

A Christmas Carol



AN ARMCHAIR THEATRE



PRODUCTION

How To Play

Armchair Theatre Plays are audio plays designed to be performed by you, your friends and your family. With no need for any acting movements, your part(s) can be spoken from the comfort of your armchair, the dinner table or around the fire!

For multi players the recommended mode is DIRECTORS MODE. Please see separate download document. There are 3 modes of play to choose from:

DIRECTORS MODE (For multi players)

In this mode, the characters have been 'grouped' into numbered batches by the Director depending on how many players there are. This means that, if for example there are 5 players, he has split the characters into 5 groups. He has done this in an attempt to not only spread the amount of words spoken around the players equally but also to try and avoid, where possible, a single player speaking multi characters within the same scene (this is not always possible to avoid, but when kept to the bear minimum will provide good fun when it does!). To play, write out slips of paper each containing a number corresponding to the number of players playing (i.e. 5 players = 5 pieces of paper numbered 1 to 5). Fold up the slips of paper and place them in a bag or pocket. Each player now takes a slip of paper. The number on the paper tells him which 'group' of characters he has picked, and by referring back to the DIRECTORS CAST LIST and looking under the correct number he will see a list of his group of characters.

IMPORTANT!! Ensure you read the headings under GENERAL PLAY.

SHUFFLE MODE (For multi players)

In this mode, the characters are cast between the players at random. To start, write down the characters names on separate pieces of paper and crunch up the names so that they may be drawn at random. Now the players pick one character each in turn until all characters have been picked. The SHUFFLE mode of play means that you may end up with any combination of characters and, if you have trebled up then it is possible you may end up having a three-way conversation between your own characters, all in different voices, in the same scene!

IMPORTANT!! Ensure you read the headings under GENERAL PLAY.

MONOLOGUE MODE (For single player)

In this mode, one player takes on all the characters. This is ideal for storytelling to children. As you will undoubtedly be playing to an audience then the words written (*in italics and brackets*) that are placed within or at the end of some characters' speech should be spoken in the NARRATORS voice.

GENERAL PLAY

1. In all modes of play, players may be required to play more than one character, remember to use different voices for each character.
2. In all ARMCHAIR THEATRE plays there is a WILD character. This is a character that must be played by ALL players at once. The wild card character for A Christmas Carol is TINY TIM.
3. Any sound effects that have not been scripted should be made by any player when they feel it appropriate.
4. When playing to an audience, remember that words (*in italics and brackets*) should be spoken by the NARRATOR.
5. There is no right or wrong way to play any of the characters, it is *your* part, do with it what you will!
6. Break a leg!

A Christmas Carol

Cast

NARRATOR
STREET BOY
FRED
EBENEZER SCROOGE
BOB CRATCHIT
GENTLEMAN #1
GHOST OF JACOB MARLEY
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST
FAN
MR FEZZIWIG
BELLE
BELLE'S HUSBAND
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT
MRS CRATCHIT
TINY TIM
SCROOGE'S NIECE
FAT GENTLEMAN
RED FACED GENTLEMAN
CHARWOMAN
OLD JOE
CAROLINE
DEBTOR

Act One

Marley's Ghost

NARRATOR: Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. This must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of this story I am going to relate.
Did Scrooge know he was dead? Of course he did, how could it be otherwise. Scrooge and Marley were partners for many, many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole friend and sole mourner.
Oh but Scrooge was a tight fisted, squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!
The cold within him froze his old features and nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, made his eyes reds and his lips blue. No warmth could warm him and nobody ever stopped Scrooge in the street to say...

DEBTOR: My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?

NARRATOR: Neither would any child dare to ask...

STREET BOY: What time is it Mr Scrooge?

NARRATOR: But that was how Scrooge liked it.
Now once upon a time, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat in his counting house. It was cold and bleak and though the city clocks had just gone three, it was quite dark already. Candles flared in windows and fog came in through every chink and keyhole.
The door to his counting house stood open so that he could keep an eye on his clerk who sat shivering in the next room. Suddenly the cheerful voice of Scrooge's nephew pierced the gloom.

FRED: A merry Christmas uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug! (*replied Scrooge*)

FRED: Christmas a humbug uncle. You don't mean that I'm sure?

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

FRED: In that case, what reason do you have to be dismal. You're rich enough. (*stated the nephew boldly*)

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug! (*came the same reply*)

FRED: Don't be cross Uncle!

SCROOGE: What else can I be in such a world of fools. Merry Christmas? If I had my way every idiot with those words on his lips would be boiled with his own pudding.

FRED: Uncle! (*complained the nephew*)

SCROOGE: Nephew! Keep Christmas in your way, and let me keep it in mine. Much good it has ever done you.

FRED: I may not have profited from Christmas Uncle, but I have always kept it as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. I believe it *has* done me good and *will* do me good; and I say God bless it!

BOB CRATCHIT: (claps). (*The sound of clapping came from the next room*)

SCROOGE: Another sound from you in there and you'll keep Christmas by losing your situation! (*shouted Scrooge*)

FRED: Don't be angry uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon Nephew!

FRED: But can we not be friends? (*pleaded the nephew*)

SCROOGE: I said Good afternoon!!

FRED: I am sorry to find you so resolute but I will keep my Christmas humour to the last. So a Merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE: Good-afternoon. (*came the relentless reply from Scrooge*)

FRED: And a Happy New Year! (*the nephew added hastily*)

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

NARRATOR: Without an angry word the nephew left the room and offered seasons greetings with the clerk who returned them warmly. On letting the nephew out, the clerk let two gentlemen in. With books and papers in their hands the gentlemen took off their hats and stood within Scrooge's office.

GENTLEMAN #1: Scrooge and Marley's I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley? (*asked the first gentleman*)

SCROOGE: Mr Marley died seven years ago, this very night. (*replied Scrooge*)

GENTLEMAN #1: Then perhaps Mr Scrooge you would find it desirable to make some slight provisions for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at this time of year. Hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons? (*countered Scrooge*)

GENTLEMAN #1: Plenty of prisons. (*replied the first gentleman*)

SCROOGE: Then what about the Union Houses, The Treadmill and the poor law? (*Scrooge continued*)

GENTLEMAN #1: All still in operation and very busy.

SCROOGE: Oh I am glad to hear it, from your words I thought something had stopped them in their useful course. (*stated Scrooge*)

GENTLEMAN #1: Many of us believe that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude and we are trying to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat, drink and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for? (*asked the gentleman*)

SCROOGE: Nothing! Leave me alone. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, I can't afford to make idle people merry. The establishments I have already mentioned cost me enough – the badly off must go there.

GENTLEMAN #1: But many would rather die. (*continued the gentleman*)

SCROOGE: Then they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon gentlemen!

NARRATOR: Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew and Scrooge resumed his labours. Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened and the cold became intense. Out in the streets great braziers glowed with heat, as the towns people went about their Christmas preparations. Finally the time for Scrooge to shut up the counting house arrived.

SCROOGE: I suppose you want all day off tomorrow? (*Scrooge moaned to his clerk*)

BOB CRATCHIT: If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient and it's not fair. If I was to stop half a crown for it, you'd think yourself ill used, I'll be bound. A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every 25th December! But I suppose you must have the whole day, just be all the earlier the next day.

NARRATOR: The clerk promised he would before scampering off and running all the way home to play at blind man's-buff. As for Scrooge, he had his usual melancholy dinner at his usual melancholy tavern before setting for home to retire to bed in chambers that had once belonged to his deceased partner. Not that his seven years dead partner had for any reason entered his thoughts since his earlier conversation in his counting house. And yet, as he placed his key in the lock of his door he saw in the great knocker, not a knocker, but Marley's face.
(pause)
Marley's face. The hair was curiously stirred with ghostly spectacles turned up on its forehead. The eyes, though open, were perfectly motionless. It was not angry or ferocious and yet with its livid colour was horrible. To say that Scrooge was not startled would be untrue and yet as he stood transfixed at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again. He walked in and lit his candle, glancing cautiously at the back of the door half expecting to see Marley's ponytail sticking out into the hall. But it wasn't.

SCROOGE: Pooh! Pooh! (*dismissed Scrooge*)

NARRATOR: Scrooge made his way up the huge staircase and despite his candle, darkness engulfed the hall. Scrooge liked it like that because darkness was cheap. Despite himself, Scrooge checked his rooms. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa, nobody in his dressing gown, nobody under the bed nor in the closet. Thus satisfied he locked himself in before changing into his dressing gown, slippers and night cap and sat down before a tiny fire to take his gruel. With the fire so low on such a bitter night he was obliged to sit close and brood over it. The fireplace itself was old, paved all around with tiles designed to illustrate the scriptures.

Despite these images to attract his thoughts that face of Marley, seven years dead, came and swallowed up the whole.

SCROOGE: Humbug! (*denied Scrooge*)

NARRATOR: He walked across the room and took several turns before taking to his seat once more. As he threw back his head his glance happened to rest upon an old bell that hung in the room. It was part of the old communication system in the large building. With inexplicable dread he saw the bell begin to swing, so softly at first that it barely made a sound until eventually it rang out loudly along with every other bell in the house.

ALL: [sound of bells]
Dingle a ling a ling a ling..... [continued over narrators next line]

NARRATOR: [Over the sound of the bells]
After what seemed like an hour, the bells all ceased together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise deep down as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine merchants cellar. The cellar door flew open with a booming sound and then became much louder on the floors below, then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

SCROOGE: It's humbug still! (*said Scrooge*) I won't believe it!

NARRATOR: The noise continued and came through the heavy door and as it passed into the room the dying flame leaped up as though to cry, "I know him! Marley's Ghost!"
It was the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights, and boots. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long and wound about him like a tail and it was made of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds and heavy purses wrought in steel. A folded kerchief was bound about its head and chin. Though it was transparent, Scrooge felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes.

SCROOGE: How now! (*said Scrooge as caustically as ever*). What do you want with me?

MARLEY'S GHOST: Much!

NARRATOR: There was no doubting that it was Marley's voice.

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY'S GHOST: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you then? (*asked Scrooge raising his voice*)

MARLEY'S GHOST: In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.
You don't believe in me. (*observed the ghost*)

SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY'S GHOST: What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your own senses?

SCROOGE: I don't know (*said Scrooge*)

MARLEY'S GHOST: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because a little thing effects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheat. Perhaps an undigested bit of beef,

a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese or a fragment of an underdone potato. Humbug, I tell you: humbug!

MARLEY'S GHOST: [A long frightful cry – continued until Scrooge asks for Mercy]
 WWWHHHOOOOOAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

NARRATOR: [Over the cry of Marley's Ghost]
 The phantom took off the bandage round his head, and its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast! The horror was too much for Scrooge and he fell upon his knees.

SCROOGE: [Over the cry of Marley's Ghost]
 Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY'S GHOST: Man of the worldly mind! (*replied the ghost*) 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'S GHOST: It is required of everyman (*the Ghost returned*) that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men, 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! And witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!

MARLEY'S GHOST: [A long frightful cry – over Scrooge's next line]

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

MARLEY'S GHOST: I wear the chain I forged in life (*replied the ghost*). I made it link by link, and yard by yard. I girded it on my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Do you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was as heavy and long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it since. It is a ponderous chain!

NARRATOR: Scrooge glanced about him, half expecting to find himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable. But he could see nothing.

SCROOGE: Jacob. Old Jacob Marley, tell me more! (*implored Scrooge*)
 Speak comfort to me Jacob!

MARLEY'S GHOST: I have none to give (*replied the Ghost*). Nor can I tell you what I would for very little is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. In life my spirit never walked beyond the narrow limits of our counting house and so weary journeys lie before me!

SCROOGE: Seven years dead (*mused Scrooge*) And travelling all the time?

MARLEY'S GHOST: The whole time. No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse. Oh not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused. Oh such was I!

SCROOGE: But you were always a good man of business, Jacob (*faltered Scrooge*).

MARLEY'S GHOST: Business! (*cried the Ghost, wringing his hands*) Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were, all, my business.

The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business.

NARRATOR: The ghost held up its chain as if it were the cause of all its unavailing grief before flinging it heavily upon the ground again.

MARLEY'S GHOST: At this time of year I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode. Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me*?

NARRATOR: Scrooge began to quake.

MARLEY'S GHOST: Hear me! (*cried the ghost*) My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: I will (*said Scrooge*). But don't be hard on me, Jacob. Prey!

MARLEY'S GHOST: How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.

NARRATOR: Scrooge shivered, it was not an agreeable idea.

MARLEY'S GHOST: I am her tonight to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: You always were a good friend to me (*said Scrooge*).
Thankee.

MARLEY'S GHOST: You will be haunted by Three Spirits (*resumed the Ghost*).

SCROOGE: Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?
(*demanded Scrooge in a faltering voice*)

MARLEY'S GHOST: It is.

SCROOGE: I-I think I'd rather not (*said Scrooge*)

MARLEY'S GHOST: Without their visits you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow when the bell tolls One.

SCROOGE: C-Couldn't I take 'em all at once and have it over, Jacob?
(*hinted Scrooge*)

MARLEY'S GHOST: Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate.
Look to see me no more and, for your own sake, look that you remember has passed between us!

NARRATOR: Scrooge ventured to raise his eyes to find the apparition walking backward from him. At every step it took, the window raised itself a little until it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach until they were but two paces apart. Scrooge stopped and he became aware of incoherent noises in the air.

ALL: [Sounds of sorrowful wailing]
Whooooaaaaa whoooooaaaaa

NARRATOR: Sounds of lamentation and regret and wailings inexpressibly sorrowful. The spectre joined in the mournful dirge and floated out upon the bleak, dark night. Following to the window Scrooge found the air filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither, moaning as they went. All wore chains like Marley's Ghost. The misery with them all was

clear, that they sought to interfere, for good, with human matters and had lost the power for ever.

ALL:

[start fading moaning]

NARRATOR:

Slowly the phantoms and the night faded back to normality and Scrooge closed the window.

He examined the door by which the Ghost had entered and it was double locked, the bolts undisturbed. Whether through fatigue, his emotions, his glimpse of the invisible World or simply the lateness of the hour he went straight to bed without undressing and fell asleep upon the instant.

Act Two

The First of the Three Spirits

NARRATOR: When Scrooge awoke it was still dark and the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. He listened for the hour.

ALL: DONG!
DONG!

SCROOGE: The heavy bell stopped at Twelve!
Why, it isn't possible, (*said Scrooge*) it was past two when I went to bed. I cannot have slept through a whole day, and yet what has happened to the sun if it is twelve noon!

NARRATOR: Alarmed Scrooge scrambled out of bed and groped his way to the window, wiping a hole in the frost with his dressing gown. It was still very foggy and extremely cold and that there was no noise from people running to and fro ruled out noon.

Scrooge went back to bed and thought and thought but could make nothing of it. Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly.

SCROOGE: Was it a dream or not? (*he thought*).

NARRATOR: Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three quarters more when he suddenly remembered the Ghosts warning of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was passed.
The quarter seemed so long that he was convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

ALL: [sound of small chime]
Ding-Dong.

SCROOGE: A quarter past (*said scrooge, counting*)

ALL: [sound of small chime]
Ding-Dong.

SCROOGE: Half past.
 ALL: [sound of small chime]
 Ding-Dong.

SCROOGE: A quarter to it.
 ALL: [sound of small chime]
 Ding-Dong.

SCROOGE: The hour itself and nothing else! (*said Scrooge triumphantly*)
 NARRATOR: But Scrooge had spoken before the hour bell had sounded.
 ALL: [Deep melancholy chime]
 DONG!

NARRATOR: Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, the curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a hand and scrooge found himself face to face with an unearthly visitor. It was a strange figure, an old man viewed through some supernatural medium which gave him a child's proportions. Its hair was white as if from old age and yet the face had not a wrinkle on it. The strangest thing about it was the bright clear jet of light that sprung from the crown of its head, by which all was visible. Under its arm it carried a great extinguisher for a cap, no doubt for its duller moments.

SCROOGE: Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?
 (*asked Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: I am!

SCROOGE: Who and what are you? (*Scrooge demanded*)

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long past? (*enquired Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: No. Your past.

SCROOGE: What business brings you here?

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Your welfare! (*said the Ghost*)

SCROOGE: I'm much obliged, but perhaps a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Your reclamation then. Take heed!

NARRATOR: As the Spirit spoke it put out its strong hand and though it clasped Scrooge gently by the hand it was not to be resisted.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Rise! And walk with me! (*the Ghost demanded*)

NARRATOR: The Spirit made for the window, causing scrooge to clasp its robe in supplication.

SCROOGE: I am a mortal (*Scrooge remonstrated*) and liable to fall.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Bear but a touch of my hand upon your heart and you shall be upheld in more than this!

NARRATOR: As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear cold winter day, with snow upon the ground.

SCROOGE: Good heaven! (*said Scrooge*) I was bred in the place. I was a boy here!

NARRATOR: With the Spirits gaze upon him Scrooge was conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a

thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long forgotten.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Your lip is trembling Scrooge. (*said the Ghost*) And what is that upon your cheek?

SCROOGE: It is nothing, a pimple now lead on where you will.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: You recollect the way? (*asked the Spirit*)

SCROOGE: Remember it! I could walk it blindfold.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Strange then to have forgotten it for so many years! (*observed the Ghost*) Let us go on.

NARRATOR: They walked along the road, Scrooge remembering every gate, post and tree until a little market town appeared in the distance Some boys on ponies came in to view, so full of great spirits that the air was full of shouts and merry music.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: These are but shadows of the things that have been (*said the Ghost*) They have no consciousness of us.

NARRATOR: As the travellers came nearer Scrooge knew and named everyone.

SCROOGE: Why am I so happy to see them and so filled with gladness to hear then hail Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas? What good has it ever done to me?

NARRATOR: The boys parted company at various crossways and byways for their own homes.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: The school is not quite deserted (*said the Ghost*) A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

SCROOGE: I know (*sobbed Scrooge*)

NARRATOR: They made their way to the school, a dull red brick building in a poor state of decay. In one of the cold melancholy rooms they came across a lonely boy, seated at a desk and reading. Scrooge sat down near him and wept to see his former self as he had used to be.

SCROOGE: I – I wish..... But it's too late now. (*muttered Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: What is the matter? (*asked the Spirit*)

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

NARRATOR: The Ghost smiled thoughtfully.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Let us see another Christmas!

NARRATOR: Scrooge watched as his former self grew larger and the room around them a little darker and more dirty. Panels shrank, windows cracked and fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling. How this was done Scrooge did not know, he only knew that it was correct. For there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and, with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door. It opened and a little girl, much younger than the boy came darting in.

FAN: Dear, dear brother I have come to bring you home! To bring you home, home, home!

MASTER SCROOGE: Home, little Fan?

FAN: 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. He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that 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.

MASTER SCROOGE: You are quite a woman, little Fan! (*exclaimed the boy*)

FAN: [claps her hands and screams in delight]

NARRATOR: [over the claps and screams]
The little girl dragged the boy towards the door and by the time Master Scrooge's trunk had been loaded on to the top of the chaise they had the schoolmaster goodbye and drove gaily down the garden sweep.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered (*said the Ghost*) But she had a large heart!

SCROOGE: So she had. I will not gainsay it Spirit. God forbid!

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: She died a woman and had, as I think, children. (*said the Ghost*)

SCROOGE: One child (*Scrooge returned*)

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: True. Your nephew!

SCROOGE: Er, yes (*said Scrooge uneasily*)

NARRATOR: Scrooge and the Spirit left the school and were immediately in the busy thoroughfares of a city. It was plain enough by the dressing of the shops that here too, it was Christmastime again. It was evening and the streets were lighted up.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Do you know this warehouse door? (*asked the Spirit*)

SCROOGE: Know it! I was apprenticed here!

NARRATOR: They went in to find an old gentleman in a Welsh Wig sitting behind a high desk.

SCROOGE: Why, its old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig alive again!

NARRATOR: Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, looked up at the clock and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat jovial voice-

MR FEZZIWIG: Yo ho there! Ebenezer! Dick!

SCROOGE: Dick Wilkins to be sure (*said Scrooge to the Ghost*)
Bless me, yes there he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear.

MR FEZZIWIG: Yo ho my boys. No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Lets have the shutters up before a man can say Jack Robinson!

NARRATOR: The two boys charged into the streets with the shutters – one, two, three – had 'em up in their places – four, five, six – barred 'em and pinned 'em – seven, eight, nine – and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like racehorses.

MR FEZZIWIG: Hilli-ho! Clear away, my lads and lets have lots of room here!
Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

NARRATOR: There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. The lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ballroom as you would desire to see upon a winter's night. In came a fiddler with a music book. In came Mrs Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwig's, beaming and loveable. In came all the young men employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin the baker. In they all came, one after another and then danced and danced and danced.

MR FEZZIWIG: [Clapping]
Well done! Well done!

NARRATOR: There were more dances then and even old Fezziwig and Mrs Fezziwig taking top couple. There were forfeits, there was cake and a great cold roast, there were mince pies and plenty of beer.

ALL: DONG!
DONG!

NARRATOR: When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr and Mrs Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and, shaking hands with every person individually wished him or her a Merry Christmas as they left. During this time Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self.

SCROOGE: I remember everything! (*cried Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude. (*said the Ghost*).

SCROOGE: Small! (*echoed Scrooge*)

NARRATOR: The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring their hearts out in praise of Fezziwig.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise? (*questioned the Spirit*)

SCROOGE: It isn't that, Spirit. (*said Scrooge heatedly*) He has 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 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune -.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: What is the matter? (*asked the Ghost*)

SCROOGE: Nothing particular. (*Scrooge replied*).

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: Something, I think. (*the Ghost insisted*).

SCROOGE: No, no. (*said scrooge*). I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all.

NARRATOR: As Scrooge's former self turned down the lamps from his bed under the counter in the back room Scrooge and the Ghost were once again side by side in the open air.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: My time grows short (*observed the Spirit*). Quick!

NARRATOR: The words had immediate effect for Scrooge was once again found himself before his former self.
He was older now, a man in the prime of his life. His face had not yet the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy restless motion in the eye which betrayed the passion that had taken root.
He was not alone but sat by the side of a fair young girl in mourning dress. There were tears in her eyes which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

BELLE: It matters little (*she said softly*) To you, very little. Another idol has replaced 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.

SCROOGE: What idol has replaced you? (*questioned the younger Scrooge*).

BELLE: A golden one.

SCROOGE: This is the even-handed dealing of the world! (*said Scrooge*). 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 to much (*she answered gently*). All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen you nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, gain, engrosses you. Have I not?

SCROOGE: What then? (*He retorted*). Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.

NARRATOR: She shook her head.

SCROOGE: Am I?

BELLE: Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor, and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made you were another man.

SCROOGE: I was a boy (*said Scrooge impatiently*)

BELLE: Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are (*she retorted*). I am. 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.

SCROOGE: Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words. No. Never.

SCROOGE: In what, then?

BELLE: In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as it its great end. 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? Ah, no!

SCROOGE: You think not (*he said with a struggle*)

BELLE: I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows! When I have learned a Truth like this. I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free today, can even I believe that would choose a dowerless girl – you who weigh everything by gain. I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.

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 this recollection of it gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which you woke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

NARRATOR: She left him, and they parted.

SCROOGE: Spirit, show me now more. (*Begged scrooge*). Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: One shadow more! (*exclaimed the Ghost*).

SCROOGE: No more! No more! I don't wish to see it. Show me no more. (*cried Scrooge*).

NARRATOR: But the relentless Ghost forced him to see what happened next. They were in another scene; a room, not very large or handsome but full of comfort. Near to the fire sat a beautiful girl, so like the last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw her, now a comely matron, sitting opposite what must her daughter.

The noise in the room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there than Scrooge could count. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter enjoyed it very much.

There was a knock upon the door.

ALL: [Screams of excitement]

NARRATOR: [over the screams]

There were shouts of wonder and delight as the father came home attended by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. The joy, and gratitude and ecstasy!

[stop screams]

In time the children went to bed.

Now Scrooge watched more attentively as the daughter leant fondly against the master of the house by the fireside. And when he thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and full of promise might have called him father, his sight grew very dim indeed.

BELLE'S HUSBAND: Belle (he said, turning to his wife). I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.

BELLE: Who was it?
BELLE'S HUSBAND: Guess!
BELLE: How can I? Oh I don't know. Mr Scrooge.
BELLE'S HUSBAND: Mr Scrooge it was (*her husband confirmed*) I passed his office window; and with it not shut up and a candle inside, I could hardly help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world I believe.

SCROOGE: Spirit! (*said Scrooge in a broken voice*). Remove me from this place.

GHOST OF XMAS PAST: I told you these were shadows of things that had been (*said the Ghost*). That they are what they are, do not blame me!

SCROOGE: Remove me! I cannot bear it! (Scrooge exclaimed)

NARRATOR: He turned upon the Ghost and wrestled with it.

SCROOGE: Leave me! Take me back! Haunt me no longer!

NARRATOR: In the struggle Scrooge had the notion that perhaps the light that burned high and bright from the crown of the Spirit had a connection with the influence the Ghost had over him. With a sudden action he seized the extinguisher cap from under its arm and pressed it down upon its head. The Spirit dropped beneath it but still light streamed from under the cap. A feeling of exhaustion and irresistible drowsiness overcame him and with a parting squeeze of the cap he found himself back in his own bedroom and barely managed to reel to his bed before he sank into a heavy sleep.

Act Three

The Second of the Three Spirits

- NARRATOR: Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, Scrooge felt that he had regained consciousness just before the stroke of One. He was in the nick of time to hold conference with the second messenger despatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. Not wishing to be taken by surprise he drew the curtains on all sides and established a lookout all round the bed. Now Scrooge was prepared for almost anything, though he was not by any means prepared for nothing. Consequently when the bell struck one –
- ALL: DONG!
- NARRATOR: Nothing appeared and he took to a fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, yet nothing came but a blaze of ruddy light that had streamed upon his bed when the clock had proclaimed the hour. At last however, he began to think that the source of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room from whence, upon further examination it seemed to shine. He got up softly, shuffled in his slippers to the door and placed his hand upon the lock.
- GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Enter Scrooge!
- NARRATOR: His own room had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were hung with living green, gleaming berries, leaves of holly, mistletoe and ivy. Heaped upon the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, great joints of meat, barrels of oysters, red hot chestnuts and juicy apples and oranges. In an easy state upon this couch there sat a jolly Giant who bore a glowing torch held high to shed its light on Scrooge as he peeped round the door.
- GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Come in! (*exclaimed the Ghost*) Come in and know me better man!
- NARRATOR: Scrooge entered timidly and hung his head before the Spirit.
- GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me!
- NARRATOR: It was clothed in one simple deep green robe, bordered with white fur and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath set with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free and with its genial face, sparkling eye and cheery voice held a most joyful air.
- GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: You have never seen the like of me before! (*exclaimed the ghost*)
- SCROOGE: Never. (*replied Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Have you never walked forth with the younger members of my family, my elder brothers born in these later years?

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

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: More than eighteen hundred (*said the Ghost*)

SCROOGE: A tremendous family to provide for (*muttered Scrooge*)

NARRATOR: The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

SCROOGE: Spirit, conduct me where you will (*said Scrooge*). I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learned a lesson which is working now. Tonight if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Touch my robe! (*cried the Spirit*)

NARRATOR: All vanished instantly and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning in the snow. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town and yet people were jovial and full of glee, now and then exchanging a facetious snowball.

The shops were still half open, the poulterer's, the grocers and the fruiterers so radiant in their glory. There were great, round pot bellied baskets of chestnuts, broad girthed Spanish onions and pears and apples clustered high in blooming pyramids. All the customers were hurried and eager in the promise of the day but soon the steeples called good people to church and chapel.

At the same time there emerged, from scores of by-streets and lanes innumerable poor revellers, carrying their dinners to the baker's shops. The spirit stood with Scrooge in a baker's doorway and, taking of the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch.

SCROOGE: Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch (*asked Scrooge*).

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: There is. My own.

SCROOGE: Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day? (*Scrooge enquired*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: To any kindly given. To a poor one most.

SCROOGE: Why to a poor one most?

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Because it needs it most.

SCROOGE: Spirit! (*said Scrooge after a moments thought*) I wonder, why do you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment/ I! (*cried the Spirit*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: I!

SCROOGE: You would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all, wouldn't you?

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: I!

SCROOGE: You seek to close these places on the seventh day and it comes to the same thing. (*said Scrooge*).

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: I seek!

SCROOGE: Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family (*Scrooge explained*).

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: There are some upon this earth of yours (returned the Spirit) who lay clam to know us and who do their deeds of passion, envy, bigotry and selfishness in our name. They are as strange to us as if they never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us.

SCROOGE: Yes I will, I promise.

NARRATOR: They went on, invisible, into the suburbs of the town and straight to the dwelling of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk. They watched as Mrs Cratchit, Bob Cratchit's wife, dressed in a twice-turned gown rose from her seat. With her was Belinda Cratchit, the second of her daughters and master Peter Cratchit who plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes. And then there were the two smaller Cratchit's who cam tearing in and danced about the table.

MRS CRATCHIT: What has ever got your precious father, then? (*said Mrs Cratchit*) And you brother , Tiny Tim. And Martha weren't as late last Christmas Day by half an hour!

ALL: Here's Martha, Mother! Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!

MRS CRATCHIT: Why, bless you heart alive, my dear, how late you are! (*said Mrs Cratchit*) Well never mind so long as you are come. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear and have a warm, Lord bless ye!

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

NARRATOR: So Martha hid herself and in came little Bob Cratchit, his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed to look seasonable and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame.

BOB CRATCHIT: Why, where's our Martha? (*cried Bob, looking round*)

MRS CRATCHIT: Not coming (*said Mrs Cratchit*)

BOB CRATCHIT: Not coming? Not coming upon Christmas Day?

ALL: Surprise! She's already here Father!

NARRATOR: Bob hugged his daughter to his heart's content while the two younger Cratchit's bore Tiny Tim off into the wash-house to take a peek at the pudding.

MRS CRATCHIT: And how did Tiny Tim behave? (*asked Mrs Cratchit*)

BOB CRATCHIT: As good as gold and better (*replied Bob*). 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 the them to remember upon Christmas day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see. I – I do believe that he is growing stronger and heartier.

NARRATOR: Before another word could be spoken, the sound of his active little crutch was heard upon the floor and he came back. Master Peter and the two young Cratchits went to fetch the goose with which they soon returned in high procession. Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; and in truth, it was something very like it in

that house. Mrs Cratchit made the gravy hissing hot, Master Peter mashed the potatoes, Miss Belinda sweetened the apple sauce, Martha dusted the hot plates, Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table and the two young children set chairs for everybody.

At last the dishes were set and was succeeded by a breathless pause before Mrs Cratchit plunge the carving knife into the Goose.

ALL: [murmur of delight]
Mmmmmmmmmmm!

TINY TIM: Hurrah!

BOB CRATCHIT: I don't believe there ever was such a Goose cooked.

ALL: Here! Here!

NARRATOR: Eked out by apple sauce and mashed potatoes it was a sufficient dinner for all the family. At the end Mrs Cratchit nervously left the room to fetch the pudding.

MRS CRATCHIT: Suppose it should not be enough! (*she worried to herself*)
Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the backyard and stolen it!

NARRATOR: Nevertheless, in half a minute Mrs Cratchit returned – flushed, but smiling proudly – with the pudding, blazing with ignited Brandy.

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, a wonderful pudding! (*exclaimed Bob*) And I do believe it is your greatest success ever!

NARRATOR: Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so.
At last the dinner was all done and the family drew round the hearth.

BOB CRATCHIT: A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us! (*said Bob*)

ALL: God bless us!

TINY TIM: God bless us, every one!

SCROOGE: Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live. (*said Scrooge with an interest he had never felt before*).

GHOST OF XMAS 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!

GHOST OF XMAS 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.

NARRATOR: Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Man, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered what the surplus is, and where it is. (*said the Ghost*) Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that, in the sight of heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child.

NARRATOR: Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke and cast his eyes to the ground only to raise them speedily at the sound of his own name.

BOB CRATCHIT: Mr Scrooge! (*said Bob*) I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the feast!

MRS CRATCHIT: 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. (*cried Mrs Cratchit*)

BOB CRATCHIT: My dear, the children! Christmas day. (*said Bob*)

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!

BOB CRATCHIT: My dear! Christmas day. (*Bob answered mildly*)

MRS CRATCHIT: I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's, not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! He'll be merry and very happy, I have no doubt!

NARRATOR: The children drank the toast after her. Certainly Scrooge was the ogre of the family, for the mere mention of his name had cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed and their shoes and clothes were scanty, But they were happy and contented with the time. As they faded from view Scrooge kept his eyes upon them, especially on Tiny Tim until the last.

By this time it was getting dark and snowing pretty heavily as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets. Without a word of warning they were suddenly upon a bleak moor.

SCROOGE: What place is this? (*asked Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: A place where miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth. But they know me. See!

NARRATOR: They advanced to a nearby hut and passing through the walls found a cheerful company assembled around a glowing fire. An old, old man and a woman with their children and children's children. The old man was singing them a Christmas song and from time to time they all joined in the chorus.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bad Scrooge hold his robe and passing on above the moor sped to sea! To Scrooge's horror he saw the last of the land and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water. They came upon a solitary lighthouse. But even here, two men sat joined at a table and bid each other a Merry Christmas before one of the men struck up a sturdy song.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea until they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsmen at the wheel and listened as every man aboard hummed a Christmas tune. On again they went until, much to Scrooge's surprise he found himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room

with the Spirit smiling by his side. They was a great hearty laugh-

FRED: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!!!

NARRATOR: It was Scrooge's nephew! And his laughter was so contagious that Scrooge's niece by marriage and their assembled friends roared out lustily.

ALL: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!!!

FRED: He said that Christmas was a humbug! He believed it too!
(cried Scrooge's nephew)

SCROOGE'S NIECE: More shame for him, Fred! *(said Scrooge's niece who was exceedingly pretty)*

FRED: He's a comical old fellow that's the truth *(said Fred)* Though not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.

SCROOGE'S NIECE: I'm sure he is very rich, Fred. At least, you always tell *me* so. *(said his wife)*

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

SCROOGE'S NIECE: I have no patience with him *(observed Scrooge's niece)*.

ALL: Nor I! *(said the assembled ladies)*

FRED: Oh I have! *(said Scrooge's nephew)* 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 don't lose much of a dinner.

SCROOGE'S NIECE: Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner *(interrupted Scrooge's niece)*

ALL: Here, here!

FRED: Well! I am very glad to hear it *(said Scrooge's nephew)* because I haven't any great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?

SCROOGE'S NIECE: Oh do go on Fred *(interrupted his wife)* 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, which could do him no harm. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas until he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it – I defy him – if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying "Uncle scrooge, how are you?" If it only put him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, *that's* something; and I think I shook him yesterday.

ALL: [snorts of laughter]
Ha, ha, ha!

NARRATOR: After tea they had some music, for they were a musical family. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp and played a simple little air.

SCROOGE: Ah, this was a favourite of sweet, sweet Fan. (*remembered Scrooge*)

NARRATOR: He had of course been reminded of the child who fetched him from boarding-school by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him came upon his mind and he softened more and more, thinking of what could have been. But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. They played at forfeits, there was a game of blindman's buff and How, When and Where. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played. And so did Scrooge! Forgetting, in his interest of what was going, that his voice made no sound in their ears he sometimes came out with his guess out loud. The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood.

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: It is time to depart (*said the Spirit*)

SCROOGE: Oh no, please may we stay until the guests have departed (*pleaded Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: We cannot.

SCROOGE: But here is a new game. One half hour, Spirit, only one!

NARRATOR: It was a game called Yes or No where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something and the rest must find out, he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case maybe. The brisk fire of questioning soon exposed that he was thinking of an animal.

SCROOGE'S NIECE: Is it a savage animal?

FRED: Yes.

ALL: Does it growl and grunt sometimes?

FRED: Yes.

SCROOGE'S NIECE: Does it live in London?

FRED: Yes.

ALL: Does it walk the streets?

FRED: Yes.

SCROOGE'S NIECE: Is it a bear?

FRED: No.

ALL: A cow?

FRED: No.

SCROOGE'S NIECE: An ass?

FRED: Ha, ha, ha. No!

ALL: A bull?

FRED: No.

SCROOGE'S NIECE: Is it a horse?

FRED: No.

ALL: I know it! I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! (*said the niece's plump sister*)

FRED: Then what is it?

ALL: It is your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-ooge.

FRED: It is, it is!

SCROOGE'S NIECE: Then surely the answer to my question "Is it a bear" ought to have been yes! Your answer of "no" diverted me entirely from Mr Scrooge. (*said Scrooge's niece*)

ALL: Ha, ha, ha.

FRED: He has given us plenty of merriment I am sure (*said Fred*)
And it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, "Uncle Scrooge".

ALL: Uncle Scrooge (*they all cried*)

FRED: A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is! (*said Scrooge's nephew*) He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!

NARRATOR: Uncle Scrooge had become so gay and light of heart that he would have thanked them in an inaudible speech had given him time. But the whole scene passed off and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels. Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end.
It was a long night. It was strange too, that, while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change but never spoke of until he noticed that its hair was grey.

SCROOGE: Are Spirits' lives so short? (*he asked*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: My life upon this globe is very brief. It ends tonight (*replied the Ghost*)

SCROOGE: Tonight! (*cried Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Tonight at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near.

ALL: [soft bell]
DING.
DING.
DING.

NARRATOR: The chimes marked three quarters past eleven.

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? (*asked Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it (*was the Spirit's sorrowful reply*) Look here!

NARRATOR: From the foldings of its robe it brought two wretched, abject, frightful, miserable children. They knelt down at its feet and clung upon the outside of its garment.

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: O man! Look here! Look, look down here! (*exclaimed the Ghost*)

NARRATOR: They were a boy and a girl. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, a stake and shrivelled hand had pinched and twisted them.
Scrooge stared back, appalled.

SCROOGE: Spirit! Are they yours? (*was all he could say*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: They are man's. And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is ignorance. This girl is want. Beware of both of them, 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.

SCROOGE: Have they no refuge or resource? (*cried Scrooge*)

GHOST OF XMAS PRESENT: Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses (*said the Spirit, turning on Scrooge his own words for the last time.*)

NARRATOR: The bell struck twelve.

ALL: [deep bell & over the Narrators words]

DONG!

NARRATOR: Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate [allow last bell to fade] he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and, lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist along the ground towards him.

Act Four

NARRATOR: The phantom approached silently. Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.
It was shrouded in a deep black garment which concealed all and left nothing visible, save one outstretched hand. Its mysterious presence filled him with dread.

SCROOGE: Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas yet to come? (*asked Scrooge*).

NARRATOR: The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

SCROOGE: You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us. Is that so Spirit?

NARRATOR: The Spirit inclined its head, that was the only answer he received. Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow the spectral hand.

SCROOGE: Ghost of the future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?

NARRATOR: It gave him no reply, the hand was pointed straight before them.

SCROOGE: Lead on (*said Scrooge*) Lead on! The night is waning fast and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!

NARRATOR: The phantom moved away and Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress.
The City sprang up around them and the Spirit stopped beside a little knot of business men. Scrooge advance to listen to their talk.

FAT GENTLEMAN: No, I don't know much about it either. I only know he's dead. (*said a fat man with a monstrous chin*)

RED FACED GENTLEMAN: When did he die (*enquired another red faced gentleman*)

FAT GENTLEMAN: Last night, I believe.

RED FACED GENTLEMAN: Why, what was the matter with him? (*asked the red faced man*) I thought he'd never die.

FAT GENTLEMAN: God knows (*said the first man with a yawn*)

RED FACED GENTLEMAN: What has he done with his money? (*asked the red faced man*)

FAT GENTLEMAN: I haven't heard. Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know. (*retorted the fat man*)

RED FACED GENTLEMAN: Ha, ha, ha.

FAT GENTLEMAN: It's likely to be a very cheap funeral (*he carried on*) for, upon my life, I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party, and volunteer?

RED FACED GENTLEMAN: I don't mind going if a lunch is provided (*observed the red faced man*). But I must be fed if I make one.

FAT GENTLEMAN: Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all (*said the fat Gentleman*) for I never wear black gloves and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye!

NARRATOR: The men drifted away to mix with other groups. Scrooge knew then men, and looked to the Spirit for an explanation.

SCROOGE: Surely the matter is not about the death of my old partner, Jacob, for that was the Past and, Spirit, your province is the future.

NARRATOR: Scrooge then looked about for his own image, but another man stood in his accustomed corner; and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there he saw no likeness of himself. It gave him little surprise for he had been resolving in his mind a change of life and hoped he saw his newborn resolutions carried out in this.

They left the busy scene and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before. Their ways were foul and narrow, the shops and houses wretched and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth and misery. Scrooge and the Phantom came into a low browed shop where iron, old rags, bottles, bones and greasy offal were bought. Sitting in amongst his wares was a grey-haired old rascal. A woman with a heavy bundle entered the shop. She had scarcely entered when another woman came in too, closely followed by a man in black.

All three burst out laughing.

ALL: Ha, ha, ha.

CHARWOMAN: Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it (*said the charwoman, the first woman*)

OLD JOE: You couldn't have met in a better place (*said old Joe*) Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour.

NARRATOR: The parlour was the space behind a screen of rags. The charwoman threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool, with a look of bold defiance at the other two.

CHARWOMAN: Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman! Who's the wiser? Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose. (*cried the charwoman*)

OLD JOE: No, indeed (*said the Shopkeeper, laughing*)

CHARWOMAN: If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw, why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.

NARRATOR: It was the Undertaker who opened his package first.

OLD JOE: Let me see (*said Old Joe as he examined the contents*) A seal, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve buttons and a brooch. Let me see. Hmm. Well, that's your account (*he announced after adding the sum*) And I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?

Ah, Mrs Dilber. Let us see, sheets, towels, a little wearing apparel, two old fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar tongs and a few boots.

NARRATOR: Again Old Joe added up the account.

OLD JOE: I always give too much to the ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself. That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal, and knock off half a crown.

CHARWOMAN: And now unwrap *my* bundle, Joe (*said the Charwoman*).

OLD JOE: What do you call this? Bed-curtains? You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there.

CHARWOMAN: Yes I do. Why not? Now don't get oil on them blankets!

OLD JOE: His blankets? (*said Old Joe*)

CHARWOMAN: Who else's do you think? He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say.

OLD JOE: I hope he didn't die of anything catching. (*said Old Joe*)

CHARWOMAN: Don't you be afraid of that (*returned the Charwoman*) I ain't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! You may look at that shirt till your eyes ache, but you won't find a hole in it. It's the best he had and they'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.

OLD JOE: What do you call wasting it (*asked the shopkeeper*)

CHARWOMAN: Putting him in it on him to be buried in. Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again (*she said with a laugh*)

NARRATOR: Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror and viewed them with disgust as Old Joe produced a flannel bag with money in it to settle the three accounts.

CHARWOMAN: Ha! Ha! This is the end of it you see (*laughed the Charwoman*) He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead.

SCROOGE: Spirit! (*cried scrooge*) I see! I see! The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way now. Merciful heaven, what is this?

NARRATOR: He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed and now he almost touched a bed – a bare, uncurtained bed – on which, beneath a ragged sheet lay something covered up. The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy. Then pale light fell straight upon the bed and there, unwatched, unwept and uncared for was the body of this man. The phantom's steady hand was pointed to the head which was covered so carelessly that the slightest motion of a finger on Scrooge's part would have disclosed the face. He longed to do it but he had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at this side.

SCROOGE: Spirit! (*cried Scrooge*) This is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!

NARRATOR: Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

SCROOGE: I understand you, and I would do it if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power. If there is any person in the town who feels emotion caused by this man's death, show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!

NARRATOR: The Phantom spread its dark robe like a wing to reveal a room where a mother and her children were. She was expecting someone with eagerness for she walked up and down the room, glancing at the clock. At length the long-expected knock was heard.

ALL: Knock! Knock!

NARRATOR: It was her husband.

CAROLINE: What news! Is it good or bad? (*she asked*)

DEBTOR: Bad (*he answered*)

CAROLINE: We are quite ruined?

DEBTOR: No. There is hope yet, Caroline.

CAROLINE: If he relents there is! Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened. (*she exclaimed*)

DEBTOR: He is past relenting (*said he husband*) He is dead.

CAROLINE: To whom will our debt be transferred?

DEBTOR: I don't know. But, before that time, we shall be ready with the money. Though even if we were not, it would be bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep with light hearts, Caroline.

NARRATOR: Indeed, their hearts were lighter and brighter and it was a happier house for this man's death.

SCROOGE: Is the only emotion you can show me as a result of this event one of pleasure? (*said Scrooge*) Let me see some tenderness connected with this death or that dark Chamber, Spirit, will be for ever present to me.

NARRATOR: The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet and as they went along Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house and found the mother and the children seated around the fire. It was very quiet.

MRS CRATCHIT: It must be past your Father's to come home (*she said*) Though I think he has walked a little slower than he used to, these last few evenings. I- I have known him walk with - I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder very fast indeed.

ALL: And so have I! (*all the children cried together*)

MRS CRATCHIT: But he was light to carry (*she resumed*) and his father loved him so that it was no trouble, no trouble. And there is your father at the door!

NARRATOR: Bob came in and his tea was ready for him on the hob. He was very cheerful with them and spoke pleasantly to all the family.

BOB CRATCHIT: My look at your fine work girls. It is beautiful, and you will be ready long before Sunday.

MRS CRATCHIT: Sunday! You went today then, Robert? *(said his wife)*

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, my dear. 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 that I would walk there on a Sunday. Oh my little, little child! *(cried Bob)* My little child!

NARRATOR: He broke down all at once, he couldn't help it. He left the room and went upstairs into the room above. There was a chair set close beside the child. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and he went down again quite happy.
They drew about the fire and talked.

BOB CRATCHIT: I met Mr Scrooge's nephew in the street today. *(said Bob)*

FRED: What has happened Mr Cratchit? You look just a little down.

BOB CRATCHIT: He asked me. On which, for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him.

FRED: I am heartily sorry for it, Mr Cratchit.

BOB CRATCHIT: He said then.

FRED: And heartily sorry for your good wife.

BOB CRATCHIT: How he ever knew *that*, I don't know. *(said Bob)*

MRS CRATCHIT: Knew what my dear? *(asked Mrs Cratchit)*

BOB CRATCHIT: Why, that you were a good wife.

ALL: Everyone knows that!

BOB CRATCHIT: Well observed children! I hope they do. Any way he continued....*(went on Bob)*

FRED: Heartily sorry for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way.

BOB CRATCHIT: He said, giving me his card.

FRED: That's where I live. Pray come to me.

BOB CRATCHIT: Now it wasn't for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. *(said Bob)* It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.

MRS CRATCHIT: I'm sure he's a good soul! *(said Mrs Cratchit)*

BOB CRATCHIT: You would be sure of it my dear. If you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he got Peter a better situation, though there's plenty of time for that. But, however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim – shall we – or this first parting that there was among us?

ALL: Never Father! *(they all cried)*

BOB CRATCHIT: And I know my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.

ALL: No never, father! *(they all cried again)*

BOB CRATCHIT: I am very happy! *(said little Bob)*

NARRATOR: Mrs Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him and Peter and himself shook hands.

SCROOGE: Spectre (*said Scrooge*) something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?

NARRATOR: The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come conveyed him once more into the resorts of business men.

SCROOGE: This court through which we hurry now is where my place of occupation is. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be in days to come.

NARRATOR: The Spirit stopped, the hand was pointed elsewhere.

SCROOGE: The house is yonder. Why do you point away?

NARRATOR: The inexorable finger underwent no change. Scrooge hastened to the window.

SCROOGE: It is an office still but not my office! The furniture is not the same! And the figure in the chair is not me!

NARRATOR: The Phantom pointed as before and Scrooge joined it once again and accompanied it until they reached an iron gate.

SCROOGE: A churchyard (*said Scrooge*) Here then lies the wretched man whose name I must learn!

NARRATOR: The Spirit stood among the graves and pointed to One. Scrooge advanced to it trembling.

SCROOGE: Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point (*said Scrooge*) Answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be only?

NARRATOR: Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

SCROOGE: Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if preserved in, they must lead (*said Scrooge*) But of the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!

NARRATOR: The Spirit was immovable as ever. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went and read the name upon the stone of the neglected grave.

SCROOGE: EBENEZER SCROOGE!
Am I that man who lay upon the bed? (*he cried upon his knees*)

NARRATOR: The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

SCROOGE: No, Spirit! Oh no, no! Spirit hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?

NARRATOR: For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

SCROOGE: Good spirit, your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life?

NARRATOR: The kind hand trembled.

SCROOGE: I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The

Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!

NARRATOR:

In his agony he caught hold of the spectral hand but the Spirit repulsed him and he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Act Five

The End of it

NARRATOR: And the bedpost was his own and the room was his own.
SCROOGE: I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! (*he repeated, scrambling out of bed*) The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. O Jacob Marley! Heaven and the Christmastime be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!
The bed-curtains are not torn down, rings and all. They are here, I am here, the shadows of the things that would have been may have been dispelled. They will be. I know they will!
I don't know what to do! I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy, I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the World! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!

NARRATOR: He ran into the sitting-room.
SCROOGE: There's the saucepan that the gruel was in! There's the door by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha, ha, ha!

NARRATOR: For a man who had been out of practise for so many years, it really was a splendid laugh.
SCROOGE: I don't know what day of the month it is, I don't know how long I have been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo there!

NARRATOR: He was checked by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard.

ALL: DING!
DONG!
HAMMER!
BELL!
CLANG!
CLASH!

NARRATOR: Scrooge ran to the window and opened it wide and saw a boy on the street.
SCROOGE: What's today? (*he called*)
STREET BOY: Eh?
SCROOGE: What's today, my fine fellow.
STREET BOY: Today, why, Christmas Day. (*replied the boy*)
SCROOGE: It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course

they can.
Do you know the poulterer's in the next street but one? (*he called to the boy*)

STREET BOY: I should hope I do! (*came the reply*)
SCROOGE: An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there! – Not the little prize turkey; the big one?

STREET BOY: What! The one as big as me?
SCROOGE: What delightful boy! (*said Scrooge*) It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!

STREET BOY: It's hanging there now (*said the boy*)
SCROOGE: Is it? Go and buy it!
STREET BOY: Walk – ER!
SCROOGE: No, no I am in earnest (*said Scrooge*) Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the directions where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half a crown!

NARRATOR: The boy was off like a shot.
SCROOGE: I'll send it to Bob Cratchit (*whispered scrooge*) He shan't know who sends it. It's twice the size of tiny Tim.

NARRATOR: As he waited downstairs for the man to arrive his eyes caught sight of the knocker.
SCROOGE: What a wonderful knocker, I shall love it as long as I live. What an honest expression it has in its face. Here's the turkey! Hallo! Whoop! How are you? Merry Christmas! Why, it's impossible to carry such a Turkey to Camden Town. You must have a cab.

NARRATOR: He chuckled as he said this, chuckled as he paid for the turkey, chuckled when he recompensed the boy and chuckled till he cried.
Dressing himself in all best he at last got out into the streets. Scrooge regarded everyone with a delighted smile. He hadn't gone far when he saw, coming towards him, the Gentleman who had walked into his counting house the day before and said-

GENTLEMAN #1: Scrooge and Marley's I believe?
NARRATOR: How would the Gentleman look upon him when they met?
SCROOGE: My dear Sir (*said scrooge*) How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you sir!

GENTLEMAN #1: Mr Scrooge?
SCROOGE: Yes, that is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness to
[sound of whispering]

NARRATOR: Scrooge whispered something in the Gentleman's ear.
GENTLEMAN #1: Lord bless me! (*cried the Gentleman*) My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious?

SCROOGE: If you please (*said Scrooge*) Not a farthing less. A great many back payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?

GENTLEMAN #1: My dear sir, I don't know what to say to such munifi-

SCROOGE: Don't say anything, please. Come and see me. Will you come and see me again?

GENTLEMAN #1: I will! (*cried the gentleman*).

SCROOGE: Thankee (*said Scrooge*) I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!

NARRATOR: Scrooge went to Church and walked the streets, patted children, questioned beggars and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk – that anything – could give him so much happiness. After a time he turned his steps towards his nephews house. He passed the door a dozen times before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash and did it.

SCROOGE: Fred! (*said Scrooge, sidling his round the door*)

FRED: Why bless my soul (*cried Fred*) who's that?

SCROOGE: It's I. Your Uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?

NARRATOR: Let him in? It's a mercy he didn't shake his hand off and nothing could be heartier for it proved to be a wonderful party, with wonderful games and such wonderful happiness. But he was early at the office next morning.

SCROOGE: If I could only get there first (*thought Scrooge*) If I could only catch Bob Cratchit coming late! I must, I simply must!

NARRATOR: And he did for the clock struck nine.

ALL: DONG!
DONG!
DONG!
DONG!
DONG!
DONG!
DONG!
DONG!
DONG!
DONG!

NARRATOR: And then quarter past.

ALL: DING.

SCROOGE: Still no sign of him (*Scrooge shrieked*)

NARRATOR: In fact Bob was a full eighteen and a half minutes behind his time. His hat was off before he had opened the door and was on his stool in a jiffy, driving away with his pen

SCROOGE: Hallo! What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?

BOB CRATCHIT: I am very sorry sir. I *am* behind my time.

SCROOGE: You are! Yes, I think you are! Step this way, sir, if you please.

BOB CRATCHIT: It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir (*pleaded Bob*)

SCROOGE: Now I tell you what my friend (*said Scrooge*) I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore – and therefore I am about to raise your salary!!

NARRATOR: As he cried this scrooge leapt from his stool and gave Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that the poor fellow staggered out of the room.

SCROOGE: A merry Christmas Bob! A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another 'i', Bob Cratchit!

NARRATOR: Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all and infinitely more. And to Tiny Tim, who did *not* die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old City knew. He had no further intercourse with Spirits and it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of all of us. And so, as Tiny Tim observed:

TINY TIM: God bless us, Every One!