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Playscripts, Inc.
325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone/fax: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Cast of Characters

(Multiple and cross-gender casting is expected and can be used to fairly comical results.)

EBENEZER SCROOGE
MAN ON THE STREET
CRATCHIT
FRED
FIRST GENTLEMAN
SECOND GENTLEMAN
MARLEY'S GHOST
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST
3 JUDGES
YOUNG SCROOGE
VOICE OF THE FEMALE PUPPET
VOICE OF FEZZIWIG
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME
SHORT TIM
MRS. CRATCHIT
PETER
MARTHA
FRED'S WIFE
FRED'S SISTER
TOPPER
IGGY
FIRST VENDOR
SECOND VENDOR
VENDORS' BOY
BOY ON THE STREET
CUSTOMERS

(For economical casting, one multiple casting suggestion would be the following:)

SCROOGE

CRATCHIT

FIRST GENTLEMAN / MARLEY'S GHOST / FEZZI-
WIG'S VOICE / FIRST VENDOR

SECOND GENTLEMAN / JUDGE / CHRISTMAS PRE-
SENT / SECOND VENDOR

MAN ON THE STREET / TOPPER / FRED / JUDGE /
CHRISTMAS FUTURE

CHRISTMAS PAST / MARTHA / FRED'S WIFE / FE-
MALE CUSTOMER

JUDGE / VOICE OF FEMALE PUPPET / MRS.
CRATCHIT / FRED'S SISTER

YOUNG EBENEZER / PETER

SHORT TIM / IGGY / VENDORS' BOY / BOY ON THE
STREET

Setting

Because the play moves from place to place, it's best for settings to be suggested, perhaps by lighting or a well-chosen piece of furniture, rather than have fully realized sets.

Acknowledgements

Twisting Carol was first produced by The Haverford School in Haverford, Pennsylvania.

TWISTING CAROL
WRENCHED FROM CHARLES DICKENS'
A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by Jonathan Dorf

Scene 1

(Enter EBENEZER SCROOGE, old and surly, with a sock puppet made up to look like a sheep on his hand. It speaks.)

SCROOGE. *(Through the sheep puppet:)* Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.

(Enter the MAN ON THE STREET.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Excuse me. There's a dead body on your roof.

(He points at a roof downstage beyond the audience and gets no reaction from SCROOGE. Brief pause.)

MAN ON THE STREET. I said there's a dead body on your roof, and it really stinks.

(Brief pause.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Hello?

(The MAN ON THE STREET puts a hand in front of SCROOGE's mouth and checks for breath. Not satisfied, he pulls out a stethoscope and checks for a heartbeat. A la Frankenstein:)

MAN ON THE STREET. It's alive!

(SCROOGE swats him away.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Scrooge was his sole executor and sole mourner.

(Brief pause.)

Their firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name from the sign. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley.

SCROOGE. Whatever.

(Exit the MAN ON THE STREET as SCROOGE goes upstage to his “office”: lights up on Scrooge’s chair and desk, and nearby, the ridiculously child-sized chair but normal-sized desk where BOB CRATCHIT sits. CRATCHIT should be invisible to SCROOGE behind the desk because of the height of the chair.)

SCROOGE. Cratchit!

CRATCHIT. Here, sir.

SCROOGE. Do something.

CRATCHIT. I need a new pen, sir.

SCROOGE. What’s wrong with the pen I gave you?

CRATCHIT. It ran out of ink last year.

(Enter FRED, Scrooge’s nephew.)

FRED. Merry Christmas, Uncle.

SCROOGE. *(Through the puppet:)* Bah. Humbug!

FRED. Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don’t mean that. Do you smell something? I love Christmas.

SCROOGE. Cratchit! Where’d Cratchit go?

(CRATCHIT pokes a hand out from behind the desk.)

CRATCHIT. Still here, sir!

FRED. I love my wife. I love your sheep. I love the sound of music. I love the way a gentle rains falls through the leaves at dusk. I love—

SCROOGE. Get a hold of yourself!

FRED. Have dinner with us tomorrow, Uncle.

SCROOGE. Cratchit? You’d better not have cut out early.

CRATCHIT. Still here, sir.

SCROOGE. *(To FRED:)* Good afternoon.

FRED. But Uncle—it's Christmas.

SCROOGE. Oh right. Sorry.

(Holds up the sheep.)

Bah. Humbug!

FRED. Uncle—

SCROOGE. Good afternoon.

FRED. But—

SCROOGE. Good afternoon.

FRED. B—

SCROOGE. Good afternoon.

(FRED feints as if about to speak to see if SCROOGE will interrupt. Quickly, before SCROOGE can speak again.)

FRED. If you change your mind...

(Exit FRED, passing two GENTLEMEN on his way out.)

FIRST GENTLEMAN. Good afternoon. Do we have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SECOND GENTLEMAN. *(To the FIRST GENTLEMAN:)* It smells like something died in here.

SCROOGE. Mr. Marley died seven years ago this very night.

FIRST GENTLEMAN. We have no doubt his liberality is represented—

SCROOGE. Liberality? Libera—you said the “L” word!

(SCROOGE pushes them out. The FIRST GENTLEMAN gets a foot in the door. SCROOGE, his back against the door, continues to try to push him out. The FIRST GENTLEMAN slides a packet through the space in the door.)

FIRST GENTLEMAN. Personalized address labels?

(Beat.)

At this festive season, we should make some provision for the poor and destitute—

SCROOGE. Are there no prisons? No workhouses, outhouses, greenhouses, doghouses or henhouses?

FIRST GENTLEMAN. All very busy. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE. You may say I'm ugly or old or that my mother was a sailor. Put me down anyway you like, but you'll get no money out of me. If they don't like their present situation, the poor can go play in traffic and decrease the surplus population. And take me off your mailing list.

(SCROOGE kicks at the FIRST GENTLEMAN's foot, which finally disappears. SCROOGE closes the door.)

SCROOGE. Cratchit, did you leave early?

CRATCHIT. No, sir.

(CRATCHIT stands.)

SCROOGE. I suppose you'll want all day tomorrow.

CRATCHIT. If it's quite convenient. It's only one day a year.

SCROOGE. It's a poor excuse for robbing a man, beating him within an inch of his life and leaving him bleeding to death, face down in the mud, while flies pick at his rotting, pus-laden flesh.

CRATCHIT. That's disgusting.

(Beat.)

SCROOGE. Be here all the earlier the next morning.

(Exit CRATCHIT. The office door becomes the door to Scrooge's "bedroom" area. SCROOGE gets into bed with his sheep puppet, which he squeezes close to him. Pause, then reggae music starts, building until it's fairly loud.)

SCROOGE. Turn that down or I'll call the police.

(The music gets louder.)

SCROOGE. I said turn that down!

(He knocks on his wall, then the floor.)

SCROOGE. I'll have you know I own a shotgun!

(Enter MARLEY'S GHOST, wearing ridiculously long dreadlocks that are his chain. The music becomes background.)

SCROOGE. Jacob? Jacob Marley?

MARLEY. I thought I was *Bob* Marley.

(Sings:)

Buffalo soldier, dreadlocked rasta. No?

SCROOGE. *(Points at Marley's hair.)* Your...uh...

MARLEY. I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, 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*?

SCROOGE. But you're...white.

(MARLEY—who could be of any race that's not likely to be a rasta, with Scrooge's "white" above changed as appropriate—howls and the reggae picks up in volume. SCROOGE hides under his blanket. Beat. The sheep puppet pokes its head out. MARLEY produces an electric razor. At its buzzing, the sheep hides.)

MARLEY. Your chain was as heavy and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since.

(SCROOGE pokes his head out.)

SCROOGE. But I get regular haircuts.

(Beat.)

Jacob, speak comfort to me.

MARLEY. I cannot stay.

SCROOGE. Maybe you could leave me the razor, just in case.

MARLEY. I cannot linger anywhere.

(MARLEY pulls out a bunch of airline tickets.)

Airline tickets on overbooked flights. I always get bumped. I never get to take off. Airport after airport—

SCROOGE. The razor.

MARLEY. Mankind was my business.

SCROOGE. I said razor, not business.

MARLEY. The common welfare was my business: charity, mercy and benevolence were all my business. At this time of year, I suffer most. The endless check-in lines, dogs sniffing my bags, everything snowed in and delayed.

(Checks his watch.)

I am here tonight to warn you that you have a chance of escaping my fate. You will be haunted by three spirits. Expect the first when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE. Aren't *you* a spirit?

MARLEY. Yes.

SCROOGE. Then wouldn't it be the second of four?

MARLEY. First of three! *First of three!*

SCROOGE. OK—three.

(The reggae builds.)

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 get my body off the roof!

(The reggae crescendos, and SCROOGE hides under the covers. Exit MARLEY, who catches his hair in the door, has to reopen it and pull out the hair, then exits for good, taking the music with him. Beat. The sheep peeks out from under the covers, then SCROOGE looks out. He gets out of bed, looks around, then sits on his bed and waits. Enter the MAN ON THE STREET.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Ding dong.

(Lights up quickly on three JUDGES. They hold up scorecards reading 6, 7 and 9 respectively. Pause. The MAN ON THE STREET puts more effort into it.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Ding dong.

(The JUDGES hold up 1, 3 and 6 this time. Pause. The MAN ON THE STREET summons a Herculean effort.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Ding dong!

(The JUDGES hold up 1, 0 and 0, in that order, then exit, as does the MAN ON THE STREET.)

SCROOGE. One o'clock. And nothing.

(Enter the SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST, bouncing into the room, wearing spandex and running in place once she arrives.)

SCROOGE. Are you the spirit—

CHRISTMAS PAST. Up up up. Move it. I'm the Spirit of Christmas Past.

(She pulls him up. He resists.)

CHRISTMAS PAST. Your past.

SCROOGE. Why are you here?

CHRISTMAS PAST. Your spirit's gotten flabby. And those buns could use some work too.

(She jerks him to his feet.)

Take hold of my robe.

(SCROOGE can't find anything to grab. It's all skin-tight.)

SCROOGE. I, uh...can't seem to find—

CHRISTMAS PAST. Just grab my arm!

(He does. The lights flicker. They leave Scrooge's room and go to an empty area of the stage.)

SCROOGE. Looks almost familiar.

CHRISTMAS PAST. Maybe this will help.

(A POPSICLE PUPPET pops up. It appears to be reading.)

SCROOGE. *(No idea:)* Sorry.

(Enter a FEMALE POPSICLE PUPPET.)

FEMALE POPSICLE PUPPET. Dear, dear brother. I have come to bring you home.

SCROOGE. Talking popsicle sticks. I don't get it.

FEMALE POPSICLE PUPPET. Father is so much kinder than he used to be. Home's like Heaven. We're to be together all Christmas long.

CHRISTMAS PAST. *(Beat.)* It's you and your sister Fan, as you called her. Budget cutbacks. They couldn't spring for real children.

(Lights fade on the puppets. Festive music. CHRISTMAS PAST drags SCROOGE to another empty part of the stage.)

SCROOGE. I recognize this place.

VOICE OF FEZZIWIG. Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

SCROOGE. I was apprenticed here.

(Enter YOUNG SCROOGE. Fiddle music. YOUNG SCROOGE dances with a popsicle stick he pulls from his coat pocket. He dances more and more maniacally.)

CHRISTMAS PAST. At least we got a young Ebenezer.

(YOUNG SCROOGE pulls more and more popsicle sticks from his pockets and throws them all over the place as he dances.)

SCROOGE. Fezziwig, uh... He threw a good party.

CHRISTMAS PAST. He didn't spend much on it.

SCROOGE. That wasn't the poi... Still, in this particular case...

CHRISTMAS PAST. What?

(The lights dim on the dancing YOUNG SCROOGE. The music fades.)

SCROOGE. Nothing.

CHRISTMAS PAST. My time grows short. Bounce with me.

(Lights up on YOUNG SCROOGE sitting on a bench and staring at a golden popsicle stick. Enter CRATCHIT in a dress. CRATCHIT sits next to YOUNG SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE. Cratchit!?

CHRISTMAS PAST. We couldn't find a woman. Keep bouncing!

SCROOGE. *You're* a woman.

CHRISTMAS PAST. I'm bouncing.

CRATCHIT. Another idol has displaced me. A golden one.

YOUNG SCROOGE. What—this?

(YOUNG SCROOGE tosses away the popsicle stick.)

CRATCHIT. You are changed. May you be happy in the life that you have chosen with your popsicle stick.

CHRISTMAS PAST. It represents greed.

CRATCHIT. These thighs could have been yours. Does gold have thighs?

(CRATCHIT shows some thigh.)

SCROOGE. No more! No more Cratchit! Spirit!

(Blackout. Lights up. SCROOGE is alone in his bed. Beat. Enter the MAN ON THE STREET.)

MAN ON THE STREET. *(Not talking to SCROOGE.)* One o'clock. Do you know where your children are?

SCROOGE. One o'clock.

MAN ON THE STREET. Do you have children?

SCROOGE. Five past one.

MAN ON THE STREET. Would you like children?

SCROOGE. Ten past.

MAN ON THE STREET. Not everyone does, you know.

SCROOGE. Quarter past one.

(Exit the MAN ON THE STREET. Plastic fruit and vegetables get tossed on stage from the wings. Enter BOB, aka the SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT, in sneakers and wearing a bathrobe over jeans and a T-shirt.)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Sorry I'm late. They just paged me. The regular Spirit of Christmas Present's on vacation. I'm Bob. Touch my robe.

(SCROOGE touches his robe. Enter the MAN ON THE STREET, who sweeps up the plastic food and exits when he is done. Lights up on the Cratchit house—a kitchen area and seven chairs around an invisible table—and MRS. CRATCHIT, PETER and MARTHA.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. Whatever has become of your father and Tiny Tim? And Martha? Where's Martha?

MARTHA. *(Standing next to her.)* Right here, Mom.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Oh.

PETER. *Short* Tim, Mom.

MRS. CRATCHIT. I'll never get used to that. He's been Tiny since he was a baby.

PETER. He doesn't think so.

(Enter CRATCHIT carrying SHORT TIM, who holds a crutch, on his shoulders.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. *(CRATCHIT and SHORT TIM are virtually next to her.)* Martha, quick—hide and pretend you're not here.

MARTHA. It's a bit late, Mom.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Next year then.

(To CRATCHIT, who puts SHORT TIM down.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. And did Tiny Tim behave?

SHORT TIM. *(Hears her.)* *Short* Tim. I'm short. I'm not tiny.

CRATCHIT. Good as gold.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Go sit down, children. Dinner is almost ready.

(PETER and MARTHA help SHORT TIM to his seat. He leans the crutch against SCROOGE, treating him like a wall. PETER and MARTHA put placards on the two extra chairs: "Invisible Cratchit Child #1" and "Invisible Cratchit Child #2.")

CRATCHIT. Better even. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people in the church saw him, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant... That doesn't quite sound right.

(Beat.)

You've got to stop with the Tiny thing.

MRS. CRATCHIT. I'm trying dear, but he *is* Tiny.

(MRS. CRATCHIT pulls a rubber chicken from her apron and plops it on the floor in the center of the chairs.)

Dinner is served.

PETER. This goose is...

MARTHA. What a goose!

CRATCHIT. You've outdone yourself, Mrs. Cratchit!

SHORT TIM. Carve it, father!

CRATCHIT. Never has there been such a goose!

(CRATCHIT "carves.")

SCROOGE. That's for sure.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. All they can afford is that rubber chicken. But year after year they pretend it's a goose.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Dark meat, dear.

PETER. Dark and white, please, father.

(All the CRATCHITS get their meat and are about to start "eating.")

SHORT TIM. Wait!

PETER. What is it, *Short Tim*?

SHORT TIM. God bless us, every one.

(A frenzy of fake eating.)

SCROOGE. Tell me, Spirit—

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Please—Bob.

SCROOGE. Bob, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. *Short Tim.*

(Beat.)

I don't have access to the regular guy's information.

SCROOGE. You could guess.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. I really shouldn't. I've known the little tyke for all of two minutes.

SCROOGE. Please, Spirit—Bob.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Next Christmas, Short Tim vs. the chicken in a breathing contest, my money's on the chicken.

(Beat.)

Wait—I think I have some language on this.

(Checks his bathrobe pocket, pulls out an index card.)

Empty place at the table. An ownerless crutch carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.

SCROOGE. No, no. No, kind Bob. Say he will be spared.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Can't make it out, but there's some kind of footnote about decreasing the surplus population.

(SCROOGE pulls out the sheep puppet.)

SCROOGE. Bad! Bad sheep!

(CRATCHIT raises his hand, which he pretends holds a glass.)

CRATCHIT. To Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast.

(Booing from the CRATCHITS.)

CRATCHIT. It's Christmas.

(Reluctantly, the CRATCHITS raise their “glasses.”)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Touch my robe.

(SCROOGE puts down the crutch gently, then touches CHRISTMAS PRESENT’s robe. Lights down on the CRATCHITS.)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. We’re skipping a few local color scenes in the interest of time.

(Lights up on FRED, FRED’S WIFE, FRED’S SISTER and TOPPER, a male guest.)

FRED. He said that Christmas was a humbug, and he believed it too.

(FRED and company mime talking and gesturing at exaggerated speed, as if in fast-forward.)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. The gist is that they all feel sorry for you.

FRED’S WIFE. I feel sorry for him.

SCROOGE. Let me hear more, Bob.

FRED. Sing something for us, Topper.

TOPPER. I only know a line or so.

(Sings:)

We wish you a Merry Christmas.

(Pause—sings exactly as before.)

We wish you a Merry Christmas.

(Pause—as before.)

We wish you a Merry Christmas.

FRED. Very good.

FRED’S WIFE. Lovely. Do it again.

TOPPER. *(As before.)* We wish you a Merry Christmas.

(The others applaud.)

FRED. And now some games.

(FRED and his companions speed through a variety of games, from Hide and Seek to Blind-Man's Bluff—all mimed and in fast-forward. SCROOGE watches, enjoying it all.)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Touch my robe.

SCROOGE. One more game. Please.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. One more.

FRED. This is a game of yes and no.

(There is more speed-miming and gesturing.)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Skip, skip, skip.

FRED'S WIFE. Is it an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes and talked sometimes, 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 an ass or a cow or a bull or a tiger or a dog or a pig or a cat or a bear?

FRED'S SISTER. I know what it is!

FRED. What?

FRED'S SISTER. It's Uncle Scrooge!

(FRED nods. Applause from the others.)

FRED. A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to the old man, wherever he is.

(CHRISTMAS PRESENT offers his robe to SCROOGE, who grabs hold. Lights dim on FRED and company. Lights up dimly on a YOUNG BOY, dressed in rags, with "DOM" written prominently across his face. He dashes out into the "street." Sound of automobile screeching and crash. He does it again with the same result.)

SCROOGE. Who's that boy?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Oh god—the kid. I forgot I was supposed to watch him. Iggy, come 'ere.

(IGGY comes over.)

SCROOGE. Is he yours?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Man's. His name is Ignorance—Iggy for short. There's supposed to be a girl named Want, but we thought it'd make the point better if we didn't actually have the other child.

(Grabs IGGY's cheeks.)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Look at that smile.

SCROOGE. He's not smiling.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Right. Beware this boy. Doom is written all over his face, unless the writing is erased.

(Beat. CHRISTMAS PRESENT pulls out a magic marker and corrects the misspelling, squeezing another "o" on IGGY's face.)

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Doom is written all over his face.

(To IGGY:)

Put some clothes on. You'll freeze to death.

(IGGY sticks his tongue out at CHRISTMAS PRESENT, flicks off SCROOGE and runs offstage. Blackout. A bell rings. Lights up on SCROOGE, back in his bedroom, standing across from the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME, a man wearing a ski mask, a trench coat and seemingly nothing else.)

SCROOGE. Am I in the presence of the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come?

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE proffers a candy bar.)

SCROOGE. No, thank you. Never accept candy from strangers. Are you about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us?

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE rolls up a bare sleeve to reveal a number of watches. He waves his arm at SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE. I already have a good one. But thank you. Is that a yes?

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE nods.)

SCROOGE. Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any specter I have seen. But lead on, spirit.

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE waggles a finger at SCROOGE, bidding him follow. SCROOGE does. Lights dim on the bedroom, up on a pair of VENDORS surrounded by candlesticks, clothing, etc.)

FIRST VENDOR. I thought he'd never die.

SECOND VENDOR. All's well that ends well.

FIRST VENDOR. Wish we could have found the cash.

SECOND VENDOR. Ah well. Waste not, want not. *(Carnival barker's voice:)* Stuff from the dead guy! Step right up and make an offer!

FIRST VENDOR. Everything must go!

SECOND VENDOR. Certificates of authenticity signed by the corpse.

(Lights up nearby on a sheet-covered corpse. The VENDORS' BOY sits next to it with a bunch of certificates. Enter a group of CUSTOMERS, who line up in front of the vendors. Once they've made a purchase, they go over to the VENDORS' BOY, who "helps" the corpse sign the certificates and then hands them out to the CUSTOMERS.)

FIRST VENDOR. We got blankets!

FEMALE CUSTOMER. *(Buys a blanket:)* I hope whatever he had ain't catchin'.

SECOND VENDOR. We got watches!

(He holds up a watch. CHRISTMAS FUTURE moves toward him.)

SECOND VENDOR. Candlesticks!

(To the FIRST VENDOR:)

Hey, is it drafty in here, or is it just me?

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE takes the watch. The SECOND VENDOR does a double-take. CHRISTMAS FUTURE returns to SCROOGE.)

SECOND VENDOR. Shirt off his back! Top quality tailoring—who wants it!

SCROOGE. Spirit, I understand my life tends that way, and I will try to do better, but take me away from here.

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE offers SCROOGE the watch.)

SCROOGE. I don't need a watch. I already own a watch. See?

(SCROOGE looks for his watch and can't find it, then recognizes Christmas Future's watch as his own.)

SCROOGE. That's my watch!

(All the objects get bought up.)

SECOND VENDOR. Get your authentic pieces of the dead guy!

FIRST VENDOR. Take a part.

SECOND VENDOR. Any part.

FIRST VENDOR. Everything must go!

SECOND VENDOR. Come on—need a hand with the scrubbing? Don't be shy!

SCROOGE. Please, spirit, show me some emotion, some tenderness.

(Lights dim as the CUSTOMERS close in on the corpse. CHRISTMAS FUTURE motions for SCROOGE to follow. Lights up on the Cratchit home. CRATCHIT is on the floor in a fetal position, sucking his thumb and clutching an eight by ten glossy of Short Tim. MRS. CRATCHIT, MARTHA and "Invisible Cratchit Child #1" sit in chairs nearby and sew. PETER, on his knees next to CRATCHIT and "Invisible Child #2," holds a spoonful of soft food by CRATCHIT's mouth.)

PETER. Father, time for dinner. Let me have the photo, just for a little while.

(CRATCHIT screams and cries and kicks.)

CRATCHIT. Tim! Tim!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Let him keep the picture.

PETER. All right. If you promise to eat.

(CRATCHIT sits up—sort of—and eats a spoonful.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder very fast indeed.

PETER. *Short* Tim, Mom.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Now we can't even get him to stand up.

(PETER, MARTHA and the two placards surround CRATCHIT.)

MARTHA. Don't be grieved, Father.

CRATCHIT. My little, little child. We must never forget Short Tim.

PETER. We won't, Father.

(CRATCHIT returns to thumb-sucking. The lights fade on the CRATCHITS.)

PETER. Father, your teeth'll get crooked.

(Lights out on the CRATCHITS.)

SCROOGE. Take me home, Spirit.

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE wags a finger at SCROOGE, indicating for him to follow.)

SCROOGE. My house isn't that way.

(Lights up on a churchyard. CHRISTMAS FUTURE points at an empty spot of ground.)

SCROOGE. Spirit, before I look at whatever it is you want me to look at on the ground over there, answer me one question: are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows of things that may be, only?

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE points again at the ground. SCROOGE stands by the exact spot and looks at it. Beat.)

SCROOGE. Nice ground.

(Feels it with his foot.)

Firm.

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE comes over and takes a good look at the ground, then storms offstage.)

SCROOGE. Spirit? Spirit! Don't leave me here!

(Enter CHRISTMAS FUTURE with a large rock, which it deposits on the ground.)

SCROOGE. Please don't do that again, Spirit.

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE points at the rock.)

SCROOGE. I'm sorry. I don't need a rock.

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE shakes its head violently.)

SCROOGE. It's not for sale?

CHRISTMAS FUTURE. That's you!

SCROOGE. If you could talk all this time, why didn't you just say—

(Beat.)

That's me? Was I that corpse?

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE nods. SCROOGE drops to his knees.)

SCROOGE. No, Spirit!

(SCROOGE grabs CHRISTMAS FUTURE's trench coat.)

CHRISTMAS FUTURE.

Hey—not so grabby.

SCROOGE.

Oh, no, no. No. No. No.

CHRISTMAS FUTURE. What—you want a show?

(CHRISTMAS FUTURE, probably turned completely upstage, flashes him.)

SCROOGE. (Looks inside the coat.) Oh—the emptiness! The nothingness! You do know there's nothing in there? Spirit, hear me. I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I have been. I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. You'll win of course. But please tell me I can...make that rock go away!

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(The next morning. SCROOGE, clutching his sheep puppet, is on his bedroom floor. He wakes up, looks around.)

SCROOGE. I'm still here. This is a good start. A good start indeed. I will live in the past, present and future, and the spirits of all three will strive within me.

(Bounding around, inspecting the room.)

I am as light as a feather. I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a schoolboy, as giddy as a drunken man.

(Grabs his chest.)

I am having a heart attack.

(Beat.)

Just gas. Much better. A merry Christmas to everyone and a happy New Year! What a wonderful day!

(Sound of church bells. He leans out his window. Enter a BOY ON THE STREET.)

SCROOGE. Boy!

BOY ON THE STREET. Me sir?

SCROOGE. What day is it?

BOY ON THE STREET. I don't know. September something.

SCROOGE. You sure?

(The BOY runs off. Beat. The BOY reenters.)

SCROOGE. Boy!

BOY ON THE STREET. Me, sir?

SCROOGE. Of course you. A wonderful boy. We just spoke.

BOY ON THE STREET. I've never seen you before, sir. Maybe you saw my brother.

SCROOGE. A truly delightful boy. What day is it today?

BOY ON THE STREET. You drunk?

SCROOGE. A perceptive boy. I'm intoxicated by life. A keen young mind. What day is it?

(The BOY runs off. Beat. Reenter the BOY.)

SCROOGE. Boy!

BOY ON THE STREET. Me, sir?

(SCROOGE pulls a shotgun out from under his bed.)

SCROOGE. Move and I'll blow your head off. What day is it?

BOY ON THE STREET. *(So scared he's inaudible—it would be funny if he wet his pants here.)* Christmas Day.

SCROOGE. What?

BOY ON THE STREET. *(Barely louder:)* Christmas Day.

SCROOGE. Enunciate!

BOY ON THE STREET. *(Louder:)* Christmas Day, sir.

SCROOGE. I haven't missed it! Hurrah!

BOY ON THE STREET. Please don't kill me!

(The BOY covers on the ground.)

SCROOGE. A thoroughly enjoyable boy. Do you know the poulterer on the next street?

BOY ON THE STREET. *(Talks into the ground.)* I should hope so, sir.

SCROOGE. What?

BOY ON THE STREET. I should hope so, sir!

SCROOGE. Stop talking into the ground!

(The BOY looks up but fixates on the gun. SCROOGE puts it down and picks up his sheep puppet. Through the sheep:)

SCROOGE. Hello, young man. Do you know the poulterer on the next street?

(Beat. The BOY gets up warily.)

BOY ON THE STREET. I should hope so.

(SCROOGE makes a sudden move back to his shotgun. The BOY dives to the ground.)

SCROOGE. Kidding. Did you see the prize turkey hanging in the window?

(Brief pause.)

I said I was kidding.

BOY ON THE STREET. *(Gets up tentatively.)* The one as big as me?

SCROOGE. That's the one. A stellar boy. Jumpy, but stellar.

(He flips a credit card to the BOY.)

SCROOGE. Go and buy it.

BOY ON THE STREET. Yes, sir.

SCROOGE. If you come back with the poulterer in ten minutes, I'll give you a one-minute shopping spree on my platinum card.

(The BOY runs off. There's a loud tripping and crashing offstage. Beat. Enter the MAN ON THE STREET.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Bring 'em in.

(Enter the FIRST and SECOND GENTLEMEN, CRATCHIT carrying SHORT TIM, and FRED. They stop. CRATCHIT puts down SHORT TIM. It looks like a police line-up.)

MAN ON THE STREET. Face right, please.

(They do.)

SCROOGE. That's them.

MAN ON THE STREET. Face front.

(SCROOGE points to the two GENTLEMEN.)

SCROOGE. Those two.

MAN ON THE STREET. *(Points at the GENTLEMEN:)* You two—step forward.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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