

Marlene's

By Tim A. Pullen

It's an old stand by, but I've altered the Dickens out of it.

Cast

Ned Ramer: Janitor/Narrator

Roberta Crachet: Eleanor Scrooge's assistant.

Eleanor Scrooge: Fashion designer/Dress maker

Nickolas Scrooge: Eleanor's nephew and only living relative

Darcy Dickens: Theater Student

Kristen Charles: Theatre Student

Marlene Jacobs: The former owner of the dress shop and Eleanor's mentor.

Timmy Crachet: The son of poor Roberta

Caroline Jacobs-Swanson: Marlene's Niece, and Eleanor's high school BFF

Cynthia Swanson: Caroline's Daughter (can be played by dolls)

Chad Swanson: Caroline's Son (can be played by dolls)

Lenny Roberts: (Radio announcer- Voice)

Act 1 scene 1

(Lights go up on the inside of a dress shop, Roberta Cratchit is fumbling through the paper work of balancing the registrar, adding up checks and charge slips. The janitor Ned Ramer walks on stage with an old fashion push vacuum. While he sweeps I imagine he hums a little holiday tune, one without copyright restrictions of course.)

Ned: (Stops sweeping to speak to the audience) Marlene was dead there was no question of that, dead as a door nail, granted I don't know how dead a door nail would be, I would think a coffin nail would be the deadest, of all the carpentry fasteners, but maybe it's just one of those stupid sayings, like sleep like a baby. Everyone knows a baby is up all hours of the night or busy as a bee, I mean they've got no-

Roberta: Ned (without looking up)

Ned: Yeah?

Roberta: You're rambling again.

Ned: Oh, yeah, so the point here is, Marlene is dead, she had been dead for seven years now. She actually died on the 16th of December so she's been dead about seven years and a week, but the funeral was held on Christmas eve. It's been a straight seven years since that. Still the sign on the door reads Marlene's Fashion. Not keep that way out of respect, or holding on to any memories of the past, or the sake of sentiment, but to save the hundred bucks it'd cost to change the sign (Eleanor Scrooge enters from behind a rack of cloths) It was seven years ago, on a dark, cold winter's night such as tonight-

Eleanor: What's the problem here?

Roberta: Ms. Scrooge? Yes well

Eleanor: Is something wrong, with my books?

Roberta: Oh no, no nothing like that, everything is fine.

Ned: Cold winter's night such as this that old Marlee-

Eleanor: What are you doing? I'm not paying you to stand around talking to yourself, if you're done cleaning go home, we've been closed for ten minutes now. You could at least clock out before monologuing on my time. (Ned goes to fetch his jacket) I'm glad everything is fine Ms. Cratchet. I have a small task for you to preform tomorrow morning. A client of ours is having her dress altered for her New years day wedding, and I need you to re take her measurements.

Roberta: But , Ms. Scrooge it's-it's just, it's -(Ned walks out throwing on his jacket, he speaks to the audience.)

Ned: You know the story, just go with it. - (to the other characters) Merry Christmas Roberta! Good night Ms. Scrooge (Exits)

Roberta: Merry Christmas Ned.

Eleanor: Night Ned.

Roberta: I've taken those measurements three times, and tomorrow is Christmas day.

Eleanor: What of it? I'm sure it's inconvenient for her too, but it's a New Year's wedding, if she wants her dress to fit, she'll make the time. We've got under a week to have it ready. Don't blame me, I tried to convince her it was a stupid idea to get married on January first. In the middle of the holiday festivities you know she's probably put on five pounds since we took any of those measurements anyway. Optimistic idiot, she'll be lucky if the ring fits.

Roberta: Well it's just not the best morning to go take measurements. Why don't I go the day after.

Eleanor: Don't be silly, it's the perfect morning. How many days a year do you have the day off to do that sort of thing?

Roberta: But, my son Timmy.

Eleanor: Kids always sleep in, do it before he wakes up.

Roberta: Kids don't sleep in on Christmas morning.

Eleanor: True, that's inconvenient. Can't somebody sit with him?

Roberta: My parents and my husband have all passed. We are the only family we've got left. He's looking forward to spending the day with me and-

Eleanor: And he can, just take him along, it should only take an hour or so.

Roberta: To take measurements?

Eleanor: Well that depends on how fast you can make the alterations. That is if any are needed.

Roberta: You want me to do the alterations tomorrow? at her house?

Eleanor: We have to do something to make up for any inconvenience now won't we? Maybe she won't need alterations, maybe she hasn't gained an ounce. If it makes you happy you can pretend she hasn't out hipped her dress since Thanksgiving, I'm just being a realist.

Roberta: You're just being a- A business woman. A darn good business woman.

Eleanor: Thank you. That is why I'm here isn't it?

Roberta: Yes. Yes it is.

Eleanor: I'm sure little Tommy wouldn't like having his Mommy in an unemployment line to start the new year.

Roberta: It's Timmy, and No, I guess he wouldn't like that at all, may I go now?

Eleanor: Of course, of course, I've already clocked you out, to save you the time. Here is the dress to take in the morning (Hands here the dress and a slip of paper) and this is the address, you should have no problem finding it. (As Roberta walks out Nick Scrooge, Eleizebeth's Nephew walks up to the closed door.)

Roberta: It's your Nephew Ms. Scrooge, may I let him in this time?

Eleanor: Why not, the restraining order costs more than it's worth. (Roberta lets Nick in as she's leaving)

Nick: Roberta, Merry Christmas.

Roberta: Merry Christmas.

Eleanor: Yeah, yeah.

Nick: How is she?

Roberta: Sweet as ever.

Nick: That bad?

Roberta: You have a Merry Christmas Nick, good night Ms. Scrooge. (she exits)

Nick: To you to! (Carring a package he closes the door and walks towards his aunt) Aunt Elanore, I've got some good news for you!

Eleanor: You're getting devoriced?

Nick: No, of course not, but Peggy would like to have you over for our Christmas dinner tommorow night.

Eleanor: My dear boy, of course she'd like that. You have invited me over each December the twenty fifth since you've been married. It's not enough to marry you for money, she's got to make sure she's in my will as well.

Nick: She's not like that, and you know it.

Eleanor: Good thing then, since I havent got a will. She is still despartely attempting to make up for insulting me over that blasted wedding dress.

Nick: She wasn't insulting you or your dress.

Eleanor: I offered her an original masterpiece free of charge and she chose to wear some old rag.

Nick: That was her grandmother's wedding dress.

Eleanor: A hand me down at that. I don't plan on standing here and arguing with you all night, you celebrate Christmas in your way, and I'll celebrate in mine.

Nick: You don't care about Christmas at all aunt Ell, not Christmas not Easter, and when was the last time you had a birthday cake?

Eleanor: And I haven't gotten a day older-

Nick: Well-

Eleanor: Not a word.

Nick: At least take this (hands her the package)

Eleanor: What is this? A larger frame for that yearly picture of the two of you?

Nick: A fruit cake, actually, and a very good one at that. Why can't you find something to be happy about? you've got everything you've ever wanted.

Eleanor: And you're struggling for what you need, so what right do you have to be so happy.

Nick: It's Christmas! How can you be so mean at Christmas?

Eleanor: Christmas isn't anything more or less than any other day of the year, only the card companies make a quick fortune, the candy and toy stores sell out, and and babbleing idiots like you go hoping around the world smiling while handing your money out to every bum on the street and claiming it's in the name of some holy spirit-

Nick: But-

Eleanor: Do you know those Tiny tot people wanted to take half my space for their toy drive thing?

Nick: And what does it hurt you?

Eleanor: I know the presidents of every one of those charity organizations rake in a cool tax exempt million for a salary. They can afford to rent their own space. Christmas, my dear boy is just an excuse for picking pockets, and every idiot that believes it to be more, should be stabbed through the heart with a stake of holy then boiled in his own Figgie pudding.

Nick: If that's the way you feel, fine. Good night Aunt Ell (Goes to the door) And have a Merry Christmas. Whether you like it or not.

Eleanore: (About to throw the fruit cake and then changes her mind) Christmas! Bahh! Hum Bug! Aggh well, (looking at fruit cake) Waste not want not. (Two teenaged girls come up to the store front, a programs in hand.wearing t-shirts advertising a school play)

Darcy: Merry Christmas.

Eleanor: We're closed.

Kristen: That's okay, we didn't want to buy anything.

Eleanor: Which endears you to my heart all the more.

Kristen: Why would that endear us to you?

Eleanor: It's called sarcasm kid, what do you want?

Darcy: We were hoping to sell you an ad in our program, to support the drama club.

Eleanor: The drama club? I've got a thought, if you're in the drama club why don't you put on a play, then sell tickets to raise the money to put on another?

Kristen: We do that, but the money from the ticket sales won't nearly cover our production costs.

Eleanor: In that case, perhaps you should take the hint. Get a part time job after school instead of wasting you time and grades on hopeless dreams, and long dead art. I'm doing you a great service by not feeding your misplaced ambitions. Trust me kids, getting over it now will save you a lifetime of disappointment. (The kids burst into tears and leave.) One day they'll thank me.

Act One Scene Two

(Eleanor locks up the store and starts out the door heading home the lights dim as she walks home opening the canister and nibbling at the fruit cake as she approaches the front door to her house the lights focus to the door, she fumbles with the keys and hears a gentle whisper from Marlene Jacobs)

Marlene: Eleanor.

Eleanor: Huh? (looks around then fumbles again for the keys) The wind.

Marlene: Eleanor Scrooge

Eleanor: Who said that?

Marlene: (An image of her face appears on the door) Eleanor.

Eleanor: (She screams then jumps back) Marlene!? Marlene Jacobs? (goes to touch the door and the face disappears) My God, they've spiked my fruit cake. (She fumbles with keys again and then opens door, then goes in. The setting changes to Eleanor's Bedroom, contents: Small bed, a privacy screen, a night stand with an alarm clock and lamp. She tosses her keys onto the night table and walks behind the screen to change)

Marlene: (voice only) Eleanor Scrooge

Eleanor: What? (pokes her head out around corner) Who said that? (Throws on the rest of her night dress and robe and walks out from behind screen) Is someone there? (goes underneath bed and grabs a baseball bat) Hello! Who's there?! (she tries to calm herself) They used some pretty strong rum in that cake.

Marlene: Eleanor.

Eleanor: I'm losing it, must be from working too hard, maybe, yeah it must be stress related, a good night's sleep it'll all be fine (she lays down and reaches to turn off the lamp but is stopped by the voice)

Marlene: (whisper) Scrooge.

Eleanor: (sitting back up in bed) What?! What?! (she looks around) Voices in my head? (attempts to lay back down but stops, then sits back up) I don't have to build anything do I? That'd really be a pain in the neck. (she lays down) Okay, Ellie- just a good night's sleep, that's all I really need. (She turns out the light, a short pause then the light is turned back on by Marlene Jacobs looking pale and dressed in hideous clothing)

Marlene: Eleanor.

Eleanor: (Quickly jumps up to huddle against the head board with her sheets) Uhm? Marlene?

Marlene: Yes, can you see me now?

Eleanor: Yes. I can see you. Oh, dear. You look awful.

Marlene: I've been dead for seven years.

Eleanor: Well yes I know - but- no it can't be , you can't be her - I- it's impossible

Marlene: It's possible believe me, now look - I've come to warn you.

Eleanor: (Closes her eyes and plugs her ears and begins to chant.) I can't hear you -I can't see you- your here- your not here-

Marlene: (Smacks Beth's leg) Cut that out. You're being childish.

Eleanor: You cannot be the real Marlene! The Marlene Jacobs I knew wouldn't be caught dead in that dress- pardon the expression.

Marlene: That's what I'm here to warn you about.

Eleanor: Warn me?

Marlene: Is it ever good news when dead friends come back to life to warn you about something?

Eleanor: Can't say it happens much. Not to me anyway.

Marlene: These cloths, I made them myself.

Eleanor: Really? -I'm sorry to say it Marlene, but you are losing you're touch.

Marlene: No, I didn't make them make them, I made them through my life, Stitched every thread with every nasty comment I made, made every cut with each tear I that I made fall. This is what we do with our lives.

Eleanor: How melo dramatic can you get in the middle of the night?

Marlene: Do you know why I left you my dress shop in my will?

Eleanor: Becuase I was the best semsress you ever had.

Marlene: You were, that's true. But I left it to you because you were my only friend.

Eleanor: That's very touching, you were my best friend too.

Marlene: Not best, the only. The absolutly only person I was ever friendly with.

Eleanor: That's very sad, I shouldve gotten you birthday cards, or maybe baked a cake.

Marlene: I was your only friend too. I still am, and I'm dead.

Eleanor: You're not my only friend, I have ...well - I sort of like...Okay, I have a few tellers I enjoy speaking with at the bank.

Marlene: What are their names?

Eleanor: I'm not sure. We could go and I could read the badges.

Marlene: Elly! You're missing the point ! I want to stop you from making the same mistakes I did, you still have time to save yourself from this! I designed this hideous garment with my life, with my distain, with my disregard for emotions.

Eleanor: Don't be so hard on yourself, you had passion, that's what it takes to make it in the fashion business.

Marlene: Mankind should have been my business. Humanity should have been my passion. The hideous dress that awaits you is longer still than mine, with louder colors. You've had seven years to add to your garment since my passing. Yours is twice as tacky.

Eleanor: Really Marlene, I find that hard to imagine.

Marlene: It's hideous.

Eleanor: It looks comfortable enough. Is that cotton?

Marlene: In the winter breeze it's cotton, in the summer heat it's wool. You still have time to save yourself. As your friend, I want to help you.

Eleanor: So, I'll be the worst dressed soul in heaven. I suppose Judy Garland will talk about me behind my back, or maybe Moses could loan me a robe.

Marlene: Eleanor, believe me honey heaven is not where I've been.

Eleanor: (covers up) Yeah, yeah.

Marlene: Why won't you listen to me?

Eleanor: I'm exusted, you're dead and I'm pretty sure my nephew spiked the fruit cake, I'm going to wake up in the morning and the fruit cake will be digested, you'll be back in the cemetery, and I will be laughing about this hum bug dream I had. Now it's always nice to see dead friends but it's late so, good night.

Marlene: I have spent the past seven years, doomed to roam the earth in this ghostly form.

Eleanor: You always did want to travel.

Marlene: Dressed like this?

Eleanor: Oh, I see how you wouldn't enjoy that. What's your angle? What do you have to gain from all of this.

Marlene: I'm a friend, helping a friend.

Eleanor: That's it, you're not the real Marlene Jacobs. I don't know whose ghost you are, but you're an impostor.

Marlene: Okay, okay. I'm hoping if I can save you, I can prove there's some good in me and get this eternity sentence reduced to a few hundred years with good behavior.

Eleanor: Marlene? That really is you isn't it. Why can't you just let me be?

Marlene: You don't celebrate Christmas.

Eleanor: So what? What if I was Jewish?

Marlene: You're not.

Eleanor: I could convert.

Marlene: If you did you wouldn't celebrate Chanuka.

Eleanor: What difference does that make to you?

Marlene: Eleanor, it's not the holiday that's important, it's the celebration of the human race. You don't treat other people as if they were fellow travelers on the same train.

Eleanor: Yes, yes I do, you just haven't rode on the subway recently.

Marlene: This train ride ends at the grave.

Eleanor: So do some subway trips. Look, Marlene it was nice seeing you. Now I'm going to try to hallucinate someone else in my bedroom. Maybe Huge Jackman.

(Eleanor pulls the covers over her head and lays back down)

Marlene: You are a tough nut to crack. If that's the way you want to play it, fine. Starting at the stroke of one this morning you will be visited by three sprits, they'll teach you what you need to know.

Eleanor: What three more?

Marlene: Yes.

Eleanor: I really need some sleep, why three?

Marlene: Everything comes in three's the trinity, the wise men, the stooge's, Peter, Paul, and Mary you get it.

Eleanor: That's four.

Marlene: What?

Eleanor: I'll be visited by four spirits, if I count you as one. So things don't come in threes, they come in fours.

Marlene: I don't count.

Eleanor: Why not?

Marlene: Im a prelude.

Eleanor: If you say so. I'll make a deal with you, this dream ends now, and I'll get a couple hours sleep before the next nightmare. Good night. (she reaches over and turns out the light)

Marlene: Good night Eleanor. Merry Christmas.

Eleanor: (From under the covers) Bah hum bug.

Past

(The scene is now pitch black and as a clock strikes one the middle of the room is illuminated lightly and the ghost of Christmas past is seen)

Past: Eleanor. wake up.

Eleanor: What? Why the- Roberta? Have you lost your ever loving mind? What are you doing in my house?

Past: I'm not Roberta.

Eleanor: You look like Roberta, only without any concern of keeping your job.

Past: I'm the spirit of Christmas past, and it's time for you to wake up.

Eleanor: Great, another bad dream, go away, I'm exhausted. Why do I keep hallucinating women?

Past: If I'm just a dream, you won't lose any sleep talking to me. Will you?

Eleanor: And if you were really a ghost you wouldn't have to call my name to get me out of bed.

Past: Valid point. (The lights brighten and at centerstage sits a sewing machine with a bow wrapped around it, a little girl "the young Eleanor" bounces onto Scrooge's bed shouting...)

Ell: Daddy! Mommy! wake up! get out of bed! wake up! It's Christmas it's Christmas! (Ell runs down off the bed and grabs the bow from the sewing machine!!) Mommy! a sewer! a sewing machine! Look at it! (the child begins playing with it)

Eleanor: (Who has been watching this from the bed) Dear God. that's me, that's me as a child Christmas morning. I was quite aggravating.

Past: Such a long, long, long time ago.

Eleanor: It wasn't that long.

Ell: Mommy Santa does exist he does! I didn't even tell you but he knew! he did!

Eleanor: He did.

Past: Do you remember that year?

Eleanor: Yes, absolutely. Where are my parents, they were there.

Past: They're not important at the moment, look at you.

Eleanor: Yeah I was a cute kid. What about me?

Past: You don't see anything odd about your behavior?

Eleanor: No, I was happy, just happy

Past: Don't you just want to stab her through the heart with a stake of holly and boil her in some pudding?

Eleanor: What a nasty thing to- (pauses to remember where she's heard that) say. Okay, throw that back in my face.

Past: That little signer sewing Machine. You wanted that thing for a soild year before you finally got it. They thought you were too young for it, thought you would cut yourself with it.

Eleanor: Yeah, it wasn't really mine. My father left it there next to my gifts, but it was meant for my mother.

Past: They still let you keep it though. Didn't they?

Eleanor: Didn't tell me the truth about it till two or maybe three years later.

Past: Why didn't you wait for you sister to come open presents with you?

Eleanor: She was still asleep. Probably hung over knowing her. She was the cheerleading captian you know. I was nine or ten so miss popular must have just started high school.

Past: Glad there's no bitterness there. Wasn't it that the same little singer that launched your career in dress making.

Eleanor: I suppose. The same machine I used in high school to sew Caroline and myself dresses.

Past: Caroline. Do you remember her?

Eleanor: Are you kidding me? She was my best friend. I made the dress for homecoming, for prom, everyone told me how talented I was, but I don't think anyone liked my work more than Caroline. I even made her wedding dress for her. You know some people would pay big money, and have paid it to have me design their wedding dress. If it wasn't for her I never would've met Marlene.

Past: How is she doing?

Eleanor: I -I don't know. We lost touch. She started a family and I worked on my career. I saw her just -a while ago.

(Caroline and a youthful Eleanor dance into the sene, at a Winter dance, they are in the ladies room putting on makeup and chatting.)

Eleanor: That's me and Caroline!

Past: Decades fly by so fast.

Eleanor: What do you mean? I - no this wasn't the last time I saw her.

Past: I know.

Eleanor: Still, I geuss it has been a while.

Past: Do you still remember this?

Eleanor: Of course. The winter wonderland dance. I that was our junior year.

Ell: Was he looking at me?

Caroline: You know he was. You were staring right back. (they take make-up from their purses and begin to do their faces)

Eleanor: This was in the bathroom right after I met- him.

Ell: Billy Swanson, what a dream boat . Do you think his real name is William?

Caroline: Oh gag me. He's nothing compared to his friend.

Eleanor: Which one? He's got two over by him.

Caroline: Like I care. I'm going to ask to dance with Mr. Left, and if he's not interested I'll ask Mr. Right. They're both cute.

Ell: Mrs. Willam Swanson, how does that sound?

Caroline: Awful. You want more out of life than a Mr. Don't you? Hey that reminds me. I showed this dress you made me to my aunt and she thinks you've got a lot of potential.

Ell: Your aunt Marlene? The famous dress maker aunt Marlene? The Marlene Jacobs?

Caroline: She's a designer, not a dress maker.

Ell: What's the difference?

Caroline: About a hundred bucks a dress. She wanted me to tell you she has an opening coming up this spring, if you're interested in a part time job.

Ell: You're kidding, of course I'm interested. So long as I don't get the part of Juleit in the school play.

Caroline: Seriously? I thought you wanted to be a fashion designer.

Ell: Well, yeah, I do.

Caroline: Then I'll take you over next Tuesday after school to meet her.

Ell: That would be like my dream come true.

Caroline: Come on Mrs. Swanson, let's do some dancing.

Eleanor: I had such a crush on him.

Past: He was fond of you as well. He wanted to take you to prom, isn't that right?

Eleanor: Yes, but -well I was working then.

(A now undead version of Marelen appears to interact with the young Eleanore.)

Marelen: You want the night off?

Ell: Yes please Ms. Jacobs.

Marelen: What do you help me do here Eleanor?

Ell: Make dresses.

Marelen: When do you think it's time to make dresses?

Ell: Always?

Marlene: Always? Do they always sell?

Ell: I suppose there's nothing that always sells.

Marlene: That's not true, caskets and urns are a fairly constant business. But when you sell fashions the time to sell them is at weddings, home comings and proms.

Ell: At funerals too I guess.

Marlene: God no, who buys a new outfit for a funeral? Everyone has something black in their closet to throw on. No, prom night this Saturday I need you tonight and everynight leading up to Saturday. -alright? You can go wild with your boyfriend in the back of his car some other Saturday night.

Eleanor: She was such a- (moment of revelation here) Good business woman.

Ell: If you need me, you need me. It can't be helped.

Marlene: That's my girl. You can let him take you out somewhere really nice next week, alright?

Ell: Alright.

Past: When did you go on that date with Billy?

Eleanor: Never. I never did.

Past: But you found much more attractive boys later on in life, didn't you?

Eleanor: If you're a spirit of my past you know the answer to that.

Past: Yes, I do. But I enjoy rubbing it in. Like putting lemon juice on a paper cut.

Eleanor: I was working. I wasn't going to let some man define my life. I never needed...that. Besides, the men a girl meets when she works at a dress shop are fathers, husbands, or drag queens, what chance did I have?

Past: The shop wasn't open all hours of the night.

Eleanor: I was designing, I was creating.

Past: I never said you weren't busy. You're a very hard worker, always have been. You put yourself through college with that part time job.

Eleanor: What's wrong with that?

Past: Nothing, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. I don't suppose witnessing Marlene's husband cheat on her had anything to do with it.

Eleanor: Witnessing? I wasn't a simple audience member, I was the one that caught them! I had a starring role. I had to tell Marlene! What do you think I- oh, yeah. You do like to rub it in don't you?

Past: Like a seasoned meat, life has indeed made you quite salty Eleanor, but there are other lessons to be learned. Marlene's husband was not ideal, but not all men are jerks.

Eleanor: I don't avoid men. I simply didn't have time.

Past: No, you had your nose to the grindstone -or in your case the singer. Although I should point out dear, I never accused you of avoiding men. Those are your words.

Eleanor: I suppose I could've been like my sister and got myself pregnant at eighteen. I chose not to be one of those popular girls. Still, I went out to the movies on occasion.

Past: Yes. Yes I suppose you did, a few years later wasn't it? Senior year of college was just about to start. Wasn't that when you discovered? Dot, dot, dot.

(Ell and Caroline are doing eachothers hair now. Before going out to a movie.)

Caroline: You're sure you don't feel weird about this?

Ell: Of course not. It's not like we were ever dating or anything. We never actually made it to a dance.

Caroline: You had such a crush on him, and he felt the same for you.

Ell: We never actually went on a date. Really, it's fine. I don't have time for boys anyway. Do you feel weird about this? Should I stay home? I don't want to be a third wheel.

Caroline: No, I want you to come with us.

Ell: Good, I haven't been to the movies in a while. We gotta go, my dad's out front waiting for us.

Caroline: I can't wait to see this movie, I heard to was so good (they run off stage giggling)

Eleanor: I remember that night. That movie stunk.

Past: Caroline enjoyed that movie, didn't she?

Eleanor: I don't see how she could have an opinon. Her and Billy were eating each other's faces through the whole thing.

Past: It didn't bother you a bit, did it?

Eleanor: Shut up. You know they got married- yeah, you know. My dad's out front in this flash back, could I see him?

Past: I'm sorry but you can't see him. So you lost your best friend and the man of your dreams that night.

Eleanor: I did no such thing, I was happy for them. I designed and made her wedding dress.

Past: You don't speak to them anymore.

Eleanor: We lead different life styes, we just grew apart. I'll call her up...one day. I don't understand why can't I see my parents in this dream?

Past: I don't know Eleanor, why can't you see your parents

Eleanor: You're supposed to be the spirit you tell me.

Past: Think about it.

Eleanor: About ?

Past: What happened to your parents.

Eleanor: (she begins to tear) NO I'm not willing to do this! Not again.

Past: They died Eleanor, ignoring the fact they existed, makes it easier to let go.

Eleanor: Are you telling me I have to face my guilt to see them again?

Past: Sort of, but also -fewer characters are easier to cast.

Eleanor: That's enough! stop.

Past: Things like that happen, it's no one's fault.

Eleanor: Yes it is! It's my fault. Now stop it! Stop it. stop it. Stop it.

Present

(As she protests she walks backwards and falls back into her bed where she can continue and "wake up" in her room.)

Eleanor: Stop! Oh. Okay. It's been a while since I've had that night mare. Get it together Eleanor.

(She doesn't notice the spirit of the present lying next to her in the shadows until he speaks.)

Present: (appearing in the bed next to her looking remarkably like Ned.)

The past is always painfull, ain't it?

Eleanor: Aggh! (jumping out of bed and covering herself with a robe) Ned! What are you doing here! Why are you here? Have you lost your mind? Have I lost mine? Are you eattin in my bed?

Present: (chewing on food) I'm not Ned.

Eleanor: I'm still dreaming? Another nightmare?

Present: No night mare, just a spirit.

Eleanor: Waking to find your janitor lying next to you is a nightmare.

Present: That may be, but I'm not your jainitor. I do believe the prefered term is custodian. Not that it makes a difference to me, receptionist - secretary, flight attendant- stewardess, ghost - sprit, politician- crook. Really you call call a rose a buttercup it's all the same thing.

Eleanor: You're rambling a lot like Ned.

Present: He just happens to be philosophical, like myself.

Eleanor: You do look and sound very much alike. The beard adds sort of a hobo look, but I've got to admit that green robe really brings out your eyes. Are your eyes that nice when I'm not dreaming?

Present: Thank you Elanore, but I'm not Ned, I'm a being beyond the physical world, a feeling, a power an enintiy, I can look any way I choose.

Eleanor: So you chose to look like Ned? I don't think anyone would choose to look like Ned, not even Ned. Unless of course those are his eyes.

Present: I chose to be recognizable to you, friendly.

Eleanor: Yeah Neds a real friendly face.

Present: As a matter of fact since Marlene died, Roberta and Ned have been the closest things you have to friends.

Eleanor: Don't remind me.

Present: And as for family, well, I suppose we should we take a look. (gets up and pulls back the screen to show Nick and his wife sitting at the dinning room table, Nick paying bills and Peg wrapping a present)

Peg: So she took the fruit cake?

Nick: Wasn't too thrilled with it, but I didn't see her toss it in a trash can.

Peg: Why doesn't she like me?

Nick: She thinks you're after my money. What I can't understand is when she stopped liking me,

Eleanor: What is this?

Present: The present, right now over at your nephews' condo. Technically a few hours ago, but the actual term "present" so to speak, is so limited, I tend to drift a bit into the realms of recently past and mildly future. This is the conversation that took place after you rejected your nephew's offer of kinship, yet again this evening.

Peg: She thinks I'm after your money? She doesn't know, does she?

Eleanor: Know? What don't I know.

Nick: Of course not why would I bother her with my petty little life.

Eleanor: What don't I know?

Present: They can't hear you.

Peg: Four months now and you haven't told her?

Nick: She wouldn't like the idea.

Peg: And? (same time) **Eleanor:** And?

Eleanor: What idea?

Nick: And I don't need her sympathy or hand me downs.

Eleanor: For what?

Peg: Like old aunt Eleanor would give you anything, least of all sympathy.

Eleanor: You mean little women.

Nick: Come on, we've almost made it (closes the books) two hundred bucks and we've paid off that loan. As soon as the ads come out this spring aunt Ell may read all about it on the side of a bus.

Eleanor: What? what'd they do?

Nick: That's one more cleint.

Eleanor: Client? what?

Present: Shhh- you're really a horrible listener.

Peg: Fine, I trust you. I won't say a word

Nick: Thank you (he holds her)

Peg: Don't you think she'd be the least bit proud of you?

Nick: She's never been before

Peg: You opened your own business, that's not a small thing.

Srooge: His own what!!

Present: (offers her popcorn) Keep quiet, watch.

Nick: She wouldn't see it as any thing special, just how stupid I was for quitting a job that paid fifty thousand a year for a gamble. Besides, I never could've done it without you.

Peg: That was your idea, and your hard work. I think it's bold.

Nick: One day I will pay you back every penny from all of this-(the spirit pulls the screen back ending the scene)

Eleanor: Pay her back every penny?

Present: Well yeah, she gave him her life savings to finance the thing and she's been working to support them while he gets his own accounting firm off the ground.

Eleanor: You're kidding,

Present: Nope, wasn't even funny- but come on, we've got other stuff to see (he grabs her hand and walks her around the bed)

Eleanor: I want to hear more. How is his accounting firm doing? What's it called? Who are his clients? What does he charge?

Present: You got his phone number. Call and ask him in the morning, or you could go over to his place for Christmas dinner, ask him about it then. You realize you've been invited, don't ya? We have bigger fish to fry tonight.

Eleanor: Where are we going? why wouldn't he tell me? I hope we're not literally fring fish.

(they walk around the bed in circles)

Present: Why should you care about his business? You gave your up your life for him and he won't even revolve his around you.

Eleanor: I don't expect him to revolve around me-

Present: They wouldn't even let you plan the wedding. The audacity.

Eleanor: That's not what I wanted.

Present: That's why you hate her so much, and who can blame you? He owes you that much.

Eleanor: He doesn't owe me anything. He didn't ask to have me raise him.

Present: Then why is he so insistant on trying to make you like that wife of his?

Eleanor: Because I was like a mother to him he - he loves me. (She takes a deep breath) I see where you're going with this.

Present: Didn't take as long as I thought to get you there.

Eleanor: I don't hate her, I just tried to give her a dress.

Present: An expensive designer dress.

Eleanor: Personally stitched, one of a kind. When I put it up in the shop it only took eight hours to sell for Seven thousand dollars, and she didn't want it.

Present: She didn't want? Or maybe it just wasn't the one her mother made her promise a long time ago that she would wear.

Eleanor: She did? She promised her mother?

Present: Possibly. I didn't ask her, did you?

Eleanor: No.

Present: What was the excuse she gave you?

Eleanor: I - honestly I don't know that I listened.

Present: You aren't good at listening.

Eleanor: I was fairly upset. She promised her mother?

Present: Would her mother make her promise something like that?

Eleanor: How would I know? I never met her mother.

Present: She ever meet yours?

Eleanor: My mother died.

Present: Maybe hers did too.

Eleanor: Is her mother gone? Is that why it mean so much to her?

Present: Why the heck are you asking me? Did you ever ask your nephew how his job was going?

Eleanor: No, no I didn't. Did she make a promise to her mother to wear that old dress?

Present: I dont know, I didn't ask. Neither did you, so maybe it doesn't matter. Shall we move on?

Eleanor: Why not. The real Ned is never this good at making me feel stupid. You know most people would love to get a wedding dress from Marlenes at any cost. That is my signature thing. Where are we now?

Present: You'll see. (they stop in front of the screen The bed is pulled off stage)

Eleanor: We're right here.

Present: Of course we are, where do you think we've been going?

Eleanor: We just walked away from here.

Present: Then aren't you glad I brought you back?

Eleanor: (She looks around and realizes she's not in her room) all right then where are we?

Present: Here, you just walked away from here so you should know.

Eleanor: Are ghosts always this sassy?

Present: I'm a spirit, not a ghost.

Eleanor: There's a difference?

Present: A ghost, like your friend Marleen is the spirit of a once living individual. However a spirit is more of a general feeling, an ambsunce if you will. In my particular case I embody the feelings of the present. Mine is a time so few truly enjoy. Most of you are dwelling on the past or planning out the future.

Eleanor: So that makes you sassy?

Present: That, plus really, what are you going to do to me?

(pulls back the screen to show little Timmy and Roberta apartment. Timmy is sitting in front of the TV. Roberta is carrying out a tray with frozen dinners on it.)

Roberta: Soups on.

Timmy: Mom, again?

Eleanor: Is this Roberta's house?

Present: It's Roberta's one bedroom apartment, that costs her half her monthly salary to rent.

Eleanor: That much? For this?

Present: You should know, you sign her paychecks.

Eleanor: What is that they're eating?

Roberta: NO, no honey I gave you the brand new one (hands him the fresh stuff)

Present: The only thing they can afford at the moment.

Timmy: But then you've got all that re heated stuff.

Roberta: It's all right, I like mine better like this.

Timmy: No, lets divide it up (scooping half of his to her plate and half of hers to his)

Eleanor: Re-heated TV dinners?

Roberta: You are such a sweet boy.

Present: Waste not want not.

Roberta: One day things will change baby it'll be better, I promise you.

Timmy: I know mommy, you'll get that raise, and guess what! I've got a Christmas surprise for you!

Roberta: Really? what?

Timmy: Well, I was going to wait to tell you tomorrow morning, but since you've gotta work I better tell ya now.

Roberta: I'm all excited, what is it?

Timmy: Mr. Fessewink says that right after Christmas day he can give me two extra blocks to deliver papers to! that'll be five extra dollars every single week! from now on.

Roberta: Oh honey that's wonderful.

Timmy: So now I can buy my own food.

Roberta: No, sweetheart. You don't worry about that. I can do that. You keep your money (she hugs him) That's a very sweet present, but I want you to save that up for yourself okay (they hug)

Timmy: Well you can at least borrow it from me sometimes huh?

Roberta: I'll let you treat us to Mc Donald's next week, how bout that?

Timmy: Really ?

Roberta: Yeah (the lights fade and Present closes the screen)

Eleanor: Five extra dollars? that makes a difference to her?

Present: For a single mother, getting paid minimum wage. No kidding it makes a difference. Funny thing is she actually does qualify for welfare, she could get free food from the tax payers. She's just too proud to take it.

Eleanor: I did promise her a raise didn't I ?

Present: (pulls a list from his pockets) Two new years bonus, commission on what she sells, a health insurance plan, and oh yeah you never re-embusted her for a roll of scotch tape she bought for the store in ninty-nine.

Eleanor: Are they going to make it? Are Roberta and Timmy going to be all right?

Present: If these shadows are left unchanged...(looking for note book) well, if the shadows of the present re-main unchanged. Let's see (flipping through the note book) Shadows of unchanged-

Eleanor: Excuse me?

Present: Give me a second, I'm just dramatically stalling while I look it up. Here we go, next September Roberta finally looses hope and quits, she decides collecting unemployment checks isn't as degrading as working for you. Then she slowly becomes an alcoholic, and little Timmy becomes... T-man. A gang thug that gets arrested and sentenced to the electric chair at the age of twenty- five. He murders a man while attempting to rob a convenience store.

Eleanore: That isn't my fault.

Present: No one said it was. I wasn't claiming you were responsible. Would you blame yourself?

Eleanore: Of course not, its their lives, I don't make their decisions for them.

Present: Exactly, you didn't tell her to marry a motorcycle cop. You didn't tell her to have a child, and you had nothing to do with the car explosion her husband died in while trying to pull a salesman out of a flipped SUV.

Eleanor: I didn't.

Present: I know, I'm not being sarcastic.

Eleanor: That's hard to tell. Really, it isn't her fault either.

Present: Ironically that salesman is the shoe rep that sells to your dress shop. Roberta speaks to him at least twice a month and neither of them know their connection.

Eleanor: Was the explosion his fault?

Present: Did you know sometimes things just happen? Even when it isn't anyones fault? That doesn't mean anyone can't help.

Eleanor: I know, with money.

Present: Eleanor, I'm here to open your mind, not your wallet. Sometimes all it takes is kindness. In about twenty minutes from now their eighty year old neighbor from across the hall is going to bring over a home cooked meal. They will eat it with her and be grateful despite the fact they've already eaten their fill, the potato salad has egg shells, and the sugar cookies are covered in cat hair. This is will all happen out of kindness. The neighbor kindly thinking of their needs, and Roberta and Timmy know those poor cats want them to keep their old lady occupied on Christmas for just a few hours respite.

Eleanor: Why is that cat lady so loney?

Present: With five cats in a one bedroom, how is the question I'm asking, not why. But, you don't have to place blame Eleanore. Not even on yourself.

Eleanor: I don't blame myself, I never even meet Roberta's neighbor. I never knew how her husband died, or that he was a cop. Maybe I don't pay attention to Roberta. Maybe I don't even think about her as a person. Somehow had it in my head her husband had a heart attack.

Present: He might have. If I were watching a car explode four feet away from my face I may just have a heart attack. But that wasn't your fault, and you had nothing to do with your sister getting pregnant at such a young age.

Eleanor: That -Yes, I know.

Present: You had nothing to do with her complications during child birth.

Eleanor: I know, I know-

Present: And you didn't get your parents killed.

Eleanor: Would you shut up?

Present: It's not your fault.

Eleanor: I bought them the tickets! I paid for that cruise! I, I - (she breaks down into sobbs) I -made that all happen.

Present: The only person that ever blamed you, was you.

Eleanor: Of course, I was the only person left alive to blame me. Nick was three he didn't understand any of it. - he didn't know what I did- and I never told him. They weren't ready to be grandparents, they needed a break, that's all I was thinking. I didn't want to take over raising him. I was too young. I never told him, I never explained why he was stuck with me.

Present: If you did. If you explained the whole story to him. He would say the same thing I'm saying. It wasn't your fault.

(spirit slowly steps off the stage)

Future

Eleanor: Why can't I go back and see them-? (looks back) Spirit? Hey Ned? Whered you go? Spirit of Christmas present? Where'd he go? If Hue isn't coming for this dream, can't I at least see my parents? Hello? Can I at least havemy bed back in thus dream?Hello? (turning around and stops dead in front of a black robe, with no face) Whoa. Hello. (they stand in silence) I'll bet you're the ghost of the future Christmas's, huh? -hello? are you going to say anything? show me something? Yell?- say boo? Big talker huh, you must be really great at parties. (The spirit moves aside revealing a tombstone it has been un kept and one single dead rose is at its base) A grave? this is real Christmasy. Are you going to say anything? (Roberta walks across stage ignoring the tomb, and is stopped half way by a begging Nick)

Nick: A dollar? please? a quarter? anything you can spare? I'm hungry.
Eleanor: Nickolas?

Roberta: Look buddy, I'm sorry, but I just don't have nothing I can spare.

Nick: Roberta?

Roberta: Nick? Nickolas Scrooge? my god it's been so long. what's happened to you? (they hug)

Nick: Not much. Bankruptcy, divorce, remarried thrown out. But I'm surveying, well trying to.

Roberta: That's all anybody can hope for. What happened to that accounting firm you started?

Nick: Business got just big enough to bury me, it was just more than I could handle. After the twins were born, well - marriage just doesn't survive that kind of pressure.

Roberta: You shouldve asked that aunt of yours about business.

Nick: No, no way was I going to bother her with it. She got stuck raising me, I couldn't ask her for anything more.

Eleanor: I wasn't stuck raising you. I could've-

Future: Wasn't your fault.

Eleanor: I could've helped him.

Roberta: Are you telling me that old battle ax aunt of yours didn't have you in her will?

Eleanor: Battle ax? Is that really called for?

Nick: I don't think she had a will.

Roberta: She probably had them bury her with all her money.

Nick: If she'd done that somebody would've dug her up.

Eleanor: How dare you say- he's my nephew, my only family. Why wouldn't I leave him in my will? Because I never got around to making it. That lawyer was a little steep last I asked.

Roberta: Who would know, nobody was at the funeral (they laugh)

Nick: That's not true, I went. It was a little awkward with only the undertaker and me staring at each other. I asked him, "did you ever meet my aunt?" He said "No, but Barbara in reception got dresses at her shop all the time, she told me I wasn't missing much." (They laugh again)

Eleanor: Barbara who? Which Barbara said that?

Nick: The woman was kind of excited aunt Ell died. Her dresses were now worth more than she paid for them. Tell you the truth I don't even know where she's buried.

Eleanor: Of all the un-greatful cynical, mean things to say . (the laughing stops and the characters freeze, till they can exit, under darkness of the dimming light) I would've put you in my will if I got around to writing it! Maybe I should look into one of those online things. You still don't have to say nasty things like that.

Future: (pulling down the veil is revealed to be Caroline) You should be an expert, you've said them all.

Eleanor: Caroline? Or no?

Future: No.

Eleanor: I suppose that pathetic lonely old stone is mine, isn't it?

Future: No. Someone would have to pay for a stone. No one cared, so you're over here with a ground plauge.

Eleanor: So no one misses me? not a soul? that couldn't be. there's a flower here, (she picks it up) a rose. Someone must've cared.

Future: Howard and Barclays' savings and loan left that there.

Eleanor: My savings and loan?

Future: Without a will, they ended up with the remainder of your estate. Someone drops a rose from their office every Christmas eve.

Eleanor: Why Christmas eve? I am sort of infamous for hating Christmas eve.

Future: It's called sarcasm Ellie.

Eleanor: (dropping the flower) Oh. well then I guess that doesn't count, does it? What was that?

Future: What was what?

Eleanor: Movement under your robes.

Future: Oh, those, these are my children.

Eleanor: Want and ignorance?

Future: No, Chad and Cynthia. You really have lost touch with your friends. I'm glad you never had kids, lousey with names.

Eleanor: I just assumed -

Future: Let's cut the crap Eleanore, your life will end up miserable any way. Why not end it now?

Eleanor: Excuse me?

Future: Leopards have spots, zebras have stripes and you're just a bitter nasty little woman. Let's face it three spirits can't change you, an army couldn't change you.

Eleanor: Maybe not. Maybe not an army or ghosts, or an army of ghosts, but I could. I am the only one that could change me.

Future: So profound, but a little too preachy. Save yourself the hassle. Become a ghost (pulls a white shroud from inside the black robe) You haven't got all that much to lose.

Eleanor: My life.

Future: Come on Elanore, it's not like you're doing anything with it. As spirit you will have you're wildest dream come true.

Eleanor: Which one? Will Huge Jakmen make an appearance?

Future: Much better, you'll never have to write another check.

Eleanor: Ha. you know that never really was that important to me.

Future: Sure it was (she unfolds the sheet and prepares to toss it over Eleanor)

Eleanor: No wait! I've got so much left to do! so much more I can fix I can change.

Future: I really doubt that.

Eleanor: I don't! I don't doubt it. I can change, you'll see I can just give me a chance.

(Tosses the sheet over her and exits as the room is returned) No! No! I can I can do it ! I want to I really do! I have changed I swear it ! I have (falls into seated position on her bed and stops squirming)

(From seated position on her bed and stops squirming) I've changed, I've changed (Digs her head out of the sheets) my room? My clock radio? (she reaches down and turns on the radio)

Lenny Roberts: It's six thirty eight, on this perfect Christmas morning and- (she shuts of the radio)

Eleanor: Christmas morning? it's Christmas morning?!! Ha ha (she's *a little* excited) I-I-I-I can't believe it they've given me another chance, the spirits did it all in one night (she paces while speaking for the rest of the scene and slightly dances, like anyone would do if they just figured out they could change their life) or the dream, or the spirits , or whatever! Thank-you! thank-you dream thank you spirits thank- you God! Thank Santa the arch angles or my spiked flippin fruit cake! Whatever happened to me last night thank you for happening! I've never felt so great in my life! I haven't got much time though (Pulls out a phone book, looks up a number and starts dialing) Not much time not much time at all ! Hello? Gabreels' catering? Thank goodness you're open, I'd like the largest Christmas feast ever delivered Mr. and Mrs. Nickolas Scrooge, 2365 Walne street yes, yes turkey, ham, potatoes, whatever you've got! Yes yes! Mastercard under the name of Elizabeth Scrooge! You cartered an office event for Marleens dress shop back in April. You do still have that on file don't you? Make sure to account for a fifty percent tip.- I'm having you work on Christmas, it's only fair. Huh? yes (she laughs it off) Of course I'm spending money, that's what it's for! I'll see you there! And merry Christmas! (She hangs up and flips through her book giggling all the way) aaha! (Finds a number, dials and tries to switch her voice back to normal) Hello? Yes, is Roberta Cratchet available? yes I'll hold (she laughs then stops) Roberta! This is Ms. Scrooge! haven't you been over to that customers house yet?! Well of course it's early! that's why it's called morning! Nevermind, she can just wait. Can you and your son meet me down at the shop in about two hours, can you do that?! Well can you?! Fine then! If you wouldn't mind I would like you to call Ned over as well. He may, he may. Good, I'll see you there! (She runs and throws on her clothes and slippers laughing and singing Christmas carols as she runs of stage.

Act One Scene Three

(Scene changes to the front window of the dress shop. and scrooge, half dressed runs back on stage, the girls from the theater group are walking past the shop. Eleanor stops them.)

Ell: Excuse me! Aren't you the young ladies with the school theater program?

Darcy: Yes, that was us. We weren't going to bother you, we know you don't want an ad.

Eleanor: After the way I behaved last night I certainly don't deserve one either. However I would like to make it up to you. What do you say if Marleens dress shop provides all the costumes for your show?

Kristin: That is very generous of you, are you sure you want to offer that?

Eleanor: I should've offered years ago. Have your director or teacher whatever they are, come down and see me we'll arrange everything right after the new year.

Darcy: Thank- you Ms. Scrooge, Thank- you.

(Roberta and Timmy walk up behind her)

Roberta: Mrs. Scrooge?

Eleanor: Yes! (Turns around) yes.

Roberta: Is something wrong Ms. Scrooge?

Eleanor: Well yes, actually yes. I've been thinking long and hard about the work you do for me, and there is something just not quite right-

Roberta: More hours? did you want me to work more?-

Eleanor: I was thinking, really working a little less.

Roberta: How much less?

Eleanor: Oh a week or two.

Roberta: Aweek or two I can't afford that ma'm I really-

Eleanor: Can't afford a two week paid vacation?

Roberta: Paid vacation?

Eleanor: Fine then, I guess I'll have to give you a raise, so you can afford it.

Roberta: a raise? a? I-

Eleanor: No? Not good enough? Let's try 45% of the profits, after all if you're going to be my partner.

Roberta: Partner?

Eleanor: I'd split it fifty fifty, but I think ten percent should go to a scholarship of some sort, if that would be alright.

Roberta: I don't know what to say?

Eleanor: Say you'll help me make Marleens a better dress shop than it ever was, I'd like to leave the name I hope that's okay - out of memorial. (She shakes her head) and say you'll help me use my little business to not only enrich our lives, but just maybe make the world a little better place.

Roberta: Eleanor, I would love to.

Eleanor: Ah now, don't start calling me Eleanor-

Roberta: Sorry-

Eleanor: My friends always called me Ell.

Roberta: Ell? As your friend I have to ask are you all right?

Eleanor: I'm fine, as a matter of fact I've never felt better. Let's just say I've had a change of heart.

Timmy: You have a heart? Mommy said- (Roberta covers his mouth)

Roberta: Timmy!

Eleanor: Your mommy probably said that I didn't have a heart. I can't blame her, I haven't used it in a long, long time. I think I may have misplaced it.

Timmy: Now you found it?

Eleanor: Apparently I had it in a safe, under a big stack of bills. My niece went a little heavy on the rum in her fruit cake, and I had quite an experience last night, but it help me remember where I put the pesky thing.

Roberta: Should we have you looked at? You're sure you're all right?

Eleanor: Right as rain.

Ned: How right is rain? Really? I guess if the wind is blowing it in that given direction.

Eleanor: Ned! (She looks at his eyes) You're little philosophic questions.

Ned: You okay boss?

Eleanor: Better than you could know. Marry Christmas Ned.

Ned: Merry...Christmas? You know I'm Jewish.

Eleanor: Really?

Ned: Half, my dad was Jewish, my mom wasn't we always celebrated both.

Eleanor: It doesn't matter, that just means I owe you six more presents This my dear is for you little Timmy. This is for you, and this my dear Ned is for you.

Ned: A gift? For me?

Eleanor: Well go on, open it.

Ned: Thank you, how'd you ever know hunter green was my favorite color?

Eleanor: I didn't, but it brings out those eyes.

Ned: Excuse me?

Eleanor: Eyes, ayes, I just guessed at your favorite color.

Ned: A really nice razor too.

Eleanor: Clean shaven is a good look for you.

Ned: Gee, thank you so much Ms. Scrooge.

Eleanor: Please Ned, call me Ell.

Ned: Okay then, Ell.

Timmy: Thank you Ms. Scrooge, This is incredible. It's just what I always wanted.

Eleanor: Timmy, why don't you call me Aunt Ell?

Timmy: Okay.

Eleanor: Now what do you all think about heading over to my nephew's place? I would really like to spend Christmas evening with all my friends and family. We've gotta be at my nephew's by noon, he always needs help setting up for his parties. That is of course if you don't mind joining us?

Roberta: No, not at all. Not at all. You don't think he'll mind do you?

Eleanor: If he does we just have to remind him it's Christmas, and the more guests he has will make the merrier Christmas.

Roberta: All right then. We'll just need to get changed. I've got to catch the bus home then-

Eleanor: You'll be catching no bus, we're carpooling, I'll stop you off wherever you need to go. Oh yes and let us not forget your bonus.

Roberta: Bonus?

Eleanor: Your Christmas Bonus of course, you've earned a little treat (attempts to open her purse) it has been a while (struggling with purse) I've got my check book right in here (holds up a purse strapp to Roberta) Could you? (they both pull the purse appart and Eleanor begins digging through it) it's somewhere in here (finds her check book) here we go(Blows the dust off her check book and they both sneeze) It has been a while since I've used this. (they begin to exit)

Timmy: God bless you, (stops and looks at the audience) Naw, I won't say it.

(The characters walk off stage speaking and laughing while Ned stays behind to address the audience)

Ned: Dear sweet Ell was good to her word. She kept Christmas in her heart and stopped being such a stick in the mud. She not only provided the costumes for that high schools' play she provided costumes for every year after that, and for different schools, winning awards – which of course boosted sales for the dress shop at prom and Halloween. She discovered generosity really kind of paid for itself as her partner and she grew the business like it had never been done before. The business did so well Ell had to hire her nephew Nick to help keep track of the profit. Roberta moved into a much bigger house, she needed it when her and Timmy took in those five cats from her neighbor that suddenly died of salmonella. The real estate agent that sold her the house was a single gentleman that truly took a liking to them, they were married later that year and Timmy's little sister is due in just a few months. As for me? Old Eleanor is still my boss, but she took my last name at the wedding. Sometimes a change of heart, or simply remembering you have one, is all it takes to make a world of difference. Happy Holidays.

(The End)

Stick that in your figgy pudding.