

BOB Why, what's the matter? Where's our Martha?  
MRS CRATCHIT She's not coming.  
BOB Not coming!  
MRS CRATCHIT No, they've kept her at work.  
BOB Kept her at work! Not coming on Christmas Day!

*But MARTHA can't keep it up any longer and comes from hiding.*

Start

**TINY TIM** There she is! There she is!  
MARTHA Oh, father. I couldn't keep it up. I simply couldn't.  
PETER You've spoiled it.  
BOB You really had me worried.  
MRS CRATCHIT It's a shame to tease him on Christmas Day.  
BELINDA I want to show Tiny Tim the pudding.  
**TINY TIM** Please, please.  
PETER And the goose.  
**TINY TIM** Everything. I want to see all of it.  
PETER Come on then.

Skip

*And he and BELINDA help the excited TINY TIM out to the kitchen.*

MARTHA I'll see they don't eat it all.  
*And she follows them.*  
BOB My, it smells good.  
MRS CRATCHIT I hope it is Robert. And I hope there's enough.  
BOB Of course there'll be enough. You always worry about that.  
MRS CRATCHIT I'm sorry. I didn't mean...  
BOB No, I know you didn't. I never cease to marvel how you make a few shillings go so far.  
MRS CRATCHIT How did little Tim behave at church? Was he good?

BOB                                Good as gold.    Even better.    But...

*He stops and goes over to the punch.*

MRS CRATCHIT                Tell me.

BOB                                Well, he comes out with the strangest ideas.    He's a funny lad.

MRS CRATCHIT                What did he say?

BOB                                I suppose it's sitting on his own so much.    He gets kind of thoughtful and then comes out with the oddest ideas you ever heard.

MRS CRATCHIT                He's doing all right, isn't he?

BOB                                Oh, I think he's growing stronger, my dear.    I think so.

MRS CRATCHIT                Robert.

BOB                                Anyway - he suddenly said that he hoped the people saw him in church because he was a cripple.

MRS CRATCHIT                What?

BOB                                Yes, that's what he hoped.    He said that it might be pleasant for them to remember on Christmas Day who it was who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.    Just like that.    Just as simple as that.

*For a moment they are silent.    Then the silence is broken by the return of the other members of the family, led by TINY TIM.*

Restart    **TINY TIM**                                It's a delicious pudding, mother.. and a great big goose. And, and, oh, it's all so wonderful.

BELINDA                                If we don't eat soon, Peter will have finished all the potatoes.

PETER                                Shan't.

MRS CRATCHIT                Is the goose done, Martha?

MARTHA                                Beautifully done.    Just ready to eat.

MRS CRATCHIT                Then Robert?

BOB                                Yes, my dear, we'll have a toast first.

PETER                                Gosh, I forgot to look after the punch.

BOB It's all right, Peter. I've seen to it.

**TINY TIM** Can I sit in my favourite corner for the toast?

MRS CRATCHIT Of course you can.

BELINDA *(Helping her father with the glasses and mugs as he pours out.)* Here's yours mother.

BOB And one for Martha.

PETER I'll give Tiny Tim his.

BOB There. Have we all got some punch?

*Choruses of delighted "yesses".*

BOB Then - A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us.

*And everybody re-echoes the toast. Until finally...*

**TINY TIM** God bless us every one.

Stop

*And THE SPIRIT holds them all for a moment in the glow of his torch, and the group freezes in the position of the toasting, light dims from them and comes up on SCROOGE and the SPIRIT.*

SCROOGE Spirit, tell me. Will Tiny Tim live?

C. PRESENT I see a vacant seat in the chimney corner. I see a crutch without an owner. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.

SCROOGE No, no, kind Spirit.

C. PRESENT If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, no other Spirit of Christmas will find him here. But what of that? If he's likely to die, then he'd better do it and decrease the surplus population.

SCROOGE Don't, Spirit, don't...

C. PRESENT Again, your words. Man, don't use such words until you have discovered what the surplus is and where it is. Will you decide what men shall live? What men shall die? It may well be that in the sight of Heaven you are more worthless, you are less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. What then? What then?

*SCROOGE turns away, crushed by the rebuke.*