

wife / Husband

70

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Act II

there no real and honest emotion caused by this man's death?

(GHOST points. Lights crossfade to next scene.)

SCENE FOUR

(Lights up on an old chair and table. YOUNG WIFE is seated there. YOUNG HUSBAND enters, heavily dressed.)



WIFE *(jumping up to embrace him)*. Oh, husband. You were gone so long—what news? Is it good or bad?

HUSBAND. My dear, it is both.

WIFE. Are we ruined, then?

HUSBAND. Not quite, Caroline. There is hope.

WIFE. There is if he relents. Has that miracle happened?

HUSBAND. No. And he's past relenting. *(Beat.)* He is dead. *(She covers her mouth in surprise. He sinks down at table.)* Day before yesterday, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay of the payment we owe—his clerk said he was not only very ill, but dying at that moment. I thought it a mere excuse to avoid me. *(Beat.)* It was true after all.

WIFE. To whom will our debt be transferred, then?

HUSBAND. I don't know. But before it happens, we will be ready with the money. Even if we weren't, no other creditor could be half so merciless as he was. *(Taking her in his arms.)* We may sleep with light hearts tonight, Caroline. We are lucky he's dead. *(They embrace as*

