



A CHRISTMAS CAROL: Whispering Hollow

A Frontier Ghost Story

ACT I

Formatting notes for rehearsal:

- CHARACTER NAMES in caps.
- Stage directions in italics.
- SOUND/ LIGHT and CHORUS cues marked.
- Use a small Ghost Chorus (3–5 voices, mixed) hidden around the space; mic them quietly.

EBENEZER SCROOGE — Frontier banker of Whispering Hollow; iron-spined, winter-blooded, terrified of need. His arc runs from calcified survival to vulnerable generosity. Large line load; onstage most of the show.

MARSHAL ADA BOONE — Town marshal and narrator. Dry wit, moral backbone, and a quiet tenderness for her people. Opens the story and returns to seal it with a call to giving and community.

JACOB MARLEY — Scrooge's dead partner, shackled in ledgers and cashboxes. Fierce, remorseful, and urgent; the catalyst who yanks Scrooge onto the road to mercy. (Can double elsewhere when unchained.)

THE PRAIRIE CHILD (Ghost of Christmas Past) — Ethereal, barefoot guide crowned with winter weeds. Gentle, inexorable witness who makes Scrooge see what he chose to forget.

MISS JUBILEE (Ghost of Christmas Present) — Saloon-queen splendor; warmth that's equal parts feast and judgment. A blazing advocate for neighborly care. Reveals WANT and IGNORANCE from beneath her skirts.

THE MAN IN BLACK (Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come) — Wordless, towering inevitability. A hat brim like a horizon; silence that crushes. Points Scrooge to the grave and to choice.

BOB CRATCHIT — Scrooge's clerk; decent, exhausted, quietly proud. Holds the household together with threadbare dignity.

CLARA CRATCHIT (MRS. CRATCHIT) — Fierce love, hotter temper; the voice of the cost extracted by "business." Softens without surrender.

TINY TIM — Frail body, luminous spirit. The show's moral treble note; his blessing cuts straight through Scrooge.

MARTHA CRATCHIT — Eldest; works outside the home, brings laughter back through the door.

PETER CRATCHIT — Shoulders too small for man-sized hopes; learns strength without hardening.

LITTLE CRATCHITS (2–3) — Joy, noise, and knife-twist innocence.

FREDDY HART (FRED) — Scrooge's nephew; wind-bright, stubbornly loving. Keeps an empty chair ready every year.

CLARA HART — Freddy's wife; warm, witty, leads songs and games, and keeps the welcome real.

BELLE — Scrooge's lost love; the moment he chooses security over soul. (Can double with Clara Hart or a saloon girl.)

YOUNG EBENEZER — All edges and vows; teaches himself not to want.

YOUNG MARLEY — Practical, flinty; signs the contract with steady hand.

FANNY — Scrooge's sister; radiant loyalty. Her prayer outlives her—and saves him.

MOTHER — Bedridden but iron-voiced; warns him not to mistake money for love.

FEZ (FEZZIWIG) — Employer who throws profit to the wind for a dance. A one-man festival.

CLARA FEZZIWIG — His co-conspirator in joy; bossy, benevolent, unstoppable.

FIDDLER — Live musical engine of the barn/store dance. (Can be onstage or in the pit.)

THE WIDOW — Proud eyes, thin shawl; begs spring's mercy for her children and gets a door instead.

MINER #1 / MINER #2 — Dust-lungs and dignity; ask grace for a week and get ledger stone. (Also appear in carols/alley scenes.)

CHARITY RIDER #1 / #2 — Collectors for coal, bread, blankets; mirror the town's conscience back at Scrooge.

RANCH HAND — Trades wages for a blanket behind the saloon; a neighbor in need.

MINER'S WIFE — Turns a crust into a feast by pretending hard enough.

Saloon GIRLS (2–4) — Carry baskets of bread in Silver Star Alley; kindness with chapped hands.

BOY (TURKEY BOY) — Street runner who delivers the feast to the Cratchits.

BUSINESSMEN: MR. WICKS / MR. DOBBINS / MR. COLE — Whiskey, smoke, and gallows humor; measure a man's death in profit margins.

OLD JOE — Pawn-shop vulture; jovial cruelty and quick arithmetic.

NAN PRITCHARD (charwoman) — Thirty winters on Scrooge's floors; sells his velvet with a steady jaw.

MABEL HIGGS (laundress) — Soap-burned hands; grief once fined as "lost time."

AMOS CROWE (undertaker's man) — Takes the burial shirt; "no sense wasting good cloth on worms."

TOWNSFOLK GOSSIPS: MRS. KETTLE / MR. BARNES / MRS. HOLLOWAY / MR. JENKINS / SUSAN MILLER — The chorus of consequence; some bitter, one brave enough to pity.

WANT — A girl with frostbitten fingers; need made flesh.

IGNORANCE — A boy with hollow eyes; doom carved on his brow. (Often doubled by younger ensemble.)

GHOST CHORUS (3–5 voices, mixed) — Hidden around the space; coughs, sobs, minor-key carols, and the hush after. They amplify spirit entrances, haunt memory scenes, and turn into townsfolk when needed.

CAROLERS (4–8) — Brave, thin harmonies that bloom as Scrooge changes. (May be the same performers as the Ghost Chorus if miking allows, or a separate visible group.)

Recommended Doubling (budget- and backstage-smart)

- Prairie Child ↔ Fanny's Spirit (same ethereal track).
- Miss Jubilee ↔ Clara Fezziwig (queen of warmth in both scenes).
- Marshal Boone ↔ remains single to anchor narration (or light cameo as Susan Miller if desired).
- Old Joe ↔ Mr. Cole (distinct voices/looks do the trick).
- Nan Pritchard ↔ Mrs. Kettle; Mabel Higgs ↔ Mrs. Holloway.
- Amos Crowe ↔ Mr. Dobbins; Mr. Wicks ↔ Mr. Barnes.
- Ranch Hand / Miner #2 / Caroler all in one track.
- Saloon Girls ↔ Caroler Trio ↔ Party Guests.
- Boy (Turkey Boy) ↔ Little Cratchit (if ages permit) or a teen swing.

PROLOGUE

Black. Wind gnaws the boards. A water-tower bell thrums once, no rope. A sign creaks—“Whispering Hallow.” A pale blue glow lifts on MARSHAL ADA BOONE, lantern low. She lets the cold sit before speaking.

BOONE

Marley was dead: to begin with. Dead as the nail that locked his box. We took him up Boot Hill ourselves—plain pine, scarce words, hard earth. I set his name proper in my book, and the shovel rang on stones that never cared for a man’s title.

His partner lived on—EBENEZER SCROOGE. Banker. Spine like ironwood, blood like January. Folks say the day his ledger outweighed his heart, the wind in this town learned new habits.

Whispering Hallow was once fiddle tunes and dust that glittered. Now ore pinches, cattle go to bone, and hunger learns our names by heart. Still the bank door opens at sun-up, shuts at dark, and every debt marches like gravestones.

I’ve worn this star long enough to know there are debts no court can write. They come on frost. They knock when the night is thick as grief. And this Christmas Eve, I hear the knocking.

SOUND: A faint chain far away. Another answers. Not loud—near.

LIGHT: A breath of blue across the bank windows.

BOONE

Some doors open with keys. Some with prayers. Some with neither.

She tips the lantern toward the bank. Lights rise there, like a room remembering itself.

SCENE 1 — THE BANK ON MAIN

Bare planks; teller rail; high desk for EBENEZER; small one for BOB CRATCHIT. Iron stove—an ember’s eye. Coal scuttle: two lumps only. Frost veining the inside glass like handwriting.

EBENEZER

Save your breath for living, Mr. Cratchit. Warm air fogs my figures.

CRATCHIT

Beg pardon, sir—the ink’s turned to iron. It takes persuasion to move it at all.

EBENEZER

Then persuade it. Paper is cheaper than pity.

[Door creaks. A WIDOW enters—shawl thin, eyes proud from long practice. Behind her, in the frost, a miner’s silhouette coughs once and fades.]

WIDOW

(hesitant, voice steady but worn)

Mr. Scrooge... I rehearsed these words, but they sound smaller now that I stand before you. I’ll speak plain.

(takes a breath)

My Henry is gone—the east shaft cave-in took him fast. Now I’m alone with three children and a roof that moans when the wind leans on it.

(She holds out a crumpled notice)

The paper says payment is due before New Year’s.

If you grant me ‘til spring—just ‘til the thaw—I’ll scrub Whispering Hollow raw and sew ‘til my fingers learn the shape of thread.

(her voice breaks slightly)

Only... don’t set us out in this weather. Not with their bones still growing.

EBENEZER

(without lifting his eyes from the ledger)

Spring is rumor. A debt is fact.

Your paper says New Year’s; my door agrees.

Vacate by sunrise on the first if payment is not paid in full.

WIDOW

(with quiet, rising hurt)

My husband died dragging another man to light.

That must count for something.

EBENEZER

(coldly)

Not in columns I keep.

WIDOW

(quiet steel)

Then may God keep your name out of mine.

(She folds a worn letter—creases softened by years of pleading thumbs—and leaves. The latch clicks softly behind her.)

[SOUND: A miner’s pick strikes stone somewhere far away—dull, hollow, fading.]

[Cratchit flinches; Scrooge turns a page like a blade.]

CRATCHIT

(carefully)

Sir... if we might adjust the schedule for the flooded claims—

EBENEZER

(without looking up)

Water does not dissolve contracts.

[Two MINERS enter—hats in hands, faces dusted like coal snow. The lamplight flickers against their soot-covered cheeks.]

MINER #1

(Cautious, respectful)

Mr. Scrooge, sir... pumps snapped clean on the lower shaft last Sunday. We’ve been working by lantern and prayer ever since. No wages in eight days. My eldest girl’s been coughing blood in her

kerchief. Doctor says it's the dust.

(He lowers his head)

We ask just a week's grace on the payment—one week, sir. Let us mend the pumps and make our due.

EBENEZER

(Without looking up from his ledger)

A week's grace is a week I starve. You chose your trade; choose stronger ground to work under.

MINER #2

(Steps forward, weary but proud)

We don't choose the earth, sir. The earth chooses whether we live. Every breath we take's a wager with the dirt. We dig your profit from the veins of God's mountain, same as always.

(beat)

Could you not make a note—for mercy, if not for help?

EBENEZER

(Cold, flatly)

You chose to sign the loan. A signature is a man's heat in winter. I deal in ink, not compassion. Good day.

MINER #1

(Voice breaking, trembling with anger)

You'd weigh a soul if you could price it.

EBENEZER

(Finally glances up, cruel smile)

If souls paid what they owe, I'd weigh nothing else.

[A long silence. The MINERS exchange a look, hollow and defeated. They put their hats back on, nod stiffly, and leave. The door shuts with a hollow echo. Scrooge's pen scratches once more.]

CRATCHIT

(quietly, gathering courage)

I pass their houses, sir. Every morning.

Children stand in the doorways just to borrow the steam off a kettle. Their toes—purple as plums.

If we could—just a notch—ease—

EBENEZER

(cuts him off)

Shoes are not my business. Balances are.

CRATCHIT

(careful, nervous, glancing at the dying ember)

The fire's down to its last breath, sir. The cold's seeped clear through the brick.

The ink stiffens, the pen won't run, and—if I might—

(hesitates, voice softer)

The young one—Tim—his lungs catch something awful when the air bites like this.

If we could feed the stove just a handful more coal, it'd warm the ink... and the room.

EBENEZER

(without looking up from his books)

Every spark is a stolen penny. Feed a flame and it learns the word “more.”

So do men. Sweat is free.

CRATCHIT

(quietly, bowing his head)

Yes, sir.

[A knock rattles the frosted glass. Before CRATCHIT can rise, the door bursts open and FREDDY HART steps inside — wind-bright and laughing, his cheeks red from the cold, his coat smelling faintly of pine and snow. He is the opposite of Scrooge in every way: color, warmth, life. A man built of laughter and compassion in a room made of ledgers and frost.]

FREDDY

(cheerfully, stamping snow from his boots)

Uncle! Merry Christmas!

EBENEZER

(without looking up from his figures)

Bah. Humbug.

FREDDY

(grinning, unshaken)

There it is — the battle cry of Ebenezer Scrooge.

(steps closer, teasing gently)

You lean on that word like a crutch that won't hold, year after year. Same song, different verse, and still no melody in it.

(He pulls a small, weathered packet of letters from his coat, holding them close to his chest as though they were holy things.)

She wrote to you, you know — my mother.

Nights so cold the ink near froze in the bottle, and still she wrote your name like it might warm the page.

(His tone softens, reverent.)

“Ebenezer,” she said — gentle as prayer — “He was a good man once. I know he was.”

EBENEZER

(flat, cutting off the warmth)

Fanny was a dreamer.

FREDDY

(smiles faintly, though it trembles)

She dreamed you human, Uncle.

And I don't believe she was wrong — not all the way.

(He walks the office slowly, taking in the chill, the piles of ledgers, the sting of ink and metal.)

You've built yourself quite the fortress here — a castle made of coin and cold air.

Warmth costs less than you think, you know.

EBENEZER

(still focused on his ledger)

I've warmth enough in profit.

FREDDY

(turning back toward him, gently but firm)

Profit won't sit beside you when the nights turn long, Uncle.

(smiles)

Tomorrow, I'm setting a table — coffee black as sin, a roast if luck holds, maybe a song if we can coax one out of the fiddle.

(He chuckles, a boyish sound in the dead air.)

There's a chair with your name carved clean in it, same as it's been for years.

Every Christmas we leave it empty — waiting, hoping.

Sit in it once, Uncle.

For her. For me.

EBENEZER

(finally looks up, eyes cold as pewter)

I keep my promises to the dead by staying alive.

FREDDY

(a beat; hurt, but still tender)

Alive ain't the same as living.

(He turns slightly, finding Cratchit with a sympathetic glance.)

Mr. Cratchit — your boy's got a seat too, if the air allows.

CRATCHIT

(genuinely moved)

You're kind, sir.

FREDDY

(nods, then faces Scrooge once more)

She prayed your name so often the dark itself knows it by heart.

(steps closer, quieter now)

I'll say it once more — I love you, Ebenezer.

And I wish you joy, whether you'll take it or not.

EBENEZER

(turns back to his ledger)

Good afternoon.

FREDDY

(with quiet ache, nodding)

Merry Christmas, Uncle.

(He almost offers the letters — his mother's hand in faded ink — but can't bear to see them refused. He tucks them back inside his coat with care. A slow breath, a small nod to Cratchit, then he tips his hat and steps into the night. The door closes softly, and with it the last trace of warmth leaves the room.)

[Silence follows — thick, heavy, cold. The ticking of the clock grows loud in the stillness, as if marking not time, but the measure of Scrooge's isolation.]

The office seems larger now, emptier. CRATCHIT rubs his hands together for heat, his breath clouding the air. The front door creaks open, letting in a drift of snow and two figures cloaked in frost — THE CHARITY RIDERS. Their coats are threadbare, their boots caked in slush. One carries a ledger patched with twine; the other, a lantern nearly out of oil.]

CHARITY #1

(softly, respectful but weary)

Beg pardon, Mr. Scrooge. We're riding the town tonight — house by house, store by store. We collect for the old, the sick, and the small — coal, bread, blankets if we can find them.

(glances toward the window)

The wind's turned sharp. There's families sleepin' with their backs to it. The fund is bare... the night is not.

EBENEZER

(without looking up)

Are there no poorhouses?

CHARITY #2

There are, sir. But they're full past bursting — men stacked on men like kindling.

EBENEZER

And no debtor pens? No chain gangs left to keep the idle in order?

CHARITY #1

(a flash of frustration, then humility)

Plenty, sir. But many would rather die than enter.

EBENEZER

Then let them die — and decrease the surplus population.

(he closes a ledger with deliberate calm)

My taxes keep those places. That is enough.

CHARITY #2

(steps forward, voice trembling with anger barely held in check)

Enough for whom, sir? You tally the cost of a loaf, but not a life.

There's children out there tonight trading prayers for soup, and you speak of ledgers.

EBENEZER

I speak of order. Charity is a fire that eats the hand that feeds it.

CHARITY #1

Order without mercy ain't fit for the living.

(a beat — his tone softens, almost pitying)

You ever stand by a crib gone still, Mr. Scrooge?

You ever bury someone who died with your name still in their mouth?

(the room stills; even Cratchit looks up)

CHARITY #1 (cont'd)

No man's born mean, sir.

You've forgotten what it costs to be cold.

EBENEZER

(slow, ice in his tone)

I've remembered it too well.

That's why I built walls high enough to keep it out.

(a pause — the faintest crack of truth under his cruelty)

CHARITY #2

Then may God find a door through them.

(turns to go)

There are books that open only at night, Mr. Scrooge.

You'll read one soon enough.

[They leave. The door closes gently. The silence that follows feels heavier than before.]

[Outside, a faint sound rises — a carol, thin and trembling but brave.]

CAROLERS (off, slow)

♪ God rest ye merry, gentlemen... ♪

[The melody falters, carried away by the wind. CRATCHIT listens, eyes down.]

EBENEZER

(crossing to the window, opening the sash a crack)

Silence.

Banks trade in it.

[A gust blows in. Frost dusts Cratchit's ledger. He brushes it away carefully, as if the world touching him is proof he still belongs to it.]

EBENEZER

We work till ten. You'll want the day tomorrow, I suppose.

CRATCHIT

If convenient, sir.

EBENEZER

It is not — and it is not fair.

But if I refuse it, I'm a brute; if I grant it, I'm robbed.

(closes the ledger)

Very well. Be here early next morning, and earn it back with interest.

CRATCHIT

Thank you, sir.

EBENEZER

Don't. Thank the hour.
Lock up. Twice.

[He takes a lantern. At the inner door, his hand lingers on the brass knocker. For a breath, the metal seems to breathe back — a pale blue shimmer of a face not yet ready to be seen.]

FANNY'S VOICE (gentle, far away)

Ebenezer...

[Scrooge stiffens. His lantern trembles.]

EBENEZER

(mutters to himself, shaking it off)
Cold tricks. Nothing more.

FANNY'S VOICE (closer now)

He was a good man once...

[The brass knocker flickers blue — FANNY'S reflection appears faintly in the metal, smiling sadly.]

EBENEZER

(snaps his eyes shut, furious)
Humbug.

[He leaves. The lamplight dies to a single ember. CRATCHIT stands in the half-dark, hands open to the fading glow, like a prayer he's too tired to finish.]

[From outside, the carol drifts once more — only a single voice now, trembling and brave.]

CAROLER (off, faintly)

♪ Tidings of comfort and joy... ♪

[CRATCHIT closes the ledger slowly, a reverence in his movements. He blows out the last light and exits.]

SCENE 2 — THE STREET

[Snow sifts down in slow, weary flakes. The town looks like a map of shadows—dim windows, crooked lanterns, smoke curling from chimneys that can still afford wood. The night hums with the low murmur of cold. CRATCHIT steps out from the counting house, closing the door behind him. He pulls his scarf high, his breath a ghost in the air.]

BOONE (voiceover or narrator)

The world's gone white and quiet, like God's hand pressed a finger to its lips.
And in that hush, the poor breathe louder than the rest.

[From a darker corner of the street, a small figure emerges—TINY TIM. He leans on a carved stick, his face pale but smiling, stubborn as dawn.]

TIM

Pa.

CRATCHIT

Tim—this air'll bite your bones clear through!

TIM

I went slow. *(a cough climbs, then lets go)*

Wanted to meet you coming out. I heard singing. Thought if I stood near it, it might warm me.

(a soft grin)

Sounds fool me good.

CRATCHIT

They fool me too, lad. *(touches Tim's cold cheek)*

Cold as iron, you are. Come—up you go. Arms round my neck now.

[He lifts him gently. Tim's weight is feather-light; the price of that lightness hangs heavy in the air.]

TIM

Did Mr. Scrooge give you the day?

CRATCHIT

He did.

Called it robbery first—but he did.

So tomorrow we'll have stew enough to fill the house, and breath enough to taste it.

(smiles at him)

And I'll carry you to the tree, if your chest says yes.

TIM

Then it's Christmas.

[Bob nods, trying to smile, but his eyes shine wet. He presses his cheek to Tim's hair. They start down the street slowly, his boots leaving deep prints that the snow rushes to fill. Above them, a square of yellow light glows in the fog—Scrooge's office window. A still figure stands inside and snuffs the lamp. The glow dies, leaving only the reflection of moonlight on glass.]

BOONE

That boy's lungs are a candle in the wind.

And Ebenezer? He's the draft.

*[Wind rises. Snow swirls in slow circles around them. A faint sound begins—soft, low, not quite singing. The **Ghost Chorus**.]*

GHOST CHORUS (off, distant, layered voices)

Hollow hearts, hollow hands,

Count the hours in the sand...

[Cratchit pauses, turning as though he hears something faint—like wind under words.]

CRATCHIT

Hear that, lad?

TIM

Just the snow talking, Pa.

(smiles weakly)

It always sounds like someone far away.

[The wind bends around them. In the drifting flakes, ghostly outlines shimmer—faces, figures, brief glints of chains and lamplight. They move like memory, like regret.]

GHOST CHORUS (stronger now, overlapping whispers)

The cold remembers every name... every debt unpaid...

[The lantern light flickers blue, a warning of what's coming. Cratchit shivers but keeps walking, holding Tim tighter.]

CRATCHIT

Come on, boy. Let's get you home before the night remembers us too.

[They disappear into the dark. The snow keeps falling, covering their tracks.]

BOONE

A man's mercy is the measure of his soul.

And tonight, the measure's running short.

[Blackout. SOUND: The rattle of a chain from nowhere, slow and heavy, echoing through the hollow streets.]

SCENE 3 — EBENEZER'S ROOMS

[Narrow bed. The stove is shy of flame, coughing embers that barely glow. The wallpaper curls like dry skin. The room is all edges and silence. Three bolts sit on the door like prayers said too late.]

[EBENEZER stands by a narrow table, eating thin gruel from a tin bowl. He doesn't sit. He never sits. The sound of his spoon against the metal is the only heartbeat the room has.]

[Outside, snow drifts against the windows. The wind moans low, almost human.]

BOONE (voiceover)

Some nights, the air don't move right.

It remembers too much.

And a man alone can hear his own wrongs whisper back through the keyhole.

[SOUND: The faint clank of metal — distant, steady, patient. A chain dragging over stone somewhere below.]

EBENEZER

(pauses, listening)

The wind—nothing more.

[But the chain again — louder this time. Then silence. The flame in the stove flares blue for a heartbeat. The door creaks... and opens by itself. No wind pushes it. It simply decides to yield.]

[LIGHT: A cold hue seeps through the threshold.]

SOUND: The chain returns — nearer, nearer — then stops. A slow, dragging breath.

[JACOB MARLEY enters. His coat is grave-hued; his flesh pale and translucent. Around him: ledgers, keys, locks, and cashboxes — all forged into a chain that clanks with every step. Dust falls from his cuffs like dry earth over a grave. Behind him, faint shapes move — men and women thin as candle smoke, their eyes hollow, their fingers reaching.]

EBENEZER

(a whisper)

Jacob...?

MARLEY

Ask me who I was.

EBENEZER

You were Jacob Marley.

MARLEY

I was.

Now I am just a remainder.

(He lifts the chain — each link scraping a note from the dark.)

I wear the chain I forged in life — link by link, yard by yard — every coin wrung from a widow's palm, every roof torn from a miner's brood, every child I turned from my door while I still held the key.

Hear it.

[He lashes the chain once. SOUND: spurs on stone, iron on bone, the shriek of metal against memory.]

[From the corners of the room, the GHOST CHORUS begins to move. Faces press against the windows — pale hands tracing frost into trembling shapes. A woman's silhouette drags fingers across the glass, leaving smudges like tears.]

CHORUS (whispered, overlapping)

Cold... hunger... please, Mr. Scrooge... the door, the door...

[The whispers rattle the walls. Scrooge flinches, his hand trembling above the spoon.]

EBENEZER

You were a man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY

(roaring suddenly; the chorus silences)

BUSINESS?

[The whole room seems to contract — the shadows pulling tight. Even the chain stills, listening.]

MARLEY

Mankind was our business!

Mercy. Forbearance. Kindness.

(points at him)

We counted coin while men drowned upright in the mines.

We weighed interest while children ate ice from the riverbank.

(steps closer, the iron in his voice bending to sorrow)

Do you want my eyes, Ebenezer?

I see faces — not numbers — faces I made poor.

They walk with me. Here. Here.

[He gestures; the shapes behind him surge — hands reaching from the corners, faces appearing in the wallpaper, whispering prayers that turn to cries.]

MARLEY (cont'd)

They speak when I try to swallow.

They will walk with you.

EBENEZER

(backing away, shaking)

You frighten me with—devices, Jacob. With theatrics!

MARLEY

(a bitter laugh)

Truth needs no trick.

(He binds his forearm in chain until it should hurt, and cannot.)

You are ugly, brother. Not your face — time will carve that —

but your soul: a frostbitten thing that would pawn its last ember for enough coin to fail at buying silence.

[The GHOST CHORUS gathers behind him now, circling Scrooge in their whispers. Their hands slide along the walls, over the bedpost, across the mirror. One ghost-child presses both palms to the windowpane — frost spiderwebs from her touch.]

MARLEY

Do you hear them?

(to the dark)

Speak.

CHORUS (rising, layered voices)

Please... bread... water... Mr. Scrooge... Mama... Henry... light...

EBENEZER

Stop. Stop—please stop—

MARLEY

I cannot.

(his voice cracks, briefly human)

I can only warn.

(softer, haunted)

Your sister pried heaven open with her small hands and said your name.
She prayed you'd soften, even while death was counting her breaths.
Freddy carries that prayer like a lantern.

(He looks down, trembling faintly)

I would spit on hope if I had spit.
I have chains.
You have a chance.

EBENEZER

(hoarse)
A... chance?

MARLEY

Three spirits. They will come whether you wish it or not.
Without them—you are damned.
With them—you may find a door not frozen shut.

[The stove flares white-blue. Frost veins creep across the floorboards. The water tower bell tolls once — low, sonorous, without a rope.]

MARLEY

Expect the first when the bell tolls one.
The second at two.
The third when the night is darkest.

EBENEZER

(desperate)
I would rather not!

MARLEY

So would every soul that howls beside me.
(steps backward; the room darkens with him)
Mercy is the only thing left, Ebenezer.
And it never asks if you're ready.

(He lifts his hand; the shapes behind him mirror the motion — dozens of hollow palms raised, begging or blessing or both.)

MARLEY

Open when it knocks.

[A gale sweeps through the room. MARLEY reels backward — his chain whirling like a silver storm. The ghosts behind him shriek as they are pulled into the dark, their hands dragging streaks across the frost on the windows until they vanish.]

[The door slams shut. The silence that follows is a wound.]

[The lamp flickers, gasps, and steadies faintly. EBENEZER stands alone again, but the air around him hums with what remains — whispers still echoing like a heartbeat too slow to die.]

EBENEZER

(broken, whispering to the dark)

Jacob... oh, Jacob...

[The lamp gutters and dies. The frost blossoms over the glass. For a final moment, faint ghost-hands reach across the window — pressing toward him, then slowly fading away.]

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 4 — THE FIRST SPIRIT (CHRISTMAS PAST)

The room exhales frost. Wheat chaff drifts from nowhere. The lamplight drains to silver. A hum rises—childlike, coyote-thin. Out of it steps THE PRAIRIE CHILD—barefoot, crowned with winter weeds and flax, holding a tin lantern that burns like moon.

PRAIRIE CHILD

Ebenezer Scrooge—

I am the trail you walked and forgot.

I am the hush after a door slams, and the boy left behind teaches himself not to cry.

I am every mile of prairie that looked the same until you believed you belonged to none of it.

Past lift the lantern; frost sketches a crooked E on the glass and fades.

PRAIRIE CHILD

They named me Christmas Past because you could not keep me, and yet I kept you. The prairie made me: lullabies sung to empty cradles, letters tucked in Bibles and never mailed, prayers with no address. They gather till they have enough weight to knock.

Why am I here? Because your sister said your name to the dark until the dark knew it. Because Jacob's chain threw sparks and one fell where it could catch. Because mercy has a longer trail than your ledger.

offers a hand. Frost blooms on their palm.

PRAIRIE CHILD

I will not punish. I will not comfort. I will witness. You will stand inside the seeing. Come. We ride backward. You will not like the country.

CHORUS (around, like breath under boards)

Eben... Ebenezer... come home... don't leave me here...

The lantern lifts; wind turns. The room becomes...

SCENE 5 — THE SCHOOLHOUSE

[A one-room shack sits against a sky the color of pewter. The wind moves through the cracks like it's searching for something it lost. Inside, the stove's flame has burned itself small — one coal glowing faintly, trying to remember what fire feels like. The smell of chalk and cold wood lingers.]

[Children pull on their coats and scarves, laughter bouncing off the walls. Their boots thump out the door, one by one, until it's only echo left. The last scrap of joy trails away on the wind. Silence takes the room by the throat.]

[YOUNG EBENEZER sits alone at a small desk, his shoulders hunched. He traces letters onto a slate, mouthing each word under his breath like a secret.]

YOUNG EBENEZER

N... need.

W... want.

L... lose.

[He stares at the last word, then erases it quickly — like if he leaves it there too long, it'll come true. He rubs the chalk dust off his fingers, leaving white streaks like bones.]

[The wind presses its face to the windows. Frost begins to bloom across the glass.]

PRAIRIE CHILD (quiet, warm)

You remember this place, don't you?

You were smaller than your pride but already learning to wear it like armor.

(she drifts through the room, touching the air, eyes tracing the corners where loneliness hides)

You told yourself if you needed nothing, then no one could ever take anything from you.

That if you didn't want, you couldn't be hurt by the ones who had enough to spare.

(softly, watching him write)

That was the first lie you ever believed, Ebenezer.

EBENEZER

(murmurs without looking up)

It wasn't a lie. It worked.

PRAIRIE CHILD

Did it?

You're still here, aren't you? Still sitting at that desk, long after the others went home.

They ran toward warmth. You stayed behind and called it wisdom.

(kneels by him)

You were a clever boy — too clever to understand what you were losing.

[Ebenezer's small hand trembles on the slate. His breath fogs in front of him. He whispers as if trying to convince the air.]

YOUNG EBENEZER

Father said I'd stay here.

He said home was no place for idlers, no place for the weak.

PRAIRIE CHILD

He said that to break you. And you believed him because it hurt less than thinking he was wrong.

[The wind pushes harder against the door — a sudden gust that sounds almost like laughter trying to get in. Ebenezer freezes, staring at the latch.]

YOUNG EBENEZER

That'll be the carriage. The others' fathers come for them.

(hesitant, trying to sound sure)

No one's coming for me.

[The door rattles again. This time it's softer — a rhythm almost like knocking.]

FANNY (off, breathless, through the storm)

Eben!

[He gasps, stands so fast his chair tips. The door bursts open and light rushes in with FANNY — cheeks flushed from cold, eyes alive with joy, hair tangled by the wind. She's a spark in human shape.]

FANNY

Eben! I found you! They said yes! Father signed the letter!

(laughs, breath catching on the edges of tears)

I asked him every day till my voice near wore out.

He softened — you can come home for Christmas!

(grabs his hand, pulling him to his feet)

Come on, come now, before he changes his mind.

[For a long second, Young Ebenezer just stares, too stunned to move. Then he lunges forward and clings to her like she's sunlight.]

YOUNG EBENEZER

You came for me...

FANNY

Always. Always will.

[They hold on longer than children should have to. The wind hushes, the candle burns a little brighter. The cold steps back, giving them space to breathe.]

[Adult EBENEZER stands in the shadows of the memory, watching. His mouth twitches — an almost-smile he doesn't know how to finish.]

EBENEZER

Fanny...

PRAIRIE CHILD

She loved you harder than life itself.

When she left, she didn't go empty. She left you something — a lantern in the dark. Freddy.

The best part of her heart.

(turns toward him)

And you can't look at him without seeing her, can you? That's why you turn him away.

EBENEZER

He is too much her. That's why.

PRAIRIE CHILD

Then that's the part you should have clung to.

Pain means it mattered. You've lived so long trying not to feel anything at all.

(steps closer, voice almost a whisper)

What's worse, Ebenezer — the hurt of losing her, or the nothing you've built to keep from hurting again?

[Ebenezer says nothing. Fanny's laughter echoes faintly, like a song carried from another lifetime. The children's voices fade. The classroom dims until only the candle remains — a single fragile light in the dark.]

PRAIRIE CHILD

She left you warmth, and you built a wall to keep it out.

That's the sin you'll have to break.

[The wind blows across the floorboards, erasing footprints that were never really there. Fanny and Young Ebenezer fade into snowlight. The Ghost Chorus stirs outside, faint hands pressing against the frosted windowpanes again, tracing childlike patterns before melting away.]

GHOST CHORUS (distant, gentle)

Homeward bound... homeward bound...

The boy stayed. The heart froze. The door closed.

[The candle gutters. The wind takes the last word, and darkness folds the room shut.]

SCENE 6 — THE MOTHER'S DEATHBED

Cabin bedroom. One candle on a crate. The walls bow inward with the weight of the storm outside. Snow squeezes through the cracks. MOTHER lies thin, pale, but her voice still has iron under it. YOUNG EBENEZER stands rigid at the foot of the bed; YOUNG FANNY kneels, clutching her mother's hand. The PRAIRIE CHILD and ADULT EBENEZER watch unseen.

MOTHER

Eben... my boy. You stand so stiff, like the world already sits on your shoulders. Don't let it turn your heart to stone. You're not made for hardness, no matter what you tell yourself.

YOUNG EBENEZER

I must be, Mama. Father says the world doesn't care for the soft.

MOTHER

Your father's wrong. The world breaks the hard quicker than the soft. The soft bend. The hard snap.

She coughs; blood speckles the rag in FANNY's hand.

MOTHER

Promise me, Eben. You'll watch Fanny. She's the gentler one. The world... will try to grind her down. Be her wall.

YOUNG EBENEZER

I promise, Mama.

MOTHER

And promise me something else... never mistake money for love. One can keep you warm... the other keeps you alive.

Her breath rattles, then stops. The candle gutters low. FANNY clings to her hand, sobbing. YOUNG EBENEZER's jaw sets tight, face blank. He forces the tears back down his throat, and in that silence, the first layer of Scrooge's wall is built.

PRAIRIE CHILD

He thought he had learned strength here. But what he learned was silence. A silence that ate his heart.

ADULT EBENEZER (broken)

If I had cried, I might have stayed human.

PRAIRIE CHILD

You taught yourself not to want. You thought it would keep you safe. It only left you hollow.

CHORUS (around, whispering)

Mama... don't go... Mama...

Snow breathes across the bed, and the room thins to music and light—

SCENE 7 — FEZZIWIG'S STORE / BARN DANCE

[Darkness peels away like frost from a window. Light swells, warm and golden. A barnlike store bursts into life: pine boughs strung from the rafters, tin stars catching the glow of lanterns. The smell of spice and sawdust, the scrape of boots, the high squeal of a fiddle tuning. CLARA moves apprentices about like a general, hanging greenery, stacking mugs. FEZ claps his great hands, and dust jumps from the beams.]

[The PRAIRIE CHILD steps into the scene holding their pale lantern. As the warmth builds, faint shapes push against the walls of memory — half-visible silhouettes of the dead, pressing fingers through the boards, hungry for the warmth they were denied.]

FEZ

Down tools! Shut those books!
Tonight we dance like fools with nothing to lose!

CLARA

And anyone who won't dance, you'll clap 'til your palms split!

[Laughter. The fiddler strikes a reel. Boots pound the floor; skirts fly. Children tumble underfoot, giggling. Between the music, whispers slide in from nowhere:]

GHOST CHORUS (faint, between fiddle phrases)

Dance... dance while you can... joy won't stay...

[At a corner table YOUNG EBENEZER and YOUNG MARLEY still scratch figures on ledgers. The PRAIRIE CHILD crosses to him, eyes fixed. The shadows of the Chorus creep nearer, pressing faces to the windowpanes, mouths opening in silent song. EBENEZER shivers though the room is warm.]

CLARA (pointing)

Up, both of you. No ink tonight.

MARLEY

Wasted sweat.

FEZ

Then waste it gladly! Sweat's cheaper than sorrow!

[They drag MARLEY into the dance — stiff, miserable. EBENEZER lingers, torn between figures and music. BELLE enters with mugs. She shines with warmth — for a flicker, a shadow overlays her, another face pressing through, then slipping away. EBENEZER startles. BELLE notices his stare.]

BELLE

Well, Mr. Scrooge?

Will you haunt yourself in the corner all night, or will you live while the chance is here?

YOUNG EBENEZER

I don't— I cannot dance.

BELLE

Then let me teach you before the chance passes.

[She takes his hands, pulls him into the whirl. His steps are stiff. The Chorus murmurs under the fiddle, mocking him:]

GHOST CHORUS (under the music)

Count it... measure it... weigh it... lose it...

[BELLE laughs warmly, draws him forward. Slowly he lets go. He stumbles, catches himself, and suddenly he's laughing — truly laughing. The Chorus recoils, hissing; the ghostly faces flinch back from the windows, unable to bear the sound.]

FEZ

Ha! There he is! The boy's got blood in him after all!

CLARA

I told you he wasn't made of ledgers alone!

[The dance grows wild. The store shakes with joy. Ghostly figures gather tighter against the walls, palms flat, faces pressed, wanting in. Their whispers sharpen, slicing through the reel:]

GHOST CHORUS (layered, rising)

Joy fades... she will leave... gold will weigh more... the dance ends...

[BELLE and EBENEZER are flung into the center, face to face, breathless. Around them the world slows — memory holding its breath. The PRAIRIE CHILD’s lantern glows bright silver, catching every ghostly face around the walls.]

BELLE

See? You’re smiling without counting.

YOUNG EBENEZER

It feels... foreign.

BELLE

Then keep it foreign. Don’t drag it into your ledger. Some things vanish if you measure them.

[The music roars back. FEZ lifts his mug, voice booming above the storm of boots and fiddles.]

FEZ

To Christmas! To foolishness! To kindness! Riches enough to shame the bankers and the misers!

[The crowd cheers, mugs raised. Joy at its peak. And then—the Ghost Chorus slides in loud beneath the cheer, hissing and laughing:]

GHOST CHORUS (over the applause)

He will not keep it. He will measure it. He will lose her. He will be alone.

[The lanterns flicker. Dancers blur into stillness, then dissolve like smoke. BELLE’s laugh echoes one last time, then is torn away. The store shrinks into silence, leaving only the PRAIRIE CHILD and ADULT EBENEZER in the dark.]

EBENEZER (adult, breaking)

I had joy once.

I let it slip from my hands like sand.

PRAIRIE CHILD

You didn’t slip.

You gripped it too hard, tried to weigh it, and crushed it.

[The whispers fade into cold wind. The next shadow rises.]

Scene 8 — Belle’s Farewell (Haunted)

[The barn dance warmth collapses into cold moonlight. A riverbank. Black water moves sluggishly; frost rims the reeds. Ghostly silhouettes crowd behind them in the reeds, pale hands swaying with the rushes. The CHORUS hums a broken version of the reel’s tune, twisted minor.]

BELLE

Another postponement, Eben?

YOUNG EBENEZER

Not long. A year.

One more year and I’ll have my partnership.

Then we'll have a house where wind's just a story, not a fact.
You'll never need for anything.

BELLE

And in that year? Another. And another.
Each one richer in coin, poorer in love.

GHOST CHORUS (around them, whispering)

Another... another... richer in coin, poorer in love...

BELLE

I once dreamed you would make me happy.
Now I see you only dream of making yourself secure.
You weigh me like a coin, hold me to the lamp to see if I'll pass as sound.

[She opens his hand, places the ring there. His hand shakes. He tries to close it, but the ring slips through his fingers and falls into the river. It vanishes without a ripple. The ghost faces bend toward the water as if drinking it in.]

BELLE

I release you, Eben. May you be happy in the life you choose.

[She turns and walks into the shadow. The ghost silhouettes shift to follow her, then dissolve. YOUNG EBENEZER lurches forward, reaching too late.]

YOUNG EBENEZER

Belle! Please!

[She is gone. Adult EBENEZER cries out, clutching at empty air.]

EBENEZER (adult)

Stop her! Spirit, stop her—bring her back!

PRAIRIE CHILD

We cannot change what is. Only witness it.

GHOST CHORUS (mocking, hissing)

You let her go... you let her go... you let her go...

[Wind cuts the reeds. The river swallows the last echo. Darkness takes the stage.]

SCENE 9 — THE CONTRACT

[The reeds fade. A cold lamp swings above a rough wooden table. YOUNG EBENEZER and YOUNG MARLEY sit opposite each other, faces sharp in the dim. The parchment between them gleams like ice. Outside the circle of light, ghostly silhouettes breathe — faint, watching, waiting. The PRAIRIE CHILD stands near ADULT EBENEZER, apart from the table, their lantern casting soft white light across the scene.]

YOUNG MARLEY

A contract. Clean and binding. It seals us richer than kings.

YOUNG EBENEZER

No more hunger. No more bowing to men with more luck than sense.

YOUNG MARLEY

Only gold. And gold will multiply if we never stop counting.

YOUNG EBENEZER

Gold doesn't die.

YOUNG MARLEY

Nor does it forgive.

[The men sign. Each stroke of ink hisses faintly, like iron plunged in water. The CHORUS begins to stir beneath the sound, whispering.]

GHOST CHORUS (whispering)

Gold... gold... more gold... lock the doors... chain the hearts... weigh the souls...

[The parchment curls coldly; frost creeps across it. The lamp burns blue. Marley lifts the document with satisfaction. The ghosts press closer at the edge of the light — pale fingers, open mouths — reaching but never touching.]

PRAIRIE CHILD (quietly, to Adult Ebenezer)

You see it now. The hour you mistook fear for strength.

You called it security. It was a cage, hammered and sealed in your own name.

EBENEZER (adult)

It was survival.

PRAIRIE CHILD

Then fear is the god you chose.

[A clock begins to chime — faint, distant, then nearer. The two young men continue their business, deaf to it. The sound fills the air: one strike, then two, then three — slow and relentless.]

GHOST CHORUS (layered whispers)

Tick for the promise... tock for the price... tick for the hand that signs away twice...

[The table trembles. Frost spreads across the floor. The ghosts move like smoke in water, circling the scene. With the last chime, the lamp flares white and shatters.]

PRAIRIE CHILD (over the echo)

The ink never dried. It froze.

[Blackout.]

SCENE 10 - EXIT FROM THE PAST

[Silence. A single thread of light hangs in the dark like a vein of gold through stone. The wind moans through unseen rafters. Slowly, the faint outline of the Prairie Child forms — older now, their lantern

flickering down to a ghost of its former glow. Adult Ebenezer crouches near the edge of the stage, the cold of his memories still clinging to him.]

PRAIRIE CHILD

The road behind you is spent.
Every joy, every choice, every silence—you have seen them all, and they have seen you.

(They lift the lantern; the flame trembles like a dying heartbeat.)

I was made of your yesterdays, Ebenezer. Each light I carried was a memory you buried.
But even the brightest past burns itself to ash.

EBENEZER

Then don't leave me in this dark. Not yet.

PRAIRIE CHILD

Darkness is where you left yourself. I only held the lantern high enough for you to notice.

[The lantern dims. A low hum begins — the sound of a thousand clocks ticking out of time. The floor beneath them shivers with the vibration of turning gears.]

EBENEZER

What's happening?

PRAIRIE CHILD

The hour turns. Every shadow has its keeper. Mine ends here.

[The ticking grows into a roar. From every corner of the stage, ghostly light spills: the silhouettes of the forgotten rise one last time, circling the Prairie Child like a storm of faces. They are fragments of Scrooge's youth, his sister, his lost love, the poor he ignored — all folding in around the lantern.]

GHOST CHORUS (chanting, layered and mounting)

Time turns, light burns, the hour begins again...

[The Prairie Child looks to Ebenezer, face soft with sorrow.]

PRAIRIE CHILD

Remember, Ebenezer—
the past is not gone; it only waits for your forgiveness.

(They hand him the lantern. The handle sears his palm with light.)

PRAIRIE CHILD (continuing)

Keep what warmth you can. The next will not be gentle.

[The great clock begins to toll—one... two... three... Each strike rattles the air. The lantern flares white. Wind explodes outward, hurling papers, benches, shards of old light across the stage. The Chorus cries out, half-song, half-wail.]

GHOST CHORUS (overlapping the chimes)

*Turn, turn, turn—past to present—
Lantern to flame, heart to burden—
The hour is struck! The hour is struck!*

[The Prairie Child raises both arms. Light pours from the lantern in a column that devours them, drawing every ghostly shape upward in a spiraling beam. They vanish in a blinding flash. Silence. Only the echo of the final chime remains.]

[When the light fades, Ebenezer is thrown backward into his bed. The room is real again: bare, small, cold. He gasps, clutching the scorched lantern handle—now nothing more than iron and smoke.]

EBENEZER (whispering)

Fanny... Belle... Jacob... forgive me...

[The clock beside his bed strikes once more—one, clear and terrible. A warm red glow begins to creep through the doorframe, swelling brighter.]

GHOST CHORUS (soft, almost kind)

The past is done. The next shall come.

[Wind stirs the ashes in the stove. The last echo of the Prairie Child's lantern flickers across the wall, forming a brief image of their face—gentle, smiling, and then gone.]

BLACKOUT.

BOONE (appearing on the edge, small as a star in a big sky)

The past took him traveling. Present'll make him stand still and feel it.

SCENE 11 — THE SECOND SPIRIT (CHRISTMAS PRESENT)

The last echo of the Prairie Child fades. Darkness holds for a beat — a silence so complete it hums. Then, a single piano chord trembles in the dark. A fiddle answers. Another chord joins, fuller, brighter. The black splits open with a rush of sound and heat.

*Light bursts across the stage in deep **crimson and gold**. Frost runs down the walls and vanishes. The smell of oranges, roasted meat, fresh bread, and coffee rolls through the air. Laughter ripples somewhere unseen. The iron stove roars back to life.*

*At the top of an iron staircase stands **MISS JUBILEE**, the Spirit of Christmas Present. She wears **scarlet silk trimmed in gold and holly**, the color of sunrise and celebration. Her hair gleams copper in the firelight; a ruby brooch burns at her throat. One hand holds a **goblet of spiced wine**, the other a **brass lantern**, its glow rich and living. She is radiant, dangerous, and utterly human — the embodiment of life itself.*

MISS JUBILEE

Evening, Ebenezer.

You can breathe easy — I'm not judgment, just proof that the world's still turning.

They call me Christmas Present because I only live as long as folks choose each other over the cold. I'm life when it's loud, love when it's brave, and mercy when it costs something.

Measure me by the warmth I leave behind, not by the shine on my dress.

She looks him over — the shake in his hands, the ash of the past still clinging — and smiles sadly. Somewhere behind her, a soft chorus hums like distant bells.

MISS JUBILEE

Walk with me, banker. My hour burns fast and bright. You waste it standing still.

She sweeps her goblet wide. The air fills with shimmer — tables laid in gold light, roasted birds, bowls of fruit, steaming cider. For a heartbeat it's almost real; then it melts into smoke. The ghosts at the edges sigh with hunger as the feast fades.

MISS JUBILEE

I'm the feast when there ain't enough bread.

I'm the laughter that shakes the empty cupboard.

I'm fire built out of people, not coal.

Every hour I live, I blaze — and when I go, I go out in ash and memory.

Tomorrow, I'll be gone. Tonight, I'm queen.

She steps down the staircase. Each heel strike lands like a heartbeat. The glow from her gown spills into the dark corners, and the shadows lean toward her, desperate for her warmth. The Ghost Chorus hums a low, minor strain of "Coventry Carol."

EBENEZER

Spirit... you are terrible to look upon, and yet... I cannot turn away.

MISS JUBILEE

Terrible? Maybe to men who've forgotten what kindness looks like.

Joy scares the joyless, and truth — truth's a mirror most folks would rather keep cracked.

You've lived so long without either, no wonder you flinch when they find you.

EBENEZER

Why have you come to me?

MISS JUBILEE

Because the night ain't done with you, sugar.

Because there's still a spark left worth saving.

While you count your silver, there's a widow praying her youngest makes it to morning.

Mercy doesn't knock polite — it kicks the door clean off its hinges.

She throws her goblet. It bursts in a hiss of red steam that smells of wine and cinnamon. Her lantern flares brighter, painting Scrooge's face in firelight. Ghostly shapes gather, whispering, clawing toward her glow but never touching.

CHORUS (whispering, hungry)

Warmth... feast... joy... not ours... never ours...

EBENEZER

What are those voices?

MISS JUBILEE

The ones you walk past on your way home.

The breath fogging your windows while you pretend not to see.

Tonight, you'll hear them — every one.

She holds out her hand. A ring of rubies glows like embers. Scrooge hesitates, then takes it. The moment their palms meet, light floods the room and the sound of the piano grows wild and bright.

MISS JUBILEE

Look, Ebenezer. See what's been waiting right outside your door.

The walls melt into a golden street. People fill it — miners, widows, children — their faces hollow but shining. They move toward the warmth, reaching for it. Their voices rise around him.

CHORUS (rising, overlapping)

Bread... fire... mercy... remember us... remember us...

EBENEZER

So many...

MISS JUBILEE

Every number in your ledger had a name.

Every coin you kept back bought another soul's hunger.

Tonight you'll see both sides of that bargain — want, and the love that still stands up to it.

She lifts her lantern. The street bends and folds, transforming into the small, bright Cratchit home — stew simmering, laughter small but true. The sound of children fades in. The contrast is almost blinding.

MISS JUBILEE

Come on, banker.

Let's visit the family you've starved and blessed in the same breath.

She steps through the doorway first, a pillar of red-gold light. Scrooge follows, humbled. Outside, ghostly hands press against the frosted windows, their breath fogging the glass — watching the warmth they can never reach.

BLACKOUT to the Cratchit Scene.

SCENE 12 — THE CRATCHIT HOME

The light of Miss Jubilee's lantern glows gold, and the Cratchit home flickers into being — a low-ceilinged room of patched chairs and tin plates. A tiny stove hums with a thin pot of stew. A sprig of green stands proud in a chipped bottle. Outside, the Ghost Chorus presses close, smearing frost across the windowpanes, their whispers soft but restless.

MRS. CRATCHIT stirs the pot with fierce determination, humming under her breath more for courage than for tune. Her eldest daughter, MARTHA, slips in from the cold, shawl around her shoulders. She kisses her mother's cheek.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Martha! Child! We didn't expect you till tomorrow!

MARTHA

The mill let us off early, Ma. Thought I'd surprise you.

The younger children rush to her, laughing and clinging. She hugs them tight, then joins in setting the table.

MRS. CRATCHIT

(half-scolding, half-laughing)

Don't dawdle, loves! He'll be home any minute, and I want this place to shine like a palace.

Peter, mind the spoons — they're not silver, but polish 'em till they pretend.

PETER

Aye, Ma!

MRS. CRATCHIT

And Martha — hide yourself quickly! Let's give your pa a Christmas surprise!

Martha grins and ducks behind the curtain. The children whisper and giggle. The Chorus hums faintly outside, a mocking lullaby:

"Shine like a palace... pretend, pretend..."

The door opens. BOB CRATCHIT enters, snow on his shoulders, carrying TINY TIM wrapped in a shawl, his crutch dangling at his side. The children cheer and run to him. MRS. CRATCHIT rushes forward, kissing Bob, then kneeling beside Tim.

MRS. CRATCHIT

You walked him again, Bob! You'll wear the breath right out of his chest.

CRATCHIT

He wanted to hear the singers in the square. Smiled the whole way. Didn't you, Tim?

TIM

(weak but beaming)

I did. And I heard a carol so fine, I thought it might carry me straight to heaven.

The children cheer. Tim coughs but waves it off. Bob settles him near the stove.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Rest now, love. Tomorrow your pa will carry you, and we'll make the walk together.

She kisses his hair, hiding the fear behind her smile. Bob glances around.

CRATCHIT

Where's Martha?

The children giggle. MARTHA bursts from hiding. Tim claps, delighted.

TIM

Martha! I knew you'd come!

She hugs him gently, then kisses her father's cheek. The family, whole again, glows in the thin firelight — love daring to laugh at hunger. The Chorus hushes, unsettled by the warmth.

MRS. CRATCHIT serves the stew. It is meager, but she dishes it as if it were a feast, stretching every spoonful. Bob seats Tim at the head of the table. They join hands.

MRS. CRATCHIT

For what we have — and for each other.

CRATCHIT

And for this day, granted by my employer, Mr. Scrooge — though he called it robbery.

MRS. CRATCHIT stiffens, bitterness flashing through the cheer.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Mr. Scrooge. A man who steals warmth from widows and bread from babes. I'd give him a feast — coal and vinegar.

CRATCHIT

(quietly)

Peace, my dear. It's Christmas.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Christmas won't mend our Tim, nor fatten this stew. He's a hard man, Bob — harder than the iron bars on his vault.

TIM

Please, Ma. Don't be cross. He gave us this day, didn't he?

That's something. And I bless him for it.

Silence. The family looks at Tim — frail, glowing, utterly sincere. One by one, they bow their heads.

Outside, the Chorus repeats softly:

"Bless him... bless him... even him..."

Empty bowls rest on the table. The family still holds hands, laughter fading to stillness. Tim struggles to stand, leaning on his crutch. His siblings steady him. His voice, thin but clear, carries through the room.

TIM

Father... Mother... brothers, sisters...

I want to say the words myself.

I may not have them tomorrow, so I'll spend them tonight.

The room stills. Even the pot stops bubbling. The Chorus falls silent; the shadows at the windows draw back to listen.

TIM

Lord in Heaven, thank You for this fire — though small, it's brighter than the cold deserves.

Thank You for this bread — though little, it fills more than our bellies; it fills our hearts.

Thank You for this family — though poor, we are rich in love, richer than the banker in his vault.

He looks at each of them. His voice gathers strength, lit from within.

TIM

Thank You for my father's hands, that work though they bleed.

Thank You for my mother's heart, that beats louder than hunger.

Thank You for Martha's laugh, for Peter's strength, for the little ones' joy.

He lifts his eyes upward, his hand trembling but sure.

TIM

Thank You for the child born this day — poor as we are, laid in straw like a beggar's son.
If Heaven could send its King to sleep cold and hungry,
who are we to complain, if we share His trial?
Let me walk close to Him, Lord, even if my legs fail.
Let me carry Your love, even if I cannot carry myself.

He coughs hard but presses on, almost radiant.

TIM

Bless this house. Bless every hungry child in Whispering Hollow.
Bless even Mr. Scrooge, who doesn't know what blessing tastes like.
May his heart be warmed — for if it's warmed, others will be too.
Bless every one, Lord... every one, no matter how poor, no matter how lost.

He closes his eyes and breathes the last words with all he has left.

TIM

God bless us... every one.

The family answers, trembling but strong.

ALL CRATCHITS

God bless us — every one.

The words hang in the air. Silence follows — deep, holy. Then, softly, the Chorus echoes, no longer mocking but aching for what they hear.

CHORUS (hushed)

Bless us... every one... every one...

From the back wall, a tall shadow drifts across the light — the MAN IN BLACK. His hat brim cuts the glow; his spurs scrape once, sharp as a nail drawn across wood. MRS. CRATCHIT clutches Tim, who sags in her arms but still wears a faint smile.

EBENEZER

(weeping, falling to his knees)

Spirit... if there's any holiness in this town, it lives in that child.
Spare him! Spare him, and I'll do anything!

MISS JUBILEE

(voice gentle but unflinching)

He's spared only if you spare him, Ebenezer.
Remember that.

The Cratchit home fades. Only the echo of Tim's prayer remains — and Scrooge's sobs in the darkness.

SCENE 13 — THE MINERS' CHILDREN

**The golden warmth of the Cratchits fades. A sound like dripping water and groaning timbers swells — the echo of a mine shaft caving. The light dims to a gray haze. The stage becomes a shack made from scraps of tin and broken wood. Wind whistles through gaps. Snow falls through holes in the roof. A WOMAN kneels on the floor, wrapping strips of rag around her children's feet. Three CHILDREN huddle close, sharing a crust no bigger than a coin.*

*The Ghost Chorus swarms here — pale hands poke through the gaps, faces press against the thin walls, their whispers rattling like pebbles down a shaft.**

MOTHER

(keeping her voice soft and steady for them)
Eat slowly, my loves. Make it last.

CHILD #1

It's only a crust, Ma.

MOTHER

Then it's a feast if we pretend hard enough.
Close your eyes. Think of stew. Feel it fill your belly.

CHILD #2

Will there be more tomorrow?

MOTHER

(stroking the child's hair)
Tomorrow's a word I can't afford tonight, sweetheart.

The youngest child coughs — a dry, brittle sound. The mother's hand tightens around the bread crust. The Chorus murmurs louder, drawn to the sound.

CHORUS (hissing)

Feed us... feed us... forgotten...

EBENEZER

(stepping forward, shaken)
Spirit — these souls have nothing.
Not warmth, not food, not hope.
They're worse off than the Cratchits.

MISS JUBILEE

(appearing beside him, her red lantern dimmed to ember)
And yet they live.
They laugh sometimes.
They still sing, when there's nothing left worth singing for.
That's the other half of your ledger, Ebenezer — the side you never balanced.

EBENEZER

(voice cracking)
Can nothing be done for them? No home, no hearth—?

MISS JUBILEE

They've been knocking at doors like yours all their lives.
You called it business.
They called it winter.

The MOTHER hushes the children's hunger with a smile too tired to fake.

MOTHER

Let's sing, my loves. A song might warm what bread cannot.
Your grandma taught me one when I was no taller than you.

*The eldest child begins humming, uncertain at first — the melody of "The First Noël."
The others join in, thin voices threading through the cold air. The Chorus recoils, covering their ears
as if the sound burns.*

CHILDREN (softly, trembling)

♪ The first Noël, the angel did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay... ♪

*The mother joins them, her voice shaking but clear. The harmony grows, small and brave — an act of
defiance against the void.*

CHILDREN & MOTHER (stronger)

♪ In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep... ♪

*The shack trembles. Snow falls heavier, swirling like ghosts unable to enter. The Chorus wails — not
in anger now, but in longing.*

CHORUS (moaning, distant)

Noël... Noël... forgotten... remember...

MOTHER

(hugging her children tight)
Sing louder, my darlings.
If Heaven's listening, let it find us singing.

CHILDREN & MOTHER (rising, fragile but shining)

♪ Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël —
Born is the King of Israel. ♪

*The last note trembles and fades into the wind.
The Chorus falls silent — their pale hands drop away from the walls.
The sound of the children's breathing fills the space like a heartbeat.*

EBENEZER

(whispering, almost prayerful)
They sing... even in hunger.
They believe when I've forgotten how.

MISS JUBILEE

Because belief is warmth, Ebenezer.
It's the only fire that doesn't need wood.

EBENEZER

Then show me how to build it again.

MISS JUBILEE

You will. But not yet.
There's still one shadow left to face — the one that carries your name.

*Her lantern flickers lower. The light bleeds red across Scrooge's face — then gutters out.
The Chorus begins to hum the melody of "The First Noël" again — slow, hollow, stripped of all joy.*

CHORUS (haunting, echoing the tune)

♪ Noël... Noël... forgotten... forgotten... ♪

*The shack dissolves into mist.
Scrooge stands alone in darkness, surrounded by the whispers of the dead.
A slow, steady ticking begins — the sound of a clock winding down.*

EBENEZER

Spirit—please, don't leave me to the dark.

MISS JUBILEE

You'll find your next guide soon enough.
He's been waiting a long, long time.

SCENE 14 - THE SILVER STAR ALLEY

*The faint echo of "The First Noël" lingers and fades.
Then—new sound: laughter. A fiddle. The crack of boots on frozen ground.
A soft **golden glow** returns, rough and uneven, like the light of a fire running out of wood.*

*The stage becomes **the alley behind the Silver Star Saloon.***

*Lamps glow amber through frosted windows.
Snow drifts down slow and heavy.
The walls sweat light and shadow in equal measure.*

*A fiddler leans against the wall, bow scraping something half-tune, half-prayer.
Saloon girls step out with baskets, handing bread to poor families gathered in the alley.
A **Ranch Hand** trades his week's wages for a threadbare blanket.
The air is cold—but there's kindness in it.
The **Ghost Chorus** lingers beyond the light, whispering hunger and envy.*

RANCH HAND

The landlord doubled the rent when the roof caved in. Said rain proved the house was worth more.

MINER'S WIFE

He doubled ours when the well froze. Said hardship builds character.

EBENEZER

(astonished)

Spirit—look at them.

They have so little, yet they share. Even here, there is kindness.

MISS JUBILEE

Kindness isn't comfort, sugar. It's a shield.

And every one of them is holding it up with shaking arms.

What of you, Ebenezer?

Will you help carry that weight—or keep counting silver while they freeze?

EBENEZER

If I have warmth left in me, give it to them. Take mine.

MISS JUBILEE

You can't give what you won't open your hand to hold.

EBENEZER

(quiet, shaken)

Have they no refuge? No help?

MISS JUBILEE

(soft at first, then fierce—throwing his own words back)

“Are there no poorhouses? Are there no debtor pens?”

SCENE 15 - FREDDY'S PARLOR

The alley dissolves.

Warmth floods back in, bright but brittle—like a candle fighting a draft.

A parlor forms: Freddy's modest home.

A fire burns low. Candles melt in tin holders.

A fiddle and piano fill the air with a homespun jig.

Friends and neighbors crowd the room — laughter, chatter, mugs raised.

*The **Ghost Chorus** watches through windows and rafters, whispering mockery but keeping their distance, uneasy amid the joy.*

FREDDY

Friends—tonight we're rich!

Richer than bankers, richer than mine-owners.

We're rich in laughter, and that's the only coin worth stealing.

CLARA

And may we never go broke in it.

GUEST #1

A toast, then—to our host Freddy, and his good Clara, who make warmth out of want!

They cheer, mugs clinking. Freddy smiles, then grows thoughtful.

FREDDY

And... another toast. To one not here. My uncle—Ebenezer Scrooge.

Groans and laughter ripple through the room.

GUEST #2

That miser? You'd toast him?

GUEST #3

The man who'd sooner weigh a soul than share a smile?

GUEST #4

He turned the church door on my brother when he asked for alms.

GUEST #2

He called my sister's children "excess population."

The Chorus echoes them faintly, like the ghosts of gossip.

CHORUS (mocking)

Miser... weigh a soul... excess population...

CLARA

Freddy, why waste breath on him?

FREDDY

Because breath is all he's got left, and I won't take that too.

You see a miser. I see my mother's brother.

She loved him when no one else would.

She wrote him letters by candlelight, hands too cold to hold a pen, praying he might soften.

I keep those letters still.

CLARA

He never answered them.

FREDDY

No. But she believed he could change.

And if I love him, it's because she taught me how.

The guests quiet. Even the Chorus fades to a hum of wind and memory.

GUEST #1

He's got a vault for a heart.

FREDDY

Then I'll keep a chair for him. Empty, maybe. Every year.

But waiting. Because the day he fills it—even once—I'll have honored her.

They all turn to look at the empty chair in the corner: a plate, a cup, a place set.

The fire crackles. Scrooge steps closer, unseen by them, trembling.

CHORUS (soft, mournful)

Waiting... waiting... empty chair...

FREDDY

Enough gloom! Christmas isn't a funeral. Who's for a game?

Laughter returns, light but forced.

They begin a round of charades. A guest mimes a pompous miser clutching coins. Laughter explodes.

GUEST #2

It's Scrooge!

The room roars. Scrooge flinches, clutching his chest.

*The **Chorus** picks up the laughter, stretching it into something cruel, echoing off the walls.*

CLARA

Your turn, Freddy.

He mimes a donkey, braying. More laughter.

GUESTS

A mule! A jackass!

FREDDY

Nay, it's my uncle again—when someone asks him for a penny!

The laughter builds again, wild and harsh.

Scrooge covers his ears. His own name echoes like thunder.

EBENEZER

Spirit... they mock me... they despise me.

MISS JUBILEE (her voice faint, from somewhere unseen)

And yet they keep you in their hearts.

They scorn your ways, yes—but they keep a chair for you.

That chair is love, Ebenezer. Foolish love... but love still.

The fiddle shifts into a carol—soft, honest.

Clara leads the guests in song.

GUESTS (singing)

♪ God rest ye merry, gentlemen,

Let nothing you dismay... ♪

*The **Chorus** tries to twist it, but the living voices rise stronger, pure.*

Scrooge looks at the empty chair—its candle burning low, wax pooling like a clock running down.

He drops to his knees, weeping.

EBENEZER

Love waits for me... and I never came.

MISS JUBILEE (voice distant, fading)

Love waits longer than hate, but even love tires if left unanswered.

Her final word hangs like smoke in the air.

The song fades.

The parlor dissolves.

The laughter decays into whispers.

The warmth drains from the stage until only the sound of a ticking clock remains—slow, echoing, final.

EBENEZER (whispering)

Spirit... please... don't go...

SCENE 16 JUBILEE'S EXIT

The warmth of Freddy's laughter fades.

*Scrooge's **bedroom bleeds back in**—bare, frozen, the iron stove emberless.*

Frost veils the window; breath hangs like smoke.

*MISS JUBILEE stands center, her silks dulled to rusted crimson, her **lantern sputtering**, its flame no larger than a coal.*

She is magnificent still, but every breath costs her light.

From beneath her skirts crawl the two children again—

***WANT**, a girl with frostbitten fingers and hollow eyes, clutching a splintered doll;*

***IGNORANCE**, a boy with a crooked grin, too old for his years, his gaze black and endless.*

*They cling to her as the **Ghost Chorus** gathers around the room, whispering, hissing, weeping.*

Their voices rise and fall like a storm of lost souls.

MISS JUBILEE

My time is spent.

I live one night, one day. At dawn, I am ash.

But before I go—*hear me, Ebenezer Scrooge.*

Her lantern flares; the ghosts recoil from the sudden heat.

MISS JUBILEE

Remember what you've seen.

The Cratchits' blessing, when love outweighed hunger.

The miners' hymn beneath the ground.

The alley where strangers shared their bread.

The laughter that mocked you, yet kept a chair waiting still.

Forget them—and you'll be colder than any grave I've shown you.

She lowers the lantern. Its light finds the children creeping toward Scrooge.

MISS JUBILEE

These are mine too. The daughter is **Want**.

The son is **Ignorance**.

They are the twins of greed and neglect—your orphans, and the world's.

Beware them both, but most of all this boy;

for on his brow I see a word branded deep as a cattle mark: **DOOM**.

The boy lifts his head; the brand glows faintly red.

EBENEZER

(hoarse)

Can nothing be done? Have they no refuge, no comfort?

MISS JUBILEE

(whipping toward him, her voice like a bell breaking)

Your words, Ebenezer—*yours!*

“Are there no workhouses? Are there no prisons?”

The words crash through the room.

*The **Chorus** takes them up, a shrieking echo from every corner.*

CHORUS (overlapping)

Workhouses! Prisons! Workhouses! Prisons!

WANT lunges first, clawing for Scrooge’s coat;

IGNORANCE follows, laughing, teeth bared like iron nails.

They drag at him, their small hands leaving black streaks of soot.

EBENEZER

Spirit—please! Keep them off! I meant no harm!

MISS JUBILEE

You meant *nothing!*

That’s the harm.

Every closed hand, every locked door, every “not my problem”—
these are what feed them.

They grow fat on neglect, and tonight they dine on you.

The Chorus surges; the room trembles.

WANT

(pleading)

You counted coins but not children.

Now count us, Mister Scrooge.

IGNORANCE

(grinning)

You built a world that forgets the hungry.

We remember.

EBENEZER

(crying)

Mercy, Spirit! Mercy!

MISS JUBILEE

Mercy burns, child—and my flame is dying.

The lantern flickers wildly. She drops to one knee, pulling the children close, shielding them with her body.

MISS JUBILEE

Listen to me now, before the dark takes me:
There is no prison that reforms the heart.
There is no workhouse that heals a soul.
There is only *choice*—to warm, or to wither.
And the world is dying for want of warmth.

She looks to Scrooge—tears, fire, and exhaustion mingled.

MISS JUBILEE

I cannot save you, Ebenezer.
But you can still save yourself—
and maybe them.

The lantern flares once more, pure scarlet.

The light pours over Scrooge; the ghosts shield their faces.

WANT and IGNORANCE wail, dissolving into smoke that spirals up through the rafters.

The flame gutters, leaving Jubilee haloed in red ash.

MISS JUBILEE

(soft, final)

My hour's ended.

Another walks now—silent as judgment, sure as death.

Face him well, and maybe—*maybe*—my fire will rise again.

She presses the dying lantern into Scrooge's shaking hands.

It goes out.

The silence that follows is absolute.

Snow drifts through the cracked roof.

*The **Chorus** breathes like wind around a grave.*

CHORUS (hushed, fading)

Doom... doom... fire gone...

Scrooge kneels, clutching the cold lantern to his chest.

EBENEZER

Spirit... come back... please...

*The answer comes: one sharp **spur click** against wood.*

Then another.

And another—steady, approaching.

*A vast **shadow** stretches across the back wall—the brim of a black hat, the outline of a long coat spreading like wings.*

Even the ghosts retreat, whispering in fear.

CHORUS (whispering)

He comes... he comes... the Black Rider comes...

*The **Man in Black** steps from the darkness.*

No face, no breath, only the slow lift of one gloved hand pointing toward Scrooge.

EBENEZER

(whispering, trembling)

Spirit...?

The Man in Black's finger lowers—accusing, inevitable.

BLACKOUT.

End of Act 1, Intermission.

ACT 2

SCENE 1 — THE MAN IN BLACK

*Blackness. Silence. The air is suffocating. Then—
a single metallic sound: a **spur striking stone**. It echoes—long, hollow, relentless.
A second strike.
A third.*

The rhythm is slow, deliberate—like a clock tolling down to the last beat.

*The **Ghost Chorus**, who have mocked, sung, and wailed through the night, now fall into frightened whispers. Their tones are fragmented, trembling, uncertain.*

CHORUS (hushed, trembling)

He comes... silence comes... doom comes...

*Faint **red lights seep up** through the floorboards, like fire smoldering under the earth. Wisps of smoke curl around Scrooge's bed. The boards groan under unseen weight.*

*From the darkness, a vast **shadow lengthens**—the **MAN IN BLACK**.*

He is immense: a towering figure in a long black duster. Spurs glint faintly.

A wide-brimmed hat hides his face. No eyes. No breath.

Wherever he moves, warmth dies.

The Chorus cowers against the walls, covering their faces.

Their whispers grow frantic, a storm of terror.

CHORUS (broken, overlapping)

Cold... silence... master of graves... no light... no mercy...

*The **MAN IN BLACK** lifts his head slowly.*

His cloak spreads behind him like wings of night.

His silence presses on the room until it feels like the air itself refuses to move.

He raises one gloved hand, slow as death, and points at Scrooge.

Scrooge trembles violently, clutching at his chest. His voice is no more than a breath.

EBENEZER

Spirit... are you the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

The Spirit does not answer.

He lowers his head slightly—the brim of his hat casting his face in total black.

EBENEZER

You will show me what is to be, then?

The shadows of what may happen if I remain the man I have been?

The Spirit gives no sign. Only points again—steadily, unrelenting, inevitable.

EBENEZER

(voice breaking)

You are terrible to behold—

more dreadful than all the rest...
But I know your purpose is to do me good.
I will follow.
Though each step chills me to the bone—
I will follow.

The MAN IN BLACK sweeps his cloak wide.

*The **red glow extinguishes** instantly, plunging the stage into pitch darkness.*

The Chorus shrieks once—a sound ripped from their throats—then falls silent, utterly silenced by his presence.

The blackness swallows everything.

When light returns, the first grave tableau begins...

SCENE 2 — THE BUSINESSMEN

The MAN IN BLACK sweeps his cloak.

*The blackness dissolves into the dull glow of a **dusty frontier mercantile**—
shelves half-empty, lamps burning low, the smell of tobacco and stale whiskey heavy in the air.*

*Three **BUSINESSMEN** sit around a table:*

***MR. WICKS** (banker), **MR. DOBBINS** (cattleman), and **MR. COLE** (undertaker).*

They are men of means, but not grace—

faces lined by greed and long familiarity with the cost of others' labor.

They play cards, drink cheap whiskey, and laugh with the kind of laughter that leaves no warmth behind.

*Above and around them, the **Ghost Chorus** crouches in rafters and corners, mimicking their words in fractured echoes—turning their greed into the music of damnation.*

MR. WICKS

Well—he's gone.

Dead as iron.

MR. DOBBINS

About time.

He's been hangin' on longer than a buzzard over a carcass.

MR. COLE

(chuckling dryly)

I had the measure of his box ready two winters ago.

Thought I'd never earn that fee.

*They laugh. The **Chorus laughs too**, mocking, echoing their words like a rattling echo:*

CHORUS (mocking)

Box... box... fee... box...

WICKS

Never met a man so tight with a dollar.

Thought he'd take 'em with him to the grave—
stitch 'em in his shroud.

DOBBINS

(laughing)
He'd haunt us if he could—
try to charge rent for breathin' his air!

COLE

Even the worms'll complain he tastes too bitter.

Their laughter rolls again—dry, ugly. The Chorus follows, twisting their joy into madness.

CHORUS (mocking)

Too bitter... too bitter... too bitter...

WICKS

Strange, though, ain't it?
For all his vaults and ledgers—
not a tear shed for him.

DOBBINS

Tears?
Who'd waste water on that dry stick?

COLE

His death's good for business.
No more debts squeezed from dry stone.

*They drink. Their laughter fades.
For a brief, flickering second—unease crosses their faces.*

WICKS

Still...
it's a fearful thing, ain't it?
To die so empty.

DOBBINS

Empty?
He had chests full of gold.

COLE

Aye—
and no soul to spend it on.

*The men fall silent. The smoke drifts.
Then, as men do, they bury the feeling in another drink.*

DOBBINS

Well—
I won't mourn him.

A man reaps what he sows.
And Ebenezer Scrooge sowed naught but stone.

WICKS

(toasting, flatly)
To Scrooge.
May the dirt lie heavy—
since no man's heart ever will.

COLE

Amen.

*They drink. The **Chorus** hisses the toast back at Scrooge, louder and louder until it drowns all else.*

CHORUS (rising, taunting)

To Scrooge!
Heavy dirt!
Heavy dirt!

Scrooge steps forward, trembling, face lit by the faint red of the Spirit's glow.

EBENEZER

Spirit—
is there no one?
No soul to feel sorrow at this death?
No friend?
No kin to mourn me?

*The **Man in Black** does not answer.
He only points—steady, cold.
The businessmen freeze, fading into silhouettes.
Their laughter stretches into the sound of rattling chains.
The mercantile dissolves into black.
The air fills with dust and dread.*

Transition to the next scene: the Pawnshop, or "Old Joe's," as the Man in Black leads Scrooge deeper into the reckoning.

SCENE 3 — OLD JOE'S PAWN SHOP

*The MAN IN BLACK sweeps his cloak.
Darkness reforms into a crooked shack at the edge of Whispering Hollow.
The walls sag; the beams groan. The shelves are stacked with rusted tin, cracked crockery, old boots, bones, and rags that once had color.
A single lantern swings from a chain, its light warped by grime.
Smoke curls thickly through the air, choking and bitter.*

*Behind a counter sits **OLD JOE** — gaunt but lively, eyes sharp as razors, grin fixed and wolfish.
His hands are stained with ink and coin, his patched coat warm, lined with the spoils of others'*

misfortune.

He smokes a pipe that fills the shack with acrid haze.

Every word he speaks drips with mock cheer, like cruelty wearing a smile.

*The **Ghost Chorus** hums low — a swarm of whispers like flies circling a carcass.*

CHORUS (low, murmuring)

Buzz... buzz... profit in death... worms feast... men feed...

OLD JOE

(leaning forward, puffing smoke)

Well, now... well now. Ain't this the place?

The night's colder than a banker's smile,

but there's always a fire burnin' here — the kind made of other folks' misfortune.

And when death comes knockin',

who answers quicker than *Old Joe*?

He cackles. The Chorus mimics him in mockery.

CHORUS (echoing)

Old Joe... Old Joe...

OLD JOE

Come in, come in!

Bring your bundles, bring your shame —

leave your prayers outside.

I don't trade in prayers.

Only in what the dead leave behind.

The door creaks open.

***NAN PRITCHARD**, a charwoman, stumbles in — half-drunk, cheeks red with cold and whiskey.*

She clutches a bundle tight against her chest like a prize she earned.

OLD JOE spreads his arms, delighted.

OLD JOE

Nan Pritchard!

My favorite house mouse!

You've scrubbed richer floors than these,

but none so honest, eh?

What've you brought me this time?

NAN slams her bundle onto the counter. Her hands tremble, but her voice is steady, sharp with rage.

NAN

Curtains.

Velvet. Near new.

I tore 'em down myself — before they shut the coffin.

*The **Chorus** hisses the words back in eerie rhythm.*

CHORUS (whispering)

Curtains... coffin curtains...

NAN

For thirty years I scrubbed his floors.
Thirty winters on my knees till they froze.
My hands cracked and bled, and he docked my pay for takin' too long.
One year I coughed blood on his stairs —
he said I was *stealin' his air*.
(her voice breaking)
Stealin'!

The Chorus mimics, chanting mockingly.

CHORUS (chanting)

Stealin' his air! Stealin' his air!

NAN

I stayed, 'cause no one else would hire me —
not a woman half-used and past her shine.
Better a crust from Scrooge than starvin'.
So tell me — why should I mourn him now?

She flings the velvet down on the counter. The fabric gleams darkly in the lantern light.

The door creaks again.

MABEL HIGGS, the laundress, slips in.

She's sober, thin, her clothes threadbare, her face lined from grief and work.

She hesitates, ashamed, clutching her own bundle.

OLD JOE grins, leaning across the counter.

OLD JOE

Well, bless my sinful heart — if it ain't Mabel Higgs!

Soap-stained angel of misery!

Did your washboard finally wear through your hands, or have you brought me somethin' cleaner than your tears?

MABEL

(quietly, setting down her bundle)

Bed linens.

Still warm when I pulled 'em off.

OLD JOE whistles through his teeth.

OLD JOE

A rich man's warmth!

And did he ever let you keep a scrap for yourself?

No. He left you cold.

Now he warms you in death.

MABEL's voice grows tight, trembling with bitterness.

MABEL

I washed his shirts till my fingers burned raw.
He said I wasted soap.
He said tears on the cloth spoiled the weave.
When my baby died, I begged him for an hour — one hour — to lay her down properly.
He fined me for leavin' my post.

The Chorus gasps and wails softly.

CHORUS (sobbing whispers)

Fined her grief... fined her grief...

MABEL

I stayed because he was steady.
Not kind — just steady.
He knew I'd never ask for more.
He could grind me down to dust, and I'd still scrub his sins clean.
So now I take my pay in cloth and coin.
I'll not be ashamed.

She tears the linen open and flings it on the counter. Her tears fall, but her chin stays high.

The door slams a third time — hard.

AMOS CROWE, the undertaker's man, enters.

He's smug, better fed, his coat heavy with the cold of grave dirt.

He drops his bundle on the counter with a grunt.

OLD JOE smirks wide.

OLD JOE

Well, if it ain't Amos Crowe himself — the man who digs faster than death can count!
Tell me, Amos — did the worms pay you, or the banker?

AMOS

(grinning)

Neither.

This time, I paid myself.

He unwraps a shirt — fine linen, nearly new.

AMOS

A burial shirt.

Took it off him before the lid was shut.

No sense wasting good cloth on worms.

OLD JOE throws back his head and cackles.

OLD JOE

Mercy, Amos!

You're robbin' the worms blind!

The Chorus explodes in laughter, shrieking and pounding.

CHORUS (howling)

Worms blind! Worms blind!

AMOS

I dug graves for paupers till my back nearly broke.
While I shoveled frozen dirt, he lent money on their coffins.
He charged interest on death itself.
When my mother died, I begged him for a day to bury her.
He docked my wages for the hour I wept.

He smirks coldly, pride and pain twisting together.

AMOS

So now?
Now I dig him a hole of his own, and I'll not waste good cloth on worms.

OLD JOE claps his hands once, gleeful.

OLD JOE

Fine! Fine!
You've brought me gold wrapped in grief.
And what's the harm?
He gave you nothin' in life —
now in death, he feeds you, clothes you, warms you.
That's more mercy than he ever gave while breathin'.

He counts out coins, slamming them on the counter.

Each clang echoes like a hammer strike.

*The three snatch the coins greedily as the **Chorus** begins to pound rhythmically on the floorboards.*

CHORUS (chanting, pounding)

Strip him! Sell him! Strip him! Sell him!

Their words grow faster, louder, like a drumline of judgment.

NAN

Thirty years I gave him —
and he called me a thief for coughin' on his stairs!

MABEL

I buried a child, and he docked my pay!
Said sorrow wasted time!

AMOS

I dug his graves and paid his debts —
now I'll take my wage in linen and shame!

OLD JOE

And so you should!
He's payin' you better now than he ever did in life!

He slams down more coins. The chorus drives the rhythm.

CHORUS (rising)

Strip him! Sell him! Strip him! Sell him!

The three thieves lift their coins high, defiant.

NAN

We stayed — but we never loved him.

MABEL

We served — but we never mourned him.

AMOS

We obeyed — but we never pitied him.

*The **Chorus** shrieks the words back, layers of voices.*

CHORUS (screaming, overlapping)

Never loved! Never mourned! Never pitied!

Scrooge stumbles forward, tears streaming, reaching for them.

EBENEZER

Nan... Mabel... Amos...

You were with me every day.

You knew me — I knew you!

If even you feel no grief...

then I am nothing.

I was nothing!

The MAN IN BLACK says nothing.

He only points.

The thieves freeze mid-motion, laughter still on their lips.

They dissolve into smoke, leaving their coins clattering to the floor — ringing like chains.

The pawn shop itself begins to crumble —

the shelves sag, the beams snap, the lantern bursts.

*The **Chorus** whispers, circling Scrooge as the light fades to black.*

CHORUS (hissing)

Worth more dead...

more dead...

more dead...

The last coin rolls across the floor and stops at Scrooge's knees.

He collapses beside it, shaking.

BLACKOUT.**SCENE 4 — THE CRATCHIT MOURNING**

The **MAN IN BLACK** sweeps his cloak.

The warm glow of the Cratchit cottage returns as a hollowed shell: the stove is dead, the sprig of green hangs brittle, and a single chair sits empty by the hearth. Snow-light leaks through the windowpanes and lays a cold pall on the room. The silence has weight.

The **Ghost Chorus** is present but hushed—soft keening under the floorboards, a breath that fogs the window glass from the outside. From time to time, pale hands appear at the panes and vanish, as if grief itself is looking in.

Center, **MRS. CRATCHIT** sits in a rocking chair, **TINY TIM'S CRUTCH** cradled in her arms like a sleeping child. **MARTHA**, **PETER**, and the **LITTLE CRATCHITS** gather close, unsure of where to put their hands, their eyes, their sorrow.

CHORUS (low, braided)

Hush... hush... sorrow in the house...

MARTHA

(quietly, stroking the crutch)

When the hill grew steep, he'd climb onto my back and call me his horse.

I told him we'd race the wind.

I'd break my back a thousand times if it meant one more ride... just one.

PETER

He said I was strong.

Said one day I'd stand for us when he couldn't.

(voice breaking)

But I don't feel strong now. I feel hollow—like my bones went with him.

LITTLE CRATCHIT #1

He taught me to whistle...

(tries; the sound fractures)

I can't make it sing without him.

LITTLE CRATCHIT #2

He blessed us every night.

Who will bless us now?

The children fold into their mother's skirt. **MRS. CRATCHIT** rocks once, twice—steady herself, steadying them.

CHORUS (faint echo)

Who will bless us now... bless us now...

MRS. CRATCHIT

Listen, my loves. Your brother's voice isn't gone; it's stitched right here.

(touches each of their chests)

Every blessing he gave, we carry and we give again.

When you eat, think of him.

When you laugh, know he laughs with heaven.

We are poor, yes—poorer than winter—but rich in what he taught us.
God lent us an angel, even if only for a little while.

CHORUS (*soft, reverent*)

Angel... angel... lent for a while...

*The door latch stirs. A wash of colder air enters with **BOB CRATCHIT**, snow on his shoulders, hat in his hand. His face is ash-pale and wet-eyed. He closes the door gently, as if the noise could disturb sleep that will never wake. The children rush him; he kneels and gathers them into his coat, breathing them in like bread.*

MRS. CRATCHIT

Bob...?

CRATCHIT

(quietly, broken)

I went to him. I... I had to see that he wasn't alone.

The churchyard is quiet—only the wind for company.

The snow lies white on the mound.

It's too cold out there.

(voice crumples)

Too cold for my boy.

*He sinks into a chair. **MARTHA** kneels at his knee; **PETER** stands behind, a hand on his father's shoulder.*

MARTHA

Pa... don't break. You told us to be strong.

CRATCHIT

I did, child.

And I tried...

But I have no strength left.

He was so small.

My Tim.

And the earth is so heavy.

CHORUS (*low lament*)

So small... earth heavy... so small...

CRATCHIT

(raising his head, a trembling steadiness)

He spoke before the end.

His voice was thin, but his heart—oh, his heart was a bell.

He told me he was not afraid.

He said heaven is like Christmas without hunger, without pain.

And he... smiled, Clara.

He smiled as the light left him.

The family weeps. MRS. CRATCHIT clutches the crutch tighter, rocking it as if to soothe a fever that's already gone.

MRS. CRATCHIT

My brave boy... my perfect boy.

CRATCHIT

(softly, breaking)

And with his last breath, he said, "God bless us... every one."

Even Scrooge.

Even the man who pressed us down and never saw his worth.

He blessed him, Clara. With his last breath, he blessed him.

CHORUS (*hushed, layered*)

Blessed Scrooge... blessed Scrooge...

PETER

He told me I must care for us when he could not.

But I don't know how to be strong without him.

I feel like a house with the beams knocked out.

MARTHA

He called me his star.

Said he'd follow me, even when he couldn't walk.

Now the shadow that trailed me is gone, and I'm lost without it.

LITTLE CRATCHIT #1

He taught me to whistle.

(tries again—the note shatters)

It breaks in my throat.

LITTLE CRATCHIT #2

He blessed us every night.

Who will bless us now?

CHORUS (*threading their phrases together, like Tim speaking through them*)

Hollow beams... lost star... sound breaks... bless us now...

MRS. CRATCHIT

Hear me.

Your brother's voice is not gone.

It lingers—in the way your father takes off his hat and thanks the day,

in the way Martha laughs,

in the way Peter stands when he is afraid,

in the way you share the last crust and make it enough.

Every blessing he gave, we give to each other now.

We are poor, yes—but we are rich in what he left us.

God lent us an angel... even if only for a little while.

CHORUS (*soft, unified, close as a heartbeat*)

Angel... lent for a while... angel...

*Something steadies in **BOB CRATCHIT**. He rises, frail but upright. He lays a hand on the empty chair, then on the crutch in Clara's arms, and draws a breath that costs him.*

CRATCHIT

You are right.

He was our angel.

If he could smile at the end, who am I to despair?

I will be strong. For him. For all of you.

PETER

Then... let us bless, as he did.

MARTHA

Yes. We'll carry his blessing—like he carried us.

They join hands. The family bows their heads. The air holds its breath.

ALL CRATCHITS

God bless us... every one.

*The **Ghost Chorus** answers—not mocking now, but like a church far away, bells in voices.*

CHORUS (*gentle, echoing*)

God bless us... every one...

*At the edge of the scene, unseen by them, **SCROOGE** has fallen to the floor. He crawls forward and gathers the crutch the family has set down, clutching it with both hands like a drowning man seizing a plank.*

EBENEZER

(not to them, to the Spirit, shattered)

Not Tim. Not my little friend.

Take me instead.

Spare him, and I will change—do you hear?

I will give all that I have.

Only... only spare him.

I cannot bear this sorrow.

*The **MAN IN BLACK** looms, vast and merciless. He points at the empty chair. As he does, the family—still holding hands—fades like breath on glass, their blessing lingering in the air.*

The crutch slips from Scrooge's arms and hits the floor with a hollow knock that feels like the end of a heartbeat.

CHORUS (*erupts, storming*)

Empty chair! Empty chair! Empty chair!

*The cottage collapses into blackness. Only Scrooge remains, hunched around nothing, the crutch at his knees. The **MAN IN BLACK** towers above him, silent, the pointer steady as fate.*

SCENE 5 — THE TOWNSFOLK GOSSIP

The MAN IN BLACK sweeps his cloak.

*The Cratchit home dissolves into a **dusty street corner in Whispering Hollow** — lantern light dim in the snow, a trough and a few barrels breaking the stillness.*

Five townsfolk huddle near a dying fire. Their breath smokes in the bitter wind.

*The **Ghost Chorus** twists among them, circling like vultures, repeating snatches of their speech as hollow echoes.*

MRS. KETTLE

(arms crossed, bitter)

So. The banker's gone. Dead and buried.

MR. BARNES

Dropped suddenly, they said. Not a tear shed. Not a bell tolled.

MRS. HOLLOWAY

I can believe it. Who'd spend coin on a bell for him?

He made me pay double rent one winter — said "demand is higher when snow falls."

My children nearly froze while I housed strangers just to cover his greed.

CHORUS (*whispering*)

Near froze... strangers... greed...

MR. JENKINS

Bah! He did worse to me. Lent me dear money for feed, then squeezed me 'til half my herd was gone.

He nearly bled me dry and called it *sound business*.

MRS. KETTLE

Sound business?

He called it sound when he took my husband's farm.

Said, "A man should pay what he owes,"

and my Will died digging silver for another man's table.

Scrooge's shadow's been standing on his grave ever since.

CHORUS (*hissing*)

Standing on his grave... standing on his grave...

MR. BARNES

I won't mourn him.

My slate's clean now.

I owed him more than I could pay — now the worms can chase that debt.

MR. JENKINS

(laughing)

Aye, and they'll collect quicker than he ever did!

*The group chuckles darkly. The **Chorus** joins, high-pitched and mocking.*

CHORUS (*taunting*)

Quicker than he ever did! Worms collect! Worms collect!

SUSAN MILLER

(softly, uneasy)

Still... it's a fearful thing.

To die so unloved.

He dismissed me for asking fair wage,
but I cannot wish him joy in the ground.

To be forgotten so quickly... it chills me.

The laughter falters. Silence ripples through the group.

*The **Chorus** repeats her words, mournful and thin, like wind through an empty house.*

CHORUS (*hushed*)

Forgotten... quickly forgotten...

MRS. HOLLOWAY

He spared no pity. Let none fall for him.

MRS. KETTLE

He gave nothing but debt and sorrow. Let him lie in the dark, he made.

MR. JENKINS

Aye. Let the crows mourn him, if they've the stomach.

MR. BARNES

(raising a flask)

Then here's to Ebenezer Scrooge.

May the dirt lie heavier on him than ever his heart lay on us.

They drink.

*Only **SUSAN** bows her head.*

SUSAN

God rest his soul...

if such a soul can rest.

*The **Chorus** explodes, twisting her prayer into a curse.*

CHORUS (*screaming, overlapping*)

Rest his soul? Heavy dirt! Heavy dirt! Rest his soul? Heavy dirt!

The townsfolk dissolve into shadow.

Their voices linger and merge with the howling of the wind.

Snow whirls upward, not down — time bending in on itself.

From the ground, smoke and light pulse as though the earth itself is breathing.

*A mound of black fabric begins to rise center stage — formed by the **Ghost Chorus**, their bodies twisting together, lifting their arms to create the illusion of a heaving grave.*

*At its peak, one Chorus member thrusts a **wooden cross** upward.*

As the others sway around it, glowing letters burn across the surface:

EBENEZER SCROOGE

*The **Chorus** screams his name in waves surrounding him.*

CHORUS *(rising, layered)*

Scrooge... Scrooge... Scrooge!

Scrooge stumbles forward, hands shaking, his face pale with horror.

EBENEZER

No... Spirit, no!

Tell me this is not me — not my name carved in this cursed wood!

These are shadows only! Tell me they may yet be changed!

I can change!

I *will* change!

*The **MAN IN BLACK** stands behind him, immense, silent, unyielding.*

He points toward the mound.

*The **Chorus** tightens the circle, whispering his sins.*

VOICES *(echoing from within the Chorus)*

“He charged interest on death itself...”

“He called me a thief for coughin’ his air...”

“Double rent when snow fell...”

“Bones knit faster than debts...”

Scrooge clutches his head, shouting over them.

EBENEZER

Stop! Stop! I hear you!

I know what I was! I know it!

But the voices grow — laughter now, cruel and familiar: Old Joe, Nan, Amos.

VOICES *(jeering)*

“Worth more dead!”

“Worms blind!”

“He feeds us now, in death!”

CHORUS *(chanting, pounding the stage)*

Worth more dead! Worth more dead!

EBENEZER

(weeping, dropping to his knees)

No! I was blind! Blind!

I see it now — I see!

The chanting dies. Silence settles like snow.

Then — a single sound: the faint voice of Tiny Tim, ghostly, tender.

TIM’S VOICE *(gentle, distant)*

God bless us... every one...

*The **Chorus** repeats, soft and aching.*

CHORUS (low, unified)

God bless us... every one...

Scrooge collapses beside the mound, pressing his hands into the black fabric of the “earth.”

*As he sobs, the **Chorus** encircles him, slowly tightening their ring.*

Each ghost places a hand on his shoulder, his back, his chest — their touch both cold and human.

EBENEZER

Tim! Tim, forgive me!

I will bless, I will give, I will change!

Only let me see his face once more!

Let me live to make it right!

The Chorus begins to hum — a deep, dissonant tone, rising like wind in a canyon.

Their circle closes tighter.

Within it, faint echoes of the Cratchits’ voices drift — a memory of love Scrooge can no longer reach.

VOICES (layered, fading)

“He was light in our dark...”

“Our angel lent for a while...”

“Empty chair... empty chair...”

EBENEZER

I am not the man I was!

Spirit, hear me!

I will honor Christmas in my heart —

I will keep it all year!

Only tell me there is still time!

Tell me these shadows may yet be sponged away!

*The **MAN IN BLACK** steps forward.*

His cloak spreads across the stage, swallowing the mound, the Chorus, everything.

All that remains is Scrooge, kneeling beneath his shadow.

The Spirit raises one gloved hand and slams his spur into the floor.

Thunder cracks. *The Chorus bursts outward — flung away as though blown by a great wind.*

They collapse around Scrooge in a wide circle, forming a living grave, their bodies undulating like the walls of a pit.

Red light seeps through the seams between them.

Scrooge reaches upward, screaming.

EBENEZER

Mercy! Mercy! God—mercy!

*The **MAN IN BLACK** lowers his brim, his voice a rasp that splits the silence.*

MAN IN BLACK

WAKE!

*The Chorus erupts — not as a fall, but as a storm of souls —
their arms outstretched, spinning around him in a cyclone of voices, cloth, and light.
The red glow flashes to white, then to black.
The voices collapse to a single whisper.*

CHORUS (whispering, fading)

Wake... wake...

All light dies.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 6 — THE AWAKENING

Darkness. Complete silence.

*Then — a single **chime** from somewhere unseen.*

It's not loud, but it cuts through the black like a knife.

BONG.

It echoes once, twice. The sound lingers in the bones.

Then another — slower.

The kind of toll you feel before you hear.

BONG.

With each strike, faint light seeps in from the window.

The outline of Scrooge's room reforms — his bed, the stove, the desk.

The frost on the glass glows faintly in the dawn.

*Scrooge lies where we last saw him — crumpled on the floorboards, one hand clutching at his chest,
the other reaching toward nothing.*

He looks dead. Until —

BONG.

His fingers twitch. A gasp. A sharp inhale, like a man pulled from drowning.

*The **Ghost Chorus** hums faintly from the dark — the first four notes of "Amazing Grace."*

The melody is uncertain at first, fragile, as if testing the air.

CHORUS (soft, hesitant hum of "Amazing Grace")*

Scrooge coughs, struggling to sit up. He blinks against the light, blinking like a newborn.

He stares at his own shaking hands.

EBENEZER

(voice small, disbelieving)

I'm... still here?

My bed... my fire... these walls...

This is my room?

*He staggers to his feet, holding onto the bedpost as though the floor might give way.
He runs his trembling hands over the chair, the curtains, the stove — touching everything like a man seeing for the first time.*

EBENEZER

It's real.
It's all real!
The Spirits — the grave — they're gone!
Oh, thank Heaven... thank Heaven above, I'm alive!

He laughs, the sound broken at first — too rough for joy — then steadier, brighter, until it fills the stage.

He collapses to his knees beside the bed, clutching it as tears run down his face.

EBENEZER

Thank you, God.
Thank you for sparing me — for letting me wake again.
You could've left me there, in the cold, but you didn't.
You gave me another morning.

He leans forward until his forehead touches the floorboards, shoulders shaking.

*The **Chorus** hums stronger — “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound” — wordless, but recognizable.*

CHORUS (soft hum builds through the melody)

*A final **chime** tolls.*

Not ominous — gentle, almost tender.

The light shifts to soft gold. The sound fades into stillness.

Scrooge drags himself upright, still trembling, still laughing through tears.

He stumbles toward the window and throws it open with both hands.

A burst of light and cold air floods in, sweeping across the room.

For the first time in the play, daylight fills the stage.

EBENEZER

(startled, awed)
Oh — look at it!
Look at the snow! It's shining! Every flake like a diamond!
Even the rooftops are wearing halos.
Is this Heaven, or just morning?

*The **Chorus** continues humming, faintly blending into the ambient sound of wind and bells.*

EBENEZER

Hallo! Hallo down there! You — boy! What day is this?

BOY'S VOICE (offstage, bright and cheerful)

Today? Why — Christmas Day, sir!

EBENEZER

(chokes, laughing and crying at once)
Christmas Day!
Bless me, it's Christmas!
They did it! The Spirits did it all in one night!

He claps his hands together, then stops suddenly — overcome. He grips the window frame, breathing hard, whispering to himself.

EBENEZER

I haven't missed it.
Not the day, not the chance.
I thought time had run out, but... it hasn't.
There's still morning left.

*The hum from the Chorus rises briefly — the second verse melody of "Amazing Grace."
It is bright now, as though sunlight has a sound.*

He crosses the room, pacing slowly, his movements shaky but growing stronger with every step.

EBENEZER

I saw the end. I saw the pit waiting.
And I deserved every inch of it.
I was meaner than the frost, tighter than the grave — and still, mercy found me.
Why me?
Why show mercy to a man like me?

He stops, pressing a hand over his heart.

EBENEZER

Because they never gave up.
Not Fanny.
Not Fred.
Not that little boy who had every reason to curse me — but blessed me instead.
Because of them, I still have breath.
And by Heaven, I'll use it better than I ever have.

*The **Chorus** softly hums the refrain: "I once was lost, but now am found..."*

CHORUS *(gentle hum, melodic)*

Mmm... now am found... was blind, but now I see...

Scrooge moves to his desk, throwing open drawers. Papers, coins, and ledgers spill out like confessions.

He grabs a handful of coins and stares at them.

EBENEZER

What good were you?
You weighed more than my soul, and less than a kind word.
You were the iron around my heart.

*He slams the drawer shut, scattering silver across the floor.
He looks toward the door, breathing fast — fear and joy mixed together.*

EBENEZER

I'll not waste another day.
This morning — this very morning — I'll go to them.
The Cratchits.
I'll bring food, warmth, something that means more than words.

He picks up a small purse, gripping it tightly.

EBENEZER

It's not enough. It'll never be enough.
But it's a start.
And I will keep starting, every day, until there's nothing left of the man I was.

He pauses. Looks upward. The light grows warmer.

EBENEZER

If You're listening — and I think You are —
help me make good of this.
Help me turn every breath into a blessing.
Let me prove I can still love this world.

*The **Chorus** hums the final verse: "Through many dangers, toils, and snares..." fading softly.*

CHORUS (*softly, reverently*)

I once was lost, but now am found...
Was blind, but now I see...

Scrooge stands in the sunlight, trembling and grinning like a child who's just seen a miracle.

EBENEZER

Then it's settled.
Christmas Day — and I've work to do.

*He grabs his coat, his purse, and one of the coins from the floor.
He flips it in the air, laughing as it glints in the light.*

EBENEZER

Come now, Ebenezer — there's a feast waiting, and a boy who needs a goose.

*The **clock chimes once more — bright, alive, almost playful.***

BONG.

Scrooge freezes for a breath, then smiles — wide, honest, unguarded.

EBENEZER

Right on time.

He strides out the door into the golden light.

*The **Chorus**, now fully human in voice, sings the final refrain in harmony:*

CHORUS (singing softly)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

The frost on the window melts.

The light shifts from gold to pure white.

SCENE 7 — THE STREETS OF WHISPERING HALLOW

The clock chimes softly — once, twice, three times.

Each note seems to push open a door to the world outside.

*Lights rise on **Whispering Hallow** — transformed.*

Where once it was gray and cold, now it glows with warmth and color.

Children dart between snowdrifts, carolers sing beneath frosted windows, and lanterns shine gold through falling snow.

A brass bell rings faintly somewhere offstage.

*The **Ghost Chorus**, now dressed in soft light, hums gently the melody of “**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.**”*

Their tone is no longer haunting — it is reverent, joyous, full of breath and warmth.

EBENEZER

(stepping into the light, whispering)

Was this always here? This joy... this light?

Did I walk through all this beauty blind?

Did I pass it a thousand times with my eyes shut tight?

The Chorus hums the refrain faintly — “Glory to the newborn King...” — woven into the wind.

*Two familiar figures appear through the crowd — the **CHARITY GENTLEMEN**, the same men Scrooge turned away in bitterness. They see him and stiffen, trying to pass quickly.*

EBENEZER

Gentlemen — please! Do not pass me by.

CHARITY MAN #1

(stiffly)

Mr. Scrooge... we will not trouble you again.

EBENEZER

No — trouble me. Trouble me every day if you will.

Yesterday I sent you away with contempt.

Today I beg you — let me make amends.

He opens his purse and pours coins into their gloved hands. The sound of silver hitting leather echoes like bells.

The men stare, stunned.

CHARITY MAN #2

Sir... this is more than we dared hope to collect in a month.

EBENEZER

Then it is still too little.

Nothing I could give would fill the hunger I caused —
but let it fill tables, light stoves, warm hearts.

Let no child in Whispering Hallow shiver tonight for want of a fire.

The men exchange glances — one removes his hat, eyes glistening.

CHARITY MAN #1

God bless you, Mr. Scrooge. Truly.

You have changed the season for many.

The Chorus swells softly behind them.

CHORUS (gentle, echoing)

Blessing... blessing... tables filled... hearts warmed...

The men exit, their lantern light mingling with the carolers as the melody continues.

*A group of weary **MINERS** pass by — faces weathered, hands raw from work.*

They see Scrooge and halt, instinctively turning away.

Scrooge steps forward, removing his hat, voice shaking with humility.

EBENEZER

Brothers...

I once called you debtors.

Tonight, I call you friends.

MINER #1

(snapping)

You? Friend?

You bled us dry 'til our children ate dirt for bread.

EBENEZER

(quietly, bowing his head)

I did.

And I will not deny it.

I was blind and cruel.

But God has opened my eyes — and if He can forgive me, perhaps you might too.

He reaches into his coat and hands them parchment, coins, and a folded deed.

EBENEZER

These are your debts — forgiven.

Every shilling, every note.

I cannot erase the hunger of yesterday...

but I can help you feed tomorrow.

The miners stare, disbelieving. One slowly reaches out, his voice breaking.

MINER #2

Why now, Scrooge? Why us?

EBENEZER

Because you bore the weight of my sin.
You broke your backs while I built my fortune.
And now, today, I begin to carry it back.
It is what the Christ-child teaches: that we bear one another's burdens.
And I am long overdue.

A beat.

One miner steps forward, rough hands gripping Scrooge's shoulder.

MINER #1

Then come sit by our fires.
We'll give you a mug and call you brother yet.

They exit, singing stronger now — their tune becoming the next verse of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

*The **Chorus** joins softly, lifting the harmony.
Snow drifts down as their song fades.*

*A woman approaches — **MRS. KETTLE** — wrapped in rags, carrying a small bundle.
She sees Scrooge and tries to pass.
He stops her gently, voice trembling.*

EBENEZER

Mrs. Kettle... please wait.
I wronged you most of all.

MRS. KETTLE

(flat, bitter)
You took my husband's farm.
My Will worked that land 'til his bones gave way.
One bad harvest, and you seized it — said "a man should pay what he owes."
He died in your debt, with dirt on his hands and a curse on his lips.

EBENEZER

(weeping)
And his curse was earned.
I cannot bring him back, but I can return what was his.

*He presses a folded deed and several gold coins into her hands.
Her fingers tremble.*

MRS. KETTLE

Is this mockery?

EBENEZER

No.
It is repentance.

It is too late for him — but not for you.
If you cannot forgive me, then keep it anyway.
It was never mine to hold.

*She looks down at the papers, her face twisting between fury and release.
At last, her voice cracks.*

MRS. KETTLE

You were a cruel man, Scrooge...
but maybe not now.

*She walks away slowly.
The **Chorus** whispers as she fades.*

CHORUS (softly)

Forgive... maybe now... forgive... maybe now...

*Scrooge wipes his eyes and turns.
A small BOY dashes past, chasing snowflakes.*

EBENEZER

Hallo, boy!
Do you know the butcher's shop — the one with the great turkey in the window?

BOY

Aye, sir! The biggest bird I ever saw!

EBENEZER

Run there and buy it.
Take it to Bob Cratchit's house — you know the one?

BOY

Yes, sir!

EBENEZER

Good lad!
Say not who sent it.
Here's coin for the bird — and here, more for your trouble.
Run fast — it's Christmas morning, and the world's waiting for you!

*The boy laughs and sprints off through the snow, vanishing down the lane.
Scrooge watches him go, tears in his eyes.*

EBENEZER

They will feast tonight.
And they will laugh without knowing who filled their table.
Let it be so — let the gift, not the giver, be known.

*The **Chorus** hums faintly, picking up the melody again.*

CHORUS (gentle, reverent)

Feast... laughter... blessing... unseen hand...

The bustle of Whispering Hallow begins to fade.

Carolers pass from view, the miners' song drifts into the distance.

Only Scrooge remains — standing alone in the falling snow, the lantern light soft around him.

*The **Chorus** hums the bridge of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" — slow and warm.*

EBENEZER

(softly, trembling)

I have made peace with strangers.

I have mended debts and set bread upon tables.

But still my heart trembles.

For what is gold, compared to family?

What is coin, compared to love — to the love I cast aside?

Mother... Fanny... can you hear me?

I am trying.

God help me... I am trying.

*The **Chorus** shifts — soft voices weaving with the wind.*

The words of loved ones echo, faint but clear, blending with the melody.

CHORUS (layered, gentle)

Family... home... welcome... love...

FANNY'S VOICE (woven in)

Go to him, Ebenezer.

He is my blood, as you are.

He waits for you still.

MOTHER'S VOICE (woven in)

He will open the door.

As I would.

As Fanny would.

Scrooge sobs quietly, wiping his tears.

He turns toward a golden glow in the distance — the doorway of Fred's home.

Laughter drifts faintly from within.

He walks toward it slowly, every step an act of courage.

EBENEZER

What if they turn me away?

What if they laugh... as I once laughed at them?

*The **Chorus** answers, soft and sure, like a lullaby.*

CHORUS (hushed, faithful)

Knock, Ebenezer... knock.

For unto us a Child is born...

and grace waits at the door.

He reaches the door.
The light spills across him like sunrise.
He lifts his hand, breath shaking — then knocks.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

SCENE 7 — FRED'S PARTY

At the door, *EBENEZER*, trembling, hat in hand. He stops, breath catching; he clutches the small purse like a lifeline.

EBENEZER

(under his breath)

What if he turns me away? What if he laughs, as I laughed at him? ...O God—give me courage.

The door opens. *FRED* appears, surprised. Warm light. Fred's home: candles, a Christmas tree with ribbons, guests laughing, a fiddle sawing a gentle reel. The contrast to Scrooge's lonely chamber could not be sharper.

. He studies his uncle, uncertain. *EBENEZER* bows his head, ashamed.

EBENEZER

Fred... my dear boy. I am not worthy to stand on your step. But I beg you—forgive me. Forgive the years I turned you from my door, the love I scorned, the family I denied.

FRED

(stepping closer, searching his face)

Uncle... what has happened to you?

EBENEZER

Everything—and nothing. I am still Ebenezer... but I am not the man I was. If you would let me in—even for a moment—I would count it more treasure than all the gold I hoarded.

FRED studies him—then steps forward and embraces him fiercely. *SCROOGE* gasps—stiff at first—then clings to him, weeping into his shoulder.

The **GHOST CHORUS** hums a soft strain of “**O Come, All Ye Faithful**” (just the opening phrase). Two faint, gentle figures appear behind Fred: **FANNY** and **SCROOGE'S MOTHER**. They glow, hands joined, smiling at Ebenezer.

FANNY'S SPIRIT

Ebenezer... I told you once you were not alone. You never were. Mother and I have watched, waiting for your heart to turn.

MOTHER'S SPIRIT

You were loved, my son—from your first cry to this very breath. Love you cast aside still waits. Still welcomes.

EBENEZER

(reaching out, trembling)

Fanny... Mother... can you forgive me?

FANNY'S SPIRIT

It is already done. Forgive yourself—and live in love.

They fade. FRED, eyes wet, keeps an arm around Ebenezer and leads him in.

FRED

Come in, Uncle. Tonight is Christmas—and tonight you are family.

Guests murmur, surprised. FRED lifts his glass, bold and bright.

FRED

Friends—this is my uncle, Ebenezer Scrooge. He has come home. Let us welcome him.

Cheer rises—hesitant at first, then true. EBENEZER bows, tears shining.

EBENEZER

Thank you... thank you all. I will spend what days are left to me proving myself worthy of this welcome.

Laughter, the fiddle, warm light. The CHORUS whispers like a benediction.

CHORUS (gentle, layered)

Home... forgiven... love restored...

Crossfade to—

SCENE 8 — THE CRATCHITS' TABLE

The Cratchit home glows: low ceiling, patched chairs; a stove crackles; bread, potatoes, a small pie. Children bustle. BOB lifts TINY TIM into his chair; MRS. CRATCHIT fusses; MARTHA and PETER whisper, smiling. For the first time since mourning, the family feels whole.

The GHOST CHORUS hums a reverent thread of "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear." A knock. Silence falls. MRS. CRATCHIT stills. BOB opens the door.

EBENEZER stands there—hat in hand, snow on his coat, body trembling. No smile. He bows his head.

EBENEZER

Bob... Clara... children. Do not fear. I mean no harm. I stand not as your master, but as a beggar—a beggar for your mercy.

MRS. CRATCHIT pulls TIM close; BOB stiffens. A beat. The CHORUS barely breathes: "mercy... beggar... mercy..."

MRS. CRATCHIT

(stepping forward, heat breaking through)

And what mercy did you ever show us, Mr. Scrooge? When Bob's hands bled ink, when my children shivered, when Tim's cough rattled his chest—where were you? You held the purse. You tightened it. You watched us suffer and called it "business."

SCROOGE sinks to his knees in the doorway, weeping openly.

EBENEZER

Yes! And God forgive me, you speak truth. I was cruel. I was blind. I was less than a man. I do not ask you to forget—only to let me change. Let me be different, if only this once.

*MRS. CRATCHIT wavers—anger warring with compassion. The **CHORUS** echoes her hurt in a soft susurrus. BOB steps forward, torn but steady.*

CRATCHIT

Sir... Ebenezer... I have worked half my life beneath your shadow. I bent my back and bowed my head. I saw my children want, my wife labor, my Tim grow pale—while you counted your coins. I hated you. I did.

SCROOGE bows lower, hands over his face.

CRATCHIT

And yet...

(voice breaking)

...when my boy lay sick, he prayed for you. With his last strength, he blessed you. If a child so pure can bless the man who wronged him most... then who am I to curse?

He kneels; lifts Scrooge by the shoulders.

CRATCHIT

Rise, Ebenezer. If you would be different—be different here. At this table. With us.

MARTHA

But Pa... how can a man change so quickly?

PETER

A heart is stone. Can stone soften in a night?

EBENEZER

(pleading; to the children)

Yes. When Heaven's fire strikes it—even stone can melt. I am melted, not by fear alone, but by your love, your Tim's blessing, your father's faith. Let me prove it—not in words, in deeds.

He opens his coat: parcels, fruit, small toys. Gasps from the children. He lays them on the table, careful, almost shy.

EBENEZER

Not payment—nothing could pay what I owe. Gifts, from one beggar to another.

TIM leans forward, eyes bright; his voice small but sure.

TIM

Mr. Scrooge... I prayed for you, because I believe God's love is bigger than anger. I blessed you, because blessings heal. If you are here to love—then you are welcome. If you are here to bless—then bless with us.

He offers his hand. SCROOGE crawls, takes it in both of his, kisses it, weeping.

EBENEZER

Tim... my angel. My little teacher. You are the reason I stand—the reason I change. God bless you. God bless you a thousand times.

*The **CHORUS** swells softly: “Blessing... blessing... love heals...” The family gathers in—MRS. CRATCHIT’s eyes wet now; MARTHA and PETER exchange a hopeful look; the little ones press close. BOB lifts his hands; all bow heads. Even the **CHORUS** hushes, as if Heaven leans in.*

CRATCHIT

Lord of Heaven, we thank Thee for this bread—plain though it be—for it is the fruit of our labor and the gift of Thy hand.

ALL CRATCHITS

Amen.

CRATCHIT

We thank Thee for sparing our Tim—for his smile, his laughter, his blessing. He is our light in the dark—our angel in the dust.

ALL CRATCHITS

Amen.

CRATCHIT

We thank Thee for this day, when hearts are opened, and even the hardest stone is made flesh.

ALL CRATCHITS

Amen.

BOB looks to SCROOGE. EBENEZER bows his head, voice shaking.

EBENEZER

And Lord... I thank Thee for mercy—mercy that reached even me when I was most undeserving. For voices that blessed me when I cursed; for children who prayed for me when I mocked; for a family who shows me Thy face in their love.

ALL CRATCHITS

Amen.

EBENEZER

I thank Thee for this chance—this morning—this one breath more to set right what I shattered. Make me a servant of these hands, these hearts, this table. Bless them, Lord—bless them beyond measure. Bless us—

He breaks; sobs; cannot finish. A hush. Then TIM lifts his head, clear and bright:

TIM

...every one.

They all meet his words, tears bright.

ALL CRATCHITS

Every one.

The **CHORUS** blooms—no longer eerie, but radiant—on the first verse of “**Silent Night**” (hummed, then sung as desired). Light floods the room.

EPILOGUE — SHERIFF BOONE’S INVITATION

The family and Scrooge remain at table, hands still linked. Golden light. Snow outside. The **CHORUS** hums like angels.

From a soft pool of light, **SHERIFF BOONE** steps forward. She does not break the circle. She speaks to us.

SHERIFF BOONE

I reckon you’ve seen enough tonight to know a truth as old as winter and wide as the prairie: a heart can change. A man can fall and rise again. Mercy can reach where law never could.

(beat)

But hear me plain, neighbors—this tale doesn’t end at the Cratchits’ table. It doesn’t end with Scrooge on his knees or Tim lifting his blessing. It only ends if we let it.

(gentle; indicating the family, then us)

The Spirit of Christmas lives here—in giving, forgiving, and gathering. And it lives out there—in you. In how you carry this night back to your homes, your work, your town. Love’s not a speech; it’s a habit. It’s how you choose to live when no one’s clappin’.

(warm, practical) As BOONE speaks, soft light grows upstage. From the shadows beyond the Cratchits’ home, the entire company begins to appear — slowly, reverently, as though drawn by her words. Faint candlelight glimmers in their hands. The first chords of a familiar carol swell beneath her final line.

The **Company** — townsfolk, miners, children, spirits, Fred and Clara, even the charity gentlemen — move quietly into view. They form a wide semicircle **behind the Cratchit table**, enclosing the scene in a glowing halo of community and light. The **Ghost Chorus** is among them, no longer spectral but radiant, mingling freely with the living.

Each carries a candle or lantern; the light grows warmer as they enter. Snow drifts gently. The stage becomes a living painting of peace — the redeemed Scrooge and the Cratchit family at the heart of it, surrounded by the world they’ve healed.

Maybe it’s knockin’ on the door that’s stayed shut too long. Maybe it’s soup for the neighbor who’s had a hard spell. Maybe it’s applaudin’ the first-time kid on this very stage, or takin’ a broom to help strike the set, or listenin’ kindly before you answer sharp. Small things, done steady—that’s how a town gets mended.

(steadier, inclusive)

We are not the same—thank God for that. Different trades, different tempers, different songs in our throats. Yet we are all children of God, made for each other. Community isn’t sameness; it’s a table wide enough for every kind of broken and every kind of bright.

(a hand to the house)

This theatre—this house of stories—stands on that kind of love. Folks lending time, craft, laughter, and faith so that strangers can sit side by side and remember what's true. It's the season of giving; not the sort that keeps tally, but the kind that says, "Here I am—use me." If you carry even a spark of tonight into tomorrow, you'll be keepin' the mission of this place alive.

(hand over heart)

So I ask you, from one soul to another: keep Christmas. Keep it in your habits. Keep it in your helping. Let it shine here in Whispering Hallow, and in this house, for many winters yet to come.

(turning back to the family, soft)

All right then... shall we end as we began—with a blessing?

TIM

God bless us... every one!

FAMILY & CHORUS & TOWNSFOLK (united)

God bless us... every one!

They lift their candles high as the final chord swells. A single church bell chimes softly in the distance. The light deepens to gold as snow falls in earnest. Boone smiles toward the audience, a tear catching the glow.

The hymn rises to its last note as the lights fade slowly to black.