



## Act 1

[SCENE: A back-street of a London slum. Snow is falling in white flakes. In the doorway of a moneylender's shop stands a miserable, stupid, ugly, poor, and starving match-girl.]

M-G [in a quivering falsetto]: Matches! Matches! Who'll buy my matches! [aside, to audience] Although I'm miserable, stupid, ugly, poor, and starving, yet I have faith in the boundless benevolence of Providence. Surely that great kind Father of us all will take pity on my plight!

[Enter a Policeman]

POL: 'Ere, ere; move along there!

M-G: You'll burn in hell for this.

POL: I'll take my chances. [Beats her to a pulp and wanders off, whistling "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."]

[The little match-girl, in addition to all the tribulations mentioned in earlier stage directions, is now severely concussed, and all her matches have fallen deep in the snow. But she carries bravely on, struggling to her feet and rubbing her crutches together.]

M-G: Matches! Matches! Who'll buy me and my guaranteed Girl Guide rub-two-sticks-together-type matches?

[Enter a philanthropist, beaming.]

PHIL: I'll buy you and your matches, little frozen cabbage leaf. And you'll never be cold or starving or pregnant or stupid again!

M-G: It's . . . it's too good to be true! [Collapses at his feet, bleeding all over his \$50 shoes. He absent-mindedly wipes his shoes on the back of his \$75 pants, kicking the little match girl in her two-cent face as he does so. He then unfolds a collapsible wheelbarrow and bundles the little match-girl into it, piece by piece. He is about to wheel her off, when he is interrupted by the sound of a huge explosion in the near distance. Enter a horde of revolutionaries, running.]

PHIL: What was that? It couldn't really have been my lovable, well-adjusted brats, pulling their wee Christmas crackers . . . ? [A huge, cut-crystal chandelier falls from the sky on top of the little match-girl.] My God, it was!

A REV: No, no, it was a diabolical new super-weapon developed by Pierre Le Pierre here, our super-

mastermind, to wipe out all the rotten slimy institutionalized filth in the world. It's an explosive Christmas tree!

M-G [Crawling indominably out from beneath the chandelier, ceaseless in her quest for knowledge.]: What's this device called, eh? Whadaya call it, etc.? Huh? Huh?

P Le P: [proudly] The Tannenbomb, O little glutinous mass.

M-G: [merrily] Well, as long as it doesn't fall on me . . .

[At this point, 85,000 pine needles fall on the little match-girl followed by the Tannenbomb's stump which falls on the philanthropist, pinning him to the ground by his wallet.]

PHIL: I'm crippled, I'm crippled.

[Holds up the pierced wallet, solemnly.] It will never walk again.

M-G [bleeding sympathetically]: Don't cry, sir. There's always a silver lining.

PHIL [holding up his dying wallet]: Yes, and look at it, torn to shreds.

P Le P: Well you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. Haw, haw, haw. [Slaps the little match girl heartily on the back, breaking her spinal column.]



# The Little Match-Moron OR

## A Christmas Pageant

[Enter Santa and his smart-aleck reindeer — Dantzer and Cancer, Dunder and Blitzkrieg, Pusher and Pindar, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

THE REINDEER, IN CHORUS:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know:

A buck's a buck, so give us all your dough,

Or we will beat your brains out on the wall.

P Le P [courageously]: That's a rotten quatrain. [Hands over all his money.]

SANTA: Thanks. [Eats it.]

[Meanwhile his reindeer are setting up a concession booth, which Santa enters. He begins to sell plastic Grecian urns filled with Scotch, Scotch Grecian urns filled with plastic, and Scotch plastic urns filled with grease. Thousands of Christmas shoppers materialize, all of them standing on the little match girl, who at this point in the play is spreading herself pretty thin.]

REVOLUTIONISTS [muttering]: Materialists!

[Santa is making billions of dollars every minute. Finally, all his stock is sold and the crowds stagger away, thoroughly oiled. In fact, exeunt omnes, except for the little match girl, who dribbles into the orchestra pit.]

CURTAIN

## Act 2

[Fifteen years later. The little match-girl, now a suave, sophisticated member of the sociaelite, is throwing a party. Present are the philanthropist, the revolutionaries, and many heads and feet of state. Other parts of the body are lying around the room.]

M-G [to the philanthropist]: Just think! Fifteen years ago I was a faceless bold for whom even all the miracles of plastic surgery could do nothing. And look at me now—an accomplished hostess and leading light of aristocratic drawing-rooms. And I owe it all to you.

P: Yes, and it'll come to exactly \$39,648.

M-G [Smiling charmingly]: Oh, really? [Shoots him dead.]

AN EAR OF STATE: What's this I see?

M-G: Perhaps you're wondering why I, who used in my ugly days to be the epitome, the very byword, of virtue, selflessness, and humility, am now a ruthless, cruel, and heartless femme fatale?

EAR OF STATE: Well, no, I wasn't really.

M-G [Yells into him]: How would you like a black ear?

EAR OF STATE: No thanks, I'm a vegetarian, myself.

M-G: Splendid! [Stuffs him full of turnips.]

P Le P [Now ultra-respectable, but on this occasion slightly drunk]: Ah, my little tin of Mexican caviar, tell me the whole glorious story of how you became so beautiful, so poised, so deadly.

M-G [expansively]: With pleasure! [Oratorically] I was born ugly and good-natured. For years I toiled to make an honest living, and was grossly mistreated for my pains. I was kicked so often that my visage, which nothing could have made uglier, was consequently made more beautiful, until I finally reached those heights of feminine pulchritude which you see in me today. Spiritually, too, I was changed. I began to think that perhaps the Golden Rule was not applicable in my situation, and so I became mean, wicked and deceitful, with the result that I