

A GREEN UMBRELLA
A musical in two acts

ACT I

Scene 1

CURTAIN UP:

(A ghost light illuminates an upper class hotel room - something you'd see in a typical Noel Coward comedy from the 1920's. Most of the show takes place on this one set which serves as various hotel rooms/apartments and as the Wisconsin home of The Lunts. When the main set isn't present, the rest of the show takes place in suggested surroundings on a bare stage.)

OVERTURE.

(During the Overture, the lights slowly start to come UP and by the end of the Overture, the stage is fully lit. NOEL COWARD enters with a member of the Ensemble who removes the ghost light.)

NOEL: *(announcing)* All right everyone, we're back. Places, please!

(ALFRED LUNT pokes his head in from one of the doors. He's wearing a WWI 'doughboy' soldier's uniform.)

ALFRED: Where are we starting?

NOEL: *(announcing for everyone)* We'll begin with her entrance!

ALFRED: Ah-hah.

(Noel sits off to the side to watch the action and take notes in his script. Alfred comes in and stands center stage. LYNN FONTANNE bursts through another door, dressed as "Kate" from The Taming of the Shrew)

LYNN *(as "Kate"- sweeping dramatically toward Alfred):*

Fie, fie, unknit that threat'ning unkind brow

And dart not scornful glances from those eyes...

(suddenly becoming aware of Alfred's costume)

What *the hell* are you wearing?!

ALFRED: Darling, I was about to ask *you* the same thing.

LYNN: Aren't we doing the scene from *Taming of the Shrew*?

ALFRED: No, darling, we're doing the scene where we first meet.

LYNN: I distinctly heard my cue: 'begin with her'

ALFRED: Noelie said 'begin with her'...*entrance*.

LYNN: (*weary*) Oh, Alfred, why must we go in chronological order?

ALFRED: Because it's less confusing to the audience if we do.

LYNN: But it's more interesting if we don't.

ALFRED: Please just make a quick change, and we'll do the scene where we first met.

(They overlap one another, almost talking to themselves rather than each other, a hallmark of the Lunts' onstage comic genius.)

LYNN: (*as she exits*) Act Two is a mess, you know that.

NOEL: I'll fix it - that's *my* job.

ALFRED: He'll fix it. Now hurry up and change your costume.

LYNN: Just like summer stock, you never know which show you're doing, until you're practically onstage...

ALFRED: Darling...

LYNN: And why must we do a *musical*?

ALFRED: (*ushering he offstage*) It's finally my chance to be a song and dance man...

LYNN: (*muttering as she exits*) But what about *me*? I don't want my private life even *discussed*, let alone set to a song and *dance*....

ALFRED: (*calling after her*) Everyone loves musical-comedy...
(*calling out to the lighting booth:*)

And speaking of comedy, I really need more light. Comedy isn't funny in the dark.

(*Another bank of lights comes on, much too bright.*)

ALFRED: (*blinded, stumbling away*) Agh! Go back!

(*The lights split the difference*)

ALFRED: (*pause*) That's better.

(*Even though this only took a moment, Lynn has done a miraculous quick change and enters in an elegant art deco gown, all silk and glitter, carrying a tray with two martinis. She puts down the tray and offers Alfred one of the drinks. They stare at each other. Silence.*)

LYNN: (*calling out*) Line!

ALFRED: It isn't your line.

(*Alfred gives her the once-over.*)

LYNN: What? You don't like the dress?

ALFRED: No...I like the dress. But you're wearing the *wrong* dress.

LYNN: Aren't we doing the scene when our characters first meet?

ALFRED: No, we're doing the scene when *we* first meet. When Alfred meets Lynn for the first time. Act 1? Scene 1?.....

LYNN: (*annoyed*) Ohhhh....

ALFRED: Now hurry along and change...

LYNN: (*drinks the martini*) Oh God I wish that was real.

ALFRED: Do hurry.

LYNN: (*exiting with the tray*) But you like the dress?

ALFRED: Yes, yes...

LYNN: Is it lovely?

(He hurries her toward the wings.)

ALFRED: Yes.

LYNN: Does it look lovely in the light?

ALFRED: It's perfect.

LYNN: The dress?

ALFRED: (*she's almost offstage now and he has to yell*) Yes, and the light!!

(The second bank of lights comes up again, blinding Alfred.)

ALFRED: Agh! No! I didn't mean *you!*

(The new bank of lights goes out again, restoring the stage to the correct setting. Even faster than before, Lynn re-enters having undergone another amazing quick change. She's shed the art deco gown and wears a simple dress circa 1919. Alfred is silent as he stares at her.)

LYNN: Oh, no, please don't tell me it's the wrong costume.

ALFRED: No, it's the right one.

LYNN: Line!

ALFRED: It isn't your line.

LYNN: Why are you staring at me?

ALFRED: Because you look exactly like the girl I fell in love with. On the day I first saw you.

(We hear the intro vamp to I LOVE THE THEATRE.)

LYNN: Oh, are we going to sing the first song? That “silly little ditty.”

ALFRED: It's not bad.

LYNN: (to Noel) Noe*l*ie, the lyrics are too simple.

ALFRED: Not very *deep*.

LYNN: I like the music.

ALFRED: Me, too.

NOEL: (getting angry) Since this a rehearsal, could you please try and rehearse?!

I LOVE THE THEATRE

ALFRED: (*emphasizing each Sh*)

I LOVE SHAKESPEARE, I LOVE SHERWOOD, I LOVE SHAW

LYNN:

'Yesh' you do.

ALFRED:

I LOVE THE THEATRE...BUT I LOVE YOU MORE.

LYNN:

(Are you sure?...)

I LOVE HALF HOUR, I LOVE 'PLACES'

ALFRED:

I LOVE REHEARSALS -

LYNN:

G-D! YOU DO -

ALFRED:

I LOVE THE THEATRE – BUT I LOVE YOU MORE.

LYNN:

(You do?)

YOU LOVE APPLAUSE AND CROWDS AND TOURING -

ALFRED:

BUT WITHOUT YOU – IT WOULD BE ‘BOORING’

LYNN:

(That's doesn't rhyme -)

YOU LOVE -

ALFRED:

...YOU.

LYNN:

YOU LOVE YOU.

ALFRED:

NO I MEAN YOU.

LYNN:

I THINK YOU DO.

ALFRED:

I LOVE THE THEATRE.... (*gets close to her*)

LYNN:

I LOVE THE THEATRE...

(*she gets even closer*)

ALFRED:

(*as though erotic*) I SPELL IT WITH AN ‘E-R’...

LYNN:

(*even more erotic*) I SPELL IT WITH AN ‘R-E’....

(*They enjoy a passionate kiss.*)

BOTH: I LOVE THE THEATRE -

BUT I LOVE.... YOU.... MORE!

(*They kiss again.*)

(*Noel goes up to them.*)

NOEL: Going on?

(*Awkward pause as Lynn and Alfred continue kissing, then stare into one another's eyes.*)

NOEL: Uh....Going on?

ALFRED: Yes. *(pause)*

LYNN: Yes. *(pause)*

ALFRED: We must. *(pause)*

NOEL: *(Loud, in order to break their trance)* Places, please!

(Back to business: Alfred goes out a door, Lynn takes her position center stage, along with the entire ENSEMBLE whose heads turn simultaneously as they watch the following action. They are all dressed in high 1920's fashion. F. Scott Fitzgerald would be proud.)

NOEL: We'll take it from the line - 'Lynn Fontanne, I'd like you to meet Alfred Lunt.'

(The heads of all the Ensemble members simultaneously turn and face the door, which Noel opens. Alfred walks forward, attempting to bow as he enters - big mistake! - he trips, does a huge pratfall and slides across the waxed stage, ending up at Lynn's feet. After a moment he puts his hand up in the air, offering a handshake.)

LYNN: *(after a pause, she takes his hand, and says 'very British')* How'd'do?

NOEL: Well, he certainly fell for her. And...Blackout!

BLACKOUT.

(In the blackout we hear Noel:)

NOEL: All right, everyone, places for Act 1, Scene 2, The Boarding house of Dr. Rounds where Alfred and Lynn live *together...in separate rooms.*
(SPOTLIGHT reveals MRS. ROUNDS)

MRS. ROUNDS: I love actors but I run a *respectable* boarding house.

(SPOTLIGHT OUT. LIGHTS UP.)

Scene 2**T-T-TIMING**

(Note: this number is not sung but rather spoken in rhythm to a rhythm track.)

ENSEMBLE:

T-T-T-TIMING

YOU EITHER HAVE IT – OR YOU DON'T.

T-T-T-TIMING.

LOVE CAN WAIT.

TIMING WON'T.

(Lynn enters from one side of the stage, Alfred enters from the other.)

LYNN: Now I like *this* number because it introduces almost all the characters from Act One.

ALFRED: A lovely device. Love it!

(Noel crosses up to them.)

LYNN: Alfred, this is my dear friend Noel Coward, who's just arrived from England.

NOEL:*(eyeing Alfred)* Hell-ooooo....

LYNN: Noe!ie...He's mine.

NOEL: We'll see.

(Noel grabs Alfred's hand and pulls him offstage.)

ENSEMBLE:

T-T-T-TIMING

YOU EITHER HAVE IT – OR YOU DON'T.

T-T-T-TIMING.

LOVE CAN WAIT.

TIME...ING...WON'T.

(Note: in each verse, the “timing” is different...and comically off.)

(Noel & Alfred re-enter, Noel looks disappointed with what happened offstage. Lynn is about to speak but Noel stops her with a wave of his hand.)

NOEL: You're right.

(he lights a cigarette) He's yours...

(Noel exits. HELEN HAYES enters.)

ALFRED: Lynn, this is my dear friend and co-star the wonderful actress Helen Hayes.

HELEN: *(Cold)* Hello.

LYNN: Helen...he's mine.

HELEN: We'll see...

(Helen grabs Alfred's hand and pulls him offstage. Lynn is horrified.)

ENSEMBLE:

T-T-T-TIMING

YOU EITHER HAVE IT – OR YOU DON'T.

T-T-T....TIMING.

LOVECANWAITTIMINGWON'T.

(Helen & Alfred re-enter.)

HELEN: You're right. He's yours.

(She suddenly bursts into tears and exits. LAURETTE TAYLOR enters.)

LYNN: Oh! Alfred, of course you know my mentor, the great actress Laurette Taylor.

ALFRED:

(starstruck) Of course...

(He extends his hand.)

LAURETTE: She's *mine*.

(Laurette whisks Lynn offstage.)

ALFRED: *(calling after them)* Uh...we'll see....

ENSEMBLE:

T-T-T-TIMING

YOU EITHER HAVE IT – OR YOU DON'T.

T-T-T-TIM...ING.

LOVE CAN WAIT -

TIME, TIME, TIME...ING...WON'T.

(Laurette and Lynn reenter.)

ALFRED: Ha! Like I said...she's mine...

LAURETTE: We'll see...

(Laurette, Noel and Helen meet center and say:)

TRIO:

THEY ONLY SPEAK OF EACH OTHER –

AS IF THERE WERE NO OTHER -

(The heavyset actor playing ALEC WOOLCOTT and SYDNEY GREENSTREET enters, wearing bright orange pajamas.)

ALFRED: Are you playing Alec Woolcott in this scene or Sydney Greenstreet?

SYDNEY: Alec Woolcott.

ALFRED: You look an awful lot like Sydney Greenstreet. They audience won't get it. All right, do the quick change and let's see you as Greenstreet.

SYDNEY: *(waddling off)* Alfred..I can't do *anything* quickly.

(ROBERT SHERWOOD enters.)

ENSEMBLE:

IT'S PLAYWRIGHT – ROBERT SHERWOOD.
 AS GOOD A PLAYWRIGHT, AS IT GETS.
 YOU MAY EXIT, MR. SHERWOOD.
 BECAUSE THE LUNTS – DON'T KNOW YOU YET.

(Sherwood exits, looking rejected.)

ENSEMBLE:

T-T-T-TIMING
 YOU EITHER HAVE IT, OR YOU DON'T.
 T-T-T-...T-T-T...TIMING.
 LOVE CAN WAIT.
 TIMING WON'T.

(HATTIE, Alfred's mother, enters.)

ALFRED: *(kissing Hattie, then calling out)* Lynn!

(Lynn enters.)

ALFRED: Lynn, this is my mother, Hattie.

LYNN: *(very friendly)* Oh, I'm so pleased to finally meet you, Alfred has told me so much...

(she sees Hattie's cold expressionless face)
 ...about...you.

HATTIE: What?

ALFRED: She's quite deaf...at times.

LYNN: Oh! *(louder)* Alfred has told me so much...about...you.

HATTIE: He's mine.

(Hattie pulls Alfred offstage.)

ENSEMBLE: T-T-T-TIMING
 YOU EITHER HAVE IT OR YOU DON'T.
 T-T-T...T-T-T...
 T-T-T-TIMING.
 LOVE CAN WAIT.
 TIM...*ING*...WON'T.

HATTIE: (*re-entering without Alfred.*) He's mine. (*She exits.*)

BLACKOUT.

(*LIGHTS UP ON Noel Coward,, tinkering at the piano with a song idea.*)

Scene 3

RECITATIVE

NOEL: (*speaking*)
 BOYS IN LOVE WITH MOTHER
 SIMPLY CAN'T LOVE ANOTHER
 YOU WILL ALWAYS BE *THE OTHER*
 THEY ADORE.

BOYS IN LOVE WITH MOTHERS,
 SIMPLY MAKE LOUSY LOVERS,
 I HAVE MY DRUTHERS,
 I'LL CHASE OTHERS,
 WHO AREN'T BORES.

(*Lynn enters.*)

LYNN: (*she knows*) And what, pray tell, inspired *that* lyric?

NOEL: Hamlet.

LYNN: Oh, Noelie...

NOEL: Really, Lynn darling, what are you going to do?

LYNN: About what?

NOEL: Alfred's mother. Your *rival*.

LYNN: Alfred is trapped. He must support his mother, his little sisters and his little brother....

NOEL: His little *half* sisters and his little *half* brother....

LYNN: So are you suggesting that he should only pay *half*?

NOEL: Their mother isn't paying anything at all.

LYNN: So what should we all do, Noelie?

NOEL: It's an unnatural triangle, Lynn. In order to marry you, he must divorce his...*mother*.

LYNN: Yes? And if he doesn't?

NOEL: (*spoken*) WHAT WILL YOU DO?

- I ASK YOU LYNN -

WITH THIS STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS YOU'RE IN?

A STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS

NOEL: (*sings*)

THE TRIANGLE THAT I LIKE BEST
 IS THE ONE THEY CALL SCALENE -
 IT'S BETTER THAN ALL THE REST -
 BECAUSE IT RHYMES WITH THE WORD OBSCENE.
 BUT YOURS MY DEAR'S NO FUN -
 WITH ONE SIDE SO UNEQUAL,
 WHEN A BOY'S CONTROLLED BY MUM -
 THERE'S NO ROMANTIC SEQUEL.
 WHAT A STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS -
 WHERE THREE SLEEP IN THREE SEPARATE BEDS -
 WHAT A STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS -
 WHERE THE BOY AND GIRL NEVER WED.
 YOUR PAIN IS ACUTE NOT OBTUSE -
 AND DAHLING IT'S REALLY NO USE -
 I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT YOU MUST GET AWAY
 FROM THIS STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!

(A waltz begins and Alfred enters. He dances with Lynn, but soon Hattie comes on and she forces her way in between them. Now Alfred is dancing with Hattie. He looks helpless and unhappy, trying to catch glimpses of Lynn over Hattie's shoulder. Noel stands by smugly, feeling his point has been proven.)

(Defiantly Lynn reclaims Alfred in the dance but she doesn't get far before Hattie taps her on the shoulder as if to cut in. Lynn, trying to make peace, holds up her arms offering herself as Hattie's dance partner. Hattie looks at her as if to say "Are you kidding??" then waltzes again with Alfred.)

NOEL:

AND HERE IS MY LEARNED HYPOTHESES -

(indicates Hattie)

YOU WILL ALWAYS BE FIGHTING ISOSCELES ...

I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT YOU MUST GET AWAY
FROM THIS STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!

(Alfred and Hattie waltz off with Alfred looking hopeless. Noel starts to dance with Lynn. She starts to cry.)

NOEL: (cont'd) NOW I HAVE A STRANGE PROPOSITION -

AND IT MIGHT COME AS QUITE A SURPRISE -

BUT I OFFER WITH NO PRE-CONDITIONS -

(Noel stops dancing, goes down on one knee, and takes her hand as though ready to propose marriage. At first Lynn doesn't get it. Then she laughs, thinking he's kidding. He remains quite serious.)

NOEL: (cont'd) Oh Linnie...

LYNN:

Oh Noelle...

NOEL:

(with ardor) Oh Linnie

LYNN:

Oh no... WHAT A STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!

(she breaks away)

NOEL:

(pursuing her) Oh Linnie...

LYNN:

Oh Noelle...

NOEL:

(with ardor) Oh Linnie

LYNN:

Oh *no*... WHAT A STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!

(They both laugh.)

NOEL:

(spoken) There now. I've stopped you from crying.

LYNN:

(giggling) I thought for a moment you were serious -

NOEL:

(spoken) It's all in the delivery, my dear. It's all in the t-t-t-timing.

(They resume dancing)

(singing) YOU'LL BE MARRIED TO YOUR DEAREST FRIEND.

LYNN:

(playing along)

WE'D BE SLEEPING IN SEP-A-RATE BEDS -

NOEL:

ALFRED COULD VISIT AND I'D LEAVE YOU ALONE

LYNN:

HATTIE WOULD THINK HE'S OUR GUEST -

NOEL:
FOR ALL OUR GREAT SINS WE WILL LATER ATONE -

LYNN:
OH, NO, NO, WHAT A TERRIBLE MESS!

(Mrs. Rounds re-enters and a spotlight hits her.)

ROUNDS: *(spoken)* I love actors but I run a *respectable* boarding house.

(Noel breaks away from Lynn and begins dancing with Mrs. Rounds.)

NOEL:
WHAT A STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!

ROUNDS:
(spoken) Oh dear!

NOEL:
WHERE THREE SLEEP IN THREE SEPARATE BEDS -

ROUNDS:
(spoken) That sounds better.

NOEL:
WHAT A STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!
WHERE THE BOY AND GIRL NEVER WED.

ROUNDS:
(spoken) How sad.

NOEL:
YOUR PAIN IS ACUTE NOT OBTUSE -
AND DAHLING IT'S REALLY NO USE -
I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT YOU MUST GET AWAY
FROM THIS STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!

LYNN:
MY PAIN IS ACUTE NOT OBTUSE -

NOEL:
AND DAHLING IT'S REALLY NO USE -
I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT YOU MUST GET AWAY

LYNN: (spoken) Must I?

NOEL AND ROUNDS:
(spoken) You must!

ALL:
FROM THIS STRANGE MENAGE A TROIS!

(Alfred and Hattie re-enter and all five actors dance, quickly exchanging partners over and over as the music builds to a climax.)

BLACKOUT.

Scene 4

(LIGHTS UP. Hattie has her back turned to Alfred – and to the audience - as he enters.)

ALFRED: Mother I must speak to you at once.

HATTIE: *(she's selectively deaf)* What?

ALFRED: *(louder)* Mother I must speak to you at once!

HATTIE: Just a moment, darling.

ALFRED: No, this can't wait, I....

(Hattie turns around and puts an expensive and outlandish hat on her head that's been concealed from the audience.)

ALFRED:where did you get that hat?

HATTIE: Fifth Avenue. Do you like it?

ALFRED: Mother! Did you use the grocery money...?

HATTIE: What?

ALFRED: (*louder*) Did you use the grocery money?

HATTIE: There's some pate left. We can get by on that.

ALFRED: Pate?! (*sarcastic*) What...no caviar?

HATTIE: No, darling, that's all gone.

ALFRED: Mother!

HATTIE: Don't worry, I'm budgeting in other areas.

ALFRED: Such as?

HATTIE: (*loading her long elegant cigarette holder*) I've switched to *American* cigarettes, for one thing.

ALFRED: Mother...listen to me. There's going to be an actors strike. That means I'm not going to be paid at all which, as you know, isn't very far from what I'm being paid now.

HATTIE: What did you say?

ALFRED: (*louder*) A strike, mother, a strike!

HATTIE: (*lighting a cigarette*) Actors on strike, how ridiculous. As though you were in a cotton mill or something...

ALFRED: We have a union now, mother and our demands are very reasonable...

HATTIE (*adjusting her hat, not listening*)...as though you were coal miners or something...

ALFRED: We want to be paid for rehearsals, and not be forced to do more than eight performances per week. Wouldn't you say that's fair?

HATTIE: Alfred, this is your big break. You're going to star on Broadway for the first time in your life. Do you really want to jeopardize all that?

ALFRED: (*torn*) It's hard mother...it is...but Lynn says....

HATTIE: Oh, *Lynn* says....

ALFRED: Mother, there's going to be a strike. It can't be helped. And while it's going, I've invited Lynn to come stay with us...

HATTIE: What?!

ALFRED: I love her, Mother... beyond....beyond... anything you can name.

HATTIE: Beyond....me?

ALFRED: No, no, no, of course not. *As much* as I love you. But of course in a different way.

HATTIE: (*a long pause*) I'm about to lose you, Alfred. The way I've lost everything else in my life.

ALFRED: Oh, mother, don't....

HATTIE: Do you remember the first time I took you to the theatre? When you were five years old?

ALFRED: How could I forget?

HATTIE: What was the name of that darling troupe of actors?

ALFRED: (*nostalgic*) The Royal Lilliputian company of German Midgets.

HATTIE: They were adorable. It's gone, Alfred. The show is gone. For all I know the midgets are gone. Every show you've ever seen. All gone. The joys of theatre – like the joys of life – are all so temporary. So... ephemeral.

ALFRED: Oh, mother, don't sing...

EPHEMERAL

HATTIE:

THERE WAS A HOUSE WITH MANY ROOMS
THERE WAS A HUSBAND...THERE WERE TWO....
THERE WAS MONEY, THERE WAS LOVE, THERE WAS SONG.

BUT ALL OF IT IS GONE...
IT DIDN'T LAST VERY LONG -
EPHEMERAL...EPHEMERAL
IT'S THE SADDEST WORD I KNOW.
OH WHERE DID EVERYTHING GO?

AND NOW YOU'RE LEAVING TOO -
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO -
EPHEMERAL....EPHEMERAL...

ALFRED: Mother, don't sing it again...

HATTIE:

OH WHERE DID EVERYTHING GO?
AND NOW YOU'RE LEAVING TOO -
AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO -
EPHEMERAL....EPHEMERAL...

(By the end of the song, Alfred looks utterly defeated.)

BLACKOUT.

ENSEMBLE: *(in the dark)*

T-T-T-TIMING
YOU EITHER HAVE IT OR YOU DON'T.
T-T-T...T-T-T...
T-T-T-TIMING.
LOVE CAN WAIT.
TIM.../NG...WON'T.

LIGHTS UP.

Scene 5

(Lynn walks onto an empty stage, exhausted, lugging a large suitcase and a trunk. She's found her way to Alfred's farm from the rural train station. Alfred enters, wearing muddy overalls and tall rubber boots. He is pulling the feathers out of a dead chicken.)

LYNN: *(can't believe it's him)* Alfred?!

ALFRED: *(startled, drops the chicken, the feathers go flying)* Lynn! I was expecting you on a later train.

LYNN: And I was expecting to be picked up on time.

ALFRED: Oh, my darling, I'm so sorry...

(He goes to embrace her but stops, realizing he's a mess.)

I...uh...

(looks at his clothes)

...look at me. I'm so sorry.

LYNN: *(a long pause – then)* You may kiss me.

ALFRED: What? Really?

LYNN: I won't say it again.

(Alfred leans in to kiss her on the cheek but at the last moment she turns her head toward his face and they kiss passionately. Perhaps he gets a little mud on her face.)

LYNN: *(laughs)* You smell dreadful.

ALFRED: Lucky you didn't arrive later. I was about to make compost.

(A pause again as she takes him in.)

LYNN: Seeing you like this...

ALFRED:...yes?...

LYNN: I just love you, that's all.

ALFRED: *(relieved)* Oh, darling...

(They go to kiss again, but they're interrupted by Hattie who enters, expensively dressed, of course, and holding a pink silk parasol in one hand and flowers with the other.)

LYNN: Hattie!

HATTIE: So!...you've come after all.

ALFRED: I told you she would be here.

HATTIE: I've been picking flowers.

(Hattie walks up to Lynn as though to offer her the flowers.)

LYNN: Oh, those are lovely.

(Hattie pulls back the flowers at the last moment, just as Lynn is about to accept them.)

HATTIE: Aren't they? And how long are you staying?

LYNN: For as long as I'm welcome.

HATTIE: There's a train leaving for New York this evening.

ALFRED: Mother!

LYNN: Hattie...isn't there a way for us to come to some sort of truce?

HATTIE: A what?

LYNN: *(louder)* A truce.

HATTIE: A what?

LYNN: *(louder)* A truce!

HATTIE: You mean a kind of armistice?

LYNN: Yes.

HATTIE: Armistice day isn't until next May.

(She turns to leave.)

ALFRED: Mother!

HATTIE: *(turns back, overly polite)* But do stay for lunch.

(Hattie exits, singing the song EPHEMERAL)

LYNN: She doesn't appear to be *tone* deaf, at least.

ALFRED: I'm sorry.

LYNN: She hates me.

ALFRED: She doesn't. She hates...the idea of you.

LYNN: *(sitting on her suitcase)* That makes me feel so much better.

ALFRED: I'm sorry...

LYNN: I simply must know, Alfred, if we're going to be together or not.

ALFRED: We are together. I'm in love with you. I just can't be married right now. You know I have to send every penny I make to my family here. I simply can't afford to support a wife, too.

LYNN: Alfred, do we or do we not have a future together? You can answer truthfully and then I can get on that evening train.

ALFRED: So...what do you propose that we do?

LYNN: "Propose"? That's a strange choice of words.

ALFRED: Oh, Lynn...

LYNN: Here's what I "propose" –

A UNION

(Note: the song starts off slowly – like a love ballad, then grows into a rousing "union" anthem.)

LYNN:

I PROPOSE A UNION
TOGETHER WE WILL WIN.

ALFRED:

I'D LOVE TO FORM A UNION –
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHEN.

LYNN:

WE'RE STRONGER AS ONE
WE CAN GET THE JOB DONE –

ALFRED:

YOU MUST KNOW I'M TEMPTED –
BUT ALAS I'M PRE-EMPTED –

LYNN:

FROM A UNION?

ALFRED:

A UNION -

LYNN:

A UNION?
WE'RE STRONGER IN NUMBERS –
OUR VOICES LIKE THUNDER –

(Suddenly the Ensemble appears and marches downstage – the song changes into a union fight song.)

ENSEMBLE:

WE'RE STRONGER AS ONE
WE CAN GET THE JOB DONE –

(Alfred sees the Ensemble and realizes:)

ALFRED: (spoken) I don't think we're talking about the same thing.

ENSEMBLE:

STRONGER IN NUMBERS –
OUR VOICES LIKE THUNDER –

LYNN:

WITH A UNION.

ENSEMBLE:

WITH A UNION!

ALFRED:

WITH A UNION?

ALL:

A UNION!

(Alfred gets down on one knee.)

ALFRED: I propose a union...

LYNN: Oh, Alfred. Are you asking me to marry you?

ALFRED: Please say yes...and please...don't tell mother.

LYNN: Yes...and no...I won't.

LYNN:

WE'RE STRONGER AS ONE
WE CAN GET THE JOB DONE –

ALL:

STRONGER IN NUMBERS –
OUR VOICES LIKE THUNDER –
A UNION!! A UNION!! A UNION!!

ALFRED: Time. A little more time is all I ask. I'll find a way. Mother's got to know you better. She'll love you as much as I do.

LYNN: You've got to decide who you want to be: her son or my husband.

ALFRED: Why not both?

LYNN: She won't let that happen. Alfred...soon we'll be going on *separate* tours...

ALFRED: Oh, Linnie, let's not discuss this again.

LYNN: But don't you think we should get married? We'll be separated for months. Anything can happen.

ALFRED: Well maybe it will be good for us. You know what they say about absence?

LYNN: I only know what I say. It's better to stay together.

(They kiss.) (The vamp begins for IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.)

LYNN: While we're both still in New York we have to make the most of it. My show ends earlier than yours – I'll run across the street and wait for you in your dressing room and greet you every night after your curtain calls.

ALFRED: Sometimes there's an awful lot of them.

LYNN: Then I'll wait. *(then with meaning)* I'll wait.

Scene 6

IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER

LYNN: (singing)
IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.

(They separate and exit via opposite sides of the stage. The Ensemble enters.)

ENSEMBLE:

SEP-A-RATED BY A STREET.
EVERY NIGHT THEY PLANNED...TO MEET.

(Helen Hayes and another actress stand off to one side. Lynn enters.)

HELEN: Are you here *again*?

LYNN: Good evening Helen.

(Lynn crosses between them.)

HELEN: Are you on the backstab...uh, *backstage* list?

(As Lynn gets past them she feels the daggers coming out of their eyes. She has to stop for a moment, collect herself, and then she practically leaps into the arms of Alfred who enters wearing his doughboy outfit again.)

ALFRED:

TWENTY CURTAIN CALLS TONIGHT
YOU'VE BEEN WAITING HERE FOREVER.

LYNN:

I'LL WAIT FOR YOU EVERY NIGHT,
IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.

HELEN & ENSEMBLE:

THEY ONLY SPEAK OF EACH OTHER -
AS IF THERE WERE NO OTHER.

(Hattie walks in between them and physically pushes them apart.)

HATTIE: *(to Lynn)* Don't you have to get on a Trans Atlantic ship or something like that?

LYNN: Not yet, Hattie. I'm not sailing for London until tomorrow.

HATTIE: Too bad it's not 1912.

ALFRED: Mother!

LYNN: Alfred, say something!

ALFRED: I just did!

(Lynn leaves, outraged. Alfred goes to follow her but instead follows Hattie off in the other direction.)

ENSEMBLE:

SEP-A-RATED BY EIGHT WEEKS
THEIR LOVE HUNG ON A TETHER –
AND WOULD THEIR LOVE REPEAT? –

LYNN: *(re-enters)*

IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.

(Lynn re-enters and sits at a small telephone/writing table, hoping the phone will ring. Hattie enters on the opposite side of the stage from Lynn and runs up to Helen.)

HATTIE: She's out of town – now's your chance!

HELEN: For...what?

HATTIE: To break them up.

HELEN: He only loves *her*.

HATTIE: Does he love you?

HELEN: No!

HATTIE: Then you have my blessings –

HELEN: But...

HATTIE: Don't be an idiot!

(Hattie pushes Helen toward Alfred who has just re-entered. She loses her balance from the push and Alfred has to catch her. They're in an awkward embrace, with Helen's arms around his neck.)

HELEN: Oh...Alfred.

ALFRED: Helen...I was only catching you so you wouldn't fall.

HELEN: *(theatrically)* Yes! Yes! Catch me, I'm falling, I'm falling!

(Alfred attempts to extricate himself – he can't.)

ALFRED: Helen, let go! I have an entrance. Helen...

(He tries to free himself one last time then finally gives up and he slowly exits, backing his way into the wings, having to drag Helen off with him, her arms still around his neck.)

LYNN: *(reading a letter)*

OH ALFRED YOUR LETTERS ARE BRIEF -
JUST TO ASK ABOUT THE WEATHER –
YOU MUST KNOW I'M FILLED WITH GRIEF –
IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.

(Alfred re-enters and sits at a small telephone/writing table identical to Lynn's but on the opposite side of the stage.)

ALFRED: *(starts to write a letter)* Dear Lynn...*(thinking a long time - then:)*...Has it stopped raining?

(Lynn buries her face in her hands and cries.)

(Hattie enters, also crying.)

ALFRED: Mother, what's wrong?

HATTIE: That poor child. You're breaking her heart.

ALFRED: I know.

HATTIE: She loves you...deeply.

ALFRED: Of course I know that. And I love her too.

HATTIE: (*suddenly stops crying*) You do?!

ALFRED: Well yes, I've only told you that a million times.

HATTIE: You've *never* told me that.

ALFRED: Yes, I have, mother you just haven't heard it – you can't hear anything!

HATTIE: Then you must stop seeing her at once.

ALFRED: I have! How can I see her when she's across the ocean?!

HATTIE: Oh, you're talking about Lynn! I thought you were talking about Helen!

ALFRED: Helen?! I don't love Helen.

HATTIE: Then you have my blessings.

ALFRED: Mother – I'm going to tell you something that will make you very happy.

HATTIE: There's only one thing that will make me happy...

(Alfred looks at her. She realizes she's won.)

HATTIE: Oh, Alfred...you've made me very happy. And it's the right thing to do.

ALFRED: Lynn is returning tomorrow and I shall tell her. While she was gone I realized that I can't go on loving her and hurting you. It's just won't work.

(Hattie kisses him on the top of his head and sings:)

HATTIE: IT WAS JUST...
EPHEMERAL – EPHEMERAL - EPHEMERAL...

(She exits. A bed slides into center stage. Alfred and Lynn leave their telephone tables and meet in front of it.)

ALFRED: Lynn – I have something to say to you.

LYNN: And I have something to say to you.

(Silence – then they go into a passionate kiss and fall onto the bed.)

ENSEMBLE: *(sings)*
IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER!

(They begin rolling around in a passionate reunion as Mrs. Rounds enters the stage and crouches near a door frame suggesting a locked door. Noel comes on.)

NOEL: Mrs. Rounds – making your “rounds” I see.

ROUNDS: *(tries to look through the “keyhole”)* Something’s going on in there.

(She knocks on the “door” – Alfred and Lynn with their clothes half off, freeze)

NOEL: Never you mind, Mrs. Rounds – come with me to the parlor. I want to play a new song I’ve written.

ROUNDS: Oh, what’s it about?

NOEL: It’s about....you!

ROUNDS: *(blushing)* Oh...

(They exit. Alfred and Lynn go back to their lovemaking. Now Hattie enters and tries to open “the door” which is locked. Lynn and Alfred abruptly stop again.)

ALFRED: Who...who is it?

HATTIE: What? Alfred is that you? Why is the door locked?

ALFRED: Mother! You *could* knock.

HATTIE: What?

ALFRED: I said you could....oh, forget it.

(He throws on his robe and goes through the door frame, closing "the door" behind him. Lynn hurriedly dresses.)

ALFRED: Mother, what are you doing here?

HATTIE: I heard that Lynn was back from her tour and I wanted to make sure you weren't seeing her again.

(Noel enters.)

NOEL: Hattie! Come with me to the parlor. I want to play a new song I've written.

HATTIE: What?

NOEL: A new song!

HATTIE: Oh! What's it about?

NOEL: It's about the wicked witch from Milwaukee.

HATTIE: What?

NOEL: It's about...you.

HATTIE: (blushing) Oh....

(Noel leads her off. Alfred goes back through "the door" and "locks" it.)

ALFRED:
 I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE
 I HAVE TO GET AWAY.

LYNN:
 YOU HAVE A SHOW TOMORROW NIGHT –
 YOU REALLY HAVE TO STAY -

ALFRED:
 I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF!

LYNN:
 OH ALFRED – PLEASE STAY A WHILE.

ALFRED:
 I'M GOING TO PHILADELPH-IA!

LYNN:
 NOW I KNOW YOU'RE SUICIDAL.

(As Alfred runs to the stage left telephone table and sits, Lynn calls after him, singing:)

LYNN:
 IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.

LYNN: *(into a phone)* Are you sure? Alfred Lunt. No? *(listens, then:)* All right.

(She hangs up and crosses something off on a piece of paper – it's a list of every hotel in Philadelphia. LIGHTS UP on Noel at the piano. Hattie leans on the piano and is obviously straining to hear – and understand - the lyrics of his song:)

NOEL:
 YOU THINK DOROTHY HAD IT BAD
 FROM THE EAST AND FROM THE WEST –
 BUT OH HOW THAT GIRL WAS LUCK-Y
 AND KANSAS WAS SO SAD –
 EVEN OZ PROVED QUITE THE TEST –
 BUT SHE SOMEHOW AVOIDED MIL-WAUKEE.

LYNN: (*picking up the phone, she jiggles the phone's cradle*) Operator, give me the Morris House Hotel. (*waits, listens.*) Yes, do you have an Alfred Lunt staying there? (*listens, then:*) I see – thank you. (*she crosses off another name from her list*)

(*Noel continues at the piano with Hattie, confused, but still listening:*)

NOEL:

POOR HANSEL HAD IT ROUGH -
AND POOR GRETEL WAS QUITE BLUE -
BUT EVERYTHING TURNED OUT QUITE DUCK-Y.
THEY GOT LOST, IT WAS TOUGH
AND IT LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE THROUGH -
BUT THEY SOMEHOW AVOIDED MIL-WAUKEE.

HATTIE: I still don't understand that song. Milwaukee is a lovely city.

NOEL: Yes, I hear that there's a lovely broom factory there.

HATTIE: What?

NOEL:

THERE'S NEW YORK, AND PAR-EE....
BUT MILWAUKEE!
HAS THE BEER AND THE PRETZELS AND CHEDDAR.
I ONLY WISH YOU WOULD JUST LET THEM BE.
IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.

HATTIE: Who?

NOEL:

THE BEER AND THE PRETZELS AND CHEDDAR!

HATTIE: Oh...

LYNN: (*picking up the phone, she jiggles the phone's cradle*) Operator, give me the Independence Park Hotel.

(*The phone rings next to Alfred and it scares the heck out of him. Who could possibly be calling him? Slowly he picks up the phone.*)

ALFRED: Yes?

LYNN: Alfred?

ALFRED: Oh, Linnie, darling, how did you find me?

LYNN: I've called every hotel in Philadelphia.

ALFRED: I'm so sorry. Were you worried?

LYNN: Worried?! Worried to death!

ALFRED: I'll take the next train to New York.

LYNN: Don't you dare!

ALFRED: Why?

LYNN: Because I'm in *Philadelphia*.

ALFRED: Where?

LYNN: At the Rittenhouse.

ALFRED: Don't move – I'll be right there.

(Alfred & Lynn run to center and fall into each other's arms onto the bed.)

BLACKOUT on the bed.

ENSEMBLE:

SEP-A-RATED BY 6 MONTHS...
AWAY ON SEPARATE TOURS –

LIGHTS UP on the bed.

ALFRED & LYNN: *(sitting on the edge of the bed)*

I'LL WRITE TO YOU EVERY-DAY –
YOUR MINE – I'M YOURS –

(They go in opposite directions and sit at phone/writing tables on opposite sides of the stage. They read letters.)

ALFRED & LYNN:
IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER.

(Hattie enters.)

ALFRED: Mother! What are you doing in Pittsburgh?

HATTIE: What does *anyone* do in Pittsburgh?

ALFRED: Is everything all right at home?

HATTIE: No.

ALFRED: Is someone ill?

HATTIE: Yes. It's my heart.

ALFRED: Mother!

HATTIE: It's broken. You've been lying to me all these months.

ALFRED: What do you mean?

HATTIE: I found out that you've been secretly engaged to Lynn since the strike last year. Oh, that awful union!

(Suddenly The Ensemble marches forward singing:)

ENSEMBLE:
WE'RE STRONGER AS ONE
WE CAN GET THE JOB DONE –
STRONGER IN NUMBERS –
OUR VOICES LIKE THUNDER –
A UNION!...

(Noel enters and signals the orchestra to stop)

NOEL: No, no, no. That wasn't *your cue*.

(The Ensemble mutters and walks off, some lighting cigarettes.)

HATTIE: Bolsheviks.

ALFRED: Who told you I was engaged? Helen?

HATTIE: Then it's true?

ALFRED: *(gaining courage)* Yes...it is.

HATTIE: *(collapsing into a chair)* I don't know what's worse, Alfred. The actual news...or that fact that you've kept it from me.

(As the scene continues, Alfred grows in strength, making it clear that is no longer a "mama's boy.")

ALFRED: Mother. I love Lynn very much and I can't live without her. I'm not going to live without her.

HATTIE: So all of this breaking up and reuniting and breaking up – it was all a façade?

ALFRED: No, Mother. It was quite real. You almost succeeded.

HATTIE: We shall lose the farm. Your siblings will not be able to attend college.

ALFRED: Mother...

HATTIE: And it will kill me, Alfred. It will kill me.

ALFRED: Mother – I promise you that I will not marry until I'm certain that you will never have to worry about money...

HATTIE: I shall have to move into a boardinghouse...

ALFRED: I've been asked to join the Theatre Guild.

HATTIE: Oh, no, Alfred! All that experimental European nonsense...

ALFRED:...and I will be steadily employed in repertory....

HATTIE: Bolsheviks!

ALFRED:...and Lynn...

HATTIE: (*grabbing her chest*)...that name again...do you wish to stab me in the heart?...my *broken* heart?!

ALFRED:...and *Lynn* will have her first starring role on Broadway when she returns from tour. If she's successful...

HATTIE: Not a chance! That bony, gangly clown!

ALFRED:...then we'll have *two* sources of steady employment. That's the plan, mother...(a pause for dramatic effect)...and that's final.

(*Hattie turns away in despair, crying. Alfred exits, and Hattie isn't aware.*)

HATTIE: (sings emotionally)
EPHEMERAL...EPHEM...

(*She turns and suddenly stops singing when she sees he's gone. She collects herself – it only takes a moment – and she exits, too.*)

BLACKOUT.

(*In the dark we hear The Ensemble finish the song:*)

ENSEMBLE:
IT'S BETTER TO STAY TOGETHER!

Scene 6

(*LIGHTS UP on Noel, Alfred & Lynn.*)

NOEL: All right, so now in the script we should work on the scene where you finally get married..

ALFRED: I'm not quite ready...

NOEL: What - you need to take a break?

ALFRED: No, I mean *I'm* ready - Alfred *in the show* isn't ready.

NOEL: (*exasperated*) I wish you'd make up your mind!

LYNN: I had just come back from England -

(*Helen appears near the wings and Lynn enters – she gasps in horror.*)

HELEN: You're back?!

LYNN: No, your back. You'd better watch it.

(*Helen exits, crying, as Alfred enters – Alfred and Lynn stare at one another then slowly come together and share an awkward embrace.*)

LYNN: I was expecting a much warmer reunion.

ALFRED: I've been doing a lot of thinking.

LYNN: Oh dear – I don't like the sound of that.

ALFRED: In your last letter you insisted that we must set a date to be married when you returned.

LYNN: And..?

ALFRED: I can't...not yet....I promise you that we'll marry....I promise. But not just yet. We have to get our careers going – once we have two incomes...

LYNN: Goodbye, Alfred.

ALFRED:...what?

LYNN: Goodbye. I can't go on living with you in the basement and me three stories above you. I want to be married, and in the same room – no matter how small it is – and I want to wake up in the same bed.

ALFRED: You must know how much I want that, too, darling.

(He goes to kiss her, but she backs away.)

LYNN: You don't want it...enough.

ALFRED: You don't know what I want...*you don't know!* I daydream about it...

LYNN: About what exactly?

ALFRED: About...about...wall-to-wall carpeting.

LYNN: What?

ALFRED: I dream about a little apartment where we can be together and get started on our lives. But a real start. I can't - and won't – subject you to poverty. At least not *abject* poverty. In my dream I picture us sitting in front of a little window watching the snow – but it's warm inside. Maybe too warm because the radiator is broken and it never shuts off. And the floors are *never* cold and bare. There's a small kitchen – just big enough for a stove – and maybe a bathtub. *(They both laugh.)* Every morning I'll make you breakfast. When we're married – and notice I said *when* we're married – not *if* – I want everything to be just right.

A CARPET ON THE FLOOR

ALFRED:

A CARPET ON THE FLOOR
WALL TO WALL –
DOOR TO DOOR –
IT WARMS THE ROOM LIKE THE SUN –
AND IT MEANS –
YOU'VE BEGUN.
YOUR LIFE HAS FINALLY STARTED -
IT'S A START THAT'S NOT HALF-HEARTED.

IN A COUPLE OF LITTLE ROOMS
 LYNN:
 WE CAN'T AFFORD MUCH MORE -

ALFRED:
 WE'LL STAY IN BED UNTIL NOON -
 WITH A CARPET ON THE FLOOR!

LYNN: Oh, Alfred, I don't need *that* – just *you* -

ALFRED:
 A CARPET ON THE FLOOR –
 WALL TO WALL –
 DOOR TO DOOR –
 IN A COUPLE OF LITTLE ROOMS
 THE BEST WE CAN AFFORD –
 AND THERE WE'LL NEVER BE PARTED -
 NOT AGAIN...NEVER MORE...
(They waltz while The Ensemble sings)

ENSEMBLE:
 A CARPET ON THE FLOOR
 WALL TO WALL –
 DOOR TO DOOR
 IT WARMS THE ROOM LIKE THE SUN –
 AND IT MEANS –
 YOU'VE BEGUN.
 YOUR LIFE HAS FINALLY STARTED –
 IT'S A START THAT'S NOT HALF-HEARTED.
 IN A COUPLE OF LITTLE ROOMS -
 THE BEST YOU CAN AFFORD –
 AND THERE WE'LL NEVER EVER BE PARTED –
 NOT AGAIN...NEVER MORE...

ALFRED & LYNN:
 AT LEAST UNTIL THE NEXT TOUR -

ALL:
 A CARPET ON THE FLOOR!

LYNN: All right, Alfred. I'll be patient. But I don't know for how much longer.

BLACKOUT.

(NOEL enters.)

NOEL: All right we'll skip the scene where Lynn becomes a Broadway star and go to my exit scene.

Scene 7

NOEL: Well you've done it, Linnie. You've made us so proud. Now you're both Broadway stars. I shall be returning to England to make my own splash and when I return – and the planets have all aligned so that all three of us are stars – I shall write a play for us and we shall open on Broadway together!

LYNN: Oh, Noelle, I'll miss you terribly...

ALFRED: As will I, dear friend.

NOEL: And I shall miss you both. I'm sorry I have to leave - I won't be here to protect you from Hattie any longer.

ALFRED: I can take care of her myself, thank you.

NOEL: *(pause)* I hope so. But that means *a wedding* – I want a telegram the moment it happens.

(He starts to leave and comes back.)

NOEL: There's one more thing. I haven't got a cent.

LYNN: *(taking money out)* Here's twenty dollars, Noelle. It's all I have right now.

NOEL: Oh, Linnie I couldn't...

LYNN: Yes, you must. You can't go across the Atlantic Ocean with no money in your pockets.

NOEL: I shall repay you.

LYNN: Of course you will.

(Noel kisses Lynn and Alfred, they all three embrace.)

NOEL: *(pause)* What a strange ménage a trois.

(They separate.)

NOEL: Goodbye Linnie!

LYNN: Goodbye Noelle!

NOEL: Goodbye Alfred!

ALFRED: Goodbye.

(He crosses to the piano where he watches the action and takes notes. There is a moment of silence – Alfred is nervous but resolute:)

ALFRED: Let's get married.

NOEL: Finally! *(he writes in his script)*

LYNN: What?

ALFRED: Now – at once – let's go down to City Hall...

LYNN: But Alfred...why now?

ALFRED: It's our only day off!

LYNN: That's not a very good reason –

ALFRED: Yes it is...we both have a show tomorrow. And...and..

LYNN: And?

ALFRED: (*looks at his pocket watch*) And they're going to close the courthouse soon... and..

LYNN: *And?*

ALFRED: And...I love you madly and I can't stop thinking about that damn carpet!

(*Alfred and Lynn run across the stage to stand before a JUDGE. A WASHERWOMAN is starting to mop the floor nearby.*)
(*Alfred frantically looks in his pockets for something.*)

ALFRED: There's a five dollar fee – I haven't brought any money.

LYNN: Oh, Alfred– I haven't any money either. I gave everything I had to Noelie.

WASHERWOMAN: (*with a NY accent*) I have two dollahs. Here.

ALFRED: Oh, no, I couldn't.

WASHERWOMAN: You'll pay me back. I can tell youse kids are in love and I wantcha to get married. Take it!

ALFRED: (*to the Judge*) Will you take two dollars and I'll bring you three tomorrow when I bring back the two to repay this angel of mercy?

JUDGE: All right – let's make it quick. We're about to close.

ALFRED: (*to the Washerwoman*) Thank you!

JUDGE: (*to the Washerwoman*) Why don't you make yourself useful and go clean the jury room?

WASHERWOMAN: I'm not going anywhere.

JUDGE: What?

WASHERWOMAN: They need a witness!

JUDGE: *(to Alfred)* You don't have a witness?

ALFRED: We left in such a hurry –

JUDGE: No fee, no witness – do you have a ring?

ALFRED: Oh, yes, I have a ring...

(He reaches into his pocket – there's nothing there. He frantically searches other pockets, but nothing.)

JUDGE: Oh the hell with it, you are now one, I pronounce you man and wife! You may kiss the bride.

(Alfred and Lynn kiss, the Washerwoman wipes away a tear.)

(A carpet is rolled out center stage – Alfred and Lynn go up to it, take off their shoes and begin waltzing on the carpet while the Ensemble sings):

ENSEMBLE:

IN A COUPLE OF LITTLE ROOMS -
THE BEST YOU CAN AFFORD –
AND THERE YOU'LL NEVER EVER BE PARTED –
NOT AGAIN...NEVER MORE...

ALFRED & LYNN:

... AT LEAST UNTIL THE NEXT TOUR -

ALL:

A CARPET ON THE FLOOR!

(Alfred & Lynn go to kiss but Hattie runs on and literally pushes them apart. They ignore her and go in for a kiss any way, crushing Hattie who has to extricate herself from in between. They continue kissing and ignore her. She storms off.)

BLACKOUT.

Scene 8

LIGHTS UP.

NOEL: All right everyone, Scene Eight. It's a couple of years later – Alfred and Lynn are the toast of Broadway and they've made The Theatre Guild shows the hottest ticket in town.

(The five members of the THEATRE GUILD BOARD OF DIRECTORS are seated at along table facing the audience.)

MEMBER 1: What do you mean *they* made us the hottest ticket?

MEMBER 2: Who were they *before* they joined The Theatre Guild?

NOEL: The biggest stars in town.

MEMBER 3: Ridiculous. They're very talented – *comedians* –

MEMBER 4: But too awkward and gawky for romantic roles.

MEMBER 3: Agreed.

MEMBER 5: I think they're quite brilliant.

MEMBER 1: *(angry pause, then:)* Vote!

MEMBER2: I'd like to make a motion that they are talented but not brilliant.

MEMBER1: Do I hear a second?

MEMBER3: Second.

MEMBER1: All who *don't* think they're brilliant say "aye".

MEMBERS 1-5: Aye!

MEMBER 1: The vote is five to one – they are very talented but *not* brilliant.

MEMBER2: Point of order.

MEMBER1: Yes – what is your point?

MEMBER2: The motion was that they are talented – not very talented.

MEMBER1: Let the minutes show that I misspoke – the vote was 5 to 1 that they are *talented*, not *very* talented, and *not* brilliant.

(The Board members being writing with pencils on legal pads. Alfred enters dressed as the character he played in “The Guardsman.”)

ALFRED: We’re ready to do our run-through. But I really must insist that we do it in front of an audience.

MEMBER 1: *(indicates the Board)* You have one. Us.

ALFRED: Yes, but it’s a comedy, and we must have an audience that doesn’t already know the punch lines.

MEMBER 1: We shall go into executive session to discuss it.

(Lights dim on The Members as they murmur and hurriedly write on their pads again. Lynn enters in a beautiful gown.)

ALFRED: *(pulling her aside)* God how I hate this! We won’t get a single laugh and then we’ll get pages of notes with suggestions of *rewrites*.

LYNN: But it’s always this way...

ALFRED: It’s not a run-through it’s a deathwatch! Witches and warlocks with pads and pencils...

LYNN: Yes they are. But they’re witches and warlocks with a vision. They pick good plays.

ALFRED: We could be making a fortune on Broadway right now...

LYNN: But we’re not in it for the money.

ALFRED: That's the problem – neither are *they*. To them the plays in this theatre are a kind of noble hobby – a *cause* – they don't care if anyone comes to see them or not – and here we are, playing to sold-out houses. They should at least not force us to pay for our own costumes! I'm exhausted - performing in two different shows each week while rehearsing a third...

LYNN: You *love* repertory!

ALFRED: Yes, but I don't love *slavery*! This isn't a theatre – it's a sweatshop!

(LIGHTS FULL AGAIN ON THE MEMBERS.)

MEMBER1: After much debate and discussion we still insist that you must run through the play for us.

ALFRED: You can't have art by committee!

MEMBER1: What did you say?

ALFRED: I said – I offer my heart...to the committee.

ART BY COMMITTEE

MEMBER1:
PENCILS READY?

ENTIRE BOARD:
AYE!

MEMBER1:
PAPER READY?

ENTIRE BOARD:
AYE!

MEMBER1:
WE'RE READY TO CHANGE THIS PLAY
FROM PATHETIC – TO AESTHETIC...

BOARD:
YES IT'S ART BY COMMITTEE.

ALFRED:
G-D PLEASE HAVE PITY -

BOARD:
YES WE MUST ALL HAVE OUR SAY -
YES, IT'S ART BY COMMITTEE

ALFRED:
THE RESULT WILL BE SHITTY -

BOARD:
WE WILL VOTE ON EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR PLAY.

BOARD: *(a capella)*
TO BE DEMOCRATIC,
WE MUST ALL HAVE AT IT
OR THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY -

BOARD:
YES, IT'S ART BY COMMITTEE -

ALFRED:
THEIR NOTES WILL BE SO PETTY -

BOARD:
WE WILL VOTE ON EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR PLAY.

(The Board Members read from their notes and Alfred reacts:)

MEMBER1: The lines aren't funny!

ALFRED: I saw *that* coming!

MEMBER2: We need to recast one of the leads.

ALFRED: Over my dead body!

MEMBER3: That would make it easier.

MEMBER4: I just don't see you and Lynn in those roles – they need a kind of...a kind of...*sophistication*.

(The Members all murmur agreement and hurriedly write on their pads again.)

MEMBER2: The costumes are too expensive!

ALFRED: *We* paid for them!

MEMBER2: In that case, they're lovely.

MEMBER1: Rewrite!

MEMBER3: Rewrite!

MEMBER4: Rewrite!

MEMBER2: Rewrite!

MEMBER5: I think it's perfect.

MEMBER1: Vote! Do I hear a motion?

MEMBER2: I move that it's not perfect.

MEMBER3: Second!

MEMBER1: All those who don't think it's perfect –

MEMBERS1-4: Aye!

MEMBER1: By a vote of five to one...

MEMBER5: Wait! I abstain.

MEMBER1: (annoyed) By a vote of *four* to one, with *one* abstention...

MEMBERS 1-4: Rewrite!

BOARD: (*a capella*)

TO BE DEMOCRATIC,
WE MUST ALL HAVE AT IT
OR THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY -
YES, IT'S ART BY COMMITTEE -

ALFRED:

GOOD G-D HAVE PITY! (*he exits*)

BOARD:

WE WILL VOTE ON EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR PLAY.

(BLACKOUT on the Board of Directors. Music under. LIGHTS UP on Alfred who is crying. He gets up and tries to hide the fact when Lynn enters.)

LYNN: Alfred...are you...crying? *(pause)* I've never seen you cry...*offstage.*

ALFRED: They're ruining it...ruining it!

LYNN: I agree, darling, and there's only one thing to do.

ALFRED: Quit?

LYNN: No – agree to everything they want.

ALFRED: What?!

LYNN: Yes – listen to all their wretched notes and nod your head like a good little boy. But when we go into previews you do this damn show exactly as you want to –

ALFRED:...and if they fire us?

LYNN: There are two hundred plays opening this year on Broadway and we'll have our pick of the lot!

ALFRED: Oh darling...I love you so much. I'm completely lost without you.

LYNN: I know. *(pause)* And I'm lost without you. *Together*, we're too powerful for them. It's our union...

(Suddenly the Ensemble marches forward singing:)

ENSEMBLE:

WE'RE STRONGER AS ONE
WE CAN GET THE JOB DONE –
STRONGER IN NUMBERS –
OUR VOICES LIKE THUNDER –
A UNION!...

NOEL: *(waving his hands to stop the orchestra)* No, no, no – all of you – for G-d's sake take five!

(The Ensemble exits, grumbling and confused about their "cue.")

ALFRED: We must never, never be parted again.

LYNN: Yes, but first things first. I will not allow them to break you – not your talent and most certainly not your heart.

(They kiss.)

LYNN:

THERE IS NO ART BY COMMITTEE

THE RESULT IS ALWAYS SHITTY –

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE CAPTAIN AT THE WHEEL -

ALFRED:

THERE IS NO ART BY COMMITTEE

LET'S GET DOWN TO THE NITTY-GRITTY

ALFRED & LYNN:

AND TELL THEM THEY CAN ALL JUST GO TO
HELL!

(They kiss again.)

BLACKOUT.

Scene 9

(LIGHTS UP.)

NOEL: Alfred defies the Board of Directors – the play opens and runs for 50 weeks – the biggest hit they ever had. They go to Hollywood to make the film version.

(An actor playing a FILM DIRECTOR enters with a director's chair and sits with his back facing the audience. He's accompanied by a CAMERAMAN with a large old-fashioned camera on a tripod, and various other members of the Ensemble playing the film crew.)

DIRECTOR: ...a-a-a-and - cut! Print it!

(WE HEAR a bell, the kind you'd hear on a sound stage to indicate "all clear". The Director stands and goes up to Alfred.)

DIRECTOR: That was perfect - perfect!

ALFRED: Thank you.

DIRECTOR: Let's shoot it again.

ALFRED & LYNN: What?!

ALFRED: If it was perfect then why....

DIRECTOR: We have to shoot one more for safety.

LYNN: That's what you said when it was "take two", it's now "take five."

DIRECTOR: You can never have enough safety. Sound!

SOUND MAN: Speed!

DIRECTOR: Camera -

CAMERAMAN: Rolling!

DIRECTOR: Action!

(Alfred just stands there.)

DIRECTOR: Alfred, stop crossing your eyes!

ALFRED: *(slowly and deliberately)* I am not crossing my eyes. When you cross your eyes they go "in". I can't help it if my left eye keeps going "out".

DIRECTOR: Cut! You're deliberately messing up the take!

ALFRED: Then I suggest you use the take that was "perfect".

(BLACKOUT. LIGHTS UP on Noel Coward seated at the piano.)

NOEL: Alfred and Lynn are nominated for Best Actor and Best Actress Academy awards. But they quickly return to New York for what would be their final confrontation with The Theatre Guild.

Scene 10

(LIGHTS UP on the Board of Directors seated at their table again.)

BOARD MEMBER1: On to New Business. Today we must decide what to do about Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

BOARD MEMBER5: Hurry up and put them in another play!

BOARD MEMBER2: Their contract is up and we expect them to be driving a hard bargain.

BOARD MEMBER5: Give them whatever they want!

BOARD MEMBER4: We have to be careful. We've already lost Edward G. Robinson.

BOARD MEMBER3: I didn't know! When did he die?

BOARD MEMBER4: When he left New York to go to Hollywood! The talkies are killing all of us!

BOARD MEMBER5: The Lunts hate making movies.

BOARD MEMBER2: But they might leave us for another Broadway producer who will pay them *five times* what they're earning here.

BOARD MEMBER5: They've never asked for much.

BOARD MEMBER3: But they also want us to pay for their costumes!

BOARD MEMBER2: All those expensive gowns...

BOARD MEMBER5: When Lynn plays a countess or a duchess, do you expect her to wear a 'schmatta'?

BOARD MEMBER2: They're also not happy about going out on separate tours. They can't stand to be away from each other.

BOARD MEMBER5: It's very romantic.

BOARD MEMBER1: Nonsense. It's about power. They know that their union...

(The orchestra begins the intro to the song A UNION before The Board Members quickly stand and yell in unison at the conductor:)

BOARD MEMBERS: Don't!

(The orchestra immediately stops playing with a few instruments sputtering out a couple of more notes before comically winding down to silence.)

BOARD MEMBER1: *(continuing)* They know that *together* they stand a better chance of getting exactly what they want.

BOARD MEMBER2: I agree.

BOARD MEMBER3: Me, too.

BOARD MEMBER5: That's nonsense. It's because they love each other more than any couple I've ever seen.

BOARD MEMBER1: That's why we should keep them separated...in separate shows they won't be...out of control.

BOARD MEMBER5: Every time they're in a show, it's a hit.

BOARD MEMBER3: Exactly! And if they're in two shows, we'll have *two* hits at the same time.

(Alfred and Lynn enter.)

ALFRED: You asked to see us.

BOARD MEMBER1: Yes – we’ve decided to open two new plays.

ALFRED: You’re always opening two new plays

BOARD MEMBER2: But...you won’t be in the *same* play.

ALFRED: *(he takes Lynn’s arm)* That’s unacceptable.

BOARD MEMBER1: *(warning)* Now, remember, Alfred, your contract is up for renewal...

ALFRED: Exactly. And if you wish to have the two of us continue working for you we will no longer work in separate theatres.

LYNN: We have to be precise, Alfred. They’re lawyers.

ALFRED: Yes - that includes theatres that are attached to one another.

BOARD MEMBER1: Perhaps *you* are in fact, the lawyers in this discussion.

(The Board members look at one another.)

BOARD MEMBER3: Let’s vote –

BOARD MEMBER4: We need a motion.

BOARD MEMBER1: The motion is for Alfred and Lynn...

ALFRED: Just a moment...

BOARD MEMBER1: *Now* what?

JUST THE LUNTS

ALFRED:

MY NAME IS ALFRED AND THE LADY IS LYNN
THOUGH MOST CALL HER LYNNIE

LYNN:

- OR MISS FONTANNE –

ALFRED:

BUT FROM HERE ON OUT
STARTING NOW AND AT ONCE -
WE’RE NOT MISTER –

LYNN:

WE'RE NOT MRS. –

BOTH:

JUST THE LUNTS

BOARD MEMBER1: All right then...The motion is for *the Lunts* to be considered a single acting unit –

BOARD MEMBER5: Second!

ALFRED: Just a moment...

BOARD MEMBER3: The vote can only be interrupted by a point of order.

ALFRED: Very well – point of order.

BOARD MEMBER1: Very well, what's your point?

ALFRED: We wish to be reimbursed for our costumes –

BOARD MEMBER2: That's out of order!

BOARD MEMBER1: All in favor of the Lunts being considered a single acting unit –

BOARD MEMBERS1-5: Aye!

BOARD MEMBER4: I abstain.

ALFRED: Now, about those costumes...

BOARD MEMBER1: Meeting adjourned!

(BLACKOUT on the Board of Directors. Alfred and Lynn are revealed in a spotlight in a romantic pose. He sings:)

ALFRED:

HALF OF ME WAS MISSING,
WELL – IT WAS MORE THAN HALF –

LYNN:

AND I WAS FOREVER WISHING -
FOR A MAN WHO COULD HOLD FOR A LAUGH –

ALFRED:

WITH YOU THERE'S A SENSE OF COMPLETION –
MY SOUL HAS MET ITS MATE –

LYNN:

NOT TO MENTION A SENSE OF ELATION –
IT'S CLICHÉ BUT – SO IS FATE.

ALFRED:

AND FROM HERE ON OUT

LYNN:

STARTING NOW AND AT ONCE

ALFRED:

WE'RE NOT MISTER –

LYNN:

WE'RE NOT MRS. –

BOTH:

JUST THE LUNTS

LYNN:

WE'RE NOT MISTER –

ALFRED:

WE'RE NOT MRS. –

BOTH:

JUST THE LUNTS

BLACKOUT.

Scene 11

(Lights up on Noel, Alfred and Lynn. A long, awkward silence.)

NOEL: All right - so where do we go from here? We're at the point where you two are finally together....

LYNN: That's a bad thing, isn't it? For the musical I mean?

ALFRED: Yes, no more conflicts.

NOEL: Oh there's a conflict all right - there are so many young people who never saw any of your brilliant performances in the 1920's, the 30's - even the 40's - they'll never know *why* you were so brilliant - how do I put *that* into a song?

(A young ACTOR enters and sits to watch.)

ALFRED: *(referring to the seated Actor, whispering to Noel)* Who is that?

NOEL: *(whispers)* I haven't the faintest idea.

LYNN: *(joins the whispered conversation)* I think I recognize him. He's an actor with the Theatre Guild.

(The Actor begins writing on a legal pad.)

LYNN: *(whispering)* Oh, yes, now I know he's *definitely* with the Theatre Guild. *(to the Actor)* What is it you want?

ACTOR: Advice.

ALFRED: I see. Well here's what I always tell young actors: "Mean every word you say."

LYNN: And you can't get there unless you rehearse -

ALFRED: And rehearse and rehearse and rehearse -

LYNN: ...and then it still isn't right. And then you add the audience...

ALFRED: ...and it still isn't right.

LYNN: And you keep rehearsing and rehearsing and one day you think you're just about there - you can almost touch the success that is the result of all of your hard work - and then you know what happens?

NOEL: What?

ALFRED: You close.

NOEL: I see, so you want me to write a song about your mental illness.

(They stop for a moment and watch the Actor, who is taking notes like mad.)

NOEL: The problem, my dears, is that people who never actually saw you on stage, have no idea how you created a kind of...beautiful... mosaic...made from a veritable jigsaw puzzle of details.

LYNN: Oh, Noelie, that's such a lovely way to put it.

NOEL: I'm under a great deal of pressure here. I have to write a musical that will be revived over and over again - unless it's *that* good, I fear that the future - I mean the long, long future - will be without any trace of the two of you.

ALFRED: You mean - we'll be completely forgotten?

LYNN: *(nervous)* If memory serves...

ALFRED: Memory will serve...

NOEL: Hard to find good servants these days.

(pause - she changes the subject)

LYNN: I know how to help this young man. We need a song about a green umbrella.

ALFRED: *(chuckles)* Yes, you must always be in search of your green umbrella.

(The seated Actor looks up a moment, confused.)

ACTOR: Your what?

ALFRED: Umbrella. *(goes over to him)* U-M-B-R-E-L-L-A.

(The Actor hesitates a moment, then continues writing. Alfred tries to sneak a glance at what the Actor has put on his yellow pad.)

LYNN: You can have a wonderful script, an inspired director...

ALFRED: A brilliant set - brilliant lighting -

LYNN: The lighting is *very* important....

ALFRED: But ultimately *the actors* must find something - anything - that will help them *believe* everything that they're asked to say and do.

LYNN: Every word - every movement.

ALFRED: And so we spend every waking moment while we're working looking for the key.

NOEL: I thought you were looking for an umbrella.

LYNN: When we were rehearsing the first scene in *Pygmalion* - the scene in the rain in front of St. Paul's Cathedral - Alfred was miserable. He couldn't find his way into Henry Higgins. He'd take long, frustrated walks. Then one day he walked by a junk shop and found a green umbrella.

ALFRED: Suddenly I realized how to play the role.

(pause)

NOEL: Now I understand.

LYNN: You do?

NOEL: No, not really. Perhaps if you sing?

LYNN: I'll try.

A GREEN UMBRELLA

LYNN:

WHEN PROFESSOR HIGGINS MEETS ELIZA – IT'S
IT'S RAINING CATS AND DOGS –

(The Ensemble enters huddled in a group under opened black umbrellas.)

LYNN: *(continues in a cockney accent)*

“BUY A FLOWER FROM A POOR GIRL?”

ASKS ELIZA – NO ONE CAN SEE HER IN THE FOG.

BUT SOMEONE IS DIFFERENT IN THE SEA OF BLACK –

A MAN WHO KNOWS HE’S BETTER THAN THE REST -

(A green umbrella is opened among the opened black umbrellas and it makes its way through the crowd until at last we see that it’s Alfred who is holding it. He exits.)

LYNN:

AND OF COURSE HE WOULD HAVE A *GREEN*
UMBRELLA –

HENRY HIGGINS WOULD OWN NOTHING LESS.

A GREEN UMBRELLA –

A LIGHT GOING ON IN YOUR EYES -

YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA –

A RAY THROUGH THE CLOUDS IN THE SKY -

YOUNG ACTORS MAY LOOK FOR WORK

OLD ACTORS MAY LOOK FOR THEIR YOUTH

BUT GREAT ACTORS LOOK FOR ONE THING:

THEY ONLY LOOK FOR THE TRUTH.

DON’T LOOK TOO CLOSE, IT’S ALL A FACADE

THE ROOM IS CANVAS, IT’S ALL A CHAR-ADE -

THE HORIZON’S A FAKE, UPSTAGE THERE’S A WALL

AND TOO FAR DOWNSTAGE, YOU’RE CERTAIN TO FALL

SO YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA

A LIGHT GOING ON IN YOUR EYES -

YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA -

A RAY THROUGH THE CLOUDS IN THE SKY -

(Alfred enters playing the accordion.)

ALFRED:

IF THE CHARACTER PLAYS THE ACCORDIAN

THEN THE ACTOR MUST LEARN HOW TO PLAY -

LYNN:

THERE'S NO PLACE FOR A LIE IN THE THEATRE -
THE TRUTH WILL GET IN THE WAY.

(Alfred hits a couple of sour notes.)

ALFRED: *(spoken)* Crap. *(Alfred exits.)*

LYNN:

YOU CAN'T EAT THE FRUIT, IT'S MADE OF WAX
THE SUN'S MADE OF LIGHTS
TURN THEM OFF, THE WORLD'S BLACK -
SO YOU SEEK OUT THE TRUTH, NO MATTER THE COST
IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE TOTALLY LOST -

(Alfred enters, dancing with his green umbrella.)

LYNN and
ENSEMBLE:

YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA
A LIGHT GOING ON IN YOUR EYES -
YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA
A RAY THROUGH THE CLOUDS IN THE SKY -

(The seated Actor stands and starts to exit.)

LYNN: Wait! Who *are* you?

ACTOR: Just an actor at the Theatre Guild, Miss Fontanne.

LYNN: What have you been in?

ACTOR: I'm just a minor player. Very small parts.

LYNN: What is your name?

ACTOR: Lee... Lee Strasberg.

(He exits. An Actress with a legal pad comes in and takes his place.)

NOEL: This must be the next shift.

LYNN: What's your name?

ACTRESS: Uta...Uta Hagen.

LYNN: (to the Actress) Get ready to write!

(Two green umbrellas fly in, Lynn and Alfred catch them.)

ALL:

YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA
 A LIGHT GOING ON IN YOUR EYES -
 YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA
 A RAY THROUGH THE CLOUDS IN THE SKIES -
 YOUNG ACTORS MAY LOOK FOR WORK
 OLD ACTORS MAY LOOK FOR THEIR YOUTH
 GREAT ACTORS LOOK FOR ONE THING:
 THEY ONLY LOOK FOR THE TRUTH.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 12

LIGHTS UP.

NOEL: All right - let's pick up the narrative where I come back into your lives, circa 1933.

(He gets up from the piano and joins Alfred and Lynn as LIGHTS COME UP center stage.)

LYNN & ALFRED: Noelie!

NOEL: Linnie! Alfred!

(Group hug.)

NOEL: Well we've done it. All three of us are stars – just as we planned, and – just as I planned – we shall do a show that I've specifically written for us.

LYNN: And it's divine –

ALFRED: And so utterly controversial.

LYNN: A bisexual triangle - it's never been done!

ALFRED: You're a genius, Noelie. It's your finest work to date.

NOEL: Really? (*pause*) Everyone seems to think that *Private Lives* was pretty good.

ALFRED: Oh, don't get all defensive, you know what I meant.

NOEL: No, I *don't*...

ALFRED: I started off by saying you're a genius...

NOEL: And that's where you should have left it.

LYNN: No quarrels! Let's not argue – let's sing!

WHAT A (GRAND) MENAGE A TROIS

LYNN:

THE TRIANGLE THAT YOU LIKE BEST
IS THE ONE THEY CALL SCALENE –

NOEL:

IT'S BETTER THAN ALL THE REST -
BECAUSE IT RHYMES WITH THE WORD OBSCENE.

ALFRED:

AND NOW YOU'VE WRITTEN A PLAY
FILLED WITH SEX-U-AL TENSION

LYNN:

WHERE WHO SLEEPS WITH WHOM

ALFRED:

IS THE ALL IMPORTANT QUESTION –

LYNN:

WHAT A GRAND MENAGE A TROIS -

NOEL:

WHERE TWO BOYS AND THEIR GIRL NEVER WED -

ALL:
WHAT A GRAND MENAGE A TROIS –

ALFRED:
WHERE THREE SLEEP IN WHO KNOWS WHICH BED?

NOEL:
THE TRIANGLE FEATURES TWO MALES –

ALFRED:
OH NO! THEY'LL PUT US IN JAIL!

LYNN:
LET THE AUDIENCE MAKE ITS SURMISE –

NOEL:
THE ROLES ARE ALL EQUAL IN SIZE -

LYNN: (spoken) That's the best part!

ALFRED & LYNN:
WE'RE HAPPY TO SAY THAT
YOUR PLAY IS SO GAY!

ALL:
WHAT A GRAND MENAGE A TROIS!

Scene 13

ALFRED: Let's run that number again.

NOEL: No! No more rehearsing! The two of you drive me absolutely mad - incessantly *rehearsing*, looking for new, *deeper* meaning in every line.

ALFRED: Alright but we need to have a post mortem on tonight's show.

NOEL: No!

LYNN: We must!

NOEL: Every...single....night!

ALFRED: Oh, I was terrible this evening.

LYNN: Oh, no, Alfred, I'm the one who was terrible.

NOEL: Here we go again.

LYNN: I almost made a curtain speech telling them to ask for their money back.

NOEL: The audience loved it!

ALFRED: I was awful.

LYNN: No *I* was awful.

ALFRED: I was worse.

LYNN: I was cursed.

NOEL: Well I thought that *I* was wonderful.

ALFRED: You were, Noelie, but I was all over the place in the second act. I let you down badly. I am so sorry darling.

LYNN: Don't worry, Alfred. You gave a lovely performance in the *matinee* today.

ALFRED: (*pause*) So...you agree that I was off during tonight's show?

LYNN: Well yes, you said it yourself.

NOEL: (*to the audience*) Uh-oh...

ALFRED: And what exactly didn't you like?

LYNN: You didn't get a laugh when you asked for the tea.

ALFRED: Yes...I noticed that.

LYNN: It's because you asked for the laugh. Next time just ask for the tea.

NOEL: Now don't start fighting you two...

ALFRED: At least I didn't forget any of my lines.

LYNN: Yes, I did go up for a moment but it was your fault.

ALFRED: My fault?

LYNN: Yes, you put your tea cup on the mantle. You never did that before!

ALFRED: I most certainly did not. I put it on the table as I always do.

LYNN: You put it on the mantle and I was so afraid it was going to fall off I forgot my lines.

ALFRED: I put the cup on the table!

LYNN: You put it on the mantle!

NOEL: Stop!

ALFRED: I'll prove it! I put it on the table...

(He picks up a coffee cup and crosses deliberately across the stage and slams it down onto a table.)

ALFRED:...just...like...that!

LYNN: You just proved *my* point. You just crossed stage left to put your cup down on the *table*, but in the play the *table* is stage right – stage left is the mantle!

(Alfred hurls the cup to the other side of the stage and it shatters on the table.)

ALFRED: There! Now it's on *the table*!

LYNN: No! It's *all over* the table!

NOEL: Stop it, stop it at once! You two aren't really mad at each other. You're mad at me for closing the play.

(Pause.)

ALFRED: Well now that you mention it...

LYNN: We're a hit, Noemie! Why would you want to leave?

NOEL: I have a longstanding rule and you know it. I never do a show more than three months. After three months the audience starts to turn on you. I've never seen it fail.

LYNN: Nonsense!

ALFRED: And even if we close here on Broadway we *must* go on tour...

NOEL: No, no, no heaven forbid. I've grown tired of this show and it's time to do another. As you know, I've already written another play for all three of us called *Point Valaine*.

(The orchestra plays an ominous sting and will play this exact ominous sting every time someone says the dreaded words "Point Valaine")

NOEL: *(crossing down to the orchestra)* What the devil was that?

ALFRED: I rather like it. It's a running joke. Every time someone says *Point Valaine*...

(Ominious sting.)

NOEL: My play will not be subjected to a running joke.

ALFRED: It *was* our only bomb. The only time we were ever in a play that was a complete failure.

NOEL: I wouldn't say *complete* failure. *Point Valaine*...

(Ominious sting.)

NOEL: *(to the orchestra)* Stop that! Stop it at once!

ALFRED: When I first read it, Noemie, I liked it but I had extreme doubts. We never should have agreed to do it.

NOEL: What was wrong with it?

ALFRED: Lynn played a bitch and I played a bastard.

LYNN: A bastard and a bitch.

ALFRED: The audience didn't want to see us do that. When I read a play I either fall in love or I hear a voice in my head that says 'they won't like it'. I heard that little voice when I read *Point Valaine... (Ominious sting)...* But I ignored it because of our close friendship.

LYNN: Your instincts are always right, Alfred.

NOEL: I've been writing plays since I was a boy! What about *my* instincts?!

ALFRED: I'm not disputing that, but look – you wrote *Private Lives* in four days.

NOEL: And it was perfect.

ALFRED: But a work of art is never perfect. Never. For an artist it's a struggle that never ends.

LYNN: Never.

NOEL: If I stay here, I shall go mad! (*he starts to exit.*)

ALFRED: Noelle – don't go. I'm sorry we argued. It's really all my fault. I'm the one who shall go. I need to take a walk and think.

(*Alfred gives Lynn a kiss. He puts out his hand for Noel who doesn't take it. Alfred starts to exit.*)

LYNN: It's raining, darling.

NOEL: (*sarcastic*) Don't forget your green umbrella.

(*Silence, then all three laugh. Group hug.*)

BLACKOUT.

Scene 14

(*WE HEAR NOEL in the dark.*)

NOEL: All right everyone, we're going to the scene where Irving Thalberg, the President of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer comes to visit the Lunts in their hotel room. Lights – up!

(Alfred and Lynn are both in elegant dressing gowns. They look despondent as they speak to Sydney Greenstreet.)

ALFRED: Are you playing Sydney Greenstreet in this scene?

GREENSTREET: Yes. I'm only Alec Woolcott when I'm in the orange pajamas.

ALFRED: Ah. All right, proceed.

(The actor playing Greenstreet launches into a perfect impersonation of Sydney Greenstreet.)

GREENSTREET: My mind is made up, Alfred. But please know it was not an easy decision.

(Lynn takes a handkerchief out of her sleeve and dabs an eye.)

GREENSTREET: I'm so sorry, Lynn. Please don't cry.

LYNN: I'm the one who's sorry, Sydney. I'm not trying to make this any harder on you but as you know, we love you dearly.

ALFRED: And Hollywood is lucky to get you. You are the finest actor in our company – one of the finest actors I've ever worked with, for that matter.

GREENSTREET: And I hope you know how much I've loved working with the both of you. Shakespeare, Shaw, Chekhov...an actor's repertory dream.

LYNN: Hollywood has already taken away Eddie Robinson, Paul Muni, Spencer Tracy, Barbara Stanwyck, Claude Rains. And now the greatest of all of them...you.

GREENSTREET: I'll probably return, Alfred. After all, the two of you made only one picture and vowed never to go back.

ALFRED: What's the name of the film you're doing?

GREENSTREET: *The Maltese* something or other.

ALFRED: Catchy title.

GREENSTREET: (*kissing Lynn's hand*) Goodbye, dearest Lynn. (*he hugs Alfred*) And dearest Alfred. Thank you both for everything.

(*He exits into what we assume to be the hall, closing the door behind him. Alfred and Lynn embrace one another, comforting each other in sadness. They look at each other for a moment in silence, composing themselves – then:*)

ALFRED: Lynn – the timing was definitely off in Act III during the matinee. We need to rehearse.

LYNN: I agree. Let me fix my mascara.

(*She exits into what we presume is the bedroom, wiping her eyes. After a moment there is a knock at the hall door.*)

ALFRED: (*toward the bedroom:*) Lynn! Maybe he changed his mind! (*toward the hall door:*) Come in.

(*IRVING THALBERG enters, closing the door behind him.*)

ALFRED: Mr. Thalberg! What are you doing in Pittsburgh?

THALBERG: What does *anyone* do in Pittsburgh?

ALFRED: (*calling toward the bedroom*) Lynn! Mr. Thalberg is here.

LYNN: (*off*) Oh, dear! I'm not dressed.

ALFRED: (*calling toward her*) Neither am I!

THALBERG: Alfred, I've come all the way across the country to see you and I'm not leaving until you sign a contract.

ALFRED: (*polite*) Then I'm afraid you've come all the way across the country for nothing.

THALBERG: (*he sits, taking out a contract*) I know you've turned me down several times but you must hear me out, Alfred.

(Lynn enters, wearing a much more elegant dressing gown – one more proper for the occasion.)

LYNN: Mr. Thalberg...

THALBERG: *(jumps up)* Lynn – I hope you'll forgive the intrusion.

LYNN: I hope you understand Mr. Thalberg that we need to rest – we just finished a matinee and we have an evening performance.

ALFRED: And we were about to run lines.

THALBERG: *(chuckles)* You two. Always rehearsing. I won't keep you long. I just need to have you sign this contract and take a couple of publicity pictures with Leo, the MGM Lion.

ALFRED: What?

THALBERG: *(pointing at the hall)* He's outside in the hallway with the photographer and his trainer, of course.

(Alfred goes over to the hall door, opens it, and is met with a loud roar. Lynn reacts in fright as simultaneously Alfred slams the door and places his back against it to insure that the lion can't get in.)

ALFRED: There's a lion out there!

THALBERG: Not just any lion – it's Leo, the MGM lion.

ALFRED: They let you into the Astor Hotel...with a lion?!

THALBERG: Not just any lion...It's Leo...

ALL:...the MGM lion.

ALFRED: Yes, right.

THALBERG: He's been here before. He once stayed in the Presidential suite. Now – I know that you've turned me down numerous times...

LYNN: I'm sorry, Mr. Thalberg, but our answer is still the same. No.

ALFRED: We're not interested in making films.

THALBERG: I'm prepared to offer you \$900,000.

(Silence.)

THALBERG: That's an awful lot of money.

(Silence)

THALBERG: That's almost a million dollars.

(Silence)

THALBERG: *(frustrated)* Haven't you heard? There's a Depression going on out there!

ALFRED: First of all, Mr. Thalberg, we don't want to move to Los Angeles. There's too much avocado in the food and not enough garlic.

THALBERG: With this kind of money, you could hire your own chef.

ALFRED: We saw how things work in Hollywood. There is constant meddling from the studios. We would have no say over our scripts, our directors...

LYNN: Our costumes!

THALBERG: Those things are *my* job. Trust me, I'll take very good care of you.

LYNN: In the theatre we're in charge of our own destiny.

THALBERG: That's a dangerous position for an actor.

ALFRED: And as I've told you repeatedly, Mr. Thalberg: we don't like the process of movie-making. So much time is wasted.

THALBERG: But I'm offering you almost a million dollars!

LYNN: Mr. Thalberg – we can be bought. But we cannot be bored. Now, if you'll excuse me. (*she exits.*)

ALFRED: I'm terribly sorry you've come all this way, Mr. Thalberg...

(*He opens the hall door, the lion roars again and he hurriedly slams it shut.*)

THALBERG: I...I just don't understand.

ALFRED: We're troupers. Do you know what a trouper is, Mr. Thalberg?

THALBERG: I've heard the expression. It means someone who's able to put up with a lot of crap and not complain.

ALFRED: (*laughs*) True! But it also refers to actors - like us - who love nothing more than taking a play to small towns all over the country.

THALBERG: Not much profit in that.

LYNN: Oh but there is! How can I explain to you how rewarding it is to shake the tiny hands of a hundred school children who've just seen their first Shakespeare...

ALFRED: ...to perform in front of an audience so elated to see their first Broadway production that they throw their cowboy hats onto the stage.

THALBERG: I'll make sure that you have every summer off to do your little plays.

ALFRED: That's the point, Mr. Thalberg. They aren't "little". For us, there is nothing bigger. Not even MGM.

THALBERG: (*putting the contract away*) You know, Alfred, you should think about the future. There won't be a record of any of your great performances unless you preserve them on film. Only movies are forever.

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN

(SOUNDS OF A TRAIN. We hear The Ensemble singing quietly in the background.)

ENSEMBLE:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

ALFRED: *(spoken a tempo over the Ensemble)*

TO SEE THOSE EYES FILLED WITH AWE
AS THEY SEE THEIR FIRST SHAKESPEARE OR SHAW –

ENSEMBLE:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(The Ensemble converges around Alfred, Lynn and Thalberg – who, against his will, is caught up in the musical number – and they move as a group in unison around the stage, as though moving in a train across the country.)

ENS1:

AMARILLO

ENS2:

CHATANOOGA

ALL:

LITTLE ROCK!

ENS3:

FORT WORTH

ENS4:

WICHITA

ENS5:

MEMPHIS

ENSEMBLE:

AUSTIN!

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.
BOSTON!

(The Ensemble opens up to allow Lynn, Alfred and out of the center of the group.)

LYNN: *(spoken)* G-d what's happened to Boston? There used to be 8 theatres? Now there's only 3!

ENSEMBLE1:

20 CURTAIN CALLS!

ENSEMBLE: *(they bow)*

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(Thalberg tries to get away but his escape is blocked by the Ensemble, which converges around him, Alfred, and Lynn. They move as a group to another part of the stage.)

ALL:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.
CHICAGO!

(The Ensemble opens up to allow Lynn & Alfred out of the center of the group.)

ALFRED: *(spoken)* G-d what's happened to Chicago? There used to be 16 theatres? Now there's only 4.

ENSEMBLE2:

25 CURTAIN CALLS!

ENSEMBLE: *(they bow)*

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(Thalberg tries to get away again but his escape is blocked by the Ensemble , which converges around him, Lynn, and Alfred. They move as a group to another part of the stage.)

ENS5:

TULSA

ENS4:

DALLAS

ENS3:

HOUSTON

ENS2:

NASHVILLE

ALL:

WACO!

(The Ensemble opens up to allow Lynn and Alfred out of the center of the group. They look around in disgust)

ALFRED: It's not a theatre –

LYNN: It's an outrage!

ALFRED: No it's an *arena*....and it looks like they just had a rodeo.

LYNN: *(holds her nose)* And no one's bothered to clean up.

ALFRED: Watch your step, Lynn.

LYNN: Don't tell me how to behave...

ALFRED : No, literally *watch your step*...

(She looks down at a cowpie)

LYNN: Oh....

(Thalberg tries to get away one last time but his escape is blocked by the Ensemble, which converges around him. He surrenders, getting caught up in the enthusiasm and joins everyone in the rest of the song. They all move as a group to another part of the stage.)

ENSEMBLE:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

ENS1:

YOUNGSTOWN

ENS2:

TULSA

ENS3:

BIRMINGHAM

THALBERG:

CLEVELAND!

(The Ensemble opens up to allow Lynn, Alfred out of the center of the group.)

ENSEMBLE3: *(spoken)* The critic is sick. He won't be able to make it to opening night.

ALFRED: Find out where he lives.

ENSEMBLE3: Why?

ALFRED: We'll do a run-through for him in his goddamn livingroom!

(The Ensemble closes ranks and the all move as a group to another part of the stage.)

ENSEMBLE:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

ENS1:
 DAVENPORT

ENS2:
 ST. PAUL

ENS3&4:
 CEDAR RAPIDS

ENS5:
 CINCINNATI

ENS1:
 SIOUX CITY

ALL:
 PITTSBURGH!
 NO, NOT PITTSBURGH!

(The Ensemble opens up to allow Lynn, Alfred out of the center of the group.)

ALFRED: The city of the jinx! Last time it was 30 feet of snow. What's going to go wrong this time?

(Sounds of a thunderstorm)

LYNN: The worst flood in history.

ALFRED: Evacuate the actors from the hotel.

ENSEMBLE4: Where are we going?

ALFRED: The theatre!

ENSEMBLE5: How are we going to get there?

ALFRED: Rowboats!

ENSEMBLE1: But how will the audience get there?

ALFRED: Rowboats! *(gathering the ensemble)* All right everyone, listen. There's still power here at the theatre but if the lights go out in the middle of the show you all know what to do.

BLACKOUT.

(Everyone onstage takes out a cigarette lighter and lights it. They all use their lights to take a good look at the audience.)

ENSEMBLE2: There's only a handful of people out there. Maybe we should cancel.

ALFRED: If there is even one audience member remaining in the house, the show will go on!

(The lighters all go out.)

LIGHTS UP.

(They all move as a group to another part of the stage.)

ENSEMBLE5: *(spoken)* 34,000 miles, 60 cities, 500 thousand people!

ENS1:

MADISON

ENS2:

KANSAS CITY

ENS3:

WASHINGTON

ENS4:

DC

ENS5:

LA

ALL:

OMAHA!

(The Ensemble opens up to allow Lynn, Alfred, and the Actor who plays Woolcott & Sydney Greenstreet to emerge from the center of the group.)

ALFRED: Are you Woolcott or Sydney Greenstreet in this scene?

ACTOR: I'm actually playing the mayor of Omaha.

ALFRED: Oh, very good, continue.

ACTOR: (*snaps into character*) I am the mayor and I forbid you to Perform that immoral play in my city unless there are some changes made to the script.

ALFRED: Absolutely not. A playwright's words are sacrosanct.

ACTOR: You must delete all references to pre-marital relations and delete all references to Omaha.

ALFRED: Not on your life.

LYNN: This is outrageous. I'm going to call that nice judge...what was his name? The one who took us to lunch in Washington, D.C.?

ALFRED: Louis Brandeis.

ACTOR: You mean the Supreme Court justice?!

LYNN: Yes, that's the one.

(The Stage Manager brings her a phone and she picks up the receiver. The Mayor produces a large "key to the city".)

ACTOR: Welcome to Omaha!

ENSEMBLE:
OMAHA!

(They all move as a group to another part of the stage.)

ENSEMBLE:
TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(Getting slower):

ENS1:
DES MOINES

ENS2:
NEW ORLEANS

ENS3:
MILWAUKEE.

ENS4:
TORONTO.

ENS5:
SEATTLE.

ENS1:
COLUMBUS.

ENS2:
ATLANTA.

ENS3:
SACRAMENTO.

ALL:
SAN FRANCISCO!

ENSEMBLE:
TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(The Ensemble parts, revealing Lynn's arm is now in a sling)

LYNN: Oh, god, my hand looks like a foot. I'm sure it's quite broken.

ALFRED: If you're going to do the matinee you must have a cast.

LYNN: There's no time.

ALFRED: Then you must have a painkiller.

LYNN: It will ruin my timing. There only *one* thing I must have...

ALFRED: What's that?

LYNN: A sling that will match my dress!

(The Ensemble very quickly closes around them, hiding them from view and they move to another part of the stage.)

ENSEMBLE:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(Note: When the ensemble opens for the next vignette, Lynn is now wearing a sling that matches her dress.)

LYNN: It looks like a gymnasium.

ALFRED: That's because it *is* a gymnasium. All right – hang the curtain from the basketball hoops and let's get started!

(The Ensemble very quickly closes around them, hiding them from view and they move to another part of the stage.)

ENSEMBLE:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(The Ensemble opens allowing Alfred and Lynn to step forward.)

ENSEMBLE2: The scenery and costumes haven't arrived.

(He exits in a panic.)

ALFRED: *(making a curtain speech – growing more and more dramatic)*
Ladies and gentlemen. There *will be* a performance tonight, but I'm sorry to say that the train which carries our scenery and costumes hasn't arrived. Where is Mr. Mussolini when you need him?

ALFRED: *(cont'd)* We will be happy to refund your money if you wish, but if you're willing – we're willing to demonstrate that the theatre is a miraculous place. And we will attempt to create a miracle, standing in front of only a simple black curtain wearing our simple street clothes. We are the stuff such as dreams are made on – and we will attempt to make those dreams a reality, with no props – propped up only by the inner fire burning in the actors...

(Ensemble 2 re-enters and taps Alfred who is annoyed that he's been interrupted.)

ALFRED: Yes, what is it?

ENSEMBLE2: Scenery and costumes are here!

ALFRED: *(a disappointed pause)* Shit.

(They all move as a group to another part of the stage.)

ENSEMBLE:

TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(With each city they name, their pace gets slower and slower as though the train were slowing down for a final stop)

ENSEMBLE:

OKLAHOMA CITY
SALT LAKE CITY

ALFRED: I could use a drink.

ENSEMBLE:

SALT LAKE CITY!

ALFRED:

Oh...I forgot...

ENSEMBLE3:

8,000 performances – over a million people.

ENSEMBLE: *(slower and slower)*

MONT-GOM-E-RY
INDIAN-A-POLIS
SAN ANT-O-NIO
PHIL-A-DEL-PHI-A

LYNN: Of all places to finish – Philadelphia.

ALFRED: It could be worse – it could be Pittsburgh!

ENSEMBLE:

NO, NOT PITTSBURGH!

BLACKOUT.

Scene 15

(LIGHTS UP ON Noel.)

NOEL: Yes, I think that song will work. And so then we should go to your triumphant return to Broadway with the play *Idiot's Delight*. Let's bring back the playwright, Robert Sherwood.

(SPOTLIGHT on Robert Sherwood)

SHERWOOD: If you want a show to run many a munt – get Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt.

(He begins reading newspapers, shaking his head in dismay.)

NOEL: As I recall the reviews were terrible; 1939 was not a good time for an anti-Fascist play –

ALFRED: Don't be sad, Bob. We're a hit.

SHERWOOD: But the critics....

ALFRED: What do they say?

SHERWOOD: *(starts to read)* The production of *Idiot's Delight*...

ALFRED: No, no, no don't tell me what they said specifically, because Lynn and I never read reviews. Never. What was the overall opinion?

SHERWOOD: Overall they like the acting, not the writing.

ALFRED: Well, then you should read the review in The Herald – they liked *both* the acting *and* the writing.

SHERWOOD: I thought you don't read reviews.

ALFRED: I don't. Ever. (*off Sherwood's look*) Someone mentioned it.

SHERWOOD: The Times says it's a failed drama and the Daily News says it's a failed comedy.

ALFRED: But The Sun said it was "the perfect mix of drama and comedy".

SHERWOOD: Is that a quote?

ALFRED: Yes.

SHERWOOD: I thought you don't read reviews.

ALFRED: I don't. Ever.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 16

(*LIGHTS UP ON Noel.*)

NOEL: *Idiot's Delight* wins the Pulitzer Prize and so they're off on another cross-country tour...

ENSEMBLE:(*off*) TROUPERS ON A TRAIN, TROUPERS ON A TRAIN,
TROUPERS ON A-TROUPERS ON A-
-TROUPERS ON A TRAIN.

(*They continue under Noel's next speech*)

NOEL: But the show could not keep up with history. When the play opened on Broadway, Fascism was a dark cloud on the horizon. During the tour of the play, Hitler began his march through Europe. And when the play closed...it was World War II.

(*LIGHTS UP on Alfred and two women who are dressed as LES BLONDES, the backup singers/dancers from Idiot's Delight.*)

ALFRED: (*with hat and cane*) Alright, ladies, let's take it from the top:
a-5-6-7-8....

(*They break into a tap dance that is interrupted by Robert Sherwood who enters.*)

ALFRED: Bob, we're rehearsing.

SHERWOOD: But we're closing next week.

ALFRED: It's never too late, Bob. I've got a couple of wonderful new ideas for the number.

SHERWOOD: I need to speak with you.

ALFRED: (*reluctantly*) All right girls, I'll see you just before half hour – and we'll run it again.

(*Les Blondes exit.*)

SHERWOOD: I've written a new play.

ALFRED: That glorious, Bob! What's it about?

SHERWOOD: It's an anti-Fascist play –

ALFRED: Oh, G-d, Bob, not again!

SHERWOOD: I couldn't convince anyone with the last play that a terrible war was coming – and now that it's here things are desperate.

(*Lynn enters.*)

LYNN: I don't need any convincing. The reports from England are horrifying.

ALFRED: But Lynn, we can't do *another* anti-Fascist play. It violates the first rule of show business: never follow a banjo act with a banjo act.

(*SPOTLIGHT on Noel. He stands up from the piano bench.*)

NOEL: Here's where I have to exit for a while. I can't stay here writing a musical while bombs are falling on all of my favorite people and places in London.

LYNN: Goodbye Noelle!

ALFRED: We shall close and lock the studio at the farm until you safely return.

LYNN: That is your room and no one will be allowed to stay in it except you.

NOEL: Thank you my darlings. Goodbye!

SHERWOOD, LYNN & ALFRED: Goodbye! G-dspeed!

SHERWOOD: Oh, Lynn, I hope you can persuade Alfred to do the play.

ALFRED: Now, wait, I didn't say "no"...

SHERWOOD: I suppose Lynn, you have more sympathy because you're British and it's your country.

ALFRED: Now, Bob, just a minute...

LYNN: No, Alfred. He's right. (*pause*) Did you know, Bob, that I was engaged to another man before I met Alfred?

SHERWOOD: No...I...uh...I'm shocked.

LYNN: Why? It's the 20th century.

SHERWOOD: No, Lynn, don't misunderstand – my reaction has nothing to do with Victorian morality. It's just that – well – you're the Lunts – I can't picture either of you unless I picture you together.

LYNN: Well I was engaged to a handsome young lawyer during the Great War. I suppose they'll soon have to call it World War I since we're onto the second. Anyway, we were very much in love.

LYNN: (*cont'd*) I was already an actress when we met but I wasn't making much money. So to earn a few extra quid I was an artist's model – for some very famous painters, I might add. There was this one artist who lived near a bridge. My fiancé would walk me to the painter's house and wait for me on the bridge. Sometimes for two hours. When I would emerge from the house – there he'd be. Waiting.

SHERWOOD: Why didn't you marry him?

ALFRED: Bobby!

SHERWOOD: (*quickly to Alfred*) I mean, I'm glad she didn't, Alfred...

LYNN: He was quite wealthy and I'm sure his family would not have allowed him to marry an actress. In fact, he still hadn't gained the courage to tell his family about me when...

SHERWOOD: When..?

LYNN: When he was killed fighting in the trenches in France.

SHERWOOD: So – his family never knew. About you, I mean.

LYNN: He left me all of his money in his will – but we weren't married yet and it wouldn't have been right for me to keep it. I told his solicitor to put all the money in an envelope and deliver it to his mother. Anonymously. So no...they never knew.

SHERWOOD: That's one of the saddest stories I've ever heard.

LYNN: No, no, it's water under the bridge. Yes...the bridge...I just found out that little bridge – the one where he used to wait for me – was bombed by the Nazis. It's completely gone. And soon everything will be gone if we don't do something.

ALFRED: (*pause*) All right, Lynn. I'm with you.

LYNN: Oh, Alfred. Thank you.

ALFRED: You never had any doubt, did you?

LYNN: No – you always make the right decision. In everything.

ALFRED: (*lovingly*) Like my decision to marry you?

LYNN: That was your greatest decision.

ALFRED: So – we'd better get started if we're going to help save mankind.

(*A patriotic and stirring vamp begins.*)

SHERWOOD: We're going to have to enlist Alec Woolcott into our small army. I know he's on our side in this –

(The actor playing Alec Woolcott, dressed in orange pajamas again, is brought on stage in his wheelchair and is positioned behind an old fashioned radio microphone where he will be broadcasting to the entire country.)

ALEC: And as much as I love the theatre, I don't think they'll ever invent anything more powerful or persuasive than the radio.

TAKE IT UP

LYNN:

THERE'S A GLOBAL CAUSE:
 SAVE THE WORLD FROM GOING DOWN –
 TAKE IT UP!
 TAKE IT UP!
 TAKE IT UP!
 JOIN THIS NOBLE CAUSE –

SHERWOOD:

OR IN FASCISM WE'LL DROWN –
 TAKE IT UP!

LYNN:

TAKE IT UP!

ALFRED:

TAKE IT UP!

ALEC:*(into the mic)*

YOU MAY BE PLEASED WITH ISOLATION –
 BUT YOU ARE DOOMING OUR NATION –

LYNN:

SAVE ENGLAND FIRST

ALEC:

THEN YOU SAVE THE U.S.A.!
 TAKE IT UP!

ALFRED:

TAKE IT UP!

ALL3:

TAKE IT UP!

(The Ensemble marches in to the beat of the song, chanting “TAKE IT UP, two-three-four, TAKE IT UP two-three-four, etc.” They carry protest signs that say “The Lunts are Communists” “Woolcott: WarMonger”, etc.)

ENSEMBLE1: They just want to save Russia!

ENSEMBLE2: Commies!

ENSEMBLE3: They just want to save the Jews!

ENSEMBLE4: War Mongers!

ENSEMBLE5: America First!

ENSEMBLE1: Stay out of it!

ENSEMBLE: Yeah! Stay out of it! Commies! War-Mongers! Jew-Lovers!

SHERWOOD: *(he manages to shout over them)* America will be getting into this war sooner or later –

ENSEMBLE1: It’s Europe’s problem!

ENSEMBLE2: We’re not Europeans!

EMSEMBLE: We’re Americans!

(The Ensemble marches in place: “TAKE IT UP, two-three-four, etc.”)

ALEC: *(continues broadcasting)* European countries are falling to the Fascists like dominoes.

SHERWOOD: *(to Alfred)* If they see my play, they’ll get the message.

ALFRED: Then we shall take your play all over the U.S.

LYNN: And Canada!

ALFRED: ...and Canada!

ALEC:

YOU MAY BE PLEASED WITH ISOLATION –
BUT YOU ARE DOOMING OUR NATION –

LYNN:

SAVE EUROPE FIRST

ALFRED:

THEN YOU SAVE THE U.S.A.!
TAKE IT UP!

ALEC:

TAKE IT UP!

ALL3:

TAKE IT UP!

(The marching Ensemble divides into two groups. The smaller group represents those who've changed their minds - the protest signs are turned around to reveal slogans derived from some of the lyrics: "SAVE EUROPE THEN YOU SAVE THE U.S.A." But the majority of protesters, like the majority of Americans at the time, are against getting involved. The two groups continue yelling at one another.)

ENSEMBLE1: We don't need another World War!

ENSEMBLE2: It'll be on our doorstep soon!

ENSEMBLE3: My son died in the trenches!

ENSEMBLE1: Commies!

ENSEMBLE5: War Mongers!

ENSEMBLE4: You have to stop the war to make peace!

ENSEMBLE1: Not MY problem!

ENSEMBLE4: Yes it is!

ENSEMBLE: Stay out of it! Commies! War-Mongers! Etc.

LYNN: Oh, Alfred, I think we've done everything we can here. They need us in London.

ALFRED: I've been thinking the same thing. Bobby, we must take your play to London.

SHERWOOD: They're already at war. It's *America* we have to convince...

LYNN: But we *must* go and show our support. Open an anti-Fascist play right in the middle of London –

ALFRED: And do eight shows a week with the bombs falling all around us.

LYNN: It will give the people hope –

ALFRED: That's what we must offer them now – *hope*.

SHERWOOD: (*pause, then*) G-d bless you. When this is over they better pin medals on both of you.

(Sherwood shakes Alfred's hand, embraces Lynn and exits. Lynn begins to cry. There is a long pause as Alfred slowly approaches Lynn and takes her in his arms. Alec Woolcott enters.)

ALFRED: Alec – Linnie and I are going to London. You'll have to take over here in the U.S.

ALEC: G-d be with you! (*speaking into the microphone*) America you must hear my voice as you've never heard it before. England is being bombed on a nightly basis. Women and children are dying in the rubble. No building is being spared. Not even churches. The Nazis have taken over the entire Continent and it won't be long before they invade England .

ALEC:(sings)
 SO BEFORE THE BRITISH FLAG IS TRAMPLED ON THE
 GROUND –

LYNN:
 TAKE IT UP!

ALFRED:
 TAKE IT UP!

HALF OF THE ENSEMBLE:
 TAKE IT UP!

(The Ensemble is still divided - the anti-Nazi side unfurls the Union Jack of England.)

HALF OF THE ENSEMBLE:
 TAKE IT UP!
 TAKE IT UP!
 TAKE IT UP!

(The two sides of the Ensemble begin rioting, attacking each other's signs, flags, etc. They chase each other offstage.)

LYNN:(sings)
 I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE
 ANOTHER WAR –
 -THE LAST ONE SCORCHED THE WORLD -
 BUT A BRAND NEW SCOURGE FORCES FLAGS TO BE
 UNFURLED! TAKE IT UP!

(The Ensemble re-enters, now they're all carrying the Union Jack flag.)

THE ENSEMBLE:
 TAKE IT UP!
 TAKE IT UP!, etc.

(They march in place, singing “TAKE IT UP!” We hear bombs falling, first in the near distance – then getting closer and closer. Soon panic starts to show on the faces of the flag-bearers. The singing becomes more tenuous. One person runs offstage. Another drops the flag he/she is holding and runs offstage. The song is falling apart as the bombs get louder and the scenery begins to shake with each explosion. More and more of the company run away, until finally Lynn is standing on the stage alone, singing a cappella.)

LYNN:

TAKE IT UP!
TAKE IT UP!

(Standing alone, she picks up one of the fallen flags)

LYNN:

TAKE...IT...UP!

(Bombs continue to explode, the flats all shake, some violently. One flat suddenly starts to collapse and it looks as if it will fall right on Lynn who crumples in fright. Alfred runs on at the last moment and stops the flat from hitting Lynn – he pushes it back up to its standing position. The curtain slowly starts to fall.)

ALFRED:

STOP!

(The curtain stops its descent and Alfred rushes to hold Lynn in his arms. The music begins again.)

ALFRED:

AS LONG AS I’M BREATHING
NO CURTAIN WILL COME DOWN!
TAKE IT UP!

LYNN:

TAKE IT UP!

ALFRED & LYNN:

TAKE IT UP!

(The Curtain slowly starts to rise again.)

ALFRED & LYNN:
AS LONG AS WE'RE BREATHING
NO CURTAIN WILL COME DOWN!

ALL: *(including the offstage Ensemble)*
TAKE IT UP!
TAKE IT UP!
TAKE...IT...UP!!!

(The Curtain finishes rising as the Ensemble holds the final note. Suddenly there is complete silence. Alfred and Lynn look heavenward expecting another explosion but the bombing seems to have stopped.)

ALFRED: *(holding Lynn in his arms)* They'll remember...

LYNN:...they must.

(One last enormous bomb explodes. The Lunts hold each other close as the flats shake and now the orchestra explodes with one final dramatic chord.)

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

(LIGHTS UP. MAIN SET.)

(The Lunts' Livingroom from The Ten Chimneys Estate in Wisconsin - Fourteen Years Later. Lynn is sitting in a chair, sewing a dress. There are several piles of play manuscripts on tables, some half open, some half read, almost all of them rejected. Alfred, now with a lot of gray in his hair, enters wearing a frilly apron, holding a spoon hovering above a pot. He can barely contain his excitement as he goes up to Lynn.)

ALFRED: Darling, you must try this.

LYNN: Oh, Alfred, I've just had tea and I'm not hungry.

ALFRED: I know darling, but you must taste it and tell me what you think.

LYNN: If you like it, Alfred, then I'm sure it's delicious...

ALFRED: I only tasted it once. I can't have too much, you know that. My ulcer...

LYNN: What was that word the doctors used? - I can never remember it.

ALFRED: *Perforate*, dear. I mustn't *perforate* my ulcer.

LYNN: And what does it mean again?

ALFRED: It's getting cold...

LYNN: Your ulcer is getting cold?

ALFRED: No, not my ulcer darling, the sauce. It's getting cold, please try it.

LYNN: *(tasting it)* Mmm...perfection. As always. *(holds up the dress)* I'm sewing this for Vivien Leigh.

ALFRED: She's going to love it. I miss them. I need a big dose of Larry Olivier....and a very small dose of Vivien Leigh.

LYNN: *(sewing)* I know how you feel darling, but I adore her.

ALFRED: And I adores only two of her personalities. (*looks at his sauce, considers*) Oh....”perforate, shmerforate”. (*ignores his ulcer, takes a taste*) Mmmmm...perfection....I was hoping to serve this sauce over string beans but I just checked the garden and the damn things still aren't growing.

(*Alfred goes over to a pile of scripts and idly thumbs through the one on top.*)

ALFRED: Any luck with this pile?

LYNN: Yes, those are the scripts that have good roles for me.

ALFRED: And for me?

LYNN: (*points to another pile*) That pile.

ALFRED: But no pile for the both of us?

LYNN: Oh, there's a *pile* all right.

(*As ALFRED speaks, he goes around the room emptying ashtrays, fluffing pillow, etc.*)

ALFRED: I think this is the first time we've been unemployed since...since...1912. In our youth we both played old people and here we are as old people with nothing to play. Look at us. I'm 65 and you're...

LYNN: (*cutting him off*) ...60..

ALFRED: (*without a beat*)...60, and look what we've become: you're a seamstress and I'm trying to finish a goddamn cookbook. That's a lousy way to start the second act of our lives.

LYNN: (*sewing*) It's actually the *third* act, dear. First act is exposition, introduction of the characters, second act is all the rising drama - you know, the bombs falling around us. Now it's *the third act* – the conclusion. The denouement. And Act III is often tragic.

ALFRED: Have it your way. It's a lousy way to start a *third* act. And they certainly don't write three act plays like they used to.

(Lynn crosses to one of the piles and picks up a script – we hear the marching rhythm of the ACT I finale TAKE IT UP! – only now the the lyrics are quite different.)

TURN IT DOWN!

LYNN:

HERE'S A FAMILY DRAMA ALL ABOUT THE KITCHEN
SINK.

ALFRED:

TURN IT DOWN! –
TURN IT DOWN! –
TURN IT DOWN!

LYNN: *(picks up another script)*

AND HERE ARE ALL THE STRUGGLES OF A BOY ALL
DRESSED IN PINK –

ALFRED:

TURN IT DOWN!
TURN IT DOWN!
TURN IT DOWN!

LYNN: *(picks up another script)*

HERE'S A ROLE FOR YOU AS KING –

ALFRED:

BUT DOES THIS KING HAVE A QUEEN?

LYNN: *(drops it, picks up another script)*

THERE'S ALWAYS ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

ALFRED:

NO POINT IN DOING THAT PLAY.

LYNN:

BUT THERE'S DIALOGUE BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE –

ALFRED:
THERE'S NOTHING NEW IN IT TO SAY –

LYNN:
TURN IT DOWN?

ALFRED:
TURN IT DOWN!

LYNN:
TURN IT DOWN.

ALFRED:
DOING SOMETHING ISN'T BETTER THAN NOTHING –

LYNN:
THE PERFECT ROLES – WE HAVE NOT SEEN.

ALFRED:
THE PLAY'S THE THING –

LYNN:
IT'S THE ONLY THING.

ALFRED:
AND ON THAT – WE CAN AGREE.

LYNN:
THE CRITICS LOVE OUR ACTING BUT THEY HATE THE
PLAYS WE CHOOSE.

ALFRED:
WE SHOULD DO THE PLAYS WE *LIKE* – AFTER ALL
WE'VE PAID OUR DUES -

LYNN:
DO AN IBSEN PLAY THEY TELL US,
YOU SHOULD TRY IT.

ALFRED:

BUT I JUST DON'T THINK THE CUSTOMERS
WILL BUY IT.

LYNN:

OR EXPERIMENTAL PLAYS
OR THE THEATRE OF ABSURD THEATRE OF ABSURD,
THEATRE OF ABSURD...
OR REVIVALS OF THOSE GERMAN PLAYS

ALFRED: (*sung to the tune of "I HATE MEN"*)

AND I – HATE – BRECHT!
TO ME IT'S ALWAYS RHYMNED WITH DRECK!

LYNN:

WE SIMPLY HAVE TO FACE THE FACT –

ALFRED:

FOR US THERE IS NO SECOND ACT –
TURN IT DOWN

LYNN:

TURN IT DOWN.

BOTH:

TURN...IT...DOWN!

ALFRED:

WE SIMPLY HAVE TO FACE THE FACT –

LYNN:

FOR US THERE IS NO SECOND ACT –

ALFRED:

TURN IT DOWN

LYNN:

TURN IT DOWN.

BOTH:
TURN...IT...DOWN!

ALFRED: (*reads the letter attached to a script*) “Dear Alfred - Here is a new play that’s the perfect ‘vehicle’ for the Lunts...” I hate that term – ‘vehicle.’

LYNN: Yes – as if we were two Volkswagens.

ALFRED: Or just a couple of old trucks. They used to write such wonderful plays for us – especially Bobby Sherwood.

LYNN: (*pause*) I miss him.

ALFRED: (*looking at the ‘vehicle’*) Why is it that when someone writes a show for us these days it’s never a serious play? Is there something wrong with us?

LYNN: I don’t think there’s anything wrong with wanting to make people laugh.

ALFRED: I don’t either. But my god, if I have to listen one more time to someone say that we’re doing “light” comedies to avoid the great plays and the classics...

LYNN: They’re choosing not to remember all of the Shakespeare, Shaw and Chekhov that we did.

ALFRED: Ah – the Chekhov. Hardest thing we ever did. And we never got to the very bottom of all the complex meanings, unspoken emotions. The longer we rehearsed the more amazing things we found in it. It's all there but so delicate and elusive.

LYNN: We were getting there, but it didn’t help when that horrible little Uta Hagen quit the show. There are some things that are unforgivable – leaving in the middle of a tour is one of them.

ALFRED: She had to attend her own wedding!

LYNN: No excuse! (*picks up a play*) There's this one, of course. I haven't quite been able to get it out of my mind.

(*Alfred comes over and takes it out of her hands, idly thumbs it.*)

ALFRED: You mean *The Visit*? Yes, I read it again. I just don't think the audience will like it. (*tosses it aside*) I wish Noemie would hurry up and finish that damn musical. But there's no second act there either! Where is he?

LYNN: He was sunbathing in the nude and then he locked himself in the studio.

ALFRED: I certainly hope he's *writing*. That's why he's here.

LYNN: Do you think he'll be able to fix it?

ALFRED: I don't know. He's spent so much time in *Las Vegas* – I think he might be out of touch with the theatre...

LYNN: They love him in *Las Vegas*.

ALFRED: Yes, but they've turned him into a broken record, singing his greatest hits. Meanwhile the critics all say he's *passé*.

LYNN: He wrote a wonderful play for us and that was only a few years ago. It had roles that were perfect for both of us.

ALFRED: And the critics hated it!

LYNN: But they've hated everything that we've chosen to do for the last fourteen years– they've eviscerated *every* play.

ALFRED: ... even though we never played to an empty seat!

LYNN: Always accusing us of choosing material "beneath" us.

ALFRED: Well maybe Noemie has one more in him. As long as it isn't another *Point Valaine*...

(*Ominous musical sting*)

LYNN: Maybe we should look in on him see if he needs a cup of tea?

ALFRED: No, he'll be entering at any moment dressed only in a cigarette holder.

(And as if on cue, Noel enters, completely naked except for a cigarette holder.)

NOEL: A cigarette holder...*(puts a cigarette into the holder)* and a cigarette.

LYNN: Good afternoon, Noelie.

NOEL: Were you talking about me? My ears were burning.

ALFRED: You stayed so long by the pool it looks like you burned more than that.

LYNN: We were talking about the elusive pursuit of critical acclaim.

ALFRED: And we were wondering if you were able to work on the second act.

NOEL: Yes, and I understand why you may think those subjects are so intertwined. But I've ceased to care what the critics think of my work – it's never prevented me from writing.

ALFRED: But Noelie, darling, you were terribly hurt by the reviews ...

NOEL: But I managed to wipe my tears on the box office receipts and I was also delighted, Alfred, that you were finally given the Tony Award.

ALFRED: Noelie, you're our greatest collaborator.

NOEL: No, no, no. You said in print that Robert Sherwood was your greatest collaborator.

LYNN: And you said – in print – that Gertrude Lawrence was *your* greatest collaborator.

NOEL: Well – Sherwood and Gertie are both dead and collaboration is for the living. And the French.

ALFRED: And all of our collaborations have been great...except for *Point...*

NOEL: Don't say it...

LYNN: Oh, Noe!ie, I know this is difficult. *We're* difficult. I remember the last time we tried to do a musical with that vile composer, what was his name?

ALFRED: Weill. (*pronounced "vile" of course*)

LYNN: Yes he was, but what was his name?

ALFRED: Weill.

LYNN: Yes, I know but *what was his name?*

ALFRED: WEILL!

LYNN: All right, don't tell me.

ALFRED: His name was Weill! Kurt Weill!

NOEL: I can't compose like this. I'd better take off my birthday suit and put on my working clothes. (*He exits.*)

LYNN: I think you've hurt his feelings.

ALFRED: Oh, Lynn!ie, he has a thick skin. (*pause*) Though it's starting to sag a little bit in some places as you might have noticed.

(Quick change gag as Noel re-enters, dressed in a tux. He's holding the handwritten pages of the second act of the musical.)

ALFRED: (*referring to the pages*) Noe!ie! How exciting! Let's hear what you've got.

NOEL: (*looking at this notes, crossing to the piano, sits down and tinkles*) Act II begins with me sitting at the piano – this Steinway of yours that's never in tune. I'm narrating and I say, "When we last saw the Lunts they were standing on a stage with the bombs falling all around them in the middle of World War II. Well a lot has happened during the intermission –

NOEL: (cont'd) - or as we British like to call it, 'the interval' – about fourteen years have passed. And now it's the second act of their lives – and that's always the hardest act to write."

ALFRED: So you skipped how many years?

LYNN: (*continues to sew*) I think he said fourteen, dear.

ALFRED: That's an awful lot to skip over.

NOEL: Fourteen years but during that time you only did *four* plays.

ALFRED: But hundreds of performances – hundreds! And all the tours. You aren't going to mention the tours?

NOEL: We had the touring number during Act I – remember?
(*He recites the lyrics for Alfred, completely deadpan*) "Troupers on a train...?" (*pause*) "Troupers on a train...?" (*pause, then slowly and deliberately*) – "Troupers on a, troupers on a, troupers on a..."

LYNN: (*cuts him off*) Yes, of course we remember, Noelie. But that was about our tours in the 1930's and 1940's. What about our tours in the 1950's?

NOEL: *Another* touring song? That would break the first rule of show business –

ALL: Never follow a banjo act with a banjo act.

ALFRED: Continue – then what happens?

NOEL: Yes I mention *Long Day's Journey into Night* and other great plays like *Death of a Salesman*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Crucible*...and then I say "Theatre was changing forever – and it was leaving the Lunts behind."

(*A long pause – Alfred and Lynn look at one another*)

ALFRED: Well, I suppose that's true, isn't it Lynn?

LYNN: (*continues sewing*) Yes, I suppose it is.

(*pause*)

ALFRED: Let's not get all melancholy. Can we do some kind of comic musical number to break the mood? (*thinks, then.*) Making fun of "method" actors – that would be funny.

LYNN: Oh must we mention them?

ALFRED: Well it's really ironic - this so-called "method": "finding the inner truth of a character" – of course! It's what *we* 've been doing since the First World War. The only difference is that now when "method" actors do it you can't hear them on the stage.

(Alfred and Lynn begin overlapping each other, and Noel can't get a word in edgewise.)

LYNN: They're saying Lee Strasberg invented this "method" – they don't mention that he used to watch us do it when he was a bit player at the Theatre Guild. This so-called "method" has taken away their technical skills.

ALFRED: The method that leads to madness.

LYNN: You cannot find a method actor who can do Shakespeare – or Oscar Wilde. Or any kind of comedy for that matter.

NOEL: Are you two finished yet?

ALFRED: And when it comes to drama, they have to work themselves into a flood of tears, making themselves totally sick in the wings before they even come on.

LYNN: That's because they can't summon the emotion *on* the stage. We used to have a word for that:

ALFRED & LYNN: Amateurs.

LYNN: A good seasoned actor can call up a flow of tears like *that*, in two seconds, like turning on a tap.

NOEL: Enough! I'm not going to write a musical number about method actors. The less said about them, the better.

ALFRED: So then what happens in Act II? At this point we should have a number that is strictly for entertainment purposes.

NOEL: Here's the problem. If I *actually* write it, then we'll *actually* have to rehearse it and that means we'll *actually* have to open. And you know what *that* means.

LYNN: Oh no...

ALFRED: G-d help us...

ALL: Opening night!

OPENING NIGHT

(Note: Members of the chorus enter and act out the different characters that the trio refers to in the song.)

NOEL:

THE FLATS ARE FRESHLY PAINTED
AND IN PLACES THEY'RE STILL WET
SOME COSTUMES STILL HAVE PINNING
AND THE MONEY'S ALL BEEN SPENT
AS THE SEATS ALL FILL WITH BUTTOCKS
ALL THE ACTORS FILL WITH FRIGHT
WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

ALL:

OH WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

(Several Ensemble members enter, playing "critics" with notepads and pens.)

ALFRED:

AND THE CRITICS ALL ARE COMING
THEY'VE ALL SHARPENED UP THEIR KNIVES
AND EVERYONE IS THINKING
"IT'S THE END OF ALL OUR LIVES!"
THE CURTAIN SLOWLY RISES

ALFRED: *(cont'd)*

AND WE'RE BLINDED BY THE LIGHTS!
WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

ALL:
 YES WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

LYNN:
 IT WOULD ALL BE SO MUCH BETTER
 IF THEY'D ONLY WAIT A WEEK
 THEY WOULD SEE SUCH FINE PERFORMANCES

LYNN: *(cont'd)*
 THE SHOW IS AT ITS PEAK!
 THE BUTTERFLIES AND NERVES ARE GONE
 AND EVERYONE'S ALLRIGHT –
 WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

ALL:
 YES WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

(More members of the Ensemble enter, playing audience members, elaborately dressed for "opening night.")

NOEL:
 THE AUDIENCE JUST CHATTERS
 ALL ABOUT WHERE THEY'VE JUST BEEN (pronounced
 "bean")
 THEY HAVEN'T COME TO SEE THE PLAY
 BUT RATHER TO BE SEEN.
 AND THE CROWD HAS ALL BEEN DRINKING
 THEY'RE THE ONLY THING THAT'S "TIGHT"
 WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

ALL:
 OH WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

(More members of the Ensemble enter, playing the richest audience members, elaborately dressed for "opening night.")

ALFRED:
 AND THEY'RE DRESSED IN ALL THEIR FINEST
 IT'S A SEA OF JEWELS AND FUR
 THEY'RE NOT LOOKING AT THEIR PROGRAMS
 NO, THEY'RE SAYING "LOOK AT *HER*"

THEY CAN'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S OVER
 DRINK CHAMPAGNE AND GET A BITE
 WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

ALL:
 YES WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

(Two dancers from the Ensemble, dance in with trays holding cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and begin serving the "party" of audience members.)

LYNN:
 AND THEN THE AFTER PARTY
 AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE
 THE LAUGHS ARE FAR TOO HEARTY
 THEY'RE PRETENDING IT'S "SUCH FUN"
 APPLAUSE IS FAR TOO TEPID
 AND REMARKS ARE TOO POLITE –
 WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

ALL:
 YES WHY OH WHY MUST THERE BE AN OPENING NIGHT?

(The dancers with the trays lead the audience members offstage.)

NOEL:
 THE IRONY WE ALL CAN SEE,
 THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE.

ALFRED:
 YOU CAN'T KEEP HAVING PREVIEWS
 YOU HAVE TO START YOUR RUN –

LYNN:
 AN AIRPLANE'S JUST A TAXI
 IF IT NEVER TAKES A FLIGHT -

ALL:
 AND THAT'S WHY THERE MUST THERE BE AN OPENING
 NIGHT!
 AND THAT'S WHY THERE MUST...

NOEL:
 BE AN OPENING,

ALFRED:
 BE AN OPENING,

LYNN:
 BE AN OPENING,

ALL:
 OPENING, OPENING, OPENING,
 OPENING, OPENING, OPENING, NIGHT!

ALL: OPENING NIGHT!

NOEL: (*glum*) Perhaps that number would work if we were in a *nightclub*.

ALFRED: Since when do you have an aversion to nightclubs, Mr. *Vegas*?

NOEL: I won't write this if you insult me.

LYNN: Don't get angry, Noelie. You yourself said that the primary function of the theatre is to amuse.

ALFRED: I'm sorry, Noelie. You're our greatest *living* collaborator. We have complete faith in you.

NOEL: At least it was an excuse to get the ensemble back on stage.

ALFRED: Yes we shouldn't be paying them to sit backstage during the second act and play Yahtzee!

LYNN: Oh I love Yahtzee!

(*Lynn takes out a deck of cards and begins to set up a game of solitaire on the coffee table - pause – Noel stares down at the cards.*)

ALFRED: What is it, Noelie?

LYNN: Is something wrong, dear?

NOEL: I'm completely devoid of inspiration. I need material. I need...Perhaps I need to begin at the beginning.

ALFRED: What, Noe!ie?! Start over?!

LYNN: Oh, no, Noe!ie, you've already written the first act and it's wonderful.

NOEL: No, I mean start at the beginning as in *the two of you*. Tell me...tell me about your love story.

ALFRED: We did that in Act One.

LYNN: Yes, we showed them our first meeting and then how we got married...

NOEL: No, no, no. In between all that. Why don't you take me back in time to the moment just before you fell in love with each other.

ALFRED: Oh, but that will be out of order, Noe!ie. The audience will be confused.

NOEL: Give them more credit. They don't need to see things in a straight line.

LYNN: Noe!ie's right. That's what I said at the beginning of Act I. It's so *theatrical* this way,

ALFRED: Maybe we could start the play with Act II with us as old ...

LYNN: Middle-aged...

ALFRED: (*not missing a beat*)...middle-aged people, and move backward in time.

NOEL: That might work as a play but never as a musical.

(*They all pause, and think*)

NOEL: (*continues*) We have the scene when you first met but not when you *first fell in love*. Sex is naturally and always will be the fundamental root of good drama.

ALFRED: Well, we did fall in love during summer stock.

LYNN: And that's a wonderful place to fall in love. Those warm romantic nights...

ALFRED: As I recall it was blistering heat.

LYNN: That's true. They cut the season short because it was too hot for the audience.

ALFRED: Washington, D.C.

LYNN: So dreadfully humid.

(pause)

NOEL: And?

(pause)

ALFRED: And...what?

NOEL: Are you going to give me a weather report or tell me about when you fell in love?

ALFRED: Ah...yes. What were the plays we did that summer, Lynnie?

LYNN: Let's see...there was a play called *A Young Man's Fancy*....

NOEL: No, no, no! I don't want to hear about *the plays* you did. Can't you two talk about anything other than the theatre?!

ALFRED: Of course we can...

LYNN: Don't be silly.

(pause)

NOEL: *Well?*

(pause)

ALFRED: Well...what?

(pause - then they're off again)

LYNN: It wasn't a very good play.

ALFRED: No.

LYNN: About a boy who falls in love with a mannequin.

ALFRED: Very silly. Then the mannequin comes to life.

NOEL: Stop! Stop it *at once!*

(longer pause)

ALFRED: There were a few good laugh lines.

LYNN: Not many.

NOEL: I...give...up!

ALFRED: No, Noelle, don't be angry. I know we talk incessantly about the theatre. But the theatre is the *reason* we fell in love.

NOEL: So – what happened next? And I forbid you to discuss anything except each other.

ALFRED: *(trying to remember)* If memory serves...we talked about a million things.

LYNN: Kissing in a carriage while the horses carried us all through the city.

NOEL: Yes, that's it, keep going! *(he takes notes)*

ALFRED: Past the White House and the Capitol building –

LYNN: That you mistook for the White House -

ALFRED: (*chuckles*) I was just a boy from Milwaukee. What did I know?

LYNN: You were young but you certainly knew what it took to put on a good play –

ALFRED: I should have directed that year.

NOEL: Stop!!!

LYNN: (*realizing*) Oh, sorry, Noemie. There we go again.

ALFRED: Here's the thing, Noemie. The moment we fell in love...well, you're not going to like it.

NOEL: No?

LYNN: No. The moment we fell in love...we were running lines.

THAT'S YOUR CUE

(Noel brings them a pair of scripts – the old fashioned kind of "sides" that you would use in 1918. The intro vamp begins slowly. They don't sing. They stare at each other – the passion is palpable. The music stops. They are vaguely aware of this, glance down at the orchestra. Then the vamp begins again until Alfred sings:)

ALFRED:
THAT'S YOUR CUE.

LYNN: (*looks at her script*) Oh, sorry.

ALFRED:
IT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR LYNN, BEGIN AGAIN.

LYNN: (*spoken*) What's my line?

ALFRED:
I WISH I KNEW.

LYNN: *(looks at her script)*
I THINK IT'S YOUR LINE.

ALFRED: *(looks at HIS script)*
NO, IT'S NOT.

LYNN:
THAT WAS YOUR CUE.

ALFRED:
YOU KNOW I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LINES.

LYNN:
WELL I CAN'T EITHER.

ALFRED:
THAT'S FINE.

LYNN: *(touching her forehead)*
I GUESS IT'S JUST THE WEATHER –

ALFRED: *(offers his handkerchief)*
YES I SEEM TO HAVE A BLOCK –

LYNN:
TWICE AS HARD TO DO IN SUMMER -

ALFRED:
APROPOS. IT'S SUMMER STOCK.

(The music gets faster - they try to shake off their reverie get back to work on the lines.)

LYNN:
THAT'S YOUR CUE.

ALFRED: (*looks at script*) Are you sure?

LYNN:

WISH I WERE BUT NOW I'M NOT –

ALFRED: (*points at her script*)

THAT'S YOUR CUE.

LYNN:

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.

ALFRED:

SO FROM THE TOP –

LYNN:

WHAT WAS MY CUE?

ALFRED:

LET'S START ANEW.

LYNN:

I'M OVER-COME BY THE HEAT.

(*She feels faint, he catches her.*)

ALFRED:

YOU NEED SOME REST TAKE A SEAT -

LYNN:

THAT'S YOUR CUE TO COME AND KISS ME -

ALFRED: (*looks at his script*)

NO THAT'S NOT HERE IN THE PLAY.

LYNN:

SO YOUR CHARACTER WON'T KISS ME?

ALFRED:

OH – I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

(The music is very fast now - they sing in counterpoint as they try to follow the lines in their scripts.)

ALFRED: THAT'S YOUR CUE. I FEEL QUITE CERTAIN
LYNN: NO IT'S YOURS I AM QUITE SURE -

ALFRED: IT'S YOUR CUE.
LYNN: NO IT'S ON YOU.

ALFRED: OH NO IT'S NOT -
LYNN: TO COME AND KISS ME -

ALFRED: OH I SEE - YES I FORGOT -
LYNN: THAT WAS YOUR CUE.

ALFRED:
I JUST KEEP MISSING -
THE CLUES -

(They toss aside their scripts, embrace.)

LYNN: WE SHOULD TRY TO JUST IM-PRO-UISE -
ALFRED: STOP THE TALK AND START THE ACTION -

LYNN: YOU KNOW THAT LINE SHOULD BE MINE -
ALFRED: IN THE SCRIPT THERE IS NO PASSION -

ALFRED:
THE SHOW WILL SOON BE OPEN

LYNN:
WE SHOULD TRY TO MEMORIZE -

ALFRED:
BUT I'D RATHER KISS YOUR LIPS

LYNN:
AND LOOK DEEP INTO YOUR EYES.

(They kiss - the song slows down again.)

ALFRED:
REHEARSAL'S THROUGH.

LYNN:
IT LOOKS LIKE I'M IN LOVE.

ALFRED:
AND SO NOW – WHAT SHOULD I DO?

LYNN:
YOU SAY YOUR LINE –
THAT YOU'RE IN LOVE –

ALFRED:
OH I SEE – I LOVE YOU TOO.
THAT WAS MY CUE.

LYNN:
WILL THIS LAST THE WHOLE SUMMER LONG?

ALFRED:
LET'S TRY TO FINISH THIS SONG –

LYNN:
WHEN THE SUMMER'S OVER,
I GUESS WE'LL BOTH TAKE STOCK.

ALFRED:
YES, WHEN THE SUMMER'S OVER,

BOTH:
APROPPOS, IT'S SUMMER STOCK.

LYNN:
BUT FOR NOW –

ALFRED:
I LOVE YOU –

LYNN:
I LOVE YOU, TOO.

BOTH:
THAT'S OUR CUE.

NOEL: So...that's all there is to the two of you. Scratch the surface and you find more surface.

ALFRED: Oh, Noelie...that's so unkind...

LYNN: It's just the writer's block talking, Alfred. He didn't mean it.

NOEL: Yes, I did, Lynn darling. I love you both dearly. Dearly. But it seems to me at this very moment that you are positively inhuman. Nothing exists for you outside of a proscenium arch.

LYNN: Don't be silly, Noelie, we've done shows in the round...

(Noel screams in frustration)

ALFRED: Well what would you like us to do? Pretend to be what we're not?

NOEL: No! No more pretending! Surely there must be some emotion deep down causing immense torture as it claws to try and get out - something that would be just *a little bit* dramatic?!

(A pause - Alfred looks at Lynn who shrugs.)

NOEL: While you've been touring in fluff over the last fourteen years, look at the great plays that have opened on Broadway: *Death of a Salesman*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Crucible*...

LYNN: We were never offered any of those plays...

NOEL: ...*Long Day's Journey Into Night*...

LYNN: Eugene O'Neill finally wrote a great play.

ALFRED: Yes, he was never able to write a good play, just one great one.

LYNN: And he never lived to see it produced. Thank goodness he couldn't come back from the dead and ruin it. I would never have turned down *Long Day's Journey Into Night* –

ALFRED: Neither would I. And if Arthur Miller had asked, I would *never* have turned down *Death of a Salesman*...

NOEL: You're missing the point - I mention these plays because they all have deeply complicated characters - a mix of good and bad, heroic and tragic...

ALFRED: Are you saying, Noel, that I don't have the depth to play Willy Loman?!

NOEL: No! I'm trying to say that you don't have the depth to play Alfred Lunt!

ALFRED: (*ignoring him, still talking about Willy Loman*) Of course I would have loved to play Willy Loman. But no one asked....(*and very sadly he repeats:*)...no one asked....

(*LIGHTS DOWN and SPOTLIGHT UP on ALFRED as Noel brings him two "sample" cases. As Alfred speaks, Noel helps Alfred on with an overcoat and a hat and gives him the sample cases. The music begins playing.*)

IT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY

ALFRED: (*to NOEL*) Thank you. (*NOEL exits.*) How I would have loved to play that part - A modern King Lear – only he never lost a kingdom – never had one....

ALFRED: (*sings*)

BUT HE STILL WENT MAD
 - ABOUT TO LOSE
 THE LITTLE HE HAD.
 HE ENTERS, THERE'S A PAUSE
 HIS HANDS AND FEET ARE SORE,
 HIS SHOES ARE BRIGHTLY POLISHED,
 THOUGH THEY DON'T FIT ANYMORE
 THE SHADOWS HIDE HIS HOME,

ALFRED: (*cont'd*)

IN THE GARDEN, NOTHING'S GROWN –
BUT IT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY,
IT'S NOT HELL IT'S JUST PURGATORY,
AND ALL HE ASKS IN THE END,
(HIS REQUEST IS SO POLITE)
ALL HE ASKS IN THE END:
JUST TO BE WELL-LIKED.
THE ACTOR EXITS AT THE END,
SOAKED WITH SWEAT FROM HEAD TO TOE.
IT WAS JUST A MATINEE,
SO ANOTHER SHOW TO GO.
ONCE MORE THROUGH THE PLAY –
THE AUDIENCE HAS PAID.
BUT IT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY,
IT'S NOT HELL IT'S JUST PURGATORY,
AND ALL HE ASKS IN THE END,
(HIS REQUEST IS SO POLITE)
ALL HE ASKS IN THE END:
JUST TO BE WELL-LIKED.
IS THIS THE FINAL CURTAIN?
YOU NEVER CAN BE CERTAIN.
YOU MIGHT NOT BE THROUGH –
THIS MIGHT JUST BE A TEST –
COULD THERE STILL BE HOPE? –
OR IS IT HOPELESS?
THE ACTOR HEARS A VOICE,
LINES FROM PLAYS GONE PAST,
THEY STAY WITH HIM FOREVER,

ALFRED: *(cont'd)*

THEY'RE THE ONLY THINGS THAT LAST.
 HAVE I STARTED? AM I DONE?
 IN THE END IT'S ALL JUST ONE -
 THAT'S WHAT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY,
 IT'S NOT HELL IT'S JUST PURGATORY,
 AND ALL HE ASKS IN THE END,
 (HIS REQUEST IS SO POLITE)
 AND ALL HE ASKS IN THE END:
 JUST TO BE WELL-LIKED.

(Lynn comes into Alfred's spotlight, wearing a simple black dress. She puts her arm through his and they strike a tableau as Willy and Linda Loman. The spotlights slowly fade to black.)

(The lights come up and The Lunts haven't moved. Noel crosses over and puts his arm around Alfred.)

NOEL: I take it back. What I said. I'm sorry, Alfred. I was very moved that you revealed that to me. Of course you have pain - we all do. I'm so sorry I suggested otherwise.

ALFRED: What?

NOEL: Your deep sorrow - thank you for sharing it with me. You've come so very far, over so many years. And now to be ignored. I never knew how sad you were about that.

ALFRED: I don't know what you're talking about.

NOEL: *(flustered)* But...in the song...

ALFRED: Oh that. I was just acting!

NOEL: Ahhhhhh!

(Noel throws himself down on a nearby couch, about to lose his mind.)

ALFRED: I was just trying to prove that I could have played Willy Loman!

LYNN: (*referring to her costume*) And I could have played Linda even though I would have hated wearing this awful black dress.

NOEL: I can't do it! I can't write a play about either of you! You don't seem to exist!

(Lynn crosses to the sofa and sits near Noel's feet.)

ALFRED: (*angry*) Well, if you'll excuse me, this non-existent person must go out and check on his non-existent string beans.

(Lynn waits to make sure Alfred is gone, then says quietly to Noel:)

LYNN: It's true what he said about that song - he *was* acting.

(Noel rolls over and screams into a pillow on the sofa. Lynn reaches out to touch his back and like a child he flinches away and screams louder.)

LYNN: He was acting, Noe*lie*. But he wasn't lying.

*(Noel stops screaming and slowly takes his head out of the pillow. Lynn gets off the couch and goes to pick up the discarded manuscript of *The Visit*.)*

LYNN: (*cont'd*) It's why he doesn't want to do this play -*The Visit*. It's a magnificent play but the main characters are a bitch and a bastard and he doesn't want us to be remembered that way.

NOEL: "Remembered"? Good lord, are you saying that one of you is...is...sick?

LYNN: Oh, no, no, no nothing like that. But I think we only have one more play in us - even if we live for another twenty years afterward - the next one will be the last.

NOEL: So let's make it a great one, Lynn*ie*. Let me write the truth about the two of you...

LYNN: What Alfred just revealed to you - he would never let that get on stage.

NOEL: But why not?!

LYNN: It's just too....too personal. Just stick to the catchy tunes and the witty lines like in Act One.

NOEL: But there's no second act! And the biggest problem is that all the characters from the first act are dead.

LYNN: (*pause, then:*) Not all of them, surely?

NOEL: Think about it.

LYNN: Well, there's poor Bobby Sherwood.

NOEL: Dead.

LYNN: Mrs. Rounds...and of course Alfred's mother.

NOEL: Dead and dead.

LYNN: Loretta Taylor.

NOEL: Dead. My darling Gertrude Lawrence, dead. Your darling Alec Woolcott, dead.

LYNN: (*realizing*) And Sydney Greenstreet –

NOEL: Dead.

LYNN: Irving Thalberg –

NOEL: Extremely dead.

LYNN: The founders of the Theatre Guild?

NOEL: Dead, dead and dead.

LYNN: Helen Hayes is still alive. And Lee Strasberg.

NOEL: (*deadpan; sarcastic*) Yes, *that* would make an interesting duet.

(*Nervously Lynn begins to play solitaire.*)

NOEL: (continues) Oh, my darling. I see that this conversation has upset you a great deal.

LYNN: I'm just thinking about - Alfred.

NOEL: What about him?

LYNN: I'm going to tell you something, Noelle. You asked if there was anything deep down clawing to get out.

NOEL: (*grabbing his pen and paper*) Yes!

LYNN: But after I've told you, you must forget all about it. And you must *not* put it into a song. I must have your promise.

NOEL: But Linnie...

LYNN: Promise me.

NOEL: (*reluctantly puts down the pen*) Very well.

LYNN: I always think of this when Alfred isn't in the room. Mostly when he's gone to bed and I'm sitting here at this table. It's so strange when he's asleep - and I'm awake.

SOLITAIRE

LYNN:

LONG AGO WE BECAME ONE PERSON –
 OUR FORMER SELVES DISAPPEARED –
 YOU CAN'T BECOME *TWO* PEOPLE AGAIN -
 NOT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.
 EVEN WHEN I PLAY SOLITAIRE, I KNOW HE'S
 SOMEWHERE AT HOME.

LYNN: (cont'd)

HOW CAN I PLAY SOLITAIRE –
 WHEN I AM TRULY ALONE?
 I'LL CALL HIS NAME AND SAY "ALFRED" –
 BUT HE WON'T RESPOND.
 I'LL RAISE MY VOICE AND CALL "ALFRED" –
 BUT ALAS, HE'LL BE GONE.
 YOU KNOW THAT I LIKE SOLITAIRE –
 BUT ONLY WHEN HE'S AT HOME.
 I'LL NEVER PLAY SOLITAIRE –
 WHEN AT LAST I'M ALL ALONE.
 NO – I WON'T PLAY SOLITAIRE –
 WHEN AT LAST I'M TRULY ALONE.

(Noel puts his arm around her and she rests her head on his shoulder.)

(Alfred enters. He's been out in the garden and so he's wearing dirty overalls and muddy boots.)

ALFRED: It just occurred to me what's wrong with the second act. Everyone from the first act is dead.

LYNN: Yes, Alfred, we covered all that while you were off stage. It seems that we're no longer a part of this world - it's been overtaken by method actors, rock 'n' roll, and television.

ALFRED: We've only done one television show and we shall *never* do another. My performance was revolting.

LYNN: No, darling you were wonderful. I was the one who was terrible.

NOEL: Oh, not again!

ALFRED: When I saw myself in that broadcast it made me wonder how I ever made it as an actor.

LYNN: No, it's *my* dreadful acting that is forever preserved on tape.

ALFRED: If you have a bad show in the theatre, there's always a chance to make it better. But videotape is *forever*.

NOEL: Say what you like about television, but do you ninnyes realize that more people saw you in that broadcast than *everyone* who had ever seen you on the stage – *combined*?

(*Alfred and Lynn pause – think about this – then moan in unison.*)

ALFRED: Thank you, Noelle, you've managed to make us feel *worse*.

NOEL: Anyway, it was television and television is *supposed* to be bad.

ALFRED: I think I've just figured out what the *real* problem is, Noelle. It's like the problem you had with *Point Valaine* –
(*Ominous musical sting.*)

ALFRED: Our characters aren't sympathetic enough.

LYNN: I think he's right, Noelle. In the first act we fell in love and beat incredible odds to finally get married –

ALFRED: And beat incredible odds to put on great shows.

LYNN: No thanks to the Theatre Guild!

ALFRED: We introduced small town America to the joys of live theatre.

LYNN: We joined the war effort.

ALFRED: And I think we made a difference – at least I hope we did.

LYNN: And almost died trying!

NOEL: Must we do a re-cap of all that exposition?

ALFRED: And now in the second act – we're just a couple of old –

LYNN: Middle-aged –

ALFRED: ...middle-aged actors who can do nothing but complain.

NOEL: But it's who you *are* – you're playing *yourselves*.

ALFRED: I'm sure I'll be awful playing Alfred Lunt.

LYNN: You'll find your green umbrella – you always do.

ALFRED: I could never find my way into *this* role!

LYNN: So, darling, what you're saying is that you could never find your way into your...self. (*she laughs mockingly*)

ALFRED: Don't you dare laugh at me.

NOEL: Bicker, bicker, bicker. It becomes insufferable when you two aren't in a show.

ALFRED: Sometimes it's even worse when we're in a show.

LYNN: What did you mean by that?

ALFRED: "Get out of my light, get out of my light!" If I have to hear you say that one more time...

LYNN: Why don't you just *get out of my light* and I'll never say it again!

NOEL: The main event! The battling Lunts!

ALFRED: And those damn gowns of yours – always tripping on your train.

LYNN: I only trip when YOU stand on it!

ALFRED: I can't take it anymore. I wish I could just retire and live the rest of my life simply known as "Old Farmer Lunt."

NOEL: That sounds like a song cue to me - (*The ensemble enters dressed in farming clothes – overalls, boots, straw hats, etc.*) What the bloody hell?!

OLD FARMER LUNT

ENSEMBLE:

IF YOUR CORNFIELD HAS A BLIGHT
IF YOU LITTER HAS A RUNT –
IT'S OKAY, HE'S ON HIS WAY,
HE'S OLD FARMER LUNT!

ALFRED:

UP IN THE MORNIN' AT FIVE A.M.
GONNA FIX A FENCE OR TWO –
GONNA MILK SOME COWS THEN
GRAB MY PLOW -

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S OLD FARMER LU-LU-LU-LUNT

ALFRED:

WELL I HAVE MORE HENS THAN I COUNT
I CAN GIVE AWAY EGGS FOR FREE –

(Picks up a rifle)

I CAN SHOOT THE CHIPMUNKS WITH MY GUN –
HOW I LOVE JUST BEING ME!

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S OLD FARMER.....

LYNN:

STOP!

THERE WILL BE NO SHOTS AT CHIPMUNKS –
YOU WILL PUT AWAY THAT GUN!

ALFRED:

BUT THEY'RE EATING HALF MY GARDEN –
YOU SHOULD LET ME HAVE SOME FUN –

LYNN: *(sits and resumes sewing while she sings)*

JUST LIKE THE SQUIRRELS I'LL MAKE THEM PETS -
THEY'LL BE EATING FROM MY HAND -

ALFRED:

BUT THEY'LL EAT MY LETTUCE AND MY GREENS -
LYNN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND -

ENSEMBLE:

YES THEY'LL EAT HIS GREENS AND LETTUCE -

ALFRED: *(to Lynn)* Listen to them!

ENSEMBLE:

CHOMP, CHOMP, CHOMP, CHOMP, etc.
THE EGGPLANT AND CUCUMBERS -
THE POTATOES, SQUASH AND KALE
HEY WE NEED A SQUARE DANCE NUMBER -

ALFRED:

EVERY FEMALE GRAB A MALE!

(A SQUARE DANCE ensues, with Alfred "calling out" names of vegetables as if calling out dance moves.)

ALFRED:

PLANT YOUR TURNIPS AND YOUR BEETS

ENSEMBLE:

YOUR TOMATOES AND YOUR CORN -

ALFRED:

ASPARAGUS AND CARROTS SWEET -

ENSEMBLE:

AND THE OKRA AND MUCH MORE -

ALFRED:

CAULIFLOWER, NO STRING BEANS -

ENSEMBLE:

NO STRING BEANS, WHY NOT?

LYNN:(yells) Because he can't figure out how to grow string beans!

ALFRED: Damn you for bringing that up!

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S OLD FARMER LUNT!

HE'S OLD FARMER LUNT!

HE'S OLD FARMER LUNT!

(Square dancing continues)

PETUNIAS AND PEPPERS AND PARSLEY AND DILL

COMING UP AT THE SAME TIME.

ALFRED:

YES THAT IS WHAT I REALLY WANT –

I WANT TO HAVE MORE THYME!

HOW I LOVE TO ESCAPE FROM BROADWAY

AND RETURN TO MY BUTTER CHURN –

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS AND ALL THOSE

TOURS -

IT'S RETIREMENT THAT I'VE *EARNED* –

LYNN: *(sewing)*

YOU NEED REJUVINATION –

YOU'RE NOT READY TO RETIRE –

ALFRED:

JUST POINT ME TO A FIELD OF WEEDS

AND I'M SUDDENLY ON FIRE!

ENSEMBLE:

ON FIRE!

LYNN:

BUT IN THE FALL YOU'LL WANT TO LEAVE
AND TROD THE BOARDS A-GAIN –

ALFRED:

THIS TIME, DEAR, IF I DON'T STAY –
I WILL SURELY GO IN-SANE.

ENSEMBLE:

HE'S OLD FARMER LUNT!
HE'S OLD FARMER LUNT!
HE'S OLD, OLD, OLD , OLD -

LYNN: (spoken) I'm middle aged -

ENSEMBLE:

OLD...FARMER....LU-LU-LU-LUNT!

(Dance ends. Alfred collapses onto the sofa next to Lynn. The Ensemble exits. Noel slowly places a cigarette in his cigarette holder and lights it.)

NOEL: *(deadpan)* Well...that was a lot of fun.

LYNN: Rather silly.

ALFRED: At least we got the ensemble back on stage.

NOEL: While you were enjoying your little revival of Oklahoma!, I was trying to think.

LYNN: And?

NOEL: I'm afraid I *do* have writer's bloc. And you know there's only one way for me to overcome that.

ALFRED: Another trip to Jamaica?

NOEL: No, another trip around the world.

LYNN: It's that bad?

NOEL: I'm afraid so. That hillbilly number really did me in.

ALFRED: Then you should just go off on your cruise, Noelle, and I will stay here, and bake bread – and paint murals on the walls – and watch Lynn sew. There's nothing I'd like more right now than to spend a week picking fabrics and watch her reupholster the livingroom.

NOEL: Good lord, did you really just say that?

LYNN: I would love to do that, too, Alfred, but the summer's almost over and it's time to get back to work....on *stage* in a *play*.

NOEL: I want to write that play - I've written half of it and I'm going to finish it. But neither one of you is helping me one bit. I'm going to give you both just one more chance. Tell me something about yourselves you've never told anyone. Something you'd never tell your best friends - something that you must keep from your worst enemies.

LYNN: Why? So you can put it into a song and put it on stage?!

NOEL: The only things you seem to care about are the theatre, food and each other. And if you could find a way to live without eating and without each other I know you'd still be very happy. Isn't there something - anything - a deep emotion of some kind? Regret?

ALFRED: What is there to regret?

NOEL: Everyone has regret of some kind. Surely the two of you - who gave up everything - everything - while you did eight shows a week for forty years. You never had a chance to experience life like others - no home life...

ALFRED: What do you call this?!

NOEL: This is just a place to rest and try to grow string beans between theatre tours. It's nothing more than a summer house.

(A long pause.)

LYNN: (*pause*) We also come here at Christmas....

NOEL: Not the point, not the point!! You never had a family other than each other -

ALFRED: You're our family, Noelle...

NOEL: I mean children! Two people who love each other as much as you are supposed to have children. You gave up that chance for what? For *the theatre*? Didn't you ever want to have children?!

(A long pause. Alfred and Lynn look at one another. Then hold hands, looking quite sad. Noel's words have gotten to them. Alfred tries to break the mood and change the subject.)

ALFRED: Noelle, *please* finish Act Two. Otherwise we'll have no play to do in the fall.

NOEL: I can't.

LYNN: (*picks up the manuscript*) Then we must do *The Visit*.

ALFRED: (*pause*) We already rejected that.

LYNN: I haven't been able to get it out of mind. And you haven't either.

ALFRED: Yes...that's very true. But we discussed this at length - the audience won't like it.

LYNN: Why?

ALFRED: It's like Point Valaine.

(Musical sting.)

NOEL: (*crosses down to the orchestra*) That's the last one you get. One more and I'm off to Jamaica.

LYNN: Think about it, Alfred. The play is wonderful – equal parts for you and me – and beautifully structured, filled with all kinds of interesting supporting characters.

ALFRED: But...

(Music under.)

LYNN: But...what?

ALFRED: But...we'll be playing a bitch and a bastard.

LYNN: *(agreeing)* A bastard and a bitch.

ALFRED: *Who* would want to see *that*?

TURN IT DOWN *(reprise)*

ENSEMBLE *(offstage)*:

A BITCH AND A BASTARD –
A BASTARD AND A BITCH -

ALFRED:

TURN IT DOWN! –

LYNN:

TURN IT DOWN?

BOTH:

TURN IT DOWN!

ENSEMBLE: *(off)*

HE'S JUST A MONSTER AND SHE'S AN EVIL WITCH -

ALFRED:

TURN IT DOWN!

LYNN:

TURN IT DOWN?

BOTH:

TURN IT DOWN!

ALFRED:

DOING SOMETHING ISN'T BETTER THAN NOTHING –

LYNN:

SHOULD WE DO THIS? WHO CAN SAY?

ALFRED:

THIS PLAY IS JUST SO AWFUL –
AND I MEAN THAT IN THE NICEST WAY.

NOEL:

I CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING –
YOU NO LONGER HAVE TO CHOOSE-
DO *THE VISIT* I IMPLORE YOU –
ONCE AGAIN – YOU’VE FOUND YOUR MUSE.

ALFRED:

BUT NOELIE –
I’M NOT CERTAIN –
I SIMPLY CAN’T DECIDE -

NOEL:

I’LL BE THERE – WHEN THEY RAISE THE CURTAIN –
IN FRONT ROW CENTER – OR ON THE AISLE -

ALFRED: (*looking at the pages Noel has written*)

BUT NOELIE – I FEEL SO ROTTEN –
YOU’VE DONE SO MUCH WORK

NOEL:

OH MY DARLINGS – I’M HAPPY FOR YOU – BELIEVE ME - I
WON’T BE HURT –

(*takes the pages and tears them up*)

TURN ME DOWN. TURN ME DOWN....
TURN....ME....DOWN.

NOEL: I was mad to think that I could write a believable ending for the two of you when you seem to be writing it yourselves. So – I’m off for a long holiday but I’ll be there on opening, opening, opening, opening opening opening night.

ALFRED: You’re our dearest friend.

LYNN: We love you dearly.

NOEL: And I you.

ALFRED: Will you stay for dinner?

NOEL: You're a fantastic cook, Alfred, but I'm still suffering from the violent wind explosions you gave me from the last meal.

(Group hug)

LYNN: Goodbye, Noemie. Bon Voyage.

ALFRED: Yes, Bon Voyage.

(He exits.)

ALFRED: We're idiots to let him go! He was so close to being finished!

(Long pause.)

LYNN: Was it worth it Alfred? To leave nothing behind of real importance...like a child?

ALFRED: By now perhaps we'd even have a *grandchild*.

LYNN: And perhaps he'd call us "nana" and "papa". And one day he would tell *his* children about us.

ALFRED: I'm afraid, Lynn. I'm so afraid that years from now, there will be no one who will recall that we even existed.

LYNN: *(trying to convince herself)* I don't think that's possible, Alfred. All those books and magazines they've written about us.

ALFRED: Yes, accompanied by a lot of still photos. And what can you get from a still photograph – other than...stillness?

LYNN: *(holding The Visit script)* We must think of the present, Alfred. We simply must do what we've always done - move on to the next project.

ALFRED: Or...we can just retire. *I* can retire, anyway. And you'll be free to do any role you'd like.

LYNN: I won't go on stage without you, Alfred. I won't. Ever. So you can just stop that nonsense.

ALFRED: What does it matter? Any of it?

LYNN: Now you're being maudlin.

ALFRED: There's something my mother used to sing, do you remember?...when she wanted to get her way.

LYNN: Which, as I recall, was all the time.

ALFRED: How did it go?

ENSEMBLE (*offstage*):

E-PHEMERAL.

ALFRED: (*to the Ensemble*) Thank you.

ENSEMBLE (*offstage, the same notes as "Ephemeral"*):

YOU'RE WELCOME.

LYNN: We've devoted our lives to ephemera, darling. We made that bargain a long time ago. (*She exits.*)

ALFRED: (*picks up The Visit script, calls off to Lynn*) I'm sorry, but I think that I *must* retire, Lynn. I simply can't do *The Visit*.

LYNN: (*she's offstage but she's psychic*) Then why do you keep picking up that damn script?

ALFRED: How did you know that I...never mind. (*slowly turns some pages*) Part of me wants to do it. The rest of me doesn't think I should.

LYNN: (*off*) I want to do it, Alfred. I really do.

ALFRED: Then let's do it.

LYNN: (*off*) But not for *me*. We've always been good about that with each other – we've *never* done a play unless we were *both* in love with it.

ALFRED: Maybe I'll just direct this time.

(*Lynn enters – she's wearing a beautiful sequined gown. She sparkles everywhere including the jewelry on her neck and ears. Alfred almost gasps.*)

LYNN: No, Alfred. I will only be as great as the man who shares the light.

(*BLACKOUT except for a spotlight on Alfred & Lynn*)

ALFRED: Oh, Lynn. Are you seducing me?

LYNN: Perhaps.

(*Intro music to "IS IT LOVELY?"*)

LYNN: (*cont'd*) I love when we do it on stage.

ALFRED: *(taken aback)* What are you talking about? We've only done it backstage!

LYNN: I meant the lighting.

ALFRED: Oh, the lighting. What was I thinking?

LYNN: We all know what you were thinking.

(She crosses to another part of the stage, the spotlight follows her, leaving Alfred in the dark - she holds out her hand and sings:)

LYNN:

WON'T YOU JOIN ME IN A POOL OF LIGHT?

ALFRED:

YOU KNOW I LIVE FOR THAT.

LYNN:

I'LL ONLY WALK THROUGH A POOL OF LIGHT -
IF YOU'RE WITH ME IN IT –

LYNN:

IS IT LOVELY?

ALFRED:

YES, IT IS.

LYNN:

ARE YOU SURE?

ALFRED:

OH, YES....

LYNN:

THEN TELL ME –
WHAT ABOUT THIS?

(Lynn crosses in the dark to another part of the stage where a second pool of light comes up. Alfred takes her place in the first pool of light.)

LYNN:

IS IT LOVELY?

ALFRED:

YES, IT IS...

LYNN:

ARE YOU SURE?

ALFRED:

OH YES....

LYNN:

THEN TELL ME –

WHAT ABOUT THIS?

(Lynn crosses through the dark into a third pool of light which fades up revealing members of the Ensemble dressed like the Italian peasants in The Visit. They slowly withdraw into the dark. As Alfred enters the second pool of light, we hear the intro music to “EPHEMERAL.”)

ALFRED:

A POOL OF LIGHT -

THE WORDS ARE SAID -

NOTHING LEFT -

ALL THE MOMENTS -

DISAPPEAR -

IN THE DARK.

AND ALL THE PARTS WE PLAY

ARE ONLY MEM’RIES THAT FADE

E-PHEMEREL, E-PHEMEREL

IT’S THE SADDEST WORD I KNOW -

OH WHERE DID EVERYTHING GO?

MY DEAR, WE CAN’T PRETEND -

THIS, TOO, WILL HAVE AN END.

E-PHEMERAL, E-PHEMERAL

LYNN: (*undeterred*) Focus, Alfred! (*sings:*)

IS IT LOVELY?

(*Alfred walks into Lynn's pool of light. Takes her hands.*)

ALFRED: Yes, you're lovely.

LYNN: No, the lighting, Alfred dear.

ALFRED: (*calls up to the catwalk*) We could use a pink gel! –

(*The pool of light suddenly has more color*)

LYNN:

IS IT LOVELY?

ALFRED:

YES, IT IS...

LYNN:

ARE YOU SURE?

ALFRED:

OH YES....

LYNN:

MY DEAR, I WON'T PRETEND -

I KNOW THIS TOO MUST END -

ALFRED:

EPHEMERAL -

LYNN:

EPHEMERAL....

(*The song ends.*)

LYNN: (*spoken*) We have a good play. And we have the lighting. Most importantly - we still have each other. And no matter what you decide, I couldn't possibly love you more than I do at this very moment.

(*Overcome with emotion, Alfred embraces Lynn - after a few moments, Alfred says:*)

ALFRED: A bitch and a bastard...

LYNN: ...a bastard and a bitch...

ALFRED: And maybe *that's* how we'll be remembered.

LYNN: (*smiles and touches his cheek*) Oh, Alfred. What does it matter, really, if we're remembered at all?

(*BLACKOUT.*)

(*Lights fade up to reveal the Ensemble, dressed like villagers from The Visit.*)

IF MEM'RY SERVES/A GREEN UMBRELLA

ENSEMBLE:

WHEN WE ARE ALL GONE -
WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND?
THE WORLD JUST GOES ON -
ONLY TRACES THEY'LL FIND -

(*The Ensemble parts, revealing Alfred and Lynn, now dressed as their characters from The Visit. Alfred wears a tattered hat and coat, and Lynn has a fur hat with a matching stole and she walks with an elegant cane.*)

ALFRED:

OF THE HEARTBREAKS WE KNEW
THEY'RE NO LONGER THERE.

LYNN:

NO ME AND NO YOU
AND NO ONE TO CARE.

ALL :

WE ALL PRAY TO BE REMEMBERED
MEM'RY SERVES BUT SOON RUNS AWAY.
MEM'RY IS THE GREAT PRETENDER
HARD TO FIND GOOD SERVANTS THESE DAYS.

ALFRED:

OLD STORIES IN WORN OUT BOOKS

LYNN:
 OLD CAPTIONS ON PHOTOS THEY TOOK -

ALFRED:
 AND NO ONE LEFT WHO CAN SHED A SMALL TEAR

LYNN:
 SO - WHILE - YOU'RE - HERE -

ALL:
 YOU MUST FIND YOUR GREEN UMBRELLA
 A LIGHT GOING ON IN YOUR EYES -
 YOU MUST FIND A GREEN UMBRELLA
 A RAY THROUGH THE CLOUDS IN THE SKIES -

ALL:
 YOUNG ACTORS WHO LOVED THEIR WORK -
 OLD ACTORS WHO GAVE UP THEIR YOUTH

ALFRED & LYNN:
 AND LOST ACTORS WHO LIVED FOR ONLY ONE THING:

ALL:
 THEY/WE ONLY LIVED FOR THE TRUTH.

(She raises her cane in the air and it becomes a green umbrella which she unfurls.)

(BLACKOUT, except for Noel at the piano who plays "Ephemeral".)

NOEL: No it's not quite over yet. There's a brief epilogue. On May 5th, 1958, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne opened to rave reviews and sold-out houses in *The Visit* - at The Lunt-Fontanne *theatre*. It's still there – to this very day, on West 46th Street. Millions walk by that marquee every year - and even if they bother to glance up at the name - they probably just keep on walking. *(pause)* In any event – let's get back to:

(sings and plays)
 OPENING, OPENING, OPENING, OPENING, OPENING,
 OPENING – NIGHT!

(BLACKOUT on Noel. Lights up on the main set, now representing a hotel room. Alfred and Lynn enter dressed in opening night attire: a tux and a ball gown. Alfred picks up newspapers off the floor that have been shoved under their door.)

ALFRED: (looking at the papers) How many newspapers are there in New York now – ten? twelve? I can't keep track anymore.

LYNN: Well at least it's not like London where there are *sixteen* newspapers, all of them hateful.

ALFRED: Yes, here in New York only the New York Times is hateful. (opens the newspaper) But this time even Brooks Atkinson liked the play!

LYNN: No, he loved it.

ALFRED: I wouldn't know, I never read reviews.

LYNN: Neither do I.

ALFRED: I must say that I'm still a little embarrassed about them naming an entire theatre after us.

LYNN: Don't be, Alfred. It's not the biggest theatre. Even though it's *much* bigger than the Helen Hayes theatre, which is the *smallest* on Broadway.

(The telephone rings.)

LYNN: Oh, don't answer it, Alfred, who would be calling at this hour?

ALFRED: Don't be silly, darling. Have you ever known a telephone to ring on stage and it not be important? (answering) Hello? Oh, yes Binkie...(covering the phone, to Lynn) What did I tell you? It's our lawyer (into the phone) Yes, thank you – we got the flowers and the telegram, of course...I'm sorry you weren't able to attend, but we have house seats for you tomorrow...

LYNN: (correcting him) It's well past midnight. We have house seats for him *tonight*.

ALFRED: (*checking his watch*) I mean tonight. ...What's that you said?...No we can't meet with you tomorrow - I mean today - out of the question, we have to rest. It's not bad news, I hope.....Oh....really?....Are you sure?....

LYNN: What is it?

ALFRED: (*covering the phone*) He said we're millionaires.

LYNN: Is he sure?

ALFRED: (*to Lynn*) He already said he was sure.

LYNN: How did *that* happen?

ALFRED: (*into the phone*) How did *that* happen?...(*pause*)...I see. (*to Lynn*) He says that's what happens when your investments exceeded \$999,999 and 99 cents.

LYNN: Oh, so it's only one million. Tell him we're going to need another to get through our retirement.

ALFRED: Well thank you for the good news, Binkie...What's that?....I see...Well, can't we just do one?...Why does it have to be two? Oh...very well then...all right, we'll see you tomorrow...uh...today...uh tonight. Right. Goodnight...uh morning.

LYNN: What did he say?

ALFRED: He said we should draw up our wills.

LYNN: You mean....we need more than one?

ALFRED: Yes, he said we each need one.

LYNN: But...why?

ALFRED: (*slowly realizing*) In case....one of us....dies first.

LYNN: (*pause*) Oh, Alfred, you really must die first.

ALFRED: I beg your pardon?

LYNN: Oh, you'd be completely lost without me and terribly lonely and I can't bear the thought of that.

ALFRED: Very thoughtful of you, darling.

LYNN: And I would be much better at waiting for death. Women have so much more patience than men.

ALFRED: And then we'll be together again – in the next world.

LYNN: Do you believe that?

ALFRED: Of course. After all this?! I can't believe – I *refuse* to believe - that when we close here we don't open somewhere else. (*he collapses into a chair*) Do you still love me?

LYNN: "Of course I love you and I shall go on loving you. Maybe not for very long but at least forever."

ALFRED: One of my favorite lines.

LYNN: It was one of *my* lines.

ALFRED: One of my favorite lines...of *yours*. (*pause*) You're right. As always. (*yawns, starting to fall asleep*) You know, darling, when we were married.... and the judge said we were joined as one...(yawns again)...I didn't know that one would be *you*.

LYNN: I always thought it was the other way around.

(While Alfred speaks, Lynn absently plays a card or two of her unfinished game of solitaire.)

ALFRED: (nodding off) I think, Lynn darling...that this is going to be the last one...I'm just so very, very tired. Want to travel, though.....so many plays I want to see. You can't *see*... plays when you're constantly *in* them. Maybe...a...*permanent*...vacation...right here.

(a long pause)

LYNN: That phone call. It made me think of those beautiful red birds - the ones who lived in a tree by the pool.

(Alfred wakes up, but only for a moment.)

ALFRED: Yes, yes...that's what I mean...sit by the pool....grow string beans.

(He slumps over in his chair - she plays cards and doesn't notice.)

LYNN: They were cardinals, remember? Beautiful red cardinals. That terrible day when the male drowned and we took him away. His mate circled the pool for days and days, because it was the last place she'd seen him.

(She gathers up the cards, shuffles.)

LYNN: (cont'd) Americans call this game solitaire – such a sad title for a fun game. *(laying out the cards again)* You know I prefer calling it by its British name - patience. That's something we've always had, Alfred – but I think we're going to need a lot more of it when we're retired, don't you think? *(no response from Alfred)* Don't you think, Alfred?

(She sees him slumped over.)

LYNN: (cont'd) Alfred...Alfred...are you asleep?

(Lynn stands up and gently shakes Alfred.)

LYNN: (cont'd) Alfred, let's call it a night. *(no response)* Alfred...*(she shakes him a little harder)*...Alfred...*(shakes him very hard and screams)* Alfred!!!

(Alfred is suddenly awakened, so startled he tips over in his chair. She helps him up.)

LYNN: (cont'd) Oh, Alfred you scared the life out of me.

ALFRED: *(collecting himself)* I'm sorry - who scared whom?!

LYNN: It's late...we have a matinee tomorrow. We should go to sleep.

ALFRED: Yes, we should.

(We hear the vamp begin to I LOVE THE THEATRE.)

ALFRED: Oh, there's that song again. It's kind of grown on me now.

LYNN: Me, too.

ALFRED: Maybe someday someone *will* write a musical about us. We never did find an ending for this one.

LYNN: This is a good ending, I think.

ALFRED: You mean...because we're going out with such a big hit?

LYNN: No, Alfred. It's a good ending because we're going to bed.

I LOVE(D) THE THEATRE (Reprise)

ALFRED: *(emphasizing each Sh)*

I LOVED SHAKESPEARE, I LOVED SHERWOOD, I LOVED
SHAW

LYNN:

('Yesh' you did.)

ALFRED:

I LOVED THE THEATRE...BUT I LOVE YOU MORE.

LYNN:

(Are you sure?...)

I LOVED HALF HOUR, I LOVED 'PLACES'

ALFRED:

I LOVED REHEARSALS -

LYNN:

G-D! YOU DID -

ALFRED:

I LOVED THE THEATRE – BUT I LOVED YOU MORE.

LYNN:

(You did?) YOU LOVED APPLAUSE AND CROWDS AND
TOURING -

ALFRED:

BUT THANKS TO YOU, IT WASN'T 'BOORING'

LYNN:

(That rhyme is still awful) -
YOU LOVED -

ALFRED:

...YOU.

LYNN:

YOU LOVED YOU.

ALFRED:

NO I MEAN YOU.

LYNN:

I LOVED YOU TOO.

ALFRED:

I LOVED THE THEATRE.... (*gets close to her*)

LYNN:

I LOVED THE THEATRE...
(*she gets even closer*)

ALFRED:

(*as though erotic*) I SPELLED IT WITH AN 'E-R'...

LYNN:

(*even more erotic*) I SPELLED IT WITH AN 'R-E'....

(*They enjoy a passionate kiss.*)

BOTH:

I LOVED THE THEATRE -
BUT I LOVE.... YOU.... MORE!

(They kiss then walk arm-in-arm upstage toward a set of double doors. They separate for a moment to open the double doors and we expect to see another room there - instead we see a set of footlights. They join arms again, walk through the doors and stand facing the footlights with their backs to us.)

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

THE END.