

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

FRED'S WIFE. I'm sure he is very rich, Fred. At least you always tell me so.

FRED. What of that, my dear? His wealth is of no use to him, for he does no good with it. (*Laughing under the following:*) And I assure you he has no such plan to benefit us with it!

FRED'S WIFE. Laugh as you will, but I have no patience with him.

(BIZ: Ad-libs of agreement.)

FRED. Oh, I have.

FRED'S WIFE. Why ever so?

FRED. I am sorry for him. I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he won't accept our invitation to come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He loses a dinner.

FRED'S WIFE. (*Interrupting:*) Indeed, he loses a very good dinner.

(BIZ: Ad-libs of agreement.)

FRED. Well. I'm very glad to hear it, because I haven't great faith in these young housekeepers. What do you say, Topper?

TOPPER. A bachelor is a wretched outcast, who has no right to express an opinion on the subject.

PLUMP SISTER. (*Blushing:*) Oh, now, Topper.

FRED'S WIFE. Do go on, Fred. Finish what you began to say.

FRED. (*With a smile:*) I was going to say that the consequence of his not making merry with us is that perhaps he loses some pleasant moments. I give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he will find me going there year after year to share my good tidings. If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds.

FRED'S WIFE. Now, Fred. I think we have heard quite enough of the poor old devil. How about a lighter mood? A parlor game, perhaps.

(BIZ: Ad-libs of agreement, names of games suggested, a la Blind Man's Bluff, etc.)

FRED. Let's play Yes and No.

PLUMP SISTER. How do we play it?

FRED. It's quite simple. I shall think of something, and the rest of you must find out what. You may ask me questions, but I will answer you with either yes or no.

(BIZ: Ad-libs of agreement.)

FRED'S WIFE. Have you thought of something, Fred?

FRED. I have.

FRED'S WIFE. Is it an animal?

FRED. Yes.

PLUMP SISTER. Does it growl and grunt?

FRED. Yes.

TOPPER. Does it walk the streets of London?

FRED. Yes.

FRED'S WIFE. Does it live in a menagerie?

FRED. No.

PLUMP SISTER. Is it a hippopotamus?

FRED. No.

TOPPER. An ass?

FRED. No.

FRED'S WIFE. A bear?

FRED. No.

PLUMP SISTER. I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!

FRED. What is it?

PLUMP SISTER. It's your Uncle Scrooge!

FRED. Yes!

(BIZ: ALL cheer and laugh.)

FRED'S WIFE. But, Fred, I asked if it was a bear and you should have said yes, as indeed he is!

(BIZ: More laughing from ALL.)

FRED. He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is. He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!

(BIZ: ALL ad-lib a la "Well!" / "Uncle Scrooge!" / etc.)