

think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound! Yet you don't think me ill-used for paying a day's wages for no work.

Start

**CRATCHIT** It is only once a year, sir.

**SCROOGE** Only once a year. A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December. However - I suppose you must have it.

**CRATCHIT** Thank you, sir.

**SCROOGE** Be here all the earlier next morning.

**CRATCHIT** Yes sir. Thank you sir. Merry Christmas, sir.

**SCROOGE** Out upon a merry Christmas. Humbug, I say. Humbug.

*And so violent is he with these words that CRATCHIT is glad to be off home as fast as possible. SCROOGE starts on his journey home. A longish journey during which he talks a great deal to himself...*

**SCROOGE** Curse the fog. And curse the stupidity of the whole world. Christmas! Humbug! It's nothing but stealing. Calling it charity doesn't change it from what it is. Stealing. And listen to them... the bells, the singing, the laughter...pretence. That's what it is. Nothing but pretence, *(The lone voice of a small BOY is heard singing a carol. SCROOGE angrily shouts him away. The BOY laughs and runs.)* Instead of getting down to work and solving their problems through honest labour they pretend all is well and hide behind the laughter and the singing... and they expect everybody else to do the same. Well, at least old Jacob Marley and I avoided any such nonsense. We lived frugally, we worked hard. No man owed us anything and we owed nothing ourselves. *(He stops for a moment thinking of JACOB.)* Poor Jacob. Seven years ago this very night. You were a good man of business Jacob. Ah, but the business hasn't suffered by your going... *(He stumbles..)* Curse the fog and the darkness. Never mind. A house stuck away in the darkest alley is a good investment...the rooms are good to let for business and there's still enough space for living..Ah, where is that door? I can feel it with the knocker...

*He stares at the knocker.*

What's this? What's this? What am I seeing? *(He is staring at the knocker.)* No, Jacob. No. Whatever else it could do your face could never serve as a

knocker on a door. Jacob, don't haunt me like this..... I won't believe it. I won't. I won't.

*And in his terror he crashes the knocker and the vision goes. There are hideous echoes throughout the house of the door noise.*

There. There. Just a moment of fancy. It means nothing, nothing at all....

*And yet as he goes through the door he instinctively looks back to see if there is anything behind the door...*

Nothing - at all. What did I expect? To see his pigtail hanging on the other side. Humbug. It's all humbug!

*He fastens the door...and goes on up the stairs towards his room...*

Jacob you chose well when you chose a staircase as wide as this. You could drive a coach and four up it in comfort....aaahhh...

*For a moment he is again frightened by some sound or imaginary sight.*

Humbug! There's nothing to be afraid of. The offices are empty...the wine cellar below is empty... and there's enough light through the window from the street lamps to save having any other light...

*He arrives at the top and goes to his own room...But the sights and sounds have unnerved him a bit, and he readily checks that there is nothing concealed anywhere.*

Nobody under the table. Nobody under the sofa. Nobody under the bed. Nobody in the cupboards or the closet.. nobody inside my dressing gown. Humbug.. of course there's nobody. What on earth have I to fear? It's all fancy. Nothing but fancy. I'll just take a good pot of gruel this one...lasted all the week.

*He puts the gruel on to the embers of the fire and starts to undress...*

Too cold to undress fully on a night like this. And no need anyway with a good thick dressing gown...a dressing gown to last for years. Has lasted for years, and'll see my life out yet. What? What?

*And again he hears some sound and crosses to his door and looks, quite motionless to check that there is nothing there...*

Humbug....nothing but humbug....

Stop

*And he goes to eat his gruel...All the time he is eating there are some signs and portents of all not being well. He hears faint footsteps in the distance...He hears a coach drive up and stop outside and waits fearfully...doors creek and slam..but still nothing particular happens in his own room...*

*Then a single door bell rings..his own..and then other bells in the house, picking up a great and terrifying cacophony of sounds..which suddenly cut out...and there is the single sound of the approach of the GHOST OF JACOB MARLEY. (Author's note: this sound, in Dicken's terms, is made by a long chain of keys and cash boxes and other symbols of the avariciousness of the two men; in production, such a chain can lead to laughter and might be more atmospherically replaced with a single chain and the dragging of feet.)*

*THE GHOST which in one sense fills SCROOGE with terror, and in another does no more than challenge his disbelief, slowly approaches - and then stops a little way from SCROOGE....*

SCROOGE                   What do you want with me?

MARLEY                   Much.

SCROOGE                   Who are you?

MARLEY                   Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE                   You're mighty particular for a ghost. Who were you then?

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

SCROOGE                   Yes. Yes, so you seem. Can you sit down?

MARLEY                   I can.

SCROOGE                   Do it then. You look more exhausted than you did seven years ago.

MARLEY                   *(Sitting, after a moment.)* You don't believe in me?

SCROOGE                   No, I don't.

MARLEY                   What proof can I offer you, beyond that of your own senses?

SCROOGE                   I - I don't know.

MARLEY                   Why do you doubt your senses?