

# Scrooge Returns

by

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FADE IN:

**EXT. FEZZIWIG FAMILY WAREHOUSE, 1850'S LONDON - NIGHT**

The scene is Christmas - Dickens style.

Bright lights and lively MUSIC spill from a snow-covered Victorian building decked for Christmas. A signboard identifies FEZZIWIG'S WAREHOUSE. Through the windows, a festive wake rocks the foundation.

Two Gents, somewhere in their golden years, pause at the door. **JACOB MARLEY** sports a red waistcoat - swings a jaunty cane. **EBENEZER SCROOGE** wears black.

The men remove their top hats, preen slicked hair and enter.

**INT. FEZZIWIG FAMILY WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

In one corner a **CORPSE** lies stiff in an extravagant coffin.

**FUNERAL GUESTS** drink to excess and make merry. From a raised platform, **MUSICIANS** fiddle festive tunes. Rich and poor, young and old, celebrate the deceased.

Marley and Scrooge stroll unnoticed toward the coffin. A **SERVING WOMAN** crosses their path - carries a luscious roast turkey on a platter.

Scrooge sniffs the air and frowns.

SCROOGE  
(English accent)  
I can't smell a thing.

Marley points his cane at the corpse.

MARLEY  
(English accent)  
You're bleedin' lucky. The stench  
would kill you.

The men peer into the coffin - Scrooge goes white as a ghost.

The corpse's gnarled fingers clutch a top hat over a black waistcoat. Wearing a grin, he's THE SPITTING IMAGE OF SCROOGE!

SCROOGE  
Jacob, I'm dead!

Marley smiles.

MARLEY  
As a doorknocker.

Marley reaches for the corpse. Forces the grin to a grimace.

MARLEY (CONT'D)  
Bah! There's the Scrooge I  
remember.

On the sly, Scrooge hoists the corpse's stiff arm. Backhands  
Marley with its dead hand.

Marley jumps a mile.

MARLEY (CONT'D)  
You were less annoying as a Humbug.

SCROOGE  
You were more charming in chains.

Beyond the coffin, a festooned window overlooks a skating  
pond. Lights from the party illuminate a **GRACEFUL SKATER** who  
twirls on the ice. A red muff warms her hands.

MARLEY  
We should've just let you finish  
your days in misery.

SCROOGE  
We?

MARLEY  
(irritated)  
Me - and the ghosts who get all the  
credit.

SCROOGE  
What credit?

MARLEY  
Forget it. It's nothing. I don't  
want to talk about them.

Scrooge lets it slide - Marley launches into it anyway.

MARLEY (CONT'D)  
Past, Present, and Future.  
Everybody remembers them. There's  
not a soul who remembers Jacob  
Marley.

SCROOGE  
Who?

Scrooge guffaws at Marley's expense.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Oh, quit with the feeling wretched  
for yourself. You showed up in  
chains, wailing and waving about,  
then said three ghosts would haunt  
me. Who could forget that?

MARLEY

Apparently, everyone but you!

Through the window, a heavy snow begins to fall.

#### **MUSICIAN'S PLATFORM**

Mug in hand, **BIG (Tiny) TIM**, 20, limps onto the stage. Nods  
to his father, **BOB CRATCHIT**, now in his fifties.

Bob steps up beside his son. Raises his mug and the room goes  
quiet.

BOB CRATCHIT

Let's raise a glass to the meanest,  
nastiest, most miserable old  
coot... who, by God's grace, became  
the best friend we ever had.

Bob salutes the corpse with his mug.

BOB CRATCHIT (CONT'D)

Here's to Ebenezer Scrooge!

Bob takes a swig. Guests CHEER and follow suit.

BIG TIM

God bless you, Mister Scrooge.

#### **COFFIN**

Marley nudges Scrooge.

MARLEY

Beats the toast at my funeral.

SCROOGE

What funeral... I clinked flasks  
with the man holding the shovel.  
Said... Here's mud in your eye as  
he launched spadeful!

Stifling tears, a handsome older woman, **BELLE**, approaches the  
casket. Around her neck, she wears an ORNATE LOCKET.

Invisible to the woman, and unheard, Scrooge gasps.

SCROOGE (CONT'D)

Belle...

Scrooge frantically upgrades the corpse's grimace to a grin. Doesn't quite make it.

Belle, once the great love of Scrooge's life, places her hands on the casket. Winces at the corpse's now-constipated expression.

BELLE

Bastard!

Scrooge's face falls as Belle unclasps her locket.

BELLE (CONT'D)

I wish I could give this to you in person.

Belle slides the locket in the body's waistcoat pocket.

BELLE (CONT'D)

True love never dies... it simply waits to be remembered.

Belle kisses her fingertips, touches them to the body's lips.

Scrooge melts as Belle takes a last look and departs.

Marley attempts to usher him away.

SCROOGE

Can I have a moment here?

Marley pulls out a pocket watch - taps his cane on the floor.

MARLEY

C'mon, we got work to do.

SCROOGE

I'm dead-

MARLEY

But you're not done...

Scrooge is confused.

Marley leans in - lowers his voice.

MARLEY (CONT'D)

A hundred and fifty years from here there's a new Scrooge of Christmas Present... a tyrant so loathing of Christmas, that none but the ghost of Ebenezer Scrooge himself could dare set him straight.

Scrooge perks up.

SCROOGE

I get to haunt somebody?

Marley smiles. Raises mischievous eyebrows. Twice.

Through the window behind them, the skater twirls gracefully.

Absolutely out of nowhere... AN AVALANCHE OF SNOW FALLS FROM THE SKY. Buries the skater in a heap. All that remains is her RED MUFF.

Suddenly, the RUMBLE-HUM of a diving airplane erupts outside.

The ghosts run to the window - gawk as A MAN CLUTCHING A TURKEY FLIES BY, SUPERHERO STYLE.

**INT. MICHELLE'S LIVING ROOM. PRESENT DAY, USA - NIGHT**

**MAX**, 8, plays at the mantel. Makes a RUMBLE-HUM sound as he swoops a figurine - A MAN CLUTCHING A TURKEY - high over a porcelain village of houses and Dickens' characters.

Max flies the Turkey Man past a porcelain Family (Father, Mother and Son) that stands beside a ceramic replica of Fezziwig's warehouse.

MAX

Turkey Man to the rescue!

Max propels Turkey Man, low and slow, over a porcelain figurine of Bob Cratchit carrying Tiny Tim on his shoulders.

MAX (CONT'D)

Not you Tiny Tim. You don't need a rescue. You already have a Dad.

Max lands Turkey Man near a small avalanche of plastic snow. Brushing the plastic away, he un-buries another figurine... a female Skater with a red muff.

Turkey Man in one hand, skater in the other, Max turns them toward each other. Speaks in a girly voice.

MAX (CONT'D)  
 Turkey Man, you're my hero!

Max bows as half a dozen **DAYCARE KIDS**, ages 2 to 8, clap for his performance. Max's dog, **OTIS**, wags.

Behind the kids, a tired, but pretty woman applauds. She is Max's late 20's, single mom, **MICHELLE**.

Worn, overstuffed furniture fills the living room and the walls need paint. But a cheery fire burns in the fireplace. Handmade Christmas stockings hang from the mantel. One reads **MAX MAN**. The other, a bit tattered, says **MICHELLE**.

Relishing the limelight, Max takes another bow.

Eyes on her son, Michelle frets over her figurines.

MICHELLE  
 Okay honey, lets put Nana's  
 figurines back. Christmas will be  
 here in a couple days, and Santa  
 wants to see them in one piece.

Max reluctantly lands Turkey Man on the mantel - returns the skater to the pond.

Near the pond Max eyes a grim Figurine of Scrooge with hands clasped behind his back.

He leans toward the mantel. Blows a big wet raspberry in Scrooge's face.

**INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY**

Glass cleaner sprays a wall of glass. A **FLUNKY'S PINKYLESS LEFT HAND**, wipes it streakless.

Through the clean glass see the hardened face of **SAMUEL JUDD**, 40. As polished as his shoes, he's all about money.

**INT. JUDD'S GLASS OFFICE - DAY**

Judd peers out through the glass walls of his opulent office and waves the Flunky aside.

From this vantage point, Judd lords over the backs of two-dozen worker bees at metal desks in a windowless office. Though it's Christmas, the office is void of festivity.

On either side of Judd, Scrooge and Marley observe... unseen.

In a cheap suit and bland tie, the new office peon, **LARRY**, 30, knocks nervously on Judd's door.

LARRY  
Sir- ahh- I

JUDD  
You're putting me to sleep, Larry,  
spit it out.

MARLEY  
(nudges Scrooge)  
He even sounds like you.

LARRY  
The Havisham property on twenty-  
seventh -

Larry holds the tips of his index and pointer fingers a mere half-inch apart.

LARRY (CONT'D)  
-about this close to foreclosure.

Grinning like the Grinch, Judd walks to an easel that displays plans for **THE VILLAGE** - a luxury condo development.

On a table before it is an AERIAL DIAGRAM of a 1920's residential neighborhood. Every property, except one labeled HAVISHAM, is X-ed in red.

JUDD  
Seems *Miss Havisham* best be  
careful. One little *mistake* and she  
could lose everything...

Scrooge turns to Marley.

SCROOGE  
Was I that awful?

Marley's *Hell, yes!* expression says it all.

#### **INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY**

Spray bottle in hand, Judd's Flunky watches Judd and Larry through the glass.

From an expensive desk, Judd's handsome protege, **GREG**, late 20's, eyes the Flunky with disgust.

Dressed to impress, Greg rises. Taps the Flunky's shoulder and whispers.

GREG  
Waiting for crumbs?

**INT. JUDD'S GLASS OFFICE - DAY**

Larry exits the office. Judd doesn't bother to look up as the Flunky knocks and walks in.

FLUNKY  
Sir, seems Larry believes he can  
leave early on Christmas Eve.

Judd gnashes his teeth as the Flunky sidles closer.

FLUNKY (CONT'D)  
He's refusing to attend your party.

**INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY**

Judd marches up one aisle and down the other. His stance oddly resembles that of the Scrooge figurine.

The Workers keep their heads down - avoid Judd's eye contact. Those on the phone hang up.

JUDD  
It has come to my attention someone  
plans to leave early on Christmas  
Eve.

Employees sink in their seats as Judd stalks Larry's aisle. Stops at Larry's desk.

JUDD (CONT'D)  
For those who are new -

Judd's eyes burn holes in Larry's head.

JUDD (CONT'D)  
Christmas Eve is a work day. No one  
leaves early.

He RAPS once on Larry's desk.

Larry startles. Eyes as big as Christmas wreaths.

JUDD (CONT'D)  
And attendance at my annual party  
is as optional as your employment  
in this office.

Judd strides across the aisle.

JUDD (CONT'D)

For those of you with children -

He sits on the corner of **JENNY**'s desk. Eyes framed pictures of her two young kids.

JUDD (CONT'D)

I'd rather you leave them at home.  
If you must bring them -  
Stella will be there.

Jenny's face falls.

Larry speaks up. Nervous as a fish in the blender.

LARRY

But Sir, my daughter is singing in  
the Christmas Eve service at our  
church.

JUDD

Then I suggest you show your wife  
how to use a video camera.

Finished, Judd RAPS twice on Jenny's desk. Treads to his office and motions Greg inside.

The workers take a collective breath.

**INT. JUDD'S GLASS OFFICE - DAY**

Greg closes the door behind him. Intent on learning from the boss.

JUDD

That's how it's done, Greg. They  
need to know who's boss.

Judd walks to the easel. Rolls up the aerial diagram.

JUDD (CONT'D)

The investors fly in tomorrow. I  
want you there - a good impression  
is imperative.

GREG

I look forward to it, sir.

JUDD

Three days 'til the party - you  
have your tux?

GREG  
You said black tie.

JUDD  
This will be an event to remember.  
I trust the woman on your arm will  
be worthy.

Greg looks away.

JUDD (CONT'D)  
Looks like we both have work to do!

**INT. JUDD'S MERCEDES - NIGHT**

Judd lays the rolled diagram in the passenger seat. Adjusting his blue tooth, he voice dials.

JUDD  
Amelia.

He starts the car and checks his rear view mirror. Misses the reflections of two ghosts as he backs from his spot.

AMELIA (O.S.)  
(English accent over  
phone)  
Hello.

JUDD  
Anything?

AMELIA'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Not a piece to be had. And  
certainly not the one you're  
looking for.

JUDD  
I don't buy excuses.

AMELIA'S VOICE (O.S.)  
I'm not selling any, Sam. I'll call  
when I find something.

JUDD  
You do that.

**EXT. JUDD'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

An opulent home, stately but sterile, secluded atop a hill.

The Mercedes pulls into the circle drive. Parks at the steps that lead to the grand front entrance.

**INT. JUDD'S LIBRARY - NIGHT**

Ear to his phone, Judd sits at an antique desk. Spread before him is the aerial diagram of the 27th Street homes.

Judd barks into the phone.

JUDD

I don't care how you do it. But  
make it expensive. *Really*  
*expensive.*

He hangs up. Taps a red marker on the Havisham property.

JUDD (CONT'D)

You didn't like my offer?  
Now I'll leave you no choice.

Judd uncaps the marker. Slashes a thick RED X through the Havisham property.

**EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

A 1920's home with climbing trees and a low front fence.

**INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Max sleeps, angelic.

**INT. MICHELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Michelle sleeps, one ear always cocked. Otis sprawls at the end of the bed.

A shadow passes Michelle's window. A faint scraping sound follows - metal on concrete. Otis growls.

Michelle stirs. Sits up and listens.

MICHELLE

Shhh, Otis.

Nothing. She pats Otis on the head. Comforts herself.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

It's okay.

**EXT. MICHELLE'S BACK YARD - NIGHT**

A silent, dark figure squats in heavy snowfall. A pinkyless hand removes the cap from the heating oil tank.

The culprit checks his back. Pours boxes of white powder in the tank, then slides the cover back. Brushes snow over the cover to hide his handiwork.

**EXT. RUN-DOWN VAN - NIGHT**

A van, the kind mothers warn children about, idles at the curb. Through the window, a pinkyless hand taps a cell phone keypad.

**INT. JUDD'S LIBRARY - NIGHT**

Judd lounges in a leather chair. Reads *Great Expectations*.

His phone RINGS.

JUDD  
(into phone)  
So?

FLUNKY (O.S.)  
Done.

JUDD  
Perfect.