

The Miser

by George Albert Leddy

**A GRAFTING, CLINGING, MONSTROUS THING;
MORE FIT FOR HORNS, THAN FIT FOR WINGS .**

The candle on the mantle shed a dim and lonely light;
The fire in the hearth was burning low;
The winds around the cabin seemed to wail in strange affright;
The windows seemed most ghastly decked in snow.
The Miser—gnarled and wrinkled, scant'ly clad and scant'ly fed;
Who'd played the game for Gold, and always scored;
With many sins of selfishness now hanging o'er his head;
Crouched in the corner—'mongst his earthly hoard.

He chattered like a maniac, his weasel-eyes did shine;
His fiend-like form now trembling from the cold.
He gloated in his hellish glee: "All mine, all mine, all mine!"
His claw-like fingers mingling in the Gold.
When lo, a Dusky Raven came and perched above the door;
The Miser cried, "Begone, I know ye well!
You are the one who haunted me, for twenty years or more;
You bought my soul for Gold—you fiend of Hell!"

The Raven spoke in rasping voice: "Yea, twenty years ago,
There came a lonely Stranger to your door.
He asked you for a lodging, and protection from the snow;
And you replied, 'Begone, for evermore!'
He gazed a moment on the scene, it was your wedding eve;
He gazed upon your Parents and your Bride.
He cried, 'Beware ye heartless, who my troubles won't relieve!'
Then struggled on—until he sank and died.

"And then the venging Spirit placed a crown upon your head;
The crown was but the curse of shining Gold.
You soon forgot your loved-ones, loved the shining Gold instead;
And soon, for such, your happiness you sold.
Your Father, whom had loved you well, you hastened to his end;
Your dear old Mother died of broken-heart;
The ones who in your younger days had proudly called you 'friend,'
Now wonder at so cruel and hard a heart.

“Your Wife was kind and faithful, served you early, served you late;
And stood by you when you had not a friend.
But lo, you cursed and beat her—all your love had turned to hate!
Alas, she met a cruel and bitter end.
Ah, tremble now ye coward, ‘tis I who know your deeds;
Tis I who planned them all, and planned them well;
‘Tis I who’ll reap the harvest, for ‘tis I who sewed the seed;
‘Tis I who’ll drag you to—Eternal Hell!

“Why, if I wished to linger, and recall the days of old;
Where I have been the Master, you the Slave;
Of men you’ve lured into your den, and robbed them of their Gold;
And sent them, boldly, to a cruel grave;
Of little children you have held for ransoms mighty high;
Of women you have lured into your fold;
And held them there, as prisoners, till they suffer, starve and die;
Unless they satisfy—your greed for Gold!

“But no, I cannot linger, we will go back twenty years;
To the night you cast the Stranger from your door.
Ah, plead ye not for mercy, there’s no mercy for you here;
Your cursid life on Earth—is nearly o’er!
And I will then escort, ye fiend, into that brimstone cell.
Revenge is sweet, it fills my soul with glee!
And then I’ll go for evermore, from that Eternal Hell;
But you’ll remain—for all eternity!”

The Miser, old and stiff, arose and hobbled to the door;
He cried, “‘Twas you who made me do those things!”
He clutched the Raven by the throat, and dragged him to the floor;
And gleefully—he clipped the Raven’s wings . . .
And now the gloating Miser sits among the tainted Gold;
The wild winds howl around the cabin door;
And where the candle sheds its light, the Raven sadly sits.
Alas! alas, he’ll sit—for evermore.
