

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A RETELLING OF CHARLES DICKENS'
CHRISTMAS CLASSIC IN TWO ACTS

By Gayann Truelove and Tammy J. Barton

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Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ISBN: 978-1-61588-020-1

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PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

**P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011**

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(11 MEN, 13 WOMEN, 3 EITHER, EXTRAS)

EBENEZER SCROOGE (m).....	Mean old miser. (<i>Adult, 103 lines</i>)
BOB CRATCHIT (m).....	Good hearted, but poor employee of Scrooge. (<i>Adult, 67 lines</i>)
EBBY (f).....	Scrooge's sweet and kind niece. (<i>Adult, 33 lines</i>)
JACOB MARLEY (m).....	Scrooge's late business partner...now a ghost. (<i>Adult, 15 lines</i>)
BOYS (5 m).....	Carolers. (<i>24 lines</i>)
GIRLS (5 f).....	Carolers. (<i>26 lines</i>)
SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST (m/f).....	Wise old spirit. (<i>14 lines</i>)
TINY TIM (m).....	Small sickly boy...changes Scrooge's heart. (<i>Age 8 to 10 years, 22 lines</i>)
AMY CRATCHIT (f).....	Tiny Tim's sister. (<i>Age 10 to 12 years, 21 lines</i>)
MRS. CRATCHIT (f).....	Bob's wife...determined, but worried about her son, Tim. (<i>Adult, 20 lines</i>)

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MOTHER (f)..... Scrooge's mother in the past...mean horrible woman. (Adult, 8 lines)

ELIZABETH (f)..... Scrooge's kindhearted sister from the past. (Teen, 13 lines)

YOUNG BOY EBENEZER (m)..... Scrooge in the past...sweet and giving. (10 to 12 years, 15 lines)

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER (m)..... Scrooge as a young man...stingy and self-absorbed. (18-25 years, 13 lines)

SARA (f)..... Scrooge's love from the past. (16 to 18 years, 9 lines)

YOUNG EBBY (f) Scrooge's niece from the past...still sweet and gentle. (6 to 8 years, 15 lines)

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT (m/f) . Outgoing and straightforward. (14 lines)

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE (m/f) ... All powerful. (Plays better as a male, 5 lines)

MATTIE (f) A beggar. (Teen or Adult, 13 lines)

*Any number of extra carolers/males or females.

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The play takes place during Christmas Eve and the following Christmas Day in the life of Ebenezer Scrooge.

ACT ONE

- PROLOGUE: Done on apron in front of curtain
SCENE 1: Scrooge's office/ bedroom/ the street
SCENE 2: Scrooge's bedroom/ the street
SCENE 3: Scrooge's office and boyhood home
SCENE 4: Scrooge's bedroom/ Cratchit's home

ACT TWO

- SCENE 1: Scrooge's bedroom/ graveyard
SCENE 2: Scrooge's bedroom and street outside office
SCENE 3: Cratchit's home on Christmas morning
EPILOGUE: Apron

NOTE: Entire play is done on the set of Scrooge's office/bedroom with only minor set pieces being moved in and out to suggest different locations.

ACT ONE
PROLOGUE

A straight back chair sits down stage center on apron. Beside it stands a hat tree with Scrooge's costume pieces hanging on it. Included are a pocket watch, glasses, muffler, hat and cane. Scrooge enters theatre from rear and talks to audience with holiday greeting. He passes out a few candy canes along his way. He is an older man with much enthusiasm for like and apparent generosity, not at all like the way we think of the "character" Scrooge. He comes onto the stage and sits on chair down center. Christmas music as he enters adds to the holiday spirit.

SCROOGE: *(Music out; Scrooge addresses the audience.)* Ah, my friends, so good of you to spend a few moments of your precious time with an old man such as I. It is, you know, the busiest season of the year, and I might add, my favorite; A season for giving and laughing, of joy and brotherly love. *(Laughs.)* Ah, yes my friends, it's the Christmas holiday. You see before you today a content man. But it was not always so. It was just one Christmas Eve ago that I received a most unusual gift. A gift, that back then, I would have never asked for. A gift that changed this cold heart *(Touches his heart and reaches for his coat.)* into one of warmth and love. *(Puts muffler on.)* A gift, at the time, *(Takes pocket watch out and opens it looks at time.)* I believed I had NO need for. *(Puts watch away and sits. Takes his glasses out and cleans them.)* You see, I was blinded to the beauties of life and it took this gift to open my eyes. *(Puts on glasses.)* This priceless gift turned these selfish hands into hands of service and love. *(Holds hands up.)* Like this cane, it enabled this bitter bend old man to stand proudly and learn to live again. *(Gets cane and stands tall while leaning on it.)* It's funny how one night of events can change a man's way of thinking forever. *(Put hat on.)*

TINY TIM: *(Speaks from the audience. Tim should sit in the front row before the show begins.)* Excuse me, sir.

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SCROOGE: *(Comes to the edge of stage and squints out to audience.)* Yes lad, *(Realizes it's Tim.)* Tim? Tim my boy, is that you? Come on up here and let me have a look at you. *(Tim takes crutch and makes his way to the stage.)* How is the leg doing, son?

TINY TIM: Much better! *(Few steps to Scrooge.)* You're going to tell them the story aren't you, Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Why yes Tim, that's why I'm here...as I was saying, it was one year ago Christmas Eve that I received a most unusual gift. *(Blackout.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

The scene opens in the shop of Scrooge and Marley. The set is representational without using back drops or back flats. It consists of a large desk with a half used candle on it, upstage center with straight back chair and hat tree, from prologue. A much smaller desk/table sits to the left of large desk with a small chair. There is a hanging window frame down stage right with a sign attached that reads Scrooge and Marley. [Note: Window is free hanging and divides the apron from the main stage playing area, so the apron becomes the outside.] Scrooge's bed sits extreme stage right. Snow apron adds to the seasonal effect. As SCENE 1 opens, Cratchit sits at smaller desk and tries to work on some figures. He is obviously very cold and his hands are cramping as he attempts to write. However, despite his apparent situation of poverty and chill, he is an upbeat, likable man that tries to always have a nice word for all. After a few moments, we hear carolers from the back of the auditorium singing "Silent Night" and carrying lighted candles. They gather around the window on apron and end their song.

BOY #1: *(Reading sign.)* Scrooge and Marley. *(Looks in window.)*
It's so dark, I don't think anybody's in there.

GIRL #1: They have probably all gone home for the evening.

GIRL #2: It is Christmas Eve you know. *(Cratchit comes to the window.)*

CRATCHIT: Hello, young lads and lasses and Merry Christmas to you all.

BOY #2: Merry Christmas to you too, sir.

BOY #3: Are you Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

CRATCHIT: (*Laughs.*) Neither. My name's Cratchit, Bob Cratchit. I'm employed by Mr. Scrooge.

GIRL #2: And what about Mr. Marley?

CRATCHIT: (*Thinking.*) Jacob Marley? Why he died seven years ago this very night.

BOY #1: But the sign reads Scrooge and "Marley."

CRATCHIT: Well, changing signs cost money and my employer works very hard at keeping his money. So you see, he has never seen the need to, as he would say, (*Imitates Scrooge.*) "Waste hard earned money to replace a perfectly good sign." (*Children laugh at Cratchit's imitation of Scrooge. Scrooge enters extreme down left.*)

GIRL #4: Come now Mr. Cratchit, no one could be that stingy.

BOY #4: Not even, Mr. Scrooge.

CRATCHIT: Trust me children, "stingy" is my employer's middle name.

All laugh.

SCROOGE: (*Enters on apron. He is now transformed into a miserly, unkind man. He walks slumped and is obviously very unhappy. All merriment stops at the sound of his voice.*) Cratchit! What on Earth are you doing wasting "my" time conversing with these little brats? (*Cratchit back to desk.*)

GIRL #5: (*Runs up to Scrooge.*) Are you Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE: Why do you care who I am?

GIRL #5: Because sir, we've come to wish Mr. Scrooge a Merry Christmas.

SCROOGE: CHRISTMAS? Bah Humbug! I have no time for such folly. I have work to do. Now be gone, all of you, or I'll send for the constable and have you all thrown in jail for...for trespassing!

BOY #1: But we are only here, Sir, to spread some Christmas joy.

GIRL #1: To share some of the magic of this glorious season.

SCROOGE: Bah! (*Enters office between bed and window and proceeds to hang up his coat, hat, muffler etc. on hat rack.*)

GIRL #2: (*As they exit.*) Why do you suppose he is so angry?

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BOY #2: What a shame to be so cross during this time of the year.

GIRL #3: Lets not let Mr. Scrooge's sour disposition ruin our holiday.

GIRL #4: Mary's right! There are plenty of others this night who will welcome our Christmas Carols.

BOY #3: *(An idea!)* How about going over to the workhouse. I am sure they could use some cheer!

GIRL #5: I hear they are going to be serving all the beggars a Christmas Eve meal.

BOY #3: A little Caroling would be a treat.

BOY #5: That's a jolly good idea, Peter, let's go! *(Carolers exit singing "The First Noel.")*

Cratchit has gone back to his desk and is once again trying to work.

CRATCHIT: *(Tentatively, trying to defend the children.)* The children were only trying to be kind, sir. Only wishing to bring us a bit of cheer.

SCROOGE: What they did my lazy employee was cost me MONEY!! They caused you, Mr. Cratchit, to be idle and I detest idleness.

CRATCHIT: But it's Christmas Eve Mr. Scrooge and it's thirty minutes later than my normal quitting time and I just thought that...

SCROOGE: I don't pay you to "think," I pay you to work. Besides, you know that you are here late this evening because of your insane request to have the entire day off tomorrow.

CRATCHIT: But tomorrow is Christmas Day.

A poor beggar woman is heard outside. She walks onto the apron from extreme down right.

BEGGAR WOMAN: *(Speaks to audience.)* Just one small crust of bread to fill this poor empty stomach. Please sir, could you spare some change or perhaps a piece of warm clothing to keep this frail body from freezing in the cold. *(She coughs and moves center.)*

SCROOGE: Who's that outside? *(Cratchit starts toward the window.)* How can a man get any work done with all these distractions.

CRATCHIT: *(At window, looks out.)* It's a poor old woman. She looks cold and hungry. May I ask her to come inside, perhaps offer her a sip of warm apple cider?

SCROOGE: *(Stands.)* What do you think I am running here, a boarding house for every stray person who roams the streets?
(Goes to the window and addresses woman.) You there, woman!

BEGGAR WOMAN: Yes.

SCROOGE: Move along, you're blocking the entrance to my shop.

BEGGAR WOMAN: Please, kind sir, I'm so tired and cold. Allow me just a few minutes inside your establishment to warm these frigid hands and to rest my weary feet.

SCROOGE: I said move along! I have no time for your groaning and complaining ways. Is there not plenty of workhouses and jails for you to seek refuge in? *(Beggar Woman starts to cry and moves down to extreme left. She sits in a heap and attempts to keep her body warm. Scrooge returns to his work.)*

CRATCHIT: Sir, it would not have hurt us to let her sit inside for only a brief moment. After, all, it is Christmas Eve.

SCROOGE: Bah Humbug! Just another day set aside to give people the excuse to be frivolous...How can you speak of Christmas when the wages that you make are barely enough to feed your family. *(He looks up and notices the used candle on his desk.)* What is this?

CRATCHIT: What is what, sir?

SCROOGE: *(Stands and picks up candle.)* THIS!

CRATCHIT: *(Stands.)* Well you see, sir, it was getting dark and I was finding it hard to see. I lit the candle so I would not make any mistakes, because of the darkness. The candle gave off such warmth and I was so cold that before I knew what had happened...it had nearly melted away.

SCROOGE: Ungrateful man. Wax costs money! My hard earned money!! Put on a coat if you're cold. Move closer to the window if you're finding it hard to see. But NEVER burn one of my candles without permission! Is that quite clear, Mr. Cratchit?

CRATCHIT: Yes Sir. *(Clock begins to strike the 8 o'clock hour Cratchit begins to get prepared to leave.)*

SCROOGE: In such a hurry to leave, are you Cratchit? Perhaps if you dislike your job so much I should relieve you of your burden.

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CRATCHIT: *(Trying hard to get back into Scrooge's favor.)* No Mr. Scrooge, it's not that at all. I'm grateful for my employment here. It's just that I promised my wife that I would be home by nine o'clock to share Christmas Eve supper with the family. You know my boy Tim is not well. I want to read him "T'was The Night Before Christmas" before he goes to sleep.

SCROOGE: That boy of yours is a diseased cripple who is draining your already meager salary. He should be put away in an institution where he can live out his final days without causing further harm to your family.

CRATCHIT: *(Takes great offense at this, for he loves Tim with all his heart.)* I love my son and would never send him away to live with strangers. It's true that my wife and I have very little, but I will continue to care for my Tim until he takes his last breath. Good evening Mr. Scrooge. *(Starts to exit, then realizes his harshness. Turns.)* and Merry Christmas. *(He exits shop and crosses left toward Beggar Woman on apron. Scrooge goes to window and watches him.)*

BEGGAR WOMAN: *(To Cratchit.)* Oh kind sir, could you spare one thin dime for a crust of bread.

CRATCHIT: You poor soul. *(Reaches in his pocket and removes a nickel.)* I fear that I do not have a dime to spare, but if this nickel would be of help I would offer it to you in the spirit of love. *(She takes the nickel.)*

SCROOGE: Frivolous Fool. *(He returns to work.)*

BEGGAR WOMAN: My God bless you and yours. You are truly a noble man.

Beggar woman exits right as we hear Ebby entering from left. She is a lighthearted woman in her late 40's or early 50's.

EBBY: Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Cratchit. *(They embrace.)*

CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas to you, Ebby. What brings you out this evening?

EBBY: I've come to pay my Uncle Ebenezer a visit and invite him to dine with me tomorrow. Perhaps bring a little Christmas cheer into his life.

CRATCHIT: Oh Ebby, your Uncle is becoming less compassionate and more bitter with each passing day. The only time I see a small glimpse of happiness is when he is counting his money.

EBBY: Mr. Cratchit, I fear that what you say may be true. But my mother truly loved him and saw the good in her brother.

CRATCHIT: That, over the years I'm afraid, he has buried under all his greed. Well, Ebby, my family awaits my arrival so I'll be leaving you now. Good luck with your Uncle, and God Speed.
(He is off.)

EBBY: *(Entering shop between window and bed.)* Merry Christmas to you, Uncle Ebenezer. *(She leans down and kisses Scrooge's cheek.)*

SCROOGE: Bah! Has everyone in the world lost their minds?

EBBY: *(Laughs.)* Oh, Uncle Ebenezer, don't be so hard. Christmas only comes once a year. Surely even you can see the goodwill and love that this season brings.

SCROOGE: I see only fools!

EBBY: *(Ignores him.)* I have come, Uncle, to invite you to share my Christmas meal. I've prepared a beautiful goose, dumplings, and your favorite mince pie, just like my mother used to make. I would be quite honored if you would join me...

SCROOGE: I have no time for such nonsense. There will be work to do tomorrow just as there is everyday!

EBBY: Well Uncle, if you happen to complete your work early, there will be a place set for you at my Christmas table.

SCROOGE: Do what you must, but you'll not see this Uncle at any holiday meal.

EBBY: *(Starting to leave, Scrooge returns to work.)* I'll be running along now Uncle, try not to work too late. Perhaps a good night's rest will change your decision about tomorrow. *(She pauses at door and turns back to Scrooge.)* Uncle Ebenezer. *(Scrooge looks up.)* Do try to find it in your heart to come...you're the only family I have left. *(She is out right.)*

SCROOGE: Bah!!

End of SCENE 1. Blackout.

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ACT ONE, SCENE 2

The scene is later that night. Scrooge is seated on his bed. He has just completed his evening meal. On a nightstand next to his bed sits a lit candle. Scrooge is now dressed in a long night shirt and cap. Christmas music should play during Scrooge's costume change.

SCROOGE: *(Speaks to himself.)* Christmas Eve indeed. Bah! My own niece, my own flesh and blood speaking of goodwill and love. Goodwill and love have never added one farthing to my coffer. *(Carolers enter from left on apron and start to sing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" under Scrooge's window. He goes to window.)* Stop that singing. Can't you see that I'm trying to sleep? I have books to balance tomorrow and must get my rest. *(Carolers are so into song that they just keep right on singing. Scrooge, now very mad.)* I SAID SILENCE!! *(The carolers are stunned by his sudden outburst and are instantly quiet and exit left.)* I should have the parents of those incorrigible children taken before the magistrate and fined for disturbing my slumber. *(He starts back to bed but is stopped by another voice.)*

MARLEY: *(From off stage right singing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." If possible, amplify the voices of Marley and the Spirits.)*

SCROOGE: *(Turns toward window.)* Little brats!! I said... *(Singing stops. He sees that the street is clear.)* My ears must be playing tricks on me. It must be that heavy sauce that I had with my supper. I must remember not to eat so late. *(He returns to the bed and blows out the candle. The stage lights dim. Marley enters right. Marley sings from head of bed. Scrooge's back is turned away from him.)* What, what's that? Who's there?

MARLEY: It is I Ebenezer, Jacob Marley! *(He is dressed in a black robe and covered in heavy chains, a man in torment.)*

SCROOGE: Jacob Marley? Bah, Marley is dead.

MARLEY: Yes, You buried me seven years ago this very night.

SCROOGE: *(Scrooge jumps to head of bed as Marley appears at foot of bed.)* You're only a dream. A bad dream, that's what you are. Caused by a late supper and a weak stomach.

MARLEY: (*Drops to his knees with a loud wail from the weight of the chairs that drape his body. It scares Scrooge and he hides behind the headboard.*) E-b-e-n-e-e-z-e-r, E-b-e-n-e-e-z-e-r!

SCROOGE: Be gone from here you figment of my imagination.

MARLEY: You are truly a foolish man. I have been allowed to return for a short time to warn you, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: Warn me?

MARLEY: (*He stands with much labor.*) For seven years I have been in torment. Required to carry the burden of this chain for the evil deeds done in my lifetime; for every lie a link, for every injustice to mankind a link was added, until the weight of my sins was too heavy to bear.

SCROOGE: What do your pain and agony have to do with me?

MARLEY: (*Advancing to Scrooge.*) Ebenezer, what you see before you is your own fate!! You see, my partner, your chain is now being prepared for you and is already heavier than mine. The links are being added daily. It is too late for me, Ebenezer, but you still have time.

SCROOGE: Bah, you talk nonsense. You were a fool in life and now you are a fool in death.

MARLEY: (*Drops to his knees and groans once again, scares Scrooge.*) You must listen to me. My time here is short. The spirits will be here soon to take me back. (*Scrooge looks about room frightened.*)

SCROOGE: Back? Back where?

MARLEY: To E-t-e-r-n-a-l T-o-r-m-e-n-t!

SCROOGE: Why did they allow you to return?

MARLEY: To give you one last chance at redemption. This night you will be visited by three spirits. One from your past, one from your present, and one from your future; the first of these spirits will visit you when the hour strikes ten, followed by another at eleven and the final and most important will make his appearance at the stroke of midnight. Heed and listen well, Ebenezer, for these three spirits hold your fate in their hands. (*He drops to his knees one last time and lets out the most agonizing moan of all. Scrooge grabs pillow and puts it over his ears to drown out sound.*)

SCROOGE: Nooooo!

End of SCENE 2. Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

During blackout, Marley exits and we hear the clock strike the ten o'clock hour. When lights come up, Scrooge is sitting on the floor in front of his bed and the Spirit of Christmas Past is standing behind the bed. Spirit is dressed in a large green cape with trimmed hood and speaks with great knowledge and insight.

SCROOGE: *(As lights come up he looks about cautiously, then stands. He speaks to himself.)* What a dream I had!! It threw me clear out of my bed. Marley came back from the dead...three spirits to visit me...BAH!! *(He turns to get into bed and sees the Spirit of Christmas Past. He jumps to the head of the bed.)* Who are you? What are you doing in my room? Leave my home at once or I shall call the authorities and have you arrested!

CHRISTMAS PAST: *(Laughs.)* Mere prison bars could not hold me, Ebenezer, for I am just a fleeting vapor sent to show you many things.

SCROOGE: How do you know my name?

CHRISTMAS PAST: An, Ebenezer Scrooge, I know more than just your name. My knowledge of your life is great, for I am the Spirit of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Marley.....Marley spoke of your visit, but I did not believe...

CHRISTMAS PAST: It matters not that you believe in me Ebenezer, only that you learn from what I am about to reveal to you. Come, my time with you is short and there is much to see. *(She holds her arms out, Scrooge is drawn to her as if he has no free will of his own. Blackout, Scrooge and Spirit are spotlighted as they walk to extreme down left on apron. A low rumbling sound effect works well here. When the lights return to normal we see Scrooge's mother sitting in a rocking chair center. She is knitting. She is a cold, bitter woman. Note: All scenes are done in Scrooge's office with just the addition of set pieces.)*

SCROOGE: Mother?...That's my mother. But how is this possible?
She died when I was a young man of thirty.

CHRISTMAS PAST: You must remember, Ebenezer, that this is a journey into your past. It is so that the ones you loved physically died, but it is also true that their memory and influence will live forever in your mind.

SCROOGE: (*Backing away.*) I don't want her to see me. All she ever gave me were heartaches and sadness. She was an unkind woman.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Come back into the light, for she is only a memory, not flesh and bone. She can not see or hear you. Yes, Ebenezer, she is only a memory of a young boy, a young boy who so desperately needed her love.

SCROOGE: Yes!

YOUNG EBENEZER: (*From offstage.*) Mother! Mother! (*He enters. A young sentimental boy of about 12 years old. He holds a small gift behind his back and is obviously very proud of it.*) I've something to give you, Mother. (*He holds it out to her.*)

MOTHER: (*Her speech is sharp and cutting.*) What kind of foolishness have you been up to, Ebenezer? You bring me a gift when you know that the money you wasted on it could help put food on our table.

YOUNG EBENEZER: But Mother, it's Christmas day and I've worked and saved all year long so that I could buy you something to make you smile. I hope you will like it.

MOTHER: (*Stands.*) You were apprenticed to Mr. Fesswig to help make ends meet since your father's death, not so you could throw your wages away on stupid gifts.

SCROOGE: There was never any love or happiness in our home when I was a lad.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Ah, but there was...and her name was Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: (*Enters. She is a lovely teenage girl with a sweet disposition and much joy.*) Merry Christmas, Mother. Merry Christmas, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: I had all but forgotten my sister, Elizabeth.

MOTHER: (*To Elizabeth.*) Why are you home so early from the mill?

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ELIZABETH: My boss was kind enough to give us the afternoon off. He said, "for every kindness shown to another, you will receive it back tenfold." So his Christmas gift to us was the entire afternoon off. *(Mother picks up knitting and starts to exit.)* Don't leave Mother. Can't you see how wonderful and generous his gift was? Now we can spend Christmas day together, as a family.

MOTHER: While my two children speak of generosity and frivolous gifts, it is still my job to see that we can pay our rent so you do not freeze to death in this bitter December cold.

YOUNG EBENEZER: *(Trying hard to be upbeat. Goes to Mother.)* Perhaps your knitting will fetch a good price in the city square this afternoon. It is Christmas day and someone will surely see its craftsmanship and pay a high price for it, to give as an extra special gift!

ELIZABETH: *(Speaking to Young Boy Ebenezer, becoming excited.)* With that extra money we could buy a small goose and have a Christmas feast!

MOTHER: EXTRA money! There is no such thing as extra money. Today is like any other. I shall purchase the broth as usual at the corner store. There are a few crusts of bread left in the cupboard. That, my greedy children, will be our supper. Christmas feast indeed! *(She exits.)*

SCROOGE: My Mother's heart was taken from her the day we laid our father in the grave.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Very true! She allowed the death of her husband to all but take her own life as well.

ELIZABETH: *(To Ebenezer, who is softly crying.)* Don't cry, Ebenezer. Mother doesn't mean to be so harsh. She just has too many burdens to carry.

YOUNG EBENEZER: But it's Christmas, Beth, and we have no gifts and no goose. We don't even have a Christmas wreath to hang on our door.

ELIZABETH: *(Takes lollipops from pockets in apron or dress.)* Look...look what I bought from Mr. Longfellow's store on my way home.

YOUNG EBENEZER: Lollipops!

ELIZABETH: Christmas Lollipops!

YOUNG EBENEZER: Oh, Beth they're beautiful...But Mother would scold you if she finds out you spent your money on them.

ELIZABETH: Mother need not find out. She has gone to the City Square to sell her knitting and should be gone for hours. We have all the time that we need to celebrate Christmas before she gets home. *(She hands him a lollipop.)* Merry Christmas, Ebenezer.

YOUNG EBENEZER: Merry Christmas, Beth! *(He hugs her as lights fade out and curtain closes quickly. Spotlight up on Scrooge and Christmas Past on apron. Note: This is an extremely quick costume change for Elizabeth. A robe over her dress works well.)*

SCROOGE: Beth always did have a way of bringing sunshine into the gloomiest of days.

CHRISTMAS PAST: So sweet and innocent. Her only goal in life was to love others.

SCROOGE: What happened to her was unfair! If served no purpose!

CHRISTMAS PAST: We shall see, Ebenezer, we shall soon see.

(Curtain opens, lights come up on stage. We see Elizabeth now in bed holding a newborn child. Young Ebenezer next to her.)

SCROOGE: No! Spirit take me away from here. I do not wish to see this Christmas.

YOUNG EBENEZER: *(He is near tears.)* Please Beth, don't die and leave me. You're all that I have.

ELIZABETH: *(Very weak.)* Ebenezer, you must be strong now for my child, your niece, born this Christmas Eve.

YOUNG EBENEZER: I don't want to be strong for the child. It is because of her that you are dying.

ELIZABETH: It frightens me so that I will not be here to raise and love her.

YOUNG EBENEZER: No, Beth, No!!!

ELIZABETH: You must take my place in her life. You must teach her to always see the good in the world. Protect her from all that is ugly and spiteful. *(She hands him the child.)* I've named her Ebby, after you, my most loved brother. *(She coughs and breaths deep.)* I must rest now. I'm so tired, so very tired. *(She closes her eyes for a moment.)*

YOUNG EBENEZER: Beth!!

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

ELIZABETH: (*Opens her eyes one last time.*) Remember, I love you, Ebenezer. (*She dies.*)

SCROOGE: No! No, Beth, don't go!!

YOUNG EBENEZER: Mother! Mother! (*Mother enters.*) Beth's dead! Beth's dead! (*He sobs.*)

MOTHER: Don't be a crybaby, Ebenezer, your sister brought shame to this family. And as for the child born in her sin, she shall pay for what her mother has done. (*She takes baby Ebby from Ebenezer.*)

YOUNG EBENEZER: Giver her back, Mother! Elizabeth gave me the child. She named her after me!!

MOTHER: You're being ridiculous. You are nothing but a child yourself. You could never take on the burdens of caring for an infant. You will speak no more of what has happened here this day...Dry your eyes, Ebenezer. Do not mourn for a sister who received exactly what she deserved. (*Black out. Spotlight up on Scrooge and Christmas Past. (During blackout rocking chair is removed and Young Man Ebenezer takes his place at desk.)*)

SCROOGE: Oh my dear Ebby, her life has been so full of trials and unhappiness. My mother never let her forget that she was the reason for the family's shame.

CHRISTMAS PAST: But Ebby inherited your sister's forgiving heart. She was able to endure the wrath of your Mother and in her own sweet way learn to love her. (*Lights come up on Scrooge and Marley's Shop. Young Man Ebenezer sits at large desk. He is Scrooge as a young man. He works diligently.*)

SCROOGE: (*Looks at scene.*) Who is that young man? Do I know him?

CHRISTMAS PAST: You know him very well. Look closer, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: It's me...Spirit, take me from this place, it's only filled with pain and loss.

CHRISTMAS PAST: But what about Ebby?

YOUNG EBBY: (*Enters, she is a small child of 8 or 9 years. Her personality is that of her mother's, loving and giving.*) Uncle Ebenezer! Uncle Ebenezer!

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: What is it, child?

YOUNG EBBY: I waited and waited at home for you, but I couldn't wait any longer. So I ran all the way here.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: this is not a good time, Ebby. Go on now and I will be home in a while.

YOUNG EBBY: But Uncle, you're never home anymore and I miss you so. It's Christmas Eve, Uncle, and I need your help to write a letter to St. Nicholas. I'll burn it in our fireplace. The ashes will be carried on the wind all the way to the North Pole. I want to ask him for a special gift for Grandmother. Perhaps if she has something pretty it would make her smile.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: (*Stand.*) It will take much more than a gift to make your grandmother smile...However, you're a fine speller, Ebby. You surely can master, one, small, insignificant letter by yourself. Now run along my child. I have many hours of accounts left to finish.

YOUNG EBBY: I will go, Uncle, but I'll try my very best to stay awake until you return home. St. Nicholas might answer my letter quicker if he knew that you helped write it and wanted a gift for Grandmother also.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: Whatever you say, Ebby. (*She starts to leave.*) Ebby, (*She turns.*) Go to bed tonight and tomorrow you may find something just for you from St. Nicholas under your pillow.

YOUNG EBBY: (*Goes to Young Man Ebenezer and kisses him.*) Oh, Uncle Ebenezer, I do love you so and Merry Christmas.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: Sleep well, Ebby (*She leaves.*)

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: (*Going through papers on his desk.*) Bills and past due notes! Everyone is late! Bah, Christmas time is a bother. It only gives my customers an excuse to be tardy on their accounts. And then they come expecting me to work miracles. After all, I'm only a man. I can not balance their books if they are lax with the funds. (*He sits.*)

SCROOGE: I was a handsome young man; but not very cheerful.

Christmas Past nods her head yes.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

YOUNG MARLEY: *(He enters. He is a young man. Both Marley parts can be played by the same actor.)* Ebenezer, are you still slaving over those books. Why waste your time trying to salvage other's delinquent accounts. It's Christmas Eve my friend and your beautiful Sara awaits our arrival for supper.

SCROOGE: It's my partner Jacob Marley...Marley was always fond of Sara.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Yes, this was one thing Jacob Marley was right about. You would have fared better if you had listened to your friend.

YOUNG MARLEY: *(Starts to close Ebenezer's books playfully.)* We mustn't keep Sara and her family waiting any longer. They were expecting us over an hour ago.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: *(Angry, stands.)* Jacob Marley, if you are to continue to be my partner you must realize that nothing will come before our work!! *(Sara enters from left and overhears this. She is a beautiful young woman who is elegantly dressed.)*

SARA: Nothing, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: *(Lovingly.)* Sara.

YOUNG EBENEZER: *(Stands flustered.)* Darling.

SARA: I thought I would find you here. Supper has been prepared for nearly half an hour. Mother and Father had begun to worry that something horrible had happened to you.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: *(Lying.)* Yes my love. I was just saying to Jacob that we should be on...

SARA: I heard what you said, Ebenezer. I put up with your foul moods and late hours all year long, but I expect you to consider me and my family during the holidays.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: You know how hard I've worked to start this business, Sara. Customer's accounts do not disappear just because it's Christmas. This shop is important to my...to our future.

YOUNG MARLEY: *(Trying to calm the argument.)* Why don't we all just go over to Sara's and dig into that delicious Christmas goose. It seems all our nerves are a bit on edge, and a glorious feast always calms me down.

SARA: You go on, Jacob. I have a few things to discuss with Ebenezer. We'll be along shortly.

YOUNG MARLEY: *(To Sara.)* Remember, Sara, even though he's a stubborn man, I know he loves you. Don't make a decision tonight that you might both regret. *(He is out left.)*

SARA: *(Turns back to Ebenezer at desk. He has returned to his work, paying her little attention as she speaks.)* Is this all that I have to look forward to from our life together? Long nights alone, never knowing whether you will attend gatherings or not. *(Sees that he is not paying her attention.)* Ebenezer! Are you listening to me?

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: *(Looks up.)* Did you say something, Sara?

SARA: I said...I don't think I can live like this...I'm not going to marry you!

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: *(Going to her.)* Sara, have I not given you everything that a young woman or status would ever want? The gowns, the jewelry....

SARA: You can not buy a person's love, Ebenezer. It's true that on the outside I have all that a woman could dream of. However, the one thing I do not have is you!! You lock yourself inside this tomb you call an office day and night, only to emerge on occasion to parade me around on your arm like a prize. I'm tired, hurt and not strong enough to continue with your charade.

YOUNG MAN EBENEZER: *(Matter of fact.)* I love you, Sara.

SARA: *(Now very angry.)* You love me? I'm just a convenience that makes you look presentable to the rest of the world...You love me?...No, Ebenezer, you LOVE money! *(Sara exits shop between bed and window and walks left directly past Scrooge and Spirit.)*

SCROOGE: You're wrong, Sara, I did love you...as much as I could ever love any human being. *(Black out spotlight on Scrooge and Spirit.)*

CHRISTMAS PAST: Scrooge, you have no control over what has happened in your past. It is the future that you can still change. My time with you is finished. *(She raises her hands as if to end scenes by her power. The sound of thunder is heard.)*

End of SCENE 3. Blackout.

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ACT ONE, SCENE 4

During the blackout we hear the clock strike the eleven o'clock hour. When lights come up, Scrooge is back in bed and Spirit of Christmas Present sits Indian style on the foot of the bed. Spirit is dressed in bright red robe with a trimmed hood. Spirit is fun loving and speaks flippantly. Scrooge is startled and sits up.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Why are you shocked to see me, Scrooge?

According to my orders, I was to arrive precisely at eleven o'clock, and if my ears served me right, the clock just struck eleven times. Allow me to introduce myself, I'm the Spirit of Christmas Present.

SCROOGE: You Spirits wear on this old man. I need my rest.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: *(Stands.)* Rest! Why, one can always rest.

Tonight the whole world is in celebration. I'm here to take you to a party.

SCROOGE: I'm not properly dressed to go out tonight. Nor am I in the mood.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: It makes no difference, Scrooge, to a party we will be going.

Spirit holds out arms and Scrooge is drawn to Spirit while sound of twinkling bells is heard. Blackout and curtain. Lights up on apron as carolers enter singing "Joy to the World." Behind curtain, Cratchit's desk is moved center with table cloth, four chairs are put around it. A small cupboard is moved into place where Cratchit's desk used to be, this cupboard contains dishes. Remove Scrooge and Marley sign from window. Scrooge and Christmas Present move up stage left. After "Joy to the World" curtain opens and carolers begin to sing "Hark the Harold Angels Sing." Mrs. Cratchit, Amy, Mr. Cratchit and Tiny Tim with his crutch are at the window listening to the carolers.

CRATCHIT: *(After song.)* Merry Christmas, children.

BOY #1: Merry Christmas to you and your family, Mr. Cratchit.

GIRL #1: We've come to your home to wish Tiny Tim a Merry Christmas.

GIRL #2: We know he is sick and can't get about.

TINY TIM: On, Father. How wonderful to have such friends at this time of year.

AMY: Do you know Deck the Halls. It's Tiny Tim's favorite.

GIRL #3: Of course we do! It's our favorite too!

BOY #2: Would you and your family like to sing with us, Amy?

AMY: Yes! That would be such fun. *(All Cratchits agree. They sing "Deck the Halls" with Cratchits.)*

MRS. CRATCHIT: How wonderful! Wait for a moment children and I'll bring you each a Christmas cookie. *(She goes to get cookies from cupboard.)*

TINY TIM: My mother's cookies are the best you'll ever eat. I think it is because she puts so much love in each and every one.

(Mother returns with cookies. Goes onto apron out to Carolers.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: Here you are. *(She gives each of them a cookie.)*

GIRL #4: English shortbread fresh from the oven! My favorite.

(They all eat cookies.)

GIRL #5: *(Takes a bite of cookie.)* And they taste as good as they look!

BOY #1: Thank you, maam! We need to be on our way now.

GIRL #1: We have several more families to sing for this Christmas day. *(Children leave with goodbyes.)*

SCROOGE: Why does the woman give away food, when she has hardly enough to feed her family.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: I like her. She has learned that giving makes one feel richer in heart.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Our goose is ready. Amy dear, help me set the table.

AMY: *(Amy goes back to cupboard to get dishes and the rest of family goes to table.)* Yes, Mother. The goose smells especially good this year.

MR. CRATCHIT: Not quite as large as I would have liked, but I am sure that it will be tender and tasty.

AMY: *(Setting table.)* Father, you've always picked a fine goose.

TINY TIM: Don't worry, Father, I don't need very much. I'm the smallest one, so I should get the least.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Now Tim, you know the doctor said you must try to eat to keep up your strength. I'm sure that there will be plenty for all of us. *(To Cratchit.)* No thanks to your boss, Mr. Scrooge.

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AMY: (*Sits.*) How fortunate for us that Mr. Scrooge is not here today. It would take two of our geese just to feed his large ego. (*They all laugh.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT: He would have to eat all our cake just to sweeten his disposition. (*Laugh.*)

MR. CRATCHIT: Now Mother, you know it is because of Mr. Scrooge that we have this meal at all.

SCROOGE: Yes! The man speaks the truth.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Hush, Scrooge, the man hasn't finished yet.

MR. CRATCHIT: Because of his generosity, our family dines on a goose the size of a sparrow. Eats beans instead of yams and drinks the finest water that money can buy. (*Family laughs.*)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: (*Flippant.*) Now, I believe the man is finished.

SCROOGE: Bah! The man needs to watch his tongue, or he will be seeking employment elsewhere!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: But, Ebenezer, the man "ONLY" speaks the truth.

MR. CRATCHIT: Tim, would you like to thank the good Lord for our blessings this Christmas Day?

TINY TIM: Oh, yes Father. (*Family bows heads and holds hands.*) Dear Lord, bless this food we are about to eat. Be with Father and let him know that even though we have a little goose, we all know that he works very hard and does the best he can. Comfort my Mother and ease the worry about me she carries in her heart. Be with my sister Amy, and always look out for her, as she does for me. Bless all those in the world less fortunate than us (*Pause.*) ...especially Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Less fortunate? They boy talks nonsense! He has a crippled mind as well as a crippled leg.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Scrooge, listen to what the boy says. It's true he can not walk with his cripple leg, but you, Scrooge, do not fully live because of your crippled HEART.

TINY TIM: Amen.

AMY: Tim, I wish I had your forgiving spirit. I know that Mr. Scrooge needs our prayers, but I find it hard to pray for such a wicked man.

TINY TIM: Amy, don't give up so easily. I believe that there is good in everybody....even Mr. Scrooge.

MRS. CRATCHIT: I believe in Mr. Scrooge's case, if there is good, it's buried so deep, only a miracle could bring it out.

TINY TIM: Miracles happen every day Mother. I just know that there will be one for Mr. Scrooge.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: You're right, Tiny Tim. The miracle is happening now.

EBBY: *(From offstage right.)* Merry Christmas, Cratchit Family!!

AMY: It's Ebby!

EBBY: *(Enters, she carries a large basket brimming with good things to eat.)* I hope I'm not too late to share my Christmas meal with your family. I waited for hours but my Uncle chose not to come. I have so much food that I couldn't possibly eat it all myself. I would love it if you would allow me to join your wonderful holiday party.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Why of course, Ebby, you know you are always welcome in our home. Set another place for our guest, Amy.
(She does.)

EBBY: *(She begins to unload basket and gets to mince pie.)* I had so hoped that this mince pie would have enticed my Uncle, but I guess his work was more important than my love.

AMY: Well, Ebby, it won't go to waste, mince pie is Tim's Favorite.

TINY TIM: Mother, please save me a piece for tomorrow. I'm too tired tonight to enjoy it. *(Coughs.)*

MR. CRATCHIT: That's all right, son, I'll make sure that the biggest piece is left just for you. Come on now and I'll take you to bed.
(He picks up Tim and carries him to bed, tucks him in.)

EBBY: Martha, Tim seems to be getting worse. What do the doctor's say?

MRS. CRATCHIT: They say they could help him with an operation.

EBBY: How soon do you plan on this operation?

AMY: Never! We don't have enough money for the doctors.

MRS. CRATCHIT: The infection has spread. The doctors say without the proper treatment, he will be with the Lord within the year.

EBBY: Oh, dear! I am not a rich woman, Martha, however, I do have some put aside. You are welcome to it all.

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MRS. CRATCHIT: I'm afraid that it would take more than even you have, but thank you for your concern and generosity.

AMY: It's hard to believe that you are the niece of Ebenezer Scrooge.

EBBY: Uncle Ebenezer would never allow Tim to die if he knew about this operation.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: He knows.

MRS. CRATCHIT: (*Annoyed.*) Your Uncle refused to give my husband a raise when he told him of this operation. Because of the stinginess of Mr. Scrooge, my son is going to die!

EBBY: (*Near tears.*) Oh, Martha, I'm so sorry!! My Uncle has become much more hard hearted than I ever would have dreamed. (*Blackout. Spotlight up on Scrooge and Spirit Present left.*)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: It's time to move on and show you what your future holds.

SCROOGE: But, Spirit, what happens to the boy?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: That's something you will soon know.

SCROOGE: The future could be as bad as what I've already witnessed.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Oh, I'm afraid, Ebenezer, the worst is yet to come! (*Raises hands as if to end scene with her power sound of thunder.*)

End of ACT ONE. Blackout. INTERMISSION.

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