

A CHRISTMAS CAROL By Charles Dickens

I have endeavored in this Ghostly little book,
to raise the Ghost of an Idea,
which shall not put my readers out of humour
with themselves, with each other,
with the season, or with me.

May it haunt their houses pleasantly,
and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant,
C. D. December, 1843

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Dickens:

Clergyman/Old Joe/ Headmaster/ Fezziwig:

Charwoman/ Belinda Cratchit/ Fan:

Laundress/ Mrs. Cratchit:

Ebenezer Scrooge:

Bob Cratchit:

Fred/ Young Adult Scrooge:

Boy/ Young Scrooge:

Boy 2/ Peter Cratchit:

Clerk/ Marley/ Richard Wilcox/ Gentleman 3:

Gentleman 1/ Ghost of Christmas Past:

Gentleman 2/ Ghost of Christmas Future:

Undertaker/ Ghost of Christmas Present:

Tiny Tim:

Belle/ Clara:

An eerie carol is heard off in the distance. At rise, we are at the viewing of a body. The singers are not mourners- be very clear about that- only SCROOGE, CLERGYMAN, CLERK, UNDERTAKER should be a part of the funeral service)

SINGERS: *"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

(The song will quietly be heard in the background during the following narration.)

DICKENS: To begin, Marley was dead. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. *(As the names of the mourners are read, the register is passed. When it is finally given to SCROOGE, each of the men exit, leaving SCROOGE.)*

Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail. Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Anyhow, back to my point. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

(The singers swiftly change to a more upbeat Christmas song, "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," as they become passersby on the street while SCROOGE makes his way to his office. All sound stops abruptly for the entrance of a group of thieves who have stolen items from Marley's home.)

OLD JOE: What odds then? What odds, madame. Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did.

CHARWOMAN: That's true, indeed. No man more so.

LAUNDRESS: Very well, then. That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these. Not a dead man, I suppose.

OLD JOE: Aye, this lot is as cheap as he was!

CHARWOMAN: Smelled about as bad, as well! *(They laugh as they exit. SCROOGE, having heard this, moves toward his office. The music is heard louder as SCROOGE passes through the singers on his way.)*

SCROOGE: Stop that noise! *(The singers stop singing. A BOY emerges.)*

BOY: Merry Christmas, sir!

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug. Be off with the lot of you!

BOY 2: No need wishing him a Merry Christmas. That's old Scrooge. (*The BOY stays for a moment looking at SCROOGE.*)

SCROOGE: I said be off with you, boy! (*SCROOGE continues to his office. It appears around him as he removes his coat. BOB CRATCHIT is at a table doing paperwork. CRATCHIT goes to get a bucket of coal for the furnace.*) What...exactly do you think you are doing, Cratchit?

CRATCHIT: Its just some more coal for the fire, sir...

SCROOGE: Coal...?

CRATCHIT: Yessir...coal for the...

SCROOGE: Coal is expensive, Cratchit!

CRATCHIT: Yessir...its just...its so cold...

SCROOGE: That's why you dress warmly Cratchit! Directly after Christmas, I shall put a lock on the coal box.

CRATCHIT: Very good, sir.

SCROOGE: We shall deal with the eviction notices for tomorrow, Mr. Cratchit!

CRATCHIT: Bu..but, Mr. Scrooge, it's Christmas...

SCROOGE: Then gift wrap them!

(*Enter FRED, SCROOGE'S nephew. He is dressed well but not lavishly.*)

FRED: (*cheerfully*) A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

DICKENS: It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE: I do, Frederick! Merry Christmas... what right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED: Come, then, uncle. (*gaily*) What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough. Don't be cross, uncle!

SCROOGE: (*indignantly*) What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!

FRED: (*pleading*) Uncle!

SCROOGE: (*sternly*) Nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED: There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round -- apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that -- as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of others. I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it! (*Bob Cratchit involuntarily applauds; becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety.*)

SCROOGE: Let me hear another sound from you, and you'll FIND YOURSELF ON THE UNEMPLOYMENT LINE! You're quite a powerful speaker, sir, I wonder you don't go into politics.

FRED: Don't be angry, uncle. Come dine with us tomorrow. You've yet to even meet my wife.