

PRELUDE

Lights up. Bare stage. A playing area (whether raised or not) A table and some stools that can be quickly moved by the actors.

ENSEMBLE enters singing a warm up melody, an actor has a kazoo, a pair of cymbals, etc. They make a lot of noise.

NARRATOR/DICKENS rushes in.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

What are you doing?! This is a serious production! You sound like outtakes from the Real Housewives reunion show!

(points to the audience)

People, people, they want us to do the show!

(to AUDIENCE)

Don't you? The show? Do the . . . ?

Hopefully the audience says, "yes"

NARRATOR/DICKENS

(back to ENSEMBLE)

So who's going to play the guy?

(looks around)

No one wants to play the guy?

(pointing to ACTOR)

You there! You'll play the guy!

ACTOR

I'd do it, really I would, but I've had a bad case of throat lozenge.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Throat lozenges?

ACTOR

No, no, just one. Lozenge. It got stuck in my throat. Musically speaking.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Why doesn't anyone want to play the guy? It's the leading part!

ACTRESS

No one wants to play the guy, it's a career killer.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

A what?

ACTRESS

A career killer. If you're good at it, no one will hire you ever again for any other role, you're typecast as the miserly old skinflint.

ACTOR

And if you're bad, well, you get run out of the Fox Valley on an old run down school bus driven by your brother in law. No one likes you. You're a complete failure.

ACTRESS

It's a no-win situation.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

You realize you get your own dressing room? A special per diem and a star on your door?

ENSEMBLE breaks into a swoon of
"volunteers"

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Only one can be the Star! Everyone else takes a back seat here!

(he picks SCROOGE and gives him a top hat)
Here now get ready!

(handing out parts of the play)
Now the rest of you, take these! And these! You all know what to do.

ENSEMBLE takes all the parts and gathers their "character" costume pieces. NARRATOR/DICKENS is left with one part left.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Wait a minute! I have one part left! That's not right.

(reading it)
That's not right at all, it's the other guy. The nice one. The Bob Cratchit guy.

ACTRESS

Sorry, sir, everybody got cast. Except for the little guy. The tiny one.

ACTOR

You're not playing anyone.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

What? Of course I am.

ACTOR

You're not cast as anything.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

I'm the narrator, I'm Charles Dickens! THE Charles Dickens. I'm like the genius here!

KID

No, you're not.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

What did you say?

KID

You're not Charles Dickens, you're just pretending. You're just an older guy playing the guy who wrote the book this is all based on but imagines himself to be Charles Dickens. But who knows, right?

ACTOR

There's already an internet conspiracy about that.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Blasphemy!

(to AUDIENCE)

Don't listen to them! I'm the great Charles Dickens--

ACTOR

Well you still have to back fill Bob Cratchit, we're not doing it.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Fine, then. We all "pretend" I step out of my omniscient Narrator slash Dickens role and "pretend" that I "pretend" to be one of my famous characters, Bob Cratchit. We'll break the fourth wall and every other rule that Plato--

ACTRESS

Aristotle!!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Aristotle! Ever invented about theatre so that you all don't have to do extra work. Happy now?

ENSEMBLE nod and agree.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

(noticing someone is missing)

Wait, who's missing? The kid! The kid's missing.

(noticing the other kid)

Not you, the other kid. The little kid. We don't have a Tiny Tim?
Are you kidding me? Where is he?

ACTOR

He's doing his homework.

ACTRESS

Yes, Thompson Middle School is very demanding around the holidays.

ACTOR

Extremely.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

The hell with Thompson Middle School and homework! This is art!
We've got a show to do right now!

ACTRESS

I told you, kids were tough to work with.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

But we need a Tiny Tim!

TINY TIM enters running.

TINY TIM

Sorry sir! Tiny Tim reporting!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

You're late, kid! Get into your hat and scarf and take your crutch!

ACTRESS

How's the homework?

NARRATOR/DICKENS

That's quite enough out of all of you!

(looking at AUDIENCE)

Now then..

NARRATOR opens the book and makes a
big deal of beginning to read the
impressive words:

NARRATOR/DICKENS

(big voice)

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief . . .

ENSEMBLE realizes this is the wrong book. ENSEMBLE whispers and gestures among themselves.

SCROOGE

(bringing another old volume forward)
Wait, wait wait a minute! That's the wrong book, you fool!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

(holding onto his own book dearly)
What? This is a great book! It's sold millions of copies!

SCROOGE

But it's the wrong book! Use this one!

SCROOGE swaps books goes back to the CHORUS. NARRATOR/DICKENS opens the book and hesitates.

SCROOGE

Read it!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Okay if you insist!

(Clears throat opens the book)
"Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life or whether that station will be held by anybody else--- "

SCROOGE

Stop! Wrong!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Now what? That was a Best Seller, too!

More fumbling with tomes among SCROOGE and ENSEMBLE.

SCROOGE

But it doesn't have me in it!

(handing him the new book)
Go ahead. Read it!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

But Copperfield made me a fortune!

SCROOGE

It's the wrong book!!! We're here for the . . .
(to Audience)

Come on, tell him, you're here for the thing! Aren't you! The thing that's about me! Everyone loves this story.

(to Audience)

Don't you love that story? What are we here for?

ENSEMBLE

(helping audience to shout it too)
The Christmas thing. A Christmas Carol!!

SCROOGE

(to NARRATOR/DICKENS)
Get it together, man.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Surely, Sir. Surely. (beat) So may I have the right book then?

SCROOGE

Yes, Indeed! Just don't call me Shirley.

(to ENSEMBLE)

Can we have the book!

ENSEMBLE passes "the book" from hand to hand, murmuring "the book" at each hand off. Finally it reaches SC, who presents the book to NARRATOR/DICKENS.

Perhaps a SOUND: drum roll as SCROOGE presents it to NARRATOR/DICKENS. NARRATOR/DICKENS makes a big deal about dusting it off and opening it up.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Oh okay then! Much better now! Here we go. Yes, sir. Here it is.
(to Audience)

Ah, then, without further ado, What you've all been waiting for...

(Clears throat)

"Marley was dead." Yep that's how it goes!

ENSEMBLE cheers! "Marley was dead!"

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Oh, yesss! he was so dead! I love the way this begins.

(assumes a NARRATOR/DICKENS "voice")
Marley was dead. There was no doubt whatever about that.

SCROOGE

I signed the death notice. And my word is gold, if I do say so myself.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

SCROOGE

You bet your last will and testament he was.

ENSEMBLE

Marley was as dead as a door-nail. Door-nail! Door-nail. Dead!

SCROOGE

Marley was dead. I knew it because I was his only friend. He and I weren't exactly b.f.f's, but since we had a business together--

ENSEMBLE

Scrooge and Marley! Marley and Scrooge. Like vinegar and vinegar or oil and oil.

SCROOGE

--that's right. And my business is so important- I mean I've got investments that don't take time off - I went to work even on the day Marley was buried.

ENSEMBLE

Booo!

SCROOGE

Are you kidding? There was money to be made! Was I wrong?

ENSEMBLE

Boooo!

SCROOGE

(gesturing to AUDIENCE)
Let's let them be the judge!

Beat for audience reaction. Do we want the audience to react?

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Excuse me, I was talking here! So you knew he was dead. You signed the death notice and made the arrangements?

SCROOGE

Sure, what are friends for?

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Now just so we all understand. This guy was dead. If we don't all agree to that, then nothing wonderful can happen here. If we're all not perfectly convinced that Marley was pushing up daisies in the Township Cemetery and, I mean, that he was a dead parrot, a mummy, a corpse, an EX Marley, we're just not going to be able to believe what's going to be shown here on this stage. I mean we may as well just be doing a rendition of "White Christmas" or something. We'd have no story here.

SCROOGE

Wow, you really have a way with words.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

I'm Charles "the Rock" Dickens, for heaven's sake!

(back to the book)

Oh, and here's the good part... !It's about you!

SCROOGE

My favorite part. I'm huge in this book!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

"Scrooge was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone!" Haha.. That's not exactly a compliment, Mr E Scrooge, Esquire.

The ENSEMBLE take up the story in a song or rap, while the ENSEMBLE sets the scene for the office. SONG:

"Attend the tale of Mister Scrooge"

CHORUS

(takes up the story)

Attend the tale of Mr. Scrooge.

His heart was small but his bank was huge.

All his money was saved for the day

He maybe would use it not give it away.

Etc.

NARRATOR/DICKENS makes a big deal about "becoming" CRATCHIT. HE steps forward and starts to supervise the office set pieces.

CRATCHIT

Let me just say that Mr. Scrooge was a cold, cold man. He was so cold . . . well how cold was he? He was so cold that he actually became the first known air conditioner. He'd walk into the office in the middle of summer and breathe a few times and instantly cool the place down.

ENSEMBLE

(humming behind him)

Ooh what a guy!

SOUND: jingling bells, bells bells.
Church bells etc. SONG finishes up.

The playing area is set for the Scrooge and Marley office scene. The ENSEMBLE assumes roles for the scene: FRED, VISITOR. SCROOGE takes his place at his big ol' desk. CRATCHIT sits at his clerk desk.

SCENE 1

Christmas Eve in Spite of Himself

ENSEMBLE create a Christmas Eve crowd scene of people bustling for Holiday shopping. Scrooge enters in the middle of this.

Singer 1

Merry happy holiday, Sir.

SCROOGE

Bah Humbug

Singer 2

Christmas Eve fun!

SCROOGE

Get lost!

Singer 3

Holidays are the best days!

SCROOGE

Get stuffed then!

Singer 4

What an old sourpuss!

Singer 3

What an old turnip!

Singer 2

Isn't he the original creator of the Holiday Blues?

Singer 1

A wet blanket.

SINGER 3

It's a one-man war on Christmas! The W-O-C!

SINGER 1

He invented the W-O-C.

ALL

Happy Holidays!! War on Christmas indeed!

SCROOGE

Bah Humbug! Get lost, losers!

FRED enters. Ding! Bell goes off.
IDEA: CRATCHIT keeps a "score board"
chalk board. One side says Scrooge,
the other side says, Christmas.
CRATCHIT "scores" Scrooge or Fred on
points during the exchange.

FRED

Merry Christmas, Uncle! Merry Christmas, Bob Cratchit!

CRATCHIT

Oh hello Mr Fred, Merry-
(SCROOGE gives him a look)

CRATCHIT

Holidays.

FRED

Holidays? Not you too, Bob Cratchit?

SCROOGE

BAH Humbug

SOUND: Bell!

FRED

Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You're pretty funny.

SCROOGE

There's a war on Christmas and I'm leading it.

FRED

Oh, so you're the one! I saw that on my news feed.

SOUND: Bell!

SCROOGE

Christmas is a colossal waste of time and money and I'm supposed to feel guilty when I ask my clerks to work today and tomorrow. It's just another day to me. Let's be sensible and worship money.

FRED

Well a lot of us just love the season. It's warmth and kindness and feeling of shared peace and purpose.

SOUND: Bell!

SCROOGE

What are you, Fred? Some sort of feel-good hippy-dippy Greenpeace lover? Humbug!

SOUND: Bell!

FRED

Now you don't mean that, Uncle.

SCROOGE

Tell me, what right have you to be "merry" you're poor enough.

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

FRED

What right do you have not to be merry, you're rich enough.

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

SCROOGE

Hugely rich if I say so myself. But Bah humbug to you!

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

FRED

Now come on, Uncle, don't be that way.

SCROOGE

What way can I be when everyone around me is a blithering idiot about one day out of the year!

FRED

Well it's not just one day, it's the feeling of one day that lasts a whole year!

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

SCROOGE

Balderdash and a humbug too! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money? A time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer? A time for balancing your books and coming up short every single month? Hunh?

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

FRED

I'm a writer, I've been working on this play --

SCROOGE

Well story me this! 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!

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

FRED

Wow. That's harsh, Uncle.

SCROOGE

Let me keep your darn Christmas in my own way, please.

FRED

But you don't keep it.

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

SCROOGE

I keep it, under lock and key!

SOUND: Bell!

CRATCHIT marks the board.

SCROOGE (cont)

Look, you're MY nephew so I know you have it in you to make money! It's in your blood, lad. But your ideals get in the way, your fantasies about "falling in love" and "Christmas is a feeling" stop you from making the living -and money-- you deserve.

FRED

Well there are many things I deserve that don't come in profit and loss amounts. Christmas more than any other. I mean, Christmas time is the best time for some people, me included. It's the only time of the year it seems to me when people open their hearts and think of others and how to help them. So, you may be right, Uncle, that Christmas has never put a single bit of gold or silver in my pocket, but it has done me good, and will do me good, and so I say, God bless it!

SOUND: Bell! Ding ding ding ding!

ENSEMBLE cheer like the Sox or CUBS just won the World Series.

SCROOGE pulls an air horn from the desk and blows it.

ENSEMBLE goes silent.

SCROOGE

That's enough out of the peanut gallery over there.

ENSEMBLE

Ensemble!

SCROOGE

Whatever you are, you make one more "joyful noise" and you'll end up getting docked a day's pay or find yourself on the street selling Christmas cookies down at the Arcada theatre.

FRED

Let's be reasonable--

SCROOGE

If you're finished, Nephew, good day, I'm busy.

FRED

Come and have dinner with me tomorrow, you can meet my wife.

SCROOGE

Don't get me started on her! Women work their magic on a man and fill his head with love and light and pretty things and soon you've got nothing but baby bills to pay. Look at Cratchit over there!

FRED

She wants to meet you.

SCROOGE

No thank you.

FRED

Why can't we all be one big family?

SCROOGE

More soupy poppycock! You fell in love! The worst condition of man. Family is for suckers.

FRED

You never came to see me before I fell in love, why use that as an excuse now?

SCROOGE

Don't be an impertinent smarty pants! Good day to you.

FRED

I want nothing from you, I ask nothing from you.

SCROOGE

Makes two of us then.

FRED

(centering himself, possibly doing a little meditation move)
I'm centered, I'm whole, I'm a grown man who doesn't need approval, I love Christmas and the spirit of the day.. Okay Uncle, I made the offer, you're still invited for dinner. Your loss if you don't come.

(to HIMSELF)

I'm strong, I'm focused, I'm sensitive.

(to SCROOGE)

But I'll keep my Christmas spirit to the end. So good bye and Merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

FRED exits. Stops.

FRED

Oh, and A Happy New Year! Merry Christmas, Bob Cratchit.

CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, Mr Fred!

SCROOGE chases FRED out. SCROOGE runs into the CHARITY man.

SCROOGE

Whipper snapper! Hippy progressive!

SCROOGE and CRATCHIT freeze. CRATCHIT remembers he's the "NARRATOR" and steps forward.

CRATCHIT

Here's the part about me. Cratchit. I'm - I mean -he - I mean Bob - has worked for Scrooge for years at just about fifteen shillings a week, which is not even minimum wage -- then or now. He's got a wife and family. Whew, what a family! They're the original eight is enough, although in this case eight was not enough! The big family and small paycheck never quite ever balances out. And that annoys Scrooge something awful. But I digress.

CHARITY MAN

Well, hellllloooo there! I'm a big Charity Man from the big Charity we run! Am I addressing Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley?

SCROOGE

Marley's dead. Didn't you read the book?

CHARITY MAN

Pardon me?

SCROOGE

Mr. Marley is dead. He's dead as a door-nail these seven years this very night.

SOUND: ominous scream. Beat while SCROOGE seems to register it.

SCROOGE

It was sort of sudden.

CHARITY MAN

Then, I know Mr Marley is well represented by his surviving partner, Mister Scrooge!

SCROOGE laughs an airless, non-mirthful guffaw.

SCROOGE

Oh boy you think you have chance to tug my heartstrings? Okay, give me your best shot, here.

CHARITY MAN

It's with deep respect that I come this time of year to ask business owners like you, on Main Street here in St. Charles, to dig deeply into their pockets and pocketbooks and safes and bank accounts and be generous with the community of need.

SCROOGE

That's your angle? Oh, brother.

CHARITY MAN

Yes, you're right, our brothers and sisters are in such need.

SCROOGE

Wait, are there no workhouses? Are there no prisons? No UNESCO or Salvation Army?

CHARITY MAN

Well yes, there are, but those are overcrowded and cold and -- some aren't even invented yet.

SCROOGE

Oh, from what you were implying, I thought these very useful institutions - for which I pay huge awesome enormous taxes - had somehow ceased to exist without my knowing it.

ENSEMBLE murmurs. "Terrible" "old skinflint" "cheapskate"

CHARITY MAN

So we are raising a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE

Nothing.

CHARITY MAN

(whispering, getting out his pad, expecting huge money)
Ooooh! So exciting!! You wish to be remain anonymous??!

SCROOGE

No, I wish to be left alone!

SOUND: Scream. Half a beat.

SCROOGE

Since you ask me what I wish, that's my answer. Look at me, I'm obviously not making merry today or tomorrow or ever and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the places I have mentioned and those who are badly off must go there.

CHARITY MAN

But--but many would rather die than go there.

SCROOGE

Well, then if they would rather die, they should get it over with and decrease the surplus population!

SOUND: Scream. Beat as SCROOGE registers the sound. Goes over to a cupboard, opens the door, sees a small urchin inside pulls the URCHIN out. URCHIN runs off.

SCROOGE

Away with you and your stupid chimney sweeps union!

(to CRATCHIT)

Nobody wants to sweep a decent chimney anymore. There's a union and they have all these rules about overtime!

SCROOGE (cont)

(back to CHARITY MAN)

Now then, sir, I need to get back to my business. There is money to be made before we close our shutters today. You seem shocked.

CHARITY MAN

Well, I don't think I've run across as tight a wallet as yours in all my years of community chest and United Way work.

SCROOGE

Mind your own business. I mind mine and it takes up all of my time. Good afternoon, Sir!

SCROOGE ushers CHARITY MAN out.

CHARITY MAN

Skinflint!

SCROOGE

What did you say?

CHARITY MAN

Um - skin splints. It's a new running disorder we're trying to cure. We've got this - this -

(pulling a ribbon off his coat)

A brown ribbon!! We wear in solidarity to support skin splint victims!

SCROOGE

Sounds like just another cheap way to look engaged while simply doing nothing about the actual disease. So good day to you!

SCROOGE feels good. Returns to his desk.

ENSEMBLE begins to sing a Christmas song very quietly.

SCROOGE

And, you! What are you singing for?? Turn that down!

ENSEMBLE sings softer.

SOUND: Bells toll 7. SCROOGE looks at his watch and rises.

SCROOGE

Cratchit!!

CRATCHIT pratfalls off his stool and runs to SCROOGE's desk.

CRATCHIT

Yes, Mr Scrooge!

SCROOGE

It's the saddest part of my day, Cratchit. You know what that is?

CRATCHIT

Closing time, sir?

SCROOGE

Exactly! I suppose you'll be wanting the whole day tomorrow then? That's ten hours you'll be practically stealing from me but I suppose you think it's okay?

CRATCHIT

It's only once a year, Sir.

SCROOGE

I knew you'd say that. Once a year. A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!

CRATCHIT

At least it's not Kwanzaa or Hannukah they go on and on for eight days!

SCROOGE

Silence! You just be here all the earlier the next day then, Bob Cratchit, you loafer.

CRATCHIT

Yes, sir, of course, sir.

SCROOGE has his coat on. HE hesitates at door. Has HE seen something ghostly?

SOUND: ominously hoarse whisper
"marley!"

CRATCHIT

What is it, Mr. Scrooge? The chimney sweep again?

SCROOGE

NO, I thought-- I-I thought - My ears need some attention.

CRATCHIT

Merry Christ---

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

LIGHTS dim. ENSEMBLE bustles in holiday spirit. Jostling SCROOGE.

SONG: a spot for jolly crowd song of some kind. ENSEMBLE sings a ditty or we hear the music of the streets: accordions and concertinas, beggars making money by busking.

SCROOGE

Get out of my way, you low lifes! Get a job! Vagabonds!

(noticing a child)

What are you lost? Get off my property!

SCROOGE exits snarling at the passersby.

INTERLUDE

CRATCHIT runs back to the NARRATOR character's costume pieces and hastily puts them on.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Scrooge took his melancholy way home through the delightful crowds full of spirits. Er - spirit! He had a meal, if that's what you call it of mutton and gruel and a glass of warm punch--

ENSEMBLE

Yuk!

NARRATOR/DICKENS (cont)

Then Old Scrooge walked the darkened foggy streets to his lodgings. And what a place! The building once belonged to his partner, Marley. Needless to say, Marley wasn't an Architectural Digest reader - and neither was Scrooge. So it was old enough now, and dark enough, and dreary enough, and nobody lived in it but Scrooge.

SCROOGE arrives at his "door." HE fumbles for the key and as he does so, a looming face or figure appears.
IDEA: PERHAPS THE DOOR IS MADE OF STRETCH FABRIC. A FACE PROTRUDES

SCROOGE

(seeing the figure)
Marley!? Marley!? What the -

SOUND: Ominous music.

SCROOGE

Humbug! Bah! And Humbug! I've had more punch than I thought.

SCROOGE lets himself into his "room."

MUSIC: interim song here.

ENSEMBLE prepares the bedroom set.

SCENE 2

A Visit from an Old Friend

Lights change. SCROOGE is asleep, snoring profusely, in his chair. Bed curtains and linens on the bed.

MUSIC underscoring the following sequences.

SOUND: Bells. Every kind of bell that can be rung, rings.

SCROOGE falls suddenly out of bed, rising, holding his ears, moving about, trying to find a way to turn off the sound. Suddenly, bells stop. Silence.

SCROOGE peers around furniture, up the chimney, worried; shakes it off.

SCROOGE

Humbug!

SCROOGE climbs back into bed and pulls the covers up over his head.

SOUND: ticking clock. Gets louder and louder to a crescendo.

SOUND: Scream. Knocks SCROOGE out of bed again. Silence.

SCROOGE

Bah and a humbug and a bah bah double humbug!

SOUND: door bolts being opened. Doors creaking. Then chains rattling. Getting closer and closer.

SCROOGE

No no no! What's that? What's happening? Who's there?! Who???

"MARLEY effect" as MARLEY appears in the room. MARLEY 's voice can be digitally distorted or enhanced.

MARLEY

Scroooooooge!

SCROOGE screams and cowers.

MARLEY

Scrooooge!

SCROOGE

Who are you? What do you want with me?

MARLEY

Much!

SCROOGE

Who are you?

MARLEY

Don't you know me?

SCROOGE

I have no idea.

MARLEY

Sure you do. Take a guess.

Beat.

SCROOGE

Not a clue.

MARLEY

Man, you're killing me!

SCROOGE

I'm clueless as usual.

MARLEY

Ask me who I was then?

SCROOGE

Okay, who were you then?

MARLEY

Jacob Marley! Marley! Ja-cob Mar-ley!

SCROOGE

Oh! Marley! But you can't be, you're - um - sorry to say but you're dead.

ENSEMBLE

As a doornail!

MARLEY

Thanks! Rub it in!

SCROOGE

So how've you been, Jacob?

MARLEY

You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE

Well I wouldn't exactly say that. I mean maybe I had too much to drink or had some bad fish for dinner. Maybe I have Irritable Bowel Syndrome, I've been known to have polyps. I mean we don't exactly have a Health Department in this day and age. So I believe more in my own turbulent gut than believe in you I suppose.

MARLEY

Really, man? That's the best you got?

SCROOGE

Humbug, I tell you! humbug!

MARLEY makes a hideous other-worldly cry. SOUND: distorted.

SCROOGE

(falling to his knees)

Aaahhhh! Stop, Jacob! I do believe in you!

MARLEY

Man of the 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 (or her let's not be gender specific), should walk abroad among the towns people, and travel far and wide. But if that spirit fails to go forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death.

(aside to NARRATOR/DICKENS)

That's harsh. Well said, but harsh, man.

(to SCROOGE)

The spirit is doomed to wander through the world (wails) and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness! You understand me now?

MARLEY screams. SOUND distorts.

SCROOGE

Why are you chained like this?

MARLEY

I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard. I wound it around myself of my own free will and then I wore it. It's got a certain flair but it's darn heavy.

(holding up part of the chain)

It's a chain, a chain of fools, or one fool! You're wearing a chain that's just as long and strong right now. The one you wear was as long and heavy as this seven Christmas Eves ago.

SCROOGE

Old friend, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!

MARLEY

Comfort comes from other regions. The nice ones (gesturing above, making a face gesturing below) and is conveyed by other folks than me, to other kinds of men. My time with you is short. I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond my hardened heart. In life I locked my comfort away in the narrow limits of a bank vault. I walk the earth now, endless times and places.

SCROOGE

So "coming to a city near everyone" it looks like! Pretty soon you'll be making an appearance at the Arcada Theatre.

MARLEY

The whole time no rest, no peace. No redemption.

SCROOGE

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

MARLEY

(rattling his chains, big clamor)

Business!! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business! Charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business!

SCROOGE

Well now ... don't be so down on yourself.

MARLEY

This time of year I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and my elbows out?

SCROOGE

You did what you could, I'm sure.

MARLEY

Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE

I will.

MARLEY

I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. Not a fun job, believe me, Ebenezer Scrooge what with your flatulence and Irritable Bowel Syndrome. I'm not a doctor but, glory be, get it taken care of.

SCROOGE

You were always a good friend to me.

MARLEY

We were hardly b-f-fs. You went to work on the day I was buried.

SCROOGE

I was working on a huge deal!

MARLEY

Whatever. Listen up, Scrooge: I am here tonight to warn you, that you have one last chance and hope of escaping my fate. You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE

No way!

MARLEY

Yes, way! Without their visits you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first when the bell tolls One.

SCROOGE

Can't we do this during the day tomorrow? It's very late. I'm doing a sleep study—

MARLEY

SILENCE!

SOUND: Loud crashing/wailing!

SCROOGE

Okay, sheesh!

MARLEY

Expect the second at the hour of two. The third upon the hour of three.

SCROOGE

Ooh boy.

MARLEY

Look to see me no more. And for your own sake, remember what I said. You have to deal with your issues, man.

MARLEY takes the head wrapper from the table, and winds it around his head. MARLEY walks backward to a "window" and vanishes. SCROOGE runs to look.

SOUND: apparitions and ghosts howling for their lost souls.

Possible visual effects of floating ghostly figures, some around ENSEMBLE actors who portray the poor in need while the ghosts are helpless to intervene.

SCROOGE backs away. The lights change. HE turns to his bed and crawls under the cover. We hear his loud emphatic voice.

SCROOGE

Humbug, humbug, Humbug!!

Lights change, dim perhaps, showing time passing.

SCENE 3

Lights change. SOUND clock ticking, ticking ticking. SCROOGE snores away.

SOUND: Alarm bell, startling SCROOGE awake.

Lights change. Time to bright white light. MUSIC: spritely carol

SCROOGE

(waking with a start)
Who's there? What? Jacob?

SOUND: giggling. SCROOGE pulls aside a curtain to reveal the GHOST PAST! A strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, GHOST PAST holds a branch of fresh green holly and wears flowers. A light beams from the ghost's hat. A belt sparkles and glitters.

SCROOGE

Are—are you the spirit? The one I was warned about?

GHOST PAST

You betcha!

SCROOGE

So what's the plan then? Who and what are you?

GHOST PAST

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE

Like long past or just last week?

GHOST PAST

No. Your past. That's how I roll.

SCROOGE

That's getting a little personal, mister - er - miss - er

GHOST PAST

I'm just "ghost" we haven't figured out the genders over here yet. You look a little dazed.

SCROOGE

Just trying to find my sunglasses. It's the light from your - your - flaming hair or your toupee or whatever it is.

GHOST PAST

That's the light of human kindness. It's battery operated. You want me to put it out? You and your war on Christmas?

SCROOGE

Why are you here?

GHOST PAST

Oooh, this is going to be fun! I'm here for your welfare!

SCROOGE

I'm thinking right now that a night of really restful sleep would be better for my welfare—

GHOST PAST

Your reclamation then!

SCROOGE

Oh now, I don't need a makeover at 1 in the morning.

GHOST PAST

Come and walk with me!

SCROOGE

Where?

GHOST PAST

Your past! It's a long, winding meandering road full of déjà vu, but I think you'll enjoy it.

SCROOGE

I don't have slippers!

GHOST PAST

(moving to the edge of a window)

We walk on the wind, friend Scrooge. Let's go!

SCROOGE

I'm just a crotchety old mortal, spirit, you want to kill me?

GHOST PAST

Bear but a touch of my robe! You'll be safe!

SCROOGE touches the robe. Lights change as they fly to the past. Stage effect with flying and lights. Effect of snow falling and on the ground.

MUSIC: caroling. Good spot of a song..

ENSEMBLE prepare the next scene. School Room. YOUNG EB sits at a school room table, head in his hands.

SCROOGE

(excited and dancing about)

Spirit, I know this place! I know it! I was a boy here! I was at school here! Look at this! A school room!

GHOST PAST

You remember then?

SCROOGE

Remember it! I could conjure it in my sleep and know every nook and cranny.

GHOST PAST

(Checking the dust)

Yes, it's like St Charles East including the black mold.

STUDENTS run through, chasing each other, laughing. Teasing the BOY at the desk. "Look who's staying behind a gain?" "Look who's leftover for the holidays!" "We'll be sure to have twice as much fun while we're away!" "Merry Christmas, Screwy McScrew toy!" "Merry Christmas!"

SCROOGE

(calling after the STUDENTS)

Wait! Don't! That's not fair! Wait! Wait for me!

STUDENTS exit

GHOST PAST

These are but shadows of the things that have been. In other words, clueless.

SCROOGE

I knew them, those students. I knew them.

GHOST PAST

Funny they didn't seem to know you very well.

(gesturing to the BOY)

Look, the school has one lone child remaining. A child without a happy Christmas home to go to. A child with a sad little life story and no friends--

SCROOGE

Okay, okay I get the picture! He was very smart that child.

(pointing to the book on the desk)

Look, it's Ali Babba and the 40 Thieves!

GHOST PAST

Well, it's no Harry Potter.

SCROOGE

Oh such fun to read and dream with that book! Adventures upon adventures. The sultan and the genii and princess. My what times were those! Such times. Poor boy.

SCROOGE tears up; GHOST notices.

GHOST PAST

What is it?

SCROOGE

I wish . . . tonight as I was leaving the office, some kid -- (shaking it off) no matter, too late! Too late.

GHOST PAST

How many years did you spend Christmas here?

SCROOGE

Many. Many many. But no matter about that. I had no cares here. I was used to my books and I had great friends in those books!

LIGHTS change slightly.

GHOST PAST

And then - one Christmas -

FAN runs onto the stage.

FAN

Ebeneezer! Ebeneezer!

BOY

Fan! Is it really you!

FAN

Oh my dear brother! You'll never guess! You'll never guess in a million years! A million hundred years! You're coming home!

BOY

What? Home?

FAN

I'm here to bring you home, brother. To bring you home, home, home!

BOY and FAN start dancing
around, laughing joyful.

BOY

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! I mean in the last few months he stopped drinking and went on Zoloft and got a girlfriend so he's happy as ever now. He was in such a good mood the other night, I asked him if you could come home. And he said "who?" And then when I explained again, he said, "why not?" and said I should come and get you. And you won't be coming back here, Ebenezer. Ever. We'll be together just like all the other families over the holiday and we can bicker and fight and have too much to eat! Just like every other family!

BOY

You did all this, little Fan, for me?

FAN

Of course, brother! Of course! I've missed having you around to torment and tease.

GHOST PAST

She missed you.

SCROOGE

She would do that. She was perfect, she thought - I mean I thought!

FAN

Now get your things, we haven't a minute to lose!

BOY

We're off then! Merry Christmas!

FAN

Merry Christmas!

BOY and FAN exit

GHOST PAST

Your sister was what they call, "delicate," I take it.

SCROOGE

If you mean, was she kind of loony tunes, well sure. But she had a large heart.

GHOST PAST

Loving.

SCROOGE

No, it was an enlarged heart. She wasn't long for this world. But loving herself the whole way. Very. Yes, Spirit. Very loving.

GHOST PAST

She died in child birth.

SCROOGE

Yes.

GHOST PAST

Your nephew.

SCROOGE

Well that would figure, wouldn't it? Her child. My nephew. What of it?

GHOST PAST

And he looks like her then?

SCROOGE

Or like the father, I don't know, never saw him. She never said who. But a bit. Yes, he does.

GHOST PAST

Come we move on.

Lights change. MUSIC: merry music, dance music.

Set is prepared for FEZZIWIG ENTERPRISES office party.

PARTYGOERS enter, bustling
around. FZ enters, bursting with
party spirit!

FEZZIWIG

Yo ho! Ebenezer! Dick! Dick Wilkins! Ebenezer Scrooge! Look
lively!

SCROOGE

(excited)

It's old Fezziwig the fuss pot! Fezziwig!

GHOST PAST

You know this place?

SCROOGE

Know it! I was apprenticed here! Such experience! The man was a
business genius! And gave a great party.

FEZZIWIG

Ebenezer! Dick! Get in here it's time to party down and have some
fun tonight!

YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK enter running.

YOUNG SCROOGE

Yes, sir!

FEZZIWIG

Yo ho, my boys! No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick.
Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up before a man can
say Jackie Robinson!

PARTYGOERS, YOUNG SCROOGE and
scatter to create the party
scene. [NOTE: what if this was
the APPRENTICE?]

MUSIC: louder. Maybe disco.

FEZZIWIG

Hilli-ho! And Hi dee ho! Clear away, and let it go! Make some room
and use a broom. Hilli-ho, Dick! Faster, Ebenezer!

(calling)

Where's my wife? Where's my squeezable Charming Princess! Hey
momma, come to papa!

MRS FEZZIWIG enters all a
flutter.

MRS FEZZIWIG

Stop shouting! You know I can't hear you when the music's in my
head.

FEZZIWIG

(grabbing her for a smooch)

Come here, you delicious cream puff! How about a Christmas squeeze.

MRS FEZZIWIG

Oh you dirty old man! There's plenty of time for that.

FEZZIWIG

It's only once a year, my dear! I mean really, it's just once. Per
year.

MRS FEZZIWIG

Well, it's not over yet.

Dance couples start forming.

FEZZIWIG

Dance everyone! Everybody dance now!

Disco ball stars glittering. The
couples are getting down on the
dance floor. They clap and
cheer. "Fezzy, you're the best!"
"Three Cheers for Fezziwig!"

GHOST PAST

Look at them! A small matter to crank up some tunes and make people
happy!

SCROOGE

Small! Not small at all. He taught us some real dance moves!

GHOST PAST

It costs him but a few pounds of your mortal money. That's not so much to have so many people love and praise him.

SCROOGE

It isn't that, at all. I mean, he could make us happy or sad or hot or cold. I mean, he was the boss. The head honcho. The uber master.

GHOST PAST

Not a boss from hell then?

SCROOGE

No, not a boss .. from hell.

GHOST PAST

What is the matter?

SCROOGE

Nothing particular, I mean, I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all.

Party scene winds down. Lights dim.

SOUND: clock chimes

GHOST PAST

(grabbing SCROOGE)

Oh crap, my time grows short!

SCROOGE

You don't have to push!

GHOST PAST

Quickly!

Lights dim to as GHOST PAST and SCROOGE "fly" to another time.

SCROOGE

Where are we going?

GHOST PAST

Your past is getting darker now, you see!? More obstacles and choices not made!

SCROOGE

Oh brother..

Lights change. Scene is a bench by a fire. EBENEZER and MARILYN are seated side by side

EBENEZER

I don't get it, Marilyn. Everything's wonderful and we're the perfect couple and then you just go cold.

MARILYN

How can you say that? It's not wonderful.

EBENEZER

What did I do?

MARILYN

If you don't know, then I'm not going to tell you.

EBENEZER

Oh come on, Marilyn!

MARILYN holds out a mirror.

EBENEZER

What's that for?

MARILYN

Take a look, Ebby! It's not pretty.

EBENEZER

(looking)

Wow, I finally see what you see in me!

MARILYN

Can you? I see a face that shows the signs of care of -- avarice.

EBENEZER

Well that's a big word, honey. Congratulations!

MARILYN

Your face has a greedy restless look like you think everyone's out to cheat you. Your job is your passion, not me. and it has taken root where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

EBENEEZER

Did you write all that down first? That's a mouthful.

MARILYN

When we're making out, you not thinking of me, you're thinking of something else.

EBENEEZER

I'm not seeing anyone else, Marilyn, just get that through your head.

MARILYN

Not someone else! Gold!

EBENEEZER

Well wait a minute! I'm making money for once in my life. It's gonna be huge profits!

MARILYN

That's what you love now. You and your banker buddies.

EBENEEZER

Oh great, that's just fine, no one likes you if you're poor but hearts farts if you try to get rich! And then they hate you being rich and getting richer!

MARILYN

It's tacky.

EBENEEZER

It's going to pay for our house and luxury automobiles - once they invent them!

MARILYN

Oh, Ebby, you fear the world too much. You're too much of a braggart and I've seen you just practically run over someone because you thought you saw a pound note on the ground!

EBENEEZER

I'd never run you over, Marilyn!

MARILYN drops a pound note on the ground. EBENEEZER dives for it, stops himself.

EBENEEZER

Okay, I see what you did there!

MARILYN

Rest my case.

EBENEEZER

That's not fair, I wasn't ready to resist the power of money.

MARILYN

I see you looking at that pound note. You may as well grab it.

EBENEEZER quickly snatches it up.

EBENEEZER

How can you say that? I'm still so in .. I mean .. I really ..

MARILYN

You can't even say it, can you?

EBENEEZER

(can't quite make the words out)

What that I'm in - in-Llllllll - uhhhhh---

MARILYN

We were stupid kids when we got engaged. I'm not going to hold you to something you did because you thought my parents would find out what we did in the back room.

EBENEEZER

We were frisky kids, Marilyn.

MARILYN

You know you want to break up, it's written all over your face.

EBENEEZER

No, it's not.

MARILYN lifts his hat or wig, there's a sign: "Break up with me!"

MARILYN

I rest my case.

EBENEEZER

What'll I do without you, Marilyn?

MARILYN

Good-bye, Ebenezer. Let's just agree to be Facebook friends when that gets invented and we can call it quits. Good bye forever!

MARILYN exits. EBENEEZER makes a half hearted attempt to follow.

EBENEEZER

Marilyn! Don't go! Don't—Don't . . . oh well, she's missing out on a pretty hot husband.

EBENEEZER picks up the mirror checks himself out. Flips a coin and goes out.

SCROOGE

Oh brother, talk about drama!

GHOST PAST

She spoke the truth. Look at you!

SCROOGE

Then show me no more, Spirit! Take me home!

GHOST PAST

Just one shadow more!

SCROOGE

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

Lights change. ENSEMBLE creates another scene. This time MARILYN is lounging by the fire. HARRY comes in, shaking off the cold.

HARRY

Merry Christmas, sweet nut.

MARILYN

What? Oh you! Hi, Merry whatever.

HARRY

Hey, I saw a friend of yours, down at the bank.

MARILYN

It's not true, whatever they've said about me!!

HARRY

What are you talking about? It was just old Scrooge.

MARILYN

Oh, haha, yes, yes, that's what I meant. Some

HARRY

Wait, now I'm curious, what did you think --

MARILYN

Oh haha I was kidding. How was old Ebenezer the Sneezer?

HARRY

I passed his office window - wow was it dirty - I had to scrape a piece of dirt off and when I did I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner, that Marley chap, is dying I hear, but there he was counting his coins.

MARILYN

Why don't I find that horrifying? He still twists my heart like a mean drunk, but I can't be with someone who just doesn't see past his wallet.

SCROOGE

Spirit! I won't watch this. Take me home.

GHOST PAST

I told you these were shadows of the things that have been. It's your life, don't blame me!

SCROOGE

No! No! I'm not going to stay here and watch this.

SCROOGE reaches out to the GHOST, and wrestles with it.

SCROOGE

Leave me alone! Take back all those terrible things I saw about myself! Haunt me no longer! Humbug! Humbug I tell you!

MUSIC: rises. Lights dim as SCROOGE and GHOST PAST struggle. SCROOGE seizes the cap and pulls it down.

SCROOGE

Out, out! No more!

Black out.

SCENE 4

Lights change. MUSIC ominous. SCROOGE back in bed, linens wrapped around him as he cowers and shakes.

Suddenly Lights go bright! Laughter, booming laughter, floods the stage.

GHOST OF XMAS

appears dressed like a Christmas tree. GHOST OF XMAS carries a large horn-of-plenty. MUSIC: Percy Faith-type music.. slightly sixties.

GHOST OF XMAS

(laughing like Santa Claus)
Ebenezer Scrooge!

SCROOGE

No, no, no, no.

GHOST OF XMAS

Come and know me man!

SCROOGE

I can't hear you! I won't hear you!

GHOST OF XMAS

(raising his arms)
Come and know me, man!

GHOST OF XMAS extends his hands and
SCROOGE rises and seemingly floats to
stand. GHOST OF XMAS laughs
uproariously.

GHOST OF XMAS

Now that wasn't so hard was it, old Scrooge brain.

SCROOGE

Are you the other spirit?

GHOST OF XMAS

Yes, let me introduce myself: I'm the Ghost of Xmas.

SCROOGE

Xmas?

GHOST OF XMAS

Yes, I jazzed up my old name to make it sound more contemporary,
more present day if you will. The Ghost of Christmas Present was
always confusing people.

SCROOGE

How so?

GHOST OF XMAS

They thought I was say, PRESENTS, like gifts, which as we know can
get very expensive. What did they think, I was santa claus?

SCROOGE

Quite right.

GHOST OF XMAS

You've probably met all my brothers and sisters over the .. how old are you?

SCROOGE

How old do I look?

GHOST OF XMAS

I'd guess a hundred, but looks like you were rode hard and put away wet, you old Pickwick.

SCROOGE

I'm fifty!

GHOST OF XMAS

Well then! Ha ha, the jokes on me! And I do enjoy a good joke.

SCROOGE

I can't say I crack much of a smile anymore.

GHOST OF XMAS

We shall see about that, you Squeers you. Come and walk with me!

SCROOGE

Why do you all talk like simpletons?

GHOST OF XMAS

I don't know, I just follow the script.

SCROOGE

Okay, I think I get this now, You're all here to change me or something and I get it, I mean I don't like it but I "get it" you know what I mean. I'm "hip" to it. So I'm open to change I guess.

GHOST OF XMAS

Fantastic! Touch my robe!

SCROOGE

Do I have to?

GHOST OF XMAS

This is our mode of transport, planes trains and automobiles not having been invented yet. So touch me!

SCROOGE reluctantly grabs the robe.
Lights change. They "walk" into the
night. Stage effect should look like
they are flying, moving through snow
or wind.

MUSIC: POSSIBLE SONG?

TOWNSFOLK bustle and crowd around a
bakery, carrying plates of food out.
GHOST OF XMAS sprinkles "funny dust"
onto all the plates as they pass.

SCROOGE

What is that you're sprinkling there, Xmas? Looks tasty.

GHOST OF XMAS

My own special concoction to make these poor miserable folks enjoy
their Xmas dinner even more flavorful.

SCROOGE

Why just poor ones? That seems a little discriminatory.

GHOST OF XMAS

A poor one needs it most, that's why.

SCROOGE

It seems very special.

GHOST OF XMAS

It is! I call it, Centrum Multi-Vitamin Silver!

SCROOGE

Sounds powerful!

GHOST OF XMAS

I worked out a sweet deal with the manufacturers.

TOWNSFOLK make merry, doing their
shopping, drinking ale, crashing
their wicker baskets wildly in the
best humor possible

SOUND: church bells and singing,
laughter.

GHOST OF XMAS points to a door ahead:
CRATCHIT house.

GHOST OF XMAS

Ah, that's where we're headed. First a little blessing!

GHOST OF XMAS conducts a dusting and sprinkling on CRATCHIT house door.

GHOST OF XMAS "pushes" on the door and we go inside the CRATCHIT house where dinner preparations are underway.

MRS, a bustling mother, pushing her bench full of MINICRATCHITs around, assisted by BELINDA, full of ribbons, and PETER taking saucepans to the table.

MRS C

Where in heaven is that man? He's behind his time. And your brother "Tiny" Tim, that precious boy! And Martha so late she'll miss the Christmas joy.

MARTHA enters! Another head of ribbons and floppy curls.

MARTHA

Quit your griping mother, here I am, same as last year!

MRS C

Oh Martha! Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

MARTHA

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

PETER

Martha! You won't believe the size of the goose. I mean it's huge.

MARTHA

What fun!

BELINDA

As big as "Tiny" Tim they say.

The kids laugh.

MRS C

Well now you're here, Martha, you can lend your hands to cooking or tending the children. We've got enough of both. Take your pick.

PETER

Take a load off, Martha and put some heat on those bones. We still haven't invented central heating, but with my brain and aspirations I'm working on it.

MARTHA

Expecting a scholarship to Hogwarts or something?

BELINDA

Oh, oh, Father's coming! He's coming! Hide, Martha, hide!

MARTHA

Be serious.

MARTHA hides herself (not very well).
CRATCHIT enters with "TINY" TIM who has no visible physical injury.

MRS C

Well hello, Stranger, about time you come home on a Christmas Eve.

CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, children! Merry Christmas, my dear!

PETER & BELINDA

Merry Christmas, father!

CRATCHIT

Well now, let's see . . .

(counting the children)

There's Peter, and Belinda. And Tim of course. Then Mephistopholes, Banquo, Sheila, Yeller, Monique and Emoji and . . . well wait a minute, it seems somehow we must be missing one of our little brood.

CHILDREN snicker.

CRATCHIT

(pulling out his abacus to "show his work")
I count eight and I know eight just wasn't enough.. Okay wait, now
who took a powder?

MRS C

Bad news, Bob, Martha isn't coming!

CRATCHIT

Martha who?

MRS C

Our oldest daughter! Martha!

CRATCHIT

Oh Martha Cratchit!_ But why isn't she coming?

PETER

Working late as usual.

BELINDA

Or hardly working!

CRATCHIT

Poor Martha! Not coming? On Christmas Eve!!

PETE

Dad, what do you need us to spell it out for you? She's not coming!

MARTHA

(coming from hiding)

Here I am father! Home all the time!

CRATCHIT

Who are you?

MARTHA

Martha! Your oldest daughter, Martha!

CRATCHIT

There's a good child. Now fetch me my slippers and a newspaper.

MRS C

And how did "Tiny" Tim behave?"

Laughter.

TINY TIM

Stop it!

CRATCHIT

Tim was a brave lad! As good as gold and better. No one noticed his affliction.

TINY TIM

Daa-ad!

CRATCHIT

Somehow Tim gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, with his affliction, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard.

BELINDA

Oh really?

Laughter from kids

TINY TIM

Stop! It!! I'm tiny! But I've got big dreams!

MRS C

Children!

CRATCHIT

Why Tim told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was so obviously afflicted—

MRS C

Oh my poor boy!!

BELINDA

Why mother, you'll make me cry, too.

CRATCHIT

Can I speak now??

MRS C

Yes, sure okay ignore me completely!

CRATCHIT

Anyway . . . Tim said, so cute he was, he said it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made the let the dogs out, the dogs, the dogs, yep, who let the dogs out? Uhn hunh!

TINY TIM

It's called rap, Dad! Holy cow! Get with it!

CRATCHIT

Is that what that noise is?

Beat.

MRS C

Well . . . isn't that . . . interesting and worth discussing in a hundred and fifty years.

TINY TIM

It's the only unique musical genre to emerge from the flagrantly fascistic disco movement. Or so it will come to pass.

CRATCHIT

My, my, how he does go on and on that "child." But he's growing so big and strong now. Don't you think everyone? Don't you?!

MRS C

That he is, Bob. That he is.

TINY TIM

Stop talking about me!! I'm going to be famous!

TINY TIM toddles off.

MRS C

Tim! Tim!

(to the family)

Now see what you've done! He'll get a complex.

The CRATCHITS busy themselves with dinner.

SCROOGE

Spirit tell me, what is the affliction poor Tiny Tim must overcome?

GHOST OF XMAS

Well isn't it obvious. He's got a crutch.

CRATCHIT

Now children--

(pulling the bench of "children" up to the table)

Let us give thanks to the spirit of Christmas.

SOUND: kids yelling and clapping.

CRATCHIT

And to the founder of the feast, Mr. Scrooge!

Dead silence. Crickets.

CRATCHIT

What did I say?

MRS C

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

CRATCHIT

But my dear, the "children!" Christmas!

MRS C

I don't care, he's a old mean-mouthed, surly, grouchy, miserly, money grubbing skinflint! And I don't care who knows it!

SCROOGE

Wow, remind me never to meet her in a dark alley.

GHOST OF XMAS sprinkles her with his
"horn"

SOUND: magical music

MRS C

(immediately drunk)

Well, now, that felt funny.. but.. what was I saying?

PETER

That Mr Scrooge was an old mean-mouthed-

CRATCHIT

That's quite enough out of everyone! This time of year we come together as a family in the light of our little candles and fireplace to honor the spirit of the holiday.

PETER

Oh brother.

MARTHA

Dad is so sentimental.

CRATCHIT

So I propose a toast!

(Standing)

To the great big spirit of this great big day! A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

ALL

God bless us!

Beat.

Expectant hesitation.

CRATCHIT

Um.. (louder) God Bless Us!

ALL

God bless us!

Beat.

Expectant hesitation.

CRATCHIT

(whispering)

Somebody grab that kid and get him out here.

PETER runs off and drags TINY TIM
back on stage. They struggle in fake
fight.

PETER

Say it! Say it! Say it!

TINY TIM

Not gonna say it! No way!

SCROOGE

Spirit, do something!

GHOST OF XMAS

(Turns to the audience)

Is there anyone here who knows the next line? You there! You little
boy/girl? Do you know what line comes next?

An audience member shouts out: God
Bless Us Everyone!

TINY TIM

(between his teeth)

All right all right all right!

(getting up and becoming an angelic little boy)

God Bless Us, Everyone!

Cheers around the CRATCHIT table.

CRATCHIT

Now let's get some of that pudding!

CRATCHIT grabs MRS C, she giggles.

MRS C

Oh Bob, I'm not the pudding!

CRATCHIT

You should be!

More cheers from the table as the pudding is produced.

SCROOGE

Spirit, will Tiny Tim live and overcome his affliction?

GHOST OF XMAS

(shaking head sadly)

Oh Scrooge! If these shadows are not redeemed, if the world does not open its heart to the less fortunate members of society, if greedy misers like you continue to be miserly, I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved.

SCROOGE

(after a beat)

So ... is that a yes?

GHOST OF XMAS

Well as some genius said recently, if he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population!

(turning away)

Walk this way.

GHOST OF XMAS walks off with a lumbering gait. SCROOGE of course walks that way too.

GHOST OF XMAS makes a gesture. The following sequence is a montage of places and types of people enjoying Christmas.

The SONG transitions into a party scene at FRED's house. TOPPER and GRACE and another couple play games and dance and sing. FRED is telling a story.. everyone laughing uproariously.

FRED

He said that Christmas was a humbug! That's what he said! He believed it, too.

TILLY

I feel sorry for him to tell you the truth.

FRED

What a character, it's like he's from an old-fashioned novel written in the 1800s or something.

TILLY

He only hurts himself.

FRED

You're right, Precious. I shouldn't poke fun. He'll get his in the end I suppose.

GUEST 1

I'm sure he is very rich, Fred.

GUEST 2

Oooh!

TILLY

He always tells me that.

GUEST 1

And me, too.

FRED

What good does it do him? He never does anything with all his riches. He lives like a miser but Lord knows what he's going to do with all of that money. He's not going to leaving it to us.

TOPPER

Or me!

GRACE

Or me!

TILLY

Old tight wad.

FRED

Now my dear, I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. He's his own worst enemy. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. And who loses? He does.

TILLY

Very true!

FRED

The only consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not coming to this little party, is that he loses some pleasant moments. That's all. Can't do him any harm and maybe would do him much good, the old sourpuss.

TILLY

Let's invite him every year!

FRED

Why, not? I'll invite him whether he likes it or not! 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.

GHOST OF XMAS

(to SCROOGE)

Did he?

SCROOGE

I - I - I told him "humbug!"

TOPPER

Well he missed a very jolly dinner, I must say!

WOMAN 1

You said it! She sure can cook.

TILLY

Why thank you! And, Topper, my sister can cook equally well! Isn't that so, Grace?

GRACE

Well, I—I mean—I've got a few tricks in various places so to speak.

TOPPER

I'd love to hear or see them sometime.

GRACE

Oh, you scamp!

TILLY

Someone's blushing!

FRED

Well! I'm very glad to hear both my wife and her sister can whip up a good meal, because I haven't much faith in these young women now a days. What do you say, Topper?

TOPPER

(eyeing GRACE)

Oh um well . . . gosh! I'm just an old bachelor.

GUEST 1

We noticed that.

WOMAN 1

We did!

GUEST 1

What in blazes are you waiting for?

TOPPER

I um I -- What say we play some parlor games!

General merriment as the group begins to chase each other in blind man's bluff.

GHOST OF XMAS

Come, Mortal, my time grows short.

SCROOGE

Now wait a minute, this looks like fun. I want to chase those gals around, too!

GHOST OF XMAS

Ohhhh, some mortal fun and games! You find them amusing do you?

SCROOGE

Of course!

GHOST OF XMAS

Well it's all a "humbug"! isn't that what you say?

SCROOGE

Well I --

GHOST OF XMAS

This way, my life is very brief. The time is drawing near.

SOUND: Church bells tolling

SCROOGE

I'm sorry, I was looking - I can't help seeing that beneath your robe. I see something strange, protruding.

Beat.

GHOST OF XMAS

Um. . . Okaaay.

SCROOGE

(pointing)

No, it's right there.

GHOST OF XMAS

You mean these?

GHOST OF XMAS throws open his robe.

SOUND: crashing, gnarling howls.

SCROOGE shrinks back.

GHOST OF XMAS

The right one is Want. The left one is Ignorance. The middle one is Congress. Look upon them!!

SCROOGE

I'd rather not.

GHOST OF XMAS

They are mankind's burdens and they cling to me! Beware of them and all of their kind - but mostly beware the Congress, it's just not that productive.

SCROOGE

Gosh, have they no refuge or resource?

GHOST OF XMAS

You mean, "Are there no prisons?" "Are there no workhouses?"

SCROOGE

Okay, got me there!

SOUND: bell tolls twelve. As lights change and wind howls. Fog machine perhaps.

SCENE 5

Note: how the ghost enters is TBD. Ideas include having a loud knock on the door and NARRATOR/DICKENS asking someone from the audience open the door.

GHOST PAST enters slowly, ominously.
SCROOGE falls to his knees.

SCROOGE

Are you the third spirit? The one from the future?

Beat. GHOST FUTURE says nothing.

SCROOGE

What? You don't want to talk? Or you can't talk? Or you're just stuck up?

Beat.

SCROOGE

Fantastic conversationalist, I must say.

GHOST FUTURE shrugs.

SCROOGE

Okay then . . . But tell me one thing, Spirit, you're here to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen, right? I mean what's the future going to be about?

GHOST FUTURE nods. GHOST FUTURE reaches in his voluminous robes. Pulls out a microbrew, a Starbucks cup, a keyboard, and an iPhone. Silence.

SCROOGE

So it looks like the future is full of microbreweries, a star and a buck on every corner, a place to conjure all manner of knowledge with our fingers just by tapping on an alphabet, and communicating with people we don't like by talking to our hands? Is there any way to avoid these tragedies?

GHOST FUTURE shakes his head.

SCROOGE

Well lead me where you will then, spirit-with-no-personality. I expect to have some revelations or something. I certainly need the walk.

GHOST FUTURE slowly turns and walks.

SCROOGE

Hey! Wait up, Gloomy Gus!

Lights change. GHOST FUTURE moves ominously to another side of the stage. SCROOGE follows.

SCROOGE

I know you're here to do me good and everything, and you're going to make me a better person and all that, but a little conversation is good, right?

GHOST FUTURE pulls out his iPhone. Taps in some text. SCROOGE's phone buzzes. HE looks at it, GHOST FUTURE gestures. SCROOGE clicks it.

SCROOGE

(reading)

"You talk to much. Shut up and listen." Wow, harsh!

GHOST FUTURE texts something else. SCROOGE's phone buzzes.

SCROOGE

"Sorry I'm having a bad day." ? Well what about me?

GHOST FUTURE points to the scene
before them.

BUSINESS TYPE holds a row of dummy
heads, the ENSEMBLE appears to
surround SCROOGE.

SCROOGE

What is this? I know all of these people!

GHOST FUTURE txts something. SCROOGE
phone buzzes.

SCROOGE

(reading)

"This is an intervention."

NOTE: depending on the type of dummy
or puppets, BUSINESS TYPE 1 can do
some ventriloquism if he wants and
make the dummies/puppets reply.

BUSINESS TYPE 1

(laughing)

It was a bad, sad end, is all I know.

SCROOGE

(to GHOST FUTURE)

Hey now, that's not fair, they get to do all the talking!

BUSINESS TYPE 1

I don't know much about it, but I hear it was just pitiful in the
end. A total nightmare. I got invited to the funeral, but it seems
like it won't be very much fun. I mean, who would go?

Dead silence from the two dummies.

BUSINESS TYPE 1

Exactly! You're so right! I mean, I'd go if they had a meal. I
love meals at funerals. Everyone digs in like they're digging up a
grave. You'd probably like it, you can get stuffed!

They all laugh.

BUSINESS TYPE 1

And to think he died last night. So crazy when I just saw him yesterday afternoon stepping on a poor beggar child. Now the big question is: What has he done with his money?

Dead silence.

BUSINESS TYPE 1

I'm speechless, too.! All I know is he didn't leave it to me!

SCROOGE

You know what's weird about this place, I come here every day, so wouldn't you think I'd see myself here? I mean maybe I can't be here because I'm "here" you know what I'm saying?

GHOST FUTURE texts into his phone.
SCROOGE's phone buzzes.

SCROOGE

"LOL" What the hell does that even mean. Long On Loans? Love Only Losers?

GHOST FUTURE does a hurry up motion.

OLD JOE

Don't get your bones in bunch, ya ghostly reaper! We're here, we're ready.

UNDERTAKER, JOE, DORIS cackle and
crow around their stolen goods.
MUSIC 12 Days of Christmas only about
the stolen merchandise.

The following could be replaced with
song lyrics.

NOTE: one of the characters or two
should be dummies..

DORIS

Hey old Joe, what a day I've had. Got up early to get this!

JOE

Looks like you've gotten your hands on some lovely loot.

MOL

I have.

UNDERTAKER

Don't look at her junk, Joe, mine's the best of the bunch!

JOE

Who wants to look at your junk, buddy?

DORIS

That's right, that's right! Take a look!

JOE

All in good time, my friends. All in good time. Let's take a moment to honor the man himself and his "gifts" to us shall we say...

Beat. Then hearty laughter all around.

DORIS

Never laughed so hard, Joe. Almost peed myself there!

UNDERTAKER

You're a regular, Louis C-K, you are.

Beat.

ALL

May he rest in peace!

All crack up, laugh themselves silly.

UNDERTAKER

Rest in peace! haha.. you crack me up!

JOE

All right, Doris, what do you got?

DORIS

Every person has a right to take care of themselves, Doris. *He* always did.

UNDERTAKER

Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.

DORIS

If he'd wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, the wicked old screw, why wasn't he surrounded by nice folks instead of lying there gasping out his last, alone by himself?

JOE

Truer words were never spoke. It's a judgment on him.

DORIS

(to JOE)

Open that bundle, Joe, and let me know the value of it. I'm not shy, we all know we was helping ourselves to everything in sight. Can't be any sin in my mind the old cheapskate.

UNDERTAKER

No, no, I insist on my proper place as first in line. And I've got a funeral to conduct so time is short so to speak.

JOE

What you got there, Sylvester the undertaker.

UNDERTAKER

(handing a package over)

Some of the finest merchandise in all of this fair city! I just happened to spy on a dusty old dresser.

JOE

(scrutinizing the box of objects)

Bah! Bunch of thingamabobs and a silver toothpick. Bah! Here's your money, Sly. And I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?

DORIS

(pulling out sheets)

Lookee here, Joe, lookee here. Never much used. Wasted on him.

JOE

(handing money to her)

Oh shoot me, but I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself. If you asked me for another penny, I'd take back a half-crown so there.

DORIS

(pointing)

Not to look greedy, but I've got another little bundle down here.

JOE

Now, Doris, I'm a married man I do say!

DORIS

(pulling out another bundle)

No, you creep, this bundle!

JOE

(undoing the bundle)

What have we here? What have we here?

(pulls out the end of a curtain)

Bed curtains!

DORIS

(cackling)
Bed Curtains!!!

All laugh, impressed.

JOE

You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?

DORIS

Rings and all, Joe, god as my witness! And why not?

JOE

Oh, Doris, you was born to make your fortune!

DORIS

Oh you flatterer, you! I certainly don't look a gift curtain rod in the window if I do say so myself. But dig deeper, Joe. You'll have a nice surprise there.

JOE

(digging deeper)
His blankets?

DORIS

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

ALL laugh and cackle together.

JOE

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

Beat. Then all crack up again.

DORIS

Dried himself up like an old raisin he did.

UNDERTAKER

An old raisin.

DORIS

(pushing out another piece)
And my final piece de registration if I do say so, is this. Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache, but you won't find

a hole in it, not a one! It's the best he had. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.

JOE

What do you call wasting it?

DORIS

Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure. Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again.

UNDERTAKER

You mean you took the shirt off his back?

DORIS

Yes indeed.

UNDERTAKER, JOE

EEeeeeewww!

DORIS

If calico an't good enough for such a purpose, it ain't good enough for anything. It's quite nice and he can't look any uglier than he did in that one.

They all laugh and cackle again.

UNDERTAKER

Well the, this is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!

They all laugh

SCROOGE

Um . . . Spirit! Are you trying to tell me something here. I mean the case of this sad, unhappy unfortunate man is tangentially like mine. I mean was like that. I mean . . .

GHOST FUTURE points to show a table on which a body lies under a sheet.

SCROOGE

Oh, crap.

SOUND: ominous music, clanking howls.

SCROOGE

You want me to look at that? Oh I don't - I mean - I don't think so - I think I know ---

GHOST FUTURE types in some text.
SCROOGE's phone buzzes

SCROOGE

No I'm not going to answer that. I'm not!

GHOST FUTURE more text and buzzing.

SCROOGE

Please, Spirit, take me someplace else, where sad tragedies are met with tears and kindness! Is there anyone in this town who cares about this man's death?

GHOST FUTURE points to another scene.
WORRIED WIFE paces. WORRIED HUSBAND enters.

WORRIED WIFE

What?! What have you heard? Is it better? Will we be saved? Good or bad, tell me!

WORRIED HUSBAND

Wellllll -

WORRIED WIFE

Then we are quite ruined?

WORRIED HUSBAND

No. There is hope yet, Caroline.

WORRIED WIFE

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

WORRIED HUSBAND

He is past relenting. He's dead!

Beat.

WORRIED WIFE

You're kidding?

WORRIED HUSBAND

Nope. Dead. Dead as a rust bucket. Dead as a door thingie.

WORRIED WIFE

Nail. Door nail.

WORRIED HUSBAND

Right, that's it. Door nail.

WORRIED WIFE

Oh wow! That's just- just-

BOTH

WONDERFUL!

SONG possible: He's dead!

WORRIED HUSBAND

So it was true, he was dying last night, when I tried to see him to get a one week reprieve on the loan. I thought he was trying to avoid me, but haha it turns out haha he was not only very ill, but dying! He was kicking his bucket right then!

WORRIED WIFE

Who will own our mortgage now?

WORRIED HUSBAND

Who cares? Before that happens we'll have the money to repay the debt. And even if we didn't, it would be impossible to find a meaner, more vile creditor than him.

WORRIED WIFE

He's dead! He's dead!

BOTH

Dead, dead dead!

They do a little jig and dance.

SCROOGE

Um . . . that's not what I had in mind. Where's the sad face of grief?

GHOST FUTURE points. The CRATCHIT house is seen.

SCROOGE

Oh no . . . does this mean...

(pointing)

Look, all those Cratchit kids have gone quiet like a row of dummies on a bench. And Mrs C looks so down in the dumps.

MRS C

Ah me!

PETER

(reading)
'And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'

MRS C
(putting her head in her hands)
Why? Why why?

BELINDA
What is it, mother?

PETER
She's been in the sherry again. You've been in the sherry again, mother, haven't you?

MRS C
No! It's just-- the color hurts my eyes is all.

PETER mouths to BELINDA "sherry"

MRS C
(putting the bottle in her sewing basket)
Ah now, these eyes are getting better now. This candlelight does something awful to my eyes. If only we had the electric light that Tim was working on in the basement. Now we'll never know if that would have helped.

BELINDA
ikDon't let father see your "eyes" mother, you know he hates it when you've been "sewing."

PETER
Yes, hide the bottle, Belinda, so father can't see Mother "sewing"

MRS C
I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father for the world. It must be near his time.

PETER
Past it rather. He's walking slower than usual now that - well - now that -

BELINDA
Now that -

MRS C
Say it! Say it! Stop beating around the bush! Now that Tim isn't here! That's what you mean.

PETER
Now that he doesn't have to keep up with Tiny Tim, yes.

MRS C

I know, I know. He always walked very fast to keep up with Tiny Tim when he was out with him.

BELINDA

Oh poor Tim and his affliction! We remember those days!

MRS C

Be nice, Belinda, be kind.

CRATCHIT appears at the "door."

MRS C

Quiet! Here's your father at the door!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Oh what a dismal scene it was, this little family.

CRATCHITS indicate that NARRATOR/DICKENS needs to "change" into CRATCHIT.

NARRATOR/DICENS

Oops! Missed my cue!

NARRATOR/DICKENS puts on his "CRATCHIT" costume, and enters. HE appears drunk. HE carries the rubber crutch that TIM carried in the other scene and he wears TIM's scarf around his neck.

CRATCHIT

Ol sour puss and his .. what the 'ell I said - you miserable curr-I'm only human.. ain't I? why I outta . . .

BELINDA

Hello Father

PETER

Father!

CRATCHIT

Jes a second..

(he adjusts the crutch by the fire)

Now thas what I think is nice. Ol' Tim is here and still with us. My little lad, you crazy boy.

PETER

But father that's just an old rubber crutch.

CRATCHIT

Quiet!

(soothing the crutch)

Shhh shhhh that's ok my son, that's okay, Tim.

(holding the crutch to his heart)

I won't hear another word from you about your dear brother!

MRS C

Come to the table, Bob. The dinner will be cold.

CRATCHIT

Ah who cares! We're all sad and lonely now that Tim is gone.

MRS C

You went today, didn't you, Bob?

CRATCHIT

Yes, my dear, I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!

Whenever CRATCHIT speaks of Tim like this, we hear a violin playing a maudlin tune. It stops when he looks over annoyed.

PETER

Here he goes again!

MRS C

There, there Bob. You did all you could, you can't help that you don't make any money and we don't have any insurance because it's not invented yet, or that you didn't ask your boss for a few hundred pounds.

BELINDA

Oh father!!

CRATCHIT

(drying his tears)

Oh! I ran into Mr Fred, old Scrooge's nephew today in the bar - I mean at church - and he noticed I was um "down" you know. So I told him flat out about Tim and what we're all going through and he said, "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 C

Hunh? What are you talking about?

CRATCHIT
How he knew you were a "good wife"?

PETER and BELDINDA snort and laugh.

MRS C
Quiet!

CRATCHIT
'Heartily sorry,' he said, 'If I can be of service to you in any way,' he said, giving me his card, and he just said, come on over any time. Like he and I were b.f.f's.

MRS C
Funny how tragedy brings people together.

CRATCHIT
Yes, like Sox fans.

MRS C
I'm sure he's a good soul!

BELINDA
He's certainly handsome!

PETER
He certainly is!

CRATCHIT
You would be surer of it, my dears, if you saw him up close. So handsome he is. I shouldn't be at all surprised—mark what I say!—if he got Peter a better situation.

MRS C
Only hear that, Peter!

PETER
I'm all ears!

BELINDA
I'll bet you are!

PETER
Shut up, Belinda. I'm going to make my fortune one way or another.

BELINDA

Looks like Peter will be keeping company with someone, and setting up for himself finally. I want his bedroom!

PETER

Get lost!

CRATCHIT

No fighting on this day, children! When we recollect how patient and how mild Tim was, although he was so little and a little strange, and a little bizarre -

PETER and BELINDA snort.

CRATCHIT

Little child, we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.

BELINDA, PETER

(sarcastically)
No, never, father!

CRATCHIT

I am very happy. I am very happy!

CRATCHI breaks down weeping.

MRS C

Belinda, get me my "sewing."

BELINDA grabs the sherry bottle.

MRS C

Bob, darling, would you like something to "sew"? Like half a glass?

CRATCHIT grabs the bottle. Slugs down a shot. PETER and BELINDA slug shots down too.

MRS C

Well then, here's to another lovely Christmas.

CRATCHIT

God bless us. . . . God bless us. . . what the hell comes next?

SCROOGE

(to AUDIENCE)

What do you say? You know the line! Say it with me!

Everyone! God bless us everyone!

(to GHOST FUTURE)

Spirit, this is one screwed up family now. You mean just because one of their children, the littlest, is gone, the family has gone to hell?

(beat)

And just because the family unit is broken, old Mrs Cratchit has taken to sewing and Bob is sewing as well? And the loss of one child in a family where eight clearly wasn't enough has caused such damage?

GHOST FUTURE texts him. Phone buzzes.

SCROOGE

(reading)

"yes." So tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead? What man was that?

GHOST FUTURE txts him.

SCROOGE

Oh! A sly yellow face with a winking eye! And one rolling its eyes. How clever the future is!

GHOST FUTURE walks and points. Lights change to churchyard.

SCROOGE

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

(beat)

I mean, who can say, if our past foreshadows our future, right? What if right now people decide to change, I mean, what if that intervention was successful? What if I could rehab myself like an old house? What if all those people out there started clapping like mad if they believe I can be redeemed.

Beat.

Okay, short of that miracle, even a small change wouldn't that mean that the end will be different? Tell me it's true!

GHOST FUTURE points to the headstone. Music is ominous and creepy. SCROOGE moves towards the tombstone.

SCROOGE

No! No! No! That's my name! I'm the one! Noooo!

Music: crashing and lights! Lights
on: EBENEZER SCROOGE.

SCROOGE

Spirit! hear me! I am not the man I was. How can I be? Why show me this, if I am past all hope? Tell me that I can change these shadows! I mean, what if I wanted to do things differently, like get a talk show and give away cars? What if I honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year? Oh and, even better, what if I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future? Yeah, that'll be easy! What if I make an effort not to shut out the lessons that I learned and to keep them in my heart as well as my head? Tell me if I do all those things, can we just start over here? Can I tear down that stone? Can I erase this mess like a bad etchasketch?

SCROOGE grabs the spectral hands.
Stage effect where SCROOGE is
enfolded in the robes of the GHOST
FUTURE and with some lighting changes
winds up back in his room, on the
floor kneeling.

INTERLUDE

Lights change. SCROOGE at first
doesn't see the change or hear birds
or street sounds from the window.
It's daylight.

SCROOGE

(still thinking he's with the GHOST FUTURE)
I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! Swear. To.
God! The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob
Marley you were right, I did need to get my act together!

(realizing where he is)
Ah, I'm here! In my own room! The bed curtains are not torn down!
My sheets and pillow shams are still here! I am here—the shadows of
the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I
know they will! Or I'll die trying so to speak!

(laughing, skipping around, little jiggy dance)
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.

(making a huffing noise)
Wait, wait! I think, yes, I think I'm going to... laugh! Laugh! Ha!
Ha! Yeah that's it! Ha! Ha!

(losing breath, getting it back)
I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody!

(to audience)
Merry Christmas to everyone! I'll bet you thought I was a goner!
Hahaha! A happy New Year to all the world.

(dancing around again)
I don't know what day of the month it is! I don't know anything.
I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby!
Waah waah hahahaha!

SOUND: Church bells ringing.

SCROOGE
Oh! Bells! Bells! Hells Bells! What day is it? What day?
(pointing to the audience)
You there! You There! What day is today?

Hopefully someone from the audience
says "Christmas Day!" or the ENSEMBLE
has to say it.

SCROOGE
What day?

ENSEMBLE
Christmas day!!

SCROOGE
Oh, glorious, glorious! 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.

(whirling around)
You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to.. ooh.. I'm going to .
. . spend... some .. money!! Argh! No no it doesn't hurt, it doesn't
hurt! It feels, goood!

(calling to ensemble)
Hey you there! You! Yes, You!

ENSEMBLE member steps forth as:

PAGE BOY
Yes, sir!

SCROOGE
Do you know Blue Goose grocery over on the next corner?

PAGE BOY

I should hope I did.

SCROOGE

An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?

PAGE BOY

What, the one as big as me?

SCROOGE

What a delightful boy! Yes, that one! I want you to buy it!

PAGE BOY

Get outta here!

SCROOGE

Hahaha, you think I'm kidding? I'm not! Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here! 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!

PAGE BOY

Bonkers you are but I'm off!

PAGE BOY runs off.

SCROOGE

Bob Cratchit will have apoplexy and his wife will faint dead away. We'll see how she treats old skinflint Scrooge in the future! But I won't tell them who sent it. No, I'll make it anonymous. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim's affliction I should say. Now I have some errands to run!

SCROOGE runs off.

The following sequence is where we can have the ENSEMBLE cover while SCROOGE gets dressed.

SCENE 6

SCROOGE walks through the town, singing, clanging bells, happy times for all.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Once Scrooge was dressed, he took a walk down Main Street, where the people were pouring forth, from church and house. And just seeing all those people, he had to.. smile!

SCROOGE

Yes, I'm smiling! Imagine that!!

ACTOR 1

Well, good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!

SCROOGE

Oooh, a Merry Christmas to you! Merry Christmas!

CHARITY MAN enters. Sees SCROOGE and turns abruptly to go the other way. SCROOGE calls out!

SCROOGE

My dear sir!

CHARITY MAN

Who, me?

SCROOGE

Yes, you, sir.

CHARITY MAN

Now, see here—

SCROOGE

You're probably not happy to see me, but you're irresistible to me right now! I can't help it but I just have to—
(kissing him on the cheeks and hugging CHARITY MAN)

CHARITY MAN

Mr. Scrooge? I beg your pardon!

SCROOGE

Yes, that is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness to take some of my my my moo-ney...

CHARITY MAN

Lord bless me! My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?

SCROOGE

I am!

SCROOGE goes to kiss him again.

CHARITY MAN

That's quite enough of that! While I'm open to dating, I think we should take it slow.

SCROOGE

How funny the world is, I'm basically high on Christmas Meth right now!

CHARITY MAN

Well thanks for the donation! I must run. Away.

CHARITY MAN flees.

SCROOGE

(Calling after)

A great many back-payments are included in that sum! Come and see me. Will you come and see me! Does that sound desperate!?

NARRATOR/DICKENS

Scrooge walked about the streets of St Charles, 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 make him, yes, happy! He had never dreamed that any walk—that anything—could give him so much happiness and he didn't even have his fit bit with him. But later, he paid one special visit.

Lights up on FRED's house. Party in progress. SCROOGE hesitates and then makes a knock on the door. FRED turns to see SCROOGE.

FRED

Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE

Yes, Fred, it's me. Bah humbug and all.

FRED

Why bless my soul, honey, it's Uncle Scrooge!

TILLY

What?! Here! Has he gone mad?

SCROOGE

Yes, it's me. I have come to dinner. But I'm not mad, just cranked on Christmas Cheer, my dear. Will you let me in, Fred?

FRED

Let you in! Haha, that's a good one! Of course!

TILLY

He doesn't look as mean as you said he was!

SCROOGE

Oh I was my dear, meaner than a junk yard dog whatever that is.

TILLY

And will you be staying for your money - er for desert?

SCROOGE

Yes my dear, staying for the party and dancing too!

Lights change as all laugh.
NARRATOR/DICKENS steps forth.

INTERLUDE

NARRATOR/DICKENS

And somehow no one at the party questioned how the old sourpuss was now a cuddly, generous old man. Not even young Fred the nephew. No one asked how the guy who had bah-humbugged his way through life, was suddenly a laugh a minute. Scrooge was made to feel at home. And isn't that what everyone wants? To finally find and have a place called home? In place and in heart?

(beat)

Okay I added that part, that wasn't in the original novel, but I thought it was a good line.

Lights change to office setting.

NARRATOR/DICKENS

So back to the story. Even though he partied hard the night before, Scrooge was all the earlier the next day to his dreary office.

SCENE 7

SCROOGE enters into the scene.

SCROOGE

I'm going to catch Bob Cratchit coming in late! Haha how I used to love to catch him coming in late! Deee-lightful!

SOUND: clock strikes nine. Slight
beat NARRATOR/DICKENS has to "become"

CRATCHIT and hurry in, sliding into his desk slyly.

SCROOGE

You're very late, Cratchit!

CRATCHIT pratfalls off his chair.

SCROOGE

What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?

CRATCHIT

I am very sorry, sir. I *am* behind my time, I know.

SCROOGE

Step this way, sir, if you please, Bob Cratchit!

CRATCHIT

It's only once a year, sir It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir. (whispering to himself) Please please please don't fire me..

SCROOGE

"It's only once a year!" waah waah.. Really? Is that all you've got? Once a year? And at who's expense?

CRATCHIT

Hummina hummina I I --

SCROOGE

Now, I'll tell you what, Bobby old chap, I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. Do you understand me--

CRATCHIT

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, sir, please--

SCROOGE (continuing)

--And therefore, and therefore,

CRATCHIT

(falling on his knees)

Oh please!!!!

SCROOGE

Bob Cratchit get to your feet!

CRATCHIT rises.

SCROOGE (cont)

Robert Petrovski Cratchit, in the name of Scrooge and Marley, I Ebenezer Scrooge I am about to raise your salary!

Beat. SCROOGE is cracking himself up.

SCROOGE

Haha! What do you think of that?

CRATCHIT

Stop it!

SCROOGE

No, no, I'm serious!!

CRATCHIT takes a pratfall. SCROOGE helps him up.

SCROOGE

Yes, Bob Cratchit, I'm raising your salary effective immediately! Hahaaha 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 help out your family— and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl punch! Now make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i,o,u Bob Cratchit! Hahaha

CRATCHIT runs out while SCROOGE dances around the room. Comes back with a bucket of coal bricks. Starts pouring it on the fire!

During the following narration, stage business should be going on. Some of the fun characters come back and get their comeuppance.

CONCLUSION

NOTE: probably needs song here.
Could this narration carry in song?

ENSEMBLE

(they take part of this wrap up)

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more. And to Tiny Tim, who did NOT er die, he was good as gold.

He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew. Some people laughed to see the how changed he was. But he let them laugh and didn't mind. He was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not laugh their silly heads off or make some cynical remark.

SCROOGE

Hey, haters gonna hate, you know!

ENSEMBLE

Yes, laughter was better medicine no matter the reason behind it.

SCROOGE

Well my heart is laughing, and that's quite enough for me!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

It was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well in his heart and in his deeds. May that be truly said of all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, um - eh - um- wait-

NARRATOR/DICKENS comes to the end of the book, the page is ripped. He is stuck. Uh oh!

NARRATOR/DICKENS

The book! The line!

ENSEMBLE looks for other books.
Hands down a book! NARRATOR/DICKENS
Opens to last page:

NARRATOR/DICKENS

"It is a far, far better thing I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest I go to than ---"

Well, of all the nerve! That's not it, you fools! Get me a rewrite! Get me a rewrite!

ENSEMBLE whisper among themselves and
One actor comes forward. Whispers to
DICKENS

DICKENS

Oh, of course! Of course!
(to Audience)

So as um . . . Tiny Tim observed, God bless us --? Er - um -

(gesturing to the ENSEMBLE)
God bless us --

TIM

God bless us . . . ?

CRATCHIT

God bless us . . . ?

ALL
God bless us everyone!!

Lights up bright and music up. Lights
out.

THE END

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