

KEN. Bernice, you're looking wonderful. (*Bernice, upon hearing her name, turns to go to Ken, and Marjorie misses her, almost kissing the bookcase instead.*)

BERNICE. (*To Ken.*) Missed ya' kid.

KEN. You've added a bracelet, I see.

MARJORIE. Have a drink with us, Bernice. I'm having a teeny martooni.

BERNICE. In that case I'll have a huge Manhootan.

ROGER. With a cherry?

BERNICE. Be realistic, Roger.

MARJORIE. This, cast, is Bernice Roth, the librettist. (*To Bernice.*) Your cast.

ROGER. (*Handing Marjorie martini.*) Martini time!

BERNICE. Hi gang. Sorry I'm late getting downstairs, but the storm froze the lock on my overnight case and I've been upstairs heating it with a candle.

MARJORIE. Heating the lock?

BERNICE. And the candle kept dripping wax on the rug so I moved into the closet and set something on fire.

MARJORIE. Set what on fire?

BERNICE. Well, see, I don't know, cause whatever it was burnt up. Then the maid comes in while I'm kneeling on the floor in the closet under this raging fire and wants to know if I'm Haitian! (*Noticing O'Reilly . . . Then to Roger who is handing her a martini.*) His eyes are very blue.

EDDIE. (*To Nikki.*) Ain't it somethin' to be with all these famous people?

NIKKI. I guess so. (*Helsa enters with more ice for the bar, which she dumps loudly. She then picks up Eddie's galoshes, coat, hat, etc., all the while exchanging glances with O'Reilly. Eddie notices them looking at each other.*)

ROGER. (*To Ken.*) Ken, love your tan.

KEN. It only cost one soul.

ROGER. May cost us ours. Bernice and I have been asked to do a motion picture later this year. You know who Abbott and Costello are?

KEN. Those two guys in the Bobbie Clark thing?

EDDIE. "Streets of Paris."

ROGER. "Streets of Paris." Well, Universal has signed them and we've been approached about some songs.

MARJORIE. That reminds me. The lead dancer from that show. The boy . . . Grover Champion . . .

EDDIE. Gower Champion.

MARJORIE. We should think about him. I know you're only in first draft, Bernice, but think about taking that long, long, loooong section where the sailor is telling the girl how beautiful she is and making it a ballet.

BERNICE. I didn't think that section was all that long.

ROGER. Ever notice, in Bernice's writing, every time someone tells a woman how beautiful she is, the scene goes on forever.

BERNICE. That comes from understanding romance, Roger. A subject you are somewhat hazy on.

ROGER. That comes from writing in front of that smoked mirror you've got over your desk, is what it comes from.

KEN. Come on kids, let's get to work. (*Elsa enters.*)

ELSA. Ahhh, we are all together once more, are we not? All together. And are we all comfortable?

ROGER. We're fine, Elsa.

KEN. We're about to start rehearsal, Elsa.

ELSA. (*Crossing to French doors.*) Does anyone need a refill?

BERNICE. Sure. (*She drains her glass.*)

ELSA. Heavens how dark it's getting and it's only just past one. Wonderful! (*She chuckles.*) The snow just won't stop, will it? What are you having, Bernice?

BERNICE. What's closest? (*Helsa enters.*)

HELSA. Excuse me, gnadige Frau, but your cook called and is snowed in.

ELSA. (*Slamming down her glass.*) Drat! (*Softening.*) Well there's nothing for it but I shall go in the kitchen and whip up a quick lunch. We don't want you hungry for the big show, do we? (*Laughs and heads for door.*) Come Helsa, let's see if we remember how to do sauerbraten. (*Elsa and Helsa exit.*)

ROGER. Sauerbraten?

MARJORIE. How inspired! She's chosen a dish, that even if she ruined, no one could tell the difference.

KEN. I suggest we get started with rehearsals, since that is why we're here.

ROGER. Is it? (*Everyone looks at him.*) Hasn't anyone wondered why this particular creative group has been gathered