

## ACT II

## It's a Wonderful Carol

*(Stage is dark. The sound of sleigh bells and distant singing of Christmas carols. A spotlight comes up center stage, and JIM strolls into light. He carries a large, leather-bound volume, which he opens and proceeds to read from, in grand style.)*

**JIM.** Marley was dead to begin with. There was no doubt whatever about that...

**MICHAEL.** *(Entering:)* Dead as a doornail.

**JOHN.** *(Entering:)* Dead, dead, dead.

**JIM.** Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise?

**JOHN.** Reeaaaally dead.

**JIM.** *(Sotto voce:)* Do you mind?!

Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years...

*(JIM begins to dress as Scrooge.)*

**MICHAEL.** Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name after he died...

**JOHN.** Died, died, died...

**MICHAEL.** There it stood, years afterwards, on a sign above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, and sometimes for reasons no one could understand, "Binky," but he answered regardless. It was all the same to him. Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Old Scrooge. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!

*(JIM acts out the description as MICHAEL continues.)*

A wizened, bandy-legged, claw-fingered, evil-eyed, hunch-backed, halitosis-ridden, incontinent old miser...

**JIM.** Hey!

**JOHN.** **Once upon a time—** of all good days in the year upon Christmas eve—Old Scrooge sat busy at his counting house...

**JIM.** *(As Scrooge:)* Mr. Cratchit! You'll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?

**MICHAEL.** *(As Cratchit:)* If it's quite convenient, sir! I have the missus, and the 37 little Cratchits to look after, and Tiny Tim, sir, you know sweet and gentle teeny Tiny Tim, and it *is* Christmas after all...

**JIM / SCROOGE.** Bah, Humbug! Just be sure you're in eight hours early the next day, and then come in for the day after that the night before you leave!

**MICHAEL / CRATCHIT.** Thank you, sir! And Merry Christmas!

*(He says this cheerily to Scrooge's turned back, but accompanies it with an "up yours" gesture, and exits SR.)*

**JIM / SCROOGE.** Bah humbug!

**JOHN.** Scrooge then received a visit from his incredibly handsome, staggeringly virile, and much beloved by all nephew, Fred...

**MICHAEL.** *(As Fred, entering SL:)* Hello, Christmas, Merry Uncle!

**JIM / SCROOGE.** Christmas-schmistmas! What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough!

**JIM / SCROOGE.** Marley's Ghost!!

**JOHN / CLARENCE.** (*Entering in an antique nightshirt and dark porkpie hat:*) No, Clarence Oddbody, Angel Third Class. I'm here to help you George Bailey, and you can help me earn my wings!

**JIM / SCROOGE.** (*Totally confused:*) What?!

**JOHN / CLARENCE.** No one is born to be a failure, George. I'm here to show you that your life truly *has* been Wonderful.

**JIM.** (*Sotto voce:*) John, what are you doing! You're supposed to be the ghost of Jacob Marley!

**JOHN.** (*Whispering back:*) *It's a Wonderful Life...we forgot It's a Wonderful Life!*

**JIM.** But we're doing Christmas Carol! We are doing Christmas Carol. And I'm Ebenezer Scrooge... (*Back to Scrooge voice:*) And I don't believe in you one bit, *Jacob Marley*, you're probably just a bit of undigested beef...

**JOHN.** But it's the M.B.H.C.!

**JIM.** The what?!

**JOHN.** The *Most Beloved Holiday Classic!*

**JIM.** No! NO! You are *not* going to do this! We're doing Christmas Carol, and I'm Scrooge, and you're Marley, and you're...you're... (*Back to Scrooge voice:*) ...you're **probably here to tell me** that Mankind was your business, and that after death, we all wear the chains we forged in life...

**JOHN / CLARENCE.** I'm here to save you George Bailey, and to show you what Bedford Falls would've been like if you'd never been born.

**JIM.** Stop calling me George!

**JOHN / CLARENCE.** The Building and Loan has helped a lot of people, George, you should be proud of that.

**JIM / SCROOGE.** And then you'll probably tell me that I'll be visited by Three Spirits, when the clock strikes one...and that it's my only hope of redemption, right?

**JOHN / CLARENCE.** You know, I'd really enjoy a flaming rum punch right about now, heavy on the cinnamon, light on the cloves—now off with you my good man, and be lively...

(*As he speaks, JIM approaches menacingly.*)

Joseph! Joseph!...

(*He exits.*)

**MICHAEL.** And so Ebenezer watched the spirit vanish into the darkness, a darkness filled with phantoms wandering hither and thither in restless haste, all dragging chains, some shorter, some longer. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power forever.

**JIM / SCROOGE.** Humbug!

**MICHAEL.** ...said Ebenezer Bailey,

**JIM.** You too?!

**MICHAEL.** ...and he fell asleep before his head hit the pillow.

(*He exits.*)