

“Happy Christmas, Tim!” came a warm greeting shouted his way from the poulterer’s shop as he passed. Tim winced at the words, suddenly feeling indignant at their meaning, and troubled emotions darkened his features. He answered the salutation with a wave of his hand and continued on, without speaking. Up ahead now a little girl was running away from a little boy, and both were laughing heartily after the girl had snatched the boy’s hat from his head and promised to never give it back.

Sadly, Tim thought how much she reminded him of Becky. With renewed bitterness, Tim’s thoughts once more turned to his lost love. After Becky had been taken from him, Tim had searched and searched years for her without success. Eventually, he had to accept that she was gone forever. All he knew was that he wasn’t there when she needed him the most. She was his soul mate. And he had failed her. Failed her. He had grown to hate the disappointment that he had become in his own eyes. For Tim, there wasn’t any other way to look at it. And how do you live with something like that? “You don’t,” Tim answered aloud.

Through the following years, Tim had desperately tried to forget about the pain of his failure, to forget about her, to move on with his life. He found he couldn’t do it. He had loved her too much, too deeply, loved her still and knew he would never be free of it.

Except for the times I breathe in, I think of you only when I breathe out...

Tim had made great efforts over the years to look and sound

normal to his family and friends, to smile and laugh on cue when the correct occasion called for it. But, inside he had become a broken thing. And now recently, he had begun to notice some perplexed looks on people's faces, suspicious glances that his answers were a bit off, that something wasn't quite right with him. But, none of this seemed to matter much to Tim anymore. Nothing mattered, really. He was tired. Very tired. Caring was now a luxury that was beyond him. Each day he saw less of himself to hold on to as if he were fading away. If he could have stopped his own heart, he would have gladly.

Tim's unfocused eyes now stared down at the ground. He had never understood the reasons of the why their marriage had been forbidden or in her belief that there is a reason and to accept God's will. *God's will*. His anger at God had started only as a small ember, but had continued to grow through the years. Now, his doubts of God's helpfulness had become a certainty. Not only in his own life, but in anyone else's as well. Tim saw broken lives and poverty and misery everywhere. Where was God in these people's lives? At least Mr. Scrooge had been a light in a darkening world.

Tim stopped by Cornhill on his way home to watch the boys and girls slide, and he remembered how proud he had been when he was little and Mr. Scrooge had watched him slide. A beggar came toward him now and offered his outstretched cap to receive anything that Tim might want to give him in his hour of need. Tim automatically reached into his pocket for some coins just as he'd always done because of Scrooge's often taught "Share what you have, and you share what you are." He started to pull the coins from his pocket then stopped, gripped the money tightly, and evading the man's eyes, stiffly walked on.

Even the music of Christmas that he loved so much couldn't touch

his heart growing colder and harder with each beat. Woodenly, Tim walked on, his eyes hot with distress. Suddenly, he became aware of a little girl standing in front of him, blocking his path and saying something, and offering a small shiny object up to him. He now heard her words as she put the small piece of metal in his hand.

“I found it,” she said. “And you can have it.” She then left in a hurry before Tim could refuse, and he now stood staring at a small cross she had placed in his hand.

With that one small act, he was undone, and the weight of his sorrows came crashing down. Clutching the cross so hard that his hand began to bleed, Tim shook a defiant fist and raged at the silent heavens. “Why! Why! Why!” Tim’s injured soul screamed over and over again to an indifferent sky. Then, with no more to say, Tim fell hard to his knees as anguish flared across his face.” Oh, Becky, my love...dear old Mr. Scrooge, my good friend...” His losses felt as poignant as a verdict and his desolate soul wanted to weep.

And then he was weeping. Hunched over as if he were trying to limit the exposure of his failures, Tim continued to kneel in the snow for a long time, his thoughts turned inward to himself as he cradled his hurt. Then, with a finality that comes only with loss, Tim crushed the cross in a tightening fist and coldly whispered to himself, “I don’t need anyone anymore.” Weak from his exertion, Tim slowly struggled to his feet and straightened up. He felt strangely detached as if his caring were being poured onto the ground like a pitcher of water. Emptying. Empty. Gone. For anything or anyone. After a few more moments of thought, he raised his swollen eyes to look out upon the Christmas scene as his hand swung down to his side, and then, after considering it all, he released the gift to

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TINY TIM AND THE GHOST OF EBENEZER SCROOGE: THE SEQUEL TO A CHRISTMAS CAROL

fall into the snow.