

‘Lead on.’ said Scrooge. ‘Lead on. The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit.’

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on Change, amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals; and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

‘No,’ said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, ‘I don’t know much about it, either way. I only know he’s dead.’

‘When did he die.’ inquired another.

‘Last night, I believe.’

‘Why, what was the matter with him.’ asked a third, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box. ‘I thought he’d never die.’

‘God knows,’ said the first, with a yawn.

‘What has he done with his money.’ asked a red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose, that shook like the gills of a turkey-cock.

‘I haven’t heard,’ said the man with the large chin, yawning again. ‘Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn’t left it to me. That’s all I know.’

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

‘It’s likely to be a very cheap funeral,’ said the same speaker; ‘for upon my life I don’t know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer.’

‘I don’t mind going if a lunch is provided,’ observed the gentleman with the excrescence on his nose. ‘But I must be fed, if I make one.’

Another laugh.

‘Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all,’ said the first speaker, ‘for I never wear black gloves, and I never eat lunch. But I’ll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I’m not at all sure that I wasn’t his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye.’