

Chapter 11

A Merry Christmas Everywhere

Soon Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present left the Cratchits' house and moved on through the streets. It was starting to get dark. Happy people were going to visit friends and relations to wish them a merry Christmas. The ghost waved his torch over them all and laughed loudly.

Suddenly, the city disappeared and everything changed. Scrooge saw grass and rocks below him, and takes that were covered in ice.

The sun was going down and soon it was dark and very cold.

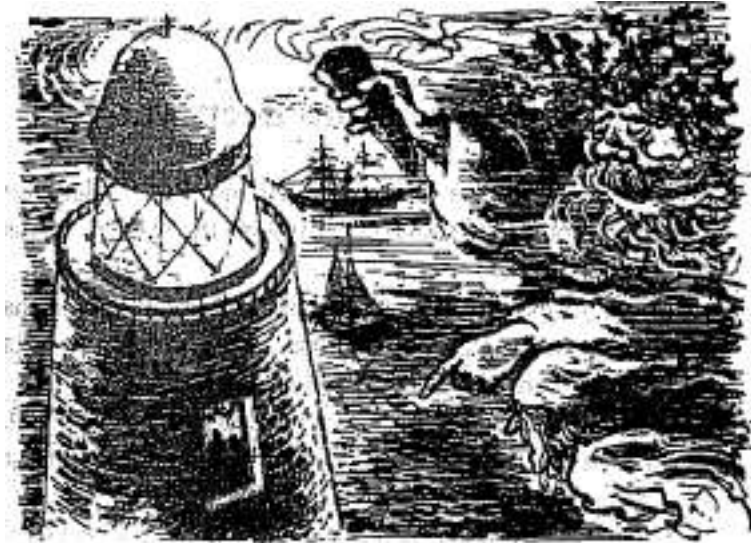
'Where are we?' asked Scrooge,

'We are in a place where miners live,' replied the ghost. 'They dig for coal under the ground. They are poor people, but; they know about me. Look!

Scrooge saw a big family in a very small stone house.

Old people and young people were sitting together around a fire and they were singing a Christmas song.

'Take hold of my robe again,' said the ghost. Then the journey continued. Sometimes it was day and sometimes it was night. Scrooge saw that the ghost was getting older. Its hair was grey now.



they were laughing and saying 'Merry Christmas' to each other. The ghost took Scrooge farther out to sea. There Scrooge saw a ship. The sailors on the ship were talking about their families. They sang Christmas songs and they were happy. Then Scrooge suddenly heard somebody laugh. He had heard that laugh before. It was the laugh of his nephew, Fred. Now Scrooge and the ghost were in Fred's bright, clean house. It was full of people. There was Fred, and his wife, who was very pretty. There were his wife's sisters and there was a friend called Mr Topper. As before, no one could see Scrooge or the ghost. Fred was talking and laughing. Scrooge listened. Fred was talking about his uncle — about him!

'Uncle Scrooge said Christmas is nonsense: He said, "It's humbug! Bah!"' said Fred. The young man was laughing, but he was being kind too. 'Your uncle is a miserable old man,' said Fred's wife. 'He doesn't care about anybody. He only cares about his money.'

'He's a strange old man. His money doesn't make him happy,' replied Fred. 'I feel sorry for him. I asked him to come and have Christmas dinner with us today. He wouldn't come. But I can't be angry with him. He makes himself unhappy.

'I'm going to say "Merry Christmas" to Uncle Scrooge every year,' Fred went on. 'I'm going to ask him to come to dinner every year at Christmas.'

Everybody laughed again, then they started to play games. Scrooge enjoyed watching all the games. He wanted to play them too.. The ghost smiled at Scrooge. He was pleased that the old man was enjoying Fred's Christmas party,

'Can we stay here, please?' Scrooge asked the ghost. He sounded like an excited child. 'Can we stay here for a long time?

Scrooge watched another game.

'I am thinking of a person,' said Fred to his wife and friends. 'You must guess who this person is. Ask me questions. I will answer Yes or No.'

They asked questions. They tried to guess who Fred

was thinking about. Fred was thinking of a person who

was like an unpleasant animal. This animal made unfriendly noises.

'I know! I know!' said one of the sisters. 'It's your Uncle Scrooge!'

They all laughed.

'Now we must all drink and wish "Merry Christmas" to my uncle,' said Scrooge's nephew. 'We have laughed at him tonight, so we must be kind to him too.'

Fred lifted a glass of wine. 'Merry Christmas, Uncle, wherever you are,' he said.

Scrooge wished he could say 'Thank you' to his nephew. But he could not think about Fred any more. The ghost took Scrooge away to more houses and more parties. Everywhere, the ghost waved the torch and made people happy.

Days and nights passed. The ghost became older and older as they travelled. Scrooge saw that the ghost's hair was now white.

'Do you have to go soon?' asked Scrooge.

'Yes. I do not have much time left,' said the Ghost of



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Christmas Present. 'I must go tonight at midnight.'

They were in a London street. Scrooge heard church bells ring. It was a quarter to midnight. Then he saw a small, child's hand. It was holding the ghost's robe.

'Who's this?' asked Scrooge.

The ghost pulled two children from behind him. There was a boy and a girl. They were thin children, wearing torn clothes. They looked frightened, angry and hungry. They did not look friendly.

Scrooge was surprised. 'Ghost, are these your children?' he asked.

'No,' said the ghost. 'These are poor children from the streets of London.'

Scrooge was very sad. 'Poor children!' he said. 'Don't they have homes? Children need homes.'

'Aren't there any prisons? Aren't there any workhouses? Put the poor people in workhouses,' said the ghost. :

Scrooge remembered those words. They were his own words. He had said them to the gentleman who came to his office. The gentleman had asked him for money to help the poor people.

The church bells rang twelve times. It was midnight. Scrooge opened his mouth to speak to the ghost. But the huge man in the green and white robe had gone.

Then Scrooge saw something coming towards him. It was another ghost. This ghost wore a long black robe which touched the ground. Its head and face were covered by a large hood

Scrooge remembered the words of Marley's ghost. 'The third ghost will come at midnight...'