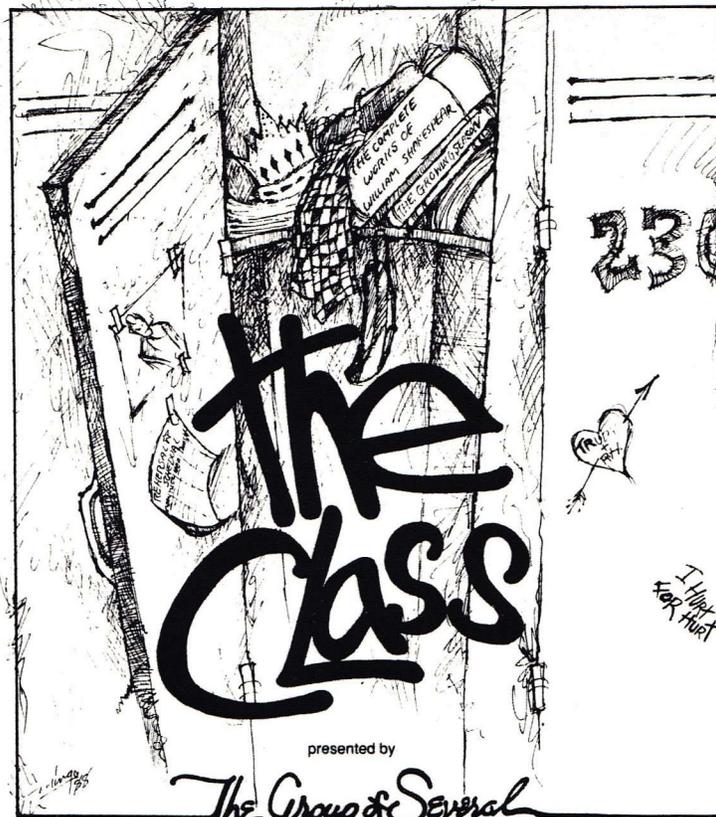


the
class

a musical play
about
growing up

book and lyrics by
PATRICK YOUNG

music by
BOB ASHLEY



presented by

The Group of Seven

A New Musical

Book and Lyrics by **Patrick Young** Music by **Bob Ashley**

Directed by **Simon Johnston**

March 17 - 19, March 23 - 26, 8:00 p.m.
March 20, Matinee 2:00 p.m.
Admission: \$8.00 and \$10.00
March 16 Preview, \$5.00, 8:00 p.m.

Saint Michael's Theatre
121 St. Joseph Street
Box Office 926-7135

A Member of Theatre Ontario ACT-CO

Third Draft, July 1988

(C) Book and Lyrics copyright 1987,88 by Patrick Young
(C) Music copyright 1987,88 by Bob Ashley

for:

Andrew, Bill, Christine, Glenn,
Jennette, John, Lisa, Michael, Paul, Paulina,
Scott, Scott, Shanna, Sheldon, Sheri,
Sherrie, Sherry, Stephen, Suzanne, Trinity --
and all the others who came after.

The Class

was commissioned by the Group of Several
with funds from the Ontario Arts Council,
and the first draft was given a public reading
at Solar Stage, Toronto, in May, 1987,
with financial assistance from Theatre Ontario.

The cast included

Jason Blicher, Diana Cartwright, Julie Lennick,
Nadine MacKinnon, Christopher Martin, Kelly Mullaly,
Greg Ross, and Diane Ticknor,
and the director was Jim White.

The second draft was given a full workshop production
at St. Michael's Theatre, Toronto, in March, 1988,
again by the Group of Several,
with support from the Ontario Arts Council.

The cast included

Diana Cartwright, Leslie Corne, Darlene Dempsey,
Larry Jannison, Julie Lennick, Kelly Mullaly,
Paul D. Smith, and Peter Windrem,
with musical direction by Bill Martin,
choreography by Rob Read, set design by Tony Abrams,
and stage management by Mary Partridge and Mark Lucasiewicz.
Verne Sparks produced, and the director was
Simon Johnston.

The authors gratefully acknowledge
the contributions of them all.

Setting and Context

A white space. Most of the show takes place in the dressing and locker room reserved for the third year graduating class of a small but high-calibre professional actor-training programme, across the hall from the studios in which their classes and rehearsals take place. It is modern and antiseptic: lockers, mirrors, dressing tables, clothes racks; doors up left centre and right centre to the hall (as the room could be divided into men's and women's sides, but never is); doors stage right and stage left to the men's and women's washrooms (with showers) offstage; and an oversize calendar on the wall which ticks off the months to "D-day".

The up left door is marginally closer to the theatre and to the shops and wardrobe downstairs. The up right door is marginally closer to the offices and academic classrooms upstairs, and to the main entrance of the building.

In addition, there is an open downstage area that can serve as anywhere: eg. the "hotseat" in THE HEAD's office, a bus-stop, part of the stage itself, a snowy park, or ELIZA's hospital room. Occasionally scenes or musical numbers can spill from one to the other. But we never see more than a fraction of any location that is outside the room; the rest is left to our imaginations.

Some further circumstances are assumed without being directly spelled out in the text. The school is in a small but unspecified city. The Third Year Class forms the core of a repertory company which presents a well-sold subscription season of four major productions during the year, and supporting roles are filled by the Second Year Class as needed. Production values are high, as the college's programmes in technical theatre and costuming are equally strong, and the shows are professionally designed and directed. Since a full schedule of classes continues throughout all this, the students are generally on deck at least twelve hours a day, six days a week.

The Characters

ELIZA: The youngest of The Class (just turning 18 as the show begins), ELIZA was accelerated in ballet school. She has always been The Class's star ingenue, and is cast as Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Shirley Talley in *Fifth of July* before her expulsion. She is, quite simply, too young to hold out -- at first -- against both her own fears and her stepmother's siege.

SUE: The Class's leading lady, SUE is cast as June Talley in *Fifth of July*, Titania/Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Rizzo in *Grease*, and Raymonde in *A Flea In Her Ear*. Very able, she has also, until now, been so competent and so anxious to be irreproachable that the rest of The Class calls her "Miss Perfect".

LOUANNE: The least cerebral of The Class, and also physically the weakest, LOUANNE has lovely comic character instincts and a big heart; she is cast as Gwen Landis in *Fifth of July*, Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Frenchy in *Grease* and Antoinette in *A Flea In Her Ear*. But, unable to see her own talent, she's terrified of failure.

TRUDY: A funny and often abrasive butterball who wants to be somebody else, TRUDY made it into The Class by the skin of her teeth. She is cast as Sally Friedman in *Fifth of July* (which she botches), Snug/Lion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (which she doesn't), and Jan in *Grease* and Olympe "the Copper-bottomed Contessa" in *A Flea In Her Ear* (in which she wows 'em).

TED: The Class's leading man, and a fine classical actor, TED has always been paired with SUE, and for good reason. He is cast as Kenneth Talley Jr. in *Fifth of July*, Oberon/Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, not Danny Zuko but Doody in *Grease*, and Tournel in *A Flea In Her Ear*. He nearly throws it all away because of his sexual identity crisis.

WHEELDON: The Class's brilliant comic character man, WHEELDON is a hit as John Landis in *Fifth of July*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Roger in *Grease*, and Chandebise/Poche (the lead) in *A Flea In Her Ear*. Having spent two or more years in the army before making his career decision, WHEELDON is the oldest, and now has good control of his craft -- but not of Theatre History, and not of LOUANNE.

THE MAN: Plays Kurt, Bobby, Richard, the Orderly, and the key recurring role of THE VOICE OF THE HEAD.

THE WOMAN: Plays the Therapist, and the recurring role of THE STAGE MANAGER.

MUSICAL SYNOPSIS

ACT I

September

The Class COMPANY
You Have to Believe ELIZA

October

Gimme Hedda TRUDY
What About Us? WHEELDON and LOUANNE

November

Transition ELIZA, WHEELDON, LOUANNE
Who Wants To Be An Actor? LOUANNE, TRUDY, ELIZA, WHEELDON
Here Am I, Alone SUE
Do Something! COMPANY (minus ELIZA)

December

Inner Monologue ELIZA
Please, Sir TED, TRUDY, WHEELDON, SUE, LOUANNE

ACT II

January

Gymnastics/Combat Demonstration THE CLASS (minus ELIZA)
Snow! ELIZA
The Class/Inner Monologue Reprise WHEELDON, ELIZA
The Edge of the Lake TED

February

Valentine's Party WHEELDON, LOUANNE, SUE, TRUDY, TED
Valentine's/Snow Reprise THE WOMAN/ELIZA
You Have to Believe Reprise THE CLASS and ELIZA

March

April

What About Us Reprise LOUANNE
Know Who You Are THE CLASS

-- A C T I --

SCENE ONE: September

Music cue: THE CLASS. Lights up on the calendar, which reads September, and open into the Third Year Room, empty. On top of the lockers are a gift box and a home-made trophy-like object that looks like a torch. ELIZA opens the door slowly and tiptoes into the room, looking around her in some awe. Her gaze falls on the torch; she approaches it. Enter WHEELDON.

WHEELDON: **Eliza--
How the hell are ya?
Look at you!**

(ELIZA has run to him. Enter TRUDY)

ELIZA: **Yodel-Trudy-hey!
Watcha got to say?**

BOTH: **Look at you!**

TRUDY: **Wheelie!**

(Enter LOUANNE)

TRUDY & ELIZA: **Lou!**

(Enter TED and SUE)

ALL FOUR: **Ted!**

ALL FIVE: **And Sue!**

ALL SIX: **Look at us!
Here we are.
Ever think
We'd get this far?
Always seemed
So far away;
Never thought**

Young & Ashley — 2 — THE CLASS

I'd see this day --

ELIZA: **Here, this room, this place,
Is ace, and we've gotta face it:**

ALL: **Here it is!**

DUET OR TRIO: **Didn't we do well,
Dontcha think it's swell --**

ALL: **Gonna hit the biz!**

(Music continues under dialogue)

ELIZA: The Third Year Room!

TRUDY: I gotta pinch myself to believe I'm here!

TED: Look: the "Golden Torch".

SUE: It's ours now -- !

(They haul it down)

TRUDY: Where did this thing come from anyway?

WHEELDON: They made it for some show years ago, and then it
got awarded to the graduating class in some
contest, and they passed it on --

ELIZA: And it became a kind of tradition: --

TED: "Passing the torch" -- you know?

TRUDY: Corny!

SUE: Will it go on?

(It does)

ELIZA: That means we're going to get through, you guys!

WHEELDON: We're not just going to get through, we're going
to be stars! Didn't you all get that letter?

TED: *(pulling it out)* Right here!

(THE OTHERS do likewise)

SUE: An international company! Peter Brook! Josef
Svoboda!

LOUANNE: It's like winning the lottery!

Young & Ashley — 3 — THE CLASS

ELIZA: And after we graduate --

TRUDY: You mean if we graduate!

ELIZA: -- we get to work together for another whole year!

THE CLASS: **Now, this hour, this year,
Is here and we musn't fear it!
Now we dare:
Wishin' on a star,
Gonna go so far,
Ask me if I care!**

TRUDY: What's that box up there?

WHEELDON: *(getting it)* It's from last year's Third Years.
It's for us!

SUE: Is that ever nice!

*(They open it and pull out the contents:
first, a bottle of champagne)*

TED: Look!

LOUANNE: O---h m---y Go---d!

(Now sweatbands)

ELIZA: *(reading a tag)* It says "YOU'LL NEED THESE!"

TED: They have our names on them!

LOUANNE: Isn't that sweet?!

TRUDY: Is there one for me?

ELIZA: Of course.

TRUDY: Well, I'm only here on probation, you know. I
could flunk out at Christmas.

SUE: So could we all!

TRUDY: Miss Perfect flunk out? That'll be the day!

THE CLASS: **When, and where, and why
We fly, we can't prophesy; but
When we do:
Better grab your hat,
Give us watcha gat --
Gonna dazzle you!**

Young & Ashley — 4 — THE CLASS

**We're op'ning up a whole new show --
Put us in a spotlight!
Gonna be a hot night!
With blood and sweat and tears, we know!**

(Maybe referring to the Torch)

**Long as we have got light,
We know how to glow!**

(Enter THE MAN and THE WOMAN to the unspecified downstage area as BOBBY and CHRIS, the Stage Manager. They punctuate a series of "jump-cuts", or quick glimpses)

THE MAN &
THE WOMAN:

Comin' and a-goin' and a-workin' and a-slavin'

LOUANNE: *(displaying her finger bashfully)* It's a diamond.

TRUDY: A tiny diamond.

WHEELDON: So on summer stock pay I'm supposed to be a millionaire?

MAN & WOMAN: **Seein' and a-doin' and a-sinnin' and behavin'**

ELIZA: I got an offer from The Feast, but I wasn't allowed to take it.

TED: Why not?

ELIZA: Too young to serve liquor.

WHEELDON: You should have lied about your age!

MAN & WOMAN: **Lovin' and a-hatin' and a-laughin' and a-cryin'**

LOUANNE: Guess you two're living together again this year?

TED: *(arm around SUE)* Oh, I guess so -- !

SUE: *(squeezing back)* Nothing better to do -- !

LOUANNE: So when are you going to make it legal?

(After a frozen moment, TED laughs uproariously)

MAN & WOMAN:

**de-
Mandin' and obeyin' and a-livin' and a-dyin'**

Young & Ashley — 5 — THE CLASS

LOUANNE: I was working in the nursing home again. Bedpans and wheelchairs, wheelchairs and bedpans. I've forgotten how to act! I just know it!

TRUDY: Well, I wasn't acting either: I was doing musicals.

MAN & WOMAN: **Comin' and a-goin' and a-workin' and a-slavin'**

ELIZA: I wonder who "The Head"'s got for guest directors?

TED: Christopher Newton!

OTHERS: Yeah! *(etc.)*

SUE: Brian MacDonald!

OTHERS: Do it to me! *(etc.)*

TRUDY: *(dreamily)* Steven Spielberg.

(ALL rush to cross themselves or fold their hands in prayer)

MAN & WOMAN: **Seein' and a-doin' and a-sinnin' and behavin'**

WHEELDON: And when we get through all this, we're all going to get our ... ?

THE CLASS: *(waving their letters)* EQUITY CARDS!!!

MAN & WOMAN: **Lovin' and a-hatin' and a-laughin' and a-cryin'**

ELIZA: Images, everybody, images! Singing class with Mary!

(THE OTHERS strike instant poses -- from extravagant opera singers to scratching their heads)

MAN & WOMAN: **de-
Mandin' and obeyin' and a-livin' and a-dyin'**

ELIZA: Voice and Text with Dorothy!

(“Books” in hand, they are all elocutionists.)

MAN & WOMAN: **Comin' and a-goin' and a-workin' and a-slavin'**

ELIZA: Dance with Francine!

(Some turn into Karen Kain, others Bo Jingles, still others tie themselves in

Young & Ashley — 6 — THE CLASS

knots)

MAN & WOMAN: **Seein' and a-doin' and a-sinnin' and behavin'**

ELIZA: Gymnastics with Kurt!

(Now they're all cripples)

MAN & WOMAN: **Lovin' and a-hatin' and a-laughin' and a-cryin'**

ELIZA: Scene Study with "The Head"!

(Beat. They bury their heads)

MAN & WOMAN: **de-
Mandin' and obeyin' and a-livin' and a-dyin'**

THE CLASS: **When, and where, and why
We fly, we can't prophesy; but
When we do:
Better grab your hat,
Give us watcha gat --
Gonna dazzle you!**

TED&WHEELDON: **We're starting on a brand new song --
Don't know what the tune is,
Light as a balloon is.**

THE CLASS: **And maybe you can sing along --
Tell us where the moon is,
Now we're goin'**

THE CLASS: **strong!**
We,
a-
not them,
a-
not they,

THE MAN & THE WOMAN: **Workin' and a-slavin' and a-
Seein' and a-doin' and a-sinnin' and behavin and a-
Comin' and a-goin' and a-workin' and a-slavin' and
Seein' and a-doin' and a-sinnin' and behavin' and
Lovin' and a-hatin' and a-laughin' and a-cryin' --**

COMPANY: **Make hay till the break of day,**

THE CLASS: **'cause**
We
a-
surpass! --
a-
Strong!
de-
And true!

THE MAN & THE WOMAN: **Comin' and a-goin' and a-workin' and a-slavin' and
Seein' and a-doin' and a-sinnin' and behavin' and
Lovin' and a-hatin' and a-laughin' and a-cryin' and
Mandin' and obeyin' and a-livin' and a-dyin' and a-**

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Bold! Comin' and a-goin' and a-workin' and a-slavin' and
a-
And blue! -- Blue!

COMPANY: Lovin' and a-hatin' and a-laughin' and a-cryin' and
de-
Mandin' and obeyin' and a-livin' and a-dyin' and a-
Comin' and a-goin' and a-workin' and a-slavin' and
a-
Seein' and a-doin' and a-sinnin' and behavin' --
Lovin' and a-hatin' and a-laughin' and a-cryin' and
de-
Mandin' and obeyin' and a-livin' and a-dyin'
Bet your ass!

THE CLASS: THE MAN & THE WOMAN:
We are ... They are ...

COMPANY: **The Class! The Class! The Class --- !!**

(Exit THE MAN and THE WOMAN. The Class has finished the number in a formal arrangement in the open downstage area. Now suddenly they are in individual specials. "The Head", played by THE MAN, is a disembodied voice)

THE HEAD: I called you in as soon as I saw that letter you've all received. Stupid thing was so vaguely worded, it could easily be misunderstood. Now of course, there is only one position available for a graduate of this school. Nobody misunderstood that, did they?

(Shock. Disbelief. Of course they did. In hurried whispers)

LOUANNE: What did he say?

TED: There's only one of them.

LOUANNE: O---h m---y Go---d!

SUE: *(out loud, to THE HEAD)* No.

THE HEAD: Good! Good. Their budget is big, but not that big! Now. Since only one of you can go, I propose to pick whichever one, man or woman, is the top student at the end of the year -- unless that person refuses the honour. And I've got to know now if you will or won't because they're waiting for my word on it. So what I'm asking each of you is, ... will you stand?

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(Pause)

Think carefully before you answer.

(Pause)

Ted?

TED: (instantly) Yes. I'll stand.

(THE OTHERS react)

THE HEAD: Wheeldon?

WHEELDON: Uh -- *(glancing at TED)* Sure. Why not? *(under his breath)* I was kind of counting on it anyway.

THE HEAD: Sue?

SUE: *(beat)* Yes.

THE HEAD: Louanne?

LOUANNE: O---h m---y Go---d! *(gesturing in alarm to THE OTHERS)* I can't -- I don't -- ... OK.

THE HEAD: Trudy?

TRUDY: You're asking me?

THE HEAD: I'm asking you.

TRUDY: Is a bear Catholic? I mean -- Hell, yes!

THE HEAD: And how about our little scene stealer? Eliza?

ELIZA: *(with a glance at THE OTHERS)* Sure! I'll just ... have to check with my mo -- my folks.

THE HEAD: I see. Let me know by tomorrow, then. Well, thank you, everybody. Work hard, and every one of you will have a chance. See you in class!

(The specials fade as The Class wanders back to the Third year Room. Music cue: THE CLASS REPRISE)

THE CLASS: **Bet your ass ...
We are:
The Class. The Class. The ...**

(WHEELDON angrily crumples his letter)

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into a ball and tosses it across the room. TED carefully tucks his into an inside pocket. SUE slides hers into a notebook. TRUDY, who has folded hers up very small, is trying to hide it. And LOUANNE is startled to discover she has turned her letter into paper dolls! ELIZA can't decide what to do with hers. Pause)

TRUDY: I still can't believe he's letting me compete against you guys.

LOUANNE: Well I don't want to compete! I'm going right back to his office and telling him I withdraw!

TED: No, wait a minute, Lou. Are you telling me that if I won, you'd hate me?

LOUANNE: No, of course not! I'd be happy for you!

TED: Well, I'd be happy for you, too. It'd take every ounce of control in my body, but I'd be happy for you! *(Strangling an imaginary victim)*

(THE OTHERS laugh, with a little relief)

ELIZA: We'd all be happy for each other, wouldn't we?

WHEELDON: Yeah, Louanne.

ELIZA: I mean, we've been living out of each other's pockets for three years almost. There's just us left out of the twenty in first year, and we're still together.

SUE: We're not going to let a stupid contest change that, are we?

ELIZA: Change us?

LOUANNE: Well ...

(Pause)

WHEELDON: *(determined to pull the mood up somehow)* Let's all go for a brew, guys!

TED: I'm with you, buddy! Sue?

(THE OTHERS echo him ad lib and start to move)

Young & Ashley — 10 — THE CLASS

SUE: I'll lend you my extra ID, Eliza.

ELIZA: Great! Hang on a sec', OK? I just have to call home.

SUE: You're not living at home, are you?

ELIZA: Have to! Back in a minute!

(Exit ELIZA. THE OTHERS collect bags etc.)

LOUANNE: Can you believe we start classes tomorrow? --

TRUDY: Hey, you guys, look! The audition notice for first term!

(ALL scramble for it. Ad lib "Let me see!" etc. Several simultaneous strains of conversation in the hubbub. A:)

LOUANNE: Fifth of July! We're doing Fifth of July!

TED: And Midsummer Night's Dream. Oh god. Wouldn't you just kill to do Oberon?

SUE: Or Titania!

LOUANNE: You'll get June Talley in July. I just know it. And Ted'll get Kenneth --

WHEELDON: -- The Lunts! --

TRUDY: -- And I'll be stuck with the aunt. What else is new?

(B:)

WHEELDON: What's that crazy guy's name? The record producer?

TED: John Landis?

WHEELDON: That's the one! That one's mine!

LOUANNE: We have to be ready in two days!! O---h m---y Go---d!

SUE: Why didn't we ask "The Head" about directors?!

(C:)

TRUDY: Get your pens out! Sign-up time!

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TED: Damn, I can't do that one Wednesday, I've got Shakespeare class.

SUE: I'll trade you if you want.

WHEELDON: Got your purse, Louanne?

LOUANNE: Coming!

TRUDY: Do you think I should do my Phoebe again for whoever-it-is? Huh? Is anybody listening?

WHEELDON: Brew! Brew! Brew! Brew!!

(TED joins him. Over the ruckus, re-enter ELIZA)

ELIZA: I can't come.

THE OTHERS: Aw -- !!!

ELIZA: It's OK, no big deal. There'll be other times.

WHEELDON: Well, we're letting you off this once, OK? Come on, everybody!

ELIZA: Have fun, guys!

(Ad lib noisy exit for all but ELIZA. Music cue: strains of THE CLASS introduce YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE. ELIZA looks around the room, collects her bag, but still can't decide what to do with the letter. Her eyes fall on the torch. She pulls it down from its position and turns it on again)

**If today you feel as if you're off to start
On a highwire hanging in the air,
With a tiny parasol to still your heart
As the only thing that keeps you there --
Then remember somebody's been here before
And you're not the first to find the way;
And if they got through it and went on to more,
You may live to see another day....**

**You have to believe
That someone out there wants you --
Have to believe
That you'll get through.
You have to believe
So nothing out there daunts you;**

And God knows I do.

You have to believe!
Hold on to your umbrella!
Have to believe
In Peter Pan.
You have to believe
That you've got feathers, fella;
And you know you can!

When the big top's folded and the day arrives
That a blank wall stares you in the face,
And you wish you'd lived another hundred lives
To know how to join the human race --
Is your clown nose polished?
Is your hem in line?
You forgot your courage?
Well I'll lend you mine.
You've got all twelve numbers
Ready on demand --
With your heart in your mouth
And your hat in your hand! --

You have to believe
That someone out there wants you!
Have to believe
That you'll get through!
You have to believe
So nothing out there daunts you;
And God knows I do!

Oh yes, I'm sure I do....
Do you?

ELIZA tucks the letter into her bag, plants a kiss on the base of the torch, returns it to its position, switches out the lights, and goes. And the calendar flips to October.

SCENE TWO: October

*Morning, too early. Empty room.
Enter SUE, up stage left. She re-
moves an article or two so that she
is in exercise clothes.*

SUE: (trying a stretch) Ow! (she tries another) Oh my god. Help!

*(Suddenly the stage right washroom door
slams open. Enter TED, dripping wet and
dressed in a towel)*

TED: Jesus Christ!

*(Enter WHEELDON, also dripping and towel
clad, also from stage right. NOTE: none
of this is perceptible to SUE, who is in
a different time frame)*

WHEELDON: I'm sorry.

TED: Jesus Christ.

WHEELDON: I'm sorry. Really.

TED: What did you -- ? I can't believe you did that.

WHEELDON: I ... uh ...

TED: I mean who did you think you were dealing with here? *(pause)* Have I ever given you any reason to think -- ?

WHEELDON: No! No, of course not!

TED: Well you were way out of line, man. You were truly and completely out of line.

WHEELDON: I guess so. I'm sorry.

TED: I mean, I don't care what you do. I don't care what you do.

WHEELDON: Sure.

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TED: Just as long as you don't do it to me!

WHEELDON: Hold on here! Wait a minute! Just what do you think I did? I mean, we're standing there in the shower, which we have done literally hundreds of times, you splash your goddamn cold water on me again --

TED: It helps my circulation.

WHEELDON: I know, I know. -- I go to scrub your back, which I have also done hundreds of times, and all of a sudden you're through the ceiling! So just what do you think I did? Eh?

TED: I'm sorry. I thought -- .

WHEELDON: I know what you thought, I know what you thought, I get the picture! *(beat)* Does Sue know you have thoughts like this?

SUE: Ow! *(she changes position and tries another one)*

TED: Like what, Wheeldon?

WHEELDON: Like ... you know what I mean.
(Enter LOUANNE, up stage left with bag)

LOUANNE: *(crossing to the other washroom door)* Hi.
(SUE wiggles her fingers. Exit LOUANNE to the washroom, stage left)

WHEELDON: OK, forget it. But if you feel like talkin', buddy, you just holler. OK? ... OK?

TED: Sure, Whee.

WHEELDON: Now hadn't you better get that soap out of your hair? I will stay at the opposite end of the shower room; I won't come anywhere near you!
(TED and WHEELDON cross slowly to the washroom stage right and open the door)

Last one dry is a fruit!

TED: Help! Mother!
(They body-check each other back into the washroom. LOUANNE re-emerges from stage left in exercise clothes)

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LOUANNE: I don't want to do this.

SUE: Tell me about it.

LOUANNE: When I got up this morning I almost didn't get up this morning. I thought, "This is it. Game over. I 'll never walk again." I couldn't move!

SUE: I know. Kurt is such a slave-driver.

LOUANNE: He's going to ask me to do a somersault. I know it!

(SUE, who has continued to exercise, starts to giggle)

Don't laugh! It's not funny! Last time I thought I was never going to get off the floor!

SUE: When you got stuck like that -- upside down, with your little face peeking out between your knees --

LOUANNE: *(reacts)* Well, you can do them!

SUE: Barely.

LOUANNE: But you can. And Ted. Ted looks like he's trying out for the Olympics. And Wheeldon -- ! Sometimes I hate him: he can do three somersaults in a row, for God's sake! *(she stretches)* OW!! *(she lies down flat)* I give up.

(Enter ELIZA up stage left, and starts getting ready)

SUE: Great show last night, Eliza.

ELIZA: Thanks.

LOUANNE: Eliza --

ELIZA: Hm?

LOUANNE: How do you do cartwheels like that?

ELIZA: Want me to show you?

LOUANNE: No! No, don't show me. I'll just get depressed.

ELIZA: Oh, come on.

LOUANNE: No. I'm never going to be able to do them anyway,

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so what's the use?

(Enter TED and WHEELDON, dressed, from outside, i.e. the hallway up right)

WHEELDON: Are you guys ready for this?

THE OTHERS: No!

WHEELDON: Whaddaya mean? Don't you just love Gymnastics?

LOUANNE: Perky. He's always so darn perky.

(Everybody settles in to stretch. Groans, etc. Suddenly, enter TRUDY up stage left, and bangs into the washroom without a word)

SUE: Hey! *(pause)* Trudy?

(Re-enter TRUDY)

Something wrong?

(TRUDY bangs over to her locker, grabs something and slams the door. Re-exit stage left)

TED: What on earth is eating her?

ELIZA: Maybe she ran into "The Head".

WHEELDON: Maybe she ran into a door.

LOUANNE: *(who has just tried another stretch)* Maybe she found out she couldn't run!

SUE: Do you think one of us should go in there and see if there's anything wrong?

(TRUDY slams back in and stands glaring at them, hands on hips)

TRUDY: You laughed!

SUE: What?

TRUDY: Yesterday in class. Right in front of "The Head". You all laughed!

SUE: Do you mean --

TRUDY: My very first heroine. I fought and clawed and

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humiliated myself to get him to give me the scene. What do I always get cast as? Old ladies and maiden aunts. Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals*, Sally Friedman in *Fifth of July*. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I'm playing the Lion, for Pete's sake! And you laughed!

TED: But, Trudy ... you were funny.

TRUDY: As Hedda Gabler?!?

WHEELDON: I was killing myself.

(TRUDY reacts)

Sorry.

LOUANNE: You mean you weren't doing it on purpose?

(TRUDY reacts)

I guess you weren't doing it on purpose.

SUE: *(getting up and crossing to her)* Trudy, you were brilliant. I mean it. Nobody could have done what you did.

(TRUDY reacts)

No, come on, don't be like that. Did it ever occur to you that maybe Hedda Gabler is not what you should be playing?

TRUDY: You mean I'm too fat.

SUE: I mean that you are wonderfully and uniquely talented, but you keep hiding it because you want to be somebody else.

TED: Yeah, Trudy, you're funny.

WHEELDON: I don't think "The Head" even knows what you've got.

TRUDY: He knows: --

(Music cue: GIMME HEDDA)

A hundred pounds I don't need and terminal performatitis. It's not fair! I've got a --

ALL: Gland condition!

TRUDY: Every time I try to gain ground with him, I'm outa
luck;
I've got to be the siren and I'm not talkin' fire-
truck!
He won't understand.
He's not for me.

I cry and plead and beg him politely, "Let me if
you can,"
Then ask to play Miranda -- he makes me feel like
Caliban!
So give me a hand --
Or can't you see?

Gimme the Rosalinds and I'll give you ladies
bright!
Unmask me:
Under the Wicked Queens, gonna find a real Snow
White!
You ask me
Why the situation
Drives me round the bend.
Well, I have to ask "Is there no end?!"

When I'm
Dying to die for Juliet, he says "Kill for
Juliet's Nurse" -- !
If anybody else should say that, they're goin' home
in a hearse!
I'm gonna demand
Which role I'll be!
I think it's grand
How pluckily
I tell him,
Up and down and all around town, it's
Time all your leading ladies were for me!

TED: Trudy, it doesn't matter that you're big --

WHEELDON: Go with it! Use it!

SUE: Sooner or later you have to recognize that you
can't be somebody you're not.

TRUDY: Well, I am Hedda Gabler.

*(LOUANNE stifles a giggle. TRUDY rounds
on her)*

Inside!

Tiptoe to his door when I'm sure I've got it in
the bank,

And ask to try Maria -- he tells me "Try Lieutenant Schrank" -- !
I'm getting a block.
It's really sad.

If this keeps up, my trauma count's gonna add up really wierd:
I'd kill for maybe Zeitel, he says "Try Tevye with a beard" -- !
It's really a crock!
It drives me mad!

No more the Mama Rose, 'cause I'm goin' Gypsy's way!
Don't blunder:
Gimme the seven veils and I'll give you Salome!
No wonder
That the situation
Has me callin' names --
When even St. Joan goes down in flames!

And I
Live on pills and diets and fruit juice, but it never halps;
If we did Sound of Music, he'd tell me "You can be the Alps" -- !
And that isn't fair!
It isn't art!
I could prepare
Another part! --
He thinks he's
So damn wise believing his eyes, but
Even a girl my size can have a heart!

(Pause)

Do you know what he said to me yesterday after class? Sometimes he thinks he made a mistake.

LOUANNE: A mistake?

TRUDY: Letting me in on probation. He thinks he made a mistake.

SUE: He makes me mad. He didn't have to say that.

LOUANNE: He told me I was my own worst enemy! What did he mean by that?! I mean how am I supposed to --

ELIZA: Would you believe a block of wood? That's what he called me after class yesterday: "a block of wood."

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WHEELDON: So finally he's making some sense!

SUE: Wheeldon!

ELIZA: No, Sue, he's right. I owe you an apology, Whee. I don't know what got into me.

WHEELDON: Neither do I, but I gotta tell you something: if it does it again, I'll kill ya.

ELIZA: All of a sudden, I felt like I was frozen! I could see you there in the scene, waiting for me to give you something, do something, do anything! But I ... I just couldn't. I'm sorry.

WHEELDON: Just don't let it happen again, OK?

TED: Yeah, Eliza, you better not screw up his chances!

LOUANNE: *(cutting off WHEELDON's outraged reaction)* You guys are really depressing me! I mean, if Eliza's a block of wood, what am I? -- Mount Rushmore?

WHEELDON: Cut it out, Louanne!

LOUANNE: No! It's true! I bet I'm out by Christmas.

TRUDY: Me too. He hates me. The writing is on the wall.

WHEELDON: "The Head, The Head, The Head, The Head": it's this damned competition! We're all starting to think like winners and losers instead of what we should be doing!

TED: As if the end of the year wasn't enough to scare us.

WHEELDON: Who said anything about being scared? --

(Suddenly, enter THE MAN up stage right in a jock outfit as the Gymnastics/ Combat Instructor. Everyone freezes)

THE MAN: What the hell is going on here? I've been waiting for you all for ten minutes!

LOUANNE: *(leaping up to leave)* Oh no!

WHEELDON: Damn!

THE MAN: *(stopping LOUANNE)* I want no fewer than six somersaults in a row from you today, young lady --

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LOUANNE: I'm not warmed up! I'll kill myself!

THE MAN: -- And you don't get out of class until I've seen at least one decent cartwheel.

LOUANNE: A cartwheel?! (going) O---h m---y Go---d!

(Exit LOUANNE)

THE MAN: *(to THE OTHERS)* Well, shall we go then? On the double! Throw your butts into it! Move!!

(THE OTHERS spring into frantic activity, scrambling to collect their things and murmuring "Sorry, sir". Lights start to grow in the downstage area; a bus is heard arriving. Upstage WHEELDON, then THE OTHERS, start to exit past THE MAN. Downstage, the bus re-starts and moves away. Enter LOUANNE to downstage on the run, with coat and bag)

LOUANNE: Oh no! Damn! *(checks her watch)*

TRUDY: *(taking her time; to an imaginary arena full of spectators)* We who are about to die, salute you!

THE MAN: Let's get the lead out, lard --

TRUDY: Don't say it!!!!

(Nose in the air, exit TRUDY, then THE MAN. The cross-fade completes. Enter WHEELDON breathless, catching up to LOUANNE downstage)

WHEELDON: Louanne, where's the fire?

LOUANNE: Pardon me?

WHEELDON: This is the third day in a row you've done this. I'm hanging around after class waiting to walk you to the bus stop, and you just -- head off! Without me!

LOUANNE: It's only a block and a half, Whee. It's not as if I was going to get jumped or anything.

WHEELDON: How do you know that?

LOUANNE: On a busy street in broad daylight?

WHEELDON: The point is that I always walk you to the bus

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stop. Always! And another thing.

LOUANNE: What?

WHEELDON: Yesterday on the way back from Shakespeare class I squeezed your hand.

LOUANNE: You did?

WHEELDON: Of course I did. I always squeeze your hand.

LOUANNE: Well?

WHEELDON: You didn't squeeze back!

LOUANNE: I think you must be imagining things.

WHEELDON: Nope. No squeeze.

LOUANNE: I probably did squeeze a little bit and you just didn't notice.

WHEELDON: Not a bit. Your hand just sort of lay there like a dead fish.

LOUANNE: Did not!

WHEELDON: Did too. You always squeeze back, Louanne!

LOUANNE: Wheelie,... just because ... things have always been a certain way doesn't mean they're always going to be just that same way. I mean ... things can change. I can change. You can change.

WHEELDON: Nope.

LOUANNE: And then if things change, well, they're not going to necessarily be the same all the time. A person can't expect them to be. It's not like it's anybody's fault: sometimes they're just going to come out different. Ly. Differently.

WHEELDON: What -- ?

LOUANNE: I mean you were in the army and then you became an acting student, right?

WHEELDON: Uh-huh....

LOUANNE: So that's one change already, isn't it.

WHEELDON: Y -- uh ...

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LOUANNE: And you didn't meet me until you were an acting student, did you.

WHEELDON: No.

LOUANNE: There! You see?

WHEELDON: What?!? See what, Louanne? What are you getting at?

LOUANNE: Well there you are! If you'd stayed in the army, you'd be with a completely different girl!

WHEELDON: But I'm not!

LOUANNE: *(beat)* Yet.

WHEELDON: What are you saying, Louanne?!?

LOUANNE: Oh, Wheelie. *(pause)* You're gonna win that prize, you know.

WHEELDON: Whoa! Hold on! We're barely half way to Christmas!

LOUANNE: But you are. And then you'll be off to the other side of the world for God knows how long, and when you get back you're going to be a star, and running around all over the country, and then maybe New York, and then maybe Hollywood --

WHEELDON: Wait a minute!

LOUANNE: -- And then I'd end up being a drag on you --

WHEELDON: Louanne!

LOUANNE: -- "Who's that mousy girl?" "His wife." "What does she do?" "Nothing!"

WHEELDON: Louanne, stop it! You're terrific onstage, everybody thinks so -- even "The Head".

LOUANNE: Not from what he says sometimes, he doesn't.

WHEELDON: But what about the other times? *(pause)* Hey! You remember the very first day of classes way back in first year? And we had to start off with Dance?

LOUANNE: Uh-huh.

WHEELDON: And I couldn't believe that the guys had to wear tights? I damn near turned right around and went

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straight back to the army!

LOUANNE: Yes. (*dutifully*) And so you waited until the last second, when the halls were deserted, and then came creeping into class, with your gym bag in front of your crotch --

WHEELDON: -- And there were twenty people sitting staring at me!

LOUANNE: All in tights.

WHEELDON: And then I saw you. And those big eyes. And you didn't seem to think I looked ridiculous.

LOUANNE: No.

WHEELDON: And so I stayed.

(*Music cue: WHAT ABOUT US?*)

You could say that you were responsible for my entire acting career. You see?

LOUANNE: That was then, Wheelie. This is now.

WHEELDON: **Waiting out here in the wings hand in hand --**

LOUANNE: **It's always been that.**

WHEELDON: **Building a castle or two in the sand --**

LOUANNE: **There's nothing in that.**

WHEELDON: **We have lived life out on a limb;
If we fall off we can swim.
I can see our future, and it's marvellous!**

LOUANNE: **Oh, god.
You'd be
Out there, pleasing the crowd all alone --**

WHEELDON: **You right behind me.**

LOUANNE: **No way. I'd be waiting at home by the phone.**

WHEELDON: **Jeez. Don't remind me!**

LOUANNE: **When your star is high on the rise,
Will love still shine in your eyes?
When your life is full of fame and fabulous --
What about us?**

WHEELDON: I have never dreamed she might send me out there
selling all on my own!

LOUANNE: I know he would be better off selling what he's
got alone!

WHEELDON: But if she thinks I would ever leave her behind me
mending socks and sweet as can be,
She's got more things to see!

LOUANNE: Someone tell me what he sees in me!

WHEELDON: Honey,
I'll find a place to stay out of the rain --

LOUANNE: But I won't be there.

WHEELDON: You'll find that coming along's not in vain.

LOUANNE: You won't find me there!

WHEELDON: When you think of all we've been through,
You know you'll want it all too;
I can see you up in lights and glamorous --

LOUANNE: Here's my bus! *(she runs for it)*

(Exit LOUANNE)

WHEELDON: Hey! ...
What about us? What about ... us?

Lights fade to a spot on the calendar.... And it flips to November.

SCENE THREE: November

The hotseat in "The Head"'s office, downstage. The dressing room upstage is relatively dim. And THE HEAD, played by THE MAN, is a disembodied voice. ELIZA presents herself nervously near the hotseat.

THE HEAD: Come in, Eliza.

ELIZA: I'm sorry, I ...

THE HEAD: Sit down.

ELIZA: If you don't mind, I'd rather not. I have to --

THE HEAD: Sit down, Eliza.

(ELIZA sits, on the edge of the chair)

I can't believe what I've been hearing about you lately. You've missed two costume fittings in a row, and you were twenty minutes late for the last one. Now what seems to be the problem?

ELIZA: I didn't ... It was ... I forgot.

THE HEAD: You know what the rules are about costume fittings, Eliza.

ELIZA: Yes.

THE HEAD: What are they?

ELIZA: "A costume fitting call is like a rehearsal call, and the student is responsible for checking the callboard daily to ensure that no calls are missed. Being late for or missing a costume fitting call is as serious as being late for or missing a rehearsal call."

THE HEAD: And what happens if you miss a rehearsal call?

ELIZA: *(in a very small voice)* Expulsion. *(pause)* But I -- I didn't see it there. I'm sorry, I just

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forgot to check. I was taking care of my little sister that day and I just -- I couldn't leave the house.

THE HEAD: You couldn't leave the house.

ELIZA: She's five. She can't be left alone. And my stepmother's got her committees and the Art Gallery Board and when she's out, I have to -- she expects me to --

THE HEAD: What's this, Eliza?

ELIZA: *(after a moment)* A telephone?

THE HEAD: Do you know how to use a telephone, Eliza?

ELIZA: Yes. Yes but, the callboard is downstairs and the office is upstairs and --

THE HEAD: Don't you have any friends who would be willing to run and check the callboard for you?

ELIZA: Well, yes, I guess --

THE HEAD: You guess.

ELIZA: -- I guess I just didn't think of that. *(pause)* But it wouldn't make any difference, you see. I still couldn't go out, not --

THE HEAD: Does remaining in this programme make a difference to you, Eliza?

ELIZA: Yes, of course it does!

THE HEAD: Then why did you miss your dance class Wednesday?

ELIZA: Oh. That! That time I --

THE HEAD: Dance is the one class you're getting good grades in this term, Eliza. All those years in ballet school -- you want to throw them away?

ELIZA: No. No, I don't! I didn't mean to --

THE HEAD: And what about this time that you were an hour late for your Midsummer Night's Dream rehearsal?

ELIZA: I couldn't ... I couldn't get out! I hadn't finished the dishes!

THE HEAD: *(after a beat)* The most difficult scene in the

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play. Twenty-five people waiting for you. For over an hour. Because you hadn't finished the dishes.

ELIZA: *(in a rush)* She says I'm shirking my responsibilities at home. She says I'll never know what it really means to 'devote my life to art'. It's never going to amount to anything anyway, I'm never going to amount to anything anyway, so why should I put it before my family, my little sister, my ... She says I'm ... She says I'm like my mother.

THE HEAD: Your mother.

ELIZA: My real mother. She was an artist. She was talented -- very talented, everyone says -- but she couldn't -- she didn't -- she never amounted to anything, really, ever, and she -- well now and then, maybe, a flash of something, but then she'd go back to being all tangled up in herself and depressed and stuff and finally she ...

THE HEAD: Yes?

ELIZA: She committed suicide.

THE HEAD: I'm sorry.

ELIZA: And I'm so afraid that she's right, my stepmother I mean. I'm so afraid I'm ... like her. Like my mother.

(Pause. Music cue: TRANSITION)

THE HEAD: Eliza, it wasn't your mother who kept twenty-five people waiting the other night.

ELIZA: No.

THE HEAD: And it wasn't your stepmother, was it?

ELIZA: No.

THE HEAD: It was you.

ELIZA: Yes.

THE HEAD: And you're not them, you're you.

ELIZA: Yes.

THE HEAD: Only you can decide what you want, where your

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priorities lie.

ELIZA: Yes.

THE HEAD: Last year I thought you had decided. That's why you're with us now.

ELIZA: *(in a very small voice)* Last year I had a loan. I didn't have to live at home.

(The music has slowly been building pressure. Now suddenly ELIZA breaks into dance: the yen to escape, the feeling of being trapped, rage, frustration, despair, in rapid succession; she holds on pleading)

THE HEAD: I see.

(Enter LOUANNE up left, looking stunned. WHEELDON comes in from the washroom)

WHEELDON: Louanne? Did you look?

LOUANNE: You bet I looked!

WHEELDON: *(grins and starts laying out his make-up)*
**Carmine left and lake goes right;
Pancake for the coming night ...**

LOUANNE: **He's trying to kill us!
I see it all now. Yes:
He's trying to kill us ...**

THE HEAD: I've decided to count your absences as latenesses, Eliza. This time.

(ELIZA dances violent relief and joy, then holds on gratefulness)

WHEELDON: **Carmine right and lake goes ...**

LOUANNE: **He's trying to kill us!**

ELIZA: Thankyou.

THE HEAD: That will pull you back a little bit from the edge. But Eliza ...

ELIZA: Yes?

THE HEAD: You don't have much margin for error. You understand that, don't you.

(ELIZA dances the gamut of violently contrary feelings from murder to adoration, from desperation to hope -- lightning quick changes -- and holds)

ELIZA: Yes. Thankyou, I ... Thankyou. Thankyou.

(ELIZA is backing towards the other scene as the lights cross-fade)

LOUANNE: **He's trying to kill us!
I see it all now ...**

WHEELDON: **Carmine left and lake goes right ...**

(Music out. The cross-fade is complete)

LOUANNE: He's trying to kill us.

WHEELDON: Aren't you being a little extreme?

LOUANNE: I'm serious: I'll never live through it.

WHEELDON: What do you think, Eliza?

ELIZA: Pardon me?

WHEELDON: She's in la-la land again! About the set. Haven't you seen it?

ELIZA: Yes.

WHEELDON: So what do you think?

ELIZA: Well ... it's pretty spectacular, isn't it.

LOUANNE: Spectacular. There you are. Just the way I always wanted to go. After a twenty meter drop, under three tons of steel cable, and with five hundred people looking at me.

WHEELDON: Louanne, they got it safetied in six different directions.

LOUANNE: I don't care. He hates actors. Anybody who could chain-smoke cigars like that in rehearsal, you just know they hate actors.

ELIZA: My stepmother will loathe it. She's a purist.

WHEELDON: What does your stepmother know?

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ELIZA: (beat) Nothing. (*she pulls herself out of it*)
Nothing at all! I think it's probably the most original set for A Midsummer Night's Dream ever invented. The entire fairy kingdom suspended in leafy nets over an acre of real grass? Who else would have thought of that?

LOUANNE: A sadist with an engineering degree?

ELIZA: Did you see it just now when they were trying out that one manoeuvre? It was awesome!

WHEELDON: Everything in blue sidelight and all the nets up there undulating?

ELIZA: It looked just like the ocean!

WHEELDON: Yeah!

LOUANNE: Terrific. I climb twenty metres in the air and what do I get? Seasick!

WHEELDON: Well, you were the one that wanted to play Puck.

LOUANNE: I know! I wanted it so bad. They even asked us at the auditions if anyone was afraid of heights, and I had to keep my big mouth shut. Dumb! Dumb!!!

(*Enter THE WOMAN up left with headset on as Stage Manager*)

THE WOMAN: First technical rehearsal for A Midsummer Night's Dream starting in five minutes!

THE OTHERS: Thankyou!

THE WOMAN: Are you guys ready?

LOUANNE: Ready as we'll ever be.

THE WOMAN: Where are Ted and Sue?

WHEELDON: They're up in the treetops trying to get used to their "leafy bower".

THE WOMAN: They're up in the net now?! Oh my God!

(*Exit THE WOMAN in a panic*)

LOUANNE: You see? We're all going to die!

WHEELDON: Louanne, for God's sake! --

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(Enter TRUDY in a deliberately absurd lion costume. THE OTHERS fall about laughing)

TRUDY: I knew you would do that! I just knew it!

ELIZA: Is that what you're wearing?

TRUDY: They asked me to try it tonight; they want to see if I get grass-stains on the knees. I got news for them: somebody's been watering the lawn.

ELIZA: Really?

TRUDY: Yup. And that stuff, believe it or not, is growing. First theatre I've ever heard of where they're going to have to mow the set!

(Everyone laughs. Enter THE WOMAN again)

THE WOMAN: This is your places call, folks. We're going cue to cue at first in case anything screws up. All set to go?

LOUANNE: Can't wait.

WHEELDON: Did you manage to rescue Sue and Ted?

THE WOMAN: Don't worry, we'll get them. We're forming a human chain.

(THE OTHERS react)

Beginners, please!

THE OTHERS: Thankyou!

(Exit THE WOMAN. Music cue: WHO WANTS TO BE AN ACTOR?)

TRUDY: My God. All those acting schools out there, and I had to pick the one where the set designer thinks he's Josef Svoboda.

LOUANNE: Exactly. I mean who wants to be an actor? They do it to you every time:

**There's a ladder on the set,
An' you're goin' up a rung --
Techies make a bet
That they're gonna get ya hung
On oak.**

And you choke.

TRUDY: When the crew is gonna cook,
Then ya gotta swallow fate;
Coroner will look,
Say "It's something that (s)he ate."
No joke.
So you croak.

ALL FOUR: Who wants to try working as an actor?
Who wants to try something else instead?
Who wants to die?

LOUANNE: Here's another factor:
It really screws your head.

ALL: We'd be better off dead!

ELIZA: You 're tripping on your train,
N' the costumer'll check;
Try it on again,
An' ya break your little neck
Right through.

ALL: Big to-do.

ELIZA: An' the lighting man'll rig
Every special, every spot;
You can do a jig,
Where ya go the spot'll not
Come too.

ALL: Yes, it's true.

WHEELDON: I could have been something in the army.

LOUANNE: I could have been something as a nurse.

TRUDY: I should have been something slightly smarmy --

ALL: 'Cause nothing could be worse!

LOUANNE: We'll go home in that hearse!

WHEELDON: Then they're handin' ya the cheque,
N' you sign your autograph;
Bank it, what the heck --
Every teller needs a laugh!
That's me.

THE OTHERS: He's for free.

WHEELDON: Shoulda listened to my Pop --

**He had all of it so right:
Take a turn on top,
I'm the bottom every night!
No fee.**

ELIZA: **But you see:**

**We could have been anything we wanted.
We could have been something else instead --
But would have been then forever haunted
By dreams inside our head....**

ALL FOUR: **And we'd rather be dead.**

THE WOMAN V.O: Actors onstage, please! Actors onstage!

WHEELDON: Here we go, you guys! Let's have a huddle.

*(They gather as in a football huddle,
arms around each other. Simultaneously,
TED and SUE enter up right, or to the
downstage area, in mid-rehearsal for a
class scene, late on another night)*

SUE: By all my modesty --

TED: Push! You forget yourself!
A woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty!

THE OTHERS: *(with ascending volume)* Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!
Ha! Ha! Ha! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HAAAAA!!!!!!

WHEELDON: Go for it!!

*(Exit WHEELDON, LOUANNE, ELIZA, and
TRUDY up left, tackling and body-check-
ing each other en route. Music out.
TED and SUE continue playing Deflores
and Beatrice-Joanna in The Changeling.
They are good: TED relentless and lust-
ful, prying her defences away; SUE con-
fused, vulnerable, and slowly being won)*

SUE: Think but upon the distance that creation
Set twixt thy blood and mine, and keep thee there.

TED: Look but into your conscience; read me there.
'Tis a true book; you'll find me there your equal.
Push! Fly not to your birth, but settle you
In what the act has made you; y'are no more now.
You must forget your parentage to me:

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Y'are the deed's creature. By that name
You lost your first condition and I challenge you:
As peace and innocency has turned you out,
And made you one with me.

SUE: With thee, foul villain?

TED: Yes, my fair murd'ress.

*(Enter ELIZA and rushes for her script.
WHEELDON pokes his head in after her)*

WHEELDON: Eliza!

ELIZA: There's just this one speech that I'm not sure of.

WHEELDON: Forget it!

*(WHEELDON drags ELIZA out. TED, face
buried in SUE's neck, smothers a giggle)*

SUE: What? What is it?!

TED: I just got a mouthful of hair!

SUE: *(laughing)* Oh, God! Well, if you wouldn't nuzzle
me quite so close at that moment.

TED: *(Dracula act)* I can't help myself!

(TED and SUE both laugh again)

SUE: Seriously, don't you think it's better to save
that for later?

TED: "So soon may you weep me," you mean?

SUE: Yeah.

TED: *(sly grin)* I had something else in mind for that.

SUE: Ooooooooh! Wanna try it again?

(TED is laughing)

Now what?

TED: Last month in Fifth of July, Alain said to me one
night -- You know that moment when I've just
fallen off my artificial legs, and he picks me up
and so on? Well, it worked out a little differ-
ently this particular night, and he ended up
holding me with my face right against his cheek --

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SUE: I remember that night.

TED: -- and he says to me -- under his breath, of course; the audience couldn't see -- he says, "Hey, little boy, want some candy?"

SUE: No!

TED: And then he sticks his tongue in my ear!

SUE: Yecch! The tart!

(They are both laughing)

What a sweetheart that boy is.

TED: Yeah. I don't think there was a dry seat in the house all through the run. Alain wandering around in cutoffs and no shirt on for the whole play. Geez.

SUE: Yeah, isn't he a hunk?

TED: *(stiffening)* You think so?

SUE: Of course! Don't you?

(TED shrugs)

Oh, come on, you're not blind! He's gorgeous.
(she sighs) What a waste.

TED: *(getting up suddenly)* Where were we? "My fair murd'ress"?

SUE: I guess so.

TED: Want me to give you the cue before that?

SUE: Hold it a second. *(she adjusts her rehearsal skirt)*

TED: I am so tired.

SUE: We could work at home.

TED: I hate working at home.

SUE: Tell me about it. *(finishing)* OK.

TED: And made you one with me.

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SUE: With thee, foul villain?

TED: Yes, my fair murd'ress. *(pause; then he bursts out laughing again)*

SUE: What is it this time?

TED: They've hit the Shakespearean Comedy section in second year, and Alain's doing a scene as Sylvius in *As You Like It*? --

SUE: You two certainly got to be friends, didn't you.

TED: Sorry. *(repositions himself)* And made you one with me.

SUE: With thee, foul villain?

TED: Yes, my fair murd'ress. Do you urge me?
By all the sweets that ever darkness tasted,
If I enjoy thee not, thou ne'er enjoyest!
I'll confess all! My life I rate at nothing!

SUE: Deflores!

TED: I shall rest from all lovers' plagues then;
I live in pain now. That shooting eye
Will burn my heart to cinders.

SUE: O, sir, hear me!

TED: She that in life and love refuses me,
In death and shame my partner she shall be!

(They are really into it now. The scene has become very physical and very sensual)

SUE: Stay, hear me once for all --

TED: No! Let this silence thee:
The wealth of all Valencia shall not buy
My pleasure from me.
Can you weep Fate from its determined purpose?
So soon may you weep me.

SUE: Vengeance begins.
Murder, I see, is followed by more sins.
Was my creation in the womb so curst
It must engender with a viper first?

(By now she, at least, is on the floor)

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TED: Come, rise and shroud your blushes in my bosom;
Thy peace is wrought forever in this yielding.
'Las! How the turtle pants! Thou'lt love anon
What thou so fear'st and faint'st to venture on.

(TED starts to make the "exit", but SUE stays wound around him and rooted to the spot. He holds her tactfully, non-plussed)

SUE: Ted.

TED: Yeah? What is it?

(No answer)

Sue?

SUE: What's wrong?

TED: I'm sorry, it's my fault. I'm no place tonight.

SUE: *(pulling back from him at last)* I didn't mean the scene, you idiot. I meant ...

TED: Yes?

SUE: I meant us. I meant us. What's happening to us?

(TED is silent, avoiding her eyes)

Forget it. I'm sorry. Please. I guess I just.... We never get home anyway, but lately it seems like even when I do, you don't. And even when you do, you're still not. There, I mean. You know? I don't know what ... you're thinking or where you're going or even who you are any more and I'm - I'm - I'm ... lonely.

TED: Yeah?

SUE: *(tears in her eyes)* Yeah. There are those endless technical rehearsals for Dream, and this scene for "The Head", and our Gymnastics showcase to plan, and of course the competition, that damned competition, and ... other things.

TED: I know. *(he touches her)*

SUE: You don't, actually. I don't see how you could, you never ask.

TED: I'm sorry. I can't explain it. Not right now.

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Not to you. Ha! Least of all to you!

SUE: Ted, tell me. What is it?

TED: I don't want to talk about it, Sue. And that's it.

SUE: Come on, for God's sake: we're supposed to love each other!

TED: Yeah. That's why -- *(his voice breaks on him)*

SUE: Go on. I'm listening.

TED: *(in a rush)* I've decided to move out, Sue. Sunday. I'm going to crash with Alain for now and look for a place of my own. Some time I'll be able to explain it to you, but not ...

(Exit TED)

SUE: Ted -- !

(Music cue: HERE AM I, ALONE. SUE struggles with her warring feelings for several moments before she can begin to sing)

Here am I, alone. Didn't even see this coming.
Here am I, alone, colder suddenly. It's numbing.
Could I try to hold him here, gamble on a thaw,
Hope that spring will reappear? No,
He won't come I know; he's
Lost in all his snow. So

Here am I, alone. Nothing more to say. It's
winter.
Here am I, alone, playing in a play by Pinter:
Every line is lie for lie; silences are true.
'Cause
Here am I, alone, and there's nothing I can do.

No one to blame when love begins to grow away.
Half of the game is knowing what you must throw
away:
Any thought of needing him, any thought of wanting
Somebody who will share the load,
Lighten the burden,
Give a kind word. Then

Here am I, alone, nothing but the ground below me.
Here am I, alone; only stars around to slow me.
Flying solo, flying high, that's alright by me --

**If
I must live alone, then that's where I'll want to
be!**

(Dressing table lights are fading up for the next scene. Audience laughter fades in over the intercom. We are hearing a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The voice of THE MAN as Demetrius comes through)

THE MAN V.O.: There is no following her in this fierce vein.
Here therefore for a while I will remain.

(A loud snore. More laughter. Enter TRUDY in overalls as Snug the Joiner, carrying her Lion costume, and begins to change into it, while acting out in "lip-sync" what she hears the other actors doing on the monitor)

TED V.O.: What hast thou done?!? Thou hast mistaken quite,
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight!

LOUANNE V.O.: Then fate o'errules that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

(Exit SUE slowly)

TED V.O.: About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find.
By some illusion see thou bring her here.
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

(During the following, TRUDY climbs onto a chair and grasps a mimed "rope")

LOUANNE V.O.: I go, I go, look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the tartar's bow!
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

(TRUDY leaps. Audience applause. Then a sudden echoing metallic twang, a muffled shriek or two, a collective gasp from the audience, followed by uproar. TRUDY is rivetted to the speaker)

TRUDY: Holy Shit! What was that?!

(Exit TRUDY up left, shrugging on the costume as she goes. The next instant ELIZA rushes in the same door, dressed

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as Hermia and in tears. She throws something at her dressing table and gets her coat from her locker. The uproar has faded only slightly)

THE WOMAN V.O.: Would the actors clear the stage, please, so we can work. Clear the stage, please, actors.

ELIZA: Oh no!

(Exit ELIZA up right on the run, grabbing her bag as she goes. Enter up left seconds later TED dressed as Oberon and WHEELDON dressed as Bottom -- wearing donkey ears and a clown nose -- followed by TRUDY. They are very high on adrenalin, and TED is fuming)

TED: *(to TRUDY)* My God, did you see that?

WHEELDON: The thrill of a lifetime!

TRUDY: What happened? Are you guys OK?!?

TED: We'll live -- no thanks to the frigging fly system!

WHEELDON: You know those moments when your whole life flashes before your eyes?

(Dialogue continues with the following V.O. on the intercom in the background)

THE HEAD V.O.: Ladies and Gentlemen, as you can see, we've had a slight mishap. In these days of restricted budgets, some of our fly gallery is not maintained by the university to the level we might wish. We assure you however, that everything about this set is safetied in at least three directions, that further collapse is not possible, and that no one has been even slightly injured. We apologize for both the shock and the interruption, and we ask you to bear with us. It would assist us right now if you would all help yourselves to a second intermission while we sort this problem out. We estimate a delay of less than ten minutes, and we'll let you know as soon as we're ready to proceed. Thankyou.

(Simultaneous with the above)

TED: Sure as hell do! Somebody's going to get sued for this one!

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TRUDY: But what happened?!?

WHEELDON: The net! -- a support gave way somewhere! There I am all wound around Titania in her leafy bower --

TED: I was tight-rope walking on that ridge! --

WHEELDON: -- Yeah, you know, it's like a huge hammock. And we're both half asleep 'cause our next cue is pages away --

TED: What else is new?

WHEELDON: -- and all of a sudden we're in mid-air! The hammock drops out and we're in mid-air!

TRUDY: Holy shit!

WHEELDON: -- and then: Boi-oi-oi-oi-oing! It was like landing in a trampoline!

TED: Fortunately.

TRUDY: You must have been terrified!

WHEELDON: Nah. Excuse me: just gotta change my underwear.

TRUDY: How did you get down?

TED: Scrambled down to the front and flipped off.

WHEELDON: Yeah, just as the S.M. was hollering "Everybody freeze!"

TED: And they'll probably get us for that, too!

WHEELDON: Ted, ease up! We're here, aren't we?

TED: Who are you, Pollyanna?!? We could've been killed!

WHEELDON: Not a chance. *(beat)* I think.

TRUDY: So where are Sue and Louanne?

TED: Sue's just following orders. You know Miss Perfect: they say freeze, she freezes.

WHEELDON: *(suddenly alarmed)* But what about Louanne?

TED: You didn't see her up there?

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WHEELDON: Up where?!?

TED: Wheeldon, Louanne is stuck on her rope -- !

WHEELDON: Aaaaaaaaaagh!!!

TRUDY: No. The one she flies in and out on?

TED: That's the one. Swinging baaaaaaack and fofooorth and baaaaack and fofooorth --

LOUANNE V.O.: Whoooooooooooo-hoooooooooooo!

WHEELDON: Jesus! She'll die of fright!!

TRUDY: Can't they get her down?

TED: Not for a while: the fly lines are all snagged.

LOUANNE V.O.: I'm getting seasick!

WHEELDON: Oh, God!

TED: It's unbelievable. Baaaaaaack and fofooorth and --

WHEELDON: Do something!!

(Music cue: DO SOMETHING!)

Do something!!!

(Exit WHEELDON on the run, TED and TRUDY after him trying to hold him back)

TED: Hold on, Whee; they caused it, let them look after it!

TRUDY: All you can do is get in the way!

TED: She'll be alright as long as she doesn't let go!

(Lights up downstage, where THE MAN as ASM and THE WOMAN as SM are attaching half a dozen pulleys and ropes; SUE is there too, dressed as Titania. One swag of leafy net has flown in above them. We are looking at the stage right wing; the rest of the set -- and LOUANNE -- are understood to be over our heads. Re-enter WHEELDON, TED, and TRUDY to downstage)

WHEELDON: Do something!!!

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THE WOMAN: We're doing everything we can! Would all actors clear the stage please!

THE MAN: (*frantic*) You're in my way! You're in my way!

TED: Come on, Whee, --

LOUANNE: Whooooooooo-hooooooooooooo!!

WHEELDON: (*breaking downstage again*) Omigod, there she is!

(*We can't see her, but onstage the COMPANY's heads follow LOUANNE's swoops through the air above us*)

Hang on, Lou! Don't panic! We're coming!

THE MAN: Wheeldon, please -- !!

WHEELDON: Bobby, don't just stand there dithering, show me the line that's snagged!!!

(*THE MAN does so*)

Aha! Now:

**If you and Trudy haul on 1
And I secure line 5,
It should release line 3
And maybe keep Louanne alive!**

(*They yank. Yank. Yank*)

LOUANNE: Whoa!

WHEELDON: **Now Ted and Bobby pull on 2
And Sue get number 4;
I'll try to handle 3 and 6
And yank a little more!**

(*They yank. Yank. Yank*)

LOUANNE: Whoa!

TED: **Let me try 3 and you try 6.**

THE MAN: **We've left out number 1!**

WHEELDON: **If you don't hang on 2 and 4
We'll never get this done!**

SUE: **No, you take 2.**

THE OTHERS:

Wheeldon! No!!!

**Don't go up there!
You're no use thirty feet in the air!
Let the crew who are trained for the job
Grease the right knob --
Leave it to Bob!
Don't be a clown!
You could kill yourself! Please come back down!
Louanne needs you but here and alive --
Quit it! Survive!**

WHEELDON: *(aloft)* Try number 5!

THE OTHERS: **She's hanging there without a sound --
What happens if she hits the ground?
And now she's laughing like a dope:
Hysterical! -- she's losing hope!**

THE WOMAN: *(at last seeing what WHEELDON is up to)*
**If Sue and Trudy haul on 5
While Wheeldon pries at 3,
An inch or two will solve it;
You can leave the rest to me.
Ted, get on number 6,
And Bobby, stabilize line 4;
If everybody's ready,
Then we'll haul a little more:**

WHEELDON: Pull!

LOUANNE: Whoa!

WHEELDON: Pull!

LOUANNE: Whoa!

WHEELDON & THE WOMAN: Pull!

LOUANNE: Whoa!

WHEELDON & THE WOMAN: Pull!

LOUANNE: Whoa!

ALL: Pull!

LOUANNE: Whoa!

ALL: Pull!

LOUANNE: Whoa! -- Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!

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(LOUANNE has just swooped in on her rope and been caught by THE OTHERS. WHEELDON climbs back down, panting, but is ignored)

THE OTHERS: **What a relief!**
 When we thought you were heading for grief --
 Hanging there on the edge of your grave.
 What a close shave!
 God, you were brave!
 Here, safe and sound!
 Aren't you glad to be back on the ground?

LOUANNE: **Omigod, I was thirty feet tall,**
 Having a ball:
 Look, Mom, I can! --
 Me! Peter Pan!!
 Over the top!
 (to WHEELDON) Why did you stop?
 I was not scared at all!!!

THE OTHERS: She was not scared at all -- ?!?

(WHEELDON collapses -- on the button of the song. Then lights cross-fade as they get WHEELDON up and all but THE MAN stagger back to the Third Year Room. LOUANNE pointedly turns her back on WHEELDON; ad lib hubbub, with the two of them in separate admiring groups)

LOUANNE: I just didn't look down! As long as I didn't look down, I was fine!

WHEELDON: Good old army. Heavy equipment training, you know.

THE WOMAN: Headcount. Gotta make sure you're all here. Ted, Wheeldon, Trudy; OK; Sue, Louanne; OK -- Eliza. Where's Eliza?!

TRUDY: I passed her in the hall when all this started; I thought she was coming to the washroom.

THE WOMAN: *(with the washroom door open stage left)* Eliza! She wasn't under it when it came down, was she?

TRUDY: I told you, I saw her.

TED: Wardrobe, maybe? She might have got grass stains on her frock.

THE WOMAN: *(into her headset)* Bobby, when you get a sec'

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would you hightail it down to wardrobe and get Eliza out of there, please? -- I know, I know. Thankyou! (to THE OTHERS) Stand by for your places call, everybody. We'll be going in minutes.

THE OTHERS: Thankyou!

(Exit THE WOMAN)

LOUANNE: What's going on? Where's Eliza?

SUE: God knows: hiding or something. I would too if I were her!

WHEELDON: Did you see that awful dry just before the accident?

LOUANNE: Where Hermia's supposed to be attacking Demetrius?

TED: God, yeah! She just stood there, staring at him! Poor Alain!

SUE: Alain can look after himself. *(to THE OTHERS)* But Lysander! She was so late for their entrance, he had to come out alone and then stand there improvising -- in iambic pentameter, yet! I couldn't believe it!

WHEELDON: If that little idiot doesn't get it together, she's history.

TRUDY: Her stepmother was in the audience tonight.

LOUANNE: You're kidding.

TRUDY: Nope. Didn't you hear that awful English "ahem! ahem!" every time Eliza did anything? That woman is a real pain.

SUE: Her stepmother thinks we're all colonials anyway. I can imagine what she'd have to say when the set fell down!

THE WOMAN V.O.: All clear, everybody, we're ready to roll. Could we have places, please. We're picking it up where we left off in Act III, scene 2. Beginners, please. Hey you guys, Eliza wasn't in wardrobe. Is she there yet?

WHEELDON: *(flipping a switch on the intercom)* No!

THE WOMAN V.O.: Oh, God, what next? Eliza onstage please! Eliza,

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wherever you are, onstage please! This is beginners, everybody. Beginners, please.

(The following speech to the audience by THE HEAD is in the background on the intercom as dialogue continues)

THE HEAD V.O.: Ahem! Ladies and gentlemen, I'm happy to report that the problem has been solved by our capable technicians and we're ready to begin again -- hopefully without any further mishap! Heh, heh. Thankyou very much indeed for bearing with us, and please take your seats. Please take your seats, ladies and gentlemen. Thankyou.

(After THE HEAD, a round of applause and the sounds of audience settling)

LOUANNE: (as THE HEAD begins) We've got to get out there!

(A flurry of last minute make-up checks etc. during the following)

WHEELDON: We can't go anywhere without a Hermia! Didn't anyone see her at all?

TRUDY: She passed me on her way here, and she was looking like death. That's the last I know.

TED: Trudy, you're not on for a few minutes. Wanna check the studio? That's the only other place I can think of.

(Exit TRUDY)

Even with all her screw-ups, I still can't believe that kid tonight!

WHEELDON: Yeah, what is she gonna do next?! Eliza, where are you?

SUE: What if she doesn't show?

WHEELDON: *(beat)* What?!?

LOUANNE: She said: "What if she doesn't show".

WHEELDON: Aw, come on. She wouldn't. She couldn't. *(pause)* That kid is gonna be hamburger. Hamburger!!!

(Enter TRUDY, panting)

TRUDY: She's not in the studio, she's not in the second

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year room, she's not in wardrobe, and I just ran into Michael and he says she's not up by the office.

WHEELDON: Holy shit.

(The audience is starting a rhythm clap)

LOUANNE: Listen to that! We gotta get out there, you guys!

TRUDY: Omigod, look. Her bag is gone.

TED: *(wrenching open ELIZA's locker)* So's her coat.

LOUANNE: Ohhhhhh -- ! What are we going to do?!

SUE: Would you believe our Stage Manager with book in hand?

TED: You're kidding. And leave Bobby to call the show?!

WHEELDON: Bobby can't call the show!!!

SUE: He can call the show a darn sight better than he can play Hermia! Now come on!

TRUDY: Let's get out there, you guys!

(ALL exit up left in a flurry)

LOUANNE: *(as she goes)* O---h M-----y Go-----d -- !!

SUE: *(as she goes)* Lord, what fools these mortals be!

WHEELDON: *(as he goes)* Hamburger! Hamburger!!!

Moments later, a round of applause over the intercom as the lights fade -- to the calendar, which flips to December.

SCENE FOUR: December

ELIZA is back on the hotseat.

Music cue: INNER MONOLOGUE.

ELIZA: **Oh! Here it comes. I know he's bound to say ...**

THE HEAD: You know it has to happen, don't you?

(ELIZA nods her head but can't speak)

Do I have any choice?

ELIZA: I suppose not.

THE HEAD: The rules are the rules.

ELIZA: **And the friggin' rules are made to break -- made to be broke, made to be broke, made to be broke, made to be broke, made to be broke ...**

**Yes, Mommy, I've been a bad bad girl,
I don't know what to say ...**

THE HEAD: I have no idea what to say, Eliza. I've never had to do this before.... Damn it, I hoped you were going to be the one, despite your age. But all this semester, you've been a mess; and then Dream --! If you were a professional, you'd be fired, fined, tried by a panel of your peers ...

ELIZA: **And when she painted me,
Her brush made sun in golden hair;
That sun is now all I have of her -- I have of her,
I have of her, I have of her, I have of her ...**

THE HEAD: You have nothing to say at all?

ELIZA: *(close to tears)* May I go now, please?

THE HEAD: I'm not going to say this hurts me as badly as it does you, Eliza, because I know better. I'm sorry.

ELIZA: **So, there it goes ...**

*(ELIZA has risen and is backing away.
Lights start to rise -- the Torch inclu-*

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ded -- in the third year room, where THE OTHERS are waiting)

TRUDY: So, anyway, that's what I told him. The second he told me I got through, I laid it right on the line.

ELIZA: Sir?

THE HEAD: Yes?

ELIZA: *(strangled)* I'm sorry, too!

(ELIZA flees. Music out)

TRUDY: I said we're doing Grease and A Flea In Her Ear next term, right? And the leads are Rizzo in Grease and Raymonde in Flea, right? Right, he said. Well, there you are, I said. You got 'em!

(She does a ba-dum-pah dance step. THE OTHERS roll their eyes)

SUE: Puh-lease!

TRUDY: I suppose you think you're going to get them all as usual, eh, Miss Perfect?

LOUANNE: *(quickly)* It's Ted's turn.

TED: I pass.

SUE: Ted, for God's sake --

TED: It was the worst grading interview I've ever had, and I don't want to talk about it, OK?!

TRUDY: Well! Pardon us for living.

LOUANNE: Sue?

SUE: Ohhhhhh-kayyyyy. He said I've gone two years backwards, I'm not letting go any more, my voice is coming from here *(throat)* not from here *(gut)* ... It wasn't a lot of fun. Anything else you want to know?

TRUDY: What about you, Wheeldon?

WHEELDON: Aaaaaaargh -- !

LOUANNE: Tell us, Whee.

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TED: It can't be that bad -- you've been acting up a storm all semester.

WHEELDON: (exploding) Goddamn theatre history!!! I flunked my theatre history!

LOUANNE: Oh no.

WHEELDON: If I don't get my theatre history I don't graduate, and if I don't graduate, I stand about a snowball's chance in hell of --

(Pause. They look at each other)

LOUANNE: O---h m---y Go---d! I feel awful. You guys all had such a terrible time.

TED: You mean you didn't?

LOUANNE: Before I went in I cried for hours, but when I got there I kept thinking he meant somebody else! He said he thought Puck was wonderful, he said I'm finally getting it together; he even said I'm starting to look like a real candidate for --

TED: *(slowly)* Winning the prize.

TRUDY: I think I'm going to be sick.

(Music cue: PLEASE SIR. Note that these are inner thoughts, unheard by THE OTHERS)

TED: *(of LOUANNE)*
**Look at the girl who thinks she's in front --
All wide-eyed, sweet, and innocent --
Playing the part and hoping that I can't see.
I know it!
She better mind her P's and Q's,
Take care to dot her I's,
Pleasing the Head,
Or she'll be dead!
What a surprise: --
Her ahead of me! ...**

TRUDY: *(of SUE)*
**She thinks that I'm the last in this line.
Well brace yourself now, pal o' mine:
That isn't where I'm killing myself to be!
You know it:
I'm gonna get me all the A's,
You're gonna get the D's!
Show me it fast,**

Show me at last,
 You on your knees --
Not ahead of me! ...

ALL: So when, Sir,
 You've got choices to make, why, then, Sir,
 Bring the arrow around again, Sir;
 Point at me, you'll do well.
 I'd be swell!
 I'm asking please, Sir,
 I'll solve the problem you've got with ease, Sir,
 When you're down to the wire, take me, Sir;
 Let the other ones go to hell.

WHEELDON: (*of TED*)

He's losing ground 'n and getting off track;
I know that I can get it back --
I've only got to get my damn History.

LOUANNE: Oh my god, oh Whee.

TRUDY: Not ahead of me.

TED: I want that prize!

SUE:

LOUANNE: Where's E-li-za?

I see it:

They're tripping up and falling down;
My turn to lead the dance --

WHEELDON: I can't learn it.

TRUDY: On your knee, Miss Perfect.

TED: I want that prize now!

ALL: Screw the charade!
 I know that they'd
 Leap at the chance
To get ahead of me!

 And yet, Sir,
 When you're playing the game roulette, Sir,
 It's the custom to make a bet, Sir.
 Odds or e-ven, you'll see
 How I'd be!
 I'm asking please, Sir,
 Don't lose the forest for all the trees, Sir;
 Now I'm practic'lly on my knees, Sir --
 Let the other ones rot!

TRUDY: Take me!

WHEELDON: Take me!

SUE: Take me!

TED: Take me!

LOUANNE: Take me!

ALL: Please sir! Take me!

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(By the button of the song, ELIZA has entered. Light musical stings underscore the following)

SUE: Eliza, where the hell have you been?

TED: You weren't in your grading interview all this time, surely.

WHEELDON: You have to admit there was a lot to talk about.

LOUANNE: *(sotto voce)* Wheeldon! You know what she's been going through this semester.

SUE: Louanne, you're too much! So suddenly Eliza's the only one with problems?

WHEELDON: Nothing a little growing up wouldn't cure. *(to ELIZA)* Well?

(Pause)

ELIZA: I thought you'd be gone.

WHEELDON: We were waiting for you. What else is new?

ELIZA: I just ... want to clear out my locker.

SUE: What -- ?

(No answer. ELIZA goes to her locker)

LOUANNE: Eliza, what is it?

(No answer)

TED: Eliza -- ?

ELIZA: *(stopping her collection of stuff)* I'm gone, you guys. I'm out. I'm history.

LOUANNE: He kicked you out?!?

ELIZA: Yes. "Expelled". No! Don't touch me or say anything or ... I couldn't stand it if you did. Just let me clean out my locker and go.

(They stand back. She continues digging and arranging)

WHEELDON: Jesus Christ.

(ELIZA struggles into coat and boots and

*heads for the door, loaded with stuff.
Total silence from THE OTHERS)*

ELIZA: *(strangled, without turning back)* Goodbye you guys.

(She is almost out the door when she sees that the Torch is on. She runs, just making it out before reaching total breakdown. Exit ELIZA)

LOUANNE: Omigod, Eliza -- ! We could go to bat for her, you guys! At least we could talk to "The Head".

(Music cue: PLEASE SIR REPRISE. One by one they turn away from LOUANNE)

ALL: **One of us out 'n five of us in
The race....**

SUE: **Do I still wanna win?**

LOUANNE: **Look how the odds are tipping conveniently....**

TED: **Don't say it: --**

WHEELDON: **One of the five could miss a step....**

TRUDY: **That's all it takes to lose.**

ALL: **Then they would find,
In "The Head"'s mind,
They're in her shoes!**
(tempo) **What if it was me?**

**Well, fine, Sir.
You want heads on the block? Not mine, Sir.
I'll make sure that I stay in line, Sir;
And whatever you want,
I will be!
I'm asking please, Sir --
And once again I am on my knees, Sir --
Keep me healthy from that disease, Sir;
Let the other ones go -- Not me!**

**Not me!
Please, Sir! Not me!**

In anger, WHEELDON turns the Torch off. Blackout.

-- INTERMISSION --

-- A C T I I --

SCENE FIVE: January

The forestage is lit like a park at night. A screech of brakes and angry car-horns. ELIZA runs on in coat and boots. She becomes fascinated with what is on the ground. Music cue: underscore from the verse of SNOW! Perhaps she starts to dance with the falling flakes.

THE WOMAN: *(calling from offstage)* Eliza?

(Music out. ELIZA hides. Enter THE WOMAN downstage as the Stage Manager in winter coat)

Eliza, was that you? You nearly got yourself killed a minute ago!

(No answer)

Eliza, where are you?

(No answer)

Are you coming to the Showcase? *(pause)* Eliza?!?

(No answer. Exit THE WOMAN. Music resumes as ELIZA comes out of hiding, twirls across the stage, and disappears. Then lights rise on the calendar, which reads January, and open up to the third year room. There may be scraps of leftover Christmas decoration, and the Torch is nowhere in sight. Music cue: segue to THE CLASS UNDERSCORE. The five remaining members of The Class enter and lay down mats for a tumbling demonstration. Ad lib as necessary: they are all very impatient with each other. Then)

WHEELDON: Fifteen minutes to Showcase, everybody!

(Music out. They scramble to complete the set up for a Wild West saloon brawl. During the following dialogue, WHEELDON and TED get on cowboy hats and neckerchiefs, SUE and LOUANNE rehearsal skirts with feathers tucked in their hair -- LOUANNE may also wear jokeshop glasses -- and TRUDY a sombrero and a poncho. They also rig a "bar" across two chair-backs with several bottles on it)

TRUDY: Geez. Ten days, but I can still feel that last helping of plum pudding.

WHEELDON: Tell me about it! Every belt of Scotch from New Year's is sitting right there!

TED: Didn't you guys work out during the holidays?

TRUDY: {Are you kidding?!
WHEELDON: {Gimme a break!

TED: Then what do you expect?

TRUDY: Well you didn't land any leads, I notice. Wheel-don got Chandebise/Poche and they had to ask Alain to do Danny Zuko!

TED: So suddenly Jan and Olympe are the stars of the show?

TRUDY: Rub it in! Go ahead, rub it in!

WHEELDON: Fourteen minutes to showcase.

TRUDY: (to WHEELDON) Up yours!

(WHEELDON gives her the finger)

SUE: If we're going to rehearse this thing, could we please cut the crap and get on with it?

LOUANNE: It's going to be really wierd without Eliza.

SUE: Everything is wierd without Eliza.

WHEELDON: Well, the first bit should make sense with just you and Louanne; we can cut what she was doing.

SUE: OK. Louanne, couldn't you manage her next bit after you deal with Trudy?

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LOUANNE: If I can remember it: I don't know!

WHEELDON: And Trudy could fill in the one after that.

TRUDY: Wait a minute! How come Louanne and I get stuck with all Eliza's stuff? What about Sue?

WHEELDON: Sue can't fill in for somebody else; she's --

WHEE & TRUDY: -- the Leading Lady!

LOUANNE: I thought that was Ted.

TED: What?!?

LOUANNE: Oops. Just a joke -- !

(WHEELDON shoos her into position as he heads for the door)

I didn't mean anything by it -- !

WHEELDON: Let's get this turkey on the wing.

(Exit WHEELDON. THE OTHERS take their positions: TRUDY and LOUANNE at the "bar", TED and SUE across the room where they're supposed to be "spooning")

TED: I can't believe we're actually going to trot this thing out in front of the whole school.

SUE: Ted, this rehearsal might be a little easier for everybody if you would get off that high horse of yours.

TED: I think I'll wait and see what you do with your broomstick!

(SUE's response is precluded by WHEELDON's entrance, cap guns blazing)

WHEELDON: Yipee-yi-o-ki-yay!!!

(SUE and LOUANNE shriek and hide behind TED. Music cue: Silent Movie/Honkey Tonk underscoring)

TRUDY: Aye, caramba! Thee baddest bad guy in all of New Meheeco! *(she hides under the bar and her sombrero)*

(WHEELDON advances into the room; maybe

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he has jingle bells on his heels to simulate spurs. Try W.C.Fields or Yosemite Sam)

WHEELDON: Bartender! Gimme somethin' to wet my whistle!

TRUDY: Get eet yourself!

(WHEELDON shoots the cap-guns at the bottles. SUE and LOUANNE shriek. TRUDY, from under the bar, is actually knocking each one over in turn; then she leaps up, quaking)

Si, senior! Anytheeng you say, senior! ("pours")

(WHEELDON knocks back three in a row; gasps of horror from the girls. Then he turns their way)

WHEELDON: Ah! Nooky! (burps)

(SUE and LOUANNE shriek)

TED: I warn you sir, attempt no discourtesy to these ladies, or I'll --

WHEELDON: Outa my way, cream puff!

TED: *(that wasn't in the script)* "Cream puff" -- !?!

(WHEELDON flips TED across the room, then sweeps LOUANNE into an embrace. She bats her eyelashes delightedly. He flips her across the room, too; then he mimes going for ELIZA)

WHEELDON: *(falsetto, for ELIZA)* No! Help! *(he mimes receiving slaps; he flings "ELIZA", too, aside; now he goes for SUE)*

SUE: Dudley! Save me!

TED: Unhand that woman, varmint!

(WHEELDON, nuzzling SUE, gives TED the finger or spits on the ground)

Why you -- !

(He launches himself at WHEELDON's head; WHEELDON dodges and TED goes flying by and into a somersault, then lies there)

"dazed". WHEELDON roars with laughter -- but now LOUANNE seizes SUE out of his arms, gives her a two-fingered eyeball punch, a knee to the solar plexus, and a two-handed chop to the back of the head. SUE goes down; LOUANNE reclines happily in WHEELDON's arms; he flips her across the room again. There TRUDY attempts to get her out of harm's way, but is summarily dispatched. LOUANNE races back for WHEELDON, but runs straight into SUE)

LOUANNE: Look out! Let me go -- I have to be Eliza now!

(Arriving with the impatient WHEELDON, she slaps him twice and then flips him. Then, as TED goes to follow up on WHEELDON, she intervenes and does the same to TED)

TED: Ow!!!

(Music out. Everything freezes)

Jesus Christ!

WHEELDON: You alright, buddy?

TED: No thanks to you! Damn it, there was no throw there, Louanne!

LOUANNE: Oh! Sorry: I got confused!

(TED gets up, socks WHEELDON and the fight resumes. So does the Music. LOUANNE races back to SUE)

SUE: What -- ?

LOUANNE: I'm me this time!

(The two of them go at it like mud wrestlers. Meanwhile TRUDY races to interfere with TED and WHEELDON's fist fight, carrying on like a demented ingénue)

TED: Trudy, what the hell are you doing?!

TRUDY: Being Eliza!

(The fight becomes a free-for-all; TRUDY

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keeps getting caught in the middle. TED is overdoing it: twice in a row someone smarts at his handling)

SUE: Watch it! ... Ted, take it easy! You're going to kill somebody!

(But what happens is that TRUDY gets flung at him instead of Eliza and he goes down under her weight)

TED: Aagh!

(Everything freezes. Music out)

That tears it. You guys can do what you like; I am not going to make an ass of myself out there.

LOUANNE: Are you alright?

WHEELDON: Here -- take a hand.

TED: I can manage on my own, thankyou!

TRUDY: There's no need to get shirty about it; it was an accident.

TED: It's not an accident, it's a disaster. Corny and trite and flat and stupid.

TRUDY: Well whaddaya want for a wrestling demonstration -- Chekhov?

TED: We're not getting graded on it, so the hell with it. I'm leaving. *(goes for his coat)*

THE OTHERS: What -- ?!?

SUE: Ted, I have just about had it up to here with your prima donna act. Anybody can flunk a course or blow an audition: get over it!

TRUDY: He's not used to getting B minuses -- it takes practice.

WHEELDON: What the hell is going on?!? Before Christmas, you were like an old bear; then you come back after a holiday and it's twice as bad!

TED: Get off my back!

SUE: No! It's time you took a good look at yourself.

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WHEELDON: You're digging yourself into a hole!

SUE: It's not called a hole.... It's called a closet.

TED: I don't have to listen to this -- !

SUE: *(blocking his exit)* You're walking around with a chip on your shoulder the size of a house, carrying your "deep dark secret". Just who do you think you're protecting? I'm a big girl now. And this town is not so large, and we are not so blind, deaf and dumb, that we all don't know by now what's going on. So open the door a crack and let in the light of day, why don't you?!

(Exit TED, slamming the door. Pause)

LOUANNE: I've got an uncle who's ... you know, and he's really sweet!

SUE: I guess if he's determined to be a jerk there's not a hell of a lot we can do about it.

WHEELDON: We've got four minutes: let's get these mats in there.

(They begin to fold them up)

LOUANNE: O--h m--y go--d! What are we going to do? No Ted, no Eliza -- !

TRUDY: I could play the ingenue!

(THE OTHERS react. Then lines overlap increasingly as the squabble mounts)

SUE: I say we cut all their stuff.

LOUANNE: We can't just drop all that without rehearsing it! {-- We'll kill ourselves!

TRUDY: {We don't have to! I know the moves!

SUE: {(to LOUANNE) Haven't you ever heard of winging it?!

WHEELDON: Trudy could play Ted -- after she does the bottles!

SUE: {That's crazy; she'd have to turn around and go right back to being bartender!

TRUDY: {I can do it! ... Is anybody listening?!?

LOUANNE: {I think we should cancel. Somebody could get injured.

WHEELDON: {Louanne, if we take it easy, everything should be fine!

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(With a quick knock at the door, enter THE WOMAN, very worried, and tops it)

THE WOMAN: Guys! Guys!!

THE OTHERS: What!!!

THE WOMAN: I just saw Eliza.

WHEELDON: So?

LOUANNE: {How is she?

OTHERS: {What? Where? or What do you mean?

THE WOMAN: Well ...

WHEELDON: Now what's she done?

THE WOMAN: She nearly got herself run over, and then when I followed her into the park, she hid on me.

(THE OTHERS react)

WHEELDON: You're sure it was Eliza?

THE WOMAN: Well, whoever it was did a triple pirouette in the middle of King and Main.

LOUANNE: Omigod: Eliza!

THE WOMAN: She nearly caused a three-car collision. I mean I know you're getting ready for Showcase, but the way she was acting made me feel really strange. I just ... thought you might want to know.

THE OTHERS: Yeah. or Geez. or Thanks.

THE WOMAN: *(beat)* I'll give you a hand with these. *(starts to manhandle mats)*

(As she does so, they stare at each other. What to do? Then LOUANNE goes for her coat. TRUDY and SUE catch on and do likewise)

LOUANNE: *(stopping in front of WHEELDON)* Coming?

(After a moment's hesitation, WHEELDON springs for his coat too)

THE WOMAN: Wait a minute! Where are you all going?

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WHEELDON: To find Eliza.

(Music cue: SNOW! Downstage, ELIZA comes out of hiding. She dances with the falling snow)

THE WOMAN: What?!? You can't just --

WHEELDON: She was in the park?

THE WOMAN: Yes, but --

WHEELDON: *(overlapping to SUE)* You and Trudy take the west gate, Louanne and I will go for the east.

SUE: And if we don't see her in fifteen, we'll meet you at the gazebo.

(Exit WHEELDON, LOUANNE, SUE, TRUDY)

THE WOMAN: *(as they bump out past her)* But what about the Showcase?!

THE OTHERS: *(already offstage)* Screw the showcase!

THE WOMAN: But what am I going to tell "The Head"? -- Guys?

(Exit THE WOMAN, with the remaining mats, as lights cross-fade until the whole stage is a snowy park at night)

ELIZA: **Fluttering down, twirling around, flying --
So thick on a branch, low on the ground, it's
lying --
Whiter than white, grey as the light,
It waits there to show me, to know me --
And I must go, for I must know:**

**Snow, kinds of snow;
Through the street and field, counting as I go
All kinds of snow. You will show,
I will make you yield everything you know!
There's powder that's fresh enough for angels,
And crystals that dazzle in the glare,
And flakes that are nice but they change into ice
All at once in mid-air,
Till you cannot bear**

**Snow. To and fro,
By each frozen brook, looking high and low
For kinds of snow I should know,
Like an open book written long ago: --
There's slush in the gutters on the roadside,**

And spray that goes leaping through the air,
And sleet that's alright when it falls in the
 night,
But in morning beware,
For it's covered in snow!

And the Eskimos know; they have a word for...
I think it's maybe ... sixty or more kinds of
 snow.

Sixty-three -- Fifty-three -- Seventy!
And if they know it, then I should know it;
It all makes sense if you know.
Ninety-three -- Forty-three -- Look at me!
Because if you get them all in line, then it's
fine:
You've got all of it under -- all of it under --
But I don't, and I won't, and I can't -- but I
 can!
I know I can find, I can get one more kind of --
Yet one more kind of my

Snow! See it blow! --
And get in your hair, and before you know,
The rising snow-drifts will grow,
Till you can't see where you were going to go!
There's snow that is filling in the highways,
And snow that is washing into shore,
And snow that is howling in the by-ways,
And snow where it's never been before!
There's snow that has hidden all the rainbows,
And snow that is covering the floor,
And snow that is climbing up the windows,
And snow that is coming through the door!
And now that I've found
All the kinds all around,
Have I traced every tense --
Have I seen all the sense
I was looking for?
No! No! No!
There's got to be more!!!

*(The tinkly snow music resumes. WHEEL-
DON and LOUANNE appear quietly on one
side of the stage, SUE and TRUDY on the
other)*

WHEELDON: Eliza!
 How the hell are ya?
 Look at you.

ELIZA: *(only by rote)*
 Yodle-Trudy-hey!
 Watcha got to say?

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TRUDY: I'm fine. How are you?

ELIZA: I can't come ... to the showcase. I have to look after my little sister, and the dishes aren't done.

SUE: We called your home, Eliza. Your mother's frantic: she says you haven't been there since yesterday morning.

ELIZA: My mother's dead.
**And when she painted me,
Her brush made sun in golden hair.
That sun is now all I have of her -- I have of
her, I have of her, I have of her, I have of her,
I have of her ...**

(THE OTHERS react. They close in cautiously)

WHEELDON: Eliza, we think you should come with us.

TRUDY: You need food.

SUE: We'll take you someplace warm.

LOUANNE: Someplace where they can take care of you. OK?

(Pause; she moves a step closer. Music out)

OK?

(Suddenly ELIZA makes a run for it. A struggle. It takes WHEELDON and SUE and the others some effort to trap her and pin her down)

ELIZA: No!! Not home!!!

WHEELDON: OK! Not home! Someplace else!

SUE: Easy now.

(Pause. Resume underscoring: ELIZA starts to give in)

ELIZA: Will it be warm there?

LOUANNE: *(in tears)* Yes. It'll be warm there.

ELIZA: You're crying. It's because I missed a class,

isn't it? I'm sorry.

WHEELDON: Come on, Eliza.

(They help her up and gently lead her out, LOUANNE in the lead, with the music tinkling along behind them until they are gone. A moment's suspension, then a new music cue: THE EDGE OF THE LAKE. TED storms into the park, kicking snow-drifts and shaking trees)

TED: "I thought that was Ted! -- Oops, just a joke."
"Get off that high horse of yours!"
"Outa my way, Cream Puff! Cream Puff!"
"Get over it!"
"It's not called a hole.... It's called a ..."
"I thought that was Ted!" "Get over it!"
"Closet!!!"
"Open the door a crack and let in the light of
day, why don't you?"
The light of day ...
Let in the light

At the edge of the lake,
There in the morning --
Wond'ring which step to take,
Feeling a warning --
Water mirror-still, the shadow of a hill
There in the dawn;
Air a little chill --
And it was beautiful....
It was beautiful.

At the edge of the lake,
There in the morning --
I was far too awake,
Feeling a warning:
Would it be too cold if I became too bold?
Shatter the dawn?
I was ten years old, and the heat was on.

Then came a voice: "Let's have no more.
You want us to phone your next of kin?
Swallow your fear and leave the shore.
Go with a grin" --
So I went in....

At the edge of my life,
Here in the morning --
Like the edge of a knife,
Feeling the warning:
I can never know how far the ripples go --

**Not in my mind;
I can only know what I'd leave behind.**

*And lights find the calendar, which
flips to February.*

SCENE SIX: February

Lights up on the room, revealing WHEELDON at his place, late at night, pouring over notebooks and heavy texts. Similar objects at TED's place.

WHEELDON: The first IATSE strike was in 1919?

TED: 1910 to 11. The first actors' strike was in 1919.

WHEELDON: And that led to the foundation of Actors' Equity.

TED: Nope. *(entering the scene and removing his coat)* Equity had been going for five or six years by then, but that was the first time anybody took it seriously.

WHEELDON: Oh, man. I wish I was Miss Perfect. I bet she's got all this down pat.

TED: Besides which she's prettier than you are.

WHEELDON: Oh no! Have I gained weight?

TED: Stuff it, buddy!

(By now he's seated too. They study)

Do you think Eliza liked the flowers?

WHEELDON: I don't know. It was hard to tell. *(he goes back to his book)* "Lilian Baylis"? Who the hell was Lilian Baylis?

TED: That was that wierd old broad who kept the Old Vic going.

WHEELDON: Phew -- ! I'd be down the tubes if you hadn't stuck around tonight. Thanks.

(TED shrugs. Pause. They study)

TED: I hate hospitals.

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WHEELDON: Me too. Louanne doesn't. Louanne feels right at home in hospitals.

TED: They don't do shock treatments any more, do they?

WHEELDON: I don't know. I hope not. (*sudden panic*) Oh my God, the Bauhaus! I never even looked at the Bauhaus!

TED: The Bauhaus was at Christmas!!!

WHEELDON: Oh. (*beat*) Jesus!!! The only academic course we can't get out of, so naturally old dry-ass Dust has to be the only prof in the whole college who gives his mid-term before Study Break.

TED: We're not getting a Study Break. We're still going to be up to our ears in Grease, remember?

WHEELDON: (*an explosion that builds until he's bouncing off the walls*) It's no use! I can't do it! I was up until three this morning working on my Oedipus mask, and we didn't finish rehearsal until midnight again. I need a party!!! I need a blow-out!!! I wanna get drunk and run around naked and jump up and down on somebody's head!!!!

TED: (*starting to snicker*) Do you feel better now?

WHEELDON: No. (*starting to go too*)

*(They dissolve into punchy giggles.
Enter LOUANNE and SUE with streamers,
etc., early on a Saturday night a week
or so later, and begin to set up a
ladder)*

TED: Wheelie?--

WHEELDON: Yeah?

TED: How are things with you and Louanne?

WHEELDON: Same as they've been all year. We're sort of together and sort of not, and I can't get her to talk about it, so ... (*shrugs*) I've been realizing how much I used to take her for granted, you know? Like I had to do the thinking for both of us? Now she's making up her own mind, and ... all I can do is wait.

TED: Better in the long run, no?

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WHEELDON: I guess. As long as ... you know.

(They grin at each other)

What about you? Still not ready to talk to Sue, are ya?

(TED blushes)

I hear things, though.

TED: Shut up, Wheelie.

WHEELDON: I hear things!

(LOUANNE and SUE have removed the last bits of Christmas stuff, if there were any, and are starting on Valentine's Day decorations)

Are you sure the Bauhaus isn't on?

TED: Only some stuff about Walter Gropius.

WHEELDON: Walter Gropius?!? Jesus Christ!! *(dives for his notes)*

TED: *(packing up and crossing to the door)* Walter Gropius designed a totally adaptable theatre in 1927 that was never built, but was a big influence on all those white elephants from the sixties and seventies? Like ours?

WHEELDON: If you say so....

LOUANNE: *(up a ladder)* I need to get higher!

SUE: If you go any higher you'll break your neck!

TED: *(at the door)* It could be one of us in there, you know.

WHEELDON: I know.

TED: I wish there was something we could do.

WHEELDON: What's that old expression? "There but for the grace of God" -- ?

TED: Go I.

(Exit TED. Music cue: VALENTINE'S PARTY)

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WHEELDON: *(packing up)* Screw this. I'm going home to bed.

(But instead of going home to bed, he joins the other scene, as lights change. Streamers, paper hearts, etc. It's a Valentine's Day party for the whole department, and it's just getting going across the hall in the studio)

WHEELDON: **Now when you're in the dead of winter,**

GIRLS: **Wop wah-oooh ...**

WHEELDON: **Tossin' and turnin' nearly every night,**

GIRLS: **Nearly every night ...**

ALL: **It's alright! -- Sleep tight.**

WHEELDON: **And when you really need a hint that**

GIRLS: **Wop wah-oooh ...**

WHEELDON: **Your fire will burn un-til the mornin' light,**

GIRLS: **Till the mornin' light ...**

ALL: **It's alright! -- It might.**

WHEELDON: **'Cause when you wanna
Skim off the cream of
All that you dream of,
And you have got to let the steam off,
Well then you know you gotta**

GIRLS: **Ooh--
Ah--**

ALL: **Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Till all the cows come home;
You gotta
Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Do what we do in Rome.
We gotta get that feelin',
Put trouble outa sight:
We'll boogie on the ceilin'
Until we all get tight.
We're gonna
Party till dawn! Party till dawn! --
It's Valentine's Party night!**

(Music continues faintly, as if at a distance. LOUANNE is perched on a counter or stepladder, and stretching to tape one piece of something near the ceiling)

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LOUANNE: Wheeldon, hold this for me?

WHEELDON: *(laughing)* Geez!

LOUANNE: What?

WHEELDON: I'm trying to imagine you doing this last September!

SUE: You would have passed out!

LOUANNE: A few things have gone down since last September. I'm thinking about taking up skydiving next!

(Enter TRUDY, decked out like the Michelin tire man, and so keyed up that she's on the ceiling. Music out)

TRUDY: Aaaaaaaaaaagh!!!

WHEELDON: Geez, Trudy!

SUE: What the hell is all that about?

TRUDY: If I have to put on or take off one more piece of clothing, lug one more bag full of scripts, miss one more bus when I'm up to my butt in slush --

WHEELDON: What are you going to do?

TRUDY: Move in here and go naked. *(starts to peel off the layers)*

WHEELDON: Spare us!

TRUDY: *(noticing the decor)* Aaaaaaaaaaagh!!!

WHEELDON: If you do that again, I swear I'll drop ya.

TRUDY: Why do I feel like I just walked into a Hallmark Card?!

LOUANNE: If you don't like our taste, you know what you can do.

WHEELDON: Yeah: pick up a roll of tape!

TRUDY: Oh, I don't do manual labour: I'm a star now!!!

THE OTHERS: *(beat)* What -- !?!

TRUDY: I got a job, you guys! I got a job! I got a job!

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J, O, B, --

SUE: {You got a job?
LOUANNE: {What?
WHEELDON: {What are you talking about?

TRUDY: I had an audition for The Showboat today -- and they loved me! They offered me a contract for the whole summer right on the spot!

WHEELDON: Did you take it?

TRUDY: I told them I'd have to think about it. Of course I took it! What do you think I am, crazy?

LOUANNE: But I thought The Showboat only did musicals.

TRUDY: Yeah, that's them. So I sang up a storm, and tap-danced, and did all of my schtick and they ate it up!

SUE: Wait a minute, Trudy. Are you telling us you said yes to a company that couldn't even offer you Lady Macbeth?

TRUDY: Oh come on, let's face it, Lady Macbeth I'm not. What I am is the best singin', dancin', fat comedienne in the biz -- so look out!

LOUANNE: *(with difficulty)* Isn't that wonderful?

WHEELDON: *(with equal difficulty)* Fabulous. So ... the first one in the whole class to get a job offer is Trudy.

TRUDY: Yeah!! And I ran into "The Head" and he actually congratulated me: I couldn't believe it!

SUE: Neither can I!

LOUANNE: Sue --

TRUDY: OK, Miss Perfect! Where do you get off being so high and mighty? I don't notice you with any job offers!

SUE: I don't leap at the first one that comes along.

TRUDY: You -- !!

WHEELDON: Sue! Trudy! Cool it, for god's sake!

TRUDY: She's always --

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LOUANNE: Please -- !

WHEELDON: We're supposed to be having fun tonight! Trudy, we're happy for ya, we really are. We're just ...
(*glance at THE OTHERS*) we're green with envy.
Congratulations!

LOUANNE: Yeah! Congratulations!

WHEELDON: Come on, it's party night! We're gonna forget all about work and winter and who's getting what and just have fun, OK?

(*No response: the girls bridle*)

You gotta help me celebrate too: I passed my mid-term!

(*Music in*)

'Cause when you're gettin' sick an' ti-red --

LOUANNE: **Wop wah-oooh ...** Come on,
you guys!

WHEELDON: **Fightin' an' growlin', livin' in a stew:**

TRUDY&LOUANNE: **Livin' in a stew ...**

ALL BUT SUE: **Don't be blue -- me too.**

WHEELDON: **And when you're feelin' uninspi-red --**

ALL 3 GIRLS: **Wop wah-oooh ...**

WHEELDON: **You need some howlin', have yourself a brew;**

GIRLS: **Have yourself a brew ...**

ALL: **Here's to you -- have two.**

WHEELDON: **You know you got a
Friend you can lean on, GIRLS: Ooh--
Girl that you're keen on;
You need a night to be obscene on! GIRLS: Ah--
So now you know you gotta**

ALL: **Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Till all the cows come home;
You gotta
Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Do what we do in Rome.**

We gotta get that feelin',
Put trouble outa sight:
We'll boogie on the ceilin'
Until we all get tight.
We're gonna
Party till dawn! Party till dawn! --
It's Valentine's Party night!

(Drum and dance break: 4 bars)

Everybody
Needs this party tonight!
Everybody
Is gonna come to the party tonight!

(Dance break: 7 bars)

So now you know you gotta
Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Till all the cows come home;
You gotta
Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Do what we do in Rome.
We gotta get that feelin',
Put trouble outa sight:
We'll boogie on the ceilin'
Until we all get tight.
We're gonna
Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Party till dawn! Party till dawn!
Party till dawn! Party till dawn! --
It's Valentine's Party night!

(TED enters shyly with THE MAN as a handsome stranger. TED is very nervous, contrite, and, now that he's finally doing what she asked, desperately anxious for SUE's approval. THE OTHERS stare)

TED: Hi, Everybody.

OTHERS: Hi. *(or hello or whatever)*

(Pause)

TED: Getting the old room decorated?

LOUANNE: That's what we're doing.

TED: Oh. Yeah, well, there's nothing like a bit of festive ... decoration.

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WHEELDON: Nothing like it.

(Pause)

TED: Looks great.

(All are now looking pointedly at the stranger. TED absorbs this)

Uh ... there's somebody here I'd like you all to meet. Richard, this is Wheeldon, Louanne, Trudy,

(Acknowledgements from them)

... and Sue.

THE MAN: Oh! So this is Sue. I've heard so much about you!

SUE: That's interesting. I haven't heard a word about you.

TED: Everybody, this is Richard.

THE MAN: Hi!

SUE: *(teasing)* Is Richard your date for the evening?

TED: *(his life is riding on this)* Richard is my date for more than the evening.

(A stunned silence)

WHEELDON: Well, hello, Richard! *(shaking hands enthusiastically)* Very pleased to meet you! *(to TED)* Maybe now you'll leave me alone, eh?

(After a beat TED laughs uproariously and everybody but SUE joins in, relieved, and shaking hands. SUE crosses slowly away, as lines from THE OTHERS overlap)

THE MAN: {Now that one's going to take some explaining!

TED: {It's a long story!

LOUANNE: {Well, Ted, all I can say is, it's a good thing I didn't see him first!

WHEELDON: {Now who's gonna be explaining?

TRUDY: {You sly fox, you! I like your taste! Can I borrow him next week?

TED: Sue? ... Sue, are you alright? ... Aren't you even going to say hello?

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(No answer. THE OTHERS hold their breaths)

Richard, is the bar open in there yet? Maybe you better get me a beer.

THE MAN: I'll see.

SUE: You ... idiot -- !

TED: *(instantly believing the worst)* Take your time, Richard.

THE MAN: Right!

(Exit THE MAN)

TED: *(deep breath)* OK, whatever you've got to say, let me have it -- I know I've got it coming.

SUE: *(turning round at last, in tears, but laughing)* You complete idiot, couldn't you have warned me?

(TED is speechless -- he never thought of that)

(to THE OTHERS) You see? He's hopeless! *(to TED)* Are you happy?

(He nods yes)

I'm so glad. I'm so glad! *(she opens her arms)*

(SUE and TED hug joyfully)

Now what did you do with poor Richard? Tell him I want a dance!

TED: Would I do?

(He would. Music cue: VALENTINE'S PARTY REPRISE. They start to dance)

WHEELDON: Well, hail, hail, the gang's all here!

LOUANNE: All but one.

WHEELDON: Yeah. Right. Happy Valentine's Day, Eliza!

THE OTHERS: Happy Valentine's Day, Eliza!

WHEELDON: Get down, Ted!

**It waits there to show me, to know me --
And I must go ...**

THE WOMAN: You're not ready to go out just yet, Eliza. Won't you come with us, please?

ELIZA: I want to go out!!!

(Music out. Enter THE MAN as an Orderly with a large parcel, gift wrapped)

THE WOMAN: *(aside to THE MAN)* Oh, thank goodness. I can't do a thing with her.

THE MAN: Look, Eliza. Somebody sent you a Valentine's present.

(No response)

THE WOMAN: *(trying for humour)* It must be chocolates. People always send chocolates on Valentine's Day. Do you think it's chocolates?

ELIZA: I want to go out!!!

THE MAN: *(with a look to THE WOMAN)* Well, here you are. It says, "From Louanne and Wheeldon and Ted and Sue and Trudy: with love."

(Now he has her attention)

Open it. ... Go ahead, open it.

(ELIZA opens it. Inside is the Torch)

ELIZA: Ah -- !

(Music cue: YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE REPRISE. THE OTHERS sing softly in the background)

THE WOMAN: For heaven's sake. What's that?

THE MAN: What is it, Eliza?

(No response. ELIZA just clings to the torch. THE WOMAN and THE MAN decide it's best to leave her that way and, eventually, exit)

GIRLS: **You have to believe!
Hold on to your umbrella!
Have to believe**

In Peter Pan.

ADD BOYS: **You have to believe
That you've got feathers, fella;
And you know you can!**

ELIZA: **You have to believe THE OTHERS: *Hmmm* --
That someone out there wants you --
Have to believe
That you'll get through.
You have to believe**

ALL: **So nothing out there daunts you;**

ELIZA: **And God knows I do.

Oh yes, I'm sure I do....
Are you?**

*LOUANNE comes forward to enter the
next scene. And the calendar flips
to March.*

SCENE SEVEN: March

*ELIZA's hospital room. Daytime.
LOUANNE presents flowers.*

ELIZA: You turd! You don't have to bring these darn flowers every time, Louanne.

LOUANNE: Sorry! I just wanted to brighten the place up a little.

ELIZA: Well, they're lovely. Thankyou. *(a big hug)*

LOUANNE: You must be feeling better.

ELIZA: Yup. A lot better. Oh, I still have the odd moment, you know, but ... I'm almost there!

LOUANNE: Good!

(Pause)

ELIZA: You know who came to visit me the other day? "The Head"!

LOUANNE: Really?

ELIZA: I couldn't believe it! He was here for almost an hour, and he asked me how I was doing and what my plans were and ... it was nice!

LOUANNE: What are you planning, Eliza?

ELIZA: Well -- when I finally get out of here, I want to work and scrimp and save, and build up a stake, and go to Toronto, and wait on tables, and take classes, and pound the pavement ... !

LOUANNE: That's great!

ELIZA: It's all I've ever wanted. So I have to try.

(LOUANNE looks away)

How's everybody in The Class?

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LOUANNE: Great! They're all fine. Trudy's being totally obnoxious, she's so excited about her season at the Showboat; -- and you should see her in rehearsals for Flea In Her Ear: she finally gets to be sexy!

ELIZA: Yay, Trudy!

LOUANNE: We're all having a ball with that: I'm wearing the prettiest maid's costume you ever saw -- Oh my God! What am I doing, going on like this when you can't be in it? I'm sorry!

ELIZA: Forget it! Tell me about the rest.

LOUANNE: Well, Ted and Sue have offers from the Young Company in the fall; --

ELIZA: Ted and Sue? Working together?

LOUANNE: Yup! It's the Lunts again. And Wheeldon's fine. Wheeldon's always fine. He's going to be brilliant in Flea, and he's got feelers from all over the place.

ELIZA: I'm going to get to see it, you know.

LOUANNE: Are you?!? Terrific!!

ELIZA: And what about you?

LOUANNE: Me? Oh, me! Well ... I'm fine. I'm fine too.

ELIZA: Really?

LOUANNE: Sure!

ELIZA: Come on, Louanne. What is it?

LOUANNE: *(sighs)* I can't keep anything from you, can I?

(They grin at each other)

Well, it's just that ... Naturally, I'm the only person in the whole class that hasn't even had a nibble! Not from anywhere.

ELIZA: Not the only person.

LOUANNE: O---h m---y Go---d!! I'm sorry!!!

ELIZA: For God's sake quit apologizing!

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(LOUANNE covers her mouth with both hands)

Louanne, it's only March. It's a little early to get upset about not having offers.

LOUANNE: That's just it! I'm not sure that I am upset about it. And that's what upsets me.

ELIZA: What?

LOUANNE: For three years I've been running my whole life around wanting to be an actor. And now I finally know I could make it. I could.

ELIZA: Sure you could.

LOUANNE: If I wanted to. But do I?

ELIZA: Huh?

LOUANNE: Oh, I don't mean the acting part. I love acting. I'll probably always love acting. It's the life that goes with it. I know, I know, after all this time, you're gonna think I'm crazy -- Oops! Sorry. Aaagh!!!

(They both laugh)

ELIZA: What do you mean, Louanne?

LOUANNE: You know what I mean. I mean galavanting all across the country, never knowing where you're going to be next month, or who you're going to be working with, or where the rent's going to be coming from ... and living on a schedule that's always out of synch with the rest of the world, so that you start losing touch with your family and your friends, or at least you don't see them for months at a time, and that's if you're lucky, and pretty soon you don't know anybody but people in the theatre, and if you're in town they're out of town, and then vice versa ... Oh I know you could say that's not so different from being a student, most students live like that, not just theatre students -- but then, you see, they get to leave it behind. Well, that's what I want to do too: leave it behind. I don't want to spend the rest of my life living like a student, always having to prove myself to the next person who comes along because they could maybe hire me. That's as bad as waiting for the grades to come out. I mean, how do you keep track of who you are when your

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whole life depends on somebody else's approval?
You know?

ELIZA: Yeah. I do know. You just have to approve of
yourself.

LOUANNE: But I do! I do approve of myself. And maybe
that's why I don't want to put myself through all
that. I want to be ... well ... normal. I want a
home and kids and people who need me, and I have
to know they need me. Not like the theatre. The
theatre doesn't need me.

ELIZA: Some people would argue with you there.

LOUANNE: Maybe. But I don't think some people could win.

(Pause)

ELIZA: What do you want to do?

LOUANNE: Well ... I do have one offer. From the nursing
home again. I really miss all those people: old
Mr. McTavish, and Mrs. Donizetti, and Mr. Robi-
chaud, and Mrs. Muehller -- I fell in love with
them last summer. I know they won't always be
there, but ... it's not like trying to communi-
cate with this big black sea of faces that you can
only half see in the dark and that all belong to
people you don't know: Mr. McTavish is right there
in front of you, and there's only one of him! You
know?

ELIZA: What about Wheeldon?

LOUANNE: Oh, Wheeldon'll survive. Wheeldon will always
survive.... It's funny, though. We always thought
we'd be together out there.

ELIZA: I know. So -- ?

LOUANNE: So if he wants to go his own way, that's OK, I
guess. But ... maybe ... *(she shrugs, holding
back tears)*

*(ELIZA takes her hand. Upstage, a CAN-
CAN and audience applause begin to fade
in over the intercom and dressing-table
lights start to rise. SUE dressed as
Raymonde, TRUDY as Olympe, and TED as
Tournel explode in the door fresh from
their curtain call for A Flea In Her
Ear; they tear down decorations)*

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TED: Whoooo-ee! We did it! We did it! We did it! We did it! Wasn't Wheeldon magnificent?

SUE: Oh God, how I love to see people get on their feet!

TRUDY: They laughed so hard I thought they were gonna toss their cookies!

TED: What a closing night! --

(They carry on more quietly)

ELIZA: You really want to do this?

LOUANNE: Yes. I do.

ELIZA: Then do it. *(big hug)* Come on. I've got a proposition for you.

LOUANNE and ELIZA exit as the calendar flips to April and the celebration upstage escalates....

SCENE EIGHT: April

Enter WHEELDON up left, dressed as Poche in Chandebise's robe, panting -- on a wave of audience applause and laughter over the intercom; the CAN-CAN continues. SUE and TRUDY applaud and hug him.

TED: Wheeldon, you were super!

TRUDY: Awesome!

WHEELDON: Gee, thanks, guys. You weren't so bad yourselves! Where's Louanne?

(On the intercom, the audience noise changes to a rhythm-clap)

SUE: Haven't seen her since the company call.

TED: Geez, listen to that. They are still going!

SUE: That's for you, you know, Wheeldon.

WHEELDON: Aw come on, it's for all of us.

SUE: Yeah, but mostly for you. *(beat)* I think you should go out there and take another bow. I do, really.

WHEELDON: What -- ?!

TRUDY: Do it, man! Go for it! I would!

WHEELDON: You mean -- by myself?

SUE: Yeah, by yourself. Go on!

TRUDY: They want you, Wheeldon, listen to them!

WHEELDON: I gotta take a leak!

THE WOMAN V.O.: Wheeldon, it looks like these people aren't going to let us go home unless you get out here for one more bow. Do you mind? I'll bring the lights up

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for you. Wheeldon, onstage please.

THE HEAD V.O.: Wheeldon Beam, get out here!

TRUDY: What'd we tell ya?! Now can the false modesty crap and move your ass!

SUE: Yeah!

WHEELDON: (William Hutt at his most regal) You'll have to excuse me now: my public awaits me.

(WHEELDON sweeps out. TED seems a little removed while SUE listens antsy for the first sign of reaction from the intercom and TRUDY dodges into the bathroom, re-emerging a moment later with two bottles and some plastic glasses)

SUE: Oh, where is that champagne?

TRUDY: Ta-da! I was keeping it cool in the toilet.

(They open and pour as lights dim in the dressing room, and WHEELDON re-enters to the open downstage area in a spot, both delighted and embarrassed as the applause swells again, with whistles, hoots and bravos. He bows, and starts to leave. Enter THE HEAD -- the first time we've seen him in the flesh)

THE HEAD: Wheeldon, hold on there: stay put. And Eliza Stanhope -- I know you're in the audience; would you come up here, please? Ladies and Gentlemen ... Ladies and Gentlemen, if we could have your attention....

(Applause quiets. A puzzled ELIZA arrives onstage from the house)

At the beginning of the school year, I announced a rather special competition. To our top graduating student would go the honour of full membership in an extraordinary multi-national repertory company being put together in connection with the International Theatre Congress next year. And I'm proud to announce, on the final night before graduation, that the recipient of this award is Mr. Wheeldon Beam!

(He cuts through a starting wave of applause)

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I have one more announcement, and it's a bit of a surprise. Our local Civic Theatre let me know recently that they have a position available for the right apprentice. This is nothing like instant stardom; she's going to have to work her way up. But she's been through a lot this year, and I think she's ready for it. I'm going to recommend Miss Eliza Stanhope.... Good luck, both of you!

THE OTHERS: *(screams of delight)* Speech! Speech! *(they crowd out of the up left dressing room door to watch from the "wings")*

WHEELDON: Oh, Geez -- !

ELIZA: You first!

WHEELDON: Thanks! *(trying)* Uh ... Well.... *(to ELIZA)* I don't know what to say, really.

ELIZA: Neither do I!

WHEELDON: Except thankyou. I wanna say thankyou to my teachers, and directors, and to all of you for watching ... and, yeah, "The Head"! -- You put us through a lot! But especially ... *(looks at ELIZA)*

ELIZA: *(seeing his thought)* Yeah.

WHEELDON: Your turn.

ELIZA: But especially to a very special group of people, 'cause ... we go our separate ways now, we've been through a heck of a lot together, and, when I really needed you, you were there. Thanks, guys.

WHEELDON: Yeah. Thanks.

THE HEAD: Thankyou, everybody! And good night!

(WHEELDON and ELIZA are surrounded by THE OTHERS; THE MAN and THE WOMAN join in too. TED hesitates only a moment longer, then congratulates WHEELDON whole-heartedly. Noisy ad libs, during which WHEELDON can be heard asking 'Where's Louanne?', as they haul him offstage. As they clear, LOUANNE is revealed alone in the dressing room, costumed as Antoinette. Music cue: WHAT

ABOUT US REPRISE)

LOUANNE: **Now your star is high on the rise,
Will love still shine in your eyes?
When your life is full of fame and fabulous --
What about us?**

(Enter WHEELDON)

WHEELDON: **What about --**

LOUANNE: Wheelie! *(she stops herself from running to him)*

WHEELDON: Lou. *(he stops himself from running to her)*

LOUANNE: You were wonderful tonight.

WHEELDON: So were you.

LOUANNE: Congratulations.

WHEELDON: Thanks. *(pause)* Well?

LOUANNE: I'm staying, Whee.

WHEELDON: Oh. That's it, then?

LOUANNE: Well ... it'd be really rough -- I know it would, but ... they say absence makes the heart grow fonder. If you want to, we could try anyway. It's up to you.

(Beat. Then they are in each other's arms. Whistles and applause from the doorways; Music out. Enter TED, SUE, TRUDY and ELIZA and surround them. Hugs again and more noisy ad libbed congratulations)

LOUANNE: Eliza, I heard! That's wonderful!

ELIZA: I still can't believe it! *(to THE OTHERS)* Louanne and I are going to get a place together while she waits for Wheelie --

LOUANNE: -- Where her stepmother will not be welcome!

ELIZA: Oh, sure she will -- on occasion! And you know what? I'm going to make it, you guys! I am! -- I won't be the first successful actress who once got kicked out of school!

OTHERS: Terrific! Awesome! Fabulous! Isn't it great to

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be all together again? *(Etc.)*

ELIZA: Hey! What are we going to leave for the next group?

TRUDY: Oh, yeah! The Second Years.

ELIZA: They'll be Third Years when they get here in September.

LOUANNE: There's one bottle of champagne left from what "The Head" gave us tonight.

WHEELDON: What about our make-up towels?

TED: Great idea!

LOUANNE: *(wrinkling her nose)* I think I'll take them home and wash them, first.

TRUDY: And put their names on?

LOUANNE: Mm-hmmm.

ELIZA: And there's one more thing! --

(She runs to get it, and returns with ... the Golden Torch. It goes down centre)

THE OTHERS: The Torch! You brought it back! *(etc.)*

SUE: *(not unkindly)* Tacky, isn't it?

ELIZA: Yeah. But nice.

(Enter THE WOMAN with valuables box)

THE WOMAN: Valuables! *(she begins to distribute them)*

(Music cue: KNOW WHO YOU ARE. The thought dawns on all of them simultaneously: they have to go)

TED: We'd better get at it, I guess.

(pause)

SUE: I guess so.

(pause)

TRUDY: Yeah.

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(pause)

LOUANNE: O---h m---y Go---d! I don't want to go!

(pause)

WHEELDON: Come on, Louanne.

(Thoughtfully, they begin to pack up their make-up kits, clean out their lockers, and, if they haven't done so already, change. ELIZA stays with the Torch)

THE WOMAN: *(who has been gathering costumes)* Good show tonight, everybody. And I want the rest of the costumes in Wardrobe in five minutes.

THE CLASS: *(automatically)* Thankyou!

(Exit THE WOMAN)

ELIZA: If we could be here next September, when they arrive in this room, ... what would we say to them?

LOUANNE: They're going to go through so much -- !

SUE: **I think it helps to know who you are --**

LOUANNE: **"To thine own self be true".**

TRUDY: **Spend your life in aching and crying,
And next thing you're dying.**

ALL: **And if by then you still don't know who you are,
Or give yourself your due,**

WHEELDON: **And have some faith in what you've got,**

ALL: **Why then you won't get through.**

**I guess you have to know who you are,
And make your life begin;**

TED & ELIZA: **Never mind if people are bending
The signals you're sending.**

ALL: **And if in time you get to know who you are,**

ELIZA: **And grow a thicker skin,**

LOUANNE, TRUDY

TED, ELIZA: **And feel real good inside yourself --**

ALL: **Well, maybe then you'll win.**

(One by one they leave off what they're doing and begin to gather centre around the Torch)

**Holding the flame
So it will keep from going out
In any wind about us;
All of us the same --**

SUE: **With the waiting for the call and the running for the mail --**

WHEELDON: **Hoping for the best,**

LOUANNE & TRUDY: **and to pass without a fail --**

ALL: **With the pawing at the gate for the learning of our fate,
And the knowing that we have to wait ...**

(By now they are in a group -- a very thoughtful group)

**I guess you have to know who you are,
And help the day arrive;
All you've learned of taking and giving
Will lead you to living.
And if in time you get to know who you are,
And keep your flame alive,
And make your heart still yearn to sing ...
Perhaps, then, you'll survive.**

(As music continues, they quietly gather the costume pieces they've managed to get out of -- and any other litter -- and take their leave of the room. That is, all but ELIZA, who returns to the Torch)

ELIZA: I wonder if the batteries are still hanging in.
(it goes on) Aaaagh! EveReady should hear about this! *(running for the door)* Hey, guys!

Exit ELIZA. And the torch keeps glowing as the music finishes, and the lights fade to black.