The main idea

Belle makes the cost of Scrooge's priorities personal. She recognises that his growing devotion to money has altered the relationship she agreed to.

Character development

Loves young Scrooge

Names his changed values

Ends the engagement

Appears in an alternative family life

A competing allegiance

"Another idol has displaced me" — Belle, Stave 2

"A golden one" — Belle, Stave 2

The religious metaphor presents wealth as a rival object of devotion. Gold explains the idol: the relationship fails because money has become an organising value.

A chosen loss

"I release you" — Belle, Stave 2

"such another creature, quite as graceful and as full of promise" — Narrator about Belle's daughter, Stave 2

The direct release recognises that their agreement no longer reflects his wishes. The later family scene makes lost possibilities visible without proving exactly what their marriage would have been.

Develop the interpretation

Belle acts with judgement and agency. Her later happiness is not a punishment engineered for Scrooge; he is forced to witness a life that continued beyond him.

Recall question

How does Belle reveal a change in values rather than simply a change in income?

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