

Chapter 1 Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead, but the names on the door of the office were Scrooge and Marley. Marley's name was on the door, seven years after he died. And sometimes people called Scrooge 'Scrooge', when they came into the office. And sometimes people called him 'Marley'.

And Scrooge said 'Yes?' when they called him Scrooge. And he answered 'Yes?' when they called him Marley. Scrooge or Marley, it was the same to him.

Scrooge was a hard man, and he loved money. He was a cold man too, a man without any friends. His old face was cold, blue with cold. Cold was with him everywhere. He took it with him, always. He took it to the office of Scrooge and Marley. The office was cold in the summer. But at Christmas time it was colder than the snow outside. And when he left the office, he looked cold too.

Nobody stopped Scrooge in the street and said, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come and see me?' People knew him, but poor people didn't ask him for a penny. Children didn't ask him, 'What time is it?' Men and women didn't ask him for help. Dogs knew Scrooge, too. They ran away from him.

Scrooge was happy about all that. He liked it. He didn't want to be with people.



It was Christmas Eve*, and Old Scrooge was busy at his desk. It was very cold. Scrooge could see the people outside in the street.

* Christmas Eve: 24 December, the day before Christmas Day.

They tried to stay warm but they couldn't. It was only three o'clock but it was dark outside. There were candles in the windows of the other offices near his.

There was a thick fog outside, too. It came into the offices under the doors, and you couldn't see the houses in the same street as Scrooge's office.

Scrooge looked up from his papers. The door of his office was open so he could watch his clerk, Bob Cratchit. The clerk worked in a small room near Scrooge. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was smaller. He couldn't put coal on it because the coal was in Scrooge's room.

A man came into the office. His name was Fred.

'Merry Christmas, Uncle,' said Fred, with a happy smile.

'Bah!' said Scrooge. 'Merry Christmas? Humbug!'

Fred's face was red from the cold outside. He laughed. And when he laughed, he laughed with his eyes, too. He was cold from outside, but it was colder here in Scrooge's office.

'You don't mean that, Uncle,' he said.

'Yes, I do,' said Scrooge. 'Merry Christmas! Bah! Why are you merry? How can you possibly feel merry? You're too poor for that.'

'Oh!' Fred laughed. 'How can you possibly feel sad? You're too rich for that.'

Scrooge had no better answer, so he said 'Bah!' again. Then he followed it with 'Merry Christmas? Humbug!'

'Don't be angry, Uncle,' said Fred.

'Angry?' said the uncle. 'Yes, I'm angry. I'm angry because I live in a world with happy people in it. Merry Christmas! Why? What's Christmas to you? You want things, but you haven't got the money for them. You're a year older, but not richer. You haven't got as much money as you had last Christmas. People say "Merry Christmas!";' said Scrooge angrily. 'But I think I'd like to eat those people for Christmas dinner!'

‘Oh, Uncle!’ said Fred, with a smile.

‘Young Fred!’ said the uncle. ‘Have your Christmas. And I’ll have mine. Was Christmas good to you, in the past?’

‘It was great!’ said Fred. ‘Christmas is a good time – a kind, happy time. Everybody likes being with people. It’s the only time in the year when that happens. And so, Uncle, Christmas was always a good time for me. It didn’t make me rich, but it made me happy. And I say “Merry Christmas everybody!”’

‘Humbug!’ said Scrooge.

‘Don’t be angry, Uncle. Come and have dinner with us tomorrow, on Christmas Day.’

‘No,’ said Scrooge. ‘And again, no! Good afternoon!’

‘But I don’t want anything from you. Why can’t we be friends?’

‘Good afternoon!’ said Scrooge.

‘So you won’t come. I am sorry about that. We were always friends. And because it’s Christmas, I want to be a good friend now. So I will say “Merry Christmas”, Uncle! And a happy New Year to you!’

‘Good afternoon!’ said Scrooge.

Fred stopped at the door and said ‘Merry Christmas!’ to Bob Cratchit, the clerk. Bob was cold, but he answered warmly, ‘Merry Christmas to you, sir!’

‘There’s another stupid person!’ said Scrooge. ‘My clerk, with only a pound a week for a wife and family, is talking about a merry Christmas!’

The clerk opened the door for Fred and he left. Then two other men in expensive clothes came in. They walked into Scrooge’s office and took their hats off. They had books and papers in their hands.

One of the men looked at his papers. ‘Scrooge and Marley’s, I think?’ he said. ‘Am I speaking to Mr Scrooge or to Mr Marley?’

‘Mr Marley’s dead,’ answered Scrooge. ‘He died on this night, back in 1836.’

‘Oh! Dead for seven years, eh?’ said the second man. He wrote that down. ‘At this happy time of the year, Mr Scrooge, we usually try to do something for the poor people in this city. Things are difficult for them now. Thousands of them are cold. They haven’t got any food. Many of them have no home.’

‘Aren’t there any prisons for them?’ asked Scrooge.

‘There are a lot of prisons,’ the man answered. He put down his pen.

‘Aren’t there any workhouses for the poor?’ asked Scrooge.

‘There are,’ said the man. ‘It’s sad, but there are a lot of workhouses.’

‘Oh, good. So the prisons and workhouses aren’t closed,’ said Scrooge coldly. ‘I’m happy about that.’

‘Prisons and workhouses can’t really make people merry at Christmas time,’ said the man. ‘So we are asking people for money. We will give it to the poor for food and drink. How much will you give us?’

‘Nothing!’ said Scrooge. ‘I’m not merry at Christmas time and I won’t give money to the poor so *they* can be merry. Good afternoon to you!’

The two men looked at Scrooge’s hard, unhappy face and left the room.



The fog was thicker now. The night was darker. The cold was colder. It was time to shut the office. Scrooge got up from his chair. Bob Cratchit, the clerk, put out the candle and put on his hat.

‘Will you want to be at home all day tomorrow?’ asked Scrooge.

‘Yes, sir. But are you happy with that?’

‘I’m not happy with it, no,’ said Scrooge. ‘It is not right. I pay you every day when you work. You think that’s right. But you also want me to pay you for a day when you don’t work.’

The clerk smiled. ‘It’s only on Christmas Day,’ he said.

‘Oh, so you can take fifteen pence from me every year and that’s all right because it is for the twenty-fifth of December?’ said Scrooge. ‘Oh, all right. You can have the day at home. Be here early the day after that.’

Scrooge went out, and the clerk shut the office. He ran home as fast as he could. He forgot about work and played with his children.



Scrooge had dinner in a cheap eating-house and then went home. He had rooms in Marley’s old house. They were dark and cold. The other rooms in the house were offices now. Only Scrooge lived there.

He opened the door and went in. He lit a candle. Then he walked through his rooms. Was everything in its place? He went into the sitting-room, the bedroom and a little office near the bedroom. His money was in this office. Everything was all right. There was nobody under the table, nobody under the bed. His money was there in the office.

There was a small fire in the sitting-room. He shut the door and sat down by the fire.

He heard the noise of a heavy chain down below. The noise came up the stairs, nearer and nearer his door.

‘Humbug!’ said Scrooge. ‘What *is* that noise?’

Something came through the heavy door and into the room. The little fire suddenly came to life, red and yellow.

It was Marley – Marley in his old clothes. Scrooge knew those clothes well. There was a chain round him – a chain with money on it and money-boxes and money bags.

Scrooge looked at Marley. He could see through him. He could see the back of his coat.

‘Well?’ said Scrooge, coldly. ‘What do you want?’

‘A lot!’