

Old Joe Oh, no.

Mrs Dilber Anything else downstairs?

Old Joe Yes. Come with me.

Mrs Dilber and Old Joe perform going downstairs business, but from L to R

Mrs Dilber Now where's that loose stair-rod?

Mrs Dilber } (together) Oh!

Old Joe }

Mrs Dilber There it is.

They disappear

Scrooge Will no-one prevent this wanton pillage? No! Because everyone hates me! Oh, hapless Scrooge! I have brought this ignominy upon myself.

Mrs Dilber re-emerges from behind balustrade, moving L to R, and Old Joe re-emerges, moving R to L. They are wearing each other's hats. They pass each other. They are both holding ridiculously anachronistic objects such as a toaster, pair of earphones, etc.

Old Joe Well, we've got some smashing things. Let's go and sell them and then we'll come back here and squat.

Mrs Dilber What a good idea. Blow the candle out, old Joe.

Mrs Dilber exits

Old Joe realizes he has left the candle behind the balustrade. He "goes downstairs", L to R to get it

Scrooge Good Spirit, I cannot bear the thought that my nastiness may have led me to this unhappy end. Restore me to the present, I beg of you. Or is there worse to come?

Old Joe "coming upstairs" R to L with the candle, does a double-take at Scrooge who merely walks behind the balustrade on his way off stage

Scrooge exits

Old Joe attempts, unsuccessfully, to blow out the candle. Nevertheless there is a Black-out. Mrs Reece's voice is heard through the PA, but what she says is incomprehensible because, due to a loose connection, the microphone keeps cutting out

Old Joe exits

The staircase balustrade is struck and two gravestones are set below the gauze. The Lights come up above the gauze and we are back at the Cratchits' house

Seated at the table on the solitary chair are Mrs Cratchit with Bob Cratchit on her knee. Scrooge enters

I know this humble dwelling. It is that of poor Bob Cratchit. But why is it not ringing to the laughter of crippled but ever-cheerful Tiny Tim? Ah! I see an empty chair.

Scrooge snorts and walks off

Cratchit Why are you staring so long and hard, my dear, at Tiny Tim's empty chair?

Mrs Reece enters with a chair

Mrs Reece Mr Cratchit?

Cratchit Yes.

Mrs Reece Here's that empty chair you ordered.

Mrs Reece exits

Mrs Cratchit I am wracked . . .

Scrooge enters with a chair and then exits

Cratchit Two chairs for Tiny Tim.

Mrs Cratchit Hip, hip! Oh, sorry. I am wracked with uncontrollable grief. I am a woman bereft. Nothing will ever console me.

Cratchit There, there. Go and put the kettle on.

Scrooge My heart sinks lower with grim foreboding. And yet I must know the truth. I implore you, Spirit: what has happened to Tiny Tim?

The Lights begin to fade

Mrs Cratchit Is this the bit where he's dead?

Cratchit Sshhh! You've spoiled it now.

Black-out. Strike two chairs. Thunder. A blue light comes up below the gauze revealing gravestones, one an unstable cross marked "Here lies Tiny Tim"

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come enters, followed by Scrooge

Scrooge As I feared! A cold and windswept graveyard.

The Ghost points at the grave

Is this the boy's final resting-place? Yes! "Here lies Tiny Tim." Oh, if only I hadn't been so mean, he might have grown up, had a family of his own and perhaps moved to a nicer house in Surrey or somewhere like that.

Mrs Cratchit enters with Tiny Tim's crutch

Who's this? Ah, Tim's loving parents.

Mrs Cratchit Hello, Tim

I thought I'd come

And say "goodbye";

Love from Mum.

She rests the crutch against the gravestone and knocks it over

Scrooge Her words stir something deep within me. And now her husband is about to speak. If he'd grace us with his presence!

Mrs Cratchit Mercedes!

Cratchit (off) I'm coming. Keep your hair on.

Scrooge Spirit, assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!

The Ghost shakes his head. He picks up the fallen cross

Do not repulse me! I will honour Christmas in my heart. I will not shut out the lessons I have learned. I'll give you all my money. Will you take a cheque?

The Ghost points at the second grave with Tiny Tim's cross

No, don't show me another gravestone. I don't want to look. Please Spirit! I don't want to see the name inscribed there . . .

The Ghost hands the cross to Scrooge so that he can strike a match next to the gravestone. It doesn't light and nor do a succession of others

So don't show me it, whatever you do. Ah, what's that name? I can't quite decipher it. The suspense is killing me. Oh, give it to me.

He hands the cross back to the Ghost, takes the matches from him and successfully strikes one. The gravestone lights up, spelling in red letters "Scrooge R.I.P." A crash of dramatic music. Scrooge cries out, staggers away and goes into flamboyantly theatrical shock, which takes him careering round the stage

Cratchit makes an extremely late entrance

Cratchit You were my son
I was your dad;
Now you're gone
And I'm so sad.

Cratchit exits

Scrooge collapses by the grave. Music ends. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come removes his hood

Ghost/YTC While I think of it: are there any strong men out there who'd like to do some humping after the show? Any takers? We've got to unscrew all the seats because the ballroom dancers are coming in tomorrow. I'm only planning ahead, Thelma!

Black-out

The Ghost exits

Scrooge's gravestone is struck. Scrooge takes the cross and stands behind the bed flat. There is a merry peal of church bells. A spot comes up on Scrooge "in bed"

Scrooge Was it all a dream? (He "gets out of bed" and realizes he still has the cross in his hand. He disposes of it) It must have been. And yet there are traces of earth beneath these ugly, chipped nails. It must have happened. Old Jacob Marley has given me a chance to turn over a new leaf. And I

shall. Oh, bliss! Oh, rupture! (He goes R and mimes opening a window, calling down) I say! You, boy!

A spot comes up L. Mercedes walks into it, as a Boy and attempts to look up

Boy Who? Me, sir?

Scrooge The very same. What day is it, my fine fellow?

Boy Today? Why, Christmas Day.

Scrooge It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it. Tell me, lad, is that prize turkey still hanging in the poulterer's?

Boy It is, sir.

Scrooge Well, go and buy it, and have it sent to Bob Cratchit's in Camden Town. Here's money for you.

He throws a bag of coins off R. The Boy holds his hands out

Boy Thank you, sir.

Scrooge Did you catch it?

Boy No, it hasn't arrived yet.

Scrooge (into the wings) Hurry up and throw the money!

A bag of coins is thrown on to the floor L

Boy Oh, I think it's just landed.

Scrooge Is there enough there?

The Boy attempts to kneel down in order to reach the bag

Boy You'll have to bear with me. I'm not as young as I was.

Scrooge Just hurry up and count it, will you?

Mrs Reece's hand reaches from the wings L towards the bag

Boy Yes, I'm going as fast as I can. (He kneels on Mrs Reece's hand)

Mrs Reece Ow!

Boy What have I done?

Mrs Reece Get off my hand.

He does so. Mrs Reece gives him the bag and goes. Simultaneously, a second bag of coins is thrown on floor R

Boy Yes, that's all correct. Well, I'll get off to the poulterer's.

Scrooge Just a minute. You'd better get some stuffing as well. Here's some more money. (He throws second bag off R)

Boy More money. Right. (He holds hands out)

Scrooge What a delightful boy. It's a pleasure to talk to him. And won't Bob Cratchit be surprised when he receives that turkey. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Oh, what a merry Christmas we're all going to have.

The Boy crosses R to Scrooge

Boy I didn't get the money for the stuffing.

Scrooge I've just given it to you.

Boy It didn't arrive.

Scrooge (into the wings) Get me another bag of coins!