

Belle/Nancy Scrooge

~~SCROOGE~~

strolling around the fountain.) Ah! That's what we did! Together!

BELLE. Mary? I wanted that more than anything. I fell quite in love with you, my dear, right at that dance. I loved your awkwardness, your shyness, and I thought, your preference for me.

SCROOGE OLDER. You were right. I did prefer you.

BELLE. You did then.

SCROOGE OLDER. And do now!

BELLE. But it makes no difference now.

SCROOGE OLDER. No difference? That I love you before all others?

BELLE. Before all other women, yes, I believe that.

SCROOGE OLDER. Then marry me!

BELLE. Women in love know they have other rivals.

SCROOGE OLDER. I can't imagine who.

BELLE. Ebenezer, you can't imagine at all. You can't see it.

SCROOGE OLDER. Don't be vague. See what?

BELLE. You have left me.

SCROOGE OLDER. I have not! My love for you is stronger than ever!

BELLE. Your love for me is one thing. But there is another love. It seemed natural at first. But it became passionate, fierce, and consuming, and it is for someone else.

SCROOGE OLDER. That is not true!

SCROOGE. And it wasn't! I loved her! With all my heart!

(A Boy comes running around the fountain.)

BOY. Sing you a carol? *(Sings?)*

NOEL, NOEL.

SCROOGE OLDER. Good afternoon!

BELLE. No, let's listen.

BOY. *(Singing?)*

NOEL, NOEL —

SCROOGE OLDER. Not now! Good afternoon, boy!

BOY. *(Singing?)*

NOEL, NOEL —

SCROOGE OLDER. Stop it! We don't want to hear your song! Goodbye!

BOY. All right, all right.

SCROOGE OLDER. Stop it! We don't want to hear your song! Goodbye!

BOY. All right, all right.

SCROOGE. I wasn't foolish! I wasn't sentimental! I did love her! I did want her! *(The Boy runs off around the fountain.)*

BELLE. You didn't have to shout at the boy.

SCROOGE OLDER. Boys like that upset me. I don't know why. I'm sorry. But all this nonsense about my having other loves is not true!

BELLE. Not true? Of course it's true. Your face was so smooth and unlined when I met you just a few years ago. Now it's hard and it's twisted.

SCROOGE OLDER. Twisted? My face?

BELLE. With desire, with passion, and with love, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE OLDER. Yes, love for you! This is humbug! There's no other woman!

BELLE. Oh, there is. She is called Idol. She has slowly displaced me. So be it. If she can cheer you and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I will be glad for you.

SCROOGE OLDER. Oh, please! What Idol has displaced you?

BELLE. A golden one.

SCROOGE OLDER. You mean money?

BELLE. Yes. I mean Money.

SCROOGE OLDER. Now you're being silly.

BELLE. I have never been more serious in my life.

SCROOGE OLDER. Belle, we must have courage and live life as it is! There is nothing as treacherous as poverty.

BELLE. Courage is not what I see in you.

SCROOGE OLDER. What do you see in me?

SCROOGE. The future is a terrible thing, Spirit! I only wanted to protect us both!

CHRISTMAS PAST. Listen!

BELLE. What I see in you is fear.

SCROOGE OLDER. Of what?

BELLE. Of the world. Of age. Of being an old man. Yes, life can be harsh and cruel. But you are too anxious to put yourself beyond being poor, by making yourself so rich. I have watched your noble aspirations fall away, while the real love of your life, Getting Things, devours you.

SCROOGE OLDER. If I have grown wise enough to put

things aside for later life, what's wrong with that? I still love you.

BELLE. No, Ebenezer, you don't.

SCROOGE. I do! I do!

BELLE. We first loved when we were poor, content to be poor until by normal industry we could better ourselves. You've gone much faster than that. And you have changed.

SCROOGE OLDER. Since I was a boy, yes!

BELLE. No, since then.

SCROOGE OLDER. I am no longer young, that's true!

BELLE. But I still am. I know what I must do.

SCROOGE. Don't! Belle!

BELLE. I will release you from your vows.

SCROOGE. You see, Spirit? From that! I wanted to protect her, from that!

SCROOGE OLDER. Is that what you will do? Walk in this park, alone and poor?

BELLE. And if I did, would you court me then?

SCROOGE OLDER. You are very sure I would not.

BELLE. I wish I wasn't. Even if you did marry a poor woman for love, I know that regret would soon follow. I let you go. With my heart full of love for the man you once were.

SCROOGE. And still am! Still am! *(Scrooge Older starts to say something, then turns his back on her.)*

BELLE. It may hurt for a while. But a very short while. You will be glad you did not marry a woman who would hold you back, just because you loved her.

SCROOGE. And still do! Still do! *(Belle smiles but speaks very faintly.)*

BELLE. We are at a crossroads, Ebenezer. One road leads one way, one another.

SCROOGE. Belle.

BELLE. Only you can decide where you will go. Only I can decide where I will go.

SCROOGE. Belle, please!

BELLE. I hope with all my heart that your way will be as right for you as I know mine is for me.

SCROOGE. Wait! Don't!

BELLE. Goodbye, my dear, and may God bless you. *(Belle touches Scrooge Older on the shoulder and walks away from him.)*

SCROOGE. Turn around! You fool, she's leaving you! Turn around! *(Belle is gone. Scrooge Older turns around.)*

SCROOGE OLDER. So be it! *(He strides off, in the opposite direction.)*

SCROOGE. Belle! Come back! COME BACK!!! Ah, Spirit! Stop torturing me! Take me home!

CHRISTMAS PAST. One shadow more!

SCROOGE. No more! I can't stand it! *(Snow begins to fall heavily. The Ghost of Christmas Past backs away from Scrooge, leaving him at the circular railing of the fountain, beneath the statue of the little boy playing with a ball.)*

CHRISTMAS PAST. ONE MORE! *(We hear a tiny voice singing. Enter the Boy again, singing the carol again. From the other side of the stage, enter Scrooge as a Boy. They sing together. Light on the statue of the little boy playing with a ball.)*

SCROOGE. That boy!

BOY and SCROOGE AS A BOY.

(Singing.)

NOEL, NOEL,

NOEL, NOEL.

BORN IS A CHILD IN ISRAEL.

SCROOGE. And that boy! Who is he? What are they doing here? Why are they tormenting me?

BOY and SCROOGE AS A BOY.

(Singing.)

NOEL, NOEL —

SCROOGE. Stop it! STOP IT!!! *(Scrooge leans against the fountain, in furious denial. He cries out with all his power.)* HUMB-BUG!!! HUMB-BUG!!! HUMB-BUG!!! *(The statue of boy looms above him. Boys sing. Snow falls. Curtain, very slowly.)*

END OF ACT ONE