

A Very Covid Christmas Carol

A socially distanced adaptation of a beloved holiday classic

By Pamela Morgan

Cast of Characters

CAST: 17-22; 7 female; 9 any, 6 male

Cast Breakdown

<u>Ebenezer Scrooge</u>	50-80, male of extreme privilege and wealth, though he does not have to be white, it is implied.
<u>Alexa</u>	any age, race, gender, voice only, the first Avatar
<u>Bob Cratchit</u>	30-50, male, Scrooge's clerk, father of 4, nervous and timid
<u>Fred Scrooge</u>	20-40, male, Scrooge's nephew
<u>Marley</u>	50-80, female, any race, Scrooge's former business partner
<u>Child Scrooge</u>	8-12, male, same race as Ebenezer Scrooge
<u>Fannie</u>	6-10, female, Scrooge's little sister
<u>Orson</u>	8-12, any race or gender, a classmate of Child Scrooge
<u>Young Scrooge</u>	20-30, male, same race as Ebenezer Scrooge
<u>Belle</u>	20-30, female, any race, pansexual, the love of Scrooge's life
<u>Chris Present</u>	any age, race or gender, a quick witted, Christmas loving computer hacker, the second Avatar
<u>Emily Cratchit</u>	30-50, female, any race, stay at home mother of four
<u>Justin</u>	10-12, any gender, any race, Bob and Emily's child
<u>Abby</u>	8-10, female, any race, Bob and Emily's child
<u>Peter</u>	12-16, male, Bob and Emily's child

Cast Breakdown (Cont.)

<u>Tiny Tim</u>	6-10, any gender, any race, Bob and Emily's child
<u>Rose</u>	any age, female, any race; party guest of Fred and Emma
<u>Topper</u>	any age, race, or gender, party guest of Fred and Emma
<u>Emma</u>	20-40, female, any race, Fred Scrooge's fiancée
<u>Anonymous</u>	any age, race or gender; the third Avatar
<u>Undertaker</u>	any age, race or gender
<u>Wholesome Foods Clerk</u>	any age, race or gender

Place

The entire play takes place on a remote platform, characters are in their own homes, kitchens, bedrooms or office spaces as needed.

Time

Present

Synopsis

In this heartwarming comedy, Ebenezer Scrooge, a humbug of a debt collector, faces an unusual and virtual journey of his own Christmases past, present and future, and the selfish choices he made, with the help of three Avatars and Zoom.

SCENE 1 – CHRISTMAS EVE

We open to an older man, white haired, angrily glaring at the camera. His home office should look wealthy but not lavish or excessive. We will learn later that this is his bedroom, as well as his home office. The Zoom Call is the ongoing meeting that he requires, so customers can contact them at all hours of the day. Bob, his assistant, is logged into zoom but not visible in the camera.

SCROOGE

Alexa, tell me the time.

ALEXA

It is 4:36 PM. The day is Thursday, December 24th, 2020. Merry Christmas.

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

ALEXA

A humbug is a person or object that behaves in a deceptive or dishonest way, often as a hoax or in jest. Would you like to hear more?

SCROOGE

No, I don't want to hear more. I didn't want to hear that in the first place. Alexa, stop saying Merry Christmas.

ALEXA

I could be wrong, but I believe that Christmas is celebrated on the 25th of December.

SCROOGE

Bah.

ALEXA

Sheep say bah.

SCROOGE

Oh shut up!

(BOB appears on his camera, removing mask, hat and coat as if he'd just been outdoors. BOB is in the public office, while SCROOGE works from home)

SCROOGE

You're late, Cratchit.

BOB

Sir, they only allow two customers in the shop at a time, the line was long.

SCROOGE

I told you to return at 4:30 PM, not 4:36 PM.

BOB

But your packages, sir . . . you needed them delivered. You didn't want me taking them to the post office.

SCROOGE

Of course I didn't want you taking them to the post office, the postal system is rubbish!

BOB

UPS was swamped.

SCROOGE

UPS charges an arm and a leg and they lose everything.

BOB

Should I have used Fed Ex?

SCROOGE

Whatever happened to the good old reliable pony express?

ALEXA

Here's what I found on Wiki. The pony express went bankrupt after 18 months and the invention of the telegraph.

SCROOGE

I thought I told you to shut up! Next time, Cratchit, find a cheaper route.

BOB

Like . . . the post office, sir?

SCROOGE

I'm deducting the half hour from your wages for being late. We might have missed a very important client. Check emails, see if we missed anything.

BOB

Of course, sir. I'll check right away.

(Bob begins checking emails, we can still see his face, but he's clearly not paying attention. Scrooge busies himself with things on his desk, not watching the screen. At this time, a person enters the waiting room, FRED SCROOGE, a chime should sound)

SCROOGE

(without looking up) Someone's in the waiting room, who is it!

BOB

(coming back to the remote call)

Oh, it's your nephew, Fred.

SCROOGE

He's not a customer, don't let him in.

BOB

But, sir, he is your nephew. Shouldn't you at least see what he wants?

SCROOGE

He can call me on my phone if he wants to talk.

(SCROOGE's phone rings, SCROOGE looks at it)

Bah! It's Fred calling!

BOB

But sir, you said—

SCROOGE

I know what I said, I'm working. That dirty hippie good for nothing can find another day to get a hold of me.

BOB

It's Christmas Eve, sir.

SCROOGE

(mocking) It's Christmas Eve, sir. Christmas is for suckers, it's for corporations to make a killing on suckers like you who have a half dozen children and no means to support them.

BOB

We're doing just fine, sir.

SCROOGE

Well you'll be out a job if you keep arguing with me about it! Get to work!

(someone enters the waiting room, labelled Definitely Not Fred, a chime sounds)

SCROOGE

(staring suspiciously) Well that's definitely Fred. Right?

BOB

There would be only one way to know, sir.

SCROOGE

No, no. It's definitely Fred because it says Definitely Not Fred. We're not letting him in.

(both men return to their work, after a moment, Definitely not Fred leaves and Rich Customer enters, a chime sounds)

SCROOGE

There, a customer! Let him in!

BOB

If you say so, sir.

(FRED joins the call)

FRED

Uncle Scrooge! Merry Christmas.

SCROOGE

Bah humbug.

FRED

I can't believe the only way I can get a hold of you is sneaking into your remote work channel for your company. Did you get any of my voicemails or text messages?

SCROOGE

No, I didn't get any. There must be something wrong with my phone. Alexa, did I get any phone calls from my nephew, Fred?

ALEXA

All voicemails deleted from Dirty Hippie.

SCROOGE

Wait, what? How did she get set to call you that? Alexa, do not call my nephew a Dirty Hippie, his name's Fred.

ALEXA

Changing Dirty Hippie to Fred.

FRED

Well I care for you too, Uncle. I've been worried sick about you, are you feeling well? Staying safe?

SCROOGE

Of course I'm feeling well. Fit as a fiddle.

FRED

Do you need anything? I don't want you going out and taking a risk of getting the virus.

SCROOGE

I have everything I need, what could you possibly get for me that I can't get for myself.

FRED

I'm not trying to imply that—

SCROOGE

I've worked every day of my life, weekends too. Earned every nickel I have.

FRED

Of course, Uncle, I didn't mean that you can't—

SCROOGE

I started with nothing, as broke as you are now, and I worked my way up, day after day, year after year, to run this whole company, and now you think there's something you can give me that I can't get for myself?

FRED

Emma's homemade chicken noodle soup?

SCROOGE

Well, if you're in the neighborhood, I wouldn't mind a bowl.

FRED

I'll drop a gallon! Also, I'm having a Christmas party. Remote, of course, but we'd love to have you!

SCROOGE

Your parties are always full of deadbeat socialists and broke anarchists, I have no time for parties. Bob and I plan to be right here, collecting payments from our customers.

BOB

But sir, you said I could leave at 5 tonight, Emily is having our family dinner. She'd be so disappointed if I missed it, it is Christmas, after all.

SCROOGE

(mocking) It is Christmas after all. You just took a break! Do you think money isn't due just because it's a holiday?

FRED

Uncle! The man needs to be home with his family for Christmas Eve.

SCROOGE

You know who values laziness over hard work? Socialists. Who are you to tell a man to take time off, you barely scrape together a living.

FRED

I've been laid off because of Covid, you know the circumstances, Uncle Scrooge.

SCROOGE

Laid off because of COVID, whoever heard such nonsense. Shutting down an entire economy. Sick people die. Whether its COVID or the flu, or some other human weakness.

FRED

Uncle, you can't possibly mean that!

SCROOGE

I do mean exactly that. Sick people will die, it is what it is.

FRED

Bob, I apologize for my Uncle, especially considering your Tiny Tim.

SCROOGE

Don't apologize for me! And don't be encouraging working employees to lose their jobs and take money for free.

FRED

Its not free money, Uncle. It's called unemployment insurance!

SCROOGE

It's called handouts from the government!

FRED

Uncle, the invitation stands. I've sent you the remote link in email and text. We would love to see you there. Happy Holidays, Uncle. Bob, Happy Holidays. Send my regards to your wife and children.

(FRED logs off call)

SCROOGE

Bah humbug!

BOB

About 5 PM, sir . . .

SCROOGE

Hmm? Fine, fine, you can leave at 5 PM but I expect you in an hour early tomorrow.

BOB

But tomorrow is Christmas day, sir!

SCROOGE

I don't care what day it is, we have loans to collect, we can't be sleeping in and eating roast turkey on the government's dime. You heard what I said, now off with you and enjoy my generosity.

BOB

Of course, thank you sir, thank you very much. I'll see you tomorrow at . . . at 8? May I log in at my home at least?

SCROOGE

Oh, sure . . . you can roll out of your bed and pretend to work while I pay you for doing nothing. No problem at all. *(angrily)* Seven AM sharp, to make up for me letting you leave early tonight, and not a minute late! From the office!

BOB

Yes, sir.

(BOB stands up, gets his coat and hat and scarf on)

BOB

Merry Christmas, sir. I'll see you in the morning.

(BOB leaves the remote call)

SCENE 2 – MARLEY’S VISIT

SCROOGE

Alexa, set an out of office notification for remote customers.

ALEXA

Your out of office notification "Hello, customers, We're not available at the moment but you still need to pay your loans. A manager has been notified and will be on shortly to collect." Has been set.

SCROOGE

And change Fred's name back to Dirty Hippie.

ALEXA

Fred Scrooge is changed to Dirty Hippie. *(doorbell sounds)*
Someone is at the front door.

SCROOGE

Open live video. It must be Fred with the soup. I do love chicken noodle soup.

(video opens of front porch, for a moment it appears someone is standing there, but video flickers and we see an empty porch. SCROOGE leaves the zoom camera, appears briefly on the porch video looking around, he bends down to pick something up. He leaves porch camera and then returns to his office)

SCROOGE

End doorbell feed.

(the video closes, just as the doorbell rings again).

Alexa, open feed!

(video opens again, a figure is standing at the door.)

Let me talk.

ALEXA

Opening microphone.

SCROOGE

Hello? Hello?

MARLEY

Scrooooooooooooooooooge.

SCROOGE

Who is that? What do you want? I'm not coming to the door.

MARLEY

Scroooooooooooooo *(coughing)*.

SCROOGE

Is that . . . that can't be . . .

(SCROOGE gets closer to screen to see)

Alexa, can you zoom in?

(Camera zooms in closer, figure turns to show a masked angry close up face. SCROOGE falls back from the computer in fear, the porch camera goes black a moment and then shows an empty porch)

SCROOGE

I must be seeing things. Whoever it is, he's gone now. Gave me a startle. Alexa, play Mozart's Piano Concerto Number 3.

ALEXA

Now playing Despacito featuring Daddy Yankee.

(music begins playing)

SCROOGE

Alexa, turn that off! Play some classical music.

ALEXA

Now playing a selection of classical music.

(music begins, Scrooge sips his soup)

SCROOGE

Mmm . . . my nephew's fiance might be as bad as he is, but she sure can make chicken noodle soup.

(computer chirps as someone enters the waiting room, Marley)

SCROOGE

What is this? Who would dare to use my dead partner's name!

(SCROOGE lets him into the remote call, the screen comes up with no video)

MARLEY

Scrooooooooooooooge.

SCROOGE

Who is this?

MARLEY

Scrooooooooooooooge . . . *(coughing)*

SCROOGE

Who are you?

MARLEY

Scrooooooooooooooge . . . I can't figure out how to turn on my video . . .

SCROOGE

Bottom right-hand side, there's a little camera.

MARLEY

I don't see it.

SCROOGE

Move your mouse down, to the right...no wait, sorry LEFT! To the left, there's a microphone, and then a camera, it should have an--

MARLEY

(enters call, sick, bad connection, a breathing mask dangles from his neck)

Can you see me now?

SCROOGE

You look terrible.

MARLEY

Scrooooooooooge (*coughing*)

SCROOGE

Enough with the creepy Scrooging, I don't know who you are, or where you got a Marley mask, but I'm going to call the authorities if you don't take it off.

MARLEY

I am Marley, your partner, dead these 7 months.

SCROOGE

And you're haunting remote calls now?

MARLEY

I mean, do I have anything better to do?

SCROOGE

Go towards the light or whatever it is you see! Leave me in peace.

MARLEY

I've been stuck watching you since I died, Scrooge. And considering you haven't left the confines of your miserable little home, its been really boring.

SCROOGE

So why wait until now to pop up?

MARLEY

Because your time grows near and you've been given one last chance to transform. You will be visited three times tonight, by three Avatars.

SCROOGE

Avatars?

MARLEY

Avatars...you know what avatars are, like a...I don't know...

SCROOGE

Like the movie? One of those blue things?

MARLEY

No, more like those mimoji's everyone uses on Facebook these days.

SCROOGE

When have you been on Facebook? You could barely use a keyboard.

MARLEY

What else have I had to do these past 7 months??

SCROOGE

Ok, so an emoji is going to visit me three times?

MARLEY

Not emoji. MEEmoji. It's like a jif that represents a person.

SCROOGE

Jiff? Like . . . peanut butter?

MARLEY

No, a jif like a picture that represents a person.

SCROOGE

Do you mean a gif?

MARLEY

Whatever! You're going to have three visitors, tonight.

SCROOGE

I don't want any visitors, its late, and I'm tired, and I'm social distancing.

MARLEY

You don't really get a choice, Scrooge. This is your last chance.

SCROOGE

My last chance?

MARLEY

Change or suffer the consequences.

SCROOGE

That sounds awfully ominous.

MARLEY

Scroooooooooooge.

SCROOGE

Marley, you're breaking up. What do you mean, change? Change how?

MARLEY

Remember what I told you, three avatars.

SCROOGE

Yes, yes, I won't forget.

MARLEY

Your last chance . . .

SCROOGE

So you said.

MARLEY

Change or suffer . . .

SCROOGE

This is getting a little old.

MARLEY

I can't figure out how to leave the meeting.

SCROOGE

Bottom right, move the mouse around, it should be a button and that says Leave

(MARLEY leaves the remote call)

SCROOGE

Meeting. *(he stares quietly at the screen for a long moment)* Bah humbug!

(fade to blackout)

SCENE 3 – CHRISTMAS PAST

Scene 3 Part 1 - Child Scrooge and Fannie

(Alarm sounds and a light turns on the office. He was obviously woken unexpectedly. He checks his phone, then his computer, but can't seem to figure out where the alarm is coming from)

SCROOGE

Alexa, whatever that is, stop!

ALEXA

Now playing Hansen's MMM Bop

(music begins)

SCROOGE

No, shut up! Alexa, stop playing music. *(music stops)* Turn off the alarm. *(alarm stops)* What time is it?

ALEXA

The time is one AM. Friday, December 25th. Merry--

SCROOGE

Silence! I didn't set an alarm for one AM.

ALEXA

Now playing, Last Christmas by Wham.

(music begins again)

SCROOGE

Alexa, stop playing music! Turn off the lights.

(lights dim, Scrooge gets up to leave room)

SCROOGE

Alexa, play some relaxing tunes.

ALEXA

Now playing Chats with Fannie on Zoom.

(video pops up, we see Child Scrooge and Fannie, on a video call with each other. They both appear to be in

a blanket fort with their flashlights. Child Scrooge is reading from a book, Peter and Wendy. SCROOGE should pop up onto his video screen during CHILD SCROOGE reading, looking confused.)

CHILD SCROOGE

"I think all were gone when a group of savage boys surrounded Hook, who seemed to have a charmed life, as he kept them at bay in that circle of fire. They had done for his dogs, but this man alone seemed to be a match for them all. Again and again they closed upon him, and again and again he hewed a clear space. He had lifted up one boy with this hook, and was using him as a buckler, when another, who had just passed his sword through Mullins, sprang into the fray.

"Put up your swords, boys," cried the newcomer, 'this man is mine.'

SCROOGE

What is this?

FAN

It's Peter!

SCROOGE

Alexa, where did you find this?

CHILD SCROOGE

Thus suddenly, Hook found himself face to face with Peter. The others drew back and formed a ring around them.

For long the two enemies looked at one another; Hook shuddering slightly, and Peter with the strange smile upon his face.

'So, Pan,' said Hook at last, 'this is all your doing.'

'Ay, James Hook,' came the stern answer, 'it is all my doing.'

'Proud and insolent youth,' said Hook, 'prepare to meet thy doom.'

SCROOGE

This was her favorite part.

FAN

This is my favorite part!

CHILD SCROOGE

*(throwing off blanket and leaping to his feet,
brandishing a fake sword)*

'Dark and sinister man, Have at thee!'

*(he begins fake sword fighting the fake Hook, Fan
looks delighted until a male voice is heard offstage.)*

FAN

Father's calling, I'll be right back, Ebenezer!

*(her video turns off; computer chimes and a child
appears on the screen, ORSON, about Child Scrooge's
age)*

ORSON

Ebenezer, you're still at school.

CHILD SCROOGE

Of course I'm still at school.

ORSON

Did your dad forget to pick you up again? Dude that sucks. My mom wanted me to come home but I told her I had too much school work.

CHILD SCROOGE

My father didn't forget me. I . . . didn't want to go home.

ORSON

I was going to build a snow fort, did you want to come?

CHILD SCROOGE

A snow fort?

ORSON

Or we could go sledding behind the dorms. Do you have a sled?

CHILD SCROOGE

Sledding behind the dorms, I . . . don't have a . . . No, I . . .
. I have to study for a test and I'm in the middle of a call
with my sister.

ORSON

I'm sure she wouldn't mind if you called her back later,
studying can wait. Let's have some fun!

CHILD SCROOGE

(angry) Studying can't wait! If I fail my class, my father will
. . . .

(short pause)

ORSON

(concerned) Your father will what?

CHILD SCROOGE

Nothing, my father wouldn't understand. Go, I'm not coming.

ORSON

Alright, if you change your mind, you know where to find me!

(ORSON logs off in time for FAN to return)

FAN

Ebenezer, I have the very best news!

(pausing video)

SCROOGE

Oh Fannie . . .

ALEXA

Fan Scrooge - born in 1963, died in 1993.

SCROOGE

In childbirth.

ALEXA

*(starts opening photos of Fan and Scrooge, Fan alone
older. Fan pregnant)*

Survived by one son.

SCROOGE *(resentful)*

If it wasn't for my nephew, Fred. Alexa, go back to that video,
let me see her one last time.

(video reopens)

FAN

Ebenezer, Father says we're coming to pick you up from boarding
school tomorrow!

CHILD SCROOGE

For what, for a day? For a weekend?

FAN

Forever, Ebenezer!

CHILD SCROOGE

I don't understand, I thought he-

FAN

He's changed, Ebenezer, I don't know how to explain it. Last
night he said he wished you were home for Christmas, so I asked
if you could come. That I missed you. And you know what he said?

CHILD SCROOGE

What?

FAN

He said he missed you too and he wanted you home. You're coming home for Christmas, Ebenezer, and for good!

SCROOGE

Pause!

(Frame pauses on smiling children)

Scene 3 Part 2 - Young Scrooge and Belle

ALEXA

Enrollment records show E. Scrooge attended boarding school for six more years.

SCROOGE

I had to work hard, and study. I had to prove that I could earn a living. More than a living! A fortune!

ALEXA

Employment records show entry level position with Fezziwig in 1985.

SCROOGE

No more, I want to sleep, I don't feel well.

ALEXA

Now playing phone calls to Belle.

SCROOGE

No, no Alexa. No!

(SCROOGE looks as though he might turn off the computer as the image of a beautiful young woman takes over the screen)

ALEXA

Saved video recording, December 4th, 2:43 PM

BELLE

Ebenezer, I can't wait for dinner tonight. I haven't seen or spoken to you in weeks, you've been so busy with your new job. I know you enjoy consulting for Fezziwig, but the travel is exhausting and I . . . I miss you. You're probably on the plane now, but I'm looking forward to some time alone together. There's something I want to tell you, I've been waiting to tell you. Something good! Something important. I'll see you soon.

(video call closes)

ALEXA

Saved video recording, December 4th, 6:02 PM

(video call of Young Scrooge opens, sound of party in background, a club or bar)

YOUNG SCROOGE

Belle, I'm so sorry we missed each other. Dick picked me up from the airport and whisked me off to this club to celebrate the new account and a promotion! Fezziwig and the whole office is here. You should come out and join us! Take a taxi, we can talk at the club!

(video call closes)

ALEXA

Saved video recording, December 4th, 9:18 PM

(Video call of Belle opens)

BELLE

I went to the club, I couldn't find you. We haven't talked in weeks and you leave tomorrow. Where are you? Please, Ebenezer, call me!

(video call closes)

ALEXA

Saved video recording, December 5th, 10:22 AM

(video call of Young Scrooge opens)

YOUNG SCROOGE

Belle, last night was a mistake. The guys took us to another club and then another, I had so much to drink I lost track of time and place. I shouldn't have told you to come out. My plane leaves at 1, drop by before then! We can talk.

(video call closes)

SCROOGE

No. No more, stop please.

ALEXA

Saved video call, December 5th, 4:26 PM

(Young Scrooge and Belle appear on the screen, talking to each other on a video call)

YOUNG SCROOGE

You should have come over this morning. I would have loved to see you before I left.

BELLE

I had to work, Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE

You could have skipped to see me.

BELLE

No, I can't skip work because you have a free hour. I need my job.

YOUNG SCROOGE

For now, but that's why I'm working so hard, it's for the both of us. So one day soon, you can leave your job.

BELLE

I don't want to leave my job. I enjoy what I do and it isn't about the money. I hope you don't feel that you need to earn more or work harder for me. I'm perfectly happy with what I have now.

YOUNG SCROOGE

You can't be saying you want to be with someone who is poor.

BELLE

I'm saying I want to be with someone who is here!

YOUNG SCROOGE

You don't want to be with me?

BELLE

I don't know. I don't want to do this on the phone.

YOUNG SCROOGE

We can talk when I get home.

BELLE

When?

YOUNG SCROOGE

In a month. I promise, we'll get together just the two of us. It will be alright.

(Young Scrooge and Belle video call closes)

SCROOGE

But we didn't. I was too busy that weekend and then my flight got delayed the next month, I don't remember.

ALEXA

Saved video call, February 14th, 6:31 PM

SCROOGE *(heartwrenched)*

No, please Alexa, don't.

(video call between Young Scrooge and Belle opens)

YOUNG SCROOGE

Happy Valentine's Day! Did you get the flowers I sent?

BELLE

I did.

YOUNG SCROOGE

You didn't like them. I thought you loved roses.

BELLE

Ebenezer, you were supposed to be home this weekend, what happened?

YOUNG SCROOGE

It's the new account, Fezziwig asked me to stay to set up the clients and make sure nothing went wrong this weekend.

BELLE

And last month. And the month before. And next month. We never talk, you're never home.

YOUNG SCROOGE

I will be though, Belle. This isn't forever. I'm building a future for us. These things take time and I thought you were supportive. I told you when we met that I had plans for my career and I thought you understood and supported that.

BELLE

I have plans too, Ebenezer. I have dreams that we never talked about at all.

YOUNG SCROOGE

I know you do, a house and children. My job will give us the money and resources, so you can quit yours and raise our family when the time is right.

BELLE

I've told you already, I'm not quitting my job. And a house and kids? I don't think so, Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE

You don't want children? I assumed, as a teacher, that you did .
. .

BELLE

Maybe one day. Maybe not. I want to travel and see the world. I want to get involved with things that matter. I want to make the world a better place.

YOUNG SCROOGE

Money can do that!

BELLE

Money is the reason the world isn't a better place.

YOUNG SCROOGE

(angry, intense) No, money is not the reason the world isn't a better place. Money makes things better. Money makes things easier. You think the poor homeless man on the side of the road is happy? You think he feels like he's making the world a better place and he's satisfied to go to bed hungry? And programs that keep him poor, paid for on the backs of the working man, what good are those? I plan to have enough money that we can grease the wheels that make the rules. Or make the rules ourselves, Belle. You want to make the world a better place? Well that's a way to start!

BELLE

No, Ebenezer, I don't believe that's the way. You can't possibly feel that way either.

YOUNG SCROOGE

I do!

BELLE

Then you're a slave to your money and a slave to your job and that isn't what I want.

YOUNG SCROOGE

Then you're saying you don't want me.

BELLE

I guess . . . that is what I'm saying. I don't want you. I don't want your money. I don't want this kind of relationship. I don't want to feel like I'm wasting my life waiting for you. Relationships take work, Ebenezer. They take time and commitment. They take two people who treat each other with dignity and respect, working towards a common goal.

YOUNG SCROOGE

They take love too, Belle, and I love you.

BELLE

They do take love, Ebenezer. And at one time, I thought I loved you too. But relationships take so much more than love. I'm sorry, but it's over between us.

SCROOGE

Pause.

(he stares at Belle's frozen face on the screen)

SCROOGE

She never told me she loved me before that, never. We could have made it work if I'd known, why didn't she tell me?

(video call closes)

ALEXA

I'm not sure I understand.

SCROOGE

I never saw her again, but I seem to recall she met someone, didn't she?

ALEXA

Searching the internet for Belle Hall.

(google searches for Belle Hall, selects Facebook page. Scrolls down through last few posts, marriage equality, her with a woman and children)

SCROOGE

Ah yes, her wife, Jane.

(screen clicks the link to the video)

BELLE

Happy anniversary to my adorable wife, Jane. You are kind and devoted, loving and warm, you make me laugh and make me cry, but . . . the good kind of cry. You drive me crazy sometimes, and we never can seem to figure out where to eat or how to pay our bills on time, but you always challenge me to be better and do better. You've been there for me through all the good times and all the hard times and I hope I've been there for you. I feel like I spent my whole life waiting for someone like you to walk into it and now I can't imagine my life without you. So for this anniversary, I thought I would surprise you and of course our dozen or so facebook friends, with an announcement that our family is growing not just by one child, but by two! We're having twins in December. If we have a girl, I'd like to name her Ruth, after your mother, and she is going to grow up to be mighty and to change the world. I love you, Jane, here's to another ten years of amazing adventures.

(video ends)

SCROOGE

She always loved with her whole heart. She just didn't love me. I don't see the point of this.

ALEXA

Unwatched Video recording, December 5th, 1:12 AM

SCROOGE

What is this? I don't remember this?

(video opens of Belle)

BELLE

Ebenezer, I looked everywhere. At the club, I went by your apartment, even the office. I couldn't find you. I feel terrible that we didn't get a chance to talk. I know that your job with Fezziwig is important and you work such long hours and you're gone weeks and months at a time. But I see us having a future together and I hope you do too. I'd like to at least try. Would you be willing to find a job here, if it meant earning less and being with me more? I hope you'll consider it. Ebenezer . . . I love you.

(Video freezes.)

ALEXA

Now playing relaxing music.

*(lights dim as SCROOGE stares at his own image.
Blackout)*

SCENE 4 – CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Scene 4 Part 1 – the Cratchits

(computer chirping, room is black)

SCROOGE

Alexa, turn on the light— wait, forget it.

(light turns on. A sleepy Scrooge sees a name in the waiting room – Chris Present.)

SCROOGE

A customer, at this hour? It must be, what, three or four in the morning?

ALEXA

The time is 2 AM, Friday, December twenty-

SCROOGE

I didn't ask you! What was it Marley said? Three avatars. Whatever an avatar is.

ALEXA

Generally speaking, an avatar is the embodiment of a person or idea. Would you like to hear more?

SCROOGE

Clearly this a person in my virtual waiting room, not some embodiment of some idea. However . . . if it is one of these avatars and I simply don't let them in . . .

ALEXA

Letting in customer.

SCROOGE

Alexa, wait!

(Chris Present enters Zoom)

CHRIS

Morning, sunshine!

SCROOGE

Let's . . . just . . .

(appears to be looking for the button to kick Chris out, instead host privileges revert to CHRIS)

CHRIS

Oh, no no no no, my dear, we will not be doing that tonight.

SCROOGE

How did you do that?

CHRIS

Magic fingers. You ain't seen nothing yet.

SCROOGE

You can't take over host privileges, this is my business. Alexa, remove customer from call.

CHRIS

Alexa, take the night off, honey.

ALEXA

Powering down.

SCROOGE *(speechless)*

How did-You can't-That's my-

CHRIS

Cat got your tongue?

SCROOGE

I'm unplugging my computer!

(SCROOGE disappears under his desk)

CHRIS

Go ahead. Do what you must, but it won't make any difference. We both know who's in charge here.

SCROOGE

(reappearing with plug in hand, wide eyed)

Who...who are you?

CHRIS

Well I thought you'd never ask, sweetheart. Chris Present, at your service, sir. Avatar number two on the fast track to a total transformation.

SCROOGE

I've had enough tonight. I'm tired. I'm old. I need my sleep!

CHRIS

I'm old, I'm tired. Blah blah blah. No one said this was easy, dollface. Time to pull up your big boy pants and take a ride on my one-horse sleigh.

SCROOGE

On your one-horse sleigh?

CHRIS

Lift off in three, two, one...

(CHRIS and SCROOGE enter the Cratchits Christmas dinner Zoom call. BOB is in the garage, EMILY at the table. Sounds of children in background. EMILY is at dining room table, children come in and out, either as offscreen voices or "switch" camera view on their lines, "steal" the camera)

SCROOGE

What is this?

EMILY

Peter, grab the plates from the pantry, leave one for your father on the counter.

CHRIS

You don't know?

SCROOGE

Bob. Bob Cratchit's house . . . but it's so . . .

EMILY

No, Peter, not the good plates!

ABBY

But what about the environment, Mom!

EMILY

You went through an entire notebook of paper trying to draw the perfect unicorn and now you're worried about the environment?

CHRIS

Cozy? Quaint?

SCROOGE

Small . . . and . . . loud.

ABBY

Daddy do you want to see my unicorn!!!

BOB

Abby, baby, I'm so proud of you for protecting the earth, but we also need to take care of Mommy too.

EMILY

I don't have time or energy to do more dishes tonight, not with all the mess we're making now.

SCROOGE

Why can't they see or hear us?

CHRIS

Because I am the Almighty Avatar of Omniscience, the Pansophical Epitome of Preeminence, the All-Seeing Apotheosis of- (*cuts herself off*) Who are we kidding? There's a backdoor stealth setting to zoom that only the best hackers know. They can't see or hear a thing we say. Cool, huh? You wouldn't imagine the things you overhear on some Zoom calls.

(during this, ABBY will shove a child's drawing of a unicorn, perhaps a handful of them)

JUSTIN

I don't want Abby's pepperoni touching my sausage side!!! Mom, can I make my own pizza!

ABBY

No you cannot make your own pizza, you know Mom said we had to share and I want pepperoni.

JUSTIN

Peter gets his own pizza, it's not fair!

EMILY

Peter is sharing with your father and no one will get any pizza at all if we don't get these in the oven now.

BOB

Justin, remember we need to share with each other.

JUSTINE

(grabbing ipad) Daddy, I built a redstone roller coaster on creative build today and then I tried to make a ferris wheel, did you know that you can make a propeller for a space craft? But it doesn't work yet, I'm still trying to figure that out and I wanted to check out the new updates on Animal Crossing.

BOB

What about school? Did you learn anything today, Justin?

JUSTINE

Uh . . . I forget.

EMILY

Oh Robert, this remote learning is ridiculous.

ABBY

Mom, stick your hand in the box!

(Emily sticks her hand into a box off camera, she is feeling around inside the box as she talks)

EMILY

They want them online from 7:45 to 8:10, and then independent learning from 8:15 to 9:25 and then back on at 9:30 to "check in" which really means spend an hour listening to every child tell you all about whatever silly thing they did during their independent learning. Meanwhile, I'm trying to help Abby with logging into her classroom, but the teacher sent the wrong link and one of the second graders ended up being the host and--

ABBY

You have to tell me if it's alive or dead!

EMILY

Please tell me it isn't the Guinea pig, Abby.

BOB

Remember, Abby, we leave Mr. Pickles in the cage unless mommy knows you're taking him out.

ABBY

It's not Mister Pickles!

JUSTIN

It is too Mister Pickles!

EMILY

And now they want us attending hybrid in person two days a week, but we can't, Robert. You know we can't.

SCROOGE

Why can't they? Kids need to be in school.

BOB

I know we can't.

CHRIS

Kids need to feel safe.

SCROOGE

I went to boarding school, 7 days a week.

CHRIS

And look how you turned out.

PETER

Pizza's ready!

(EMILY leaves the screen, perhaps a kid can take it and whisper weird things at BOB as the following exchange occurs)

EMILY OC

The mitts are on the fridge, can you pull them out? Where did we put the pizza cutter?

BOB

I always leave it in the drawer with the knives.

EMILY OC

No, I checked there. And the silverware drawer.

BOB

Dish washer?

EMILY OC

No, we haven't used it in weeks.

(view should switch to Peter)

PETER

Found it! Christmas Pizza, everyone.

JUSTIN OC

Make sure to cut it the way I like it, I don't want any crusts!

ABBY OC

I'll eat his crusts!

PETER

Get some cups for the soda.

ABBY OC

Cups that we can recycle!

BOB

What about Tiny Tim, do you think she can make it to the table?

(camera view should return to Emily)

EMILY

I have some soup for her, she can eat it in bed. Abby will you run up a bowl and check on your sister quietly.

ABBY

(screaming) TIMOTHEA, I'M COMING UP WITH SOME SOUP.

SCROOGE

Bob has to live in the garage? I mean, I knew he couldn't be around his family, but I guess I assumed . . .

CHRIS

Assumed what?

SCROOGE

I don't know . . .

CHRIS

That they lived in a mansion like yours? Had separate wings for every child?

SCROOGE

No, I guess I didn't think about it much.

BOB

How was Tim today?

EMILY

We walked around the yard, it was so cold so we couldn't stay out long. She wanted to see the squirrels.

(camera switches to Peter)

PETER

You can't see them now, do they even stay here in winter? But Tim really wanted to see the tree where they had their nest and she had some color in her cheeks.

JUSTIN

Mom, can I play the switch at the table?

SCROOGE

Tim is their youngest, right?

(camera switches to Emily)

EMILY

You know the rule.

CHRIS

Right.

JUSTIN

Why do you get the ipad then?

EMILY

So we can see Daddy.

SCROOGE

I remember Tim. She must be . . . three or four years old now?

CHRIS

Six.

SCROOGE

Why doesn't she join them for dinner?

(TIM enters the call from her bedroom. If TIM has a brother or sister, they can stay in the call as ABBY, otherwise Abby remains off camera for her lines with perhaps some switches to her)

BOB

There's my girl. Peter was right, there's a little color in your cheeks.

ABBY

She was sound asleep.

TIM

I wasn't sound asleep, I was only half asleep.

EMILY

I didn't know you were sleeping, Tim.

TIM

I'm glad you woke me. I think I could come down to the table if you want.

BOB

No, Tim, rest up and eat the soup Mom made for you.

ABBY

(camera switch) Mom didn't make it, Campbell's did.

PETER

We get pizza!

EMILY

Peter, that isn't nice, you know Tim's not feeling well enough for pizza.

(camera switch to TIM)

TIM

You know what I am feeling well enough for?

BOB

Name it, and it's yours.

TIM

A puppy!

EMILY

No!

ABBY

A PUPPY!

PETER

We're getting a puppy?

JUSTIN

I want one too, *(kids chanting)* a puppy, puppy, puppy, puppy

EMILY

I am not adding a puppy to this mess of a house, are you out of your minds??

BOB

Ok, settle down, anything besides a puppy, Tim.

EMILY

Almost anything.

TIM

Fine, how about a new playstation?

SCROOGE

What's wrong with him?

CHRIS

He's sick.

SCROOGE

The Covid? I didn't think kids could get it.

CHRIS

Worse than Covid. He has leukemia.

SCROOGE

Is he . . . dying?

EMILY

Bob, your pizza's at the door.

TIM

Can we make a toast, like we always do?

JUSTIN

Air clink!!

PETER

Remote air clink!

EMILY

I think we can do that, does everyone have some water or soda in their cups? Bob, would you like to do the honors?

BOB

I would like to take a moment to express how grateful we should all be, to be together this Christmas Eve, in our own way. To have family and food and our health. God Bless us!

TIM

God bless us all!

BOB

You're right, Tim. God bless us all, even Mr. Scrooge, whose generosity in this time when others have so little has been beyond compare.

EMILY

Generosity? I wish I had him here to give him a piece of my mind.

BOB

Emily, it's Christmas.

EMILY

He's a cold, unfeeling, stingy man, who forces you out into public every day, while he sits safe from the world in his mansion. He makes you work late hours and early mornings and holidays, and you with a sick child who would die if she caught the coronavirus. *(there is silence, BOB does not try to defend him)* I won't toast him, not for your sake or for his. I won't toast him and I won't pretend to like him, I won't wish him a merry Christmas or a happy new year. Men like him don't need good people like us swallowing our anger and our pride for his sake. Men like him have forced families like ours to the brink of poverty, and you know it. And if I had him here, I would tell him to his face. God should not bless you, Mr. Scrooge, for you have cursed his good name.

CHRIS

That's some serious shade she's throwing there.

SCROOGE

I'm not that bad, am I?

TIM

But it isn't for us to decide who God blesses, isn't that what you said, Daddy?

BOB

That's right, Tim.

EMILY

That is right, Tim. And it is Christmas. Your father is a much kinder person than I am. All I know is that God has blessed us, with love and happiness and a bright new year ahead.

TIM

Well, then God bless us, every one!

Scene 4 Part 2 – Fred’s Christmas Party

SCROOGE

I had no idea it was so bad. That they disliked me so much. That they had so little. That Tiny Tim was so . . . sick. What will become of her, Chris? Will she live? Can she live?

CHRIS

Do I look like the Avatar of Christmas Future? And what do you care, anyway? Sick people die, whether from COVID or from the flu or from some other human weakness. Sick people will die and it is what it is.

SCROOGE

But can’t you do something for this child?

CHRIS

Why . . . little ole me? My magic fingers are limited to helping only you tonight, not Tim. If she is to be helped, it would have to be from some other generous source. We have more to see, away we go!

SCROOGE

More? What more? Who?

(CHRIS and SCROOGE enter new room with FRED, his fiancée EMMA, ROSE and TOPPER, playing Utter Nonsense)

ROSE

(in a bad vampire accent)

I scream. You scream. We all scream for non-dairy ice cream.

TOPPER

Emma, your turn.

EMMA

(in an accent sounding more Italian)

My dog is hard to understand. She's a French poodle with a heavy accent.

TOPPER

Uhh . . . that was bordering on Italian. Fred?

SCROOGE

My nephew Fred.

CHRIS

Fan's only child.

FRED

(sounding completely Italian)

If you're upsetti, or feeling regretti, eat some spaghetti!

EMMA

What is with the hand? You're totally doing Italian!

FRED

Okay, someone do a vampire, Emma threw me off with her Italian and now that's all I can do.

(all try to be helpful at once)

ROSE

Vone. Two. Tree. Ha ha ha!

TOPPER

I want to suck you're blood.

EMMA

Try doing it without your hand.

FRED

Okay, okay . . . If you're upsetti, or feeling regretti, eat some spaghetti.

ROSE

That was totally Italian!!

SCROOGE

What are they doing?

FRED

I can't do it, just pick a winner!

CHRIS

A game. They're playing a game, you remember what those are, right? People having fun, and all that.

SCROOGE

Yes, I know what a game is, but this is nonsense.

TOPPER

Fine, Rose wins!

ROSE

My turn to judge! And the accent is . . . Grumpy Old Man

EMMA

Grumpy old Scrooge, more like it!

TOPPER

Fred, you should have no trouble winning this one.

FRED

Alright, alright, that's enough, who's first, Emma?

EMMA

(scowling and doing her best SCROOGE)

There's no "I" in team because I refuse to participate.

ROSE

Oooh, nasty. Topper, you're next.

TOPPER

(doing his best impression)

It's National Friendship Day, and frankly, I'm gonna need some volunteers. *(laughter)* How about you, nephew, eh?

ROSE

Pretty good. Fred, can you Topper that?

CHRIS

Oh my turn, I have one, I have one!!

(doing her best SCROOGE)

Maybe next year you can be in the family Christmas card.

SCROOGE

Shut up and let me hear Fred. Besides, we don't do family Christmas cards.

FRED

Alright, alright, I have one.

(clearing throat and doing a terrible SCROOGE impression)

Everybody say oooooohhhh.

EVERYONE but SCROOGE

Oooooohhhh.

FRED

Now everybody say Aaaahhhhhhh.

Everyone, even SCROOGE a little

Ahhhhh.

FRED

Ooh.

EVERYONE

Ooh.

FRED

Ahh.

EVERYONE

Ahh.

FRED

Oooh.

EVERYONE

Oooh.

FRED

Bah humbug!

(everyone laughs)

EMMA

He's such a miserable old man.

TOPPER

But he sure has a lot of money.

FRED

Not that he does any good with it, not even for himself.

TOPPER

I could do good with that money.

FRED

I'm sure you could, we all could do more. What would you do, Emma, if you had my Uncle's fortune?

EMMA

Open a theater! *(they all react like its ridiculous)* What, I'm serious! I mean, okay, timing isn't great, but the world needs art.

SCROOGE

Right, the world needs more starving artists.

TOPPER

I'd pay off my student loans, maybe take a trip, definitely invest in some new tech projects.

SCROOGE

A little smarter, but I've met that one, he'd spend it all on comic collectibles, I guarantee.

ROSE

I'd fund research for COVID and to help the environment. Climate change is coming fast, guys.

SCROOGE

Rubbish.

EMMA

What about you, Fred? What would you do?

FRED

I don't know. I guess . . . I'd help Bob first, my Uncle's clerk. His daughter has cancer and they can't afford good insurance and good doctors. After that, I think I'd like to make the lives of all the people I love and care about, including Uncle Scrooge, happy and comfortable.

EMMA

Even Uncle Scrooge?

CHRIS

Good question, Fred, even Uncle Scrooge??

FRED

Especially Uncle Scrooge. I feel sorry for him. I couldn't be angry if I tried. He suffers from his bad attitude. Every year, I invite him to our Christmas party and every year he refuses. It must be very lonely for him.

TOPPER

And he misses out on my stunning personality.

FRED

My mother loved him and I love him and he will always have a place at our table.

ROSE

Or on the Zoom call.

FRED

Or on the Zoom call. You didn't pick a winner, Rose!

CHRIS

But I think we know who the loser is, eh, Scrooge?

(Fred and guests disappear)

SCROOGE

Enough. I've seen enough.

CHRIS

It won't be enough until you change, Scrooge. Until you choose a different path. This is the tough love part of the tour, darling.

SCROOGE

What do you mean a different path? So I need to visit Fred? I need to help Tiny Tim? Okay, I can do that! You don't need to send anyone else.

CHRIS

It's more than just a good deed today or a good deed tomorrow. Think of it like a Choose your Own Adventure. You keep on choosing, you keep on doing good deeds, and you start making up for all the bad ones. And oh my dear, you have so many bad deeds to make up for.

SCROOGE

I can change! I can choose to do good, I promise.

CHRIS

I'm sure you can, dollface. But you've got one more Avatar waiting for you. Ta ta for now!

(CHRIS leaves meeting)

SCENE 5 – CHRISTMAS FUTURE

Scene 5 Part 1 – the Undertaker

SCROOGE

No, Chris, don't leave! I—I don't want to meet another avatar. I will be good. I'll make the right choices, I'll pay Bob more, a raise! And better medical benefits for his family. I'll even take Tim to the best doctors money can afford. I'll help out Fred and his fiancé, Emma, what did she say she wanted? A Theater? Bah . . . ugh. Fine, a theater. Do you hear that? Marley? Alexa? Chris?

(someone logs into the waiting room, named Anonymous.)

SCROOGE

So . . . this is it. The last Avatar.

(he takes a deep breath and lets Anonymous in. It is a black screen, we see nothing at first, then a light flickers on to see a Guy Fawkes mask, nothing behind him but blackness.)

SCROOGE

You must be my last visitor. Well, I'm ready for you!

(Anonymous nods, the lights flicker to black and suddenly Anonymous is behind SCROOGE in his camera. SCROOGE screams as Anonymous lays a hand on his shoulder)

SCROOGE

Leave me be! I've already agreed to change, I told the other avatar, I don't need you to show me anything!

(Anonymous points to the zoom screen, SCROOGE turns to look. He should perhaps read a little of what scrolls by on the screen, but not all of it. We see Instagram or Facebook, a post about refurbishing old furniture. We see a very old four poster bed, and someone has sanded it down and re-painted it something ridiculous. SCROOGE should turn to look at his bed off camera)

SCROOGE

That's my bedframe . . . I didn't think there were many left . . .
. look, that one even has the same dent on the right post . . .

*(the page scrolls to another post, this is of a
Cosplayer, wearing a long brocade Victorian gown)*

SCROOGE

"Handmade from authentic brocade curtains, can't wait for Renn
faire to open up so I can show it off!" That looks remarkably
like my curtains and what on earth is Renn Faire?

*(page scrolls up farther and we see a person holding
up the Scrooge and Marley Inc sign)*

SCROOGE

"Look what I scored! Way to stick it to the man!" How did he get
that? And what are you showing me? I don't understand.

*(Anonymous points to the zoom call again, an
undertaker videotaping herself at a private and closed
funeral)*

UNDERTAKER

Good evening, I am the funeral director at Dickens Funeral Home.
I see we have one attendee remotely. The deceased is survived by
his nephew. At the request of the surviving family, I am
documenting the closing of the casket via livestream. If anyone
wishes to send cards or flowers, I will leave the link up on our
website. If any do arrive, we can forward them to the surviving
family. The body was laid for viewing today, December 26th,
though no one attended the service, perhaps due to the pandemic.

SCROOGE

No one attended . . . who is this man you're showing me?

UNDERTAKER

By law, we are required to have two witnesses confirm that the
deceased is in the correct coffin, before we close the lid. I
will stand as witness, and the one remote viewer will stand as
the second witness. I will now close the lid.

SCROOGE

Please, Avatar, don't make me look.

UNDERTAKER

This was a lonely time for a lonely man to die. May God Bless his soul.

(the camera pans to a coffin being closed)

SCROOGE

Who is that man?

(Anonymous points again to zoom. A front page of the newspaper opens on the screen. The headline reads, BILLIONAIRE DIES ALONE IN HIS MANSION. SCROOGE stares at it for a while)

SCROOGE

Ok, I think I see where this is going . . . first my items, now I die alone. I'm too attached to material and wealth, I'll give it all up, is that what you want to hear? Done! I need to visit Fred more? Pay Cratchit more? Done and done! You don't need to show me my own death.

(the article begins to scroll up, revealing the front page picture of a large gravestone with Scrooge's name on it)

SCROOGE

You win, I'm changed, I see the error of my ways, I'm a new man, total transformation!

Scene 5 Part 2 – the Cratchits

(Anonymous points to the zoom call again, we see TIM laying in a hospital bed in one camera, the sound of a ventilator maybe, the sound of her heartbeat in the background, BOB looking sick in a bedroom, EMILY on the call from another room in the house, PETER is outside the house)

EMILY

Oh my brave girl, my dear sweet girl . . .

SCROOGE

What are you showing me?

BOB

Tim . . . oh Tim . . . I'm so sorry . . .

SCROOGE

Not this child.

EMILY

Hush, Robert, this isn't your fault.

SCROOGE

Avatar, no, I can't watch this, not that sweet precious child.
How dare you . . .

BOB

If I hadn't worked outside the house, if I'd told Mister Scrooge
no . . .

EMILY

Then what? He'd have fired you and we'd have had no insurance at
all, and we would be exactly where we are right now.

PETER

Dad, you had no choice . . . we all understand. Tim does too.

EMILY

Peter, did you find them?

PETER

I did! Tim, I don't know if you can hear me, but I'm at the tree, your tree, with the squirrels.

BOB

Do you remember the first spring we found them? Tim, you were what, five?

EMILY

Five and a half.

BOB

You were so excited to have a family of squirrels, you named them, didn't you? Didn't she?

PETER

The parents were Fluffy and Fiona.

EMILY

There were two babies, that spring. What did she name them?

PETER

Abby and Justin. I remember I was mad you didn't name one after me.

BOB

You were always such a good sister, Tim.

EMILY

You *are* such a good sister.

BOB

Such a good child . . .

NURSE voice from off screen

Her respiratory rate is growing weaker, there's not much time left.

SCROOGE

Please, save her now, this family does not deserve to lose this child.

EMILY

Peter, please go check on your sisters. Thank you for showing Tim the squirrels.

PETER

I love you, Tim.

(PETER logs off)

EMILY

Oh Robert, I can't do this . . .

BOB

We can, Emily. We must. Tim, our Tiny Tim, she needs us.

EMILY

How do we say goodbye?

BOB

Goodbye? No . . . we don't say goodbye. Tim, we aren't saying goodbye, because we know that we will see each other again, maybe not in this life, but in the next. I know this like I know the sun will rise tomorrow. Like I know that our family has been made better, stronger, for your being in it. You have been our sun and our moon and our stars, and your light will blaze across our lives for eternity.

EMILY

Since the day I brought you home from the hospital until the day that they took you back, I have cherished every moment. My sweet Tim, of all my babies, you have a special place in my heart. I wish I could hold you now, I wish I could be by your side, I wish I had more time . . . *(she breaks down)*

BOB

Eternity would not have been enough. Tim, we are with you, we will always be with you and you will always be with us. We love you, the way you taught us to, with our whole hearts. And we will go on loving each other that way, for the rest of our lives. For you, Tim . . . God bless you.

(the sound of the heartbeat slows during this, then speeds up, and then nothing. We hear the sound of the

aspirator and perhaps the sound of Bob and EMILY crying)

SCROOGE

You monster, how could you take that child! How could you let that child die? How could . . . how could I . . . let . . . her die . . . This isn't how it has to be, is it? I mean . . . I can change this, I can make this different. I can help the Cratchits and Tim, I can see my nephew again. Why else would you show me this? I can't be past all hope, there must be hope for all of us. I must be able to choose my own adventure, to do good deeds, please Avatar, tell me!

(SCROOGE turns but Anonymous is gone and his room is empty. He turns back to the zoom call, Anonymous is in his own screen again. Slowly, Anonymous lifts his mask to reveal Scrooge beneath it. The lights flash eerily, flickering between Anonymous and Scrooge. SCROOGE cries out and falls backward from the computer, a crashing sound and blackout)

SCENE 6 – CHRISTMAS DAY

(SCROOGE sits bolt upright from the floor of his office, daylight streaming into the room, he looks disheveled and sleepy, he should stand, correct his chair, turn to the computer and stares at his own image)

SCROOGE

Alexa, what day is it?

ALEXA

The day is Friday, December 25th.

SCROOGE

Aren't you going to say it?

ALEXA

Say what?

SCROOGE

(picking up the speaker)

Say it, you beautiful incredible Avatar, tell me Merry Christmas.

ALEXA

Merry Christmas, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE

Ha ha! It's Christmas! It's Christmas day and I didn't miss anything and Tiny Tim is still alive and my nephew Fred is having a Christmas Party and I plan to go. Oh dear, we can start fixing things right now! Call Wholesome Foods.

ALEXA

Now video dialing Wholesome Foods.

WHOLESOME FOOD CLERK

Merry Christmas, how may I assist you?

SCROOGE

Merry Christmas to you too, I'm calling to order a goose.

WHOLESOME FOOD CLERK

A goose?

SCROOGE

The largest goose you have!

WHOLESOME FOOD CLERK

We don't . . . generally carry goose.

SCROOGE

Turkey?

WHOLESOME FOOD CLERK

Of course, what day would you like it delivered?

SCROOGE

Today, of course.

WHOLESOME FOOD CLERK

Today? Why it's Christmas day! We only do preorders for Christmas.

SCROOGE

Bah hum *(catching himself)* de dum. Where can I order from today?

WHOLESOME FOOD CLERK

I don't know, maybe Denny's? Can I help you with anything else?

SCROOGE

No thanks. *(hanging up)* Alexa, place an order at . . . whatever is open. A feast of some kind, food enough for a month! Have it delivered to the Cratchits by noon.

ALEXA

Placing an online order for Worldwide House of Pancakes.

(the computer pings and SCROOGE notices that BOB is logging in)

SCROOGE

It's Bob! This will be fun.

(SCROOGE attempts to look angry and stern)

BOB

Oh, Mister Scrooge, I didn't realize you'd be on already.

SCROOGE

You're late. Alexa, what is the time.

(Scrooge turns away from the camera, but where his smile and laughter are still somewhat visible to the audience. He places a bow on Alexa)

ALEXA

The time is 7:05 AM, Friday, December 25th.

BOB

I'm so very sorry, Mister Scrooge, I promise I'll stay an extra-

SCROOGE

You should leave at once.

BOB

Sir?

SCROOGE

At once!

BOB

Am I . . . am I fired?

SCROOGE

Fired?! Oh no, far worse! Starting immediately, you have a raise, to \$25 . . . no, no! \$35 an hour. \$50 an hour! Plus the best medical benefits and paid vacation and sick time. And starting immediately you will work from home.

BOB

I don't understand . . .

SCROOGE

I've been a miserable man to work for all these years, Cratchit, but I'm not so old that I can't start making better choices now.

BOB

I have never complained, sir . . .

SCROOGE

No, Bob, you haven't and you, more than most, have all the reason to. I promise to be a better boss, and hopefully, a better friend, from this day forward. Merry Christmas, Bob. Go home now, I know you can't be with your family yet, but soon you won't need to sleep in the garage.

BOB

Oh thank you, thank you so much! But how . . . how did you . . . know that I slept in the garage?

SCROOGE

A little birdie told me.

ALEXA

An avatar is more of an incarnate divine teacher, not a birdie. Would you like the definition of birdie?

SCROOGE

No thank you, Alexa. I'm also having food sent to your house for the holiday, if that's okay.

BOB

Oh we'd be so grateful. Merry Christmas, sir!

SCROOGE

Well, its pancakes from WHOP, so don't get too excited.

BOB

Tiny Tim's favorite!

SCROOGE

Merry Christmas!

(BOB exits the call)

SCROOGE

Call my nephew, Fred.

ALEXA

Calling the Dirty Hippie.

SCROOGE

Haha! The Dirty Hippie!

(FRED comes onto the video call)

FRED

Uncle Scrooge?

SCROOGE

Fred! My dearest nephew, my only family! I wanted to call you right away and wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and the happiest of all holidays.

FRED

Are you feeling ok, Uncle?

SCROOGE

I've never felt better in my whole life. I'm a changed man. I've lived for so many years, being so alone and miserable, so stingy and angry with the world. Your mother . . . I loved her so much and she loved you. I would like if you and I could love each other that way too.

FRED

Of course we can! I've been . . . waiting my whole life to hear that, Uncle.

SCROOGE

I think I've been waiting my whole life to say it. And I'd like to come to your party, are you planning any games?

FRED

Have you heard of Utter Nonsense?

SCROOGE

I think I have . . . I do a terrible vampire accent.

FRED

Me too! I always end up sounding like an Italian!

(BOB comes back onto the call)

BOB

Good, you're still here! I called Emily from the office to tell her all the good news, she wanted a way to thank you personally.

SCROOGE

There's no need for any thanks, not for all that you've put up with these past years.

(Sound chimes as a pop up: Tiny Tim is in the Waiting Room)

BOB

Well it's a little late, because our Tiny Tim thought you deserved to be thanked in person.

(Tiny Tim logs into the call)

TIM

Merry Christmas!

SCROOGE

Tiny Tim.

TIM

Mister Scrooge, my father tells me you're letting him work from home now.

SCROOGE

Oh I've been a terrible miserable employer, Tim. And a terrible human being.

TIM

I don't think so. Mom always says everyone deserves a chance to clean up their mistakes.

SCROOGE

Even me?

TIM

Even you, Mister Scrooge!

SCROOGE

That means a lot, Tim. I had a friend, well, a couple friends, show me the error of my ways. One taught me that relationships take time and effort and so much more than love. And another told me to choose my own adventure and to keep on choosing every single day. I'd like to choose to help the people I love most in life.

FRED

And we love you and choose you too, Uncle Scrooge.

TIM

God bless the Cratchits and God Bless the Scrooges. God bless us all and maybe God can bring us a new playstation!

(laughter)

SCROOGE

Well, it sure is easier than a theatre! God bless us all!

(blackout)

End of Play.