

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Written by

SUSIE BURKE

Based on  
A Christmas Carol  
By  
Charles Dickens

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PROLOGUE

WILL FERN enters. "A sunbrowned, sinewy, country looking man. He was so jaded and footsore, and so soiled with travel, and looked about him so forlorn and strange. He wore worn shoes -now the very shade and ghost of shoes, rough leather leggings, common frock and broad slouched hat."

This character will also play THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

He removes his hat, and reading from a Proclamation, gives the speech of welcome to the audience.

WILL FERN

Welcome to the Parish of St.Giles on this December 24th, in the year of our Lord, 1843. By subscription and most charitable ways, we do thank the goodly persons of this parish for their benefactions.

(name the Patrons and supporters of the theatre))

I, Will Fern, directed by the Alderman, do here confess to my many sins and exactions, and here before you accept the judgment of this jury upon my misdeeds. Jail. Jail, Jail for the rest of my years. But I swear before you all that I never took with this hand that wasn't my own; and never held it back from work, however hard and poorly paid. Gentlefolk, I've lived many a year in the cottage over yonder. And see how your laws are made to trap and hunt us. I go nutting in my own woods and breaks -who don't - a limber branch or two -to jail with him! One of your keepers sees me in the broad day, near my own patch of garden, with a gun. Jail Jail! I cuts a stick. To jail! I eats a rotten apple or a turnip. To jail with him! Twenty miles away. Coming back, free again, I begs a trifle on the road.

(MORE)

## WILL FERN (CONT'D)

Back to jail with him. Put him down  
for a Jailbird, vagabond, vagrant  
of the Parish. Who can give me back  
my liberty? Who can give me back my  
good name?

CHARLES DICKENS speaks from the Audience as the BAILIFF leads  
Will Fern away.

## DICKENS

Not all the Lords and ladies in  
wide England. Now Will Fern is  
beyond the time when kind words and  
kind actions would have done him  
good. Gone, gone all hope, gone  
with the scent of last year's beans  
or clover on the air. Gentlefolk,  
deal with these men in the right  
way. Give them, in mercy, better  
homes when they are lying in their  
cradles; give them better food when  
they are working for their lives;  
give them kinder laws, for they  
have patient, peaceful, willing  
hearts.

As he speaks, the CHORUS of the people of London streams in,  
ignoring his exhortation as the characters set up the  
CHRISTMAS EVE FLEA MARKET. He walks among them, as they  
busily ignore him. He is just one of the "do gooder" speakers  
at Hyde Park Corner. The CHORUS will also set up the scenes  
as they play.

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

Bring him back, gentlefolk, bring  
him back, before the time when even  
his Bible changes in his altered  
mind, and the words seem to him to  
read, "whither thou goest, I can  
Not go; where thou lodgest, I do  
not lodge; thy people are Not my  
people; Nor thy God my God!"

The people are warming themselves by singing a Christmas  
CAROL

"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"

ACT ONE

## SCENE ONE:

It is almost seven o'clock on a wintry night in London. The dark tenements rise up into the gloom amid shadows.

The COUNTING HOUSE of EBENEZER SCROOGE fronts the street. Tucked into an alcove is a tall pulpit with a tall stool, on which BOB CRATCHIT labors in a dim light. He is transcribing figures into a big Bookkeeper's record of the business transactions of the day. He is wearing thick lensed glasses, and over them, a jeweler's magnifying headpiece. He is desperately trying to "see" the tiny figures in the flickering light. As the Music is heard outside his window, he sighs, pushes the glasses and the jeweler's headpiece up onto his head and rubs his eyes wearily. He lowers himself from the stool, and stretches his bent back and shoulders. He looks out the window and smiles, and sings quietly along with the Carolers. Then he returns to the tall stool, trims the light to make it brighter, and resumes his work, lowering his eyepieces to see.

On stage, a streetlight pierces the darkness, and a fire blazes in the chestnut seller's cart. On small tables, and rugs thrown on the ground, dilapidated items are set for sale. A Christmas Eve flea market is being set up. Shivering in the dank air, shoemakers, leatherworkers, bootblacks, and cloak and coat menders set up their perches. Children are running around, including TINY TIM and his LITTLE BROTHERS, and a shivering WAIF who is making something to sell. Matches? Pretty little Paper Flowers? Feather designs? Wire jewelry? Her work is on a shawl that would be better wound around her shoulders, for she is quite ill. This WAIF will become THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST.

While the Carol is being sung, TINY TIM and his BROTHERS see the Waif. They crowd around her wares, picking up and playing with them, and showing them to passersby. When the Carol ends, the little family stands behind her and sings:

"Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat. Please to put a penny in a poor girl's hat. If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do. If you haven't got a ha'penny then God Bless you."

EBENEZER SCROOGE appears, shutting his Office door, and huddling into his coat. He is about to hurry past the little group as he pulls his handkerchief out of his pocket. His small purse of coins flies out with it, and scatters on the ground. The Waif runs towards the money.

He growls, waves his stick.

SCROOGE

Back. Back Child! Be off with you!

She has gathered up a few rolling coins, and shyly offers them to him. He opens the pouch for her to put them in.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)  
 (counting), )  
 Shilling, shilling, penny, penny,  
 penny, half crown...here! T'uppennies  
 missing, Turn out your scarf, girl.  
 Turn it out I say.

She spreads out the scarf, which has a few coins in it. He takes money from it.

TINY TIM  
 It is here sir, right here.

He offers Scrooge the pennies that his Brother picked up off the ground.

Scrooge takes them, but does not give back the two pennies he took from the scarf.

SCROOGE  
 Idle beggars! Where are your  
 parents who send you to beg on the  
 Streets? In the gin mills, no  
 doubt, or wastrels in the pens. Get  
 off with you.

He scatters them with his stick, Tiny Tim almost falling as he tries to crutch away.

BOB CRATCHIT emerges from Scrooge's counting house. He sees his family. He is Irish.

BOB  
 I say Sir, I say! They was just  
 waiting for me, and singing, sir,  
 that is my Family, Sir.

SCROOGE  
 Then you should know better, Bob  
 Cratchit, and have more Pride. You  
 are employed Sir, employed. And it  
 is on you to provide for your  
 family, not the Gentlemen of the  
 City. Never let me see this  
 spectacle again. Children! Begging  
 in the Streets. Are there not  
 enough workhouses to take in these  
 vagrants?

Bob hands Mr. Scrooge the Cash Accounts, bound and sealed.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow. Seven sharp. Sharp, mind you, a penny for every minute that you scant me.

BOB

But it is Christmas, Sir, Christmas day.

SCROOGE

And do you think the world stops spinning for a'that, Bob Cratchit? Do you think Business Affairs take a day off? They do not. Bob Cratchit. And if you do not want your job, there are plenty here to step up for me. Just say the word, Bob Cratchit, and you will have many days to enjoy the company of your family!

Bob Cratchit gathers his family around him as Scrooge exits. He buys a bag of warm chestnuts and gives them to the waif, who crouches over their warmth, eating them so quickly she almost burns her fingers. The Cratchit family exits.

The little girl pulls her shawl about her and curls up on the ground under the streetlamp.

THE CHORUS

( sings:)

Silent Night, Holy night,  
All is calm, all is bright,  
Round yon Virgin Mother and child,  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.  
Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light,  
Radiant beams from thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Christ the savior is here,  
Christ the savior is here.

CHARLES DICKENS

The Spirit of Christmas moves among you! I know that our inheritance is held in store for us by Time. I know there is a Sea of Time to rise one day, before which all who wrong us or oppress us will be swept away like leaves. I see it on the flow!

(MORE)

CHARLES DICKENS (CONT'D)

I know that we must trust and hope,  
and neither doubt ourselves nor  
doubt the good in one another.

The Church Bells of London begin to chime the hour.

DICKENS

The Bells, the bells! Dear  
constant, steady friends. Bless  
your sturdy hearts. Melodious, deep  
mouthed noble bells, Ring for us,  
ring for the Blessed Babe born this  
Eve, who never raised his benignant  
hand save to bless and heal. Chime,  
great Bells, as you have never  
chimed before. I myself will swing  
a sledge hammer and strike a mighty  
blow for the Poor.

Scrooge makes his way towards his dwelling, through the  
people on the street. FREDERICKA, Scrooge's niece, calls to  
him in a jolly voice.

FREDDIE

A merry Christmas, Uncle Scrooge,  
God save you.

SCROOGE

Bah. Humbug!

FREDDIE

Christmas a Humbug, Uncle? You  
don't mean that I'm sure?

SCROOGE

I do. Merry Christmas! What right  
do you have to be merry, Miss  
Fredericka? You are poor enough?

FREDDIE

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

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

FREDDIE

Don't be cross, Uncle.

SCROOGE

What else can I be, when I live in  
such a world of fools as this? (He  
shakes his cane at the revelers).

(MORE)

## SCROOGE (CONT'D)

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

## FREDDIE

Uncle! Christmas is a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. A time when Men and Women open their shut up hearts freely.

## SCROOGE

Niece, keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.

## FREDDIE

Keep it! But you don't keep it!

## SCROOGE

Let me leave it alone then. Christmas! A poor excuse to pick a man's pocket.

## FREDDIE

Uncle. I want nothing from you! I came here today to invite you to our Christmas Dinner.

## SCROOGE

More extravagance! Have you no idea at all of Political Economy? Why did you get married?

## FREDDIE

Because I fell in love.

## SCROOGE

You had no right and no business to be married. Married! You people are completely ignorant. You will probably quarrel with your husband and become a distressed wife on the parish. You will certainly have children, who will grow up bad of course, and run wild in the streets without shoes and stockings!

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Perhaps your husband will die and leave you with a baby, then you'll be turned out of doors and wander the streets. Now don't wander near me, my girl, don't think to plead illness as an excuse with me, or your babies, for I shall have no pity!

FREDDIE

Nay, Uncle, for goodness sake!

SCROOGE

The poor law is in full vigor, I take it, the workhouses remain open?

FREDDIE

Many can't go there, many would rather die!

SCROOGE

If they be like to die, let them do it and decrease the surplus population!

FREDDIE

(Looks at him gravely) I have made my trial of you in homage to Christmas. I am sorry with all my heart to find you in this temper.

CAROL

"We wish you a merry Christmas"

FREDDIE

Merry Christmas, Uncle.

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

Freddie Exits.

SCENE TWO:

As Dickens Speaks, Scrooge climbs the stairs to his chambers.

DICKENS

Ebenezer Scrooge lived in chambers above his counting house.

(MORE)

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of a building up a yard, where it had so little business to be that I fancy it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide and seek with the other houses, and forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge. Once he had a Partner -Old Jacob Marley. Indeed, The Counting House still had the name "Scrooge and Marley" across the door. Now. Old Marley has been dead for seven years. Dead as a doornail. I might have thought a coffin nail as the deadeast piece of ironmongery in the trade, but the wisdom of our ancestors is in the doornail, so I shan't disturb it or the Country's done for. So. Scrooge knew Old Marley was dead of course, for he was his sole executor, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend and his sole mourner. Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but was an excellent man of business on the day of the Funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain. There is no doubt that Marley is dead. This must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am about to relate. Scrooge and Marley had been partners for I don't know how long, and Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. Oh but Scrooge was a tight fisted hand, a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, solitary as an Oyster! No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. What did Scrooge care?

(MORE)

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

It was the very thing he liked - to edge his way upon the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance.

As Dickens speaks, Scrooge enters his chambers. His bed has curtains around it. There is also a curtained alcove. Scrooge pulls back this curtain which hides his Money. Scrooge carefully locks the cash and the Accounts into a money box in the alcove and turns it with a key which he wears around his neck. He pulls the curtain closed. He gets undressed and puts on nightgown, slippers and a nightcap. He is shivering cold -too miserly to have a fire. Scrooge gets into bed and draws the curtains closed -his room is cheerless, cold and dark.

A SOUND rises: Ghostly wind, clanking chains, hollow groans. Scrooge looks out, cross, rather than fearful. The GHOST OF JACOB MARLEY reveals himself by pulling the curtain open in the Alcove. This is Dicken's description of the GHOST

He had ghostly spectacles turned up on his ghostly forehead. He wore his usual waistcoat, tights and boots and coat. He was not angry or ferocious, but had a livid color with a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. He was bristling with an infernal atmosphere of his own -his hair, skirts, pigtail, tassels were agitated as if from the breath of an oven. A long chain was wound about his waist, chaining him within the alcove to the money box, to strong boxes, to heavy purses and to files of debts.

SCROOGE

Marley? Jacob Marley? Bah! Humbug!  
I don't believe it.

He draws the curtains.

The Ghost rattles his chains and howls.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

(caustic and cold as ever)  
Marley? Old Marley? What do you  
want with me?

MARLEY

Much!

SCROOGE

Who are you?

MARLEY

Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE

Who were you then? You're particular, for a shade.

MARLEY

In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE

Can you -can you sit down?

MARLEY

You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE

I don't.

MARLEY

What evidence do you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?

SCROOGE

I don't know.

MARLEY

Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE

Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than a grave about you, whatever you are. You see this toothpick?

MARLEY

I do.

SCROOGE

You are not looking at it.

MARLEY

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 raises a frightful cry and shakes his chains with a dismal and appalling noise.

Scrooge falls out of bed and kneels on the floor.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Mercy! Dreadful Apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY

Man of Worldly Mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE

I do. I must. But why do Spirits walk the Earth, and why do they come to me?

MARLEY

It is required of every man that the Spirit within him be condemned to wander through the world -oh woe is me- to witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth and turned to happiness.

The Ghost groans and shakes his chains.

SCROOGE

You are fettered. Tell me why?

MARLEY

I am doomed to wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link and yard by yard. I girded it on by 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 coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is a ponderous chain.

SCROOGE

Jacob, Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.

MARLEY

I have none to give. I cannot rest, I cannot linger anywhere. My Spirit never walked beyond our Counting House, Mark me!

(MORE)

MARLEY (CONT'D)

In Life I never roved beyond the  
narrow limits of this Money  
Changing Hole! And now weary  
journeys lie before me.

SCROOGE

You must have been very slow about  
it, Jacob.

MARLEY

Slow!

SCROOGE

Seven years, Jacob, you might have  
got over a great quantity of ground  
in seven years.

The Ghost clanks his chains and howls.

MARLEY

Oh! Captive! Bound and double  
ironed, to know that no space of  
regret can make amends! I have  
missed all of life's opportunity  
for kindness and Christian Spirit  
to work for Good. And now the earth  
must pass into eternity before I  
can right even one wrong!

SCROOGE

But you were always a good Man of  
Business, Jacob.

MARLEY

Business! Mankind was my business;  
The Common Welfare was my Business;  
charity, mercy, forbearance and  
benevolence were all my Business.

The ghost struggles against the chains and the money boxes.

MARLEY (CONT'D)

At this time of the rolling year, I  
suffer most. Why did I walk through  
crowds of my 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 abodes to which its  
light would have conducted me? Hear  
Me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE

I will. But don't be hard upon me,  
don't be flowery, Jacob, pray.

MARLEY

How is it that I appear before you  
in a shape that you can see I may  
not tell. I have sat invisible here  
beside you many and many a day.

SCROOGE

Here, just here, Jacob, here beside  
me?

MARLEY

Night and Day, night and day,  
Ebenezer for lo these seven years!  
This is my penance. I am here to  
warn you that you have yet a chance  
and a hope of escaping my fate. A  
chance and a hope of my procuring,  
Ebenezer.

SCROOGE

You were always a good friend to  
me. Thankee.

MARLEY

You will be haunted by three  
Spirits.

SCROOGE

Three Spirits? Three? Is that the  
chance and the hope that you  
mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY

It is.

SCROOGE

I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY

Without their visits you cannot  
hope to shun the path I tread.  
Expect the First when the Bell  
tolls One.

SCROOGE

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

## MARLEY

Expect the Second when the Bell  
tolls Two. The Third will come upon  
the last stroke of Twelve. Look to  
see me no more; and look that, for  
your own sake, you remember what  
has passed between us.

The Ghost fades from view. Scrooge pulls the curtain across  
the alcove. He jumps into bed, pulling closed his curtains  
and pulling his blanket over his head.

## SCENE THREE:

A whirring is heard -an old fashioned Clockworks. The Clock  
strikes ONE

The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enters. She is the Waif who died  
in the cold. She is beautiful, glittering, she seems to be  
afire with her own radiance. "Love's pure light/ Radiant  
beams" from the Christmas Carol Silent Night. She could be an  
Angel.

She draws the bed curtains aside.

## SCROOGE

Are you the Spirit whose coming was  
foretold me?

## SPIRIT

I am.

## SCROOGE

Who and what are you?

## SPIRIT

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past

## SCROOGE

Long Past?

## SPIRIT

No. Your past.

Scrooge throws his covers over his head.

## SPIRIT (CONT'D)

I am the Spirit of Christmas. Would  
you not see the light I give?

SCROOGE

Christmas is nothing to me. What has Christmas ever done for me. Out upon Christmas. Why are you here?

SPIRIT

For your Welfare.

SCROOGE

I am very much obliged, but a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end.

SPIRIT

Take heed! Rise! And walk with me.

SCROOGE

But the weather! And the night! It is on the freeze. I am not dressed. And my bed is warm, and (pitifully), I have a cold!

The Spirit takes his hand. Scrooge tries to resist, but is lifted from his bed.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I...I cannot fly. I cannot move through walls as you do. I am mortal! I am liable to fall.

The Spirit puts her hand on his heart.

SPIRIT

Bear but a touch of my hand there.

Dickens speaks as the Spirit and Scrooge exit.

DICKENS

They passed through the wall and stood upon an open country road with fields on either hand. The City had entirely vanished. It was a clear, cold winter day.

Scrooge enters with the Spirit.

SCROOGE

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

DICKENS

The old man was suddenly conscious of a thousand odors floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares, long, long forgotten.

SPIRIT

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

SCROOGE

A Pimple. Lead me where you would.

SPIRIT

You recollect the way?

SCROOGE

Remember it. I could walk it blindfold.

SPIRIT

Strange to have forgotten it for so many years. Let us go on.

DICKENS

They left the high road, by a well remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, deserted, dreary and decayed. They entered the dismal rooms, poorly furnished, cold and vast. There was a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candlelight, and not too much to eat.

SPIRIT

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

A YOUNG BOY enters and sits alone at a desk.

DICKENS

A lonely boy was reading by a feeble fire.

SCROOGE

(weeping) )

That is me. Me, poor and forgotten, as I used to be.

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Alone, always alone, when all the other boys had gone home. Home for Christmas.

Scrooge walks around the little boy, despairingly.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Poor boy, poor boy.

The little boy picks up his book and goes to the window, looking out at the audience. He is smiling.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

But look who's here! Ali Baba! And Valentine and his wild brother Orson, and the Parrot! There he is, green body and yellow tail, with a thing like a lettuce on top of his head. Yes, there he is! Poor Robinson Crusoe! He called him, and when he came back from sailing around the island, the Parrot said, "poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been Robin Crusoe?" Haha the man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't, it was the Parrot, you know. And here goes Man Friday, running for his life. Halloo! Hoop! Halloo!

I wish...but it's too late now...

SPIRIT

What is the matter?

SCROOGE

Nothing. Nothing. There was a little boy singing Carols this evening. I should have liked to have given him something, that's all.

SPIRIT

You saw only him?

SCROOGE

Spirit, you were not there.

## DICKENS

Although they had but that moment left the School behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy figures passed and repassed, where shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way, where all the strife and tumult of a city were all about them. It was Christmas time again.

## SPIRIT

Do you know this place?

## SCROOGE

Know it! I was Apprenticed here. With old Fezziwig, bless my soul.

OLD FEZZIWIG enters. He is a gentleman wearing a high "welsh wig", much dusty and disheveled. He is a jolly fellow, dressed in a capacious gown. He laughs all over himself and has a "comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice."

## FEZZIWIG

Yo ho there! Ebenezer, Dick!

Young Scrooge comes in briskly, with his fellow 'prentice.

## SCROOGE

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 clear away before a man can say Jack Robinson!

Fezziwig claps his hands and dances a little jig.

## FEZZIWIG (CONT'D)

HilliHo, clear away, my lads and let's have lots of room for the dancing, hilliho, Dick, chirrup, Ebenezer.

The Apprentices clear away the tables and chairs and desks.

Mrs Fezziwig enters, her whole body a smile. She bears a steaming jug of Brandy toddy.

FEZZIWIG (CONT'D)

AH Ha! Mrs Fezziwig! Come with the  
Christmas cheer I see. Well well!  
Dick, Ebenezer, have your Libation,  
boys, and here is a little  
something for the Day.

He presses purses into their hands.

The Chorus comes jostling in.

FEZZIWIG (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas  
and welcome to All! Here we are,  
here we are- The Waits, God Bless  
them! Now boys, Ebenezer, Dick,  
come here, come here.

He gives them some handfuls of coins. They distribute pennies  
to the Singers.

FEZZIWIG (CONT'D)

Come one, come all to the Christmas  
Libation. Then let us have a Jolly  
song for the Season.

(The CAROL)

"Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly"

The Fezziwigs dance a "merry measure" to the singing. The  
Chorus, the Apprentices and the Fezziwigs dance and sing  
their way off the stage.

SPIRIT

Fezziwig has spent but a few pounds  
of your mortal money. Three or four  
perhaps? And look what Christmas  
cheer. Does he not deserve your  
praise?

SCROOGE

It isn't that, Spirit. Not the  
money. He has the power to render  
us happy or unhappy; to make our  
service light or burdensome; a  
pleasure or a toil. Say that his  
power lies in words and looks;  
things so slight and insignificant  
that it is impossible to add and  
count 'em up. What then? The  
happiness he gives is quite as  
great as if it cost a fortune.

SPIRIT

What is the matter?

SCROOGE

Nothing particular.

SPIRIT

Something, I think?

SCROOGE

No, no. I should like to say a word or two to my clerk, Bob Cratchit, just now, if I could, that's all.

SPIRIT

My time grows short.

As Dickens speaks, he helps Scrooge into a greatcoat and boots, a tall hat and gold topped cane.

DICKENS

Scrooge is now a Man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it has begun to wear the signs of Care and Avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

ISABELLE, a lovely young girl in mourning clothes, enters. Scrooge takes her hand and bows over it without kissing it.

SCROOGE

Isabelle, my dear.

She gently takes away her hand.

ISABELLE

Our contract is an old one, made when we were both poor and content to be so. You are changed. When it was made you were another man.

SCROOGE

(impatiently) )  
I was a boy.

ISABELLE

Your own feelings tell you that you were not what you are. I am.

(MORE)

ISABELLE (CONT'D)

That which promised happiness when  
we were one in heart, is fraught  
with misery now that we are two.  
Another Idol has displaced me.

SCROOGE

What Idol!

ISABELLE

A golden one.

SCROOGE

This is the dealing of the world!  
There is nothing on which it is so  
hard as poverty; and there is  
nothing it condemns more severely  
than wealth!

ISABELLE

You fear the world too much. All  
your other hopes have merged into  
the hope of being beyond its sordid  
reproach. I have seen your nobler  
aspirations fall off one by one,  
until the master passion engrosses  
you.

SCROOGE

(Coldly) And what is that?

ISABELLE

Gain!

SCROOGE

What then? Even if I have grown so  
much wiser, what then? I haven't  
changed towards you.

ISABELLE

If this contract had never been  
between us, tell me, would you seek  
me out and try to win me now? Ah  
no.

SCROOGE

You think not?

ISABELLE

If you were free today, tomorrow,  
yesterday, can I believe that you  
would choose a dowerless girl?

SCROOGE

Have I ever sought release?

ISABELLE

Not in words, no. Never.

SCROOGE

In what then?

ISABELLE

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 worth and value in your sight... I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were. I release you.

He is about to speak.

ISABELLE (CONT'D)

The memory of what is past half makes me hope that you will have pain in this. But it will be brief, and you will dismiss all recollection of our love, gladly, as an unprofitable dream from which you have awakened. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

She exits.

SCROOGE

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

SPIRIT

One shadow more!

SCROOGE

No more, no more, I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!

Isabelle enters another room. Her HUSBAND follows her, embraces her.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

What would I not have given to be hers!

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I should have dearly liked, I own,  
to have touched her lips, to have  
questioned her so that she might  
have opened them, to have looked  
upon the lashes of her downcast  
eyes, to have let loose waves of  
her hair, I should have been Man  
enough to know her value...

HUSBAND

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

ISABELLE

Who was it?

HUSBAND

Guess.

ISABELLE

How can I? Tut! I don't know.

The Husband laughs.

ISABELLE (CONT'D)

(Laughingly) )

Mr. Scrooge.

HUSBAND

Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his  
office window. His partner lies  
upon the point of death, I hear,  
and there he sat alone. Quite alone  
in the world, I do believe.

They kiss. Embracing, they move towards the stairs.

SCROOGE

Spirit! Remove me from this place.

SPIRIT

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

SCROOGE

Remove me. I can't bear it. Leave  
me! Take me back. Haunt me no  
longer!

He removes his great coat and "extinguishes" the Spirit.  
Dickens says that her light glows and runs out along the  
floor....she crumples and Scrooge falls to his knees.

## CAROL

"How Shall I Fitly Meet Thee"  
 (by Bach: page 94-95 in  
 the Big Book of Carols)  
 How Shall I fitly meet Thee and  
 give thee welcome due?  
 The Nations long to greet Thee, and  
 I would greet Thee, too.  
 O Fount of Light shine brightly  
 upon my darkened heart,  
 That I may serve thee rightly, and  
 know Thee as Thou art.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

MRS. CRATCHIT and her Daughter BELINDA are preparing their small abode for Christmas. They are tying bright ribbons onto each other's faded dresses, and counting bits of coal for the fire, and putting out potatoes for the pot -small and wrinkled -some must be discarded for rot.

The rest of the Family is still out in the streets. It is but a moment after Act One, Scene One.

MRS CRATCHIT

What has ever got your precious  
 Father, then? And Tiny Tim? And our  
 dear Martha?

BELINDA

I sent the boys to fetch him home,  
 Mother, and Martha is kept late at  
 the Milliners -she may not leave  
 until every fine Lady is served.  
 She has a deal of work, and must  
 stay to clear away as well. But  
 look at these pretty ribbons,  
 Mother, they are only scraps she  
 says, but won't they make our  
 Christmas dresses fine indeed?

MRS CRATCHIT

Darling girl. Our twice turned,  
 thrice turned dresses...

BELINDA

(As she ties on the  
ribbons) )  
There, Mother.

MRS CRATCHIT

She was late last Christmas by  
almost an hour.

MARTHA enters, rosy from the cold.

MARTHA

Here I am, Mother. Belinda,  
darling. (She kisses her sister).  
Look what I found. (She gives them  
scraps of lace).

MRS CRATCHIT

Bless your heart alive, my dear!  
How lovely for the table, Martha  
dear. We will indeed be festive  
tonight.

Martha takes off her cloak, wraps a cloth around her waist  
for an apron.

MARTHA

What's to do?

MRS CRATCHIT

Mercy dear. Lay the table -no check  
the potatoes -is there one at least  
for each? Oh dear, oh dear, the  
Pudding -I have checked the fire, I  
hope we have enough coal. Belinda  
dear, go to the washhouse and see  
to the fire. Oh I do hope your  
Father has found a bit of coal.

MARTHA

Did you find a Christmas Goose,  
Mother?

BELINDA

Indeed she did, the boys have  
checked the Baker's Ovens ever so  
many times today.

MRS CRATCHIT

Poor creature -he was even more  
starved than we. Never mind. Come  
girls, to the washhouse. Bring the  
bit of coal.

They exit.

The CHORUS enters, singing a CAROL

"The Holly and the Ivy"

They bring decorations to dress the stage: Fir Boughs and Holly and Oak Wreaths. They decorate the stage so that it suddenly looks like a clearing in the forest.

SCROOGE enters above, goes to his Money Alcove, pulls aside the curtain, gingerly.

SCROOGE

Jacob, dear old Jacob, are you here  
Jacob? I beg your pardon indeed,  
but I must, I just must take a  
little-by your leave Jacob..

Scrooge unlocks his strong box and takes out some money.

Suddenly his room blooms with Golden Light. THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT strides in. He has a big, booming, laughing voice. Dickens describes him: He has long curling hair, a big beard, which hair and beard are woven with berries and holly. His gown is green and flowing. He bears a staff.

GHOST

Ebenezer Scrooge! Come here. Come  
here and know me better, Man!

Scrooge is timid. He shrinks into himself and hangs his head. "He is not the dogged Scrooge he has been, and although the Spirit's eyes are clear and kind, he did not like to meet them"

GHOST (CONT'D)

I am the Ghost of Christmas  
Present. Look upon me.

Scrooge looks up

GHOST (CONT'D)

You have never seen the like of me  
before.

SCROOGE

Never.

GHOST

(Have never walked forth  
with the other members of  
my family; meaning (for I  
am very young))  
(MORE)

GHOST (CONT'D)

my elder Brothers born in these  
later years?

SCROOGE

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

GHOST

More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE

A tremendous Family to provide for.

The Ghost laughs.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Spirit, conduct me where you will.  
I went forth already on Compulsion,  
and I learnt a lesson which is  
working now. If you have aught to  
teach me, let me profit by it.

GHOST

Touch my robe.

The Ghost leads Scrooge into the Streets. As Dickens speaks,  
the Chorus fills the stage with Christmas itself: merry  
makers, toymakers, fruit stalls with oranges and lemons,  
chestnut sellers. All the revels of Christmas.

DICKENS

The people were jovial and full of  
glee; calling out to one another  
from the parapets and now and then  
exchanging a facetious snowball,  
laughing heartily if it went right  
and not less heartily if it went  
wrong. The poulterers shops were  
open and the fruiterers were  
radiant in their glory. There were  
great round pot bellied baskets of  
chestnuts, shaped like the  
waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen,  
lolling out the doors and tumbling  
out into the street in their  
apoplectic opulence.

(MORE)

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

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, who glanced demurely at the hung up mistletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered in blooming pyramids, and bunches of grapes dangling from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed. There were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves. There were oranges and lemons, who in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreated and beseeched to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner. The blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, the raisins so plentiful and rare, the almonds so white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the spices so delicious, the figs so moist and pulpy, the French plums blushing in modest tartness, everything so good to eat and in its Christmas Dress. The Customers were all so hurried and eager in the hopeful promise of the day that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and leaving their purchases upon the counter, and running back again to fetch them, committing hundreds of the like mistakes in the best humor possible.

BOB CRATCHIT and TINY TIM and the two little CRATCHIT TWINS enter. The little boys are staggering under a platter on which is the Christmas Goose. Bob carries Tiny Tim.

BOB

Careful boys, steady now.

The little boys: Such a Goose, Father! And Sage and Onion stuffing!

They sing "Christmas is coming"

As they rollick home, The Ghost leads Scrooge to follow them.

Mrs. Cratchit and Belinda enter.

MRS CRATCHIT

Here is Father at last. Give me the  
Goose boys, goodness don't drop it!

BOB

Where is our Martha?

BELINDA

Not coming, Father.

BOB

Not coming, not coming on Christmas  
Day!

Mrs. Cratchit laughs at him as Martha comes in to embrace  
him.

Bob. There we are. All of us together.

He regards his family fondly.

MRS CRATCHIT

Now dears, all to the washhouse  
-there is warm water today.

BELINDA

Come, boys.

Martha picks up Tiny Tim.

MARTHA

Wait until you hear the Pudding! It  
is singing in the Copper.

The children exit.

MRS CRATCHIT

Did you get a bit of coal?

Bob shakes his head, gathers her in an embrace.

BOB

We shall warm each other. What a  
pretty dress!

She wipes her eyes, smiles at him.

MRS CRATCHIT

And how did Tiny Tim behave?

BOB

As good as gold. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to remember on Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.

(Bob's voice grew tremulous.)

He is getting better, dear, more strong and hearty every day.

The Cratchit children return. The family gathers around the table as Dickens speaks. They hold hands and bow their heads as Bob murmurs Grace. Mrs. Cratchit and the girls serve the plates with Goose and Potatoes and Applesauce.

DICKENS

There never was such a Goose. Bob said he didn't believe there was ever such a Goose cooked - a feathered phenomenon! Its tenderness, and flavor, size and cheapness were the themes of universal admiration and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, the little boys crammed spoons into their mouths lest they should shriek for Goose before their turn. Once a year, once a year a sufficient dinner for the whole family. Everyone had enough and the youngest Cratchits were steeped in Sage and onions to the eyebrows.

Martha and Belinda clear the table.

MARTHA

Mother, shall I help you with the pudding?

MRS CRATCHIT

Suppose it should not be done enough? Suppose it should break in turning out?

(MORE)

MRS CRATCHIT (CONT'D)

Suppose somebody got over the back wall and stole it while we were merry with the Goose? Oh my, oh my.

She bustles out.

MARTHA

Tomorrow I will sleep all morning long. I am learning all the fine stitching, Father, and the mending and ironing -look at my hands from the starching. Oh Father, I pray to be kept on. I am ever so careful. I have seen a Countess! And a Lord...

She prances about, imitating the Aristocracy. The children jump up and follow her as the family sings the refrain from the Carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas":

"Twelve Drummers drumming, Eleven Pipers piping, Ten Lords a leaping, Nine Ladies dancing, Eight Maids a milking, Seven Swans a swimming, Six Geese a laying, Five Golden rings, Four Calling Birds, Three French Hens, Two Turtle Doves and a Partridge in a Pear Tree."

Mrs. Cratchit enters with the Pudding. The little family applauds, oohs and ahhs.

DICKENS

Hallo! A great deal of steam. The Pudding was out of the Copper. A smell like washing day -that was the cloth. A smell like an eating house and a pastry cook's and a laundress next door to that. The Pudding -like a speckled cannon ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half a quarter of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas Holly stuck into the top.

BOB

Molly, this is the greatest success achieved by you since our Marriage Day.

DICKENS

Nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

BOB

A Merry Christmas to us all, my  
Dears, God Bless us.

Family: Merry Christmas, God bless us,

TINY TIM

God bless us every one!

Bob holds Tiny Tim close, looks at Mrs. Cratchit. The family  
gathers around the dying fire, holding each other close.

SCROOGE

Spirit! Tell me if Tiny Tim will  
live?

GHOST

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.

GHOST

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"

Scrooge hung his head, overcome at hearing his own words  
quoted back to him.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Man. If man you be in heart, not  
adamant, forbear that wicked cant  
until you have discovered What the  
surplus is and Where it is. Will  
you decide what men shall live,  
what men shall die? It may be that  
in the sight of heaven, you are  
more worthless and unfit to live  
than millions like this poor man's  
child. Oh God, to hear the Insect  
on the leaf pronouncing upon the  
too much life among his hungry  
brothers in the dust!

BOB

Mr. Scrooge! I give you Mister  
Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!

MRS CRATCHIT

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

BOB

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, poor fellow.

BOB

(mildly) My dear, Christmas Day.

MRS CRATCHIT

I'll drink his health for your sake  
and the Day's, not for him. Long  
Life to him! A Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year. He will be very  
merry, and very happy, I have no  
doubt.

TINY TIM

To Mr. Scrooge!

THE FAMILY

To Mr. Scrooge.

Tiny Tim, or one of the Sisters, or Mrs. Cratchit, sings the  
Carol solo:

"Lo how a Rose e're Blooming"

As Dickens speaks.

DICKENS

There was nothing of high mark in  
this. They were not a handsome  
family, they were not well dressed;  
their shoes were far from being  
water proof; their clothes were  
scanty;

(MORE)

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

and they had known the inside of a pawnbrokers. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented. They looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings from the Spirit's torch at parting.

Bob rocks the sleeping Tiny Tim.

The Chorus sings softly:

"It came upon a Midnight Clear"

As Dickens speaks.

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, Scrooge stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about as though it was the burial place of giants.

## SCROOGE

What place is this?

## GHOST

A place where Miners live, who labor in the bowels of the earth. But they know me, see?

A group of singers lights a miners lamp, gathers around it, singing.

## DICKENS

The Spirit did not tarry here, but sped, whither? Not to Sea? Not to Sea! To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled and roared and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn as it fiercely tried to undermine the earth. There stood a solitary lighthouse. But even here the men who watched the light made a fire that cast a ray of brightness upon the awful sea.

Two singers unveil the Light of the Lighthouse, blinking it out into the darkness.

A light answers it -as if swinging from a mast.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

The Ghost lighted upon a ship,  
tossed upon the black and heaving  
Sea. They stood beside the helmsman  
at the wheel, the lookout on the  
bow, the officers who stood the  
watch. Dark ghostly figures in  
their several stations.

GHOST

But every man among them sings of  
me. Everyone had a Christmas tune  
or a Christmas thought, or spoke of  
some by gone Christmas day, with  
homeward hopes belonging to it. And  
every man on board had a kinder  
word, had shared in my festivities,  
had remembered those who cared for  
him in the distance. These are your  
brethren. These are God's children.  
These the blessed ones for whom He  
was born.

DICKENS

Much they saw, and far they went.  
The Spirit stood beside sick beds  
and they were cheerful, by  
struggling men, who became patient  
with their greater hope, by  
poverty, which was made rich, to  
almshouse, hospital and jail, in  
misery's every refuge where vain  
man in his brief authority had not  
made fast the door and barred the  
Spirit out.

SCROOGE

You seem older, Spirit, clearly  
older, and yet no time seemingly  
has passed. I am as I was.

GHOST

My life upon this globe is very  
brief.

SCROOGE

Are Spirit's lives so short?

GHOST

My life ends tonight. Tonight at  
midnight. Hark! The time is drawing  
near.

SCROOGE

Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask, but I see something strange within your robe. It looks like a foot or a claw.

GHOST

(sorrowfully) )

It might be a claw, for the flesh that is on it.

He reveals two emaciated little figures. Puppets. A boy and a girl. "Wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable, yellow, meager, ragged, scowling, wolfish."

GHOST (CONT'D)

Oh Man, look here, look here.

SCROOGE

(appalled) )

Spirit! They are yours?

GHOST

They are Man's, and they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see what is written. Doom. Unless the writing be erased. Deny it. Slander those who tell it ye. Admit this and make it worse, than abide the end!

SCROOGE

Have they no refuge or resource?

GHOST

"Are there no Prisons? Are there no workhouses?"

Sound -cacophony of bells -ominous. And the great bell begins to strike. The Ghost departs. Scrooge beholds a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist upon the ground, toward him. Scrooge flees up his stairs to his Chamber. The Phantom flies up beside him. This Spirit is a giant Puppet, manipulated by members of the Chorus.

SCENE TWO

The Last of the Spirits

Dickens' description:

"The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing visible save one outstretched hand. The Spirit neither spoke nor moved."

SCROOGE

I am in the presence of the Ghost  
of Christmas Yet to come?"

The Phantom answered not, but pointed outward with its hand.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

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

The Phantom inclined his head.

DICKENS

Although well used to ghostly  
company by this time, Scrooge  
feared the silent shape so much  
that his legs trembled beneath him.  
He thrilled to a vague, uncertain  
horror, to know that behind the  
dusky shroud there were ghostly  
eyes fixed upon him.

SCROOGE

Ghost of the Future, I fear you  
more than any Spectre I have seen.  
Will you not speak to me?

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

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

The Phantom gestures to the street below. Scrooge looks down.

DICKENS

They went into an obscure part of  
the town. The ways were foul and  
narrow, the shops and houses  
wretched.

(MORE)

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell and dirt upon the stragglng streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, with misery.

The RAG DEALER appears in her "shop" as Dickens speaks.

## DICKENS (CONT'D)

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low browed, beetling shop, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were brought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of refuse of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinize were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares she dealt in was the RAG DEALER.

MRS. DILBER bustles in with a large bundle.

## MRS DILBER

What odds, then, What odds, will you give me? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. HE always did.

## RAG DEALER

That's true, indeed, Mrs. Dilber. No man more so.

They both laugh.

## MRS DILBER

Open this bundle, then, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I have helped myself, it's no sin. Open the Bundle.

The two women open the bundle and sort clothing and small items as they speak.

## RAG DEALER

Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose? No indeed, Mrs. Dilber.

MRS DILBER

If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw, why wasn't he natural in his life time? 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.

RAG DEALER

It's a judgment on him.

MRS DILBER

I wish it was a little heavier judgment, and it should have been if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Look here, sheets, towels, two teaspoons, a pair of sugar tongs, some boots.

RAG DEALER

What have we here, his blankets?

MRS DILBER

Whose else? He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say.

RAG DEALER

I hope he didn't die of anything catching, Eh?

MRS DILBER

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

RAG DEALER

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 any uglier without it.

RAG DEALER

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 a  
man such as he was, I promise you.

RAG DEALER

Ha, ha! We're all suitable to our  
calling, we're well matched.

She takes some money out of her pocket.

RAG DEALER (CONT'D)

That's your account, and I wouldn't  
give another sixpence, if I was to  
be boiled for not doing it. What do  
you say?

MRS DILBER

We're not going to pick holes in  
each other's coats, I suppose?

RAG DEALER

No indeed! I should hope not!

MRS DILBER

Very well then. This is finer stuff  
than what you show here, my dear,  
but as we are friends together, I  
always give first look to you. But  
I can take my custom elsewhere, you  
know.

RAG DEALER

Some who might be a little more  
careful of where these came from,  
my dear, a little more than me.

MRS DILBER

I shall reserve the shirt, then, a  
pretty penny may come to me for  
that.

RAG DEALER

Oh, I always give too much to my  
ladies. It's a weakness of mine,  
and that's the way I ruin myself.  
That's your account. Six penny and  
t'uppence I will add.

(MORE)

RAG DEALER (CONT'D)

But if you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half a crown. Now don't stand there staring.

MRS DILBER

Well, this is the end of it.

(She takes the money)

He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead.

They exit, dragging off the Bundle.

SCROOGE

(Shuddering) Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way now. Merciful heaven!

A light burns in Scrooge's bedroom. The Phantom gestures to the Curtains around the bed. Scrooge opens them. A form of a man lies under a sheet, with the sheet drawn up over the face. The Spirit gestures to the form.

DICKENS

Scrooge recoiled in terror. There lay the body, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for. Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command; for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered and honored head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purpose. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand WAS open, generous and true; the heart brave, warm and tender, and the pulse a Man's. Strike shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with Life immortal!

SCROOGE

Spirit, this is a fearful place. Let us go!

The Phantom points to the figure on the bed. Scrooge willfully refuses to recognize it.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I understand you! I would try to take care of him, I would do it if I could, but I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power. Let us go.

The Phantom bends his glare upon Scrooge.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Spirit, I beseech you. Let me see some tenderness, some mercy.

The Phantom wafts down the stairs. Scrooge follows.

DICKENS

The Phantom led him into the dark streets. No one stirred, the lights were dimmed, shadows fled. The Phantom spread its dark robe before Scrooge for a moment, like a wing, and withdrawing it, revealed the small abode of the Cratchit Family. Tiny Tim's little crutch rested against the fireplace. Mrs. Cratchit and the family were seated around the fire. It was quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were still as statues in one corner. The mother and her daughters were sewing. But surely they were very quiet. "And He took a child in the midst of them."

MRS CRATCHIT

(putting her sewing aside  
and covering her eyes) )  
The colour hurts my eyes.

DICKENS

The colour? Ah poor Tiny Tim!

MRS CRATCHIT

They're better now again; it makes them weak by candlelight, and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, not for the world. It must be near his time?

MARTHA

Past it, rather.

BELINDA

He has walked a little slower than he used to, these last few evenings, Mother.

MRS CRATCHIT

I have known him walk with-I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.

MARTHA

And so have I...

The Boys: And we have too, Mother.

MRS CRATCHIT

But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble, no trouble. And there is your father at the door!

She hurries to meet him, taking off his coat and drawing him nearer to the fire. The girls give him his tea and toast, the little boys lean on his knee, one climbs on his lap and hugs him.

BOYS

Don't mind it, father, don't be grieved.

BOB

(taking up the sewing)  
Wonderful work, my girls, so carefully done. I am sure you will be finished by Sunday.

His voice catches in his throat. In the Roman Catholic Church, those who died in the parish that week are blessed and submitted to Heaven in the next Mass. The women of the family are sewing the lace for the altar to be given in the name of Tiny Tim. His passing will be cited at the Sunday Mass.

MRS CRATCHIT

We shall surely decorate the Altar, won't we girls? And we shall...we shall...pick flowers for his little grave. Did you go today, then?

BOB

Yes my dear, I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you will see it often.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

I promised that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child, (breaking down all of a sudden), my little child!

The family embraces him. The girls sob.

MRS CRATCHIT

There now, there. Our little man would not have us grieving so. Think of the good that he always gave us, hush now, hush.

BOB

We must think of the extraordinary kindness of Miss Fredericka. She saw me at Mr. Scrooges' Counting House today, and seeing that I was just a little -just a little down, you know, asked what had happened to distress me so. "I am heartily sorry for it", she said, "and heartily sorry for your good wife." She said that if she could help us in any way, pray come to her -and she gave me this card of where she lives. "Pray come to me", she said. It was as if she knew our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.

MRS CRATCHIT

I'm sure she's a good soul.

BOB

However and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget Tiny Tim -shall we -or this first parting that there was among us?

THE FAMILY

Never, father. We shall never forget our Tiny Tim.

BOB

And I know, I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall never quarrel amongst ourselves, and forget Tiny Tim in doing it.

THE FAMILY  
Never father, no never.

BOB  
I am very happy, very happy.  
(Tears)

He and Mrs. Cratchit cling together, the children close.

Dickens writes: Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters  
kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him.

DICKENS  
Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish  
essence was from God!

SCROOGE  
Spectre, oh Spectre, are these the  
shadows of the things that WILL be?  
Or the shadows of things that MAY  
be only?

The Phantom ushers Scrooge towards the stairs and up into his  
bedroom as Scrooge speaks.

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

The Phantom does not answer, but points to the bed upon which  
is the silent figure beneath the sheet.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)  
Am I the Man who lies upon this  
bed?

The Phantom points unwaveringly to the figure.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)  
No, Spirit! Oh, no, no! Spirit!  
(he clutches the robes in  
supplication) )  
Spirit, hear me. I am not the man I  
was.

SOUND: Marley's Ghost groaning and rattling the chains

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I will not be the man I must have  
been but for these visitations. Why  
show me this if I am past all hope?

The Phantom withdraws the pointing hand. Stands towering over  
Scrooge, who is on his knees. The Phantom watches.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Good Spirit, your nature intercedes  
for me, and pities me. Assure me  
that I yet may change these shadows  
you have shown me by an altered  
Life!

The Phantom towers, silent.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I will honor Christmas in my heart,  
and try to keep it all the year. I  
will live in the Past, the Present,  
and the Future. The Spirits of all  
Three shall strive within me. I  
will not shut out the lessons that  
they teach. Oh tell me how I can  
alter my Ways. Tell me how I can  
Live!

The Phantom swoops upon him. Scrooge cries out and falls  
unconscious. Dickens describes the phantom as collapsing  
"into a bedpost". This could be done if the Phantom is a big  
cloaked puppet - the sticks that hold the shoulders and head  
could just bring it down to nothing - a heap of Cloth. The  
Puppet holders could join in singing the Carol as they hide  
the figure on the bed with the cloth of the Puppet.

"Oh Come All Ye Faithful"

The Chorus enters, singing softly and then swelling into full  
throated Song. They finish the dressing of the Stage for  
Christmas. Center Stage is FREDERICKA'S PARLOR, a big,  
generous room. The Chorus decorates for Christmas. The Chorus  
will become the guests, and they will also become the  
Cratchit Family later in the Scene.

Fredericka enters, dressed up for Christmas. She is laughing  
with her Guests;

Fredericka: He said that Christmas was a Humbug, as I live!  
He believed it, too.

A GUEST

More shame for him, Freddie

FREDDIE

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.

A GUEST

I am sure he is very rich, Freddie, at least you always tell me so.

FREDDIE

What of that, my dear, his wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking  
(she laughs)  
that he is ever going to benefit us with it.

A GUEST

How can you be so patient with him?

FREDDIE

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? He don't lose much of a dinner.

A GUEST

He loses a very good dinner indeed!

Everyone laughs.

FREDDIE

I was only going to say that the consequence of him taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is that he loses pleasant company, and better cheer 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 I defy him.

(MORE)

## FREDDIE (CONT'D)

If he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying, "Uncle Scrooge, how are you?", even if it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor Clerk fifty pounds, that's something.

A Guest starts a Song. It is sung as a Round.

La Marche Des Rois, or March of the Kings

The guests sing and dance a circle dance, hand over hand. Scrooge awakens above. As he speaks, Freddie and the guests continue to play Christmas games together.

Scrooge jumps to his feet. He feels himself all over, Alive! As he speaks, he goes to his Money alcove and fills his pockets with money -some spills out and he kicks it out of his way. He speaks to Jacob Marley within the Alcove. He is almost capering with joy, although his face is wet with tears.

## SCROOGE

I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley, Heaven and you and the Christmas Time be praised for this. I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees. I am here -the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be, I know they will! I don't know what to do!

(Dickens says Scrooge is "laughing and crying in the same breath, making a perfect Laocoon of himself with his stockings.")

## SCROOGE (CONT'D)

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. A Merry Christmas to everybody. A Happy New Year to all the World!

He runs down his stairs into the street.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Hallo here! Whoop! Hallow! I don't know what day of the month it is, I don't know anything! I'm quite a baby. Never mind, I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo there!

As he passes among the stalls, he buys big baskets and fills them with provisions and fruit and flowers, paying lavishly, and taking no change. He beckons a little boy, THE URCHIN, to help him carry all of it, stuffing money into the little boy's ragged shirt pocket.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Good morning, good morning, Merry Christmas! Yes, all of that please, all of it, keep the change. My dear Sir, how do you do? Very kind, very kind indeed. Yes fill it up, chirrup, chirrup. Thankee, thankee kindly, I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you. (He beckons to THE URCHIN). Hallo my fine fellow!

URCHIN

Hallo!

SCROOGE

What's today, my fine fellow?

URCHIN

Today? Why it is Christmas, Sir, Christmas Day!

SCROOGE

I haven't missed it! Do you know the house of the good lady Miss Fredericka?

URCHIN

I should hope I did! Many a day has she given me some piece of good bread, or some small coin for an errand.

SCROOGE

An intelligent Boy, a remarkable boy!

URCHIN

What can I do for her, Sir?

SCROOGE

(Loading him up with the baskets)

What a delightful boy, what a pleasure to talk to you. Yes, my Buck. Here, I will give you a shilling to take this to her -no I will give you half a crown! There you are, now off like a shot!

DICKENS

Scrooge 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. By this he made his way to the small dwelling of Bob Cratchit.

Bob Cratchit meets him. Scrooge is standing with his hat off.

BOB

Mr Scrooge! I am very sorry Sir, very sorry indeed not to come this morning. I know I am behind my time.

SCROOGE

(in his accustomed voice)  
What do you mean by it!

BOB

It is only once a year, Sir, once a year, it shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry, Sir, with my Family.

SCROOGE

Merry? Merry?

The Cratchit family gathers around Bob. And then TINY TIM crutches forward.

TINY TIM

Merry Christmas, Mr. Scrooge. God bless you this day.

SCROOGE

(Astounded) )  
God bless me! God bless me indeed! And all of you! A merry Christmas, Bob, a merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year.

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

I'll raise your salary, and endeavor to assist your family, Bob. Here is a bit to go on, Bob, to make up the fires and buy a new coal scuttle and give your good ladies some new ribbons and and... and... to take Tiny Tim to a Hospital! Yes a Hospital! Which I shall Endow-indeed I shall- for the treatment of Children who are ill! Gosh, shall I make it, Gosh indeed!

BOB

Mr. Scrooge, Sir, dear Mr. Scrooge!

Scrooge leads the Family to Freddie's house, carrying Tiny Tim himself on his shoulder.

SCROOGE

And now I am bid, Sir, bid by my Niece Fredericka, Mrs. Cratchit, to bring you all to Christmas dinner, yes indeed, where we shall feast and dance and play "Forfeits" and "Yes and No", and we shall have Charades, and A Christmas Tree, yes we shall indeed, and Gifts! And we shall sing the Joy into the Season!

DICKENS

And it was so.

Scrooge and the Cratchit family are welcomed into the Parlor. The Light brightens, the Urchin arrives with the Baskets. A Christmas Tree arrives!

SCROOGE

Freddie! Freddie my Dear!

FREDDIE

Why bless my soul! Who's that?

SCROOGE

It's I. Your Uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner, with our Guests whom you know, my Clerk Bob Cratchit, the good Mrs. Cratchit, her daughters, her sons, god bless them, and my - my Young Ward, Tiny Tim! Yes indeed!

(MORE)

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

And here are the provisions, my dear, and this excellent young lad, this bright boy, my dear, who also needs his dinner. Will you let us in, Fredericka?

FREDDIE

Let you in! (She embraces him)  
Wonderful! Wonderful! Come in one, come in all. (She reaches up and shakes Tiny Tim's hand). Dear Boy. And Belinda! And Martha, what pretty dresses, how clever you are. And dear Mrs. Cratchit, the lace collars you made turned my wedding dress so fine. I have taken them off -see, I am wearing one now. Come in boys, come to the fire. Dear Uncle, dear good Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE

God Bless you, darling girl, and  
God Bless us every one!

"Joy to The World"

The whole cast sings. The words of this Carol could be in the program so that the Audience can sing along during the Curtain Call.

THE END