

M3 (Stephen)  
F1 (Erin)

## MAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT

by Craig Pospisil

*The main corridor of the mall. Todd and Jenny are about to exit when Stephen, dressed in Edwardian-style clothing, a powdered wig, and wrapped in chains like Marley's Ghost from A Christmas Carol, rushes in, furious about something.*

STEPHEN. GOD—!

*Stops himself from saying "damn it!" when he sees Todd and Jenny.*

...bless us, everyone. You have one more chance to celebrate with Towne Players' annual production of *A Christmas Carol*, onstage in front of Run-Away Bridal at three o'clock! Spirited fun for the whole family!

*Todd and Jenny hurry out. Stephen calls after them.*

Not fans of Dickens? You should've seen me in *Streetcar*. That was a great show. *(To himself.)* Not this piece of crap.

*Disgusted, he sits on the bench and unwraps the chain from around his body. A woman's voice is heard, coming from the direction that Stephen came onstage.*

ERIN. (O.S.) Stephen!!

STEPHEN. Oh, joy.

*Stephen hangs his head as Erin hurries in. She is also dressed in a man's Edwardian clothes.*

ERIN. Where are you going? We've got another show to do.

STEPHEN. No. I can't do this again today. I quit.

ERIN. What are you talking about?!

STEPHEN. I'm done.

ERIN. Why?

STEPHEN. Because I'm—! You know, it's none of your business.

ERIN. Yeah, I think it is. There's a cast of twelve, a crew, and Tiny Tim, and we all gave up our Christmas Eves to truck over our

costumes and props and everything here to the mall. And right before our last show, you quit?!

STEPHEN. Someone else can be Marley. All they need are the chains. Here. Take 'em. The symbol of my oppression.

ERIN. The symbol of—? What are you talking about?

STEPHEN. I don't even know half the time.

ERIN. Well, you're being ridiculous. We need you.

STEPHEN. No, it's a simple part. The lines are easy. "In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley." "I wear the chain I forged in life." Then you rattle them. "Mankind was my business!" And done. Our esteemed director can play the part. It'll fit perfectly with her whole "turn the story on its head" approach.

*Stephen throws the chains at Erin's feet. She picks them up and tries to hang them around his neck again.*

ERIN. Okay, I don't know what your problem is, but how about you quit *after* the performance, okay? You don't even have to stay for the curtain call. Just leave right after Marley exits. That'd be more professional, at least.

STEPHEN. Excuse me?!

ERIN. Do your bit, then go. You can be on your way in... (*Checks her watch.*) Less than half an hour.

STEPHEN. You know what's *not* professional, Erin? That! Right there! Wearing a watch!

ERIN. I take it off before I go on.

STEPHEN. Little acting tip, when you prepare to play a 19th century character, you have to get rid of everything from the 21st century!

ERIN. You're a little intense, you know that?

STEPHEN. What I am is a committed actor!

ERIN. Or maybe you should *be* committed.

STEPHEN. Oh, nice! That's a good way to convince me to come back.

ERIN. Yeah, well, I'm done with this. What's your problem with me?

STEPHEN. I don't have a problem with you.

ERIN. Are you kidding?! Ever since we met in rehearsal, you've made it pretty clear that you hate me.