

Little Nell

BOB CRATCHIT. Well, Tiny Tim, it's sweet of you to obsess about it, but really I'm not crippled, I just fell down and went b'm. *(Note: pronounced like boom, but with a shorter vowel sound ... somewhere between boom and bum. B'm. The traditional way parents say it to children, but how do you spell that?)*

CHILDREN. *(Delighted.)* B'm! B'm! *(Enter Little Nell. She is a big girl — either tall and big; or even heavy. She carries a large bag [in which she hides some gifts, we will find out]. She's sensitive, like Tiny Tim. But also has a bit of a hale and hearty, "look on the bright side" attitude. So she has energy.)*

LITTLE NELL. Hello, father. Hello, Tiny Tim. Hello, other two children.

BOB CRATCHIT. Look, children, it's your older sister Little Nell home from the sweatshop. Did you bring home your pitiful salary to help us pay the bills?

LITTLE NELL. I was going to, dearest Father, but then on the street I saw such a pathetic sight. A woman of indeterminate age shivering in the cold and clutching her starving children. They were weeping and rending their garments. And because it's Christmastime, I felt such a tender feeling in my heart that I just had to give all my salary to them.

BOB CRATCHIT. That's lovely to hear, Little Nell. Children, your sister gives us all a good example.

LITTLE NELL. But I had saved enough money from before, with my nighttime job of selling matches in the snow, that I've been able to buy everyone presents.

TINY TIM. Presents, presents! Oh my little heart may burst!

GHOST. You see how happy and touching they are?

EBENEZER SCROOGE. If you say so. Just promise me they won't sing "Silent Night" again.

LITTLE NELL. Would anyone like to sing "Silent Night" with me?

EBENEZER SCROOGE. NOOOOOOO!!!! *(Scrooge rushes at her and pushes her off her stool. She falls to the ground.)*

LITTLE NELL. Aaaaaaaaaggghhh! What was that???

GHOST. Mr. Scrooge, stop that!

BOB CRATCHIT. Just a very strong wind in here, darling Little Nell. I like your sweater, is it new?

LITTLE NELL. Yes, Father. I made it myself at the sweatshop from extra yarn and table scraps that fell on the floor. It's my little gift to myself to keep my spirits up.

BOB CRATCHIT. Well it's even nicer than your earlier sweater

that your mother made a stew out of. *(Suddenly realizing, worried.)* Children, where is your mother?

TINY TIM. I don't know, Father. We haven't seen her for several hours since she said she was going to jump off the London Bridge.

LITTLE NELL. Oh my gracious.

CHILD 1 and CHILD 2. Mummy, Mummy! We want Mummy!

BOB CRATCHIT. Come, children, let us pray for the safe return of Mrs. Cratchit.

TINY TIM. What if she's dead? Think how pathetic I'll be then!

GHOST. Oh my God, I can't have Mrs. Cratchit be dead. Wait, I'm going to need all my powers. *(The Ghost spreads her arms, with firm authority. Bright light hits her and she intones:)* Hear me, spirits and ghosts around us. By all the powers vested in me from heaven and above, I call upon the forces of the wind and sea to bring Mrs. Bob Cratchit back to her proper home right now! *(Sounds of wind; then nothing.)* Nothing? Okay, what if I do this? *(With a bit of "I hate when I have to stoop to trying this," sings.)* Camptown ladies, sing this song, do da, do da, Camptown races ... *(Mrs. Bob Cratchit, her clothes and hair looking wet, comes dancing into the room, suddenly singing the second line along with the Ghost. It's as if the song has magically called her back from the river.)*

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. *(Singing.)* Camptown races, all day long, oh de do da day! *(Suddenly sees where she is and screams:)* Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaggghhh!!!!

GHOST. It worked!

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. NO NO NO!

CHILDREN. Mummy! Mummy!

TINY TIM. Merry Christmas, Mother. And God bless us, everyone.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. No, I don't want to be here.

BOB CRATCHIT. Gladys, are you all right?

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Wait a minute. *(She struggles inside her bodice; something is moving around that is bothering her.)* Uh ... uh ... got it! *(From inside her bodice she brings out a big fish.)* Look children, straight from the filthy, stinking Thames River. Mother's brought home a fish. How'd you all like fish for Christmas dinner?

TINY TIM. No thank you very much. I would prefer a Christmas goose and huckleberries and candied yams and then Mother's special Christmas pudding.

MRS. BOB CRATCHIT. Well you're gonna eat sushi and like it. Here, start nibbling on it now! *(She hands him the fish.)*

EBENEZER SCROOGE. Spirit, why did you bring this woman