Click on the audio links to listen as you read chapter 5 of *A Christmas Carol*.

The Last of the Spirits

Another phantom was coming towards him. It was tall and silent. Scrooge couldn't see its face or its body because it was wearing long, black clothes and a black hood. There was something mysterious about it. When it came near him, Scrooge was very frightened. It didn't speak or move.

'Are you the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?' he asked.

The Spirit didn't answer, but its long, white hand came out from the black clothes and pointed down.



'Are you going to show me things from the future?' Scrooge asked.

His legs were trembling a lot and so he couldn't follow the Ghost when it moved away. It stopped and waited for him. He couldn't see its eyes but he felt that they were looking at him. This Ghost was the most frightening of the three.

'Ghost of the Future!' he cried. 'I'm very frightened of you! But I know that you want to help me so I'll go with you. Please speak to me!'

It made no reply. Its long hand pointed ahead.

'All right, I'll come,' said Scrooge.

So the Ghost carried him to the centre of London. At a place called the Exchange, he saw a lot of businessmen. Their pockets were full of money. They were walking around and talking to each other. They often jingled the money in their pockets and looked at their watches. Scrooge knew many of them. When the Ghost stopped near three men, he could hear their conversation.

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'No, I don't know much,' said one very fat man. 'I only know he's dead.'

'When did he die?' another man asked.

'Last night, I think.'

'I thought he would never die. Was he very ill?'

'God knows.'

'What about his money?' asked a man with a very red face.

'I don't know,' replied the fat man. 'He hasn't left it to me.'

Everybody laughed.

'The funeral will be very cheap because only a few people will go,' the fat man continued.

'I'll go if there's a big lunch,' the red-faced man said.

Another laugh. And then the men went away.

Scrooge looked at the Ghost.

'Who are they talking about?' he asked.

But the Ghost said nothing. It went into the street and showed Scrooge two men. He knew them. They were rich and important businessmen. First they said hallo. Then one of them said:

'Well, he's finally dead.'

'Yes, I've heard,' answered his companion. 'Cold, isn't it?'

'Very cold. But it's the right weather for Christmas. Would you like to come ice-skating?'

'No. thank you. I'm too busy. Good morning.'

That was the end of their conversation. Scrooge was surprised. Who were they talking about? He couldn't think of anybody. Old Marley died seven years ago and this Ghost was showing him the future. He decided to wait and see. He looked around but couldn't see himself anywhere. Wasn't

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he there in the future? Silent and black, the Ghost stood near him. He knew that it was watching him and he trembled.

They went into a poor part of the city where the streets were dirty and narrow. There were dark shops and houses, and the people looked ugly and miserable. A lot of them were drunk. Rubbish was everywhere, and there were bad smells. The quarter was full of dangerous criminals. Scrooge followed the Ghost into a small, dark shop. It was full of dirty, old things - bottles, clothes, keys, chains. A man of about seventy with grey hair sat near a fire and smoked his pipe. Then a woman came in with a big, heavy box in her arms. She put it on the floor and sat down.

'Open it. Old Joe,' she said, 'and give me the money.'

The man opened the box. 'What are these?' he said. 'Bed - curtains! Did you take them while he was in bed?'

'Yes. Why not? There was nobody with him. There are blankets too.'

'His blankets?'

'Of course! He won't need them where he's going. Here's a beautiful, expensive shirt too. He was wearing it for his funeral. I thought, "What a pity! This is a very fine shirt but nobody will wear it again." So I took it off him.'

'You did well, madam,' laughed Old Joe. 'You're a clever woman and you'll make a fortune one day.'

'I must think of myself, like him. He was a selfish old miser. I cleaned his rooms and his clothes. I worked very hard for him but he never gave me anything. I wanted to take more things but his housekeeper took them before me.'

Just then the housekeeper came in. She had a large bag full of sheets, towels, clothes, and shoes.

'Now look in my bag. Old Joe,' she said, 'and tell me how much you'll give me.'

Old Joe counted up the money for each thing in the box and the bag and wrote some numbers on the wall.

'That's how much I'll give you,' he said. 'And no more. I always give too much and so I'm poor.' Then he opened a dirty bag and put the money on the floor. 'When he was alive, he frightened people and they hated him. So we get **the profits** now that he's dead. Ha, ha, ha!'

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Scrooge watched this in horror. 'Spirit! I see and I understand. This could happen to me. Oh God, what's this now?'

The scene changed and he was near a bed. It had no blankets or curtains. There was only an old sheet with something under it - the body of a dead man. The Ghost pointed at the head, but Scrooge couldn't pull down the sheet and look at the dead man's face. He was shaking with terror. The body was cold, rigid, and alone in that dark room. 'How terrible!' thought Scrooge. 'Not a man, woman or child to say that he was kind to them in life and to remember him with love!' Then he heard the sound of rats behind the walls. Were they waiting, were they going to jump on the bed and...?

'Spirit!' he said. 'What a horrible place! I'll always remember this scene. Can we go now?'

But the Ghost still pointed at the dead man's head.

'I understand,' Scrooge said. 'But I can't do it. I ask you to show me somebody who is sorry that this man is dead.'

The Ghost took him to Bob Cratchit's house. The mother and children were sitting round the fire. They were quiet, very quiet. The little Cratchits sat like statues in a corner. Peter was reading.

'When is Father coming?' he asked. 'He's late. But I think he walks slower now.'

'I remember when he walked very fast with - with Tiny Tim on his shoulder,' said the mother. 'But Tiny Tim was very light - and his father loved him so much. Ah there's your father at the door!'

Bob came in. He drank some tea while the two little Cratchits put their faces close to his, saying, 'Don't be sad, Father!'

So Bob tried to be cheerful; but suddenly he cried. 'My little child! My little boy!'

He went to a room upstairs. It looked as bright and happy as Christmas. He sat on a chair next to the bed. There was a little child on it. It was Tiny Tim, and he wasn't sleeping. He was dead. Bob kissed the little face; then he went downstairs.

'I met Mr Scrooge's nephew in the street.' he told the family. 'He asked me why I was so sad. When I told him, he said he was very sorry and wanted to help us. I think he's going to find a job for Peter.'

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'He's a very good man,' said Mrs Cratchit.

'Yes. Children, when you all leave home in a few years, you won't forget Tiny Tim, will you?'

'Never, Father!' they all cried.

'Thank you. I feel happier now,' Bob said.

Scrooge said to the Ghost, 'Oh, please tell me who that dead man was!'

The Ghost took him near his office, but it didn't stop.

'Wait!' said Scrooge. 'My office is in that house. Let me go and see what I'll be in the future.'

The Ghost continued walking. Scrooge ran to the window of his office and looked in. He saw an office, but it wasn't his. Everything was different, including the man at the desk. He followed the Ghost again. It stopped at the gate of a cemetery.

'Am I going to learn the dead man's name now?' asked Scrooge.

The Spirit led him to a grave. He went near it, trembling.

'Before I look at the name,' he said, 'answer me one question. Is it really necessary for these things to happen or are they only possible?'

The Ghost didn't answer.

'I mean, if men change their lives and become better, will the future change too? Is this what you want to tell me?'

The Ghost was silent. Scrooge went slowly towards the grave, still trembling. He read the name on the gravestone: EBENEZER SCROOGE.

He fell on his knees. 'I was the dead man in the bed! Oh, Spirit! Oh no, no! Listen, I've changed. I won't be the same man as before. Tell me there is still hope - please! Tell me that if I change my life, the things that you have shown me will be different!'

The Spirit's hand trembled.

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'I will celebrate Christmas with all my heart!' Scrooge continued. 'And I'll always try to have the Christmas spirit - every day of the year! I will live in the past, the present and the future. I will not forget the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me that I can clean the name off this stone!'

Scrooge held up his hands to the Ghost but suddenly it vanished. There was only a bed-curtain in front of his eyes.



Write the past tense of the verbs

feel= _____
make = _____
think = _____
stand = _____
take = _____
lead = _____
fall = _____
drink = _____
meet = _____
tell = _____
hold up = _____

Write the number next to the correct <u>synonym. (same meaning)</u>

1. sick
2. phantom
3. cemetery
4. disappear
5. rich
6. frightened
7. miserable
8. rigid
9. quiet

_____ vanish
_____ silent
_____ unhappy
_____ spirit
_____ stiff
_____ graveyard
_____ wealthy
_____ terrified
_____ ill

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Choose the correct word or phrases and write in the following sentences.

1. The ghost of the future wore long black clothes and a black _____.
   a) cloak b) hat c) hood
2. Scrooge thought this ghost was _____ of them all.
   a) the saddest b) the most frightening c) the strangest
3. The ghost took him first to _____ a place where rich business men met.
   a) the bank b) the Exchange c) the restaurant
4. The rich business men were talking about a funeral that they thought would be _____
   a) cheap b) expensive c) crowded
5. The ghost showed him next two businessmen talking about someone being dead in _____
   a) the bank b) his office c) the street
6. Next the ghost took him to the poor part of the city into _____
   a) a church b) a shop a) an office
7. _____ was sitting by the fire smoking a pipe.
   a) a young boy b) a middle-aged woman c) an old man.
8. A woman entered the room carrying _____
   a) a suitcase b) a box c) a chest
9. The woman said she had taken _____off the dead body.
   a) a golden watch b) an expensive shirt c) a silver ring
10. The woman was the dead man's _____
    a) maid b) cook c) wife
11. The housekeeper was selling Old Joe a bag of towels and clothes she stole from
    a) her husband b) the dead man c) the businessmen
12. After showing Scrooge the corpse, Scrooge wants to go to the home of someone who _____ this dead man.
    a) loved b) hated c) missed
13. Scrooge wanted to know who the dead man was when he saw _____
    a) Tiny Tim b) Bob Cratchit c) his nephew
14. Tiny Tim lay _____ in his bed.
    a) dead b) sleeping c) crippled
15. When Scrooge saw his name on the gravestone, he promised _____
    a) to be a better person b) to continue being a miser c) to pretend to love Christmas

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