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Charles Dickens'

A Christmas Carol

Adapted by

John Mortimer

Samuel French — London
New York - Toronto - Hollywood



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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Commissioned and first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican Theatre, London, on 28th November 1994, financially supported by Unilever, with the following cast:

Ebenezer Scrooge	Clive Francis
Bob Cratchit	Paul Greenwood
Fred, Scrooge's Nephew	Philip Quast
Two Portly Gentlemen	Arthur Cox
	Raymond Mason
The Ghost of Jacob Marley	John Bennett
The Spirit of Christmas Past	Stephen Jenn
Child Scrooge	Steven Geller
	Daniel Whelan
Boy Scrooge	Tom Godfrey
	Ben Reynolds
Young Scrooge	Robert Portal
Headmaster	Raymond Mason
Fan	Vicky Blake
Mr Fezziwig	Raymond Bowers
Dick Wilkins	Peter Warnock
Mrs Fezziwig	Cherry Morris
The Misses Fezziwig	Polly James
	Angela Ridgeon
	Sara Weymouth
Three Young Followers	Michael Geary
	Roger Moss
	Philip Quast
Housemaid	Anita Wright
Baker	John Kane
Cook	Arthur Cox
Milkman	John Warner
Girl	Vicky Blake
Boy	Danny Mertsoy
Belle	Tracy-Ann Oberman
Her Daughter	Sara Weymouth
Her Husband	David Weston

Spirit of Christmas Present

Mrs Cratchit

Peter

Martha

Belinda

Tiny Tim

Little Cratchits

Fred's Wife, Scrooge's niece

Miss Rosie, the plump sister

Mr Topper

Spirit of Christmas Yet To Come

Businessmen

Jobbins

Staveley

Old Joe

Charwoman

Mrs Dilber

Undertaker's Man

Boy

Poulterer's Man

Maid

Children

John Kane

Polly James

Roger Moss

Sara Weymouth

Vicky Blake

Steven Geller

Daniel Whelan

Carla Prosser

Hannah Everitt

Patrick Rufey

Sam Faulkner

Sara Weymouth

Angela Ridgeon

Michael Geary

Peter Warnock

David Weston

Paul Greenwood

Raymond Mason

John Bennett

Raymond Bowers

Arthur Cox

John Warner

Cherry Morris

Anita Wright

Stephen Jenn

Rupert Mealing

Michael Geary

Vicky Blake

Hannah Gibson

Oliver Kristian

David Leslie

Oliver Palmer

Charlotte Peters

Ben Thom

Directed by Ian Judge

Set designed by John Gunter

Costumes designed by Deirdre Clancy

Lighting designed by Nigel Levings

Music composed and arranged by Nigel Hess

Choreography by Lindsay Dolan

CHARACTERS

Ebenezer Scrooge
Bob Cratchit
Fred, Scrooge's nephew
Two Portly Gentlemen
Tiny Tim
Jacob Marley's Ghost
Mrs Cratchit
Peter Cratchit
Belinda Cratchit
Martha Cratchit
Two Smaller Cratchits, a boy and a girl
The Spirit of Christmas Past
Child Scrooge
Ali Baba
Morgiana
Robinson Crusoe
Man Friday
Sinbad the Sailor } non-speaking
Young Scrooge
Headmaster
Fan, Scrooge's sister
Fezziwig
Dick Wilkins, Fezziwig's other apprentice
Mrs Fezziwig
Three Misses Fezziwig
Belle, once engaged to Scrooge
Belle's Husband
Belle's Daughter
The Spirit Of Christmas Present
Scrooge's Nephew
Fred's Wife
Miss Rosie, the Plump Sister
Topper
Guests at Fred's Party

Ignorance, a boy
Want, a girl
The Spirit Of Christmas Yet to Come
First Businessman
Second Businessman
Third Businessman
Fourth Businessman
First Important Man
Second Important Man
Man on Scrooge's Corner of the Exchange
Old Joe, a receiver of stolen property
Charwoman
Mrs Dilber, a laundress
An Undertaker's Man
Caroline
William
Their Child
Boy in Sunday Clothes
Poulterer's Man
Fred's Maid
Sailors, Miners, Lighthouse Men, etc.

The play is set in London and in and around a country town. The visits to a miner's cottage, a lighthouse and a ship at sea are done without scenery.

The main action takes place in 1843. But Scrooge is a child in the 1770s and a young man in the 1790s.

PRODUCTION NOTES

At the Barbican, the play was presented with elaborate stage machinery, houses and scenery that rose into the air and a revolve. The play can be presented far more simply, on a bare stage with furniture brought on and off when it is needed, for the office, Scrooge's bedroom, etc. The following text indicates when the scenes are played, but how they are set will depend on the intention and resources of each production.

The Chorus

The Chorus consists of the actors who are not playing named parts at the time—so all the cast play a part (or parts) and also take part in the Chorus. The allotment of the Chorus lines can be filled in in the empty brackets according to the number of actors and the Director's decision. Only one actor speaks at a time.

Music

In order to give as complete a record as possible of the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *A Christmas Carol*, the composer, Nigel Hess, has kindly supplied full details of all the *vocal* music used in the first production. In all, some seventy-five minutes of original music was played.

It is not obligatory to use any, or all, of this music in productions of the play. Other carols and music of the period can be substituted. However, a note of where Nigel Hess's music may be obtained is given on page ix. **Please read the notices regarding the use of copyright music on pages ix and x carefully.**

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(See also page ii)

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Vocal Music used in the original production of *A Christmas Carol*

Act I

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen | Music/lyrics: traditional |
| 2. Alass We Bless | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: adapted from <i>The Wassail</i> by
Robert Herrick (1591-1674) |
| 3. Veni Veni | Music/lyrics: traditional (to the tune of
<i>O Come, O Come Emmanuel</i>) |
| 4. Angels From The Realms of
Glory/O Oriens Solare | Music: traditional/Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional |
| 5. And Here is to Dobbin | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional (from <i>The Gloucestershire Wassail</i>) |
| 6. There Was An Old Man | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional (adapted from <i>The Somerset Wassail</i>) |
| 7. Beloved Eye, Beloved Star | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: J Oxenford (from the song
<i>Thou Art So Near and Yet So Far</i>) |
| 8. God Bless the Master | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional (from <i>This New Christmas Carol</i>) |
| 9. Angels From the Realms of
Glory/Hark The Herald
Angels Sing | Music: traditional/Mendelssohn/
Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional/Charles Wesley |

Act II

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Silent Night | Music: Franz Xaver Gruber (1787-1863)
Lyrics: Joseph Mohr (1792-1849) |
| 2. All Hail to the Days | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: Tom Durfey (1653-1723) and
others (from <i>The Praise of Christmas</i>) |
| 3. Past Three O'Clock | Music/lyrics traditional |

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 4. If Bethlehem Were Here Today | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: Elizabeth Madox Roberts
(freely adapted from <i>Christmas Morning</i>) 1922 |
| 5. While Shepherds Watched | Music: Christopher Tye (c 1500-1573)
Lyrics: Nahum Tate (?) 1652-1715 |
| 6. O Master and Missus | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional (from <i>The Somerset Wassail</i>) |
| 7. I Saw Three Ships | Music/lyrics: traditional |
| 8. Our Wassail Cup | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional (from <i>Wassail Song</i>) |
| 9. Puer Nobis Nascitur | Music/lyrics: traditional (to the tune of <i>Unto Us is Born a Son</i>) |
| 10. Beloved Eye, Beloved Star | as above |
| 11. Love and Joy | Music: Nigel Hess
Lyrics: traditional (from <i>Wassail Song</i>) |
| 12. God Bless The Master | as above |

All the newly composed music for *A Christmas Carol* is published by Myra Music Ltd, administered by Bucks Music Ltd.

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I Spy
Knightsbridge
A Little Hotel on the Side (*translator*)
Lunch Hour
One To Another (*sketches; co-author*)
Two Stars For Comfort
A Voyage Round My Father
What Shall We Tell Caroline?

ACT I

SCENE 1

London

There is a coffin on the empty stage. It is Marley's funeral and Scrooge is the chief mourner. The Chorus are on stage and circle round him as they speak

- () **Chorus** Marley was dead, to begin with.
- () **Chorus** There is no doubt whatever about that.
- () **Chorus** The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman——
- () **Chorus** —the clerk——
- () **Chorus** —the undertaker——
- () **Chorus** —and the Chief Mourner.
- () **Chorus** Ebenezer Scrooge signed it.
- () **Chorus** And his name's good up at the Exchange for anything he puts his hand to.
- () **Chorus** Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.
- () **Chorus** Mind! I don't mean to say, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a doornail.
- () **Chorus** I might have been inclined, for myself, to regard a *coffin* nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade.
- () **Chorus** No doubt the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the country's done for.
- () **Chorus** There is no doubt that Marley was dead.
- () **Chorus** This must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of the story we are going to relate.
- () **Chorus** So I repeat emphatically, Jacob Marley was dead as a doornail.

Scrooge sprinkles earth on the coffin

- () **Chorus** Scrooge knew he was dead?

- () **Chorus** Of course he did. How could it be otherwise?
- () **Chorus** Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years.
- () **Chorus** Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend——
- () **Chorus** —and his sole mourner...

Scrooge turns away from the graveside. He moves down stage, meets a prosperous looking man from the Chorus, and engages him in conversation

- () **Chorus** And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event!

Scrooge and the prosperous man shake hands

- () **Chorus** He was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain!

The prosperous man pays money to Scrooge, which Scrooge counts carefully

- () **Chorus** Oh, he's a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone is Scrooge.
- () **Chorus** Hard and sharp as flint——
- () **Chorus** —for which no steel ever struck out a generous fire.
- () **Chorus** Secret and self-contained——
- () **Chorus** —and solitary as an oyster.
- () **Chorus** The cold within him freezes his old features, stiffens his gait, makes his eyes red, his thin lips blue——
- () **Chorus** —and speaks out clearly in his grating voice.
- () **Chorus** He carries his low temperature always about with him.
- () **Chorus** He ices his office in the dog days and doesn't thaw it out one degree at Christmas.

Scrooge moves down stage towards the entrance of his warehouse, through the Chorus, who are dispersed on the stage. He passes through them ungreeted and unnoticed

- () **Chorus** No one ever stops him in the street to say——
- () **Chorus** My dear Scrooge. How are you?

- () **Chorus** When will you come to see me?
- () **Chorus (Beggar)** No beggars implore him to bestow a trifle.
- () **Chorus (Child)** No children ask him what o'clock it is.
- () **Chorus (Blind man)** Even the blind man's dog appears to know him——
- () **Chorus** —and pulls its owner away as though to say——
- () **Chorus** —“No eye at all is better than the evil eye of Scrooge.”
- () **Chorus** He passes behind our backs like a cold shiver.
- () **Chorus** To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance.
- () **Chorus** That, ladies and gentlemen, is “nuts” to Scrooge.

Scrooge arrives at his warehouse door. We see the sign over it: “Scrooge and Marley”

- () **Chorus** Scrooge and Marley.
- () **Chorus** Scrooge won't have Marley's name painted out.
- () **Chorus** Why go to the expense?
- () **Chorus** Some may call him “Scrooge” and some “Marley”.
- () **Chorus** It makes no difference. Provided their credit's good and they can pay on the nail!
- () **Chorus** Or the coffin nail, perhaps.

SCENE 2

Scrooge's office

Fog rises outside. A clock chimes three

The Chorus stamps to keep warm. Scrooge sits at his desk and starts to do his accounts in a huge ledger

- () **Chorus** Once upon a time—of all the good days of the year, on Christmas Eve—Scrooge sits busy in his counting house...
- () **Chorus** Jacob Marley has been dead a good seven year.
- () **Chorus** It's cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal.
- () **Chorus** Scrooge can hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down.
- () **Chorus** Beating their hands upon their breasts——

() **Chorus** —and stamping their feet upon the paving stones to warm them.

() **Chorus** The City clocks have just gone three, but it's dark already: it hasn't been light all day.

() **Chorus** The fog comes pouring in at every chink and keyhole.

Scrooge unlocks a large tin box, and starts to count the money in it

() **Chorus** External heat and cold have little influence on Scrooge.

() **Chorus** Foul weather doesn't know where to take advantage over him.

Lights up on Bob Cratchit's small office where a candle is burning

Bob Cratchit is working at his table

() **Chorus** The door of Scrooge's counting house is open so he may keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond...

() **Chorus** A sort of tank——

() **Chorus** Is copying letters.

() **Chorus** Scrooge has a very small fire——

() **Chorus** —but the clerk's fire is so very much smaller that it looks like one coal...

Bob Cratchit blows on his fingers, shivers, then plucks up courage and picks up a small shovel from his grate. He knocks on Scrooge's open door, fearfully, and then coughs to attract Scrooge's attention

Scrooge What is it, Cratchit?

Cratchit Could you see your way clear, Mr Scrooge? In your great generosity, sir? To spare me a few coals for my fireplace, which is now empty, sir?

Scrooge No, I could not see my way clear! And if you take time off your work, Cratchit, to come in here with exorbitant demands—then you and I must part company. Is that what you want?

Cratchit Not at all, Mr Scrooge. By no means. Thank you for your time, sir. *(He goes dolefully back to his office)*

Scrooge is working. Cratchit puts on his long white scarf and tries to warm his hands by his candle

() **Chorus** The clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle.

() **Chorus** In which office, not being a man of strong imagination, he failed.

Scrooge's Nephew enters Scrooge's office

Nephew A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

Scrooge (*not looking up from his work*) Bah! Humbug!

The Nephew blows out his cheeks

() **Chorus** He has so heated himself with walking through the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he's all in a glow.

Nephew Christmas "humbug", Uncle? You don't mean that, surely?

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

Nephew Come then. What right do you have to be dismal? You're rich enough!

Scrooge (*glaring at him*) Bah! (*He returns to work*) Humbug!

Nephew Don't be cross, Uncle!

Scrooge What else can I be? (*He throws down his pen*) When I live in a world of fools? Merry Christmas! Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money? A time for finding yourself a year older and not an hour richer? A time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em proved dead against you? I wish 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. So he should!

Nephew Uncle...

Scrooge Nephew! (*He picks up his pen again*) You keep "Merry Christmas" in your own way and I'll keep it in mine.

Nephew You keep it? But, Uncle, you don't keep it!

Scrooge Let me leave it out, then. Much good it has ever done you.

Nephew There are many things I haven't profited by, I'm sure, Uncle. But I believe Christmas is a *good* time. A kind, forgiving, pleasant, charitable time. The only time I know of when we all seem by one consent to open our hearts freely—and think of people poorer than us as fellow passengers to the grave. Not a strange race of creatures bound on other

journeys which don't concern us at all! So, Uncle. Christmas may never have put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket. But I believe it *has* done me good. And *will* do me good. So I say, God bless it!

Bob Cratchit applauds so loudly that he succeeds in blowing out his guttering candle. Scrooge goes to the door of the clerk's room and pokes his head in, furious

Scrooge Let me hear one more sound from you and I'll give you a surprise Christmas present. Instant dismissal! Without a reference! (*He bangs the door shut and goes back to his Nephew*) You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

Cratchit tries to relight the candle in his room

Nephew Don't be angry, Uncle. Dine with us tomorrow.

Scrooge Don't insult my intelligence! (*He sits at his desk*) What? Waste a day singing silly songs and stuffing down pudding and playing hunt the slipper with a pack of spoiled little brats! Seeing you in hell would be a pleasant alternative.

Cratchit has managed to relight the candle

Nephew But why... *Why?*

Scrooge Why did you get married, Nephew?

Nephew Because I fell in love, Uncle!

Scrooge (*sarcastically*) Because you fell in love? Good afternoon!

Nephew Nay, Uncle you never came to see me *before* that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now.

Scrooge Good afternoon!

Nephew I want nothing from you. I ask nothing of you. Why cannot we be friends...?

Scrooge Good afternoon!

Nephew 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!

Nephew And a Happy New Year!

Scrooge Cratchit! Will you wake up and let this relative out of my sight.

Cratchit comes into Scrooge's office

Nephew A Merry Christmas, Mr Cratchit!

Cratchit Merry Christmas, sir.

Scrooge There's my clerk! Fifteen shillings a week with a wife and brats ... talking about "A Merry Christmas"? Now I think I'll retire to Bedlam in search of some sanity.

The Nephew exits. As he goes, he passes the two Portly Gentlemen on their way to Scrooge's office

() **Chorus** The lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, lets the two other people in.

The Portly Gentlemen move into Scrooge's office

Cratchit goes back to his "tank", looking at them curiously

First Portly Gent Two portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold——

Second Portly Gent —now stand with their hats off in Scrooge's office.

Scrooge Good afternoon!

First Portly Gent Merry Christmas!

Second Portly Gent Merry Christmas.

They stand, holding their hats

Scrooge (*muttering*) Bedlamites!

First Portly Gent Scrooge and Marley. We believe...

Second Portly Gent Have we the pleasure of addressing Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley?

Scrooge Mr Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night.

First Portly Gent And we have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner. (*He hands a paper to Scrooge*)

() **Chorus** At the ominous word "liberality", Scrooge frowned, shook his head, and gave the Portly Gentleman back his credentials.

Second Portly Gent We are representatives of the Society for the Relief of Poverty.

Scrooge Are you indeed? (*He goes back to work*)

Second Portly Gent The Ragged Children's Clothing Charity.

First Portly Gent The Relief of Starvation in City Streets.

Second Portly Gent The Gentlewomen's Provision of Simple Fare to the Deserving Poor.

Scrooge (*not looking up from his work*) Humbug!

First Portly Gent At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge. It is Scrooge, is it not?

Scrooge Yes, it's Scrooge.

Second Portly Gent Mr Marley is deceased. Yes, of course, you said so.

First Portly Gent Unfortunately deceased.

Second Portly Gent At this season of the year. It is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and homeless.

First Portly Gent Who suffer greatly at the present time.

Second Portly Gent Many are in want of common necessities, sir.

First Portly Gent Hundreds are in want of common comforts, sir.

Scrooge Poor people?

First Portly Gent Yes, Mr Scrooge.

Scrooge Beggars?

Second Portly Gent Alas, yes, Mr Scrooge.

Scrooge Are there no prisons?

First Portly Gent Plenty of prisons, sir.

Scrooge And the workhouses. Are they still in operation?

Second Portly Gent They are still, sir.

First Portly Gent We wish we could say they were not.

Scrooge And the Poor Law. In full vigour, is it? And the Treadmill. Still turning nicely, I hope.

Second Portly Gent Both very busy, sir.

Scrooge Oh, I'm very glad to hear it. I was afraid from what you said something had gone wrong with those admirable institutions.

First Portly Gent But they scarcely furnish Christmas cheer to the multitude.

Second Portly Gent At this time of the year, Want is keenly felt and Abundance rejoices.

Scrooge sweeps his money into the drawer of his desk

First Portly Gent What shall we put you down for?

Scrooge slams the drawer shut and locks it

Scrooge Nothing!

First Portly Gent (*smiling*) We understand.

Second Portly Gent (*smiling*) An anonymous gift? That's very generous!

First Portly Gent A modest benefactor, Mr Scrooge! Who would do good by stealth.

Second Portly Gent And doesn't wish to see his name published.

Scrooge (*in an outburst*) I wish to be left alone! I don't make merry at Christmas. And I can't afford to make idle people merry. I support the Poor House, sir. And the Treadmill. And the Gaols. They cost enough, in all conscience. Let those who are badly off make use of such luxuries!

Second Portly Gent Many would rather die, sir. Than go to the Poor House.

Scrooge If that's what they'd prefer... By all means let them do it! Why not? Decrease the surplus population. It's not my business if they'd rather die. It's enough for a man to understand his own business and mine occupies me continually. Good afternoon, gentlemen.

First Portly Gent Merry——

Scrooge Good afternoon!

Second Portly Gent Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their quest...

First Portly Gent The Portly Gentlemen withdrew...

They exit

Scrooge goes back to his desk. He rules lines on paper to set out his accounts. The street is empty, bleaker, with a little sifting of snow

() **Chorus** Foggier yet, and colder.

() **Chorus** Piercing, searching, biting cold.

A Boy moves towards Scrooge's door, singing "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"

() **Chorus** The owner of one scant young nose...

() **Chorus** Gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold...

() **Chorus** As bones are gnawed by dogs...

() **Chorus** Stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole...

() **Chorus** To regale him with a carol.

Scrooge seizes a big ruler off his desk, rushes to the door, flings it open, and raises the ruler to threaten the boy

Scrooge Humbug!

The boy retreats

Scrooge goes back to work. The clock strikes six

() **Chorus** At length the hour of shutting up the counting house arrived.

() **Chorus** With an ill will, Scrooge dismounted from his stool.

Scrooge does so

() **Chorus** And tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk.

Scrooge goes to Cratchit's door and makes a reluctant gesture of dismissal. Cratchit immediately puts on his hat and snuffs out the candle

Scrooge You'll want a day off tomorrow, I don't doubt...?

Cratchit If it's quite convenient, sir.

Scrooge It's not quite convenient! More than that. It's not fair. If I was to stop you half a crown for it, you'd start squealing, I'll be bound. You'd think yourself ill used. Well, sir. Don't you think I'm ill used? Having to pay you for lying idle?

Cratchit (*smiling faintly*) Christmas is but once a year, sir.

Scrooge (*putting on his hat and coat*) So you can pick a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December? A poor excuse. And I suppose you're asking for the whole day. What? Be two hours earlier next morning. When sanity returns to the world. That's all I've got to say to you!

Cratchit Happy——

Scrooge (*going*) Bah!

Scrooge exits

Singers

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,

And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace.
The holy tide of Christmas
All others doth efface.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

SCENE 3

The street. Scrooge is leaving his office

Cratchit starts to lock up. Scrooge makes his way through the crowds in the street. As he passes, groups are singing snatches of "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen", much to Scrooge's fury

- () **Chorus** Meanwhile the fog and darkness thicken so, that people run about with flaring links.
- () **Chorus** Proffering their services to go before the horses in the carriages and conduct them on their way.
- () **Chorus** The ancient tower of a church...
- () **Chorus** Whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall...
- () **Chorus** Strikes the hours and quarters in the clouds with tremulous vibrations afterwards...
- () **Chorus** As if its teeth are chattering in its frozen head up there.
- () **Chorus** The cold becomes intense.

During the following Chorus lines, Cratchit comes away from the warehouse, warms his hands at the brazier and then joins a group of boys sliding on the ice. Scrooge arrives at his chophouse. The waiter takes his order, and brings Scrooge his chop and a newspaper

- () **Chorus** The brightness of the shops, where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows...
- () **Chorus** Make pale faces ruddy as they pass.
- () **Chorus** The Lord Mayor...
- () **Chorus** In the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House...
- () **Chorus** Gives orders to his fifty cooks and butlers...

() **Chorus** To keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should.

Scrooge throws down his newspaper and starts reading his bank book

() **Chorus** Scrooge has read his newspaper, and beguiles the evening with his favourite reading.

() **Chorus** His bank statement!

Tiny Tim appears

We see Cratchit sliding on the ice. Tiny Tim watches him

() **Chorus** Cratchit, with the long ends of his comforter dangling below his waist...

() **Chorus** For he boasts no greatcoat...

() **Chorus** Goes down the ice slide in Cornhill, twenty times...

() **Chorus** Between a lane of boys.

() **Chorus** In honour of it's being Christmas Eve.

Tiny Tim, leaning on his crutch, watches his father and claps. Scrooge finishes his dinner

Scrooge Waiter. Toothpick!

The waiter appears with a toothpick

Cratchit stops sliding, picks up Tiny Tim, and carries him off

Scrooge pays the waiter, failing to give him a tip

Scrooge exits

The waiter makes rude gestures at Scrooge's retreating back

Music: "Alas We Bless"

SCENE 4

Scrooge is walking home, picking his teeth

Three or four children, who have been watching the sliding and taking part, follow him, imitating his walk and his tooth picking, jumping and running behind him

Singers Alas! we bless, but see none here
 That brings us either ale or beer;
 Let's leave a longer time to wait,
 While rust and cobwebs bind the gate.

() **Chorus** Scrooge is going home to bed.

() **Chorus** He lives in the dusty rooms, that were the home of his dead partner!

() **Chorus** In a gloomy pile of a building, up a yard where it had no business to be...

() **Chorus (Child)** You can't help fancying that it ran there when it was a young house, playing hide and seek with other houses and forgot the way out.

Singers Where chimneys do forever weep
 For want of warmth, and no eyes sleep.
 It is in vain to sing or stay
 Our cold feet here; but we'll away.

() **Chorus** The yard is so dark that even Scrooge, who knows its every stone, has to grope with his hands.

Singers The time will come when you'll be sad
 And reckon this for fortune bad,
 To have lost the good ye might have had.

() **Chorus** By the way—the door knocker.

() **Chorus** It's a fact there's nothing particular about the door knocker.
 Except it's very large!

() **Chorus** Scrooge has seen it every night and morning.

() **Chorus** And Scrooge has as little of what's called fancy about him as any man in the City of London.

() **Chorus** Including the Corporation.

() **Chorus** So let anyone explain why Scrooge can see...

During the following passage, Scrooge puts his key in the lock

() **Chorus** Having his key in the lock...

() **Chorus** Should see...

() **Chorus** Not a knocker, but...

The knocker changes, and becomes Marley's face. It's a livid greyish colour, its grey hair is ruffled, its spectacles pushed up on his forehead. It is staring at Scrooge with grey, expressionless eyes

Marley Marley's face!

Scrooge stands staring at it. The children retreat further into the shadows during the following

() **Chorus** With a dismal light about it...

() **Chorus** Glowing like a bad lobster in the dark!

() **Chorus** Though the eyes are open, they don't move.

() **Chorus** That and its livid colour, makes it horrible...

All Horrible...

Scrooge Jacob Marley! Is that you, Jacob? What're you playing at, my old partner? Don't come bothering me now. You're dead as a coffin nail, remember.

Marley's face fades. One of the children comes into the light

() **Chorus** It's a knocker again.

Scrooge That's better, Jacob, you old devil. Never there at all, was you? *(He opens the door and looks carefully at the inside of it. Then he lights a candle and examines the back of the door more closely)* If you had've been there, I'd've expected to see your cursed pigtail sticking out behind you. *(He moves the candle to see more clearly)* No pigtail! And therefore no Jacob. *Quod Erat Demonstrandum.* So far as all ghosts and night-walkers go ... it's humbug! Pooh! Pooh! *(He slams the door shut)*

The sound of the door and the hugely amplified sounds of his "Pooh! Pooh!" echo and re-echo. Scrooge, his candle in his hand, starts to go up the dark stairs towards his bedroom

() **Chorus** Some talk of driving a coach and horses up a good old flight of stairs.

() **Chorus** But I mean to say you could get a hearse up that staircase.

Scrooge stops. He sees the shape of a hearse on a wall

() **Chorus** Is that why Scrooge thinks he can see a hearse in the gloom?

Scrooge Humbug... (*He moves on up the stairs*)

() **Chorus** Of course, it's dark.

() **Chorus** Scrooge likes it dark.

() **Chorus** Darkness comes cheap.

Scrooge moves up to his bedroom

SCENE 5

Scrooge's bedroom and sitting-room

During the following Chorus passage, Scrooge searches his rooms, getting into his night clothes, finally settling down with his gruel by the fire in his sitting-room

Scrooge Sitting-room, all as it should be. Nobody under the table!
Nobody under the sofa!

() **Chorus** A small fire in the grate.

() **Chorus** Spoon and basin ready for the little saucepan of gruel up on the hob.

() **Chorus** Scrooge has a cold in his head.

() **Chorus** Nobody under the bed!

() **Chorus** Nobody in the closet!

() **Chorus** Nobody in his dressing gown, which is hanging in a suspicious attitude against the wall!

() **Chorus** Quite satisfied, Scrooge sits down before the fire to take his gruel.

Scrooge is by the fire in the sitting-room

() **Chorus** It's a very low fire, nothing on such a bitter night.

() **Chorus** He is obliged to sit over it, and brood over it, before he can extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel.

Scrooge paces the room. He sits again. He throws back his head, and starts at a bell

- () **Chorus** His glance happens to rest upon a bell.
- () **Chorus** A disused bell, that hangs in his room.
- () **Chorus** And communicates, for some purpose now forgotten, with a chamber in the highest storey of the house.
- () **Chorus** It is with great astonishment...
- () **Chorus** And inexplicable dread...
- () **Chorus** That Scrooge sees the bell begin to swing.
- () **Chorus** It swings so softly it hardly makes a sound.
- () **Chorus** But now it rings out loudly!
- () **Chorus** And so does every bell in the house!
- () **Chorus** Who's ringing the bells...?
- Scrooge** It's humbug still! I won't believe it.

The bells stop ringing. There's the sound of a door slamming, somewhere in the bowels of the house

- () **Chorus** Who slams the door?

Sound of chains being dragged across the floor

- () **Chorus** And drags chains when there's no prison hereabouts?

Marley's Ghost appears in the shadows at the bottom of the stairs. His jaw is held up by a bandage tied on top of his head. He wears a jacket and waistcoat, tights, and boots with their tassels bristling. His pigtail sticks out behind him. His body seems to be hollow, so you can see a white, glowing backbone where his stomach ought to be. He has a chain round his waist so long that it's a tail of keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds and heavy purses. We hear his footsteps as he goes up the stairs

- () **Chorus** Footsteps...
- () **Chorus** Scrooge never held with stair carpet...
- () **Chorus** So he can hear the footsteps on the stairs.

Scrooge is sitting by his feeble bedroom fire as the Ghost comes up the stairs and through the locked door behind Scrooge, who doesn't look round. When he speaks, it is cold and caustic

Scrooge What do you want with me?

Marley Much.

Scrooge Who are you?

Marley Rather ask me who I *was*.

Scrooge All right then. Who *were* you?

Marley In life I was your partner. Jacob Marley.

Scrooge turns and looks at the Ghost for the first time

Scrooge Jacob Marley! I always knew you had no bowels. Now I see it clearly.

Marley You don't believe in me?

Scrooge I don't!

Marley Why do you doubt your senses?

Scrooge Because little things upset them. How do I know you're not a mere—indigestion? A hard gristle of chop, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of underdone potato? You're no more than a stomach upset. More gravy than graveyard, you! You see this toothpick?

Marley I do.

Scrooge You're not looking at it.

Marley I see it all the same.

Scrooge Well. I have but to swallow this to be persecuted for the rest of my days, persecuted by legions of restless spirits and hobgoblins! Stomach upset. What do you say about that?

The Ghost gives a terrible cry of anguish and rattles his chain—so amplified that Scrooge holds on to his chair. Then the Ghost undoes the bandage so its jaw drops on to its chest with a great clang. Scrooge is now on his knees

Dreadful apparition! Why do you trouble me?

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

Scrooge I suppose I do. Got no choice, have I? But Jacob. Couldn't you have stayed at home? I mean—what's the reason for this visit? It's getting late and I've been hard at work.

Unearthly music during Marley's speech

Marley To warn you, Ebenezer Scrooge! Learn from me. My spirit never

walked beyond our counting house. It never roved beyond our money-changing hole. So I'm condemned to wander through the world. To see what I might have shared on earth and turned to happiness.

Scrooge But Jacob! You was always a good businessman.

The music stops

Marley It was not enough. I should have known. Mankind was my true business. Charity, Mercy, Benevolence. These were all my business. Money making was but a drop in the wide ocean of my proper business.

Scrooge I beg you, Jacob. Don't be flowery with me. Why are you in chains?

Marley I wear the chain I made in my life. I made it. Link by link. Yard by yard. I made it of my own free will, every day I made money and forgot the poor.

Scrooge And you has to travel every day. Wearing that?

Marley Would you know the weight and length of the stong coil you will bear yourself. It was heavy and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it since. It is a ponderous chain.

Scrooge Don't be hard on me! Speak comfort to me, Jacob.

Marley I have none to give. I cannot linger anywhere. I have very little more time to deal with you.

Scrooge Don't be hard on me. I beg you. And not too flowery, mind.

Marley At this time of the rolling year, why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down and never raise them to that blessed star which took the Wise Men to a home of poverty...?

Scrooge (*protesting mildly*) That's flowery... Jacob. Very flowery!

Marley I'm here to warn you. To give you a chance of escaping my fate. And to bring you some hope.

Scrooge You were always a good friend to me. Thankee, Jacob. A bit of hope would come very welcome! Thankee...

Marley You will be haunted by three spirits.

Scrooge Oh. Yes? What? Is *that* the hope you spoke of?

Marley It is!

Scrooge Then thankee very much. I'd rather do without it.

Marley Expect the first tomorrow. When the bell tolls one.

Scrooge Couldn't I take all three at once, Jacob? And get 'em over and done with. Like nasty medicine...

Marley Expect the second the next night at the same hour. And the third

the night following. When the last stroke of midnight no longer echoes.
Look to see me no more, Ebenezer Scrooge. But for your own sake.
Remember me. Remember me. Remember me.

Scrooge, still on his knees, looks up. He sees Marley tie the bandage again and his teeth snap together loudly. Then Marley gathers up his chain, winds it round his arm and beckons Scrooge to follow him as he walks backwards towards the window, which opens of its own accord. There is a sound of wailing and lamentation

SCENE 6

- () **Chorus** The air is filled with phantoms wandering hither and thither in restless haste.
- () **Chorus** And moaning as they go.
- () **Chorus** Every one of them wears chains like Marley's Ghost.
- () **Chorus** Some of them are linked together.
- () **Chorus** They might be guilty government ministers.
- () **Chorus** None are free.
- () **Chorus** Scrooge has known many of them during their lives.

A young mother sits on Scrooge's doorstep, hugging a small baby and trying to keep it warm

- () **Chorus** Scrooge has been quite familiar with one old ghost in a white waistcoat.
- () **Chorus** With a monstrous safe attached to its ankle.

The Ghost, weighed down with the safe, sinks to the woman and holds out its arms to her

Marley Marley who flies down to help a wretched woman with an infant whom it saw below.

The Ghost is snatched up again

- () **Chorus** And cries piteously when it's snatched away.
- () **Chorus** The misery for them all is...

() **Chorus** That they seek to interfere for good, in human matters.

() **Chorus** And have lost the power forever.

Marley's Ghost rises, floats out of the window and joins the other phantoms

The Ghost vanishes. The sky is empty

Scrooge bangs the window shut. He bolts it. He examines the door the Ghost came through. It's bolted and locked

Scrooge Humb——

He cannot finish the word. He jumps into bed, without undressing, and pulls the curtains shut and so disappears from our sight

Sound of the church clock chiming a quarter

Music: "Veni, Veni"

SCENE 7

Scrooge's bedroom

The bed curtains part and Scrooge peers out, nervously now. He is wearing a nightcap and his night-shirt.

The clock chimes a second quarter

Scrooge Ding dong. Half past o' what I wonder? I took a long sleep. Didn't I? (*He rubs his eyes*) When I got there...

The clock chimes three-quarters

Ding dong. Quarter to it. (*He looks towards the window*) Must be morning. Dark as hell at Christmas.

The clock chimes the hour

Ding dong. The hour itself! And nothing else.

The clock booms once—deep, hollow, melancholy

One o'clock? Can't be possible! It was near two when I went to bed with all the disturbance... Can I have slept some twenty-three hours, can I? Where's my watch? Old Marley's watch once... But he no longer has a use for it. (*He pulls the curtain back further and finds a watch under his pillow. He shakes it, then puts it to his ear*) Watch says one also. The clocks run mad like people over Christmas... Agh!

The side curtains of his bed are drawn back

() **Chorus** The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand!

() **Chorus** Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back...

() **Chorus** But those to which his face was addressed.

() **Chorus** The curtains of his bed were drawn aside...

A strange Light from an extraordinary figure floods the scene—the Spirit of Christmas Past

It looks like an old man shrunk to the size of a child. White hair hangs down its back, but its face has no wrinkles. Its arms, legs, and feet are bare. It wears a white tunic, trimmed with spring flowers and a belt which shines beautifully. It carries a branch of green holly. The light which has illuminated Scrooge's bedroom comes from the top of its head. Under one arm it carries something like a giant dunce's cap, and a large candle snuffer

() **Chorus** And Scrooge, starting up into a half recumbent attitude...

() **Chorus** Found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them...

() **Chorus** As close to it as I am now to you...

() **Chorus** And I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

Scrooge You! Are you the visitor I was told to expect?

Spirit (*in a gentle, but somehow distant voice*) I am.

Scrooge Who are you then?

Spirit I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

Scrooge Long past?

Spirit No. Your past. (*It moves into the room*)

Scrooge moves after it, leaving the bed. Still fearful, he tries to be polite

Scrooge Please Spirit. No need to stand there so respectful. Be covered, Spirit. Please put your cap on your head.

Spirit My cap? You want to put out my light so quickly? You—one of those dim spirits who tried to make a cap to cover my flame and make the whole world dreary...? You, the great fire extinguisher? Don't ask me that.

Scrooge Please! Don't trouble yourself any further. Keep your cap under your arm as far as I am concerned. I was only trying to see you quite comfortable. Now. Will you be staying long? Please... Young man... Old gentleman... Oh well, Spirit, if you like it. What exactly is your business with me?

Spirit Your welfare!

Scrooge I take that very kindly of you, Spirit. I take it exceedingly kind. But so far as my own particular welfare is concerned, a good night's sleep might have done me some good... With a cup of hot tea around seven, and a nice bit of business to bring off if it wasn't near Christmas.

Spirit Your reclamation, then. Take heed!

Scrooge My ... what exactly...?

Spirit We shall only find it after a long voyage of discovery. Are you ready to set out with me?

Scrooge Hardly, Spirit. I'm in my night-gown.

Spirit No matter.

Scrooge Where are we going, did you say?

Spirit On a journey.

Scrooge Are we going far...?

Spirit A very long way indeed! As long as your life, Scrooge.

Scrooge There's a nasty wind out there. A sharp sneaping wind. If I might put on a pair of trousers, and a greatcoat perhaps?

Spirit Trousers and a greatcoat will not be necessary.

Scrooge A pair of boots perhaps?

Spirit Nor boots neither...

Scrooge Just slippers then as I have a nasty cold upon me... How do we travel exactly? (*He hastily steps into his slippers which are by the bed*)

Spirit Through the air.

Scrooge I'm a mortal man, remember! I'll drop like a stone. And I have a curious fear of high places.

Spirit You'll not fall. If I touch you—there! (*It puts out a hand and touches Scrooge above his heart*) Now rise and walk with me.

Singers Angels from the realms of glory
Wing your flight o'er all the earth
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth
Come and worship
Christ the new-born King.
Come and worship,
Worship Christ the new-born King.

Sages, leave your contemplation
Brighter visions beam afar:
Seek the great Desire of Nations
Ye have seen his natal star:
Come and worship
Christ the new-born King.
Come and worship,
Worship Christ the new-born King.

During this carol Scrooge and the Spirit are walking round the stage—going on a long journey

SCENE 8

The ground is covered with snow, gleaming white in the clear winter sunshine

Scrooge and the Spirit rise into the air, and through the window to a high point over roof-tops, which are still misty. Then the roof-tops disappear, the mist clears

The roofs of a small market town appear

Scrooge Good heavens! This is my country. I was a boy here.

Spirit You remember the road?

Scrooge Remember it? I could walk it blindfolded!

Spirit Strange to have forgotten it for so many years. (*He looks closely at Scrooge*) Your lip's trembling. What's that on your cheek? (*He puts out a hand to touch Scrooge's cheek*)

Scrooge (*turning his face away hastily*) On my cheek? Just a pimple. Oh yes, I tell you. A perfectly ordinary—pimple.

Farmfolk And here is to Dobbin and to his right eye,
Pray God send our master a good Christmas
And a good Christmas pie that we all may
With our wassailing bowl we'll drink to that

Scrooge Who are they?

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

Scrooge What are they shouting?

Spirit Listen!

The people on the road are singing snatches of a song to each other

Farmfolk There was an old man, and he had an old cow
And how for to keep her he didn't know how
He built up a barn for to keep his cow warm
And a drop or two of cider will do us no harm
Sing Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas,
And a drop or two of cider will do us no harm

Scrooge (*cupping his ear with his hand*) I can't hear.

SCENE 9

Spirit Not yet. What's a Merry Christmas to you? Out upon Christmas!
That's your opinion of the matter, isn't it, Scrooge?

Scrooge I know him!

Child Scrooge appears in a school

Spirit The school isn't altogether empty. There's one lonely boy, forbidden to come home by his father. Stays on and made to work for his keep. You remember?

Scrooge I was alone.

Spirit Not entirely.

Child Scrooge Open Sesame!

The cupboard door opens

The characters of the stories Scrooge read as a child come out in turn. Ali Baba with his slave girl, the beautiful Morgiana. Sinbad the Sailor, and Robinson Crusoe with his fur hat, and his gun and his parrot on his shoulder

Scrooge Ali Baba. I remember him and his beautiful slave girl Morgiana, who helped boil forty robbers in oil! Sound businessman, Ali! Knew the value of money and took over his brother's shop.

Parrot (*shrieking*) Poor Robin Crusoe! Where've you been, Robin Crusoe? Poor Robin Crusoe!

Scrooge I remember Old Crusoe. Just as he came to me that afternoon! The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't. It was the parrot speaking, you know. And Sinbad the survivor. Got the Old Man of the Sea drunk on a glass of wine and off his back at last! That's the way to do business! Mind you, I've been the old man on the back of a good many who came to borrow money!

Man Friday comes running across the classroom

And here comes Friday. Running away from his enemies who were going to make a stew out of him... Run, Friday. Run! Hallou! Hoop! Hallou!

() **Chorus** To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects...

() **Chorus** In a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying.

() **Chorus** And to see his heightened and excited face...

() **Chorus** Would have been a surprise to his business friends in the City.

Robinson Crusoe raises his gun and fires at Friday's unseen pursuers. Friday kneels before Crusoe in gratitude

Headmaster (*off; slightly drunkenly*) Scrooge? Are you there, Scrooge? Stop idling there, boy. There's potatoes here for peeling! We didn't keep you on at school so you could read books, you know.

Child Scrooge closes his book

The fictional characters hurry back into the cupboard

Child Scrooge Close Sesame!

The cupboard door closes

Headmaster (off) Scrooge!

The Child Scrooge leaves the classroom

Scrooge Poor boy... I wish...

Spirit What do you wish?

Scrooge There was a boy singing a Christmas carol. I needn't have frightened him away.

A group appears, with the Boy whom Scrooge frightened with the ruler, singing "God Bless You Merry, Gentlemen"

Spirit Let us see another Christmas. (He holds out his hand)

The room seems to crumble; bare laths replace a plaster wall. A window is broken

Young Scrooge enters

Scrooge That's me also.

Spirit Still alone, after ten Christmasses.

Scrooge Not reading now. Walking up and down in my cage! With other boys gone home for jolly holidays...

The Headmaster comes into the classroom. He calls

Headmaster Scrooge!

Young Scrooge starts guiltily, half afraid

Your sister to see you, Scrooge.

Fan, Scrooge's younger sister, runs into the classroom and embraces him

Fan Dear brother.

Young Scrooge Fan... Why are you here?

Fan To bring you home, home, home!

Young Scrooge Home, little Fan? That's not possible.

Fan Yes, it is. Home for good and all. Home forever and forever. Our father has grown much kinder and now home's changed. Home's like heaven. He spoke gently to me when I was going to bed. So I dared ask him if you might come home. And he said "Yes". My dear brother. "Yes, you may". So I've been sent in a coach to bring you.

Young Scrooge (*looking at her with admiration*) You're quite a woman, now. Little Fan.

Fan And you're to be a man—and never come back here again.

Up stage, we see the back of a coach

Headmaster (*shouting*) Fetch down Master Scrooge's box.

An aged servant enters, staggering under the weight of Master Scrooge's trunk

The Headmaster pours out two diminutive glasses of sherry and a large glass for himself. The servant heaves the trunk on the back of the coach

Fan (*to Young Scrooge*) We're to be together all the Christmas long—and have the merriest time in the world.

Headmaster (*still slightly drunk*) You are to be launched, Scrooge, on the dangerous seas of life. Away from this cosy and kindly establishment where you have long been protected and cosseted by the loving hands of self and staff. But however you travel, Scrooge, to whatever distant part of the Empire, beneath what tropic sun or desert cold, you will always feel, in your heart, loyalty and gratitude to this great school which has long given you succour, sir, and been your world! You will remember.

Young Scrooge I promise you, yes!

Headmaster I see I have touched your heart. Your loyal spirit...

Young Scrooge I promise you never to remember you! Never think of you again. Not if I can possibly help it. Come on, Fan.

Music

Beloved eye, beloved star,
 Thou art so near and yet so far;
 Beloved eye, beloved star,
 Thou art so near and yet so far!

Spirit Always a delicate creature, your sister Fan. But she had a great heart.

Scrooge So she had. I won't deny that. God forbid.

Spirit She died a woman. With, I think, children.

Scrooge One child.

Spirit Your nephew!

Scrooge (*uneasily*) Yes, Fred.

Carol Singers God bless the master of this house,
 And all that are within,
 And to begin this Christmas-tide,
 With mirth now let us sing.

And this new Christmas carol
 Let us cheerfully sing,
 To the honour and glory
 Of our heavenly King;
 And this new Christmas carol
 Let us cheerfully sing,
 To the honour and glory
 Of our heavenly King.

SCENE 10

Scrooge and the Spirit watch as the country turns into a city

Carol Singers of various appearance mill about. They stop in front of a warehouse office door with "Fezziwig and Company" written over it. They sing their carol outside this door

Spirit You know this place?

Scrooge Know it? Weren't I apprenticed here?

Mr Fezziwig comes out of his front door. He is short, fat, perpetually

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