

SCROOGE: What do you want with me?

MARLEY: Much!

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: You're very particular for a spirit. *(raising voice)* Who were you then?

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

SCROOGE: *(quietly)* Can you sit down?

MARLEY: I can.

SCROOGE: Well, do it then.

MARLEY slowly moves to the chair. He sits.

MARLEY: You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY: What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your own senses?

SCROOGE: ... I don't know.

MARLEY: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, 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 lets out a frightful cry, shaking his chains with a dismal and appalling wail. SCROOGES cowers behind his chair.

SCROOGE: (*cowering*) Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY: (*demanding*) Man of the worldly mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE: (*quickly*) I do! I must! But... why do spirits walk the earth? Why do you come to me?

MARLEY: It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men, and travel far and wide; and 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, and turned to happiness!

MARLEY lets out another frightful cry, shaking his chains in anguish.

SCROOGE: You're chained... Tell me why.

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link and yard by yard. Is its pattern strange to you? And would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was as full... as heavy... and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since! It is a ponderous chain!

SCROOGE: I see no chain upon me.

MARLEY sits once again.

MARLEY: Mine... were invisible... until the day of my death. As yours shall be.

SCROOGE: Tell... tell me more, Jacob. Speak comfort to me.

MARLEY: I have none to give. 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!

SCROOGE: No doubt of that. 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, and benevolence were all my business! The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!

SCROOGE: I'm sorry for you, Jacob. Is there anything I can do?

MARLEY: For me? Nay. It is too late. But I... have come... for your sake, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: Have you? Well, you were always a good friend.

MARLEY: As part of my penance, I have been sent to warn you. And to offer you a hope and chance of escaping my fate. You will be haunted by three spirits.

SCROOGE: Three spirits... Is that the chance and hope you mentioned?

MARLEY: It is.

SCROOGE: Yes, well, in that case I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY: (*ignoring him*) Expect the first when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE: Couldn't I take them all at once and have it over with, Jacob?

MARLEY: (*still ignoring him*) Expect the second when the bell tolls two. The third... more mercurial... will arrive in his own good time.

MARLEY prepares to leave.

MARLEY: (*continued*) Look to me no more... Look, that you may

remember what has passed between us!

SFX & music as MARLEY exits. Wind dies down to silence.

SCROOGE: *(quietly, fearful, rushes to examine where MARLEY exited)*
Humbug.

*SCROOGE walks to his chair, still uneasy,
and sits.*

SCROOGE: *(trying to convince himself)* Some...
Something I ate.