



YOUNG HUSBAND. It's most urgent that I speak with you.

SCROOGE. I gave you my answer last week, young Mr. Buckworthy. You will pay what you agreed to pay when you applied to my firm for your loan. No grace period—no delays—no more twaddle, sir. On the day after tomorrow—payment is due.

YOUNG HUSBAND. Sir, at this particular season, there are special circumstances—

SCROOGE. Balderdash. Christmas comes, tiresomely, year in and year out. Can't use that to get round me.

YOUNG HUSBAND. Oh no indeed, sir. It's my wife. You see, we have discovered—*(Whispers discreetly.)*

SCROOGE. Congratulations are in order. At least I suppose they are. I am happily ignorant of such matters.

YOUNG HUSBAND. We'd be very happy, except that my wife Caroline is delicate. Even now, she requires the care of a physician. That leaves little or nothing for other obligations—



SCROOGE. No excuse. You will pay, or your little mite will weep and wail piteously because dear papa has been locked up in Marshalsea Prison—where all the debtors go. Good evening. *(Desolate, the YOUNG HUSBAND exits. SCROOGE moves toward door with his key, as:)*

DICKENS. The fog and frost hung about the old black threshold, where there was a large door-knocker. *(Light fades out on him as:)* And now let any man explain to me, if he can, how this happened—

(A light snaps up on a strange human head that seems to float in the dark. Old wire spectacles are pushed up on the forehead. The skin is a sickly blue-gray. The eyes are

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