

"OPENING NIGHT"

A New Musical

Book, Music & Lyrics by

Matthew Canning-Wall

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 at the St. James Theatre

Scene 7 — The Stage of "Hearts Aflame"

Scene 8 — Front of Curtain

Scene 9 — Dorothy Crane's Dressing Room

Scene 10 — Dorothy's Dressing Room / The Decision

Scene 11 — Finale / The Stage of "Curtain Up!"

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 favor 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

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, Celia, surely we can...

WOMAN

I can't...

MAN

You can, my darling. And you shall.

WOMAN

No, no. We can't.

MAN

Yes, yes. 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

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

ELLIOT

But I am bound by honor!

DANNY

For us, my love - unbind yourself!

ELLIOT

I'm bound... 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 were ending!

ELLIOT

I think 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.

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

Well, it's flaky, expensive, and impossible to repair. Actually, you're right: it's practically Paris. (beat) Oh, Danny: I just wonder if we'll ever be as good as the Vales.

DANNY

Elliot, nobody starts as the Vales. Even the Vales probably started as someone 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

Um... 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', the new musical by Julian and Beatrice Vale."

DANNY

It's not what you know...

ELLIOT

Shut up. My mother 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

Sure, but 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

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
Danny!

DANNY
You're scared they'll say no.

ELLIOT
I'm scared they'll say yes, Danny. And find out who Silver and Shaw really are.

DANNY
You gave me top billing! 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 the show.

Elliot returns to the piano and starts playing.

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 on.

DANNY (CONT'D)

One day.

ELLIOT

Don't, baby.

DANNY

One day on the Great White Way, huh?

ELLIOT

Danny...

DANNY

One day.

ELLIOT

You always say that.

DANNY

Because one day is 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 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.

JULIAN (OFFSTAGE)

I'm perfectly all right, my love. That was the table.

Another smaller crash.

JULIAN (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

And the lamp.

BEATRICE

Are they hungover too?

Julian enters.

JULIAN

Is it morning?

BEATRICE

In parts of the city.

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

My dear, you're trembling.

JULIAN

I'm vibrating with melody, dear heart.

BEATRICE

Well sit down before you vibrate all over the Turkish rug.

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

Darling, if those are my pages, I'm entitled to see them.

BEATRICE

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

JULIAN

Ah. My new protégé.

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw.

JULIAN

He has a name?

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

Mr. Shaw has found a pulse, my love. Musically speaking.

She hands him one page.

JULIAN

Hmm. That's not my work.

BEATRICE

Thankfully, no.

JULIAN

It doesn't even sound like my work.

BEATRICE

It sounds like your work 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

Those lyrics aren't Mr. Shaw's. Are they yours?

BEATRICE

Hardly. I haven't been that optimistic in years.

JULIAN

So, whose are they?

BEATRICE

I have no idea. Someone with jokes, Julian. And a heart.

JULIAN

We have jokes.

BEATRICE

No, dear, we have typing.

Julian reads again, despite himself.

JULIAN

They're good.

BEATRICE

I know.

JULIAN

I hate that.

BEATRICE

Me too.

JULIAN

And no one knows we're smuggling them into 'Hearts Aflame'?

BEATRICE

No one can ever know. About these or Mr. Shaw's new score.

JULIAN

Maurice?

BEATRICE

Our dear 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

We are letting one young man - or possibly two - suggest alternatives.

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 which 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 works because someone else saved it, they will still put our names on the marquee. That is the bargain we are asking them to make: their work in our shadow, until we decide whether we are brave enough to step out of it.

JULIAN

And if it doesn't work?

BEATRICE

They'll say we never had it to begin with.

Julian moves to the piano.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

We're doing the right thing, aren't we? By doing the wrong thing?

JULIAN

I certainly hope so.

He plays.

JULIAN / BEATRICE

"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's coming up.

BEATRICE

Of course he is.

JULIAN

Hide the pages.

BEATRICE

Hide the coffee, Luella.

JULIAN

Huh?

BEATRICE

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

JULIAN

Ah.

The doorbell rings.

Beatrice tucks the packet under the
newspaper.

BEATRICE

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

JULIAN

And the anonymous 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 is
ready. We open in three days.

JULIAN

I'm working on it, Maurice.

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're certainly pages, Maurice.

MAURICE

That wasn't my question.

Maurice reaches for them.

Beatrice places one hand flat on the newspaper.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Please - for the love of God - tell me Julian wrote them.

JULIAN

Who else?

MAURICE

The backers are coming on opening night. Trust me, we do not wanna upset these guys.

BEATRICE

Why these backers in particular, Maurice? I mean, as opposed to all the others you've upset?

MAURICE

They're not exactly theater people.

JULIAN

Neither are most theater people.

MAURICE

I'm serious, Julian. 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 which case: I am very much not here. If Dorothy asks, I'm with the backers.

JULIAN

But where are you really?

MAURICE

Hiding from Dorothy.

BEATRICE

Maurice, that's the first sensible decision you've made all season.

The doorbell rings.

MAURICE

God, that's her.

JULIAN

Oh, Maurice, it might be anyone.

The doorbell rings again. Harder.

MAURICE

Only Dorothy Crane can make a doorbell sound like a firing squad. You still have the bathroom with the sunken tub?

BEATRICE

Of course, Maurice: only we're out of loafahs.

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, 60s, enters in dark glasses.

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.

Dorothy drinks. Breathes. Attempts speech.

A sip.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I can't...

Another sip.

LUELLA

Act?

BEATRICE

Luella.

DOROTHY

I can't...

Another sip.

Sing? LUELLA

Luella! JULIAN

I can't... DOROTHY

Another sip.

LUELLA
Get through Act One without a hip flask?

JULIAN / BEATRICE
Luella!

Dorothy removes her dark glasses.

She looks from Julian to Beatrice.

DOROTHY
Beatrice, I have survived three studios, six husbands, two nervous breakdowns, and one talkie in which a horse received better notices. I have survived a director who asked me to imagine I was a snow crab. But I will not... 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, Beatrice - just fix the goddam song. (beat) I was a movie star! Think on that. The silver screen paled against my incandescent talent. I was beloved. Beloved! Worshipped! An icon. Why - why! - did I leave the glamor of Hollywood for this wretched little town? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

BEATRICE

Because you're a monster, Dorothy. 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 good number.

DOROTHY

It's 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 in a studio fire and still hit my mark. Twice! I cannot... I will not stand in front of a Broadway audience and tell them my soul is a dove.

JULIAN

Lottie is... well, she's an 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.

A glare from Dorothy.

DOROTHY

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

Dorothy takes a long swig from the decanter.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Oh, 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. (beat) I need to believe in Lottie: as a woman, not a... ninny. She must live. For the audience. For me. To play Lottie, I need proof. 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 simply turn my head 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.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

And I want one more thing: when I step into that light, I will not be treated as a memory borrowing a costume. I will be the woman who earned the room. If this show is going to be my last Broadway opening, it will not be a eulogy.

BEATRICE

But the plot...

DOROTHY

The plot will recover, Beatrice. I will not.

A beat.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Do you know: twenty years ago, nobody wrote love songs like you two. Nobody. People got married to them. Hell, people got divorced to them. I know I did. Three or four times. You used to write like love was worth ruining your life for. Now, it's all moonlight and vibrato and polite little feelings no one actually feels. You're better than this. Both of you.

JULIAN

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

Dorothy, 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

Actually, Otto would love that.

DOROTHY

True. (beat) 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. But 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! Many of whom were, it appears, looking at chorus boys. But that's in the past. 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. Think on that!

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 ditch 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 can't take much more of this.

BEATRICE

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

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 our 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.

BEATRICE

And what did this impossibly glamorous pigeon have to say?

OTTO

Show iz wrong.

MAURICE

What does he know?

BEATRICE

Wrong how, Otto?

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 anozzer 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? (beat) 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. Trust me.

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

Sure. 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 needs 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

He is a father. Specifically, Lottie's father.

SIR HUGO

No, 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."

JULIAN/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

My dear Beatrice: 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 Fairfax has saved a show. Do you know, I once told Ziegfeld...

He exits toward the conservatory, still talking.

BEATRICE

This is all your fault!

JULIAN

You said we needed class!

BEATRICE

And we got a monocle with opinions. Listen, Julian, 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

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)

Mr. Ransome, even your allergies have lousy timing.

REX

Sorry!

BEATRICE

Shh!

Beatrice turns to Luella.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Show them in, Luella.

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

Rex? You know the curtains?

ELLIOT

The curtains?

BEATRICE

Ah, the curtains!

Rex steps out from behind the curtains.

REX

Elliot, I... I've been thinking about you all morning.

DANNY

Oh yeah?

BEATRICE

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, mister.

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? I say: what have you got there?

BEATRICE / JULIAN / ELLIOT / DANNY

Copies.

MAURICE

Copies of what?

BEATRICE

Rehearsal pages.

MAURICE

New rehearsal pages?

JULIAN

Fresh rehearsal pages.

MAURICE

Fresh from whom?

BEATRICE / JULIAN / ELLIOT / DANNY

No one!

MAURICE

That's not how pages work.

Luella takes the loofah from him.

LUELLA

Before you hurt yourself.

SIR HUGO

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

BEATRICE / JULIAN / ELLIOT / DANNY

No!

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

BEATRICE

Mr. Shaw has delivered copies of pages that were copied because copies were required. Mr. Silver has helped carry those copies, as young men with hands are sometimes called upon to do. No one has written, rewritten, improved, repaired, rescued, polished, or otherwise interfered with anything resembling this or any other show.

MAURICE

Huh?

LUELLA

I'm 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 (OFFSTAGE)

That your dream, toots? To be on Broadway?

MONA

More than anything in the world, sir.

VOICE (OFFSTAGE)

Want my advice?

MONA

You bet.

VOICE (OFFSTAGE)

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!

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?

DANNY

For a waitress, Mona, you sure are well-informed.

MONA

Oh, I know half the dressers on 44th Street. Feed enough of 'em cannoli and eventually someone sneaks you backstage.

MONA (CONT'D)

I know the score to "Hearts Aflame," too. I've been learning it from the wings for six months. When the chorus girls lose a harmony, I can sing the missing line. Nobody's asked me to, but that's how you learn a room when nobody's handing you a door. What do you do, Mr. Shaw?

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 opening.

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.

DANNY

So, what do we do? We could just keep quiet about it?

ELLIOT

You? Keep quiet? I don't think so. No. We don't walk away from this, Danny. If something happens to that show, our names never get near Broadway again - and neither does Mona's.

MONA

Well maybe Mr. Valenti'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

Kid, there ain't enough fog in the world.

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.

Otto exits.

MAURICE

How do they find me?

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.

BEATRICE

At least we have your new pages, Mr. Shaw.

ELLIOT

Mrs. Vale, Mr. Vale — those pages. They're not mine.

DANNY

Elliot...

ELLIOT

They're ours.

JULIAN

Oh.

BEATRICE

A team? Like Julian and I used to be.

ELLIOT

More than a team, Mrs. Shaw.

BEATRICE

Ah. I see.

JULIAN

Listen. Beatrice and I owe you both a great deal. How you live your life in nobody's business but your own.

DANNY

That's good of you, Mr. Shaw.

BEATRICE

And besides, Julian went to boarding school, so...

Before Beatrice can finish:

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

Thank God. I thought it was the waistcoat.

He sees Elliot.

REX (CONT'D)

Elliot! You're here!

DANNY

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

REX

The what?

BEATRICE

Go warm up, Rex.

REX

I'm plenty warm, thanks, Mrs. Vale. I have thermal underwear.

BEATRICE

Vocally.

REX

Right.

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

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. It's what I always wanted for us.

A bell rings.

STAGE MANAGER

Ten minutes! Ten minutes to curtain!

The backstage traffic thickens.

ELLIOT

We've got to 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 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. You're... well, you're good for me, Elliot.

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

OLIVE

Long time, no see, Mouth.

DANNY

It's you.

OLIVE

You with the show?

DANNY

Kinda... sorta...

OLIVE

That a yes or a medical condition?

DANNY

Both, increasingly.

OLIVE

Listen to me, Mouth. Keep away from the stage tonight.

DANNY

That sounds like a threat.

OLIVE

It ain't no threat.

DANNY

Then you gotta work on your delivery.

OLIVE

It's a warning.

DANNY

About what?

OLIVE

Listen, when Dorothy Crane takes the spotlight, everybody looks front.

DANNY

And?

OLIVE

That's when smart boys keep clear of anything with a rope, a wheel, or a stagehand pretending not to sweat.

DANNY

What's gonna happen?

OLIVE

I don't know. That's the part I don't like.

She starts to go.

DANNY

Why tell me?

Olive looks back.

OLIVE

Because you're cute. And because you looked at me like I wasn't someone's moll.

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.

REX

HEARTS AFLAME

I WAS BORN WITH A SILVER SPOON,
ON A WEDNESDAY — THE THIRD OF JUNE.
NOW I CROON TO A BALLROOM TUNE
STARING UP AT THE SILVER MOON.
WHEN A VIOLIN STARTS TO SWOON,
AND A HEART STARTS TO FLUTTER TOO SOON,
THEN THE STARS AND THE COCKTAILS AGREE
LIFE IS HOPELESSLY OUT OF TUNE!
CHAMPAGNE! MOONLIGHT!
KISSES THAT ARRIVE TOO SOON!
ONE MORE DANCE BENEATH THE CHANDELIERS
AND DARLING, WE ARE DOOMED!
HEARTS AFLAME! HEARTS AFLAME!
EVERY WALTZ ANOTHER DANGEROUS GAME!
CALL IT LOVE OR CALL IT SHAME —
EITHER WAY: HEARTS AFLAME!

DOROTHY

NOW WE GLIDE THROUGH A MIDNIGHT HAZE,
THROUGH A BLUR OF APPLAUSE AND PRAISE,
WHILE THE MOON IN A CLOUDLESS SKY
LOOKS DIVINE IN SEVENTEEN WAYS.
AND THE BAND WITH IMPECCABLE TIMING
KEEPS INSISTING ON SILVER AND JUNE,
WHILE SOMEBODY SINGS ABOUT SPOONS
TO A VERY EXPENSIVE TUNE!
CHAMPAGNE! MOONLIGHT! VIOLINS THAT HOWL AND CROON!
ONE MORE KISS BENEATH THE PALMS
AND DARLING, WE ARE DOOMED!

REX / DOROTHY

HEARTS AFLAME! HEARTS AFLAME!
EVERY TORCH BECOMING ONE MORE FLAME!
RAISE THE ROOF AND SHOUT THE NAME
HEARTS! 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 put all this dough in the show, right?

SILKY

Correct.

SPRINKLES

And now you want the show to flop?

SILKY

I want the show to suffer a temporary, regrettable, fully insured misfortune.

KNUCKLES

Flop's shorter.

OLIVE

But less profitable.

SPRINKLES

So we're robbing the theater?

SILKY

Sprinkles, please. We are not animals. We are businessmen.

KNUCKLES

Crooked businessmen.

SILKY

The adjective is implied.

SPRINKLES

And Schwartz knows?

SILKY

Schwartz knows he's got backers. That's plenty for Schwartz.

OLIVE

He also knows how to sweat through gabardine.

SILKY

A rare gift.

SPRINKLES

So what happens?

SILKY

Knuckles here has taken care of everything. A little pulley slips. A little scenery sticks. A little panic. A little smoke maybe. The silver screen jams after Crane's number, the audience sees a dead stop, and the St. James is declared unsafe. The policy opens. I collect the failure money, Schwartz loses the theatre, and the other backers stop asking questions about where their investment went.

SPRINKLES

And nobody gets hurt?

SILKY

Nobody we cannot afford to lose.

OLIVE

Try that again.

SILKY

Nobody gets hurt.

OLIVE

That ain't what you said.

SILKY

It's what I meant.

OLIVE

No. It's what you remembered to mean.

Knuckles shifts, uneasy.

KNUCKLES

When?

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

SILKY

When every eye in the house is where God intended it.

SPRINKLES

On you?

SILKY

No, dummy. On Dorothy Crane.

Knuckles and Sprinkles exchange a look.

SILKY (CONT'D)

Her eleven o'clock number. Big dress. Big spotlight. Big feelings. Nobody looks elsewhere when Dorothy Crane is downstage bleeding her heart out.

Knuckles and Sprinkles exchange a look.

SILKY (CONT'D)

Face it, boys. That woman is Broadway. Yesterday, today and - hopefully - tomorrow.

Knuckles and Sprinkles exchange another 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 one another.

ELLIOT

Danny, I... Rex flirted with me.

DANNY

The nerve of that guy! Although... the broad from Stronzi's is here and, well, she flirted with me too.

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

Hand on heart, I did not flirt. Did you?

ELLIOT

I compared him flatteringly to a dessert fork.

DANNY

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. Shirl 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

Miss 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. It's Broadway. Nobody knows, but...
everybody knows.

DANNY

Who needs Western Union when you have actors?

MONA

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

ELLIOT

My career is over!

DANNY

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

ELLIOT

Not helping!

MONA

Look, we ain'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.

Danny and Mona exit.

The performance is underway.

From the stage: MUSIC, APPLAUSE, the
muffled roar of an opening-night audience.

Stagehands rush past with flowers, ropes,
bits of Long Island shrubbery.

Julian enters.

ELLIOT

Mr. Vale?

JULIAN

Not now, Elliot.

Elliot sees the score in Julian's hand.

ELLIOT

You're changing Silver Screen?

JULIAN

A little. My name on the billboards, after all.

ELLIOT

But... it isn't your song.

JULIAN

Careful.

ELLIOT

I'm always being careful, sir. That's the problem.

Elliot looks terrified, but keeps going.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Danny wrote those words. I wrote that music. You know we did. I know you and Mrs. Vale are responsible for the show. I know you're under pressure. But "Silver Screen" works because it's ours. If you change it now, it becomes something it isn't.

Julian looks at the page.

Then he lowers the pencil.

JULIAN

It is your song, Elliot. Yours and Mr. Silver's.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

If the curtain survives tonight, you do not go back into the shadows. You put your names on the next page before anyone can make you grateful for the privilege of disappearing.

ELLIOT

And if the names cost us the show?

JULIAN

Then you will know what the show was worth.

ELLIOT

Thank you.

The Stage Manager rushes past.

STAGE MANAGER

Miss Crane wants to know if the song is ready, Mr. Vale.

Julian looks at Elliot.

Then back to the Stage Manager.

JULIAN

Tell her it's not just ready. It's perfect.

The Stage Manager exits.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

You know, when I was starting out, I was just like you. So protective of the work and Beatrice and... what we had together. But now...

ELLIOT

Mr. Vale, you're the greatest songwriter I know.

JULIAN

Ha! You wouldn't say that if you'd heard my first song.

ELLIOT

What was it called?

JULIAN

"There's a Moon in My Martini."

ELLIOT

You don't say.

Elliot exits.

Beatrice enters with the Stage Manager.

BEATRICE

Listen to this!

STAGE MANAGER

Miss Crane wants the both of you in her dressing room. Five minutes. Apparently she can't sing all those lyrics before her costume change.

JULIAN

How much do we lose?

STAGE MANAGER

Just four bars.

The Stage Manager exits.

JULIAN

We could make that work, couldn't we, darling?

BEATRICE

Julian! Four bars is not trimming, it's amputation! My lyrics won't mean anything.

JULIAN

The melody will survive.

BEATRICE

I bet it will.

JULIAN

Beatrice, they're just the words. It's...

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... Darling, I...

BEATRICE

I'll 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.

Danny enters.

DANNY

Mrs. Vale - is everything okay?

BEATRICE

Opening night is falling apart around me. My husband thinks all I do is gild his lily, and I'm about to confront the woman I admire most in all the world, and whom I would gladly thwack with a croquet mallet. Other than that...

DANNY

Oh, Beatrice. Can I call you Beatrice? Everything's gonna be swell. Trust me. Why, just think of all the great Broadway moments snatched from the jaws of imminent disaster. Think about when Fanny Brice...

BEATRICE

You're Moishe Silver's boy, yes?

DANNY

Sorry?

BEATRICE

Grand Street. Across from Valinsky's Bakery?

DANNY

You know Valinsky's?

BEATRICE

Danny, my father was Valinsky.

DANNY

Huh?

BEATRICE

You came in every Sunday with your father. Talked Papa half to death. Always with the questions.

DANNY

That sounds like me.

BEATRICE

It was you. Same eyes. Same mouth running ahead of your heart.

DANNY

But I figured...

BEATRICE

The voice. The hats. The apartment. Of course you did. Bessie Valinsky from Grand Street was not invited to Broadway. But, she turned up anyway.

DANNY

Can you beat that? (beat) Mrs. Vale, do you still feel like everyone else got handed a ticket, and you're still trying to sneak past the usher?

BEATRICE

Every day of my life. I'll tell you a secret, Danny. Everyone here is pretending. Julian pretends he isn't scared. Dorothy pretends she doesn't care. Maurice pretends he's in control.

DANNY

And Elliot?

BEATRICE

I think Elliot pretends no one sees how much he loves you.

DANNY

I...

BEATRICE

He's not ashamed of you, Danny.

DANNY

He isn't? But... why not? He's... and I'm... One day he's gonna realize I'm just... I'm not enough for him.

BEATRICE

I imagine he's scared he's not enough for you.

DANNY

So where does that leave us?

BEATRICE

Danny, stop standing in the doorway waiting to be asked in. Elliot loves you. You love him. The work is good. That's more than most people get on opening night. Or, indeed... ever.

DANNY

It's that simple?

BEATRICE

No. But simple is for operettas and nitwits. You belong here, Danny. Not because they let you in. Because you made something beautiful. You and Elliot.

DANNY

Thanks, Mrs. Vale.

BEATRICE

Don't mention it. By which I mean: don't ever mention it. To anyone.

She straightens herself.

DANNY

Valinsky's had the best onion bagels.

BEATRICE

Don't I know it. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to beard the lioness in her den - and see whether anyone keeps a croquet mallet backstage.

Beatrice exits.

SCENE 5

DOROTHY'S DRESSING ROOM.

Dorothy sits at the mirror in costume.

A knock.

DOROTHY

If that's Maurice, tell him I've forgiven him completely - 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.

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 is it?

Dorothy looks at Beatrice in the mirror.

DOROTHY

The song. It... 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.

BEATRICE

That's good.

DOROTHY

Of course it's good. I've had thirty years to write it. Even though 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.

A beat.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

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 6

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

Nein?

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. Did you see anything strange backstage?

OTTO

Everyzing is wrong backstage. Zis is why I am genius.

MONA

I mean with the set. The silver screen for Miss Crane's big number?

OTTO

Nein. Yust stageman in hat. He check ze mechanizm, I zink.

MONA

What kind of hat?

OTTO

Low, dark. Like memory of hat.

MONA

Is the set change important?

OTTO

Important? Iz spectacular! Vill tranzform entire show! Otto vill be understood. At lazt.

MONA

After the song?

OTTO

Natürlich. Before, iz just scenery. After... iz Art.

Elliot and Danny rush in.

DANNY

Mona?

ELLIOT

What did Otto say?

MONA

They're not sabotaging Dorothy's big number.

DANNY

That's a relief.

MONA

They're sabotaging what happens after it.

ELLIOT

After "Silver Screen"? Oh God, the big set change!

MONA

The screen won't clear. The next scene can't start. The show definitely won't go on.

DANNY

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

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.

DANNY / ELLIOT

...now.

Blackout.

SCENE 7

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.

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 next scene.

Maurice appears.

MAURICE

Why not? I'm almost sure I paid for it.

Elliot sits at the backstage piano.

DANNY

Elliot, what do we do?

ELLIOT

We can do this, Danny. 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 (CONT'D)

The vamp is ours. The words are ours. If we save the show,
we do it as Silver and Shaw - not as ghosts inside somebody
else's credit.

DANNY

I can't!

ELLIOT

You can.

Elliot gestures at Mona.

DANNY

Mona.

MONA

No.

DANNY

Yes.

MONA

Danny...

DANNY

This is for all the kids out there who never got a chance,
Mona. (beat) Kids like us.

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.

Danny drapes one of Dorothy's costume
pieces around Mona's shoulders.

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.

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

He sees Mona on stage.

In the wings:

BEATRICE

No!

JULIAN

Oh God!

Sir Hugo steps onto the stage with
magnificent restraint.

Dorothy sees him coming.

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

Sir 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 foolish
hope. That bright, imperishable certainty.

(MORE)

SIR HUGO (CONT'D)

For one moment - for 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 next scene 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.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Elliot, if we walk out there, everybody hears us.

ELLIOT

Good. Let them hear who wrote the rescue.

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
Huh. And yet I still enjoyed it.

JULIAN
That old devil.

BEATRICE
What?

JULIAN
Hugo just saved the goddam show.

Dorothy and Mona exit to the wings.

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)
People spend a lifetime trying.

JULIAN
Mr. Shaw.

Elliot looks at him.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

That vamp, I... I couldn't have done it.

ELLIOT

Mr. Vale...

JULIAN

No. Don't let me off the hook. It's taken me all evening to understand. I... thank you.

SCENE 8

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 9

DOROTHY'S DRESSING ROOM.

The room is crowded.

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"!

OTTO

To ze pigeon!

BEATRICE

To Dorothy Crane.

DOROTHY

After the pigeon?

SIR HUGO

And to this marvelous young person, 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.

JULIAN

And... before everyone starts rewriting history - and they will, because Broadway never met a fact it couldn't embroider - let me say one thing.

A beat.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Beatrice Vale does not decorate my music. She gave it a reason to exist.

BEATRICE

Julian...

JULIAN

No. No, darling. The songs people remember, my love? They remember them because of you.

Beatrice and Julian embrace.

MAURICE

So, Mr. Shaw, I understand you're to thank for tonight. Your show...

ELLIOT

Our show, Mr. Schwartz.

MAURICE

Huh?

ELLIOT

Our show. Danny's and mine.

MAURICE

His show. His show. Your show. Their show. Who cares? You got a producer lined up for your next one?

DANNY

Let's just say we're considering offers at this time.

They toast.

The door opens.

Silky enters with Olive, Knuckles and Sprinkles.

The room stills.

SILKY

Ain't that adorable? Everybody celebrating. How touching.

MAURICE

Silky, bubbeleh...

SILKY

Zip it, Schwartz.

MAURICE

Gladly.

Silky looks at Elliot, Danny and Mona.

SILKY

(to Danny)
Nicely done, kid.

DANNY

Panic comes naturally to my people.

SILKY

But you got in my way.

DANNY

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

SILKY

Funny boy.

DANNY

That's the rumor.

SILKY

Rumors can be... useful.

Silky looks to Beatrice and Julian.

SILKY (CONT'D)

In fact, here's a rumor we can all enjoy. Julian and Beatrice Vale did not write this show.

MAURICE

Silky!

SILKY

No, Maurice. It's a hell of a story. 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 outrageous accusation.

SILKY

It's Broadway, lady. Outrageous sells.

SIR HUGO

Now, see here!

DOROTHY

Oh, sit down, Hugo.

BEATRICE

Dorothy?

DOROTHY

Darling, I sang the goddam song. Of course you two 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. Who knows what goes on after hours, huh? How's that gonna read with the matinée crowd?

Elliot goes white.

Danny is very still.

Beatrice's face hardens.

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. 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 sees who made the magic. So you don't get to tell them they don't belong. Not in my theater. Not tonight. Not ever.

(MORE)

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Because without every kid who comes here because the world outside won't give them a home... without them, Silky, 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 in white tie.

REX

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

KNUCKLES

"Sardi's"?

SPRINKLES

"Darling"?

SILKY

Stay out of this, Ransome.

REX

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

MAURICE

What is going on right now?

DANNY

My, my, my.

ELLIOT

This was... unexpected.

SILKY

Rex...

REX

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

OLIVE

You took him to Atlantic City? You bought him champagne? You... Oh, Silky. (beat) Please... please tell me you... you kept the receipts?

Rex crosses to Silky.

REX

You're better than this, my love.

SILKY

You don't know nothing about... nothing.

REX

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

SILKY

Theater dust.

REX

Both eyes?

DOROTHY

That takes commitment.

REX

And you know every picture Dorothy Crane ever made.

SILKY

Not every...

REX

"Sunset Scanties".

DANNY

Eww.

SILKY

She was badly directed! And the costumes? Too much chiffon.
No structure.

He realizes.

DOROTHY

He's not wrong.

Knuckles looks at Sprinkles. Sprinkles looks
at Knuckles.

SILKY

What?

KNUCKLES

Nothing, boss.

SILKY

You knew?

SPRINKLES

About Mr. Ransome?

KNUCKLES

Or the musicals?

SPRINKLES

We figured they was connected.

KNUCKLES

Plus, you got opinions about chiffon.

SPRINKLES

Strong opinions.

SILKY

And nobody said nothing?

KNUCKLES

You're the boss, boss.

SPRINKLES

And you was right. Chiffon. Too pouffy.

REX

You see, my love? We told everyone. 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

Oh, Silky. 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, Silky. Hit shows pay every week.

MAURICE

They do?

OLIVE

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

MAURICE

Miss...?

OLIVE

Olive Cammeretti, Mr. Schwartz.

MAURICE

Miss Cammeretti, have you ever considered producing?

OLIVE

Have I? Well, who d'ya think's been keeping Silky solvent all this time? The big lug thought it was dumb luck.

MAURICE

Come work for me.

OLIVE

With you?

MAURICE

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

Something shiny and expensive will take the edge off the pain,
I guess.

SILKY

Anything you want, handsome.

REX

Sorry, Elliot.

ELLIOT

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

DOROTHY

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

Dorothy looks at Elliot and Danny.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Do not mistake a happy ending for permission to stop. The star leaves the stage; the writers stay up all night. That is how the next show begins.

A strapping WESTERN UNION
MESSENGER appears with a telegram.

Young, ridiculously handsome, broad-shouldered — and wearing a tight shirt doing the best it can.

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, well. Mayer wants me back in pictures.

MAURICE

Pictures?

DOROTHY

Yes, Maurice. The moving kind. Hollywood. I leave tonight.

BEATRICE

Dorothy, that's wonderful.

DOROTHY

Wonderful? Pah! It's inevitable.

She looks the messenger up and down
through her lorgnette.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

And you are?

MESSENGER

Tommy Flanagan, Miss Crane.

DOROTHY

Irish. Shoulders. Punctual. Turn around.

He does. 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.

JULIAN

Isn't he a little... young?

DOROTHY

Age, Mr. Flanagan?

MESSENGER

Twenty-two, Miss Crane.

DOROTHY

See!

MAURICE

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

DOROTHY

I have a contract to appear in the new musical by 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...

DOROTHY

The show will go on, Maurice. But not by pretending nothing happened. The young woman who held the room tonight is going to stand in the light, and the people who wrote the moment are going to be named.

JULIAN

How can the show go on without a leading lady?

Dorothy looks straight to Mona.

DOROTHY

It'll go on with her.

Every head turns to Mona.

MAURICE

She's... she's a waitress!

BEATRICE

What she served tonight was magic, Maurice.

DOROTHY

Name?

MONA

Mona Lipschitz.

MAURICE

I'm ruined!

DOROTHY

Mona Lip...? Well, not anymore it isn't. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Broadway: Miss Lola Hart.

SPRINKLES

It's a good name.

KNUCKLES

It is a good name.

DOROTHY

Of course it is, fellas.

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 - a long time 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.

(MORE)

LUELLA (CONT'D)

Reckon he'd be mighty interested to hear what goes on... on opening night.

Sharp intakes of breath all round.

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 10

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, S
END 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.

Dorothy sweeps in.

Magnificent Hollywood gown. Impossible glamor.

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

They cross through the number and effortlessly upstage everyone.

Mona 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.
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.

ELLIOT

Oh, Celia!

DANNY

Oh, Roderick!

They kiss.

DANNY (CONT'D)

One day on the Great White Way, but... now what?

ELLIOT

Now we write the next one.

DANNY

Perfect. I already have the title.

ELLIOT

No.

DANNY

You haven't heard it!

ELLIOT

Danny...

DANNY

"There's a Moon in My Martini"!

ELLIOT

Absolutely not.

Blackout.

THE END.