

LIVING IN A MUSICAL

A New Musical

Book & Lyrics by Tom Attea

Contact:
Tom Attea
Phone: 917.647.4321
Email: tattea@gmail.com
© 2008 Tom Attea

CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

Wait-Staff.....Actors in waiting at Blue Neon, the stylish restaurant where Frank works

Manager.....Dapper, hyperactive manager of the restaurant

Hostess.....Sexy, unpredictably discretionary hostess of restaurant

Frank.....Young dancer-singer-actor who lives in the musical-theater past

Bill.....Successful broker, who went to college with Frank

Beth.....Attractive young lawyer and Bill's fiancé

Angel.....Pretty but troubled singer-dancer in a heavy-metal band

Cal.....Talented rock musician who believes he should be more successful

Mom.....Frank's mother (voice only) who calls with career ideas for her son

Director.....Director of the Broadway version of a vintage Hollywood musical

Choreographer...Choreographer of the revival

Producer.....Producer of the revival

SCENES

ACT I

Blue Neon Restaurant.....Scene 1
Frank’s Apartment.....Scene 2
Blue Neon Restaurant.....Scene 3
Audition.....Scene 4
Frank’s Apartment.....Scene 5
Frank’s Apartment.....Scene 6

ACT II

Blue Neon Restaurant.....Scene 1
Frank’s Apartment.....Scene 2
Blue Neon Restaurant.....Scene 3
Frank’s Apartment.....Scene 4
Greenwich Village Rock Club.....Scene 5
Blue Neon Restaurant.....Scene 6
Reprise, “Living in a Musical”.....Scene 7

Time: The Present

SONGS

ACT I

WAITING FOR A BREAK.....	WAIT-STAFF
WE’VE STILL GOT LOVE.....	BILL & BETH
LIVING IN A MUSICAL.....	FRANK
AN AUDITION?.....	FRANK & WAIT-STAFF
COULD IT BE – HE, HE, HE?.....	DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER & PRODUCER
I DON’T KNOW WHY.....	ANGEL
I SEE SOMETHING IN YOU.....	FRANK
SOMETHING WE’D NEVER DO.....	FRANK & ANGEL
TO DANCE JUST WITH YOU.....	FRANK
DIFFERENT AS WE ARE.....	FRANK & ANGEL

ACT II

HE DIDN’T GET THE ROLE.....	WAIT-STAFF
WHAT DO I CARE?.....	FRANK
PART OF THE FLAME.....	CAL & ANGEL
GOOD AT BEING ALONE.....	FRANK
INTO THE WALL.....	CAL
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?.....	FRANK & ANGEL
REPRISE, “LIVING IN A MUSICAL”.....	CAST

ACT I

Scene 1

Blue Neon, a stylish New York restaurant, just before it opens. WAIT-STAFF, dressed in the usual black outfits, are gathering and chitchatting near the service desk.

HOSTESS, in a smoothly sexy black dress, at the reservation desk, pencils in an achievement.

MANAGER, in a black suit with a black shirt, buttoned at the neck, notice, ENTERS and calls out to the WAIT-STAFF.

MANAGER

Come on, guys! Let's move it! It's another opening of another dinner.
(heads for front door)

(PHONE rings; HOSTESS picks up)

HOSTESS

(on PHONE)

Hello, Blue Neon....Sorry, we're completely booked tonight. Oh, you are? What's your telephone number, please?

(clicks on computer keyboard; back on PHONE)

What time would you like to come?... See you then.

(hangs up and pushes button on another line)

MANAGER unlocks front door, as FRANK skips in, with the wide-eyed breathlessness unique to the anxiously late. HE is dressed like the other members of the WAIT-STAFF, except for his conspicuously retro brown-and-white cordovans, such as we have all seen, in vintage photographs, sported by the likes of Irving Berlin or George Gershwin.

MANAGER returns and resumes his harangue
of the intricately idle WAIT-STAFF.

MANAGER

Door's open, gang! What are you waiting for?

WAIT-STAFF

What are we waiting for? What else?

(sing)

WE'RE WAITING ON TABLES
WHILE WE'RE WAITING
FOR A BREAK,
A BREAK THAT'LL MAKE
US – ME –

(disagreement among them)

– NO, ME – YES, ME –
A STAR!

IT MAY BE A PART
IN A MUSICAL OR A PLAY,
A FILM OR A TV SHOW,
I DON'T KNOW
HOW I'LL GET MY START,
I ONLY KNOW
I'LL BE ON MY WAY!

WE'RE WAITING ON TABLES
WHILE WE'RE WAITING
FOR A BREAK,
A BREAK THAT'LL TAKE
US – ME –

(same business)

– NO, ME – YES, ME –
SO FAR
IT'LL MAKE
ME A STAR!

WHY ELSE WOULD A WONDERFULLY TALENTED
YOUNG PERSON LIKE ME,
WHO'S DESTINED FOR FAME,
WAIT ON PEOPLE WHO ARE DESTINED TO BE
THRILLED BY THE MERE SOUND OF MY NAME?

WAIT-STAFF (CONT'D)

AND WHY ELSE WOULD AN ASTONISHINGLY GIFTED
YOUNG PERSON LIKE *MOI*
GET BY ON THE TIPS
I CAN FINAGLE
FROM PEOPLE WHO
WILL ONE DAY LIVE IN AWE
OF EVERY WORD FROM MY LIPS?

WE'RE WAITING ON TABLES
WHILE WE'RE WAITING
FOR A BREAK,
A BREAK THAT'LL TAKE
US – ME – NO, ME – YES, ME –
SO FAR
IT'LL MAKE
ME A STAR!
A GREAT, SHINING NEW STAR!

MANAGER

Yeah, yeah, but right now you're waiting for customers.
(notices FRANK's anachronistic shoes)
Frank, what the hell are you doing?

FRANK

Not much. What's up?

MANAGER

You mean, what's down?
(points)
What planet did those shoes come from?

FRANK

(looks at them)
Oh, forgot to change. Be right back.

MANAGER

Rapido! Rapido!

FRANK

OK, OK!
(moves his knees back and forth, with his hands moving in front of
them, in a gesture that disappeared with the ex-Vaudevillians who...)

FRANK (CONT'D)

... condescended to appear on early television; then he heads OFF, performing a graceful turn as he goes)

MANAGER

(to OTHERS)

Is he livin' in another century or what?

WAITRESS

Given what's happening in this century, how bad can that be?

WAITER

Otherwise, he's just like the rest of us.

WAIT-STAFF

(sings)

HE'S WAITING ON TABLES
WHILE HE'S WAITING
FOR A BREAK!

MANAGER

Yeah, yeah, yeah, and guess what?

(points to the front door)

The wait's over.

DINNER GUESTS begin to arrive, in the casually hip dress of the contemporary hedonist: men, for instance, in trim sports jackets, a la the ubiquitous Armani, and women in suits, designed and priced by the remains of Chanel and other houses of promotionally cultivated elegance.

WAIT-STAFF assumes its stiff, deferential attitude, and MANAGER falls with habitual ease into the usual affability of the conspicuously insincere, shaking hands with favorite diners, hugging the most revered males, and planting a cheek kiss on the most enticing females)

Welcome! Hi, there! Good to see you again.

HOSTESS

(PHONE rings again; gestures patience to guests)

Be with you in a moment.

(on PHONE)

The first opening we have is the evening of October 12th. No, next October.

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

(hangs up; to GUESTS)
Good evening. Right this way, please.
(leads some GUESTS to their table)

MANAGER

(winks at a couple of the most coddled GUESTS)
Follow me, please.
(leads them toward a privileged table)

FRANK ENTERS, his feet now permissibly attired
in black and heads toward his station, but just then HE
notices BILL, a GUEST, and BETH, BILL's fiancé. FRANK
expresses effusive recognition and moves toward them.

FRANK

Hey, Bill, what a great surprise!

BILL

Hey, Frank, likewise!

FRANK

I never saw you here before.

BILL

Could never get a reservation, till the owner put me in the computer. Your boss just became a client.

FRANK

Hey, that's great.
(to returning MANAGER)
My best buddy from college. Sit him at one of my tables, all right? And be good to him.
The boss is a client of his.
(departs with a wave)
See ya in a moment.

MANAGER

(to BILL)
You know Frankie?

BILL

Yeah, great guy. Can do anything – dance, sing, act, anything except make money.

MANAGER

Even for the restaurant.
(to HOSTESS)
Show them to table 26.

BILL

Thanks.

HOSTESS

(to BILL and BETH)
Come with me, please.

SHE leads them to their table and THEY take their seats.

BILL

Thank you.

HOSTESS

Enjoy your dinner.

SHE heads back to the reservation desk.

BILL

(to BETH)
What do you think?

BETH

Quaint.

FRANK comes up to their table.

FRANK

(arms crossed)
I had no idea you were coming tonight.

BILL

I didn't know you work here.

FRANK

(a fleeting wisp of sadness)
Oh, a long time. Hey, how ya been?

BILL

Great, Frankie! How about you?

FRANK

Oh, the usual. Vamping till ready.

BILL

(to BETH)
Not only now, but since he was born.
(to FRANK)
This delectable creature is Beth, my fiancé.

FRANK

Oh, wow, congratulations. Nice to meet you, Beth.

BETH

A pleasure.
(presents her limp hand for a condescending shake)

FRANK

(adds a respectably minute kiss to the back of it; to BILL)
You did well. Cute.

BILL

Also smart. A fellow counselor, in fact.

FRANK

(to BETH)
Good for you.

BILL

Yeah, everything but sweet. She's working on that.

BETH

Thanks.
(to FRANK)
He wants everything.

FRANK

Always did.
(to BOTH)
Well, I'm very happy for you.

BILL

Got a lady in your life?

FRANK

Can't afford one. Maybe someday. Can I get you something to drink?

BILL

(to BETH)
Wine or champagne?

BETH

Can we start with champagne?

BILL

Why not?
(to FRANK)
A bottle of Veuve Cliquot.

FRANK

Excellent. How about the water – bottled or regular?

BILL

Pellegrino.

FRANK

Good. Be back in a moment.

FRANK heads off.

BETH

Seems like an OK guy.

BILL

Yeah, great guy! But a schmuck. A total schmuck.

BETH

Then how did he become your best friend?

BILL

(gets the edge)
Thanks a lot.
(decides to move past it)
He's a very likable and talented guy. But look at him, now. Out of college nine years and still waiting on tables.

BETH

That's pretty sad.

BILL

He's got a dream – you know, show biz. His worst enemy; like a silver hammer he hits himself over the head with every day.

BETH

Everybody can't be as successful as you are.

BILL

Hey, how about you?
(gives her a kiss)
Love ya.

FRANK arrives with the water.

FRANK

(as HE opens it)
You two seem really happy.

BILL

Yeah. Rare enough, right?

FRANK

(as HE pours the sparkling water)
Absolutely effervescent!
(to BILL)
Still at the brokerage firm?
(to BETH)
They hired him right out of school.

BILL

Yeah. Partner, now.

FRANK

Hey, great! Give me five.
(shakes his hand)
I'll be right back with your champagne.
(departs)

BILL

(raises water; to BETH)
As I said, a likable schmuck. *A vous!*

BETH

(raises her glass; corrects him)
A nous.

BILL

So, tell me, sweetheart, where should we go for our honeymoon?

BETH

Oh, I don't know. Some place safe.

BILL

And where would that be, in this explosive world? The price of empire, dear, even if America didn't ask for it.

(sings)
HOW WELL WE KNOW
THAT PEACE MAY COME AND GO
BUT THANK THE STARS ABOVE
WE'VE STILL GOT LOVE.

THESE ARE UNEASY TIMES,
WHEN HATE IS POISED FOR CRIMES.
BUT THERE IS STILL A PLACE
WE'LL FIND A FRIENDLY FACE.

DEAR, HOW WELL WE KNOW
THAT PEACE MAY COME AND GO,
BUT THANK THE STARS ABOVE
WE'VE STILL GOT LOVE.

OH, FOOLS MAY HAVE THEIR DAY,
BUT THEY ALL GO THEIR WAY,
WHILE VALUES THAT ARE TRUE,
WILL SOMEHOW GET US THROUGH.

YES, HOW WELL WE KNOW
THAT PEACE MAY COME AND GO
BUT THANK THE STARS ABOVE ...

BILL & BETH (TOGETHER)

THE MOON AND STARS ABOVE,
WE'VE STILL GOT LOVE.

BILL

(spoken)
How about Italy?

BETH

Been there, saw that.

BILL

Yeah, likewise.

BETH

Maybe Greece, again. We can cruise the islands.

BILL

Depends on which ones, I guess. Any place relatively safe.

(FRANK returns with the champagne)

FRANK

(holding the bottle out)

Good choice.

(as he works on the foil and cork)

Where are your digs these days?

BILL

Park Avenue, in the 60s. Bought a co-op there last year. How about you?

FRANK

Still have my studio in the Village.

(to BETH)

Rent's great. I moved in right after they condemned the building.

(pops the champagne and begins to pour it)

It's great to see two such happy people, especially in this willfully woebegone world.

BILL

(as he lifts his glass of champagne)

The truly wise have always found a way.

(to BETH,)

Right, dear?

BETH

(lifting her glass of champagne)

We can't all be miserable, can we? Or why does the sun shine?

FRANK

Right. That's why I'm hiding out. It's a survival tactic. This is not my kind of world. In fact, I don't even go outside anymore without peeking first.

BILL

(raises glass to FRANK)
However you get by, buddy. Well, here's to you, Frankie, and the success you've always dreamed of.

BETH

(raises glass)
To you, Frank.
(to BILL)
And to us.

BILL

Right, sweetheart, always us.
(to FRANK)
But, good buddy, what if the show biz thing doesn't work out? Time fleets.

FRANK

What can I tell you? I don't have a choice.
(acts a bit)
Gotta dance! Gotta sing!

BILL

Cute. Well, who knows?
(to BETH)
Maybe someday I'll be able to say I knew him way back when.

FRANK

That's right. All I need is one lousy break.

WAITRESS passes by and overhears.

WAITRESS

Did I hear you say a "break"?
(to BILL and BETH)
My second favorite word – right after a "star."

FRANK & WAITRESS (TOGETHER)

WE'RE WAITING ON TABLES
WHILE WE'RE WAITING
FOR A BREAK!
(OTHER WAITERS, WAITRESSES join in)
ONLY WAITING ON TABLES
WHILE WE'RE WAITING
FOR A BREAK...

FRANK & WAIT-STAFF (CONT'D)

...A BREAK THAT'LL TAKE
ME – NO, ME – YES, ME –
SO FAR
IT'LL MAKE
ME A STAR!
A SHINING NEW STAR!

BILL, BETH and other GUESTS applaud.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

Scene 1

ACT I

Scene 2

FRANK's apartment, along with a brief space of hallway just outside of it, l. The stage is dark, except for the hallway.

FRANK ENTERS the hallway area, now dressed in a way that reveals how desperately out of time he has chosen to live: HE is wearing his cordovans, along with baggy, cuffed slacks, a white shirt, over which he has donned a V-neck sweater with an antiquarian two-tone diamond pattern. Though it may be excessive, HE might also wear a chapeau reminiscent of the era in which he has chosen, to the extent he can, to live.

HE inserts the key in the lock, turns it, and ENTERS. When HE flips the light switch, the LIGHTS come up on his apartment – and we see the abundant manifestations of his devotion to the vintage American musical. LIGHTS in the hallway fade down, to prepare for the intrusion of the unexpected.

His furniture is art deco and wherever we chance to glance we see mementos of his fondness, obviously collected with tender affection. The walls are cluttered with posters from a variety of classic musicals and with black-and-white photos of many of the more, as well as some of the less, famous musical celebrities of the era, from Berlin to Youmans.

The centerpiece of the portraits, above the couch, is a photograph of the star with whom Frank identifies most: Fred Astaire. Similar photos and other memorabilia also deck whatever surfaces are available, including the coffee table and end tables.

We note that FRANK has also acquired a wooden radio with classic filigree over the speaker and a phonograph such as we haven't seen since the RCA dog graced the gramophone. HE has a bookcase,

in the center shelf of which is a violin and bow; we shall learn that it belonged to his grandfather. There is an upright piano, which he uses to give himself the first note or so of a song before he goes into that infrequent delight – a word-exact, pitch-perfect a cappella rendition.

We notice that he has admitted into his refuge certain persuasively useful playthings of the moment: a CD player, a laptop computer, and every actor's obligatory appurtenances: a cell phone and an answering machine.

FRANK is, to the extent repression of pain from perceived rejection and perhaps the first intimations of the possibility of failure will allow, well-adjusted to the different tune he has chosen to hearken to and in a sprightly mood. HE crosses to the generally unobliging custodian of his hopes, the ANSWERING MACHING, and taps the play button.

The FIRST VOICE we hear is that of his mother.

MOTHER (VOICE)

Frankie, sweetie, it's Mom again. I talked to your dad, and he said if you come to work for him at the real estate company, he'll agree that you're not dead. Call me back so we can talk. You know we still love you. And don't forget to floss.

The ANSWERING MACHINE continues to the SECOND VOICE, which, happily, turns out to be that of AMY, his tenuous agent.

AMY (VOICE)

Frank, Amy. I have an audition for you tomorrow. You'll love this one. How unlikely I can't tell you. It's for the Broadway revival of your favorite Hollywood antique: *Top Hat*. Yes, some cockamamie producers have decided there's an audience for the nostalgia, top hat and all. I submitted you for the lead. Call me first thing in the AM about the audition. Till then, toodle-oo!

FRANK

(so excited he thrusts his arms skyward and exclaims)
Yes! Yes! My turn, at last!
(becomes giddy and launches into a lively
but infinitely graceful dance; slips by the PIANO
to give himself the first note; sings)

TOP HAT!
GOLLY GEE,
TIME FOR ME!
COOL CAT,
COULD IT BE...

FRANK (CONT'D)

... FINALLY BE,
TIME FOR ME!

(looks at the photograph of Astaire and throws it a kiss;
spoken)

Here's to you Fred, and now to me truly!

(sings and dances)

TOP HAT, WHITE TIE AND TAILS!

He twirls over to his record collection and takes out, as we might by now accommodate, a 78-rmp of the original score of the musical, if Berlin's notorious rights allow, or, if not, of a suitably celebratory piece of dance music of the period. HE looks over the record for dust, blows off a speck, and then puts it on the turntable.

It begins to play and HE dances across the living room to his compressed kitchen, opens the refrigerator, and takes out a bottle, not a can, of Coca-Cola. HE pops the lid with a spritely flourish, takes a celebratory sip, and then heads back toward the ANSWERING MACHINE for a confirmatory listen. HE poises his finger to press the play button.

Just then his oasis of delight is intruded on by an outburst of male-female rage, more typical of our less self-possessed times. LIGHTS come up on the hallway and we see CAL – a modishly skinny, youngish man in jeans, a black t-shirt, and thumping big boots – who, we shall learn, is a surprisingly talented but angrily over-expectant rock musician, perturbed that he has yet, by his late twenties, to achieve the raucous fame he is convinced he merits.

HE is venting at the darling ANGEL, his gamely combative girlfriend, who some of the more accusatory might dismiss as a masochist; SHE harbors that appalling lack of self-esteem which seems to impel the more foolhardy among men to rush in to see if he might rescue her from herself. As we shall discover, ANGEL, quite a wayward talent herself, also sings harmony and strums guitar in CAL's actually rather interesting hard-metal band, that is, if one is capable of indulging the possibilities of such a contemporary amalgam.

CAL

Bitch!

ANGEL

You hit me again, and I'm calling the cops!

CAL

Like hell.

(HE slaps her again)

FRANK, our impetuous but possibly unwelcome Galahad, speeds toward the door.

ANGEL

(screams)

Stop it, you scumbag!

CAL

Yeah, why?

(HE pushes her and she falls down)

ANGEL

Bastard!

CAL

Listen up, bitch! Don't you ever say that again! Or I'll kill ya. Swear go God, I'll kill ya.

(FRANK opens the door and views the inviting scene)

FRANK

(to CAL)

May I ask what you're doing to the lovely lady?

CAL

Butt out, idiot!

FRANK

You can't hit a woman like that. Where the hell are your manners?

CAL

I said, butt out!

ANGEL

(to FRANK)

That's OK. I'll be all right.

FRANK

How is that possible? Has he agreed to stop attacking you?

CAL

Just close the damn door and leave us alone.

(to ANGEL; holds out hand)

Come on, babes. We got to go.

ANGEL

I told you, I'm through.

CAL

I said, come on.

SHE shakes her head no.

FRANK

Give her a break, will you?

CAL

You know nothing about it.

(looks him over)

Hey, man, what time warp are you in?

FRANK

I promise you wouldn't understand.

(kneels down)

Look what you did to her.

CAL

She's fine. Let's go, Angel. We'll be late for the gig.

ANGEL

No way, Cal.

SHE faints.

CAL

(condescends to bend a knee)

Oh, great. Perfect timing.

FRANK

(down on his own knees to look her over)

She's hurt, man.

CAL

She's faking it. Passes out whenever it's convenient. Let's go, Angel.

(ANGEL stirs and nods no; HE notices)

So stay until you change your mind.

(as HE heads down the hall)

Who can even sing a love song with a chick like you dissing him?

FRANK

Can you stand up? Come on, let me help you.

(HE helps ANGEL get to her feet)

ANGEL

I'm all right.

(loses balance again)

FRANK

Sure, you are. You can rest up a bit in my place.

ANGEL

OK. You don't have to worry. I won't stay long.

FRANK

Till you feel better. I'm Frank.

ANGEL

Angel.

FRANK

Yeah, and I'm God. What's your real name?

ANGEL

Angela.

FRANK

Hey, normal.

HE leads her toward his apartment door.

ANGEL

Who wants to be "normal"?

FRANK

Oh, I don't know. It might have some advantages.

ANGEL

I'll leave that to you, OK?

As HE closes the door, SHE looks around and has
notices his otherworldly environment.

ANGEL

Weird. Another world. Are you zoned out or what?

FRANK

Yeah, but at least in my zone men have some savoir faire.
(leads her to the couch)
Who is that guy, anyway?

ANGEL

My boyfriend.
(sits)

FRANK

Have you questioned your taste in men?

ANGEL

Can I just lie down?

FRANK

Sure. Can I get you anything? How about some Coke?

ANGEL

Is it good stuff?

FRANK

I mean, the beverage.

ANGEL

Oh, all right. Thanks.

HE goes to the refrigerator.

FRANK

(as HE goes)
I didn't know you live in the building.

ANGEL

We just moved in.

You and your beau? FRANK

He's not what you think. ANGEL

Really? FRANK
(opens the refrigerator, takes out a bottle of Coke, pops it open,
and returns with it)
How is he commendable?
(hands her the Coke)

It was my fault. I called him a wannabe. ANGEL

Oh. A wannabe what? FRANK

Never mind. Nice music. ANGEL

Glad you like it. FRANK

But can you turn it off? I have a headache. ANGEL

Oh. FRANK

Besides, it's not what I do. ANGEL

(as he goes to phonograph)
What do you do? FRANK

Metal. ANGEL

FRANK

Oh. Sure.

(turns off phonograph and heads back)

Would you feel more at home if I get out some pots and pans and bang them together?

ANGEL

Please.

FRANK

I'm old-fashioned. I like ...

(sings)

... "a melody by Kern."

ANGEL

So do I. But today he couldn't get arrested.

FRANK

Yes, I often say, the record business is the worst thing that ever happened to American song. Where did you study, if anywhere?

ANGEL

Juilliard.

FRANK

Really? I might not have guessed. I studied up the street, at Mannes. What happened?

ANGEL

I want to make a living, on the edge.

FRANK

That where you met Cal?

ANGEL

We were classmates.

FRANK

That creep went to Juilliard?

ANGEL

On a scholarship. That's his problem.

FRANK

I don't know; he seems to have gotten over it.

ANGEL

No way. He still thinks he's a classical musician, lowering himself to have a popular success. It holds him back.

FRANK

Oh, I know what that's like.

ANGEL

At least, you're not angry about it. Or don't seem to be.

(looks around)

What are you into here?

FRANK

(quotes)

"S'what I love."

ANGEL

But what can you do with it?

FRANK

Oh, once in a while I have a dance student. Otherwise, I wait tables. I do, however, have an audition coming up.

ANGEL

In what?

FRANK

A revival of *Top Hat*.

ANGEL

Top Hat?

FRANK

Apparently, a few other people are as hopeless as I am. When I was growing up, the old movie was my inspiration. I know almost every word, every movement.

ANGEL

You are so out of it.

FRANK

In my terms, I'm incredibly in it. But sometimes I think I was born too late. I would've been great in the 30's. My name right up there in lights with the great song-and-dance men of the time.

ANGEL

It's not that way anymore, Frank.

FRANK

I suppose. Do you know rock and roll even pushed aside Irving Berlin?

ANGEL

So get used to it.

FRANK

No, no, I have a better approach. If you want, I'll tell you about it, but, of course, in song.

ANGEL

I can't wait.

FRANK

If you insist.

(sings, dances)

I WAS, I THINK,
BORN TOO LATE –
AT HOME WITH THINGS
YOU CALL OUT-OF-DATE.
BUT DON'T YOU SEE
I FOUND A WAY
TO GET BY TODAY.

I'M LIVING IN A MUSICAL,
A GREAT, OLD-FASHIONED MUSICAL –
A TIMELESSLY ENCHANTING PLACE
THAT WELCOMES ME WITH TUNEFUL GRACE.
OF COURSE, IT'S JUST A FANTASY,
BUT IT FEELS JUST LIKE HOME TO ME.

IF YOU GO BY MY AGE,
I COULDN'T HAVE LIVED WHEN SHOWS
LIKE *TOP HAT* AND *ANYTHING GOES*
WERE ALL THE RAGE.
WHEN I WAS GROWING UP,
I WATCHED THEM ON TV,
BUT THE WORLD PORTRAYED IN THEM
SAID, "THAT'S WHERE I WANT TO BE...."

FRANK (CONT'D)

...YES, THAT'S THE PLACE FOR ME!"

I'M LIVING IN A MUSICAL,
A GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED MUSICAL –
AN ENCHANTING PLACE
OF TIMELESS GRACE
THAT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME,
THOUGH IT'S JUST A FANTASY,
JUST A FANTASY
BUT IT'S HOME TO ME.

I LOVE TO HEAR A MELODY
BY KERN, RODGERS OR BERLIN,
ARLEN, LOEWE OR GERSHWIN,
WHERE EVERY DO, MI, SO DELIGHTS ME.

I KNOW SO WELL THE LYRICS OF
IRA, LARRY, AND COLE,
YIP, OSCAR AND ALAN JAY,
THAT IGNITE THE MANY CHARMS OF LOVE.

AND, MOST OF ALL, I'M REMAIN ENTRANCED
BY FRED ASTAIRE AND GENE KELLY,
GINGER ROGERS AND ANN MILLER
AND THE INIMITABLE WAYS THEY DANCED.

OH, I LOVE TO DANCE
TO A GRACEFUL TUNE,
NOT A RAUCOUS BEAT
THAT CONFOUNDS MY FEET.
OH, I WANT TO SING
ABOUT ROMANCE
WITH A TUNE THAT SOARS
AND WORDS THAT SAY
WITH METAPHORS
MORE THAN THE CLICHÉ,
"I LOVE YOU, BABY,
YOU KNOW I DO."

OH, I CAN DANCE,
AND SING AND ACT
AND EVEN DARE
AT TIMES TO COMPARE...

FRANK (CONT'D)

... MYSELF TO THE RARE
(POINTS TO PHOTO ON WALL)
FRED EXTR'ORDINAIRE.

I'M LIVING IN A MUSICAL,
A GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED MUSICAL
AN ENCHANTING PLACE
OF TIMELESS GRACE
THAT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME,
THOUGH IT'S JUST A FANTASY,
JUST A FANTASY
IT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME.

ANGEL

(applauds)
Hey, that was cool, baby.

FRANK

Thanks. But not for you, I assume?

ANGEL

Maybe in another life. I better move along.
(tries to sit up)

FRANK

Why? Was it something I sang?
(helps her)
Are you sure you'll be all right.

ANGEL

Who is?

FRANK

What about when Cal comes back?

THEY walk toward door.

ANGEL

No problem. He loves me.

FRANK

Really? How have you determined that?

ANGEL
He just has a lot of inner anger, that's all.

FRANK
Not to mention outward.

ANGEL
(gives him a little kiss)
You are *tres* strange, you know that. See ya.
(EXITS to hallway)
And good luck with your audition.

FRANK
I don't need luck. I just need an audience.

ANGEL
Funny guy.

FRANK
In my fashion.

HE closes the door and crosses back toward the couch. HE notices that she left her bottle of Coke. HE picks it up and looks at it. HE thinks about going to the door to give it to her. Then HE stops, looks at it, holds it out as if it were a dancing partner, and begins to dance with it.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(quotes)
Ah, dancin' cheek to cheek – but with somebody who might know what that is.

As HE goes, he heads for his ANSWERING MACHINE to hear AMY's MESSAGE once more.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Oh, Amy, say it once again. Show me, do, that I'm not just telling myself a fairy tale.
(pushes button)

MESSAGE
Frank, this is Amy. I have an audition for you tomorrow...

HE smiles stridently and does a pirouette, as the LIGHTS FADE to...

1-2-28

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

Scene 2

ACT I

Scene 3

Blue Neon restaurant. Similar to ACT I, Scene 1: hubbub of staff prepping for dinner, but FRANK is not yet present.

MANAGER

(to WAIT-STAFF)
Anyone seen Frank?

WAITER

Not yet –

FRANK hurries in.

WAITER

(notices him)
– but right on cue ...

FRANK

Voila! Here I am!

MANAGER

(looks at his shoes)
Late, but at least wearing the right shoes.
(points to them)
No spats.
(heads off, about his business)

WAITRESS

(to FRANK)
You seem up today. What's happening?

FRANK

I got a call for an audition.

WAITRESS

An audition? Oh, great!
(calls to others)
Hey, Frank has an audition!

WAIT-STAFF

(reaction)
An audition? How great is that?

WAITER

(sings)
HE'S GOT AN AUDITION!

FEMALE WAITRESS

(sings)
FOR A FILM, AS A PSYCHOTIC KILLER?

FRANK

(sings)
PSYCHOTIC KILLERS DON'T SING.

SECOND MALE WAITER

(sings)
THEN A TV SHOW, A MAFIA THRILLER?

FRANK

(sings)
GANGSTERS ONLY DANCE IN *GUYS AND DOLLS*.
THIS, GUYS AND DOLLS, IS THE BEST OF CASTING CALLS!

SECOND WAITRESS

(spoken)
Not for – a Coca-Cola commercial?

FRANK

No, people in commercials usually only pretend to act.

(shakes head to indicate "No")
Something right up my alley.

FIRST WAITRESS

Right up his alley? How long has it been since anybody said that?

FIRST WAITER

Don't tell us. You've got an audition for a Broadway show!

FRANK

And not just any show. It's a revival of my all-time favorite movie musical, *Top Hat*.

Top Hat? SECOND WAITER

FIRST WAITER
Who'd be crazy enough to revive that – and on B'way?

FRANK
I don't know who's doing it, but I love 'em already.

FIRST WAITRESS
Do you think there's an audience?

FRANK
I'll be there every night. And what if it's a hit? It may bring back style and grace.

SECOND WAITER
Dream on, Frankie.

FRANK
What else? And get this. I'm up for the lead.

MANAGER ENTERS, in his busy way.

FIRST WAITER
(to MANAGER)
Hey, did you hear? Frank's up for the lead in a Broadway musical.

MANAGER
I can't be that lucky.

FRANK
You never know. It's *Top Hat!*

MANAGER
Top Hat? I remember that flick. Go for it, kid.

FIRST WAITER
Hey, what if you get it?

SECOND WAITER
You could be a star!

WAIT-STAFF
Wow! A star!

And he could be off to showbiz heaven!

MANAGER

Wow, too much.

FIRST WAITER

(sing)
HE'S BEEN WAITING ON TABLES,
WHILE WAITING FOR A BREAK
BUT NOW HE'S GOT A CHANCE
TO SING AND DANCE
AND SHOW HIS STUFF,
SO HE MAY,
JUST MAY,
HAVE WAITED LONG ENOUGH!

WAIT-STAFF

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

Scene 3

ACT I

Scene 4

Audition space. We hear a piano and the sound of tap dancing, as the LIGHTS come up on an audition in progress. A PIANIST is playing dance music in the style of the 30's at an upright piano. The DIRECTOR is standing, while the CHOREOGRAPHER and a PRODUCER are seated. An ACTOR, dressed in contemporary street clothes, such as jeans and a t-shirt, is tap dancing his best.

DIRECTOR

(failing to have been enchanted)
Thanks. We'll be in touch with your agent. Next, please.
(to his cohorts)
What do you think?

THUMBS down.

CHOREGRAPHER

Good, but not great. We need magic if this antique is gonna have a shot, especially since your wife thinks she's Ginger Rogers.

PRODUCER

More like Pepper Rogers.

FRANK ENTERS. HE's dressed the way only the most dedicated actors seem to manage: in a manner gauged to inform his auditors that HE is indisputably right for the role. HE is, in short, decked out in his own top hat, white tie, and tails.

DIRECTOR

(to OTHERS)
Take a look at this guy.
(to FRANK)
Name?

FRANK

(tips hat)
Frank Conover. With Tempo Management.

I see you prepared.

DIRECTOR

For this role I'm always prepared.

FRANK

(to DIRECTOR)
Let's see something.

PRODUCER

What do you do?

DIRECTOR

Whatever you want? You name it, I do it.

FRANK

How about the title song?

DIRECTOR

In my sleep.

FRANK

(to DIRECTOR)
Ask him if he can move a bit while he sings.

CHOREOGRAPHER

Let's hear it and work in some movement if you can.
(to PIANIST)
Hit it.

DIRECTOR

The PIANIST begins to play the song "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails," if we can navigate the rights. If not, another piece of period dance music will have to do.

FRANK begins to sing in a gentle, lilting voice, touchingly reminiscent of Fred Astaire's style. Helpless to do otherwise to the music, HE dances as HE sings.

The DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER, and PRODUCER are increasingly captivated, to the extent they will allow their enthusiasm to radiate, and THEY begin to gesture among themselves with delight, not unleavened with robust relief.

When FRANK completes the lyrics for the first time, The PIANIST swings into a musical repeat of the song, and FRANK seizes on the potential of the opportunity to create an inspired performance that his dance idols might actually applaud, particularly when HE grabs, with a very Astaire flair, a chair as his dancing partner. He concludes in classic form by singing a reprise of the last chorus. Then HE bows, tipping his top hat with a flourish, knowing all too well that HE has fulfilled the expectations of his audience.

ALL of his auditors applaud, including the PIANIST, and we, along with FRANK, sense that THEY have found their man.

DIRECTOR

(to OTHERS)
Great! Love what you did!

CHOREOGRAPHER

(to OTHERS)
The kid's a natural!

PRODUCER

He could make the show.

DIRECTOR

Despite your wife.

PRODUCER

I just wish he was a little taller. She likes tall men.

DIRECTOR

(eyes short PRODUCER)
Forget it. Your wife can wear flats! He's great!

FRANK

Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you very much.

DIRECTOR

You do anything else from *Top Hat*?

FRANK

When I was a kid, I wore out the video. You name it, I do it.

DIRECTOR

I bet you do.

FRANK

So what do you want? Another song?

(indicates chair)

Another dance? Got a real partner for me to work with?

DIRECTOR

You're too much, Frank.

(to OTHERS)

I've seen enough for now.

(THEY nod agreement; to FRANK)

We'll be in touch with your agent.

FRANK

(with a confident tip of his top hat)

Then thanks for the opportunity, gentlemen. And hope to see you soon.

(HE waltzes off)

DIRECTOR

Well, whaddaya know? Even given your wife in the female lead,

(sings)

COULD IT BE –

DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER, &
PRODUCER (TOGETHER)

(spoken)

– HE, HE, HE –

(sing)

THAT WE FOUND SOMEONE WHO CAN
SAVE OUR COCKAMAMIE PLAN?

COULD IT BE –

HE, HE, HE –

WE CAN ENTERTAIN THE THOUGHT –

HE, HE, HE –

THAT WE ACTUALLY HAVE A SHOT?

SURE, THE SHOW HAS GOT
THE INESCAPABLE REEK

OF AN ART DECO ANTIQUE;
BUT WHERE IS IT WRIT
THAT A CLASSIC ...

DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER, &
PRODUCER (TOGETHER)

... CAN'T BE A HIT –
ESPECIALLY TODAY,
WHERE ON THE GREAT WHITE WAY
THE USUAL MEANS OF SURVIVAL
IS YET ONE MORE REVIVAL?

OH, CAN'T YOU JUST SEE
OUR NEW LEADING MAN
AS A 30'S CAT
IN TAILS AND A TOP HAT –
SINGING AND DANCING,
AND ALTOGETHER ENTRANCING.
SO ON OPENING NIGHT
WE'LL GARNER REVIEWS
THAT'LL MAKE BOXOFFICE NEWS.
AND WHAT WILL OUR CRONIES
SAY – HE, HE, HE –
HE, HE, HE –
ON THE GLORIOUS NIGHT
WE SWEEP THE TONYS?

COULD IT BE –
HE, HE, HE –
WELL, AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY FIT
THAT LONGTIME PROS LIKE US
SHOULD HAVE A HIT!
HE, HE, HE.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

Scene 4

ACT I

Scene 5

FRANK's apartment, HALLWAY outside of it. When the LIGHTS come up, we see a drugged-out ANGEL, behaving as people under that dreary influence are likely to, primarily staggering about and, in her case, passing out, fortunately for our story, not far from FRANK's apartment. In fact, one might suspect from her indirection that she thought to seek salvation there. Shortly after her expiration, FRANK, ebullient with nascent hope, skips in, top hat and tails for the audition over his arm. HE sees her and experiences an untimely interruption of his felicity.

FRANK

Oh, great!

(bends down; touches her face)

Angel, what's wrong? Can you hear me?

(feels her forehead. SHE groans)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Ah, man! What are you doing to yourself? I'll help you.

(takes out keys and opens door to his apartment;
then bends down again and lifts her to her unsteady feet)

Come on, now. Easy does it. Lean on Frank.

HE supports her so SHE can stand and leads her into his apartment;
eases her onto the couch and kneels beside her)

FRANK (CONT'D)

What happened? Did he hit you again?

(SHE shakes her head no)

What then?

ANGEL

Nothing.

FRANK

Right. You're fine. Come on, tell me. Coke? Heroin? Name your poison.

ANGEL

I'm sorry.

FRANK

Baby, you gotta stop this. You're gonna kill yourself.

ANGEL

Maybe. And who will care?

FRANK

What, that's it? You need love or you'll kill yourself?

(looks up; philosophizes)

Once more, a privileged person brings tragedy into the lives of everyday people.

(back to her)

Has it occurred to you that you're trying to find it with an unlikely person?

ANGEL

I don't know anything, anymore. I could kill myself.

FRANK

But not here, OK? You don't really want to do that, do you?

ANGEL

Why not?

FRANK

Well, for starters, to remain alive.

ANGEL

Sure.

FRANK

Ah, I see, the usual bad trip. Infinite need knows no satisfaction. So you absent yourself from the world, the final pleasure of the narcissist. Come on, I thought you wanted to do something original?

ANGEL

I'm out of here.

(SHE tries to rise but collapses)

FRANK

Will you just take it easy? Maybe I should help you get a hospital.

ANGEL

I'll be all right.

(touches his cheek)

You're too nice.

FRANK

Just normal, in an indifferent world. How about some water?

ANGEL

Thanks.

HE goes into the kitchen and gets two bottles of spring water.
He returns, tearing off the caps, and pulls up a chair beside her;
holds out a bottle.

FRANK

Here.

ANGEL

Thanks.

(sees his top hat and tails)

What's that for?

FRANK

My audition, remember?

ANGEL

Oh, right. How'd you do?

FRANK

They loved me. I'm so right for the role.

ANGEL

No kidding.

FRANK

Right.

(gestures around room)

It's my life. Not a bad one, either. For me, the best.

ANGEL

Why can't I meet a nice guy like you?

FRANK

I thought you did.

ANGEL

I'm sorry. I'm just kind of screwed up right now.

ANGEL (CONT'D)

(sings)
I DON'T KNOW WHY
BUT I CAN'T DENY –
WHEN A GUY IS NICE,
I WON'T LOOK TWICE
I DON'T KNOW WHY;
THOUGH THEY MAKE ME CRY
I'M SO FAR GONE
ROUGH GUYS TURN ME ON.

I SEEM TO NEED
A MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB
AND A MAN WHO KNOWS
IF I REACH THE TOP
I'LL WANT TO MOVE ON.
THAT'S JUST HOW IT GOES.

I ALWAYS GOT
MY WAY BECAUSE
I'M CUTE OR SMART,
AND WHAT DRIVES ME WILD
IS A GUY WHO WON'T
LET ME PLAY THE PART
OF MY INNER CHILD.

I DON'T KNOW WHY,
COULD DAMN NEAR DIE.
I ONLY LIKE MEN
WHEN I KNOW I CAN'T WIN.
(LOOKS UP AT HIM WITH EVIDENT ANXIETY)

FRANK

Tell you what. You can hang here till you feel OK.

ANGEL

Thanks. I used to be so damn happy.

FRANK

Weren't we all? Can't let the mad world steal your happiness. Then what will you have left to give?

ANGEL

You seem so confident.

FRANK

It's a façade. I'm as fragile as aluminum foil. And it's a rough and ready world. Sometimes it just crunches me up and throws me in the trash. So I hide out. But, hey, that's just me. You relax.

ANGEL

I can't.

FRANK

Why not? Cal? How much of a masochist are you, anyway?

ANGEL

I'm not a masochist. That's why I'm alone. He left town for a gig, and I wouldn't go.

FRANK

Good, but, hey, look what you did with your free time. I'll tell you what. You can sleep it off. Go on in my bedroom and knock off. I'll take the couch. Look, kid –

ANGEL

– Don't call me “kid,” OK? I've been through more shit than you'll ever know.

FRANK

No doubt. I was about to say, in my semi-fatherly way –

ANGEL

– skip it. You're not much older than I am.

FRANK

Depends on how you measure age.

ANGEL

Thanks. That wasn't very charming.

FRANK

Sorry. Anyway, I'm willing to deal with your craziness for one night only. If, by some chance, Cal shows up, I'll just tell him what happened.

ANGEL

Sure, you will.

FRANK

What, you think I'm a wimp? I can dance circles around him. If he doesn't listen, maybe I'll even punch him out while I'm moving. When I was a kid, I boxed at camp one summer. I was really fast, till I stepped into the ring with this guy whose boxing gloves were dragging on the canvas. He wacked me so hard I flew out of the ring. Angel, listen to me. At some point, you've got to make a break from this guy. You owe it to yourself.

ANGEL

We'll see.

FRANK

Let me give you some encouragement. I see something in you that you don't.

ANGEL

Like what?

FRANK

I mean, like ...

(sings)

I SEE SOMETHING IN YOU –
SOMETHING IN YOU
THAT YOU WON'T, SOMEHOW WON'T
ALLOW YOURSELF TO.

I SEE SOMETHING IN YOU,
SOMETHING IN YOU
THAT GOES WITH, SO WELL WITH
ALL I LIKE TO DO.

SOMETHING SPECIAL
AND REMARKABLY
LIKE SOMETHING YOU
MAY SEE IN ME;

SOMETHING LOVELY
THAT COULD MAKE YOU, DEAR,
REMARKABLY
SPECIAL TO ME.

I SEE SOMETHING IN YOU,
SOMETHING IN YOU
THAT I WISH, WISH SO MUCH
THAT YOU COULD SEE, TOO.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(spoken)

Let me show you what I mean. Come on, give me your hand.

ANGEL

What for?

FRANK

Just do it, silly. Come on.

(takes her hand and helps you rise; puts his arm around her waist)

Ready? Follow me.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(leads her in a few dance steps)

Not bad, for a recuperating cokehead.

ANGEL

I know I can dance. It was always easy for me.

FRANK

How about right now? You know, sometimes going backward in life can be a real advance. Courage, lass.

(gives her an affectionate kiss)

Sorry, I couldn't help it.

ANGEL

Just too nice for this world, aren't you?

(SHE kisses him back, tenderly)

FRANK

(gesture to dance)

Very nice. But careful. I generally avoid druggies. Shall we dance?

THEY begin to dance, with intimations of excellent chemistry,
as the LIGHTS FADE DOWN.

END OF ACT I

Scene 5

ACT I

Scene 6

FRANK's apartment, a few days later. Heavy-metal music blares. LIGHTS come up, and we see ANGEL, who has, predictably enough, reverted to type. SHE is dressed in jeans and a halter, dancing to the beat. SHE is obviously a polished performer in the style. FRANK ENTERS from the hallway, with a bag of groceries. HE hears the unwelcome thumping in his digs, inserts the key, and opens the door.

Due to the volume at which SHE has set the CD player, SHE doesn't hear him arrive. HE stops and observes her performance, with unexpected patience and some trace of interest in her movements. When the track is done, HE alerts her to his presence.

FRANK

Primitive, yet somehow enrapturing.
(another track starts)

ANGEL

Oh, I am so sorry.
(SHE goes to turn it off)

FRANK

I accept.

ANGEL

Everybody can't like what you do.

FRANK

I grant that. The question is, does anybody else? But somebody has to adhere to the rickety standards of the past.
(goes to kitchen and puts down bag of groceries)

ANGEL

I won't play it when you're around.

FRANK

Thanks. It rattles my inner harmony.

ANGEL

Are we on different pages or what?

(sings)

I HAVE TO TUNE IN;
THAT'S WHAT I'M ALL ABOUT.

FRANK

(sings)

FUNNY, BECAUSE TO THE DAY BEGIN,
I HAVE TO TUNE OUT.

BOTH

AND FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO
IS SOMETHING WE'D NEVER DO.

ANGEL

I THINK THE BIGGEST WOW
IS WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

FRANK

FOR ME THE BEST OF THE PAST
IS OBVIOUSLY UNSURPASSED.

BOTH

AND FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO
IS SOMETHING WE'D NEVER DO.

ANGEL

TO ME THE LASTEST
SONG AND DANCE
IS THE GREATEST
SONG AND DANCE.

FRANK

I'D RATHER DO A TAP
SONG AND DANCE
THAN A RAP
SONG AND DANCE.

ANGEL

AND I WOULD RATHER BE
SEEN ON MTV
THAN SING AND DANCE
WHAT'S ANCIENT HISTORY.

FRANK

WELL, IF YOU MUST,
BUT I COULD NEVER SETTLE
FOR THAT RACOUS STUFF
YOU CALL HEAVY METAL.

ANGEL

IF YOU STAY IN THAT BIND,
YOU'LL ALWAYS REMAIN BEHIND.

FRANK

AND WHAT YOU'LL NEVER FIND
IS MY KIND OF PEACE OF MIND.

BOTH

AND SO WE
AGREE
THAT FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO
IS SOMETHING WE'D NEVER DO.
YES, FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO
IS SOMETHING WE'D NEVER DO!

FRANK

I suppose that's true. I have an idea. Be right back.

HE goes to the closet and takes out a white gown that would
flatter the loveliest lady ever to grace a vintage musical.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I bought this for my private dance students, when I'm lucky enough to have one.

ANGEL

It's so pretty.

FRANK

So put it on. I dare you. Violate your misguided concept of coolness.

ANGEL

Thanks. I'd feel so out of it.

FRANK

Oh, come on, give it a shot. It won't give you pimples. Meanwhile, I'll slip into
something suitable myself. And then we shall dance.

ANGEL

This is too weird.

(SHE takes it from him and starts to put it on over her jeans)

FRANK

No, no, put it on as if it were emblematic of your talent. Be right back.

HE EXITS to the bedroom. ANGEL slips off her blouse and jeans and manages her discomfort enough to slip into the dress. Then SHE goes to the mirror and observes herself.

ANGEL

Unreal!

FRANK ENTERS, in his top hat and tails.

FRANK

Voila!

ANGEL

This is too much. You look great!

FRANK

Thanks. And you look ravishing. In fact, a dancing partner fit for the one and only ...

(gestures to photograph of Fred Astaire on wall)

... Fred "Extraordinaire."

(sings)

I DIDN'T KNOW
YOU'D HAVE A GLOW
THAT MAKES ME LONG
TO SING A SONG
AND DANCE WITH YOU
DANCE WITH YOU.

HOW DID YOU
CHANGE SO MUCH
IN A MOMENT OF TIME ...

FRANK

... THAT YOU'D TOUCH
MY HEART AND CLIMB
SO HIGH
IN MY EYES

FRANK (CONT'D)

THAT I LONG
TO SING A SONG
AND DANCE WITH YOU,
DANCE WITH YOU?

(HE takes out one of his treasured 78's.)

AND AS I DO
THE TROUBLED WORLD
WILL GO AWAY.
SO LET THE MUSIC PLAY
FOREVER AND A DAY
AS I DANCE WITH YOU,
JUST WITH YOU.

HE puts on a piece of dance music
from the period he loves. Then he returns
and holds out his arms)

FRANK (CONT'D)

(spoken)

Shall we?

ANGEL

(holds up arms hesitantly)

We shall.

The tune plays, and THEY begin to dance. Soon,
SHE's following his lead well and THEY get carried
away into a collaborative performance of unexpected wonder.

FRANK

That was absolutely astonishing.

ANGEL

I just followed your lead.

FRANK

No, no, Angel. You've got a great talent for not-too-modern dance. You really do.

ANGEL

And what can I do with it?

FRANK

Is mass appeal the measure of all things?

(TELEPHONE RINGS. HE gets it)

Hi, Amy. I got it, right?... I'm too short?... That's nutso! Nobody in the world can do that role the way I can!... All right, all right. I'll get used to it. Disappointment is not an original experience.

(Hangs up; to ANGEL)

You're not gonna believe this.

ANGEL

Why not? I heard it.

FRANK

The wife of the producer is the female lead. She looked at my bio and decided I'm too short for her. But she didn't even see my audition!

ANGEL

Don't worry, Frank. Your time will come.

FRANK

Yeah, when? Assholes, one and all! I'm sorry.

ANGEL

That's one of the things that makes you right for the part. You're so old school.

FRANK

And what are you? New school? Look what that got you – a splendid dance talent like yours, as good as already in the crypt. I can't believe this. How stupid can they be? It's enough to make me hang up my tap shoes.

ANGEL

We've all been there. Maybe it's just not your time. Maybe it's time for us.

FRANK

Us? Don't be so daring. I could take you seriously.

SHE poses in her dress and does an attractive turn.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Why is it that, when I think I'm managing everything, I discover I'm in control of nothing?

LOUD KNOCK on door.

CAL (OFF)

Angel, you in there? Open it or, swear to God, I'll kick in the door.

FRANK

Apparently, it's also time for the eternal cycle of return. He taps upon the door with such grace.

ANGEL

Don't open it.

FRANK

(as he crosses to the door)
You were thinking he might just go away?
(opens it and CAL is there)
Welcome.

CAL

Where is she?
(walks in)

FRANK

You're welcome.
(closes door)
We were dancing, in a former style.

CAL

(sees her in gown)
Ridiculous.

FRANK

Actually, I think she looks enchanting.

CAL

That's because you're lost in a time warp.
(to ANGEL)
Come on, dump the glad rags before you totally lose it.

ANGELA

Why?

CAL

We got a gig tonight.

ANGEL

(sits down gracefully and spreads out her dress)
No, thank you. I choose not to participate.

CAL

Do you know how stupid that sounds – and how old you suddenly look?

ANGEL

Do you know how callow you sound?

CAL

Callow? What's callow?
(to FRANK)
Who are you, some kind of Svengali?
(to ANGEL)
Come on, babes. Let's go.

FRANK

I don't think the lady wants to.

CAL

Butt out, OK?

FRANK

I would like to. Unfortunately, it's difficult in my own apartment. Angel tells me you're a talented musician, went to Juilliard. Has everything you once were been trashed for timely fame and glory?

CAL

Cool it, buddy.
(Sees violin in bookcase and goes to it; takes it down)
This yours?

FRANK

It belonged to my father.

CAL

(flicks off some dust)
You should have more respect for it.
(HE draws bow across the strings; begins to tune violin; then plays a classical melody with surprising feeling)
Not a Strad, but not bad.
(as HE puts the violin back; to FRANK)
Maybe you're not the only one who's up against it.

CAL (CONT'D)

(to ANGEL)
You wanna hang here, we're through.
(SHE looks down; doesn't answer)
Fine, babes. But, when you start to feel as out of it as you look, let's talk.
(to FRANK)
You look like Dracula, you know that. Dracula!

FRANK
Any more compliments to dispense?

CAL
You are so uncool, man!

CAL stomps out. FRANK closes the door quietly.

FRANK
Overwhelmed with loss?

ANGEL
No, I'm glad he's gone.
(stands)

FRANK
Good. But you're right. He's talented.

ANGEL
He started to play when he was so young his teacher had to tune it for him. But now – well, you know, the odds can really beat you down.

FRANK
Trust me, there's never an excuse for bad behavior. My take is, if you chase an improbable dream, you should love yourself for making the effort.

ANGEL
You do that?

FRANK
I do my best. Disappointment is part of the equation. But, hey, I'm only human. Tell you something, though. Sometimes, when I'm really down and I glance at myself in the mirror with self-questioning ...
(takes hold of his own jaw)

FRANK (CONT'D)

... I grab myself by the jaw and say, "What a guy! What guy for even trying!" And, no matter how tough things get, I try to get through them with grace. And, speaking of grace, my angelic skeptic, shall we?

ANGEL

Dance?

FRANK

I never thought you'd ask.

(HE takes her in his arms and they do another wonderful dance together and end with a deeply felt kiss)

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

Blue Neon restaurant. WAIT-STAFF, sitting around,
despondent, FRANK among them.

MANAGER ENTERS

MANAGER

Hey, what a scrappy, happy bunch! I'm afraid to let the customers in. What's up?

WAITER

(points to FRANK)
He didn't get the role.

MANAGER

Hey, that's terrible.
(to FRANK)
I thought you might be leaving us.

FRANK

So did I.

MANAGER

What misfortune prevented your departure?

FRANK

They said I'm not the right height.

MANAGER

Oh, too short? Well, I can't fix that.

FRANK

Thanks, pal.

WAITRESS

Look on the bright side, Frank.

FRANK

How? For me, it's always midnight at noon.

WAITRESS

What about your new girlfriend?

FRANK

I'm crazy about her, but, in many ways, we're worlds apart.

WAITRESS

Frank, you are, by definition, worlds apart.

SECOND WAITER

But the absolute worst thing is –

MANAGER

– He didn't get the role.

WAIT-STAFF

(sings)

WHY DOES FRANK LOOK
AS IF HE'S STARING
OUT OF A HOLE
AS DEEP AS THE DEEPEST
SINKHOLE THERE EVER WAS?
THE POOR SOUL
DIDN'T GET THE ROLE!

OH, WHAT HAS MADE
HIS YOUNG COMPLEXION
PALE AS A BOWL
OF THE CREAMIEST CHOWDER
OUR CHEF WILL EVER BREW?
THE POOR SOUL
DIDN'T GET THE ROLE.

WHY CAN NO WORDS
WE CAN OFFER
SEEM TO CONSOLE
HIM IN THIS, THE DARKEST
HOUR HE'S EVER KNOWN?
THE POOR SOUL,
DIDN'T GET THE ROLE! ...

WAIT-STAFF

... NO, NO,
HE DIDN'T GET THE ROLE!

MANAGER

OK, can we find a way to make happy?
(points to door)

Look! Any moment, customers. Remember service with a smile?

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT II

Scene 1

ACT II

Scene 2

FRANK's apartment. FRANK and ANGELA are seated at the small dining table, having dinner. Show music in the background.

FRANK

What do you think?

ANGELA

You are such a good cook. Music's not bad, either.

FRANK

Thank you.

(leans over and kisses her)

I'm beginning to feel a troubling affection for you.

ANGEL

You're so romantic.

FRANK

I mean, given our different ways. And yet, against all my instincts for self-preservation, I sense within me the scintillating inclination to care about you – care about you quite deeply.

(spoken)

Are you, by any chance, experiencing the very same sensation?

ANGEL

You mean, the inexplicable whatever?

FRANK

Something like that.

ANGEL

Yep. But I know how my life goes. Good things always seem to go poof.

FRANK

Well, what if for once we decide not to let it happen?

HE gets up.

ANGEL

Do you think that's possible?

FRANK

Well, it seems better than giving up right away, doesn't it?

(sings)

DIFFERENT AS WE ARE,
LET'S WISH UPON A STAR
THAT, IF WE DECIDE
LOVE WON'T GO POOF,
WE'LL ALWAYS BE
BY EACH OTHER'S SIDE.

HE holds out his hand and helps ANGELA stand up.

FRANK & ANGEL (TOGETHER)

DIFFERENT AS WE ARE,
LET'S WISH UPON A STAR
THAT IF WE TAKE CARE
OF OUR LOVE SO WELL
THAT IT GROWS AND GROWS
THEN, DIFFERENT AS WE ARE,
WE'LL HAVE LOVE TO SPARE.

FRANK

HOW DIFFERENT CAN TWO PEOPLE BE?

FRANK

IF I WAS UP ...

ANGEL

... THEN I'D BE DOWN ...

FRANK

... HOW 'BOUT THE EAST?

ANGEL

... THEN I'D BE WEST

FRANK

... A IN THE ALPHABET ...

ANGEL

... IN THAT CASE, YOU CAN BET
THAT I'D BE Z.

I LOVE TO MOVE MY FEET
TO A HARD ROCK BEAT.

FRANK

AND I LOVE TO DANCE AND SING
TO SONGS THAT SWING.
SO WOULDN'T IT BE RETRO ...

ANGEL

... SO EXCITINGLY UNMETRO ...

FRANK & ANGEL

... IF, IN THIS CHANCY WORLD,
WE STUCK TOGETHER
LIKE CRAZY GLU,
AND STAYED TOGETHER
AS LONG AS ONE
AND ONE ARE TWO?

DIFFERENT AS WE ARE,
LET'S WISH UPON A STAR
THAT IF I THINK OF YOU
AND YOU THINK OF ME
AS THOUGHTFULLY
AS WE REALLY OUGHT TO,
THEN, DIFFERENT AS WE ARE,
TRUE LOVE JUST MIGHT COME TRUE!
YES, DIFFERENT AS WE ARE.
TRUE LOVE JUST MIGHT COME TRUE!

ANGEL

I like it – you very odd but entrancing young man.

FRANK

So do I, dear. Shall we dance?

THEY begin to dance again. There is a loud KNOCK at the door. THEY stop dancing.

FRANK

I'll get it, sweetheart.

HE crosses to the door and opens it. CAL is standing there, looking disheveled and disoriented.

CAL

Where is she?
(walks in unsteadily)

FRANK

You're welcome.
(closes door)

CAL

(sees her)
We need to talk. I need you, girl.
(to FRANK)
This chick changes like the wind.

HE passes out. SHE rushes to him.

ANGELA

Cal!

FRANK

(as HE crosses to them)
Is he drunk?

ANGELA

He never gets drunk.

FRANK

Of course, a Puritan. What did he OD on? Cocaine, heroin, ecstasy?

ANGELA

Don't be so indifferent! Can't you see he's in a bad way?

FRANK

I'm sorry. Want me to call EMS?

ANGELA

If this keeps up, we have to.
(tries to rouse him)

2-2-62

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Cal, baby, wake up! Please, for Angela.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT II

Scene 2

ACT II

Scene 3

BLUE NEON restaurant. BILL and BETH
are seated at a table, looking over menus.
FRANK hurries in.

MANAGER

Ah, Frank, almost on time! Your pal and his gal are here tonight. I put them in your section.

FRANK

Thanks.

MANAGER

I told them the tragic news.

FRANK

Which tragic news? Suddenly, I have candidates.

MANAGER

The worst tragedy of all. You didn't get the role.

FRANK

Did you have to do that?

MANAGER

It was a sympathetic gesture.

FRANK

I'm touched. Excuse me.

(goes to BILL and BETH)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hi, Bill... Beth. Sorry I'm a bit late. Domestic spat. That sort of stuff.

BILL

Geese, I'm sorry, Frank.

BETH

I thought you lived alone?

FRANK

Ah, the life that late I led. Now I've got all the complications of a love triangle.

BILL

I wasn't talking about domestic bliss. I mean, about the role.

BETH

Weren't you up for the lead?

FRANK

Yeah, in a revival of *Top Hat*.

BILL

How could they find somebody more suited to that part than you?

(to BETH)

When we were rooming together, he used to play the video of that show so often I threatened to put it in the microwave.

(to FRANK)

Right?

FRANK

Don't remind me. But nothing to be concerned about. I'm a recuperating reject.

BILL

But, Frank, doesn't that kind of tell you something? I mean, if you can't even get that role, what can you get?

FRANK

That's my problem, isn't it?

As THEY take their seats.

BILL

I guess, old buddy. But we aren't getting any younger.

FRANK

So my mother tells me. What would you like to drink?

BILL

The usual.

FRANK

Be right back.

HE departs. WAITRESS comes by.

BILL

(to BETH)
Tough break. Not to get even that role!

WAITRESS

(overhears)
We all feel so bad for him.

WAIT-STAFF overhears her.

WAIT-STAFF

Poor, Frank.
(sing; reprise)
HE DIDN'T GET THE ROLE,
NO, NO,
HE DIDN'T GET THE ROLE!

FRANK

(bit of an outburst)
WHAT DO I CARE
IF I DIDN'T GET THE ROLE?
I'VE GOT TALENT,
TALENT TO SPARE.
SO, HOWEVER YOU SLICE THE CAKE,
(SLICES CAKE WITH KNIFE ON DESSERT TABLE)
SOMEDAY I'LL GET A BREAK!

WAITSTAFF & FRANK

YES, HOWEVER YOU SLICE THE CAKE,
SOMEDAY HE'LL (I'LL) GET A BREAK!

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT II

Scene 3

ACT II

Scene 4

FRANK'S apartment. FRANK enters, despondent.

FRANK

(calls)
Angel, I'm home.

No response. HE notices the light is blinking on the answering machine. HE pushes the button.

FIRST MESSAGE, MOM (VOICE)

Frankie, dear, it's Mom again. You know your Uncle Don, the optometrist. He's going to retire in a few years, and he says if you go to optometry school, you can take over his practice free of charge. Your dad said he'd pay for you to go back to school and helping people see better – it's a nice livelihood. No blood. Call me and we'll talk.

FRANK

When will she get it? Oh, God, save me! If there is a God who's involved in our day-to-day lives, please, now is the time to think about show business and my big break.

SECOND MESSAGE, AMY (VOICE)

Frank, Amy, you're gonna love this. I just got a call from the casting director of *Top Hat*. The guy they picked isn't working out in rehearsals. It's so bad even the producer's wife has relented. You've got the role, that is, if you still want it. Give Amy a call in the AM and let's make the bastards pay.

FRANK

(looks up at sky)
Thank you. I didn't think I had influence. I never did before.
(explodes)
If I want it! Aw, man! It's top hat, white tie, and tails for me!
(celebratory dance step or two; calls)
Angel! Great news! I got the role.
(looks in his bedroom)
Angel?

FRANK (CONT'D)

(puzzled that SHE is not there, HE walks
back into the living room; see NOTE on
the coffee table; picks it up and READS)

I cannot believe it. My lucky streak is already over. I got the role, I lost the girl.

(sings)

WHY CAN'T TWO THINGS GO RIGHT
FOR ME?

DOES IT HAVE TO BE NOON AT MIDNIGHT
BEFORE TWO THINGS GO RIGHT
FOR ME?

JUST ONCE IN MY LIFE

WHY CAN'T TWO THINGS GO RIGHT?

(spoken)

All right, let's control the apparent disaster. Apparently, the bad guy got the girl. So just sit down and get used to it. She's obviously not right for you. She's only trouble. You know that. So take wing, Angel – and, with any luck, you won't flit by again.

(sings)

I'M USED TO BEING ALONE,
ACTUALLY QUITE GOOD AT BEING ALONE –
AN EXPERTLY SELF-SUFFICIENT SOUL,
IDEALLY FREE AND UNQUESTIONABLY WHOLE
ON MY OWN!
AND HAPPILY,
CONTENTEDLY,
OUT OF PLACE
IN THE HUMAN RACE!

(spoken)

The question is, who am I kidding?

HE heads out the door and EXITS, slamming it behind him.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT II

Scene 4

ACT II

Scene 5

A rock club in the Village, not overly grungy. CAL and, if our musicians can cover it, his hard-metal band are on the stage, performing with proverbial adolescent angst. If we are fortunate enough to find an actor who can play the guitar, as well as the violin, HE might be attacking one, as HE barks forth his lyrics. Otherwise, HE can simply shout and strut. ANGEL is with them, dressed in jeans and a faded t-shirt, singing harmony, doing some strutting herself, and, if SHE can manage it, whacking her own guitar.

During their musical intro, FRANK ENTERS. ANGEL notices but keeps performing. HE takes a seat and orders a beer.

CAL & ANGEL (TOGETHER)

(sing)

I WANT TO BE
PART OF THE FLAME,
NOT THE ASHES.
YEAH, YEAH –
PART OF THE FLAME,
ONE OF THE FLASHES
RIGHT AT THE TIP,
MAKIN' IT RIP.

I WANT TO BE
PART OF THE FLAME,
NOT THE ASHES.
YEAH, YEAH –
PART OF THE FLAME,
ONE OF THE FLASHES
MAKIN' IT RAGE
ACROSS THE PAGE.

CAL & ANGEL (TOGETHER; CONT'D)

TODAY
LIFE AIN'T NO GAME,
LOVE AIN'T NO GAME;
I SAY
WITH EVERY BREATH
LIFE OR DEATH –
THAT'S THE NAME
OF WHAT'S IN THE FLAME.

I WANT TO BE
PART OF THE FLAME,
NOT THE ASHES.
YEAH, YEAH –
PART OF THE FLAME,
ONE OF THE FLASHES,
BURNIN' TIME RIGHT.
EACH DAY AND NIGHT.
PART OF THE FLAME,
NOT THE ASHES.
YEAH, YEAH –
PART OF THE FLAME!

The set is apparently over, as the BAND begins to put down their instruments. ANGEL tries to EXIT to the side of the stage. FRANK gets up and goes after her. CAL stops him.

CAL

Slumming tonight, Frank?

FRANK

Obviously. Nice to see you alive again.

(calls)
Angel.

CAL

Take the hint, OK?

FRANK

I need to talk to her.

CAL

Why? She made her decision.

FRANK

What? Under the influence of your habits?

(to ANGELA)

Can we talk?

ANGEL

Sure.

(to CAL)

I'm cool.

(to FRANK)

We can sit down.

FRANK

(as they go)

How about we take a little walk and talk?

ANGEL

I would, but I only have a few minutes between sets.

SHE leads him to a table, and THEY sit down.

FRANK

Would you like something to drink?

ANGEL

A beer.

WAITER comes over.

FRANK

What kind?

ANGEL

(to WAITER)

The usual.

FRANK

Champagne.

WAITER departs.

ANGEL

Champagne? I thought you were sad.

WAITER

That's the best time I drink it. It functions as a pick-me-up. Why did you leave? He pull on your heart strings?

ANGEL

I had to. I'm sorry.

FRANK

But I thought we were kind of getting to –

ANGEL

– We were. But it didn't happen.

FRANK

Come on, Angel, you don't belong with him. I don't care how wild he acted.

ANGEL

It's not him. It's me.

FRANK

I think we both know better than that. We were great together.

ANGEL

We did have fun.

FRANK

So tell him to get used to the loss and come back.

ANGEL

You're so sweet. I don't want to hurt you, baby.

FRANK

You're hurting yourself – and me.

ANGEL

It was too unreal, that's all.

FRANK

What do you mean? I'm real, aren't I?

ANGEL

Frank, sweetheart, you're so unreal it's amazing. I mean, you live in this world that hasn't existed since our grandparents were living it up, and you think it's like today.

FRANK

Style and grace are timeless.

ANGEL

Yes, especially for you, baby.

FRANK

You're right. It works for me. I thought it started to work for you.

ANGEL

It did for a while. It really did. But it was just too far from who I am.

(starts to get up)

Be happy. You're better off without me.

FRANK

Then why am I here? Why are you here?

ANGEL

(gestures to BAND)

I like it.

FRANK

What do you like? You just don't want to hurt Cal.

ANGEL

He's not always angry.

FRANK

I think we found something better.

ANGEL

You only see things one way, Frank. Maybe you should open up.

FRANK

To barbarism?

ANGEL

Well, to me it's –

FRANK

– What? Variations on a theme of self-destruction?

ANGEL

(imitates phrase from Gershwin song "S'Wonderful")
"It's what I like."

(speaking voice)
Did you hear our last number?

FRANK

Yeah. At least, it wasn't another "I love you, baby, You know I do" tune that sounds as if it was written by the record company's accounting department.

ANGEL

That's Cal. He wants to say something. It's a problem.

FRANK

But your real talent –

ANGEL

– I'm not good enough for you. I'm not! And I know what's real, at least, for Cal and me. We can't resell the past. How about you change? I can get you in the band.

FRANK

No thanks.

ANGEL

You are who you are.

FRANK

And glad to be. Get this. I got the role.

ANGEL

You did?

FRANK

Yeah, the guy they picked wasn't working out.

ANGEL

I'm so happy for you.

FRANK

Yeah, but what kind of movie am I starring in? I'm the good guy. Don't I get the girl?

ANGEL

You will, when the right one comes along.

FRANK

I thought you might be her.

ANGEL

So did I, for a while. Gotta go now, sweetie.
(makes to leave again)

FRANK

Hold it. What if you do what you want to do in music, and I do what I want to do, but we stay together?

ANGEL

I wish life was that simple. Honest, I do.

FRANK

(grabs her arm)
What if he goes off on you again?

ANGEL

He promised not to.
(gives him a kiss on the cheek)
You're the nicest guy I ever met. And I'm so happy about the role.

SHE walks away. HE takes a last gulp of his beer, gets up,
and EXITS. LIGHTS come up outside, where we see him
on the street.

FRANK

(spoken)
Alone again. So what?
(sings)
I'M USED TO BEING ALONE,
ACTUALLY QUITE GOOD AT BEING ALONE –
AN EXPERTLY SELF-SUFFICIENT SOUL,
IDEALLY FREE AND UNQUESTIONABLY WHOLE
ON MY OWN!
AND HAPPILY,
CONTENTEDLY,
OUT OF PLACE
IN THE HUMAN RACE!

(spoken)
Ah, humans ...
(sings)
WHAT ARE THEY THINKING OF,

FRANK (CONT'D)

THESE SMARTEST CREATURES OF ALL
WHO SOMEHOW CAN'T WAIT TO FALL
MINDLESSLY IN LOVE?

AS FOR MYSELF, I INTEND TO BE
AS INDIFFERENT AS A TREE –
SOLITARY AND STRONG,
NO MATTER FOR HOW LONG.

ONLY TROUBLE IS,
I'M NOT SURE HOW GOOD
IT WOULD FEEL
TO BE MADE OF WOOD.

AS FOR ANGELA,
DEAR ANGELA,
I CAN EASILY GET ALONG
WITHOUT HER SIREN SONG.

WILL I MISS HER TENDER TOUCH?
HOPEFULLY, NOT THAT MUCH.
AND I'M SURE I CAN DISMISS
HER DELICIOUS MORNING KISS
AND ENJOY COFFEE OR TEA
WITH THE PLEASURE OF SIMPLY ME.

FOR A STROLL DOWN THE STREET,
I CAN GO ON MY OWN TWO FEET.
AND TO BE WITH HER AT NIGHT,
PERHAPS TO ATTEND A SHOW
OR JUST TO SHARE A BITE,
I CAN AS EASILY GO SOLO.

AND WHEN IT'S TIME FOR BED
I CAN LIVE WITHOUT THE FIRE
OF THE CONSUMING DESIRE
THAT SHE IGNITES IN ME
WHEN SHE SWEETLY LEANS MY WAY
TO KISS MY FRETTEED HEAD
AND SOMEWHAT IMPROVE MY DAY.

AND HOW RESTFUL IT IS TO BE FREE
OF THE RELENTLESS SEX

FRANK (CONT'D)

THAT ABSOLUTELY WRECKS
ALL OF MY ENERGY.

AND THEN TO SNUGGLE UP
IN THE COMFORTING WARM CUP
OF HER BODY AGAINST MY OWN.
HOW MUCH BETTER CAN THAT BE
THAN SLEEPING ALL ALONE?
AFTER ALL, CAN I FEEL
MY SENSES REEL
FROM HER NEXT TO ME
OR HEAR A SINGLE PEEP
ONCE I'M SAFELY SOUND ASLEEP?

(spoken)

Oh, no ...

(sings)

WHEN IT COMES THE MATING CALL
I'D RATHER NOT HEAR IT AT ALL.
I CAN DEFINITELY SAY
I WAS WRONG
TO CARE FOR HER;
AND WILL NEVER LONG
TO SHARE WITH HER
ANOTHER DELIGHTFUL DAY.
I'M READY TO MOVE ON
AND WISELY THRILLED THAT SHE'S GONE

(spoken)

Ah, yes ...

(sings)

I'M USED TO BEING ALONE,
ACTUALLY QUITE GOOD AT BEING ALONE –
AN EXPERTLY SELF-SUFFICIENT SOUL,
IDEALLY FREE AND UNQUESTIONABLY WHOLE
ON MY OWN!
AND HAPPILY,
CONTENTEDLY,
OUT OF PLACE
IN THE MISGUIDED HUMAN RACE!

END OF ACT II

Scene 5

ACT II

Scene 6

Blue Neon restaurant. Meal in progress. BILL and BETH at a table. MANAGER is talking with them.

MANAGER

Welcome back.

BILL

Thanks. Great food. Where's Frank?

MANAGER

Should be here any minute. I'll send him over as soon as he gets here.

BILL

Great. Been thinking and decided to offer him something real.

MANAGER

Bless you. Do not change your mind. He's not a happy camper here.

BILL

The question is, will he agree to success?

BETH

What do you think?

MANAGER

What can I say? I'm on my knees.

(to passing WAITRESS)

Anyone seen Frank yet?

WAITRESS

No. But I'm sure he'll be here soon.

(to BILL and BETH)

Can I get you some bottled water?

BILL

Pellegrino – and the wine list.

WAITRESS

Be right back.

BETH

Do you think he'll take the job?

BILL

Only Frank knows. Let's just enjoy dinner.

FRANK comes skipping in, with his wait outfit on but wearing his cordovans.

MANAGER

(to FRANK)

About time. Your college buddy is here.

(confidentially)

He's got some big news for you.

FRANK

What?

MANAGER

Not sure. Maybe a chance to escape from your humble beginnings.

(looks down; sees his cordovans)

Frank, how many times do I have to tell you? Wear black shoes!

FRANK

(smiles; pinches MANAGER's cheek)

I promise this is the last time you'll see me in these. Like it or not, this is parting night.

MANAGER

Is that a promise?

FRANK

No, it's a necessity.

MANAGER

Why?

FRANK

I did, after all, get the role.

MANAGER

Hallelujah! This is our lucky day!

FRANK goes to BILL and BETH

FRANK

Hi, there.

BILL

Hi, buddy. Can we order? She's starving, and so am I.

FRANK

Sure. What about drinks?

BILL

We already ordered. Got menus?

FRANK

Be right back. I'll get you some bread.

BILL

Thanks.

(FRANK heads off; turns to BETH)

Who would've thought that after all these years I'd be the one who offers the sucker a break?

FRANK returns with a bread basket and two menus. Heads back.

FRANK

Here ya go.

(puts down bread and gives them menus)

Would you like to hear about tonight's specials?

BILL

Sure, but later. Frank, I've been thinkin', and I want to talk with you about a job opportunity. It's time for you to give up on this show biz dream and –

FRANK

– Thank, Bill. I totally agree.

BILL

You do?

FRANK

No doubt about it. I've had it with the dream.

2-6-80

BILL

I never thought I'd hear you say that, Frank. What happened? Finally, fed up, huh?

FRANK

Not exactly.

BILL

Then what?

FRANK

I got the role.

(picks up a roll from the basket)

And I don't mean sourdough.

BILL

What role?

FRANK

The lead in *Top Hat!* So, my friend, the dream has become a reality.

BILL

Hey, Frank, fantastic!

(to BETH)

Isn't that just great?

BETH

Wonderful.

BILL

Well, old buddy, it's about time. Congratulations!

FRANK

Thanks. Hey, first there was Fred Astaire. Now, there's Frank Conover.

(does a quick dance step)

A star is born!

WAITRESS

A star? What star?

FRANK

Twinkle, twinkle little me. I got the role!

WAITRESS

You got the role?

What role?
SECOND WAITER

The one I was up for.
FRANK

The lead in *Top Hat*?
SECOND WAITRESS

Yeah! The “tall” guy wasn’t working out.
FRANK

You should be ecstatic.
SECOND WAITER

I am, but only half ecstatic.
FRANK

Why?
WAITRESS

I lost my girl. We broke up.
FRANK

Too bad. But think about it: you got the role.
WAITRESS

Thank God. Released! I have found my release!
MANAGER

(to MANAGER)
WAITER
One day you’ll be able to say you knew him way back when.

We all will! You’ll be a star!
WAITRESS

And, best of all, my kind of star!
FRANK
(sings)
NOW I KNOW WHAT I’VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

WAIT-STAFF

(sing)
NOW HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S BEEN WAITING FOR!

FRANK

... I GOT MY BREAK.

WAIT-STAFF

HE GOT HIS BREAK!

FRANK & WAIT-STAFF (TOGETHER)

AND I (HE) COULD GO SO FAR
I'LL (HE'LL) BECOME A STAR!
A BRIGHT NEW SHINING STAR!

Just then there is a disturbance at the door. CAL ENTERS
with ANGEL.

ANGEL

(to ANGEL)
Off the wall, Cal! You are totally off the wall!

CAL

Look who's talking!

FRANK

(sees them)
Excuse me. I work here.
(to ANGEL)
What's going on?

CAL

You wrecked her, that's what!
(to ANGEL)
Totally wrecked!

ANGEL

Who wrecked what?

FRANK

Can we talk outside?

MANAGER hurries over.

MANAGER

(to FRANK)
Friends of yours?
(to CAL and ANGEL)
Excuse me. I have to ask you to quiet down or leave the premises.

CAL

This will only take a minute.
(to FRANK)
Take her back!

FRANK

I thought you couldn't live without her?

CAL

I'm over it.

ANGEL

Are you sure about that?

CAL

Trust me, Angel, I will survive.

ANGEL

What about the band?

CAL

You're no longer a member.

ANGEL

Says who?

CAL

Says the leader of the band.
(to FRANK)
You gotta take her off my hands.

MANAGER

Frank, do like the man says.

FRANK

How can I? She left me for him!

2-6-84

MANAGER
Get over it, Frank.

CAL
Do what's right, will ya?

FRANK
(to CAL)
Who are you to talk about that?
(to MANAGER)
I'm just getting used to living without her.

MANAGER
(to BILL, BETH, and other diners)
Sorry about this, folks.
(to FRANK)
Outside, Frank, please.

FRANK
Can we oblige my boss?

CAL
Just take her. I'm on my knees.

FRANK
I thought you two were joined at the backbeat?

CAL
I didn't know how much she changed.
(to ANGEL)
You lost your groove. Completely lost it.

ANGEL
Did I?

CAL
There are certain accusations you can't defend yourself against.
(to FRANK)
All she does is whistle show tunes. I can't deal with it anymore. Please, she's all yours.

MANAGER

Look, why don't we let the lady decide what she wants? Then maybe we can conclude this interlude. After all, this is a classy joint.

(to ANGELA, as HE points to CAL)

You don't want to be with him? Is that correct?

CAL

No, no, I don't want to be with her.

MANAGER

That's irrelevant.

(to ANGELA, as he points to FRANK)

But, for whatever reason, you want to be with the music man? Right?

(to FRANK)

And the music man definitely wants to be with you. Isn't that right, Frankie?

CAL

Do it, Frank. All she does is yak about her retro life with you.

MANAGER

Great! Signed, sealed, and delivered. The soap opera is over.

FRANK

It's not a soap opera. It's my life. I'm not a flake. I have feelings. I need to ruminate.

ANGEL

(to FRANK)

You mean, you don't want me back?

FRANK

I'm to blame? No, no, you can't get away with that! Who left who?

MANAGER

Lady, find a way to make nice, will ya?

ANGEL

What for? I don't need either one of them.

MANAGER

You don't?

ANGEL

No. They don't need me; I don't need them. I'm out of here.

(starts to leave)

MANAGER

Excellent!

(points to door; to FRANK and CAL)
Follow her to the ends of the earth!

FRANK

Hold it! Who said I don't need you? I just need to know what you truly want.

MANAGER

Tell him, will ya, Angel?

ANGEL

(mulls things over; quoting PORTER song)
"In my fashion."

(SHE does a brief, slow, lovely show-style dance; ALL applaud)

CAL

(to FRANK, referring to ANGEL)
See what I mean? Hopeless!

MANAGER

(to FRANK)
So, Frank, quick – what do you say, pal?

FRANK

I say ...
(holds out arms to her)
... what could be more eloquent than dance?

(SHE rushes to him and they embrace)

MANAGER

Great! Signed, sealed, and delivered. Movie over! Boy gets girl; girl gets boy – and we're back to dinnertime. OK?

CAL

(to FRANK)
She tells me you got the role?

FRANK

Yeah.

2-6-87

CAL
Have fun.

FRANK
Thanks.

ANGEL
But, Cal, what about you?

CAL
Me? I can finally get back my focus.

(sings)
INTO THE WALL,
THAT'S ALL!
STRAIGHT AHEAD,
'TIL I'M DEAD.
THAT'S ALL!

GOTTA BREAK THROUGH
TO THE OTHER SIDE
AND SEE WHAT'S THERE;
UNSPOKEN THINGS,
LOCKED UP INSIDE,
WE NEED TO SHARE.

INTO THE WALL,
THAT'S ALL!
STRAIGHT AHEAD,
'TIL I'M DEAD.
THAT'S ALL!
YEAH, THAT'S ALL!

CAL EXITS.

FRANK
Actually, an interesting guy.
(arm around ANGELA)
Welcome back, Angel.

ANGEL
Thanks. But I have a problem.

FRANK

A problem? Already?

ANGEL

Yes, and I need to spend some time on it.

MANAGER

Can you spend time on it later?

FRANK

What kind of problem?

ANGEL

Dance steps I'm starting to remember.

FRANK

Really?

ANGEL

Yeah.

(does a little turn)

I haven't done that since music school.

FRANK

Wow, I can't believe it. "Some Enchanted Evening." I get the role – and the girl.

(sings)

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
OUT OF THE NIGHT
COMES THE LIGHT!
THE SUDDEN GLOW
OF A BRIGHT NEW DAY
THAT'S HERE TO SAY
YOUR LIFE IS GONNA TURN OUT RIGHT!

ANGEL

(sings)

YOU FOUND THAT SPECIAL SOMEONE,
THE ONE WHO SHINED
YOUR WAY WITH LOVE,
JUST LIKE THE SUN ABOVE.
AND AFTER ALL
THE PAIN AND TEARS,
DOUBTS AND FEARS
THAT YOU RECALL –

FRANK & ANGEL (TOGETHER)

(sing)
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
OUT OF THE NIGHT
COMES THE LIGHT!
THE SUDDEN GLOW
OF A BRIGHT NEW DAY
THAT'S HERE TO SAY
YOUR LIFE IS GONNA TURN OUT RIGHT!

YOU KNOW THAT SPECIAL SOMEONE
... THE ONE WHO SHINED ...
YOUR WAY WITH LOVE,
JUST LIKE THE SUN ABOVE,
IS THERE TO BRIGTEN EVERY DAY
AND HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY.

YES, THEN YOU KNOW?
OUT OF THE NIGHT
COMES THE LIGHT!
THE SUDDEN GLOW
OF A BRIGHT NEW DAY
THAT'S HERE TO SAY
YOUR LIFE IS GONNA TURN OUT RIGHT!
YOUR LIFE IS GONNA TURN OUT RIGHT!

FRANK

(spoken; to ANGEL)
Shall we dance?

ANGEL

Shall we?

HE takes her hand. THEY do a splendid dance.

WAIT-STAFF

(joins in; sings, dances)
HEY, WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
HE GOT THE ROLE;
HE GOT THE GIRL –
AND THEY'RE BOTH AGLOW.
WHAT COULD BE
MORE TOP HAT
THAN THAT!

2-6-90

OH, ISN'T THAT
JUST TOP, TOP HAT!

WAIT-STAFF (CONT'D)

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT II

Scene 6

ACT II

Scene 5

LIGHTS come up as quickly as restyling allows on a full production number – a cast reprise of “Living in a Musical.” Or perhaps the title song from *Top Hat*. FRANK is dressed in top hat, white tie, and tails. Of course, we realize that by now the producer’s temperamental wife has apparently quit, and ANGEL, dressed in a glorious gown, has become his marvelously able dancing partner.

As a practical extension of literary license, the WAIT-STAFF has become the chorus. BILL and BETH, the DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER and PRODUCER can be in the fictive audience. We might even admit the MANAGER and the HOSTESS. As fairy tales allow, everybody seems to be meeting his or her needs and is, as a consequence, exquisitely happy.

CURTAIN

THE END