Prologue

Tim appears.

Tim: Once upon a time, there was a country that was both "old" and "jolly," called - amongst other things - "England," which was the very best country in the whole wide world, unless you weren't a white Christian man, but our protagonist tonight is, so allll good!

Now, this old honky was named Ebenezer, which at the time was a very popular boy's name, third only to Alistair and Chad. Now, if you're curious as to the etymology of the name "Scrooge," I did a little research for you: pored over ancient texts with me little fingerless gloves I did, in the deepest stacks of The Royal British Library of Books and Suchlike, where I learned that the name "Scrooge" is derived from two words. The suffix "g-e" comes from the the Latin "genus" for "class," whilst the prefix "scroo" derives from "screwing" or "screwing over." Hence, "screwing over all classes" becomes "Scrooge." *The more you know!*

And aptly named this chap was, for he revelled in nothing more than Scrooging the folks around him, until it got so bad that there wasn't a soul what could say a good word about him. And this is in England, remember: the country that invented Scrooging!

But listen to me, blabbing away in an interminable monologue like some sort of Charles Dickhead. Why don't I take you on a magical journey instead? Come with me to *Victorian England:* come for the Industry, stay for the Syphilis[1].

The month… December… The day… why, it's Christmas Eve Day, today…

Oh, and the name's Tim. *Petite* Tim.

He winks coolly as the scene transforms…

Scene 1

Scrooge's money factory. As the set is assembled:

Tim: Stave 1. Victorian England. The Great Compromise… Ascension of Aestheticism, Installation of Industry… Beatlemania…

He breathes in deep. He coughs violently.

[1] Could be replaced with "Scurvy," should tots be in attendance.

Tim: Enter, my father, Bob Cratchit.
The etymology of "Cratchit" is not important…

Bob appears, the very flop-sweating symbol of haplessness and good intentions.

Tim: Our tale begins that very Christmas Eve midafternoon. That particular day was also "Bring Your Child to Work Day" at my father's offices, which is incidentally also where Scrooge got the idea for child labour!
Now, me father was a good man, if slightly in over his head. He got hired at Ebenezeer Scrooge's Money Factory after misunderstanding what a "bookkeeper" was. Having purchased books and keeping said books in his home for many years, he envisioned a far simpler and passive task.
The reality was an endless string of torture-days filled with verbal abuse, equally-legal physical abuse, forms, reports, torts, invoices, audits, balances, deductions, amendments, appendixes (both ruptured and financial), accounts, sums, math math math… Meanwhile his nights were filled with panic attacks, cold sweats, and stress dreams about file cabinets singing to him an operetta of despair and failure. It was… a lot.

Bob: Tim, oy there you are! Where've you been? It was like you vanished into an alternate reality. Oh, I'm sorry, were you in the toilet?

Tim: (*Embarrassed, the audience is watching*) Father, nooo… God, you're so embarrassing…

Bob: Is it the renal tubular acidosis acting up again? Do you need a new little stick?

Tim: Faaaather, me kidneys are fine!

Bob: You know me: I worry. I guess that's what happens when you have nineteen children before the age of 30… Speaking of which, I gotta get these books nice and laundered for Mr Scrooge if we hope to get out of here before dinner.

Tim: Best not waste time then, eh Father?

Bob: Mm, Christmas Eve dinner. I can already taste the familiar classics: turtle soup, stewed rockfish, yaaams… Not to mention Turkey Galantine. Yessir, no better way to cook a turkey than to stuff, boil, then gelatinize it.

Tim: I pray you, Father, stop talking of delicious period dishes. It's been a fortnight since last we ate. Wait— did you say Mr Ebenezer Scrooge wants you to *launder* his books?

Bob: I did indeed. Where's the Calgon? It's an ancient Chinese secret… for committing tax fraud!

Tim: But Father, I may just be a poor ragamuffin, but even I know that's illegal.

Bob: Now now, what's "legal," amiright? Next you'll be saying we shouldn't be sending jaywalkers to Australia.

Tim: I just don't want you taking the fall for this guy, you know? That solitary old oyster doesn't care about us—

Bob: Now Tim, you know I don't like you using the "o" word. Mr Scrooge has been very good to us. He took me off the graveyard shift, last year. Remember? That's been nice. The wifi in that cemetery was a joke.

Tim: But last year he made you work on Christmas, Father. Don't you remember?

Bob: Hmm, I seem to have repressed that! Wonder what else I've repressed… (*Vanishes into his own thoughts*) Oh, what could be behind *that* mental door?

Tim: Uh oh.

Bob: Lots of psychological locks on this one… This oughta be good…

Tim: I don't know if—

Bob: Mommy?!

He releases a blood-curdling scream. Tim shakes him.

Tim: Whoa! Come back to me, Father! It's okay! Sun's getting low…

Bob: Wuh— Where am I?

Tim: You're safe. Just repress. Repress…

Bob: Thank you. I should've known better than attempting to deal with my trauma. It's not the British way.

Tim: Father! Did you remember to book Christmas off this year?

Bob: Um…

Tim: Father!

Bob: You know there's a lot of contention about what day our Saviour was born… Many think it's June 13th, which actually falls on a Sunday this year so we should be all good—

Tim: (*Firmly*) Do you have to work *tomorrow?*

Bob: Tomorrow? Oh yes, definitely.

Tim: But Father, what about our jolly traditions? First we were going to beg for alms, and then go to Bedlam and laugh at the inmates, and then after a supper of tripe and offal, we were to cuddle up and watch the Muppets Chri— (*covering*) Treasure Island…

Bob: Well, worry not. Mr Scrooge shall understand. Perhaps he wants the day off, too.

Tim: But he hasn't taken a break since he started working at the age of seven.

Bob: Now now, we mustn't tease Mr Scrooge for entering the workforce so late in life. He's very sensitive about it. (*Knocks/calls*) Excuse me, sir?

Scrooge: (*Off*) What is it, Crotch? I'm in the midst of a top-hat fitting.

Bob: I just wanted—

Tim: (*Sotto voce:*) Wait, Father! Make it sound like you've already asked for Christmas off. Maybe he'll think he's just forgotten!

Bob: Smart! Sir, I just wanted to confirm that you don't need me June 13th—

Scrooge: What?

Tim elbows his father out of the way and mimics his voice:

Tim: I mean tomorrow. We talked about it a couple months ago. You said it was cool.

Scrooge: I did?

Tim: Ah, thanks for confirming. We'll get out of your sideburns. Kay, byyyyyee—

Tim begins pushing Bob towards the exit. Scrooge enters with the beginnings of an elaborate top hat.

Scrooge: Nice try there, lads. This isn't my first… whatever we British call a "rodeo."

Bob: That would be a "Heifer Scrimmage," sir.

Scrooge: Did you really think you could just leave in the middle of a workday? It's hardly 6!

Bob: I was hoping to audition for the Christmas pantomime, Sir: there's a drag role I'd love to try out for.

Scrooge: Well sadly, Shauntay you stay. The money demands it!

Tim: Mr Scrooge—

Scrooge: Well, if it isn't the littlest Crotch.

Tim: It's Cratchit, sir.

Scrooge: Crotch-itch, right. Now I'm afraid your Da-Da must come in to work tomorrow—

Bob: (*To Tim*) Why's he afraid? What's gonna happen?!

Tim: But what about the Factory Act of '33? Doesn't that give all workers Christmas Day off?

Scrooge: True, except your father signed *this* contract yesterday…

Tim: (*Appalled, looking it over*) Father! This is awful! Why would you sign this?

Bob: It's not all bad! Look, I also signed away my sick days so… (*smugly*) guess who's not getting sick.

Tim: Why do you need him to come in anyway? No one else will be working.

Scrooge: Little Timberly, now normally I'd be happy to give your father here the day off to get stuck in a chimney—

Bob: That only happened once! And it wasn't a Christmas thing. It was just for me and the missus.

Scrooge: — but things have changed. This isn't old Jacob Marley's Loose Change Repository anymore. It's Ebenezer Scrooge's Money Factory! And money never takes a break. Did you know I'm the wealthiest man in the world?

Tim: The world?!

Scrooge: That's right. I'm worth nearly a thousand pounds.

Tim and Bob cling to one another to keep themselves from fainting.

Scrooge: While your father works eight and a half days a week and garners an admirable 4 shillings for his efforts, I make nearly *thrice* that.

Tim: Thrice?

Scrooge: That's right. Now multiply that number by four, then by twelve, round that number up, pad it for the occasional bonuses, embezzlement, stealing, corporate donations and what-have-you: then you'll have a general idea of my annual salary. And that number is always rising, too! In fact, since I've started this sentence, I've made about tuppence.

Tim: (*At a loss*) Tuppence?

Scrooge: Ay. I have so much money that I could end world hunger just like that.

He holds his hand forth. Bob manipulates his fingers so he snaps.

Scrooge: Earlier today, I had a couple goobers from a local charity come to me for help feeding and heating the surplus population— As though there weren't already prisons and workhouses doing just that! Can you believe?

Tim: But sir, if you could end world hunger, why wouldn't you?

Scrooge: Oh my little invalid, there's so much you don't understand about the wealthy.

Bob: Don't hold it against him, sir. He's not well he is! He's got tubular rectal acid reflux!

Tim: Faaaaather! (*Beat*) That's not what it's called.

Scrooge: My point, Tim, is while I could certainly end famine once and for all, we rich folk have a more sacred obligation…

Tim: What's more sacred than helping your fellow man?

Scrooge: *Space travel!*

Tim: Space travel?

Scrooge: That's right! I want to pour 6-million meals' worth of cash into a five minute foray amongst the stars. I want to go to the moon - get in on the ground floor of their booming cheese industry. Swing by Mars, see if I can't turn some of that red to green, if you know what I mean.

Bob: (*Clarifying for Tim, wrongly*) Those are the Christmas colours, son.

Scrooge goes to elaborate, but is interrupted by some unexpected child carolers.

Scrooge: Ew, what is that caterwauling?

Bob: It sounds like some wassailers, sir. "Jingle Bell Rock," if I'm not mistaken.

Scrooge: This is hardly the time or the place for a Christmas carol. Well, best get my donation in order…

He picks up a hose and sprays it offstage.

Scrooge: HA HA !Rest ye soggy, gentlemen!

Sounds of children screaming and fleeing.

Scrooge: Get your own figgy pudding. I brought this one from home! (*Sighs peacefully*) Now where were we?

Tim: Space?

Scrooge: Ah yes, the financier's frontier. Now, give a man food for a year and he thrives; give that man the chance to see a member of the ultra-elite go to outer space for a few seconds… why, that nourishes his soul for *life.*

Tim: But there's so much to be done *here*! Think of your fellow man!

Scrooge: Don't make me say it, boy.

Tim: What?

Scrooge: Bob, he's going to make me say it.

Bob: This child does not represent me, sir.

Scrooge: It's coming down like the hammer of Thor, Tim.

Tim: What's happening?

Bob: I love you, son.

Scrooge: To that I say… Bah **HUMBUG**.

Huge reverb and sound effects. Perhaps humbugs fall from the sky. Tim and Bob stagger like the earth is shaking, swatting humbugs off them. Finally, Scrooge swoons as though weak from exertion.

Scrooge: Blimey, I'm spent. Those humbugs take a lot out of me.

Bob: I know, sir.

Scrooge: If that boy were on the payroll I'd dock his pay.

Bob: You'd be right to do it, sir.

Scrooge: Help me to my fainting couch. It's next to my puking chair.

Bob: Right this way sir.

Scrooge: I must convalesce before I can return home to Grimes, which is what I call the ash and industrial filth that covers every surface of my lodging.

He carries Scrooge off. Tim returns to the audience.

Scene 2

Tim: And thus was it decreed. Me father was doomed to work forever while that classic classist Scrooge set his gaze upon Uranus, Saturn, and beyond. And only once the swarm of buzzing humbugs had dispersed back to their cold and silent hives were my father and I permitted to return home…

Bob and Scrooge join him in the night.

Scrooge: Did you remember to empty your urine bottles?

Bob: Yes, Mr Scrooge.

Scrooge: Very well. See you tomorrow then.

Bob: Good night sir, and Happy Christmas!

Scrooge: Don't say "Happy Christmas," Bob. You sound like a nerd.

He exits. Bob sighs and he and his son wander homeward.

Tim: Old Cratchit Cottage was buried in the deepest bowels of Londontown, far beyond Fleet Street with its bougie hair salons and restaurants; past Drury Lane where legions of muffin-men await their dark instruction; past even the cheapest side of Cheapside and the fords of debtors known as Deptford… There stood our humble hovel, betwixt the shadow of Big Ben - which was the name of the donkey who was also our building manager - and St Paul, a notorious child abductor.
Me father went in for his traditional post-work cry, yet something compelled me elsewhere… away from our feeble hearth and my eighteen brothers and sisters, away from the donkeys and the perverts… Until at last I found myself standing in the shadow of the local parish church and the twisted, overgrown boneyard afore it.
As I wandered twixt the headstones, I found meself wondering - how many of these poor souls had been worked to death by squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, lying, no-good, rotten, low-life, snake-licking, dirt-eating, blood-sucking, dog-kissing, brainless, hopeless, heartless, bug-eyed, stiff-legged, spotty-lipped, worm-headed old sinners like Scrooge. How many of us had found an early grave amongst these knotted roots and nettles. I thought of meself: of my adorable trademark crutch, of me own inevitable premature burial. Of me sweaty father returning from the boneyard, alone… no doubt getting lost along the way… ending up god knows where…
And that's when I saw it… At my feet, a flat worn stone. The name barely decipherable after oh-so many sooty British winters. Yet in the crepuscular light of that old churchyard, it burned like phosphorescence.
Marley.
Marley?
Where had I heard that name before? Think, Petite Tim, think!

He does. Bob appears in Tim's memory, dancing badly.

Bob: No woman no cry!

Tim: No, that wasn't it…

Bob is replaced by Scrooge.

Scrooge: This isn't old Jacob Marley's Loose Change Repository anymore. It's Scrooge's Money Factory!

Tim: Of course, Scrooge's predeceased predecessor! The one responsible for unleashing that ornery old orangutan on Londontown!
And in that moment, I am ashamed to say, I felt me heart give way to hate. To primal rage. Towards Marley, towards Scrooge. A draconian fury hitherto untapped, like an oil well deep within me sickly soul. I raised mey wee fist thusly to the heavens (*he raises his fist, thusly*), shaking it like so (*he shakes it*), and I cursed God Himself.
OY! GOD! You think You're so great just because You capitalize Your pronouns? Well guess what, the rest of us think it's pretentious! Why don't You do something to help us, eh? Instead of dumping your blessings on old skinflints like Scrooge, You could spread it around a bit. Maybe *I'd* like to go to space, befriend an alien, fly a UFO. Ever think of that?
Blimey, I am so sick of seeing blokes like Scrooge living the life of luxury, whilst so many good people suffer and scrimp. Why, there ain't nuthin' what I wouldn't give to get even with that miserly old goat…

A flicker of… something. Light? Magic? Fire?

Carol: (*Appearing behind him, in the shadows*) That could be arranged.

Tim: Who goes there?

Carol steps into the light. She looks like your classic holiday mom, wearing an ugly Christmas sweater and festive jewelry.

Carol: Well hello there, little fella! What're you doing out here in this cemetery? Why, I've heard it's *devilishly* haunted…

Tim: Oh I'm just cursing God, mum. And yourself?

Carol: Same, same. What's your name?

Tim: I'm Tim, mum. Petite Tim.

Carol: Oh, well howsabout I call you Tiny Tim? Would that be okay?

Tim: *Tiny* Tim? My god… It's catchy… alliterative… It's amazing! Thank you, mum!

Carol: Call me Carol, dear.

Tim: Carol? Like a Christmas Carol?

Carol: You got it, buckaroo. I love Christmas! In my family, I get to do all the holiday shopping, if you catch my drift. Now, why're you cursing God? Shouldn't you be roasting some sort of period-appropriate nut over a fire?

Tim: Oh I can't afford nuts. And it's all because of my father's boss, Ebenezer Scrooge!

Carol: I've heard of him. You know the reason he's so rich is because he doesn't have to buy any coal? Santa brings him enough to power all of England.

Tim: (*Bitterly*) Of course he does… Perhaps *I* ought to be naughty for once. Lord knows being nice never helped no one.

Carol: Now that is a new year's resolution I can get behind. Maybe I can even help. I know a thing or two about being naughty.

Tim: But Carol, you're the very picture of seasonal warmth!

Carol: *Warmth*. That's a great way to put it. I'm always very warm.

Tim: And you'd risk getting coal by helping me get on the naughty list?

Carol: Honey, where I come from, coal is currency.

Tim: And where are you from?

Carol: Well… Have you ever hear of a guardian angel?

Tim: Of course!

Carol: Well it's sort of like that, only way cooler.

Tim: Hang on…

Carol: I'm your guardian demon! And I'm here to make sure you have the best Christmas ever! And also that you sign over your eternal soul to almighty Lucifer.

Tim: Hmm… Me mother always warned me against selling my soul to middle-aged women in cemeteries… Then again, I sure could use some supernatural assistance in getting revenge on old Scrooge… You know, why not!

Carol: Yeah?

Tim: Yeah! If this is what I need to do to help my family, then I'm gonna do it. I'm tired of that old miser terrorizing this town. Time to hit him where it hurts.

Carol: *The scrotum*[2].

Tim: The wallet! I am going to terrorize him so immensely that if he ever dreams about hurting his fellow man again, he'll have a nervous breakdown.

Carol: That's lovely. Where I come from, we have a saying: "Every time a senior citizen cries, a demon gets their horns."

Tim: Well then get ready to be horny, Carol—

Carol: I always am!

Tim: — Because we're about to trick some Scrooge. But wait, if this plan goes correctly, then Scrooge will be redeemed. You'd lose his soul…

Carol: But we'd get yours instead. Oh man… A nice little kid soul… (*Chef's kiss*) I'm looking at a promotion: artistic director! But wait, first you must sign your soul over to me.

Tim: How? In blood? Can you take it from my left hand, please? I'm a northpaw.

Carol: Nothing like that, sugar. All you have to do is partake of the Sinister Sacrament. Instead of the Body of Christ, try the Body of Satan. T-M.

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[2] Kid friendly version? I don't know, man. Butt?

She offers it.

Tim: Is that fruitcake?

Carol: *Sugar-free* fruitcake.

Tim: I don't know…

Carol: Oh hush now.

She shoves it into his mouth.

Tim: Wow. You can really taste the anguish.

Carol: The secret ingredient is babies.

Tim: Ah.

Carol: Now let's get to work! (*Beat*) You know, I could just make it so your family's rich and cut out the middle man entirely.

Tim: Nah, my father would just spend it all on magic beans. I'm not joking. He wants to invest in something called "coffee"… Horrible bitter stuff. Who would ever pay for diarrhea? It'll never catch on. No, better to have a wealthy benefactor in our lives who's in charge of the money. Plus, if our plan goes aright, he might even help the whole city.

Carol: The whole city? You know, this might not be a fair trade after all…

Tim: Did I mention I'm sick?

Carol: Huh?

Tim: I'm just a sick widdew baby. *Koff koff.*

Carol: Oh man. (*Mouth waters*) You gotta soul in there, little baby?

Tim: Yeah, it's so spotwess and pewe (*pure?*).

Carol: ALRIGHT! I'll help!