

The Chimes, Side 2

TOBY

I was pretty certain as I slipped out quietly into the street that I should find the tower door shut and locked, for I knew the door well, and had so rarely seen it open. But when I came to the church and put my hand into the nook where the door was, I felt no wood or metal - only darkness. The door was open.

Come now, Toby! What have you to fear? It's a church! Besides, the ringers are probably still up there, and have just forgotten to shut the door.

Best go home.

A loud bell rings.

Alright I'm coming! I'm coming!

HE *begins the ascend, using the set creatively to clamber up the narrow staircase.*

Ding-dong-ding-dong. Up you come now. Reach the tower. Porter Toby.
Ding-dong-ding-dong.

Up, up, up, and round, and round; and up, up, up; higher, higher, higher up!

Silence.

(*softly*) Hello? Halloa!

His voice echoes around the belfry.

It's powerful lonely, ain't it. (*Looking up*) My, but the bells are enormous! Old friends. I've listened to your chimes my whole life, and taken comfort in 'em. But, I feel quite nervous here in your presence. It's an eerie place you live.

Cripes, what is that?

I think it was the stillness of that gargoyle rattled me. Had it been flying overhead or crawling round the tower, I should've been less afraid of it. But something about its stony silence made my skin crawl.

HE *becomes the GARGOYLE, frozen in a monstrous pose. HE stays still for a strange, even uncomfortable length of time. Then slowly the eyes begin to move, then the hand, then the head. Soon the creature stands to its full height.*

Toby! Toby Veck! Porter, friend of the bells. You have wronged us. You have wronged the Chimes! Of all days, on Christmas Eve - when love is

nearest human hearts, you have strangled hope. Have not the Chimes always told you to keep a good heart? What else could they mean, Toby Veck, except to keep hope, to keep faith?

Becoming TOBY.

I tried to speak, to explain that I didn't mean nothing by it. It's only that I was frightened - frightened for the world, and for Lillian, and for meself, and most of all for dear Meg. But I could make no answer. Terror had struck me mute. And as I sat trembling before the creature, a soft light cut through the darkness of the belfry. It shone from behind me, casting my shadow long across the tower floor. I turned slowly, shaking from fright at what I might see behind me.

As he turns HE covers his eyes. Cautiously, HE removes his hand and looks. His fear softens.

Why it's but a little thing, a little child. It's Lillian! Or at least, a bit like her. So small and sweet, and glowing with a gentle light. It reminds me of my Meg when she was little. But not quite exactly like Meg. Tell me, who are you?

Becoming the CHIMES

I am Time, Toby Veck. I am Hope. I am the spirit of the Chimes, the lifter of souls, the fresh bloom of youth and possibility. I *am* Lillian, and also Meg - I am all things bright and hopeful. I will show you, Toby Veck. I will show you what happens when hope dies. And you will learn it from the creature dearest to your heart. You will see, Toby Veck. You will see. Follow me.