

# DEL CONTE AL CURTMETRATGE



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*“Es pot escriure un guió sobre qualsevol cosa,  
però un guió no pot ser qualsevol cosa”*

Isabel Coixet

## Introducció

Sovint em preguntava què hi havia darrere d'una gran producció cinematogràfica. Sabia que no era tan senzill com agafar una càmera i posar-se a gravar però tampoc podia fer-me cap idea perquè gairebé no sabia res d'aquest món. Aquesta curiositat doncs, em va empènyer a confeccionar un treball de recerca que abracés tots aquests interrogants. Quins són els passos per crear qualsevol producció audiovisual? Quantes persones hi treballen? Cal una planificació prèvia? Fins a quin punt és important la interpretació dels actors?

La meva idea inicial era crear un projecte audiovisual a partir d'un text escrit. Sabent de l'existència del Festival de curtmetratges Julius, que se celebra a Vic cada any, vaig buscar quin era el tema d'aquest any 2013. Els curtmetratges havien d'estar basats en l'obra literària *Un conte de Nadal* de *Charles Dickens*. Les bases s'ajustaven perfectament al meu treball i em van servir per definir-lo i establir els objectius. Així doncs em vaig posar per objectiu principal, crear un curtmetratge d'acord amb les bases del Festival Julius i presentar-lo a concurs. No havia fet mai cap projecte d'aquesta envergadura i era conscient del nivell de professionalitat que això m'exigia, no podia fer qualsevol cosa. Sabia que requeria un procés i un ordre lògic, havia de seguir uns passos concrets que em garantissin un bon curtmetratge. Em vaig marcar com a objectius secundaris, seguir els passos de la preproducció, producció i muntatge que segueix un director per crear qualsevol pel·lícula. Per fer un curtmetratge, se segueix el mateix mètode que per fer una pel·lícula però de forma reduïda. D'aquesta manera, podria viure de prop el món del cinema i experimentar en primera persona tot el que suposa fer un projecte audiovisual. Aquesta també seria la manera de trobar les respostes a les meves preguntes i curiositats inicials.

En aquest treball exposaré els conceptes que engloben cada part del procés i tot el que vaig haver de tenir en compte per aconseguir un bon resultat final. També s'hi troba adjunt tot el que vaig haver de preparar abans de gravar el curtmetratge, així com els guions i la planificació del rodatge. Als annexos hi ha les bases i el fulletó del Festival Julius 2013, el conte original de *Charles Dickens* i un enllaç al *Vimeo* per visionar el curtmetratge.

# 1. L'inici al treball

## 1.1 El Festival Julius

El Festival Julius és un festival de cinema que se celebra a Vic. Durant una setmana es fan diversos actes i es projecten diferents curtmetratges realitzats per aficionats i experts del món audiovisual. Els curtmetratges han de seguir una temàtica concreta. Hi ha un jurat que valora la fidelitat al tema i els aspectes formals del curtmetratge atorgant un seguit de premis al millor curtmetratge, al segon millor curtmetratge, a la millor qualitat tècnica i a la millor interpretació dels actors. També s'atorga un altre premi segons el criteri del públic i segons el criteri dels cineclubs catalans. La temàtica dels curtmetratges varia cada any. La temàtica d'enguany era *Un conte de Nadal* de *Charles Dickens*, tota producció que es presentés al concurs havia d'estar basada en aquest conte i la durada no podia ser superior als deu minuts.

Un cop informada del festival i de les seves bases [annex I] vaig decidir que no perdria res en presentant-m'hi i que em serviria també, de motor per fer un curtmetratge digne i de qualitat. Havia de dissenyar una producció a mida pel concurs.



Cartell del Festival Julius 2013

## 1.2 Un conte de Nadal de Charles Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*)

Abans de posar-me a pensar en el curtmetratge, m'havia de llegir el conte i així ho vaig fer. [annex III] *Un conte de Nadal (A Christmas Carol)* va ser escrit l'any 1843 pel gran autor universal i novel·lista anglès *Charles Dickens* (1812 – 1870). De petit va viure en un entorn familiar dur. Els seus avis feien de criats i el seu pare era un funcionari problemàtic que no pagava els deutes i com a conseqüència, va ser empresonat. Ell es va posar a treballar als dotze anys. Va créixer en un ambient pobre que va marcar la seva trajectòria literària, a les seves obres s'hi observa aquesta simpatia que aboca a les classes més baixes i treballadores de la població. L'autor ens mostra la realitat de forma fidel, típic del moviment literari del Realisme al qual ell pertanyia.

*Un conte de Nadal (A Christmas Carol)* narra la història d'un home vell, garrepa i de caràcter fred que es diu *Scrooge*. No celebra mai el Nadal perquè viu de forma solitària i no li interessa res que no siguin els negocis de la seva petita empresa. A la nit de Nadal el visita l'espectre del seu antic soci de negocis. Li diu que, a causa de la seva avarícia, quan mori haurà d'arrossegar una cadena llarga i pesada per pagar totes les maldats que ha comès. L'espectre li ofereix l'última oportunitat per salvar-se d'aquest turment i l'acompanya a un viatge que el farà canviar. En aquest viatge fantàstic, recórrer el Nadal passat, present i futur a partir de l'aparició de tres esperits nadalencs.

L'esperit del Nadal passat és un nen i el transporta al seu passat, quan es passava hores llegint i fent anar la imaginació. Aquest esperit porta a *Scrooge* a fer un recorregut pels moments més significatius de la seva infància fins que arriba a la joventut i s'observa a ell mateix discutint amb la seva parella a causa de la seva avarícia i obsessió pels diners. L'esperit del Nadal present li fa veure quina és la situació del seu empleat *Bob* i de la seva família. *Bob* viu de forma precària intentant curar la malaltia d'un dels seus fills, tot i així, *Scrooge* pot veure com celebren el Nadal feliçment. Després, l'esperit transporta a *Scrooge* a veure el seu nebot que celebra el Nadal amb tota la seva família menys ell. El seu nebot però, amb molta humilitat es digna a brindar per la salut de *Scrooge*. L'últim dels esperits, el del futur, és mut i el més tenebrós. Aquest li mostra el seu destí. El porta al seu propi sepulcre i fa que escolti la conversa d'uns homes que diuen que ha mort però que ningú ha anat al seu enterrament perquè ningú l'apreciava. *Scrooge* promet a l'esperit que canviarà i que celebrarà tots els Nadals feliçment si el seu destí també canvia. L'esperit del futur li diu que així serà.

Després d'aquestes tres aparicions *Scrooge* se n'adona que no pot continuar per aquest camí i esdevé una altra persona, molt diferent de la que era abans. Surt al carrer disposat a reinventar-se, augmenta el sou a en *Bob* i li promet que l'ajudarà a curar la malaltia del seu fill. Va a celebrar el Nadal amb la seva família i es torna més generós i simpàtic amb tothom.

El conte és de caràcter moralista i aconseguix commoure'ns, però també hi trobem una part de crítica social. Se n'han fet moltes adaptacions cinematogràfiques. La primera data de l'any 1901, és una versió muda titulada *Scrooge or Marley's Ghost* que va fer el director britànic *Walter R. Booth*. La primera adaptació cinematogràfica espanyola data del 1947, el director és de *Manuel Tamayo* i es titula *Leyenda de Navidad*. L'última producció relacionada amb aquest conte, és de l'any 2009 i és una adaptació d'animació realitzada per *Disney* que titula igual que el conte.



*Scrooge or Marleys Ghost*  
Primera adaptació visual del conte de Dickens



*Leyenda de Navidad*.  
Primera adaptació espanyola.



*A Christmas Carol*.  
Adaptació més recent.

### 1.3 La idea

Una bona idea, una bona història a explicar, és la base d'un bon curtmétratge. La idea és la que desencadena tot el procés. Podem establir una analogia amb la vida humana. Els humans ens regim per dos principis bàsics: el desig i l'acció. El desig de menjar per exemple, t'empeny a buscar la manera de satisfer aquesta necessitat. El mateix passa amb el cinema, tens el desig d'explicar alguna cosa, una idea que no pots deixar escapar. Busques com portar-la a terme i així satisfer aquest desig.

En el curtmétratge, la història que volem explicar, es transforma en imatges i so, la narració és tant oral com visual. Però avanç de crear la imatge audiovisual, s'ha de treballar el text narratiu inicial. Per fer-ho és útil escriure la història en forma de narració tot i que no és un pas indispensable. Si es té molt clar què es vol explicar, és bastant usual, escriure directament el guió perquè hi consta tota la informació. Escriure una història prèvia però, en facilita la feina perquè serveix per estructurar les idees. En el meu cas, em va servir per crear una versió personal basada en un *Un conte de Nadal* i a partir d'ella, definir el guió. [annex III]

A l'hora d'escriure la història, no és tant important el què s'explica sinó com s'explica. No existeix cap manera adequada per explicar la història, l'única regla és que capti l'atenció del públic. No es pot donar molta informació de cop perquè l'espectador es pot perdre, però tampoc podem divagar en fets poc importants que no siguin realment importants i que distreguin a l'espectador. En els curtmétratges s'ha d'aconseguir que els personatges connectin amb el públic de forma ràpida i eficaç, ja que no et pots entretenir presentant el personatge de forma detallada i explicant el seu passat.

Si no es té gaire especialització en el món del cinema i no es disposen de gaires recursos, és important ser realista. És recomanable evitar històries molt ambicioses, amb molts efectes especials o localitzacions estranyes les quals no es podran recrear.

Per crear la meua versió del conte de *Dickens* vaig tenir en compte tots aquests aspectes. També em vaig mirar curtmétratges i pel·lícules fixant-me en el fil argumental i em vaig llegir diversos llibres de directors de cinema com per exemple, *La vida és un guió*, d'Isabel Coixet. La meua idea era mantenir l'essència del conte però canviant els personatges, ambientant-lo en l'actualitat i no deixar de banda l'esperit nadalenc. Havia

de buscar una manera curta i entenedora perquè qualsevol persona, s'hagués o no, llegit el conte original, pogués comprendre la història. Volia crear una història curosa i entenedora però impactant i distreta. D'aquesta manera, vaig crear un primer text susceptible a ser transformat en guió. La història que vaig escriure i que vaig posar per títol "3 missatges per canviar" ve presentada a continuació.

### **3 missatges per canviar**

*Una llum tènue t'il·lumina el rostre, són els primers rajos de sol d'aquest matí de Nadal. Avui havies somiat amb ell però ara veus que no és real, els somnis et fan parar boja cada nit. Quan surts del llit i mires per la finestra veus uns nens cantant Nades. La teva tristesa augmenta. Odies el Nadal, amb el Nadal va marxar ell i amb ell has mort gairebé tota tu. L'únic bocí que queda de tu viu atrapat en una caixa plena dels seus records, és l'únic que et queda d'ell i el que fa que el puguis sentir a prop. Vius sense vida, sense inèrcia. El món no para de girar però sents que ja no pots girar amb ell. Il·lusió, esperança, felicitat... són paraules que et queden molt llunyanes. Tanques la finestra de cop i et deixes caure a terra, et quedes mirant un punt fix de l'habitació, amb la caixa al costat, per suposat. No et separaries d'ella ni un instant. No t'importa res ni ningú. La teva família t'intenta ajudar, t'empeny a seguir endavant; però tu... tu vius en una apatia constant. El Nadal només et transporta a ell però això és tot el que vols, només vols mantenir vius els dies feliços que vau passar junts, no el vols oblidar. I és que no entens com tothom oblida, tan ràpid, o simplement ja no recorden?*

*Ara mateix només vols estar sola, sortir d'aquesta habitació, posar-te a córrer i no parar mai. No suportes els típics "Bon dia" dels teus pares i no entens com, tot i saber que no obtindran cap resposta, fan l'esforç de dirigir-te la paraula. Necessites anar on vas sempre, a aquell banc, on et va dir que només la mort us podria vèncer, i ho ha fet.*

*Caminant sents com el fred se t'escola per la pell però t'és igual, ja no sents res. No hi ha cap força que t'empenyi a viure, ni el més gran dels terratrèmols et faria reaccionar. El banc està gebrat però t'hi asseus igualment. Al teu cap hi sona una melodia dissonant de records fugissers. Aquesta melodia es veu irrompuda quan, de cop, sents unes passes lentes d'entre els arbres i tens la sensació que algú s'acosta cap a tu. Notes com l'escalfor d'una mà càlida t'acaricia la teva, lentament. Confosa t'espantes, se t'accelera la respiració i el cor es posa a bategar amb tanta força que xoca amb els teus records. Et*

*gires i no veus res. Sents un murmuri suau prop de la teva orella que et transporta al record de la seva veu, el mateix xiuxiueig que senties cada matí quan et despertava amb un "Bon dia, princesa" prop de la teva orella, era una mica cursi però et feia somriure. Pares atenció i en distingeixes algunes paraules. "Sóc aquí per donar-te una oportunitat. Si segueixes aquests passos, el teu destí es complicarà". T'estàs començant a espantar, aquesta veu acaba de trencar amb la teva monotonia. Estàs massa perplexa per jutjar si el que sents és real o imaginari. Ja no notes l'escalfor, la presència, però veus que al costat de la teva mà t'hi ha deixat un paper. El llegeixes. Diu que avui tindràs tres aparicions i que sense elles no podràs escapar del teu destí. Però què és tot això? És algun tipus de broma o un inútil regal de Nadal?, penses. Agafes el paper i el llances amb ràbia, no et pots permetre espantar-te però ho has fet, per això t'aixeques i marxes corrents cap a casa.*

*Arribes al portal de casa teva i veus que hi ha un nen petit que et barra el pas. Puges un esglaó, ell t'estiva la jaqueta i et dona una foto. Et pren la caixa de les mans i arrenca a córrer. No tens temps de reaccionar, les cames no et responen i les paraules se t'encallen. Quant l'intentes atrapar ja està massa lluny. La caixa era l'única cosa que et mantenia en vida. Mires la foto que t'ha donat i et veus a tu, de petita. Se't veu contenta i feliç obrint amb eufòria els regals de Nadal. Darrere la foto hi ha un missatge: "De petita eres feliç". No entens que és tot això però ho vols evitar. Deixes caure la foto a terra i marxes corrents, només vols córrer, cada cop que et pares, et passa alguna cosa. Tot i així no pots evitar pensar-hi i te n'adones que aquesta era la primera de les tres aparicions.*

*Corres, no hi ha ningú enlloc però de cop gires per una cantonada i xoques amb uns peus. Uns peus que et fan la traveta. És noia que podria molt bé ser la teva amiga però que no ho és perquè no la coneixes de res. Ella t'agafa bruscament pel braç i t'arrossega. Et fa aturar davant d'una finestra d'una casa que et resulta familiar, t'obliga a mirar l'interior i hi veus la teva família menjant, rient i brindant.*

- *Brindem - diu algun dels teus familiars*
- *Brindem per l'Aida, perquè algun dia s'ho torni a passar bé aquí amb nosaltres.*

*Tu? Perquè tu? No entens perquè brinden per tu, si tu mai els has tractat bé, si tu mai els hi dius res i sempre els hi fas mala cara. Saps que no tenen cap motiu per parlar de tu amablement però tot i així ho fan.*

- *Ho veus? La teva família et recorda, creuen en tu. - diu la noia que t'ha portat fins aquí.*
- *Ja, però jo no m'ho mereixo... no sé perquè ho fan.*
- *No tothom és com tu. Has de passar pàgina, seguir endavant, no et pots quedar atrapada al passat.*

*La noia torna a desaparèixer per la cantonada. L'intentes atrapar, sents curiositat per ella, per tot el que t'ha dit i ensenyat però et rendeixes, ja ha desaparegut. Ja no pots córrer més, estàs exhausta i caus rendida a terra. El teu cor encara batega més fort i sembla que hagi destruït gairebé tots els teus records perquè ja no penses en ell. Penses en la teva família, podrien ignorar-te però no ho fan. Per un cop et preocupes pels altres i sents que potser realment no es mereixen que descarreguis tota la teva ràbia en ells. Penses en tu, en perquè no ets capaç d'avançar, veus que realment estàs malgastant valuosos dies de vida.*

*Un vent suau t'acaricia la cara i això et tranquil·litza. Però no és així perquè una mà robusta t'apareix davant els ulls. És una presència negra, algun cos cobert per una capa negra que et fa aixecar del terra. És la tercera aparició que tens i, segons el missatge de l'esperit del banc, l'última. Aquest et posa una capa al damunt. T'intentes escapar però quan ho aconsegueixes veus que és de nit, que estàs en un altre lloc, en un lloc tètric i desconegut. T'hi fixes bé i distingeixes una paret plena de nínxols a la teva dreta, a l'esquerra, a davant i darrere; és un cementiri. Per què t'ha portat aquí? Ets capaç de sentir la por a flor de pell. Avui t'estan passant massa coses i no ets capaç de controlar tantes emocions, avui la teva monotonía s'ha vist irrompuda.*

*El fantasma t'assenyala una làpida. T'hi acostes i veus que hi ha escrit un nom: Aida Muntades 10-01-2013. Sí, ets tu. Estàs davant el teu sepulcre i això és el teu futur, el teu futur més immediat perquè aquesta data correspon al mes que bé. Vols cridar però no pots, vols marxar corrents però el fantasma et té agafada.*

- *Què? És aquest el meu destí? - deixes anar amb un fil de veu.*

*El fantasma et sent i fa que si amb el cap. Però llavors es gira lentament i escriu a la paret: "els actes d'un home prediuen quin serà el seu destí però si els actes canvien, el destí canviarà"*

- *Gràcies... Et prometo que canviaré.-deixes anar tremolosament*

*El fantasma et torna a cobrir amb la capa. Apareixes al banc, al banc de sempre. Ara sents com una nova oportunitat se t'obra. No entens el que ha passat però has reaccionat. Veus que encara és de dia, això vol dir que no ha passat el temps, que encara és Nadal. Vol dir que ets a temps de tornar a casa i anar a dinar amb la teva família. Estàs disposada a fer-ho per reconstruir el teu destí, per començar una nova vida. I la caixa? La caixa ja no hi és, això vol dir que s'ha acabat passar-se cada Nadal amb aquest coi de cartró. I a ell? A ell no l'has pas oblidat, simplement estàs disposada a avançar, a no consumir-te en el passat fins a morir sola d'amargura i tristesa. T'allunyaràs dels records per buscar altres raons per seguir endavant, per tornar a ser feliç. Il·lusió, esperança, felicitat... són paraules que tornaran a cobrar sentit.*

## 2. La Preproducció

Aparentment ja tenia el fil argumental del què seria el curtmetratge però no em podia posar a gravar directament. Calia una preparació sense la qual, la gravació seria un caos. Havia d'estructurar l'argument en escenes, pensar com treballaria cada escena tècnica i escenogràficament, buscar-me un repartiment, un vestuari i unes localitzacions on gravar. Havia de vestir l'argument amb tots els aspectes que em calia definir abans de posar-me a gravar. Tots aquests passos són els mateixos que segueix qualsevol productora de pel·lícules i s'anomenen la preproducció.

### 2.1 El guió

De guions n'hi ha de tres tipus diferents segons el seu contingut i forma: el guió literari, el guió tècnic i el guió gràfic o *storyboard*. Cal distingir el fons de la forma: el fons correspon al què volem explicar i ens ve plantejat amb el guió literari, com ho expliquem correspon a la forma i se'ns planteja en el guió tècnic. La manera com es desenvolupa cada un és bastant relativa i depèn de la manera de treballar de cada guionista o director. Es poden ajuntar-los o fins i tot prescindir d'algun d'ells.

Jo vaig ajuntar el guió tècnic i el guió gràfic o *storyboard* perquè em permetia organitzar-me millor durant el rodatge, ja que veia de forma simultània el què havia de gravar i quina acció es desenvolupava. A continuació veurem cada un dels guions de forma detallada.

### 2.1.1 El guió literari

A partir d'un text o narració prèvia es pot definir el guió literari on s'explica la història amb un llenguatge més precís i de forma esquemàtica. Moltes pel·lícules són adaptacions d'una novel·la, la qual s'ha hagut de convertir primer en guió. No es pot començar a gravar directament a partir del què explica el llibre, ja que es disposa de poc temps i no podem explicar tot el llibre punt per punt.

El guió literari serveix per veure com es desenvolupa l'argument i és el document que els directors o guionistes presenten a les productores de cinema perquè què els hi tirin endavant o no el projecte. Hi trobem els diàlegs dels personatges, la descripció de l'acció i l'espai on se situa l'acció (interior o exterior). Conté tot el que passa a cada escena però sense indicacions tècniques. Està estructurat en seqüències, és a dir, en un seguit d'escenes unides per una idea, situació o acció i ordenades una darrere l'altre en ordre temporal.

S'ha de redactar tot amb frases curtes. S'ha d'utilitzar el present per les descripcions que han de ser breus i cenyir-se només al què veurem i sentirem a la pantalla. Ha de ser lingüísticament senzill. Ha d'explicar únicament l'essencial per tal que l'espectador entengui la història, no és una novel·la. El guió literari et permet obtenir les primeres nocions en quan al ritme, durada i cadència de la història. Per aconseguir-ho s'han de dosificar les informacions i recursos expressius, els elements més atractius, sorprenents o impactants s'han de guardar pel final, ja que és quant el nivell d'atenció dels receptors tendeix a decaure. Com que el temps que es disposa per dur a terme el curtmetratge és relativament curt, s'ha de ser molt concret i concís a l'hora d'explicar la història. Tot el que apareix a la filmació ha de ser imprescindible. Ha de captar ràpidament l'atenció de l'espectador. Els diàlegs són prescindibles perquè els curtmetratges són un medi tan visual que gairebé tot el que s'explica es pot a fer a través de les imatges i les accions. Els diàlegs només han de servir per expressar allò que no es pot expressar de forma visual.

Per desenvolupar el meu guió vaig tenir en compte una estructura bàsica que se sol complir a la majoria de curtmetratges o pel·lícules i que és la següent:

<i>Status quo</i>	Es presenta el personatge, la seva vida, el seu caràcter... S'ha d'aconseguir que l'espectador senti empatia cap a ell.	La veu en off ens explica el perquè de la tristesa i l'arrogància de l'Aida.
Detonant	Succeeix alguna cosa inesperada que fa que tot canviï.	Li apareix l'espectre de seu novio.
1r punt de gir o <i>midpoint</i>	És el punt de no retorn perquè ja no es pot tornar enrere. És també el punt mig.	L'Aida ja no té la caixa i no la pot recuperar, no pot tornar enrere.
2n punt de gir	Succeeix una acció que ens fa creure que el protagonista no se'n sortirà.	L'Aida veu el seu destí i es desespera creient que no hi ha marxa enrere.
Clímax	És el punt àlgid, el final.	El fantasma li diu que pot canviar el seu destí i ella es disposa a fer-ho.

El guió literari que vaig desenvolupar ve presentat a continuació.

### **3 MISSATGES PER CANVIAR – GUIÓ LITERARI**

#### **SEQÜÈNCIA 1**

##### **ESCENA 1 - INT. HABITACIÓ**

*L'Aida està dins el llit. Obre els ulls lentament. S'aixeca del llit i va cap a la finestra. Apuja la persiana i mira a fora.*

*VEU EN OFF*

*Nadal, odies el Nadal.*

#### **SEQÜÈNCIA 2**

##### **ESCENA 2 - EXT. DIA. CARRER**

*A fora es veu gent que es desitja Bon Nadal.*

*PERSONA 1*

*Hola, que tal?*

*PERSONA 2*

*Bé, aquí passant el Nadal.*

PERSONA 1

*Vinga he de marxar. Bon Nadal!*

PERSONA 2

*Bon Nadal!*

VEU EN OFF

*Amb el Nadal va marxar ell i amb ell has mort gairebé tota tu.*

### **SEQÜÈNCIA 3**

#### **ESCENA 3 - INT. HABITACIÓ**

*L'Aida es gira amb mala cara i s'asseu lentament a terra. Obra el llum i agafa la caixa de sobre la tauleta de nit. Es posa els auriculars i va mirant i agafant objectes de dins la caixa*

VEU EN OFF

*L'únic bocí que queda de tu viu atrapat en aquesta caixa, en aquests records. Vius sense vida, sense inèrcia. El món no para de girar però sents que tu ja no pots girar amb ell. Il·lusió, esperança, felicitat... són paraules que et queden molt llunyanes.*

#### **ESCENA 4 - INT. HABITACIÓ**

*Se senten uns cops a la porta. La seva germana obre la porta. L'Aida es treu ràpidament els auriculars.*

GERMANA

*Bon dia Aida, l'esmorzar està a punt.*

*L'Aida agafa un objecte que tingui a prop i li llença a la seva germana.*

AIDA

*(amb ràbia)*

*Deixa'm en pau!*

VEU EN OFF

*Impulsos de ràbia quan algú t'intenta ajudar, ells no saben res. I és que no entens com tothom oblida, tan ràpid. O simplement ja no recorden?*

#### **ESCENA 5 - INT. HABITACIÓ**

*L'Aida es vesteix, es posa les sabates, la jaqueta i la bufanda. Agafa la caixa i surt de l'habitació,*

**SEQÜÈNCIA 4****ESCENA 6 - INT. ESCALES**

*Baixa les escales i surt de casa.*

**SEQÜÈNCIA 5****ESCENA 7 - EXT. DIA. BANC**

*L'Aida arriba caminant a un banc al costat d'un caminet natural i s'hi asseu.*

VEU EN OFF

*Només hi ha una cosa que t'agradi, contemplar les hores asseguda en aquest banc on et va dir que només la mort us podria vèncer. I ho ha fet.*

**ESCENA 8 - EXT. DIA. BANC**

*Posa la mà sobre el banc i al costat de la seva apareix una mà coberta amb un guant blanc que de sobte, la toca. L'Aida es sobresalta. Apareix un espectre blanc darrere seu.*

ESPECTRE

(xiuxiuejant)

*Sóc aquí per donar-te una oportunitat. Si segueixes així, els teus passos es complicaran.*

**ESCENA 9 - EXT. DIA. BANC**

*L'estrany li deixa un paper al banc i desapareix. L'Aida el desplega i hi posa: "Avui tindràs tres aparicions, sense elles no podràs escapar del teu destí". L'Aida fa cara d'espantada. Deixa caure el paper, s'aixeca, agafa la caixa i marxa corrents pel mateix lloc on ha vingut.*

**SEQÜÈNCIA 6****ESCENA 10 - EXT. DIA. PORTAL**

*L'Aida arriba corrent i s'atura davant el portal de casa seva al veure un nen petit dret a davant la porta. Ella puja un esglaó i el nen la toca i li dona una fotografia d'ella quan era petita.*

**ESCENA 11 - EXT. DIA. PORTAL**

*El nen li agafa la caixa de cop i marxa corrents. L'Aida es queda perplexa i quant reacciona el nen ja ha marxat. L'Aida s'asseu a l'escala i es queda mirant la fotografia que li ha donat.*

**VEU EN OFF DEL NEN PETIT**

*Ho veus, de petita eres feliç.*

**ESCENA 12 - EXT. DIA. PORTAL**

*L'Aida s'aixeca, deixa caure la foto a terra i marxa corrent.*

**SEQÜÈNCIA 7****ESCENA 13 - EXT. DIA. CARRER**

*L'Aida arriba per una cantonada i topa amb uns peus. Són els peus d'una noia que l'agafa i l'arrossega fins a una finestra.*

AIDA

*Aaah! Que fas!?*

**ESCENA 14 - EXT. DIA. FINESTRA CASA**

*L'Aida mira per la finestra d'una casa. A dins s'hi veu la seva família brindant.*

FAMILIAR 1

*Vinga va, brindem!*

GERMANA

*Brindem per l'Aida.*

FAMILIARS

*Bon Nadal!*

**ESCENA 15 - EXT. DIA. FINESTRA CASA**

NOIA

*Ho veus? La teva família et recorda, creuen en tu.*

AIDA

*(neguitosa)*

*Ja... però jo no m'ho mereixo. No sé perquè ho fan.*

NOIA

*No tothom és com tu! La gent es preocupa pels altres. Has de passar pàgina, seguir endavant, no et pots quedar atrapada al passat.*

*Quan la noia acaba de parlar es treu la caputxa de la jaqueta i desapareix de cop.*

AIDA

*Espera!*

**ESCENA 16 - EXT. DIA. FINESTRA CASA**

*Apareix un fantasma negre al mateix lloc on havia desaparegut la noia. L'Aida s'espanta i va per marxar. El fantasma l'agafa i li posa una capa a sobre. Desapareixen.*

**SEQÜÈNCIA 8****ESCENA 17 - EXT. NIT. CEMENTIRI**

*L'Aida i el fantasma apareixen a un cementiri. L'Aida s'enretira la capa del damunt. S'acosten a una làpida. L'Aida està perplexa. El fantasma porta una espelma a les mans*

**ESCENA 18 - EXT. NIT. CEMENTIRI**

AIDA

*Què es això?*

*El fantasma l'assenyala a ella lentament.*

AIDA

*Sóc jo?*

*El fantasma fa que sí amb el cap.*

AIDA

*Però per què m'ensenyas això? M'heu dit que podria escapar del meu destí!*

*El fantasma es gira i escriu a la paret: Els actes d'un home prediuen el seu destí, però si els actes canvien, el destí canviarà.*

**ESCENA 19 - EXT. NIT. CEMENTIRI**

*S'allunyen pel mateix lloc on han vingut.*

AIDA

*Gràcies. Et prometo que canviaré.*

*El fantasma bufa l'espelma i desapareixen altre cop.*

**SEQÜÈNCIA 9****ESCENA 20 - EXT. DIA. BANC**

*L'Aida apareix al banc amb la capa al damunt. S'enretira la capa de sobre i mira quina hora és. És el matí. S'aixeca i marxa caminant.*

VEU EN OFF

*Hagi passat el que hagi passat encara és Nadal, no ha passat el temps però tot ha canviat. Ja no tens la caixa, això vol dir que s'ha acabat passar-se cada Nadal amb aquell coi de cartró!*

## **SEQÜÈNCIA 10**

### **ESCENA 21 - EXT. NIT. PATI**

*Subtítol: Al cap d'un any...*

*Ha passat un any. L'Aida està amb les seves amigues al voltant d'un foc. És Nadal i s'estan donant regals, parlant, rient i menjant.*

*VEU EN OFF*

*I a ell no l'has pas oblidat, simplement estàs disposada a avançar, a no consumir-te en el passat fins a morir sola d'amargura i tristesa.*

### **ESCENA 22 - INT. MENJADOR**

*L'Aida està brindant i fent postres amb la seva família. Riuen i es desitgen bon Nadal.*

*VEU EN OFF*

*A reorientar el teu destí i a buscar altres motius per ser feliç; saps que hi són, t'estan esperant.*

### **ESCENA 23 - EXT. NIT. PATI**

*(Continuació de l'escena 21) Es donen regals.*

*VEU EN OFF*

*Il·lusió, esperança, felicitat; són paraules que tornaran a cobrar sentit.*

**FI**

### 2.1.2 El guió tècnic i *storyboard*

A partir del guió literari es pot definir el guió tècnic. El llenguatge que havia utilitzat fins ara era literari i ara l'havia de transformar a llenguatge audiovisual. En el guió tècnic, la paraula agafa un altre significat. El llenguatge audiovisual ha de ser clar i objectiu perquè tothom que participa en el rodatge ho pugui entendre.

En el guió tècnic es presenta el què s'ha de veure i sentir i alhora la manera com s'ha de veure i sentir. El què es veu fa referència als personatges, objectes, decorats, accions, elements ambientals... Com es veu remet als tipus de plans, angulació, moviments de la càmera i il·luminació. El què se sent es refereix als diàlegs, la banda sonora, sorolls ambientals i efectes sonors. Com se sent ens indica la intensitat, les superposicions, encadenaments o foses d'àudio.

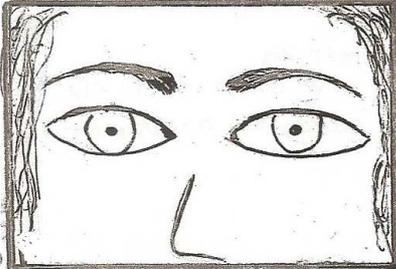
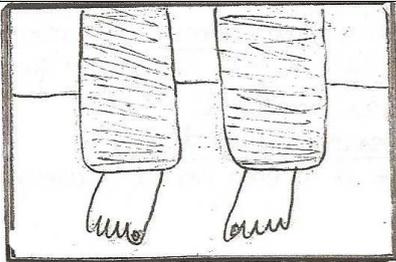
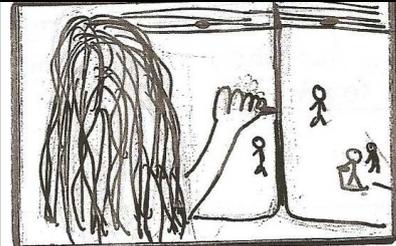
Hi ha de constar la informació necessària perquè es pugui preparar la interpretació dels actors, els decorats, buscar les localitzacions, planificar el rodatge i fer el muntatge final. En el guió també es pot especificar si la càmera és subjectiva, és a dir, quan imita la mirada d'un personatge, com si aquesta estigués als seus ulls. O bé si és objectiva, quan la càmera segueix l'acció del personatge, com si ho miréssim com un espectador des de l'exterior, és la més utilitzada.

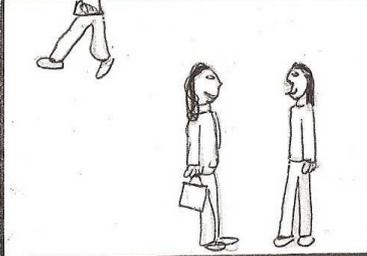
Pel que fa el *storyboard*, és la representació gràfica del què veurem. Et permet transformar els teus pensaments en imatges. Està format per un conjunt de dibuixos en forma de vinyetes que representen els plans orientatius que s'hauran de gravar. Es poden dibuixar autònomament en forma de còmic o col·locar-los al costat de les especificacions del guió tècnic. Fa que el rodatge flueixi millor, et guien a l'hora de la filmació però no vol dir que t'hi hagi de cenyir rígidament, ja que sempre pots tenir una idea millor o bé et poden aparèixer entrebancs. Es pot utilitzar durant el rodatge però sobretot és una eina útil durant la preproducció per tal de definir tots els elements que intervindran en l'enregistrament. És útil també als altres membres de l'equip, els actors entendran millor el que els hi estàs dient, si els filmaràs de prop o de lluny i com s'han de moure si els hi ensenyes l'*storyboard*.

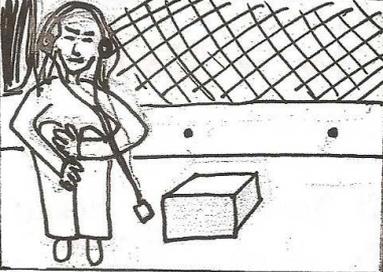
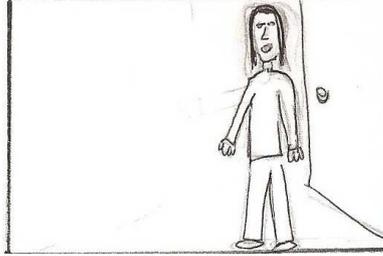
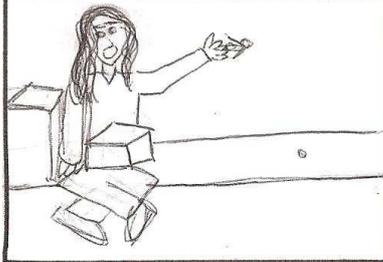
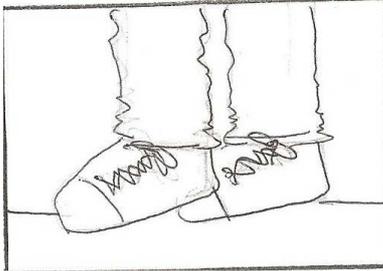
En els curtmetratges és de molta utilitat dibuixar un *storyboard* perquè es pot comprovar visualment si la història i el que veurem a la pantalla té ritme i pot enganxar a l'espectador

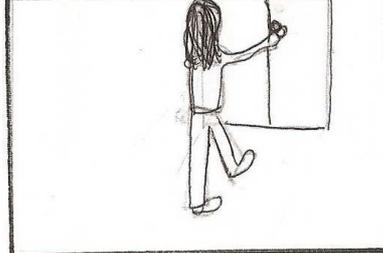
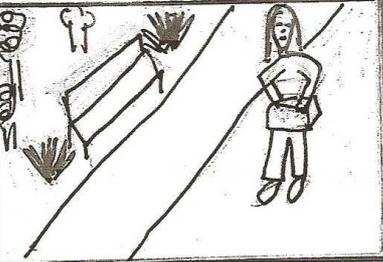
o el pot avorrir perquè hi ha escenes no necessària que no fan avançar l'acció. Actualment, molts *storyboards* es fan amb eines informàtiques.

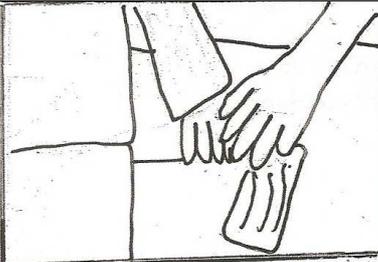
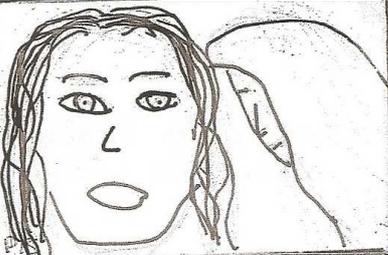
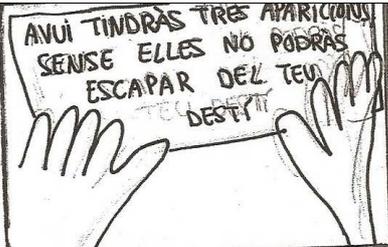
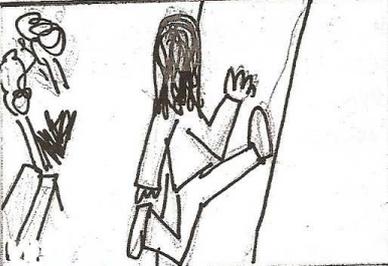
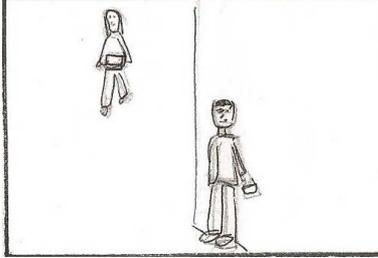
Tenint presents aquestes condicions, vaig escriure i dibuixar el guió tècnic i gràfic següent.

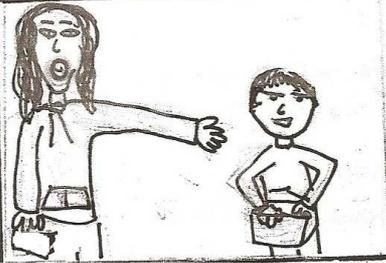
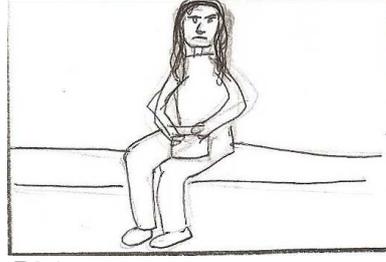
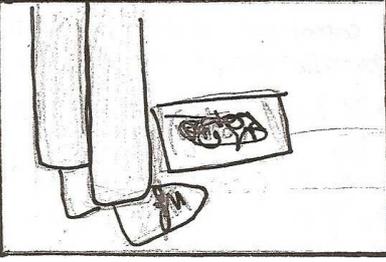
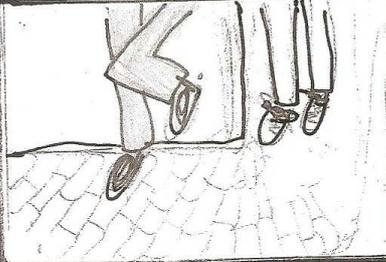
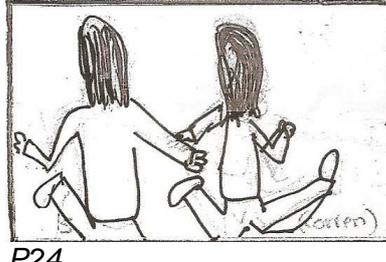
<b>TRES MISSATGES PER CANVIAR</b>	
<b>GUIÓ TÈCNIC I STORYBOARD</b>	
<b>SEQÜÈNCIA 1</b>	
<b>ESCENA 1 – INT. HABITACIÓ</b>	
	<b>OBERTURA EN NEGRE</b> <b>PRIMERÍSSIM PLA</b> <i>Hi ha esclatxes de llum a l'habitació. Se sent el so d'un despertador. L'Aida obra els ulls lentament</i>
<b>P1</b>	
	<b>PLA DE DETALL</b> <i>Baixa descalça del llit.</i>
<b>P2</b>	
	<b>PRIMER PLA</b> <i>Puja la cortina i mira per la finestra.</i>
<b>P3</b>	
<b>SEQÜÈNCIA 2</b>	
<b>ESCENA 2 – EXT. DIA. CARRER.</b>	

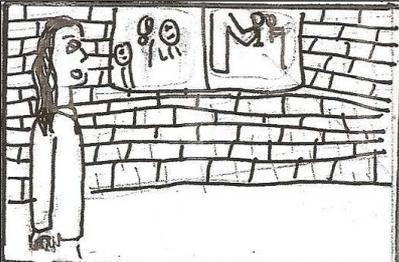
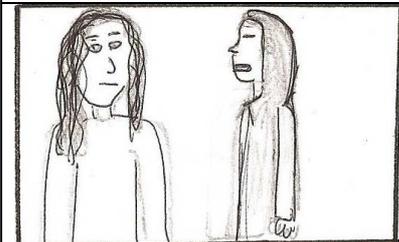
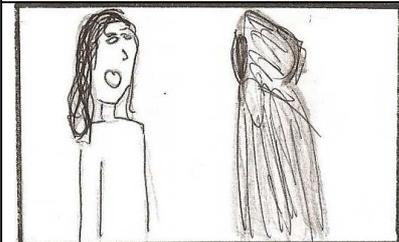
	<p><b>PLA DE CONJUNT</b></p> <p><i>Es veu gent caminant pel carrer.</i></p> <p><i>PERSONA 1</i> <i>Hola, què tal?</i></p> <p><i>PERSONA 2</i> <i>Bé, aquí passant el Nadal.</i></p> <p><i>PERSONA 1</i> <i>Vinga he de marxar. Bon Nadal!</i></p> <p><i>PERSONA 2</i> <i>Bon Nadal!</i></p> <p><i>VEU EN OFF</i> <i>Nadal, odies el Nadal. Amb el Nadal va marxar ell i amb ell has mort gairebé tota tu.</i></p>
<p><b>SEQÜÈNCIA 3</b></p>	
<p><b>ESCENA 3 – INT. HABITACIÓ</b></p>	
	<p><b>PLA MITJÀ CURT</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida baixa la persiana, es gira i s'asseu a terra.</i> <i>Encén el llum, agafa la caixa i es posa els auriculars.</i></p> <p><i>VEU EN OFF</i> <i>L'únic bocí que queda de tu viu atrapat en aquesta caixa, en aquests records. Vius sense vida, sense inèrcia. El món no para de girar però sents que ja no pots girar amb ell.</i></p>
	<p><b>PRIMER PLA</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida va mirant coses de la caixa. Cara trista.</i></p> <p><i>VEU EN OFF</i> <i>Il·lusió, esperança, felicitat... són paraules que et queden molt llunyanes.</i></p>
<p><b>ESCENA 4 – INT. HABITACIÓ</b></p>	

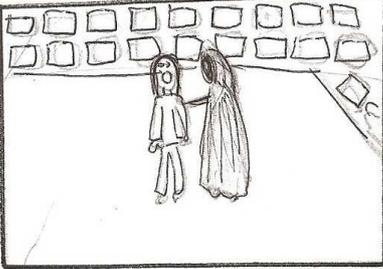
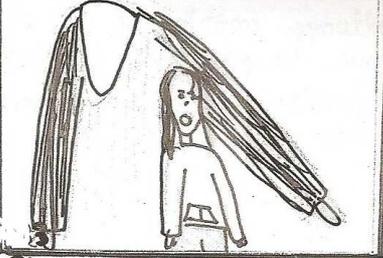
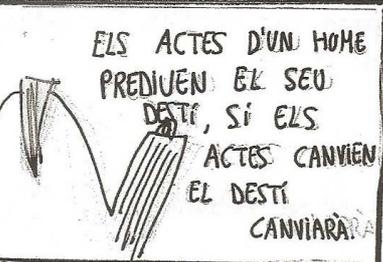
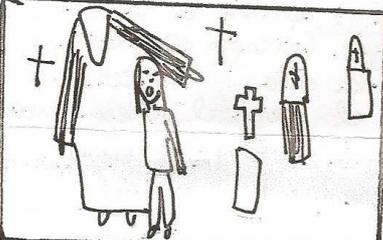
	<p><b>PLA SENCER</b></p> <p><i>Se sent la seva germana que pica a la porta. L'Aida es treu els auriculars de cop i mira cap a la porta.</i></p>
<p>P7</p>	
<p><b>ESCENA 5 – INT. HABITACIÓ</b></p>	
	<p><b>PLA SENCER</b></p> <p><i>La germana entra.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GERMANA</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Bon dia Aida, l'esmorzar està a punt.</i></p>
<p>P8</p>	
	<p><b>PLA SENCER</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida agafa un objecte que tingui a prop i li llença a la seva germana.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AIDA</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(amb ràbia)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Deixa'm en pau!</i></p>
<p>P9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>VEU EN OFF</b></p> <p><i>Impulsos de ràbia quan algú t'intenta ajudar, ells no saben res.</i></p>
<p><b>ESCENA 6 – INT. HABITACIÓ</b></p>	
	<p><b>PLÀ DE DETALL</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida es corda les sabates.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>VEU EN OFF</b></p> <p><i>I és que no entens com tothom oblida, tant ràpid. O simplement ja no recorden?</i></p>
<p>P10</p>	

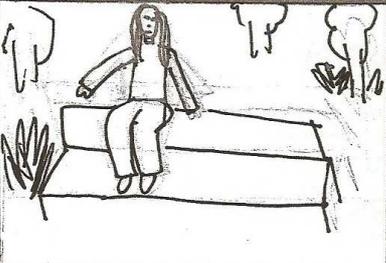
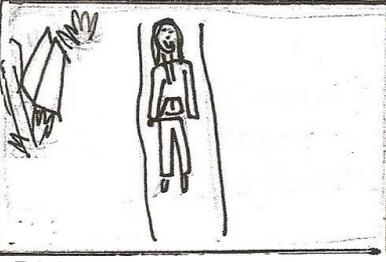
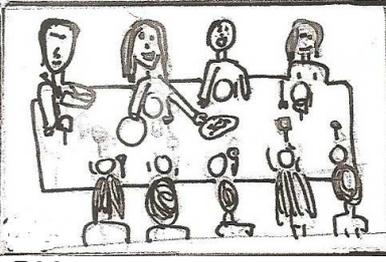
 <p>P11</p>	<p><b>PLÀ MITJÀ</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida es posa el jersei, agafa la caixa i marxa.</i></p>
<p><b>SEQÜÈNCIA 4</b></p>	
<p><b>ESCENA 7 – INT. ESCALES</b></p>	
 <p>P12</p>	<p><b>PLA AMERICÀ</b></p> <p><i>Es para un moment davant l'arbre de Nadal.</i></p>
 <p>P13</p>	<p><b>PLÀ DE CONJUNT</b></p> <p><i>Baixa les escales i surt per la porta.</i></p>
<p><b>SEQÜÈNCIA 5</b></p>	
<p><b>ESCENA 8 – EXT. DIA. CAMÍ</b></p>	
 <p>P14</p>	<p><b>PLÀ GENERAL</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida arriba caminant a un banc al costat d'un caminet natural i s'hi asseu amb la caixa sobre les cames.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>VEU EN OFF</b></p> <p><i>Només hi ha una cosa que t'agradi, contemplar les hores asseguda en aquest banc on et va dir que només la mort us podria vèncer. I ho ha fet.</i></p>
<p><b>ESCENA 9 – EXT. DIA. BANC</b></p>	

 <p>P15</p>	<p><b>PLA DE DETALL</b></p> <p><i>Posa la mà sobre el banc i al costat de la seva apareix una mà coberta amb un guant blanc que de sobte, la toca. L'Aida es sobresalta. Apareix un espectre blanc darrere seu.</i></p>
 <p>P16</p>	<p><b>PRIMER PLA</b></p> <p><b>ESPECTRE</b> (xiuxiuejant)</p> <p><i>Sóc aquí per donar-te una oportunitat. Si segueixes així, els teus passos es complicaran.</i></p>
<p><b>ESCENA 10 – EXT. DIA. BANC</b></p>	
 <p>P17</p>	<p><b>PLÀ DE DETALL</b></p> <p><i>L'Espectre li deixa un paper a sobre el banc. L'Aida llegeix el paper. Hi posa: "Avui tindràs tres aparicions, sense elles no podràs escapar del teu destí".</i></p>
 <p>P18</p>	<p><b>PLA GENERAL</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida, espantada, deixa caure el paper, s'aixeca, agafa la caixa i marxa corrents pel mateix lloc on ha vingut.</i></p>
<p><b>SEQÜÈNCIA 6</b></p>	
<p><b>ESCENA 11 – EXT. DIA. PORTAL</b></p>	
 <p>P19</p>	<p><b>PLÀ MITJÀ</b></p> <p><i>L'Aida arriba al portal de casa. L'espera un nen petit que li dona una fotografia de l'Aida de petita.</i></p>

 <p>P20</p>	<p><b>PLA AMERICÀ</b>          El nen li agafa la caixa i marxa corrents. L'Aida reacciona tard.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AIDA          (perplexa)          Espera!</p>
 <p>P21</p>	<p><b>PLA SENCER</b>          L'Aida s'asseu a l'esgraó i mira la fotografia.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VEU EN OFF DEL NEN          De petita eres feliç.</p>
 <p>P22</p>	<p><b>PLA DE DETALL</b>          L'Aida deixa caure la foto. Baixa les escales ràpidament i marxa.</p>
<b>SEQÜÈNCIA 7</b>	
<b>ESCENA 12 – EXT. DIA. CARRER</b>	
 <p>P23</p>	<p><b>PLÀ DE DETALL</b>          Es veuen els peus d'una noia en una cantonada i els de l'Aida que s'acosten a ella.</p>
 <p>P24</p>	<p><b>PLA AMERICÀ</b>          La noia li agafa la mà i se l'emporta corrents.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AIDA          (mentre està corrent)          Aaah! Però què fas?</p>
<b>ESCENA 13 – EXT. DIA. FINESTRA CASA</b>	

	<p><b>PLA MITJÀ</b></p> <p><i>S'aturen a una finestra i l'Aida mira a través d'ella. A dins s'hi veu i se sent gent que parla, riu i es desitja Bon Nadal.</i></p>
<p>P25</p>	<p><b>NOIA</b></p> <p><i>Ho veus? La teva família et recorda, creuen en tu.</i></p> <p><b>AIDA</b></p> <p><i>(neguitosa)</i></p> <p><i>Ja... però jo no m'ho mereixo. No sé perquè ho fan.</i></p>
	<p><b>PLA MITJÀ CURT</b></p> <p><b>NOIA</b></p> <p><i>No tothom és com tu! La gent es preocupa pels altres. Has de passar pàgina, seguir endavant, no et pots quedar atrapada al passat.</i></p>
<p>P26</p>	<p><b>PLA MITJÀ CURT</b></p> <p><i>Quan la noia acaba de parlar es treu la caputxa de la jaqueta i desapareix de cop.</i></p> <p><b>AIDA</b></p> <p><i>Espera!</i></p>
<p>P27</p>	
<p><b>ESCENA 14 – EXT. DIA. FINESTRA CASA</b></p>	
	<p><b>PLA MITJÀ CURT</b></p> <p><i>Apareix el Fantasma de la mort al mateix lloc on desapareix la noia. L'Aida s'espanta i va per marxar. El fantasma l'agafa i li posa una capa a sobre. Desapareixen.</i></p>
<p>P28</p>	
<p><b>SEQÜÈNCIA 8</b></p>	
<p><b>ESCENA 15 – EXT. NIT. CEMENTIRI</b></p>	

 <p>P29</p>	<p><b>GRAN PLA GENERAL</b></p> <p>L'Aida i el Fantasma arriben a un cementiri. El Fantasma porta una espelma a la mà. S'acosten a un sepulcre.</p>
 <p>P30</p>	<p><b>PLA MITJÀ</b></p> <p>AIDA Què es això?</p> <p>El Fantasma l'assenyala a ella lentament.</p> <p>AIDA Sóc jo?</p> <p>El Fantasma fa que sí amb el cap.</p> <p>AIDA Però per què m'ensenyas això? M'heu dit que podria escapar del meu destí!</p>
 <p>P31</p>	<p><b>PLA DE DETALL</b></p> <p>El Fantasma es gira i escriu a la paret: "Els actes d'un home prediuen el seu destí, però si els actes canvien, el destí canviarà."</p>
<p>ESCENA 16 – EXT. NIT. CEMENTIRI</p>	
 <p>P32</p>	<p><b>PLA SENCER</b></p> <p>AIDA Gràcies. Et prometo que canviaré.</p> <p>S'allunyen pel mateix lloc on han vingut. El Fantasma bufa l'espelma i desapareixen altre cop.</p>
<p><b>SEQÜÈNCIA 9</b></p>	
<p>ESCENA 17 – EXT. DIA. CAMÍ I BANC</p>	

	<p><b>PLA SENCER</b></p> <p>L'Aida apareix al banc amb la capa al damunt. S'enretira la capa de sobre i mira quina hora és. S'aixeca i marxa caminant.</p>
P33	<p><b>PLA GENERAL</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">VEU EN OFF</p> <p>Hagi passat el que hagi passat encara és Nadal, no ha passat el temps però tot ha canviat. Ja no tens la caixa, això vol dir que s'ha acabat passar-se cada Nadal amb aquell coi de cartró!</p>
	P34
<b>SEQÜÈNCIA 10</b>	
<b>ESCENA 18 – EXT. NIT. PATI INTERIOR</b>	
	<p><b>PLA GENERAL</b></p> <p>Subtítol: Al cap d'un any...</p> <p>L'Aida està amb les seves amigues al voltant d'un foc. És Nadal i s'estan donant regals, parlant, rient i menjant.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VEU EN OFF</p> <p>I a ell no l'has pas oblidat, simplement estàs disposada a avançar, a no consumir-te en el passat fins a morir sola d'amargura i tristesa.</p> <p><b>FOSA ENCADENADA</b></p>
P35	<b>ESCENA 19 – INT. MENJADOR</b>
	<p><b>PLA DE CONJUNT</b></p> <p>L'Aida està brindant i fent postres amb la seva família. Riuen i es desitjen bon Nadal.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VEU EN OFF</p> <p>A reorientar el teu destí i a buscar altres motius per ser feliç; saps que hi són, t'estan esperant.</p> <p><b>FOSA ENCADENADA</b></p>
P36	<b>ESCENA 20 – EXT. NIT. PATI</b>

 <p>P37</p>	<p><b>PLA SENCER</b>  <i>(Continuació de l'escena 21, es donen regals)</i></p> <p><b>VEU EN OFF</b>  <i>Il·lusió, esperança, felicitat; són paraules que tornaran a cobrar sentit.</i></p> <p><b>FOSA EN NEGRA</b></p>
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## 2.2 El repartiment

El repartiment és el conjunt d'intèrprets d'un film. El director ha de buscar els intèrprets que encarnaran els protagonistes de la seva història però també els personatges secundaris i els extres. Tots els personatges exigeixen credibilitat encara que el seu paper no tingui diàleg. En les grans produccions cada cop és més usual que hi hagi un director de càsting responsable d'escollir els intèrprets. Els càstings són un seguit de proves a diferents actors i actrius per escollir les persones que interpretaran millor els diferents personatges.

Per fer els càstings s'ha de buscar un terreny neutral i evitar domicilis privats. Hi ha diferents tècniques per fer càstings, es pot donar prèviament un guió als actors perquè se'l preparin o fer que se'l llegeixin per primer cop per veure com reaccionen i així valorar la seva improvisació. També és útil fer-els-hi fer una prova actuant amb la resta d'actors per veure com treballen plegats i si s'entenen. Un cop seleccionats els intèrprets és útil assejar abans de gravar per fer que es familiaritzin amb el text i es vagin preparant. Això t'estalvia temps de rodatge, ja que el fa més fluid.

En els curtmetratges s'ha de tenir clar el què es busca de l'actor perquè la seva interpretació és clau i s'ha de treballar molt. L'espectador és molt més rigorós a l'hora de valorar la interpretació dels actors i actrius i és en el que més es fixen, i per tant, s'ha d'aconseguir captar l'atenció de l'espectador amb pocs minuts. Una bona interpretació pot ser la clau per aconseguir un curtmetratge amb èxit.

Per buscar els intèrprets del meu curtmetratge, vaig utilitzar com a recurs persones que ja coneixia. Tot i així els hi vaig fer un petit càsting [annex IV] per assegurar-me que s'ajustaven al personatge i que tenien ganes de fer-ho i d'ajudar-me a fer el curtmetratge

de forma altruista. Va ser difícil trobar la veu en *off*, no podia ser ningú que ja aparegués físicament a la història. Volia una veu neutra, agradable i entenedora. Vaig enregistrar les proves per decidir qui faria cada personatge en tranquil·litat. No els hi vaig enviar cap text perquè se'l prepararessin perquè volia veure la seva espontaneïtat, naturalitat i entonació. Primer els vaig fer presentar i després els hi vaig donar per escrit fragment de la veu en *off* que havien de llegir. Aquest va ser el fragment:

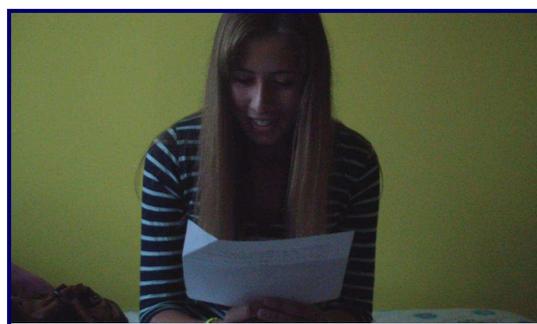
*“Odis el Nadal, amb el Nadal va marxar ell i amb ell has mort gairebé tota tu. L’únic bocí que queda de tu viu atrapat en aquesta caixa, en aquests records. Vius sense vida, sense inèrcia. El món no para de girar però sents que ja no pots girar amb ell. Il·lusió, esperança, felicitat... són paraules que et queden molt llunyanes.*

*No t’importa res ni ningú. Vius amb una apatia constant que augmenta quant arriba el Nadal. Impulsos de ràbia quan algú t’intenta ajudar, ells no saben res. I és que no entens com tothom oblida, tant ràpid. O simplement ja no recorden?*

*Només hi ha una cosa que t’agradi; contemplar les hores asseguda en aquest banc, on et va dir que només la mort us podria vèncer, i ho ha fet.”*



*La Clàudia Piedrabuena fent el càsting*



*La Laia Aguilar fent el càsting*



*La Núria Soler fent el càsting*

## 2.2 Les localitzacions

Les localitzacions són els llocs on es graven les diferents seqüències. Pot ser un espai interior o exterior. L'exterior et permet molt més marge de moviment però hi ha més sorolls i estímuls externs. Per gravar interiors necessites el permís del propietari i ajustar el rodatge a la seva disponibilitat. T'has d'adaptar a les circumstàncies. La millor opció és trobar localitzacions lliures que disposis d'elles sempre que vulguis i desenvolupar la teva història en base elles.

Jo vaig escollir gravar tant en espais exteriors com en espais interiors. Els espais exteriors no em van causar cap problema, ja que eren llocs poc transitats. Els espais interiors requerien una ambientació concreta, per això vaig haver de treballar-hi més per aconseguir que fossin versemblants. Em vaig haver d'adaptar als espais interiors perquè eren espais petits no em permetien gaire marge de moviment. A més a més havia de tenir cura de la il·luminació, com que vaig haver de fer servir llum artificial, havia de ser sempre la mateixa a totes les escenes.

Localitzacions del curtmetratge per ordre d'aparició:



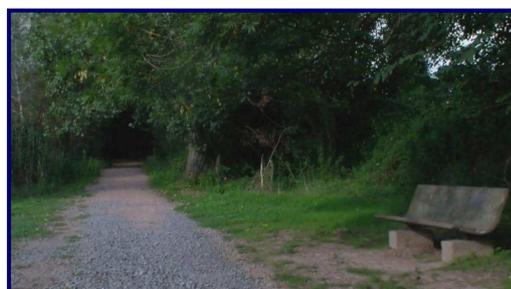
1. Habitació



2. Carrer (1)



3. Escales



4. Camí



5. Portal



6. Carrer (2)



7. Finestra



8. Cementiri



9. Pati



10. Menjador

## 2.3 El vestuari, decorats i atrezzo

Uns bons vestuaris, decorats i *atrezzo* col·laboraran a donar credibilitat a les escenes, sobretot en els pel·lícules històriques que impliquen la recreació d'una època. S'han d'adaptar al tipus de pel·lícula i donar-li versemblança. Pel que fa al maquillatge, pot ser que només es necessitin pólvore facials per treure la brillantor de la pell sota els focus de llum. Si dus a terme un rodatge durant diversos dies, necessites algú que et cuidi el vestuari i l'*atrezzo*, algú que en coordini la logística. L'actor no pot emportar-se el vestuari

a casa cada dia. La roba no només ha de quedar bé al personatge sinó que l'elecció dels colors i estampats pot influir a l'aspecte i el significat conjunt de la producció.

La condició principal per escollir el vestuari pel curtmetratge era que fos vestuari d'hivern, de màniga llarga i pantalons llargs. No hi podia haver cap element que desentonés, i tenint en compte que vaig gravar durant els mesos d'agost i setembre, no va ser fàcil. Vaig abocar més atenció al vestuari del personatge principal, l'Aida. Per les primeres escenes, porta un pijama neutre format per una samarreta clara i uns pantalons negres, tot sense dibuixos per no distreure l'atenció del públic. Per la majoria d'escenes porta un jersei granat obert on s'hi entreveu una samarreta grisa, uns pantalons texans, unes sabates altes i rígides i una bufanda de color gris fosc; tampoc vaig escollir roba amb estampats per reafirmar la seva serietat i mal humor utilitzant també colors foscos i poc cridaners. En l'última seqüència vaig haver de buscar un altre vestuari perquè representava un altre dia i no podia anar vestida igual. Vaig decidir utilitzar un vestuari més viu perquè en aquestes escenes ja ha canviat de caràcter i està més alegre. La vaig vestir amb un jersei de color taronja salmó una mica fluorescent per les escenes interiors i per les exteriors, un jersei blau gruixut i un gorro de ratlles blaves per donar-li color i fer ressaltar el seu personatge sobre la resta.

Pel que fa els altres personatges extres, no els vaig marcar tant el què havien de portar, simplement els vaig dir que havia de ser roba d'hivern. Els altres dos personatges que necessitaven un vestuari més específic eren l'espectre i el fantasma del futur. Vaig decidir que els dos anirien amb colors oposats perquè els espectadors no els confonguessin. L'espectre el vaig vestir amb un llençol blanc, una careta de guix blanca i guants blancs. El fantasma del futur, com que havia de ser més tenebrós i apareixia a la nit, el seu vestuari era negre. El vaig vestir amb una disfressa tota negra que cobria fins i tot la cara, i uns guants negres.

Els decorats em van servir per donar aquest to nadalenc que necessitava. L'únic d'especial que vaig haver d'afegir a les localitzacions interiors va ser un arbre de nadal, llums de colors i figures de nadal per decorar la casa; la resta de decoració era la que ja formava part de les localitzacions.

L'*atrezzo* no es pot confondre amb els decorats o vestuaris. Quan diem *atrezzo*, ens referim a aquells objectes claus i fonamentals pel desenvolupament d'una història. Els actors solen interactuar amb aquests elements. L'*atrezzo* que vaig necessitar va ser una

caixa de cartró amb els respectius objectes dins, una foto de l'Aida de petita, coca, torró, xocolata, cava, coberteria i vaixela pel dinar. També vaig necessitar una capa negra, una espelma, regals i núvols de laminadura.

## 2.4 L'equip tècnic

Abans de començar a gravar havia de preparar tot l'equip tècnic. L'element principal és la càmera. Vaig utilitzar una càmera de vídeo, concretament una de la marca *Samsung* model *HMX-Q20 Full HD*. L'altre element indispensable per aconseguir una gravació de qualitat és el tríode. És un suport plegable de tres cames que té incorporat un nivell per aconseguir un bon enquadrament. El tríode fa que la càmera estigui estable i et permet tenir les mans lliures. Vaig utilitzar un tríode de la marca *Hama star 61* que arriba als 153 cm d'alçària. També vaig utilitzar dos focus per il·luminar l'exterior del cementiri i algunes escenes interiors.



*Càmera Samsung HMX Full HD,  
sobre el tríode*



*Focus i bombeta*



*Tríode Hama star 61*

## 2.5 La planificació del rodatge

Elaborar un pla rodatge serveix per organitzar i planificar cada dia de rodatge. Com més producció hi hagi, més important serà tenir una bona planificació. Al full de rodatge s'hi desglossa el guió però no s'especifica l'acció d'aquella escena sinó qui i què es necessitarà per dur-la a terme. D'aquesta manera pots preveure mínimament les dificultats i imprevistos que poden sorgir al llarg del rodatge. Si una planificació està ben coordinada, guanyaràs temps i evitaràs que el rodatge sigui un caos. Si es disposa d'un equip de professionals tècnics, s'ha de distribuir a tots els membres i actors com a mínim un dia abans del rodatge perquè es puguin organitzar i preparar. Existeixen programes informàtics per dur a terme aquesta programació com per exemple el *GorillaPro* o el *MovieMagic Scheduling*.

Per organitzar el meu rodatge vaig preparar un detallat pla de rodatge. Hi vaig establir un ordre de gravació segons les disponibilitats dels actors, de les localitzacions, del material tècnic; depenent també de la previsió meteorològica i agrupant les mateixes localitzacions per gravar-les al mateix dia o en dies consecutius i així evitar desplaçaments innecessaris. Vaig organitzar el pla de rodatge en dies. A cada dia hi especifico què es gravarà, on es gravarà, els actors que hi sortiran, el vestuari, l'*attrezzo* i el material tècnic. El pla de rodatge es pot observar a continuació

DIA 1 - 26/08/13					
Seqüència 1		Escena	1	Plans	P1, P2, P3
Localització	Interior. Habitació				
Repartiment	Aida				
Vestuari	Pijama				
Equip tècnic	Càmera, trípod i focus.				
Seqüència 3		Escena	3, 4, 5 i 6	Plans	P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10 i P11
Localització	Interior. Habitació.				
Repartiment	Aida.				
Vestuari	Pijama, pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates.				
<i>Attrezzo</i>	Caixa amb objectes i auriculars.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera, trípod, focus i làmpada.				
Anotacions	Falta escena 5, P8.				

<b>DIA 2 - 28/08/13</b>					
Seqüència 5		Escena	8, 9, 10	Plans	P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P i P
Localització	Exterior. Dia. Camí i banc.				
Repartiment	Aida i Espectre				
Vestuari	Aida: pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates. Espectre: llençol blanc, guant blanc i màscara de guix.				
Attrezzo	Caixa i carta.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípod.				
Anotacions					
Seqüència 9		Escena	17	Plans	P33 i P34
Localització	Exterior. Dia. Camí i banc.				
Repartiment	Aida				
Vestuari	Aida: pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates.				
Attrezzo	Capa negra i rellotge.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípod.				

<b>DIA 3 – 30/08/13</b>					
Seqüència 2		Escena	2	Plans	P4
Localització	Exterior. Dia. Carrer.				
Repartiment	Tres extres.				
Vestuari	Roba d'hivern.				
Attrezzo	Bosses amb regals a dins.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípod.				

<b>DIA 4 – 2/09/13</b>					
Seqüència 4		Escena	7	Plans	P12 i P13
Localització	Interior. Escales				
Repartiment	Aida				
Vestuari	Pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates.				
Attrezzo	Caixa, arbre de Nadal i llums de colors.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípod.				

<b>DIA 5 – 10/08/13</b>					
Seqüència 8		Escena	15 i 16	Plans	P29, P30, P31 i P32
Localització	Exterior. Nit. Cementiri.				
Repartiment	Aida i Fantasma de la mort.				
Vestuari	Aida: pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates. Fantasma: disfressa negra i guants negres.				
Attrezzo	Espelma i llençol negra.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera, trípode i focus.				
Anotacions					

<b>DIA 6 – 21/09/13</b>					
Seqüència 7 i 10		Escena	13 i 19	Plans	P25 i P36
Localització	Interior. Menjador.				
Repartiment	Aida i família.				
Vestuari	Aida: jersei Família: roba d'hivern				
Attrezzo	Decoració de Nadal, vaixel·la i coberteria, coca, xocolata i cava.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera, trípode i focus.				
Anotacions	El jersei de l'Aida ha de ser diferent de la d'avanç perquè representa un altre dia.				
Seqüència 3		Escena	5	Plans	P8
Localització	Interior. Habitació.				
Repartiment	Germana				
Vestuari	Roba d'hivern.				
Equip tècnic	Càmera, trípode i focus.				
Anotacions	La llum ha de ser la mateixa que la de l'escena 4.				

**DIA 7 – 25/09/13**

Seqüència 7	Escena	12, 13	Plans	P23, P24, P26 i P27
Localització	Exterior. Dia. Carrer i finestra.			
Repartiment	Aida i Noia del present.			
Vestuari	Aida: pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates. Noia: jaqueta blanca amb caputxa, pantalons i sabates fosques.			
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípode.			

**DIA 8 – 27/09/13**

Seqüència 6	Escena	11	Plans	P19, P20, P21, P22
Localització	Exterior. Dia. Portal amb escales.			
Repartiment	Aida i Nen del passat.			
Vestuari	Aida: pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates. Nen: jaqueta d'hivern, pantalons i sabates fosques.			
Attrezzo	Caixa i foto de l'Aida de petita.			
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípode.			
Anotacions	Gravar veu en off del Nen dient: " <i>De petita eres feliç.</i> "			

**DIA 9 – 28/09/13**

Seqüència 10	Escena	18 i 20	Plans	P35 i P37
Localització	Exterior. Nit. Pati interior.			
Repartiment	Aida i tres o quatre amigues.			
Vestuari	Aida: jaqueta i gorro d'hivern. Amigues: jaquetes i complements d'hivern.			
Attrezzo	Regals, núvols de sucre i foc.			
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípode.			
Anotacions	La roba de l'Aida ha de ser diferent a la d'avanç perquè representa un altre dia.			

Seqüència 7		Escena	14	Plans	P28
Localització	Exterior. Dia. Finestra				
Repartiment	Aida i Fantasma.				
Vestuari	Aida: pantalons, samarreta, jaqueta, bufanda i sabates. Fantasma: disfressa negra.				
Attrezzo	Llençol negre				
Equip tècnic	Càmera i trípode.				
Anotacions	És la continuació de l'escena 13, l'enquadrament i llum ha de ser el mateix.				

## 3. La Producció

### 3.1 La filmació

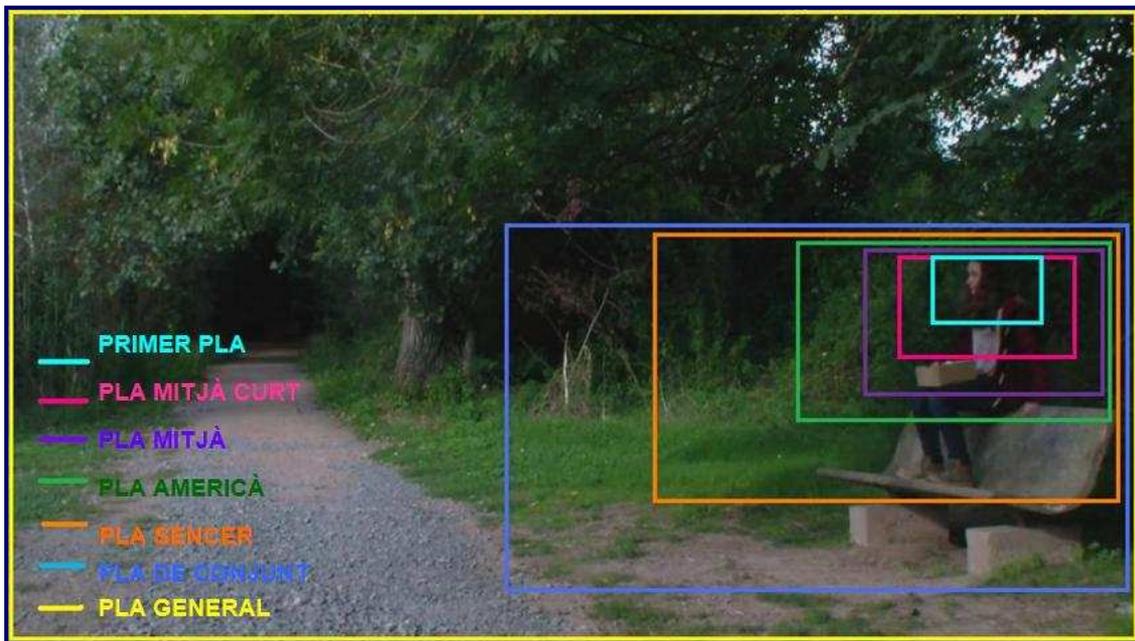
A l'hora de filmar les diferents escenes s'ha de tenir clar com s'han de filmar, és a dir quins són els plans que s'han d'utilitzar i que venen especificats al guió tècnic. El pla fa referència al grau d'apropament de la càmera a la realitat. Els plans més allunyats aporten a la imatge un valor més descriptiu. En canvi, els plans més propers aporten un valor més expressiu o dramàtic.

Els podem classificar de la següent manera:

Gran pla general	Mostra un gran escenari, un gran paisatge o una multitud. La persona pot no ser-hi, si hi és queda petita i perduda en la llunyania. Cobra més importància l'entorn que la persona.	
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Pla general	Mostra part d'un escenari ampli en el qual s'hi incorpora la persona. Es pot veure l'acció que està duent a terme.	
Pla de conjunt	Abraça un petit grup de persones o un ambient determinat. La persona queda encaixada dins d'un espai definit del qual sol formar part.	
Pla sencer	Els límits superior i inferior de la pantalla coincideixen amb el cap i els peus del personatge.	
Pla americà	Els límits superior i inferior de la pantalla coincideixen amb el cap i els genolls del personatge.	
Pla mitjà	Presenta el personatge de cintura amunt.	
Pla mitjà curt	Pla intermedi entre el pla mitjà i el primer pla.	

<p>Primer pla</p>	<p>Presenta el rostre sencer del personatge.</p>	
<p>Primeríssim pla</p>	<p>Mostra una part del rostre o del cos de la persona que ocupa totalment la pantalla.</p>	
<p>Pla de detall</p>	<p>Mostra detalladament un objecte o part d'un objecte.</p>	

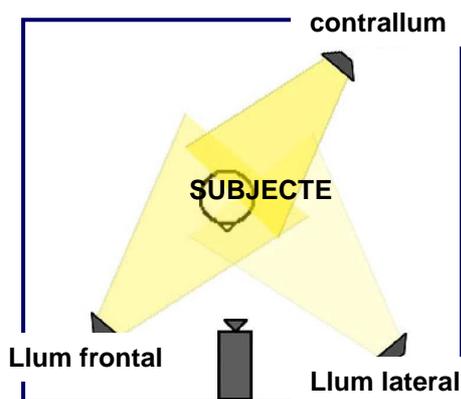


Correspondència de diversos plans dins d'un mateix pla

### 3.2 La il·luminació

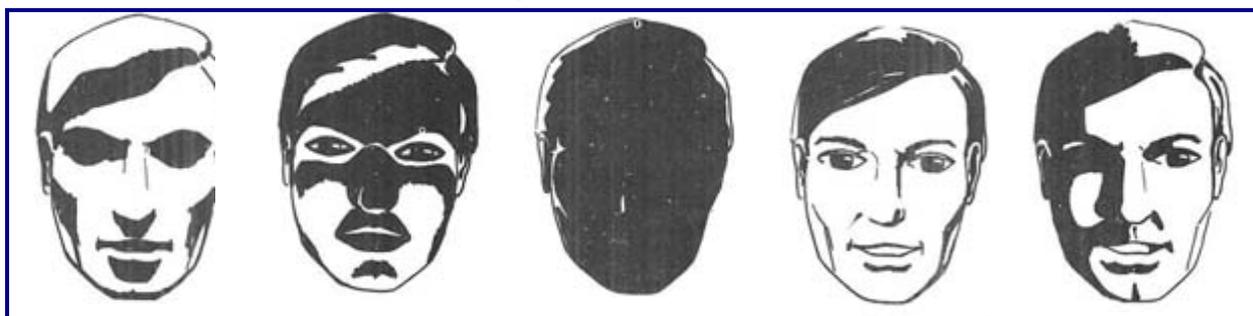
La il·luminació és la quantitat i el repartiment de la llum a cada pla. Serveix per crear un ambient determinat. No deixa de ser un element expressiu més. Tenint en compte que les localitzacions poden ser interiors o exteriors, s'ha d'utilitzar un tipus de llum o un altre. Per les localitzacions exteriors s'utilitza la llum solar, la llum natural. Per les localitzacions interiors és difícil utilitzar la llum natural perquè va canviant al llarg del dia i pot ser que no coincideixi amb la llum que es necessita per l'escena que es vol gravar, és per això que s'utilitza la llum artificial. Aquesta llum es modifica segons el què es vol transmetre. En una pel·lícula, el director de fotografia és l'encarregat de crear les condicions lumíniques adequades per allò que vol comunicar el director.

La forma més barata i senzilla de crear la llum artificial és amb bombetes o làmpades portàtils. Podem distingir dos tipus de il·luminació, la dura i la tova. La dura serveix per destacar la forma i contorn del subjecte de forma definida. La tova és una llum complementària que serveix per suavitzar els contrastos forts que es deriven de la il·luminació dura i crear l'ombra. Els diferents efectes lumínics s'aconsegueixen a partir de la posició deliberada d'un, dos, tres o quatre punts de llum. Amb una sola llum a davant o al costat del subjecte o objecte, s'obté una imatge molt contrastada que crea una ombra allargada a la silueta del subjecte. (Aquesta llum és la que vaig utilitzar a la seqüència 3, 4 i 5 aconseguint il·luminar només mitja silueta del personatge.) Afegint una segona llum al costat de la càmera s'aconsegueix un tipus de llum que s'anomena llum creuada i elimina les ombres, redueix el contrast i crea una figura més nítida. La il·luminació bàsica és la que s'aconsegueix amb tres punts de llum i és la que dóna més profunditat de camp i defineix més detalls. S'aconsegueix col·locant una llum frontal, una de lateral i una de posterior que fa de contrallum i dóna relleu al subjecte. Amb un quart punt de llum ben bé a darrere del subjecte, obtenim més profunditat però existeix el risc de crear brillantor.



Esquema de la il·luminació bàsica

Hi ha diferents tipus de llum segons la direcció. La llum picada s'obté col·locant la llum a sobre de l'objecte. La llum contrapicada prové de sota el subjecte i ressalta exageradament les ombres, com per exemple en les pel·lícules de terror. El contrallum s'obté col·locant el punt de llum darrera del personatge enfocant directament a la cara. La llum frontal se situa darrera de la càmera i tendeix a aixafar o deixar plans l'objecte o la persona. La llum lateral remarca les siluetes i el contorn, dona més relleu deixant una part de l'objecte a l'ombra.

*Llum picada**Llum contrapicada**Contrallum**Llum frontal**Llum lateral*

### 3.3. Els moviments de càmera

Quan es grava un pla es pot fer amb la càmera fixa o en moviment.

#### 3.3.1 La panoràmica

La panoràmica és un moviment de rotació de la càmera sense desplaçament. Únicament gira sobre un punt fix i es manté sempre en la mateixa distància focal del pla. Si es mou d'esquerra a dreta, parlem de panoràmica horitzontal i si es mou de dalt a baix, parlem de panoràmica vertical. La panoràmica vertical pot ser ascendent, si va de baix a dalt, o descendent, si va de dalt a baix. La panoràmica de balanceig és un moviment suau d'oscil·lació que se sol utilitzar amb la càmera subjectiva, per exemple el què veu un borratxo que perd l'equilibri.

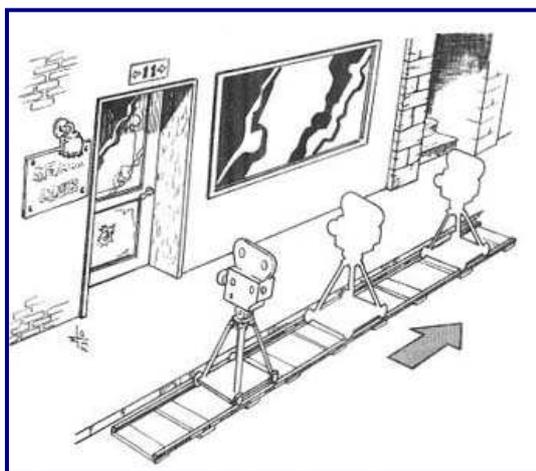
Aquest tipus de moviment és útil per seguir un personatge que es desplaça horitzontalment, per explorar un espai, per relacionar espais o personatges separats, o

com a recurs de transició entre plans fent una panoràmica molt ràpida i borrosa i passant ràpidament al següent pla.

En el curtmetratge es distingeix una panoràmica vertical descendent a l'escena 3. Primer es veu la cara de l'Aida i hi ha la panoràmica vertical perquè es vegi que és el que està mirant dins la caixa. En aquest cas, la panoràmica té una funció narrativa i descriptiva. També n'hi ha una altra a l'escena 12 i 13, és una panoràmica horitzontal utilitzada com a recurs transició.

### 3.3.2 El tràveling

És un moviment en el qual la càmera es desplaça sobre un peu mòbil que s'anomena carro i que està muntat sobre uns rails. També es pot desplaçar a mà, sobre un cotxe o amb una grua depenent del tipus de tràveling. En aquest cas, sí que canvia la distància focal. Cal destacar que no és el mateix el tràveling que el zoom. En el tràveling és la càmera la que va cap a l'objecte o personatge, en canvi, el zoom es fa amb la càmera quieta. S'ha d'intentar evitar el zoom perquè quan s'utilitza, es comprimeix la imatge i canvia la qualitat.



Tràveling lateral

Hi ha diferents tipus de tràveling depenent cap on es mogui la càmera. El tràveling de seguiment és quan la càmera segueix un subjecte just a darrere seu. En el tràveling lateral, la càmera acompanya paral·lelament el desplaçament d'un personatge. En el tràveling de profunditat d'avançament, la càmera es trasllada d'un punt llunyà a un de proper i en el tràveling de profunditat en retrocés, es trasllada d'un punt proper a un de

llunyà. El *tràveling aeri* és quan la càmera segueix des d'un punt de vista elevat en l'aire a un personatge. El *tràveling circular*, la càmera gira al voltant del personatge i aquest no es mou.

En el meu curtmetratge no hi ha gaires *tràvelings* perquè no disposava del material suficient per poder muntar-ne un. Només els podia fer amb la càmera en mà però la imatge quedava molt moguda i només vaig utilitzar aquest recurs en algun cas excepcional.

### 3.4 L'angulació

L'angulació fa referència a la posició de la càmera respecte al subjecte. L'angulació normal és quan la càmera està perpendicular als ulls del personatge. En l'angulació en picat, la càmera se situa més amunt que el personatge i serveix per empètir el subjecte, transmetre inferioritat, submissió o aclapament. També es pot utilitzar per presentar millor un personatge o multitud de persones. En l'angulació en contrapicat, la càmera enregistra de baix cap a dalt i li dóna més valor expressiu. En l'angle inclinat, la càmera s'inclina lateralment i expressa inestabilitat, inquietud i inseguretat. És un angle poc utilitzat.

### 3.5 Els elements bàsics del rodatge

Durant el rodatge hi ha certs aspectes que cal tenir en compte. La bateria de la càmera ha d'estar ben carregada. Durant el rodatge s'ha de tenir en mà el guió i la planificació. És el moment en què es posa a prova el guió i la planificació, per tant s'ha de controlar si els plans proposats *a priori* i tots els elements del rodatge funcionen en el moment de la gravació. Hi ha d'haver un pla de situació que serveixi per presentar l'espai en el qual es desenvoluparà l'acció i sol ser un pla general. Es necessiten plans mitjans que mostrin els personatges i primers plans de les persones que duen a terme l'acció principal. Els altres plans que es poden utilitzar s'anomenen plans de recurs, com per exemple els primeríssims plans, plans de detall o les panoràmiques. Aquests plans poden estar relacionats amb algun detall o informació rellevant o ser simplement un pla per interrompre la possible monotonia dels altres plans. Els plans d'inserció són plans que

ajuden a seguir el fil de la narració i poden actuar també de transició entre diferents plans, escenes o seqüències; per exemple un primer pla d'un rellotge. Durant el rodatge també és útil anotar els canvis que es duen a terme a l'ordre de rodatge per quan es faci el muntatge.

Com que era el primer cop que rodava un curtmetratge, em vaig trobar amb alguns imprevistos, detalls que no tenia controlats i que modifiquen el ritme de rodatge. Els primers dies no tenia gaire control de la càmera i el trípod i vaig tardar més temps del previst a gravar les escenes previstes pels dos primers dies, però a poc a poc vaig anar agafant agilitat i el rodatge va funcionar correctament segons la planificació prèvia.

### 3.6 La direcció

El director és el que pren les decisions, el que s'ocupa dels aspectes administratius i ordena i controla tot l'equip. Segons *Adrià Massanet*, autor del blog [www.blogdecine.com](http://www.blogdecine.com) afirma que hi ha quatre tipus de directors. Els primers són els directors-guionistes que elaboren i controlen tots els aspectes de la pel·lícula, elaboren ells el guió. Els directors-coguionistes que no elaboren ells el guió, simplement participen en el procés. Els directors-escriptors considera que són els que, sense acreditació, durant el rodatge o preproducció aporten idees crucials i solucionen molts problemes. Per acabar, *Massanet* distingeix els directors que no escriuen, simplement dirigeixen guions aliens. La majoria dels directors principiants estan a la primera categoria.

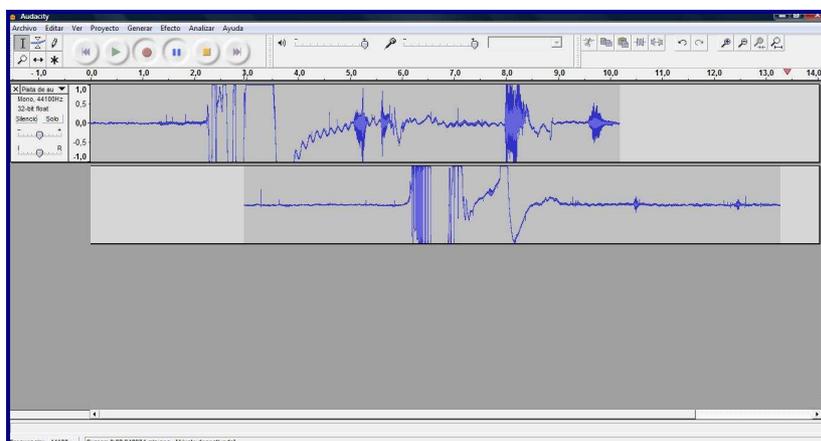
Hi ha cinc virtuts a destacar d'un director. Visió, per transportar idees en imatges i de forma creativa. Organització, ha de vetllar perquè tot l'equip estigui al lloc que li toca. Diplomàcia i comunicació, ha de tractar bé a la gent perquè facin tot el que s'els hi diu però sense que se sentin manats. Coneixement, ha de conèixer bé totes les bases de la producció de la pel·lícula i així preveure els problemes. Per últim, ha de tenir humilitat per fer amb excel·lència totes les funcions anteriors.

La meva funció dins del rodatge va més enllà de la direcció. No tenia cap persona especialitzada que m'ajudés. Era jo l'encarregada de controlar la il·luminació, el so, el vestuari i el maquillatge. No tenia cap persona subordinada que m'ajudés, tot depenia de mi.

## 4. La postproducció

### 4.1 La veu en *off*

La veu en *off* és un dels punts claus en el meu curtmetratge. Fa la funció de narrador, és el fil conductor de la història. Cobra més importància la veu en *off* que el diàleg, ja que aquest és gairebé nul. La veu la trobem bàsicament al començament i al final de la història. Al començament ens presenta la protagonista i al final ens explica el desenllaç i la situació de la protagonista al cap d'un any. La veu en *off* la vaig enregistrar a part, després del rodatge. Ho vaig fer amb el programa d'àudio *Audacity*.



Programa Audacity

### 4.2 El so

Sovint oblidem que el cinema és el resultat de la meravellosa mescla d'imatges i sons. És important el tractament i la qualitat del so. Les càmeres domèstiques solen dur incorporat un micròfon omnidireccional, és a dir, un micròfon que capta el so provinent de totes les direccions igual. Si es vol aconseguir un so excel·lent sense sorolls de fons, s'ha d'utilitzar un micròfon unidireccional. Aquests micròfons són independents i potencien els sons del davant i suprimeixen el soroll de fons. S'han de connectar a la càmera a l'entrada *MIC* o utilitzar adaptadors de connexions si la càmera no disposa d'entrada.

Tot i que els micròfons unidireccionals t'aporten un so més nítid i de millor qualitat, em vaig veure obligada a utilitzar el micròfon omnidireccional que porta incorporat la meua càmera. No disposava de cap micròfon unidireccional. El micròfon omnidireccional enregistra els sons de totes direccions i no és gaire apropiat per gravar diàlegs a l'exterior, per sort, no havia de gravar gaires diàlegs exteriors. El micròfon omnidireccional però, em va ser útil per enregistrar el que es coneix com a so ambiental, com per exemple l'escena del dinar o la que l'Aida està amb les amigues. Per la veu en *off* vaig fer servir un altre micròfon. La vaig enregistrar amb el micròfon *Singstar* del joc de la *Play Station*. És un tipus de micròfon omnidireccional que vaig connectar directament a l'ordinador. Amb uns quants retocs amb el programa d'edició d'àudio *Audicity*, vaig poder aconseguir un so bastant òptim.



Diferents tipus de micròfons unidireccionals

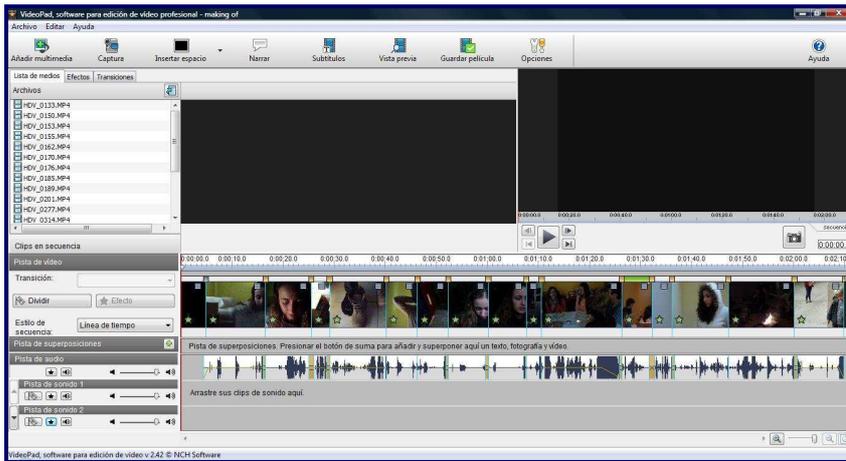


Micròfons del Singstar

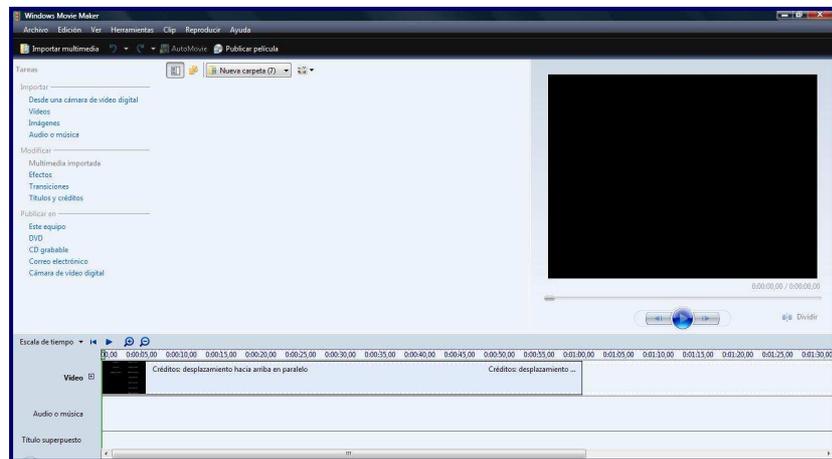
### 4.3 El muntatge

En el muntatge se seleccionen i uneixen tots els plans rodats segons el guió. En el moment del muntatge és quan s'observa si el curt té el ritme i cadència adequats per fer que el públic estigui atenent. S'han de saber dosificar els silencis, el clímax i els diàlegs. A l'hora de fer el muntatge cal tenir en compte les regles bàsiques i el tipus de muntatge.

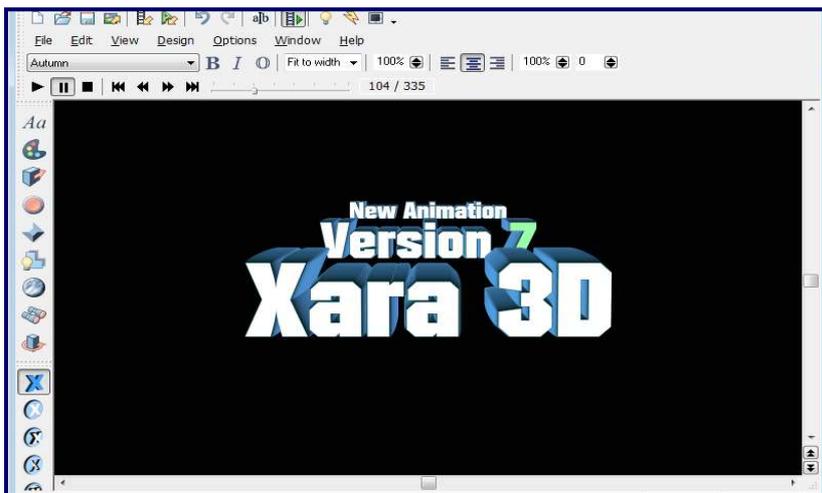
Per fer el muntatge vaig utilitzar el programa d'edició de vídeos *Video Pad*. Em van recomanar un programa que es diu *Adobe Premiere* però no era compatible al meu ordinador i em vaig haver d'adaptar i utilitzar un programa més senzill. També vaig utilitzar el *Windows Movie Maker* per fer els crèdits i el *Xara 3D Maker 7* per crear un títol en moviment i en 3D.



Programa d'edició de vídeo, VideoPad



Programa d'edició de vídeo, Windows Movie Maker



Programa per editar lletres en 3D i en moviment

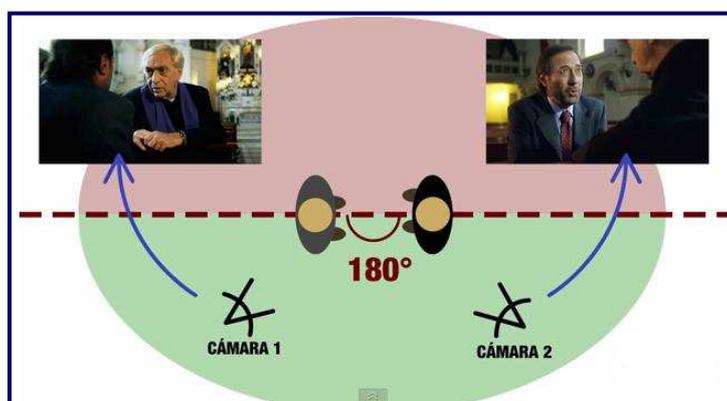
### 4.3.1 La regla de graduació d'escala

La regla de graduació d'escala és una regla senzilla però que sinó se segueix pot crear confusió. Després d'un gran pla general no es pot passar directament a un primeríssim pla, s'han d'intercalar plans d'escala intermèdia entre els dos per evitar un salt tan gran. Això no vol dir que estigui prohibit combinar aquests plans tan extrems. A vegades els podem veure combinats amb una finalitat narrativa concreta però sempre tenint en compte que sigui intel·ligible pels espectadors.

### 4.3.2 Els eixos i la regla dels 180°

Abans de poder aplicar la regles dels eixos, cal saber què és un eix. Un eix és una línia imaginària que uneix dos punts. Hi ha diferents tipus d'eixos. L'eix d'acció és aquell que uneix la persona amb l'acció que està fent, aquest eix engloba tots els eixos següents. L'eix de mirada és entre els ulls de qui mira i què mira. L'eix de moviment és el que uneix el personatge amb el moviment que realitza. Per últim, l'eix de desplaçament és el trajecte que realitza un personatge cap a un punt concret.

Cal aplicar la regla dels 180° quan la càmera que estava gravant a un extrem de l'eix passa a l'altre. S'aplica aquesta regla per evitar que l'espectador es perdi en l'espai. Per exemple, en una conversació, l'eix d'acció uneix dos personatges situats un a cada extrem de l'eix d'acció. Primer es veu un dels dos personatges de cara i l'altre d'esquena però sempre han d'aparèixer els dos perquè si no sembla que no parlin entre ells. Pel què fa la càmera, s'ha de col·locar de tal manera que una persona estigui sempre a la dreta i l'altre sempre a l'esquerra per donar a entendre que s'estan mirant. Per aconseguir aquest efecte s'ha de col·locar la càmera sempre a la dreta o a l'esquerra de la línia d'eix.



Regla dels 180° en una conversació

### 4.3.3 Els tipus de muntatge des del punt de vista expressiu

Es distingeix el muntatge continu i discontinu. El muntatge continu és quant es fa una reconstrucció en temps real i el muntatge discontinu quant hi ha una el·lipsis en el temps; es redueix un espai de temps. Dins del muntatge discontinu hi ha altres tipus de muntatge. El muntatge en paral·lel, alterna accions que es comparen. El muntatge altern juxtaposa accions que tenen una correspondència temporal i que s'uneixen al final de la seqüència o del film. El flashback es produeix quan un pla suposa una tornada enrere en el temps. El muntatge d'anticipació encavalca sobre un pla els diàlegs o la música corresponents al pla següent. El muntatge rítmic accelera o alenteix el ritme real d'un esdeveniment. El muntatge de síntesi es fa una compressió en el pas del temps. El muntatge ideològic connecta plans que no tenen una relació física simplement de significat.

El muntatge del curtmetratge és un muntatge discontinu perquè hi petites el·lipsis al començament i una elipsis d'un any al final. També hi ha un flashback perquè quan l'Aida retorna al banc, representa que no ha passat el temps i que torna a ser el matí.

### 4.3.4 Els signes de puntuació

Són les connexions entre els diferents plans. Els signes principals són els següents. El tall en sec, quan es passa directament d'un pla a un altre sense cap altre recurs intermedi. La fosa en negre quan la imatge es va dissolent fins que la pantalla arriba al negre total i causa sensació de tancament o de finalització entre dos períodes de temps. L'obertura en negre, a partir d'una pantalla en negre va sorgint lentament la imatge fins que es veu clarament. Pot significar l'inici d'una narració o seqüència si s'utilitza després d'una fosa en negre. L'encadenament o fosa encadenada és quant una imatge es va difuminant i simultàniament en va apareixent un altre de forma progressiva, se superposen en un moment determinat. És un sistema de puntuació suau. La cortineta esdevé quan la imatge que entra va desplaçant la imatge que hi havia cap a una banda de la pantalla

## 4.4 La banda sonora

La música, en un curtmetratge o pel·lícula s'utilitza per realçar el què es vol transmetre i crear una atmosfera determinada. El tipus de música dependrà del tipus de pel·lícula o del que es vol expressar cada moment. Una pel·lícula sense música s'ens faria molt estranya, la música és necessària però s'ha de saber en quin moment cal utilitzar-la o quan s'en pot prescindir.

La banda sonora que vaig escollir jo està formada per dues cançons que es van alternant. La que sona a la seqüència 1, 2, 9 i 10 és *Old Pine* de *Ben Howard*. Em va resultar difícil trobar un tema que s'ajustés a aquestes escenes. Per la seqüència 1 i 2 volia que se sentís una melodia lenta i suau que representés el matí i és un moment del dia íntim i tranquil. Per la seqüència 9 i 10 volia que fos una mica més alegre perquè representa el futur quant la situació de l'Aida ha canviat i se sent feliç. Aquesta cançó em va semblar oportuna perquè comença amb una melodia de piano lenta i amb unes veus de fons que recreen aquest ambient romàntic i íntim de les primeres escenes; a mitja cançó s'introdueix la veu del cantant i la melodia agafa un to més alegre i desenfadat però suau poder adaptar la música amb la veu en *off*. Utilitzo aquest tema musical per acompanyar la veu en *off*, el diàleg i les accions dels personatges que prenen més importància que la música.

La cançó que sona a la seqüència 3 i 4 és una versió de la cançó *Wonderwall* d'*Oasis* interpretada per *Ryan Adams*. Aquest tema el tenia molt clar perquè la lletra de la cançó descriu tal com se sent l'Aida, la vaig escollir pensant en la lletra, volia que agafés el protagonisme de l'escena. Vaig escollir la versió de *Ryan Adams* perquè és més lenta que l'original i li dóna un to més malenconiós i trist. Si observem la lletra, veiem com expressa aquesta sensació que té l'Aida que ningú l'entén "*I do not believe that anybody feels the way I do about you now*" que en català vol dir "*No crec que ningú senti el mateix que jo ara sento per tu*". Aquesta impotència que sent de no poder expressar-li tot el que sent perquè ell ja no hi és ho podem veure reflectit quan diu "*There are many things that I would like to say to you but I do not know how*" que en català es tradueix "*Hi ha tantes coses que m'agradaria dir-te però no sé com*". Aquesta cançó potser no parla explícitament d'una persona que ja no hi sigui però en el context que l'utilitzo jo faig que agafi aquesta significació.

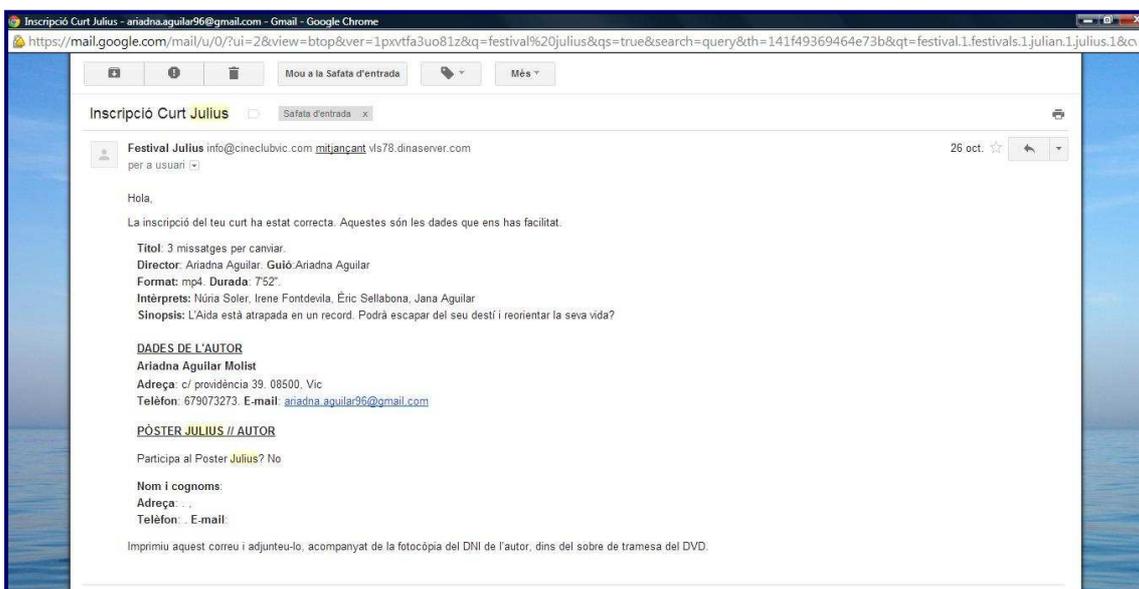
## 5. El curtmétratge: 3 missatges per canviar

### 5.1 El perquè del títol

El títol del curtmétratge és “3 missatges per canviar”. Els tres missatges representen els tres retrobaments de l’Aida amb els tres espectres del passat, present i futur. Cada un li dona un missatge per fer-li obrir els ulls i adonar-se que la vida segueix i que ha de trobar les forces per seguir endavant i tornar a ser feliç.

### 5.2 Incripció al Festival Julius

Vaig acabar el curtmétratge el 26 d’octubre, pocs dies abans que es tanqués el termini per enviar-los a l’organització del festival. Primer vaig inscriure’m al festival. Un cop confirmada que la incripció era correcta, vaig haver d’omplir una fitxa d’inscripció, gravar el curtmétratge en un CD en format H264 i enviar-lo per correu certificat.



Confirmació per correu de l’inscripció al concurs.

### 5.2 La sinopsis

Quan vaig enviar el curtmétratge al festival em van demanar que redactés una sinopsis que és la següent: “ l’Aida està atrapada en un record. Podrà escapar del seu destí i reorientar la seva vida?” La imatge la vaig extreure del curtmétratge.



**3 missatges per canviar**

**Direcció** Ariadna Aguilar

**Intèrprets** Núria Soler, Irene Fontdevila, Èric Sellabona, Jana Aguilar

L'Aida està atrapada en un record. Podrà escapar del seu destí i reorientar la seva vida? **7' 52"**

*Sinopsis, títol, intèrprets, duració i imatge promocional del curtmetratge.*

### 5.3 L'estrena final

Finalment, el 23 de novembre, van informar-me que el curtmetratge havia estat seleccionat participar en el concurs i projectar-se a l'Espai de Teatre i Cinema - ETC de Vic. Al cap de dues setmanes van publicar a la web [www.festivaljuli.com](http://www.festivaljuli.com) els horaris de projeccions de tots els 31 curtmetratges presentats a concurs i els altres actes i activitats que formaven part del festival [annex II].

El festival va ser un èxit. Hi va haver produccions de tots els gèneres: terror, animació, comèdia, reportatge... El nivell era molt elevat. Al entrar a la sala, et donaven un paper amb el nom de tots els curtmetratges presentats i un cop els havies vist, havies de votar-ne dos pel premi del públic Pitet de Baba.



## 6. Conclusions

Puc concloure que els objectius inicials s'han complert. He creat un curtmetratge i l'he presentat al festival *Julius*. Els objectius secundaris també s'han vist assolits, ja que he estat molt metòdica i he seguit tots els passos de la preproducció, producció i muntatge.

Tot el que he fet, ho he fet partint de zero, els meus coneixements del món audiovisual eren gairebé nuls. No podia partir de l'experiència perquè mai havia fet res en aquest nivell de professionalitat, havia de guiar-me a partir de la informació dels llibres i d'internet. Les eines tècniques (càmera, llums, micròfons...) de les quals disposava no em podien aportar la professionalitat suficient i em vaig haver d'adaptar a elles i treure'ls-hi el màxim de profit. Durant el muntatge em van sorgir molts problemes informàtics que em van fer endarrerir molt la feina. Com a conseqüència, el resultat final no ha estat ben bé l'esperat. Potser les meves expectatives eren una mica idealistes però a vegades, per molt que preparis molt bé el projecte, pot ser que els resultats que obtinguis no es corresponguin al 100% al què haves imaginat prèviament. Però és normal perquè una cosa és la imaginació i l'altre la realitat, s'ha de tenir molta intuïció per evitar que això no passi. En tot cas, el públic, l'únic que veu és el resultat final, la història i fa els seus judicis en base aquesta. Sóc jo l'única que sap tot el que s'hi amaga darrere del curtmetratge. Tot i així, cal dir que estic satisfeta del resultat, he après moltes coses i he pogut observar com es viu el món audiovisual des de molt a prop.

Per altra banda, els meus interrogants s'han resolt. Com he exposat a la introducció, em preguntava els passos a seguir per crear una producció audiovisual, si cal una planificació prèvia, quantes persones hi treballen o fins a quin punt és important la interpretació dels actors. Ara puc afirmar que els passos a seguir són: la preproducció, producció i rodatge. Tots són necessaris i imprescindibles. A la preproducció és on es fa la planificació i tot i ser el pas més discutible, considero que és inevitable. Pot ser una preproducció més detallada o menys, però sempre hi haurà una preparació mínima, ja que la preproducció s'inicia en el moment que et passa pel cap la primera idea, abans de gravar res has de pensar què gravaràs. Després ho has de gravar (producció) i finalment ajuntar-ho tot i donar vida al projecte (muntatge). Si et saltes algun pas, no obtindràs cap resultat. A més, la preproducció, és el pas clau, tot depèn d'aquesta. En el rodatge són moltes les coses que s'han de controlar i seria impossible

fer-ho sense un guió i una planificació prèvia, a més, en el rodatge i muntatge no es pot fer marxa enrere. Totes i cada una de les imatges de qualsevol projecte audiovisual estan pensades i deliberades anteriorment, tot té una raó de ser.

Pel que fa a les persones que hi treballen, com més gran sigui el projecte, més personal es necessitarà. Hi ha especialistes en il·luminació, so, fotografia, vestuari, decoració... que treballen pel director. Si hi intervenen aquest especialistes, hi ha més números que el resultat sigui millor. A més, el director no ho pot fer tot, ha de contractar treballadors que l'ajudin. En el meu cas, no ha estat possible disposar d'especialistes perquè no tenia pressupost i no m'ho podia permetre, però al ser un projecte de poques dimensions, he pogut ser autosuficient i encarregar-me de tots els aspectes.

Els actors són la cara visible de la pel·lícula o curtmetratge. Són també el reflex d'una bona planificació. S'ha de saber escollir els actors adequats, els que transmetin millor el missatge i connectin amb el públic. Han de dur a terme una interpretació sublim, són els que donen la cara al públic i aquest és molt exigent. Els actors de i actrius de 3 *missatges per canviar*, han transmès tot el que volia que transmetessin. En el curtmetratge hi ha moltes emocions, des de tristesa a felicitat, i penso que l'actriu principal ha sabut interpretar-les totes perfectament.

He pogut observar també, com d'importants són els detalls, donen versemblança a la història. S'han de controlar moltes coses en una pel·lícula, és la unió de molts elements que han de funcionar alhora i correctament. Ara puc entendre realment tot el que suposa fer una pel·lícula. Tot el desplegament que hi ha darrere és espectacular. Tot i així sempre s'ha d'estar a punt pels imprevistos perquè el cinema és un seguit d'imprevistos. Entre les càmeres, la gent va atrafegada, amunt i avall, és una cosa inevitable, hi ha com una pressió invisible perquè tot funcioni correctament. Si fer un curtmetratge de vuit minuts m'ha portat més de tres mesos de feina, fent alguns càlculs, obtinc que necessitaria trenta-tres mesos per fer una pel·lícula d'una hora i mitja... bé això és relatiu, ja que totes les pel·lícules són diferents, cada pel·lícula és un món.

Concloc que fer aquest treball ha sigut una experiència molt positiva. He après moltes coses noves i m'ha portat a fer profundes reflexions relacionades amb aquest món. Si ara tornés a fer el projecte, probablement canviaria moltes coses o ho faria diferent. He pogut aprendre dels errors. No crec que em dediqui al món audiovisual però aquest

treball m'ha aportat uns coneixements que sempre em seran útils. Aquest món no és només una professió. Estic segura que, al llarg de la meua vida, em dediqui al què em dediqui, hauré de fer vídeos i projectes audiovisuals perquè les noves tecnologies cada cop tenen un paper més important a les nostres vides.

## Agraïments

M'agradaria agrair a totes les persones que han dedicat i m'han ajudat a fer possible aquest treball. Per començar, vull donar les gràcies a la meua tutora per empènye'm a fer un curtmetratge i enviar-lo al concurs, per ajudar-me a definir clarament el projecte i pel suport incondicional que m'ha donat en tot moment. Vull agrair tot el que ha fet la Núria, sense ella, aquest curtmetratge no hagués estat possible. És difícil trobar una persona amb la paciència i ganes necessàries per col·laborar tantes hores en un projecte sense cap recompensa econòmica i ella no només ho ha fet, sinó que ho ha fet de forma impecable. La Raquel també ha estat una peça clau en aquest curtmetratge, la seves interpretacions múltiples i la seva ajuda durant tota la gravació ha fet que tot fos més fàcil. Gràcies a la Clàudia P. per encarnar el personatge de l'espectre i tenir la paciència necessària per repetir tants cops les preses. La Irene ha fet una interpretació molt realista per això vull donar-li les gràcies per contribuir a donar vida aquest personatge. Gràcies al més petit del repartiment, a l'Èric, no va ser fàcil gravar les seves seqüències però al final ho va fer perfecte. Moltes gràcies a la Graciela, l'Èrica i l'Íngrid per fer que l'escena final fos possible. També agraeixo molt sincerament el temps de la família Aguilar, amb les seves ganes i il·lusió vam poder recrear un dinar de Nadal molt versemblant tot i estar a ple estiu. M'agradaria donar les gràcies a la família Sellabona per obrir-me les portes del cementiri i donar-me la màxima llibertat i temps per gravar aquestes seqüències. Moltes gràcies a la Clàudia A. per donar so a la veu en *off*. Finalment vull agrair tota la informació que m'ha proporcionat l'Ariadna B. sobre els aspectes tècnics i teòrics del cinema.

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**DEL CONTE AL  
CURTMETRATGE**



**ANNEXOS**

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## **Annex I - Bases del Festival Julius 2013**

# Festival Julius 2013

CONCURS DE CURTMETRATGES

VIC, del 17 al 22 de desembre de 2013

## Bases

**1 Els treballs** presentats **han de ser originals**, creats expressament per a aquesta edició del festival. Només s'admetran obres produïdes íntegrament durant l'any 2013. Tots els guions s'han de basar en un tema obligatori, l'obra literària **Conte de Nadal**, de Charles Dickens.

**2 Les obres participants** no podran durar més de **10 minuts**, crèdits inclosos. Es pot presentar més d'un curtmetratge per autor.

**3** El format original de filmació **és lliure**. L'autor enviarà el curt en un arxiu **en H264** per al seu visionat. L'organització es posarà en contacte amb l'autor per sol·licitar el format de projecció.

**4** Els participants poden presentar-se a l'apartat **Cartell Julius**, que valorarà la millor obra gràfica. Els treballs han de ser originals i la **tècnica d'execució és lliure**. S'han de presentar sobre paper en format estàndard **DIN A2** i muntat sobre un suport de cartró ploma.

Cada curtmetratge podrà presentar **un únic cartell** al festival. El curtmetratge i el cartell podran ser d'autors diferents, però s'hauran d'identificar en la mateixa fitxa d'inscripció.

**5** Cal fer la inscripció al web **festivaljulius.com** i adjuntar una imatge de promoció del curtmetratge.

**6 El termini** per a la presentació dels curtmetratges i dels cartells és el **31 d'octubre de 2013**.

**Els curtmetratges** s'han d'enviar juntament amb una còpia de la fitxa d'inscripció i una fotocòpia del DNI de l'autor per correu certificat a: Cine Club Vic · Apartat de correus 91 · 08500 Vic

**Els cartells** s'han d'enviar juntament amb còpia impresa de la fitxa d'inscripció i una fotocòpia del DNI de l'autor a: Escola d'Art i Superior de Disseny de Vic · Consergeria · Rambla Sant Domènec, 24 · 08500 Vic · Horari: de 9h a 13h, i de 16h a 20h.

L'organització no es fa responsable dels desperfectes que es puguin ocasionar degut al transport.

**7 L'organització farà una selecció** dels curtmetratges presentats en base als criteris de qualitat tècnica i adaptació del tema obligatori. Les còpies presentades al festival passaran a ser propietat de l'organització i formaran part de l'arxiu de Cineclub Vic.

**8** Els autors dels cartells podran recollir la seva obra **a l'espai ETC** en el termini d'un mes, a partir del 23 de desembre de 2013.

**9 La llista de seleccionats** es publicarà al web **festivaljulius.com** i es comunicarà als participants per correu electrònic **el 23 de novembre de 2013**.

**10** El festival es celebrarà a Vic **del 17 al 22 de desembre de 2013** a l'Espai **ETC** (Passeig de la Generalitat, 46).

**11 Les obres presentades** no es poden exhibir ni difondre públicament abans de la celebració del festival. L'incompliment d'aquesta clàusula serà motiu de desqualificació.

## 12 Premis Julius 2013:

**Gran Premi Julius Ciutat de Vic** al millor curtmetratge, dotat amb **2.000 €**

**Premi Bis-B** al segon millor curtmetratge, dotat amb **1.000 €**

**Premi Orson Welles** per la qualitat tècnica, dotat amb **300 €**

**Premi Jaume Esteve** a la millor interpretació, dotat amb **300 €**

**Premi del públic Pitet de Baba**, dotat amb **300 €**

**Premi Miquel Porter i Moix** dels cineclubs catalans, dotat amb **300 €**

**Premi Sert o no Sert** al millor cartell, dotat amb **300 €**

**13 Els jurats designats** per l'organització fallaran tots els premis, excepte el Premi Pitet de Baba que atorga el públic, i podran concedir una menció especial sense dotació econòmica. També podran resoldre premis *ex-aequo*, o declarar-los deserts.

**14 La decisió dels jurats** es farà pública durant els actes de clausura del festival.

**15** Els participants **cedeixen gratuïtament els drets d'exhibició** dels curtmetratges seleccionats durant 2 mesos, a partir del 23 de desembre de 2013.

**16 Els participants es responsabilitzen** de possibles reclamacions de drets de tercers en les obres presentades.

**17 L'organització del festival** es reserva el dret de resoldre qualsevol eventualitat no especificada a les bases.

**18 Presentar-se al festival** suposa la total acceptació d'aquestes bases.

Organitza

cineclub vic

Patrocina

Ajuntament de Vic

INSTITUCIÓ PUIG - PORRET  
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Annex II – Fulletó del Festival Julius 2013

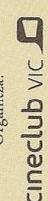
# Festival Julius 2013

## Concurs de curtmetratges

Vic, del 17 al 22 de desembre  
11a edició



*Un conte de Nadal*

Organitza:  



ESPAI DE TEATRE I CINEMA ETC  
 Passeig de la Generalitat, 46  
 BIBLIOTECA JOAN TRIADU  
 Carrer de l'Arquebisbe Alemany, 5

### Jurat

				
Presidenta del jurat. Directora de cinema. Ha realitzat films com <i>El domini dels santissos</i> o <i>Elisa K</i> .	Escriptor, periodista, compositor i cineasta. Director de <i>Ventre Blanc</i> .	Professora i periodista cinematogràfica. Responsable del Diari del Festival de Sitges.	Marketing i comunicació al Festival de Sitges.	Responsable de programació de la Federació Catalana de Cineclubs.

## Projecció dels curtmetratges

**Divendres 20 de desembre** | Espai de Teatre i Cinema ETC  
 CURTMETRATGES JULIUS 2013  
 20h | Primera part | 22.30h | Segona part

**Dissabte 21 de desembre** | Espai de Teatre i Cinema ETC  
 CURTMETRATGES JULIUS 2013  
 16h | Primera part | 20h | Primera part  
 18h | Segona part | 22h | Segona part  
 23.30h | Trobada de directors. Benvingut Mr. Julius

**Diumenge 22 de desembre** | Espai de Teatre i Cinema ETC  
 17h | Cerimònia de lliurament de premis i clausura del Festival

Totes les activitats són gratuïtes

Organitza:



Parrocina:














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III

# Curtmetratges Julius 2013

## Primera part

Divendres 20 | 20h  
Dissabte 21 | 16h i 20h



**25 d'agost fum, fum, fum**  
Direcció: Angel Solà  
Intèrprets: Cesc Pérez, Salvador Marrell, Arnau Galindo, Taro, Pau Viladell, 5'45"



**3 missatges per canviar**  
Direcció: Ariadna Aguilar  
Intèrprets: Núria Soler, Irene Fontdevila, Eric Sellabona, Jana Aguilà, 7'52"



**Adaptació d'Un conte de Nadal** | Direcció: Jordi Crusats  
Intèrprets: Marel Gausa, Mercè Estrada, Jordi Homs, Ferran Arcarons, 8'



**Agnus Dei**  
Direcció: Joanot Cortés, 5'55"



**Amàlia**  
Direcció: Mireia Vilamala  
Intèrprets: Montse Girbau, Víctor Torres, Bet Serra, Ennald Rià, Teresa Verdaguier, Xevi Rià, etc. 7'51"



**Anyone**  
Direcció: James J. Wilson  
Intèrprets: Antonella Michetti, Lorena Franco, 6'



**Bestiari Vigarà (Fum, Fum, Fum)**  
Direcció: Albert Bagué  
Intèrprets: Txavius Taxus Indanate, Albert Bagué, Roger Codina, etc. 8'



**Bon Nadal, Senyor Escroçgella**  
Direcció: Albert i Nina Altés  
Intèrprets: Albert Altés Segura i Nina Altés Vila, 9'27"



**Canción de Navidad**  
Direcció: Pepe Caldeias  
Intèrprets: Blanca García, Txema Lorente, Marc Betriu, María Berrío, etc. 10'



**Canta in el nadal**  
Direcció: Arrús Roca i Abel Reyes | Intèrprets: Jordi Gas, Galdric Plana, Hector Mignel, Montse Tibau, Elok Vallmajor, Marióna Arenas, etc. 9'



**Ciutat March**  
Direcció: Joan Bover  
Intèrprets: Pere Ferrer, Joan Francesc March, 9'15"



**Conte de Nadal**  
Direcció: Irene Sola  
Intèrprets: Tia Lindström, 3'24"



**Copying Julius**  
Direcció: M. Carme Vives  
Intèrprets: Miriam Valldaura, Cesc Pérez, Pep Almerich, Guilfré Cola i Mè Carme Vives, 8'



**El de Nadal conte!**  
Direcció: Albert Salariach  
Intèrprets: Eli Llauradó, Núria Casà, Miquel Civilleres, Paco Escobar, Toni Gil, Lluís Vilardell, Josep Quero, 7'50"

## Segona part

Divendres 20 | 22:30h  
Dissabte 21 | 18h i 22h



**El dia més feliç de les nostres vides**  
Direcció: David Aragall  
Intèrprets: Júlia Mairades, Anna Mairades, 3'



**Entrecuento de Navidad**  
Direcció: Toni Pinel  
Intèrprets: Mía Puig, Oriol Agell, Isaac Galofré, 10'



**Ghostly**  
Direcció: Orió Peñalver i Eric Montegudo | Animació  
Veus: Greda Ortiz, Orió Peñalver i Eric Montegudo, 3'40"



**I**  
Direcció: Anna Pont, Jordi Conas i Marc Ribà-Rovira  
Intèrprets: Carles Salas, 6'



**La Visita**  
Direcció: Anna Parcerisas i Elisenda Guàrdia  
Intèrprets: Joan Anguera, Guillem Rico, Maria Parramón, Maria Oriol, Antoni Font, etc. 10'



**Niemand**  
Direcció: Joan Puig  
Intèrprets: Sara Serra, Elisabet Maren, Elisenda Oms, Berta Balbu, 10'



**Noël**  
Direcció: Ricard Parra  
Intèrprets: Adolf, Fridel, Darrh, Andy, 2'30"



**Quan arriba la mort**  
Direcció: Mía Puig  
Intèrprets: Josep Ma Rabio, Aureli Quintana, Lluís Gil Pares, Romi Pares, Ariadna Lorent, Pili Barceló, Joana Puig, Mercè Masnou, etc. 10'



**Ruth**  
Direcció: Víctor Quintero  
Intèrprets: Marta Parramón, Joan Koutra, 10'



**Santa Innocència**  
Direcció: David Conill  
Intèrprets: Domènec de Guzman, Albert Salariach, Pepe Caldeias, Pevi, Silvia Nogueras, Marc Freixenet, Xevi Font, etc. 9'30"



**Scrooge**  
Direcció: Antoni Serrat  
Intèrprets: Yinyet Vinas, Maria Rabionet, Xevi Cunill, 4'42"



**The Kumba Mela Carol**  
Direcció: Jordi Casadevall, 5'55"



**Traum**  
Direcció: Esteve Sunyol  
Intèrprets: Núria Loan, Esteve Sunyol, 4'42"



**Un centum de Scrooge**  
Direcció: Josep Calle  
Animació, 4'



**Una vida...**  
Direcció: Ernest Altés, 6'30"



**Xmas Gift**  
Direcció: E. Carea i Ivo Oliveras  
Intèrprets: Robert J. Raubert, Eloi Berenguer, Olaf Ruiz, Dany Terri Lanut, Genís Jové, etc. 10'

## **Annex III – A Christmas Carol**

### **A Christmas Carol - Charles Dickens**

#### Chapter 1 - Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is 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 upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

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 residuary 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 solemnised it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot -- say Saint Paul's Churchyard for instance -- literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the ware-house door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and 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.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows,

and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often came down handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you. When will you come to see me." No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blindmen's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call nuts to Scrooge.

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 only just gone three, but it was quite dark already: it had not been light all day: and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

``Bah!" said Scrooge, ``Humbug!"

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

``Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. ``You don't mean that, I am sure."

``I do," said Scrooge. ``Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? what reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

``Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. ``What right have you to be dismal? what reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said, ``Bah!" again; and followed it up with ``Humbug."

``Don't be cross, uncle," said the nephew.

``What else can I be," returned the uncle, ``when I live in such a world of fools as this Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas. What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge indignantly, ``every idiot who goes about with ``Merry Christmas" on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

``Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

``Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, ``keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

``Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. ``But you don't keep it."

``Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. ``Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

``There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say," returned the nephew: ``Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round -- apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that -- as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other

journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

"Let me hear another sound from you," said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow."

Scrooge said that he would see him -- yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. "Good afternoon!"

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And A Happy New Year!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greeting of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

“There's another fellow,” muttered Scrooge; who overheard him: “my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.”

This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

“Scrooge and Marley's, I believe,” said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. “Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr Scrooge, or Mr Marley?”

“Mr Marley has been dead these seven years,” Scrooge replied. “He died seven years ago, this very night.”

“We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner,” said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word “liberality”, Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

“At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge,” said the gentleman, taking up a pen, “it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.”

“Are there no prisons?” asked Scrooge.

“Plenty of prisons,” said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

“And the Union workhouses?” demanded Scrooge. “Are they still in operation?”

“They are. Still,” returned the gentleman, “I wish I could say they were not.”

“The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?” said Scrooge.

“Both very busy, sir.”

“Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,” said Scrooge. “I'm very glad to hear it.”

“Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude,” returned the gentleman, “a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?”

“Nothing!” Scrooge replied.

``You wish to be anonymous?"

``I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. ``Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there."

``Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

``If they would rather die," said Scrooge, ``they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides -- excuse me -- I don't know that."

``But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

``It's not my business," Scrooge returned. ``It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the main street, at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug being left in solitude, its overflowings sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp-heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' and grocers' trades became a splendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and bloodthirsty in the streets, stirred up tomorrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed

by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of God bless you, merry gentleman! May nothing you dismay! Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

“You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?” said Scrooge.

“If quite convenient, Sir.”

“It's not convenient,” said Scrooge, “and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I 'll be bound?”

The clerk smiled faintly.

“And yet,” said Scrooge, “you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.”

The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

“A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!” said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. “But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!”

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's buff.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands. The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and

morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the City of London, even including -- which is a bold word -- the corporation, aldermen, and livery. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven-year's dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air; and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He did pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he **did** look cautiously behind it first, as if he half expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said ``Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs, slowly too: trimming his candle as he went.

You may talk vaguely about driving a coach-and-six up a good old flight of stairs, or through a bad young Act of Parliament; but I mean to say you might have got a hearse up that staircase, and taken it broadwise, with the splinter-bar towards the wall and the door towards the balustrades: and done it easy. There was plenty of width for that, and room to spare; which is perhaps the reason why Scrooge thought he saw a locomotive hearse going on before him in the gloom. Half-a-dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that: darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bed-room, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge has a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his night-cap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel. The fireplace was an old one, built by some Dutch merchant long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels, Pharaoh's daughters, Queens of Sheba, Angelic messengers descending through the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apostles putting off to sea in butter-boats, hundreds of figures to attract his thoughts; and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead, came like the ancient Prophet's rod, and swallowed up the whole. If each smooth tile had been a blank at first, with power to shape some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a copy of old Marley's head on every one.

“Humbug!” said Scrooge; and walked across the room.

After several turns, he sat down again. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

“It's humbug still!” said Scrooge. “I won't believe it.”

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, “I know him! Marley's Ghost!” and fell again.

The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights, and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.

“How now!” said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. “What do you want with me?”

“Much!” -- Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

“Who are you?”

“Ask me who I was.”

“Who were you then.” said Scrooge, raising his voice. “You're particular, for a shade.” He was going to say “to a shade,” but substituted this, as more appropriate.

“In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.”

“Can you -- can you sit down?” asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

“I can.”

“Do it, then.”

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

“You don't believe in me,” observed the Ghost.

“I don't,” said Scrooge.

“What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?”

“I don't know,” said Scrooge.

“Why do you doubt your senses?”

“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!”

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, staring at those fixed, glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

“You see this toothpick?” said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from himself.

“I do,” replied the Ghost.

“You are not looking at it,” said Scrooge.

“But I see it,” said the Ghost, “notwithstanding.”

“Well!” returned Scrooge, “I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you; humbug!”

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear in-doors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

“Mercy!” he said. “Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?”

“Man of the worldly mind!” replied the Ghost, “do you believe in me or not?”

“I do,” said Scrooge. “I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?”

“It is required of every man,” the Ghost returned, “that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world -- oh, woe is me! -- and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!”

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain, and wrung its shadowy hands.

“You are fettered,” said Scrooge, trembling. “Tell me why?”

“I wear the chain I forged in life,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?”

Scrooge trembled more and more.

“Or would you know,” pursued the Ghost, “the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!”

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

“Jacob,” he said, imploringly. “Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.”

“I have none to give,” the Ghost replied. “It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more, is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house -- mark me! -- in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

“You must have been very slow about it, Jacob,” Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deference.

“Slow!” the Ghost repeated.

“Seven years dead,” mused Scrooge. “And travelling all the time?”

“The whole time,” said the Ghost. “No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.”

“You travel fast?” said Scrooge.

“On the wings of the wind,” replied the Ghost.

“You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years,” said Scrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night, that the Ward would have been justified in indicting it for a nuisance.

“Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,” cried the phantom, “not to know, that ages of incessant labour by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

“At this time of the rolling year,” the spectre said, “I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me!”

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

“Hear me!” cried the Ghost. “My time is nearly gone.”

“I will,” said Scrooge. “But don't be hard upon me! Don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!”

“How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.”

It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

“That is no light part of my penance,” pursued the Ghost. “I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.”

“You were always a good friend to me,” said Scrooge. “Thank’ee!”

“You will be haunted,” resumed the Ghost, “by Three Spirits.”

Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done.

“Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?” he demanded, in a faltering voice.

“It is.”

“I -- I think I'd rather not,” said Scrooge.

“Without their visits,” said the Ghost, “you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls One.”

“Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?” hinted Scrooge.

“Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us.”

When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scrooge knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together by the bandage. He ventured to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open.

It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and

regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose; went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

## Chapter 2 - The First of the Three Spirits

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve!

He touched the spring of his repeater, to correct this most preposterous clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve: and stopped.

"Why, it isn't possible," said Scrooge, "that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!"

The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day, and taken possession of the world. This was a great relief, because "three days after sight of this First of Exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order," and so forth, would have become a mere United States' security if there were no days to count by.

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought it over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavoured not to think, the more he thought Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly. Every time he resolved within himself, after mature inquiry, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through, "Was it a dream or not?"

Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three quarters more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was past; and, considering that he could no more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was perhaps the wisest resolution in his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter past," said Scrooge, counting.

"Ding, dong!"

"Half past!" said Scrooge.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter to it," said Scrooge.

"Ding, dong!"

"The hour itself," said Scrooge, triumphantly, "and nothing else!"

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

It was a strange figure -- like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was not its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

“Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?” asked Scrooge.

“I am!”

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

“Who, and what are you?” Scrooge demanded.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.”

“Long past?” inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

“No. Your past.”

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

“What!” exclaimed the Ghost, “would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!”

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend or any knowledge of having wilfully bonneted the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

“Your welfare!” said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

“Your reclamation, then. Take heed!”

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

“Rise! and walk with me!”

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped his robe in supplication.

“I am mortal,” Scrooge remonstrated, “and liable to fall.”

“Bear but a touch of my hand there,” said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, “and you shall be upheld in more than this!”

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground. “Good Heaven!” said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. “I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!”

The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten.

“Your lip is trembling,” said the Ghost. “And what is that upon your cheek?”

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

“You recollect the way?” inquired the Spirit.

“Remember it!” cried Scrooge with fervour; “I could walk it blindfold.”

“Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!” observed the Ghost. “Let us go on.”

They walked along the road; Scrooge recognising every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

“These are but shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “They have no consciousness of us.”

The jocund travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

“The school is not quite deserted,” said the Ghost. “A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-surmounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panneling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreign garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading an ass laden with wood by the bridle.

“Why, it's Ali Baba! ” Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. “It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he did come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Valentine,” said Scrooge, “and his wild brother, Orson; there they go! And what's his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus; don't you see him! And the Sultan's Groom turned upside-down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had he to be married to the Princess!”

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying; and to see his heightened and excited face; would have been a surprise to his business friends in the city, indeed.

“There's the Parrot!” cried Scrooge. “Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like a lettuce growing out of the top of his head; there he is! Poor Robin Crusoe, he called him, when he came home again after sailing round the island. “Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?” The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't. It was the Parrot, you know. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloo! Hoop! Halloo!”

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, “Poor boy!” and cried again.

“I wish,” Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: “but it's too late now.”

“What is the matter?” asked the Spirit.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge. “Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all.”

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, “Let us see another Christmas!”

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown instead; but how all this was brought about,

Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

"I have come to bring you home, dear brother!" said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. "To bring you home, home, home!"

"Home, little Fan?" returned the boy.

"Yes!" said the child, brimful of glee. "Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, accompanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried. "Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!" and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious condescension, and threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands with him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the veriest old well of a shivering best-parlour that ever was seen, where the maps upon the wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Here he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake, and administered instalments of those dainties to the young people: at the same time, sending out a meagre servant to offer a glass of something to the postboy, who answered that he thanked the gentleman, but if it was the same tap as he had tasted before, he had rather not. Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the top of the chaise, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye right willingly; and getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-sweep: the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and snow from off the dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

``Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered," said the Ghost.  
``But she had a large heart!"

``So she had," cried Scrooge. ``You're right, I will not gainsay it, Spirit. God forbid!"

``She died a woman," said the Ghost, ``and had, as I think, children."

``One child," Scrooge returned.

``True," said the Ghost. ``Your nephew!"

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly, ``Yes."

Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battle for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

``Know it!" said Scrooge. ``Was I apprenticed here!"

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welch wig, sitting behind such a high desk, that if he had been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

``Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shows to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

``Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

``Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. ``Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

``Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. ``No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up," cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, ``before a man can say, Jack Robinson!"

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters -- one, two, three -- had 'em up in their places -- four, five, six -- barred 'em and pinned 'em -- seven, eight, nine -- and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

``Hilli-ho!" cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. ``Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!"

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her Mistress. In they all came, one after nother; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couple at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them. When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, ``Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter, especially provided for that purpose. But scorning rest, upon his reappearance, he instantly began again, though there were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter, and he were a bran-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up ``Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who would dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many: ah, four times: old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to her, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would become of 'em next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, hold hands with your partner, bow and curtsy; corkscrew; thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig cut -- cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr and Mrs Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

``A small matter," said the Ghost, ``to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

``Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

``Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

``It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. ``It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

``What is the matter?" asked the Ghost.

``Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

“Something, I think?” the Ghost insisted.

“No,” said Scrooge, “No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That’s all.”

His former self turned down the lamps as he gave utterance to the wish; and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

“My time grows short,” observed the Spirit. “Quick!”

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

“It matters little,” she said, softly. “To you, 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.”

“What Idol has displaced you?” he rejoined.

“A golden one.”

“This is the even-handed dealing of the world!” he said. “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!”

“You fear the world too much,” she answered, gently. “All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?”

“What then?” he retorted. “Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.”

She shook her head.

“Am I?”

“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.”

“I was a boy,” he said impatiently.

“Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are,” she returned. “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.”

“Have I ever sought release?”

“In words. No. Never.”

“In what, then?”

“In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us,” said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him; “tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!”

He seemed to yield to the justice of this supposition, in spite of himself. But he said with a struggle, “You think not.”

“I would gladly think otherwise if I could,” she answered, “Heaven knows! When I have learned a Truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl -- you who, in your very confidence with her, 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. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.”

He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

“You may -- the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will -- have pain in this. 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!”

She left him, and they parted.

“Spirit!” said Scrooge, “show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?”

“One shadow more!” exclaimed the Ghost.

“No more!” cried Scrooge. “No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!”

But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next.

They were in another scene and place; a room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like that last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw her, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there, than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; and, unlike the celebrated herd in the poem, they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much; and the latter, soon beginning to mingle in the sports, got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly. What would I not have given to one of them! Though I never could have been so rude, no, no! I wouldn't for the wealth of all the world have crushed that braided hair, and torn it down; and for the precious little shoe, I wouldn't have plucked it off, God bless my soul! to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sport, as they did, bold young brood, I couldn't have done it; I should have expected my arm to have grown round it for a punishment, and never come straight again. And yet I should have dearly liked, I own, to have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let loose waves of hair, an inch of which would be a keepsake beyond price: in short, I should have liked, I do confess, to have had the lightest licence of a child, and yet to have been man enough to know its value.

But now a knocking at the door was heard, and such a rush immediately ensued that she with laughing face and plundered dress was borne towards it the centre of a flushed and boisterous group, just in time to greet the father, who came home attended by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. Then the shouting and the struggling, and the onslaught that was made on the defenceless porter! The scaling him, with chairs for ladders, to dive into his pockets, despoil him of brown-paper parcels, hold on tight by his cravat, hug him round the neck, pommel his back, and kick his legs in irrepressible affection! The shouts of wonder and delight with which the development of every package was received! The terrible announcement that the baby had been taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, and was more than suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstasy! They are all indescribable alike. It is enough that by degrees the children and their emotions got out of the parlour, and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed, and so subsided.

And now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, when the master of the house, having his daughter leaning fondly on him, sat down with her and her mother at his own fireside; and when he thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and as full

of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed.

“Belle,” said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile, “I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.”

“Who was it?”

“Guess!”

“How can I? Tut, don’t I know.” she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. “Mr Scrooge.”

“Mr Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe.”

“Spirit!” said Scrooge in a broken voice, “remove me from this place.”

“I told you these were shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “That they are what they are, do not blame me!”

“Remove me!” Scrooge exclaimed, “I cannot bear it!”

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

“Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!”

In the struggle, if that can be called a struggle in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its own part was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting that with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.

The Spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all his force, he could not hide the light, which streamed from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

### Chapter 3 - The Second of the Three Spirits

Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger despatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. But, finding that he turned uncomfortably cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spectre would draw back, he put them every one aside with his own hands; and lying down again, established a sharp look-out all round the bed. For he wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise, and made nervous.

Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, who plume themselves on being acquainted with a move or two, and being usually equal to the time-of-day, express the wide range of their capacity for adventure by observing that they are good for anything from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter; between which opposite extremes, no doubt, there lies a tolerably wide and comprehensive range of subjects. Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the Bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time, he lay upon his bed, the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which, being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was powerless to make out what it meant, or would be at; and was sometimes apprehensive that he might be at that very moment an interesting case of spontaneous combustion, without having the consolation of knowing it. At last, however, he began to think -- as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the predicament who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too - - at last, I say, he began to think that the source and secret of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room, from whence, on further tracing it, it seemed to shine. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp

leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull petrification of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chesnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see: who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

“Come in!” exclaimed the Ghost. “Come in. and know me better, man!”

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,” said the Spirit. “Look upon me!”

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free: free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

“You have never seen the like of me before!” exclaimed the Spirit.

“Never,” Scrooge made answer to it.

“Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?” pursued the Phantom.

“I don't think I have,” said Scrooge. “I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?”

“More than eighteen hundred,” said the Ghost.

“A tremendous family to provide for!” muttered Scrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge submissively, “conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.”

“Touch my robe!”

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses: whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snow-storms.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground; which last deposit had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and waggons; furrows that crossed and recrossed each other hundreds of times where the great streets branched off; and made intricate channels, hard to trace in the thick yellow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed, half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain.

For the people who were shovelling away on the housetops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball -- better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest -- laughing heartily if it went right and not less heartily if it went wrong. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chesnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars, and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shopkeepers' benevolence to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed; there were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins, squab and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great

compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish, set forth among these choice fruits in a bowl, though members of a dull and stagnant-blooded race, appeared to know that there was something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and round their little world in slow and passionless excitement.

The Grocers! oh the Grocers! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimpses! It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter made a merry sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so briskly, or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. Nor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartness from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress; but the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes, in the best humour possible; while the Grocer and his people were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind might have been their own, worn outside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws to peck at if they chose.

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces. And at the same time there emerged from scores of bye-streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the baker' shops. The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. For they said, it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers' were shut up; and yet there was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

“Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?” asked Scrooge.

“There is. My own.”

``Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

``To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

``Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

``Because it needs it most."

``Spirit," said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, ``I wonder you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment."

``!" cried the Spirit.

``You would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all," said Scrooge. ``Wouldn't you?"

``!" cried the Spirit.

``You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day?" said Scrooge. ``And it comes to the same thing."

``I seek!" exclaimed the Spirit.

``Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family," said Scrooge.

``There are some upon this earth of yours," returned the Spirit, ``who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name, who are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us."

Scrooge promised that he would; and they went on, invisible, as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town. It was a remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed at the baker's), that notwithstanding his gigantic size, he could accommodate himself to any place with ease; and that he stood beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature, as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall.

And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen bob a-week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then up rose Mrs Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage-and-onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

``What has ever got your precious father then." said Mrs Cratchit. ``And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!"

``Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

``Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. ``Hurrah! There's **such** a goose, Martha!"

``Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

``We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, ``and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

``Well! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs Cratchit. ``Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

``No, no! There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. ``Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

``Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

``Not coming," said Mrs Cratchit.

``Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. ``Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

“And how did little Tim behave?” asked Mrs Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

“As good as gold,” said Bob, “and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.”

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs -- as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby -- compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course; and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion

to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs Cratchit left the room alone -- too nervous to bear witnesses -- to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose: a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs Cratchit entered: flushed, but smiling proudly: with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarter of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chesnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass; two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chesnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

``A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

``God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

``Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, ``tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

“I see a vacant seat,” replied the Ghost, “in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”

“No, no,” said Scrooge. “Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.”

“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race,” returned the Ghost, “will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

“Man,” said the Ghost, “if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!”

Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name.

“Mr Scrooge!” said Bob; “I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!”

“The Founder of the Feast indeed!” cried Mrs Cratchit, reddening. “I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.”

“My dear,” said Bob, “the children; Christmas Day.”

“It should be Christmas Day, I am sure,” said she, “on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!”

“My dear,” was Bob's mild answer, “Christmas Day.”

“I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's,” said Mrs Cratchit, “not for his. Long life to him. A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!”

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favour when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie a-bed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as Peter;" at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chesnuts and the jug went round and round; and by and by they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim; who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness. There all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows on the window-blind of guests assembling; and there a group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-booted, and all chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbour's house; where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter -- artful witches, well they knew it -- in a glow!

But, if you had judged from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there, instead of every house expecting company, and piling up its fires half-chimney high. Blessings on it, how the Ghost exulted! How it bared its breadth of breast, and opened its capacious palm, and floated on, outpouring, with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach! The very lamplighter, who ran on before, dotting the dusky street with specks of light, and who was dressed to spend the evening somewhere, laughed out loudly as the Spirit passed: though little kenned the lamplighter that he had any company but Christmas!

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of giants; and water spread itself wheresoever it listed; or would have done so, but for the frost that held it prisoner; and nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse, rank grass. Down in the west the setting sun had left a streak of fiery red, which glared upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frowning lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom of darkest night.

“What place is this?” asked Scrooge.

“A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth,” returned the Spirit.  
“But they know me. See!”

A light shone from the window of a hut, and swiftly they advanced towards it. Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas song : it had been a very old song when he was a boy; and from time to time they all joined in the chorus. So surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped whither? Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled, and roared, and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed clung to its base, and storm-birds -- born of the wind one might suppose, as sea-weed of the water -- rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the loophole in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog; and one of them: the elder, too, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea -- on, on -- until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them hummed a

Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some bygone Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year; and had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, and thinking what a solemn thing it was to move on through the lonely darkness over an unknown abyss, whose depths were secrets as profound as Death: it was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognise it as his own nephew's and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability!

``Ha, ha!" laughed Scrooge's nephew. ``Ha, ha, ha!"

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way: holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions: Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand, roared out lustily.

``Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

``He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!" cried Scrooge's nephew. ``He believed it too!"

``More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignantly. Bless those women; they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest.

She was very pretty: exceedingly pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed -- as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory!

``He's a comical old fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, ``that's the truth: and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him."

“I'm sure he is very rich, Fred,” hinted Scrooge's niece. “At least you always tell me so.”

“What of that, my dear!” said Scrooge's nephew. “His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking -- ha, ha, ha! -- that he is ever going to benefit Us with it.”

“I have no patience with him,” observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

“Oh, I have!” said Scrooge's nephew. “I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner.”

“Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner,” interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

“Well! I'm very glad to hear it,” said Scrooge's nephew, “because I haven't great faith in these young housekeepers. What do you say, Topper?”

Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the subject. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister -- the plump one with the lace tucker: not the one with the roses -- blushed.

“Do go on, Fred,” said Scrooge's niece, clapping her hands. “He never finishes what he begins to say. He is such a ridiculous fellow!”

Scrooge's nephew revelled in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off; though the plump sister tried hard to do it with aromatic vinegar; his example was unanimously followed.

“I was only going to say,” said Scrooge's nephew, “that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it -- I defy him -- if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something; and I think I shook him yesterday.”

It was their turn to laugh now at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they

laughed at any rate, he encouraged them in their merriment, and passed the bottle joyously.

After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch, I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp; and played among other tunes a simple little air (a mere nothing: you might learn to whistle it in two minutes), which had been familiar to the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been reminded by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindnesses of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley.

But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself. Stop! There was first a game at blind-man's buff. Of course there was. And I no more believe Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots. My opinion is, that it was a done thing between him and Scrooge's nephew; and that the Ghost of Christmas Present knew it. The way he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker, was an outrage on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down the fire-irons, tumbling over the chairs, bumping against the piano, smothering himself among the curtains, wherever she went, there went he. He always knew where the plump sister was. He wouldn't catch anybody else. If you had fallen up against him (as some of them did), on purpose, he would have made a feint of endeavouring to seize you, which would have been an affront to your understanding, and would instantly have sidled off in the direction of the plump sister. She often cried out that it wasn't fair; and it really was not. But when at last, he caught her; when, in spite of all her silken rustlings, and her rapid flutterings past him, he got her into a corner whence there was no escape; then his conduct was the most execrable. For his pretending not to know her; his pretending that it was necessary to touch her head-dress, and further to assure himself of her identity by pressing a certain ring upon her finger, and a certain chain about her neck; was vile, monstrous. No doubt she told him her opinion of it, when, another blind-man being in office, they were so very confidential together, behind the curtains.

Scrooge's niece was not one of the blind-man's buff party, but was made comfortable with a large chair and a footstool, in a snug corner, where the Ghost and Scrooge were close behind her. But she joined in the forfeits, and loved her love to admiration with all the letters of the alphabet. Likewise at the game of How, When, and Where, she was very great, and to the secret joy of Scrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hollow: though they were sharp girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did Scrooge; for, wholly forgetting in the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud, and vey often guessed

quite right, too; for the sharpest needle, best Whitechapel, warranted not to cut in the eye, was not sharper than Scrooge; blunt as he took it in his head to be.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and looked upon him with such favour, that he begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

“Here is a new game,” said Scrooge. “One half hour, Spirit, only one!”

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister, falling into a similar state, cried out:

“I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!”

“What is it?” cried Fred.

“It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!”

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though some objected that the reply to “Is it a bear?” ought to have been “Yes;” inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr Scrooge, supposing they had ever had any tendency that way.

“He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure,” said Fred, “and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, “Uncle Scrooge!””

“Well! Uncle Scrooge.” they cried.

“A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!” said Scrooge's nephew. “He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!”

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was grey.

“Are spirits' lives so short?” asked Scrooge.

“My life upon this globe, is very brief,” replied the Ghost. “It ends to-night.”

“To-night!” cried Scrooge.

“To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near.”

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment.

“Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask,” said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, “but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw!”

“It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it,” was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. “Look here.”

From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

“Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!” exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

“Spirit! are they yours?” Scrooge could say no more.

“They are Man's,” said the Spirit, looking down upon them. “And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!” cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. “Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse! And bide the end!”

“Have they no refuge or resource?” cried Scrooge.

“Are there no prisons?” said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. “Are there no workhouses?”

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him

#### Chapter 4 - The Last of the Spirits

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

“I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?” said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

“You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us,” Scrooge pursued. “Is that so, Spirit?”

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

“Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed, “I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?”

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

“Lead on!” said Scrooge. “Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!”

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on Change, amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals; and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

“No,” said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, “I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead.”

“When did he die?” inquired another.

“Last night, I believe.”

“Why, what was the matter with him?” asked a third, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box. “I thought he'd never die.”

“God knows,” said the first, with a yawn.

“What has he done with his money?” asked a red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose, that shook like the gills of a turkey-cock.

“I haven't heard,” said the man with the large chin, yawning again. “Left it to his Company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know.”

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

“It's likely to be a very cheap funeral,” said the same speaker; “for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?”

“I don't mind going if a lunch is provided,” observed the gentleman with the excrescence on his nose. “But I must be fed, if I make one.”

Another laugh.

“Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all,” said the first speaker, “for I never wear black gloves, and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye!”

Speakers and listeners strolled away, and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation.

The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here.

He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He had made a point always of standing well in their esteem: in a business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point of view.

“How are you?” said one.

“How are you?” returned the other.

“Well!” said the first. “Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?”

“So I am told,” returned the second. “Cold, isn't it?”

“Seasonable for Christmas time. You're not a skaiter, I suppose?”

“No. No. Something else to think of. Good morning!”

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting.

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself, to whom he could apply them. But nothing doubting that to whomsoever they applied they had some latent moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it appeared. For he had an expectation that the conduct of his future self would give him the clue he missed, and would render the solution of these riddles easy.

He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner, and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had been revolving in his mind a change of life, and thought and hoped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. When he roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied from the turn of the hand, and its situation in reference to himself, that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the stragglng streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove, made of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frousy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than they had been upon the recognition

of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

“Let the charwoman alone to be the first!” cried she who had entered first. “Let the laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!”

“You couldn't have met in a better place,” said old Joe, removing his pipe from his mouth. “Come into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two an't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! How it skreeks! There an't such a rusty bit of metal in the place as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no such old bones here, as mine. Ha, ha! We're all suitable to our calling, we're well matched. Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour.”

The parlour was the space behind the screen of rags. The old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, and having trimmed his smoky lamp (for it was night), with the stem of his pipe, put it in his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool; crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with a bold defiance at the other two.

“What odds then! What odds, Mrs Dilber?” said the woman. “Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did!”

“That's true, indeed!” said the laundress. “No man more so.”

“Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?”

“No, indeed!” said Mrs Dilber and the man together. “We should hope not.”

“Very well, then!” cried the woman. “That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.”

“No, indeed!” said Mrs Dilber, laughing.

“If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw,” pursued the woman, “why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.”

“It's the truest word that ever was spoke,” said Mrs Dilber. “It's a judgment on him.”

“I wish it was a little heavier judgment,” replied the woman; “and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that

bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We know pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe."

But the gallantry of her friends would not allow of this; and the man in faded black, mounting the breach first, produced his plunder. It was not extensive. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value, were all. They were severally examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each, upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found there was nothing more to come.

"That's your account," said Joe, "and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?"

Mrs Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

"I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself," said old Joe. "That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half-a-crown."

"And now undo my bundle, Joe," said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

"What do you call this," said Joe. "Bed-curtains!"

"Ah!" returned the woman, laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms. "Bed-curtains!"

"You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there?" said Joe.

"Yes I do," replied the woman. "Why not?"

"You were born to make your fortune," said Joe, "and you'll certainly do it."

"I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as He was, I promise you, Joe," returned the woman coolly. "don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

"His blankets?" asked Joe.

"Whose else's do you think?" replied the woman. "He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say."

“I hope he didn't die of any thing catching? Eh?” said old Joe, stopping in his work, and looking up.

“Don't you be afraid of that,” returned the woman. “I an't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.”

“What do you call wasting of it?” asked old Joe.

“Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure,” replied the woman with a laugh. “Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico an't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one.”

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust, which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

“Ha, ha!” laughed the same woman, when old Joe, producing a flannel bag with money in it, told out their several gains upon the ground. “This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!”

“Spirit!” said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. “I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!”

He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one

feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal.

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard-dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What they wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

“Spirit!” he said, “this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!”

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

“I understand you,” Scrooge returned, “and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power.”

Again it seemed to look upon him.

“If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death,” said Scrooge quite agonised, “show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!”

The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked out from the window; glanced at the clock; tried, but in vain, to work with her needle; and could hardly bear the voices of the children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband; a man whose face was careworn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been boarding for him by the fire; and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

“Is it good,” she said, “or bad?” -- to help him.

``Bad," he answered.

``We are quite ruined?"

``No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

``If he relents," she said, amazed, ``there is. Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened."

``He is past relenting," said her husband. ``He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands. She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

``What the half-drunken woman whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me; turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then."

``To whom will our debt be transferred?"

``I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be a bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!"

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

``Let me see some tenderness connected with a death," said Scrooge; ``or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me."

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

````And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them.````

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

“The colour hurts my eyes,” she said.

The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

“They’re better now again,” said Cratchit’s wife. “It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.”

“Past it rather,” Peter answered, shutting up his book. “But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother.”

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once:

“I have known him walk with -- I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.”

“And so have I,” cried Peter. “Often.”

“And so have I!” exclaimed another. So had all.

“But he was very light to carry,” she resumed, intent upon her work, “and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble. And there is your father at the door!”

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter -- he had need of it, poor fellow -- came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, “Don’t mind it, father. Don’t be grieved!”

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

“Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?” said his wife.

“Yes, my dear,” returned Bob. “I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you’ll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!” cried Bob. “My little child!”

He broke down all at once. He couldn’t help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went up-stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were

signs of some one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little -- "just a little down you know," said Bob, inquired what had happened to distress him. "On which," said Bob, "for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. "I am heartily sorry for it, Mr Cratchit," he said, "and heartily sorry for your good wife." By the bye, how he ever knew that, I don't know."

"Knew what, my dear?"

"Why, that you were a good wife," replied Bob.

"Everybody knows that." said Peter.

"Very well observed, my boy." cried Bob. "I hope they do. "Heartily sorry," he said, "for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way," he said, giving me his card, "that's where I live. Pray come to me." Now, it wasn't," cried Bob, "for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us."

"I'm sure he's a good soul!" said Mrs Cratchit.

"You would be surer of it, my dear," returned Bob, "if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised, mark what I say, if he got Peter a better situation."

"Only hear that, Peter," said Mrs Cratchit.

"And then," cried one of the girls, "Peter will be keeping company with some one, and setting up for himself."

"Get along with you!" retorted Peter, grinning.

"It's just as likely as not," said Bob, "one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim -- shall we -- or this first parting that there was among us?"

"Never, father!" cried they all.

"And I know," said Bob, "I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it."

“No, never, father!” they all cried again.

“I am very happy,” said little Bob, “I am very happy!”

Mrs Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!

“Spectre,” said Scrooge, “something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?”

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before -- though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Future -- into the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now desired, until besought by Scrooge to tarry for a moment.

“This courts,” said Scrooge, “through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come.”

The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

“The house is yonder,” Scrooge exclaimed. “Why do you point away?”

The inexorable finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

“Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point,” said Scrooge, “answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?”

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

“Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead,” said Scrooge. “But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!”

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.

“Am I that man who lay upon the bed?” he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

“No, Spirit! Oh no, no!”

The finger still was there.

“Spirit!” he cried, tight clutching at its robe, “hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?”

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

“Good Spirit,” he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: “Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!”

The kind hand trembled.

“I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!”

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him.

Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

## Chapter 5 - The End of it

Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the time before him was his own, to make amends in!

“I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!” Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. “The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!”

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

“They are not torn down,” cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, “they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here: I am here: the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!”

His hands were busy with his garments all this time: turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

“I don't know what to do!” cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. “I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to every-body! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!”

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded.

“There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!” cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fire-place. “There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!”

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!

“I don't know what day of the month it is!” said Scrooge. “I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!”

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer, ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding, hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his stirring, cold cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

“What’s to-day?” cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

“Eh?” returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

“What’s to-day, my fine fellow?” said Scrooge.

“To-day?” replied the boy. “Why, Christmas Day.”

“It’s Christmas Day!” said Scrooge to himself. “I haven’t missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!”

“Hallo!” returned the boy

“Do you know the Poulterer’s, in the next street but one, at the corner?” Scrooge inquired.

“I should hope I did,” replied the lad.

“An intelligent boy!” said Scrooge. “A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey; the big one?”

“What, the one as big as me?” returned the boy.

“What a delightful boy!” said Scrooge. “It’s a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!”

“It’s hanging there now,” replied the boy.

“Is it?” said Scrooge. “Go and buy it.”

“Walk-er!” exclaimed the boy.

“No, no,” said Scrooge, “I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell ‘em to bring it here, that I may give them the irection where to take it. Come back with the man, and I’ll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I’ll give you half-a-crown!”

“I’ll send it to Bob Cratchit’s!” whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. “He sha’n’t know who sends it. It’s twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke as sending it to Bob’s will be!”

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went down stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer’s man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

“I shall love it, as long as I live!” cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. “I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It’s a wonderful knocker! -- Here’s the Turkey. Hallo! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas!”

It was a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped ‘em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

“Why, it’s impossible to carry that to Camden Town,” said Scrooge. “You must have a cab.”

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the Turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don’t dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaister over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself all in his best, and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, “Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!” And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, “Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe?” It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

“My dear sir,” said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. “How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!”

“Mr Scrooge?”

“Yes,” said Scrooge. “That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness --” here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

“Lord bless me!” cried the gentleman, as if his breath were gone. “My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious?”

“If you please,” said Scrooge. “Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?”

“My dear sir,” said the other, shaking hands with him. “I don’t know what to say to such munifi-”

“don’t say anything, please,” retorted Scrooge. “Come and see me. Will you come and see me?”

“I will!” cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

“Thank ‘ee,” said Scrooge. “I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!”

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows: and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk -- that anything -- could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew’s house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

“Is your master at home, my dear?” said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

“Yes, sir.”

“Where is he, my love?” said Scrooge.

“He’s in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I’ll show you up-stairs, if you please.”

“Thank ‘ee. He knows me,” said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. “I’ll go in here, my dear.”

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great array); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

“Fred!” said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

“Why bless my soul!” cried Fred, “who’s that?”

“It’s I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?”

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when he came. So did the plump sister when she came. So did every one when they came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, wonderful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half, behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.

His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

“Hallo!” growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. “What do you mean by coming here at this time of day.”

“I am very sorry, sir,” said Bob. “I am behind my time.”

“You are?” repeated Scrooge. “Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please.”

“It’s only once a year, sir,” pleaded Bob, appearing from the Tank. “It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.”

“Now, I’ll tell you what, my friend,” said Scrooge, “I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore,” he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again: “and therefore I am about to raise your salary!”

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it; holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.

“A merry Christmas, Bob!” said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. “A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I’ll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist

your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit."

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!

## **Annex IV – Curtmetratge.**

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