

Chapter 10

Christmas with the Cratchits

The church bells stopped ringing. Scrooge took hold of the ghost's robe again and they continued their journey. No one could see them as they went through the streets of the city.

They went past many small houses and at last they stopped. The Ghost of Christmas Present had found Bob Cratchit's house. It was a small house with two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. Bob Cratchit, his wife and six children lived in this small house.

The ghost waved the torch and the light from its red flame shone on the little house. Scrooge was pleased that the ghost cared about Bob Cratchit and his family.

Then suddenly Scrooge and the ghost were inside the house. Mrs Cratchit and one of her daughters, Belinda, were putting plates and knives and forks on a table. They were getting ready to eat their Christmas dinner. A boy, Peter, and two smaller children were there too. They were very excited.

'Where's Martha?' I asked Mrs Cratchit. I hope she won't be late.'

'I'm here, Mother,' said her eldest daughter, coming in the door. 'I'm late because I had a lot of work to do today.'

The little children were looking out of the window. 'Here's Father! Here's Father coming home from church!' they cried. 'Let's play a joke on Father. Hide, Martha! Hide behind the door.'

So quickly Martha hid behind the door, as Bob came

in. Bob was carrying Tiny Tim, his youngest child. Carefully, Bob lifted his son off his shoulders and put him on the floor. The little boy could not walk properly. He had metal bands around his legs to help him to walk. He also leant on a wooden crutch.

'Where's Martha?' asked Bob.

'She's at work. She can't come,' replied his wife.

'Can't come?' said Bob. Suddenly he looked very sad.

Martha did not want to make her father unhappy. 'Oh, Father, I'm here!' she cried. She ran out from behind the door and put her arms round her father, 'It was a joke! Don't be sad.'

'Come and see the Christmas pudding, Tiny Tim, said Peter. It's cooking in a big pot over the fire,'

The younger children took their little brother to the other room to see the special Christmas fruit pudding.

'Did Tiny Tim behave himself well in church?' asked Mrs. Cratchit.

'He behaved himself very well,' replied Bob. 'He's always a good child. He always cares about other people, and not about himself.'

The children came back into the room. Tiny Tim sat on his little chair by the fire. Mrs Cratchit spoke to Peter and the two younger children.

'The goose will be cooked now,' she said. 'Go to the baker's shop and bring it back for me.' ;

And so, Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present watched the Cratchits eat their Christmas dinner. There were eight people and the goose was small. They all said how good the goose tasted. They talked about how little money the goose had cost. But nobody said how small it was.



Martha ran out from behind the door and put her arms round her father.

Then Mrs Cratchit brought in the Christmas pudding.
There were eight people and the pudding was small.
Everyone said how good it tasted. But nobody said how
small it was.

After dinner, Bob poured a drink into everyone's cup.
Then he lifted his cup and said, 'A Merry Christmas to us
all, my dears! God bless us! :

All the Cratchits lifted their cups too. And Tiny Tim said, 'God bless all
of us!'

Bob held his youngest child's hand. Tiny Tim. was his
favourite child. Tiny Tim was weak and ill. But Bob had
no money to pay a doctor. Bob was worried that Tiny Tim
would die soon.

Scrooge was looking at Bob Cratchit and Tiny Thru 'Ghost/ he said
suddenly, 'tell me that Tiny Tim will live. Tell me that the little boy
won't die.' 'This family is very poor, I replied the ghost; 'They cannot
buy enough food. They cannot pay a doctor. The little boy will die if the
family does not get medicine and more food. There will be an empty
chair beside the fire. There will be a wooden crutch that nobody uses.'
'Oh, no,' said Scrooge. -Yes, the little; boy will die,' repeated the ghost.
Then it: said, 'There are too many people in the world. Tell them to go
away and die.1

Scrooge looked at the ghost in horror. Those were his
own words. He remembered the gentleman who: had come
to his office. The gentleman had asked for money to help
the poor people in London.

Then Scrooge heard Bob Cratchit speaking again. Bob was lifting his cup
once more. 'And God bless Mr Scrooge,'

he said.

'Oh no, Bob,' said Mrs Cratchit. 'Mr Scrooge doesn't care about you. He doesn't care about us. He only cares about money.'

'It's Christmas Day,' replied Bob. 'We must all drink and give our good wishes to Mr Scrooge.'

So all the family drank and said, 'God bless Mr Scrooge.'

Soon all the Cratchits were happy again. They talked and laughed and sang songs. Tiny Tim sang in a sweet but quiet voice:

The snow was cold!

The child was lost!

His home was far away ...

The light from the ghost's torch shone down on the Cratchit family and they were all happy.