

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO - The lights come up on BARRY's office. KAREN walks in first, BARRY comes behind and closes the door.

BARRY

Can I get you something, Miss Sloan?

KAREN

Thank you, I'm fine. I can't stay long, I need to be back in the city tonight. I have a job interview in the morning.

BARRY

What is it you do?

KAREN

I'm a lawyer. Until recently I worked in the district attorney's office.

BARRY

Oh? What happened?

KAREN

(Defensively)

Nothing. Why? What have you heard?

BARRY

(Thrown a bit)

Um, nothing specific.

KAREN

Suffice it to say, not everyone is ready to accept the idea of a female attorney, especially one who is confident, aggressive and keenly aware of her own sexuality. They feel threatened. Intimidated. The sight of a woman's leg turns them to jelly.

(She lifts her skirt and shows her ankle)

Look at that, Mr. Landis. Does that threaten you? Does it intimidate you?

BARRY

Um, those are not the first words that come to mind, no.

(Trying to refocus)

So your father.....

KAREN

Ah, yes. My mother and father met when they were both very young. J.P. was a carnival man at the time. He met my mother when he sold her a jarful of invisible fish.

BARRY

Invisible fish?

KAREN

Yes. He would take a clear jar, dip it in water, and tell people there were invisible fish in it.

BARRY

And they bought it?

KAREN

My mother did. Twelve times. On the thirteenth they were married.

BARRY

Yes, I think that's the law.

KAREN

My grandfather was a wealthy and powerful man and never acknowledged the union. No daughter of his was going to marry a carnie. J.P. was allowed to see me at my birth and then told never to contact my mother again. The irony is that my grandfather lost everything in the stock market crash. J.P. died a richer man than he did.

BARRY

Considering the state of J.P.'s finances, that's not only ironic, but incredibly sad.

KAREN

Indeed. I'm told I was left the only thing of value in my father's estate.

BARRY

Which was....?

KAREN

Half ownership of WZBQ. From what I understand, you own the other half. Apparently, we're partners, Mr. Landis.

(She hands over some legal papers)

BARRY

(Frowning as he looks them over)

J.P. never said anything about this.

KAREN

Based on the little I knew of my father, I seriously doubt he ever expected to die. Now, I've been considering our options. Given the station's limited revenue source, our outstanding debts and liabilities, pressure from competitors and what have you, I've come to the conclusion that our best course of action would be to sell the station, divide up the assets and redistribute the remaining capital. If that is agreeable, I can have the papers drawn up this week.

(She stands)

Well, this was pleasant. If you could just tell me the best way back to Chicago....

BARRY

(Still focusing on the papers)

Sure. Go to Main Street and make a sharp right.

KAREN

Thank you.

(She starts to leave, then frowns)

If I go to Main Street and make a right I'll wind up in the middle of Cougar Lake.

BARRY

Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you meant best for me.

(He tosses the papers aside)

I'm not selling the station. More than fifteen people make their living at WZBQ, I'm not tossing them out on the street.

KAREN

Oh, I see where the misunderstanding is. You think this station has an actual future.

BARRY

In case the news hasn't reached Chicago, we're in a depression. No one's doing very well. It'll turn around.

KAREN

You obviously haven't read the same quarterly reports that I have.

BARRY

(Surprised)

We have quarterly reports?

KAREN

Here are the facts. The ratings are lousy, potential revenue is zero, advertising dollars don't exist and we can't afford any of the popular shows.

BARRY

What, you mean Amos and Andy? Charlie McCarthy? Kate Smith? Who needs them? We provide top notch quality entertainment on practically the same level.

(KAREN turns on the radio)

LAWRENCE

(On the radio, still doing his commentary)

In fact, Marty, many people would be surprised to learn that the string bean is not a bean at all, but rather a legume.

MARTY

You don't say!

(She turns the radio off)

BARRY

I said 'practically' the same level.

KAREN

Face it, it can't be done.

BARRY