

# A Christmas Carol

As performed on the eve of December 24th, 1939, during the live broadcast of the CBS Campbell Playhouse radio program. Featuring Orson Welles as the Narrator, and Lionel Barrymore as Scrooge.

(MUSIC ... SLEIGH-BELLS BRIEFLY ... THEN, CHOIR SINGS "THE FIRST NOEL" ... UNDER)

ORSON WELLES: Good evening. This is Orson Welles. There are clearly a number of ways in which "A Christmas Carol" could be introduced. Myself, I am most struck by the happy fortune that enables us on this Christmas Eve to present Mr. Lionel Barrymore, the best-loved actor of our time, in the world's best-loved Christmas story, "A Christmas Carol." There is, I think, in all America nothing more eagerly awaited, more firmly rooted in the hearts of the radio family that numbers millions than this yearly performance of "A Christmas Carol." "A Christmas Carol," as Charles Dickens wrote it, has, by common consent, long been a classic. Mr. Lionel Barrymore's appearance in it is rapidly becoming one.

(MUSIC ... BELLS RING AND THEN "HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING" ... UNDER)

NARRATOR (WELLES): Marley was dead: to begin with. There's no doubt whatever about that. 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 upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail. Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. Scrooge and Marley were partners for I don't know how many years. Ah! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, was Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! And once upon a time -- of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve ...

(MUSIC ... CHOIR SINGS "GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN" ... UNDER)

NARRATOR: ... old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house, a grim, cheerless place if ever there was one. The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, Bob Cratchit, who in a cold and dismal little cell beyond, worked at his ledgers.

(MUSIC ... UP AND UNDER )

BOB CRATCHIT: (TO HIMSELF) ... nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two ... (SINGS ALONG WITH CHOIR) ... merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay ... (TO HIMSELF) ... twenty-three, twenty-six, twenty-nine, nine carry two ... (SINGS ALONG WITH CHOIR) Christmas Day! ... (TO HIMSELF) ... seventeen-thirteen, seventeen-seven ...

SCROOGE: Bob Cratchit!

BOB CRATCHIT: Er, yes, Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE: Stop that infernal caterwauling!

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir. (TO HIMSELF) ... nine, fifteen, seventeen ... (MUMBLES TO HIMSELF)

SOUND: (SCROOGE'S FOOTSTEPS TO THE FRONT DOOR)

SCROOGE: (MUTTERS TO HIMSELF) ... singing their idiotic Christmas carols at my very door.

SOUND: (FRONT DOOR OPENS)

(MUSIC ... CHOIR UP A LITTLE AS DOOR OPENS)

SCROOGE: Go on! Get away from my door!

CHOIR: (STOPS SINGING, PROTESTS MILDLY) Awww!

SCROOGE: Go somewhere else and bellow your blasted carols or I'll give ya [?]

CHILD: Why, Guv'nor? It's an old custom at Christmas time, you know!

SCROOGE: Yes! And I don't want any of your old customs! Take your fellow fools and go away. (TO HIMSELF) Christmas! Bleah!

CHILD: Right, sir! Merry Christmas anyway, sir!

SCROOGE: (DISMISSIVE) Ahhh!

SOUND: (DOOR SLAMS SHUT, SCROOGE'S FOOTSTEPS AWAY)

(MUSIC ... CHOIR SINGS "GOOD KING WENCESLAS" AS IT MOVES OFF)

SCROOGE: Now, you get that letter from Higgins and Blackthorne, Cratchit. And then I want you to finish posting this ledger. And, after that, you can pop over to Parthegill's and tell Ephraim Parthegill you've come after the seventeen shillings and sixpence he's owed me since Michelmas. And tell him I shall have a constable over there if he doesn't pay up at once.

BOB CRATCHIT: Mr. Parthegill's wife has been ill, sir.

SCROOGE: Oh, what do I care about his wife? I want my seventeen and six.

BOB CRATCHIT: I - I just thought, it being Christmas, sir--

SCROOGE: Christmas?! Christmas! You mention that word to me once more, Bob Cratchit and I'll--

FRED: A merry Christmas, uncle! A merry Christmas, Bob!

BOB CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas, Mr. Fred!

FRED: God save you, uncle!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, uncle! Now, I'm sure you don't mean that!

SCROOGE: I mean JUST that -- exactly that! Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you? You're poor enough.

FRED: Well, what right have you to be dismal about Christmas, uncle? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah!

FRED: Now, uncle, don't be cross.

SCROOGE: Well, what else can I be when I live in such a world of fools? What's

Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money? Merry Christmas! A time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips'd be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

FRED: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Now, nephew. Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it! But you don't keep it, uncle.

SCROOGE: Well, let me leave it alone, then. What do you want? A Christmas gift, I've no doubt.

FRED: I came to wish you a merry Christmas, uncle.

SCROOGE: A merry Christmas! Much good may Christmas do you. Ha, ha! Much good it ever HAS done ya.

FRED: There are many things from which I derive good by which I have not profited materially, I dare say, uncle. Christmas among the rest. But I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

BOB CRATCHIT: (APPLAUDS) God bless Christmas! Hurrah!

SCROOGE: Let me hear another sound out of you there, Bob Cratchit, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! As to you, nephew, I wonder you don't go into Parliament. You talk enough nonsense--

FRED: Oh, don't be angry, uncle. I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why can't we be friends?

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

FRED: I'm sorry you feel that way. Well, I tried. (EXITING) A merry Christmas to you, uncle!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

FRED: And a happy New Year, too!

SCROOGE: Bah. Humbug.

FRED: And a merry Christmas to you, Bob! And the missus! And to Tiny Tim!

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, thank you, Mr. Fred! Same to you, sir. Good day, sir.

FRED: Good day, Bob!

SOUND: (DOOR HAS OPENED AND SHUT)

SCROOGE: (TO HIMSELF) Nonsense. Twaddle. Flummery. Talking of Christmas and not two sixpences to jingle together in his trousers' pocket.

SOUND: (COAL IN THE SCUTTLE)

SCROOGE: Hey, hey, you there! Bob Cratchit! Come here! What are you doing there?!

BOB CRATCHIT: I'm only putting a bit more coal in the fire, Mr. Scrooge, seeing it's so cold in there, sir.

SCROOGE: You put that coal back into the scuttle! A fire! A fire, indeed. I can tell you, if you use coal at that rate, you and I will soon be parting company, Bob Cratchit. You understand that? There's many a young fella'd like your situation, you know.

BOB CRATCHIT: I'm sorry, sir. My fingers were getting a little stiff with the cold--

SCROOGE: Then put on your mittens.

SOUND: (KNOCK AT THE DOOR)

SCROOGE: There's someone at the door. Go on, see who it is.

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir.

SOUND: (A COUPLE OF FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENS)

GENTLEMAN: Good afternoon, sir.

BOB CRATCHIT: Good afternoon.

GENTLEMAN: This is the firm of Scrooge and Marley?

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir.

GENTLEMAN: I should like to see the head of the firm, if I may.

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, very good, sir.

SOUND: (DOOR SHUTS)

SCROOGE: What is it?

BOB CRATCHIT: A gentleman to see you, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Huh?

GENTLEMAN: Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: Marley's been dead these seven years tonight. I'm Scrooge.

GENTLEMAN: Well, now, Mr. Scrooge, at this season of the year, it's only fitting that we who are more fortunate should raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. You may not believe it, sir, but many thousands are now in want of common necessities.

SCROOGE: (GROWLS)

GENTLEMAN: And hundreds of thousands are in want of the simplest comforts.

SCROOGE: (GROWLS) Are there no prisons?

GENTLEMAN: Well, there are plenty of prisons, sir.

SCROOGE: And the workhouses? They're still in operation, I trust?

GENTLEMAN: I wish I could say they are not. But they are, sir.

SCROOGE: The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?

GENTLEMAN: Both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE: Ah! I'm glad to hear that. Heh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course.

GENTLEMAN: No, sir. All these institutions that you mention are flourishing. But it's nevertheless true that some additional provision for the Poor and the Destitute must be made.

SCROOGE: (SCOFFS)

GENTLEMAN: A few of us upon 'Change are endeavouring to raise such a fund, you see. And, uh, what shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing!

GENTLEMAN: Oh, I see. You wish to be anonymous, sir?

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone! I don't make merry myself at Christmastime and I can't afford to help make a lot of idle people merry. I help to support the establishments that take care of the poor -- they cost enough. Let those who are badly off go there.

GENTLEMAN: Many can't go there, sir. And many would rather die.

SCROOGE: Then, my advice to them is to do so and decrease the surplus population. Besides, I've only your word for it that all this is so.

GENTLEMAN: It's the truth, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Well, so be it, then. It's not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, sir!

GENTLEMAN: I quite understand, Mr. Scrooge. Good afternoon.

SCROOGE: Cratchit! Show this gentleman out.

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir.

SOUND: (FOOTSTEPS TO THE DOOR)

BOB CRATCHIT: This way, sir, please. (LOWERS HIS VOICE) Sir, I couldn't help overhearing. I should like to contribute tuppence.

SCROOGE: Cratchit!

BOB CRATCHIT: (TO SCROOGE) Yes, sir! (LOWERS HIS VOICE, TO GENTLEMAN) It isn't much but it's all I can afford. But there are others in worse situation than I.

GENTLEMAN: You're a generous fellow. I wish I might say so of your employer.

SCROOGE: (IMPATIENT) Cratchit!

BOB CRATCHIT: (TO SCROOGE) Yes, sir!

GENTLEMAN: Good afternoon, sir.

BOB CRATCHIT: Good afternoon.

SOUND: (DOOR OPENS)

SCROOGE: Cratchit!

GENTLEMAN: Merry Christmas.

BOB CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas. (TO SCROOGE) Yes, sir!

SCROOGE: Close the door!

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir.

SOUND: (DOOR SHUTS, CRATCHIT'S FOOTSTEPS SLOWLY BACK TO DESK)

BOB CRATCHIT: (SIGHS, TO HIMSELF) ... twenty-four, thirty-one. One, carry three. A new scarlet tippet for Tiny Tim. A comb for Martha. Thirty-three. Three and carry three. A hair-ribbon for Belinda. Four, seven, twelve, fifteen.

SCROOGE: Cratchit!

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir? Yes, sir?

SCROOGE: It's too late to have you go to Parthegill's. He'll be closed up for Christmas like these other fools. We may as well close up the place now.

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir. It IS getting a little dark. Hard to see the figures.

SCROOGE: I - I suppose you'll want the entire day to-morrow?

BOB CRATCHIT: If it's quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient -- and it's not fair, either. But I suppose I can't do anything about it. Heh. If - if I was to stop half-a-crown of your wages, you'd think yourself very ill-used, I'll be bound?

BOB CRATCHIT: Well, sir, I--

SCROOGE: Yeah, but you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.

BOB CRATCHIT: It's only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE: Once a year! Once a year, indeed. A fine excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose there's no good talking. You must have the whole day. Well, see that you're here all the earlier the next morning. You understand?

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, I will, sir.

SOUND: (DOOR OPENS)

BOB CRATCHIT: I will, indeed. (EXITING) Good night, sir. And merry Christmas.

SCROOGE: Bah!

BOB CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas!

SCROOGE: Bah!

SOUND: (DOOR SHUTS)

(MUSIC ... SLEIGH BELLS AND A JAUNTY TUNE ... AS A BRIDGE AND THEN UNDER)

NARRATOR: The office was closed in a twinkling, and Bob Cratchit, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play with his family at blindman's-buff.

(MUSIC ... TAKES A DARK TURN ... UNDER)

NARRATOR: Scrooge, on the other hand, took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; having read all the newspapers, and spent the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, went to his dismal house.

Darkness is cheap. And Scrooge liked it. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, had to grope with his hands through the fog and the frost to find the door. Scrooge walked through his rooms to see that all was right. Sitting-room. Bedroom. Lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa, nobody under the bed, nobody in the closet. Close the door.

He locked himself in. He double-locked himself in. And took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

(MUSIC ... EERIE ... UNDER)

SOUND: (CLOCK STRIKES)

SCROOGE: (YAWNS MIGHTILY, COUGHS, THEN AMAZED) Marley. Marley? Marley! I could have sworn I saw old-- Ah! Humbug. Marley's been dead these seven years. Humbug. All humbug. What I need is a good night's--

SOUND: (CLANKING NOISE, DEEP DOWN BELOW)

SCROOGE: What? What's that?

SOUND: (MORE NOISE, LIKE DRAGGING CHAINS, INCREASINGLY LOUDER AND CLOSER)

SCROOGE: Someone's in the wine cellar. But the door's locked and double-locked! Something's - is coming! Some - something is - is coming closer. Outside my door. Bah! I won't believe it. It's humbug still!

SOUND: (NOISE ... OUT)

MARLEY: (GHOSTLY) Ebenezer Scrooge! Ebenezer Scrooge!

SCROOGE: (GASPS) Marley! (NERVOUS SQUEAK) Oh, no. What do you want with me?

MARLEY: I want much of you, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: Who - who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Oh ho. You're very particular, for a ghost. All right then. Who were ya?

MARLEY: In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE: (SKEPTICAL) Jacob Marley! But you're dead. You died seven years ago.

MARLEY: Seven years ago this very night.

SCROOGE: [?]

MARLEY: What's wrong, Ebenezer? Don't you believe in me?

SCROOGE: I do not.

MARLEY: You doubt your senses, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: Yes. Yes. Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You - you can't be a ghost. You may be an undigested bit of beef, or a blot of mustard, or a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. (CHUCKLES) There may be more gravy than grave about you, whatever you are! Ah, humbug, I tell ya. Humbug!

MARLEY: (RAISES A FRIGHTFUL CRY)

(MUSIC ... MATCHES THE CRY, THEN SUBSIDES AND CONTINUES UNDER EERILY)

SCROOGE: (SHIVERS AND SHUDDERS IN FEAR) I do believe in you. You ARE a ghost, Jacob.

MARLEY: Thank you.

SCROOGE: But why - why do you walk the earth, Jacob? Why do you come to me?

MARLEY: It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide, to witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness.

SCROOGE: But tell me, Jacob, what is that chain you wear around you?

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; by my own free will. Is its pattern strange to you, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: Cashboxes? Keys and padlocks? Ledgers and purses?

MARLEY: Yours was as heavy and as long as this, seven years ago. You have laboured on it since, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: Old Jacob, speak comfort to me, Jacob!

MARLEY: Comfort I have none to give. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger. Weary journeys lie before me.

SCROOGE: You travel fast?



MARLEY: Yes, Ebenezer. On the wings of the wind.

SCROOGE: Ah, seven years dead and traveling all the time.

MARLEY: Seven years, Ebenezer. Seven years of remorse. Ebenezer, do you know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused?

SCROOGE: But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY: Business! Mankind was my business! Charity, mercy, benevolence -- they were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!

SCROOGE: Jacob, Jacob, don't take on so, now. Jacob--

MARLEY: Listen to me, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: I'll listen to you, Jacob. Go on, Jacob, now. Speak to me but don't be so flowery.

MARLEY: Ebenezer, I am here to warn you that you have yet a chance of hope of escaping my fate. Do you hear that, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: Yes, Jacob. Yes, you always were a good friend to me, Jacob. Thanks, Jacob. But - but go on, go on, go on, go on. How shall I escape? Oh, I'm afraid, Jacob.

MARLEY: You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE: Is that the only chance and hope, Jacob?

MARLEY: It is your only chance and hope.

SCROOGE: Well, then, I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY: Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls One.

SCROOGE: Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?

MARLEY: Ebenezer, look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us! Remember, when the bell tolls One, look for the first Spirit!

SOUND: (RUSTLE OF THE GHOST AND ITS CHAINS)

SCROOGE: Marley! Jacob Marley!

(MUSIC ... UP FOR AN ACCENT, THEN A BRIDGE, THEN UNDER)

SOUND: (BELL TOLLS ONE)

NARRATOR: Scrooge awoke. He was lying on his bed, fully dressed. Suddenly, the curtains of his bed were drawn aside, and Scrooge found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

It was a strange figure -- like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom

was on the skin. The arms were long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE: (GASPS) Who - who's that?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Ebenezer Scrooge, I have come for you.

SCROOGE: You--? Are - are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold me?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: I am that Spirit.

SCROOGE: Who--? What are you?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long Past?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: No. Your past.

SCROOGE: But - what do you want of me? What brings you here to haunt me?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Your welfare, Ebenezer Scrooge. Rise! and walk with me!

SCROOGE: Oh, no, no, no. No! Not - not out of the window! Why, I can't do that. I'll fall down. I'm not a Spirit. I'm mortal and I'll fall.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Bear but a touch of my hand upon your heart, and you shall be upheld in more than this. Come! Follow me!

(MUSIC ... AN ACCENT, THEN UNDER ... SLEIGH BELLS AND CHILDREN SINGING "GOD, REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN" UNDER)

SCROOGE: Where are we? What's become of the city? And there - there's snow upon the ground. Where are we?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: These are the shadows of the things that have been. You recognize this countryside?

SCROOGE: (GASPS) Oh. I know every inch of it. Every rock. Every tree.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: And that bleak building over there?

SCROOGE: Ah, that building! Heh! I was a boy there! Yes, I went to school in that horrible place.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Do you recollect that path?

SCROOGE: Heh! I could walk it blindfold.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Strange you should have forgotten it so many years. Come, let us go closer. (BEAT) Look through the window into that cold, barren room. What do you see, Ebenezer Scrooge?

SCROOGE: I see a boy.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: A solitary child, neglected by his family. Alone.

SCROOGE: Yes, yes, I see. I know that boy. (SIGHS) Oh. I was so lonely. Poor boy.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Your lip is trembling, Scrooge. And what is that on your cheek?

SCROOGE: It's nothing. Nothing at all. I wish I-- Ah, it's too late now.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: What's the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing, nothing. The waifs came to my door singing Christmas carols last night and there was a boy like that among 'em. A poor pale thin little boy in a ragged coat. I should like to have given him something: that's all.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: IS that all? Come, Ebenezer Scrooge. Let us see another Christmas!

(MUSIC ... SINGING OUT ... A BRIEF BRIDGE ... MERRY PARTY MUSIC UNDER)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Do you know this place, Ebenezer Scrooge?

SOUND: (CROWD OF PARTYGOERS LAUGH AND TALK UNDER)

SCROOGE: (DELIGHTED) Know it?! Know it! This is the counting-house where I was apprenticed! (AFTER A PAUSE) It's my old master! Bless his heart; old Fezziwig! My master -- alive again! And hosting one of his Christmas parties! (CHUCKLES HAPPILY)

FEZZIWIG: (CALLS A DANCE IN B.G.) Pick your partners!

SCROOGE: Listen to him!

FEZZIWIG: [?] Corkscrew! Thread the needle and back to your places!

SCROOGE: (LAUGHS ALONG WITH CROWD) And there's Dick Wilkins. Poor Dick. Dear, dear, dear. Yes, and look! There's Mrs. Fezziwig herself, looking younger'n any of 'em! And the tables, all loaded with roasts and cider, mince pie and beer! Oh, what a jolly time we used to have!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: That carefree young man with the light heart and the gay smile? Do you recognize him?

SCROOGE: Yes, yes, yes. Merciful Heaven. How happy I was then.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: A small matter for old Fezziwig to make those silly folks so full of joy.

SCROOGE: (INDIGNANT) Small matter! Small, indeed.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Isn't it? He has spent only a few pounds of your mortal money. Is that so much that he deserves praise?

SCROOGE: (SCOFFS) It's not that. It's not that, Spirit. Old Fezziwig has the power to make us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or heavy. His power lies in words and looks and in things so tiny that it's impossible to count 'em up. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a - a--

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Oh, nothing. Nothing at all, Spirit.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Something, I think?

SCROOGE: No, no.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Speak.

SCROOGE: Well, only-- It's just that I should like to be able to say a word or two to MY clerk, Bob Cratchit. That's all.

SOUND AND MUSIC: (PARTY NOISES AND MUSIC UP FOR A MOMENT, THEN FADES OUT)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: My time grows short. And we have yet another journey to make.

SCROOGE: Where now?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Come!

(MUSIC ... A BRIEF BRIDGE, THEN UNDER)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: This is our last visit to the past, Ebenezer. Here, in this little room, with a fair young girl by your side. Do you recognize yourself, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: (GASPS) No, no. No, no, no, no. Spare me this!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: You're older now. A man in the prime of life. Your face has begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. Your eyes are greedy. The eager, restless eyes of a miser.

SCROOGE: No! No, please!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: She knows it, too -- that girl by your side. There are tears in her eyes.

(MUSIC ... TURNS GENTLE AND SAD, UNDER)

BELLE: It matters little [?] to you, very little -- I know that.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, have I changed toward you?

BELLE: When we were engaged, we were both poor.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Was it better then? Better to be poor?

BELLE: Better, at least, to be happy. You're changed. You were another man, then.

YOUNG SCROOGE: I was a boy! You blame me because I've grown wiser? Have I ever tried to break our engagement?

BELLE: In words, no. Never.

YOUNG SCROOGE: In what, then?

BELLE: In a changed nature; in an altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any value in your sight. So I release you from your promise.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle!

BELLE: Oh, at first, it may cause you pain to lose me -- a very brief pain. But soon it will be dim, like a half-remembered dream -- an unprofitable dream. And you will be glad to be awake from such a dream. May you be happy in the life you have chosen, Ebenezer, for the love of [whom you once loved?].

(MUSIC ... OUT)

SCROOGE: That's enough! Show me no more! Take me home!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: These were shadows of the things that HAVE been. That they are what they are, do not blame me.

SCROOGE: No. No more. No more.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: One shadow more! Come!

(MUSIC ... IN AND UNDER)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Do you see this man, Ebenezer Scrooge? This man might have been you. And the woman beside him, your wife. And that girl -- that girl might have been your daughter, Ebenezer Scrooge. She might have called you father. She might have been a spring-time in the haggard winter of your life.

SCROOGE: Spirit -- let me go. Show me no more.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: Listen, now, while they speak, Ebenezer.

BELLE'S HUSBAND: Belle, I saw an old friend of yours today.

BELLE: Who was it?

BELLE'S HUSBAND: Guess.

BELLE: How can I? It-- Oh! I know. Mr. Scrooge.

BELLE'S HUSBAND: Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window -- it wasn't shuttered. And there was a candle inside so I couldn't help seeing him. His partner Marley lies at the point of death, I hear; and there Scrooge sat -- all alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe.

SCROOGE: Spirit, Spirit, I can't bear any more. Leave me. Haunt me no more. Take me back! Take me back!

(MUSIC ... OMINOUS ... BELL CHIMES ... UNDER)

NARRATOR: On the stroke of One, Scrooge awakened suddenly and sat bolt upright in his own bed. He remembered the words of Marley's ghost and wondered from which direction the second spectre would appear. At that moment, nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. Then, as he sat in his bed, he became aware gradually of a great blaze of ruddy light, which seemed to shine upon him from the adjoining room. He got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

It was his own sitting-room -- no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living

green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as had never been known in Scrooge's time, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam.

In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Come in! Come in, Ebenezer Scrooge, and know me better, man!

SCROOGE: Who--? Who--?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present! Look upon me! You've never seen the like of me before!

SCROOGE: You're-- You're different from the other Spirit. You're tall, almost a giant. And that great torch you carry--

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: It's light pours into the homes of rich and poor alike.

SCROOGE: Spirit, take me where you will. Last time I went against my will and learnt a lesson which is working now. If you have anything to teach me, let me profit by it.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Touch my robe, Ebenezer Scrooge! Touch my robe!

(MUSIC ... UP FOR A TRANSITION, THEN UNDER)

SCROOGE: Where've you brought me, Spirit?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: An humble dwelling in an humble street.

SCROOGE: It's humble enough.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Yet there is happiness there.

SCROOGE: Who - who are these people? Who's that woman? And the children?

SOUND: (FAMILY CHATTER INCREASES UNDER FOLLOWING)

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: These are the family of your clerk, Bob Cratchit. His wife, dressed in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, laying the table for their Christmas dinner. And there, assisting her, is her daughter Belinda. And the young man with the fork in the stuffing -- that's Master Peter Cratchit. And the two little Cratchits. Listen, Scrooge.

SOUND: (FAMILY CHATTER UP)

GIRL: Here's Martha, mother!

AD LIBS: Martha! (EXCITED CHATTER)

MRS. CRATCHIT: Why, bless your heart alive, Martha, my dear, merry Christmas

to you!

MARTHA: Merry Christmas, Mother!

AD LIBS: Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!

MRS. CRATCHIT: How late you are, my dear.

MARTHA: Oh, we'd a deal of work to finish up last night and we had to clear away this morning.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, never mind so long as you're here now. Sit ye down before the fire and have a warm, Lord bless ye!

MARTHA: Where's father?

MRS. CRATCHIT: He's been to church with Tiny Tim. They'll be along directly.

MARTHA: (CONCERNED) How IS Tiny Tim, mother? Any better at all?

MRS. CRATCHIT: Sometimes I think he is. And sometimes I think - oh, dear God, if anything should happen to Tiny Tim--

MARTHA: Mother! You mustn't even THINK of such a thing!

CHILDREN AD LIB: Here they are!

MRS. CRATCHIT: There's Tiny Tim!

BOB CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas, everybody! Martha! Welcome, my dear!

MARTHA: Merry Christmas, father! And Tim!

TINY TIM: Merry Christmas, Martha!

MARTHA: Oh, Tim, you darling! Oh, father, I'm so glad to be home.

BOB CRATCHIT: And we're so glad to have you, Martha.

MRS. CRATCHIT: And how did little Tim behave in church, Bob?

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, as good as gold, and better.

TINY TIM: I like church, Mother. Oh, they sang the nicest songs. I hope people saw me there.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Saw you there? And why, Tim?

TINY TIM: Well, don't you see? Because I'm lame. And if they saw my crutch, it might be pleasant for them to remember on Christmas who it was made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, bless you, my son.

CHILDREN AD LIB: Are we ready to eat, Mother? Come on, let's eat! (CHILDREN CONTINUE TO CHATTER UNDER FOLLOWING:)

MRS. CRATCHIT: Yes, children. We're all ready. Come, come take your places now. And, Bob, wait your turn -- there's plenty! Stuffing and dressing and plum pudding for all of you. Martha, you take care of Tiny Tim.

MARTHA: Yes, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT: You see that he eats plenty, he must get tall and well. Now, sit down, sit down, everyone!

BOB CRATCHIT: Ah, now, my dears.

CHILDREN: (INSTANTLY SILENT)

BOB CRATCHIT: Shall we say grace? (AS BOB SAYS GRACE, WE HEAR SCROOGE AND THE SPIRIT:)

SCROOGE: Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved.

SCROOGE: Oh, no, no. No, no, kind Spirit! Say he'll be spared. Say he'll live.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, Ebenezer, the child will die.

BOB CRATCHIT: (FINISHES GRACE) Amen.

CHILDREN: Amen.

BOB CRATCHIT: And, now, my dears, with such a dinner, a toast. A Merry Christmas to us all. And God bless us!

MRS. CRATCHIT: Amen.

TINY TIM: God bless us every one!

BOB CRATCHIT: And, now, to Mr. Scrooge!

CHILDREN AD LIB: (UNHAPPY) Awwwww!

BOB CRATCHIT: I give you a toast to Mr. Scrooge -- the Founder of the Feast!

MRS. CRATCHIT: (UPSET) The Founder of the Feast indeed! -- who pays you all of fifteen shillings a week! I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast on, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it!

BOB CRATCHIT: (PROTESTS) Oh, my dear -- the children! Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, it should be Christmas Day, I'm sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Bob! Nobody knows it better than you, poor fellow!

BOB CRATCHIT: (INSISTS) My dear, Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's, not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!

TINY TIM: And I say, God bless him, too, Mother. And everyone.

CHILDREN AD LIB: (AGREEING WITH TIM)



(MUSIC ... MOURNFUL CHOIR ... THEN CHURCH BELLS, "O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL" AS A BRIDGE, THEN UNDER)

NARRATOR: There was nothing of high mark in all this. They were not a handsome family, these Cratchits; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and had known, very likely, the insides of a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time. When, at last, they faded, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

(MUSIC ... TAKES A DARKER TURN, UNDER)

NARRATOR: Many calls Scrooge made that night with the Ghost of Christmas Present. Down among the miners they went, who labour in the bowels of the earth and out to sea among the sailors at their watch -- dark, ghostly figures in their several stations.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many places they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, the Spirit left his blessing. It was a long night -- if it was only a night; And it was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: My life upon this globe, is very brief, Ebenezer. It ends to-night.

SCROOGE: To-night!

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: To-night at midnight. Hark! The hour has come.

SCROOGE: Oh, no, no. Not yet! Not yet! There - there - there are still more things I wish to learn.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: These you will learn from still another Spirit. Still another Spirit, Ebenezer.

(MUSIC ... A HUGE ACCENT, THEN UNDER)

NARRATOR: Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost. It had vanished. And he found himself once more in his bed, in his dressing gown and his nightcap on his head. He heard the clock strike and then ... he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley. And lifting up his eyes, beheld the third Spirit...

(MUSIC ... DARKER ... UNDER)

NARRATOR: ... a solemn Phantom, shrouded in black, draped and hooded, coming towards him, slowly and silently, like a mist along the ground.

SCROOGE: I know you. You - you are the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come. You'll show me the shadows of things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us. Answer me, Spirit, Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I've seen. Yet I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, lead on. Lead on! The night's waning fast, and time's precious.

(MUSIC ... AN ACCENT ... THEN UNDER)

SCROOGE: Spirit! Why - why have you brought me here again? Here to Bob Cratchit's home? But it's not the same-- What - ?

(MUSIC ... OUT)

SCROOGE: Why is it so quiet? So very quiet here?

MRS. CRATCHIT: (WEEPING)

MARTHA: Mother... Mother, please.

MRS. CRATCHIT: (WEEPING) Oh, my son. My little son. Tiny Tim. I loved him so.

MARTHA: Oh, Mother dear, you mustn't. It's almost time for father to be home. Don't let him see you crying.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Yes. Yes, Martha.

MARTHA: He's late tonight.

MRS. CRATCHIT: He walks slower than he used to. And yet I've known him to walk very fast indeed with Tiny Tim on his shoulder.

MARTHA: So have I, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT: But he was light to carry. And his father loved him so that it was no trouble: no trouble--

SOUND: (DOOR OPENS)

MRS. CRATCHIT: Bob!

BOB CRATCHIT: Good evening, my dear.

MRS. CRATCHIT: You're late, Bob.

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, I'm sorry, my dear. I - I went to the church yard today. I wish you could have gone with me. It would have done your heart good to see how sweet and green a place it is. But you'll see it often, I promised him. Yes, I promised Tiny Tim we'd walk there on a Sunday.

MARTHA: Father, dear.

MRS. CRATCHIT: It's God's will, Bob.

BOB CRATCHIT: I'm trying to understand it, my dear. (TO HIMSELF) My son. My little son, Tiny Tim. And I loved him so.

(MUSIC ... DARK, UNDER)

SCROOGE: Oh, that's cruel. Cruel. Spirit? Can't you give me one ray of hope that I may change all that? That Tiny Tim may live?

(MUSIC ... AN OMINOUS BRIDGE, THEN UNDER)

SCROOGE: Where are you taking me now? Here? On a common street, Spirit? What is there for me to learn here? Who - who are those men?

1ST MAN: I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead.

2ND MAN: When did he die?

1ST MAN: Last night, I believe.

2ND MAN: It's likely to be a very cheap funeral, for upon my life, I don't know anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

1ST MAN: I don't mind going if a lunch is provided. (BOTH MEN LAUGH)

2ND MAN: Come to think of it, I'll bet I was his best friend.

1ST MAN: What?

2ND MAN: We used to nod to each other when we met in the street. (MORE LAUGHS)

SCROOGE: Spirit, help me. Who is this man that died? Is there no one to mourn the poor creature? No one to follow him to the grave? Perhaps they'll give him a green grave at least, like poor Tiny Tim. Perhaps--

(MUSIC ... A HUGE, SUDDEN ACCENT, THEN UNDER, EERILY)

SCROOGE: Spirit! Where are we now? Merciful Heaven! A church yard! Overrun by grass and weeds, choked with too much burying -- desolate, lonely, crumbling gravestones. Spirit! Before I draw nearer to that gravestone, answer me one question. Are - are these shadows of things that Will be, or - or are they shadows of things that May be, only? Huh? Will - will you not speak to me, Spirit? What IS that grave to which you point?

(MUSIC ... AN ACCENT, THEN UNDER)

SCROOGE: Ah, now I see it. Uh huh. There's writing on that stone. The name on the gravestone is -- (READS, AWED) Ebenezer Scrooge. Ebenezer Scrooge?! Oh, no, no, Spirit! No, no, no! Hear me! I'm not the man I was! Why show me this, if I am past all hope?! Tell me that I can change these dreadful shadows you've shown me by an altered life! I'll honour Christmas in my heart! I'll - I'll try to keep it all the year. I'll live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. And I'll not shut out the lessons that they teach. Tell me, Spirit, oh, go on, tell me! Tell me that I can sponge away the writing on that stone, Spirit. I beg you, Spirit! I beg you!

(MUSIC ... BIG DARK ACCENT, THEN ABRUPTLY GENTLE, DISTANT CAROLERS SING "GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN")

SCROOGE: (WHISPERS) Spirit, I promise. I promise on my knees. I promise. I promise. I'll - I - (PAUSES, HEARS CAROLERS SINGING) Why, what's this? It's my own drape. Oh! I'm home. In my own bed. In my own room.

SOUND: (WINDOW OPENS, CAROLERS LOUDER, THEN UNDER)

SCROOGE: And the sun! The sun's shining! It's clear! It's bright! No fog! What a beautiful day. Oh, glorious, glorious. (CALLS OUT) Hey, boy! Oh, boy!

BOY: Yes, sir?

SCROOGE: What's - What's to-day?

BOY: What's that, sir?

SCROOGE: What day is it, my fine fellow?

BOY: To-day? Why, it's Christmas Day.

SCROOGE: Ha ha! Christmas Day! Then I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. All in one night, Heaven be praised.

BOY: How's that, sir?

SCROOGE: Listen, my lad, er, you know where the Poulterer is, in the next street?

BOY: I should say I do!

SCROOGE: Ha! An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Tell me, do you know if they sold the prize Turkey that was hanging in the window?

BOY: The one as big as me?

(MUSIC ... HAS QUIETLY FADED OUT)

SCROOGE: Hee hee hee! What a delightful boy! It's a pleasure to talk to ye. Yes, my buck!

BOY: It's hanging there now, sir.

SCROOGE: That's wonderful. Go down, will ya? And tell 'em to send it to Bob Cratchit and his family on Broad Street. And, mind you, they're not to know who paid for it. Go along, hurry, hurry, my lad. Here, here, wait a minute. Here's half-a-crown for your trouble.

BOY: Yes, sir! Yes, sir! And a merry Christmas, sir!

SCROOGE: Ha ha! And a merry Christmas to you, my boy! (TO HIMSELF) Oh! I don't know what to do! I'm as light as a feather! As happy as an angel! I'm as merry as a schoolboy! (CALLS OUT) Merry Christmas! (LAUGHS) A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Whoo! Whoo! Hallooo!

(MUSIC ... HAS SNEAKED BACK IN UNDER SCROOGE'S SPEECH AND NOW BURSTS FORTH WITH A GRAND "PEACE ON EARTH" -- WHICH FADES OUT DURING FOLLOWING)

SCROOGE: My dear sir! How do you do?

GENTLEMAN: I - I beg your pardon?

SCROOGE: Well, you, sir -- aren't you the gentleman who came to my office in regard to that charity?

GENTLEMAN: Why, yes, sir.

SCROOGE: A merry Christmas to you.

GENTLEMAN: Er, yes, sir.

SCROOGE: Allow me to ask your pardon, sir. And will you have the goodness to accept-- (LOWERS HIS VOICE) I prefer to whisper this. (WHISPERS)

GENTLEMAN: Wha--? But Lord bless me! My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?

SCROOGE: If you please. Now, not a farthing less. (CHUCKLES) A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you! Heh! Will you do me that favour?

GENTLEMAN: Well, my dear sir, I don't know what to say to such munifi--

SCROOGE: Now! Don't say anything, please. Come and see me. Will you - will you come and see me?

GENTLEMAN: I will! I will, indeed.

SCROOGE: Ha ha! Thank'ee. I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you! Merry Christmas!

(MUSIC ... "PEACE ON EARTH" AS A BRIDGE, THEN UNDER)

NARRATOR: Next morning, Scrooge was early at his office. He went early for a reason. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he'd set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come in.

At last he came. His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

BOB CRATCHIT: (QUICKLY) ... fifteen and twenty-one, six and carry the one. Twenty-four and carry the two, thirty-one and eight and nine ...

SCROOGE: Hallo, you Cratchit!

BOB CRATCHIT: Yes, sir?

SCROOGE: Step this way, Cratchit, if you please.

SOUND: (RELUCTANT FOOTSTEPS)

SCROOGE: Cratchit! What do you mean by coming in at this time of day?

BOB CRATCHIT: Why, I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.

SCROOGE: You are. Yes, yes. I think you are.

BOB CRATCHIT: Oh, it's only once a year, Mr. Scrooge. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.

SCROOGE: I'll tell you what, my friend -- I'll not stand this sort of thing any longer! And therefore, Bob Cratchit -- I'm about to raise your salary.

BOB CRATCHIT: (AFTER A PAUSE, TREMBLING) Mr. Scrooge? Are you quite yourself, sir?

SCROOGE: No. No, thank Heaven, I'm NOT quite myself. Merry Christmas, Bob! (LAUGHS) Merry Christmas, my good fellow! A merrier Christmas than I've given you in many a year! I shall raise your salary, and we'll see what we can do for Tiny Tim and the rest of your family. Hah?! (CHUCKLES) We - we'll discuss it this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop.

(MUSIC ... PLAYFUL, CHEERY ... SNEAKS IN AND UNDER)

SCROOGE: Bob! Make up the fire! Make it up and - and - and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!

(MUSIC ... CONTINUES AS A BRIDGE, AND UNDER)

NARRATOR: Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; To Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them. His own heart laughed. That was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.

(MUSIC ... OUT)

NARRATOR: May that be truly said of us. Of all of us. And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One.

(MUSIC ... CHOIR SINGS "JOY TO THE WORLD" ... THEN, OUT)

THE END

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