

Charles Dickens' classic novel, A Christmas Carol, tells the story of Scrooge, a dreadful old miser. He is visited by the ghost of his deceased business partner and warned that if he doesn't change his ways, he'll die a miserable, lonely death.





This is the original English Christmas feast with all the trimmings – the goose, the gush of stuffing, the Christmas pudding (a steamed spongy dessert made of fruits and spices). And how the Cratchit family enjoys it, even though their poverty and Tiny Tim's bad health give them very little to celebrate.



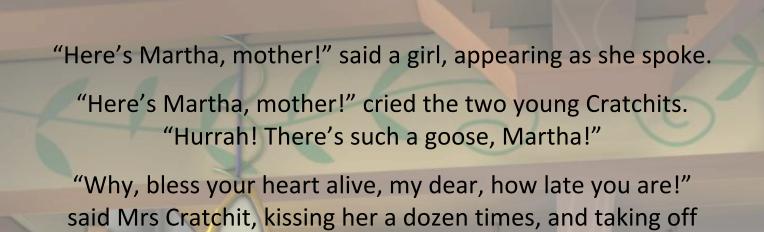




And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes, bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.









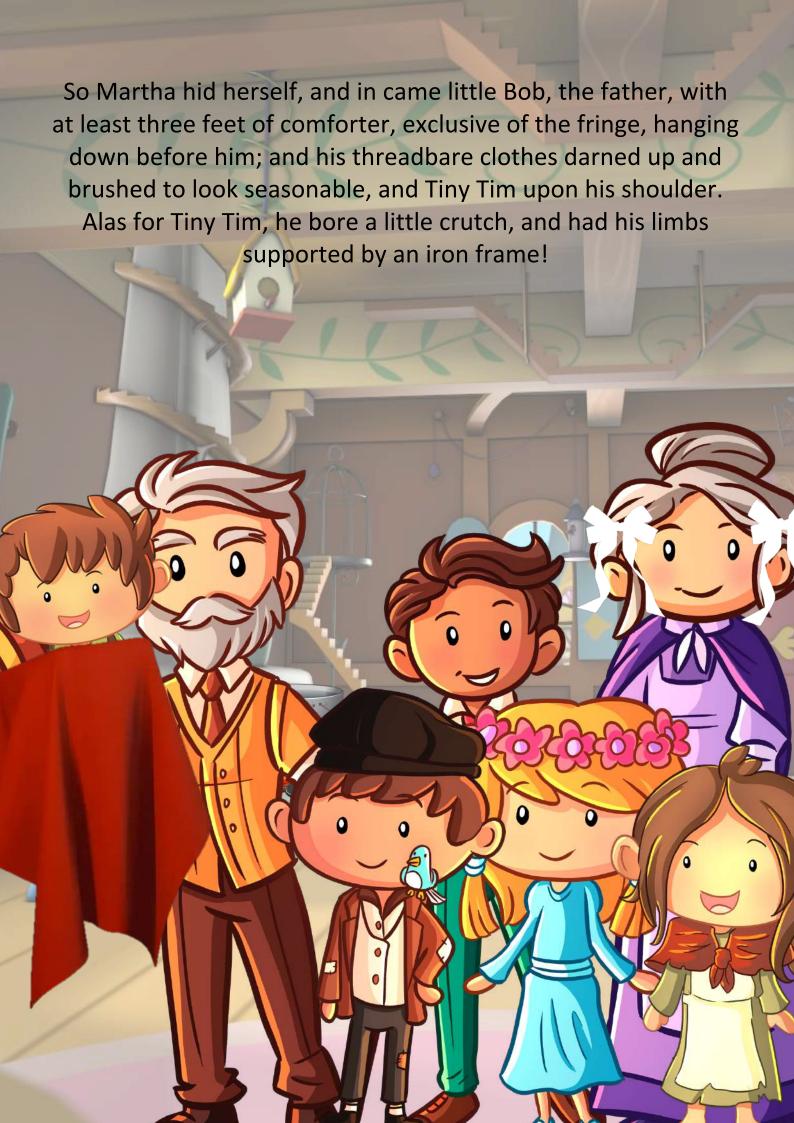
"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs Cratchit.

"Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No, no! there's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"











Somehow, he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see."

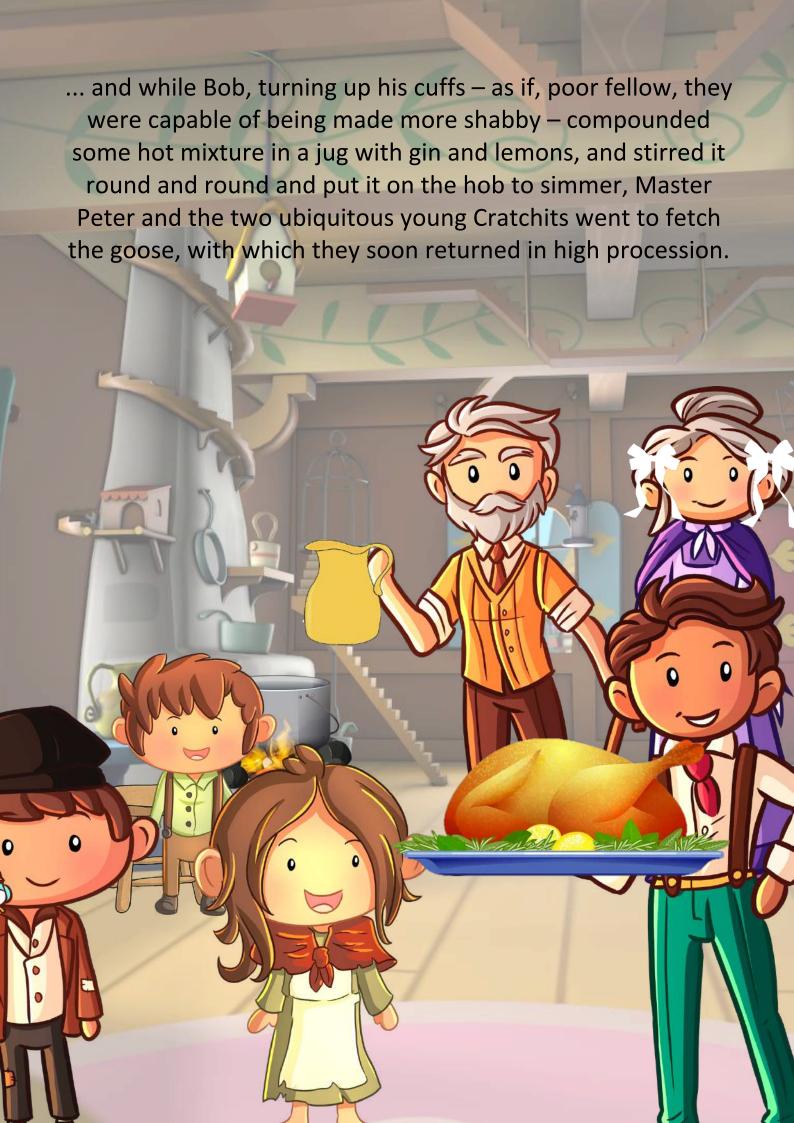
Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.





... and while Bob, turning up his cuffs – as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby – compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer, Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

















Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits, in particular, were steeped in sage and inion to the eyebrows!

But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs

Cratchit left the room alone – too nervous to bear witnesses – to take the pudding up, and bring it in.



Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose – a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.









Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.











