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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## A Christmas Carol

### 4: The Last of the Spirits



*NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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#### **Narrator**

Let's continue the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. The Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come couldn't have been more different from the Spirit of Christmas Present Scrooge had just seen disappearing. It was very tall and it was hidden in a black cape and hood. It didn't speak at all. Scrooge was getting used to the company of ghosts by now but he was afraid of this one.

#### **Scrooge**

Ghost of the Future, I am more afraid of you than any spirit I've seen. But I know your purpose is to do me good. And I hope to become another man from the one I was, so I am prepared to be in your company. And do it with a thankful heart.

#### **Narrator**

Was Scrooge really changing his ways? They went to the financial district and the Spirit stopped near a group of businessmen who were chatting.

#### **Businessman 1**

I don't know much about it. I only know he's dead. It's likely to be a very cheap funeral! I'm certain I don't know of anybody who'd go to it. Should we volunteer?

#### **Businessman 2**

I don't mind going if a lunch is provided! What happened to the money?

#### **Businessman 1**

Well, he didn't give it to me!

#### **Narrator**

Scrooge knew these men. But why did the Spirit make him listen to this conversation? No answer. Then the Spirit took him to a bad part of town. Criminals lived there. Some people were trying to sell stolen goods and they were making fun of the person who used to own them.

#### **Housekeeper**

Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose. He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, but he profits us now he's dead!

**Narrator**

And even the shirt the dead man was wearing was sold. A housekeeper, a laundress, an undertaker – they stood in line to make a profit on the dead man's things. Scrooge was shocked! He asked the Ghost to show him people with kindness towards the dead. And where do you think they went? Scrooge found himself back at Bob Cratchit's house. But this time everybody was sad and quiet. Bob Cratchit had just returned from church where he had made arrangements for somebody's funeral.

**Mrs Cratchit**

How was it, Robert?

**Bob Cratchit**

I wish you could have been there, dear wife. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child...

**Narrator**

Scrooge knew now that Tiny Tim was dead. But who was that man whose death others were talking about? The Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come took Scrooge to a graveyard and pointed ahead. On the stone of a neglected grave, the old man read a name: Ebenezer Scrooge! It was his own name! It was Scrooge's grave!

**Scrooge**

No, Spirit. Oh no, no! Spirit, hear me. I'm not the man I was. Why show me this, if all hope is gone?

**Narrator**

Wow! That's a brand new Scrooge we're seeing! And he's not done yet in his pleading...

**Scrooge**

Good Spirit, tell me that I still may change these shadows you have shown me, by changing my life. I will celebrate Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I'll live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall live within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me that I may remove the writing on this stone!

**Narrator**

Scrooge grabbed the Spirit's hand. The Spirit tried to free itself. In the end, it just disappeared. Scrooge found himself grabbing his own bedpost. What will happen now? I'll tell you next time.

## **Vocabulary**

### **holly**

a plant with green prickly leaves and bright red berries which is often associated with Christmas

### **cape**

clothing item which covers the shoulders and arms, like a coat without buttons

### **hood**

part of the cape that covers the head

### **funeral**

a ceremony to bury a dead person

### **volunteer**

to offer to do something without expecting payment

### **housekeeper**

person employed to take care of a house (by cleaning and cooking)

### **laundress**

person paid to wash clothes

### **undertaker**

person employed to bury dead people