Fred + Annabella

SCROOGE
I can manage.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Not without me you can't. Take hold of my robe.

SCROOGE
The way you fly about! What ship is that down there below us?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
Years out from port with years to go before they see their homes. Every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, has a kinder word for his fellows on this day than on any other and shares in its festivities; and has remembered those he cares for at a distance, and has known that they delighted to remember him and all of them together.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT leads SCROOGE on a circuit of the stage.

I stand beside sick beds—and they're cheerful. On foreign lands—they're close at home. Beside struggling men—they're patient in their greater hope. Beside poverty—it's rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge tonight I'll leave my blessing.

Laughter. Enter ACTOR 5—ANNABEL and ACTOR 6—FRED.

SCROOGE
Who's laughing? Who's that laughing. Spirit? Spirit, where are you?!

STOP

ACTOR 6—FRED
He said Christmas was a humbug! And believed it too!

ACTOR 5—ANNABEL
More shame for him, Fred!

FRED
He's a comical old fellow and that's the truth—and not so pleasant as he might be! However, his offenses carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.

ANNABEL
Well, I've no patience with him.

FRED
I have. I can't help it. I couldn't be angry with him if I tried.

ANNABEL
After all his unkindness?

FRED
Who suffers most? He does. He takes it into his head to dislike us—won't come to dine—and what's the consequence? He spends the day alone.

He kisses ANNABEL'S hand.

For my mother's sake if not for his, I say a Merry Christmas, uncle Scrooge. And a Happy New Year to you, wherever you are. You wouldn't take it in person but you can't deny me now so I will have my own way in the end.

(to her)
Think, my dear, if you were he… sent away as a boy. All his father's grief turned to rage against him. Abandoned to a school my mother said was worse than any prison. His happiness ruined again when old Fezziwig died as his apprenticeship ended and he was about to enter the firm. What other lesson was he to learn?

ANNABEL
(thoughtful)
As you say—to uncle Scrooge.

FRED
And to you. My dearest love. You mustn't tire yourself.

ANNABEL
Don't fuss me.

FRED
You must let me fuss just a little.

FRED kisses ANNABEL'S hand.

This time next year! What a Christmas that will be!

END

SCROOGE
(to FRED, moved)