

"MRS. CRATCHIT'S CHRISTMAS CAROL"

by

Charles Deemer

cdeemer@yahoo.com  
503-452-8277

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY - STREET - DAY

The business area of a mid-sized city.

SUPER: "The day before Christmas. The present."

A large sign stands out on one building:

"Scrooge & Marley Accounting Services"

Among the nearby cars, a VAN is parked on the street.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

EBENEZER SCROOGE, 60s, puts on his coat. He is gray and looks older. He has the body language of an impatient tyrant.

He stands near the desk of BOB CRATCHIT, 40s.

BOB CRATCHIT

Isn't it early for the bank, sir?

SCROOGE

It is. But they insist on closing early today, which means I must leave early to get in line with all the other businessmen losing money today. How soon before you wrap that up?

Cratchit has been working at his computer.

BOB CRATCHIT

A few days yet, sir.

SCROOGE

I suppose you don't want to work late tonight. We'll talk about it when I get back.

He goes to the door. Stops, turns.

SCROOGE

My nephew is coming by for my computer. He insists on updating something or other.

BOB CRATCHIT

You won't have your computer, sir?

SCROOGE

He's giving me a loaner. He says I can still do my accounts on it. Back to work.

He leaves.

Bob Cratchit takes a deep breath and returns to his computer.

EXT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Scrooge comes out and heads up the street, toward the van.

INT. VAN - DAY

Watching Scrooge from the van are MRS. CRATCHIT, 40s, and FRED HOLYWELL, 30s.

Behind the wheel is Mrs. Cratchit's brother, CHARLES, 30s.

FRED

Here he comes.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Wait till he gets out of sight.

They watch Scrooge move past the van.

FRED

Well, here goes.

CHARLES

Fred?

FRED

Yes.

CHARLES  
Don't forget the computer.

FRED  
Right.

He fetches a laptop and exits the van.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
I hope this works.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Bob Cratchit is still hunched close to the desktop computer.  
The door opens and Fred enters, carrying the laptop.

FRED  
Merry Christmas, Bob! Is my uncle  
around?

BOB CRATCHIT  
He just went to the bank. He  
shouldn't be long if you want to  
wait.

FRED  
Last minute shopping to do. I  
just need to pick up his laptop.  
I told him I'd update Windows. Of  
course, he'd have nothing to do  
with it unless I gave him a  
loaner. I'll make the exchange  
and be on my way.

Fred quickly heads into Scrooge's office.

BOB CRATCHIT  
Mr. Scrooge doesn't like anyone  
entering ... but I guess it's  
okay this once.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - SCROOGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Fred goes to a laptop on the desk.

He makes the exchange, leaving the one he brought from the van.

He pauses a moment, as if making a secret incantation for Good Luck.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS

Fred exits Scrooge's office with the other laptop.

FRED

I hope Uncle Scrooge is letting you go home early today.

BOB CRATCHIT

He usually does, in his own sweet time.

FRED

Maybe I'll stop by later and put in a good word. I want to make sure he's comfortable with the loaner. Uncle Scrooge isn't the most computer literate man in the world.

BOB CRATCHIT

I've noticed that, yes. Even I have had to help him from time to time, and I'm no whiz at it.

FRED

I'll see you in a few hours then. If you're still here. Merry Christmas, Bob!

BOB CRATCHIT

Merry Christmas, Fred ...

EXT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Fred comes out.

He gives a "thumbs up" in the direction of the van and moves off.

INT. VAN - DAY

Mrs. Cratchit and Charles get the signal.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
All set then.

Charles starts the engine, and the van heads out.

EXT. CITY - STREET - DAY

Scrooge continues walking to the bank.

The van approaches behind him.

INT. VAN - DAY

Mrs. Cratchit sees Scrooge on the street.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Oh my God, there he is!

She ducks down out of sight.

CHARLES  
Aren't you carrying this a little  
far?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
You don't know how that man's  
mind works. He sees conspiracies  
everywhere. And he thinks I'm  
headstrong.

Charles laughs.

CHARLES  
I like him better already.

EXT. CITY - STREET - DAY

The van passes. Scrooge walks on.

INT. BANK - DAY

Scrooge stands in line at a window. He fidgets.

The bank is crowded with HOLIDAY SHOPPERS. Lines at every window.

Scrooge looks more impatient. Finally he taps the shoulder of a WOMAN in front of him.

SCROOGE

Excuse me. I'm in a hurry. Do you mind if I--?

WOMAN

We're all in a hurry. I still have shopping to do. I suppose you do, too.

SCROOGE

Shopping? What shopping is that?

WOMAN

For Christmas, of course. Oh, I see. That was a joke.

SCROOGE

Christmas is the joke! It's Christmas that has the bank closing early, and Christmas that puts me here in line, waiting and losing money while I'm doing it.

A GENTLEMAN ahead of the woman has heard what is going on.

GENTLEMAN

I'm in no hurry. You can go in front of me if you like.

SCROOGE

Then I will.

He moves up in line.

GENTLEMAN

Merry Christmas to you, sir.

SCROOGE  
Don't press your luck.

GENTLEMAN  
Sir?

The window is open.

BANK TELLER  
Next please.

Scrooge steps up to the window.

BANK TELLER  
Merry Christmas, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE  
Is it? You close early today, so  
I have to come earlier than usual  
when I have work to do in the  
office. Do you know how much  
money I'm losing by being here?

BANK TELLER  
I'm sure the work will wait for you.

She takes Scrooge's deposit and enters it in her computer.

BANK TELLER  
You've done your shopping early,  
have you?

SCROOGE  
I don't like shopping.

BANK TELLER  
In a couple hours, I think I'll  
be agreeing with you. You're all set.

Scrooge takes his receipt and steps away.

BANK TELLER  
And Merry Christmas, even if you  
don't like me saying it.

SCROOGE  
(under his breath)  
Bah, humbug.



EXT. STREET - DAY

Scrooge moves down the street.

A SOLICITOR catches up with him.

SOLICITOR  
Excuse me, sir. Ebenezer Scrooge,  
isn't it?

SCROOGE  
Do I know you?

SOLICITOR  
We talked several months ago. At  
a business association meeting.

SCROOGE  
I don't recall.

SOLICITOR  
At any rate, I'm collecting  
donations for a new homeless  
shelter. I have the holiday spirit!

Scrooge just stares at him.

SOLICITOR  
I was thinking you might want to  
give something.

SCROOGE  
Then you think wrong.

SOLICITOR  
Ebenezer, I'm sure you're aware  
that our homeless population  
continues to grow and--

SCROOGE  
Let them get jobs like anyone else.

SOLICITOR  
In today's economy that's not--

SCROOGE  
I never met a man who wanted a  
job who couldn't find one.

SOLICITOR  
I beg to disagree--

SCROOGE  
You're entitled to your opinion.  
And I'm entitled to mine. I think  
we're done here.

Scrooge steps away.

SOLICITOR  
(after him)  
No hard feelings, I hope. Merry  
Christmas, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE  
(to himself)  
Bah, humbug ...

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Bob Cratchit stands at a coffee machine. He pours a cup.

Scrooge enters.

SCROOGE  
Early for a coffee break, isn't  
it, Cratchit?

Cratchit hurries back to his desk.

BOB CRATCHIT  
Your nephew came by. He took your  
computer and left a loaner. I  
assume this was okay.

Scrooge goes into his office.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - SCROOGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Scrooge sits down at his desk. He stares at the replacement  
laptop computer.

Finally he turns it on. It boots up.

Scrooge stares at it.

SCROOGE

Cratchit!

Almost immediately Cratchit hovers in the doorway.

BOB CRATCHIT

Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE

I thought you said my nephew took my computer.

BOB CRATCHIT

He did, sir.

SCROOGE

Are you sure? This looks exactly like my computer.

BOB CRATCHIT

I saw him take it myself. It must be the same model.

SCROOGE

Perhaps so. I'll call him.

BOB CRATCHIT

He said he had shopping to do, sir. But he planned to stop by later.

SCROOGE

Shopping! Has the world gone crazy?

BOB CRATCHIT

Sir?

SCROOGE

Crazy with Christmas shopping!

BOB CRATCHIT

I see, sir.

SCROOGE

Very well then. Back to work.

Cratchit scuffles off.

Stooge stares at the computer.

EXT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The van pulls in front of an apartment building.

INT. VAN - DAY

Mrs. Cratchit reaches for the door, then stops and turns.

MRS. CRATCHIT

This has got to work. I'm at my wit's end with that old man. God knows, Bob will never stand up to him.

CHARLES

Relax and let me do my job.

He snickers.

MRS. CRATCHIT

What?

CHARLES

If he's as computer ignorant as you say he is, when that laptop starts talking to him, it's going to be something to see.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I hope you're right.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - SCROOGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Cratchit reappears in the doorway.

BOB CRATCHIT

Excuse me, Mr. Scrooge. I was wondering if you're having any trouble with the computer.

SCROOGE

None at all. I like this one better. I'll tell my nephew that I want to keep it.

Cratchit stays in the doorway.

SCROOGE

Is there something else?

BOB CRATCHIT

I was wondering if I might leave at four today, sir. Instead of working overtime. Given it's Christmas eve and all.

SCROOGE

You said you were a few days from finishing.

BOB CRATCHIT

I've worked overtime every day this week.

SCROOGE

You say that as if you expect a medal. Or a raise.

BOB CRATCHIT

I didn't mean that. It's just, well, I still have Christmas shopping to do--

SCROOGE

Shopping, shopping, shopping! And most of it charged, mind you. More debt. More groundwork for bankruptcy.

A silence. Cratchit looks nervous.

SCROOGE

Oh, go on and do your shopping.

BOB CRATCHIT

Thank you, sir! Merry--!

He catches himself.

SCROOGE

But I want you here early the day after, you hear me?

BOB CRATCHIT

Absolutely. And overtime as well. Thank you so much.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Cratchit grabs his things and rushes out of there, as if expecting Scrooge to change his mind.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - SCROOGE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Scrooge hovers over the laptop.

Fred appears in the doorway.

FRED  
Merry Christmas, Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE  
Surely you know how I feel about that by now.

FRED  
(ignoring this)  
Must you work so late on Christmas eve? How's the loaner working for you?

SCROOGE  
I like this computer. I'm going to keep it.

FRED  
Wait till you see the other with updated software. Fast as lightning.

SCROOGE  
Cratchit said you had "shopping" to do. I hope you didn't charge it.

FRED  
Why don't you come to Christmas dinner tomorrow?

SCROOGE  
Avoiding the question, I see. I imagine that wife of yours keeps you very busy "shopping" for presents for her.

FRED

Now you're avoiding the question.  
Come to dinner. We'd love to have  
you. Both of us would.

SCROOGE

I don't have time for Christmas  
dinner.

FRED

Then make time. That's rather the  
point, uncle.

SCROOGE

The point is, Every time I think  
of how much money I'm losing  
because banks close and employees  
take the day off, my blood begins  
to boil. Now get out of here so I  
can finish and go home.

FRED

If you change you mind, even at  
the last minute, you're always  
welcome.

No reply. Scrooge is back at work on the computer.

FRED

Merry Christmas, Uncle Scrooge.

SCROOGE

Humbug ...

EXT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - NIGHT

The lights in the office go out.

Scrooge comes out after working late. He carries the laptop  
in a case.

He starts down the street.

EXT. CITY - STREET - NIGHT

Scrooge passes a Christmas choir of YOUNG PEOPLE, singing on  
a street corner.

Nearby a SANTA CLAUS rings a bell, collecting donations.

Scrooge hardly looks up as he passes, a permanent scowl on his face.

A YOUNG LADY in the choir notices this.

YOUNG LADY  
Merry Christmas, you old grouch!

Laughter -- and the choir continues singing.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge approaches home, the bottom floor of an old Victorian duplex.

The van is parked across the street.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles sits in the back of the van in front of a computer. He wears headphones.

He looks like he's enjoying this. Like playing CIA.

A cam recorder on the van shows Scrooge on Charles's computer screen.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge enters the building.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge enters his living space. Spartan, drab, not a sign of a hobby or interests anywhere.

Scrooge puts the laptop on a small desk and continues into the ...



INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - KITCHEN - NIGHT

He turns on a CD player. An OPERA begins to play.

Scrooge goes to the cupboard. He takes out a bottle of whiskey. Pours a finger into a coffee cup and bolts it down.

From the other room he hears ...

VOICE

(O.S)  
Scrooooooge! .... Scrooooooge!

Scrooge stops and listens. He turns down the music.

VOICE

(O.S.)  
Scrooooooge! ...

SCROOGE

Who's there?

He waits -- no reply.

Scrooge looks around and grabs a butcher knife.

Slowly he moves toward the sound.

VOICE

(O.S.)  
Scrooooooge! ...

Scrooge approaches the desk. The sound seems to be coming from the laptop.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles, headset on, speaks into the mic.

CHARLES

Scrooooooge! ...

His computer screen is split into two windows:

in one, what Scrooge sees on his laptop;

in the other, a cam on Scrooge.

And in this window Scrooge looks scared and bewildered by the talking laptop.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge stands before the laptop on his desk.

He looks more frightened than ever. He holds the knife as if he plans to attack the computer.

Suddenly an image appears on the screen: it is a photograph of JACOB MARLEY.

Scrooge gasps and drops the knife.

SCROOGE

Marley!

MARLEY'S GHOST

(voice of Charles,  
over image on screen)

Then you recognize me.

SCROOGE

Of course I recognize my old partner. Is that you talking? It doesn't sound like you.

MARLEY'S GHOST

Where I am, everything is different.

SCROOGE

Marley, if you're here because of that favor I forgot to do for you after you died--

MARLEY'S GHOST

Silent! I talk, you listen. We haven't much time.

SCROOGE

Of course. Whatever you say.

MARLEY'S GHOST

I want you to hear something. Move closer. Listen carefully.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

At the computer, Charles loads an audio file.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge leans close to the screen. A sound of something being dragged across a floor.

MARLEY'S GHOST

Hear it?

SCROOGE

Yes. What is it?

MARLEY'S GHOST

My chains, Ebenezer! My chains!  
The chains I must drag until  
eternity!

Louder now.

And the sounds of CRIES and MOANING now come from the computer.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles controls everything on Scrooge's laptop from his own computer in the van.

He clearly is enjoying the hell out of himself, watching Scrooge's growing fear.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge falls into the chair at the desk. He covers his ears.

SCROOGE

Stop it! Please stop it!

MARLEY'S GHOST

My fate will be your fate as well,  
unless you change your ways.

SCROOGE

But I've done nothing wrong. I work hard. I run a good business. You know that more than anyone.

MARLEY'S GHOST

Business! What do you really know about business? Is the common good and welfare of your fellow man your business? Are charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence your business?

SCROOGE

My business is financial. The Bottom Line. Surely you remember that, Marley.

MARLEY'S GHOST

Hear me, Ebenezer! My time is nearly gone. Tonight you will be haunted by Three Spirits. Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path on which I suffer.

SCROOGE

Three spirits?

MARLEY'S GHOST

This is your last chance to avoid my fate, Ebenezer. Listen to the spirits and learn!

The sound of chains dragging. The screen image of Marley slowly begins to fade.

SCROOGE

Marley, come back! Where will I find these spirits? Will they come all together? Marley?

The screen is black.

Scrooge presses keys, trying to get Marley back. No luck.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles looks very pleased with himself. He takes out his Blackberry and punches a number.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Watching a movie on television are Mrs. Cratchit, Bob Cratchit, and their children MARTHA, teens, and TIM, about 8. Tim is in a wheel chair.

The phone rings.

MARTHA  
(overlapping)  
It's for me!

MRS. CRATCHIT  
(overlapping)  
I'll get it.

Mrs. Cratchit answers. Martha waits expectantly.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Hello.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

CHARLES  
It's me.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
(to Martha)  
It's for me.  
(on phone)  
Have you started?

CHARLES  
Worked like a charm.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Really?

Bob watches her. She tries to hide her relief and joy.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Well, then. I guess it will work  
out. I'll talk to you later.

CHARLES  
Relax and get a good night's  
sleep, sis. I think this is going  
to work out fine.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit hangs up.

BOB CRATCHIT  
Who was that?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Hillary was having trouble with a  
recipe. I guess she has it  
figured out.

Bob goes back to watching TV.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Should I make popcorn? Martha? Tim?

TIM  
Popcorn would be awesome!

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

The street is dark. Not a house light on anywhere.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Scrooge in bed, asleep.

A bedside clock reads 11:59 ... and turns to midnight.

LOUD CHRISTMAS MUSIC suddenly starts from another room.

Scrooge bolts up.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge, in his robe, enters.

The music comes from the laptop.

Scrooge sits down and hits a key. The music stops.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles at the controls.

CHARLES  
 (to himself)  
 Now the fun begins, old man ...

He punches keys to start ...

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

... an IMAGE suddenly comes on the screen. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST stares out at Scrooge from the screen. He rather resembles one of the Three Wise Men.

Scrooge sits down.

SCROOGE  
 Are you the spirit Marley said  
 would visit me?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST  
 I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE  
 Long past?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST  
 Your past.

A SLIDE SHOW starts on the screen: images from Scrooge's past: his parents, Scrooge as a boy, his school, Scrooge's school photos etc. Over this:

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST  
Behold the images of your life!  
Remember how you were before you  
became obsessed with what you  
call Finances.

SCROOGE  
Where did you get these?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST  
That is not important. Ebenezer,  
look at your past and remember!  
Look and remember!

Scrooge watches the slide show of his past. And his  
expression changes, as he begins to remember ...

EXT. SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY (FLASHBACK)

YOUNG SCROOGE, his sister FAN and other CHILDREN are playing  
softball.

SUPER: "50 years earlier"

Scrooge is at the plate. Fan in the batting box.

FAN  
Hit a good one, Ebenezer! You  
can do it!

Wind up and pitch.

And Scrooge clobbers it!

Runners score from third and second base, the winning runs.

The winning team rushes Scrooge, the game's hero. Kids  
pounding him on the back.

The school bell rings. Children enter the school.

Fan goes up to Scrooge.

FAN  
I knew you'd do it.



YOUNG SCROOGE  
That's because little sisters  
worship big brothers. It's a  
natural law.

FAN  
I was right, wasn't I?

YOUNG SCROOGE  
Fan, you were right as rain.

Scrooge lovingly messes her hair, and they enter school  
together.

INT. SCHOOL ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A TEACHER at the front of the class.

STUDENTS, including Young Scrooge, in their seats.

TEACHER  
And now the yearbook results for  
the student voted Most Likely To  
Succeed. And the winner is ...

She holds the moment. Expectation.

TEACHER  
Ebenezer!

Applause.

SCATTERED STUDENTS  
Speech! Speech!

TEACHER  
Will you say a few words, Ebenezer?

Young Scrooge goes to the front of the class.

YOUNG SCROOGE  
This is an honor, thank you! When  
I'm playing center field for the  
Yankees, I'll remember that you  
guys supported me from the beginning!

More applause.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A high school dance. Young Scrooge, now teens, dances with BELLE, teens.

The song ends.

BELLE  
Let's get some air.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

They come outside.

BELLE  
It's a beautiful night.

She stands close to Young Scrooge. He looks ill at ease.

BELLE  
Isn't it a beautiful night?

YOUNG SCROOGE  
Yes. Of course.

BELLE  
You can kiss me if you want.

YOUNG SCROOGE  
I can?

She puckers up.

Young Scrooge awkwardly kisses her.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Young Scrooge and Belle in a car. They are making out heavily.  
Up for air.

BELLE  
What are you thinking?

YOUNG SCROOGE  
Does this mean we're going steady?

BELLE

I accept!

She kisses him, and they are petting again.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - BALL FIELD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Scrooge and other PLAYERS at baseball practice.

The COACH watches with a visiting BASEBALL AGENT.

COACH

Ebenezer is the best prospect  
I've had since coming here.

BASEBALL AGENT

I've sure heard good things about  
him.

COACH

Ebenezer! Hit a few, would you?

On the field, Young Scrooge trots in from the outfield to bat.

TEAM MATE

Show him what you can do, Ebby.

Young Scrooge selects a bat. He steps to the plate.

The pitcher winds up. Throws.

Scrooge hits the first pitch a mile.

The coach grins. The baseball agent is impressed.

More pitches, more solid hits.

Then a stray pitch comes at Young Scrooge. He tries to duck  
but it hits him on the knee.

Young Scrooge falls, squirming in great pain.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge snaps out of his memory.

SCROOGE  
 (to himself)  
 Mother wouldn't let me play after  
 that. The injury ended my career ...

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles hears this. He wasn't expecting it. He speaks on the mic.

CHARLES  
 (voice of ghost)  
 What's that you say?

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge remembering the accident.

SCROOGE  
 It was a freak accident. By the  
 time I recovered, my entire life  
 had changed. Baseball no longer  
 interested me.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

In a waiting room are Young Scrooge, older, with a cane; his MOTHER and FATHER; and a TEENAGE BOY, the father of the baby.

SCROOGE  
 When my sister got pregnant and  
 had her first child, her only  
 child, there were complications  
 and ...

A DOCTOR appears. Everyone stands for the news.

DOCTOR  
 I have good news and bad news.

MOTHER  
 Good news first.

DOCTOR  
 She had a healthy boy.

FATHER

And the bad news?

DOCTOR

I'm so sorry ... We did everything we could.

Young Scrooge understands the message. He breaks down.

EXT. SCROOGE HOME - PORCH - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Young Scrooge and Belle sit on a porch swing.

YOUNG SCROOGE

If there was a God, he wouldn't have let Fan die.

BELLE

We don't always understand His reasons for doing things.

YOUNG SCROOGE

What I understand is that the world's a cruel place. All you can do is whatever it takes to protect yourself.

BELLE

I don't think you can ever do that really.

YOUNG SCROOGE

With enough money you can.

BELLE

I know how hard it is, Ebenezer, but--

YOUNG SCROOGE

Do you?

BELLE

I think so. I know how much you're hurting. First your knee, you lose playing baseball, and then losing your sister ...

YOUNG SCROOGE  
It doesn't matter.

BELLE  
Of course it matters.

YOUNG SCROOGE  
It doesn't matter because I'm a  
survivor. I can survive anything.

BELLE  
Oh, Ebenezer ...

YOUNG SCROOGE  
So what I can't play baseball? So  
what I don't have a sister?

BELLE  
Please don't ...

YOUNG SCROOGE  
I'll make so much money it  
doesn't matter what anybody else  
thinks about anything. I'll be a  
country unto myself.

BELLE  
You don't mean that.

Young Scrooge doesn't reply.

BELLE  
What about me?

YOUNG SCROOGE  
What about you?

BELLE  
What if I don't want to live that  
way?

YOUNG SCROOGE  
It's a free country. Do what you  
want.

She studies him.

YOUNG SCROOGE

What?

BELLE

I don't know you any more.

YOUNG SCROOGE

That's too bad. Because this is who I am.

BELLE

Very well then.

She takes off the ring she's been wearing on a chain around her neck.

BELLE

I suppose I won't need this any more. Will I?

YOUNG SCROOGE

You have to answer that question yourself.

She holds out the ring. He doesn't take it. She sets it on the swing.

BELLE

Goodnight, Ebenezer.

He just stares at her.

She fights back tears.

BELLE

I hope you find what you're looking for.

She waits but still no reply. She runs off.

Young Scrooge fights hard to keep his composure. His face is tense, muscles tight.

But he doesn't break.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge at the laptop. The memory lingers.

On the screen, an image of Belle as a young woman.

SCROOGE

Belle was such a lovely girl ...

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

(Charles as ghost)

You let her get away, didn't you?

SCROOGE

I suppose I did.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

You gave her up in order to  
pursue a career in Business!  
Money, is what it amounts to.  
Your finances!

SCROOGE

I had no choice. A man has to  
make a living.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Let's look at this living you  
made, Ebenezer. There are a few  
things you may have forgotten.

Another SLIDE SHOW, images from Scrooge's business career.

--FUZZIWIG shaking hands with Scrooge as a young man.

SCROOGE

That's Fuzziwig.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Who gave you your first job.

SCROOGE

And I was excited to get it.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

A decade later, you and Marley  
bought him out. You were none too  
generous about it either.



SCROOGE

He was almost bankrupt.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Which meant he had no choice but to accept what you offered. Which was half of what the company was actually worth.

--Scrooge and Marley pose under their new business sign, Scrooge & Marley Accounting Services.

SCROOGE

Naturally, in business, one strives for the best deal you can arrange.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Business, business! Losing his company broke his heart. He died in less than a year.

SCROOGE

I had nothing to do with that. I went to the funeral.

--Graveside, Fuzziwig being laid to rest. Scrooge in a group of men paying respects.

Scrooge stands up.

SCROOGE

How long must I do this?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Remembering the past bothers you, does it?

SCROOGE

I'm very tired.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

As well you should be.

SCROOGE

Marley said there would be three spirits. Must I visit the others tonight?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST  
You don't have to do anything,  
Ebenezer. You can always go to  
the office and do business, can't  
you?

The Ghost of Christmas Past starts laughing hysterically.  
His image begins to fade on the screen.

SCROOGE  
What's so funny?...You can't go  
until you tell me why you're  
laughing?...WHAT'S SO FUNNY!?

A black screen. Silence.

Scrooge composes himself. He staggers to ...

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - NIGHT

... and crashes on the bed.

He looks exhausted. His eyes close.

He starts snoring.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles stands and stretches.

He looks at his watch.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit sits in a dark room. Restless.

She dials a number on her cell phone. Waits.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Hi. I know I shouldn't be calling.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles on the phone.

INTERCUT

CHARLES

Sis, I told you to relax.  
Everything's going well.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I don't know why I'm nervous.

CHARLES

I don't know either. This is  
going much better than I expected.

MRS. CRATCHIT

You didn't think it would go well?

CHARLES

To be honest, when I first heard  
the idea, I didn't know what to  
think.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mrs. Cratchit and Charles sitting close at a table. Speaking  
in low tones, privately.

SUPER: "Six months earlier"

CHARLES

There's no technical problem. I  
can run his computer from mine,  
make the videos and run them --  
but I'm still not sure what the  
purpose is.

MRS. CRATCHIT

To give him some of his own medicine.

She thinks a moment.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Not exactly that. It's just Bob  
will never stand up to him.  
Scrooge runs over him at will.

(MORE)

MRS. CRATCHIT (CONT'D)

Do you know, he has never given Christmas day off without resisting it, reminding Bob how much money he'll lose that day? It just infuriates me that no one will stand up to him.

CHARLES

And you can get all the family photos?

MRS. CRATCHIT

Bob says Scrooge's nephew, Fred Honeywell, has been researching the family tree. He has more than you'd need, I'm sure.

CHARLES

And I can get holiday footage from the archives at the station. Lots of possibilities there.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Sounds great.

CHARLES

And the nephew goes along with it?

MRS. CRATCHIT

I haven't asked him yet. I wanted to make sure something like this could be done.

CHARLES

Technically, not difficult at all.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Fred is as frustrated with Scrooge as everyone is. The man wakes up on the wrong side of the bed every day of his life. So you can make the videos yourself?

CHARLES

I still have a few actor friends from college. Something like this would appeal to them. But this is going to take time.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Can you get it done before Christmas?

CHARLES  
That should be doable.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Then it's a deal?

She offers her hand. They shake.

CHARLES  
How come it took this long for me  
to find out what an evil mind my  
sister has?

He's grinning.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Scrooge asleep. Snoring.

The bedside clock reads 1:59. And advances to 2:00 a.m.

Once again, loud CHRISTMAS MUSIC begins from the laptop in  
the other room.

Scrooge stirs.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge comes to the laptop and plops down at the desk.

A new image on the screen: THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

SCROOGE  
Okay, spirit, I'm here. what  
memories do you want to show me  
that the other one missed? I had  
a root canal once. We haven't  
covered that.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
Have you learned nothing from the  
past?

SCROOGE

Don't mind me. I'm still half  
asleep. What have you got for me?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I bring no memories. I am the  
Ghost of Christmas Present.

SCROOGE

Christmas present? Excellent. I  
don't celebrate Christmas, so I  
can go back to bed.

He stands up.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Sit down!

He does.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I'm going to show you how other  
people celebrate Christmas.

SCROOGE

If you must.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

That attitude will be changed  
soon enough. Watch the screen.

A home VIDEO begins on the laptop.

HOME VIDEO #1 - FRED AT CHRISTMAS

A Christmas party in progress. A crowded room. The focus of  
the camera, Scrooge's nephew Fred. Clearly a home made video.

Near Fred, JANET, 20s, his wife. They laugh and embrace.

Scrooge and the ghost (Charles) speak over the images.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Do you recognize them?

SCROOGE

Of course. My nephew and his wife.  
But this can't be Christmas  
present. Christmas isn't until  
tomorrow. Well, today actually.  
But everyone should still be asleep.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

This is how they celebrated last  
year. They'll be in the very same  
good spirits later today.

SCROOGE

Easy enough for them to look so  
happy. They have their best years  
ahead of them.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

As you did at their age. And look  
how you squandered it with your  
obsession for Business!

The Christmas party goes on. A spontaneous Christmas carol  
starts.

Fred gets everyone's attention.

FRED

I want to propose a Christmas  
toast! Quiet everyone! ... In  
this season of Peace and Good  
Will toward man, let's take a  
moment to remember the loved ones  
who surround us and the good  
fortune that fills our lives. I  
especially want to remember a man  
who is very important to me, more  
important than he would think  
himself. My mother died in child  
birth, as many of you know, and  
my father died in a car accident  
when I was only 12. My  
grandparents raised me and of  
course, I remember them dearly.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

But the one who most reminds me of my mother, in whose face I see a resemblance to the photographs of my mother I treasure so much, the man who reminds me most of this lost side of my roots, my family, is my dear Uncle Scrooge. I would like--

JANET

My God, Fred, what has that ornery old man ever done for you? Or for us?

FRED

I admit he's, well, eccentric, and not so easy to get to know, but--

JANET

Impossible to know because he doesn't want anything to do with anyone!

FRED

All the same, he is my mother's brother. And I do see her when I look at him. And this is why I propose a toast to my Uncle Scrooge.

JANET

I'm doing this for you, not for him.

She raises her glass. More glasses are raised.

FRED

To Uncle Scrooge!

VOICES

To Uncle Scrooge!

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge stares at the computer.

The image of the Ghost of Christmas Present returns.



GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
 How does that make you feel,  
 Ebenezer?

FRED  
 I didn't know he cared.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST  
 Not everyone is so lucky to have  
 relatives to wish them a Merry  
 Christmas. I have something else  
 to show you.

Another video comes on.

VIDEO #2 - HOMELESS FAMILY

A city street.

A HOMELESS MAN pushes a shopping cart filled with bottles  
 and cans.

SCROOGE  
 If you expect me to have sympathy  
 for someone who won't get a job--

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
 Oh, he had a job. He was a  
 soldier in Iraq. Won a few metals  
 doing it, too. Came back, managed  
 to readjust better than many do,  
 and yes, even found himself a job.

SCROOGE  
 What did he do to end up like this?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST  
 His company decided to downsize,  
 move most of its operations to  
 South America. He got axed in the  
 shuffle. Before he could find  
 another job, he found himself on  
 the street.

The homeless man goes through a garbage container. He finds  
 a few empty bottles and tosses them in the cart.

SCROOGE  
 He has a drinking problem,  
 doesn't he?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
 Many on the street do, it's true.  
 But no, he's been a teetotaler  
 for years.

The homeless man pushes the cart to the next container.

SCROOGE  
 His problem isn't my fault. There  
 will always be haves and have-nots.

The homeless man brings out a piece of cheap jewelry from  
 the container. He studies it.

Deciding to keep it, he drops it into a pocket.

And moves on to the next container.

SCROOGE  
 How long do I have to watch this?

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles running the show as before.

CHARLES  
 (as ghost)  
 Want to see something else, do  
 you? How about this?

Keystrokes ... accessing a different video.

VIDEO #3 - HOMELESS CAMP

On Scrooge's laptop, a new video starts.

This shows a camp of homeless people -- MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN  
 of various ages -- gathered around a campfire.

Sleeping bags and lean-to's strewn about.

The group is singing "Silent Night." It's quite moving.

SCROOGE

Where is this? Are they gypsies  
in Europe?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

You don't have to go far to find  
them, Ebenezer. Just down by the  
river, past the freeway bridge.

SCROOGE

You mean these people live here?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Home sweet home.

The singing continues.

SCROOGE

My God, Spirit! What do you want  
from me?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Enough Christmas singing for you?  
Easily fixed.

And the other video comes back on.

VIDEO #2 - HOMELESS FAMILY

Now the homeless man sits on a bench on the bus mall. He is  
wrapping the cheap jewelry in a page of newspaper funnies.

SCROOGE

What's he doing now?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

I'd guess he's wrapping a  
Christmas present.

SCROOGE

A Christmas present ...?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

'Tis the season, still. In case  
you've forgotten.

The homeless man finishes and inspects his work. A shrug. It  
will have to do.

He gets up and pushes the cart on down the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

A huge parking lot in a shopping center.

The homeless man pushes the cart toward an older model car at the edge of the lot.

As he gets near, the car door opens. A WOMAN holding a CHILD gets out. Both are bedraggled, unkempt.

HOMELESS MAN  
Merry Christmas, Jennifer! I have something for you.

He brings out the present wrapped in funnies.

SCROOGE  
My God ...

Scrooge looks touched by the scene but quickly succeeds in hiding his emotions.

JENNIFER  
What did you get me?

HOMELESS MAN  
Have to open it to find out.

JENNIFER  
Hold Alice.

She hands the child to the homeless man. He begins to rock her.

Jennifer tears open the package -- and finds the costume jewelry. A necklace.

JENNIFER  
Oh my word! I hope you found this and didn't go buying it.

HOMELESS MAN  
Like it, do you?

JENNIFER  
I love it.

HOMELESS MAN

Put it on.

Scrooge gets up and moves away from the laptop. He looks like he's seen enough.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

We're not done here.

Silence,

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Do you want to end up like Marley?  
If you do, then fine, go on back  
to bed.

SCROOGE

This is not easy.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Whoever said it would be? Here, I  
bet you recognize these folks.

Scrooge comes back to the computer. A new video has started.

VIDEO #4 - CRATCHITS AT CHRISTMAS

The Cratchit family at Christmas dinner -- home video from a recent year.

Everyone is in good spirits -- Bob, Mrs. Cratchit, Martha, Tim. Tim's wheelchair is parked near his chair at the table.

SCROOGE

Bob Cratchit's family.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Indeed, it is.

SCROOGE

Spirit, before I watch this, can  
you answer a question about the  
homeless man?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

If I can.

SCROOGE

The woman and child -- are they  
his family?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Of course. They lost their  
apartment after he was laid off,  
and they've been living in their  
car for two months now.

SCROOGE

And he can't find a job anywhere?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

He has little time to look for  
one any more. All his time is  
spent collecting bottles and cans  
for food and gas. They take it  
one day at a time.

Scrooge's expression softens with care. He's not as hard and  
cold as earlier.

On the video, sudden LAUGHTER gets Scrooge's attention.

Tim laughs so hard that he slips off his chair onto the  
floor. Bob is quickly to his side. Mrs. Cratchit and Martha  
aren't far behind.

BOB CRATCHIT

Careful, Timmy!

MARTHA

Are you all right?

TIM

I'm good ...

They help the boy back onto his chair.

SCROOGE

Will the boy ever be able to walk?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

No. It's a degenerative disease --  
the blessing now is life, not  
walking.

SCROOGE  
I never realized.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
Don't know much about your  
employees, do you? Other than how  
much work they produce -- or  
don't. How much money they cost you.

Bob stays on his feet after the others sit.

BOB CRATCHIT  
I want to propose a toast.

The others raise their glasses.

BOB CRATCHIT  
I give you Mr. Scrooge, the  
Founder of the Feast!

MRS. CRATCHIT  
The Founder of the Feast indeed!  
If he were here, I'd give him a  
piece of my mind to feast upon!

TIM  
Mom says old Scrooge is--

BOB CRATCHIT  
That's enough! It's Christmas day.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
The one day of the year on which  
one drinks to the health of such  
an odious, stingy, hard,  
unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.

BOB CRATCHIT  
Christmas Day!

During a pause in the video action, Scrooge looks stricken.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
I'll drink his health for your  
sake, not for his. Long life to  
him! A merry Christmas and a  
happy new year!

(MORE)

MRS. CRATCHIT (CONT'D)  
 He'll be very merry and very  
 happy, I have no doubt!

They all drink.

SCROOGE  
 Spirit, how long does the boy  
 have to live?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
 He won't reach his teens, I'm afraid.

SCROOGE  
 There's nothing that can be done?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
 Oh, there's research and new  
 surgeries being tried, but even  
 if they find remedies, it's all  
 so expensive. Far beyond the  
 meager health insurance you give  
 your employees.

SCROOGE  
 And the family living in their  
 car ... will they be living there  
 long?

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles at the mic.

CHARLES  
 (as ghost)  
 Some months longer yet. Let's see  
 how they are doing.

He punches some keys. The video on the laptop changes again.

VIDEO #2 - HOMELESS FAMILY

The homeless man and Jennifer are in a long line on the  
 sidewalk. Jennifer holds the child. The line leads into a  
 rescue mission.



SCROOGE

What is this?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Their one free meal for the day.

SCROOGE

There are so many of them.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

True enough. And I'm pleased you didn't say what I thought you might say.

Scrooge looks puzzled.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

"Let them eat cake."

The video cuts to ...

INT. RESCUE MISSION

... where SERVERS are filling food trays of the passing HOMELESS PEOPLE.

The homeless man, his wife and child come up to be served.

Scrooge moves closer to the screen.

SCROOGE

That man serving the food! I know him! I've done business with him! How can he be homeless?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Oh, he's not homeless. He's a volunteer. This whole affair is mostly run by volunteers.

SCROOGE

He's volunteering?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Not getting paid a cent. What a concept.

Scrooge studies the screen.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

At the controls Charles looks pleased by Scrooge's reaction. He nods, as if to say, Now we're getting somewhere.

Then he speaks as the ghost.

CHARLES  
I think you've seen enough now.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge straightens up.

SCROOGE  
I didn't expect this to be so  
exhausting.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
We're done here.

SCROOGE  
What about the third spirit?  
Marley said there'd be three.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
I'm sure you'll know when it's  
time to see the final spirit.

SCROOGE  
I'll say goodnight then.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT  
Good night, Ebenezer. And Merry  
Christmas.

Scrooge starts to say Merry Christmas but stops himself. Not quite there yet.

He moves off.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Scrooge crawls back into bed. He pulls the covers up.

He closes his eyes. A word, almost involuntarily, comes from his lips.

SCROOGE  
Merry ...

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles stretches.

He punches some keys.

On his computer, a file manager. He opens a file called "Xmas Future."

He double clicks a file called "Future vid"

An error message comes on screen: "Video file corrupted."

CHARLES  
No ...

He tries again. "Video file corrupted."

CHARLES  
Don't do this to me.

He tries another way. He opens a media player. Hits "File/Open" ... selects "Future vid" ...

"Video file corrupted."

Charles slumps in his chair, looking defeated. What now?

He takes a deep breath.

One more try via a different media player.

"Video file corrupted."

CHARLES  
No!

He gets up and starts pacing around inside the van.

An idea!

He takes out his Blackberry.

He accesses Twitter.

He stares at the Twitter opening screen. His expression looks hopeful now, as if a new plan is being born.

Suddenly he punches a phone number.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit and Bob are asleep.

The bedside phone rings. Mrs. Cratchit answers it.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Hello ...

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

CHARLES

Sorry to wake you.

His voice bolts her awake. She sits up.

Beside her, Bob stirs.

MRS. CRATCHIT

What's wrong?

CHARLES

I can't play the last video. It's corrupt.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Oh no!

CHARLES

But I have a Plan B. It's just going to take your help.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Of course. What do I have to do?

CHARLES  
I'll pick you up in fifteen minutes.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Okay.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit hangs up.. She sneaks out of bed.

She grabs clothes and leaves the room.

Bob wakes and catches her figure going out the bedroom door.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles secures his work space in the back of the van.

He moves to the driver's seat.

He starts the engine.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

The van moves down the street.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit finishes dressing. She goes to the front door.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bob is fully awake now.

BOB CRATCHIT  
Honey?

He gets out of bed.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bob enters just as the front door closes.

He goes to the window and sees ...

EXT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit gets into the van. The van heads off.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bob looks confused, troubled.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit gets comfortable. She's wearing a black rain coat with a hood.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
So what's the plan?

CHARLES  
I think you'll like it.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

A dark house.

The van is nowhere to be seen.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Scrooge asleep, snoring.

The clock reads 3:59 ... and turns to 4:00 a.m.

As before, CHRISTMAS MUSIC starts.

Scrooge stirs and sits up.

SCROOGE  
I know the drill ...

He gets out of bed.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge enters and sits down at the laptop.

There is a message on the screen: "There is a Blackberry on your front porch. Get it and follow the instructions on the screen."

SCROOGE  
Spirit, are you there?

No reply. The music plays. The message remains on the screen.

Scrooge goes to the front door.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

The door opens. Scrooge steps out.

There's a manila envelope leaning against the wall.

Scrooge fetches it. He opens it.

A Blackberry is inside. There is a message on the Twitter screen, a "tweet":

"@XmasFuture. Msg from Ghost Christmas Yet To Come. Move up street twd mkt. Then press enter."

SCROOGE  
I'll need my robe, Spirit.

Scrooge looks startled by his own voice. He looks around. Nothing. Nobody.

He hurries inside, clutching the Blackberry.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Scrooge dashes in and grabs his robe.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge comes out, putting on the robe.

He looks at the Blackberry. Same message.

He steps off and heads up the street.

On his way, he presses enter.

A new tweet comes on the screen: "@XmasFuture. At stoplight, turn L. Cont. next light, turn R."

Scrooge walks on.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

The van is parked on the street outside a cemetery.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles at the laptop controls. He has been sending the tweets.

Beside him sits Mrs. Cratchit in the black rain coat.

CHARLES  
Shouldn't be long now. You want  
to take position?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Why am I so nervous?

CHARLES  
It's your Oscar-winning opportunity.

She punches his arm.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Right. With no lines.

CHARLES  
You want lines? I can give you lines.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
This is all I can handle, thank  
you very much.

She gets out of the van.



EXT. VAN - CEMETERY - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit hurries across the street and enters the cemetery.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles enters another tweet.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Scrooge reads a new message on the Blackberry: "@XmasFuture. Cont. ahead. Enter cemetery main entry. Cont. R."

Scrooge continues on.

He passes the van across the street.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Scrooge enters the cemetery.

He continues right.

New message: "@XmasFuture. Cont. to corner of grvyd. Go to fresh grave."

Scrooge follows directions.

Ahead, at the corner of the graveyard, are signs of fresh digging.

Suddenly a FIGURE steps out of the darkness. Black coat and hood, face hidden -- this is Mrs. Cratchit. She points ominously at a wooden marker nearby.

Scrooge sees the figure and stops.

SCROOGE  
Are you the new spirit?

Mrs. Cratchit moves her arm, gesturing again.

Scrooge sees a wooden marker in the ground.

SCROOGE  
Am I to go there?

Another gesture.

SCROOGE  
Yes, of course.

Scrooge approaches the wooden marker.

It sticks out of fresh dirt, like a temporary gravestone.

Scrooge comes closer. Close enough to read it.

He looks down at the marker and sees ...

"Ebenezer Scrooge. 1947 - 201?. A man who never learned the meaning of Christmas."

Scrooge gasps in horror.

He twirls around in panic.

SCROOGE  
My gravestone! But spirit, what  
if I learn, what if the spirits  
have taught me that--"

But Mrs. Cratchit, the figure, is gone.

Scrooge turns back to the marker. Still there.

He looks at the Blackberry. A new message:

"@XmasFuture. Ebenezer Scrooge: R,.I.P."

Scrooge screams in fear. He drops the Blackberry.

He turns and starts running for the exit from the cemetery.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit climbs back into the van.

CHARLES  
How'd it go?

Before Mrs. Cratchit replies, they are distracted by Scrooge running out of the cemetery.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Scrooge is running for all he's worth, looking like a madman.

Out of nowhere, a POLICE CAR appears, lights and sirens on. It takes after Scrooge.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

They witness the police car.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Oh my God ...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The police car stops Scrooge down the street.

TWO POLICEMEN jump out, guns drawn.

Scrooge stops.

SCROOGE  
The police, thank God! Help me!  
The spirit is going to kill me!

POLICEMAN #1  
Whoa, old-timer...

SCROOGE  
They've already prepared my  
gravestone!

POLICEMAN #2  
I don't see anybody after you, sir.

POLICEMAN #1  
Come on, we'll talk about it at  
the station.

SCROOGE  
Lock me up! Please lock me up!  
I'll be safe from the spirits in  
jail.

They lead Scrooge to the back door of the police car.

POLICEMAN #2  
What spirits are you talking about?

SCROOGE  
Three of them. The Christmas spirits.

The policemen exchange an amused look.

POLICEMAN #1  
Was that 80 percent spirits? Or  
100 percent?

Scrooge is shoved into the back seat.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

They've witnessed it all.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
We can't let them arrest him. Can we?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The police car drives off.

The van follows the police car.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The policemen lead Scrooge into the station.

The van has parked nearby.

Mrs. Cratchit and Charles climb out and head for the station.

CHARLES  
You okay?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
I can do this.

CHARLES  
And you're the one who didn't  
want any lines.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit and Charles enter.

Scrooge is at the booking table.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Dad, there you are!

CHARLES  
We've been looking all over for you!

One of the policemen approaches.

POLICEMAN #1  
This is your father?

Mrs. Cratchit speaks softly.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
What's left of him. Alzheimer's,  
you know. We saw you arrest him.  
He's not going to jail, is he?

POLICEMAN #1  
You've been looking for him?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
He lives with us. This is my husband.

CHARLES  
Hello.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
He sometimes wanders the streets  
at night. Thank God I checked in  
on him.

POLICEMAN #1

He says he was being chased by  
Christmas spirits.

MRS. CRATCHIT

It happens every year. It's  
upsetting, of course, but at  
least he's harmless. Perfectly  
harmless.

CHARLES

He doesn't even carry on loud  
enough to wake anybody up.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Did he break a law of some kind?

CHARLES

A little old for curfew.

POLICEMAN #1

Just a minute.

The policeman returns to the booking desk.

Mrs. Cratchit and Charles exchange a hopeful work.

The policeman returns with a very bewildered Scrooge.

Mrs. Cratchit quickly embraces him.

MRS. CRATCHIT

We'll get you home, Dad. The  
Christmas spirits can't bother  
you there.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit and Charles escort Scrooge into the van.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Scrooge sits between them in the front seat.

SCROOGE

Where are we going?

CHARLES  
How about we take you home?

Scrooge stares at Mrs. Cratchit.

SCROOGE  
Have we met? You look familiar.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
I have one of those faces.

The van starts up.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

The van pulls up.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Charles turns to Scrooge.

CHARLES  
Here we go.

SCROOGE  
Thank you so much.

Mrs. Cratchit gets out so Scrooge can get out.

He slides out. Then turns in back to Charles.

SCROOGE  
You're not a spirit, are you?

CHARLES  
Nope. Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Scrooge.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Try and get some sleep.

SCROOGE  
Yes. Merry ...

He stops. But he's halfway there.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge shuffles toward the front door. He moves like a very old man.

The van pulls away.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit looks back at Scrooge.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
I don't know what I was thinking of.

CHARLES  
What do you mean? He'll never forget this night. I bet he's a changed man.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
But for the better or for the worse?

Charles drives on.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT

Scrooge enters.

He looks around warily, as if expecting spirits to jump out at him.

He sees the laptop on the desk and jumps.

SCROOGE  
Spirit, stay away from me!

No reply.

He slowly approaches the laptop.

He gets close enough to see the screen is black.

SCROOGE  
Spirit, are you there?

No reply.



SCROOGE  
Why must I die?

No reply.

SCROOGE  
Spirit?  
(to himself)  
Is this all a dream?

He pinches himself. Nothing.

He turns and staggers toward the ...

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - NIGHT

He plops down on the bed. He crawls under the covers, robe on and all.

SCROOGE  
There was no date when I died. At  
least that. And it said I never  
learned the meaning of Christmas.  
But if I did learn, then there'd  
be no reason ...

The thoughts are exhaustive. Scrooge closes his eyes.

He's very soon asleep.

EXT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The van pulls up.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit embraces her brother.

CHARLES  
What time do you want me?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
We'll eat at three, same as every  
year.

CHARLES

See you then.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Thanks for everything. I think.

CHARLES

It was fun. And as far as I'm concerned, the glass is always half full. He won't forget this night for a very long time.

EXT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit gets out of the van and approaches the building.

The van pulls away.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mrs. Cratchit enters to find ...

Bob Cratchit in a chair, waiting for her.

BOB CRATCHIT

I'm glad I recognized your brother's van. Otherwise I would've thought you were having an affair.

MRS. CRATCHIT

I'm sorry I woke you.

BOB CRATCHIT

I imagine you are.

Tense silence.

BOB CRATCHIT

You won't give me the courtesy of an explanation?

MRS. CRATCHIT

I don't know where to begin. And I'm very tired.

BOB CRATCHIT  
I've been imagining all sorts of  
things. Maybe she--

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Bob, don't, please. Let's go to  
bed. I promise I'll explain  
everything in the morning.

BOB CRATCHIT  
It is morning.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
After we get some sleep. Please.  
The children will be up soon enough.

BOB CRATCHIT  
I love you.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
I love you, too! Don't you ever  
doubt it. Come ...

She offers her hand.

He takes it. They move toward the bedroom.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - DAY

A bright sun shines on Scrooge's building.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - BEDROOM - DAY

Scrooge waking. A tentative process.

He opens an eye. Both eyes.

He wiggles his nose. He opens and closes his mouth.  
Everything works.

He sits up and looks around.

He slips out of bed and stands at a mirror. He inspects his  
image.

SCROOGE  
 Testing one, two, three ... Good  
 morning. Good morning, Ebenezer.  
 I would say you're very much  
 alive this morning.

He grins at himself. Still in the mirror:

SCROOGE  
 Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas,  
 Ebenezer.

He does a little jig.

EXT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - DAY

A cab pulls up and honks.

Scrooge, dressed for the day, comes out.

INT. CAB - DAY

Scrooge climbs in back.

The CABBIE catches his eye in the rear-view mirror.

CABBIE  
 Where to?

SCROOGE  
 I hardly know where to begin. The  
 supermarket.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT - DAY

The cab parked.

Through the window, Scrooge can be seen talking to a STORE  
 MANAGER about something.

INT. CAB - DAY

The cabbie does a puzzle, waiting.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT - DAY

Scrooge comes out. He carries a small flat package.

He faces the parking lot and remembers something. He scans the corners of the lot, looking for something.

He goes to the cab window. The cabbie rolls it down.

SCROOGE

Where do the homeless families live?

CABBIE

Excuse me?

SCROOGE

The homeless families that live in their cars. One of them was living in a parking lot like this. Way out on the edge of it.

CABBIE

Don't know nothing about that.

SCROOGE

There can't be that many lots in town, can there?

INT. CAB - DAY

Scrooge gets in the back seat. He sets down the small flat package.

CABBIE

I thought you were getting yourself a turkey.

SCROOGE

For someone else. But they were out of turkeys. I had to get a goose.

A SERIES OF SHOTS -- THE SEARCH

The cab enters one market parking lot after another, perhaps half a dozen in all.

No luck finding the homeless couple.

INT. CAB - DAY

Scrooge leans forward.

The small flat package is still on the seat beside him.

SCROOGE

Maybe this is good news. He found a job. They can afford an apartment.

CABBIE

Who found a job?

SCROOGE

Do you know the camp under the freeway?

CABBIE

The homeless camp?

SCROOGE

I want to go there.

CABBIE

Can't. They clean it up every holiday. They kicked everybody out a couple weeks ago. Course, they'll all be back before the year's out.

SCROOGE

Where do they go?

CABBIE

Some leave town but not many. They just park themselves someplace else. You'll never get rid of the poor, if you ask me. I count my blessing every day I got this job.

Scrooge looks lost in thought. Then ...

SCROOGE

I want to go to the, what's it called? Not a church. Something like a church. Where they give out the free meals.

CABBIE  
This I can help you with.

EXT. RESCUE MISSION - DAY

The cab cruises by. Already a long line has formed for the afternoon's free Christmas dinner.

INT. CAB - DAY

Scrooge peruses the line.

SCROOGE  
I want to get out. Wait for me.

EXT. RESCUE MISSION - DAY

Scrooge gets out.

He glances around like someone who is lost.

A HOMELESS WOMAN in line sizes him up.

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Line forms at the rear, bud.

SCROOGE  
Do you know who's in charge here?

Before she replies, a OLDER WOMAN steps forward.

OLDER WOMAN  
May I help you?

SCROOGE  
I hope so. I want to volunteer. I want to help serve the meal.

OLDER WOMAN  
We have all the help we need today. Never a problem getting volunteers on the holidays. But the rest of the year, if you're still interested, we can always use help then.

SCROOGE

Yes, I am interested. Here, take my card. Please call me anytime.

OLDER WOMAN

God bless you, sir. And Merry Christmas.

SCROOGE

Merry Christmas.

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Cratchit, Martha and Tim (in his wheel chair) are busy with Christmas meal preparations.

The doorbell rings.

TIM

I'll get it.

He starts away.

MARTHA

It's probably Uncle Charles.

MRS. CRATCHIT

Not this early.

ENTRYWAY

Tim opens the door.

A DELIVERY MAN has a box.

DELIVERY MAN

Package for Bob Cratchit.

IN THE KITCHEN

Tim wheels in with the package. And Bob Cratchit enters.

BOB CRATCHIT

What's this?



TIM  
It's for you. It smells like a  
turkey.

BOB CRATCHIT  
What?

MARTHA  
We have a turkey.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Would somebody open it?

Tim opens the package. Bob helps.

And they take out ...

A cooked, stuffed goose with all the trimmings.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Oh my word!

MARTHA  
What is it?

TIM  
It's a goose, isn't it, mom?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
Who would send us a goose?

BOB CRATCHIT  
There's no card.

Bob searches the box for a return address. He finds the  
receipt and reads it.

He looks shocked by what he finds.

BOB CRATCHIT  
It's from Mr. Scrooge.

And the family's mouths drop open.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The cab drives on.

INT. CAB - DAY

Scrooge notices something ahead.

SCROOGE  
Pull over there.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The cab pulls in front of the cemetery.

INT. CAB - DAY

Scrooge reaches for the door.

SCROOGE  
I won't be a minute.

INT. CEMETERY - DAY

Scrooge enters the cemetery.

With some trepidation, he traces the path from before.

He approaches the pile of fresh dirt. He stops.

He is shocked to see ... a wooden marker in the ground.

SCROOGE  
(to himself)  
But I've changed ...

He looks around, as if looking for spirits.

Back to the marker. Should he or shouldn't he?

He steps forward. And closer.

He reaches down and looks ...

... and the wooden marker reads ...

"God bless us every one!"

Scrooge lights up with joy.

SCROOGE  
 Merry Christmas! God bless us  
 every one!

INT. CAB - DAY

Scrooge practically leaps into the cab.

CABBIE  
 And now where to, old-timer?

SCROOGE  
 To Christmas dinner! Where else?

INT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT - DINNER TABLE - DAY

In the middle of Christmas dinner are Mrs. Cratchit, Bob, Charles, Martha and Tim.

Charles leans close to Mrs. Cratchit.

CHARLES  
 Bet you didn't expect to get a  
 free goose out of the deal.

Bob has overheard.

BOB CRATCHIT  
 The ends don't justify the means.

MRS. CRATCHIT  
 (to Charles)  
 I told him everything.

TIM  
 Told what?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
 Nothing you should worry your  
 pretty little head about.

CHARLES  
 (to Bob)  
 You can't be mad at her.

BOB CRATCHIT  
I haven't decided.

MARTHA  
Why is everybody whispering?

MRS. CRATCHIT  
I think we should toast Mr  
Scrooge for the wonderful dinner.  
What is it you say, the Founder  
of the Feast?

Everyone toasts.

ALL  
The Founder of the Feast!

Charles catches Mrs. Cratchit's eye and winks.  
He sees Bob watching and crosses his eyes.

EXT. FRED'S HOME - DAY

The cab pulls up.

INT. FRED'S HOME - DAY

A Christmas gathering at Fred's home. Laughter and conviviality.  
The doorbell rings.  
Fred's wife, Janet, heads for the door.  
She opens it to find ... Scrooge.

JANET  
Yes?

SCROOGE  
I'm sorry. I forget your name.

JANET  
Do I know you?

SCROOGE  
I'm Fred's uncle.

JANET

Oh! I'm sorry, I didn't recognize you.

SCROOGE

I hardly recognize myself. Is Fred here?

JANET

Of course. Come in.

She leads Scrooge into the party.

Fred is surprised to see him.

FRED

Uncle Scrooge! What a surprise. I'm so happy to see you.

SCROOGE

Merry Christmas, Fred.

Even more shock. Then Fred grins ear to ear and embraces him.

FRED

Merry Christmas, Uncle Scrooge. This will be the best Christmas ever!

LATER

Everyone sits around the large DINNER TABLE.

Scrooge turns to the man, DR. HOWARD, next to him.

SCROOGE

Merry Christmas. I'm Ebenezer Scrooge.

DR. HOWARD

Merry Christmas. I'm Dr. John Howard.

SCROOGE

A doctor!

DR. HOWARD

Sorry, old habit. Call me John.

SCROOGE

I've been wanting to talk to a doctor. What do you know about degenerative diseases?

DR. HOWARD

A good deal actually. Why do you ask?

LATER

At the ENTRYWAY, as people begin to leave.

Fred and Janet escort Scrooge to the door.

Scrooge sees Dr. Howard nearby. He takes out a business card.

SCROOGE

Here's my card. I'd like to follow up on what we were talking about. I want to make an appointment for the boy.

DR. HOWARD

Of course. Take my card as well.

Back to his nephew.

SCROOGE

And to think what I've been missing all these years.

FRED

Better late than never. Isn't that what they say?

They embrace.

EXT. FRED'S HOME - DAY

The cab is outside.

Scrooge waves, then climbs in.

INT. CAB - DAY

The cabbie puts down his paperback.

SCROOGE

I'm sorry. I was much longer than I thought I'd be. Thank you for waiting.

CABBIE

It's your dollar.

He starts the engine.

In the back seat, Scrooge looks positively blissful.

The small flat package is still on the seat beside him.

EXT. CRATCHIT APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Near sunrise.

Bob Cratchit rushes out. He looks like he's late.

EXT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Bob Cratchit races inside.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY OFFICE - DAY

Bob hasn't even reached his computer when ...

SCROOGE (O.S.)

Cratchit! Get in here immediately!

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY OFFICE - SCROOGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Scrooge sits at his desk.

Bob Cratchit appears in the doorway.

BOB CRATCHIT

I know I'm late, sir. We all got carried away yesterday, I'm afraid. The goose you sent over was such a surprise and such a wonderful gift, and--

SCROOGE  
Taste okay, did it?

BOB CRATCHIT  
It was truly the best goose I  
ever ate. I can't thank you enough.

SCROOGE  
I can make a suggestion on that.

BOB CRATCHIT  
I'll work overtime every day this  
week, sir.

SCROOGE  
No, you won't.

BOB CRATCHIT  
I won't? Two weeks overtime then?

SCROOGE  
No overtime at all.

BOB CRATCHIT  
Sir?

SCROOGE  
You have to sit down with your  
wife and figure out what to do.

BOB CRATCHIT  
What to do, sir? Are you firing  
me then?

SCROOGE  
I'm not firing you. I'm giving  
you a raise! Unless you don't  
want it, of course.

BOB CRATCHIT  
A raise? But ...?

SCROOGE  
But but but but but. Now are you  
going home to talk to your wife  
or not?



BOB CRATCHIT  
You mean now, sir?

SCROOGE  
Yes! This very moment!

BOB CRATCHIT  
It shouldn't take long. I should  
be back by--

SCROOGE  
If you step into this office  
again today, Cratchit, I will  
fire you. Is that clear?

Bob Cratchit is speechless.

SCROOGE  
I said, Is that clear?

BOB CRATCHIT  
Yes! Yes, yes ...

SCROOGE  
Then go home. And come in at the  
regular hour tomorrow.

BOB CRATCHIT  
Yes, sir!

He practically trips over himself getting out of there.

Scrooge grins. Very pleased with himself.

On the desk is the small flat package. Scrooge reaches for it.

INT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Scrooge puts a small sign in the front window -- the flat  
package. Only the back of the sign is visible to us.

EXT. SCROOGE/MARLEY BUSINESS - DAY

Scrooge comes out. He inspects the front window.

The sign in the window says:

"Closed for the day."

Scrooge looks even more pleased with himself than earlier.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - KITCHEN - DAY

Scrooge watches as popcorn pops.

INT. SCROOGE'S DUPLEX - DAY

At the television, Scrooge roots around his DVDs and tapes, looking for something.

He finds it. He puts it in a player.

He settles on a divan. He puts a bowl of popcorn in his lap.

A movie starts on the television.

Movie title: "Pride of the Yankees."

Scrooge is a picture of contentment. Watching a baseball movie on a work day. God bless us every one.

He reaches for popcorn and ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASEBALL PARK - DAY

...two hands reach for popcorn.

The hands belong to Scrooge and the older woman from the rescue mission. They are watching a baseball game together.

SUPER: "Three years later"

The CRACK of a bat.

A long foul ball rises high and heads into the stands ... where it lands into an outfielder's glove ...

The glove belongs to Tim. He stands with the help of a cane. The wheel chair is nowhere to be found.

Scrooge and the older woman are next to Tim. They beam as he shows off the baseball to the cheering crowd.

Scrooge and Tim embrace.

SCROOGE

God bless us ...

TIM

... every one!

FADE OUT