

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Adapted by Burton Bumgarner

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# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

## Adapted by Burton Bumgarner

*A SHORT PLAY ADAPTATION OF CHARLES DICKENS'S A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

**SYNOPSIS:** An easily staged, one-act version of Charles Dickens's great holiday story of greedy, miserly old Ebenezer Scrooge and the spirits that haunt him on Christmas Eve. Through visions of the past, the present and the future, Scrooge becomes one of the kindest and most generous citizens of London. All of the familiar characters are here: Marley's Ghost, the Cratchit family, Scrooge's childhood friends, and of course, Tiny Tim. Even better, the use of Dickens's original language makes this 50-minute version an audience favorite.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(6-13 females, 9-12 males, 4-5 either, 9-20+extras;  
doubling possible, gender flexible)*

EBENEZER SCROOGE (m).....	(126 lines)
BOB CRATCHIT (m).....	(24 lines)
MRS. CRATCHIT (f).....	(14 lines)
PETER CRATCHIT (m).....	(9 lines)
TINY TIM (m).....	(3 lines)
FRED (m).....	(32 lines)
MRS. FRED (f).....	(9 lines)
JACOB MARLEY (m).....	(19 lines)
PAST 1 (f).....	Ghost of Christmas Past. (17 lines)
PAST 2 (f).....	Ghost of Christmas Past. (18 lines)
PRESENT (f).....	Ghost of Christmas Present. (20 lines)
FUTURE (m/f).....	Ghost of Christmas Future. (Non-Speaking)
LADY 1 (f).....	(5 lines)
LADY 2 (f).....	(6 lines)
CHILD SCROOGE (m).....	(2 lines)

YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE (m) .....	(1 line)
FAN (f) .....	(3 lines)
BELLE (f) .....	(4 lines)
BELLE'S HUSBAND (m).....	(4 lines)
REG (m).....	(6 lines)
BONNIE (f) .....	(11 lines)
LADY 3 (f) .....	Snobby. (4 lines)
GENTLEMAN 1 (m).....	Snobby. (4 lines)
MRS. DILBER (f).....	(10 lines)
JOE (m).....	(10 lines)
BUTCHER (f).....	(3 lines)
PASSING BOY/GIRL (f/m).....	(8 lines)
BOY/GIRL 1 (f/m).....	(1 line)
BOY/GIRL 2 (f/m).....	(1 line)
NARRATOR (f/m) .....	(2 lines)

**EXTRAS:**

CAROLERS.....	2+ females and 2+ males. Singing Part.
CRATCHIT CHILDREN (m/f) .....	2+ children. ( <i>Non-Speaking</i> )
BELLE'S CHILDREN (m/f) .....	4+ children, 1 female teen. ( <i>Non-Speaking</i> )
IGNORANCE (m) .....	( <i>Non-Speaking.</i> )
WANT (f).....	( <i>Non-Speaking.</i> )

**DOUBLING OPTIONS**

- ◆ FRED and JOE
- ◆ JACOB MARLEY and GENTLEMAN 1
- ◆ MRS. CRATCHIT and BUTCHER
- ◆ PAST 1 and MRS. FRED
- ◆ PAST 2, BONNIE and MRS. DILBER
- ◆ PRESENT and LADY 3
- ◆ FUTURE and YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE
- ◆ LADY 1 and BELLE
- ◆ LADY 2 and FAN
- ◆ BELLE'S HUSBAND and REG

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### PROLOGUE

**SCENE 1:** Marley's Ghost

**SCENE 2:** The Ghosts of Christmas Past

**SCENE 3:** The Ghost of Christmas Present

**SCENE 4:** The Ghost of Christmas Future

**SCENE 5:** The End of It

### EPILOGUE

## COSTUMES

**ALL CAST:** Traditional costumes should include bonnets, long dresses, and capes for women; top coats and top hats for men

**SCROOGE:** Traditional costume, Nightshirt and cap.

**PAST 1 and PAST 2:** leotards, white or gold lamè pullovers

**PRESENT:** long green robe, holly or green and red wreath in hair

**FUTURE:** long, dark robe with hood that hides face

Scrooge has two costume changes during which carols may be sung by the cast and audience. When actors are covering more than one role, simple accessories may be added to suggest different characters.

## SET

The play can be performed with a single set. Scrooge's office is left with Scrooge's desk and chair downstage, and Bob Cratchet's desk or podium upstage and behind Scrooge. Scrooge's bedroom is right. On a small stage, use a chair instead of a bed, end table, and other items. The use of candles greatly enhances the production. A backdrop of a Victorian scene (street or interior) will also enhance the production. A small table and chairs for the Cratchit's dinner that can be easily moved on and off stage

**PROP LIST**

- Candles and matches to light candles
- Ledgers
- Quills
- Inkwells
- Papers for Portly Ladies
- Blanket
- Bowl for Scrooge
- Spoon, teapot, teacup
- Books for school children
- Book for Young Scrooge
- Engagement ring
- Cratchet table: goblets or glasses, plates, fork, serving tray wrapped in foil to resemble Christmas goose
- Crutch for Tiny Tim
- Sack for Dilber
- Walking cane for Scrooge

**DEDICATION**

*For the cast and crew of  
Grace Lutheran Church, Hendersonville, North Carolina*

## PROLOGUE

**AT START:** *Blackout. SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT take their places left at their desks during narration.*

**NARRATOR:** *(May be recorded.)* Marley was dead to begin with.

Dead as a doornail. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner, Ebenezer Scrooge, who was his sole executor, his sole friend and his soul mourner. But Scrooge was not so distraught by Marley's funeral that on that very day he returned to his work and earned a healthy profit from a business deal.

*SCROOGE lights a candle on his desk and works at his ledger.*

**NARRATOR:** He was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone: a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, stiffened his gait, made his eyes red, and his thin lips blue.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, "My dear Scrooge, how are you?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what time it was, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such an such a place, of Scrooge. But did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance.

There was no doubt that Marley was dead. That must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

**SCENE 1**  
*MARLEY'S GHOST*

**AT RISE:** *Lights up left. The small desk where SCROOGE works is downstage left. Nearby BOB CRATCHIT stands and works at a taller desk – a music stand or podium covered in black fabric. Both are writing with quill pens. FRED enters right, removes his hat, smiles.*

**FRED:** Merry Christmas, Uncle!

**SCROOGE:** Bah! Humbug!

**FRED:** Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that.

**SCROOGE:** I do! (*Sarcastic.*) Merry Christmas indeed! What right do you have to be merry? You're poor enough!

**FRED:** What right have you to be so dismal? You're rich enough!

**SCROOGE:** I live in a world of fools! (*Sarcastic.*) What's Christmas time to you but a time for finding yourself a year older but not an hour richer! If I could work my will, every idiot who goes around with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!

**FRED:** But Uncle ...

**SCROOGE:** But nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine!

**FRED:** But you don't keep it!

**SCROOGE:** Then leave me alone! Much good Christmas has ever done you!

**FRED:** I have always thought of Christmas as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of when people open their hearts freely, and think of others as if they really WERE fellow passengers, and NOT another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it HAS done me good, and I say God bless it!

**BOB:** (*Applauds.*) Bravo, sir!

**SCROOGE:** (*Stares BOB down. To BOB.*) Another sound from you and you'll be celebrating Christmas by losing your employment!

*BOB goes back to work. SCROOGE does his best to ignore FRED.*

**FRED:** Come dine with us tomorrow.

**SCROOGE:** (*Snickers.*) No.

**FRED:** But why? I want nothing of you! I ask nothing of you. Why can't we be friends?

**SCROOGE:** Good afternoon.

**FRED:** I am sorry to find you so stubborn. Merry Christmas, Uncle.

**SCROOGE:** Good afternoon!

**FRED:** (*To BOB.*) And a Merry Christmas to you, Bob.

**BOB:** Thank you, sir. A Merry Christmas to you, too.

*FRED exits right.*

**SCROOGE:** (*Scoffs.*) My clerk, Bob Cratchit! Fifteen shillings a week and a wife and family talking about a Merry Christmas!

*LADY 1 and LADY 2 enter right carrying papers and a quill. They cross left to SCROOGE.*

**LADY 1:** Have we the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

**SCROOGE:** Mr. Marley died seven years ago this very night.

**LADY 2:** Very well. We are trying to make some provisions for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities.

**SCROOGE:** Are there no prisons?

**LADY 1:** Plenty of prisons.

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

**LADY 2:** They are. I wish I could say they are not.

**SCROOGE:** Oh. I was afraid that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course.

**LADY 2:** A few of us are raising funds to provide the poor food and shelter. What shall I put you down for?

**SCROOGE:** Nothing!

**LADY 1:** You wish to be anonymous?

**SCROOGE:** I wish to be left alone. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned. They cost enough, and those who are badly off must go there.

**LADY 2:** Many can't go there, and many would rather die.

**SCROOGE:** If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon!

*LADY 1 and LADY 2 turn and cross right. BOB follows them center and hands them a coin. They take it and thank him graciously. BOB returns to his stool. SCROOGE has been watching him.*

**SCROOGE:** *(To BOB.)* I suppose you'll want the day off tomorrow.

**BOB:** If it's convenient, sir.

**SCROOGE:** *(Angry.)* It's not convenient, and it's not fair!

**BOB:** It's only once a year, sir.

**SCROOGE:** A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every December 25<sup>th</sup>! Make sure you are here all the earlier the next morning!

**BOB:** Yes, sir! Thank you, sir! And Merry Christmas!

*SCROOGE glares at BOB.*

**BOB:** I mean ...uh ...thank you, sir. That's all. Not Merry Christmas. Just thank you, sir.

*BOB puts on his overcoat and quickly exits left. CAROLERS, CHILDREN and TINY TIM enter right and cross center. CAROLERS sing "God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen" verse 1, or other familiar carol, during which the following actions take place: SCROOGE blows out the candle on his desk, puts on his coat and tries to make his way through the CAROLERS. During the singing, BOB joins TINY TIM. They pantomime a conversation. After a moment, BOB and TINY TIM exit left.*

**SCROOGE:** *(To CAROLERS.)* Get out of my way! Don't you people have anything better to do with your time than to stand on the street making all this racket? Stand aside! *(Etc.)*

*SCROOGE makes his way right. A CAROLER holds out her hand for a donation.*

**SCROOGE:** (*Screeches at CAROLER.*) HUMBUG!

*CAROLER backs away. SCROOGE exits right. CAROLERS finish singing and exit. SCROOGE enters in his nightshirt and nightcap. His wingback chair, blanket, ottoman and an end table with a candle are upstage right. On the end table is a bowl and spoon, a tea pot and a candle. He sits, lights the candle, drinks tea and eats gruel from the bowl. Lights dim. Twelve chimes are heard. SCROOGE blows out his candle, covers himself with his blanket and goes to sleep. Eerie sounds are heard. He sits up and looks around.*

**SCROOGE:** (*Alarmed.*) Hello? Is someone there? (*Tries to go back to sleep.*)

**MARLEY:** (*Offstage.*) Scrooge!

*SCROOGE stirs, and tries to ignore the sounds. Sound of chains hitting the floor and ponderous footsteps.*

**MARLEY:** (*Offstage.*) SCROOGE! (*Enters left and slowly crosses right, rattling his chains. Pauses and calls out in an eerie voice.*)  
SCROOGE!

**SCROOGE:** (*Jumps up, looking around.*) What? Who's there?

*SCROOGE sits back down. MARLEY walks a bit further.*

**MARLEY:** SCROOGE!

**SCROOGE:** (*Looking around.*) There's nothing there! Nothing I tell you!

**MARLEY:** (*Louder.*) SCROOGE!

*MARLEY crosses right to SCROOGE. SCROOGE jumps up and tries to hide behind the chair.*

**SCROOGE:** It's humbug! (*Stands and slowly peeks up from behind the chair.*) Nothing but humbug! I won't believe it! I won't!

*MARLEY crosses behind SCROOGE, who slowly turns, sees him, screams, jumps to his feet and backs away.*

**SCROOGE:** What do you want with me?

**MARLEY:** Much!

**SCROOGE:** Who are you?

**MARLEY:** Ask me who I WAS!

**SCROOGE:** Okay. Who WERE you?

**MARLEY:** In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

**SCROOGE:** Can you ... uh ... sit down?

**MARLEY:** I can. (*Sits in the chair.*) You don't believe in me.

*SCROOGE pulls the ottoman away from the chair and sits.*

**SCROOGE:** I do not.

**MARLEY:** Why do you doubt your senses?

**SCROOGE:** Because, a little thing affects them, a slight disorder of the stomach, a bit of undigested beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

*MARLEY stands, shakes his chains and roars. SCROOGE cowers.*

**SCROOGE:** Why do you trouble me?

**MARLEY:** Do you believe in me?

**SCROOGE:** I Do! But why come to visit me?

**MARLEY:** (*Sits.*) It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk among his fellow men, and travel far and wide, and if that spirit does not go forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander throughout the world and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth.

**SCROOGE:** Why are you wearing that chain?

**MARLEY:** I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, yard by yard. Is it strange to you?

**SCROOGE:** It is.

**MARLEY:** The weight and length of the chain YOU bear yourself was as full and heavy as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is a ponderous chain!

**SCROOGE:** Jacob, tell me more. Speak comfort to me.

**MARLEY:** I have none to give. It comes from other regions and is conveyed by other ministers. In life, my spirit never walked beyond our counting house. Now I am condemned to travel far and wide.

**SCROOGE:** Well, you were always a good man of business.

*MARLEY stands, rattles chains and cries out. SCROOGE trembles.*

**MARLEY:** Business? BUSINESS? Mankind was my business! The common welfare was my business! Charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence were all my business! The dealings of trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! At this time of the year, I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down and never see my fellow travelers? Hear me! My time is nearly gone. I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate.

**SCROOGE:** You always were a good friend, Jacob.

**MARLEY:** You will be haunted by three spirits.

**SCROOGE:** Is that the chance and hope you mentioned?

**MARLEY:** It is.

**SCROOGE:** I think I'd rather not.

**MARLEY:** Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tonight when the bell tolls one.

**SCROOGE:** Couldn't I take them all at once and have it over?

**MARLEY:** Expect the second when the bell tolls two. The third will arrive in his own mercurial time. Expect to see me no more!

*BLACKOUT. Eerie sounds. SCROOGE howls, returns to his chair and covers up with the blanket. MARLEY exits left. Lights up dim. SCROOGE stands and looks around.*

**SCROOGE:** Must have been a bad dream. That's all. Ghost of Jacob Marley! Humbug! *(He returns to his chair, wraps himself in the blanket and goes to sleep.)*

**SCENE 2***THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST*

**AT START:** *We hear bell peal and strike once. SCROOGE sits up and looks around.*

**SCROOGE:** Spirit indeed! Wrong in life, wrong in death, Jacob Marley! *(Sits back down.)*

*CHRISTMAS PAST GHOST 1 and CHRISTMAS PAST GHOST 2 enter left and hide behind SCROOGE'S desk.*

**PAST 1:** *(Playfully, peeking out from behind the desk.)* Scrooge!

**PAST 2:** *(Playfully, peeking out from behind the desk.)* Oh, Scrooge!

**SCROOGE:** Humbug!

*PAST 1 and PAST 2 tiptoe left, smiling at the audience and putting a finger to their lips. PAST 1 hides behind Scrooge's chair. PAST 2 hides behind the table.*

**PAST 1:** *(Calls out.)* Scrooge!

**PAST 2:** Oh, Scrooge!

*SCROOGE sits up, looks around, then lays back down.*

**SCROOGE:** Humbug!

*PAST 1 slowly stands up behind the chair.*

**PAST 1:** Scrooge!

*PAST 1 quickly ducks out of sight and SCROOGE, startled, turns and looks behind him. PAST 2 stands up behind the table.*

**PAST 2:** Oh, Scrooge!

*PAST 2 ducks back down. SCROOGE looks back and forth, then wraps himself tighter in his blanket and closes his eyes. PAST 1 and PAST 2 slowly make their way to either side of SCROOGE'S face, silently snickering. They both lean over, use hand signals to count to three and shout.*

**PAST 1 and PAST 2:** *(Shouting.) SCROOGE!*

*PAST 1 and PAST 2 duck down and giggle as SCROOGE sits up.*

**SCROOGE:** WHAT! Who's there? I demand to see you!

*SCROOGE stands, throws off the blanket and crosses center. The blanket covers PAST 2, who crawls toward SCROOGE. He turns, sees the moving blanket and gasps. She slowly stands. He is mesmerized. PAST 1 sneaks up behind him. He slowly reaches out for the blanket and tugs on it. PAST 2 tugs back. He reaches out again. From beneath the blanket, PAST 2 grabs his hand. He gasps and pulls his hand away. PAST 2 flaps beneath the blanket. PAST 1, unseen by SCROOGE, leans over and shouts in his ear.*

**PAST 1:** BOO!

*SCROOGE gasps, turns to look at PAST 1.*

**PAST 2:** *(Tosses off the blanket, leans toward SCROOGE and shouts.)* BOO!

*SCROOGE gasps in terror. PAST 1 and PAST 2 laugh.*

**SCROOGE:** WHO ARE YOU?

**PAST 1:** We're the ghosts of Christmas Past.

**SCROOGE:** Long past?

**PAST 2:** No. Your past.

**SCROOGE:** Two of you?

*PAST 1 and PAST 2 grin at each and shrug their shoulders.*

**SCROOGE:** Why are you here?

**PAST 1:** Your welfare.

**PAST 2:** Your redemption. (*Ghosts stand on either side of Scrooge.*)

**PAST 1:** Come with us.

**SCROOGE:** Where are we going?

**PAST 2:** You'll see.

*They lead SCROOGE center. Lights up. A bench is downstage left. CHILD SCROOGE is sitting on the bench reading a book. SCHOOL CHILDREN enter right carrying books. They cross and exit left.*

**SCROOGE:** I know this place! I was a boy here! (*Pointing.*) There's Abigail and Thomas and Charlie! Hello there, Charlie! It's me! Ebenezer!

*SCROOGE indicates members of the audience.*

**PAST 1:** These are shadows of the things that have been.

**PAST 2:** They can't see us or hear us.

**PAST 1:** Your lip is trembling.

**PAST 2:** Is that a tear upon your cheek?

**SCROOGE:** There is my school. It looks deserted.

**PAST 1:** It's not deserted.

**PAST 2:** Don't you recognize the boy?

**SCROOGE:** (*Surprised.*) I remember this! Away at school. Alone on Christmas. Alone except for my books. "Robinson Crusoe", "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves".

**PAST 1:** Why were you left alone at your school?

**SCROOGE:** My mother died in childbirth. My childbirth. And my father was a bitter man. He didn't want to look at me.

**PAST 2:** Was there anyone in your life who loved you?

**SCROOGE:** Yes, there was. My sister, Fan.

*FAN enters left and crosses to CHILD SCROOGE.*

**FAN:** Merry Christmas, Ebenezer! (*Sits beside CHILD SCROOGE and hugs him.*) I've come to bring you home!

**CHILD SCROOGE:** Home?

**FAN:** Yes! Home for good! Father is so much kinder than he used to be. He sent me in a coach to bring you. Let's pack your things! We can be together for Christmas.

**CHILD SCROOGE:** Just for Christmas? What do you mean?

**FAN:** Well, Father has arranged for you to go to work as an apprentice. But we'll have Christmas together.

*FAN and CHILD SCROOGE exit left.*

**PAST 1:** Your sister was a kind and loving person.

**PAST 2:** But she died a young woman. With children, I believe.

**SCROOGE:** One child. My nephew, Fred.

**PAST 1:** Let's visit another Christmas Past.

**PAST 2:** YOUR past!

**SCROOGE:** I don't believe I can take any more.

*PAST 1 and PAST 2 grin at each other.*

**PAST 1 and PAST 2:** That is NOT an option!

*BELLE enters left and sits on the bench.*

**PAST 1:** Do you recognize this lady?

**SCROOGE:** It's Belle!

**PAST 2:** Did Belle have some special meaning in your life?

**SCROOGE:** She and I were engaged to be married.

**PAST 1:** Why is she waiting?

**SCROOGE:** I was working. Working so that we would have a future, I might add.

*YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE enters left, crosses to BELLE and sits beside her.*

**BELLE:** You're late.

**YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE:** Yes, I know. I was pursuing a very lucrative opportunity that will earn a handsome return if it all works out.

**BELLE:** (*Frustrated.*) Oh, Ebenezer. I've waited so many times for your (*Sarcastic.*) opportunities to earn handsome returns. I'm tired of waiting. You fear the world too much. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until all that is left is your pursuit of wealth. (*Stands.*) I have no resources to bring to a marriage ... therefore I release you, Ebenezer! I release you from your proposal of marriage! (*Removes engagement ring from her finger and places it on the bench.*) May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

*BELLE pauses. SCROOGE almost speaks, but doesn't. BELLE exits left. SCROOGE picks up the ring, stands and watches her go.*

**SCROOGE:** I almost stopped her.

**PAST 1:** Almost doesn't count.

*YOUNG ADULT SCROOGE exits left.*

**SCROOGE:** Take me home, spirits!

**PAST 2:** Not yet. We have one more scene for you to witness.

**PAST 1:** Another Christmas Eve, years later.

*BELLE'S CHILDREN enter. Two play a game on the floor. Two cross center and toss a ball. An older girl enters, sits on the bench and reads a book.*

**SCROOGE:** Who are those brats?

*BELLE enters with BELLE'S HUSBAND. They sit on the bench.*

**BELLE'S HUSBAND:** Merry Christmas, children!

*BELLE'S CHILDREN gather around them, sitting at their feet.*

**BELLE'S CHILDREN:** Merry Christmas, Father!

**SCROOGE:** (*Disappointed.*) Belle's family?

**PAST 2:** A family like you may have had, (*Sarcastic.*) if you hadn't been so busy pursuing lucrative opportunities that earned handsome returns.

**BELLE'S HUSBAND:** I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon. Guess who it was?

**BELLE:** How can I guess? Tell me.

**BELLE'S HUSBAND:** Ebenezer Scrooge.

*BELLE frowns.*

**BELLE'S HUSBAND:** I passed his office window, and saw him sitting at his desk. He was illuminated by the light of a single candle. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear. And there he sat, quite alone in the world.

**BELLE:** Poor Ebenezer.

**SCROOGE:** (*Angry.*) Keep your pity! (*To PAST 1 and PAST 2.*) Remove me from this place! Take me home! Haunt me no longer!

*Lights dim. Spooky sound effects. BELLE and others exit. PAST 1 and PAST 2 escort SCROOGE to his bedroom. SCROOGE sits in his chair, eyes wide with fear. PAST 1 and PAST 2 tuck him in with his blanket. Sounds fade. SCROOGE slowly goes to sleep.*

### SCENE 3

#### THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

**AT START:** *We hear bell peal and strike two. SCROOGE sits up and looks around.*

**SCROOGE:** (*Meekly.*) Hello? Is there another... another spirit around somewhere?

*Sudden loud bells and spooky sounds. Lights up. SCROOGE jumps up and nervously looks around, crossing center, holding his ears. CHRISTMAS PRESENT enters left and crosses center. PRESENT holds a chalice full of confetti. Sounds stop.*

**PRESENT:** *(Playfully.)* Come here! Come here and know me better!

*SCROOGE cautiously crosses center.*

**PRESENT:** Have you ever seen the likes of me before?

**SCROOGE:** Never!

**PRESENT:** Have you never walked with older members of my family born in these latter years?

**SCROOGE:** I don't think I have. Do you have a lot of brothers and sisters?

**PRESENT:** More than eighteen hundred.

**SCROOGE:** A tremendous family to provide for. Spirit, conduct me where you will. Let's get this over with.

**PRESENT:** Touch my robe.

*SCROOGE takes PRESENT'S robe. BOY 1 chases BOY 2 center, stops him and shakes him as if fighting.*

**SCROOGE:** See here, you hoodlums!

**PRESENT:** They cannot see or hear you.

*PRESENT pours a small bit of confetti on BOY 1 and BOY 2. They stop fighting. Their demeanor changes to one of joy.*

**BOY 1:** *(Offering his hand.)* A Merry Christmas to you!

**BOY 2:** *(Shaking BOY 1's hand.)* And a Merry Christmas to you too!

*BOY 1 and BOY 2 exit left, arms around each other's shoulders.*

**SCROOGE:** What of the charlatans who cheat and steal in your name?

**PRESENT:** There are some upon this earth of yours who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill will, hatred, envy, bigotry and selfishness in our name. They are as strange to us and all of our kith and kin, as if they had never lived! Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us.

*A small trestle or card table with table cloth is brought downstage left. Chairs are placed behind the table by the CRATCHIT CHILDREN, who also place goblets or mugs on the table. MRS. CRATCHIT enters left carrying a covered serving tray. PETER CRATCHIT takes the tray from her and places it on the table. CRATCHIT CHILDREN eagerly look at the tray.*

**PETER:** The Christmas goose smells wonderful! Can we start?

**MRS. CRATCHIT:** We can start when your father and Tiny Tim arrive, and not a moment earlier. I hope Martha can make it.

**PETER:** May I please sample a potato? Just to make sure they're cooked enough.

*PETER takes a fork and starts to lift the top from the tray. MRS. CRATCHIT slaps his hand away.*

**MRS. CRATCHIT:** You may not, Peter!

*Others CRATCHIT CHILDREN snicker.*

**PETER:** But I'm SO hungry!

**MRS. CRATCHIT:** Behave yourself or else you'll remain hungry for some time to come!

*MARTHA enters, crosses to MRS. CRATCHIT and hugs her.*

**MARTHA:** We had a good deal of work to finish. I came as soon as I could.

**MRS. CRATCHIT:** Your father and Tiny Tim will be so pleased! We were afraid you wouldn't be able to join us.

**BOBBY:** *(Looking left.)* Father's coming! Hide, Martha! We'll tell him you couldn't be here, then you can jump out and surprise him!

*MARTHA ducks down beside the table. BOB enters carrying TINY TIM and his crutch. CHILDREN rush to greet them.*

**BOB:** *(Looking around.)* Where's our Martha?

**CRATCHIT CHILDREN:** Not coming!

**BOB:** (*Disappointed.*) Not coming? Not coming on Christmas Day?  
(*Martha stands up.*)

**MARTHA:** Surprise!

*Laughs and cheers. MARTHA crosses to BOB, takes TINY TIM. BOB pulls out a chair and the end of the table and MARTHA lowers TINY TIM into the chair. PETER takes the crutch from BOB and places it upstage. MARTHA and the others help TIM with his coat and scarf. MRS. CRATCHIT helps BOB remove his coat, hat and scarf. MRS. CRATCHIT hands the coats to MARTHA who takes them off stage and returns. They all sit at the table, on three sides so backs are not to the audience.*

**MRS. CRATCHIT:** How did Tim behave?

**BOB:** As good as gold. Better even. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made the lame beggars walk and blind men see. I think he's getting stronger every day.

**MRS. CRATCHIT:** (*Unsure.*) I'm sure he is.

**PETER:** Can we have Christmas dinner now?

**MRS. CRATCHIT:** We had better before Peter eats the goose, the plates and the forks and spoons.

**SCROOGE:** Seems to be a rather small goose for such a pack of ravenous children.

**PRESENT:** It's all Bob Cratchit can afford with the salary he's paid.

*ALL bow their heads and hold hands for a blessing.*

**BOB:** Heavenly Father, on this Christmas Day we remember with joy and thanksgiving the babe born in a stable so long ago: a poor child first seen by humble shepherds, then worshiped by kings from the East. We thank thee for all the abundance with which we have been blessed ...

**SCROOGE:** What abundance?

**PRESENT:** Be quiet.

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*By Burton Bumgarner*

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