

LIBRETTO VOCAL BOOK



Book by
Joe Masteroff

Music by
Jerry Bock

Lyrics by
Sheldon Harnick

Based on a Play by **Miklos Laszlo**. Originally Directed on Broadway by **Harold Prince**.
Originally Produced on Broadway by **Harold Prince** in Association with **Lawrence N. Kasha** and **Philip C. McKenna**



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Table Of Contents

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE		1
#1A	Overture (Orchestra).....	1
#1B	Opening — Act I (Orchestra).....	1
#1C	Good Morning, Good Day (Sipos, Arpad, Ritter, Kodaly, Georg).....	1
#2	Opening The Shop (Orchestra).....	7
#3	Sounds While Selling (Customers, Sipos, Kodaly, Georg).....	7
#4	Reading The Letter (Orchestra).....	12
#5	Days Gone By (Maraczek).....	13
#6	Music Box #1 (Orchestra).....	16
#7	You Will Pay Through The Nose (Maraczek).....	17
#8	Music Box #2 (Orchestra).....	18
#9	Doorbell #1 (Orchestra).....	18
#10	Music Box #3 (Orchestra).....	18
#11	Amalia's Entrance (Orchestra).....	19
#12	Thank You, Madam #1 (Ritter, Kodaly, Georg, Sipos).....	20
#13	Music Box Surprise (Orchestra).....	24
#14	No More Candy (Amalia).....	24
#15	Thank You, Madam #2 (Amalia, Ritter, Kodaly, Georg, Sipos).....	26
SCENE TWO.....		27
#16A	The First Letter — Summer (Georg).....	27
#16B	The Second Letter — Autumn (Georg).....	27
#16C	The Third Letter — Winter (Georg, Amalia).....	29
#17	Tonight At Eight (Georg).....	34
#18	Shop To The Back Room (Orchestra).....	35
#19	I Don't Know His Name (Amalia, Ritter).....	38
#20	Back Room To The Shop (Orchestra).....	40
#21	Perspective (Sipos).....	42
#22	Doorbell #2 (Orchestra).....	44
#23	Thank You, Madam #4 (Amalia, Ritter, Kodaly, Georg, Sipos).....	45
#24	Doorbell #3 (Orchestra).....	47
#25	Doorbell #4 (Orchestra).....	47
#26	Goodbye, Georg (Customers, Clerks).....	49
#27A	Georg's Exit (Orchestra).....	52
#27B	Will He Like Me? (Amalia).....	52
#28	Will He Like Me? — Tag (Orchestra).....	53

SCENE THREE			54
#29	<i>Ilona</i>	<i>(Kodaly, Sipos, Arpad)</i>	55
#30	<i>I Resolve</i>	<i>(Ritter)</i>	58
#31	<i>Ilona's Exit</i>	<i>(Orchestra)</i>	59
#32	<i>Street To The Shop</i>	<i>(Orchestra)</i>	60
#33	<i>Goodbye, Love</i>	<i>(Orchestra)</i>	63
 SCENE FOUR			 64
#34	<i>A Romantic Atmosphere</i>	<i>(Waiter)</i>	64
#35	<i>The Café Imperiale</i>	<i>(Orchestra)</i>	65
#36	<i>Tango Tragique</i>	<i>(Orchestra)</i>	71
#37	<i>Mr. Nowack, Will You</i> <i>Please...</i>	<i>(Amalia, Waiter)</i>	73
#38	<i>Dear Friend</i>	<i>(Amalia)</i>	77

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE.....	80
#39 <i>Entr'acte</i> (Orchestra).....	80
#40 <i>Opening — Act II</i> (Orchestra).....	80
#41 <i>Try Me</i> (Arpad).....	81
#42 <i>Maraczek's Memories</i> (Maraczek).....	87
SCENE TWO.....	89
#43 <i>Where's My Shoe?</i> (Amalia, Georg).....	90
#44 <i>Vanilla Ice Cream</i> (Amalia).....	99
SCENE THREE.....	102
#45 <i>She Loves Me</i> (Georg).....	102
#46 <i>She Loves Me Playoff</i> (Orchestra).....	103
#47 <i>A Trip To The Library</i> (Ritter).....	105
#48 <i>Sipos' Exit</i> (Orchestra).....	108
#49 <i>Doorbell #5</i> (Orchestra).....	108
#50 <i>Doorbell #6</i> (Orchestra).....	108
#51 <i>Thank You, Madam #5</i> (Ritter, Arpad, Sipos).....	109
#52 <i>Grand Knowing You</i> (Kodaly).....	111
#53A <i>Grand Knowing You —</i> <i>Tag</i> (Orchestra).....	112
SCENE FOUR.....	113
#53B <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (Carolers).....	113
#53C <i>Twelve Days To</i> <i>Christmas</i> (Carolers, Customers, Clerks).....	113
SCENE FIVE.....	118
#54 <i>The Invitation</i> (Orchestra).....	119
SCENE SIX.....	126
#55 <i>Closing The Shop</i> (Orchestra).....	126
#56 <i>Finale — Act II</i> (Georg, Amalia).....	128
#57 <i>She Loves Me Bows</i> (Orchestra).....	129
#58 <i>Thank You Bows</i> (Company).....	129
#59 <i>Exit Music</i> (Orchestra).....	129

Characters

ARPAD LASZLO
LADISLAV SIPOS
ILONA RITTER
STEVEN KODALY
GEORG NOWACK
MR. MARACZEK
AMALIA BALASH
KELLER
BUSBOY
WAITER
CUSTOMERS
COUPLES
CAROLERS

Songs By Character

<i>Amalia</i>	#14	<i>No More Candy</i>	24
	#15	<i>Thank You, Madam #2</i>	26
	#16C	<i>The Third Letter — Winter</i>	29
	#19	<i>I Don't Know His Name</i>	38
	#23	<i>Thank You, Madam #4</i>	45
	#27B	<i>Will He Like Me?</i>	52
	#37	<i>Mr. Nowack, Will You Please...</i>	73
	#38	<i>Dear Friend</i>	77
	#43	<i>Where's My Shoe?</i>	90
	#44	<i>Vanilla Ice Cream</i>	99
	#56	<i>Finale — Act II</i>	128
<i>Arpad</i>	#1C	<i>Good Morning, Good Day</i>	1
	#29	<i>Ilona</i>	55
	#41	<i>Try Me</i>	81
	#51	<i>Thank You, Madam #5</i>	109
<i>Carolers</i>	#53B	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	113
	#53C	<i>Twelve Days To Christmas</i>	113
<i>Clerks</i>	#26	<i>Goodbye, Georg</i>	49
	#53C	<i>Twelve Days To Christmas</i>	113
<i>Company</i>	#58	<i>Thank You Bows</i>	129
<i>Customers</i>	#3	<i>Sounds While Selling</i>	7
	#26	<i>Goodbye, Georg</i>	49
	#53C	<i>Twelve Days To Christmas</i>	113
<i>Georg</i>	#1C	<i>Good Morning, Good Day</i>	1
	#3	<i>Sounds While Selling</i>	7
	#12	<i>Thank You, Madam #1</i>	20
	#15	<i>Thank You, Madam #2</i>	26
	#16A	<i>The First Letter — Summer</i>	27
	#16B	<i>The Second Letter — Autumn</i>	27
	#16C	<i>The Third Letter — Winter</i>	29
	#17	<i>Tonight At Eight</i>	34
	#23	<i>Thank You, Madam #4</i>	45
	#43	<i>Where's My Shoe?</i>	90
	#45	<i>She Loves Me</i>	102
	#56	<i>Finale — Act II</i>	128
<i>Kodaly</i>	#1C	<i>Good Morning, Good Day</i>	1
	#3	<i>Sounds While Selling</i>	7

	#12	<i>Thank You, Madam #1</i>	20
	#15	<i>Thank You, Madam #2</i>	26
	#23	<i>Thank You, Madam #4</i>	45
	#29	<i>Ilona</i>	55
	#52	<i>Grand Knowing You</i>	111
<i>Maraczek</i>	#5	<i>Days Gone By</i>	13
	#7	<i>You Will Pay Through The Nose</i>	17
	#42	<i>Maraczek's Memories</i>	87
<i>Ritter</i>	#1C	<i>Good Morning, Good Day</i>	1
	#12	<i>Thank You, Madam #1</i>	20
	#15	<i>Thank You, Madam #2</i>	26
	#19	<i>I Don't Know His Name</i>	38
	#23	<i>Thank You, Madam #4</i>	45
	#30	<i>I Resolve</i>	58
	#47	<i>A Trip To The Library</i>	105
	#51	<i>Thank You, Madam #5</i>	109
<i>Sipos</i>	#1C	<i>Good Morning, Good Day</i>	1
	#3	<i>Sounds While Selling</i>	7
	#12	<i>Thank You, Madam #1</i>	20
	#15	<i>Thank You, Madam #2</i>	26
	#21	<i>Perspective</i>	42
	#23	<i>Thank You, Madam #4</i>	45
	#29	<i>Ilona</i>	55
	#51	<i>Thank You, Madam #5</i>	109
<i>Waiter</i>	#34	<i>A Romantic Atmosphere</i>	64
	#37	<i>Mr. Nowack, Will You Please</i> ...	73

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| #1A | Overture | (Orchestra) |
| #1B | Opening — Act I | (Orchestra) |
| #1C | Good Morning,
Good Day | (Sipos, Arpad, Ritter, Kodaly, Georg) |

(AT RISE: The front of MARACZEK'S Parfumerie. A city in Europe. The 1930s. It is early morning in midsummer. The stage is empty. Then LADISLAV SIPOS ENTERS, his nose buried in a newspaper. SIPOS is about 45 — but he looks older. A moment later, ARPAD ENTERS, riding a bicycle. ARPAD is 15 or 16 — and indefatigable)

ARPAD

GOOD MORNING.

SIPOS

GOOD DAY.

ARPAD

HOW ARE YOU THIS BEAUTIFUL DAY?
ISN'T THIS A BEAUTIFUL MORNING?

SIPOS

VERY.

ARPAD

HEY, SIPOS —
HOW'S THIS?

SIPOS

THAT'S AN AWFULLY ELEGANT POSE
BUT IS ALL THAT ELEGANCE NECE —
'SARY?

ARPAD

And why not? I represent Maraczek's, don't I? We're not a butcher shop — or a hardware store... we're a parfumerie. That means we're... we're...
(HE looks for the word)

SIPOS

WE'RE STYLISH.

ARPAD

THAT'S IT.

SIPOS

WITH A QUIET DIGNITY.

ARPAD

YES,
AND WE GET THE TILT OF OUR HATS RIGHT.

SIPOS

THAT'S RIGHT.

ARPAD

WHEN I RIDE MY BIKE,
PEOPLE SEE WHAT MARACZEK'S LIKE.
SO I THINK IT'S VERY IMPORTANT
THAT I LOOK MY BEST.

SIPOS

(Matter-of-factly)

And how many people did you run over today?

ARPAD

Not one.

SIPOS

Well — it's early.

ARPAD

Here comes Miss Ritter.

SIPOS

Hmm...

ARPAD

She spent the night with Mr. Kodaly.

SIPOS

Again?

ARPAD

They always kiss goodbye at the newsstand. Then she walks around the block to make us think she's been home.

(MISS RITTER ENTERS. 30ish — sexy — SHE gives the impression of a girl who's been around)

RITTER
GOOD MORNING.

ARPAD, SIPOS
GOOD DAY.

RITTER
HOW ARE YOU THIS GLORIOUS DAY?
HAVE YOU SEEN A LOVELIER MORNING?

ARPAD, SIPOS
NEVER.

RITTER
IT'S TOO NICE A DAY
TO BE INSIDE SHUFFLING SOAP.
I HAVE NO MORE ENERGY WHAT-SO-
(SHE yawns)
EVER.

Anybody mind if I take the day off? Arpad — why aren't you old enough to take me away from all this?

ARPAD
I'm old enough!

RITTER
Then marry me and I'll quit my job.
(SHE gives ARPAD a close scrutiny)
No. I'm afraid you're really not — quite — old enough.

ARPAD
(Innocently)
It won't be long, though. I'm catching up. You know, Miss Horvath always used to say I'd get to be thirty-five before *you* ever did.

(STEVEN KODALY ENTERS jauntily. HE is in his middle 20s — handsome, dapper and shallow)

KODALY
GOOD MORNING.

ARPAD, SIPOS, RITTER
GOOD DAY.

KODALY
HOW ARE YOU THIS RADIANT DAY?
WHAT A RARE MAGNIFICENT MORNING!

ARPAD, SIPOS
(Downbeat)
IS IT?

KODALY
(To RITTER)
GOOD MORNING, MY DEAR.
HOW ARE YOU THIS RAVISHING DAY?
DO YOU KNOW YOU'VE NEVER LOOKED MORE EXQUISITE.

RITTER
(Curtseying archly)
THANK YOU, KIND SIR.

KODALY
(To RITTER)
What a lovely dress.

ARPAD
It's the same one she had on yesterday, Mr. Kodaly.

SIPOS
Ah — Mr. Nowack.

(GEORG NOWACK ENTERS. HE is in his late 20s — soft-spoken, personable, shy, capable)

GEORG
GOOD MORNING.

SIPOS, ARPAD, RITTER, KODALY
GOOD DAY.

GEORG
ISN'T THAT A BEAUTIFUL SKY?
WHAT A PERFECT SAMPLE OF SUMMER WEATHER.
IT'S TOO NICE A DAY
TO BE INDOORS COUNTING OUT CHANGE.
WHAT A WASTE OF HOLIDAY WEATHER ALTOGETHER...

LET'S ALL RUN AWAY!

(THEY all dreamily consider this possibility for a moment)

RITTER

WOULDN'T IT BE SOMETHING IF WE ALL TOOK OFF FROM
WORK?

SIPOS

LEAVING MR. MARACZEK WITHOUT A SINGLE CLERK!

ARPAD

WHY NOT HAVE A PICNIC?

SIPOS

I COULD BRING MY WIFE'S PRESERVES.

KODALY

CHAMPAGNE MIGHT BE NICE WITH HOT HORS D'OEUVRES.

ALL

(In canon)

IT'S TOO NICE A DAY
TO BE STUCK INSIDE OF A STORE.
WE COULD ALL BE GETTING OUR FACES SUNTANNED.
IT'S SO NICE A DAY
TO BE DOZING UNDER A TREE —

SIPOS

AND WE'LL ALL BE OUT OF A JOB.

RITTER

IF IT COSTS THAT MUCH TO GET SUNTANNED —

SIPOS

I'LL STAY UNTANNED.

KODALY

PALE — BUT SOLVENT.

ARPAD

(Wistfully)

A PICNIC —

ALL

A PICNIC —

(Spoken-sighed)

Oh, well...

(The dream is ended)

KODALY

Well, Mr. Nowack — was the chicken the usual success?

GEORG

Hmm?

KODALY

Last night. Your weekly dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Maraczek.

GEORG

Oh. Yes.

(HE nods)

SIPOS

(To GEORG)

Did you talk to Mr. Maraczek about replacing Miss Horvath?

GEORG

I mentioned it.

(HE shakes his head)

Absolutely not. After all — with business the way it's been...

KODALY

Yes, but it's bound to pick up — now that Hammerschmidt's has closed.

(MR. MARACZEK ENTERS. HE is about 60 — genial-looking but quite capable of being difficult when the occasion arises. As he enters, two FEMALE WINDOW SHOPPERS ENTER and stop at one of the windows. MR. MARACZEK watches them)

FIRST WINDOW SHOPPER

Did you ever try their hand-cream?

SECOND WINDOW SHOPPER

I wonder if it's any good?

(MR. MARACZEK walks up to the ladies and speaks to them)

MARACZEK

Good? My dear woman — my wife's been using their products for years! In fact, I often wondered why theirs are always so much better than everyone else's.

FIRST WINDOW SHOPPER

You should know, Mr. Maraczek.

(The WINDOW SHOPPERS EXIT. MR. MARACZEK approaches the group at the front door)

CLERKS

Good morning, Mr. Maraczek.

MARACZEK

Good day.

#2 *Opening The Shop* (Orchestra)

(Set turns. We are in the Parfumerie. CLERKS pantomime getting the shop ready for business. GEORG opens the door. The doorbell sounds its characteristic four notes and THREE CUSTOMERS ENTER)

#3 *Sounds While Selling* (Customers, Sipos, Kodaly, Georg)

GEORG

(To FIRST CUSTOMER)

Good day, madam, may I help you?

KODALY

(To SECOND CUSTOMER)

Good day, madam, may I help you?

SIPOS

(To THIRD CUSTOMER)

Good day, madam, may I help you?

THIRD CUSTOMER

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE A

KODALY

FACE LIKE YOURS

FIRST CUSTOMER

CRACKED

SIPOS

BUT WE CARRY

FIRST CUSTOMER

DO YOU HAVE A CREAM FOR

SECOND CUSTOMER

CHERRY RED

THIRD CUSTOMER

SKIN

KODALY

OH, I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

GEORG

YOU WILL LOOK ENCHANTING.

THIRD CUSTOMER

DRY

FIRST CUSTOMER

LIPS

KODALY

GLAMOROUS AS GARBO

SIPOS

BIG

GEORG

MOUTH

KODALY

I WOULD RECOMMEND A

SIPOS

BATH

GEORG

TODAY

SECOND CUSTOMER

ON SALE, DID YOU SAY?

GEORG
PUT A LITTLE LIPSTICK

KODALY
ON YOUR NOSE

SIPOS
TWICE

SECOND CUSTOMER
MORNING AND EVENING

FIRST CUSTOMER
AND A LITTLE BRUSH FOR

THIRD CUSTOMER
COMBING MY

GEORG
TEETH

KODALY
ABSOLUTELY

CUSTOMERS
WRAP IT UP AND SEND IT.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.

CLERKS
IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE BEFORE YOU GO?

CUSTOMERS
YES...

(The THREE CUSTOMERS sing a round)

THIRD CUSTOMER
WHAT HAVE I FORGOTTEN?
I KNOW THERE WAS
SOMETHING ELSE,
WHAT COULD IT
BE?
SOMETHING UNIMPORTANT.
SOMETHING FOR MY HUSBAND.
REALLY DOESN'T MATTER,

SECOND CUSTOMER
WHAT HAVE I FORGOTTEN?
I KNOW THERE WAS
SOMETHING ELSE,
WHAT COULD IT
BE?
SOMETHING UNIMPORTANT.
SOMETHING FOR MY HUSBAND.

LET'S GET
BACK TO ME.

DOESN'T MATTER,
LET'S GET BACK TO ME.

FIRST CUSTOMER

THERE IS SOMETHING I'VE FORGOTTEN
I REMEMBER IT WAS SOMETHING FOR MY HUSBAND.
MIGHT AS WELL GET BACK TO ME.

I COULD ALSO USE A

SECOND CUSTOMER

BOTTLE OF

THIRD CUSTOMER

HAIR

GEORG

WE HAVE A SPLENDID

KODALY

HERE'S AN INEXPENSIVE
PERFUME CALLED

SIPOS

RAT

THIRD CUSTOMER

I'VE NEVER USED ONE.

GEORG

IF YOU WANT TO CLIP YOUR

KODALY

EAR LOBES

SIPOS

YOU MAY WANT TO DYE YOUR

GEORG

HANGNAILS

KODALY

DAB A LITTLE ON YOUR

SIPOS
HUSBAND'S FACE

CUSTOMERS
WON'T HE BE SURPRISED!

FIRST CUSTOMER
I WOULD LIKE AN EYEBROW

SECOND CUSTOMER
UNDER MY

THIRD CUSTOMER
CHIN

FIRST CUSTOMER
THERE'S AN IDEA!

KODALY
MADAM, I AM FILLED WITH

GEORG
VERY SOFT

SIPOS
SOAP

CUSTOMERS
THAT SHOULD DO IT.
WRAP IT UP AND CHARGE IT.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.

CLERKS, CUSTOMERS
ALWAYS SUCH A PLEASURE...
SEEING YOU.

(The door opens)

CLERKS
THANK YOU, MADAM.
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN.
DO CALL AGAIN, MADAM.

(The THREE CUSTOMERS EXIT)

SIPOS

(To GEORG)

Did you see that? Looks like business is picking up.

GEORG

Ladislav — I got another letter today.

SIPOS

From *her*?

GEORG

It's so beautiful — I've got to read it to you...

SIPOS

Did she enclose a *snapshot* this time?

(GEORG shakes his head)

Does she say anything about meeting you — face-to-face?

#4 *Reading The Letter* (Orchestra)

GEORG

(Evasively)

Oh — we're going to — very soon...

(Opens the letter)

But just listen to this — "Dear Friend: Yesterday morning I ran through the rain to the Post Office. I had the key in my hand — the key to box 1433. Trembling, I opened the door and reached inside. And oh, my dear friend, there you were. I took you out, held you in my hand and looked at you for a moment. Then I sat down, gently opened you and read you."

(MARACZEK ENTERS from the office)

MARACZEK

Mr. Sipos, could you spare me one of your stomach pills?

SIPOS

Yes, sir. Of course, sir.

(SIPOS brings the box of stomach pills to MARACZEK, who takes one)

MARACZEK

Thank you. You know whose fault this is?

SIPOS

No, sir.

MARACZEK

(Points to GEORG)

Yours.

GEORG

(Laughs)

Mine?

MARACZEK

Every time you come to dinner — Mrs. Maraczek tries to fatten you up. She has the cook make dumplings and cream gravy — and what happens? You stay thin and I get heartburn.

GEORG

I'm sorry, sir.

MARACZEK

Georg, it's time you were married. Haven't you had enough of living in furnished rooms — running around to cabarets and dance-halls...?

GEORG

Mr. Maraczek — I haven't been to a dance-hall in... years.

#5 *Days Gone By*

(Maraczek)

MARACZEK

I know what you bachelors are like. Remember — I was once one myself. And what a bachelor...

YOUNG, STRONG, OH, I WAS SOMETHING
IN DAYS GONE BY
WITH SOME GIRL WHO JUST
HAPPENED TO CATCH MY EYE.
SLIM, STRAIGHT, LIGHT ON MY FEET,
SHOES JUST SKIMMING THE GROUND.
1-2-3, 1-2-3, FOLLOW THE BEAT

AROUND, AROUND, AROUND.
ALL NIGHT CIRCLING THE FLOOR
'TIL DAWN LIT UP THE SKY,
NO ONE YOUNGER THAN I
IN DAYS GONE BY.

And then I met Mrs. Maraczek and ever since I've danced only with her. I bet *you* think that's incredible.

GEORG

No. Mrs. Maraczek's a beautiful woman.

MARACZEK

YOUNG, STRONG, OH, I WAS SOMETHING
IN DAYS GONE BY

GEORG

The fact is — I'm a terrible dancer.

MARACZEK

WITH SOME GIRL WHO JUST HAPPENED
TO CATCH MY EYE.

(MARACZEK dances with GEORG)

GEORG

No, no, no, Mr. Maraczek. I can do it with my hands. It's just —

MARACZEK

SLIM, STRAIGHT, LIGHT ON MY FEET,

GEORG

I always have trouble with my feet.

MARACZEK

SHOES JUST SKIMMING THE GROUND.

MARACZEK, GEORG

1-2-3, 1-2-3, FOLLOW THE BEAT
AROUND, AROUND, AROUND.

MARACZEK

Miss Ritter...

(GEORG dances with RITTER)

GEORG

Oh, dear. 1-2-3, 1-2-3.

MARACZEK

Very good, Georg.

SIPOS

Relax.

RITTER

And go back-2-3, back-2-3.

SIPOS

Smile.

ARPAD

That's it, Mr. Nowack.

RITTER

Spin me around and go back-2-3, back-2-3.

(ARPAD EXITS)

MARACZEK

ALL NIGHT CIRCLING
'TIL DAWN LIT UP THE SKY,
NO ONE YOUNGER THAN I
IN DAYS GONE BY.

Take my advice, Georg: find yourself one person to dance with. Believe me, it's not necessary to change partners every night...

GEORG

Mr. Maraczek, I...

MARACZEK

Or even every other night. You just think it's necessary.

(ARPAD ENTERS carrying an armful of boxes and a sign — "10/6")

Oh, here they are!

GEORG

What?

MARACZEK

A little surprise for you.

GEORG

What is it?

#6 *Music Box #1* (Orchestra)

MARACZEK

A genuine leather box. Wait — listen —

(Opens the box. It plays a tune)

Isn't that lovely? Here, you try it.

(Hands box to GEORG.)

GEORG opens the box, and looks at it as it plays the tune)

GEORG

(Downbeat)

What else does it do?

MARACZEK

What do you mean, what else?! It's a genuine leather musical cigarette box. And only ten-and-six. How's that for a bargain?

GEORG

But who will buy it?

MARACZEK

I can see you're in a difficult mood today. Now, let's ask some of the other people around here, get their honest opinions. Mr. Kodaly —

KODALY

Yes, sir.

MARACZEK

Will it sell?

KODALY

I can't imagine why not, sir. I'd even go further — I think this will make music lovers out of cigarette smokers, and cigarette smokers out of music lovers!

MARACZEK

Thank you, Mr. Kodaly.

KODALY

You're welcome, sir.

(KODALY returns to his counter)

MARACZEK

All right, Georg — now I'll make you a bet. I'll bet you — ten-and-six — we'll sell the first of these boxes within one hour.

GEORG

I don't want to take your money —

MARACZEK

Ten-and-six — one hour — no more — no less. Is it a bet?

GEORG

Well —

MARACZEK

Ah ha! He's not so confident now!

GEORG

It's a bet.

#7 *You Will Pay Through The Nose* (Maraczek)

MARACZEK

(Sings the music box melody)

YOU WILL PAY THROUGH THE NOSE,
YOU WILL PAY THROUGH THE NOSE...

*(The door opens, the bell rings and the FIRST CUSTOMER
ENTERS. MARACZEK goes to her)*

Good day, madam. May I help you?

FIRST CUSTOMER

I'd like a large tube of Mona Lisa.

MARACZEK

Mona Lisa Cold Cream. Certainly, madam.

#8 Music Box #2 (Orchestra)

(HE opens the box and lets it play close to the FIRST CUSTOMER'S ear)

Isn't that a lovely melody?

FIRST CUSTOMER

Is seven-and-four the largest size — or is there a larger?

MARACZEK

Oh — eh — we also have a nine-and-six.

FIRST CUSTOMER

I'd like to see it.

MARACZEK

This is a musical cigarette box.

(FIRST CUSTOMER once again doesn't rise to the bait)

FIRST CUSTOMER

Do you carry "Flowers of Spring" in the one ounce bottle?

MARACZEK

(Closing the box)

The one ounce bottle? Certainly. Mr. Sipos — your customer.

SIPOS

(To CUSTOMER)

Yes, sir. Over here, madam.

#9 Doorbell #1 (Orchestra)

(Another CUSTOMER ENTERS)

MARACZEK

Good day, madam. May I help you?

#10 Music Box #3 (Orchestra)

CUSTOMER

Who do I see about returning a jar of *sour* face cream?

MARACZEK

Oh — Mr. Kodaly... your customer.

KODALY

Right this way, madam.

(MARACZECK EXITS. AMALIA BALASH ENTERS. SHE is attractive, very bright and very, very nervous)

#11 Amalia's Entrance (Orchestra)

GEORG

(To AMALIA)

Good day, madam. May I help you?

AMALIA

No. Yes! —

GEORG

We have a complete stock of perfumes, soaps, shampoos.

AMALIA

No!

GEORG

Bath oils, bath salts.

AMALIA

No!

GEORG

Cold creams, face creams, nail polishes.

AMALIA

No!

GEORG

Brushes — hard, soft and medium —

AMALIA

No!

GEORG

Toilet water? There's a special — this week only — on "Roses of Italy." I'll show it to you...

(GEORG goes to the toilet water)

FIRST CUSTOMER

(To SIPOS)

Thursday? Good. I'll stop by for it.

SIPOS

Thank you very much, madam.

(FIRST CUSTOMER goes to the door and opens it, the bell rings)

#12 Thank You, Madam #1

(Ritter, Kodaly, Georg, Sipos)

RITTER, KODALY, GEORG, SIPOS

THANK YOU, MADAM.

PLEASE, CALL AGAIN.

DO CALL AGAIN, MADAM.

(FIRST CUSTOMER EXITS. GEORG returns to AMALIA with an atomizer)

GEORG

Let me spray a little on your hand —

AMALIA

No!

GEORG

No?

AMALIA

Actually you see — I'm not going to buy any. Not today. I'm not going to buy anything. Is Mr. Maraczek here?

GEORG

He's in the back room.

AMALIA

Could I speak to him, please?

GEORG

Perhaps I can help you.

AMALIA

I don't think so.

GEORG

He's quite busy.

AMALIA

Then I'll wait. I don't mind. Really. I'll just sit somewhere quietly and wait 'til he's free.

GEORG

May I ask — the nature of your business?

AMALIA

I think I'd better speak to Mr. Maraczek personally.

GEORG

Very well. May I have your name, please?

AMALIA

Balash. Amalia Balash.

GEORG

Very well, Miss Balash, I'll tell him you're here.

(GEORG starts for the back room)

AMALIA

Oh — just one thing. Miss Horvath — who used to work here — the one who's having a baby — she hasn't been replaced yet — has she?

GEORG

Are you looking for a job?

AMALIA

No! I guess you could call it that.

(Eagerly)

I'm a very good salesgirl. Really! Very good! And I know the parfumerie business — inside and out! I worked at Hammerschmidt's — five years! Five years and eight months! And they were always very satisfied with me. I have a letter here — from Mr. Hammerschmidt himself...

(Searches in her pocketbook)

somewhere here. It says: "Miss Balash is honest, dependable, dedicated."

(With emphasis)

"Dedicated."

(Frantically looking through the pocketbook)

It's here somewhere. "She also has an abundance of those qualities which go toward making a superior salesperson. I highly recommend her. Signed: Herman Hammerschmidt..."

(Remembers something)

Oh!

(AMALIA finds the letter and gives it to GEORG)

Here —

GEORG

I'm sure it's just as you say. But — unfortunately — we're not replacing Miss Horvath right now. If you'd like to leave your name...

AMALIA

Balash. Amalia Balash.

GEORG

And then — if anything should come up...

AMALIA

I'd like to speak to Mr. Maraczek, please.

GEORG

I'm afraid — if it's only about a job...

AMALIA

Please!

GEORG

I'm sorry.

(MARACZEK ENTERS)

It just can't be done.

MARACZEK

What can't be done? At Maraczek's, nothing is impossible.

(To AMALIA)

Perhaps I can help you.

GEORG

She wants a job.

MARACZEK

What?

AMALIA

I know this business — inside and out! I worked at Hammerschmidt's...

MARACZEK

(Shaking his head emphatically)

I'm sorry.

AMALIA

I have a letter from Mr. Hammerschmidt himself!

MARACZEK

It's out of the question.

AMALIA

I'm honest — dependable — dedicated!

MARACZEK

Really, Georg — why can't you handle this sort of thing without calling *me* in?

AMALIA

I'm a very good salesgirl!

(MARACZEK starts to EXIT)

MARACZEK

If you'll excuse me...

AMALIA

Really! I am! I'm very good!!

(The CUSTOMER, while waiting for her package, has been wandering around the store. For a moment, her interest is taken by the leather boxes. AMALIA, noting this, tears off her hat — tosses it aside — and approaches the customer energetically)

Aren't these marvelous boxes! And only —

(Reading the sign)

ten-and-six. Can you imagine?

CUSTOMER

What are they for?

AMALIA

(Not at all sure)

Oh —

(Taking the plunge)

candy.

CUSTOMER

Candy?

AMALIA

Why, yes, madam, it's the latest thing. And just look at the workmanship.

#13 *Music Box Surprise* (Orchestra)

(AMALIA takes a box and opens it. The music plays. AMALIA — taken by surprise — jumps back)

Oh!

CUSTOMER

A musical candy box?

AMALIA

(Improvising wildly)

Why, certainly, madam! It combines the three elements of good taste: attractive to the eye, attractive to the ear and — functional!

CUSTOMER

How — functional?

#14 *No More Candy* (Amalia)

AMALIA

How?

(SHE wishes she knew — and then —)

Let me tell you. This little box has been a lifesaver to many, many women, who have a slight tendency to overweight. And don't we all? We sit at home reading a good book — or listening to a symphony — and, without realizing it, our hand slips into the candy box.

WE BECOME INDISCREET,
EATING SWEET AFTER SWEET —
THO' WE KNOW ALL TOO WELL
WHERE THAT MAY LEAD.

SO THIS BOX WAS DESIGNED
WITH THE TWO OF US IN MIND
AS THE KIND OF REMINDER WE NEED.

WHEN YOU RAISE THE LID, THE MUSIC PLAYS
LIKE A DISAPPROVING NOD.

AND IT SINGS IN YOUR EAR:
NO MORE CANDY, MY DEAR!
IN A WAY, IT'S A LITTLE LIKE THE VOICE OF GOD.

CUSTOMER

(Eagerly)

I'll take it!

AMALIA

Thank you, madam!!

KODALY

(To the CUSTOMER)

If you'll step over here, please...

(To RITTER)

That will be three-and-eight for the large jar of face cream.

AMALIA

(Proudly)

And ten-and-six for the box! Thank you very much, madam. Thank you!

(AMALIA returns to MARACZEK, who is beaming with pure joy)

MARACZEK

(To AMALIA)

You're hired! Miss —

AMALIA

Balash. Amalia Balash!

MARACZEK

Miss Balash, welcome to Maraczek's.

(Turning triumphantly to GEORG and sticking out his hand)

And now, Mr. Nowack — if you please —

*(GEORG counts out ten-and-six and hands it to MARACZEK.
Meanwhile, the cash register rings)*

RITTER

(Counting out change)

Fourteen-and-four — fourteen-and-five — fifteen —

KODALY

Your packages, madam.

(The CUSTOMER goes to the door and opens it. The bell rings)

#15 Thank You, Madam #2 (Amalia, Ritter, Kodaly, Georg, Sipos)

AMALIA, RITTER, KODALY, GEORG, SIPOS
THANK YOU, MADAM.
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN.
DO CALL AGAIN, MADAM.

(The CUSTOMER EXITS. AMALIA looks at GEORG triumphantly. HE glares back as the LIGHTS FADE)

END OF SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

#16A *The First Letter — Summer (Georg)*

(Set turns to show the outside of the shop. GEORG ENTERS, writing a letter)

GEORG

Dear Friend:

WHEN A DAY BRINGS PETTY AGGRAVATIONS
AND MY POOR FRAYED NERVES ARE ALL ASKEW,
I FORGET THESE UNIMPORTANT MATTERS
POURING OUT MY HOPES AND DREAMS TO YOU.
AS I REST MY PEN AND LOOK AROUND ME,
I CAN SEE THE SUMMER DISAPPEAR.
OH, DEAR FRIEND — ALL AT ONCE — AUTUMN'S HERE.

(GEORG EXITS as ARPAD and RITTER ENTER)

ARPAD

Good morning, Miss Ritter.

RITTER

Good morning, Arpad.

ARPAD

Look!

(Leaves fall)

Autumn!

(ARPAD EXITS as KODALY ENTERS)

#16B *The Second Letter — Autumn (Georg)*

KODALY

Good morning, Ilona. Here you are on this first October day — the quintessence of autumn. I hope you've forgiven me about our little misunderstanding last night. I can't bear it when we quarrel. Can you, darling? Truthfully?

RITTER

Go to hell.

(THEY EXIT into the shop. More leaves fall. GEORG ENTERS, wearing his coat and reading a letter aloud)

GEORG

Dear Friend:

WITH NOVEMBER JUST AROUND THE CORNER,
I'VE A FEELING YOU MAY ALSO SHARE.
DO YOU FEEL AN UNDERTONE OF DISCORD
AND A SENSE OF TENSION IN THE AIR?

(MARACZEK ENTERS angrily)

MARACZEK

Mr. Nowack — must this sidewalk always be covered with leaves?

GEORG

No, sir. But... Mr. Maraczek, Mr. Maraczek...

(MARACZEK goes into the shop and slams the door. ARPAD ENTERS with a broom and starts sweeping the leaves)

IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOUR ENDEARING LETTERS,
I'D BE FLYING SOUTH WITH ALL THE GEESE!
BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU READ "WAR AND PEACE"?

(AMALIA ENTERS. GEORG quickly ducks the letter)

AMALIA

Good morning, Mr. Nowack.

GEORG

I see you're on time today, Miss Balash. Congratulations.

(SIPOS ENTERS and watches)

AMALIA

I'm sorry to disappoint you.

GEORG

Oh, but I'm not disappointed. Far from it. Let's just call it surprised.

(Their argument continues softly)

ARPAD

(To SIPOS)

They always argue — why is that?

SIPOS

A simple chemical reaction. You see — sometimes when two people like each other very much...

*(AMALIA goes into the shop, slamming the door in GEORG'S face.
Then GEORG goes in)*

ARPAD

They like each other?!

SIPOS

I think so.

ARPAD

They like each other very much?

(SIPOS nods)

Don't you think we should tell them?

SIPOS

Arpad — my boy — they'd never believe us!!

ARPAD

Look!

(Icicles come down)

Winter!

*(ARPAD and SIPOS go into shop. We hear GEORG'S voice. Then
AMALIA ENTERS, reading a letter)*

#16C *The Third Letter — Winter (Georg, Amalia)*

GEORG

Dear Friend:

HAVE YOU SET YOUR CALENDAR FOR TUESDAY,
WHEN WE BRING THIS

AMALIA, GEORG
CHAPTER TO A CLOSE?
WHEN I MEET MY LADY OF THE LETTERS
WHO PUTS TINY FACES IN HER "O'S."

(GEORG fades out)

IN THE FREEZING WEATHER OF DECEMBER
I'LL BE WARMLY WAITING FOR OUR DATE.

AMALIA
UNTIL THEN — COUNT THE HOURS —

Oh! I'm late for work! I'm late!

(AMALIA runs into the shop)

Good morning.

ALL
Good morning.

AMALIA
Am I very late? Did Mr. Nowack say anything?
(SHE takes off her coat and starts into the workroom.)
Where is he?

RITTER
In the workroom. You're all new! The shoes — the dress — the hat —

AMALIA
Top to bottom. I'm surprised you recognized me. Do I look all right?

SIPOS, RITTER, KODALY, ARPAD
(Ad libbing)
Lovely! Very nice! Wonderful! etc...

AMALIA
It took me three hours to get dressed. That's why I'm so late.

KODALY
I have a feeling our little Miss Balash must be in love.
(To AMALIA)
And you have a rendezvous with him — this evening...

(AMALIA nods)

SIPOS

How do you know?

RITTER

Mr. Kodaly's an expert on love. Which is really quite remarkable — considering he's never been in it.

(GEORG ENTERS from the workroom, carrying some boxes)

GEORG

(Flatly)

Good morning, Miss Balash.

AMALIA

(To RITTER)

He didn't yell at me. What's wrong with him?

RITTER

He has other things on his mind. Mr. Maraczek's very upset...

AMALIA

He is? Again?

RITTER

And you know who gets the worst of it...

(RITTER and AMALIA EXIT into the workroom as MARACZEK ENTERS from the office with a tube of cold cream)

MARACZEK

Mr. Nowack.

GEORG

Yes, sir.

MARACZEK

You see this?

GEORG

Yes.

MARACZEK

You know what it is?

GEORG

Of course. A tube of Mona Lisa cold cream.

MARACZEK

Here — let's see you try it.

(GEORG unscrews the cap and squeezes the tube. The cream gushes out the back and over GEORG'S coat)

GEORG

(Astonished)

The back came off.

MARACZEK

I was under the impression it was your responsibility to see that these tubes are correctly filled...?

(GEORG nods)

If that responsibility's too much for you, Mr. Nowack —

GEORG

Mr. Maraczek — I...

MARACZEK

Or is there something wrong with the tubes? Are they defective?

GEORG

No... I don't think so.

MARACZEK

You don't *think* so?! Then it wouldn't be asking too much for the cream to come out the right end?

GEORG

It wouldn't be asking too much.

MARACZEK

Thank you, Mr. Nowack. That's all I wanted to know!

(MARACZEK EXITS. GEORG starts after MARACZEK)

SIPOS

Georg!

(GEORG doesn't hear)

Georg!

(GEORG stops and turns to SIPOS)

Your coat, there's still Mona Lisa on it.

(SIPOS takes a cloth and cleans GEORG'S coat)

GEORG

Thanks, Ladislav.

SIPOS

You're so nervous. I can feel you vibrating.

GEORG

It's a new suit, Ladislav. I've never worn it to work before.

SIPOS

Oh? What's the occasion?

GEORG

The biggest ever. I'm meeting her tonight.

SIPOS

The letter girl? You mean — face-to-face at last?

GEORG

Face-to-face — at last.

SIPOS

Well — I just hope she lives up to your expectations.

GEORG

Can I tell you something, Ladislav? I hope she doesn't. I mean, I hope she isn't as beautiful as I think she is, or as brilliant as I think she is. Because what will she think of me? A very ordinary clerk in a very ordinary shop. And a terrible liar.

SIPOS

A liar?

GEORG

The things I wrote in those letters.

SIPOS

You lied?

GEORG

Well, I certainly exaggerated...

SIPOS

No wonder you're vibrating.

#17 *Tonight At Eight* (Georg)

GEORG

I'M NERVOUS AND UPSET
BECAUSE THIS GIRL I'VE NEVER MET
I GET TO MEET TONIGHT AT EIGHT.
I'M TAKING HER TO DINNER
AT A CHARMING OLD CAFE
BUT WHO CAN EAT TONIGHT AT EIGHT?
IT'S EARLY IN THE MORNING
AND OUR DATE IS NOT 'TIL
EIGHT O'CLOCK TONIGHT
AND YET ALREADY I CAN SEE
WHAT A NIGHTMARE THIS WHOLE DAY WILL BE!

I HAVEN'T SLEPT A WINK
I ONLY THINK OF OUR APPROACHING
TETE-A-TETE TONIGHT AT EIGHT.
I FEEL A COMBINATION OF
DEPRESSION AND ELATION,
WHAT A STATE TO WAIT 'TIL EIGHT!
3 MORE MINUTES, 2 MORE SECONDS, 10 MORE HOURS TO GO!
IN SPITE OF ALL I'VE WRITTEN
SHE MAY NOT BE VERY SMITTEN
AND MY HOPES, PERHAPS, MAY ALL COLLAPSE,
KAPUT, TONIGHT AT EIGHT.

(GEORG knocks over the music boxes)

I WISH I KNEW EXACTLY HOW I'LL ACT
AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN
WHEN WE DINE TONIGHT AT EIGHT.
I KNOW I'LL DROP THE SILVERWARE,
BUT WILL I SPILL THE WATER
OR THE WINE TONIGHT AT EIGHT?

TONIGHT I'LL WALK RIGHT
UP AND SIT RIGHT DOWN
BESIDE THE SMARTEST GIRL IN TOWN
AND THEN IT'S ANYBODY'S GUESS.
MORE AND MORE I'M BREATHING LESS AND LESS.

IN MY IMAGINATION
I CAN HEAR OUR CONVERSATION
TAKING SHAPE TONIGHT AT EIGHT.
I'LL SIT THERE SAYING ABSOLUTELY NOTHING
OR I'LL JABBER LIKE AN APE, TONIGHT AT EIGHT.

2 MORE MINUTES, 3 MORE SECONDS, 10 MORE HOURS TO GO!
I'LL KNOW WHEN THIS IS DONE
IF SOMETHING'S ENDED OR BEGUN
AND IF IT GOES ALL RIGHT, WHO KNOWS?
I MIGHT PROPOSE TONIGHT AT EIGHT!

#18 *Shop To The Back Room* (Orchestra)

(BLACKOUT.)

*The workroom. AMALIA and RITTER are sitting at a long table,
Christmas-wrapping packages)*

RITTER

This is fun. I love Christmas-wrapping.

AMALIA

It's certainly a pleasant change. You know — for the last month, I've done practically nothing but fill those darn tubes of Mona Lisa.

RITTER

Well — what do you care? You're in love with some nice, eligible young man. Pretty soon you'll be able to kiss all this goodbye. Tell me — what's he like? Tell me all about him. I love to suffer.

(AMALIA hesitates noticeably)

AMALIA

Well —

RITTER

Is he tall?

AMALIA

(Evasively)

So-so.

RITTER

So-so six feet? So-so five feet?

AMALIA

I never measured.

RITTER

Color of hair? Color of eyes?

AMALIA

Eh — sandy hair. Not really light. Not really dark.

RITTER

And the eyes —?

AMALIA

Bluish — greenish —

RITTER

(Beginning to smell something fishy)

Brownish?

AMALIA

A little.

RITTER

Is he handsome?

AMALIA

It's difficult to say. I mean — at times he is — and then again at times he's not.

RITTER

Well-built?

AMALIA

Oh — average.

RITTER

Would you like a piece of good advice?

(AMALIA nods)

Don't lose him in a crowd.

(There is a brief pause)

AMALIA

Why — oh, why — am I such an unconvincing liar? The fact is I've never met him — ever, really.

RITTER

Never?

AMALIA

(Nodding)

That's why I don't know if he's tall, wide, short, narrow, pink or green — or even what his name is.

RITTER

You mean all of this fuss is just for a blind date? My God, you're even more desperate than *I* am.

AMALIA

It's not a blind date! I *know* him!

RITTER

How?

AMALIA

Letters. Many, many letters.

RITTER

You belong to a Lonely Hearts Club?

AMALIA

(Shaking her head)

I've never *done* that sort of thing. I used to read the advertisements in the papers...

RITTER

Who hasn't? Young man wants young lady. Young lady wants young man.

#19 *I Don't Know His Name* (Amalia, Ritter)

AMALIA

But I never took them seriously. Until — one day — I saw his advertisement. Even then, I tried not to answer it. Really. But it kept calling out to me...

RITTER

He could be seventy-five!

AMALIA

(Shaking her head)

The advertisement said: "Young man."

RITTER

You haven't even asked for a photograph?

AMALIA

I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME OR WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE
BUT I HAVE A MUCH MORE CERTAIN GUIDE:
I CAN TELL EXACTLY WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE INSIDE.

WHEN I UNDERTOOK THIS CORRESPONDENCE,
LITTLE DID I KNOW I'D GROW SO FOND;
LITTLE DID I KNOW OUR VIEWS WOULD SO CORRESPOND.

HE WRITES ME WHAT HIS FEELINGS ARE
ON SHAW, FLAUBERT, CHOPIN, RENOIR.
THE MORE I READ, THE MORE I FIND
WE'RE ONE IN MIND AND HEART.

I KNOW THE KIND OF HOME WE'D SHARE —
THE BOOKS, THE PRINTS, THE MUSIC THERE,
A HOME, A LIFE, THAT'S WARM AND FULL
AND RICH IN LOVE AND ART.

I DON'T NEED TO SEE HIS HANDSOME PROFILE.
I DON'T NEED TO SEE HIS MANLY FRAME.
ALL I NEED TO KNOW IS IN EACH LETTER —
EACH LONG REVEALING LETTER.
I COULDN'T KNOW HIM BETTER
IF I KNEW HIS NAME.

I know him so well, Ilona. I know that he's a very successful person and terribly well educated. And he's gentle and kind, soft spoken... I know all this about him! And so much more! I've just never *met* him — that's all.

AMALIA

(Softly)

HE WRITES HIS DEEPEST
THOUGHTS TO ME
ON SWIFT, VERMEER
AND DEBUSSY,

ON MAUGHAM,
REMARQUE,
DUMAS,
DUCAS,
DUFY,
DUFAY,
DEFOE.

HE THINKS AS I,
HE FEELS AS I,
HE SHARES THE SAME
IDEALS AS I.
I'LL NEVER FIND

A MAN WHO'S SO
SIMPATICO,

I KNOW.

RITTER

IF HE ISN'T TOO HANDSOME,
TRUE, IT DOESN'T MUCH MATTER
BUT HIS PERSONAL HABITS
ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIS LOOKS.

SUPPOSING HE SNORES
LIKE A LOCOMOTIVE?
SUPPOSING HE
GRINDS HIS TEETH?
SUPPOSING HE'S A KNUCKLECRACKER,
AMALIA?
GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR BOOKS!

AND ANOTHER SMALL DETAIL
THAT YOU HAVEN'T YET MENTIONED:
I AM SPEAKING OF SEX, DEAR,
WHEN YOU AND HE ARE ALL ALONE.
COME TO THINK OF IT,
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
MAYBE IT DOESN'T MATTER AT THAT.
MAYBE I'D DO MUCH BETTER MYSELF
WITH A LIBRARY CARD
AND A GRAMOPHONE.

AMALIA

I DON'T NEED TO SEE HIS HANDSOME PROFILE.

RITTER

I WAS TAKEN IN BY SOMEONE'S PROFILE.

AMALIA

(Overlapping)

I DON'T NEED TO SEE HIS MANLY FRAME.

RITTER

I WAS TAKEN IN BY SOMEONE'S FRAME.

AMALIA

(Overlapping)

ALL I NEED TO KNOW IS IN EACH LETTER,
EACH —

RITTER
HOW I COULD HAVE USED ONE —

AMALIA, RITTER
— LONG, REVEALING LETTER.

AMALIA
I COULDN'T LOVE HIM BETTER

RITTER
(Overlapping)
I HOPE YOU DO MUCH BETTER.

AMALIA
IF I KNEW HIS NAME.

RITTER
I KNEW HIS NAME.

AMALIA, RITTER
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

#20 *Back Room To The Shop* (Orchestra)

(The perfume shop. KODALY has a CUSTOMER. GEORG is at the cash register. SIPOS is arranging the music boxes into a pyramid. MARACZEK ENTERS and approaches GEORG)

MARACZEK
Mr. Nowack — perhaps you can help me...

GEORG
Yes, sir?

MARACZEK
I'm looking for the Christmas decorations. I don't see them.

GEORG
We haven't started them yet. I meant to talk to you about it in a day or two...

MARACZEK
I'm sick and tired of your running to me — like a baby — on every little matter that comes up!

GEORG

Mr. Maraczek — that's not fair!

(SIPOS comes up behind MARACZEK)

SIPOS

(Very gently)

Excuse me... Georg!

(SIPOS is ignored)

MARACZEK

Kindly inform all the employees they'll have to stay late tonight. Now, is that clear — even to you?

GEORG

It's perfectly clear. But I'm afraid I can't make it. I have an appointment.

SIPOS

Excuse me...

GEORG

I can stay tomorrow night — Thursday night — Friday...

MARACZEK

That won't be necessary. I assure you we'll get on splendidly without you. That's all. Thank you.

GEORG

That's not all, Mr. Maraczek. For the past month, I can't seem to do anything right. Everything's changed. What is it? Is it me? Is it you? If my work is bad now, it's been bad for fifteen years! Why the hell did you wait 'til now to start telling me?

(Meanwhile, SIPOS has been pulling on GEORG'S coat. GEORG has ignored him through the preceding speech)

MARACZEK

How dare you raise your voice in this shop?

(SIPOS intentionally pushes over the music boxes. MARACZEK turns around to see what happened)

Clumsy idiot!

#21 Thank You Madam # 3 (Ritter, Georg, Kodaly, Sipos)

RITTER, GEORG, KODALY, SIPOS
THANK YOU, MADAM.
PLEASE CALL AGAIN.
DO CALL AGAIN, MADAM

(MARACZEK storms into his office. GEORG helps SIPOS pick up the music boxes)

GEORG

You did that on purpose, didn't you?

SIPOS

I had to stop that argument — before you did something foolish — like resigning.

GEORG

I'm not sure I appreciate that.

SIPOS

Oh, I didn't do it for *you*, Georg. I did it for *me*. Who knows — if you resign, your successor might take one look at me and ask himself: "What's that oaf doing in this fancy parfumerie?"

GEORG

You're a very good clerk, Ladislav.

#21 *Perspective*

(*Sipos*)

SIPOS

I'm an idiot. But at least I'm an idiot with a job —

CALL ME FOOL. THAT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME.
HERE'S MY RULE: NEVER DISAGREE.
WHERE'S MY PRIDE? SWALLOWED LONG AGO.
DEEP INSIDE — WHERE IT DOESN'T SHOW.
BOWING, SCRAPING, NODDING, BEAMING, ALWAYS HUMBLE,
NOT AN OUNCE OF SELF-RESPECT.
YES, SIR! YES SIR! YOU'RE SO RIGHT, SIR! BLACK IS WHITE, SIR!
'SCUSE ME WHILE I GENUFLECT.

HOW DO I REMAIN SO CALM AND CHEERFUL?
HOW DO I RETAIN MY PEACE OF MIND?
LET ME JUST EXPLAIN MY RATIONALE.
IT'S ALL IN YOUR PERSPECTIVE.
LISTEN... LISTEN... TO AN OLD HUNGARIAN'S PHILOSOPHY.

I AM ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL IN A RATHER SMALL
PARFUMERIE
WHICH IS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL IN THIS CITY
WHICH IS ONE OF MANY CITIES IN THIS COUNTRY
WHICH IS ONLY ONE OF MANY COUNTRIES

WHICH ARE ON THIS CONTINENT
WHICH IS ONLY ONE OF SEVEN ON THIS NOT SO SPECIAL
PLANET
WHICH IS ONE OF MANY IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM
WHICH IS ONLY ONE OF MANY SOLAR SYSTEMS
IN THIS VAST AND INCONCEIVABLE AFFAIR THAT IS THE
UNIVERSE.

SO — IN THIS INFINITE, INCOMPREHENSIBLE SCHEME,
IF A DOT CALLED MARACZEK SHOULD SCREAM
AT A SPECK CALLED SIPOS,
WHAT — ON EARTH — DOES IT MATTER?

SO CALL ME FOOL — THAT'S ALL RIGHT WITH ME.
HERE'S MY RULE: NEVER DISAGREE.
JUST MAINTAIN A TRUE PERSPECTIVE
AND IT'S EASY TO AVOID A CLASH OF WILLS.
JUST MAINTAIN A TRUE PERSPECTIVE
AND MAKE SURE YOU'RE WELL-SUPPLIED WITH STOMACH
PILLS.

LET ME PUT IT BLUNTLY: I'M A COWARD
WITH A WIFE AND CHILDREN TO SUPPORT.
ACTUALLY, MY CREED IS SHORT AND SIMPLE:
FIVE ESSENTIAL WORDS, GEORG:
DO NOT... LOSE... YOUR JOB!!!

*(KODALY leaves his customer and approaches RITTER, who has
entered from the workroom with AMALIA)*

KODALY

Miss Ritter —

(RITTER pretends not to hear)

Miss Ritter —

RITTER

(Icily)

What?

KODALY

This is going to be a charge. Here's the lady's name.

RITTER

Just the name? After such a long conversation? No telephone number?

KODALY

I don't need it. She's got mine.

GEORG

While I have you all here — Miss Balash — Mr. Maraczek wants everyone to stay late tonight.

AMALIA

Why?

GEORG

To work on the Christmas decorations. All right?

RITTER

I guess so.

KODALY

Of course.

#22 Doorbell #2 (Orchestra)

(The door opens and another CUSTOMER ENTERS. SIPOS approaches her)

SIPOS

Good day, madam. May I help you?

AMALIA

Mr. Nowack, Mr. Nowack, I can't stay.

GEORG

Why?

AMALIA

I've got a date. You *know* I've got a date.

GEORG

I know no such thing.

AMALIA

How can you *say* that? Why do you think I'm wearing these new clothes? To trim a tree in?

GEORG

I'm only following Mr. Maraczek's instructions.

AMALIA

I can't stay.

GEORG

You are not being very cooperative, Miss Balash.

AMALIA.

Well — why did he have to pick *this one night?*

(Mulling that over)

Or did you pick it, Mr. Nowack? Just because you knew I had an appointment?

(KODALY'S CUSTOMER starts to leave. KODALY opens the door)

#23 *Thank You, Madam #4 (Amalia, Ritter, Kodaly, Georg, Sipos)*

KODALY, SIPOS, RITTER, GEORG, AMALIA

THANK YOU, MADAM.

PLEASE, CALL AGAIN.

DO CALL AGAIN, MADAM.

(The CUSTOMER EXITS)

AMALIA

You know, I find it quite depressing that anyone could hate me that much —

GEORG

I don't hate you. But until you came here, this was a happy, peaceful place. Now — the whole atmosphere's changed: everyone's cranky — Mr. Maraczek's on the war-path...

AMALIA

That's not *my* fault!

GEORG

The Mona Lisa's coming out the wrong end of the tubes!!

AMALIA

And *that's* not my fault!

(With a sudden pang of guilt)

Is it?

GEORG

You've been filling them.

AMALIA

According to *your* instructions.

GEORG

Well — let's not argue about it now. Can we have a truce?

AMALIA

Anytime, Mr. Nowack. After all, you're the one who always starts things.

GEORG

I'm the one?

AMALIA

You've always resented me — from the very first day I came here — when I made you lose that bet to Mr. Maraczek. For ten-and-six, wasn't it? To think that anyone could hate me so much — just for ten-and-six!

GEORG

That's nonsense!

AMALIA

Or was it your male pride that was wounded? Because I went over your head? Men always do seem to resent things like that.

GEORG

I do not resent you, Miss Balash.

AMALIA

Oh, yes, you do.

GEORG

Oh, for Heaven's sake! I do not resent you. But if I did, I would have a very good reason. Can you deny you hadn't worked here two weeks before you started making very public, very humiliating remarks about me?

AMALIA

Only because you were going around calling me *Miss A-mal-ia* Balash. *Miss A-malia* Balash. You think I liked that?

GEORG

You think I liked your criticizing my socks — my tie — my fingernails...?

(GEORG holds up his hands and defiantly shows AMALIA his fingernails)

AMALIA

(Looking at GEORG'S fingernails)

Much better.

(AMALIA storms into the workroom)

GEORG

That must be the rudest, most difficult, worst-tempered girl in the world.

(GEORG goes to the water cooler and takes a pill)

#24 Doorbell #3 *(Orchestra)*

(The door opens and a CUSTOMER ENTERS)

KODALY

Good day, madam. May I help you?

CUSTOMER

Yes. I'd like to see lily scented soap...

(The CUSTOMER goes to KODALY'S counter. MARACZEK ENTERS — looks around and walks over to GEORG)

MARACZEK

Well — Mr. Nowack — hard at work as usual, I see.

#25 Doorbell #4 *(Orchestra)*

(The door opens and two more CUSTOMERS ENTER)

RITTER

Good day, ladies. May I help you?

(GEORG starts to say something, but MARACZEK cuts in)

MARACZEK

Have you made the arrangements about tonight?

GEORG

Yes, sir. Miss Ritter, Mr. Kodaly and Mr. Sipos can stay — and Arpad, of course...

MARACZEK

What about Miss Balash?

GEORG

She has an appointment.

MARACZEK

An appointment! Well — I guess you could hardly prevail upon her to stay when *you're* not going to.

GEORG

Any other night, Mr. Maraczek.

MARACZEK

There seem to be a great many things, Mr. Nowack, that interest you far more than your position here.

GEORG

Mr. Maraczek — I am devoted to this shop — I couldn't work harder — if I owned it...

MARACZEK

(Almost out of control, and trying, not too successfully, to keep his voice down)

If you owned it!! Well, let me tell you something, my young friend: no matter what you do — you will never get your hands on this shop! Never! Not if I have to come down from Heaven and stop you myself!! Is that clear?

GEORG

Yes, it's perfectly clear.

MARACZEK

Now get away from me! Just get away from me!

GEORG

I *will* get away! And permanently!

MARACZEK

Can I take that as your resignation, Mr. Nowack?

GEORG

That's exactly what it is.

MARACZEK

Very well. I accept it — effective immediately. Miss Ritter will have your final pay.

(MARACZEK goes to RITTER, gives her an envelope. Then MARACZEK EXITS into his office)

CUSTOMER

(Holding up a jar of bath salts)

Excuse me, is this the large size or the medium size?

SIPOS

Eh — the large size.

CUSTOMER

Well — then — show me the medium. And I haven't got all day.

#26 *Goodbye, Georg* (Customers, Clerks)

SIPOS

Yes, madam.

CUSTOMERS

I WOULD LIKE A CAKE OF CASTILE SOAP
AND A POWDER PUFF, SHAMPOO.
IS THERE A SALE ON?

LET ME HAVE A HAIRNET, BUBBLE BATH.
HOW MUCH DO YOU CHARGE FOR YOUR
MONA LISA?

(GEORG goes into the workroom. AMALIA is still working on the Christmas boxes. GEORG opens his locker. Meanwhile, AMALIA has been watching him out of the corner of her eye. CUSTOMERS continue singing softly)

AMALIA

(Not quite believing what she's seeing)

Mr. Nowack — are you leaving?

GEORG

It should be good news for you, Miss Balash. Very good news. I won't be arguing with you anymore. I've just quit my job.

AMALIA

Why?

GEORG

Well — as a matter of fact — I didn't have much choice.

AMALIA

I don't know what to say...

GEORG

Then don't say anything. Especially not that you're sorry. Let's not end our relationship on that false note.

(GEORG closes his locker)

Goodbye, Miss Balash.

(GEORG starts out)

AMALIA

Mr. Nowack... may the condemned woman have one last word? I've never wished you harm. Ever. You've got to believe that..

GEORG

I believe you, Miss Balash. And — may I say — I sincerely hope you marry some nice man and have many children. And for the sake of my successor in this job, I hope it's soon!

(GEORG comes into the store and starts for the door. The shop is humming with activity. KODALY, RITTER and SIPOS all have customers. ARPAD is bringing in more stock)

CUSTOMERS

I WOULD LIKE A CAKE OF CASTILE SOAP
AND A POWDER PUFF, SHAMPOO.

SIPOS, KODALY, ARPAD, RITTER

(Overlapping)

GOOD BYE, GEORG.

CUSTOMERS

IS THERE A SALE ON?
LET ME HAVE A HAIRNET, BUBBLE BATH.
HOW MUCH DO YOU CHARGE

SIPOS, KODALY, ARPAD, RITTER

(Overlapping)

MARACZEK'S WON'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT YOU.

CUSTOMERS

FOR YOUR MONA LISA?
CAN YOU RECOMMEND AN UNUSUAL PERFUME?

KODALY

(Overlapping)
SORRY TO SEE YOU GO.

CUSTOMERS

SOMETHING RATHER CHIC BUT INEXPENSIVE

ARPAD

(Overlapping)
IF I CAN EVER HELP,

CUSTOMERS

THAT WILL MAKE A NOVEL CHRISTMAS GIFT.

SIPOS, KODALY, ARPAD, RITTER

LET ME KNOW.

CUSTOMERS

I THINK YOU KNOW THE KIND THAT I'M AFTER.
DO YOU HAVE A LIPSTICK, GUARANTEED KISS-PROOF?
COCONUT OIL? WHAT KIND OF MASCARA?

SIPOS, KODALY, ARPAD, RITTER

(Overlapping)
GOOD BYE, GEORG.

CUSTOMERS

LET ME HAVE A JAR OF VANISHING CREAM
AND A BOTTLE OF YOUR BEST COLOGNE AND CAN YOU

SIPOS

(Overlapping)
I WISH THERE WERE TIME FOR A PROPER FAREWELL

CUSTOMERS

WRAP IT AS A GIFT AND SEND IT? PUT IT ON MY BILL

SIPOS, KODALY, ARPAD, RITTER

(Overlapping)
BUT FOR NOW GOOD LUCK AND

CUSTOMERS

AND THANK YOU VERY, VERY MUCH.
IT'S ALWAYS SUCH A PLEASURE SHOPPING HERE.

SIPOS, KODALY, ARPAD, RITTER

(Overlapping)

GOOD BYE, GEORG.

*(GEORG reaches the door. RITTER hands him the envelope
MARACZEK gave her. Then she kisses GEORG on the cheek.
GEORG opens the door. The bell rings)*

SO LONG, SO LONG.

PLEASE, KEEP IN TOUCH.

DO KEEP IN TOUCH,

WON'T YOU...?

#27A *Georg's Exit* (Orchestra)

*(GEORG EXITS. The shop turns. The set revolves to AMALIA in the
workroom)*

#27B *Will He Like Me?* (Amalia)

AMALIA

WILL HE LIKE ME WHEN WE MEET?

WILL THE SHY AND QUIET GIRL HE'S GOING TO SEE

BE THE GIRL THAT HE'S IMAGINED ME TO BE?

WILL HE LIKE ME?

WILL HE LIKE THE GIRL HE SEES?

IF HE DOESN'T, WILL HE KNOW ENOUGH TO KNOW

THAT THERE'S MORE TO ME THAN I MAY ALWAYS SHOW?

WILL HE LIKE ME?

WILL HE KNOW THAT THERE'S A WORLD OF LOVE

WAITING TO WARM HIM?

HOW I'M HOPING THAT HIS EYES AND EARS

WON'T MISINFORM HIM.

WILL HE LIKE ME? WHO CAN SAY?

HOW I WISH THAT WE COULD MEET ANOTHER DAY

IT'S ABSURD FOR ME TO CARRY ON THIS WAY.

I'LL TRY NOT TO.

WILL HE LIKE ME? HE'S JUST GOT TO!

WHEN I AM IN MY ROOM ALONE

AND I WRITE,

THOUGHTS COME EASILY,

WORDS COME FLUENTLY THEN.
THAT'S HOW IT IS WHEN I'M ALONE
BUT TONIGHT
THERE'S NO HIDING BEHIND MY PAPER AND PEN.

(Puts on her hat, coat and scarf, takes her book and EXITS into the street)

WILL HE KNOW THAT THERE'S A WORLD OF LOVE
WAITING TO WARM HIM?
HOW I'M HOPING THAT HIS EYES AND EARS
WON'T MISINFORM HIM.

WILL HE LIKE ME? I DON'T KNOW.
ALL I KNOW IS THAT I'M TEMPTED NOT TO GO.
IT'S INSANITY FOR ME TO WORRY SO.
I'LL TRY NOT TO.
WILL HE LIKE ME?
HE'S JUST GOT TO!
WILL HE LIKE ME?
WILL HE LIKE ME?

(AMALIA EXITS as the LIGHTS FADE)

#28 *Will He Like Me? — Tag (Orchestra)*

END OF SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

(In the shop, RITTER is hanging tinsel icicles. KODALY and SIPOS are working nearby. ARPAD is upstairs)

RITTER

Ladislav — have you got a pack of icicles over there?

SIPOS

(Looking)

I don't see any...

RITTER

Would you please ask Mr. Kodaly if he's got them?

SIPOS

(Turning to KODALY, who is right next to him)

Miss Ritter would like to know if you've got her icicles.

KODALY

(To SIPOS)

Icicles? Please tell her that's *all* I've been getting from her for several weeks.

SIPOS

(To RITTER)

He says...

RITTER

(Unamused)

I heard him. Why else would I be laughing so uncontrollably?

KODALY

Sipos — what do you think of a woman who goes with a man, tells him she loves him — and suddenly drops him?

RITTER

(To SIPOS)

Before you answer that, Ladislav — what do you think of a man who breaks three dates with a girl in a little over a week?

KODALY

A little over a week?

RITTER

Eight days!

KODALY

I don't recall *three* dates.

RITTER

You don't recall anything. You never did.

(SIPOS goes upstairs)

#29 *Ilona*

(Kodaly, Sipos, Arpad)

KODALY

You're so wrong, Ilona. I recall our evenings together. I recall them very well. Our private little booth at the Rathskeller. Remember? Oh, come on, Ilona, let's go there tonight. You always loved the Rathskeller, the Chinese food, the gypsy fortune teller, and that rhumba band? Ilona?

COME WITH ME, ILONA.
I'VE MISSED YOU SO MUCH.
HOW I ENVY YOU EACH EVENING
WHEN WORK IS THROUGH
FOR I HAVE ONLY ME TO BE WITH
WHILE YOU HAVE YOU.

WITHOUT YOU, ILONA,
HOW COLD MY LONELY LIFE HAS GROWN.
ARE YOU HAPPY ALONE, ILONA?
ILONA, MY OWN!

SIPOS

NOW THAT KODALY IS HARD AT PLAY
WE'LL NEVER GET OUT OF HERE 'TIL NEW YEARS DAY SO

SIPOS, ARPAD

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

KODALY

COME WITH ME, ILONA.
COME WITH ME, CHERIE.
MISTLETOE, I LONG FOR SOMEONE.
PLEASE TELL ME WHO.
LIKE SOME DIVINE DIVINING ROD,
IT POINTS STRAIGHT TO YOU.
REMEMBER, ILONA,
THE SUNNY NIGHTS WE KNEW BEFORE?
IF YOU'LL JUST SAY THE WORD, ILONA,

WE'LL KNOW THEM ONCE MORE.

ARPAD
IF IT WAS ONLY UP TO ME,
GUESS WHO I WOULD HANG UPON THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

SIPOS
THIS IS WHERE I CAME IN, AMEN.
THE FOX AND THE CHICKEN ARE A TEAM AGAIN.

KODALY
TOGETHER, ILONA,
WE GENERATE A SPARK THAT'S RARE.
WHY DENY THAT IT'S THERE, ILONA?
YOU FEEL IT, I KNOW.
LET'S HELP IT... TO GLOW...

(THEY kiss)

RITTER
You really are a rat! All right, we'll go to the Rathskeller, and you'd better have lots of money because I'm starved. Or is this going to be Dutch, as usual?

KODALY
No, no. My treat!

(MARACZEK comes out of his office)

MARACZEK
You can all go home now. Go home.

SIPOS
Eh — but the work isn't finished yet, sir.

MARACZEK
We'll have to do it some other time.

SIPOS
Speaking for myself, Mr. Maraczek — I wouldn't mind staying a little longer.
You see — I'm in the rhythm of it now.

MARACZEK
I want everyone out as quickly as possible. Good night.

(MARACZEK goes into the office)

SIPOS

Good night, Mr. Maraczek.

RITTER

It's only nine thirty!

KODALY

(Looking at watch)

Nine thirty...

(HE crosses to workroom)

SIPOS

Arpad —

ARPAD

What?

SIPOS

Good news!

ARPAD

What?

SIPOS

You've been reprieved! Mr. Maraczek says we can go.

(SIPOS goes into the workroom. KODALY comes out in his coat and hat)

RITTER

(To KODALY)

You're all ready! I'll just be a minute. Arpad, will you bring me my things, please?

KODALY

(Pause)

Ilona — this is going to be a bit difficult to explain... but I won't be able to take you to the Rathskeller after all.

RITTER

What?

(ARPAD brings RITTER'S coat and hat, then goes upstairs)

KODALY

I can't help myself, darling. The fact is: I thought we were going to be working late tonight — so I canceled a previous appointment — but now that we're finished early I've just got to keep it... you do understand? Don't you?

(RITTER says nothing)

Trust me, darling? I promise you. We'll go to the Rathskeller another night — soon. Let's see now, tonight is Tuesday... what about next Monday? Ilona — chérie?

#30 *I Resolve*

(Ritter)

RITTER

I RESOLVE NOT TO BE SO STUPID.

KODALY

Will you keep Monday night open for me, darling?

RITTER

I RESOLVE NOT TO PLAY THESE GAMES.

KODALY

All right, sweetheart?

RITTER

HOW OFTEN I'VE BEEN A SITTING DUCK FOR CUPID.
HOW OFTEN I'VE LET HIM SHOOT ME DOWN IN FLAMES.

KODALY

Sweetheart, say it's all right?

RITTER

I RESOLVE NOT TO BE SO TRUSTING.
IT'S HIGH TIME — TIME THAT I AWOKE.
WHATEVER I'VE GOT UP HERE IS UP HERE RUSTING.
MY FEMININE INTUITION IS A JOKE!

(KODALY kisses ILONA on the cheek and EXITS)

I MUST BE COUSIN TO A CAT:
I ALWAYS WIND UP WITH A RAT.
I'M THROUGH WITH MOMENTARY THRILLS.
I FIND I CAN'T AFFORD THE BILLS.

I RESOLVE COME WHAT MAY:
I WILL NOT BE THIS GIRL ONE MORE DAY!

I RESOLVE NOT TO BE SO BRAINLESS.
I RESOLVE NOT TO BE SO DUMB.
MY USUAL BRUSH WITH LOVE IS FAR FROM PAINLESS
AND SUDDENLY I HAVE GOT TO KNOW HOW COME.

I RESOLVE NOT TO BLAME THE OTHERS,
JUST BECAUSE I'M AN EASY MARK.
I WANT TO KNOW WHY I NEVER MEET THEIR MOTHERS.
WHERE MEN ARE CONCERNED I'M ALWAYS IN THE DARK.

I MUST STOP THINKING WITH MY SKIN.
I WILL NOT BE A MANDOLIN
THAT SOMEONE STRUMS AND PUTS AWAY
UNTIL HE GETS THE URGE TO PLAY.

I RESOLVE HERE AND NOW:
I WILL BE A DIFFERENT GIRL SOMEHOW!

#31 *Ilona's Exit*

(Orchestra)

*(RITTER EXITS. Shop turns. SIPOS EXITS from shop to street.
GEORG stops him)*

GEORG

Ladislav!

SIPOS

Georg!

GEORG

I have to talk to you... Will you come with me to the Café Imperiale? It's urgent.

SIPOS

The Café Imperiale?

GEORG

(Nodding)

She'll be there — sitting alone... and on the table in front of her there'll be a copy of "Anna Karenina" with a rose in it.

SIPOS

Your lady friend? The one who writes the letters? Oh ho!

GEORG

And I'll be wearing a rose — here...

SIPOS

That's a very romantic picture. *Very* romantic — except for one thing...

GEORG

One thing?

SIPOS

What am *I* doing there?

GEORG

(Taking a letter out of his pocket)

You're going to give her this letter — which explains I've been called out of town and will write her as soon as possible.

SIPOS

She won't be disappointed?

GEORG

She'd be more disappointed if she saw me the way I am tonight. Will you give her this for me?

SIPOS

Of course I will — although —

GEORG

Let's hurry — please? For all I know, she got tired of waiting and went home long ago.

(THEY EXIT.)

#32 *Street To The Shop* (Orchestra)

A man in a raincoat and hat comes to the door of the shop. HE knocks. MARACZEK comes to the door and opens it)

MARACZEK

Mr. Keller...?

KELLER

(Nodding)

Mr. Maraczek...?

MARACZEK

Come in, please.

(KELLER comes into the shop)

KELLER

Do we talk here?

MARACZEK

Everyone's gone.

KELLER

As I told you on the phone, sir — we've completed our investigation...

(MARACZEK takes a letter out of his pocket)

MARACZEK

Who sent this to me?

KELLER

I'm afraid we don't know that. Anonymous letters are difficult to track down. But we *have* checked its contents.

(Takes out a document)

As you'll see we've been following Mrs. Maraczek. And there's no doubt — she's involved with one of your clerks — just as the letter said...

MARACZEK

There's no doubt...

KELLER

I'm sorry, sir.

MARACZEK

I've known all along. I just — had to be sure.

KELLER

She's been going to his apartment, Number 17 Court Street. Each visit is listed. Would you care to have us do an investigation of Mr. Kodaly?

MARACZEK

Who?

KELLER

That's his name — Steven Kodaly...
(KELLER starts leafing through the report)

MARACZEK

But I thought...

KELLER

(Reading)
Steven Kodaly; Number 17 Court Street, Second Floor, Apartment 6.

MARACZEK

Kodaly!

(KELLER extends the report to MARACZEK)

It's just that — he hardly knows Mrs. Maraczek. And there's another clerk here — a clerk who's been to our house many times — and I thought — I naturally thought...

KELLER

If you'll read the report, sir.

MARACZEK

Yes. Thank you.

KELLER

Will there be anything else?

(MARACZEK shakes his head. The telephone rings)

Then I'll be saying good night.

MARACZEK

Good night, Mr. Keller.

KELLER

Good night, sir.

(KELLER EXITS. MARACZEK crosses to the counter and answers telephone)

#33 *Goodbye, Love*

(Orchestra)

MARACZEK

Maraczek, here... Hello, love... yes, I know... you'll be out late then? I see... give her my best... No, I just feel a bit tired... of course... of course... No, I won't wait up... so do I... Bye-bye.

(MARACZEK EXITS to his office. ARPAD comes out of the stockroom and crosses to the office)

ARPAD

Mr. Maraczek! Don't! Don't! Mr. Maraczek!

(BLACKOUT. GUNSHOT blends with the noise of a BUSBOY dropping a tray)

END OF SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR

(AT RISE: The Café Imperiale. A romantic-type café, with candles, dim lights, lovers at the tables. At one table, AMALIA sits expectantly — the book and the rose in front of her. SHE keeps looking around nervously — and sipping a glass of red wine)

#34 *A Romantic Atmosphere* (Waiter)

WAITER

(To BUSBOY)

BUTTERFINGERS, DO THAT AGAIN,
THAT'S THE END OF YOUR CAREER!

How do you do, sir? How do you do, madam?

DON'T YOU KNOW WE TRY TO PRESERVE
A ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE?

Good to see you again, Mr. Liszt.

THAT'S WHAT ALL OUR PATRONS EXPECT,
SO EVERY JARRING NOTE WILL BE RUTHLESSLY CHECKED!
GENTLY DOES IT, TRY TO PRESERVE
A ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE.

THINK OF ALL THE LOVE AFFAIRS WE ASSIST.
WHAT MORE NOBLE CALLING IS THERE THAN OURS:
TENDING EACH NEW BEAUTIFUL BUD OF LOVE,
MAKING SURE EACH DELICATE SEEDLING FLOWERS.

(AMALIA EXITS)

TREAT EACH TRYST AND RENDEZVOUS AS YOUR OWN,
BEARING IN MIND THE GRAVITY OF YOUR TASK.
ALL THESE LOVERS WANT IS ONE SHINING HOUR.
IS THAT SUCH A TERRIBLE LOT TO ASK?

COUPLES

Shhh...

WAITER

LOOK AROUND AND SEE FOR YOURSELF
THE ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE.

COUPLE

Viktor... Stefanie.

WAITER

THAT'S WHAT ALL OUR PATRONS DEMAND;
THAT'S THE REASON WHY THEY'RE HERE.

ANOTHER COUPLE

Viktor... Hugo.

WAITER

THEY ALL COME HERE JUST FOR THE MOOD
AND IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME
TRY TASTING OUR FOOD.
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE GOT TO PRESERVE
A ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE.

*(Dance number culminating in rowdy behavior by CUSTOMERS and
BUSBOY)*

SUCH BEHAVIOR WON'T BE ALLOWED
BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN WE JUST GET THE WRONG
CROWD.

(AMALIA RE-ENTERS)

GENTLY DOES IT, TRY TO PRESERVE
A ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE.

#35 *The Café Imperiale* (Orchestra)

*(SIPOS and GEORG ENTER. THEY cannot see AMALIA — nor
SHE them)*

SIPOS

Where's the rose?

GEORG

What?

SIPOS

The rose. Where is it?

(GEORG takes out a rose)

That's a rose?

GEORG

It's been in my pocket all day.

SIPOS

Let me have it.

(SIPOS starts to put it into GEORG'S lapel)

GEORG

Oh, no...

(GEORG takes the rose)

SIPOS

You've gone this far — go the rest of the way.

GEORG

No. Just — give her the letter — please? And thank you, Ladislav — I really appreciate this.

(GEORG starts to EXIT)

SIPOS

Wait!

(GEORG stops)

At least — let's take a look at her.

GEORG

You look.

(SIPOS looks through the café, spots AMALLA, then returns to GEORG)

She's old. Old and ugly and toothless — isn't she?

SIPOS

I wouldn't say so.

GEORG

There must be something wrong with her — terribly wrong!

SIPOS

Why?

GEORG

I can see it in your face!

SIPOS

The fact is: she's a very attractive girl.

GEORG

She *really* is?

SIPOS

Absolutely.

GEORG

But will *I* think so?

SIPOS

Well — of course — that's a matter of personal taste. Let's see now — who does she look like?

GEORG

(Hopefully)

Some — film star?

SIPOS

No, no, no. Let me think — more than anyone else, I'd say she looks like someone in the shop...

GEORG

In our shop?

SIPOS

As a matter of fact — you know who? Miss Balash. She looks very much like her.

GEORG

(Stunned)

Miss Balash? Amalia Balash? But I thought you said "*attractive.*"

SIPOS

Well — I think so. But, of course, if you don't care for Miss Balash, you're certainly not going to like *this* girl.

GEORG

They're *that* similar?

SIPOS

See for yourself.

(GEORG moves to a spot from which he can see AMALIA. The minute HE spots her, his body droops. The rose drops from his hand and falls to the floor. Then he starts to EXIT)

You're just going to *leave* her there?

GEORG

What do you suggest? You want me to tell her *I'm* the poor fool who's written all those letters? She'd make me the laughingstock of the city!

SIPOS

How? *She* wrote some too. "Dear Friend: I took you out of the box — I cut you open..." And so on —

GEORG

It's impossible!

SIPOS

What?

GEORG

She never wrote those letters! She couldn't have!

SIPOS

You think it's just a coincidence? She just happens to like this café — she just happens to be reading "Anna Karenina" — she just happens to be using a rose as a bookmark — in December!!

GEORG

But it's Miss Balash! I can't be in love with Miss Balash!

SIPOS

How do you know until you try?

GEORG

I know *her*! There's some mistake, Ladislav. There's got to be.

SIPOS

Then, talk to her. Find out.

GEORG

(Nodding in agreement)

She's not Dear Friend. She's not. She can't be!

(Suddenly terrified)

Can she?

(GEORG crosses to AMALIA'S table. SIPOS watches — leaving after a few moments. GEORG pretends surprise)

Miss Balash!

AMALIA

(Really surprised)

Mr. Nowack! What are *you* doing here?

GEORG

Celebrating. How about you?

AMALIA

I'm waiting for someone.

GEORG

Anyone in particular?

AMALIA

Well — of course! What kind of girl do you think I am?

(Changes her mind)

Never mind, Mr. Nowack. I know.

GEORG

May I sit down for a minute?

AMALIA

No. I'm afraid not.

GEORG

You won't help me celebrate?

AMALIA

Celebrate?

GEORG

My freedom, Miss Balash! Just think of it! Tomorrow's Wednesday, and I can sleep late as I like.

(GEORG sits down at the table and picks up the extra glass)

AMALIA

(Upset)

Mr. Nowack — I told you — that chair — happens to be reserved.

GEORG

You won't even have one quick drink with me?

AMALIA

I can't!

GEORG

One small, farewell drink?

AMALIA

(Looking around nervously)

Well — if it's very small — and very quick.

(GEORG pours himself a drink. HE also fills AMALIA'S glass, which was half empty)

GEORG

Thank you, Miss Balash.

(Toasting)

Well, here's to Maraczek's Parfumerie — and the people who work there — and the people who used to work there — and all the customers —

AMALIA

(Quickly)

And that covers everything!

(AMALIA drinks. GEORG drinks)

GEORG

Good wine.

(Takes another sip)

AMALIA

Mr. Nowack, are you spying on me?

GEORG

Spying?

AMALIA

Did you come here to make sure I really have a date — that I wasn't just inventing an excuse not to work tonight?

GEORG

Miss Balash, who would I be spying for? Maraczek?

AMALIA

(Very determined)

Mr. Nowack — if you don't leave this table immediately, I'm going to have to call the waiter.

(The WAITER, who has been hovering uneasily nearby, takes this as his cue to approach)

WAITER

Yes, madam?

AMALIA

(Taken aback)

Oh — ah — *there* you are.

WAITER

May I put a word in?

(AMALIA nods)

The Café Imperiale is a rendezvous for *lovers*. Look around you. We try to preserve a romantic atmosphere. And I find it very difficult, madam, when you and your husband insist on fighting right in the middle of it. Can't you argue at home?

AMALIA

This is *not* my husband! This is a — business associate.

WAITER

Well — talk business someplace else, please.

(WAITER EXITS)

#36 *Tango Tragique* (Orchestra)

GEORG

You say you're meeting someone here? Someone you've known very long?

AMALIA

Mr. Nowack, will you leave?

GEORG

It doesn't seem right for a man to keep a girl waiting — all alone... in such a public place.

AMALIA

Will you please leave?

GEORG

Even if he's an old friend — a dear friend...

AMALIA

I don't wish to discuss it with you, Mr. Nowack.

GEORG

(Re: "Tango Tragique" which has been playing in the background)

What's the name of that tune?

(No answer from AMALIA)

My mother used to sing it when I was a baby.

AMALIA

So did mine.

GEORG

Miss Balash — do you realize? We've just found something in common. At one time — we were both infants.

AMALIA

But I grew up.

GEORG

I think it's called "Tango Tragique."

AMALIA

(Looking around the café)

What if he's already been here and seen us together — and gone? I'll never forgive you!

(GEORG notes the book on the table. HE picks it up and looks at it)

GEORG

What's this?

AMALIA

Put that back!

GEORG

"Anna Karenina"...

AMALIA

Yes. It's a book. By Leo Tolstoy. A Russian. Now will you please put it back.

(GEORG looks at the rose)

GEORG

What's this for?

AMALIA

That's none of your business!

GEORG

Miss Balash, is it possible you've never even *met* this man?

AMALIA

That's ridiculous!

GEORG

Of course it is. And yet, you know, some girls — and some men — do make appointments with strangers. And sometimes it turns out rather well. And — on the other hand — sometimes it turns out not so well. I remember a girl I used to know. She started writing to someone through a Lonely Hearts Club. They corresponded for a while — then decided to meet. I seem to recall she was to have a flower in her book — and he would have the same flower in his buttonhole. And they did recognize each other, I guess. The next day the police found her left leg floating in the Danube. And, you know — they never did find the rest of her. Or her book.

#37 *Mr. Nowack, Will You Please... (Amalia, Waiter)*

AMALIA

AT THE COUNT OF FIVE, I'LL SCREAM
SO YOU'D BETTER GO — AND SOON!

One!

GEORG

I just want to talk to you —

AMALIA

DON'T FORGET I'VE HAD SOME WINE AND
NOTHING TO EAT SINCE NOON.

Two!

GEORG

We could go somewhere and have a sandwich maybe...

AMALIA
DANTE ONCE DESCRIBED
ALL THE DEPTHS OF HELL.
IF I HAVE MY WAY,
YOU WILL KNOW THEM WELL!

Three!

GEORG
Miss Balash!

AMALIA
YOU ARE EASILY THE MOST
INSENSITIVE MAN ALIVE!

GEORG
You surprise me!

AMALIA
I'm sorry

BUT I'M FIGHTING FOR MY LIFE!
FOUR!
FOUR-AND-A-HALF!
WILL YOU GO?
THEN FIVE!!

(AMALIA screams. The WAITER rushes over)

WAITER
ARE YOU TRYING TO RUIN ME, LADY?
I WARNED YOU — GET OUT!
THAT'S ALL — GET OUT!

GEORG
Wait a minute —

WAITER
YOU TOO — GET OUT!
SCREAMING LIKE LUNATICS —
THAT'S ALL — GET OUT!!

GEORG
How dare you speak to a lady that way!

WAITER

Ladies don't scream in cafés!

GEORG

I'm afraid you don't quite understand. You see — there was a fly in the wine.

WAITER

What?

GEORG

(Much louder)

I said — a fly in the wine.

WAITER

SHHHHH! Where is it? Show it to me.

GEORG

Oh, no. I'm afraid that's quite impossible. You see, the lady swallowed it.

WAITER

(Appalled)

She swallowed...?

GEORG

Wouldn't *you* scream?

WAITER

Good God!

CUSTOMER

Waiter!

(The WAITER goes to another table)

AMALIA

Really, Mr. Nowack — no matter how much you despise me or how unhappy you are, haven't you had enough revenge? I don't understand you.

GEORG

How could you, Miss Balash? You've never listened to me — you've never really looked at me...

AMALIA

How wrong you are, Mr. Nowack! I'm looking at you now — and shall I tell you what I see? A smug, pompous, petty tyrant — very sure of himself and very

ambitious. But I see him ten years from now — selling shampoo. And twenty years from now — selling shampoo. And thirty years from now still selling shampoo! Because, basically, do you know what he is? Just a not-very-bright, not-very-handsome, not-very young man with balding hair and the personality of a python!

(GEORG EXITS)

Mr. Nowack — I didn't mean — *all* those things.

(GEORG can't hear)

Mr. Nowack!

(The WAITER comes to the table as GEORG EXITS)

WAITER

Don't *call* him! He'll come *back*.

(To BUSBOY)

It's almost closing time.

AMALIA

Closing time? But I'm still waiting for someone. He'll have a rose in his lapel —

WAITER

To match the one in your book?

(AMALIA nods)

How late *is* he?

AMALIA

Over two hours.

WAITER

You're a very patient young lady.

AMALIA

I've waited for him all my life. What's two hours?

(The WAITER puts a clean glass and a small carafe of wine on AMALIA'S table)

WAITER

This one is on the house — for luck.

AMALIA

Thank you. You know — this is a very nice café.

WAITER

We try to preserve a romantic atmosphere.
(*The WAITER EXITS*)

#38 *Dear Friend*

(*Amalia*)

THE FLOWERS, THE LINEN, THE CRYSTAL I SEE
WERE CAREFULLY CHOSEN FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME;
THE SILVER AGLEAM AND THE CANDLES AGLOW,
YOUR FAVORITE SONGS ON REQUEST.

EACH COLORFUL TOUCH IN THE FINEST OF TASTE
AND NOTICE HOW SUBTLY THE TABLES ARE SPACED.
THE MUSIC IS MUTED, THE LIGHTING IS LOW,
NO WONDER I FEEL SO DEPRESSED.

CHARMING, ROMANTIC,
THE PERFECT CAFE —
THEN AS IF IT ISN'T BAD ENOUGH
A VIOLIN STARTS TO PLAY.
CANDLES AND WINE —
TABLES FOR TWO —
BUT WHERE ARE YOU,
DEAR FRIEND?

COUPLES GO PAST ME.
I SEE HOW THEY LOOK:
SO DISCREETLY SYMPATHETIC
WHEN THEY SEE THE ROSE AND THE BOOK.
I MAKE BELIEVE
NOTHING IS WRONG.
HOW LONG CAN I PRETEND?
PLEASE, MAKE IT RIGHT.
DON'T BREAK MY HEART.
DON'T LET IT END,
DEAR FRIEND.

(Last COUPLES EXIT. The WAITER RE-ENTERS with the BUSBOY. The WAITER starts blowing out the candles and stacking the chairs on the tables)

WAITER

We're closing up.

AMALIA

So soon?

WAITER

It looks like your friend didn't get here.

AMALIA

I'm sure there's some very good reason.

WAITER

Then he'll write to you — and you can patch it up. And I hope you'll be very happy.

AMALIA

Thank you.

(The WAITER stacks more chairs. As HE does so, he discovers the rose which GEORG had thrown away earlier in the scene. He hides it)

Will you tell me something? You've seen so many of these cases. Does it ever happen that the girl is here — and the young man arrives — and looks at her — secretly — and just — goes away — without writing or explaining? Does that ever happen?

WAITER

Sometimes. And sometimes she looks at him and *she* goes away.

AMALIA

How heart-breaking that must be.

WAITER

Well, you don't have to worry. You're a nice presentable girl. Not a beauty-contest winner... but you should see some of the others...

(WAITER and BUSBOY EXIT)

AMALIA

I MAKE BELIEVE
NOTHING IS WRONG.

HOW LONG CAN I PRETEND?
PLEASE, MAKE IT RIGHT.
DON'T BREAK MY HEART.
DON'T LET IT END,
DEAR FRIEND.

(CURTAIN)

END OF SCENE FOUR

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**SCENE ONE**

#39 *Entr'acte* (Orchestra)

#40 *Opening — Act II* (Orchestra)

(AT RISE: A private room in a hospital. Morning. MR. MARACZEK is in bed — his left arm in a sling. HE is sitting up while a NURSE feeds him his breakfast. There is a knock at the door)

MARACZEK

Come in.

(ARPAD ENTERS)

ARPAD

I'm back!

MARACZEK

Good.

(To the NURSE, indicating the breakfast tray)

You can take this away.

(The NURSE takes the tray and EXITS)

ARPAD

Well — I did everything you told me to...

MARACZEK

You went to the shop?

ARPAD

(Nodding)

Here's the key.

MARACZEK

What did you tell them about last night?

ARPAD

That you shot yourself accidentally. You were cleaning your gun.

MARACZEK

Good.

ARPAD

Then I delivered your message to Mr. Nowack. That is — I left it with his landlady. He was out.

MARACZEK

Very good.

ARPAD

Oh — there's something else. Miss Balash is sick. Her mother called us. She won't be in today. And that's everything.

MARACZEK

Arpad, you're a credit to your profession.

ARPAD

Thank you Mr. Maraczek. You know — I'm not afraid of responsibility. I welcome it. In fact, I'd welcome a lot more...

MARACZEK

I'll keep it in mind...

ARPAD

And I can't help thinking — Christmas is almost here — all that Christmas shopping — we're going to be very short-handed in the shop.

MARACZEK

We'll have to manage...

ARPAD

But one more clerk would certainly come in handy.

MARACZEK

What is it? You know someone who wants a job?

ARPAD

Mr. Maraczek — you've got to stop thinking of me as just a delivery boy. In a suit — with a tie — I look — old. And I've been training myself to be a sales clerk — training hard — for two years!

MARACZEK

Oh! You've been training...?

ARPAD

I HAVE TRAINED MYSELF,
GOING SHELF BY SHELF
AND I KNOW EVERY ITEM IN THE STORE:
EVERY TUBE, JAR, BOX, BOTTLE, CARTON AND CONTAINER...
WHERE THEY ARE... WHAT THEY COST... WHAT THEY'RE FOR.

ALTHOUGH IT'S SOMETHING YOU HAVE NEVER THOUGHT
ABOUT,
MR. MARACZEK, TRY ME!
YOU NEED A MAN WHO KNOWS THE BUSINESS INSIDE OUT.
MR. MARACZEK, TRY ME!
YOU NEED HELP OR I'D HAVE NEVER SPOKEN.
AND WHY BREAK SOMEONE IN
WHEN I'M ALREADY BROKEN?

IN THIS EMERGENCY I WOULDN'T LET YOU DOWN!
MR. MARACZEK, TRY ME!
OH, I CAN SEE BY THE UNCERTAIN WAY YOU FROWN
THAT YOU'VE ASKED YOURSELF, WHY ME?

FOR FIRST-CLASS CLERKING
AND CONSCIENTIOUS WORKING,
MR. MARACZEK, WHY NOT TRY ME?!

MARACZEK

All right! This cream is sour, very sour. Take it back!

ARPAD

YOU WISH TO RETURN THIS JAR, MADAM?
CERTAINLY, RIGHT YOU ARE, MADAM.
YOU SAY IT SMELLS LIKE A "DROWNEDED" CAT?
IT DOES AT THAT.
AT MARACZEK'S, MADAM, WE CLAIM WITH PRIDE
THE CUSTOMER MUST BE SATISFIED!
THE CUSTOMER MUST BE SATISFIED!

BY THE WAY WE HAVE A SPECIAL SALE ON "AUTUMN
HEATHER."
LET ME SPRAY SOME ON YOUR HAND
(Whsssh)
HERE... WE'LL SMELL IT TOGETHER.

(Inhales)

Mmm... It has the three elements of good perfume... attractive to the nose...
invisible to the eye and functional.

MY WIFE HAS USED IT TIME AND AGAIN.
IT'S VERY APPEALING TO US MEN.
I USE IT MYSELF EVERY NOW AND THEN.

MARACZEK

I'll take it.

ARPAD

Certainly, madam!

(Calls, too boyishly)

Oh, Miss Ritter!

(Changes his attitude... more dignified)

Miss Ritter!

THAT'S TWENTY-AND-SIX FOR THE "AUTUMN HEATHER,"
EIGHT-AND-THREE FOR THE CREAM,
THIRTY-TWO EVEN FOR THAT BOTTLE OF "MERMAID'S
DREAM";
ONE-AND-THREE FOR THE EYEBROW PENCIL,
NINE FOR THE LARGE SHAMPOO
AND THEN FOR THE JAR YOU'RE BRINGING BACK
THAT'S FOUR-AND-TWO FOR YOU.
THAT'S A TOTAL OF NINETY-EIGHT LESS FOUR-AND-TWO
FOR THE JAR.
OUT OF A HUNDRED... HERE'S YOUR CHANGE:
FIVE-AND-TWO. THERE YOU ARE!

The biggest sale in several years, I believe!

THANK YOU, MADAM, PLEASE CALL AGAIN.
GLAD I COULD HELP.
HERE IS MY CARD.
THANK YOU, MADAM, PLEASE CALL AGAIN.
DO CALL AGAIN,
MADAM!

I WOULD GLADLY GROW A MOUSTACHE IF YOU'D LIKE!
MR. MARACZEK, TRY ME!
I WOULD EVEN THINK OF GIVING UP MY BIKE!
MR. MARACZEK, TRY ME!
FOR FIRST-CLASS CLERKING
AND CONSCIENTIOUS WORKING,
MR. MARACZEK, WHY NOT TRY ME?!

MARACZEK

(Dryly)

Very impressive. You even managed to short change me.

(GEORG ENTERS)

GEORG

Mr. Maraczek...?

MARACZEK

Oh, Georg.

GEORG

What happened?

ARPAD

He shot himself accidentally. He was cleaning his gun.

MARACZEK

Arpad — will you please leave us alone?

(ARPAD EXITS)

GEORG

Are you in very much pain, Mr. Maraczek?

MARACZEK

The only place that doesn't hurt me is my left shoulder — where I shot myself.

GEORG

Is there anything I can do?

MARACZEK

First I've got to do something. Something very important. If I could stand up, you know what I'd do? I'd walk over and take you by the hand — and beg you to forgive me.

GEORG

I forgive you, Mr. Maraczek. Whatever happened — why ever it happened. I don't care.

MARACZEK

No. You can't let me off that easily. I did a terrible thing to you, and there's no excuse.

(Changes his mind)

Well — I guess there's *one* excuse: the jealousy of an old man.

GEORG

Jealousy?

MARACZEK

(Ruefully)

Poor Georg. Still in the dark. I guess you're the only man in the world who ever had an affair without knowing it.

GEORG

An affair?

MARACZEK

(Calmly)

You've been having an affair with my wife.

GEORG

(Appalled)

With your wife? With Mrs. Maraczek?

MARACZEK

I have all the facts.

GEORG

But it's not true!!

MARACZEK

I *know* it's not true. I know *now*. But last week — and two weeks ago — I didn't know.

GEORG

I can't believe it! Mrs. Maraczek and...? Did you really think — ?

MARACZEK

That's just the point. I *didn't* think.

GEORG

I can't get over it.

MARACZEK

Well — Georg — starting today — if you're willing — I'd like you to take over the shop.

GEORG

Of course I will. At least — keep the doors open — 'til you're well enough to come back.

MARACZEK

The key is on the table. Oh, and Georg... now that you're the boss, if you want to give yourself a raise...

GEORG

Well, I'll have a little talk with myself and if I don't ask for too much, I may grant it.

MARACZEK

The perfect executive! Now you better get going. You'll be very short-handed today. Arpad tells me Miss Balash isn't coming in —

GEORG

(Upset)

Miss Balash! Why not?

MARACZEK

She's sick.

GEORG

What's wrong with her?

MARACZEK

He didn't say. But you'll have to manage without her. And without one other clerk as well — Mr. Kodaly. I want you to fire him.

GEORG

Fire him?

MARACZEK

Just give him two weeks' salary...

GEORG

I didn't realize Mr. Kodaly was that unsatisfactory. He works hard...

MARACZEK

But at the wrong things.

GEORG

I'm not sure I understand...

MARACZEK

If you ever run into Mrs. Maraczek — perhaps *she'll* explain it to you... Well, my boy — it looks like I'm a bachelor again — same as you. Perhaps one night you'll take me to a cabaret...

GEORG

But I —

MARACZEK

I know. You never go to cabarets.

GEORG

I'll stop by later and give you a full report.

MARACZEK

Thank you, my boy, I'll be here.

#42 *Maraczek's Memories (Maraczek)*

(GEORG opens the door and ARPAD falls through. GEORG EXITS)

ARPAD

Have you been thinking about me as a sales clerk?

MARACZEK

Quite seriously. But there's one thing that puzzles me. You're so attached to your bicycle. How could you ever bear to part with it?

ARPAD

What if I *didn't* part with it — altogether? I could be half delivery boy — half clerk.

MARACZEK

Arpad — you just made a sale.

ARPAD

I did?

MARACZEK

As of right now. And I guess we can't call you Arpad any more. I don't think I ever knew your last name. You do have a last name...?

ARPAD

Laszlo.

MARACZEK

Welcome to Maraczek's, Mr. Laszlo.

ARPAD

(Savoring it)

Mr. Laszlo... Mr. Laszlo.

MARACZEK

Now you'd better get going.

ARPAD

I'm on my way. And you can count on me!

(Opens the door)

Goodbye, Mr. Maraczek.

MARACZEK

(Absently)

Goodbye, Arpad.

(ARPAD'S ecstatic expression fades. MARACZEK is too preoccupied to notice. ARPAD EXITS)

ALL NIGHT... CIRCLING THE FLOOR
'TIL DAWN LIT UP THE SKY
NO ONE YOUNGER...

(MUSIC continues as LIGHTS FADE)

END OF SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

(AT RISE: An attractive one-room apartment. The window shades are drawn to keep out the daylight. AMALIA, in pajamas, is asleep in her bed. After a moment, there is a knock at the door)

AMALIA

(Sleepily)
Who's there?

GEORG

(OFFSTAGE)
Miss Balash...
(Knocks)

AMALIA

Who is it?

GEORG

(OFFSTAGE)
Miss Balash?

(AMALIA gets out of bed, rather unsteadily. SHE puts on a bathrobe)

AMALIA

Just a minute.

(AMALIA goes to the door and opens it. GEORG is standing there, carrying a brown paper bag)

Mr. Nowack...?

GEORG

I was in this neighborhood...

AMALIA

(Very tired)
What do you want? Have you thought of something you forgot to say last night? Well, say it — please — and get it over with. I'm not feeling very well today.

GEORG

I know you're not. That's why I'm here.

AMALIA

You knew I was sick? How?

GEORG

Well — this will come as quite a shock to you, Miss Balash. But the fact is, I'm back at Maraczek's again.

AMALIA

Back at Maraczek's?

GEORG

As of this morning.

AMALIA

(With mounting hysteria)

And you've come to see if I'm really sick? Is that it?

GEORG

No, no.

AMALIA

So you can tell everyone there's not a thing wrong with me?

GEORG

No, no.

AMALIA

— that I just don't care about my job?

GEORG

No, no!

#43 *Where's My Shoe?* (Amalia, Georg)

AMALIA

Well — Mr. Nowack — you're not going to have that chance!

(AMALIA rushes to the closet and starts pulling out hats. SHE puts one on)

What time is it? I won't be *very* late.

(SHE puts on one shoe)

WHERE'S MY OTHER SHOE?
HELP ME FIND MY OTHER SHOE!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE THAT
WHERE'S MY SHOE?

GEORG

I THINK YOU SHOULD LIE DOWN.

AMALIA

HELP ME FIND MY SHOE.
I CAN'T LEAVE UNTIL I DO.
WILL YOU GIVE ME MY HAT!
WHERE'S MY SHOE?

GEORG

PLEASE, MISS BALASH, LIE DOWN.

AMALIA

I HATE TO DISAPPOINT YOU
NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT YOUR HOPES UP,
THRILLED TO BE DOING SOMETHING MEAN!

GEORG

MISS BALASH, DO BE SENSIBLE.

AMALIA

JUST TELL ME IF IT'S COLD OUT.
COME HELP ME PICK A SWEATER.
I CAN'T DECIDE ON WHITE OR GREEN.

GEORG

NOW, MISS BALASH, YOU'RE SICK AND YOU OUGHT TO LIE
DOWN.

AMALIA

WHERE'D YOU PUT MY SHOE?
THAT'S A SNEAKY THING TO DO!
YOU DON'T WANT ME TO GO, DO YOU?
I CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH YOU!

WHERE'S MY SHOE?

GEORG

YOU SHOULDN'T BE ON YOUR FEET.

AMALIA

WHERE'S MY SHOE?

GEORG

BE A GOOD GIRL AND GO

AMALIA
MY RIGHT —

GEORG
BACK TO —

AMALIA
IF I WERE A SHOE,
WHERE WOULD I HAVE GOTTEN TO?
NOW IF I WERE A SHOE, I'D BE... THERE!

GEORG
PLEASE, MISS BALASH, LIE DOWN.

AMALIA
IS IT VERY COLD?
YES, YOU TOLD ME IT WAS COLD.
TELL ME WHAT KIND OF DRESS SHOULD I WEAR?

GEORG
YOU HAVE FEVER, I THINK.

AMALIA
I COULDN'T WEAR A SWEATER.
THAT WOULDN'T FIT MY MOOD NOW.
I FEEL LIKE WEARING SOMETHING GAY!

GEORG
MISS BALASH, YOU'RE HYSTERICAL

AMALIA
I'M FEELING SO MUCH BETTER!
I FEEL SO GAY AND GIDDY!
ONE SHOE AND I'LL BE ON MY WAY!

GEORG
YOU ARE GOING TO BED WHICH IS WHERE YOU BELONG.

AMALIA
AH-HAH-HAH-HAH... SEE!
THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH ME!
I AM GOING, YOU CAN'T STOP ME!
STOP IT, NOW PLEASE DROP ME!
PUT ME DOWN!

GEORG
NO, YOU'RE NOT LEAVING THIS ROOM.

AMALIA

WHERE'S MY SHOE?

GEORG

YOU'RE GOING NOWHERE BUT

AMALIA

MY RIGHT SHOE?

GEORG

BACK TO BED!

(GEORG picks AMALIA up and dumps her on the bed. The minute SHE hits the pillow, she collapses into hysterical weeping. Meanwhile, GEORG straightens the room. Then HE gets the brown paper bag and sits on the edge of AMALIA'S bed)

GEORG

I brought you something.

AMALIA

(Through the tears)

What?

GEORG

See for yourself.

(AMALIA sits up. SHE takes the brown bag and looks into it)

AMALIA

What is it?

GEORG

Vanilla ice cream. It's the best thing in the world when you're sick.

AMALIA

(SHE takes the container and a wooden spoon out of the bag)

It's from Lindner's. My mother works at Lindner's. She may have waited on you.

(AMALIA starts eating the ice cream)

GEORG

A small, stout woman?

AMALIA

Oh, no. The image of me — everyone says — only much younger looking.

(SHE stops eating)

There's something wrong with this ice cream.

GEORG

There is?

AMALIA

So much salt —

GEORG

Are you surprised? All those tears falling into it.

AMALIA

Oh. I'd better cry in the other direction.

GEORG

Why cry at all?

AMALIA

How little you understand, Mr. Nowack. I'm like a rag doll, and somebody's kicked out the stuffing.

GEORG

You'll soon fill up again — good as new.

AMALIA

(Shaking her head again)

You're looking at a very disillusioned girl, Mr. Nowack.

GEORG

You know, Miss Balash — I'll never forgive myself for last night at the café. I must have been drunk...

AMALIA

But — strangely enough — you were right, Mr. Nowack! — when you guessed I'd never met the man I was waiting for. He was just someone who'd been writing letters to me — such glorious letters.

GEORG

And he never showed up.

AMALIA

I waited 'til closing.

GEORG

I feel very responsible.

AMALIA

Oh, no — it wasn't just you, Mr. Nowack. There could have been so many reasons. But — if he cared at all — he would have explained — he would have written — a letter, a note, two words — something!

(AMALIA'S tears flow forth again. GEORG watches sadly for a minute)

GEORG

(Impulsively)
Miss Balash, he *will* write!

AMALIA

I don't think so.

GEORG

He will! I'm not just guessing! I know it definitely!

AMALIA.

How?

GEORG

He told me himself!

AMALIA

He — himself?

GEORG

Yes — of course! Dear Friend! No one else!

AMALIA

(Ecstatic)
Dear Friend?! When? How? Oh — tell me, Mr. Nowack. Tell me!!

GEORG

Well —

(Madly improvising)
— let's see now — You know — when I left the café last night, I had the oddest feeling that someone was following me. And I kept looking back — and there *was* a...

AMALIA

(Eagerly)
A young man?

GEORG

A *man* — and when I was almost home — he came up and started asking questions about you and me.

AMALIA

What sort of questions?

GEORG

Oh — just what you'd expect...

AMALIA

But I want to know the *words* he said.

GEORG

I'm not very good at remembering exact words...

AMALIA

Try — please?

GEORG

Well — let's see. I think the first thing he said was: "Excuse me, but I'd like to ask you a question." Or something like that. And then he said: "Did you just leave the Café Imperiale?" You want to know what *I* said, too?

AMALIA

Of course!

GEORG

All right. I said: "Yes."

AMALIA

(Eagerly)

And then —

GEORG

He said: "Tell me — that girl you were sitting with. Is she a special friend of yours?" Those were his exact words: "Special friend." And I said: "No. We just work at the same shop. As a matter of fact, she has an appointment with someone else tonight." I'm remembering very clearly now. And I remember he suddenly looked quite sad.

AMALIA

(Rapturous)

He looked sad?

GEORG

Quite sad. And then he said: "I *know* she has an appointment. It's with *me*. But I've got to take the next train out of town on urgent business."

AMALIA

Urgent business? Is he a — manufacturer — do you think? Or a shop-owner...?

GEORG

It's hard to say. He certainly looked well-fed...

AMALIA

Well-fed?

GEORG

To judge by appearances... Of course, that's not so unusual in a man his age.

(Gets up and looks at AMALIA'S little shelf of books)

You have some wonderful books here, Miss Balash.

(AMALIA'S thoughts seem to be elsewhere. GEORG picks up one book)

"The Red and the Black." I've been so anxious to read this. I wonder — could I borrow it sometime?

AMALIA

(The one-track mind)

What did you mean — a man his age?

GEORG

I beg your pardon?

AMALIA

You said, "It's not so unusual in a man his age." How old is he?

GEORG

Well — of course — you realize it was a dark night...

(AMALIA nods)

And he'd had an exhausting day. Emotionally, at any rate. I'd guess his age at — you know, it's hard to tell. Very. Possibly if he had some hair...

(Shrugs his shoulders)

Have you read "The Magic Mountain?"

AMALIA

What?

GEORG

"The Magic Mountain." I bought it for myself — for my birthday. If you like — I'd lend it to you...

AMALIA

Is he — completely bald?

GEORG

Does that matter? I thought you were in love with him...?

AMALIA

I *am* in love with him, Mr. Nowack. I *am*. It's just — you know — I thought — I hoped...

(Pulls herself together)

I'm so ashamed of myself! As if appearances made a difference!! The important thing is the letters. Just look at all the immortal works of art — the rapturous love stories — that were written by elderly men, bald men, fat men — with indigestion and terrible tempers — but somewhere deep inside — they had the magic... and that's a glory beyond estimation!

GEORG

You put it very well, Miss Balash.

AMALIA

I feel very well! I feel marvelous!! Oh — thank you, Mr. Nowack! Thank you for coming here today! Thank you for my life!!

(AMALIA kisses GEORG quite impulsively. For her it is a little kiss — but it rocks GEORG. SHE runs around the room, pulling up the window shades. Sun pours in)

I'm going to write to him — this very minute. So he'll have a letter waiting. But I won't mention you — since that might be embarrassing.

GEORG

Yes, I would appreciate that.

(Stands)

Well — I guess I'll get back to the shop...

AMALIA

And I'll follow — as soon as I've written the letter!

GEORG

Oh, no. There's no need for that. Take the rest of the day off. Relax. Read a book. Have you finished "Anna Karenina" yet?

AMALIA

Oh, yes. A long time ago.

GEORG

So did I. But it's remarkable how it stays with me. You know — every platform — every station platform with a train puffing in — is Anna's platform — wherever it may be. And I can see her — actually see her come out of the crowd and walk slowly toward her death. I've even tried to stop her a few times. But she always vanishes into the smoke and steam...

AMALIA

How odd, Mr. Nowack. How very odd. You know — in one of his letters... I wish I could show it to you...

GEORG

You mean — Dear Friend's had the same experience?

AMALIA

More than once!

GEORG

Well — goodbye, Miss Balash.

AMALIA

Goodbye. Oh, Mr. Nowack! May I tell you something — quite sincerely?

(GEORG nods. AMALIA continues with astonished delight)

I like you, Mr. Nowack. Really! I like you!

GEORG

Thank you, Miss Balash. See you in the morning...

#44 *Vanilla Ice Cream* (Amalia)

AMALIA

In the morning.

(GEORG EXITS. AMALIA closes the door. SHE goes to the table and takes out pen and paper. She thinks for a moment, then starts to write)

Dear Friend...

I AM SO SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT.
IT WAS A NIGHTMARE IN EVERY WAY

BUT TOGETHER YOU AND I
WILL LAUGH AT LAST NIGHT SOME DAY.

ICE CREAM...
HE BROUGHT ME ICE CREAM...
VANILLA ICE CREAM...
IMAGINE THAT!
ICE CREAM...
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME
WE WERE TOGETHER
WITHOUT A SPAT!
FRIENDLY...
HE WAS SO FRIENDLY...
THAT ISN'T LIKE HIM.
I'M SIMPLY STUNNED!
WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?
WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?
IT'S BEEN A MOST PECULIAR DAY!
WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?
WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?

Where was I?

I AM SO SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT. IT WAS A NIGHTMARE
IN EVERY WAY BUT TOGETHER YOU AND I WILL LAUGH
AT LAST NIGHT SOME DAY...

I SAT THERE WAITING IN THAT CAFE
AND NEVER GUESSING THAT YOU WERE FAT —
(SHE crosses this out)
THAT YOU WERE NEAR.
YOU WERE OUTSIDE LOOKING BALD —

Oh, my...
(SHE takes a new piece of paper)

Dear Friend...

I AM SO SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT.
LAST NIGHT I WAS SO NASTY!
WELL, HE DESERVED IT!
BUT EVEN SO...
THAT GEORG
IS NOT LIKE THIS GEORG.
THIS IS A NEW GEORG
THAT I DON'T KNOW.

SOMEHOW IT ALL REMINDS ME
OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE
FOR RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES
A MAN THAT I DESPISE
HAS TURNED INTO A MAN I LIKE!
IT'S ALMOST LIKE A DREAM
AND STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM,
HE CAME TO OFFER ME VANILLA ICE CREAM!!

(LIGHTS OUT)

END OF SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE#45 *She Loves Me* (Georg)

(AT RISE: Outside the shop — a sunny winter morning. GEORG ENTERS buoyantly)

GEORG

WELL, WELL,
WELL, WELL, WELL, WELL,
WELL, WELL, WELL, WELL,
WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?

I DIDN'T LIKE HER...
DIDN'T LIKE HER? I COULDN'T STAND HER!
COULDN'T STAND HER? I WOULDN'T HAVE HER!
I NEVER KNEW HER.
BUT NOW I DO... AND I COULD...
AND I WOULD... AND I KNOW...

SHE LOVES ME
AND TO MY AMAZEMENT,
I LOVE IT
KNOWING THAT SHE LOVES ME!
SHE LOVES ME!
TRUE, SHE DOESN'T SHOW IT.
HOW COULD SHE
WHEN SHE DOESN'T KNOW IT?

YESTERDAY SHE LOATHED ME... BAH!
NOW, TODAY SHE LIKES ME... HAH!
AND TOMORROW, TOMORROW... AH!

MY TEETH ACHE
FROM THE URGE TO TOUCH HER!
I'M SPEECHLESS
FOR I MUSTN'T TELL HER.
IT'S WRONG NOW
BUT IT WON'T BE LONG NOW
BEFORE MY LOVE DISCOVERS
THAT SHE AND I ARE LOVERS.
IMAGINE HOW SURPRISED SHE'S BOUND TO BE!
SHE LOVES ME!
SHE LOVES ME!

I LOVE HER!
ISN'T THAT A WONDER?
I WONDER
WHY I DIDN'T WANT HER.
I WANT HER
THAT'S THE THING THAT MATTERS
AND MATTERS
ARE IMPROVING DAILY!

YESTERDAY I LOATHED HER... BAH!
NOW TODAY I LOVE HER... HAH!
AND TOMORROW, TOMORROW... AH!

I'M TINGLING
SUCH DELICIOUS TINGLES!
I'M TREMBLING!
WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?
I'M FREEZING.
THAT'S BECAUSE IT'S COLD OUT.
BUT STILL I'M INCANDESCENT
AND LIKE SOME ADOLESCENT,
I'D LIKE TO SCRAWL ON EVERY WALL I SEE:
SHE LOVES ME!
SHE LOVES ME!

#46 *She Loves Me* Playoff (Orchestra)

(GEORG EXITS and joins SIPOS and RITTER in the workroom)

SIPOS

The new Mr. Maraczek? Not so impressive. Too young. Too skinny.

RITTER

I think he's beautiful. Welcome back, Georg.

SIPOS

Congratulations, Georg.

(KODALY opens the door and sticks his head in)

KODALY

Excuse me — but I could use some help in there. We do have customers — you know.

(Withdraws his head)

GEORG

That reminds me: I have to have a word with Mr. Kodaly.

(HE EXITS into the shop)

RITTER

Isn't it wonderful!!

SIPOS

A miracle! An absolute miracle!!

(Wandering inquisitively to the door)

A word with Mr. Kodaly...

RITTER

Oh — who cares about him? That's all in the past.

SIPOS

It is?

RITTER

Ever since last night — remember what a silly confused girl I was last night?

SIPOS

You were?

RITTER

Oh, very! I didn't know what to do or where to go — and then somehow my feet started walking down the street and across the bridge and past the Metropole Cinema — and you know where?

SIPOS

Where?

RITTER

Right into the library!

SIPOS

The library?

RITTER

Can you imagine?

SIPOS

How did you like it?

#47 *A Trip To The Library (Ritter)*

RITTER

You've never seen such a place. So many books... so much marble... so quiet...

AND SUDDENLY ALL OF MY CONFIDENCE
DRIBBLED AWAY WITH A PITIFUL PLOP.
MY HEAD WAS BEGINNING TO SWIM
AND MY FOREHEAD WAS COVERED WITH
COLD PERSPIRATION.
I STARTED TO REACH FOR A BOOK AND MY HAND
AUTOMATICALLY CAME TO A STOP.
I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I STOOD FROZEN,
A VICTIM OF PANIC AND MORTIFICATION!
OH... HOW I WANTED TO FLEE...
WHEN A KINDLY VOICE... A GENTLE VOICE
WHISPERED "PARDON ME."

SIPOS

Pardon me?

RITTER

AND THERE WAS THIS DEAR, SWEET,
CLEARLY RESPECTABLE,
THICKLY BESPECTACLED MAN
WHO STOOD BY MY SIDE AND
QUIETLY SAID TO ME... "MA'AM,
DON'T MEAN TO INTRUDE, BUT
I WAS JUST WONDERING
ARE YOU IN NEED OF SOME HELP?"
I SAID "NO... YES I AM!"
THE NEXT THING I KNOW,
I'M SIPPING HOT CHOCOLATE
AND TELLING MY TROUBLES TO PAUL
WHOSE TENDER BROWN EYES
KEPT SENDING COMPASSIONATE LOOKS.
A TRIP TO THE LIBRARY
HAS MADE A NEW GIRL OF ME
FOR SUDDENLY I CAN SEE
THE MAGIC OF BOOKS!

I HAVE TO ADMIT IN THE BACK OF MY MIND
I WAS PRAYING HE WOULDN'T GET FRESH.
AND ALL OF THE WHILE I WAS WONDERING WHY

AN ILLITERATE GIRL SHOULD ATTRACT HIM.
THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN HE SAID THAT I
COULDN'T GO WRONG WITH "THE WAY OF ALL FLESH."
OF COURSE IT'S A NOVEL BUT I DIDN'T KNOW
OR I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE SMACKED HIM!
WELL, HE GAVE ME A SMILE
THAT I COULDN'T RESIST
AND I KNEW AT ONCE... HOW MUCH I LIKED
THIS OPTOMETRIST.

SIPOS

Optometrist!

RITTER

YOU KNOW WHAT THIS DEAR, SWEET,
SLIGHTLY BESPECTACLED GENTLEMAN SAID TO ME NEXT?
HE SAID HE COULD SOLVE THIS PROBLEM OF MINE.
I SAID... "HOW?"
HE SAID IF I'D LIKE, HE'D WILLINGLY READ TO ME
SOME OF HIS FAVORITE THINGS.
I SAID "WHEN"?...
HE SAID "NOW".
HIS NOVEL APPROACH SEEMED HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS
AND POSSIBLY DANGEROUS, TOO.
I TOLD MYSELF "WAIT... THINK...
DARE YOU GO UP TO HIS FLAT?
WHAT HAPPENS IF THINGS GO WRONG?
IT'S OBVIOUS HE'S QUITE STRONG..."
HE READ TO ME ALL NIGHT LONG!
NOW, HOW ABOUT THAT?

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE HOW TRULY DOMESTIC
AND HAPPILY HOPEFUL I FEEL.
I PICTURE MY PAUL THERE
READING ALOUD AS I... COOK.
AS LONG AS HE'S THERE TO READ
THERE'S QUITE A GOOD CHANCE, INDEED,
A CHANCE THAT I'LL NEVER NEED TO OPEN A BOOK!

UNLIKE SOMEONE ELSE...
SOMEONE I DIMLY RECALL,
I KNOW HE'LL ONLY HAVE EYES FOR ME,
MY OPTOMETRIST... PAUL.

(GEORG RE-ENTERS the workroom)

GEORG

Well, I might as well tell you: Mr. Kodaly is leaving us — right now. Mr. Maraczek's orders.

RITTER

Why? I mean — it's nice. But what happened?

GEORG

I'm afraid I can't tell you.

RITTER

I bet I know. I warned him they'd catch up with him. Do you know that half the perfume and toilet water in this shop ended up in his bathroom?

(Realizing what SHE'S said)

I mean — he told me!

(SHE dashes out)

SIPOS

(With elaborate calmness)

Oh — incidentally — now that you're back and everything's straightened out — I might as well tell you: I sent the anonymous letter.

(Starts out quickly)

GEORG

Ladislav!

(SIPOS stops)

What anonymous letter?

SIPOS

(A little less casual)

You didn't know? What do you think caused all the trouble? I wrote to Mr. Maraczek about his wife and one of our clerks...

GEORG

I don't believe you!

SIPOS

(Getting serious)

I was desperate! Business was so bad! And I thought to myself — if he fires Mr. Kodaly — who deserves it — he might not fire me — who doesn't.

GEORG

Do you realize how much trouble you've caused?

SIPOS

(Earnestly)

I'll regret it to the day I die. But who ever dreamed Mr. Maraczek would think I meant you?

GEORG

Well — Ladislav — I just hope you've learned your lesson.

#48 *Sipos' Exit*

(Orchestra)

SIPOS

Oh — I have. I have. Believe me. In the next letter — name the names!!

(SIPOS EXITS into the shop. GEORG follows him)

GEORG

(To RITTER)

I need two weeks' pay for Mr. Kodaly.

(RITTER reaches under the cash register and brings up a sealed envelope. SHE smiles broadly)

#49 *Doorbell #5*

(Orchestra)

RITTER

Here it is. No, no, my pleasure!

(The front door opens and a CUSTOMER ENTERS. SHE walks toward RITTER)

Good day, madam. May I help you?

CUSTOMER

Do you carry "Flowers of Spring"?

#50 *Doorbell #6*

(Orchestra)

(Meanwhile, GEORG has gone back to the workroom. The front door opens and ARPAD ENTERS excitedly. HE goes to SIPOS)

ARPAD

Mr. Sipos — guess what?

SIPOS

What?

ARPAD

I'm a clerk!

SIPOS

Well — congratulations, Arpad!

ARPAD

Mr. Maraczek just promoted me. Oh — and something else — I'm not Arpad anymore.

SIPOS

You're not — ? Who are you?

ARPAD

(Proudly)

Mr. Laszlo!

SIPOS

Why Laszlo?

ARPAD

Why? It's my last name!

(RITTER'S CUSTOMER goes to the front door and opens it)

#51 *Thank You, Madam* #5 *(Ritter, Arpad, Sipos)*

RITTER, SIPOS, ARPAD

THANK YOU, MADAM.
PLEASE CALL AGAIN.
DO CALL AGAIN, MADAM.

(CUSTOMER EXITS)

SIPOS

Miss Ritter — May I present our new clerk — Mr. Laszlo.

ARPAD

(To RITTER)

It's true! Ask Mr. Maraczek!

RITTER

Arpad! How wonderful!

(KODALY has come out of the workroom, nattily dressed for outdoors)

KODALY

What's wonderful?

ARPAD

I'm a clerk! Starting right now! A clerk!

KODALY

Can you believe it? Steven Kodaly replaced by a delivery boy!?

ARPAD

Replaced?

KODALY

Yes, Arpad, I'm leaving... I just resigned. I wouldn't stay here another day.

SIPOS

You couldn't. You've just been fired!

KODALY

All right — believe that if it makes you happy. But you're not going to be happy for very long. Because any day now that door will close for the last time. Then just take a walk over to Hammerschmidt's...

SIPOS

Why? It's closed.

KODALY

Only temporarily. For renovations. You see — they're going to have a new owner: Steven Kodaly!

SIPOS

(Derisively)

Some owner.

KODALY

Nevertheless, it's true.

(To RITTER)

Ilona believes me. Don't you darling?

and Knowing You (Kodaly)

RITTER

(Deadpan)

course I do.

(She hands him the envelope)

Here's your down payment.

(KODALY takes the envelope)

KODALY

Cherie —

IT'S BEEN GRAND KNOWING YOU,
GRAND KNOWING YOU,
GRAND BEING YOUR FRIEND.
YOU'VE BEEN KIND, LOYAL AND
SO GENEROUS
RIGHT DOWN TO THE END.
PLEASE, DON'T GRIEVE
WATCHING ME LEAVE.
THAT WOULD BE MUCH TOO PAINFUL TO STAND.
IT'S BEEN FUN.
NOW I MUST RUN
BUT IT'S BEEN GRAND, PERFECTLY GRAND.

ILONA, FAREWELL, CHERIE,
BE BRAVE, CHIN UP, IT'S BEEN SUBLIME.
YOU MUSTN'T WASTE A PRECIOUS MOMENT OVER ME.
YOU DON'T HAVE TIME.
JUST REMEMBER WHEN YOU'RE LONELY OR BLUE,
THERE'S A HOLLOW IN MY PILLOW — FOR YOU.

And, Sipos, what can I say?

AH, SIPOS, NO TEARS, BE GAY!
YOU KNOW, OLD FRIEND, I'M IN YOUR DEBT.
I OWE YOU MORE THAN I CAN POSSIBLY REPAY.
I WON'T FORGET.
GIVE YOUR WIFE A LITTLE KISS FROM KODALY.
I NEVER MET HER — BUT I WILL — BY AND BY.

THO' I HATE LEAVING YOU,
HATE LEAVING YOUR
WARM, INTIMATE CLUB,

IT'S A SMALL PLEASURE
BUT I'LL TREASURE
EACH WARM, INTIMATE SNUB.
IT'S BEEN GRAND, LET ME SAY
AND LET ME SAY
AU REVOIR, NOT GOODBYE
FOR IT'S GRAND
KNOWING YOU'LL ALL BE WORKING
FOR YOUR FRIEND,
KODALY!!

(LIGHTS OUT)

#53A *Grand Knowing You — Tag (Orchestra)*

END OF SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR

(In the shop)

#53B A Christmas Carol (Carolers)

CAROLERS
ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS,
MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

AMALIA
Good morning, Mr. Nowack.

GEORG
Good morning, Miss Balash. How are you today?

AMALIA
I'm ready for thousands of customers.

GEORG
Only twelve days to go...

#53C Twelve Days To Christmas (Carolers, Customers, Clerks)

CAROLERS
FA LA, FA LA, FA LA...
12 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
12 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
PLENTY OF TIME TO DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.

THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO SHOP IN TIME,
SHOP IN TIME, PLENTY OF TIME.
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WITH TIME TO SPARE
WHO SHOP AT THEIR CONVENIENCE

12 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
12 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
LOOK AT THE WAY THEY DO THEIR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.

THEY CAN GO SHOPPING AND STILL REMAIN
CALM AND SEDATE.
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WE ENVY
AND THE PEOPLE THAT WE HATE!

CUSTOMERS

THANK YOU, THANK YOU,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...

CLERKS

(Simultaneous with above)

THANK, THANK YOU,
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN,
DO CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...

AMALIA

Quite a day, eh, Mr. Nowack?

GEORG

It certainly was, Miss Balash.

AMALIA

Oh, thank you for the book. It was excellent.

GEORG

I'm glad you enjoyed it. Will you be taking the bus home today, Miss Balash?

AMALIA

Yes, I will.

GEORG

May I walk you to the bus stop?

AMALIA

I'd like that, Mr. Nowack.

CAROLERS

12 DRUMMERS DRUMMING,
11 PIPERS PIPING,
10 LORDS A LEAPING,
9...

9 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
9 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
STILL ENOUGH TIME TO DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO SHOP IN TIME,
SHOP IN TIME, STILL ENOUGH TIME,
SENSIBLE PEOPLE WHO ORGANIZE
THE TIME AT THEIR DISPOSAL.

9 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
9 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
STILL ENOUGH TIME TO DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.

THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO PLAN THEIR DAYS
WISELY AND WELL.
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO SHOP IN TIME
AND THEY CAN GO TO HELL!

CUSTOMERS

THANK YOU, THANK YOU,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...

CLERKS

(Simultaneous with above)

THANK, THANK YOU,
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN,
DO CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...

GEORG

Are you in a very great hurry, Miss Balash?

AMALIA

No. Not at all.

GEORG

I thought — maybe a cup of coffee — on the way to the bus...

AMALIA

I'd love that, Mr. Nowack!

GEORG

So would I.

CAROLERS

8 MAIDS A MILKING,
7 SWANS A SWIMMING,
6 GEESE A LAYING,

CAROLERS & CLERKS

5 GOLDEN RINGS...

CAROLERS

4 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
4 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
JUST ENOUGH TIME TO DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.

THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO SHOP IN TIME,
JUST IN TIME, BARELY IN TIME,
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO CALCULATE
WITH CLINICAL PRECISION.

4 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
4 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS,
THESE ARE THE FOLKS WHO NEVER WASTE A SECOND.

FULL OF A CHILLY EFFICIENCY,
LOADED WITH GALL,
NEVER TOO EARLY AND NEVER LATE
AND THEY'RE THE WORST OF ALL!

CUSTOMERS

THANK YOU, THANK YOU,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...

CLERKS

(Simultaneous with above)

THANK, THANK YOU,
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN,
DO CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...

AMALIA

What a day!

GEORG

Just wait until the 24th.

CAROLERS, CLERKS

The twenty-fourth!!!

CAROLERS, CUSTOMERS

ONE DAY TO CHRISTMAS,
ONE DAY TO CHRISTMAS,
NOT ENOUGH TIME TO DO OUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING!

WE'RE NOT THE SHOPPLE WHO PEEPED IN TIME...

WE'RE NOT THE SHEEPLE WHO POPPED IN TIME...
WE'RE NOT THE PEOPLE WHO SHOPPED IN TIME...
SHOPPED IN TIME, NOT ENOUGH TIME!
WE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO ALWAYS WAIT
UNTIL IT'S MUCH TOO LATE, OH!

ONE DAY TO CHRISTMAS,
ONE DAY TO CHRISTMAS,
HOW WILL WE EVER DO OUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING?

WHY DID WE EVER DELAY SO LONG?
WHO CAN RECALL?
SOME OF THE FAMILY MAY NOT GET A CHRISTMAS GIFT
AT ALL!

CUSTOMERS, CAROLERS
THANK YOU, THANK YOU,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN,
WE'LL CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

CLERKS
(Simultaneous with above)
THANK, THANK YOU,
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN,
DO CALL AGAIN, THANK YOU...
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

END OF SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

(RITTER is making busy music on the cash register as GEORG watches eagerly. ARPAD, SIPOS and AMALIA are straightening up. RITTER pulls a long tape out of the cash register)

RITTER

Here it is...

(Hands it to GEORG)

GEORG

Not bad.

SIPOS

Not bad? It's at least eighteen inches longer than last year!

AMALIA

— If only every night were Christmas Eve...

RITTER

I don't think I could take it. I haven't stopped for a minute...

ARPAD

I waited on fifty-three customers personally!

AMALIA

Too bad Mr. Maraczek couldn't be here.

GEORG

(Holding up the tape)

Well — I'll stop by the hospital tonight and take this with me...

(GEORG wanders to SIPOS)

Well — it's coming. She's going to invite me home for Christmas Eve.

SIPOS

Splendid!

GEORG

Why splendid? I can't go. Tonight's the night she's finally meeting Dear Friend!

SIPOS

But you're Dear Friend!

GEORG

That's just the point!

SIPOS

I give up! It's too complicated for me. You want to untangle it? Shoot yourself.

RITTER

Amalia — my friend's coming to pick me up. Will you let me know when he gets here?

*(RITTER starts for the workroom. GEORG starts for the office.
AMALIA intercepts him)*

#54 *The Invitation*

(Orchestra)

AMALIA

All right. Oh — Mr. Nowack... Mother and I would be so happy if you'd spend Christmas Eve with us...

GEORG

(Hesitating)

Well — Miss Balash...

AMALIA

It's a very special Christmas Eve. Do you know who's going to be there? Dear Friend!

GEORG

(Innocently)

Who?

AMALIA

Dear Friend! The man I've been corresponding with. Remember?

GEORG

Oh — of course. But I certainly don't want to intrude...

AMALIA

Intrude! You'd be helping! After all — you know him. You've met him. And you're so alike. Really. You can help me with the conversation when it gets too deep for me. Please, Mr. Nowack...?

GEORG

(Giving in)

Well — I just hope this isn't a mistake, Miss Balash.

AMALIA

I *know* it's not!

(MARACZEK ENTERS, carrying a bottle of champagne)

ARPAD

Mr. Maraczek! Look who's here! Mr. Maraczek!

MARACZEK

Where else would I be Christmas Eve?

GEORG

Merry Christmas, sir.

(GEORG and MARACZEK shake hands. GEORG holds up the tape)

MARACZEK

You did all that in one day?

(GEORG nods proudly)

AMALIA

Merry Christmas, sir!

(RITTER comes out of the workroom)

RITTER

(To MARACZEK)

I thought I heard your voice. Merry Christmas, Mr. Maraczek!

MARACZEK

Merry Christmas, Miss Ritter.

(Indicating the champagne)

Have you time for a drink?

RITTER

Champagne? I'll *make* time!

(SIPOS comes out of the workroom dressed for outdoors)

SIPOS

Mr. Maraczek! Such a surprise!

MARACZEK

Merry Christmas, Mr. Sipos. Will you bring six cups...?

SIPOS

(Going to the water cooler for the cups)

Of course.

RITTER

I'll open it. I love opening champagne.

(SHE goes to work on the bottle)

GEORG

(To MARACZEK)

How do you feel, sir?

MARACZEK

Fine — excellent.

(SIPOS brings the paper cups and distributes them)

SIPOS

The goblets!

(RITTER and ARPAD open the champagne)

RITTER

The champagne! Shall I pour?

MARACZEK

Of course.

(RITTER fills the cups)

It's good to be home.

GEORG

The toast, Mr. Maraczek...?

MARACZEK

(Holding up his cup)

Christmas Eve. The shop. All of us together.

(ALL drink)

ALL

Merry Christmas!

AMALIA

Mav I?

(SHE takes the cup from MARACZEK)

MARACZEK

Thank you. — Georg?

GEORG

Yes, sir?

MARACZEK

Tell me — what would you say to a gala dinner? We'll go to some nice restaurant — Weber's perhaps.

GEORG

I wish I could, Mr. Maraczek.

MARACZEK

But you weren't expecting me. I understand.

GEORG

I've been invited by Miss Balash....

MARACZEK

Don't give it another thought, my boy. It's not that important.

RITTER

(At the window)

I think it's — It looks like — it is!!

SIPOS

(To ALL)

He's here! Miss Ritter's friend!

RITTER

(Looking out the window)

Isn't he handsome!

SIPOS

Intelligent looking.

AMALIA

He has beautiful eyes.

RITTER

He's an optometrist!

ARPAD

Much better than Mr. Kodaly. I'll say *that*.

AMALIA

I love the way he walks.

SIPOS

And look at that coat — that hat.

ARPAD

Is he rich?

RITTER

I don't know.

AMALIA

He has dimples!

RITTER

That settles it! Tonight — when he asks me to marry him — I'm going to say yes!

AMALIA

(Astonished)

Tonight? Ilona — I had no idea.

RITTER

(Wickedly)

Neither does *he*.

(Warmly)

Well — Merry Christmas.

ALL

Merry Christmas!

(RITTER gets to the door — remembers something — and starts back into the shop. SHE picks up two books and puts on glasses)

RITTER

Good evening.

(RITTER EXITS)

SIPOS

Ah, youth. Well, Mr. Maracek, thank you for the champagne. And now my wife and children are waiting for me. And my wife's sister. And *her* children. And God knows who else. Merry Christmas.

ALL

Merry Christmas.

(SIPOS goes out the door)

MARACZEK

Arpad...

ARPAD

Yes, sir?

MARACZEK

Are you busy tonight?

ARPAD

No, sir.

MARACZEK

Oh, yes, you are. You're going to Weber's.

ARPAD

Weber's! What is it?

MARACZEK

Oh, Georg! Arpad and I are going out for a night on the town.

AMALIA

Merry Christmas, Mr. Maraczek.

MARACZEK

Merry Christmas, Miss Balash. Georg —

GEORG

Merry Christmas, sir.

(MARACZEK and GEORG shake hands affectionately)

ARPAD

Merry Christmas, Mr. Nowack.

GEORG

(To ARPAD)

Merry Christmas.

ARPAD

I'm going to Weber's.

END OF SCENE FIVE

SCENE SIX

MARACZEK

Tell me, Mr. Laszlo, is there anything special you'd like for Christmas?

ARPAD

It's too much to hope for...

MARACZEK

But what is it?

ARPAD

I won't get it anyway.

MARACZEK

At least — *tell* me.

ARPAD

Well — what I'd really like — more than anything — is a motorcycle.

MARACZEK

You're right my boy. You won't get it.

#55 *Closing The Shop* (Orchestra)

(THEY EXIT.)

GEORG reaches for AMALIA'S packages)

GEORG

Let me help you with those —

(One package drops to the sidewalk. It plays the MUSIC BOX TUNE. AMALIA looks embarrassed)

GEORG

A cigarette box?

AMALIA

(Apologetically)

I know you hate them. But I rather like them. And I thought — as a gift for Dear Friend...

(GEORG picks up the box, which stops its music)

GEORG

But — what if he's not a smoker?

AMALIA

He likes music.

GEORG

And it's just a box. You know, Miss Balash — I don't hate these boxes nearly as much as I used to. In fact I wouldn't mind owning one myself.

AMALIA

You wouldn't?

GEORG

If only to remind me of the first day you came here. Remember?

(AMALIA nods)

I'll never forget it...

(Imitating AMALIA)

"What kind of box, madam? Eh, it's a candy box! And it's functional!"

AMALIA

I was so terrified. And you were so awful. Did I really sound like that?

GEORG

You sounded — irresistible. As a matter of fact — I remember thinking: Why, that's the kind of girl I could almost fall in love with.

AMALIA

But you were so awful...

GEORG

I know.

AMALIA

And you never said anything!

GEORG

How could I? I knew how you felt about me...

AMALIA

But you didn't. Really! You didn't! Because I was attracted to you — more than attracted.

GEORG

Awful as I was?

AMALIA

What a shame you never spoke up.

GEORG

And you...

AMALIA

Who knows what might have been...?

(AMALIA starts to EXIT)

GEORG

I AM SO SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT.
IT WAS A NIGHTMARE IN EVERY WAY
BUT TOGETHER YOU AND I
WILL LAUGH AT LAST NIGHT SOME DAY.

(AMALIA stops and turns back to GEORG)

AMALIA

DEAR FRIEND...
IT'S REALLY TRUE THEN!
IT'S WHAT I HOPED FOR...
THAT IT WAS YOU!

GEORG

DEAR FRIEND,
I HAD TO TELL YOU!
I COULDN'T STAND IT
UNTIL YOU KNEW!

GEORG

TWO WEEKS...
I'VE KNOWN FOR TWO WEEKS!
I WAS SO TEMPTED...
I DIDN'T DARE!

AMALIA

(Simultaneous with above)

OH, GEORG,
I WAS SO ANXIOUS!
I WAS AFRAID THAT...
I'M SO RELIEVED!

GEORG

I WANTED YOU TO KNOW!

AMALIA

(Overlapping)

I PRAYED THAT IT WAS YOU!

GEORGE

(Overlapping)

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE GUESSED!

AMALIA

(Overlapping)

TO TELL THE TRUTH,

GEORG, AMALIA

I COULDN'T WAIT ANOTHER DAY!

(THEY embrace as snow falls and the Christmas lights sparkle.)

CURTAIN)

#57 *She Loves Me Bows* (Orchestra)

#58 *Thank You Bows* (Company)

COMPANY

THANK YOU, THANK YOU,
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN.
GLAD THAT YOU CAME.
FOND FARE-THEE-WELL.
THANK YOU, THANK YOU,
PLEASE, CALL AGAIN,
DO CALL AGAIN,
WON'T YOU.

#59 *Exit Music* (Orchestra)

THE END