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THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS BY J. N. STIGEN

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

AN ADAPTATION OF
O. HENRY'S "THE GIFT OF THE MAGI"
& CHARLES DICKENS' "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

BY J. N. STIGEN



GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

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THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

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GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Min. Cast: 3 Female (F), 4 Male (M), 7 Either (X)

Max. Cast: 4 F, 7 M, 16 X + Extras as desired

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI (GOM)

Narrator, X

Della, F

Jim, M

Madame Sofronie, F

Shopkeeper(s), X

Passersby, X

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (CC)

Narrator, X

Bob Cratchit, M

Ebenezer Scrooge, M

Fred, X

Charity Collector, X

Caroler(s), X

Ghost of Marley, M

Ghost of Christmas Past, X

Fezziwig, M

Young Ebenezer, M

Belle, F

Party Guests, X

Ghost of Christmas Present, X

Belinda, X

Peter, X

Mrs. Cratchit, F

Martha, X

Tiny Tim, M

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Want, X
Ignorance, X
Ghost of Christmas Future, X
Passerby 1, X
Passerby 2, X
Body, M
Young Passerby, X
Poulterer, X

CAST NOTES

- 3 Shopkeepers are recommended for *GOM*, but it may be done with as few as one or as many as desired. The same is true of the Caroler(s) in *CC*.
- Name change options for genderbending Belinda, Peter, and Martha: George, David, Harry, Ada, Polly, Caroline. If female, change Fred to Freddie.
- A prop may be used instead of an actor for the Body.

APPROX RUN TIME
1 hour

SETTING
Christmas Eve
New York, 1905 & London, 1843

IN THE BLEAK MID-WINTER

BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Tableau Suggestion: In the stable at Bethlehem on the first Christmas. A poor shepherd kneels before the baby Jesus in a manger. Mary, Joseph, Wise Men, and an angel look on.

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty
Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him whom cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him whom angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

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Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air,
But only His mother
In her maiden bliss
Worshiped the Beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,—
Yet what I can I give Him,
Give my heart.

**TO KEEP THE SAMPLE A REASONABLE LENGTH, ALL OTHER
SONGS HAVE BEEN CUT**

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

BY O. HENRY

Brooklyn, New York City, Christmas Eve morning, 1905. Half of the stage shows a jolly, Christmassy market street. If desired, a corner of the stage with an armchair is set apart for the NARRATOR. The other half of the stage is the Youngs' apartment. It's small, worn, and unadorned, but tidy.

Lights up on the Youngs' apartment. JIM is finishing his breakfast and dressing to leave for work. DELLA is putting away the last of the breakfast things. JIM consults his pocket watch—an ornate, glittering gold watch on an old leather strap. DELLA meets him by the door and the pair exchange an affectionate goodbye. Exit JIM.

DELLA rushes over to a hidden spot where she carefully pulls out a small money box. DELLA dumps out all of the money onto the table and sits. She counts the coins, is unsatisfied with the amount, counts again, and again. Enter NARRATOR carrying a small book. NARRATOR opens the book and reads to the audience.

NARRATOR. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of miserliness that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

Finally convinced of the wretchedly small total, DELLA rises and throws herself on the couch in despair.

NARRATOR. There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the

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moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

NARRATOR hands DELLA a handkerchief and busies himself with a tour of the room.

NARRATOR. While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at eight dollars per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the vagrant squad. In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger would ever coax a ring. Also appearing down there was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young." The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid thirty dollars per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to twenty, they were thinking seriously of contracting it to a modest and unassuming "D." But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above, he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della.

*DELLA lifts herself from the couch and dries her tears.
NARRATOR settles into a chair and continues to read.*

NARRATOR. Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only one dollar and eighty-seven cents with which to buy Jim a present.

DELLA watches forlornly out the window as two cheerful people outside in coats and hats greet each other and excitedly exchange beautiful gifts before parting ways.

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NARRATOR. She had been saving every penny she could for months with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only one dollar and eighty-seven cents to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

DELLA is struck by an idea. She leaps up and runs to the looking glass. She lets down her long hair and admires it for a while.

NARRATOR. Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length. Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy. The other treasure was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters.

DELLA determinedly puts her hair up in a quick bun.

NARRATOR. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

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DELLA throws on her jacket and hat, gathers her money carefully into her handbag, and races out the door.

NARRATOR. On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Lights transition focus to the market street. Enter MME. SOFRONIE, who sets up her shop. She places a sign that says, "Open," and begins sweeping.

NARRATOR. Where she stopped the sign read: "Madame Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran and collected herself, panting.

Enter DELLA in a rush and panting.

DELLA. Will you buy my hair?

MME. SOFRONIE. *(Sets the broom aside)* I buy hair. Take your hat off, and let's have a sight at the looks of it.

DELLA lets her hair down. MME. SOFRONIE examines it briefly, obviously impressed.

MME. SOFRONIE. Twenty dollars.

DELLA. Give it to me quick.

MME. SOFRONIE counts out twenty dollars and hands it to DELLA. MME. SOFRONIE leads DELLA to a chair and hands DELLA a basket to hold. MME. SOFRONIE takes up a large pair of scissors and begins chopping, placing the hair clippings in the basket, humming merrily all the while. When it is all done, MME. SOFRONIE takes the basket of hair and exits.

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SHOPKEEPERS set out stalls and window displays next to MME. SOFRONIE's shop. DELLA rushes outside and begins searching the shop windows. She pauses briefly at a display with jeweled hair combs, but quickly resumes her mission to find JIM's present. SHOPKEEPERS offer DELLA their wares as she passes by.

NARRATOR. Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

DELLA stops dead at a shop window and gasps. She has found her prize and she admires it briefly before entering the shop and purchasing it from a SHOPKEEPER.

NARRATOR. She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by garish ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the eighty-seven cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

SHOPKEEPERS remove their displays as lights transition focus to the Youngs' apartment. DELLA enters her kitchen in ecstasy. Well, until she spots her reflection in the looking glass and remembers her hair.

NARRATOR. When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason.

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DELLA places the watch chain and her remaining money in the box and stores it in her special hiding place. She then pulls out a curling iron and hairbrush and begins working to make something nice out of her remaining hair.

NARRATOR. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

DELLA. If Jim doesn't kill me before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?

DELLA puts away her hair things, puts on her apron, and sets the table for supper.

NARRATOR. At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops. Jim was never late.

DELLA pulls the box out of its hiding spot, removes the watch chain, and sits on a chair closest to the door.

NARRATOR. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered.

Footsteps are heard outside.

NARRATOR. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit

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of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered:

DELLA. Please, God, make him think I am still pretty.

Enter JIM. He fixes his windblown hair and rubs his hands together for a moment before turning to see DELLA.

NARRATOR. The door opened, and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat, and he was without gloves. Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

DELLA stands to greet the immovable JIM.

DELLA. Jim, darling, don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again—you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say, "Merry Christmas!" Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you.

JIM. You've cut off your hair?

DELLA. Cut it off and sold it. Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm still me without my hair, ain't I?

JIM looks around the room curiously as if to find her hair there.

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JIM. You say your hair is gone?

DELLA. You needn't look for it, silly. It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered, but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?

JIM shakes off his trance and embraces DELLA. Embarrassed, NARRATOR attempts to shift the audience's attention away from the pair.

NARRATOR. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year—what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but wit was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

JIM releases DELLA, takes a package from his coat, and sets it on the table.

JIM. Don't make any mistake about me, Dell. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first.

DELLA excitedly opens the package. It's the jeweled hair combs. DELLA squeals in ecstasy, hugs the package, hugs JIM, and bursts into tears. JIM comforts her.

NARRATOR. White and nimble fingers tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat. For there lay The Combs—the set of combs that Della had

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worshiped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful varnished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone. But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say:

DELLA. My hair grows so fast, Jim!

NARRATOR. And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried—

DELLA. Oh, oh!

CUT FOR SAMPLE

A CHRISTMAS CAROL CONT. ON NEXT PAGE

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

BY CHARLES DICKENS

London, a foggy Christmas Eve afternoon, 1843. Most of the stage shows the interior of the Scrooge & Marley counting house. It is dark, dusty, frigid, and frugally furnished. There are two small desks with stools and a fireplace that is clearly rarely used. Just outside the counting house is a market street. Far upstage on a platform or in a corner far downstage we can also see Scrooge's bedroom. Style-wise it is the twin of the counting house. Its spartan features consist of a coat tree with a dressing gown, a smaller, cobweb-filled fireplace or stove, and a tiny bed or armchair. If desired, a corner of the stage with an armchair is set apart for the NARRATOR.

A church bell tolls three. Passersby fill the market street, merrily going about their business and offering cheerful greetings to each other. Enter NARRATOR who opens a small book, and reads.

NARRATOR. Marley was dead, to begin with. There was no doubt whatsoever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. I don't mean to say that I know of my own knowledge, what is particularly dead about a doornail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the country's done for. You will, therefore, permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a doornail. Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was Marley's sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, his sole mourner.

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CRATCHIT makes his way through the crowded street and enters the counting house, nodding politely to passersby. He is dressed in threadbare clothes and wrapped in a white blanket. He attempts to warm himself over the meager fire or a lonely candle before sitting at a small desk to begin his work of copying letters.

SCROOGE enters the street looking unkempt and wearing a nasty expression. The festive atmosphere is instantly sucked out of the crowd. Passersby make way and quickly exit as the grumbling SCROOGE crosses to his counting house.

NARRATOR. Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, was Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what was the o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired of Scrooge the way to such and such a place. But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked.

SCROOGE enters the counting house, removes his coat and hat. CRATCHIT looks up and offers a small smile and a brief nod.

CRATCHIT. Afternoon, sir.

SCROOGE replies by rapping harshly on CRATCHIT's desk. CRATCHIT resumes working as SCROOGE takes up his own work with a large ledger at the other desk.

NARRATOR. Once upon a time, of all the good days in the year, upon a Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house. It was cold, bleak, biting, foggy weather; and the city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already.

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Enter FRED, a jovial young man with a sprig of holly on his hat. He carries a small package wrapped with a festive ribbon. He sets the present on top of SCROOGE's ledger.

FRED. A merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE bats the gift aside.

SCROOGE. Bah! Humbug!

FRED. Christmas a humbug, Uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE. I do. Out upon "merry Christmas!" What's Christmastime to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer. If I had my way, every idiot who goes about with "merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

FRED. Uncle!

SCROOGE. (*Mimicking*) 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. There are many things from which I might have derived good by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmastime—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

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shut-up hearts freely and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow travelers to the grave and not some other 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!

CRATCHIT applauds. SCROOGE's sour look prompts CRATCHIT to resume his work.

SCROOGE. *(To CRATCHIT)* Let me hear another sound from you, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! *(To FRED, with a sneer)* 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. No.

FRED. But why? Why?

SCROOGE. Good afternoon.

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 humor to the last. So, a merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE. Good afternoon!

FRED. And a happy new year!

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SCROOGE. Good afternoon!

SCROOGE motions curtly for CRATCHIT to show FRED out. CRATCHIT and FRED exchange a brief, friendly goodbye. Exit FRED.

Enter Charity COLLECTOR carrying a small ledger and pencil. CRATCHIT and COLLECTOR greet each other and shake hands as CRATCHIT shows him in.

CRATCHIT. *(To SCROOGE)* A visitor, sir.

SCROOGE grunts and looks up. CRATCHIT retreats to his desk.

COLLECTOR. Scrooge and Marley's, I believe? Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE. Mr. Marley is dead. He died seven years ago, this very night.

COLLECTOR. Ah! My condolences, sir. At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

CRATCHIT looks up hopefully.

SCROOGE. Are there no prisons?

CRATCHIT quickly resumes his work.

COLLECTOR. *(Flustered)* Plenty of prisons. But under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the unoffending multitude, a few of us are endeavoring to

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raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE. Nothing!

COLLECTOR. You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE. I wish to be left alone. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the prisons and the workhouses—they cost enough—and those who are badly off must go there.

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

SCROOGE. If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon.

COLLECTOR shows himself out. Enter CAROLER(s) who stands outside the door and sings.

CAROLER. *(Singing)* God rest ye, merry gentleman, let nothing you dismay!—

SCROOGE howls and hurls an object (perhaps his shoe) at the door. CAROLER runs off in fear for his life.

A church bell tolls six. CRATCHIT sets his work in order and rises. He waits expectantly for his employer. SCROOGE doesn't look up as he addresses the clerk.

SCROOGE. You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT. If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE. It is not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to stop half a crown for it, you'd think yourself mightily ill-used, I'll be

bound? And yet you don't think me ill-used when I pay a day's wages for no work.

CRATCHIT. It's only once a year, sir.

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.

CRATCHIT. Yes, sir. Good evening, sir.

SCROOGE grunts in response. Exit CRATCHIT.

SCROOGE puts away his work and crosses to his bedroom. SCROOGE changes into his dressing gown, takes a small pot of gruel from the fire, and eats it mechanically on the edge of his bed.

NARRATOR. Scrooge lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms in a lowering pile of buildings up a yard. The building was old enough now and dreary enough for nobody lived in it but Scrooge. He took off his cravat, put on his dressing gown and slippers and his nightcap, and sat down before the very low fire to take his gruel. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room and communicated, for some purpose now forgotten, with a chamber in the highest story of the building.

A single bell rings.

NARRATOR. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. Soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

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Suddenly, a cacophony of bells rattles the room and echoes throughout the house. Abruptly, the ringing ceases. Distant footsteps are heard coming closer, as though someone were walking up the stairs trailing heavy chains with every step. As the steps come closer, SCROOGE readies himself to meet the intruder by brandishing a poker (or the pot of gruel).

The footsteps cease. A flash of light. MARLEY appears. He is a restless, mournful ghost wrapped in a great, heavy length of chain.

SCROOGE. (*Confused recognition*) Can it be...? (*To MARLEY*)
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?

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

SCROOGE. Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY. It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. I cannot tell you all I would. A very little time is 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. Seven years dead. And traveling all the time?

MARLEY. O blind man, blind man! Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! (*Eyes suddenly fixed on SCROOGE*) Yet I was like this man; I once was like this man!

SCROOGE. But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY. Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business. Charity, mercy, forbearance, benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! Hear me! My time is nearly gone. I am here tonight to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate—a chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer. You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE. Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob? I—I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY. Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow night when the bell tolls one. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!

MARLEY vanishes in a flash of light. SCROOGE is shaken, but after examining the door to confirm it is locked, he is able to halfway convince himself the encounter was a dream. He settles down in bed and tries to sleep.

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

NARRATOR. Scrooge examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. And being—from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the invisible world, or the strange conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour—much in need of repose, he went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep on the instant.

A bell tolls one. A flash of light. The Ghost of Christmas PAST appears. He is as blindingly bright as an angel, dressed in summer flowers, carrying a branch of fresh holly, and wearing a crown of pure light. SCROOGE is startled out of bed.

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

PAST. I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE. ...Long past?

PAST. Your past. The things that you will see with me are shadows of the things that have been; they will have no consciousness of us.

SCROOGE. What business has brought you here?

PAST. Your welfare. Rise, and walk with me!

PAST leads SCROOGE to a busy city street decorated for Christmas.

NARRATOR. As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood in the busy thoroughfares of a city. It was made plain enough by the dressing of the shops that here, too, it was Christmastime.

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PAST leads SCROOGE into a shop. SCROOGE pauses with wonder in the door.

PAST. Do you know this shop?

SCROOGE. Know it! I was apprenticed here.

Fezziwig's counting house is laid out like the Scrooge & Marley counting house but is bright, warm, and festive. Enter FEZZIWIG, a jolly old gentleman in a wig carrying a stack of papers.

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

FEZZIWIG. Yo ho, there! Ebenezer!

Enter EBENEZER. He is clearly the late teen/early adult version of SCROOGE, but his face is kinder, even jolly.

EBENEZER. Here, sir!

FEZZIWIG. *(With mock severity)* We've got a new account to set up. Start a new ledger for one Mr. Fernsby & Sons at once.

EBENEZER. Yes, sir.

FEZZIWIG hands EBENEZER another set of papers with every assignment he doles out.

FEZZIWIG. Also, the accounts of a Mr. Dankworth, a Mr. Birdwhistle, and a Mr. Berrycloth must be counted up and settled immediately. And when you have finished with that, I have no less than fifty letters that must be copied and addressed tonight.

EBENEZER looks at the stack of papers in his hands forlornly.

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

EBENEZER. Fifty!...Must it all be done tonight, sir?

FEZZIWIG breaks into a jolly laugh.

FEZZIWIG. Ah, the look on your face, my boy! No more work tonight. Christmas, Ebenezer! Christmas! Let's have the shutters up, before a man can say Jack Robinson! Clear away, my lad, and let's have lots of room here!

EBENEZER. Yes, sir!

EBENEZER quickly clears the room. Enter Party GUESTS and BELLE. A single fiddler plays a lively Christmas tune as everyone dances and laughs. EBENEZER pays special attention to BELLE. They laugh and dance more excitedly than everyone. SCROOGE unconsciously nods and taps his foot to the music.

NARRATOR. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life forevermore. The floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire, and the warehouse was as snug and warm and dry and bright a ballroom as you would desire to see upon a winter's night. In came a fiddler with a music book and went up to the lofty desk and made an orchestra of it and tuned like fifty stomach aches. There were dances, and there were forfeits and more dances, and there was cake, and there was a great piece of cold roast, and there were mince pies and plenty of beer.

Music ends. GUESTS finish dancing and applaud. A clock strikes eleven. FEZZIWIG and EBENEZER shake each GUEST'S hand as they leave. EBENEZER sneaks a quick kiss on BELLE's cheek. She smiles and blushes as she exits. Finally, FEZZIWIG and EBENEZER are alone. They wish each other "merry Christmas" and "goodnight" as they exit for bed.

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PAST. A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude. He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money—three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

SCROOGE. It isn't that, 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. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune...*(trails off)*

PAST. What is the matter?

SCROOGE. Nothing particular.

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.

PAST. My time grows short. Quick!

PAST waves his holly branch. Enter BELLE wearing a black shawl and EBENEZER, a little older and already starting to resemble present day SCROOGE in his mannerisms. They are in the midst of a difficult conversation.

BELLE. *(Gently)* It matters little. To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me, and if it can comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

EBENEZER. *(Scathingly)* What idol has displaced you?

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

BELLE. A golden one. You fear the world too much. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?

EBENEZER. What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you. Have I ever sought release from our engagement?

BELLE. In words, no. Never.

BELLE instinctively reaches to fix his collar or brush the hair out of his face. EBENEZER harshly bats her hand away.

EBENEZER. *(Frustrated)* In what, then?

BELLE. In a changed nature, in an altered spirit, in another atmosphere of life, another Hope as its great end. If you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can I even 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, *(Removes a ring from her finger and places it in EBENEZER's hand)* and I release you, with a full heart, for the love of him you once were.

BELLE calmly, sadly turns and exits. EBENEZER looks at the ring.

EBENEZER. Bah!

EBENEZER shoves the ring in his pocket and exits opposite BELLE.

SCROOGE. Spirit! Remove me from this place.

PAST. I told you these were shadows of the things that have been. They are what they are. Do not blame me!

SCROOGE. Remove me! I cannot bear it! Leave me! Take me back.
Haunt me no longer!

PAST vanishes in a flash of light. SCROOGE is back in his bed and startles awake. However, his bedroom has been decorated in greenery and a fire blazes in the hearth. SCROOGE grabs the poker and sits on the edge of his bed ready to confront the next apparition.

NARRATOR. Scrooge awoke in his bedroom. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green that it looked like a perfect grove. The leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if many little mirrors had been scattered there. Such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney as that petrification of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped upon the floor to form a kind of throne were turkeys, geese, game, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince pies, plum puddings, barrels of oysters, red hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth cakes, and great bowls of punch.

A bell tolls one. A flash of light. The Ghost of Christmas PRESENT appears lounging in a chair. PRESENT is dressed in a loose green tunic with white fur trim and a holly wreath with glittering icicles on his head. He holds an ornate torch.

PRESENT. Come in, come in, and know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! You have never seen anything like me before!

SCROOGE. Never.

PRESENT. Touch my robe!

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

SCROOGE sets down the poker and obeys. Instantly PRESENT whisks him away to the CRATCHIT's house. It is an old and patched kitchen but well-loved and warm. On the kitchen table there is a medium-sized cooked goose, a pot of potatoes, and a saucepan of applesauce.

NARRATOR. The room and its contents all vanished, and they stood in a warm kitchen upon a snowy Christmas evening.

SCROOGE. Spirit, whose house is this?

PRESENT. Watch and see.

Enter PETER and BELINDA who rush over to the goose and admire it with hungry eyes and watering mouths.

BELINDA. Have you ever seen such a wonderful goose in all your life?

PETER. Do you think Mother will notice just one leg missing?

Enter MRS. CRATCHIT carrying dishes, cups, and utensils.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Peter Cratchit, if I find my beautiful Christmas goose missing an appendage I will stuff you full of onions and roast you over the fire as a replacement!

PETER and BELINDA leap away from the goose and begin mashing the potatoes and stirring the applesauce like they had been sent to do. BELINDA sneaks small spoonfuls of applesauce when MRS. CRATCHIT isn't looking.

MRS. CRATCHIT. What is keeping your precious father, then? And your brother Tiny Tim! And Martha wasn't as late last Christmas day by half an hour!

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Enter MARTHA. MRS. CRATCHIT, BELINDA, and PETER stop their tasks to greet her.

PETER. Here's Martha, Mother! Martha!

MARTHA. Merry Christmas! Has Belinda left any applesauce for the rest of us?

BELINDA. Martha! You'll never believe it! There's such a goose!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

MARTHA. We'd a deal of work to finish up last night and had to clear away this morning, Mother!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Well! Never mind so long as you are here.

PETER. *(At the door)* Father's coming! Father's coming!

Enter CRATCHIT with TINY TIM on his shoulders, who is carrying a little crutch.

TINY TIM. Father, look! *(Coughs)* Martha!

CRATCHIT sets TINY TIM down and hands him the crutch. All greet and hug each other. There is a great deal of excited chatter. TINY TIM coughs now and then, but he's just as excited as the rest.

CRATCHIT. *(hugging MARTHA)* Welcome home, dear.

MARTHA. Glad to be home. Merry Christmas, Father!

PETER. Tim! You won't believe it! There is such a goose!

TINY TIM. A goose!

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

BELINDA. Come see! Martha, come see, too!

PETER, BELINDA, MARTHA, and TINY TIM run over and admire the goose on the table.

MRS. CRATCHIT. *(To CRATCHIT)* And how did little Tim behave?

CRATCHIT. As good as gold and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard.

TINY TIM. *(Looking up from the goose)* All I said was I hope the people saw me in the church, because I'm a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember, upon Christmas day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see. *(Has a small coughing fit.)*

MRS. CRATCHIT tears up and hugs TINY TIM affectionately. CRATCHIT, MARTHA, BELINDA, and PETER are silent and watchful.

MRS. CRATCHIT. *(Wiping her eyes)* Now then, enough of that! Let's have the table set and see about that goose, shall we?

All cheer. MARTHA, PETER, BELINDA, and TINY TIM set the table quickly with mismatched and chipped dishes. Everyone sits around the table, and MRS. CRATCHIT serves the goose, potatoes, and applesauce. All eat with loud enthusiasm.

NARRATOR. There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, and size, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by applesauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight, they hadn't eaten it all at last! Yet every one had enough, and the

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youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows!

MRS. CRATCHIT clears away the goose and proudly sets out a round pudding on the table. ALL ooh and ahh.

NARRATOR. Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. O, a wonderful pudding Bob Cratchit said, and calmly, too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

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

TINY TIM. God bless us every one! *(Coughs)*

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

PRESENT closes his eyes briefly then opens suddenly and looks toward a corner of the room.

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.

PRESENT. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race will find him here. What then? If he must die, he had better do it, *(pointedly)* and decrease the surplus population.

CRATCHIT. *(Raising his cup)* Mr. Scrooge! I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

MRS. CRATCHIT. 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.

CRATCHIT. My dear, the children! Christmas day.

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

CRATCHIT. My dear, Christmas day.

MRS. CRATCHIT. 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!

TINY TIM. (*Raising his cup, coughs*) God bless Mr. Scrooge!

ALL drink the toast. Exit Cratchits (perhaps singing a Christmas carol).

SCROOGE. (*To himself*) I wonder...

PRESENT. What do you wonder?

SCROOGE. Nothing. Only that perhaps I was a little too quick in turning down my nephew's offer to come to dinner.

An eerie bell tolls and lights flicker.

PRESENT. O Man! look here! Look, look down here!

A flash of light. IGNORANCE and WANT appear. They are children, ragged, hungry, sickly, and shivering. IGNORANCE—although he looks half-starved—plays roughly with

and throws the remainder of the Cratchit's dinner recklessly. WANT begs, tries to wrest items out of IGNORANCE's hands, and scrounges around the table desperately for crumbs. WANT also appears to be starving, but she hoards food instead of eating it.

NARRATOR. They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meager, ragged, scowling, wolfish, but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shriveled hand, like that of age, had pinched and twisted them and pulled them into shreds. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dreadful.

SCROOGE. (*Appalled*) Spirit! Are they yours?

PRESENT. They are Man's. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this one (*indicates IGNORANCE*), for on his brow I see Doom is written, unless the writing be erased. (*PRESENT taps SCROOGE on the forehead*)

SCROOGE. Have they no refuge or resource?

PRESENT. (*Perhaps an imitation of SCROOGE*) Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

SCROOGE. (*Falls to his knees, lamenting*) Oh. Oh, no...

PRESENT, IGNORANCE, and WANT vanish in a flash of light. A bell tolls twelve. Light fades to darkness and fog creeps out. In the dark, SCROOGE returns to his bedroom.

NARRATOR. Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost and saw it no more.

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

On the last stroke of midnight there is a flash of light. SCROOGE is in his bedroom, and the Ghost of Christmas FUTURE appears over him, surrounded by mist. FUTURE is shrouded in a black hooded robe. We cannot see his face or any other part of his body. He stands before SCROOGE motionless.

NARRATOR. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and, lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist along the ground towards him.

SCROOGE. Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?

No response.

SCROOGE. Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any specter I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company and do it with a thankful heart. ...Will you not speak to me?

FUTURE slowly lifts his black shrouded arm and points. SCROOGE stands and draws his attention to where FUTURE indicates. Enter PASSERBY 1 and PASSEBY 2 in mid-conversation.

PASSERBY 1. No, I don't know much about it either way. I only know he's dead.

PASSERBY 2. When did he die?

PASSERBY 1. Last night, I believe.

PASSERBY 2. Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

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PASSERBY 1. (*Yawns*) God knows.

PASSERBY 2. What has he done with his money?

PASSERBY 1. I haven't heard. Company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know.

PASSERBY 2. It's likely to be a very cheap funeral for, upon my life, I don't know of anybody to go to it. (*Joking*) Say, suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

PASSERBY 1. (*Laughing*) I don't mind going if a lunch is provided!

Exit PASSERBY 1 and 2, laughing.

SCROOGE. Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way now.

FUTURE points again. A flash of light. SCROOGE turns to see a body laying on his bed carelessly covered in a dingy sheet.

SCROOGE. Merciful heaven, what is this?

NARRATOR. He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed—a bare, uncurtained bed—on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language. The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.

FUTURE points to the head of the body on the bed.

SCROOGE. (*Horried*) Oh, no, Spirit! I cannot look.

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER SCRIPTS

FUTURE slowly lowers his hand. A flash of light. The body is gone. SCROOGE and FUTURE stand in a ruinous, disorderly graveyard.

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

FUTURE slowly turns and points to a headstone that is covered in ivy and turned so SCROOGE cannot see the writing without walking to stand before it.

SCROOGE. (*Hesitant*) 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 the things that only may be?

No response.

SCROOGE. (*Desperation rising*) Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses are departed from, the ends will change. Say it is so with what you show me!

FUTURE points again. SCROOGE walks to the headstone, brushes back the ivy, and collapses when he reads the inscription.

NARRATOR. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and, following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name: EBENEZER SCROOGE.

SCROOGE. Am I that man who lay upon the bed? No, Spirit! Oh, no, no! Spirit! Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I have been. Why show me this, if I am past all hope? Assure

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me that I may yet change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life.

FUTURE lowers his hand slowly. A heavy mist swirls. A bell tolls twelve.

SCROOGE. I will honor 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! *(Sobbing)* Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!

Blackout on the last stroke of midnight.

END OF SAMPLE