

Charles Dickens
Christmas Carol



Retold by Patrick Lagendijk

w o r y g i n a l e

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A Christmas Carol



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Chapter I

'Bah! Humbug!'



Marley was dead. He had been dead for seven years now. Did Scrooge know this? Of course he did. Ebenezer Scrooge was Marley's business partner and he was his only friend. He was, after all, the only one, apart from the undertaker, who went to Marley's funeral.

What kind of a man was Scrooge, then? Well, if you could think of the coldest weather or the iciest wind, you might be able to imagine the man. The weather itself had no effect on him. Rather, it was the cold inside that froze everything about him: his lips, his nose, his cheeks, his eyes, his voice, especially his voice, and even his walk. And nobody was meaner than Scrooge. Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?'

Once upon a time - on Christmas Eve - old Scrooge sat busy in his office. It was cold, nasty weather, and the fog was thick. The city clocks had just rang three, but it was quite dark already - it had not been light all day

- and candles were burning in the windows. The door of Scrooge's office was open so that he might keep an eye on his clerk, who was busy copying letters by a small flame (this was because Scrooge was so mean that he kept the coal in his own room).

'A Merry Christmas, uncle!' cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, a warm and handsome man who had come to invite his uncle to a Christmas party.

'Bah!' said Scrooge, 'humbug!'

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

'I do,' said Scrooge. 'Merry Christmas? You are too poor to be merry!'

'And you are too rich not to be!' said his nephew.

'What is Christmas,' said Scrooge, 'but a time for paying bills and a time for finding yourself a year older? I do not need Christmas and Christmas does not need me. Keep Christmas in your own way, 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.
'Why be so happy. Christmas hasn't ever made you any money!'

'There are many things in this world that are good but not money-making,' replied the nephew. 'And Christmas is one of them. It is a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time in the year when men and women open their closed hearts and think of others. And so, uncle, though Christmas has never made me any money, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!'

An applause was heard in the next room.
'Let me hear another sound from you,' barked Scrooge to his clerk, 'and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your position!'

'Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Have dinner with us tomorrow.'

'Don't be so foolish!' said Scrooge.

'Why can you not be happy for once and join us?', asked Scrooge's nephew.

'Good afternoon!' said Scrooge.

'I am sorry, with all my heart, to see you so cold-hearted. But I have made the effort because I believe it is worth it and I'll keep my Christmas spirit to the end. So a Merry Christmas, uncle!'

'Good afternoon!' said Scrooge.

'And a Happy New Year!'

'Good afternoon!' repeated Scrooge.

As soon as Scrooge's nephew left the office, two gentlemen, holding books and papers, walked in.

'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe,' said one of them, looking at his list. 'Do I have the pleasure of speaking with Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?'

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

'I am truly sorry to hear that, Mr. Scrooge,' said the other man.

'I am not,' said Scrooge. 'He left me with a load of paperwork!'

'We are here because we believe that Christmas is a time of giving, and who



might need this more than the poor and homeless?' said the first.

'Are there no prisons?' asked Scrooge.

'Many prisons,' said the other.

'I'm very glad to hear it,' said Scrooge.

'But we feel that the poor and homeless should also share in our joy and happiness, and prisons can hardly do that. Because of this, we are raising money for them and would very much like people to help. Perhaps you too would like to help?'

'Gentlemen,' replied Scrooge. 'I do not help people who cannot help themselves! If the poor are poor, it is for a reason. Now good afternoon Gentlemen, and please close the door on your way out'.

Having little hope that Scrooge would change his mind, the gentlemen left. The fog, meanwhile, had thickened. Night had fallen on the world outside. The cold outside became so intense that people started lighting fires in the streets. The brightness of the shops, whose windows were decorated with holly, made cold



faces reddish as they passed. The carol singers were out, their voices heard full of happiness. One of these stopped outside Scrooge's office, but at the sound of:

'God bless you, merry gentleman!'

'I've had enough!'

Scrooge slapped his ruler with such noise (bang) that the young voice left screaming. At last, closing-up time came in the office. A smile came across the clerk's face as he blew his candle out and put his hat on.

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

'It's Christmas sir, and it only comes once a year,' said the clerk.

'A poor excuse. You'd better be here even earlier the next morning!' said Scrooge. The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out complaining. After locking up the office, the clerk made his way home to Camden Town, dancing merrily on the snow as he thought about spending Christmas with his family.

Chapter II

'Remember my words'



Scrooge had his sad dinner in his usual sad tavern. Once he had finished it and read all the papers, he made his way home. Scrooge lived in the same house which had once belonged to Marley: it was a nasty old place where no normal person would like to live.

Now, you must believe that there was nothing very special about the knocker that hung on the door, except that it was very large. You must also believe that Scrooge had seen it, night and day, when he came back from work and when he went to work. As soon as Scrooge put his key in the door, the knocker seemed to change before his very eyes - not a knocker, but Marley's face!

Marley's face. It was not an angry face, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to: with ghostly glasses on its ghostly forehead. The hair was strangely wavy, the eyes wide open, and the colour bluish. It was horrible! But, as Scrooge fearfully stared at it, the face changed back into the knocker



again. Scrooge quickly turned the key, walked in, and shut the door with a bang. As he lit his candle, Scrooge turned to see if the screws that held the knocker were in the right place. They were. He walked hurriedly across the hall, up the stairs to his rooms, and double-locked his own door.

Sitting room, bedroom. All as it should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the fireplace; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of porridge on the cooker. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging on the wall.

Quite satisfied, Scrooge took off his tie; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his night-cap; and sat down in front of the fire to eat his porridge.

He couldn't stop thinking of old Marley. 'Humbug!' said Scrooge, as he finished.

After carefully looking around the room with his short eyes, he noticed an old disused bell that hung in the room. With

rising fear, he saw the bell begin to swing. Left ... right; left ... right. It swung so softly that it hardly made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house. And although this might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, it seemed like an hour. The bells stopped as soon as they had begun, together. And from down deep in the house came a mettalic noise, as if some person were pulling a heavy chain.

Somewhere in the house a door flew open with a bang. The noise grew louder, and louder, and louder still, on the floors below. It slowly came up the stairs, and was coming straight towards his door.

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

The colour in his face changed though, when, the ghostly form of a man came through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his very eyes, now facing him. 'I know him,' cried Scrooge - 'Marley's ghost!'

The same face; the very same, but with a handkerchief wrapped around his head and chin (was it keeping his jaw from falling down?). Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots. The chain he was pulling was tied around his waist - it was long, and was made of cash-boxes, keys, and steel padlocks. His body was transparent.

Scrooge could still not believe his eyes, even with Marley's death-cold eyes fixed on him.

'What do you want with me?' said Scrooge.

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

'Who are you?'

'Ask me who I was.'

'Who were you then?' said Scrooge, raising his voice. 'There's something familiar about you.'

'In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley,' said the ghost. 'You don't believe in me?'

'I don't,' said Scrooge.



At this the Spirit made a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a noise that Scrooge held on tight to his chair to save himself from falling. But how much greater was his horror when the Spirit, taking off the bandage round its head, dropped its jaw upon its chest.

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and held his hands before his face. 'Mercy!' he cried. 'Oh why are you haunting me?'

'I have come for you', said the ghost. 'I have come to warn you.'

'Warn me? About what?' said Scrooge.

'Here, look' said the Ghost, pointing to the chain around him. 'I made this chain. I made it when I was alive. And I made it from my greed and from my selfishness. Do you not recognise its cash-boxes?'

'Jacob,' begged Scrooge. 'Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak to me of a bright future, Jacob!'

'There is none,' the Ghost replied. 'I can only tell you that you too will carry your own chain if you do not change.

I am trapped myself, trapped for ever - no rest, no peace, and nobody to share my troubles with. All happiness gone, for ever and ever.'

'But you always were a good businessman, Jacob,' said Scrooge.

'Business!' cried the Ghost. 'Charity, mercy and love should have been my business, Ebenezer.'

'Hear me!' said the Ghost. 'My time is nearly gone, but yours is just beginning. You will be haunted by Three Spirits.'

'I cannot ...', said Scrooge.

'Without their visits', said the Ghost, 'you cannot change your future; and you cannot become a better man. The first will come tomorrow, at one o'clock; the second on the next night at the same time; the third on the next night as soon as you hear the last stroke of twelve. Be prepared Ebenezer, and remember my words.'

The Spirit then folded his handkerchief about his head and walked backwards;

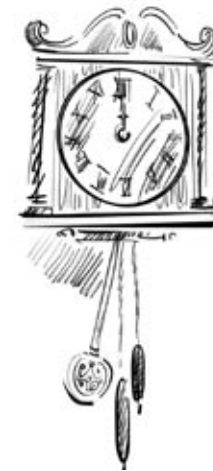
and with every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the ghost reached it, the window was wide open.

And then it was gone.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered: it was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands. He tried to say 'Humbug!' but stopped himself halfway. And as he was completely exhausted (it had not, after all, been a regular day), Scrooge went straight to bed, without taking his clothes off, and very quickly went to sleep.

Chapter III

*'And you shall fly
with me'*



When Scrooge woke, it was so dark that, looking out of bed, he could not see his window. He was trying to focus his eyes on certain objects in his room when the bells of a nearby church started to ring. Suddenly remembering what Marley's ghost had told him, he listened for the hour, counting.

The clock rang Twelve.

He still, thankfully he thought, had one hour. So he got out of bed and crawled to the window. He had to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; even now he could only see that it was still very foggy and it was still very cold.

Scrooge went back to bed, and thought, and thought, and thought. Marley's ghost bothered him – he could hardly believe that anyone (and not just anyone for, as you know, Marley had been dead for seven years) would come to see him in good faith. So his mind twisted and turned, and he thought that it could easily have been just a dream. At least he hoped it had been a dream.

'Ding, dong!' rang the bell.

'A quarter past,' said Scrooge, counting.

'Ding, dong!'

'Half-past!' said Scrooge.

'Ding, dong!'

'A quarter to,' said Scrooge.

'Ding, dong!'

'One o'clock, and still nothing,' Scrooge said, joyfully.

He spoke too soon. When the last bell rang out, a light instantly flashed up in the room, and the curtains of his bed were drawn: they were drawn by a hand. Scrooge was now face to face with another spirit, but a different one to Marley's.

It was a strange figure – like a child. Its hair, which hung around its neck and down its back, was white like an old man's; but the face had not a wrinkle on it, and it shone with youthful colour. The arms were very long and strong; the hands the same. Its legs and chest were bare, but it wore a coat of the purest white. It also held some fresh green holly in its hand. But the

strangest thing about it was, that from the top of its head there flashed a bright clear light, which lit all before it.

'Are you the Spirit who has come to help me?' asked Scrooge, with fear in his voice.

'I am!' The voice was soft and gentle.

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

'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.'

'Whose past?' asked Scrooge.

'Your past,' said the Ghost

'But why?' asked Scrooge nervously.

'Because you must understand your past if you are to change your future.'

The Ghost put out its strong hand as it spoke, and took him gently by the arm.

'Rise! And walk with me!'

Scrooge rose; but finding that the Spirit was walking towards the window, held his dressing gown tightly.

'I am human,' Scrooge argued, 'and I am in danger of falling'.

'Put your hand in mine,' said the Ghost, 'and you shall fly with me'.

As these words were spoken, they went through the wall, and stood on an open country road, with fields on either side. The city had entirely disappeared. The darkness and the fog had disappeared too, as it was a clear, cold, wintry day, with snow on the ground.

'Good Heaven!' said Scrooge, as he looked around him. 'I was brought up in this place. I was a boy here!'

Scrooge suddenly noticed a thousand childhood smells hanging in the air, each one reminding him of thoughts, and hopes, and joys long, long, forgotten!

They walked along the road until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and its own river. Ponies were seen galloping towards them with boys on their backs, shouting cheerfully in the fresh air. As they went round a bend, they came up to a large brick building that Scrooge remembered as a school.

'The school is not quite empty,' said the Ghost. 'A child, forgotten by his friends, is there still.'

Scrooge said he knew it. And a tear fell from his eye.

The Ghost and Scrooge walked in and across the hall, to a door at the back of the building. It opened before them as they walked in. The room was long and empty, made emptier still by lines of wooden desks and chairs. At one of these a lonely boy was reading by a small fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a chair, and cried to see himself as he used to be.

'I wish,' said Scrooge. '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: 'Let us see another Christmas!'

Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

'I have little time,' said the Spirit. 'Quick!'



Scrooge again saw himself. But he was older now; a healthy young man. His face did not have the hard and stiff lines that he was to have later on in his life; but it had begun to show what was to trouble him later: greed and selfishness.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a black dress. The girl had been crying as her eyes were watery with tears.

'You once loved me, Ebenezer. But that love is gone now. You don't need me anymore; all you need is money.'

'But there is nothing worse in this lonely world of ours than to be poor,' said Scrooge.

'There is,' replied the girl. 'A world without Love.'

'But Love alone does not put food on our table,' said Scrooge, thoughtfully.

'You fear the world too much,' she answered, gently. 'Which is why, with a full heart, I have to let you go. You have decided your future and do not need me



with you. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!’

She walked away from him. Scrooge wanted to call out to her; wanted to hold her; wanted to be with her, for ever and ever. But the Ghost explained to him that these were just memories, shadows of a world that had been.

‘Please take me home,’ cried Scrooge. ‘Is it not enough that I have seen my heart break again?’

At this, the Spirit burned with light and Scrooge was aware of being exhausted and back in his bedroom, of being in his own bed. He instantly fell into a heavy sleep, dreaming of his younger self.

Chapter IV

‘God bless us everyone!’



Awakening in the middle of a deep sleep, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge almost hadn't noticed the sound of the church bells that had just rung one. He hoped he might be better prepared for the second of the three spirits, and so he pulled at his bed curtains.

Now, Scrooge was not normally a brave man, but his first two visitors had made him ready for any Ghost, he felt: nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have surprised him!

If he was prepared for anything, he certainly was not prepared for nothing; so that when the bells struck one, and nothing happened, Scrooge began to shake.

Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, but nothing came! Was he dreaming or had he been dreaming all along? All this time, he lay on his bed, which seemed to shine with some sort of reddish light. Where was this light coming from? It took some time for Scrooge to

realise that the source of this light came from his sitting room. And so he got up softly and walked slowly to the door in his slippers.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the door, a strange voice called out to him by his name, and asked him to enter. He did as he was told.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had been transformed in a surprising way. The walls and ceiling were hung with living green, so that it looked a perfect garden; from every part of which he could see berries shining in the calm light. The crisp leaves of mistletoe reflected back the light, like many mirrors. A great fire went up the chimney, warming everything before it. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, chicken, strings of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, red-hot chestnuts, juicy oranges, and bowls of punch, that made the room clouded with a delicious

steam. And on the throne there sat, comfortably, a Giant, glorious to see, and holding a torch, from which shone a reddish light.

'Come in!' said the Ghost. 'Welcome Ebenezer. Come in!'

Scrooge entered the room, but did not want to meet the Spirit's eyes.

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

Scrooge did as he was told. It was clothed in one simple green coat with white fur. Its chest was bare. It was not wearing any shoes, and on its head it wore a wreath, shining with icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its kind face, its shining eyes, its open hand, its cheerful voice.

'Touch my coat,' said the Ghost.

Scrooge, knowing what was expected of him, did so; and held it tight.

The mistletoe, red berries, turkeys, geese, chicken, meat, sausages, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all suddenly



disappeared. So did the room, the fire, the reddish light, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning.

Despite the cold, and it was very cold, people were making a rough (but not unpleasant) kind of music, removing the snow from the pavement in front of their houses. Carts were making deep marks in the snow, criss-crossing each other along the great streets. The sky was dark, and the smallest streets were full of snow, half melted and half frozen. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet there was cheerfulness in the air. Where was it coming from? It soon became obvious: the people who were lifting snow were happy, calling out to one another from rooftops, and sometimes even throwing snowballs.

As Scrooge and The Spirit walked through the wintry streets of this pleasant neighbourhood, a true Christmas spirit

was in the air: the grocers, the fruit sellers and even the butchers were still half open and smelt wonderful (especially the grocers with special tea and coffee, fruits and nuts, its sticks of cinnamon and other spices... its French plums, and much, much more).

Perhaps it was the generous nature of the good spirit that gave them direction; or perhaps it was his sympathy with all poor men. Whatever it was, they soon arrived at the four-roomed house of Scrooge's clerk, Bob Cratchit. And it was then that Scrooge saw what he had never seen before, or thought possible: a family caught in the moment.

They were not very well dressed: their shoes were far from being water-proof and their clothes were old. Nor was their house properly dressed with comfortable pieces of furniture. Another sign of their poverty came from the kitchen, where a goose was cooking instead of the usual Christmas turkey. But they were happy,

grateful, and pleased with one another, and the time they had together.

Mrs. Cratchit was making the sauce; their eldest son, Master Peter, was preparing the potatoes with great energy; a daughter, Miss Belinda, was sweetening up the apple-sauce; another, Miss Martha, was cleaning the cooker; and Bob himself took his youngest, Tiny Tim, beside him in a tiny corner at the table, which was neatly laid out for their Christmas dinner. As far as Scrooge could see, the only complaint that this family could have with life was that Tiny Tim carried a little crutch with him.

The family sat down at the table, and said prayers. This was followed by a pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the knife, prepared to cut the goose; and when she did, a sound of happiness was heard around the table. Even Tiny Tim weakly cried Hurrah!

When they had finished with their delicious dinner, the table was cleared, the



floor swept, and the fire made up. They sat down by it, ready with a compote of fruit and some chestnuts. They lifted their mugs, when Bob proposed:

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

Which they all joined in.

'God bless us everyone!' said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

And the scene disappeared before Scrooge's eyes.

Chapter V

'To uncle Scrooge!'



Scrooge and the Spirit found themselves on the streets again. By this time it was getting dark, and snowing quite heavily; and as they walked along, the brightness of the fires in the kitchens and living rooms was wonderful. Christmas was in the air, there was no doubt about it.

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon an empty field, where lots of stones were around. It looked like a graveyard for giants.

Down in the west the sun was going down fast, its light changing from golden yellow to red. A few moments later, it looked at this untouched view for a second, like a silent eye; and going lower, lower, lower again, until darkness fell over the world like a cold blanket.

'What place is this?' asked Scrooge.

'A place where miners live, who work in the earth,' answered the Spirit. 'But they recognise me. See!'

A light shone from the window of a hut, and quickly they moved towards it. Passing



through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful group of people sitting around a bright fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation again, all dressed brightly in their holiday clothes. The old man was singing them a Christmas song (it had been a very old song even when he was a boy) and from time to time they all sang with him. It seemed as if they sang in time with the wind's own music outside.

The Spirit did not stay, but asked Scrooge to hold his coat, and high above the land, flew - where?

Not to sea?

To sea.

They flew past ships; they flew past lighthouses; they flew past islands. But wherever they saw human life, even on the seas, the story of Christmas was being told and re-told: every man either sang a Christmas carol, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke quietly to his companion of some past Christmas day.

At last they landed on land itself; and, again, suddenly Scrooge found himself in a country house he did not recognise. There was, however, something about the place which he recognised.

'Ha, ha!' laughed a voice he knew well. 'Ha, ha, ha!'

It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew. The room they were in was bright, dry, and warm. Scrooge turned round and found the Spirit standing by his side, he too smiling (everybody, even those without bodies, felt the cheerfulness in the room).

'Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!'

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

'How sad, Fred!' said Scrooge's niece, a little angry. She was pretty, very pretty too. Scrooge had never met his niece; had never found time to visit; had never accepted his nephew's kind invitations. And now, seeing the good times he had missed (and the good times he was

missing), Scrooge felt a deep pain in his heart.

'He's a funny old man,' said Scrooge's nephew, 'that's the truth: and not as friendly as he could be, I feel.'

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

'But do you think money helps him?' said Scrooge's nephew. 'It is useless to him. He doesn't do any good with it. He doesn't even make his own life comfortable with it.'

'I have no patience with him,' said Scrooge's niece.

'Oh, I have!' said Scrooge's nephew. 'I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who really suffers from his greed? Who really suffers from his selfishness? He does, always.'

'What makes you think he cares?' asked Scrooge's niece.

'Well, take his Christmas. He doesn't visit us and he certainly doesn't visit anyone



else. I believe that, because of this, he loses some very nice moments in life. I am also sure that his thoughts could never give him the friendship we all need, either in his cold office, or in his dark rooms. I would like to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, because I feel sorry for him. He may think Christmas a humbug, as he says, but I am sure that he can't stop thinking about it, especially if he sees me, in a good mood, year after year, and saying, uncle Scrooge, how are you?'

'I suppose you are right,' said Scrooge's niece.

'Here is a glass to his health and happiness, anyway' said Scrooge's nephew, raising a glass of warm wine for his uncle. 'I hope that he may one day find the happiness that belongs to us all. To uncle Scrooge!'

'Well, to uncle Scrooge!' she agreed, doing the same.

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

Scrooge suddenly had a strange feeling of warmth as he heard these words: words of hope, words of love. If only he could thank them for their thoughts and for their toast, if the Ghost had given him time; instead, the whole scene disappeared before his very eyes, and Scrooge once again found himself travelling.

They saw much more, the Spirit and he. And travelled far too. But the end was always the same: happy. The Spirit stood by sick beds, and they were cheerful; by hard working men, and they were patient; by poverty, and it was rich. Wherever they went, love seemed greater than all life's worries put together. This truly was a world where Love could rule, Scrooge thought. And win.

Scrooge saw all this in only one night, but it seemed like forever. He noticed, too, that while he stayed the same, the Spirit appeared to grow older, clearly older.

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

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

'Tonight!' cried Scrooge.

'Tonight at midnight. Our time together is coming to an end.'

And almost as soon as the Spirit had said this, the bell rang twelve.

They were back in Scrooge's bedroom now. Scrooge turned and looked for the Ghost, but did not see him. Instead, as the last bell stopped ringing, he remembered Marley's words and, lifting his eyes, saw a dark figure coming, like a fog along the ground, towards him.

Chapter VI

The Last of the Spirits



The Ghost slowly came towards Scrooge. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down and knelt by it. The air around seemed full of unhappiness. It was wearing a deep black coat, which hid its face, so that the only thing that Scrooge could see was his hand. He felt that the Ghost was tall but he was too afraid to look up; but that was all he knew, since the Spirit neither spoke nor moved. Scrooge only felt fear in his heart.

'Are you the Ghost of Christmas Future?' asked Scrooge.

The Spirit did not answer, but pointed with its hand.

Although Scrooge was used to these visits by now, he was completely unprepared for the dark Spirit. His legs grew weak and started shaking under him. And, as he prepared to follow the Spirit's hand, Scrooge found that he could hardly stand.

'Ghost of the Future!' he cried, 'I fear you more than any Spirit I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be a different man



from what I was, 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 pointing straight before him.

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

The city lay in front of them. They were, in fact, in the heart of it. Merchants hurried up and down the streets, with the money in their pockets, and sometimes stopping to converse with others. The Spirit flew on into a narrow street. Its finger pointed to two people meeting. Scrooge knew these men, and knew them well. They were men of business: very rich, and of great importance.

‘How are you?’ said one.

‘How are you?’ returned the other.

‘Well!’ said the first. ‘Old Scratch has finally died, hey?’

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

‘As usual in Christmas time. You’re not a skater, I suppose are you?’

‘No. No. Much too busy for that. Good morning!’

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting.

Not knowing what to think about this conversation, Scrooge turned towards the Spirit; and all he was faced with was an outstretched hand pointing in another direction, this time into a poor part of town. It was Camden Town, and it had changed since Scrooge knew it: the ways now were dirty; the shops and houses falling down; the people half-naked, drunken, ugly. The whole quarter smelt of crime, of dirt and unhappiness.

The sad Ghost and Scrooge walked on ‘till they reached the house of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge’s clerk. Scrooge felt as though he had just visited his clerk’s house, but this time seemed very different. The happiness and laughter that once filled the house had changed to bitter unhappiness.

This was the scene that met Scrooge’s

eyes: in a corner sat Bob Cratchit crying like a child, with two of his own children sitting beside him. Mrs. Cratchit holding one of them, trying hard to kiss away her husband's tears. There were no words of warmth; and there were no voices of hope. This awful vision was made more painful by the complete stillness in the scene: nothing and nobody moved. Scrooge soon saw why his clerk's family was so unhappy: in the corner of the room stood an empty chair with a small crutch leaning next to it. Tiny Tim, the joy of this family, had been taken from them.

'Spirit,' said Scrooge, tears beginning to fill his eyes, 'why has the child died?'

The Ghost said nothing. The scene had changed again and this time they were facing an entrance gate to some overgrown churchyard. The old iron gate made a metallic noise as the Spirit moved through it. Scrooge stood still, and could not follow the Spirit: a deathly fear had taken hold of him.

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to one. Scrooge waited, his legs



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

'No, Spirit! I beg you' said Scrooge

Still the finger was there.

Scrooge slowly walked towards it, shaking; and following the finger, read on the stone of the lonely grave the name:

EBENEZER SCROOGE RIP

'No, Spirit! O, no, no!'

'Spirit!' he cried, holding its coat, 'Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I was! 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 live within me.

I will not forget the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may clean away the writing on this stone!'

In his pain, he tried to catch the spirit's hand. The Spirit freed itself as soon as Scrooge moved towards it. Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his future changed, he saw the spirit's hood and coat become smaller before him, until it fell down on a bed.

Chapter VII

'The End of it'



Yes! And the bed was his own. The room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to change his wrong ways!

'I will live in the past, the present, and the future!' Scrooge repeated, as he was getting out of bed. 'The Spirits of all three shall live within me. Oh Jacob Marley! God bless Heaven and Christmas time for this! I swear it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees!'

He was so happy and so shining with good intentions that the tears on his cheeks were now tears of joy. For the first time in a very long time he looked to the future with hope in his heart.

'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, a Merry Christmas to everybody! A Happy New Year to all the World!'

And he laughed, and laughed. It really was a great laugh.

'I don't know what day of the month it is!' said Scrooge. 'I don't know how long I've been with the spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby; never mind, I don't care. I'd rather be a baby!'

And then he heard the church bells. Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog; clear, bright, cold; cold, fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious!

'What's today?' cried Scrooge, calling down to a boy.

'Eh?' returned the boy. 'Why, 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. Hello, my fine boy!'

'Hello Sir!' returned the boy.

'Do you know the Butchers', in the next street at the corner?' Scrooge asked.

'Of course I do, Sir.'

'An intelligent boy!' said Scrooge. 'Do

you know if they still have the prize turkey that was hanging up there?’

‘What, the one as big as me?’ returned the boy.

‘What a nice boy!’ said Scrooge. ‘It’s a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my boy!’

‘I believe it’s hanging there now’ replied the boy.

‘Is it?’ said Scrooge. ‘Go and buy it.’

‘Excuse me?’ said the boy.

‘I mean it,’ said Scrooge. ‘Go and buy it, and tell them to bring it here. 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!’

The boy was running like a shot.

‘I’ll send it to Bob Cratchit’s!’ whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and laughing.

Scrooge quickly got dressed, and went downstairs to open the street door, ready for the boy, butcher and turkey. As he stood there waiting, the knocker caught his eye.

‘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! Merry Christmas!

And he paid for it all with a smile, and patted the boy on the head.

'A Merry Christmas to you,' repeated Scrooge. 'And a Happy New Year!'

Scrooge left his house and walked down the street, dancing merrily along the snow-white streets. Wherever he went it looked as if a new world had been born, where people greeted each other, smiled, and laughed out loud.

He went to church, and walked about some more, watching people hurrying along. He patted children on the head; he talked to the beggars and to the homeless; he looked into the kitchens of houses, and up at the windows, and found that everything could give him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk (that anything for that matter) could bring him such happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

And he certainly surprised him. And his



wife. And their friends. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful happiness! Scrooge enjoyed himself so much that he hoped that Christmas would never end.

But he was early at the office the next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was his plan.

And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was exactly eighteen and a half minutes late. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, so that he might see his clerk come into the office.

'Hello!' said Scrooge, in his angry voice. 'What time do you think it is?'

'I am very sorry sir,' said Bob, with fear in his voice.

'You are?' repeated Scrooge. 'Come here, sir, if you please.'

'It's only once a year, sir,' begged Bob. 'It will never happen again sir, please.'

'Well, let me tell you what I am going to do,' said Scrooge, watching Bob tremble

with fear. 'I'm going ... I'm going ... I'm going ... to raise your salary!'

Bob did not know what to think. He just stood there with his mouth open, not able to move a finger.

'A Merry Christmas, Bob!' said Scrooge, as he hugged him. 'A Merrier Christmas, Bob, my good man, than I have ever given you! I'll raise your salary, I'll try and help your family in any way I can, and we'll discuss your situation this afternoon, over a bowl of Christmas soup, Bob!'

And Scrooge meant it too. He did it all, and a lot more. To Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became a friend to all, and his own heart laughed. May that truly be said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim once said,

God bless us, everyone!

Notes

Glossary

a fit of trembling – atak drgawek
 a load of – ogrom
 ache – ból
 all along – od samego początku
 all life's worries put together – wszelkie życiowe zmartwienia
 anger – gniew, złość
 appear – pojawić się
 applause – oklaski, aplauz
 approach – zbliżyć się
 awakening – budząc się, przebudzenie
 aware of – świadomy
 awful – okropny
 bang – huk, trzask, łoskot
 bare – surowy, pusty
 bark – szczekać, warknąć
 basin – miska
 bear – znosić, tolerować
 bear someone's company – tolerować czyjeś towarzystwo
 bear up someone – podtrzymywać na duchu
 become aware of – uświadomić sobie
 bedpost – słupek wspierający baldachim
 beg – żebrać
 beggar – żebrak
 belly – brzuch
 bleak – ponury
 blended – skłębiony
 blow out – zdmuchnąć
 bluish – niebieskawy

bother – niepokoić
 branch – gałąź



brief – krótki
 brightness – jasność
 broadly – szeroko
 burial-place – cmentarzysko
 candied fruit – owoce kandyzowane
 care about something – przejmować się
 carol singers – kolędnicy
 carry along – przenosić
 cart - wóz
 carving-knife – nóż do krojenia mięsa
 cash – box - kasa
 catch – złapać
 certainly – z pewnością
 chain - łańcuch



charitable – dobroczynny
 cheer – radość
 cheerful – wesoły
 cheerfully – radośnie
 cheery – radosny
 chestnut – orzech włoski

chicken – kurczak



chink – brzęk

chinking the money – dzwoniąc monetami

choked up – zapchany

christmas carol – kolęda

chuckle – chichot

chunk - bryła

chunks of snow – bryły śniegu

churchyard – cmentarz parafialny

clacking chestnuts – pękające orzechy

clasp – chwycić, klepnąć, uścisnąć, objąć

clerk – pracownik

closet - szafka

clothed – ubrany

clouded with a steam – otoczony parą

clouded – zachmurzony

clutch at – chwytać się

coal – węgiel

coat – płaszcz



cold-hearted – bezlitosny

collapse – zawalić się

come to an end – zbliżyć się do końca

companionship – przyjaźń

company – towarzystwo

complain – skarżyć się, jęczeć

crackle – trzaskać

crawl – pełzać

crisp – rześki

crutch – kula, podpora

dare to do something – mieć odwagę na coś

deaf – głuchy

deathly – śmiertelny, grobowy

deathly fear – śmiertelny strach

delight – zachwyt

delightful – zachwytający

desert – opuszczony

despair – rozpacz

dimly – mgliście

disappear – znikać

disused – nieużywany

double-lock a door – zamknąć drzwi na dwa spusty

draw curtains – odsłonić zasłony

dream – śnić

dressing- gown – szlafrok

drop – upaść, upuścić

dust – posypać

dusty – zakurzony

dwindled – zmaleć, skurczyć się
 entirely – całkowicie
 entrance gate – brama wejściowa
 exhausted – wyczerpany
 familiar – znajomy
 fear took hold of him – strach go ogarnął
 fearfully stare – wpatrywać się ze strachem
 feather – pióro



filth – brud
 fine fellow – miły gość, miły koleżka
 finger - palec
 fireplace - kominek



flame – płomień
 flash up – rozbłysnąć
 float in the air – unosić się w powietrzu
 fluttered – przepełniony emocjami
 fly – lecieć
 fold – złożyć

forehead – czoło
 forgive – wybaczać
 foul – paskudny
 freeze – zamrznąć
 frightful – przerażający
 frown – zmarszczyć brwi
 funeral - pogrzeb
 furrows – bruzda , rowek
 gaily – kolorowo
 gallop – galopować
 garment – ciuch
 generous – hojny, wspaniałomyślny
 ghostly – straszny
 gleaming – jaśniejący, migotający
 glide on – sunąć naprzód
 glistening – lśniący
 gloomy - mroczny
 glorious – wspaniały
 glory – wspaniałość
 glow – błyszczeć
 glowing with good intentions – pełen dobrych intencji
 goblet – kielich
 grace – łaska
 grave – grób, poważny
 gravely – poważnie, godnie
 gravy – sos mięsny
 greed – chciwość
 grief – żmartwienie, żal

grope – szukać po omacku
 grove – gaj
 grow old – starzeć się
 grow weak – słabnąć
 growl – warknięcie
 halfway – w pół drogi
 handsome – przystojny
 hang on - wisieć
 haunt – nawiedzać
 heap up – usypać stos
 hearth – palenisko
 hearty serdeczny
 hissing hot – wrzący
 hold on tight – trzymać się mocno
 holly - ostrokrzew



homeless - bezdomny
 hooded – zakapturzony
 hug – przytulać
 hum – nucić
 human – człowiek
 humbug – błaga, kicz
 hut – chata
 I pity him – żał mi go

icicle – sopelek
 icy – lodowaty
 in good faith – w dobrej wierze
 in his uncle's honour – na cześć swojego wujka
 incredible – niewiarygodny
 instant – chwila
 instantly – błyskawicznie
 intense – intensywny
 intention – intencja, zamiar
 ivy – bluszcz
 jaw – szczeka
 joints – kości
 keep an eye on something / somebody – mieć kogoś / coś na oku
 keep Christmas – obchodzić święta Bożego Narodzenia
 kneel – uklęknąć
 knees – kolana
 knocker – kołatka



laid out table – nakryty stół
 lay – znajdować się
 light – lekki, światło
 light as a feather – lekki jak piórko

lighthouse - latarnia morska



live – żyć

make an effort – starać się

make for something – skierować się ku czemuś

make out – dostrzec

mash potatoes – ubijać ziemniaki

mean – skąpy

merrily – wesoło

metallic noise – metaliczne pobrzękiwanie

mildly angered – lekko rozgniewana

mince – pies – pierożek z nadzieniem z bakalii

misery – nieszczęście, nędza

miss – przegapić, tracić

mistletoe – jemiola



money – making – zarabianie pieniędzy

monstrous – monstrualnie wielki

mood – nastrój

moor – wrzosowisko

mortal – śmiertelnik

mud – błoto

mulled wine – grzane wino

neatly – starannie

neglected – opuszczony, zaniedbany

nephew – siostrzeniec, bratanek

nervous – nerwowy

nightmarish – koszmarny

noise – dźwięk

obscure – mroczny

oddly – dziwnie

on the hob – na kuchence

outstretched – otwarty, rozpostarty, wyciągnięty

overgrown – zarośnięty chwastami

padlock – kłódka



pain – ból

painful – bolesny

parting – rozstanie

pat – poklepać

patience – cierpliwość

phantom – zjawia

pigtail – warkoczyk



pity – litość, współczucie

plum-puddings – pudding

plunge – zatopić

pony – kucyk



porridge - owsianka

poultry – drób

poverty – bieda

prayer – modlitwa

prepare – przygotowywać

prize – nagroda

pulling – ciągnąc

punch – poncz

radiant – promienisty

raise – podnieść, wznieść

raise money – zbierać pieniądze (na cel)

rather - raczej

recognise – rozpoznać

red-hot – rozgrzane do czerwoności

reply – odpowiedzieć

rhinoceros – nosorożec

rip – skrót 'rest in peace' - niech spoczywa w pokoju

roar – ryczeć

roaring – buzujący

robe – płaszcz

rough – szorstki

round a bend – minąć zakręt

rub off – zetrzeć

rule – zawiadywać

ruler – linijka

rusty – zardzewiały

say grace – odmawiać modlitwę

scanty – skąpe, nikłe

scramble out of bed – wygramolić się z łóżka

scrape – zeskrobywać

scrape the snow – odśnieżyć

screw – śrubka



seasonal – sezonowy

selfishness – egoizm

set with – udekorowany

shadow – cień

shaken – wstrząśnięty

shame – wstyd

shame on him – co za wstyd (z jego powodu)

share in – uczestniczyć
shine – świecić
shrink – kurczyć się
shuffle – iść powłócząc nogami
sing in tune with – harmonizować się z
skater – łyżwiarz
slap – uderzyć
slippers – kapcie
smiling broadly – uśmiechając się szeroko
sparkling – błyszczący
speak below one's breath – mówić cicho
spectre – widmo
splendid – doskonały
sponge away – wymazać (zetrzeć gąbką)
spread – rozprzestrzeniać się
stately – stateczny
step – krok
stiff – zacięty
still – jeszcze, nadal
stillness - cisza
stirring – poruszający
stop oneself halfway – nagle przestać
strike - wybić
stroke – uderzenie
suffer – cierpieć
surprise – zaskoczenie
surprised – zaskoczony
swear – przysiąc

sweeten up – osłodzić
swing – kołysać się
sympathy – współczucie
shaken with grief – przepełniony żalem
take hold of – opanować
tavern - gospoda
tear trickled – łza spłynęła
thaw – roztopić się
the bell struck twelve – dzwon wybił dwunastą
the crown of its head – czubek głowy
the fog - mgła
the mist – mgła
thick – gęsty
thoughtfully – troskliwie
thundering – huczący
tie – krawat, wiązać
timidly – bojaźliwie
to be in the prime of life – być w kwiecie wieku
to be off like a shot – pobiec jak torpeda, szybko znik-
nąć, odejść
to last – trwać
to point – wskazywać
to pull curtains – odsłonić zasłony
to split – slang. odchodząc
transform – odmienić
trap – złapać w pułapkę
trembling – drżący
trot – kłusować

turn one's steps towards – skierować kroki do
 undertaker – grabarz
 unprepared – nieprzygotowany
 untouched – nietknięty
 vanish – zniknąć
 vigour – wigor, energia
 visible – widoczny
 vision – wizja
 wagon - fura
 waist – pas
 waistcoat – kamizelka



warmth – ciepło
 wealthy – zamożny
 were hung with living green – zostały obwieszone
 zielenią
 whisper – szeptać
 wicked – haniebny, niegodziwy
 wide - szeroki
 winding – kręta, wijąca się
 with a chuckle – chichocząc
 wrap – owinać
 wreath – wieniec, wianuszek
 wretched – haniebny
 wrinkle – zmarszczka

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