

And framed in the doorway he sees ... the fearful apparition of the ghost of Jacob Marley

Marley (*wailing*) Ebenezer Scroo-o-ooge!

The door slams shut

Whimpering with fear, Scrooge edges warily forward to the door, opens it and looks out into the blackness beyond. There is no-one there. The door is open 180 degrees

Scrooge Hallo? Hallo? (*He closes the door*) It's all humbug!

Standing behind the door, inside the room, is Marley's ghost

Marley Ebenezer Scrooge!

Scrooge whirls round with a cry of terror

Marley is swathed in a great chain made up of cash-boxes, ledgers, keys, padlocks, deeds and heavy purses. Scrooge contemplates in horror this fearful reincarnation of his former partner

Scrooge H-how now! What do you want with me?

Marley Much!

Scrooge Who are you?

Marley Better to ask me who I was.

Scrooge Who were you, then?

Marley In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

Scrooge Jacob? Can you sit down?

Marley Of course I can sit down.

Scrooge Please do so, then.

Marley sits, with much clanking and evident relief. Scrooge averts his eyes

Marley You don't believe in me, do you?

Scrooge No, I don't.

Marley Why do you doubt what you see?

Scrooge Because I've had a slight stomach disorder. It has undoubtedly affected my vision. You're an hallucination, probably brought on by an undigested bit of beef, or a blob of mustard. Yes, that's what you are—you're a blob of mustard!

Marley I tell you, Scrooge, there's more of the grave than of gravy about me!

Scrooge You do not exist, Jacob Marley! Humbug, I tell you—humbug!

Marley Humbug—eh? (*He pulls his chin away from his mouth*) Now do you believe in me?

Scrooge Absolutely! I thank you for your visit and for your good counsel, and now, sir, (*he opens the door*) I bid you a fond farewell.

Marley closes the door with a hand gesture

But why do you walk the earth? And why do you come to me?

Marley I am doomed to wander through the world and witness what I cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness. (*Again he utters a desolate cry and shakes his chain, as though overwhelmed with remorse*)

Scrooge trembles

Scrooge And why are you fettered by that great chain?

Marley I wear the chain that I forged during my life on earth. I made it link by link and yard by yard, and now I can never be rid of it. Any more than you will ever be rid of yours.

Scrooge (*trembling*) M-m-mine?

Marley Imagine the weight and length of the mighty chain you are making for yourself. It was as heavy and as long as this seven Christmasses ago! You have laboured at it mightily ever since! It's a terrible ponderous chain you are making, Scrooge.

Scrooge Jacob! Old Jacob Marley! Speak comfort to me! (*He instinctively looks about his person for the chain and is relieved to find it not there*)

Marley I have none to give. Very little is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere... When I lived, my spirit, like yours, never walked beyond the narrow limits of our counting-house.

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

Marley Business? Mankind is our business, Ebenezer. But how seldom do we attend to it! I know this because I have sat invisible at your elbow many and many a day in your office.

Scrooge (*shivering at the thought*) My office? Watching me?

Marley Hear me, my time is almost gone. I am here tonight to warn you. It is your only hope.

Before Scrooge can object, Marley throws a loop of his chain over his erstwhile partner's neck, and the door and windows slowly open allowing strange lights and mist to enter

Scrooge (*terrified*) No, Jacob! No-o-o-o!