



A  
CHRISTMAS  
CAROL

BY  
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## A Christmas Carol, Episode 1 - Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead. There is no doubt whatever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. Scrooge and he were partners. Scrooge was his sole friend and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley.

Oh - he was tight-fisted, Scrooge! Hard and sharp as flint. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue. A frost was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?' No man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge.

Once upon a time - on Christmas Eve - old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather and he could hear the people outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense that the houses opposite were mere phantoms.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, Bob Cratchit, who in a small dismal little room beyond, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room.

'A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!' It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

'Bah!' said Scrooge, 'Humbug!'

This nephew of Scrooge's had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost that he was all a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled.

'Christmas a humbug, uncle!' said Scrooge's nephew. 'You don't mean that, I'm sure.'

'I do,' said Scrooge. 'Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.'

'Come, then,' returned the nephew gaily. 'What right have you to be dismal? What right have you to be morose? You're rich enough.'

Scrooge, having no better answer, said 'Bah!' again; and followed it up with 'Humbug.'

'Don't be cross, uncle,' said the nephew.

'What else can I be,' returned Scrooge, 'when I live in such a world of fools?'

'Uncle!' pleaded the nephew.

'Keep Christmas in your own way' returned the uncle, sternly, 'and let me keep it in mine.'

'Keep it!' repeated Scrooge's nephew. 'But you don't keep it.'

'Let me leave it alone, then,' said Scrooge. 'Much good Christmas has ever done you!' he added.

'I'm sure I have always thought of Christmas as a good time,' said the nephew. 'A kind, forgiving, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long year, when men and women seem to open their hearts freely. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!'

The clerk, Bob Cratchit, involuntarily applauded. But becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark forever.

'Let me hear another sound from you,' said Scrooge, 'and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation!'

'Don't be angry, uncle,' continued Scrooge's nephew. 'Come! Dine with us to-morrow.'

'Good afternoon,' said Scrooge.

'I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?'

'Good afternoon,' said Scrooge.

'I'm sorry, with all my heart. But I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!'

'Good afternoon!' said Scrooge.

His nephew stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who - cold as he was - was warmer than Scrooge, for he returned them cordially.

'There's another fellow,' muttered Scrooge; who overheard him: 'my clerk, Bob Cratchit, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and a family, talking about a merry Christmas. Humbug!'

Bob, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office.

'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe,' said one of the gentlemen. 'Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?'

'Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years,' Scrooge replied. 'He died seven years ago, this very night.'

'At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,' said the gentleman, taking up a pen, 'it is desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at this present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.'

'Are there no prisons?' asked Scrooge.

'Plenty of prisons,' said the gentleman.

'And the workhouses?' demanded Scrooge. 'Are they still in operation?'

'They are,' returned the gentleman.

'Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,' said Scrooge. 'I'm very glad to hear it.'

'A few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth,' continued the gentleman. 'We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt. What shall I put you down for?'

'Nothing!' Scrooge replied.

'You wish to be anonymous?'

'I wish to be left alone,' said Scrooge. 'Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough and those who are badly off must go there.'

'Many would rather die than go to prison or the workhouse,' said the gentleman.

'If they would rather die,' said Scrooge, 'they'd better do it, and decrease the surplus population.'

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew and Scrooge resumed his labors.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened. The ancient tower of a church, whose old bell was always peeping down at Scrooge, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with a tremulous vibration as if its teeth were chattering. Piercing, searching, biting cold. A young boy stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of 'God bless you, merry gentleman!' Scrooge seized his ruler with such energy that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and frost.

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and the clerk - Bob Cratchit - instantly snuffed his candle out and put on his hat.

'You'll want all Christmas day off tomorrow, I suppose?' said Scrooge.

'If quite convenient, Sir,' said Bob.

'It's not convenient,' said Scrooge, 'and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound? And yet,' he continued, 'you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.'

The clerk smiled faintly and observed that it was only once a year.

'A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!' said Scrooge, buttoning his coat to the chin. 'Be here all the earlier next morning!' And Bob Cratchit promised that he would.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern and went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner, Jacob Marley. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a pile of a building up a yard. It was old and dreary, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, had to grope with his hands.

Now, it is a fact that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It's also a fact that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also, that Scrooge had little of what is called 'fancy' about him. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, not a knocker...but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. To say that Scrooge was not startled would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He did pause before he shut the door to look cautiously behind it first. But there was nothing on the back except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. But Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes, so he fastened the door, walked across the hall and up the stairs.

Up Scrooge went. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. Sitting-room, bed-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table; nobody under the sofa; nobody under the bed.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, locked himself in and thus secured against surprise, he put on his dressing-gown and slippers and his night-cap and sat down before the fire.

As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room. It was with great astonishment and dread that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain in the cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains. The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

'It's humbug still!' said Scrooge. 'I won't believe it.'

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, a figure came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes.

The same face: the very same. Jacob Marley!

### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 2 - Meeting with Marley**

Jacob Marley. The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat and boots. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Though Scrooge looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes and marked the very texture of the folded handkerchief bound about its head and chin (which he'd not observed before) he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.

'How now!' he said, caustic and cold as ever. 'What do you want with me?'

'Much!' - Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

'Who are you?' asked Scrooge.

'Ask me who I was' stated the ghost.

'Who were you then?' said Scrooge, raising his voice.

'In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.'

'Can you - can you sit down?' asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

'I can.'

'Do it then,' asked Scrooge.

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might be able to take to a chair, and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

'You don't believe in me,' observed the Ghost.

'I don't,' said Scrooge.

'What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?' continued the ghost.

'I don't know,' said Scrooge.

'Why do you doubt your senses?' asked the ghost.

'Because,' said Scrooge, 'a little thing may affect them. A slight disorder of the stomach. You might be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!'

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror, for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

'You see this toothpick?' said Scrooge, returning quickly to his point and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from himself.

'I do,' replied the Ghost.

'You're not looking at it,' said Scrooge.

But I see it,' said the Ghost

'Well!' returned Scrooge, 'I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you; humbug!'

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom, taking off the bandage round its head - as if it were too warm to wear indoors - its lower jaw dropped down upon its chest!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

'Mercy!' he said. 'Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?'

'Do you believe in me or not?' replied the Ghost.

'I do! I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?'

'It is required of every man,' the Ghost returned, 'that the spirit within him should walk among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not

forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain, and wrung its shadowy hands.

'You are chained,' said Scrooge, trembling. 'Tell me why?'

'I wear the chain I forged in life,' replied the Ghost. 'I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it.

Is its pattern strange to you?'

Scrooge trembled more and more.

'Or would you know the weight and length of the chain you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!'

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

'Jacob,' he said, imploringly. 'Tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.'

'I have none to give,' the Ghost replied. 'Comfort comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more, is all that is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. In life my spirit never walked beyond our counting-house - and now weary journeys lie before me!'

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

'You must have been very slow about it, Jacob,' Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deference.

'Slow!' the Ghost repeated.

'Seven years dead,' mused Scrooge. 'And travelling all that time?'

'The whole time,' said the Ghost. 'No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.'

'You travel fast?' said Scrooge.

'On the wings of the wind,' replied the Ghost.

'You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years,' said Scrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chain hideously in the dead silence of the night.

'Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,' cried the phantom, 'and not to know that any space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!'

'But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,' faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.



'Business!' cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. 'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, benevolence were my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!'

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if it were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

'This is the time of year I suffer most,' the spectre said. 'Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed star which led the wise men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have led me!'

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and he began to quake exceedingly.

'Hear me!' cried the Ghost. 'My time is nearly gone.'

'I will,' said Scrooge. 'But don't be hard upon me, Jacob!'

'How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.'

It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

'That is no light part of my penance,' pursued the Ghost. 'I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.'

'You were always a good friend to me,' said Scrooge. 'Thank'ee!'

'You will be haunted,' resumed the Ghost, 'by Three Spirits.'

Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done.

'Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?' he demanded, in a faltering voice.

'It is.'

'I - I think I'd rather not,' said Scrooge.

'Without their visits you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls one.'

'Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it all over, Jacob?' hinted Scrooge.

'Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us.'

When it had said these words, the spectre took its handkerchief from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scrooge knew this by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together by the bandage. He ventured to

raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an upright posture, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night. Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He'd been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle. It cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was clearly, that they sought to interfere for good in human matters...and had lost the power for ever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was still locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say 'Humbug!' but stopped at the first syllable. Whether from the emotion he'd undergone...or the fatigues of the day...or the conversation of the Ghost...or the lateness of the hour, he was much in need of rest. He went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 3 - The First of the Three Spirits**

When Scrooge awoke it was so dark that, looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the window from the walls of his chamber. He was endeavoring to pierce the darkness when the chimes of a neighboring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve! It was past two when he went to bed.

'Why, it isn't possible,' said Scrooge, 'that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night.' He scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. All he could make out was that it was still very foggy and extremely cold.

He went over to bed again and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over - and could make nothing of it. Every time he resolved within himself that it was all a dream, his mind flew back to its first position and presented the same problem to be worked all through, 'Was it a dream or not?'

Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three quarters more, when he remembered that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was past; and, considering that he could not go to sleep, this was perhaps the wisest resolution in his power.

The quarter hour was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

'Ding, dong!'

'A quarter past,' said Scrooge, counting.

'Ding, dong!'

'Half past!' said Scrooge.

'Ding, dong!'

'A quarter to it,' said Scrooge.

'Ding, dong!'

'The hour itself,' said Scrooge, triumphantly, 'and nothing else!'

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy one. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a hand and Scrooge, starting up, found himself face to face with an unearthly visitor.

It was a strange figure - like a child, yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it. It wore a tunic of the purest white and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible.

'Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?' asked Scrooge.

'I am!'

The voice was soft and gentle, as if, instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

'Who...and what are you?' Scrooge demanded.

'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.'

'Long past?' inquired Scrooge.

'No. Your past.'

Scrooge then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

'Your welfare!' said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately: 'Your reclamation, then. Take heed!'

It put out its hand as it spoke, and clasped Scrooge gently by the arm.

'Rise! and walk with me!'

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the bed was warm and the thermometer a long way below freezing; the grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. Scrooge rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped its robe in supplication.

'I am mortal,' Scrooge remonstrated, 'and liable to fall.'

'Let me touch my hand there,' said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, 'and you shall be upheld!'

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall...and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either side. The city had entirely vanished. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground. 'Good Heaven!' said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. 'I know this place. I was a boy here!'

Scrooge was conscious of a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten.

'Your lip is trembling,' said the Ghost.

Scrooge muttered, and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

'You recollect the way?' inquired the Spirit.

'Remember it!' cried Scrooge with fervor; 'I could walk it blindfold.'

'Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!' observed the Ghost. 'Let us go on.'

They walked along the road; Scrooge recognizing every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in carts driven by farmers. All these

boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

'These are but shadows of the things that have been,' said the Ghost. 'They have no consciousness of us.'

The merry travelers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? What good had it ever done to him?

'The school is not quite deserted,' said the Ghost. 'A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.'

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious rooms were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy smell in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candlelight, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain benches and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a bench, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreign garments, wonderfully real and distinct to look at, stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading an ass laden with wood by the bridle.

'Why, it's Ali Baba!' Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. 'It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, when this solitary child was left here all alone, he did come, just like that. And Valentine,' said Scrooge, 'and his wild brother, Orson; there they go!'

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying; and to see his heightened and excited face; would have been a surprise to his business friends in the city, indeed.

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, 'Poor boy!' and cried again.

'I wish,' Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: 'but it's too late now.'

What's the matter?' asked the Spirit.

'Nothing,' said Scrooge. 'Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all.'

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, 'Let us see another Christmas!'

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the windows cracked and fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling. But how all this was brought about, Scrooge knew not. He only knew that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her 'Dear, dear brother.'

'I have come to bring you home, dear brother!' said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. 'To bring you home, home, home!'

'Home, little Fan?' returned the boy.

'Yes!' said the child, brimful of glee. 'Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be. He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man!' said the child, opening her eyes, 'and you are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world.'

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door.

A voice in the hall cried. 'Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!' and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who showed young Scrooge and his sister into the parlor. Here he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake and, at the same time, sent out a servant to offer a glass of something to the postboy.

Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied to the top of the coach, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye right willingly; and getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-sweep, the quick wheels dashing the frost and snow from the dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

'Always a delicate creature, your sister,' said the Ghost. 'But she had a large heart!'

'So she had!' cried Scrooge. 'You're right, I will not deny it!'

'She died a woman,' said the Ghost, 'and had, as I think, children.'

'One child,' Scrooge returned.

'True,' said the Ghost. 'Your nephew!'

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly, 'Yes.'

#### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 4 - Master Fezziwig**

Although Scrooge and the Ghost had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the streets of a busy city, where shadowy passengers passed and shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way. It was plain enough that here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

'Know it!' said Scrooge. 'I was an apprentice here!'

They went in. At the sight of an old gentleman in a wig, sitting behind such a high desk, that if he'd been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement: 'Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!'

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands, adjusted his capacious waistcoat, and called out in a jovial voice: 'Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!'

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow apprentice, Dick.

'Dick Wilkins, to be sure!' said Scrooge to the Ghost. 'Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!' 'Yo ho, my boys!'

said Fezziwig. 'No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!'

Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!'

Clear away! It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off; the floor was swept and fuel was heaped upon the fire. The warehouse was as snug and bright a ball-room, as you could desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's friend, the milkman. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. And away they all went, twenty couples at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again.

Old Fezziwig cried out, 'Well done!' and the fiddler began again and there were more dances, and there were games, and more dances, and then there was cake, and there was a great Cold Roast, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came when Old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance - advance and retire, hold hands with your partner, bow and curtsy, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place - Fezziwig cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two apprentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene and with his former self. He remembered everything and enjoyed everything. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

'A small matter,' said the Ghost, 'to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.'

'Small!' echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig. And when Scrooge had done so, the Spirit said: 'Why! Is it not? He's spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?'

'It isn't that,' said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. 'It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.'



He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

'What's the matter?' asked the Ghost.

'Nothing particular,' said Scrooge.

'Something, I think?' the Ghost insisted.

'No,' said Scrooge, 'No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk, Bob Cratchit, just now! That's all.'

Scrooge's former self turned down the lamps and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

'My time grows short,' observed the Spirit. 'Quick!'

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of his life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years, but there was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young woman, in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

'It matters little,' she said, softly. 'To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I've no just cause to grieve.'

'What Idol has displaced you?' he asked.

'A golden one: the pursuit of wealth! I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you.'

'What then?' he retorted. 'Even if I've grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.'

She shook her head.

'Am I?' he asked.

'Our engagement is an old one,' she said. 'It was made when we were both poor and content to be so. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.'

'Have I ever sought release?' he asked.

'In words. No. Never,' she said.

'In what, then?'

'In a changed nature; in an altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us,' she said, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him, 'tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now?'

He seemed to yield to the justice of this, in spite of himself. But he said with a struggle, 'You think not.'

'I would gladly think otherwise if I could,' she answered, 'Heaven knows! But if you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a girl without a dowry - you who weigh everything by Gain. I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.'

He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

'You may have pain in this now. But a very brief time from now and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you've chosen!'

She left him, and they parted.

'Spirit!' said Scrooge, 'show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?'

'One shadow more!' exclaimed the Ghost.

'No more!' cried Scrooge. 'No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!'

But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next.

They were in another scene and place; a room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like that last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw her, now grown older, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count, and every child was conducting itself like forty. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much.

Now a knocking at the door was heard, and such a rush immediately ensued that the daughter with a laughing face was borne towards it at the centre of a flushed and boisterous group, just in time to greet the father, who came home attended by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. Then the shouting and the struggling, and the onslaught that was made on the defenceless porter! The scaling him, with chairs for ladders, to dive into his pockets, and despoil him of brown-paper parcels, hold on tight by his cravat, hug him round the neck, pommel his back, and kick his legs in irrepressible affection! The shouts of wonder and delight with which the development of every package was received! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstasy! They are all indescribable. It's enough that by degrees the children got out of the parlor, and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed.

And now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, when the master of the house, having his daughter leaning fondly on him, sat down with her and her mother at his own fireside; and when he thought that such another creature, quite as

graceful and as full of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed.

'I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon,' said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile.

'Who was it?' she enquired.

'Guess!'

'How can I? I don't I know,' she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed.

'Mr Scrooge?'

'Mr Scrooge it was!' said her husband. 'I passed his office window and as it was not shut up, and because he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear, and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe.'

'Spirit!' said Scrooge in a broken voice, 'remove me from this place.'

'I told you these were shadows of the things that have been,' said the Ghost. 'That they are what they are, do not blame me!'

'Remove me!' Scrooge exclaimed, 'I cannot bear it!'

He turned upon the Ghost, and began to wrestle with it.

'Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!'

In the struggle Scrooge was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness. He relaxed, and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 5 - The Second of the Three Spirits**

Awakening and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. But, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling.

Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time, as he lay upon his bed, a blaze of ruddy light, streamed upon the clock, which Scrooge began to think at last might be coming from the adjoining room. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were hung with living green, from every part of which bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly,

mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney. Heaped upon the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, great joints of meat, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam.

Upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see: who bore a glowing torch, which he held up high, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

'Come in!' exclaimed the Ghost. 'Come in and know me better!'

Scrooge entered timidly. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

'I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,' said the Spirit. 'Look upon me!'

Scrooge did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, bordered with white fur. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free: free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, and its joyful air.

'You've never seen the like of me before!' exclaimed the Spirit.

'Never,' Scrooge made answer.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

'Spirit,' said Scrooge submissively, 'conduct me where you will. I went forth last night and I learned a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have ought to teach me, let me profit by it.'

'Touch my robe!' said the Spirit.

Scrooge did as he was told and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries - all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow. They stood, invisible as before, in the suburbs of the town on Christmas morning, before the house of Scrooge's clerk, Bob Cratchit.

Up rose Mrs Cratchit, dressed poorly, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes. Now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage-and-onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies,

while he blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

'What has ever got your father then?' said Mrs Cratchit. 'And your brother, Tiny Tim! And your sister Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!'

'Here's Martha, mother!' said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

'Here's Martha, mother!' cried two young Cratchits. 'Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!'

'Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!' said Mrs Cratchit.

'We'd a deal of work to finish up last night,' replied the girl, 'and had to clear away this morning, mother!'

'Well! Never mind, so long as you're come,' said Mrs Cratchit. 'Sit down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm!'

'No, no! There's father coming,' cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. 'Hide, Martha, hide!'

So Martha hid herself, and in came Bob, the father, in his threadbare clothes with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

'Why, where's our Martha?' cried Bob, looking round.

'Not coming,' said Mrs Cratchit.

'Not coming!' said Bob. 'Not coming upon Christmas Day!'

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, even if it were only in joke, so she came out from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the pot.

'And how did little Tim behave?' asked Mrs Cratchit, when Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

'Good as gold,' said Bob, 'and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.'

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire.

Bob, turned up his cuffs and compounded some hot mixture in a jug, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; while Master Peter, and the two young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon; and, in truth, it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody.

At last the dishes were set, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs Cratchit, looked slowly all along the carving-knife, preparing to plunge it in the goose. And when she did, and the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all around the table, and even Tiny Tim beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family. The plates were changed by Miss Belinda and now Mrs. Cratchit left the room, to take the pudding up, and bring it in. Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose! All sorts of horrors were supposed by Mrs. Cratchit.

In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit returned: flushed but smiling proudly, with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in ignited brandy, and with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess that she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for such a large family.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire.

Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass: two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle. These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts upon the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed: 'A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!'

Which all the family re-echoed. 'God bless us every one!' said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

'Spirit,' said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, 'tell me if Tiny Tim will live.'

'I see a vacant seat,' replied the Ghost, 'in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.'

'Oh no,' said Scrooge. 'Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he'll be spared.'

'If he be like to die,' returned the Ghost, 'he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.'

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief. He bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name.

'Mr Scrooge!' said Bob; 'I give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!'

'The Founder of the Feast indeed!' cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. 'I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon.'

'My dear,' said Bob, 'the children; Christmas Day.'

'It should be Christmas Day, I am sure,' said she, 'on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do!'

'My dear,' was Bob's mild answer, 'Christmas Day.'

'I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's,' said Mrs. Cratchit, 'not for his. Long life to him. A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!' she added.

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care two-pence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge being done with. Bob told them how he'd enquired about a job for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five shillings and sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favor when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and bye and bye they had a song, about a lost child travelling in

the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented. And, when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them - and especially on Tiny Tim - until the last.

### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 6 - Scrooge's Nephew**

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of all the roaring fires in kitchens, parlors, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cozy dinner and curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness. There all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. If you had judged from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there.

How the Ghost exulted! How it poured its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach!

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak moor, where nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse, rank grass. Down in the west the setting sun had left a streak of fiery red, which glared upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frowning lower, lower, lower, was lost in the thick gloom of darkest night.

'What place is this?' asked Scrooge.

'A place where Miners live, who labor in the bowels of the earth,' returned the Spirit. 'But they know me. See!'

A light shone from the window of a hut, and swiftly they advanced towards it.

Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled around a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wind, was singing them a Christmas song, and from time to time they all joined in the chorus.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped towards the sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land behind them, and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water,



as it rolled, and roared, and raged. Built upon a reef of sunken rocks, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed clung to its base, and storm-birds rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, the two men who watched the lighthouse light had made a fire, that shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas, and one of them, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather - as the figure-head of an old ship might be - struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea - on, on - until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers on watch; dark, ghostly figures. But every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some bygone Christmas Day. And every man on board had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his own nephew's and to find himself in a bright, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability!

'Ha, ha!' laughed Scrooge's nephew. 'Ha, ha, ha!'

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance. There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humor. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way, holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions, Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends roared out lustily.

'Ha, ha! He said that Christmas was humbug, as I live!' cried Scrooge's nephew. 'He believed it too!'

'More shame for him, Fred!' said Scrooge's niece, indignantly.

'He's a comical old fellow,' said Scrooge's nephew, 'that's the truth: and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.'

'I'm sure he's very rich, Fred,' hinted Scrooge's niece. 'At least you always tell me so.'

'What of that, my dear!' said Scrooge's nephew. 'His wealth is of no use to him. He doesn't do any good with it!'

'I have no patience with him,' observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

'Oh, I have!' said Scrooge's nephew. 'I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. He takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He doesn't lose much of a dinner.'

'Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner,' interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner.

'Well! I'm very glad to hear it,' said Scrooge's nephew. 'I just wish to say that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it - I defy him - if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the mood to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something.'

After tea, they had some music, for they were a musical family. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp, and played among other things a simple little tune which had been familiar to the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been reminded by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindness of life for his own happiness.

But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did Scrooge; for, wholly forgetting what was going on and that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud, and very often guessed quite right, too; for the sharpest needle, was not sharper than Scrooge.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and looked upon him so kindly, that Scrooge begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

'Here's a new game,' said Scrooge. 'One half hour, Spirit, only one!'

It was a Game called 'Yes and No', where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what it was; he only answering to their questions 'yes' or 'no', as the case was.

The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, his nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last someone cried out: 'I've found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!'

'What is it?' cried Fred.

'It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!'

It certainly was...though some objected that the reply to 'Is it a bear?' ought to have been 'Yes', inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr Scrooge.

'He's given us plenty of merriment, I am sure,' said Fred, 'and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine and I say, 'Uncle Scrooge!'

'Well! Uncle Scrooge.' they cried.

'A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, wherever he is!' said Scrooge's nephew.

Scrooge had become so gay and light of heart that he would have toasted the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels. Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man had not made fast the door and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing.

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they stood together in an open place, and Scrooge noticed that the Spirit's hair was grey.

'Are spirits' lives so short?' asked Scrooge.

'My life upon this globe, is very brief,' replied the Ghost. 'It ends tonight.'

'Tonight!' cried Scrooge.

'Tonight at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near.'

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment. 'Forgive me if I'm not justified in what I ask,' said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, 'but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your robe.'

From the foldings of its robe, the Spirit brought two children; wretched and miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment. They were a boy and girl. Meagre, ragged, scowling and wolfish. Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

'Spirit! are they yours?' Scrooge could say no more.

'They are Mankind's,' said the Spirit, looking down upon them. 'This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased!' cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city.

'Have they no refuge?' cried Scrooge.

'Are there no prisons?' said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. 'Are there no workhouses?'

The bell struck twelve. Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 7 - The Last of the Spirits**

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment - which concealed its head, its face, its form - and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. Scrooge felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

'Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?' said Scrooge. The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

'You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us,' Scrooge pursued. 'Is that so, Spirit?' The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had nodded. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused for a moment, observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

Scrooge felt a vague, uncertain, horror to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

'Ghost of the Future!' he exclaimed, 'I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I'm prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?'

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

'Lead on!' said Scrooge. 'Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it's precious time to me, I know. Lead on!'

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city, for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it: amongst the merchants, who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

'No,' said a great big man with a monstrous chin, 'I don't know much about it. I only know he's dead.'

'When did he die?' inquired another.

'Last night, I believe.'

'Why, what was the matter with him?' asked a third. 'I thought he'd never die.'

'God knows,' said the first man, with a yawn.

'What's he done with his money?' asked a fourth.

'I haven't heard,' said the man with the large chin, yawning again. 'Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know.'

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

'It's likely to be a very cheap funeral,' said the same speaker; 'for upon my life I don't know of anybody who'll go to it. Suppose we volunteer?'

'I don't mind if lunch is provided,' observed one of the gentleman.

Another laugh.

'Well, I'll offer to go, if anybody else will,' said the first speaker. 'When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend, for we used to stop and speak whenever we met!'

Speakers and listeners strolled away, and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation.

The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here.

He knew these men also. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He'd made a point always of standing well in their esteem - in a business point of view, that is.

'How are you?' said one.

'How are you?' returned the other.

'Well!' said the first. 'Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?'

'So I am told,' returned the second. 'Cold, isn't it?'

'But seasonable for Christmas time' said the first. 'Good morning!'

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting. Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was past, and this Ghost's province was the future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself, to whom he could apply them. But certain they held some moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it appeared. For he had an expectation that the conduct of his future self would give him the clue he missed, and would render the solution of these riddles easy.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. When Scrooge roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never been before, though he knew its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

The Spirit took Scrooge to an old shop, where upon the floor within were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of

all kinds. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove, made of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age, smoking a pipe, who had screened himself from the cold air outside, with a curtaining of miscellaneous tatters.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

'Look here, old Joe, here's a chance!' said the woman who'd entered first. 'If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!'

'You couldn't have met in a better place,' said old Joe, removing his pipe from his mouth. 'Come into the parlor and I'll shut the door of the shop. Come into the parlor. Come into the parlor,' he repeated.

The parlor was the space behind the screen of rags. The old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, while the woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down crossing her elbows on her knees, looking with a bold defiance at the other two.

'What then, Mrs. Dilber?' said the woman. 'Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did!'

'That's true, indeed!' said the other woman, Mrs. Dilber. 'No man more so.'

'Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser?' said the first. 'Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.'

'No, indeed!' said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

'If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead,' pursued the woman, 'why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.'

'It's the truest word that ever was spoke,' said Mrs. Dilber. 'It's a judgment on him.'

'I wish it was a little heavier judgment,' replied the woman; 'and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me have the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We know pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.'

But before Old Joe could do as she directed, the man in faded black, stepped forward and produced his plunder. It was not extensive. A pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value. They were examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each, upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found there was nothing more to come.

'That's your account,' said Joe, 'and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?'

Mrs. Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

'I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself,' said old Joe. 'That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, I'd repent of being so generous and knock off half-a-crown.'

'Now undo my bundle, Joe,' said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

'What do you call this?' said Joe. 'Bed curtains! You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there?' said Joe.

'Yes I do,' replied the woman. 'Why not?'

'You were born to make your fortune,' said Joe, 'and you'll certainly do it.'

'I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you, Joe,' returned the woman coolly. 'Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now.'

'His blankets?' asked Joe.

'Whose else's do you think?' replied the woman. 'He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say...Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache, but you won't find a hole in it, not a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.'

'What do you call wasting it?' asked old Joe.

'Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure,' replied the woman with a laugh.

'Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again! If calico isn't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one.'

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a disgust which could hardly have been greater if they had been obscene demons, offering for sale the corpse itself.



'Spirit!' said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. 'I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. Merciful Heaven, what is this!' He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, un-curtained bed, on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 8 - An End to the Haunting**

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced around it, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light fell straight upon the bed and on it - covered but unwatched, unwept, uncared for - was the body of a man.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it would have disclosed the face. Scrooge thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the specter at his side.

The body lay in the dark empty house, with not a man, woman or child to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him.

'Spirit!' Scrooge said, 'this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!'

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

'I understand you,' Scrooge returned, 'and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power.'

Again the Spirit seemed to look upon him.

'If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death,' said Scrooge quite agonized, 'show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!'

The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing, and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were. She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness for she walked up and down the room, started at every sound, looked out from the window, glanced at the clock, tried - but in vain - to work with her needle, and could hardly bear the voices of the children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband - a man whose face was careworn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been set for him by the fire and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence) he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

'Is it good?' she said, 'or bad?'

'Bad,' he answered.

'We're quite ruined?' she asked.

'No. There is hope yet, Caroline,' he replied.

'If he relents,' she said, 'there is. Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened.'

'He's past relenting,' said her husband. 'He's dead.'

She was a mild and patient creature...but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands. She prayed for forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

The husband continued: 'What the woman whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay - and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me - turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill then, but dying.'

'To whom will our debt be transferred?' asked the wife.

'I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be bad luck indeed to find his successor so merciless. We may sleep tonight with light hearts, Caroline!'

Yes, their hearts were lighter and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show Scrooge, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

'Let me see some tenderness connected with a death,' said Scrooge, 'or that dark bedroom, Spirit, which we left just now, will be forever present to me.' The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen.

They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house - the dwelling he'd visited before - and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But they were all very quiet!

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand to her face.

'The color hurts my eyes,' she said. 'It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.'

'Past it rather,' Peter answered, shutting up his book. 'But I think he's walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother.'

They were very quiet again. At last she said, in a steady voice that only faltered once: 'I've known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.'

'And so have I,' cried Peter. 'Often.'

'And so have I!' exclaimed another. So had all.

'But he was very light to carry,' she resumed, intent upon her work, 'and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble. And there's your father at the door!'

She hurried out to meet Bob as he came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and each child laid a little cheek against his face, as if they said: 'Don't mind it, father. Don't be grieved!'

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

'Sunday! You went today, then, Robert?' said his wife.

'Yes, my dear,' returned Bob. 'I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!' cried Bob. 'My little child!' He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went up-stairs into the room above. There was a chair set close beside the child. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he'd thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked, the girls and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little down, inquired what had happened to distress him. 'On which,' said Bob, 'for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily sorry for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way,' he said, 'come to me.'

'I'm sure he's a good soul!' said Mrs. Cratchit.

'You would be surer of it, my dear,' returned Bob, 'if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised, mark what I say, if he got Peter a better situation.'

'Get along with you!' retorted Peter, grinning.

'It's just as likely as not,' said Bob, 'one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that. But however and whenever we part from one another, I'm sure we

shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim - shall we - or this first parting that there was among us?'

'Never, father!' cried they all.

'And I know,' said Bob, 'I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was - although he was a little, little child - we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.'

'No, never, father!' they all cried again.

'I'm very happy,' said Bob, 'I'm very happy!'

Mrs Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands.

'Specter,' said Scrooge, 'something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?' The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before - though to a different time, Scrooge thought - until the Spirit was asked by Scrooge to tarry for a moment.

'This court,' said Scrooge, 'through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come.'

The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

'The house is just there,' Scrooge exclaimed. 'Why do you point away?'

The finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined the Spirit once again, and wondering why it was that he'd not seen himself, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground.

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to one. Scrooge advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but Scrooge dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

'Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point,' said Scrooge, 'answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows of things that may be, only?'

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

'The course of our lives will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead,' said Scrooge. 'But if those courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!'

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards the gravestone, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name: Ebenezer Scrooge.

'Am I that man who lay upon the bed?' he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

'No, Spirit! Oh no, no!'

The finger still was there.

'Spirit!' he cried, tight clutching at its robe, 'hear me! I'm not the man I was. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?'

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

'Good Spirit,' he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: 'Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you've shown me, by an altered life!'

The kind hand trembled.

'I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!'

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him. Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, Scrooge saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

### **A Christmas Carol, Episode 9 - The End of It**

The bedpost was his own! The bed was his own, the room was his own. But best and happiest of all, the time before him was his own, to make amends in!

'I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!' Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. 'The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this!'

He folded one of his bed-curtains in his arms, and cried: 'They are not torn down, they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here...I am here...the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!'

His hands were busy with his garments all this time: turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them.

'I don't know what to do!' cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath. 'I'm as light as a feather, I'm as happy as an angel, I'm as merry as a school-boy. I'm as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to every-body! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Hallo!'

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: completely winded.

'There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered!' cried Scrooge, starting off again. 'There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's true, it all happened. Ha, ha, ha!'

Really, for a man who'd been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs! 'I don't know what day of the month it is!' said Scrooge. 'I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. Never mind. I don't care. Hallo! Hallo here!'

He was checked by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer, ding, dong! Oh, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it: golden sunlight; heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

'What's today?' cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes.

'Eh?' returned the boy, in wonder.

'What's today, my fine fellow?' said Scrooge.

'Today?' replied the boy. 'Why, it's Christmas Day.'

'It's Christmas Day!' said Scrooge to himself. 'I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!'

'Hallo!' returned the boy.

'Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?' Scrooge inquired. 'I should hope I did,' replied the lad.

'An intelligent boy!' said Scrooge. 'A remarkable boy!' Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize turkey; the big one?'

'What, the one as big as me?' returned the boy.

'What a delightful boy!' said Scrooge. 'It's a pleasure to talk to him.'

'It's hanging there now,' said the boy.

'Is it?' said Scrooge. 'Go and buy it. Go and buy it, and tell them to bring it here, that I may give them the directions where to take it. Come back with the man, and

I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown!

'I'll send it to Bob Cratchits!' whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. 'He shan't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim!'

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went down stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

'I shall love it, as long as I live!' cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. 'I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker! Here's the turkey. Hallo! How are you! Merry Christmas!'

It was a turkey!

'Why, it's impossible to carry that,' said Scrooge. 'You must have a cab.'

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you're at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaster over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself all in his best, and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he'd seen them with the *Ghost of Christmas Present*; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humored fellows said, 'Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!' And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the happy sounds he'd ever heard, those were the happiest of all in his ears.

He'd not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who'd walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, 'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?' It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

'My dear sir,' said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. 'How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!'

'Mr. Scrooge?' wondered the old gentleman.

'Yes,' said Scrooge. 'That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness...' Here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

'Lord bless me!' cried the gentleman, as if his breath were gone. 'My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious?'

'If you please,' said Scrooge. 'Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favor?'

'My dear sir,' said the other, shaking hands with him. 'I don't know what to say to such munificence!'

'Don't say anything, please,' retorted Scrooge. 'Come and see me. Will you come and see me?'

'I will!' cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

'Thank 'ee,' said Scrooge. 'I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!'

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows: and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He'd never dreamed that any walk - that anything - could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it: 'Is your master at home, my dear?' said Scrooge to the housekeeper.

'Yes, sir. He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you upstairs, if you please.'

'Thank 'ee. He knows me,' said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. 'I'll go in here...'

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door.

'Fred!' said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

'Well bless my soul!' cried Fred, 'who's that?'

'It is I. Your uncle Scrooge. I've come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?'

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did the niece's sisters when they came in...so did everyone else when they came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!



But Scrooge was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he'd set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was a full eighteen minutes and a half, behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come in.

Bob's hat was off, before he opened the door; he was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

'Hallo!' growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it.

'What do you mean by coming here at this time of day.'

'I'm very sorry, sir,' said Bob. 'I am behind my time.'

'You are?' repeated Scrooge. 'Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please.'

'It's only once a year, sir,' pleaded Bob. 'It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.'

'Now, I'll tell you what, my friend,' said Scrooge, 'I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore,' he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back, 'and therefore I am about to raise your salary!'

'A merry Christmas, Bob!' said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. 'A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavor to assist your struggling family, and we'll discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of punch, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit.'

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!