

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Stave Three

THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS

3.1 Tiny Tim

The ghost now takes Scrooge to his present life, but forward to Christmas Day. They first visit the Cratchit family. Bob and his very ill son, Tiny Tim, have just arrived home. Tiny Tim has 'a little crutch' and 'an iron frame' to walk with.

Martha took her brother to the kitchen to see the Christmas goose.

'And how did little Tim behave?' asked Mrs Cratchit, while they were out of the room.

'As good as gold,' said Bob, with a [tremble](#) in his voice. 'Tiny Tim is growing stronger.'

Before he could say another word, Tiny Tim returned, his little crutch banging against the floor.

His sister was carrying the tiny bird.

All the Cratchits helped prepare the meal Mrs Cratchit made the gravy hissing hot. Master Peter



mashed the potatoes. Miss Belinda sweetened the apple-sauce. Martha dusted the hot plates.

The other children set places for everybody to eat. Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table.

At last, the dishes were ready, and they said [grace](#). There was then a breathless pause, as Mrs Cratchit slowly pressed the carving-knife into the breast. When she did there a [murmur](#) of delight arose all round the table.

Even Tiny Tim beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and [feebly](#) cried Hurrah.

'There never was a goose like this one!' said Bob, as they ate every last crumb of the food before them.

Then it was time for Mrs Cratchit to serve the Christmas pudding.

'Oh, what a wonderful pudding!' Bob Cratchit said to his wife. 'The best you have ever made.'

Everybody had something nice to say about it. No Cratchit said or thought it was a small pudding for a large family.

After dinner all, the Cratchit family gathered in a half-circle round the fire. Bob served [punch](#) into their 'glasses': one of which was a custard-cup without a handle.

Bob proposed a [toast](#): 'A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us.'

'God bless us!' cried all the family.

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

He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool.

Bob held his [withered](#) little hand in his. He loved the child, and [dreaded](#) what the future might bring.

Will Tiny Tim live?

'Spirit,' said Scrooge. 'Tell me if Tiny Tim will live.'

'I see an empty seat in the corner,' replied the Ghost, 'and a crutch without an owner. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.'

'No, no,' said Scrooge. 'Oh, no, kind Spirit. Say he will be spared!'

Mr Cratchit now proposed a final toast. 'To Mr Scrooge!'

'Mr Scrooge is a hard, unfeeling man. You know he is, Robert.'

'My dear,' said Bob. 'It's Christmas Day.'

'I'll drink his health for you, Bob' said Mrs Cratchit, 'Not for him.'

The children drank the toast after her. Tiny Tim drank it last of all.

3.2 Fred

The ghost takes Scrooge to see Christmas dinner at Fred's house. Fred is talking to his sister about their Uncle Scrooge.

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

'That's terrible, Fred!' said Scrooge's niece.

'He's a comical old fellow,' said Scrooge's nephew. 'I have nothing to say against him.'

'I'm sure he is very rich, Fred,' said Scrooge's niece.

'His money does not help him,' said Fred. 'He doesn't do any good with it.'

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

All the other ladies agreed.

'Oh, I have.' said Scrooge's nephew. 'I am sorry for him. I couldn't be angry with him.'

'Who loses most from his behaviour? Himself, always!'

'Silly man!' said his niece.



'I will give him the same chance every year,' said Fred, lifting his glass in a toast. 'He is always welcome here. Happy Christmas, Uncle Scrooge!'

'Uncle Scrooge!' they cried.

Uncle Scrooge wanted to thank them in return but the Spirit pulled him away.

There was one more ghost to see.

End of Stave One

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