

BELLE

It matters little, to you very little. Another idol has displaced me.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN

What idol has displaced you?

BELLE

A golden one.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN

This is the even-handed dealing of the world, so hard on the poor and severe with the pursuit of wealth.

BELLE

You fear the world too much. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, *gain*, engrosses you.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN

What then? Even if I have grown so much the wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you. (*BELLE shakes her head.*) Am I?

BELLE

Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor. Ten years have passed. You are changed.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN

I was a boy.

BELLE

That which promised happiness when we were one in heart is fraught with misery now that we are two.

How often I have thought of this I will not say...I can release you.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN

Have I ever sought release from our engagement?

BELLE

In words, no. Never.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN

In what, then?

BELLE

In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; another hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. Tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now?

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN

You think not?

BELLE

I would gladly think otherwise if I could. But me, a girl with no dowry, no money. Do I not know that your regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. (*SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN tries to speak.*) You may have pain in this. But you will awake, as from an unprofitable dream. May you be happy in the life you have chosen.