

SETTING: *Various locations in the life and times of Ebenezer Scrooge including the streets of London, the office of Scrooge and Marley, Scrooge's bedroom, an English countryside, a schoolroom, Fezziwig's warehouse, Belle's home, the Cratchit house, Fred's house, the docks, a hovel, and a cemetery.*

AT RISE: *Christmas Eve, 1836. The streets of London, nightfall. The stage is dark. The streetlamp starts to glow. CAROLER #6 appears upstage left, at the edge of the glow, crossing down into the light, singing "Coventry Carol" as she does so. She is leading a funeral procession.*

#### CAROLER #6

*Lullay, Thou little tiny Child  
By, by, lully, lullay  
Lullay, Thou little tiny Child  
By, by, lully, lullay*

*(CAROLER #1, CAROLER #2, CAROLER #3, CAROLER #5, CAROLER #9 and CAROLER #10 appear behind her, carrying a coffin on their shoulders. They join in on the next verse as they cross down right, passing CAROLER #4 who enters and watches them.)*

#### CAROLERS

*O sisters too, how may we do  
For to preserve this day?  
This poor youngling for whom we sing  
By, by, lully, lullay*

*(They exit with the coffin)*

#### CAROLER #4

*(To the audience, referring to the coffin)*

Old Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story we are going to relate.

*(The streetlamp goes out and the lights shift as we flash forward seven years to Christmas Eve day, 1843...)*

*(CAROLER #7, CAROLER #8, CAROLER #11, and CAROLER #12 enter and pose as carolers singing "Sussex Carol." FIDDLER enters behind them and accompanies them.)*

CAROLERS

*On Christmas night all Christians sing  
To hear the news the angels bring  
On Christmas night all Christians sing  
To hear the news the angels bring  
News of great joy, news of great mirth  
News of our merciful King's birth*

*(FIDDLER continues with the next verse under the following.)*

CAROLER #4

To begin our story, we set the scene.

CAROLER #7

The time...

CAROLER # 3

Christmas Eve.

CAROLER #8

The place...

CAROLER #5

The counting house of Scrooge and Marley.

CAROLER #9

Scrooge and Marley?

CAROLER #6

Scrooge and Marley.

CAROLER #9

I thought Marley was dead?

*(to CAROLER #2.)*

You said Marley was dead.

CAROLER #4

And so he is.

CAROLER #9

Then why is his name still on the sign?

*(SCROOGE enters. FIDDLER screeches to a halt.)*

SCROOGE

Because removing his name would require paint...

CAROLER #4

*(Introducing SCROOGE to the audience.)*

Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE

...and paint is expensive.

*(He starts to cross but his way is blocked by CAROLER #12.)*

Out of my way, brat.

*(CAROLER #12 squeals in fear and runs off. SCROOGE winds his way to his office as the CAROLERS talk about him.)*

CAROLER #10

Ebenezer Scrooge...

CAROLER #11

What a tight-fisted, greedy, covetous old sinner.

CAROLER # 3

Ebenezer Scrooge...

CAROLER #7

Hard as flint...

CAROLER # 8

Secret, self-contained...

CAROLER #6

Solitary as an oyster...

CAROLER # 5/CAROLER #4

Ebenezer Scrooge...

CAROLER #6

No warmth could warm him...

CAROLER # 10

No wind that blew was bitterer than he...

CAROLERS

Ebenezer Scrooge!

*(During the following, CAROLER #3, CAROLER #5, CAROLER #6, CAROLER #9 and CAROLER # 10 reenter and shift the scene to the office of Scrooge and Marley. The office consists of two desks – the grander one with its chair belongs to Scrooge, the lesser one with its stool belongs to BOB CRATCHIT, Scrooge's clerk. A candle sits on Cratchit's desk.)*

CAROLER #6

The interior of Scrooge and Marley mirrored the personality of its owner...

CAROLER #9

Dark and dismal...

CAROLER #10

With grimy windows that refused to let in the sun...

CAROLER #5

Not that any sun shone this day...

CAROLER #3

No, indeed – it was a bleak day.

*(SCROOGE takes his seat in his office.)*

CAROLER #8

A very bleak day...

CAROLER #11

Cold and grey...

CAROLER #6

With a fog so thick it came pouring in at every chink and keyhole...

CAROLER #3

Working alongside Scrooge in his office was Bob Cratchit.

*(BOB CRATCHIT steps forward, a muffler wrapped around his neck.)*

CAROLERS

Bob Cratchit!

*(CRATCHIT crosses to his stool, sits, and lights the candle during the following.)*

CAROLER #5

*(Explaining to audience)*

Bob Cratchit was Scrooge's clerk.

CAROLER #6

A hardworking fellow...

CAROLER #9

And loyal to Scrooge, in spite of the ill treatment he received at his hands.

*(CAROLERS have gathered at the periphery of SCROOGE's office. CAROLER #4 looks around, making sure the scene is set.)*

CAROLER #4

*(To the audience)*

Our story begins.

*(CAROLERS take a deep step back into the shadows. The lights shift and the scene begins.)*

CRATCHIT

It was seven years go tonight.

SCROOGE

Eh? What's that?

CRATCHIT

Mr. Marley died seven years ago this very night.

SCROOGE

Marley?

CRATCHIT

Jacob Marley, your business partner. I was remembering that he died seven years ago tonight, on Christmas Eve.

SCROOGE

I see. And am I paying you for your memories, Mr. Cratchit?

CRATCHIT

No, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE

Then I suggest you get back to work and “remember” on your own time.

CRATCHIT

Yes, Mr. Scrooge.

*(He stands up, rubbing his hands together to get warm, and starts off.)*

I’ll just put some more coal on the fire...

SCROOGE

No, you will not. Coal costs money. If you are cold, you have a candle with which to warm yourself.

CRATCHIT

Yes, sir.

*(Before CRATCHIT can sit back down, a special comes up on the CAROLERS standing on a street corner, caroling with “Good King Wenceslas.” NOTE: To be sung up tempo and joyfully.)*

CAROLERS

*Good King Wenceslas looked out  
On the Feast of Stephen  
When the snow lay round about  
Deep and crisp and even*

*(CAROLERS continue under as CRATCHIT crosses down to the “window” and looks out.)*

SCROOGE

Who’s making that infernal racket?

CAROLERS

*Brightly shown the moon that night*

CRATCHIT

Christmas carolers, sir.

*Though the frost was cruel...*

*(CRATCHIT returns to his stool and sits. Still singing, CAROLER # 2 becomes FRED and crosses to SCROOGE’s office.)*

SCROOGE  
Christmas – Bah. Humbug.

CAROLERS  
*When a poor man came in sight*

*(FRED bursts through the door of the office, still singing.)*

FRED/CAROLERS  
*Gathering winter fuel*

*(Special out on the CAROLERS. SCROOGE stands up in dismay.  
CRATCHIT is delighted to see him.)*

FRED  
Good afternoon, Cratchit!

CRATCHIT  
Good afternoon, Mr. Fred!

SCROOGE  
What's this? What's this?!

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

SCROOGE  
Bah! Humbug!

FRED  
Christmas a humbug, uncle? You don't mean that, I'm sure.

SCROOGE  
I do. "Merry Christmas." What right have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED  
What right have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE  
Bah! Humbug.

FRED  
Don't be cross, uncle.

SCROOGE  
What else can I be when I live in a world full of fools wishing me Merry Christmas?

FRED

Uncle...

SCROOGE

What's Christmas but a time for finding yourself a year older and not an hour richer. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips would be boiled in his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

FRED

Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE

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

FRED

Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE

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

FRED

There are many things from which I might have derived good by which I have not profited, I daresay, Christmas being one of them.

*(FIDDLER underscores the following with a slow "Good King Wenceslas.")*

But I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come around, as a kind, forgiving, charitable time. A time when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely. And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold in my pocket, I believe that Christmas has done me good and will do me good, and I say God bless it!

*(Music out. CRATCHIT applauds.)*

SCROOGE

Let me hear another sound from you, Bob Cratchit, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation.

*(To FRED.)*

You're quite a powerful speaker, sir – I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED

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



SCROOGE

I'll see you in hell, first.

FRED

But why? Why?

SCROOGE

Why did you get married?

FRED

Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE

Because you fell in love. Good afternoon.

FRED

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

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

I want nothing from you. I ask nothing of you. Why can't we be friends?

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

I'm sorry to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel to which I have been a party. But I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

FRED

And a Happy New Year!

*(FRED crosses to CRATCHIT.)*

FRED

Merry Christmas to you, Bob Cratchit.

CRATCHIT  
Merry Christmas, Mr. Fred!

FRED  
How's that fine family of yours?

CRATCHIT  
Very well, sir – thank you.

FRED  
Give them my regards.

CRATCHIT  
I will, sir – thank you.

*(FRED tips his hat and turns, bumping into SOLICITOR #1 and SOLICITOR #2, who are entering.)*

FRED  
Oh, I beg your pardon.

*(He tips his hat to them and exits.)*

SOLICITOR #1  
*(Consulting a list)*  
Scrooge and Marley's, I believe.

SCROOGE  
*(Looking up)*  
What's that?

SOLICITOR #1  
Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE  
Mr. Marley is dead. He died seven years ago this very night – or so I've been told.

*(SCROOGE shoots CRATCHIT a barbed look.)*

SOLICITOR #2  
We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

SCROOGE  
State your business. I have work...