

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

**AT RISE:** *Curtain is up when audience enters. Downstage we see a velvet-padded lectern for the evening's star performer. THEATER MANAGER enters, surveys the audience, checks the lectern, etc.*

**THEATER MANAGER.** Ladies and gentlemen—here now—as part of his second American tour—the management of the theater is proud to present the great English novelist, Mr. Charles Dickens.

*(DICKENS enters. White tie, tails. He carries a book. He gets applause and expects it. He opens the book and prepares to read. He milks the moment—he is a master of timing.)*

*Narrator :* ~~DICKENS.~~ Good evening. Tonight I shall read what has proved to be one of my most popular tales. It was first published in my *Christmas Book* for the year 1844. A *Christmas Carol—Stave One. "Marley's Ghost."* *(Now he begins his dramatic and well-rehearsed reading.)* Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. There was no doubt whatever about Marley. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge



signed it. And Scrooge's name was good for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was dead as a doornail. Scrooge knew he was dead. Of course he did. Scrooge and he were partners for years. Scrooge was his sole executor, sole administrator, sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it by concluding a favorable contract.

*(Claps and signals—sign reading SCROOGE AND MARLEY flies in.)*

DICKENS. Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterward, above the door. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge and sometimes Marley but he answered to both names—it was all the same to him.

*(Music begins. Lights are fading up.)*

DICKENS. On the day in question—of all the good days in the year, on a Christmas Eve—it was cold, bleak, biting weather. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole. *(Lights candle on BOB CRATCHIT's desk.)* It was late—and candles appeared in the windows of offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air.

*(A bell chimes six times—6-note motif for "God Bless Us, Ev'ry One." DICKENS moves into the background as an observer. Music swells as lights fade up on a street in Victorian London. It's a drab street, ugly with*

