MARTHA SIDE

BELINDA. Here’s Martha, mother! Hurrah!
MARTHA. Peter, Belinda, Merry Christmas. (She hands them small brown bags full of candy.)
PETER AND BELINDA. Thank you, Martha!
MRS. CRATCHIT. Why bless your heart alive, my dear! How late you are! (She takes off her shawl and bonnet for her.)
MARTHA. We’d a great deal of work to finish up last night, and had to clear away this morning, mother!
PETER. No, no! There’s father coming! Hide, Martha, hide!
BELINDA. Over here, Martha! (Martha is pulled behind the table. Peter cautions Belinda to be silent. Cratchit enters, with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Tim bears a tiny wooden crutch, and his limbs are supported by an iron frame.)
CRATCHIT. Why, where’s our Martha?
MRS. CRATCHIT. Not coming.
CRATCHIT. (With a sudden deflation in his high spirits.) Not com-ing?! Not coming on Christmas Day? (Martha can’t bear to see her father disappointed, so she comes quickly out from hiding.)
MARTHA. Don’t be sad, Father! I’m here!
MRS. CRATCHIT. And how did little Tim behave?
CRATCHIT. As good as gold. And better... Tim has grown stronger, more hearty since last Christmas. Wouldn’t you say, Martha? (Martha looks at Mrs.Cratchit, then — )
MARTHA. Yes! Yes, I believe it’s so!