

Scene 14: Fred's Home

CLARA: Oh, Fred! Thank you so much for this wonderful gift! But it's much too expensive!

FRED: But do you like it?

CLARA: I love it! It's the most beautiful bracelet I have ever seen!

FRED: Then it belongs on your wrist, my darling.
Merry Christmas!

CLARA: Oh, Fred, I do love you, and not just for this!

FRED: *(laughing)* I know, I know.

SFX: Knocking on door, door opening, street noise.

CLARA: Who could that be?

FRED: No one is expected this early...

FRED'S HOUSEKEEPER: *(off stage)* May I help you, sir?

SCROOGE: *(off stage)* Is your master at home, my dear?

FRED: *(whispered)* My word! It's Uncle Ebenezer!

CLARA: *(shocked)* Your uncle?? What in the world would he want?

FRED: I'm sure I don't know!

FRED'S HOUSEKEEPER: Yes, sir. Won't you come in? He's in the dining room. Please follow me.

SCROOGE: Thank you, miss.

*SCROOGE steps into the room, then stopped.
A beat of silence.*

FRED: *(still shocked)* Uncle Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: *(quietly, but happy)* Fred. *(after a beat, friendly to CLARA)* Good afternoon, madam. Merry Christmas to you!

CLARA: *(shocked)* Merry Christmas to you.

FRED: *(still shocked)* Um... uncle Ebenezer, this is my wife, Clara. Clara, this is my Uncle Ebenezer.

CLARA: *(unsure)* It's a pleasure!

SCROOGE: *(chuckles)* More like a surprise, wouldn't you say?

CLARA: *(giggles, disarmed)* Well, that, too!

FRED: Well, that is quite true! Quite honestly it is a surprise. When we spoke yesterday, you made it quite clear, it seemed to me at least, that you had no intention of accepting my annual invitation.

SCROOGE: *(deep breath)* I made other things clear, too, didn't I, Fred? That Christmas... was a humbug. A waste of time and money. A time to be ignored.

FRED: Yes, basically that was it.

SCROOGE: Well, I come for three reasons. First... to beg your pardon for the things I said. That... was a humbug, Fred.

FRED: Was it?

SCROOGE: Yes. I didn't know it then, but I know it now. Secondly...
I've come to meet your wife! And a lovely woman she is, too!

CLARA: (*flattered*) Thank you!

SCROOGE: I, uh... I was in love once. (*self-deprecating*) Would you believe that?

CLARA: Yes. Yes, I do.

SCROOGE: Thirdly, if the invitation to dine with you today is still in force, I accept!

FRED: (*overjoyed*) Of course it is still in force! Hurrah! I was sure that one day...

SCROOGE: Apparently you were right! Yes! I would like to dine with you and your friends.

CLARA: You will be more than welcome!

SCROOGE: (*giddy*) You like games, don't you?

CLARA: (*totally charmed*) Yes! Yes, as matter of fact, I do!

SCROOGE: Did you ever play Simile?

CLARA: It's one of our favorites!

SCROOGE: Well, perhaps we can play today

CLARA: Quite possibly!

SCROOGE: I'm very good at it! And should the phrase "Tight as..." be given, the answer is "a drum."

CLARA: Why, yes! So, it is!

SCROOGE: (*chuckles, then after a beat*) My dear, Fred. You'll forgive me for saying this, but I see the shadow of my sister in your face. I