

# A Christmas Carol:

Excerpted vigorously for brevity

## **Preface**

*I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.*

*Their faithful Friend and Servant, C.D.*

*December, 1843.*

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I

Scrooge

Scrooge's nephew Fred

Two gentlemen (one reader will suffice)

Bob, the clerk, also acting as narrator

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*Bob* Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; you will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the ware-house door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

*Cont.*

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you. When will you come to see me." No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock.

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|-------------|---|
| <i>Fred</i> | A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you! |
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|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Scrooge</i> | Bah! Humbug! |
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| <i>Fred</i> | Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure. |
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| <i>Scrooge</i> | I do. Merry Christmas!? What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough. |
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| <i>Fred</i> | Come, then, what right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough. |
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|----------------|---|
| <i>Scrooge</i> | Bah! Humbug. Out upon merry Christmas. What's Christmas time but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will 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. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you! |
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| <i>Fred</i> | There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say. I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time as a <i>good</i> time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it <i>has</i> done me good, and <i>will</i> do me good; and I say, God bless it! |
|-------------|---|

*Scrooge* You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament. Let me hear another sound from *you*, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation.

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*Fred* Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.

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*Scrooge*  
*(very angry)* Good afternoon!

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*Fred*  
*(leaving)* Merry Christmas, Bob.

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*Bob* Merry Christmas.

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*Scrooge* There's another fellow, my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

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*Gentlemen* Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr Scrooge, or Mr Marley?

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

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*Gentlemen* At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

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*Scrooge* Are there no prisons?

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*Gentlemen* Plenty of prisons

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*Scrooge* And the Union workhouses? Are they still in operation?

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*Gentlemen* They are. I wish I could say they were not.

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*Scrooge* I'm very glad to hear it.

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*Gentlemen* Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

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*Scrooge* Nothing!

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*Gentlemen* You wish to be left anonymous?

*Scrooge* I wish to be left alone. 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.

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*Gentlemen* Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

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*Scrooge* If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

*(to Bob)* You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

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*Bob* If quite convenient, Sir.

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*Scrooge* It's not convenient, 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 you don't think **me** ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.

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*Bob* It is only once a year.

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*Scrooge* A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!

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*Bob* The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his scarf dangling below his waist (for he had no coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's buff.

Scrooge (in nightcap)  
Marley (in chains)  
Narrator

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*Narrator:* Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern, beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, and went home to bed.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had no imagination at all. 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 had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. The eyes were wide open, but perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression. As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again. He turned the key, walked in, and closed the door with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. But Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. Or darkness: darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked that. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. Sitting-room, bed-room, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa, nobody under the bed, nobody in the closet, nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Quite satisfied, he locked himself in; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his night-cap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it. As he sat back in the chair, he heard a bell - 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 half a minute, or 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.

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|---------|---|
| Scrooge | How now! What do you want with me?  |
| Marley  | In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.   |
| Scrooge | Can you -- can you sit down?  |
| Marley  | I can.  |
| Scrooge | Do it, then.  |
| Marley  | You don't believe in me.  |
| Scrooge | I don't.  |
| Marley  | Why do you doubt your senses?   |
| Scrooge | Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are! Humbug, I tell you; humbug!  |
| Marley  | <i>At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with a dismal and appalling noise. Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.</i>  |
| Scrooge | Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?  |
| Marley  | Man of the worldly mind! Do you believe in me or not?   |
| Scrooge | I do. I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?  |
| Marley  | It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death.  |
| Scrooge | You are fettered. Tell me why?  |
| Marley  | I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard. Would you know the weight and length of the strong coil 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! My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house -- mark me! -- in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me! |
| Scrooge | But you were always a good man of business, Jacob!  |
| Marley  | Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. You will be haunted by Three Spirits. Without their visits you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Look to see me no more.  |

Scrooge (in nightcap)  
 Ghost of Christmas Past (in brightly lit cap)  
 Belle  
 Narrator/Belle's husband

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*(Bell rings)*

*Narrator* Scrooge found himself face to face with an unearthly visitor as close to him as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow. It was a strange figure -- like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, 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. The arms were very long and muscular; its legs and feet were bare. 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.

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*Scrooge* Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?

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*Ghost* I am! I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

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*Scrooge* Long past?

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*Ghost* No. Your past. Rise! and walk with me

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*Narrator* As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished.

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*Scrooge* Good Heaven! I was raised in this place. I was a boy here! I recognizing every gate, and post, and tree; the little market-town in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. *(narrating:)* *Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys, all in great spirits. They shouted to each other until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it. Then they saw a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire.*

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*Ghost* A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

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*Scrooge* I know it.

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*Ghost* These are but shadows of the things that have been. Why are you filled with gladness to hear them give each other Merry Christmas? Why does your cold eye glisten? What is merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good has it ever done to you?

*Scrooge* I wish... but it's too late now.

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*Ghost* What is the matter?

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*Scrooge* Nothing. 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.

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*Ghost* Let us see another Christmas.

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*Scrooge* Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!

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*Narrator* "Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!, "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here!

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

*Scrooge* In came a fiddler with a music-book, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. 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 particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master. Away they all went, twenty couple at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; advance and retire, hold hands with your partner, bow and curtsy; corkscrew; thread-the-needle, and back again to your place. There were more dances, and there was cake, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer.

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*Ghost* Listen to those two apprentices, pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig. A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude. He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?



*Scrooge* It isn't that! 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. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.'

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*Ghost* What is the matter?

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*Scrooge* Nothing. No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That's all.

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*Ghost* My time grows short. Quick!"

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*Narrator* 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 life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

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*Belle* It matters little. Another idol has displaced me – a golden one.

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*Scrooge* This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

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*Belle* You fear the world too much. All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?

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*Scrooge* What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.

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*Belle* Our contract was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When our contract was made, you were another man.

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*Scrooge* I was a boy.

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*Belle* You are changed in everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us, tell me, would you try to win me now? Ah, no! And so I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

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*Ghost* One shadow more!

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

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Belle *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 a comely matron, 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, unlike the celebrated herd in the poem, they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty.*

*But now a knocking at the door was heard -- the father, who came home laden with Christmas toys and presents. The shouts of wonder and delight with which the development of every package was received! The terrible announcement that the baby had been taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, and was more than suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstasy! They are all indescribable alike. It is enough that by degrees the children and their emotions got out of the parlour, and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed, and so subsided.*

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Scrooge *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 haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed.*

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

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*Belle* Who was it?

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*Narrator* Guess!

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*Belle* How can I? Tut, don't I know.

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*Narrator* Mr Scrooge. I passed his office window 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.

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*Scrooge* Spirit! Remove me from this place.

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

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*Scrooge* Take me back. Haunt me no longer!

Scrooge (in nightcap)  
 Ghost (in holly crown, with torch)  
 Narrator 1/Bob Cratchit  
 Narrator 2 /Mrs. Cratchit/Fred  
 Narrator 3 /Tiny Tim/Fred's Wife

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*(Bell rings)*

*Ghost* I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Come in. and know me better, man!

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*Narrator 1* His room had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were hung with living green. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see: who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

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*Scrooge* Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

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*Ghost* Touch my robe!

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*Narrator 2:  
Mrs. Cratchit* Then up rose Mrs Cratchit, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, and danced about the table, and Master Peter Cratchit blew the fire.

“What has ever got your precious father then,” said Mrs Cratchit. “And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour! Ah, here they are. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye! And how did little Tim behave?”

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*Narr. 1: Bob* As good as gold, 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."

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*Narr. 3: Tim* There never was such a goose. Its tenderness and flavour, 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. Every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, to take the pudding up, and bring it in...

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs Cratchit entered: flushed, but smiling proudly: with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarter of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. 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.

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*Narr. 1: Bob* A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

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*Narr. 3: Tim* God bless us every one!

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*Scrooge* Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

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*Ghost* I see a vacant seat, 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.

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*Scrooge* No, no! Oh, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared.

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*Ghost* If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

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| <i>Narr. 1: Bob</i>                 | Mr Scrooge! I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!  |
| <i>Narrator 2:<br/>Mrs. Crachit</i> | The Founder of the Feast indeed! I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.  |
| <i>Narr. 1: Bob</i>                 | My dear, the children; Christmas Day.  |
| <i>Narrator 2:<br/>Mrs. Crachit</i> | It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, 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, poor fellow! I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's, 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!  |
| <i>Ghost</i>                        | And now they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of giants; and nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse, rank grass.  |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                      | What place is this?  |
| <i>Ghost</i>                        | A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth. But they know me. See!   |
| <i>Narr. 1</i>                      | 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 round 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 upon the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas song : it had been a very old song when he was a boy; and from time to time they all joined in the chorus. |
| <i>Ghost</i>                        | <i>The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped whither? Not to sea? To sea.</i>   |
| <i>Narr. 3</i>                      | They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day; and had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.  |

*Narr 2: Fred* Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!

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*Ghost* 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.

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*Narr 2: Fred* He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it too!

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*Narr 3:* More shame for him, Fred!

*Fred's wife*

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*Fred* He's a comical old fellow, 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. His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't even make himself comfortable with it.

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*Fred's wife* I have no patience with him,'

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*Fred* Oh, I have! I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. 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.

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*Fred's wife* After tea, they had some music. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp; a simple little air which had been familiar to the child in 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 kindnesses of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley.

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*Fred* A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is! He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!

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*Ghost* It was a long night, if it were only a night, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge noticed that its hair was grey.

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|---------|--|
| Scrooge | Are spirits' lives so short?   |
| Ghost   | My life upon this globe, is very brief. It ends to-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near. Look here.   |
| Scrooge | I see something strange, protruding from your robe. Is it a foot or a claw!  |
| Ghost   | <i>From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment. They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds.</i> |
| Scrooge | Spirit! are they yours?  |
| Ghost   | They are Man's. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow Doom is written.  |
| Scrooge | Have they no refuge or resource?   |
| Ghost   | Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?   |



Scrooge (in nightcap)  
Ghost (in black hood) reads narratively

First man/Husband/Bob Cratchit/Narr. 1  
Second man/Caroline/Mrs. Cratchit/Narr. 2

(bell rings)

*Ghost* Scrooge beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

*Scrooge* I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?

*Ghost* The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

*Scrooge* You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us. Is that so, Spirit?

*Ghost* (*nods*)

*Scrooge* Ghost of the Future! 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 am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?

*Ghost* (*points ahead*)

*Scrooge* The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!

*Ghost* The city seemed to spring up about them. There they were, in the heart of it; on Change St., amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

*1st man* No, I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead.

*2nd man* When did he die?

*1st man* Last night, I believe.

*2nd man* Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

*1st man* God knows.

*2nd man* What has he done with his money?'

*1st man* I haven't heard. Left it to his Company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know.

*2nd man* (*laughing*) It's likely to be a very cheap funeral, for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

*1st man* I don't mind going if a lunch is provided!

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>Scrooge</i>  | Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!  |
| <i>Ghost</i>    | The scene had changed. The room was very dark, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up. A pale light fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.   |
| <i>Narr. 1</i>  | Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious.   |
| <i>Narr. 2</i>  | It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal.   |
| <i>Scrooge</i>  | If this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard-dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly! He lays, in this dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a 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.' If there is any person who feels emotion caused by this man's death, show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you! |
| <i>Ghost</i>    | 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; at length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband.   |
| <i>Caroline</i> | Is it good, or bad?  |
| <i>Husband</i>  | <i>(uncertain)</i> Bad...?   |
| <i>Caroline</i> | We are quite ruined?   |
| <i>Husband</i>  | No. There is hope yet, Caroline.   |
| <i>Caroline</i> | If he relents, there is. Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened.   |
| <i>Husband</i>  | He is past relenting. He is dead!  |

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| <i>Caroline</i>      | <i>(hopeful)</i> To whom will our debt be transferred?   |
| <i>Husband</i>       | I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be a bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!  |
| <i>Ghost</i>         | Now the Ghost conducted him to poor Bob Cratchit's house.  |
| <i>Mrs. Cratchit</i> | I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings. I have known him walk with -- I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed. But he was very light to carry, and your father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble. Now, there is your father at the door!   |
| <i>Bob Cratchit</i>  | I met Mr. Scrooge's nephew in the street today. "I am heartily sorry for you, Mr Cratchit," he said, "and heartily sorry for your good wife." "If I can be of service to you in any way," he said, giving me his card, "that's where I live. Pray come to me." Now, it wasn't for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us. I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim. |
| <i>Mrs. Cratchit</i> | And I know, 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.   |
| <i>Scrooge</i>       | Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?  |
| <i>Ghost</i>         | A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, choked up with too much burying. A worthy place! The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One.   |
| <i>Scrooge</i>       | Answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?   |
| <i>Ghost</i>         | Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.   |

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*Scrooge* Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!

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*Ghost* The Spirit was immovable as ever. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.

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*Scrooge* Spirit! Hear me! I am not the man I was. Why show me this, if I am past all hope? 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 teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!

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*Ghost* Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Scrooge (in nightcap)  
 Boy/Fred  
 Gentleman/Bob

*Scrooge* I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees! *((Bells ringing))* Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious! *(Opening window)* What's to-day?

*Boy* To-day? Why, Christmas Day.

*Scrooge* It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it. Hallo, my fine fellow! Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?

*Boy* I should hope I did.

*Scrooge* An intelligent boy! 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?

*Boy* It's hanging there now.

*Scrooge* Go and buy it. I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction 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 Cratchit's, and they shan't know who sent it.

*Boy* He dressed himself and at last got out into the streets. Scrooge regarded every *(Narrating)* one with a delighted smile, and three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears. He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?"

*Scrooge* My dear sir, how do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. A merry Christmas to you, sir!

*Gentleman* Mr Scrooge?

*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... *(whispers)*

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|--|---|
| <i>Gentleman</i>                       | Lord bless me! My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious?   |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | If you please. Not a farthing less.   |
| <i>Gentleman</i>                       | My dear sir, I don't know what to say to such munifi--  |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | Don't say anything, please. Come and see me. Will you come and see me?  |
| <i>Gentleman</i>                       | I will!   |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | Thank 'ee. I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!  |
| <i>Gentleman</i><br><i>(Narrating)</i> | He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows: and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had 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. |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | Fred!   |
| <i>Fred</i>                            | Why bless my soul!  |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?  |
| <i>Fred</i><br><i>(Narrating)</i>      | 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: wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness! But he 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 had set his heart upon.                         |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | (growling) Hallo! What do you mean by coming here at this time of day.  |
| <i>Bob</i>                             | I am very sorry, sir. I <i>am</i> behind my time.   |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please.   |
| <i>Bob</i>                             | It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.   |
| <i>Scrooge</i>                         | Now, I'll tell you what, my friend. I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore... <i>and therefore I am about to raise your salary!</i>   |
| <i>Bob</i><br><i>(Narrating)</i>       | Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the fireplace poker. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it; holding him, and calling to the people in the street for help and a strait-waistcoat.   |

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*Scrooge*

A merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit.

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*Bob*

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. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and his own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!