

A Christmas Carol




Chapter 1

Scrooge and Marley

Contents

Chapter 1	Scrooge and Marley	3
Chapter 2	Marley's ghost	11
Chapter 3	The first spirit	18
Chapter 4	The second spirit	25
Chapter 5	The last spirit	39
Chapter 6	Merry Christmas!	50



Chapter 1

Scrooge and Marley



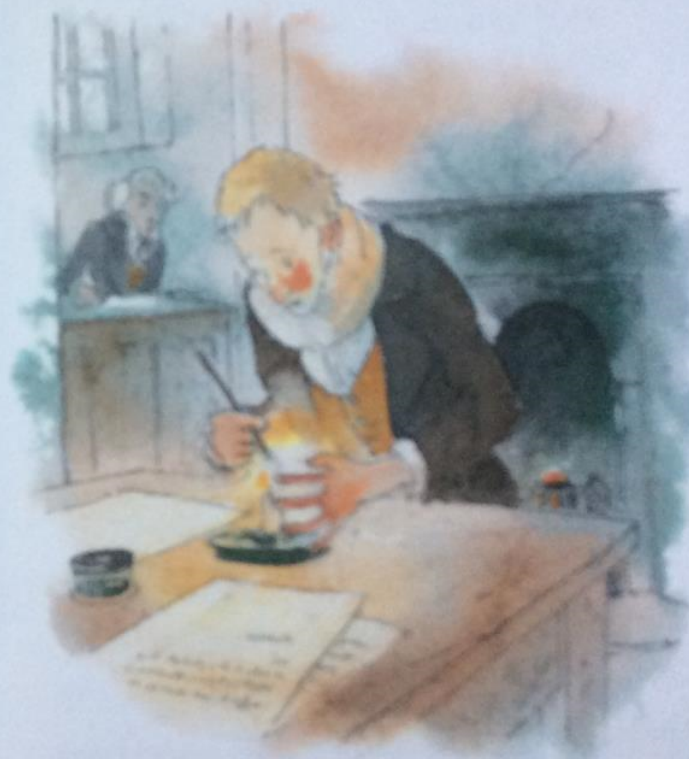
Marley was dead, dead as a doornail. All that remained of the firm of Scrooge and Marley was Ebenezer Scrooge.

Scrooge... a grasping, greedy, gruesome old man! He was as hard as stone, and so cold inside his face looked frozen.



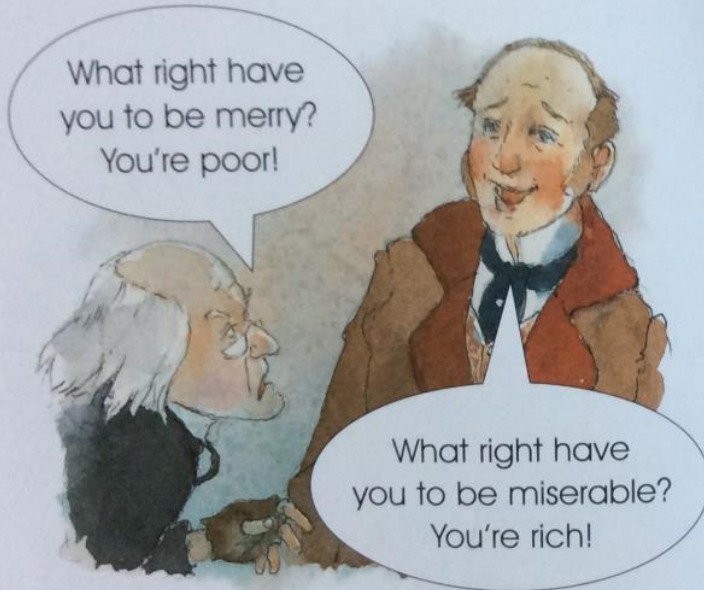
Scrooge didn't care for anyone and hardly anyone cared for him. Even Christmas cheer couldn't thaw his icy heart.

One Christmas Eve, he was busy in his counting house. He had left his office door open, to keep an eye on his clerk, Bob Cratchit.



"A Merry Christmas, Uncle!" cried a cheerful voice suddenly. It was Scrooge's nephew, Fred.

"Bah, humbug!" said Scrooge.



"If I had my way," Scrooge added, "every idiot who said 'Merry Christmas' would be cooked with his own cake!"

"Really, Uncle!" cried Fred. "Come, why not eat with us tomorrow?"

"Good afternoon!" Scrooge replied, returning to his books.



As Fred left, two other men came in, collecting for the poor.

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge. "No workhouses? I pay for those. That's enough."

The men went out into the bitterly cold afternoon, shaking their heads. A little later, a scruffy boy paused by Scrooge's office and began to sing.

God bless you, merry gentlemen...

But one look at Scrooge and he fled without finishing the verse.



Finally, it was time to go home. "You'll want the whole day off tomorrow, I suppose?" Scrooge snapped at Bob.

"If it's convenient," said Bob.

"It isn't. Be here all the earlier the day after."

Scrooge left the office with a growl. Bob quickly locked up and set off for home. Scrooge went for his usual lonely dinner in a lonely inn.



Then he too set off for home, a few gloomy rooms in an old house which once belonged to Marley.

Chapter 2

Marley's ghost



Chapter 2

Marley's ghost



The door knocker on this house was not unusual, just large. But, as Scrooge put his key in the door, the knocker changed into Marley's face.



Startled, Scrooge turned his key and went in. Was the back of Marley's head sticking out into the hall? No, he saw only screws.

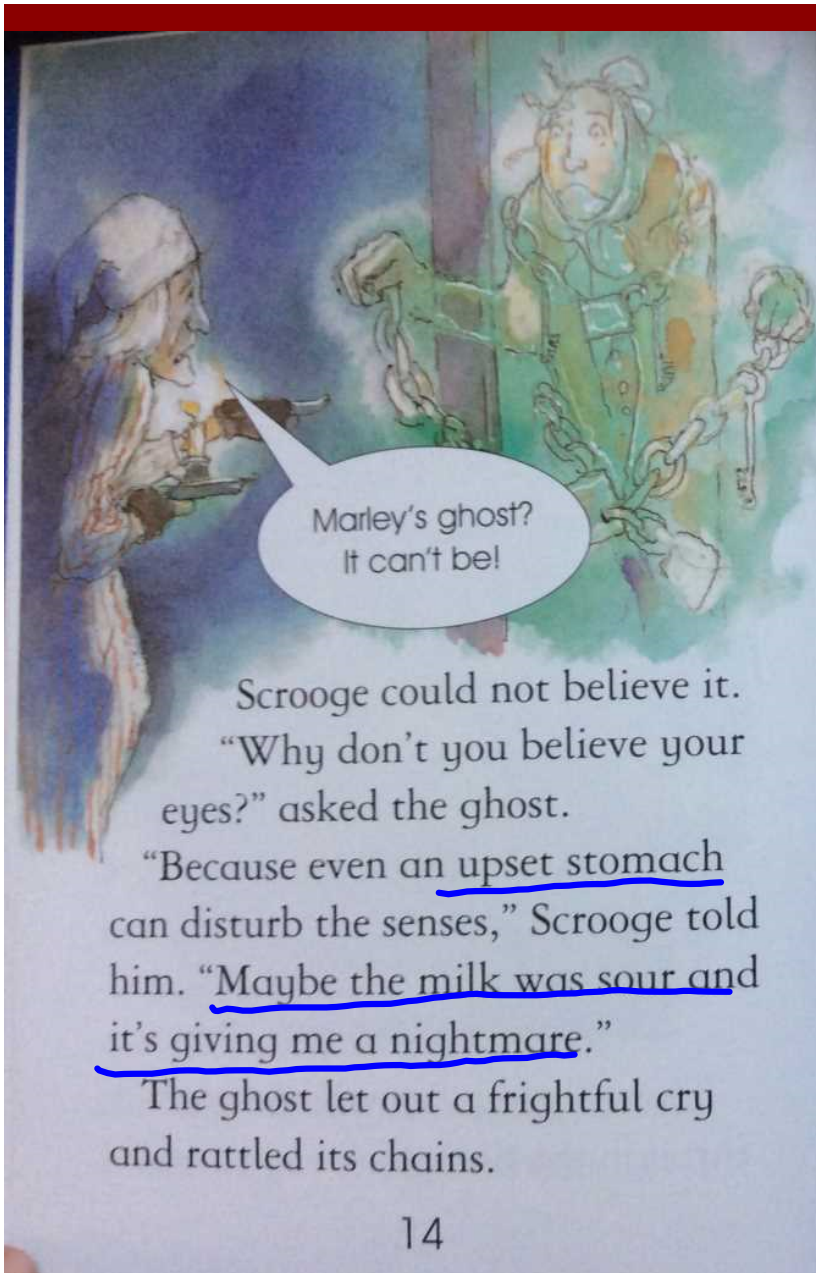
"Pah, humbug!" he said, closing the door with a bang. But he checked all his rooms, just in case, before he got ready for bed.

Without warning, an old bell began to ring. It started quietly but soon rang loudly, along with every other bell in the house. Suddenly, the bells stopped. A clanking noise followed, as if someone in the cellar was dragging a chain.



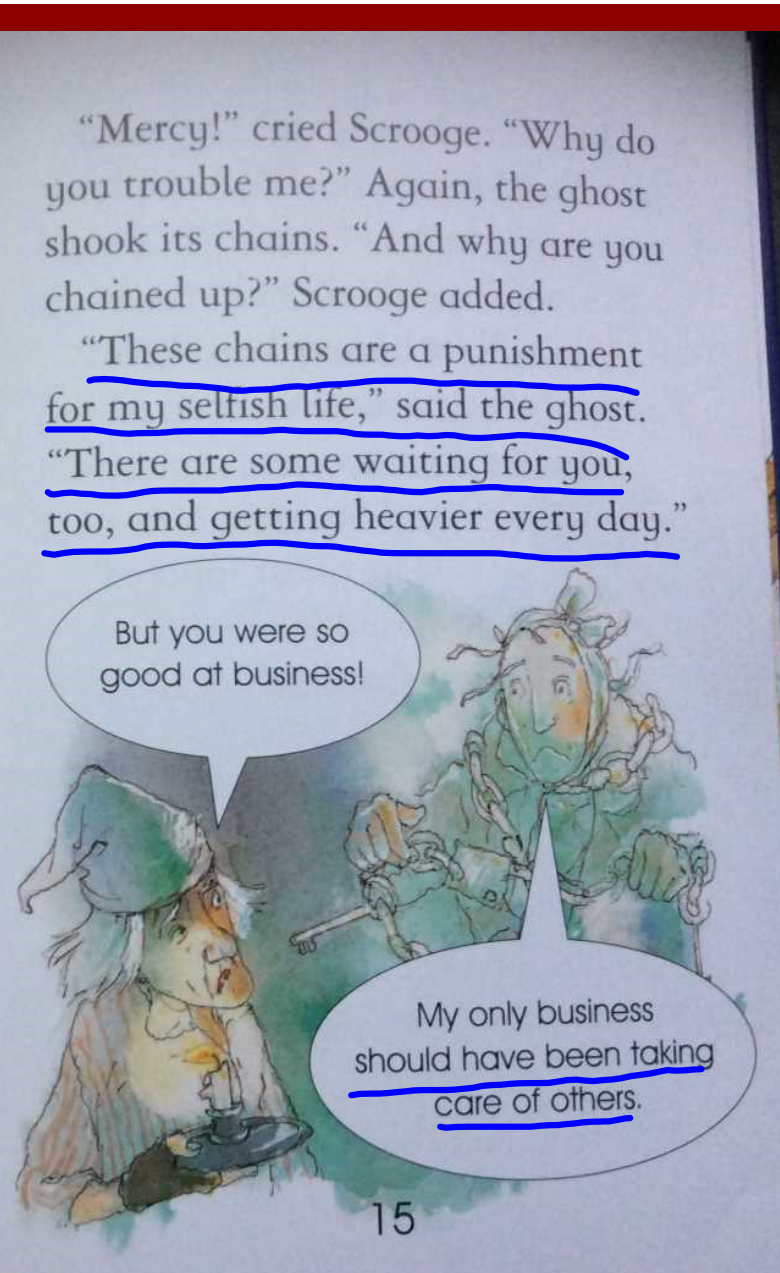
Then, slowly, something came through the door...

Stop here and
make a
prediction...



Marley's ghost?
It can't be!

Scrooge could not believe it. "Why don't you believe your eyes?" asked the ghost. "Because even an upset stomach can disturb the senses," Scrooge told him. "Maybe the milk was sour and it's giving me a nightmare." The ghost let out a frightful cry and rattled its chains.



"Mercy!" cried Scrooge. "Why do you trouble me?" Again, the ghost shook its chains. "And why are you chained up?" Scrooge added.

"These chains are a punishment for my selfish life," said the ghost. "There are some waiting for you, too, and getting heavier every day."

But you were so good at business!

My only business should have been taking care of others.

"I've come here tonight to warn you," said the ghost. "You might escape my fate."

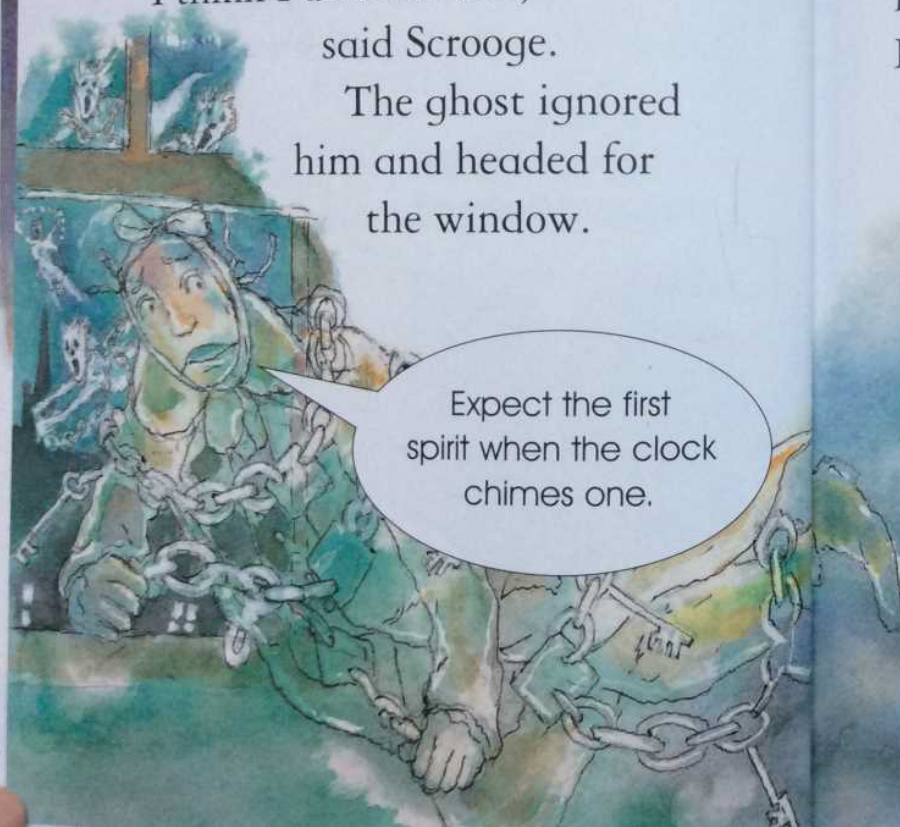
Scrooge looked relieved.

"You will be haunted by three spirits," the ghost went on.

"I think I'd rather not,"

said Scrooge.

The ghost ignored him and headed for the window.

A watercolor illustration of a ghostly figure, likely the Marley ghost, wearing a green coat and heavy metal chains. The figure is looking towards the right. A speech bubble points to the figure.

Expect the first spirit when the clock chimes one.


Scrooge closed the window and checked his door. It was still locked. "Humb—" he began, but the word stuck in his throat.

Worn out — partly from shock, partly because it was two in the morning — Scrooge fell into bed. He was asleep in an instant.



Chapter 3

The first spirit



Chapter 3

The first spirit



Scrooge awoke in total darkness. To his surprise, a clock chimed twelve. He lay awake, fearfully counting down the next hour. On the stroke of one, a hand drew back the curtain around his bed...

Scrooge gasped. He was face to face with the strangest creature he had ever seen. A light shone out of its head and it carried a cap like a candle snuffer.

“Are you the spirit I was told about?” he asked.

“I am!” said the ghost, softly.

“I’m the Ghost of Christmas Past...”

your past.”



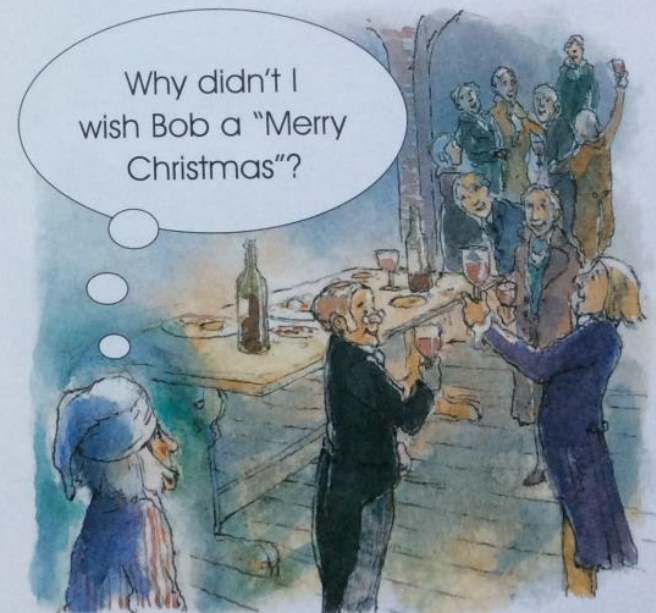
Scrooge clung to the spirit as he floated through the window and out... not into the foggy city but a bright, cold day in the country.

"I was a boy here," Scrooge cried. The ghost took him to his old schoolroom where a lonely boy sat alone.



Before he knew it, they were back in a busy city and entering a warehouse, where a party was in full swing.

"And here I was an apprentice!" cried Scrooge. "There's my master, old Fezziwig. He made us so happy..."



The party faded, leaving Scrooge and the spirit outside. There was the young Scrooge again, sitting beside a beautiful girl.

"I cannot marry you," she said, sadly. "You love money more than you love me."



The scene changed and Scrooge found himself in a comfy room, filled with children. There was his old love, now married to another man.



Scrooge began to struggle with the ghost. As he did, he noticed the light on its head burning even more brightly. Scrooge grabbed the spirit's cap and put it over the light, pressing hard.



The spirit sank down and Scrooge sank into a deep sleep.