

KEVIN. I asked you to see me later.

ZORAH. You came down here ... you came all the way down here to tell me to talk to you later. And I'm supposed to say, "Oh, sure. Great, Kevin, money things. Talk to you later?"

KEVIN. I'm sorry.

ZORAH. Shit. Shit shit shit. I'm sorry. I'm Lithuanian. I have a lot of anger. It isn't your fault. I'm sorry. God! What happened?

KEVIN. Well the market's a little soft right now.

ZORAH. No, I mean what happened to my life? You're new here. You don't know who I was when I started this place. I wanted to change people. I wanted to erase the borders between theatre and life. I wanted to hold up the mirror.

KEVIN. Yeah. To nature?

ZORAH. Yes. What was I thinking? Change people? What did I mean, change people? Into what?

KEVIN. Non-subscribers, maybe. I'm sorry.

ZORAH. You can't change this audience. You can't do what you want. You have to do what *they* want. And now you tell me *they* don't even want what they want. Last season. God! Have you ever seen anything that boring?

KEVIN. I thought your production of *Harvey* was interesting.

ZORAH. I'll tell you. However much we complain about it, at times like this all I can say is: *Thank God* for the National Endowment for the Arts.

KEVIN. Yeah.

ZORAH. I know that's heresy. I know it's a pitiful little grant compared to what other companies get. But

right now thirty thousand dollars is going to get us into next year.

KEVIN. That's the second thing I wanted to talk to you about.

ZORAH. What?

KEVIN. The grant.

ZORAH. Oh, Kevin, they didn't cut us back again?

KEVIN. Well ...

ZORAH. Oh, Kevin. This is just embarrassing.

KEVIN. Yeah.

ZORAH. Why do they *do* this? They cut us two thousand dollars last year. They just nip away at you, you know.

KEVIN. Yeah.

ZORAH. Take little chunks out of you. As if there was an adequate amount there to start with.

KEVIN. Yeah.

ZORAH. So what's the damage this year?

KEVIN. They aren't giving us anything. *(Pause.)* They've decided to withhold the grant in its entirety, pending an artistic evaluation. Apparently they have questions about what they call—uh—well. Here. It's here. *(Reads from letter.)* "...a significant artistic deficit" *(Pause.)* Word is we got a pretty bad report from last year's evaluator.

*(Pause.)*

ZORAH. That little shit.

KEVIN. Yes, well.

ZORAH. Mincing little snitch!

KEVIN. He loved the posters.

ZORAH. Pluralistic pederast.

KEVIN. Well, I don't know if you can ...

ZORAH. What do they want? They said we were too white, that we weren't hiring people who were ... what is it?

KEVIN. People of color.

ZORAH. And we did that. And we have done that. I've bent over backwards to be multi-cultural, Kevin, you agree.

KEVIN. You've tried.

ZORAH. I've tried? I hired Walter! They want us to balance our books. I hire you. Last year they're big on new works, I do that play about colon cancer, and that was not easy for me, Kevin, as you know, having lost Sherman just two days before the first rehearsal.

KEVIN. He didn't have colon ...

ZORAH. And now this. I've given them everything they've asked for, Kevin, and now they want, what? Quality? We never get a break, do we.

KEVIN. Well, that's the odd thing. We could still have a chance. They're sending out one last evaluator.

ZORAH. What'd you mean?

KEVIN. Well, apparently this is the way they do it. The N.E.A. keeps the money until they get his report. If the report is good, they let the money go.

ZORAH. To us.

KEVIN. Of course to us.

ZORAH. What if the report is bad? What happens to the money then?

KEVIN. (*Losing control.*) I don't know, Zorah! They give it to Robert Mapplethorpe's estate! How the hell should I know! We don't get it!

ZORAH. (*The victim.*) All right. That's what I was asking.

M.J. (*Entering.*) Could you two possibly keep it down?

KEVIN. We're finished, Mary Jane.

M.J. (*Shouting off.*) Let's get going, folks!

ZORAH. (*To Kevin.*) Who's coming this time? Is it the same guy as last year?

KEVIN. They don't say.

ZORAH. (*Takes the letter.*) Are you sure?

KEVIN. Whoever it is, he's due here sometime this week.

ZORAH. This week? He's going to see *this!*

KEVIN. Yeah.

M.J. Who's going to see this?

(*LARRY enters in the severe black coat and hat of Ebenezer Scrooge. From the waist down, however, he is dressed in street clothes—worn-out jeans and Birkenstocks. He has PHIL in tow. The COMPANY enters and settles in the auditorium.*)

LARRY. Can we interrupt?

M.J. We're starting, Larry.

LARRY. Zorah, listen, we just had this great idea. Take a look at this. Come on, Phil. Let's ...

PHIL. I don't know about this.

LARRY. You're going to back out on me now?

PHIL. (*To Zorah.*) It's just kind of a green room joke.

LARRY. You thought this was a great idea.

PHIL. Come on, we were goofing. Let's not ...

LARRY. Are you going to do this with me or not?