

(The bolt shoots open. A bright, eerie light illuminates the doorway. MARLEY's ghost – FORSTER, in a ragged suit, wrapped in the chains from the horse-collar – enters. As he does, the eerie light fades out, a dim light comes up in the room.)

How now? What do you want with me?

MARLEY. Much.

SCROOGE. Who are you?

MARLEY. Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE. Who *were* you, then?

MARLEY. In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

(A pause.)

You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE. I don't.

MARLEY. Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE. Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You could be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are. Humbug, I tell you, humbug!

(MARLEY raises a frightful cry – a loud, melancholy wail – which sends SCROOGE scurrying behind his stool at the fireplace.)

Mercy, dreadful apparition! Why do you trouble me?

MARLEY. Man of worldly mind! 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. It is required of every person that the spirit within us should walk abroad among all human beings, and travel far and wide. If that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world and witness what it cannot

share but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness.

SCROOGE. You are wrapped in chains. Tell me why.

MARLEY. I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it, link by link and yard by yard. I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?

SCROOGE. It is.

MARLEY. Would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is a ponderous chain!

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

MARLEY. I have none to give. A very little more is all that is permitted me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house. In life, my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole. Weary journeys lie before me.

SCROOGE. You must have been very slow about it, Jacob.

MARLEY. Slow?

SCROOGE. Seven years dead, and traveling all the time.

MARLEY. The whole time, on the wings of the wind. No rest, no peace, incessant torture of remorse.

(Again he rattles his chains and sends up a wail.)

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, forbearance were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop in the comprehensive ocean of my business!

SCROOGE. Don't be hard on me, Jacob!