



A Christmas Carol

BY CHARLES DICKENS

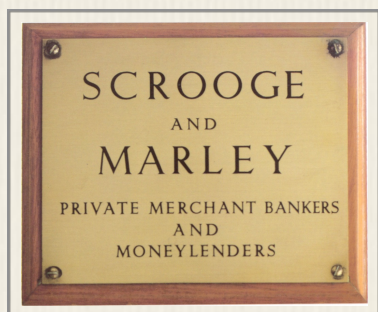
Stave One



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STAVE ONE: MARLEY'S GHOST



December 24, 1846 - London

Marley was dead. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. There was no doubt about that.

Did Scrooge know he was dead? Of course he did. Scrooge and he were partners for many years. Scrooge was his only friend and only **mourner**. And even Scrooge did not mourn much when he died.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the door: Scrooge and Marley.

Sometimes people new to the business called him Scrooge - and Sometimes they Marley. Scrooge answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh but he was **tight-fisted!** The cold within him froze his old features. He carried his own low temperature always about with him - and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?"

But what did Scrooge care?

Bob Cratchit

That Christmas Eve old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was very, very cold.

And by three in the afternoon, it was already dark.

The door of Scrooge's office was open. His assistant, Bob Cratchit, was in a tiny, dark room at the back. Bob was copying letters for his boss.



Scrooge had a very small fire. Bob's fire was even smaller. Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room.

"God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was Scrooge's nephew, Fred.

"Bah!" said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

Scrooge had a very small fire. Bob's fire was even smaller. Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room.

"God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was Scrooge's nephew, Fred.

"Bah!" said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Fred. "You don't mean that, I'm sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," said the nephew. "What reason have you to be **morose**? You're rich enough!"

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

Fred

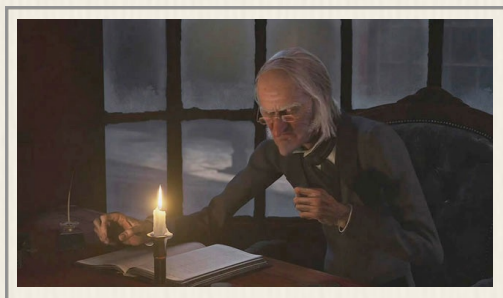
"Don't be **cross**, uncle!" said the nephew.

'What else can I be,' said the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this?"

“Merry Christmas! What’s Christmas to you? A time for paying bills without money? For finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer?”

“Uncle!” said the nephew.

“Nephew!” replied the uncle. “Keep Christmas in your own way. Let me keep it in mine.”



“Keep it!” repeated Scrooge’s nephew. “But you don’t keep it.”

“Let me leave it, then,” said Scrooge. “Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!”

“I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time - a kind, forgiving, charitable time,” said Fred. “I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good. I say, God bless it!”

Without thinking, Bob clapped his hands.

Scrooge turned to his assistant. “Another sound from you,” he said, “and you’ll be losing your job this Christmas.”

“Don’t be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.”

“No!”

“I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you. Why cannot we be friends?”

“Good afternoon,” said Scrooge.

“I am sorry, with all my heart. Merry Christmas, Uncle!”

“Good afternoon,” said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word.

The charity collectors

Soon after two other gentlemen came in. They stood in Scrooge’s office, with their

hats off and books and papers in their hands.

“Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe,” said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. “And you are Mr. Scrooge? Or Mr. Marley?”

“Mr. Marley has been dead seven years,” Scrooge replied. “He died seven years ago, this very night.”

“At Christmas, Mr. Scrooge,” said the gentleman, taking up a pen, “We should give a little to the poor. They suffer greatly at this time of year.”

“Why? Are there no prisons?” asked Scrooge.

“Plenty of prisons,” said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

“And the **workhouses**?” asked Scrooge. “Are they still in operation?”

“They are,” said the gentleman, “I wish they were not. A few of us are trying to raise money to buy the Poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?”

“Nothing!” Scrooge replied.

‘You wish to be anonymous?’

“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge. “I don’t make merry myself at Christmas. And I can’t afford to make **idle** people merry. I help to pay for the workhouses. And they me cost enough.

Besides, it’s not by business. It’s enough for a man to understand his own business and not interfere with other people’s. Good afternoon, gentlemen!”

At last, it was time for Bob Cratchit to go home.

“You want the day off work tomorrow, I suppose?” said Scrooge.

“If it’s convenient, sir.”

“It’s not convenient,” said Scrooge, “and it’s not fair. I pay a day’s wages for no work.”

“It’s only once a year, sir.”

“A poor excuse!” said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin.

Scrooge returns home

Scrooge returns home on the evening of Christmas Eve. It is the seventh anniversary of the death of his business partner, Jacob Marley.

Scrooge lived in a **gloomy** suite of rooms, in a gloomy old building that had once belonged to his dead partner. Nobody lived there but Scrooge. The other rooms were let out as offices and there was also a wine cellar below

Fog and frost surrounded the black old gateway of the house. The yard was very dark and gloomy. Even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, had to grope with his hands, to find his way to the front door.

Scrooge put his key in the lock. As he did so, the knocker suddenly became Marley’s face!

The face disappeared

Scrooge stared for a moment. No, it was a normal knocker again. He was seeing things!

He turned the key firmly, lit his candle



and walked in.

He did pause before he shut the door. And he did look behind it first, as if half-expecting to see Marley’s pigtail, sticking out into the hall.

But there was nothing on the back of the door.

“Bah!” said Scrooge and closed it with a bang.

The sound echoed through the house like thunder.

Scrooge was not a man frightened by echoes. He walked across the hall and slowly up the stairs.

Up Scrooge went, not caring about the poor light given by his candle. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it.

But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right.

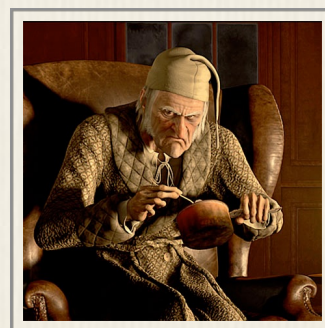
He looked in the sitting-room and the bedroom. Everything was normal. Nobody was under the table. Nobody was under the sofa. A small fire was in the grate.

On the table his spoon and basin were ready. There was also a little saucepan of **gruel** upon the hob.

Nobody was under the bed or in the closet. His dressing-gown was hanging up against the wall. Everything was as usual.

Scrooge closed his door. He double-locked himself in.

Feeling safer, he put on his dressing-gown, slippers, and nightcap. Then he sat down before the fire to eat his gruel.



He tried not to think about Marley.

A bell rings

An old unused bell hung in the room. Suddenly it began to swing.

Soon it rang out loudly. So did every bell in the house.

This lasted half a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells stopped as they had begun, together.

Then there was a clanking noise, deep down below.

It sounded like someone was dragging



a heavy chain over the casks in the wine merchant's cellar below.

Then he heard the cellar-door fly open. This was followed by a much louder sound. It started on the floors below; before coming up the stairs. Now it was coming straight towards his door.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His colour changed though, when the heavy door opened. Something passed into the room before his eyes.

It was Marley's ghost.

Was this really Marley?

The same face: the very same. Marley in his usual clothes. A long chain, made of cash-boxes, keys and padlocks, wound about him like a tail.

Was this really Marley? Scrooge saw him standing there before him but did not want to believe his eyes.

"What do you want with me?" said Scrooge.

"Much."

It was Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I was."

"Who were you then?" said Scrooge, raising his voice.

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"You don't believe in me," said the Ghost.

"I don't," said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

Why are you in chains?

The spirit shook its chain and made a terrible noise. Scrooge held on tight to his chair.

To his horror, the ghost was taking off the bandage round its head.

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and held his hands before his face. "Why do you trouble me?"

"Do you believe in me or not?" replied the Ghost.

"I do," said Scrooge. "I must. But why are you in chains?"

"It was like this seven Christmas Eves ago."

"Jacob!" said Scrooge. "Old Jacob Marley. Tell me more! Speak comfort to me, Jacob."

Marley's warning

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "I cannot stay. I cannot stay anywhere. I must walk the earth."

"Seven years dead," said Scrooge. "And travelling all the time?"

"The whole time," said the Ghost. "No rest, no peace."

The Ghost made another cry in the dead silence of the night.

"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob," said Scrooge.

"Business!" cried the Ghost. "Mankind was my business. Mercy was my business."

It held up its chain and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

"At this time of year," the ghost said, "I suffer most. Why did I walk with my eyes turned down?"

Scrooge was very unhappy to hear the spirit talking like this. He shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Hear me!" cried the Ghost. "My time is nearly gone."

“I will,” said Scrooge. “But don’t be hard upon me, Jacob!”

“I am here tonight to warn you,” said the ghost. “You still have a chance and hope of escaping my fate.”

“You were always a good friend to me,” said Scrooge. “Thank you.”

Expect three spirits

“You will be **haunted**,” resumed the Ghost, “by Three Spirits.” Scrooge’s face fell.

“I-I think I’d rather not,” said Scrooge.

“Without their visits,” said the Ghost, “you cannot avoid the path I tread. Expect the first spirit tomorrow, when the clock strikes one.”

“Couldn’t I take them all at once, Jacob?” said Scrooge.

“Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third will come the next night on the last stroke of twelve. And remember what has passed between us!”

The spirit took its bandage from the table. It bound it round its head, as before. Then it walked backward from him.

At every step it took, the window raised itself a little until it was wide open.

Spirits in the night

A terrible **wailing** sound began. The spirit, after listening for a moment, floated out into the dark night.

Scrooge went to the window and looked out.

The air was filled with spirits. Every one of them wore chains like Marley’s Ghost.

Eventually the spirit voices faded together. The night became as it had been.

Scrooge closed the window. He examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands. The bolts were undisturbed.

He tried to say “Humbug!” but stopped. Instead he went straight to bed, without undressing, and instantly fell asleep.

End of Stave 1

KEYWORD GLOSSARY

address - speak to

anonymous - unnamed, private

bandage - cloth used to protect wound

beckoned - gesture with hand

bills - invoices/demands for payment

casks - large containers for wine

cell - office without light, like a prison cell

convenient - does not create a problem

clerk - office worker

cross - angry

counting house - accounts office

dead as doornail - obviously dead

dismal - sad, without hope

destitute - without money to live

faded - grew softer

fate - what happens/going to happen.

flung - throw with force

gloomy/dismal – dark, depressing

gruel – thin poor quality porridge

haunted - visited by a ghost/ghosts

humbug - rubbish, nonsense

idle - lazy

morose - gloomy, miserable, pessimistic

mourner - attends a funeral

resolute - determined to continue

shivered - feel cold or fear

situation - job

spirit - ghost

startled - shocked, scared, very surprised

strikes - hits, mechanical sound in clock

surplus - more than needed

tight-fisted - hates spending money

wailing - like the sound of a baby crying

workhouse/poorhouse - institution for the poor/destitute

STAVE ONE - WORKSHEET from A CHRISTMAS CAROL



QUICK CHECK

1. Who died seven years ago?
2. How many friends does Scrooge have?
3. Who invites Scrooge to Christmas Dinner?
4. Who asks about prisons and workhouses?
5. What do the 'two gentlemen' ask Scrooge to do?
6. Who asks not to work on Christmas Day?
7. What does Scrooge eat for his supper?
8. Whose face appears on the knocker?
9. Who appears to Scrooge?
10. How many spirits will visit Scrooge?

UNDERSTANDING

1. How do Scrooge and Fred differ in their attitudes to Christmas?
2. Why does Scrooge refuse to give money to the charity collectors?
3. What does Marley mean when he says "Mankind was my business"?

VOCABULARY

Match the definition with the word below

1. An office worker
2. Something without value/nonsense
3. Prison-like institution for the poor
4. More than needed
5. Depressing/dark
6. Oat dish/porridge
7. Room without light
8. Old word for ghost

**cell * nonsense * dismal - spirit * porridge *
clerk * surplus * workhouse**

USE OF ENGLISH

- a) Write down five words or phrases that describe Scrooge.
- b) Write down three words or phrases to describe Fred.
- c) What does Scrooge say 'humbug'?

WRITING (SHORT)

(25-50) words per question)

You are one of the following people: Scrooge, Fred, Bob Cratchit

1. You are one of the visiting gentlemen. Write a diary entry for your meeting with Scrooge.
2. Describe either Fred or Bob Cratchit.
3. Describe the ghost of Marley. What does he tell Scrooge?
4. Write Scrooge's diary entry after his meeting with Marley

WRITING (LONGER)

(50-100) words)

1. Write one of the following to Scrooge

- A Christmas Dinner invitation from Fred.
- A request from Bob asking for an extra day's holiday
- A request for £100 for 'Children in Need'.

2. Write Scrooge's reply to your request.