

Scrooge What a relief. It was just two cats fighting. To bed! (*He goes behind the bed flat and realizes when he is there that he is too short to put his head through the hole. His nightcap is just visible. He jumps up at the hole, snores rapidly and then disappears again. He tries this twice more, then incoherent grumbling can be heard*) Pass me that! Pass me that!

Hoping she is unobserved, Felicity passes Scrooge a milk crate from behind the gauze

After a moment Scrooge fits his head comfortably into the hole and feigns sleep

Marley (*off*) Wooooooo! Wooooooo!

Scrooge There it is again—that spectral moan! And yet I can see nothing. But wait! A ghastly apparition approaches my bed!

Marley enters, still attached to the front door

Marley Sorry. I'm stuck.

Scrooge (*in character*) I don't believe it!

Marley No, honest. It's jammed tight. Look. (*He struggles*)

Scrooge What do you want with me?

Marley Well, if you can just hold this so I can pull . . . oh, I see what you mean. Er . . . much.

Scrooge Who are you?

Marley Ask me who you were.

Scrooge Not "who you were".

Marley Ask me who I were.

Scrooge No. "Ask me who I was."

Marley Who was you?

Scrooge Don't ask me! You want me to ask you!

Marley Yes! I want you to ask me who you was.

Scrooge No. No. No. Your line is, "Ask me who I was".

Marley Ask me who I was.

Scrooge Who were you?

Marley You said it was, "Ask me who I was".

Scrooge It was!

Marley Well, what is it now?

Scrooge It hasn't changed!

Marley It's still the same?

Scrooge Yes!

Marley Oh, that's a relief.

Scrooge Are you going to tell me then?

Marley Tell you what?

Scrooge Who—you—were.

Marley Well, I'm not the man I was.

Scrooge All right, just concentrate, will you? You say: "Ask me who I was".

I say, "Who were you?" And you tell me!

Marley I tell you what?

Scrooge Who you were!

Marley Who I were when?

Scrooge "Who I were when?" That's not even English!

Marley You wanted to know.

Scrooge I didn't want to know "who I were when"! I wanted to know who you were. Just tell me what your name is!

Marley Gordon Pugh.

Scrooge So in life you were my partner, Jacob Marley?

Marley Oh, him! Yes, I was him.

Scrooge Can you sit down?

Marley I can.

Scrooge Do it then.

Marley makes an effort, then thinks better of it

Marley I prefer to stand, actually.

Scrooge Can't you take that thing off?

Marley It's stuck.

Scrooge You're showing me up. Who do you think you are?

Marley You mean who do I think I am now rather than when I was you know who?

Scrooge What is he on about?

Marley I'd just like to get it clear in my own mind.

Scrooge I do not believe in you. You are an undigested bit of beef.

Marley What evidence of my existence do you require?

Scrooge Come closer, Jacob. Reach forth a spectral hand.

Marley lumbers closer. The door and bed flats collide and both fall to the ground revealing Scrooge perched on his milk crate

Yes, I seemed to sense something intangible.

Marley (*waving chains*) Wooooooo!

Scrooge (*moving away*) Oh, get off.

Marley I am doomed to wander through the world witnessing the happiness I cannot share.

Scrooge You are fettered. Why?

Marley I wear the chains I forged in life, and I am come to warn you that you will share my fate unless . . . wooooooo!

Scrooge Don't do that, Gordon!

Marley Sorry.

Scrooge Unless what? Speak comfort to me, Jacob! Tell me how I can avoid your pitiable penance!

Marley You will be haunted by Three Spirits. Expect the first when the bell tolls one. Wooooooo!

Scrooge I told you to stop that! Now just . . . stop it!

Silence

Come on, get on with it.

Marley You told me to stop.

Scrooge Not the lines, you fool! Say your next line.

Marley I can't.

Scrooge Say your next line this instant!

Marley (*struggling*) Wooooooo!

Scrooge Right, that's it! I'm not acting with him any more.

He storms into the wings. Mrs Reece blocks his path, pushing him back

Mrs Reece Thelma, now don't be hasty . . .

Scrooge Me, hasty? This has been going on all through rehearsals! Look at this arm—here! Look at these bruises! The man is a sadist!

Mrs Reece He's not going to do it any more.

Scrooge He is! Because he's mad! He's completely mad, and I'm not working with a mad sadist.

Mrs Reece Gordon, I want you to stop doing this business with Thelma because you've hurt her very badly. She's got bruises . . .

Scrooge I wanted to wear my sleeveless blouse for the after-show party. I can't do that any more . . .

Mrs Reece She's crippled with pain, Gordon, and it's going to cost her hundreds of pounds in medical fees, so I want you to promise me faithfully that you're not going to do this "wooooooo" business any more. Now do you promise me?

Marley Yes.

Mrs Reece There you are, Thelma. He's not going to do it any more.

Scrooge But he will. He doesn't know what he's doing. He's not an actor, Phoebe. He's not an actor. You know that. Why isn't he nailing bits of wood together? It's all he's fit for.

Mrs Reece Thelma, he's given me his solemn word. Now you cannot disappoint all these people who've come to see you.

Scrooge I'm sure you can find someone to play my part, Phoebe. (*Pointing at 3rd Person in the audience*) What about that man there?

Mrs Reece Please, Thelma, remember the spirit of the play. It's Christmas. The season of goodwill to all men. Let's remember the true meaning of Christmas, shall we?

Pause

Scrooge Very well. (*He returns to Marley*)

Mrs Reece exits

Marley Wooooooo!

Black-out. Scrooge takes his place behind the reset bed

Marley exits

The front door flat is struck

Mrs Reece (*off, through the PA*) Marley's ghost disappeared with a sudden—

Raspberry-like buzz is heard

(*Off, through the PA*) Joycel! They'll think it was me. Scrooge went straight to bed, but at length—

Policeman 1's Voice (*through the PA*) This is a missing person call to all units. Winston Yates, aged fifteen, and wanted for questioning in connection with . . .

Mrs Reece (*off, through the PA*) What's going on now?

Policeman 1's Voice (*through the PA*) I'll repeat that . . .

Mrs Reece (*off, through the PA*) You won't. Scrooge went straight to bed, but at length the hour of one fell upon his ear.

Policeman 2's Voice (*through the PA*) Don't read you, zed charlie three. What's that about suspect falling on his ear? Does he require ambulance? Over.

A spot comes up on the bed. A clock strikes one

Scrooge One o'clock. The hour appointed for the arrival of the first Spirit. Yet none appears.

Cross-fade: the Lights go down below the gauze, the Lights come up above the gauze

Gordon, in white sheet with cut-out eye-holes, is revealed as the Ghost of Christmas Past. He lifts his arms

Cross-fade: the Lights go down above the gauze, the Lights come up below the gauze

Hello! Who's there? No-one. It must have been a draught against my cheek.

Cross-fade: the Lights go down below the gauze, the Lights come up above the gauze. Once again the Ghost of Christmas Past raises his arms. Cross-fade: the Lights go down above the gauze, the Lights come up below the gauze

The Ghost exits

There it is again. Show yourself, unearthly visitor, if such you be. I am not afraid!

The Lights cross-fade to above the gauze

Felicity is revealed holding an outlandish prop from another production

Quick cross-fade to below gauze

The Ghost of Christmas Past enters. Felicity exits

Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?

Ghost/Past I am.

Scrooge Who, and what are you?

Ghost/Past I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

Scrooge Long past?

Ghost/Past No. Your past. Hold on to this . . . (*He raises an arm beneath the sheet*) And I will show you something interesting.

Struck by the ambiguity of this remark, Scrooge is gingerly reaching for the Ghost's hand when there is a Black-out