A Christmas Callout

by certs_up

Summary

There is more to the transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge than meets the eye. Terrifyingly, horrifyingly more. Know the truth and the truth shall set you free!! Also, the Ghost of Christmas Present is a decadent git.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

Bob Cratchit's raise was only the beginning. Scrooge was a man of business, and as such he had connections, or at any rate the means of forming them. He arranged for the Cratchits to move into far better and roomier lodgings, and over time he paid a veritable prince's ransom obtaining proper medical treatment for Tiny Tim.

But Mrs. Cratchit remained suspicious. She knew when something was too good to be true.

She kept her thoughts to herself, of course. Had she come from a wealthier background, she might have compared herself to Cassandra, who could foresee dire events but not gain credence if she shared the knowledge. So she kept her own counsel as her family grew happier and healthier, as Peter gained a better position and Scrooge jollied Bob along with the prospect of a partnership.

She wondered why Scrooge was ready enough to visit them in their home or entertain them at an inn but never invited anyone to his own residence. Odd, she thought it. Surely such a man of means should have a grand mansion and enjoy playing the munificent host.
As is the way of women, she had her own connections, in the marketplace and at the church and among the buyers and sellers who went up and down the streets crying their wares. Through them she learned Mr. Scrooge's address and made the acquaintance of his cleaning lady. Scrooge had thoroughly paid her off, so Mrs. Cratchit played along, asking admission to the grand man's apartment "just to see," as she put it, "what sort of home he has for himself, when he's been so good and kind to us and never asked a thing for himself in return."

"Well, he's a very unassuming man for someone so well off, he is," the cleaning lady had said. "There's really nothing to be seen there."

"Poor man!" Mrs. Cratchit commiserated, though the lie burned her tongue like bile from the pits of hell. "Just let me have a look, then, so I can think of a proper gift I might send to cheer him up."

Scrooge's cleaning lady had been completely honest about the unassuming nature of his quarters. Mrs. Cratchit was wondering if Scrooge's workplace wouldn't bear some investigating when she noticed a door that had no knob; only a deadbolt.

And it was painted shut.

"What's this, then?" she asked, trying to sound innocent and dismayed at her failure.

"Oh, that? Just an old dumbwaiter, from a long time ago, when this was a fancy man's mansion. It's all locked up so nobody can fall in and break his neck."

"I see," said Mrs. Cratchit. But she saw a door too large for a dumbwaiter, and she smelled a rat.

It would take too long to detail how carefully she planned her next step, obtaining burglary tools and learning Mr. Scrooge's schedule, and making excuses to her own family about an excursion with an entirely fictitious friend. Suffice it to say that she laid her trap with care, and when the time was right, she laid into the mysterious door as woman bearing both the wrath and the will of God.

What she found within nearly made her drop her lantern in horror. It was indeed Mr. Scrooge -- the real Mr. Scrooge, it had to be -- or rather, something like a mummy of the real Mr. Scrooge. Fearful, she poked it with a crowbar. The flesh crumbled away, revealing a mostly hollow chest and the shriveled remains of a heart three sizes too small.

That convinced her this was indeed the real body of the real Mr. Scrooge.

But when she tried explaining her discovery to a constable, he smilingly escorted her to a lunatic asylum, where she spent the rest of her existence shouting, "Keep watching the skies!"

"That line's from *The Thing From Another World,*" the Ghost of Christmas Present said a little testily as he looked over the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come's shoulder. "*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* ends with the protagonist shouting, 'They're here ... you're next ... you're next!'"

The bony phalanges continued tapping against equally hard typewriter keys:
The Ghost of Christmas Present's charade might have continued indefinitely had it not been for a Series of Unfortunate Events. The False Scrooge was admiring the erection of an orphanage he was founding when a sudden gust of wind blew a sheet of plate glass from the workmen's hands! It sailed along, silent and invisible, as if guided by some knowing deity. Slice! Right through the figure's middle it went! Out from the two halves of the fallen torso there spilled cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel: a mass of the very things that had weighted old Marley's chains.

"For someone who looks like the Grim Reaper," the Ghost of Christmas Present continued dryly, "you're a lousy horror writer."

Then the people of London saw. Saw and knew! Knew that the generosity was only materialism and that all, all, ALL would in time fall to dust and ruin!

The Ghost of Christmas Present sighed. "Yet To Come, old fellow, wouldn't you rather join me in a glass of mulled wine?"

Yet To Come grabbed the paper in the typewriter and pulled it out with a hard yank. Flinging it aside, he pushed back his chair, pulled back his robe, and pointed to his nonexistent gut, then made a fist and extended a bony middle finger into the air.

"Oh, fine," grumbled the Ghost of Christmas Present, as Yet To Come sat down and rolled another sheet of paper into the antique typewriter.

End Notes
The picture is an image of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come first thing in the morning, before he's put on his robe. This is when he does his best writing.

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