

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Fred, Jake, Nelly

Fred: Hi ho, Jake, and a Merry Christmas to you!

Jake: God bless you, Fred, and good cheer, lad! Here, have something hot to warm you. (*Pours some soup.*)

Fred: (*Takes the small pail of soup.*) No, thank you, but I'll take a pitcher along inside to my uncle.

Jake: Why, lad? Why do you do it? Coming here every Christmas only to be tossed out on your ear by that old skinflint—your Uncle Scrooge. Him without a kind word for anyone—let alone you, sir.

Fred: Doesn't cost me a penny to wish that old man good cheer, and he is my uncle after all. (*Crosses to another vendor*) Ah, Mrs. Nelly, the best of all good Christmas Eves to you!

Mrs. Nelly: And to you, lovey. Here to see old Scrooge, are you?

Fred: I'll buy him one of your warm mufflers as a token of the season.

Mrs. Nelly: Little good it'll do him. Old Scrooge carries a frosty rime on his head and nothing can warm him. Oh, but he is a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, is Scrooge. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint. A cold Christmas he is and may God forgive my saying so.

Jake: (*Joining the conversation*) Look at his doorway there, Lad. "Scrooge and Marley" Marley's been dead as a doornail all these years. Makes a man shutter to think of it. What, why doesn't Scrooge paint out Marley's name? Marley's dead as a doornail.

Mrs. Nelly: Some say Scrooge is so busy counting his money, he's not had time to notice that his old partner Marley's been dead and gone—dead and gone!

Fred: Well, I intend to wish him a glad Christmas for all that—Marry Christmas, Jake. God bless you both! Merry Christmas, Mrs. Nelly.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Scrooge, Bob Cratchit

Scrooge: Wishing to lose your position, are you, Cratchit?

Bob: Sir? Oh! No, sir. Indeed not, sir.

Scrooge: Then what business do you have with my coal, sir?

Bob: It's cold sir—it seems a bit cold to me—for my fire, sir.

Scrooge: You'd rob a man in his own shop, would you, Cratchit? Rob me before my eyes? I prepared both our fires myself this morning. Mine is still quite sufficient. If you've poked and fussed yours away instead of minding your work, for which I pay you a generous wage, God knows. Then come creeping over here for more fuel, then I predict we shall have to part company.

Bob: No, sir. Not at all sir. My family—we—I—need my position, sir. We—I appreciate your generosity, sir. Indeed it seems warmer somehow, doesn't it sir?

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dilber, Crow

Dilber: Do just let me sweep the hearth Mrs. Crow and I'll help you with those linens. And we'll be gone in a quick.

Crow: That's a pitiful fire you've got made there, Mrs. Dilber, and it a bitter night.

Dilber: As pitiful as the coin he pays me—for all I do extra. No char makes the fire! But, he'd not pay me my due if I didn't—AND fix his gruel—AND all the other bits.

Crow: No more he pays his laundress and not another single gentlemen I wash for, but has a maid to make the bed. The skinflint. Put on another lump for us.

Dilber: Well, I will (*she does*) though he won't thank me if he notices. (*Comes to the bed and the two of them finish tucking in the sheets, folding the blankets and adjusting the bed curtains during the remainder of the scene.*) Ah, he has a thin soul, old Scrooge, and it don't feel the cold. I believe he warms himself by pouring over his money books, for I know he brings 'em home with him—sleeps with him for all I know.

Crow: (laughing) He'd need something to keep him warm. Who'd want rooms in a building all let out as offices?

Dilber: Marley's rooms they were. His partner, dead these many years and Scrooge livin' here ever since.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Mrs. Cratchit, Belinda, Annie, Peter, Martha

Belinda: Oh, Peter, Don't you look fine! Look, Mother, our brother looks like a grown up man!

Annie: Where did you get your new clothes, Peter?

Peter: Why, Father gave them to me to wear for Christmas dinner.

Mother: (*Touched by this*) You will make a fine man, Peter. Your sleeve wants turning. Here, let me help you.

Peter: (*To escape his mother*) Listen, the potatoes are bubbling up. Hear them knocking at the saucepan lid.

Mother: Mind, Peter, take care or you'll boil your sleeves and collars and all. Whatever has got your precious father then? And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha wasn't as late last Christmas day by half an hour.

Martha: (*Entering*) Here's Martha, Mother!

Belinda and Annie: (*So excited*) Here's Martha, Mother!

Peter: Hurrah! Martha's home. Now we'll have a Christmas.

Martha: Peter! My, just look at you. So tall, Peter!

Annie: Hurrah, Martha! There's such a goose.

Martha: I know, Annie. Why, in the lane just past the baker's, I smelled the goose and knew it for our own.

Mother: Bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are.

Martha: We had a deal of work to finish in the shop last night and had to clear away this morning, Mother.

Mother: Well! Never mind, so long as you are home. Are you well, my dear?

Martha: Oh, yes, Mother. Not to worry.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Belle, Young Scrooge

Belle: Excuse me, Ebby, but it has grown quite late. I...

Young Scrooge: I've only a few things more to finish here.

Belle: Yes, yes, I'm sure. Dear Ebby, your business has quite consumed you.

Young S: It occupies me, yes. I will be a good man of business, you may be sure of it.

Belle: I have no doubt. Your business has your heart and the affection you once shared with me. I see that an idol has replaced me in your eyes.

Young S: No. What idol?

Belle: A golden one. Made of golden coins.

Young S: I am not changed toward you.

Belle: You are changed. When our contract was made, you were another man.

Young S: I was a boy.

Belle: You see! Your own feelings tell you that were not what you are. Perhaps your coins can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do. Now I release you. *(She removes a ring from her finger.)* With a full heart, for the love of the man you once were. May you be happy in the life you have chosen. *(She drops the ring onto the scales on the desk and leaves. Silence ensues. Young Scrooge returns to work.)*

Young S & Scrooge: Belle!

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

3 Young Children

1st Child (male or female): Yes! School's out! Hooray!

2nd Child: Merry Christmas Larry. Merry Christmas, Ebenezer.

3rd Child: (*running in*) Happy Holidays Lads. Plenty of pudding.

2nd Child: Merry Christmas. I am sorry you can't be off to home Ebby.

1st Child: Yes rotten luck Ebenezer. Take care of the old school until we back, won't you lad.

3rd Child: To bad you can't go home for Christmas Ebby. Maybe next year old man.