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A Christmas Carol (Short Version)

Charles Dickens

Once upon a time there was a businessman, his name was Ebenezer Scrooge. He was not a friendly man. He was very rich, but he never spent it. You could say that he was very stingy.

It was almost Christmas, but Scrooge didn't want to have anything to do with it. 'Nonsense,' was his opinion. He had asked his bookkeeper, Bob Cratchit, to work on Christmas Eve. Together they went through all the finances of the year until Scrooge finally let the poor man go home to his family around midnight.

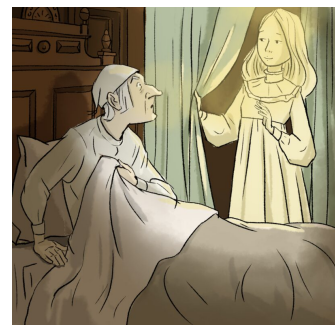


Then he left the office to go home himself. That evening Scrooge got a visitor. It was his cousin Fred. 'Uncle, come to our house for Christmas dinner,' asked Fred. 'Oh what rubbish,' answered Scrooge, 'I hate Christmas!' And that's how Scrooge, heartless, sent his nephew back into the cold.

He was a tough one, this Scrooge. Even collectors for the poor were mercilessly sent away by Scrooge. 'Work for your money! I do!' he yelled. And even worse, he yelled after the collectors: 'the more poor people die, the better for the problem of overpopulation.'

That night something remarkable happened. In his dream, Scrooge got a visit from his deceased business partner Marley. 'If you continue like this, you will haunt this earth forever, just like me, and will always be reminded of how poorly you treated others!' warned Marley. He told him that he would have three spirits visit him who can help him be spared from this awful faith. And that's what happened that night.

Scrooge was awoken by the first ghost shortly after midnight. 'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past,' said the ghost. 'What are you here for?' asked Scrooge. 'I want to show you memories. They are from a long time ago. You might not remember them so well. I am here to refresh your memory,' said the ghost.



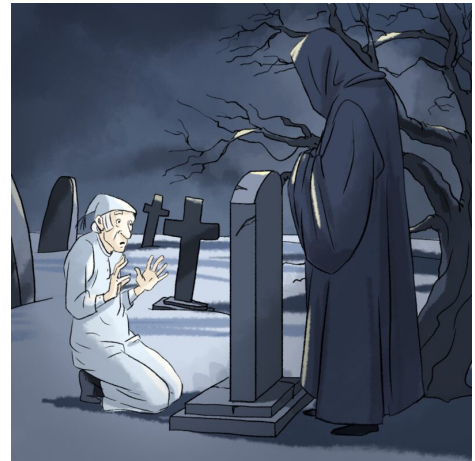
Scrooge saw images from his past. Like when he was left lonely and abandoned by his father at a strict boarding school. He also saw the love of his life who he lost because he spent too much time doing business. Finally he saw his deceased sister who had always been kind to him. 'Stop it,' begged Scrooge, 'I can't bear this!' The ghost disappeared.

An hour later Scrooge was woken up again. It was still slightly after midnight. The second ghost appeared, the Ghost of Christmas Present. Scrooge sighed. 'And what are you doing here?' he asked. 'I want to show you your loyal bookkeeper, Bob Cratchit, he has a tough life. He has a son, his name is Tiny Tim, who is very ill. They can't afford his medicine. You don't pay him enough for all the work that he does. It's very well possible that Tiny Tim will pass away too soon.'



The images touched Scrooge. There was a tear streaming down his face. When the ghost saw it, he said: 'What a strange reaction, his death would be a good solution to overpopulation right?' And for the first time in ages Scrooge felt regret. Regret over what he had said about the poor and regret about how he treated his loyal bookkeeper. The ghost said farewell and the third ghost appeared, the Ghost of Christmas Future.

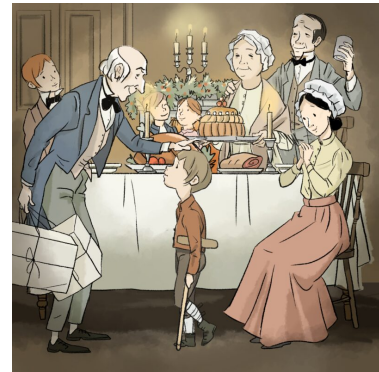
'What can I do for you?' asked Scrooge, who was overwhelmed by his feelings that he had suppressed for a long time and had been awoken by the visits of the previous ghosts. His experiences from the past had made him a tough man, but the memories had sparked something in him. He started to regret his behaviour more and more. This ghost showed him images of his grave with no visitors and he got even sadder. It got worse when the ghost showed him the next Christmas without Tiny Tim. The sadness of the Cratchit family touched him. He became very ashamed and wished he could be as gentle and generous as when he was born.



That's when Scrooge decided to change. He ordered a turkey at the butcher and had it delivered at the Cratchit family, twice the size of Tiny Tim. And they enjoyed it so much! Of course, he gave Bob a raise. Then Scrooge went to the

poor house, where he personally apologized to the collectors and gave them a large amount of money.

And that's how it happened that the cruel businessman changed into a kind and warm man. He accepted his nephew's invitation to spend Christmas with his family and had a lovely time. Scrooge became like a second father to Tiny Tim. Not only did he give the boy a lot of things, what was more important, he loved the boy.



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