

**Mrs. Cratchit, Peter, Robbie, Belinda**

MRS. CRATCHIT: That will do, children. Belinda, you can set the plates. Robbie, you can set out the cups and spoons.

BELINDA: Yes, Mama

ROBBIE: Yes, Mama.

BELINDA: (TO ROBBIE.) I'll finish before you will!

ROBBIE: Oh, no you won't! I'm twice as fast as you are!

(THEY RACE TO FETCH THE DISHES AND SPOONS, ALMOST COLLIDING WITH EACH OTHER.)

BELINDA: Careful, Robbie! You almost made me drop the plates!

ROBBIE: Well, you almost made me break the cups.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Now, be very careful, children. Those are the only plates and cups we have. If you break them, you just might not be able to have any Christmas dinner!

BELINDA: Oh, that would be terrible!

ROBBIE: No Christmas dinner? Truly?

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well — you never know. After all, how can you have a fine Christmas dinner without a plate?

BELINDA: (ASIDE TO ROBBIE.) We'd better be very careful.

ROBBIE: (ASIDE TO BELINDA.) Right! I wouldn't like to miss our Christmas dinner!

BELINDA: (AGREES.) It's the best dinner of the whole year!

MRS. CRATCHIT: (NOW THAT THE CHILDREN ARE BEHAVING, HUMS TO HERSELF AS SHE LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.) Very nice. (CHECKS THE FOOD, AND THE PROGRESS ON THE TABLE.) Very nice, indeed!

PETER: (STILL IS STIRRING A POT, AGREES.) Yes, indeed, Mother! And our goose is the biggest we've ever had!

MRS. CRATCHIT: (LAUGHS, MUSSES HIS HAIR.) Oh, Peter, you say that every year!

PETER: (SMOOTHING HIS HAIR.) Now, Mother, you mustn't treat me like a child. After all, Father has almost found me a job —

MRS. CRATCHIT: "Almost."

PETER: (INDIGNANT.) For five shillings a week!

MRS. CRATCHIT: (LAUGHING.) Yes, Peter, I know.

PETER: And, after all I am wearing one of Father's shirt collars today, and that means I'm nearly grown up!

MRS. CRATCHIT: (SERIOUSLY.) Yes, son. You have truly grown so much. You really are almost grown up. (WITH ANOTHER MUSS OF HIS HAIR.) But even though you're wearing one of your father's shirt collars, you have a way to go before it actually fits you! (SHE LAUGHS.)

PETER: Oh, Mother.

BELINDA AND ROBBIE: (LAUGH.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: (WITH A FOND SMILE.) Peter, stir the potatoes again for me for me, please.

PETER: Yes, Mother. (GOES TO THE POT, STIRS VIGOROUSLY, THEN TAKES A FEW SURREPTITIOUS SAMPLES.) Ummmmmm!

BELINDA: Mama! Peter's eating the potatoes!

ROBBIE: That's not fair! I want some, too!

MRS. CRATCHIT: Peter! Leave some for the rest of the family!

PETER: Oh. (COVERS THE POT.) I just wanted to see if— ah -they were as good as last year's.

BELINDA: (SKEPTICAL.) Uh-huh.

ROBBIE: (EQUALLY SKEPTICAL) Uh-huh.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, are they as good as last year's?

PETER: (HEADS BACK TO THE POT.) Well, let me try just one more taste, and I'll be able to —

MRS. CRATCHIT: (PULLS HIM BACK, LAUGHING.) Oh, no, you don't, Peter Cratchit! You leave those potatoes alone.

PETER: (SIGHS.) All right, Mother.