

SCROOGE

Once upon a time—on this Christmas Eve—my clerk, Bob Cratchit, sat busy in my counting-house. It was a cold, bleak, afternoon. I was in a particularly foul mood. The city clocks had only just gone three, and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighboring offices. The door to the counting-room was open so that I might keep my eye upon my clerk, Bob Cratchit who was in the dismal little cell beyond, copying letters. To make matters worse, my nephew elected to visit me on this dismal dreary day.

(Nephew enters)

NEPHEW

A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

NEPHEW

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

SCROOGE

I do. Merry Christmas? What have you to be merry about? What reason have you to be merry? You're **poor** enough.

NEPHEW

There are probably many things to be merry about and Christmas is likely one of them. Aside from its religious significance, it's a season of goodwill, forgiveness, generosity, and joy. It's the only time of year when people seem to open their hearts and treat others, regardless of social status, as fellow human beings on the same life journey. So even though Christmas hasn't made me any richer financially, I believe it has enriched my life and will continue to do so. That's why I say, "A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!"

SCROOGE

On your way then. Don't let me keep you.

NEPHEW

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

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug.

NEPHEW

Don't be cross, uncle!

SCROOGE

What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? There's another fellow, my clerk, Bob Cratchit, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam.

NEPHEW

That reminds me uncle, A gentleman from a charity for the destitute visited while you were out. He was requesting to speak to either you or Mr. Marley.

SCROOGE

Mr. Marley is dead. He died seven years ago, this very night. You would have thought that a beggar of his status would have done his research to determine as much!

NEPHEW

I explained as much. And then he ventured to suggest that Mr. Marley's generosity was no doubt well represented by his surviving partner. You of course. And that at this festive season of the year, it is usually desirable that one should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute

SCROOGE

Bah! Tell me, are there no prisons?

NEPHEW

Plenty I fear.

SCROOGE

And the Union workhouses? Are they still in operation?

NEPHEW

They are. And the Treadmill and the "Poor" law are in full vigor. Both are very busy, I am told.

SCROOGE

Oh! I was afraid that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course, I'm very glad to hear it.

NEPHEW

As he described it, he was endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. He wanted to know what he should put you down for?

SCROOGE

Nothing! I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support these establishments. They cost enough and those who are badly off must go there!

NEPHEW

But Uncle, many can't go to these establishments and many would rather die.

SCROOGE

Ha! Then so be it! If they would rather die, they had better do it! Now

NEPHEW

Uncle!

SCROOGE

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

NEPHEW

Keep it? But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE

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

NEPHEW

Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE

It should not come as a surprise to learn that I will not be dining with you tomorrow.

NEPHEW

But why?

SCROOGE

Why? Why did you get married?

NEPHEW

Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE

Because you fell in love! Bah humbug!

NEPHEW

But you never came to see me before I fell in love. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE

On your way then.

NEPHEW

I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why can't we be friends?

SCROOGE

You no doubt have much to do in preparation for your festivities tomorrow. On your way.

NEPHEW

I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. But I have made the effort in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So Merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE

Bah humbug!

NEPHEW

And A Happy New Year!

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

SCROOGE

(to audience)., Enough about this. The hour of shutting up the Counting House was upon us. I sent my clerk, Bob Cratchit, on his way, but only after he humiliated himself by practically begging for Christmas day off. To his credit he did qualify the request with the caveat that it only be convenient. Well it's not convenient! And it's not fair! If I was to stop wages for it, he'd think himself ill-used. And yet, he doesn't think I'm ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work. Bah! Humbug! Well there you have it. Those were the foolish interactions of that fateful day that I was subjected to. It was no wonder I was in such a foul mood that evening as I made my way home. Now quickly, follow me. There is much more that must be accounted for.

(Scrooge leads the group to the next scene.)