The Three Christmas Spirits

The Ghost of Christmas Past
It was a strange figure . . . like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, shrunk to a child’s size. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same. Its legs and feet, like its arms, were bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white, and round its waist was bound a beautiful, shining belt. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; but had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; with a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it, was not its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light in one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself changed: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body. The voice was soft and gentle but low, as if, instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

‘Who, and what are you?’ Scrooge demanded.

‘I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.’

Paraphrase
The Ghost of Christmas Past was a strange child-like figure. Its long hair, which reached down its back and around its shoulders, was as white as an old person’s hair, but its face was as smooth as a child’s. Its long, muscular arms and hands looked very strong. It wore a pure, white, sleeveless tunic trimmed with summer flowers, although the Ghost was holding a branch of fresh, green, winter holly in one hand. Around its waist was a beautiful, bright belt which sparkled and glittered, first in one part and then in another.

But the strangest thing about this spirit was the jet of bright, clear light which sprung from the top of its head, lighting up everything around itself. In its other hand, it held an extinguisher, shaped like a cap.

When it spoke, its voice was soft and gentle.
The walls and ceilings were hung with living green, from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a might blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull hearth had never known in Scrooge’s time, or Marley’s, or for many and many a winter gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam.

In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty’s horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge as he came peeping round the corner.

‘I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,’ said the Spirit. ‘Look upon me.’

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its huge chest was bare. Its feet, visible beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its kind face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, and its joyful air. Round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

Paraphrase
The Ghost of Christmas Present was a jolly Giant, dressed in a loose, green robe, trimmed with white fur, below which Scrooge could see bare feet. Placed on its long, dark, brown curls was a holly wreath from which hung shining icicles. The spirit had a happy face, sparkling eyes and a joyful way of moving. When it spoke, its voice was cheerful. Around its waist was an ancient sword holder, but it was strangely empty as the sword which belonged to it had rusted completely away.

The walls and ceiling of the room were decorated with holly, mistletoe and ivy, gleaming with berries that shone like thousands of tiny reflections of light in a mirror. A blazing fire roared up the chimney while the Ghost sat on a huge throne made of every kind of Christmas food – turkeys, geese, chickens, pheasant, huge joints of meat, pork, long sausage chains, mince pies, Christmas puddings, chestnuts, rosy red apples, juicy oranges and pears, huge cakes and steaming bowls of punch.

As it sat merrily on this throne, the Ghost held up a glowing torch, shaped like a horn, which lit up everything around it.
The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its shape from the night and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

‘I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come,’ said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

Paraphrase
The mysterious Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come scattered gloom and misery around itself. It was covered from head to toe in a deep, black cloak which covered its head, its face and its whole body. All that showed was one hand, stretched out below the cloak. The hand was the only way to separate the Ghost from the surrounding darkness which it appeared to be a part of.

This tall Spirit moved slowly and had no voice. It pointed with its outstretched hand to show Scrooge where to go. It seemed to fill the air with dread.