

Start

**SCROOGE** How strange! My journey has taken me only as far as the landing outside my bedroom. What significant event will occur here in the future, I wonder?

**MRS REECE**, as **MRS DILBER** with a candle and **FELICITY**, as **OLD JOE**, enter.

Could this be it?

**MRS DILBER** (*curtsying*) Evening, old Joe.

**OLD JOE** (*removing his hat together with false beard attached to it*) Evening, Mrs Dilber.

**MRS DILBER** We meet under very happy circumstances.

**OLD JOE** You mean that horrible old bloke who never did a good deed in his life kicked the bucket?

**SCROOGE** Can they mean the death of poor old Scrooge?

**MRS DILBER** They say he was the most hated man in London slap them on the head if they so much as spoke.

**OLD JOE** Yes, he did. And I once saw him kick a poor old woman.

**MRS DILBER** So did I. Do you remember the time he went to pick up a penny and fell in a pile of dog poo.

**OLD JOE** Ha-ha-ha! I laughed so much I nearly split my trousers.

**SCROOGE** Oh, no. I had no idea I was so unpopular.

**OLD JOE** Well, time and tide wait for no man, some stuff we can sell to the pawnbroker.

**MRS DILBER** Yes, let's get going. I'll light this candle.

*She strikes a match and pretends to light a battery-operated candle. Nothing happens, but lights snap up to full anyway, temporarily blinding MRS DILBER and OLD JOE. MRS DILBER shakes the candle and its light comes on.*

**OLD JOE** Thanks, Mrs Dilber. I'll take it downstairs.

**MRS DILBER** Right you are, old Joe. I'll have a prowl round up here.

**OLD JOE** *moves to above balustrade and pretends to walk downstairs, right to left, by bending his knees successively further with each step. After two steps, he staggers.*

**OLD JOE** Oh!

**MRS DILBER** What's up, Joe?

**OLD JOE** Just stumbled on a loose stair-rod.

*He disappears.*

**MRS DILBER** You be careful now.

**OLD JOE** *reappears briefly.*

**OLD JOE** I will.

*He disappears.*

**SCROOGE** Oh, lackaday! I am still warm in my grave and these monstrous ghouls are ransacking my home. What a way to go!

**MRS DILBER** You found anything yet, old Joe?

**OLD JOE** Not half. I'll bring it upstairs to show you.

*He gradually re-emerges from behind the balustrade, moving left to right. He has what is obviously a contemporary woman's coat with him. He shows it to MRS DILBER.*

What do you think of that?

**SCROOGE** Oh, no! Not my onyx umbrella stand.

**OLD JOE** It's your overcoat actually.

**SCROOGE** You brought the wrong thing up. It's supposed to be the umbrella stand.