

Why won't you answer me!? What's the matter with you Cratchit? *CRATCHIT!!*

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME. His mind is on other things sir.

(CRATCHIT opens the drawer.)

SCROOGE. Other things? There are no other things! *Where's the box Cratchit!*

(CRATCHIT takes out a cardboard box. He holds it with great tenderness.)

No! That's not the box! No!! –

(CRATCHIT gently opens the box. Takes out something wrapped in brown paper.)

What are you doing Cratchit!!? What's this?

(CRATCHIT carefully unwraps the brown paper and there is the leather-bound story book from the school room. Faded and battered and still in two pieces but otherwise intact. CRATCHIT gazes at the book as the mist gathers around it. SCROOGE gasps.)

My book!

CRATCHIT. *(looks up, calls to the flies)* Tiny Tim? If you can hear me where you are. Since your passing.

SCROOGE. Passing? Tiny Tim?

CRATCHIT. I would bring thee comfort sir, wherever you dwell. I hope in a place of peace. But perhaps it is to seek peace for myself. For you are my light in the darkness little man. Please may I read to you as I used to? Only *I* knew where this was. He'd forgotten all about it. His book of treasures.

SCROOGE. Treasures.

CRATCHIT. I learnt the stories off by heart. I know 'em all now. Every one of 'em. Worth more than all the money ever made, Mr. Scrooge sir. It is your heart you see sir. Even you had a heart would you believe Mr. Scrooge?

(SCROOGE tries to reply but cannot. He watches spellbound.)

Even in two bits and all battered and locked away in a cupboard. But you kept it sir. Even though you didn't know you did sir. Even though you forgot it was even there sir. Some part of you, some tiny beating part of you, could not bear to lose it. And that makes all the difference. You kept it old Scrooge! Doesn't that bring hope to the whole rolling world sir? That a Scrooge can love stories? That a Scrooge can have a heart? Even though he doesn't know it? Doesn't it, Tiny Tim? My dear one. *(He looks up.)* What shall we read? *(He turns the pages.)* I know. How about – your favourite?

SCROOGE. *(whispers)* Ali Baba.

CRATCHIT. Ali Baba. And the Cave of Treasures. And so I will Tiny Tim. But we always like reading this bit first don't we?

(SCROOGE stretches his hand and opens the book simultaneously with CRATCHIT. Very tenderly, they reveal the title page.)

(reads) "This book is for you my sweet darling boy. A book of treasures to guide your life. And if I –"

(SCROOGE'S MOTHER appears from the shadows.)

SCROOGE'S MOTHER. – cannot remain with thee as the doctors tell me I must not, then know how very dearly I would do if I could, and how very nearly did I see this one Christmas with you – your first ever Christmas – that I know now I will not. How many many Christmases would I spend with you if I could. Just one more hour of life with you would be the dearest gift, no earthly riches could compare. But since I cannot, know that I will look over you and will love you always as I always did from the first sweet breath you drew. And do so now and always will forever. And forever. With my eternal blessing. Your mother. Seventeen hundred and seventy-seven. Christmas.

*(SCROOGE is overcome with emotion. Real tears fall.
The GHOST watches.)*

CRATCHIT. So you was loved Mr. Scrooge. All that time. Who'd a' thought it? Even though you never knew 'er sir. She loved you Mr Scrooge. And you loved her, didn't yer sir? Like all the Cratchits love Mrs. Cratchit! Didn't you sir?

SCROOGE. *(barely audible)* I did. I do.

(Suddenly a VOICE shatters the moment. The shadow of the GHOST morphs into the giant figure of GRIMES the school master.)

GRIMES. SCROOGE!!

(SCROOGE freezes. Gazes up at him.)

What's this!!? Robin Hood! Robinson Crusoe! Jack the Giant Killer! ALI BABA!!? OPEN SESAME!!! STORIES BOY!!? PALTRY POINTLESS STORIES!??

(raises his cane) FAIRY TALES!!? Give me the book boy! Vile witless pointless boy! Give it to me!!! Scrooge!!! GIVE!!! SCROOGE!!!

SCROOGE. Yes sir.

GRIMES. That's right boy. Quickly boy quickly! I'm waitin' Scrooge! I'm waitin'!

(SCROOGE looks up at GRIMES.)

SCROOGE. No sir.

GRIMES. What!!? What was that?? Whatcher say boy!? SCROOGE!!!!!!!?

SCROOGE. I said no sir. It is my book sir. It is my most special treasure. Given to me by someone I loved. Yes, loved sir. And you're not to have it. Not ever. No-one is to have it. Except Tiny Tim. And Bob Cratchit actually. And all the Cratchits actually. And all the children of all the world actually if you want to know sir actually. SO MR. GRIMES SIR - *(He takes a deep breath.)* GET THEE GONE SIR!