

Scrooge (*opening another ledger with a growl*) Love! If there's one thing in the world more nauseating than "Merry Christmas", it's a happy marriage with some love-sick female! Good-afternoon, sir!

Nephew My offer stands. You are always welcome, Uncle—just like Christmas itself!

Scrooge I said good-afternoon!

No. 1a: starts (underscore)

Nephew I want nothing from you. I ask nothing of you. Why can we not be friends?

Scrooge Good-afternoon!

Nephew Merry Christmas, Uncle. And you too, Bob Cratchit! And your family!

Bob Cratchit (*with a smile*) Thank you, sir. And to your good lady!

The Nephew exits, then reappears in a second, popping his head round the door

Nephew Oh, and Uncle!

Scrooge Hmmm?

Nephew A happy New Year!

Scrooge (*furiously*) Good-afternoon, sir!

The Nephew exits, grinning

Bob Cratchit, considerably cheered up, warms his hands on the candle on his desk. The chimes of a nearby church are heard

Bob Cratchit Excuse me, sir, but it's—er—seven o'clock, sir.

Scrooge looks at his watch

Scrooge (*grudgingly*) Correct, Cratchit.

Bob Cratchit I don't wish to be impertinent, Mr Scrooge, but will it be too much trouble if I have my wages, sir?

Scrooge growls his disapproval and reluctantly stops work and takes out his purse, carefully counting out fifteen shillings as they talk. He counts it three times—twice in his own hand, and finally into Cratchit's hand

Scrooge The trouble with you, Cratchit, is that all you think about is money! You'll be wanting the whole of Christmas Day off tomorrow, I suppose?

Bob Cratchit If it's convenient, sir.