

Tom Petiet's

CHAPTER *and Worse!*

MADventures in Good Music

THE COMIC OPERA GUILD

Chapter and Worse a musical comedy written by Ann Arbor's Tom Petiet, debuted in 1986, performing in Ann Arbor and on tour, and was quickly recognized as an exceptionally clever musical parody, recalling shows like *Beyond the Fringe*, and names like Peter Schickele, Tom Lehrer, Monty Python and Mel Brooks.

Showcasing the comic talents of its cast, Chapter and Worse consists of seven scenes in wildly different settings, from Shakespeare to prehistoric Africa. The music is by well-known collaborators such as Tchaikovsky, Chopin and Verdi, as well as Comic Opera Guild regulars Offenbach and Sullivan. People will undoubtedly recognize most of the melodies, but the lyrics have been altered to fit the story line.

Related to a musical revue, which uses existing music, this show also resembles sketch comedy. Each audience member will undoubtedly be able to single out one scene as their favorite. In the show's first run in 1986, audiences were remarkably varied in their choices, leading one to believe that whatever people bring to the show will amplify their enjoyment of it.

Like *Sugar Babies*, which contains music from the 20's and 30's, a revue can focus on the music of an era, or it can treat themes, as did the Broadway adaptation of Studs Terkel's *Working*, which featured music of different occupations. In Chapter and Worse the music is drawn mainly from opera and operetta, the strong suit of Comic Opera Guild, but other sources include ballet, piano compositions, symphonies and madrigals. The story includes parodies on Shakespeare, opera, gangster movies, paleontology and ballet.

CHAPTER AND WORSE

CAST ASSIGNMENTS

Eight principals take on a different character in each scene. The narrator is unchanging.

SCENE	CHARACTER	SCENE	CHARACTER
	LOVE INTEREST (soprano)		ANTI-HERO (baritone)
1	Chava Niceday	1	Fenster Blande
2	Rowena	2	Hugh of Fenster
3	Mimi	3	Fenestrino
4	Amy Sue	4	Ralph
5	Lucy Australopithecus	5	Homo Erectus
6	Omelette	6	The Hunter
7	Chava Niceday	7	Fenster Blande
	LADY 1 (mezzo)		MAN 1 (baritone)
1	Sally Mander	1	Jerry Mander
2	Page/Madrigal Singer	2	King Henry/Madrigal Singer
3	Cherubeano	3	Scarpo
4	Mrs. Buffles	4	Officer Clancy
5	Not involved	5	Homo Habilis
6	Albatross	6	Flight Controller
7	Sally Mander	7	Jerry Mander
	LADY 2 (mezzo)		MAN 2 (tenor)
1	Anna Conda	1	Rex Holmes
1	The Old Lady	2	Westexeterchestershire
2	Puck/Madrigal Singer	3	Rexo
3	Mama Lucia	4	Bugs
4	Zelda	5	Homo Sapiens
5	Not involved	6	Airplane
6	Omafox	7	Rex Holmes
7	Anna Conda		
	LADY 3 (mezzo)		MAN 3 (tenor)
1	Gert Dirt	1	Bert Dirt
1	Mrs. DaMark	2	Knave/Madrigal Singer
2	Rattle/Madrigal Singer	3	Enrico
3	Opera Prompter	4	The Boss
4	Annabella Morgan	5	Africanis Afarensis
5	Not involved	6	Airplane
6	Albatross	1	Bert Dirt
1	Gert Dirt		

INTRODUCTION

SCENE 1: *The living room of Mrs. Damark's boarding house.*

Tableau: Bert and Gert eating at table; Sally and Jerry seated at couch; Rex and Anna watching TV. Fenster sits by himself, in center, reading.

NARRATOR: It is a typical day at the boarding house of Mrs. Damark, an elderly lady fortunate in the possession of facilities, if not faculties. Let's meet these characters, close-up and personal.

(He moves to the person nearest his podium) This is Miss Anna Conda, a single lady possessed of business acumen and an unpleasant personality *(she twitches slightly)*, all blended under a veneer of superior politeness. Her competitor, this evening, for viewing time, is the handsome Rex Holmes *(he smiles)*, a ladies' man whose best lines have been in reruns for years *(smile disappears)*.

(Moves To Sally And Jerry) Over here, Sally and Gerry Mander; he a hard-driving, hard drinking bagger at the A & P, and she, the woman destined by God to constantly remind him of the fact.

(Moves to Bert and Gert) At the table we find, to our discomfort, Bert Dirt, a genuinely disagreeable fellow whose appetite for food and crude are legendary. When he is not eating, his other bodily functions become more apparent. His twin sister, Gert, has an equal appetite, not for food, but for men, a hunger which she is singularly ill-equipped to satisfy.

(Returns to Fenster) Finally we come to our hero, Fenster Blande, a quiet fellow who assigns Dewey Decimal numbers at the Public Library. Fenster's role in life, and certainly it is considered so in this house, is to provide the nadir- the low mark... someone even people as miserable as this *(they all look at him)* can look down on *(they all nod)*. Poor Fenster *(he pats him on the back)*. He's really not a bad fellow, but he is burdened with a nervous system which directs his every action contrary to accepted practice. Now the years of scorn and ridicule have had their toll *(Fenster starts to cry, Narrator gives him a hankie)*. He has retreated into the fantasy life of his books, like this one... *(he looks at it)*. Hmmm. "Little Women" *(swats Fenster, throws book back at him, walks away)*

Perhaps the best thing to do is to skip the next scene, which shows the abuse that Fenster must endure each and every day, and skip directly to the scene where...

(Fenster blows his nose noisily in hankie. Gives it back to Narrator)

No, damn it... let's see it.

NO. 1 THE NERD SONG - Sextet: Jerry, Sally, Rex, Anna, Bert, Gert

JERRY I want to watch another station!
SALLY You make a move, you'll face castration!
 Why aren't you looking for a job?
JERRY I'd rather find a bank to rob!
SALLY I think I should have married Bob!
BERT How come there are no more potatoes?
GERT Don't you remember, you just ate those?
ANNA I think it's time for arbitration.
REX I want to find another station
SALLY I really could have married Bob!
JERRY With you it's always sob, sob, sob.
ANNA Don't turn that dial! (Yes, I'll turn that dial!)
BERT/ GERT Don't touch that dial, your taste is vile
ANNA I pay good rent, You must consent
SALLY Oh, life might have held success, if to Bob I had said "yes."
 But no, I married you, and my chances out I threw.
JERRY Holy bejeezes!
 Oh, now I'm getting aggravated!
REX I'm changing channels as I've stated
ANNA You change it now and be castrated.
SALLY Why don't you tell me that you love me?
JERRY If God can hear way up above me...
SALLY Why can't you make some decent money?
JERRY The way you treat me isn't funny.
ALL I'm so upset I want to scream! Ugh!
 I'm so upset I want to scream!

(They notice Fenster, aside, reading a book, ignoring them)

JERRY Say, look what's sitting over there... just look at Fenster in that chair.
SALLY Look at his socks! Look at his book!
GERT/ANNA Can you believe he's really such a schnook?
REX/BERT He looks just like I've heard a nerd should look!
ALL Oh, look! A schnook!
 Ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh what a nerd.
 The sight is really too absurd.
 Ha, ha, ha, ha! Is there a word
 to quite describe this bookish bird?

 Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a schlemil!
 My scorn I fear I can't conceal.
 Ha, ha, ha, ha! What do I feel?
 I must admit my joy is real.

JER I think I feel better now!
REX I feel very good somehow!
ANNA/GERT Fenster we are thankful to
ALL For laughing at him has made us feel good.
BERT Tho' there's no more food to eat...
GERT Needling Fenster is a treat.
ALL For our ills the joy complete is ridicule, oh how sweet.
ANNA/REX No need to quarrel any more.
SAL/JERRY A truce to our domestic war.
GERT And even Bert is more polite...
BERT And Gert's a much more pleasant sight.
Don't you agree?
ALL We do agree! He's such a nerd!
Ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh what a nerd.
The sight is really too absurd.
Ha, ha, ha, ha! Is there a word
to quite describe this bird?
REX His feet... so flat!
ANNA And that cravat!
GERT No form or grace.
SALLY He's out of place.
REX And such a bore...
ANNA we can't ignore.
JERRY When he is here...
SALLY we disappear.
Enough! Enough!
BERT My belt will break!
REX Enough! Enough!
JERRY My sides they ache.
SALLY With glee I quake. He's such a flake.
ALL He's such a flake.
Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a schlemil!
My scorn I fear I can't conceal.
Ha, ha, ha, ha! What do I feel?
I must admit my joy is real.
BERT I think I feel better now!
JERRY I feel very good somehow!
REX Fenster we are thankful to,
ALL For laughing at him has made us feel good.
Oh yes, we feel very good! Very good!

END OF NO. 1

(At end of #1, all exit laughing, except Fenster, who remains seated)

NARR. Since this happened regularly every day, Fenster took but little notice of the proceedings, and continued to read his book. But now who should enter but the little bank teller, Chava Niceday. Oh, she was young, beautiful, innocent, *(she reacts)* and all the other things a really nice girl should be. She even noticed Fenster from time to time, which only a nice person would have done.

(during this narration, Fenster has been talking to Chava in mime, she oblivious)

CHA; Did you say something?

FEN: I... I said... no, nothing.

CHA: Oh. I thought you said something.

FEN: Thank you. It's nice of you to say that.

CHA: You're welcome.

FEN: *(after a long pause)* I did.

CHA: I beg your pardon?

FEN: I actually did say something.

CHA: Oh. That's nice. *(pause)* What?

FEN: Well, uh, I said, uh. ...

MRS: *(entering)* Oh, well, hello, my dears. Did everyone have enough to eat?

FEN: Dinner was two hours ago, Missus...

MRS: Oh? Uh, it was? Oh. Well, yes. What have I been doing? I guess I should remove the dooshes. Uh, room the demeeshes... uh, doom the reeshes... uh, deem the rooshes... uh, clean up.

CHA: Bert's not done yet, Missus.

MRS: Bert? Oh, good. How are you doing, dear?

BERT: *(with full mouth)* Browegemashuberingtoomallwhenitasberbla.

MRS.: Thank you, dear. Your sister is lovely, too.

ANNA: Mrs. Damark?

MRS: Ah, buh... ah, buh... ah, what ?

ANNA: Mrs. Damark, I have a complaint!

MRS: A what? A complaint? Oh, dear! Oh, my... I just don't know, a what? Oh, I just can't imagine what's wrong. I just can't. Ah, buh, ah, buh, oh? Ah, ah, what is it?

ANNA: There's not enough heat in my room. I'm always cold!

BERT: That's for sure. Ha, ha!

ANNA: *(Glares at him)* Well?

MRS: Well? Oh. Well, I, uh, I'll call the canister... uh... haul the bannister... uh... stall the janitor... uh... turn it up!

ANNA: Well, see that you do, or I'll withhold my rent for every hour it's not. I don't know why I stay here anyway.

BERT: Because it's cheap!

ANNA: Ooh! All these creeps and perverts, *(to Chava)* And I certainly don't understand why you stay here at all! *(looks directly at Fenster)* You could certainly do better! *(huffs at Bert as she leaves)*

(there is an uncomfortable pause as Fenster works up his courage again.)

FEN: Chava?

CHA: Did you say something?

FEN: I wanted to say...

CHA: Oh, yes, you wanted to say...

FEN: I wanted to say...

GRAN: HEY! *(calling from offstage)*

CHA: What?

FEN: I wanted to say...

GRAN: HEY!

CHA: What?

FEN: What?

CHA: You said HEY!

FEN: What?

GRAN: HEY!

CHA: Hey?

FEN: That's not me. That's her.

CHA: Who?

GRAN: Hey!

FEN: Her.

CHA: Her?

GRAN: HEY!

FEN: Her.

CHA: Oh.

GRAN: Somebody open this damn door! Who keeps closing this damn door? (*Fenster crosses, opens the door*) About time. (*enters*) You close that door? Who the hell did, then? I can't go thru closed doors. Why do you keep that door closed? Always keeping doors closed nowadays. In my day they didn't close doors all the time. Didn't have any doors. Wouldn't a closed 'em if we'd a had 'em. Young people today...

What were you doin' in here that you had to close the door?
Don't know what the world's comin' to...

FEN: Yes ma'am.

GRAN: People always doin' things nowadays. Things! Didn't do things in my day. Life was simpler then. Didn't have to do things all the time. Wasn't nothing to do anyways. And we were better off for it, that's for sure. Good thing I won't be around to see things like that much longer... (*continues to mutter as she makes his way glacially across the room to the TV, then exits R*)

FEN: Chava, I was going to say that... you know...

CHA: Yes? Oh, excuse me. (*she gets up to find another magazine*)

FEN: (*following*) I mean, I was hoping that you and I might...

CHA: Oh, here's one I haven't read. Have you read this article? It's about the chances of falling in love with a DOCTOR.

FEN: No, no... *(they sit on the couch again, only to notice that Bert has sat there. He slouches, drinking a beer)* Can I talk to you for a minute? I've been wanting to talk to you about... *(Bert is watching)* Do you mind? *(Bert looks away)* I wanted to say that I admire you very much and I've been wanting to ask you something for a long time. I really think you're pretty, you know. I like the way you toss your head when you walk, and you have this wonderful way of... *(Bert snickers)* Could we be alone for a few minutes?

BERT: What?

FEN: I was just wondering if we couldn't have a few minutes alone, if you don't mind.

BERT: Oh, I make you nervous, huh? Sure, pal... *(he gets up, goes behind them)*

FEN: What was I saying?

CHA: I don't know...

FEN: Oh, yes, you're wonderful and I like you very much and I just wanted to say... *(Bert belches)*

CHA: What?

FEN: *(trying to ignore him)* I just wanted to say, uh, are you real busy tonight?
(Bert mimicks him from behind)

CHA: Well, as a matter of fact...

FEN: Oh, sure, I knew it. It was too sudden. I didn't give you enough notice. That's old impulsive me... How about... *(notices Bert, who looks away)* How about Saturday?

CHA: Saturday? Well, Saturday I...uh... I'm meeting a friend and we're going...uh... bowling.

FEN: Oh, gosh, do you like bowling? I've never been, but I'd love to learn. Maybe some day *(sees Bert again)* you... *(looks again)* Just a minute, please. *(Fenster goes into kitchen, reappears with food and puts it on the table, making attraction noises to Bert.)*

(Chava, meanwhile, has gotten up and gone unnoticed to sit by the TV, while Gert has taken her place. Fenster returns to couch while watching Bert eat)

What do you say we go bowling?

GERT: Oh, sure, wow! I love bowling. We can go tonight. It's my league night and all the girls can meet you. We'll make a great team. *(she grabs him)*

FEN: Oh, uh, I'm sorry. I, uh...

GERT: I'll get my ball! *(she runs out)*

FEN: *(seeing Chava by the TV)* Hi. It's me again.

CHA: Oh, hi. Did you ever see this show? It's about DOCTORS...

FEN: Uh, no... I was just trying to figure out when we might get together. How about...

GRAN: HEY!

CHA: What?

FEN: How about...

GRAN: HEY!

CHA: Hey what?

FEN: Just a minute... *(opens door at right)*

GRAN: Closed the door again, eh?

FEN: No sir, I just...

GRAN: Young people always closin' doors. I can't open doors. Keep it open. You watchin' TV? I want to watch my program. Now I suppose I'll have to miss it because I couldn't get here in time because some damn fool closed the door...

CHA: No, no, no, you go ahead. I've seen it before. *(Grandma fiddles with TV and chair)*

FEN: Let's sit over here. *(they go over to the couch again. Now Jerry has settled down, reading a paper)* Oh, no... Oh, well. *(they sit)* Anyway, how about Monday night? We could...

CHA: Oh, look! I've got to see this movie- DOCTOR Strangelove.

FEN: I've seen it. How about... *(Jerry shakes his paper madly, interrupting Fenster, who tries to start again, but Jerry continues to fight with his paper. Finally, after some false stops, the paper is quiet)*

FEN: What was I saying?

CHA: I don't know. Something about a doctor?

FEN: No... I don't know. I guess it must be that being here, sitting next to you, I can't think about anything but you. *(he gets closer, but Chava is now reading the back of Jerry's paper)* Maybe we could spend a quiet evening at...

SAL: *(entering)* Jerry! Are you .looking at the help wanteds?

JER: Yes, dear.

SAL: No, you're not! That's the sports section! Oh, I don't know what's the matter with you-- I suppose you like being a bagger.

JER: Oh, now don't start that again.

SAL: *(coming behind Fenster and Chava)* Do you know anybody else that's married to a bagger?

CHA: I didn't think beggars could marry.

JER: Bagger! Bagger!

SAL: Do you know how embarrassing it is when somebody asks you what your husband does?

JER: Actually I'm in packaging. A containment engineer.

SAL: Yes, some big shot! Making \$81.40 a week so we can live here. How does it feel when I can't invite my friends for a visit?

JER: It feels good. *(gets up)*

SAL: Where are you going?

JER: I need to lie down.

SAL: If you're not bagging, you're sleeping. That's why you never get anywhere.

JER: I don't want to get anywhere. I want to lie down.

SAL: Don't you ever want to be something?

JER: Yes. Asleep.

SAL: What will your son think of you?

JER: He'll think "Dad's asleep." Come on, Sally, will you leave me alone?

SAL: My mother was right. I never should have married you. You don't love me.

JER: Your mother was never right. I do love you. I dream about you all the time.

SAL: *(softening)* You do?

JER: Sure. I always dream when something doesn't agree with me. *(she leaves in a huff. He follows, apologizing)*

FEN: I can't stand this! How can romance flourish in a place like this? It's not possible...

REX: *(entering)* Hey, all you little people, what's happening. Dull night on TV, huh?

CHA: There was this program about DOCTORS...

REX: Looks like Grandma's got a lock on it.

(Attention turns to Chava)

Say, you're the new girl in the house, aren't you?

No. 2 DUET *(Rex begins by singing first refrain. Chava replies with intro.recit. Pause for dialogue)*

REX Ah, I adore, I adore to gaze upon your features.
 More, more and more,
 I look forward to a chance to meetcha.
 You've got a face that I just have to kiss.
 What's a girl like you doing
 In a place such as this?
 I want to hold you hand in mine, dear...
 I bet we have the same sign, dear.
 For I adore, I adore to gaze upon your features.
 More, more and more,
 I look forward to a chance to greetcha.
 Your face is divine, love.
 Your place or mine, love.
 Let's be in love tonight
 All night.

(Chava, gets up moves to center)

CHAVA I don't know. I don't know, I don't know...
 There's a doubt within my heart.
 If I really want to go
 I'm not so sure it's smart.
 There's a word that I first must hear
 Before I can say "yes" to you.
 For that word I would wait patiently many years
 It will come very soon.

REX *(spoken)* Where have you been all my life?"
 We were made for each other, baby.
 Before I met you, I didn't know what love was.
 Aw, c'mon, give me room to operate!
 How about a night on the town
 With the old DOCTOR, eh?

CHAVA DOCTOR? Did you say DOCTOR?

(music continues)

BOTH Ah, I adore, I adore to gaze upon your features.
 More, more and more,
 I look forward to a chance to meetcha.
 We could be in for an evening of bliss
 That's not a night I am willing to miss.
 I bet we have the same sign, dear.
 For I adore, I adore to gaze upon your features.
 More, more and more,
 I look forward to a chance to greetcha.
 Your face is divine, love.
 Your place or mine, love.
 Let's be in love tonight
 All night.

END OF SONG

CHA: Oh, let's go! Let's go! I'd love to go! And I want to see your office, too! And the place
 where you operate!

REX: Great. I've got a bottle of Chianti and two glasses in the car. Why don't we both slip into
 something stylish? I know this sweet dancing place...

CHA: I'll be right there. Bye, Fenster... nice talking to you. *(they run out, hand in hand)*

FEN: Why? Why? Why is my soul imprisoned in this form... in this time? I should have been
 born in the days of yore, the glorious days of romance, when a knight had but to say
 to a lady...

GRAN: HEY! *(still teetering , trying to sit)* Give me a hand.

FEN: ...The days of yore, when I would have kissed her hand, looked deeply into milady's eyes
 and said...

GRAN: HEY!

FEN: ...and she would have said...

GRAN: HEY!

FEN: *(becoming upset)* ...and she would have...

GRAN: HEY!

FEN: AAAAAAHHHHH! *(Fenster falls insensible)*

BLACKOUT

NARR: Thus did Fenster Blande, strained to the breaking point, leave for a time, his world of troubles and enter his world of dreams; the world of his books. Come with us now into this strange environment, where life is as men have written it.

Can Fenster find romance in the world of literature? Can his tremendous shortcomings be erased as easily as the written word? Will he find...

GRAN: HEY!

CHAPTER TWO: IN A SHAKESPEARE SCENE

Scene: A king and his knave discovered in Elizabethan costumes, along with a strolling group of Madrigal singers.

No. 3 Madrigal: SIDNEY AND JANET - Quintet: Rowena, Page, Puck, King, Knave

Sidney and Janet
took love for granted
Fa, la, la , la

No time they wasteth
Rapture soon hasteth
And in full measure
Took they their pleasure
Fa, la, la , la

All things delight them
None do requite them
Fa, la, la , la

No condoms packing
Care were they lacking
Soon a new treasure
Cost them their leisure
Fa, la, la , la

NARR: Ah, good choice, Fenster. His dreams have transported him to the time of Will Shakespeare, when flowery tongues won the day.

KING; How, now, knave, knowest nothing, thou nattering nobby? Nay, name it not, neither now, nor never, for never is nigh to nothingness, knave, or I know it not. Quickly, to horse, lest the Norse force enter the borse, of course, of course. Tell gentle York to take the left fork to Cork, so that the Duke, thru no sudden fluke, strike, and in striking be not by stroke of luck struck.

PAGE; (*confused*) Aye, majesty, or I stand stultified.

NARR: Of course, life wasn't easy then, what with everyone trying to understand what everyone else was saying... but it was a time of expensive clothes and that made up for a lot of it. The social classes were very distinct at this time: the status of a person was directly proportional to the length of his speeches. This was, in part, due to the fact that the upper classes knew more words.

KNA: *(Entering)* Your majesty, a scurrilous knave bids an audience.

KING: Marry, and who should scurrilous be, save one who by dint of scur, or by scurrying curlike, did seek succor from his sovereign, or did curry care from his king, caring not if his comportment did clash with the current cravings of the court

KNA: What?

KING: Send him in.

KNA: Oh.

RAT: Arr, yer highness, and I have somethin' for yer ears or Rattle is not my name.

KING: Ah, good Rattle. Thou who hast girded his loins in my service is welcome to lay his thrice-tortured conscience before me on aught which has caused him anguish, save that which would cause anguish in his lord, as well he knows. Lay on, man, and tarry not!

RAT: Do that mean I can speak, milord? *(King nods)* Arr! Well then, sire, I have come upon a letter writ by a sartain gallant to Miss Rowena, which I knows would be of interest to yer Highness.

KING: Zounds! Ods bodikins! Let mine eyes attend the violating' sheepskin... the scurrilous scroll. Rapscallions' He proclaims his love, and he not worthy to mention her name in breaths that emanate fulsome from his hottened heart. Fain, his words do ferry themselves about like a bloated bladder prick'd upon a table. His smooth words do slide like oiled eels upon a salver of sow's lard well mix'd with sweet porridge as I am lief to lay mine tongue to on a summer's day smothering in sweltering soddenness, sickening as sundry swoggles.

RAT: Arr, that goes fer me belike, sire, that do.

KING: Come, varlet, we must proceed to unman him and impale the rascal upon the gusset of his arduous ardor, or I know not what.

RAT: Aye, and I'll smack 'im flat, arr, that I will. *(they exit)*

ROW: *(entering)* Oh, woe is me, oh, woe is me, most miserable of maidens. I cannot find his letter. I am lost.

No. 4 SHE LOST A LETTER- Rowena

ROWENA *(carrying letter aloft)*
 1. She had a letter from her love
 And on her heart she laid it
 T'was all in rhyme and Father Time
 She vowed could never fade it
 Ah!
 Ah, me! Ah, me! A lover's vow,
 She knowest better now.

(drops letter on ground)
 2. She lost the letter from her love
 or somebody did steal it
 And, oh! The smart in her poor heart
 She vowed that naught could heal it.
 Ah!
 Ah, me! Ah, me! A lover's vow,
 She knowest better now.

(steps on letter)
 3. She found the letter from her love
 When she had sorely missed it
 Despite the stain of mud and rain
 She fondled it and kissed it *(kisses it)*
 Ah!
 Ah, me! Ah, me! A lover's vow,
 She knowest better now.

END OF SONG

PUCK: *(entering, having a donkey's head)* Fair maiden! I am Puck and I bring you word of your love.

ROW: I beg your pardon. You what?

PUCK: I said, I bring you word of your love, if you would hear it.

ROW: Oh, I beg your pardon, I misunderstood you. I have seldom been addressed by such as you.

PUCK: I speak plainly. I am but a simple man.

ROW: Surely not, gentle Puck. But tell me what you know. Withhold nothing.

PUCK: The king has caught thy lover and is even now leading him to the block.

ROW: Heavens! Tis not a message one would have expected from such lips as thine. Make haste!
 I must seek my cousin to intercede for him. Let me upon you bestride.

PUCK: What?

ROW: As your head bespeaks your duty, let your back be the vehicle of his deliverance in carrying a maidenly appeal.

PUCK: One more time and I'll have it...

ROW: Let me mount you, you silly ass!

PUCK: Well, tis not prettily spoke, but t'will do, or my name is not...

ROW: Avaunt! *(she jumps on his back and they ride off.)*

(enter Hugh of Fenster, beloved of Rowena, in a sad procession, being escorted to the block by the King, Rattle, Knave and Page)

NO. 5 FARE THEE WELL - Dirge with Hugh, King, Knave, Rattle

HUGH Fare thee well, Rowena, fare thee well

PUCK, RAT. Fare thee well,

KING, GD. Fare thee well, Fare thee well.

HUGH Fare thee well, Rowena, fare thee well

PAGE, RAT. Fare thee well,.

KING, GD. Fare thee well, fare thee well.

PAGE. Fare thee well, fare thee well.

KING, GD. Fare thee well.

RAT. Fare thee well.

KING, GD. Fare thee well.

ALL Fare well, fare well.
Fare thee well, etc.

END OF SONG

(The block is put down, Hugh is forced to his knees, with his head placed on the block. The King is upset with Hugh sending love letters to Rowena. Rattle is preparing to lop Hugh's head off with a large axe.)

KING: I hereby sentence you, Hugh of Fenster, to deliver thyself to that great kingdom of the celestial being, giving the final quietude to thy earthly travail, and ours, from which no man, though hungered of opportunity, is likely to return to make of himself a nuisance, for the crime, simply put, of spilling wanton words, like milk, upon the feet of one whose sandals had ne'er known the damp of malefactory eloquence.

RAT: Do that mean I lop off his head? (*King nods*) Right. Off it go.

HUGH: Why me?

KING: Why you, Hugh? You knew, Hugh, that to woo you'd rue. Did you to woo eschew, Hugh? Nooo. So without ado, adieu to Hugh.

ROW: Stop! Yon uncle begs to speak.

KNA: The Earl of Westexeterchestershire.

NARR: Or, in the English tradition of shortening long, silly names...

KING: Shecky!

WEST: Aye, brother, 'tis I.
 Nor emollients, nor the distant dank beTide,
 Full suds the grime of humankind remove
 This life, seek not the Cheer of livelihood to chide
 And know that All does not his death behoove.
 When in the skies, the Comet spreads his tail,
 The smell is sweet, as Oxydol will know,
 And Zephyr Puffs to open full his Sail.
 We see that life stands forth through Ivory Snow;
 How deep the stains, how 'round about the ring
 That collars noble hearts, as Ajax felt of yore
 The whitest whites are not so much the thing
 As phosphors are Rinso that man make Bold his gore.
 Say not the words that cloud the Selsun Blue
 And stay the hands so Deft that pull the plug on Hugh.

(the King, overcome by Shecky's eloquence, belays the order to lop it off)

KNAVE; A sonnet!

PAGE: A sonnet!

RAT: Arr, he a sonnet somehow said.

KING: Well said, brother, and as eloquent ye be, that I full understood and comprehended thee.

HUGH: *(embracing)* Rowena!

ROW: Hugh!

KING: And well it is that so fine a voice as yours, sweet Shecky, did champion that rascal that so effusive writ, else roll'd his head from off his shaking shoulders sure, and loos'd his lurid liquors trickling to the trench, to quench at last his wenching thirst.

ALL: Hooray!

RAT: Arr. That I finally understood. Off it goes. *(raising axe)*

ALL: NO!

BLACKOUT, THEN CURTAIN

THE INTERMEZZO

NARR: *(calling into wing)* What do you mean “stall”? What am I going to do? What? *(suddenly to audience)* Oh... ladies and gentlemen... this is very embarrassing, but, well, the truth of the matter is... there is a big costume change before the next scene, and, you see, they haven't designed the show just right and there's not quite enough time, and so they've asked me to stall... uh, entertain you for a minute until they're ready. So... here goes. *(a long pause. He looks at his notes)* Oh.. I guess it's not in here. I'm not used to ad-libbing, *(another pause)* Oh. I used to know this joke... let's see, what's the punch line? *(turns around, working on it)* Okay, right. There was this drunk that goes into this bar... oh, you've heard it? NO? Well, this drunk... goes... no, it wasn't a bar, it was a ..wait! It wasn't a drunk, it was a kangaroo... anyway, this kangaroo walks into a... no, he would have hopped... anyway, he... no, it was a Tibetan monastery! Anyway, he hopped into this Tibetan monastery and... excuse me...*(goes into wings, pulls out a woman and whispers loudly to her)* Just for a minute. Just a MINUTE!

NO. 6 THE MINUTE WALTZ- Lady 1

Stop a minute. Just a little minute.
 How much time can there be in it?
 In a minute?
 There's no sin, it's only sixty seconds
 from when I begin it
 that I'll take to sing this waltz.
 I've got to sing it without any faults.
 You've go to give me credit
 And the better portion of a minute, just a minute,
 'cause again it's just a tiny little minute waltz.
 Altho' it's certainly not big at all,
 It's very difficult to finish.
 I must do it never, ever, ever stopping.
 If I take a breath, I'll certainly be flopping.
 So if you will give me your complete attention
 There won't be a word you will not hear me mention.

Now I'm sure it's not what Chopin had intended
 And I'm certain you'll be happy when I've ended.
 But I've only got a couple hundred words
 I absolutely have to say.

I'll be careful to be terribly emphatic
 And with luck I won't be horribly erratic.
 Now I hope you won't think I am rambling.
 And it's on my fine technique that I am gambling.
 If I dazzled all of you with perfect diction
 You won't separate the fact
 From all the fiction.
 And with any luck at all
 There's not a one of you
 Will wanna walk away.

Rapidly the time goes by,
 All too soon the minute waltzes by.
 The tempo now is very fine,
 But I'd better fly for I'm
 running out of time.

Less than half a minute, barely half a minute,
 Is the total left within it,
 Half a minute's all that's in it,
 That's the limit
 Not enough for me to sing each note
 within this little minute waltz.
 There's not a chance for any further halts.
 I'm not too sure that I can make it

For my brain is out of oxygen and giddy.
 I am out of breath and it is such a pity
 When you get so close it seems a shame to say
 You can't go on and faint away.
 Oh, my goodness, I have got a sudden notion
 That my second wind will keep my mouth in motion,
 Tho' there's little sense in what I may be saying,
 At this point I'm only holding on and praying.
 God, I hope my lungs can keep it up and manage
 Just to get me thru this song with minor damage.
 Now the end's in sight and
 Tho' I was so frightened,
 I have sung the minute waltz.

CHAPTER THREE – AT THE GRAND OPERA

NARR; Fenster blacks out again, his dream of primitive passion extinguished. Frustrated by the complexities he has encountered, he longs for a simple answer... a literary sanctuary where time is on his side, and he has a clear understanding of what is required to be truly happy. Can he find it?

Scene; *Mama Lucia, Scarpo, Rexo and Enrico are discovered*

NO. 7 OPENING – El Grillo non e importa (LA VESTALE) Mamma Lucia, Enrico, Scarpo, Mimi, Rexo

ENR., MAMA, SCAR. Un buon cantore, el grillo, el grillo

MIMI, CHER., REXO Ciel!

REXO Non credo el grillo e un buon cantore

MIMI Non e importa

REXO, SCA. Ma faccia tutte clamore.

MIMI Non importa da me

Quel sogetto non e importa da me

REXO E non conosco “O Sole Mio”

MIMI Io voglio cantare “O Sole Mio”

REXO Ed “I’m goin’ home to Santa Fe.”

SCA. Io credo el grillo e un buon contore

Ma faccia tutte clamore.

MIMI Non importa da me

ALL Ma el grillo,el grillo non e importa da me.

Da me, non importa da me,

Non importa, non importa da me, etc

NARR: Well, it appears we have made a wrong turn and landed in the world of grand opera. We can readily determine that it’s an exotic setting and that something important is going on. Of course, regardless of either of these considerations, it is sung in Italian.

No. 8 OPERA SCENE - Fenestrino, Mamma Lucia, Enrico, Scarpio Mimi, Rexo, Cherubeano

REX Si quel guerrierio fossi, grazia tanto di sposa
De gustibus non est disputandum. Come qual cosa?

FEN *(entering)* What?

SCAR. Basta! Dove la fnciulla con la body?

MIMI Mi chiamamo Mimi. Ma perche? Non so.

REXO Il mio tootsy!

SCAR No! Il mio! Non messa round la fanciulla del Scarpo!

REXO Non Piu!

SCAR Non piu!

REXO Pew!

SCAR Pew!

(They fight. Mama and Enrico get tired of the fighting and leave the stage to Fenestrino and Cherubeano. Rexo and Scarpo move the fight offstage and continue to make sword noise during the following recit.)

CHER La, la, la, etc. Why who are you, sir. I've not seen you around.

FEN My God! I can understand you.

CHER Naturally. I'm from a comic opera, and these are sometimes done in English.

FEN But, wait a minute. Why are we singing?

CHER That's the way it's always done here. But don't ask me why.

FEN *(hearing fight, he speaks)* What's going on here?

CHER I beg your pardon.

FEN *(spoken)* I said: What's going on here? What's going on here?
(realizing he has to sing) I said, what's going one here?

CHER That's better. For a minute, I couldn't understand you.
This is an operatic fight scene. It's really quite exciting.
The tenor and the baritone are fighting over the soprano.

FEN Really? I'm lookong for a girl myself.

CHER A soprano or a mezzo? It's best you be precise.
Are you by any chance a tenor?

FEN *(singing low note)* No.

CHER Then you get the mezzo.

(the fight ends with a scream. Rexo staggers in with a knife in his stomach)

REXO Mama, Mama! My belly... she feel so funny.
 E certo.... Oh gee! Musta been pizza with anchovies!
 Gotta get me some Pepto!
 Oh, Mama mia... not so hot idea.
 Instead o' walking... Ima sit right he-ah!

(others come in, looking at him)

Hey boy! Mama! Come closer.
 I feel so lousy. Ah! I feel lousy!
 Da me la medicina. Da me la medicina.
 I want dat Pepto Bismol!
 Gimme som Pepto! Gimme some Pepto! Some Pepto!
 Oh my good God, I wish you'd gimme dat Pepto.
 Some Pepto! Mama! Addio!

(Rexo does an exaggerated death scene. Accepts flowers from adoring fans before opera can continue)

FEN Oh my God! Is he dead?

CHER He is until tomorrow.
 Oh, but here comes the best part. His family's not too hspyy.

MAMA Ah, mia figlio. E morto!

ENRICO Holy cow! E morto.

MIMI Ah! E morto.

MAMA Morto.

ENRICO Ah! E morto!

MIMI *(does a run)* Ah! Morto!

ENRICO *(competing, he does run)* Ah! E morto!

MIMI *(does another run)* Ah! Morto!

ENRICO Ah! E morto!

MIMI *(does a run)* Ah! Morto!

(they enjoy it, and do a run together) Ah!

MAMA *(interrupting)* Can it!

ALL 3 Morto! Morto!

(Enrico screws up)

ENRICO Morto! *(Mama kicks him)* OW! My toe!

MIMI Mi chiamamo Mimi. Ma perche, non so!

MAMA Io domando la vendetta!

MIMI La vendetta!

ENRICO La Vendetta!

MAMA La Vendetta!

(nobody does anything)

MIMI Mi chiamamo Mimi Ma perche, non so!

FEN I'll do it ! I'll be the tenor. LA VENDETTA!

SCARPO *(entering)* E comico, e stupido! You crazy little guy.
E comico, e stupido! Non ferma ridere.
You really got a lotta gall, you crazy little guy.
Ha, ha, ha, ha! Now you can kiss your ass goodbye!

MIMI NO! Mi chiamamo mimi, and now I know why.

(Mimi starts coughing)

FEN *(weakly)* No...

REXO *(coming to life)* No, no, no! Like this)
(ala Boheme) MIMI!

BLACKOUT

(Singers, other than Fenestrino and Cherubeano, leave the stage. Then lights come up for curtain calls. Mimi is last, gets bouquet)

FEN I thought she died.

CHER Yes, it's the end. She's supposed to. She dies again tomorrow, in Lohengrin.

FEN Oh, no! I couldn't bear it again.

CHER If it makes you feel any better... it takes quite a bit longer.

FEN No! I must escape this convention and return to the dialog.
The rhyming is confining and my ears are, from singing, stinging.

CHER I'm afraid there's no solution.

FEN That's what you think. I have the answer.

(pulls out pistol, shoots accompanist)

CHE: *(spoken)* What have you done? What... My God, I'm talking! We can TALK!

ALL: Hooray!

CHE: You did it! We can all be normal now.

REXO: I don't have to die anymore!

MAM: I don't always have to be the mother!

SCAR: I don't always have to be the old guy.

CHE: No more recitative!

ENR: No more high notes!

REXO: *(suddenly concerned)* No more high notes?

MAM: No more low notes?

SCAR: No more cadenzas!

MIMI: No more CADENZAS?

REXO: *(sobbing)* No more quartets.

ENR: *(sobbing)* No more duets.

SCAR: *(sobbing)* No more SOLOS! *(they all break down)*

CHE; I wonder who would hire an eighteenth century comprimario?

FEN: *(taking Mimi's hand)* Never mind, darling. Now at least we can be happy. Now we can talk on equal terms without worrying about tessitura. Talk to me, darling... tell me you love me... tell me anything you want...

MIMI; *(stupidly)* My name is called Mimi. But why? I don't know.

BLACKOUT, END OF FIRST ACT

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DEPRESSION SCENE

NARR: Fenster's mind could have, without difficulty, set him down in any one of a dozen wonderful literary scenes. It might have been the time of King Arthur, or perhaps renaissance Florence, or at worst a Harlequin romance. Actually, I would have liked that. But no... where did that recalcitrant organ now deposit him? On a dismal street corner in one of the more depressing stories of the American Depression. If Eugene O'Neill had written a musical, this would be it.

SCENE: A street corner. To one side, people standing in a line. There is a single street lamp. A woman walks in, wearing dark glasses and carrying a trombone

#9 I AM CALLED ANNABELLA MORGAN - Annabella

ANNA I am called Annabella Morgan
Very needy and gettin' old
Something's wrong with my optic organ
And a coin is all I behold.

Music still, to my ear is charming.
Bringing forth vile misfortune's groan.
Ah... gently, thru poverty alarming
It sounds, my sweet my soft trombone.

Ah... gently, thru poverty alarming
It sounds, my sweet my soft trombone.
When I'm sad and lone, it sounds,
my sweet, my soft trombone.
Yes, gently sighs my soft trombone,
My soft trombone.

END OF SONG

ANNA: Pity the sorrows of a poor blind woman, who is not only blind, my friends, but is also deprived of sight.

BUF: *(carrying a white cane and cup full of pencils)* Hey, watch where you're goin'!

ANNA: Ain't you got no respect? Can't you see I'm blind?

BUF: 'Course not. What do you think I'm carryin' this for?

ANNA: How do I know?

BUF: Pity me, madam, for I am troubled in sight.

ANNA: That's nothing. I'm BLIND. Whaddaya sellin' there?

BUF: Why, these fine pencils. And I see you're sellin' old copper plumbin'.

ANNA: I'll have you know this is a fine musical instrument.

BUF: Sounded like old plumbin'.

ANNA: Are you castin' diversions on me, madam?

BUF: Not at all, for I see we are sisters in misfortune. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Mrs. Buffles.

ANNA: Anabella Morgan at your service. I'd shake your hand, but of course, I can't find it.

BUF: If you don't mind my asking, how did you lose your sight?

ANNA: It's a sad story. I was livin' in the lap o' luxury, den my husband died, chokin' on a snail.

BUF: A slow death.

ANNA: My husband left me everything, but I was an innocent young widow and the lawyers stole me blind! *(pause)* And how about you?

BUF: I was born blind. I never could see clear to makin' any money, but then I got a job drivin' a bus.

ANNA: Drivin' a bus? You?

BUF: Yeah. But the good times didn't last, 'cause then I lost my hearin'.

ANNA: You lost your hearin' too?

BUF: Yeah. Then I lost ev'rything in the crash.

#9 THE PLAINT *(intro begins)*

ANNA: Uh, oh! The factory's hirin'. Gotta get in line!

(They run into a forming line at back, including extras, Amy Sue and Ralphie. The boos appears, with a clipboard, inspecting the line with the intention of hiring someone))

#10 THE PLAINT *(continues)*

ALL Oh, help me! Oh,oh. I am in distress

ANNA *(spoken)* Misery.

BUFFLES Anguish!

RALPH Despair!

(music continues)

ALL Oh, oh! Save me, for life is just as mess.

ANNA I'm starving!

BUFF I'm freezing!

ANNA I have all misfortune, more or less!
Oh, take me first, take me. These others do ignore.

BUFF As you can plainly see, I deserve it more.

BOTH For I am very, very, very, very poor.

ANNA I am very, very, very...

BOTH ...very poor.
I'm very very, very very poor.

ALL YES, I'm very, very, very, very poor.

SONG ENDS

(Buffles is behind Ralph in line. She drops her cup. Ralph politely picks it up like a true gentleman. As he does, she takes advantage, changes places with him, and is now in front.)

BUFF: Oh, thank you sir. You are a true gentleman.

RALPH: Ma'am...

(seeing this, Annabella takes off her coat and drops it in front of Ralph, who picks it up. Same business)

ANNA: Why, thank you, sir. Thank you for taking pity on a poor woman.

RALPH: Think nothing of it.

ANNA: All right. *(tries to go around Buffles as well)*

BUFF: Hey, don't take advantage of a handicapped person.

ANNA: You're no such thing.

BUFF: Oh, yes... My hands shake so bad. I got a nerve problem.

ANNA: You got plenty of nerve. *(they continue to jostle)*

RALPH: *(to Amy)* Are you waiting in line?

AMY: *(smiles)* Uh, huh.

RALPH: I am too. Are you poor?

AMY: Everybody is poor. *(the entire line sighs in unison)*

RALPH: I guess that's right. Say, I got a quarter. Would you like to...

BOSS: *(coming out by the front of the line)* All right, listen up, you people! We got work for one person here. Who needs a job the worst?

AN & BU: Are you kiddin'?

BUFF: I'm broke!

ANNA: I'm broker!

BUFF: I'm blind!

ANNA: I'm blinder!

BUFF: I'm deaf!

ANNA: *(showing trombone)* I'm tone deaf!

BOSS: Yeah, that's really heart renderin'. *(looks at Buffles and Morgan.)*
(To Amy) I'll take you!

AMY: Gee, that's swell.

BOSS: Be here at 8:00 sharp tomorrow morning.

AMY: I don't know. That's kinda early for me.

(Anna and Buffles start to push in front of her)

BOSS: Don't worry about it, baby. You can be a little late. We'll just make it up after work.
 Heh, heh! *(exits)*

AMY: *(to Ralph)* Gee, I guess I got a job...

RALPH: *(dolefully)* That's a break for you, kid.

AMY: Yeah.

BUF: *(disdainfully)* Yeah.

ANNA: You dirty... *(Buffles restrains her from strangling Amy)*

ZELDA: *(entering, she has a black eye)* Ralphie... ya better scram! Bugs is lookin' for ya!

RALPH: For what?

ZELDA For talkin' to his new girlfriend.

RALPH: His new girlfriend?

ZELDA: Yeah. *(indicates Amy)* HER!

RALPH: Amy! You and Bugs? Oh, no!

AMY: Do you think I shouldn't go out with him? He does give me stuff.

RALPH: AMY!

AMY: Also he has a Duesenberg.

ZELDA: Yeah, he does.

RALPH: Well, I guess you'd have to, then.

ZELDA: Bugs thinks you been hangin' around her too much.

RALPH:: What? Five minutes?

ZELDA: That's too much.

RALPH:: But I thought you were his girlfriend.

ZELDA: Yeah. I am.

RALPH: But how can you stay with him when he does things like this?

(Indicates Amy, who reacts)

And this! *(indicates her black eye)*

ZELDA: Oh, I guess I'm just a one-man woman, Ralphie. Yeah, that's it. A one-man woman. I saw him kicking that Chinaman and I said, "that's my guy," Ralphie. I don't know why. Something just snapped inside me. Or maybe inside the Chinaman. I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong to love him, Ralphie, but I think he still loves me, ya know? Yeah. Oh, it used ta bother me when he ignored me, or when he cleaned his gun on my dress. And at first I didn't like it when he wanted me to be a hat rack... but now, ya know, I'm kinda used to that corner of the room. It's my corner, ya know? And Bugs needs me to be there for him... Gosh, I'd miss him if he didn't throw his hat on me at night. And I'd even miss the grapefruit he shoves in my face at breakfast. If I left Bugs, I'd be LONELY, Ralphie.

RALPH: (sarcastically) That'd be terrible.

BUGS: (*entering. A slick thug, he has one hand concealed in trench coat*) So there ya are, doll-baby! (*To Zelda, who comes forward*) Not you! (*to Amy*) So ya thought ya'd throw me over for the baby-face here, eh? Thought I'd let ya go and come clean, eh?

ZELDA: Gosh, Bugs. You noticed I was gone...

BUGS: What? Oh, yeah. (*puts his hat on her*)

RALPH: It's not what you think, Bugs...

BUGS: Shaddap, punk! Nobody takes somethin' what's mine and gets away wid it, see?

RALPH: Honestly, I wasn't...

BUGS: Didn't I tell ya to shaddap?

RALPH: I'm sorry... I thought you asked me a question. Oh, I know. That was just a rhetorical question that you...

BUGS: I'll make you shaddap. . . (*starts for him*)

ZELDA: Don't do it, Bugs!

BUGS: Say yer prayers, punk. I'm gonna splatter ya!

ZELDA: NO! (*steps in front of Ralph*)

BUGS: Take that! (*his concealed hand emerges from coat and he delivers a pie. Zelda takes what was meant for Ralph*) Zelda! You little fool! What have you done?

(*she sinks onto Ralph, who lets her down, supports her head in his lap. Bugs kneels beside her.*)

ZELDA: Oh! Yick!

RALPH: What a mess!

ZELDA: I'm goin' fast, Bugs! (*grabs his coat*)

BUGS: Hey! Watch the suit, huh?

ZELDA: I'll say hello to your Momma in heaven, Bugs. Ooh! We'll wait for you. Aah!

BUGS: (*whistles blow, she holds on to him*) Look. Don't bother, huh? Leggo, will ya?

ZELDA: I was a good girl, once, Bugs. Where did we go wrong? Urgh! It's because I couldn't have kids, I know...

BUGS: No, it's not that...

ZELDA: *(pulling him closer)* But I like kids, Bugs! *(he looks around, struggling to get free)*
Maybe we could have adopted, Bugs... aagh!

BUGS: Come on, come on!

ZELDA: I feel cold, Bugs. Why do I feel cold, Bugs?

BUGS: How the hell should I know? Maybe it's the cement.

ZELDA: Hold me, Bugs. Hold me!

BUGS: Hey, I'm in a hurry here!

RALPH: For pity's sake, hold her, Bugs!

BUGS: All right! All Right!

ZELDA: Kiss me, Bugs! Kiss me!

RALPH: Go on! Ain't ya got no compassion?

BUGS: *(looks at Ralph)* Yeah, yeah. Okay, okay. *(gets his face covered with pie)*

ZELDA: Bugs?

BUGS: Yeah, yeah. What? What?

ZELDA: Just tell me one thing, Bugs.

BUGS: Okay, okay. One thing. Hurry up!

ZELDA: Why do they call you Bugs?

BUGS: *(laughing)* Oh, gosh... everybody asks me that. Well, years ago, when I was a kid...

RALPH: It's too late. She's... she's pied. *(whistle blows, Bugs runs off)*

COP: What's goin' on here? My good God... 'tis a murder! Messy business, this... and it's you what's done the deed, right enough.

RALPH: No, no! It wasn't me! It was Bugs!

COP: Aye, the bugs'll get her soon enough, poor darlin, and you soon after. Come on.

RALPH: Amy Sue! Tell him! *(he is dragged off)*

AMY: *(calling off)* I got a job! *(strolls off)*

ANNA: *(examining the body)* Hmmmmm.

BUFF: What is it, Mrs Morgan?

ANNA: Custard, Mrs. Buffles

(everyone in line turns around and holds out a plate)

BLACKOUT THEN CURTAIN

CHAPTER FIVE: IN PREHISTORY

NARR. Unable to accept failure, Fenster's brain recoiled to its most elemental level. It didn't stop at Mr. Hyde... it didn't pause at Beauty's Beast... it didn't even consider Mr. Rogers or his neighborhood. It fell straight into the well-illustrated depths of an article on early man in the National Geographic Magazine... more than one million B.C.

Scene: A rather primitive man sitting on the ground, in front of the fire that he is trying unsuccessfully to start. He is naked (flesch colored tights) and wears a fig leaf.

NARR. Here we meet that most primitive of men, Africanis Afarensis, a barely human sort of a fellow, whom, we believe, subsisted mainly by catching turtles and other slow or motionless things. He is not believed to possess tools. *(Man holds up a modern crescent wrench)* And if he did have tools, paleontologists doubt that he knew how to use them. *(tries to start fire with wrench)* How can Fenster hope to find happiness here?

AFAR: I know I seen somebody take something and make something happen. I know I seen it. You take these sticks and you pile 'em up for some reason, then you do somethin' and whoosh! It gets hot. I'm not sure how, but if I ever figure it out, I know exactly what I'm gonna call it; UNDERWEAR! Just think of it: I'll be the man who invented underwear.

You know, if I ever get this underwear started, I think maybe I'll throw a turkle in there. I don't know why, but I think they might taste better that way. If I wasn't so hungry, I'd wait for some lightning. Speaking of hungry, I ain't even got a turkle yet .

(a turtle is dragged across the stage on a string)

There's one now! *(he bashes it)* Long as I can do that, I'll be around for a long time. I'm a heck of a lot smarter than those turkles. *(Lucy walks in; she is obviously as primitive as he is)* Hello, Lucy. Want to have some turkle?

LUCY: No, thanks, Afarensis. I'm tired of turtle. Every time you invite me to dinner, it's always turtle.

AFAR: Oh. Yeah. I see what you mean.

LUCY: It's kinda boring, you know?

AFAR: What's boring?

LUCY: It's... well... it's hard to explain. I feel that way when something isn't ... uh...interesting. Yes. When something isn't interesting. You know what I mean?

AFAR: I don't know.

LUCY: Don't you know what interesting is?

AFAR: I'm interested in that turkle.

LUCY: No, no. Do something different for a change. Come on...

AFAR: *(turns around, looking all over, obviously totally confused)* Uh, okay, uh... how's this?
(assumes a stupid pose)

LUCY: No, no. How about something different for dinner?

AFAR: Oh. Okay. How about leaves? *(she shakes head)* Grass? Dirt? Termites?

LUCY: There's something about the concept you're not getting, but I'm not sure what. Try something different that's not stupid or disgusting... something exciting, fantastic, something that takes my breath away!

AFAR: Yeah, yeah... I know what you mean. Like... like... "an elegant tossed composition of greens, ollowed by a cold compote, lightly seasoned with herbs and spices, washed down by a vintage beverage, heady yet delicate in bouquet, and followed by the piece de resistance...turtle flambe!"

LUCY: YES! YES!

AFAR: *(looking at the non-fire)* Yeah, but I think we're gonna have to wait for some lightning first... I thought I saw some over there... *(they exit)*

(In comes Homo Habilis, also naked with fig leaf, but also adorned with a tool belt, hammer and hard hat)

No. 11A HOMO HABILIS IS MY NAME - Habilis

HABILIS Homo Hab'lis is my name,
And a homind bright am I
I'm not damn fool 'cause I've got a tool
That can hit something very hard, oh yes,
That can hit something very hard.
I'm not quite certain what I ought to do
With these things that I can fashion,
Tho' countless uses I am sure I'll find,
Right now they're real good for bashin'

Let hammer on skull go bang! Bang! Bang!
 That's progress for all mankind.
 Bang! Bang! Bang!
 Say goodbye to the mammoth,
 the sloth and the elk,
 The tiger with tooth like saber.
 Hello to the man who can wipe out the lot:
 It's homo habilis, man of labor!

(Habilis notices Afarensis)

No. 1B WHO ARE YOU, SIR?

HABILIS Who are you, sir? Tell me, who?
 AFAR If it comes to that, sir, who are you?
 HABILIS Who are you, sir?
 AFAR What's that to you, sir?
 HABIIS What's that to who, sir?
 AFAR Who, sir? You, sir!
 HABILIS Who are you, sir? Tell me, who sir!
 AFAR Who are you, sir? Who are you, sir?
 HABILIS It's Afarensis!
 AFAR It's Homo Hab'lis!

HABILIS Afarensis, tho' you dense is,
 Leave this world, I'll tell you why.
 You can't build a simple fire,
 I've evolved just that much higher,
 So it's time to say good-bye, to say good-bye!

AFAR Homo hab'lis, think you're fab'lis
 I won't hear a word you say.
 So you've made yourself some toolin'
 I just need a little schoolin'
 So I wish you'd go away, you'd go away!

HABILIS Afarensis, tho' you dense is, AFAR Homo hab'lis, think you're fab'lis You must go!

AFAR *(spoken)* What are you doing in may time?

HABILIS Your time? If you doubt my claims
 Check my carbon date remains.

AFAR Your remains are very fine.
 If it comes to that, sir... If it comes to that, sir...
 Here are mine! HA, HA!

HABILIS Swine! Murder! It's an absolute scandal! Alters the timeline. Murder, murder!

AFAR That's a date you can't handle, I'm in my timeline. Murder, murder!

(Homo Erectus enters)

ERECTUS Carbon date! Carbon date! Etc.

ALL Carbon date! Carbon date! We are here either too soon or too late!

Carbon date! Carbon date!

We are here either soon or late!

Carbon date! Etc.

END OF SONG

(at end of song, Homo Erectus comes in. He is naked with fig leaf, but may also have some other simple accessories)

BOTH: Who are you?

ERECT Homo Erectus, at your service.

HAB: Wait a geological moment. You can't be here... not for hundreds of thousands of years. Just look how erect you are.

ERECT: Erectus my name; erect is my game. Actually, I'm carbon-dated in this time, too, so walk over to the edge of the chart and go extinct.

AFAR: What's extinct?

HAB: What gives you the right to come in here like this and take over the earth, just because you stand up straight? Big deal. So what? My name is Habilis, which means I'm very handy, and I just got here, and I intend to stay. What have you got that I haven't got?

ERECT: Well, I can use tools, for one thing

HAB: Hah! I can use tools.

AFAR: I got a tool. (shows wrench)

ERECT: Yes, but look at you. Look at your posture... look at how long your arms are... look where you live: in caves. God, how does that look? No better than a bear. What do you use those tools for? Clubbing something over the head?

AFAR: Yeah...turkles.

ERECT: I use my hands and tools to build things. Yes, I make huts! And I've got plans for the future; someday there will be a whole row of huts and people will live together and the men will hunt and the women will sit around and clean carcasses and cook meat on the fire...

HAB: I can make a fire.

AFAR: What's a fire?

ERECT: Come on, fellows, admit it. You're through. Fossils for the great paleontological junkpile. You can't keep going on in the face of a better species; think of all the confusion when people dig you up thousands of years from now. Face it. Look at my brow. My brain is bigger!

LUCY: Wow! It is! (*admiringly*)

ERECT: Stick with me, baby, and you'll go places, (*he lights a match, the others fall back in shock*)

AFAR: UNDERWEAR! He's got underwear!

LUCY: Where?

HAB: That's FIRE, you idiot!

LUCY: (*taking Erectus' arm*) Will you show me how to do that?

ERECT: Sure, back at my HUT! Come on, and I'll show you some scratchings...

AFAR: Well, I guess he's got us, all right.

HAB: Well, it's not fair. I just got here. Oh, it's all right for you, you've been around a while, smacking turtles. But what about me? I've got some talent... I've got a contribution to make! Now along comes Mr. Posture-Perfect with his huts and his fires and takes it all away. It's not fair! (*breaks down*)

AFAR: (*changing the subject*) Hey, I'm still hungry. You want some turtle?

HAB: Take it away! You and your stupid turtles. It's primitive.

AFAR: Yeah, well, you're not much better...

(*Erectus is about to leave with Lucy when in comes Homo Sapiens, riding a bicycle. He wears furs and a loin cloth and might have a biking helmet*)

SAP: Hi, guys. What's happening?

ALL: Who are you?

SAP: Homo Sapiens to you. I'm the Thinking Man, just out on a mass migration. Do I know you?

- ERECT: I don't think so...
- SAP: Sure, sure... you're my ancestors. I've seen your bits and pieces lying around the hillside. I'm surprised you're still around.
- ERECT: What do you mean, still? You're not supposed to be here for hundreds of thousands of years. You're too early.
- SAP: Ha, ha. Listen to him, and he hasn't even invented counting yet. But you're all wet, sport. I've got this carbon dating here, and...
- HAB: Carbon dating, shmarbon dating! That stuff says everything is millions of years old. Give me the old stratum method any day.
- AFAR: Yeah.
- SAP: Say, you're not going to quibble over technicalities, are you? Use your heads. You can't go into the modern world the way you are. You're stark naked! You can't go into a nice civilization with nothing on. It's not the custom.
- ERECT: What's a custom?
- LUCY: Gee, customs sound INTERESTING!
- SAP: Baby, we've got some customs you wouldn't believe...
- HAB: So what? Big deal.
- AFAR: Yeah.
- SAP: Listen, guys, I can't stand around here arguing with you all day. I've got an evolutionary train to catch. You're hopelessly out of date. You simply can't compete with my agriculture, my cave paintings, my social skills and my religion. My God, we haven't even begun to talk about religion...
- ERECT: I don't want to talk about it.
- SAP: Well, it adds up to CIVILIZATION, my friends, and you haven't got it. Besides, I've got the WHEEL.
- ERECT I forgot about that.
- HAB: He's got us there.
- AFAR: Maybe he can show us how to use this... (*holds up tool*)
- LUCY: (*who has been admiring SAP*) Look at his brow! His brain is the biggest!

- SAP: Say, you're pretty cute for a girl without much on the ball. Come on along, and I'll light your fire. (*pulls out Zippo lighter, others fall back in amazement*)
- ERECT: Lucy! What about me?
- HAB: How do you like it, Mr. Former Big Shot?
- SAP: (*breaking up the scuffle*) Hey, take it easy, fellows. There's nothing you could do about it. Believe me, her selection was natural.

No. 12. THE EVOLUTIONARY RAG

- SAPIENS C'mon let's go, jes' point your toe!
Pass the brink, or go extinct.
- Jes' point your toe and ramble revolutionary
To the tune of genealogy.
Ev'ry step is very evolutionary,
It's the dance of Darwinology.
- AFAR, LUCY First you shuffle and drag your knuckles
Because your arms are hangin' low.
And then you circle and chase a turkle
For that is all you really know.
- ALL Point your toe and ramble revolutionary
To the tune of genalogy
Ev'ry step is very revolutuinary
It's the dance of Darwinology
- HAB, FEN Then you straighten, improve your gait and
Before you realize what you've done,
Your forehead's higher, you've built a fire;
You're just beginnin' to have some fun.
- ALL Point your toe and ramble revolutionary
To the tune of genalogy
Ev'ry step is very revolutuinary
It's the dance of Darwinology
- SAP Then you're smarter, your steps get harder
Because you've gotten a better brain.
But while you're wheelin' an urge you're feelin'
To get back down and start again!

ALL Point your toe and ramble revolutionary
To the tune of genalogy
Ev'ry step is very revolutuinary
It's the dance of Darwinology

We get smarter, we trade and barter
And we invent the motor car
And stat to wonder,
As on we blunder
“how did we get to where we are?”

So we're smarter, the steps are harder
Because we've gotten a better brain.
So we're wheelin' an urge we're feelin'
So let's get down and start again.

Oh yeah!

CHAPTER SIX: AT THE BALLET

Scene; Fenster is discovered in the fetal position on abare stage.

NARR: Fenster's tortured cerebellum, wracked with disappointments in love no matter where his fantasies led him, yearned for peace- for quiet. Frantically His unconscious mind searched for that existence where no words, spoken or otherwise, interrupted or destroyed his mood... where the only sound was beautiful music.

13A BAROQUE MUSIC - Handel

There, there it is. Ah, how beautiful! This is what Fenster wanted. (*Fenster comes out of his position, and enjoys the music*) But how can he find the girl of his dreams this way? There's nothing happening except music. (*Fenster shrugs*) Well, maybe he doesn't need the girl of his dreams. (*Fenster nods, continues to enjoy*) He has peace. He has his music. (*Fenster smiles*) This is pretty boring, Fenster... you can't just sit here, listening to music. It's like a (*gasp*) CONCERT! You can't spend your life in a concert. You're not a contributor! (*Fenster capitulates*)

That's better. What's missing? A story. Let's add a story!

13B PETER AND THE WOLF THEME

Well, that's better, I guess, but somehow it's not enough. There's still something missing. What could it be? Well, let's see. maybe if we start, it will come to us. “Once upon a time there were these two...people.” That's it! People. We need other people! (*Fenster mimes a shape, narr. tries to understand*) And... they will have sway backs. (*Fenster shakes it off, tries again*) There will be... two hunchbacks... (*Fenster becomes animated, does an impression of a woman walking*) Two sexy hunchbacks.... (*Fenster threatens him*) TWO WOMEN! (*Fenster shakes head*) ONE WOMEN! (*Fenster indicates victory*)

(a girl in a tutu walks out in a leotard. She and Fenster just stare at each other)

Oh, now we're in trouble. She's going to want to talk, Fenster. Just look at her!
You know it'll go badly for you if she starts talking, Fenster. But, then again, if she doesn't talk, how can there be a story?

13C DANCE OF THE GOONY BIRDS - Music begins

NARR: Yes, that's it. Fenster is now in the world of the ballet...a world where the gesture and the subtle movement of the body can convey as much as a thousand words, *(girl tries-to convey something to Fenster, he can't understand. Finally, she grabs him and pulls him into motion. He tries to dance a conversation with her, but fails.)*

Well, it doesn't look like a ballet, yet, but it must be, because that music is Tchaikovsky. Oh, and it's one of his best...a recently discovered companion piece to his famous Swan Lake... Goony Gulf! It's the story of the magical albatrosses on Midway Island. *(Fenster leaps offstage as three more girls come onstage)* As the ballet begins, the albatrosses are winging their way across the ocean looking for that speck of land that is their island.

(spoken over the music)

But, unknown to the albatrosses, the island has been taken over by men, who have made it into an airfield for their planes to land on. In a heroic dance, the flight controller signals his companions.

13D DANCE OF THE FLIGHT CONTROLLER

The airplanes come in from all over, circling to land.

13E DANCE OF THE AIR CORPS

But now the albatrosses enter, seeking to land on their homeland. OH, NO! The birds don't see the airplanes! They're going to crash!

13F DANCE OF THE AIR CRASHES

(The birds and the planes crash to chords of music)

Damaged by the collisions, the airplanes manage to crash land. Albatrosses, also known as Goony Birds, always crash land. *(planes and birds crash and proceed to argue in dance)*
(The flight controller brings in the Hunter, who is Fenster with a rifle)

13G DANCE OF THE HUNTER

The Flight Controller now brings in the Hunter, and pays him to kill the albatrosses, who are the cause of all his trouble.

13H SCENE: OMELETTE AND THE HUNTER

NARR. The Hunter is dissuaded from his course by the Albatross Queen Omelette, who explains that all the birds are girls from the Tri-Delta sorority who have been changed into albatrosses by the Army Corps of Engineers.

She explains that if only a hero were to swear his love to her by initiating a lawsuit, the spell would be broken, funding would dry up, and the girls would return to their former condition. The Hunter swears to marry her in a passionate love duet.

13J PAS DE POTATOES

(The flight controller returns with a contract)

13K SCENE: DANCE OF THE CONTRACT

Their happiness is broken off by the Flight Controller, who shows the Hunter his contract. Helpless in the face of legal proceedings, the Hunter raises his bow and takes aim at Omelette.

13L DANCE OF THE SCARED CHICKEN

Because of his love for Omelette, and the fact that he never could hit a moving target, the Hunter runs off. Enraged, the Flight Controller calls in his pilots, and they chase the birds with brooms. As the birds are about to be overcome in the sweeping climax, the Hunter reappears and rescues them.

13M SCENE: THE BIRDSEED

The evil Flight Controller swears revenge on the Hunter. He lures Omelette off with a bag of birdseed. Then, crossing the stage with magnificent leaps, he brings in the black albatross Omafox, who attempts to seduce the Hunter with a passionate dance.

13N DANCE BURLESQUE

13O DANCE OF AGONY

13 P, Q

NARR. Omelette returns to see the Hunter in the arms of Omafox. Assuming that he has renounced his love for her, she goes into despair along with the other albatrosses, who now will never again be able to experience the joy of sorority tea.

The Hunter realizes too late what has happened. He rushes to her side, but it is too late. Desperate to be with her, he attempts to stab himself, but fails. Finally, as the airplanes enter, he finds a way to be with her. *(he collides with a plane)*

Their spirits rise to join together and at last the spell is broken.

BLACKOUT

ACCOMP. *(stopping)* Oh... I can't go on...

NARR: What's the matter?

ACCOMP. I can't help it! It's so tragic!

NARR: Yes I understand. It's so very, very moving

ACCOMP. And so romantic!

NARR: I know.. I know. But we must go on.

ACCOMP. I'm sorry. I need something.

NARR: A handkerchief?

ACCOMP. No... something else. Something...

NARR: I'll get it if I can. Something to get you past the..

ACCOMP. More money.

NARR: What?

ACCOMP. The show is going on too long. The union says time and a half.

NARR: Well, all I have is ... twenty dollars.

ACCOMP. Not union scale.

NARR: Well, let's see... twenty five?

ACCOMP. I'll take it!

(starts to play again)

13R FINAL SCENE

CHAPTER 7 WAKING UP IN THE BOARDING HOUSE

Scene: Chava is discovered trying to wake up Fenster, who is asleep.

NARR: Can it be that Fenster has at last found his love, or is this only a dream?

FEN: My queen! My darling! *(he grabs Chava, who screams, waking him up)*
What? What happened? *(the others enter)*

CHA: You've been dreaming and being crazy.

BERT: Yeah. You chased me with a broom.

GER. & REX: Me too!

ANNA: Then you started dancing with me.

FEN: Oh dear. And what did I do to you?

CHA: You kissed me!

FEN; Oh no! I'm sorry.

CHA; I'm not.

FEN; You're not?

CHA: Oh, no. Somehow, when you kissed me, I heard music. Could you try it again so I could be sure?
(he does, Love Theme from ballet begins, then fades out)

REX: Well, I'll be darned. I heard it too. Is that supposed to happen?

ANNA: I never saw him do THAT before.

GERT: I never saw him do anything before!

SAL: I wonder what happened to him?

GER. I wonder what happened to HER!

BERT: It'll never last.

FEN: *(coming up for air)* My friends. Though you never were my friends, and since I'm moving out of this place tomorrow and buying a condo in Shaker Heights, I really am in a generous mood. Since I have found my love through the Muse of the Dance, I invite you to join Chava and me, now, in a Grand Finale that suits the occasion.

#14 FINALE (Evolutionary Rag Reprise and Dance)

ALL Jes' point your toe and ramble revolutionary
 To the tune of genealogy.
 Ev'ry step is very evolutionary,
 It's the dance of Darwinology.

Fenster's smarter, and for a starter,
A lady's love he did attain.
There's no romancin' like goin' dancin'
So let's get down and start again.

Yes, he's smarter, and for a starter,
A lady's love he did attain.
There's no romancin' like goin' dancin'
So let's get down and start again.

Oh yeah!

END OF THE OPERETTA

BUFF

