

YOUNG BEN/BELLE SIDE

YOUNG BELLE

I do not understand you, Ebenezer.
After all that Mr. Fezziwig has done
for you.

YOUNG EBENEZER

I'm helping Fezziwig. Surely, you must
see that.

YOUNG BELLE

By taking his company from him?

YOUNG EBENEZER

Taking financial control. Fezziwig
will still have a stake, but it is a
great gain for me, Belle. Business is
complicated, you do not understand.

YOUNG BELLE

I understand you are offering him less
than half its worth.

YOUNG EBENEZER

How do you know what I'm offering?

YOUNG BELLE

Is that a denial? It does not sound
like one.

YOUNG EBENEZER

Fezziwig's options are limited. He is
in no position to negotiate.

YOUNG BELLE

And therefore you have no choice but to
squeeze him?

YOUNG EBENEZER

It is business. Others would do the
same.

YOUNG BELLE

I am not engaged to be married to "others".

YOUNG EBENEZER

This is the even-handed dealing of the world, Belle, and an opportunity I cannot pass over. There is nothing on which this world is so hard as poverty, and there is no one on this earth to provide for oneself but oneself. Not Fezziwig, not Father Christmas, not our own parents, and certainly not the charity of others.

YOUNG BELLE

And what of a wife? I am not a good business deal, Ebenezer.

YOUNG EBENEZER

Don't be absurd.

YOUNG BELLE

We were both poor when our contract was made and content to be so until, together, we could slowly improve our situation through simple, hard work.

YOUNG EBENEZER

I was a boy. I was a fool.

YOUNG BELLE

And now you are someone else. Tell me, Ebenezer, honestly. If this had never been between us, would you seek me out and try to win me now?

YOUNG EBENEZER

Belle. I love you.

YOUNG BELLE

I know you do. But that is not what I asked. Please. Speak the truth. If you met me for the very first time tonight. Is there any chance you would choose me - a dowerless girl - to be your wife?

YOUNG EBENEZER

(wavering)

You think not.

YOUNG BELLE

I would gladly think otherwise, but we both know the answer. The good business deal is now your guiding principle. And even if for a moment you were false enough to that principle to choose a girl with no prospects - you and I can both be sure that repentance and regret would soon follow.

(pause)

I will not live in fear of that. I release you, Ebenezer. With a full heart, for the dreams we once shared.