

Table 1

	Angus Wright	Katy Stephens	David Fielder	Steve Crane	Rebecca Mondadori
Message from Mars 1	Horace	Messenger	Tramp	Stage directions / Dicey / Gentlemen / Sir Edward	Minnie / Bella / Aunt / Stage directions / Mrs Clarence
Mrs Bob Cratchit	Scrooge	Mrs Bob Cratchit	Clarence	Stage directions	Ghost
Past, Present, and Future	Bob	Mrs Fred	Scrooge	Stage directions / Fred	Boy / Stage directions / Tiny Tim

EXTRACT ONE FROM A MESSAGE FROM MARS BY
RICHARD GANTHONY (1899)

Minnie coming to the left of the table and taking off her engagement ring.

MINNIE. I think you will understand me when I say, “Here is your ring.” You have given me a glimpse of such a love-cheapening life that I have grown afraid. I believed in you, Horace, though I was never blind to your faults, I had hoped I might help you to conquer them, but I realize now the task is beyond me. A stronger spirit would have to be invoked. Without your love I should fail, and I see now you have none to offer me. The devotion of your life is for yourself and yourself alone,

HORACE. And all this fuss because I don’t want you to go with a silly ass to a dance to-night.

MINNIE. No. For your utter lack of consideration, I might hurt my dear friend, Kitty Clarence, by not going to her dance. Oh, that was nothing! Disappoint Auntie nothing—give up my own pleasure—nothing—insult a visitor—nothing, nothing at all. Here it is, Horace.

Minnie puts ring on table.

MINNIE. I cannot wear it. The gold seems to have gone out of it.

Exit Minnie.

HORACE. And that’s the girl I’ve been talking to about broad views! Well, I’ve met some narrow-minded people in my life, but she is far and away the most narrow-minded of the lot.

Horace picks up paper.

HORACE. It’s very disappointing, that’s what it is, very disappointing. Women are all alike. No liberality, no generosity, You think you have found an exception, you pour out all the wealth of your priceless love upon her, and the moment the shoe

pinches—there you are. I suppose she will want to make it up tomorrow, then I shall have to put down my foot and come to a thorough understanding. Confound that fellow Dicey! It's all his fault, I never ought to have allowed him to take her, I ought to have gone myself. Damn Dicey! Now for this article. I suppose I'd better read it. Don't feel a bit like it. However, it may act as a sedative.

Horaces settles down to read. Enter Bella.

BELLA. Please, sir, there's a man wants to see you.

HORACE. A what wants to what?

BELLA. A man to see you, sir.

HORACE. What does he want?

BELLA. I don't know, sir. He says he has a letter for you, sir.

HORACE. Why didn't he give it to you?

BELLA. He wouldn't trust it out of his hand, sir. He says he must give it to you himself.

HORACE. What sort of a man?

BELLA. Well, sir, he seems to think he is a respectable sort of a man, but he's what I should call a tramp.

HORACE. A tramp? Well, I can't see him, then. I can't see him. Tell him to come again in the morning.

BELLA. I told him that, sir.

HORACE. Well, what did he say?

BELLA. Well, sir, he said he was a persevering kind of man, but he's what I should call obstinate.

HORACE. What do you mean?

BELLA. He said he wouldn't go away till he had seen you—and I don't think he will.

HORACE. It is too maddening. I can't have one moment to myself.
Very well, show him in. Show him in.

Exit Bella.

HORACE. First of all Aunt Martha, then that fool Dicey, then
Minnie and now a tramp.

Enter Bella with Tramp. Exit Bella.

HORACE. Well, what is it? What is it? What do you want?

TRAMP. Mr, Brampton told me to give you this.

Tramp hands letter.

HORACE. Mr. Brampton—of Coventry?

TRAMP. Yes, sir.

Horace reading.

HORACE. “—might be. able to give him some work.” I haven't any
work to give you. “Clever workman—seen better days.”

TRAMP. That's true enough. I never see any worse than what I'm
getting now.

HORACE. I'm afraid I cannot help you.

TRAMP. Don't be hard, Guv'ner. I'm cold and tired. I've walked all
the way from Coventry.

HORACE. Walked? Why, Mr. Brampton says here he has given you
the money for your railway fare.

TRAMP. So he did, sir. I had a bit of bad luck with that.

HORACE. What? Lost it, I suppose. *(half laughing)*

TRAMP. Not exactly, sir.

HORACE. What then?

TRAMP. Spent it.

HORACE. How? Drink?

TRAMP. Yes, drink and meat. There's no crime in that, is there?
Even a tramp must eat.

HORACE. Yes, and drink. Well, and when the money was gone—

TRAMP. I had to walk. That's all.

HORACE. Well, that's what you will have to do now. I can't help you.

TRAMP. Just my luck! (*going.*) Beg pardon, Guv'ner, do you feel like standing me a drink before I go, just to keep out the cold?

Horace shrugs his shoulder.

HORACE. Help yourself.

Tramp drinks glass of whiskey Minnie had poured out.

TRAMP. Ah, that's good! That brings back old times. You wouldn't think, Guv'ner, that I was a prosperous man once.

Horace indicates that Whiskey is responsible.

TRAMP. No, it wasn't drink that ruined me. Drink may have kept me down, but it didn't throw me. I'm an engineer by trade—leastways, I was, but I ain't worked at it now these five years. Thank you kindly for the whiskey. Good night, sir.

HORACE. Care to take another?

TRAMP. Thank you, sir, I would.

Tramp helps himself.

TRAMP. Your health, Guv'ner! You wouldn't think there was much of the inventor about me? Would you? But I've got some ideas, good uns too, only I ain't got the capital, see?

HORACE. I see,

TRAMP. I'll let you into one of my ideas, Guv'ner, if you'll take it up. It'll make your fortune.

HORACE. Thanks. I have all the money I require.

TRAMP. Have you, now? I haven't, that's the difference. Feels pretty comfortable, doesn't it? I was doing very well once, over there in the States.

HORACE. America?

TRAMP. Yes. They're pretty smart there, but I showed them I was as good as they. I made a steam valve that's on most boilers today. Yes, I did. Just me. I got ten thousand dollars down before I got my papers out. But my partner got ahead of me. I never saw another cent. I fought him as long as the money lasted. But it didn't go far in the Courts of Justice. It was the Law as downed me, Guv'ner. Drink?—only damned me.

HORACE. Too bad, You must try again.

TRAMP. Not much chance of that. One can't do anything without a little capital, and who's going to trust me? No, I'll pick up a living how I can.

HORACE. How do you pick up a living?

TRAMP. Anyhow. Running after cabs.

HORACE. Surely to goodness, nobody pays you for doing that?

TRAMP. If I'm lucky I gets the job of lifting down the luggage.

HORACE. Oh, that's it.

TRAMP. There's a lovely fall of snow to-night.

HORACE. Cold comfort for you, I should have thought.

TRAMP. I may get a job shovelling it in the morning—if I am in luck.

HORACE. Why don't you go back to your old trade?

TRAMP. Why don't I go back to my old trade? Why don't I? Who's going to take me on? Who'll give me a job? Will you?

HORACE. I told you I can't do anything for you,

TRAMP. Then what's the good of asking? But it don't matter, I've

got nothing to live for now. Nothing to save for. The Law broke me up, killed the missus.

HORACE. You were married then?

TRAMP. Yes.

HORACE. Any children?

TRAMP. One. God forgive me. (*affected*)

HORACE. Care to take another? Some biscuits if you like.

TRAMP. I ain't proud. Thank you, Guv'ner. You're a good un. I worked my way back to England only to find my missus dead and the little un gone.

HORACE. Gone? How gone?

TRAMP. The people she had been with had left, and I never could find out what had become of her, Poor little Minnie!

HORACE. Minnie!

TRAMP. That was her name, sir,

HORACE. Minnie?

Horace rising and his manner hardening.

TRAMP. Everything gone, Why should I care? Care! I beg pardon, sir. The whiskey set me talking. My story can't interest you. Good night, sir. Perhaps if I come back in a day or two you might know of a job.

HORACE. No. Quite useless, I can do nothing for you. Get along, now.

TRAMP. Good night, sir.

Exit Tramp.

HORACE. Minnie! Minnie! How dare he mention her name? Of course she couldn't possibly have anything to do with him. But it did give me a turn. Poor devil, I suppose I was rather rough on

him. Never mind, serves him right. I dare say he deserved it. Anyhow, it will prevent him coming back again to-morrow.

Horace is about to drink.

HORACE. Confound him, he has used my glass!

Horace fetches another from the table.

HORACE. It seems tame I am curiously unlucky. I can't think why people are so unfair to me. I'm such a good sort. I don't know anyone who has a better temper or a more generous, open disposition. I expect that is the secret of it.

He puts the whiskey, glasses and biscuits on small table above fireplace.

HORACE. Other people are so mean, and selfish, and unfair.

He sits in an armchair.

HORACE. Now let me get on with it.

Horace reads "The Astronomer."

HORACE. Where was I? Ah, yes, here we are. "Latest observations have revealed strange lights which some astronomers believe to be signals put out in the hope of an answer from Earth." I don't believe a word of it. It may be possible, though. If Mars is inhabited, I wonder what they are like. Are they savages, or are they ahead of us?

The lamp flickers a little.

HORACE. Confound it! The lamp's going out. Minnie never told her. Forgets all about a poor fellow left alone in the dark. Most selfish of her.

Horace turns over page and reads by firelight as lamp fails more and more.

HORACE. Ah, just the end. "The advent of a messenger or an army from Mars should not seem to us of the twentieth century a greater marvel than did the shining sails of Columbus to the

aborigines of America. What an unfolding of wisdom would their coming yield. What problems could they solve, what new ones set us. The mind fails in contemplation. Too vast—vast.”

The lamp goes out. Horace falls asleep. Enter a Messenger from Mars. A gentle roll of thunder should announce the arrival of the Messenger. The following is Horace's Dream.

MESSENGER. Man! Man of Earth! Give heed for the good of your kind.

HORACE. (*drowsily*) Hullo. Who are you?

MESSENGER. I am a Messenger from Mars.

HORACE. Don't believe a word of it.

MESSENGER. (*sternly*) I am a Messenger from Mars.

HORACE. Are you really? Won't you sit down?

MESSENGER. No.

HORACE. Have a drink, then?

MESSENGER. Worm!

HORACE. Meaning me? I note that politeness is at a discount in Mars.

MESSENGER. We are not upon that planet now.

HORACE. I thank my stars.

MESSENGER. Know you why I am here?

HORACE. No more than why the other tramp bothered me. You have come rather farther—you may stay a little longer. From the venturesome spirit that prompted this visit I conclude you are of the greatest of your race.

MESSENGER. I am the poorest gifted, most unhappy, lowest fallen, and easiest spared. I am a criminal, and therefore condemned to make this journey.

HORACE. What had you been up to? Do tell.

MESSENGER. I sinned in vanity. A dear companion and myself had composed a hymn of praise. He died, and I gave it forth as entirely my own.

HORACE. (*gleefully*) Did you make much out of it?

MESSENGER. It was chanted by many.

HORACE. Then it paid pretty well?

MESSENGER. In Mars we do not write for gain. For five days I endured the bitterest remorse when I confessed my crime, and was sentenced to make this journey.

HORACE. Doubtless you have learnt that I am interested in your world and quite rightly expected a sympathetic welcome from me?

MESSENGER. No. But of all countries yours seemed the most promising field –

HORACE. Bravo! Rule, Brittania!

MESSENGER. Of all cities, this London, the greatest, and most intense –

HORACE. Good old London!

MESSENGER. And of all its citizens yourself the most striking example–

Horace bows.

MESSENGER. –of the Greed and Egoism of the age.

Horace staggers to his feet and is about to rush at Messenger.

HORACE. Hullo! I'll not stand for this! Get out of my–

Messenger raises his arm and Horace receives an electric shock which reels him back into his chair. The furniture may be arranged to shake and rock about as if under the same influence. Messenger refrains and Horace slowly recovers himself.

MESSENGER. Are you properly impressed, or shall I—?

HORACE. No, no! Don't do it again, please! It hurts!

MESSENGER. Good! Now listen with heart and mind. You have learnt that Mars has a planetary lifetime brief compared with Earth, and yet we Martians are to you as are you to the cattle that you breed.

HORACE. As bad as that?

MESSENGER. Triflers of Time, learn the cause. Self–Self is the Miasm of the world you live in; a soul plague blotching Earth's body over with its petty spites, outraged homes, labor riots, revolutions, civil wars, carnivals of blood, marring the Grand Purpose. No war has ever wasted Mars, nor could it. There have been no rushings back, no buried epochs, no sleeping centuries, for Self was unmasked at the beginning.

HORACE. Mask? What mask?

MESSENGER. Self wears a thousand, making a counterfeit of every virtue. The soldier's glory, the painter's touch, the statesman's aim, the poet's dream hide something still of self behind them. Even your children are becoming egoists—the saddest sign of all.

HORACE. Very sad and quite true, but why tell me all this?

MESSENGER. You are the chosen subject.

HORACE. But why?

MESSENGER. Considering your opportunities, you are the basest, the most selfish of men.

HORACE. My opportunities?

MESSENGER. In your house is one whose impulses are fully half unselfish, the maid Minnie. You couldn't spare one evening to make her happy.

HORACE. She took such a narrow view.

MESSENGER. Shame on you! Shame! Then there is your Aunt—

HORACE. Oh, she is awfully narrow, too.

MESSENGER. Silence!

HORACE. If you'd lived in the house as long as I have with Aunt—

MESSENGER. Silence! Too lazy to call a cab.

HORACE. You don't make any allowance.

MESSENGER. You deserve none. Again, there was that poor
unfortunate who in a weak moment confided to you his life's
tragedy.

HORACE. You can't make me responsible for that dirty tramp's
condition.

MESSENGER. You might have saved him. You would have been,
blessed a thousandfold if you had.

HORACE. How do you mean?

MESSENGER. In what a hideous Pretence you live. There, before
you, stood a man of genius. You drove him out to die. An
Inventor perishing in the hey-day of Invention-Worship.

HORACE. Do you really think that fellow's ideas are good for
anything?

MESSENGER. You a man of science! You know nothing at all.
There is more in his little finger than your whole body.

HORACE. Look here. If you'll guarantee him and with your inside
knowledge of things generally—I might hunt him up to-morrow
and set him going.

MESSENGER. You will?

HORACE. Yes. Of course, you do guarantee him?

MESSENGER. For whose benefit would you do this?

HORACE. I should expect to come in, of course—

MESSENGER. Hypocrite! Beyond belief hypocrite! You train your dogs with hunger and a whip. It seems I must try that system upon you. Get up!

HORACE. What are you going to do now?

MESSENGER. You must come with me.

HORACE. Not out into the snow?

MESSENGER. Yes, into the snow and the night.

HORACE. Do let me explain. The fact is I am in rather a delicate state of health, and if I were to venture out on a night like this, the consequences might be most serious.

MESSENGER. You are wasting your breath. Come.

HORACE. You can't really mean it?

MESSENGER. I do.

HORACE. You will let me put on my coat. and hat?

MESSENGER. Put them on. We may find them useful. Hurry!

Horace puts on his coat and muffler slowly.

HORACE. You don't give me time.

MESSENGER. Make haste, I say.

HORACE. I'm not starting out with any comfort at all. I really don't think I should be wise to venture out to-night. It is so very sharp outside.

MESSENGER. Do you hear me? Come!

HORACE. No. I'm damned if I do!

Messenger raises his arm, and again Horace is electrified and the furniture thrown into a commotion. Horace sinks to his knees in front of Messenger in terror.

HORACE. I'll come! I'll come!

MESSENGER. On to your schooling!

Messenger leading Horace away.

EXTRACT TWO FROM A MESSAGE FROM MARS BY
RICHARD GANTHONY (1899)

Enter Bella hastily. She rings bell at front door

MESSENGER. Who comes now? Your servant, is it not?

HORACE. Bella! What can she want? Has she missed me?

Footman opens front door.

BELLA. Is Mr. Parker here, please?

Footman shakes his head.

BELLA. Or Miss Parker, then? Quick, please! The house is on fire.

Footman admits her and the door is closed.

HORACE. The house on fire? My house on fire?

MESSENGER. Be calm. The firemen will attend to it. You'll see all about it in the papers to-morrow.

HORACE. My house is on fire! Let me go !

He starts to go, but is hypnotically held back.

MESSENGER. Stay where you are. You would only be in the way. It is insured, of course.

HORACE. Curse you, no! All my papers will be destroyed. I'm done! I'm beaten! It's your doing! Well, kill me at once! It would be a kindness!

Horace sobs, thoroughly crushed.

MESSENGER. Poor child of the times, crying over your alphabet.

HORACE. What will become of me? What will I do?

MESSENGER. Where are your divisions of labor now? Yours will be to tramp the streets. Stand forth, poor shivering wretch! You are a beggar in rags!

Horace's coat, scarf and hat are torn from him, and he appears as a ragged loafer. Horace looks down at himself in despair.

HORACE. I am! I am!

MESSENGER. And hungry.

HORACE. Ravenous!

Horace leans back against the railings of the house, and most forlorn object. After a pause, enter slowly from R. the Tramp spies Horace and sidles up to him, and takes up a similar pose by his side. Nothing said for a little, but they examine each other.

TRAMP. Know anything?

HORACE. Nothing. I'm hungry. Are you?

The Tramp brings out a biscuit from his pocket.

TRAMP. Here's a biscuit I've got left. It was given to me by a swell to-night. A real tip-topper. That sort of chap don't know what hunger is.

Horace eats ravenously.

HORACE. Doesn't he?

TRAMP. Don't know a place to doss in, do you?

HORACE. No.

TRAMP. Tough, ain't it?

HORACE. Very.

TRAMP. Know where you can get a job in the morning?

HORACE. Wish I did.

TRAMP. There's a lot of snow to shovel.

HORACE. Lots.

TRAMP. But we ain't got no shovels.

HORACE. Worse luck!

TRAMP. What are you?

HORACE. Nothing. Just a tramp.

TRAMP. Same as me. Seen better days?

HORACE. Yes.

TRAMP. Same as me again. Well, I like the looks of you. You seem a good sort, anyhow.

HORACE. Do I? You are the first to say so tonight. I've heard nothing but the contrary opinion of late.

TRAMP. Got a wife that nags, maybe?

HORACE. Not exactly a wife. I've got no wife.

TRAMP. Same as me again. I had a wife once, though. But she's dead and gone. I had a little daughter, but I don't know what become of her. What's on here? A party?

HORACE. Yes.

The footman opens the door and Aunt and Bella come out followed by Dicey and Minnie.

TRAMP. Going away. Come on, let's call a cab.

HORACE. No good, they've got their own car.

AUNT. Oh, how thick the snow is.

DICEY. Don't slip, Minnie.

TRAMP. Minnie! Look! There's my Minnie! My darling little Minnie!

HORACE. Where?

TRAMP. There in the doorway, with that swell! It's my Minnie! I'll swear to it! The living image of her mother! I'm going to speak to her.

Horace holding him back.

HORACE. No, no, man. Think how you will disgrace her.

TRAMP. Disgrace her? Why, she will be proud of her father.

HORACE. See, she has someone to care for her. Why break in upon

her life? You have forfeited your claim.

TRAMP. Not much I haven't. She could give me a fine lift up, and then I'd help you.

HORACE. Not if I die in the gutter! It may be your right. But don't drag her down to your level and mine. Stop him, Marsy! You can.

Messenger waves his hand to Tramp, who seems to give up his purpose.

MESSENGER. A thought for another. The fire is catching.

TRAMP. Well, you're a rum 'un! No wonder you are down on your luck. A man must think of himself in this world a little bit. But you're a good sort. I won't speak to the girl, though she is my daughter. See here now, I've got an idea.

HORACE. I know you have. Lots of them.

TRAMP. How did you know that?

HORACE. I guessed it. (*Aside*) I hope he won't recognize me.

TRAMP. The people will be going home presently. Let's get to work and clear the snow for them to get to their cars. We might pick up a bit that way.

HORACE. Capital, but we have no shovels.

TRAMP. Can't get shovels. Look around and see if you can't find a bit of board to scrape with.

HORACE. A bit of board to scrape with! I recognize the inventor.

TRAMP. Here, what's the matter with that barrel?

HORACE. Lor', I should never have thought of that.

TRAMP. Look out for the Bobby!

Tramp kicks barrel apart and tears out a couple of staves.

TRAMP. You start on the steps.

They clear a path from the door to off. As they work:

HORACE. I wonder how much we shall make?

TRAMP. Sixpence or two if we're in luck. Halves, partner?

HORACE. Halves, if you say so. Halves, partner.

TRAMP. Seems to me I've met you somewhere.

HORACE. (*Aside*) Thunder, he recognizes me!

TRAMP. Didn't I see you last August down Margate way with a piano-organ and a monkey?

HORACE. (*quite boldly*) Very likely.

TRAMP. I thought I'd met you before. Ah, you have come down a bit since then. About ready for them.

Footman at door and a lady and first gentleman come out.

TRAMP. (*most cheerily*) Cleared the snow for you, Lady. Made a nice path, Sir.

He touches his hat. Horace faintly imitates and touches his hat.

HORACE. Cleared the snow for you, Lady. Made a nice path, Sir.

FIRST GENTLEMAN. Sorry I haven't got any coppers. Do take an answer.

TRAMP. Shall I call a cab, sir?

HORACE. Shall I call a cab, sir?

FIRST GENTLEMAN. No, no!

The gentleman exits with lady.

TRAMP. That was a frost. Here's some more.

Two gentleman and a lady come out.

TRAMP. (*less cheerily*) Beg pardon, sir. Look what we've done. Ain't it nice and handy for the lady?

HORACE. (*rather more forcibly*) See what we've done. Ain't it nice and handy for the lady?

SECOND GENTLEMAN. All muffled up or I would.

Exit with others of the party.

HORACE. I've said the same thing myself a dozen times.

TRAMP. Ain't making our fortunes, are we, partner?

HORACE. The stingy brutes! Never mind, we'll try again.

Sir Edward Vivian and two ladies come out.

TRAMP. We cleared the snow away for you, sir. Can't you spare us a trifle, sir?

SIR EDWARD. Nonsense! The servants of the house cleared it.

TRAMP. No, sir, we done it, sir. Me and my partner.

SIR EDWARD. You couple of impostors! Why, where are your shovels?

HORACE. (*firing up*) We cleared it, and if you don't like it you can bally well walk in the snow!

Horace shoulders Sir Edward off the path into the snow.

SIR EDWARD. You impudent loafer! Hi, Policeman!

Enter Policeman.

SIR EDWARD. This ruffian assaulted me.

POLICEMAN. Come out of that, you two! I know you! You're old hands! Be off, both of you!

Tramp drags Horace away.

POLICEMAN. (*very sweetly*) Cab, sir?

Sir Edward gives money.

SIR EDWARD. Thank you, Policeman.

Exeunt Sir Edward, ladies and Policeman.

MESSENGER. Fine force, the police!

HORACE. I was nearly starting a labor riot. Well, that's what is at

the bottom of most of them.

TRAMP. (*thoroughly broken*) My ideas don't seem to come to anything any more. I'm a failure, and a bad 'un. I've been feeling bad all day, and this has about done for me.

He falls down. Horace goes to him and kneels down to him, trying to rouse him up.

HORACE. Don't talk like that! It is a splendid idea, and there are plenty more to come out.

TRAMP. I only wants burying, Partner, and they'll have to do that. Damn 'em!

HORACE. You must pull yourself together. Marsy, won't you help him?

MESSENGER. You can't make me responsible for that dirty beggar's condition.

HORACE. Ah, don't mock me! I'm beaten! I give in.

MESSENGER. If you had your money again, you'd just go your old way, and leave him to die.

HORACE. That's gone, and I wouldn't have it back at that price. Only help him now.

MESSENGER. Try at the house.

HORACE. They know me there.

MESSENGER. What of that?

HORACE. I wouldn't like Mrs. Clarence to see me in this condition.

MESSENGER. Your friend is dying.

Horace pulls himself together and knocks loudly at the door. Footman opens door.

HORACE. There's a poor fellow dying of cold and hunger. Ask Mrs. Clarence if she will—

Mrs. Clarence appears behind Footman.

MRS. CLARENCE. What is it, John?

HORACE. There's a poor fellow outside dying of cold.

MRS. CLARENCE. This is not a hospital. John, shut the door.

Horace holds the door open.

HORACE. Mrs. Clarence, you must not refuse this service.

MRS. CLARENCE. And pray, who are you?

HORACE. Horace Parker, a ruined man as you know—a tramp as you see.

MRS. CLARENCE. John, do you hear me?

HORACE. Mrs. Clarence—may he lie on the mat where your dog sleeps?

MRS. CLARENCE. John—

Mrs Clarence retires, and the door is shut in Horace's face

HORACE. You hear? What shall I do for him, Marsy?

MESSENGER. Well done, my pupil!

TRAMP. You're a good 'un. I said it all along.

MESSENGER. Feel in your pocket.

HORACE. My pocket? What for? What's this? A note! A pound note! Halves, Partner! Halves!

Horace bends over the Tramp, succoring him.

EXTRACT THREE FROM A MESSAGE FROM MARS.

At rise of curtain there should be shown at transparency set well down stage, a picture of the end of the last act, the snow scene and Horace bending over the Tramp and the Messenger soaring homewards.

At the same time Horace himself is seen sleeping in his chair, breathing heavily. With the first climbing of the fire-engine bell and Horace waking up, the lights increase at back and the dream scene fades away. The lamp is now seen to be lighted again, the fire burning brightly, and an "Extra" evening paper lying on the table, close to Horace. After sufficient pause after curtain is up, a fire-engine is heard rumbling past outside, and this disturbs Horace, the biggest awake, as the transparency picture fades away.

Horace looks about him, bewildered, then at his clothes. Gives a short laugh and grunt, and leans back, smiling with closed eyes.

HORACE. What a nightmare! Marsy, old boy, you have a lot to answer for! Fancy my dreaming I was hungry! Comes of eating a heavy dinner. (*with a sudden thought*) By Jove!

Horace searches his pockets for money. Finds it with a sigh of relief. Counts his notes carefully.

HORACE. Ten, twenty, fifty, and one. All there.

Horace pulls out some silver from his trousers pocket.

HORACE. Even the silver. Very careless, very careless of me. I can hardly be trusted out at night with so much. I might in a weak moment hand it over to some hospital amid the admiring cheers of the populace. I must watch myself.

Loud clang of fire-engine bell as it passes, and involuntarily he shouts out.

HORACE. Fire!

Horace checks himself.

HORACE. Hope nobody heard me. My nerves are all on edge. I

wish old Marsy would tell me whether that inventive vagabond got over his troubles or peacefully expired in the snow. Poor devil! I almost wish I could meet him again. We call such fellows riff-raff, rabble, but, if the truth were told, might not some of us be found to be the real loafers in the snug corners of Easy Street, of little good to anyone, cumbering up the way till that old patrolman, Death, steps up and bids us "Move on"?

Enter Bella abruptly and alarmed.

BELLA. Oh, sir, did you call?

HORACE. Call? (*innocently*) Call what?

BELLA. Fire, sir. Fire.

HORACE. Fire is all right. Burning nicely.

BELLA. Yes, sir. Perhaps it was the fire engine going by.

HORACE. Very likely. Very likely. Did one go by?

BELLA. Yes, sir-and I was half dozing, and-

HORACE. You must have been dreaming, Bella. That's very wrong. You shouldn't. It's a bad habit to get into. However, as you are sleepy you needn't wait up. I shan't sleep again. I mean I don't think I shall feel like going to sleep at all.

BELLA. (*Aside*) As if I didn't see him asleep. I think I would like to go to bed, sir, if you think Miss Minnie won't want anything. They can't be long now, sir.

HORACE. No, You go to bed. By the way, did you fill the lamp?

BELLA. Yes, sir, and made up the fire, and brought you in your "Extra."

HORACE. Extra?

Horace almost reeling with nervousness.

BELLA. Yes, sir, I put it on the table. Oh, sir, are you ill?

HORACE. Ill? No. What an idea!

BELLA. You were so-so busy, sir, when I came in with the oil, I didn't like to wa— to disturb you, sir. Good night, sir.

HORACE. Good night, Bella.

Bella exits.

HORACE. Then there was an Extra in reality. That was not all dream. There it is. What made me dream of the bank smash if nothing had been said about it? I dreamt of Mars. I had been reading of Mars. At this moment, great heavens, I may be, in very fact, a ruined man!

Horace seizes paper with trembling hands and finds the place. Reads.

HORACE. Not a word!

Horace wipes his forehead.

HORACE. Not a word, but there might have been! And why should this house not be burning as well as the one that is? What would I do? Cut my throat! An arrant coward's refuge, after all. Ah, from the beggar's point of view, wealth seemed so flinty hearted, while charity was natural and easy to the poor.

Fire engine.

HORACE. Evidently no false alarm this time. Somebody sick with anxiety and dread to-night. Heaven help them, whoever they are! What a rap Marsy would give me for that speech. He'd say, "Help them yourself. Don't overtax Heaven." Pshaw, I'd only be in the way. We have an excellent fire department. Best in the world. And there are so many need helping. How many lines of this paper tell of suffering, and how much may we read between the lines!

Horace skims over paper.

HORACE. "Wanted, plain sewing, to do at home." "Young man wants work. Will do anything honest." Honest? He is particular for these days. And I swore to Marsy that I wouldn't take back my

money except to share it with others. He might have made favorable terms with me just then.

Horace sees ring on table.

HORACE. Minnie's ring. My trying to bully her. It was the act of a cur! I'll tell her so. I'll—

Fire-engine passes.

HORACE. Another! It must be serious.

Horace looks through curtains of window centre.

HORACE. What a sheet of flame! It must be in the next street. It may reach here.

Horace looks intently.

HORACE. No, the wind's the other way. (*relieved*) That tenement house, I'll be bound! Poor people, what will they do this bitter night if they are burnt out? I don't know what I could do if I really wanted to. I think I'll put on my coat and hat and go and see. Don't suppose I'll do much harm looking on.

Fire-engine bell again. He looks out again.

HORACE. Ladder escape.

Horace dresses a little quicker now.

HORACE. I might take an extra coat for some one.

Horace goes to closet containing several overcoats and takes one.

Hesitates and then puts another over his arm. Is going when another engine passes.

HORACE. I can't stand it!

Horace snatches the last overcoat. Leave the closet door open and rushes out with coats over his arm.

EXTRACT FROM MRS. BOB CRATCHIT'S WILD
CHRISTMAS BINGE BY CHRISTOPHER DURANG
(2005)

Enter Clarence, a sweet doddering old man of an angel. He has a very large set of wings on his back that make it hard for him to balance.

CLARENCE. Well it's true. The bell that just rang was for me—I just got my first pair of wings. Saved that man from killing himself. George Bailey of Bailey Savings and Loan. And now I've got these great big things on me. Ooooh, they make me feel a little unsteady. *(to the Ghost)* Hello. I'm Clarence. What's your name?

GHOST. My name is Trophenia.

CLARENCE. Trophenia. What a lovely name. I'm an angel, what about you?

GHOST. I'm a ghost.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. I hate all this stuff about ghosts and angels. I don't believe it.

CLARENCE. You don't believe your eyes?

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. I think you're all a piece of undigested mutton. Or a glob of still-fermenting Rice-A-Roni.

EBENEZER SCROOGE. Oh, that's what I said too.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Hello, there. I'm Mrs. Bob Cratchit. Are you Mr. Scrooge?

EBENEZER SCROOGE. Yes. I've enjoyed watching you.

BOB CRATCHIT. *(excited)* Ooooooh, watching me do what?

Ghost notices the flirtation, but focuses back on Clarence.

GHOST. Clarence I wonder if maybe you've been sent to help me. I've tried and tried to. make Mr. Scrooge reform himself, but this lady, Mrs. Bob Cratchit, keeps getting in the way with all her

negativity. And try to show him him his gravestone, and we end up in a pub.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Well I'd prefer a pub any day.

EBENEZER SCROOGE. Me too.

They smile at each other.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Brilliant minds think alike.

CLARENCE. Well I love to help people, I'm a very good person.

Ummm ... let me see. (to Mrs Bob Cratchit and Scrooge) Which of you two is Mrs. Bob Cratchit?

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. (*with a look that he is dense*) Well ... I am.

CLARENCE. I understand you have a bad attitude.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. I have a realistic attitude. I'm living in 1840s London, there's no plumbing, everybody smells all the time, I have twenty children—no, twenty-one—or forty-seven, I don't know!—there's never enough food, my husband earns no money cause this man won't pay him anything ...

EBENEZER SCROOGE. Oh, you want me to give him a raise?

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. (*to Scrooge, flirtatious again*) No, you're right, he's not worth a raise. You pay him as little as you want. (*smiles, then back to Clarence*) It's nonstop pathos in my house. The crippled little boy with innocent little eyes. The big galumphing Little Nell, who eats nettles, whatever they are.

She waves the back of nettles in his face.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. And I feel so lonely, and hopeless, and the people around me are icky and goody-goody and pitiful, and I wish I had never been born!

A little ding noise. Clarence looks focused.

CLARENCE. Say that again.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. I wish I had never been born!

The little ding noise again.

CLARENCE. Your wish is granted.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. What?

CLARENCE. You got it. You've never been born.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Well, nonsense. I'm still here. I'm still holding Little Nell's nettles.

She reaches for the bag; it's gone.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Wait. The bag of nettles, where are they?

CLARENCE. You've never been born, so there is no Little Nell. And there's no bag of nettles either. And there is also no Tiny Tim.

GHOST. Excuse me. I don't see how this is going to help.

Threatening Scrooge with the death of Tiny Tim is a big part of my strategy.

CLARENCE. Step at a time. This worked with George Bailey, I think it'll work here too. Mrs. Cratchit, or Person X, since you don't exist, you've been granted a great gift. To see what life would've been like if you hadn't been born. Come let's look and see how your husband Bob would be. *(starts to exit with Mrs Bob; to Ghost)* We'll be back in a minute and I bet she'll be a changed woman.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Wait a minute. I want Mr. Scrooge to come along for moral support.

EBENEZER SCROOGE. I'd be happy to, fine lady. *(flirtatious)* And you are a fine lady.

GHOST. I'm so thrown. Nowhere in the story does Scrooge fall in love with Mrs. Bob Cratchit.

EBENEZER SCROOGE. I'm not in love ... *(with a smile to Mrs. Bob Cratchit)* ... yet. I'm just flirting.

The ghost looks a little alarmed by this interest from Scrooge.

CLARENCE. Now, now, don't lose faith. Come with me, and we'll see what would've happened had Gladys Cratchit never been born.

The pub goes away. We're back at the Cratchit's house.

EXTRACT FROM PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE (1844)

A churchyard. Moonlit tomb. Grave of Scrooge. Bell tolling at intervals

SCROOGE. A churchyard, overrun by grass and weeds!

The spectre points to Scrooge's grave.

SCROOGE. Why do you point to that stone? (*pause*) Before I draw near to it, answer me one question. Have I seen the shadows of things that will be? or are they shadows of the things that may be only?

Spectre motions him to the grave. Scrooge advances to the grave. Reads.

SCROOGE. Ebenezer Scrooge!

Scrooge falls on his knees.

SCROOGE. Am I the despised deserted man that none mourn for dead? (*picture*) Oh no, no; spirit, hear, speak to me. I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why, why shew me this if! am past all hope?

Scrooge clings to Spectre's robe.

SCROOGE. Good spirit! assure me that I yet may change the shadows you have shewn me by an altered life.

The Spectre's hand trembles.

SCROOGE. You pity me. I will honor 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. Oh! tell me I may hope to sponge away the writing on this stone.

Music. As he is holding Spirit's robe, it slowly glides away. The scene at the same time vanishing, leaves him in Chamber as in first scene. He is still kneeling, his eyes buried in his hands. Bells are heard ringing.

Lights full on. He is aroused and looks up.

SCROOGE. Yes, my own room, there's the saucepan—that's the gruel; it's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha! ha! yes, yes,

old Jacob Marley. Heaven and the Christmas time be praised for this! I say it on my knees!

Scrooge sobs violently.

SCROOGE. I don't know what to do, I am as light as a feather, happy as an angel, and merry as a school-boy.

Carol singers are heard outside. He runs to the window, opens it, and throws out money.

SCROOGE. (*singing*) A merry Christmas to everybody, a happy new year to all the world.

Scrooge capers about dancing.

SCROOGE. Hollo! whoop! hollo! I don't know what day of the month it is. I don't know anything, I'm a baby; I don't care.

Scrooge snaps his fingers.

SCROOGE. I'd rather be a baby.

Scrooge runs to the window.

SCROOGE. Hallo! boy there, come up, I want you.

BOY. (*outside*) Me, sir?

SCROOGE. Yes, yes, there's the key.

Scrooge throws his key out.

SCROOGE. I'll go out.

Scrooge takes off his dressing gown and begins to put on his coat which must be on the arm chair.

SCROOGE. No I won't, I'll stay at home.

Enter Peter.

SCROOGE. What's to-day, my fine fellow?

BOY. Why Christmas-day to be sure, sir!

SCROOGE. Christmas-day! I see, the spirits have done it all in one

night. My lad, do you see that poulterer's?

Scrooge points out of the window.

PETER. Of course I do !

SCROOGE. Look at that turkey hanging up—the prize one—the big one.

PETER. What, the one as big as me?

SCROOGE. What an intelligent boy! It's quite a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck, go and buy it.

PETER. (*grinning*) Walker!

SCROOGE. I'm in earnest, go, and buy it and tell 'em to bring it here, and I'll give you a shilling.

PETER. A shilling! oh crikey, won't I.

Peter runs off.

SCROOGE. (*calling after him*) Make haste, and I'll give you half-a-crown! I'll send it to Bob Cratchits, it's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Bob shan't know who sends it. No, no.

Scrooge looks out of window.

SCROOGE. Hilloa! there he goes with tiny Tim on his shoulder. Hallo! Bob Cratchit! hallo man, come up, quick, run, jump.

Scrooge laughs.

SCROOGE. He shall take the turkey with him. No he shan't, I'll send it home—he shall go with me to Fred's. I'll carry Tiny Tim.

Enter Bob, in first dress, with Tiny Tim on his shoulder. Scrooge sits at a table and looks very cross.

BOB. Good morning, sir. May I wish you a merry Christmas? Scrooge.

Scrooge advances and threatens with a roll of parchment.

SCROOGE. If you don't Bob, I'll kill you. I won't stand any of

your nonsense, will we Tim, my man.

Scrooge takes the child and hits Bob in the ribs.

SCROOGE. Cratchit, be so good as to give me my coat, will you?

Bob crosses for coat. Scrooge kneels to child and presses it to his breast.

SCROOGE. This child is mine—will you have me for a second father my dear? There, there, don't cry, don't cry.

Scrooge weeps.

SCROOGE. Bob, this child is mine, all you're children are mine, you are mine, your salary's doubled, and you shall have another coal scuttle in your office before you can dot another i. Bob, come with me to my nephew Fred's.

PETER. (*outside*) The turkey's come, sir.

SCROOGE. Call a cab for him, and another for us. I'll come down, lad. Tiny, my man, we'll have a roaring day of it. Bob, put him on my back.

Scrooge exit laughing, carrying Tiny Tim.

BOB. (*following*) Double salary—new coal scuttle—father to all my children—what'll Mrs. Cratchit say to that?

Exit. Music. Last scene. Nephew Fred's Christmas Day. A handsome apartment filled by well dressed guests, male and female. Chairs, sofas, chandeliers, the apartment decorated with holly. Music and laugh to open scene. They're all playing hunt the slipper seated on the ground.

FRED. I've got it.

All rise. Mr Topper kisses one of the girls under the mistletoe, she screams.

FRED. Topper! drop her! Now for a health.

Servants hand wine. Gentlemen help the ladies.

FRED. "Uncle Scrooge," a merry Christmas and a happy new year to the old man, whatever he is.

All drink.

FRED. I only wish he was amongst us now.

Enter Scrooge with a large piece of holly stuck in his button-hole followed by Bob carrying Tiny Tim, and coal scuttle.

SCROOGE. Do you, my boy? then here he is!

FRED. Uncle!

Fred shakes his hand.

SCROOGE. Yes, and your uncle's friends, Mr, Cratchit and Mr. Cratchit's son—no, my son.

FRED. Who'd have dreamt this.?

SCROOGE. Nobody—Bob did'nt dream it, did you Bob?

BOB. I thought it all a dream, sir, till you bought the coal scuttle.

Bob shakes hands with guests. Scrooge kisses Mrs Fred.

SCROOGE. We've come to dinner. How do you do, my dear? will you let us stay with you?

MRS. F. Stay, sir? I am only sorry you did not come before.

SCROOGE. To be sure you are, but I'll make up for it all now; you must come and see me—I hope every body here will come—all the world, I'll try to make 'em happy—

All bow and curtsy.

SCROOGE. You'll come?

They bow.

SCROOGE. Thankee, I am much obliged to you, bless you. (*to audience*) And may I ask you to come, I need not say how much your presence will add to our enjoyment and help us to keep our Christmas well—

Scrooge leads Tiny forward.

SCROOGE.—and with Tiny Tim allow me to wish you a happy new

year, and may—

TIM. Heaven bless us, everyone.

Picture, and curtain falls, as the characters are singing the carol—the bells ringing.