

(ALMOST) GOT IT MADE

A MUSICAL COMEDY IN ONE ACT

Book and Lyrics by Maureen Kane Berg
Music by Maureen Kane Berg and Thomas C. Berg

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 MALES, 3 FEMALES)

MOLLY MERRIWEATHER (f).....Protagonist - - A young woman in her twenties working at a large real estate development and management company in a large city; she is earnest and sweet, but not naïve; she has become disillusioned with her job. *(142 lines)*

FREDDY SWEETBRIAR (m).....Molly's assistant at work and friend; he falls in love very easily. *(86 lines)*

CHLOE CRYSTALSON (f)Molly's college friend - - a beautiful jet-setting fashion photographer with lots of family money. *(47 lines)*

NORVALL CHITWOOD, III (m) ..Molly's immediate boss; charming on the surface, he picks favorites and has a condescending bite; he is in tight with Earl Cheeseman. *(21 lines)*

EARL CHEESEMAN/

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER (m)...Earl Cheeseman is the Big Boss of Molly's company. On the surface he is a new-economy boss with cardigan sweaters and a family metaphor for his company; underneath, however, he is an old-fashioned boss who demands absolute loyalty. Also plays the Mysterious Stranger (probably hooded or otherwise disguised) whom Molly follows during "Molly Tails a Stranger." (13 lines)

OFFICE MANAGER/

SANDWICH LADY (f)Secretary/Office Manager in Molly's company; an old-fashioned Girl Friday to Mr. Cheeseman. Also plays the sandwich delivery person and back-up singer during "Send Out My Resume." (3 lines)

OFFICER OWEN TRÜSTY/

GENERIC OFFICE WORKER (m) Officer Trüsty is the policeman who investigates the theft of Chloe's ATM Card and PIN number from her apartment. He also plays a generic office worker when necessary. (31 lines)

SETTING

A metropolitan city (Minneapolis); much of the action occurs at a large downtown real estate development and management company.

TIME: The present.

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1 **CHEESEMAN OFFICES**

The Company Song, The Big Cheese, The Key to Success, Molly's Grandfather

Scene 2 **CHLOE'S APARTMENT**

Opportunity Knocks

Scene 3 **TWO CITY STREETS**

Molly Tails a Stranger

Scene 4 **CHIC COFFEE HOUSE**

Cappuccino and Tiramisu; Cappuccino and Tiramisu, Reprise

Scene 5 **CHEESEMAN OFFICES** (late at night)

Opportunity Knocks, Reprise

Scene 6 **CHEESEMAN OFFICES** (next morning)

Send Out My Resume

Scene 7 **POLICE STATION**

Scene 8 **CHEESEMAN OFFICES**

Dies Irae, We've Got It Made

MUSICAL NUMBERS

- SONG #1 **THE COMPANY SONG** Entire Cast
SONG #2 **THE BIG CHEESE**Cheeseman, Norvall, Office Manager, Cast
SONG #3 **THE KEY TO SUCCESS**..... Norvall
SONG #4 **MOLLY'S GRANDFATHER**..... Molly
SONG #5 **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS**.....Molly, Freddy, Chloe
SONG #6 **MOLLY TAILS A STRANGER**..... Instrumental
SONG #7 **CAPPUCCINO AND TIRAMISU** Freddy and Chloe
SONG #8 **CAPPUCCINO AND TIRAMISU, REPRISE**Freddy and Chloe
SONG #9 **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS, REPRISE**..... Molly
SONG #10 **SEND OUT MY RESUME**..... Molly w/ Freddy,
Chloe, Sandwich Lady
SONG #11 **DIES IRAE** Two offstage male singers
(Norvall and Cheeseman)
SONG #12 **WE'VE GOT IT MADE**..... Entire Cast

SCENE 1

OFFICE MANAGER: (*Voiceover in darkened theater.*) Attention, everyone! Mr. Cheeseman is calling a meeting of all employees in the main entrance hall. I repeat, Earl wants all employees in the main entrance hall!

Lights come up on the Cheeseman Offices main entrance hall. See Director's Score Production Notes for detailed suggestions on how to create simple sets to suggest the various places in this musical.

SONG #1: THE COMPANY SONG (ENTIRE CAST)

All cast members join in singing this song except CHEESEMAN, who enters from his office door partway through and looks approvingly at the adoring crowd. OFFICE MANAGER has a whistle around her neck, which she can use to punctuate music if desired.

ALL:

GLORY TO CHEESEMAN'S REAL ESTATE
DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT, INC.!
NEVER WAS THERE A FIRM SO GREAT,
TO CHEESEMAN'S RAISE YOUR DRINK.

Several raise Starbucks' coffee cups and Diet Cokes.

GLORY TO CHEESEMAN'S REAL ESTATE
AND TO OUR FOUNDER ALL GIVE HAIL!
ABOUT EARL CHEESEMAN THERE IS NO DEBATE,
HE WILL ALWAYS MAKE THE SALE!

C-H-E-E-S-E-M-A-N! (*Spelling it out like a cheer.*)
CHEESEMAN, CHEESEMAN, SHOUT IT MEN!

HAIL TO THE BEST FIRM EVER YET
SING IT OUT AS LOUD AS YOU CAN!
IF YOU HAVE LUCK ENOUGH TO GET
EMPLOYED BY EARL CHEESEMAN.

(ALMOST) GOT IT MADE)

GLORY TO CHEESEMAN'S REAL ESTATE
'CAUSE THAT'S OUR COMPANY.
WE ARE COGS IN THE WHEEL OF THE REAL ESTATE DEAL,
AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE PROUD TO BE!

COGS IN THE WHEEL OF THE REAL ESTATE DEAL.
YES! THAT'S WHAT WE'RE PROUD TO BE!
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE PROUD TO BE!
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE PROUD TO BE!
H -- A -- I -- L CHEESEMAN!

Song morphs into the vamp for "The Big Cheese."

CHEESEMAN: *(Addresses the crowd. Speaks cheerily, but with an underlying intensity.)* You know that I think of all of you as my family. However, certain things have made me wonder whether some of us here at Cheeseman's Real Estate Development and Management, Inc. have forgotten the fundamental principles on which I founded this firm. Who can tell me your first obligation as an employee of Cheeseman's?

NORVALL: *(Steps forward, raising his hand tentatively - - when CHEESEMAN doesn't see him at first, clears his throat - - CHEESEMAN nods to him.)* To demonstrate complete loyalty to the firm and to you, sir?

CHEESEMAN: *(Nods approvingly.)* That's right, Norvall.

Puts an arm around NORVALL's neck and gives him a noogie while NORVALL smiles and looks pleased. CHEESEMAN sings. Backup is sung by NORVALL CHITWOOD and OFFICE MANAGER and/or others in the group of employees who pop up. (In this shorter version of the show, you may decide to give all the lines to OFFICE MANAGER and NORVALL, or include others as desired.) OFFICE MANAGER can demonstrate some of her more threatening lines by blowing whistle if desired.

**SONG #2: THE BIG CHEESE
(CHEESEMAN, NORVALL, OFFICE MANAGER, CAST)**

CHEESEMAN:

I AM THE ONLY ONE AROUND HERE YOU MUST PLEASE

OFFICE MANAGER AND NORVALL:

HE'S THE BIG CHEESE

CHEESEMAN:

BUT YOU ALL KNOW THAT ISN'T VERY HARD TO DO

NORVALL: (*Playfully punching CHEESEMAN's arm.*)

HIS HEART IS TRUE

CHEESEMAN:

I NEED TO KNOW THAT YOU BELONG TO ME
WHILE YOU'RE LOGGED IN ON YOUR PC
IN SUN OR RAIN OR SNOW, NIGHT, NOON AND MORN.

OFFICE MANAGER:

AND PLEASE, NO PORN!

CHEESEMAN:

AND IF YOU WISELY FOLLOW EACH OF THESE FEW RULES

OFFICE MANAGER AND NORVALL:

HIS RULES ARE JEWELS

CHEESEMAN:

THEN YOU WILL FIND I WILL REWARD YOU FOR YOUR WORK.

NORVALL:

YOU MUSTN'T SHIRK

CHEESEMAN:

THOUGH I'M NOT KNOWN TO BE EXTRAVAGANT,
YOU'LL HAVE ENOUGH TO PAY YOUR RENT
AND WHAT IS MORE, YOU'LL EARN MY FAITH AND TRUST!

OFFICE MANAGER AND NORVALL:

AND THAT WE MUST!

CHEESEMAN: (*Speaks as music continues underneath.*) For the third time in seven months, I have been within days of completing an important deal when I have been secretly outbid by Ormond Crouch of Crouch Properties. (*Looks around meaningfully at the group.*) I must assume that we have a mole who is feeding Crouch the critical information that has allowed him to best me. I suggest that you give yourself up right now, and face your punishment. (*Pauses expectantly - - no one steps forward.*) Very well, if you don't want to do this the easy way, you need to know, I'm coming after you. Because there is nothing worse than being betrayed by family! So I've got my eye on you. And everyone who is loyal to this company, I expect you to do the same. If you see any suspicious behavior - - my door will always be open to you. So keep a sharp eye on your brothers and sisters, and let me know what you see.

CHEESEMAN: (*Singing.*)
IT'S GENEROSITY THAT I PERSONIFY

NORVALL AND OFFICE MANAGER:
HE'S SUCH A GUY!

CHEESEMAN:
BUT THERE IS ONE THING OVER ALL I DO DEMAND

NORVALL:
OR YOU'LL BE CANNED.

CHEESEMAN:
WHEN AN EMPLOYEE IS DISLOYAL
THEN MY BLOOD BEGINS TO BOIL
AND I WILL NOT REST UNTIL I FIND THE LOUT.

OFFICE MANAGER:
DON'T HAVE A DOUBT.

CHEESEMAN:
SO I WILL TURN THIS FIRM RIGHT UPSIDE DOWN AND SHAKE

OFFICE MANAGER AND NORVALL:
MAKE NO MISTAKE.

CHEESEMAN:

AND AS I SEARCH YOU OUT I'LL LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED.

NORVALL:

YOU WILL GET BURNED.

CHEESEMAN:

'CAUSE IF MY COMPANY HAS BEEN BETRAYED

THEN JUSTICE MUST NOT BE DELAYED.

YOU CANNOT HIDE NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO!

NORVALL, OFFICE MANAGER, SELECTED COMPANY MEMBERS:

HOW TRUE!

CHEESEMAN: Now listen, this firm cannot afford to lose any more deals to Ormond Crouch, or I'll have to start thinking about laying some of you off. *And I've got the police looking into this - - this - - corporate espionage. It's illegal! (Pause.)* That's it. Back to your jobs. And my office door is open to anyone with information about the mole.

Everyone else exits as MOLLY and FREDDY return to their offices.

FREDDY: Dude!

MOLLY: Cheeseman threatens layoffs at least once a month.

FREDDY: Do ya think there's really a mole?

MOLLY: No. Ormond Crouch is the sharpest real estate man in the city. I'm sure he is capable of outbidding "Earl" without having a mole in this company. Besides, the Cheese Man is always looking for any excuse to have his employees spy on each other. Honestly, the level of paranoia around here.

NORVALL: *(Peeks his head around the door into MOLLY's office.)*
Molly!

MOLLY: *(Jumping, she reveals her own paranoia.)* Oh, hi, Norvall.

NORVALL: Molly, I thought you were going to meet with me this morning.

MOLLY: I was. I was ready, but you were in with Earl.

NORVALL: I was in my office at 7:00 a.m. this morning, as usual.

MOLLY: Our meeting was set for 8:45 . . .

NORVALL: You need to get up early in the morning to make a mark in this business, Molly.

MOLLY: Well, of course, Norvall, but I . . .

NORVALL: Well, never mind all that. (*Checks his watch.*) I have about fifteen minutes. Can you do this right now?

MOLLY: Sure, just let me pull up the file.

NORVALL: (*Turns to leave.*) Meet me in my office.

He strides out without missing a beat. He goes to his office on other side of stage. MOLLY has hit a few keys on her computer before following him across the hall just a few paces behind. NORVALL sits behind his desk as MOLLY moves to a chair in front of his desk, and NORVALL looks up at her, as if surprised. She sits in the chair; NORVALL smiles and pours on the charm.

NORVALL: Molly, I'm so glad that you've gotten to work on this Park Place project - - I'm anxious to see what you've done with it. I hope you've given it your magic touch. I was impressed by the financing structure you used on the KittyKorner warehouses. Innovative! Of course, you want to be careful about getting *too* creative.

MOLLY: (*Launches into "presentation mode."*) Okay, Norvall. Let me take you through this deal . . .

NORVALL's phone rings. He glances at it casually.

NORVALL: Oh, I've got to take this - - Hold on. (*He picks up; speaks much more positively than he does to MOLLY.*) Thanks for calling me back, Howie. Jackie? Oh, you're both there? Good. I was wondering if you two could stop by here when you get a chance. I wanted to look over that project you've been working on. It is? Great! Yeah, okay. Well, when would be good for you? Five minutes? Perfect. See you then. (*Hangs up, folds his hands on desk and looks at MOLLY.*) Now, where were we? Oh yeah, I think you've learned a lot from me, and you applied it well on your last deal. I hope you're ready for a deal this big, but I don't really have the time I would have liked to go over it with you now. Briefly, where does it stand?

MOLLY: *(Coming into her confidence - - she knows she's got a good deal here and is excited about it.)* Norvall, this is an excellent deal. We finished the due diligence just yesterday. We've got our numbers lined up, and they look great. If you take a look at the attachment I just e-mailed you, you'll see. *(Back into presentation mode.)* As you review that, I'd like to take you through this deal from the beginning. As you will see, the financing structure that I have put together allows . . .

NORVALL: *(Hits a few keys on his computer.)* Are these really the numbers? *(Sounding skeptical.)* Humph. Well, of course, we need to get the due diligence done.

MOLLY: As I said, we finished that yesterday. It's all in there. *(Back to her presentation.)* The financing structure . . .

NORVALL: *(Seems distracted.)* Oh, really? Well, I'll look it over. I'll get back to you when I've had a chance.

MOLLY: *(Somewhat hesitantly.)* Okay. *(Asserting herself.)* But Norvall, I'm really excited by this project, and I think it's important that we jump on this deal as soon as possible.

NORVALL: *(Not looking up.)* Uh-huh.

MOLLY: *(Still eager.)* So do you think we should set up a time to present this to Earl? I'd like to contribute to the presentation.

NORVALL: *(Still not looking up.)* Uh-huh. We'll see. I'll be in touch.

MOLLY: But Norvall, the numbers may change if we don't grab it.

NORVALL: *(Putting on his most charming and "confidential" demeanor.)*

Molly, I really want to help you move forward in this company. As I always say, you've got potential. Now, you may have noticed that Earl is coming to rely on my insight more and more. If I took him this deal prematurely, I'd undermine my own credibility. Let me give you some advice about success:

**SONG #3: THE KEY TO SUCCESS
(NORVALL)**

NORVALL:

IF YOU ARE HOPING TO RISE UP LIKE CREAM,
THEN QUIT YOUR MOPING, AND FOLLOW MY THEME.
TO PROVE YOUR MERIT,
YOU CAN'T JUST SHARE IT,
YOU NEED TO GET THE BOSS ON YOUR TEAM.

SO FROM THE FIRST DAY YOU LAND IN YOUR JOB,
FIND EVERY NEW WAY YOU CAN TO HOB-NOB.
ALL TRUE GO-GETTERS
PURSUE THEIR BETTERS,
TO HOIST THEM HIGH UP OVER THE MOB

AND IF, LIKE MINE, YOUR EFFORTS FIND THEIR REWARD
WITH THE CEO OR CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,
YOU HOLD A PRECIOUS ASSET, GUARD IT WELL,
AND PROTECT HIM FROM UNWORTHY PERSONNEL!

Dance break.

WHILE YOU ARE HEEDING HIS EVERY COMMAND,
YOU'LL BE SUCCEEDING IN ALL YOU HAVE PLANNED.
JUST LOOK AT ME NOW
AND YOU WILL SEE HOW
I'VE GOT HIM IN THE PALM OF MY HAND!

HE'S EATING RIGHT OUT OF MY HAND!

MOLLY: You know, Norvall, that's exactly what I'm talking about. I want to help present Park Place to Earl precisely because I need to raise my profile with him.

NORVALL: (*Pouring the charm on.*) Molly, Earl is not the boss that you need to worry about. *I am.* Stick with me, kid, and I'll get you where you want to go. You know what? Earl has asked me to take a more involved role in some of our brokerage deals. I have the files on several buildings that we've been asked to take condo. I might ask you to help me with that. (*MOLLY looks disappointed.*) I know it's not as glamorous as building a tower, Molly, but it is our bread and

butter. If we don't get our fundamentals in order, this firm could be in real trouble. (*NORVALL's phone buzzes. He picks it up. NORVALL's manner towards JACKIE and HOWIE is markedly friendlier than towards MOLLY.*) Oh hi, Jackie, Howie! Are you ready? Great. I've been here since seven. Why don't we hit that new restaurant and you can show me what you have ready for Earl over oysters? (*Hangs up and grabs his suit coat from the back of his chair; prepares to leave his office.*) Molly, I'll be in touch with the additional work I need you to do on Park Place after I've had a chance to look it over. And remind me to send you those condo files. Bye.

NORVALL heads out, leaving MOLLY with her mouth hanging open.

MOLLY: (*Momentarily dazed, MOLLY then laughs to herself and addresses NORVALL's empty office.*) So, in conclusion, I direct your attention to the exceptional profit margin, which is a result of the financing structure I pioneered for this project. Norvall, you are so perceptive to be supporting this deal - - It will make your name - - and mine! (*Bows in several directions.*) Thank you, thank you, thank you!

MOLLY heads back to her office. FREDDY looks up.

FREDDY: Oh, hey. How did your meeting with Chitwood go?

MOLLY: (*Chuckles slightly and nods.*) The usual.

FREDDY: That good, eh?

MOLLY: Freddy, what are we doing here?

FREDDY: (*Taken aback - - shrugs a little.*) Being cogs in the wheel of the real estate deal?

MOLLY: Right. But lately I'm feeling like the gears are jammed. Every time I get revved up about a potential deal, Norvall gums up the works. (*Pause.*) Have I ever told you why I got into this business?

**SONG #4: MOLLY'S GRANDFATHER
(MOLLY)**

"Molly's Grandfather" music starts to play softly underneath. FREDDY reacts with inevitability - - he has heard it all before. He rolls his eyes gently and gets out his newsboy cap and newspaper and puts them on the desk - - ready to act out his role.

Lights dim. Voices reverb, if possible.

MOLLY:

IT BEGAN WITH MY GRANDFATHER, ARCHIBALD MERRIWEATHER,
ARCHITECT OF RENOWN.
TO MY FAMILY'S PRIDE, HE DESIGNED THE MOST
SPECTACULAR BUILDINGS IN TOWN.
AS HE ADDED EACH YEAR TO THE SKYLINE,
HE BUILT HIS PRESTIGE AND HIS POWER,
AND THE CROWNING SUCCESS OF HIS SOARING CAREER WAS THE
GREAT MERRIWEATHER TOWER.

Music pauses; if desired, the fantasy lighting and reverb can cease.

FREDDY: *(Speaks.)* The Merriweather Tower? But wasn't that the building where it . . . umm . . . snowed . . . ?

MOLLY: *(Nodding and smiling ruefully.)* Snowed . . . on the inside? That's the one.

MOLLY: *(Singing.)*

IN THE THIRTIETH YEAR OF HIS BRILLIANT CAREER HE LEARNED HIS
CONTRACTOR WAS A FRAUD.
HE HAD SKIMMED AND SKIMPED ON MATERIALS SO
MY GRANDFATHER'S BUILDINGS WERE FLAWED.
THOUGH IT DIDN'T APPEAR FOR A LONG TIME,
A MASSIVE INTRUSION OF WATER,
WHEN COMBINED WITH HIS SYSTEM FOR COOLING THE AIR, LED MY
GRANDFATHER'S NAME TO SLAUGHTER.

Music pauses again; MOLLY and FREDDY (or, if preferred, other Chorus members) approach their desks acting as "the workers" as MOLLY continues to narrate.

MOLLY: (*Speaks.*) The workers showed up at their offices to find a half inch of snow on their desks.

MOLLY: (*Singing.*)

IN HIS LAST FIFTEEN YEARS, MY POOR GRANDFATHER SEARCHED FOR HOW TO
PATCH UP THE FAULT THEY'D FOUND,
BUT THE DAMAGE WAS DONE AND SO ONE BY ONE
HIS BUILDINGS WERE TORN TO THE GROUND.
WHERE ONCE HE WAS KNOWN AS A GENIUS,
WITH GUTS AND EXCEPTIONAL VISION,
HE BECAME JUST THE GUY WITH THE BUILDINGS THAT SNOWED - -
HIS NAME A SOURCE OF DERISION

Music pauses so MOLLY can speak.

MOLLY: It didn't help that it was Merriweather, either . . .

FREDDY: (*Becoming an old-fashioned newsboy.*) Extry, extry, read all about it: "Scary Weather at the Merriweather."

MOLLY: Every month brought more bad news.

FREDDY: (*Still as newsboy.*) "Christmas Comes Early at Another Downtown Building."

MOLLY: (*Singing.*)

I WAS WITH HIM THE DAY THEY TORE DOWN HIS LAST BUILDING; I WAS
TWELVE AND I MADE HIM A VOW:
"I'LL PUT BACK OUR NAME ON THE BRIGHT SKYLINE
AND RESTORE OUR HONOR SOMEHOW!
AND I'VE WORKED ON IT THAT DAY 'TIL NOW!
TO KEEP MY VOW!

FREDDY:

Well, at least you've always known what you wanted to do.

MOLLY: Sort of. Before that, I wanted to be a private eye. (*FREDDY looks surprised. MOLLY shrugs.*) Big Nancy Drew fan. (*Laughs.*) I used to prowl my neighborhood looking for something suspicious to investigate. But I never got the opportunity! I was so jealous - - suspicious things always happened in Nancy Drew's neighborhood! But once I made that promise to my grandfather, I thought I knew my true destiny: to put up building after building, until one day - - I'd erect the great, New Merriweather Building to tower over the city. And after just two years at Trombone Holdings, I was doing so well, Cheeseman's headhunters recruited me here, and Norvall got ahold of my career.

FREDDY: Norvall is definitely threatened by you, Molly. Every time he looks over one of your deals, he gets this look on his face and says: "Innovative" - - like it's an insult.

MOLLY: (*Smiles sadly.*) When I got here, I offered to work on anything where Norvall needed the help. He promptly stuck me on every dog deal in the office. Most of them were never going to happen at all. Of course, whenever I'm feeling bad, I can always drive thirty-five miles out Highway 169 [*Choose a local highway that leads out to farmland, if desired.*] to gaze upon my (*With a big flourish.*) "Industrial Distribution Center" . . .

FREDDY: (*Knowingly.*) I think you mean, (*Imitating MOLLY's flourish.*) your warehouse.

MOLLY: (*Back down to earth and playing along.*) Exactly. And not just any warehouse - - nooo - - a kitty litter warehouse! I've built the largest litter box on the planet!

FREDDY: Well, the Park Place project - - that's a downtown office tower - - maybe this one will come through!

MOLLY: You know, when we were putting it together last night, I actually felt that old excitement. Lately that's the signal for Norvall to knock me down again. I wonder if I should be looking for another job.

FREDDY: (*Nodding sympathetically.*) And if this deal does happen, Norvall will probably grab it from you.

MOLLY: I should, shouldn't I? I need to brush up the old resume. (*Laughs.*) Or maybe I should chuck the whole real estate thing and go to private eye school after all!

FREDDY: Do you feel like you might be pursuing your grandfather's dream instead of your own?

MOLLY: I never did feel like that. He didn't push me into this career. I chose this dream. The irony is, I decided to go into the business side of things instead of architecture like my grandfather because I thought I'd have more control over quality - - I'd control the contracting. Instead, I have no control over anything.

FREDDY: *(Sadly, as if remembering his own problems.)* I know what you mean.

MOLLY: What's with you? *(Suddenly realizing.)* Oh no! Freddy! That's your "break-up shirt!" And you let me go on all morning. What happened?

FREDDY: When I finally got home last night, Estella left me.

MOLLY: Oh, I'm so sorry.

FREDDY: And the thing is, she was so strong. I'm really not sure I'll be able to stand up without her.

MOLLY: Strong? I thought you told me that she was as "delicate as a flower."

FREDDY: *(Incredulously.)* A Venus Flytrap, maybe. Estella works out every day. She can bench press, well . . . *(With a wistful smile.)* . . . me!

MOLLY: Freddy, it was just, like, two weeks ago you told me how romantic you found it when she fainted, 'cause you didn't think anyone actually did that anymore.

FREDDY: *(Confused.)* Fainted? Oh, that was Annabelle - - we broke up eight days ago.

MOLLY: Okay, then. So how long have you been with this Estella?

FREDDY: The best week of my life.

MOLLY: Oh, Freddy.

FREDDY: *(Sheepishly.)* I know, I know. But Molly, I can't help it. I love women. And they love me too! But only for a while. To them I'm just a plaything. How do I hang on to one?

MOLLY: I don't know, Freddy. Maybe if you acted a little . . . less needy?

FREDDY: But I am needy! I need them! And what is so wrong with that?

MOLLY: I don't know whether to be insulted or relieved. I must be the only woman you've ever met that you didn't fall in love with.

FREDDY: I would have, but on my first day, they gave me a copy of the sexual harassment policy.

MOLLY: *(Amused, but also just explaining the policy to him.)* But I'm your boss. You couldn't sexually harass me; only I could sexually harass you.

FREDDY: *(Hopefully.)* You could?

MOLLY gives him a look that says "Forget it" and he nods and shrugs. MOLLY's phone rings. She looks at the readout.

MOLLY: Oooh, I've got to take this, I hope you don't mind. It's a friend who's been out of the country. *(She picks up the phone.)* Hey, Chloe - - how was your trip? Really? Oh no. How did that happen? Oh, how awful. Well, *(Checks her watch.)* yeah, we can call this lunchtime. Sure, I'll be right over. *(Hangs up; turns apologetically to FREDDY.)* My friend Chloe was robbed while she was in Europe. Someone took her spare ATM card and her PIN number out of her apartment. They've been taking nearly \$300 out of her account every day for two and a half weeks.

FREDDY: *(Still very subdued.)* That's too bad.

MOLLY: So I told her I'd come over.

FREDDY: Okay.

MOLLY: *(Looks at FREDDY; he is still moping.)* I can't leave you here like this - - but Chloe wants me there when she gives her statement to the police. *(Pause.)* I bet that won't take long. Why don't you meet me at Chloe's apartment and we'll all go out for lunch? *(Scribbles a note and hands it to FREDDY.)* Here's the address. It overlooks Lake Calhoun. *[Choose a local neighborhood with high-rise apartments and condos in a desirable part of town, if desired.]*

FREDDY: *(Perks up immediately, reading the address.)* Okay. So who is this Chloe?

MOLLY: *(As she gathers her stuff to leave the office, MOLLY laughs fondly as she describes CHLOE.)* Haven't I ever told you about her? She's . . . well, she's an exotic creature. She was my freshman year roommate, and I could hardly believe her when I met her. She's independently wealthy; she's a high fashion photographer; she jets around the world at the drop of a hat. *(She starts to walk out the door, and calls back, laughingly over her shoulder.)* Oh yeah, and she's gorgeous. *(Shaking head smilingly as she exits.)* It just isn't fair.

FREDDY: *(Goggling.)* Wow!

SCENE 2

SETTING:

CHLOE's apartment. (See Production Notes on "Sets" for how to keep these transitions very simple.)

AT RISE:

No one on stage. Doorbell rings. MOLLY enters and answers the door. OFFICER TRÜSTY is there. He is wearing a prominent name badge. MOLLY looks at it closely, and then speaks.

MOLLY: Hello, Officer uhh *(Reading.)* "Trusty."

OFFICER TRÜSTY: That's "Trüüüsty."

He pronounces it with a strong Scandinavian accent. The "u" sound is a hard "u" made by pursing the lips in a small circle and saying "e." In all other respects, he speaks normal unaccented (if a bit clipped) American English.

MOLLY: *(Bewildered, she says it without the umlaut.)* Troosty?

OFFICER TRÜSTY: "ÜÜÜ." "ÜÜÜ." "Trüüüsty." And you must be Miss Crystalson?

MOLLY: No. That's my friend, Chloe. She'll be right out. She asked me to let you in. *(CHLOE enters. She is dressed very high fashion, bright colors.)* Here she is now. Chloe, this is Officer, uhh, "Troosty."

OFFICER TRÜSTY: *(To MOLLY.)* "ÜÜÜ." "ÜÜÜ."

CHLOE: *(Taking it all in, she leans in and reads OFFICER TRÜSTY's nametag. With perfect pronunciation, she says.)* Officer "Trüsty." Thank you for coming. I hope you don't mind my asking my friend Molly to come over. This has been so upsetting. I just feel so violated.

OFFICER TRÜSTY: That's fine, Miss. I have the notes here from the information you called in to the station. *(Pulls out a small notebook and consults it.)* I've seen this before, Miss. You received two ATM cards from the bank when you opened your account?

CHLOE: *(Tearfully.)* That's right, sir.

OFFICER TRÜSTY: And you kept the spare in a file here?

CHLOE: Yes.

OFFICER TRÜSTY: *(Scoldingly.)* And you kept a record of your PIN number in the same file?

CHLOE: *(Contrite.)* I'm afraid I did, sir.

OFFICER TRÜSTY: *(Shaking his head.)* While you were out of the country, who had access to your apartment?

CHLOE: Well, my maid came in to clean, and I hired a cat sitter while I was gone.

OFFICER TRÜSTY: And they both have keys?

CHLOE: That's right. And my plant service came in and watered. My grocery service delivered the day before I got back. And the dry cleaners have a key. And, of course, my building management. And I think that's everyone.

OFFICER TRÜSTY: I noticed the sign out front saying that your building is going condo - - the brokers probably have a master.

CHLOE: Yeah, I think so. Do you think you can find whoever did this, Officer?

OFFICER TRÜSTY: Well, Miss, we'll do what we can. We've had several of these ATM card thefts in the last few weeks. I'll look into the possible connections. In the meantime, you should change your locks, Miss, and I think you would best fire all those services that had access to your apartment.

CHLOE: *(Stricken.)* Fire them?

OFFICER TRÜSTY: It would be a wise precaution.

CHLOE: I just can't manage without my maid. (*Playing up to him shamelessly.*) You need to find whoever did this. (*Gets more upset; continues playing up to him.*) Oh, Officer Trüüüsty, I really need your help!

OFFICER TRÜSTY: (*Obviously influenced by CHLOE's charms.*) Well, Miss, as I say, we will do our best. (*Tips his cap and starts to leave.*)

CHLOE: (*Accompanies OFFICER TRÜSTY to the door, and continues playing up to him.*) Thank you, Officer. I look forward to hearing from you.

OFFICER TRÜSTY exits.

MOLLY: (*Comes forward from where she had been somewhat out of the way while CHLOE talked to OFFICER TRÜSTY. She mimics CHLOE's flirtatious style.*) "Oh, Officer Truuusty, I really need your help." Chloe, there you go again.

CHLOE: (*Suddenly all business.*) So what? I want him to find out who took my card.

MOLLY: I thought I had finally gotten through to you about this on our trip to Jamaica. You set feminism back thirty years just trying to get us upgraded to first class

CHLOE: But you did enjoy the champagne?

Doorbell rings.

MOLLY: Oh, that's probably Freddy, my assistant. He was having a bad day, so I told him to meet us here. (*CHLOE answers the door, letting FREDDY in. CHLOE and FREDDY begin to eye each other immediately. MOLLY picks up and looks at some papers lying on CHLOE's desk or table. Getting excited. Abstractedly, she says.*) Hi Freddy, this is Chloe. But Chloe - - look at these bank records! Whoever has been doing this has gone to one of three ATMs every night between 6:00 and 6:15.

CHLOE: Yeah - - I noticed that.

FREDDY: (*Playing up to CHLOE.*) I heard about your burglary, Chloe. And I met that policeman coming out of your building - - Officer Trüsty?

He pronounces it well. CHLOE flashes him a smile; MOLLY looks up, temporarily flummoxed by everyone else getting the name right.

MOLLY: The police officer didn't say anything earlier about staking out these ATMs tonight, did he?

CHLOE: No.

MOLLY: Of course, from their point of view, a theft of this size wouldn't warrant three different stakeouts . . . but tonight is the final chance – your ATM card has been canceled, right?

CHLOE: Yes.

MOLLY: So tonight will be the last night that the thief tries to use it. Once he sees that the card doesn't work, he won't come back. (*Gets a flash.*) We should do it!

FREDDY AND CHLOE: Do what?

MOLLY: Look - - three ATMs - - three of us - - we could each stake one out.

FREDDY: Yes!

CHLOE: Let me guess. You're channeling Nancy Drew again?

MOLLY: This is just the opportunity I've always wanted! It wouldn't even be that hard - - here is a window of just fifteen minutes when the thief uses your card. If we each stationed ourselves across from one of the ATMs and took a picture of every person who used it during that time, maybe you would recognize one of the people from your cat sitters or something. Or we might be able to tell when the thief realizes the card has been canceled and the machine spits it back out!

CHLOE: Molly, I don't know, I'm awfully tired after my trip.

MOLLY: (*Getting exasperated.*) Well, take a nap - - we have six hours before we even have to do it. Freddy, help me out here.

FREDDY: Yeah - - well - - Chloe - - how about it?

MOLLY: (*Hands out pages of the bank records to each of them and circles something on each page.*) Chloe - - you could cover this ATM; Freddy - - you take this one. And I'll cover this third one. To be safe, we'd have to get there by 5:45 and stay through 6:30. We'll need each other's cell phone numbers - - I know both of yours, so you two exchange numbers.

FREDDY: *(Pretends to be bashful as he pulls out a card for CHLOE.)*
Oh, okay.

CHLOE takes FREDDY's hand and begins to write her number on it while he is happily stunned.

MOLLY: We should get in touch by phone as soon as we set out tonight. If we're going to do this, I need to run back to the office now and make sure all my work is done ahead of time. I wouldn't want to get held up at the critical moment.

FREDDY: *(Still gazing at CHLOE.)* I hate that.

MOLLY: It'll be fun. Wear something dark tonight, Chloe - - you don't want to stand out. You are on board, right?

CHLOE: *(She and FREDDY exchange looks, enraptured.)* I guess if the two of you are willing to do this for me, how can I say no?

FREDDY: *(Right into CHLOE's eyes.)* How can either of us say "no," really?

CHLOE: *(Coming around.)* I guess it could be fun.

MOLLY: That's the spirit! Something suspicious to investigate - - finally!
We can't ignore a chance like this when it falls in our laps!

**SONG #5: OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS
(MOLLY, FREDDY, CHLOE)**

MOLLY:

OPPORTUNITY IS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR AS IF TO SAY, "WHY DON'T YOU COME
OUTSIDE AND PLAY?"
IF YOU LISTEN CLOSELY, YOU CAN HEAR IT MURMUR: "YOU DON'T GET A
CHANCE LIKE THIS ONE EV'RY DAY."
IF YOU LET THIS PASS YOU BY NOW,
IT MAY NEVER COME AGAIN.
WHEN OPPORTUNITY COMES ASKING YOU TO PLAY, YOU SIMPLY SAY, "AMEN,"
YOU SIMPLY SAY, "AMEN."

MOLLY, FREDDY AND CHLOE:

SERENDIPITY HAS OPENED UP THE DOOR AND WONDERS IF YOU MIGHT BE
GAME TO TAKE A CHANCE?
WHEN YOUR TURN HAS COME TO ROLL THE DICE, JUST ASK YOURSELF IF
YOU'LL RETREAT OR IF YOU WILL ADVANCE?
IF YOU TURN AND WALK AWAY NOW,
YOU WON'T KNOW WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.
WHEN SERENDIPITY IS STANDING ON YOUR STOOP, YOU MUST INVITE IT IN.
YOU MUST INVITE IT IN.

MOLLY:

YOU HANG AROUND ALL DAY COMPLAINING LIFE IS DULL AND DRAB
BUT FUN JUST CAME TO GET YOU IN A TAXICAB.
IF YOU MISS OUT, YOU'LL ONLY HAVE YOURSELF TO BLAME,
SO GET INTO THE GAME!

POSSIBILITIES ARE CROWDING ALL AROUND YOU AND THEY'RE FIGHTING JUST
TO WHISPER IN YOUR EAR.
THEY HAVE GOT A PLAN THAT'S GUARANTEED TO SCINTILLATE AND NOW THEY
ONLY NEED A VOLUNTEER.

MOLLY, FREDDY AND CHLOE:

FATE MAY BE AROUND THE CORNER.
THAT YOU SIMPLY CAN'T IGNORE.
WHEN POSSIBILITIES WALK UP AND INTRODUCE THEMSELVES, DON'T SLAM THE
DOOR.
DON'T SLAM THE DOOR!

BY MAUREEN KANE BERG AND THOMAS C. BERG

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