

*He laughs but then throws himself to the floor as MARLEY rises into the air terrifyingly, clanking and shaking his chains in fury.*

Oh Glory! Mercy!

MARLEY. Man of the worldly mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE *puts his hands together as though praying.*

SCROOGE. I do! I must! But why... why have you come to me?

MARLEY. It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men. If that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death.

MARLEY *utters a dreadful cry and rattles his chains.*

It is doomed to wander through the world – oh, woe is me! – and witness what it cannot share, but *might* have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!

SCROOGE *points a shaking hand at MARLEY's chains.*

SCROOGE. You... you are fettered. 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. What... what do you mean?

MARLEY. Or 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 laboured on it, since. It is a PONDEROUS chain!

SCROOGE *looks about him as though expecting to see the chain.*

SCROOGE. But, Jacob, you were always a good man of business...

MARLEY (*shrieking*). *BUSINESS!* Mankind was my business! Charity, mercy and benevolence were all my business. At this time of the rolling year, I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode?

Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me!

*He shudders and draws back towards the door.*

I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger... anywhere...

Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE. Tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!

MARLEY. I have none to give.

*He makes to leave, then stops.*

Save this. You have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE. You were always a good friend to me.

MARLEY. You will be visited by three spirits.

SCROOGE. Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY. It is.

SCROOGE. Then I... I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY. Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.

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

MARLEY. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate.

Remember what has passed between us, Ebenezer Scrooge. Look to see me... no more...