

[SCROOGE will walk alone to his rooms from his offices. As he makes a long slow cross of the stage, the scenery should change. Christmas music will be heard, various people will cross by SCROOGE, often smiling happily.]

There will be occasional pleasant greetings tossed at him.

SCROOGE, in contrast to all, will grump and mumble. He will snap at passing boys, as might a horrid old hound.

In short, SCROOGE's sounds and movements will define him in contrast from all other people who cross the stage: he is the misanthrope, the malcontent, the miser. He is SCROOGE.

This statement of SCROOGE's character, by contrast to all other characters, should seem comical to the audience.

During SCROOGE's crossover to his rooms, snow should begin to fall. All passers-by will hold their faces to the sky, smiling, allowing snow to shower them lightly. SCROOGE, by contrast, will bat at the flakes with his walking-stick, as might an insomniac swat at a sleep-stopping, middle-of-the-night swarm of mosquitoes. He will comment on the blackness of the night, and, finally, reach his rooms and his encounter with the magical specter: MARLEY, his eternal mate.]

20:38 audio

Scene 3

SCROOGE. No light at all . . . no moon . . . that is what is at the center of a Christmas Eve: dead black: void . . .

[SCROOGE puts his key in the door's keyhole. He has reached his rooms now. The door knocker changes and is now MARLEY's face. A musical sound: quickly: ghostly. MARLEY's image is not at all angry, but looks at SCROOGE as did the old MARLEY look at SCROOGE. The hair is curiously stirred; eyes

wide open, dead: absent of focus. SCROOGE stares wordlessly here. The face, before his very eyes, does **deliquesce**.¹⁰ It is a knocker again. SCROOGE opens the door and checks the back of same, probably for MARLEY's pigtail. Seeing nothing but screws and nuts, SCROOGE refuses the memory.]

Pooh, pooh!

[The sound of the door closing resounds throughout the house as thunder. Every room echoes the sound. SCROOGE fastens the door and walks across the hall to the stairs, trimming his candle as he goes; and then he goes slowly up the staircase. He checks each room: sitting room, bedroom, lumber-room. He looks under the sofa, under the table: nobody there. He fixes his evening **gruel on the hob**,¹¹ changes his jacket. SCROOGE sits near the tiny low-flamed fire, sipping his gruel. There are various pictures on the walls: all of them now show likenesses of MARLEY. SCROOGE blinks his eyes.]

Bah! Humbug!

[SCROOGE walks in a circle about the room. The pictures change back into their natural images. He sits down at the table in front of the fire. A bell hangs overhead. It begins to ring, of its own accord. Slowly, surely, begins the ringing of every bell in the house. They continue ringing for nearly half a minute. SCROOGE is stunned by the phenomenon. The bells cease their ringing all at once. Deep below SCROOGE, in the basement of the house, there is the sound of clanking, of some enormous chain being dragged across the floors; and now up the stairs. We hear doors flying open.]

10. deliquesce (del' ə kwes') v.: Melt away.

11. gruel (grūō' əl) **on the hob** (hăb): A thin broth warming on a ledge at the back or side of the fireplace.

Grumpy
character

contrast with
those around
him

Bells ring as
as a warning

Bah still! Humbug still! This is not happening! I won't believe it!

[MARLEY'S GHOST enters the room. He is horrible to look at: pigtail, vest, suit as usual, but he drags an enormous chain now, to which is fastened cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses fashioned of steel. He is transparent. MARLEY stands opposite the stricken SCROOGE.]

How now! What do you want of me?

MARLEY. Much!

SCROOGE. Who are you?

MARLEY. Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE. Who were you then?

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

SCROOGE. I see . . . can you sit down?

MARLEY. I can.

SCROOGE. Do it then.

MARLEY. I shall. [MARLEY sits opposite SCROOGE, in the chair across the table, at the front of the fireplace.] You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE. I don't.

MARLEY. Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE. Because every little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheat. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

[There is a silence between them. SCROOGE is made nervous by it. He picks up a toothpick.]

Humbug! I tell you: humbug!

[MARLEY opens his mouth and screams a ghostly, fearful scream. The scream echoes about each room of the house. Bats fly, cats screech, lightning flashes. SCROOGE stands and walks backwards against the wall. MARLEY stands and screams again. This time, he takes his head and lifts it from his shoulders. His head continues to scream. MARLEY's face again appears on every picture in the room: all screaming. SCROOGE, on his knees before MARLEY.]

Mercy! Dreadful apparition,¹² mercy! Why, O! why do you trouble me so?

MARLEY. Man of the worldly mind, do you believe in me, or not?

SCROOGE. I do. I must. But why do spirits such as you walk the earth? And why do they come to me?

MARLEY. It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. [MARLEY screams again; a tragic scream; from his ghostly bones.] I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know, you, Scrooge, the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it, since. It is a ponderous chain. End of part 1, scene 3

[Terrified that a chain will appear about his body, SCROOGE spins and waves the unwanted chain away. None, of course, appears. Sees MARLEY watching him dance about the room. MARLEY watches SCROOGE: silently.]

SCROOGE. Jacob. Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob . . .

12. **apparition** (ap' ə rish' ən) n.: Ghost.

Marley's
purpose

pun

MARLEY. I have none to give. Comfort comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. A very little more, is all that is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere . . . [*He moans again.*] my spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!

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

MARLEY. [*Screams word "business": a flashpot explodes with him.*] **BUSINESS!!!** Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, **benevolence**, were, all, my business. [*SCROOGE is quaking.*] Hear me, Ebenezer Scrooge! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE. I will, but don't be hard upon me. And don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!

MARLEY. How is it that I appear before you in a shape **that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. That is no light part of my penance, I am here tonight to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.**

SCROOGE. You were always a good friend to me. Thank'ee!

MARLEY. **You will be haunted by Three Spirits.**

SCROOGE. Would that be the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY. It is.

SCROOGE. I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY. **Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first one tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.**

SCROOGE. Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and get it over, Jacob?

MARLEY. Expect **the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate.** Look to see me no more. Others may, but you may not. And look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!

[*MARLEY places his head back upon his shoulders. He approaches the window and beckons to SCROOGE to watch. Outside the window, specters¹³ fly by, carrying money-boxes and chains. They make a confused sound of lamentation. MARLEY, after listening a moment, joins into their mournful dirge. He leans to the window and floats out into the bleak, dark night. He is gone.*]

SCROOGE. [*Rushing to the window*] Jacob! No, Jacob! Don't leave me! I'm frightened!

[*He sees that MARLEY has gone. He looks outside. He pulls the shutter closed, so that the scene is blocked from his view. All sound stops. After a pause, he re-opens the shutter and all is quiet, as it should be on Christmas Eve. Carolers carol out of doors, in the distance. SCROOGE closes the shutter and walks down the stairs. He examines the door by which MARLEY first entered.*]

No one here at all! Did I imagine all that? Humbug! [*He looks about the room.*] I did imagine it. It only happened in my foulest dream-mind, didn't it? An undigested bit of . . .

[*Thunder and lightning in the room: suddenly*]

Sorry! Sorry!

[*There is silence again. The lights fade out.*]

13. specters (spek' tərz) n.: Ghosts.

Marley was a businessman and ignored the poor--as Scrooge has done

Notice the motif of the number 3

Marley tells Scrooge that he will see 3 ghosts over 3 nights; it really happens in one night.