

Give 'Em The "Dickens"

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December 25, 2023

Now that the trial is over the truth can finally be told. Bob Cratchit and Scrooge's partner, Jacob Marley, conspired to steal the business holdings of Ebenezer Scrooge. Also involved in the diabolical plot were Scrooge's housekeeper, Mrs. Henderson, and Bob Cratchit's wife.

In the end, they were caught, of course, but not before it looked as though they were completely successful, and not until many years later. Their demise came when young Tiny Tim grew to maturity and learned the whole truth.

Cratchit had forced Tim to live his life, pretending to be crippled, in order to gain the townspeople's sympathy and their support in his plan to discredit Scrooge. Having learned all of this, Tim turned his father and co-conspirators over to the authorities. During the trial all the sordid details were disclosed. Their scheme was to cause Scrooge to suffer a complete mental breakdown. Like the team from Mission Impossible, Marley and Cratchit carefully plotted their moves.

They began with the fake death of Scrooge's partner, Marley. No longer encumbered with the day-to-day chore of working with Scrooge, Marley moved behind the scenes, recruiting those he needed to carry out the plan. He started false rumors about Scrooge's character, creating an image that showed him to be harsh, cruel, and one to be scorned. Marley even intercepted checks Scrooge had written to various charity organizations.

Meanwhile, Bob Cratchit worked to reinforce Marley's actions by saying that Scrooge was a harsh taskmaster. Using the excuse of his supposedly crippled child, Cratchit played on the sympathy of the townspeople and turned them against

Scrooge.

All of this began to take a toll on Scrooge's business. He became worried and despondent, finding it difficult to understand why the community refused to deal with him. As money grew short Scrooge was forced to cut back on office personnel. Marley, of course, used this opportunity to spread false rumors that Scrooge simply wanted all the money for himself. Cratchit was now the only worker left in Scrooge's employ. He then seized that opportunity to ask for a raise, knowing full well what the results of the request would be. When Scrooge refused the raise, Cratchit told the townspeople he needed the money for Tiny Tim's medical bills.

Finally, Marley and Cratchit knew the time was at hand to complete their plan. Sinister as they were, the two chose the Christmas season for the background to their final play. On the morning of December 24th, while Scrooge was at the office, Marley visited his housekeeper, Mrs. Henderson, and gave her a small vial. It contained a white powdery substance. He paid her one hundred dollars and handed her an envelope containing instructions on how and when to use the contents.

Later that afternoon, Cratchit informed Scrooge that he wanted to leave early to join his family for Christmas Eve. Scrooge was expecting a very important shipment of special-order goods, but he had to attend a business meeting. He then asked Cratchit to please stay, at least until it was delivered. In fact, Cratchit was not planning to go home at all, rather he was to meet Marley to finalize plans for that night. He waited for Scrooge to leave for his meeting and then promptly closed the office and left.

That night, as Scrooge prepared for bed, Mrs. Henderson brought him hot milk. Upon drinking it the entire room seemed to grow dark and misty as if in a dream. Moments later, Marley, whom Scrooge believed to be dead, appeared before him. The effect was devastating.

Throughout the night, Marley and Cratchit, using special effects and psychological torment, systematically tortured their victim, now in a weak mental state. They spun his bed; they led him into the cold night dressed only in a nightshirt and cap; and Marley continually changed costumes, pretending to be several different characters, each accusing Scrooge of various crimes.

Consider the testimony of Constable O'Malley, who told of seeing three men on Baker Street at approximately 4:00am, December 25th. One, dressed only in a nightshirt and cap, was babbling incoherently, and was understood to cry out, "No more, Sir, please, I don't want to see anymore." One of the men with him was tall and wore a hooded robe. He did not speak. As the Constable approached them, a third man, who had been following about as half a block behind, quickly rushed forward and nervously told the Constable that all was well, "My grandfather has just had a little too much Christmas 'spirit' and we're just taking him home." According to Constable O'Mally, the spokesman matched the description of Bob Cratchit.

The traumatic night, of course, took its toll on Scrooge. He suffered the planned mental breakdown and was reduced to a babbling idiot who, every day, walked through London's market exchange, shouting Christmas greetings to all and handed out plucked turkeys to the vendors. Finally, Bob Cratchit managed to have Scrooge committed to a mental hospital and Cratchit himself was appointed guardian of his estate. Authorities found Scrooge on a July afternoon, wandering through the exchange, shouting his Christmas greetings. They loaded him into a wagon and took him to the Home for the Euphorically Deluded.

Years later, as reported, Tiny Tim learned the truth behind the whole story and reported it to the authorities. It was too late for Scrooge, who died in the Home, a broken man. Jacob

Marley too had died, never able to enjoy his ill-gotten gain. He also had suffered a breakdown brought on by an identity crisis. Bob Cratchit, his wife, and Mrs. Henderson did stand trial and were found guilty. They were sentenced to work in a sweatshop run by the government.

Tiny Tim was granted control of Scrooge's estate. He invested the money in a toy company and soon built a vast financial empire by hiring a marketing firm. Together they were able to turn Christmas into a huge commercial buying season for toys. Tiny Tim hung a huge sign over his factory so that all could see. There, written in gold letters, was the name of his corporation, "HUMBUG ENTERPRISES."

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