

Old Joe/Hags

OLD JOE. So what'd you get out of this one?  
CHARWOMAN. This old man? Plenty!  
OLD JOE. Before he was cold, I'll wager!  
LAUNDRESS. Before he was dead!  
OLD JOE. No!  
ALL THREE HAGS. YES!! *(They laugh.)*  
LAUNDRESS. Why pretend? We're all doing the same thing here!  
UNDERTAKER'S WOMAN. Everybody's got a right to take care of themselves!  
CHARWOMAN. HE always did!! *(The three Hags laugh.)*  
UNDERTAKER'S WOMAN. Who's the worst for a few little lost things here and there? Not the dead man!  
LAUNDRESS. If he'd a wanted to keep anything after he was dead, the mean old screw, why wasn't he natural about it when he was alive? He'd have somebody to look after him when Death struck him, instead of lying there gasping out his last, alone all by himself!  
CHARWOMAN. THAT'S the truest word ever spoken!  
UNDERTAKER'S WOMAN. Let it be a judgement on him!  
OLD JOE. Right you are, and that's enough! Let me see it!  
UNDERTAKER'S WOMAN. Here! *(She opens her bundle. Old Joe takes out a ragged little account book and a pencil.)* A pencil case, velvet inside. A pair of sleeve buttons. And a beautiful necktie brooch. There!  
OLD JOE. I'll take sixpence off your account, and not another, not if I'm to be boiled in oil.  
UNDERTAKER'S WOMAN. Oh, that hurts!! But all right!  
*(She dumps her stuff into Old Joe's sack.)*  
OLD JOE. Next!  
LAUNDRESS. Here. *(She opens her bundle.)* Sheets and towels, a pair of pants, two gorgeous tea spoons and one pair of sugar longs, and two boots!  
OLD JOE. I always give ladies too much! That's how I ruin myself! Half a crown, and if you ask me for a penny more, I'll knock it in two!  
LAUNDRESS. You're killing me! But all right! *(She dumps her stuff into Old Joe's sack.)*

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OLD JOE. Next!  
CHARWOMAN. Here's mine! *(She undoes a very large bundle.)*  
See?  
OLD JOE. What's all this?  
CHARWOMAN. Bed curtains!!  
OLD JOE. Oh, my sainted mother! You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?  
CHARWOMAN. I did so, and why not? What was he to do about it? *(Pause. Old Joe shakes his head.)*  
OLD JOE. Terrible! H'awful! SHAMEFUL! *(Laughs.)* Hee, hee, hee!! *(They all laugh.)* You were born to make your fortune and you'll let nothing stop you. What's this?  
CHARWOMAN. The finest nightshirt you ever seen. Not a hole in it. Been wasted, but for me.  
OLD JOE. What do you mean, wasted?  
CHARWOMAN. Why some fool put it on him to be buried in! I took it off his body and left him under a little calico and a sheet.  
LAUNDRESS. Quite becoming!  
CHARWOMAN. Well, he couldn't look any uglier than he did in this! *(They all laugh.)*  
OLD JOE. One pound for the lot!  
CHARWOMAN. AH!!!  
OLD JOE. Or you can take it home and wear it yourself!  
CHARWOMAN. This is worse than Death but ALL RIGHT!  
*(She stuffs everything of hers into the sack.)*  
OLD JOE. Ladies, I thank you!! *(Exeunt Old Joe, his Ragas and the Three Hags.)*  
SCROOGE. Spirit, I own things like that. This poor man so robbed of everything, who was he? *(The Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come points. Wind, quietly. Lights go down. The stage is almost dark. Scrooge's own bed, but now without the curtains, bare, slides onto the stage. On it, under a sheet, lies a man's body.)* Merciful heaven, what is this? *(A pale light falls on the bed and the body. Scrooge recoils in horror from the body on the bed. He looks at the Spirit of Christmas. Yet to Come, who points sternly toward the bed. Scrooge squares his shoulders, and forces himself to approach the body. He reaches out one hand and starts to lift the sheet from the dead.)*

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