

SCENE ONE

(Scrooge goes to the stove by his desk. Realizes it is cold and decides to put only one piece of coal in it. Bob Cratchit is at his desk with a blanket around him copying letters. He tries to warm his hands on his candle. He sneezes blowing it out and then lights it again with difficulty. Fred comes in through the office door.)

FRED

A Merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug.

FRED

Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure.

SCROOGE

I do, Fred! Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED

Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

FRED

Don't be cross, uncle.

SCROOGE

What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this. Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas. What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer. If I could work my will every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

FRED

Uncle!

SCROOGE

Nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED

Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE

Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED

I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round -- as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!
(Cratchit involuntarily applauds.)

SCROOGE

Cratchit! Let me hear another sound from you and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. (to Fred) You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED

Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.

SCROOGE

I'll see you in hell first.

FRED

But why? Why?

SCROOGE

Why did you get married?

FRED

Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE

Because you fell in love-with a dowerless girl! Good afternoon!

FRED

Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. But I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

FRED

And A Happy New Year!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

FRED

Merry Christmas , Mr. Cratchit to you and your family.

CRATCHIT

And a Merry Christmas to you and your wife, sir.

SCROOGE

There's another fellow. My clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

SOLICITOR #1

Scrooge and Marley's, I believe, (referring to his list) Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE

Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.

SOLICITOR #2

We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

SOLICITOR #1