

Gentlemen 1, 2

(BOB sees FRED to the door. Two prosperous GENTLEMEN appear and enter. They carry books and papers.)

⊛ GENTLEMAN 1 (to BOB). Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have we the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE. Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. Seven years ago this very night.

GENTLEMAN 2. We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

SCROOGE. Liberality? ...

GENTLEMAN 1. Our credentials, sir. *(Hands them over.)*

At this season of the year it's desirable that we should

make some provision for the poor and destitute. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries. Hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts—

SCROOGE (*returning credentials*). Are there no prisons?

GENTLEMAN 2. Oh, plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE. And the workhouses? Are they still in operation?

GENTLEMAN 2. Very busy, sir.

SCROOGE. I am very glad to hear it. From what you said at first, I was afraid something had stopped them in their useful course.

GENTLEMAN 1. But they hardly furnish Christian cheer of mind and body to the multitude, Mr. Scrooge. That is why a few of us endeavor to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth.

GENTLEMAN 2. What shall we put you down for?

SCROOGE. Nothing.

GENTLEMAN 1. You wish to be anonymous.

SCROOGE. I wish to be left alone. I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help support the prisons and the workhouses—they cost enough.

GENTLEMAN 1. Many can't go there. Many would rather die.

SCROOGE. If they would rather die, let them. It will decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon.



(The stunned GENTLEMEN stare at one another. SCROOGE returns to his desk and ignores them. They give up and exit. The street is darker. Some CAROLERS appear. Their leader is FRED. CAROLERS stop outside the office, singing. SCROOGE runs out the door and FRED darts behind the others.)