

REBECCA. I don't know how we've done it, but we haven't spilled a drop.

CATHERINE. He'd have our heads if we did. He insisted we have the punch.

FREDERICK. Bravo, ladies, remarkable feat!

REBECCA. I think it's an accomplishment, to be chased 'round a table and up three flights of stairs, carrying a full bowl of punch, and not spill a drop. What could he be thinking?

FREDERICK. (Picking up a horse collar connected to several chains) Something outrageous, I'm quite confident.

CATHERINE. Well, if that's any indication, I'm certain we'll need to fortify ourselves for whatever he has in mind.

Have some punch.

(DICKENS sings offstage. He's heard before he's seen.)

DICKENS. WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE
BEARING GIFTS WE'VE TRAVELED AFAR.

(He enters, carrying a pine branch in a pot, festooned with decorations)

FIELD AND FOUNTAIN, MOOR AND MOUNTAIN,
FOLLOWING YONDER STAR.

(He sets down the pot, and points a finger at CHARLEY)

Child, which way to the East?

CATHERINE. What have you done to the tree, Charles?

DICKENS. It insisted I bring some of it upstairs. "Take a bough" it said! "I don't want to be left out! I've plenty more and won't miss it a minute!" You'll be happy to know that the senior goose is simmering in the oven.

REBECCA. There's barely a thing left downstairs. Mary is positively in a turmoil.

CATHERINE. As she should be, having dinner stolen from under her nose like that.

DICKENS. Nonsense. Mary is an excellent woman and a cook most adaptable to any situation. In any event, I've sent her home, where she ought to be on Christmas Eve.