



"OPENING NIGHT"

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A New Musical

Book, Music & Lyrics by

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

ELLIOT SHAW III – Mid-20s. Old-money Manhattan, precise, anxious, gifted. Julian Vale's assistant, secretly helping repair Hearts Aflame. In love with Danny.

DANNY SILVER – Mid-20s. Jewish, Bronx/Flatbush, fast, funny, hungry. A young book writer/lyricist with nerve, heart, and too much mouth. In love with Elliot.

BEATRICE VALE – 40s. Elegant, sharp, immaculate. One half of the legendary Vale writing team, concealing exhaustion beneath lethal wit.

JULIAN VALE – 40s. Celebrated composer, charming wreck, professional disappointment to himself. Still capable of beauty when sober enough to find it.

MAURICE SCHWARTZ – 60s. Broadway producer. High-strung, evasive, sweating through wool, and more decent than he first appears.

DOROTHY CRANE – 60s. Former screen goddess, current Broadway legend. Grand, drunk, impossible, hilarious, and not yet finished being great.

MONA LIPSCHITZ / LOLA HART – 20s. Stronzi's waitress and Broadway dreamer with nerve, talent, and intelligence no one sees coming.

NICKY "SILKY" VALENTI – 40s. Handsome, immaculate mob boss and show backer. Dangerous, theatrical, and secretly devoted to Broadway.

OLIVE CAMMERETTI – 30s. Silky's moll, but nobody's fool. Cool-eyed, sharp-tongued, business-minded, and born to produce.

REX RANSOME – 30s. Leading man of Hearts Aflame. Offensively handsome, vain, insecure, and not nearly as shallow as he appears.

SIR HUGO FAIRFAX – 70s. English, classical, ruinously charming. A great actor determined to make Lottie's father matter.

OTTO VON KLEIST – 50s. European avant-garde director with furious hair, mangled English, and a profound relationship with pigeons.

LUELLA – 60s. Beatrice and Julian's maid. Black, dry, observant, unflappable. Sees everything, says just enough.

FRANKIE "KNUCKLES" LUPO – Silky's associate. Practical, blunt, dangerous enough to justify the nickname.

JOEY "SPRINKLES" MORETTI – Silky's associate. Dessert-minded, easily confused, and more useful than he appears.

ENSEMBLE – Playing waiters, stagehands, dressers, chorus girls, society guests, musicians, and the shifting machinery of Broadway.

## SETTINGS

### Act I

Scene 1 – Elliot and Danny's Apartment

Scene 2 – Julian and Beatrice Vale's Park Avenue Apartment

Scene 3 – Stronzi's Italian Restaurant

### Act II

Scene 1 – Backstage at the St. James Theatre

Scene 2 – The Stage of Hearts Aflame

Scene 3 – Front of Curtain

Scene 4 – Backstage at the St. James Theatre

Scene 5 – Dorothy Crane's Dressing Room

Scene 6 – Backstage near the Fly Rail

Scene 7 – The Stage of Hearts Aflame

Scene 8 – Front of Curtain

Scene 9 – Dorothy Crane's Dressing Room / Finale

## PRODUCTION NOTES

Opening Night is a fast-moving, theatrical musical comedy set in 1930s New York and the feverish world of Broadway. It should not be played as strict period realism, but as a heightened, stylish world where emotional truth, screwball velocity, backstage farce, and old-fashioned showbiz glamour happily coexist.

The production should favour fluid stagecraft over literal realism. Apartments, restaurants, dressing rooms, backstage corridors, and the stage of Hearts Aflame should appear and disappear swiftly, as if conjured by the theatre itself. Scene changes should feel like part of the show's comic rhythm, not interruptions to it.

Visually, the piece should balance the hunger and ingenuity of young artists with the polished excess of Broadway legend. Cold rooms, Park Avenue elegance, Italian restaurant warmth, backstage chaos, feathers, flowers, ropes, mirrors, telegrams, footlights, and painted moonlight should all help tell the story.

The show-within-the-show, Hearts Aflame, should be lavish, florid, and gloriously overripe: Long Island as imagined by Cecil Beaton after too much champagne. It should be sincere to the characters performing it and funny to us because of its excess.

Doubling is encouraged. The ensemble should function as actors, stagehands, waiters, dressers, chorus girls, society guests, mobsters, musicians, audience members, and the machinery of Broadway itself – constantly shifting the world before our eyes.

Above all, Opening Night should feel like a love letter to the theatre: witty, romantic, chaotic, dangerous, generous, and gloriously alive.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Darkness.

A single, violently romantic piano chord.

A woman's voice – a tragic Society heroine – cuts through the dark.

WOMAN

Oh, Roderick, Roderick...

Another chord.

A doomed romantic hero answers.

MAN

Oh, Celia, Celia...

WOMAN

If only I'd known you before I married your brother.

MAN

If only my brother had died at sea.

WOMAN

Yes. Like he always wanted to.

MAN

Oh, Celia. Your lips. Your hair. Your smile.

WOMAN

My father's a dentist.

MAN

It's why you always have floss. Why I love you so madly, so deeply, But now, Celia...

WOMAN

I can't...

MAN

You can, my darling. And you shall.

WOMAN

We can't.

MAN

We can.

WOMAN

We mustn't!

MAN

We must!

WOMAN

Oh Roderick: Society would never allow it.

MAN

Then Society... be damned!

Lights up.

MANHATTAN. 1930S. WINTER.

The grand romantic scene is being performed by two young men in a down-at-heel Manhattan loft apartment.

ELLIOT SHAW III sits at the piano in his coat and scarf.

DANNY SILVER stands on the bed in a blanket like an opera cloak.

Danny, still as Celia, throws the blanket wider like a grand opera cloak.

DANNY

Then take me, Roderick. Take me now - before dawn, before duty, before decency.

ELLIOT

But I am bound by honor!

DANNY

Unbind yourself!

ELLIOT

By family!

DANNY

You never liked them! Uncle Teddy and his wandering hands...

ELLIOT

But also by... by God, Celia!

DANNY

He'll understand. After all... He... He made me this way!

The boys come out of character.

ELLIOT

No, no, no, Danny. We can't. You know what Broadway's like.

DANNY

It killed in Chicago.

ELLIOT

We never played Chicago.

DANNY

Not with that attitude.

Danny launches himself from the bed into Elliot's arms. Elliot has to lunge up from the piano bench to catch him. They end up in an absurd romantic clinch.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Oh, Roderick!

ELLIOT

Oh, Celia!

DANNY

Hold me as if the world was ending!

ELLIOT

I believe the chair is ending.

The chair gives a dangerous CREAK.

They freeze in the pose.

They both collapse into helpless laughter, trying not to make noise and making more noise because of it.

A POUND from next door.

MRS. KATZ (OFFSTAGE)

Some of us got work, ya know!

DANNY

So do we, Mrs. Katz!

MRS. KATZ (OFFSTAGE)

At what?

DANNY

Mostly? Disappointing our parents.

Elliot tries to put Danny down.  
Danny makes it difficult.

ELLIOT

Get off.

DANNY

Celia can't. Celia has vapors.

ELLIOT

Celia weighs a ton.

DANNY

Celia has presence.

Elliot finally drops him onto the bed.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Celia may need a rewrite.

ELLIOT

We should cut the whole thing.

DANNY

Elliot, the whole thing is our show.

ELLIOT

Tragic, isn't it?

Danny jumps down from the bed and crosses to the typewriter.

DANNY

Elliot, we are writing in the Vale tradition. Great passion. Great clothes. Great pain in rooms with French doors.

ELLIOT

Julian and Beatrice Vale have French doors.

DANNY

We have a door. It's whiny and uncooperative. That's French enough.

ELLIOT

It all sounds so... false.

DANNY

Of course it's false. We're not done making it true.

ELLIOT

Or perhaps we're not the Vales.

DANNY

Nobody starts as the Vales. Even the Vales probably started as somebody worse.

ELLIOT

Julian Vale did not start worse.

DANNY

You don't know that. Maybe his first song was called "There's a Moon in My Martini."

ELLIOT

It wasn't.

DANNY

You say that like your family has the original score.

Elliot says nothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
Your family has the original score.

ELLIOT  
Maybe.

DANNY  
Elliot Shaw the Third. Prince of Park Avenue.

ELLIOT  
Shut up, Danny.

Danny grabs an envelope from the table.

DANNY  
Speaking of Park Avenue...

ELLIOT  
What?

Danny hands it to him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
You opened it?

DANNY  
What's yours is mine, Roderick!

ELLIOT  
"Mr. Maurice Schwartz requests the pleasure of Mr. Elliot Shaw..."

DANNY  
"The third".

ELLIOT  
"The third. And guest. At the opening night of 'Hearts Aflame', a new musical by Julian and Beatrice Vale."

DANNY  
It's not what you know...

ELLIOT  
Shut up, Danny. My mom got me the introduction, that's all.

DANNY  
And then you became indispensable to dear Julian and Beatrice.

ELLIOT  
I'm Julian's secretary. I take notes.

DANNY  
You fix notes.

ELLIOT  
I sharpen pencils.

DANNY

And I sharpen the book, remember?

ELLIOT

I carry pages.

DANNY

Pages we wrote.

ELLIOT

Quietly.

DANNY

You say "quietly" like it's a profession.

ELLIOT

In my family, it is.

DANNY

I bet the backers will be there.

ELLIOT

You don't know that.

DANNY

Actually, I do. Schwartz told the stage manager, the stage manager told the wardrobe mistress, the wardrobe mistress told a chorus girl, the chorus girl told a violinist, and the violinist told me while buying a pickle.

ELLIOT

That's not a source. It's a parade.

DANNY

A parade with benefits.

ELLIOT

We are not pitching our show at the party.

DANNY

Absolutely not.

ELLIOT

You said that too quickly.

DANNY

I am agreeing at tempo.

ELLIOT

Danny.

DANNY

Elliot.

ELLIOT

No pitching.

DANNY

No pitching.

A beat.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Unless asked.

ELLIOT

No.

DANNY

Unless cornered.

ELLIOT

No.

DANNY

Unless a jeweled dowager says: "Young man, I am drowning in money and only your musical can save me!"

ELLIOT

Hmm...

DANNY

You'd let a man drown?

ELLIOT

In money, yes.

DANNY

Oh Roderick, you really do love me, don't you?

ELLIOT

Oh Celia, more than life itself!

They kiss.

The radiator CLANKS violently.

DANNY

See - even the radiator wants us to pitch.

Elliot returns to the piano.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Is that one of ours?

ELLIOT

Maybe.

DANNY

It sounds like one of ours.

ELLIOT

Which is why we'll probably cut it.

DANNY

Elliot...

Elliot plays it again.

DANNY (CONT'D)

One day.

ELLIOT

Don't.

DANNY

One day on the Great White Way, huh?

ELLIOT

Don't, Danny.

DANNY

One day.

ELLIOT

You always say that.

DANNY

Because it's better than never.

Elliot keeps playing.

DANNY (CONT'D)

"ONE DAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY"

WE'VE WATCHED THE POSTERS LINE THE STREET,  
WE'VE WATCHED THE CROWDS GO BY,  
WE'VE STOOD OUTSIDE ON FROZEN FEET,  
AND STARED UP AT THE SKY.  
WE'VE HEARD THE TAXIS IN THE RAIN,  
WE'VE FELT THE WINTER AIR,  
WE'VE SEEN THOSE LIGHTS AGAIN, AGAIN,  
AND WISHED THAT WE WERE THERE.  
WE DO NOT NEED A GOLDEN CROWN,  
WE DO NOT NEED A THRONE,  
WE ONLY NEED ONE NIGHT IN TOWN,  
TO CALL A DREAM OUR OWN.  
ALL WE ASK FOR, ALL WE PRAY,  
IS JUST ONE DAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
ALL THE WAITING, ALL THE GREY,  
WOULD FADE AWAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
WE'VE GOT NO CARRIAGE AT THE DOOR,  
WE'VE GOT NO GRAND ADDRESS,  
WE'VE GOT A ROOM ON THE FIFTH FLOOR,  
AND ONE GOOD SHIRT TO PRESS.  
WE'VE GOT A PIANO OUT OF TUNE,  
WE'VE GOT A PAGE OR TWO,  
WE'VE GOT A DREAM THAT CAME TOO SOON,  
BUT STILL MIGHT JUST COME TRUE.  
WE DO NOT ASK FOR ENDLESS FAME,  
WE DO NOT ASK TO STAY,  
WE ONLY ASK TO HEAR OUR NAME  
ON BROADWAY FOR A DAY.  
ALL WE ASK FOR, ALL WE PRAY,  
IS JUST ONE DAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
ALL THE HOPING, ALL THE GREY,  
WOULD FADE AWAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
FOR EVERY KID OUTSIDE THE LIGHT,

WHO THINKS, "THAT ISN'T ME,"  
FOR EVERY HEART THAT SAYS, "NOT YET,"  
BUT KNOWS WHAT IT COULD BE,  
FOR EVERY VOICE THAT STARTS OUT SMALL,  
THEN LEARNS IT HAS TO SING,  
FOR EVERY HAND AGAINST THE WALL,  
THAT FINDS A BELL TO RING,  
FOR EVERY ROOM THAT FELT TOO GRAND,  
FOR EVERY DOOR TOO HIGH,  
FOR EVERY DREAM THAT LEARNED TO STAND  
AND WOULD NOT SAY GOODBYE—  
ALL WE ASK FOR, ALL WE PRAY,  
IS JUST ONE DAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
ALL THE WAITING, ALL THE GREY,  
WOULD FADE AWAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
ONE DAY THE CURTAIN STARTS TO RISE,  
ONE DAY THE BAND BEGINS,  
ONE DAY THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD OUTSIDE  
WILL FINALLY LET US IN.  
ONE DAY THE ROOM WILL HOLD ITS BREATH,  
ONE DAY THE CROWD WILL CHEER,  
ONE DAY WE'LL LAUGH AT EVERY FEAR  
THAT TRIED TO KEEP US HERE.  
WE DO NOT NEED A GOLDEN CROWN,  
WE DO NOT NEED A THRONE,  
WE ONLY NEED ONE NIGHT IN TOWN,  
TO CALL A DREAM OUR OWN.  
ALL WE ASK FOR, ALL WE PRAY,  
IS JUST ONE DAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
ALL THE WAITING, ALL THE GREY,  
WOULD FADE AWAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
ALL WE ASK FOR, ALL WE PRAY,  
IS JUST ONE DAY ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.  
ONE DAY, ONE DAY, WE'LL FIND OUR WAY,  
AND TAKE OUR PLACE ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY.

The radiator CLANKS like a cymbal  
crash.

A POUND from next door.

MRS KATZ (OFFSTAGE)  
Are you two finished in there?

Danny looks at Elliot.

Elliot plays the final chord.

DANNY  
Mrs. Katz - we're just getting started!

SCENE 2

PARK AVENUE APARTMENT. MORNING.

The opposite of the boys'  
apartment.

A large, elegant breakfast room in the apartment of JULIAN and BEATRICE VALE.

Beatrice, elegant, sharp, immaculate, sits at the breakfast table. She is smoking, drinking coffee, and reading a packet of pages.

A maid - LUELLA - enters with fresh coffee.

LUELLA  
More coffee, Mrs. Vale?

BEATRICE  
Has it improved since the last pot?

LUELLA  
I'm afraid not, ma'am.

BEATRICE  
In which case: why not? Who wants to live forever?

LUELLA  
Mr. Schwartz telephoned again, ma'am. Said it was urgent.

BEATRICE  
Mr. Schwartz is a producer, Luella. He thinks everything is urgent.

LUELLA  
Miss Crane telephoned as well.

BEATRICE  
Did she threaten to quit the show?

LUELLA  
Yes'm. Twice.

BEATRICE  
Well, at least she's feeling better.

Luella exits.

From offstage, a crash.

Then:

JULIAN (OFFSTAGE)  
I'm perfectly all right, my love.

Another smaller crash.

JULIAN (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)  
That was the table. And the lamp.

BEATRICE  
Are they hungover too?

Julian enters.

JULIAN  
Is it morning?

BEATRICE  
In parts of the city, yes.

JULIAN  
Coffee.

BEATRICE  
That is what the pot contains, my sweet. Or something like it.

JULIAN  
I mean it as a plea, my love. Coffee!

BEATRICE  
You're trembling.

JULIAN  
I'm vibrating with melody.

BEATRICE  
Then sit down before you vibrate all over the Turkish carpet.

Julian sits. Sees the packet.

JULIAN  
What's that?

BEATRICE  
Breakfast.

JULIAN  
It has margins.

BEATRICE  
Unlike your behavior.

He reaches for the packet. She moves it away without looking.

JULIAN  
Beatrice.

BEATRICE  
Julian.

JULIAN  
If those are my pages, I'm entitled to see them.

BEATRICE

If these were your pages, I'd be entitled to frame them.

JULIAN

Ah. Your new protégé?

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw.

JULIAN

He has a name now?

BEATRICE

Young people today want for nothing, it seems.

JULIAN

Always observing, that one. Makes a fella nervous.

BEATRICE

Well, he observed that Act Two dies where your ballad should be.

JULIAN

Act Two pauses. It breathes.

BEATRICE

Julian, Act Two lies down, summons a priest, and asks for its mother.

JULIAN

Has Mr. Shaw performed last rites?

BEATRICE

Better. Mr. Shaw has found a pulse. Musically speaking.

She hands him one page.

JULIAN

That's not my work.

BEATRICE

Thankfully, no.

JULIAN

It doesn't even sound like my work.

BEATRICE

Darling, it sounds like you used to sound before lunch.

JULIAN

That's unkind.

BEATRICE

But fair.

JULIAN

The modulation is vulgar.

BEATRICE

The modulation is charming.

JULIAN

Charming is what people call things they don't love.

BEATRICE

Charming is what keeps our show from closing on page four.

Julian reaches for another page.  
This time she lets him take it.

JULIAN

Now that is not our Mr. Shaw's.

BEATRICE

That's what I thought.

JULIAN

Whose is it?

BEATRICE

Someone with jokes. And a heart.

JULIAN

We have jokes.

BEATRICE

No, dear, we have typing.

Julian reads again, despite himself.

JULIAN

It's good.

BEATRICE

I know.

JULIAN

I hate that.

BEATRICE

Me too.

JULIAN

And no one knows?

BEATRICE

No one can ever know.

JULIAN

Maurice?

BEATRICE

Our producer suspects everything and understands nothing. It is why he's so successful.

JULIAN

What about Dorothy?

BEATRICE

If Dorothy knew we were giving better lines to her leading man, she'd demand custody.

JULIAN

Otto?

BEATRICE

Otto would call it a violation of the sacred muse. Or something equally Teutonic.

JULIAN

Rex?

BEATRICE

Rex Ransome is a hat rack with cheekbones. The only thing our leading man notices is his dressing-room mirror.

JULIAN

Beatrice, are we letting children rewrite our show?

BEATRICE

Nonsense. We are letting one young man suggest alternatives.

JULIAN

And the other?

BEATRICE

The other appears to be smuggling in vitality.

JULIAN

But I write the music.

BEATRICE

When you write it.

JULIAN

You write the lyrics.

BEATRICE

Every morning, whether or not Broadway deserves them.

JULIAN

That's the arrangement.

BEATRICE

That's the legend, Julian. On a good day, it's also the truth.

JULIAN

I had something last night, you know.

BEATRICE

You had several somethings last night, Julian.  
Not one of them was a decent tune.

JULIAN

You used to find me charming.

BEATRICE

You used to finish what you started.

Julian looks at the pages.

JULIAN

If it works, they'll say we've still got it.

BEATRICE

And if it doesn't?

JULIAN

They'll say we never did.

Julian moves to the piano.

BEATRICE

Julian.

JULIAN

What?

BEATRICE

We are doing the right thing, aren't we?

JULIAN

I certainly hope so.

He plays.

"THE ONLY WAY IS DOWN"

WHEN YOU'RE UP, THEY SEND YOU FLOWERS,  
WHEN YOU SLIP, THEY SEND REGRETS.  
WHEN YOU FALL, THEY SEND REPORTERS  
AND A LIST OF UNPAID DEBTS.  
WHEN YOU'RE NEW, THEY CALL YOU DARING,  
WHEN YOU'RE KNOWN, THEY CALL YOU SOUND.  
WHEN YOU'RE OLD, THEY CHECK THE EXITS:  
THE ONLY WAY IS DOWN.  
WHEN YOU'RE STANDING AT THE SUMMIT  
IN A TOWN THAT LOVES A CROWN,  
THERE'S NO HIGHER PLACE TO GET TO:  
THE ONLY WAY IS DOWN.  
EVERY SMILE BECOMES A WARNING,  
EVERY HANDSHAKE HIDES A BET.  
EVERY FRIEND WHO CALLS YOU "DARLING"  
HAS A COLUMNIST THEY'VE MET.  
ONCE THEY CALL YOU "LEGEND," DARLING,

THEY STOP LISTENING FOR THE SONG.  
THEY JUST WAIT FOR ONE BAD NOTICE,  
THEN THEY SAY THEY KNEW ALL ALONG.  
WHEN YOU'RE STANDING AT THE SUMMIT  
IN A TOWN THAT LOVES A CROWN,  
THERE'S NO HIGHER PLACE TO GET TO:  
THE ONLY WAY IS DOWN.  
SO YOU SMILE A LITTLE BRIGHTER,  
SO YOU LAUGH A LITTLE LOUD.  
SO YOU DANCE A LITTLE FASTER,  
SO YOU NEVER DISAPPOINT THE CROWD.  
BUT THE ROOM IS ALWAYS WATCHING,  
AND THE BAND IS ALWAYS TUNED.  
AND THE MOMENT YOU STOP SHINING,  
THEY WILL SAY YOU PEAKED TOO SOON.  
WHEN YOU'RE STANDING AT THE SUMMIT  
IN A TOWN THAT LOVES A CROWN,  
THERE'S NO HIGHER PLACE TO GET TO:  
THE ONLY WAY IS DOWN.  
STILL WE HOLD THE POSE TOGETHER,  
STILL WE TAKE THE FINAL BOW.  
STILL WE SAY WE'LL LAST FOREVER,  
THOUGH FOREVER'S CLOSING NOW.  
IF THE YOUNG ONES HEAR THE MUSIC,  
IF THEY FIND A BRIGHTER SOUND,  
DO WE BLESS THEM FROM THE SUMMIT,  
OR CUT THE LADDER DOWN?  
WHEN YOU'RE STANDING AT THE SUMMIT  
IN A TOWN THAT LOVES A CROWN,  
THERE'S NO HIGHER PLACE TO GET TO:  
THE ONLY WAY IS DOWN.

The telephone rings.

Luella appears.

LUELLA

Mr. Schwartz again, Mrs. Vale. He says he's coming up.

BEATRICE

Of course he is.

JULIAN

Hide the pages.

BEATRICE

Hide the coffee, Luella.

JULIAN

Huh?

BEATRICE

If Maurice sees anything warm, he'll ask it for money.

JULIAN

Good point.

The doorbell rings.

Beatrice tucks the packet under  
the newspaper.

BEATRICE  
If Maurice asks: Mr. Shaw is merely...  
observing.

JULIAN  
And the mysterious writer - the funny one?

BEATRICE  
Is... dead.

JULIAN  
That seems harsh.

BEATRICE  
It's Broadway, darling. He'll get used to it.

Luella opens the door.

MAURICE SCHWARTZ enters at speed,  
hat in hand.

MAURICE  
Nobody panic. I've done enough this morning for  
all of us.

BEATRICE  
Good morning, Maurice.

MAURICE  
Is it? I'm a nervous wreck.

JULIAN  
Coffee?

MAURICE  
Is it your "special" coffee? The last time I  
drank Julian's coffee, I lost three days and  
wound up in Atlantic City.

JULIAN  
Refreshed?

MAURICE  
Engaged.

BEATRICE  
To whom?

MAURICE  
Who knows these things! Julian. Tell me the Act  
Two ballad exists.

JULIAN  
I'm working on it.

Maurice spots the newspaper.

MAURICE  
What's that?

BEATRICE  
The newspaper.

MAURICE  
It has a spine.

BEATRICE  
I'm surprised you recognize one.

MAURICE  
Beatrice...

BEATRICE  
Maurice?

MAURICE  
Are those new pages?

BEATRICE  
They are pages.

MAURICE  
That wasn't my question.

Maurice reaches for them.

Beatrice places one hand flat on  
the newspaper.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
Please tell me Julian wrote them.

JULIAN  
Who else?

MAURICE  
Oh God! The backers are coming to the run-  
through tonight.

JULIAN  
Then give them champagne and keep them away  
from Otto.

MAURICE  
Champagne doesn't solve these particular men.

BEATRICE  
Really? It has solved so many men.

MAURICE  
These are not theater people, Beatrice.

JULIAN  
Neither are most theater people.

MAURICE  
I'm serious. They want reassurance.

BEATRICE

Then reassure them, Maurice. That's your job.  
And who are they anyway - these mysterious  
"backers" of ours?

MAURICE

Again with the questions! I have it all under  
control. Trust me.

The telephone rings again.

Luella enters.

LUELLA

Ma'am, Miss Crane is downstairs.

MAURICE

Downstairs here?

BEATRICE

No, Maurice. Downstairs at the Rialto doing  
"No, No, Nanette". Of course here.

MAURICE

In that case: I am very much not here. If  
Dorothy asks, I'm with the backers.

JULIAN

Where are you really?

MAURICE

Hiding from Dorothy.

BEATRICE

That's the first sensible decision you've made  
all season.

The doorbell rings.

MAURICE

That's her.

JULIAN

Oh, Maurice, it might be anyone.

The doorbell rings again. Harder.

MAURICE

"Anyone" doesn't ring like that. You still have  
the bathroom with the sunken tub?

BEATRICE

Of course, but we're out of loofahs.

MAURICE

I'll improvise.

He bolts off.

BEATRICE

Luella: if Miss Crane asks, Mr. Schwartz is with the backers... cleaning up a few loose ends.

MAURICE (OFFSTAGE)

Tell her I'm dead!

BEATRICE

One lie at a time, Maurice. Remember your ulcer.

Beatrice gathers the packet and slides it beneath a silver tray.

Luella heads for the door.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Brace yourselves.

Luella opens the door.

DOROTHY CRANE enters.

She takes one step in.

Stops.

Raises one trembling hand.

No sound comes.

She points weakly toward the drinks tray.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Dorothy, it's nine-thirty in the morning.

Dorothy lowers her sunglasses just enough to stare.

DOROTHY

I have not had a drink since Garbo's party. Think on that, you judgmental bastards.

BEATRICE

Dorothy, that party finished less than an hour ago. It was on Walter Winchell.

DOROTHY

As a matter of fact, so was I - long story - but an hour in this business is practically Lent, Beatrice. Pour.

LUELLA

Would Miss Crane like a glass, or shall I pour straight into the legend?

DOROTHY

Surprise me.

Luella. BEATRICE

Ma'am. LUELLA

Dorothy drinks. Breathes. Attempts speech.

I... DOROTHY

Another sip.

I can't... DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Act? LUELLA

Luella. BEATRICE

I can't... DOROTHY

Sing? LUELLA

Luella! JULIAN

I can't... DOROTHY

Get through Act One without a hip flask? LUELLA

Luella! JULIAN / BEATRICE

Dorothy removes her dark glasses.

She looks from Julian to Beatrice.

DOROTHY  
I have survived three studios, six husbands,  
two nervous breakdowns, and one talkie in which  
a horse received better notices. I have  
survived a crazy director who asked me to enter  
as the memory of a staircase. But I will not  
survive that wretched song.

JULIAN  
Dorothy...

DOROTHY  
Words, words, words! What are words to heal a  
soul in torment?

BEATRICE

In this house? Billable.

DOROTHY

Then send me an invoice - just fix the goddam song. Why did I leave the glamor of Hollywood for this wretched little town? Why? Why? Why?

BEATRICE

No one would work with you.

DOROTHY

Details!

JULIAN

Which song are we mourning?

DOROTHY

"Moonlight Matrimony". Even saying it ages me.

JULIAN

It's a perfectly good number.

DOROTHY

It is a doily with delusions of grandeur.

Dorothy snatches up the lyric sheet from the piano.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

"My heart is a petal, my soul is a dove."  
Julian, I was lit by Pickford's cameraman during a studio fire and still found my mark. I cannot... I will not stand in front of a Broadway audience and tell them my soul is a dove.

JULIAN

Lottie is... she's innocent.

DOROTHY

"Lottie Lane"! Even the name sounds like a damp Tuesday in Paramus. My character is an insult in... dear God, Beatrice: white shoes?

BEATRICE

She's young... well, young-ish.

DOROTHY

Then write young, Beatrice. Don't write stupid.

Dorothy takes a long swig. From the decanter.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I know what they say: Dorothy Crane is difficult. Dorothy Crane is a drunk. Dorothy Crane threw a mink at a priest.

BEATRICE

How'd he look?

DOROTHY

Fabulous. He still writes to me. But I am not difficult because I demand quality, Beatrice. I am difficult because I remember having it.

JULIAN

You do have quality, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

I have cheekbones and credit, Julian. That is not the same thing. I need to believe in Lottie - as a woman, not a ninny. She must live. To the audience. To me. To play Lottie, I need proof.

LUELLA

Proof, Miss Dorothy?

DOROTHY

Forty percent proof, Luella. Hit me.

Luella tops up her glass.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

There was a time I could turn my head on a screen and men forgot their wives. Women forgot their hats. Ushers forgot their flashlights.

BEATRICE

Civilization has never been the same.

DOROTHY

Precisely. And you want me to warble about... petals!

JULIAN

It's not warbling.

DOROTHY

It's warbling with stationery.

She drops the lyric sheet as if it were contaminated.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I want a song that knows I have lived.

BEATRICE

But the plot...

DOROTHY

The plot will recover, Beatrice. I will not.

JULIAN

But Dorothy - the show opens in three days!

DOROTHY

All the time in the world.

BEATRICE

There's a rehearsal at eleven.

DOROTHY

Wonderful. I'll be there at noon.

BEATRICE

The rehearsal is at eleven.

DOROTHY

And I am Dorothy Crane. Meet me halfway.

Julian reaches for the lyric  
sheet.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Don't touch it! It may be contagious.

JULIAN

If we change the number now...

DOROTHY

If we don't change the number now, Julian, I  
will step onto that stage, stand beneath your  
ghastly moonlight, and let two thousand people  
watch my soul leave my body.

BEATRICE

Otto would love that.

DOROTHY

Beatrice, I have known you for fifteen years. I  
have admired your venom, envied your hats, and  
defended you when your husband was getting all  
the applause. So listen: I will not be made a  
laughing stock by a song that would choke  
Shirley goddam Temple!

Dorothy puts the dark glasses back  
on.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Fix it.

JULIAN

We'll look at it.

DOROTHY

Don't look at it, Julian. Looking is for chorus  
boys and my six husbands. Six! Fix it.

BEATRICE

We'll see what can be done.

DOROTHY

You'll see what must be done, Beatrice. There's  
a difference.

She starts for the door, then stops at the silver tray.

She notices the hidden packet.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Are those new pages?

BEATRICE

Just the morning papers, dear.

DOROTHY

Beatrice, I know the papers. The papers have ruined me in five states. Five! One of which was Rhode Island.

She reaches for the packet.

Beatrice gets there first, resting one hand on the silver tray.

BEATRICE

Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Eleven.

DOROTHY

Eleven-thirty. I'm in a generous mood.

BEATRICE

Eleven.

DOROTHY

Eleven-fifteen, and I arrive wounded.

JULIAN

You always arrive wounded.

DOROTHY

Yes, but at eleven-fifteen it will still be fresh.

She sweeps to the door.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

And tell Maurice that if he wants to avoid me, he should start by ditching that cheap cologne. Don't forget to wash behind your ears, Maurice!

Dorothy takes the decanter of bourbon from Luella and exits majestically.

Luella closes the door.

MAURICE (OFFSTAGE)

Is she gone?

Maurice appears from the bathroom,  
holding a loofah.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

I found one!

JULIAN

That went well.

BEATRICE

For Dorothy.

LUELLA

And the bourbon.

The doorbell rings.

JULIAN

I'm not sure I can take much more of this.

BEATRICE

Not a phrase I'm accustomed to hearing from  
you, dear.

MAURICE

Who is it now?

Luella checks.

LUELLA

Mr. von Kleist, ma'am.

MAURICE

Oy.

BEATRICE

Let him in, would you?

MAURICE

I should hide.

JULIAN

From the director? Why?

MAURICE

I can't understand a word he says.

BEATRICE

You hired him.

MAURICE

On Julian's recommendation!

JULIAN

I was drunk, Maurice! I never for one moment  
imagined you'd hire that Weimar nitwit!

OTTO VON KLEIST enters. European.  
Scarf, gloves, cigarette holder,  
furious hair.

BEATRICE  
Otto! How marvelous to see you.

OTTO  
I hef been speaking mit a pigeon in ze Zentral  
Peck.

BEATRICE  
But of course.

MAURICE  
What?

OTTO  
Zey have not ze zoul, zeez pigeonz. But zis  
vun? Zis vun had acute hearing.

MAURICE  
Jewelry?

OTTO  
Vat?

MAURICE  
A cute earring.

OTTO  
No. Hearing. Hearing. For ze music. For truth.  
For crumz.

JULIAN  
Everyone's a critic.

OTTO  
Nein. Pigeon leave ven bored.

BEATRICE  
And what did this impossibly glamorous pigeon  
have to say, Otto?

OTTO  
Show iz wrong.

MAURICE  
I hate that pigeon.

BEATRICE  
Wrong how?

Otto produces a folded sheaf of  
notes.

OTTO  
Not to vorry. I hef made ze fix.

MAURICE  
Of course you have.

OTTO  
Dorothy vill not enter az bride.

JULIAN  
Otto - she's playing a bride.

OTTO  
This is vy not. Too eezy. Must enter az memory  
of bride.

MAURICE  
Will the memory wear the dress? Because we  
already paid for the dress.

OTTO  
This qvestion vounds me. (beat) SCHNAPPS!

Everyone jumps.

MAURICE  
I miss Dorothy.

The doorbell rings again.

BEATRICE  
Julian, take Otto and Maurice into the library  
and see if we have any...

OTTO  
SCHNAPPS!

MAURICE  
Stop doing that!

OTTO  
Library haz balcony, ja?

JULIAN  
Ja. I mean, yes.

OTTO  
Gut. Ve vind anoizzer pigeon.

Julian, Maurice and Otto head for  
the library.

The doorbell rings again.

Luella opens the door and REX  
RANSOME steps in.

He is offensively handsome.

REX  
Mrs. Vale.

BEATRICE

Mr. Ransome.

REX

I hope I'm not intruding.

BEATRICE

And yet...

REX

I wanted a private word.

BEATRICE

I should have sold tickets.

REX

It's about Dorothy.

BEATRICE

Who else?

REX

Dorothy is magnificent, of course. But she does have a very big one.

BEATRICE

Come again?

REX

Her second act number is very... expansive.

BEATRICE

So is Dorothy.

REX

And I enter after it.

BEATRICE

That's how "after" works, dear.

REX

I worry the audience may need reminding.

BEATRICE

That you exist? Actually, I can see that.

REX

That I matter.

BEATRICE

Ah. A spiritual crisis. Have you consulted a priest?

REX

Perhaps Julian could give me something. Eight bars. Nothing vulgar.

BEATRICE

It shouldn't be hard for Julian to find eight bars.

REX

Something romantic. Something that lets them understand what Lottie sees in me.

BEATRICE

Lottie sees you because you stand downstage and block the lamp.

REX

Exactly. I need more to work with than... lamp.

A muffled sound from the library.

REX (CONT'D)

Is someone in there?

BEATRICE

Bird-watchers.

REX

Right. But won't the audience want a little more from me than lamp?

BEATRICE

Rex, you have a solo, a proposal, a dance break, and an entrance that requires two stagehands to shunt the banister.

REX

Yes, but Dorothy has feeling.

BEATRICE

Dorothy has bourbon.

REX

I could have feeling.

BEATRICE

You might, with the right lighting.

REX

The quiet fellow at the piano understands.

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw?

REX

Elliot. He plays my song beautifully. He knows where I breathe.

BEATRICE

That must save you so much trouble.

REX

I thought perhaps he might play for me today. Privately. Before rehearsal.

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw is not a taxi cab, Rex. One can't simply hail him.

REX  
No, of course. I only meant...

The DOORBELL rings.

REX (CONT'D)  
Are you expecting someone?

BEATRICE  
This morning? Apparently: everyone.

LUELLA  
Sir Hugo Fairfax is here, ma'am.

REX  
Hugo?

BEATRICE  
Unless Luella has started announcing people for sport.

REX  
I can't be here.

BEATRICE  
Why not?

REX  
He thinks I'm an idiot.

BEATRICE  
The English think everyone's an idiot: it's their national pastime.

REX  
He called me a mannequin.

BEATRICE  
Oh, Rex. From Hugo, that's practically a love letter.

The doorbell rings again.

REX  
Where can I hide?

Rex looks toward the sideboard.

BEATRICE  
No.

REX  
You don't know what I was going to ask.

BEATRICE  
You were going to ask if you could hide behind breakfast.

REX  
Could I?

BEATRICE  
Not with those shoulders.

She points to the curtains.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
There.

REX  
Behind the curtains?

BEATRICE  
You wanted more to work with than lamp, didn't  
you? Try drapery.

Rex slips behind the curtains. His  
shoes remain visible.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
Feet.

The shoes vanish.

A beat. Rex's head reappears.

REX  
Hair?

BEATRICE  
Unmistakable.

He disappears again.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
Luella, show Sir Hugo in, please.

Luella opens the door. Julian  
enters from the library, brushing  
off pigeon feathers.

SIR HUGO FAIRFAX enters.

SIR HUGO  
My dear Beatrice.

BEATRICE  
Hugo.

SIR HUGO  
Julian, you glorious wreck.

JULIAN  
Hugo, you old fraud.

SIR HUGO  
Yes, but a fraud with technique.

He kisses Beatrice's hand, claps  
Julian warmly on the shoulder.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)

What a morning. What a room. What company. One feels almost employed.

BEATRICE

You are employed.

SIR HUGO

Yes, but as Lottie's father. Hardly Falstaff at the Old Vic. Did I ever tell you about the time...

BEATRICE

Lottie's father is a wonderful part.

SIR HUGO

Lottie's father is a waistcoat and a furrowed brow.

JULIAN

That's fatherhood.

SIR HUGO

My dear boy, I did not cross the Atlantic to furrow.

BEATRICE

Hugo, you live on the Upper East Side.

SIR HUGO

A spiritual crossing, dear one.

He produces his script.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)

I've been thinking.

BEATRICE

How refreshing.

SIR HUGO

What if Lottie's father is not merely a father?

JULIAN

But he is a father.

SIR HUGO

No, dear boy. He's the locked gate between youth and destiny.

BEATRICE

What are you suggesting, Hugo? He runs off with the caterer? He refuses to pay for the wedding?

SIR HUGO

Precisely. Tragedy with invoices.

From behind the curtains, Rex shifts slightly.

Sir Hugo's smile flickers toward the sound, but he keeps performing charm.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)

Here. Act Two. Lottie begs for love. I enter and say, "My dear, be sensible."

BEATRICE

A line much admired for its brevity.

SIR HUGO

But what if she cannot be sensible? What if this father — this ruin of paternal grandeur — sees in Lottie's reckless little heart the lost music of his own youth?

JULIAN

In "My dear, be sensible"?

SIR HUGO

I can do a great deal with "my."

BEATRICE

We know.

SIR HUGO

All I ask is a small expansion.

BEATRICE

How small?

SIR HUGO

A speech?

BEATRICE

No.

SIR HUGO

A modest speech?

BEATRICE

No.

SIR HUGO

A song, then? If brevity is your fetish.

JULIAN

A song?

SIR HUGO

A father's song. Low. Noble. Wounded. Something about daughters, winter, and the quiet death of Empire.

BEATRICE

In a musical comedy set on Long Island?

SIR HUGO

Where else could one bear it?

The doorbell rings.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)

Are you having an open house?

BEATRICE

Apparently so. Who is it, Luella?

LUELLA

Mr. Shaw, ma'am. And a Mr. Silver?

Beatrice and Julian exchange a look.

BEATRICE

Hugo, would you mind stepping into the conservatory?

SIR HUGO

Not at all, my dear. It will give me time to work on my new speech.

BEATRICE

Wha...

SIR HUGO

Fret not, dear lady - it won't be the first time old Hugo Fairfax has saved a show. Do you know, I once told dear Flo Ziegfeld...

He exits toward the conservatory, still talking.

BEATRICE

This is all your fault.

JULIAN

You said we needed class.

BEATRICE

And what we got is a monocle with opinions. Listen, we have to get these kids out of here before anyone suspects Elliot is helping us with the show.

LUELLA

Ma'am?

BEATRICE

Yes?

LUELLA

Did you ever consider just telling folks the truth?

BEATRICE

Bite your tongue, Luella. Truth has no place in show business.

A sneeze from behind the curtains.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
Not a sound, Mr. Ransome.

REX  
Sorry! I snozed.

BEATRICE  
You... what?

REX  
Snozed. Past tense of sneeze.

JULIAN  
I'm going insane.

BEATRICE  
You're in good company.

She turns to Luella.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
Please show them in.

Luella opens the door.

Elliot enters.

Danny follows, carrying a pile of papers.

DANNY  
Leaping lizards!

ELLIOT  
Danny.

DANNY  
It's like I fell through Noël Coward's letterbox.

BEATRICE  
Mr. Shaw.

ELLIOT  
Mrs. Vale. Mr. Vale.

BEATRICE  
You brought a friend. How thoughtful.

ELLIOT  
This is Mr. Silver. He's helping me carry...

DANNY  
Paper.

ELLIOT  
Pages.

DANNY  
Pages. Right. More theatrical.

JULIAN

I thought Mr. Shaw carried his own pages?

DANNY

I'm new to the field.

BEATRICE

What field?

DANNY

Carrying.

A muffled sound from behind the  
curtains.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Roderick, we're not alone!

BEATRICE

Mr. Silver, my curtains are none of your  
concern.

REX

(behind curtains)

Elliot?

ELLIOT

Rex?

DANNY

You know the curtains?

ELLIOT

The curtains?

BEATRICE

Ah, the curtains!

Rex steps out from behind the  
curtains.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

This is Mr. Ransome. He takes a passionate  
interest in... curtains.

JULIAN

Will everyone please stop saying "curtains"!

Maurice enters from the bathroom,  
holding the loofah.

MAURICE

Why is Ransome in the curtains?

JULIAN

God's teeth!

DANNY

Nice loofah.

MAURICE

You are?

ELLIOT

Mr. Schwartz, this is my associate: Danny Silver.

MAURICE

Is he in the show?

BEATRICE

He's assisting Mr. Shaw.

MAURICE

Since when does the assistant have an assistant?

Otto appears from the library with pigeon droppings on his shoulders.

OTTO

What iz boyz?

Sir Hugo enters from the conservatory, script in hand.

SIR HUGO

Did we order young men?

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw is delivering copies.

ELLIOT

Copies.

JULIAN

Copies.

DANNY

Very copied.

Beatrice shoots him a look.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Cleanly copied.

MAURICE

Copies of what?

BEATRICE

Rehearsal pages.

SIR HUGO

New rehearsal pages?

BEATRICE

Rehearsal pages.

MAURICE

Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Maurice.

MAURICE

Are these the improved pages?

JULIAN

They are merely duplicates.

MAURICE

Of what?

JULIAN

The pages.

MAURICE

Which pages?

BEATRICE

The duplicated ones.

MAURICE

I'm getting a migraine. (to Luella) Hold my loofah.

Rex drifts toward Elliot.

REX

Elliot, will you be at rehearsal?

ELLIOT

I will, Mr. Ransome.

REX

Could you play... my entrance?

DANNY

Hum a few bars, handsome, and I'll join in on the chorus.

ELLIOT

Danny!

BEATRICE

Mr. Ransome, step away from the assistant.

REX

But I wasn't...

DANNY

Oh yes you were, pal.

SIR HUGO

Those wouldn't by any chance be new pages for Lottie's father?

BEATRICE / JULIAN / DANNY /

ELLIOT

NO!

Beatrice takes the folder from Elliot and places it on the table, firmly.

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw has delivered copies. Mr. Silver has helped deliver copies. That is all.

LUELLA

I sure am glad we cleared that up.

The doorbell rings.

BEATRICE

Luella.

LUELLA

Ma'am?

BEATRICE

At this point, just leave the door open.

Luella opens the door.

Dorothy stands there. Empty decanter in hand.

Hat crooked. Missing a shoe and one glove. Listing.

DOROTHY

I...

She staggers in.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Oh.

She blinks.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Did I do this part already?

ALL

YES!

DOROTHY

Good.

She turns. As she reaches the door, she executes a spectacular fall.

Luella slams the door.

Silence.

DANNY

I like her!

Blackout.

SCENE 3

DARKNESS.

A single spotlight.

MONA LIPSCHITZ stands alone in it.

MONA

"ON THE OUTSIDE"

I CAN HEAR THE MUSIC PLAYING,  
I CAN SEE THE WINDOWS GLOW,  
I CAN SEE THE PEOPLE LAUGHING  
IN A ROOM I'LL NEVER KNOW.  
I CAN FEEL THE COLD AROUND ME,  
I CAN FEEL THE DOOR STAY SHUT,  
I CAN TELL MYSELF "TOMORROW,"  
BUT TOMORROW AIN'T ENOUGH.  
ON THE OUTSIDE,  
LOOKING IN,  
WHERE THE LIGHT IS BRIGHT ENOUGH  
TO LET THE DREAM BEGIN.  
ON THE OUTSIDE,  
STANDING STILL,  
WITH A HEART THAT KEEPS ON SAYING,  
"ONE DAY, ONE DAY I WILL."  
THERE'S A WORLD BEYOND THE WINDOW,  
THERE'S A SONG BEHIND THE DOOR,  
THERE'S A PLACE WHERE I COULD MATTER  
IF I COULD CROSS THAT FLOOR.  
I HAVE WAITED, I HAVE WATCHED IT,  
I HAVE HELD MY WANTING IN,  
BUT I WASN'T BORN TO LIVE HERE  
ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.  
ON THE OUTSIDE,  
LOOKING IN,  
WHERE THE LIGHT IS BRIGHT ENOUGH  
TO LET THE DREAM BEGIN.  
ON THE OUTSIDE,  
STANDING STILL,  
WITH A HEART THAT KEEPS ON SAYING,  
"ONE DAY, ONE DAY I WILL."  
SO I'LL KNOCK UNTIL THEY HEAR ME,  
I'LL KEEP SINGING TILL THEY TURN,  
I'LL KEEP REACHING FOR THE HANDLE,  
I'LL KEEP TRYING TILL I LEARN.  
I MAY START OUT IN THE SHADOW,  
I MAY START OUT AT THE WALL,  
BUT I'LL FIND A WAY INSIDE IT,  
OR I'LL BUILD MY OWN DAMN HALL.  
ON THE OUTSIDE,  
NOT FOR LONG,  
WHEN THE QUIET FINDS A VOICE,  
WHEN THE LOST START TO BELONG.  
ON THE OUTSIDE,  
LOOKING IN,  
BUT THE DOOR WON'T STAY BETWEEN ME

AND THE LIFE I MEAN TO WIN.  
WHEN I STEP INTO THE SPOTLIGHT,  
WHEN I MAKE IT, WHEN I WIN,  
THEN I WON'T BE —  
NO, I WON'T BE —  
ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.

A voice cuts through the dark.

VOICE

That your dream, toots? To be on Broadway?

MONA

More than anything in the world, sir.

VOICE

Want my advice?

MONA

You bet.

VOICE

Get another dream, kid. Next!

The spotlight snaps out.

Lights up.

A small Italian restaurant near  
the theater district.

Mona is standing exactly where she  
was — but now she is in a waitress  
uniform, holding an order pad.

A MANAGER passes her.

MANAGER

You're late, Mona.

MONA

Sorry, Mr. Stronzi, but I was almost  
discovered.

MANAGER

Not by table six, you weren't.

MONA

Table six. Right away.

Mona crosses toward table six.

At the best table in the room sit  
NICKY "SILKY" VALENTI and OLIVE  
CAMMERETTI.

Silky is handsome, immaculate,  
dangerous without trying.

Olive sits beside him. Killer legs. Cooler eyes.

Two HOODLUMS linger nearby.

MONA (CONT'D)

Good evening, Mr. Valenti.

SILKY

Mona, honey. You're late.

MONA

I was chasing my dream, sir.

OLIVE

Did it chase back?

MONA

Not yet, Miss Olive. But it will. One day.

SILKY

Coffee.

KNUCKLES

And cannoli.

SPRINKLES

And the thing with the little chocolate sprinkles.

MONA

You got it.

Mona goes.

KNUCKLES

Little chocolate sprinkles?

SPRINKLES

What? I like sprinkles!

KNUCKLES

You are a sprinkle.

Silky watches the room. Olive watches Silky.

OLIVE

What's the matter, Silk? Something on your mind?

SILKY

Opening night, toots. That's the key.

KNUCKLES

Big crowd, boss.

SILKY

A crowd can be a useful thing, my friends.

OLIVE

Noise. Confusion. Everybody looking at the stage.

SILKY

Exactly.

SPRINKLES

And Schwartz?

SILKY

Schwartz wouldn't notice an elephant in his pajamas.

OLIVE

Unless it owed him money.

SILKY

Opening night...

Mona returns with coffee.

MONA

Which opening night, Mr. Valenti?

SILKY

You like the theater, Mona?

MONA

Boy, do I! More than I oughta, I guess.

OLIVE

A girl should be careful not to have too many... enthusiasms.

MONA

Oh, I know. But I can't help it. Everybody needs a dream, Miss Olive.

OLIVE

Is that so?

Silky takes his coffee. Mona leaves them to it.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

You think she heard us?

SILKY

Mona? Nah. She's a sweet kid, but her brain lives on 42nd Street.

The restaurant door opens.

Elliot and Danny enter.

DANNY

They say the fettucine alfredo here is to die for.

ELLIOT

Danny, we can't even afford the napkins in this place.

DANNY

Why d'ya think God invented sleeves?

Mona appears with menus.

MONA

Table for two?

DANNY

Yes, but eating for one.

MONA

Right this way, Mr. Rockefeller.

She leads them to a small table.

ELLIOT

Um... do you have anything cheap?

MONA

The clientele?

DANNY

Cute. Like Dorothy Crane but without the bourbon fumes.

MONA

Dorothy Crane? You're show folk! I shoulda known from the tailoring. One day, boys, you're gonna see my name up there on the Great White Way next to hers.

DANNY

What's your name, kid?

MONA

Mona Lipschitz.

DANNY

Oh boy.

ELLIOT

Just ignore him, Mona. Mr. Big Mouth here is Danny Silver, and I'm Elliot Shaw.

DANNY

The third.

MONA

Elliot Shaw? Say, you're with 'Hearts Aflame', ain't ya?

ELLIOT

I assist Mr. Vale.

DANNY

And I assist the assistant.

MONA

That sounds like show business. Lemme guess: no green?

DANNY

Bingo.

MONA

So, are you guys a....

DANNY

Yeah, we're a... Is that a problem?

MONA

Not for me, pal. Means I don't gotta watch for wandering hands. Like Teddy over there.

They look towards the bar, where an elderly drunk waves lasciviously at Mona.

Knuckles is using the payphone.

MONA (CONT'D)

So, what'll it be, boys?

At Silky's table, Olive notices Danny.

OLIVE

Who's the talker?

SILKY

Talker?

OLIVE

That one. All eyes and... mouth.

Danny glances over, catches Olive looking.

Olive does not look away.

Danny looks back to the menu, too quickly.

DANNY

That broad just looked me over like a fox eyeing up a hen house.

ELLIOT

A hen house? Danny, you're from Flatbush.

DANNY

Then like a fat kid looking at a kosher hotdog. Gimme a break, here!

Mona returns with some drinks.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Who's the dame with the peepers?

MONA

That's Miss Olive.

DANNY

Should I be nervous?

MONA

Depends on what she wants.

ELLIOT

What does she want?

MONA

That's easy. Anything she can't have.

Mona moves off.

At Silky's table, Knuckles returns.

KNUCKLES

Schwartz says we're all set.

SILKY

Schwartz says a lot.

OLIVE

Mostly while sweating.

SPRINKLES

Opening night, boss?

SILKY

Eat your sprinkles.

At the boys' table, Elliot has overheard.

ELLIOT

You hear that?

DANNY

I heard sprinkles.

ELLIOT

"Opening night"?

DANNY

There's an opening night twice a week, Elliot.  
It's Broadway.

ELLIOT

Sure there are, but produced by Maurice Schwartz?

Mona returns with a plate of pasta.

MONA

I present your spaghetti alla... spaghetti.  
Cheapest thing we have.

DANNY

So cheap they named it twice.

ELLIOT

Mona, where's the little boy's room?

MONA

If sir would care to follow me.

Elliot and Mona exit.

Silky rises from his table,  
buttoning his jacket.

SILKY

Olive. Shake a tail, honey, would ya? Cole  
Porter's gonna give me hell if I miss his  
entrance.

OLIVE

Alright, already. I'm coming. I'm coming.

Silky exits. Olive passes the  
boys' table.

A pause beside Danny.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

You got a name, kid?

DANNY

Several, doll. Who's asking?

OLIVE

Ya got mouth, kid. I like mouth.

DANNY

I'm working on that.

OLIVE

Don't work too hard.

She goes.

Elliot returns

ELLIOT

Did I miss anything?

DANNY

Um...

The two hoodlums pass the boys' table.

                  KNUCKLES  
Opening night it is, then.

                  SPRINKLES  
Seems a pity, though.

                  KNUCKLES  
A pity?

                  SPRINKLES  
"Hearts Aflame". It's a good title.

                  KNUCKLES  
It is a good title.

                                  They exit.

                  ELLIOT / DANNY  
Opening night?

                                  Mona returns.

                  MONA  
That's what Mr. Valenti said.

                  DANNY  
The fedora in the corner?

                  MONA  
Yeah. Gee, he's a real sweetheart. Maybe he's got tickets?

                  ELLIOT  
Maybe.

                  MONA  
Or maybe he's just nuts about Broadway? And, honestly, what could go wrong on opening night? Fellas, I'd give my right arm to be up there on opening night.

"OPENING NIGHT"

                  DANNY  
THERE'S A MOMENT IN THE THEATER  
WHEN YOU'RE WAITING ON THE STAGE,  
WHEN THE AUDIENCE GOES QUIET,  
THE CONDUCTOR TURNS THE PAGE.

                  ELLIOT  
WHEN YOUR HANDS ARE ALL A-TREMBLE,  
WHEN YOU FEEL THE LIGHTS GO DIM,  
AND YOU KNOW A KIND OF MAGIC  
IS WAITING TO BEGIN.

                  DANNY & ELLIOT  
OPENING NIGHT,

MONA  
THE HOUSE IS HOLDING STILL.

DANNY & ELLIOT  
OPENING NIGHT,

MONA  
YOU FEEL IT IN THE AIR.

DANNY & ELLIOT  
OPENING NIGHT,  
THE DREAM IS CLOSE ENOUGH  
TO TOUCH,  
AND GOD,  
YOU'RE ALMOST THERE.

MONA  
FOR ONE BRIGHT BREATH,  
THE ROOM TRANSFORMS,  
THE DARKNESS TURNS TO LIGHT.

DANNY & ELLIOT & MONA  
AND ANYTHING,  
YES, ANYTHING,  
CAN HAPPEN  
ON OPENING NIGHT.

BEATRICE  
THERE'S A MOMENT IN THE THEATER  
WHEN YOU HEAR THE OVERTURE,  
AND YOU WONDER IF THE WHOLE DAMN THING  
CAN HOLD ONE EVENING MORE.

JULIAN  
WHEN THE SETS BEGIN TO TREMBLE,  
WHEN THE LEADING MAN LOOKS PALE,  
WHEN THE STAR IS IN HER DRESSING ROOM  
AND THREATENING TO BAIL.

BEATRICE  
OPENING NIGHT,

JULIAN & MAURICE  
THE HOUSE IS HOLDING STILL.

BEATRICE  
OPENING NIGHT,

JULIAN & MAURICE  
YOU SMELL IT IN THE AIR.

BEATRICE  
OPENING NIGHT,

JULIAN & MAURICE  
DISASTER'S CLOSE ENOUGH  
TO TOUCH,  
AND GOD,  
YOU'RE ALMOST THERE.

BEATRICE  
FOR ONE HELD BREATH,  
THE ROOM CAN TURN,  
THE DARKNESS SWALLOWS LIGHT.

BEATRICE & JULIAN & MAURICE  
AND ANYTHING,  
YES, ANYTHING,  
CAN HAPPEN  
ON OPENING NIGHT.

OLIVE  
THERE'S A MOMENT IN THE THEATER  
WHEN THE CROWD IS PACKED IN TIGHT,  
WHEN THE ROOM IS FULL OF LAUGHTER,  
AND THE STAGE IS FULL OF LIGHT.

SILKY  
WHEN THE HOUSE IS BUSY CLAPPING,  
WHEN THE WHOLE JOINT MAKES A SOUND,  
THAT'S THE MOMENT WHEN A FELLA  
CAN MOVE SOME THINGS AROUND.

KNUCKLES & SPRINKLES  
OPENING NIGHT,

SILKY  
THE HOUSE IS HOLDING STILL.

KNUCKLES & SPRINKLES  
OPENING NIGHT,

OLIVE  
YOU FEEL IT IN THE AIR.

KNUCKLES & SPRINKLES  
OPENING NIGHT,

SILKY & OLIVE  
THE JOB IS CLOSE ENOUGH  
TO TOUCH,  
AND BOYS,  
WE'RE ALMOST THERE.

SILKY & OLIVE & KNUCKLES &  
SPRINKLE  
FOR ONE LOUD BREATH,  
THE EYES LOOK FRONT,  
THE HOUSE IS BURNING BRIGHT.  
AND ANYTHING,  
YES, ANYTHING,  
CAN HAPPEN  
ON OPENING NIGHT.

ALL  
THERE'S A MOMENT IN THE THEATER  
WHEN THE CITY SEEMS TO WAIT,  
WHEN THE PEOPLE HOLD THEIR BREATH OUT THERE,  
AND NO ONE KNOWS THEIR FATE.  
WHEN THE DREAMERS AND THE DOUBTERS

AND THE SHADOWS IN THE HALL  
ARE ALL WAITING FOR THE CURTAIN,  
AND THE CURTAIN WAITS FOR ALL.  
OPENING NIGHT,  
THE HOUSE IS HOLDING STILL.  
OPENING NIGHT,  
WE FEEL IT IN THE AIR.  
OPENING NIGHT,  
THE DREAM IS CLOSE ENOUGH  
TO TOUCH,  
AND GOD,  
WE'RE ALMOST THERE.  
FOR ONE BRIGHT BREATH,  
THE ROOM TRANSFORMS,  
THE DARKNESS TURNS TO LIGHT.  
AND ANYTHING,  
YES, ANYTHING,  
CAN HAPPEN  
ON OPENING NIGHT!

Blackout.

**END OF ACT ONE.**

ACT II

SCENE 1

BACKSTAGE AT THE ST. JAMES THEATRE. OPENING NIGHT.

Half-hour call.

Wardrobe racks. Flowers.  
Telegrams. Stagehands crossing.  
Chorus girls warming up. Musicians  
tuning below.

Maurice moves through the chaos.

MAURICE  
Where's Miss Crane?

STAGE MANAGER  
Dressing room.

MAURICE  
Dressed?

STAGE MANAGER  
Almost.

MAURICE  
Sober?

The stage manager shrugs.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
Can someone remind me why I got into this  
verkochte business?

STAGE MANAGER  
(reading from clipboard)  
Oh, and Mr. Ransome says he can't act...

MAURICE  
Tell me something I don't know.

STAGE MANAGER  
(flipping over the page)  
... in surprise pink.

MAURICE  
Well, he's half right.

STAGE MANAGER  
And Sir Hugo wants fog for his big scene.

MAURICE  
Hugo has one line.

STAGE MANAGER  
He says fog will help.

MAURICE

There isn't enough fog in the world for that.

The stage manager goes.

Otto appears.

OTTO

I hef no vind.

MAURICE

Neither has the box office, Otto, but I'm trying to stay calm.

OTTO

Vind! Bress! Ze invisible hand zat moves ze soul!

MAURICE

Otto! What are you talking about?

OTTO

I require air mit feeling.

MAURICE

I can give you smoke, dust, and Rex Ransome in a waistcoat.

OTTO

Nein. I vill konzult ze pigeon.

MAURICE

I'm surrounded by lunatics.

Beatrice enters with revised pages.

BEATRICE

Maurice, at last!

MAURICE

Don't start with me, Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Has Dorothy seen the new number?

MAURICE

I thought you had it.

BEATRICE

I thought Julian had it.

Julian enters, composed but pale.

JULIAN

Dorothy has it.

BEATRICE

And?

JULIAN  
She read it.

MAURICE  
And?

JULIAN  
She asked for tea.

MAURICE  
Tea?

BEATRICE  
Oh God.

MAURICE  
Is tea bad?

JULIAN  
Dorothy only drinks tea when she's frightened.

BEATRICE  
Or calling her lawyer.

From off:

DOROTHY (OFFSTAGE)  
Who the hell put lilies in my dressing room?

Everyone freezes.

DOROTHY (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)  
I am not dead yet!

MAURICE  
Oy.

STAGE MANAGER  
Half-hour, everyone. Half-hour to curtain.

Julian looks toward Dorothy's  
dressing room.

JULIAN  
If she hates it, she'll kill us.

BEATRICE  
On the other hand, if she loves it, she'll take  
credit.

MAURICE  
Let her take whatever she wants, as long as she  
gets her expensive tuches on that stage in  
thirty minutes.

BEATRICE  
Everything alright, Maurice? You seem a  
little...

MAURICE

What? Neurotic? Panicked? Desperate?

JULIAN

All of the above.

MAURICE

It's nothing. Say, did either of you see a fella in a fedora back here? The kinda guy you'd want to avoid in a dark alley?

BEATRICE

I don't think our agent is in tonight, is he darling?

MAURICE

Never mind. I'll... I'll see you later.

JULIAN

Is it me, or does he seem even more Maurice than usual?

Elliot and Danny enter from the stage door side.

DANNY

Tell them.

ELLIOT

I'm going to.

DANNY

Now.

ELLIOT

I know.

DANNY

Before somebody says "opening night" again and I lose the power of speech.

They reach Beatrice and Julian.

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw. Mr. Silver. Unless those are rewrites or committal papers, choose your words carefully.

ELLIOT

Mrs. Vale, we need to tell you something.

JULIAN

If it's about the Act II ballad, I'm nearly there.

DANNY

It's not the ballad.

ELLIOT

It's something we heard, Mr. Vale. Overheard, really.

BEATRICE

What?

JULIAN

Where?

DANNY

A restaurant.

BEATRICE

That narrows it down.

ELLIOT

The Italian place near Forty-Fourth.

JULIAN

Stronzi's? You remember, darling - little chocolate sprinkles?

BEATRICE

That was your evening, not mine. Darling.

DANNY

That's the one. Very good spaghetti. Very intimidating clientele.

ELLIOT

These guys were talking about the show.

BEATRICE

Everyone is talking about the show. I hope.

DANNY

Not everyone says "opening night" like it's a bank robbery.

BEATRICE

What exactly did you hear?

DANNY

Not enough.

ELLIOT

Too much. They said the crowd would be "useful".

DANNY

We heard them say "noise" and "confusion".

JULIAN

That's also a fair description of musical comedy.

DANNY

Then one of them said, "'Hearts Aflame'. It's a good title."

JULIAN

A damn good title.

DANNY

We thought so too. But they said it... ominously.

JULIAN

"Ominously"?

BEATRICE

Has J. Edgar Hoover been informed?

ELLIOT

Mrs. Vale, we think someone may be planning to do something to disrupt the show.

DANNY

And we need to warn Mr. Schwartz.

JULIAN

This is definitely going to rupture his ulcer.

ELLIOT

Where is he?

JULIAN

Looking for a guy in a fedora.

DANNY

Bingo.

BEATRICE

Who is he?

DANNY

If I'm any judge of character, Mrs. Vale? Bad news.

Before Beatrice can respond:

STAGE MANAGER

Fifteen minutes to curtain!

A rush of bodies crosses. Chorus girls. Dressers. A stagehand with flowers. Rex sweeps through in a pink waistcoat.

REX

Beatrice, does this color make me look unserious?

BEATRICE

No, Rex. Your face does that.

REX

Good. I thought it was the waistcoat.

He sees Elliot.

REX (CONT'D)

Elliot! You're here!

DANNY

So are a lot of people. Try not to trip over the plot.

REX

The what?

BEATRICE

Go warm up, Rex.

REX

I'm plenty warm, thanks, Mrs. Vale.

BEATRICE

Vocally.

Rex exits.

DANNY

I worry about him crossing streets.

ELLIOT

Mrs. Vale, we're serious.

BEATRICE

So am I... now.

She looks toward the stage. Toward Dorothy's room. Toward the audience beyond the walls.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

But in fifteen minutes that curtain goes up. If we stop now, we hand whoever they are whatever they want.

JULIAN

And if we don't?

BEATRICE

Then we keep our eyes open.

DANNY

That's the plan? Eyes?

BEATRICE

Have you got a better one?

ELLIOT

We could tell the police?

JULIAN

And say what? "A man in a hat said the title ominously"?

DANNY

You didn't see the hat.

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw, stay close to the score. Mr. Silver,  
stay close to Mr. Shaw.

DANNY

That was my plan before the hat guy.

Dorothy's dressing room door  
opens.

Dorothy appears in costume.

She holds the pages for the new  
number.

DOROTHY

Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Dorothy.

DOROTHY

This song.

A beat.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Had better be as good as I think it is.

She turns and goes back in.

DANNY

Does that mean she likes it?

JULIAN

Did you hear a wardrobe girl crying or the  
sound of breaking glass?

DANNY

No and... no.

JULIAN

Could still go either way.

BEATRICE

We need to keep Dorothy off the bourbon and on  
her marks. Come with me, Julian. I have a  
feeling Maurice isn't being entirely honest  
with us.

Beatrice and Julian exit.

ELLIOT

Danny, this is a disaster! The leading lady's a  
drunk. The leading man's a moron. The score  
isn't finished, and we have strange men in  
fedoras lurking backstage. And the show opens  
in... ten minutes!

DANNY

I know. This is what I want for us, honey.

ELLIOT

You belong in a straitjacket!

A bell rings somewhere.

STAGE MANAGER

Ten minutes! Ten minutes to curtain!

The backstage traffic thickens.

ELLIOT

We should stick together.

DANNY

Absolutely.

A stagehand barrels between them  
with a rolled drop.

STAGEHAND

Coming through! I'm walkin' here.

Elliot steps one way. Danny steps  
the other.

They are separated instantly.

DANNY

Elliot?

ELLIOT

Danny?

The stage splits.

On one side: Elliot, stranded near  
the piano/score table.

On the other: Danny, backed toward  
a corridor leading to the lobby.

Rex appears beside Elliot, radiant  
in surprise pink.

REX

There you are.

ELLIOT

Mr. Ransome.

REX

Rex.

ELLIOT

Rex.

REX  
Do you think I look ridiculous?

ELLIOT  
In the waistcoat?

REX  
In general.

ELLIOT  
Generally? Um...

REX  
Hugo says I have the dramatic weight of a  
dessert fork.

ELLIOT  
Dessert forks are useful.

REX  
Are they?

ELLIOT  
Sure they are. For, um... dessert?

REX  
Aww, you always know just what to say.

ELLIOT  
I do?

REX  
Especially when you play.

Rex leans closer.

REX (CONT'D)  
If I get nervous tonight, will you be near the  
piano?

ELLIOT  
Uh-huh.

REX  
Good. Then I'll know where to breathe.

Across the stage, Olive appears  
beside Danny as if she has been  
there all along.

OLIVE  
Long time, no see, Mouth.

DANNY  
Oh, it's you.

OLIVE  
Maybe it is, and maybe it ain't. You with the  
show?

DANNY

I... kinda... sorta...

OLIVE

Lost for words, Mouth?

DANNY

Only 'cause I'm frightened.

OLIVE

I frighten you, huh? Smart kid. Keep your eyes open tonight, ya hear?

DANNY

For what?

OLIVE

Trouble.

DANNY

Any particular size? Shape? Hat?

OLIVE

You're cute.

DANNY

That feels like either good news or bad news.

OLIVE

Can't it be both?

She leans in, close.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Take a tip from me, Mouth. Don't get too close to the stage at the big moment.

DANNY

Why not?

OLIVE

'Cause that's when nobody's looking any place else.

She goes.

DANNY

She seems nice.

STAGE MANAGER (OFFSTAGE)

Showtime, folks.

Blackout.

A thunderous chord.

Lights up on.

SCENE 2

THE STAGE OF 'HEARTS AFLAME'.

Long Island. Tea-time.

Or rather, Long Island as designed  
by Cecil Beaton in a state of  
romantic emergency.

A vast white garden terrace.  
Silver tea services. Striped  
awnings. Hydrangeas the size of  
debutantes. Tennis whites,  
parasols, feathers, smiles, and  
absolutely no restraint.

DOROTHY & COMPANY

"HEARTS AFLAME"

HEARTS AFLAME! HEARTS AFLAME!  
CALL THE STARS BY EVERY NAME!  
LIGHT THE LANTERNS, POUR THE WINE,  
EVERY HEART IS BY DESIGN!  
HEARTS AFLAME! HEARTS AFLAME!  
LOVE'S A LOVELY LITTLE GAME!  
WHEN THE MOON IS RIDING HIGH,  
NO ONE ASKS THE REASON WHY!  
WHEN THE MOON IS OUT IN JUNE,  
LOVERS FIND A PLACE TO SPOON,  
EVERY HEART BEATS OUT OF TUNE,  
WHISPERING A NAME.  
EVERY GENTLEMAN IN WHITE  
FINDS A STAR AND HOLDS IT TIGHT,  
AND BEFORE WE SAY GOODNIGHT,  
EVERY HEART'S AFLAME!  
WHO CAN TELL WHAT LOVE MAY DO?  
WHO CAN SAY WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE?  
ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS, WITH THE SKY ABOVE,  
EVERY FOOL'S A GENIUS WHEN  
HE'S FALLING INTO LOVE!  
HEARTS AFLAME! HEARTS AFLAME!  
CALL THE STARS BY EVERY NAME!  
LIGHT THE LANTERNS, POUR THE WINE,  
EVERY HEART IS BY DESIGN!  
A TELEGRAM! FOR LOTTIE LANE?  
CAN IT BE? CAN IT FAIL?  
WHEN A MESSAGE COMES AT TWILIGHT,  
AND THE MOON BEGINS TO CLIMB,  
EVERY WORD IS FULL OF MUSIC,  
EVERY STAMP IS FULL OF RHYME!  
HE ARRIVES TONIGHT! WHO ARRIVES?  
WHAT A NIGHT! FETCH THE SHERRY!  
DIM THE LIGHT!  
WHEN A GENTLEMAN ARRIVES,  
AND A LADY'S HEART IS TAME,  
THERE'S A CHANCE THE NIGHT SURVIVES  
WITH EVERY HEART AFLAME!  
NEEDED! HE WAS NEEDED!  
BEHOLD THE MAN, BEHOLD THE CLAIM,  
BEHOLD THE SPARK THAT LIGHTS THE FLAME!  
LOVE IS A LANTERN, LOVE IS A STAR,

LOVE IS A MOTORCAR WAITING AFAR.  
LOVE IS A QUESTION, LOVE IS A SIGH,  
LOVE IS A TELEGRAM ASKING ME WHY.  
WHY DOES THE MOONLIGHT TELL US ITS NAME?  
BECAUSE TONIGHT THEIR HEARTS AFLAME!  
HEARTS AFLAME! HEARTS AFLAME!  
CALL THE STARS BY EVERY NAME!  
LIGHT THE LANTERNS, POUR THE WINE,  
EVERY HEART IS BY DESIGN!  
HEARTS AFLAME! HEARTS AFLAME!  
LOVE'S A LOVELY LITTLE GAME!  
WHEN THE MOON IS RIDING HIGH,  
NO ONE ASKS THE REASON WHY!  
LET THE NIGHT BEGIN!  
LET THE FATES PROCLAIM!  
LET THE WORLD COME SPINNING IN  
WITH EVERY HEART AFLAME!  
HEARTS AFLAME!  
HEARTS AFLAME!  
EVERY HEART AFLAME!

Blackout.

SCENE 3

FRONT OF CURTAIN.

The applause from the opening  
number is still ringing.

Silky enters with Olive, Knuckles  
and Sprinkles.

SPRINKLES

I still don't get it, boss.

SILKY

This does not surprise me.

SPRINKLES

You got all this dough in the show, right?

SILKY

So?

SPRINKLES

And you want it to go down in flames?

SILKY

I want it to go down discreetly.

KNUCKLES

There's a difference.

SPRINKLES

There is?

OLIVE

Sure there is, Sprinkles. One costs money. One pays money.

SPRINKLES

I still don't get it.

SILKY

Listen, dummy: a hit is a maybe. Insurance is a contract.

SPRINKLES

So we make it look like an accident?

SILKY

It is an accident. We're just helping it happen on schedule.

KNUCKLES

What about Schwartz?

SILKY

Schwartz knows what he needs to know.

OLIVE

Which ain't much.

SILKY

Exactly why I like him.

SPRINKLES

And nobody gets hurt?

SILKY

Nobody gets hurt.

Olive looks at him.

SILKY (CONT'D)

What?

OLIVE

Say it like you mean it, Silk.

SILKY

Nobody gets hurt.

A beat.

KNUCKLES

So when?

Silky looks toward the curtain. Behind it, the machinery of the show moves on.

SILKY

When everybody's otherwise engaged.

SPRINKLES

Which is when, boss?

SILKY

When? Ain't it obvious? When the stage welcomes Dorothy Crane for her eleven o'clock number.

KNUCKLES & SPRINKLES

Huh?

SILKY

Face it, boys, that woman is Broadway.

Knuckles and Sprinkles exchange a look.

SCENE 4

BACKSTAGE.

A small pocket of quiet near the rehearsal piano.

The show continues somewhere beyond the walls.

Elliot enters, flustered. Danny enters from the opposite side, equally flustered.

DANNY

Where were you?

ELLIOT

Nowhere.

DANNY

That's my least favorite place for you to be.

ELLIOT

Where were you?

DANNY

Also nowhere. I'm surprised we didn't bump into each other.

ELLIOT

Danny... Rex flirted with me.

DANNY

Olive flirted with me.

ELLIOT

Oh.

DANNY

Yeah. Oh.

ELLIOT

Did you flirt back?

DANNY

I don't know. My heart was beating so fast I coulda spelled something out in Morse code.

ELLIOT

Danny.

DANNY

I did not flirt. Did you?

ELLIOT

I compared him flatteringly to a dessert fork.

DANNY

You animal.

A beat.

ELLIOT

He said my music helps him breathe.

DANNY

Olive thinks I'm all mouth. So, I talk. It's not like anyone notices.

ELLIOT

I notice.

DANNY

You do?

ELLIOT

'Course I do.

DANNY

Sometimes I think I talk so much because if I stop, I might say the one thing I can't.

ELLIOT

Danny...

DANNY

I know. Not here. Not now.

ELLIOT

It isn't that I don't want...

DANNY

I know. I don't want us to be dumb, Elliot. I know what the world is like.

The show continues beyond them.  
Applause. A laugh. A burst of underscoring.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I just wish we didn't have to do everything so... quietly.

Elliot cannot answer.

Instead, he sits at the rehearsal piano.

DANNY (CONT'D)

That ours?

ELLIOT

It could be.

DANNY

"QUIETLY"

QUIETLY,  
THAT'S HOW WE CROSS A ROOM.  
QUIETLY,  
THAT'S HOW WE LEAVE NO TRACE.  
QUIETLY,  
THAT'S HOW WE WRITE A SONG,  
THEN WATCH IT WEAR  
ANOTHER PERSON'S FACE.  
QUIETLY,  
THAT'S HOW WE STEAL A KISS.  
QUIETLY,  
BEHIND A HALF-CLOSED DOOR.  
QUIETLY,  
THAT'S HOW I SAY I WANT  
THE THINGS I'M NOT  
SUPPOSED TO ASK FOR.  
I MAKE A JOKE,  
I PLAY THE CLOWN,  
I TALK UNTIL  
THE TRUTH SITS DOWN.  
BUT WHEN YOU PLAY,  
THE ROOM GOES STILL,  
AND I CAN HEAR  
THE THINGS I WILL -  
QUIETLY,  
I KNOW THE WAY YOU BREATHE.  
QUIETLY,  
I KNOW THE THINGS YOU FEAR.  
QUIETLY,  
THE LIFE WE DON'T SAY OUT LOUD  
IS STILL THE LIFE  
THAT BROUGHT US HERE.  
QUIETLY,  
I DON'T NEED ALL THE ROOM.  
QUIETLY,  
I DON'T NEED EVERY LIGHT.  
BUT I GET TIRED  
OF LOVING YOU  
LIKE SOMETHING  
WE MUST HIDE.  
QUIETLY,  
WE'VE WAITED IN THE WINGS.  
QUIETLY,  
WE'VE WATCHED THE LIGHTS APPEAR.  
QUIETLY,  
BUT SOMEONE HAS TO START  
BY STANDING HERE.  
MAYBE NOT TONIGHT.

NOT YET.  
NOT LOUD.  
NOT NOW.  
BUT NOT FOREVER.  
QUIETLY,  
NOT BECAUSE WE'RE SMALL.  
QUIETLY,  
NOT BECAUSE WE'RE WRONG.  
QUIETLY,  
BUT ONLY TILL THE MOMENT  
FINDS THE SONG.  
AND WHEN IT DOES,  
AND WHEN IT'S TIME,  
WHEN EVERY HIDDEN NOTE  
CAN CLIMB,  
WE'LL STEP FROM WHERE  
WE'VE HAD TO BE  
AND SAY IT PLAIN —  
QUIETLY.

The stage door opens.

Mona slips in, breathless.

A STAGE-DOOR MAN leans after her.

STAGE-DOOR MAN

Five minutes, Mona.

MONA

Ten, Archie. Pretty please?

STAGE-DOOR MAN

Okay, kid. But stay outta trouble.

MONA

Archie, you're an angel. A genuine angel.

STAGE-DOOR MAN

I'm a pushover is what I am.

He shuts the door.

DANNY

Mona?

MONA

Oh good. I found you.

ELLIOT

What are you doing here?

MONA

Risking my job, my career and very possibly my  
life.

DANNY

That's the Broadway spirit.

MONA

Listen. You remember Mr. Valenti? The nice gentleman from table six?

ELLIOT

The one in the fedora?

MONA

That's him.

DANNY

He didn't look very nice.

MONA

He tips big.

DANNY

I take it back.

MONA

One of the girls at Stronzi's saw me with him. She said: "Mona, honey, you know who that is?"

ELLIOT

And?

MONA

Nicky Valenti. Which I knew.

DANNY

And?

MONA

Nicky "Silky" Valenti. Which I didn't.

ELLIOT

Why does that sound worse?

MONA

Believe me, it is. Shirley says he runs half the numbers rackets west of Broadway, and the other half's too scared to complain.

ELLIOT

He's a gangster?

MONA

That's the phrase she used after she said several things I can't repeat - even in a theater.

DANNY

Theater's heard worse.

MONA

She said if Silky Valenti is backing a show, it ain't because he likes the dancing.

A burst of laughter from the house.

The three look toward the stage.

ELLIOT  
Julian said the backers weren't theater people.

DANNY  
That was underselling it.

MONA  
So what do we do?

ELLIOT  
Find Beatrice?

DANNY  
Find Maurice?

MONA  
Find Miss Olive.

ELLIOT  
Who's Olive?

DANNY  
Absolutely not.

MONA  
She knows things, Danny.

DANNY  
Not everything, apparently.

MONA  
Listen.

From onstage, Hugo's voice, grand  
and slow:

SIR HUGO (OFFSTAGE)  
My dear...

A long pause.

STAGE MANAGER (OFFSTAGE)  
"Be sensible!"

SIR HUGO (OFFSTAGE)  
...be sensible.

Applause and laughter.

DANNY  
He's terrible.

ELLIOT  
Yeah, but British which, you know... helps.

Mona looks toward the stage, lit  
from the wings.

MONA

When's Miss Crane's big number?

ELLIOT

Not till Act II.

MONA

"Silver Screen".

ELLIOT

You know about that?

MONA

Everybody knows. Nobody knows officially, but everybody knows.

DANNY

Who needs Western Union when you have actors?

MONA

Unofficially, I also know you guys wrote it. Word on the street is: anything good about "Hearts Aflame" is 'cause of you two.

ELLIOT

Oh God, my career is over!

DANNY

On the plus side, Elliot, your career hasn't actually started yet.

ELLIOT

Not helping!

MONA

Look, we haven't got much time. Danny - you go front of house and look for Valenti. Elliot, pull yourself together and see if anyone in the wings is where they shouldn't be.

DANNY

What about you, Mona?

MONA

I think I know someone who could help.

They exit.

SCENE 5

BACKSTAGE.

Julian enters with revised pages, agitated.

JULIAN

Dorothy's dressing room. Five minutes. Apparently she can't sing all those lyrics before her costume change.

BEATRICE  
So how much do we lose?

JULIAN  
Just four bars.

BEATRICE  
Four bars is not shorter, Julian. Four bars is  
amputation. My lyrics won't mean anything.

JULIAN  
The melody survives.

BEATRICE  
I bet it does.

JULIAN  
The tune carries the song, Beatrice. They're  
just the words.

A silence.

Beatrice looks at him.

BEATRICE  
"Just the words"?

Julian realizes at once.

JULIAN  
Beatrice, I...

BEATRICE  
No. How helpful. After twenty years, one likes  
to know the terms of one's employment.

She takes the page.

JULIAN  
I... Forgive me, I...

BEATRICE  
See you in the dressing room.

Julian exits.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)  
"JUST THE WORDS"

JUST THE WORDS,  
JUST THE LACE AROUND THE TUNE,  
JUST THE LITTLE SILVER BIRDS  
THAT MAKE THE LADIES SWOON.  
JUST THE WORDS, JUST THE POLISH,  
JUST THE ART,  
JUST THE THING THEY CALL THE TRIMMING,  
NEVER QUITE THE BEATING HEART.  
THEY SAY, "THE MELODY WAS HEAVEN,"  
THEY SAY, "THE MUSIC MADE ME CRY."  
THEY HUM THE TUNE AT HALF PAST SEVEN,

AND LET THE MEANING PASS THEM BY.  
TRY RHYMING FALSETTO WITH DEBT AND LIBRETTO,  
AND MAKE A BROKEN HEART APPEAR POLITE.  
TRY DRESSING UP DISASTER  
SO IT DANCES SLIGHTLY FASTER,  
THEN TELL ME WORDS ARE EASY THINGS TO WRITE.  
JUST THE WORDS,  
JUST THE RIBBON, JUST THE BOW,  
JUST THE THING THAT TELLS THE SINGER  
WHERE THE FEELING OUGHT TO GO.  
JUST THE WORDS,  
JUST THE INK, THE BREATH, THE SPARK,  
JUST THE MAP THAT LEADS THE MUSIC  
THROUGH THE DARK.  
I CAN WRITE THE GIRL WHO LEAVES,  
I CAN WRITE THE WIFE WHO STAYS,  
I CAN GIVE A FOOL A HEARTBREAK  
IN A DOZEN POLISHED WAYS.  
I CAN MAKE A LAUGH TURN TENDER,  
I CAN MAKE A KISS FEEL NEW,  
I CAN FIND THE PERFECT ENDING  
FOR A LOVE I NEVER KNEW.  
BUT YOU— YOU WERE NEVER EASY.  
YOU WERE NEVER PLAIN.  
YOU WERE CHAMPAGNE IN THE MORNING,  
YOU WERE THUNDER AFTER RAIN.  
YOU WERE MUSIC THROUGH THE CEILING,  
YOU WERE TROUBLE AT THE DOOR,  
YOU WERE EVERY LINE I WANTED,  
AND THE ONE I'M LOOKING FOR.  
JUST THE WORDS,  
AND YET WORDS ARE ALL I KNOW.  
WORDS TO MAKE A WOMAN STAY,  
WORDS TO LET A LOVER GO.  
JUST THE WORDS,  
BUT THE ONE THING I CAN'T DO  
IS FIND THE LINE THAT BRINGS ME BACK  
TO YOU.

SCENE 6

DOROTHY'S DRESSING ROOM.

A shrine to Dorothy Crane.

Dorothy sits at the mirror in  
costume.

A knock.

DOROTHY

If that's Maurice, tell him I've forgiven him  
completely and then push him down the stairs.

Beatrice enters with Julian.

BEATRICE

It's us.

JULIAN

Dorothy...

DOROTHY

Don't "Dorothy" me, Julian. I'm powdered, corseted, sober and petrified. I may become sincere at any moment.

BEATRICE

That would tarnish your legend.

DOROTHY

My legend has survived worse. Irving Thalberg once saw me eat a boiled egg.

JULIAN

You haven't had a drink?

DOROTHY

I noticed.

BEATRICE

Are you ill?

DOROTHY

No. That would be less humiliating.

She looks down at the pages.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

This song.

JULIAN

You hate it.

DOROTHY

Don't be an ass, Julian. I hate many things. White shoes. Underwritten men. Producers with sweaty palms. But I do not hate this.

BEATRICE

Then what's wrong?

Dorothy looks at Beatrice in the mirror.

DOROTHY

It knows too much.

JULIAN

Dorothy...

DOROTHY

Don't comfort me, Julian. It makes me nauseous.

She stands, restless.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Do you know what happens to women like me, Beatrice? We don't die.

(MORE)

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

We become stories men tell each other over brandy and cigars. "Dorothy Crane hit a nun with her Academy Award." "Dorothy Crane drank Tallulah Bankhead under the table." "Dorothy Crane married a French horn from Dubuque."

BEATRICE

Did you?

DOROTHY

He had it coming.

A faint smile. Then gone.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

But somewhere, in all that noise, you forget there was work. Real work. Marks hit. Tears summoned. Light found. Silence held. A camera doesn't love you, darling. It waits for you to lie.

JULIAN

That's good.

DOROTHY

Of course it's good. I've had thirty years to write it. And no one asked me to.

BEATRICE

The song asks, doesn't it?

DOROTHY

It does. That's the problem.

JULIAN

You can sing it.

DOROTHY

Can I?

JULIAN

Yes.

DOROTHY

Don't say that because you need me to sing it, Julian.

JULIAN

I'm not.

BEATRICE

Dorothy, you asked for a song that knows you've lived.

DOROTHY

I didn't expect you to listen.

BEATRICE

Neither did I.

A beat.

DOROTHY

I should very much like to meet the people who wrote it.

Beatrice and Julian exchange a look of terror.

BEATRICE

Dorothy, we...

DOROTHY

Beatrice, do you remember the first time you saw me?

BEATRICE

Of course.

DOROTHY

Don't say "in pictures." It makes me sound embalmed.

BEATRICE

At the Rialto. I was twenty-one. You turned your head and every woman in the audience sat up straighter.

DOROTHY

Exactly what I was going for.

JULIAN

Women sitting up straighter?

DOROTHY

Every goddam one of them. The world spends so much time pushing us down, Julian. A woman walks into the light and refuses to apologize - suddenly a girl in the dark thinks, "That could be me." Then they print I threw a champagne bucket at a duchess and the point is lost.

BEATRICE

Did you?

DOROTHY

Of course! I mean: a bet's a bet.

A knock.

STAGE MANAGER (OFFSTAGE)

Ten minutes, Miss Crane.

JULIAN

Dorothy... about the song...

Dorothy holds up an imperious hand.

DOROTHY

Later, my friends. Later. Now - please...

Beatrice and Julian exit.

Dorothy stops before exiting,  
looks back at the bourbon.

She takes the bottle from behind  
the vase.

Considers it.

Then places it, deliberately, back  
where it was.

SCENE 7

BACKSTAGE.

Near the fly rail.

Otto stands alone, staring upward.

Mona enters, breathless.

OTTO

Ja?

MONA

Mr. von Kleist, I... I saw your play. "Window  
Pane". Off-off-off Broadway.

OTTO

Ah. Zen you are here to tell me it iz too long.  
Or too gray. Or zat nobody knowz vy ze monkey  
iz crying.

MONA

No, sir.

OTTO

No?

MONA

It was about people on the outside, wasn't it?  
People who spend their whole lives looking  
through windows at rooms they never get invited  
into. And then, for two hours, your play asked  
them in.

The theatre noise seems to fall  
away for a moment.

OTTO

You felt zis?

MONA

I felt zis.

OTTO  
You underztood ze pane.

MONA  
I understood ze pain.

OTTO  
Fraulein, in zat case... You are not audience.

MONA  
No?

OTTO  
Nein. You are ze zeater.

Otto embraces her.

MONA  
Sir, I need your help. Have you seen anything backstage you weren't expecting?

OTTO  
Ja. I zaw man mit hat touch ze zilver dream.

MONA  
The silver screen?

OTTO  
Ja. But not ze zinging. Ze goodbye.

MONA  
The end of the song?

OTTO  
After Crane. After zong. When applauze make idiot of eferyone.

Elliot and Danny rush in.

DANNY  
Mona?

ELLIOT  
What did Otto say?

MONA  
They're not sabotaging Dorothy's number.

DANNY  
That's a relief.

MONA  
They're sabotaging what happens after it.

ELLIOT  
After "Silver Screen"? The big set change!

MONA  
During the applause. The screen won't clear. The next scene can't start.

DANNY

You learned all this from the Bird Man of 63rd Street?

ELLIOT

Danny!

MONA

Look, if the scene can't change the show can't go on.

OTTO

Backerz loze eferyting. Criticz reach for ze poizon pin. Show iz... kaput!

ELLIOT

But Dorothy's big number is...

A musical swell from the stage.

STAGE MANAGER (OFFSTAGE)

Miss Crane. Places.

ELLIOT

...now.

Blackout.

SCENE 8

A single silver chord.

The stage of HEARTS AFLAME.

The stage is transformed into a dream of old Hollywood: silver light, black velvet, Art Deco shadows, and at the back, a magnificent SILVER SCREEN – vast, luminous, impossibly glamorous.

On either side of the main playing area are two visible wing spaces: narrow pools of side-light where performers can hover half-seen, waiting to enter, listening, watching.

Then Dorothy steps into the light.

As Dorothy sings, the screen shows a montage of the great women of Hollywood in their incandescent beauty and power.

DOROTHY

"SILVER SCREEN"

ONCE I WAS A GIRL IN LIGHT,  
SOFT WITHIN THE FRAME,

EVERY CLOSE-UP BURNED SO BRIGHT,  
EVERY WHISPER KNEW MY NAME.  
I DIDN'T KNOW THE POWER THEN,  
I ONLY KNEW THE GLOW,  
HOW A FACE COULD FILL THE DARK  
AND HOLD THE HEARTS BELOW.  
SILVER SCREEN, SILVER SCREEN,  
I WAS YOUNG AND BRIGHT AND NEW  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.  
SILVER SCREEN, SILVER SCREEN,  
NOW I KNOW WHAT LIGHT CAN DO  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.  
THEY WANTED ROSES IN MY HAIR,  
MOONLIGHT IN MY EYES,  
SOMEONE LOVELY, SOMEONE FAIR,  
SOMEONE WRAPPED IN LIES.  
BUT TIME HAS TAUGHT MY HANDS  
TO STILL, MY HEART TO HOLD ITS FIRE,  
NOW I CAN BREAK A HEART AT WILL  
WITH NOTHING BUT DESIRE.  
SILVER SCREEN, SILVER SCREEN,  
I WAS YOUNG AND BRIGHT AND NEW  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.  
SILVER SCREEN, SILVER SCREEN,  
NOW I KNOW WHAT LIGHT CAN DO  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.  
LET THEM SAY THE GIRL IS GONE,  
LET THEM MISS THE CHILD,  
I HAVE LIVED TOO LONG TO PLAY  
THE INNOCENT AND MILD.  
I CAN STAND AND NOT EXPLAIN,  
I CAN SMILE AND MAKE IT STING,  
I CAN SHOW THEM WHAT A WOMAN KNOWS  
WHEN SHE HAS LOST THE SPRING.  
SILVER SCREEN, SILVER SCREEN,  
ONCE I BOWED BEFORE THE SCENE  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.  
SILVER SCREEN, SILVER SCREEN,  
NOW I KNOW WHAT I COULD BE  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.  
IF THEY DO NOT WANT ME NOW,  
LET THEM LOOK AWAY,  
I HAVE LIGHT ENOUGH INSIDE  
TO BURN THROUGH ONE MORE DAY.  
SILVER SCREEN, SILVER SCREEN,  
I AM MORE THAN WHAT THEY'VE SEEN  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.  
SILVER SCREEN,  
SILVER SCREEN,  
LET ME SHOW THEM WHAT I MEAN  
ON THE SILVER SCREEN.

The final note hangs in the air.

Dorothy holds the stage.

A stagehand yanks a rope.

Nothing.

Another tug.

Nothing.

STAGEHAND

It's stuck.

STAGE MANAGER

What's stuck?

STAGEHAND

The screen.

STAGE MANAGER

Clear it.

STAGEHAND

I'm trying.

The stage manager looks up. Then  
toward the next set.

STAGE MANAGER

We can't bring on the garden.

Maurice appears.

MAURICE

Why can't we bring on the garden?

STAGE MANAGER

Because the silver screen won't clear.

MAURICE

Then bring on half a garden!

STAGE MANAGER

Which half?

MAURICE

The cheap half!

Elliot sits at the backstage  
piano.

DANNY

Elliot?

ELLIOT

Follow me. Danny. We can do this. Together.  
Trust me.

He plays.

A vamp that sounds as if it had  
always been waiting inside "Silver  
Screen."

The orchestra catches him.

MAURICE

What is that?

DANNY

Time, Mr. Schwartz. We're buying time.

MAURICE

With whose money?

Mona looks from Elliot to the stuck screen, then toward the light.

ELLIOT

Danny. You've got this.

Elliot gestures at Mona.

DANNY

Mona.

MONA

No.

DANNY

Yes.

MONA

Danny...

DANNY

Everybody needs a dream, Mona. Including you.

Mona freezes.

The vamp continues.

Then, from just inside the wing, Mona sings.

MONA

THERE'S A WORLD BEYOND THE WINDOW,  
THERE'S A SONG BEHIND THE DOOR,  
THERE'S A PLACE WHERE I COULD MATTER  
IF I COULD CROSS THAT FLOOR.

Dorothy turns.

MONA (CONT'D)

ON THE OUTSIDE,  
LOOKING IN,  
WHERE THE LIGHT IS BRIGHT ENOUGH  
TO LET THE DREAM BEGIN.

Mona takes one step further into the light.

Then, from the opposite wing, Sir Hugo Fairfax appears in full paternal costume.

He sees Mona. The light. The music.

In the wings:

BEATRICE  
No!

JULIAN  
Oh God!

On stage:

Hugo steps onto the stage with magnificent restraint.

Dorothy sees him coming.

She offers him her hand as if this had always been planned.

Hugo takes it.

SIR HUGO  
Lottie... don't be alarmed, my child. The past has a habit of entering without knocking first. Look at her. At you. That face. That foolish hope. That bright, impossible certainty. For one moment - one bright, shining moment - the girl you were has come back to ask what became of her.

Mona, without missing the vamp, turns it into part of the moment.

MONA  
ON THE OUTSIDE,  
LOOKING IN,  
WHERE THE LIGHT IS BRIGHT ENOUGH  
TO LET THE DREAM BEGIN.

SIR HUGO  
My dear...

A beat.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)  
Be sensible.

Backstage, the stagehand gives the rope one last hard pull.

The silver screen finally flies.

The garden begins to move into place.

STAGE MANAGER  
Go. Go. Go.

The change happens behind Hugo and Mona, hidden by light, music, and nerve.

Elliot keeps playing.

Danny watches the screen clear.

DANNY

That's it. That's it.

Mona finishes the phrase.

MONA

ON THE OUTSIDE,  
LOOKING IN,  
WHERE THE LIGHT IS BRIGHT ENOUGH  
TO LET THE DREAM BEGIN.

Hugo lifts Dorothy's hand and kisses it.

Then he exits.

Backstage explodes into whispered chaos.

MAURICE

What was that?

DANNY

Theater, Mr. Schwartz. Pure theater.

MAURICE

And yet I still enjoyed it.

JULIAN

The old devil.

BEATRICE

What?

JULIAN

Hugo just saved the whole goddam show.

Dorothy stands near Mona now.

MONA

Miss Crane, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean...

DOROTHY

Never apologize for holding a room, child.

Dorothy studies her.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Most people spend a lifetime trying.

JULIAN

Mr. Shaw.

Elliot looks at him.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

That vamp after "Silver Screen"... I couldn't have done it.

ELLIOT

Mr. Vale...

JULIAN

No. Don't rescue me from the compliment. It's taken me all evening to find it.

SCENE 9

FRONT OF CURTAIN.

The chorus line of HEARTS AFLAME bursts on in full Long Island splendor: tennis whites, pearls, parasols, feathers, and impossible smiles.

CHORUS

HEARTS AFLAME!  
HEARTS AFLAME!  
LOVE'S A TERRIBLY ELEGANT GAME!  
MOON IN JUNE,  
SPOONING SOON,  
TROUBLE ALWAYS ARRIVES TOO SOON!  
HEARTS AFLAME!  
HEARTS AFLAME!  
CALL IT MADNESS OR CALL IT FAME!  
ONE, TWO, THREE—  
WHO NEEDS SHAME?  
WHEN EVERY HEART IS A HEART AFLAME!

Blackout.

SCENE 10

DOROTHY'S DRESSING ROOM.

The room is crowded, overheated, and electric.

Dorothy sits at her dressing table, still in costume.

Beatrice, Julian, Maurice, Elliot, Danny, Mona, Otto and Hugo are present.

Everyone is toasting.

MAURICE

To "Hearts Aflame".

BEATRICE

To surviving "Hearts Aflame".

OTTO

To ze pigeon!

JULIAN

To Dorothy Crane.

DOROTHY

After the pigeon!?

SIR HUGO

And to this remarkable young lady, who demonstrated remarkable composure under extraordinary pressure.

MONA

Thank you, Sir Hugo.

ELLIOT

To you, Danny.

DANNY

And to you, Elliot.

ELLIOT

The third.

DANNY

The third.

They drink.

Then the door opens.

Silky enters with Olive, Knuckles and Sprinkles.

The room stills.

SILKY

Ain't that sweet? Everybody celebrating.

MAURICE

Silky, bubbeleh...

SILKY

Zip it, Schwartz.

MAURICE

Gladly.

Silky looks at Elliot, Danny and Mona.

SILKY

Nicely done.

DANNY

Thank you. Panic comes naturally to my people.

SILKY  
You got in my way, kid.

DANNY  
I have a knack for being in the wrong place at  
the wrong time.

SILKY  
Funny boy.

DANNY  
That's the rumor.

SILKY  
Rumors can be... very useful.

Silky looks to Beatrice and  
Julian.

SILKY (CONT'D)  
Here's one we can all enjoy, folks. Julian and  
Beatrice Vale did not write this show.

The room tightens.

MAURICE  
Silky!

SILKY  
No, no. It's a hell of a story, Schwartz. The  
king and queen of Broadway lose their touch.  
Hire a couple kids to patch the holes. Pretend  
the whole thing's theirs.

BEATRICE  
That is an ugly accusation.

SILKY  
It's Broadway, lady. Ugly sells.

SIR HUGO  
Now see here!

DOROTHY  
Oh, sit down, Hugo.

BEATRICE  
Dorothy?

DOROTHY  
Darling, I sang the goddam song. Of course you  
didn't write it.

JULIAN  
Dorothy!

DOROTHY  
Don't look wounded, Julian. It'll give you  
jowls.

Silky turns to Elliot and Danny.

SILKY

So let's talk about the guys who did write it, shall we? Two fellas. Writing together. Living together. A little light in the loafers, maybe? How's that gonna read with the matinée crowd, huh?

Elliot goes white.

Danny is very still.

Beatrice's face hardens.

Olive watches Silky.

MAURICE

No.

Everyone looks at Maurice.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

No, no, no. You listen up, Valenti, and you listen good. You can say what you want about me. Most folks do. You can call me cheap, nervous, crooked, sweaty – sweaty is fair. But don't you start on these boys.

SILKY

Schwartz...

MAURICE

I'm talking here! You think this business runs on respectable men with square shoulders and clean secrets? Wake up, Silky. Half the people who make Broadway beautiful are people the matinée crowd pretends not to see. They write the songs. They sew the gowns. They make the jokes, paint the flats, fix the lights, save the show, and go home through the alley so nobody has to see who made the magic. So you don't get to tell them they don't belong. Not tonight. Not in my theater. Not ever. Because without these guys – and gals – without every kid who comes here because the world outside won't give them a home, there is no goddam theater.

A silence.

DOROTHY

Maurice.

A beat.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I may have misjudged you.

MAURICE

Thank you, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

I said may.

SILKY

That's a beautiful speech, Schwartz - but it don't change nothing.

Rex enters.

REX

Nicky, darling! You're here! I thought we were meeting at Sardi's?

KNUCKLES

"Sardi's"?

SPRINKLES

"Darling"?

SILKY

Stay out of this, Ransome.

REX

I tried that, Nicky. Remember? You climbed through my dressing-room window.

MAURICE

What is happening right now?

DANNY

My, my, my.

SILKY

Rex...

REX

Don't Rex me in that tone, darling. You used it in Atlantic City when the bellboy brought the wrong champagne.

OLIVE

You bought him champagne? (beat) Please tell me you kept the receipt.

Rex crosses to Silky.

REX

You're better than this, Nicky. I know you are.

SILKY

You don't know nothing.

REX

Nicky, I've seen you cry during an overture.

SILKY

Theater dust.

REX

Both eyes.

DOROTHY

That takes commitment.

REX

And you know every movie Dorothy Crane ever made. Even "Sunset Scanties", and no one's seen that.

SILKY

She was badly directed! And the costumes? Who cut on the bias in 1924?

DOROTHY

He's not wrong, you know. Who did those wretched gowns, anyway?

SILKY

Antoine of Beverley Hills. Who should never have...

He regrets it instantly.

Knuckle looks at Sprinkles.

Sprinkles looks at Knuckles.

Both look at Silky.

SILKY (CONT'D)

What?

KNUCKLES

Nothing, boss.

SILKY

You knew?

KNUCKLES

About you and Mr. Ransome?

SPRINKLES

Or about the musicals?

KNUCKLES

We thought the two might be connected.

SPRINKLES

Plus, you got opinions about chiffon.

KNUCKLES

Strong opinions.

SILKY

And nobody said nothing?

KNUCKLES

You're the boss, boss.

SPRINKLES

Also, you was right about the chiffon. Too pouffy.

REX

You see, my love? We told everyone. And nobody fainted.

DANNY

I came close, but that was finding out someone actually watched "Sunset Scanties".

DOROTHY

Watch yourself, young man.

Silky looks around the room.

SILKY

Olive, I... I'm sorry, toots.

OLIVE

Why? Thanks to you, my wardrobe has never looked better. And besides, the show's alive.

SILKY

So what? No insurance payout, remember?

OLIVE

Dead shows pay once. Hit shows pay every week.

MAURICE

They do?

OLIVE

Sure. If somebody here knew how to run the numbers.

MAURICE

Miss Cammeretti, have you ever considered producing?

OLIVE

Mr. Schwartz, I've been keeping Silky solvent for years. The big lug thought it was dumb luck.

MAURICE

Come work for me.

OLIVE

With you.

MAURICE

With me. That's what I said. Schwartz and Cammeretti.

OLIVE

Cammeretti and Schwartz.

MAURICE

I was afraid of that.

OLIVE

Cammeretti and Schwartz present the Broadway debut of... Silver and Shaw.

Maurice looks at Beatrice and Julian. They nod enthusiastically.

MAURICE

Who else?

Elliot and Danny embrace.

Silky crosses to Rex.

SILKY

I've been a heel, Rex - and I'm sorry.

REX

A weekend on Cape Cod ought to make me feel a whole lot better.

SILKY

You got it, kid.

REX

Sorry, Elliot.

ELLIOT

Don't be. I've had my happy ending since Act One.

DOROTHY

Happy endings all round, it seems. I can't tell you how much I hate that.

Then, from beyond the door, a knock.

Everyone turns.

A strapping WESTERN UNION MESSENGER appears with a telegram.

He is young, very handsome, broad-shouldered, and wearing a shirt that is doing its best.

MESSENGER

Telegram for Miss Dorothy Crane.

DOROTHY

I am Dorothy Crane. What's left of her.

She takes it, reads.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Well, well, whaddya know? Louis B. Mayer wants me back in pictures.

MAURICE

Pictures?

DOROTHY

Yes, Maurice. Moving ones. Do try to keep up. He wants me to leave for Hollywood tonight.

BEATRICE

Dorothy, that's wonderful!

DOROTHY

Wonderful? Darling, it's inevitable.

She looks the messenger up and down through a lorgnette.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

And you are?

MESSENGER

Tommy, ma'am.

DOROTHY

Tommy...?

MESSENGER

Tommy Flanagan, Miss Crane.

DOROTHY

Irish. Shoulders. Punctual. Turn around for me, Mr. Flanagan.

He executes a nervous turn. It is... impressive.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I've married worse.

BEATRICE

Dorothy...

DOROTHY

Don't look at me like that, Beatrice. Seven has always been my lucky number. Mr. Flanagan, how do you feel about long-distance travel?

JULIAN

Dorothy: surely someone closer to your own age?

DOROTHY

How old are you, Mr. Flanagan?

MESSENGER

Twenty-two, Miss Crane.

DOROTHY

See!

MAURICE

You can't go to Hollywood, Dorothy. You have a contract.

DOROTHY

Maurice, I have a contract to appear in the new musical from Julian and Beatrice Vale.

She looks at Elliot. Then Danny.  
Then back to Maurice.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Do let me know if one turns up.

MAURICE

But... but...

DOROTHY

But me no buts, Maurice. The show will go on.

BEATRICE

How?

DOROTHY

Because I've already found you the perfect leading lady.

JULIAN

Who?

Dorothy looks straight at Mona.

Every head pivots until all eyes are on the ingenue.

MAURICE

But... she's a waitress!

BEATRICE

Who cares? What she served up tonight was pure magic.

DOROTHY

Name?

MONA

Mona Lipschitz.

MAURICE

I'm ruined!

DOROTHY

That won't do at all. Hmm. I have it! Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to Broadway: Miss Lola Hart.

SPRINKLES

It's a good name.

KNUCKLES

It is a good name.

MONA

Lola Hart...

DOROTHY

That's your name, child - if you're brave enough to take it on.

MONA

Miss Crane: why are you doing this?

DOROTHY

Because - long ago - someone opened a door for me.

A beat.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Naturally, I made them regret it. Now, Mr. Flanagan, take me to Hollywood. And take me very... very... slowly.

The door opens.

Luella enters with a WAITER and a trolley of champagne.

LUELLA

Compliments of Mr. and Mrs. Vale.

BEATRICE

How thoughtful of us.

JULIAN

Did we pay for it?

LUELLA

Not yet.

MAURICE

You're learning!

Luella begins distributing glasses.

The room loosens. Champagne. Relief.

Beatrice watches Luella for a moment.

BEATRICE

Luella.

LUELLA  
Ma'am?

BEATRICE  
You ever think about being up there? Your name  
in lights?

LUELLA  
No'm.

A beat.

LUELLA (CONT'D)  
I did have a hankering to go into show  
business, ma'am. After a fashion. Reckoned I  
could call up that nice Mr. Winchell. Reckon  
he'd be mighty interested to hear what goes  
on... on opening night.

All eyes turn to Hugo.

Hugo, holding champagne, is  
oblivious.

Then he senses the room.

Looks up.

SIR HUGO  
What?

A beat.

Realization dawns.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)  
Ah!

Sir Hugo moves center stage.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)  
My dear...

A final look to Luella.

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)  
Be sensible!

Blackout.

SCENE 11

A MARQUEE BLAZES:

"CURTAIN UP!" CAMMERETTI &  
SCHWARTZ PRESENT LOLA HART IN A  
NEW MUSICAL BY SILVER & SHAW.

The stage reveals the opening  
number of "Curtain Up!"

A central playing area.

Visible wings on either side.

Mona/Lola stands center.

"CURTAIN UP!"

COMPANY

CURTAIN UP, LIGHTS COME ON,  
HEAR THE OVERTURE BEGIN.  
TAKE YOUR SEATS, HOLD YOUR BREATH,  
LET THE WHOLE DAMN WORLD COME IN.  
CURTAIN UP, HERE WE GO,  
PAST THE DOOR AND THROUGH THE DARK.  
FROM A WHISPER, FROM A HOPE,  
TO A FIRE, TO A SPARK.

In one wing: Olive and Maurice  
watch the house, clutching  
receipts and wads of cash.

MONA

ONE BARE ROOM, ONE CHEAP LIGHT,  
ONE IDEA THAT WOULDN'T DIE,  
TURN IT INTO SOMETHING BRIGHT,  
SEND IT OUT THERE,  
LET IT FLY.

In the opposite wing: Rex slips  
offstage into Silky's arms. A  
quick kiss. Silky straightens  
Rex's costume and sends him back  
on.

COMPANY

CURTAIN UP, HEARTS IN THROATS,  
EVERY HAND A LITTLE TIGHT.  
EVERY DREAM GETS ONE CHANCE TO STEP OUT  
INTO THE LIGHT.

Knuckles and Sprinkles enter in  
top hats and tails.

Luella appears with a prompt book,  
calm and absolute. Hugo sweeps  
toward an entrance. Luella  
redirects him with one finger.

MONA

FROM THE BACK ROW,  
FROM THE STREET,  
FROM A NAME THEY NEVER KNEW,  
TO THE CENTER, TO THE LIGHT,  
NOW THE STORY'S TOLD BY YOU.

Then Dorothy sweeps in.

Magnificent Hollywood gown.  
Impossible glamor.

On her arm: Tommy Flanagan. Dark  
glasses. Every inch the movie  
star.

They cross through the number and  
effortlessly upstage everyone.

Lola sees, laughs, and gives  
Dorothy the stage for one glorious  
beat.

DOROTHY

I WAS STANDING IN THE SHADOW,  
WATCHING SOMEONE ELSE BEGIN.  
NOW THE LIGHT IS WHERE I'M STANDING,  
NOW I'M FINALLY WALKING IN.  
CURTAIN UP, LIGHTS AND SOUND,  
EVERY HOPE AND EVERY FEAR.  
EVERY SOUL IN THE HOUSE KNOWS  
EXACTLY WHY WE'RE HERE.

Beatrice and Julian watch from the  
side. Julian takes Beatrice's  
hand.

COMPANY

CURTAIN UP, TAKE YOUR MARK,  
LET THE WORLD FALL INTO PLACE.  
FOR A MOMENT, JUST A MOMENT,  
WE CAN ALL BELONG SOMEPLACE.

The number builds.

COMPANY (CONT'D)

ONE BRIGHT NIGHT, ONE TRUE CHANCE,  
ONE MORE STORY LEFT TO TELL.  
IF IT WORKS, IT'S PARADISE,  
IF IT DOESN'T, WHAT THE HELL!  
CURTAIN UP, HERE WE STAND,  
EVERY HEART OUT IN THE LIGHT.  
AND ANYTHING,  
YES, ANYTHING,  
CAN HAPPEN  
HERE TONIGHT!

The stage curtain of "Curtain Up!"  
comes down.

Only Elliot and Danny remain on  
stage.

Danny reaches for Elliot's hand.

Elliot takes it.

They look out. They kiss.

Blackout.

**THE END.**