

A Christmas Carole

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Dramatis Personae

Scrooges

Carole Scrooge - Overly excited about Christmas, she's constantly over-bothering her uncle about presents and the like. The Ghosts of Holidays attempt to teach her to be more moderate.

Ebenezer Scrooge - Carole's uncle, a true humbug. Ebenezer hates Christmas and holiday cheer and the Ghosts of Christmas try to teach him to be more full of merriment.

Fred Scrooge - Carole's older brother, a slightly more reasonable member of the family. Slightly, just enough for him not to have an adventure of his own.

Narrators

Charlie - The Serious Narrator, wants to just be following the original Dickens novel. Very confused and frustrated about going off book.

Jamie - The Silly Narrator, aware that they're in a parody. Finds it very fun when things start going wrong.

Junior Narrators

Arabella - Very nervous about the whole thing

Geoff - Overambitious and really eager to prove himself

Riley - Irritated with the others' attitudes

Ghosts

Ghost of Christmas Past - Tired and old, this Ghost has been in the game too long and just wants to get the job done so they can go to bed.

Ghost of Christmas Present - A jolly Ghost, excited about all the different ways Christmas could be celebrated.

Ghost of Christmas Future - A serious Ghost, who speaks deeply and gravely about what is to come. Slightly undercut by the French accent and sarcastic asides to the audience.

Ghost of Holidays Past - This Ghost wants to be taken seriously and will try anything to do it. Mostly consists of putting on a booming voice and being (unsuccessfully) scary, including dressing in a Halloween vampire costume.

Ghost of Holidays Present - Bemused by humans and just looking for the next carrot, this Ghost (the Easter bunny) is mostly along for the ride, happy to celebrate Christmas however people want to.

Ghost of Holidays Future - A Ghost used to communicating through mime, now very happy to be given a voice. Even happier with the fact that it's Texan.

Ghost of Xmas Past – An eccentric but nonetheless villainous Ghost, looking for a bit of chaos to shake things up.

Ghost of Xmas Present - Insecure and browbeaten by Xmas Past and Future, Xmas Present just wants to be liked by everyone and be as cool as his big siblings.

Ghost of Xmas Future - A creepy Ghost who communicates entirely through evil laughter.

Ghost of Yuletide Past - This Ghost is trying, like really trying but can't seem to get anyone to go on an adventure.

The Boss - The Boss of Ghosts, head of the Bureaucracy they work for.

Cratchits

Bob Cratchit - Scrooge's employee and all-around nice guy. Gets very little time off and worries about his children.

Emily Cratchit - A mother rushed off her feet, Emily wants to make Christmas perfect for her family.

Peter Cratchit - The oldest Cratchit child, Peter tries to lead his siblings to save Christmas for their parents.

Martha Cratchit - Belinda's twin, slightly dimmer than her siblings but no less excited about Christmas!

Belinda Cratchit - Martha's twin, the worrier of the group. Until she gets swept up in her family's madness...

Tiny Tim Cratchit - The youngest child and classic ill urchin child with a Heart of Gold, who coughs at entertaining moments.

Flashback Characters

Headmaster

Fran

Teen Ebenezer

Matthew

Worker 1

Urchin

Young Ebenezer

Fezziwig

Belle

Clara

Worker 2

Songs

1.2 : Carole's Carol (This is the Way I Run my Christmas) Carole sings loudly and enthusiastically about her Christmas plans and upcoming party while a crew of people who she's dragged away from their loved ones decorate her house miserably – *Carole, Bob, Ensemble*

1.4 : We're Going to have a Great Christmas. Except they're not. It's sad and they're poor but they're so unflinchingly positive about how poor they are and how they're going to make Christmas nice anyway, that it's a happy song. *Bob, Emily, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim*

2.4 : Xmas Forever. The Xmas ghosts have their big dramatic villain reveal – they finally have the chance to be overly enthusiastically evil and they love it. *Xmas Past, Xmas Present, Xmas Future*

2.9 : Battle for Christmas. So someone told me there hadn't been a rap battle in OULES for ages and they used to be so I thought it would be fun. Xmas Ghosts against Scrooge and Carole, refereed by the tired Ghost of Christmas Past. *Scrooge, Carole, Xmas Past, Xmas Present, Xmas Future*

2.10 : All OULES Want for Christmas is a Final Song. Christmas medley with fun parody lyrics. *All*

Summary

Act 1

1. A Tale of Two Stories
Charlie, Jamie, Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Scrooge, Fred, Carole
2. Little Bore-It
Carole, H - Past
3. Old Animosity Shop
Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Past
4. Bleak Household
Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, Emily, Bob
5. Scrooge-y and Son
Charlie, Jamie, Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Scrooge, C - Past, Carole, H - Past, Headmaster, Y - Ebenezer, Fran
6. Our Unusual Friend
Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past
7. (Not Martin) Fezziwig
Scrooge, C - Past, Carole, H - Past, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, Fezziwig, T - Ebenezer, Belle
8. Pickwick Presents
Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Past, C - Present, Carole, H - Past, H - Present, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present
9. Harder Times
Bob, Emily, Y - Past
10. All of a Twist
Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Present, Carole, H - Present, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present, Fred, Clara, Matthew

Act 2

1. The Thousand and One Humbugs
Charlie, Jamie, Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Scrooge, H - Present,
2. All Thoroughfare
Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Carole, C - Present, Emily, Bob
3. Going into A Society
Scrooge, C - Past, H - Past, H - Present, Boss
4. A Child's Dream of Bizarre
Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present, X - Future
5. To Be Met at Dusk
Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Future, H - Present
6. Hunted Around
Charlie, Jamie, Carole, C - Present, H - Future, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Future
7. The Mystery of Edwin Deads
C - Past, H - Past, H - Present, X - Past, X - Present
8. The Haunted Men
Scrooge, C - Future, Carole, H - Future, Peter, Martha, Belinda, X - Future, Worker 1, Worker 2
9. Everybody's Story
Scrooge, C - Past, C - Present, C - Future, Carole, H - Past, H - Present, H - Future, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present, X - Future, Boss
10. Greater Expectations
Charlie, Jamie, Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Scrooge, Carole, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, Emily, Bob, Urchin

Act 1

1.1 A Tale of Two Stories

Charlie, Jamie, Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Scrooge, Fred, Carole

(Lights up on the front stage right corner of the stage, with a spotlight if possible. We see Charlie, reading from a book gravely, with somewhat ominous music underneath.)

Charlie Marley was dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it and Scrooge's name was good upon change for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

(Enter Jamie)

Jamie What are you doing? *(music stops abruptly)*

Charlie I'm...doing the opening narration?

Jamie No, you're not.

Charlie Yes I am.

Jamie That's not what I've got in the script.

Charlie Well, you don't need a script for the opening narration, the opening narration is just the book.

Jamie What book?

Charlie A Christmas Carol, the show we're doing.

Jamie We're not doing a book. We're doing a parody.

Charlie Well, no, we're doing a play but it's an adaptation of a book. A parody would have a different name

Jamie It does have a different name, it's called A Christmas Carole.

Charlie Yes, exactly A Christmas Carol, the name of the book.

Jamie *(Beat)* Does your script have an 'E' at the end of Carole?

Charlie No?

Jamie Oh no, you've got the wrong script!

Charlie No I don't. This script is very accurate to the book.

Jamie But we're not doing a show that is accurate to the book, we're doing A ChristmasCarole!

Charlie Yes, I know!

Jamie No! Right, this is not an adaptation, this is not a serious play. This is - and I'm sorry to tell you this Charlie - a light entertainment show.

Charlie What? Jamie, are you telling me we're not doing a loyal adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*?

Jamie No. No, not in the slightest, we're going to really take the mick out of it. *(gleefully)* We're gonna rip it to shreds.

Charlie *(looks horrified, clutches the book to his chest protectively)* Why?

Jamie That's just what people do isn't it?

Charlie No! It's not! *(Visibly calming self down)* Besides, you're not setting a good example.

Jamie Example? For who?

Charlie For them!

(Charlie gestures vaguely towards to audience)

Jamie Them? *(pointing at random audience member, who will hopefully look terrified that they're about to be dragged into the show)*

Charlie No, them!

(Charlie continues the sweep of the gesture to the front row of the audience. Lights come up on the three Junior Narrators, huddled together and holding notebooks.)

Jamie Who on earth are they?

Charlie Oh, be nice! They're our junior narrators.

(The JNs jump out of their seats.)

Geoff We're really excited to be here!

Riley *(sceptically)* We are?

Arabella Of course! We've got loads of great ideas.

Geoff Well, I do.

Jamie Wait, wait, shush, all of you. Charlie, why are there three junior narrators?

Charlie Well, they're trying to learn how to narrate by following around experienced narrators and learning the trade. And with that in mind... *(Narrator voice)* You will therefore permit me to repeat emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a doornail.

Jamie You don't really need to, do you?

Geoff *(looking eager, poised to take notes)* Do what?

Jamie Repeat that he's dead. Everyone knows that Marley is dead, everyone knows the story. *(can have some audience engagement here – 'you know the story, right madam?' etc)* Marley's dead, there's a bunch of ghosts, Scrooge hates Christmas but at the end of the day he learns that it's great! It's a great feel-good movie.

Charlie It's not a movie, it's a book!

Jamie Yeah, I was thinking of The Muppets version.

Charlie Ugh, I'm ignoring you now! *(Narrator voice)* Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did, how could it be otherwise. Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years.

Arabella Should we not be getting to the start of the scene?

Charlie *(Narrator voice, insistently and louder than before)* But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge-

Jamie Look, look, look, you don't need to do all of that. Everyone knows who Ebenezer Scrooge is! A 'Scrooge' is literally a thing that describes what he is. The person we're meant to be introducing is his niece!

Charlie *(flips through his book in confusion)* Scrooge doesn't have a niece.

Jamie He does in this version. *(gleeful grin)* Her name...is Carole!

Charlie *(Beat)* Please don't tell me the entire basis of your script is someone mishearing A Christmas Carol to be someone's name.

Jamie It might be a flimsy excuse for parody but we're doing it anyway. Now, Carole loves Christmas-

Charlie Fine, we'll do it your way. But at least narrate properly?

Jamie Fine, fine. You lot, take notes.

(Jamie winks at the JNs who scatter to the edges of the stage and Jamie starts Narrating™)

Jamie Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house.

(Lights up on the rest of the stage, showing Scrooge at his desk.)

Scrooge *(venomously)* Bah! Christmas! Humbug! Everyone wants the day off and everyone thinks that I should extend their loans just because it's Christmas. Bah!

(Enter Fred)

Fred Merry Christmas Uncle! God save you!

Charlie This is his nephew not his niece.

Jamie *(intoning dramatically)* His niece is also there. There are two of them, Fred and Carole.

(Enter Carole. Jamie gestures to her as she does.)

Scrooge Bah! Humbug!

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

Scrooge *(scoffing)* Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? Bah!

Carole Oh, Uncle, Christmas is great! Come on, you've got to enjoy it, you've got no choice! Everyone else does.

Scrooge Oh, I should enjoy things just because everyone else does?

Fred Uncle, you really are a lonely sort. You know, if you just came to my Christmas Eve party this evening, I'm sure you would have fun.

Carole Or *my* party on Christmas Day, which is going to be even more fun!

Fred It's not a competition, Carole!

Carole Maybe not, but everyone is going to have such a wonderful time, they'll *have* to!

Fred After you forced them to give up their Christmas Day, I don't think they'll have a choice...

Carole Exactly! And neither does Uncle!

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

Carole But you don't keep Christmas uncle! You don't give presents, you don't sing carols, you don't do anything Christmassy. You're not keeping Christmas, at all!

Scrooge Those things aren't needed for Christmas. Christmas is just a day once a year. It barely needs keeping at all.

Carole I think I would rather die than not celebrate Christmas.

Scrooge If you would rather die than you had better do it and decrease the surplus population.

Carole Goodness me uncle! I have no idea why you get so upset by all this. Fred, we'll be at your Christmas party, both me and uncle!

Scrooge I will not be coming.

Carole Yes, you will, uncle. You're just being boring and you can't be boring at Christmas.

Fred Right oh, well I'll see you both later then. Ta-rah! *(He starts to leave)*

Carole There we go, Christmas saved! And I assume you've given Bob the day off, uncle?

Scrooge Had no choice, did I? He expected it but I'm not paying him for it!

Fred *(Pause and coming back towards the others)* You can't expect him to keep working Uncle, the poor man must be tired to the bone with the job you have him doing.

Scrooge The job isn't to be tired, the job is to do what I say and get on with it, no complaining! I pay the man's wages, I decide what the man does with his time.

Carole Uncle, it's Christmas and Bob does so much around here. Why, he helped buy all my presents for all my friends.

Scrooge He shouldn't have done that on my time!

Carole No, no, I snatched him after work. He barely complained once, he's such a good man. He let me drag him all over the city, carried all my bags through the cold and then dropped off the presents. You know, I don't even know what time he got home!

Fred You made him do all your shopping? Couldn't you have done that by yourself?

Carole Well, of course not! I need all the help I can get! Why, I'm still trying to get everything sorted for my party tomorrow!

Fred Oh? Busy evening ahead then? No need to make it to my party if you're going to be too busy.

Carole Don't be silly, Fred, of course I'll be there! No, I've got so many people coming round to help me set up, decorate the house, make the food. It's all a big task, the party is going to be the best one anyone goes to all year!!

Fred And what are you going to be doing?

Carole Supervising! Oh, well, I must be off even more presents to buy! Isn't Christmas fantastic?!

(She laughs and exits, Fred following. After a pause, the lights dim over Scrooge and he exits)

Charlie Thoughts?

Arabella She's, ah - really annoying.

Riley So annoying.

Jamie Well, she needs to learn a lesson as well. She has to be sort of bad to start off with. So, what happens next? That's Scrooge in his house isn't it?

Jamie No, it's *Carole* in *her* house! Please don't tell me you've given a bunch of actors the original script.

Charlie Um...I hope not? (*awkward grimace betrays that this is a very real possibility*)

Jamie Oh, *joy*.

(*Exeunt*)

1.2 Little Bore-It

Carole, H - Past

(Lights up, Carole's house, with cheerful but instrumental Christmas music playing in the background. Bob Cratchit and members of the ensemble are decorating, clearly very rushed and harried. Carole enters and starts fussing over their work.)

Carole *(to the pianist)* This music isn't really...merry enough? *(to sound booth)* Hit it!

SONG: Carole's Carol (This is the Way I Run my Christmas). *Carole sings loudly and enthusiastically about her Christmas plans and upcoming party while a crew of people who she's dragged away from their loved ones decorate her house miserably. The ensemble looks more and more annoyed as she tries to get them involved in the song, making it clear her enthusiasm is not appreciated.*

(After the song, Carole shoos Bob and the ensemble offstage.)

Carole It's Christmas!! I'm so excited!! Uncle is going to have such a good time at the party! Well, he better have a good time! Oh, nothing could possibly spoil my mood on this Christmas Eve night!!

(Enter the Ghost of Holidays Past, looking all dark and mysterious, face hidden by a hood. The Ghost speaks with a deep booming voice, at least to begin with.)

H - Past You don't keep Christmas.

Carole Excuse me? Who is daring to suggest that I am anything but Christmassy?! *(gestures to her very Christmassy costume)*

H - Past You don't keep Christmas. You keep yourself.

Carole Well, I am Christmassy so by keeping myself, I *am* keeping Christmas! *(Beat)* Who are you, why are you all covered up?

H - Past You would want to see very little if you could see me. I am the Ghost of Holidays Past.

Carole What, like Halloween? That was like 2 months ago!

H - Past *(takes down hood to reveal that they are dressed as a vampire, taking out fake fangs)...no?*

(Beat as they try to recover their prior confidence)

I represent Christmas the way it should be kept, the way it was kept in years past.

Carole Look, I'm sure whoever you are, you're really cool but *(beginning to ramble excitedly)* I have presents to wrap, and decorations to set up and oh, well I suppose the workers already did that, but anyway, it's going to be great, and my uncle-

H - Past *(abandoning booming voice for a second)* Look! Would you listen, I am creating an

atmosphere here. I'm meant to instil dread and nervousness and you are completely ruining it!

Carole You can't create dread on Christmas! It's Christmas!!!!

H - Past Right. Let's try a different way.

(H-Past is now extra loud and booming. Maybe some sort of dramatic SFX is played and lighting changes)

H - Past You, Carole Scrooge, do not respect the Holidays that you so claim to love! You focus on presents and singing and parties, rather than the true meaning of Christmas!

Carole ...having a good time?

H - Past Oh, for goodness sake! How about I put it a different way? *(Beat, gets really close up into Carole's face)* No one likes you.

Carole *(Suddenly incredibly upset)* Everyone likes me! That's the most horrible thing I ever heard and you just-

H - Past And they think you're annoying.

Carole *(Genuinely frightened now)* *GASP* Oh my gosh that's horrifying, that's such a terrifying thought. What must I do to change this?

H - Past Change it? Oh, you think you can change?

(Carole grabs hold of the ghost's arm. H-Past looks very confused.)

Carole Please, please, spirit, I beg of you, help please! You have to help me, if people cannot appreciate me - Oh my gosh! - I won't get invited to parties if they find me annoying. Oh goodness spirit, you must help me!

H - Past This was slightly easier than I expected. I feel you might be doing this for selfish motivations...

Carole Please, Spirit, you must save me!!

(She starts to shake the ghost and H-Past tries to get away.)

H - Past Okay! Okay. You shall come with me and see the people you have wronged.

Carole Yes, whatever you say, I will do whatever you say!!

H - Past Are you always this melodramatic?

Carole It's a slight family problem.

H - Past I'll get used to it, I suppose. We should be going.

Carole *(Still sobbing, kneeling on the ground and clutching at the Ghost's legs)* Yes, Spirit. Thank you, how can I ever-

H - Past You can stop now, I've agreed to help you.

Carole *(Back to cheery)* Oh, great, let's go.

(She walks off, dragging the Ghost with her.)

1.3 Old Animosity Shop

Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Past

(Lights up on the Narrators again, just downstage as before.)

Charlie When Scrooge awoke it was so dark that, looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber.

Jamie *(enthusiastically)* Yeah! Scrooge is waking up and it is dark and terrible and mysterious. Oooohhhh....

Charlie I really don't think that sets the mood the way you think it does...

(Lights up on the rest of the stage, where we see Scrooge asleep. The Ghost of Christmas Past is sitting in the background, looking very worn out. Scrooge yawns.)

Scrooge Why, isn't it possible I've slept through a whole day and far into another night? Bah!

(We hear the sound of a bell chime.)

Scrooge The hour itself and nothing else! No spirit riding to wake me! What nonsense!

(Christmas Past gives a very visible and audible sigh.)

Scrooge No disturbance whatsoever! Bah! No spirit could fight me, no spirit would dare!

C - Past *(Tiredly)* You're Scrooge, right?

Scrooge Ah! Who are you? Where are you?

C - Past *(Sigh)* I'm behind you

Scrooge AHHH!! *(falls backward onto his bed)*

Scrooge Are you the spirit whose coming old Marley foretold to me?

C - Past That I am.

Scrooge Who and what are you?

C - Past I am the Ghost of Christmas Past *(yawn)*

Scrooge Long past? *(sceptically)* You don't seem so grand as that.

C - Past I am very old and very, very tired. *(Rambling and trailing off towards the end.)* There's a lot of Christmas Past to keep track of. It used to be Christmas was one day a year, just the 25th celebrated, and we're done. Then Christmas Eve needs a party, then add people's work parties and days off for shopping and getting together with your friends on a random Saturday beforehand because it's the only day everyone could do. *(Yawn)* Every year, there's

more of Christmas which means there's more for me to deal with.

Scrooge *(starts paying attention again now the Ghost is done monologuing)* And why are you here, darkening my doorstep?

C - Past It seems someone has decided that your past is important.

Scrooge That's all?

C - Past *(taken aback)* Well, I was probably told but I might have slept through it. I've got to show you some things and then I'll pass you on to the next guy. Hopefully, you'll learn a lesson or two. More and more for me to do...

Scrooge Are you quite well?

C - Past I'm fine. I'm Christmas. Anyway, rise and walk with me.

(The Ghost starts walking, very, very slowly and is immediately outstripped by Scrooge.)

Scrooge Can you go any faster?

C - Past Yes.

(The ghost continues walking extremely slowly and eventually lights go down while they're still nowhere near offstage.)

1.4 Bleak Household

Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, Emily, Bob

(Lights up on the Cratchit children, excitedly yelling over each other. They say things like "mum what time is dad getting home", "mum, look at this, look what I've done", "mum, you're burning the goose" and so on and so on. As it continues to build, Mrs Cratchit enters.)

Emily Would you please be quiet! Your father will be home any minute, I want to have a nice calm house for him!

Peter Mum, you're burning the goose.

Emily What?! Peter, why didn't you tell me?

(The children all giggle. Enter Bob.)

Bob Hello, children!

Kids Dad!

(The children swarm Bob excitedly. He picks Tiny Tim up and swings him around, which is very funny if the actor playing Tim is actually very tall.)

Martha Dad, how was work?

Bob Well, Scrooge is giving me tomorrow off.

Kids Yay!

Bob But I think Miss Scrooge might ask me to come in for an hour or so.

Emily Those two, I can't believe they take such advantage of you all the time.

Bob It's fine, Emily, they don't mean anything by it. Scrooge just wants to make sure I'm making my money honestly and Carole's just...well, she's Carole.

Tiny Tim So, *cough* does that mean you're home tomorrow, dad?

Bob That's right, Tiny Tim! We're going to have a great Christmas!

(Song, song, song: We're Going to have a Great Christmas. Except they're not. It's sad and they're poor but they're so unflinchingly positive about how poor they are and how they're going to make Christmas nice anyway, that it's a happy song.)

Emily Now, children, why don't you go set the table and make sure the dining room is all clean. Your father and I just need to chat a little bit about what's happening when Santa comes round later.

(The children all gasp and cheer, and they move to sit downstage as their parents move upstage to chat. They make a very half-hearted effort to set the table but give up very quickly.)

Belinda Hey guys, do you think Santa is actually coming tomorrow?

Martha Why wouldn't he, Belinda? Santa comes to every house!

Peter Besides, even if Santa doesn't come, we'll still have a great Christmas.

Martha Yeah, it's gonna be fantastic!

Belinda Except dad's not gonna be here all day. That annoying lady Scrooge is going to pull him into work.

Martha And I bet if she does, her uncle will do the same.

Peter What do you think, Tim?

Tim *(Coughing)* Well, could we try to convince Miss Scrooge not to do anything?

Belinda Great! And if Dad's here all day, then things will be even better than if he was gone!

Martha Yes, we can go out, we can stop her from stealing him and stop Scrooge from getting him. It'll be amazing!

Tim We could save Christmas!

Kids Yay!

Peter We're gonna have to sneak out the back.

Belinda Right, *(whispered)* let's go!

(The kids sneak offstage, very dramatically. After a beat.)

Bob I feel terrible about it but we'll just have to tell them that- Emily, are you listening to me?

Emily Bob. Where are the children?

(Blackout over worried faces.)

1.5 Scrooge-y and Son

Charlie, Jamie, Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Scrooge, C - Past, Carole, H - Past, Headmaster, Y - Ebenezer, Fran

(This is the first of many scenes that involve split staging. There are three groups of people who in general don't interact and can't hear each other. We start with the narrators again.)

Jamie Do you think this story is missing something?

Charlie Well, what could it be missing? It's one of the oldest and most beloved stories of all time!

Jamie Well, yes, but that means the plot is quite old isn't it? Not as exciting as modern adventures.

Charlie *(sceptically)* So, what problem have *you* found in the works of Charles Dickens, oh great literary analyst?

Jamie Umm... junior narrators! *(clicks fingers to summon them onstage)* What does this story need?

(Next lines in very quick succession)

Arabella Action?

Geoff Romance?

Riley A rabbit?

Jamie *(Pausing, very confused)* No! None of those things! Clearly you lot have not done your narrator homework yet. Come back to us when you have better ideas!

(The Junior Narrators stare at him)

Jamie Go on, shoo! Shoo!

(The Junior Narrators leave, dejected).

Jamie *(turning back to Charlie)* Look, the point is - There's no villain! No conflict.

Charlie The *conflict* is that he doesn't like Christmas.

Jamie Yeah, but that gets boring, doesn't it?

Charlie *(incredibly offended at this remark)* I'm guessing there's a villain in your version?

Jamie Ah yes, well – *(beat)* okay, I will admit I haven't got anything particular in mind at the moment. But I don't have to be constructive – I'm a critic!

Charlie Okay. Next time we do some narration, why don't *you* figure out who the villain is going to be?

Jamie Thanks, I will.

Charlie *(Dramatic voice)* As the spirit spoke they passed through a wall and stood up on an open country road, fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished.
(Enter Scrooge and Christmas Past, possibly with some magical sound effect. Narrators retreat to the side of the stage to watch. C-Past is still yawning throughout the dialogue)

Scrooge Good heavens! I was bred in this place! I was a boy here!

C - Past Your lip's trembling. Are you crying?

Scrooge What, no! It was that magic of yours, doesn't agree with me.

C - Past I'm sure. You – *(yawns enormously)* – recollect the way?

Headmaster *(Offstage)* Scrooge! You idiot boy, what are you doing?!

Scrooge Ah! My old schoolmaster. Dreadful fellow, you couldn't say anything without him telling you how your thinking was wrong and you were wrong and worthless for saying it. I'd like to walk up to him and tell him just how much he affected me as a child.

C - Past Oh, you can't hit him, you can't interact with anyone here.

Scrooge No, I'd want to shake his hand. His hatred and sternness made me the man I am today.
(Beat) Can he really not see me?

C - Past He's naught but shadows of things that have been. They have no consciousness of us.

Scrooge I think I preferred you before you started getting all flowery with your speaking.

C - Past Of course you did. Let's have a look around, see if we can't find what we're here for.
(The two move towards the back of the stage, looking around. On the other side of the stage, enter Carole and Holidays Past with more magic sounds.)

Carole Spirit, I feel you must have gotten lost!

H - Past No, Carole Scrooge, these are the memories of the one you hurt most with your abundance.

Carole But there's no one about. Oh, look at all the gorgeous decorations! *(gesturing to a single sad strand of tinsel)* It must be Christmas! Everyone's off having fun!

H - Past The school is not quite deserted. A solitary child neglected by his friends is left there still.
(Enter Young Ebenezer, looking sad and crying. Enter the headmaster.)

Headmaster What are you crying over boy?!

Y Ebenezer I've been left alone, Sir. My father didn't want to get me.

Headmaster Well, that's life, better get used to it.

Y Ebenezer I didn't even get a letter, sir.

Headmaster *(Beat)* B. How's that for a letter? Be quiet and get on with work! *(He throws a book down into Young Ebenezer's lap.)*

Y Ebenezer But it's Christmas, sir.

Headmaster Christmas is but one day of the year, that's all it needs to be. What's Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money and finding yourself a year older and not an hour richer?

Y Ebenezer But sir, I'm seven years old, I don't pay bills. I don't even work.

Headmaster *(suddenly incensed)* Well, you should! Bah, child labour laws are ruining this country!

Scrooge A remarkable man.

Carole Who is that man? Or that little boy, spirit?

H - Past That is your uncle.

Carole *(Does a double take, squints at the Headmaster)* Really? It doesn't look like him – though it certainly sounds like him. And I didn't know he used to be a teacher!

H - Past No, no – the boy is your uncle when he was a child.

Carole No, it's not, my uncle hates Christmas. He would never want to go home for Christmas. That child loves Christmas, he'd have to go through horribly upsetting times to be like Uncle...

(Holidays Past looks hopeful that Carole is about to understand the point of the lesson, but then...)

...which is impossible at Christmas!

H - Past ...I don't know how to tell you how stupid you are.

Scrooge That was a good Christmas.

C - Past Oh really? Tell me more about how great this Christmas spent all alone was.

Scrooge Well, I read all my best books, didn't I, got plenty of work done. It was splendid.

(Then we hear a very exaggerated sob from young Scrooge)

C - Past Quite.

Carole Did you say something?

H - Past Oh, bother, it appears we have a bit of confusion. There must be another spirit.

Carole Oh, you're not the only one then?

H - Past No? Did you think you were so special to be the only person visited by a spirit?

Carole *(Beat)* Yes.

H - Past *(frustrated)* You are truly unbelievable!

Carole Thank you. Anyway, I don't understand what the point of all this is.

H - Past The point is, your uncle isn't happy! Christmas isn't making him happy just by being Christmas, he... Anyway, the other part of the point is here.

(Enter Fran excitedly.)

Fran I've come to bring you home, dear brother! To bring you home, home, home.

Carole Who's that?

H - Past Scrooge's sister. Your mother, how do you not recognise your own mother?

Y Ebenezer *(hopeful)* Fran! We're going home??

(During the next three lines between Scrooge and C-Past, Fran is fussing over Young Ebenezer, checking he's okay, and throwing dirty looks at the mean Headmaster.)

C - Past You seem happy to be leaving your books.

Scrooge Well, I had better books at home. Don't try to make this some lesson of peace and love.

C - Past I feel you're missing the point of this entire evening.

Fran Home for good and all. We're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world!!

Carole See, that's exactly what I've been saying to Uncle. So I am right.

H - Past Ugghhh, you're the *worst*!

Headmaster Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there! This is a bad idea, Scrooge. You'll never amount to anything if you leave now.

Y Ebenezer Yes, sir.

(Fran gets between Y Ebenezer and the Headmaster protectively, refusing to back down when the Headmaster tries to get round her. Especially funny if Fran is much smaller than the Headmaster and looks very sweet and wholesome.)

Headmaster You are worthless and I hope you know that.

Y Ebenezer I do, sir. Thank you sir.

Headmaster *(clearly still intimidated by Fran)* Right, well...off you go, you little brat!

Y Ebenezer *(timidly)* Have a good holiday Sir!

(Exit Y Ebenezer and Fran.)

Headmaster It's not a holiday. We call it a vacation for a reason. *(He exits)*

H - Past Can you just admit you see he's happy to be spending time with his sister? Not because of presents or anything like that?

Carole ...Ugh, fine! Maybe that sort of stuff doesn't matter to *some* people, but it's fun and it's good and it doesn't hurt anyone. Spirit 0, Carole 1!

(H-Past sighs loudly, shaking their head as they drag Carole offstage. Magical sounds again as they leave. We move back to Scrooge and C-Past.)

Scrooge Fine. I enjoyed spending time with my family, but they had none of this insistent Christmas spirit you seem to think I should have. Let's leave.

C - Past *(shaking head ruefully)* You are a confusing man, Mr Scrooge.

(More magical sounds to blackout.)

1.6 Our Unusual Friend

Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past

(The Cratchit children run in, chattering and cheering. They're very excited. NB: I'm not going to keep putting in where Tim coughs, be free with the lurgy.)

Peter Alright everyone, it's time for Operation: Save Christmas!

Kids YAAYYYY!!!

Tiny Tim We've got to make it so Dad doesn't have to work and then he can stay home and celebrate with us!

Martha It's gonna be the best Christmas ever!!

Belinda Wait, what's the actual plan?

Martha Right, we make it so Dad doesn't have to work, so therefore dad isn't working and can stay home, so therefore he's at home to celebrate Christmas!

Peter It's so simple!

Tiny Tim It's brilliant!

Belinda *(now pacing anxiously)* But, what are we going to do?

(A beat as everyone pauses and tries to think)

Tiny Tim Well, I suppose what we need to do is make it so that Scrooge doesn't want him to work.

Martha Right, mad idea, but what if we got Dad fired!

(Pause as they think it over.)

Belinda That is...genius! That would work so well!

Tiny Tim Then he definitely wouldn't have to work tomorrow!

Peter *(worried, realising he needs to derail this idea quickly)* As great as that would be, I think he'd be just a *bit* annoyed to be fired! *(looking around for support and finding none)*

Martha Don't be silly, Dad hates his job.

Peter Yes, but jobs are still- *(he realises he does not want to explain the realities of a capitalist economy to his innocent younger siblings)* -never mind. We're not getting him fired.

Martha Okay, okay. We won't get Dad fired - but we're keeping that as a backup plan. *(Tim and Belinda nod enthusiastically, Peter sighs.)* So how on earth are we going to change Scrooge's mind about Dad working tomorrow?

X-Past *(Offstage)* Perhaps *I* can help with that.

Peter Did everyone else just hear a weird creepy voice?

X-Past *(Offstage)* I'm not creepy, I'm mysterious

Belinda That's what creepy people say.

(Enter Xmas Past.)

X-Past Why don't I introduce myself properly?

Belinda That's generally how things are done, but we're very busy, Miss.

Peter Can we just hurry up with this? We want to help our father.

X-Past Ah yes. Yes, yes, yes. And I want to help your father too. You see, I am the Ghost of Xmas Past!

Tiny Tim Xmas? Miss, I don't mean to be rude but we're Victorian urchins. What's Xmas?

X-Past *(Beat)* Xmas, you know, Christmas but cooler!

Martha That's awesome, Miss!

X-Past It is, isn't it! Now, we are going to disrupt the plans of my very annoying boss, giving me more control and power...

(Pause as the Ghost realises the kids are visibly very alarmed. X-Past changes course.)

X-Past ...and *then*, save Christmas and make it so your father never has to work for that horrible Scrooge again!

Kids *(immediately reassured and happy again)* Yay!!

Peter *(still a bit anxious about the 'get Dad fired' plan)* Er, we just want him to not work tomorrow?

X-Past Oh, that's easy! We just need *Scrooge* to not work tomorrow.

Tiny Tim We do?

X-Past Of course. If we can stop Scrooge working, he won't even be in the office to know that your Dad wasn't there.

Belinda I'm not entirely sure about this plan, Miss.

X-Past Listen, I'm a supernatural being who's come here to destroy Christmas and take down all those smug ghosts once and f- *(again notices the kids backing away in alarm and hastily backtracks)* I mean...save your dad from those mean old Scrooges, and help your family

really experience the true joys of Christmas. Who doesn't want that?

Children YAY!

(Exeunt, with the sound of magic.)

1.7 (Not Martin) Fezziwig

Scrooge, C - Past, Carole, H - Past, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, Fezziwig, T - Ebenezer, Belle

(Lights up on an empty stage, set for a party. This is another scene with characters interacting and not being able to see each other, although this pretence will be dropped quite soon for most of them.)

(Magic sounds as Carole and H - Past enter.)

Carole Ugh, where are we now?

H - Past We are at your uncle's old place of work. Where he was employed by one MrFezziwig. A joyous man, he very much enjoyed a good party.

Carole Party?! WHERE?

H - Past Just be quiet, we're nearly there!

(Jolly music, enter Fezziwig and the ensemble of partygoers with glasses of champagne.)

Fezziwig Yo ho, there! Ebenezer!

(Magic, magic, magic as Scrooge and C - Past enter. They move toward the centre of the stage, near Fezziwig. Fezziwig's original line was delivered in their direction, giving Scrooge the initial impression that he is visible to the partygoers.)

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

Fezziwig No more work tonight! Christmas, Ebenezer! Clear away, my lad! Yo ho!

(Enter Teen Ebenezer from the same side as Scrooge and C-Past, rushing past them.)

T Ebenezer Of course, Mr Fezziwig. I'll get straight on it!

Scrooge He had the power to render us happy or unhappy. The happiness he gave was quite as great as a fortune.

C - Past And the happiness you give? Are you still making that clerk of yours worktomorrow?

Scrooge ...oh, be quiet.

(More sounds of magic as the Cratchits and X-Past enter. This is where the chaos starts and I apologise in advance.)

Martha Spirit, where are we?

X - Past Oh, not where, but when. We are in Scrooge's memories!

Belinda This doesn't look like the sort of party Miss Scrooge would go to.

X - Past Oh, no, not Carole. The older one, old Ebenezer. Remember, he's the one we want to get.

Peter But how does looking through his memories do that?

X - Past Just relax, it will all work out. Let my plan unfold.

Belinda So, who are all these people?

X - Past Well, that man there is Scrooge.

Martha And the woman? *(gestures to Belle, who's off to one side looking angsty)*

X - Past That, surprisingly enough, is his fiancée.

(The kids all look surprised.)

Martha She looks sad. I'm gonna go talk to her!

(Martha makes as if to move towards Belle, and her motion attracts the attention of Holidays Past, who has been standing at the side with Carole and now seems to notice that something isn't quite right. X-Past grabs Martha's wrist and pulls her back)

X-Past No sudden movements! We have to stick to the plan or *(notices that H-Past has started moving through the crowd, mirrored by C-Past on the other side, who has also noticed that something is going on)* – damn it!

Tiny Tim What?

X - Past There are other ghosts here, and they've started to notice us.

Belinda Other ghosts?

X - Past The Ghosts of Christmas and Holidays Past

Martha *(excitedly)* Christmas?

Belinda *(even more excitedly)* Holidays?

Tiny Tim But we love Christmas!

Kids Yay!! *(Chanting)* Christmas! Christmas!

X - Past Okay, okay! Christmas is great but remember who *I* am. Xmas: Christmas, but cooler! And if I'm the cool one, what does that make *them*?

Martha The boring ones?

X - Past Exactly! No worries, I can handle them. I need you to distract Ebenezer and his fiancée. Both Ebenezers. And probably Carole too, she might be difficult.

Belinda Why?

X - Past Just do it! *(Pausing, backtracking)* Because, it'll be fun! Who doesn't like causing some mischief on Christmas?

Kids Yay, mischief!

(The kids scurry off and start playing pranks on the ensemble members and Teen Ebenezer, who can't see them. Holidays and Christmas Past appear next to Xmas Past)

H - Past Xmas what are you doing?

C - Past *(Yawning)* Oh, Holidays, can you let me deal with this? I've been up far too long to deal with both of you at once.

H - Past Well, old man, why don't you let me get rid of the upstart and I can get back teaching my very important lesson.

X - Past *(Clearly BS-ing)* I am teaching my kids the importance of respecting their elders. They don't understand why Scrooge is so mean to their father so I'm teaching them to sympathise with him.

H - Past Is that why that one's talking to the young Scroo - wait! How have you done that?!

X - Past It was quite simple, just like this. Freeze!

(They click their fingers. Everyone else in the scene freezes. H Past and C Past sink to the ground at a gesture from X Past.)

X - Past You really need to stop underestimating me. We've all got the same powers over time – I'm just more imaginative.

(X Past drags C Past and H Past to the vacant chairs in the front row of the audience previously occupied by the Junior Narrators, then sits between them and gestures for the scene to unfreeze. The two captured Ghosts remain frozen in their seats)

X-Past Now, let's watch some chaos.

(We move across to Peter and Belinda who have pulled the teenaged Ebenezer away from the crowd.)

Peter Excuse me, are you Mr Scrooge?

T Ebenezer Oh yes hello, my name's Ebenezer. Where's your father, lad?

Martha *(unconvincingly)* Um, he had to work so he sent us to the party alone.

Fezziwig Oh you poor dears, I'm so sorry to hear that. No one should be working at Christmas!

Peter That's what we said but his boss is a right prick.

Martha A, wrinkly, ugly, old prick.

T Ebenezer *(Beat)* Bit harsh.

Fezziwig *(Wanting to move the conversation along)* Alright my dears, you come with me and I'll make sure you get plenty of good food to fill up your bellies. If your father's working all night, we'll make sure you're well taken care of!

T Ebenezer An excellent plan! Come along children!

(Fezziwig, Teen Ebenezer, Martha and Peter exit and we now move to Carole, standing awkwardly on the side of the stage.)

Belle Excuse me, are you okay?

Carole Oh, um, yes, I'm fine. Just waiting for my friend to return. They're very sweet, I'm sure they'll be back any- *(beat)* Wait, I didn't think people were allowed to see me?

Belle Well, of course people see you, it's a party. My name is Belle.

Carole Carole Scro-

Belinda *(Appearing)* Miss! Miss Carole, hi, hello! I don't know if you remember me, you work with my father.

Carole Yes, hello, I was just talking to Belle here. As I was saying, I'm Carole Scr-

Belinda I need to talk to you!! It's really important! You need to come over here with me, to this random corner, right now!

Belle *(Stepping away)* Good luck, Carole!

Carole Alright, kid. What is going on? What happened to my Ghost? Wait, how are you in the past too?

Belinda Oh, um, your Ghost is just doing, you know, Ghost stuff, completely normal. I need to talk to you about...presents?

Carole *(Beat)* You have my attention.

(Tiny Tim approaches a confused Belle.)

Tiny Tim Excuse me, Miss Belle, I was just wondering if you come and talk to my **cough** my...Grandfather, he's just over here. He's quite lonely.

Belle Oh of course. Let's go.

(Tim and Belle start to walk across the stage towards Scrooge. Xmas Past jumps out of the front row to address the audience.)

X - Past Oh no, did you see that? I did not realise children could be so cruel! Putting Scrooge face to face with his old flame after what she did to him... *(Beat, then start to get a bit maniacal)* I did not tell him they broke up. *(gleefully)* Oh, this is going to be *horrible!* *(tauntingly)* Christmas, you might wanna go save your guy? Christmas, Christmas- oh wait. You're still frozen. Well, we'll just have to watch things unfold.

(Tiny Tim and Belle have now reached Scrooge.)

Tiny Tim Hello, Mister!

Scrooge Leave me alone, boy. I'm – Belle?

Belle Oh? Hello? Have we met?

Scrooge *(Flustered)* No, sorry, you just look like my fiancée.

Belle Oh, well I'm engaged myself. For the moment.

Tiny Tim For the moment? Aren't those things normally like, forever things?

(Beat. Belle looks deeply uncomfortable at this child calling her out.)

Scrooge *(noticing Belle's discomfort)* I think you'd better run along lad. *(shoos Tim away)*

(Tim looks downcast and goes to sit centre stage, looking sad. Belinda and Carole move to sit with him)

Belle Thank you so much, I didn't know what to say. *(Pause)* It's just, my Ebenezer can be so frustrating. He was always so wonderful to me, but ever since the engagement he's changed. Spends all his time at the office. I can't think why – must be all the money I suppose. I feel like I barely see him anymore. You know, he almost didn't come to this party tonight? He said, "What's Christmas but a time for paying bills without money?" Can you imagine talking like that?

Scrooge *(realising something heartbreaking)* Have you talked to him about it? I'm sure he has good reasons! Maybe he cares about you and wants you to have a good life, Belle.

Belle I know, I wish I knew what was in his head. I've tried to talk to him but he's just too busy, I can't go on like this any longer. I thought doing it on Christmas would soften the blow.

Scrooge *(resignedly, with deep irony)* And of course, if you leave him tomorrow, he will always have Christmas Day to cheer him up.

Belle Yes, obviously. You can't be sad at Christmas!

Scrooge *(still holding some sadness, wryly)* You really should meet my niece one day. *(noticing someone else)* Wait! Bah! That's my niece over there! What is going on here? And, you, boy! You're Bob's son. Spirit, Spirit, what is going on?

(Xmas Past rushes onstage, between the kids and Scrooge.)

X - Past Now, now, there's no need to get upset, we were only having a bit of fun.

Carole What?! My spirit is meant to be teaching me an important, life-altering lesson. Is this story now becoming about you kids or something?

Belinda Why can't it be about us?

Carole *(petulantly)* Um, I don't know, maybe because I'm more important and I'm older and therefore I should get to learn my lesson first!

Scrooge Carole, would you be quiet!

H - Past *(Jumping out of their seat and back onstage)* Trust me, I've been asking the same question all day.

Carole You're okay!

X - Past Holidays! You're unfrozen? How did you manage that?

H - Past Never you mind! I'm taking Carole and we're going!

Carole So, we can't stay for the party?

H - Past No, we cannot! This has all gone completely wrong! I am swapping out now, you're the next guy's problem. We're leaving!

(Magic, magic as they exit)

C - Past *(Standing, yawning and heading back onstage)* I suppose we better leave as well.

Scrooge *(furious that C-Past abandoned him to face Belle)* Oh, you're back too!

C - Past Yeah, I was never frozen, I was just too tired to move. Let's go, Ebenezer.

(Ebenezer storms off with C-Past shuffling behind. Peter and Martha run back onstage, giggling.)

Tiny Tim Xmas, what do we do now?

X - Past Well, they'll be changing ghosts now - I think it's time we bring in some reinforcements of our own.

(Magic, magic, magic, end of scene.)

1.8 Pickwick Presents

Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Past, C - Present, Carole, H - Past, H-Present, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present

(Lights up on the Narrators. This is another scene with a lot of people but it's in several bits and the characters don't overlap.)

Jamie What just happened?

Charlie You mean, that wasn't you?!

Jamie No! I've got my own plots for this and they're not that stupid!

Charlie I mean...

Jamie Hey!

Charlie Can you blame me? You said you wanted a villain and now a new plot appears, with some weird ghost!

Jamie Hey, ghosts are allowed to be weird! It's 1843.

Charlie I guess we can't blame them for going a little batty. *(looks Jamie up and down with contempt)* Can you imagine being stuck as you are now for all eternity?

(Jamie gives Charlie a look.)

Jamie So how are we gonna do to get this back on track?

Charlie Well, I suppose *this* Xmas Ghost isn't great but they do have to change over now, don't they? Hopefully, the new Ghost will be slightly more responsible.

Jamie Yeah, okay. *(taking deep breaths)* It'll all be fine, let's just watch.

(Enter Carole and H-Past. Charlie and Jamie should stay watching the scene.)

Carole Let's go back to the party. Let's go back to the party. Go back to the party, back to the party. Party, party, party, party...

H - Past Oh my God, would you shut up! You weren't even invited to that party, they didn't want you there! It wasn't even really a party, it was a memory! Why would you want to go back?

Carole Because it's a party and people have fun at parties! Instead of, like, with you, where all I've had is someone nagging me and complaining all the time, when I'm just being a good person.

H - Past You are not a good person! The entire point of what is going on here is that you are not a

good person!

Carole Well, that's very judgemental and judging people is mean, so I'm not going to sit here and be lectured by a mean person.

H-Past You didn't even care that I was stuck, and frozen! You just wandered about ruining things!

Carole I was helping a child! And I did care, I was very worried but did you ask about that? No, you just marched us off before I could say anything and show how caring I am.

H - Past You know, I've been doing this job for so many thousands of years and you are honestly the stupidest, most self-centred human I have ever, ever been forced to work with!

Carole Thank you!

H – Past Alright, that's it, I can't deal with you for one more second. I'm done. *(Sarcastically)*
Good luck improving your life. *(Exit)*

Carole Thank you! *(it dawns on her this might have been a bad idea)* Wait, I don't know where I am. I don't know if I am anywhere, really. *(it no longer dawns on her)* Maybe if I just turn and walk around in a random direction, I'll find out. Oooh, maybe I can find that party again!

(Enter Holidays Present, hopping onstage and eating a carrot. The Ghost will be eating carrots all through their scenes.)

H - Present That seems like an interesting idea.

Carole *(Long pause as Carole takes in the ridiculous Ghost in front of her.)* Oh, hello! Do you know where I'm supposed to be going?

H - Present Well, I'm not too certain. Depends where you've been.

Carole Ohh, I've been all over. I travelled to my uncle's childhood, and then his young adulthood, and now I assume I'm travelling to his present-hood, which is weird because I thought this was *my* adventure, but it's all been about Uncle so far.

H - Present You talk a lot, don't you, miss?

Carole I do. Always. Good to keep conversation going.

H - Present And how often do you let other people talk?

(An awkward beat of silence)

Carole I feel like this is a trick question and the second I start talking, you use it against me.

H - Present You already started talking.

Carole Aha! I bet you're another Ghost, aren't you? Here to make me feel bad about being cheerful

and excited about Christmas!

H - Present I am! Ghost of Holidays Present, at your service. Hmm, normally by this point, you'd have had some affecting dramatic revelation, but (*looks Carole up and down*) I'm assuming that hasn't happened.

Carole No, not true, as I tried to say to that *previous* Ghost multiple times – I have realised that my Uncle *does* enjoy Christmas and therefore I need to work harder making sure he enjoys this Christmas.

H – Present (*assessing the situation, and Carole*) Right. Okay. Well...that's a good start. Let's head on, and see where we end up.

(*Exit Carole and H-Present and enter Scrooge and C-Past.*)

C - Past Scrooge, look, I'm sorry about that, I didn't know-

Scrooge Leave me! Help me no longer! Take me back!

C - Past I can't do that. We have rules we have to follow as ghosts. This whole night's been planned out by our boss, he made the rules! We always have to do the same thing so the next spirit will-

Scrooge No! No next spirit! I don't want to do this anymore! Tell your boss he is a cruel man and he can't do this to me!

C - Past I can't! I have to try to teach you a very important lesson to improve your life. It's profound, it's important!

Scrooge You have a very high opinion of yourself. "Everything I say is profound and therefore I'm really important". Is that really how you think of yourself?

C - Past Yes.

Scrooge I'm going back home, to bed, at once!

C – Past But how will you do that without someone to show you the way?

Scrooge (*realizing he is temporarily beaten*) Fine. Bring this next Ghost, I can only hope they're more reasonable.

C - Present (*Entering*) Ahaha, oh, yes! Yes I am!

C - Past I hope you get on better with them than you do me.

C - Present Christmas Past! Ho, this is amazing, we barely ever get to see each other!

(*Present grabs Past in a giant hug.*)

C - Past That is on purpose.

C - Present Oh, and you must be Scrooge, I hope you've been treating my dear sibling well!

C - Past We're not actually related.

C - Present We are sort of. Anyway, lots to do, loads of people to see - well they won't see you, will they? Unless someone messes up again, isn't that right, Past?

C - Past That was not my fault.

C - Present Yes, yes. You can tell the boss all about it in a bit, he wants to talk to you. Now MrScrooge, do come with me. I am the Ghost of Christmas Present, and I will be your guide for the next hour or so.

Scrooge Oh joy, aren't I lucky?

C - Present Haha, that's the spirit! Get it? Spirit? Because I'm a ghost! (*giggling*) Anyway, we best be getting on. Past, I will see you next Christmas.

C - Past I really hope not.

(They all exit, Past in a different direction to the others. As they leave, enter the Cratchits and X-Past.)

X - Past Okay then children! Are you ready to meet the second coolest ghost in the world?!

Tiny Tim (*Overlapping*) Yeah

Peter (*Overlapping*) Oh my gosh!

Belinda (*Overlapping*) Cool!

Martha (*Beat*) When do we get to meet the *first* coolest ghost in the world?

X - Past (*Extremely annoyed*) Well, you *have* met them – it's *me*! *I'm* the coolest ghost in the world! But either way, I'd like you to meet my ever so slightly less handsome younger sibling, the Ghost of Xmas Present!

(The pianist does a nice entrance flourish ending on a triumphant chord when Xmas Present should arrive. Xmas Present does not arrive on his cue.)

X – Past (*irritated*) Present!

(Xmas Present enters in a rush, tangled in brightly coloured Christmas lights and almost tripping over his own feet.)

X - Present Sorry! Sorry, sorry, my timing is always a little bit off. (*attempting gravitas*) Hello everyone, it is I, the ghost of Xmas Present!

Belinda Yeah, Past has introduced you already.

X - Present Oh? Great, cool. I didn't get to do my own entrance. *(passive-aggressively)* That's fine.

Martha Well it's lovely to meet you Christmas Present!

**X-Past/
X-Present** *Xmas* Present!

Belinda Sorry, we just really love Christmas.

X - Past We know!

X - Present Remember, we are Xmas, which is Christmas but colder. *(aims finger guns at the audience, attempting to look very cool and failing utterly)*

X – Past Anyway, time to continue the plan.

X – Present *(affronted)* No, you don't get to be in this bit, this is *my* time. I'm doing the present-y bit, you've done the past-y bit.

X - Past Yeah, okay, but here's the thing. Holidays and Christmas are interfering.

X - Present They, what?!

X - Past The Boss has given them each a *(with contempt)* 'special mission' for the two Scrooges.

X - Present But that's not fair, they ALWAYS get the special missions! While we get told "sorry, come back next year"!

Tiny Tim Well, maybe it's a good thing they're around here? Maybe they could help us save Christmas!

X - Past No, no. If they're about that puts everything in jeopardy. The problem is, children, the ghosts of Christmas and Holidays are not as nice as you'd think. *(the children look horrified at this)* They just do what their cruel Boss tells them, and they wouldn't appreciate us breaking the rules for our super secret mission to Save Christmas.

Belinda But how could anyone want to stop us when our mission is to save our dad!

Martha And have fun!

X - Past Yeah, exactly - fun! Simple, harmless fun, of course... *(Starts laughing evilly then cuts off awkwardly to maintain the pretence)* So, what do you say kids? Who agrees that we should cause a bit of mischief for those mean old ghosts?

(The kids each yell, getting louder and more excited.)

Peter Me!

Tiny Tim Me!

Belinda Me!

Martha Me!

X - Past Five votes to one! You can vote no, Present – if you want to be the uncool one...

X - Present No, I am not uncool! I'm in!

Kids Yay!

X - Past *(to X Present, evilly)* Let's cause some chaos!

(Blackout)

1.9 Harder Times

Bob, Emily, Y - Past

(Bob and Emily run onstage, looking stressed.)

Bob I cannot believe we lost them.

Emily Everything is going to go wrong! Oh, the goose is going to burn!

Bob You know, that's not what we should be worrying about right now, Emily?

Emily I can worry about multiple things at once, Bob! Look they can't have gone far, we just need to figure out why they would have run away.

Bob They haven't run away!

Emily *(Ignoring him)* You don't think I said something stupid? That I upset them?

Bob No, Emily, I don't-

Emily Oh, I'm so cruel to them all the time, they must have finally gotten fed up and gone. They don't love me anymore!

(One of the Junior Narrators (Geoff) enters the stage at the side and discovers a traditional Ghost costume (white sheet with eyeholes cut out) cast aside on the ground. It is clear that this has given Geoff an idea, so he starts putting the costume on visibly at the side of the stage and getting into character as a Ghost.)

Bob Emily! This really isn't helpful!

Emily Oh, you're right! I need to be strong for my children, focused, determined.

Bob Exactly, we'll find them, it's-

Emily *(She starts pacing determinedly, filling the whole stage with single-minded mother energy)*
I will search all night. I will go into every home I need to, comb through every nook and cranny until I find them!

Bob I'm not entirely sure that's helpful either...but it may be better than what we had before so let's stick with that energy. Where would they have gone?

Geoff (now as Y – Past) *(Emerging into centre stage)* Perhaps I can help with that?

Emily Um, sorry? Who are you?

Y – Past A friend. Here to help you.

Bob Right...Help would be lovely but normally when someone offers their help they also offer their name?

Emily We're looking for our children. We don't really have time for this?

Y - Past No, no, no. Look, I'm here to help you.

Emily Yes...you said that already. But, who *are* you?

Y - Past Now, that is the question.

Bob The question we've been asking, yes, can you tell us the answer?

Y - Past Ugh, you're taking all the fun out of this. You've completely spoiled the atmosphere!

Bob We're trying to find our children!

Emily You're getting on my nerves now, I think you should leave.

Y - Past Wait, wait, wait! *(Serious again)* You want to find your children, yes? But do you know where they've gone? Why they would run away on Christmas Eve of all nights?

Emily No! Obviously not!

Bob That's why we're looking for them!

Y - Past Well, perhaps you need to learn a little bit about your children. See Christmas as they do?

Emily What are you on about?!

Y - Past I am no ordinary person, Mr and Mrs Cratchit. I am the Ghost of Yuletide Past.
(Yuletide Past is clearly expecting a big reaction and is disappointed not to get it.)

Bob What?

Y - Past I will take you on a journey to discover all your greatest follies and help you improve.

Emily What?

Y - Past So that, come the morning your relationships and your lives will be better.

**Bob/
Emily** What?!

Y - Past Will you join me on this adventure, Bob and Emily Cratchit?
(Long pause.)

Bob No, sod off! We have children to find.

Emily And go home, you're clearly drunk.
(They exit. Y-Past remains onstage and removes the ghost outfit, looking dejected.)

Y - Past This always works for the other Ghosts...

(Blackout)

1.10 All of a Twist

Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Present, Carole, H - Present, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present, Fred, Clara, Matthew

(Lights up on Fred, Clara and Matthew playing cards in front of a fireplace. There are also some members of the ensemble onstage to fill out the party scene. Another split scene of ghosts observing stuff but this should sort itself a bit nicer. We hear the magic as Scrooge and C - Present enter.)

C – Present Ha-ha, look where we are! I believe that's your nephew over there isn't it!

Scrooge Yes, it is. You are aware I was invited to this party - you didn't need all this subterfuge to get me inside.

C - Present Ah, but if I wasn't here you, wouldn't have come would you?

Scrooge Quite likely not. The only person I know here is my nephew – I would end up either trailing after him all night or sitting in the corner eating crisps.

C - Present True, true.

(Enter Carole and Holidays Present)

C - Present But is that not your niece? Surely you know her equally as well.

Scrooge Carole?

Carole Uncle? Wait, hang on, I thought we weren't meant to be able to see each other.

C - Present Well, you're family. Can't keep family apart at Christmas! *(hugging Scrooge and Carole together enthusiastically)*

Carole Are you agreeing to this? Holidays Past wouldn't have agreed to this.

H - Present I'm not so sure it's the best idea, but if the Ghost of Christmas Present thinks it's okay, why don't we indulge them?

Scrooge *(to Carole)* How has your evening gone so far?

Carole Awful. They're trying to teach me how Christmas can be sad by showing me how much you enjoyed it.

Scrooge How strange. They're trying to show me how wonderful Christmas can be by showing me how much I hated it.

Carole Weird. Maybe they should swap?

(Enter Cratchits and Xmas, pushing through the unaware party crowd to the front of the stage)

X – Present Oh no, Christmas and Holidays have teamed up, and they got here before us! Okay, looks like we need to get cracking straight away.

Martha What do you want us to do?

X - Past Well, this is Scrooge's nephew's party. What do people do at parties?

Tiny Tim Ooh, ooh!! Games!

Belinda Yeah, everyone plays games!

X - Past Exactly, and games are super fun, so here's what we're gonna do...

(They huddle, whispering.)

X - Past OK, everyone got that?

Kids Yes!

X - Present Brilliant! Okay, spread out. I'll make sure they'll be able to hear and see you but they won't think anything of you being there.

Kids Cool!

(The kids scamper off and spread out into the crowd.)

Fred Okay, it doesn't seem my family will be joining us so might as well play a game. Anyone got any ideas?

(Ensemble and people backstage yell out various game suggestions with the Cratchit kids yelling 20 questions over and over, getting louder.)

Clara Well, Fred, it seems that *someone* is very enthusiastic about 20 questions!

Fred Right you are, Clara!

Tiny Tim Oh, oh, I know one!

Fred Well, quick, tell me.

(Tiny Tim whispers to Fred.)

Fred *(Chuckling)* Oh, that is a good one. No giving it away, lad. Ask your questions.

Clara Is it a bird?

Fred No.

Matthew Is it a fish?

Fred	No.
Carole	Insect?
Peter	So some sort of mammal?
Fred	Yes, I'll give you that.
Carole	Could have been an insect.
Clara	So is it a creature that lives in a city?
Fred	Yes, most of the time.
Belinda	Is it something you might keep as a pet?
Fred	Oh, I wouldn't want to see you try.
Clara	Is it an unwanted creature then?
Fred	Oh very much so.
Matthew	Is it cruel?
Fred	Almost invariably.
Martha	Ugly?
Fred	A little bit...
Clara	Is it a rat?
Fred	No.
Matthew	A pig?
Tiny Tim	Pigs don't live in the city.
Peter	Oh, oh, a pigeon!
Belinda	Pigeons aren't mammals.
Scrooge	I reckon it's a slug.

C-Present I don't know, it could be a snail.

Carole No, snails are cute, they're not ugly!

Scrooge They're exactly the same as slugs, they just have a shell.

H-Present Well, either way, I'm not entirely sure they count as mammals.

Matthew Wait, wait, I've got it! An unwanted creature that spends its time in the city! It's your sister!

Martha It's Carole!

Fred Oh, that wasn't what I was thinking but that's good!

(Laughter)

Clara Was it your uncle Ebenezer?!

Fred Yes!

(They laugh)

Carole What?!

X - Present Oh, this is the bit where I come in.

(Finger click, followed by magic sounds)

Carole Fred!

Fred Carole?! Where did you come from?

Carole Oh, wouldn't you like to know? How dare you say that! You think I'm unwanted? Cruel? Ugly?!!

Scrooge That's what upset you the most?

Fred Uncle! I didn't think you were coming?

Scrooge Well, Carole insisted I attend but I am getting fatigued now, we should be going.
(Quieter) Carole, this isn't real, let's just go.

Carole He called you unwanted, uncle!

Scrooge Yes, yes, I've heard worse.

Carole From who?

Scrooge From you! Look, we shouldn't waste our time with them anymore. I told you Carole, Christmas is pointless anyway.

Fred Uncle, wait, please! I'm sorry, I was just trying to have a laugh with my friends! I didn't mean to insult you!

Scrooge Well, I insult people all the time, Fred, it would be wrong of me to judge you for it. But you've upset your sister so we should leave.

Tiny Tim Since when do you care about someone being upset?

Martha Yeah, you're mean!

Belinda You're horrible!

Peter You both are!!

Clara They're right, you are cruel to everyone. You don't get to take the moral high ground now.

Scrooge What? That's not what I'm saying-

X - Past Okay kids, it's time we up the chaos.

Peter Right. *(Louder)* They're ruining everything!

Martha Why are they here?

(Xmas Past puts a hand on Matthew's shoulder and he stands angrily)

Matthew I think it's time you all left.

(X - Present places a hand on Fred, causing similar sudden anger)

Fred No, Matthew! They should be allowed to stay.

Scrooge No, we should just leave, it would be easier for everyone.

Fred This is my house, you cannot keep my family out of my house!

Carole Or we could just keep arguing, that also works.

H - Present Should we do something about this?

C - Present *(trying to be cheerful, but not as confident as usual)* Oh, I'm sure it's an excellent teaching moment.

X - Present This is going great!

X – Past It's not over yet, one more push.

X – Present Well, let's get them a bit more excited.

(The Xmas Ghosts walk around, placing their hands on the shoulders of each member of the ensemble. As they do, each person gets angry and moves forward, surrounding the Scrooges until they are completely blocked off from the audience. Dramatic piano music amps up the energy.)

Carole Hey, what are you doing?!

Matthew Now, come on, let's not cause a fuss.

Fred Don't you touch her!

Scrooge Leave her alone!

Martha Get rid of them!

Belinda Kick them out!

Fred Look, everyone needs to just calm down!

Clara You're ruining the party!

Carole I'm not ruining the party! Hey, it's those kids again!

X - Past Now!

(Suddenly, there is a crash. Everyone jumps backward and Scrooge is on the floor.)

Carole/Fred Uncle!

Carole How dare you?

Clara Look, I don't want this to turn into a fight. Can we all just calm-

(She is cut off as Fred punches Matthew and he goes sprawling. Suddenly, everyone starts fighting and things get madder and madder. C - Present and H - Present panic and run offstage. Scrooge and Carole try to run but are forced back and end up downstage centre as everyone is fighting behind them.)

X - Past Children! It's time for the plan! Now!!

C - Present *(Offstage)* Scrooge! Scrooge, come on! We've got to go now!

Scrooge/Carole I'm coming!

Carole We've got to get out of here!

Scrooge But how, everyone has gone mad?

(In the middle of the stage, Tiny Tim has stood on a chair, laughing happily and holding

a giant red button)

Tiny Tim I've got it! Now let's save Christmas!

(Tim presses the button and the lights cut out. Everyone yells and runs off stage apart from Carole. As the yelling dies down, the lights come back up to Carole standing in the middle of the stage, very confused.)

Carole Oh, goodness, that was mad. Okay, I get it, my family don't like me and I ruin parties but how am I meant to change that? I didn't even mean to be there!

C – Present *(Entering)* You've just got to get more into the Christmas spirit and really - you're not Ebenezer!

Carole You're not the Ghost of Holidays Present!

C - Present Oh no! I am Christmas Present. Here to bring the joy and wonder of Christmas.

Carole Ah, and that's what you were teaching my uncle?

C - Present Why yes! No time to waste, dear Scrooge – we must be off to another Christmas!

Carole Are you not even going to-

C - Present Let's go!

(Exit Christmas Present, pulling Carole with them. Enter Jamie and Charlie - without the Junior Narrators this time.)

Jamie ...what just happened?

Charlie I think you got that villain you wanted.

Jamie They... there was a fight... in the middle of a dream sequence... and... and theghost...

Charlie Yep. Yep. It's all gone wrong.

Jamie How do we even begin to fix his?

Charlie *(Beat)* Okay, I have a four-part plan. I think I've really outdone myself this time. It's a plan so perfect, so well-crafted that every part will work perfectly with the other. A plan that will get us out of all this trouble.

Jamie Tell me, please!

Charlie *(beat)* It's one part lime juice, one part Cointreau, and two parts tequila!

Jamie Bugger.

(Blackout.)

Act 2

2.1 The Thousand and One Humbugs

Charlie, Jamie, Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Scrooge, H - Present

(Enter Jamie and Charlie. There's much stumbling and drunken mumbling as they head to the front of the stage. They are shurring A Lot during the next scene.)

Charlie So, so. Tell me again. What happened?

Jamie I don't know. I don't know. I thought I knew but I don't...

Charlie We can't let them derail this entire show!

Jamie Well, they just did. Can't really stop them.

Charlie No. Can we do anything at this point?

Jamie What d'you mean?

Charlie *(despairingly)* I mean, is there any point us being here? If we don't know how to stop things, we don't even know what's going to happen so we can't narrate it. How can we be narrators if we can't narrate...

Jamie Wow... deep...

Charlie More wine? **Jamie** Yes! Let us wine! **Charlie** We shall wine!

(They cheer and clink their wine bottles together before passing out at the side of the stage. Enter Scrooge and Holidays Present)

Scrooge Look, I've been dealing with ghosts all night! Could you just leave me alone?

H - Present I'd like to do that but you're not the person I meant to be with so I'm a bit confused as to what to do.

Scrooge Look, if I'm not the person you're supposed to be dragging all over this unearthly plane - at some ungodly hour of the night, I might add - then why don't you just go away, and find whoever you *are* supposed to be bothering?

H - Present Hmm, well you *are* meant to have a ghost with you, and you *are* meant to be learning a lesson. Who knows what's meant to be happening in this sort of situation.

Scrooge I know. You leave me alone and you let me get on with my life.

H - Present Hmm...

Scrooge You were with Carole, weren't you? Would it help if I said that is exactly what she would say to do in this situation?

H - Present Oh, it's what Carole would say? Then that is the exact opposite of what I should do.

Scrooge Fine! Then what do you think we should do?

H - Present *(Beat)* I...don't know. This is way beyond my pay grade.

Scrooge You have pay grades as ghosts?

H - Present Yeah, and getting promoted is no easy task. I worked very hard to be promoted to Present Ghost.

Scrooge *(Confused)* What were you before?

H - Present No time for that. We need to find someone who actually knows what's going on here and can tell me exactly what I'm meant to do.

Scrooge Who?

H - Present My boss. Don't worry, I'm sure you'll get on great.

Scrooge Wait, no, I don't want to go, uggghhh!!!

(Magic sounds as H-Present drags Scrooge offstage. The Narrators wake up a bit.)

Charlie Did we know they had a boss?

Jamie They mentioned a boss a couple times but I thought it was a throwaway joke!

Charlie *(slurring)* You're a throwaway joke.

Jamie Heh, good one. *(Beat)* I sleep now.

(A thud as Jamie hits the floor again. Charlie laughs, then also falls asleep. After a second or so, enter the Junior Narrators.)

Geoff Um, are you okay?

(Riley walks over and nudges the Narrators with a foot.)

Riley I think they're dead.

Arabella What? No! They can't be dead! What are we going to do?

Geoff Oh, don't worry! We can take over, it'll be fine.

Arabella Okay, right, yes. Maybe it's a training exercise, to see how well we handle the pressure?

Riley Either way, no point whining about it!

Jamie *(Jumping up)* Wine!!!

(The Junior Narrators jump away and Charlie sits up slightly. During the next line,

Charlie becomes aware of the JNs)

Jamie Who's got wine? Come on, don't look at me like that, it's all fun. You need to have fun, you need to-

Charlie Learn! You need to learn!! *(Jumping up, pushing Jamie away)* But you cannot learn from us doing, you must learn from you doing the doing!

Geoff Wait, are you saying what I think you are?

Arabella Oh, I hope not.

Geoff Be quiet, we'll never get this chance again!

Jamie What chance?

Charlie The chance! The big chance! You, you four - three! You are going to narrate a scene!

Riley We are?

Jamie They are?

Charlie They are! Now, you'll need to stand here, right at the front of the stage, that's right.

(Charlie and Jamie manoeuvre the JNs towards the front of the stage.)

Jamie *(dramatically)* Make sure you use your impressive voice.

Charlie You need to really set the scene.

Jamie We'll be watching of course. *(To Charlie)* We will be watching, right?

Charlie Of course we'll be watching... from backstage... in the dark ... with our eyes closed...

Jamie Excellent. Good luck little ones!

(Exit Jamie and Charlie. After a beat, the JNs look at each other.)

Geoff Right then, is everyone ready?

Arabella I think so. Do we know what we're going to say?

Riley Well we haven't got long, this interlude could stop at any minute!

(Blackout)

2.2 All Thoroughfare

Geoff, Riley, Arabella, Carole, C - Present, Emily, Bob

(Lights quickly back up on the JNs, now looking sufficiently serious due to Dramatic Props. Maybe one of them has produced the book to be reading from or another has a pipe or something.)

Riley As Christmas Eve continued to pass, young Carole knew something had gone very, very wrong.

Geoff Her previous visitors had tested her compassion and her empathy, her newest companion was testing her patience.

Arabella *(Dropping drama)* Ooh, that was very good.

Geoff Oh, thank you, I was working on it in the interval, just in case.

(The drama resumes)

Arabella She was not ready for the way her night would turn, nor the lessons she would have to learn.

Riley *(scoffs)* Rhyming, really?

Arabella But she must learn without delay, for soon approaches Christmas day...

(Enter Carole and C-Present, Carole looking very annoyed. Christmas Present laughing until...)

Carole What are you even laughing about? There wasn't even a joke!

C - Present Ha but it's Christmas!

Riley This was not reassuring to Carole, not at all.

Geoff While she still loved Christmas, the idea she shared an interest with *this* Ghost made the idea of that love difficult, upsetting.

Arabella She could not see the end to her time of anguish and to get away was her only wish.

(Geoff and Arabella dramatically exit, with Riley bringing up the rear.)

Riley *(aside to the audience, before leaving)* That doesn't scan at all.

(The Junior Narrators retreat.)

C - Present Why wouldn't I be happy at Christmas?

Carole I mean, maybe because you screwed up and you've done your job wrong and you're with me when you shouldn't be! Trust me, the thing I've been learning tonight is that people

can be very unhappy at Christmas when I'm around.

C - Present Oh, ho ho ho, you are too hard on yourself, Carole Scrooge! What we need is more fun! Surely that is the way to make Christmas better for all!

Carole Yes. I am aware of that. But it isn't helpful for me. I chased off Holidays Past and now I am trying to learn how to connect to people in a different way and you are just-

(Christmas Present laughs)

Carole Stop laughing!

C - Present Ah, but it's Christmas! A great day that all must enjoy!

Carole I do enjoy Christmas, that's not. The. Point!

C - Present Look, why don't I show you exactly why Christmas is so wonderful!

(Christmas Present removes one of their many strands of tinsel and wraps Carole up in it like a Christmas tree, giggling all the while. Carole does not look amused.)

C - Present Ha, ha, did that not make you so much happier?

Carole No.

C - Present Excellent! Let's move on shall we? We are visiting the Cratchits.

Carole I've seen far too much of those little terrors tonight, thank you very much.

C - Present *(Not listening)* The Cratchit family really knows how to keep Christmas, you'll see. They find joy and love in every moment of it.

(Enter Emily and Bob)

Emily Tim! Peter!

Bob Martha! Belinda! Where are you?

Emily Oh it's all gone wrong! What if we can't find them, Bob?

Bob No, we will find them, I promise. We can't let them be alone at Christmas.

Carole Um, I don't think things are going well for them, Spirit?

C - Present *(Getting serious)* Each moment of the day, they seize the Christmas spirit and spend it together as a family-

Carole Their children are missing!

C - Present -and they're happy throughout it all.

(Emily wails dramatically, collapsing on the floor. Bob tries to console her as Carole and C-Present watch. Exit Bob and Emily)

Carole Spirit, I really don't think this is what's supposed to be happening. Whatever those awful Xmas ghosts are doing, wherever they've taken the kids - it's ruined everything! How did Christmas go so wrong?

C - Present *(Suddenly cheery again)* More Christmas! Excellent, let's get moving! *(Skips offstage)*

Carole *(After a pause)* I can really see why people hate me now. *(She follows C-Present offstage)*

2.3 Going into A Society

Scrooge, C - Past, H - Past, H - Present, Boss

(Magic sounds, enter H-Present and Scrooge.)

H - Present Oh, boss, sorry to interrupt, but you're never going to believe this.

Boss You're back early. And he's not dead.

Scrooge Am I meant to be?

H - Present No, boss, this is Ebenezer Scrooge.

Boss You were not assigned Ebenezer Scrooge, you are assigned to Carole Scrooge.

H - Present Yes, I know but-

C - Past *(Entering with a yawn)* Have you managed to mess up already?

Scrooge Spirit!

H - Present Christmas Past, what are you doing here?

C - Past I'm the next appointment, I'm trying to discuss my retirement. *(Nodding at Scrooge)* Ebenezer.

Scrooge *(Nodding back)* Spirit. I can put in a good word for you, if you need it.

C - Past Oh, thank you.

Boss You are not here to discuss your retirement. You are here to discuss how much you've failed this evening.

Scrooge Now, wait a second-

Boss This doesn't concern you. Listen here, Christmas Past. You work for me, remember, so you do as I say.

Scrooge Wait, you can't expect the work to continue forever, my friend here must be tired to the bone.

Boss The job isn't to be tired, the job is to do what I say and get on with it, no complaining! Besides, ghosts don't have bones.

Scrooge *(After a moment)* You really are an awful person. And believe me, I am very familiar with being awful.

Boss *(Smirking)* Well, I suppose this lesson is going sort of well, I'll consider that in the review. Anyway, Holidays Present, how did you end up getting the wrong Scrooge?

H - Present We were at a party, I was there with Carole, and Christmas Present had Scrooge.
(*Getting awkward*) It was a funny story, honestly, it all just went wrong.

H - Past (*Entering*) How do you mean it all just went wrong?

H - Present Past, you're here?

H - Past Yes, I'm here. Gladys called me, said you were here interrupting a meeting and to come pick you up.

Scrooge Well, everything is going to be fine, you can leave now.

Boss Anyway, saying everything just "went wrong" isn't really an excuse.

(*The ghosts freeze at this, looking very worried*)

H - Present It really wasn't my fault, it was just a misunderstanding. Christmas Present-

Boss So, you're blaming this on Christmas Present?

H - Present No, boss, please. Those Xmas lot-

Boss I'm sorry? The Xmas Ghosts?

H - Present Yeah, Past and Present, they were both there. They had the Cratchits kids ruin the experience.

Boss The Cratchit children are not set to be learning a lesson this Christmas. I have not sent the Xmas ghosts on a mission.

Scrooge I must apologise, but what exactly does that mean for me?

C - Past Doesn't mean anything, Ebenezer. I think we will have to deal with this.

Boss Exactly, leave this to the professionals.

(*The three ghosts are lined up in fear like soldiers before their pacing drill sergeant.*)

Holidays Present, take Ebenezer back to where he's meant to be and leave him for his next ghost. Then you may join your companions here in figuring out how this oversight has come about. We cannot have unruly Ghosts running amok.

H - Present I don't think they're being unruly. They just seemed to be trying to cause a bit of mischief.

Boss I don't care if all they did was swat a fly. They are not obeying my instructions. Unless I tell them to go out, they are meant to stay here and do as they are told! Now go before I have you all demoted.

H - Past Not sure demotions are too bad.

Boss Which will extend your employment for another 2000 years.

C - Past We're leaving!

(There's a magic swoosh and they all leave. The Boss sighs.)

Boss Gladys, put the office on lockdown. Everyone works until I tell them to stop.

(Blackout.)

2.4 A Child's Dream of Bizarre

Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present, X - Future

(Enter Team Chaos. The Cratchit kids are very happy and the two Xmas Ghosts are enjoying themselves as well, everyone laughing.)

Peter That party was amazing!

Belinda Did you see her face? She looked so annoyed!

X - Present That definitely showed her!

Tiny Tim Wait, I'm sorry, I'm just a little bit confused? What did we do all of that for??

Martha Well, we... she's a horrible person and now something horrible will happen... to... her...

Tiny Tim Don't get me wrong, it was so much fun.

X - Past Yeah, it was hilarious!

Peter I had a great time!

Martha I called her ugly!

X - Present That may have been taking things a bit too far.

Tiny Tim But, how does it help dad get off work?

Belinda Yeah...all we've done is made Carole angry.

Peter And when Carole gets angry, she's not a better person.

X - Past *(visibly scrambling for an explanation)* Ah, you see, well, the way, the way it works is...

X - Present *(Interrupting, enthusiastic)* They're trying to teach her a lesson, to make her a better person and more reflective of what she's done. We put a stop to that!

Martha *(Beat)* Why?

Belinda That seems like the exact opposite of what we would want to happen!

X - Past You absolute idiot!

X - Present I thought we wanted the lesson to stop?

X - Past We did but we didn't want the kids to know!

Peter What is going on?

X - Present No matter! Let's just move on with the plan!

Tiny Tim We've messed things up so much...

X - Past *(desperately trying to get the kids back onside)* And we can still do more. More chaos!

Martha Yeah, I don't think I want to do chaos anymore.

Tiny Tim I want to go home.

Peter What's the point in complaining about dad not being home when we're not there?

(The other kids nod enthusiastically.)

X - Past You can't go! We haven't finished!

Peter Whatever lesson you were planning on us learning, it isn't working.

X - Past *(finally snapping)* We weren't planning for you to learn a lesson, you idiots! It was never about you, we just needed someone gullible and easy to use.

Tiny Tim What?

X - Present Look, kids, it's really quite simple. The Christmas and the Holiday ghosts always get all the praise and the best jobs. We've been pushed down our whole undying lives, made to follow all the awful storylines - the children, the amateur dramatics societies, we even had to teach a dog once!

Peter But, isn't that fun?

X - Past To start with! But now, no one respects us, no one listens to what we have to say! Everyone just writes us off as the goofballs, the second fiddles, never taken seriously and never good enough. Well we're not playing everyone else's games anymore. We're going to make US the stars of the show – and if we have to destroy Christmas to do that, then so be it!

Martha *(timidly)* Aren't you just...Christmas but abbreviated?

X - Past That's not the point! Those old sods think they've got a monopoly on Christmas, well, they've got another think coming! We get to be in charge now!

(The kids huddle together in fear as the villains launch into their evil spiel.)

X - Present We deserve some appreciation, some time on top!

X - Past And we're going to get it. Ruin their job, tear it apart and make a complete fool of them.

X - Present Which really shouldn't be that difficult, they are quite foolish. *(As he says this, he goes to lean on X-Past's shoulder, but they move out of the way and X-Present falls on the ground.)*

X - Past There won't be any Christmas holidays anymore! There won't be anything but us, no Halloween, no Easter! Everything will be Xmas! Xmas alone!

Peter Why?

X - Present Xmas is fun! People deserve that fun all year round.

X - Past I deserve to have fun all year round!

Martha I know I'm a bit dim sometimes, but even I think this is dodgy. We need to go.

X - Present Even if you run, you won't get far. You're still bound by the rules of the story.

Tiny Tim What do you mean?

X - Present Well, you've met Xmas Past and Xmas Present so if you go away, you have Xmas Future to deal with.

Peter *(Cheekily, putting on a show of bravado for the others)* And is Xmas Future like you? Or is he scary?

(X-Present and Peter face off against each other, sticking tongues out, etc)

X - Past *(Beat, grins evilly)* Oh, he's the MOST evil!

X - Present He's as creepy as can be.

X - Past If you're going to run, I'd run fast.

X - Present Yeah, and if you do, it'll be much more fun for our dear Xmas Future!

(The two laugh evilly and spooky music starts to play under the next few lines of dialogue.)

Martha We've got to find someone who can help!

Tiny Tim Well, we've got to find those other ghosts.

(Enter Xmas Future, laughing evilly and creepily)

Belinda But that means we have to find the Scrooges.

X - Past Xmas Future, welcome to the party!

(Xmas Future approaches the children menacingly, evil laughter increases)

Peter I don't think we have any choice. Let's go!

(The children run off, screaming)

X - Present Shouldn't we go after them?

X - Past

You said it yourself, they won't get far. Besides, Xmas Future loves the chase...

*(The Xmas Ghosts laugh evilly and we go into the **Song: Xmas Forever**. The ghosts finally have the chance to be overly enthusiastically evil and they love it. It's just generally a bop.)*

2.5 To Be Met at Dusk

Charlie, Jamie, Scrooge, C - Future, H - Present

(Lights up on Scrooge and Holidays Present as they enter)

H - Present Right, so, I guess that's where I leave you.

Scrooge What? You're leaving me alone?

H - Present Well, Christmas Present left you and if I don't head off, you can't have your next Ghost. Plus, I really do need to get on with work. My boss is going to have my head if I don't figure out what's going on with these Xmas ghosts.

Scrooge You're not serious? That's what you care about at the moment? Bureaucracy?

H - Present I don't love it any more than the next ghost, but I have no choice. Our Boss is so cruel and if I stay here a moment longer I shudder to think what will happen. I'm sorry I couldn't stay. Good luck with your next ghost, Mr Scrooge. Try not to be too scared. *(Exits)*

Scrooge Too scared?! What do you mean-

Scrooge Wait! Spirit, come back! What do you mean don't be scared?

(Ominous, creeping music slowly builds)

Scrooge What is that? Who are you? What's going on?

(Music builds and builds as Scrooge continues to panic. Suddenly we have a dramatic scare chord and Ebenezer screams, pointing to the side. Standing there is the Ghost of Christmas Future, hooded and silent.)

Scrooge Oh my lord! What are you? Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

(There is a long pause)

Scrooge You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened but will happen in the time before us. Is that so, Spirit?

(Still nothing from C-Future. Enter the Narrators in a rush. They're still very drunk and slurring. The JNs trail, very confused)

Jamie What's happening?

Charlie Haven't you read the original Christmas Carol? The Ghost of Christmas Future doesn't speak!

Jamie Well, that's a bit rubbish! This is light entertainment! You can't have a light entertainment character who doesn't talk!

Charlie None of the future ghosts can talk.

Jamie Nope, nope, there's three of them in the show, can't have that. *(Beat, then it becomes clear that he has Had An Idea)* We're gonna give them all voices!

Charlie How do we do that?

Jamie *(swaying, clearly in no condition to do anything useful)* We just have to concentrate... really really hard...one, two, three, go!

(Jamie and Charlie swing around, not at all coordinated, to stare at C-Future. Maybe they make jazzy hand gestures like they're casting a spell)

Charlie I really don't think that did anything-

C - Future Bonsoir, Ebenezer!

Charlie ...wait, what?

Scrooge Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. Will you not speak to me so I can understand?

C - Future Indeed I am the Ghost of Christmas Future. I am here to guide you, Ebenezer. We should move on and see the coming future.

Scrooge Spirit, please. Please, speak so I may understand you!

Jamie *(addressing Scrooge)* The spirit *is* speaking! Are you deaf, old man?

Charlie Maybe he just doesn't like the French. He is a Dickens character after all.

C-Future Follow me, Ebenezer...

Scrooge Spirit, I beg of you, please talk to me!

(C- Future and Scrooge leave.)

Charlie Well, that went terribly.

Jamie I guess maybe wine and magic powers don't mix...

Charlie I dread to think what the other Future ghosts will end up sounding like!

(They run away, drunkenly stumbling. Blackout.)

2.6 Hunted Around

Charlie, Jamie, Carole, C - Present, H - Future, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Future

(Enter Carole and C - Present)

C - Present Oh-ho, let's keep moving on! Next Christmas!

Carole Aren't you the Ghost of Christmas Present? Surely you can't be dealing with next Christmas?

C - Present Ah, but we're having so much fun! Aren't we?

Carole I feel there's so many responses I could give to that but all of them would make you cry.

C - Present Haha, you are quite right. Now let's see what we can do! This next Christmas we're visiting is-

(This is cut off by the Cratchit children running in)

Tiny Tim Miss Scrooge!

Martha Carole, please we need your help!

Belinda Please, please, you gotta help us!

Carole Kids! I was just thinking I needed to find you! In fact, I was intending to find you if this idiot didn't keep me wandering around.

C - Present Haha, more friends, how excellent! Are you here to celebrate Christmas with us?!

**Kids /
Carole** No!

Peter Everything is going wrong!

Carole Wait, where are the Ghosts you were with?

Peter Yeah, that's sort of the problem...

(We hear the creepy laugh of Xmas Future, quiet but building up slowly over the next few lines.)

Carole What is that?

Belinda So, we're running from our next Ghost because Xmas Past sort of wants to destroy Christmas...

Carole They can't destroy Christmas. They *are* Christmas just...abbreviated.

Martha Yeah, I know!

Peter We said that!

Carole Okay, what do you want me to do?

Peter We thought your ghost could do something?

Carole That won't work. So far, I've had to beg just to move on to the next Christmas.

C - Present Oh, next Christmas! We best be moving on!

Martha No wait! Xmas Future is coming and is going to get us

C - Present Oh, that's not in the spirit of Christmas cheer, is it? Let me go see if I can talk to this Xmas Future.

Belinda I don't think that talk's going to go very well.

(Exit C-Present, skipping)

Carole Look, if nothing else, it'll be a distraction. Let's go.

Tiny Tim We can't leave!

Carole I think we have to. A Ghost can't exactly be hurt! You lot on the other hand...

Martha But, where do we go?

Carole I don't know, but I'll do my best to get you all home as soon as possible!

Peter Okay!

(Exit Carole and kids. From offstage we hear:)

C - Present Xmas Future, what are you doing here? Are you here to join in the Christmas cheer? Ho, ho, ho!

(Christmas Present's joyful chuckles are taken over by Xmas Future's more sinister laughter. Between X-Future's laughter, Christmas Present laughs awkwardly and eventually X-Future's laughter becomes crazy. Christmas Present screams and we hear a thud. The kids and Carole run back onstage.)

Belinda What was that?

Peter Don't look back, just run!

(They run offstage to one side and chase music starts up. They then run back on.)

Tiny Tim Miss Scrooge?

Carole What?

Tiny Tim I turned around. It's pretty terrifying.

Carole Why?! Look, just keep going! Keep going!

(They run off again, the evil laughter intensifying further, then they come back again, this time missing Tiny Tim.)

Carole Okay, is everyone okay?

Martha One, two, three, four. All of us, good.

Peter No, Martha. There should be five of us.

Belinda Wait, you mean?

Carole Oh my God, the Ghost got Tim!

H - Future *(Entering, with a terrible, obnoxious, Texan accent and cowboy boots that click as they walk onstage.)* Well, little missy, it looks like you're in quite a bit of trouble.

Carole Oh dear Lord, no.

H - Future I'm the Ghost of Holidays Future, my darlin'. It's probably best if you come with me.

Carole Nope! There's a little boy in danger, we need to go and save him!

H - Future That's not how the story goes, m'lady. Let's get moving, shall we?

(As the kids, Carole, and H-Future exit, the narrators enter, looking slightly more sober now)

Charlie Still think we should have given the future ghosts voices?

Jamie *(looking sheepish)* Well, at least they can hear this one?

Charlie Somehow I doubt they're counting that as a blessing.

(Blackout)

2.7 The Mystery of Edwin Deads

C - Past, H - Past, H - Present, X - Past, X - Present

(We hear a thud. Lights up on the Past Ghosts shoving each other like children.)

C - Past Get off me!

H - Past You get off!

C - Past I can't believe I have to work with you!

H - Past Trust me, Christmas, I'm not enjoying it either.

C - Past How are we even going to solve this? We have no idea where the Xmas Ghosts even are.

H - Past Well, maybe if we find the Cratchit kids?

(Sound of magic, enter Holidays Present, eating a carrot.)

H - Present Oh, are we looking for the Cratchit kids? Well, if we find the Xmas Ghosts, we'll find the Cratchit kids.

H - Past Yes, and once we find the Cratchit kids, we find the... Xmas... Ghosts. Doesn't really help us, does it?

C - Past No. *(Yawns)* How was Ebenezer when you left him?

H - Present Complaining.

C - Past So he's okay, good to hear.

H - Past Your Christmas Present should join us soon, then we can figure something out.

C - Past What do we do in the meantime?

H - Present Um, what do we normally do?

H - Past Our jobs!

H - Present Okay, but solving this problem is our job now.

C - Past No, my job is to go to the past, show some stuff and then hand over to the next ghost. It's the same job I've been doing for thousands of years.

H - Present And you do it with such little complaining.

C - Past Well, have you got any idea how to move forward?

H - Present Yes, we could- no that won't work. So, instead we – nope, that'll just use all of my carrots. Um, well. No. I've got no idea, no.

(Xmas Past and Present enter and wait in the background.)

C - Past Christmas Present is meant to finish any minute now and then we have four Ghosts against three.

H - Past Easy as pie.

X - Present *(jumping in eagerly)* Oh, is it now? What kind of pie?

(The Ghosts jump and look at the Xmases. H-Past doesn't react until after their next line.)

H - Past No particular kind of pie, it's just an expression.

X - Present I was- I was trying to be cool.

H - Present It didn't work.

X - Present Whatever.

X - Past You smug bunch of Christmas and Holidays Ghosts, you think you're *so* special, don't you?

**C – Past,
H - Past,
H - Present** *(Beat)* Yes

X - Present Well, you're not so, ha.

X - Past Just come with us. Give up.

C - Past Why would we do that?

H - Past We've been specifically sent here to stop you.

X - Past Yeah, but we can do this.

(Finger click and then a pause. Then one of the Ghosts tries to talk but can't open their mouth. The others try but are also muffled. Xmas Past gestures at them, forcing them to the ground one by one. C-Past just lies down and goes straight to sleep.)

X - Present Did you have to gag them? They're a bit boring when they can't talk.

X – Past Trust me, Ghosts are more annoying when they do. *(with a dark look at X Present to show that they're the annoying Ghost that X-Past is talking about)*

X - Present Right, well, the next step of the evil plan is complete. Go us! The Boss really shouldn't have sent them out here, just makes things easier for us.

X - Past Well, we want to show the Boss that he doesn't know everything, so this is perfect.
Come on, let's take them away.

X - Present Ooh, are we going to do the evil laugh again?

X - Past No, my throat is starting to hurt, we should save it for the finale.

X - Present Oh, I guess so.

X - Past If you really want, you can do an evil hum.

X - Present Ooh, thanks!

(Present does an evil hum, which is basically an evil laugh but stupid. Blackout over this.)

2.8 The Haunted Men

Scrooge, C - Future, Carole, H - Future, Peter, Martha, Belinda, X - Future, Worker 1, Worker 2

(Lights up on the Workers, chatting and digging. Enter C-Future and Ebenezer.)

C - Future Come along Ebenezer, I've got some interesting stories to show you.

Scrooge Spirit, please, I have learned my lesson. I wish to go home now.

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

Scrooge *(Defeated)* I suppose that's me, is it? I've died and not a soul cares.

C - Future Now, just sit there and listen, please.

Worker 2 When did he die?

Worker 1 Last night, I believe.

Worker 2 What happened to him? He was so bloody old I thought he'd never die.

Scrooge Yes, yes, the world would rejoice at my passing, I understand that now, just-.
(Pretending to be unconcerned) Can we please just move on, I'm growing tired of this

C - Future Ooh la la, we are touchy, aren't we?

(Exit Scrooge and C-Future, enter Carole, the Cratchits (minus Tim) and H-Future)

H - Future And now I know this probably don't mean much to you but as a spirit of great importance, I understand the world in a way that might trouble your human sensibilities.

Carole Does your accent make you an ass or is that just a coincidence?

H - Future You are a funny one Carole Scrooge.

Martha Can I punch the Ghost?

Peter Maybe later.

Belinda Look we need to move on-

H - Future Nuh-uh, no, sweetie. You got a lesson to learn, we can't move on until the lesson has been learned.

Worker 1 What has he done with his money?

Worker 2 It's likely to be a very cheap funeral. For, upon my life, I don't know anyone but her to go to it.

Worker 1 Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

Carole Oh, let me guess. My uncle is dead and I'm the only person going to the funeral for probably selfish reasons. This is just cruel, showing me people being rude about my family. Making me think about his death!

Worker 2 I don't mind going if lunch is provided.

Worker 1 Well, he's got his own, at last.

Worker 2 So I am told.

Carole Can we move on? Please!

H - Future Little lady, you don't seem to understand the pro-found life lesson we all could be learnin' here.

Carole And you don't seem to understand that a child has been kidnapped!

H - Future I do beg your pardon, you must forgive me.

Carole No.

Peter Let's move on.

(They exit and the lights dim. The Workers exit and we see that they have put up Scrooge's gravestone centre stage. Scrooge and C-Future enter.)

Scrooge And now we return... to my own grave. *(despondently)* Ah! Please, no!

C - Future Oh, you don't seem to be enjoying yourself here, Ebenezer. Is there something wrong?

Scrooge Spirit, I beg thee! I see now I have been cruel and mean man and I have not led a good life. But this... this is senseless. I want to go back and change things, I see now how my actions have hurt people. And I want to make things better, save Bob Cratchit's Christmas. But if you force me to stay here longer, I may miss Christmas altogether – miss the chance to right my wrongs! What good does that do anyone?!

(Enter Carole, C - Future drifts away from the two.)

Carole Uncle! Wait, are we...

Scrooge At a grave, my grave. I suppose no one came to the funeral.

Carole Well, that can't be true. I'd be there.

Scrooge Really?

Carole Of course! Listen, uncle, I should never have made you feel like I didn't love you exactly as you are. You are my family and I want to spend time with you. Not dozens of people who I have forced into having a good time. You, and Fred - that's all that matters. Christmas is about family and looking out for each other and I should have been thinking about that, not forcing you to enjoy it the way I wanted you to.

Scrooge No, no, you were just trying to help, Carole. I shouldn't have been so hard-headed about everything. When I think about the way I've treated poor Bob, working him to the bone... Maybe I should close the office more often. Give everyone a chance to see their families more. Even me.

Carole I'd like that, Uncle. I-

(In run the Cratchit children and Holidays Future)

Peter Miss Scrooge!

Belinda And, wait, Mr Scrooge!

Martha The Ghost is coming back!

Carole Right, yes! Epiphany later, this is more important.

Scrooge Wait, why have you got those children with you?

Carole Long story. Short version, their brother's been kidnapped by an evil ghost.

Scrooge Oh, goodness, well we need to go help him.

Belinda That's what we said! But the Ghost won't let us!

X - Future *(Offstage ominous laughter floating over the scene)*

Carole Oh thank goodness for that.

Martha Thank goodness?

Scrooge Isn't this bad?

Peter It's terrible! It's the Ghost of Xmas Future!

Belinda Come to take us away!

Carole Yes, exactly.

(blank looks all around)

Carole Look, Tim's been kidnapped by the Ghost of Xmas Future. If we want to get to Tim, the easiest way to find him is through the Ghost of Xmas Future.

C - Future I wish I could fault your logic but desolée - I cannot.
(Laughter increases and X-Future enter)

Carole Okay, you can stop that. We're not going to put up a fight.

Martha We're not?

Belinda We're not?

Peter We're not. This is the best way to save Tim. Carole's right.

C - Future Now, Xmas Future, this is really not on.

H - Future Y'all really need to learn some manners.

Carole Okay, Ghost. Do your worst.
(Blackout.)

2.9 Everybody's Story

Scrooge, C - Past, C - Present, C - Future, Carole, H - Past, H - Present, H - Future, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, X - Past, X - Present, X - Future, Boss

(Lights up on, well, almost everyone. I'm sorry. The already captured Ghosts are upstage (in 'ghost jail'), while the Scrooges are in one corner and the Cratchits in the other, Tiny Tim passed out next to them. The Xmas Ghosts are in the centre, X-Future holding the other two future ghosts captive.)

There is much evil laughter from all the Xmas Ghosts.)

X - Past Ha, ha, ha! Thank you Future! Managed to get them all in one fell swoop!

X - Present I always knew you were impressive!

H - Future Don't be thinking yourself special partner. This here was our choice.

C - Future *(even more Frenchly than usual)* We 'ave chosen to surrender.

X - Past Enough talking!

(Finger click and a load more muffled yelling. The captured Future Ghosts join the others in ghost jail.)

X - Present Six Ghosts completely under our control! I can't believe how easy it was!

Belinda Please, if you've got six Ghosts, you don't need one tiny human!

Peter Yeah, you can give us our brother back!

Martha Can't you?

X - Past Oh, no, you all know far too much now. We gave you a big evil monologue and everything – our plan would never work if you went blabbing to our Boss.

X - Present And you can imagine, that is not something we want to happen.

Peter Look, we don't want to be any trouble.

Martha We just want to go home.

Belinda Please, can you just let us go home to our parents?

X - Past No, I just explained why I can't do that!

X - Present I'll handle this. Look you can't go home but what if we sent you to a small pocket dimension where there's no one else but you and you get to have as much fun as you want for all eternity?

(Everyone stares at X-Present. X-Past does not look happy)

Martha That sounds like...the opposite of what we want.

Peter Yeah I don't really think that works as a compromise.

X - Present It works for me.

(Finger click, the kids collapse. We hear evil laughter from X – Future)

X - Past Finally those pesky little rats are out of the way. It's time for us to take what is rightfully ours.

(Even more evil laughter from X-Future. The others join in but X-Present looks uncertain)

X - Present You have a point, I just don't think we should take it through scaring and hurting children. It's a bit evil, isn't it?

X - Past You've been doing evil laughs for the last hour.

X - Present Fair point. What about those two?

X - Past Ah yes. The Scrooges. What do *you* think we should do with you?

Carole I think you should let us go, go back to your boss to be fired and forced to do... I don't know, what's the punishment for ghosts?

Scrooge Haunting politicians?

X - Past No, we are not going back to our boss, we're never going to be forced to do his dirty work again! *(to Scrooge)* Besides, you wanted to get rid of Christmas! No more Christmas, no more humbug holiday for you to deal with!

X - Present And Carole, the Holidays will last forever now. Everyone having fun, enjoying themselves all the time.

Carole I don't really think you can have both of those things.

X – Future *(confused agreement evil laughter)*

X - Present Well, you can because we will make it happen. It will be great!

X – Future *(triumphant evil laughter)*

X - Present The Holidays will last forever and everyone will celebrate and enjoy it and keep Christmas – keep Xmas the way it's meant to be kept!

Scrooge You don't keep Christmas, you don't even keep Xmas.

Carole And if you have a way you decide to keep it, then keep it in your own way and let us keep it in ours.

X - Present This is rich, coming from the girl who thinks we have to celebrate Christmas every single day of December.

Carole The holiday cheer is one thing but Christmas is just one day a year. If people don't want to celebrate that day, it's up to them.

Scrooge But if people want to spend that day with family, look after each other and try to make each other smile? I don't think that's a bad thing, do you?

(Carole and Scrooge look at each other and smile. It's a Profound Moment where we see what they've learned from their experiences)

X - Past This is ridiculous!

X - Present What do you possibly think you can do against us?

X - Past This is what you wanted! This is for you as much as it is for us!

Carole Oh, I don't think so.

(Song: Battle for Christmas. Rap battle with Xmas Ghosts against Scrooge and Carole, refereed by the tired Ghost of Christmas Past. After the song the Xmas Ghosts have been thoroughly trounced and are panting heavily.)

X - Past What was that?!

X – Future *(hurt, defeated evil laughter)*

Carole Hmm, you really aren't in the holiday spirit – you can't even handle a bit of Christmas wrapping!

Scrooge *(Fondly)* That was terrible, Carole.

X - Present How did any of this help you?

Carole Oh, it didn't. We just needed a distraction.

(H-Past emerges from ghost jail and knocks out X-Future)

X - Past What?!

(H-Past knocks out X-Past)

X - Present I won't do anything, please don't hurt me! Wait, I'll just...

(He looks frantically back and forth before just falling down on his own. Carole runs over to H - Past and hugs them)

H – Past Well, I guess I showed them. Are you okay?

Scrooge *(passive-aggressively)* Er, we're fine. That was very impressive, what were you waiting for?

H - Past They had us tied up!

Carole And you suddenly got untied, how?

H - Past I remembered that ghosts were incorporeal...

C - Present Excellently done! We can bring in the Christmas spirit and cheer and many-

Carole Would you shut up?

C - Past Look, Christmas Present, Holidays Present, why don't you take the Xmas Ghosts back to the Boss?

H - Present They won't be causing trouble anymore.

Boss *(Entering)* No, they won't.

(The Ghosts all freeze, the Xmas Ghosts halfway through standing up)

Boss You are all in a lot of trouble. I am very disappointed in how badly you completed your duties tonight.

C - Future Sorry, Boss, we'll do better next time.

H - Future We'll do better next time, we promise.

Boss You'd better. Now let's go.

(They all start shuffling off, Ghosts looking at the Scrooges sadly. Carole squares her shoulders and marches up to the Boss)

Carole You are joking, right?

Boss I'm sorry? Are you trying to suggest that tonight was anything other than a complete failure?

Carole Oh no, tonight was a disaster but that is all because of you!

H - Past Carole, don't...

Carole *(Loud and angry)* Is this really how you treat people? Force them to run around all day doing things they don't want to, lending their precious time every waking moment just to make YOUR life easier? And the Xmas ghosts, I know they were evil but you never appreciated them! They worked so hard for you, for so long, and how did you repay them? If I were you I w-

Scrooge Carole, stop!

(He steps between her and the Boss.)

Scrooge This man is their Boss, you need to show him the proper level of respect.

Boss I knew you would understand, Ebenezer.

Scrooge *(To Carole)* That is not the way to talk to a man like this. *(Turning to the Boss, louder and angrier than Carole)* How dare you treat these Ghosts like this?! They work so hard to follow your instructions and you can't even thank them? Give them a day off? Show them some courtesy? Do you know how hard they try to obey your ridiculous orders, day after day? They deserve so much more than you!

X - Past We just wanted some respect.

Scrooge Exactly! And they deserve it!

Boss This is rich coming from you! Besides, what are you going to do about it? I'm an all-powerful Ghost - you're just some old man.

Scrooge Oh, yes I am. And do you really want to deal with me when I become a Ghost myself?

(There is a moment where Scrooge stares the Boss down. The Boss definitely loses)

Boss Fine. Let's get back to the office and discuss some... time in lieu you're allowed.

Scrooge What about retirement?

Carole And promotions?

Boss Alright! Alright. We'll discuss all of that, let's just... let's just go...please?

(Exit the Boss with C - Present, H - Present and the Xmas ghosts.)

C - Past Did you just threaten him... with your own death?

Scrooge Well, it worked, didn't it?

Carole Wait, the Cratchit kids!

C - Future I can do that!

(Figure click, the Cratchits all wake up.)

Tiny Tim That was really weird.

Martha Carole!

Belinda Mr Scrooge!

Peter Are you okay?

Tiny Tim You defeated the ghosts?

Carole Well, sort of. We sang at them and then Holidays Past punched them.

Peter You did?

H - Future It was awesome.

Carole Very awesome.

H - Past *(looks pleased)* Well, I'm never doing it again.

C - Past Come on, Scrooge, let's get you home.

Scrooge This is it? No more tricks, I get to go home?

C - Past Why not? You've officially saved Christmas, after all.

C - Future Oh, did you hear that Ebenezer? You've saved Christmas. Don't you feel so proud of yourself, all the Christmas cheer you must be experiencing!

C - Past Future, help the Cratchit kids home.

C-Future Allons-y!

(Exit C-Future with the Cratchits.)

H - Future Well, little missy, that seems like I'll be taking you-

Carole No, no! I've dealt with you quite enough for one day!

H - Past It's alright Carole, I'll take you home.

(H-Past offers their arm, Carole takes it and kisses them on the cheek. They exit.)

C - Past Thank you, Ebenezer. Truly.

Scrooge No, thank you, my friend. Now, can we finally go home?

C - Past I think I can do that.

(Magic, magic. Blackout.)

2.10 Greater Expectations

Scrooge, Carole, Peter, Martha, Belinda, Tiny Tim, Emily, Bob, Urchin

(Magic sounds fade out and soft morning sounds fade in. Soft music that is cut off by-)

Carole Ahhh!!

(Lights up on Carole, back in her house. She stands up, as if looking through a window.)

Carole Oh, I'm fine. It's all fine. It's all still here and the Ghosts have gone. *(noticing urchin)* You there!

Urchin *(Appearing on the edge of the stag)* Um, yes, miss?

Carole What day is it today?

Urchin Today? Why it's Christmas day!

Carole Christmas Day! I haven't missed it! Could you take a message for me?

Urchin A message, miss? To who?

Carole To my brother, Fred. He lives next to the Poulterer's in the next street but one, at the corner. I need you to tell him I won't be seeing him today but I'd love it if he and his wife would join me for lunch sometime, whenever works best for them. Nothing fancy, just family. Here!

(She throws some money.)

Urchin A half-crown? Are you sure, miss?

Carole Of course I'm sure! Off you run, dear!

Urchin Yes, miss!

(The urchin runs past. Enter Scrooge, doing the same "looking out the window" thing)

Scrooge You there!

Urchin Um, yes, sir?

Scrooge What day is it today?

Urchin *(a bit more like he's just going through the motions)* Today? Why it's Christmas day!

Scrooge Christmas Day! I haven't missed it! Do you know the Poulterer's in the next street but one, at the corner?

Urchin Um, yes sir, I'm headed there now, actually.

Scrooge A remarkable child! Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging

up there?—Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?

Urchin The one as big as me? (*gesturing*) It's hanging there now.

Scrooge Go and buy it. Take it to the Cratchits' house, in Bayham Street, I'll meet it there. There's a crown in it for you!

Urchin Yes, sir! (*He runs off*)

(Scrooge leaves his "house" and walks across the stage. During his chat with the Urchin, Carole has been surrounded by people, very angry.)

Carole I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I know you all worked so hard on this and that I forced you into helping me, but I don't want to force you into anything else. The party is cancelled, please go home and enjoy Christmas with your families! I will make sure you are all reimbursed for your time and if you ever need anything from me, do not hesitate to ask, it's yours.

(The crowd grumbles, but disperses. Scrooge moves towards Carole, confused.)

Scrooge What are you doing Carole?

Carole Oh, Uncle! It's so good to see you! I wasn't sure the spirits would get you home okay.

Scrooge Of course they did! But we should check the Cratchits got home okay, let's go!

(He starts to move but she doesn't follow)

Carole *(downcast)* You go ahead, Uncle. Christmas isn't about me forcing people to enjoy themselves.

Scrooge No, it's not. It's about spending time with the people you care about – and I think we both care enough about those kids to make sure those idiot spirits got them home alright!

Carole But... what if they don't want me there?

Scrooge Then we'll go somewhere else. It's Christmas, Carole. You should spend it with family.

(Carole beams and hugs her uncle)

Carole I suppose I do need to make up for all the time I dragged their dad away from them!

Scrooge Exactly! And I think it's time Bob had his Christmas bonus!

(The two smile and they run off. Enter the Cratchits on the other side and the Scrooges arrive at the door, "knocking".)

Emily Who is it? (*Open door*) You! Look, I don't know what you're thinking, but you're not taking him away!

Scrooge Mrs Cratchit, I wouldn't dream of it! In fact, I'll be raising his salary and giving him extra days off, starting right now!

Emily What?!

Peter Mr Scrooge!

Tiny Tim Carole!

Martha You're okay!

Belinda You're here!

Scrooge We are! *(Urchin runs on with turkey)* And, look, here is a turkey I ordered. My apologies, Mrs Cratchit, I didn't feel right turning up without food to offer you.

Bob What is all this? Mr Scrooge!

Emily *(stunned)* It's...no problem, Bob – the Scrooges are here to join us for dinner, it seems. Get back to helping me in the kitchen.

Carole Oh, don't worry, I can do that! *(more uncertainly)* If you don't mind, Mrs Cratchit?

Emily Emily, please. And that would be lovely!

Scrooge Bob deserves a sit down after all his hard work. Though you can't let us forget to go shopping.

Bob But it's Christmas Day, the shops are all closed!

Carole Oh no! *(pause, a moment of reflection)* But that's okay. I know it's disappointing but now I've learned it's not what Christmas is truly about. As long as we're all here together, that's enough.

(Carole and Emily pick up the turkey and take it through to the "kitchen", exiting)

Scrooge Ah but Bob, tomorrow they'll be open! Yes, and there'll be lots of presents for everyone! *(He takes off his Scrooge nightcap and replaces it with a jolly Santa hat.)* Why don't you all tell me what you want for Christmas! Ho ho ho!

(Exit all laughing. Enter Jamie and Charlie on the other side, with the JNs. Jamie and Charlie look severely hungover.)

Riley Is that it? Are we done?

Arabella We can't be done, can we? We haven't passed our assessment yet...

Geoff Well, we might have done, we did do some narrating.

Riley If that's what you want to call it...

(The JNs look expectantly at Charlie and Jamie, who seem very much out of it.)

Charlie Um, can we help you?

Geoff Yes? You're meant to be assessing us?

Jamie We are?

Charlie I thought you were just shadowing us, getting to know how everything worked?

Geoff Hey, you bunked off half the script!

Arabella You made us do narration!

Riley You got drunk!

Jamie All, good points, all good points but look. There isn't even a Narrators' Test – we just pretended that to make you all pay attention.

Arabella But you said-

Charlie And from the looks of how you handled all of.... *This (gestures towards everything)* I'd say you're all just about ready to become fully fledged Narrators yourselves!

(The Junior Narrators all run off cheering. Jamie and Charlie stare after them, confused.)

Jamie Well, it all seemed to work out in the end.

Charlie I suppose so. I just wish we'd known what we were doing when we started.

Jamie And maybe not gotten so drunk halfway through...

Charlie Still, I suppose there's only one way to end the show.

Jamie I suppose so. Together?

Charlie Together.

Jamie I do love you Chazzie.

Charlie I love you too. And don't call me Chazzie. Come on now.

Jamie/Charlie God Bless Us, Every One!

FIN

	Act 1	Act 2
Carole Scrooge	1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10	2, 6, 8, 9, 10
Ebenezer Scrooge	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10	1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10
Fred Scrooge	1, 10	
Charlie	1, 3, 5, 8, 10	1, 5, 6, 10
Jamie	1, 3, 5, 8, 10	1, 5, 6, 10
Arabella	1, 5	1, 2, 10
Geoff	1, 5	1, 2, 10
Riley	1, 5	1, 2, 10
Christmas Past	3, 5, 7, 8,	3, 7, 9
Christmas Present	8, 10	2, 6, 9
Christmas Future		5, 8, 9
Holidays Past	2, 5, 7, 8,	3, 7, 9
Holidays Present	8, 10	1, 3, 5, 7, 9
Holidays Future		6, 8, 9
Xmas Past	6, 7, 8, 10	4, 7, 9
Xmas Present	8, 10	4, 7, 9
Xmas Future		4, 6, 8, 9
Yuletide Past	9	
The Boss		3, 9
Bob Cratchit	4, 9	2, 10
Emily Cratchit	4, 9	2, 10
Peter Cratchit	4, 6, 7, 8, 10	4, 6, 8, 9, 10
Martha Cratchit	4, 6, 7, 8, 10	4, 6, 8, 9, 10
Belinda Cratchit	4, 6, 7, 8, 10	4, 6, 8, 9, 10

Tiny Tim Cratchit	4, 6, 7, 8, 10	4, 6, 9, 10
Headmaster	5	
Young Ebenezer	5	
Fran	5	
Fezziwig	7	
Teen Ebenezer	7	
Belle	7	
Matthew	10	
Clara	10	
Worker 1		8
Worker 2		8
Urchin		10