



continued from page two

will first be visited by the spirit of Christmas Past-- his past, not long past. You know, like when he was a child."

"I didn't know he was ever a child, sir. I thought he was hatched in his present form."

"You know, kid, if you don't watch yourself, I may not talk to you at all."

"Is that a promise, sir?"

"Silence!" he bellowed at me, which was quite a feat, for squirrels aren't very good at bellowing. Listen to one sometime, and you'll see what I mean. "Now, where was I?" he continued. "Oh, yes. Mr. Scrooge will be visited by the spirit of Christmas Past."

A large image wavered before me. "Behold the spirit of Christmas Past!" cried the squirrel, and scampered behind a bush. The image standing before me was wearing a straw hat with a bumper sticker on it. I could barely make out the words. It read: Physics is Fun. A moaning whisper assailed me. "Physics is fun...physics is fun... physics is fun...." I shuddered.

"Oh, how horrible. You will drive the poor man insane. He can't have done

anything that wrong."

"There is a purpose to it, child. Wait...Behold, the spirit of Christmas Present!"

Another image took form in front of me. It smiled and kowtowed politely. In one hand it was holding a large paper shopping bag; in the other it clutched a manila folder filled with marbles. The spirit smiled again, and said good-naturedly, "The top of the day to you, Mr. Scrooge."

"What is the purpose of this spirit, Mr. Marley?"

"The spirit will make apparent to Mr. Scrooge the joys of Christmas as it is now, and how he can help to make it more joyous, just as the spirit of Christmas Past will show him the joys of Christmases in his past...and also remind him of the shameful manner in which he failed physics in college." The pleasant smiling figure kowtowed once again and silently disappeared.

"And now...the last spirit....the most frightening of all." The squirrel cringed and the cold air blew around us icily and without relent. The air grew thick and heavy and the trees took on a somber and morbid air. The sky darkened and the cloud clustered together above our heads. Marley whispered, "The ghost of Christmas to Come...."



The image before me was swathed in black and was wearing a high fake fur Russian hat with a buckle on the side. It glared at me relentlessly and murmured, "So you wanted your pie in the sky too soon, did you? You wanted your pie in the sky now, eh.....?"

I covered my eyes, as the horrifying apparition before me was too frightening for me to behold. Marley scampered behind me and panted, "Wow, that one even scares me sometimes."

When I dared to uncover my eyes, I found that the apparition had turned his hollow eyes upon me, and I caught his icy gaze upon my face. His moldy lips moved, and he murmured at me, "And...always re-

member....the legend of the Great Hat...." With that final warning note he faded into the nothingness of the icy air surrounding him.

In a second's time the air around me was filled with apparitions, all flying and shouting. One spirit cried out, "Call me Carl," while another moaned over and over again, "Sing it again, sopranos." Another filled the sky with cries of "This is the real world!" One just kept repeating over and over again, "Neat...neat...neat...." A ghost with a New York accent smoking a pipe kept quoting sources I had never heard of and admonishing me for never having heard of them. One spoke Burmese and waved a chemical model in my face. One scattered computer cards to the winds, and said, "That was a people mistake...a people mistake..." One quoted Shakespeare and another quoted formulas. I covered my ears and closed my eyes to shut out the cacophany of the spirits.

A few seconds later I felt a gentle bite on my ankle. Marley was looking up at me, and, if a squirrel can smile, was grinning wildly. "Do you hear that?" he chattered anxiously. "Do you hear that? The spirits have already done their work!"

I uncovered my eyes and

looked around. The spirits were gone, and Mr. Scrooge was hanging out of the Commons window crying, "Merry Christmas to all and a Happy New Year!"

Marley swished his tail and crawled under a bush. He looked up at me and yawned. "Good night. I have a few weeks a sleep to catch up on. Oh---and have a Merry Christmas yourself."

"You too, sir." I shook my head to dispel the feeling of illusion that was troubling me, but when I heard Mr. Scrooge wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, I decided it hadn't been a dream after all.

