

# A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

## Stave Two

### THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS

#### 2.1 School



*The Ghost of Christmas past takes Scrooge back to when he was a boy.*

Soon they passed through the wall. Now they stood upon an open country road, with fields on either side. The city, the darkness and the fog had all disappeared.

Now it was a clear, cold, winter day. There was snow upon the ground.

'Good Heaven!' said Scrooge, holding his hands together, as he looked about him. 'I grew up in this place. I was a boy here.'

'Do you remember the way?' asked the Spirit.

'Remember it?' cried Scrooge; 'I know every step.'

'Let us go on,' said the ghost.

They walked along the road. Scrooge knew every gate, post and tree. Soon a little town appeared in the distance.

Some ponies now were coming towards them with boys upon their backs. The boys were laughing and shouting at each other. Soon the fields were full of merry music

Scrooge knew the names of all these boys. Why was he so happy to see them?

As they left for their different homes, the boys said, *Merry Christmas!*

'The school is not quite deserted,' said the Ghost. 'A child, with no friends, is still there.'

'I know,' said Scrooge, his eyes wet with tears.

#### **Solitary Child**

They left the high road, and soon approached a large red-brick house. The big damp deserted rooms had broken windows. Chickens ran around the stables. The grass needed cutting.

Looking through the open doors, Scrooge saw a cold deserted building. It was a place where the children got up in the dark and never had enough to eat.



The Ghost took Scrooge across the hall. A door at the back of the house opened before them into a long empty room. There were rows of desks.

At one desk a lonely boy was reading near a tiny fire. Scrooge cried when he saw himself. Poor forgotten boy!

## 2.2: Fan

‘I wish I could change this,’ Scrooge said, putting his hand in his pocket. He looked around him. ‘It’s too late now.’

The Ghost smiled and waved its hand. ‘Let us see another Christmas.’

The room became a little darker and dirtier. The boy was alone again. All the other boys had gone home for Christmas.

Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and shook his head. He glanced anxiously towards the door.

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Suddenly the door opened. A little girl ran in and jumped into Scrooge’s arms.

‘Dear, dear brother. I have come to bring you home!’ said the child, clapping her tiny hands.

‘Home, little Fan?’ said the boy.

‘Father has sent me in a coach to bring you home! We’ll be together at Christmas. We’ll have the merriest time in all the world.’

She clapped her hands and tried to touch his head; but was too little. Laughing again, Fan began pulling him towards the door.

‘She had a large heart,’ said the Ghost. ‘

'Yes, she had,' cried Scrooge.

'And died a young woman,' said the Ghost, 'leaving children.'

'One child,' said Scrooge.

'True,' said the Ghost. 'Your nephew.'

## 2.3 Fezziwig

*The ghost then takes Scrooge back to when he was a young man in his first job.*



They went in. An old gentleman in a wig was sitting behind a very high desk.

Scrooge cried: 'Why, it's old Fezziwig. [Bless his heart!](#) It's Fezziwig alive again.'

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen. He looked up at the clock. 'Seven o'clock!' he cried, laughing to himself. Then he called out: 'Yo ho, there, boys. Ebenezer! Dick!'

Two young apprentice hurried in.

'Dick Wilkins!' said the watching Scrooge to the Ghost. 'There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick.'

'No more work tonight,' said Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk 'It's Christmas Eve! 'Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here.'

The two young men cleared away everything in a minute. They swept and cleaned the floor. They lit the lamps and filled the fire with fuel.

Soon the office was a bright ballroom on a winter's night.

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*A wonderful party follows. Everyone eats and drinks and dances all evening.*

When the clock struck eleven, the party ended.

Mr and Mrs Fezziwig stood, one on either side of the door, wishing everyone a Merry Christmas.

Old Scrooge remembered everything, enjoyed everything.

'He was wonderful man,' said Scrooge, as the bright faces of his former self and Dick turned away.

'Wonderful?' asked the Spirit. 'He only spent a few pounds on these boys.'

'It isn't that, Spirit!' said Scrooge, speaking like his former self. 'Mr Fezziwig has the power to make us happy or unhappy.'

Scrooge felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

'What is the matter?,' asked the Ghost.

'Nothing,' said Scrooge.

'Something, I think,' the Ghost insisted.

'No,' said Scrooge, 'No. I just wish I could say a word or two to my clerk.'

## 2.4 Young Love



*The spirit (ghost) now shows Scrooge with Belle, his former fiancée.*

'I am not changed towards you,' said Scrooge

She shook her head.

'You now love money too much to love me. When we were both poor we were happy together. But you've changed.'

'I was a boy then,' he said.

'You are different now,' she said tears in her eyes. 'That's why I must let you go.'

'Have I ever tried to end our engagement?'

'Not in words.'

'In what, then?' said Scrooge

'In everything that made our love important,' said the girl. 'My heart loves the person you once were. But you are no longer that person. I must let you go.'

She left him, and they parted.

'Spirit!' said Scrooge, 'Show me no more. Take me home.'

'One shadow more,' said the Ghost.

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*It is now many years later. Belle is sitting next to winter fire with her daughter.*

The room was not very large, but was full of happy noise. The children ran to the door to greet their father. His arms were full of Christmas toys and presents. Laughing, they pulled little brown-paper parcels from his pockets.

Later, when most of the children were in bed, the husband, turned to his wife with a smile. 'Belle,' he said 'I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon. Mr Scrooge.'

'Oh.'

'I passed his office and he was sitting alone by the window. His partner lies close to death, I hear.'

'Spirit!' said Scrooge, in a broken voice, 'remove me from this place.'

'I told you these were shadows of the things that have been,' said the Ghost. 'They are what they are. Do not blame me.'

'Leave me. Take me back!' said Scrooge. 'Haunt me no longer. I cannot bear it.'

Reaching out, Scrooge put out the ghost's candle. In the darkness he suddenly felt very sleepy.

Soon his eyes were closing and he fell into heavy sleep.

### **End of Stave One**

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