

M.J. Ok! Here she is. Let's get to work now!

DOROTHY. Thank God!

ZORAH. Sorry everybody. My fault. Entirely my fault.

ZORAH. Good. You've started.

WAYNE. Well, Larry said you wouldn't mind.

LARRY. He's doing great stuff. I think our little company has found that writer we're always talking about.

WAYNE. (*A self-conscious chuckle.*) Really. I'm an actor.

LARRY. And you write like an actor. Shakespeare. Moliere. Actor/writers.

WALTER. Can we get on with this?

LARRY. No. Honestly. We know how to *write* words because we have to *say* words. We spend our lives saying shit that somebody wrote who can barely speak out loud in a public situation. And that's their idea of credible speech? (*WAYNE laughs.*) How a person speaks? I'm sorry. Come on.

WAYNE. (*Laughing, holding up Christmas Carol script.*) Like this adaptation you've been using. I mean, where did you get this?

(*EVERYONE, even LARRY, is embarrassed by this.*)

WAYNE. My tax return might be more exciting than this.

M.J. Zorah, we can show you what we've been doing here.

WAYNE. I mean, none of my business, but who in God's name *wrote* this stinker, anyway?

ZORAH. I did, Wayne.

WAYNE. Oh.

M.J. Well ... uh ...

LUTHER. It's lunch!

WALTER. That's not for an hour ...

(*M.J. signals WALTER to leave.*)

COMPANY exits.)

PHIL. (*To Zorah.*) Can I get you anything, honey? (*Slight pause.*) Never mind, I know what you like. (*HE goes.*)

WAYNE. I'm speaking out of turn here, actually, because I haven't studied it very carefully.

ZORAH. I'm not a writer. I know that. But it's a way for the institution to make money and so I do it because this place is what I live for. (*SHE takes off her coat.*)

WAYNE. That is so admirable!

ZORAH. I love this institution, Wayne, and I would do anything—give anything—to save it.

WAYNE. I understand. Yes. Now ... Thank you. I have my lunch now.

ZORAH. How are your observations coming?

WAYNE. (*Taking a sack lunch out of his briefcase.*) My observations?

ZORAH. Yes. Your journal.

WAYNE. Oh, oh. I put it to bed. Uh, I put it on hold. For now. Since I have to do this other stuff. But I'll get back to it.

ZORAH. What are your observations so far?

WAYNE. Well, it's really kind of dumb and private.

ZORAH. Well, could we have dinner tonight and talk about it?

WAYNE. Oh, I'd like that, but I have to finish that ...

ZORAH. (*Sitting on Cratchit's settee.*) It's not important. I just need some company. I've been feeling low.

WAYNE. I'm sorry.

ZORAH. I get a little blue around this time of year.

WAYNE. I think that's pretty common. There's a lot of suicides around the holidays they say. People get sad and they don't even know why.

ZORAH. I lost my husband at Christmas ...

WAYNE. Oh. Well, then ... *you* know why then.

ZORAH. He hanged himself.

WAYNE. Oh. I'm sorry. That's ... very ... you must be ... how terrible.

ZORAH. (*Laughing.*) No. Please. Don't. He was a prick ...

WAYNE. Oh.

ZORAH. He was a womanizer. I hated the bastard.

WAYNE. Oh ... (*HE sits with her on settee.*) But you get blue, though. Still.

ZORAH. Well, yeah. I'm alone. I don't miss *him*, per se, but I do miss the, you know, the contact. The physical contact. He was a very successful womanizer. He got my engine kickin' over, but you know what that's like. I don't have to tell you.

WAYNE. (*Moves away.*) So. Your husband. Was he an actor?

ZORAH. He thought he was. But he had no talent. He'd just walk around the stage and smirk.

WAYNE. Oh well.

ZORAH. I put him in this show every year so I could keep an eye on him. He played the ghosts.

WAYNE. Oh. It was probably good casting.

ZORAH. Be better casting now. (*SHE laughs.*)

WAYNE. (*Laughs uproariously.*) Because he's dead.

(*SHE crosses to him.*)

WAYNE. So, your husband was me. He was this?

ZORAH. Yeah. He had an odor that people found very upsetting. And he didn't do anything about it, on purpose, I think, because he was short and he wanted to make an impression. It was so potent. It made me dizzy.

WAYNE. I'm sure.

ZORAH. I miss that. Let's get that engine kickin' over. (*SHE pulls his hood over his head and thrusts her own head inside it, joining him. His hands grasp for the chair next to him.*)

WAYNE. This is lunch. We're on lunch. People will come. Please.

(*PHIL enters and looks on, his suspicions confirmed. After a struggle, WAYNE extricates himself and sees Phil. PHIL exits.*)

WAYNE. I need to prepare for my acting.

ZORAH. Oh, please, let's just ...

WAYNE. For my role.

ZORAH. Oh, come off it.

WAYNE. What?

ZORAH. We know everything. We know you're not in the union.

WAYNE. Oh.

ZORAH. We are doing our best here, Wayne Whoever-You-Are.

WAYNE. What?

ZORAH. Why pick on us? We have never done anything obscene! We have never smeared ourselves with chocolate sauce. We have never shown two boys kissing. I took every last "fuck" out of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Lasted about five minutes, but it was clean as a whistle. So *why?* (*M.J. appears at the door.*) Why are you doing this to us?

WAYNE. I'm not sure I know what you're talking about.

ZORAH. Stop! Please stop acting!

M.J. Zorah!

ZORAH. You're terrible at this! If you're going to pretend to be somebody else, at least try to bring some degree of conviction to what you're doing.

WAYNE. I've only had one rehearsal.

ZORAH. Well, it wasn't enough. (*To M.J.*) One rehearsal. They think we're that stupid that we'd *buy* this performance? (*To Wayne.*) Go ahead. Do your worst. I don't care anymore. Keep the money.

WAYNE. What money?

ZORAH. You know something? I hope Jesse Helms bites your ass off. Truly. I hope he gets the N.R.A. to bring their little assault rifles over to your building and executes the pack of you. And I hope you all end up in hell where you'll have to watch performance art for eternity. So go back to your cubicle at the National Endowment and tell them Zorah Bloch said to send a real man to inspect her next time. (*SHE exits.*)

M.J. Uh-oh. Cover's blown. Don't you have a cyanide capsule you're supposed to bite now? I could get you one. Well that was enjoyable ... But maybe not thirty thousand dollars' worth.

(*A pause.*)

WAYNE. Inspect her?

M.J. Yeah. The N.E.A. is probably new to the covert operations game. If they want to infiltrate an acting company, they should try sending an actor.

WAYNE. (*To himself.*) I get it. I get it now. I'm an idiot. So. You didn't want me in the Company after all.

(*Sounds offstage of a violent but hushed ARGUMENT. ZORAH and KEVIN enter.*)

ZORAH. Wayne. Wayne. Forgive me. I should not have spoken to you like that. I'm Lithuanian

KEVIN. She is.

ZORAH. But I think you should know that thirty thousand dollars is the difference between life and death for us. For me. For all these good people. Please when you write your little observations, don't ... don't mention my outburst. Please.

(*A considerable pause.*)

WAYNE. Well, we'll see how things go.

BLACKOUT