

~~SCROOGE No, spirit, no.~~

~~C. PAST Look, I say.~~

~~And SCROOGE looks, and sees other people come to his former
self: Belle, with whom he danced and to whom he is now engaged;
Dick, his fellow apprentice and friend;
Dick's Girl.~~

~~DICK Come on, old man. If we don't go now we shall miss
all the daylight. My feet are just tingling with
the thought of a skate.~~

~~SCROOGE looks up for a moment, but is deeply involved in
figures and continues to check them.~~

~~DICK (With a mixture of mock and genuine impatience.)
Ebenezer!~~

~~THE GIRL Oh, he's all wrapped up in another of his silly old
books. Come on, Ebenezer.~~

Start

DICK We'll soon move that. Come, Ebenezer, the books'll
keep till tomorrow. For today - it's skating and
then supper. *(Playfully snatching the books away.)*
Let's put the books to bed, shall we?

SCROOGE Dick, don't do that.

DICK But the books are fed up with work. And it's
Christmas.

SCROOGE Give them back...

DICK Tomorrow morning.

SCROOGE I said "Give them back".

DICK Ooooooh, hoity-toity, and at Christmas too.

SCROOGE Give - them - back! Dick!

DICK *(To his GIRL.)* Here, catch.

SCROOGE *(Laughing at DICK.)* Will you give that back to me at
once, please.

DICK *(Throwing the book to his GIRL.)* When you're a good
boy and promise to forget all about them till
tomorrow.

SCROOGE Dick, will you stop fooling about and give me that
book.

DICK *(Just as SCROOGE lunges at his GIRL.)* Look out.

The GIRL laughs as she throws the book back to DICK, and for a few seconds they go on teasing SCROOGE in this way, throwing the book backwards and forwards, taunting SCROOGE with a kind of pig-in-the-middle-game. And he gets more and more angry. And finally intercepts the book.

SCROOGE Now, leave it, will you.

DICK *(Going to him again.)* Aw, come, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE *(Really angry.)* I said leave it.

And there is dead silence and stillness for several seconds.

DICK Sorry. I didn't realise you were serious.

SCROOGE Well, I am.

DICK But we arranged this party months ago.

DICK's GIRL Months! We arranged it last Christmas.

SCROOGE All right, we arranged it a year ago. Things can change in a year. I'm sorry, but I can't come.

DICK *(Quite innocently incredulous.)* You what?

SCROOGE I said I can't come.

Now DICK and HIS GIRL are fully sensitive to the situation in terms of BELLE, who all this time has said nothing, but has just stared at SCROOGE. At first thinking he was part of the game that DICK was trying to play, and then gradually realising the fuller truth. Now... in the silence, in the awareness that DICK and HIS GIRL have played their full hand.. she speaks for the first time.

BELLE Happy Anniversary.

SCROOGE turns to her and looks at her, but cannot answer.

BELLE Happy Anniversary, my dear.

SCROOGE *(Still angry.)* Happy Anniversary! Don't try to get round me now with Happy Anniversary! There's always something! Anniversaries, birthdays, Christmas. Always something! It's nothing but Humbug. Humbug, humbug, humbug.....

DICK All right, then it's humbug, whatever that may mean. But just get one thing straight, Ebenezer - I'm through after this. Do you understand. I've tried and I've tried and I've tried - God alone knows how I've tried - well I'm not trying any more. It's up to you now. Understand?

SCROOGE Please yourself.

DICK I said d'you understand.

SCROOGE Oh, do as you like, only leave me alone.

DICK *(Controlling himself for a long pause.)* All right. I will leave you alone. *(To his GIRL.)* Come on.

As they reach the door, he turns to BELLE.

Belle?

BELLE I'll come in a moment.

DICK We'll wait for you. *(Pause.)* I'm sorry, Belle.

He waits only long enough for BELLE to smile her reassurance and then goes, followed by HIS GIRL. There is silence between SCROOGE and BELLE. BELLE breaks it.

BELLE Ebenezer, dear...don't you think...don't you feel that...that...

SCROOGE That he's right? Is that what you're going to say? That Dick's right? *(BELLE tries to interrupt but SCROOGE takes no notice.)* If you think he's right Belle, then you must do what you think's best. I won't interfere. Only don't expect me to give up everything I've worked for just for the sake of some damn-fool skating party that you know as well as I do will be as boring as the last one, and doesn't do anything for any of us.

BELLE I wasn't going to say that.

SCROOGE If that's the kind of life you want then you're welcome to it, only you'd better find someone else to give it to you, 'cos I wont.

BELLE You don't really care about us at all, do you?

SCROOGE Oh, don't be petty?