

# A Christmas Carole

## RT CROSSING

(circa 1992)

*The snow and ice crunched underfoot as Ebenezer Scrooge IV walked down the street. "What a beautiful night!" he thought to himself. Smiling to the passersby, he hailed many by name and wished all a Merry Christmas.*

*As he turned the corner, he saw a raggedly dressed old man across the street shivering in the bare shelter of the alley. He frowned and walked into the bakery. A few moments later, he reemerged with two armloads of breads and pastries. Crossing the street, he approached the man and called to him. "You there, isn't it a lovely night?" The man looked at him blankly. "I want you to come to my house and celebrate Christmas with me." The man mumbled something incoherent. "Come, come. I have no family and will be quite lonely without company," said Ebenezer with a smile as he shuffled his bags and lifted the man to his feet.*

*"My name is Ben Scrooge," said Ebenezer, "What is yours?"*

*"Stan....Stanley McAlister."*

*"Well, Stanley, nice to meet you. Hold these bags, will you, and come with me. I need to finish my shopping."*

*Two hours later a taxi pulled in front of a large building with the name "Ebenezer Scrooge & Friends" above the door. From the cab bounded Scrooge followed a bit more slowly by Stanley. They somehow managed to take in all of the packages in two trips. (They had help of the taxi driver.)*

*As Scrooge closed the outside door, the inner door burst open and twenty or so children of all ages crowded into the room laughing calling hello. A few moments later they were gone, along with the packages.*

*After hanging up their coats Scrooge and Stanley walked down the hall and into a sitting room. "I see you run a children's home," observed Stanley.*

*"Yes," said Scrooge, "I have over 120 homeless children living here right now."*

*Both men rose to their feet as a beautiful woman entered the room. She smiled kindly as Scrooge spoke. "Stanley, I want you to meet the oldest member of my 'family'. This is Carole." Turning to Carole, he signed, "Carole, this is a new friend of mine, Stanley McAlister. He is going to spend Christmas with us." To Stanley he explained, "Carole is deaf. She came to us then years ago when she was eight. She has become the head of the girls' division."*

*"I am glad to meet you, Carole," signed Stanley.*

*"My pleasure," Carole signed delightedly.*

*"Where did you learn sign language," asked Scrooge.*

*"Some of my best friends were deaf."*

*"Oh."*

*"I came to tell you that supper is ready. Shall we eat?" signed Carole.*

*"Of course. Follow me."*

Scrooge led them to a large room filled with boys and girls of all ages and many backgrounds. They were eating, talking, and laughing with enthusiasm.

After sitting down to eat, Stanley noticed that while Carole bowed in prayer, Scrooge began eating immediately.

The next morning was Christmas Day. At exactly 6:00 doors flung open and the house was filled with excited laughter and the sounds of running feet. Stanley followed the commotion to a big parlor where fifty or so children were animatedly looking at a tall tree covered with and surrounded by presents of all shapes and sizes. The voices stilled as Carole and Scrooge entered.

Scrooge spoke, "Thank you for joining me here this fine morning. I know how difficult it was for all of you to get up so early. By now, I'm sure that you all have become painfully aware that there is no Santa Claus. You have learned that it is better to receive than to give, and you have to look out for number one because no one else will. Christmas is just a time where the spirit of Christmas is greed, and all that is important is how much money you can make or how many gifts you receive. Bah Humbug. I'm here to tell you this morning that this is not true. The true Spirit of Christmas is love. I have devoted my life to giving to you the best life that I can possibly provide. It is better to give than to receive. If I accomplish nothing else in my life, I hope it is to teach you to love each other and all mankind. Remember this as you enjoy your presents. You may open them now."

The children moved as one toward the gifts while Scrooge joined Stanley and Carole. Stanley said, "That was a nice little speech you gave."

"Thank you. I hope they learned it."

"There was something missing though."

"Oh? What is that?"

"I heard nothing about the Baby Jesus," said Stanley inquisitively.

"I don't believe that they should go from one fairy tale to another."

"What do you mean?"

"He means," interjected Carole in sign, "that he equates both Jesus and Santa Claus as detrimental fairy tales."

"I see," said Stanley thoughtfully.

Later, the three rejoined for breakfast. Eventually the conversation turned to gifts.

"So... What would you like if you could have any one thing this Christmas," signed Stanley to Carole.

She smiled shyly. "I would wish for assurance that Ben would one day receive Christ."

Scrooge smiled almost condescendingly as Stanley watched meditatively.

"How about you," signed Carole.

"I desire that your wish be fulfilled."

Carole turned to Ben, "What do you wish?"

He smiled kindly. "My greatest wish is for you to be able to speak."

"Granted." Scrooge looked at Stanley piercingly.

"Impossible," he spoke sadly. "She was born without vocal cords. I have tried the greatest doctors around the world. There is no hope."

Stanley rose to his feet. "There is always hope in Jesus Christ. If you will excuse me, I will go take a nap."

*"Carole signed, "Join us in an hour in the parlor for dessert." Stanley nodded his assent.*

*An hour's time found them together again. Scrooge sat by the tree while Carole stood across the room serving drinks. Stanley was telling a story to a group of attentive children. Three minutes passed and the low murmur of contented voices was interrupted by a snap and a loud machine gun-like cracking. Everyone's attention was grabbed by a feminine scream, "Beeennn!" Scrooge leaped from his chair as the great Christmas tree landed where he had sat seconds before. He shakily stood to his feet and, white-faced, looked at Carole. She stood with her back to the wall. Her hand covered her mouth, and her eyes were opened widely. Scrooge walked unsteadily toward her, "Carole...your voice...you spoke." He stopped and turned around. Stanley McAlister was nowhere to be seen.*