

LEADING MAN. (To Prop Boy.) Can you act?

STAGE MANAGER. No. He is the Prop Boy.

PROP BOY. I can still do the fog and snow, sir. And Tiny Tim only has one line.

LEADING MAN. Come along. I'll teach you the limp.

PROP BOY. Thank you, sir! (Leading Man hoists Prop Boy on his shoulder and they exit as Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim.)

STAGE MANAGER. You stole my prop boy! It won't work. It'll never work.

START:

DIRECTOR. Before your eyes: the transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge, haunted by the ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future — (Clowns do a quick set of tableaux.) Performed to a T by our trio of clowns. They can do anything and wait till you see what they do to Scrooge!

STAGE MANAGER. He's ruining the show. He's giving it all away.

CHARACTER WOMAN. That's because he's generous, dear. You wouldn't know anything about that. (She and Stage Manager start to fight. Director pulls them apart and turns her to the audience.)

DIRECTOR. And Mrs. Fezziwig —

CHARACTER WOMAN. One vast substantial smile! (She does a Fezziwig bit to applause from the Company.)

DIRECTOR. The woman who knows that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humor. (She does a pratfall. Old Clown helps her up.)

OLD CLOWN. And when she danced with Mr. Fezziwig, a positive light appeared to issue from their calves — (He dances her around.)

CHARACTER WOMAN. They shone in every part of the dance —

OLD CLOWN. (Lifting her skirts.) Like moons!

DIRECTOR. Excellent. The parts they were born to play.

STAGE MANAGER. They'll be asking for raises tomorrow.

DIRECTOR. And let us not forget Belle —

CHARACTER WOMAN. I used to play that part. The fair young girl — who —



Oct 17 03 09:24a

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p. 6

STAGE MANAGER. Who turned into a hippo.

CHARACTER WOMAN. The fair young girl —

INGENUUE. In whose eyes there were tears, Mama.

BOTH WOMEN. Which sparkled in the light of Christmas Past.

CHARACTER WOMAN. She'll be wonderful. *(Kisses her.)*  
Good luck.

DIRECTOR. Now the story of Scrooge all begins with Marley. *(Taking on Marley's voice.)* Marley was dead to begin with. Dead as a doornail. He and Scrooge had been business partners for years. Scrooge was his sole executor, sole friend and sole mourner — and even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event. But there is no doubt whatsoever that Marley was dead. Dead as a doornail.

STAGE MANAGER. Not so dead as you think. Not dead at all in fact, because there is *no chain*. And therefore there can be no Marley. No Marley without a chain —

DIRECTOR. Sir, we are professionals here. We can make men fly like birds — *(Clown pantomimes it.)* We can climb ladders in the air — *(Another Clown pantomimes.)* We can certainly make a simple chain! *(All Clowns pantomime a huge chain to applause from Company.)* Yes! Marley was dead. Dead as a doornail. And no one knew it better than — *Ebenezer Scrooge* — *(But Scrooge doesn't enter. Instead, it's the Prop Boy holding a letter.)*

PROP BOY. Sir ... we haven't got a Scrooge.

DIRECTOR. No Scrooge?

PROP BOY. I have a note from Mr. Barton Wingate, sir.

DIRECTOR. A note???

PROP BOY. *(Reading.)* My dear friends and fellow players. I will no longer be traveling with you in the role of Ebenezer Scrooge as I have chosen to remain in Zagreb where I have found great happiness —

DIRECTOR. Zagreb???

PROP BOY. Working with his hands, sir. Raising potatoes.

DIRECTOR. Potatoes???

STAGE MANAGER. Hah! *Potatoes!* Potatoes and no Scrooge. No dinner. No chain, no Marley, no Scrooge — no play. *(Sig-*

END.