

**A CHRISTMAS  
CAROL**

By  
Charles Dickens

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## Chapter 1 Marley's Ghost

Ebenezer Scrooge was a hard and cold man. The cold inside of him seemed to freeze his face. His nose and cheeks looked icy and pointed. His lips were blue. Even his walk and voice were cold. No fire or heat had the power to warm him.

One Christmas Eve, Scrooge was busy in his counting house. The only people in the office were Scrooge and his clerk, Mr. Cratchit. Outside was windy and cold. Inside was cold as well. Scrooge did not like to waste money on coal for the fire.

Suddenly, the door opened, and a happy voice called, "Merry Christmas, Uncle!" It was Fred, the nephew of Ebenezer Scrooge.

“Bah! Humbug!” replied Scrooge.

“You don't mean that, I'm sure,” said Fred.

“I do,” said Scrooge. “Who should be merry? You? You're poor enough.”

“Then why aren't you merry?” asked Fred with a smile. “You're rich enough.”

“Bah! Humbug!” said Scrooge again. “You keep Christmas your way. I'll keep it mine.”

“But you don't keep it,” Fred reminded his uncle. “Christmas is a time to be good. It is a time to do good to others. I say, God bless it!” Then he asked, “Will you come eat with us tomorrow?”

Scrooge laughed. It was his way of saying no to his nephew.

“Why not, Uncle? I want nothing of you. I ask nothing of you. Why can’t we be friends?”

“Good afternoon,” was all Scrooge said.

Later, the time to close the counting house arrived. Looking at Mr. Cratchit, Scrooge said, “You’ll want tomorrow off, I suppose?”<sup>1</sup>

“If it is convenient...”

“No, it’s not convenient. But I can do nothing about it. Be here early the next morning.”

Then both men left for their homes.

Scrooge lived in an old apartment. His business partner Marley. had also lived there in the past. However, Marley had died seven years before.

As he came to the door of his home, Scrooge thought he saw Marley's face on the door. And later at dinner, he saw the face again in a picture in his room.

The strange face was heavy on his mind that night. Scrooge tried to forget it as he dressed for bed, but he could not. Then, as he sat before the fire, he heard the sound of chains.

The door flew open, and in walked the ghost of Marley!

Jacob Marley?" asked Scrooge, trying hard to control his fear.

"Yes," replied the ghost.

"Why do you wear those chains? You were a good man of business when you lived?"

"Business!" the ghost cried out.

"Mankind was my business. Helping

others and showing mercy were my business. But I did those poorly. Now I walk in chains, unable to do anything about the possibilities I missed in life."

Then the ghost stood close to Scrooge. "My time is short," it said. "I have come to warn you. You can escape chains like these. Three spirits will come to you. Learn from them!"

With that, the ghost of Marley went out the window into the cold, dark night.

## Chapter 2 The First Spirit

Scrooge fell asleep after the ghost of Marley left. However, he woke up again around one in the morning. Suddenly, his room was filled with light. A spirit stood beside his bed!

The spirit looked very strange. He was as small as a child, but very, very old. He was dressed all in white and had long white hair. The light in the room was coming from the top of the spirit's head. Under his arm, he held a large cap.

“Who and what are you?” asked Scrooge.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past,” said the spirit in a soft voice.

“Long past?”

“No. Your past.” Then the spirit said,  
“Walk with me.”

Scrooge got out of bed. He took the spirit’s hand, and they walked through the wall!

To his surprise. Scrooge found himself in the country. They were near a school. It was Scrooge’s school when he was a boy. He saw himself in the school as a teenage boy. A young girl was with him.

“I’ve come to take you home for Christmas,” said the girl. She was Scrooge’s sister, Fanny.

Together, the younger Scrooge and the girl happily got into a carriage and rode away.

“She was weak,” Scrooge told the spirit.

“But she had a big heart,” replied the spirit. “And she had a son before she died. Your nephew.”

Next, the spirit showed Scrooge another Christmas. They were at Scrooge’s first job. There, Mr. Fezziwig gave a Christmas party. Scrooge watched his younger self have a fine time there.

‘Look at old Fezziwig,’ Scrooge said. “He has the power to make us happy or unhappy.

He can make our work light or heavy.” Then Scrooge half whispered, “I wish I could say a word to my clerk now.”

The spirit had two more Christmases to show old Scrooge. On one, his younger self said goodbye to a girl. He wanted to work and earn money more than he wanted to be with her. And then on a

later Christmas, the spirit showed him the same girl, older and married. She lived happily in a house filled with children. Her husband seemed a fine man, too.

“Take me back!” ordered Scrooge. “I have seen enough!” He grabbed the spirit's cap. And he pulled it down over the spirit's head to put out its light.

Suddenly, Scrooge was back in his room. He fell into bed and was asleep in a moment.

## Chapter 3 The Second Spirit

A strange light falling on his bed woke Scrooge again. The light seemed to be coming from the next room.

Certain that the second spirit had come, Scrooge went into the room. He found it filled with plants and all kinds of food. And there was a happy giant sitting among them all. The giant wore a loose robe, and he held a torch that filled the room with light.

“Come in and get to know me better,” said the ghost happily. “I am the Ghost of Christmas Present.”

“Spirit,” said Scrooge in a quiet voice, “take me where you will. I learned a lesson from the spirit before you. Tonight, if you have anything to teach me, let me benefit from it.”

“Touch my robe!” said the spirit.

The next moment, Scrooge found himself carried along as the spirit flew through the town. His torch’s light gave cheer and plenty to all on whom it fell.

And then Scrooge and the spirit stood before Bob Cratchit’s door. The spirit let his light fall there, too.

In the house, Scrooge watched Mrs. Cratchit and four children cook their Christmas dinner. Then Mr. Cratchit returned from church. He carried another child on his shoulder. The child was a boy born with a bad leg. His name was Tiny Tim.

“How was church?” Mrs. Cratchit asked.

“Fine, Mother!” said Tiny Tim. “I was glad to be there on Christmas Day. I

think people who saw me remembered the one who made lame men walk so long ago!”

The family laughed as they put dinner on the table. Scrooge watched them eat and laugh and enjoy their time together.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge as he watched the family, “tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”

“I see an empty chair. I see a crutch without an owner. If things go on as they are, the child will die.”

This thought upset Scrooge.

But the spirit had more to show him of that Christmas Day. They visited the home of Scrooge's nephew. They visited poor homes, homes far from the city, and homes in other lands. All were enjoying time together with family and friends.

Finally, it was time for Scrooge to return to his lonely apartment. But the spirit had one more thing to show him there.

“Look here, man!” said the spirit. Then he pulled two thin and ugly children from under his robe. They both had hungry and evil looks in their eyes.

“Are they yours?” Scrooge asked in horror.

“They are Man's. The boy is Ignorance. The girl is Want. Keep them both far from you. The boy is the worst. Deny him as best you can!”

Then the spirit disappeared. But Scrooge was not alone. No sooner had he got back into bed than the third spirit appeared.

## Chapter 4 The Last Spirit

This spirit moved slowly. He wore a long robe and never spoke. A hood covered his head, so Scrooge could see neither the spirit's face nor eyes.

“Are you the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?” asked Scrooge. “Will you show me things that will happen?”

The spirit nodded.

“I fear you, Spirit,” admitted Scrooge. “But I know your purpose is to do me good. I hope to live to be another man from what I was. Lead on!”

Without a word, the spirit moved away. Scrooge followed.

Suddenly, they were on the city's street. Some men were talking together.

“When did he die?”

“Last night, I believe.”

“What has he done with his money?”

“I haven't heard. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know.”

The men laughed.

“It's likely to be a cheap funeral. I don't know anybody who will go to it. Should we go?”

“I don't mind if a lunch is provided.”

There was more laughter.

Then Scrooge and the spirit were in a small room. Two women and a man were there. Scrooge knew them. All three worked in or around his apartment. They were talking about things they had taken from a dead man's room. One had some small kitchen things. Another had clothes.

The third had the blanket from the dead man's bed.

Suddenly, Scrooge and the spirit were in a bedroom. A dead body lay on the bed before them. The face was covered.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge. “I fear this place. Let us go!”

The spirit pointed at the body on the bed.

“I understand. I would look at the face if I could. But I don't have the power. If there is any person in the city who has good to say about this man, show me, Spirit, please!”

The spirit took him to a man's home. The man was talking to his wife. “He is dead,” said the man.

“What about our debts? Who must we pay now?” asked his wife.

“I don’t know. By the time they tell us, we will be ready to pay them. Tonight, though, we can sleep with light hearts!”

Then the spirit and Scrooge were again in Mr. Cratchit's home. An empty chair there had a crutch beside it. Scrooge heard that his nephew, Fred, had learned of Tiny Tim’s death. And he had talked with Mr. Cratchit on the street that day.

Mr. Cratchit told his wife, “Fred said if there was anything he could do for us, we should go and see him.”<sup>1</sup>

The whole family was surprised to hear this. They did not think Fred knew them at all.

Then the spirit took Scrooge to one more place. It was a graveyard. There,

the spirit showed Scrooge a stone by a grave. On the stone was his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

“Spirit!” cried Scrooge as he fell to his knees. “Hear me! I am not the man I was. Why show me this if I am past all hope?”

The spirit’s hand shook a little.

“Good Spirit,” Scrooge said, “have pity. Tell me that I can change these things you have shown me by changing my life.”

The kind hand shook more.

“I will honor Christmas in my heart. I will try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. I will not shut out the lessons that I have been taught. Tell me, can I change the writing on this stone?”

Scrooge caught the spirit's hand in his own. But the spirit was stronger and pulled away.

Suddenly, Scrooge found himself back in his bedroom. The post of his bed stood in the place where the spirit had been.

## Chapter 5 The End of It

With joy, Scrooge realized where he was. He knew that all he had seen was not a dream. “I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!” he said to himself.

Then he ran to the window and looked out. He saw a boy on the street below.

“What day is it. my boy?” called down Scrooge.

“Christmas Day,” replied the boy.

“I haven't missed it. The spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything. My boy, do you know the shop on the corner?”

“I do.”

“An intelligent boy! Do you know if they have sold the big turkey that was in the shop window?”

“Not yet. It’s there now.”

“Go tell them to bring it to me here. Do it in less than five minutes, and I’ll give you a gold coin!”

The boy ran off like a shot.

When the turkey came. Scrooge bought it. Then he sent it to the Cratchits’ home. He laughed to think about the family. What would they say when the turkey came? He had sent no note saying where the turkey had come from.

After that, Scrooge dressed himself. Then he went to his nephew’s home. Of course, his nephew was surprised to see him. but he welcomed his uncle

warmly. It was the best Christmas dinner Scrooge had ever had.

The next day, Scrooge was at work early. Bob Cratchit arrived eighteen minutes late.

“I’m very sorry, sir,” said Bob.

“I’ll tell you what, my friend,” said Scrooge. He had a serious look on his face. “I am not going to stand for this any longer.” Then his face broke into a smile. With a laugh, he told Bob, “Therefore. I am going to raise your salary!”

Bob looked at Scrooge in horror. He thought the old man must be mad.

“A merry Christmas, Bob! I am going to give you a raise. I am also going to do my best to help your family. Build up the fire. Bob. Let’s have a talk.”

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all and more. To Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. Scrooge became a good friend and a good man.

No more spirits ever came to visit Scrooge. After that, it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well. May that be said of all of us! God bless us, everyone!