

Young Ebenezer, Mr. Pringle, Miss Pringle, Fan

A YOUNG BOY, DRESSED IN THE CLOTHING OF AN EARLIER ERA, ENTERS, SIGHS, THEN SITS ON A BENCH. HE BEGINS READING A BOOK, TURNING THE PAGES VERY SLOWLY. THE BOY RISES FROM THE BENCH, THROWS HIS BOOK ASIDE, SIGHS, PACES UP AND DOWN FOR A MOMENT, THEN SITS AGAIN, DEJECTED, SIGHS.

BOY: I wish the others would come back. Christmas is so lonely. (HE PICKS UP HIS BOOK AGAIN, BUT DOESN'T OPEN IT.)

MR. PRINGLE: You may rise, Master Scrooge!

BOY: (RISES QUICKLY.) Yes, sir, Master Pringle.

MR. PRINGLE: All of the other boys have left to spend Christmas with their families.

BOY: Yes, sir.

MR. PRINGLE: But you, Master Scrooge, will stay here at the school during the entire holiday.

BOY: Yes, sir.

MR. PRINGLE: Your father has no desire to see you at this time of the year, nor, apparently, at any other time of the year.

BOY: Yes, sir. I know.

MR. PRINGLE: My sister, Miss Pringle and I find your continued presence here entirely inconvenient. But we have been most handsomely reimbursed to accept our duty and to comply with your father's request that you stay.

BOY: Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

MR. PRINGLE: You will remain in this room at all times unless you are sleeping. You will cause no further inconvenience to my sister nor to myself. If you should behave in a disobedient or disrespectful fashion, I will — take steps. Do you understand me?

BOY: Yes, sir.

(MISS PHAEDRA PRINGLE ENTERS. SHE IS EVEN MORE COLD AND STERN THAN HER BROTHER.)

MISS PRINGLE: Brother Phineas!

MR. PRINGLE: (ANNOYED.) Sister, can't you see that I am occupied?

MISS PRINGLE: (COLDLY.) Indeed, Brother. My vision is not impaired. However, I must speak with you immediately.

MR. PRINGLE: In regard to — what Dear Sister?

MISS PRINGLE: In regard to young Master Scrooge, here, Dear Brother.

MR. PRINGLE: Oh?

MISS PRINGLE: (PULLS HIM ASIDE, AND WHISPERS TO HIM.)

MR. PRINGLE: Can this be?

MISS PRINGLE: Evidently it is.

MR. PRINGLE: Well, then I suspect we must allow it.

MISS PRINGLE: Unfortunately, we must.

MR. PRINGLE: Wait here, Master Scrooge.

MISS PRINGLE: Come, we must hasten.