

floor. Then THE CHILD picks up another of the crumpled pages and reads from it.)

THE CHILD. Facts. Not interested.

DICKENS. You're quite the critic.

THE CHILD. "Despite our poverty, the spirit of Christmas filled our poor home like a living giant"?

(He crumples the page and tosses it away.)

DICKENS. Perhaps you could help me make something of all this?

(THE CHILD tosses DICKENS a small box.)

(DICKENS opens it and removes an engagement ring.)

Where did you get this?

THE CHILD. The ladies in the alley.

DICKENS. What alley?

THE CHILD. I think they stole it.

DICKENS. Tell me more.

THE CHILD. *(Now at the window looking down at the street.)*

There's a man with a goose outside.

DICKENS. Yes, we're having a Christmas Eve party tonight.

THE CHILD. He has another goose.

DICKENS. A sure sign that Mark Lemon will be here.

THE CHILD. You will be haunted by three spirits.

DICKENS. I beg your pardon?

THE CHILD. Do you think he has to work tonight?

DICKENS. Who?

THE CHILD. The goose man.

DICKENS. I'd say so.

THE CHILD. Must work for a nasty man, having to work on Christmas Eve.

DICKENS. *(As THE CHILD turns his attention to rummaging in the window seat.)* Many people have to work on Christmas Eve. What are you doing?

THE CHILD. Looking for something.

DICKENS. There's nothing in there.

(But THE CHILD pulls out a large handkerchief which he throws into the air. Billowing, it lands gently in DICKENS' hand.)

What the devil?

THE CHILD. *(As he blindfolds DICKENS with the handkerchief.)*
A game.

DICKENS. I'm no good at blind man's buff.

THE CHILD. Not that one.

(He pulls a boy's cloth cap from the window seat and places it in DICKENS' hand.)

Don't you recognize it?

DICKENS. No. Should I? Who runs about the street underneath it?

THE CHILD. No one.

DICKENS. Wasn't mine, then.

(From the window seat, THE CHILD gives DICKENS a black bag with a good-sized oval thing inside.)

What's this?

THE CHILD. The prize of it all.

DICKENS. Not a clock, I'll be bound.

(He takes off the handkerchief.)

THE CHILD. Merry Christmas.

(A small pause.)

DICKENS. Thank you.

(He pulls the bag off the thing - and finds himself face-to-face with a human skull. THE CHILD laughs at the surprise he's pulled and, from the window seat, produces a small money bag on a leather thong. "We Three