

Stooge

The Anti - Scrooge

Written by

Mark Clark

*Two smaller stages left and right of the main stage. On the main stage, two chairs are stage left. There is a table and chairs on the right stage. The left stage is bare.*

*Lights up on the main stage. Stooge sits upon one of the chairs, looking at his watch, impatiently.*

*Bob Ratchet pokes his head in, stage right. Stooge turns to see him, looks at his watch again. Bob enters gingerly.*

Stooge                    *(stridently)* Bob Ratchet! What time do you call this?

Bob                        I'm very sorry, Mr. Stooge.

Stooge                    Eighteen minutes late? That will cost you.

Bob                        I promise, sir. It won't happen again.

Stooge                    *(rising)* No, it won't happen again. And do you know why, Mr. Ratchet?

*Bob lowers his head.*

Bob                        I think I can guess, Mr. Stooge.

*Stooge moves menacingly towards Bob, then Stooge's whole demeanor changes. He smiles affably and puts his arm around Bob.*

Stooge                    Because, my dear lad, you can have the rest of the month off. And when you return, we'll discuss that raise you asked for.

Bob                        Really, sir?

Stooge                    It's Christmas, my boy. Go on. Off you go. Go on home to that lovely family of yours. And give my especial love to Tiny Tim.

Bob                        Oh thank you, sir. Yes, I will, sir and thank you again, sir.

*Bob exits backward, bowing as he does so. As he is about to exit...*

Stooge                    Oh, and Bob.

Bob                        Yes, sir, Mr. Stooge?

Stooge                    You might be receiving a little present later on this evening. A little Christmas cheer.

Bob                                Oh thank you so much, Mr. Stooge.

*Bob exits.*

*Stooge bellows with the laughter of one full of good will for his fellow man.*

*He moves downstage and looks down as if through an imaginary window. A young boy is passing at audience level across the front of the stage.*

Stooge                            *(yelling)* You there! Boy!

Boy                                Me, sir?

Stooge                            Yes, you son. Do you know the poulterers, in the next street but one, at the corner?

Boy                                I should say I do.

Stooge                            An intelligent boy. A remarkable boy. Go talk to the man at the shop and have him send the prize turkey to Bob Ratchet's house and I'll give you a thousand pounds.

Boy                                Two thousand.

Stooge                            *(chuckling)* An intelligent boy. A remarkable boy. Very well, two thousand. And if you get there within five minutes, I'll double it to four.

*The boy races off across stage towards left. He stops.*

Boy                                Sucker.

*And disappears off left.*

*An old man in a suit walks across stage at audience level. Stooge yells down to him.*

Stooge                            Mr. Johnson.

*Mr. Johnson looks up.*

Mr. Johnson                    Oh, hello, Mr. Stooge.

Stooge                            Mr. Johnson, put me down for thirty thousand pounds to the tsunami fund.

Mr. Johnson            Why that's very generous of you, Mr. Stooze but I must be honest with you. Most of the money seems to have been appropriated by greedy Indonesian criminals and is being used to bribe government officials. That's how their system works apparently.

Stooze                    Never mind, Mr. Johnson. Put me down for the money. Dishonest people have to make a living too.

Mr. Johnson            Yes, Mr. Stooze. And thank you.

*Stooze booms with good-natured laughter. John walks off, shaking his head as if to say: 'What a twit'.*

*Stooze stands, arms akimbo, looking down on the audience.*

Stooze                    The streets of the city, expecting what's to come  
Whether freezing snow, or blazing sun  
It's Christmas Eve- good cheer; great fun.  
God bless us, each and every one.

*The lights fade on the main stage. With more boisterous laughter, Stooze disappears from view.*

*Lights up on the right hand stage. Bob enters. His wife, two of his children and Tiny Tim sit at the table. Tiny Tim is fat and is stuffing food into his face.*

Mrs. Ratchet    How'd it go?

Bob                    *(to Mrs. Ratchet)* Too easy. *(to the children)* Hello, Perfectly Functioning Body. Hello, No Major Defects. *(to Tiny Tim)* Hey you, you fat prick. Where's your crutches?

Tim                    I don't need 'em.

Bob                    You'll bloody need 'em if I catch you without 'em. All some bastard's gotta do is point a video camera at you and we're all stuffed. No more parking in handicapped zones. No more freebies from the government. Do you want that?

Tim                    No.

Bob                    Then shut your trap and carry your crutches.

Mrs. Ratchet        So what did he say?

Bob                    Stupid bastard gave me the raise and a month off.

PFB                   What a loser. It's the same every year.

NMD                   Where's the turkey? I'm starving.

*There is a loud knock. The boy appears with the most ridiculously large turkey imaginable. It is so large that we can only see the boy's legs until he passes it over to Mrs. Ratchet who staggers under its weight.*

Bob                   'Bout bloody time.

*The boy turns to leave.*

Bob                   Hey!

*The boy turns back.*

Bob                   Next year get us one that fits in the bloody oven.

*The boy gives him the finger and leaves.*

*Lights down on the right stage and up on the main stage.*

*Stooge is wandering around in his pyjamas, which have positive slogans written all over them, like: 'Life is wonderful' and 'Human beings are essentially good'.*

Stooge               Christmas Day tomorrow. Bob will have received his turkey by now. I wish I'd have been a fly on the wall to hear that Ratchet gratitude. I...

*The noise of a clanking chain is heard.*

Stooge               What was that?

*The noise of the chain grows louder. Stooge backs away. Bells start ringing. The sound of the rasping chain continues for perhaps fifteen seconds, along with the bells. Additional to this are various sounds of distant doors being opened and closed, echoing down hallways. The noise continues long enough for Stooge to lose his fear. Still waiting for the apparition, he sits in his chair, glancing at his watch. After perhaps another fifteen to thirty seconds, we hear the sound of a door creaking open.*

*A ghost appears. He has a belt made of Christmas cards and blank cheques and various photographs of people stuffing their faces at dinner tables. He carries a hair drier, which he points at his face so that his hair blows about behind him. A long extension lead trails behind him.*

*Both must yell over the sound of the hair drier.*

Stooge                    Jacob!?! Jacob Marley!?!

Ghost 1                 What!?!

Stooge                    Who are you?!?

Ghost 1                 What?!?

Stooge                    I said who are you!?!

Ghost 1                 I can't hear you!

Stooge                    Why don't you turn off the hair drier!?!

Ghost 1                 Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I'll turn off the hair drier!

*The ghost turns off the hair drier.*

Ghost 1                 That's better. *(points to the drier)* Sorry. Low budget. You'll just have to imagine that my hair is shimmering, ghost-like in the still air.

Stooge                    You're the spitting image of Jacob Marley, my old partner.

Ghost 1                 Funny you should mention it- I used to be Jacob Marley.

Stooge                    Take a seat. Can I get you something? Some port perhaps?

*The ghost sits.*

Ghost 1                 Thanks. Port? What I wouldn't give for a glass of port, but I'm not allowed. You-Know-Who *(points up)* won't let me. I'm dead, you see. No intestinal tract. Makes a hell of a mess.

*They sit for a moment or two looking at one another- smiling. Eventually...*

Stooge                    So how can I help you?

Ghost 1                 Oh sorry. I was forgetting. I'm so comfortable here. You see, I'm here so often, but of course you can't see me.

Stooge                    You come here? Invisible?

Ghost 1                 Sure. And let me tell you, you visit some interesting sites on the Internet.

Stooge                    You watch me?

Ghost 1                 Of course. But hey, don't be alarmed. If I were alive, I'd be doin' the same thing. What with the Internet, the drink driving laws and the no smoking regulations who leaves home anymore?

Stooge                    If you're usually invisible, why can I see you now?

Ghost 1                 Oh yeah. Hang on.

*He rummages through his pockets and pulls out a piece of paper. He reads.*

Ghost 1                 Okay. Here's the deal. I must travel the world in spirit form because of all the lame ass things I did when I was alive and help warn the rest of you guys not to make the same mistakes I did.

Stooge                    But I don't think I've made too many mistakes.

Ghost 1                 Hold your horses, there's more. *(reads)* You have to learn a lesson... blah blah blah ... will die a lonely death... yarda yarda yarda...

Stooge                    Die a lonely death?

Ghost 1                 Please. I'm tryin' to read here. Oh, here it is. You will be visited by three ghosts. The Ghost of Christmas Past; The Ghost of Christmas Present and finally, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, will all appear to show you the mistakes you have made in your life and encourage you to change your wayward ways. *(to himself)* I must change the wording on that.

Stooge                    But I haven't done anything wrong. I've worked hard my whole life. I've maintained a sense of humour in the face of adversity and I possess a good mind that I've used for the good of humanity.

Ghost 1                 Look, Stoogey boy, you just outlined the three great lies we all tell ourselves while we're alive. Everybody thinks they work hard; everybody thinks they have a great sense of humour and everybody thinks, deep down inside, that they're smarter than most other people. Self-assessment doesn't count in the hereafter, pal.

*A rising chorus of wails and moans can be heard, growing in intensity. Stooge rises to listen.*

Stooge                    What is that?

Ghost 1                    They're just the wails and ghostly lamentations of the spirits who regret their earthly mistakes, but who can no longer take part in worldly affairs. Listen.

*A ghostly voice wails out: 'I should have thought of myself'. Another: 'I should have never left my money to my children'. Yet another: 'I should have invested in real estate'. And finally: 'I should have never married a Filipino'.*

Ghost 1                    *(rising)* Okay. Gotta go.

*He begins to haul in the extension lead as he moves towards stage right.*

Ghost1                    Ghost One should be here shortly. Or am I Ghost 1? Which would make him Ghost 2? Whatever. I'm outta here. Good luck.

*He exits, stage right.*

*The clock chimes once. The light dims on the main stage. A strobe light covers the stage. Some appropriate rap music is played. A ghost swaggers on from stage right. It is black and dressed like a home boy - baggy pants, crutch down to the knees, underpants on show, cap turned backwards. It has a flashing belt and it holds a branch of fresh green holly in its hand.*

Stooge                    *(tremulous)* Are you the Ghost of Christmas Past?

Ghost 2                    Yo, man. Wassup? Have some holly.

*The ghost offers the holly to Stooge.*

Stooge                    No thanks. I don't use the stuff.

Ghost                    No sweat, Honky. I'm cool with that groove.

Stooge                    I beg your pardon?

Ghost 2                    I said I'm cool with your straight groove, man.

Stooge                    I'm sorry, I have no idea what you're saying.

Ghost 2                    Oh, is that a fact, Jack? Looky here at Mr. High and Mighty. Well, let me tell you something, white boy- ain't no momma to hold your hand now. Dig?

Stooge                    Dig?

Ghost 2                   Yo. Dig, fool?

Stooge                    I'm lost.

Ghost 2                   Be still, honky and let me show you the error of your ways. Now look here. This is when you was a boy.

*Lights dim on the main stage, leaving Stooge and Ghost 2 in a spotlight. Lights come up on the left stage. Stooge and Ghost 2 look on.*

*A little boy stands alone. A little girl approaches him.*

Boy Stooge               Am I to come home now from the boarding school, Fran, my sister? Has father asked for me to return? Has the love returned to his heart?

Fran                       Yes, brother, he has. Father's much kinder than he used to be. Since mamma died he has positively changed. He says that he will have you home on one condition.

Stooge                    Anything, Fran.

Fran                       You must agree to do all of the chores around the house that mamma and I used to do and never complain and give him any money you make until he dies.

Boy Stooge               Oh yes, of course Franny wanny.

*He clasps his hands together with joy*

Boy Stooge               I'm going home to dear pappa. I shall get my things.

*Boy Stooge runs off stage.*

Fran                       Sucker.

*Lights down on left stage.*

Stooge                    I see no fault here. A dearer sister there never was.

Ghost 2                   *(incredulous)* Say what? She was usin' you, fool.

Stooge                    No. I don't think so. She died alas, some years ago. She had a son you know. My nephew. He has turned out to be a lovely man with the most impressive, irresistible laugh.

Ghost 2                    Not convinced, huh? Well check this out, Mr. Rose-Coloured-Glasses. Here's a little scene from when you was an apprentice to Mr. Fezziwig.

*Two young men walk onto the left stage- Stooge and Dick. Stooge is wiping his brow with a handkerchief.*

Stooge                    Why look. It's me and little Dick Wilkins. I wonder whatever happened to little Dick?

Ghost 2                    He died.

Stooge                    He died? How terrible to think my little Dick has died and gone to Heaven.

Ghost 2                    Shut up, fool and listen.

Prentice Stooge            Well, old Fezziwig sure knows how to throw a Christmas party. I haven't danced so hard for years.

Dick                        If you ask me, he's a silly old fart. He spends all his money on his employees. A fool and his money are soon parted. Lend us five quid Stoogey?

Prentice Stooge            Of course, old boy.

*Dick puts the money Stooge gives him into a wallet overflowing with money.*

Prentice Stooge            I say, little Dick, you seem to have enough money already.

Dick                        True Stoogey, but you can never have enough and I know you'll never say no. Come on. Let's get back to the party.

Prentice Stooge            *(happily)* Righty ho.

*They move off stage. The lights come down on the left stage.*

*On the main stage, Stooge appears to be a little crestfallen. The first cracks appearing.*

Ghost 2                    Well?

Stooge                    Well, I suppose I could have been a bit more assertive.

Ghost 2                    A bit more assertive? Man, you just got pissed on without a raincoat. Now watch this. You're in your late twenties- in your prime.

*The lights come up on the right stage. A young Stooge is speaking with a young woman.*

Prime Stooge            Please, my little sugar biscuit, don't be like that.

Diadree                 You've changed, Stooge. That's all I'm saying. You used to be ambitious. You used to have a fire in your belly, but it's gone now, my lad. What a disappointment you turned out to be.

Prime Stooge            But cinnamon doughnut...

Diadree                 Don't you 'but cinnamon doughnut' me. My father was right. I wouldn't listen to him, but he was right. Diadree. Diadree he used to say to me, that Stooge will never come to anything. He's too easy going and he lets people run all over him.

Prime Stooge            But fairy bread...

Diadree                 You'll see, he said. He'll come to nothing, less than nothing if there is such a thing, but I didn't listen- until now.

Prime Stooge            But, Cadbury's Dairy Milk....

Diadree                 Don't you 'Cadbury's Dairy Milk' me. Did you or did you not give ten quid to those beggar orphans in the street just now?

Prime Stooge            We have to help where we can, my little iced vovo.

Diadree                 That's it. I'm off. And I never want to see you again.

*She exits.*

Prime Stooge            But Crunchy Nut...

*Lights down on the left stage.*

Stooge                 What did I do wrong there?

Ghost 2                 Come to think of it, that was a good result. However, after that she had plastic surgery and found a man she could depend upon. Now watch this and learn, 'cos this is the last one I'm showing your sorry, spineless ass.

*Lights up on the right stage. A beautiful, sexily dressed woman is seated at the table. Eagerly she stands and rises to welcome her husband as he returns home.*

Diadree Peter, darling, welcome home. (*seductively*) Come to bed.

Peter In a moment, Diadree. In a moment. You really must get control over the insatiable desire to have sex you strangely developed after you had the plastic surgery which not only made you beautiful, but also, inexplicably, made you a much more rational and likeable person.

Diadree You're so right, my darling. I have become a better person. I've realised that it's okay for you to have sex with whomever you wish, whenever you want, so long as you make love to me at every possible waking moment. I, on the other hand, will always remain faithful to you. My soul desire is to please you physically and emotionally. I would have felt exactly the same about my previous boyfriend, Stooge, had I married him. If he had just been more assertive and less the bleeding heart, I would have respected him and all of this could have been his. Now, come to bed and make love to me.

Peter Oh, all right. If I must.

*The lights fade on the right stage.*

*On the main stage, Stooge is open-mouthed.*

Stooge That was Diadree?

Ghost 2 Um hmm.

Stooge And you mean if I had just...?

Ghost That's exactly what I been tryin' to tell you. I got to go now but before I do, listen to the brother, 'cos the brother knows. Don't be such an easy touch, Stooge. It's every sucker for himself on that zoo planet down there. You dig?

Stooge I'm beginning to.

Ghost 2 Cool. You just chill, bro. Now give me some skin.

*Ghost 2 holds up his hand for a high five but Stooge shakes it.*

Ghost 2 You still got a ways to go yet, brother, but I ain't givin' up hope on your lily white ass. Later, bro.