

# SCROOGE HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

*a Play in One Act*

*by Pat Cook*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

It's Christmas time. The old man sits in his sitting room eating his porridge. Just then Marley bursts in and begins to rattle his chains, scaring the man half to death. You all know the story ... or do you?

"I have come to save you from a horrible fate, Ebenezer Scrooge!" Marley shrieks.

"I'm not Scrooge!" the man points out. "He moved!"

Sure enough, Marley is at the wrong house. Not only the wrong house but on the wrong night.

"This is Christmas eve EVE," the old man tells him.

"I'm sorry, I've been dead!" Marley alibis.

Then the other three ghosts show up. "Will you hurry, we're starting to pile up out here!" one yells at him.

From here on it's every ghost for itself in this not-so-well known tale of what Marley and his spectral friends were doing on the night BEFORE they met Scrooge. The lines fly fast and furious as the Ghosts argue among themselves, Spirits outside the old man's window keep doing Christmas Carols and Marley tries to keep everything quiet.

"You're going to get another chain for this!" one Ghost threatens him.

And then the Missus shows up wielding a rolling pin and scares the scarers! A fresh look at the characters from Dickens puts a new spin on an old story – this hysterical farce shows just what can happen when you have too many ghosts, bad timing and have to deal with the fact that "Scrooge Has Left the Building".

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS:**

*(4 m, 2 w, extras)*

**BEN:** Old man who wants to be left alone.

**MARLEY:** Ghost of Jacob Marley, adorned in chains.

**GHOST #1:** The Ghost of Christmas Past, a wraith-like woman.

**MISSUS:** Ben's nagging wife.

**GHOST #2:** Ghost of Christmas Present.

**GHOST #3:** Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

**NARRATOR and OFFSTAGE MOANERS**

**TIME:**

Christmas time in the 1840s.

**PLACE:**

Ben's sitting room.

**Running Time:** 25 minutes.

### **SETTING**

The setting for this Christmas fable is a Victorian sitting room which has seen better days. UC in the room is a large fireplace with old coals glimmering. There are two practical doors to this room: the SL door leads out to the hall and down to the first floor, and the second door, SR of the fireplace on the US wall, leads to the bedroom. A large window (built as a "French" window, where the two sections open in the middle) is located on the SR wall. There is little furniture in the room. Just an old weather-beaten wingback chair and a small table near it.

### **PROPS**

Bowl of porridge, spoon  
Chains  
Rolling pin  
Old notebook, ink pen  
Broom

### **SCROOGE HAS LEFT THE BUILDING**

*(Before the LIGHTS come up, we hear a NARRATOR.)*

NARRATOR: Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. That must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come from this tale. But on this night, he again roamed o'er the earth.

*(AT RISE: LIGHTS come up on BEN sitting in his chair, eating a bowl of porridge.)*

NARRATOR: He had one hope to do some good, the hope he had not made use of during his own life.

BEN: *(Ominously, to HIMSELF.)* What a bitter night! The wind howls around the hearth like dead souls moaning from the afterlife! Best I get straight away to bed. No mortal will wander forth on such a night as this. *(As HE eats his porridge, we hear the SOUNDS of heavy chains being dragged and moaning offstage.)* What's this? Callers? *(HE sets his bowl down and rises but doesn't take a step. Finally, he shouts at the SL door.)* Who goes there?! Who ARE you, I say?! What are you, that cannot speak? Come in, sir, if you be a man! And if you be not a man ... forget it.

*(The SL door creaks slowly open and MARLEY, adorned in chains, enters eerily.)*

MARLEY: It is I, Jacob Marley. *(HE points a finger at BEN.)* And I have come for you, sir!

BEN: Marley? But you cannot be. You are ...

MARLEY: Dead. Yes, I know. These seven years.

BEN: I ... I don't believe you for a moment!

MARLEY: *(Moves closer to BEN.)* Do you doubt your own senses? See me as I am, chained with my ambition, my avarice, my greed! Yet, I walk this earth tonight to come here.

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BEN: There's only enough porridge for one.  
MARLEY: I seek not worldly things but am here that I may help you escape my torment!  
BEN: Me?  
MARLEY: You have but one chance. There will come after me three ghosts. Make that three chances.  
BEN: I'm really not dressed for entertaining.  
MARLEY: Do not mock me! *(HE moves to the window.)* They shall be your reclamation, your chance to escape my doom. Hear for yourself the agony of the others! Those doomed to wander the earth like me! *(HE flings open the window and outside we hear agonizing MOANS.)* They seek to interfere for good but have lost their powers!  
BEN: *(Hands over HIS ears.)* Why are you doing this to me?  
MARLEY: Because you were a good friend to me and I hope that I may save you from this horrible fate, Ebenezer Scrooge!  
BEN: Who?  
MARLEY: You! Ebenezer Scrooge!  
BEN: You must have the wrong house.  
MARLEY: What say you?  
BEN: *(Loudly.)* I'm not Scrooge!

*(The MOANS outside cease and ALL together say "Huh?")*

MARLEY: *(To the MOANERS.)* I'll get back to you. *(HE closes the window.)* You're not Scrooge?  
BEN: No.  
MARLEY: Really? *(HE pulls out an old notebook and looks at it.)*  
BEN: And I should know.  
MARLEY: Wait a minute.  
BEN: I thought you said you were his friend?  
MARLEY: I was.  
BEN: And you thought I was him?  
MARLEY: Hey, people change.  
BEN: You can't even recognize him?

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