**A CHRISTMAS CAROL : ACT ONE**

**Adapted for Reader’s Theater by** [**M Ryan Taylor**](https://web.archive.org/web/20161228043907/http://composer.mryantaylor.com/)

Revised by Melanee Phillips

**from the novel by Charles Dickens**

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**SCENE ONE : Narrator**

Marley was dead to begin with. There is no doubt about that. The register of his burial was signed by the 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. Old Marley was dead as a doornail. 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 friend and his sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up about the sad event.

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.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley’s name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, 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. The col within him froze his features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait: made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. He carried his own low temperature always about with him.

Once upon a time-of all the good days of the year, on Christmas Eve--old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house. It was cold bleak weather and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hand upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them.

The door of Scrooge’s counting house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in dismal little cell beyond 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 coalbox in his own room. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort he failed.

**SCENE TWO : INSIDE SCROOGE AND MARLEY’S**

(Scrooge sits busy in his office. The door is open so he can keep an eye upon his clerk, Bob, who is in a dismal little cell beyond copying letters. Scrooge has a very small fire, but Bob’s fire looks as if there is only one coal. Bob, wrapped in his white comforter, tries to warm himself at his candle.)

FRED

(entering)

A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

FRED

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

SCROOGE

I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You’re poor enough.

FRED

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

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

FRED

Don’t be cross, uncle!

SCROOGE

What else can I be 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. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

FRED

Uncle!

SCROOGE

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

FRED

Keep it! But you don’t keep it.

SCROOGE

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

FRED

I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round 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 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! (Bob involuntarily applauds)

SCROOGE

(to Bob)

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

FRED

Don’t be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE

I think not.

FRED

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

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

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

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

FRED

And A Happy New Year!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

A YOUNG CAROLER

God rest you, merry gentlemen! Let nothing you dismay! (Scrooge seizes a ruler and makes for the door with such energy of action, that the singer flees in terror. Scrooge doesn’t return to his seat, but instead faces Bob.)

SCROOGE

You’ll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

BOB

It’s only once a year, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE

A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning.

BOB

All the earlier.

SCROOGE

See that you do! (Scrooge storms out.)

**SCENE THREE : SCROOGE’S HOME**

(Scrooge steps quickly in, closing the door behind him and leaning back against it.)

SCROOGE

(muttering to himself)

Marley’s face. Marley’s face! Spectacles and all! Dismal glowing, hair stirring as if it was alive. Eyes motionless and that livid colour . . . Horrible! (Scrooge shakes himself) Bah! Just a trick of the shadows . . . darkness is the price of being thrifty! Marley! Humbug! ( one of the chamber bells begins to swing and ring, Scrooge begins to rise) Impossible! That bell doesn’t go . . . (all the bells begin to ring, then all at once they stop again, but in the distance the sound of chains being dragged across the floor replaces them and Scrooge sits bolt upright) Humbug . . . Humbug! Humbug!!! (the door flies open with a booming sound, and Scrooge shrinks from it, the sound of chains grows louder) It’s humbug still! I won’t . . . I won’t believe it.

**SCENE FOUR : MARLEY’S GHOST**

(Marley’s ghost enters)

SCROOGE

(whispering)

I know him . . . (Scrooge screws up his courage and puts on his cold and caustic business tone) How now! What do you want with me?

MARLEY

Much!

SCROOGE

Who are you?

MARLEY

Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE

Who were you then? You’re particular, for a shade.

MARLEY

In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

You don’t believe in me.

SCROOGE

I don’t.

MARLEY

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

SCROOGE

I don’t know.

MARLEY

Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE

Because, a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheat. 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!

Humbug, I tell you! humbug! (Marley raises a frightful cry, and shakes his chains, Scrooge falls upon his knees, and clasps his hands before his face) Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY

Man of the worldly mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE

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

MARLEY

It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death–and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness! (again Marley raises a cry, and shakes his chains and wrings his hands)

SCROOGE

(trembling)

You are fettered. Tell me why?

MARLEY

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

SCROOGE

(imploringly)

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

MARLEY

I have none to give. It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. A very little more is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house–mark me!–in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!

SCROOGE

But you were always a good man of business, Jacob

MARLEY

(crying and shaking his chains)

Business! Business!! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode! Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me! Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE

I will. But don’t be hard upon me, Jacob! Pray!

MARLEY

I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE

You were always a good friend to me.

MARLEY

You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE

Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY

It is.

SCROOGE

I–I think I’d rather not.

MARLEY

Without their visits you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first when the bell tolls One.

SCROOGE

Couldn’t I take ‘em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?

MARLEY

Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us….

**END OF ACT ONE**

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL : ACT TWO**

**Adapted for Reader’s Theater**

**by [M Ryan Taylor](https://web.archive.org/web/20161214111334/http://composer.mryantaylor.com/)**

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**SCENE ONE : THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST**

(The clock begins to strike Twelve and Scrooge stirs and sits up on his bed)

SCROOGE

I must have dreamed it. I must . . . Marley said something about a visit . . . a visit when the clock strikes One. Was it a dream or not? (as if in answer, the clock begins the chiming prelude again before the clacker tolls One) Impossible! The clock just rang Twelve! Still there it is, the hour itself and nothing else! (the hour bell sounds and light flashes about and illuminates the room, a radiant child-like spirit holding a cap has appeared at Scrooge’s elbow) Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?

CHRISTMAS PAST

I am!

SCROOGE

Who, and what are you?

CHRISTMAS PAST

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE

Long Past?

CHRISTMAS PAST

No. Your past.

SCROOGE

What business brings you here?

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your welfare!

SCROOGE

I’m much obliged, but would not a night of unbroken rest be more conducive to that end.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Your reclamation, then. Take heed! (gently placing a hand upon Scrooge’s arm) Rise! and walk with me! (Scrooge rises and is led to the window)

CHRISTMAS PAST

Bear but a touch of my hand there, (the Spirit lays a hand upon his heart) and you shall be upheld in more than this!

CHRISTMAS PAST

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

**SCENE THREE : AT FEZZIWIG’S**

CHRISTMAS PAST

Do you know this place?

SCROOGE

(excitedly)

Know it! I was apprenticed here! Why, it’s old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it’s Fezziwig alive again! (Fezziwig lays down his pen and looks at the clock)

FEZZIWIG

Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Wilkins!

SCROOGE

Richard Wilkins, to be sure! Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me. Poor man! Dear, dear!

FEZZIWIG

Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Wilkins. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let’s have the shutters up before a man can say Jack Robinson! Hilli-ho! Clear away, my lads, and let’s have lots of room here! Chirrup, Ebenezer ( - the fiddler tunes up and they all dance)

FEZZIWIG

Well done! Fiddler well done!

SCROOGE

Ah! Fizziwig, amazing man. Look at him go!

CHRISTMAS PAST

Dances and forfeits. Cake and cold roast. Mince-pies and ale. More dances. A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE

Small!

CHRISTMAS PAST

Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

SCROOGE

(heatedly)

It isn’t that. 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 ‘em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune. (Scrooge glances at the spirit and then his gaze to the ground)

CHRISTMAS PAST

What is the matter?

SCROOGE

Nothing particular.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Something, I think?

SCROOGE

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

CHRISTMAS PAST

My time grows short. Quick!

**SCENE FOUR : A PARK**

(an older Scrooge in his prime sits by the side of a fair young woman in a mourning-dress whose eyes are full of tears)

SCROOGE

No spirit, not this!

CHRISTMAS PAST

Watch.

BELLE

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 IN HIS PRIME

What Idol has displaced you?

BELLE

A golden one.

SCROOGE IN HIS PRIME

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

BELLE

(gently)

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

SCROOGE IN HIS PRIME

What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you. Am I?

BELLE

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

SCROOGE IN HIS PRIME

I was a boy.

BELLE

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 IN HIS PRIME

Have I ever sought release?

BELLE

In words. No. Never

SCROOGE IN HIS PRIME

In what, then?

BELLE

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!

SCROOGE IN HIS PRIME

You think not.

BELLE

I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows! But if you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl– or, choosing her, 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. (he is about to speak, but Belle, having her head turned away does not see it and resumes) You may–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! (Belle rises and leaves)

SCROOGE

Spirit! Show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?

CHRISTMAS PAST

One shadow more!

SCROOGE

No more! No more. I don’t wish to see it. Show me no more! (the spirit places a hand on Scrooge’s heart)

SCROOGE

(in agony)

Spirit! Remove me from this place.

CHRISTMAS PAST

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

SCROOGE

Remove me! I cannot bear it! (he turns to the spirit) I see in you all the faces of the past! Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer! ( all goes dark)

**END OF ACT TWO**

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL : ACT THREE**

**Adapted for Reader’s Theater**

**by [M Ryan Taylor](https://web.archive.org/web/20160423101911/http://composer.mryantaylor.com/)**

**from the novel by Charles Dickens**

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**SCENE ONE : THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT**

(a light slowly begins to shine from underneath one of the doors in Scrooge’s apartment and we see his outline, standing there in the dark - he moves toward the door and the light and hesitatingly puts his hand on the handle)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Scroooooge! Come in! Come in! (Scrooge obeys) Come in! and know me better, man!

SCROOGE

My room!? (Scooge enters timidly - the walls and ceiling are hung with living green from which bright gleaming berries glisten - a roaring fire is on the hearth - a kind of throne is heaped up of turkeys, geese, game, poultry, great joints of meat, pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch : upon this couch, there sits a giant who bares a glowing torch shaped like a horn of plenty)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! (the spirit is clothed in one simple green robe, bordered with white fur and on its head a holly wreath set with shining icicles) You have never seen the like of me before!

SCROOGE

Never.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Have never walked forth with the other members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?

SCROOGE

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

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE

A tremendous family to provide for! (the spirit rises at this, Scrooge continues quickly, but submissively) Spirit, conduct me where you will. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Touch my robe! (Scrooge does so)

**SCENE TWO : ABOUT THE CITY**

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Do you know this home?

SCROOGE

Should I?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Look!

MRS. CRACHIT

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

No, no! There’s father coming. ( Bob enters carrying Tiny Tim who hold a crutch)

SCROOGE

THIS?! is Bob Crachits home?

MRS. CRACHIT

And how did little Tim behave?

BOB

As good as gold, and better. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see. He’s growing strong and hearty, you know!

MRS. CRACHIT

Everyone’s here, let’s put on the goose!

CHILD

Mashed potatoes and gravy!

CHILD

Applesauce!

CHILD

One goose, stuffed to the brim!

TINY TIM

(feebly)

Hurrah! (they begin to dine)

CHILD

There never was such a goose!

BOB

Oh, a wonderful pudding! I regard it as the greatest culinary success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since our marriage.

MRS. CRACHIT

Now the weight is off my mind, I must confess.

BOB

(raising a glass)

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

ALL BUT BOB AND TIM

God bless us!

TINY TIM

God bless us every one!

SCROOGE

Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

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

SCROOGE

No, no. "Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

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

SCROOGE

(bowing his head)

My very words.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Man, if man you be in heart, Now you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. 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. (Scrooge bends over before the Ghost’s rebuke, and trembling casts his eyes upon the ground. But he raises them speedily, on hearing his own name)

BOB

(raising a glass)

Mr. Scrooge! I give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!

MRS. CRACHIT

The Founder of the Feast indeed! I wish I had him here. I’d give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he’d have a good appetite for it.

BOB

My dear, the children! Christmas Day.

MRS. CRACHIT

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. Christmas Day.

MRS. CRACHIT

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!

ALL CRACHIT CHILDREN

(glumly)

Mr. Scrooge.

BOB

Come Tim, give us a song.

TINY TIM

(singing)

Good King Wenceslas looked out on the feast of Stephen, when the snow lay round about deep and crispt and even . . . (he continues)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

It is time to go on.

SCROOGE

Can’t we stay a little longer to hear the end of the song?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Take hold of my robe.

**SCENE THREE : FRED’S HOUSE**

FRED

Ha ha ha! I was only going to say, that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I 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. I think I shook him yesterday.

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 GUESTS

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. Uncle Scrooge!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Come now, take a hold of my robe.

SCROOGE

Are spirits’ lives so short?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

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

SCROOGE

Tonight!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Tonight at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near.

SCROOGE

Is there no more to be helped?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses? (the bell strikes twelve and the spirit is gone - a solemnly draped and hooded phantom approaches)

**END OF ACT THREE**

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL : ACT FOUR**

**Adapted for Reader’s Theater**

**by [M Ryan Taylor](https://web.archive.org/web/20160424171557/http://composer.mryantaylor.com/)**

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**SCENE ONE : THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE**

(the phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approaches, shrouded in a deep black garment, which conceals its head, its face, its form)

SCROOGE

I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come? (the Spirit points onward with its hand) 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? (the Spirit inclines its head slightly) Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose s 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? (the Spirit again points onward with its hand) Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!

**SCENE TWO : THE EXCHANGE**

(the phantom moves away as it had come and Scrooge follows - the city seems to spring up about them, and encompass them - they are at the exchange, merchants hurry up and down and converse in groups - the Spirit stops a little knot of business men and points to them)

MERCHANT #1

No, I don’t know much about it, either way. I only know he’s dead.

MERCHANT #2

When did he die?

MERCHANT #1

Last night, I believe.

MERCHANT #2

Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he’d never die.

MERCHANT #1

(yawning)

Heaven knows.

MERCHANT #2

What has he done with his money?

MERCHANT #1

I haven’t heard. Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn’t left it to me. That’s all I know. (they all laugh)

MERCHANT #2

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?

MERCHANT #1

I don’t mind going if a lunch is provided. But I insisted I must be fed. 9 Lots of laughter…)

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!

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!

**SCENE SIX : THE CRATCHIT HOME**

(the ghost bids Scrooge follow and leads him to Bob Cratchit’s house)

MRS. CRATCHIT

You went today, then, Robert?

BOB

(looking over the needlework on the table)

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. (Bob breaks down all at once and crys) My little, little child! My little child! (the family draws about him) Mr. Scrooge’s nephew, extraordinarily kind man, I’ve scarcely seen him more than once, inquired what happened to distress me. On which I told him. ‘I’m heartily sorry for it, Mr Cratchit,’he said,’and heartily sorry for your good wife.’ By the bye, how he ever knew that, I don’t know.

MRS CRATCHIT

Knew what my dear?

BOB

Why, that you were a good wife.

SCROOGE

Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was who we was dead? (the scene dissolves into a graveyard)

**SCENE SEVEN : THE GRAVEYARD**

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? (the ghost points downward to the grave by which it stands) Say it is thus with what you show me! (the spirit is immovable, and Scrooge creeps toward it and read the name) Ebenezer Scrooge!? Am I that man who was dead? 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 but for this exchange. Why show me this, if I am past all hope! (the hand begins to shake) Good Spirit- Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life! (the hand trembles fiercely) 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! (he reaches out to the spirit)

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL : ACT FIVE**

**Adapted for Reader’s Theater**

**by [M Ryan Taylor](https://web.archive.org/web/20160425122826/http://composer.mryantaylor.com/)**

**from the novel by Charles Dickens**

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**SCENE ONE : SCROOGE’S APARTMENT**

SCROOGE

I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! 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! I am here–the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will! (he leaps up, laughing and crying at the same time) 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. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. It’s all right, it’s all true, it all happened! (he laughs long, hard and well) 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. Whoo! Halloooooo here!" (there is a ringing of church bells outside and Scrooge runs to the window and throws it open - a boy is passing in Sunday clothes)

BOY

EH?

SCROOGE

What’s today, my fine fellow?

BOY

Today! Why, CHRISTMAS DAY.

SCROOGE

It’s Christmas Day! I haven’t missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. 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

An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there?- the big one?

BOY

What, the one as big as me?

It’s hanging there now.

SCROOGE

Is it? Go and buy it.

BOY

GOOD--NESS!

SCROOGE

No, no, I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and bring it here, and you can help me deliver it and I’ll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes and I’ll give you half-a-crown! (the boy is off like a shot) I’ll take it to Bob Cratchit’s! It’s twice the size of Tiny Tim!

**SCENE TWO : THE STREET**

Christmas, It’s Christmas! I shall love it, as long as I live! (Scrooge sets off down the street himself, greeting people that walk by) Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you! Merry Christmas my dear! Happy New Year to you!

THE CRATCHITS

Scrooge Knocks

SCROOGE

(growling)

What do you mean by being here at this time of day?

CRATCHIT

I am very sorry, sir. You gave me the day off.

SCROOGE

I gave you the day? Who do you think you are, if you please.

CRATCHIT

It’s only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE

Now, I’ll tell you what, my friend. I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore . . . (he leaps from his stool, and gives Bob a dig in the waistcoat that he staggers back, Bob trembles and grabs the ruler to defend himself) . . . and therefore I am about to raise your salary! (Bob lowers the ruler) A merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you, for many a year! I’ll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl, Bob! ( Narrator steps out and addresses the audience)

FRED

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. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him. 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…

EVERYONE

God bless Us, Every One!