

The Chimes, Side 3

Toby:

Oh! Spirit what's here? The room is so dim, I can hardly see. (*Beat*) Oh, spirit. It's her. It's Meg. She weeps by the bedside. There's a still figure on the blankets. Oh no, spirit! No not, Richard! Please, spirit, spare her this grief. They were to be such a happy couple. Despair has led them astray, I see. Oh spare them, spirit.

HE notices something.

But what's that in her arms? Why, Meg. Oh, Meg! It's your little girl. Oh, she is lovely! My little granddaughter. Oh Meg, you have at least this happiness left. Look at your baby girl, and have hope, my dear. Have hope.

HE watches Meg stand. With rising panic.

What is she doing, spirit? Where is she going? There's a fierce and terrible expression in her face. Where does she go, spirit?

A dreadful realization.

Oh please stop her. Please, I am her father. Have mercy! Turn her back, spirit!

Becoming the CHIMES.

Have you yet learned it, Toby Veck? Have you learned the secret of the Chimes, how we keep time day-in and day-out, whatever good or evil is happening in the world below? Time, Toby Veck - time is the fertile soil of hope. For while there is still time, there is still hope. And by our faithful keeping of time, the Chimes keep hope alive for all the downtrodden, the afraid, the lonely, and the oppressed. We keep hope that one day even the worst will get better. This hope keeps men and women alive, it keeps them striving and sharing and helping one another, it builds the future it dreams.

But you have looked around you, Toby, have come to believe that what you see is all there is. And so have given over your heart to despair. Keep a good heart; is that not the command? Is it not Christmas, Toby Veck? Of all days, the greatest for remembering that there is hope beyond the world's badness. Hope for salvation.

You shall learn it yet, Toby Veck. You shall learn it from the creature dearest to your heart. Follow her. Follow her to desperation.

Becoming TOBY.

And follow her I did - my little girl. On and on Meg hurried through the streets. And long as I live I shall never forget the look of despair on my poor child's face as she made towards the river.

I begged the spirit for something to awaken her! For any sight, or sound, or scent, to call up tender recollections in a brain on fire! For any gentle image of the Past, to rise before her!
And then. She was at the river. She stood on a precipice and it rolled dark and icy below her. The little girl in her arms began to cry. Somewhere down the bank a Christmas choir sang a carol, but the sound seemed not to reach her. She had lost all sense of goodness, of hope.

Oh please! I have learnt it! From the creature dearest to my heart! O, save her, save her! No!

She leaps. TOBY lunges, reaching for Meg. He is too late.

O spirit! Spirit! Have mercy on me in this hour, if, in my love for her, so young and good, I slandered her future! If I condemned the world as utterly bad, and condemned my precious girl along with it. I see, spirit, I see. I know that our inheritance is held in store for us by Time. I know there is a sea of Time to rise one day, before which all wrongs and oppressions will be swept away. I see it! I know that we must trust and hope, and neither doubt ourselves, nor doubt the good in one another. *(beat)* O Spirit, I have learnt it from the creature dearest to my heart. I am grateful. I am grateful. I am grateful.