

*The hour sounds. SCROOGE sighs with relief.*

The hour and nothing more!

*But the hour rolls on, a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE. The bed curtain is drawn aside as if by magic – and the room is suddenly ablaze with pure, snow-white light.*

*And there's a face right by SCROOGE's. He starts in terror.*

*But the apparition is more strange than terrifying.*

*Androgynous, with long white hair and a smooth, youthful face, it's dressed in a simple white tunic, trimmed with summer flowers.*

*In one hand it carries a sprig of fresh holly and it has a huge candle-snuffer under its other arm. From its head streams a jet of dazzling white light. It is the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST.*

SCROOGE *gapes at it.*

Are you the spirit... whose coming was foretold to me?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. I am!

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. I see.

*(Squints.)* Would you... would you mind just putting on that cap of yours? I cannot quite –

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. What! Would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, this wonderful light I give? Is it not enough that you, Ebenezer Scrooge, are one of those whose efforts made this cap. And force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!

SCROOGE. I meant no offence, spirit! And I can't recall having had any involvement in your bonneting –

*The light surges brighter still.*

What... what business brings you here?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. Your welfare.

SCROOGE. Can't help thinking that a good night's sleep would be better for me than –

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. Your reclamation, then!

SCROOGE. Reclamation? Hmmph! I'm not a tract of Dutch fen!

*The GHOST grasps him firmly by the arm.*

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. Rise! And walk with me!

SCROOGE. I'm not properly attired, spirit, and... did I mention I have a cold in the head? And –

*They are heading inexorably towards the window.*

I am mortal and liable to fall!

*The GHOST puts its hand to SCROOGE's heart.*

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST. Bear but a touch of my hand there and you shall be upheld in more than this!

*And they suddenly rise into the air, racing towards the wall.*

SCROOGE cries out in terror...

SCROOGE. Good heavens!