

A Christmas Carol Sides

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MONOLOGUE #1

Scrooge went home. Fog and frost hung about an old brick gateway. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, had to grope with his hands. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy, dreary suite of rooms, and nobody lived there but Scrooge. Now it is a fact, that there was nothing particular about the knocker on the door. Then let any man explain to me, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face had a dismal look about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It wasn't angry or ferocious but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, the eyes were wide open, but perfectly motionless. As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

MONOLOGUE #2

MARLEY was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. On the very day of Marley's funeral, Scrooge was not upset by the sad event, and only remarked, "he was an excellent man of business." Marley and Scrooge had been partners for years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole friend, and sole mourner. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business, called Scrooge Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him. But there is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story we are about to relate.

CRATCHIT and MRS. CRATCHIT

CRATCHIT: My dears, I have three toasts! To the Lady of the Feast: Mother Cratchit!

MRS. CRATCHIT (embarrassed) Bob!

ALL: To Mother Cratchit!

CRATCHIT: To the Treasure of the Feast: Mister Goose!

ALL: To Mister Goose!

CRATCHIT And to the Founder of the Feast: Mister Scrooge!

MRS. CRATCHIT: The Founder of the Feast? Him? Oh, I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

CRATCHIT: My dear. Christmas Day . . .

MRS. CRATCHIT: It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such a... a stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.

CRATCHIT: My dear.

MRS. CRATCHIT: You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do!

CRATCHIT: Have an open heart, I beg you. Remember that Mister Scrooge is a poor unfortunate.

MRS. CRATCHIT: A poor unfortunate . . . ?

CRATCHIT: Here it is Christmas day and he has no family gathered round him, no warmth, no cheer. He has none but his own voice to listen to and his own voice to answer. Is he not unfortunate?

MRS. CRATCHIT: Yes, I suppose. But ... well ..(PRESENT sprinkles MRS CRATCHIT with his magic dust. MRS. CRATCHIT brightens.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, yes, Bob. I say, God bless Mr. Scrooge!

ALL: God bless, Mr. Scrooge!

FAN AND BOY SCROOGE

BOY SCROOGE: Fan!

FAN: Ebbe! [Silent final E.] Oh, my dearest brother. I have come to pack you home!

BOY SCROOGE: But what about father?

FAN: Oh, Ebbe, father is ever so much kinder than he was. He sent me in a fine coach to fetch you, with four horses!

BOY SCROOGE: Four horses!?

FAN: You're to be a man now, he says, and never come back to this place. And we'll be

together all Christmas long and have the merriest time in the world!

BOY SCROOGE: Oh, Fan!

FAN: And - I have something for you. (FAN produces a small box tied with a decorative ribbon.)

BOY SCROOGE: What is it?

FAN: Open it up silly goose and see for yourself.

BOY SCROOGE: (he unwraps the box.) A ring?

FAN: It's only a shilling ring. But I want you to wear it so that you'll always be reminded that you are loved. It makes me so happy to think of it. And someday perhaps you'll give it to someone else for the same reason.

Grimgrind, Miggot, & Old Joe

GRIMGRIND

They journeyed then to a place where Scrooge had never been, where the ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched.

MIGGOT

Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their smell and dirt and life upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

SCROOGE

What horrible place is this, Spirit, and why do you bring me here?

OLD JOE enters with his CART; a rolling Pawn Shop; He's followed by MRS. DILBER and joined by MIGGOTT and GRIMGRIND; All three carry bundles or sacks;

OLD JOE

Right this way, Mrs. Housekeeper, right this way.

SCROOGE

Why that is my housekeeper, Mrs. Dilber!

MIGGOTT

Hey?!

SCROOGE

And Mercy Miggot, she cleans my chambers! Why are they here?

MRS. DILBER [to MIGGOTT and GRIMGRIND]

Well, fancy meeting the two 'a you here.

MIGGOTT

I ain't surprised.

GRIMGRIND

Nor I.

OLD JOE

You're all acquainted - lovely.

SCROOGE

I don't know these men...

OLD JOE

Well now, Mrs. Housekeeper, Missy Charwoman, and Mr. . . . ? Come now, don't be shy, no secrets among the unholy, Mr. . . . ?

GRIMGRIND

Grimgrind. His undertaker.

SCROOGE

Undertaker. i. j. . . ?

OLD JOE

Naturally! Three lovely bone pickers all!

MRS. DILBER

Bone pickers?

OLD JOE

Now, show Old Joe what you've stolen and I'll let you know the value of it.

MIGGOTT

Stolen! I resent the inference, Joe. And I ain't in the habit of picking bones.

GRIMGRIND

Nor I.

MRS. DILBER

Nor I. Every person has a right to look after themselves. He always did!

MIGGOTT

Too true.

GRIMGRIND

No man more so.

MRS. DILBER

If he wanted his things about him after he was dead, why wasn't he more natural in his lifetime? Then he'd've had somebody to look after him when his time had come, instead of lying there, gasping out his last, all by himself.

MIGGOTT

The truest words ever was spoke.

GRIMGRIND

It's a judgment on 'im.

MRS. DILBER

We're only claiming what's due us.

OLD JOE

I'm convinced.

He places a stool between them that will be used to display the goods;

SCROOGE

This is a strange gathering, Spirit.

OLD JOE

To the business, then.

GRIMGRIND

To the business.

OLD JOE

Show Old Joe what you've got. What's yours, Missy Charwoman?

MIGGOTT.unloads.her.bundle?onto.the.stool;

MIGGOTT

Brass doorknocker, gruel pot, a spoon – it's silver; sugar tongs - without much experience of sugar; and a pair a shoes.

OLD JOE

Six shillings.

MIGGOTT

Six. . . !?

OLD JOE

I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine.

OLDJOE.pays.her.and.takes.the.things?as.she.steps.back.grumbling;
Open your, bundle, Mr. Grimgrind the undertaker and show Old Joe what's in it.

GRIMGRIND

Reading specs.

OLD JOE

Seen better days.

GRIMGRIND

Two gold fillings.

OLD JOE

That's more like it.

GRIMGRIND

And a ring.

OLD JOE

An old-fashioned shilling ring.

GRIMGRIND/SCROOGE

A shilling-ring?

OLDJOE.bites.it.and.throw.s.it.away;

OLD JOE

Ain't worth a farthing now. Four shillings for the rest.

GRIMGRIND

Four shill...!

OLD JOE

Not another sixpence, if I was to be boiled in oil.

OLDJOE.pays.a.grumbling.GRIMGRIND.and.tosses.the.contents.of.his.bag.on.his.cart
as.MRSj.DILBER.unwraps.her.bundlej

PAST AND SCROOGE

SCROOGE: Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

CHRISTMAS PAST: I am.

SCROOGE: Who, and what are you?

CHRISTMAS PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long Past?

CHRISTMAS PAST: No, no. Your past.

SCROOGE: And these children, who are they?

CHRISTMAS PAST: This boy is called Remembrance; this girl is Forgiveness. Do you not recognize them?

SCROOGE: Recognize them? Why should I? What business brings them here?

CHRISTMAS PAST: Your welfare.

SCROOGE: My welfare? I cannot help thinking a night of unbroken rest would be infinitely more conducive to that end.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Your reclamation, then. Walk forth with me!

SCROOGE: Walk forth . . . ? It's midnight, I am clad but lightly and I have an inconvenient cold upon me at this time. Walk forth you say!?

SCROOGE: What do you want of me?

REMEMBERANCE: Hold my hand.

SCROOGE: I am but mortal.

FORGIVENESS: We won't harm you.

CHRISTMAS PAST: Bear but a touch of my hand – and you shall be upheld in more than this!

PHILPOT AND TWYCE

(MR. PHILPOT and MR. TWYCE enter.)

PHILPOT: Merry Christmas.

CRATCHIT: Good afternoon, Gentlemen. Merry Christmas to you.

TWYCE: Merry Christmas, that's the word, that's the word.

PHILPOT: Scrooge and Marley's, I presume?

SCROOGE: Yes?

PHILPOT: I am Mr. Philpot, and this is my new associate, Mr. Twyce.

TWYCE: How do you do, sir? How do you do? Have we the pleasure of addressing Marley, or Scrooge, then? Mr. Marley or Mr - ?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley is dead.

.

PHILPOT: Please accept our condolences.

TWYCE: Indeed, indeed.

SCROOGE: He died seven years ago, this very night. It was his Christmas celebration.

TWYCE: Ah.

PHILPOT: Well, Mr. Marley's liberality is no doubt represented by his surviving partner.

SCROOGE: Your business, sir?

PHILPOT: Mr. Scrooge, at this festive time of the year it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute,

TWYCE: Who suffer greatly at the present time.

PHILPOT: Many more are in want of common necessities.

TWYCE: Necessaries.

PHILPOT: Thousands more are in want of common comforts.

TWYCE: Comforts, comforts.

SCROOGE: Beggars, are they?

PHILPOT: Many have been reduced to such degradation.

SCROOGE: What has this to do with me?

PHILPOT: My dear Mister Scrooge, we should like to enjoy a bit of your assistance.

SCROOGE: Assistance?

PHILPOT: Your...

TWYCE and PHILPOT: Financial assistance.

SCROOGE: How much?

TWYCE: That's the spirit. That's the spirit.

SCROOGE: As much as you feel that you can afford would be most gratefully accepted, my dear Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE

Very well. Cratchit, prepare a contract at 18 1/2% interest; penalty fees at double the interest for payment in arrears as per our standard arrangement. Now, my dear Mr. – Philpot, I believe. ...what would you guarantee me as collateral?

TWYCE: Oh dear. Oh dear.

PHILPOT: You misunderstand, sir.

SCROOGE: You are asking me for money. My business is lending money for profit.

PHILPOT: We are asking for generosity, sir. To help those less fortunate than we.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

PHILPOT: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE And the workhouses? Are they still in operation?

PHILPOT: I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE: Well, I am very glad to hear they are. I was afraid that something had occurred to halt them in their useful course.

TWYCE: Mr. Philpot, perhaps we should...

PHILPOT: Mr. Scrooge, workhouses and prisons scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude. With this in mind, a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth.

TWYCE: Common necessities.

PHILPOT: We choose this time of year because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices.

TWYCE: Rejoices!

PHILPOT: Now then, Mr. Scrooge, what donation, shall we put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

PHILPOT: You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. My taxes help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough, and those who are badly off must go there.

PHILPOT: Many can't go there; and many more would rather die.

SCROOGE: If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

TWYCE: Mr. Scrooge . . .!

PHILPOT: Charity, Mr. Scrooge. Charity!

SCROOGE: Charity is not my business! And now Gentlemen, if you will kindly take your leave, we shall all be the better for it. Good afternoon.

PHILPOT: Good afternoon, sir.

PHILPOT AND TWYCE #1

(MR. PHILPOT and MR. TWYCE enter.)

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CRATCHIT: Good afternoon, Gentlemen. Merry Christmas to you.

TWYCE: Merry Christmas, that's the word, that's the word.

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TWYCE and PHILPOT: Financial assistance.

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SCROOGE: As much as you feel that you can afford would be most gratefully accepted, my dear Mr. Scrooge.

PHILPOT AND TWYCE #2

SCROOGE: Very well. Cratchit, prepare a contract at 18 1/2% interest; penalty fees at double the interest for payment in arrears as per our standard arrangement. Now, my dear Mr. – Philpot, I believe. ...what would you guarantee me as collateral?

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SCROOGE: Charity is not my business! And now Gentlemen, if you will kindly take your leave, we shall all be the better for it. Good afternoon.

PHILPOT: Good afternoon, sir.

SCADGER

I could be 'ome right now with a 'unk of Yuletide mutton in me mouth,
But for this 'ere stinkin' lump. E 'ad to die on Christmas day! Ain't that the
thievin' way of the world, when even the dead can keep a poor man 'ungry?
But, let us give thanks for small blessin's. E's got no grievin' relations, which
means no weepin', no wailin' and no waitin'. We'll dump him down the ole
Pauper's Pit - and with any luck we'll be 'ome for Christmas puddin'. Come
on, you.

SCROOGE AND CRATCHIT

SCROOGE: You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT: If it's quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to stop you half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill used; I'll be bound. And yet, you don't think me ill used, when I pay a day's wages for no work.

CRATCHIT: It's only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE: A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December.

CRATCHIT: Yes sir. It's the family more than me, sir. They put their hearts into . . . the holiday, as it were, sir.

SCROOGE: Put their hands into my pocket, as it were, sir. But I suppose you must have the whole day.

CRATCHIT: Thank you, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: How many mouths in that family of yours, Cratchit?

CRATCHIT: Six children we've been blessed with, sir. We've much to be grateful for.

SCROOGE: Including a little lame boy, I seem to recall.

CRATCHIT: Timothy, sir. Tiny Tim we're fond of calling him. But we're in high hopes that he's getting stronger.

SCROOGE: Eight hungry mouths to feed on fifteen shillings a week - and a cripple thrown in for good measure. Yes, you've much to be grateful for, Bob Cratchit.

CRATCHIT Good night, sir. We . . . shall think of you tomorrow, sir.

SCROOGE AND FRED

FRED: Won't you return my Merry Christmas, Uncle?

SCROOGE: Humbug.

FRED: Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I am sure.

SCROOGE: What right have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED: What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah -

FRED and SCROOGE: Humbug!

SCROOGE: How dare you!

FRED: Now, now, don't be cross, Uncle.

SCROOGE: What else can I be when I live in a world of fools? 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, and 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.

FRED: That, Uncle, is a discouraging sentiment.

SCROOGE: Meant to be so. 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: Uncle, there are many things from which I have derived good, by which I have not made money. Christmas among the rest. I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to look upon people less fortunate as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, 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 Christmas!

SCROOGE

You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED: Uncle, I've come once again to invite you to Christmas dinner. Catherine and I would be most honored to see you at two o'clock.
SCROOGE

SCROOGE: I will see you in hell first.

FRED: Half past then, no later.

SCROOGE: You will never see me in your home, sir.

FRED: But why?

SCROOGE: Why? Why did you get married? Why did you, against my most express wishes, affix yourself to a penniless, dowerless girl?

FRED: Because we fell in love.

SCROOGE: Love!

FRED: Yes, and if you'd only agree to meet her, I'm sure you'd grow to love her too.

SCROOGE: I suppose you'll spawn children with this woman.

FRED: With Catherine. My wife's name is Catherine. And yes Uncle, one day we hope to have many children.

SCROOGE: You've no business breeding, sir. You can barely support yourself.

FRED: Uncle, please, we are family, you and I. We are each other's only kin in this world.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

FRED: And I know my mother's spirit can never rest easy until things between us are put right.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED: Well . . . I have made this annual pilgrimage in honor of she who was your sister, and my mother. And in her remembrance, I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. Merry Christmas, my dear Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE AND SMUDGE

SCROOGE: Stop! ...What is your name?

SMUDGE: My name's Smudge, sir. Percy Smudge. I'm hungry I am this Christmas Eve. I had no supper these two days, sir.

SCROOGE: You're an enterprising young lad. You're very kind, sir.

SMUDGE: Oh, I don't know. . .

SCROOGE: I do have something for you. Can you see what's in my hand?

SMUDGE: A shilling, sir.

SCROOGE: Yes, and in this one?

SMUDGE: A ruler.

SCROOGE: Yes. Now come here. If you can tell me three uses for a ruler, Master Smudge, then you shall have the shilling.

SMUDGE: A ruler is to measure, sir.

SCROOGE: That's one.

SMUDGE: And to make a straight line . . . ?

SCROOGE: Two.

SMUDGE: Sorry sir. That's all I know.

SCROOGE: I'll teach you the third. A ruler is an excellent tool for the edification of impudent beggar-boys. Now get out! You've no business here, you rascal! Out!

SMUDGE: Help! Lunatic! Murderer! Help me . . . ! Help . . . !

THE CRATCHIT CHILDREN

MARTHA: And lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, 'til it came to rest over the manger where the child lay, and going inside they saw the baby with Mary his mother, and they knelt and offered him gifts.

ALICE (1ST KING) : Hail, Maker of everything; I give you gold as an offering.

BELINDA (2ND KING) Hail, infant of heavenly light; I bring you incense, as is my right.

PETER (3RD KING) Hail, King, on bended knee; I bring for Thy grave, this myrrh to Thee.

MARTHA And the little baby smiled, and Mary thanked them.

MARY: We thank you, O Kings!

MARTHA: And suddenly, the star blazed forth, and all round them a choir of angels sang!

CRATCHIT

Hello, hello, hello! Merry Christmas, my dears! Merry Christmas to you all!
You all seem in great spirits! And look at those beards!

PETER: We're making a pageant, father!

BELINDA: It's the nativity!

MARY: And I'm Mary and here's Baby Jesus!

CRATCHIT: Wonderful, Mary! I can hardly wait to see it.

TINY TIM AND MARTHA

MARTHA: Merry Christmas, Timothy!

TIM: Merry Christmas, Martha!

MARTHA: Do you know what is taking place in that kettle on that stove at this very moment?

TINY TIM: What?

MARTHA: Our Christmas pudding is singing. Singing? As sweet as a choir of angels.

TINY TIM: Really?

MARTHA: Would you like to hear it?

TINY TIM: I would!

YOUNG SCROOGE AND BELLE SCENE #1

BELLE: Congratulations, Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Thank you, Belle.

BELLE: I'm very happy for you. You've such a bright future.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Perhaps I have.

BELLE: (she motions to the party going on inside) Shall we . . .?

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, could we not stay here a moment? Would you mind?

BELLE: I wouldn't mind. I wouldn't mind at all.

YOUNG SCROOGE: You. . . You're looking particularly handsome tonight, Belle.

BELLE: Mrs. Fezziwig helped me with my dress.

YOUNG SCROOGE: You're an angel. I mean you're beautiful as an angel . . . would look. . .

were an angel to be at Fezziwig's Christmas party.

BELLE: Why, thank you, Ebenezer. Perhaps we should...

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, I . . . I have something for you.

BELLE: Oh.

YOUNG SCROOGE: (producing a ring)It was given me when I was a boy; in trust, really. A reminder that I would always be loved. It should make me very happy for you to wear it. It's only a shilling ring, I know. Someday I swear to you, you'll wear a gold one beside it.

BELLE: It's beautiful.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Then you'll have me? ...As soon as I can afford to support you in the manner you deserve, I want you to become my wife.

BELLE: Oh, Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE: You know I love you.

BELLE: And I you, more than you can imagine. But my father's a poor man. I've no inheritance to look forward to and no hope of a dowry. And you, you wear ambition about you like a cloak on a winter's day. Ebenezer, you need a wealthy girl. Someone who can help give you your start in life.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, all that I desire is you by my side and an honest chance to advance our station. Dearest Belle, believe me, if you love me, then I'm already the richest man on earth.

BELLE: Will you always feel that way?

YOUNG SCROOGE: As long as I have a heart, it shall be yours.

YOUNG SCROOGE AND BELLE SCENE #2

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, Jacob and I run a business, not a charity.

BELLE: But why must they vacate on Christmas Eve? An unfortunate family with nowhere to go?

YOUNG SCROOGE: If one cannot meet one's financial obligations, then one must accept the consequences. After all who is the injured party? I am. Whenever I borrow, I pay on the nail.

BELLE: And so you collect on the nail as well.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Yes, and I'm proud to say so. Belle, when we're married, will we not have substantial expenses? I want to provide us with a certain quality of life. I want us to be happy. Now, Jacob is waiting for us at The Fox and Hound.

BELLE: Ebenezer, when we are married, will the quality of our life be measured by our expenses?

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle. Not again.

BELLE: Are those the scales on which our happiness will be weighed?

YOUNG SCROOGE: You're speaking nonsense – and it's unfair. There's nothing the world is so hard on as poverty; and yet there's nothing the world so roundly condemns as the honest pursuit of wealth.

BELLE: You fear the world too much, Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE: What?

BELLE: Is it the honest pursuit of wealth, or just another way to keep the world at arm's length?

YOUNG SCROOGE: Belle, please. If I've grown wiser in the ways of the world, what then? I am not changed towards you.

BELLE: But you are. You are. An idol has displaced me.

YOUNG SCROOGE: What idol?

BELLE: A golden one.

SCROOGE: Oh, no...no...

BELLE: Ebenezer, forgive me. I've been slow to speak my heart. Not because my love for you blinded me, but because I trusted too deeply in that love.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Jacob is waiting!

BELLE: And so I kept silent these past two years while I've watched your nobler aspirations fall from you one by one, til your every conversation – your every thought I fear – is of assets, advantages, profits, and wealth. Ebenezer, is that the man you now aspire to be?

YOUNG SCROOGE: What is it that you mean to say?

BELLE: Our contract is an old one. When it was made, you were another man.

YOUNG SCROOGE: I was a boy.

BELLE: You are not now what you were then. I am. I have not changed. But if this new life is what you truly desire; if it will cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, then I have no just cause to grieve.

BELLE: How often, how keenly, how painfully I have thought upon this . . . I will not say. But, I have thought upon it . . . and feel it best to release you.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words, no. Never.

YOUNG SCROOGE: In what, then?

BELLE: In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight.

BELLE: Look at me, Ebenezer, and answer from your heart . . . if you were free today, as you were two years ago, would you still try to win me, a girl with no inheritance, no social standing, and no desire to sell happiness for success?

YOUNG SCROOGE: If you wish to break our contract...If you seek a release from our agreement. I grant it.

BELLE: I shall always remember with a full heart the love I carried for the man you once were. You may have pain in this. But I know that it will last a very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. (BELLE extends the ring to YOUNG SCROOGE. He takes the ring.)

BELLE: So. It's done. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

YOUNG SCROOGE: (a beat) Humbug. (He exits)