

AN ENCHANTED APRIL:
a musical

book by
Elizabeth Hansen

music by
C. Michael Perry

lyrics by
Elizabeth Hansen & C. Michael Perry

based on the novel by
Elizabeth von Arnim

ACT I

SCENE 1

LONDON: FEBRUARY, 1922

The insistent SOUND of rain.
A projection of a page out of the
CLASSIFIEDS of the London Times: "To
Those who Appreciate Wisteria and
Sunshine. Small medieval Italian
castle on the shores of the
Mediterranean to be let furnished for
the month of April. Necessary servants
remain. Z, Box 1000, The Times."

(The LIGHTS RISE on: the SMOKING ROOM of
a WOMEN'S CLUB where LOTTY and ROSE sit
at tables on opposite sides; the
luxurious bedroom of LADY CAROLINE; and
on the Victorian sitting room of MRS.
FISHER. All of them read the Times.)

(Simultaneously, they lower their papers:)

#1 - OVERTURE/ALONE ON A HILL

LOTTY, ROSE, LADY CAROLINE MRS. FISHER SING:
ALONE ON A HILL AND A MONTH BY THE SEA...

(A HUGE clap of THUNDER.)

#2 - ENDLESS RAIN

ALL WOMEN SING:
RAIN, IT'S ALWAYS RAIN.
NO SUN AT ALL.
NO EMPTY DRAIN.

LOTTY SINGS:
WITH FIVE MORE CHORES MY LIST IS DONE.

ROSE SINGS:
TOO MANY DUTIES JUST BEGUN.

MRS. FISHER SINGS:
I'LL HAVE TO STAY INSIDE AGAIN.

LADY CAROLINE SINGS:
WHEN DID I EVER LIKE THE RAIN?

ALL WOMEN:
 AS IT INVADES MY HOME
 I STAY INSIDE AND CLOSE THE DOOR.

LADY CAROLINE SINGS:
 THE RAIN IS SEEPING;

LOTTY AND MRS. FISHER SING:
 JUST WEeping ON THE FLOOR.

(They all sigh audibly.)

LOTTY SINGS:
 I CANNOT BREATHE.

LOTTY AND ROSE SING:
 I'M THUNDERSTRUCK.

LOTTY, ROSE AND LADY CAROLINE:
 I SCREAM INSIDE.

LOTTY, ROSE, LADY CAROLINE AND MRS. FISHER:
 I'M ALWAYS STUCK HERE WITH THIS RAIN...

LOTTY, MRS. FISHER AND ROSE SING:
 THIS STIFLING RAIN...

LOTTY AND ROSE SING:
 THIS ENDLESS RAIN.

(The LIGHTS on MRS. FISHER and LADY CAROLINE
 fade. ROSE sighs. LOTTY crosses behind her
 and gazes the page ROSE reads.)

LOTTY
 Are you reading about the medieval castle and the wisteria?

ROSE
 Are you speaking to me?

LOTTY
 Yes. Are you reading about the medieval castle and the wisteria ?
 I see that we're on the same page, so I just wondered.

ROSE
 There are many things on this page.

LOTTY
 Yes, but this is the only thing worth reading.

ROSE
 Are you a member of this club?

LOTTY
 Yes! Only just. My husband made me join.

LOTTY (Continued)

(Realizing.)
You're Mrs. ArBUTHnot.

ROSE

AR-buthnot.

LOTTY

I've seen you...on Sunday. In church every Sunday. You march in the poor and the needy.

ROSE

I don't think I "march" them in.

LOTTY

Oh, yes you do. Every Sunday, efficiently like clockwork. I don't know how you do it, all those children, it's quite remarkable, but you do.

(They both go back to their papers.)

"Wisteria and sunshine." Just reading it makes me feel better. And...it's such a miserable day...

#3A - JUST THINK/WISTERIA & SUNSHINE

ROSE

It's February. It always rains in February.

LOTTY

And March and April...

LOTTY SINGS:
JUST THINK...

ROSE SINGS:
RAIN!

LOTTY SINGS:
MY DREAM...

ROSE SINGS:
RAIN!

LOTTY SINGS:
I WANT...

ROSE SINGS:
WISH...

LOTTY AND ROSE SING:
TO SEE SUN AND FLOWERS!

LOTTY SINGS:
TO FLY...

ROSE SINGS:
FLEE...

LOTTY SINGS:
TAKE WING...

ROSE SINGS:
WING!

LOTTY SINGS:
AND SOAR...
OVER BRIDGE AND TOWERS.
A MEDIEVAL CASTLE,

ROSE SINGS:
IT'S NOT FOR ME!

LOTTY SINGS:
NEAR VIEWS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA,

ROSE SINGS:
IT'S JUST FOR THE RICH,
AND THE BOURGEOISIE,

LOTTY SINGS:
AN INCREDIBLE DABBLE IN LUXURY.

ROSE SINGS:
TO GET AWAY EVERYDAY
IS AN INDULGENCE I FEEL I MUST DECLINE.

LOTTY SINGS:
A RUNAWAY HOLIDAY GIFT TO MYSELF
WHERE THERE'S MORE THAN SUN THAT'S SHINING!

(ROSE allows herself the indulgence of
wishing about it.)

LOTTY SINGS:
AFTERNOON NAPS WITH A DIP IN THE SEA
JUST BEFORE SUNSET HOVERS AND LINGERS!

ROSE SINGS:
MORNINGS WITH FLOWERS?

(LOTTY nods.)

LOTTY SINGS:
AND WALKS ON THE BEACH
AS THE SAND RUNS THROUGH MY FINGERS!

(Talking to ROSE.)

LOTTY SING:

IMAGINE THE LIGHT AND THE FRAGRANCE, TOO,
 FOR CASTLE GUESTS LOOKING FOR ROMANCE: WHO
 ABIDE NEAR THE SEA: AN ENTRANCING VIEW,
 SO ENCHANTED BY RIPPLES OF DANCING BLUE.

LOTTY (cont.)

It's such a wonderful thought? An Italian castle full of flowers
 and—

ROSE

Yes, but it's no use wasting one's time thinking of such things.

LOTTY

Oh, but it is! And just the considering of "such things" is
 worthwhile in itself and sometimes I believe—I really do
 believe—if one considers hard enough one gets things.

ROSE

Who are you?

LOTTY

Oh, yes, how stupid of me. I'm Mrs. Wilkins. Mrs. "Mellersh"-
 Wilkins. Mellersh is my husband. I work for Mellersh which is why
 "wisteria and sunshine" seems so wonderful.

ROSE

You work for your husband?

LOTTY

Yes.

(She pulls out a long memorandum.)

Pick up Mellersh's shirts, pick up Mellersh's collars, pick up
 Mellersh's boots, pick up Mellersh's books, I pick up Mellersh's
 everything.

(She stuffs the paper back in her pocket.)

Cook his dinner, wash his clothes, clean his house.

(Sighs.)

It's never ending.

ROSE

But that's not work. Those are loving duties a wife performs for
 her husband.

LOTTY

It feels like work. Mellersh is a solicitor and very handsome.

ROSE

That must be a great pleasure to you.

LOTTY

Well, I don't look at him that much, but I suppose. Mellersh has
 seen you at church as well.

ROSE

Really?

LOTTY SINGS: [PROMINENT]
 IF WE ARRANGE THINGS,
 CAREFULLY PLAN,
 LIE TO OUR HUSBANDS...
 I SEE US THERE!

ROSE SINGS: [SUBDUED]
 WHY WAS SHE LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?
 WHAT IS SHE THINKING?
 WHY DOESN'T SHE
 LEAVE ME ALONE?

ROSE
 Really, Mrs. Wilkins—

LOTTY
 Let's get it?!

MUSIC STOPS ABRUPTLY.

LOTTY (cont.)
 Let's rent it! Hire it! Have it! Not just sit here and say how beautiful and then go home to Hampstead without lifting a finger—go home just as usual and see about the dinner and the fish just as we've been doing for years and years...

(Frenzied.)

And will go on doing for years and years! In fact, I see no end to it!

ROSE
 Shh!

LOTTY
 (A yelling whisper.)
 There is no end to it! Why, we would really be unselfish to go away and be happy for a little because we would come back so much nicer!

ROSE
 But we don't know each other.

LOTTY
 But just think how well we would if we went away for a month! And I have a nest egg, and I expect so have you...

ROSE
 But my nest egg?

ROSE SINGS:
 I COULDN'T, I SHOULDN'T,
 I WOULDN'T, JUST USE IT FOR ANYTHING.
 TO SPEND IT ON ME
 NOT THE POOR OR THE SICK IS UNTHINKABLE.

IT'S TRUE, ITALY, WOULD BE BEAUTIFUL.
 YES, TRUE, ITALY, SOUNDS SO BEAUTIFUL.
 IT'S SELFISH, TO SPEND SUCH TIME IN COMFORT.
 IT'S SINFUL, THOUGH SURE A TRUE DELIGHT.

ROSE (cont.)
 But there are many delightful things in life one would like to do, but why is strength given to one, except to help one not to do them?

LOTTY

When was the last time you did something just for the fun of it? For me it was 1912, the year the Titanic sank. When was the last time you were truly, truly happy.

(ROSE turns away.)

LOTTY (cont.)

Mrs. Arbuthnot. Don't you think it's time to be happy. I can see us there. Sipping tea, the breeze ruffling our skirts. Even if you don't see us there, wouldn't you like to?

(Beat.)

And Mellersh is simply insufferable in February...and all the other months. I can never do anything right around him and he's cross and short tempered and I don't want to go to prison for killing him. And I long for something else! I'm at my wits end!

(Tries not to cry.)

I'm sorry. I don't know what's come over me.

ROSE

It's the advertisement.

LOTTY

Yes... And both of us being so miserable.

(Pause.)

ROSE

I'm wondering...

LOTTY

What?

ROSE

I don't think it would do any harm to answer the advertisement.

(LOTTY brightens.)

ROSE (cont.)

Just an inquiry.

LOTTY

Yes, yes, yes!

ROSE

And it isn't as if it committed us to anything.

LOTTY

No, no, no! Oh, Mrs. Arbuthnot, you can see us there can't you?

#3C - WISTERIA AND SUNSHINE

LOTTY SINGS:

A VILLA ITALIAN, NOT
TOO FAR FROM ROME, WITH
SERVANTS AND SEACOAST:
A SHRINE!
WITH HILLTOP AND CASTLE, AND
ACRES TO ROAM.
LACED WITH WISTERIA AND
SUNSHINE.

ROSE SINGS:

PICTURE ME, BY THE SEA
BASKING IN LUXURY
SERVANTS AT MY CALL.
COULD I BE, ON A SPREE?
WANDERING ON AN ESTATE
WOULD BE ENTHRALLING.

LOTTY SINGS:

AFTERNOON NAPS WITH A
DIP IN THE SEA,
JUST BEFORE SUNSET
HOVERS AND LINGERS.
MORNINGS WITH FLOWERS
AND WALKS ON THE BEACH,
AS THE SAND RUNS THROUGH
OUR FINGERS!

ROSE SINGS:

STAYING ON A,
SEACOAST
WE MOSTLY WOULD
LOUNGE IN THE LIGHT.
COULD I, OR WOULD I?
THE PERFUME IN MY ROOM IN A
CASTLE COULD BE A DELIGHT.

(They move to a writing table. LOTTY
writes as ROSE dictates.)

ROSE

To Mr. "Z" Box one thousand. The Times. Please
send..."particulars."

LOTTY AND ROSE SING:

JUST THINK OF THE TIME I WILL HAVE TO INHALE
ALL THE SCENTS, AS MY SENSES START REELING!
THE FEELING IT GIVES ME I CAN'T QUITE CONVEY;
OF FRAGRANT WISTERIA AND SUNSHINE.

LET'S HOPE FOR
WISTERIA AND SUNSHINE!

(LOTTY exits. The lights on ROSE dim as
a CLAP of THUNDER is heard. ROSE dons
her raincoat. The LIGHTS CROSS-FADE.)

ACT I

SCENE 2

The SOUND of rain intensifies. ROSE moves from the women's club.

#4 - WISTERIA AND...ROSE SINGS:

WISTERIA...MIGHT BE DISTRACTING
 HOW WONDERFUL IF I COULD GET AWAY
 FROM DUTY
 THERE'S TOO MUCH DUTY
 AND LITTLE BEAUTY...
 IF I COULD JUST FLY AWAY
 FROM DUTY; THE POOR.
 AND DUTY; THE SICK. NO BEAUTY
 IN MEM'RIES THAT I CANNOT...

(ROSE crosses into her home, hangs up her coat, puts away her umbrella, and sits. The SOUND of a door opening and closing.)

ROSE

Frederick?

(FREDERICK ARBUTHNOT, dressed in evening clothes, enters.)

FREDERICK (O.S.)

Rose? What are you doing up? Is everything all right?

ROSE

Yes.

FREDERICK

Were you waiting up for me? You haven't done that for years.

ROSE

Were you at a party?

FREDERICK

Yes, at Lord and Lady Dester's? I left you a note.

(He retrieves a note from the table and hands it to her. She reads.)

ROSE

"Rose, a reminder that I will be home later than usual." A reminder? When did you tell me?

FREDERICK

Over a month ago I should think.

ROSE

I'm sorry. I'd forgotten.

FREDERICK

That's why the note.

ROSE

Dester? Are they friends of yours?

FREDERICK

On the fringe. They find me remotely amusing, I think. Certainly you've heard of the Desters? They're in all the papers. Oh, right, you don't read the papers. Anyway, it was their daughter's engagement party to Lord Darlington.

ROSE

The Lord Darlington?

FREDERICK

The very same. Quite a bash, I must say. Everybody was there.

(ROSE looks to him.)

FREDERICK (cont.)

Not to worry, I went as my "nom de plume," so they only know me as B.D. Baxter. Your reputation is quite safe.

ROSE

How reassuring. Have they all read your books?

FREDERICK

Yes, I believe they have.

ROSE

And they still invited you?

(FREDERICK turns away, hurt.)

ROSE (cont.)

And how did B.D. Baxter do? Was he charming? Cavalier? Debonair?

FREDERICK

Me, debonair? No, but I'm flattered you think I could be. Made a good joke or two at dinner, though. Lady Dester laughed. The daughter, Caroline, didn't seem too keen on the whole affair. Kept slipping away from all the leeches and grabbers. A looker that one is.

(ROSE eyes him.)

FREDERICK (cont.)

Not that I've looked! Well, I've looked, but not like with anything in mind. Lord, no. She thinks I'm old and boring.

ROSE

How do you know she thinks that?

FREDERICK

Because she said, "Baxter, you're old and boring."

(An awkward pause.)

ROSE

I wanted to—

FREDERICK

I started a new—

FREDERICK (cont.)

Pardon me.

ROSE

You go first.

FREDERICK

I was just going to say that I started a new book.

ROSE

Really? Does it contain the word "lurid" or "titillating" in the title?

FREDERICK

Neither, actually. I thought you might like it if I tried something different. Something about...us. Something you might want to read.

ROSE

I shan't want to read that.

(He is stung.)

FREDERICK

What did you want to tell me?

ROSE

Never mind. It's foolish. I met with the Vicar.

FREDERICK

Ah, the Vicar.

ROSE

We are to buy boots for the poor. In Cheapside.

FREDERICK

How fortunate for the poor.

ROSE

Frederick, I'm thinking of, well, I'm entertaining the idea of going to Italy for the month of April.

FREDERICK

Are you?

ROSE

Yes.

FREDERICK

Really? You? On holiday?

ROSE

Unless you need me—

FREDERICK

No, no. Do it. Enjoy yourself for a change. How much will you need?

(He moves to the desk and writes a check.)

ROSE

Oh, no, no, no, I shall use my nest egg.

FREDERICK

Nonsense. I have plenty. You may need your nest egg. Would two hundred pounds be enough?

ROSE

Please, nothing so extravagant. One hundred. One hundred would be more than plenty.

FREDERICK

One hundred it is then.

ROSE

You could write the other hundred to the Parish Charities.

(He hands her the check.)

FREDERICK

One hundred pounds. I shall let the Vicar fend for himself.

ROSE

Thank you. But if you need me to stay—

FREDERICK

You should go. I have to start that wretched book tour, anyway.

ROSE

But if you want me to stay, you need only say the word.

FREDERICK

Really?

(He turns from her.)

#5 - EVERYTHING WAS CHANGED

FREDERICK SINGS:

YOU MEAN THERE'S JUST A WORD?

JUST ONE WORD TO CHANGE YOUR TACK?

I'VE TRIED EVERY WORD I KNOW,
 BUT I ALWAYS SEE YOUR BACK AND NOT YOUR
 EYES LIKE ROSIE...
 HAIR LIKE ROSIE...

FREDERICK (cont.)

You'll enjoy Italy.

ROSE
 I used to love to travel...

FREDERICK
 You used to love to travel...

FREDERICK (cont.)

Go. Otherwise you'll be here all alone.

ROSE SINGS:

I'M ALWAYS HERE ALONE
 FROM DAY TO MONTH TO YEAR
 AND EVEN WHEN YOU'RE HERE
 WE SEEM TO BE ALONE TOGETHER.
 AND I LET THAT HAPPEN.

FREDERICK SINGS:

I'M WEARY TO THE BONE
 I FIGHT IT EVERY NIGHT.
 I STAY HERE...I CAN'T WRITE!
 IT'S LIKE WE'RE SIMPLY THROWN TOGETHER.
 AND I LET THAT HAPPEN?

ROSE AND FREDERICK SING:

EVERYTHING WAS CHANGED IN A SECOND.
 THIS WAS NOT THE LIFE THAT HAD BECKONED.

ROSE SINGS:

I LOOK AT YOU AND BY DEGREE
 THAT AWFUL DAY COMES BACK TO ME.
 OH, FRED'RICK...I CAN'T...BEAR IT.

FREDERICK SINGS:

THIS SILENCE, IMPOTENT AND WEAK...
 I ALWAYS TURN THE OTHER CHEEK..
 WHAT'S LEFT BUT TO DESPAIR IT?

ROSE AND FREDERICK SING:

ONCE YOU LEFT...THEN I LEFT...
 AND HERE WE ARE GONE TOGETHER.

ROSE SINGS:

I NEED TO GO...
 IF I DON'T GO...
 I'M SURE I'D NEED TO LEAVE.

I LOVE YOU SO,
 IF I DON'T GO
 THERE WILL BE NO REPRIEVE.

FREDERICK SINGS:
 YOU WANDER TO AND FRO
 I LONG TO LOVE YOU SO
 BUT YOU LEFT YEARS AGO.
 AND WE LIVE HERE ALONE
 TOGETHER.
 DID I LET THAT HAPPEN?

I'M WEARY TO THE BONE
 I FIGHT IT EVERY NIGHT.
 I STAY HERE...I CAN'T WRITE!
 IT'S LIKE WE'RE SIMPLY THROWN
 TOGETHER.
 AND I LET THAT HAPPEN?

ROSE AND FREDERICK SING:
 EVERYTHING WAS CHANGED IN A SECOND.
 THIS IS NOT THE LIFE THAT HAD BECKONED.

ROSE SINGS:
 YOU WROTE THE BOOKS I DREAD,
 I HELPED THE POOR INSTEAD
 I CAN NO...LONGER...BEAR IT.

FREDERICK SINGS:
 HOW CAN I GET IT THROUGH TO YOU
 THAT IT WAS NEVER DUE TO YOU

ROSE SINGS:
 ONCE I LEFT

FREDERICK SINGS:
 THEN I LEFT

ROSE AND FREDERICK SING:
 AND HERE WE ARE GONE TOGETHER.

SO YOU/I MIGHT AS WELL LEAVE,
 LEAVING'S BETTER THAN TO GRIEVE.
 AND IT WON'T BE MISERABLE IN IT'LY
 MISERABLE AS LONDON IS...

FREDERICK SING:
 EYES LIKE ROSIE...
 HAIR LIKE ROSIE...

ROSE SING:
 WE WERE SUCH A PAIR...

(ROSE leaves the room, leaving FREDERICK
 alone. She stops.)

ROSE AND FREDERICK SING:
 EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED.

(The lights BLACKOUT.)

ACT I

SCENE 3

Lights up on the WOMEN'S CLUB.

(LOTTY enters, a letter in hand. ROSE enters from the opposite direction.)

LOTTY

Rose! It's here! It's called San Salvatore and it's owned by a Mr. Briggs of London. It has beds enough for eight, exclusive of servants, three sitting-rooms, battlements, dungeons—we might not need a dungeon but one is always nice to have—and electric light. And it's only...

(LOTTY stands stunned.)

ROSE

What? It's only what?

(ROSE takes the letter and reads.)

Sixty pounds!? And the servants' wages are extra! Then there will be food and the rail out and home!

LOTTY

Don't you have your half in your nest egg?

ROSE

That's not the point! It's a small fortune!

(Reading.)

And the man wants references!

(LOTTY snatches the letter, dismayed.)

LOTTY

References!? The only reference I have is the man who sells me fish. Whatever shall we do?

ROSE

We shall do without!

LOTTY

Without references?

ROSE

Without San Salvatore.

LOTTY

But we can't!

ROSE

We can and we shall.

LOTTY

But Rose...I can see you there! In linen...smiling.

ROSE
Smiling? You see me smiling?

(LOTTY nods.)

I don't understand why I'm doing this, but...we shall find two others to share!

LOTTY
Brilliant! But what about the references?

(ROSE thinks a moment.)

ROSE
I'll take care of the references! You take care of the others!

(ROSE exits. LOTTY moves to the desk, pulls out a piece of paper and writes. As she does...)

Lights rise on LADY CAROLINE in her bedroom and MRS. FISHER in her parlor, reading their newspapers.)

LOTTY
Needed: Women to share just a slice of heaven in April...

MRS. FISHER
Heaven...

LADY CAROLINE
In April...

MRS. FISHER & LADY CAROLINE
Fifteen pounds!

MRS. FISHER
Overpriced.

LADY CAROLINE
Perfect.

(LIGHTS CROSS-FADE to:)

SCENE 4

ACT I

The office of THOMAS BRIGGS.

(Rose enters.)

BRIGGS

A pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Ar-BUTH-not. Thomas Briggs.

ROSE

AR-buthnot. A pleasure. I've come to complete our transaction.
(She hands him an envelope.)
Sixty pounds is your asking price, I believe.

(He opens the envelope.)

ROSE (cont.)

It's all there.

BRIGGS

All of it?

ROSE

Yes. Is that all right?

BRIGGS

Of course.

ROSE

You can count it if you like.

BRIGGS

No, no, that won't be necessary. It just wasn't expected. To whom should I make the receipt?

ROSE

To me. Mrs. Rose Arbuthnot. About the references—

BRIGGS

(He moves to his desk and writes.)

You can send them 'round.

ROSE

But you see, my intention was to pay in advance so that we would have no need of references.

BRIGGS

Really? Is your husband going?

(That takes her by surprise.)

ROSE

Ah, no. I'm afraid that would be impossible. You see...

(It dawns on BRIGGS.)

BRIGGS

Forgive me. I didn't mean to pry. The war took so many young men, didn't it?

ROSE

Yes...it did. There were a great many tragedies because of it.

BRIGGS

I am so sorry. Of course references will not be needed.

ROSE

Thank you. You're very kind.

BRIGGS

It's the least I can do. To be honest, I haven't been to San Salvatore in years, myself. Don't seem to have the time, what with the war and business and all. I'm in Italy often, too. I'm an importer. Fine leather goods. You must tell me if it's not up to snuff.

ROSE

Of course.

BRIGGS

(He hands her a receipt.)

There you are.

ROSE

Thank you, Mr. Briggs.

(She starts to leave.)

Oh, and our plan is to have four of us ladies.

BRIGGS

Four?!

ROSE

They will need no references, I can assure you.

BRIGGS

If they are your friends, I'm sure that goes without saying.

ROSE

Thank you, again.

(She offers her hand. He takes it.)

BRIGGS

My pleasure. If my memory serves, you shall enjoy San Salvatore. In April it's simply a mass of flowers.

(She tries to go, but he holds her hand fast. They gaze at one another a moment.)

ROSE

Ah...

(She looks at her hand.)

BRIGGS

Oh, I am sorry, yes. I suppose you'll need that.

(They smile. ROSE starts out.)

Enjoy the old castle.

(ROSE stops looks back to BRIGGS, smiles,
then continues off.)

Rose Arbuthnot. Rose...pretty name.

#6 - GLANCE AT MEBRIGGS SINGS:SO MANY THINGS TO ATTEND TO.
BEFORE I AM GONE FOR AWHILE.
THE STAFF WILL HAVE SOMEONE TO TEND TO...
AND YOU KNOW, SHE MADE ME SMILE.SO MANY THINGS TO ARRANGE FOR...
THE WAY THAT THE LIGHT CAUGHT HER HAIR...
DON'T BE A HALF-WIT NOW, OLD MAN, DON'T YOU DARE!CAN'T LIVE A FANCY! IT COULD NEVER BE!
THERE ISN'T A CHANCE...
DID I SEE HER GLANCE AT ME?

(The lights...)

BLACKOUT.

ACT I

SCENE 5

The lights rise on the WOMEN'S CLUB.

(LOTTY enters, waving two envelopes.)

LOTTY

We have two responses!

ROSE

Only two?

LOTTY

We only need two. The first is...Lady Caroline Dester!

ROSE

Dester? Why does that name sound familiar?

LOTTY

Because she's Lady Caroline Dester! She's the most beautiful, the most elegant, the most...everything! She's going to marry Lord Darlington, the most decorated war hero in England!

ROSE

Oh, good lord! She's the "looker!"

LOTTY

It's in all the papers—

ROSE

I know who she is. My husband's told me all about her. No, Lotty, we cannot have her.

(The lights rise on LADY CAROLINE'S parlor. The move into it.)

LOTTY

Why?

ROSE

Because...we can't, is all! We can't possibly have her!

LOTTY

Why not! She's the most beautiful, the most elegant the most—

(LADY CAROLINE walks in, a note in one hand, a cigarette in the other.)

ROSE

She'll ruin everything!

(LOTTY and ROSE turn. ROSE is mortified.)

LADY CAROLINE
One of you must be Mrs. Wilkins.

(LOTTY curtsies.)

LADY CAROLINE (cont.)
And you are Mrs. Ar-BUTH-not.

ROSE
AR-buthnot. Mrs. Frederick Arbuthnot.

LADY CAROLINE
I'm Lady Caroline Dester. Would you like some tea?

(LOTTY nods.)

ROSE
No, thank you.
(LOTTY shakes her head.)
We just came round to speak with you about our holiday.

LADY CAROLINE
It sounds just what I'm looking for.

ROSE
But, we have some reservations.

LADY CAROLINE
About?

ROSE
You and us.

LADY CAROLINE
You? Have reservations about me? Shouldn't it be the other way 'round?

ROSE
Perhaps, but it is our holiday.

LOTTY
What she means is, why do you want to go with us?

ROSE
One can only imagine the friends and the excursions one of your station can afford. So why, on earth, would you want to come to so quaint, so remote, so antiquated, a place as San Salvatore?

LADY CAROLINE
Because remote is exactly what I wish.

ROSE
Are you sure? There will be no room for your Lady's Maid.

LADY CAROLINE
Mrs. Arbuthnot. I have no intention of bringing a Lady's maid.

LADY CAROLINE (Continued)

My intention is to be alone.

LOTTY

Then a holiday sounds just what you need!

ROSE

(Pointedly to LOTTY.)

Perhaps she might be more comfortable elsewhere.

LOTTY

But Rose...I can see her there, can't you?

ROSE

No, I cannot.

LADY CAROLINE

You know I'm right here.

(LOTTY steps in front of ROSE.)

LOTTY

I can see you there. In the quiet...lounging in the sun...
sorting things out.

LADY CAROLINE

Can you.

ROSE

But perhaps it's not quite what you're looking for.

(Pause.)

LADY CAROLINE

You will receive my share by the morning post. Ta, till then.

(LADY CAROLINE exits. ROSE throws a look
at LOTTY.)

ROSE

Lotty! Why can't you keep what you see to yourself.

LOTTY

I don't know. M-Mellersh wonders that as well.

ROSE

Who is the other one?

(LOTTY opens the other envelope and reads
as the lights rise on MRS. FISHER in her
parlor.)

LOTTY

It's a Mrs. Fisher.

(LOTTY and ROSE walk into the parlor.)

MRS. FISHER

This Lady Caroline person won't be disruptive, will she?

ROSE

I couldn't say.

MRS. FISHER

For I shall not tolerate disruptions of—

(LOTTY points to a photograph.)

LOTTY

Did you really know Tennyson?

MRS. FISHER

What? What did you say?

LOTTY

I said, "Did you really know Tennyson."

MRS. FISHER

Yes, I did. Do you doubt the personal, hand-written signature on my photograph?

LOTTY

No, of course not. Did you know Keats?

MRS. FISHER

No. And I didn't know Shakespeare either.

(LOTTY moves closer staring,
uncomfortably, at MRS. FISHER.)

MRS. FISHER (cont.)

What is it? What are you doing?

LOTTY

I can see you there.

ROSE

Do you see everybody there?

LOTTY

Mrs. Fisher. You must come.

ROSE

She's not feeling well.

MRS. FISHER

What do you mean, you "see" me there?

LOTTY

At the castle, in Italy. I can see you there. In a room overlooking the sea where one can sit and reflect. It will be just what you need.

MRS. FISHER

How could you possibly presume to know what I need?

LOTTY

We all need little peace and quiet every now and again to remember the happier times.

(Beat.)

MRS. FISHER

Very well, I shall come. I shall send round my share of the rent. You may go.

(MRS. FISHER goes off. ROSE and LOTTY
move CENTER.)

ROSE

Well, I suppose there's no getting out of it now. The only thing left is...

LOTTY

Mellersh.

ROSE

All right. Lotty, this is important. You must do exactly as I say. What is his favorite supper?

LOTTY

Fried Cod.

ROSE

Really? That's awful. Well, make it, and a salad and an apricot tart for pudding.

(ROSE exits.)

#7 - "A SOLICITOR'S WIFE" MUSIC STARTS

(LOTTY takes a deep breath. LIGHTS CROSS-
FADE to...)

ACT I

SCENE 6

The WILKINS' FLAT.

(MELLERSH enters, a napkin in his collar,
carrying a plate of apricot tart.)

MELLERSH

Lotty!

(LOTTY enters the FLAT, timidly, maybe
even a little afraid.)

MELLERSH (cont.)

Lotty!

LOTTY

Y-yes?

#7 - "A SOLICITOR'S WIFE" (CONT.)

MELLERSH SINGS:

YOU HAVE OUTDONE YOURSELF,
SIMPLY OUTDONE YOURSELF.
YOU'RE TURNING OUT QUITE NICELY,
QUITE NICELY, FOR ME.

I WAS WORRIED FOR A TIME,
IT WAS QUITE AN UPHILL CLIMB.
IT WAS DIFFICULT TO SEE,
YOU MIGHT, JUST QUITE, TURN OUT TO BE
A HALF-WAY DECENT SOLICITOR'S WIFE FOR ME.

LOTTY (cont.)

I'm...I'm pleased you're pleased.

MELLERSH

Oh, I am. Well, getting there.

(LOTTY begins to clear the table.
MELLERSH takes out a pipe fills it.)

MELLERSH SINGS:

I HAVE AN ADVANTAGE...
YES, AN ADVANTAGE.
A WIFE LIKE YOU IS HELPFUL
AND JUST WHAT I NEED.

NOT TOO PRETTY, NOT TOO PLAIN,
 RATHER BRIGHT, AND NOT INSANE!
 RATHER CLEVER, NOT A FOOL,
 YOU'RE NOTHING TOO OUTSTANDING! YOU'LL
 BE A HALF-WAY DECENT SOLICITOR'S WIFE FOR ME.

THINGS AT THE OFFICE ARE GOING WELL.
 AND APRIL IN LONDON'S A LOT LIKE HELL!
 NORWAY IS COLD. GERMANY'S OLD.

(LOTTY exits into the kitchen.)

FRANCE HAS THE FROGS AND HOLLAND'S ALL BOGS.
 RUSSIA'S NOT THERE. THE IRISH JUST GLARE.
 AUSTRIA, PORTUGAL, SWITZERLAND, HUNGARY ALL TO PLAIN!
 THERE'S SPAIN...NO!
 THAT'S WHY I'M THINKING OF TAKING YOU
 TO ITALY...FOR EASTER.

(A CRASH from the kitchen.)

MELLERSH (cont.)

Lotty?

LOTTY (O.S.)

Yes...

MELLERSH

Are you all right?

LOTTY (O.S.)

Yes...

MELLERSH

Did you hear me? About taking you to Italy for Easter?

LOTTY (O.S.)

Yes...

MELLERSH

Well, I couldn't very well go without you. A second person is always useful for holding things, for waiting with the luggage. Lottie, did you hear me? I'm going to take you to Italy.

LOTTY

(Peeking out.)

Yes, I heard and it's, it's, it's, it's, it's extraordinary, really, quite extraordinary, I was just standing in there marveling at the extraordinary coincidence of it all.

MELLERSH

What?

LOTTY

(Easing into the room.)

You see I was just, you really will never believe it, I was just going to tell you how, how, how I have been invited, a friend has invited me, for Easter as well, Easter is in April, isn't it?

MELLERSH

Yes...

LOTTY

A friend, a good friend of mine has a house there.

MELLERSH

Where?

LOTTY

In Italy. A h-house in Italy.

MELLERSH

As usual, Lotty, I'm not following.

LOTTY

She has invited me to her h-house in Italy for April.

MELLERSH

What part of April?

LOTTY

All the p-parts. Every b-bit of April.

MELLERSH

Well, tell her you can't go!

LOTTY

Why not?

MELLERSH

Because you're going to Italy with me!

LOTTY

How can I go to Italy with you when I'm already there?

MELLERSH

But you're not there!

LOTTY

But I will be!

MELLERSH

Yes, you will be! With me!

#8 - THE JOURNEYMELLERSH SINGS:

I'LL GO GET THE TICKETS
STOP THE POST AND PAPER.
WE'RE LEAVING NEXT WEEK.

LOTTY

No!

MELLERSH SINGS:

IT'LL TAKE ME THAT LONG TO
FINISH UP AT WORK.

(As he sings LOTTY puts on her coat and
affixes her hat.)

LOTTY (cont.)

Mellersh, I said, "No!"

MELLERSH SINGS:

WE'LL LEAVE SUNDAY MORNING
SPEND THE DAY IN BRIGHTON.

LOTTY (cont.)

You're not listening.

MELLERSH SINGS:

WE'LL SIT ON THE BEACH!

LOTTY (cont.)

You never listen!

MELLERSH SINGS:

THERE'S NOTHING TO SAY, LOTTY,
YOU SHALL GO WITH ME!

(She speaks directly to his face.)

LOTTY (cont.)

I-don't-want-to-go-with-you!

(LOTTY exits.)

MELLERSH

Lotty! Lotty! Well...damn.

(The LIGHTS:)

BLACKOUT.

ACT I

SCENE 7

VICTORIA STATION.

(LOTTY and ROSE enter from opposite sides of the stage, coats on and carrying their luggage.)

#8 - THE JOURNEY (CONT.)

LOTTY AND ROSE SING:
HE WON'T EVEN MISS ME

LOTTY SINGS:
HE CAN READ HIS PAPERS!

ROSE SINGS:
AND GO TO HIS CLUB!

LOTTY AND ROSE SING:
IF HE HAD CARED AT ALL

(They see each other and come together
CENTER.)

LOTTY SINGS:
HE'D TELL ME, "GO!"

ROSE SINGS:
HE'D TELL ME, "STAY!"

LOTTY

He is the most infuriating man! I wanted to box his ears! He treats me like, well, he treats me like one of his assistants! No, like one of his secretaries! No, no, even worse! What's worse than a secretary?

ROSE

A maid?

LOTTY

Yes! Or a wife!

(They arrange their luggage into a
train's bench seat.

The SOUND of STEAM then the SOUND of a
TRAIN chugging out of a station is HEARD.

THE MUSIC CHANGES. LOTTY and ROSE sit in
their "seats" and jostle with the
imaginary train.)

ROSE SINGS:
I LEFT A NOTE.

LOTTY SINGS:
I JUST WALKED OUT.
I COULDN'T STAY ANOTHER MINUTE
WITH THAT LOU!

ROSE SINGS:
YES, I HAVE NO DOUBT.

LOTTY SINGS:
YOU DIDN'T EVEN SAY GOODBYE?

ROSE SINGS:
HE'S AT HIS CLUB AND I KNOW WHY.

LOTTY SINGS:
OH, ROSE....

ROSE SINGS:
IT'S ALL AWRY.

(THE MUSIC CHANGES as a BOAT HORN sounds.
The women rearrange their luggage into
"deck chairs.")

LOTTY (cont.)

But Rose, why didn't you just go round to his club. I'm sure he would have wanted to see you.

ROSE

I'm not so sure about it. You didn't say goodbye to Mellersh.

LOTTY

Yes, but you like Frederick. Don't you? I mean, you do don't you?
(ROSE glares at LOTTY, shutting her up.)
I know. Why can't I just keep things to myself.

(LIGHTS RISE on FREDERICK at home reading
Rose's note.)

FREDERICK SINGS:
"DEAR FRED'RICK, I'M HOME IN A MONTH AND THOUGH THERE'S
A DOUBT,
TIME IS A FRIEND WE CAN USE TO SORT ALL OF THIS OUT.
IT SEEMS THAT I'M STUCK AND I CAN'T MOVE FROM HERE
AND IF I CAN'T MOVE IT BECOMES VERY CLEAR
THERE IS NOTHING TO SAVE."

ROSE SINGS:
OH, THAT WAVE!

(FREDERICK stands stunned as the BOAT
HORN SOUNDS. ROSE doubles over seasick.)

LOTTY SINGS:
EASY NOW, BREATHE.

ROSE SINGS:
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT ONCE "I FIND MY LEGS."
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND...

LOTTY SINGS:
UNDERSTAND WHAT?

ROSE SINGS:
WHAT I CAN DO—

LOTTY SING:
HE'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU!

ROSE SINGS:
THIS IS NOT ABOUT FRED'RICK!

LOTTY SINGS:
I SEE THAT IT'S FRED'RICK, FOR YOU!

ROSE SINGS:
THEN YOUR SIGHT IS COMPLETELY DEFECTIVE.
AND WHAT ABOUT MELLERSH AND YOU?
IS YOUR "SEEING" COMPLETELY SELECTIVE?

LOTTY SINGS:
ROSE, YOU ARE CERTAINLY RIGHT.
THERE'S A FLAW IN MY SIGHT.
I NEEDED A MAN NEEDING ME FOR A WIFE
AND I NEEDED A LIFE THAT WAS NEVER THIS LIFE
AND I NEEDED SOME KINDNESS,
I NEED TO BE LOVED WHERE I'M NEEDED!

LOTTY SINGS:
IS THAT TOO MUCH TO ASK?
IS THAT TOO MUCH TO WANT?

ROSE SINGS:
IF YOU WANTED ALL THESE THINGS,
AND YOU NEEDED ALL THESE THINGS,
THEN WHY DID YOU MARRY HIM?

LOTTY SINGS:
BECAUSE HE ASKED.
NO ONE HAD ASKED.
AT LEAST HE ASKED.

LOTTY (cont.)

We both worked for the home office. He was a nice enough chap. We'd talk every now and then and we got on well enough. Then about a year ago, out of the blue, he took me to tea and said that his new firm told him that there wouldn't be a place for him unless he was married. So...he proposed. And before I could stop myself...I said, "Yes." And that was that.

(A moment. THE MUSIC CHANGES as a light rises on MELLERSH.)

MELLERSH SINGS:

A BUTTON IS MISSING. I CAN'T DO WITHOUT!
A DAMNED INCONVENIENCE—WIVES GADDING ABOUT.

(He rips off his jacket and puts on a different one.)

MELLERSH SINGS: (CONT)

WHILE SHE IS AWAY,
I'LL GET WORK DONE TODAY.
I CAN'T DENY IT, I FEAR,
IT'S AWFULLY QUIET IN HERE.

(The lights rise on MRS. FISHER and LADY CAROLINE, on a different train, crammed together; their luggage arranged as train seats. LADY CAROLINE is surrounded by trunks, a cigarette between her fingers.)

MRS. FISHER

Where are we now?

LADY CAROLINE

(Under her breath.)

In hell.

MRS. FISHER SINGS:

HOW LUCKY WE ARE TO HAVE MET ON THE TRAIN.

(She drops her book.)

MRS. FISHER SINGS:

PLEASE FETCH THAT, I CAN'T QUITE, BECAUSE OF MY CANE.

(LADY CAROLINE hands it to her rises and paces and takes a drag on her cigarette.)

MRS. FISHER SINGS:

OH, DO PUT THAT OUT!
AND STOP PACING ABOUT!

LADY CAROLINE SINGS:

IF SHE COMPLAINS ONE MORE TIME;
WOULD MURDER BE SUCH A CRIME?

MRS. FISHER

Where are we now?

LADY CAROLINE

Still in hell.

ROSE SINGS:

WE'RE JUST LEAVING PARIS AND NIGHTTIME IS HERE.

MRS. FISHER

What?!

LADY CAROLINE SINGS:

TORINO! JUST PASSED IT?

MRS. FISHER SINGS:

GOOD LORD, THE FRONTIER!

LADY CAROLINE SINGS:

I'LL KILL HER I SWEAR
TIE HER DOWN TO HER CHAIR
AND DISAPPEAR!

WOMEN SING:

WISTERIA AND SUNSHINE...

PLEASE SAY YOU'RE NEAR!

(Lights rise on MR. BRIGGS' office. He
sits at his desk and checks his watch.)

BRIGGS SINGS:

PAST GENOA TO PISA, WILL THEY SEE THE SIGN?
CAN ROSE READ DIRECTIONS, I'M SURE SHE'LL BE FINE.
SHE'S CLEARLY GOT GRIT,
LIKE THE GIRL WHO'S GOT "IT"
SHE'LL FIND HER WAY THERE!

BRIGGS AND FREDERICK SING:

I'M SUDDENLY SEEING HER EVERYWHERE!

MRS. FISHER (cont.)

Where are we now?

LADY CAROLINE

On a bloody train for bloody ever!

WOMEN SING:

THIS VILLA, ITALIAN IS TOO FAR AWAY.
MUST GET THERE BEFORE I GO MAD!
THOUGH I'VE NEVER DONE IT—I THINK I SHOULD PRAY
BEFORE THIS EXPERIENCE ENDS BADLY.

MEN SING:

ITALY, WITTILY,
SPELLBOUND A WOMAN AND SHE COULD NOT DECLINE!
ADMITTING HERE, SITTING HERE,
WISH SHE HADN'T LEFT FOR THAT DAMNED ITALIAN SUNSHINE!

(LOTTY and ROSE move off the train and
move DOWN CENTER.)

WOMAN SING:

A VILLA, ITALIAN, NOT TOO
 FAR FROM ROME.
 A PLACE TO REPOSE AND
 RECLINE!
 SO WE CAN RETURN SO MUCH
 NICER TO HOME.
 WE'LL BASK IN WISTERIA AND
 SUNSHINE!

MEN SING:

ITALY, WITTILY
 SPELLBOUND A WOMAN AND SHE
 COULD NOT DECLINE!
 ADMITTING HERE, SITTING HERE,
 WISH SHE HADN'T LEFT FOR THAT
 DAMNED ITALIAN SUNSHINE!

(A HUGE CLAP of THUNDER resounds.
 Everyone looks up.)

ALL THE WOMEN

Damn!

BLACKOUT.