

(CRATCHIT rises, approaches SCROOGE.)
CRATCHIT: And my wages come due today, sir, if you please.
SCROOGE (*Counting change into CRATCHIT's hand*): Are you just going to waste your pay?
CRATCHIT: No, sir! I have presents to buy for my family! (*Excited*) Tomorrow's Christmas!
SCROOGE (*Irritably*): And I suppose you'll be wanting the whole day off?
CRATCHIT: If it's convenient, sir.
SCROOGE (*Snapping*): It's *not* convenient! But take it if you must.
CRATCHIT: Thank you, sir!
SCROOGE: But be here all the earlier the next morning.
CRATCHIT: I will, sir. Merry Christmas. (CRATCHIT exits.)
SCROOGE: Bah. Humbug!
NARRATOR: Scrooge was nasty not just to Bob Cratchit. He was mean to everyone, and especially mean at Christmastime. (FRED enters.)
FRED: Merry Christmas, Uncle. I've come to bring you season's greetings.
SCROOGE: Humbug. If I could work my will, everyone 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!
FRED (*Shocked*): Uncle!
SCROOGE (*Testily*): Nephew, leave me alone.
FRED: If that is what you'd like, sir, I will. But, please, dine with us tomorrow.
SCROOGE: I do not wish to dine with you. Now good day, sir.

FRED (*Laughing*): All right, then. A merry Christmas, Uncle.
SCROOGE (*Quite angrily*): Good day!
NARRATOR: Now, Scrooge was a wealthy man, but he did not like to share his money with those who truly needed it. One day two charity workers came asking for donations to help the needy people at Christmas. (CHARITY WORKERS enter.)
SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?
1ST WORKER: Plenty of prisons.
SCROOGE: And are the workhouses still in operation?
2ND WORKER: Yes, sir, though I wish they were not.
SCROOGE: And is the poor law still in effect?
1ST WORKER: Unfortunately, it is.
SCROOGE (*Relieved*): I'm glad to hear it. At first I thought something had occurred to stop them in their useful purpose.
2ND WORKER: But they don't provide happiness at Christmas, sir. In fact, many would rather die than go to the poor house.
SCROOGE: Well, if they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. So – good day to you. (WORKERS exit.)
NARRATOR: And this is the way Scrooge always was. (*With emphasis*) Nasty, mean and cruel.

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SCENE 2

TIME: *Later that night.*

SETTING: *Scrooge's apartment. The stage is the same except for small bed in the foreground.*

AT RISE: SCROOGE is tossing and

turning in bed. NARRATOR *enters.*
NARRATOR: Later that night, Scrooge went home to his cold, dreary apartment. He ate cold porridge and gruel, then went to bed. It was Christmas Eve, and he was alone. (*Questioningly*) Or was he? Suddenly he was awakened by ringing bells (*Sound of bell tolling is heard.*), and he became very scared.
SCROOGE (*Sitting up in bed*): Who goes there? Who is it, I say?
NARRATOR: But there was no answer. Then more bells rang. (*Sound of bell tolling*)
SCROOGE (*Fearfully*): Who is it, I say?
NARRATOR: Then, from the shadows, appeared a strange figure. (*MARLEY enters. NARRATOR sits on stool.*)
SCROOGE: Oh, bless me! Who are you, fearful ghost?
MARLEY: In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.
SCROOGE: Marley! But why do you trouble me?
MARLEY (*Pointing finger at SCROOGE*): To save you, Scrooge. You are as mean and cruel as I was when I lived, and now I am in chains. It is not right that you hate Christmas.
SCROOGE (*Cowering*): Don't trouble me, spirit, please!
MARLEY: Silence! You will be visited by three spirits. The first at the stroke of one. The second at the stroke of two, and the last when the clock tolls three. They are your only hope of avoiding my sad fate. Beware! (*Retreats, with finger raised in*

admonition) And heed what they say. (*Exits*)
NARRATOR: And with that, Marley disappeared and Scrooge fell asleep. But as the clock struck one, (*Clock chimes once.*) he awoke with a start. (*GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enters, stands at foot of SCROOGE's bed.*)
SCROOGE (*Shaking*): Oh, my! Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold to me?
GHOST (*Seriously*): I am the ghost of Christmas past – *your* past.
SCROOGE: What do you want with me? (*Pointing to exit*) Be gone!
GHOST: Scrooge, I am here to remind you of your many mistakes in the past. As a boy you had no friends because you were unkind to others. Do you remember that, Scrooge?
SCROOGE (*Sorrowfully*): Yes.
GHOST: And when you grew older, you worked for a kind old man, Fezziwig. Yet you repay that kindness by being very cruel to your own clerk, poor Bob Cratchit, don't you?
SCROOGE (*Eyes cast downward*): Yes.
GHOST: And do you remember, Scrooge, that your young sister, Fan, asked you to take care of her son Fred, and be kind to him?
SCROOGE: Yes.
GHOST: But you were unkind to him as well. You see, Scrooge, in your past you have often been unkind and lacking in generosity. These are mistakes that have cost you dearly. Try to learn from your past. (*Retreats ominously*) Save yourself, Scrooge. Save yourself. (*Exits*)

SCROOGE (*Shaken*): Humbug. (*Falls asleep*)

NARRATOR: But then, when the clock struck two, another spirit appeared. (*Clock chimes twice.*

SCROOGE *awakens*. GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT *enters*.)

SCROOGE (*Warily*): I was told to expect you.

GHOST (*Very jolly*): Good man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. (*Swings arms wide*) I love Christmas!

SCROOGE: Christmas is humbug!

GHOST: I know you think so. That is why I'm here, my good man.

SCROOGE: Why is that?

GHOST: To show you how good people everywhere are preparing for Christmas on this holy night. Everyone celebrates at Christmastime—fishermen, miners, cooks, and even the sooty chimney sweeps, though they are very poor.

SCROOGE: Why?

GHOST (*Impatiently*): Because it is a special time, man, when all things are good. Even poor Bob Cratchit is enjoying Christmas tonight. And you know better than anyone how little he has to celebrate with.

SCROOGE: How can he enjoy Christmas with all those children to feed and clothe?

GHOST: You have so much to learn. That is *why* he enjoys Christmas. Because of his family and friends. (*Seriously*) Scrooge, do you know Bob's young son, Tiny Tim?

SCROOGE: I do.

GHOST: He is very sick. But Bob does not have enough money to buy Tiny

Tim the medicine he needs to get well. You are a rich man, Scrooge, but you do not pay Bob enough money.

SCROOGE: His wages are adequate.

GHOST: Without medicine Tiny Tim will die.

SCROOGE: Surely Tiny Tim won't die. (*Suddenly concerned*) Will he?

GHOST (*Retreating sorrowfully*): If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die! (GHOST *exits*. SCROOGE *sits on his bed, looking upset*.)

NARRATOR: Finally, at the last stroke of three, (*Clock chimes three times*.) a very fearsome ghost appeared. (GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE *enters*. SCROOGE *looks up*.)

SCROOGE (*Very fearful*): Are you the ghost of Christmas yet to come?

GHOST (*Ominously*): I am.

SCROOGE: You will show me things that have not been but might be. Is that right, spirit?

GHOST: Yes, Scrooge. But it is nearly too late. If you do not change, you will spend the rest of your life alone, as you have already done, with no one to care for you and no friends. Your fate will be worse than poor Jacob Marley's.

SCROOGE (*Concerned*): And Tiny Tim?

GHOST: I see an empty chair in Bob Cratchit's house and a very sad family that misses him very much.

SCROOGE (*Frantically*): Oh, no! I don't want these things to happen.

GHOST (*Sternly*): Then change, Scrooge! You must try to be kind

and generous and warmhearted. You must care for people and try to help them if you can. And most especially, Scrooge, you must keep Christmas well, and profit from its lesson. For above all, Christmas shows us that we must be good to our fellow man, for all people are important.

SCROOGE (*Pleading*): Is it too late, spirit? Must I be alone, must these sad things happen, or do I still have time to change? I *will* change, spirit! You'll see. I will be kind and generous. I want to help Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim and my poor nephew Fred. I see that all the spirits have shown me the truth. I want to change, spirit. Tell me it's not too late. (SCROOGE *gets on his knees, looks up at GHOST, pleading.*) Speak comfort to me, spirit. (GHOST *exits. SCROOGE cries, then crawls to his bed and sleeps.*)

NARRATOR: Scrooge slept undisturbed the rest of that night, and when morning came, he heard bells heralding Christmas. (*Sound of bells. SCROOGE wakes, gets up.*)

SCROOGE: Oh my, oh my, what day is it? (SCROOGE *goes to window, sees BOY running by. BOY enters.*)

SCROOGE: You there! What day is it?

BOY (*Pausing*): Today? Why, it's Christmas Day, sir!

SCROOGE (*Delighted*): What a remarkable a boy! (*To BOY*) Do you know the grocer at the corner?

BOY (*Confidently*): I should say I do!

SCROOGE (*Beaming*): Fine boy. A remarkable boy. Here. (SCROOGE *tosses BOY a coin.*) Take this crown

and purchase the biggest turkey you can find. Deliver it to Bob Cratchit's house in Camden Town and take a shilling from the change for yourself.

BOY (*Excited*): Thank you, sir. Merry Christmas!

SCROOGE: And a Merry Christmas to you, boy! (BOY *exits. SCROOGE speaks joyfully.*) The spirits have done it all in one night! They have shown me how nasty and cruel I've been and how much I have to learn about generosity. (*Emphatically*) And I *will* learn. I will treat people with care and kindness, and help those less fortunate than I am. And I will love Christmas! (*Looks upward*) You'll see, spirits. I will be a new man. (SCROOGE *moves center.*) Now, let me see. What shall I do first? (*Enthusiastically*) I know, I will go to my nephew Fred's house and dine with him and his family. He will be so surprised. (*Curtain*)

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SCENE 3

TIME: *Later Christmas Day.*

SETTING: *Fred's house. Table is set for Christmas dinner. Working door is right.*

AT RISE: FRED and family sit around table enjoying dinner. Knock at door is heard.

FRED (*Answering door; surprised*): Uncle! What a surprise! (SCROOGE *enters. FRED closes door.*)

SCROOGE (*Taking FRED's hand; solemnly*): Fred, can you forgive an old fool?

FRED: Certainly, Uncle. It is, after all, Christmas Day.

SCROOGE: If I am still welcome, I would very much like to dine with you and your family.

FRED (*Warmly*): You will always be welcome, Uncle. Come join us. (SCROOGE and FRED join others at table, pantomime conversation.)

NARRATOR: And they did have a very merry dinner. Scrooge joked and laughed, and they all ate until they were very full.

SCROOGE (*Rising*): Fred, I must pay a Christmas visit to Bob Cratchit's house, so I will leave now. (*Taking FRED's hand.*) A very merry Christmas to you, nephew.

FRED (*Happily*): And to you, Uncle. And to you. (SCROOGE exits.)

SCENE 4

SETTING: *Bob Cratchit's house. Same setting may be used.*

AT RISE: CRATCHIT and his family, including TINY TIM, are eating Christmas dinner. Knock on door.

CRATCHIT (*Answering door; surprised*): Why, Mr. Scrooge! What a surprise!

SCROOGE (*At door*): Bob, I want to apologize to you. I have been a

nasty, cruel boss, and I am sorry. (CRATCHIT is stunned. SCROOGE takes his hand.) I want to help you and your family. And I especially want to help Tiny Tim. (*With an expansive gesture*) I am going to raise your salary, Bob Cratchit, before you dot another "i." (*Winks at CRATCHIT and puts arm around his shoulder.*) Now, let's go finish that beautiful turkey, Bob.

CRATCHIT (*Bewildered*): Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Scrooge. And Merry Christmas.

TINY TIM (*Raising his hand, as in a toast*): And God bless us, everyone.

NARRATOR: Scrooge was better than his word. He did help the Cratchit family, and Tiny Tim grew strong and healthy. Scrooge shared his money with needy people, and he was always concerned, caring, and kind. (*Complete cast gathers center.*) It was said of Scrooge ever after that he knew how to keep Christmas, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of all of us. So as Tiny Tim observed —

ALL (*In unison*): God bless us, Every one.



Production Notes

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Characters: 6 male; 6 male or female; as many male or female extras as desired for carolers and children.

Playing Time: 15 minutes.

Costumes: Everyday Victorian clothes. Marley is wrapped in gauze or chains. Spirit of Past is dressed in white; Present in red robe and a crown of holly; Future in black shroud. Tiny Tim carries a crutch.

Properties: Quill pen, candle, dining utensils, dishes.

Setting: Same basic set throughout. Scene 1: Cratchit's desk is center. Scene 2: Cot is center. Scenes 3 and 4: Table is center.

Lighting and Sound: Lights dim when Scrooge falls asleep, come up when Spirits appear. Clock chimes and Christmas bells.