

Isabel Ebenezer?

Ebenezer Yes. (*He does not look up from his work*)

Isabel picks out the fading flowers from the vase on Ebenezer's desk and replaces them with the fresh ones. Old Scrooge is right beside her, and now looks at her with a sadness greater than her own

Ebenezer is preoccupied

Isabel We have talked of marriage for quite some time. But there is still no plan for a wedding.

Ebenezer There will be a wedding when I have enough money to support such an enterprise.

Isabel When will that ever be, Ebenezer? How much is “enough”? I want to marry you, not your cash box.

Slowly Ebenezer looks up at Isabel as her words penetrate

Ebenezer I will decide when. I will know. Now I have work to do.

Isabel shakes her head. She looks sadly at the ring Ebenezer gave her

Isabel No. You have found another love to replace me—and she is much more desirable than I am.

Ebenezer I have no idea what you're talking about.

Isabel puts her hand in the open money box on the desk and lets a handful of golden sovereigns trickle through her fingers

Isabel This lady here.

Ebenezer puts his pen down and looks at the gold, and then at Isabel

Ebenezer How shall I ever understand this world? There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty, and there is nothing it condemns with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

Scrooge He's right! It was true then and it's true now!

Isabel All your nobler dreams, that I loved, I have seen die off, one by one, until only the desire for gain is left.

Ebenezer I am not changed towards you ... am I?

Isabel Yes, Ebenezer. You are. Your promise to me was made when you were poor, and content to be so. You were someone else then. I see that only too clearly, and so I can release you. (*She looks sadly again at the ring, then removes it from her finger and offers it to Ebenezer*)

Ebenezer does not take it

Ebenezer Have I ever asked to be released?

Isabel In words, no. But in a changed nature, yes. In everything that made my love of value to you, yes. If you met me today, you would not love me.

Scrooge (*vehemently*) I would! I do!

Christmas Past Ssssh!

Scrooge (*sadly*) I still do...

Ebenezer remains silent. Isabel touches the pair of scales on the desk, placing the little ring on one side, and a pile of gold coins on the other. The scale moves accordingly

Ebenezer Isabel, I find it impossible to discuss personal affairs during business hours. Now please.

Isabel You see? If you weigh me by gain, I weigh very little. And so I am not enough for you, and I release you—with a full heart, for the love of him you once were.

Ebenezer goes to speak, but Isabel turns away

Scrooge Say something, you fool! Say something!

Ebenezer struggles to say something

Isabel You may have pain in this. But it will pass, and you will dismiss the recollection of it gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke.

Ebenezer shakes his head. Isabel kisses his cheek

Scrooge Don't go... It's a mistake ... don't go!

Isabel Be happy in the life you have chosen.

Isabel walks to the door and exits

Scrooge Isabel. Isabel!

Ebenezer Isabel...

But she has gone. Scrooge looks brokenly at Ebenezer

Scrooge Go after her!

Ebenezer I can't!