

WHAT IN THE DICKENS HAPPENED TO SCROOGE?

By Jerry Cowling

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This Christmas the folds affected by Ebenezer Scrooge's miserly ways hatch a plan to get him intoxicated, act out his life before his bleary little and force him to become "the most generous soul in London."

That night, as old Scrooge imbibes "exceptionally fine" tea, the Cratchits and friends present several funny and poignant scenes of Christmases past, present and future. Laughs abound as they try to convert the curmudgeon.

Everyone's having a grand escapade but crafty old Scrooge isn't as drunk as he pretends. Amid the fun, each character learns a little more about himself and each is changed for the better, as is Scrooge. The next morning they all celebrate and Tiny Tim boasts, "God helps those who help themselves. I mean, God bless us, everyone." Warm-hearted and lively, this play is sure to bring the Christmas spirit to your audience.

CHARACTERS:

6m, 4w, optional chorus

(In order of appearance)

EBENEZER SCROOGE: A small, prune-faced miser! He wears well-kept but out-of-date clothes.

BOB CRATCHIT: Scrooge's meek, middle-aged clerk. A family man. His clothing, though newer than Scrooge's, is worn.

MR. TETTERBY: A large, robust man. A bit of a dandy, wears high-fashion clothes, sports a well-manicured moustache, and dyes his hair to preserve his youthful appearance.

MRS. WARDLE: Tetterby's sister; well dressed but conservative. An average-sized, kindly woman.

FRED: Scrooge's nephew, a bank teller. A handsome young man and dressed as dapperly as a man of limited means might.

TINY TIM: Cratchit's lame son, about 10 years old, bright and sensitive. Not expected to live long.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Bob's wife. Life's problems have hardened her.

MARTHA: Daughter, 12, pretty but subdued.

PETER: Son, about 14 and bright-eyed.

BELLE: Fred's fiancée, attractive and sensibly dressed.

(ALL characters need coats, hats, etc. in addition to their costumes.)

SETTING

ACT I

Scene 1: Two days before Christmas, 1855.

Scene 2: Late afternoon, Christmas Eve.

Scene 3: A little later that same night.

Scene 4: Same night, a little later.

ACT II

Scene 1: A little later, same night.

Scene 2: Early Christmas morning.

All action takes place at Scrooge and Marley's Counting House, London. A desk is SR. UR is the front door. UC is a window with the reversed lettering, "Scrooge and Marley's." DC is a long bench for waiting customers. UL is a small table with teapot and cups, a stool, a coal scuttle and a stove. DL is a high desk and high stool. By the front door is a coat rack.

PROPS

Bag of money; hunks of coal; book bag; crutch; coin; 3 cups of tea; two flasks; basket of food (including cooked goose, tablecloth and flatware); fake tombstone; gray gown; black robe; chains; small purse holding kerchief and white makeup; small bag of coins; wine glasses; sewing; bottle of wine; and cups on a tray.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Two days before Christmas. EBENEZER SCROOGE is looking out the window of his office. BOB CRATCHIT is hunched over his books at the high desk.)

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug!

CRATCHIT: I beg your pardon, sir?

SCROOGE: I don't have to explain my exclamations to you.

CRATCHIT: Oh. I'm sorry, sir.

SCROOGE: It's those two charity solicitors who haunt me every year. Hmph. They usually come Christmas Eve. They're a day early this year.

CRATCHIT: You mean Mr. Tetterby and Mrs. Wardle?

SCROOGE: You actually remember their names? I save my memory for more important things. *(Sits.)* Like people who owe me money.

CRATCHIT: Anything you say, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Indeed, anything I say, indeed. I'll remember or forget any name I wish to remember or forget.

CRATCHIT: Of course, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: I cannot abide their cursed good will this evening. I'll go to the bank early tonight. *(Glances suspiciously at CRATCHIT as he unlocks the bottom drawer to pull out a bag of money.)*

CRATCHIT: I rather enjoy their yearly visitations. Mr. Tetterby is so jovial, and his sister Mrs. Wardle is so kind.

(SCROOGE stands, walks to the coat tree and puts on his hat, scarf, coat and gloves.)

SCROOGE: Jovial and kind, indeed. A bank does not care for kindness and joviality. It only cares for this. *(Holds up the money bag.)*

CRATCHIT: Yes sir.

(SCROOGE heads for the door.)

What in the Dickens Happened to Scrooge?

- 6 -

SCROOGE: I shall return soon, hopefully well after the visitation you so mindlessly anticipate. (*Opens door.*) Oh, and don't add any coal to the fire while I'm gone. The warmth only takes away the numbness in your fingers. Then you feel the cold more.

(*SCROOGE exits UR. CRATCHIT follows him to the door, watches to make sure Scrooge is gone.*)

CRATCHIT: And I say bah humbug to numb fingers!

(*CRATCHIT goes to scuttle and gets a couple of hunks of coal to toss into the stove and warms himself by the fire until TETTERBY and MRS. WARDLE enter from UR.*)

MRS. WARDLE: Merry Christmas, my good Mr. Cratchit!

(*CRATCHIT bows to MRS. WARDLE and shakes hands with TETTERBY.*)

CRATCHIT: Good to see you again, Mrs. Wardle, Mr. Tetterby.

MRS. WARDLE: And how is the family?

(*CRATCHIT returns to his desk, avoiding eye contact.*)

CRATCHIT: Fine, fine. Everyone is fine. (*Looks around and smiles.*) I'm so glad the two of you could visit again this year. It wouldn't seem like Christmas if you didn't drop in.

TETTERBY: We would visit more often if it were not for your employer. By the bye, where is the old pinchpenny?

MRS. WARDLE: Brother dear, you mustn't speak so of Mr. Scrooge. Who knows, perhaps he has had a change of heart and will share his generous portion of life's bounty with the less fortunate this Christmastide.

TETTERBY: That isn't likely.

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