

UNDERTAKER'S MAN. ...and an undertaker's man...

(BIZ: Laughing and ad-libbing.)

LAUNDRESS. Let the charwoman be the first!

CHARWOMAN. Let the laundress be the second!

UNDERTAKER'S MAN. And let the undertaker's man be the third!

LAUNDRESS. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance. If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!

OLD JOE. You couldn't have met in a better place. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two ain't strangers. And I'm sure there's no such old bones here as mine.

(Laughs, coughs.)

CHARWOMAN. Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did.

LAUNDRESS. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.

UNDERTAKER'S MAN. *(Laughing:)* No, indeed.

CHARWOMAN. If he wanted to keep them after he was dead, a wicked old screw, why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.

LAUNDRESS. It's the truest word that ever was spoke.

UNDERTAKER'S MAN. Open that bundle, Old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it.

(SFX: Bundle being opened, contents removed.)

OLD JOE. Let's see your plunder, man... It is not extensive, I must say. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value. Is that all?

UNDERTAKER'S MAN. It's a lot worth closer inspection, certainly!

OLD JOE. Certainly not! I'll give you half a crown.

UNDERTAKER'S MAN. Are you bloody serious?!

OLD JOE. I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?

LAUNDRESS. Feast your eyes on my booty, Old Joe...

OLD JOE. Make with it...

(SFX: Bundle being opened, contents removed.)

LAUNDRESS. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar tongs and a few boots.

OLD JOE. I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself. I'll give you three crown.

CHARWOMAN. And now undo my bundle, Joe.

(SFX: Bundle being opened, contents removed.)

OLD JOE. What do you call this? Bed curtains?

CHARWOMAN. *(With an odd laugh:)* Ah, yes! Bed curtains!

OLD JOE. You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there?

CHARWOMAN. Yes I do. Why not?

OLD JOE. His blankets?

CHARWOMAN. Whose else's do you think? *(With an odd laugh:)* He isn't likely to take cold without them, I dare say.

OLD JOE. I hope he didn't die of anything catching. Eh?

CHARWOMAN. Don't you be afraid of that. And you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure, if it hadn't been for me. Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again!

(Gives an odd laugh.)

OLD JOE. *(Laughs, coughs:)* Here's your money, the lot of you...

(SFX/BIZ: Money changing hands, ad-libs, laughing, coughing.)

CHARWOMAN. This is the end of it, you see. He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead.

(BIZ: They all laugh and cough, moving off.)

SCROOGE. *(Shuddering from head to foot:)* Spirit. I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now... Merciful Heaven, what is this? *(Beat.)* Spirit, this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go. *(Beat.)* I understand you, and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power. *(Quite agonized:)* If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death, show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you.

MUSIC CUE #22: CRATCHIT THEME #3