



HANUKKAH, SHMANUKKAH!

A READER'S THEATER SCRIPT

ADAPTED FROM THE STORY BY ESMÉ RAJI CODELL
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About Reader's Theater: Reader's theater takes the content of a book (and then some) and puts it into script form as a form of turn-taking read-aloud. No sets or costumes are required, just good readers, a few chairs and a lot of imagination. For performance, print out copies for everyone participating and put them in matching covers.

About the Parts: The *Mensches*, or good people, help define Yiddish words for the audience and help the Narrator tell the story. Perhaps they are Scroogemacher's neighbors, or a klezmer band, or new immigrants...whatever your imagination decides they should be. The chorus is Scroogemacher's community, designed to make sure that in the classroom community everyone gets a part, so include as many chorus members as you want or need. If you are short a chorus or want to read this at a smaller family gathering, just have the *Mensches* speak in unison for the chorus parts.

Other helpful hints: Show children how to highlight their lines in accordance with their assigned parts so they know when to speak, and explain that they shouldn't read the characters' names or stage directions out loud. Reading the script silently to themselves and then practicing lines out loud will make for a more fluid performance.

Pronunciations for the Yiddish words may be found in the glossary of the fully illustrated children's book *Hanukkah, Shmanukkah!* by Esmé Raji Codell (Hyperion, 2005), along with an informative author's note about the origins of this story (also makes for a nice introduction to this script) and recommendations for further reading.

Characters:

Big Shot Narrator
Scroogemacher
Moshe
Gerstein
Chorus

Rabbi of Hanukkah Past
Rabbi of Hanukkah Present
Rabbi of Hanukkah Future (*a female*)
Mensch 1
Mensch 2
Mensch 3

Narrator: Once upon a time there was a man named Charles Dickens.

Mensch 3: But that's another story.

Mensch 2: Don't tell us that one. Everyone knows that one. Tell us the one with words in Yiddish, the language of our grandparents.

Mensch 1: Yes, yes, that one. The one with words so funny on the tongue.

Narrator: Speaking of tongues! Old man Scroogemacher was as sour as a pickle, and had a tongue like horseradish. He would lash out at all the workers in his waistcoat factory.

Mensch 1: Look at them, hunched over their machines.

Scroogemacher: Faster, faster! *Shvieg*, no talking during work hours!

Mensch 2: Be quiet, he says!

Scroogemacher: *Shmendrick*, pick up the pace or I'll give you such a *zetz*.

Mensch 3: He means, you want a knock on that empty head of yours?

Scroogemacher: What's the matter with you, you greenhorn klutz! If you ruin the work, you'll pay for it!

Narrator: Poor Gerstein turned as white as a ghost.

Gerstein: Pay for it? With five mouths to feed waiting open at home, like baby birds, and hardly a corner of bread to share?

Narrator: But this is how Scroogemacher talked, *geshraying* from sunrise to sunset. *Gevalt*, there are only so many hours in the day, but Scroogemacher even knew how to fix that. Scroogemacher went into his office.

Chorus: No, don't do it!

Scroogemacher: Foreman, adjust the clock.

Narrator: The foreman went behind the wall, and turned a small dial. So slowly, the minute hand went backward.

Mensch 1: Five minutes.

Mensch 2: Ten minutes!

Moshe: Oh, uncle. Not tonight. Please, it's the last night of Hanukkah. Let them go home at a decent hour.

Scroogemacher: What? Are they going to be late for a game of *dreidel*? And what do these worthless dogs have to gamble, the *shmattes* on their backs?

Chorus: All they have to wear are rags!

Scroogemacher: Hanukkah, shmanukkah. It's just another night to me.

Moshe: Maybe it's more to them.

Scroogemacher: Them, schmem. laughed Always with the 'them.' What do you care about them, you freethinking young fool?

Moshe: Some of them have children.

Scroogemacher: (*grunts*) Children, schmildren. So let them work to feed them.

Moshe: But some of them *are* children.

Scroogemacher: (*wearily*) Nephew, I bought your ticket here to the Golden Medinah not so you could follow me around the floor hocking my tzchinik, but to learn the trade and maybe someday take over for me, like a son.

Mensch 3: So why are you bothering your uncle, Moshe? Did he not bring you to America?

Scroogemacher: Life here is hard work and they know it, so why do you cry for them instead of enjoy your own privileges? If you weren't my nephew...

Moshe: I'd be one of them. I'd be working late on this night of miracles.

Narrator: Scroogemacher looked out over the bent, pale faces of his workers, their bony shoulders hunched and eyes fluttering over muddy, sleepless circles. And guess what Scroogemacher said. That's right.

Scroogemacher: Miracles, shmericles.

Moshe: (*grumbling*) I think it would be a miracle if you would act like a mensch.

Mensch 2: Luckily Scroogemacher didn't hear him.

Chorus: The humming of the sewing machines was too loud.

Narrator: Past the tenements old Scroogemacher's carriage rolled, leaving long trails in the slush. His nose wrinkled at the smell of laundry water, boiled cabbage and horse.

Mensch 3: From the boarded up windows, he could see the glinting of candles.

Mensch 1: Is that a woman sewing by the light of the menorah?

Scroogemacher: Good. They should take the work home.

Narrator: Even the moon hung thin and emaciated, yellow like a fingernail cutting overseeing the ghostly lines of laundry.

Scroogemacher: It is a chilly night. Did Moshe say he would be home late? I think tonight I will go straight to bed.

Narrator: When he crawled into his bed, though, he had a funny feeling in his *kishkes*.

Mensch 2: (*confidentially*) It didn't go away, even with seltzer!

Scroogemacher: Oh! My stomach. That farshtunkener butcher sold me bad meat.

Rabbi Past: It's not the meat.

Scroogemacher: *A gonif!*

Narrator: But when he sat up, it was not a thief he found. Instead, he saw a rabbi at the foot of his bed, handsomely dressed in a black suit and a silver tallis.

Chorus: Who is this man in a prayer shawl?

Scroogemacher: Don't ask me for alms. I put in the tzedakah box already. I don't owe any more to charity.

Rabbi Past: (*shaking his head and chuckling*) Oy, Scroogemacher. You are such a shtunk.

Scroogemacher: How do you know my name? Who let you in?

Mensch 2: Notice how Scroogemacher doesn't argue when the rabbi called him a nasty man.

Mensch 1: Well, how could he?

Mensch 3: *Shah!* I'm listening.

Rabbi Past: I heard you like to *potchke* with clocks. It so happens that I do, too. I am the rabbi of Hanukkah past, and I have arrived to take you to *hotzenplotz* and back so you will see that Hanukkah is nothing to sneeze at.

Chorus: You're going on a little trip, Scroogemacher!

Scroogemacher: Hanukkah, shmanukkah. Probably I ate too much garlic and onions. I'm seeing little *dybbuk* at the foot of my bed. You let yourself in, evil spirit, so see yourself out.

Mensch 1: Did he just call the rabbi an evil spirit?

Mensch 3: Oy!

Narrator: Scroogemacher pulled the covers over his head. But even when he closed his eyes, the rabbi appeared, as if in a dream. When Scroogemacher tried to awaken, it seemed as though he couldn't.

Scroogemacher: (*as if to himself*) What spell is this?

Rabbi Past: So, Scroogemacher, do you not know from lighting a menorah? One candle for each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, and of course the ninth candle, the shammes.

Chorus: The candle in the middle!

Scroogemacher: Of course, I know the story of Hanukkah. What do you take me for, a nincompoop?

Rabbi Past: So, give me a history lesson.

Chorus: Faster is better, and talk is cheap. So get started!

Scroogemacher: All right, all right! (*sighs*) Two thousand years ago, give or take a few. *Meshugges* captured the holy temple, made such a mess.

Rabbi Past: Like this?

Narrator: Suddenly, all around the two men, soldiers of old appeared with feathers trailing off of helmets, smashing furniture with great steely blows from their swords.

Mensch 3: Flames crawled up the walls, and black smoke billowed!

Chorus: (*coughing*)

Narrator: Through the darkness, Scroogemacher could see the soldiers pillage the great temple, gathering the gold.

Scroogemacher: *Vey iz mir*, what place is this?

Mensch 1: Scroogemacher cowered behind an overturned table.

Mensch 2: Can you blame him?

Rabbi Past: The desecrated temple. Mid-desecration. Front row, center.

Scroogemacher: Gevalt! What a *tumul!* They are making a wreck of this place! How can this be? Rabbi, we must flee King Antioch's soldiers!

Rabbi Past: Nothing doing. They can't see us, my friend. Don't worry about the noise. Just go on with your story. You were saying?

Scroogemacher: (*trembling*) The Jews fought back.

Rabbi Past: *Nu?* Like this?

Narrator: At once, men in tunics poured in like water, howling and wielding swords and sticks.

Chorus: (*cries and groans*)

Narrator: Rocks and arrows rained down through the air, along with the groans of men taking their last breath and dropping like lead against the stone floor. Scroogemacher found himself screaming, but stopped awestruck when there entered a man who moved calmly through the terror and lay down his enemy left and right.

Rabbi Past: Judah Macabee!

Mensch 2: Macabee means 'hammer,' as you know, being such a smarty pants.

Rabbi Past: He was the mighty Son of Matthais. When the soldiers came to Modin, an altar was put. Matthais was ordered to bow down before a statue of a Greek idol and sacrifice a pig to him.

Chorus: Not too kosher.

Rabbi Past: So, do you remember what happened next?

Scroogemacher: Matthais opened a mouth. He said he would never worship idols, and his five sons attacked the soldiers. The villagers joined the *mishegas*, and the soldiers fled. But they would return, and the Macabees fled to caves in the mountains, where they formed an army and learned to fight.

Rabbi Past: All from someone standing up to a *makher!*

Chorus: A bigshot!

Rabbi Past: So, what would have happened if old Gerstein would have stood up to you when you docked his pay, I wonder? Maybe you'd find a hundred hammers on your head?

Scroogemacher: (shouting) One has nothing to do with the other!

Rabbi Past: Who says one has to do with the other? A man can't wonder about hammers? So go on. You haven't told me the end of your story.

Scroogemacher: The Macabees won the war and returned to the land of Judea. When they returned to the temple, it was all *farpatsshket*.

Chorus: Messed up.

Scroogemacher: There was so much work to do, but there was only enough oil in the lamp to last for one night. They say it is a miracle that the oil lasted for eight, and so there are eight candles in a menorah and one shammes, to remember the rededication of the temple won back by the Macabees. Are you paying attention?

Rabbi Past: He should be here now.

Scroogemacher: Who?

Mensch 1: Who?

Mensch 2: Who?

Mensch 3: Who?

Chorus: Whom?

Rabbi Past: The Rabbi of Hanukkah Present. Ah, here he is. Scroogemacher, meet the Rabbi of Hanukkah present. Rabbi, this is Mr. Scroogemacher. You will excuse me for running off, but you see, I'm late for latkes.

Chorus: Mmm, potato pancakes!

Rabbi Past: My wife makes the best latkes. But she will understand why I am not on time. Everyone works late here in the New World, right, Scroogemacher?

Narrator: He winked, and before Scroogemacher could answer, the little rabbi was gone. In his place was the new rabbi.

Mensch 1: Tall and pointed as a sewing needle!

Mensch 3: No need to get personal.

Rabbi Present: Look, at you, Scroogemacher. Your mouth is hanging open. You must be hungry. Don't worry. I know where we can get a nosh. Follow me!

Narrator: There appeared a flight of stairs of worn wood.

Mensch 2: Sounds of people talking, laughing and arguing hummed from behind closed doors.

Chorus: (softly talking and laughing)

Narrator: Scroogemacher stayed at the rabbi's heel, grasping tighter to the splintery banister as it seemed to grow darker with every landing.

Scroogemacher: What was that, moving in a corner?

Mensch 3: The cheaper flats are at the top.

Mensch 2 and 1: Come on, Scroogemacher. You can make it!

Rabbi Present: Ah, here we are.

Scroogemacher: (*short of breath*) At last! So what devilish place is this, now? It is dark as a den of thieves.

Rabbi Present: Devilish! Why Scroogemacher, it is the tenement of your own worker, Gerstein! Surely you remember him, you docked him two cents for a crooked hem only a few hours ago!

Scroogemacher: *Shvieg!*

Chorus: Shhh! Be quiet!

Scroogemacher: (*fearfully*) Listen, Someone is coming. Who knows what bad element frequents such a shoddy tenement at this time of night?

Rabbi Present: (*laughing*) Oh, Scroogemacher! Don't you recognize your own nephew?

Chorus: It's that mischief-maker Moshe!

Scroogemacher: What is that *mazik* doing here?

Narrator: Scroogemacher jumped back into the shadows, but the Rabbi of Hanukkah Present reminded him that he was invisible. Up the stairs came bounding two at a time. In his arms were packages. He knocked on the door.

(*All Mensches knock in unison to the rhythm of "shave and a haircut, two cents"*)

Moshe: (*calling*) Anybody home?

Gerstein: Ah, my boy, my boy! Look everyone, it is our young friend Moshe, bearing gifts.

Half of Chorus: Hello, Moshe! Welcome! Welcome!

Other half of Chorus: Hooray, it's Moshe! Welcome! Welcome!

Gerstein: *Sha, sha*, children! You are jumping up and down so, you could break through the floorboards! Do you see, Moshe, what joy you bring when you pay us a visit?

Narrator: Scroogemacher and the rabbi slipped in before the door closed. The apartment was barely two rooms with a single window looking out upon a wall of bricks, the draft lifting the ragged curtain strung across the pane. Beds were set abreast so that you couldn't even walk.

Mensch 1: Though it was the middle of the night, everyone was awake.

Mensch 2: Mr. And Mrs. Gerstein with their older daughter and four small children...

Mensch 1: One still a baby on her mother's hip.

Mensch 3: Then there were the five boarders: a young man with his grandmother, her head wrapped in a baboushka, and another man wearing an undershirt and whose smile could still be made out from under his thick moustache...

Mensch 1: Along with his wife and small daughter.

Narrator: At once the table was cleared of the hill of limp pants and shirtcoats that had been brought home to work on, and the sewing machine and hot iron ushered off to a corner.

Mensch 2: Moshe opened up his packages wrapped in newspaper from the butcher and baker and grocer with some ceremony, each met with noisy groans of delight.

Mensch 1: A loaf of bread!

Mensch 3: A roasted chicken!

Mensch 2: Smoked herring, fit for a czar!

All Mensches: (*in unison*) And pickles, yes, enough for each child to have his own!

Mensches and Chorus: Oh, what a happy Hanukkah!

Narrator: Mrs. Gerstein wept, and kissed Scroogemacher's nephew on both cheeks.

Scroogemacher: (*shrieking*) What is this! I pay for his passage so he can gallivant with this crowd of riff-raff! I pay him good salary so he can squander it on charity cases!

Rabbi Present: (*chewing on a pickle*) Now, now. Is that any way to talk about your nephew's future in-laws?

Scroogemacher: What!

Rabbi Present: (*affectionately*) Look at Gerstein's daughter. Lovely as a rose.

Scroogemacher: (*snorting*) Rose, shmoze. She's skinny as a weed, and with any luck, the wind will blow her away like one. I will fire her tomorrow, and Gerstein, too. Then we will see about getting my nephew a proper match!

Rabbi Present: Don't tell me you are against love, too.

Scroogemacher: Love is sweet...

Chorus: But with bread, it's better!

Rabbi Present: You would know, Mr. Scroogemacher, wouldn't you?

Narrator: At once, the room went dark.

Mensch and Chorus: (*fingers to lips*) Shhhhhhhhhhh!

Scroogemacher: Where did everybody go? Again with the dark?

Narrator: To Scroogemacher's amazement, the rabbi answered the question by opening his waistcoat and pulling out a golden menorah, eight candles lit.

Rabbi Present: Ahh. Finally. It was giving me such a cramp, you wouldn't believe. But look, the shammas is out. Would you light it for me?

Scroogemacher: Why should I light a candle? It's an old world tradition, and I left the old for the new. But do as you please. What's it to me?

Narrator: The rabbi nodded and, taking the shammas, he lit each candle himself and recited the ancient lines.

Chorus: (*whispering reverently*) A prayer over the candles.

Mensch 3: The words and notes plucked at Scroogemacher's heart like the strains of a fiddle playing a familiar song!

Narrator: But he did not waver until the light cast by the candles revealed a ship's steerage.

Scroogemacher: Oh, rabbi, don't make me relive this!

Rabbi Present: You are not reliving anything. It is the new crop of your workers, Scroogemacher, crossing the Atlantic as we speak. It seems you will never run out of poor wretches.

Scroogemacher: What is that, Rabbi? I barely heard you, so carried off am I by my own memories. Who could forget the passage? I was such a young man then, but I still remember.

Mensch 1: Three weeks of babies crying.

Mensch 2: No change of clothes, no place to do your private business, people sick all around.

Mensch 3: Vinegar would have smelled like perfume after breathing in the ethyrs of that Gehenna!

Scroogemacher: Like dogs, crowded a thousand thick in a space that could barely hold a hundred.

Chorus: Like dogs!

Rabbi Present: Like dogs, you say? And so you call your workers. Were they not so brave as yourself, to make such a treacherous journey?

Scroogemacher: To live in the Golden Medinah, it is worth such peril.

All Mensches: The Golden Country!

Chorus: Are the streets not paved with gold?

Scroogemacher: These people coming have made the right decision, Rabbi. It is the land of opportunity and freedom. Is it not the world for Jews that Judah Macabee envisioned when he so bravely battled?

Rabbi Present: Perhaps. But how about for your dogs, Mr. Scroogemacher? How about for your dogs?

Narrator: Scroogemacher's eyes surveyed the terrible scene.

Mensch 1: Beneath Scroogemacher's shoes, the boat swayed and lurched.

Mensch 2: Babies whined in an eerie rhythm that echoed in the hull.

Mensch 3: All around was a tangle, a human pile of scarves and suitcases and beating hearts.

(Half the chorus puts hand over heart; the other half leans forward with a hand cupped around the ear)

Chorus: *(softly, stage whisper)* Can you hear the beating of a heart?

Rabbi Present: You look green, Scroogemacher. Is the butcher's chicken bothering you again?

Narrator: Scroogemacher tripped unnoticed over the sprawl of sleeping cargo and climbed the stairs to the deck, just as crowded but cut by the breeze of the night air.

Chorus: *(sniffing in)* Air!

Narrator: He breathed it greedily and with great relief, and like the horde around him, he found himself with his head lifted toward the stars. The ship blew its great bass signal, and a cry rose from the crowd.

Chorus: Ahhhhh!

Narrator: Scroogemacher opened his eyes to see the torch of Lady Liberty, like a jewel in the distance.

Rabbi Present: Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

Chorus: That's us!

Scroogemacher: *(whispering)* I remember standing on this deck with my wife. She crossed the ocean twice, you know. Here, and then back again. When they checked her eyes, she had trachoma, the blinding disease, and got the chalk mark that meant she was forced to return. We were parted. I swore I would send for her.

Rabbi Present: So did you?

Scroogemacher: Why do you ask if you already know, to torture me, you tsores monger?

Mensch 2: (*scolding*) What's the matter with that rabbi? Does he like sorrow and trouble?

Scroogemacher: Man plans and God laughs. Surely you know that, Rabbi! By the time I could save enough to send for her, it was too late. She had perished in the violence across the ocean. I gave the ticket to my sister's son—he was not even twelve then—so that the army shouldn't take him. (*sighs*) And that's the way the cookie crumbled.

Rabbi Present: It is good to hear your heart makes a noise besides the clunking of a sewing machine, Scroogemacher.

All Mensches: He who has not tasted the bitter cannot know the sweet.

Chorus: (*leaning forward, hand cupped around ear*) Can you hear the beating of a heart?

Narrator: Scroogemacher could not help but smile at the rabbi. He looked at the rabbi's menorah until it seemed as if the glow of the statue's torch, growing ever nearer, was the light of the shammes.

Mensch 3: The light seemed to grow brighter and brighter, and brighter still.

Mensch 1: Scroogemacher had to block the light with his hands to keep from being blinded.

Narrator: When at last he was able to see, he found himself sitting in a pile of snow.

Rabbi Future: Hi.

Narrator: A woman with curly hair and glasses, speaking from behind a scarf wrapped snugly around her neck, held out her hand to him.

Mensch 1: Scroogemacher allowed himself to be helped to his feet.

Scroogemacher: Hello. Excuse me for saying so, Madame, but your gloves! What fine leather!

Rabbi Future: Why, thank you!

Scroogemacher: Would you mind...?

Rabbi Future: Oh, not at all. Let me take it off so you can examine it more closely.

Scroogemacher: Look at this workmanship! Man or machine made these fine stitches? And your coat, is it wool? I'll give you twice whatever you paid. Three times, then!

Rabbi Future: (*laughing gently*) I am not a saleswoman or a seamstress, Mr. Scroogemacher. I am the Rabbi of Hanukkah Future.

Scroogemacher: (*laughing not so gently*) I'm fainting! A woman rabbi! And I suppose women have the vote, too?

Rabbi Future: Oy, we had better start small. Did you have a nice trip?

Scroogemacher: I'm feeling a little farblondzhet, to tell you the truth.

Chorus: Poor, lost Scroogemacher!

Scroogemacher: I'm beginning to wonder if I'll ever get home.

Rabbi Future: You've been so patient, I promise, this is the last stop. I just thought there's something...or someone... you might want to see. Here, come, follow me into this school.

Scroogemacher: Ahh, my eyes! What is this brilliant glow of flameless fire?

Rabbi Future: Electric lights. Now, look into this classroom.

Scroogemacher: So? A bunch of *vildekinder*. What do you want, a medal?

Mensch 2: Wild children!

Chorus: Sit down! Listen up!

Scroogemacher: And just look at these no-goodnicks, at school in the middle of the day, while their parents toil! No wonder the girls have to wear pants! Even the teacher is wearing pants! Is this a school for farmers?

Chorus: Ha ha ha!

Scroogemacher: So now what's so funny?

Rabbi Future: In the future, children in America must go to school. Children are not allowed to work.

Scroogemacher: School, shmool. I know the law. The children must not be employed unless they can read English, and none under the age of fourteen. But who doesn't look the other way?

Mensch 3: Hunger is a great educator, and yields a meaner whipping stick than the law. (*other Mensch nod in agreement*)

Rabbi Future: The laws of the future have changed. All children must go to school during the day.

Chorus: It is no joke.

Scroogemacher: Look, these children come from all different neighborhoods. It's a mishmash.

Mensch 1: A melting pot!

Mensch 2: A tossed salad!

Mensch 3: Soup, with a little bit of everything!

Rabbi Future: In the future, all of the children in America will be the sons and daughters of people who made a great journey, either long ago or not so long ago. They will not be divided by race or religion, and by class, maybe just a little.

Scroogemacher: But these must all be children of some privilege, or would they not starve from such laws that keep them from working?

Rabbi Future: On the contrary, Mr. Scroogemacher! It is a privilege, yes, but a necessary one. They would more likely be hungry if they didn't go to school, and this is common knowledge.

Scroogemacher: So all of these children can read and write and do sums?

Rabbi Future: Most all, yes.

All Mensches: Or else they are learning.

Rabbi Future: They have a chance at growing up to be whatever they dream of being, no matter their race or religion. Jews in America are doctors, lawyers...

Mensch 1: Writers...

Mensch 2: Athletes...

Mensch 3: Performers...

Rabbi Future: One even ran for vice president recently.

Scroogemacher: (*whistling*) Of the whole United States? The future is full of geniuses.

Rabbi Future: Oh, yes. And do you know what that means? I'll tell you. It means the days where sweaters like you can live off of the toil of others are numbered, *kennehorra*.

Chorus: Thank goodness!

Scroogemacher: What do you mean?

Rabbi Future: In your near future, Mr. Scroogemacher, there will be a fire at a factory.

Narrator: Even as she spoke, the room seemed to grow hotter, and the terrible screams of women seemed to echo around them.

Chorus: Help! Won't somebody help us?

Rabbi Future: Dozens upon dozens will perish in a terrible way. The only good thing to come of that nightmare day will be that it will be the end of such unsafe, unfair working conditions. People like Gerstein will rise up and no longer bend to the demands of men with the likes of your black heart.

Scroogemacher: (*laughing*) Not like that milquetoast Gerstein! Not like that namby-pamby Gerstein! Not like that lightweight Gerstein!

Moshe and Gerstein: Yes, like Gerstein!

Chorus: Yes, like Gerstein!

Rabbi Future: Yes, like Gerstein! You are a villain to those people, Mr. Scroogemacher! The workers will strike, they won't sew one stitch for you, and even though you think you can, you will not be able to fill their shoes. They will shout at the top of their lungs about their unfair treatment, but you will be too much of a *dumkopf* to change.

All but Scroogemacher: Foolish Scroogemacher!

Rabbi Future: Your own nephew will try to help you see what is right, but again, the *dumkopf* thing.

Scroogemacher: (*angrily*) You dare to suggest I have no heart!

(*Chorus and Mensch lean toward Scroogemacher, hands cupped to ears*)

Rabbi Future: (*calmly*) I dare to see what lies in store. Excuse me, let me wipe my glasses...ah, yes. I see it now. You will also be insulted by your nephew's suggestion, and decide you are not speaking to him anymore. He will move out and that will be that.

Chorus: Kaput!

Rabbi Future: He will go and live with his wife's family and work as a union organizer, trying to get people to ask for what they deserve. But the conditions will be so bad in his crowded tenement that he will die from typhus, and bring the sickness to all the children who live there as well.

Moshe: Oh, Uncle! Must we say goodbye?

Scroogemacher: No! I'm covering my ears! I don't want to hear it!

Rabbi Future: Meanwhile! Your business will fail, Mr. Scroogemacher, and you will die poor and lonely in a coldwater flat.

(*Mensch and chorus cover their mouth with their hands in shock. Scroogemacher also has his mouth agape.*)

Narrator: Scroogemacher stood with his mouth open so wide, you could fit in a whole matzoh ball. And why not? Wouldn't you be that surprised to hear such bad news?

Rabbi Future: Or.

Scroogemacher: Or!

Chorus, Mensches, Moshe, Gerstein: Or!

Rabbi Future: Yes, or.

Scroogemacher: Or what?

Rabbi Future: Or is what we're here for. We can go this way, or that way. Here, or there. Up, or down. Inside, or out.

Scroogemacher: What is your point, Rabbi?

Rabbi Future: My point is, listen to your nephew. He thinks for the future. He will become a great union leader, a respected man. He will take over your business with your blessing, and your business will flourish and he will happily share the profits. Accept his bride, and they will come and live with you and be well. They will have children.

Scroogemacher: They will?

Rabbi Future: See that *boychik*? There! He's your great-great-great-great nephew. Your very own bloodline, alive and well even a hundred years later.

Scroogemacher: (*as if to himself*) He looks a little like me when I was a boy. Yes, he does! (*brightening*) Is he a good student?

Rabbi Future: In the middle. Not so good at spelling. Better at math.

Scroogemacher: Spelling, shpelling.

Rabbi Future: He, too, will grow up to fight for working people. Even though children here and now are well taken care of, there are children all over the world who still work in sweatshops, as they did a hundred years ago, children who do not get the chance to go to school. There is still such thing as slavery.

Narrator: Scroogemacher and the rabbi watched as the bell rang, and his great-great-grand nephew waited on the playground for his sister. They watched as the two children had a snowball fight with their friends.

Mensch 1: Even though their faces were all different colors and suggested many different countries, they played without the teasing or name-calling that Scroogemacher knew from the children's brawls on the streets of his time.

Narrator: As they walked toward the children's homes, Scroogemacher could not believe the things that met his eyes, and he spun like a *dreidel*, trying to take it all in.

Mensch 2: Cars and televisions.

Mensch 3: People talking on cell phones.

Narrator: Advertisements with women wearing bathing suits that made him cover his face in embarrassment, but that the children barely seemed to notice.

Mensch 1: Playgrounds.

Mensch 2: Streetlights.

Mensch 3: Skyscrapers!

Narrator: And draping over all of it was the garlands and glitter of Christmas.

Scroogemacher: Look at all these Christmas trees in the store windows! Listen to the carols in the streets! What is this song, 'Jingle Bells'?

Rabbi Future: Christmas is a big part of America.

Scroogemacher: (*upset*) It is a Christian holiday! I thought you said this country belonged to Jews as well as Christians, but everywhere, all I see is Christmas!

Rabbi Future: What can I say? They have good decorations.

Scroogemacher: What sort of rabbi are you, anyway? If this loose talk is the future of Jewish generations, then perhaps it is best that fate plays itself out for me in the first way!

Rabbi Future: What do you care if they carry on Jewish tradition? Why are you making such a *tsimmes*, such a stew? Weren't you the one who said, 'Hanukkah, shmanukkah'?

Scroogemacher: But I was wrong! Look at the world my great-great-grand nephew lives in, full of marvels. Electric trees. Double-stitched leather gloves. Pictures that move in boxes, and carts that drive themselves.

Rabbi Future: So? That's progress!

Scroogemacher: I'm not so sure. They don't seem to know where it all came from. Where are the Macabees, who fought so bravely? And if they can't even remember that, then where are the huddled masses, yearning to breathe free? Where are the workers who endured such hunger so that someday children could go to these fancy-shmancy schools? Where am I?

Rabbi Future: You? You're history.

Narrator: They followed the children up to their apartment.

Mensch 1: The children had their own rooms, where more screens glowed and rows of toys were lined up neatly on shelves.

Mensch 2: The father cooked in the kitchen, stirring soup and searing meat while he listened to the radio.

Mensch 3: The mother soon rang the doorbell, stepping smartly through the door carrying a briefcase and kissing each member of the family.

Narrator: The radiators clanged, and the sunset melted down in lines of pink and blue over the steaming rooftops. And then, down from the shelf came the menorahs.

Chorus: The menorahs!

Narrator: One for each member of the family.

Scroogemacher: Look! Look what they are doing!

Mensch 1: The family gathered around the table.

Mensch 2: Out came the candles,

Mensch 3: one, two, for you, one, two for you...

Mensch 2: and then the father and son put on *yarmulkes* to cover their head.

Narrator: And the mother began to sing, leading the prayer, her gentle breath making the firelight flicker and dance.

Chorus: (*gently*) *Baruch atah Adonai...*

Scroogemacher: They do remember!

Rabbi Future: So they lit a few candles.

Scroogemacher: Candles, shmandles! Don't you see, it's not about the candles, it's about the remembering!

Mensch 3: (*dreamily*) Remembering...

Rabbi Future: What are they remembering?

Scroogemacher: People.

Mensch 1 and 2: How hard people have worked to make their place in the world.

Chorus: Our people, and all people.

Scroogemacher: Past, present and future!

Narrator: The room glowed in the flickering candlelight, and it seemed to Scroogemacher that the room began to swim before his eyes.

Mensch 1: So then, this is what happened.

Mensch 2: Scroogemacher woke up and said...

Scroogemacher: Oy, what a dream.

Narrator: He got out of bed and ate a cookie and poured some tea from the samovar and thought about what he remembered.

Mensch 3: Some of the things made him cry, and some of the things made him laugh.

Narrator: He did not rush out and get a big loaf of *challah* bread and bring it to the Gerstein's.

Chorus: Oh, no!

Narrator: He did not stop kaknocking his nephew on the *keppe* every time he talked about worker's rights.

Moshe: Ow, my head!

Narrator: He did not stop yelling at his workers when they sewed a crooked hem.

Scroogemacher: What did you expect? That a leopard could change his spots?

Mensch 1: But he unscrewed the dial in the wall that could turn back the clock on his sweatshop wall.

Gerstein: About time!

Mensch 2: He started to give with a warm hand to the immigrant aid society.

Mensch 3: When he got over the shock of the Triangle Factory fire, he listened to his nephew and gave the workers most of what they demanded.

Rabbi Future: And when his nephew wanted to marry that Gerstein girl, he said...

Scroogemacher: Okay.

Rabbi Present: It turned out they had a daughter whom they named Rose, even if her mother did look a little like a weed.

Rabbi Past: You see? Good things happen from a little remembering.

Scroogemacher: Especially on Hanukkah, shmanukkah.