

“KNOCK!”

A Spirited Musical

Book by Eva Seidner

Lyrics by Eva Seidner and David Warrack

Music by David Warrack

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“KNOCK!”

SYNOPSIS

On a blustery autumn night in 1848, a young woman named Maggie Fox and her sister, Katie, invented Spiritualism.

What began in an upstate New York farmhouse as a private conversation between the Fox sisters and the ghost of a murdered peddler quickly developed into a cult that swept North America and Europe. Soon people from every station and walk of life were meeting in front parlours, hotel ballrooms and theatres to commune with the spirits, who “spoke” to them by knocking on the wooden séance tables. As the most illustrious mediums of their day (thanks to the entrepreneurial flair of the third sister, the irrepressible Leah), Maggie and Katie Fox reigned supreme over this phantasmagoric domain.

“Knock!” is the musical life and times of Maggie Fox. It chronicles the flowering of her career during the heyday of Spiritualism, and follows her then-scandalous love affair with the socialite Arctic explorer, Elisha Kent Kane. It is a musical peopled by the famous and the obscure, the gullible and the shrewd, by mystics and mediums, fakers and frauds, and businessmen of every moral shade.

Above all, it is the story of two strong people whose reach exceeds their grasp.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

P.T. BARNUM	The famous impresario. Shrewd, energetic, affable, with a keen appreciation of business and pleasure. 40's.
A. J. CAPRON	A Rochester gentleman in his mid-30's. Smitten with and slightly afraid of Leah.
NED CHISHOLM	A young, one-handed sailor whose life was saved by Kane: hence, his grateful and devoted follower.
KATIE FOX	Maggie's adoring kid sister.
LEAH FOX	Maggie's shrewish older sister. Ruthless, opportunistic, resourceful - a female Barnum.
MAGGIE FOX (Margaretta)	A modest country girl who is convinced that she is "no one special" until she is chosen by the spirits. Then, a strong woman dedicated to a life and cause beyond the social conventions of her time.
MR. FOX	The girls' father. A worn-out dirt farmer, old before his time.
MRS. FOX	His wife, who has bequeathed some of her bitchiness to Leah. Fed up with poverty.
GAFFER	Malodorous but loveable old drunk. Hydesville clown.
BILLY GLADSTONE	The most eligible of the Hydesville bumpkin bachelors.
GRINNELL	Kane's closest friend and confidante; a snobbish young gentleman of Philadelphia.
JIM	Katie's husband, handsome and refined.
ELISHA KANE	Lead character. Moneyed, sophisticated, educated, he has explored the Arctic but not his own heart.
MR. and MRS. KANE	His upper-crust parents.
MAGICIAN	An aggressive opponent of Spiritualism
LADY FRANKLIN	The aristocratic wife of the ill-fated explorer.
JENNY LIND	Barnum's prize, an opera singer whom he bills as "The Swediss Nightingale".
OLD GENT of NEW YORK	Refined and well-spoken; the voice of reason.
POLICEMAN	Irish and burly.

MRS. AMY POST	Ancestor of Emily; the most formidable and sought-after hostess of New York society.
MINISTER of HYDESVILLE	Bible-thumping purveyor of blood and thunder.
PREACHER AT REVIVAL	
LUCRETIA PULVER	Seething sexuality beneath a bland exterior. Lolita in nineteenth-century hick town.
RUPERT	A 10-year old who hated taking piano lessons from Leah.
REDFIELD	Ichabod Crane-like schoolmaster of Hydesville.
SECRETARY TO BARNUM	Prim and pretty.
STRAPPING YOUTH	Ringleader of Hydesville youths.

PLUS: townspeople, séance sitters, revelers at Hotel gala, et cetera.

SONG LIST

ACT I

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Who Desires? (Lyrics E.S.) | Man, Woman, Chorus |
| 2. | Softly and Tenderly | Assembly |
| 3. | Two and Two (Lyrics E.S.) | Preacher's Assistants |
| 4. | Mr. Splitfoot (Lyrics E.S.) | Maggie, Katie |
| 5. | Lucretia's Tale (Lyrics E.S.) | Lucretia |
| 6. | Wide-eyed Girl | Kane |
| 7. | Why Would I Run From Love? | Kane, Grinnell |
| 8. | Who Do You Want To Talk To? | Leah |
| 9. | Bravo! | Audience, Kane, Grinnell, Leah |
| 10. | I'm No One Special | Maggie, Kane |
| 11. | "KNOCK!" (Lyrics E.S.) | Leah, Capron, Maggie, Katie |
| 12. | Sell! | Barnum |
| 13. | Let's Deal | Leah, Barnum |
| 14. | The Magic of Family Ties | Magician |
| 15. | Should We? | Maggie, Katie |
| 16. | Enchanted Ground (Lyrics E.S.) | Kane |
| 17. | Is It Our Time for Love? | Kane, Maggie |

ACT II

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | The Rochester Rappings (Lyrics E.S.) | Barnum, Jenny Lind |
| 2. | Mrs. Post's Anthem (Lyrics E.S.) | Mrs. Post |
| 3. | The Girl That I Was | Maggie |
| 4. | Enough! | Leah, Barnum |
| 5. | Loving You | Kane, Maggie |
| 6. | Wonderful | Mrs. Fox, Mr. Fox, Jim, Katie |
| 7. | "KNOCK!" | Company |

ACT I

A blacked out, silent stage, left dark long enough for the audience to begin stirring easily. Very gradually enough light comes up for them to see smoke floating over what seems a vast, empty plain. Sound effects (wind, whispering, rustling leaves) evoke a sense of the past, of hauntedness, of a séance. One by one spotlights illuminate the pale faces of isolated spirits not yet identified as characters in the coming action. They sing:

Song #1: Who Desires?

CALLS THE SEASONS CIRCLING RITES?
THE CREAKING BOUGHS OF GUSTY AUTUMN NIGHTS?
THE VERDANT SMELLS OF SPRING AND SUMMER RAIN?
STILL HAUNT THE SOUL -- BUT TEASE THE CORPSE IN VAIN.

WHO IS THERE?
COME THROUGH, COME THROUGH, COME THROUGH.

WHO REPENTS WITH BURNING, SPECTRAL TEARS?
WHO REGRETS THE UNRELENTING YEARS?
WHO CURSED LIFE, YET FEARED HOW SWIFT IT FLOWED?
WHO IS LOST UPON THE OPEN ROAD?

WHO IS THERE?
COME THROUGH, COME THROUGH, COME THROUGH.

Repeat to fade.

SECOND FARMHAND

There's only one cure in this gopher-hole of a town for cabin fever -- and that's REVIVAL fever.

THIRD FARMHAND

Sure -- fire and brimstone make a helluva show!

They hurry away, laughing and making "friendly" remarks to the girls they meet.

Enter the Fox family: Mr. and Mrs. Fox and two daughters,

Margaretta (Maggie) and Katie.

Maggie is in her late teens, slim and pretty despite her dowdy dress and faded bonnet, but no beauty. It is important that, except in the scenes when in the scenes in which she communicates with the other side, she appear to be an ordinary country girl, if somewhat more modest and well-spoken than most. Only when she conjures the spirits should she step out of her ordinariness. Like a priestess taken over by powers beyond her own. Katie, her sister, is a happy, mischievous ten-year-old.

MRS. FOX

The Minister isn't going to be pleased -- a new Preacher coming to town almost on the heels of the last one. Church has been nearly empty for the better part of the month, with all those folks that Preacher "saved" staying away.

MR. FOX

I guess it'll stay empty until that old sourpuss comes up with some good news for a change. I've about had it to HERE with his ranting about how we was all damned even before we was born. If I'm gonna be damned, I'll make sure I do something to deserve it.

KATIE

I LIKED the last Preacher. When he looked in my eyes, I felt all tingly.

MRS. FOX

You're too young to tingle, Miss...

Enter Billy Gladstone. A young farmer who looks a bit more prosperous than the others we have met so far. He is handsome and muscular, carrying himself with assurance and energy. He approaches Maggie with confidence.

BILLY

Afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Fox. Katie.

Mrs. Fox nods and smiles warmly.

Afternoon, Miss Margaretta. I was hoping I'd see you here. I'd be honoured to see you home after the meeting, if you'll let me. I've got on my new shirt.

To the others.

It's city-bought.

KATIE

Oooh, Maggie! I think I'm getting that "tingly" again!

MAGGIE

Not looking at Billy.

No, thank you, Billy.

MRS. FOX

Maggie, you're being rude.

BILLY

Have I done something to make you mad at me, Margaretta? I can't think of anything...

MAGGIE

I'm not made at you. But, since you made the same offer to me and Lucretia Pulver last time, I'll save you the trouble of having to decide between us again. So, no thank you, Billy.

BILLY

Lucretia Pulver?! Why she's nothing -- everyone knows she's just the town...

He falters as Maggie meets his eyes and holds them, but says nothing to him for a long, icy moment. The uneasy silence is broken when Katie supplies the implied rejection, brightly:

KATIE

No, thank you, Billy.

BILLY

Okay, Maggie. It's up to you. But, she really doesn't mean anything to me.

He walks away.

MRS. FOX

That was foolish and proud, Maggie. You can't afford to put on airs. The Gladstones are the only ones around here with any prospects. If you're not careful you'll end up like your sister, Leah.

MR. FOX

Damnation! Not that sermon again, Woman! Sure hope that Preacher puts on a good one.

The rest of the family follow him, all soon arriving at the revival tent.

Backdrop curtain rises to reveal interior of the tent, where a mild-mannered, well-fed preacher stands before the crowd, some of whom are seated, some still milling around, looking for seats or greeting neighbours. Two female assistants are leading the assembly in song.

Song #2: Softly and Tenderly

ASSEMBLY

SOFTLY AND TENDERLY JESUS IS CALLING,
CALLING FOR YOU AND FOR ME.
PATIENTLY JESUS IS WAITING AND WATCHING,
WATCHING FOR YOU AND ME.

COME HOME! COME HOME!
YOU WHO ARE WEARY, COME HOME!

EARNESTLY, TENDERLY, JESUS IS CALLING,
CALLING, "O SINNER, COME HOME!"

Eventually the preacher raises his hands and brings the group to order.

PREACHER

My friends...

FARMER

Do we know you, Brother?

He gets some laughs from his cronies.

PREACHER

Perhaps not yet, Brother. But, I know YOU -- yeah, and better than you think.

ANOTHER FARMER

The LAST miracle-peddler through here told you all about us, did he?

More laughs from the crowd.

PREACHER

No, my friend, he did not for whoever he may have been. Our paths did not cross. No, I know you because you are what I was myself only two short years - and yet a lifetime - ago. You are poor. You are weary. You are honest. God-fearing men and women - yes, and even little children - who see no end to your poverty and drudgery.

The crowd has fallen silent -- he's got their attention now.

You scrape your meagre livelihoods out of a stingy soil, and if the skies deny you rain, as they have done so far this year, you face the serpent's tooth of winter with dread in your hearts.

WOMAN

You're right there, Preacher!

Heads turn. She pulls her child towards her and strokes its hair protectively.

PREACHER

In heat and in cold! In daylight and darkness! Summer and winter! You toil your lives away. The world seems sundered into opposites: heat and cold, day and night. Warring halves of senseless energy bent on blotting each other out, and you with them, unto eternity. Amid such hardship, who can wonder that husbands sometimes grumble at their wives?

ANOTHER WOMAN

More than grumble, Preacher!

PREACHER

Or, that wives may berate their husbands?

FARMER

Mine threw a pot at my head last night. Is that what you mean by "berate", Preacher?

His wife hotly jumps to her feet and begins angrily scolding him. Some people laugh, others complain to each other, taking sides. Women accuse men, children jeer, and break away from their parents, running about. The scene dissolves into a kind of chaotic courtroom with everyone eager to tell the preacher or his neighbour about some injustice suffered at the hands of a spouse.

PREACHER

You see, my friends -- you see? I know how it is! Discord among couples, where God intended harmony, CONCORD! But, do not despair, for the answer is within your grasp. Salvation lies within your grasp! Shall I tell you what it is?

CROWD (Mostly female)

Yes! Tell us, Preacher!

One incongruous response, really in the spirit of the proceedings.
I BELIEVE, PREACHER, I BELIEVE!!!

MAN

Better for you told us how to put bread on our tables this winter!

MUSICAL SCORE

1. Bah! Humbug!
2. The Ghosts are Gathering
3. Let's Take a Walk Through Your Past
4. Follow the Leader
5. The Fezziwig Waddle
6. Think of Me at Christmas
7. Please Welcome Ebenezer

A KIDSMAS CAROL

SCROOGE

Why? It's only three in the afternoon.

CRATCHIT

Yes, Mr. Scrooge. But, as you may recall, it's Christmas Eve.

SCROOGE

Christmas, shmismas. What does that have to do with business?

The bell rings as Fred, a hearty soul, enters.

FRED

A Merry Christmas, Uncle. God save you!

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

FRED

Christmas a humbug, Uncle? Surely you don't mean that?

SCROOGE

I do. Merry Christmas, what right do you have to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED

Come then. What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE

Bah! I live in a world of fools. People buying presents they can't afford so they can go into the New Year with even less money than they had before. Christmas should be cancelled. You hear me? Cancelled.

FRED

Why? It's a sacred time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, and pleasant time. Look at the people out there on the street. They are full of joy. What's wrong with that? It doesn't all have to show in the bank book.

Cratchit applauds almost without knowing.

Thank you, Cratchit.

SCROOGE

(*To Cratchit*) And, I'll thank you to not utter another sound, or you'll celebrate Christmas by losing your job.

FRED

Uncle! He's your most loyal employee.

SCROOGE

That's because he's my only employee. Now out with you. I have work to do.

FRED

Don't be angry, Uncle. Come done with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE

No.

FRED

Why?

SCROOGE

You're married.

FRED

So?

SCROOGE

I don't approve of marriage any more than I approve of Christmas.

FRED

Uncle. I want nothing from you. I ask nothing from you. Why can we not be friends?

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

All right. But, I will keep my humour to the last. Merry Christmas, Uncle.

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

And, a Happy New Year.

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

Fred exits as a Salvation Army lady enters.

LADY

Referring to list; speaks to Cratchit

Is this Scrooge and Marley's?

CRATCHIT

Yes. Could we help you?

SCROOGE

What does she want? If she wants money, she's come to the wrong place.

LADY

Merry Christmas, sir.

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

LADY

Do I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE

Marley died seven years ago this very night.

LADY

Oh dear. I'm so sorry. But, the sign...

SCROOGE

Signs are expensive. Why replace it? Now, what's your business?

LADY

The business of giving, sir.

SCROOGE

So, what are you giving me?

She tries a laugh. It doesn't work.

LADY

I am seeking contributions for the poor and destitute. Many are in great need.

SCROOGE

Are there no prisons?

LADY

Sir?

SCROOGE

And, the poorhouses are still in operation.

LADY

They are, though badly in need of assistance.

SCROOGE

Good.

LADY

But, sir, there is so much more that needs to be done. We raise money to buy the poor better food and clothing to raise their spirits. This is a time of year, if none other, to help each other. Now, what might I put you down for?

SCROOGE

Nothing.

LADY

You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE

I wish to be left alone. My taxes support the prisons and poorhouses.

LADY

Many would rather die than go there.

SCROOGE

Then let them do it and decrease the surplus population.

LADY

Sir, I beg you...

SCROOGE

Go beg for the beggars elsewhere. Good afternoon.

LADY

Won't you reconsider? It is Christmas eve.

SCROOGE

Never. And, Christmas is your invention, not mine.

He's back at his desk.

CRATCHIT

(Giving her a coin) It's not much, but it's something.

LADY

Oh, thank you, sir. Merry Christmas.

The lady exits.

Song #1: "Bah! Humbug"

*After first half of song, chorus of singers heard outside the window,
singing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"*

SCROOGE

Begone, all of you. People are working here!

Cratchit is preparing to leave.

Oh, that hour is it?

CRATCHIT

Yes, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE

You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT

If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE

It's not convenient, and it's not fair. IF I was to pay you less this week because of it, what would you think?

CRATCHIT

But...

SCROOGE

And yet, you don't think me ill used when I pay a day's wages for no work!

CRATCHIT

But, sir, it's only once a year.

SCROOGE

A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket. Take the day, but be early the day after.

CRATCHIT

Yes, sir. Merry Christmas, sir.

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug!

*He sings the second half of the song as
he leaves the office and goes to his apartment.*

Ah, home at last. I shall change and then relax with a good dinner. No one to bother me. Just as I like it.

*He exits to change. Lights flash. Sound of chains.
Scrooge returns, half undressed.*

What was that? Who's there? Nothing.

*He exits again. Lights flash, howling, louder chains.
Scrooge returns in his night-clothes.
He carries an umbrella like a weapon.*

Declare yourself, I say! I am armed! If you're after money, I have none.

Laughter in an echo chamber.

MARLEY'S VOICE

Ebenezer. No money? Now, that's funny!

More laughter.

SCROOGE

Who are you? Where are you?

MARLEY

On your bed.

*Lights stop flashing, and Marley's Ghost is found sitting on the bed.
He is a sad sight, and yes, he is chained.
Scrooge reacts by hiding behind the curtains covering his window.*

Come on out. I know you're there. I won't hurt you.

Scrooge peeks around the corner of the curtain.

SCROOGE

Marley?

MARLEY

His ghost, actually.

SCROOGE

What is this? Some kind of a joke? How did you get in?

MARLEY

I more or less dragged myself through the wall. Nothing's easy with these chains, I tell you.

SCROOGE

Well, drag yourself back out. You are not welcome here.

MARLEY

Now, is that any way to talk to your partner after seven years?

SCROOGE

My partner is dead.

MARLEY

But, unfortunately, not at rest.

SCROOGE

Why have you come? What kind of humbug is this?

The lights flash again. Marley's voice is heard through the echo chamber effect.

MARLEY

This is not humbug!!

Scrooge falls down on his knees and covers his head.

SCROOGE

Stop!

The noise stops. Marley's voice is back to normal.

MARLEY

Sorry about that. It's just an attention-getting device. Effective, don't you think?

SCROOGE

Have mercy.

MARLEY

Oh, stand up. You look ridiculous down there.

SCROOGE

(Still on the floor) Why is your spirit walking the earth?

MARLEY

Oh, it's this whole penance thing. I wander the world and am condemned to witness what I cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness.

SCROOGE

But, the chains?

MARLEY

I forged them in life, of my own free will. Now I must wear them in death.

SCROOGE

That's horrible.

MARLEY

It's no picnic. You should see the size of the chain waiting for you!

SCROOGE

Jacob! Jacob Marley. Help me. Is your fate to be mine? Can nothing be done?

MARLEY

It's not hopeless, but close.

SCROOGE

What can I do? Show me.

MARLEY

You could start by getting up. You keep this place so cold, your knees must be freezing.

Scrooge remains kneeling.

All right. Have it your way. But I cannot stay. My spirit cannot linger anywhere.

SCROOGE

Have you been travelling for seven years?

MARLEY

It never ends. It never will.

SCROOGE

But why? You were a good man of business.

MARLEY

Back in his echo chamber.

Noooo!!

Back to normal voice.

Sorry. I tend to do it without thinking. The point is, my business, my only business should have been the well-being of my fellow man. But, I hardly knew he existed. And now, I must suffer for that for eternity.

SCROOGE

Surely, there must be...

MARLEY

Do not argue. I am telling you how it is. And now, my time is nearly up. I cannot help you. But, I can give you a message.

SCROOGE

What?

MARLEY

Take heed!

Song #2: The Ghosts are Gathering

(dialogue insert after fourth system on page 4)

MARLEY

You will be haunted, Ebenezer ... by three spirits.

SCROOGE

Will they help me, or hurt me?

MARLEY

Without their visits, my fate will be your fate. Expect the first one tomorrow when the bell rings for one o'clock.

SCROOGE

Couldn't I take them all at once, and have it over with, Jacob?

MARLEY

Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate.

(Song continues with Scrooge's no no no)

MARLEY

Back in echo chamber.

Prepare, Ebenezer. Prepare.

Marley disappears.

SCROOGE

Come back. Jacob!

The lights return to normal.

Jacob?

(To the audience) Have I been dreaming?

They will respond.

No, I didn't think so. Oh, dear -- this is terrible.

He checks the lock on the door.

I don't suppose locks will keep them out. But, it's worth a try.

He gets in bed.

What do I do while I'm waiting?

He yawns.

I certainly can't sleep.

He yawns again.

I'll just wait here. And, watch. And, listen.

*He falls asleep. Lights dim to show passage of time.
Scrooge stirs and wakes. He jumps out of bed, looks out the window,
runs and checks the door, jumps into bed and hides under the covers,
all but his eyes peeking out.*

The time, I wonder what time it is.

He checks his watch on the bedstand.

Almost one? How is that possible? I can't have slept that long.

Realization.

Almost one! Marley said ... the first spirit..

He looks around.

What if he's invisible?

FIRST GHOST

What good would that do?

SCROOGE

Who said that?

*The first ghost emerges, a dapper gentleman.
He has a hat and a cane.*

FIRST GHOST

I did, sir.

SCROOGE

Get out, whoever you are. I'm waiting for a ghost.

FIRST GHOST

And, here I am. Well, what did you expect? A mobile bedsheet?

SCROOGE

How do I know you're who you say you are?

FIRST GHOST

You don't. But, for once in your life, Mr. Scrooge, I suggestion you might try believing in something.

SCROOGE

Who exactly are you?

FIRST GHOST

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE

Long past?

FIRST GHOST

No, your past.

SCROOGE

Why have you come?

FIRST GHOST

To take you for a walk.

SCROOGE

It's freezing cold out there. And, I'm not dressed for it.

FIRST GHOST

Believe me, Mr. Scrooge. This walk will do your soul a world of good.

Song #3: Let's Take a Walk Through Your Past

During the song, Scrooge's chamber disappears.

Does this look familiar?

SCROOGE

Good heaven! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here.

FIRST GHOST

Do you recognize that house?

SCROOGE

Recognize it? I know every room, every hall, every corner.

FIRST GHOST

And, the girl?

A young girl appears.

SCROOGE

Hardly able to get a word out.

Fan. Dear little Fan. My sister. Can she see us?

FIRST GHOST

These are shadows of things that have been. But, if you want her to see you, she will. Only know that she will not see the wicked old man you have become. She will see the loving young brother she knew you to be.

Scrooge approaches her.

SCROOGE

Fan?

She sees him, runs over and throws her arms around him.

He is taken aback and cannot respond at first.

FAN

Eb! There you are. We haven't long to ourselves. Mother says Father is in a good mood, and wants us to go with them to some friends for Christmas dinner.

SCROOGE

Father? In a good mood? You must be kidding.

FAN

Truly. I just passed him in the hall, and he spoke to me ever so gently.

SCROOGE

A miracle.

FAN

A Christmas miracle!

SCROOGE

Hardly.

FAN

Oh, cheer up, big brother. Where's that smile I love?

She starts to tickle him.

SCROOGE

Stop it, Fan!

FAN

Oh, you are getting too old and sophisticated. No more fun? Come on, let's go.

SCROOGE

Where?

FAN

Into the garden, of course.

SCROOGE

Why?

FAN

To play!

Song #4: Follow the Leader

At the end of the song she runs offstage.

SCROOGE

Fan! Come back!

FIRST GHOST

Always a delicate creature. But, she had a large heart.

SCROOGE

She died so young.

FIRST GHOST

She died a woman, and had, I think, children, did she not?

SCROOGE

One child. A boy.

FIRST GHOST

Your nephew?

SCROOGE

My nephew. I wish...

FIRST GHOST

Yes?

SCROOGE

He invited me for Christmas dinner. I wish I had said yes.

FIRST GHOST

Walk with me some more.

SCROOGE

Where is this? I know this place. I was apprenticed in this warehouse.

An older man enters full of good cheer.

Look! It's old Fezziwig Bless his heart. It's Fezziwig, alive again.

FEZZIWIG

Here. Ebenezer. Help me clear the middle of the room.

Scrooge looks to the ghost, who nods.

SCROOGE

is the shop closing so early?

FEZZIWIG

Of course! It's Christmas, lad. This is no time to work. This is a time to celebrate. Mother, where are you? get everyone in here.

Mrs. Fezziwig enters with a friend and her young son.

MRS. FEZZIWIG

It's early, dear. Don't be in such a rush. The party will begin soon enough. Oh, hello, Ebenezer. How good of you to join us.

SCROOGE

How good of you to include me.

MRS. FEZZIWIG

Don't be silly. You're like family. Have you met Mrs. Pickwick?

SCROOGE

Of course. Merry Christmas.

MRS. PICKWICK

Merry Christmas.

MRS. FEZZIWIG

And, her son, Peter.

SCROOGE

Hello, Peter.

PETER

Are you the one who dances so well?

SCROOGE

(Laughing) Oh, no. There's your man.

Points to Mr. Fezziwig.

FEZZIWIG

Always having to live up to my reputation. Well, the floor's clear. What are we waiting for?

Song #5: The Fezziwig Waddle

*At the end of the song, the others dance off
and Scrooge is left alone, perhaps still dancing himself.*

FIRST GHOST

Mr. Scrooge? Dancing?

Scrooge stops, embarrassed.

SCROOGE

We used to dance all the time. Fezziwig was the father I never had. He was so wonderful to work for. I...

FIRST GHOST

What is it?

SCROOGE

Bob Cratchit. I wish I could speak to Bob Cratchit in the way Fezziwig spoke to me.

FIRST GHOST

We have one more path to walk.

SCROOGE

Where?

FIRST GHOST

To the time when the dancing stopped.

*A young girl in her early twenties is revealed.
Scrooge looks at the ghost.*

FIRST GHOST

Go ahead. She too sees you as you were.

Scrooge enters the scene.

SCROOGE

Belle?

BELLE

I have been replaced.

SCROOGE

Never.

BELLE

Oh, I have. Your need to be rich is greater than your need for me.

SCROOGE

You should want us to be poor?

BELLE

I would want us to be happy. We were happy. But you've changed.

SCROOGE

I've grown. I am no longer a boy.

BELLE

No, but the man you are becoming is a stranger to me.

SCROOGE

I have learned how to succeed. What is wrong with that?

BELLE

You measure your success in a ledger book. You hardly look up from it to see if I am still here. And, next time you bother to look, I won't be.

SCROOGE

You're not being fair.

BELLE

I'm doing what I must do so I can remember the young man I fell in love with. If I stay, I will gradually forget him.

SCROOGE

He will not forget you.

BELLE

Perhaps, now and then, he might remember.

Song #6: Think of Me at Christmas

Insert dialogue after first time through

BELLE

You may feel some sadness for a brief period, but soon you will dismiss that sadness as an unprofitable dream, and you will be glad you awoke from it. I wish you well, Ebenezer. May you be happy in the life you have chosen.

Song resumes and concludes. Lights fade on Belle

SCROOGE

Spirit! Show me no more. Conduct me home. Why do you delight in torturing me this way?

FIRST GHOST

These are shadows of things which have been. They are what they are. Do not blame me. You are home.

Lights rise on Scrooge's chamber.

SCROOGE

Home. Home. What is happening to me? Why am I so tired?

He lies down and immediately falls asleep. Lights dim for passage of time.

Clock chimes one o'clock. Scrooge sits up.

Applause is heard as lights come on brightly, and the second ghost strides onstage, applauding his audience and playing the TV personality to the hilt.

SECOND GHOST

Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls, please...

Song #7: Please Welcome Ebenezer

After first chorus, dialogue insert

SECOND GHOST

Okay, kids, have you got any questions for our guess? Go ahead -- ask him anything you like. Ask him how he got to be such a loser. Ask him why he hates Christmas. Here's your chance. Who's first?

Ghost goes into the audience. Adlib section.

After three or four questions, the Ghostettes come onstage and join the song through it's conclusion.

Song conclusion

SCROOGE

What's going on? Who are you?

GHOSTETTES

He's the ghost of Christmas present!

SECOND GHOST

You got it.

SCROOGE

Are you always this ... obnoxious? It's one o'clock in the morning.

SECOND GHOST

Don't knock it. You should see the audience numbers.

GHOSTETTES

The world is watching.

SECOND GHOST

Okay, kids. Take a powder.

They flit away.

So, are you ready for another trip?

SCROOGE

Me?

SECOND GHOST

Bingo!

SCROOGE

Where to?

SECOND GHOST

And, spoil the surprise? Get serious.

SCROOGE

(Resigned) I'm ready.

SECOND GHOST

We're off.

They go into the audience.

Grrrr...

I CAN SEE INTO THE FUTURE
THEES WAY, I CAN SEE INTO THE FUTURE
DON'T BE SHY.
I CAN SEE INTO THE FUTURE
FOLLOW ME.

CHA CHA CHA

OLD JOE, BILLY, TOOTHLESS, MRS. DILBER
GOOD RIDDANCE TO BAD RUBBISH
HE'S GONE, BUT HE'LL NEVER BE MISSED.
WE'D LIST ALL HIS BAD QUALITIES,
BUT, IT'S TOO LONG OF A LIST.

WE KNOW THAT WE SHOULD SPEAK WELL OF THE DEAD
WELL ... HE'S DEAD.
GOOD RIDDANCE TO RUBBISH, WE SAY.
BAG IT AND TAKE IT AWAY.

MRS. DILBER

NOW THAT HE'S GONE, WE SHOULD REALLY TAKE STOCK
OF THE TREASURES AND GOODIES INSIDE OF HIS TOMBS.

OLD JOE

WHY LET THEM GO OUT ON THE OLD AUCTION BLOCK?
LET'S SAVE EV'RYONE TROUBLE AND CLEAN OUT HIS ROOMS.

BILLY

WE'LL START WITH THE STUFF WE CAN CARRY WITH EASE,
'CUZ WHO KNOWS JUST HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE?

TOOTHLESS

WE'LL SAVE 'EM THE COST OF THE AUCTIONEER'S FEES,
OUR BACKS THEY WILL PAT
OUR HANDS THEY WILL SHAKE, 'CUZ IT'S...

OLD JOE, BILLY, TOOTHLESS, MRS. DILBER
GOOD RIDDANCE TO BAD RUBBISH
HE'S GONE BUT HE'LL NEVER BE MISSED.
WE'D LIST ALL HIS BAD QUALITIES,
BUT, IT'S TOO LONG OF A LIST.

WE KNOW THAT WE SHOULD SPEAK WELL OF THE DEAD,

WELL ... HE'S DEAD.
GOOD RIDDANCE TO RUBBISH, WE SAY
BAG IT AND TAKE IT AWAY.

BILLY

LOOK AT THIS BAUBLE I FOUND IN HIS DESK!

TOOTHLESS

IT'S A PAPERWEIGHT WORTH A KING'S RANSOM IN GOLD!

BILLY

AND, LOOK AT THIS CARVING, IT'S RATHER GROTESQUE!

TOOTHLESS

AH, TOSS IT! IT MUST BE A THOUSAND YEARS OLD.

MRS. DILBER

JUST LOOK AT THIS TABLECLOTH, EMBROIDERED AND ALL.
SO LACY ONE WOULD HATE TO EAT ON IT.

OLD JOE

AND, LOOK AT THIS CARPET I FOUND IN HIS HALL,
I'LL THANK HIM EACH TIME THAT I GO WIPE MY FEET ON IT.

OLD JOE, BILLY, TOOTHLESS, MRS. DILBER
GOOD RIDDANCE TO BAD RUBBISH,
HE'S GONE BUT HE'LL NEVER BE MISSED.
WE'D LIST ALL HIS BAD QUALITIES,
BUT, IT'S TOO LONG OF A LIST.

WE KNOW THAT WE SHOULD SPEAK WELL FO THE DEAD,
WELL ... HE'S DEAD.
GOOD RIDDANCE TO RUBBISH, WE SAY
BAG IT, AND TAKE IT AWAY.

DON'T LET IT DROP,
YOU'LL FOUL UP THE SIDEWALK.
JUST WAIT 'TIL YOU GET TO THE BAY,
THEN ONE, TWO, THREE,
HEAVE IT AWAY.

TINY TIM

GOD BLESS US EV'RYONE, AND HELP US CELEBRATE THE SEASON
MAY WE GIVE EACH OTHER HOPE AND JOY
GOD BLESS US EV'RYONE.

FAN

GOD BLESS US EV'RYONE AND HELP US CELEBRATE THE SEASON
MAYBE GIVE EACH OTHER HOPE AND JOY
GOD BLESS US EV'RYONE.

FEZZIWIG

SING A SONG OF JOY.
SING A SONG OF PRAISE.
LIFT YOUR HEAD AND SING IT TO THE SKY,

PREACHER

It is divinely simple, my friends. Divinely. Because the Almighty provided for it in His Creation, if only we will read His Word aright, with open eyes, and open minds - and yes! - open arms!

CROWD

What did he say? Open arms? What does that mean?

PREACHER

Let me reveal it to you step-by-step. The halves of Creation, they are not opponents. They are not combatants. For what are cold and heat?

Pauses dramatically before he answers his own question.

A COUPLE. What are summer and winter?

Shorter pause.

A COUPLE. Day and night?

Crowd catches on, responding tentatively at first.

CROWD

A couple.

PREACHER

Darkness and light?

CROWD

A couple!

PREACHER

Husbands and wives? Seedtime and harvest?

CROWD

A couple! A couple!

PREACHER

And, what does HE bid us to do?

CROWD

Couple! Couple! Couple!

Two assistants strike up the music and begin singing rapturously.

Song #3: Two and Two

ASSISTANTS

TWO AND TWO, TWO AND TWO...

PREACHER

His voice rising over the music.

In Genesis it was written: TWO AND TWO, the male and the female. Keep the seed alive!
Breed abundantly in the earth. KEEP THE SEED ALIVE! Be fruitful and multiply, replenish the
earth. KEEP THE SEEDS ALIVE!

*His voice joins the singing women, who are changing over and
over, in rising crescendo.*

TWO AND TWO, AND TWO AND TWO,
KEEP THE SEED ALIVE.
YOU AND YOU, AND YOU AND YOU
BREED, LET NATURE THRIVE.

TWO AND TWO, AND TWO AND TWO,
THROUGHOUT THE YEARLY SPAN,
RAISE THE CRY TO MULTIPLY --
'TIS GOD'S DECREE TO MAN!

Repeat over and over.

PREACHER

The message is love, my friends! Coupling in the macrocosm and the microcosm. Nature and man coupling on every plane of being. If your husband be cold, Wife, seek another and be fruitful. If your wife be barren, Husband, cleave unto another and multiply!

Amid the music and raised voices, one of the three farmhands met earlier can be heard commending the preacher's scheme to his buddies.

FARMHAND

This fellow has the best advice yet: Rut and your corn will grow!

ANOTHER FARMHAND

Couple in the fields, couple behind the barn -- couple in the very rafters! Let's do it!!

*Each grabs for a woman, as do several other of the men present.
There is screaming. Laughter. Curses. The slapping of cheeks and rumps.
Pandemonium.*

A WOMAN

Hands off, Will Duesler!

*Everywhere people are either embracing lustfully or fleeing.
Some women gather up their children, and head for the exit.
The inflammatory music grows even louder. An old man stands up straight as a poker and begins "reciting" something in gibberish. A matron throws herself at the preacher's feet, seemingly in an ecstatic trance.*

LUCRETIA PULVER

Falling on the breast of Billy Gladstone, ripping open his store-bought shirt and pawing his chest in a frenzy o religious (or is that just an excuse?) ecstasy, chanting.

COUPLE! COUPLE!

Billy responds enthusiastically.

KATIE

Lookit! Lookit!

Mrs. Fox coves Katie's eyes and turns her toward the exit, succeeding, with Maggie's help in clearing a path down the aisle and to the tent flap. Mr. Fox follows reluctantly.

MRS. FOX

Tsk! Filthy! And, I thought he was a catch for my Maggie. You're nothing but a chippy, Lucretia Pulver!

The Foxes exit.

Outside the sky is lowering, not just with the approach of night, but with gathering storm clouds. Fat drops of rain begin to fall as the Fox family heads for home. The rain gathers momentum. Falling more and more heavily until there is a full-blown storm. The family looks skyward, amazed.

FAMILY

Rain! At last! Thank heaven, rain!

Mr. Fox looks at Mrs. Fox craftily. As if considering the efficacy of the preacher's advice. Katie, giggling, catches drops of rain in her open, upturned mouth. Maggie uncovers her long hair, and lets it fly loose in the charged, invigorating air. Behind the family, through a veil of water, the incandescent tent shimmers and seems to rock like an ark. Sounds of rejoicing and singing (Two and Two, and two and two...) float out to the Foxes through the storm as they hurry home.

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE II

The Fox family, drenched to the skin and shaking with cold, enters their poor, two-room cabin. The wind, churning and howling puts up a good fight as Mr. Fox shuts the door behind them.

MRS. FOX

Maggie, help Katie get dry and put her to bed.

MR. FOX

I'll get the fire going.

Maggie and Katie go to their sleeping quarters. This room is dark and spartan and has a single tiny window with scraps of burlap at either side that serve as curtains. Maggie lights the single taper set in the candle stand. This rests, together with a washbowl and pitcher, on a rough-hewn pine table, beside which are two straight-back chairs. In a corner sits a rocking chair. Against the longest wall is a bedstead, big enough for two girls to sleep in. Its thin straw mattress sags in the middle and is covered by a threadbare quilt. Two or three nails have been hammered into the plank walls to hold the girl's few pieces of clothing.

Flashes of lighting are seen through the window, and the sounds of thunder and lashing rain seem to shake the fragile shelter.

KATIE

Oh, wasn't that exciting, Maggie?! I thought the whole tent would fall down when fat, old Ms. Culvert threw herself down on the ground and started yelling, "I believe, Mr. Preacher. I believe!"

Both girls laugh.

What's a hussy, Maggie?

MAGGIE

Well, it's a lady who ... isn't a lady.

KATIE

Oh -- you mean a CHIPPY?!

MAGGIE

Why do you ask that, Katie?

KATIE

Because I heard Mrs. Lanning tell Momma that Mrs. Culvert was a “hussy”. She said Mrs. Culvert tried to run off with the last Preacher -- remember that pimply, bad-smellin’ one that said God was tellin’ him he had to touch all the ladies’ bums for them or they’d never get to Heaven? Only he wouldn’t let her come with him, Maggie, ‘cuz he said it’d cost him too much to feed her!

*Suddenly, the wind howls with particular ferocity and the candle is blown out.
Katie screams. But, Maggie is calm, and immediately comforts her.*

MAGGIE

Don’t worry, Katie. It’s only a draught from the window. I’ll go relight the candle. You stay here. Momma and Papa are probably asleep by now. Papa said he wanted to be up at dawn tomorrow to start cutting down those willows.

KATIE

No! Don’t leave me alone!

MAGGIE

Silly little Katie, you’re not alone. I heard our friend come in a little while ago. He wants to play the game with us tonight. He’ll keep you safe.

She leads Katie to bed and makes her sit down. Kissing her gently on the forehead, she tiptoes out of the room with the candle stand. Katie starts humming a song and speaks tentatively into the darkness.

KATIE

Are you there, Mr. Splitfoot?

Sounds of rustling, as in prologue, but she has no time to receive an answer, for Maggie re-enters almost immediately, bearing the lighted candle.

MAGGIE

That wasn’t so bad, was it? Well, have you spoken with him?

KATIE

Yes. No. He hasn’t said anything yet.

Pauses.

Maggie? I’ve been thinkin’. How come the only ones he talks to are you and me? He lives right here in the house with all of us, but Momma and Papa don’t even know he’s here. Doesn’t he like them?

MAGGIE

Oh, I'm sure he likes them. It's jut that he only comes out at night, and he knows that they work hard all day, and need their rest.

KATIE

Maggie, why do you always tell me not to talk about him to anyone?

MAGGIE

Oh, Katie, please stop asking all these questions. He's just our very own special friend, that's all. I thought you liked having him all to ourselves. Anyway, it's rude, talking about him like this when he's right here in the room.

Suddenly, three resounding knocks echo through the room, as if in agreement with what Maggie has said.

MAGGIE

See! I told you he was here!

Katie is delighted, and immediately turns her attention to their newly-arrived friend. She looks up at the ceiling and peers into the dark corners of the room, her face alight with smiles.

GIRLS

Good evening, Mr. Splitfoot!

They are answered by three more, preternatural-sounding knocks. Spaced to sound like "good evening".

KATIE

Oh, Mr. Splitfoot! I wish you had come with us to the revival meeting. You missed seeing Mrs. Culvert get saved again. And, that other hussy was there, too.

MAGGIE

Katie!

KATIE

Oblivious, and proud of her new word.

That hussy, Lucretia Pulver. She let her hair down and started dancin', and then she ran straight up to Billy Gladstone and hugged him in front of everyone, and she said she wanted to be filled up with his Holy Spirits!

Sings

Lucretia Pulver, hussy, flirt.
Ripped her sweetie's Sunday shirt...

Maggie tries to stem the flow of Katie's talk, but finally gives in, joining with her in the laughter that their "friend" too now shares in a shower of rapid light-hearted raps.

Tell him the best part, Katie. About Mr. Jewell.

KATIE

Oh yeah. The BEST part, Mr. Splitfoot, besides the music I mean -- that lady with the concertina sang the way I'm sure angels sing, don't you think so, Maggie? -- was when Old Man Jewell started talkin' in that funny language.

MAGGIE

He was speaking in tongues, Mr. Splitfoot.

KATIE

Yean, what's what I said. And, his teeth flew out and hit Miss Watters in the back of her head.

Their laughter is again joined by the amused-sounding rapping.

Did you know Old Man Jewell has wooden teeth, Maggie?

MAGGIE

No, sweetheart, I didn't. But, I suppose everyone in Hydesville knows it now. You might say that his secret has "come out".

More laughter, and rapping.

KATIE

You know, Mr. Splitfoot, Maggie's right. It IS fun having a secret friend nobody else has! Let's play the game now!

Song #4: Mr. Splitfoot

MAGGIE

WE KNOW SOMEONE NO ONE ELSE KNOWS.

HE LIVES UNDERNEATH THE STAIR.
HE'S THE MAN WHO ISN'T THERE.

KATIE

HE CAN SHAKE THINGS, JUGGLE, BREAK THINGS.
HE CAN FLOAT THINGS IN THE AIR,
EVEN THOUGH HE ISN'T THERE!

*Curtains shake, shoes are juggled, lit candle nearly flies off the table,
washbowl and pitcher begin to float.*

BOTH

'ROUND THE CIRCLE GO.
YOU ARE THERE, WE KNOW.
DO AS WE DO, MR. SPLITFOOT,
FOLLOW US NOW. DON'T BE SLOW.

'ROUND THE CIRCLE GO.
YOU ARE THERE, WE KNOW.
DO AS WE DO, MR SPLITFOOT,
FOLLOW US NOW. DON'T BE SLOW.

Cloaks and other clothes join the floating objects, flapping like giant bats.

KATIE

SOMETIMES IF WE'RE SAD OR LONELY,
HE TICKLES US AND PULLS OUR HAIR,
JUST TO LET US KNOW HE'S THERE.

'STEAD OF TALKING, HE LIKES KNOCKING
WHILE HE RIDES THE ROCKING CHAIR,
SO, WE KNOW HE'S REALLY THERE.

Loud knocks of agreement. Chair starts wildly rocking.

BOTH

'ROUND THE CIRCLE GO.
YOU ARE THERE, WE KNOW.
DO AS WE DO, MR SPLITFOOT,
FOLLOW US NOW. DON'T BE SLOW.

*The spirit raps out the rhythm, while the girls skip about,
Singing "la, la, la...". Song ends with Spirit Rapping out "Shave and a Haircut"
and the girls joining in at the end to clap out "two bits". All laugh.*

The spirit emitting a shower of knocks.

Door bangs open and startled parents enter, faces aghast.

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE III

One Month Later

Noon of a sunny April day, an excited crowd has gathered outside the Foxes' cabin. There is a broad verandah with the two crude chairs and table from the girls' room. Some of the townsfolk are looking in at the windows; most are standing in small groups around the grounds. In one such small group, a gangly, undernourished-looking man in shabby clothes - the town's schoolmaster - is reading aloud from the newspaper. His enunciation suitable to one of the town's few literate inhabitants.

SCHOOLMASTER

Listen to this headline - "Spirits or Humbug?"

Crowd around him grows attentive and expectant, listening.

TOWNSPERSON

Read on, Schoolmaster.

SCHOOLMASTER

"Our correspondent reports from Hydesville, New York, that the curious disturbances which have become known as the Rochester Rappings continue to emanate from the humble cottage of John Fox and his family. This sleepy hamlet of 43 souls has been repeatedly alarmed by such mysterious phenomena as loud knocking sounds, objects flying about apparently of their own volition, and the spontaneous combustion last Friday of a barn belonging to one William Duesler. At the centre of these unexplained incidents are Maggie and Katherine, the daughters of John and Margaret Fox. The young ladies' presence seem to excite whatever unknown agents are responsible for havoc. Mr. Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune continues to urge that the Misses Fox's abilities be scientifically tested by a panel of impartial professionals."

A dour, pinched-looking Minister dressed entirely in black has overheard the schoolmaster's reading and turns on him angrily.

MINISTER

Beware the sin of pride! What do we care for the opinions of Godless newspapermen! We who are Godfearing know that the sisters Fox are sent by the Old Serpent himself! They tempt us to the everlasting lake of burning brimstone! There is nothing between them and hell, but the air!

GAFFER

Mimicking the minister with burlesque gestures.

And there is nothing betwixt your left and right ears, Sir, but the air!

Laughter and agreement from some members of the crowd.

The fox sisters are sweet, harmless girls.

MINISTER

Sinner! You do not see the black clouds of God's wrath, which even now hang over you!

Gaffer looks up with a grand gesture at what is obviously a sunny sky, eliciting yet more dismissive laughs from some members of the crowd.

Elisha Kent Kane steps forward in a conciliatory way. Kane is in his 30's, handsome, poised, elegantly attired in expensive clothing appropriate to a city street in mid-afternoon; his dark moustache and beard are elegantly clipped; his hair is full and glossy and falls to just below his ears. His ruddy complexion has been tanned by the wind, he carries a tightly furled umbrella and has a wildflower stuck in the buttonhole of his lapel. His voice is hearty but refined.

KANE

Gentlemen! In that case, how fortunate that I thought to bring my umbrella!

MINISTER

You seem a gentleman. Can you not help me to save these doubters and dive them from this temple of Satan?

KANE

I'm afraid I cannot, as I myself am one of the curious. I am a free thinker, sir, and I believe that every man must choose for himself his own path.

Minister turns away in disgust. Schoolmaster steps forward and offers his hand, which Kane shakes.

SCHOOLMASTER

I'm the schoolmaster here. My name is Redfield. Sir, I believe I've seen your picture. Dr. Elisha Kent Kane?

Kane nods.

The papers minutely reported your efforts to rescue John Franklin and his party.

KANE

That is so.

Bows modestly.

Unfortunately, we returned from the Arctic seas with neither sign nor word of the courageous company. But, Lady Franklin has not given up hope of finding her husband alive - and neither shall I. As soon as I can mount a second expedition, we shall try again.

GAFFER

Look on the bright side. Even if they all froze solid up there years ago, you can still talk to Franklin's ghost - with the help of the "Devil's women" ... ha!

MINISTER

Pointing a menacing finger and chanting.

We quibble and gossip and smirk and suppose;
While Lucifer schemes and watches and KNOWS!

The crowd falls silent as Mr. and Mrs. Fox, Maggie and Katie emerge through the front door of the house. John Fox accompanies the girls to the table, at which they sit down. Mrs. Fox steps to the edge of the verandah and faces the assembly. She nervously wrings her hands as she surveys the large crowd.

MRS. FOX

Friends and neighbours, there's been a lot of talk lately about goings-on in this house. Some of you have heard that our girls Katie and Maggie here ---

MINISTER

--- are possessed by the devil!

MR. FOX

Walking over to his wife and taking her hand.

That Katie and Maggie have an invisible "friend" who speaks to them.

GAFFER

So, it's true, you've got haunts in your place?

MRS. FOX

We don't know what's talking to the girls. But, we don't want no more rumours flying.

MR. FOX

Since we all know each other, we wanted you here to see for yourselves. Maybe together we can all figure out just what this thing is -- whether these are ghosts or something worse, like the Minister says.

MRS. FOX

The "thing" that talks to our daughters, it seems to know everything about us. It can answer any question. And, not just about us -- about all of us here in Hydesville.

GAFFER

Ya mean it knows about the skeletons in our closets?

There is an uneasy rumbling from the crowd. The nervous laughter turns to tense whispering, followed by silence.

MAN IN CROWD

Come on, girls. Let's see what your spirits can do!

Maggie stands up. She is dignified and protective of Katie.

MAGGIE

The spirit does not appear on command. I do not control it, it may not consent to speak now.

CROWD

Come on. Come on. There's nothing to this. It's all a hoax.

MAGGIE

Very well. I shall try.

She sits down again. Places her hands on the table, and resumes quietly.

Is there anybody there?

Silence.

Is there anybody there?

There is a long pause. Then Maggie's body tenses. Her eyes close. She seems to become aware of someone else's presence. Music under recalls "Who Desires".

KATIE

Is he comin', Maggie?

MAGGIE

Rising to her feet and speaking in a changed priestess voice.

I feel the pain of past travail.
The soul loosed from it's earthly jail.
The eyes that watched the twilight fail;
But give the sign - I'll lift the veil.
Draw near and freely speak your will,
With sound the waiting silence fill.
O pulse long stopped, O voice long still.
O silhouette on distant hill,
Draw near, draw near, draw near...

Maggie's invocation is answered by a single deafening "knock".

KATIE

Listen, Maggie. He's here! I knew he'd come! Won't you stay and talk with us for a while?

*The door of the cabin opens and slams shut loudly, alarming the crowd.
The crowd's stunned silence is broken after a long moment by the minister.*

MINISTER

Devil's woman! Fire and brimstone rain down upon thee!

He and one or two others fall to their knees and pray.

A STRAPPING YOUTH

Pshaw! There's no devil here! But, I'll wager there's someone of flesh and blood on the other side of that door! C'mon boys. We'll get him!

*While he bursts into the house by the front door. His friends run onto the porch
and around the back. A moment later they return to the front.
The youth emerges, shaking his head and looking bewildered.*

No one.

MRS. FOX

Is this a spirit that has taken possession of my dear children?

Silence.

MR. FOX

Have you come to hurt anyone here?

Silence.

Has anyone hurt you?

Door opens and slams. Several women shriek.

Oh! Someone has hurt you? Was it someone in this house?

Door slams, indicating the affirmative.

KATIE

No! We never hurt anybody!

MAGGIE

Is the person who hurt you living in this house now?

One loud rap.

KATIE

See, I told you!

MAGGIE

Did you die in this house? Were you murdered?

One loud rap.

Spirit, tell us your name.

There is a series of rapid raps, separated by pauses: 3 then 8 then 1...

SCHOOLMASTER

Maybe he's spelling his name!

MAGGIE

Spirit. I shall recite the alphabet. Rap when I reach the first letter of your name. A--B--C---

One loud rap.

KATIE

His name begins with a C!

MAN IN CROWD

Is it Carl?

WOMAN IN CROWD

Is it Catherine?

SECOND MAN IN CROWD

Is it Calvin?

KATIE

This is fun!

MAGGIE

Now, the second letter, spirit. A--B--C--D--E--F--G--H--

One loud rap.

KATIE

The second letter is H! Let me do the third! A--

One loud rap.

WOMAN, DRESSED IN BLACK

Oh, it's Charlotte, my baby! Is it you, darling?

Silent pause.

MAN IN CROWD

Maybe his name is Charlie.

*There are many loud raps, even faster and more energetic than before.
And, the door slams several times, as if excitedly.*

MAGGIE

Charles...I shall spell your second name. A--B--

SECOND MAN IN CROWD

Pointing over Maggie's head.

Look! He's writing something.

Crowd gasps as letters of blood begin to form on the side of the house.

SCHOOLMASTER

Reading in horror.

Char--l-es Ros--na, pe-dd-ler!...

*Crowd gasps. Various people express astonishment.
Ad lib. The name Charles Rosna is repeated by different people.*

MAN IN CROWD

Peddler! What peddler! Does anyone remember a peddler?

LUCRETIA PULVER

I do! I told you! I tried at least! I've known for five years that murder was done in this house!
But, everyone tried to tell told me I was just a silly girl with too much imagination!

*She steps forward, excited and somewhat self-important, and sings
Lucretia's tale melodramatically.*

Song #5: Lucretia's Tale

NOW HEAR MY TALE, YOU KNOW ME WELL.
I WORKED AS A SERVANT TO MR. BELL.
WHEN HE AND HIS WIFE LIVED IN THIS PLACE
'ERE THEY AWAY DID SUSPICIOUSLY RACE
THE CAUSE OF WHICH I NOW WILL TELL.

ONE DAY A MAN CAME TO THE DOOR,
MORE HANDSOME THAN ANY I'D SEEN BEFORE.
HE CARRIED A HEAVY, BULGING SACK
AND A COAT WITH POCKETS IN FRONT AND IN BACK.

A PEDDLER-MAN HE WAS INDEED
OF MY EMPLOYERS HE HAD A NEED.
I LET HIM IN -- THE BELLS WERE GLAD
TO SEE THE MANY WARES HE HAD.
I WATCHED THEIR EYES GROW BRIGHT WITH GREED.

THE HANDSOME PEDDLER SPREAD AROUND
HIS OBJECTS SO PRECIOUS UPON THE GROUND.
A BRIGHT GOLDEN THIMBLE CAUGHT MY SIGHT

I BEGGED TO HAVE WITH ALL OF MY MIGHT.
THE BELLS JUST SHOOK THEIR HEADS AND FROWNED.

SOON MRS. BELL DECLARED THAT SHE
WOULD VISIT HER FRIENDS IN ALBANY.
SHE SAID SHE'D BE SOME TIME FROM HOME
AND FEARED HER HUSBAND'S HAND WOULD ROAM
TO A SERVANT GIRL, AND SO SHE FIRED ME!

THREE DAYS PASSED AND THEN I LEARNED
SHE WISHED ME BACK, SO I RETURNED.
I SPIED HER SEWING LATE AT NIGHT
HER THIMBLE CAUGHT THE LANTERN'S LIGHT,
THE VERY ONE FOR WHICH I'D YEARNED.

I SAW THE THING SHE SEWED UPON
WAS HEAVY CLOTH WITH BUTTONS ON.
A COAT WITH POCKETS FRONT AND BACK
BUT EMPTY NOW, THEIR LININGS SLACK.
THE COAT WAS THERE, THE PEDDLER GONE!

FROM THAT WEIRD HOUSE I GLADLY FLED,
IT FILLED ME WITH UNCANNY DREAD.
AS PHANTOM FOOTSTEPS CREAKED ON FLOORS
AND COLD DRAFTS PENETRATED DOORS.
AND A MOUNT OF EARTH IN THE CELLAR, BLED!

NOW FIVE YEARS HENCE WE HEAR THE PAIN
THE RAPPINGS RETURN TO WHERE HE WAS SLAIN.
CAN YOU DOUBT, GOOD DAMES AND GENTS.
UPON THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH STRONG EVIDENCE,
THE PEDDLER'S SOUL IS HERE AGAIN?

STRAPPING YOUTH

A body in the cellar! If he's there, we'll dig him up! C'mon boys! Get your shovels!

He and a few others rush off, soon to return with spades and shovels.

MINISTER

This is blasphemy! You know neighbour Bell and his wife were god-fearing people. Let not this witch woman deliver you into the hands of an angry God! The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the strong, and justice bends the arrow at your heart and strains the bow! Only God's mercy keeps the arrow from being made drunk with your blood!

YOUNG MAN

Examining the blood on the wall.

Blood! It's written in blood!

CROWD

Some people shouting, some falling to their knees praying, eyes heavenward.

Have mercy on us! Amen!

Again, the minister points across the yard to the porch at Maggie, who is now standing, frightened, behind the table.

Remember the words of our forefathers: "Thou shalt not supper a witch to live!"

In response to the minister's summons, a group of townspeople rushes threateningly at the girls. Suddenly a deafening shower of stones erupts, pelting and panicking everyone. Some crowd members flee, screaming. Others continue to advance on the Foxes. Mr. Fox tries to defend his cowering womenfolk., but the situation is becoming desperate. And then ... Elisha Kane to the rescue, brandishing his umbrella like a rapier, he fends off the attackers while shouting instructions at Fox.

KANE

I've moved my carriage behind the house! Take the women through and get in! Wait for me there!

Fox obeys. Kane, still thrusting valiantly with his makeshift rapier, backs into the house after them, Douglas Fairbanks style. Soon all are safely installed in the carriage, Kane whipping the horses into a gallop amid the sounds of retreating hooves, the few frenzied townfolk who have not yet fled hurl rocks after the fugitives.

CROWD

Get out of here! And, stay away from Hydesville!

Note: Shower of stones could be done as a hologram "into" the audience.

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE IV

Rochester, New York: Later that same day.

Kane's carriage has pulled up in front of Leah Fox Fish's home - a shabby rooming house in a once genteel section of Rochester, New York. The family is exhausted after their journey, and still very much agitated by the uncanny events of the rapping demonstration and by the terrifying experience of having been driven out of Hydesville by the mob.

MR. FOX

We're obliged to you, Dr. Kane. Without your help I'm not sure we woulda made it out alive.

MRS. FOX

My husband is right. He certainly couldn't have saved us -- uh, without your help. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

KANE

Madam, it is my good luck to have been in the right place at the right time. Will you be staying here?

Surveying the sorry-looking block of flats.

Perhaps you will allow me to provide accommodation for you until you decide what you will do.

KATIE

Can we stay at your house?

MAGGIE

Katie!

MRS. FOX

You are very kind. But, my daughter Leah will make space for us until we are settled somewhere. And, we have family further upstate.

MR. FOX

Goodbye, sir. I thank you for saving my girls. They're everything to me.

KANE

And, with good reason, sir.

His eyes rest briefly on Maggie's face.

MRS. FOX

Heading for Leah's door.

Leah will think of something.

MR. FOX

Following her.

Lord knows she always does

Katie hangs back. Then, impulsively, she plants a kiss on Kane's cheek.

MAGGIE

KATIE!

KANE

Do not reprimand her, please, Miss Fox. I have dined with the President and been presented at royal courts, but never have I had a more charming tribute, or enjoyed one more.

MAGGIE

To Katie.

Darling, run along and join Momma and Papa. I want to speak to Dr. Kane for a moment.

*Katie gives them both a mischievous grin and does as she is told.
She waves to Kane, who waves back.*

KANE

If I can ever be of any assistance to you, provide ANY kind of help at all, Miss Maggie -- may I call you so, as your sister does? I hope you will think of me as your friend. A friend you can always call upon.

Meaningful pause.

One who will always be interested in your welfare.

He gives her a look that a girl with more experience would know to be "suggestive".

MAGGIE

Earnestly.

You have done so much already. We owe you our lives.

KANE

Smiling. He lives her even more, for her innocence.

And, as you say, those lives are now to change dramatically. You especially, Miss Maggie, will have many lessons to learn. Some will not be easy. I am sorry to say so, but I have seen much of the world, and I know I'm right.

MAGGIE

Because of the spirits, you mean?

Defiantly.

I will NOT give them up!

KANE

No. I mean because of YOUR spirit. You are a brave young woman, but you know little of human nature.

MAGGIE

Dr. Kane, I am not Katie.

KANE

No, you are not a child. But, you have a child's unpractised gaze.

Song #6: Wide-eyed Girl

WIDE-EYED GIRL
IS YOUR INNOCENCE REAL AS IT SEEMS TO BE?

MAGGIE

What do you...

KANE

WIDE-EYED GIRL
NOW I KNOW AT YOUR AGE YOU'RE STILL GREEN
YOU DIDN'T KNOW FRIENDS COULD TURN MEAN.
THE CROWD HAS A SINGULAR LACK OF COURAGE IN ITS BONES
AND IT SHRINKS IF IT THINKS YOU'LL BREAK ITS STICKS WITH YOUR STONES.

SO YOU GET TOUGH, GET MAD, GET ROUGH; IT'S SAD ---
BUT YOU GOTTA DO IT NOW, BEFORE THEY SPOT THE FEAR.

MAGGIE

But, I could never...

KANE

DEAR WIDE-EYED GIRL
IT'S SURPRISING ENCOUNTERING ONE LIKE YOU.
WIDE-EYED GIRL,
BUT YOU'RE ASKING FOR TROUBLE -- BEWARE.
WHEN SOMEONE IS SO VERY RARE
AS YOU KNOW YOU ARE.
THEN YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK 'EM IN THE EYE.
SO, THEY SEE THAT YOU'RE SIMPLY NOT ABOUT TO UP AND FLY
AWAY -- NOT YOU
YOU'LL STAY TO DO
WHAT YOU CAME FOR.

AGAINST ALL ODDS, YOU'LL MAKE YOUR NAME
FOR CHALLENGING THE GODS.
THEN WATCH 'EM TURN, WATCH 'EM RUN.
YOU'LL EARN YOUR PLACE IN THE SUN.
IF YOU'RE WILLING TO BE THAT WAY.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?

MAGGIE

Of course, if I HAD to, but...

KANE

HEY, WIDE-EYED GIRL.
LITTLE WIDE-EYED GIRL.
IF YOU DO WHAT I SAY TO DO
WATCH MY WORDS COME TRUE --
YOU'LL SEE SOME WIDE EYES STARING BACK AT YOU.

*Their eyes lock for a long moment. Then she looks away, flustered,
and hurries to Leah's door. Kane openly watches her as she steals a glance
at him before opening the door and fleeing inside.*

END OF SCENE
ACT I, SCENE V

Inside Leah's cramped flat.

A music lesson is in progress. Leah presiding over a hapless little boy, Rupert, who labours at an out-of-tune upright piano. He torments the same few bars of a Chopin etude haltingly over and over, while she berates him with shrill insults that nearly drown out his playing.

Leah is the oldest of the Fox children, 23 years older than Maggie (that is about 40 at the time the play opens). She has always dominated everyone she has known including her parents and siblings, and the various men who have fled from her. Sharp of mind and feature, she married young, was abandoned early, and quickly became "street-wise". She is shrewd and aggressive, an opportunist with a keen eye for the main chance. At the moment, she is down on her luck, eking out a meagre living by giving piano lessons. But, she is obviously a survivor with strong entrepreneurial instincts.

LEAH

Damnation, Rupert! Can't you get anything right?

She raps him sharply over the knuckles with a pencil.

RUPERT

Oww!!

LEAH

That's the note. Boy! That's it, exactly! You can SING it - why can't you PLAY it?

Rupert rubs his aching knuckles and glances fearfully, but with deep hostility into her face. There is an urgent pounding at the door.

LEAH

Hells Bells! Who's that? Did you tell your sister to come and get you early again, you little weasel?

Rupert vehemently shakes his head.

LEAH

Leaving her chair and crossing over to the door.

Can't a struggling artiste be left in peace to earn her living? All right, all right, coming.

Calling out grandly.

Patience, Mrs. Fish is coming...

Opening the door, Leah sees her parents and two sisters clearly much agitated.

What are YOU doing here? Who died?

Everyone starts explaining at once. Leah cuts them short.

Come in. For heaven's sake! Come and sit down. Now, Mother, what's happened?

MRS. FOX

Oh, Leah, we barely escaped with our lives! It's the knockings.

Suddenly a vase flies across the room. Narrowly missing Leah's head, and is smashed to bits against the opposite wall. Leah exclaims in amazement. Rupert is unable to suppress a cheer.

RUPERT

Hurray!

LEAH

Shut up, you little Toad! Go home! And, tell your mother that I'm raising my fee to 50 cents. I won't waste myself on brats like you for a measly 25 cents an hour.

Rupert eagerly stands up to go. As he does so, the lid over the keys of the piano loudly slams shut, entirely on its own. Rupert jumps back as if stung, and holds up his innocent hands for Leah to see.

RUPERT

I didn't do that! Honest! Your piana's haunted! Your whole place is haunted! I'm tellin' my Momma! She won't make me come here anymore when she hears!

LEAH

Listen you little... Listen, Rupert. Don't be a silly boy, now, your mother would never believe a story like that. Why, she might even BEAT THE TAR OUT OF YOU for telling a lie. You just go home and tell your dear mother that Mrs. Fish said you're coming along very nicely, and that Mrs. Fish sends her compliments. I'll see you next week.

She rises and bustles Rupert to the door.

RUPERT

Rupert sticks out his tongue and runs out the door.

No, you will NOT! And, I reckon Mrs. Fish better watch out when she's playin' that piana, or else she might be havin' FISH FINGERS for supper! Nyaa!

LEAH

Little skunk! Who needs him?

She slams the door behind him, turning back to her family.

Now, tell me what happened. It was the knockings you said, Mother? But, they've been going on for months. There's nothing new in that.

She looks over at the shattered vase on the floor.

Or, is there?

MRS. FOX

There is something. At first, we thought it was the house, that it had some kind of special presence in it. But, it's not just the house, Leah. It's the girls, especially Maggie. The spirit follows her, you see.

MR. FOX

And now this spirit, or whatever it is, has brought the whole town down on our heads, with the help of that poisonous minister. We can't ever go back to Hydesville, any of us.

MRS. FOX

We want the girls to stay here with you until we can get settled with Cousin David up state and send for them.

LEAH

Well, I suppose, if you can't go back.

MAGGIE

Leah, it wouldn't be fair not to tell you this first. The spirit -- it's becoming stronger, somehow. It can do more than just rap. Much more.

She walks over to the piano and turns back the lid that earlier slammed down on the keys.

We don't even know yet how much.

LEAH

Mother says it "follows" you. Can't you tell it what to do?

MAGGIE

No. I can usually feel when something is going to happen though. I feel a kind of thrill, like a current passing through me, and then the spirit chooses a way of showing that he's there. But, I don't control what he does.

LEAH

Looking around apprehensively.

It's obviously here now.

MAGGIE

Yes.

LEAH

Is it feeling any friendlier?

MAGGIE

He seems calmer, yes.

LEAH

Summon it. Ask it to show us something else. Something ... nicer.

MAGGIE

No, Leah. Truly I cannot. He's separate from me. I don't control...

Maggie's protestation is interrupted by music from the piano, which of itself begins to play the melodious Chopin Etude with which Rupert was earlier struggling. The music is soft, sweet, and fluent. Halfway through, the piano switches to a flamboyant Liszt Etude, ending in a dazzling display of chromatics and crashing chords. It is a virtuoso performance, as if making a bow, the invisible player once again slams the lid down over the keys. Katie claps her hands, John Fox hugs his little daughter. Mrs. Fox's jaw drops open. Only Maggie and Leah do not move from their places. Maggie stands in respectful silence, Leah seems to have something on her mind. Some pragmatic notion.

LEAH

Managing, with an effort, to act very calm and cool, almost unimpressed.

Not bad. I'd say that what we have here is the ghost of someone who liked music, wouldn't you?

MAGGIE

I don't even say that it is a ghost, Leah.

KANE

Yes, it is, Maggie. He said he was a peddler, Charles Somebody. Didn't you believe him?

MAGGIE

Hush, sweetheart. It MAY be a spirit, yes. But, it may be a different one or more than one. Or, it may be something else altogether.

MRS. FOX

Oh Lord! What if the Minister is right? What if it IS the Devil? Oh God, have mercy on us!

LEAH

Whatever it is, people are surely getting mightily interested in it. That fellow in the New York Tribune runs something in his paper about the Rochester Rappings almost every day now. And, just last week the mother of one of those little rats I teach asked me if I was related to the "Knocking Fox Sisters" everybody in town's talking about.

Pauses, thinking. A plan is beginning to take shape in her mind.

You know, if this musical friend of yours IS the ghost of someone's dear departed, I'll bet a month's earnings that that someone would be willing to pay almost ANYTHING to hear him play the piano again, or to get some message of love and comfort from "beyond the grave".

MR. FOX

Leah, what have you got up your sleeve now?

LEAH

We could start by inviting the neighbours in -- everybody's got someone close they've lost. Why Mrs. Malone downstairs had her baby die on her last month. Just a little thing, too. Only a year old. Annoying woman; still can't stop crying. Think what a comfort it would be to hear her little one rap out that she was safe and sound in the bosom of her Maker, playing with all her cousins and great-great-grandparents. Everybody loves good news. All the neighbours would tell their friends and pretty soon we'd be turning people away.

MAGGIE

Leah, what are you talking about?

LEAH

Of course, with the money -- we'd charge 50 cents admission. No! 75 cents -- with the money, we could get a larger place. Maybe even rent an auditorium and give public demonstrations. Of course, we'd charge more for those.

MAGGIE

Leah, stop this! What in the world are you talking about? We can't charge people money for talking to their "dear dead loved ones" when we don't even know where the rappings come from. I don't want any part of this.

KATIE

Me neither! I'm not doin' it! Oh, I wish we could just have Mr. Splitfoot all to ourselves again. I don't have to do it, do I, Momma?

MRS. FOX

Of course not. Hush dear, let your sister think.

LEAH

You know what your problem is, Maggie? You have no imagination. Who cares WHAT's causing the rapping or the music? People are curious. They'll pay just to be here and see it happen! You know what they say: "There's a sucker born every minute!"

MAGGIE

WHO says so?

LEAH

Don't you even read the newspapers? Why, it's a fellow named P.T. Barnum. Now, there's a businessman!

Suddenly she stops short, a wonderful idea has come to her.

Mother! You remember that new beau I told you about? Herbie? Never mind -- he's the latest one, the butcher. Brings me port chops instead of flowers when we step out together.

Mrs. Fox remembers.

Anyway, Herbie's been talking my ear off about the trip to New York he took last fall. Real educational, he says. Seems they've got a new place there full of what they call "instructional curiosities". Well, some of it's just pickled punk jars in seawater -- you know, shrunken heads, pigs with eight legs, and such. But, they also have giants, and pygmies and bearded ladies.

MAGGIE

Freaks! It's a freak show!

LEAH

Not freaks, Mar-gar-etta. "Natural curiosities". Marvels of Mother Nature. The main attraction is an amazing little man...

MAGGIE

Growing disgusted.

You mean a midget?

KATIE

Shh, Maggie! I want to hear!

LEAH

Resuming with a smile at Katie.

An amazing little man called General Tom Thumb. He's only about two feet tall, and he's perfect. Very handsome, I'm told. He wears a red uniform covered with gold braid, and he sings and dances and acts. He's travelled all over the world, and appeared before the crowned heads of Europe.

KATIE

Just the heads?

LEAH

QUIET! He's graced the stage with all the finest and most famous actresses of his day, and has kissed hundreds of noble ladies in Europe, including queens and princesses.

LEAH

To Maggie.

Now, does that sound like a freak to you?

MAGGIE

What does all this have to do with us, anyway?

LEAH

I'm coming to that, thank you. The whole magnificent display can be seen in a place that looks like a huge palace, on Broadway in New York. It's run by this man, Barnum, and he calls it his American Museum.

ALL

So???

LEAH

SO ... it costs \$1.00 to get in, and according to Herbie, Barnum must make \$10,000 a day. Obviously, his chief attraction gets a cut of the take. SO ... if we play our cards right, WE'LL be the biggest thing ever to hit Barnum's American Museum. We'll pack them in! I can see the banners now: "THE MARVELLOUS FOX SISTERS - THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN TWO WORLDS". SO ... we're all going to be partners -- we're all going to be RICH!

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE VI

This scene comprises four initially separate situations, which are eventually woven together musically:

1. Kane and his friend, Grinnell, discussing Kane's infatuation with Maggie Fox, whom Grinnell believes to be a fraud (*Why Would I Run from Love?*)
2. Leah acting as Mistress of Ceremonies at various public demonstrations of Spirit Rapping at which Maggie and Katie are performing (*Who Do You Want To Talk To?*)
3. Audiences responding enthusiastically to Maggie and Katie's demonstrations (*Bravo*)
4. Maggie trying, despite her growing fame, to cling to her sense of who she really is - a simple girl who happens to possess one inexplicable God-given talent, which she hopes will bring someone comfort (*I'm No One Special*)

Although Kane and Grinnell do not actually attend the public seances the Fox sisters are conducting, Kane should look across the stage and comment on the crowd's fascination with Maggie, in such lines as "all New York's at her feet!"

*In portraying the Foxes' public appearances, the staging should make clear the fact that they are moving up in the world, attracting ever larger crowds to ever more fashionable halls. Leah's costumes (thought not necessarily Maggie and Katie's) should become conspicuously more opulent and -- in accordance with Leah's taste -- garish. Maggie's solo (*I'm No One Special*) requires a very simple costume and staging that creates an atmosphere of intimacy and isolation.*

Kane and Grinnell walk into their spotlight.

KANE

I think that I have found the girl unique and unattainable. She fascinates me quite beyond the norm, plays inside my mind where she's taken hold. I'm amused by her mystery. Who wouldn't be?

GRINNELL

Can't you recognize her for what she is?
Are you blinded by this strange fascination?

KANE

If so, my friend. Let me stay in the dark for just a little while...

Song #7: *Why Would I Run From Love?*

I'VE CHARTED COURSES WHERE NO MAN TRAVELLED BEFORE ME;
I'VE FACED THE DANGERS AND NEVER QUESTIONED WHY;
FACE-TO-FACE WITH FEAR, I AM WHERE I'VE ALWAYS BEEN.
SO, WHY WOULD I RUN FROM LOVE?

GRINNELL

IT ISN'T LOVE I QUESTION.

KANE

I'VE NEVER WISHED FOR ANOTHER KIND OF EXISTENCE,
WHERE OTHERS FALTERED I HAD THE STRENGTH TO TRY.
OUT THERE ON A LIMB, I AM QUITE PREPARED TO BE.
SO, WHY WOULD I RUN FROM LOVE?

LOVE IS NOT ABOUT TO CHANGE ME FROM WHAT I'VE BECOME.
TOO MANY YEARS HAVE MOLDED ME INTO THIS STATE OF MIND
BUT, WHAT'S WRONG WITH ADDING SOMETHING
SOMETHING THAT CAN TRULY TAKE A LIFETIME TO FIND?

I'VE SPENT FOREVER IN SEARCH OF WORLDS UNDISCOVERED.
IT WASN'T EVER A CHOICE -- IT WAS A CALL.
FACING THE UNKNOWN, YOU SEE INSIDE YOUR SOUL.
SO, WHY WOULD I RUN FROM LOVE?

GRINNELL

YOU'RE NOT ONLY BLIND, YOU REFUSE TO HEAR WHAT I'M REALLY SAYING.
GO AHEAD, FALL IN LOVE, BUY THE RING, HAVE A BIG FAMILY,
GROW OLD AND GREY TOGETHER,
BUT, NOT WITH HER!

Lights up on Leah, Maggie, Katie and their audience

Song #8: Who Do You Want To Talk To?

LEAH

WHO DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO?
YOU CAN COMMUNICATE
AND YOU CAN HEAR THEM KNOCK, TOO.
YOU SIMPLY INDICATE
YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN HEARING WHAT MIGHT BE SAID
BY A FRIEND OR A RELATIVE
WHO HAPPENS TO BE DEAD.

WHO DO YOU WANT TO HEAR FROM?
IS THERE A VOICE FROM THE PAST YOU CAN BUY SOME CHEER FROM?
IS THERE A CHOICE? YOU CAN REACH ACROSS THE BARRIER
AND FIND OUT WHAT LIES BEYOND.
IT'S ALL PART OF THE BARGAIN,
YOU DON'T NEED A MAGIC WAND.
IN THE SHADOWS IN THE MIST, BURNING,

THERE'S A MOMENT NOT TO BE MISSED FOR LEARNING
ANSWERS WE ALL HUNGER FOR
FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT FORBIDDEN DOOR.

WHO DID YOU REALLY CHERISH,
SOME OTHER SEASON, WHO ONE AWFUL NIGHT DID PERISH?
THAT IS NO REASON TO THINK THEY AREN'T TRYING
TO CROSS THE VOID WITH A WORD.
WELL, NOW HERE'S YOUR OPPORTUNITY
AND CONTACT IS ASSURED!

There's a money-back guarantee, folks!

Song #8: Bravo!

AUDIENCE

BRAVO! THIS FAMILY FOX
HAS FOUND NOT ONLY OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!
THE SPIRITS SEEM TO FIND THEIR WAY
TO WHATEVER FAR-OFF CORNER THEY
HAPPEN TO FIND THEMSELVES AT.
JUST TURN OUT ALL THE LIGHTS AND PASS THE HAT,
IT'S WORTH A PENNY OR TWO TO SEE A FOX SÉANCE THROUGH.

KANE

SHE HAS THEM ALL MESMERIZED -- WHAT A WOMAN!

GRINNELL

YOU AS WELL, I FEAR. IT ISN'T RIGHT!

KANE

SHE'S SHOWING THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO SEE.
SHE'S TELLING THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT, IF IT HELPS THEM THROUGH THE DAY?

GRINNELL

SHE'S A DANGEROUS WOMAN!

KANE

I'VE FACED DANGER -- WHY WOULD I RUN FROM LOVE?

GRINNELL

OH FRIEND, WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FAR TOO LONG, TOO WELL,
FOR ME NOT TO SAY THIS: SHE'S A FRAUD!

LEAH

HAVE YOU A FRIEND OR RELATIVE
WHO HAPPENS TO BE DEAD?

AUDIENCE

BRAVO! THIS MARGARETTA FOX
SHE AMAZES SHE SHOCKS!

KANE

ALL NEW YORK'S AT HER FEET!

Song #10: I'm No One Special

MAGGIE

Alone in her spotlight.

I'M NO ONE, NOTHING VERY SPECIAL.
ONE SMALL GIFT I WAS GIVEN,
ONE THAT I LOVE TO SHARE.
I'M NOT A SAINT, I'M NOT A SINNER.
WHAT YOU SEE HERE BEFORE YOU
IS JUST A SIMPLE GIRL TO WHOM YOU CAN COME FOR SOME PEACE.

KANE

MY GOD! SHE'S WONDERFUL! AMAZING!
WHAT A CHALLENGE TO MAKE HER MY OWN!

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE VII

Spring, 1850, Albany, New York

We find the Fox sisters ensconced in a lavish hotel suite. The French windows give onto a quiet city street. A gaslight streetlamp and parked Hansom cab are visible through the panes. It is about 11:00 at night.

The three women and their friend, E.W. Capron, enter the room. Leah, talking volubly and enthusiastically. All three females are expensively dressed. Leah garishly and extravagantly. Her sisters more simply and tastefully.

LEAH

Ah, what a night! What a glorious triumph! It was the best show yet, wasn't it, Mr. Capron?

Capron is in his mid-40's; a respectable citizen with a special interest in physical research. He is, then, that most useful of associates; a rich devotee of Leah's who is both fascinated and intimidated by her.

CAPRON

Indeed, it was, Mrs. Fish. A most impressive display. The Spiritual Telegraph was fairly humming with messages tonight.

LEAH

Yes, we're getting pretty good at delivering, aren't we? Look out, Samuel Morse! The Foxes' telegraph has got yours beat, right down to the ground!

CAPRON

Hear, hear!

LEAH

Who ever thought we'd fill Van Vechten Hall? How I used to dream of someday seeing the inside of that place! But, it's not so grand really, is it? Not compared to where WE'RE going! Just ow many people saw us tonight anyway?

CAPRON

Well, every seat in the house was taken, Mrs. Fish. And, the Hall holds well over two hundred people.

LEAH

Then tonight there are well over two hundred more converts to Spirit Rapping. Not to mention well over two hundred more good, green dollars in the till.

KATIE

Two hundred dollars! Think of that, Maggie! We must have enough now to buy Momma and Papa that big, white house over in Poughkeepsie, and a fine carriage besides!

MAGGIE

Sounding tired.

Well, I'm glad of that. But, Leah, I tell you this now, once and for all. I will not go along with your idea of faking effects. The ghostly violins, the floating roses, the showers of pennies -- they're stupid and wrong. There are no money-back guarantees in the spirit world. If the spirits come, they come. I will not dupe their families with cheap pretences.

LEAH

Cheap, you say? Do you have any idea how many pennies we dropped on those society yokels tonight? Of course, I made up for it by bumping up the admission price.

MAGGIE

Congratulations -- that WAS thrifty. You know what I mean.

LEAH

Oh, yes, of course I do, Margaretta. I know how MORAL you are. I wouldn't dream of asking you to COUNTERFEIT the spirits. I'm only trying to make your work easier by encouraging them. Some of them may be -- uh -- shy, and not willing to appear unless they think some of their -- uh -- friends have already done so.

MAGGIE

I'm not a fool, Leah. You've always thought me one, I know. And, as long as you kept your nose out of my affairs, what you thought didn't matter. But, it matters now. The only ones you are interested in "encouraging" are those you and Mr. Barnum please to call the "suckers"; the ones who will pay. For those who are easily bored, you devise bigger and flashier quackeries, because if once you became Old Hat, they'll desert you. My conscience, I admit, does not trouble me over them. But, what about the ones who really believe, who need to believe, who sit night after night in the dark, hoping? How you feel palming off a worthless coin on them, when their hands are so empty?

Leah snorts with impatience at Maggie's naivete.

MAGGIE

No. I see that it makes no difference to you at all. But, it does to me. And, I won't do it. And, I won't let Katie be party to it, either.

Katie runs over to where Maggie is standing and takes her hand.

LEAH

You've become quite the philosopher, Margaretta. I can't think who you might have learned it from. It must have been someone with enough money and time to indulge in idle thinking. But, since thinking is your game now, consider the logic of this. In order to win people over, you must deceive them. You must promise and show them toys. Suppose your spirits were a thousand times wiser and more serious, do you think you would have anywhere to live or any success at all without the hocus pocus? Without the show?

You know the answer. The answer lies under a heap of stones in Hydesville. The answer is that you would reach NO ONE with you clumsy coded telegrams of comfort and enduring love -- because you and Katie, and Momma and Papa, would have pegged out from hunger long ago.

Maggie can think of nothing to say. Leah is right. Beaten, she turns away from Leah's hard gaze and hugs Katie to her.

LEAH

Businesslike again.

So, now, let's be friends again. That's best for all concerned.

Announcing.

I've decided to raise our prices. When we get to New York, we'll be charging five times our usual rate for private seances. And, people will be all too happy, believe me, to fork over a mere \$5.00 for a chance to converse with their dear departed ones in the Other World.

MAGGIE

Five dollars each?

LEAH

That's right. And, who can say it's not a fair price? After all, our fees are set by the spirits themselves!

KATIE

How do YOU know, Leah? You can't rap. You've never gotten even one little knock.

Leah ignores her. Removing her gloves, she glides over to a writing desk, and fondly picks up her ledger book.

LEAH

I'm afraid Momma and Papa may have to wait for that house. We paid out quite a large sum for renting this place tonight.

MAGGIE

Katie and I will buy the house out of our share, when we've saved up enough. You can help Cousin David with the payment on his farm.

LEAH

Very generous of you, I'm sure. But then, you can afford to be generous, can't you, Margaretta? Elisha Kent Kane isn't likely to use up HIS family's spectacular fortune, is he? And, since the two of you have been stepping out together. It seems a likely bet that he'll break down and ask you to marry him pretty soon. That is, if he can square things with that bothersome MA-MAH of his.

MAGGIE

I don't know what you mean. Dr. Kane has never spoken to me of marriage.

LEAH

Oh, come now, Miss Innocent! You don't think that your conniving and secrecy can fool anyone, do you? Why, even the newspapers have gotten wind of your "liaison". Your precious Elisha would have popped the question long ago if he weren't afraid of riling his family and losing his inheritance. And, who knows? Maybe deep in his heart of hearts he suspects that his precious Mother is right, maybe you are NOT good enough for him, NOT good enough to be admitted to the "Royal Family". After all, a spiritualist is little better than a showgirl, in some people's eyes!

MAGGIE

If I'm little better than a showgirl, it's because you've turned me into one.

LEAH

Relenting. After all, Maggie is her most valuable asset. When she speaks after a moment, her voice is cool and level.

I admit that your "friendship" with Elisha Kane is none of my business. But, I'm only thinking of YOU. His first love, as you and I both now, isn't you. It's the Arctic. He'd leave any woman for THAT mistress. He can't resist her. And, some day, mark my words, Maggie, he'll die there. And, you will have given up everything. For what? For the privilege of being a famous explorer's unknown widow.

Leah's speech rings true; it is followed by a long and uneasy silence, which Capron now breaks, in the hope of restoring the evening's earlier good humour.

CAPRON

Ladies, please, I am certain that you have only each other's best interests at heart. For my part, I fully understand Miss Margaretta's hesitation about the fees for the seances. Hers is truly a priceless gift. But, if you simply GAVE it away, Miss Margaretta, how could we afford to spread the word of the spirits? How could you bring their comfort and enlightenment to the hundreds -- no, the thousands -- of persons you now reach? You and Miss Katie ease the sorrow of countless hearts through your communication with the spirits. Through you, the past lives and breathes again. Yours is a holy office. You must not hide your light under a bushel.

LEAH

Mr. Capron is right, girls. The past USED to be over and done with. But not anymore. Thanks to US, the PAST IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE!

Song #11: "Knock!"

YOU YOUNG GIRLS WITH SCRUPLES, COME HARK UNTO ME,
AND SOME NEWS OF GREAT IMPORT YOU'LL LEARN.
YOU NEEDN'T BE PRETTY, OR CLEVER, OR GOOD
THESE DAYS, YOUR FORTUNES TO EARN.
USED TO BE MEN MANAGED ALL THE CASH
THEY COULD HOARD IT, OR SPEND IT, OR BURY IT.
A GIRL HAD TO BE MIGHTILY QUICK OFF HER MARK,
SPOT HER ONE CHANCE, AND GRAB IT, AND MARRY IT.

BUT...
KNOCK ON WOOD
AS YOU CAN SEE
THE PAST IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE.

"KNOCK!" ON THE TABLES,
"KNOCK!" ON THE FLOORS.
"KNOCK!" ON THE WINDOWS,
"KNOCK!" ON THE DOORS.
LEGIONS OF SPIRITS WITH FACES SUBLIME
STACCATO FOOTSTEPS RAP ACROSS TIME.

FEAR NOT THE DARKNESS,
LOVED ONES ARE NEAR,
"KNOCK!" IS THAT SOUND THAT,
TELLS YOU THEY'RE HERE.
TO WARN OR ADVISE, TO ROMP OR A TONE,
SO YOU MAY BE SURE THAT YOU'RE NEVER ALONE!

WE'RE THE GROUP WITH THE SCOOP ON ETERNITY,
SORROW ENDS, FOES AND FRIENDS SON CEASE TO BE.
UNLIKE LIFE, AFTERLIFE REWARDS EVERYONE
TO SEIZE THE DAY WHILE YOU MAY
AND THEN ENJOY THE RIDE ONTO THE OTHER SIDE.

DROUGHTS OR RAINS, HURRICANES -- WHAT DO WE CARE?
 JOY ABIDES, SUNNY SIDE'S UP. WE DO DECLARE!
 BREAKS AND SPRAINS, ACHES AND PAINS, DON'T BROOD ABOUT
 THOSE BECAUSE AN ASTRAL BOD WON'T EVER WEAR OUT - IT TENDS TO TEAR ABOUT,
 AND

LEAH, CAPRON, MAGGIE, KATIE

"KNOCK!" ON THE TABLES,
 "KNOCK!" ON THE FLOORS.
 "KNOCK!" ON THE WINDOWS,
 "KNOCK!" ON THE DOORS.
 LEGIONS OF SPIRITS WITH FACES SUBLIME
 ECHOING FOOTSTEPS SOUND ACROSS TIME!

FEAR NOT THE DARKNESS,
 LOVED ONES ARE NEAR.
 KNOCK! IS THE SOUND THAT
 TELLS YOU WE'RE NEAR,
 TO WARN OR ADVISEE TO ROMP OR ATONE,
 SO YOU MAY BE SURE THAT WERE NEVER ALONE!

LEAH

Mr. Capron, I'd like to speak to you, if I may. Shall we take a late supper at Trevi's? I have decided to meet Barnum next week to discuss this summer's bookings, and I'm sure that you have all kinds of helpful suggestions to make. And, didn't you tell me about some rich -- uh -- some Psychological Research Society in New York that wants to observe Maggie and Katie?

CAPRON

Yes, friends of mine. I can get in touch with them in the morning, if you're agreeable. I'll do what I can, as always, Mrs. Fish.

To Maggie and Katie.

Goodnight ladies. I congratulate you both and wish you pleasant dreams.

To Leah, as they exit.

I say, that was a good one, Mrs. Fish! "The past is not what it used to be!" Haha! Excellent! Capital!

KATIE

Was what Leah said true, Maggie? Aren't we good enough for some people?

MAGGIE

Of course we are, Sweetheart! We're good enough for anyone, don't you ever forget that. Your sister doesn't mean to say such things; her tongue just runs away with her sometimes.

KATIE

That's silly! Tongues can't run anywhere!

MAGGIE

Yes, they can, and they can slip, too. Get ready for bed now, Katie. I'll come right in and tuck the covers around you.

Katie exits.

Maggie walks over to the window, looking out at Capron and Leah, who are strolling past, arm in arm. Leah laughs archly at something he says. Maggie turns away, as if she wishes not to see how Leah manipulates her prey.

Oh, Leah, what are we getting ourselves into? I'm sure Mr. Splitfoot wasn't counting on you, or he'd never have appeared in the first place. It seems such a long time ago. I can't believe he's any happier about this grand scheme of yours than I am, or that he'll go along with it.

Suddenly the gaslight flickers and dims to complete darkness for a moment. Then inexplicably turns itself up again. Maggie reacts to what she takes to be a "sign", but of good or bad omen? By shivering and hugging herself, as if she had just felt someone "walk over her grave", she hurries into Katie's room.

The lights dim on the set, leaving only the gaslit chandelier brilliantly "alive". It has the last, ambiguous word in the scene.

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE VIII

New York City, Several Days Later

Leah is seated in P.T. Barnum's outer office, impatiently waiting to see him. Sitting across the room from her is a weary, but pleasant looking young man, dressed in a tuxedo and holding on his lap a tall, black, silk top hat. He has clearly been waiting here for hours. Leah glances at him with hostility. He's her competition. As he gazes blandly back at her. A white rabbit peeps up over the rim of his hat, he strokes its ears, produces a carrot "out of thin air", and affectionately offers it to the rabbit.

Then a pretty girl, Barnum's secretary, enters, wearing a smart frock with a huge, brilliantly white, stiffly starched lace collar.

SECRETARY

Mr. Barnum simply cannot see you without an appointment, Mrs. Fish. Even this young man, who HAS one, has had to wait since early this morning.

LEAH

That is nonsense, Mr. Barnum SHALL see me -- it's entirely to his advantage -- and he'll see me RIGHT NOW!

Leah eyes the secretary critically.

By the way your neck lined needs changing. It's getting grubby.

Leah charges past the startled secretary and sails into Barnum's inner sanctum. The secretary and young man follow in her wake.

As they all enter, Barnum rises from his seat behind a huge desk. He is a short, stubby man in a loud plaid suit. A bow tie rests beneath the lowest of his several chins, and an impressive FOB chain stretches across his expansive vest. His forehead is high, his hair thick, dark and curling, his face clean-shaven, his nose bulbous. His face wears an expression of perpetual good humour and slight astonishment -- perhaps at the extent of his success.

LEAH

Mr. Barnum, I am Mrs. Leah Fox Fish...

BARNUM

Affably.

Good afternoon, Madam. What an interesting name you have. Puts me in mind of a menagerie I once assembled out Fiji way. Even found a mermaid to put in it. Well, to tell you the truth, I assembled the mermaid, too. Stuck together a fishtail and a shrunken head. Audiences loved it.

Dragging his attention away from his recollections.

And, who is your gentleman friend?

YOUNG MAN

Radek the Magnificent, Sir. Magician Extraordinaire. At your service!

Bowing deeply, the magician presents Barnum with a huge, garish coloured bouquet of flowers, produced out of "nowhere".

LEAH

Look, you -- stop horning in.

BARNUM

My dear lady, please. Well, well, Mr. -hem - Radek. I like magic a great deal, as I do any good piece of humbug. Perhaps we can do some business. Just have a seat outside, you'll be next. Right after Mrs. Foxfish here.

LEAH

That's FOX-FISH!

BARNUM

Unfazed.

Quite.

The magician, somewhat encouraged, heads for the door.

BARNUM

Now, Mrs. Fox Fish, what intriguing business brings you to me on this fine day?

LEAH

I am here to offer you the unique opportunity of exhibiting my sisters - that is, the Marvellous Fox Sisters, the Rochester Rappers, in your museum.

The magician overhears this remark just as he is about to exit. He turns on Leah with surprising ferocity.

MAGICIAN

The Rochester Rappers? Those pathetic fakes?! Why, they're nothing but failed magicians! Their so-called "manifestations" don't rival the most primitive illusion of the rankest amateur among real magicians. And, what's worse, the ignorant tar us all with the same brush -- the Rappers' fakery gives us ALL the bad name they alone deserve!

LEAH

How DARE you -- you, you, rabbit-toting pipsqueak!

She clenches her fists and looks to be on the verge of rushing over and punching him. For the first time Barnum seems alarmed.

BARNUM

Please, Please, Mr. Krackred! Do take a seat outside. Be patient a little while longer, and I shall be only too happy to give you and your rabbit an audition.

The magician exits.

Now, Mrs. - hem - Fish. You were speaking of your sisters?

LEAH

Ruffled, but ready to go into her pitch.

Yes, the Marvellous Fox Sisters, the Rochester Rappers.

BARNUM

Oh yes! The Marvellous Rapping Humbugs!

LEAH

HUMBUGS, Mr. Barnum? How DARE you! I didn't come here to hear you insult my family and my honesty. I don't give a tinker's curse HOW rich you are!

BARNUM

Now, hold on, Mrs. Fish! I don't insult anybody by calling him a humbug.

LEAH

Relenting a little, she does not want to lose this deal.

No? I suppose it's a compliment to tell a person he's a crook?!

BARNUM

Now, I didn't say crook. I said humbug. There's a world of difference. There's nothing illegal or even immoral in the usual sense about being a humbug. In fact, vast fortunes have been made out of having that unusual talent.

LEAH

Perhaps you'd care to enlighten me, Mr. Barnum?

BARNUM

Love to, Mrs. Fish. Love to. Now then, being a humbug consists of putting on novel and glittering appearances by which to suddenly arrest public attention and attract the public eye and ear. Finding unusual ways to sell bug poison, or rum, or bowel rectifier isn't the same as being a forger or a thief, is it?

LEAH

Well, no...

BARNUM

Let me give you an example. Just a few years aback, there was a feller that made shoe polish in London, England -- boot blacking, they call it over there. Now, he sent his agent to Egypt to write on the Great Pyramids of Ghiza, "Buy Warren's Boot Blacking. #30 Strand, London". Now, as it happened, he made darn fine boot blacking, well worth the price he was charging for it. So, he wasn't cheating the travellers on the Nile who read his advertisement. He was merely humbugging them by his queer way of arresting their attention.

Leah nods. Barnum continues.

Well, just as he had expected, the English travellers to Ghiza were mightily steamed up at his desecration of the Pyramids, and they all wrote letters about it to the London Times. I've spent some time in England, Mrs. Fish, and I can tell you, every Englishman writes or threatens to write to the Times if anything goes wrong. Now, the Times printed their letters, and printed editorials and articles on the subject besides. And, all the provincial papers that like to think of themselves as the Times picked up the story and printed it, too. So, very soon the columns of every rag in England were teeming with this advice: "Buy Warren's Boot Blacking, #30, Strand, London". And, the public DID buy it, Mrs. Fish. And, Warren made a fortune! And...

LEAH

And...

BOTH

AND THAT'S HUMBUG!

LEAH

Now I see, Mr. Barnum. Just as I perceive that you have -- if I may put it this way, "out-foxed" Mr. Warren. It is YOU who are the world's most successful purveyor of humbug, isn't it?

Barnum acknowledges the compliment, bowing.

BARNUM

This is accurate, Madam. I have pitched humbug ever since I was a little nipper.

Song #12: Sell!

AT THE AGE OF EIGHT
I LOOKED AROUND ME AND I SAW THAT WE WERE NOT EXACTLY RICH;
NOW YOU GO AND SAY THAT IT WAS FATE.
BUT FORTUNE FOUND ME WITH A TALENT IN THE FAMILY -- I COULD PITCH!

I TRIED IT ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
AND IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE I UNDERSTOOD
IF I HAD CONVICTION AND SOME FIRE IN MY DICTUM,
THEY'D BUY WHAT I WOULD
SELL!

EVERY WAKING HOUR I'D SELL;
I LOVED THE SENSE OF POWER.
WHATEVER I SOLD, THEY USUALLY BOUGHT
FOR SILVER OR GOLD, SO HOW COULD I NOT
SELL?

AT THE AGE OF NINE
I LOOKED AROUND ME AND I SAW A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY.
WHATEVER I WANTED WAS MINE.
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT, HOW THEY ALL WERE WILLING TO LISTEN
TO ME!

I TOLD THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS LIES
AND SOON I CAME TO REALIZE
SUCCESS I COULD SAVOUR IF MY VOICE DIDN'T WAVER;
I LEARNED I YEARNED TO
SELL!

Leah indicates there is something she would like to say.

BARNUM

Madam?

LEAH

Sir:

Song #13: Let's Deal

I HAVE A SMALL PROPOSITION.

BARNUM

I'm all ears.

LEAH

INVOLVED AS I AM IN A MISSION
TO LOOK BEYOND THIS WORLD, INTO WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE.

BARNUM

Isn't that the Chinese?

LEAH

I KNOW IT SEEMS QUITE ASTOUNDING
YET WHAT WE DO IS CONFOUNDING
CYNICS WHO LOOK FOR TRICKS WHEN WE'VE DONE NOTHING AT ALL TO HIDE.

BARNUM

Nothing?

LEAH

NOW THE TIME HAS COME TO LOOK AT THE LONG-RANGE POSSIBILITIES
AND THE OBVIOUS PERSON WHO CAME TO MIND WITH THE KIND OF ABILITIES
WE NEEDED WAS YOU. SO
LET'S DEAL!

SURELY THE BEST KIND OF DEAL
IS WHEN EACH SIDE GETS TO FEEL
BOTH SIDES ARE EQUAL AND NECESSARY.
I'VE GOT THE JEWEL, ROUGH AND UNCUT.
YOU'VE GOT THE TOOLS TO FINISH IT. But

BEFORE WE GO ON ONE MORE STEP --
LET'S DEAL!

BARNUM

I HAVE THE GIST OF THE OFFER
INVOLVED AS I AM WITH A COFFER
TO WHICH THE KEY IS SOUGHT BY A DOZEN OR MORE EACH HOUR.
I DON'T BELIEVE IN A MISSION.
BUT STOCK A POND, PEOPLE COME FISHIN'
AND I CAN SEE THE VALUE BACKING YOUR SPECIAL POWER.

LEAH

YOU WILL NOT REGRET IT -- SHE WILL BECOME THE NEW CELEBRITY.

BARNUM

I SUPPOSE IT'S WORTH THE CHANCE,
'THOUGH I'M PUTTING MY WHOLE SHOW IN JEOPARDY.
BUT WHEN HAS THAT STOPPED ME?
LET'S DEAL!

SURELY THE BEST KIND OF DEAL
IS WHEN EACH SIDE GETS TO FEEL
BOTH SIDES ARE EQUAL AND NECESSARY.
YOU HAVE THE JEWEL, ROUGH AND UNCUT.
I HAVE THE TOOLS TO FINISH IT. BUT
BEFORE WE GO ON ONE MORE STEP --
LET'S DEAL!

LEAH

Mr. Barnum, I could see right off that you're a gentleman.

BARNUM

That's it, Mrs. Fish. I'm a gentleman - just like you're a lady!

LEAH

Then we'll have no trouble in arriving at an arrangement. Now, my, uh, agent informs me that you make the in the neighbourhood of \$10,000 a day at your American Museum.

BARNUM

My dear Madam! I assure you that's very far off the mark. And, besides, I do not feel that the Museum would be the best venue for your sisters' demonstrations. I am prepared to book them

into Barnum's Hotel, at Maiden Lane and Broadway. A much more genteel establishment, and a better setting for their talents.

LEAH

How so?

BARNUM

Answering the question immediately; they are sparring now.

You can fit five hundred head into the main ballroom, and give private sittings upstairs, in the suites. Each suite will hold about half-a-dozen head. I refer to clients, of course.

LEAH

Of course. And, we don't have to keep to regular opening and closing times.

BARNUM

Exactly. Hotels open all day and all night. Got to be, doesn't it? We could have public seances in the ballroom, say, from 10:00 to 12:00 in the morning, 3:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon, and 8:00 to 10:00 at night. In between, and before breakfast, we could fit in the private ones. I'd reckon you and your sisters would clear \$200-\$250 a day, easy.

LEAH

You left out the advance. Say, \$1,500?

BARNUM

\$800.

LEAH

\$1,200.

BARNUM

\$1,000.

LEAH

Done. And, you pay for the publicity as well as room and board.

BARNUM

You're the boss, Mrs. Fish. And, may I say what a great pleasure it is to finally meet my match in the business, and make the acquaintance of a charming "lady", all at the same time!

Leah extends her hand for Barnum to shake as a token of sealing their bargain, but he raises it to his lips instead. They smile at each other with satisfaction. Their bargain is struck -- and, could something else be beginning between them?

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE IX

Trifocus (Family Ties)

A completely dark stage. Then the sound of a drum roll, in the middle of which a single spotlight suddenly pierces the blackness and illuminates the starkly black-and-white figure of the magician of the previous scene.

MAGICIAN

And now, for my final illusion!

Deftly he performs a magic trick. His grand finale. An unseen audience gasps, breaks into hearty and delighted applause.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you and bid you all a good night.

He bows. Sounds of an appreciative audience extolling his talent as they leave their seats and file out of the theatre.

House lights up on the magician, who removes his top hat and cape, becoming an ordinary civilian again. He addresses the house directly.

Song #14: The Magic of Family Ties

MAGIC IS MY WORLD.

I DAZZLE THEM, I KEEP THEM ON EDGE,

AND SEND THEM HOME SAYING,

"HOW DID HE DO THAT?"

"WHAT DID WE MISS?"

LET ME TELL YOU THIS:

WHEN THE SHOW IS OVER AND THE WAND IS STORED

WITH THE CAPE AND THE RABBIT AND THE HAT,

I'M THE ONE WISHING FOR THE ONLY MAGIC THAT ISN'T ILLUSION:

THAT IS THE MAGIC OF FAMILY TIES.

IT DOESN'T DEPEND ON LIGHTS. IT'S SOMETHING YOU REALIZE

FROM SHARING A THOUSAND NIGHTS.

IT'S WATCHING YOUR BABY GROW, THAT'S THE BEST TRICK I KNOW.

AND THOUGHTS THAT YOU SHARE WITHOUT A WORD.

THE MAGIC OF FAMILY TIES.

IT DOESN'T LIVE UP A SLEEVE.

IT'S ONLY A TOUCH AWAY, AND EFFORTLESS TO BELIEVE

IT DOESN'T TAKE YEARS TO LEARN.

IT'S BOUND WITH A SPECIAL SEAL

BECAUSE THE MAGIC OF FAMILY TIES IS REAL.

The lights dim on him, and come up stage left on the Fox family: Leah, off a

little to one side of her "audience", Maggie, Katie, and Mrs. Fox.

Song #14: I Got It!

LEAH

I GOT IT, I GOT IT! YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE IT
THE DEAL OF A LIFETIME IS OURS!
I'VE SOLD HIM COMPLETELY ON TAKING US OVER
AND JUST IN A MATTER OF HOURS
HE WAS BEGGING TO BE THE ONE TO SELL THE WHOLE DARN WORLD
ON THE FOX MIRACLE.

MRS. FOX

DID YOU GET AN ADVANCE?

LEAH

RIGHT OF HIS PANTS!

I GOT IT, I GOT IT!
I WISH YOU HAVE BEEN THERE TO SEE HOW THE MEETING PROGRESSED.
HE STARTED PRETENDING HE SCARCELY HAD HEARD OF US
BUT IN THE END HE CONFESSED
HE COULD SEE WE HAD SOMETHING PEOPLE WOULD LINE UP TO SEE
FOR A DIME OR EVEN MORE.

MRS. FOX

WHAT A RELIEF! MAYBE IT'S FINALLY THE END OF BEING POOR!

KATIE

I DON'T KNOW -- LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GETTING IN OVER OUR HEADS.

LEAH

YOU MUST BE JOKING -- A CHANCE LIKE THIS MAY NEVER COME AGAIN!

MRS. FOX

IT'S HEAVEN SENT. A MIRACLE.

MAGGIE

LET'S NOT RUSH, WE MUST BE MOVING QUITE CAREFULLY.
YES, IT SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.
BUT YOU KNOW ME AND I KNOW YOU.

WE MUST BE ASSURED THAT MR. BARNUM WILL PRESENT US
WITH A BIT OF STYLE.
NOT AS FREAKS OR CIRCUS CLOWNS,
ALWAYS IN OUR FINEST GOWNS.

MRS. FOX

OH, SHE'S TAKEN ON AIRS SINCE SHE MET ELISHA KANE.
QUITE THE LITTLE LADY, DONT'CHA KNOW?
WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT WITHOUT HER POWDER BOX!

LEAH

CAN A CULTIVATED EAR STILL HEAR THE KNOCKS?
SHE'S CHANGING HER STYLE. ARE WE GOOD ENOUGH FOR HER?
THERE'S A LIMIT TO HOW FAR SHE WILL GO.
SHE WOULD REFUSE A COIN THAT WASN'T PURE.
CAN ANYBODY BE STARVING AND DEMURE?

MAGICIAN

THE MAGIC OF FAMILY TIES IS REAL.

*Lights up stage right on the Kane family: Mrs. Kane as the focal point,
Elisha, Mr. Kane, and Grinnell*

MRS. KANE

HOW COULD YOU BE SEEN WITH HER?

MR. KANE

IT'S A MATTER OF CLASS.

MRS. KANE

HOW COULD YOU BE SEEN WITH HER?

GRINNELL

I MUST AGREE.
IF SHE EVEN HAD SOME STYLE OR GRACE, ONE MIGHT FORGIVE HER OCCUPATION.

MR. KANE

NEVER! IT'S A SCANDAL!

MRS. KANE

HOW COULD YOU BE SEEN WITH HER?

GRINNELL

THINK, MAN, THINK! ARE YOU WILLING TO THROW AWAY YEARS OF BUILDING YOUR REPUTATION?

MR. KANE

THE GIRL WILL DRAG YOU DOWN. THE WORD'S ALL OVER TOWN!

ELISHA

I DON'T CARE WHAT THEY SAY,
LET THEM WILE THEIR SILLY HOURS AWAY IN THE SENSELESS OCCUPATION
OF DECIDING WHOM I SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T SEE.
IT COULDN'T MATTER LESS TO ME.

MRS. KANE

HOW COULD YOU BE SEEN WITH HER?

GRINNELL

BE SENSIBLE.

MR. KANE

BEWARE.

ELISHA

BE QUIET!

MRS. KANE

SON...

Black. Abrupt silence for a moment. Then, into the hush, the spotlight comes up once more on the magician.

MAGICIAN

THE MAGIC OF FAMILY TIMES IS REAL.

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE X

One Week Later

Once again, the scene is Barnum's office. Barnum and Leah are on one side of Barnum's desk. Maggie and Katie on the other. Barnum is seated. While Leah stands at his side, Katie is on the edge of her seat. Her eyes keep darting around the room at the numerous bizarre and wonderful trophies, flags, and posters that Barnum has displayed in every space. Maggie looks attentive and guarded. Her back stiff and formal, her hands folded in her lap to keep them from fidgeting.

BARNUM

With utmost sincerity.

So, you see, Miss Fox, your fears are quite unfounded. While I may have made quite a name for myself exhibiting - ahem - curiosities, I would not dream of presenting your awesome talents with anything less than the utmost dignity and decorum. To do otherwise would be to offer insult to you, and to cast the authenticity of your manifestations into question.

LEAH

And, that would discourage trade.

She's trying to be helpful, but Barnum darts her a glance that says, "Better let me handle this".

MAGGIE

Thank you for explaining that to me, Leah.

BARNUM

Do you have any other questions, Miss Fox? I am, of course, at your service.

MAGGIE

How often would I be expected to appear?

BARNUM

We have in mind two public demonstrations of Spirit Rapping daily, and some private seances, by appointment only.

LEAH

Forgetting herself.

It makes sense to take all corners.

This time Barnum's warning look silences her.

BARNUM

The number of private appointments would be left entirely to your discretion, Miss Fox.

MAGGIE

I see. My sister has explained that our share of the proceeds is 40%.

BARNUM

I trust that is satisfactory.

MAGGIE

And that she, Katie, and I, are to share our portion equally.

BARNUM

That is so.

MAGGIE

I would insist on Katie's share being paid directly into the bank, into an account registered under her name.

LEAH

Oh, come now -- you don't think I'd try to bilk a ten-year old?

She bites off her words in mid-sentence. She wants nothing to sour the deal.

MAGGIE

I am merely suggesting that Katie's money to be put in trust

KATIE

I TRUST you, Maggie,

LEAH

Aside, to herself

First philosophy, now banking. What will she learn next, I wonder?

BARNUM

To Katie

Of course you do, young lady. Ah, the pristine innocence of youth.

MAGGIE

About Katie's share, Mr. Barnum.

BARNUM

Right you are, Miss Fox. A wise suggestion indeed. I shall make all the necessary arrangements.

MAGGIE

We haven't made our decision yet, sir. When would our engagement at Barnum's Hotel end?

BARNUM

The last day of August, Miss Fox. It is our custom to throw a ball on that evening, as a way of officially, and, if I may say so, magnificently -- ending the season.

MAGGIE

And, the season begins?

BARNUM

Next Monday.

MAGGIE

So, you need *our* decision?

BARNUM

Now. Hem -- or, uh, any time within the next two hours. I have no desire to press you.

MAGGIE

Of course. My sister and I will confer, and let you know our decision. May we speak together here?

BARNUM

Certainly, you will have complete privacy.

Leah smiles graciously and moves towards one of the armchairs, about to sit down and confer with her sisters, but Maggie's look stops her.

LEAH

Oh - you meant you and Katie. Well, excuse me, I'm sure!

Barnum opens the door for Leah and they exit. Barnum closes the door empathetically, and clumps away with footsteps that seem unnecessarily heavy and loud, but immediately he tiptoes back to the door, where he and Leah have taken up their positions with their ears to the keyhole.

MAGGIE

Phew! I don't think I could have kept it up much longer! Well? What do you think, Katie?

KATIE

I'd do it if you would, Maggie.

MAGGIE

It seems unbelievable, somehow. Like a dream! We'd probably become famous. And, rich. We'd be looked after for the rest of our lives, Katie, and so would Momma and Papa.

KATIE

I'd buy a pony -- and red shoes -- and a candy store...

Song #15: Should we?

MAGGIE

SHOULD WE DO THIS OR JUST RUN AWAY?
SEEMS SO DANGEROUS AND BOLD.
DO WE DARE TO WALK A DIFFERENT WAY?
IT WAS SO EASY STICKING TO THE OLD.
SHOULD WE TRY THIS OR JUST LET IT BE?
SEEMS WE'RE FLYING AWFULLY HIGH.

KATIE

NOTHING WRONG WITH BRUISES ON THE KNEE,
BUT IF WE FELL NOW, WE COULD EVEN DIE.

MAGGIE

SHOULD WE SET IN MOTION ALL THOSE DREAMS?
WELL WE'VE GOT A NOTION
THE ANSWER IS EASIER THAN IT SEEMS.

SHOULD WE PRESS AHEAD OR TURN AROUND?
SEEMS IT'S NOW WE MUST DECIDE.

KATIE

DO WE LIKE TO BE UP OFF THE GROUND
OR DO WE HIDE?

MAGGIE

SOMETHING TELLS US THAT WE KNOW

KATIE

SOMETHING TELLS US THIS IS GOOD

BOTH

SHOULD WE?
WE SHOULD!

*They shake hands to seal the bargain laughing. They begin to dance about.
In various spots in the office, objects rise from their places or move gently
through the air.*

BOTH

SOMETHING TELLS US THAT WE KNOW
SOMETHING TELLS US THIS IS GOOD
SHOULD WE?
WE SHOULD!

*As Maggie and Katie shake hands, Lean and Barnum, on the other side of the
closed door, do the same.*

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE XI

Meanwhile, at the Explorers Club...

The setting is the epitome of Victorian masculinity. The trophy room of a gentlemen's club in New York City, about twelve robust and ruddy-faced gentlemen are distributed among the plush, overstuffed armchairs, smoking their cigars and talking comfortably among themselves. Most are retired navy officers who still retain something of their military presence and bearing. The cigar smoke billows among display cases filled with presidential medals, silver loving cups, and other trophies, as well as exotic memorabilia of the members' campaigns and travels. The oak-panelled walls are hung with enormous oil portraits. In an alcove is a writing desk.

At the front of the room, facing the assembly, is a dais on which are seated: Kane, Lady Franklin, Ned Chisholm (a young weather-beaten sailor with only one hand. He has the air of being self-conscious and uncomfortable in the presence of so many toffs in so lavish a setting), an older imposing man with a huge mustache - the president of the club - and Grinnell. Off to one side is a large easel, on which rests a canvas completely covered by a purple drape. The president rises and calls the assembly to order.

PRESIDENT

Gentlemen, may I have your attention?

Their murmuring stops.

Thank you. As some of you already know, our distinguished member, Mr. Grinnell, who financed the first American expedition in search of Sir John Franklin and his crew, is soon to make public the date on which the second expedition will go to the Arctic. Although there has been no official communication from Sir John's ship, the Erebus, since the late summer of '45, reports of sightings continue to nurture the world's hope that he and his men are yet alive in some remote region of the Arctic grounds. Today we are honoured by the presence of Lady Franklin, who has made an arduous sea crossing from England in order to speak with us about this impending voyage. I present, Gentlemen, Lady Franklin.

The men, including those on the dais, rise and applaud her

LADY FRANKLIN

Very British and formal.

Thank you, Mr. President. Gentlemen: I need not recount to you the details of my husband's courageous quest for the North-West Passage, nor stress the urgency of the enterprise to find him and bring him safely home. Since he disappeared, many men have gone in search of him. But, it is my strong conviction that if anyone can rescue Sir John Franklin it is the many who sits here by my side today, the man who did so distinguish himself for heroism on his previous voyage. I give you the man who is to lead this second expedition...

Dramatically she crosses the dais and pulls the drape from the painting on the easel, revealing a monumental portrait of Kane.

Goodspeed, Mr. Kane!

MEMBERS

Bravo! Hear, hear!

PRESIDENT

Your attention once more, if you will, Gentlemen. Lady Franklin has alluded to Dr. Kane's heroism. We shall now hear it recounted in detail, by one who was with Dr. Kane on that perilous voyage, and witnessed firsthand his bravery and skill, Mr. Chisholm. Will you come forward now, sir?

Ned complies, very ill at ease.

NED

I'm no speaker, sirs. I am a plain seaman, and have been these fourteen years, since I was twelve.

MAN IN AUDIENCE

We are ALL seamen, Ned!

Ned relaxes somewhat at this display of good will, and continues.

Well, like the Gent said, I know firsthand what Dr. Kane done.

He pauses as a funny thought occurs to him.

And, "firsthand" is about the size of it!

He raises his handless arm for them to see.

For, if Dr. Kane hadn't been quick to say that my hand and the rest of me had to go their separate ways, there'd BE no first hand, nor no second hand neither. For Ned Chisholm wouldn't be alive today. It was like this: We were icebound just off the coast of Greenland, and Cap'n says we got to wait it out. That was fine with us. We'd been choppin' ice and haulin' our vessels for weeks, and it was almost a relieve to admit that it was no use tryin' to go fore or aft. So, we settled down to the repairin' the sails and waited. And, waited some more. We were low on provisions, but we expected to meet up with the rescue party at Rensselaer Bay by spring, and didn't think we'd be held fast for long. After nine weeks our rations gave out, and the men started failin'. Some died. As the weeks went by, the rest of us took our hammocks, and just lay slung there, black in our spirts and near frozen with cold and hunger. Finally, we were down to usin' what was left of the rum for fuel.

Cap'n decided that those of us as could still manage it would have to go out on foot to kill meat to bring back for the others. We had no idea if we would find a single beast -- but we had to try. Dr. Kane volunteered to lead the party, and I was ordered to go with him. I said my prayers and went.

The third day out a storm blew up, fiercer than anything I'd ever seen at sea. The winds howled like a hundred jilted whores and the snow blinded us and lashed our faces. Dr. Kane ordered us to carve blocks out of the hard snow, and he showed us how to fit them together to make a shelter. We dug in as best we could and prayed for the night to pass.

When we crawled out in the morning we couldn't believe our eyes! The sky was like an axe blade -- clear and blue and sharp. There were seals, and up high against the sun, birds, wheelin' and dippin' as they must have done in the Garden of Eden. I was almost sorry to raise my gun -- but raise it I did, and fired.

It must have been the freeze and sudden thaw, I couldn't say for certain, but the barrel exploded, and I watched my hand blow apart. Then I fell into a deep well.

I remember things floating in at me out of the blackness, and then floated away again. A face, a flame, a voice. One feeling I had over and over was that I was rockin' in my hammock back on board the ship, only the movement was harder. I saw my wife and a beautiful little blonde girl -- somehow I knew it was my daughter that I'd never laid eyes on, even though she was nearly two -- and my mother lookin' down at me, worried, like she did when I was child, and sick. I felt her, or someone, smooth my hair and wash my face. Someone gave me water, which I drank, and drifted away again.

When I finally came to myself, it was as if I'd come back from the dead. I was in a tent, and Dr. Kane was watchin' me with eyes like coals. He jumped up when I asked where I was. "You are, and have been, in God's hands, Ned, my friend", he said, "and He has brought you back to us."

I found out later that I had been "away", on and off, for weeks, ravin' much of the time. Dr. Kane had cleaned and bandaged my hand, and ordered the men to carry me in a litter back to the ship, along with all the game they had killed. Dr. Kane had gone on alone, met the rescue party, and led them back to us. The Cap'n and what was left of the crew - eight men out of nearly eighty - were safe buildin' up their strength for the voyage home. Dr. Kane, himself very weak, was carin' for all of them, and all were on the mend. Not so my hand. He had had to cut it off when the gangrene set in. He had taken my hand and given me back my life. And, I will be his man to the end of my days.

A hush has enveloped the listeners. Ned, having said his piece, takes a small object from his pocket and continues.

I used to like to pass the time on long voyages with a bit of scrimshaw. This is the best piece of whalebone I ever carved. I want to give it to you, Dr. Kane, in appreciation of all you have done for me. My left hand doesn't seem to get the knack of carvin', so I guess this is the last piece, too.

Kane accepts the little carving wordlessly. No one seems able to speak.

Finally, the president clears his throat and says, with a catch in his voice.

Gentlemen, we are adjourned.

*Slowly and thoughtfully, then men stand and begin speaking **fully**, some are about to come up to Ned to commend him. But, Kane takes the sailor aside for a private word.*

KANE

Ned, will you come and stay at my house for a few days? We have much to say to each other.

NED

I thank you, Dr. Kane, but I want to get home to my wife and little one. If you can use me on this next voyage I will come. I would follow you anywhere. But, if you do not call me, I'll go to sea no more.

KANE

What WILL you do, Ned? You've been a sailor all your life.

NED

That's so. But, every man must one day look into his heart and ask himself where his life truly lies. I am a sailor, yes. But, I am also a husband. I am a father. It's the land for me now. Ned Chisholm, sailor, has become Ned Chisholm, shopkeeper. Jenny and me will have more babies, and I will keep them entertained by the fire on long winter nights with tales of my years before the mast. Thanks to you, I've got the chance, Dr. Kane. But, what about you, don't you wish to marry and have a family?

KANE

Unlike you, Ned, I have not until this moment searched my heart. But, now I wonder. What joy is there in all a man attains, if he lives his life alone? Good luck to you, Ned. May you win all that your heart desires.

The two men embrace, and Ned goes his way. As the room is emptying, Grinnell approaches Kane.

GRINNELL

We are all going to the Bentley for a round. Are you coming?

KANE

His thoughts elsewhere

No, my friend. I'll join you later at the reception of Lady Franklin.

GRINNELL

The simple fellow spoke with remarkable feeling.

KANE

That simple fellow is one of the wisest men I know. 'Til tonight, then.

GRINNELL

Sensing that he is being dismissed.

Yes, all right. Until tonight.

He exits.

Alone in the room, Kane looks around him at the portraits of all the famous explorers, and the lands they have conquered, or died in. His eye rests on the largest of them, that of Franklin, and then his own, still on the easel. He touches it briefly. Finally, he cradles in his two hands the carving that Ned has given to him and begins to sing.

Song #16: Enchanted Ground

BEHOLD A MAN BETWEEN TWO LIVES
THE ONE HE CHOSE, THE ONE HE SPURNED.
A MAN WHO ACTED COOL AND WISE.
WHILE DEEP WITHIN STRANGE FIRES BURNED.
MEN CALL HIM BOLD, FOR HE HAS DARED
UNCHARTED LANDS TO SEEK AND ROAM.
YET WHILE HIS BODY BRAVED THE WINDS
HIS COWARD HEART STAYED SAFE AT HOME.

AND NOW THAT HEART IS BOUND
FOR YOUR ENCHANTED GROUND,
A PLACE ITS NEVER BEEN SEEN, YET LONGS TO BE
AND I CAN ONLY FOLLOW,
DESPITE MY FEARS, I FOLLOW
WHERE YOUR EYES BECKON ME.

I LIVE A CHESS GAME OF LIFE,
DECIDE MY EVERY MOVE WITH CARE;
SO OF SWEET PASSION'S TENDER STRIFE
I NEVER THOUGHT TO CLAIM MY SHARE.
I CONQUERED ALL THAT I DID MEET
AND CROSSED THE WILD, UNFATHOMED SEA
YET ALL FELT FIRM BENEATH MY FEAT
NO WORLD WAS EVER STRANGE TO ME.

BUT NOW MY HEART IS BOUND
FOR YOUR ENCHANTED GROUND,
A PLACE IT'S NEVER SEEN, YET LONGS TO BE
AND I CAN ONLY FOLLOW.
DESPITE MY FEARS I FOLLOW
WHERE YOUR EYES BECKON ME.

NOW THROUGH YOUR LANDSCAPE, RICH AND STRANGE
I MOVE AS IN A WAKING DREAM.
NO CHART, NO START TO FIX MY COURSE
WHERE THINGS ARE ALL, BUT WHAT THEY SEEM.
AND, YET, I HEAR MY HEART DECLARE
AT LEAST THE WAY IS CLEAR FOR ME
TO BE A WHOLE, UNFETTERED MAN
WHOSE LOVE YOUR LOVE WILL SOON SET FREE!

AT LEAST MY HEART IS BOUND
FOR YOUR ENCHANTED GROUND.
A PLACE IT'S NEVER SEEN, YET LONGS TO BE
AND I CAN ONLY FOLLOW.
I CANNOT CHOOSE BUT FOLLOW
WHERE YOUR EYES BECKON ME.

YES, I CAN ONLY FOLLOW.
AND SO, I CHOOSE TO FOLLOW
WHERE YOUR EYES BECKON ME.

*Kane strides purposefully over to the writing desk, sits, and takes up his pen,
without even a moment's reflection, he writes.*

KANE

Dear Miss Fox: Will you do me the honour of joining me for a carriage ride in one hour's time? I shall be waiting in front of the hotel. Your devoted friend, Elisha Kane.

Music up and out.

END OF SCENE

ACT I, SCENE XII

Having stepped down from Kane's carriage, Maggie and Kane are walking together under the trees in a green park. As they stroll, they glance at each other from time to time, but do not speak. Each is too preoccupied with their own thoughts to know how to begin. At last Kane stops and faces Maggie.

KANE

Maggie, this is an important day.

MAGGIE

A little breathless

Yes, Dr. Kane, I was just thinking that, too. It IS an important and exciting day.

KANE

Maggie, there are some decisions that can change the course of a person's life...

MAGGIE

EXACTLY! And, sometimes you just KNOW that what you are about to do is the right thing.

Kane realizes that they are speaking at cross purposes and draws Maggie over to a park bench. They sit down and he starts their conversation again.

Song #17: Is This Our Time for Love?

KANE

MAGGIE?

MAGGIE

DR. KANE?

KANE

YOU'RE ALL FLUSHED WITH EXCITEMENT.

MAGGIE

IS IT REALLY THAT PLAIN?
I'VE BEEN MEETING WITH MY SISTER AND A FELLOW NAME OF BARNUM
AND THEY PLANS THEY HAVE ARE WONDERFUL TO HEAR.

KANE

MAGGIE.

MAGGIE

DR. KANE
YOU LOOK AS IF YOU WERE BURSTING.

KANE

NO, MERELY GOING INSANE
AT THE THOUGHT OF WHAT WE MIGHT BE
IF WE WERE ONCE ALLOWED OURSELVES
TO PUT ASIDE ALL REASON AND ALL FEAR
AND LISTEN TO OUR HEARTS. THEY'RE SAYING
SOMETHING WE BOTH KNOW. SOMETHING THAT WON'T GO AWAY.

NO MATTER HOW WE TRY TO FIGHT IT,
IT'S RIGHT. IT HAS TO BE
SO NOW IT'S UP TO US TO LET IT GO
OR PLAY WHATEVER PRICE TO LET IT LIVE.

MAGGIE

OH, DR. KANE.

KANE

MAGGIE...

TWO STRONG PEOPLE
WITH TOO MUCH THAT'S CALLING US AWAY FROM EACH OTHER
IS THIS OUR TIME FOR LOVE?
A SIMPLE QUESTION WITH NO SIMPLE ANSWER
WHEN YOU'RE PULLING TWO DIRECTIONS
DIVIDED AFFECTIONS CAN LEAVE NO WINNER IN THE GAME.

WE'D LIKE TO HAVE IT ALL
WE'RE QUITE CONVINCED IT'S POSSIBLE.
THOUGH NO ONE ELSE BELIEVES IT CAN BE DONE
WE'RE USED TO CLIMBING ANY WALL
TO WIN WHAT WE ARE AFTER
THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO CHANGE ALL THAT AND RUN.

THE TWO OF US TOGETHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO DISCOVER
WAYS AROUND A MERE IMPOSSIBILITY.
AND THEN WE'LL WONDER WHY IT SEEMED SO VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE.
TWO STRONG PEOPLE WITH TOO MANY MESSAGES CONFUSING THE ISSUE
IS THIS OUR TIME FOR LOVE?

IT'S OURS TO CAPTURE IF WE CAN FIT EACH OTHER
INTO THE DREAMS WE'VE LIVED WITH SO MUCH LONGER.
TWO STRONG PEOPLE CAN HAVE ALL THAT THEY DESIRE
IF THEY LEARN HOW TO LISTEN TO A HEART.
THIS IS OUR TIME FOR LOVE
AND THIS IS THE TIME TO START!

CURTAIN

INTERMISSION

ACT II, SCENE I

August 31, 1850: The Grand Ballroom of Barnum's Hotel

The last night of the 1850 season is being celebrated, as Barnum promised, in high style. The air scintillates with excitement. The room sparkles with the crystal of chandeliers and the diamonds of pampered women. Fans flutter and ballgowns swish. Waiters bustle about balancing silver trays laden with glasses of champagne, to which everyone helps themselves liberally.

Not all the celebrants are from the "upper crust", and tonight this enhances the atmosphere of good cheer. Stuff-shirt bankers and the svelte heiresses happily rub shoulders with spruced-up clerks and fussily-dressed secretaries. Everyone is having a thoroughly democratic, all-American blow-out.

Amid the bustle and laughter, P.T. Barnum walks out onto the stage and grandly addresses "his" crowd.

BARNUM

Ladies and Gentlemen ---

Silence is achieved. Barnum continues:

It is a great pleasure to see you all here at this, the final gala of the season. Tonight we honour our extraordinary, our uncanny celebrities, the Sisters Fox: Miss Margaretta, Miss Katie, and of course, the incomparable Mrs. Fish, who is soon to become the bride of Mr. Daniel Underhill, known to most of us New Yorkers as Banker Underhill.

As the crowd begins to marvel at this piece of gossip, Barnum restores them to order:

Ahem! We here at Barnum's have, over the past three months, had the privilege of witnessing history in the making. Centuries hence, a world whose advances and marvels we can only guess at, will rehearse the events of this Year of Our Lord, 1850, when the fame of the Rochester Rappings spread far and wide, across America and across the seas, to Europe and beyond, enlivening even those ancient shores, which thought they had seen everything, with the vitality and inventiveness of the American spirit.

As the poet has it, "Omne ignotum pro mirifico" - "everything mysterious is wonderful" - and the Fox sisters are surely all that and more! So, in homage to these three fine ladies and their message of universal goodwill on both sides of the ocean, no less than on both sides of the Veil, I present to you our very own Swedish Nightingale, Miss Jenny Lind, who will join me in a song especially composed for this occasion: The Rochester Rappings at Barnum's Hotel!"

The crowd cheers as Jenny Lind joins Barnum on stage.

Song #1: The Rochester Rappings at Barnum's Hotel

BARNUM

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE LATEST SENSATION
THAT'S STORMED IN, WHEN BANNERS UNFURLED?
IN A FEW MONTHS IT'S SWEEPED THE WHOLE NATION
PRETTY SOON IT WILL SWEEP THE WHOLE WORLD.

AND WHERE DOES THIS NEW MARVEL COME FROM?
IS IT LONDON, OR PARIS, OR ROME? NO!
THE FOX GIRLS ARE TRUE, BLUE AMERICANS
FROM ROCHESTER, RIGHT HERE AT HOME!

The crowd gives a patriotic cheer

BARNUM, JENNY

OH, THE ROCHESTER RAPPINGS AT BARNUM'S HOTEL
ARE A TRULY AMERICAN EVENT.
THE WRITING'S AUTOMATIC.
THE SPIRITS DEMOCRATIC.
THE MESSAGES ALL HEAVEN-SENT!

JENNY

ONE YOUNG SEAMSTRESS CONSULTED THE SPIRITS
AND ASKED, SHOULD SHE MARRY HER BEAU?
THEY RAPPED OUT HIS HISTORY,
LEFT NOTHING A MYSTERY,
HE LEFT TOWN BEFORE THE NEXT SHOW.

BUT A SILK-VESTED DANDY DID SPY HER,
AND SOON SHE FORGOT HER ALARM.
HE SHOWED HER HIS CARRIAGE,
HE HINTED OF MARRIAGE,
THEY LEFT THE HOTEL ARM-IN-ARM

BARNUM, JENNY

OH, THE ROCHESTER RAPPINGS AT BARNUM'S HOTEL
ARE A TRULY AMERICAN EVENT.
THE WRITINGS AUTOMATIC.
THE SPIRITS DEMOCRATIC.
THE MESSAGES ALL HEAVEN-SENT!

JENNY

OH, A SAD-EYED OLD WIDOW FROM CLEVELAND
HEARD HER DEAR HUSBAND COME THROUGH
SHE ASKED, "ARE YOU HAPPY?"
HE RAPPED, "MAKE IT SNAPPY.
THERE'S LOTS OVER HERE WE CAN DO!"

THEN HE TOLD HER OF HEAVENLY PLEASURES.
UNENDING CELESTIAL DELIGHTS.
LIKE HARPING, ROMANCING,
AND SPARKING AND DANCING
SHE RUSHED HOME AND PUT OUT THE LIGHTS!

The crowd joins in on the choruses.

OH, THE ROCHESTER RAPPINGS AT BARNUM'S HOTEL
ARE A TRULY AMERICAN EVENT.
THE WRITINGS AUTOMATIC.
THE SPIRITS DEMOCRATIC.
THE MESSAGES ALL HEAVEN-SENT!

BARNUM

NOW YOU SEE HOW THE SPIRITS ARE WILLING
TO SHARE ALL THEIR KNOWLEDGE WITH YOU.
SO, IF YOU HAVE QURIES
PRESENT THE, MY DEARIES.
THEY'RE WAITING TO RAP OUT GOOD NEWS.

JENNY

AND THE FAIR SISTERS FOX WILL ATTEND YOU,
WHILE MESSAGES GLADDEN YOUR HEART.
SO, IF YOU'VE A WORRY
FORGET IT, AND HURRY
A RAP SESSION'S READY TO START!

ALL

OH, THE ROCHESTER RAPPINGS AT BARNUM'S HOTEL
ARE A TRULY AMERICAN EVENT.
THE WRITINGS AUTOMATIC.
THE SPIRITS DEMOCRATIC.
THE MESSAGES ALL HEAVEN-SENT!

Amid wild applause, Jenny makes a deep curtsy and leaves the stage. When the crowd is quiet again, Barnum announces:

And now, for the illustrious Mrs. Fish, soon to be Mrs. Underhill!

Leah strides onstage to stand beside Barnum. She is extravagantly dressed and ridiculously bedecked with jewels. They sparkle around her neck and wrists, in her hair, on her shoes. She sports a huge engagement ring. She is greeted by more applause.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen. Mr. Barnum has “as they say” let the cat out of the bag. Mr. Underhill HAS proposed marriage to me, and I have agreed to take him - uh - that is accept him.

Leah draws a frail, embarrassed old gent onto the stage and urges the crowd to applaud him. They cheer obediently. They are in high spirits after Jenny’s song. Underhill, mortified, slips back into anonymity as quickly as he can.

LEAH

But, have no fear. Despite my duties as a wife, I shall not cease to work tirelessly on behalf of the spirits. Throughout the coming fall and winter, my sisters and I shall take their message to Washington, Philadelphia and London. Furthermore, I have made arrangements to myself undertake the education of all interested in parties in the Art of Spirit Rapping. Those whom I instruct will receive certificates as Teachers of Mediumship and will thus themselves be qualified to teach others. It is my plan that one day, every town and city in Amercia will be equipped with a Leah Fox Underhill School, so that wherever their loved ones may be, the spirits need never again languish in silence.

Applause.

And now, I invite you all to dance and enjoy yourselves. The champagne is courtesy of Mr. Underhill.

The orchestra strikes up a waltz. Leah and Barnum leave the stage and take to the dance floor. Kane crosses the floor and, bowing, presents himself to Maggie.

KANE

Miss Margaretta, may I have the honour?

Maggie takes his arm, and they join the couples on the dance floor.

Did you know of your sister’s wedding plans before tonight, Maggie?

MAGGIE

No, I had no idea. I think even Mr. Underhill was taken a little but surprise. But, I am glad for Leah.

KANE

She sees her way in life very clearly, doesn't she?

MAGGIE

With a laugh.

Oh yes. Leah knows what she wants. She tells me that's the key to a happy life.

KANE

Perhaps. I'd say that all depends.

MAGGIE

On what?

KANE

On the nature of the lock. Some can be opened, some not. But tonight isn't only Leah's night. It's just as much yours. Are you happy, Maggie? Do you have what you want at this moment?

MAGGIE

Turning serious.

Of course I don't. You know that, Elisha. If I could have anything in the world at this moment, I would wish that instead of leaving tomorrow, you were home from the Arctic, that the expedition were over, and we were together again.

KANE

I'm sorry, Maggie. Our separation weighs just as heavily on my heart as it does on yours. We WILL be together again, and then we will never be parted. I promise you that. But, for now, your wish is of the "locked" kind. No one can hasten time.

MAGGIE

Looking intently into his eyes.

Then I make another wish. I wish not to share you with anyone else on our last night together. I wish us alone in some quiet, secluded place where we can talk. Or not talk. Can you unlock THAT wish for me, Elisha? Can you?

KANE

After pausing to take in exactly what she is proposing.

I can, my love.

As the waltz continues, the hotel revellers revolve away and offstage. The last to disappear is Leah who is spying the lovers "escape" allows herself a knowing little smile before going on with the dance.

The chandeliers and other features of the ballroom set are withdrawn and the lights dimmed. The music becomes slower and more sensuous. At last Kane and Maggie are swaying alone together on a stage that is nearly dark and devoid of proper, except for two lighted candles on a nightstand, suggesting a bedchamber.

Kane removes a ring from his finger and places it on Maggie's finger. She takes from her neck a velvet ribbon on which there hangs a cameo portrait of herself, and slips it over his head. He kisses the palm of her hand, then without a word, she bends and blows out the candles.

Black out.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE II

New York City, May 1852

Maggie and Katie are seated at a wooden table on the dais of a public hall. In the process of giving a demonstration of Spirit Rapping. Leah stands at Maggie's side, acting as Mistress of Ceremonies. The audience is applauding enthusiastically. Leah raises a hand to quiet them.

LEAH

I trust that last message will help you to straighten out your financial problem, sir?

BUSINESS MAN IN THE AUDIENCE

Yes, it's clear to me now. Remarkable!

More applause.

LEAH

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is time for Miss Katie to retire for the night.

Katie rises and sweetly says good night to everyone. Her bedtime is part of the show, lending a note of cozy familial intimacy. Katie is led out by a governess.

Good night. Sweet dreams (ad lib)

Now, Miss Margaretta is still ready to receive further communications from the other side. There are many, many spirits with us tonight, all anxious to speak. Who wants to be the next to inquire of them?

BRAZEN YOUNG MAN

I'll be next. I want to hear from my friend, Abraham Holiday. Can you bring him across for me?

MAGGIE

I shall try. Are you there, Abraham Holiday? If you are with us tonight, please rap out a message for your friend. Abraham? Abraham Holiday?

After a pause, the table slowly rises into the air and gently touches down again. Maggie darts a glance at Leah, who smugly smiles back. The audience gasps. Then loud raps ring through the hall: one, two, five...

LEAH

Rap again, spirit. I shall decipher.

One rap.

"A" ...

Two raps.

"B" ...

Five raps.

"E". Yes, that's him -- Abe!

MAGGIE

To the young man.

What do you wish to learn from your friend?

YOUNG MAN

I want to know how he died.

MAGGIE

Abraham, will you tell us how you died?

There is silence. Although the table rises and settles down again.

He is not ready to tell you. Perhaps on another occasion.

YOUNG MAN

No -- I'll try a different question. Who was with him when he died?

MAGGIE

Reluctantly.

Abraham, who was by your side when you passed over?

Again no raps sound; but this time the table moves from side to side, scraping the floorboards.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, but I can get no news.

LEAH

Interrupting impatiently.

Ask him a simple question -- one he can answer with yes or no.

YOUNG MAN

All right then. Are you happy where you are now, Abe?

One loud rap.

LEAH

Ah! You see? He's warming up!

Maggie shoots Leah another sour look.

YOUNG MAN

Abe, are you reunited with Alice?

One rap.

And, with your loving parents?

One rap.

Why, I'll bet even Grandpa Jeb and that old blue hound dog of his are there too!

*One loud rap, accompanied by levitation of the table and soft music,
as from heavenly instruments.*

LEAH

Your friend must have been a good man, to be so rewarded in heaven.

YOUNG MAN

Loudly and derisively.

A good man? No worse than most, I guess. And, a LOT better than some people I could name!

Everyone, surprised, turns to stare at the brash speaker.

But, I tell you what, folks! Why not judge for yourselves? My buddy, Abe Holiday, is right here -- in the flesh!

Abe stands up.

And so is his sweetheart. Stand up, Alice!

She stands.

AND his mom and dad.

They stand.

And, even Grandpa Jeb.

He stands.

Old Blue would have come, too, but he's got a touch of rheumatism, so he stayed home in his kennel!

The young man laughs triumphantly. The crowd joins in, some jeering Maggie and Leah. Soon the mob is out of control. Catcalls and cries of "hoax" and "charlatans" punctuate the general hubbub. People leave their seats and move toward the stage, demanding their money back.

LEAH

Ladies and Gentlemen, please. There has been a mistake!

CROWD

You said it, Lady! Yeah! And, you made it!

LEAH

To Maggie

For God's sake, SAY something!

Maggie tries in vain to make herself heard above the din. The crowd rushes the stage. Police whistles sound shrilly, officers rush into the hall and wrestle with members of the mob. Finally, all the people are persuaded to take their seats again. A burly officer takes charge.

IRISH POLICEMAN

Now quiet down, all o' you's. Anyone who tries to lay violent hands on either of these two ladies will come down to the stationhouse with me!

CROWD

We want our money back! They're the ones you should haul off to the stationhouse! They're frauds! Arrest them!

LEAH

Officer, there is no fraud here, I assure you. My sister will explain, if these people will allow her to be heard. Margaretta?

MAGGIE

Trembling

I have always said that I do not control the spirits, or anything they say or do. Just as a person of flesh and blood may play a prank, so a spirit may stir up mischief. I think that perhaps some spirit was *pretending* to be the ghost of Abraham Holiday.

YOUNG MAN

Bunkum! There ARE no spirits here. Just you and your fakes! What do you use, trapdoors? Magnets?

Chaos threatens to erupt again as the crowd shouts agreement. Finally, a dignified old gentleman raises his voice above the others and calls for silence.

OLD GENTLEMAN

One moment, please! I have a suggestion. As Christians it is our moral duty to afford these ladies every opportunity to demonstrate their honesty and clear their names.

Rumbling from crowd.

Here is what I propose. Let us appoint a committee of ladies to examine Miss Margaretta's garments. If there are any engines of deception hidden about her person, let these ladies find them and show them to us. IF they find nothing, we must humbly accept Miss Margaretta's entirely plausible explanation of what has transpired and beg her forgive us our ill manners.

The crowd is divided in their response to the suggestion, but Leah eagerly grabs the opportunity.

LEAH

Yes! We agree to the proposal!

MAGGIE

We do NOT agree! I do not consent to being stripped naked and searched like some, some criminal!

The crowd grows ugly again.

VARIOUS VOICES

We knew you'd back down
We do you have to hide?

Maggie's protests are ignored. Several women volunteer to perform the search. With Leah's urging Maggie allows herself to be led out into the cloak room adjoining. Here a dressing screen is quickly set up and a tearful Maggie obediently takes her place behind it. Each time she strips off an article of clothing, the women grab at it hungrily, snatching the clothes out of one another's hands and sometimes tearing them in their zeal.

Music reinforces this atmosphere of feeding frenzy, as the women shrill:

Song #2: Feeding

LADIES

LIAR! SEARCH HER!
FIND OUT WHAT SHE'S HIDING

MAGGIE

I'M HIDING NOTHING!
WHY WON'T YOU BELIEVE ME?

DEARIE, IF YOU'VE REALLY NOTHING TO HIDE
SURELY YOU'LL PERMIT US TO CHECK YOU INSIDE
TO PROVE YOU'RE NOT A LIAR!
GRAB HER!
LET'S CHECK HER STORY.

LEAH

SHE'S HIDING NOTHING.

LADIES

LADIES WE WILL BE THE JUDGES.

FIRST LADY

I'D BE MORE THAN WILLING

SECOND LADY

I WOULD AS WELL.

THIRD LADY

COUNT ME IN!

FOURTH LADY

AND ME!

ALL FOUR LADIES

WE'RE DETERMINED TO TELL
IF THE GIRL'S A FAKE
IF THE GIRL'S A FRAUD.

LEAH

MAGGIE, BEST YOU GO WITH THEM.

MAGGIE

OH, MY GOD!

FIRST LADY

WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND?

SECOND LADY

NOTHING

THIRD AND FOURTH LADIES

SHE'S VERY CLEVER.

FIRST LADY

SHE'S GONE AND HIDDEN IT.

ALL LADIES

LOOK EVERYWHERE.
GRAB IT! BARE IT!
CHECK IT! TEAR IT!
DON'T MISS A POSSIBILITY THAT'S THERE.

SEARCH HER! SEARCH HER!
SEARCH HER! SEARCH HER!

IS THERE A POCKET? A SECRET POCKET?
HER HEELS MAY BE HOLLOW,
HER SHOES, CHECK THEM!
WHAT'S IN HER STOCKING?
TEAR IT, TEAR IT!
FEEL ALONG THE SEAMS
OPEN UP THE HEM

SEARCH HER! SEARCH HER!
SEARCH HER! SEARCH HER!

The voices crescendo until, at the height of the caterwauling, Mrs. Amy Post enters. A formidable matron of great wealth and social standing. She has the style and earing of a queen, combined with the commanding presence of an avenging angel.

MRS. POST

Stop! Stop this witch hunt at once!

Abrupt and total silence ensues. The name "Amy Post" passes in whispers from woman to woman. Until all look cowed and fearful. Maggie peeks out from behind the screen. She picks up a petticoat with which to cover herself and steps out into the open.

MAGGIE

Thank you for your kindness, Mrs...

MRS. POST

Post, my dear. Mrs. Amy Post. Please resume your clothing so that we may leave this place. I hope that you and your younger sister will accept the protection of my house tonight, and for as long as you require and wish it.

A grateful Maggie begins to dress, while Mrs. Post addresses the women.

As for you, your conduct is a blister on the pure brow of womanhood!

WOMAN

But, we were just trying to...

MRS. POST

Oh, do not protest that you were doing the bidding of the men! Men are mean and suspicious. If they are not so by nature, then they become so by their daily battles in the world of commerce. Every day they are exposed to the crudities of getting and spending. We women remain in the sanctuary of the homes we make for them. We are safe there, and our safety should preserve our virtue. But, what is more, much more, our virtue confers on us a responsibility. It is up to US to be men's spiritual guides. Women have a heaven-appointed duty, and a heaven-ordained theatre of action. THAT is the meaning of true womanhood!

Song #3: Mrs. Post's Anthem to True Womanhood

MRS. POST

CHASTITY, MODESTY, TACT
KINDNESS IN THOUGHT AND IN ACT.
TO EMBODY THE GOOD OF TRUE WOMANHOOD
ARE THE TERMS OF OUR HOLY CONTRACT!

SOCIETY TODAY IS MUCH CHANGED.
FROM THEIR SOULS MEN ARE SADLY ESTRANGED.
IT'S THE ROLE OF HIS WIFE TO REDEEM A MAN'S LIFE
'ERE HIS LUST LEAVE HIS CONSCIENCE DERANGED.

FIRST WOMAN

A MAN'S ORALS ARE DANGEROUSLY FRAIL

SECOND WOMAN

HE'S A DO WHO IS WAGGED BY HIS TAIL!

MRS. POST

WOMAN'S PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN IS TO WATCH OVER MAN
AND INSPIRE HIM 'TIL VIRTUE PREVAIL.

ALL

CHASTITY, MODESTY, TACT
KINDNESS IN THOUGHT AND IN ACT.
TO EMBODY THE GOOD OF TRUE WOMANHOOD

ARE THE TERMS OF OUR HOLY CONTRACT!

The song ends in triumphant chorus and a spirit of good fellowship. As the women begin to sing "Chastity, modesty, tact" yet again, Mrs. Post exits with Maggie in tow. But, just as Maggie is about to pass through the door and offstage she stops and turns. She senses an unseen presence, and a smile lights up her face. Suddenly a deafening shower of raps erupt all over the theatre. The women stop singing and stare, open-mouthed with astonishment. Maggie gallantly salutes them, turns on her heel, and strides offstage, her head held high as she whistles the last two lines of the chorus: "to embody the good".

Music up.

Black out.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE III

Kane and Grinnell are lounging in the captain's quarters of Kane's ship, comfortably sharing a light-hearted conversation and a bottle of good Claret -- two old friends reunited after a long and perilous separation.

KANE

Concluding an anecdote.

And, when I looked down and saw YOU, waving and grinning at me from that broken-down wharf in St. John's, I thought we must have gone off course again!

GRINNELL

Laughing.

Did you imagine you'd make New York a week early?

KANE

Either that, or you were hopelessly lost yourself, and trying to flag down a ship to take YOU there!

GRINNELL

I am flattered by your confidence in my skill as a navigator. And, after all the trouble I went to, to reach Newfoundland in time to welcome you with a bit of fanfare.

More laughter, more Claret.

KANE

I expect there will be quite a lot of fanfare today when we reach home. Or, have they all forgotten me?

GRINNELL

Deadpan.

They've all forgotten you.

He bursts into laughter at seeing Kane's expression of dismay.

My friend, forgive me! I did not expect to see you horrified at the prospect of obscurity, when all the hazards of the Arctic failed to daunt you. Look...

Grinnell produces a stack of newspapers, which he spreads out on the table

between them.

The fanfare has hardly stopped all the time you've been away. Your name is on everyone's lips, especially since the news that you had started your homeward journey. I assure you that your exploits have been the subject of all the headlines for weeks now. And, here is the proof.

KANE

As he scans the papers.

I only wish I were bringing home better news.

GRINNELL

Bringing home Sir John Frankin, you mean. Kane, you are, as you have ever been, your own harshest critic. No one else would call your voyage anything short of a triumph. The charts you've made will mean the difference between survival and disaster to future expeditions.

KANE

I hope you're right.

Kane stops short in his perusal of a page. His eye has caught something unnerving.

What the blazes!

He sees by Grinnell's expression, half guilty, half knowing, that his friend has meant for him to find the article in question.

KANE

You selected these with care, I see. MY name in the headlines, just as you said, but here. What is here, further down the page? "The Senator and the Psychic."

Kane turns to the next newspaper in the pile.

And here, "Second Sight or Second Fiddle: Has Margareta Fox Forgotten Dr. Kane?" Splendid - I made two headlines on the same day!

GRINNELL

Kane, I didn't mean for you, to -- that is, I did want you to know, but -- look, we've got to talk this over, man to man. Like the old friends we are.

KANE

Interrupting him.

Shall we try one more?

Pulling out a paper at random.

Aha ... another tidbit! "Maggie Fox: Pied Piper in Petticoats." What game are you playing with me, my so-called "friend"?

GRINNELL

I AM your friend! And, this is no game. As your friend, I consider it my duty to warn you of what has been going on in your absence.

KANE

I deliberately kept from asking you about Maggie, because I know how disdainfully you look down on her. Do you seriously expect me to give credence to this trash?

GRINNELL

For God's sake and your own, Kane, listen. I've been present when people - men - talk about her. I've seen what goes on at the Spirit Rapping demonstrations. She's a blatant fraud. Yet still the "customers" come. It's common knowledge that Waddy Thompson, the Senator from North Carolina, sometimes stays half the night in her hotel suite. Do you think he spends his time there hobnobbing with the ghost of Benjamin Franklin? Think, man! It's been two years! Did you expect her to be faithful to you? Did you think a girl like that, from that kind of family, could resist taking advantage of her intercourse with the rich and powerful?

KANE

Jumping to his feet and knocking over his chair.

THAT'S ENOUGH!

GRINNELL

It's not enough. It won't be enough until you sever your relations with this person! Now is the time to do it -- now, after a two-year absence. She won't be surprised if you've had a change of heart.

*Kane looks to be on the point of throttling Grinnell with his bare hands,
but there is a decorous knock at the door, followed by a diffident seaman's voice.*

SEAMAN

We are in sight of New York Harbour, sir.

KANE

Answering the seaman through the closed door.

I'm coming to the bridge.

Kane has not taken his eyes from Grinnell's face. When he speaks, he is shaking with cold fury.

A change of heart, you say? I had no heart until I knew Maggie Fox. All I had was what you have. I had a will. An arrogant sense of my own importance, a pompous desire to heap honours on my own head. Maggie gave me something that all the power and wealth, all the class privilege I had known, had not given me, and would never have given me. She gave me herself. And, in doing that, she gave me myself. What's kept me alive through these past two unspeakable years has been my love for her, because that is the best, the truest and strongest part of me. So, don't try to save me from her, Grinnell. Try instead to understand how it is that men like us can fail so far short of the courage and openness of "that kind of person".

Kane puts on his captain's dress jacket and sword, and exits. Grinnell is left standing at the table looking down at the litter of papers and wine glasses. From offstage comes the distant boom of cannon fire, saluting Kane's ship as she is sighted from the harbour.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE IV

That evening, Kane, shaved, refreshed and dressed in elegant civilian clothes has just entered the lobby of Maggie's hotel when he is intercepted by Leah, who has been lying in wait for him.

LEAH

Stepping into his path.

Dr. Kane! Welcome back to New York!

KANE

Impatiently about to walk past her.

Thank you.

LEAH

Don't you recognize me? I'm Leah Underhill. Leah FOX Underhill.

KANE

He has recognized her, but is eager to move on.

Forgive me, Madam. It's good to see you looking so well. I'm anxious to call on Maggie. She is waiting for me.

LEAH

I know, but as she doesn't know you've arrived, I'm sure you'll spare me a moment.

KANE

Perhaps another time.

LEAH

Grabbing hold of his arm, then preening herself and dimpling demurely at him.

NOW - ahem - now would be better, Mr. Kane.

KANE

Reluctantly allowing her to draw him to a corner of the lobby.

Very well. What is it, Mrs. Underhill?

LEAH

Unless I'm not the keen judge of character everyone says I am, you plan to propose marriage to my sister. Am I right?

KANE

With respect, Madam, that is a matter that does not concern you.

LEAH

Meaning "yes".

KANE

Meaning, that is between Maggie and myself. No one else.

LEAH

You'd be making a big mistake if you married her.

KANE

Good-bye, Madam.

LEAH

Now so fast, Doctor. You think I'm prying. Maybe I am, but you're wrong about my reasons. Your private life is of no interest to me whatsoever, not in itself. But, when it concerns Maggie, it concerns me, too. So, I have a right to know your intentions.

KANE

You have a right, Madam, to live your life. And, so does Maggie.

He begins to walk away.

LEAH

Raising her voice so that he, and whoever else is in the hotel lobby, can hear her clearly.

Which of Maggie's lives do you mean, Mr. Kane?

Mortified, Kane turns and comes back to her side. Eager to avoid attracting attention.

LEAH

Ah, that's better. I don't like to strain my voice unnecessarily. I need it for the evening Rapping demonstrations.

KANE

Have your say, Mrs. Underhill, and be done with it.

LEAH

I was just asking you WHICH life you think Maggie has a right to live, the one she has now, or the one she had before?

KANE

You are not making sense.

LEAH

Not making sense? Oh really? Not to you, maybe. That's because you take luxury for granted. Naturally, you have no reason to remember what it was like in Hydesville. You were there only briefly, weren't you? Just long enough to take one look at Maggie, and decide you had to have her for your very own. But, Hydesville was more than an afternoon's ramble in the countryside for us, Dr. Kane. It was the purgatory we spent our lives in, where we shivered or sweated, depending on the season, and just barely kept from starving, all year round. That was Maggie's other life, Doctor -- the one I escaped from, and the one Maggie was trapped in before I took her out of that dirt floor shack and turned her into the most famous woman in America.

KANE

And, WHY did you do it, Madam? Out of philanthropy, out of family feeling? Or, out of your monstrous indomitable greed?

LEAH

Sure, I'd done well for myself -- why shouldn't I have? But, I've done well for her, too. Better than you'll be able to do. Maggie's not the spineless ninny you're looking for in a wife. She won't do as she's told, and she won't sit simpering over endless cups of tea with your Mama's brainless friends. She won't content herself with bustling between the milliner's shop and the caterer's like some demented beetle. She has a mind and a will of her own. I ought to know -- I've had to cope with both. You don't have to like me, Dr. Kane, and I couldn't care less, but for your own good, you'd better believe me. Maggie will not play the role of your Domestic Angel for long. She is not what you want. And, what's more important, you are not what she needs.

Turning on her heel, Leah strides away from Kane and offstage. After a moment, Kane pulls himself together and heads for the staircase that will take him to Maggie's suite.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE V

The parlour of Maggie's suite, moments later.

An excited and somewhat nervous Maggie awaits Kane's arrival. She looks older by more than the two years since their last meeting, but has acquired an elegance and dignity she did not have then. She has the bearing of a priestess, and evident in her face is the fact that has weathered a few storms while Kane has been away. As a result, she knows herself, and her powers better than she did once.

A maid answers Kane's knock and admits him. Maggie dismisses her. With the maid's exit Maggie and Kane are together again at last. They gaze at one another from opposite sides of a two-year gulf, neither able to think of anything important enough to say aloud. Then they both break the embarrassed silence at the same time, and must laugh at their awkward babbling and shyness. Finally, Maggie takes a step towards Kane, and immediately they are in one another's arms. They kiss. Without another word, Kane picks Maggie up in his arms and carries her into the adjacent bedroom offstage.

Later they are seated in a parlour. Kane is tieless and Maggie's hair is loose.

KANE

Maggie, you are an amazing girl!

MAGGIE

I've become an American institution, Elisha. Just like you!

KANE

Then what could be more fitting? Two American institutions about to be joined in the institution of matrimony.

MAGGIE

Now, wait! THIS institution has waited two long years to savour this moment. Now that it's finally here, she has no intention of letting it pass in talk about the future. Take your eyes off the horizon, Dr. Kane. You're home now, and it's time to enjoy the present.

KANE

That's what I intend to do. I only want to assure you that your days of worrying over bookings and finances are over. No more exhaustive seasons for Barnum, no more having to earn a living, no more Spirit Rapping. Henceforth, you are a lady of leisure.

MAGGIE

Why, thank you, sir. But, I'd prefer to wait until you are a gentleman of leisure, and will wile away the time with me. By then, we'll both be silver-haired and mellow with age. Besides, I like earning my living. And, as for Spirit Rapping, I can't imagine my life without that. The spirits are a part of me. They're what set me apart from other people, yet link me to generations of them.

KANE

But Spirit Rapping used to scare you. You told me so yourself, many times.

MAGGIE

It still scares me, sometimes.

KANE

Then why do it?

MAGGIE

Because like you, I believe that my explorations shed some light and do some good.

KANE

Explorations.

MAGGIE

Yes, that's what the seances are for me now. Oh, Elisha, I've been longing to talk to you about this. You're the only one who can truly understand how I feel, because we share this calling, this sense of mission.

Kane, puzzled, does not answer. So, Maggie continues.

You travel to the farthest reaches of the earth. You see for yourself wonders that most people can only dream of. I am a woman. Such adventures are closed to me, but through the spirits, I, too, explore and discover. The only difference is that they take me not to the ends of the earth, but into the secret places of the heart.

KANE

Marvelling.

This is a new Margaretta Fox! The Maggie I left waiting for me two years ago was confused and frightened by the rappings. Now, you seem so confident. It's as if you'd been converted.

MAGGIE

It is? Well, perhaps I have. I never cared much for religion, one way or the other. I just know that what I see is important and true. The only problem is seeing it clearly enough to understand it, and helping other people understand. It's still confusing sometimes, especially when the truth comes to me in disguise.

KANE

Forgive me for asking this, Maggie. Is Leah part of this "disguise"?

MAGGIE

Oh, Leah. Don't get me started about her. Of course she has nothing to do with the real messages, except for sometimes discouraging them by staging "manifestations". I've argued with her so often about that. It makes us look like frauds. Elisha, people aren't stupid. They can see it's not real. But, she...

KANE

Maggie, Maggie! Calm down! I'm sorry I asked about her. I certainly don't want to spend our first evening together talking about Leah. Or, even about the spirits. They're not alive, after all. We have too many other wonderfully alive things to talk about; our future. Yes, all right, our present.

Darling, go and pack some overnight things. Then put on your finest gown. We're going dancing. And then we'll go back to the inn where we said our goodbyes. Only this time, we'll be saying hello to our new life, together.

They embrace again.

I'll be back in half an hour.

Admiring her again.

My wonderful, amazing girl!

Kane exits. Maggie looks down from her window until she sees him enter the street below and get into his carriage. She waves to him, then turns to face the audience. Her look is thoughtful. She senses trouble ahead for the two of them.

Song #3: The Girl That I Was

THE GIRL THAT I WAS LONGED FOR MIRRORS AND SMOKE.
SHE MOVED AMONG SHADES, HEARD THE PHRASES THEY SPOKE.
THE GIRL'S NOW A WOMAN, GROWN STRONG WITH THE YEARS.
BUT HER LOVER'S STILL DAZZLED BY SMOKE AND MIRRORS.

THE ONE THAT HE LOVES
IS THE GIRL THAT I WAS,
NOT THE WOMAN I AM.
NO, NOT THE WOMAN I AM.

ANOTHER, A YOUNGER HAS STOLEN MY JOY
THE VOWS OF A MAN MADE THE SPORT OF A BOY.
SHE DWELLS IN THE WELLS OF HIS MOUTH AND HIS EYES,
THE PROOF OF HER SPELL IS THE TRUTH HE DENIES.

THE RIVAL WHO'S WON HIM ALL INNOCENTLY
IS NO EARTHLY ONE - SHE'S THE GIRL THAT WAS ME.
HE FOLLOWS HER FORM THROUGH THE WOODS, BY THE STREAMS
OF LONG-AGO LANDSCAPES I VISIT IN DREAMS.

THE ONE THAT HE LOVES
IS THE GIRL THAT I WAS.
NOT THE WOMAN I AM.
NO, NOT THE WOMAN I AM.

HAUNTER OR HAUNTED, HOW CAN WE TELL?
OUR BODIES LIKE HOUSES WHERE SPENT CHOICES DWELL
WOULD THINGS HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT IF I'D NEVER SEEN
THE HAPPIER WOMAN THAT I MIGHT HAVE BEEN?

THE ONE THAT HE LOVES
IS THE GIRL THAT I WAS.
NOT THE WOMAN I AM.
NO, NOT THE WOMAN I AM. *(Repeat)*

Maggie exits offstage, to her bedroom, to prepare herself for the coming evening and night.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE VI

Maggie is seated at a séance table in yet another auditorium. She looks pale and exhausted. The audience is restless and bored. But, Leah, stationed as usual at Maggie's side, is as relentless as ever, aware that they are losing the crowd, she says encouragingly:

LEAH

Yes ... yes! A spirit is trying to come through! At any moment, Miss Margaretta will receive a communication. Be patient just a few seconds longer, Ladies and Gentlemen.

CROWD

This is a waste of time. Yeah, and money ... I'm going home -- you coming?

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Ladies and Gentlemen, but there is no point in continuing. Perhaps the spirits will speak another time. Thank you for being so patient.

She rises to leave.

MAN IN CROWD

Hey, how about our money-back guarantee?

LEAH

Spurred to action.

OH! I feel -- is it? Yes, a message! I am getting a message for someone named Harris, or Horace. Is he here tonight?

No one comes forward, but the crowd resume their seats. Maybe there will be a show after all.

A child has come for Harris or Horace. She has only recently passed over, and has not yet learned to rap. But, I feel her presence. I feel her joy. She wants Horace to know that he must not blame himself for anything, and that she loves him just as much as she did before the accident.

A woman in the audience jumps to her feet, excitedly.

WOMAN

Milly! It's our Milly!

The woman's husband takes hold of her arm, and gently tries to persuade her to sit down, but she is jubilant.

WOMAN

No, Frank! Don't you understand? It's our Millicent!

To Leah.

She's not saying Horace, Mrs. Underhill. She's trying to say "horse"! Milly fell from her pony a month ago and ... died.

LEAH

Horse? Yes, it could be. It IS horse. Milly is saying that she is happy now, because her body is whole again, and no longer gives her pain.

WOMAN

Hysterically.

Thank heaven she is well and safe -- forever!

She begins to laugh and cry uncontrollably. Her husband puts his arm around her shoulders and guides her down the aisle towards the exit, amid the sound of her sobs he faces the dais and shouts angrily at Maggie and Leah.

HUSBAND

Shame on you women. Shame! You prey on the trust of grief-stricken people! You cannot even begin to understand her suffering.

As he is speaking, his wife breaks away from him and runs out the door, crying.

WOMAN

Milly! Milly!

Her husband races after her.

The crowd is restless again. Many of its members seem to agree with the husband's accusation. Leah hastens to restore order.

LEAH

Please. Ladies and Gentlemen, remain calm. These things often happen. It is the burden we bear as spirit rappers, and we shoulder it willingly. The lady is agitated, but joyful. She has

received news from her beloved child on the other side. But, I see my sister is too tired to continue, and as I have no wish to usurp her role as medium, we bid you good night, and convey our love to all those who wait beyond the veil.

Leah raises her arms as in benediction. At that moment the gaslight dims and dozens of white roses drop from the ceiling onto the audience, who clutch at them wondering fingers. Guitars and other musical instruments float through the air far above the people's heads, trailing faint, ethereal music, as if played by phantom hands. Then they are obscured by a spreading veil of smoke, which slowly disperses as the lights come up. All is as it was, except that the audience is now satisfied.

They make for the door, clutching their souvenirs from the other world and talking volubly. Some people are mystified and convinced, others cynical but gratifyingly entertained. Everyone is happy. Watching from the stage, Maggie and Leah prepare to leave by the stage door.

Suddenly, from outside comes the sound of frightened horses, of men shouting and women screaming. Some terrible accident has occurred. The audience, distracted by the prospect of this new spectacle, runs out the door to the street. Their excited voices are added to the din.

WOMAN IN CROWD

Oh, poor thing! Poor, poor thing!

MAN IN CROWD

Over here! We need more men on this side!

Police whistles sound.

Maggie is about to rush out to the street to see what has happened, but Leah puts her hand on Maggie's arm and stops her.

LEAH

Don't be a fool. This may be bad for us. Let's go out this way.

Leah pulls a confused Maggie towards the stage door and out. They both exit as the sounds of catastrophe continue to resound in the now empty auditorium.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE VII

It's early the next morning. A distraught Maggie sits miserably in the parlour of her hotel suite, brooding on her part in the terrible events of the previous evening. She has not slept and has been crying all night. The woman who earlier appeared as Katie's governess knocks on the door. But Maggie does not answer. The knocks sound again. Hollowly evoking (as they are not amplified) preternatural raps. Receiving no reply, the woman cautiously opens the door and peeks in.

WOMAN

Dr. Kane is here.

Kane enters. As soon as the door shuts behind him, Maggie rushes into his arms. He strokes her hair, trying to comfort her as she weeps. She catches her breath, looks up into his face and speaks.

MAGGIE

You heard what happened?

KANE

Some of it. Not everything.

MAGGIE

Then you haven't seen this morning's Tribune?

She picks up the newspaper and begins to read aloud to him.

"Mrs. Sophia Coverdale, ex ... expired in the arms of her husband last night after throwing herself in front ... in front ... "

Her voice is choked by sobs and she cannot go on. Kane takes the paper from her and begins to peruse it silently

MAGGIE

No, out loud! Read it out loud, so that I can hear, should hear, every word. READ, ELISHA!

KANE

"... after throwing herself in front of an omnibus. Minutes earlier Mr. and Mrs. Coverdale had left the Corinthian Hall, where a Spirit Rapping demonstration was being conducted by the renowned medium, Miss Margaretta Fox and her sister, Mrs. Underhill. Mr. Coverdale revealed that his wife, who believed that the spirit of her daughter had spoken to her, cried out just before rushing into the path of the horses, "I'm coming to you, Milly. I'm coming!"

In light of Mr. Coverdale's disclosure, no charges will be laid against the driver of the omnibus. However, it behooves this writer to enquire of Miss Fox and Mrs. Underhill, if they are reading these pages, whether they must not, in good conscience, concede that they bear some responsibility for this tragedy."

Oh God.

MAGGIE

Brokenly.

The cruellest, most senseless part is that we didn't even GET any raps last night. Leah made the whole thing up!

She collapses, sobbing.

KANE

Holding her in his arms.

My darling. My poor darling. This is what comes of Spirit Rapping.

MAGGIE

Pushing him away angrily.

What are you trying to say, Elisha? I told you so? I just told you that it had nothing to do with the spirits. It was all Leah, playing at being medium.

KANE

"Playing!" Maggie, she may be a sham medium, but now you see, to your sorrow, that her power is all too real. And so is her influence over you. Can't you understand that, even now?

Maggie is silent. Kane presses his advantage.

Maggie, Leah's effect is pernicious. It's like some spreading disease. There was a time when you would not have succumbed to her. Your sympathy for believes, your sense of what was right, made you fight back. But now -- forgive me, Maggie, but I must say this. She has succeeded in wearing you down. Your will is infected. You do things now that would have shamed and sickened the Maggie I once knew.

MAGGIE

Coldly and after a long pause.

I could have stopped her. I didn't. Yes, it's as much my fault as Leah's. More my fault, because I have the true power. And, because I claim to care. Yes, the woman's death is my doing.

KANE

Not contradicting her.

It's too late for that poor woman, but it's not too late for you. Turn away from it, Maggie. Give it up. This is no life for you. Your place is among the living, not the dead. Be my wife and turn your back on the spirit circles, the rapping demonstrations, all of it. It's dangerous, and it's unwholesome.

MAGGIE

Only when it's faked. I won't turn my back. There are others to consider besides myself.

KANE

I know there are. Naturally Katie would share our home ---

MAGGIE

Elisha, why can't I make you understand? I have a gift, a terrible gift at times, but I must have been given it for a reason. I won't deny it and the people it helps. I won't. Even if it makes me wish I had never been chosen.

KANE

Resignedly.

All right. We've been through all that before. At least try to see what Leah is doing to you. You've got to break with her, Maggie. Let me help you cast her off. I have a way, one of the holds Leah has had over you from the first has been Katie's future. Let me pay for Katie's education and see that she is properly established in the world. I will send her to any school you choose. In England, perhaps. As far away from this kind of life as she can get. With a good education Katie will have splendid prospects. She will enter society and marry well. Hers will be a normal life, a life that is comfortable and respectable, and safe.

MAGGIE

What more could a woman ask?

KANE

What did you say?

MAGGIE

Nothing. Elisha, if I did not give up the spirits, would your offer still stand?

KANE

That sounds like something Leah would say.

Maggie flinches. Kane regrets the barb.

I'm sorry. Yes, of course the offer stands. I have no wish to bully or blackmail you. I only want to help. You have the right to choose this -- vocation -- for yourself. But, can you honestly choose it for someone else, especially a child who adores and trusts you?

MAGGIE

You're right, I can't. Let's not fight, Elisha. Of course we accept your help. And, love you all the more for it.

They are about to embrace when the door suddenly slams open and Leah enters, brandishing her own copy of the Tribune.

LEAH

The snakes! The worms! We'll SUE the rag! Did you see what they had the gall to say about us? Oh, good morning, Dr. Kane.

KANE

Coldly.

Mrs. Underhill.

LEAH

Offering comfort to Margaretta, I see. But, it's not comforting we need, is it, Maggie? As Barnum likes to say, "All publicity is good publicity." We'll turn this whole thing to our advantage. By the time we're finished with the New York Tribune, they'll wish they'd stayed away from us. And, WE'LL come out of it smelling even sweeter than we did before it started!

MAGGIE

LEAH!

KANE

Madam, where is your decency? Have you no sense of responsibility?

LEAH

Disdaining him.

Don't know about decency, but if you're suggesting that I'm to blame for that woman's death, I'd have to say, no, I have no sense of responsibility. It was unfortunate, of course, but it was her own doing.

MAGGIE

Her own doing! You know as well as I do that she killed herself because of you - our - message.

LEAH

Don't be ridiculous, Margaretta. You always overestimate your own importance. It's so tiresome. The woman was obviously crazy. She was crazy long before she entered the hall, and long before she set eyes on us.

MAGGIE

Crazy! You ARE evil! How dare you nonchalantly toss such a blatant lie in our faces! You faked that message from her child.

LEAH

Furious, in her turn.

Don't you dare moralize me, now that things haven't turned out the way you would have liked them to. It wasn't any message that sent that woman to Glory. It was her own misbegotten will. She heard what she wanted to hear. They ALL do. And, if you haven't figured that out by now, you're an even greater fool than HE is!

Nodding dismissively in Kane's direction.

MAGGIE

GET OUT! GET OUT OF HERE, LEAH! I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

LEAH

Fine. That's all right with me, I'll go. But now until I've had my say about THIS pompous snob!

*Maggie tries to push and slap Leah away, to stop the flood of her ugly words,
but Kane stands his ground.*

KANE

No, Maggie. Let her speak. Then there will be no doubt in your mind about what she is. Let her damn herself in your eyes once and for all.

To Leah.

Go on, "Madam"!

But, Leah coolly addresses herself not to Kane, but to Maggie.

LEAH

When I've gone, ask him what HE proposes to give up in return for your giving up Spirit Rapping. Ask him if he will stay away from those frozen wastes that so naturally appeal to what he pleases to call his heart. Ask yourself if you will be happy sitting alone by his fireside, knitting booties for his rosy-cheeked heirs, while he controls your life from a ship thousands of miles away. And, ask yourself what kind of life you'll have, walled up alone in his house, when that almighty Queen of Snobs, his "Mama", decrees that none of the other snobs or their tender, impressionable daughters may have anything to do with you.

KANE

You are raving, woman! My family have never done any injury to Maggie.

LEAH

No injury, to be sure! The Royal House of Kane are never so ill bred as to act uncivilly. They merely ignore her when she is present, slander her when she is absent, and threaten to sue any newspaper that dares so much as print her name together with yours in the same sentence. Where else do you think I got the idea of suing the Tribune?

MAGGIE

Exhausted and sick at heart.

Just get out, Leah.

LEAH

With pleasure. But, do not flatter yourself that you are disowning me, Margaretta. I disown you. And, what's more, I'll take your place. I made you, and I can just as easily ruin you. I can see to it that on no one comes to your pathetic rapping demonstrations or your morbid little seances. The world will pass you by as it beats a path to my door.

As Kane enfolds a shaking Maggie in his arms, Leah winds up for her big finish.

Goodbye. I leave you to the tender mercies of your globetrotting prince and his stuck-up court. NO WONDER THESE UNITED STATES FOUGHT A REVOLUTION, IF THIS IS WHAT THE ROYAL FAMILIES ARE LIKE!

Leah exits with a mighty slam of the door.

MAGGIE

Recovering herself a little.

You'd better leave, too, Elisha. I want to be by myself for a while.

KANE

I'll be back this evening.

MAGGIE

No, not today. In a few days.

KANE

Whatever you want, Maggie. Send word when you're ready.

Kane kisses her and exits.

Lights gradually down.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE VIII

Some weeks later.

*Maggie and Katie are standing on a pier, surrounded by Katie's trunks and valises.
The ship which will take her to England is about to sail.*

KATIE

Why can't you come with me, Maggie? We've never been away from each other before. I don't know anyone in England. What if nobody at that school likes me?

MAGGIE

Katie, we've talked it all over. I know that you understand, even if you're feeling a little scared right now. This is the beginning of wonderful things for you, better than you can ever hope for if you stay here. Just keep those letters of introduction from Mrs. Post safe and sound. Thanks to her, you already have lots of friends in England. One family will even be waiting at the per when your ship docks. You're such a clever girl, you'll breeze through your studies. And, before you know it, it'll be summer, and I'll be coming to see you.

KATIE

If I work extra hard at school and learn everything fast, maybe they'll let me come home sooner.

MAGGIE

Gently.

Maybe.

KATIE

I'll write you every day.

MAGGIE

Me, too.

KATIE

Bravely.

I'll do fine.

MAGGIE

I know you will.

The ship's whistle announces boarding time. A porter hoists Katie's luggage onto his cart and makes for the gangway.

PORTER

Better hurry, Miss. She's about to sail.

Exit.

KATIE

Maggie, are you sure you'll be able to manage without me?

MAGGIE

It won't be easy, but I'll manage. I'll do fine, too.

KATIE

But you'll be all alone, Leah and Dr. Kane are mad at you.

MAGGIE

Dr. Kane's not made at me. He's our best friend. Would he be looking out for you so well if he weren't?

KATIE

Are you going to marry Dr. Kane?

MAGGIE

Now, how can I tell you the answer to that when I don't even know it myself?

KATIE

Momma says you're not getting any younger, and he won't wait forever.

MAGGIE

She's probably right. But, don't worry, I've promised him that we'll talk it over again tomorrow. You'll be the first to hear what we decide.

KATIE

Leah's not your friend anymore, is she?

MAGGIE

Leah and I have different ideas, but we'll sort things out in time.

KATIE

Then you're not scared to be alone, without me?

MAGGIE

I'll never be without you, or you without me, no matter how far apart we are.

The final whistle sounds. Maggie and Katie embrace.

KATIE

Goodbye, Maggie. I love you.

MAGGIE

Goodbye, my darling. Goodbye, dear Katie.

*Lights gradually down while the orchestra plays a subdued reminder of
"Should We?"*

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE IX

That night, Maggie prepared for bed. On her bedside table stand framed portraits of Katie and Kane. She picks up the one of her sister, kisses it, and sets it down. The one of Kane she holds longer, looking at it with an intent, troubled expression. Tomorrow she must give him her answer. Finally, she replaces the picture, turns down the gaslight, gets into bed, and settles into sleep. Through her window come the ordinary sounds of night in New York City of 1852.

Gradually, a grey fog spreads over the stage, seeming to set the sleeper adrift in infinity. The night noises are extinguished, replaced by an unearthly hush and then a sound barely distinguishable at first, but increasingly insistent. The sweep of wind over a barren landscape. Slowly the landscape itself flows into being. We see an arctic sea, eerily washed by great arcs of green and yellow - the Aurora Borealis. The wind picks up, causing ice to crack and snap as it shifts. Powdery snow eddies and swirls, glittering like phosphorus.

A ghostly ship looms on the horizon, gathering substance as she moves closer. Her sails are torn and some of her masts broken, but her flag still flies defiantly. The Union Jack. Moving ever closer, she is at last huge and solid, seeming about to sail right into the audience. On her side is emblazoned her name in letters of fire: Erebus. She vanishes abruptly, like a candleflame snuffed out.

Through the darkness come the amplified sounds of creaking boards, the voices of sailors. A new image appears: The same ship in middle distance, held fast in the ice. Her few seamen are removing crude coffins from her decks and lowering them into shallow holes cut into the ice. That done, they say a few words over the graves and abandon their vessel. They carry whatever they have managed to salvage and begin their long and, perhaps doomed, trek overland. The struggling figures look tiny and hopeless against the sky.

A final tableau: A solitary man kneels on an ice floe, his face turned heavenward, his hands clasped in prayer. In the sky above his head we see the image that occupies his final thoughts: His wife, Lady Franklin back home in England, veiled and dressed in mourning. She stands on her rooftop balcony and gazes out to sea, searching the horizon in vain. Below her, on the ice, Franklin collapses. His body becomes transparent, ghostlike, and then disappears altogether.

On her bed, Maggie tosses and groans. The grey light of early morning seeps through her window, but for her the night is not yet over. One more vision remains.

Lady Franklin does not vanish, but her surroundings change. Now she is standing on a makeshift stage, elevated above the crowd that has assembled at a railway platform. The crowd is subdued and respectful as it waits alongside a newly-arrived train. A group of musicians wearing black armbands plays a funeral march. The muffled beat of the bass drum predominates.

From a railway carriage some men lower an ornate coffin draped in the Stars and Stripes. Six ushers - Mr. Kane, Grinnell, Ned Chisholm, the President of the Explorers Club, and two of its members - take up the coffin and carry it in solemn procession up onto the stage, where it is placed atop a trestle. A volley of gunfire salutes it. Lady Franklin takes her place to one side of the coffin. On the other is the life-size portrait of Kane she earlier presented to the club.

Lady Franklin begins her eulogy.

LADY FRANKLIN

Today we gather to pay our last respects to a fallen hero.

But her voice is drowned out by the muffled beat of the drum, which metamorphoses into the amplified beating of a frightened heart -- Maggie's. Its painful thudding accelerates in mounting agitation, when it seems that no heart could beat any harder, Maggie snaps awake with a gasp, sits bolt upright on her bed and shouts.

MAGGIE

NO!!!!

Instantly the vision blows apart as the amplified echoes of her protest rebound from the walls and fade in the sunlight that floods her bedroom.

NO... NO... NO... no... no...

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE X

The vestibule of the Explorers Club. The hall porter has just summoned Kane, and now gazes quizzically at his visitor, Maggie. She is impatient and agitated, and looks almost like a madwoman. Her hair is loose, her clothes thrown together heedlessly. Kane arrives and looks at her with surprise, but is clearly delighted to see her. As he holds out his hands to take hers, she is already talking breathlessly.

MAGGIE

Elisha, I had to come right away.

KATIE

Leading her to a quiet alcove.

Come over here. We can talk more privately. I didn't expect to see you until this evening. This not you sent yesterday said ... but, Maggie, are you well? Your cheeks look as if they were on fire.

MAGGIE

Yes, I'm well. I've never been so well! Elisha, I've had a vision, a true vision. It will save us from a terrible tragedy. You mustn't ever go back to the Arctic!

KANE

Is that what all this is about? The spirits? I thought you were coming to give me your answer.

MAGGIE

There can only be one answer. I love you, and I want to marry you.

KANE

My darling, I wasn't sure that was what you wanted anymore! This is wonderful.

MAGGIE

I never stopped loving you, Elisha. Things just got so complicated. But, that's not important now. What's important is what I've seen, what I know. Listen to me. I know what happened to the Franklin exploration. And, what might have happened to you, except that we will prevent it. Oh, Elisha, at last my powers have done something good for me, for US. They've given us a chance no one else could have had. We can change the course of our lives! We can choose the right path. Just as if we'd seen beforehand where the one we were following would finally take us, and decided to go back to the path we hadn't chosen and start over.

KANE

Laughing

Maggie, slow down! You've lost me! First things first, we're going to be married. Have I got that part right?

MAGGIE

Yes. You've got it right, Dr. Kane.

KANE

Good. Second, you don't want me to go back to the Arctic. But, there are two sides to that coin. I don't want you to go back to Spirit Rapping. There's nothing new in that. But, now that we've made the most important decision, that we want to be together, always, we'll work out everything else. We'll find the right compromise, as long as we have each other.

MAGGIE

You don't understand. We must not -- we DARE not -- compromise on you going away to search for Franklin again. Franklin is dead, I saw him, I saw his men. Their ship was call the Erebus.

KANE

Of course. The name is common knowledge. You've heard it and read of it in the papers. Everyone has.

MAGGIE

Franklin died alone, adrift on an ice floe. His men abandoned the ship. It's a graveyard. The few that lived went overland.

KANE

Nothing of the kind has been reported.

MAGGIE

Of course not! I saw it, I tell you!

KANE

You DREAMT it.

MAGGIE

It's the same thing. I had a vision.

KANE

So you keep saying. But, you haven't told me anything real. All right, the name of the ship. But, you knew that already, you've just forgotten you knew it.

MAGGIE

I can tell you details. Facts you could check.

KANE

Such as?

MAGGIE

You have been to Lady Franklin's house in England, haven't you?

KANE

You know I have. I called on her in London after the last expedition.

MAGGIE

This house isn't in London. It's by the sea. A big, square house. An alley of lime trees leads up to the entrance. The back faces the ocean. It has a gabled roof with iron gridwork running around it. There's a long balcony with a fancy railing. It looks over the sea.

KANE

The widow's walk.

MAGGIE

What?

KANE

It's called a widow's walk. She told me how much she hated the name. She had one built onto the roof of her country house so that she watch for his ship.

MAGGIE

She will watch in vain. He died. I don't know when, but I saw him die.

KANE

On an ice floe.

MAGGIE

Yes.

KATIE

All alone. Do you realize that you're saying his crew mutinied?

MAGGIE

I don't know. Perhaps he made them leave him behind. He did not feel angry or betrayed. He just couldn't go on. He was praying, and his last thoughts were of her. At the end he was glad to fall asleep. Only sad that she would wait and wait for him.

KANE

Look, Maggie, it's natural for you to dream about him when you're so worried about my voyages.

MAGGIE

There's more, Elisha. I don't want to put what I saw into words, I haven't the heart. Please say you've heard enough to be convinced.

KANE

You'd better tell me the rest.

MAGGIE

I was at your funeral.

KANE

After a long pause, his concern is not for himself, but for her.

All right, Maggie. I think this has gone far enough.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry. I didn't want to tell you. I asked you not to make me.

She begins to cry.

KANE

It's not ME I'm worried about, it's you. This -- obsession -- has you so upset. It's bad for you, Maggie.

She continues to sob. He embraces her.

Darling, I'm going to take you back to the Hotel. I'll have them bring you some food. Then I want you to try and rest.

Maggie begins to protest. Kane persists.

Rest, Maggie - you're exhausted. Promise me you'll try, only for two or three hours? Then I'll come for you and we will try to see our way through this.

Maggie nods. Kane signals to the hall porter to have his carriage brought around, and continues to comfort Maggie as the scene ends.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE XI

Meanwhile...

Barnum, strolling past the storefront of Tiffany's, just misses meeting Leah, who is emerging laden with parcels from a day's spending. She is gowned in billowing folds of the finest black silk and velvet, which, despite proclaiming her widowhood, expose a good deal of cleavage, accents of red and diamonds galore identify her as the merriest of widows.

Leah comes up behind Barnum and archly taps him on the shoulder.

Song #4: Enough!

LEAH

GOT A MOMENT FOR A RICH ONE?

BARNUM

WHICH ONE?

LEAH

ME!

BARNUM

GOT A MOMENT FOR A DANDY?

LEAH

IS HE HANDY?

BARNUM

YES, AND HE'S FREE!

LEAH

GOT A MOMENT?

BARNUM

MAYBE TWO.

LEAH

IT WON'T PAY THE RENT, BUT WHO CARES?

SOMEONE ELSE HAS LEFT A LITTLE TO EASE THE PAIN.

BARNUM

GOD BLESS THE WOMAN WHO SHARES!
THERE'S ...

They link arms.

BOTH

ENOUGH FOR YOU AND ENOUGH FOR ME,
AND ENOUGH FOR US TO EVEN BE
GENEROUS TO ALL OF THOSE AROUND
IF THEY'RE QUICK ENOUGH TO FIGURE WHERE WE'RE FOUND!
OH, LIFE CAN BE FUNNY AND LIFE CAN BE TOUCH
BUT IT SURE IS EASIER
WHEN YOU'VE FINALLY GOT ENOUGH!

Together they stroll offstage.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE XII

Three hours later: Early afternoon

Maggie and Kane are back in the park where they earlier declared their love ("Two Strong People"). But now the verdure of spring is gone, and fall is nearly over. The trees retain only a faded vestige of their autumn colours. The few leaves that remain seem to shiver in the watery grey light.

Strolling arm-in-arm with Kane, Maggie looks restored and serene. She is elegantly dressed, her hair simply but neatly arranged, and she has an air of authority about her. The priestess has banished the madwoman and is in control once more.

The couple stop at their usual park bench and sit down facing each other. They hold onto each other's hands and gaze into each other's eyes.

KANE

That's much better. You look like your old self again. Indeed, you look very beautiful, Mrs. Kane.

MAGGIE

Thank you, Doctor. You see how well your prescription has worked.

KANE

It's so good to see you smile. That's the only prescription I need.

MAGGIE

I have good reason to smile. I've found the solution to our problems.

KANE

So soon? I'm impressed. It's obvious who is the better physician here!

MAGGIE

It's so simple. We should have seen it at once.

KANE

I can contain my curiosity no longer! What is it?

MAGGIE

We shall hold a séance.

KANE

A séance.

MAGGIE

Yes. You and I together shall have a séance, and ask the spirit of Franklin to come through. He is the only one who can confirm for you the truth of my vision.

KANE

Maggie, you're joking!

MAGGIE

Of course I'm not joking, Elisha. Don't you understand? It's the only way! Your proof shall come from the very man, from the spirit of the man, whom you are needlessly risking your life to rescue. Once you've heard him out, you'll never want to go back there.

KANE

This is absurd, Maggie. My expeditions are far too important to risk on the outcome of ... of ...

MAGGIE

Of what?

Kane is silent.

MAGGIE

Of a parlour game? Or are you thinking something even worse? Are you thinking "a hoax"? That's it, isn't it? You think I've plotted to stage a bogus communication in order to convince you to stay at home?!

KANE

I didn't say that, Maggie. In fact, I didn't say anything.

MAGGIE

Well, now is the time to say it, Elisha! Now is the time to say that you think my powers are all a sham -- just a cheap gimmick for keeping myself in the limelight, and well supplied with cash!

KANE

Please calm yourself. I'm suggesting nothing of the kind. I KNOW you have something ... something ... unusual. I was in Hydesville with you. I saw the letters of blood on the side of the cabin. No one could possibly have faked those. But...

MAGGIE

But, that was nearly five years ago, is that it? For all you know all the manifestations since then have been faked, by myself and Leah, in collusion.

KANE

No, Maggie. Don't twist things in that ugly way. I don't think you have it in you to deliberately deceive.

MAGGIE

My God, Elisha! I have a way of saving your life! And, you dismiss it! What else can I think? You must see me as either a lunatic who thinks she converses with ghosts, or a fraud. Which one, Elisha -- which one?

She is on the verge of bursting into tears.

KANE

Neither. I love you. And, I believe in you.

MAGGIE

But, not in my vision.

KANE

Admitting it at last.

No.

MAGGIE

And, not in my manifestations -- not since Hydesville.

KANE

I can't say whether ... I honestly don't know.

MAGGIE

Then you can't know why Spirit Rapping is so important to me either. Why I will not and must not turn my back on it if I marry you.

KANE

All right ... yes. I confess, since you make me confess, that I do not understand. I wish I could. And, believe me, I have tried. But, I just cannot. I will marry you whether you give it all up or not, but if you choose not to, I will probably never understand your decision.

MAGGIE

After a long, painful pause.

Then you would never understand me. The very essence of Margaretta Fox would be a stranger to you.

KANE

I love you. I love the girl, the woman, who is Margaretta Fox. Isn't that enough?

MAGGIE

No, it isn't, Elisha. Not for people like us.

KANE

It is for me.

MAGGIE

Is it? If I told you that I loved the man, Elisha Kane, but not the explorer, the seeker after knowledge, the lover of adventure, would you think that I loved or knew the REAL Elisha Kane?

KANE

Maggie, don't do this. If we pursue this argument we will both regret it. Our marriage, our lives together, will be...

MAGGIE

Sadly, but with finality.

Not "will" -- "would". Our marriage would have been a fiction. Just a hollow fiction.

KANE

You can't mean this. You can't want us to be lost to each other.

Song #5: Loving You

I WAS THE ONE WHO GREW UP AS A DREAMER.
I WAS THE ONE WITH THE COURAGE AND VISION
TO FIND THE UNFOUND, CHASE THE UNKNOWN
I STOOD MY GROUND. WHILE OTHERS HAD FLOWN
WHERE ARE THE REWARDS?
AM I DESTINED TO CONTINUE, YEAR AFTER YEAR?
AM I DESTINED TO PASS OVER SOMETHING SO DEAR AS YOU?

I WAS THE ONE LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER.
I WAS THE ONE WHO WAS WILING TO FOLLOW
THE UNTRAVELLED PATH. UNMASTERED SEA.
TO FACE NATURE'S WRATH WAS NOTHING TO ME
WHERE ARE THE REWARDS?
AM I DESTINED TO CONTINUE, YEAR AFTER YEAR?
AM I DESTINED TO PASS OVER SOMETHING SO DEAR AS YOU?

KANE

Maggie, reconsider all this. No! forget the entire conversation. Put it from your mind.
Tomorrow we'll see more clearly. We'll be able to unravel these knots, if only we are reasonable
and cool-headed. I won't let you move out of my life like this. If you think I will, then you don't
know me.

MAGGIE

But, I do know you, my love. No one knows you better.

WHO KNOWS YOU AS I DO?
WHO ALWAYS WILL LOVE YOU
FOR ALL OF YOUR PASSIONS AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS?
YOU'RE SO ALIVE!
I'LL ALWAYS CARRY YOUR MEMORY NEAR.

KANE

I'VE NEVER KNOWN 'TIL THIS MOMENT FEAR.

MAGGIE

DR. KANE, YOU'RE AFRAID.

KANE

THERE'S NOT A MOMENT I WOULD TRADE.

MAGGIE

LOVING YOU

HAS BROUGHT ME EVERY KIND OF JOY I EVER THOUGHT I MIGHT MISS.
LOVING YOU
HAS TAUGHT ME WHY THROUGHOUT THE AGES KINGDOMS FELL FOR A KISS.
LOVING YOU
HAS BEEN THE MOST COMPELLING REASON I HAVE FOUND
TO BE GLAD I WAS ME.
LOVING YOU
HAS BROUGHT THE SUN TO EVERY SEASON
LET IT SNOW, LET IT RAIN, FOR I CANNOT COMPLAIN.

KANE

LOVING YOU
HAS MADE ME ONCE AGAIN BELIEVE IN ALL THE FATE I HAD LOST.
LOVING YOU
HAS MADE ME HUNGER FOR OUR STOLEN TIME, WHATEVER THE COST.

LOVING YOU
HAS BEEN THE SINGLE HONEST ANSWER TO WHY I
HAD TO CHANGE WHAT I WAS.
LOVING YOU HAS BEEN MY MOST IMPORTANT CHANCE.

MAGGIE

OR PERHAPS, INDEED, MY LAST.

BOTH

NOW THAT THE TIME FOR LOVING YOU IS PAST.

Maggie and Kane stand together at centre stage, holding each other at arms' length, as if already they are drifting away into their separate destinies. Upstage, stage right and stage left, their "shadows" take up their distinct lives. The Kane double sails into the Arctic seascape, while the Maggie double takes her place in a candle-lit séance circle.

Music up and out.

END OF SCENE

ACT II, SCENE XIII

Lights up on a softened, well-fed Mr. and Mrs. Fox, framed in the doorway of their white-pillared Italianate country-house, Mr. Fox is the first spy their eagerly awaited guests.

MR. FOX

I see them! And, I see the baby!

Enter Katie, beaming. She has grown into a fine lady. She is accompanied by her handsome cultivated-looking husband, Jim. Katie proudly holds a baby luxuriously wrapped in cashmere and lace.

MRS. FOX

Welcome, you two. Welcome at last! Oh, let me look at my grandchild! Baby -- Baby Margaretta.

All greet and embrace one another. Then contemplate the baby.

Song #5: Wonderful

MRS. FOX

OUR HOME IS YOUR HOME, PLEASE STAY FOR A WHILE.
FOR YOU ARE THE ONE WHO MADE OUR KATIE SMILE.

MR. FOX

AND, YOU ARE THE ONES WHO BROUGHT US THIS VISION OF BEAUTY,
THIS BEAUTIFUL GIFT.

JIM

ISN'T SHE WONDERFUL?

KATIE

LIFE IS WONDERFUL FOR US!
IF WE ONLY COULD HELP OTHERS FEEL AS WE FEEL
THEN OUR HAPPINESS WOULD BE COMPLETE.

MRS. FOX

WE ALL MUST FIND OUR OWN WAY.

JIM

ISN'T SHE WONDERFUL?

MR. FOX

ISN'T SHE SWEET?

OUR HOME IS YOUR HOME, YOU'VE BROUGHT US SUCH JOY

THAT NO OTHER PAIN IN OUR LIVES CAN DESTROY.

YOU ARE THE ONES WE THANK FOR THESE MOMENTS OF PLEASURE.

MRS. FOX

THESE MOMENTS OF BLISS.

KATIE

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

JIM

LIFE IS WONDERFUL.

ALL

AT MOMENTS LIKE THIS!

The lights gradually go down.

END OF SCENE

EPILOGUE

The eerie plane of eternity with which the action of the play opened. Echoes of "Who Desires?" blend and swell into a buoyant. Triumphant reprise of "Knock!" as the company. Spirits once more since and march around and across the stage in various formations. Eventually they fill the stage and face the audience, as sound and light flood the final tableau. Maggie and Kane take their place at centre stage, hand-in-hand, and reconciled at last.

COMPANY

Song #6: "KNOCK!" (Reprise)

"KNOCK!" ON THE TABLES,
 "KNOCK!" ON THE FLOORS.
 "KNOCK!" ON THE WINDOWS,
 "KNOCK!" ON THE DOORS.
 LEGIONS OF SPIRITS WITH FACES SUBLIME
 STACCATO FOOTSTEPS RAP ACROSS TIME.

FEAR NOT THE DARKNESS,
 LOVED ONES ARE NEAR.
 "KNOCK!" IS THE SOUND THAT
 TELLS YOU WE'RE HERE.
 TO WARN OR ADVISE, TO ROMP OR ATONE!
 YOU MAY BE SURE THAT YOU'RE NEVER ALONE!

WE'RE THE GROUP WITH THE SCOOP ON ETERNITY.
 SORROW ENDS, FOES AND FRIENDS SOON CEASE TO BE.
 UNLIKE LIFE, AFTERLIFE REWARDS EVERYONE.
 SO SEIZE THE DAY WHILE YOU MAY
 AND THEN ENJOY THE RIDE ONTO THE OTHER SIDE.

DROUGHTS OR RAINS, HURRICANES -- WHAT DO WE CARE?
 JOY ABIDES, SUNNY SIDE'S UP, WE DO DECLARE!
 BREAKS AND SPRAINS, ACHES AND PAINS, DON'T BROOD ABOUT
 THOSE BECAUSE AN ASTRAL BOD WON'T EVER WEAR OUT -- IT TENDS TO TEAR ABOUT,
 AND

"KNOCK!" ON THE TABLES,
 "KNOCK!" ON THE FLOORS.
 "KNOCK!" ON THE WINDOWS,
 "KNOCK!" ON THE DOORS.
 LEGIONS OF SPIRITS WITH FACES SUBLIME
 STACCATO FOOTSTEPS RAP ACROSS TIME.

THE END