You may — the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will — have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it — gladly — as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

[YOUNG BELLE exits and YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE watches sadly then bows his head in silence. SCROOGE attempts to move toward his bedchamber at east end of house, only to be blocked by FIRST SPIRIT]

SCROOGE: Spirit! Show me no more! Conduct me home! Why do you delight to torture me? No more! I don't wish to see it! Spirit! Show me no more!

[YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE exits]

FIRST SPIRIT: One shadow more!

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

SCENE 10 — BELLE'S FAMILY HOME (YEARS LATER)

DICKENS: But the relentless ghost forced him to observe what happened next. They were back in this familiar place, but in another time, years later.

[BELLE'S CHILDREN enter, running and giggling, and begin playing jacks on the floor near the same love seat... ADULT BELLE enters and joins in the game]

ADULT BELLE: Alright now, children, I expect father to be here very soon... Let's tidy up and make ready for him my darlings...

DICKENS: The children and their mother laughed heartily, and enjoyed themselves very much; and the latter, soon beginning to mingle in the sports, got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly. What would I not have given to be one of them!

[DICKENS moves into bedchamber and sits in a chair]

FIRST SPIRIT: Tell me, Ebenezer, what do you see?

SCROOGE: *[sadly]* Belle.

[a door knocker is heard and ADULT BELLE'S husband TUT enters carrying packages in his hands and his coat pockets]

TUT: A merry Christmas, my children!

CHILDREN: *[rising and hugging their father]* Father! Father! *[accepting his handouts and looting his coat pockets and ad libbing]* Thank you, Father.

Oh, look.

May I see?

Is this for me ?

One for Mother!

SCROOGE: *[clearly shocked and heartbroken]* Belle married another..... *[trailing off...]* I never knew.

[ADULT BELLE and TUT move away from children, who play behind them]

TUT: *[putting an arm about ADULT BELLE's waste]* Belle, I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.

ADULT BELLE: Who was it?

TUT: Guess!

ADULT BELLE: How can I? Tut, don't I know? *[they both laugh]* Mr. Scrooge!

TUT: Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed by his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe.

BELLE : Poor Ebenezer Scrooge...

SCROOGE: *[in a broken voice]* Spirit! Remove me from this place!

FIRST SPIRIT: I told you these were shadows of the things that have been. That they are what they are. Do not blame me!

[FIRST SPIRIT touches SCROOGE's heart once more, steps back, and begins to swirl away]

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

SCENE 11 — SCROOGE'S BEDCHAMBER

[DICKENS rises from bedchamber chair as SCROOGE gets into bed. SECOND SPIRIT enters quietly in darkness at the center of the house]

DICKENS: After his experiences with the First Spirit, Scrooge was concious of being exahausted, and overcome by an irresistable drowsiness, and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He had barely time to reel to bed before he sank into a heavy sleep. Waking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore...

[SCROOGE snores loudly]

...and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the hour... He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger dispatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. Scrooge wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise.

Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, express the wide range of their capacity for adventure by observing that they are good for anything from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter; between which opposite extremes, no doubt, there lies a tolerably wide and comprehensive range of subjects.

Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and consequently, when the bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. At last, however, he began to think — as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the predicament who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too — at last, I say, he began to realize that the source and secret of this ghostly visit might already be in the room.

[Lights suddenly come to full, illuminating SECOND SPIRIT]

SECOND SPIRIT: Ebenezer Scrooge! Come! *[laughing]* Come! Come and know me better, man. I am the Ghost of Christmas Present! Look upon me! You've never seen the like of me before!

SCROOGE: *[Stunned]* Never!

SECOND SPIRIT: Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning — for I am very young — my elder brothers born in these later years?

SCROOGE: *[confused]* I don't think I have. *[now a bit more certain]* I am afraid I have not. *[And again rather confused]* Have you had many brothers, Spirit ?

SPIRIT: *[begins laughing again]* More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE: *[his miserly self speaking]* A tremendous family to provide for! *[sighing, reluctantly accepting]* 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 have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

SECOND SPIRIT: *[earnestly]* Touch my robe!

[LONDONER CHORUS enters singing **“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”** boldly pushing Scrooge to and fro, willy nilly as SECOND SPIRIT moves among them joyfully. DICKENS resumes....

SCENE 12 — LONDON STREETS

DICKENS: They stood in the city streets on Christmas morning.

[*LONDONERS hum « **God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen**.... Quietly beneath as DICKENS speaks*]

DICKENS: People were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another — laughing heartily. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the grocers were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the wastecoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars, and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe. It was not alone that blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest onlookers feel faint.

[*SECOND SPIRIT sprinkles Joyful seasoning as people pass, chuckling as he does so*]

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

SECOND SPIRIT: There is. My own.

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

SECOND SPIRIT: To any kindly given. To a poor one most.

SCROOGE: Why to a poor one most?

SECOND SPIRIT: Because it needs it most.

SCROOGE: Spirit, I wonder you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment.

SECOND SPIRIT: I.

SCROOGE: You would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all, wouldn't you?

SECOND SPIRIT: I!

SCROOGE: You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day. And it comes to the same thing.

SECOND SPIRIT: I seek!

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

SECOND SPIRIT: [*Firmly advising Scrooge, the great teacher summarizing*] There are some upon this earth of yours who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name, who are as strange to us, and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. [*Turning sharply to face Scrooge, perhaps poking his staff in Scrooge's chest*] Remember that ! And charge their doings on themselves, not us.

[*SCROOGE nods fearfully.*]

[Type text]

DICKENS: The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and, taking off the covers of baskets or packages as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice, when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled each other, he shed a few drops on them from it, and their good-humour was restored directly.

[two shoppers bump into each other, and one drops a basket]

SHOPPER 1: I say, watch out where you're going!

SHOPPER 2: Watch where you're going!

[SECOND SPIRIT sprinkles seasoning on the two shoppers, a sudden change occurs between them as they miraculously (due to seasoning) become holiday affable to each other and to all.]

SHOPPER 1: Why Merry Christmas Me' Love !

SHOPPER 2: *[picking up parcels]* Me packages.... *[suddenlt experiencing a delayed reaction to the « seasoning »]* Why I do believe this one's for you ! *[handing a package to Shopper #1]*

*[LONDONER CHORUS burts forth with the phrase « **O tidings of Comfort and Joy** and exit, interacting with each other]*

DICKENS: For they said, it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

SCENE 13 — CRATCHIT FAMILY HOME

[MRS. CRATCHIT and CRATCHIT CHILDREN without TINY TIM enter, with table, bench, stool and dishes. As CRATCHIT CHILDREN and mother set up, they softly hum or cant « bum, bum, bum » to “Pat-a-Pan” under narration]

DICKENS: Perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and, on the threshold of the door, the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen "Bob" a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

MRS. CRATCHIT: 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 CRATCHIT enters in excited flurry – so happy to be home]

PETER CRATCHIT: Here's Martha, Mother. Hurrah!

HARRIET : There's such a goose, Martha!

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

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

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, never mind — so long as you are come. [indicating a chair and a mug perhaps] Sit down, my dear, and have a warm. Lord bless ye!

BELINDA CRATCHIT: No, no! Not Yet! Father's coming!

PETER : [An idea strikes him to make a game for Father] Hide here, Martha ! Hide!

FREDERICK CRATCHIT: Quick. He's coming! [Indicating she should hide under the table cloth]

[MARTHA hides – not very successfully under the table as BOB CRATCHIT enters carrying TINY TIM upon his shoulder]

TINY TIM: [excitedly to BOB CRATCHIT] I can smell the pudding !

[BELINDA steps up to BOB, taking his scarf from him, placing it on the bench, BOB places his hat on FREDERICK'S head]

BOB CRATCHIT: Indeed ! It smells like a pastrycook's shoppe. [setting TINY TIM onto a stool – he looks about him, with a fondness for hearth and home...] Ah! Peter, Belinda, Frederick, Harriet! Why, where's our Martha?

MRS CRATCHIT clears her throat, letting BOB know that the « game is afoot. » She then obviously points toward the table at MARTHA'S PROTRUDING FOOT or BACKSIDE, just as all of the children look away, not seeing her gestures.

HARRIET CRATCHIT: *[looking OBVIOUSLY at the table – hoping BOB doesn't notice.... Then coyly scratching the floor with one foot]* Not coming !

BOB CRATCHIT: *[Playing into the game, feigns shock, and disappointment]* Oh No ! Not coming! Not coming upon Christmas Day?

MARTHA CRATCHIT: *[coming out of hiding]* Here I am, Father! *[laughs]* Merry Christmas! *[runs around to wrap her arms around him.]*

MRS. CRATCHIT: Now, tell us all, how did little Tim behave?

BOB CRATCHIT: As good as gold, and better.

TINY TIM CRATCHIT: *[to MRS. CRATCHIT]* They sang ever so nice, Mother.

BOB CRATCHIT: 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 made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.

MRS. CRATCHIT: *[holding TINY TIM's face in her hands]* Bless you, my son.

BOB CRATCHIT: See Mother, Tim is growing strong and hearty. He will get better. I know it.

BELINDA CRATCHIT: Father, let's play a game!

FREDERICK CRATCHIT: Play — the memory game with us!

HARRIET : Please! Please!

MARTHA CRATCHIT: Yes! And then we'll sing songs and... maybe dance Papa ?

[MRS. CRATCHIT carries a small cooked goose to the table]

PETER CRATCHIT: *[gasps]* Oh My!

FREDERICK ! Look at that goose!

TINY TIM CRATCHIT: Oh, smell that goooooooooooooose!

HARRIET CRATCHIT: Hurrah! Look! Look!

MARTHA : There was never such a goose! Never!

BOB CRATCHIT: I don't believe there was ever such a goose cooked. I regard it as your greatest achievement, Mrs. Cratchit, since our wedding day. *[he kisses MRS. CRATCHIT on the cheek]*

MRS. CRATCHIT: *[flattered, but returning to the pragmatism of the moment at hand]* All right! Be seated. Here you go. Take your turn, now. There's plenty of stuffing, potatoes and plum pudding for all of you. *[pulling MARTHA CRATCHIT aside, whispers]* Martha, dear. Sit next to Tiny Tim and make sure he eats plenty. He must get strong and well. If anything should happen to him...

MARTHA CRATCHIT: *[evesdropping]* Oh, Mother! Don't even think that.

BELINDA CRATCHIT: I'll see that he eats well.

[BOB CRATCHIT calls attention by rapping a spoon on the table]

BOB CRATCHIT: Alright then! Quiet, please. Quiet. A Prayer: *[all join hands]* Bless this food to our use, and us to thy service, bless all of our friends, folks of all sorts, Bless our dear family, and lord hear me ask - Keep us ever mindful to the needs of all others.

ALL: Amen!

BOB CRATCHIT: A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

MRS. CRATCHIT: God bless us!

PETER CRATCHIT: God bless us.

MARTHA CRATCHIT: God bless us.

BELINDA CRATCHIT: God bless us.

FREDERICK CRATCHIT: God bless us.

HARRIET CRATCHIT: God bless us.

TINY TIM CRATCHIT: *[coughs]* God... bless us... every one!

[BOB CRATCHIT wraps his arm around TINY TIM's shoulder, and gives him his white comforter... all CRATCHITS freeze in tableau]

SCROOGE: *[overcome for a moment with sentiment for the child]* Spirit, tell me! Will Tiny Tim will live ?

SECOND SPIRIT: 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 !

SECOND SPIRIT: If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and «decrease the surplus population.» *[poinantly throwing Scrooge's own words back to him]*

SCROOGE hangs his head in shame]

SECOND SPIRIT: Perhaps in the future, man — if man you be in heart — you will hold that wicked tongue until you have discovered what the surplus population 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.

[wounded, SCROOGE looks at the floor... the CRATCHITS break their tableau... a punch bowl is brought to the table]

MARTHA CRATCHIT: Here's the punch — steaming hot.

MAS CRATCHIT : Take your turn. There's enough for a toast!

[Type text]

BOB : And one after that!

BELINDA CRATCHIT: A toast! A toast!

FREDERICK : A toast to Christmas!

BOB CRATCHIT: Indeed my boy ! *[clearing his throat]* I would like to propose a toast... To the Founder of the Feast....Mr. Scrooge!

[upon hearing his name, SCROOGE looks up]

CRATCHIT CHILDREN: *[ad libbing objections]* What? No! Father! Please! Not him! Ohh!

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

BOB CRATCHIT: *(mildly)* My dear, the children! Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: 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!

BOB CRATCHIT: *(mildly)* My dear, Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: 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!

[the family drinks a subdued toast to SCROOGE and freezes]

DICKENS SPEAKS as *[SECOND SPIRIT sprinkles each CRATCHIT as they slowly through southwest door]* **CRATCHITS ALL** leave the table and **QUIETLY** remove all plates, cups, table itself as they go.

DICKENS: It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness. The mention of Scrooge's name cast a dark shadow on the party which was not quickly dispelled. There was nothing of high mark in their gathering. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawn-broker's.

ONLY CRATCHIT BENCH remains, on which **SCROOGE** sits to observe and reflect. **TINY TIM** is last to exit.

DICKENS: But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

[TINY TIM leaves, looking at SCROOGE who doesn't see TINY TIM as TINY TIM sings "FOUR PENCE A DAY" until out of view]

SECOND SPIRIT generously dusts **SCROOGE** with his « seasoning » which causes **SCROOGE** to slumber on the **BENCH**.

SCENE 14A – SCROOGE’S FLIGHT

DICKENS: By this time it was getting dark, and snowing quite heavily; the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms was wonderful. If you had judged from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there, instead of every house expecting company, and piling up its fires half-chimney high. Blessings on it, how the Ghost exulted! How it opened its capacious palm, and floated on, outpouring, with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach!

SCENE 14 — FRED'S PARLOR

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, SCROOGE awakens.... Confused

LONDONERS in 4 corners of the room, resume with "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen" hummed very quietly...

SCROOGE: What now, Spirit ? What now ?

[SECOND SPIRIT puts a finger to his lips as if to quiet SCROOGE, then nods, as guests assemble for FRED'S PARTY.]

DICKENS: It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. *(NEPHEW FRED laughs offstage, then enters with KATE.)*

It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his own nephew's and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side. If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's newpew, all I can say is, I should like to know him, too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance.

[LONDONER PARTY GUESTS are enter, each with a glass of wine, in the south transept area, and they begin joyfully singing "Wassail Song"]

FRED: *[laughs]* He said Christmas was a humbug! As I live! *[laughing]* He believed it too! *[laughs some more]*

KATE: *[indignantly]* More shame for him, Fred.

FRED: *[becoming more serious, but with a smile]* 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.

KATE: 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 make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking that he is ever going to benefit *us* with it.

KATE: I have no patience with him.

FRED: Oh, I have. I am sorry for him. I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims ? Himself. Always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence?

KATE: *[proudly]* I think he loses a very good dinner.

FRED: Well, I'm very glad to hear it, because I haven't great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?

TOPPER: *[gazing at one of the female guests]* I'm a bachelor, a wretched outcast who has no right to express an opinion on the subject.

KATE: *[to FRED]* Do go on, Fred. *[to FRED'S PARTY GUESTS]* He never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!

FRED: *[laughs]* 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. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it — I defy him — 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.

[FRED'S PARTY GUESTS laugh at the notion of FRED having "shaken" SCROOGE... the party breaks into a short song TBD, the conclusion of which is met with more laughter, and SCROOGE is visibly enjoying himself]

KATE: Let's play Yes and No!

[FRED'S PARTY GUESTS ad lib agreement and applaud]

SCROOGE: *[excitedly to the SECOND SPIRIT]* Here's a game! One half hour, Spirit, only one!

KATE: Think of something, dear husband, and we must find out what.

FRED: All right. *[thinking]* Quick now! Ask away!

GUEST 1: Vegetable?

FRED: No!

GUEST 2: Animal?

FRED: Yes!

GUEST 3: A friendly animal?

FRED: No!

GUEST 1: Disagreeable?

FRED: *[laughs]* Yes!

GUEST 2: Savage?

FRED: *[roars]* Yeeeeeeesss!

GUEST 3: Grunts and growls? Talks?

FRED: *[thinking]* Yes to both! Sometimes!

GUEST 1: Hmmm... Lives in London? In a menagerie?

FRED: Yes and... *[laughing]* No!

GUEST 2: Walks the streets?

[Type text]

FRED: Oh, yes!

GUEST 3: Horse!

FRED: No! No! No!

GUEST 1: Then it's a dog?

FRED: No.

KATE: A bull!

FRED: *[guffaws scoldingly]* Noooo!

GUEST 2: An ass!

FRED: *[swiftly]* No! But... closer.

GUEST 3: I have found it out. I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!

FRED: *[chuckling]* What is it?

GUEST 3: It's... your.... Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!

[FRED'S PARTY GUESTS erupt in laughter; SCROOGE's excitement evident throughout the game turns instantly to humility]

FRED: Yes! *[laughs]* He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here's a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment, and I say, "Uncle, Scrooge!"

FRED'S PARTY GUESTS: *[lifting their glasses]* Uncle Scrooge!

FRED: A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is! He wouldn't take it from me, but he may have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!

[they all drink and then exit, with two carrying the table singing "The Parting Glass"]

SCENE 15 — DEPARTURE OF THE SECOND SPIRIT

[SECOND SPIRIT has moved to area in front of Scrooge & Marley office set during previous scene, allowing IGNORANCE and WANT to emerge from off state and position themselves under the SECOND SPIRIT's robe. SCROOGE is left alone in center of house when previous scene ends]

SECOND SPIRIT: My life upon this globe is very brief. It ends yet tonight.

SCROOGE: *[startled]* Tonight!

[a bell tolls three quarters]

SECOND SPIRIT: Tonight at midnight. *[Westminster chimes are heard]* Hark! The time is drawing near.

SCROOGE: Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask, *[now looking intently at the SECOND SPIRIT's feet]* But I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot... or a claw?

[the hand of IGNORANCE extends upward in front of SECOND SPIRIT's robe]

SECOND SPIRIT: It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it. *[he bends down, points and continues sadly]* Look here.

[IGNORANCE and WANT emerge, clutching at the SECOND SPIRIT's garment from their knees]

SECOND SPIRIT: Oh, man! Look here! Look, look, down here!

[SCROOGE starts back, appalled]

SCROOGE: Spirit! Are they yours?

SECOND SPIRIT: They are Man's. *[looking down at the children]* 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. Deny it! Slander those who tell it ye. Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And abide the end.

SCROOGE: Have they no refuge or resource?

SECOND SPIRIT: *[bending down to shelter the children in his robes, he looks at them both in turn as he continues]* Are there no prisons? *[now looking up to catch SCROOGE's eye directly]* Are there no workhouses?

[blackout on SECOND SPIRIT, IGNORANCE and WANT and they exit, leaving a devastated SCROOGE in isolation, then complete blackout]

INTERMISSION

SCENE 16 — THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS

[LONDONERS CHORUS sings offstage the first verse of “In the Bleak Midwinter”... Twelve chimes indicate midnight... Lights come up on SCROOGE, who is in the same pose as he was at the blackout ending Act I, as the narration begins.]

DICKENS: As the last stroke of midnight ceased to vibrate, Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost of Christmas Present, and saw it not. He then remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and, lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist along the ground towards him.

[THIRD SPIRIT enters and once in place does not speak or move]

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

[THIRD SPIRIT points onward]

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?

[SCROOGE’s legs begin to tremble beneath him, and the THIRD SPIRIT takes notice of this]

SCROOGE: Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any specter 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 your company... and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?

[THIRD SPIRIT points again]

SCROOGE: *[resigned to the fact he will receive no verbal response]* Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!

SCENE 17 — ROYAL EXCHANGE

DICKENS: They scarecley seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were in the heart of it. Merchants chinked the money in their pockets and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and so forth.

[YOUNG BUCK enters, hawking a newspaper, and one of the businessmen buys a copy]

SCROOGE: Why! It's my accustomed corner at the Royal Exchange. And here are my fellow businessmen, as I have seen them often.

[THIRD SPIRIT points at BUSINESSMEN, and SCROOGE leans in to eavesdrop of their conversation]

BUSINESSMAN 1: *[mid-conversation]* No, I don't know much about it either way. I only know he's dead.

BUSINESSMAN 2: Well, Old Scratch has got his own at last, eh?

BUSINESSMAN 1: So I am told.

BUSINESSMAN 3: When did he die?

BUSINESSMAN 1: Last night, I believe.

BUSINESSMAN 3: *[takes snuff out of snuffbox and snorts it]* Why what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

BUSINESSMAN 1: *[yawns]* God knows.

BUSINESSMAN 2: What has he done with his money?

BUSINESSMAN 1: I haven't heard. *[yawns again]* Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know.

[all three BUSINESSMEN laugh]

BUSINESSMAN 1: 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?

BUSINESSMAN 2: I don't mind going if a lunch is provided. But I must be fed.

[all three BUSINESSMEN laugh again]

BUSINESSMAN 1: Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all, for I never wear black gloves, and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go — if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye!

[BUSINESSMEN ad lib farewells and exit]

SCROOGE: Spirit? Why attach importance to a conversation so trivial? Is there some hidden purpose?

DICKENS: Having recieved no answer from the Phantom, Scrooge nonetheless knew these events could not have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. When he roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

SCENE 18 — RAG AND BOTTLE SHOP

[OLD JOE, THE CHARWOMAN and MRS. DILBER enter during narration and stand in north transept area, where lights come up at the end of the narration]

DICKENS: They went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognized its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow, the shops and houses wretched, the people drunken and slipshod. Secrets that few would like to scrutinize were bred and hidden in mountains of torn rags, broken glass and rusted metal. The spirit yet had not spoken, but pointed to society's refuse — two examples of which were gathering to do business with Old Joe.

[CHARWOMAN and MRS. DILBER enter OLD JOE's rag and bottle shop, both carrying baskets or bundles of stolen goods from SCROOGE's residence... they are laughing, and OLD JOE joins in the laughter upon their approach]

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, Old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!

OLD JOE: You couldn't have met in a better place. *[removing his pipe from his mouth]* Come into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know, and you ain't strangers. There ain't such a rusty bit of metal in the place as its own door 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. *[he feigns graciousness, but it is thinly covered by his greed and desire to see what the ladies have brought to him]* Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour.

CHARWOMAN: *[dropping her bundle to the floor and herself on a stool, she sits in a flaunting manner]* What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber! Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did.

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

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?

MRS. DILBER: No, indeed. We should hope not.

CHARWOMAN: Very well, then! That's enough. *[meaning enough idle chatter]* Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.

MRS. DILBER: *[laughing]* No, indeed. 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.

OLD JOE: 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, Old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for all to see it. We know pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.

OLD JOE: *[examines the contents of CHARWOMAN's bundle, tallies marks on a slate and shows it to her]* That's your account, and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not

doing it. I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself.

MRS. DILBER: And now undo *my* bundle, Joe.

OLD JOE: [*uses his walking stick to fish from the basket some linens*] What do you call this? Bed curtains?

MRS. DILBER: [*with great pride*] Indeed! Bed curtains!

OLD JOE: [*incredulous, but approving*] You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?

MRS. DILBER: Yes I do! Why not?

OLD JOE: [*flirting with her*] You were born to make your fortune! And you'll certainly do it.

MRS. DILBER: 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, Joe.

CHARWOMAN: [*as OLD JOE uncovers more from MRS. DILBER's basket*] His blankets?

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

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

MRS. DILBER: Don't you be afraid of that, I ain't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did.

[*OLD JOE finds SCROOGE's shirt and holds it up so the shape is clearly visible*]

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

OLD JOE: What do you call wasting of it?

MRS. DILBER: Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure. Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. He can't look uglier than he did in that shirt.

[*all three laugh at this latest remark, enjoying themselves a little too much*]

DICKENS: Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil in the scanty light, he viewed these outcasts of London with a detestation and disgust, which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

OLD JOE: [*tossing coins at the women's feet*] 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.

[*all three burst into greedy laughter, and exit with their wares*]

SCROOGE: [*shuddering*] Spirit. I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now.

SCENE 19 — SCROOGE's BEDCHAMBER

[the black sheet that had been placed on SCROOGE's bed at the start of Scene 12 is removed, leaving only a white sheet covering a corpse... down stage goes to black and platform is now in half light... SCROOGE and THIRD SPIRIT approach the bed]

SCROOGE: *[frightened mightily]* Merciful heaven, what is this? A dark room! A bare, uncurtained bed! The shrouded body of this plundered, uncared for man?

[THIRD SPIRIT points at the head of the shrouded body, and SCROOGE moves closer to it]

SCROOGE: Spirit!. This is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!

[THIRD SPIRIT again points to the corpse's head]

SCROOGE: *[defeated]* I understand you, and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power.

[THIRD SPIRIT turns its gaze from the corpse to SCROOGE]

SCROOGE: *[returning the gaze directly]* If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death, *[quite agonized]* show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you! *[sobs]*

SCENE 20A — DEBTORS' HOME

[spotlight comes up on CAROLINE pacing, fidgeting, and looking toward the entrance. CAROLINE'S HUSBAND enters, the two lock eyes in a moment of silence, during which CAROLINE'S SON dashes in]

HER SON: Mother, Mother I have News!

CAROLINE: Is it good... or bad? We are quite ruined?

HER SON: No.... Mother I think there is hope.

CAROLINE: If the ogre relents there is! If only such a miracle has happened!

HER SON: He is past relenting, Mother. *[a pause]* He is dead.

[looking at each other, both pause a beat and then can no longer surpress the relief... CAROLINE then appears awkward and fidgety again in her sudden regret for feeling so thankful to hear her husband's news]

HER SON: What the old cleaning woman said to me when I tried to seek a week's delay; and what I thought was an excuse to avoid me; turns out to have been quite true! He was not only very ill as she said, but dying!

CAROLINE: So to whom will our debt be transferred?

HER SON: I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; for it could only be bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor to replace him. We may sleep tonight with light hearts tonight. That man is dead!

[Scrooge is both horrified and embarrassed at this scene. He begins to show remorse as he pleads in the next line.]

SCROOGE: Let me see some tendernous connected with a death, Spirit, or that room which we left just now, will be forever present to me.

SCENE 20B — BOB CRATCHIT'S HOME

[the CRATCHIT children gather in the south transept area around MRS. CRATCHIT, who is

PETER CRATCHIT: "...And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them. And answered, 'I say unto you that none but those who are as humble as little children shall enter into Heaven. Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me..."

MRS. CRATCHIT: *[weeping]* Stop, Peter. Stop reading. Oh... My son, my son, Tiny Tim... *[sobs]*

MARTHA CRATCHIT: *[bringing her mother a handkerchief]* Mother, please don't cry. Father will be home soon. Don't let him know you've been crying. It is near father's time to be home.

FREDERICK CRATCHIT: Past it rather ...

HARRIET CRATCHIT: But I think he has walked a bit slower than he used to, these few last evenings, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT: *[attempts cheerfulness, but falters]* I have known him walk with — I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed. *[weeps]*

BELINDA CRATCHIT: And so have I. Often.

MARTHA CRATCHIT: And so have I.

MRS. CRATCHIT: But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble.

PETER CRATCHIT: Here's Father just now!

[MRS. CRATCHIT dries her tears, makes herself presentable and moves to hug BOB CRATCHIT, who enters carrying the crutch, and each of the children offer a subdued hug in turn]

BOB CRATCHIT: *[feigning cheerfulness]* Sorry, I'm late, Mother. 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. *[breaking down]* My little, little child! My little child!

MARTHA CRATCHIT: *[racing to her father's side]* Don't mind it, father. Don't be grieved.

MRS. CRATCHIT: *[rising to embrace him in sorrow]* You went there today, then? Oh, Robert! *[sobs]*

BOB CRATCHIT: As I was walking, I met Mr. Scrooge's nephew on the street, as well. He asked why I looked a little down. On which, for he is the peasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him of our loss. 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily sorry for your good wife.' By the bye, how he ever knew *that*, I don't know.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Knew what, my dear?

BOB CRATCHIT: Why, that you were a good wife.

PETER CRATCHIT: Everybody knows that!

BOB CRATCHIT: Very well observed, my boy! I hope they do. *[returning to his story]*
 ‘Heartily sorry,’ he said, ‘for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way,’ he said,
 giving me his card, ‘that’s where I live. Pray come to me.’ 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 is was quite delightful. It really
 seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.

MRS. CRATCHIT: I’m sure he’s a good soul.

BOB CRATCHIT: You would be surer of it, my dear, if you saw and spoke to him. *[breaking down again]* My little child! *[now laying a hand on TINY TIM’s crutch and trying to compose himself]* However and whenever we part from one another, I am sure, that none of us will ever forget poor Tiny Tim. — Shall we? — Or this first parting that there was among us?

ALL CRATCHIT CHILDREN: Oh, Father, no. Never. Not ever, Father.

[BOB CRATCHIT moves to each child in turn, patting the tops of their heads]

BOB CRATCHIT: And I know... I know my dears that when we recollect how patient and how mild our Tiny Tim was, although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves nor forget Tiny Tim by doing it...

ALL CRATCHIT CHILDREN: No, never Father. Not ever.

BOB CRATCHIT: *[buoyed by the children’s earnest affirmation]* I am very happy. I am very happy!

[CRATCHITS gather for a family hug then exit] **Violin Flute or Cello Solo = Wexford Carol**

SCROOGE: Specter, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?

[THIRD SPIRIT turns SCROOGE toward the bedchamber -----]

SCROOGE: This court, through which we hurry now, is where my place of residence is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be in the days to come!

[THIRD SPIRIT turns SCROOGE toward the opposite end of the space, where tombstones have been placed]

SCROOGE: *[desperate]* The house is yonder! Why do you point away?

2267 **SCENE 21 — GRAVEYARD**

2268
2269 **SCROOGE:** Spirit, where are we now? *[knowingly somber]* A churchyard.

2270
2271 *[THIRD SPIRIT points toward the large tombstone]*

2272
2273 **SCROOGE:** Spirit, before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one
2274 question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May
2275 be, only?"

2276
2277 *[THIRD SPIRIT only points at the stone]*

2278
2279 **SCROOGE:** Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must
2280 lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show
2281 me! Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?

2282
2283 *[THIRD SPIRIT's finger moves from the grave to SCROOGE and back again. SCROOGE*
2284 *approaches the grave, which reveals his name]*

2285
2286 **SCROOGE:** *[falling to his knees]* No, Spirit! Oh no, no! Spirit! hear me! I am not the man I was.
2287 I will not be the man I must have been! Why show me this, if I am past all hope?

2288
2289 *[THIRD SPIRIT's hand begins to shake, and SCROOGE notices this]*

2290
2291 **SCROOGE:** Good Spirit, your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may
2292 change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life! I will honour Christmas in my heart,
2293 and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all
2294 Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may
2295 sponge away the writing on this stone!

2296
2297 *[SCROOGE reaches for THIRD SPIRIT's hand, but it retreats, then exits... alone, SCROOGE*
2298 *raises his hands in prayer]*

2299
2300 **SCROOGE:** I will change... I will change... I will change.... *[blackout]*

2301
2302 **SCROOGE:** : I will change... I will change...

2303
2304 *[I WILL CHANGE as the cue for lights to come up... fading]*

SCENE 22 — SCROOGE'S BEDCHAMBER ON CHRISTMAS MORNING

SCROOGE: *[in bed but still on his knees]* I will change... I will change... *[opening his eyes that had been squeezed shut in earnest, one at a time, and looking over his shoulder]* I... I... am... home. In my own room! In my own bed! *[now scrambling out of bed and repeating his pledge]* 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! *[frantically kneeling again and pumping his clenched hands in hasty prayer]* I say it on my knees, old Jacob! On my knees! *[now jumping to his feet again to touch a bed curtain with his hands and cheek]* 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!

[SCROOGE comically changes from his nightcap and robe into daytime wear, putting on a topcoat upside down, pulling sleeves inside out]

SCROOGE: *[laughing and crying in the same breath]* 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 schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. *[skipping about his room]* A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!

SCROOGE: *[accounting for each bit of evidence as he darts from place to place]* There's the saucepan that the gruel was in! There's the door by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the window where I saw the wandering spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. *[giddy laughter]*

[YOUNG BUCK enters dragging a sled and begins his route around the stage platform... SCROOGE dashes to a window and pantomimes opening it]

SCROOGE: *[calling out]* Boy, boy! What's today?

YOUNG BUCK: Huh?

SCROOGE: What day is it, my fine fellow?

YOUNG BUCK: Today? Why, Christmas day.

SCROOGE: *[to himself]* 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. *[racing to another window at the opposite of the Platform, and nearly forgetting to open it]* Hallo, my fine fellow!

YOUNG BUCK: *[who has slowly made his way to stage left]* Hallo!

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

YOUNG BUCK: I should hope I did.

SCROOGE: *[to himself]* An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! *[calling out again]* Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? — Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?

YOUNG BUCK: What? The one as big as me?

SCROOGE: *[to himself]* What a delightful boy! It's a pleasure to talk to him! *[calling out through laughter]* Yes, my buck!

[Type text]

YOUNG BUCK: It's hanging there now.

SCROOGE: Is it? Go and buy it!

YOUNG BUCK: *[thinking it's a joke, he starts again on his route]* Walk-ER!

SCROOGE: *[pleading]* No, no, I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction 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.

[YOUNG BUCK exits, running]

SCROOGE: *[to himself again, away from the window]* I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's! He sha'n't know who sends it. *[laughing]* It's twice the size of Tiny Tim.

[SCROOGE takes his top hat and descends the stairs of the bedchamber set]

DICKENS: Dressed in all his best, Ebenezer Scrooge at last got out into the streets of London. *[LONDONERS ENTER left and right, and stagehands convert the bedroom to SCROOGE's counting house]* By this time, people were pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present, and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He had not gone far, when coming toward him, he beheld one of the gentleman who had walked into his counting house the day before, and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?" It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

[SCROOGE takes MR. POOLE by the hands]

SCROOGE: My dear sir. How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir.

LAMB: 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... *[fades to whisper into POOLE's ear]*

LAMB: 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 favor?

LAMB: *[heartily shaking SCROOGE's hand]* My dear sir, I don't know what to say to such...

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

LAMB: I will!

SCROOGE: Thank'ee. I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!

[LONDONERS exit with SCROOGE engaging children, etc., as FRED, KATE and FRED's PARTY GUESTS enter opposite carrying and setting parlor props]

SCENE 23 — FRED'S PARLOR

DICKENS: Scrooge went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk — that anything — could give him so much happiness.

DICKENS: In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

[SCROOGE shows apprehension as he makes several approaches to an invisible door and knocks... RUTH answers]

SCROOGE: Is your master at home, my dear?

RUTH: Yes, sir.

SCROOGE: Where is he, my love?

RUTH: He's in the parlor, sir, along with the mistress. Will you kindly wait here, if you please.

SCROOGE: Thank'ee, my dear.... *[calling fter her...]* He knows me. *[nervously to himself after she leaves]* Nice girl. Very.

[RUTH whispers to FRED, who expresses shock at what he heard, then sees SCROOGE standing there]

SCROOGE: Fred!

FRED: *[beaming]* Why, bless my soul. Who's that?

SCROOGE: It is I -- Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?

FRED: Why, I can't believe you are really here... at my home?... on Christmas?

SCROOGE: I have come also to beg your pardon, Fred, for the things I said about Christmas. They... were a hum-bug.

NEPHEW FRED: *[relishing the moment]* Were they? Well, I... I don't know what to say... Do come in. Um... May I present my wife Kate.

KATE: Uncle Ebenezer, I never expected this of you.

SCROOGE: Oh, Kate. Can you forgive an old fool? And God forgive me for the time I've wasted!

KATE: Of course.

NEPHEW FRED: Well, join the feast, Uncle! *[calls off stage]* Set another place at the table!

KATE: Come, Uncle.

NEPHEW FRED: *[addressing the party guests]* Here, here! I propose a toast. A toast! *[no fixed on SCROOGE with great emotion in his voice]* To Uncle Scrooge...

[Type text]

FRED'S PARTY GUESTS: To Uncle Scrooge!

DICKENS: And so, Ebenezer Scrooge rejoined his family and rejoined the family of man.

SCENE 24— SCROOGE’S OFFICE

[SCROOGE enters opposite and opens his counting house]

DICKENS: The next morning, Scrooge was early at the office. If he could only be there first — and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon. And he did it! The clock had struck nine — no Bob. Quarter past — no Bob. He was a full eighteen minutes and half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the tank. *[BOB CRATCHIT rushes in from the street set and tries to enter, hoping to sneak in undetected by SCROOGE]*

SCROOGE: *[at the exact moment BOB CRATCHIT sits, feigning anger]* Mister Cratchit! What do you mean by coming in at this time of day?

[BOB CRATCHIT bolts upright and turns towards SCROOGE]

BOB CRATCHIT: I am very sorry, sir. I’m behind my time.

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

BOB 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. *[pointing a finger at CRATCHIT, if not actually poking him in the chest]* And therefore... And therefore... I am about to raise your salary! *[he spins and skips amid nutty laughter]*

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, please sir, you’re... going to raise... my salary?
[skeptical] But... sir...

SCROOGE: *[laughs and shakes CRATCHIT’s hand with both of his own]* Bob, Bob, Bob. I’ve not lost my senses... I’ve come to them! A merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I’ll raise your salary, and endeavor to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!

DICKENS: Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old city ever knew.

[TINY TIM — still using his crutch — enters and stands next to DICKENS]

And to Tiny Tim — who did not die — he became a second father. And it was always said that Ebenezer Scrooge knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us. ALL of us. And so, as Tiny Tim observed...

TINY TIM: God bless us — every one!

*[at this instant, LONDONERS CHORUS joyously sings the last line of **God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen**]*

LONDONERS CHORUS: Oh, tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, oh tidings of comfort and joy!