

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Charles Dickens

Adapted for the stage by Kristen Doherty.

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## PREFACE

December 1843.

I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the ghost of an idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant,

Charles Dickens

SCENE 1: MARLEY'S GHOST

SCENE 2: THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS

SCENE 3: THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS

SCENE 4: THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS

SCENE 5: THE END OF IT

CHARACTERS

NARRATOR ONE

NARRATOR TWO

EBENEZER SCROOGE

BOB CRATCHIT - Scrooge's clerk.

FRED - Scrooges nephew.

JACOB MARLEY - Scrooge's business partner. 7 years dead.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE

TOWNSPEOPLE - Featured throughout, incl speaking roles 1,2,3,4

MISS EVIE - Charity collector.

MRS BENNETT - Charity collector

BILLY - Carol singer/Blind-man's Bluff

PIP - Carol singer/Blind-man's Bluff

OLLY - Carol singer/Blind-man's Bluff

SISSY - Carol singer/Blind-man's Bluff

GHOSTS - On the street. Outside Scrooges window

CEDRIC - Scrooge's school chums

MARCUS - Scrooge's school chums

CECIL - Scrooge's school chums

FRAN - Ebenezer's sister

EBENEZER - Aged 12 (non-speaking)

EBENEZER - Aged 15/17/21

BELLE - Ebenezer's lost love - aged 16/20

FEZZWIG - Ebenezer aged 17's boss

DICK WILKINS - Fezzwig's workmate.

MRS FEZZWIG - Adored wife of Mr Fezzwig

TIZZY MACDONALD - Wilkin's object of affection.

GUESTS - at the Fezzwig Warehouse Christmas dance.

BELLE FEZZWIG - Aged 50

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CHARLIE - Belle's husband.

BELLES CHILDREN - 3 or 4

FRUIT LADY

FLOWER GIRL

MRS. CRATCHIT - Bob Cratchit's wife

MARTHA - Bob Cratchit's child

PETER - Bob Cratchit's child

BELINDA - Bob Cratchit's child

TINY TIM - Bob Cratchit's child

MARY - Fred's wife.

TOPPER - Guest at Fred's party.

JANE - Guest at Fred's party.

ELIZABETH - Guest at Fred's party.

MALVIN - Guest at Fred's party.

WANT – Little girl ghoul

IGNORANCE – Little boy ghoul

MR JONES - Business Man

MR SMITH - Business Man

MR CAIN - Business Man

MRS HARRIS - Well-to-do Gossip

MRS ADAMS - Well-to-do Gossip

CHARWOMAN - Death Picker

OLD JOE - Death Picker

LAUNDRESS VICKY - Death Picker

UNDERTAKER - Death Picker

CAROLINE - Poor Wife

PATRICK - Poor Husband

JIMMY - Boy on the street on Christmas Day

TURKEY MAN - Owner of the Poultry Store

MAID MEG - Fred's Maid.

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SCENE 1 - *MARLEY'S GHOST*.

*1849. A bitterly cold Christmas Eve on a crowded street of Old London Town. Two Narrators in Dickensque costume emerge, and address the audience directly.*

NARRATOR 1: Here is the story, including the rich and the poor, the sad and the happy.

NARRATOR 2: All of those elements composed into a tale which truly orchestrates the message of Christmas Past, Present and Christmas Future.

NARRATORS: A Christmas Carol.

*A small group of children play Blind Man's Bluff on the misty street. The scene has an eerie, haunting quality about it.*

CHILDREN: Blind man's bluff. Blind man's bluff.  
We will spin you round til you've had enough.  
Come find us now, we have set you free.  
Might be hard cause you can't see.  
Might be hard, cause you can't see.  
Might be hard, cause you can't see.

NARRATOR 2: Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatsoever about that. The register of his burial was signed by Scrooge himself. For seven long years this very night, Old Marley had been as dead as a doornail.

NARRATOR 1: Their business was known as Scrooge and Marley. Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge kept his tight-fisted hand at the grindstone. He was a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner.

*Scrooge enters – the children scream and run away. Scrooge is a cantankerous old man, his mouth turned down as if he has tasted something unpleasant. He hobbles along the road, darting glances around suspiciously.*

NARRATOR 2: Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red and his thin lips blue.

*A variety of townspeople pass Scrooge. Scruffy children, refined ladies, workmen, gentlemen, rich and poor. They cross the stage, going about their business.*

NARRATOR 1: Ebenezer Scrooge carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

*Scrooge shuffles towards his offices. Growling and frowning at anyone who crosses paths with him. The townspeople are obviously aware of whom he is and avoid him. They cross the road, rush past, change direction hide in doorways. Children whisper to each other. One might cry or scream when they accidentally bump into him. Scrooge*

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*approaches his front door. Takes out a multitude of keys, swiftly unlocks door and enters his offices, a dismal looking room, two desks, divided. He takes off his coat and hangs it on stand. He crosses to safe, takes out keys again and brings out a bag of coins, sits at his desk and starts to count - Detailing his findings in a ledger. His Clerk, Bob Cratchit, sits at a small table covered in ledgers, journals, books and quills. There is a small fire at Scrooges side of the stage.*

NARRATOR 2: Once upon a time - of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve - old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: thick, foggy. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already - it had not been light all day: and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air, casting phantoms on the walls.

*Cratchit tightens blanket around his knees and tries to warm his hands on small candle on his table.*

NARRATOR 1: The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, Bob Cratchit who worked for his master in a dismal little cell beyond.

*Standing it no longer, Cratchit walks to Scrooges side of the office and attempts to put on another log before he is intercepted by Scrooge.*

SCROOGE: Cratchit! What do you think you are doing!?

CRATCHIT: Forgive me Mr Scrooge. I'm just putting a log of wood on the fire. It's freezing in here.

SCROOGE: Poke it! Poke it! Wasteful creature.

CRATCHIT: *(obliges)* Yes sir, of course sir.

*Enter Fred, Scrooges nephew.*

FRED: A merry Christmas, uncle. God save you.

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, uncle! *(laughs)* You don't mean that, I am sure.

SCROOGE: I do. Merry Christmas. What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED: Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to morose? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug.

FRED: Don't be cross, uncle.

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SCROOGE: What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What is Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should.

FRED: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it. But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then! Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED: There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave. 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 *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!

*Cratchit, overhearing, involuntarily breaks into applause before correcting himself.*

SCROOGE: *(to Cratchit)* Let me hear another sound from *you* Cratchit, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. *(to Fred)* You're quite a powerful speaker, sir; I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED: Don't be angry, uncle. Come. Dine with us tomorrow. Come along, you can dance with us.

*Fred tries to spin Scrooge around in a dance. Scrooge is horrified. He shakes him off.*

SCROOGE: Be off with you.

FRED: You can meet my bride.

SCROOGE: Why did you get married?

FRED: Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE: *(snide)* Because you fell in love. Good afternoon!

*Scrooge starts bustling Fred out the door.*

FRED: Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

FRED: I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

FRED: I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED: And a Happy New Year.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED: *(to Cratchit)* Merry Christmas my dear fellow.

*Fred exits down the street.*

CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas to you too sir.

SCROOGE: There's another fellow, my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

*Mrs Bennett and Miss Evie - two Charity Ladies, enter. They stop Fred.*

MRS BENNETT: Good afternoon, sir. Can you please point us in the direction of the Scrooge and Marley offices?

FRED: Scrooge and Marley. Why yes! Yes, of course I can help you ladies. I just have stepped out of those offices myself, just moments ago. Just two or three steps down that way. On the left. The sign above the door is quite clear, if a little faded with age.

MISS EVIE: Why thank you kind sir. I do hope that when you left, the proprietors were in happy spirits. We are hoping to appeal to some generous business owners in this township to open their hearts and loosen their purse-strings willingly.

MRS BENNETT: It is a cold and dismal winter this year and the poor of London need our charity more than ever.

FRED: What a wonderful service you are providing to our community ladies. May I ask however if you and your charitable organisation is maybe... new to this township?

MISS EVIE: Why yes, yes, we are in fact.

FRED: I thought so much.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

MRS BENNETT: We unfortunately have to be ever searching further afield, poverty spreads, thick and fast. Winter is a cruel mistress to those without a proper roof over their heads.

FRED: Yes, I understand. We must all help the unfortunate. I am happy to make my own small donation if you would allow me. *(he takes some coins out of his purse)*

MRS BENNETT: Why, thank you sir.

MISS EVIE: Yes, thank you. Your kindness is greatly appreciated.

MRS BENNETT: Greatly appreciated.

FRED: You are very welcome. Good day ladies...and good luck, I fear you may need it with your next endeavour.

*The ladies look confused, but they continue to Scrooge and Marley's offices and let themselves in.*

MRS BENNETT: Scrooge and Marley, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.

MRS EVIE: Oh, I am terribly sorry.

MRS BENNETT: We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner. Our credentials if you please.

*Mrs Bennett presents Scrooge their credentials - Scrooge frowns and does not take them.*

MRS BENNETT: I am Mrs Bennett, and this is Miss Evie Thompson.

MISS EVIE: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute. Here in our lord's year of 1843 the suffering is great and widespread.

MISS BENNETT: Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

MRS BENNETT: Plenty of prisons...

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

MISS EVIE: They are. Still, I wish I could say they were not.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

SCROOGE: The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?

MISS EVIE: Both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE: Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

MRS BENNETT: A few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when want is keenly felt, and abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing!

MRS BENNETT: You wish to be anonymous?

MISS EVIE: He wishes to remain anonymous.

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone! *(the women are shocked)* Since you ask me what I wish, ladies, that is my answer. 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.

MISS EVIE: 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. Besides - excuse me - I don't know that.

MRS BENNETT: But you might know it.

SCROOGE: It's not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other peoples. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, ladies!

*Scrooge holds door open for them and the two ladies leave insulted and dumbfounded.*

MISS EVIE: Well I never!

*Blackout*

*Lights and music change.*

*A group of Children singing a Christmas Carols enter the street. Their singing is beautiful, haunting, a couple of townspeople pass them, smile and give them a coin or two.*

CAROL SINGERS: God bless you, merry gentleman  
May nothing you dismay  
Remember, Christ, our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas day  
To save us all from Satan's power

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

When we were gone astray  
O tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy  
O tidings of comfort and joy

*They stop and count their coins excitedly. Suddenly one breaks away.*

BILLY: I'm going to try old Scrooge.

PIP: Nah don't Billy. He'll have your guts for garters.

OLLY: He'll boil you alive.

PIP: Olly's right. I hears he eats children for breakfast.

BILLY: Well, I ain't scared, even if you is.

SISSY: *(holds onto his arm.)* Nahh Billy don't go. We gotta get home remember. It's getting dark already.

BILLY: I said I ain't scared! *(pulls away)* I won't say I told you so when I come back with a half-penny or even thrupence.

*Billy stands at the door and sings sweetly in front of it - We see Scrooge inside trying to concentrate. After a moment or two he can stand it no longer and, in a rage, seizes a ruler.*

BILLY:       Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
                  that saved a wretch like me.  
                  I once was lost, but now am found,  
                  twas blind but now I see.  
                  Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear  
                  and grace my fears--

*With a roar, Scrooge tears open the door and chases the children away. They run off screaming. He then calmly returns to his desk to count his coins.*

SCROOGE: *(after a moment)* That'd be time Cratchit.

*Cratchit immediately snuffs out his candle out and puts on his hat and wraps a blanket around himself.*

SCROOGE: You'll want all day to-morrow off, I suppose?

CRATCHIT: If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient, and it's not fair.

CRATCHIT: Christmas is only one day a year sir.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

SCROOGE: A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December. Be here all the earlier next morning.

CRATCHIT: Of course, sir. Thank you sir...And have a merry--

SCROOGE: *(interrupts/threatening)* Don't even....

CRATCHIT: Good night sir...

*Cratchit exits gladly. On his way down the street we see him intercepted by a group of children playing Blind Man's Bluff. He joins in for a moment or two, before skipping off down the street, eager to get home – He exits.*

SCROOGE: *(scolds)* Have a merry Christmas indeed. Bah! Humbug!

*During the following dialogue Scrooge packs up his desk puts his coat and hat on and walks out of office down street to his front door.*

NARRATOR 1: Scrooge lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms. The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if sorrow itself sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

*Scrooge removes his keys from his coat pocket and fumbles to find right key.*

NARRATOR 2: Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge hadn't really noticed it during his whole residence in that place; Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven years' dead partner that afternoon.

*Finding the right key he reaches his hand towards the door.*

NARRATOR 1: Suddenly Scrooge saw not a knocker, but Marley's face. The eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless staring straight at Scrooge.

*Scrooge recoils in horror.*

NARRATOR 2: Shocked, he recoiled in horror but then as soon as he looked back. It had changed again. Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon; it was a knocker again.

*Scrooge collects himself, shakes his head with disbelief and opens the door – checks behind it before entering.*

SCROOGE: Pooh, pooh!

*He closes the door with a bang - The sound resounds through the house like thunder, shocking him again. He picks up a candlestick and walks checking the dark corners of his rooms.*

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

SCROOGE: Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the chair;

*Satisfied, he closes his door, and double locks himself in. He takes off his clothes and puts on his nightgown, dressing-gown, slippers and his nightcap; he sits down before the fire to stir the gruel that is sitting in a pan on top. He shivers and rubs his eyes in memory of his vision.*

SCROOGE: Humbug!

*He sits down on the bed. Suddenly a disused servant's bell which hung on the wall begins to ring loudly. Soon other bells start to ring as though the whole house is suddenly alive. Scrooge –shocked leaps onto his bed and quickly draws the bed-curtains around him after a prolonged moment the bells stop, only to be replaced by the sound of dragging chains which gets louder and closer.*

SCROOGE: It's humbug still. I won't believe it.

*Marley appears at the door and appears to walk straight through it. Marley is grey, his hair stands straight on end, as if he is in a permanent state of shock. He is tightly wound up in heavy chains across his body which drag behind him of cashboxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel.*

SCROOGE: How now. What do you want with me?

MARLEY: Much!

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you then?

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

SCROOGE: Marley!...Can you....can you sit down?

MARLEY: I can.

SCROOGE: Do it then...please.

*Marley painfully walks to the chair and sits.*

MARLEY: You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY: What evidence would you have of my reality, beyond that of your senses?

SCROOGE: I don't know.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

MARLEY: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: I do... because, a little thing affects them. I call it indigestion.

*Marley stares coldly at Scrooge.*

SCROOGE: I have but to swallow this and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you! humbug!

*At this Marley raises a frightful cry and shakes his chain with such a dismal and appalling noise which seems to vibrate the whole room. Scrooge holds on tight to his chair, to save himself from fainting. Then the Ghost of Marley takes off the bandage round its head and his jaw drops into a terrible silent scream as if it has been broken that way. Scrooge is horrified screams and backs into a corner. Marley wraps the bandage back around his jaw. Scrooge falls upon his knees, clasping his hands, begging.*

SCROOGE: Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY: Man of the worldly mind. Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE: I do! I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?

MARLEY: It is required of every man, that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world - oh, woe is me!

SCROOGE: *(trembling)* You are fettered. Tell me why?

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is an unwieldy chain!

*Scrooge looks around him for a sign of his own chains but sees nothing.*

SCROOGE: Jacob! Old Jacob Marley tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.

MARLEY: I have none to give, Ebenezer Scrooge. Nor can I tell you what I would. Very little more, is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house - mark me. In life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole.

*Marley's Ghost cries out again and clanks its chain loudly*

MARLEY: Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed. Not to know, that ages of incessant labour, by immortal creatures which stretches into an eternity. Not to know that mortal life is too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused! Yet such was I. Oh, such was I.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

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

MARLEY: Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. Trade was not 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? Hear me. My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: I will. But don't be hard upon me, Jacob. Pray.

MARLEY: I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you now can see. I am here to-night to warn you. You have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: You were always a good friend to me Jacob.

MARLEY: You will be haunted this very night by three spirits.

SCROOGE: Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY: It is.

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

MARLEY: Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. You will never escape your fate! Expect the first when the bell tolls midnight.

SCROOGE: Couldn't I take them all at once, and have it over and done with, Jacob?

Marley roars at Scrooges' feeble quip. Scrooge cowers in fear.

*SXF: The sounds of sorrowful wailing.*

*Scrooge goes to the window: desperate in his curiosity and looks out. Horrified, he sees dozens of ghosts going about their business outside his room. Marley's Ghost joins the spectres.*

MARLEY: Expect the second on the next hour. The third upon the next. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, remember what has passed between us.

*Scrooge slams close the window, rushes over to examine the door. It was still double-locked. He tries to say 'Humbug!' Runs to his bed and jumps under the covers and pulls the blanket over his head.*

**BLACKOUT.**

SCENE 2: *THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS*

NARRATOR 2: Despite Scrooges' best efforts not to sleep. Scrooge fell into a fitful slumber.

NARRATOR 1: When he awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber.

NARRATOR 2: He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

*The clock chimes. Scrooge counts.*

SCROOGE: Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven. Twelve. Twelve? How can it be? It was past two when I went to bed. The clock must be wrong. An icicle must have got into the works... Twelve? Why, it isn't possible, that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon.

*He scrambles out of bed and gropes his way to the window. rubs the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown.*

SCROOGE: A simple explanation. I am but dreaming. This whole night... Jacobs warning, is naught but a dream.

*He pulls the bed curtains back around him. The lights and music change and the curtains are suddenly swept open by an invisible force. The Ghost of Christmas Past appears at his bedside. A strange figure - Beautiful - like a child but her long hair was white as if with age; she is wearing a tunic of the purest white and holds a branch of green holly in her hand. Her white dress is trimmed with summer flowers. She is luminescent.*

SCROOGE: *(terrified)* Are you the Spirit, madam, whose coming was foretold to me?

PAST: *(softly)* I am.

SCROOGE: Who, and what are you?

PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long Past?

PAST: No. Your past.

SCROOGE: Spirit can I make bold to inquire what business has brought you here?

PAST: Your welfare.

SCROOGE: For that dear Spirit I am much obliged but cannot help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

PAST: Your reclamation, then. Take heed.

*The Ghost of Christmas Past clasps Scrooge gently by the arm.*

PAST: Rise. And walk with me.

*Scrooge stands up and grabs the Spirits robes as she walks away.*

SCROOGE: I am mortal, and liable to fall.

PAST: Bear but a touch of my hand there, (*Spirit, takes Scrooges hand and lays it on her heart.*) and you shall be upheld in more than this.

*The lights change and they are suddenly on a snowy country road.*

SCROOGE: (*looking around*) Good Heavens! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here.

PAST: Your lip is trembling. And what is that upon your cheek?

*SCROOGE quickly wipes away a tear.*

PAST: You recollect the way?

SCROOGE: (*with fervour*) Remember it! I could walk it blindfolded.

PAST: Strange to have forgotten it for so many years. Let us go on.

*They walk along the road.*

SCROOGE: Look here, it's Old Man Johnsons gate...and the tree we used to climb and hide in and there yonder is the old market-town with its bridge and church and the river. It's as though nothing has changed. Who's this?

*Three school boys enter excitedly.*

MARCUS: Holidays at last. I can't wait to tuck in to mothers' roast turkey, baked potatoes and pork pie.

CEDRIC: Anything would be better than cooks' stew!

MARCUS: You can say that again.

CECIL: Cooks stew, blerrkk!

CEDRIC: I can taste my freedom already! And I bet it tastes better than your old mum's pork pie.

MARCUS: It comes a close second.

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CEDRIC: Why do you keep looking back then my dear fellow? Are you missing your lessons already? Come now, Christmas is almost upon us.

MARCUS: It just don't feel right leaving him behind again, with us all in the holiday spirit.

CEDRIC: Yes, poor old Ebenezer. I do feel sorry for the old chump.

CECIL: Never mind that now... Ebenezer cares more for his studies than a home cooked meal anyway. Your train will be arriving soon chaps and my father's servant will have my guts for garters if I keep him waiting.

SCROOGE: Why look, it's Cecil Smithers, Cedric Johnson and Marcus Maureens. Not one of them a day older than when I last saw them... in fact a few years shy of my memory. *(He calls out)* Why hello there, chaps. Hello, hello!

PAST: These are but shadows of the things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

*Scrooge looks disappointed.*

MARCUS: Farewell then lads. Have a jolly good break.

CEDRIC: And Merry Christmas!

CECIL: Yes. Merry Christmas to you too, my dear fellows.

MARCUS: So long. So long.

*They exit.*

SCROOGE: *(bitterly)* Merry Christmas! Bah! What good has Merry Christmas ever done!

PAST: This way please.

*They enter the School House, a boy (Ebenezer aged 12) sits sadly at a desk alone.*

PAST: The school is not quite deserted. A solitary child, neglected by his friends, neglected by his family, is left there still.

SCROOGE: *(sadly)* I know what you are saying to be true. There I am. It was always the same, year after year, I was left behind. Poor boy. I wish *(he wipes away tears with his sleeve)* ...but it's too late now.

PAST: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing...Nothing.... There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all.

*The Ghost of Christmas Past smiles thoughtfully and waves her hand.*

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

PAST: Let us see another Christmas.

*Lighting change, time has passed. The boy now stands, he is wearing a jacket, he is older.*

SCROOGE: Nothing has changed. There stand I, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

*Enter Fran – she runs to her brother and embraces him.*

FRAN: Dear, dear brother.

EBENEZER: Fran! What are you doing here?

FRAN: *(excitedly)* I have come to bring you home, dear brother! To bring you home, home, home!

EBENEZER: Home, little Fran?

FRAN: Yes! Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven! I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man and are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world.

SCROOGE: You are quite a woman, little Fran.

*She hugs him again and drags him the door.*

PAST: Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered...But she had a large heart!

SCROOGE: *(fondly)* So she had! You're right. It was a terrible injury for me to lose her. Do not make me think upon it, Spirit. God forbid!

PAST: She died a woman and had, as I think, children.

SCROOGE: One child.

PAST: True... Your nephew?

SCROOGE: *(uneasy)* Yes. Fred.

PAST: We must move on.

*She waves her hand – Lighting change, they are in a warehouse.*

PAST: Do you know this place?

SCROOGE: Know it? I was apprenticed here.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

*Enter Fezzwig, Scrooges boss. A large, kindly, generous and jolly man.*

SCROOGE: Why, it's old Fezziwig. Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again.

*Fezziwig rubs his hands; adjusted his voluminous waistcoat, laughs and calls out.*

FEZZWIG: Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Wilkins!

*Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man of 17, enters with Dick Wilkins his fellow-apprentice.*

SCROOGE: Dick Wilkins, to be sure! Bless me, yes. There he is. He was a great fellow. Dear, dear. I hadn't thought of him til now.

FEZZWIG: Yo ho, my boys. No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Wilkins, Ebenezer. Start the celebrations (*he claps his hands*) before a man can say Jack Robinson. High-ho! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here. Hilli-ho, Wilkins! Chirrup, Ebenezer.

WILKINS: Come on Ebenezer. We'll have this done in a jiffy.

*They move some of the previous set away.*

EBENEZER: Right you are Wilkins.

FEZZWIG: (*walking around pleased*) Look at that, the warehouse is as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright as any a ballroom, you would wish to see upon a winter's night. Are you ready boys? The work is almost over! Now it's time to reap the rewards of a prosperous year. A time to celebrate.

*They continue putting the finishing touches together for the party as Scrooge and the spirit speak.*

SCROOGE: A fine man. Old Fezzwig, such a fine man.

PAST: A small matter, to make these silly folks so full of gratitude. He has spent but a few pounds of money: three or four perhaps on this night of merriment. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

SCROOGE: It isn't that. It isn't that, Spirit. He was generous but he was also kind. He had the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count them up: what then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune. (*he stops short*)

PAST: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing in particular...

PAST: Something, I think?

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

SCROOGE: No... No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That's all.

FEZZWIG: Quick! Open the door, open the door, look who's first, it's our fiddler. Now we can begin our celebration.

*A man with a fiddle enters the room, the music starts. He is followed by Mrs Fezzwig, a pink cheeked matron who rivals her husband in size.*

FEZZWIG: Ere she is! Ere she is! The most beautiful girl this side of Bow Bells.

MRS FEZZWIG: *(A bit teary, blowing nose loudly)* Awh, Arthur you are a dear... *(shaking her head in wonderment)* Will you have a butcher's around this old place. It's lovely. Bleeding lovely!

FEZZWIG: *(taking her hand and kissing it.)* It only is because you make it so my princess, the garlands pale in comparison to your exquisite beauty my darling trouble and strife! *(grabs her in an embrace)*

MRS FEZZWIG: Awh! *(she pushes him)* Get out with ya! *(Then pulls him back into herself)* Not before you give us a kiss though!

*They embrace again – She cackles with laughter. They turn to greet their guests who arrive carrying Christmas decorations and tables laden with a feast. They all enter merrily. Soon they are dancing, singing, drinking and laughing.*

WILKINS: Did you see that!? Smooth as ever. He knows how to butter her up. We could take a leaf out of his book, you and I.

*Tizzy MacDonald and Belle Fezzwig enter.*

EBENEZER: I might leave that to you and Miss Tizzy MacDonald... who has just walked in. Look there she is over there, making google eyes at you.

WILKINS: Where! *(looks around)*

EBENEZER: *(He stops him)* Don't look. She's just behind you. Ok turn around slowly... She is looking the other way.

WILKINS: I don't care if she catches me looking. I like to look. I could look at her all day long.

EBENEZER: Ha, ha. Then you'd get even less work done than you already do.

WILKINS: There is more to life Ebenezer, than work and earning money. *(He presents the room with his hand)* Like girls... If you came to the tavern with me once in a while you might actually meet one.

EBENEZER: Psht!... *(searches for a word)* humbug! There is plenty of time for all of that.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

WILKINS: Why wait? I think Tizzy MacDonald is just about the most smashing girl I have ever seen. *(he looks for her)* There she is! Isn't she what boys like us dream of at night...She's just there talking to Belle Fezzwig. Belle must be back from school for Christmas...My, hasn't she grown up!

*Ebenezer whips his head around at lightning speed.*

WILKINS: Hang on there a minute, me ol' son! Just the sound of Belle's name was enough to give you a crook neck. Is there something you're not telling me?

EBENEZER: I have no notion as what you are referring to, sir!

WILKINS: Come on Ebenezer! You have turned as white as a ghost! Fess up!

EBENEZER: *(can't contain himself)* Oh ,she makes me want to jump over the moon!

WILKINS: Well, well, well, isn't the frost melting on old Scrooge...Go on...Ask her to dance!

*The fiddler starts up the Contra jig - \*The Contra 1800s - Each man takes a lady, bows to her and they form two lines down the centre. Men on one side, women on the other. In turn, partners join in middle between the two lines and generally do their own routine down the middle. When they reached the end of the lines, they parted and moved back into their respective lines and the next couple begins.*

*All the men at the ball cross to a lady and bow and ask to lead their partners to the dance floor and gradually stand in formation as the following dialogue is spoken. We see Dick drag Scrooge over to where Tizzy and Belle stand. Dick is charming and Tizzy quickly agrees to dance with him.*

WILKINS: Why then if it aint Tizzy MacDonald. *(copying Fezzwigs line)* The most beautiful girl this side of Bow Bells.

TIZZY: Dick Wilkins! You old charmer. You think your sweet talk is going to work on me?

WILKINS: I sure do! Tell me... *(Puts his arm around her)* Is it working?

TIZZY: Oh...Dear... *(quite flustered)* ...Maybe it's working...a little. *(giggles.)*

DICK: *(bows)* Shall I have the honour of...

TIZZY: *(Doesn't let him finish.)* Too right you can!

*They leave swiftly together to join the dancing line that is forming. Ebenezer looks uncomfortable.*

EBENEZER: Lovely evening we are having...ahem.

BELLE: Yes. *(she smiles at him, warmly)* You look well Ebenezer...Much older than the last time I saw you.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

EBENEZER: Um. Yes! Yes! So do you. You look old! Really, really old! Oh....

BELLE: (*giggles behind her hand*) Oh dear... (*teasing*) Maybe I have spent too long out in the sun.

EBENEZER: Oh no! I didn't mean old... I meant grown up... Yes, that's it grown up. A real lady.

BELLE: I'm sixteen now Ebenezer. I'm not that annoying little girl who used to dip her pigtails in your ink pot and ruin all your ledgers...(*she smiles*)

EBENEZER: (*laughs*) Oh yes! I was fit to burst wasn't I? ...You were so incredibly annoying! I mean...I... I know you are no longer...annoying... I'm sorry. I'm not very good at this.

BELLE: (*takes a step closer*) I only tormented you, because I like you.

EBENEZER: (*shocked*) You? Liked me? (*flustered*)

BELLE: Not liked...Like! (*smiles*)

FEZZWIG: Now take your partners. Let's have some of the old Contra. Now don't be shy, it's Christmas Eve. And the roof is richly hung with mistletoe.

EBENEZER: (*with confidence*) Miss Belle Fezzwig. May I have the honour of dancing this set with you?

BELLE: But of course, Mr Scrooge. The honour is all mine!

*Hand in hand, they join the other couples.*

MRS FEZZWIG: (*Loudly, for the benefit of others*) Oh look I just happen to have some mistletoe right here. Come on pucker up Mr Fezzwig. This one's coming towards you!

*She holds mistletoe above his head, grabs his cheeks and pulls him in for a kiss. The other revellers cheer.*

FEZZWIG: Lawd above! What you all standing around gaping for? It's Christmas and Mr Fezzwig said we shall dance. So let's (*rambunctious*) do what he says!

*Everyone cheers! The dance starts. It is highly-spirited and everyone is having a wonderful time. The scene ends with Ebenezer spinning Belle around in a circle on their last turn of the dance.*

*The lights change; we can no-longer see the warehouse dance.*

PAST: My time grows short. Quick!

*Lighting change, more time has passed. The Ghost of Christmas Past points to a garden where Belle and Ebenezer sit.*

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

BELLE: *(softly)* It matters little... To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

EBENEZER: What Idol has displaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

EBENEZER: Money... again Belle? This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

BELLE: You fear the world too much. All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, gain, engrosses you. Have I not?

EBENEZER: What then? So I want wealth? So what! Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.

*Belle shakes her head.*

EBENEZER: Am I?

*She nods.*

BELLE: You are... I can feel it. I know the debt of my family that I bring with me, torments you. Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and in love and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune. You *are* changed. The drive for wealth consumes you. When was made those promises, you were another man.

EBENEZER: *(impatiently)* I was a boy.

BELLE: Your own feeling tells you that you are not the man you once were... But I am still that girl. Our hearts no longer beat together. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it and can release you.

EBENEZER: *(despairingly)* Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words? No. Never.

EBENEZER: In what, then?

BELLE: In a changed nature; in an altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? *(she waits...he doesn't answer)* Ah, no...

EBENEZER: You think not!?

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

BELLE: I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows. But I know that if you were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, I don't believe that you would choose a dowerless girl.

EBENEZER: I...I...

BELLE: You who weigh everything by gain... I think not my darling. I release you, with a full heart, for the love of who you once were.

*She approaches him and kisses him on the head.*

BELLE: You may - the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will -- have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen.

*She walks away. She looks back hopefully, but he does not stop her – she exits.  
Ebenezer does not turn, but we see his face. It is stricken.*

SCROOGE: *(deeply upset by what he has lost)* Spirit! Show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?

PAST: One shadow more

SCROOGE: No more! No more, I don't wish to see it! Show me no more!

*The Ghost of Christmas Past ignores his pleas and points once again – Lighting change – we are in an older Belle's (50) home – we see the scene play out as Narrator describes it.*

NARRATOR 1: They were in another scene and place; a room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort.

NARRATOR 2: Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like that last that Scrooge believed it was the same Belle, until he saw *her*, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her young daughter.

NARRATOR 1: The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count, but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much; Belle was happy.

*Scrooge looks upon the older Belle with a heart broken longing, he says quietly.*

SCROOGE: God bless my soul to save my life. I should have dearly liked, to have known her better. To have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let loose waves of hair, to sit with her...in short, I should have liked to have known her.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

*A knocking on the door is heard. The children rush to the door to greet their father who arrives with his arms heavy with Christmas toys and presents. The children shout with wonder and delight.*

CHARLIE: Take these and put them under the tree. No peeking!

*The Children all run off excitedly, holding their presents.*

BELLE: *(kisses Charlie on the cheek)* Well done darling. You've had them wrapped and everything.

CHARLIE: There is a lovely little parcel with your name on it in that bundle too.

BELLE: Oh, my thoughtful, thoughtful husband. I think that deserves another kiss. *(she kisses him on the other cheek.)*

CHARLIE: Belle, I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.

BELLE: Who was it?

CHARLIE: Guess!

BELLE: How can I? Tut, I don't know...

*Charlie does a funny impression of Scrooge waving his cane around.*

CHARLIE: *(mocking)* Bahhhh Humbug.

BELLE: *(laughing)* Mr Scrooge? Oh poor old Ebenezer.

CHARLIE: Mr Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear. And there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe.

BELLE: *(sighs)* Oh that makes me quite, quite sad... I am none too surprised though.

CHARLIE: How so dear wife?

BELLE: He has chosen this pathway of solitude. I could never keep him as warm at night as his money would.

CHARLIE: *(embracing Belle)* His loss is my gain.

*Belle turns and happily hugs her husband.*

SCROOGE: Spirit! Remove me from this place!

PAST: I told you these were shadows of the things that have been. That they are what they are, do not blame me!

SCROOGE: Remove me! I cannot bear it! Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!

*Scrooge removes his nightcap and pulls it down over The Ghost of Christmas Present.*

*SFX: Lighting change.*

*Scrooge is suddenly back in his bedroom and the ghost has gone. He is lying on his on his bed as he was before The Ghost of Christmas Past's visitation. He sits bolt upright and looks around.*

## SCENE 2: THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS

NARRATOR 2: Waking suddenly with a gasp Scrooge needed no occasion to be told that the bell was again about to strike One. He wished to challenge the next Spirit on the moment of its appearance and did not wish to be taken by surprise.

*Scrooge sits up, satisfied and waits.*

NARRATOR 1: Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the Bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came.

*Scrooge stands impatiently and shuts the bed-curtains behind him. He starts to pace – meanwhile his bed can be laden with the fruits and feast and the Ghost can hide behind the shut bed-curtains.*

NARRATOR 2: At last, he began to think that his ghostly visitor might be waiting in the adjoining room. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door. The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice from behind him called him by his name.

*Scrooge walks towards the door and reaches toward the doorknob before whipping around after hearing his voice. Terrified he realises that the voice is coming from behind his bed-curtains, he creeps toward them and when reaching them rips them open quickly as to lessen the pain. There he reveals the Ghost of Christmas Present in all his glory sitting on Scrooges bed surrounded by a feast. His bed hung with green and elaborate wreaths.*

NARRATOR 1: In easy state on his bed, there sat a jolly giant, glorious to see, surrounded by a feast fit for a king; turkeys, geese, poultry, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, juicy oranges, luscious pears.

PRESENT: Come forward! Come forward, and know me better, man.

*Scrooge enters timidly, head bowed and stands before the spirit.*

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

PRESENT: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me.

*A huge man clothed in a green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. Feet bare, chest bare. Brown curls. His head covered by a holly wreath dripping with shining icicles. He is jolly and speaks with a cheery voice – He is the original Father Christmas.*

PRESENT: You have never seen the like of me before!

SCROOGE: Never!

PRESENT: Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family for I am very young, meaning my elder brothers born in these later years.

SCROOGE: I don't think I have. I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?

PRESENT: More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE: A tremendous family to provide for... Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

PRESENT: Touch my robe.

*Scrooge grabs onto the spirits robe, lights change, they move onto the street. We see swirling lights, snow and wind blowing. We hear the cold wind howling. Enter townspeople rushing through the storm going about their business. Some look harried or stressed. A child slips in the snow. The Ghost of Christmas Past sprinkles his torch over them. Their mood immediately improves, and they continue happily on their way. A Flower Girl and a Fruit Seller bump into each other.*

FLOWER GIRL: Oi! Watch where you are going!

FRUIT LADY: Excuse me! *(sarcastic)* But it seems you might be a tad confused... Little madam! You walked straight into me with your bundle and have caused me to drop my fruit. You should better hope that you have not bruised any of me apples.

FLOWER GIRL: *(Threatening)* Oh I'm happy to give your eye a bruise if I didn't succeed with your fruit!

FRUIT LADY: Is that a threat you just made to me, miss?

FLOWER GIRL: Take it as you will... *(under her breath)* You old hag!

FRUIT LADY: Oi! I heard that!

*She goes to grab the girl, but the Ghost of Christmas Present sprinkles his torch over them, they are immediately calm.*

FLOWER GIRL: I said, would you like a hand?...To pick up your fruit.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

*The Flower Girl immediately picks up flowers.*

FRUIT LADY: No, it seems all my fruit is unscathed. No harm done at all.

FLOWER GIRL: I am right glad to hear that Madam. May you enjoy the rest of your day...and Merry Christmas!

FRUIT LADY: Season's Greetings to you too my dear!

*Soon we see the storm has past, the day has brightened, and all the townspeople are enjoying the season despite their hardships. They wave at each other while they carry heavy loads of presents; children rush past on toboggans, fighting with snowballs, laughing heartily. Men warm their hands in front of a fire while they toast the season.*

SCROOGE: Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?

PRESENT: There is. My own.

SCROOGE: Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?

PRESENT: To any kindly given. To a poor one most.

SCROOGE: Why to a poor one most?

PRESENT: Because it needs it most. 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, who are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that.

SCROOGE: Of course... I promise.

*The Spirit smiles and waves his hand. Lighting change. They are now in Bob Cratchit's dwelling, Mrs Cratchit and two of her children, Peter and Belinda rush around their dining table setting it for their Christmas dinner.*

PRESENT: Do you know where we are?

SCROOGE: No, not I, I have never set foot in this room before. It is not the part of London I choose to be vested in.

PRESENT: This is where your lowly clerk, Bob Cratchit resides. Look here is his wife and two of his children.

SCROOGE: He has children?

PRESENT: He has four.... (*Scrooge looks uncomfortable*) I see you are imagining how hard it must be to provide for a family of six on the measly living Bob Cratchit ekes out.

SCROOGE: You know me better than I know myself, Spirit.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

*They turn to watch the scene.*

MRS CRATCHIT: What has ever got your precious father then? And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha wasn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour.

BELINDA: Here's Martha, mother!

*Martha enters.*

PETER: Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha! It aint no turkey but it'll do just the same.

MARTHA: Hello, hello, I'm here, finally. Oh Peter, I could smell it as I walked up to the door.

BELINDA: Martha, Mother has prepared a Christmas feast with all the trimmings. Roast turkey, potatoes, carrots and Yorkshire pudding.

PETER: Don't forget the gravy.

BELINDA: Mmm yes hot, delicious gravy. I can almost taste it already.

PETER: Don't forget the plum pudding.

BELINDA: Oh yes! Plum pudding. This will be the greatest Christmas the Cratchit's have ever seen.

MARTHA: Oh it sounds wonderful! I am so glad to be home. Why, Belinda, don't you look lovely? Is this new?

BELINDA: Gosh no! This is one of your old dresses. I've used some of the lining as a sash.

MARTHA: Oh, how clever you are. If you don't watch out Mrs Grivell will have you in the milliners with me before you are 13.

BELINDA: No fear! You'll not find me slaving my life away in a factory... *(realisation)* Oh...I'm sorry Martha. I didn't think... I didn't mean...

MARTHA: Hush now! I completely agree. It is the last place I would want to find my baby sister.

MRS CRATCHIT: *(kisses Martha and takes off her shawl)* Why bless your heart alive, my dear Martha, how late you are!

MARTHA: We had a great deal of work to finish up last night and had to clear away this morning, mother.

MRS CRATCHIT: *(teary)* You work too hard for a young girl.

MARTHA: And I will continue to as long as it benefits my family.

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

MRS CRATCHIT: Well. Never mind so long as you are home now. Sit yourself down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless you.

PETER: No, no. There's father coming. Hide, Martha, hide!

BELINDA: Quick hide and we shall give father a wonderful surprise.

*Martha hides - Bob Cratchit enters with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. He holds a crutch in his hands.*

BELINDA: Oh father. Father you're home! *(they run to embrace him)*

PETER: We've been waiting all day. Great to see you Timmy!

MRS CRATCHIT: Oh, my darlings, my darlings. Come warm yourself in front of the fire.

CRATCHIT: It's good to be home....Why, where's our Martha? *(looking around)*

*Peter makes a loud ahem sound.*

MRS CRATCHIT: Oh...Not coming...

CRATCHIT: Not coming! Not coming upon Christmas Day?

*Peter and Belinda burst out laughing.*

PETER: *(bursts out)* Oh it was just a joke father. Here she is! Right here!

MARTHA: Here I am Father. *(She runs into his arms)* Do you really think I would let them keep me at that wretched factory on Christmas Eve?

BELINDA: Oh Peter. It was supposed to be a surprise.

PETER: It was mother who really gave it away. Did you see her face? She looked fit to burst!

MRS CRATCHIT: Cheeky monkey!

MARTHA: Oh, don't worry dear Belinda. I didn't want to see father so disappointed. I could hardly hold it in myself.

PETER: Quick Timmy! Come see what we've been doing in the wash house.

BELINDA: You can actually hear the pudding singing in the copper.

MARTHA: *(To Tim)* Come now little one. I'd like to see this for myself.

TIM: Pudding! Yum! *(He follows his siblings painfully out – assisted by Martha.)*

MRS CRATCHIT: And how did little Tim behave?

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

CRATCHIT: As good as gold...and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.  
*(He stops himself from crying)*

MRS CRATCHIT: *(embracing him)* Oh my darling. That's just like our Timmy always thinking of others.

*They collect themselves – putting on brave faces as Tim re-enters the room, escorted by his sisters. The others rush in after him excited.*

MRS CRATCHIT: It won't be long now. Just giving the goose a little longer. Everything else is set. Let's sit a while and rest. *(she sits and rubs her sore feet)* I'm glad we don't eat like this every day!

TIM: I wish we ate like this every day! I could eat like this three times a day!

*Everyone laughs.*

CRATCHIT: What a day it has been! I have heard of a situation for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly.

BELINDA: *(laughs)* Oh! Can you imagine? Master Peter - A man of business.

TIM: I wouldn't mind five and sixpence!

CRATCHIT: Neither would I!

*They all laugh.*

PETER: Hmm five and sixpence...I wonder what particular investments I shall favour when I come into the receipt of that income.

MARTHA: That would be wonderful, to have a real situation. I would give anything to work in an office rather than being an apprentice at the milliner's factory. I am so, so tired and the days seem longer and longer. I miss seeing the sun...But even so I mean to lie in bed tomorrow morning for a good long rest; tomorrow being a holiday, I am staying at home!

MRS CRATCHIT: *(upset, busies herself)* Right you are! No time for resting. Martha dust the hot plates. Bob get Timmy seated in his spot next to you. Let's eat!

TIM: Hurrah!

*Belinda and Peter race each other out. Martha and her mother walk out hand in hand and Tim is carried off by Bob Cratchit.*

BLACKOUT.

*SFX: Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Present are left illuminated.*

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SCROOGE: They love him very much, don't they?

PRESENT: Of course they do. For he loves them in return.

SCROOGE: Surely there is more to it than that.

PRESENT: Surely there is not.

*BLACKOUT.*

*Time has passed - the Cratchit family sit around the fire. Belly's full reflecting on their marvellous feast. Scrooge and the Spirit look on.*

CRATCHIT: *(in wonder)* There never was such a goose. I don't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size...

MRS CRATCHIT: And cheapness!

CRATCHIT: Laughs. Yes and cheapness. My industrious bride. Tenderness, flavour size and cheapness - These are the themes of our universal admiration. *(He kisses her hand and jumps to his feet animated)* Eked out by applesauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed!

MRS CRATCHIT: *(with delight)* And all that was left was one small atom of a bone upon the dish. Yet everyone had enough. You boys were practically steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows.

BELINDA: But mother, don't forget about the pudding!

PETER: Oh, the pudding was smashing! Just smashing. *(overlaps)* Martha: It was better than I could have ever imagined it.

TIM: It was so yummy mother. I could eat it, every day!

MARTHA: You two were practically drooling all over it. Like spaniels around the scraps bowl.

TIM: You can't blame us can you Martha?

PETER: No you can't rightly blame us, not when you said yourself you found it hard to refrain from licking it there and then.

MARTHA: *(Gets up and chases him)* Why you little beast, I never said such a thing.

CRATCHIT: *(toasts)* Oh, to a wonderful pudding! I hereby regard it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since our marriage.

*The children all protest.*

TIM: Oh Father!

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MARTHA: That's just mean father.

PETER: Oi! How about me?

TIM: (*teases*). Nah, pudding is better.

PETER: Oi!

*Peter launches himself on Tim, tickling him, Tim squeals in delight.*

MRS CRATCHIT: (*fussing*) Now, Peter... Be careful with Timmy.

*The girls laugh and scold their mother for worrying while Cratchit sits back and smiles proudly at his family.*

SCROOGE: But it was at all a small pudding for a large family... But they would never say that, would they?

PRESENT: Not a one. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

SCROOGE: Yes, I can imagine they would. Such a lovely, lovely family.

*Bob Cratchit toasts.*

CRATCHIT: A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us.

MRS CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas, my darling.

CHILDREN: Merry Christmas!

TIM: God bless us every one!

*Tim cuddles up to his father. Looking up at him adoringly. Cratchit pulls him closer as if he fears his boy might slip away.*

SCROOGE: Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live?

PRESENT: I see a vacant seat, in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCROOGE: No, no! Oh, no, kind Spirit. Say he will be spared.

PRESENT: If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, none other of my race, will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, "he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population".

*Scrooge hangs his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and is overcome with shame – then looks up when he hears his name.*

A Christmas Carol by Kristen Doherty

CRATCHIT: *(toasts)* Mr Scrooge! I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!

MRS CRATCHIT: *(bitter)* The Founder of the Feast indeed! I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

CRATCHIT: My dear! The children... Christmas Day.

MRS CRATCHIT: It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr Scrooge. You know he is, Robert. Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow.

CRATCHIT: My love...

MRS CRATCHIT: I'll drink his health for your sake and the days, not for his. Long life to him. A merry Christmas and a happy new year! - he'll be very merry and very happy; I have no doubt!

ALL: To Mr Scrooge!

*Tim softly starts to sing 'Silent Night' He is soon joined by the other Cratchit children. They continue underneath the following dialogue.*

PRESENT: They are not a handsome family; they are not well dressed. Their clothes in fact are scanty; their shoes are far from being waterproof. Peter might know, and very likely does, the inside of a pawnbrokers. But they are happy, grateful, pleased with one another and contented with the time they have together. However short that might be.

SCROOGE: *(softly)* Spirit. I have seen enough.

*BLACKOUT.*

*A hearty laugh is heard in the blackout. Sudden lighting change. Scrooge finds himself in his nephew, Fred's room. It is bright, gleaming and cheerful. The Spirit stands smiling by his side. He is at a party. Young well-dressed couples socialise. Something incredibly funny has just been said and they are all in stitches.*

JANE: Oh stop! *(doubled over)* Stop please!

TOPPER: If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance.

JANE: Oh, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour.

FRED: He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it too.

TOPPER: Humbug?! Oh, your uncle is quite the character, isn't he?

MARY: More shame for him, Fred.

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MALVIN: Bless our women, Fred; they never do anything by halves, and they are always in earnest.

ELIZABETH: Of course we are my darling. Would you expect anything less?

MALVIN: (*mock fear*) I wouldn't dare to!

ELIZABETH: Good! I expect you remember that too!

JANE: Or else your dear wives may find a reason to say humbug to you as well!

FRED: Old Scrooge is a comical old fellow, that's the truth: and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offenses carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.

MARY: I'm sure he is very rich, Fred. At least you always tell me so.

FRED: What of that, my dear? His wealth is of no use to him. He doesn't do any good with it. He doesn't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking that he is ever going to benefit us with it.

MARY: I have no patience with him.

JANE: Nor I. I have never heard anyone speak of him fondly before!

ELIZABETH: He scares me.

TOPPER: He scares me too!

*They all laugh heartily.*

FRED: Well, I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He doesn't lose much of a dinner.

MARY: Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner!

MALVIN: Of course he does. That was an extremely good dinner, Mary.

JANE: Yes, yes it was, absolutely delicious.

ELIZABETH: Just wonderful!

TOPPER: The company is first rate too I must say!

MARY: Why thank you, kind Sir.

FRED: Well. I'm very glad to hear it because I haven't great faith in these young housekeepers. What do you say, Topper?

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TOPPER: I am in no position to answer my dear fellow for I am still a bachelor and as a bachelor I am a wretched outcast, who has no right to express an opinion on the subject!

JANE: Oh, you poor thing. It is a terrible trial to be a lonely bachelor.

TOPPER: It is an ailment I long to remedy.

*Jane giggles at his flirtation.*

MARY: Do go on, Fred. He never finishes what he begins to say. He is such a ridiculous fellow.

FRED: I was only going to say, that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments. I mean to give him the same chance every year, I think I shook him yesterday.

MARY: I wouldn't mind shaking him myself!

ELIZABETH: I'd wonder if he would jingle when all the coins fall out!

*They all laugh again.*

TOPPER: Right 'o time for a game I believe.

MALVIN Jolly good idea.

SCROOGE: Indeed it is!

JANE: We all know your sorts of games Topper.

ELIZABETH: Oh no, Topper's games are such fun. Let's play.

*They all position themselves for the game. By now Scrooge is starting to enjoy himself as well.*

TOPPER: This game is called Yes and No.

PRESENT: It is time.

SCROOGE: Oh please no. This is such fun. Let's just stay until the guests depart.

PRESENT: It cannot be done. It is time.

JANE: Oh, I don't know this one.

TOPPER: Alright. Fred, old chap, you must think of something, and the rest must find out what.

JANE: A guessing game?

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TOPPER: Of sorts. Fred must only answer to your questions yes or no, as the case is.

FRED: I am ready.

TOPPER: You have thought of something?

FRED: I have indeed.

ELIZABETH: This is terribly exciting.

MARY: Can I go first?... Is it a...a chair? Or a piece of furniture? Something in this room?

TOPPER: You can only ask one question at a time. That was two.

MARY: I'm not very good at this game.

ELIZABETH: Is it an animal?

FRED: Yes.

ELIZABETH: Is it the delicious roast turkey that we just ate for our dinner?

FRED: No.

ELIZABETH: Oh.

JANE: Is it a live animal?

FRED: Yes.

JANE: Is it a bunny rabbit?

FRED: (*frowning*) No.

MALVIN: My turn... Is it a more disagreeable animal?

FRED: Yes.

MALVIN: A savage animal?

FRED: Yes.

MALVIN: An animal that growls and grunts?

FRED: Yes.

MALVIN: Is it a dog?

FRED: No (*laughs*)

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MARY: A Bull?

FRED: No!

ELIZABETH: A cow?

FRED: (*scoffs*) No.

TOPPER: A bear! It's a bear!

FRED: No! No! No!

JANE: An ass? (*she giggles at her use of the word*)

FRED: Well maybe... (*he laughs again*) No... it's not an ass or a tiger or a pig or a sheep or a goat. (*He stamps his feet with laughter*)

JANE: I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!

FRED: What is it?

MARY: Yes, what Jane. Do tell?

JANE: It's your Uncle Scrooge!

FRED: It certainly is.

*They all groan and laugh. Scrooge is abashed but enjoying their jesting.*

TOPPER: But I asked 'Is it a bear?' You ought to have said 'Yes'

FRED: Oh, poor old Uncle Scrooge! He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, to Uncle Scrooge!

ALL: Uncle Scrooge!

MARY: A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is.

FRED: He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!

PRESENT: Now it is time.

SCROOGE: Ah dear Spirit. You look a'weary. Your hair has turned quite grey. Are spirits' lives so short?

PRESENT: My life upon this globe is very brief. It ends tonight.

SCROOGE: Tonight?

PRESENT: To-night. Hark! The time is drawing near.

*A bell starts tolling.*

SCROOGE: Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask...but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?

PRESENT: (*sorrowfully*) It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it. Look here.

*From under the robe of the Ghost of Christmas Present two children; wretched, miserable children emerge. Kneeling at the spirits feet they cling to his robe but reach out to Scrooge, begging pitifully.*

PRESENT: Oh, Man, look here! Look, look, down here!

SCROOGE: Spirit, are they yours?

PRESENT: They are Man's. And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it! Slander those who tell it ye. Admit it for your factious purposes and make it worse. And abide the end.

SCROOGE: (*with great pity and desperation*) Have they no refuge or resource?

PRESENT: "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"

*The bell strikes twelve and the spirit disappears. Lights/music change, becoming ominous. Scrooge looks around with dread – expecting the third spirit whom looms behind him – huge draped and hooded.*

#### SCENE 4: THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS

NARRATOR 1: The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

NARRATOR 2: Its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

SCROOGE: I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

*This play is not finished. Printable PDF scripts for perusal, classroom or rehearsal use are available for \$8 AUD / \$5 USD per copy, charged per student or participant. Email me at [kristencmdoherty@gmail.com](mailto:kristencmdoherty@gmail.com) to order.*