

Sir Roderic Murgatroyd: Ghost. It is Roderic's job to keep the current holder of the curse on track. He initially appears terrifying, but mellows when re-united with Dame Hannah in one of the most touching moments of the show. Just like all the other Bad Baronets, he's playing a part thrust upon him by circumstance ... but he plays it very well.

ROB. I recognize you now – you are the picture that hangs at the end of the gallery.

SIR ROD. In a bad light. I am.

ROB. Are you considered a good likeness?

SIR ROD. Pretty well. Flattering.

ROB. Because as a work of art you are poor.

SIR ROD. I am crude in colour, but I have only been painted ten years. In a couple of centuries I shall be an Old Master, and then you will be sorry you spoke lightly of me.

ROB. And may I ask why you have left your frames?

SIR ROD. It is our duty to see that our successors commit their daily crimes in a conscientious and workmanlike fashion. It is our duty to remind you that you are evading the conditions under which you are permitted to exist.

ROB. Really, I don't know what you'd have. I've only been a bad baronet a week, and I've committed a crime punctually every day.

SIR ROD. Let us inquire into this. Monday?

ROB. Monday was a Bank Holiday.

SIR ROD. True. Tuesday?

ROB. On Tuesday I made a false income-tax return.

ALL. Ha! ha!

1ST GHOST That's nothing.

2ND GHOST Nothing at all.

3RD GHOST Everybody does that.

4TH GHOST It's expected of you.

SIR ROD. Wednesday?

ROB. (melodramatically). On Wednesday I forged a will.

SIR ROD. Whose will?

ROB. My own.

SIR ROD. My good sir, you can't forge your own will!

ROB. Can't I, though! I like that! I did! Besides, if a man can't forge his own will, whose will can he forge?

1ST GHOST There's something in that.

2ND GHOST Yes, it seems reasonable.

3RD GHOST At first sight it does.

4TH GHOST Fallacy somewhere, I fancy!

ROB. A man can do what he likes with his own!

SIR ROD. I suppose he can.

ROB. Well, then, he can forge his own will, stoopid! On Thursday I shot a fox.

1ST GHOST Hear, hear!

SIR ROD. That's better. (addressing Ghosts) **Pass the fox, I think?** (They assent.)
Yes, pass the fox. Friday?

ROB. On Friday I forged a cheque.

SIR ROD. Whose cheque?

ROB. Old Adam's.

SIR ROD. But Old Adam hasn't a banker.

ROB. I didn't say I forged his banker – I said I forged his cheque. On Saturday I disinherited my only son.

SIR ROD. But you haven't got a son.

ROB. No – not yet. I disinherited him in advance, to save time. You see – by this arrangement – he'll be born ready disinherited.

SIR ROD. I see. But I don't think you can do that.

ROB. My good sir, if I can't disinherit my own unborn son, whose unborn son can I disinherit?

SIR ROD. Humph! These arguments sound very well, but I can't help thinking that, if they were reduced to syllogistic form, they wouldn't hold water. Now quite understand us. We are foggy, but we don't permit our fogginess to be presumed upon. Unless you undertake to – well, suppose we say, carry off a lady? (addressing Ghosts.) Those who are in favour of his carrying off a lady? (All hold up their hands except a Bishop.) Those of the contrary opinion? (Bishop holds up his hands.) Oh, you're never satisfied! Yes, unless you undertake to carry off a lady at once – I don't care what lady – any lady – choose your lady – you perish in inconceivable agonies.

ROB. Carry off a lady? Certainly not, on any account. I've the greatest respect for ladies, and I wouldn't do anything of the kind for worlds! No, no. I'm not that kind of baronet, I assure you! If that's all you've got to say, you'd better go back to your frames.

SIR ROD. Very good – then let the agonies commence.