

LBRIS

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books

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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PUFFIN



THE NAME on the door of the counting house said: *Scrooge and Marley*. But Jacob Marley was dead; he'd been dead for seven years.

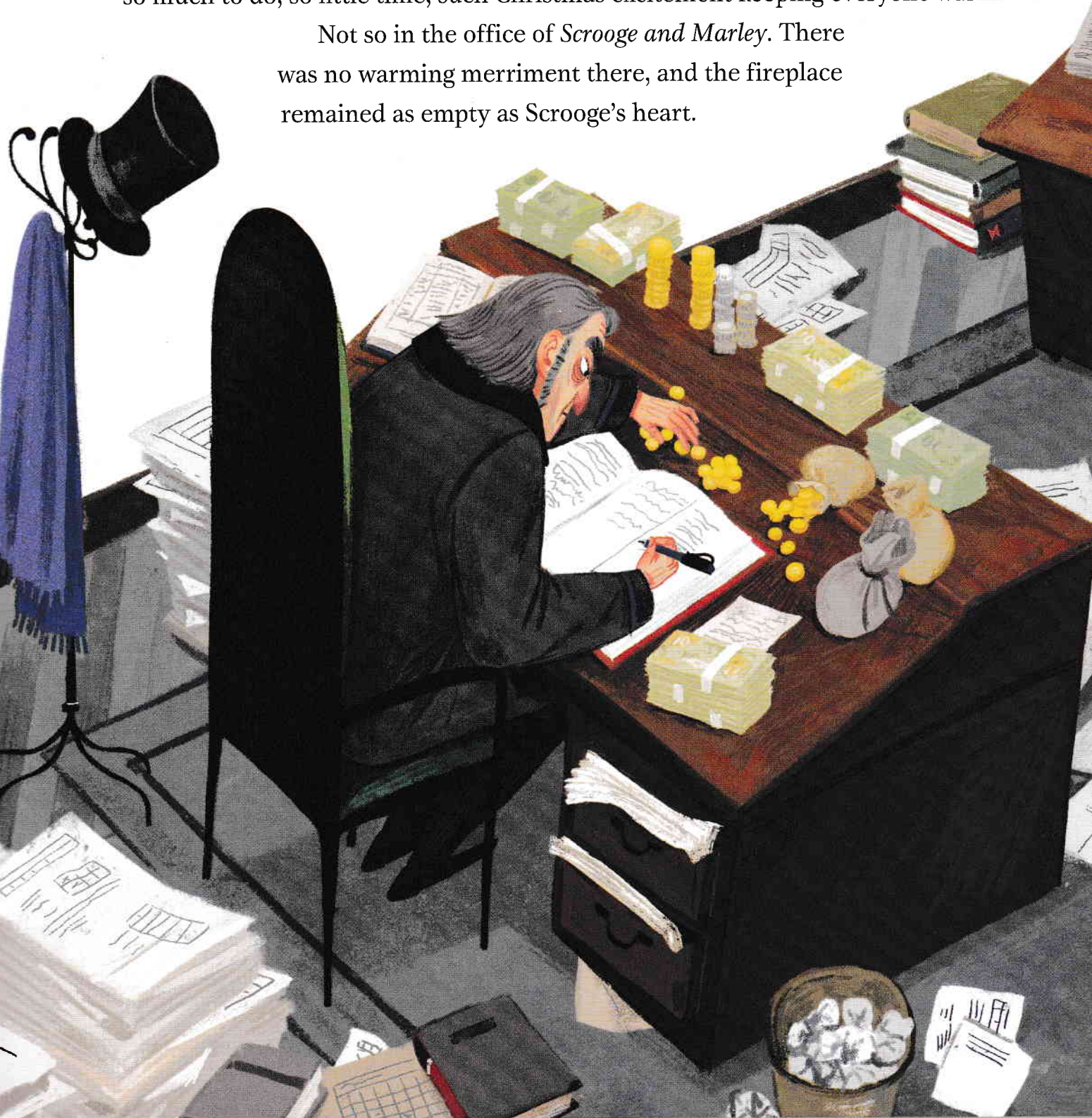
Ebenezer Scrooge – a mumbling, grumbling, mean old miser – ran the business alone, without a care for anything but his money or a thought for anyone but himself. Least of all his poor, petrified clerk, Bob Cratchit, who – on this particular Christmas Eve – was working late . . . as usual.

CHINK,
CHINK,
CHINK!

The sound of Ebenezer Scrooge counting coins drowned out the chattering of Bob Cratchit's teeth as he shivered at his desk.

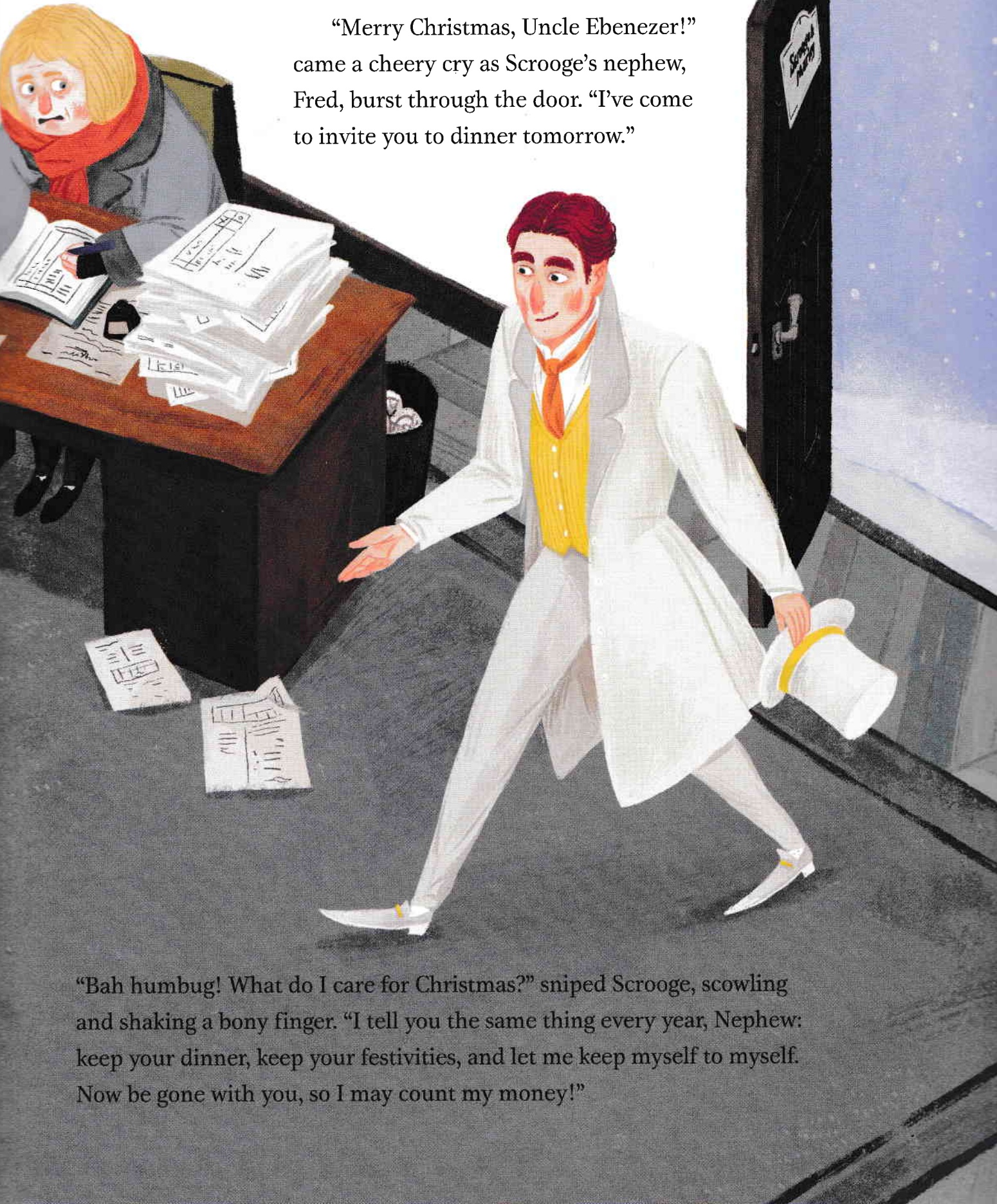
Outside, a blanket of white topped the houses and carpeted the streets below. Falling flakes of snow and billowing breath filled the air as people bustled about – so much to do, so little time, such Christmas excitement keeping everyone warm.

Not so in the office of *Scrooge and Marley*. There was no warming merriment there, and the fireplace remained as empty as Scrooge's heart.



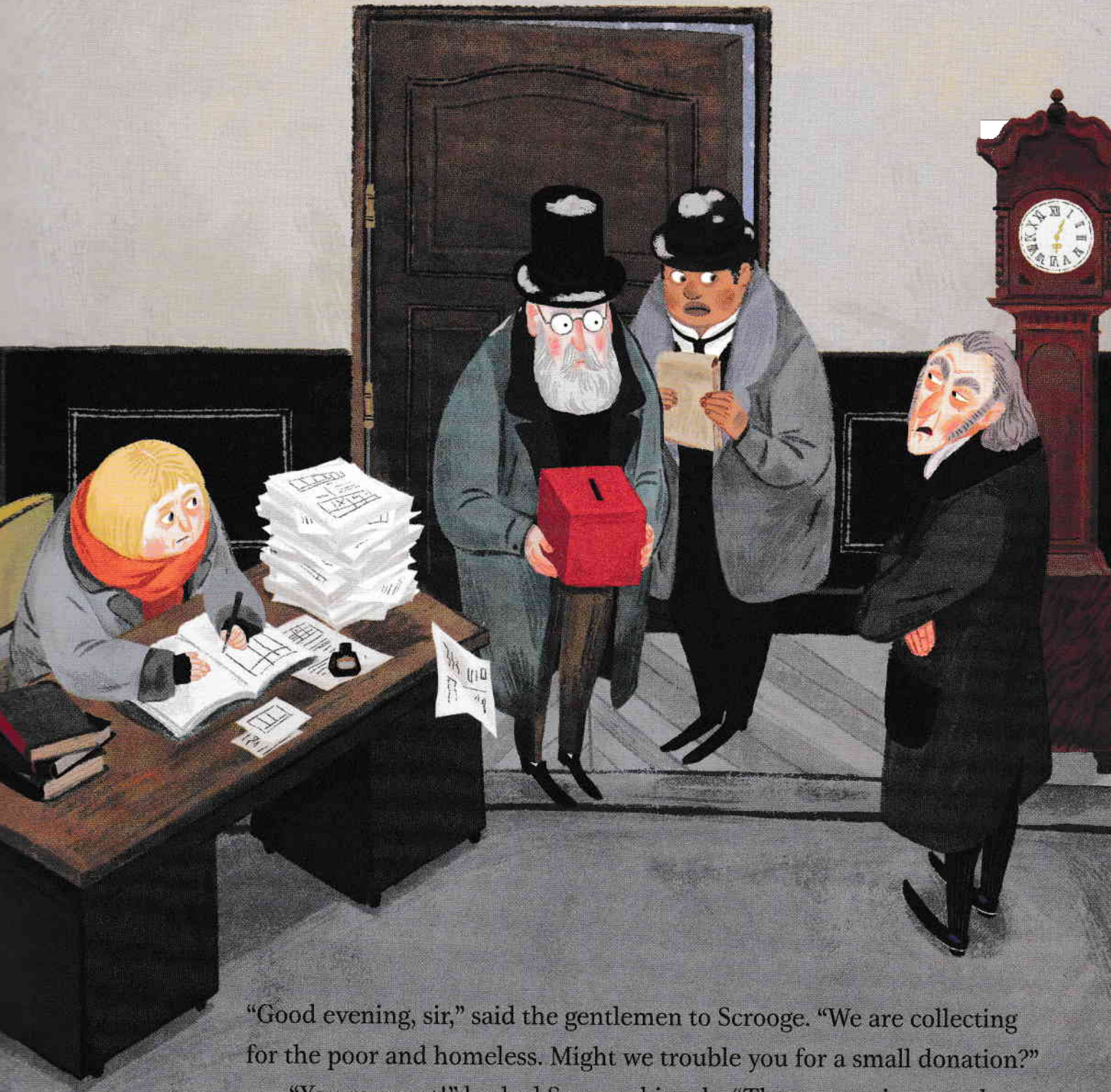
UNTIL . . .

“Merry Christmas, Uncle Ebenezer!” came a cheery cry as Scrooge’s nephew, Fred, burst through the door. “I’ve come to invite you to dinner tomorrow.”



“Bah humbug! What do I care for Christmas?” sniped Scrooge, scowling and shaking a bony finger. “I tell you the same thing every year, Nephew: keep your dinner, keep your festivities, and let me keep myself to myself. Now be gone with you, so I may count my money!”

As Fred left the counting house in a flurry of snow, two gentlemen came in.



“Good evening, sir,” said the gentlemen to Scrooge. “We are collecting for the poor and homeless. Might we trouble you for a small donation?”

“You may not!” barked Scrooge bitterly. “There are prisons and workhouses for the poor and the homeless. This money is for ME!”

The gentlemen were horrified and scurried away, leaving a frosty silence in the room, colder than the air outside. It was broken only by the chiming of the clock sounding out the hour.

“You’ll be wanting the day off tomorrow with full pay, I suppose?”
said Scrooge meanly to his clerk. “Be here all the earlier the next morning.”



“Yes, sir, thank you, sir, and Merry Christmas, Mr Scrooge,”
said Bob Cratchit cheerily as he hurried out of the door.