

A Christmas Carol

Chapter 1 - Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead, to begin with – there's no doubt about that. He was as dead as a doornail.

Marley and Scrooge were business partners once. But then Marley died and now their firm belonged to Scrooge, who was a stingy and heartless old man. Once upon a time, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat busy in his office. It was very cold outside and in Scrooge's office it was not much warmer either. Suddenly, a cheerful person entered the office. It was Scrooge's nephew.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" Fred said.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "What's Christmas time to you? You have to pay bills without money! You're a year older but not an hour richer! Keep Christmas in your way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it? But you don't keep it," said Scrooge's nephew, who was a very friendly young man. He even tried to cheer Scrooge up and invited him for dinner on Christmas Day. But Scrooge said no and sent him out.

When Scrooge's nephew left, two gentlemen came in to collect money for the poor who had no place they could go. Stingy Scrooge, however, didn't give the gentlemen any money.

"Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" he asked sarcastically and told them to leave the office.

When it was time to close the office, Scrooge talked to his clerk, Bob Cratchit.





"You want all day off tomorrow, don't you?" said Scrooge.

"If that is okay, Sir," answered the clerk.

"It's not okay," said Scrooge, "and it is not fair. After all, I have to pay you for the day although you don't work. But if it must be, I want you to start work even earlier the following morning."

Cratchit promised that he would; and the two went home.

Scrooge lived all alone in an old house. The yard was very dark and scary that night and when Scrooge wanted to unlock the door, he had the feeling that he saw Marley's face there. This was rather spooky, but Scrooge was not frightened easily. "Humbug," he said, opened

the door and walked in. He locked himself in, however, which he usually didn't do. But then he felt safe again and sat down before the fire.

Suddenly, Scrooge heard a noise, deep down below, as if somebody was dragging a heavy chain. The noise came nearer and nearer, and then Scrooge saw a ghost coming right through the heavy door. It was Marley's ghost, and his chains were long; they were made of cash-boxes, keys and heavy purses.

"Who are you?" said Scrooge

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

"But why do you come to me now?"

"I must wander through the world and I wear the chains because I was so stingy in life. I only cared about business but not about the people around me. Now, I am here to warn you. You still have a chance, Ebenezer. Three spirits will come to you. Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one."

When he had said these words, Marley's ghost disappeared; and the night became quiet again. Scrooge went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep immediately.

