



THE ILLUSTRATED HOLIDAY CLASSIC

Written by Brooke Vitale
Illustrated by Luke Flowers

The Muppet Christmas Carol



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"Hello. Welcome to The Muppet Christmas Carol. My name is Charles Dickens."

"And I am Rizzo the Rat... hey, wait a second. You're not Charles Dickens."

"I am, too. I know the story of A Christmas Carol like the back of my hand."

"Prove it."

"There's a little mole on my thumb, and..."

"Not your hand... tell us the story!"

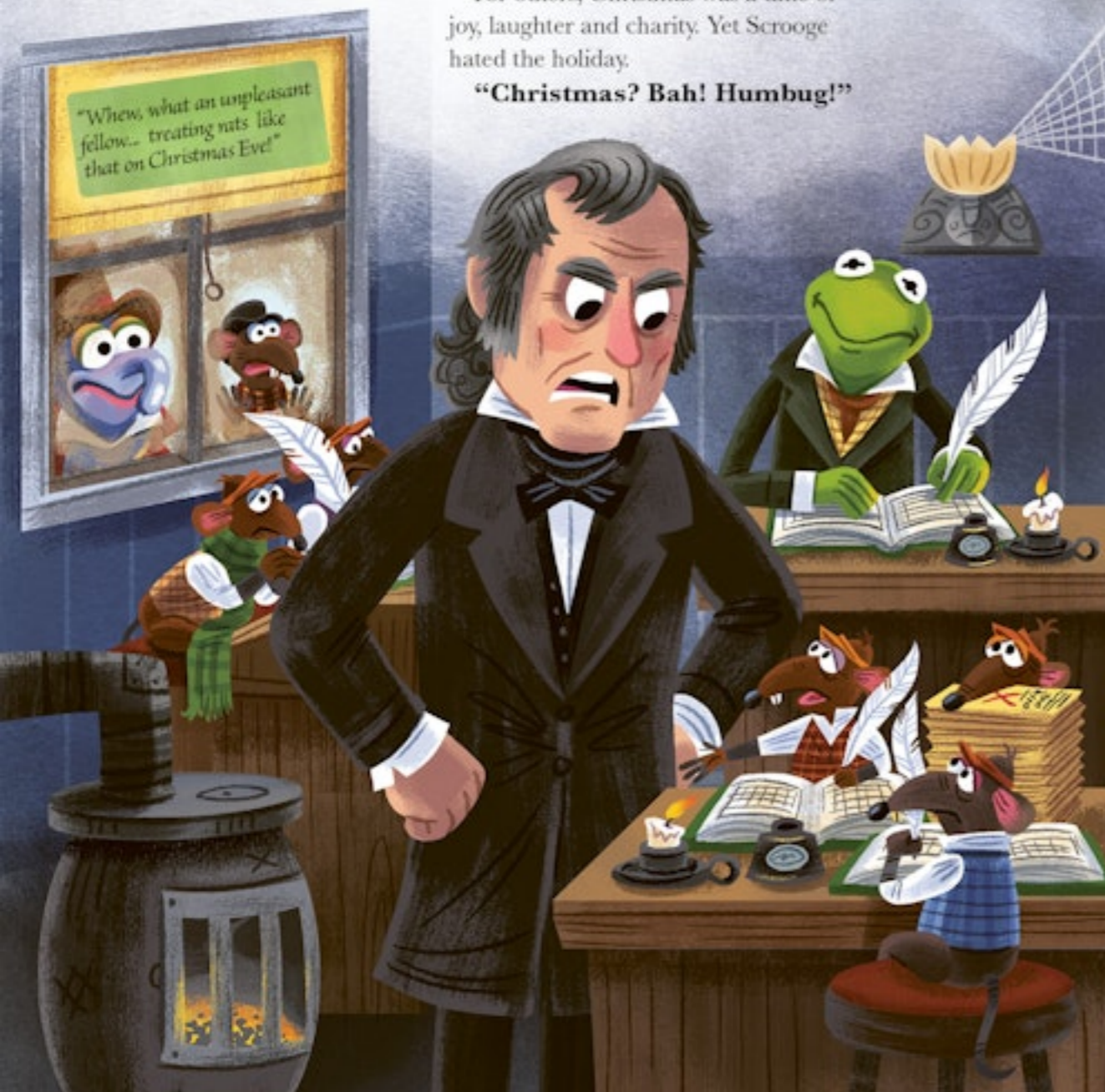
"The Marleys were dead to begin with. As dead as a doornail. In life, the Marleys had been business partners with a man named Ebenezer Scrooge..."

Scrooge was cold, greedy and unkind. His only care in life was making money.

Inside his office, Scrooge's bookkeepers shivered. They needed more coal for their fire, but Scrooge was not in a giving mood, not even on Christmas Eve!

For others, Christmas was a time of joy, laughter and charity. Yet Scrooge hated the holiday.

"Christmas? Bah! Humbug!"



After Scrooge left his office for the evening, the mood brightened. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, and the bookkeepers merrily closed up the shop. They were all looking forward to their Christmas holiday.



Outside, the streets were filled with the joy of the season. The Penguins were hosting their annual figure-skating party. Bob had to give it a try.



After a turn on the ice, Bob bid goodnight to the Penguins. Looking up at the moon, he smiled. It was time to go home to his family.



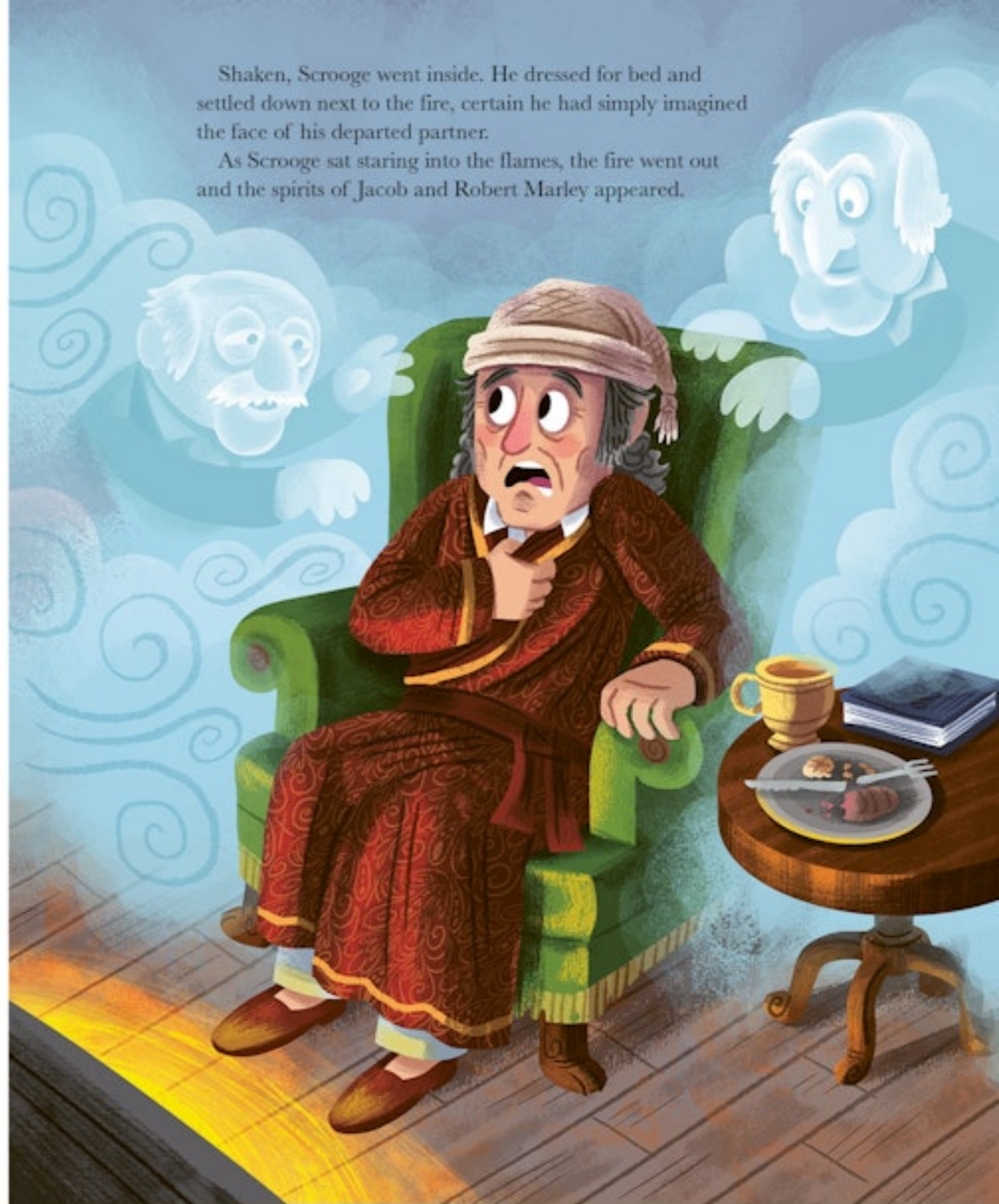
"Elsewhere in the city, Scrooge approached his own home, which had once belonged to his partners, Jacob and Robert Marley. Now, once again, I must ask you to remember that the Marleys were dead. That one thing you must remember or nothing that follows will seem wondrous..."

As Scrooge bent to open his door, a cold wind began to blow. Suddenly the door knocker transformed into the face of Jacob Marley. Scrooge cried out in shock. But when he looked again, the knocker had returned to normal.



Shaken, Scrooge went inside. He dressed for bed and settled down next to the fire, certain he had simply imagined the face of his departed partner.

As Scrooge sat staring into the flames, the fire went out and the spirits of Jacob and Robert Marley appeared.



The Marleys showed Scrooge the chains they'd earned through their many acts of greed in life.

As the Marleys howled and danced about the room, they issued Scrooge a warning: If Scrooge did not change his ways, he would end up like them.



The Marleys told Scrooge that he would be haunted by three spirits. Only with the help of these spirits could he change his fate. Then, with a final rattle of their chains, the Marleys vanished.

The Marleys' visit left Scrooge deeply unsettled. He lit a candle to ward off the darkness and got into bed.

When the clock chimed one, Scrooge awoke to a bright light filling his room. He drew back his bed curtains. Floating by his bed was a childlike spirit.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."



The spirit told Scrooge that she had come to save him from the Marleys' terrible fate. She offered Scrooge her hand and gestured to the world outside his suddenly open window.

Scrooge hesitated to leap into thin air, but the spirit assured him that he would be safe. He took her hand and they flew out the window and into the past.



Soon they arrived in Scrooge's childhood. Scrooge recognised the place at once. It was his old school. And there was his younger self.

It was Christmas Eve here, too. All around, happy children were preparing to go home for the holiday. But young Scrooge had nowhere to go, no family to return to. He had to spend the holiday at school. Alone.



"Rats don't understand these things."

"You were never a lonely child?"

"I had 1,274 brothers and sisters."

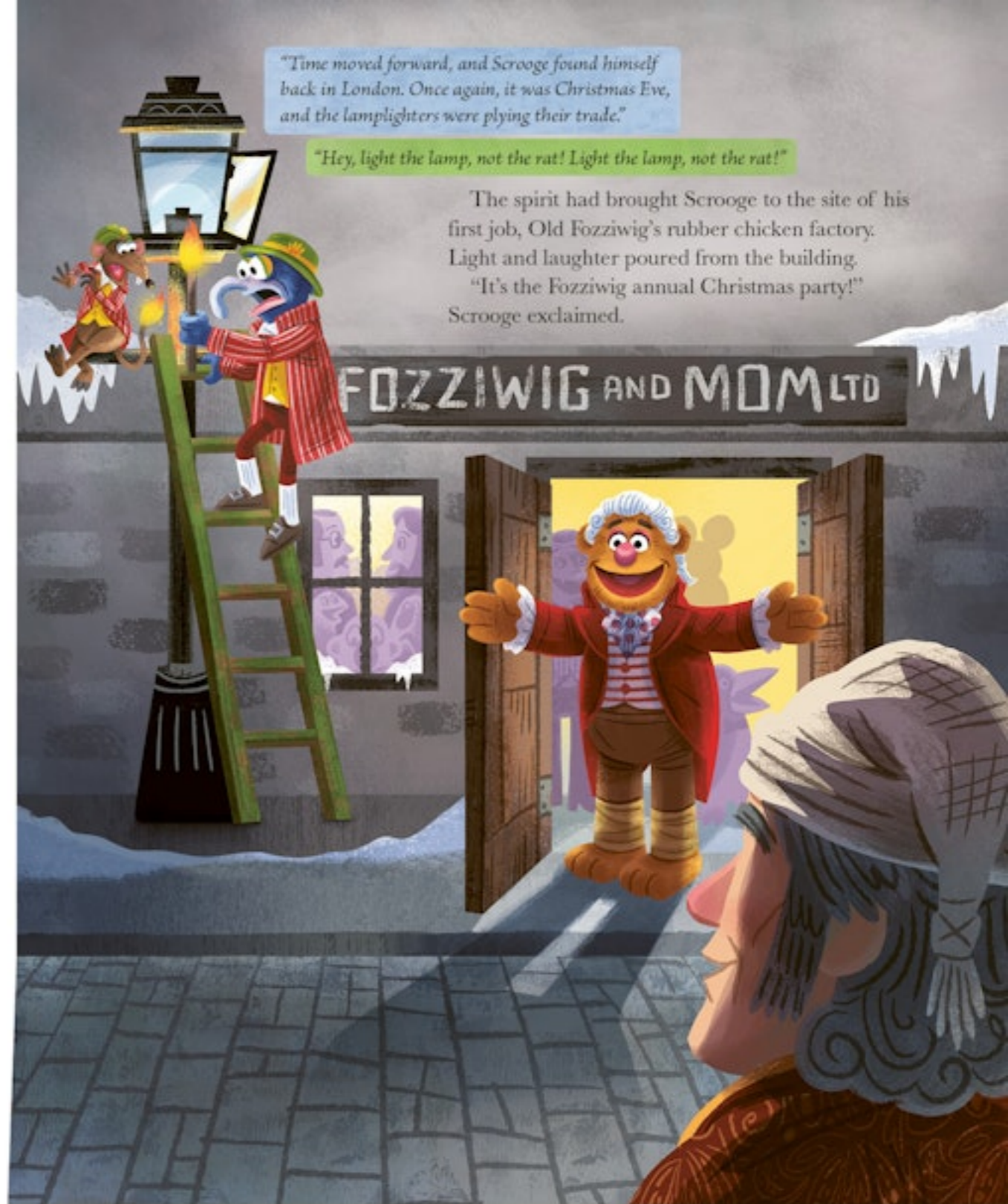


"Time moved forward, and Scrooge found himself back in London. Once again, it was Christmas Eve, and the lamplighters were plying their trade."

"Hey, light the lamp, not the rat! Light the lamp, not the rat!"

The spirit had brought Scrooge to the site of his first job, Old Fozziwig's rubber chicken factory. Light and laughter poured from the building.

"It's the Fozziwig annual Christmas party!" Scrooge exclaimed.



Scrooge rushed inside. The factory was full of music and merriment. Everyone was enjoying the party...

... except young Scrooge, who was fretting over the company's finances.

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At the party, Scrooge watched as his younger self was introduced to a beautiful girl named Belle. It was love at first sight.

But, as Scrooge knew, this was not the only Christmas he had spent with Belle.



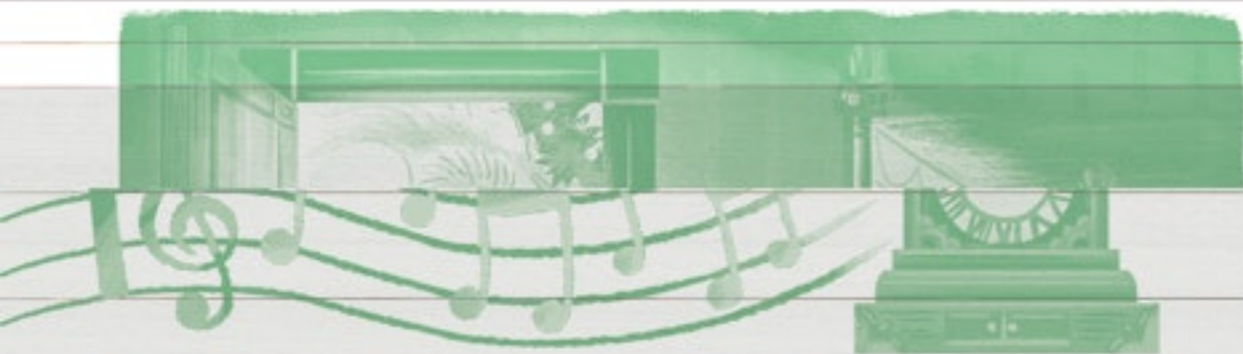
Time moved forward again. Tears filled Scrooge's eyes as he watched Belle tell his younger self that though he claimed to have loved her, he had chosen money over her one too many times. She couldn't marry him.

Scrooge begged the spirit to show him no more. Crying into his hands, Scrooge sank to the floor. The spirit, and the past, began to fade. When Scrooge looked up again, he was alone in his bedroom.



Scrooge returned to bed, but he didn't sleep. A short while later, the clock struck two, and light and music filled the room. A cheery face appeared in his doorway.

**"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present!
Come in and know me better, man!"**



Scrooge got out of bed. The second spirit was so full of joy and warmth that Scrooge couldn't help but smile. But his smile faded as the spirit began to talk about the wonder of Christmas. Scrooge had never understood why people loved Christmas so much. "Before this day is over, you shall!" said the spirit.



The spirit led Scrooge onto the streets of London. Scrooge watched as people greeted each other warmly, sang carols together and exchanged gifts.



For the first time in his life, Scrooge began to understand that Christmas was a time for sharing love. And despite himself, he began to have fun.



Next, the spirit brought Scrooge to the house of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk. Bob was just arriving home from church with his son, a small, frail child named Tiny Tim.



"Goose! They're cooking
goose down there!"



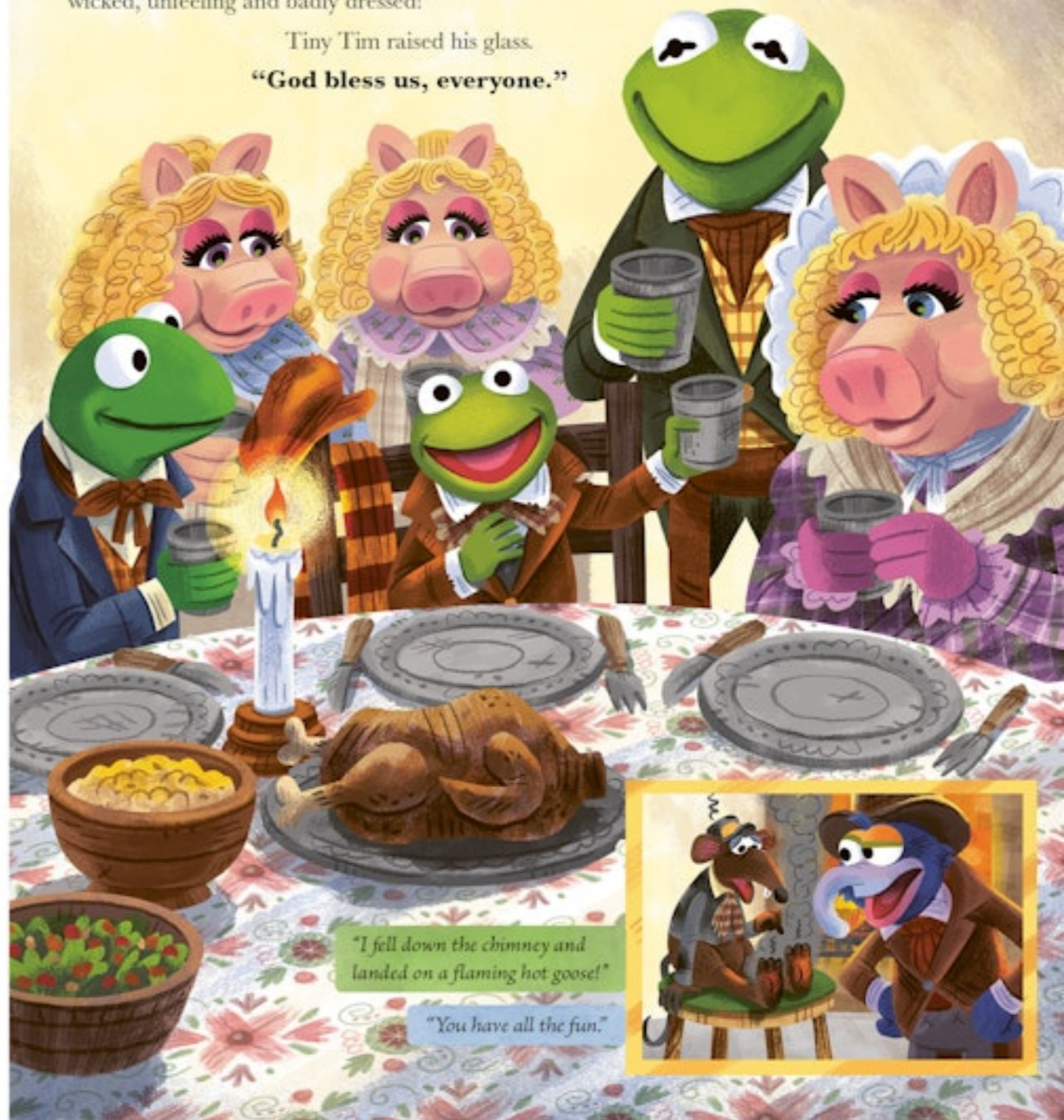
Scrooge watched as Bob's wife and children rushed to greet him. He could see that what the family lacked in money, they made up for with love.



As the Cratchits sat down to dinner, Bob offered a toast to Scrooge. Mrs Cratchit huffed. "I suppose, on the blessed day of Christmas, one must drink to the health of Mr Scrooge. Even though he is stingy, wicked, unfeeling and badly dressed!"

Tiny Tim raised his glass.

"God bless us, everyone."



"I fell down the chimney and
landed on a flaming hot goose!"

"You have all the fun."

Shame filled Scrooge at the thought of how poorly he had treated Bob. The family had so little, and Tiny Tim was clearly very sick.

"Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will get better."



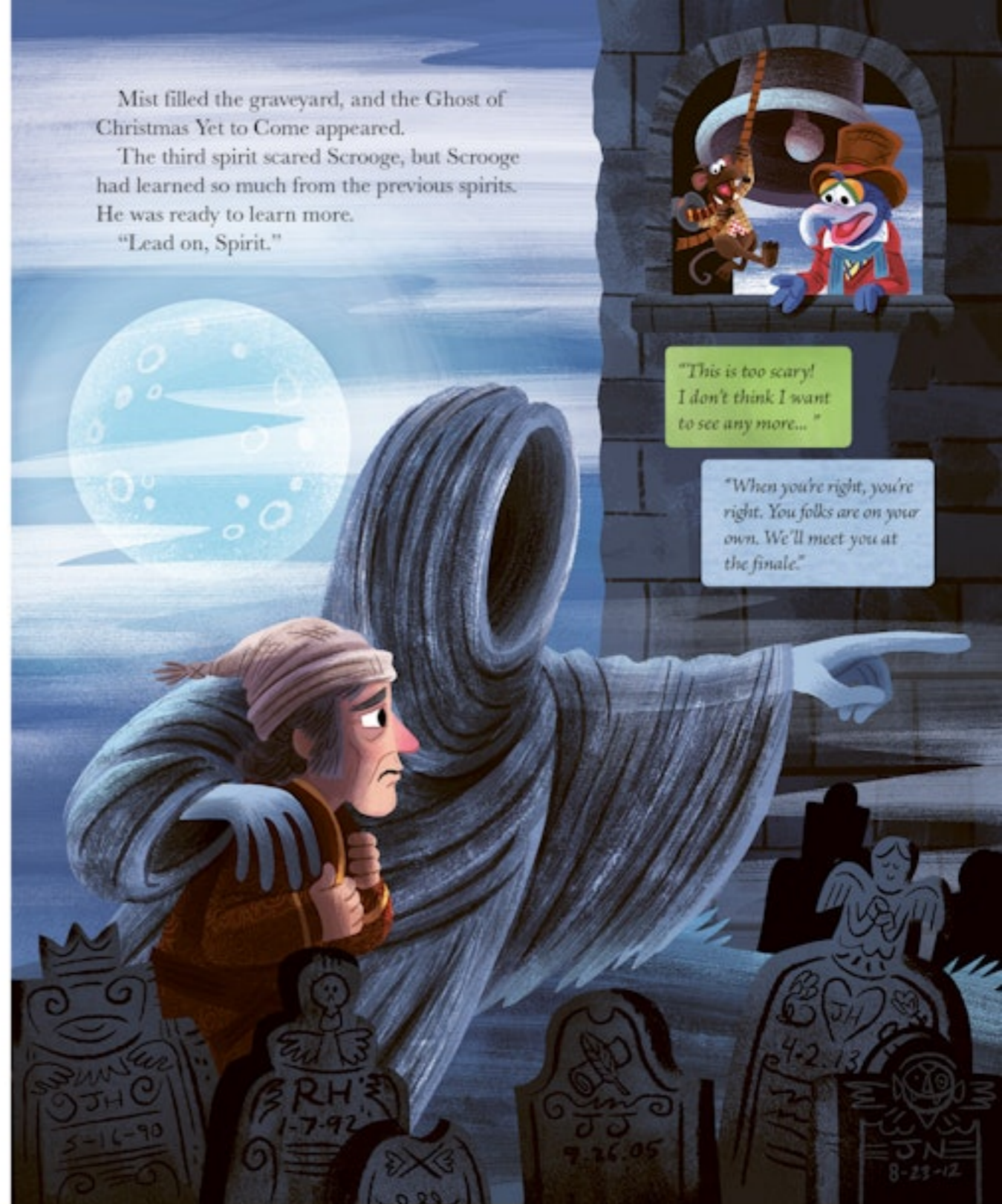
But the spirit could not see the future. The spirit's time was the present, and that time was coming to an end. Scrooge begged the spirit to stay, but the gentle ghost had started to fade. Soon, the spirit had vanished, along with the Cratchits' loving home. Scrooge found himself alone... in a graveyard.



Mist filled the graveyard, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come appeared.

The third spirit scared Scrooge, but Scrooge had learned so much from the previous spirits. He was ready to learn more.

"Lead on, Spirit."



"This is too scary!
I don't think I want
to see any more..."

"When you're right, you're
right. You folks are on your
own. We'll meet you at
the finale."

In the future, Scrooge listened to several street folk merrily discussing a funeral.



He watched as the mysterious dead man's belongings were given away. Fear crept into Scrooge's heart. Though Scrooge had heard no name, he thought he recognised the dead man's things.

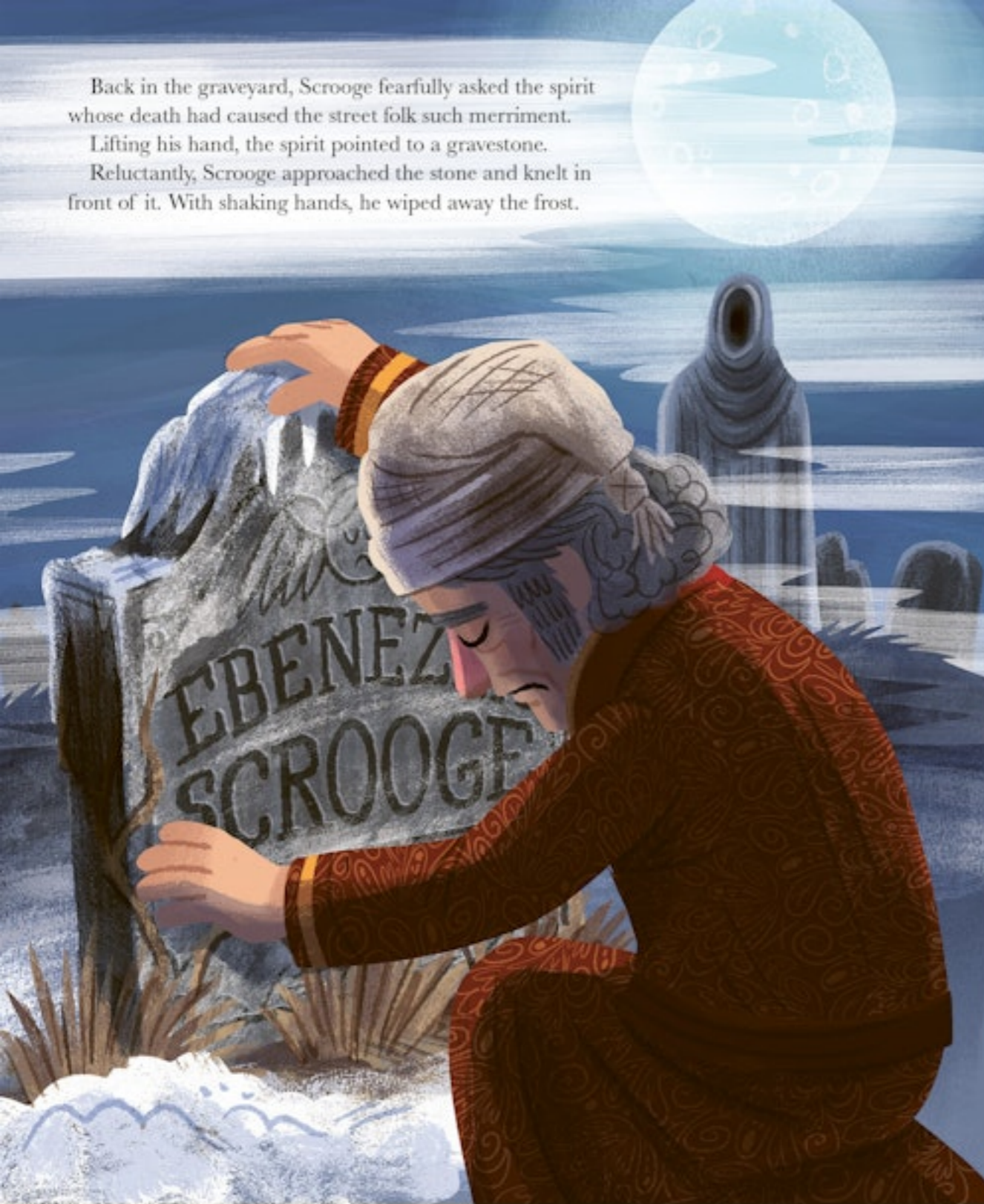


Next, the spirit brought him to the Cratchits' house. Everything had changed. The once joyful family was now filled with grief.

Scrooge understood that the worst had happened. Tiny Tim had not got better.



Back in the graveyard, Scrooge fearfully asked the spirit whose death had caused the street folk such merriment. Lifting his hand, the spirit pointed to a gravestone. Reluctantly, Scrooge approached the stone and knelt in front of it. With shaking hands, he wiped away the frost.



At the sight of his name, Scrooge burst into tears. "Oh Spirit, no!" he cried. "Please, I'm a changed man!" Begging for a second chance, Scrooge fell to his knees...



... and into his own bed.
Scrooge looked up. He was
back in his bedroom.

"I'm home. It's a miracle!"



"Hi guys, we're back!
Um, do you think it's
safe for us to be up here?"

"Scrooge is saved, what
could happen now?"



Joyfully, Scrooge threw open his window.
"You there, boy. What's today?"

"Today? It's Christmas Day!"

Scrooge couldn't believe it. He'd been
given a second chance to show the world
he was a changed man! Filled with gratitude,
he decided to surprise the Cratchits
with a delicious Christmas dinner.



Scrooge made his way through the city, giving gifts and smiles to all he passed. His joy was contagious, and he soon found himself followed by a huge crowd of merry-makers.



Soon, Scrooge arrived at the Cratchits' house. He gestured to the crowd to hide and then knocked on the Cratchits' door.





The Cratchits opened their door to find Scrooge scowling on their doorstep. They thought Bob's boss had come to yell at him for missing work on Christmas Day! Mrs Cratchit couldn't hold back. She jumped in front of her husband, ready to give Scrooge a piece of her mind.



She stopped when she saw the crowd of merry Londoners standing behind Scrooge, their hands full of more presents and food than she or Bob had ever seen. Scrooge stepped forward, an enormous smile on his face.

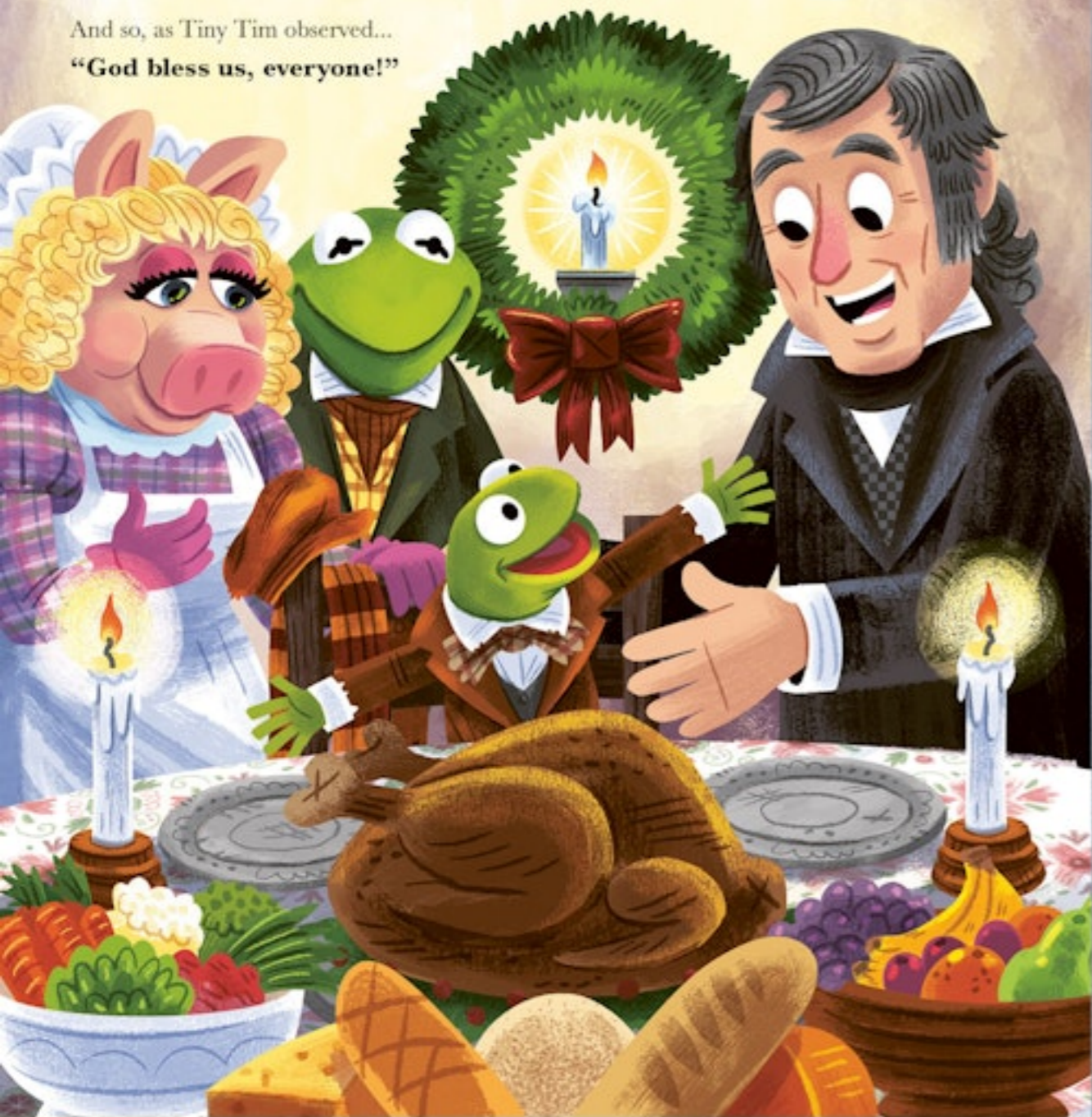
"Bob Cratchit, would you and your family care to join us for a little turkey dinner on this fine Christmas Day?"



"From that day on, Scrooge became as good a friend, as good a boss and as good a man as London ever had. To Tiny Tim – who did get better – Scrooge became like a second father, and it was always said of Scrooge that he knew how to keep Christmas well."

And so, as Tiny Tim observed...

"God bless us, everyone!"



The End





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