

~~SCROOGE Spirit, please do not torture me any more. Show me one person - surely there must be one - who feels tenderness about the death of another. Show me some moment of tenderness or I shall be haunted by these sights for ever.~~

~~THE SPIRIT does not answer but leads SCROOGE away.~~

~~SCROOGE Oh, Spirit, I am thankful to leave this place and to be again among streets and sights I know. Lead on. Lead on, Spirit.~~

~~And THE SPIRIT takes him farther onwards...and stops.~~

~~SCROOGE I know this street. I know the house. Why, Spirit...~~

~~But before he can speak any more, light comes up on the CRATCHIT household.~~

~~Mrs Cratchit
Martha Cratchit
Belinda Cratchit
Peter Cratchit~~

~~But Bob Cratchit is not present...and Tiny Tim's special corner is empty, his stool is there; so, too, is his crutch.~~

~~ALL are sitting very still and quiet. PETER is reading.~~

Start

PETER C. "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them".

And there is silence and stillness, and then MRS CRATCHIT and THEIR DAUGHTERS continue with sewing, and PETER just sits. After a while MRS CRATCHIT puts down her sewing, and puts her hand up to her face.

MARTHA Mother?

MRS CRATCHIT It's the sewing. The colour hurts my eyes. I'll be all right in a moment.

MARTHA You're doing too much.

MRS CRATCHIT No. There - they're all right again now. I think it's the candle-light that makes them weak. Don't mention anything to your father, will you.

MARTHA Are you sure you're all right?

MRS CRATCHIT Yes, of course. I don't want your father to know. He has enough to worry him without my silly old eyes.

Stop

~~BELINDA Father ought to be home by now. It's near his time.~~

~~PETER Past it. But father walks slower than he used to.~~