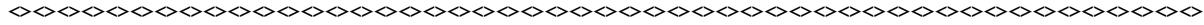


A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens

Adapted for Readers Theater by Richard Swallow

Parts(28):	Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Narrator 3	Narrator 4	Narrator 5	Fred
	Scrooge	Gentleman	Singer	Bob	Marley	Spirit 1
	Fan	Fezziwig	girl/Belle	Husband	Spirit 2	Mrs. Cratchit
	Tiny Tim	Niece	Man 1	Man 2	Man 3	Woman
	Mrs. Dilber	Old Joe	Peter	boy		



[NOTE: This script could as well be a combination Reader's Theater and Play]

Narrator 1: A CHRISTMAS CAROL by Charles Dickens, December, 1843

Stave 1: Marley's Ghost

Narrator 2: Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon `Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to.

Narrator 3: Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Narrator 4: Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the dearest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Narrator 5: Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain.

Narrator 1: The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot -- say Saint Paul's Churchyard for instance -- literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Narrator 2: Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Narrator 3: Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn't thaw it one

degree at Christmas.

Narrator 4: External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often 'came down' handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Narrator 5: Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks,

Narrator 1: 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?'

Narrator 2: No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said,

Narrator 3: 'No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!'

Narrator 4: But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call 'nuts' to Scrooge.

Narrator 5: Once upon a time -- of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve -- old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already -- it had not been light all day -- and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

Narrator 1: The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

Fred: "A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!"

Narrator 2: cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

Scrooge: "Bah!"

Narrator 3: said Scrooge,

Scrooge: "Humbug!"

Narrator 3: He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

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

Scrooge: "I do,"

Narrator 4: said Scrooge.

Scrooge: "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

Fred: "Come, then,"

Narrator 5: returned the nephew gaily.

Fred: "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Narrator 1: Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said

Scrooge: "Bah!"

Narrator 1: again; and followed it up with

Scrooge: "Humbug."

Fred: "Don't be cross, uncle!"

Narrator 2: said the nephew.

Scrooge: "What else can I be,"

Narrator 3: returned the uncle,

Scrooge: "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in `em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will,' said Scrooge indignantly, `every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

Fred: "Uncle!"

Narrator 4: pleaded the nephew.

Scrooge: "Nephew!"

Narrator 5: returned Scrooge sternly,

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

Fred: "Keep it!"

Narrator 1: repeated his nephew,

Fred: "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!"

Narrator 2: Scrooge demanded, but his nephew would not be put off.

Fred: "There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not

profited, I dare say,"

Narrator 3: returned Fred.

Fred: "Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round -- apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that -- as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. 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!"

Narrator 4: The clerk in the Tank involuntarily applauded. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

Scrooge: "Let me hear another sound from you,"

Narrator 5: "said Scrooge sharply to his clerk,

Scrooge: "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! You're quite a powerful speaker, sir,"

Narrator 1: he added, turning to his nephew.

Scrooge: "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

Fred: "Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow."

Narrator 2: Fred said in a pleading voice.
Scrooge said that he would see him -- yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him as soon as he died.

Fred: "But why?"

Narrator 2: cried Scrooge's nephew.

Fred: "Why?"

Scrooge: "Why did you get married?"

Narrator 3: said Scrooge, making little sense at all in his question.

Fred: "Because I fell in love."

Fred:" "Because you fell in love!"

Narrator 3: growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas.

Scrooge: "Good afternoon!"

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

Scrooge: "Good afternoon,"

Narrator 4: said Scrooge more curtly.

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

Scrooge: "Good afternoon,"

Narrator 5: repeated Scrooge once more

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

Scrooge: "Good afternoon!"

Fred: "And A Happy New Year!"

Scrooge: "Good afternoon."

Narrator 1: said Scrooge one final time, pointing to the door.

Narrator 2: His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

Scrooge: "There's another fellow,"

Narrator 3: muttered Scrooge; who overheard him:

Scrooge: "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam."

Narrator 4: This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

Gentleman: "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe,"

Narrator 5: said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list.

Gentleman: "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

Scrooge: "Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years,"

Narrator 1: Scrooge replied.

Scrooge: "He died seven years ago, this very night."

Gentleman: "We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner."

Narrator 2: said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

Narrator 3: It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word 'liberality,' Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

Gentleman: "At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,"

Narrator 4: continued the gentleman, taking up a pen,

Gentleman: "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and Destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

Scrooge: "Are there no prisons?"

Narrator 5: asked Scrooge.

Gentleman: "Plenty of prisons."

Narrator 1: said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

Scrooge: "And the Union workhouses?"

Narrator 2: demanded Scrooge,

Scrooge: "Are they still in operation?"

Gentleman: "They are... Still,"

Narrator 3: returned the gentleman,

Gentleman: "I wish I could say they were not."

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

Narrator 4: asked Scrooge, to which the gentleman replied

Gentleman: "Both very busy, sir."

Scrooge: "Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,"

Narrator 5: said Scrooge, sarcastically.

Scrooge: "I'm very glad to hear it."

Gentleman: "Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude,"

Narrator 1: returned the gentleman,

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

Scrooge: "Nothing!"

Narrator 2: Scrooge replied.

Gentleman: "You wish to be anonymous?"

Scrooge: "I wish to be left alone,"

Narrator 3: said Scrooge.

Scrooge: "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 establishments I have mentioned -- 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, and decrease the surplus population. Besides -- excuse me -- I don't know that."

Gentleman: "But you might know it."

Narrator 4: observed the gentleman.

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

Narrator 5: Scrooge replied meanly, and seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge returned his to labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

Narrator 1: Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flares, offering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters from the clouds. The cold became intense.

Narrator 2: The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk in the streets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef.

Narrator 3: Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of

Singer: `God bless you, merry gentleman!
May nothing you dismay!'

Narrator 4: Scrooge seized a ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.

Narrator 5: At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and told his clerk that it was time to close. The clerk instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat. Scrooge said to him,

Scrooge: "You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?"

Bob: "If quite convenient, sir."

Narrator 1: replied the clerk.

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'd suppose?"

Narrator 2: retorted Scrooge, at which the clerk could only file faintly. Scrooge continued,

Scrooge: "And yet, you don't think me ill-used when I pay a day's wages for no work.'

Bob: "But sir, 'tis but once a year!"

Narrator 3: The clerk observed

Scrooge: "A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!"

Narrator 4: said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin, and then continuing,

Scrooge: "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning."

- Narrator 5: The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), hurried home to play with his children.
- Narrator 1: Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers and passing the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, went home to bed. He lived in a gloomy set of rooms which had once belonged to his deceased partner. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge.
- Narrator 2: Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London. Let it also be kept in mind that Scrooge had not spent one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven years' dead partner that afternoon. It seems odd, then that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, not a knocker, but Marley's face.
- Narrator 3: Marley's face. It had a dismal light about it, not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.
- Narrator 4: Startled, he put his hand upon the key, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle. He paused for a moment before he shut the door, looking cautiously behind it first, as if he half-expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said
- Scrooge: "Pooh, pooh!"
- Narrator 4: and closed it with a bang.
- Narrator 5: Scrooge fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs; slowly, too. trimming his candle as he went. He checked each room as he got to them: sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guards, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.
- Narrator 1: Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.
- Narrator 2: Shortly he sat down in his favorite chair and as he threw his head back, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.
- Narrator 3: This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

Narrator 4: The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

Scrooge: "It's humbug."

Narrator 4: said Scrooge.

Scrooge: "I won't believe it."

Narrator 5: His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried 'I know him; Marley's Ghost!' and fell again.

Narrator 1: The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Narrator 2: Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he still did not believe his eyes.

Scrooge: "How now!"

Narrator 3: said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever.

Scrooge: "What do you want with me?"

Marley: "Much!"

Narrator 4: -- Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

Scrooge: "Who are you?"

Marley: "Ask me who I was."

Narrator 5: Marley replied.

Scrooge: "Who were you then?"

Narrator 1: said Scrooge, raising his voice.

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

Scrooge: "Can you -- can you sit down?"

Narrator 2: asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

Marley: "I can."

Scrooge: "Do it, then."

Narrator 3: commanded Scrooge, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it. Marley's ghost spoke

Marley: "You don't believe in me."

Scrooge: "I don't."

Marley: "What evidence do you need of my reality beyond that of your senses?"

Scrooge: "I don't know."

Narrator 4: Scrooge said, hesitation in his voice. And they continued

Marley: "Why do you doubt your senses?"

Scrooge: "Because, a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. 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 5: The Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven. The spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear indoors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Narrator 1: Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face and cried out

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

Marley: "Man of the worldly mind!"

Narrator 2: replied the Ghost,

Marley: "Do you believe in me or not?"

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

Marley: "It is required of every man,"

Narrator 3: the Ghost returned,

Marley: "that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world -- oh, woe is me! -- and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!"

Narrator 4: Again the spectre raised a mournful cry, and shook its chain and wrung its shadowy hands.

Scrooge: "You are fettered,"

Narrator 5: said Scrooge, trembling.

Scrooge: "Tell me why?"

Marley: "I wear the chain I forged in life,"

Narrator 1: replied the Ghost.

Marley: "I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?"

Narrator 2: Scrooge trembled more and more, and the ghost pursued

Marley: "Or would you know, the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!"

Narrator 3: Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing. Of the ghost he asked imploringly,

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

Marley: "I have none to give, Ebenezer Scrooge, except that I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house -- mark me! -- in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!"

Narrator 4: Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

Marley: "Hear me!"

Narrator 5: cried Marley's ghost,

Marley: "My time is nearly gone. I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. I offer you a chance and hope, Ebenezer."

Scrooge: "You were always a good friend to me, and I thank 'ee!"

Marley: "You will be haunted by Three Spirits."

Narrator 1: Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done and he asked the ghost in a faltering voice,

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

Marley: "It is."

Scrooge: "I -- I think I'd rather not,"

Narrator 2: said Scrooge, and the Ghost continued,

Marley: "Without their visits you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls One."

Scrooge: "Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?"

Marley: "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 look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!"

Narrator 2: When it had said these words, the spectre stood, wound its chain over and about its arm and walked backward from him to the window, which had raised itself wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped and the spectre, after listening for a moment, floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Narrator 3: Looking out, Scrooge saw that the air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He

had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, but had lost the power for ever.

Narrator 4: Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable and went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

Stave 2: The First of the Three Spirits

Narrator 5: Scrooge awoke, to the chimes of a neighbouring church striking the four quarters. So he listened for the hour and he heard a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy One. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

Narrator 1: The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor.

Narrator 2: It was a strange figure. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, but the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light; a cap tucked under its arm. Of this creature, Scrooge asked shakily,

Scrooge: "Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me."

Spirit 1: "I am."

Narrator 3: Replied the spirit, whose voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance, and Scrooge demanded,

Scrooge: "Who, and what are you?"

Spirit 1: "I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

Scrooge: "Long Past?"

Narrator 4: inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

Spirit 2: "No. Your past."

Narrator 5: Scrooge could not have told anybody why, but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered. The ghost exclaimed,

Spirit 1: "What!" Would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give. Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow.'

Narrator 1: Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend or any knowledge of having wilfully bonneted the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there, and the Spirit of Christmas Past replied,

Spirit 1: "Your welfare."

Scrooge: "I am much obliged, but I can not help but think that a night of unbroken rest would be more conducive to that end."

Narrator 2: Hearing this, the Spirit said immediately,

Spirit 1: "Your reclamation, then. Take heed."

Narrator 3: It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped Scrooge gently by the arm and instructed

Spirit 1: "Rise. and walk with me."

Narrator 3: It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped his robe in supplication. In a whine, Scrooge said,

Scrooge: "I am mortal, and liable to fall."

Spirit 1: "Bear but a touch of my hand there, and you shall be upheld in more than this."

Narrator 4: said the Spirit, laying it upon Scrooge's heart, and 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. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. 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!"

Narrator 5: "said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him.

Scrooge: "I was bred in this place. I was a boy here."

Narrator 1: The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He 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.

Spirit 1: "Your lip is trembling,"

Narrator 2: said the Spirit.

Spirit 1: "And what is that upon your cheek?"

Narrator 3: Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

Spirit 1: You recollect the way?"

Narrator 4: inquired the Spirit, and Scrooge cried with fervour,

Scrooge: "Remember it! I could walk it blindfold."

Spirit 1: "Strange to have forgotten it for so many years."

Narrator 5: observed the spirit as they walked along the road. Scrooge recognised every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

Spirit 1: "These are but shadows of the things that have been,"

Narrator 1: said the Ghost.

Spirit 1: "They have no consciousness of us."

Narrator 2: Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he so happy to see them? Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past? Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways? What was merry Christmas to Scrooge. Out upon merry Christmas. What good had it ever done to him? After a time, the Spirit, spoke

Spirit 1: "The school is not quite deserted. A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still."

Narrator 3: Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

Narrator 4: "They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick; a large house, but the spacious offices were little used, their walls damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed.

Narrator 5: They went in, the Ghost and Scrooge, and crossed the hall to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Narrator 1: The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, Scrooge said, in pity for his former self,

Scrooge: "Poor boy."

Narrator 2: and cried again.

Scrooge: "I wish,"

Narrator 3: Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff:

Scrooge: "but it's too late now."

Spirit 1: "What is the matter?"

Scrooge: "Nothing,"

Narrator 4: said Scrooge.

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

Narrator 5: The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so,

Spirit 1: "Let us see another Christmas."

Narrator 1: Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown instead; but how all this was brought about, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

Narrator 2: He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. 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, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her `Dear, dear brother.'

Fan: "I have come to bring you home, dear brother."

Narrator 3: said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh.

Fan: "To bring you home, home, home."

Boy: "Home, little Fan."

Narrator 4: returned the boy, and brimful of glee, his sister said:

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. First, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world.'

Boy: "You are quite a woman, little Fan."

Narrator 5: exclaimed young Scrooge to his dear little sister. She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, accompanied her.

Spirit 1: "Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered, but she had a large heart."

Scrooge: "So she had, you're right. I cannot deny it, Spirit.'

Spirit 1: "She died a woman,"

Narrator 1: said the Ghost,

Spirit 1: "and had, as I think, children."

Scrooge: "One child."

Narrator 1: Scrooge returned.

Spirit 1: "True,"

Narrator 1: said the Ghost.

Spirit 1: "Your nephew."

Narrator 1: Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly,

Scrooge: "Yes."

Narrator 2: In but a moment they left the school behind them, and were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battle for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

Narrator 3: The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

Scrooge: "Know it! I was apprenticed here!"

Narrator 4: 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."

Narrator 5: Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

Fezziwig: "Yo ho, there. Ebenezer. Dick."

Narrator 1: Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-prentice.

Scrooge: "Dick Wilkins, to be sure. Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick. Dear, dear."

Narrator 2: said Scrooge to the Ghost just as Fezziwig spoke merrily to the young men,

Fezziwig: "Yo ho, my boys. No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer. Let's have the shutters up, before a man can say Jack Robinson."

Narrator 3: You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it. They charged into the street with the shutters -- one, two, three -- had them up in their places -- four, five, six -- barred them and pinned them -- seven, eight, nine -- and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

Fezziwig: "Hilli-ho!"

Narrator 4: cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility.

Fezziwig: "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here. Hilli-ho, Dick. Chirrup, Ebenezer."

Narrator 5: 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. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and 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.

Narrator 1: In came a fiddler with a music-book. In came Mrs Fezziwig, one vast substantial and the three Miss Fezziwigs along with the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business; the house-help and neighbors. There were dances, and there was cake, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer, and more dances.

Narrator 2: 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 as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

Narrator 3: During the whole of 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. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

Narrator 4: The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

Spirit 1: "He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

Scrooge: "It isn't that,"

Narrator 5: said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self.

Scrooge: "It isn't that, Spirit. 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 them up: what then. The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

Narrator 1: He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

Spirit 1: "What is the matter.

Narrator 1: asked the Ghost, to which Scrooge replied,

Scrooge: "Nothing in particular."

Spirit 1: "Something, I think."

Narrator 1: the Ghost insisted.

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

Narrator 2: His former self turned down the lamps as he gave utterance to the wish; and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

Spirit 1: "My time grows short."

Narrator 2: observed the Spirit.

Spirit 1: "Quick."

Narrator 3: This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past. Softly she said,

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

Scrooge: "What Idol has displaced you?"

Narrator 4: Scrooge asked.

Girl: "A golden one."

Scrooge: "This is the even-handed dealing of the world. There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth."

Girl: "You fear the world too much,

Narrator 5: the young girl answered, gently.

Girl: "All your other hopes have merged into one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you."

Scrooge: "What then?"

Narrator 1: Scrooge retorted.

Scrooge: "Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then. I am not changed towards you."

Narrator 1: She shook her head Scrooge asked,

Scrooge: "Am I?"

Girl: "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,"

Narrator 2: Scrooge said impatiently.

Girl: "Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are. 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."

Girl: "In words. No. Never."

Scrooge: "In what, then."

Girl: "In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as 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."

Narrator 2: said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him. He seemed to yield to the justice of this supposition, in spite of himself. But he said with a struggle,

Scrooge: "You think not."

Girl: "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 to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl -- you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain: or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow. I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were."

Narrator 3: He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

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

Narrator 4: She left him, and they parted, and Scrooge implored of the Spirit,

Scrooge: "Spirit, show me no more. Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?"

Spirit 1: "One shadow more."

Scrooge: "No more."

Narrator 5: cried Scrooge.

Scrooge: "No more, I don't wish to see it. Show me no more."

Narrator 1: But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next. They were in another scene and place; a room, not very large but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat, a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there, than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much.

Narrator 2: But now a knocking at the door was heard and all rushed to greet the father, who came home attended by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. Their were shouts of wonder and delight with every package was received. The joy, and gratitude, and ecstasy. They are all indescribable alike. And later off to bed to dream the delightful dreams of children.

Narrator 3: Seated comfortably and happily by the fire, the husband turned to his wife, and said with a smile,

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

Girl: "Who was it."

Husband: "Guess."

Girl: "How can I. Tut, don't I know."

Narrator 4: she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed.

Girl: "Mr Scrooge."

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

Scrooge: "Spirit."

Narrator 5: said Scrooge in a broken voice,

Scrooge: "remove me from this place."

Spirit 1: "I told you these were shadows of the things that have been,"

Narrator 1: said the Ghost.

Spirit 1: "That they are what they are, do not blame me."

Scrooge: "Remove me. I cannot bear it."

Narrator 2: Scrooge exclaimed. He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

Scrooge: "Leave me. Take me back. Haunt me no longer."

Narrator 3: Scrooge observed seized the Spirit's extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head, and the Spirit dropped beneath it. Scrooge was suddenly aware of being in his own bedroom, conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and soon he sank into a heavy sleep.

Stave 3: The Second of the Three Spirits

Narrator 4: Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. Observing a bright light shining from under his door, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door. The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

Narrator 5: It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

Spirit 2: "Come in. Come in and know me better, man."

Narrator 5: exclaimed the Ghost. Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, Scrooge did not like to meet them.

Spirit 2: "I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me."

Narrator 1: said the Spirit. Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust. He spoke in a voice friendly and almost as a laugh,

Spirit 2: "You have never seen the like of me before."

Scrooge: "Never"

Narrator 2: The Ghost of Christmas Present rose, and as he did, Scrooge spoke submissively,

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

Spirit 2: "Touch my robe."

Narrator 3: Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast and they were instantly transported to the city streets on Christmas morning. The last deposit snow had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and wagons. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist whose heavier particles descended in shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain.

Narrator 4: The people who were shovelling away on the housetops were jovial and full of glee; The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen. There was hung-up mistletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, oranges and lemons.

Narrator 5: But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes. The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much. And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off his power, or else it was his own kind, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch. Think of that. Bob had but fifteen bob a-week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house.

Narrator 1: There was Mrs Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, and Master Peter Cratchit, who plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar into his mouth. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table.

Mrs. Cratchit: "What has ever got your precious father then?"

Narrator 2: said Mrs Cratchit.

Mrs. Cratchit: "And your brother, Tiny Tim?"

Narrator 2: She had no longer asked when in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and 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. The two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

Mrs. Cratchit: "And how did little Tim behave?"

Bob: "As good as gold,"

Narrator 3: said her good husband Bob,

Bob: "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 4: Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that

Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty. Tiny Tim's active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back he came before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire; Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Narrator 5: Mrs Cratchit made the gravy hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; 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 mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless 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 gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah.

Narrator 1: When every one had had enough the plates were changed by Miss Belinda, and Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Narrator 2: Oh, a wonderful pudding, enjoyed by all. And when at last the dinner was all done, the table cleared, and drinks served round, Bob proposed:

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

Narrator 3: Which all the family re-echoed, and Tiny Tim echoed the last of all,

Tiny Tim: "God bless us every one."

Narrator 4: Tiny Tim sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him. Scrooge asked of the Spirit, with an interest he had never felt before,

Scrooge: "Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

Spirit 2: "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."

Spirit 2: "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 5: Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief, and the spirit said to him,

Spirit 2: "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 1: Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name issued by Bob as a toast:

Bob: "Mr Scrooge. I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast."

Mrs. Cratchit: "The Founder of the Feast indeed!"

Narrator 2: cried Mrs Cratchit, reddening.

Mrs. Cratchit: "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope

he'd have a good appetite for it.'

Bob: "My dear,"

Narrator 3: said Bob, cautiously,

Bob: "the children.....Christmas Day."

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

Bob: "My dear,"

Narrator 4: was Bob's mild answer,

Bob: "Christmas Day."

Mrs. Cratchit: "Well, 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 very merry and very happy, I have no doubt."

Narrator 5: The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

Narrator 1: And now, without a word of warning, Scrooge found himself standing in a bright, dry, gleaming room with the Spirit standing smiling by his side and listening to the laughter of his own nephew, Fred. There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way: holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions: Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand, roared out lustily.

(All): "Ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha."

Fred: "He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live.' cried Scrooge's nephew. He believed it, too!"

Niece: "More shame for him, Fred."

Narrator 2: said Scrooge's niece, indignantly. Bless those women; they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest, and Fred replied

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

Niece: "I'm sure he is very rich, Fred,"

Narrator 3: hinted Scrooge's niece.

Niece: "At least you always tell me so."

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.'

Niece: "I have no patience with him."

Narrator 4: observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

Fred: "Oh, I have. 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."

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

Narrator 5: interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

Fred: "Well. I'm very glad to hear it. I only meant 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 am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. 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 till 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 puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something; and I think I shook him yesterday.'

Narrator 1: It was their turn to laugh now at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, just so that they laughed at any rate, Fred encouraged them in their merriment.

Narrator 2: With no little enjoyment Scrooge watched as the gathering passed their even playing at a game at blind-man's buff, then the game of How, When, and Where, in which he himself joined in the guessing. The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and Scrooge begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

Scrooge: "Here is a new game, One half hour, Spirit, only one."

Narrator 3: It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the his wife, falling into a similar state, cried out:

Niece: "I have found it out. I know what it is, Fred. I know what it is."

Fred: "What is it."

Niece: "It's your Uncle Scrooge."

Narrator 4: Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though some objected that the reply to 'Is it a bear.' ought to have been 'Yes;' inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, supposing they had ever had any tendency that way. And Fred said,

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

(All) "Well. Uncle Scrooge."

Fred: "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is. He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. To Uncle Scrooge."

Narrator 5: Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Narrator 1: Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, in almshouses, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, and left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.

Narrator 2: As quickly as before, and as unexpected, Scrooge found himself once more in his chambers, alone, as he heard the clock strike twelve. He looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. 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.

Stave 4: The Last of the Spirits

Narrator 3: The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery. It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded. Scrooge surmised,

Scrooge: "I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come."

Narrator 4: 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 5: The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer Scrooge received.

Narrator 1: Although well used to ghostly company by this time, 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 it. The Spirit pauses a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

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 you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me."

Narrator 2: It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them, and Scrooge said,

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

Narrator 3: The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

Narrator 4: They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on Change street, amongst the merchants who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals; and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

Narrator 5: 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 1: "No,"

Narrator 1: said a great fat man with a monstrous chin,

Man 1: "I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead."

Man 2: "When did he die?"

Man 1: "Last night, I believe."

Man 3: "Why, what was the matter with him?"

Narrator 2: "asked a third, man, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box.

Man 3: "I thought he'd never die."

Man 1: "God knows,"

Narrator 3: said the first, with a yawn.

Man 2: "What has he done with his money."

Man 1: "I haven't heard,"

Narrator 4: said the man with the large chin, yawning again.

Man 1: "Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know."

Narrator 5: This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

Man 1: "It's likely to be a very cheap funeral, for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer."

Man 3: "I don't mind going if a lunch is provided, but I must be fed."

All: (light laughter)

Man 1: "Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all, 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 1: Speakers and listeners strolled away, and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation. The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here.

Narrator 2: He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He had made a point always of standing well in their esteem: in a business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point of view.

Man 3: "How are you?"

Man 2: "How are you?"

Man 3: "Well. Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?"

Man 2: "So I am told. Cold, isn't it?"

Man 3: "Seasonable for Christmas time. You're not a skater, I suppose?"

Man 2: "No. No. Something else to think of. Good morning."

Narrator 3: Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting.

Narrator 4: Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself, to whom he could apply them.

Narrator 5: He looked about in that very place 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 among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had been revolving in his mind a change of life, and thought and hoped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this.

Narrator 1: Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people slipshod and ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Narrator 2: In a low-browed shop below a pent-house roof, sat a raggedy grey-haired rascal, a man nearly seventy years of age sitting in among the wares he dealt in. Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

Narrator 3: The first woman to arrive threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool; crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with a bold defiance at the other two, said to the other woman,

Woman: "What odds then? What odds, Mrs Dilber? Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did."

Mrs. Dilber: "That's true, indeed. No man more so."

Woman: "Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser. We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose."

Mrs. Dilber: "No, indeed. We should hope not."

Woman: "Very well, then. That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these. Not a dead man, I suppose."

Mrs. Dilber: "No, indeed!"

Narrator 4: said Mrs Dilber, laughing.

Woman: "If he wanted to keep them after he was dead, 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."

Mrs. Dilber: "It's the truest word that ever was spoke. It's a judgment on him."

Narrator 5: With some care, as though presenting their materials for a market, they each in turn presented Old Joe with the wares they had to offer. The man in faded black was first to produced his plunder. It was not extensive. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value, were all. They were severally examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each, upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found there was nothing more to come. To the man, he said,

Old Joe: "That's your account, and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?"

Narrator 1: Mrs Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

Old Joe: "I always give too much to 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."

Woman: "And now undo my bundle, Joe."

Narrator 2: Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

Old Joe: "What do you call this? Bed-curtains?"

Woman: "Ah."

Narrator 3: returned the woman, laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms.

Woman: "Bed-curtains."

Old Joe: "You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there."

Woman: "Yes I do, and why not."

Old Joe: "You were born to make your fortune, and you'll certainly do it."

Woman: "I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you, Joe,"

Narrator 4: returned the woman coolly.

Woman: "Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

Old Joe: "His blankets."

Woman: "Whose else's do you think? He isn't likely to take cold without them, I dare say."

Old Joe: "I hope he didn't die of any thing catching. Eh."

Narrator 5: Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror, and shuddering from head to foot, said,

Scrooge: "Spirit. 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 1: Scrooge 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, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

Narrator 2: Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side. Again he spoke,

Scrooge: "Spirit, this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go."

Narrator 3: 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 4: 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; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Narrator 5: 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 sewing. But surely they were very quiet.

Mrs. Cratchit: "Where could your father be? It must be near his time."

Peter: "Past it rather,"

Narrator 1: answered Peter, the eldest lad.

Peter: "But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother.'

Narrator 2: They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once:

Mrs. Cratchit: "I have known him walk with -- I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.'

Peter: "And so have I, Often."

Mrs. Cratchit: "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 3: She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter -- he had need of it, poor fellow -- came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, 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.'

Mrs. Cratchit: "Sunday. You went to-day, then, Robert?"

Bob: "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."

Narrator 4: He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. He left the room, and went up-stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. He was reconciled to what had happened, and soon went down again quite happy.

Narrator 5: The family drew about the fire, and talked. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little - 'just a little down you know,' related Bob, inquired what had happened to distress him.

Bob: "On which, for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. and he says to me 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr Cratchit, and heartily sorry for your good wife. Heartily sorry,' he said, 'for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way,' he said, giving me his card, 'that's where I live. Pray come to me.' 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."

Bob: " But however and when ever 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.' And I know, 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."

Bob: "I am very happy; very happy."

Narrator 1: Bob said to his beloved family as Scrooge and the Ghost looked on.

Scrooge: "Spectre,"

Narrator 2: said Scrooge, with a soft and pleading quality to his voice,

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 3: The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before -- though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Future, but showed him not himself.

Scrooge: "These courts, through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come."

Narrator 4: The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

Scrooge: "The house is yonder, Spirit. Why do you point away?"

Narrator 5: The inexorable finger underwent no change. Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

Narrator 1: They went on until they reached an iron gate. Scrooge paused to look round before entering. A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, choked up with too much burying. A worthy place.

Narrator 2: The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. Scrooge advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape, and said,

Scrooge: " Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"

Narrator 3: Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood. 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?"

Narrator 4: Scrooge cried, upon his knees. 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. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?"

Narrator 5: For the first time the hand appeared to shake, and Scrooge took hope, and he fell down upon the ground saying,

Scrooge: "Good Spirit, Your nature pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life."

Narrator 1: 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 2: In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him. Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate aye reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Stave 5: The End of It

Narrator 3: 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!

Scrooge: "I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future."

Narrator 4: Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed.

Scrooge: "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley. Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this. I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees."

Narrator 5: He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

Scrooge: "They are not torn down."

Narrator 1: cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms,

Scrooge "They are not torn down, rings and all. They are here -- I am here -- the shadows of

the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will.'

Narrator 2: His hands were busy with his garments all this time; turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance. Laughing and crying in the same breath; and struggling with his stockings, he said,

Scrooge: "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 3: He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded, but exclaiming nonetheless,

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 4: Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs.

Scrooge: "I don't know what day of the month it is. I don't know how long I've 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 here."

Narrator 5: He was checked in his thoughts by the church bells ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer; ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clang, clash. Oh, glorious, glorious. Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious. And he called downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

Scrooge: "What's to-day?"

Boy: "Eh?"

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

Boy: "To-day. Why, Christmas Day."

Scrooge: "It's Christmas Day."

Narrator 1: said Scrooge excitedly to himself.

Scrooge: "I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. 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: "Ah, 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: "Oh, right, sure."

Narrator 2: responded the boy, as though he though old Scrooge a mad joker.

Scrooge: "No, no, I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell them 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 3: The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast. Rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh, Old Scrooge whispered to himself,

Scrooge: "I'll send it to Bon Cratchit's. He shan't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim.

Narrator 4: The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went down-stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye. Patting it with one hand, he said,

Scrooge: "I shall love it, as long as I live. I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face. It's a wonderful knocker. -- Here's the Turkey. Hallo. Whoop. How are you. Merry Christmas.'

Narrator 5: The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the Turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for a cab to deliver it to the Cratchit's humble home, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Narrator 1: He 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 delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, 'Good morning, sir. A merry Christmas to you.' And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

Narrator 2: He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, 'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe.' It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it. Quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands, he said,

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."

Gentlaman: "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..."

Narrator 3: -- here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

Gentleman: "Lord bless me."

Narrator 4: cried the gentleman, as if his breath were taken away.

Gentleman: "My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious?"

Scrooge: "If you please, not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?"

Gentleman: "My dear sir, I don't know what to say to such munificence."

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

Gentleman: "I will." cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

Scrooge: "Thank you, I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you."

Narrator 5: He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk -- that anything -- could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

Narrator 1: 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, and asked of the girl who answered the door,

Scrooge: "Is your master at home, my dear."

Girl: "Yes, sir."

Scrooge: "Where is he, my love."

Girl: "He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you up-stairs, if you please."

Scrooge: "Thank you. He knows me,"

Narrator 2: said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock.

Scrooge: "I'll go in here, my dear."

Narrator 3: He turned the latch gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table and preparing to sit and eat their fine Christmas meal.

Scrooge: "Fred."

Narrator 4: Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started. Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account. And Fred cried out in happy surprise,

Fred: "Why bless my soul, who's that?"

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

Narrator 5: Let him in. It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. And so did all the guests. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, wonderful happiness.

Narrator 1: But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late. That was the thing he had

set his heart upon.

Narrator 2: And he did it; yes, he did. The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.

Narrator 3: His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. 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."

Narrator 4: growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it.

Scrooge: "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

Bob: "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: "It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

Scrooge: "Now, I'll tell you what, my friend, I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore,

Narrator 5: he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again;

Scrooge: "and therefore I am about to raise your salary."

Narrator 1: Bob trembled, and thinking Old Scrooge had become mad, got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it, holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.

Scrooge: "A merry Christmas, Bob,"

Narrator 2: said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped his obviously astonished employee on the back.

Scrooge: "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 punch, Bob. Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit."

Narrator 3: 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 he let them laugh, and little heeded them; he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

Narrator 4: He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!

Vocabulary: mourner ironmongery simile solemnized gait impropriety
Bedlam portly liberality kindred congenial counting-house
Melancholy fancy gruel wrought swoon apparition
spectre fettered ponderous fathom recumbent recollect

tumult	capacious	avarice	industry	fraught	dowerless
pinioned	comely	matron	tumultuous	reverently	Plenty's Horn
scabbard	penitence	rebuke	odious	rail	almshouse
precepts	laundress	dumb	beseech	inexorable	wretched
entreaty	repulsed	amends	dispelled	peals	poulterer
earnest	crown	recompensed	munificence	blithe	farthing
unanimity	feign	waistcoat	endeavor	intercourse	

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Scripted by Richard Swallow