

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

{The LIGHTS COME UP on a smartly dressed ACTOR, who is standing at a podium and addressing the audience.}

ACTOR. I have been proud and privileged to have spent the majority of my life in the theatre. And tonight, I am pleased to place in deserving hands the highest honor the Theater knows, and to such a young lady, young in years, but whose heart is as old as Broadway. Ladies and gentlemen - the award for outstanding achievement by an actress in a musical comedy goes to Miss Kathie Zelden.

{The SOUND OF APPLAUSE fills the theatre. KATHIE slowly makes her way to the podium. She takes her place in front of the microphones and addresses the audience.}

KATHIE. It won't be easy. You'll think it's strange when I try to explain how I feel. For, I am still but an apprentice in the Theater and have much to learn from you all. As you may know, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Hollywood star Penny Stuart. However, the lion's share of credit for my meteoric rise to stardom must go to one woman, a perky woman, a woman you've probably never heard of . . . Miss. Betsy Barker.

{The LIGHTS rise on BETSY BARKER, a young girl from the mid-west. She is standing center stage, frozen in position and waiting to start her dance routine. She is smiling as if her very life depended on it.}

That's the day it all started. When she decided to attend that open casting call, who could know that it would set into motion a chain of events that would bring me here tonight? May I return to the beginning? The light is dimming and the dream is too.

{The lights dim out on KATHIE and up on BETSY. The DIRECTOR can be visible or an off-stage voice.}

DIRECTOR. (Yelling) Are you ready? OK, A five, six, seven, eight. {BETSY starts to tap and is immediately stopped.} Next.

BETSY. No, please. Let me have another shot.

DIRECTOR. We have a lot of people to see.

BETSY. But, I've come all the way from French Lick!

DIRECTOR. You're just not the right type.

BETSY. I can be any type. I'm very versatile. What type are you looking for?

DIRECTOR. Someone with talent.

BETSY: But, I have talent!

DIRECTOR. No, you don't. And, you're too fat. Honey, dry your eyes. We don't have time for tears here. This isn't French Lick. You're in the big leagues now. This is Indianapolis.

BETSY. You just wait. I'll show you. I'll show you all. I'm going to New York. I'm going to Broadway. I'm going to be a star!

BLACKOUT

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ACT ONE
SCENE TWO

{We transition from the theatre to BETSY'S bedroom, where she is packing her suitcase and singing THEY ALWAYS PICK ON ME}

BETSY.

WHEN I WAS BORN, MY MA AND PA,
THEY LOOKED AT ME AND SAID "GOOD GAWD."
THE DOCTOR SAID "IT'S A GIRL, I THINK"
AND PA WENT OUT AND GOT A DRINK.
THEN, MA SAID I "LOOKED JUST LIKE PA"
AND PA SAID I "TOOK AFTER MA."
AUNT JANE SAID I LOOKED "KIND OF DENSE"
AND I'VE BEEN THE BLACK SHEEP EVER SINCE.
THEY ALWAYS, ALWAYS PICK ON ME.
THEY NEVER EVER LET ME BE. Sample downloaded from markridge.net
I'M SO VERY LONESOME, VERY SAD, Not Purchased
IT'S A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE BEEN GLAD. © Mark A. Ridge
BUT, I KNOW WHAT I'LL DO, STARTS TONIGHT,
YOU'LL SEE MY NAME IN MARQUEE LIGHTS.
AND WHEN I'M GONE, YOU WAIT AND SEE,
THEY'LL ALL BE SORRY THAT THEY PICKED ON ME.
WHEN I FIRST SAW THE LADIES DANCE,
I KNEW SOMEDAY I'D GET MY CHANCE.
I WAS PREPARED TO PAY MY DUES.
I SCRIMPED AND SAVED TO BUY TAP SHOES.
WHEN MOTHER SENT ME OFF TO SCHOOL,
THEY TREATED ME JUST LIKE A FOOL.
SO, I TOOK DANCE CLASS EVERY DAY
AND SET MY SIGHTS ON OL' BROADWAY.
THEY ALWAYS, ALWAYS PICK ON ME.
THEY NEVER EVER LET ME BE.
I'M SO VERY LONESOME, PRETTY MAD,
IT'S A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE BEEN BAD
BUT, I KNOW WHAT I'LL DO, ONE FINE DAY.
I'LL GET REVENGE AND MAKE THEM PAY.
AND WHEN AT LAST I'VE MADE THE CUT
I'LL TELL THEM ALL THAT THEY CAN KISS MY BUTT!

{GRANDMA enters. She is played by a male actor.}

GRANDMA. What's going on in here?

BETSY. Nothing.

GRANDMA. I thought I heard singing.

BETSY. (Tearing up) You did. This is a musical.

GRANDMA. Oh, stop that crying. It's not going to do you a bit of good.

BETSY. But, they laughed at me.

GRANDMA. Everyone in this world who has ever dreamed of something has been laughed at. Betsy, there are two types of people in this world, the dreamers and the doers. The doers are the ones who set out to make their dreams come true, while the dreamers just sit around and moon about how wonderful it would be if only things were different.

BETSY. Oh Grandma, I want so much more than this provincial life. I'm gonna be a doer! Look at me and tell me what you see.

GRANDMA. I see a beautiful, slightly overweight girl.

BETSY. Well, you ain't seen the best of me yet. I can catch the moon in my hand. Don't you know who I am?

GRANDMA. You're Betsy Barker.

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BETSY. Remember my name.

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GRANDMA. Fame. . . You want it all and you want it to be easy. Why, when I wanted something, I came across those plains in a prairie schooner with your grandfather. Oh, everyone laughed at us, too. They always said this country would never be anything but a wilderness. But, we didn't believe that.

BETSY. It must have been wonderful.

GRANDMA. No. It sucked. We burned in summer and we froze in winter. We kept on going because we were doing something we loved. Could you do it? Could you do it even if it broke your heart? Remember, for every dream that you make come true, you will pay the price in heart break. I know what I'm talking about. You may not believe it, but I was a young girl once, a very pretty young girl, a lot prettier than you are. I had offers from many men and a few women. Yes, Betsy, there are women out there who prefer the company of other women.

(MORE)

GRANDMA. (Continued) Remember, I told you about them? They can be possessive. Why, when that gal put a bullet into your Grandpa, it was like it went through my body, too. But, I stayed strong. I jumped in that wagon with her and kept heading west. Three days later, your mother was born. You don't know the meaning of pain until you've given yourself a cesarean. But, I kept going. I had to. I had that dream. I wanted to be a Teamster. Are you prepared to follow your dream, Betsy, to sacrifice for it?

BETSY: I am. I hear the music. I close my eyes, feel the rhythm.

GRANDMA. Does it wrap around and take a hold of your heart?

BETSY: What a feeling!

GRANDMA. Well, maybe New York is your wilderness. If you've got one drop of my blood in your veins, you won't let anyone break your heart. You'll go right out there and break it yourself. That's your right as my granddaughter. But, always remember-

{THERE'S A BROKEN HEART FOR EVERY LIGHT ON BROADWAY begins.}

THERE'S A BROKEN HEART
FOR EV'RY LIGHT ON BROADWAY.
A MILLION TEARS FOR EVERY GLEAM, THEY SAY.
THOSE LIGHTS ABOVE YOU,
THINK NOTHING OF YOU.
IT'S THOSE WHO LOVE YOU WHO HAVE TO PAY.
THERE'S A SORROW LURKING
IN EACH GLOOMY SHADOW.
AND, SORROW COMES TO EV'RY ONE SOME DAY.
'TWILL COME TO YOUR BROTHERS,
BUT THINK OF GRANDMOTHERS,
WITH BROKEN HEARTS
FOR EACH LIGHT ON BROADWAY.

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BETSY. (Hugging her) Oh, Grandmother.

GRANDMA. Here take this.

BETSY. Oh, I can't take your money.

GRANDMA. Follow your dream child, that dream that will need all the love you can give.

BETSY: Every day of my life?

GRANDMA. For as long as you live. And Betsy, if sometime in the future, perhaps even somewhere in this play, you find yourself in a position to help another struggling artist, don't forget the golden rule.

BETSY: I won't. I'll do unto them.

GRANDMA. Pay it forward, Betsy. Pay it forward.

BETSY: I will. I promise. Oh Grandmother, how can I ever thank you?

GRANDMA. By giving me your solemn word that you will never ever tell a living soul where you got that money. Don't forget, I'm still on parole.

BETSY: I won't. I am not throwing away my shot!

GRANDMA. What?

BETSY: I am not throwing away my shot!

GRANDMA. Just take your Hamilton's and go.

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BLACKOUT

ACT ONE
SCENE THREE

{Lights up in the office of famed Broadway director, JEFFERSON BLAND. He is in the process of signing his new contract. SKIP and BANKS are standing nearby.}

BANKS. Can you make a hit out of it, Jefferson?

JEFFERSON. I've made hit shows out of less.

BANKS. We certainly got a break when we got Penny Stuart. That Gabe Stroman has agreed to finance anything for her.

JEFFERSON. These days, stars like Penny Stuart are a dime a dozen.

BANKS. That's why we got you Jefferson. Jefferson Bland, the greatest director on Broadway.

SKIP. Broadway?

BANKS. The greatest director in the world. Why, with your reputation-

JEFFERSON. Did you ever try to pay a bill with a reputation? Don't kid yourself. I'm doing this show for one reason and one reason only - cold hard CASH.

BANKS. With all your past hits, you should be sitting pretty.

JEFFERSON. I've got just two words for you.

BANKS. Wall Street?

JEFFERSON. No. Fuck off.

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{The TELEPHONE RINGS.}

SKIP. (Answering phone) Mr. Bland's office. Who's calling? One moment please. (To Jefferson) It's for you. It's a Dr. Brockton. Says it's important.

JEFFERSON. Sorry, I've got to take this. (On Phone) Bland here.

{Lights up on DR. BROCKTON.}

DR. BROCKTON. (On phone) Mr. Bland, I've got the results back from your examination.

JEFFERSON. Hit me with it, Doc. I can take it.

DR. BROCKTON. (On phone) I'm afraid it's what I suspected. I must recommend immediate surgery.

JEFFERSON. It's too late for that now. I've signed a contract. I've got a show to do.

DR. BROCKTON. (On phone) Good lord man, you're not a machine. That body of yours will only tolerate so much. Any undue strain on your part could prove fatal.

JEFFERSON. I'll have to risk it.

DR. BROCKTON. (On phone) In that case, there's still that matter of your outstanding balance. (JEFFERSON hangs up the phone) Hello? Hello?

{Lights out on DR. BROCKTON.}

BANKS. Is there anything wrong?

JEFFERSON. Why do you ask?

BANKS. That doctor talked kind of loud. You realize that if the show doesn't open by the fifteenth, we lose the lease on the theatre.

JEFFERSON. Don't worry. I've never let you down before and I can't afford to now.

BANKS. Well, I need to get back to the bank. I've got a foreclosure this afternoon and you know how I love those. So long.

JEFFERSON. Farewell.

SKIP. Auf Wiedersehen

BANKS: (Exiting) Good night.

SKIP. It'll sure be nice to be back on Broadway again.

JEFFERSON. Broadway. I've given everything I've had to that damn 42nd Street. It's beautiful, isn't it? There's not another like it in the entire world.

SKIP. Boss, we're on 43rd Street.

JEFFERSON. What's the difference? You've seen one street, you've seen 'em all. The point is, this is my last shot. I'm going to have to reach in and pull one more hit out of my ass and you're going to have to help me. And, this time I'll sock my money away someplace that no one on earth will ever be able to find it, not even my ex-wives. That's why TAP THAT has got to be a hit and it's got to be my best. It's got to support me for a long, long time.

SKIP. But, about that phone call . . .

JEFFERSON. What do doctors know? Medical diplomas don't make them gods. Make the chorus call for ten a.m. tomorrow.

BLACKOUT

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ACT ONE
SCENE FOUR

{Lights up on a Broadway theatre. The stage is full of dancers waiting for auditions to resume, some are in various stages of practicing routines and doing stretches. SKIP is doing his best to keep the crowds under control. Among the dancers are BETSY, MONA, FANNY, HARRY and PETER. BANKS and GABE are also present and checking out the ladies.}

MONA. You OK, honey? You look a little pale.

BETSY. I'll be all right.

FANNY. When was the last time you had a decent meal?

BETSY. I can't remember.

FANNY. A pretty girl like you? You shouldn't have any trouble getting a guy to buy you dinner. Look over there. That's Banks Lonnigan. He's loaded.

MONA. You mean, drunk?

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FANNY. Could you be any dumber?

MONA. I don't know.

FANNY. (To Betsy) You stick with us kid. We'll show you how to hook a guy. It's easy.

MONA. She's easy.

FANNY. Look over there. Banks is talking to Gabe Stroman, the Sausage King.

MONA. I sure could go for a nice big sausage right now.

{MONA and FANNY laugh.}

BETSY. I don't feel well. I think I might faint. I'm dizzy.

FANNY. Nice to meet you Dizzy.

BETSY. No, I'm serious.

MONA. Nice to meet you Serious.

{BETSY FAINTS.}

JEFFERSON. (Entering) Someone wake up that girl. We don't have time for naps. This is a theatre. If you want to sleep here, you've got to buy a ticket first.

{FANNY and MONA help revive BETSY.}

BETSY. Thanks. I'm so embarrassed. This is the third time this week I've woke up on the floor.

FANNY. You get used to it.

SKIP. OK gang, cut the chatter. Mr. Bland is back from the john. I need everyone to get back in line.

GABE. Who are those two girls over there?

BANKS. You mean, Pete and Harry?

PETER & HARRY. (In unison) We heard that.

GABE. No, those two.

SKIP. That's Mona and Fanny.

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GABE. That Fanny is a real peach.

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BETSY. Peach?

JEFFERSON. I can't help but notice Miss Stuart has decided not to grace us with her presence.

GABE. You know how she feels about auditions.

MONA. (Whispering) She thinks she's too good for us.

BETSY. Well, she is a big star.

FANNY. And getting bigger every day.

SKIP. Quiet girls.

PETER & HARRY. (In unison) Sorry.

JEFFERSON. I guess I shouldn't have had those clams for breakfast. I think they may have turned. Anyway, I was just looking over your resumes-

PETER. (Whispering to Harry) In the bathroom?

JEFFERSON. (Addressing the line) Now, you remaining dancers represent the best of the best. I wish I could hire you all but dammit, I just can't. I'm going to have to let one of you go. Please take your positions. I need to see you one last time.

SKIP. OK Gang. You heard the man. A five, six, seven, eight-

{The MUSIC STARTS and the dancers begin to dance. They each appear to be doing their own private routine.}

JEFFERSON. (Stopping them) Enough. Enough. Wonderful. Just wonderful. You're not making this decision easy. (The dancers form a line and each adopt a pose eerily reminiscent of "A Chorus Line.") As I look into your eager young faces, I realize that I've worked with most of you before. Except you - I don't think I know you. You were the sleeping girl.

BETSY. I'm Betsy Barker . . . from French Lick, Indiana.

JEFFERSON. And, why did you come here Miss Barker, to take a nap?

BETSY. I came here because I need a job.

JEFFERSON. In the chorus? Look, I was just sitting in there looking over your resume. (To Skip) That reminds me, we're out of paper in there.

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SKIP. Sorry Boss.

JEFFERSON. (Back to Betsy) You've done speaking roles before. This would be a step down for you.

BETSY. I'll take what I can get.

JEFFERSON. You're just going thru a slow period.

BETSY. That's what I've been telling myself for the last thirty seven auditions. The truth is, nothing is going to turn up. I just need a job. Look, there's nothing left for me to do here, so I'm putting myself on that line. God, I'm a dancer! A dancer dances.

JEFFERSON. But, I've only got one more spot open and I sort of promised it to that girl back stage, the one with the tits and the ass.

BETSY. Please! Give me somebody to dance with. Give me somebody to show.

JEFFERSON. What sort of salary are you hoping for?

BETSY. I don't need much. Maybe some music . . . a mirror-

JEFFERSON. You're hired. You're all hired! (Everyone applauds) All right now, you people, back in line and everybody quiet. Tomorrow morning, we're going to start a show. We're going to rehearse and rehearse and we're going to open on schedule. You're going to work and sweat and work some more. You're going to work days and you're going to work nights.

(MORE)

JEFFERSON. (Continued) It's going to be the toughest seven days you've ever lived through. You're going to dance your feet off and one week from now, we're going to have a show! We start tomorrow.

{Everyone CHEERS.}

SKIP. Now, you're all going to need your rest. I want you all to go straight home and go straight to bed.

MONA. Whose home?

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FANNY. Whose bed?

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PETER & HARRY. (In unison) Who's straight?

JEFFERSON. Wait! Before you all go, I have a quick question. Does anyone happen to know a young, handsome, singing, song writing, juvenile male lead? I've just received word that Billy Lawler is unavailable for our show.

PETER. Say, I might know someone. There's this new guy who frequents our club.

JEFFERSON. Is he talented?

PETER. I think so. I've heard him singing in the sauna.

SKIP. Can he dance?

PETER. I think so. I've seen him dancing in the sauna.

JEFFERSON. Do you think he would be interested and available to take the lead in the biggest show scheduled to land on Broadway this season?

PETER & HARRY. (In unison) We can ask him.

SKIP. Jefferson, are you willing to risk the entire show on an unknown?

JEFFERSON. If God could create the entire world in seven days, surely I can pull this off. Besides, I have no choice. When that curtain goes up, TAP THAT has got to be a sensation! We owe it to those ticket buyers. When they pluck down their twenty five cents, they don't expect to see just any old show. They expect to see a show with my name on it. They expect to see a Bland show, and that's exactly what we've got to give them.

BLACKOUT

ACT ONE
SCENE FIVE

{The lights come up on DICK HOPPER, a young attractive man in his twenties. He is dressed in a towel, sitting on a bench in the sauna and scribbling into a note pad.}

{I CAN ALWAYS FIND A LITTLE SUNSHINE begins}

DICK.

MOTHER DEAR, I HAVE JUST SETTLED IN
AND WAS THINKING OF YOU TODAY.
HOW I'VE MISSED YOUR TENDER CARESS
SINCE THE DAY WHEN I MOVED AWAY.
BUT, DON'T WORRY DEAR, I'M CONTENTED HERE,
WHAT IS MORE I'M FEELING FINE.
EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR,
AND EVERY NIGHT, I WILL DROP YOU A LINE.
YOU CAN PICTURE ME EVERY EVENING,
AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY,
WRITING A LITTLE LETTER, JUST TO SAY I'M OK.
DON'T YOU WORRY MOTHER DARLING,
FOR WHEN THE SKIES ARE GRAY,
I CAN ALWAYS FIND A LITTLE SUNSHINE AT THE Y.M.C.A.
MOTHER DEAR, I'M STILL WRITING SONGS
BUT IT'S TOUGHER NOW TO EARN MY PAY.
THE WEATHER'S COLD AND THE NIGHTS ARE LONG.
I'M BEGINNING TO LOSE MY WAY.
BUT, DON'T WORRY DEAR,
THO 'THIS MAY SOUND QUEER,
REST ASSURED THAT ALL IS WELL.
ON OPENING NIGHT, I'LL BE QUITE A SIGHT.
THERE'LL BE SO MUCH TO TELL.

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{HARRY and PETER enter the locker room. They are also dressed in towels. They silently listen to DICK's song.}

YOU CAN PICTURE ME EVERY EVENING,
AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY,
WRITING A LITTLE LETTER
JUST TO SEND ON ITS' WAY.
DON'T YOU WORRY MOTHER DARLING,
FOR WHEN THE SKIES ARE GRAY,
I CAN ALWAYS FIND A LITTLE SUNSHINE AT THE Y.M.C.A.

PETER. Hey, don't take this the wrong way, but that was a great song.

DICK. Thanks.

HARRY. And, you're a great singer.

DICK. Thanks. And, you've both got amazing bodies.

PETER & HARRY. (In unison) Thanks.

DICK. My name's Dick. Dick Hopper.

HARRY. Nice to meet you Dick. I'm Harry.

DICK. Not really.

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HARRY. Harry Wood.

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PETER. And, I'm Peter. Peter Burns.

DICK. Nice to meet you fellows. And, what do you both do? Besides keeping fit that is?

PETER & HARRY. (In unison) We're chorus boys.

DICK. No way.

PETER & HARRY. (In unison) Way.

PETER. We're in rehearsals for a new Broadway show called TAP THAT. Perhaps, you've heard of it?

DICK. Are you kidding? Everybody's heard of TAP THAT. I tried desperately to get into those auditions. I'm new in town so I don't have an agent yet.

HARRY. Oh, you don't need an agent to get an audition. You just gotta know the right guy to -

PETER. (Cutting him off) Say, it just so happens they're still looking for a guy.

HARRY. Yeah, it's for one of the secondary leads, the juvenile. You'd be perfect.

PETER. What's your schedule like for the next few weeks?

DICK. Well, I do have a few things planned. I was going to get this boil lanced, but I think I can put that off. This opportunity sounds too good to miss. How can I ever thank you guys?

PETER & HARRY. (In unison) Come here.

DICK. (Approaching)

YOU CAN PICTURE ME EVERY EVENING,
AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY,
WRITING A LITTLE LETTER
THAT I'LL SEND FROM BROADWAY.

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ALL.

DON'T YOU WORRY MOTHER DARLING,
FOR WHEN WE'RE FEELING GAY,
WE CAN ALWAYS FIND A LITTLE SUNSHINE
AT THE Y.M.C.A.

BLACKOUT