A Christmas Carol

The beloved holiday story of how three ghosts help mean Ebenezer Scrooge mend the errors of his ways.

by Charles Dickens and adapted by Adele Thane

Characters

EBENEZER SCROOGE
BOB CRATCHIT, his clerk
FRED, Scrooge’s nephew
COLLECTOR FOR CHARITY
MARLEY’S GHOST
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST
EBENEZER, as schoolboy
FAN, his sister
YOUNG SCROOGE, as apprentice
DICK WILKINS, a fellow apprentice
MR. FEZZIWIG, their boss
MRS. FEZZIWIG
BELLE, young Scrooge’s fiancée
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT
MRS. CRATCHIT, Bob’s wife
PETER
BELINDA
MARTHA
NED
SALLY
TINY TIM
CRATCHIT CHILDREN
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME
FIDDLER
BOY
CAROLERS, extras

SCENE 1
TIME: Christmas Eve, 19th century.

SETTING: London. Business office of Scrooge and Marley. In right wall is door that opens to the street. Upstage of door, clothes tree holds Bob Cratchit’s hat and Scrooge’s muffler, hat and overcoat. At center is flat-topped desk with stool behind it. On desk is pile of ledgers, pen and inkstand, a ruler, a metal cash box with money in it, and a lighted candle. Set against wall is high clerk’s desk and stool. This desk also has lighted candle, ledgers, pen, and inkstand. A casement window is downstage of clerk’s desk, and potbelly stove is upstage between two desks. Coal hod and shovel are beside stove.
AT RISE: EBENEZER SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT are working at their desks. BOB has long white scarf around his neck. CAROLERS offstage start singing, “God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen.” SCROOGE rises impatiently, goes to street door, flings it open.

SCROOGE (Shouting off right): Hey! Stop that singing! Stop it, I say! Keep quiet out there! (CAROLERS stop singing. SCROOGE closes door and returns to desk, muttering.) Police ought to shut those people up. Singing around in the street as if they had no proper business. (Counts money in cash box, with his back to BOB, who gets down off stool, blowing on his hands and rubbing them together)

BOB: Weather seems to be getting colder.

SCROOGE (Without turning around): Cold? Humbug! It doesn’t feel cold to me. (BOB goes to coal hod and lifts out shovel, making a grating noise. SCROOGE whirls on him.) What are you doing?

BOB (Timidly): I thought I’d put another coal on the fire—if it’s all right.

SCROOGE: It’s not all right, and you know it. If you persist in burning up my coal like tinder, you will have to find another position!

BOB: But my hand is so cold I can hardly write.

SCROOGE: Warm it at the candle. (Closes and locks cash box. BOB replaces shovel in coal hod, sits at desk and holds hands over candle. Door bursts open and FRED enters briskly.)

FRED (Cheerfully, removing his hat): Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED (Laughing): Christmas a humbug, Uncle? Surely you don’t mean that.

SCROOGE: I do! (Scornfully) Merry Christmas! What reason have you to be merry? You’re poor enough.

FRED: Come, then. What reason have you to be so sad? You’re rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED (Coaxingly): Don’t be cross.

SCROOGE: What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools? A pox upon Merry Christmas! What’s Christmas 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 had my way, every idiot who goes about with “Merry Christmas” on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

FRED: Oh, really, Uncle!

SCROOGE (Mockingly): Oh, really, nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: But you don’t keep it at all.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. What good has Christmas ever done you?

FRED: Why, Uncle, it has done me a lot of good. It is the only time I know when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely—and though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe it has done me good, and will do me good, and I say (Thumps SCROOGE’s desk)—God bless it!

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BOB (Applauding): Splendid, sir!

SCROOGE (Turning to BOB with a vengeance): Another sound out of you, Bob Cratchit, and you’ll keep your Christmas by losing your job! (Sarcastically, to FRED) You’re quite a powerful speaker, Fred. I wonder why you don’t go into Parliament.

FRED (Soothingly): Don’t be angry, Uncle. Come, dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE (Angrily): I’ll dine with the devil first.

FRED: I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you. Why can’t we be friends?

SCROOGE (Returning to his work): Good afternoon.

FRED: I am sorry to find you so resolute. But I have made this visit in honor of Christmas, and I’ll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So a Merry Christmas, Uncle! And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE (Thundering): Good afternoon!

FRED (Waving to BOB with his hat): Merry Christmas to you, Bob!

BOB: The same to you, sir! God bless you! (FRED opens door to exit; COLLECTOR FOR CHARITY is standing outside, consulting notebook.)

COLLECTOR: How do you do, sir? Scrooge and Marley, I believe? (FRED nods and gestures toward SCROOGE. COLLECTOR enters. FRED exits, closing door. COLLECTOR speaks to SCROOGE.) Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

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

COLLECTOR: I have no doubt his generosity is well represented in his surviving partner. My credentials, sir. (Lays card on desk; SCROOGE brushes it aside without looking at it.) Mr. Scrooge, at this festive season of the year, we all want to make some slight provision for the poor and destitute. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts.

SCROOGE (Putting down pen): Are there no prisons?

COLLECTOR: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: What about the union workhouses and treadmill? Are they still in operation?

COLLECTOR: They are. I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE: Good. I was afraid from what you said that something had stopped them in their useful work.

COLLECTOR: I would hardly call them useful! As I say, Mr. Scrooge, a few of us are trying to raise a fund to buy meat and drink for the poor. We chose this time because it is the time when want is felt most keenly. (Picks up pen from desk) What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE (Snatching pen from COLLECTOR’s hand): Nothing.

COLLECTOR: You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE (Slamming pen down on desk): I wish to be left alone! (Rising) I don’t make myself merry at Christmas, and I can’t afford to make a lot of idle people merry. I help support the
prisons and poorhouses—they cost enough. Those who are badly off must go there.

COLLECTOR: Sir, I am sure many would rather die than go there.

SCROOGE: If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Besides, this has nothing to do with my business.

COLLECTOR (Reproachfully): You ought to make it your business to help your fellow man.

SCROOGE (Testily): It’s enough for a man to understand his own business and not interfere with other people’s. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon. (Sits at desk)

COLLECTOR (Going to door, then turning): If Mr. Marley felt as you do, I fear his ghost is not resting in peace. Good afternoon. (Exits)

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug! (Looks at watch and speaks grudgingly to BOB) You might as well go, it’s five minutes past time. Get along.

BOB: Yes, sir. (Closes ledger, blows out candle, gets hat from clothes tree and stands twirling it nervously in his hands)

SCROOGE: Well, what are you waiting for?

BOB: About tomorrow, sir.

SCROOGE: You’ll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

BOB: Yes, sir, if it’s quite convenient.

SCROOGE (Rising, banging ruler on desk): It’s not convenient, and it’s not fair! If I were to deduct something from your salary, you’d think yourself ill-used. And yet, you don’t think me ill-used when I pay a day’s wages for no work.

BOB (Pleadingly): Christmas is only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE: A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December! Very well, take the day off—but be here all the earlier the next morning.

BOB (Eagerly, as he goes toward exit): Oh, I will, sir! Good night, Mr. Scrooge—and a Merry Christmas to you! (Hurries out, closing door)

SCROOGE (Closing to lock door): There’s another one, Bob Cratchit, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a Merry Christmas. They’ll drive me to distraction. (CAROLERS start singing “The First Noël” offstage.) Carolers, carolers! Will they never leave a man in peace? (Sits at desk and resumes work. CAROLERS fade. Candle flickers, lights dim. Sound of clanking chains is heard off right, faint at first, then growing louder. SCROOGE looks up, listening, then shakes head.) Humbug! (Suddenly door flies open. MARLEY’S GHOST appears in doorway, pale, heavily bound with chains that drag behind him. SCROOGE gives a start, looks toward door, then quickly shakes head.) Humbug, I say! That door is locked! (MARLEY’S GHOST enters, and as SCROOGE turns again to look he advances to clothes tree, where spotlight comes upon him. SCROOGE slides off stool and slowly approaches GHOST. In a nervous voice) Who—who are you?

MARLEY’S GHOST (In deep, forbidding voice): Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you, then?
MARLEY’S GHOST: In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE (Drawing away): Jacob Marley! What do you want with me?

MARLEY’S GHOST: Much. (Pause) Don’t you believe in me?

SCROOGE (Boastfully): I don’t.

MARLEY’S GHOST: You can see me, can’t you?

SCROOGE: I think I can.

MARLEY’S GHOST: Why do you doubt your own senses?

SCROOGE: Because a little thing affects my senses—a slight disorder of the stomach—a bit of undigested beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese. (Cackling at his own joke) There’s more of gravy than of the grave about you, whatever you are. (MARLEY’S GHOST raises a frightful cry and shakes his chains.)

MARLEY’S GHOST: Silence! (SCROOGE, suddenly terrified, falls on his knees.)

SCROOGE: Mercy, oh mercy!

MARLEY’S GHOST (In a booming voice): Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE (Terrified): I do, I must! But why do you walk on earth? And why do you come to me?

MARLEY’S GHOST: It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men. If that spirit does not go out in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world. Oh, woe is me! (Wails dismally, lifting chains high and flinging them heavily to the floor)

SCROOGE (Rising fearfully): You are chained—tell me why.

MARLEY’S GHOST: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link. I girded it on of my own free will. Is its pattern strange to you?

SCROOGE: I’ve never seen anything like it before.

MARLEY’S GHOST: That’s strange. You wear such a chain yourself. (SCROOGE looks anxiously about him on the floor.) It was as long as this chain of mine seven Christmas Eves ago. You’ve made it longer since.

SCROOGE (Clasping his hands in supplication): Oh, no! Jacob, say something to comfort me.

MARLEY’S GHOST: I have no comfort for you.

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

MARLEY’S GHOST: Business! Mankind was my business. I did nothing to help my fellow man. Oh, woe is me! (Wails again and shakes his chains)

SCROOGE: Is something hurting you?

MARLEY’S GHOST: I suffer most at Christmas time. Hear me, Ebenezer. My time is nearly gone. I am here to warn you. You may yet have a chance to escape my fate.

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

MARLEY’S GHOST (Relentlessly): You will be haunted by three Spirits.

SCROOGE (Faltering): Is that the chance you mentioned, Jacob?
MARLEY’S GHOST: It is.

SCROOGE: Then I think I’d better not take that chance.

MARLEY’S GHOST: You have no choice. (Starts walking backward, toward door) Expect the Ghost of Christmas Past when the bell tolls one. Expect the Ghost of Christmas Present when the bell tolls two. Expect the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come when the bell tolls three. (Pauses in doorway) For your own sake, Scrooge, remember what has passed between us. Farewell. (MARLEY’S GHOST disappears off right.)

SCROOGE (Rushing to doorway): Jacob, wait! Help me! Jacob! (Falls on knees. Bell tolls one. Live or recorded music of “Lo, How A Rose E’er Blooming” is heard, and continues under following dialogue. Spotlight comes up on GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST, wearing white tunic with golden belt, shining crown, and carrying holly branch, left center. SCROOGE rises, walks hesitantly toward GHOST.) Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

1ST GHOST (Softly, gently): I am.

SCROOGE: Who and what are you?

1ST GHOST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long past?

1ST GHOST: No, your past. Come and walk with me.

SCROOGE (Shrinking back): No, no, I can’t!

1ST GHOST: It is your only hope of being saved. (Taking SCROOGE’s arm) Come, we have far to go.

SCROOGE (Remonstrating): It’s bitter cold outside.

1ST GHOST: What does it matter? Nothing can wither your cold spirit. We will move swiftly through the air. (Points to window, and it opens magically. NOTE: Shutters are pushed open from offstage.)

SCROOGE (Pulling away): Through the air? I am mortal, I will fall!

1ST GHOST: Bear but a touch of my hand there (Touching SCROOGE’s heart), and you shall be upheld in more than this. Come! (As 1ST GHOST and SCROOGE start walking toward window, lights dim to black-out. Curtain closes to sound of whistling wind.)

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SCENE 2

SETTING: Schoolroom, played before curtain. School desk and bench are center.

AT RISE: Sound of wind fades as spotlight comes up on 1ST GHOST and SCROOGE, down left. SCROOGE is on his knees, clinging to 1ST GHOST.

SCROOGE: Help, help, I’m falling!

1ST GHOST: Stand up! You’re on the ground now. You haven’t lost your feet. Stand up, I say!

SCROOGE (Getting up, looking around, then walking about, nervously): Where are we?

1ST GHOST: You’ve been here many times before. (Spotlight comes up on EBENEZER as schoolboy, at desk, head on his arms, sobbing. He does not notice others.)

SCROOGE: Why, it’s my old school. Everybody has gone home for the Christmas holidays.
1ST GHOST: Not everybody. A solitary boy is left there still.

SCROOG E: I know him all too well—my lonely self. Poor boy!

FAN (Off right, calling): Hello! Is anybody here? (Enters, calling) I’m looking for my brother, Ebenezer Scrooge.

EBENEZER (Rising): Fan!

FAN (Seeing him): Ebenezer! (Runs to him and hugs him) I’ve come to take you home!

EBENEZER: Home? Is Father dead?

FAN: No, he sent me in a carriage to get you. He’s much kinder than he used to be. We’re to be together all the Christmas long. (Taking his hand) Hurry, let’s go! I’m so excited I can hardly talk! (They run off, right. Spotlight fades out on schoolroom, up on SCROOGE and 1ST GHOST, down left. During following dialogue, desk and bench are moved to right, representing FEZZIWIG’s warehouse.)

SCROOG E: That was the only happy Christmas I ever had at home. My sister died several years later.

1ST GHOST: She left a child, didn’t she? Your nephew, Fred. What have you done for him? Have you loved him dearly for your sister’s sake?

SCROOG E (Ashamed): Take me away, I don’t want to remember any more.

1ST GHOST: You have no choice. (Lights come up full. YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK WILKINS, both in shirtsleeves, are seated at desk, writing in ledgers.) Do you know this place?

SCROOG E: Know it! Of course, I do. It’s Fezziwig’s warehouse—I was appren-
ticed here. (FEZZIWIG enters, carrying small Christmas tree and stand.)

FEZZIWIG (Jovially, to YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK): Yo ho, there, Ebenezer Scrooge. . .Dick Wilkins! No more work tonight. It’s Christmas Eve. Clear away, my lads, and let’s have lots of room here!

SCROOG E (Excitedly): It’s old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it’s Fezziwig alive again! And there’s Dick Wilkins. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. (YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK move desk off right, but leave bench on stage. FEZZIWIG sets tree left. MRS. FEZZIWIG enters right with holly wreath, hangs it on curtain.)

MRS. FEZZIWIG: Merry Christmas, Mr. Fezziwig.

FEZZIWIG: Ho, there, Mrs. Fezziwig! Christmas comes only once a year. Worth waiting for—worth celebrating—worth remembering. (YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK reenter, struggling into their coats. CAROLERS come down aisles of auditorium, singing “Deck the Halls,” and go onstage. FIDDLER enters, right, with fiddle and bow, stands on bench and begins to play appropriate dance tune. Recorded music may be used. CAROLERS dance as YOUNG SCROOGE and DICK clap their hands, and MR. and MRS. FEZZIWIG link arms and dance in circle. SCROOGE watches with apparent pleasure, clapping his hands and tapping his foot in time to music. The dance ends with CAROLERS, YOUNG SCROOGE, DICK, FEZZIWIGS, and FIDDLER dancing up aisles and out at rear of auditorium.)

SCROOG E: Those were happy times. And how grateful we all were to old Fezziwig for those Christmas Eves.
1ST GHOST: Yet Mr. Fezziwig didn’t spend more than a few pounds on the whole party.

SCROOGE: What difference does that make? The happiness he gave us was quite as great as if he had spent a fortune.

1ST GHOST: How did you ever forget these things in your later years? (Pause) My time grows short. One shadow more from your past. (Spotlight comes up on BELLE, standing center.)

SCROOGE (Crying out): Belle! The girl I was to marry!

1ST GHOST: Listen again to the words she spoke on that fateful Christmas Day when she released you from your promise of marriage.

BELLE (Removing ring from finger): I return your ring, Ebenezer. Another idol has displaced me, a golden one. I’ve seen your love of gold grow like a mighty passion until nothing else matters to you. Our contract is an old one, made when we were both poor. I release you from it, with a full heart, for the love of him you once were. May you be happy in the life you have chosen. (Spotlight on BELLE fades out.)

SCROOGE: Spirit, why do you delight in torturing me? Show me no more!

1ST GHOST: Listen. (Bell tolls twice.) My time is up. Another spirit comes. Farewell. (1ST GHOST exits left. Spotlight comes up right, revealing GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT, who wears simple green robe, a holly wreath on his head, and carries a horn of plenty as a torch.)

2ND GHOST (Cheerily, in a hearty voice): Look upon me, and know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Will you come forth with me, Ebenezer Scrooge?

SCROOGE (Crossing to 2ND GHOST meekly): Spirit, conduct me where you will. If you have anything to teach me, let me benefit by it.

2ND GHOST: Come then, let us visit Bob Cratchit’s home. (2ND GHOST gestures toward curtain with his torch; glitter falls from torch, and sound of tinkling bells is heard. Curtain opens, and 2ND GHOST and SCROOGE stand down right to watch the action.)

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SCENE 3

SETTING: Kitchen of Cratchit home. Fireplace is left. Center is large table covered with red-checked tablecloth, plates, glasses, etc. Chairs and stools for eight are placed around it.

AT RISE: MRS. CRATCHIT and BELINDA are putting finishing touches to table. PETER is at fireplace, using bellows.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Whatever is keeping your dear father and Tiny Tim? And Martha wasn’t as late as this last Christmas Day. (Door flies open, and NED and SALLY rush in, followed by MARTHA, wearing bonnet and shawl.)

SALLY: Mother, here’s Martha!

NED: There’s such a goose for dinner, Martha! Hurrah! (NED and SALLY rush back out.)

MRS. CRATCHIT (Kissing MARTHA): Bless your heart, Martha, how late you are!

MARTHA (Hanging bonnet and shawl on clothes tree): We had a lot of work to finish at the shop last night, Mother, and then we had to clean it this morning.
MRS. CRATCHIT: Sit down, my dear, and rest. (MARTHA starts to sit at table but stops as NED and SALLY run in.)

SALLY: Hide, Martha, hide!

NED: Father's coming with Tiny Tim! Let's surprise him!

SALLY: Hide in the pantry! (NED, SALLY and MARTHA hurry out left. BOB CRATCHIT gallops in with TINY TIM on his back, holding a crutch.)

BOB: Clear the way for the fastest horse in London Town!

TIM: Whoa there, whoa!

BOB (Lowering TIM to floor and glancing about): Why, where's our Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT: She's not coming, Bob. (PETER and BELINDA, at fireplace, nudge each other and giggle.)

BOB: Not coming on Christmas Day! (Disappointed) But it just won't be Christmas without Martha.

MARTHA (Entering, running to BOB, and hugging him): Here I am, Father! I was only hiding. We wanted to tease you. (Hugging TIM) Why, Tim! How is my little brother?

TIM: I threw a snowball as far as Peter—almost.

PETER: Come and smell the pudding, Tim. (PETER and BELINDA exit down left with TIM.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: How did Tim behave in church, Bob?

BOB (Hanging hat and scarf on clothes tree): As good as gold, and better. Coming home, he told me that he hoped all the people in church saw him, because he was crippled. He thought it might help them to remember on Christmas Day who it was that made lame beggars walk and blind men see.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Bless his heart, he does think of the strangest things. (Calling off left) Children, come to dinner! (Children race in, PETER carrying bowl of punch, which he sets at BOB's place at end of table. There is much talking and moving of chairs as everyone gets into place. BOB ladles out punch into mugs and glasses.)

BOB: I propose a toast. (Raising glass) To Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast.

MRS. CRATCHIT (Putting down her glass): 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!

BOB: My dear, the children! It's Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: It should be Christmas Day, I'm sure, when one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard man as Mr. Scrooge.

BOB (Mildly): My dear, Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: I'll drink his health, Robert, for your sake and the day's, but not for his! (Raising glass) Long life to him! A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!

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

TIM: God bless us, every one!

BOB (Picking up carving knife): And now, the goose! (All cheer. Curtain closes. Spotlight comes up on SCROOGE and 2ND GHOST down right.)
SCROOGE: Spirit, tell me—will Tiny Tim live?

2ND GHOST: I see a vacant chair in that poor room—a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, Tiny Tim will die.

SCROOGE: No, no! He must not die!

2ND GHOST: You can do nothing to change the past, nothing to alter the present. But there is still the future; perhaps in it lie your hope and salvation. I must leave you now. My life upon this globe is very brief. I go, but another spirit comes. (Bell tolls three times. 2ND GHOST exits, right, as spotlight comes up on GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME, wearing a black robe with a hood hiding his face, down left. SCROOGE crosses to him. Spotlight right stage fades out.)

SCROOGE (Awed, clasping hands): Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come? (3RD GHOST nods slowly.) Ghost of the future, I fear you more than the other specters I have seen. But I know you intend to do me good, so I’ll bear your company and do it with a thankful heart. Spirit, if you can see the future, show me what has happened to Tiny Tim. (Live or recorded Christmas hymn is heard. 3RD GHOST points right, where spotlight comes up on Cratchits. MRS. CRATCHIT sits on armchair, weeping. MARTHA sits beside her on arm of chair. PETER, on stool, is reading from large book. BELINDA stands behind him, looking over his shoulder. NED and SALLY sit on floor.)

MARTHA (Comforting her): Don’t cry, Mother. Our Tim is happy now. He won’t ever need his crutch again.

PETER (Closing book): Father is late tonight. I think he walks a little slower than he used to.

MRS. CRATCHIT (Wiping away tears): I have known him to walk very fast indeed with Tiny Tim on his shoulder. But then, Tim was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble—no trouble at all.

BELINDA: Here’s Father now. (BOB enters, giving hat to MARTHA. MRS. CRATCHIT rises and motions for him to sit in armchair.)

BOB: I visited Tim’s grave today. (To MRS. CRATCHIT) I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you’ll see it often. I promised Tim that we would walk there every Sunday. (Gently, to children) Children, we mustn’t grieve—Tim would not want it so. And when we remember how patient and mild Tim was, I know that we shall not quarrel among ourselves.

ALL (Ad lib): No, never, Father. (Etc.)

BOB: Then I am very happy—for him, and for us all. (Spotlight fades out on Cratchits.)

SCROOGE: Spirit, are these the shadows of things that will be, or is it possible to change the future? Why show me these things if I am past all hope? (3RD GHOST turns away.) Spirit, hear me! I am not the man I was. I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the past, the present, and the future. I will not shut out the lessons they teach. (SCROOGE kneels and clutchhes 3RD GHOST’s robe.) Oh, speak to me! Give me some hope. Tell me that I may still have time to change. Speak to me! Speak to me! (Fast fade to blackout)
SCENE 4

TIME: Christmas Day.

AT RISE: Ringing of church bells is heard. SCROOGE is kneeling near his desk, violently shaking stool.

SCROOGE: Speak to me! Tell me it is not too late! (SCROOGE looks about incredulously and slowly gets to his feet.) Why, this is my stool! And this is my office! How did I get here? Am I dreaming? (Dancing a few steps) I feel as light as a feather...as merry as a schoolboy! (Hears bells) Church bells! What day is this? I must find out. (Opens street door, calls out) Hello, out there! Come here a minute! Don’t be afraid! (BOY enters hesitantly.) What’s today, my fine fellow?

BOY: Today? Why, it’s Christmas Day!

SCROOGE: Christmas Day! (Exulting) Hurrah! I haven’t missed it after all! My fine fellow, do you know the grocer’s down the street?

BOY: I should hope so.

SCROOGE (Grabbing BOY’s hand, shaking it): An intelligent, remarkable boy! Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize turkey that was hanging in the window?

BOY: The one that’s as big as I am? It’s hanging there now.

SCROOGE: Then go and buy it. (BOY looks incredulous.) No, no, I’m serious. Here’s the money. (Gives BOY several coins from cash box, then scribbles on piece of paper) Deliver it to this address in Camden Town. It will be too heavy to carry, so take a cab. And you’re not to say where that turkey came from—not a word.

BOY: I won’t, sir, thank you, sir. Merry Christmas! (Runs out)

SCROOGE (Calling after him): Merry Christmas! (Rubbing hands together gleefully) Won’t Bob Cratchit be surprised to get that turkey! It’s twice the size of Tiny Tim. And he won’t know who sent it. How surprised they’ll be! (Church bells peal again.) Listen to those bells! Makes me feel good just to hear them. (Calls through open door) Merry Christmas!

COLLECTOR (Coming to door): Are you speaking to me, sir?

SCROOGE: Of course I am. Come in, come in! (COLLECTOR enters and SCROOGE shakes his hand vigorously.) How are you? I hope you succeeded yesterday in collecting money for the poor. I’m afraid you don’t remember me with much pleasure. Allow me to ask your pardon. (Getting roll of bank notes from cash box and handing it to COLLECTOR) Will you have the goodness to accept this?

COLLECTOR: Bless me! Are you serious, Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE: If you please, not a farthing less. A great many back payments are included in it, I assure you. Come and see me any time you need help. Will you do that?

COLLECTOR: I will indeed, sir.

SCROOGE: Thank you—thank you a hundred times. Bless you.

COLLECTOR: Bless you, Mr. Scrooge, and a very Merry Christmas. (COLLECTOR exits.)

SCROOGE (Skipping to clothes tree): Merry Christmas, Ebenezer, you old humbug! I’m going to have dinner with my nephew, Fred. He invited me,
yes, he did! (Sings “God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen” as he puts on muffler, coat and hat. Dances out. Curtain closes.)

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SCENE 5

TIME: The next morning.

SETTING: Same as Scene 1.

AT RISE: SCROOGE is peeking out the half-open street door.

SCROOGE (Looking at watch): Eighteen and a half minutes past nine. (Chuckles) He’s late! The day after Christmas, and Bob Cratchit is late for work. Ah, here he comes now. (SCROOGE closes door, scurries to desk and busies himself. BOB enters hurriedly, whips off hat, tosses it onto clothes tree, starts toward desk. SCROOGE looks up, scowling.) What do you mean by coming to work at this time of day, Bob Cratchit?

BOB: I’m very sorry, sir. It won’t happen again.

SCROOGE (Rising with pretended exasperation): Now, I’ll tell you what, my man. I’m not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And so (Claps BOB on the back, laughing)—I am going to raise your salary! (BOB staggers, gaping in astonishment.) A merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I’ll raise your salary and endeavor to assist your struggling family. Tiny Tim shall have the best doctors in London. (Putting arm around BOB’s shoulder) We’ll discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of mulled wine. And I promise you that from this day forth, I will be as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as this old city will ever know. May it always be said of me that if any man alive knew how to keep Christmas well, that man was Ebenezer Scrooge.

BOB: May that be truly said of all of us, Mr. Scrooge. (Clasping his hand gratefully) God bless you. As Tiny Tim always says, God bless us, every one! (Live or recorded music of “Joy to the World” is heard as curtain closes.)

THE END

(Production Notes on next page)
CHARACTERS: 11 male; 7 female; 6 male or female for Ghosts, Fiddler, and Collector; as many extras as desired for Carolers.
PLAYING TIME: 30 minutes.
COSTUMES: 19th-century. Cratchits’ clothing is threadbare. Marley’s Ghost is haggard; cash boxes, keys, and ledgers hang from chains that drag behind him. Ghost of Christmas Past is youthful, white tunic with gold belt, shining crown and carries holly branch. Ghost of Christmas Present is dressed in simple robe, with antique scabbard around waist, and holly wreath with icicles hanging from it, carries horn of plenty torch. Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come wears black robe that hides his face.
PROPERTIES: Calling card; pocket watch; small Christmas tree on stand; holly wreath; fiddle and bow; ring; goose on platter, carving knife, covered vegetable dishes; crutch; punch bowl and ladle; sewing basket and sewing; book.
SETTING: Scenes 1, 4, and 5: Business office. Door at right opens to street. A clothes tree holding two hats, muffler, and greatcoat stands upstage of door. At center are flat-topped desk and stool for Scrooge. Clerk’s desk and stool are against left wall. Each desk has pen and inkstand, ledger, and lighted candle on it. Scrooge’s desk has a ruler and metal cash box containing money. A casement window is downstage of clerk’s desk, and potbelly stove, coal hod and shovel are upstage. Scene 2: Played before curtain. School desk and bench, center. Scene 3: Kitchen of Cratchit home. Exit is down left, in place of casement window. Fireplace is left. At center is large table, with place settings, mugs and glasses, goose on platter, carving knife, and covered vegetable dishes. Chairs and stools for eight are placed around table. Clock on mantel, down center.
LIGHTING: Candle flickers; spotlights dim down and come up; blackout, as indicated in text.
SOUND: Bell striking; whistling of wind; live or recorded fiddle music; church bells; live or recorded Christmas carols.