

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS

A SATIRE OF THEATRICAL BACKSTAGE MAYHEM AND
CHARLES DICKENS' *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* IN ONE ACT

By Michael Wehrli

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A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – ONE ACT

By Michael Wehrli

A SATIRE OF THEATRICAL BACKSTAGE MAYHEM AND CHARLES DICKENS' "A CHRISTMAS CAROL" IN ONE ACT

SYNOPSIS: When a professional theatre company gets stranded across the country, it's up to a rag-tag group of local theatre people to throw together their own version of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

The stage manager comes out at the beginning to gently tell the audience that after only one day's preparation, that the show must go on! During the show we meet the pretentious narrator, the "professional" actor playing Scrooge, and a myriad of other "theatrical types" that theatre companies and audiences will recognize and adore immediately. It quickly becomes apparent that this group is far from ready to put on a show, let alone *A Christmas Carol*. There are two child actors vying for the role of Tiny Tim; there's an extremely flighty and confused crew member who believes she is in the cast; two cast members are very unhappy with each other; one actor who plays both Bob and Mrs. Cratchit at the same time; and others who are struggling to make the best of a terribly funny situation. Everything that can go wrong does, but the show ends with the actors pleased, the crew proud, and the audience wonderfully entertained!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FLEXIBLE CAST OF 13, APPROXIMATELY 3 MEN, 4 WOMEN,
1 YOUTH FEMALE, 1 YOUTH MALE, 4 EITHER GENDER, EXTRAS)

Note: I encourage theatre companies to use the names of their actual cast members when it is indicated in the script.

SCROOGE (M) Considers himself a "professional actor." He is appalled when others don't take the craft seriously. Strong-willed. (145 lines)

- STAGE MANAGER (M/F)** Tough, no-nonsense type. Doing his/her best to keep things on track. *(55 lines)*
- NARRATOR (M/F)**..... Considers him/herself a great speaker. Loves to show off their vocabulary. *(23 lines)*
- CONFUSED ACTOR (M/F)** Quite talented yet very flighty. Easily confused. *(15 lines)*
- TINY TIM 1 (YTH FEMALE)** Strong-willed. Used to getting her own way. *(20 lines)*
- SINGER, TINY TIM 2 (YTH MALE)** Considers himself the child star of the area. *(23 lines)*
- NERVOUS ACTOR, FRED, CHRISTMAS FUTURE (F)** Was the understudy for the production. Suffers from stage fright. Shy and nervous. *(30 lines)*
- BOB CRATCHIT, FAN, BELLE (M)** A goofball. Thinks he's a good actor, but tends to over play things. In a relationship with the actress playing YOUNG SCROOGE and they frequently butt heads. *(32 lines)*
- CHRISTMAS PAST, CHRISTMAS PRESENT, BUSINESSMAN 1 (M/F)**..... Comedic actor/actress. Loves to ad-lib or find humor in everything. Frequently amuses theirself. *(22 lines)*

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – ONE ACT

PETER, BUSINESSMAN 2 (M) Loves being involved in the theatre even though his talents are minimal. He strives to do his best, though he is rarely successful. (19 lines)

CHARITY LADY, MARY (F) Very quick on her feet. Can always make the best of a tough situation. (34 lines)

MARLEY, BOB AND

MRS. CRATCHIT (F) Strong actress that loves a challenge. Able to ad-lib well and roll with whatever is presented to her. But has a tendency to go overboard with her characters. (34 lines)

YOUNG SCROOGE, BOY (F) Strong-willed and hard-headed. In a relationship with the actor playing FAN and they frequently argue. Tends to “lose” herself in her roles. (36 lines)

SCENE

A theatre or auditorium.

TIME

The present.

SET/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The show can be done very minimally or on a larger scale. The important thing to note is the play should look as if it was thrown together very hastily. The show starts off with the curtains closed. From there, set pieces and props are brought on to the stage to suggest new locations – so everything should be easily movable. Every set piece should look as if the theatre company pulled from what they already had in stock or could quickly find. Costumes and props should follow the same rule. Lighting can be somewhat minimal, though it would be more fun if several areas could be delineated. Shy away from too many lighting effects – remember, they only put the show together in a day! If you do decide to have lighting effects, consider having them not work out as planned. Sound effects should be realistic, but as noted in the script, usually not on cue.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The best way to bring out the full comedy of the play is for the actors to play it honestly. Each character, in their own way, should be trying to do their best to make the show work – even though their choices vary from odd to outright ridiculous. The stage directions written in to the script should be followed closely, as the stage movement of the show is an integral part of the overall comedic effects. Though the look of the show is chaotic, the actors and crew should be very carefully choreographed. The playwright encourages each production to add local references (only where it is marked in the script). This includes the actors using their actual names.

ACT ONE

SETTING:

A theatre or auditorium.

AT RISE:

The curtains are closed.

LIGHTS come up and the STAGE MANAGER awkwardly comes through the curtains.

STAGE MANAGER: Uhh...hello there everyone. I'm the production stage manager and uhh...well...listen, a funny thing happened... uhh, guess it really isn't that funny. Okay, look, I know you all came to see the Royal Shakespeare Company perform their famous version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. But uhh... they made it to Portland, all right. Portland...Maine. (*Your production may substitute a city name that's appropriate.*)

We found out seven hours ago. But don't worry! The show must go on, right? So we have been working all day to give you our own version of *A Christmas Carol*. Please bear with us - it's been one weird and crazy day. Well, uhh, thanks. On with the—

TINY TIM 1: (*From offstage.*) _____!!!
(*Name of the actor playing STAGE MANAGER.*)

STAGE MANAGER: Oh man, what now!?

TINY TIM 1: (*entering*) You said I could play Tiny Tim!

STAGE MANAGER: I did?

TINY TIM 1: Yes!!!

STAGE MANAGER: When?

TINY TIM 1: Right after lunch.

STAGE MANAGER: What?

TINY TIM 1: You said _____ (*Name of the actor playing TINY TIM 2.*) was out and I was in!

STAGE MANAGER: I don't remember saying—

TINY TIM 1: You did! You did!! You did!!!

Keeps repeating this as she circles STAGE MANAGER who tries to interject.

STAGE MANAGER: But I didn't - I wouldn't have - couldn't you -
OKAY, FINE! You can be Tiny Tim!

TINY TIM 1 stops instantly, and smiles.

TINY TIM 1: Thank you. *(Starts to exit.)*

STAGE MANAGER: *(To herself.)* _____ *(Name of the actor playing TINY TIM 2.) is not going to like this...*

TINY TIM 1 stops, glares at STAGE MANAGER, then exits.

STAGE MANAGER: Oh man... *(Smiles meekly to the audience.)*
Don't worry, people. We got it all covered. *(softly.)* I hope.
(Whispers into headsets.) Lights and sound, go!

STAGE MANAGER exits. LIGHTS slowly fade out. Odd MUSIC plays. Soon the CURTAINS open. NARRATOR is sitting in a chair far down stage right, near the edge of the stage, holding a book. Eventually, LIGHTS come back up on the NARRATOR and Scrooge's Office. SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT are their desks. Scrooge's "desk" is a typical school desk so small that he can barely get into it. Bob's "desk" is a tall stool and a very low table. There is a pause as SCROOGE and BOB struggle for a few seconds with their "desks" — NARRATOR sits watching, dumbfounded. Eventually, BOB CRATCHIT sits on the floor in order to reach his desk—he begins working on a ten-key machine.

NARRATOR: Marley, was dead—

SCROOGE: *(Looking at BOB CRATCHIT, referring to the ten-key machine.)* That is not period!

BOB CRATCHIT: Nope. It's a decimal point! *(Laughs at his own joke.)*

SCROOGE: Oh!

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – ONE ACT

NARRATOR: Marley was—

SFX: BOB CRATCHIT'S cell phone rings. He answers it.

BOB CRATCHIT: Hello? Yeah. Hey there Alex, what's up?

SCROOGE: Oh, for the love of—

BOB CRATCHIT: *(Talking on the phone.)* No, no man. Doing my show. Yeah, we just started. When you coming to see it?

STAGE MANAGER: *(Pops out.)* Turn that blasted thing off!!!

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh. Alex, sorry dude, gotta run. Listen let's hook up at _____ *(Name of a local karaoke bar.)* later and sing some tunes.

During above, SCROOGE walks over, takes the cell phone from him, and tosses it off stage. We hear STAGE MANAGER and NERVOUS Actor talking backstage.

NARRATOR: Marley was—

NERVOUS enters, pursued by the STAGE MANAGER.

NERVOUS: _____ *(Name of actor playing STAGE MANAGER.)* I assure you I cannot do this.

STAGE MANAGER: There's no one else who can play —

NERVOUS: I can't! All those people staring and watching. *(Sees the audience, freezes.)* Staring and watching. Staring and watching. *(She continues. STAGE MANAGER takes her offstage.)*

NARRATOR: Oh dear. Sorry everyone. Ahem. Marley was dead to begin with. There was no doubt whatever about that. *(MARLEY enters and elaborately "dies" in the background, unseen by NARRATOR.)* Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

NARRATOR finally notices as MARLEY finishes dying gloriously and loudly.

STAGE MANAGER: *(Enters.)* Get off the stage!

MARLEY and STAGE MANAGER exit.

NARRATOR: Oh, but he was a tightfisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug!

SCROOGE pantomimes the below description.

NARRATOR: A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner!

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug!

NARRATOR: And once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house with his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

BOB CRATCHIT: (*Pretends he is very cold.*) S...S...Sir...I am s...so...C...C...Cold. Can I p...p...please p...put an...another—

SCROOGE: You're never going to finish that line are you?

STAGE MANAGER: (*Pops out.*) _____
(*Name of actor playing SCROOGE.*) don't break character!

SCROOGE: Right, sorry! No sir, Bob Cratchit! If you use coal at that rate you and I will soon be parting company.

BOB CRATCHIT: Y...Y...Yes...S...Si...Si...

SCROOGE: Never mind!!! Just warm your hands at your candle. Bah humbug!

SINGER comes up and pretends to knock on the "door." His pantomime is terrible. The SFX happens after his knock. SINGER starts singing a gut-wrenchingly awful version of a standard Christmas song. SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT react. Finally, SCROOGE can't stand it anymore. He goes over, opens the "door" and again the SFX happens afterward. The SINGER smiles, and holds out his hand and continues singing.

SCROOGE: Go on, get away from my door!

SINGER: (*Stops singing.*) What?

SCROOGE: Stop your blasted caroling!

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – ONE ACT

SINGER: But it's a tradition at Christmas time! (*SINGER starts singing again.*)

SCROOGE: Aaaaah!!! Well I don't want any of your customs. Close your oral opening, lower your grubby paw, and go away.

SINGER: Sorry sir. Merry Christmas to you anyway, sir.

Exits, singing.

SCROOGE: (*Closes the "door."*) Christmas. Bah, humbug! (*SFX happens, he reacts.*) Errrr. And what are you looking at, Bob Cratchit?! Get back to your work!

BOB: Yes s...s...sir, M...M...Mis—

SCROOGE: Don't start that again! Carolers. Decorations. Holiday cheer. Bah, it's all humbug. (*Pause.*) It's...all...humbug!

Pause. SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT look at each other. Finally, STAGE MANAGER pushes out NERVOUS as FRED. She is petrified and stands motionless looking at the audience.

STAGE MANAGER: Come on, _____. (*Name of actor playing FRED.*) You can do it.

NARRATOR: (*Prompting.*) "Merry Christmas, Uncle!"

FRED: Mm...Mmerr...Mmm...

STAGE MANAGER: Don't be nervous, _____!
(*Name of actor playing FRED.*)

BOB CRATCHIT: Yeah! Just imagine all those people in the audience in their underwear—

SCROOGE: Don't try to help! (*Getting back into character.*) Uh, bah, humbug!

FRED: Underwear?

NARRATOR: "Merry Christmas Uncle."

FRED: Underwear? Underwear...underwear... (*Freezes.*)

STAGE MANAGER: Oh man.

STAGE MANAGER enters, stands behind FRED, puts her arms under FRED'S armpits, says her lines, and moves FRED'S arms to gesture. FRED is petrified throughout. STAGE MANAGER drags or lifts FRED to the "door." STAGE MANAGER pantomimes opening door, SFX happens afterward.

STAGE MANAGER: *(As FRED, using different voice.)* "Merry Christmas Uncle."

SCROOGE: Hmm? Oh, yes. Bah, humbug!

STAGE MANAGER: "Christmas a humbug, Uncle? Surely you don't mean that."

SCROOGE: I do mean that!

BOB CRATCHIT: And don't call him Shirley! *(Laughs at his own joke.)*

SCROOGE glares at BOB CRATCHIT.

SCROOGE: You keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine!

STAGE MANAGER: *(With difficulty, she moves FRED.)* "But you don't keep it. Christmas is a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. And though it hasn't put a scrap of gold in my pocket. I say it has done me good and will do me good, and I say"—

FRED: *(Snaps out of it.)* God bless it.

BOB CRATCHIT: God bless Christmas! Hurrah!

STAGE MANAGER tries to sneak off.

SCROOGE: Quiet you! Bah, humbug!

FRED: Please don't be angry, Uncle... *(She sees audience again, freezes. Pause.)*

STAGE MANAGER: Oh! *(Runs back behind her. Gestures and speaks for her again.)* "Come! Dine with us tomorrow."

SCROOGE: No!

During the below, FRED quietly echoes each sentence after the STAGE MANAGER says it.

STAGE MANAGER: (*Moving FRED.*) “I want nothing from you. I ask nothing of you. Why cannot we be friends?”

SCROOGE: Good afternoon. Bah, humbug!

STAGE MANAGER: “I am sorry to find you so resolute. But I’ll keep my Christmas humor to the last! So a merry Christmas, Uncle!”

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

STAGE MANAGER: “And a happy new year!”

They open the door. SCROOGE follows.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon, Bah, humbug!

SFX of door. STAGE MANAGER quickly pushes FRED to get offstage, but as they do, they run smack into the CHARITY lady, sending her box of coins to the floor spilling. FRED snaps out of it.

FRED: Oh, my gracious! I am so sorry!

CHARITY: (*Whispers.*) Go on, I’ll handle it.

FRED: (*Kneeling to help pick up her coins.*) But what about your coins? (*STAGE MANAGER picks up FRED, she sees the audience and freezes again.*)

STAGE MANAGER: Move it. (*STAGE MANAGER pushes her off stage with great effort.*)

FRED: Underwear...underwear...underwear... (*Exits.*)

CHARITY: (*Kneeling on floor, picking up coins.*) Scrooge and Marley’s I believe?

SCROOGE crosses over to her. He thinks he has come up with an excellent piece of business to “cover” for what has happened. During the below scene, he tries to distract her and every time she looks away, he picks up and pockets a coin.

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley died seven years ago this very night. I am Scrooge.

CHARITY: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time.

SCROOGE: (*Distracts her, picks up a coin.*) Are there no prisons?

CHARITY: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: (*Distracts her.*) And the Union workhouses – they're still in operation then?

CHARITY: I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE: (*Distracts her.*) The Treadmill and the Poor Law?

CHARITY catches him. SCROOGE pretends that he was helping her. As he hands it to her, he picks up another coin and pockets it.

CHARITY: Both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE: I'm very glad to hear it. (*Stands, all the coins fall out of his pocket.*)

CHARITY: Look, we just need a donation Mr. Skinflint—Mr. Scrooge. So what shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

CHARITY: You wish to remain anon... anony...anomo... (*Keeps trying to say "anonymous."*)

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone! Bah, humbug!

CHARITY: Well fine!!!! Sheesh, what a grouch.

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug!

CHARITY: Good day sir! (*Starts to exit.*)

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug! (*Door SFX happens. To cover, SCROOGE rushes to open and close the door. He then crosses and looks at his "desk."*) Bah, humbug. (*To BOB.*) Bah, humbug. We have got to find something else for me to say. (*BOB brings him his hat and coat.*)

BOB CRATCHIT: If it's quite convenient sir, may I take the entire day tomorrow?

SCROOGE: It is not convenient. Bah, humbug!—

BOB CRATCHIT: It does get old, doesn't it?

SCROOGE: —Oh, I suppose that you—

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – ONE ACT

CONFUSED actor enters wearing an “Anne” outfit from **Anne of Green Gables** including a bad red hair wig. She carries an old suitcase.

CONFUSED: Oh Mr. Cuthbert, I can’t wait to arrive at Green Gables.

Thank you for picking me up from the train station.—

SCROOGE: What on earth—

CONFUSED: —there is so much to learn about this wonderful and interesting world. Don’t you think?

BOB CRATCHIT: _____? (*Name of actor playing CONFUSED.*) What are you doing?

STAGE MANAGER enters.

CONFUSED: (*Stops.*) What?

STAGE MANAGER: All right, stop it, _____. (*Name of actor playing CONFUSED.*) We are doing *A Christmas Carol*, not *Anne of Green Gables*.

CONFUSED: Ooooohhh! Why didn’t you say so? Right. Got it. Be ready soon! (*Exits.*)

STAGE MANAGER: (*Exiting.*) I told her not to take her meds...

BOB CRATCHIT: Wow. That was...weird.

SCROOGE: Tell me about it. I mean, I suppose you can have the entire day. But be here all the earlier the next morning.

BOB CRATCHIT: Thank you sir! And a merry Christmas, sir!

SCROOGE: Bah—

SCROOGE AND BOB: Humbug!!!

LIGHTS shift. *SCROOGE* and *BOB CRATCHIT* freeze in a tableau.

NARRATOR: The office was closed in a twinkling and Bob ran home to Camden Town to play with his family at Blindman’s Buff. (*Pause. Then louder.*) Closed in a twinkling!

Scene change. There is a huge flurry of activity as the stage is changed into "Scrooge's Bedroom" – a chair, small table, bowl of gruel and spoon, something that looks vaguely like a fireplace, and a very, very small bed. The stool is left on stage from the previous scene. MARLEY holds a poster board that has a "door" painted on one side and a flap where the knocker is painted on. SCROOGE pantomimes the below.

NARRATOR: Scrooge lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone— (*SCROOGE runs into the stool and it falls over with a crash.*) —was fain to grope with his hands. (*SCROOGE gets up and goes to the door. STAGE MANAGER sneaks on and takes off the stool.*) When Scrooge arrived at his familiar door, he was greeted by a dismal sight. There, where the knocker once stood, was Marley's face. (*MARLEY pokes her face through the flap in the "door."*) The face looked at Scrooge as Marley used to do. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air. (*MARLEY blows on her long and stringy wig hair.*) And as Scrooge opened the door— (*SCROOGE does, MARLEY moves the "door" as if it is opening and makes a creaking sound.*) —the ghostly visage vanished. (*MARLEY stands there, SCROOGE quietly tells her to "beat it."*) After a thorough check of his house, Scrooge retired to his bedroom to sit by the fire to take his gruel.

SCROOGE changes into his dressing gown and nightcap. When SCROOGE is seated, a bell starts to ring off stage, followed by another, then another. Then a series of other odd sounds are heard off stage (e.g. kazoo, slide whistle, juice harp: anything that will sound odd!) SCROOGE gets progressively more scared until all the sounds cease and MARLEY enters. MARLEY is dressed in a sheet with two eyeholes and a bowler hat and carries a tiny little chain—which she pretends is very heavy.

MARLEY: Scrooooooooooge! Scrooooooooooge!! Scrooooooooooge!!!

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – ONE ACT

MARLEY tries to stand on the “bed” and falls over. SCROOGE and the STAGE MANAGER run over to help her to her feet. Once she is up, we see the eyeholes are not over her eyes. SCROOGE is disgusted.

MARLEY: Scrooooooooooge! (She fixes the sheet so she can see during below.)

SCROOGE: Jacob Marley! (MARLEY is startled.) Why do you walk the earth and why do you bother me?

MARLEY: Your welfare. (Gets carried away.) Booooooooooooo!!!
Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!!!

STAGE MANAGER comes out and bonks MARLEY on the head with her script. Then exits.

SCROOGE: Why do you wear that— (Tries to see the very small chain. Finally does.) You've got to be kidding...why do you wear that chain?

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life! Boooooo! AAAAAAHHHH!!! (MARLEY waves the chain grandly and promptly drops it. During the below, she is trying to find it.) Uh-oh. Uh, you have a chance of escaping my fate, _____. (Name of actor playing SCROOGE.)

SCROOGE: Ebenezer!

MARLEY: Ebenezer!

SCROOGE: You were always a good friend to me. Thank you.

MARLEY is still looking for the chain.

MARLEY: You shall be haunted by three spirits. Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one. (SCROOGE has found the chain and hands it to her. She acts as if it is very heavy.) Oh, thanks! (Starts backing off.) Boooooo!!! Remember! Aaaaahhhh!!! Remember! Remember! (When she gets off stage there is a huge crash.) I'm all right.

NARRATOR: The apparition had walked backward from him and floated out the window. Scrooge followed and he looked out.

SCROOGE goes and pantomimes opening a "window." SFX happens on time but it is busy city sounds. SCROOGE looks disgusted. SFX are abruptly stopped then play again and it is wind. LIGHTS dim. Several people come out as various GHOSTS. They make LOTS of noise - so much so that the NARRATOR has to shout by the end of her line.

NARRATOR: *(Continues.)* The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste. The misery with them was clear. Soon these creatures faded into the mist and their spirit voices faded together. *(Pause.)* The creatures faded!!!!

GHOSTS quickly exit. SCROOGE closes the "window." SFX happens way afterward. SCROOGE reacts then goes to his bed which is very tiny. He spends a few moments figuring out how to best lie on it. LIGHTS shift. Eventually, a COW BELL chimes 'one' off stage. CHRISTMAS PAST enters slowly.

SCROOGE: Who are you? *(Rises.)*

PAST: *(Ghostly voice.)* Iiiiiiiii am the Ghooooost of Christmas Paaaaaast!

SCROOGE: Long past?

PAST: *(Looks at watch.)* No, about half past. *(Smirks.)*

SCROOGE: Errrr! Long past!?

PAST: Noooooo, your paaaaaast. Rise and waaaallllk with meeeeeee.

SCROOGE: I'm already standing.

PAST: Gooooood pooooooooooooo! Cooooommmmmme!

PAST leads him to another part of the stage. There is a flurry of activity as "Scrooge's Bedroom" is struck.

PAST: Now loooooook!

FAN and YOUNG SCROOGE come out. The actor playing FAN is not happy about being in women's clothing.

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – ONE ACT

STAGE MANAGER: *(Entering.)* Hold it! You're wearing each other's costumes!

FAN and YOUNG SCROOGE exchange looks.

YOUNG SCROOGE: I told you!

FAN: No you didn't!

YOUNG SCROOGE: Yes I did!!

FAN: No you didn't!!

YOUNG SCROOGE: Yes, I did!!!

FAN: I'm telling you—

STAGE MANAGER: Stop! Just go on.

FAN: How can we “go on”?

STAGE MANAGER: Do each other's roles.

FAN: No way on earth!

YOUNG SCROOGE grabs him. STAGE MANAGER exits.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Do it!

FAN: Fine. *(Half-heartedly.)* Dear, dear brother.

YOUNG SCROOGE: *(Stepping on his foot.)* Do it right!

FAN: *(Winces. YOUNG SCROOGE gestures. He does a little girl voice.)* Dear, dear brother. I have come to bring you home, dear Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE: *(Boy voice.)* Home little Fan?

FAN: Yes! Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be that home is like Heaven!

YOUNG SCROOGE: Hoorah!

She does a large gesture and accidentally hits FAN in the face. Both scramble off stage. PAST leads SCROOGE to another part of the stage. You hear FAN and YOUNG SCROOGE both whispering and running very loudly backstage to get to the other side of the stage. We hear the STAGE MANAGER yell: “Slow down and keep quiet!”

PAST: Aaaaalways a deeeeelicate creature. But she had a laaaaaarge heaaaaaart.

SCROOGE: So she had. You are right, Spirit.

PAST: Now loooooook. *(Pause. No one enters.)* Now loooooook!
(Overlap the below dialogue.)

BELLE: *(Off stage.)* I am not doing this—

YOUNG SCROOGE: *(Off stage.)* Yes you are —

BELLE: *(Off stage.)* Stop telling me what to do! —

YOUNG SCROOGE: *(Off stage.)* Get your butt on that stage! —

They enter again, BELLE being pushed on by YOUNG SCROOGE. Again, they have their costumes switched so that he is BELLE and YOUNG SCROOGE is still in her costume. STAGE MANAGER enters.

STAGE MANAGER: You did it again!

YOUNG SCROOGE: There wasn't time for me to change! *(Overlap the below dialogue.)*

BELLE: Yeah right—

YOUNG SCROOGE: Just shut up and go on! —

BELLE: Don't you tell me to shut up! —

YOUNG SCROOGE: Well then don't get me mad —

BELLE: I didn't do anything! —

YOUNG SCROOGE: Right. You never do anything—

BELLE: Don't bring on that crud again—

YOUNG SCROOGE: Oh, there's more where that came from—

Both continue to ad-lib/argue.

STAGE MANAGER: BOTH OF YOU SHUT UP! *(Both glare at her.)*
I'm...sorry. Please, go on.

YOUNG SCROOGE: *(Still glaring at STAGE MANAGER.)* I...Oh, all right. Go on, Belle!

STAGE MANAGER exits.

BELLE: *(Scowls at YOUNG SCROOGE. Starts off with his voice.)* I release you— *(YOUNG SCROOGE gestures to BELLE as if telling him to “do it right.” He now does his ‘BELLE’ voice.)* —I release you from our engagement Ebenezer. *(Close to her ear and really loud, to get back at her. She covers her ears.)* You may have pain in this — *(Goes to her other side, even louder.)* — a very brief pain! But you will dismiss the recollection of it as an unprofitable dream. *(She grabs him, he is scared.)* May you be happy in the life you have chosen. *(He quickly exits.)*

YOUNG SCROOGE: *(Very dramatic.)* Beeeellllllleee!!! *(Exits.)*

SCROOGE: No more. Show me no more!

PAST: *(Regular voice.)* All right. *(Exits.)*

Pause. SCROOGE is unsure what to do.

SCROOGE: Ah. I...I really feel I've learned something. Oh...um... bah, humbug!

Pause. Still nothing happens. CONFUSED enters as Hamlet carrying a skull and playing it like William Shatner.

CONFUSED: Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times— *(STAGE MANAGER enters and pushes her off stage.)* —and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. *(Exits.)*

SCROOGE waits for something to happen.

STAGE MANAGER: *(Enters.)* Go on. *(Exits.)*

SCROOGE: Go on she says...

BY MICHAEL WEHRLI

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