

# Learn English with a CHRISTMAS GHOST STORY

## *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

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### ***Merry Christmas!***

This time I'm going to read you a classic Christmas ghost story, written by Charles Dickens, called "A Christmas Carol".

I have read this story on the podcast before - in episode 320 back in 2015.

Some of you might remember that, but I expect a lot of you listening haven't heard that episode, so I thought I would read it again. Also, I just love reading this story. I like the spirit of the story - I mean, the message. It has a good message for us all to remember. And I just love telling stories and acting out the characters. So, I'm going to enjoy this and I hope you do too.

Also, there is a video version this time (episode 320 was audio only), and it's not going to be exactly the same as before. I've adapted the story a little bit more than I did last time, to modernise the English slightly .

The original text was written in 1843, and naturally the English is a bit old-fashioned by today's standards. So, I've gone through the story and adapted it *slightly*, to make the English *a bit* more up-to-date, and hopefully *a little bit* more appropriate for learners

of English hoping to learn the kind of English that everyone uses today.

I said “slightly” - it’s still very similar to the original version to be honest. Although I’ve tried to modernise it a bit, it’s hard to re-write the work of Dickens and so much of the text is still the same. So, this is slightly modernised but still quite old-fashioned English.

Although this is described as a short story, it will probably take about 45 mins for me to read the whole thing to you. So, I am not going to explain *all* the vocabulary like I do in some episodes.

The story is too long for me to do that. If I explained all the vocabulary the episode would end up being waaaay too long.

So, I’m just going to read the story to you. I’m going to try to make it entertaining and clear and I will pause at certain moments and sum up what has happened, in order to help you understand the main storyline.

However, if you really feel you need to understand certain vocabulary that you notice, just use one of the many online dictionaries that are available including

- **The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary**
- **[dictionary.cambridge.org](https://dictionary.cambridge.org)**
- **[CollinsDictionary.com](https://www.collinsdictionary.com)**
- **The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online**

or even ChatGPT which can also be a useful tool for exploring vocabulary definitions and examples.

But, for this episode, all you have to do is listen, and enjoy this classic ghost story in English!

### **PDF Available**

You'll find the full text for this story on the page for this episode (link in the description) as a PDF. You can download it directly there.

With the PDF you can take your time and read the story at your own pace if you like, and copy+paste words or phrases into an online dictionary.

To help you understand what you are about to hear, let me give you a very quick overview of the story and the main characters.

## **The story**

*A Christmas Carol* is about a horrible man called Ebenezer Scrooge who only cares about money and is very mean and rude with everyone, including the people who work for him.

At Christmas, Scrooge is visited by ghosts that show him visions of the past, the present and the future. The ghosts show Scrooge the truth about himself and he learns the real meaning of Christmas.

## **Characters**

### **Ebenezer Scrooge**

He is cruel, mean, selfish, tight fisted, stingy, only cares about money. He mainly just works on his business - a small money-lending company.

### **Scrooge's nephew Fred**

Fred is Scrooge's only remaining family.

### **Jacob Marley**

Scrooge's former business partner. He died 7 years earlier.

### **Bob Cratchitt**

Scrooge's *clerk* - his employee who does office work for him, and who Scrooge pays the minimum possible wage.

A clerk = an office worker, accountant. Someone who does basic office admin.

Bob has a large family and they are living on the poverty line.

Bob's youngest son is called Tiny Tim. Tim is sick and disabled - he has a problem with his legs and has to walk with a crutch. Bob has hardly any money, but his family is close and loving.

### **Three ghosts**

Scrooge is visited by three ghosts, and they are called:

- The ghost of Christmas past
- The ghost of Christmas present
- The ghost of Christmas future

### **Bah, humbug!**

Final thing: You'll notice that Scrooge often says "Bah, humbug!" and you might wonder what that means.

The "Bah" part of it, is just an expression of disdain or contempt. A noise that Scrooge makes to show that he dislikes something.

“Humbug” is an old-fashioned word which Scrooge uses to say that he thinks Christmas is all a big joke, a sham, a load of nonsense - he doesn't believe in it.

These days “Bah, humbug” has become an expression which is associated with not enjoying Christmas, but it's a negative expression. It means you're being grumpy and not enjoying the festive season. It can be used as a criticism of someone, or an expression of your dislike of the Christmas period (but you know you're being grumpy).

## **A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens**

## Preface by Charles Dickens

I have tried in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which will not put my readers in a bad mood in any way. I hope it haunts their houses pleasantly, and that no one wishes to put it down. Their faithful Friend and Servant, C.D.  
December, 1843.

## **PART 1 – Marley's Ghost**

MARLEY was dead: to begin with. This must be understood, or this story will mean nothing to anybody.

So, we start with the fact that Scrooge's business partner Marley had died and Scrooge now carried on the money-lending business alone.

He never removed Old Marley's name from the door of the office, even though his old partner was – definitely – dead. The company was known, still, as Scrooge and Marley.

Sometimes people called Scrooge "Scrooge", and sometimes they got his name wrong and called him "Marley", but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh! Scrooge was a selfish old git! He was as cold as a freezing winter night, and he didn't thaw one degree at Christmas. He hated Christmas and everything it stood for. No 'season of goodwill' – for him it was just another excuse to grumble and moan, and stay at home counting his money.

One dark Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house, counting out his money. It was freezing, foggy weather outside.

Scrooge had a very small fire in his office. But next door in his clerk's office the poor fire was even smaller and hardly even warm at all. His poor clerk, called Bob Cratchit, had worked for Scrooge for years, and yet had never once received a pay rise.

"Merry Christmas, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew Fred coming into the room.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

"Christmas a humbug, uncle?" he said. "You don't mean that do you?"

"If it was up to me," said Scrooge indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!"

The nephew answered, "Don't be angry, uncle. Come to our place for Christmas tomorrow."

"Bah, humbug! Christmas! Don't talk to me about Christmas. It's all just a big jumped up shopping spree invented by the Americans. The whole thing is just a scam to get the money out of your pocket! Well, not mine – I'm keeping mine. You do Christmas your way, and I'll do it my way, here on my own, just like every other day, thank you very much!"

"Suit yourself Uncle, but we'll miss you this year, again" said Scrooge's nephew.

"Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew even stopped to wish “Merry Christmas” to the clerk.

The poor, cold clerk, Bob Cratchit, managed a thin smile and a weak “merry christmas” in return as Scrooge’s nephew left.

As he left, Fred let two other people in. They entered and bowed to Scrooge.

“Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?” said one of the gentlemen.

“Mr. Marley,” Scrooge replied, “died seven years ago, this very night.”

“Oh, sorry for your loss” said one of the men.

“What do you want?” snapped Scrooge.

“Mr. Scrooge,” said the gentleman, “It looks like it’s going to be an especially freezing winter this year. A few of us are going to buy some meat and drink for the Poor, and some blankets to keep them warm this Christmas. What would you like to give?”

“Nothing,” said Scrooge. “If they’ve got no money they can borrow it, or failing that go to the debtors’ prisons.”

“Many would rather die than do that.”

“If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon, gentlemen!”

Scrooge went back to his work.

Meanwhile it got even foggier, darker and colder outside.



Some carol singers walked by Scrooge's office.  
One cold young boy stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to sing a  
Christmas carol:

“God bless you, merry gentleman!  
May nothing you dismay!”

As soon as he heard it Scrooge jumped up so that the singer fled in  
terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog.

Eventually, closing time arrived. Scrooge nodded to the clerk Mr  
Cratchit, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

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

“Yes please Mr Scrooge. Christmas Day, you know. It is only once a  
year, after all”

“A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of  
December!” said Scrooge. “No day off for you. I expect you to be here  
extra early next morning.”

Cratchit just looked at him.

Scrooge went home to his gloomy house. The yard outside was dark  
and the fog and frost hung about the place.

As he approached his door, something strange happened.

Now, the knocker on his door was very large and ordinary. But  
tonight it looked like... well, it looked like Marley's face.

Marley's face. The eyes were wide open, and its grayish colour made it horrible in the half light.

As Scrooge looked more closely, it became a knocker again. He did look carefully, but the knocker was still a knocker.

“Load of old nonsense!” said Scrooge to himself.

He closed his door and double-locked himself in. He walked through his rooms to see that everything was all right and then sat by the fire.

“Humbug!” he said. “Stupid Christmas. I’ll be glad when it’s all over and people start acting normally again.”

And then he heard it – a clanking noise, from the cellar, as if some person were dragging a heavy chain.

Scrooge tried to ignore it, and opened his paper.

Then he heard the sound again. The noise of heavy chains being dragged, and a faint sound of moaning.

Scrooge suddenly sat upright in his chair. The noise was real, and it was getting louder.

Suddenly the cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise coming up the stairs; then straight towards his door.

Quickly it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room right in front of his eyes.

It was Jacob Marley, back from the dead. The chain Marley pulled was long, and made of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, and purses. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge could see the buttons on his coat hanging on the door behind.

“What do you want with me?” said Scrooge. “Who are you?”

“In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.”

“Humbug, I tell you! humbug!”

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain.

Scrooge fell upon his knees.

The ghost asked, “Do you believe in me or not?”

“I do,” said Scrooge. “I do! 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 abroad among his fellow men; and if that spirit does not go forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death!”

“What? What do you mean?” said Scrooge, failing to understand.

“Your spirit, it does not walk with his fellow men, and will be condemned to walk the earth, after your death. Do you understand Scrooge?”

Scrooge just continued to stare, trembling.

“But, you are chained” he said. “Tell me why?”

“I wear the chain I forged in life and by the very work I did, with you,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard; and of my own free will I wore it.”

Scrooge trembled more and more.

“Do you know,” pursued the Ghost, “your chain was as heavy as this, seven Christmas Eves ago? You have made it longer, since then.”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faltered Scrooge.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. Greed was my business! I spent my life on this earth obsessing over money and mistreating the poor and the needy to fill my pocket. Old Scrooge, I am condemned to walk the earth for eternity never to find rest or peace.”

“I am here tonight to warn you,” continued the Ghost. “You will be haunted by Three Spirits.”

“I—I think I’d rather not,” said Scrooge.

“They will come to teach you a lesson. Expect the first tomorrow,” said the Ghost, “when the bell tolls One.”

“Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night at the last stroke of Twelve.”

When it had said these words, the spectre floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

The air was filled with moaning phantoms, and every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost.

They faded away. Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was still double-locked, as he had done with his own hands. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped. And he went straight to bed and fell asleep instantly.

## **PART 2 – The First of the Three Spirits**

WHEN Scrooge woke up, it was dark. The chimes of a neighbouring church struck the hour, with a single deep, melancholy note.

Light flashed up in the room, and the curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a hand. And Scrooge found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them, right in front of his face.

It was a strange figure – like a child, or an old man. Its white hair hung about its neck and down its back, and yet the face had no wrinkles in it at all. Its legs and feet were bare. It wore a white tunic with a shining belt. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and had its dress trimmed with summer flowers.

"Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?" asked Scrooge.

The voice was soft and gentle. "I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long Past?" inquired Scrooge.

“No. Your past.”

It put out its strong hand and clasped him gently by the arm.

“Rise! and walk with me!”

They passed through the wall, and stood on an open country road. Now it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow on the ground.

“Good Heavens!” said Scrooge, recognising the place where they were standing. “I was a boy in this place!” He wiped away a tear and begged the Ghost to lead him.

“You remember the way?” inquired the Spirit.

“Remember it!” cried Scrooge. “I could walk it blindfolded.”

They walked along the road, Scrooge recognizing every gate and tree; until a little town appeared in the distance. Some shaggy ponies trotted towards them with boys upon their backs. All these boys shouted to each other merrily. Scrooge knew them all. They were his old schoolmates. He called out to them by name but the boys didn't respond.

“These are but shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “They do not see us.”

Scrooge was filled with happiness when he heard them tell each other Merry Christmas, as they parted. But why?

What was Merry Christmas to Scrooge? What good had it ever done to him?

“The school is not quite deserted,” said the Ghost. “A lonely child, neglected and ignored by his friends, is there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he cried.

They soon approached a large house, its windows broken, and the many rooms cold, with no food in them.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, to the back of the house, to a room with desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble little fire; and Scrooge sat down, beside his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

He said “Poor boy!” and cried again.

“I wish,” Scrooge muttered, after drying his eyes with his cuff: “but it’s too late now.”

“What is the matter?” asked the Spirit.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge. “Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should 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!”

And there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the holidays.

The door opened; a little girl rushed in, and put her arms around his neck.

“I have come to bring you home, dear brother!” said the child. “We’re going to be together all Christmas long, and have the best time in all the world.”

“Your sister,” said the Ghost. “Always a delicate creature. But she had a large heart!”

“So she had,” cried Scrooge. “You’re right, Spirit!”

“She died when she was a woman,” said the Ghost, “and had, I think, one child – your nephew”

Scrooge answered sadly, “Yes.”

Suddenly they were in a busy city. Here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were decorated with Christmas lights.

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

“Know it!” said Scrooge. “I was apprenticed here! This is where I did my training.”

When he saw an old gentleman, behind a high desk, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

“Look! It’s Fezziwig, alive again! My old boss!”

Scrooge’s former self, now a young man, came in, beside his fellow apprentice, a young man called Dick.

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock. He rubbed his hands and called out in a rich voice:



“No more work to-night, my boys!” said Fezziwig. “Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Clear everything away, lads!”

It was done in a minute. The floor was swept, the tables were cleared away, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse became a snug, warm, and bright ball-room.

In came a fiddler with a music-book. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, and the three Miss Fezziwigs. In came all the young men and women employed in the business, the housemaid, the baker, the cook, the milkman, and the party started.

There were dances, and games. There was cake, and roast beef, and mince-pies, and plenty of ale.

During all this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his mind. He enjoyed everything.

Now that he remembered the Ghost, he became conscious that it was looking full upon him.

“A small matter,” said the Ghost, “for Fezziwig to make these silly folks so full of gratitude and happiness.”

“Small!” echoed Scrooge. “It isn’t that, Spirit. He has the power to make our work a pleasure or a pain. The happiness he gives, it’s so big, as if it cost a fortune, and...”

He stopped.

“What is the matter?” asked the Ghost.

“Nothing in particular,” said Scrooge.

“Something, I think?” the Ghost insisted.

“No,” said Scrooge, “No. It’s just that I would like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That’s all.”

Scrooge and the Ghost again stood in the open air.

“I am running out of time,” observed the Spirit. “Quick!”

Again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now. He was not alone, but sat next to a pretty young girl: in her eyes there were tears.

“It matters little to you,” she said, softly.

“Another idol has taken my place. It is the love of money. Good-bye. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!”

“Spirit!” cried Scrooge, “show me no more! I cannot bear it! Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!”

He was conscious of being exhausted, and of being in his own bedroom. He had barely time to fall onto bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

### **PART 3 – The Second of the Three Spirits**

Scrooge waited again, lying in his bed, in the darkness.

Now, when the Bell struck One, he saw a ghostly light coming from the next room. He shuffled to the door.

A strange voice called him by his name, and told him to enter.

The room was hung with holly and mistletoe, and a huge fire went roaring up the chimney.

Heaped up like a throne were geese, pies, plum-puddings, chestnuts, oranges, pears, cakes, and punch. Upon this food couch, there sat a jolly Giant, who held a glowing torch high up, to shed its light on Scrooge.

“Come in!” exclaimed the Ghost, “and know me better, man!” Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head.

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

Scrooge reverently did so. The ghost was wearing a green robe, bordered with white fur.

Its feet were bare; and on its head it wore a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles.

“You have never seen the like of me before!” exclaimed the Spirit.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge, “take me where you want. I went out last night and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have anything to teach me, let me profit by it.”

“Here. Touch my robe!”

Feast, fire, room all vanished instantly and they stood in the city streets on a snowy Christmas morning.

The sky was gloomy, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness like a summer day.

Soon the bells called the people to church, and out they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their happiest faces.

The good Spirit led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's house; and at the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling.

Think of that! Bob had only fifty pounds a week himself; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his little house!

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, dressed poorly in a worn out dress. "Where's your precious father then?" said Mrs. Cratchit to the little Cratchits. "And your brother, Tiny Tim?"

In came Bob, the father, in his worn out clothes; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Sadly, Tiny Tim held a little crutch, which he needed to help him walk.

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit.

"As good as gold," said Bob.

At last the dishes were set on the table, and grace was said. Bob said he didn't believe that a better goose had ever been cooked. Mrs. Cratchit brought in the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, blazing with brandy, and with Christmas holly stuck into the top. A wonderful pudding!

Bob proposed a toast:

“A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!”

“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 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 corner, and a crutch without an owner. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”

“No, no,” said Scrooge. “Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.”

“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, he will die this year,” repeated the Ghost.

“and... decrease the surplus population.”

Scrooge hung his head, ashamed to hear his own words.

“Man,” said the Ghost, “are you the one to decide who should live, who should die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child!”

But now Scrooge heard his own name.

“Mr. Scrooge!” toasted Bob; “I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!”

“The Founder of the Feast indeed!” cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening.

“My dear,” was Bob’s mild answer, “Christmas Day.”

“I’ll drink to his health, for your sake and the Day’s,” said Mrs. Cratchit, “Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year!”

The children drank the toast after her, but they didn’t care for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party.

By-and-bye they had a song from Tiny Tim, who had a sweet little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time they had. Scrooge watched them, and especially Tiny Tim, until the end.

And now, they traveled through coal miners’ homes, past ships on the dark sea. And everywhere they went, no matter how poor, every person hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought. And every person, good or bad, had a kind word for another on that day.

Scrooge heard a hearty laugh and recognised it as his own nephew’s. He found himself in a bright, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side.

“Ha, ha!” laughed Scrooge’s nephew. “He said that Christmas was a humbug - a load of nonsense, and he believed it too!”

“More shame for him, Fred!” said Scrooge’s niece, indignantly.

“He’s a comical old fellow,” said Scrooge’s nephew, “and not as pleasant as he could be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I am sorry for him. Who is it that suffers from his ill temper! Himself, always.”

They had some music and played some games; because it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas.

They all played and sang, and so did Scrooge, singing quite loud. He begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But “This” the Spirit said “could not be done”.

They saw many things and went to many places, and everywhere the Spirit went he left his blessing. It was a long night, and Scrooge noticed that the Ghost grew older, and he noticed that its hair was grey.

“Are spirits’ lives so short?” asked Scrooge.

“My life upon this globe, is very brief,” replied the Ghost. “It ends to-night at midnight. Listen!

The time is drawing near.”

The bell struck twelve. And the Spirit disappeared. 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.

## PART 4 – The Last of the Spirits

The phantom approached, in deep black robes, which left nothing of it visible except for one boney hand.

“Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?” said Scrooge. “You are about to show me shadows of the things that will happen. Is that so, Spirit?”

Scrooge's legs trembled beneath him.

“Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed, “I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But I know your purpose is to do me good, and I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?”

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight ahead.

“Lead on!” said Scrooge. “Lead on! The night is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!”

The phantom moved away.

They were in the heart of the city; amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, as Scrooge had often seen them do.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men, pointing to them. Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

“No,” said one of the men, “I don't know much about it. I only know he's dead.”



“When did he die?” inquired another.

“Last night, I believe.”

“What has he done with all his money?”

“I haven't heard,” said the first man, yawning. “It's likely to be a very cheap funeral. I don't know anybody who would go to it.”

“I don't mind going if a lunch is provided,” laughed one gentleman.

Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation.

Scrooge felt that the unseen eyes of the ghost were looking at him closely. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They went into a dirty part of town where the shops and houses reeked with filth and misery.

There was a shop where greasy old junk was bought. Scrooge and the phantom came into this shop, called Old Joe's, just as two women and a man carried in several bags of stuff, laughing.

The man produced his takings first. A pencil-case and a brooch were all he had. Old Joe added up his prices, upon the wall.

“I know those things,” Scrooge said. “They are just like mine – and they are worth much more than this man is paying!”

“Who's next?” said Joe.

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 paid two shillings ten for teaspoons just like those," Scrooge objected.

"And now open up my bag, Joe," said the next woman.

Joe dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff, the same fabric and color as Scrooge's bed curtains..

"Bed-curtains!" said Joe. "You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there dead?"

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

"His blankets too?" asked Joe.

"Whose else's do you think?" replied the woman. "And that's the best shirt he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me. Putting it on him to be buried in, they were," she laughed. "But I took it off again."

Scrooge looked at a shirt just like his own shirt and listened in horror.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the same woman, when old Joe paid out the money in return for the shirt and the other things.

"This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead!"

"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, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay the body of this man.

He lay, in the dark empty house, with no one to tell his story or mourn his death. "Spirit!"

Scrooge said, "this is a fearful place. Let us go!"

The Ghost led him to poor Bob Cratchit's house; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Very quiet. The little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, with Peter, who had a book in front of him. The mother and her daughters were sewing. But certainly, they were very quiet!

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face. "Your father should have been home by now," she said .

Peter said, shutting up his book. "But I think he has walked a little slower than he used to, these few last evenings, mother."

At last she said, "He used to walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed. But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so. Ah - there is your father at the door!"

She hurried out to meet him. Bob broke down all at once and cried. He couldn't help it.

They gathered in front of the fire, and talked. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once.

“I am terribly sorry about this, Mr. Cratchit,’ Fred had said, ‘and sorry for your good wife.’ I am sure that none of us will forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we?”

“Never, father!” they all cried.

“Spectre,” said Scrooge, “tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?”

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come did not answer, but led him straight on, until they reached an iron gate.

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

“Answer me one question,” said Scrooge. “Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?”

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to one of them. Scrooge followed the finger, and read upon the stone of the grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

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

“No, Spirit! Oh no, no!”

The finger still was there.

“Spirit!” he cried, tightly clutching at its robe, “hear me! I am not the man I was. I’ve changed!

Why show me this, if I am past all hope!”

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

“Good Spirit,” he pursued, “I will honour 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 have taught me. Oh, tell me I can remove the writing on this stone!”

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. The Phantom's hood and dress shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

## **PART 5 – The End of it**

YES! And the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the time before him was his own. Time to make amends! To make changes. To fix things.

“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! Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!”

His face was wet with tears.

“They are not torn down,” cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, “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! I can change the future.”

“I don't know what to do!” cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath.

“I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world.”

He had hurried into the sitting-room, and was now standing there.

“There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered!” cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace.

“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 all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!”

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh.

“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!”

The churches began ringing out louder and clearer than he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer; ding, dong, bell. What a glorious, glorious sound!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; just clear, bright, cold. Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. What a glorious glorious day!

“What day is it, today?!” cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes.

“EH?” returned the boy.

“What day is it, my fine fellow?” said Scrooge.

“Today!?” replied the boy. “Why, it’s CHRISTMAS DAY sir.”

“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. Hello, my fine fellow!”

“Hello!” returned the boy.

“Do you know the butcher’s shop, in the next street, at the corner?” Scrooge inquired.

“I certainly do,” 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. “Yes, yes!”

“It’s hanging there now,” replied the boy.

“Is it?” said Scrooge. “Go and buy it.”

“What!?” exclaimed the boy.

“Seriously,” said Scrooge. “Go and tell them to bring it here, so I can give them the directions where to take it. Come back with the man,

and I'll give you a tenner. Come back with him in less than five minutes and I'll give you twenty!"

The boy was off like a shot.

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, laughing. "He won't know who's sent it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim!"

He wrote the address somehow, and went down-stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the butcher's man. As he stood there, waiting for him to arrive, the door knocker caught his eye, the one that had appeared to him as the face of old Jacob Marley the night before.

"I shall love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "It's a wonderful knocker!— Here's the Turkey! Hello again! Merry Christmas!"

It was a Turkey!

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said Scrooge. "I'll get you 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 paid 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.

He dressed himself up in his best clothes, and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time all pouring out of their homes, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and Scrooge looked at every one of them with a delighted smile. Three



or four good-humoured people said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!"

And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the happy sounds he had ever heard, those were the happiest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming towards him he saw the gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before. 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.

"Excuse me!" said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and putting his hand on the gentleman's shoulder. "How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you, to collect things for the poor. A merry Christmas to you, sir! Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness to allow me to give you" – here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

"Goodness me!" cried the gentleman, as if his breath were taken away. "My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?"

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

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

"Don't say anything, please," retorted Scrooge.

"Will you come and see me?"

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

“Thank you,” said Scrooge. “I am much obliged to you. I thank you so much, and god 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 found that everything could give him pleasure. He had never dreamed 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 girl.

“Yes, sir.”

“Where is he, my love?” said Scrooge.

“He's in the dining-room, sir, along with his sister. I'll show you upstairs, if you'd like.”

“He knows me. They both do.” said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock.

“I'll go in here myself, my dear.”

“Fred!” said Scrooge.

“Why bless my soul!” cried Fred, “who's that?”

“It's me. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?”

Let him in? He's lucky Fred didn't shake his arm off. He was made to feel welcome and at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. Wonderful party, wonderful games, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had 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 and a half minutes late. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, so he could see him come into the office.

His hat was off, before he opened the door. He was on his stool in a jiffy; working away with his pen, as if he were trying to make up for his lateness.

"Hello!" 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 am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I'm late, I know."

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

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob. "I won't do it again! We had a bit of a party yesterday, sir. I've got a bit of a hangover to be honest, but I'm good for work I promise."

"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, "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

Bob trembled. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down, holding him, and calling to the people in the hospital for help and a strait-jacket.

“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 try to help your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, Bob! Come on, let’s get a good warm fire going in the fireplace.”

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was like 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 change in him, but he let them laugh. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further meetings with Spirits ever again; and people always said about him, that he knew how to do Christmas properly, 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!