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General

Marley's Ghost
Mark Hazard Osmun
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Everyone familiar with Dickens' A Christmas Carol remembers Jacob Marley: the ghostly partner who came to warn Ebenezer Scrooge to change his ways lest Scrooge suffer the same fate. What fate was it? Only alluded to by the reference of the heavy chain wrapped around Marley's figure as the burden he forged in his own life, in Marley's Ghost Osmun picks up the faint thread of curiosity about Scrooge's old partner and weaves his own compelling tale of who Jacob Marley was, how he came to forge his burdensome chain of sin, and what events urged him to make that well-known Christmas Eve visitation to Scrooge from the afterlife.

The first part of the book deals with the life of Marley. From his happy childhood as a gifted twin to an equally gifted autistic twin brother, a drastic reversal of the family's fortune finds them forced to work in the coal mines where Marley is falsely accused of murder and must leave his beloved brother behind. After fleeing, Marley is caught and becomes hardened in prison where he subsequently meets Bill Worthy; an enterprising crook who makes Marley his partner in a trading company established once they escape prison. Upon the death of Worthy, Marley leaves to create his own business and hires Scrooge—whom he eventually makes his partner—both in business and indifference and emotional coldness to the needy and almost everyone else around them. On his deathbed Marley is shocked to realize that Scrooge cares nothing for him, only of business and money.

The second part of the book shows us the frigid afterlife that Marley enters upon dying. It is here that he meets the spirits which will be a part of the Christmas Eve visitation to Scrooge—as well as one other spirit: a seemingly benevolent guide who aids Marley in his self-examination of what he has done to deserve being in a frozen, hellish afterworld. However, only Marley himself can decide what he will do with the one chance he has to visit the real world again; how he might redeem himself. Only after the visitation with Scrooge—and to an extremely famous writer—will Marley discover his ultimate fate.

A masterfully written story, Osmun follows in the tradition of Charles Dickens—weaving a colorful tapestry about the battle between the forces of good and evil—and adds a new dimension to a legendary story.

Nelly Heitman