

SCENE 2

KLEIN HOME, BROOKLYN

Sitting at the humbler piano with her back to us is a woman. She plays Moonlight Sonata. She gets halfway in, stops. Then her hand appears with a lit cigarette. She inhales, blows out a puff, resumes playing. Then CAROLE, age 16, in skirt that does not match her blouse, comes in excitedly holding a piece of notebook paper. The woman is Carole's mother, GENIE.

CAROLE

Ma, what're you doing? I thought you were writing your play.

GENIE

I got stuck. This relaxes me.

CAROLE

Do you mind?

Genie gets up. Carole sits, puts the paper in front of her and sings:

WHAT SHOULD I WRITE?

WHAT CAN I SAY?

HOW CAN I TELL YOU HOW MUCH I MISS YOU?

(Speaks)

New intro. What do you think?

GENIE

Carole dear, remember when you used to play Mozart? I'd be so proud if you played Mozart again. So would your father, God rest his soul.

CAROLE

Ma, you're just divorced, he's not dead.

DOORBELL.

GENIE

He's dead to me.

CAROLE

Daddy never loved that other woman. He always tells me he loves you.

GENIE

He just says that so you'll think I'm bitter and unforgiving. I'll never forgive him for that.

BETTY Enters.

BETTY

Hi, Carole. Hi, Mrs. K. Carole, you want to study for the history test?

CAROLE

I can't. I'm going into the city to sell my RAIN UNTIL SEPTEMBER song.

GENIE

What? 12 places turned that down—

CAROLE

I got a new guy to go to, Donny Kirshner.

GENIE

Where is Donny Kirshner's office?

CAROLE

1650 Broadway. Times Square.

GENIE

Times Square. If there were only two places on earth, Hell and Times Square, the nice people would live in Hell. That's not a proper place for a 16 year-old girl.

CAROLE

Betty'll come. She's 18. Combined, we're 34.

GENIE

It's not just Times Square. It's show business. I know how hard it is— every time they send my plays back, it's like a knife. Get your degree and be a teacher.

CAROLE

I don't want to do that anymore. I want to be a songwriter. Ma, when I hear a good song, I feel like someone understands me. Even if I'm all alone, it's like I've got a friend in the room. I want to do that for people.

GENIE

It's not practical. Girls don't write music. They teach it.

CAROLE

Look. AMERICAN BANDSTAND's on right now. If you feel my song isn't as good as whatever hit song they're playing, I won't go.

GENIE

Deal.

They turn the TV on. They hear:

GERRY

How do you know Betty?

CAROLE

We're both freshman. You?

GERRY

Junior. You go here? How old are you?

CAROLE

16. I skipped two grades. What's your major?

GERRY

Chemistry. But I'm going to be a playwright.

CAROLE

Really? I write, too. Songs.

GERRY

Me, too. But just lyrics. What about you?

CAROLE

Both but I'm not so good at words. Maybe that doesn't matter in rock and roll.

GERRY

Until words matter, rock and roll won't. It's just lame-o teenybopper junk. Plus a single is three minutes. What can you say in three minutes? Songs by Cole Porter or Gershwin are like little plays. You should listen to Bach some time.

He exits. She goes to the piano and plays an intricate section of Bach. Gerry comes back in, amazed.

Ok! I'm an asshole. Now I see why you skipped two grades! So you're a classical music major?

CAROLE

No, education. And I like all music. I think rock and roll is fun-- it's harder than you think.

GERRY

Hey, I'm writing a play. There's a scene where I need a song. You wanna write the music?

CAROLE

Uh, sure, yeah—

He opens his notebook, flips through, finds a page.

GERRY

Here. Those are the lyrics. See what you think.

He hands her the page. She starts to read.

If you don't understand them, I can explain. There are a lot of references to stuff in the play.

She keeps reading. He can't tell what she is feeling.

And there are some literary allusions, too, so if you don't—

She does not look up but keeps reading. She still does not reveal her feelings. He starts feeling nervous.

You know it's only a first draft. And I had a toothache that day.

Give them back.

He reaches for them but she pulls them away.

CAROLE

Stop.

She keeps reading. Then looks up:

They're incredible. They have so much feeling in them. But it's put so simply.

GERRY

Yeah, that's what I was going for cause the guy, that's how he is.

Carole looks at him with a new respect.

CAROLE

And I thought you were just cute. Yeah, I'd love to try and write this. If I do, will you write some words for my lame-o teenybopper songs?

GERRY

Sure. You know, you have a beautiful smile.

CAROLE

I do? I can't see it from in here.

GERRY

You know, we could do more than write together.

CAROLE

We could?

He slides an arm around her.

GERRY

Have I told you the title of the play?

CAROLE

No. What?

GERRY

THE YOUNG LOVERS. As a writer I feel research is the best way to understand my characters. So getting to know you in a more intimate way would really help us artistically.

CAROLE

We probably shouldn't, I always hear people shouldn't mix the personal and the professio—

They kiss.

Who knew? I love research!

They kiss passionately.

SCENE 6

CAROLE'S OFFICE AT 1650 BROADWAY.

Carole plays the piano. Donny walks by.

DONNY

Hey, I need a girl song. It's for the Shirelles and I want it by tomorrow. I'm telling everybody. First one I like is it.

CAROLE

Ok, we'll get you something.

DONNY

You ok? How's the baby?

CAROLE

She's good. She's almost 5.

DONNY

Man, five years old already, the time really –

CAROLE

Five months.

DONNY

Jesus, people count the months? Anyway, is the kid a problem? You're not giving me enough stuff.

CAROLE

It's hard. We don't earn enough from our music yet so Gerry works as a chemist all day and by the time he gets home, he's dead. I've had a new song finished for a week but he's too tired to do the lyrics. Plus, we still live with my Mom which doesn't make things easier.

Cynthia Weil appears, knocks on the open door.

CYNTHIA

I'm sorry, I'm lost. It's like a rabbit warren in here. Can you help me find Donny Kirshner's office?

DONNY

I'm Donny.

CYNTHIA

Hi, I'm Cynthia Weil. My Aunt Toni knows your friend Eddie so Toni called Eddie and Eddie called you and you said you'd see me.

DONNY

Remind me. What are you? Singer, composer, secretary —

CYNTHIA

Lyricist.

DONNY

You got something I can listen to?

CYNTHIA

Yes.

DONNY

Where is it?

CYNTHIA

In my throat. It's my voice. I'll sing you one of my songs.

DONNY

I don't do live auditions anymore. Leave me a demo.

CYNTHIA

Yeah, my aunt who knows Eddie who knows you said that's what you wanted but I didn't think that was best.

DONNY

Well, I do. That's why I said it.

CYNTHIA

My songs are better live.

DONNY

That's not a great quality for the record business. Leave something.

CYNTHIA

If I leave you something, you might not listen to it.

DONNY

Jesus, you're argumentative.

CYNTHIA

You're the one who's arguing. I'm just saying what I want.

(to Carole)

Do you know HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN?

CAROLE

Sure, I—

CYNTHIA

Hit it!

BARRY

(laughing)

Well, it made it to number 7 but, ok, let's try to do better.

(picks up phone and dials)

I'll reschedule my doctors' appointments but first I have to cancel some other plans I had lined up for to –

(into phone; very sexy)

Hey, babe. Sorry but I can't have drinks tonight. Gotta work. Yeah. Yeah. Yeaah. Ok, bye.

Hangs up, dials another number.

We might be here all night, I'm just warning you. Carole and Gerry are insanely competitive and they will have something ready first thing, believe me, and then all our work will be for –

(into phone; sexy voice)

Hey, sweetie, I can't do dinner. Gotta work. I know, my boss is so mean to me. I'll call you tomorrow and you can help me feel better. Ok, bye. Oh, wait. Can you put Mindy on?... Hey, babe, bad news about dessert.

SCENE 2

CYNTHIA'S OFFICE.

Carole knocks on Cynthia's door.

CAROLE

Hi.

CYNTHIA

Hi! Where have you been? It's been ages.

CAROLE

I've been working from home. Ever since Little Eva's song took off, we don't have a sitter. Anyway, I need to talk to you. Do you know Janelle Woods?

CYNTHIA

Yeah, I saw her doing ONE FINE DAY. God, she's really something, isn't she? She's not only talented, she's gorgeous.

Carole can't help it. She starts to cry.

Oh, my God, what's wrong?

CAROLE

Gerry's having an affair with her.

CYNTHIA

What could he possibly see in her? She's ugly and has no talent!

Carole can't herself— she laughs.

How did you find out?

CAROLE

He told me he was going to do it. Look, I know how young we were when we got married. I thought maybe if I let him leave the marriage he'll see what we have and come back. Anyway, that was the idea but so far it isn't working and it's just killing me.

CYNTHIA

You should tell him how you feel, that you want him to stop.

CAROLE

But— but what if he says: then I chose her?

CYNTHIA

Do you really think he'd say that?

CAROLE

I don't know. He's just not himself these days. He comes in with lots of ideas but he's not finishing much. Sometimes he has too much energy, other times he's half dead.

CYNTHIA

Do you think it's— it's drugs?

CAROLE

Maybe. He's been smoking a lot of grass. I'm so square, you know me, anything else I wouldn't know. The whole thing makes me so mad, sometimes I just hate him.

CYNTHIA

So why don't you leave him?

CAROLE

Cause I love him.

CYNTHIA

I know. Love. The basis for so much hate.

CAROLE

I don't want to be like my mother, always in a rage about a man. I want to fix this but am I crazy? Gerry's always talking about how everything is changing and he's right, it is— but is marriage an old-fashioned idea?

CYNTHIA

No.

CAROLE

So why didn't you want to do it?

CYNTHIA

You have your mother, I have mine. She stayed married to my father, whom she did not love, because she had no idea how to make a living. I don't want to be that person.

CAROLE

I don't think you would be. Would Barry want you to stop working?

CYNTHIA

I don't know what Barry wants. Every time I call him, he hangs up. So you know what? I'm over him. I'm moving on. He wants to get married, he can marry his gastroenterologist. I guess I have to find a new partner. I'm scared, Carole. You know what Donny said to me the other day?

Spot hits Donny:

DONNY

What's going on with you guys? Carole and Gerry are writing much more than you. This could affect your contract.

Spot off on Donny.

CAROLE

He said that? You know what he said to me?

Spot on Donny.

DONNY

What's going on with you guys? Barry and Cynthia are writing much more than you. This could affect your contract.

Spot off Donny. Carole and Cynthia laugh.

CYNTHIA

That rat! I feel so much better!

Carole rises.

CAROLE

Ok, I'm going to go.

CYNTHIA

What are you going to do about Gerry?

CAROLE

I'm going to talk to him, tell him this isn't right.

CYNTHIA

You'll do great.

CAROLE

I hope so. Why am I so sure of myself at work but with Gerry, I'm always guessing?

CYNTHIA

I'm right there with you.

CAROLE

And don't give up on Barry. He'd be crazy to let you go.

CYNTHIA

I know. But Barry is crazy.

She opens the door. Barry is there. Carole is startled but Cynthia does not move.

CAROLE

Barry! It's good to see you. Bye, guys!

CYNTHIA

I'll never understand why this song wasn't number one.

BARRY

LOCOMOTION beat us.

CYNTHIA

God, that seems like a thousand years ago.

BARRY

I know. I can't believe Carole and Gerry are getting divorced.

CYNTHIA

I know. But it wasn't right for a long time. It's funny how long it takes people to see something that's right in front of them.

BARRY

Yep.

CYNTHIA

Like now, for instance, I can see that it's just as stupid not to marry the right person as it is to marry the wrong one.

BARRY

Well, sure.

(realizes what she said)

Wait. What? Are you serious?

LEAD SINGER & BACKUP SINGERS

UPTOWN, UPTOWN, OOH

CYNTHIA

It's not that I haven't been happy with you. It's just I'm afraid to trust the happiness.

BARRY

This is what I've been offering the whole time: a life of mutual anxiety and doubt!

Barry drops to his knees.

Cynthia Weil, will you marry me?

CYNTHIA

We're good in all the rooms.

LEAD SINGER

BACKUP SINGERS

THE WORLD IS SWEET, AH
IT'S AT HIS FEET, WHEN HE'S UPTOWN! AH

Everyone claps. Carole enters. They wave. She comes over.

CAROLE

Sorry, I'm late – I was reading Sherry that cute book you sent her. She loves it.

CYNTHIA

Does she understand it?

CAROLE

No. She likes to lick it.

CYNTHIA

I love your new hair.

CAROLE

Really? I finally decided to just let it do what it wants. And I'm single again. I figured it was time for a new look.

BARRY

I'm sorry about the news. How are you doing with everything?

CAROLE

Well, it's scary. I was with Gerry since I was 16, almost half my life. And it's been hard in the house because, you know, everything reminds me of him. So, and this is my big news, I've decided to move.

CYNTHIA

Great – back to the city?

CAROLE

A little farther. LA.

Both Barry and Cynthia are shocked.

BOTH

What?

CAROLE

Well, I took the girls to Disneyland a couple of weeks ago just as a— you know— just to change our moods, and we all loved LA.

CYNTHIA

But what about work?

CAROLE

A lot of the business has moved out there. And you know what's funny? I'd been having trouble writing at home. But when I got to California, I wrote a few songs.

CYNTHIA

That's good— do you like them?

CAROLE

Well, I liked them when I wrote them but now that I'm back— I don't know. They're not like my other songs, and I can't think of anyone who could sing them— they don't seem right for anybody. Anyway, enough about me, how are you guys?

BARRY

Should we tell her?

CAROLE

If it's happy, tell me.

BARRY

We're getting married!

Carole squeals with delight.

CAROLE

Oh, that's great!

The noise attracts the attention of Nick who turns and sees her. He walks over as she says—

This is the best news! Congratulations, guys!

CAROLE

Ok, calm down. Get your breath. It's ok, you'll be ok.

There is a knock.

Yeah, 5 minutes, I got it.

But Gerry steps into the doorway.

GERRY

You should listen to Bach some time. Otherwise you'll never get to Carnegie Hall.

CAROLE

Gerry!

GERRY

I'm so proud of you. Here, I even brought you a good luck present.

He hands her a gift. She unwraps it.

CAROLE

"How To Orchestrate With Strings!"

She smiles.

Thanks. So how's everything? How are you feeling?

GERRY

I have my good days and my not so good days. But this is a good one, being here on your big night.

(GERRY)

There is an awkward pause and then:

Look, I know it's almost time but I had something I had to tell you.

CAROLE

Uh, ok—

GERRY

It's something I should have told you a long time ago.

He pauses, struggling. Then:

I'm sorry. I'm really, really sorry—

—for all of it. I never meant for it to go like that.

CAROLE

You know, Ger, you made a lot of mistakes. But we made two beautiful girls, and our songs. That's something to be proud of.

Stage manager appears.

STAGE MANAGER

It's time.

She goes to the door.

GERRY

Hey, I got a prediction. Want to hear it?

CAROLE

Sure.

GERRY

You're going all the way.