

CAROLER

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,
Let Nothing You Dismay
Remember Christ Our Savior
Was Born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's Power
When we were Gone Astray—

SCROOGE WRINKLES HIS FACE IN DISGUST. HE DISMOUNTS HIS STOOL. SCROOGE GRABS A RULER FROM CRATCHIT'S DESK THEN CROSSES OUTSIDE TO SCARE THE CHILD AWAY. CRATCHIT PUTS DOWN HIS PEN, BLOWS OUT HIS CANDLE.

SCROOGE

You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT

If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE

It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound? (CRATCHIT SMILES FAINTLY) Yet you don't think me ill-used when I pay a day's wage for no work.

CRATCHIT

It's only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE

A poor excuse to pick a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier the next morning.

CRATCHIT (*RELIEVED*)

Oh, yes sir! Thank you, sir! And a Merry- (SCROOGE GLOWERS) good evening, sir.

CRATCHIT LEAVES. 'THE LONG END OF HIS WHITE COMFORTER DANGLING BELOW HIS WAIST (FOR HE BOASTS NO GREAT COAT)'

CRATCHIT

My Boys!

HE MEETS HIS SONS, PETER AND TIM. THE COUNTING HOUSE DISAPPEARS.
SCROOGE BEGIN HIS WALK. MELANCHOLY VIOLIN.

NARRATOR

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern, beguiling the time with his banker's book.

THE COUNTING HOUSE DISAPPEARS.

It was dark, so dark that Scrooge had to grope his way. The fog and the darkness thickened. A piercing, searching, biting cold. Scrooge lived in a dismal street, in a dismal house, in a gloomy set of room that once belonged to his partner. The house was so dreary that no one would live in it, except Scrooge. The fog and the frost hung upon the old black gateway to the house as if the Genius of the weather sat in mournful meditation of the threshold.

Now it is a fact; there was nothing particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It was also a fact that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London. Then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge saw in the knock- not a knocker, but-

SCROOGE

What? Marley?

ETHEREAL VOICE

Ebenezer. . . ! Ebenezer . . . !

NARRATOR

Marley's face. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on his ghostly forehead, and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless.

SCROOGE

Jacob Marley?!

ETHEREAL VOICE

Ebenezer Scrooge . . . !

NARRATOR

Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon and- it was the knocker again.

SCROOGE

Humbug. Humbug.

NARRATOR

To say that he was not startled or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation would be untrue.

SCROOGE BEDROOM APPEARS.

Scrooge had but only lonely candle. Darkness was cheap and Scrooge liked it.

(SCROOGE, SNEEZES, CHORTLES, MUMBLES, AS HE WANDERS THROUGH HIS HOUSE, AND AFFECT HIS CHANGE INTO NIGHTSHIRT)

Nobody in the bed, nobody in the closet, nobody under the table.

SCROOGE

Humbug. Nonsense. Humbug.

HE BLOWS OUT THE CANDLE- BUT THE FLAME RETURNS. HE BLOWS IT OUT AGAIN, IT RETURNS. BLOWS OUT A THIRD TIME, A CLANKING NOISE, DEEP DOWN BELOW, AS IF SOMEONE WERE DRAGGING A HEAVY CHAIN OVER CASKS IN A WINE CELLAR. THERE IS A LOUD BOOMING SOUND; THE CLANKING, DRAGGING NOISE IS MUCH LOUDER, APPROACHING THE BEDROOM.

SCROOGE

Humbug! Humbug! I don't believe it It's humbug still! I won't believe it.

MARLEY ENTERS. EFFECTS

SCROOGE (CAUSTIC AS EVER)

Is a man not to have a decent night's sleep?

MARLEY IS LADEN WITH HEAVY CHAINS AND PADLOCKS.

SCROOGE

How now! What do you want of me?

MARLEY

Much.

SCROOGE

Who are you?

MARLEY

Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE

Who were you then? You're particular, for a ghost.

MARLEY

In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley. You don't believe in me?

SCROOGE

I don't.

MARLEY

Why do you doubt your sense?

SCROOGE

Because a little thing affects them. You might be an undigested bit of beef- or a blot of mustard, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than the grave about you, whatever you are! Humbug, I tell you! Humbug!

AT THIS, THE SPIRIT RAISES A FRIGHTFUL CRY, AND SHAKES HIS CHAIN, A DISMAL AND APPALING SOUND, SCROOGE HAS TO HANH ON TO THE FURNITURE TO KEEP FROM SWOONING.

SCROOGE

Mercy! Dreadful apparition, who do you trouble me?

MARLEY

Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE

I do, I must. But why do you walk the earth, and why do you come to me?

MARLEY

Ebenezer Scrooge: it is require of every man that the spirit within him should walk among his fellow men. And if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. Doomed to wonder through the world- oh, woe is me! –and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned into happiness!

SCROOGE (TREMBLING)

What is this chain you wear?

MARLEY

I wear the chain I forged in life. I make it, link by link, and yard by yard. Is it pattern strange to you?

MARLEY PLACES A PIECE OF IT AROUND SCROOGE'S NECK.

You have your own chain, Ebenezer. It was full as heavy as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is more ponderous.

SCROOGE LOOKS ABOUT HIMSELF.

SCROOGE (IMPLORINGLY)

Jacob! Old Jacob Marley, tell me more! Speak comfort to me, Jacob!

MARLEY

I have none to give. A very little time is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay. In life my spirit never walked beyond our counting-house, now weary journeys life before me. The incessant torture of remorse! (HE WAILS)

SCROOGE

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

MARLEY

Business! Mankind was my business! The common welfare was my business: charity, mercy, and forbearance, and benevolence were all my business! Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE

I will, Jacob, but don't be hard on me, Jacob, and don't be flowery.

MARLEY

I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet another chance of escaping my fate.

SCROOGE

You were always a good friend to me Jacob, thank you.

MARLEY

You will be haunted by three spirits.

SCROOGE

I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY (LONG MOAN, AND THEN)

Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I read. Expect the first tonight, when the bell tolls one. . .

SCROOGE

Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over Jacob?

MARLEY

Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to sound. Look to see me no more. . . Remember what was passed between us.

MARLEY DISAPPEARS. NARRATOR ENTERS.

NARRATOR

Scrooge became aware of confuse noises in the air, incoherent noises of lamentation and regret. The air was filled with phantom, wandering hither and thither in restless haste and moaning as they went. The misery with tem al was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matter, and had lost the power forever.

THE SOUNDS SLOWLY DIE AWAY.

SCROOGE

Humbug.

THE CLOCK BEGINS TO STRIKE TWELVE.