

The spirit of Elmer Scrunge

... and the spirit of Christmas came upon him
in a white wreathed lab coat, and lo it was
the SUB phantom, fa la la cee-two-h-five-o-h

Snow falls peacefully on the buildings of the university. The campus, quiet and subdued, snuggles into its wintery blanket of softness. Christmas chimes gently stir the air. The racked pathways of once ambulatory students disappear beneath the fresh snowfall. It is Christmas recess and the night is Christmas Eve, a night of stillness and passive thought. Students have left for families and warm words and festive hearts. No person touched by the spirit of the season would think of remaining in these halls of the academic.

But wait. There are those who have not felt the glow of Christmas, or have felt the warmth of the season, and have had to remain on campus. There are two such individuals in those very situations this sacred eve. Deep within the recesses of SUB we watch one of these people.

"Tis the season to be jolly, fla la la la la . . . it's the season for Marian and Holly, fla la la la la . . ." A black, sinister figure wearing a bright red sash around his waist is tossing tinsel on a small Christmas tree.

"Deck the halls with boughs of holly, fla la la la la . . ." A gentle aura of festive red is seen upon his usually bleak, white cheeks. His discordant voice rings to the rafters with festive song. Even the Phantom of SUB has caught the fever of the season!

"I saw mommy kissing Santa Claus underneath the Christmas tree last year, bumbity bo da . . ." His enthusiasm comes to a halt as he throws the last pieces on the tree. He turns on the lights and stands back to absorb the aesthetic quality of his creation. He pauses a moment and suddenly remembers something which has more aesthetic value which is, naturally, hidden away in the Gateway Fine Arts Office. He rushes to that sanctum of culture, and there in the bottom drawer of T.D.'s desk, a fine old bottle of high-octane Alberta Vodka. Well . . .

Now seems a propitious time to leave the Phantom and let him prepare his Christmas egg-nog with Vodka and SUB cafeteria eggs. In that concoction is the true aesthetic. The Phantom is alone for Christmas, but he is happy. However, the Phantom is totally unaware of the evil that lurks in the hearts of men. He fails to see a faint light flicker from the fourth floor of Cameron library. What can this be? The light of student power? The light of a Latvian liquor lamp?

We move to the scene of the Illumination within this great house of knowledge. The erie light comes forth from that carrel. No it can't be! Yes it is: Elmer Scrunge! He is hunched over his text book, his eyes straining in the light of his expensive Treasure Van treasure.

"Damn lamp! Won't work decently on Alberta liquor." He curses under his breath between hydrocarbon chains.

"Is it cee-two H-four, oh-two, or cee-two H-two oh-two?" He scribbles on his book a series of un-intelligible symbols. "Got to hurry . . . got to get done . . . waste not, want not . . . Stanine in time saves nine . . ."

You remember Elmer Scrunge don't you? He never learns does he?

Oh those fools at the parties, drinking and singing and having fun. They don't know what they're doing. Exams are the key to success, not parties. Elmer Scrunge is no fool, I'll show them. Anyways, liquor that touches lips shall never touch my liquor. Oh those Christmas fools! When they have hangovers, I'll have my sheepskin.

These are strong thoughts for Christmas eve. Retribution will soon come to Elmer. We will move again, this time to the Temple of Retribution across the river. Santa Claus is preparing for his annual Christmas trip.

All the elves are waiting for Santa to come out of his quarters. All are anxious and becoming very impatient, especially the chief elf Fred. Only he knows that Elmer is attempting to violate Christmas tradition again this year. Last year it was presents, this year well . . .

A door opens and the old gentleman enters the room. All the elves cheer. He looks great; he's calm and collected. It must have been that French girl that sexually re-aligned him at the 'Christmas is Tomorrow' party.

Fred is aware of the crisis that could occur, but all the elves are between Santa and himself. Elmer could set a bad example for the drinking set.

Santa opens his record book and prepares his words of wisdom. "Alcoholic beverages are evil. Money is Evil. God Bless the ALCB."

"Santa! Chief! Come here, it's important. That Scrunge guy is trying to do it again. He refuses to drink on Christmas. The guy won't go to a party. I tell you, he's inhuman."

"What's that you say — Scrunge? I remember him well." The chief was in complete control of himself.

"What are we going to do about it, boss? Do you want me to go and do the ghost routine on him again. You know, the Dickens' thing. I got the projector fixed this year, and some new chains. Could be a real good show."

The austere fellow looked down on his helper and coolly replied, "NO."

"We can't let him set an example. No telling what might happen if his idea caught on. Can you imagine a dry Christmas?" Fred was getting frantic.

This meant the future of the firm.

Santa thought for a moment and said, "Does that funny fellow with the black clothes still live across the river? The one that gave you the dramatic lessons for your ghost act. His name slips my mind right now."

"Not the Phantom!" Fred shouted incredulously.

"Yes that's the chap," Santa replies, twirling his whiskers. "Now you give him a ring and tell him the situation. If he can get that Scrunge fellow to drink, Santa will put an extra goody in his stocking. You follow me?" His nose glowed a bright red, and he smiled wickedly.

"Alright boss, I'll try to get ahold of him, but he may not like it. He doesn't like to be disturbed, especially on holidays. Haunting SUB is hard work . . ."

"Just get ahold of him. He'll do it if he knows what's good for him." Santa put on his tasseled hat.

"Alright, alright." Fred dialed the Phantom's secret number which is known only to a chosen few.

We should move back to the Phantom's quarters and see how our friend is fairing.

"Fla la la la la la la, boughs of jolly Holly and Marian . . . 'tis the season of the folly fla la la la la la . . ." It seems the Phantom has overdone it. His nose is actually red! Such a disgrace!

"What's that? Do I hear a phone? Yes, I hear a phone. Maybe I should answer it . . . Hello, how are you, I am fine. This is the Phantom of SUB here. Who are you? Fred? Fred who? Oh that Fred . . . I remember you, you've got talent kid, real talent. Now what can I do for you? . . . You're kidding . . . What's in it for me? . . . It's a deal. Merry Christmas Fred, and keep the spirit flowing." The Phantom hangs up his Phantom phone and moves to his disguise chest.

"This is going to be just like Hallowe'en, just like Hallowe'en. Now where is that costume . . . Ah here we are." He grabs an outfit that is unmistakably that of a male ballet dancer. The inebriated Phantom changes as quickly as possible and rushes into the night air, clutching sprigs of holly in his hands.

Since the sight of an intoxicated Phantom crossing the Quad is something that batters the sensibility of common students, we cannot describe such a movement. We'll join the Phantom on the fourth floor of the library. Here he comes!

"Oh those steps . . . am I out of shape . . ." He stops to catch his breath, and sees the dim light flickering not too far away. He tiptoes quietly to the carrel; the unsuspecting Scrunge is still hunched over his book. In his most mellifluous voice the

Phantom sings out, "Kris Kringle is coming." With his song still ringing in library, the Phantom commences to toss holly about Scrunge.

"Kris Kringle is coming! Kris Kringle is coming! Kris Kringle is coming! Oh joy, oh joy!"

Scrunge looks up from his book, to see the Phantom in a pair of tight, white leotards.

"Who the hell are you? Not one of those corny elves, are you? I read the Christmas Gateway last year. I know what you're up to. Now go away, can't you see I'm busy." Scrunge pushes the Phantom back and scribbles more symbols on his book.

"Kris Kringle is coming! Oh joy, oh joy!" The Phantom tosses more Holly at Scrunge.

"So what! Who cares. I've got work to do, so get lost fairy; go prance somewhere else!"

"Don't you want to taste the essence of life?" The Phantom pleads with Scrunge. "Don't you want to see Kris Kringle and his magic mixtures?"

"What magic mixtures?" Scrunge is interested in what this strange figure has to say. Magic mixtures are big business in the commercial world.

"Oh like cee-two, H-five, oh-H. It comes in many forms."

"You lie! That's alcohol. Liquor shall never touch my lips." Scrunge buries his face in his book.

"No . . . no . . . no . . . you've got it all wrong It's 'Lips that touch liquor shall never touch my liquored lips.'" The Phantom felt that this fellow was a losing battle.

Scrunge looked up from his book. "No, I am pure, and liquor shall never violate my pure body. Now leave before you violate my purity; fairy!"

The color in the Phantom's cheeks became an ashen hue. He turned and returned to his quarters deep within the recesses of SUB. A tear fell gently upon his cheek. We'll leave the Phantom for a while; it isn't nice to see a Phantom cry. Across the river we go again. Final preparations are being made for the night task.

Fred is running around getting things organized. Santa is sitting in his favorite throne, sipping from a large cup.

"Fred, Fred! How is that strange fellow doing across the river? You haven't heard from him yet, have you?"

"Not yet chief. That Scrunge fellow is a hard one to break. He believes in abstinence." Fred wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Don't we all believe in abstinence and temperance?" The old guy took a deep gulp from the cup. "Maybe you better get him on the line and see how he's doing. I have to leave soon."

Fred dialed the Phantom. "Hello, is this the Phantom? Now stop crying; it doesn't

sound good. He didn't. Now here's what you do Phanty old friend . . ."

Fred hung up and turned to Santa, "He'll be all right if he follows my orders; I hope."

Let's cross the river once more, and see just what the Phantom is doing. There he is! Confidently drifting across the Quad with a white lab coat under one arm, and two beakers in his hands. Oh, what evil lurks in the mind of the Phantom?

There is a flash of light in front of Scrunge's carrel. Out of the smoke walks a distinguished looking figure in a white lab coat.

"Whaa . . . Who are you?" Scrunge stammers and stutters.

"I am the spirit of Science; all that is Science belongs to me. I control Chemistry. I control Physics. I control you! You are in my power since you are my disciple. Is that not true?" The Phantom was proud of his act. It was almost like an afternoon soap opera.

"What do you want with me? I didn't do anything. Honest I didn't." Scrunge was hiding under the carrel.

"Oh yes you did. You missed the Christmas party of the chemistry club, the computing science club, and all other scientific clubs on campus. That is what you did wrong. You placed yourself before science in importance. This is a sin that cannot be forgotten. Science will step heavily upon you."

"I didn't mean to. I'm innocent. What can I do to gain the favored light of yourself once more?" Scrunge had moved from beneath the carrel, and was on his knees in front of the phantom.

"Will you do anything to regain your faith?"

"Anything!" Scrunge was kissing the corner of the lab coat.

"Then I want you to drink from these flasks. One is water, the other is alcohol, the disinfectant of the soul."

"Yes, I'll do it if it dissinfects. It will retain my purity."

"Then I want you to go find a party and partake of the seasonal festivities."

"Yes, yes, I'll do it. Give me the flasks." Scrunge grabs the flasks from the Phantom and races out of the library.

"Bless you my son. Bless your pure little soul." The Phantom turns and drifts towards SUB. A smile rests upon his tired face, and a deep thirst sits in his throat.

Once in his quarters he dials the Temple. "Hello Fred, Phantom here. I got the job done. When is delivery? Right away? Good!" He puts the Phantom phone down and listens. Through the chimes and bells of the night air he can just discern the tinkling of bottles, and the ho, ho, hoing driver of Santa's Christmas express.

by NOJHM