

PROLOGUE

The theatre is dark. A voice from the stage addresses the waiting audience.

MAN

I hate theatre. Well, it's so disappointing, isn't it? You know what I do when I'm sitting in a darkened theatre waiting for the show to begin? I pray. Oh, dear God, please let it be a good show. And let it be short, oh Lord in heaven, please. Two hours is fine, three hours is too much. And keep the actors out of the audience...God. I didn't pay good money to have the fourth wall come crashing down around my ears. I just want a story, and a few good songs that will take me away. I just want to be entertained. I mean, isn't that the point? Amen.

(pause)

You know there was a time when people sat in darkened theatres and thought to themselves, "What have George and Ira Gershwin got for us tonight?" Or "Can Cole Porter pull it off again?" Can you imagine? Now it's, "Please, Elton John, must we continue this charade?" It used to be, sitting there in the dark, you knew that when the show began you would be taken to another world, a world full of color and music and glamour. And you thought to yourself, "My God. When are they going to bring up the lights?"

(lights up)

Oh, how things have changed. Hello. How are we today? I'm feeling a little blue myself. You know, a little anxious for no particular reason, a little sad that I should feel anxious at this age, you know, a little self-conscious anxiety resulting in nonspecific sadness: a state that I call "blue". Anyway, whenever I'm feeling this way, blue, I like to listen to my music. So, I was going through my records this morning – yes, records – and I was about to put on the sound track recording of Meredith Willson's THE MUSIC MAN. I had a craving for a young Ronny Howard. But then I said "No! Let's have a treat! Let's disappear for a while into the decadent world of the 1920's. When the champagne flowed while the caviar chilled and all the world was a party" – for the wealthy anyway. So, I dug about and what did I find –

(extracting a record)

– but one of my favorite shows Gable and Stein's "The Drowsy Chaperone;" Remember? Music by Julie Gable, lyrics by Sidney Stein. It's a two record set, remastered from the original recording made in 1928. It's the full show with the original cast including Beatrice Stockwell as the Chaperone. Isn't she elegant? And this is a full 15 years before she became Dame Beatrice Stockwell. Can you believe it? Let me read to you what it says on the back – it says "Mix-ups, mayhem and a gay wedding!" Of course the phrase gay wedding has a different meaning now, but back then it just meant fun. And that's just what the show is – fun. So. Would you... would you indulge me? Would you let me play the record for you now? I was hoping you would say yes.

He puts the record on the record player. He places the needle.

(MAN)

You hear that static? I love that sound. To me, it's the sound of a time machine starting up.

The overture begins.

#1 – Overture

Alright now, let's visualize. Imagine if you will, it's November 1928. You've just arrived at the doors of the Morosco Theatre in New York. It's very cold – remember when it used to be cold in November? Not anymore. November's the new August now. It's global warming – we're all doomed – anyway... It's very cold and a heavy grey sleet is falling from the sky but you don't care because you're going to see a Broadway show! Listen!

(He settles back and listens for a moment)

Isn't this wonderful?

(He listens)

It helps if you close your eyes.

(He listens)

A kettle on the stove begins to whistle. MAN runs over to the stove and dances while he makes himself a cup of tea.

Overtures. Overtures are out of style now. I miss them. It's the show's way of welcoming you. "Hello, welcome. The meal will be served shortly, but in the meantime, would you like an appetizer?" That's what an overture is, a musical appetizer. A Pu-pu platter of tunes, if you will.

(He listens)

Oh! Something new! What could it be? Sounds like a dance tune. Kind of rollicking. Maybe involving pirates! Don't worry. There are no pirates.

He runs back to his chair as the music segues from a mono recording to a live orchestra.

Now. Here it comes. The moment when the music starts to build and you know you're only seconds away from being transported.

The overture builds to it's conclusion.

The curtain is going up. I can't wait!

#1a – Opening Scene

SCENE 9: INTERMISSION MONOLOGUE

The curtain falls. The man remains on stage.

MAN

And that's that. The curtain falls, and it's time for the intermission. At least it would be, if we were actually sitting in the Morosco Theatre watching *The Drowsy Chaperone*, which of course, we are not. I don't like intermissions. They ruin the magic, you know? They yank you back into reality. One moment you're lost in a glamorous world of music and romance, and then, bang, you're surrounded by tourists. Crinkling candy wrappers and nattering about the lack of women's restrooms. It's cruel.

(takes out a Powerbar and starts eating)

Oh, it's a Powerbar. I have a bit of a blood sugar issue. I have to eat small meals all day long or I get jittery. I know it's rude, but you wouldn't like the alternative believe you me. Believe you me.

(he changes the record)

I remember my wedding day. I didn't eat breakfast and the ceremony wasn't until four in the afternoon. Aaaaah! I do, I do! Are you surprised that I was married? Well, there you are: you shouldn't go making assumptions about people, should you? I'm a very complicated person. I have to pee now. I'll be quick, I promise, and while I'm gone, you can listen to the beginning of Act two.

(disappears behind the curtain)

SCENE 14: JANET'S BRIDAL SUITE—LATE AFTERNOON

MAN

Yes, that was charming, but to be frank, on some level, that number pisses me off. Now, I'm going to say something here, and yes I have been drinking, but I am going to go out on a limb here and say that love is not always lovely in the end. Often, in the end, there are lawyers. And another thing—and another thing—surely someone was aware of the awkward sexual connotation of that title? Love is always lovely in the end? I mean, is it just me? I guess what I'm saying is that number is naive. And irresponsibly so. Sorry. I just thought that needed to be said for the benefit of the young people.

#14a - Incidental

I won't interrupt anymore. Oh! There's a moment coming up that I've become obsessed with.

JANET

There you are. Oh, Chaperone, I'm in a terrible state.

DROWSY

You certainly are. You can't go to the wedding looking like that.

JANET

Oh, you poor Dear. Haven't you heard? The wedding's been called off.

DROWSY

Not your wedding. Mine. Oh! That reminds me. Might I borrow your veil?

JANET

You're getting married? But, to whom?

Aldolpho enters in a bathrobe, singing.

ALDOLPHO

La la la la la.

(notices JANET)

Ah, beautiful lady with baffled expression.

JANET

You're marrying Aldolfo?

DROWSY

I know it's surprising, but when I look into his eyes, his big, clumsy eyes, I get all drowsy. And that's love, isn't it?

ALDOLPHO

(to DROWSY)

Yes, dear. That is love.

ROBERT

BOLD FEETS

GEORGE

WHAT DO I DO—SCOLD FEETS?

ROBERT

NOOOOO!

YOU MAKE 'DA COLD FEETS HOT

ROBERT begins a tap dance routine. GEORGE joins in.
George! Look at you! You're dancing!

GEORGE

I am? I am!

GEORGE does an impressive tap turn.

*The tap routine builds. UNDERLING Enters with a tray and two glasses of water.
Serves ROBERT and GEORGE and Exits.*

ROBERT & GEORGE

Five, six, seven, eight..

COLD FEETS COLD FEETS

TURN 'EM INTO BOLD FEETS

RHYTHM MAKE 'DEM COLD FEETS HOT

YOU MAKE DA COLD FEETS HOT

YOU MAKE DA COLD FEETS HOT

YOU MAKE DA COLD FEETS HOT

YOU MAKE DA COLD FEETS HOT

MAN

Percy Hyman was a wonderful performer. I like to think of him panting and sweating after a long dance routine. He's still alive, you know. I saw him on the news recently "celebrating" his 100th birthday. To say that the passing years had taken their toll on him, would be a grotesque understatement. They wheeled him out and he had that wide-eyed expression of pained confusion that God reserves for the very, very old on their birthdays. You know, the one that says "Who are you, who am I and why is this cake on fire?" You know what I'm talking about? Anyway.

GEORGE

Alright, alright. That's enough of that. Dancing around like a fool.

ROBERT

Sorry, George. I was just trying to calm my nerves. It is my wedding day after all.

GEORGE

Well, you could've snapped an ankle. Tap dancing is too dangerous. Why don't you go out for a skate instead? That's what I do when it want to blow off some steam.

JANET

ABOVE
IS IT THE MONKEY OR MY PEDESTAL
I LOVE

CHORUS

AH, AH,
MONKEY ON A PEDESTAL

MAN

Don't you just love that number? It has everything: a little Busby Berkeley; a little Jane Goodall. And that's another thing I love about musicals in general. When a character is in crisis they sing and they dance. Which is so much more interesting than just whining about it. But that's the glory of musical theatre -

Phone rings.

Oh! Oh! You see? This is what I'm talking about. This is life. You manage to be happy for five seconds and then something starts ringing!