

ACT ONE.

MARLEY'S GHOST.

6 roles needed: Narrator, Scrooge (a grumpy old man), Nephew (a cheerful young man), Gentleman (a kindly man), Marley (a whining ghost) and a Flame (scared)

NARRATOR

Once upon a time, upon a Christmas eve old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house.

NEPHEW

"A merry Christmas, uncle!"

NARRATOR

It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew.

SCROOGE

"Bah! . . . Humbug!"

NEPHEW

"Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?"

SCROOGE

"I do. Out upon merry Christmas! If I had my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding. He should!"

NEPHEW

"Uncle!"

SCROOGE

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

NEPHEW

"Keep it! But you don't keep it."

SCROOGE

“Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!”

NEPHEW

“I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. And therefore uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!”

SCROOGE

"Good afternoon."

NEPHEW

“I’ll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!”

SCROOGE

"GOOD Afternoon!"

NEPHEW

"And A Happy New-Year!"

SCROOGE

"GOOD AFTERNOON!!!"

NARRATOR

His nephew left the room without an angry word, but the clerk, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in.

GENTLEMAN

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. A few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?"

SCROOGE

"Nothing!"

GENTLEMAN

"You wish to be anonymous?"

SCROOGE

"I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the prisons and the workhouses, -- they cost enough, -- and those who are badly off must go there."

GENTLEMAN

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

SCROOGE

"If they would rather die, they had better do it!"

NARRATOR

The hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and went home to bed.

Now it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door of this house, except that it was very large; and yet Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face, with a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar.

As Scrooge looked at this, it was a knocker again. He said,

SCROOGE

"Pooh, pooh!"

NARRATOR

. . . and closed the door with a *BANG*. The sound resounded through the house like thunder. (*BANG, Bang, bang*) Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, (*BANG, Bang, bang*) appeared to have a separate peal of echoes (*BANG, Bang, bang*) of its own.

Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for its being very dark. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he put on his dressing-gown and slippers and his nightcap, and sat down before the very low fire to take his gruel.

As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange dread, that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. (ding, ding, ding) Soon it rang out loudly, (*Ding, DING, DING!*) and so did every bell in the house. (*Dingaling, Aling, ALing, ALING, ALING, ALING, ALING!!!!!!*)

This was succeeded by a clanking noise, (*clank*) deep down below, (*clank*) as if some person (*clank*) were dragging a heavy chain (*clank*) over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar.

Then he heard the noise much louder, (*Clank*) on the floors below; (*Clank*) then coming up the stairs; (*Clank!*) then coming straight towards his door. (*Clank!!*)

It came on through the heavy door, (*CLANK!!!*) and a spectre passed into the room before his eyes. And upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried,

FLAME

"I know him! Marley's ghost!"

SCROOGE

"What do you want with me?"

MARLEY

"Much!"

SCROOGE

"Who are you?"

MARLEY

"Ask me who I was."

SCROOGE

"Who were you then?"

MARLEY

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

NARRATOR

The ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

MARLEY

"You don't believe in me."

SCROOGE

"I don't."

MARLEY

"Why do you doubt your senses?"

SCROOGE

"Because a little thing affects them. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

NARRATOR

. . . the spirit raised a frightful cry . . .

MARLEY

[HOWL] (OOOOOOOOHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!)

SCROOGE

"Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me? Why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?"

MARLEY

"It is required of every man, that the spirit within him should walk 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. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house -- mark me! -- in life my spirit never roved beyond our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!"

NARRATOR

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

MARLEY

"I am here to-night to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. You will be haunted by Three Spirits. Expect the first to-morrow night, when the bell tolls One. 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."

NARRATOR

Scrooge tried to say Humbug but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the invisible world, or the conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, he went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep on the instant. [*MAKE SNORING SOUNDS AS IF ASLEEP*]

(All children now sing . . .)

**Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.**

**'Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.**

**Don we now our gay apparel,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.**

**Troll the ancient Yule tide carol,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.**

ACT TWO.

THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS.

3 roles needed: Narrator, Scrooge (a grumpy old man), First Ghost (a young and calm ghost), Mr. Fezzigwig (a jovial fellow)

NARRATOR

WHEN Scrooge awoke, the church clock tolled a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy (*BONG!*) ONE.

Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a strange figure, like a child.

SCROOGE

"Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?"

FIRST GHOST

"I am!"

SCROOGE

"Who and what are you?"

FIRST GHOST

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

NARRATOR

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood in the busy thoroughfares of a city. It was made plain enough by the dressing of the shops that here, too, it was Christmas time. The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

SCROOGE

"Know it! I apprenticed here!"

NARRATOR

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk that, if he had been two inches taller, he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

SCROOGE

"Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig, alive again!"

FEZZIWIG

"Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

NARRATOR

A living and moving picture of Scrooge's former self, a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-prentice.

FEZZIWIG

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up, before a man can say Jack Robinson! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here!"

NARRATOR

Clear away! 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 warehouse was as snug and warm and dry and bright a ball-room as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches (MAKE FIDDLE SOUNDS). In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In they all came one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty

couple at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place.

When the clock struck eleven this ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig, shaking hands with every person as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas.

FIRST GHOST

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude. He has spent but a few pounds of your money, -- three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

SCROOGE

"It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.

Spirit! remove me from this place. Haunt me no longer!"

NARRATOR

As he struggled with the Spirit he was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He had barely time to reel to bed before he sank into a heavy sleep.
[MAKE SNORING SOUNDS AS IF ASLEEP]

(All children now sing . . .)

**It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,**

**From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:**

**"Peace on the earth,
goodwill to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King."**

**The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.**

ACT THREE.

THE SECOND OF THREE SPIRITS.

8 roles needed: Narrator, Scrooge (a grumpy old man), Second Ghost (happy booming sort of ghost), Mrs. Cratchit (kindly but a bit rough mother), Mr. Cratchit (a kindly father and emotional), Tiny Tim (a young boy), and The Two Young Cratchits (two fun-loving and very energetic little children).

NARRATOR

SCROOGE awoke in his bedroom.

The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove. The leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney. Heaped upon the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, great joints of meat, pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, great bowls of punch and immense twelfth-cakes. Upon this couch there sat a Giant glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch.

SECOND GHOST

"Come in, -- come in! and know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! You have never seen the like of me before! Touch my robe!"

NARRATOR

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast. The room and its contents all vanished instantly, and they stood in the city streets upon a snowy Christmas morning. Scrooge and the Ghost passed on, invisible, straight to Scrooge's clerk's; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit . . .

MRS. CRATCHIT

"What has ever got your precious father then? And your brother Tiny Tim!"

THE TWO YOUNG CRATCHITS

"No, no! There's father coming . . ."

NARRATOR

. . . cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once.

In came Bob, the father, 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!

MRS. CRATCHIT

"And how did little Tim behave?"

BOB CRATCHIT

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

NARRATOR

Master Peter and the two young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy – ready beforehand in a little saucepan -- hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless [PAUSE HERE] pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected *GUSHHHHH* of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board (*AAAAAAHHHHH!!!*), and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with

the handle of his knife, and feebly cried . . .

TINY TIM

“Hurrah!”

NARRATOR

But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone, to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Mrs. Cratchit entered, -- smiling proudly, -- with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half of a quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

BOB CRATCHIT

“O, a wonderful pudding!”

NARRATOR

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and crackled noisily. They were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

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. Suddenly, as they stood together in an open place, the bell struck (*BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG!*) twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it no more. AS the last stroke ceased to vibrate, 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.

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS.

12-13 roles needed: Narrator, Scrooge (a grumpy old man), Man with Monstrous Chin (A big man, very loud), Another Gentleman (a gentleman), Red-faced Gentleman (exactly that), Mrs. Cratchit, Peter (older and gentle son of Cratchit family) Bob Cratchit, Boy (a young boy, a bit rough and not afraid to speak his mind to adults), Three or Four Good-Humored Fellows (young gentlemen, friendly and happy) and, Tiny Tim.

SCROOGE

"Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. Will you not speak to me?"

NARRATOR

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

SCROOGE

"Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!"

NARRATOR

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them. But there they were in the heart of it amongst the merchants.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

MAN WITH MONSTROUS CHIN

"I don't know much about it either way. I only know he's dead."

ANOTHER GENTLEMAN

"When did he die?"

MAN WITH MONSTROUS CHIN

"Last night, I believe."

RED-FACED GENTLEMAN

"What has he done with his money?"

MAN WITH MONSTROUS CHIN

"I haven't heard, Company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know."

NARRATOR

The scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bare, uncurtained bed. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon this bed; and on it, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this unknown man.

SCROOGE

"Spirit, let me see some tenderness connected with a death, or this dark chamber, Spirit, will be forever present to me."

NARRATOR

The Ghost conducted him to poor Bob Cratchit's house, -- the dwelling he had visited before, -- and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in needle-work. But surely they were very quiet!

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

MRS. CRATCHIT

"The color hurts my eyes. They're better now again. It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time."

PETER

"Past it rather. But I think he has walked a little slower than he used these few last evenings, Mother."

MRS. CRATCHIT

"I have known him walk with -- I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed. But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble, -- no trouble. And there is your father at the door!"

NARRATOR

She hurried out to meet him; and Bob came in. His tea was ready for him, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child, a little cheek against his face, as if they said, "Don't mind it, father. Don't be grieved!"

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised Mrs. Cratchit and the girls.

MRS. CRATCHIT

"You went to-day, then, Robert?"

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 him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child! My little child!"

SCROOGE

"Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was, with the covered face, whom we saw lying dead?"

NARRATOR

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him to a dismal, wretched, ruinous churchyard.

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and, following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, -- EBENEZER SCROOGE.

SCROOGE

"Am I that man who lay upon the bed? No, Spirit! O no, no! Spirit! hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been. Why show me this, if I am past all hope? Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life. I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. O, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

NARRATOR

Holding up his hands in one last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Yes, and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in! He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. (*BONG! ABONG!, ABONG!, ABONG!. ABONG!, ABONG!!, ABONG!!!*)

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist, no night; clear, bright, stirring, golden day.

SCROOGE

"What's to-day?"

NARRATOR

. . . cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes..

BOY

"EH?"

SCROOGE

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?"

BOY

"To-day! Why, CHRISTMAS DAY."

SCROOGE

"It's Christmas day! I haven't missed it. Hallo, my fine fellow!"

BOY

"Hallo!"

SCROOGE

"Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?"

BOY

"I should hope I did."

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?"

BOY

"What, the one as big as me?"

SCROOGE

"What a delightful boy! It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!"

BOY

"It's hanging there now."

SCROOGE

"Is it? Go and buy it."

BOY

"Walk-ER!"

SCROOGE

"No, no, I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction 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's! He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim."

NARRATOR

Scrooge dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present: and, walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delightful smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humored fellows said . . .

THREE OR FOUR GOOD-HUMORED FELLOWS

"Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!"

NARRATOR

He was early at the office next morning. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late!

The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. Bob was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time.

Bob's hat was off, before he opened the door. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

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, if you please. Now, I tell you what my friend. I am not going to stand for this sort of thing any longer. And therefore, I am about to raise your salary!"

NARRATOR

Bob trembled.

SCROOGE

"A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavor to assist your struggling family.

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, or any other good old city, town, or borough in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him; but his own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him. And it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well. May that be truly said of us, and all of us.

And so, as Tiny Tim observed . . .

TINY TIM

. . . God Bless Us, Every One!

End

(And now everybody sings . . .)