

FREDERICK. Sorry Mr. Cratchit.

(Shuts the door.)

(Sound Effect: London street sounds cut)

SCROOGE. Did ye not hear me Cratchit!?

(CRATCHIT reaches for the door-knob.)

CRATCHIT. *(to FREDERICK)* Sorry sir.

(FREDERICK takes the door-knob.)

FREDERICK. *(to CRATCHIT)* Sorry sir.

(FREDERICK holds the door [ACTOR] closed. CRATCHIT, door and bell [ACTORS] FREEZE in terror. FREDERICK turns on SCROOGE.)

FREDERICK. And will ye not hear *ME* sir! A Christmas feast uncle! A roaring fire sir! A fine plump turkey sir! Chestnut stuffing! Roast potatoes! Cranberry sauce, brussel sprouts and gravy sir!

(He addresses this to SCROOGE who stands grimacing, but also to CRATCHIT, the door [ACTOR] and the door-bell [ACTOR] who listen yearningly.)

CRATCHIT/DOOR/DOOR-BELL. Graaaaavy!!!

SCROOGE. Gruel sir!!!!

FREDERICK. No sir no! A true Christmas table uncle! All alight with smiling faces! Joy on every countenance! Music and dancing and –

SCROOGE. – and parlour games I should imagine sir!!!

FREDERICK. Yes uncle yes! All manner of games sir! O uncle dearest uncle!!

(puts his arms round him)

SCROOGE. *(freezes)* Unhand sir me please sir!

(An awkward moment. FREDERICK lets him go. Looks at him.)

FREDERICK. What *IS* it about Christmas uncle!? What is it makes you so unhappy sir?

SCROOGE. *IT DOES NOT MAKE ME UNHAPPY SIR!* I am exceptionally happy with Christmas if you wish to know sir! It brings me joy sir! For the plump profits it heaps upon my table! For the merry way it stuffs my wallet sir! Christmas? I ADORE IT SIR!

FREDERICK. Profits uncle! Stuffed wallets sir! That is not the point of Christmas! Christmas is not that! It is a time of loving sir! Of giving and forgiving and –

SCROOGE. That is YOUR Christmas sir! Giving and forgiving and lovey dovey doving and *that* Christmas sir is a fraud! A sham! A fake sir! Just like this – paper *chain* sir! (*He rips down the banner.*) What is the excellently expressive and – if I may say so – hilarious word I use for ‘Christmas’ Cratchit? *CRATCHIT!!*

CRATCHIT. (*inaudible*) Humbug sir.

SCROOGE. Louder sir!

CRATCHIT. Humbug sir!

SCROOGE. Louder!

CRATCHIT. HUMBUG SIR!!!

SCROOGE. HUMBUG SIR!!!

FREDERICK. No sir! Not Humbug sir!! 'Tis the opposite sir! 'Tis an honest true good time sir! Meant for the honest *GOOD* of people. A merry time sir! Full of cheer! When all the world is glad sir!

SCROOGE. Cheer! Glad! Good!! Honest! Merry!!! Urrgggggh! I tell thee if I could work my will nephew, every buffoon who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips and wastes his hours of righteous toil spreading Christmas cheer to all and sundry, making silly Christmas feasts and singing silly Christmas songs and playing *silly pathetic paltry parlour games*, would be boiled with his own Christmas pudding and buried in his grave with a stake of Christmas holly through his heart! Good day sir!

FREDERICK. I cannot believe uncle – that *somewhere* inside you, resides not a memory – a tiny spark of light glowing in your heart – when Christmas was a goodly

time to you too sir! When you could say with an open heart, with all the world, God bless it! God bless it everyone!

CRATCHIT. (*applauds*) God bless it every one!

SCROOGE. **CRATCHIT!** *Get thee gone with thy blessings, sir!!!*

(*CRATCHIT freezes with fear.*)

One more sound from you sir and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! I can snuff you out Cratchit. Like a candle Cratchit. Or a moth Cratchit. Just like – (*clicks fingers*) that Cratchit!

FREDERICK. I beg of thee sir –

SCROOGE. What!!!?

FREDERICK. Come for your sister then! For my dear mother's sake!

SCROOGE. (*turns on him*) Thy mother sir!? She is long gone sir! Did you not hear me nephew? I think thine ears are sealed sir!! *Nothing will induce me to come, sir! NOTHING!!!*

FREDERICK. But my wife sir! My darling Constance! My children sir! They long to meet you sir!

SCROOGE. *No-one longs to meet me sir! NOW BE GONE SIR!!!*

FREDERICK. This shell that entombs thee uncle! Like a dark cave sir! Why sir – why why –

SCROOGE. *WHY DID YOU GET MARRIED SIR?*

(*All freeze. CRATCHIT freezes. Even SCROOGE freezes.*)

FREDERICK. What?

SCROOGE. What?

FREDERICK. Why did I get –

SCROOGE. Nothing sir!

FREDERICK. Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE. *Love! Ha! LOVE!???*

(*The shop door bell CLANGS.*)

(*All freeze. CRATCHIT riffles through his appointments book. Rushes to the window. Peers through it.*)