

The Man in the Locket
Truths and Lies at the Bergstrom Circus & Menagerie

a Melodrama
by

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Cast of Characters

<u>SIR MALCOLM TENT:</u>	40-50ish Villain intent on acquiring the Blessing fortune. Former business associate of Stephan Blessing.
<u>MAGGIE BLESSING:</u>	18, heroine daughter of Stephan Blessing. Does not know who she is or who her father is.
<u>FLICK:</u>	20s, hero. Charles' right hand. Smart, confident, handsome. Carries a bat. Occasionally poses as Olga Gregario.
<u>CHARLES BERGSTROM:</u>	40-50ish Ringmaster. Gruff, kind. Friend to Stephan.
<u>CATALINA DALCA:</u>	30s, Russian-Romanian Bareback Rider teacher. Bad English. Russian lilt and occasional simple-to-learn Russian phrases.
<u>LYDIA VOLDANO:</u>	20s, sham Gypsy Fortune Teller who wants Flick only because she believes he's to inherit circus. Fake gypsy lilt.
<u>APOLLO:</u>	Strongman who's lost his love, confidence, and strength after his love, Brunhilda, left him for a Pennsylvania barber.
<u>CHESTER MEEKS:</u>	20s-30s, sad clown, older brother of Fester. Shorter than Fester. (Male but could be played by woman)
<u>FESTER MEEKS:</u>	20s-30s, happy clown, Chester's younger, taller brother. Pantomimes most of play. (Male; could be played by woman)
<u>MYRA SINCLAIR:</u>	50s, Archibald's wife. In cahoots w/Malcolm. Smart. Scottish.
<u>ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR:</u>	50s, Myra's husband. Slow. In cahoots w/Malcolm. Scottish.
<u>STEPHAN BLESSING/EXTRA:</u>	51, Tycoon, devoted father to Maggie. Friend and partner to Charles. (Can play various EXTRA circus characters.)
<u>BRUNHILDA/EXTRA:</u>	Bearded Woman in love with Apollo (Can be played by M or F. Can play EXTRA circus characters.)

Place

Near Coney Island. Begins briefly in the Sinclair home and then in staging area of the Bergstrom Circus where performers dress, makeup, warmup, enter and exit Big Top, Midway, and Back of property. Also houses Ringmaster's "open office" which is the open end of the back of a trailer.

Time

The early 1900s. Summer morning.

ACT I
Scene 1

Setting: A nondescript room in the Sinclair home. A spotlight on a chair and small table could be used to represent room. Morning.

At Rise: Maggie is sitting in a chair next to a small table. She's wearing a pretty dress. She has a locket on a chain hidden in her pocket that, when opened, displays a photo of her as a 6-year-old and a photo of Stephan Blessing. She is plain/simple with no makeup on and her hair is loose, natural. Myra is putting a ribbon in Maggie's hair and Archibald is pacing.

MAGGIE

But I have no wish to marry Sir Malcontent! I don't even know him!

ARCHIBALD

That's Malcolm Tent! Malcolm (pause) Tent. Got it?

MYRA

(Ties ribbon into Maggie's hair but leaves hair down.)

What's to know, hen? He says he wishes your hand and so he'll have it! It's a good offer for a girl like you. You don't like the new dress?

MAGGIE

Oh, I love the dress. It's the finest dress I've ever had on. Thank you. Actually, it's the only fine dress I've ever had on...but dress or no, I won't be married!

MYRA

(Finishing touches to MAGGIE'S hair.)

There now, hen. You look beautiful. He's here now to attend to ya. Watch yer mouth and be polite, aye?

MAGGIE

Now? He's here now? But...

ARCHIBALD

Yes, now! And if you know what's good for you...

MYRA

Archie come! Let's let the lovebirds get to know each other, aye?

(MYRA yanks ARCHIBALD and they exit. MALCOLM enters carrying a folded newspaper with a picture and story about the circus on the outside and inside the fold, unseen for now, there is a picture of Stephan Blessing and a story about the millionaire tycoon's death. MAGGIE stands, MALCOLM bows to MAGGIE.)

MALCOLM

Your servant Miss.

(MALCOLM tosses paper on the small table, grabs MAGGIE's hand which she unsuccessfully tries to pull back and kisses it.)

MAGGIE

(Pulls her hand away and wipes it on her skirt.)

Sir.

MALCOLM

(Begins to circle MAGGIE examining her unabashedly.)

Well, well, well. The Sinclairs have done a fine job with you...Maggie, isn't it?

MAGGIE

Job?

MALCOLM

A fine job indeed. Not quite a lady yet but you'll do. You know we're to be married then?

MAGGIE

I know what Myra said but I don't think...

MALCOLM

Think?

(aside – She thinks she's to decide who to marry? (evil laugh.) Not likely. I've been waiting a mighty long time for this day! She's mine and, soon too, the Blessing fortune!)

You think you have a say in the matter?

MAGGIE

I should think I do, Sir!

MALCOLM

I dare say, you are a rare one, aren't you? Myra says you've spirit. No matter. I do love a good challenge.

MAGGIE

It's not a matter of challenging, Sir. I just refuse to be-

MALCOLM

Refuse, do you? First thinking. Then refusing. Ha! (beat) Have a seat my dear.

MAGGIE

No, thank you. I prefer to stand.

(MALCOLM puts hands on MAGGIE'S shoulders and forces her to sit.)

MALCOLM

Have you ever seen wild horses my dear?

MAGGIE (confused)

Wild...What? Wild horses? No...

MALCOLM

(Takes off gloves, begins to circle MAGGIE, holding gloves in one hand and hitting them on the palm of his other hand while speaking.)

Running to and fro, nostrils flaring, eyes wild, main and tail flying. And you must face them.

(Comes to the front of MAGGIE, kneels on one knee in front of her, grabs her chin to make her look at him, and looks deeply into her eyes.)

You must look them directly in the eye, you see. (long pause) Establish dominance.

(MAGGIE stares defiantly into MALCOLM'S eyes for a long moment before he moves in as to kiss her and she turns her head, breaking the stare and looks no more in his direction.)

Ahhh...yes. And that's just the beginning, dear. There's no greater pleasure than breaking a wild horse.

MALCOLM (Cont.)

(Stands, pulling on his gloves.)

But there will plenty of time to discuss such things, my dear, as we'll marry soon. It's a very exciting time for a bride-to-be, or so I've been told. You'll need your rest I'm sure. So, for tonight, I bid you adieu.

(MALCOLM bows formally and exits, forgetting newspaper.)

MAGGIE

(Pulls locket from her pocket, opens and looks at picture of STEPHAN.)

Oh Father. Where are you?

(Notices newspaper, picks up, and starts to read.)

What's this? The Bergstrom Circus...

MYRA

(OS) Come on then Archie!

(MAGGIE, hearing MYRA, quickly puts locket back in her pocket just as ARCHIBALD and MYRA enter.)

MYRA

Now tell us, hen, did you and your future husband acquaint yourselves?

MAGGIE

Oh, I shan't marry him! He's simply awful!

ARCHIBALD

You'll do as we say!

MAGGIE

But Myra...

ARCHIBALD

That's Mother to you, you ungrateful...

MAGGIE

...why should he even wish to marry me?

MYRA

I'm sure he has his reasons, hen.

ARCHIBALD (giggling)

I can think of millions...

MYRA

(Hits ARCHIBALD over the head with dishrag.)

Hush!

MAGGIE

We've not one thing in common!

MYRA

Listen child, don't worry yourself. You'll be his wife, live in his house, see to his health.

ARCHIBALD

See to his wealth!

MYRA

(Hits ARCHIBALD over the head with dishrag.)

Archie, Hush! You'll be his bride, sleep in his bed, stand by his side!

MAGGIE

His bed? But...but...but...he's so old! Oh my...the thought of...No. No! I...I just can't!

ARCHIBALD

Ohhh...but ya can. And ya will. Malcolm's a powerful man. Believe you me, he'll have what he wants, and we'll get what's coming to us. You'll not spoil our plans!

MYRA

(Hits ARCHIBALD over the head with dishrag.)

Archie!

MAGGIE

What's coming to you? Plans? What?

ARCHIBALD

It's what we'll be deservin after all these long years of sacrifice, no care for ourselves, raisin you since you were but a babe.

(MYRA hits ARCHIBALD over the head with dishrag, makes the "what are you doing" face and gesture, hands up in frustration.)

MAGGIE

What? Wait...I was six, I think...

MYRA

Let's not split hairs.

ARCHIBALD

Enough Maggie! You will marry Malcontent. It's been agreed to!

MYRA

That's Malcolm Tent, dear. Remember? Malcolm. (pause) Tent?

MAGGIE

But I can't get married! Not to him. Not to anyone!

ARCHIBALD

And just why not, you ungrateful little snot?

MAGGIE (thinking)

(aside – Why not marry Malcolm (pause) Tent? Let's see...He's unpleasant, quite old, rough, and, well gives me the heebie-jeebies. Did I mention he is very old? (beat) Most of all, I will only marry for love. But they'll not hear of these reasons, so what then?)

Um.... Yes! I know why I can't marry. Who's to give me away with my father not yet returned?

ARCHIBALD

Your father? Your father? You're father ain't never comin back! I'm your father, girl!

MAGGIE

Please don't misunderstand Archib...I mean Father. I'm thankful for all you've done. A warm place to sleep next to the fire...when we have one. Plenty to eat...when there are leftovers. And I'm sure my housekeeping and cooking skills couldn't be more well developed under Myra...I mean Mother's...tutelage. But I've always dreamed that one day my real father will return for me.

ARCHIBALD

Your real father abandoned you sure as rain! Why else would he have dropped you on our

ARCHIBALD (Cont.)

doorstep? Likely a drunkard or criminal.

MAGGIE

And the note said what again?

MYRA (exasperated)

Oh hen...again with the note? (big sigh) Said your Mama was dead and he didn't want 'cha. We shall never know who he was or what became of him. He's probably dead by now too.

MAGGIE

And you're quite sure the signature was unreadable and there was never any other...clue? Something to identify him? Anything. Anything at all?
(Puts her hand in her pocket, secretly fondling the locket.)

MYRA

Nothin but the note and, as we've told ye many times before, 'twas rainin that night. A miracle we could read any of it! Threw the sopping mess away we did, which is why ye can't be reading it yerself.

MAGGIE

But I can almost remember something about him...

ARCHIBALD & MYRA (alarmed)

Remember?

MYRA

What exactly is it you remember?

MAGGIE

(Closes eyes, trying to remember.)

Music. Lights. And horses.

ARCHIBALD and MYRA

(Gasp)

MYRA (thinking)

Uh...Probably took you to the horse races with 'em. Yes. That's it! That's the kind of father you want then? A drunk and a gambler!

MAGGIE (ignoring, eyes still closed)

Spinning. Horses spinning. Colorful horses. And a man laughing. Waiving. But I can't quite see his face.

ARCHIBALD

The carousel? You remember that?

MYRA

(Hits ARCHIBALD over the head with a dishrag.)

Archie!

MAGGIE

A carousel. Yes! That's it!

MYRA

What he means, hen, is that you couldn't possibly have such a memory. There are no carousels 'round here. Must have been a dream then.

MAGGIE

Oh...right. I guess so. (pause) But wait! What about a Circus? Wouldn't a circus have a carousel?

ARCHIBALD

Ummm...

MYRA

Circus? No, they never come to Sheepshead Bay. Too small to warrant such festivities, mind you.

MAGGIE (hopeful)

But...but what about another town? One close by? Like Coney Island? Look here.

(Grabs newspaper and hands to MYRA.)

It says the Bergstrom Circus is set up right now, just outside of Coney Island. Perhaps it is a memory. We could go. See if anyone recognizes me or knows of my father...

ARCHIBALD

Ummm....

MYRA

(Looks closely at article.)

Oh, that old C.T. Bergstrom? Ha! Barely a circus if you ask me.

(Tosses newspaper back on table.)

Flea infested dog and pony show is the most of it. Certainly no carousel. Like I said, just a dream. Best put it out of your mind and start thinkin about your weddin.

(OS a door slams, ARCHIBALD and MYRA jump, hurry to exit.)

ARCHIBALD

(Turns back, wagging finger at MAGGIE.)

You'll be marryin soon girl, like it or no.

MYRA

Come on then Archie!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA exit.)

MAGGIE

I'll be switched if I'll be hitched to the likes of Sir (pause) Malcolm (pause) Tent.

(Pulls locket out of her pocket.)

No clues, eh dear Myra, dear Archie? Was this locket round my neck when you found me? Why have you hidden it away from me for all these years? No matter. I've found it. I've got my clue.

(Opens locket and looks at pictures.)

Oh Father...Who are you? Where are you?

(Picks up newspaper, reads circus article, makes a decision, puts it down.)

I think it's high time I look for you...

(Stands, puts the locket around her neck, picks up the newspaper.)

and The Bergstrom Circus is as good of place to start as any!

BLACK OUT

ACT I
Scene 2

Setting: Tented staging area between the Midway and the Big Top. This is the place that performers come to warm up before going on, where they eat, drink, visit, and where they enter and exit the Big Top, Midway, and Back of property. Halved barrels serve as tables with folding chairs, trunks of costumes, racks of costumes and drying clothes pinned up on lines. There is a platform with two or three steps up to it that represents the open end of a trailer where the Ringmaster has his office with simple desk and chair at the front, and the illusion of quarters behind a curtain. Simple desk, chair, etc...Potted plant at bottom of stairs. Same day but in the evening with show in progress.

At Rise: Circus music playing in the background fades. CHARLES sits at desk counting coins and bills and writing in a ledger.

CHARLES

Seventeen...and fifty. Eighteen and fifty...

(MAGGIE enters from midway carrying newspaper, sneaking, from under circus tent flap, looking all around the room in amazement.)

CHARLES

(Hears, then sees MAGGIE, and hurries down the stairs.)

What's this? You there! Stop!

(MAGGIE, startled, turns to run but CHARLES grabs her. The newspaper falls to the ground and is forgotten.)

MAGGIE (afraid)

Oh Sir, please unhand me!

CHARLES

Trying to sneak into the show, eh? We'll have none of that you little nipper!

MAGGIE

Heaven forbid! I would never!

CHARLES

(Releases Maggie and spins her around to face him.)

Oh no? Then you lost your way to the ticket wagon? Fine. Children cost thirty-five cents.

MAGGIE

I'm not a child! I'm eighteen!

CHARLES

Thank you for your honesty. An adult ticket then...that will be seventy-five cents.

MAGGIE

Oh my! I have no money for a ticket but...

CHARLES

Truly, Miss, you must work on your skills of deception. (shouting) Flick! (pause) Flick! We've got another one!

MAGGIE

But sir. You don't understand, you see...

(FLICK enters from Midway carrying his baseball bat.)

FLICK

Boss?

CHARLES

This girl's trying to skunk us out of a ticket!

FLICK

(Sees MAGGIE and is taken with her beauty.)

I see...

(aside – Be still my heart! What a beauty! Wait! I shall not let my heart be taken...and crushed... again by a pretty face. But, oh, what a face. The face of an angel.)

MAGGIE

It's not true! If you would just listen-

CHARLES

Too late for denials. Flick I want you to-

MAGGIE

I was NOT trying to sneak in to see the circus! I saw a story about your circus in the paper.

(MAGGIE looks for the paper, finds and picks up and shows to CHARLES.)

MAGGIE (Cont.)

See here?

CHARLES

(CHARLES grabs paper and looks at the article about the circus.)

And?

MAGGIE

...and...and...I've come to (beat) to join the circus!

(FLICK regards MAGGIE with some amusement.)

CHARLES

(Tosses paper aside.)

Oh poppycock! You were trying to sneak in! FLICK, what do you think?

FLICK

Well Boss, I don't know.

(Puts bat down and starts walking a circle around MAGGIE, examining.)

Take a look at the way she's dressed. Fancy dress, ribboned hair...

(Takes MAGGIE'S hands looking at them, looks into her eyes as speaks.)

...no dirt under her nails. She's no street urchin.

(LYDIA enters from Midway holding her crystal ball. Seeing the scene unfold she stops short and listens, unobserved. FLICK releases MAGGIE'S hands, takes her chin in hand, and turns her head side to side.)

FLICK

Boss, I don't think we have a thief here.

(Mesmerized by FLICK, MAGGIE subconsciously touches her face where FLICK touched her. LYDIA is visibly jealous.)

CHARLES

No? Well I guess you're right. (to MAGGIE) You're no thief, are you? You seem like a fine young lady after all. I'm sorry I misjudged you.

MAGGIE (relieved)

Yes...that's right. So...might I stay?

LYDIA

(Enters fully into room, rubbing her crystal ball, speaking as if in a trance.)

I've seen the future. Trouble in the future! Someone...a girl...pretending to be something she is not. A troublemaker. She has

(Peeks at MAGGIE.)

(fill in color of MAGGIE'S hair) hair. At first appears pretty but really, if you look more closely, you'll see her eyes are just a bit too close together...

(FLICK and CHARLES peer at MAGGIE'S eyes. MAGGIE reaches to touch one of her eyes. EVERYONE looks back at LYDIA.)

LYDIA (Cont.)

...and her chin is a bit too big for her face...

(FLICK and CHARLES peer at MAGGIE'S chin. MAGGIE reaches to touch her chin. EVERYONE looks back at LYDIA.)

LYDIA (Cont.)

...and her backside is way too-

(MAGGIE twists and turns, trying to see her own backside.)

FLICK

Lydia!

CHARLES (interrupting)

Thank you Lydia! That will be quite enough. We've got this situation completely under control. Shouldn't you be on the Midway reading fortunes?

(LYDIA casts a mean look at MAGGIE and stomps out Midway exit.)

FLICK

That girl!

CHARLES (thinking)

Flick. Get rid of her.

FLICK

Get rid of Lydia? Finally! She's such a grouser. Always complaining about one thing or another. Really brings down morale.

CHARLES

Not Lydia! Flick, do I need to remind you that we are down a Bearded Lady and our Strong Man's lost his strength. We can't do without our fortune teller too. Get rid of her!

(Points at MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE

But you said I was a fine young lady!

CHARLES

Right! And the circus is no place for a fine young lady. FLICK... I think we got ourselves a run-away.

(APOLLO enters from Midway doing curls with fake weight.)

MAGGIE

But I'm NOT a run-away!

APOLLO

Another run-away huh? Hello Miss.

(Puts his fake weight down and shakes MAGGIE'S hand.)

APOLLO (Cont.)

I'm Apollo, the Bergstrom's strong man.

(Poses in strongman position.)

MAGGIE

Pleased to meet-

CHARLES

Apollo!

APOLLO

Sorry Boss. Um...oh yea. We need you on the Midway. Some jerk's complainin that the snakelady's snake ain't real. Another is yammering bout the bearded lady on the poster and there ain't one.

CHARLES

We must look into getting a real snake one of these days! And we need to find another bearded woman straight away!

APOLLO

Say it's a scam. They're makin a real stink.

CHARLES

If it isn't one thing, it's another! Take these comp tickets to the yammerers. That should soothe their ruffled feathers.

(CHARLES takes several tickets from his pocket, hands to APOLLO who starts toward exit. MAGGIE easily picks up his forgotten fake weight.)

MAGGIE

Oh! Mr. Apollo! Sir Strong Man! You've forgotten your weight.

(APOLLO turns and MAGGIE easily tosses fake weight which APOLLO catches, looks embarrassed at MAGGIE for he thinks she has discovered the weight is actually weightless.)

APOLLO

Yea. Real strong.

(APOLLO turns and exits Midway with his head hung low.)

MAGGIE

Oh no! Was it something I said?

CHARLES

For heaven's sake! We can't afford to lose our strong man as well! Flick, get her out of here.

CHARLES (Cont.)

Take her into town. Find her mother straight away. I'll see to Apollo.

(CHARLES exits to Midway, hurrying after APOLLO. MAGGIE and FLICK regard each other warily.)

FLICK

Well, Miss. I best be gettin you back to town.

MAGGIE

(Moves behind a table.)

Oh I have no intentions of going back.

FLICK (amused)

I will be takin ya back to town.

MAGGIE (retreating)

No. You won't.

FLICK

Oh, but I will.

(FLICK, having a bit of fun, chases MAGGIE around various items in the room until he catches her from behind and picks her up as she struggles.)

FLICK (Cont.)

Got 'cha. You've certainly got spunk...I'll give you that!

MAGGIE (struggling)

Unhand me! You can take me back, but I'll just run away again!

FLICK

Ah-ha! So, you are a run-away!

(Puts MAGGIE on her feet and turns her around to face him.)

But the Boss is right, Miss. The circus is no place for a fine young lady. Besides, I'm sure your mother must be quite worried about you by now.

MAGGIE

My mother is dead!

(FLICK's expression changes from amused to compassionate as MAGGIE begins to cry quietly. FLICK pulls her gently to his chest and puts his arms around her. LYDIA enters quietly, unnoticed, from Midway, with crystal ball. She sees FLICK and MAGGIE embraced.)

LYDIA

(aside – So this fancy girl thinks she can come in here and steal Flick away from me? Ha! I'll get rid of her one way or another if it's the last thing I do!

(Rubs crystal ball.)

Yes...I see great misfortune in her future.)

(LYDIA exits Midway.)

FLICK

Miss...I'm so sorry. I had no idea.

MAGGIE

It's ok. It was a long time ago. I don't even remember her. I'm sorry. I don't even know why I'm crying.

FLICK (breaking embrace)

And your father?

MAGGIE

I...I don't know. I don't exactly know who my father is. You see I'm looking for-

FLICK (interrupting)

Oh. I understand. I'm an orphan as well. So, you have no one looking out for you?

MAGGIE

Well, I've been with the Sinclairs since I was six, but really I'm just there to cook and clean. I don't mind the work, but now they say I must marry this horrible man! Sir Malcolm Tent. They say I've no choice in the matter!

FLICK (thinking)

I see. (pause) But would it not be of great comfort for you to have this Malcontent-

MAGGIE

Oh...that Malcolm (pause) Tent. Two words. It's difficult, I know.

FLICK

Ahh... Would it not be of great comfort for you to marry, and have this (beat) man in your life to protect and care for you?

MAGGIE (turning away)

I'll not marry for care or for protection! One day, if and when I marry...

(Turns to FLICK unintentionally ending up face to face.)

(swallows) it will be (long pause) for love.

FLICK

(long pause) For love.

(FLICK and MAGGIE are lost in each other's eyes.)

FLICK (Cont.)

I see.

(aside – Oh mercy me. There's more to this girl than meets the eye. How can I help but fall in love!)

MAGGIE (pacing)

And besides, he's quite old! At least 30! Maybe even 40! Now I ask you what would an older gentleman like that see in a young girl like me?

FLICK (knowingly)

Ah...well...

MAGGIE

We've nothing in common!

FLICK

Yes...well...

MAGGIE

I'm not well traveled, nor highly educated. I have no inkling of what's expected of society women. I haven't the first clue about child raising, or bearing for that matter. So why would he want to marry me?

FLICK

Um...well...

(aside – Why indeed! I know exactly what this blackguard has on this mind. Somehow, I will protect my new love or die trying!)

MAGGIE

Now that you understand my situation, will you help? I can't go back. I can't marry him! I simply can't.

FLICK (thoughtfully)

So, you're determined, are you? To join the circus?

MAGGIE

My mind is set.

FLICK

Nothing I can do to talk you out of it?

MAGGIE

Nothing. (long pause) Well? Are you going to help me or not?

FLICK (teasing)

If I say not?

MAGGIE

Then I'll find someone who will and I shall count you a coward!

FLICK (teasing)

Oh. A Coward? Well...can't have people thinking that, now can we? (pause, then serious) OK I'll help you. But you must promise to trust me and do exactly as I say. Is it a deal?

(Holds hand out to shake.)

MAGGIE

Deal!

(MAGGIE and FLICK shake hands much longer than necessary.)

FLICK

So...first thing we need to do is get you out of this dress.

MAGGIE

(Slaps FLICK across face.)

How dare you! Villains at every turn!

FLICK (laughing, rubbing face)

Wait! Wait. I only meant that if you are to hide here at the circus you will need to wear something a little less...less pretentious.

MAGGIE

You think I'm pretentious?

FLICK

Not you. But, well, come and look in the mirror.

(FLICK guides MAGGIE to mirror and looks at her reflection and FLICK'S as he looks over her shoulder. They look at themselves and each other in the mirror, having a moment. FLICK pushes a strand of hair out of MAGGIE'S face.)

MAGGIE (breaking spell)

Oh. Yes. I suppose I do look a bit...frilly. Perhaps not the best choice for a run-away outfit I admit. I left in such a hurry, you see-

FLICK

Tell you what. Look through this trunk and see if you can find something. I know just the person who can help.

(FLICK grabs his bat and exits Midway while MAGGIE pulls out costumes, including a clown outfit which she holds up in front of herself in the mirror as CHESTER and FESTER enter from Midway.)

CHESTER

Ho there! I heard there was a run-away among us! Going to be staying?

MAGGIE

Oh! Hello. Yes. I think I am staying. How do you two like the circus?

CHESTER

Oh us? Only been here a short while but we love it! Allow me to introduce myself. I am Chester. At your service mademoiselle.

(Bows deeply.)

MAGGIE

My pleasure.

(Curtseys.)

CHESTER

And this is...

FESTER

(Elbows CHESTER puts his finger to his lips making the “be quiet” motion, to stop him from telling MAGGIE his name.)

CHESTER

Ow! What?

FESTER

(Points to himself and then to MAGGIE.)

CHESTER

No. We don't have time for that!

FESTER

(Stomps his foot, turns away and crosses his arms over his chest.)

MAGGIE

It looks as if he does not wish to meet me.

FESTER

(Comes to MAGGIE, bows, then kneels on one knee.)

MAGGIE

What's this?

CHESTER

Oh, all right! But hurry up! We're on soon!

FESTER

(Jumps up and begins to mime, pointing to his arm for a very confused MAGGIE and continues to mime during dialogue.)

MAGGIE

What in heaven's name is he doing? Is he afflicted in some way?

CHESTER

He doesn't speak. Childhood trauma. He's trying to tell you his name.

MAGGIE

His name? (pause) Oh! Charades! What fun! (Claps.) I think I remember playing when I was very, very young. Um...let's see...

FESTER

(Points again to his arm.)

MAGGIE

Your arm!

FESTER

(Jumps up and down, happily touches his nose indicating MAGGIE is correct.)

MAGGIE (misinterpreting)

Your nose!

FESTER

(Stops, looks in a scolding way at MAGGIE, shakes his head no, and then slowly touches his arm again.)

MAGGIE

Um. OK. Your arm?

FESTER

(Nods yes while touching his nose and holding his other hand up to indicate to wait, and then starts to mime scratching his arm.)

MAGGIE

It itches?

FESTER

(Nods enthusiastically yes, while touching his nose, and then mimes scratching his arm more vigorously.)

MAGGIE

It itches a lot! (excited) Your name is Lot?

FESTER (frustrated)

(Holds and shakes his head.)

CHESTER

Can I just tell her? She'll never guess.

FESTER

(Wags his finger at CHESTER indicating no and mimes to MAGGIE, scratching his arm more vigorously.)

MAGGIE (excited)

Ok. Your arm itches a lot. Let's see...Is it a bug bite? Is your name Bug?

(CHESTER and FESTER look strangely at MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE (Cont.)

OK, no. (pause) Keep going!

FESTER

(Continues miming scratching his arm, miming the spot getting bigger.)

MAGGIE (excited)

Something is itchy on your arm...oh...it's getting bigger...it's growing. Oh! Like a boil! Boil? No. Surely your name can't be boil. Keep going! Oh...

FESTER

(Mimes the spot on his arm is getting sticky and gross.)

MAGGIE

(Begins to fan her face, looking like she might be ill.)

Oh my! I'm sorry but perhaps you'd better tell me before this boil begins to...fester.

CHESTER

Well I'll be.

FESTER

(Jumps up and down excited, grabs MAGGIE and begins to dance around the room with her.)

MAGGIE

Wait! What did I say?

CHESTER

His name! Fester! No one has ever guessed it before.

MAGGIE (pleased)

Fester!

FESTER

(Stops and bows deeply before MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE (curtsying)

Well Fester, I'm Maggie. It's lovely to meet you. Wait! Chester and Fester. (pause) And you're brothers! Am I right?

FESTER

(Stands next to and proudly puts his arm around CHESTER, who is shorter, and then points out through mime that he is taller than CHESTER.)

MAGGIE

And Fester's the older brother!

FESTER

(Starts mime laughing, slapping his knee and pointing at CHESTER.)

CHESTER

Actually, I'm the older one. He just loves pointing out that he's taller. So,
(Picks up clown costume from chair and hands it to MAGGIE.)
...thinking of becoming a clown?

MAGGIE

Maybe...

FESTER

(Points at MAGGIE, mimes putting on the clown suit, and points at her again.)

CHESTER

Want to try it on?

FESTER

(Vigorously nods yes.)

MAGGIE

OK, yes!

(CHESTER and FESTER help MAGGIE step into clown suit and tie the back which covers up her dress completely.)

MAGGIE (Cont.)

Well...What do you think?

CHESTER

Yes. I can almost see you as a clown.

FESTER

(Pulls red clown nose out of trunk and puts on MAGGIE and claps. OS Big Top the sound of clown music begins.)

CHESTER

There! Now that's perfect. (hearing clown music) Oh! That's us!

MAGGIE

Wait! Boys, before you go could you look at this? Have you ever seen this man?

(MAGGIE pulls out locket, still on necklace she's wearing, and opens. FESTER and CHESTER look closely and both shake heads no.)

CHESTER

Pretty little girl there. Don't know the man. Sorry we can't help you, Miss. Your fella?

MAGGIE (thoughtfully)

Oh no. My father. (pause) I think so anyway.

CHESTER

Well, I do hope you find him Miss. We've got to get out there. Come on Fester!

(CHESTER exits Big Top thinking FESTER is right behind him.)

FESTER

(Thumbs away an unseen tear from MAGGIE'S cheek. Points to his painted clown smile and then points to MAGGIE'S mouth. MAGGIE smiles in return, and FESTER smiles for real. CHESTER enters, running, from Big Top, grabs and drags FESTER out to Big Top. MAGGIE smiles after them, tucks her locket and necklace back under her clown suit, picks up a clown hat from trunk, walks to the mirror, pulls her hair up into the hat and makes faces at herself.)

MAGGIE

(in a false silly voice) Hello Father! I'm your long-lost daughter, Bobo the Clown! (in her voice) That'll make a good impression, I'm sure.

(MALCOLM enters from Midway unobserved.)

MALCOLM

Where is that girl?

(MAGGIE recognizes voice as MALCOLM, stiffens, starts to sneak off.)

MALCOLM

You there! Clown!

(MAGGIE freezes.)

MALCOLM

I'm talking to you, clown. (beat) Turn around.

MAGGIE

(Turns, wide eyed. Then, getting the idea to mime, bows deeply.)

MALCOLM

I'm looking for a girl.

MAGGIE

(Shakes head, wags disapproving finger MALCOLM.)

MALCOLM

It's not like that!

MAGGIE

(Crosses arms, nods head, looks like "yea right".)

MALCOLM

It's NOT! You see I'm looking for...oh never mind. Why am I explaining myself to a clown?

MAGGIE

(Shrugs her shoulders, holds her hands out in mock "how do I know".)

MALCOLM

So, have you seen a girl or not?

MAGGIE

(Puts a stiff hand above eyes, miming looking around the room, then shrugs shoulders, palms facing up, and shakes head no.)

MALCOLM

Not now man! Earlier. Did you see a girl here earlier?

MAGGIE

(Shrugs shoulders.)

MALCOLM

She's about this tall.

(MALCOLM indicates height of MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE

(Mimes height in understanding and then adjusts her own height to be shorter.)

MALCOLM

Nice girlish figure...

MAGGIE

(Pops her cheeks out and pats her belly as though it's big and scratches in a manly fashion and nods understanding.)

MALCOLM

She has (fill in color of hair of actor playing MAGGIE) hair...

MAGGIE

(Quickly reaches up to touch her hair and, touching hat, realizes with relief her hair is not visible and shrugs.)

MALCOLM

...a pretty face...

MAGGIE

(Makes a goofy face trying to make herself look ugly.)

MALCOLM

...and was wearing a (fill in actor's costume color) dress.

MAGGIE

(MAGGIE fusses with clown suit to be sure her dress isn't showing and shrugs.)

MALCOLM

Well? Have you seen her or not?

MAGGIE

(Nods head vigorously and points to the Big Top exit.)

MALCOLM

Ah-ha! She'll not escape me now! She must...she will be mine!

(MALCOLM exits Big Top. OS, Big Top, sound of a lion roar followed by MALCOLM yelping, and the crowd cheering.)

MAGGIE

Whoops!

FLICK

(OS Midway) Come Catalina. She's in here.

(FLICK, carrying his bat, and CATALINA enter from Midway and look around, seeing but not recognizing MAGGIE.)

FLICK

I'm looking for a girl...

MAGGIE

Where have I heard that before?

FLICK

Wait! Is that you? (Removes MAGGIE'S clown nose.) Ha! It is you!

CATALINA (doubtful)

This? This is great beauty you speak of? This...this clown?

MAGGIE (teasing)

(to FLICK) You think I'm beautiful?

FLICK

Well, maybe not at this particular moment, but before you were dressed as a clown you were quite-

CATALINA

Flick!

FLICK

Oh, um, yes. Catalina, may I introduce...Wait. I don't even know your name!

MAGGIE

Maggie. My name is Maggie.

FLICK

(aside – Maggie. Listen now, fortunate heart! Learn the name to which you forever belong!)

CATALINA

(Removes MAGGIE'S hat and her hair tumbles down.)

Your new name...Blaze! Cousin from homeland.

MAGGIE

Blaze. Oh my! So exotic. Blaze. I like it!

CATALINA

You get off lodka today. (pause) Boat? No clown suit for you! You rider like I once was.

(During dialogue, FLICK and CATALINA help MAGGIE out of costume.)

FLICK

Horses.

MAGGIE

Oh! I can ride side saddle.

CATALINA

Bareback. No saddle.

MAGGIE (unsure)

Oh.

CATALINA

No worry. I teach. Now, we get you out of clothes.

MAGGIE

Where have I heard that before?

(MAGGIE and FLICK grin at each other.)

FLICK

Well, I'll leave you to it then. I've got to get to the big top anyway. Some commotion. Apparently, a man from the audience thought he could singlehandedly manhandle Kasar!

MAGGIE

Kasar?

CATALINA

Kasar is bol'shoy kot. Big cat? You say lion.

MAGGIE

So Kasar did not kill him then? Was he a bearded man with a black cape?

FLICK

Yes. A bearded man with a black cape! Kasar gave him a little nip in the rear and then he ran off.

MAGGIE

That's him! Sir Malcolm Tent.

CATALINA

Malcontent?

FLICK

Apparently, it's Malcolm and then Tent.

MAGGIE

He's here! He must have followed me! I thought the lion did him in, but he must have escaped!
Oh my!

FLICK

(Grabs MAGGIE'S hands in his.)

Don't worry Maggie...

CATALINA (reminding)

Blaze.

FLICK

Don't worry...Blaze. I'll take care of him and Catalina will take care of you.

(FLICK picks up his bat and exits Big Top as MAGGIE looks after,
dreamily.)

CATALINA

(Circles MAGGIE, evaluating.)

OK, now.... Da...Maybe...yes. I know just da thing.

(Rummages in the trunk and pulls out a skimpy bareback riding costume
and offers it to MAGGIE.)

Go behind there and put on.

MAGGIE

(Looks skeptically at garment.)

Um...

CATALINA

(Puts garment in MAGGIE'S hands and pushes MAGGIE to the dressing
screen.)

Go!

(CATALINA digs in costume trunk. MAGGIE soon begins draping her
own clothes on top of the screen.)

MAGGIE

(Pokes head out from behind the screen.)

Um...Is there more to this? This can't possibly be the whole ensemble.

CATALINA

What?! Let Catalina see.

(MAGGIE withdraws behind screen, CATALINA follows, MALCOLM enters from Midway, looking around wildly, limping, holding his backside, in pain.)

MALCOLM

Where is that clown? Feed me to the lions, eh? Oh, my dear clown. You'll be sorry. You'll be so sorry. When I get my hands on-

CATALINA

(from behind screen) This goes here. (pause) Like that. (pause) Good. How does that feel? Now put that here. (pause) Now pull this up tight. (pause) Otlichno. Perfect. I like. Feel good?

MALCOLM (listening.)

Hmmm...this sounds very interesting! Perhaps I'll just stay and-

APOLLO

(OS Midway) Here! I think he went in here!

MALCOLM

Balderdash! No rest for the wicked! I'm off then!

(MALCOLM rushes, exiting Rear. APOLLO, CHESTER, and FESTER enter from Midway, panting. CHESTER continues to the Rear exit, looking out. Others stop near dressing screen to catch their breath and hear the following dialogue.)

CATALINA

(from behind screen) You like it, right?

MAGGIE

(from behind screen) Ummmm...I don't know. It feels so strange.

CATALINA

(from behind screen) You no like? You'll get used to it. All the girls do.

APOLLO

Hmmm...this sounds very interesting! Perhaps I'll just stay and-

(FESTER hits APOLLO over the head with clown hat and wags finger at him.)

CHESTER

Come on fellas! This way!

(CHESTER exits Rear followed quickly by FESTER and APOLLO. CATALINA comes out from behind screen and digs in the trunk.)

CATALINA

Why you no like? You look much like bare back rider.

MAGGIE (modestly)

(from behind screen) But my legs!

CATALINA

Your legs good!

(Finds a riding crop and pulls out of trunk, snaps it and puts it down on a chair.)

MAGGIE (modestly)

(from behind screen) But my shoulders!

CATALINA

Your legs! Your shoulders! What? You are cold?

(Pulls elaborate rider's head dress from trunk, shakes and puts it down on chair.)

MAGGIE (pretending)

(from behind screen) Cold? Oh...Yes...that's it. I'm cold. Quite cold.

CATALINA

Ah...Here. This keep you warm.

(Pulls colorful Japanese robe from trunk, passes to MAGGIE behind screen.)

MAGGIE

Yes. Oh good. That's much better.

(Comes out from behind screen modestly tying robe closed.)

Much...ummmm...warmer.

FLICK

(OS Midway) But Boss! He's not in there. Let's go check behind the hucksters!

(CHARLES rushes in from Midway followed by FLICK carrying bat.)

CHARLES

Yes, yes. We've already checked there. If he's not in here we'll check-

(Stops short when he sees MAGGIE.)

What's this? Flick! I told you to get rid of her!

FLICK

Ummm...

CATALINA

Who is person you speak of?

CHARLES (pointing at MAGGIE)

Her!

CATALINA

This...my cousin from homeland. (heavily accented) Blaze.

CHARLES (skeptical)

(no accent) Blaze?

FLICK

(in same accent and tone as CATALINA) Blaze.

CHARLES (skeptical)

(no accent) Blaze?

MAGGIE

(in same accent and tone as CATALINA) Blaze.

CHARLES (skeptical)

Cousin, hum?

(Walks slowly around MAGGIE, evaluating.)

FLICK

Yes, that's right! Her cousin. Just arrived on the (pause) lodka today from...the homeland?

CHARLES (suspicious)

Lodka? You speaking Russian now Flick?

CATALINA

Russian-Romanian! Lodka is boat. She ride bareback like me. Family business.

CHARLES

Funny. She doesn't look Romanian.

CATALINA

Russian-Romanian.

CHARLES

She doesn't look Russian-Romanian either!

CATALINA

Adopted. Left on door stoop.

FLICK (nervous laughter)

Adopted! That explains it!

CHARLES

Adopted. Humph. Doesn't look like a bareback rider either.

FLICK

I don't know Boss. She looks like she could ride.

CATALINA

Wait!

(Gets headdress and riding crop, puts headdress on MAGGIE.)

There! Posmotrite! (translation: look) You see! Bareback rider!

FLICK

Yes, Boss! Definitely a bareback rider. Now we should go check the-

CHARLES

Something funny about this...She looks awfully like that run-away from earlier.

FLICK (out of ideas)

Ummm...

CATALINA (out of ideas)

Well...

(FLICK and CATALINA look at each other and shrug "what else can we do?". MAGGIE looks at both of them, then at CHARLES, makes a decision, steels herself, takes a deep breath, unties and drops the robe revealing a skimpy bareback riding outfit. She quickly grabs the crop from CATALINA, poses, snaps it.)

FLICK (shocked – in a good way)

Ho-Le-Cow.

CATALINA (triumphant)

Kha! You see! Bareback rider!

CHARLES

Humph.

CHARLES (Cont.)

(Looks long and hard at MAGGIE, CATALINA, and then FLICK.)

Well then. I guess that's settled. (long pause) Well? What are you all doing still standing around then? Go get busy doing...whatever it is you do! I'm not paying you to hang about and stare at each other!

(CATALINA grabs MAGGIE and pulls her toward Midway exit. MAGGIE grabs robe along the way, looks longingly at FLICK who returns a similar look. CATALINA and MAGGIE exit.)

CHARLES

Cousin my foot!

FLICK (dreamily looking where MAGGIE exited.)

Boss?

CHARLES

I may be old, but I'm no idiot Flick. Blaze, or whatever her real name is, is your responsibility now. One bit of drama from her, one bit mind you, and she's out on her run-away tush! Now get this place cleaned up, would you?

FLICK

You got it Boss.

(FLICK puts bat down, starts sweeping up, finds the newspaper open to the article about Stephan Blessing's death, picks it up, and reads a bit.)

Hey Boss. Isn't Stephan Blessing the name of your silent partner?

CHARLES

And friend...Why? What is it?

(FLICK hands newspaper to Charles, pointing to article.)

CHARLES (reading aloud)

Tycoon Stephan Blessing...dead at 51...of...consumption? I can't believe this. I just saw him last month and he was fine! This is...this is terrible. (choked up) Poor Stephan. He was such a good man. I can't tell you how many times he saved this rag tag excuse for a circus from going under. (long pause) I didn't think it would end like this.

FLICK

End? You mean...you're closing down the circus, Boss?

CHARLES

No, no. I meant I didn't think his search would end like this.

FLICK

His search?

CHARLES

His daughter. She disappeared from this very circus twelve years ago. Snatched right off the carousel. Stephan's been looking for her ever since. The police found nothing. No clue whatsoever. Surely a kidnapping. They had several suspects, some missing servants, but never received a ransom demand. He was always hopeful that she would someday, somehow, remember and make her way back here.

FLICK

Ahhh...So he partnered up with you to keep the circus going so he could keep that hope alive?

CHARLES

Yes. That's right. That's...right. That's how we became friends. I guess she's really gone for good. And now (long pause) so is he...unless...no. Not even Stephan would think to-

FLICK

I'm...I'm so sorry Boss. (pause) Anything I can do?

CHARLES (sad)

No. Not much can be done about that business, what with Stephan gone.

(Clears his throat, folds newspaper, shakes his head, and tosses aside.)

But I suppose the show must go on.

(MALCOLM enters silently from Back exit, unseen, hears the conversation, stops, and listens.)

CHARLES (Cont.)

So, to the matters at hand, if you can think of a way to come up with a live snake, a bearded woman, and a lion tamer, I'd be most appreciative.

FLICK

A lion tamer? Don't tell me that old Granger finally kicked off?

CHARLES

No. That old coot will outlive us all. But he was pretty upset by all that business with Kasar and the man in the black cape. Said he's done with the circus. Got himself an RV and is going to retire.

FLICK

An RV?

CHARLES

Roadhouse vacancy. Anyhow, we are now officially down a lion tamer!

MALCOLM

(aside – Ah ha! Here’s my chance! I know they’re hiding Maggie somewhere here.

(Takes off black cape, turns inside out to red and puts it back on.)

I’ll do a little undercover work to find her.

(Removes mask from pocket and puts it on his face.)

And when I do, she’ll be mine as will the Blessing fortune!

(Sneaks out Back exit.)

FLICK

Ain’t that a shame. Granger was one of the best. So, he’s gone already?

CHARLES

Heading out this evening. Couldn’t talk him out of it.

FLICK

I’d better go say my goodbyes then.

CHARLES

Yes. I suppose you should. (pause) See you first thing in the morning.

(FLICK exits Midway with bat.)

CHARLES

(To himself) Where in the world are we going to find a lion tamer on such short notice? It’s not as if we have lion tamers waltzing in here all the time, looking for work.

*(MALCOLM literally waltzes in from Midway in red cape and mask, followed by ARCHIBALD, masked, carrying a lion tamer’s chair and MYRA, masked carrying a lion tamers whip. ARCHIBALD and MYRA are dressed as men in ridiculous safari clothes/hats and both wearing fake but very apparently different mustaches. **Every time they appear they are wearing the other’s mustache.**)*

MALCOLM

Good evening sir! Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Martine Nicholas DeSilva the Third!

*(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud as they do **every time his name is mentioned.** CHARLES looks on, perplexed and slightly amused.)*

MALCOLM (Cont.)

I have tamed the king of the jungle in many countries across the world. I am at your service.

(MALCOLM bows extravagantly. ARCHIBALD and MYRA bow clumsily.)

CHARLES

At my service?

MALCOLM

I understand you've lost your lion tamer?

CHARLES (toying with them)

That's right. My goodness, word gets around fast. Do you know someone who'd be interested?

MALCOLM

Do I know someone? Do I...

(aside – This circus yahoo is completely clueless! He will be easier to fool than I thought!)

CHARLES (toying with them)

So...you do know someone?

MALCOLM

Haven't I been explaining this in great detail? (pause) I am known as El León Susurro!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

(Perplexed that he doesn't understand) The lion whisperer?

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud.)

CHARLES

You whisper to lions? That's a talent then?

MYRA (exasperated)

(own voice) Good God...*(clears throat and continues in false male voice)* Good God man! He's a lion tamer! You need a lion tamer! That's him! He's your man!

MALCOLM

Quite right. I'm offering you my services.

CHARLES (toying with them)

Ohhh...I see. Why the masks? Were you burned by acid or something?

ARCHIBALD

Oh no. *(Strikes a modeling pose.)* It's just they're terribly comfortable. *(Strikes a modeling pose.)* I think everyone will be wearing them in the future. *(Strikes a modeling pose.)*

(MYRA hits ARCHIBALD in the tush with the whip.)

CHARLES

And these two?

ARCHIBALD

I'm Archib-

(MYRA hits ARCHIBALD in the tush with the whip.)

MYRA

(own voice) We're his (clears throat and continues in false male voice) We're his unnamed assistants!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA bow clumsily.)

CHARLES (toying with them)

Hmmm...I don't know. Men in masks can rarely be trusted.

MYRA

(false male voice) Don't you suppose the masks could add a bit of drama to the show.

MALCOLM

And really, you have nothing to lose! What's the worst that could happen?

ARCHIBALD (thinking)

Well...that would be...eaten by lion?

CHARLES (thinking)

(serious) Right. (beat) Right. (to MALCOLM) Alright, you're hired!

MALCOLM

I accept!

(aside - And now to begin our dirty work! No doubt we'll find young Maggie soon enough and then the Blessing fortune will mine! All mine!)

BLACK OUT

ACT I
Scene 3

Setting: Same. About a week later, late morning.

At Rise: CHARLES is sitting at desk, writing. FLICK down in the main area, dressed as OLGA (except shoes) with crazy wig hair, a fake beard, and a bad lipstick job as FLICK is pacing, holding his bat, clumping back and forth in men's work boots.

FLICK

This is not going to work, Boss. No one is ever going to believe I'm a woman.

CHARLES

Nonsense. You look fantastic! Totally convincing. Besides, everyone says you're a bit on the feminine side anyhow.

FLICK

They...what? Who says that?

(APOLLO enters from Midway, curling a fake weight.)

CHARLES

If I wasn't a married man...

FLICK

You're not a married man!

APOLLO

Oh. Sorry Boss. Didn't know you were entertaining. (pause) And such a lovely guest I might add.

CHARLES

Apollo! Gather anyone on the Midway who's not working. I have a couple of announcements to make.

APOLLO

Sure thing Boss. (To FLICK) Miss.

(APOLLO bows deeply. FLICK giggles like a girl. APOLLO exits Midway.)

FLICK

Oh brother! We're never going to get away with this Boss.

CHARLES (chuckling)

Seems like you've already convinced Apollo! (serious) But seriously, Flick, we don't have too

CHARLES (Cont.)

many options here. Brunhilda quit. She was a wonderful bearded woman, very popular on the Midway. But it's advertised on our posters, so patrons are expecting a bearded woman! We have to face facts. She's gone and until we can find another, it'll have to be you. I'm sorry son.

FLICK (hopeful)

Perhaps Brunhilda could be convinced to come back?

CHARLES

Doubtful. She lost her heart to a Pennsylvania barber. He fell in love with her and gave her a shave and a cut during a show! Her face was as smooth as a baby's butt. And that's the last we saw of dear Brunhilda. Of course, Apollo was brokenhearted. You know he still hasn't regained his strength, poor fella. No...it's got to be you for now. No one else can do it!

FLICK

But I look ridiculous! I have no idea what to do with this wig and makeup.

CHARLES

Don't worry. Catalina's going to help. So, it's just the three of us who know. No one else, understand? Can't take a chance on word getting out that the bearded woman is really a beardless man.

(CATALINA enters from Midway carrying a basket of makeup/hair stuff.)

Here she is now.

FLICK (groaning)

Great. Just great.

CATALINA (laughing)

Oh...this is something. Flick! Never do I see you look so much beautiful!

CHARLES

That's Olga! He's Olga. Got it?

CATALINA (sarcastically)

Da. Yes. Ok. Olga. Beautiful name for beautiful woman. Come. I make hair better. Makeup. You no so clever with lipstick, Flick.

CHARLES

Olga!!!!

CATALINA

OK! Olga!

(Notices FLICK has on his heavy men's work boots.)

CATALINA (Cont.)

And it look like Olga forgot the women shoes.

FLICK

Sorry Boss. You didn't give me shoes with the dress.

CHARLES

Catalina, take Flick-

FLICK and CATALINA

Olga!

CHARLES

Take Olga and get her some proper shoes! And hurry it up!

(FLICK, carrying bat, and CATALINA exit Back. FESTER, CHESTER, and MAGGIE, who are obviously now good friends, enter from Midway chatting. MAGGIE is wearing complete riding outfit including headpiece and crop. She is in very theatrical show makeup and hair up, looking very different from her original plain appearance. They are followed by LYDIA, carrying crystal ball, who is listening with obviously jealousy.)

MAGGIE (mid-sentence.)

(to CHESTER and FESTER) –Oh yes, very much! I've seen Flick almost every day since I've been here! On Monday, he took me out on the Midway and we played all the games. He won me a doll with yellow hair. On Tuesday, we rode the Ferris wheel at night. We could see the moon reflecting on the water. It was very romantic. On Wednesday, we ate corndogs and shared a lemonade and yesterday-

LYDIA

Oh...shared a lemonade? Think that makes you special to Flick, do you?

(MAGGIE looks perplexed, not understanding LYDIA is being mean.)

CHESTER

Cut it out Lydia. Leave her alone.

FESTER

(Mimes slamming door in LYDIA'S face, locking it, and swallowing key.)

CHARLES

Lydia! Didn't I warn you not to carry the crystal ball around anymore? They're not cheap to replace and you've not yet finished paying me for the last two you broke!

FESTER

(Starts miming dropping and breaking things.)

(CHARLES looks around, spots a small box and the newspaper with the Blessing article, retrieves, takes crystal ball from LYDIA, wraps crystal ball, puts the wrapped crystal ball in the box and hands to LYDIA.)

CHARLES

Chester! Fester! Come help me get a few more chairs!

(CHESTER and FESTER follow CHARLES exiting Back as LYDIA sits at table, pulls out her crystal ball, unwraps, smooths paper, and starts to read the STEPHAN BLESSING article without realizing its significance, then notices MAGGIE standing alone, folds and tucks newspaper in box.)

LYDIA

(aside – This bareback riding getup doesn't fool me. I know she's that run-away and it's about time I made her run away again before she wins Flick's heart and ruins all my plans.)

I'm a fortune teller, you know. I can see the future. Would you like me to read your fortune? See your future? Perhaps there's something you would like to know...I do your fortune for free. Sit!

MAGGIE

Well, I've never had my fortune told before. (pause) Alright then!
(Sits across from LYDIA.)

LYDIA

Let me see your hand.

(MAGGIE gives LYDIA her hand, palm up. LYDIA spits into it, much to MAGGIE'S surprise and disgust, and rubs her thumb around looking intently at MAGGIE'S palm.)

Ahhh...I see you running. Running away from...

MAGGIE

Yes! Away from a bad man. A very bad man. Sir Malcolm Tent!

LYDIA

Sir Malcontent?

MAGGIE

That's two words. Malcolm and then Tent. It just...oh never mind. He came here looking for me. Flick, Chester, Fester, and Catalina have all sworn to protect me from him!

LYDIA

Lot of good Chester and Fester will do you. Two clowns. And one a mute! What good is he? Couldn't warn ya if your pants were on fire. And Catalina? That one afraid of her own horse. But no matter. So, you run away, yes? But you run toward something also, no?

MAGGIE

I'm not sure what you mean.

LYDIA

You search for something, no?

MAGGIE

Wow. You really can read fortunes!

LYDIA

You search for fame or wealth?

(During the following dialogue, LYDIA releases MAGGIE's hand which MAGGIE wipes on her skirt. LYDIA positions crystal ball between them on table, begins to wave her hands around the ball in a mystical fashion.)

MAGGIE

Fame? Wealth? No. I'm not interested in fame or fortune. Perhaps I hope to find family and love. I am so happy to have found Flick. I've never been so happy in my whole life!

LYDIA

So, you're telling me you don't know that Flick is set to inherit the Bergstrom Circus & Menagerie when the Boss retires? He has no children. Flick has been with him since he was young boy and the Boss thinks of him as a son. Are you sure that's not why you've come? To tie your wagon to his hitch?

MAGGIE

Tie my...No! Certainly not! I didn't know any of that.

LYDIA

No? Well good. Because Flick belongs to another.

MAGGIE

He...he what?

(Peers into crystal ball.)

LYDIA

Flick belongs to another. I see his future as husband, father. I see him happy and wealthy.

MAGGIE

You can see all that...in there? Wow. But...perhaps it's me he's happy with in your vision? *(aside – Oh, how I can picture it! Life with Flick as my husband and father to our children. I couldn't care less about the wealthy part, but being with Flick...it's become one of my dearest dreams.)*

LYDIA

Flick has been through dozens of girlfriends. There was Jenny, Patrice, and Shirley-

MAGGIE

Oh...so many!

LYDIA

Not done yet. –Soula, Florence, Elsie, and Agnes-

MAGGIE

Oh my! That many?

LYDIA

Still not done. –Nellie, Myrtle, Ladelle, and Jolene. And those last two? Sisters!

MAGGIE

Goodness! Well...Flick certainly has (pause) a big (pause) heart.

LYDIA

Yes. But now he's professed his love and is devoted. You see Flick and I are engaged to be married. As his wife, I will one day own half of all of this! Finally, I will have something to call my own.

MAGGIE

Flick? Engaged? Oh...but why would he-

LYDIA

I think perhaps you misinterpreted his friendship as something else. Flick has always been one to make newcomers welcome. It's his only fault. He is too nice.

MAGGIE (sadly)

(aside – Oh dear me. My true love, Flick, loves another. My poor heart is broken and shall never be mended. What reason is there to go on? (long pause) Only news of my Father matters now.)

Oh. I...I guess I misunderstood. I'm really not well versed in matters of the heart. How ridiculously silly of me! You and Flick? I didn't realize...I would never have...If I had known...You must know that-

LYDIA

An honest misunderstanding. I am not a jealous person. Do not give it another thought.

MAGGIE (embarrassed, panicked)

Oh please don't tell Flick, Mistress Lydia! It would be so...humiliating if he knew I was pining away for him while he was just trying to be kind.

LYDIA

Do not trouble yourself. You can be sure I will never breathe a word of this to him. But perhaps

LYDIA (Cont.)

it would be better if you left Bergstrom's right away.

MAGGIE

I...I can't leave. I came in search of a man-

LYDIA

But I though you said-

MAGGIE

No, not a man for a husband. I came searching for...for my father.

(Pulls locket and chain from bosom, opens, and displays pictures.)

LYDIA (shocked)

(Tries to look closely at pictures.)

This? This is your father? Hmmm...May I hold it?

(MAGGIE removes chain and locket from neck and hands to LYDIA.)

MAGGIE

Yes. I think he's my Father. I've not seen him since I was a child. The couple that raised me said he was likely dead. But I found this picture and thought perhaps if I looked for him-

LYDIA (sharply)

Have you shown this to Flick?

MAGGIE

No. Not yet. He told me Mr. Bergstrom insisted if there was any drama with me, he would send me away and I just can't go back. I don't want to get Flick in trouble so I've been quietly asking around myself. No one recognizes the picture. Do you recognize him?

LYDIA

(Nervously looks back and forth between MAGGIE and locket.)

Him? No. Of course not. No. Not at all. He's a complete stranger to me. I can honestly say that I've never...ever laid eyes on this man. He's...um...not familiar. Not at all. Me? Recognize him? That's just silly. Why would you think such a thing?

MAGGIE (perplexed)

I...I was just asking if-

LYDIA (serious again, dramatic)

Enough! Do you really want to know the truth? What's learned can never be un-learned!

MAGGIE

Desperately.

LYDIA

(long pause) Alright...Mistress Lydia will help you. But I must first know your real name.

MAGGIE

My name is Maggie. And I don't know my last name at all.

LYDIA

You don't say. That's good. I mean what a shame. OK so let's begin, shall we? Close your eyes and think of your father. Picture his face in your mind.

(MAGGIE closes her eyes. LYDIA sets open locket facing up on table and quietly removes the folded newspaper from the box.)

LYDIA (Cont.)

(dramatic voice) Concentrate on your Father's face and keep your eyes closed tight.

(Compares STEPHAN'S photos in the newspaper and locket.)

(dramatic voice) Keep thinking. Keep your eyes closed.

(*aside* – (looking paper) *Just as I thought. He's one in the same!* (reading) *Tycoon Stephan Blessing...daughter Margaret* (looks up) *that must be Maggie* (reading) *missing...no one to inherit unless she can be located!* (looks up) *She doesn't even know who she is! How perfect is this?*)

Are your eyes still closed?

MAGGIE

Yes.

LYDIA

(Puts paper back in box.)

Did you peek? Oh, never mind. Let's get on with it. (dramatic voice) Can you picture your father in your mind's eye?

MAGGIE

Yes...I think so. Wait! I think I remember him calling me...Sweet Pea. Does that help?

LYDIA

Oh sure, sure. (dramatic voice) Open your eyes, take my hands, stare deeply with me into the crystal ball.

(LYDIA and MAGGIE hold hands over the table and around the crystal ball. LYDIA closes her eyes and begins to chant very dramatically.)

LYDIA (Cont.)

To the left and right of me, above and below, I awaken the spirit of nature and magic within me. Show me, all seeing crystal, Maggie's...Sweet Pea's...father, wherever he may be, through time and space, show him to me.

(Throws her head back dramatically raising her voice.)

LYDIA (Cont.)

This is my will! So it will be!

(Opens her eyes, releases MAGGIE'S hands and starts waiving her own hands around the crystal ball, staring intently into the ball.)

What's this...I see a man. Yes! I see a man. Is he? Yes...he...he is your father! He is the man in the locket! Tell me your name! Bo...Bono

MAGGIE (excited)

My father is Bono? I'm Irish then?

LYDIA

No, not Bono...Bonette. Randolph Bonette. And...what's this. Oh no! It can't be true!

MAGGIE

(Madly looking back and forth between the ball and LYDIA.)

What? What can't be true? Do you know where he is?

LYDIA

(Dramatically slumps in her chair, feigning exhaustion.)

The psychic connection is lost. But I did find the information you seek.

(aside – Are you ready for this? Are you? I'm going to give dear, sweet, innocent Maggie a history she'll never recover from!)

MAGGIE

Tell me! Oh please tell me! You said his name is Randolph Bonette? Where is he?

LYDIA

Your father, Randolph Bonette, (pause) died fifteen years ago-

MAGGIE (sadly)

What? Oh no!

LYDIA

-in prison.

MAGGIE (shocked)

In prison?

LYDIA

Sad to say, he was a criminal of the worst sort.

MAGGIE (hopeless)

He was...he was a criminal? So, the Sinclairs were right. They were right all along.

LYDIA

I'm so sorry dear. We can't choose our parents. It's no reflection on you I'm sure.

MAGGIE (despairing)

(aside - Oh woe is me. Woe is me! I don't know which is more distressing. Losing the love of a father I can't remember or loving a man who can never love me back.)

I don't know how I'm going to get through this, losing both my father and Flick.

LYDIA

It will pass my dear. It will pass. Just put Flick and your father out of your mind forever and it will pass. And one more thing, dear.

MAGGIE

Yes?

LYDIA

Your real name? It's not Maggie. It's Gertrude.

MAGGIE (sadly)

(Picks up locket and looks at photo.)

Gertrude Bonette. Daughter of a criminal. (pause) I guess I have all my answers now.

(Gives locket to LYDIA.)

You keep it. Payment for the reading. I don't need it any longer.

LYDIA

(aside – (Displaying locket.) I can't believe my good fortune! With Maggie thinking she is Gertrude Bonette, which coincidentally (wink) is my real name, the identity of Margaret Blessing, AKA Maggie, is now mine for the taking! As is the Blessing Fortune!

(Puts locket round her neck and tucks in collar while speaking.)

It appears I'm an heiress! Looks like I won't need Flick after all.)

(FLICK, carrying his bat and dressed as Olga including women's shoes, and CATALINA enter from Midway along with EXTRAS who mingle.)

FLICK (stopping short.)

Blaze!

(CATALINA elbows FLICK as he has used his own voice and is not supposed to know MAGGIE yet.)

FLICK (Cont.)

(in female voice) I mean you must be Blaze.

(Curtsies awkwardly.)

CATALINA

Blaze...Olga would like to, um...acquaintance you. Blaze meet Olga. Olga meet Blaze.

MAGGIE (sadly)

(aside – I guess I really am Blaze now. For certainly I'm not Maggie. That was a lie. And who is

MAGGIE (Cont.)

Gertrude but the daughter of a criminal? It's the circus life for me now. I'd better make the most of it.)

(friendly) Hi Olga! I'm pleased to meet you.

(FLICK sits at a table and CATALINA begins fixing his makeup. EXTRAS mingle. CHARLES, CHESTER, and FESTER enter from Back carrying chairs, setting them down facing CHARLE'S trailer opening/desk. FESTER and CHESTER then grab MAGGIE and sit on either side of her in chairs. APOLLO enters from Big Top, sees FLICK, and comes over to him, takes off his hat and gives FLICK a deep bow.)

APOLLO

Dear Olga. It's lovely to see you again. You look quite fetching today.

FLICK

(real voice) Thanks. (female voice) I mean thank you so kindly.

CHARLES

Ok everyone quiet down! Take a seat!

(CHARLES faces group, standing. Everyone who is not sitting, takes a seat.)

CHARLES (Cont.)

I have a few announcements to make. We have several new additions to the Bergstrom family. Blaze. Where is- ahh...there you are. Come here my dear. For those of you who've not yet met her, this is Catalina's cousin from...

(MAGGIE goes and stands next to CHARLES.)

CATALINA

From homeland.

CHARLES

Blaze arrived last week and, under Catalina's training should be ready for the bareback show soon. Everyone welcome Blaze!

EVERYONE EXCEPT MAGGIE

(Clapping, whooping, feet stomping)

(MAGGIE curtsies and returns to her seat between FESTER and CHESTER who fawn over her.)

CHARLES

And as many of you know, we've recently lost our beloved bearded lady, Brunhilda.

EVERYONE EXCEPT MAGGIE

(General murmur of disappointment with things like “Such a shame”, “I’ll miss her”, “She was so nice”, etc...)

APOLLO (lamenting)

Brunie! My Brunie!

MAGGIE

Oh my! Did she die?

CHESTER

Nah. Shaved by a Pennsylvania barber.

MAGGIE (confused)

Oh...

(MAGGIE leaves her seat to go pat APOLLO on the back and whisper in his ear. He nods and whispers back. She pats him on the back again and returns to seat.)

CHARLES

But the show must go on! So, everyone welcome Olga, our new bearded lady! Olga come up here.

(CHARLES gestures to FLICK, CATALINA gives him a shove and grabs his bat as he goes and stands next to CHARLES.)

EVERYONE

(Clapping, whooping, feet stomping. Even APOLLO joins in, forgetting his lament.)

(FLICK curtsies awkwardly and returns to his seat.)

CHARLES

And my final announcement. Most of you don’t yet know but old man Granger has tamed his last lion.

EVERYONE EXCEPT MAGGIE

(General murmur of disappointment with things like “Such a shame”, “I’ll miss him”, “He was so good with Kasar”, etc...)

MAGGIE

Oh my! Eaten by lion?

CHESTER

Nah. Retired. Got himself an RV.

MAGGIE

Oh...A recreational vehicle?

CHESTER (perplexed)

A what?

(FESTER mimes driving and honking a horn to MAGGIE'S amusement.)

CHARLES

But the good news is we have secured the employment of (reads from paper) Martine Nicholas DeSilva the Third and his unnamed assistants!

(MALCOLM gracefully enters from Midway with a flourish followed by the clumsy ARCHIBALD and MYRA who are applauding. All are still costumed. Applause from crowd is sparse as they're put off by the pomp and circumstance.)

MALCOLM

Better known as El León Susurro!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud but everyone else is silent.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

(perplexed at non-recognition.) The lion whisperer?

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud but everyone else is silent.)

CATALINA

Kha! This is talent? To whisper to lions?

(MALCOLM gives CATALINA the evil eye.)

CHARLES

Martine will-

MALCOLM (interrupting)

El León Susurro!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud.)

CHARLES (stumbling over name)

Er...yes...Elinor...Surrendo...is our new lion tamer! Now...we have a couple of hours before the afternoon show begins. Let's make it a good one! Olga, a word?

(FLICK grabs his bat and follows CHARLES. They both exit to Big Top. Everyone starts socializing. MALCOLM whispers to ARCHIBALD and

MYRA and the two of them begin walking around together trying to get a good look at each female's face. MALCOLM, looking separately, approaches MAGGIE, extracting her from her conversation.)

MALCOLM

So...Blaze is it?

MAGGIE (sassy)

Um...yes. Yes it is. And you're the new lion tamer? Elinor Surrendo isn't it? Elinor a curious name for a man.

MALCOLM (angry)

It's El León Susurro!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA stop what they're doing, turn and applaud. They stop short when MALCOLM gives them a stern look and return to what they were doing. MALCOLM roughly pulls MAGGIE away to get her alone.)

MALCOLM (Cont. threateningly)

Now, now, my dear. We don't want to get off on the wrong foot, do we?

MAGGIE

(does not recognize as MALCOLM but is afraid.) No. Of course not. I beg your pardon Mr. Susurro.

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA stop what they're doing, turn and applaud until MALCOLM gives them a stern look and they return to what they were doing.)

MALCOLM

El León Susurro. I'm a lion tamer by trade. But really, I take great pleasure in the taming of all measure of wild beast. There's a great talent in breaking the wild spirit. Of making the strong-willed docile. Now, tell me dear, from where do you hail?

MAGGIE (afraid)

From...from the homeland.

MALCOLM

The homeland? And where, pray tell, is the homeland.

MAGGIE (remembering)

My homeland is, um, (pause) Russia!

MALCOLM

I see. I thought it was Romania.

MAGGIE (flustered)

Yes...Yes that's right. Romania.

MALCOLM

Well which is it? Russia or Romania?

MAGGIE (hopeful)

Both? I'm Russian-Romanian?

MALCOLM

I don't think you're either Russian or Romanian.

(Grabs MAGGIE'S arm roughly and pulls her close.)

Now, tell me true girl. Who are you? What's your real name?

MAGGIE (ashamed)

I...I...I'm nobody. Nobody at all. (starts crying quietly) My real name is Gertrude Bonette and I'm the daughter of a criminal. I'm...I'm nobody.

(FESTER hears MAGGIE crying and looks around the room for her, spots her, and starts heading her way.)

MALCOLM

Oh, for heaven's sake. Stop crying. Have some self-respect! Daughter of a criminal? There are worse things. (seeing FESTER on the way) You could be daughter of a clown.

FESTER

(Jumps between MAGGIE and MALCOLM and poses in a fighting stance facing MALCOLM and starts miming boxing.)

(MAGGIE rushes to tell CHESTER.)

MALCOLM

What's this? Clown boxing? I don't have time for this nonsense!

(MALCOLM walks away, trying to look at the faces of the other women.)

FESTER

(Mimes for him to come back and fight.)

(CHESTER arrives, calms FESTER down and brings him back to MAGGIE.

(MAGGIE hugs and mimes to FESTER, wiping sweat off her brow "that was a close one". CHESTER, FESTER, and MAGGIE sit at table with LYDIA and play cards. FLICK, dressed as Olga, enters carrying his bat.

MALCOLM is about to give up his search when APOLLO'S voice catches his attention.)

APOLLO

I didn't get a chance to welcome you earlier, dear Olga.

(MALCOLM cranes his neck to see FLICK while APOLLO bows deeply and kisses FLICK'S hand. FLICK curtsies awkwardly and sits with CATALINA who snatches FLICK'S bat away and gestures to him "what the heck" for bringing it.)

MALCOLM

(aside – What luck! I think I may have at last found dear Maggie. She's a fool if she thinks she can outsmart me! I am the most cunning and brilliant man on earth! Don't you agree? No? We shall see!)

(MALCOLM hurries over and shoves APOLLO out of the way. APOLLO retreats, lies down on a bench, and begins to press fake weights.)

FESTER

(Mimes spotting APOLLO'S weights.)

MALCOLM

So, Olga is it?

(MYRA spots MAGGIE, whispers to ARCHIBALD who looks at MAGGIE and shrugs.)

MYRA (whispering loudly)

Martine.

MALCOLM

I understand you're the newest edition to the Bergstrom family my dear.

(Takes FLICK'S hand as to kiss it.)

MYRA (whispering loudly)

Martine Nicholas DeSilva!

FLICK (sarcastic)

(Struggles to yank his hand back before MALCOLM can kiss it.)

(own voice) Actually (female voice) I think you're the newest edition Elinor.

MALCOLM

That's El León Susurro, but you can call me Martine.

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA stop what they're doing, turn and applaud until MALCOLM gives them a stern look and they stop.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

You know, dear Olga, that beard looks so very fine and sturdy. Mind if I give it a friendly yank?

(MALCOLM reaches for FLICK'S fake beard and CATALINA slaps it away.)

CATALINA (threatens with bat)

I give you somethink to yank!

MALCOLM

(aside – Foiled by that do-good Russian tart. But they can't fool me! Olga is clearly Maggie, my bride to be, masquerading as the bearded lady. I must say I find her even more alluring than I recall! I must find some way to get her alone!)

ARCHIBALD (singsong)

Malcontent!

(MYRA hits ARCHIBALD in the tush with the whip.)

MALCOLM

Excuse me one moment my dear.

(MALCOLM impatiently stomps over to ARCHIBALD and MYRA and they speak, conspiratorially. They are off to the side and no one else can hear them.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

What is it? Can't you see that I'm extraordinarily busy?

MYRA

That girl...over there. The one they call Blaze.

MALCOLM

The bareback rider? What about her.

MYRA

I think it could be Maggie. Hard to tell with all the makeup but if you look at her eyes and cheekbones-

MALCOLM

That girl? Impossible! I've already interviewed her. She's...well she's nobody. Nobody at all. Besides, I believe I've already located our sweet Maggie.

ARCHIBALD (looking around)
Who?

MYRA (looking around)
Which one?

MALCOLM

The one they call Olga. (sigh) Now it's just a matter of proof. I must get her alone and see if she has the locket! I still can't believe the two of you let her find it! It's our only proof to gain the Blessing fortune!

MYRA (doubtfully)

Olga?

MALCOLM

Quite right! I must admit that I find her even more attractive than I originally remember!

ARCHIBALD (also attracted)

Ahhh... Yes. Yes. The bearded lady! That's some woman alright.

MYRA (exasperated)

Seriously? Oh for heaven's sake.

MALCOLM (ignoring)

Isn't she exquisite? That face! That neck! Those hands!!! I can hardly contain myself! I think I'm going to enjoy her almost as much as I'm going to enjoy her family fortune! Now! Meet me back at our quarters so we can devise a plan!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA, eyeballing FLICK as they passing closely on either side of him, head for Back exit.)

ARCHIBALD

(Conspiratorially to MYRA, heard only by MYRA at exit.) I don't think that's her...but that Olga is quite a handsome woman, don't you think? I mean, did you get a look at her-

(MYRA grabs ARCHIBALD by the ear, and drags him out Back exit.)

MALCOLM

Forgive the intrusion, my dear lady. My assistants are lost without me! It's a great burden, always being the brilliant one.

(Leans very close to FLICK, smelling his hair deeply.)

Perhaps you'd like to join me later? (smelling hair deeply) In my tent? (smelling hair deeply) For a drink?

FLICK (aggressive)

(Balling fists, ready to fight.)

(own voice) Oh I just might-

(CATALINA kicks FLICK under the table as he has spoken in his own voice and is acting like FLICK.)

FLICK (Cont.)

(female voice) have to do that!

MALCOLM

Excellent! Until then, I bid you adieu.

(MAGGIE'S head snaps up at the phrase "bid you adieu" and she watches, suspicious, as MALCOLM exits Midway. FLICK, picks up bat, follows and looks out Midway exit.)

MAGGIE

(aside - Hmm...that lion tamer seems strangely familiar. He's a dastardly scoundrel, no doubt, but there's something more. I feel he has dark purpose. Should I warn Olga? Yes? Alright then.)

(MAGGIE approaches and, as FLICK returns to table he tries to conceal the bat.)

MAGGIE

Hello girls. Olga, dear. I wanted to ask you- (sees bat) Oh! Is that Flick's bat?

CATALINA

Bat? What bat?

MAGGIE

That bat. The one Olga is holding behind her back.

CATALINA

Oh no. That is...um...Catalina's bat! Olga, my bat please!

(OLGA hands CATALINA the bat.)

MAGGIE

I'm certain it's Flick's lucky bat. It has his name on it. You see there, where it says Flick?

CATALINA

Oh, da. Well...(pause) can we look at that? (long pause) I guess Flick mixes our bats up at game.

MAGGIE

So...you play baseball on Flick's team? How exciting! What position do you play?

CATALINA

Ummm...Catalina play in middle position.

FLICK

(Groans in own voice)

CATALINA

Catalina play in back position?

FLICK

(Groans in own voice)

CATALINA

Catalina play in front position?

FLICK

(Groans in own voice)

CATALINA

Catalina like all positions! Dostatochno! (translation: enough) No more talk of the baseball! You have question for Olga?

MAGGIE

Um...Oh yes. Olga, dear. I hate to speak ill of others, but I don't like the looks of that lion tamer. I don't think you should trust him.

CATALINA

Olga smart. He no trust.

(FLICK kicks CATALINA under the table as she just referred to him as "he".)

CATALINA (Cont.)

Ow! Why you kick Catalina?

MAGGIE

Catalina, I think that you've hurt Olga's feelings by referring to her as "he". Just because Olga has a beard doesn't mean she's not a girl. And a lovely girl at that.

CATALINA

Oh. Right. Sorry. She. She. She. Blaze, put ribbon in Olga's hair.

MAGGIE

(Pulls ribbon from basket, goes behind FLICK, and starts fixing his wig.)

Oh sure. Your hair is such a pretty color Olga.

FLICK

(own voice) Thanks.

(CATALINA kicks FLICK under the table as he has spoken in his own voice.)

FLICK (Cont.)

(own voice) Ouch! Oh, right. (female voice) I mean thank you Blaze.

MAGGIE

And I just love your dress. So feminine.

FLICK (sarcastic)

(own voice) Right.

(As speaking, moves immediately so as not to get kicked again.)

(own voice) I mean (female voice). I mean thank you. I like your outfit too Blaze.

APOLLO

(Still pressing fake weights)

Olga?

FLICK

(own voice) Yes (female voice) Yes Apollo?

APOLLO

I think you should use your own voice.

(CATALINA and FLICK look quickly at each other. APOLLO puts his weights down, grabs his hat, stands, and starts to walk over to FLICK.)

APOLLO

After all, it matches your beard. It's a handsome beard. You're a handsome woman Olga. Don't think you should try to tidy up your voice for the sake of the show. Be yourself. You're fine just the way you are.

(APOLLO puts his hat on, tips it and exits Midway, leaving CATALINA, FLICK, and MAGGIE with hanging jaws.)

MAGGIE

Oh Olga! Apollo is sweet on you! I've only known him a short while but I've never seen him act like that! I think he's in love! Don't you think so Catalina?

CATALINA

Oh brother! Eto sumasshedshiy biznes! (translation: This is crazy business)

(CATALINA gathers her hair and makeup stuff, stops at table and speaks briefly to LYDIA and EXTRAS, who follow her exiting Back.)

MAGGIE

Well I think so. (to FESTER and CHESTER) You think so too, right boys?

FESTER

(Vigorously nods his head and mimes his heart beating with both hands.)

CHESTER

Oh yea, Olga. It's obvious that Apollo's swoonin for ya.

FESTER & CHESTER

(FESTER mimes trying to kiss CHESTER as he chases him around the room while CHESTER mimes a damsel in distress. FESTER and CHESTER run out Midway, leaving FLICK and MAGGIE alone.)

FLICK

(own voice) This is

(Clears throat and continues in female voice.)

(female voice) This is so humiliating!

MAGGIE

Oh, dear Olga, no. It's a complement, a man flirting with you like that. What's the matter? Don't you like Apollo?

FLICK

(own voice) No! (female voice) No I don't like Apollo!

MAGGIE

Oh. Why ever not? He's so big, and strong, and handsome, and sweet, and-

FLICK (jealous)

(female voice) Sounds like you like him enough for the both of us!

MAGGIE (wistfully)

Me? Oh no! Not me. Alas my heart belongs to someone else.

FLICK

(female voice) Really? Who?

MAGGIE

I came to the circus to find-

FLICK

(female voice) Find what?

MAGGIE

Oh...it doesn't matter anymore. Instead I found love. I probably shouldn't be telling you any of

MAGGIE (Cont.)

this. We hardly know each other.

(Trance-like MAGGIE stares into FLICK'S eyes.)

We just met, but I feel so close to you. You feel so...familiar. Like we already know each other. Perhaps we knew each other in a past life or something.

(Hugs FLICK as they speak.)

Do you feel it too, dear Olga? Our closeness?

FLICK

(own voice) Oh yes. (female voice) I mean...I feel it. I do. So so, so so much.

MAGGIE

(Releases FLICK from hug and holds his hands.)

Then I can, in good conscience, tell you my heart. (shyly) I've never really had a girlfriend with whom to share my secrets. Catalina's more like a mother and she would disapprove. But I'll just die if I don't tell someone! But can I tell you? Can tell you everything?

FLICK

(female voice) Yes. Yes, you can tell me everything.

MAGGIE

Olga...My heart belongs to someone wonderful. Someone strong and brave-

FLICK (jealous)

(own voice) Who? (female voice) Who is it? Albert, the elephant handler? You know he really spends most of his time shucking elephant chips so I don't know if you could really count him strong or brave.

MAGGIE

Oh no, not Albert. My heart belongs to someone warm, funny, and sincere-

FLICK

(female voice) One of the clowns? Chester? Fester? Click? Clack? Who is it? Tell me!

MAGGIE

Oh no, not a clown. My heart belongs to someone handsome, and kind, with eyes like (use "the sea after a storm" or "barrel aged whiskey" depending on eye color of actor playing FLICK.)

FLICK

(female voice) Bruster, the barker? Charlie, the acrobat? (begrudgingly) I must admit his flexibility makes him quite the catch.

MAGGIE

My! You've met quite a few people for being new here! But no. Not any of those. Oh never mind. It's not important any way.

FLICK (sincere)

(female voice) Everything you say is important to me.

MAGGIE

Oh Olga. We're going to be such dear friends. Can you hold my secret always in your heart? Forever?

FLICK

(own voice) Forever, in my heart.

(FLICK and MAGGIE stare into each other's eyes, forgetting everything but the moment. FLICK forgets himself and kisses MAGGIE who briefly kisses back.)

MAGGIE

(Jumps up.)

Oh my! Olga No! I'm so sorry if I gave you the wrong impression!

FLICK

(own voice) No wait! (female voice) Wait! You don't understand!

MAGGIE

Oh! But I do! I have great affection for you, Olga, and while I find the situation very (beat) confusing, I understand it is not unheard of. In fact, my neighbor Marjorie said that one year at band camp-

FLICK (confused)

(female voice) Band camp?

MAGGIE

What I'm trying to say is that perhaps, what with the beard and voice and all, there may be quite bit of boy left in you. That would totally explain your attraction to me as well as mine to you. As it is, however, my heart belongs to a man.

FLICK

(female voice) No wait! I must explain! This isn't what it seems!

MAGGIE

No need to be embarrassed dear Olga. We can still remain good friends. But it may help you, to keep your affection in check, to know that the one I love is Flick. Do you know him?

FLICK

(own voice) What? (female voice) Oh, ummm...what? Yes. I've met Flick. Great guy! Good choice! But why keep it a secret?

MAGGIE

Alas, because my heart is broken as I can never be with him. You see...he's engaged.

FLICK

(own voice) No he's (female voice) not.

MAGGIE

Oh yes. He is. Mistress Lydia Voldano, the fortune teller, told me so! Did you know she can really (dramatically with voice and hand in air) see the future?

FLICK

(female voice) So you think you can't be with m- um Flick now because he'll be engaged to someone in the future?

MAGGIE

Oh no, silly. I understand the space time continuum. After all, it could be me he's engaged to in the future, right? No, no. Mistress Lydia didn't use her powers of vision to make this determination. In any event, my poor heart is broken as I love Flick and he loves another.

FLICK

(female voice) That's simply not true! You see...I have it on good authority that Flick is in love with you!

MAGGIE

With me? Oh Olga, how could this be true?

FLICK

(female voice) Truer words were never spoken.

MAGGIE

But Mistress Lydia assured me that she and Flick are to be married! Why ever would she lie to me?

FLICK

(own voice) I'm not... (female voice) Flick is not engaged to Lydia! What can I say to make you believe?

MAGGIE

Only Flick himself could confirm otherwise! But I would never ask him. It would be wrong. Very wrong! Very, Very, Very, and in all other ways, wrong.

FLICK

(Stands in heroic pose.)

Then confirmation you shall have!

MAGGIE

What's this?

(In heroic pose, FLICK removes his beard.)

MAGGIE (Cont.)

Oh my goodness.

(In heroic pose, FLICK removes wig. MAGGIE faints into his arms.)

FLICK

Blaze! Blaze!

MAGGIE (dreamily)

(Coming around, looks into FLICK'S eyes and touches his face.)

It's you.

FLICK

Yes, it is I, Flick.

MAGGIE (dreamily)

Oh. It's that dream again. (long pause) Except you have on lipstick.

FLICK

It is a dream. A dream come true, darling.

(Wipes lipstick off with a handkerchief.)

I love you and you love me and now we can be together. I'm so happy Blaze.

(Kisses MAGGIE who kisses him back briefly.)

MAGGIE

(Gasps, struggles out of FLICK'S embrace, completely alert.)

Stop! How could you do such a thing? How could you lie to me? You let me believe... You let me tell you things... things that...

FLICK

But Blaze-

MAGGIE

My name is Maggie!

FLICK

Yes of course, Maggie.

MAGGIE

My name is Gertrude!

FLICK (confused)

Gertrude? (pause) Blaze, Maggie, Gertrude! Your name doesn't matter! I love you! You must know-

MAGGIE

Know? I'll tell you what I know. I know you've proven yourself a trickster of the worst variety. I know you're not the confidant and friend I believed you to be! I know you lied about not being engaged. I know that everything I have ever believed is a lie. I came to the circus looking for truths but I just found more lies. My whole life is a lie. (starts crying)

FLICK

I'm so sorry.

(Reaches to comfort her with a touch.)

I never meant to hurt-

MAGGIE

Don't touch me!

FLICK

I'm sure if you would just listen-

MAGGIE

There is only one thing I can be sure of.

FLICK (hopeful)

What? What is it?

MAGGIE

That I never want to see you again!

(MAGGIE hurries out Midway exit, crying.)

FLICK (despairingly)

Oh no! What have I done? My one and only true love. Lost! Lost!

BLACK OUT

ACT II
Scene 1

Setting: Same, some weeks later.

At Rise: CHARLES is sitting at his desk with MAGGIE across from him. EXTRAS and others can be on stage doing circus stuff except MALCOLM, ARCHIBALD, and MYRA.

CHARLES

So, Blaze, Catalina tells me you've finished your bareback training and are about ready to take the stage.

MAGGIE

Yes. She says I'm ready. I think I am. I've gone nearly three weeks in a row without falling off. She says it's time. She's a wonderful teacher. I only wish we could do the routine together but she refuses. Has me performing with Jocasta. She's good but I hear Catalina was wonderful.

CHARLES

That she was. The best I've ever seen.

MAGGIE

Then why doesn't she ride? She's certainly still young enough and seems physically capable. I don't get the impression that she's afraid, exactly, but there's...something...

CHARLES

I guess it's just a memory that haunts her, my dear. She hasn't told you about her partner, Malory?

MAGGIE

Oh. Malory. Yes, I've heard some of the other girls talking about a Mallory. Who is she?

CHARLES

He. Malory was her husband. They were riding partners. A duo horseback riding act. They were something to behold. The most amazing tricks on horseback I've ever seen.

MAGGIE

What happened?

CHARLES

Well, you see, the act they performed was more acrobatically challenging than the one she has you girls doing. Very tricky and quite dangerous. They had been doing it for years, though, and always performed flawlessly, until...until one performance Malory took a nasty fall and...

MAGGIE

Oh no! Did he die?

CHARLES

No. Poor man broke his neck. Paralyzed from the waist down. It wasn't her fault, and he never blamed her, but she blamed herself. Spent days and nights looking after him. But Malory wasn't satisfied to be a broken man. He finally convinced her to take the stage again, that he would be ok without her for a few hours. She rode beautifully that night, her confidence returned, but she came back to find he had taken his own life. She vowed to never again ride and she's never gotten on a horse since.

MAGGIE

Oh. My poor Catalina.

CHARLES

Yes, yes. Anyway, best you know the dangers in the ring before you commit to doing the show.

MAGGIE

Oh Catalina has made me very aware of the dangers. I'll be careful. I'm ready, Boss.

CHARLES

My dear! That's the first time you've called me Boss. I guess you're here to stay.
(Stands, extends his hand to shake.)

(MAGGIE stands, ignores hand, rushes to fiercely hug CHARLES.)

MAGGIE

I am. Thank you. Thank you for letting me stay the night I...ran away.

CHARLES

Oh my dear. Whatever you were running from must have been very bad. You'll be safe here.

FLICK

(OS from Midway) Boss? Boss!

CHARLES

(shouting to FLICK) In here! (to MAGGIE) It's settled then! It seems the circus is a place for a fine young lady after all. You'll do wonderfully my dear. Best you go get ready for your first show!

(MAGGIE kisses CHARLES chastely on the cheek and heads for Midway exit as FLICK, dressed as OLGA in wig and beard, but whose dress is on backwards, enters from Midway carrying his bat. They stop short when they see each other. EXTRAS and others stagger their exits, Midway, during following dialogue.)

FLICK

Blaze...

MAGGIE (sarcastically)

Olga. (pause) I see you got your bat back from Catalina.

FLICK

Oh Blaze...won't you talk to me? Please?

MAGGIE (thinking)

(aside – Oh how can I keep ignoring him when I still love him? I guess I'll go on loving Flick even though we can never be together. And that's not so bad is it? (pause) To love?)

Well, Flick, I've finished my training so it looks like I'm going to be staying. I guess it won't do to be at odds with you as much as we see each other. So, let's just forget all about it.

FLICK

Forget about it? How can I forget that I love you?

(CHARLES, thinking he is accidentally listening to young lovers' quarrel, discretely exits Back. He is the last to exit, leaving MAGGIE and FLICK alone.)

MAGGIE (sassy)

Love? You mean the way you loved Jenny, Patrice, and Shirley-

FLICK

How did you know-

MAGGIE (sassy)

Not done yet. -or the way you loved Soula, Florence, Elsie, and Agnes-

FLICK

Who told you about-

MAGGIE (sassy)

Still not done. -or the way you loved Nellie, Myrtle, Ladelle, and Jolene? And sisters those last two!

FLICK

You must know that-

MAGGIE (softly)

Or the way you love your fiancé Lydia?

FLICK

I told you we're not-

MAGGIE (chastising)

Or the way you led on poor Apollo?

FLICK

What? I never-

MAGGIE

Please, Flick, no more denials. I did take the liberty of informing Apollo that Olga was... not the kind of woman he thought she was. I'm sure you'll be glad to know that he is no longer pining for you but back to lamenting the loss of his sweet Brunhilda. Poor man.

FLICK (embarrassed)

Yes, well, that's a good thing.

MAGGIE (resolved)

You're with Lydia, please. Please don't deny it. I wish you both well. Really I do. I admit I feel somewhat responsible. I behaved quite foolishly and assumed too much. (pause) Perhaps we could still be...friends?

FLICK

Friends.

MAGGIE

I do miss my friend Flick. (pause) And my friend...Olga. What do you say?

FLICK (relieved)

Friends. So be it.

MAGGIE

Good. I'm so glad. I'd better go. I've got to get ready for the show. I'm on tonight! Watch me, ok?

(MAGGIE kisses FLICK chastely on the cheek, heads for exit, turns back, giggling.)

MAGGIE (Cont.)

Oh, Flick! I mean Olga. Lose the bat. And your dress...you'd better turn it around before anyone sees you or someone just might not believe you're a woman! I'll see you later!

(MAGGIE exits Midway.)

FLICK

(Looking after her, he touches cheek where MAGGIE kissed him.)

Yes. Later.

(aside – Can it be? All is not lost. Friendship can blossom. Do you think she could ever love me again?)

Friends. Friends for now. It's not hopeless after all! (remembering dress) But this dress is!

(FLICK takes bat and goes behind dressing screen to adjust dress as MALCOLM, ARCHIBALD, and MYRA, still in disguise, enter from Midway.)

MALCOLM

I know I saw the lovely Olga come this way. I must find her and see if she's wearing the locket as I suspect she is!

(aside – Yes...it's high time I find out what's under that dress! (pause) What? I'm talking about the locket! Sheesh! Just what kind of evil villain do you think I am?)

FLICK

(from behind screen) This goes here. (pause) Like that. (pause) Good. Wait. That doesn't feel right! (pause) If I pull this up tight. (pause) No. That's not right either!

MALCOLM (listening)

What's this? I knew Olga was here somewhere. Ohhh...She's using her sexy Demi Moore voice. I love it!

ARCHIBALD

Yes...I like that voice. So husky.

MYRA

Shut up Archie.

MALCOLM

You two keep a lookout.

(Emits evil laugh and rubs hands together.)

I'm going to see what's what!

(Goes behind screen.)

FLICK

You! What are you doing here?

MALCOLM

Ah...dear Olga. Wild horses couldn't keep me from finding out what's under that dress!

(From behind screen sounds of a scuffle, shouting, articles of ladies clothing are being thrown up, down, behind and over screen.

ARCHIBALD catches an article of clothing, holds it up to the correct part of his body, smiling stupidly, MYRA grabs it hits ARCHIBALD over the head with it, and throws it on floor.)

MYRA

Idiot!

MALCOLM

(from behind screen) What in God's name is that?

FLICK

(from behind screen) That better be my bat you're talkin about!

(From behind screen the sound of a fist hitting MALCOLM'S face and his responding yelp. MALCOM comes out from behind the screen rubbing his jaw.)

MALCOLM

Wow. They don't make bearded women the way they used to! But that's absolutely, without a shadow of a doubt, not Maggie!

FLICK

(from behind screen) Come back here you coward! As soon as I get this dress back on you're a dead man!

MALCOLM

Let's get out of here!

(Rushing, ARCHIBALD, MYRA and MALCOLM exit Midway. ARCHIBALD enters from Midway, running, grabs the clothing article from the floor, giggles, exits Midway. FLICK emerges from screen with bat, dress on correctly but wig askew, looking around wildly. CHARLES enters from Back, unnoticed at first.)

FLICK (shouting)

Yea...run away like a little girl!

CHARLES (chuckling)

You're one to talk. Looking good there, Flick.

FLICK (indignant)

That's Olga to you!

(Stomping, exits Back with bat.)

CHARLES (chuckling)

Lordie. Lordie. Just another day at the circus!

BLACKOUT

ACT II
Scene 2

Setting: Same. Hours later after the show and all the attendees have gone home.

At Rise: CHARLES is sitting at his desk and LYDIA is sitting across from him. They are in a heated argument. EXTRAS are around doing circus stuff. APOLLO is pressing fake weights on a bench. CHESTER and CATALINA are playing cards at table. MALCOLM, ARCHIBALD, and MYRA all in disguise, are sitting at a different table, playing cards.

FESTER
(Mimes spotting APOLLO'S weights.)

CHARLES
You can't leave now! Lydia, we finally have our bearded woman and lion tamer. We're expecting a big crowd tomorrow! We just cannot do without our fortune teller!

CATALINA
Let her go. A monkey could do better fortunes.

FESTER
(Scampers around room miming a monkey.)

LYDIA
Now that I've finally finished paying you off for the broken crystal balls, I am no longer in debt to you nor in need of employment. I've recently received word that my father has passed on and I'm to inherit his fortune! I'm a rich woman.

(MYRA perks up and pays attention at this mention. She pokes MALCOLM to listen. ARCHIBALD is oblivious.)

CHARLES
Your father? I was under the impression your father had died, years back. In prison wasn't it?

LYDIA
Oh...well. I was wrong about that. My father was actually a rich tycoon!

CHARLES, MALCOLM, and MYRA
Tycoon?

LYDIA
That's right. I'm off to claim my inheritance!

CATALINA
Good riddance goes to visit bad rubbish.

MALCOLM

(aside – What? How could I have been so easily fooled! Maggie looks completely different! Amazing disguise! Simply amazing!)

CHARLES (bewildered)

You? The daughter of a rich tycoon?

MALCOLM (interrupting)

Darling!

(Rushes up the stairs to LYDIA.)

I've been looking everywhere for you and you've been under my nose all this time!

CHARLES (further bewildered)

What's that you say, Martine?

MALCOLM

My name is-

CHARLES

Yes, yes...I know. Your name is Martine Nicholas DeSilva the Third.

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud, MALCOLM looks sternly at them, they stop.)

MALCOLM

Actually my real name is-

CHARLES

Oh that's right. Ummm...El León Susurro, isn't it?

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud, MALCOLM looks sternly at them, they stop. MALCOLM removes and reverses his cape, and removes his mask.)

MALCOLM

Truth be told, my name is-

FESTER

(Stands and points.)

I know who you are!

EVERYONE

Fester! You spoke!

(CHESTER and others, chattering, gather around and hug FESTER.)

FESTER

(Touches his throat gingerly.)

Well! So I did. (pause) You! You, Sir, are Sir Malcontent!

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA applaud, MALCOLM looks sternly at them, they stop.)

CATALINA

Da, yes, it is him! The bearded man in black cape!

MALCOLM

Actually, that's Malcolm (pause) Tent. With a big pause in the middle.

CATALINA

You...you are plokho (translation: bad), horrible bad man.

FESTER

Boss. Don't trust him. He's-

MALCOLM

So...the speechless speaks! Amazing. However, just because he can speak doesn't mean he's not still an idiot clown.

CHARLES

Fester, my boy. It does my heart good to hear you speak at long last. Cause for celebration to be sure but first let's hear what this gentleman has to say for himself. So, you're Malcolm Tent? Sounds so familiar.

MALCOLM

At your service! And this, sir, is my bride-to-be!

LYDIA

I don't know this man! You wouldn't be trying to horn in on my fortune, would you Mr. Malcontent, or whoever you are?

MALCOLM

That's really pronounced-

LYDIA

I know how it's pronounced. I was trying to be grammatically efficient!

FESTER

Boss! He's the one that upset poor Kasar!

CATALINA

Fester is right. He attack Kasar! He is scoundreled!

CHARLES

Two witnesses! I dare say we'll be calling the authorities to deal with you!

MALCOLM

A simple misunderstanding. And really, what harm was done?

CHESTER

We lost our lion tamer because of you!

FESTER

And Kasar has never been the same since Old Man Granger left.

CATALINA

Yes...and that not worst of it. He also-

MALCOLM

Well, it's not like I killed him, is it? Or even injured him. In fact, I'm the one who was injured as I recall. You should be glad I've not yet filed a lawsuit against you! Not yet...

APOLLO

What? How dare you threaten the Boss with a lawsuit? Why I ought to-

ARCHIBALD

Ought to what? Everyone knows...

(Picks up one of APOLLO'S fake weights, tosses to MALCOLM.)

ARCHIBALD

...you ain't got no strength, Strongman!

MALCOLM

(Easily catches fake weight and puts it down.)

Tisk, Tisk, Archie. No need to be cruel.

(aside – Although cruelty is my middle name. It calms me so. Like yoga (pause) or Kenny G.)

We're getting off topic here. Look, Mr. Bergstrom, I think even the most astute law enforcement official will tell you, no crime was committed. After all, I was just innocently in search of my run-away bride! Seems she got a case of cold feet (threateningly toward LYDIA) which I will soon rectify. You're coming with me, my dear. Our nuptials are long overdue.

(MALCOLM grabs LYDIA'S arm.)

LYDIA

(Slapping his hands away.)

Barbarian! Get your meat-hooks off me! I'm telling ya I don't know this man!

CHARLES (thinking)

Well...he sounds sincere...and he really seems to like you...and he's not bad looking either!

MALCOLM

Why thank you my good sir!

(aside – I am devastatingly handsome if I do say so myself. Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, James Dean? Those boys ain't got nothin on me. Wouldn't you agree?)

FESTER

But Boss he's the one that's after-

LYDIA

He can't just come in here and take me!

CHARLES

Are you sure? He went to a lot of trouble to find you and let's face it, Lydia. You've not been happy here.

LYDIA

You can't let him take me without...without proof that I'm his fiancé!

CHARLES

Well...I guess she's right. Do you have any proof that she's your fiancé?

FESTER

Boss listen, you should know-

MALCOLM

Why yes! I have these two very reliable, yet unnamed witnesses who are actually her parents, in disguise of course. We all had to go undercover to look for our poor, distraught, girl.

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA remove hats/mustaches and approach LYDIA)

CHARLES

Well...what do you say?

ARCHIBALD & MYRA (unsure)

Um...

MALCOLM

(Clears his throat to get ARCHIBALD and MYRA'S attention, and nods yes.)

MYRA (false confidence)

Oh my yes...That's my little hen. I'd know her anywhere. Hello dearie!

ARCHIBALD (stupidly)

I don't know.

MYRA

(Hits ARCHIBALD over the head with her hat.)

Archie! What he means to say is that he doesn't know how we've gone on without her, what with our hearts breakin and what not. Isn't that right dear?

ARCHIBALD

Uh...yea?

MALCOLM

You see? There's your proof, Mr. Bergstrom. Now we really should be going.

LYDIA

You can't go on their word! They obviously work for him. Without real proof you can't let them take me!

FESTER

Boss there's more to it than-

CHARLES (thinking)

Yes...I'm afraid she's right. You'll have to give me something concrete or I'll have no other choice than to call the authorities and let them sort it out.

FESTER

(aside – For goodness sake! A guy gets his voice back after 15 years and can't get anyone to listen! Maybe I should mime it!

(Mimes a very brief version of events.)

No, I think instead I'll go find Maggie and warn her!

(During the following dialogue, FESTER whispers in CHESTER'S ear, CHESTER nods understanding and they quickly exit Midway.)

MALCOLM

Alright then...Let's try this. Would you agree that only her husband or fiancé would know what lies beneath her dress?

EVERYONE (shocked.)

What?

MALCOLM

Not that! Seriously people. Get your minds out of the gutter! (pause) I'm talking about a locket. My fiancé wears a locket round her neck, under her dress.

CHARLES

Lydia?

LYDIA

I have no locket!

MALCOLM

Oh, don't you?

(Grabs Lydia and pulls the necklace with locket from under her collar.)

What's this then?

LYDIA

Oh. That locket.

CHARLES

(Peers at the locket.)

Well then. He's got his proof.

LYDIA

But Boss-

CHARLES

Lydia, let me see that would you?

(LYDIA removes the locket and hands to CHARLES at which time MAGGIE, CHESTER, and FESTER enter from Midway, unnoticed.)

CHARLES

(Takes locket turns over in, opens it and looks at the photos.)

(aside – What's this? Stephan Blessing's picture! And young Margaret Blessing. This must be locket she was wearing when she disappeared twelve years ago! No way it belongs to Lydia. I'd better find out the truth about what's going on here!)

(to MALCOLM) This locket belongs to Lydia, your bride-to-be?

MALCOLM

That's correct.

CHARLES

Lydia. Is this your locket?

LYDIA

Well, yes. Yes, it is. But that does not prove he's my fiancé!

CHARLES

Alright then, Lydia, since this is your locket, tell me about this man, here in the picture on the left. Who would this be?

LYDIA (unsure)

That would be (beat) my father? Look here. An article about his death.

(LYDIA pulls out crumpled newspaper with story about Stephan Blessing and hands to CHARLES who looks at the paper briefly.)

CHARLES (sarcastic)

I see. So Stephan Blessing is your father. OK and this little (FILL IN MAGGIE'S HAIR COLOR) girl here in the picture on the right. Who would that be?

LYDIA (floundering)

Um...Um...Well...that would be-

MAGGIE

That would be me!

(General murmur of amazement from everyone. MALCOLM, MYRA, and ARCHIBALD huddle and whisper, devising a new plan. CHARLES stands.)

CHARLES

Blaze?

(Looks at girl's photo in locket.)

You're Margaret? Is it really you? It is! I should have recognized you! You've come back after all these years. Your father always hoped you would come back. And you did. You really did.

MAGGIE

My father? You know him?

CHARLES

Of course. Stephan Blessing.

MAGGIE (hopeful)

Not Randolph Bonette?

CHARLES

No. Maggie, your father is Stephan Blessing, Tycoon.

MAGGIE

He's not a criminal then?

CHARLES

A criminal? Oh no my dear. Stephan Blessing was a great man.

MAGGIE (sadly)

Was? Then he's dead?

CHARLES

(Hands the locket and the newspaper to MAGGIE who reads.)

I'm afraid so. I'm so sorry my dear.

(FESTER, CHESTER, and CATALINA surround MAGGIE, comforting her.)

FESTER (sad)
Oh Maggie.

CHESTER (sad)
I'm so sorry Maggie.

CATALINA
My poor Blaze.

MALCOLM

Oh my! How could I have made such an error! Of course this charlatan, whom I assumed was Maggie in disguise, is not my bride to be! (to MAGGIE) Maggie, my darling!

(MALCOLM pushes FESTER, MYRA pushes CATALINA and ARCHIBALD pushes CHESTER out of the way and surround MAGGIE who does not react to them but keeps looking down at her father's photo in the paper.)

MYRA

Come on then, little hen. We've been worried sick about you! Let's get you home then, aye?

MAGGIE (realizing)

So you wanting me to marry Malcolm...it was all about the money. The inheritance, wasn't it?

ARCHIBALD
What else?

MYRA
Of course not!

(MYRA hits ARCHIBALD over the head with her hat.)

MALCOLM

Poor girl is so overwrought! She's delusional!

MAGGIE (puzzling)

You just recently find out who my father was, right?

ARCHIBALD
Recent? Define recent.

MYRA
Of course, sure.

(MYRA hits ARCHIBALD over the head with her hat.)

MAGGIE (puzzling)

Not recent then. When? When did you discover who I was? (long pause) Why didn't you take me to my father when you found out, before he died? You always said I was such a burden! He would probably have given you a handsome reward!

ARCHIBALD

Not nearly as big as the reward Malcolm promised us twelve years ago!

FESTER

Reward?

MYRA (exasperated)

Archibald Marian Sinclair! Would you Please! Shut! Up! Good Lord, please make me a doctor so I can have more patience!

MAGGIE (realizing)

Oh my goodness. (pause) No, no, no. (long pause) I wasn't left on your door stoop, was I?

MYRA

Rest. Rest is what she needs...poor thing.

MAGGIE (horrified)

Lies! You kidnapped me!

EVERYONE EXCEPT MAGGIE, MALCOLM, ARCHIBALD, and MYRA

(General murmur of surprise and dismay with things like "How could they do that", "Kidnapped?", "What?", "I don't believe this!", etc...)

MAGGIE (angry)

You stole my childhood for...for what? For a big payout at the end? Waiting for my father to die so you could cash in?

(Throws newspaper down at MYRA'S feet.)

FESTER

You monsters!

MYRA

She's out of her mind. All the excitement you see.

(MAGGIE pauses and then opens locket and removes the photo of herself as the little girl and puts it in her pocket. Walks to LYDIA and hands the locket to her.)

MAGGIE

Here Lydia. My picture's gone. You can add your own picture and you can be Margaret. You've got the locket and the picture of Stephan Blessing to prove it. Go with Malcolm, Myra and Archie. They can be your witnesses.

LYDIA

You can't be serious. You would walk away from fame and fortune? Something to call your own! A life of luxury. Anything you want?

MAGGIE

Don't you understand? Don't any of you understand? I don't want fame or fortune. I never wanted to be an heiress. I just dreamed of being a daughter...of having a real father. With Stephan Blessing gone, that dream is dead. Now go! Be happy with your money and your new found cohorts. You deserve each other. As for me, I want nothing more than to stay at the circus

MAGGIE (Cont.)

with my new friends.

CATALINA

Da. My Blaze stay here. She like daughter to me. Everyone love Blaze.

MALCOLM

Oh, would that it were that simple. Sometimes, when fortune comes a calling, you have no choice but to answer. Maggie, you'll have to come with us.

MAGGIE

But why? I'm giving it to you. With my blessing! Take the locket. Take Lydia and go!

MALCOLM

I'm glad you shared your thoughts on the childhood photo. I hadn't thought of that. Hand it over.

(MAGGIE takes childhood photo from pocket and hands to MALCOLM.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

(aside - And I'm usually so brilliantly meticulous! Am I off my game? Hmm...maybe it was something I ate. (belch.) Oh! Pardon me!)

And it got me to thinking...that can't be the only picture Stephan had of you. No doubt there are many and someone like Lydia is just not going to pull it off. Sorry Lydia. Hand over the locket. I actually appreciate your tenaciousness and devious mind. You just don't (pause) look the part.

(LYDIA hands MALCOLM locket and he puts photo back in during dialogue.)

LYDIA

I wouldn't have helped you for all the tea in China! I may have questionable morals, but associating with kidnappers of children? That's beyond the pale. Maggie, I'm so sorry for what happened to you and that I added to your pain. I hope you can forgive me. By the way, I want you to know that Flick and I were never engaged. It was you he was interested in.

(Waves hands over and staring intently into crystal ball.)

But I see you and Flick together and happy for many, many years.

MAGGIE

You do? Oh that's just wonderful! Thank you for that, Lydia. And I do. I forgive you.

LYDIA

(Still waving hands over and staring intently into crystal ball.)

And as for you, Malcolm, I see great sorrow in your future.

MALCOLM (sarcastic)

The predictions of a scam artist fortune teller? Don't make me laugh.

LYDIA

No I'm serious. I have the sight! True...I was a fraud, but now I can see! Really see! Look...here in your immediate future...you'll be...blubbering! Lamenting your lost fortune!

MALCOLM

Everyone knows you're a fraud Lydia. Get over yourself.

LYDIA (taunting)

(Still waving hands over and staring intently into crystal ball.)

What's this? You're begging for mercy like a little girl. Oh no! It's actually quite embarrassing. I think you might have wet yourself a little!

MALCOLM

(to ARCHIBALD and MYRA) Shut her up!

CATALINA

No! Go on. This is best fortune I ever hear Lydia give.

(ARCHIBALD and MYRA head toward LYDIA, but stop to listen to the next prediction.)

LYDIA

(Still waving hands over and staring intently into crystal ball.)

And you two! You were...servants a long time ago. It was hard work and, although you were fairly compensated, you dreamt of more.

ARCHIBALD & MYRA (amazed)

That's right!

LYDIA

(Still waving hands over and staring intently into crystal ball.)

Ahhh...But I see in the future you'll live that dream! Live in the lap of luxury! Fine clothes. Fine wine. A mansion. And...what's this? Finally! Servants of your own!

MYRA

Yes!

ARCHIBALD

Kidnapping pays! Yea!

(MYRA hits ARCHIBALD over the head with her hat.)

LYDIA

(Still waving hands over and staring intently into crystal ball.)

Wait...what's this? Oh...sorry about that. That was yesterday's prediction.

(Delivers the following like a weather newscaster report.) Today's prediction shows you cold and hungry with a chance of shackles around your ankles for the rest of your lives!

MALCOLM

Enough! We've wasted enough time! Myra, go fetch the horses. They're behind the hucksters.

(MYRA exits Back with MALCOLM looking out after her.)

FESTER

Maggie! Run!

(MAGGIE runs out Big Top exit.)

MALCOLM

(To FESTER) Stay out of it, idiot clown! (To ARCHIBALD) Archibald! Get her!

(ARCHIBALD runs out the Big Top Exit.)

ARCHIBALD

(OS Big Top) Where'd she go? I don't see her!

MALCOLM

Oh for heaven's sake. Want something done right you have to do it yourself!

(MALCOLM runs out Big Top Exit.)

CHARLES

Everyone! Listen up! Catalina, you need to fetch help from town as quick as you can. You'll need to ride like the wind. I know it's too much to ask but you're the only one who can do it in time.

CATALINA

You no worry. I give anything to save my Blaze. I will ride as I have never ridden before! YA letayu! (translation: I fly)

(CATALINA exits Back with any EXTRAS.)

CHARLES

Chester! Fester! Quick! Go find Flick!

CHESTER

We couldn't find him earlier.

FESTER

We looked, with Maggie. He was nowhere to be found.

CHARLES

He's under the Carousal, working on the gear shaft.

FESTER and CHESTER

We're on it Boss!

(FESTER and CHESTER and any EXTRAS exit quickly Midway)

CHARLES

No doubt when that madman returns he'll think to put us in the security hold. Or...he'll kill us. So, if it's the security hold we'll go willingly and, after he locks us in, we'll wait a few minutes. Then Apollo will break us out. It will give us a chance to get some weapons and have the element of surprise. Apollo. You know the security hold is solid. But I know you can do it. Do you have your strength back?

APOLLO

I can do it Boss. Anything to help save sweet Blaze from that good for nothing-

MALCOLM

(OS Big Top) There you are! Oh no you don't!

(MALCOLM and ARCHIBALD enter from Big Top with MAGGIE struggling.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

Think you'll get away from me now? After all I've gone through to get you and get you back? Not likely!

(MALCOLM roughly settles MAGGIE in chair and brandishes a gun. Everyone except MALCOLM and ARCHIBALD reacts with shock and dismay.)

CHARLES

Do you really think you're going to get away with this? What's going to prevent me from going to the authorities once you've gone? Once they're told about the kidnapping, the marriage and the inheritance will never hold up in the courts and you'll be facing prison!

MALCOLM

Rightly so. I guess I'll have to make it worth your while. How much will it take then, eh (sarcastic) Boss?

CHARLES

Stephan Blessing was a dear friend. I watched him suffer the loss of his only child year after year. Do you really think you can buy me off?

MALCOLM

Everyone has a price.

CHARLES

You're wrong about that.

MALCOLM

I think I know your price. Your price? (long pause) Your price is the life of Margaret Blessing! I get even a hint that you, or anyone else, has gone to the authorities and I'll kill her. I swear it.

MAGGIE

(Back of hand over forehead) Oh dear! Oh my goodness!

LYDIA

You good-for-nothing! You wouldn't dare!

CHARLES

You're bluffing! If you kill Maggie, you'll have nothing for all your trouble. No chance for the Blessing fortune!

MALCOLM

Better than going to prison for kidnapping though. I'd kill her-

APOLLO

You touch a hair on Blaze's head and I'll-

MALCOLM

(waiving the gun around) Oh stop your posturing, strong man. Everyone knows you have no strength. Perhaps they should bill you as the Apollo, the Amazing Pansy Man. Has a nice ring to it. Pansy Man.

ARCHIBALD (snorting)

Yea...Pansy Man. Bet that would be a big crowd pleaser!

(APOLLO ready to attack but, with a touch, CHARLES warns to hold off and wait for the plan.)

MALCOLM

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted...I won't hesitate to kill dear Maggie without a second thought. Sorry, Maggie. Then I'd disappear. I've done it before. I can do it again. (to ARCHIBALD) Myra should be back with the horses soon. Take these six...Hey. Where did the clowns go? Oh well. They're circus clowns. How much trouble could they cause? Who else is missing? Ahhh...that Russian tart.

MAGGIE

Russian-Romanian! No doubt on her way to get help! She'll likely be back very soon. Perhaps you're not as smart as you think you are.

MALCOLM

Ha! Again...I know all your secrets including the fact that your beloved Russian tart does not, and will not for any reason, ride a horse. Let's see...walking, even running if she could manage it, would take her hours. Looks like I'm exactly as smart as I think I am.

(aside – Which is to say brilliant! I'm absolutely and unarguably the very best strategist I know! You don't think so? Well I'm certainly smarter than all of them...and all of you too!)

Archibald. Take these three and put them in the security hold. Should be keys on the wall inside. Lock them in. It's solid. They won't be able to get out.

ARCHIBALD

You got it! (snorting) Come on Pansy Man.

(ARCHIBALD ushers APOLLO, CHARLES, and LYDIA, exiting Back. MALCOLM grabs MAGGIE roughly, pulls her close.)

MALCOLM

You will be my bride! And if you don't marry willingly, I'll come back here and murder every last one of your little circus buddies.

MAGGIE

Alright! Alright! I'll marry you. Please! Just leave them alone!

MALCOLM

Just as I thought. Look there...just a little work and I've tamed the wild beast. But there should always be a small reward. Some token. I know...After we marry, if you're very, very good to me, I just might bring you to see the circus now and again, for old time's sake.

(Evil laugh to blackout.)

BLACKOUT

ACT II
Scene 3

Setting: Same. A short time later.

At Rise: MAGGIE is sitting in a chair facing MALCOLM.

MALCOLM

Where are those idiots?

MAGGIE (sassy)

Perhaps they came to their senses and got out while the getting's good.

MALCOLM

Not likely with their paycheck sitting in a chair right here in front of me. And don't sass me, girl.

MAGGIE (sincerely)

You may be able to force me to marry you. But I'll never be a real wife. I'll never truly love you. Don't you want real, true love in your life?

MALCOLM

True love? It's highly over-rated. Maggie, darling, did you know that arranged marriages are among the most successful? In cultures that exclusively practice arrange marriages, divorce is not even heard of. Besides, I'm quite sure you'll come to love me.

(MALCOLM trains his gun on MAGGIE. STEPHAN sneaks in, unnoticed, from Big Top with a gun.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

I can be very persuasive.

STEPHAN

(Points gun at MALCOLM'S back and gives him a nudge with it.)

Not so fast Malcolm. Drop your gun.

MALCOLM

(Surprised, freezes at the sound of STEPHAN'S voice, puts down his gun. Then he grins, impressed.)

Blessing.

MAGGIE

Stephan Blessing?

STEPHAN

(Not taking his eyes or the gun off of MALCOLM.)

Hello sweet pea. Hold on just a moment and we'll have a proper reunion. I have a little

STEPHAN (Cont.)

unfinished business to take care of.

MALCOLM

(Turns slowly around, clapping slowly)

Stephan Blessing. I thought you were dead.

STEPHAN

That was the plan. With Margaret old enough to wed and inherit, I thought my untimely death would bring the kidnappers out of the woodwork. And here you are, predictable as ever. My former business associate.

(MYRA enters unnoticed from Big Top with gun.)

STEPHAN (Cont.)

Tent, you're just too greedy for your own good. You always were. It's over Malcolm.

MYRA

(Points gun at STEPHAN'S back and gives him a nudge with it.)

Not so fast, Mr. Blessing. Drop your gun.

STEPHAN

Myra? Myra McBride?

MYRA

McBride? Why I haven't heard that name in 12 years. It's Sinclair now. Archie and I needed a change. Life can get a mite boring if you don't mix it up now and again.

MALCOLM

I suggest you put down your gun Stephan. You know how testy disgruntled employees can be.

(STEPHAN puts down his gun and turns to face MYRA as MALCOLM retrieves his own gun and trains it on STEPHAN.)

STEPHAN

You were our housekeeper. I trusted you!

MAGGIE

Housekeeper? Myra was our housekeeper?

MYRA

I'm sure you suspected when Archi and I disappeared.

STEPHAN (shouting)

She was only six! How could you?

MYRA

How could we? Why wouldn't we? Slaving for you, year after year. Watching you in that big fancy house, spoiling that child. You spent more money on shoes for a six-year-old than a year's salary for your own housekeeper or butler.

MAGGIE

Butler? Archibald was our butler?

STEPHAN

You were both more than well compensated for your services.

MYRA

Well...it wasn't enough.

MALCOLM

I dare say they were as unhappy in their work as I was in your termination of our business contract. They were easily persuaded to join me in my quest to...liberate young Maggie, her locket, and her fortune.

STEPHAN

Locket?

MALCOLM

(Dangles locket for STEPHAN and returns it to his pocket when done speaking.)

Thanks to you it was widely reported that she disappeared with it around her neck. Maggie is our payday. And the locket...the locket is our insurance policy. Myra, tie him up.

MYRA

Gladly. (sarcastic) Sit Monsieur.

(MYRA takes some rope off a peg on the wall, pockets her gun, and proceeds to tie STEPHAN to the chair.)

MALCOLM

Myra, did you get the horses?

MYRA

Yes. But there were only two. Not sure where the third got to.

MALCOLM

Doesn't matter. When you're done, be a dear and go see why that idiot husband of yours is not back yet. He took the others to the security hold.

(MYRA finishes tying STEPHAN and stands.)

MYRA

(sarcastic servant voice) Are your bindings nice and tight Mr. Blessing? Will ya be needin anythin else this evenin Mr. Blessing? Tea perhaps? No? Perhaps you'd like me to stow your weapon. Can't think you'll be requiring it any more this evenin...(own angry voice) since you'll likely be dead!

MALCOLM

Enough! Myra go!

(MYRA pockets STEPHAN'S gun and exits Back.)

MALCOLM (Cont.)

Now this. This is a conundrum Stephan. Can't very well marry your daughter and inherit your fortune with you still alive, now can I?

STEPHAN

Guess you didn't plan for unseen contingencies. Always cutting corners. Trying to do things the easy way instead of the right way. It has always been your greatest weakness Malcolm. It's why I dissolved our business relationship.

(FLICK sneaks in, unseen, from Big Top with a baseball bat.)

MALCOLM

Oh I have a contingency plan, Stephan. I'll just have to kill you.

MAGGIE

No you can't! Father!

STEPHAN

Don't worry sweet pea. Malcolm doesn't have it in him.

MALCOLM

You don't think so? You don't know me anymore Stephan. A man can change a great deal in 12 years.

(MALCOLM raises gun to shoot STEPHAN)

FLICK

(Pokes MALCOLM in the back with his baseball bat.)

Not so fast Malcontent.

MALCOLM

Malcolm (long pause) Tent! It's simple, really. Two words-

FLICK

Yea. I know. Drop your gun.

MALCOLM

(Trying to distract FLICK with words so he'll let down guard.)

Or what? I can tell that's not a gun. Are you going to hit me with your little baseball bat? Really Flick. You're so predictable. You know, when I'm done with Stephan, I'd be happy to put you down as well. Put you out of your misery, the pathetic lovesick little puppy dog that you are. I know how painful it will be for you to watch your love marry another-

(MALCOLM whirls on FLICK who is ready, rushes him and uses the bat, longwise, to force MALCOLM'S gun arm up. MALCOLM fires into the ceiling and drops the gun in surprise. MAGGIE screams and then rushes to STEPHAN and starts untying him.)

MALCOLM

Foiled by a boy with a bat! I'll make my get away!

(FLICK, bat still in hand, picks up STEPHAN'S gun and puts it in his pocket. He backs up to the Big Top exit, keeping an eye on MALCOLM to make sure everything goes as planned. MALCOLM runs up to Midway Exit just as CATALINA, snapping a riding crop, LYDIA, threatening with a crystal ball, and CHARLES with a hoe at the ready arrive to block him. He stops short, almost running into them.)

LYDIA

Have you ever been on the receiving end of a crystal ball to the head?

CHARLES

A hoe?

CATALINA

A riding crop?

LYDIA

(Rubbing crystal ball.) My prediction...you'd be dead.

MALCOLM

Psycho Fortune Teller! Boss with a hoe. Crop happy Russian. No thank you! I'll escape out the back!

(MALCOLM runs to Back Exit as APOLLO and BRUNHILDA enter to block him. He stops short, almost running into them.)

MALCOLM

(To BRUNHILDA) Who in the world are you?

EVERYONE (except MAGGIE and STEPHAN)

Brunhilda! The original bearded woman!

MALCOLM

I thought you left with a Pennsylvania barber?

BRUNHILDA

Received a telegram from someone named Blaze? I just had to come back. I realized I couldn't live without my little Polo a moment longer.

APOLLO

(swooning) Oh, Brunie! (getting serious) Later, my love. I've got my strength back and it's been way too long since I've delivered a proper beat down.

(Gets in a fighting stance.)

Come on punk. Make my day.

MALCOLM

Strongman. Hairy woman. No thank you! I'll escape out the big top!

(MALCOLM runs up to Big Top Exit just as CHESTER and FESTER, both with baseball bats, enter from Big Top and flank FLICK who is also holding his bat. MALCOLM stops short, almost running into them, no exits left.)

FLICK

Batter up!

(FLICK, CHESTER, and FESTER all get in batting positions facing MALCOLM.)

MALCOLM

Holy Baseball! Out flanked by batboy and his bat clowns! Wait! You're forgetting I have two associates in the wings, waiting to rescue me.

CHESTER

Myra and Archie?

FESTER

Yea...Apollo put those two geniuses in the hold.

FLICK

End of the road for you Malcontent.

Everyone except BRUNHILDA, STEPHAN, and FLICK
Malcom (long pause) Tent!

FLICK

How about I just call you Tent? It's over Tent. You're through. No Maggie. No Blessing Fortune.

MALCOLM

No! No! It's mine! It's all mine! I waited all these years. Do you know how much scheming went into this? It can't be over! I need compensation!!!

FLICK

Apollo! Help the boys escort Mr. Tent to Kasar's cage? He's missed a couple of meals and is in quite the nasty mood. I think he needs some company.

APOLLO

Gladly.

MALCOLM

Kasar? No! You wouldn't! You couldn't!

STEPHAN

Wait! One thing before you go.

(STEPHAN walks to MALCOLM and removes locket from his pocket.)

CHESTER

Come on then. You don't want to keep Kasar waiting do you?

FESTER

(Mimes being a lion and chases MALCOLM around the stage for his last round.)

MALCOLM

(Makes last round, begging audience for help.)

No please! Not the lion. Please I'm begging you. Anything but that lion! Please...Help me! They're going to feed me to the lion! Help! Get me out of here!

(APOLLO and CHESTER grab MALCOLM and drag him out Big Top followed by FESTER, who is still miming being a lion, and BRUNHILDA who is fawning over APOLLO. STEPHAN approaches MAGGIE. The others watch the reunion.)

STEPHAN

Margaret...Let me look at you. (long pause) You are so beautiful. You look like your mother. She would have been so proud of the fine young lady you've become.

MAGGIE

Oh Father!

(Hugs STEPHAN fiercely, burying her face into his shoulder, crying quietly.)

STEPHAN

Oh Sweet Pea. Shhh...It's ok now. It will all be ok now.

MAGGIE (breaking embrace)

How did you know to come?

STEPHAN

Catalina came tearing into town on her horse screaming for the help at the top of her Russian lungs.

CATALINA (flirting)

Russian-Romanian, thank you very much.

STEPHAN (flirting)

Right. Russian-Romanian.

MAGGIE

Catalina? You rode. You got on your horse and rode!

CATALINA

For my Blaze? Anything.

STEPHAN

She was yelling about trouble out at the Bergstrom Circus. Charles and I had enough discussions over the years to know how it might go down. Catalina was nice enough to fill me in on the details and brought me back on her horse. (To LYDIA) That was some ride!

CATALINA (coy)

Da. It was werry good ride.

LYDIA

(aside – (rubbing crystal ball) I see romance brewing. Maggie has her father back and will soon have a certain Russian-Romanian Mother!)

CHARLES

Stephan you sly dog! I thought we'd lost you. Quite a brilliant plan!

(STEPHAN and CHARLES shake hands and then bear hug. MAGGIE and CATALINA hug. STEPHAN notices FLICK, smiles and winks at him.)

STEPHAN

Sweet Pea, we have much catching up to do, but we have the rest of our lives to do it. And right now, I think there's a young man over there that just might be waiting to see you. But before you go...

(STEPHAN puts locket around MAGGIE'S neck and kisses the top of her head.)

MAGGIE

Oh, Father.

LYDIA

(rubbing crystal ball) I see strong drinks in our immediate future!

CHARLES

Mistress Lydia Voldano! I do believe you've got the sight after all! Come on everyone. Drinks are on me!

(STEPHAN gives MAGGIE a hug, turns her toward FLICK and, chatting, exits Back with CHARLES, STEPHAN, CATALINA, and LYDIA leaving MAGGIE and FLICK alone. They hurry toward each other and hug. FLICK lifts MAGGIE off the ground, twirls her around, and puts her down at arm's length.)

FLICK

Maggie. Oh Maggie. Are you ok?

MAGGIE

Yes. I'm fine. Oh, Flick, I was so worried he was going to shoot you! Glad you had your lucky bat with you. You were very brave. Oh! Did you hear about Catalina?

FLICK

Yes. Got back on her horse.

MAGGIE

And Fester? Did you hear about Fester?

FLICK

Yes, yes. Fester spoke.

MAGGIE

And Apollo. Did you hear-

(FLICK grabs MAGGIE and pulls her in close.)

FLICK (serious)

Yes. Catalina got on her horse and Fester found his voice. Apollo got his strength back and his beloved Brunhilda returned. Charles' best friend was resurrected and a father was reunited with his long lost daughter. Heck, I even heard that Lydia can really see the future now. (long pause) Seems you've make quite an impact on people around here.

MAGGIE (serious)

And what about you? Have I made an impact on you?

FLICK

Oh...that's the best one of all. You've made me an acrobat.

MAGGIE (confused)

An acrobat?

FLICK

Yes. Because, Maggie Blessing, I'm head over heels in love with you.

MAGGIE

Oh Flick. Me too.

(MAGGIE and FLICK are about to kiss when, OS Big Top, they hear a lion roar and MALCOLM yelp. They laugh and then kiss until blackout.)

BLACKOUT

END