

Felicity (Fred), Thelma (Scrooge)

ACT I

17

CRATCHIT Thank you.

MRS REECE You're welcome.

She closes the store door.

SCROOGE And you didn't warm the pot before you made this tea.

CRATCHIT It's coming, it's coming.

CRATCHIT *exits.*

A bell is heard, off.

START

FELICITY *enters as SCROOGE's nephew FRED.*

FRED Good morning, uncle. And a merry Christmas to you.

SCROOGE Humbug!

FRED Humbuggle, uncle...lumbuggle...lunc? You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE I do. Every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. One lump or two?

FRED One, if you please.

SCROOGE Still watching your figure, eh, nephew?

FRED Yes, unlike you, uncle, I am not blessed with a firm and well-proportioned body.

SCROOGE *(prompting)* And perfect skin.

FRED And perfect skin. What charming, hand-painted crockery.

SCROOGE Yes, Cratchit fires it in his lunch hour. He's a little treasure really. Cratchit!

CRATCHIT *enters with a tray of tea.*

CRATCHIT Yes, I haven't forgotten. I had a bit of a spasm in the dressing-room. I'll be all right. One sugar with no tea, Mr Scrooge?

18

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

SCROOGE Take it away and do the washing-up, Cratchit.

CRATCHIT You what?

He pours the tea - an immensely noisy and messy business - regardless of the ensuing dialogue.

FRED That welcome refreshment reminds me of the reason for my visit, Uncle. Will you dine with us tomorrow?

SCROOGE Dine with you?

FRED Well, it will be nothing fancy. The au pair has gone back to Oslo for the holidays. Shall we say one o'clock for cocktails?

SCROOGE Say what you like. But your idle merriments will be conducted in my absence. I hate Christmas and all celebrations of the confounded season. If I had my way, people who invite other people to Christmas dinner would be strung up to the ceiling with their own paper chains.

FRED Well, you don't have to make your mind up now. Just drop in if you are passing. It is Liberty Hall round at our place.

SCROOGE Bah!

FRED And bring a bottle.

SCROOGE Good morning, nephew!

FRED *exits.*

CRATCHIT *(offering tea)* Would your nephew like a cup? **END**

SCROOGE Cratchit, take a letter.

CRATCHIT We've done the tea, have we?

CRATCHIT *exits with the tray of tea.*

SCROOGE To Messrs Goodbody and Wimble: "Gentlemen, unless our account is settled within the next seven days, I shall be forced to put the matter into the hands of my solicitors. Yours, etc., etc." Read that back to me, will you, Cratchit?

CRATCHIT *(off stage)* Can't find the pen.