

**Do the Narration with Standard American Speech. Use appropriate Brit dialect for scene work.**

**NARRATION**  
**(remember, this is a ghost story)**

Marley was dead, to begin with. There was 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 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

This must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of the story we are about to relate. Scrooge knew he was dead. Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole legatee, his 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 with an undoubted bargain.

Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: SCROOGE & MARLEY. 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.

Once upon a time, of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather; foggy withal; and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had just gone three, but it was a dark day already.

**Scene 1 – BELLE & SCROOGE**

BELLE: To you it matters little. Very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

SCROOGE: (*Entering the scene.*) What idol has displaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

SCROOGE: This is the even handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth.

BELLE: You fear the world too much. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Greed, engrosses you. Have I not?

SCROOGE: What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, I am not changed towards you. Am I?

BELLE: Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor, and content to be so, until in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.

SCROOGE: I was a boy.

BELLE: Your own feeling tells you that you are not what you were. I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I have thought of it, and can release you.

SCROOGE: Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words. No. Never.

SCROOGE: In what then?

BELLE: In a changed nature; in an altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? *(Belle looks into his eyes for a long moment. Scrooge turns his head away.)* Ah, no.

SCROOGE: You think not.

BELLE: I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows! But if you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can I believe that you would choose a poor girl, - you who weigh everything by Gain or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentance, and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. *(Scrooge starts to speak - stops.)* You may have pain in this; the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen. *(Belle exits as Fiddler quietly reprises Music from the top of this scene.)*