

# Cratchit Family/Present/Scrooge

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. And you must see what you must become!

SCROOGE. That's even harder!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Try! Here, touch my robe.

SCROOGE. What will you do to me?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. I will help you to see all the things you must see, Ebenezer Scrooge, if you wish to say you have lived at all.

SCROOGE. Lived? Of course I've lived!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. And want to live!

SCROOGE. Of course I want to live!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Then touch my robe! (Scrooge takes hold of the flowing robe. ~~Muscle~~ *Muscle*. A wild display of on and off lights, which become finally a shy fall of very bright stars. The Christmas largess suspended in the air is replaced by the humble wash of a poor home: faded clothes and sheets. The hearth of a small, very poor house appears, in the house of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk. A few rickety chairs, an old table, peeling plaster, long faded in color. Over the small fire, several pots are boiling. Everything is very cramped and very crooked and very poor and very shabby and very jolly. Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present stand beside it. Discovered at the hearth is Mrs. Bob Cratchit. She is poorly dressed but bravely be-ribboned, as is her daughter, Belinda Cratchit, about thirteen, who is laying out plain chipped pewter mugs and plates on the table. Peter Cratchit, about twelve, is wrestling with his also threadbare but proud clothes.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. Hurry up, Peter. Help your sister.

PETER. Ah, this collar!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Breathe in and hold it, then fasten it.

PETER. Ah — hup! (He breathes in and holds it and tries to fasten his collar. In run two smaller Cratchit daughters, Gillian and Miranda, screaming.)

GILLIAN and MIRANDA. The goose! The goose! We smell the goose!

PETER. Out! My breath!

GILLIAN. Your collar!

MIRANDA. Why don't you fasten it?

PETER. I'm trying!

SCROOGE

GILLIAN. Mother, mother, we were all the way outside and we smelled the goose and knew it was ours!

MIRANDA. O wonderful goose!

GILLIAN. Great goose!

BELINDA. Goose beyond compare!

PETER. There! I've got it!

GILLIAN and MIRANDA. Hurray! (They grab Peter and then Belinda and dance around the table, chanting. Mrs. Cratchit smiles at them.)

GILLIAN, MIRANDA, BELINDA and PETER. (Chanting.)

THE GOOSE, THE GOOSE, THE BEAUTIFUL

GOOSE!

NOBODY HAS SUCH A GOOSE AS THIS!

IT'S PLUMP AND IT'S TENDER AND IT'S HOT!

O HOW PERFECT! O WHAT BLISS!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Where's your precious father, then? And your bother, Tiny Tim? And Martha wasn't this late last Christmas!

BELINDA. Here's Martha, mother! (Enter Martha, also poor, about seventeen.)

GILLIAN. Here's Martha, mother!

PETER. Hurray, Martha!

MIRANDA. Martha! There's SUCH a goose!

MARTHA. I can smell it! Belinda! Gillian! Miranda! Peter! (Martha kisses her sisters and brother, then turns fondly toward her mother to embrace her.)

SCROOGE. Is it a very big goose, Spirit?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. No, it is very small. But they make the best of it.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Bless your heart, my dear, how late you are!

MARTHA. We had a lot of work we had to finish. They made us come in this morning, too.

SCROOGE. Where does she work?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. In a mill.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Never mind. So long as you're here. Get next to the fire, my dear, and get yourself warm!

PETER. Here's father coming!

GILLIAN and MIRANDA. Hide! Hide! (The children hide, throwing a threadbare blanket over themselves. Mrs. Cratchit works. Enter Bob Cratchit, his coat and long scarf covered with snow. On his shoulder is Tiny Tim, carrying his crutch, who is thin and pale. He has an iron brace attached to one leg. His right hand is withered.)

SCROOGE. Who is that boy?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. You will see.

SCROOGE. Is he sick?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. In some ways yes, in other ways no.

SCROOGE. What do you mean by that?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. You will see.

CRATCHIT. So? Where's our Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Not coming.

CRATCHIT. Not coming? Really?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Absolutely not.

CRATCHIT. And Peter?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Not.

CRATCHIT. And Gillian?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Not.

CRATCHIT. And Belinda?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Not.

CRATCHIT. And Miranda?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Not, not, not, not coming.

TINY TIM. On Christmas Day? Where are they? (Peter, Belinda, Gillian, Miranda and Martha throw off the blanket and jump up.)

ALL. HERE WE ARE!

TINY TIM. Oh!

ALL. Hello, father! Hello, Tim! Tiny Tim!

SCROOGE. Tim? Is that his name?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. They call him Tiny Tim.

SCROOGE. No wonder. He is very small, and pale.

TINY TIM. Hello! You should see the stars tonight! They're beautiful!

PETER. All right, Tim!

GILLIAN. Let's go see the stars!

TINY TIM. Let's go!

ALL. Let's go! (Cratchit puts Tiny Tim down; he hobbles toward

them. He trips, and falls sprawling.)

SCROOGE. He fell!

ALL. OH! TINY TIM!!

SCROOGE. Help him up! Someone help him up! (They rush to Tiny Tim, to help him stand up, but Tiny Tim holds out his hand, wanting to stand up by himself. His crutch is handed to him by Peter, who then steps back and lets Tiny Tim struggle to his feet again.)

TINY TIM. It's all right.

SCROOGE. Stands up by himself, does he?

TINY TIM. (Taking crutch.) Thank you.

SCROOGE. Good!

TINY TIM. (Struggling to get up.) Quite all right.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. You like that?

SCROOGE. Yes!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Why?

SCROOGE. He has backbone! That's it! Get up by yourself, lad!

TINY TIM. There!

SCROOGE. There!

TINY TIM. I'm fine now.

PETER. Come along, Tim! (Peter picks Tiny Tim up, and the others do too, putting him on Peter's shoulders. They all go off. Cratchit and his wife watching them. Then they look sadly at each other.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. How did our little Tim behave?

CRATCHIT. As good as gold and better. He gets thoughtful not walking, sitting by himself so much. He thinks the strangest things you ever heard. (Cratchit's children, Tiny Tim on their shoulders, gather outside in a group, moving almost as one person. They look up at the stars, which sparkle brightly.)

CRATCHIT'S CHILDREN. OOOOH! AHHHHH! (Cratchit's voice trembles.)

CRATCHIT. He told me, coming home, that he hoped people saw him in church, a cripple, because it might be pleasant for them to remember on Christmas Day, who made beggars walk and blind men see.

MRS. CRATCHIT. Bless the boy.

CRATCHIT. Yes. He's getting better! He's growing strong! And hearty!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Of course he is. (*Cratchit picks up Tiny Tim's crutch from off the floor and looks at it.*)

CRATCHIT'S CHILDREN. OOOOHH! AHHHHH!

SCROOGE. Spirit! Tiny Tim, did you say?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Tiny Tim, because he is thin —

SCROOGE. — and pale and small. I see that. What will happen to him?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. It depends.

SCROOGE. On what?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. It depends on you.

SCROOGE. What do you mean?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. You will see.

SCROOGE. What's wrong with his hand?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. It is withered.

SCROOGE. The iron brace?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. His right leg. He can barely walk. (*Enter Tiny Tim, with the others.*)

TINY TIM. Oh, mother! The stars!

MARTHA. Just you wait!

PETER. It'll be the best Christmas ever! (*They put Tiny Tim on a stool by the fire.*)

BELINDA. Get warm, Tim.

TINY TIM. Thank you.

PETER. Now, Ready, Mother?

MRS. CRATCHIT. Ready! (*Musical. A few mugs, one for every two Cratchits, are held out. Mrs. Cratchit takes a pot off the fire and pours hot cider into them.*)

ALL. Cider! Oooooooh!

FEMALE CRATCHIT CHILDREN. It's hot!

MALE CRATCHIT CHILDREN. It's good! (*They drink their cider, sharing mugs.*)

SCROOGE. And not much else, I'll warrant. How big is their goose?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. It is the size of one scrawny chicken.

SCROOGE. For all those hungry mouths. I knew it.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. But what they have, they know how to share! Better, they know how to enjoy what they share! Look

at them!

CRATCHIT. I propose a Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

ALL. God bless us!

TINY TIM. God bless us every one! (*The Cratchits drink their small mugs of cider.*)

SCROOGE. Spirit, that boy!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Yes?

SCROOGE. It seems to me that today I have seen many little boys. From the present and the past. But none so pale, so frail, as this one. Tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. I see a vacant chair in a poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCROOGE. Oh, no, Spirit!

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Oh, yes, Scrooge!

SCROOGE. Well, when? Ten years?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Sooner.

SCROOGE. Five?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Sooner!

SCROOGE. A year, a month, a week, WHAT?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. What do you care? "If children have to die, why let them do it and decrease the surface population."

SCROOGE. Did I say that?

CHRISTMAS PRESENT. Yes! (*Scrooge bows his head in shame. Cratchit stands up.*)

CRATCHIT. I give you — Mr. Scrooge! The Founder of the Feast!

MRS. CRATCHIT. Mr. Scrooge? Founder of the Feast indeed!

CRATCHIT. My dear.

MRS. CRATCHIT. I wish I had him here, I'd give him something to feast on! A piece of my mind, that's what, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it!

CRATCHIT. My dear, the children. Christmas Day.

Finish