

# A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens



*Retold by Kieran McGovern*

## 1. Marley's Ghost

*December 24, 1843 - London*

Marley was dead. There was no doubt about that. Old Marley was as [dead as a door-nail](#).

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.

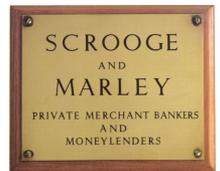
Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the door: Scrooge and Marley.

Sometimes people new to the business called him Scrooge, and sometimes Marley. He 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?

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That Christmas Eve old Scrooge sat busy in his [counting house](#). It was cold, bleak, biting weather. Scrooge could hear the people outside, stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them.

The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already. The door of Scrooge’s counting-house was open so that he could see Bob Cratchit, his [clerk](#). Cratchit was in a [dismal](#) little [cell](#) beyond, copying letters.

Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk’s fire was very much smaller. Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room.

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‘A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!’ cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge’s nephew, Fred.

‘Bah!’ said Scrooge, [‘Humbug!’](#)

‘Christmas a humbug, uncle!’ said Scrooge’s nephew.  
‘You don’t mean that, I am 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!’

‘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! Out upon merry Christmas! What’s Christmas time to you but 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, and 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!’

### **A Charitable Time**

‘I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable time.

‘I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good. I say, God bless it!’

The clerk involuntarily applauded

‘Let me hear another sound from you,’ said Scrooge, ‘and you’ll keep your Christmas by losing your [situation](#).’

‘You’re quite a powerful speaker, sir,’ he added, turning to his nephew. ‘I wonder you don’t go into [Parliament](#).’

‘Don’t be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.’

‘No!’

‘But why?’ cried Scrooge’s nephew. ‘Why?’

‘Why did you get married?’ said Scrooge.

‘Because I fell in love.’

‘Because you fell in love!’ growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a

merry Christmas.

‘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.

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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 this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,’ said the gentleman, taking up a pen, ‘We should give a little to the Poor and Destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time.’



‘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.’

‘Many can’t go there and many would rather die.’

‘That will decrease the [surplus](#) population,’ said Scrooge.

‘But Mr Scrooge-’

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

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At last it was time for the clerk to go home.

‘You’ll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?’  
said Scrooge.

‘If its [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 for [picking a man’s pocket](#) every twenty-fifth of December!’ said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin.

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## Glossary/Vocabulary

**address** - speak to

**anonymous** - unnamed, private

**bills** - invoices/demands for payment

**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** - dead without doubt

**dismal** - sad, without hope

**destitute** - without money to live

**humbug** - rubbish, nonsense

**involuntary** - without meaning to

**morose** - gloomy, miserable, pessimistic

**mourner** - friend or family of dead person

**Parliament** - where elected politicians attend

**picking a pocket** - stealing money

**situation** - job

**tight-fisted** - hates spending money

**surplus** - more than needed

**workhouse/poorhouse** - prison-like institutions for the destitute (see above)

## Characters:

**Scrooge** - owner of an accountancy practice.

**Bob Cratchit** - Scrooge's clerk. A kind, very poor man

with a large family.

**Tiny Tim** - very sick son of Bob Cratchit.

**Jacob Marley** - Scrooge's dead partner.

**Fred** - Scrooge's nephew. Fred is the son of Fan -  
Scrooge's beloved sister