

Florence Foster Jenkins

Written by

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TITLES:

BASED ON TRUE EVENTS - 1944

INT. COMMODORE HOTEL / BALLROOM -- NIGHT

Bayfield, 50s, the showman in tails, is on stage before a 150 strong AUDIENCE of well-to-do New Yorkers. To one side of the stage, a small orchestra of about 10 MUSICIANS. To the other, a sign which reads "The Verdi Club". Bayfield, a macho-camp man of the theatre, is in his element.

BAYFIELD

'Swounds, I should take it, for
it cannot be, But I am pigeon-
livered and lack gall, To make
oppression bitter, or ere this, I
should have fattened all the region
kites, With this slave's offal.
Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous,
lecherous, kindless villain! O
vengeance!

The Audience is a little taken-aback by his theatrics but applause begins to build.

BAYFIELD

Thank you, Thank you very much.
Thank you. That was of course the
speech of Hamlet's, from a play I
was lucky enough to perform in on
several occasions, though not as
yet in the principal role.

(beat)

Our next tableau features someone
who has devoted herself to the
musical life of this city.
Amongst others she is patron of
the Euterpe Club, of the Brooklyn
Orchestra for Distressed
Gentlewomen as well as, of
course, our very own Verdi Club.
Let us journey back in time to
1850 and the state of Alabama...

The plush velvet curtains open to reveal the music room of a grand plantation mansion. Accompanying music.

The audience gasps at the splendid sight.

A PIANIST, 50s, dressed in frock coat, playing Stephen Foster, is tinkling away at the piano.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

America's greatest popular song
writer, Stephen Foster, has run
out of ideas! He's a desperate
man...

He tries to write a few notes on the score but sighs in
frustration before screwing up the sheet and tossing it on
the floor, where it joins many others. He buries his head in
his hands - he's a terrible actor. The Audience laughs.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

But wait, what is this?

At the side of the stage, STAGE HANDS heave on ropes.

The Audience gasps as FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS, 65, dressed
in a white gown, pouf hat, and wearing magnificent white
wings "descends" from on high holding a golden harp. She
really is an extraordinary vision.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

It is the Angel of Inspiration,
sent from on high!

With her index finger extended, she touches the Pianist on
the temple, bestowing upon him the gift of Inspiration. The
Audience gasps some more and applauds.

A little hesitantly, Foster begins to pick out the familiar
tune of "Oh Susanna!"

BAYFIELD

At last! Stephen Foster can write
his song!

STEPHEN FOSTER

(singing)

"I came from Alabama with my banjo
on my knee..."

The Audience love this and clap along. As the song reaches
its climax, Foster is joined on stage by actors playing his
FAMILY and SERVANTS.

ALL

(singing)

"Oh Susannah, won't you marry
me..."

The Stage Hands struggle with their rope. Florence is quite a
weight!

STAGE HAND # 1

Hold her! Hold her! Keep her
steady!

The song finishes with a flourish and Bayfield steps centre stage as the Audience applauds.

BAYFIELD
 Bravo! Bravo! The Angel of
 Inspiration - Madam Florence Foster
 Jenkin!

The curtain falls to loud cheering and enthusiastic applause.

INT. COMMODORE HOTEL / DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT

Bayfield enters Florence's dressing room where JENNY, 40s, her dresser, is helping her prepare for the next scene. Florence wears armour. An old leather briefcase rests on the dresser.

BAYFIELD
 It's going very, very, very well.

FLORENCE
 I don't feel I imbued the moment
 of inspiration with the intensity
 it deserved, but it was a
serviceable attempt.

BAYFIELD
 Better than *serviceable*. It was
 good.

FLORENCE
 My armlets, please.

BAYFIELD
 Armlets.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)
 Has the impending potato salad
 catastrophe been averted?

BAYFIELD
 Even as we speak, the chef has a
 team out scouring Manhattan for
 chives.

FLORENCE
 No chives, what next I wonder?

BAYFIELD
 Unconscionable, I know, but they
 tell me there is a war on, Bunny.

SPEAKER (O.S.)
 Valkyries on stage please. The
 Overture has begun.

FLORENCE

What about the sandwiches?

BAYFIELD

Ham and tomato, plain cucumber
and chicken with a hint of Dijon
mustard, actually delicious.

FLORENCE

Excellent.

Bayfield passes Florence a winged helmet which she places
on her head. She makes a very splendid Brunhilda.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

How do I look?

Bayfield glows with pleasure.

BAYFIELD

Wunderbar!

They giggle together, before Florence picks up the leather
briefcase and heads for the door.

BAYFIELD

Now schnell, schnell. Go on
quickly. You're a very naughty
Valkyrie.

INT. COMMODORE HOTEL / BALLROOM -- NIGHT

Bayfield returns to the stage and does his best to quell
the thunderous applause.

BAYFIELD

And now we come to the finale of
our evening. I should warn you
that the vision you are about to
witness will be both shocking...
and terrifying.

The Audience sighs in keen anticipation. The orchestra
strike up the opening of Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries".
Bayfield milks it.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

A battle is raging. Volleys of
arrows pierce the air, shields
clash and swords do their
terrible work. But swooping down
from the clouds comes the most
terrible spectre of all... Ladies
and gentlemen, the Verdi Club
presents - The Ride of the
Valkyries!

The music swells. The curtains open to reveal a spectacular and terrible scene. Florence stands at the top of the "mountain" in her armour, her hair and cape blowing in the wind. Below her MINOR VALKYRIES strike suitably dramatic poses. On the battle field, the DYING writhe in agony.

The audience cheers and applauds. Florence remains in character - she is Brunhilda!

INT. COMMODORE BALLROOM / STAGE -- NIGHT

Florence, now in evening dress stands before committee member BRUCE ADAMS, 60s, polished, steps on to the stage.

ADAMS

It is my very great pleasure to present you with this small token of our esteem.

He hands Florence a slim box.

FLORENCE

(thrilled)

Thank you, shall I open it?

ALL

Yes!

She opens the box which contains a beautiful bejewelled watch. Florence sighs with surprise and pleasure. The audience gasps.

FLORENCE

Well this is beautiful! Thank you all so very much.

(beat)

You know, years ago when I founded the Verdi Club I never could have imagined that I'd be here tonight, 25 years on, with my beloved husband by my side.

(beat)

Music... has been and is my life.

(beat)

Music matters.

The Orchestra breaks into spontaneous applause.

BAYFIELD

Bravo!

FLORENCE

And at this dark moment in history, with our brave boys fighting for civilization itself, it matters more than ever.

(MORE)

FLORENCE (cont'd)
 So I implore you to continue to
 support the musical life of this
 city.

Applause and cheers. Florence is deeply moved and bows
 again. Bayfield kisses her.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

Florence's maid, KITTY, 40s, opens the front door and lets
 Florence and Bayfield in. Florence is so exhausted that she
 needs Bayfield's arm.

The walls of the hall are lined with photos and posters
 featuring Florence.

KITTY
 Good evening, Madam Florence.

FLORENCE
 Hello, Kitty.

Kitty takes their coats and Florence's leather briefcase,
 which she places on a table in the hall.

KITTY
 How did it go?

BAYFIELD
 Very, very well thank you.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bayfield helps Florence (now wearing a night gown) into
 bed. She's exhausted, but content.

BAYFIELD
 And now my bunny, you must sleep.

FLORENCE
 I don't want this day to end.

BAYFIELD
 I know, I know. Shut your eyes.

FLORENCE
 Only if you recite for me.

BAYFIELD
 Very well.

Bayfield smiles. He thinks for a second then stands and
 begins to recite Shakespeare's sonnet No. 116. His
 performance is a little hammed up, but very sincere.

BAYFIELD

"Let me not to the marriage of
true minds admit impediments.
Love is not love which alters
when it alteration finds..."

Florence shuts her eyes and surrenders blissfully to the words and her tiredness.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

... Or bends with the remover to
remove: O no!"

Bayfield realizes that Florence is already asleep. Kitty enters. He removes Florence's wig. Beneath it she is entirely bald. Kitty takes the wig and places it on a stand. Bayfield then removes Florence's false eye lashes and help Kitty place a turban on Florence's head. He takes her hand and checks her pulse against his watch before making a note in a little notebook that rests beside the bed.

FINALLY, Bayfield kisses Florence's forehead.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

Kitty helps Bayfield into his coat.

BAYFIELD

Thank you, Kitty.

KITTY

Good night, Mr. Bayfield.

EXT. HOTEL SEYMOUR -- NIGHT

Bayfield steps through the doors of the hotel and speaks to the DOORMAN.

BAYFIELD

A taxi if I may, Jimmy.

The Doorman steps into the street and hails a cab.

EXT. OUTSIDE BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

As the cab leaves, Bayfield climbs the steps of a rather shabby apartment block.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Bayfield lets himself into his apartment. It's a small but cosy space.

Beautiful KATHLEEN, 34, enters from the bedroom. She wears a cocktail dress and heels. She smiles as she sips a martini.

KATHLEEN
Welcome home. I'm a tad drunk.

BAYFIELD
Oh, lucky you.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
How was Florence?

BAYFIELD
Magnificent.

KATHLEEN
And you?

BAYFIELD
(with obviously false
modesty)
I'd say I gave an adequate
performance.

KATHLEEN
I wish I could have come.

BAYFIELD
How was Augustus' play?

KATHLEEN
(laughing)
Terrible!
(she gives the glass to
Bayfield)
Finish it - I'm teaching first
thing - the oculist with bad
breath and two left hands - both
of which tend to wander.

Bayfield laughs and glugs down the cocktail.

Bayfield smiles as he slips his arms around her narrow waist and kisses her tenderly.

KATHLEEN
I love you, St Claire.

BAYFIELD
With knobs on.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM -- DAY

Bayfield, wearing jacket and tie and carrying a breakfast tray, enters the bedroom where he finds Florence sitting up in bed reading through the newspapers.

BAYFIELD
 (brightly)
 Good morning Miss Rabbit.

FLORENCE
 Have you seen the reviews,
 Whitey? Carlton Smith in the
 Musical Courier says it was the
 event of the season.

BAYFIELD
 (placing the tray before
 her)
 Well it jolly well was. Now -

FLORENCE
 (indicating the tray)
 - put it on the table, I'm
 getting up.

BAYFIELD
 Now Bunny, that's not a good
 idea. Last night, your pulse -

FLORENCE
 - on the table, please.

Bayfield does as commanded.

FLORENCE
 We need to plan the Verdi lunch.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

A PIANO TUNER is at work. He taps the keys as he turns his hammer. The gleaming grand piano stands to one side of Florence's plush lounge. Bayfield and Florence pore over a seating plan. They move names around like generals planning a battle.

FLORENCE
 (sighing)
 ... no, no, no. You can't put
 Mrs. James O'Flaherty next to the
 Baroness - she slurps her soup.

BAYFIELD
 (becoming irritated)
 So let's serve smoked trout. I
 doubt even Mrs. O'Flaherty could
 slurp a trout.

FLORENCE
 (scoffing)
 The Verdi Luncheon always begins
 with a soup, you know that.
 (MORE)

FLORENCE (cont'd)

How could we not begin with soup?
There would be a riot.

BAYFIELD

(crossing the room)

In that case let us put her over
here on the card table between Mr
and Mrs Levi. Perfect.

FLORENCE

No. Mrs. O'Flaherty isn't keen on
the... Jews.

(placing the card)

We'll put her between Prince
Galitzer and Mrs. Oscar Gurmunder.

BAYFIELD

No.

FLORENCE

Yes! They're both as deaf as posts!

BAYFIELD

No!

FLORENCE

Yes!

Florence rearranges the seating plan with satisfaction as
Kitty Enters.

KITTY

Maestro Toscanini is here.

The piano tuner catches the name and immediately stops
testing the keys.

BAYFIELD

Charlie, cup of coffee.

Bayfield leads the piano tuner from the room.

FLORENCE

(to Kitty)

Do show him in, Kitty, please.

Kitty nods and leaves. A second later ARTURO TOSCANINI,
70s, appears. He's a wiry and intense man who wears a three
piece suit and speaks with an Italian accent as thick as
putanesca sauce.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Arturo, what a wonderful
surprise!

TOSCANINI
 (kissing her)
 You don't mind me visiting by
 unannounced?

FLORENCE
No. La mia casa e la tua casa.

TOSCANINI
 I 'ave a little gift.
 (handing her a record)
 My recording ova da Bell Song
 with Lily Pons.

FLORENCE
 (looking at the record)
 Arturo, how very thoughtful of
 you. Thank you. You know we are
 so looking forward to the
 concert. Are preparations going
 well?

TOSCANINI
 Very well... though there are some
 financial matters that remain...
problematico.

FLORENCE
 (feigning surprise)
 Oh?

Toscanini milks it for all its worth.

TOSCANINI
 (shaking his head)
 Madam Florence... withouta your
 'elp there will be no concert!

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Florence slips the record from the sleeve and examines it.
 Bayfield enters.

BAYFIELD
 How much did he want?

FLORENCE
 A thousand.
 (cynically)
 But he gave me a record.

She puts the disk on the Victrola. After some crackles the
 introduction to Delibe's "The Bell Song" begins to sound.
 They listen together attentively. But when Pons takes her
 first breath and launches into the song...

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL -- NIGHT

... she is on stage singing at Carnegie Hall.

LILY PONS, 35, wears a stunning, shimmering dress that shows off her marvellous figure.

PONS
 (singing)
 "Ou va la jeune Indoue, fille des
 Parias..."

Her voice is extraordinary: flawless and powerful. Even unamplified, it fills the huge auditorium where a black-tie audience of 2,800 listen, mesmerized.

Toscani conducts the NBC Orchestra with intense concentration.

Sitting in the front row of the stalls Bayfield and Florence are both stunned by the beauty of the sound.

Florence breathes in the sound, then slowly looks around. It's as if Pons is touching the souls of every single person in the room. Her voice brings a tear to Florence's eye.

INT. CAB -- NIGHT

Florence and Bayfield ride home in the back of a cab, arm in arm. Florence is still mesmerized by the sound of Lily Pons's voice.

FLORENCE
 I haven't heard a voice that good since Caruso.

BAYFIELD
 Extraordinary little thing, isn't she?

FLORENCE
 Can you imagine what that must feel like? To hold nearly three thousand people in the cup of your hand? To share such profound... communion?

(beat)
 Did you see Carlo Edwards from the Met?

BAYFIELD
 No?

FLORENCE
 He was seated to our right. I gather he's coaching again.

BAYFIELD
 (smiling)
 Oh is he now, Bunny?

FLORENCE
 I would like to take some more
 lessons with him.

BAYFIELD
 Then I shall phone him first
 thing in the morning.

FLORENCE
 (earnestly)
 I shall need a pianist.

BAYFIELD
 Yes.

FLORENCE
 (imagining)
 Someone young... someone with
passion...

HARD CUT TO

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

An incredible sound fills the room. At a grand piano sits ERNST ZEIGLER, late 30s. He's a storm of flying arms and hair as he plays List's Hungarian Rhapsody with great flamboyance.

Florence sits at the table. Bayfield stands nearby. He's enjoying the performance, but it's all too much for poor Florence. He crosses to her.

FLORENCE
 (under her breath)
 Oh, my hat!

BAYFIELD
 What? Not passionate enough?

FLORENCE
 He's raping my ears. Make him
 stop. Make him stop!

BAYFIELD
 (calling out)
 Thank you, Mr. Zeigler. Thank you
 very much...

But Zeigler is lost in his performance and doesn't hear him.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
 (shouting)
 Thank you!

Finally, Zeigler stops and looks up.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
 Very good. We'll be in touch.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- DAY

Bayfield shows Zeigler to the door.

BAYFIELD
 Thank you again.

In the hall half a dozen PIANISTS sit reading through scores as they await their audition. Bayfield approaches.

BAYFIELD
 Gentlemen, the chairs are not for practical use. You have been told.

Surprised, the Pianists get to their feet.

BAYFIELD
 (checking a list)
 Cosme McMoon?

COSME MCMOON, 32, steps forward.

MCMOON
 That's me, Sir.

BAYFIELD
 Come.

He begins to follow Bayfield, but has to scurry back as he's forgotten his scores.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Now seated at the piano, McMoon collects himself before turning to Florence.

MCMOON
 What should I play?

FLORENCE
 Well I really don't mind, as long as it's not too loud.

McMoon thinks about it and then begins to play Saint Saen's "The Swan" from the Carnival of the Animals.

It's a rather syrupy and sentimental piece, but as soon as he touches the keys Florence sits up. She can't quite believe what she's hearing. Bayfield notices the change in her as she begins to smile.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)
 (under her breath)
 What loveliness!

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- DAY

The other Pianists hear the tune and become curious.

PIANIST # 1
 What is he playing?

PIANIST # 2
 (scoffing)
 Some Saint Saen's... bullshit.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

McMoon plays on. Florence is so deeply touched by the tune that she starts to cry a little.

McMoon stops playing, unsure what's going on. Bayfield passes Florence a handkerchief.

FLORENCE
 (smiling through her
 tears)
 You know...
 (drying her eyes)
 ... when I was sixteen years old,
 my father told me that if I
 didn't give up music and marry a
 dull banker, he'd cut me off.

Florence laughs heartily at the memory. Bayfield enjoys seeing her happy. McMoon is a little embarrassed.

BAYFIELD
 It's true!

FLORENCE
 Sorry, continue, Mr. McMoon.

McMoon begins to play again.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)
 Of course he didn't understand
 musicians. We'd rather go without
 bread than Mozart, wouldn't we?

MCMOON
 It's not even a choice for us.

FLORENCE

Of course, he did cut me off, but I got a little apartment in Philly and I made a living teaching piano to children. We'd play *The Swan*. That was my favourite.

MCMOON

Wow. Great story.

FLORENCE

It is, isn't it? Of course he came round eventually and I was... back in the will.

McMoon finishes the piece. Florence beams and sighs with pleasure.

FLORENCE

(beat)

Well, I must say you I think you're absolutely ideal.

MCMOON

Did I mention that I also compose?

FLORENCE

(to Bayfield)

And he also composes.

BAYFIELD

(cynically)

Yes, I'm sure he does.

BAYFIELD

There are some *other* candidates to hear, Bunny.

FLORENCE

(turning to McMoon)

Do you know any of them?

MCMOON

I do.

(under his breath)

They're all rather... *heavy handed*, I'm afraid.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- DAY

Now all the Pianists are craning their necks.

PIANIST # 1

(under his breath)

Son of a bitch!

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- DAY

Bayfield escorts the failed candidates to the door.

BAYFIELD

Madam Florence regrets she's
unable to hear any more
candidates today.

ALL

(very irritated)
What? Why not? I trained at
Julliard.

BAYFIELD

I'm so very sorry.

PIANIST

Why?

BAYFIELD

You're not her type.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Florence and McMoon sit on a sofa taking tea.

FLORENCE

Now I must warn you. I work very
hard. I study each morning for an
hour, sometimes two. And my
father didn't leave me as much
money as everybody thinks. I
couldn't pay you more than... a
hundred and fifty?

MCMOON

A month?

FLORENCE

A week.
(scoffing)
I'm not destitute.

McMoon's eyes nearly pop out of his head. Christmas has come early!

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR/ CORRIDOR - DAY

McMoon follows Bayfield down the corridor.

BAYFIELD

A few pointers as to how Madam
Florence does things. You will
note that she carries a briefcase
with her at all times.

(MORE)

BAYFIELD (cont'd)

You are not to touch the briefcase or enquire as to its contents.

MCMOON

Right.

BAYFIELD

In the hall Madam Florence keeps a collection of chairs in which people of note have expired. They're not for practical use.

MCMOON

I understand.

BAYFIELD

She abhors pointed objects, so never smoke in her presence or hand her a knife or anything like that.

(stopping)

Are you fond of sandwiches?

MCMOON

(unsure)

Yes?

They step into the elevator.

BAYFIELD

Good. Madam Florence is inordinately fond of sandwiches - and potato salad, too. When we throw a party we make mountains of the stuff. It would serve you to consume both with enthusiasm.

MCMOON

I shall.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / ELEVATOR -- DAY

They step into the elevator.

BAYFIELD

Good morning Patrick.

The doors shut.

EXT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / LOBBY -- DAY

Bayfield and McMoon step out of the elevator and into the plush lobby of the hotel. Bayfield counts out some twenty dollar bills from his wallet. He hands them to McMoon.

BAYFIELD

So here is a week in advance and
a teeny bit extra for a new
shirt?

MCMOON

(touching his frayed
collar with
embarrassment)

Thank you.

BAYFIELD

(beat; sincerely)

If you can forgive Madam Florence
her eccentricities, you will find
her to be a most generous and
delightful person. Ours is a very
happy world.

(shaking hands)

Welcome, Mr. McMoon.

(leaving)

Tomorrow morning at nine. Don't
be late.

MCMOON

I won't, sir!

McMoon breathes a sigh of satisfaction. He's landed a dream
job!

EXT. 45TH STREET -- DAY

McMoon heads down the busy street with a new spring in his
step.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE - DAY

Kitty and McMoon enters.

KITTY

Mr McMoon is here.

Florence and Bayfield are chatting with debonair CARLO
EDWARDS, 50s.

FLORENCE

Do come in Mr McMoon.

(to Edwards)

This is the talented young man I
was telling you about.

EDWARDS
 (shaking hands)
 How do you do, Mr. McMoon?

FLORENCE
 This is my vocal coach, Maestro Carlo Edwards, assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera.

MCMOON
 (star struck)
 How do you do, Sir. I saw you conduct La Boheme last season -

EDWARDS
 (for Florence)
 - please! Don't remind me!

FLORENCE
 (laughing)
 Oh, Carlo!

McMoon panics a little.

FLORENCE
 (to McMoon)
 He's kidding obviously.

MCMOON
 (relieved: producing the scores)
 I've learnt everything. I'm virtually off score.

EDWARDS
 Good! Then let's get started!

Florence giggles with excitement as Edwards flips through McMoon's scores and selects one.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)
 Here we are. The Bell Song.

FLORENCE
 (laughing)
 Isn't it a little early in the morning for Lakme, Carlo?

EDWARDS
 Not for a singer of your ability.

He hands the score to McMoon who sets it up.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)
 Whenever you're ready, Mr. McMoon.

McMoon prepares himself then plays the short introduction. He was telling the truth - he is off score.

Florence draws a deep breath in preparation for the tricky a *cappella* section, but at the very last second, she shakes head. Something is not quite right.

FLORENCE

No, no, no.

McMoon stops.

FLORENCE

A little more.... *allegretto*,
please, if you don't mind, Mr.
McMoon.

Bayfield nods to Florence in agreement.

McMoon begins again - this time with a little more bounce.

Once again, Florence fills her lungs and this time she sings. When she does she unleashes a sound so dreadful that McMoon's mouth drops open.

FLORENCE

(singing)

Agh agh agh agh agh...

In shock, he looks to Carlo Edwards and Bayfield, but both of them seem unconcerned. Bayfield appears to be actually enjoying the performance. McMoon is completely discombobulated by the sound.

EDWARDS

Raise the soft palette!

FLORENCE

Agh agh agh...

EDWARDS

Good.

FLORENCE

Agh agh agh...

EDWARDS

Use the air!

FLORENCE

Agh agh agh...

EDWARDS

On the breath. Project forward.

She howls on just the same.

BAYFIELD
 (mouthing the words)
 Very good.

McMoon struggles to understand what is going on. When the a *cappella* section comes to an end, he struggles to pick up the piano part.

Edwards winces and Florence flinches, but McMoon finally finds his spot and Florence begins to howl again.

McMoon struggles on in desperation.

FLORENCE
 "Ou va la jeune Indoue, fille des
 Parias...

EDWARDS
 Think of the mask, Florence. The
 squillo! The voice is in the
 mask!

FLORENCE
 "Quand la lune se joue,
 Dans le grand mimosas?...

Florence tries desperately hard to follow Edwards' instructions, but nothing can save her. She howls some more before reaching a terrible climax.

EDWARDS
 Stop there.

Florence catches her breath as Edwards considers his verdict. He pauses for effect, then plays it tough but tender.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)
 There's work to be done.
 (beat)
 But you've never sounded better!

Florence claps her hands with pleasure, as if Edwards' words come as a welcome surprise.

BAYFIELD
 Here, here!

FLORENCE
 (shaking her head)
 Oh maestro, it is true that most
 singers my age are on the
 decline, but I just seem to get
 better and better.

EDWARDS
 I know. It's hard to believe,
 isn't it?

FLORENCE
I am so blessed.

EDWARDS
(kissing her hand)
There is no one quite like you.

Florence is flattered and turns to Bayfield to make sure he has noticed the attention she is receiving.

EDWARDS
Onwards!
(under his breath to
McMoon, snidely)
I thought you were off score?

McMoon lowers his eyes in embarrassment.

CUT TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL - DAY

Bayfield shows McMoon to the front door.

BAYFIELD
Did you enjoy the class?

MCMOON
Very much so.

BAYFIELD
She's remarkable, isn't she?

MCMOON
She is.

BAYFIELD
I thought you played very nicely.

MCMOON
Thank you.

Bayfield lets him out of the front door.

BAYFIELD
Good. Same time tomorrow then?

MCMOON
Yes. Goodbye.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / ELEVATOR - DAY

McMoon steps into crowded elevator. The doors shut and the elevator begins to descend. It's only now that the mask slips. McMoon starts to shake. He tries to control his laughter, but cannot and begins to guffaw.

The other PASSENGERS notice but try to ignore him and continue staring ahead or reading their newspapers.

Finally, McMoon manages to get a grip and stops laughing. The elevator reaches the ground floor and the doors open with a ping. The other passengers disgorge, grateful to get away from the madman.

McMoon straightens himself up and steps into the calm of the lobby.

CUT TO:

EXT. 45TH STREET -- DAY

Florence wails over the scene.

Bayfield steps out of the hotel carrying an armful of Florence's dresses.

BAYFIELD
(to the doorman)
Morning Jimmy.

JIMMY
Morning Mr Bayfield.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE - DAY

McMoon dutifully accompanying Florence. Edwards and Bayfield are at her side as she sings "Biassy", a song based on Bach's Prelude no XV1, in a language all of her own.

FLORENCE
"Jedu, jedu chistom pole, stanlee
tu-chi...

EDWARDS
Find a breath, Florence.

She lets out a howl that frightens everyone.

FLORENCE
"Ej, poshjo, jamshchik!...

EXT. 45TH STREET -- DAY

Bayfield returns to the hotel carrying an armful of Florence's dresses. They've been dry-cleaned.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE - DAY

McMoon continues to accompany Florence as she wails away at the Biassy.

FLORENCE
Agh agh agh!

Edwards offers ever more inane instruction.

EDWARDS
Lean into it. Appogio. Expand your
diaphragm, Florence! Breathe!
Breathe Florence! Good.

As Edwards grips Florence around the waist, Bayfield becomes concerned.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Edwards continues to give Florence instruction as she sings the Musical Snuffbox" by Anatomy Lyadov.

FLORENCE
"Quaint melodies, bring back old
days, faintly the old music box
plays...

EDWARDS
Soar! Like a bird! Wonderful.

Bayfield enters with a bag of groceries. Florence kisses him in between off-key notes.

Florence lets out a final and very dramatic burst before McMoon strikes the final chord. The room falls silent.

Florence sighs with satisfaction, then turns to Edwards for the verdict. The great man pauses as he attempts to sum up his very profound feelings.

EDWARDS (CONT'D)
One word: *authenticity*.

FLORENCE
Maestro. Do you think I'm ready for
a concert?

McMoon is gob smacked. His mouth drops open.

EDWARDS
You'll never be more ready.

BAYFIELD
You have been absent from the
stage for far too long, Bunny.

FLORENCE
 (turning to McMoon)
 Mr. McMoon? Do you think I'm
 ready?

McMoon stares back like a stunned mullet. Finally he
 squeezes out a reply.

MCMOON
 (beat)
 Sure...

BAYFIELD
 (enthusiastically)
 And perhaps I shall perform a
 monologue.

Florence doesn't like this idea. Bayfield takes the hint.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
 (masking his
 disappointment)
 Or not. Or not I shall start to
 make arrangements.

Florence giggles with pleasure. McMoon swallows hard.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / LOBBY - DAY

Bayfield and Edwards step out of the elevator and head
 towards the hotel entrance.

EDWARDS
 (anxiously)
 Obviously, I'll do my utmost to
 attend the concert, but I'll be
 away in Florida at some point.

BAYFIELD
 Oh? When?

EDWARDS
 Let me know when you've fixed a
 date.

Bayfield doesn't like Edwards' disloyalty, but remains
 gracious.

EDWARDS
 One other thing...
 (confidentially)
 ... since I've been working so
 intensively with Florence, I've
 rather neglected my other
 students. It might be best if we
 were discreet about these
 classes.

(MORE)

EDWARDS (cont'd)
I'd be mortified if Madam
Florence become the focus of any
envy.

BAYFIELD
(biting his lip)
Well thank you so very, very
much.

Bayfield hands over an envelope.

EDWARDS
Oh, she spoils me.
(patting Bayfield's
shoulder)
But then she spoils us all.
Doesn't she?

BAYFIELD
Enjoy Florida.

EDWARDS
(leaving)
I will.

With Edwards gone, Bayfield heads back towards the
elevator. He is then approached by an anxious McMoon who
follows him.

BAYFIELD
(surprised)
Mr. McMoon.

MCMOON
Could we speak, Mr. Bayfield?

BAYFIELD
Yes, of course. What is it?

MCMOON
(nervously)
Well... I thought I was being hired
to accompany Madam Florence's
lessons.
(treading carefully)
I'll be honest with you, Mr.
Bayfield. I think Madam Florence
might need a little more
preparation before she sings in
public.

The doors of the elevator open. Bayfield steps inside. McMoon
follows.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / ELEVATOR -- DAY

They ride up together.

BAYFIELD

But we've been rehearsing for a month?

MCMOON

(really struggling)

I know, but from time to time she can be a little... a little... flat.

BAYFIELD

(surprised)

Flat?

MCMOON

A tad. Just a tad.

BAYFIELD

(apparently perplexed)

Carlo Edwards didn't mention any flatness, and he is the leading vocal coach in the city.

MCMOON

(perspiring)

Gees, Mr. Bayfield... we can't be talking about the same singer. I mean, her vocal cords, they don't phonate freely... her phrasing is haphazard, as for her sub-glottal pressure... it defies medical science -

BAYFIELD

(starting to lose his patience)

- it is true that her instrument is not what it was, but as Beethoven said, a few wrong notes can be forgiven, but singing without feeling - cannot.

The doors of the elevator open. Bayfield steps out. McMoon follows.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / 7TH FLOOR CORRIDOR -- DAY

MCMOON

(unconvincing)

Mr. Bayfield, is there any way I could do the lessons - but not the concerts?

BAYFIELD

No, I'm afraid not.

MCMOON
 (in desperation)
 But I have my reputation to think
 of!

BAYFIELD
 Oh really?... What reputation is
 that?
 (coldly)
 If you want to go back to playing
 for tips in a steak house - be my
 guest.

McMoon is cut to the quick.

49

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
 (more gently)
 Cosme, Florence is very fond of
 you. She's paying you well and she
 wants to help you. She knows...
 everyone.

49

MCMOON
 But Mr. Bayfield -

BAYFIELD
 - and she has sung in dozens of
 sell out concerts. She has a
 magnetism that her followers adore.

MCMOON
 I understand that... but what if
 less *educated* members of the public
 show up?

BAYFIELD
 (beat; earnestly)
 You're right, we must exclude the
 hoodlum element and ensure that
 only true music lovers gain entry.
 These kind of events take all kinds
 of careful preparation.

EXT. BACKSTREET - DAY

Bayfield and McMoon in a back street. Bayfield offers a wad
 of money to a smart GENTLEMAN. He takes the money and leaves
 with a smile for Bayfield.

Bayfield steps over to McMoon and takes out a little
 notebook.

CLOSE UP:

A list of publications, some already struck out. Bayfield
 crosses off The Musical Courier. Only two remain.

BAYFIELD
So, two to go.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Bayfield and McMoon sit at a desk in the lounge selling tickets. A line of patient TICKET BUYERS stretches out of the door of the apartment. Most are Verdi Club ladies, with a few WEALTHY LOOKING COUPLES here and there.

Bayfield is discreetly interviewing a MAN, 30s, who has too much of a twinkle in his eye.

BAYFIELD
Have you attended one of Madam
Florence's concerts before?

MAN
No. But I heard all about her.

Bayfield recoils inwardly. This chap is not the right type at all.

BAYFIELD
Yes, well I'm afraid we're giving
priority to Verdi Club members at
the moment.

MAN
But I came all the way from
Brooklyn!

BAYFIELD
(looking down)
I'm so sorry. Next, please.
(to McMoon)
Not a music lover.

A phone in the hallway rings. Bayfield gets up to answer it.

BAYFIELD
(to McMoon)
You take over. Two dollars a pop.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- DAY

He passes PHINEUS STARK, 50s, a businessman who is with his young wife, AGNES, 20s, a brassy show girl.

BAYFIELD
Mr Stark, very nice!

Bayfield answers the phone.

BAYFIELD

(on phone)

Yes, thank you for calling back.
The poster. President and founder,
Florence Foster Jenkins, that
should be larger, 28 point.

PHINEUS

(to Agnes; under his
breath)

If asked, your favourite composers
are Mozart, Verdi, and Beethoven.

AGNES

(through chewing gum)

Phineus, try to get this through
your fat head. I'm not interested
in your bullshit music club, OK?

PHINEUS

Agnes, please!
(getting a surprise)
My God!

Florence walks into the hall, arm-in-arm with Toscanini.

FLORENCE

On the 4th, Saturday night at 8pm.
I do so hope you can be there.

TOSCANINI

Well unfortunately we're
rehearsing.

FLORENCE

Oh, on Saturday night?

TOSCANINI

Well yes, we rehearse all the time.

Florence shows Toscanani out.

PHINEUS

(under his breath)

Oh my God. That's Toscanini, the
conductor.

AGNES

And I thought it was Toscanini -
the anchovy paste salesman.

Bayfield's still on the phone.

BAYFIELD

(on phone)

And finally, the line below that should read: "Directed by St. Clair Bayfield, *eminent* actor and monologist"... *Eminent, yes.*

After leaving Toscanini at the door, Florence returns and spots glamorous Agnes. Clearly, she takes a dim view. She approaches Bayfield.

FLORENCE

(under her breath)

St.. Clair, who is that vulgar woman?

BAYFIELD

The new Mrs Phineus Stark, I imagine.

FLORENCE

(scoffing)

Huf! What happened to the last one? Who is that man, anyway?

BAYFIELD

Phineus? Sells meat - in cans. Very wealthy. Very generous.

Florence scoffs again before returning to the lounge.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Phineus and Agnes have reached the front of the line. Phineus is trying to persuade McMoon to sell him a pair of tickets. Agnes couldn't care less.

PHINEUS

(anxiously)

- I understand that Agnes isn't a member... she's new to the world of classical music... but she is very keen to learn.

McMoon turns to passing Bayfield for guidance. Bayfield gives him a nod of approval.

MCMOON

(under his breath)

Well in that case I think we can make an exception. Four dollars please.

PHINEUS

(thrilled)

Thank you so much.

MCMOON
 (handing over the tickets)
 A whole world of pleasure awaits
 you, Mrs. Stark.

AGNES STARK
 You can never get too much
 pleasure. Right?

MCMOON
 Right!

CUT TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

The Verdi luncheon is taking place. Guests are seated around a few different tables eating sandwiches and potato salad. McMoon plays Verdi's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves on the grand piano.

Shameless Bayfield hands over a pair of tickets to Mrs. Levi and takes cash in return.

BAYFIELD
 So, that is two tickets for the
 Levis and a dollar change.

Bayfield turns to MRS. VANDERBILT.

BAYFIELD
 Now then.

MRS. VANDERBILT
 Oh Mr Bayfield. I am so excited.

BAYFIELD
 Well, we all are. I have put you in
 row E, Mrs Vanderbilt - E for
 elegance.

At another table Florence holds court. She rises and beckons to Bayfield.

BAYFIELD
 Four dollars if I may.
 (noticing Florence)
 Excuse me?

Bayfield sidles over to anxious Florence.

FLORENCE
 (under her breath)
 They're getting through the potato
 salad like gannets. Is there any
 more?

BAYFIELD
Let me check.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BATHROOM -- DAY

Bayfield enters the bathroom.

BAYFIELD
How's it going Kitty? Running low?

Cut to reveal that KITTY is spooning potato salad onto a silver platter with a ladle from the bathtub - it's full to the brim with the stuff.

KITTY
I think we should be fine Mr.
Bayfield.

BAYFIELD
(reassured)
Very good. I'll take that.

Kitty hands him the dish of potato salad.

KITTY
Thank you Mr. Bayfield.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

The guests have gone. Bayfield tots up the cash. Kitty enters.

KITTY
There's an Earl Wilson here.

BAYFIELD
(hesitant)
Send him in. Thank you.

For some reason Bayfield is immediately on his guard. He gathers up the cash and puts it in the desk drawer.

BAYFIELD
Earl Wilson of the New York Post.

EARL WILSON
How do you do Mr. Bayfield?

BAYFIELD
I read your column, it's great fun.

EARL WILSON
Thank you.

BAYFIELD
What brings you here?

EARL WILSON
I was hoping I could get a ticket
for the concert?

BAYFIELD
Well, I'm afraid we're all sold
out.

EARL WILSON
Oh? Carlton Smith from the
Musical Courier has got one. So
has Stubbs from World Bugle.

BAYFIELD
I'm really not sure that it's an
event that would interest the
readers of the New York Post.

EARL WILSON
My editor would disagree. There's
quite a buzz around town about it
- he sent me down here, himself.
(beat)
So, can I get that ticket?

BAYFIELD
(very unsure)
Why not?

EARL WILSON
Thank you.

Bayfield reaches into the drawer of his desk. He stuffs a
fifty into an envelope together with a ticket and offers it
to Wilson.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
Voila.

EARL WILSON (CONT'D)
I just need the ticket.

BAYFIELD
It's both or neither, Mr. Wilson.

EARL WILSON
(ignoring the envelope)
Then I'll trouble you no more. Good
evening.

BAYFIELD
Good evening.

EXT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A taxi pulls up.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

Tired Bayfield enters his apartment. He hears voices.

KATHLEEN (O.S.)
Darling. Augustus is here.

BAYFIELD
Ah, what a surprise? How are you Augustus?

CORBIN (O.S.)
Couldn't be better.

BAYFIELD
I hear your play was a triumph.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Bayfield enters the lounge where he finds flamboyant AUGUSTUS CORBIN, 50'S, drinking a cocktail, Kathleen sits on the arm of his chair. She gets up to kiss Bayfield.

CORBIN
I am a second-rate playwright and we all know that but a first-rate friend. The latter outweighing the former, I feel.

KATHLEEN
(kissing him)
With knobs on!

Bayfield begins fixing a drink for himself.

CORBIN (CONT'D)
So, is it really true?

BAYFIELD
What's that?

CORBIN
Madam Florence is taking to the stage once more?

BAYFIELD
Yes.

CORBIN
It's been too long! How much are the tickets?

BAYFIELD
I'm afraid we're all sold out.

CORBIN
(shocked)
You can't be sold out.

BAYFIELD
I'm so sorry.

KATHLEEN
St. Clair, don't be a silly arse.

CORBIN
(imitating her
Britishness)
Yes, don't be a silly arse, St.
Clair!

Kathleen laughs.

BAYFIELD
The concert is for true music
lovers - not mockers and scoffers
like you and your artistic
friends.

CORBIN
When have I ever mocked or
scoffed?
(sincerely)
The lady is an eloquent lesson in
fidelity and courage and that's
why we love her. Please, St.
Clair, do you want to see a grown
man cry?

KATHLEEN
Be a sport...
(kissing him; turning it
on)
... I'll make it up to you.

BAYFIELD
No, I'm sorry.

KATHLEEN
Please?

BAYFIELD
No. Non. Niet.

INT. RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

The ballroom is filling up fast.

INT. RITZ-CARLTON BALLROOM / LOBBY -- NIGHT

Kathleen, Corbin and their ARTISTIC FRIENDS approach Bayfield.

BAYFIELD

You're very lucky to be here.
You've made some promises and I'm
holding you to them.

CORBIN

I've brought some friends. Music
lovers.

BAYFIELD

We'll see. I'm watching them
carefully.

Kathleen, Corbin and their Friends head into the ballroom.

Journalist CARLTON SMITH, the man that took the cash in the
back alley, arrives with fellow journalist, STUBBS.

BAYFIELD

Carlton Smith and Mr Stubbs. We're
greatly honoured. I hope you enjoy
the evening.

SMITH

We will St. Clair.

BAYFIELD

Fingers crossed.

Bayfield crossing to the main door where a pair of USHERS
are checking tickets.

BAYFIELD

(under his breath)

Tell the ushers downstairs that
absolutely no one gets in without
a ticket. No exceptions. And if
Earl Wilson turns up, they
politely show him the door.

USHERS

Yes, Mr Bayfield.

Mr and Mrs Stark arrive.

BAYFIELD

Mr and Mrs Stark, how very nice.
Will you forgive me? I have an
important nose to powder.

PHINEUS

(sighing)

Just beautiful.

INT. RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL / BALLROOM / WINGS - DAY

McMoon, wearing a tuxedo, peeps out from the wings and surveys the audience. He's sweating with anxiety.

MCMOON
(under his breath)
God.

Bayfield joins him on the stage.

BAYFIELD
They're going to adore you, you
have my word.

His words don't settle McMoon.

Florence appears wearing an extraordinary outfit of shimmering silk and feathers; it's splendidly kitsch.

FLORENCE
Too many feathers you think?

BAYFIELD
The perfect number of feathers.
Restrained and elegant.

FLORENCE
(laughing)
I'm so nervous, Whitey! Are you
nervous, Mr. McMoon?

MCMOON
Somewhat.

BAYFIELD
We've a full and very warm house
and you are both going to be
sensational. Ready?

FLORENCE
Yes!

Bayfield kisses Florence.

BAYFIELD
Break a leg.

He signals to the LIGHTING GUY.

BAYFIELD
House lights please.

Florence smiles at McMoon.

FLORENCE
This is what we live for, isn't
it? This moment.

The curtains open. The Audience applauds.

McMoon takes his seat at the piano and strikes up the opening chords of Adele's Laughing Song from Die Fledermaus. Florence begins to sing.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

(singing)

"Oh noble sir, how far you err,
you're really not discreet..."

The Verdi Club members listen in reverential silence, but at the back of the hall, Corbin and his friends are already in convulsions, though they are very careful not to make a sound.

FLORENCE

"My little white hands so fine, agh
agh agh agh agh!..."

But AGNES Stark can't believe the sound Florence is making. Her mouth drops open with incredulity. She looks around and is astonished to see that the Verdi Club members seem to be unphased, indeed enraptured. She attempts to stifle a giggle. Phineus shoots her a warning look but this only makes matters worse.

FLORENCE

"Your blunder almost takes the
cake.."

Agnes laughs more loudly - the sound distracts others. A couple of the Verdi Ladies shoot her irritated looks.

PHINEUS STARK

(hissing under his
breath)

For God's sake woman - be quiet!

FLORENCE

"Pray excuse me aha ha ha..."

But it's too late. Agnes can no longer control herself.

McMoon notices that Agnes is laughing and struggles to maintain his composure.

Bayfield spots the trouble and moves in as Agnes is gripped by a full-blown laughing fit.

BAYFIELD

(under his breath)

Is she unwell, Mr. Stark?

PHINEUS STARK

(under his breath)

A coughing fit.

BAYFIELD
 (under his breath)
 She needs fresh air. This way Mrs
 Stark.

All the fuss just makes things worse for poor Agnes.

INT. RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL / OUTSIDE BALLROOM - NIGHT

... Bayfield and Stark half carry her into the corridor outside. With the door shut behind them, Agnes collapses on a floor with tears of laughter stream down her face. She forces her knees forced together as a precaution.

PHINEUS STARK
 Control yourself, Agnes!
 (turning to Bayfield)
 I am so sorry, Mr. Bayfield.

BAYFIELD
 Not at all.
 (to Agnes)
 I wish you a speedy recovery, Mrs.
 Stark.

AGNES STARK
 (fighting for breath)
 She is the god-damned worst singer
 in the whole, entire world!

PHINEUS STARK
 Why must you always embarrass me?

INT. RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL / BALLROOM - NIGHT

Bayfield returns to the ballroom where Corbin and his friends are struggling to remain silent. Kathleen, too, is fighting to stay in control. Bayfield shoots them an angry look.

ON THE STAGE:

McMoon does his best to stay in time with Florence, but she's sliding around and it's a real struggle. To his huge relief, Florence reaches the end of the song with a final and terrible howl.

It all becomes too much for Corbin who's muffled laughter is becoming audible. To mask the sound, he breaks into applause...

CORBIN
 Bravo Madam Florence! Bravo!

The ballroom fills with cheers and applause.

McMoon takes a deep breath then turns to the audience.
 Florence takes a bow.

A smile of relief comes over McMoon's face. Not only have they survived, they have triumphed. He joins Florence and takes a bow.

Finally, Bayfield has had enough of Corbin.

BAYFIELD
 That's enough. Sit down!

CUT TO:

INT. RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL / FLORENCE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

WAITERS serve sandwiches and potato salad from silver platters. Florence is surrounded by well-wishers. Bayfield talks to some Verdi Ladies.

BARONESS
 St. Clair, congratulations. What a wonderful evening.

BAYFIELD
 Thank you, Baroness.

MRS OSCAR GURMUNDER
 Oh Mr Bayfield, I don't hear very well but I just think Madam Florence is magical!

BAYFIELD
 (raising his voice)
 Well I know how very grateful she is for your friendship and your support.
 (noticing Florence)
 I'm so very sorry, just one moment.

BARONESS
 That little McMoon. What a find.

Bayfield makes his way through the crowd, accepting congratulations as he goes. He reaches Florence's side and notices that she's looking exhausted.

MRS. JAMES O'FLAHERTY
 Darling, darling, the Die Fledermaus was thrilling!
 Absolutely thrilling!

Florence soaks up the praise.

BAYFIELD
 Everything all right?

FLORENCE
 (under her breath)
 I don't feel very well, Whitey.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

Kitty opens the door. Bayfield guides Florence in, she's unsteady on her feet. Kitty takes the leather briefcase from Bayfield.

KITTY
 Dr. Hertz is in Washington, but he sent his colleague, Dr. Hermann.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - NIGHT

Florence in bed in her nightgown with Bayfield at her side. DR. HERMANN, 60s, listens to her heart with a stethoscope. He removes the earphones and checks the glands in Florence's neck.

DR. HERMANN
 If I may, please.

He then checks her back. He spots something and pauses.

DR. HERMANN
 I didn't have time to look at your medical notes.

FLORENCE
 The scarring is from syphilis.

DR. HERMANN
 When did you contract the disease?

FLORENCE
 On my wedding night. My first husband, Dr. Frank Thorton Jenkins... something of an alley cat.

DR. HERMANN
 How old were you?

FLORENCE
 18.

DR. HERMANN
 Where did the chancre first appear?

FLORENCE
 On my left hand. Right here.

He examines Florence's limp hand.

DR. HERMANN

(beat)

Are you taking any medication?

FLORENCE

Just mercury - and arsenic, of course.

DR. HERMANN

Any other symptoms?

FLORENCE

No.

BAYFIELD

She has seizures from time to time.

(gently scolding)

When she has over-exerted herself.

DR. HERMANN

I see.

(the examination over)

Well, there is a murmur and some palpitations, but no indication that the disease is entering the tertiary phase.

(ironically)

The two hours of coloratura you performed this evening might account for the tiredness.

Florence and Bayfield laugh politely as Dr. Hermann packs up his bag.

DR. HERMANN (CONT'D)

Bed rest until your strength returns. I'll speak to Dr. Hertz and let him know.

FLORENCE

Thank you, Doctor.

Bayfield follows Dr. Hermann out of the room.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Bayfield accompanies Dr. Hermann to the door.

DR. HERMANN

I've known patients survive twenty years with syphilis, but never nearly fifty. I'm amazed. What *is* her secret?

BAYFIELD

Music. She lives for music.

DR. HERMANN

And no doubt your love has proved
to be a panacea, too.

BAYFIELD

We were fortunate to have found
each other.

DR. HERMANN

Clearly.

(confidentially)

I don't mean to pry, Mr. Bayfield,
but... how is your own health?

BAYFIELD

(under his breath)

Florence and I have always
abstained.

DR. HERMANN

Very wise. I have several patients
who observe the five year rule but
it's no sure prophylactic.

BAYFIELD

From the start, Florence felt that
my health was paramount.

DR. HERMANN

Excitement stimulates the disease.
She needs rest, Mr. Bayfield. Rest.

INT. FLORENCE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Bayfield returns to Florence's bedroom. He can see that the
examination has upset her.

BAYFIELD

Rest, my love.

FLORENCE

I can't help wondering what my life
would have been, if I had never met
Frank Jenkins.

BAYFIELD

He is in his grave now. Forget him.

FLORENCE

But I could have given you a child.
We could have been a family -

BAYFIELD

(tenderly)

- we are a family. A great and
devoted family - united by our love
of music. Are we not happy, Bunny?

Florence does her best to nod, but the pain of her childlessness is very great. Bayfield turns to Keats for help.

BAYFIELD

Shut your eyes. I'll recite for you.

(beat)

"Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art, Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night, And watching, with eternal lids apart -

FLORENCE

(thoughtlessly)

- I think I'll read.

Bayfield stops. He stands and kisses her cheek.

BAYFIELD

Good night, my love.

FLORENCE

Night night.

Florence nods. Bayfield leaves.

EXT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A tired Bayfield steps out of a cab and heads up the steps of his rather shabby apartment building.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

Bayfield let's himself in. From the lounge we hear a jazz trio playing the Fats Waller song "It's a Sin To Tell a Lie".

Near the door, journalist Carlton Smith is calling in his copy on the telephone.

SMITH

(reading from a notebook)

- and the consensus was that she'd never sung better -

Carlton spots Bayfield and gives him a friendly wave.

SMITH (CONT'D)

- her grace and brilliant personality only added to the remarkable quality of her voice. By the end of her performance, the stage was a bower of blooms, and Madam Jenkins retired to affectionate applause...

Bayfield gives him a look.

SMITH
 (correcting himself)
 ... make that "thunderous"
 applause.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Bayfield enters the lounge where a party is taking place. Many of the characters from Florence's concert are there. Corbin and his artistic crew are having a fine old time.

KATHLEEN
 (to all)
 Everybody, look who's here!

A great cheer goes up as the party guests recognise Bayfield and applaud.

KATHLEEN
 (kissing Bayfield)
 Darling!

Bayfield recognises Agnes.

KATHLEEN
 (indicating Agnes)
 You don't mind? I invited the show
 girl. She's simply adorable.
 Darling, the concert was wonderful.
 How is Florence?

BAYFIELD
 She's absolutely f-

Bayfield spots McMoon who is standing alone in the kitchen.

KATHLEEN
 Well I couldn't not invite him.
 Would you like a drink?

BAYFIELD
 (heading away)
 In a minute.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / KITCHEN -- NIGHT

McMoon straightens himself up as Bayfield enters.

BAYFIELD
 Cosme.

MCMOON
 Good evening, Mr. Bayfield.

Bayfield offers him a cigarette from an elegant cigarette case.

BAYFIELD
Cigarette?

MCMOON
No thank you... I hope you don't mind me being here, your friend Kathleen was most insistent that I stop by.

Bayfield takes a cigarette for himself and lights it.

BAYFIELD
You're very welcome. Do you have a drink?

MCMOON
Yes.

He sucks on his coke through a straw and makes a little noise.

MCMOON
(shifting about)
Maybe I should get home?

BAYFIELD
No no no. You stay where you are.

MCMOON
This is all... a little awkward. I mean, I thought that you and Madam Florence were married?

BAYFIELD
We are.

MCMOON
But you live here with... Kathleen. Is she... your sister?

BAYFIELD
She's my girlfriend. It's a little complicated.

MCMOON
Yes, it is.

BAYFIELD
Cosme, you have nothing to worry about. Florence and I have an understanding.

MCMOON

(wide eyed)

Madam Florence, she... knows about Kathleen?

BAYFIELD

(beat)

Well she... understands that love, love... takes many forms. Believe me there is no shortage of love between any of us. Surely you can see I'm devoted to Florence? Our marriage is a thing of the spirit, it transcends this realm.

(beat)

I am very fond of you, Cosme. I think of you as a chum.

MCMOON

That's kind of you, Mr. Bayfield. Seeing as we're talking in a familiar fashion... could I possibly ask what it is that Madam Florence carries in that briefcase?

BAYFIELD

No.

MCMOON

No!

Bayfield guides Cosme out of the kitchen.

BAYFIELD

Now, what do you say we grab a couple of Manhattans and go and join the hepcats?

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Bayfield and McMoon rejoin the party. McMoon is admired by a passing MALE GUEST.

MCMOON

Mr. Corbin's friends are all so personable.

BAYFIELD

(cynically)

Yes, I bet.

He hands McMoon a drink.

BAYFIE

There you are. To friendship. In one. Go!

They down the cocktails.

Whooping and cheering. Tom tom drums. Sing! Sing! Sing!
begins to play on the record player.

AGNES STARK

Hey! Mr Bayfield, I want to see you
dance!

BAYFIELD

No, no... my dancing days are done.

Kathleen drapes herself around Bayfield and kisses him.

KATHLEEN

Dance St.. Clair! I wanna see you
dance!

BAYFIELD

No, I really shouldn't.

Suddenly, Bayfield cuts loose and goes mad with Agnes - he's
a great dancer! Kathleen whoops and claps - it's so much fun.

McMoon loves it and is surprised to find his drink being
refreshed by his admirer.

Bayfield throws Agnes into the air.

The guests love it! They all join in.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE - DAY

The following morning.

McMoon sleeps fitfully on the sofa in a state of some
dishevelment.

There's a knock at the door. Then a slightly louder one.
McMoon stirs and sits up trying to get his bearings. He looks
around. The room is a mess. Empty bottles, half full glasses
and ash trays litter the tables and floor.

FLORENCE (O.S.)

St.. Clair. Are you there? St..
Clair? Wake up! There's something I
simply have to show you.

McMoon recognizes Florence's voice and leaps up. Only now do
we see that he's not wearing trousers. The bell sounds again.

FLORENCE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

St.. Clair, are you in there?

McMoon fights his way into his trousers and dashes into the bedroom...

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - DAY

... where he finds a very naked Bayfield asleep in bed with a very naked Kathleen. McMoon taps Bayfield's shoulder.

MCMOON
 (under his breath)
 Oh golly. Mr. Bayfield! Wake up!
 Mr. Bayfield.

Bayfield stirs.

MCMOON (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 Madam Florence is here!

BAYFIELD
 (shocked)
 What?

MCMOON
 That's her at the door.

Bayfield sits bolt upright in panic. He jogs Kathleen violently.

BAYFIELD
 (under his breath)
 Wake up!

KATHLEEN
 (stirring)
 Huh? What's the matter?

BAYFIELD
 It's Florence. She's here.

KATHLEEN
 What's she doing here?

BAYFIELD
 (to McMoon)
 Stall her!
 (to Kathleen)
 Get out of bed. Get out.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE - DAY

McMoon returns to the lounge. Florence is becoming increasingly frustrated and begins banging on the door.

FLORENCE (O.S)
 St.. Clair, are you there?

MCMOON
Just a moment, Madam Florence.

She stops banging.

FLORENCE (O.S.)
(beat)
Who is that?

MCMOON
It's me. Mr. McMoon. How are you?

FLORENCE (O.S.)
Mr. McMoon? What are you doing
here? Open this door at once!

McMoon has no option. He opens the door and Florence strides in carrying an armful of newspapers.

FLORENCE
Where's Mr. Bayfield?

Florence trips on an empty bottle before taking in the mess with disgust.

FLORENCE
Oh, my hat!

Florence strides past McMoon and reaches for the door handle of Bayfield's bedroom. Fearing the worst, McMoon tries to stop her -

MCMOON
Madam Florence! Please!

- but he's too late. She throws open the door...

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - DAY

... and discovers Bayfield sitting up in bed wearing a dressing gown and glasses as he reads a book.

FLORENCE
Whitey?

BAYFIELD
Bunny. How very nice I was just
reading a little early Austen.
Quite fun.

He puts down the book and gets out of bed.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
Could I offer you some tea?

FLORENCE

What is going on? Why is Mr. McMoon here?

BAYFIELD

He lost his house key, so I put him up for the night.

FLORENCE

But what about the mess?

BAYFIELD

(playing confused)
There's a mess?

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE - DAY

They step into the lounge where McMoon awaits, nervously. Bayfield takes in the chaotic sight; he's "horrified".

BAYFIELD

Good God.
(turning to McMoon)
When I said help yourself to a night cap, I meant ONE! Just look at the place!

He turns to Florence, who, for once, is speechless.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

Look what he's done Bunny, aren't you going to chastise him?

FLORENCE

(stumbling)
Well, I am very disappointed in you, Mr. McMoon. I do not approve of drinking. What got into you?

MCMOON

(bewildered)
I'm very sorry.

BAYFIELD

Never again, Mr. McMoon. Do you understand?

Bayfield notices that Florence is carrying a wad of newspapers under her arm.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

(brightly)
The reviews! What do they say?

Florence returns to the purpose of her visit. McMoon's transgressions are suddenly forgotten.

FLORENCE
Well, they're simply marvellous!
Come, come, come.

The sit down on the sofa.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)
Page seven. Here. Down below.

Bayfield searches through the paper for the review with great urgency. He finds it and reads aloud:

BAYFIELD
... the consensus was that she'd never sung better. Her grace and brilliant personality only added to the remarkable quality of her voice...

Florence soaks up the praise like a sponge. Suddenly, McMoon's eyes widen as he sees Agnes Stark stagger out of the bathroom behind Florence's back. She wears just a slip, her hair is like a bird's nest, and mascara is smeared all over her face.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
... by the end of her performance, the stage was a bower of blooms, and Madam Jenkins retired to thunderous applause!

Bayfield sees Agnes but keeps his cool. Florence is so distracted that she doesn't notice McMoon slip behind her and escort Agnes back into the bathroom.

BAYFIELD
(shouting)
Bravo! Bravisimo!

FLORENCE
And I've had a simply darling idea for the Christmas gift for the members.

BAYFIELD
Really?

FLORENCE
We're booked in for eleven O'clock.

BAYFIELD
Booked for?

FLORENCE
It's a surprise.
(giggling with excitement)
So continue your ablutions - quickly.

(MORE)

FLORENCE (cont'd)
 I've got a cab waiting downstairs.
 And bring McMoon with you. I've
 been looking for him all morning!

Bayfield shows Florence to the door.

BAYFIELD
 I shall.

FLORENCE
 Just hurry.

BAYFIELD
 Yes, yes! In a tiny demi-quaver.

Bayfield let Florence out then and shuts the door behind her
 before taking a deep breath.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - DAY

Bayfield enters the bedroom and opens the closet door.

BAYFIELD
 She's gone.

Kathleen steps out with a sheet around her.

KATHLEEN
 (fuming)
 This is just ridiculous.

BAYFIELD
 I'm sorry.

KATHLEEN
 I shouldn't have to hide in my own
 home. It's humiliating and there
 are rules.

BAYFIELD
 I think she was just overexcited.

KATHLEEN
 You are to speak to her.

BAYFIELD
 Yes that's a very good idea and I
 shall say "Florence, although you
 pay the rent on my apartment would
 you mind not visiting it."

KATHLEEN
 Oh, shut up. I won't go on living
 like this. Do you understand?
 (getting dressed)
 What am I doing here?
 (MORE)

KATHLEEN (cont'd)
I'm willing to share you St. Clair
but... I need some dignity.

BAYFIELD
Of course, of course. I am so
sorry. I'll make sure it doesn't
happen again. I don't know how.

Kathleen sighs and sits on the bed. Bayfield sits beside her.

BAYFIELD
(beat)
Why don't we go away for a few
days. Golf? Hamptons? Good idea?

Kathleen nods.

KATHLEEN
(sighing)
Yes.

To cap it all, from the bathroom we hear the sound of McMoon
vomiting.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / HALL -- DAY

Bayfield steps out the bedroom and sees Agnes holding
McMoon's hair as she smokes a cigarette in the bathroom.

AGNES
There you go.

BAYFIELD
Oh good Lord.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MELOTONE RECORDS - DAY

A New York street. Excited Florence climbs out of a cab and
points at a sign in the window of a shop which reads
"Melotone Records".

FLORENCE
Here we are!

Bayfield and McMoon follow.

FLORENCE
We're going to make a recording and
give a copy to the members for
Christmas. I'm so excited!

BAYFIELD
It's a lovely idea but Bunny, Dr
Hermann was very, very specific
about excitement -

FLORENCE

- oh phooew! Come along.

McMoon stands hesitantly at the side of the road as Florence bounds into the studio. Bayfield snaps his fingers at McMoon.

BAYFIELD

Come on. Come on!

INT. MELOTONE RECORDS / RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Florence stands before a microphone and shrieks her way through McMoon's song "Like A Bird". McMoon does his best to stay with her.

In the adjoining control room, the ENGINEER struggles to understand what's going on. He turns to Bayfield for help, but receives only a supercilious smile.

To one side, the needle of a recording machine cuts into a disc of shellac.

As Florence hits the big note at the end, the Engineer is forced to lift his earphones away from his ears. Mercifully, the song comes to an end.

BAYFIELD

Bravo! That was wonderful, Bunny.

Florence giggles with pleasure.

EXT. BEACH ROAD -- DAY

To cheerful music, Bayfield's little sports car clips along a seaside lane.

EXT. GOLF COURSE -- DAY

Amid glorious sand dunes and with a splendid view of Long Island Sound, Bayfield and Kathleen are having a marvellous time together. Kathleen looks sensational as she plays the flirt for Bayfield's entertainment. She swings the club erratically.

KATHLEEN

Oh flipping hell!

A group of fellow GOLFERS are appalled by the spectacle.

BAYFIELD

Try this one. I did suggest this earlier. It's a little shorter and a little easier.

KATHLEEN

Oh yes, I like this one.

BAYFIELD

(holding her hips)

And slightly to the left and swing -
as if through molasses.

She hits it! She's so excited and jumps into Bayfield's arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Bach's heartbreaking Sarabande in D Minor for violin plays over.

Boxes of records sit on the table. Florence is hard at work. She's wrapped a hundred records but it's a Sisyphean task. On the radio, the Sarabande, comes to an end.

RICHARD CROOKS (O.S.)

(on radio)

You're listening to the Firestone Hour with me Richard Crooks on the NBC Radio network. We have a caller on line one, Mrs. Edna Hoffmann of New Jersey. Go ahead Edna.

EDNA HOFFMAN (O.S.)

(on radio)

Mr. Crooks, would you play Brahms' Lullaby?

RICHARD CROOKS

I'd love to. 'for anyone in particular?

EDNA HOFFMAN

(beat)

My son, Samuel. He's a flight navigator... He's missing in action over Germany.

Florence sighs in sympathy with the poor woman and stops wrapping.

FLORENCE

Oh my hat.

RICHARD CROOKS (O.S.)

(on radio)

Our hearts go out to you today, Edna. We'll all be thinking of Samuel.

Florence listens to the sound of Brahms' heart breaking tune sung in a sweet soprano voice.

SINGER
(on radio)
"Guten Abend, gute Nacht,
mit Rosen bedacht..."

EXT. HOTEL SEYMOUR - DAY

Florence walks out and hands a wrapped record to the Doorman.

FLORENCE
Jimmy, I'd like you to have that
hand-delivered please and I'm going
to grab one of these cabs.

DOORMAN
(showing her to the cab)
Sure. This way ma'am.

EXT. CRUMMY STREET - EVENING

A block in a humble neighborhood. CHILDREN play. A yellow cab picks its way through the streets and pulls up at a doorway. In furs and hat, Florence seems out of place.

INT. MCMOON'S APARTMENT - EVENING

McMoon lifts weights. Suddenly there is a loud knock on the door. He stirs.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)
Hey! McMoon! You got a visitor.

MCMOON
Alright!

FLORENCE (O.S.)
Hope I'm not disturbing you, Mr.
McMoon?

Florence climbs the stairs to McMoon's messy apartment. McMoon is shocked to see her.

MCMOON (CONT'D)
Madam Florence.

FLORENCE
I was out and about and suddenly
realized that I was in your
neighborhood.

MCMOON
What a... happy coincidence.

FLORENCE

Indeed.

MCMOON

Is Mr. Bayfield with you?

FLORENCE

No. May I come in?

MCMOON

(unsure)

Sure.

89

89

Very reluctantly, McMoon lets Florence in. He's consumed with embarrassment.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I've brought you our recording.

She hands a copy to McMoon.

MCMOON

Gee, thank you, Madam Florence.

FLORENCE

You're very welcome.

She notices that the kitchen area is a mess.

FLORENCE

(laughing)

You haven't done your dishes, Mr McMoon!

(sighing)

Would you like me to do them for you?

MCMOON

(anxiously)

No, you don't need to do that Madam Florence.

FLORENCE

Well, they'll not wash themselves, will they?

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I'll make you a deal. I'll wash your dishes if you play something for me. How about that?

She takes off her coat and begins rolling up her sleeves.

MCMOON

(shaking his head)

Madam Florence, I can -

McMoon stands watching as Florence gets to work.

FLORENCE
 (brightly)
 - Do we have a deal, Mr. McMoon?

McMoon realizes that he has no choice but to play. He takes his seat at the piano.

MCMOON
 What should I play?

FLORENCE
 Anything you like.

McMoon settles then begins playing a sweet little song.

FLORENCE
 That's such a pretty melody. Is it yours?

MCMOON
 (smiling)
 Yes.

Florence starts to sing along to McMoon's despair.

FLORENCE
 You inspire me. I shall write some lyrics for you.

MCMOON
 Oh. Wonderful.

Florence tries to come up with some lyrics but they don't really make much sense.

FLORENCE
 (singing)
 "The birds... in the trees..."

MCMOON
 Madam Florence, do you mind if I ask how you met Mr. Bayfield?

FLORENCE
 (thrilled)
 Oh! I was performing in a musicale at the Waldorf, 1919, and I was wearing a violet, velvet gown. I looked into the audience and saw a man with the most beautiful smile I had ever seen.
 (beaming)
 He had such an aristocratic bearing. That was that.
 (laughing gently)
 Of course his grandfather was an Earl, you know?

MCMOON

Doesn't that make him an Earl, too?

FLORENCE

(shaking her head)

He wasn't on the legitimate line. There was nothing for him in England, so he came here and became an actor. He wasn't always successful. I had to hide the reviews occasionally.

(beat)

You play so beautifully, Mr. McMoon. You know, I played for the President when I was eight years old?

MCMOON

Really?

FLORENCE

Yes! I played at the White House. Little Miss Foster, they called me. I had very high hopes of becoming a concert pianist...

(massaging her hand)

... but then the nerves were damaged in my left hand and that was not to be.

MCMOON

That's too bad. What happened to your hand?

Suddenly, Florence knocks a knife onto the floor. She jumps back, very startled and struggles to control her breathing. McMoon jumps up from the piano and hides the knife beneath a tea towel before removing it.

FLORENCE

(recovering)

I'm sorry. I am a silly woman.

MCMOON

No... would you like a glass of water?

Florence nods. McMoon rinses a glass and fills it from the tap. Florence gulps it down.

FLORENCE

When Mr. Bayfield is away playing golf, the days can seem awfully long.

(beat)

I understand that he needs his sport, but I miss him terribly.

MCMOON

He'll be back soon, Madam Florence.
He's devoted to you. He told me so.

Florence nods, a little reassured. Florence massages her weak hand.

MCMOON

'you ok?

FLORENCE

The change in temperature... It can
be very painful.

Florence is very touched. She pauses then nods nervously. She joins McMoon at the piano.

FLORENCE

Do you know the Prelude in E minor?
Chopin?

McMoon nods. With only his left hand McMoon begins to play the bass notes intro. Florence joins him with her right hand and they begin to play together as one.

FLORENCE

That's it.

Florence is overcome with agony and joy.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY / DUSK

Kathleen and Bayfield lie together on a picnic blanket. Bayfield rolls over and kisses Kathleen who giggles.

EXT. WOOD - DAY / DUSK

Kathleen and Bayfield walk hand-in-hand through the woodland.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / HALL -- DAY

Bayfield and Kathleen return from their happy weekend away. They drop their bags and golf clubs in the hall.

INT. BAYFIELD'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- DAY

Kathleen flops down on a chair.

BAYFIELD

Drink?

KATHLEEN

Rather!

BAYFIELD

Let me just take your bags Madam.
And may I say what lovely legs you
have Madam.

As Bayfield disappears into the bedroom, Kathleen turns on the radio. We hear a singer performing "Like A Bird". Gradually, Kathleen recognises Florence's voice and becomes increasingly alarmed.

KATHLEEN

(standing up)

St.. Clair. Come in here.

BAYFIELD (O.S.)

One moment.

KATHLEEN

St.. Clair!

Bayfield returns to the room.

BAYFIELD

What?

Bayfield recognises Florence's voice. He is horrified.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

How did she get on the radio?

The song comes to an end.

RICHARD CROOKS (O.S.)

(on radio)

That was Florence Foster Jenkins
singing Like a Bird by Cosme
McMoon.

(beat)

We're getting quite a few calls on
that one...

RICHARD CROOKS (O.S.)

(on radio)

... We have Ed calling from the
military hospital in Queens. Ed,
you're on the air.

KATHLEEN

How did Richard Crooks get -

Bayfield cuts her off.

ED (O.S.)

(on radio)

Mr. Crooks, the guys here, we all love that record! I lost my left leg and half my face at Guadalcanal, but that Dame's got me feelin' happy to be alive! Can you play it again? And please tell us where we can find her records!

RICHARD CROOKS (O.S.)

(on radio; laughing)

I don't think it's for sale. It's a private recording...

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

Kitty lets Bayfield into Florence's apartment. She's very agitated.

KITTY

Thank goodness you're here, Mr. Bayfield. Things have been goin' crazy. It's difficult when you're away.

BAYFIELD

Yes, I'm very sorry Kitty. Tell me, how did Richard Crooks get the record?

Bayfield heads towards Florence's bedroom.

KITTY

She gave it to him - he's been playing it all weekend. The phone's been ringing off the hook with people wanting a copy - Cole Porter called. It put Madam Florence into one of her excited moods.

BAYFIELD

I'll talk to her.

KITTY

(shaking her head)

She's not here. She's at a meeting.

BAYFIELD

With?

KITTY

(anxiously)

Mr. Totten.

BAYFIELD

Thank you very much.

The alarm bells ring in Bayfield's head. He hurries out...

EXT. CARNEGIE HALL -- DAY

Bayfield jumps out of a taxi and hurries through the door of the hall.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / FOYER -- DAY

Bayfield enters the foyer where he runs into JOHN TOTTEN, 50s, the General Manager.

TOTTEN
(shaking his hand warmly)
Mr. Bayfield, how good to see you.

BAYFIELD
And you Mr. Totten. Is Madam Florence here?

TOTTEN
She's in the hall.

BAYFIELD
(hurry on)
Thank you.

TOTTEN
You have a moment?

BAYFIELD
Yes, in a jiffy.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL - DAY

Bayfield finds Florence sitting alone in the middle of the stalls.

Bayfield joins Florence and sits with her. She's calm, but not entirely in the room.

BAYFIELD
Do I see a pair of rabbit ears?

FLORENCE
Oh, Whitey.

BAYFIELD
Bunny!

FLORENCE
(a little tartly)
How was the golf?

BAYFIELD
 (slightly shame faced)
 It was nice enough, thank you.

FLORENCE
 Good.
 (moving on)
 This is my favourite place in the
 whole world.
 (beat)
 And I'm going to sing here.
 I've booked the hall for October
 25th. I'm going to give a thousand
 tickets to the soldiers because we
 must support our boys.

BAYFIELD
 (beat)
 Well... I applaud your courage and
 no one would enjoy seeing you
 triumph here more than I,
 obviously, but this place... it's
 just so big. It's almost three
 thousand people.

FLORENCE
 Well Lily Pons' voice filled it.
 And she's a little bird.

BAYFIELD
 Yes, but she is a young woman, with
 a young woman's strength and
 perfect technique -

FLORENCE
 (affronted)
 - my technique isn't perfect?

BAYFIELD
 No, it is. It is, I just think it
 might be too much for you.

FLORENCE
 (scoffing)
 Well if Mr. Churchill had adopted
 that attitude, why, Herr Hitler
 would be standing on the balcony of
 Buckingham Palace, howling like a
 Doberman as we speak!

BAYFIELD
 You're not strong enough, Bunny.
 (very anxiously)
 What if it kills you?

FLORENCE
 Then I shall die happy!
 (beat)

(MORE)

FLORENCE (cont'd)

Death has been my constant companion for the last fifty years. I have lived from day to day, never knowing when my body will succumb or my reason desert me.

(beat)

But I have fought and fought - and I am still here. And I'm going to sing here.

BAYFIELD

Have I not stood by you?

FLORENCE

If you truly love me, you'll let me sing here.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Kathleen and Bayfield sit in a booth drinking cocktails. Bayfield is in reflective mood. Kathleen takes Bayfield's hand, warmly.

KATHLEEN

It was a lovely weekend.

BAYFIELD

It was. We must do it again.

KATHLEEN

We must.

(beat)

Darling, please don't look so out of sorts.

BAYFIELD

I'm sorry.

KATHLEEN

She might change her mind, you know?

BAYFIELD

I very much doubt that.

Kathleen begins to lose patience.

KATHLEEN

Let's try to be happy tonight, eh?

BAYFIELD

Well, I'm trying.

Kathleen sighs and sits back.

KATHLEEN

You certainly are.

BAYFIELD

I just feel, if we had not gone away, none of this would have ever happened, but that's completely my fault.

Nearby, at the bar, WAGGISH YOUNG MEN drink and do their best to interest a group of YOUNG WOMEN. Jazz plays on a record player. A YOUNG MAN runs in. He puts a record on the player.

YOUNG MAN

Guys, Guys! I got it! Wait 'til you hear this.

We hear an excruciating burst of very off-key singing. It's Florence murdering The Bell Song. The Wags fall about laughing.

Kathleen recognises the sound.

KATHLEEN

It's Florence, they've got her record.

Bayfield is livid.

KATHLEEN

Darling, ignore them.

BAYFIELD

I shall not ignore them.

KATHLEEN

This is our night out St Clair.

BAYFIELD

Oh? So you think I should just sit here and have a jolly drink with you while human vermin laugh at my wife. Is that what you think?

KATHLEEN

You will sit down or, so help me God, I will leave you, St. Clair. Do you understand?

Bayfield ignores this and begins to stand. He springs from the table and pushes his way through the guffawing drinkers to the record player, where he pulls the needle from the record and snatches it.

BAYFIELD

Excuse me, excuse me. You have no right to have this, this is a private recording. It is not yours.

The WAGS are furious and begin jostling Bayfield violently. The record is snatched from him.

One of the girls pulls Bayfield's handkerchief from his pocket and tosses it on the floor.

GIRL

You dropped your mouchoir, Mr Fancy pants!

BAYFIELD

Get your philistine hands off me.
Give it to me or I will call the police.

Bayfield tries to fight off the attackers but he's quickly roughed up. The record is torn from his grip and he's tossed back towards the booth.

SOLDIER

Beat it, you hinty old sap!

Humiliated, Bayfield tries to straighten himself up as best he can. But the final humiliation is yet to come. When he turns into the booth... Kathleen is gone.

Bayfield draws a breath, then dashes towards the door.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET -- NIGHT

He bursts out of the bar and catches a glimpse of Kathleen as she gets into a cab at the far end of the street. Bayfield dashes towards her.

BAYFIELD

Kathleen! Wait!

But he's too late. The cab disappears into the night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MCMOON'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Bayfield, looking unshaven and rough, talks with McMoon who sits on the end of his bed.

MCMOON

(shaking his head)

I cannot play Carnegie Hall with Madam Florence!

(beat)

Maybe you could speak to Mr. Totten - tell him it's not such a great idea. Surely he'd understand?

BAYFIELD
 (shaking his head)
 It's too late she's given a
 thousand tickets to the War
 Veterans' Association.

MCMOON
 What did Kathleen say?

BAYFIELD
 (mournfully)
 Kathleen... has left me.

MCMOON
 (shocked)
 Gees. I'm so sorry. That's awful.

BAYFIELD
 Please, Cosme. Will you do it?

MCMOON
 (striding around)
 Mr. Bayfield, I am a serious
 pianist. I have ambition!

BAYFIELD
 (angrily)
 You think I didn't have ambition?
 I was a good actor, but I was never
 going to be a great actor. It was
 very hard to admit that to myself,
 but once I had, I felt free from
 the tyranny of Ambition. I started
 to live!
 (beat)
 Is ours not a happy world, Cosme?
 Do we not have fun?

MCMOON
 Please Mr. Bayfield -

BAYFIELD
 - you see, we have to help her
 because without loyalty there's
 nothing.

COSME
 We'll be murdered out there.

BAYFIELD
 You think I'm not aware of that?
 For 25 years I have kept the
 mockers and scoffers at bay. I'm
 very well aware of what they might
 do.

(beat)
 But Florence has been my life.

(MORE)

BAYFIELD (cont'd)

I love her and I think you love her too. Hmm? Singing at Carnegie Hall is her dream and I'm going to give it to her. The only question is whether you will stand by your patron and friend, in her hour of need, or whether you'll focus on your... ambition?

McMoon sighs. He's torn.

BAYFIELD

Please Cosme. Will you play for your friends?

COSME

Okay.

BAYFIELD

Thank you.

(beat; kisses Cosme's head)

Come on. You're going to play Carnegie Hall. How many people can say that?

MCMOON

(unconvinced)

Oh, boy. We're gonna die out there.

EXT. CARNEGIE HALL -- NIGHT

A crowd presses around the famous "up-coming concerts" board on the wall outside Carnegie Hall. The board carries a poster of Florence. The word "tonight" has been slashed across the corner.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / FOYER - NIGHT

Manager John Totten anxiously surveys the scene. SOLDIERS in excited mood are packing in and most have been drinking.

Flash bulbs pop as TALLULAH BANKHEAD and COLE PORTER make their entrance.

SOLDIER

It's Cole Porter - and Tullulah Bankhead.

SOLDIER # 2

Hey, Tallulah!

Bankhead smiles sweetly for the excited Soldiers.

TOTTEN
Miss Bankhead, Mr Porter. What an
honour!

Totten button holes an Ushers.

TOTTEN
(under his breath)
Don't let anyone in who's drunk!

USHER
They're all drunk.

BANKHEAD
Me included!

The crowd laughs uproariously.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Florence's dressing room is filled with costumes, including her magnificent wings. Jenny fussing around. Bayfield help Florence make her final vocal preparations.

BAYFIELD
And lower - from the diaphragm.
Blow the candles, Bunny.

FLORENCE
Agh! Agh!

BAYFIELD
Blow the candles out.. Hate the
candles.

FLORENCE
Where is Cosme? He's very, very
late.

BAYFIELD
Bunny, you must relax.

FLORENCE
What if he's dead?

BAYFIELD
He's never been late.

There is a knock on the door.

FLORENCE
Oh, here he is!

Bayfield answers it and finds a COLONEL, 40s, outside. He's smartly turned out in uniform and much decorated.

BAYFIELD

Colonel.

COLONEL

Could I speak to Madam Florence for a moment, Mr. Bayfield?

BAYFIELD

Of course. Bunny, it's the Colonel.

The Colonel hobbles in with the aid of a stick.

FLORENCE

Ah, Colonel. Is the house warming up nicely?

COLONEL

It sure is, Madam Florence. I'm not surprised, you're the talk of the town.

BAYFIELD

She sold out faster than Sinatra.

COLONEL

I don't doubt it. On behalf of the Marine Corp I just wanted to say thank you so much for the free tickets. The boys are very grateful.

FLORENCE

Given the sacrifices you've made it's the very least I can do.

COLONEL

Some things are worth dying for.

FLORENCE

(with a look to Bayfield)
You take the words right out of my mouth.

(apologetically)

Colonel, you'll forgive me, I must prepare.

COLONEL

(bowing)
Of course. Break a leg, that's what you say, isn't it?

FLORENCE

Yes, I'll try.

Bayfield shows the Colonel out.

BAYFIELD

Thank you Colonel. Those were kind words.

FLORENCE

Now, we are now 10 minutes from going on stage, where is he?

BAYFIELD

Bunny, you must relax.

FLORENCE

Where is Cosme?
(shouting)
Cosme!

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL - NIGHT

Tallulah Bankhead walks down the aisle to many whistles and cheers. A rowdy atmosphere is beginning to build.

More drunken soldiers flow into the hall and fight for seats. They whoop and cheer with excitement.

Some of the Verdi Club ladies turn and scowl. This is not the way to behave at a recital!

Totten has never seen anything like it and becomes increasingly anxious.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / BACK STAGE - NIGHT

Florence storms along. Bayfield and Jenny do their best to calm her down.

FLORENCE

Where is that silly, silly boy?

BAYFIELD

Well I don't have an answer Bunny, I wish I did. We know the traffic is terrible and I'm sure he'll be here any moment.

Florence hands Jenny her briefcase.

FLORENCE

Hold this. Keep it close.

Totten appears; he's close to panic.

TOTTEN

Mr Bayfield, half the audience is drunk!

BAYFIELD

Well, you were told about the soldiers, what did you expect?

TOTTEN

But this is Carnegie Hall!

BAYFIELD

You took the money though, I notice.

TOTTEN

Listen to that! They're hoodlums. Hoodlums.

FLORENCE

Hoodlums, as you call them, Mr. Totten, who have been risking their lives for our country and I'd be grateful if you showed them the respect they deserve.

TOTTEN

Madam Florence, they're tearing the place apart. You must go on!

FLORENCE

(wailing)

But my pianist hasn't shown!

TOTTEN

Then you'll have to sing a *cappella*!

Suddenly, McMoon appears in the wings. He's dishevelled and a little traumatised.

FLORENCE

Cosme, where have you been?

MCMOON

I got jumped by a bunch of sailors - they were *most* disrespectful.

BAYFIELD

Straighten yourself up.

(to Totten)

Five minutes, Mr. Totten.

TOTTEN

Not a second longer, PLEASE!

FLORENCE

Shush!

Bayfield gets to work straightening McMoon up. Behind him, Totten disappears through a door.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL - NIGHT

Agnes Stark enters the hall with her husband Phineus.

The Soldiers immediately begin whistling lasciviously, to the great embarrassment of Phineus. But Agnes responds by slipping her fur down her shoulders, revealing quite a bit of flesh.

The soldiers go mad. They begin to whoop and clap as Agnes sashays down the aisle in a deliberately provocative manner, with a smile on her face.

PHINEUS
For God's sake, Agnes, cover
yourself up!

Agnes ignores him.

PHINEUS
(under his breath)
Oh, nuts!

Eventually Agnes rejoins him.

PHINEUS
Behave yourself!

AGNES
(angrily)
What!

They take their seats amongst the Verdi faithful.

PHINEUS
Sit down!

AGNES
(sighing)
What a grouch.

PHINEUS
Read your program.

IN THE WINGS:

Bayfield peeps out into the auditorium through a spy hole. He's surprised to see Cole Porter in the front row.

McMoon and Florence join him.

BAYFIELD
Well, it's quite a house, Bunny. I
spy Cole Porter in the front row,
no less!

MCMOON
 (shocked)
 Cole Porter?!

BAYFIELD
 And Tallulah Bankhead is here!

Florence peeps through the spy hole and see the enormous sea of faces.

FLORENCE
 (shaking her head)
 Oh my hat! What have I done? I can't. I can't do it, Whitey. I can't go on that stage. I've made a terrible mistake.

Totten appears from the auditorium. He sees that Florence has lost her nerve. He draws Bayfield to one side.

TOTTEN
 (under his breath)
 She has to go on!

BAYFIELD
 (firmly)
 A moment please, Mr. Totten.
 Goodbye!

A chair is found for Florence.

Bayfield turns to Florence. Her nerves are in pieces, but Bayfield takes her hands.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
 Listen to me, Bunny. Those men out there, they have seen horrors. Their bodies have been smashed, their minds have been torn - they need joy. They need... music. You can heal them. That is your purpose. Believe it.

FLORENCE
 I'm afraid.

BAYFIELD
 Don't be. They're going to love you.

As the audience grows increasingly impatient and begins to stamp its feet and whistle, Florence turns to McMoon, who suddenly finds his courage.

MCMOON
 You'll be great, Madam Florence.

Florence nods and takes McMoon's hand.

MCMOON (CONT'D)
We can do it.

Florence manages a smile.

FLORENCE
Jenny, may I have my briefcase,
please.

Jenny passes her the briefcase. She opens it and takes out a thick document. She turns to the back page.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)
A pen?

Bayfield gives her a pen. She sits and begins scribbling a note.

Totten reappears - he's desperate.

TOTTEN
You must go on - NOW!

FLORENCE
(ignoring Totten)
I'm adding a codicil to my will.
I'd like you to have a little
something when I die, Cosme.

MCMOON
(very touched)
Thank you, Madam Florence.

FLORENCE
(passing him the pen)
Mr Totten, would you mind
witnessing? Right here.

Exasperated, Totten takes the pen and scribbles his signature as quickly as possible.

FLORENCE
(taking back the pen and
will)
Thank you very much.

TOTTEN
Not at all, now will you PLEASE go
on!

BAYFIELD
(smiling)
Ready?

Florence nods as she hands the bag to Jenny.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
(to Totten)
House lights down please, Mr.
Totten.

Totten gives the signal to his LIGHTING TECHNICIAN and the lights begin to dim in the hall.

Bayfield gives Florence a final kiss of reassurance.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)
Now then, Little Miss Foster, make
me proud.

IN THE HALL:

Suddenly, the audience begins to cheer and clap with excitement as darkness envelops them.

The lights come up on McMoon. He bows to the applauding audience.

A huge cheer goes up as Florence appears.

McMoon strikes up the opening bars of Valse Caressante, then Florence unleashes a blast of ungodly notes that reverberate around the hall.

FLORENCE
(singing)
Agh, agh, agh, agh, agh...

The dreadful sound stuns the entire audience into silence.

But as Florence a wave of laughter rises up.

FLORENCE
"Valse caressante, verse ancient...

The laughter becomes almost deafening. Soldiers convulse, unable to sit straight in their seats.

IN THE WINGS:

Bayfield watches on, unable to do anything.

ON STAGE:

Florence falters. She's shocked by the laughter - her confidence begins to collapse. McMoon struggles on.

IN THE WINGS:

Totten approaches Bayfield.

TOTTEN
 Good job, Mr Bayfield.

Bayfield sees it all but is powerless to help. He looks to McMoon, but he is catatonic with shock and stops playing.

ON THE STAGE:

Florence stands alone, facing the huge audience who are laughing harder and harder.

She turns to Bayfield. For a moment the two are locked together. Their world is collapsing around their ears, but they are united by their 35 years together.

IN THE HALL:

Corbin and his friends are laughing, too, but he begins to sense danger and realizes that Florence is about to crack. This is not Corbin's idea of fun at all. He stops laughing and becomes increasingly anxious for Florence. But the soldiers just can't control themselves.

Agnes too realises that Florence is in trouble. She stops laughing and becomes increasingly concerned. Desperate to save the day, AGNES gets to her feet and whistles loudly.

AGNES
 (crying out)
 Hey! Give the dame a break!
 She's singing her heart out!

One of the drunken soldiers answers her.

CORPORAL
 Yeah, and her heart sounds like a dying cat.

AGNES
 A cat dying?

CORPORAL
 Hey, she can't sing?

AGNES
 You kiss your mother with that mouth? Sit your ass down. Shame on you. Shame on all of you! You better cheer assholes. Cheer! Cheer!

Corbin turns to the soldiers and joins in.

CORBIN
 Bravo, Madam Florence! Bravo!

IN THE WINGS:

Bayfield begins to clap wildly. He turns to Totten and spits words.

BAYFIELD
Clap! Clap!

Totten obeys.

IN THE HALL:

AGNES
Up on your feet! Cheer!

Agnes turns to Florence and smiles her stunning smile.

AGNES
(applauding)
Sing, Madam Florence!

Agnes beams with pleasure as she applauds. Phineus finally stands and cracks a smile: this is why he loves Agnes. He kisses her cheek tenderly.

CORBIN
You're beautiful. I love ya!

AGNES
(pushing him away)
Alright. Enough.

Finally, the Soldiers get the message. They stop hooting and howling and begin to applaud and cheer.

ON THE STAGE:

Florence begins to recover from her panic.

AUDIENCE
Sing! Sing! Sing!

IN THE WINGS:

Bayfield senses the change of mood and smiles.

BAYFIELD
Sing, Bunny! Sing.

ON THE STAGE:

Finally, Florence smiles, then bows to the Audience reverentially.

Florence's confidence returns as the cheering intensifies.

She turns to McMoon and smiles. McMoon recovers his wits and strikes up the next section of the song.

FLORENCE
(singing)
"Valse carresante, verse ancient..."

The Audience is a sea of happy faces. When Florence hits a particularly hilarious bum note, even the soldiers do their best to mask their laughter.

Suddenly, McMoon finds himself having a good time.

IN THE WINGS:

Bayfield is relieved and begins enjoying the show.

Everyone in the audience is smiling and applauding - everyone except Earl Wilson.

Bayfield's face hardens as he recognizes the critic.

IN THE HALL:

Earl Wilson shakes his head with contempt and heads for the exit.

INT THE WINGS:

Bayfield watches, then slips away.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / FOYER - NIGHT

As Earl Wilson heads through the foyer, Bayfield catches up with.

BAYFIELD
Mr. Wilson. Are you leaving
already? She's only just started.

Wilson collects his coat and hat.

EARL WILSON
I've heard enough.

BAYFIELD
She just needs a little warming up,
that's all. Listen to her.

EARL WILSON
(scoffing)
I have never seen such a pathetic,
vain-glorious display of egotism in
my life. That you encouraged Mrs.
Jenkins to make a spectacle of
herself is quite simply
unforgivable.

BAYFIELD
Will you be writing something?

EARL WILSON
Yes. And it will be the truth.

BAYFIELD
Isn't it the truth that a lot of
hurt people are having some fun -
did you not notice?

EARL WILSON
Music is important, it should not
be mocked.

Bayfield takes Wilson's arm and stops him.

BAYFIELD
How dare you. She's done more for
the musical life of this city than
anyone and that includes you.

EARL WILSON
(beat; coldly)
Do you mind?

BAYFIELD
(let's him past)
You're nothing but a jumped up
hack.

Wilson is shocked by Bayfield's anger. Bayfield produces a
wad of cash and starts counting out twenties with contempt.

BAYFIELD
Name your price, Mr Wilson. A
hundred? Two hundred?

Wilson heads for the door.

BAYFIELD
(calling after him)
Three hundred, that's my limit!

EARL WILSON
You're insane.

BAYFIELD
Listen! Listen to them, hack!

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL - NIGHT

Florence, now dressed as The Queen of the Night, fights her
way through the tricky second aria.

FLORENCE
 (singing)
 "Ti lascio, t'abbandono, piu madre
 tua non sono...

The Audience is loving it.

Florence reaches the last few bars of the aria and gives it all she's got. The sound is excruciating, but unforgettable.

As McMoon strikes up the final chords, the audience rise to their feet. The cheering and applause is deafening.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kitty lets Bayfield, McMoon and Florence into the apartment. McMoon follows carrying a huge armful of roses.

KITTY
 (beaming)
 Congratulations, Madam Florence.
 The phone hasn't stopped ringing!

FLORENCE
 Thank you very much, Kitty.

BAYFIELD
 You're pooped, Bunny. Straight to bed or I shall be very, very cross.

FLORENCE
 (to McMoon)
 Well Mr. McMoon, we did it!

MCMOON
 We did it!

FLORENCE
 (thoughtlessly)
 And good night!

MCMOON
 Good night.

FLORENCE
 (to Bayfield)
 And you'll come kiss me good night?

BAYFIELD
 Of course I will.

Kitty takes Florence's coat and the leather briefcase which she places on the table, then leads her into the bedroom.

Bayfield follows McMoon into the lounge.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- NIGHT

MCMOON places the roses on the table, then collapses on the sofa, exhausted. He loosens his tie and smiles with deep satisfaction. Bayfield takes off his coat sets about pouring whiskies.

MCMOON

(laughing)

I played Carnegie Hall.

(beat)

Goddarnit, Mr. Bayfield, Cosme McMoon from San Antonio, Texas, played Carnegie Hall!

BAYFIELD

And he was brilliant. Utterly brilliant.

MCMOON

We did it!

BAYFIELD

I think we did!

He hands McMoon a glass and toasts him.

BAYFIELD

Mud in your eye.

They drink.

MCMOON

(moved)

Thank you, Mr. Bayfield. Thank you for everything.

BAYFIELD

No, don't thank me. I had the night of my life.

(beat)

Down in one!

They down their drinks.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL -- NIGHT

McMoon sleeps on a sofa. Bayfield steps into the hall from the lounge where he finds Kitty.

BAYFIELD

Kitty, would you mind fetching a blanket for Mr. McMoon? He's staying the night.

KITTY

Of course. Madam Florence is already asleep.

BAYFIELD

Good, I'll get on then.

KITTY

Good night, Mr. Bayfield.

As Kitty heads off to find a blanket, Bayfield heads to the end of the hallway where he begins putting on his coat. To his surprise he hears the door of Florence's room open.

He turns and sees Florence standing in the doorway.

BAYFIELD

Kitty said you were asleep.

FLORENCE

No. You will buy the papers in the morning, won't you?

BAYFIELD

Yes, of course.

FLORENCE

(hesitantly)
Stay the night.

CUT TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Florence and Bayfield kiss as they lie together, Bayfield on top of the covers.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I love you so, St. Clair.

BAYFIELD

And I love you, my bunny rabbit.

They hug each other tenderly...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 45TH STREET - DAY / DAWN

But soon the dawn has come...

A NEWSPAPER vendor is opening up his stand.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Florence and Bayfield lie in bed asleep. Florence wears her night gown and Bayfield his shirt. Bayfield's eyes open.

Suddenly he remembers that there is business to be taken care of. As gently as possible he eases out of bed so as not to disturb Florence. We see that he's still wearing his trousers.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE - DAY / DAWN

McMoon, still dressed, sleeps on the sofa with a blanket wrapped around him.

Bayfield touches his shoulder.

BAYFIELD
(softly)
Wake up, Cosme.

Bayfield throws open the curtains.

McMoon stirs and sits up.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOTEL SEYMOUR - DAY

Bayfield and McMoon scuttle across the street to the news stand. Bayfield buys a copy of the New York Post.

BAYFIELD
Post, please.

Nervously, he burrows through it until he finds Earl Wilson's review. He reads a few lines of the harrowing write-up, then cannot read more.

He hands the paper to McMoon, who reads a few words. McMoon is shocked by the viciousness of Earl Wilson's review.

MCMOON
Oh God.

BAYFIELD
She must never see this.
(to the Vendor)
I want every copy of the Post you
have please.

VENDOR
But I got regular customers -

Bayfield hands the Vendor a twenty dollar bill.

BAYFIELD
I'm sure they'll manage.

The Vendor shrugs and takes the cash.

VENDOR
I think so, too.

BAYFIELD
I'd also like the Bugle, the News,
and the Correspondent.

VENDOR
Thank you, Sir.

BAYFIELD
Thank you.

Bayfield picks up the copies of The Post, then carries them over to a trash can where he dumps them.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - DAY

Florence lies in bed surrounded by newspapers. As Kitty reads from The Herald Tribune, Florence glows with pleasure.

KITTY
(reading)
"Madam Jenkins' performance
conquers Carnegie Hall..."

FLORENCE
(clapping her hands)
Oh, my hat!

KITTY
(reading)
... only the night before at
Carnegie Hall, Sinatra entertained
three thousand of his bobby socks
followers ...

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / HALL - DAY

As Kitty continues to read glowing reviews in the bedroom, Bayfield speaks on the telephone in a hushed but very forceful tone.

BAYFIELD
(on phone)
... the piece was spiteful, vicious
and wholly inaccurate and has
caused a great deal of upset...
Well do I need to remind you that
Madam Florence is a very close
personal friend of Arturo
Toscanini? It would be a pity if
the Post was excluded from Carnegie
Hall...

McMoon lets himself into the flat and shuts the door. He stands by as Bayfield listens on the phone.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

(on phone)

... Thank you for your understanding, Mr. Thackrey. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Bayfield replaces the receiver.

MCMOON

(under his breath)

I bought up every copy of the Post within two blocks.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

(relieved; under his breath)

Well done. And I very much doubt the piece will be in the afternoon edition. So, a few more hours and we're in the clear.

FLORENCE (O.S.)

St. Clair!

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM -- DAY

Bayfield enters the bedroom where Kitty is still reading to Florence.

KITTY

"Madam Jenkins wore a series of extraordinary costumes of great elegance and beauty.

FLORENCE

Whitey, whitey!

(to Kitty)

Read the thing about the simultaneous... something.

KITTY

"But even their simultaneous reflections were nothing compared to the applause and community spirit afforded Madam Jenkins."

Florence laughs with delight. Kitty leaves them to it.

FLORENCE

All the reviews are just terrific - but no Post.

BAYFIELD

I don't think they covered the concert.

Florence gets out of bed.

FLORENCE

The Post always covers Carnegie Hall.

BAYFIELD

Well then I shall find you a copy.
(beat)
Are you sure you should be getting up? You must be so tired.

FLORENCE

(walking away)
The Baroness and a some of the others are gathering for lunch in downstairs. I'm going to join them.

BAYFIELD

Now, Florence that really is not a good idea.

FLORENCE

(firmly)
What on earth is the matter with you today?

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / DINING ROOM - DAY

Florence and Bayfield eat lunch with Baroness La Feyre and other Verdi Club members in the sparsely filled dining room. The ladies gush with praise for Florence.

FLORENCE

... After the first half, I was pooped!

BARONESS

Your voice was as fresh as morning dew 'til the very last, Florence!

McMoon is doing his best to listen, but like Bayfield, he's keeping a nervous eye on everyone who enters the dining room.

PATSY SNOW

People were fighting for tickets outside. I was offered twenty dollars for mine!

Suddenly, Bayfield spots a man behind Florence's back carrying a copy of the New York Post under his arm. McMoon spots him too and gets up.

MCMOON

Excuse me.

Bayfield is distracted watching McMoon.

BARONESS

What was the high point of the evening for you, Mr. Bayfield?

BAYFIELD

(comes to)

I'm sorry Baroness?

MRS. JAMES O'FLAHERTY

What was the high point of the evening for you?

BAYFIELD

Well, there were so many -

PATSY SNOW

No, it was your Queen of the Night aria, Florence!

Bayfield watches McMoon try desperately to get the paper from the Diner without success.

BAYFIELD

Excuse me, Ladies.

He slips away and approaches McMoon and the Diner who are arguing.

BAYFIELD

I realise this is absurd but is there any way we could persuade you to part with your newspaper?

DINER

Well no, you couldn't. This one's mine.

BAYFIELD

(getting out his wallet)

How much?

DINER

(pompously)

What's going on? I'm not taking your money!

BAYFIELD

Fifty bucks?

DINER

(beat)

Well, if you insist.

BAYFIELD

Thank you so very much. It's very nice of you.

Bayfield hands the diner the money and takes the paper, which he hands to McMoon.

BAYFIELD

Get rid of it.

Bayfield then heads towards Florence's table, but gets a shock - Florence is missing.

BAYFIELD

(anxiously)
Where's Florence?

MRS. OSCAR GARMUNDER

She's gone to powder her nose.

He dashes off.

MRS. JAMES O'FLAHERTY

(surprised)
She's gone to powder her nose, Mr. Bayfield.

BAYFIELD

(sitting at the table)
Oh, quite.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / LOBBY - DAY

Florence exits the powder room and is met by two young men, CUNNINGHAM and THORNTON.

CUNNINGHAM

Madam Florence? It is you? We saw your show at Carnegie Hall last night.

THORNTON

It was wonderful!

FLORENCE

(thrilled)
Thank you! Thank you very much.

CUNNINGHAM

We've never laughed so hard.

THORNTON

My ribs are still aching!

Florence is rattled by this.

CUNNINGHAM

(smiling)

You have an enormous comic talent,
Mrs. Foster Jenkins.

THORNTON

It was so funny.

FLORENCE

(beat; shaken)

Thank you very much. I must be on.
Good afternoon to you.

She walks away from them.

CUNNINGHAM

And don't pay any attention to that
review.

THORNTON

That hack knows absolutely nothing.

Rattled, Florence heads for the door.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / DINING ROOM

Bayfield sits anxiously as the Verdi Ladies gossip.

VERDI CLUB LADIES

Is everything all right Mr.
Bayfield?

BAYFIELD

I think I just need some air.
Excuse me ladies.

He escapes the table.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOTEL SEYMOUR - DAY

Florence crosses the side walk and approaches the news stand
where the Vendor is still at work.

FLORENCE

The Post, please.

VENDOR

Sorry Lady, all sold out.

FLORENCE

Already? How come?

VENDOR
 (laughing)
 You won't believe it, but this guy
 comes by this morning, takes all
 the copies I got. An Englishman.

Florence's interest is piqued.

FLORENCE
 (beat)
 What did he look like?

VENDOR
 Oh, tall. Your gentleman type.

FLORENCE
 Why did he buy all of them?

VENDOR
 I dunno. Twenty bucks, he gives me -
 then he dumps them in the trash.

He indicates the nearby trash can.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / LOBBY -- DAY

Bayfield goes into the Powder Room. He reappears and picks up
 the phone in the lobby.

BAYFIELD
 (on phone)
 708, please.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOTEL SEYMOUR - DAY

Florence approaches the trash. She digs out a copy of the
 Post and begins looking through it.

Finally, she finds Earl Wilson's review and begins to read.
 The words are too shocking for her to take in. She begins to
 struggle for breath as a full blown panic attack grips her.

Gasping for air, stumbles across the road.

INT. HOTEL SEYMOUR / LOBBY - DAY

Florence re-enters the lobby carrying a copy of the Post. She
 is very distressed and unsure on her feet.

Suddenly, she collapses. A general exclamation of shock.
 HOTEL GUESTS gather around.

Bayfield rushes forward and cradles Florence's head in his
 arms.

BAYFIELD (CONT'D)

(to Florence)

Bunny? Bunny? It's me. It's Whitey.

(to the doorman)

Get a doctor - quickly!

(to Florence)

Darling, it's me. It's me my precious. I'm going to turn you over. Speak to me Bunny, please.

Florence's face remains unresponsive.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / LOUNGE -- NIGHT

A copy of the Post rests on the piano. The headline reads: "Foster Jenkins Gravely Ill".

McMoon plays The Swan. He is incredibly upset but, out of duty, struggles on.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Florence lies in bed unconscious. Bayfield sitting beside her holding her hand.

Finally, Florence stirs.

BAYFIELD

Bunny, it's me. I'm here. Can you hear me?

Florence opens her eyes a fraction. She panics and tries to sit up but Bayfield settles her down.

BAYFIELD

Rest, my beautiful.

FLORENCE

Was everyone laughing at me the whole time?

BAYFIELD

I was never laughing at you. Yours is the truest voice I have ever heard.

McMoon begins to play Charles's "When I have Sung My songs For You". Florence perks up.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL -- NIGHT (DREAM)

Florence stands in a spotlight wearing a dazzling head dress and angel wings. She sings... beautifully.

FLORENCE
 (singing)
 When I have sang my song to you,
 I'll sing no more...

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - NIGHT

Florence's singing continues over. Florence looks to Bayfield.

FLORENCE
 Listen...

BAYFIELD
 I love you, my Bunny.

FLORENCE
 The audience, they were applauding
 and cheering.

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL -- NIGHT (DREAM)

Florence and McMoon take their bows on stage as the Audience cheers and applauds.

Florence looks to the wings and reaches out for Bayfield. He's hesitant but eventually he joins them on stage.

The three take their bow.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Kitty and McMoon approach the bedroom door, both upset.

FLORENCE
 People may say that I couldn't
 sing, but no one can say that I
 didn't sing.

BAYFIELD
 Bravo my love. Bravo.

Florence smiles, enigmatically, and then she is gone...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CARNEGIE HALL / RECITAL HALL -- NIGHT (DREAM)

Bayfield releases Florence's hand for her to take her final bow.

FADE TO BLACK:

END CARD:

Florence Foster Jenkins

1868 - 1944

One of the most requested programs from the Carnegie Hall archive is for the concert given by Florence Foster Jenkins.

The records she made for Melotone became their biggest seller.

Cosme McMoon's career as pianist never surpassed his performance with Florence.

He developed an interest in bodybuilding and judged a number of competitions before his death in 1980.

St. Clair Bayfield devoted the rest of his life to celebrating Florence and her passion for music. He died in 1967.

CREDITS: