

CLEOPATRA AND THE SLAVE GIRLS OF VENUS

A MUSICAL IN TWO ACTS

Book, Music and Lyrics by Scott Freiheit

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CLEOPATRA AND THE SLAVE GIRLS OF VENUS

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SYNOPSIS: It's the 1960s, and Stupendous Pictures is producing one cheesy movie ("The Weasel that Ate Pomona") after another. When the producer has a change of heart and wants to produce Shakespeare, unexpected events grind things to a halt. Enter aspiring writer Allen Franklin who, along with the current head writer Jill Montgomery, has to figure out how to combine shlock with classic to save the day!

Then it happens. Allen moves to New York for an Off-Off-Off-Off Broadway production of one of his plays and things come crashing down, including his relationship with Jill. But the misunderstanding between Jill and Allen is resolved when Allen realizes that he belongs with Jill and the crazy world of Stupendous Pictures. He even goes so far as to suggest that they combine the Shakespearean footage with some science fiction riffraff and create a new movie called *Cleopatra and the Slave Girls of Venus* . . . the studio loves it and all is saved.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 MALES, 4 FEMALES)

ALLEN FRANKLIN (m)A young writer. He is in his early to mid-twenties and reasonably good-looking in an intellectual sort of way.

MISS CAVENDISH (f)A secretary. She is very prim in her appearance and all business in her demeanor. Age is not particular but one assumes perhaps a more mature woman.

GLORIA MC PHERSON (f)Head of the Wardrobe Department. Very "bubbly" and upbeat.

STRETCH HAMILTON (m)Head of the Prop Department. He is heavy-set and not too bright but pretty loveable.

- GORDON WILLIS(m).....Head of the Special Effects Department. He is tall and thin and a wisecracking cynic.
- KARL VAN HORTON (m).....Producer, director and ringmaster of the daily circus that is Stupendous Pictures. It is hard to determine his age - - he could be anywhere from 35 to 55. He wears a goatee and a mustache, which makes him resemble a “beatnik.”
- JILL MONTGOMERY (f).....The head writer. She is an attractive woman, in a kind of artistic way, somewhere in her late thirties to mid-forties.
- JOE BENNETT (m).....A cameraman.
- JIMMY ROBERTS (m).....A young production assistant.
- FREDDIE (m).....A jack-of-all-trades. He is a very smooth operator. His hair is slicked-back, he wears dark glasses and favors loud Hawaiian shirts. He obviously operates on his own schedule and under his own rules.
- VICKY VALENTINE (f).....An aspiring young actress. She is a bit of a Marilyn Monroe wannabe.

SETTING

The Time: The late 1950s or early 1960s.

The Place: Hollywood, California

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

Prologue: Dark Stage.

Scene 1: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

Scene 2: Jill's Apartment.

Scene 3: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

Scene 4: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

Scene 5: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

Scene 6: A Screening Room.

Scene 7: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

ACT TWO

Scene 1: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

Scene 2: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

Scene 3: A Street in Hollywood.

Scene 4: Karl's Apartment.

Scene 5: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

Scene 6: A City Park.

Scene 7: A Screening Room.

Scene 8: The Office of Stupendous Pictures.

DO NOT COPY

PRODUCTION NOTES

There are many intricate bits of stage business and improvised dialogue that go on throughout the course of the entire play. Unless noted, they are simply to provide atmosphere and should not overpower the primary dialogue nor pull focus from the center of attention.

The show was originally designed with a “black box” set in mind where bits of furniture or posters hanging from the wall would suggest the setting. Desks, tables, park benches and so on can all be fitted with wheels or mounted on rolling platforms to facilitate quick scene changes. With the “B” movie motif, all sorts of science fiction props, costumes, monster masks, etc. can be used to decorate the set and may even be used for bits of business in the background or during musical numbers.

MOVIE TRAILERS: Video monitors may be used on either side of the stage if large projection is not practical or possible. Throughout the evening, we will see film clips of “coming attraction” trailers shot specifically for this play. They will be filmed in the style of classic “B” movie trailers and will often parallel the action being described on stage.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

- SONG #1 **SOUNDTRACK COLLAGE**..... Instrumental
SONG #2 **SOMEDAY**..... Allen
SONG #3 **LET'S GET ACQUAINTED**..... Allen, Jill
SONG #4 **I USED TO BE**..... Karl
SONG #5 **I'D BETTER WAIT**..... Jill
SONG #6 **WHAT IF?** Jimmy, Stretch, Gordon, Karl,
..... Joe, Miss Cavendish, Gloria, and Freddie
SONG #7 **DO OR DIE**..... Karl, Stretch, Gordon, All

ACT TWO

- SONG #8 **ENTR'ACTE**..... Instrumental
SONG #9 **AN INCREDIBLE DAY** Stretch, Joe, Gloria,
Miss Cavendish, Freddie, Gordon, Jimmy, and Allen
SONG #10 **THE CASTING COUCH**..... Vicky, Allen
SONG #11 **SCENE CHANGE #1**..... Instrumental
SONG #12 **I WISH WE STILL WERE IN LOVE** Jill, Karl
SONG #13 **SCENE CHANGE #2**..... Instrumental
SONG #14 **GOODBYE**..... Jill
SONG #15 **ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA** Instrumental
SONG #16 **FOR THE BEST** Karl, Jill
SONG #17 **SCENE CHANGE #3**..... Instrumental
SONG #18 **BACK ON OUR FEET**Karl, Joe, Gloria,
Gordon, Stretch, All
SONG #19 **IT'S NOT TOO LATE**..... Allen, Jill
SONG #20 **AN INCREDIBLE DAY (REPRISE)**Karl, Stretch,
Allen, Jill, All
SONG #21 **BOWS**..... Instrumental

PROLOGUE

SETTING:

The Time: The late 1950's or early 1960's.

The Place: Hollywood, California.

AT RISE:

**SONG 1: SOUNDTRACK COLLAGE
(INSTRUMENTAL)**

The stage is completely dark as an audio montage of sound clips from a series of fictional "B" movies begins to play. Out of the darkness steps ALLEN FRANKLIN, a young writer. He is in his early to mid-twenties and reasonably good-looking in an intellectual sort of way.

**SONG 2: SOMEDAY
(ALLEN)**

ALLEN:

I ALWAYS KNEW
WHAT I WANTED TO DO WITH MY LIFE.
NEVER A QUESTION,
NEVER A SECOND THOUGHT.
SO I PREPARED WITH THE BEST EDUCATION
MY PARENTS COULD EVER HAVE BOUGHT.

'CAUSE I KNEW I COULD BE A GREAT WRITER SOMEDAY,
WITH A NOVEL OR TWO
AND A HIT BROADWAY PLAY.
BUT UNTIL THEN I JUST NEED TO FIND A WAY
TO PAY THE RENT THAT WAS DUE YESTERDAY.

The music continues as an underscore as ALLEN speaks to the audience.

ALLEN: When I came to Hollywood six months ago, I figured it wouldn't be too tough to find a job. I thought, with all the junk that gets made into movies, how much competition can there be? I mean, who writes this stuff? It isn't art . . . it isn't literature . . . half the time it doesn't even make sense! I knew that real authors wouldn't waste their time with such a trivial medium, but I thought it might be fun to try my hand at screenplays, maybe elevate the art form a bit. Well, after six months of pounding the typewriter with my fingers and pounding the pavement with my feet, all I've got to show for my effort is a landlord pounding on my door threatening me with eviction! So here I am . . . at the office of Stupendous Pictures . . . what the hell kind of name is that? You'll find stupendous in Webster's just above the word stupid . . . which is how I feel right now applying for a . . . no, *begging* for a job from the only studio in town crummy enough to still give a rejected writer an interview.

ALLEN:

I KNOW I COULD BE A GREAT WRITER SOMEDAY,
WITH A PULITZER PRIZE
AND A SMASH BROADWAY PLAY.
BUT UNTIL THEN I JUST NEED TO FIND A WAY
TO PAY THE RENT THAT WAS DUE . . . YESTERDAY!

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:

The office of Stupendous Pictures.

AT RISE:

Afternoon. As the song concludes, the lights come up on stage. We now see the office of Stupendous Pictures. It's an all-inclusive office, workshop, and storage space that is constantly buzzing with activity. Numerous large movie posters are prominently displayed on the walls. The titles on the posters are: "The Incredible Creature from Planet Zaatar," "The Biker and the Beauty Queen," "Circus of Death" and "When Girls Go Bad." Stage right is a large cluttered desk with several telephones on it. By its side is an office chair on wheels. Behind the desk sits KARL VAN HORTON, producer, director and ringmaster of the daily circus that is Stupendous Pictures. It is hard to determine his age - - he could be anywhere from 35 to 55. He wears a goatee and a mustache, which makes him resemble a "beatnik". A prim-looking secretary, MISS CAVENDISH, scurries about the office on various tasks, frequently stopping at VAN HORTON'S desk to get his signature on one thing or another. She is the only one there who is dressed in business attire. The rest of the OFFICE STAFF are a colorful and diverse group of characters who are busily at work building props, flying model spaceships, etc. Down left is a smaller desk with a typewriter on it. The chair is vacant at the moment. Upstage are some filing cabinets ACTORS frequently move on and offstage implying that there are several other wings to the building. Into this madness steps ALLEN, who looks around in a bewildered fashion before spotting by MISS CAVENDISH on one of her forays.

ALLEN: Excuse me . . .

MISS CAVENDISH: May I help you, young man?

ALLEN: Yes, I think so. I'm looking for a . . . *(He fumbles for a note in his pocket.)* . . . Karl Van Horton.

MISS CAVENDISH: Mister Van Horton is the head of this studio and a very busy man.

ALLEN: I believe he's expecting me. My name's Allen Franklin, and I have a two o'clock appointment with him.

MISS CAVENDISH: *(Checking her watch.)* It is now two-fourteen, Mr. Franklin . . . and twenty-three seconds. And YOU are now LATE.

ALLEN: I know, I'm sorry about that. I went right past the place three times. You know, from the outside it looks more like a grocery store than a movie studio!

GLORIA MCPHERSON, the head of the Wardrobe Department, passes by pushing a rack full of colorful costumes.

GLORIA: That's because it used to be a grocery store.

ALLEN: *(Smiling.)* Well, there you go! You can work for peanuts and never have to leave to cash your check! *(Waits for the laugh. GLORIA just stares at HIM.)* Anyway, if it weren't for the confusion, I might have only been fourteen minutes and eleven seconds late.

MISS CAVENDISH: *(Coldly.)* It's now FIFTEEN minutes. Please wait here. I'll see if Mr. Van Horton is still available.

ALLEN can tell that he's not getting off to a very good start. He stands off to one side observing the chaos around him. At the moment, ALLEN is watching two men, GORDON WILLIS and STRETCH HAMILTON, who seem to be amusing themselves with a small radio-controlled robot - - or an actor in a "robot suit" if an actual radio-controlled robot is impractical for staging. STRETCH is heavy-set and not-too-bright, while GORDON is thin and a bit of a wise guy. GORDON holds the controller, but STRETCH keeps making an effort to wrestle it away.

STRETCH: Come on, Gordon, let me drive that thing for awhile.

GORDON: No!

STRETCH: I AM the head of the prop department!

GORDON: Yeah? Well, I'm in charge of special effects. When it sits there, it's a prop. But when it moves, it's an effect, and as you can plainly see, it's movin' all over the place!

STRETCH: Aw, come on . . . you've had it all day long!

GORDON, STRETCH and the robot start to move off.

GORDON: Go build your own robot, Stretch.

STRETCH: *(Thinks for a moment or two.)* Hey! I did build it!

MISS CAVENDISH: *(To ALLEN)* Come this way, please. Mr. Van Horton has a few moments he can spare you.

ALLEN: Thanks.

She leads him over to the desk where KARL has been carrying on several phone conversations at once.

KARL: *(Several telephones in hand.)* Two weeks! Whaddaya mean two weeks? I need it in two days . . . yeah, TWO DAYS . . . hang on, I got New York on the line . . . *(Into the other phone.)* Freddie, is that you? Where the hell are you . . . Fresno!

GLORIA: Tell him to get lots of raisins!

KARL: What are you doing up there . . . well, stop gallivanting about and come into the office once in awhile . . .

GLORIA: And don't forget the raisins.

KARL: Oh, yeah, Gloria wants you to buy some raisins . . . all right, I gotta go. I got New York on the other line. *(He puts down one phone and is about to pick up the other.)* Hey! What do we need raisins for?

GLORIA: I like 'em! *(SHE waves and EXITS with costumes.)*

MISS CAVENDISH: Mr. Van Horton, this is the young man who's been waiting to see you.

KARL: Grab a seat, kid, I gotta' take this call . . . damn, he hung up! Miss Cavendish, will you see if you can get that guy back on the line for me?

MISS CAVENDISH: Certainly, Mr. Van Horton.

She exits. ALLEN has just taken a seat in the rolling chair next to the desk.

KARL: Now, what can you do for me?

ALLEN: Ha, ha, you mean what can - -

KARL: I mean who the hell ARE you? I'm a busy man!

ALLEN: My name is Allen Franklin, and I believe I had an appointment to discuss a job with you.

KARL: Oh, yeah . . . you're the writer who sent some samples over. Very neat.

ALLEN: NEAT, sir?

KARL: The typing. How fast do you type?

ALLEN: I don't know . . . about 50 . . . 60 words a minute, I guess.

KARL: Well, I've already got a writer that can do 85.

ALLEN: I think there must be some mistake. I'm not applying for a clerical position. I'm an author.

KARL: (*Mocking.*) Oh, excuse me, you're an AUTHOR. What have I read of yours?

ALLEN: Well, um, there's, well . . . probably not anything unless you went to Bradley High School or Lincoln Junior College.

KARL: Right. Now look, Mr. Author. Kid. Around here, we've always got about a dozen things going at once, but the one thing we can't have is a bunch of people standing around waiting for a script. I need writers who can get the ideas out of their head and onto the page as quickly as possible.

ALLEN: With all due respect, sir, I don't believe in rushing the creative process. I'm an artist, not a house painter.

KARL: (*To HIMSELF, amused.*) Oh, that's rich - - he's an ARTIST, not a HOUSE painter. (*To ALLEN fiercely.*) Then what in the world makes you want to work here?

ALLEN: Well, I . . . I . . . ah . . . greatly admire and respect your work.

KARL: Really? And what films of mine have you seen?

ALLEN: Oh, well, ah . . . (*He tries to look casual as he reads from a poster behind KARL.*) . . . I particularly enjoyed "The Incredible Creature from Planet . . . (*He peers at the last word on the poster.*) . . . Zawtur?

KARL: ZAYTAR.

ALLEN: Oh, yeah.

JILL MONTGOMERY, an attractive woman in her late thirties to mid-forties enters the room and stands behind ALLEN, who is not aware of her presence.

KARL: Nice try, I admire your instinct to lie when under duress. Let's get down to business. I've read your samples. It's strictly "A" grade material.

ALLEN: Well, thank you!

KARL: But what WE write is B-grade stuff. What makes you think you can write "B" pictures?

ALLEN: Well, if I'm already writing "A" grade material, as you say, then I CERTAINLY should be able to write "B" grade.

JILL: It's not as easy as you think.

KARL: Mr. Franklin, meet - - you ever have a grandfather named Benjamin?

ALLEN: Well, I - -

KARL: Skip it. Meet our head house painter, Jill Montgomery. Jill, this is Allen Franklin, author at large and a big fan of all our pictures, none of which he's seen!

ALLEN: Hello, how do you - -

JILL: You see Mr. Franklin, we don't have the resources of a major studio. We have to shoot everything on a shoestring budget. We have to work quickly and sometimes under a great deal of pressure. The working conditions for a writer are far from ideal. But we ARE a professional motion picture company and we take our jobs as seriously as anyone at Warner's or Fox or MGM!

On cue, STRETCH enters controlling the robot. Now it's GORDON'S turn to chase after the coveted prize.

GORDON: STRE-ETCH! Come back here with that thing. It's my turn to drive the robot!

STRETCH: You drove it all morning.

GORDON: Well, just don't wear out the batteries.

STRETCH: Who's wearin' out the batteries? I've barely touched it!

They complete their cross and exit the other side of the stage.

ALLEN: Sorry. I didn't mean to offend anyone. I guess I didn't realize it was such a specialized and, uh, sophisticated field of endeavor.

KARL: You still haven't explained why you want to work here. You wanna spend years writing the great American novel; we wanna spend days getting Mr. Shlock Versus the Giant Ant out the door and making money.

ALLEN: Look . . .

KARL: *(Inspired, to JILL.)*

Write that down. Mr. Shlock Versus the Giant Ant. If it hasn't been done, get to work on it.

JILL jots notes.

ALLEN: I'll be honest with you. I've been trying to get a job at every studio in town for the last six months. Most of them won't even grant me an interview. I'm flat broke, and I need a job, and writing is the only thing I've ever wanted to do with my life.

KARL: What do you think, Jill? It's your department. You're the head writer.

JILL: I'm the only writer.

KARL: Well, here's a chance to double your staff. Let us hope that Mr. Franklin works cheaply, if not quickly. Why don't we give him a couple of weeks and see how it goes?

JILL: God knows I can use the help.

KARL: Forget what God thinks. I pay the bills here.

MISS CAVENDISH: (*Poking head into office.*) Your call is waiting, Mr. Van Horton.

KARL: Thank you, Miss Cavendish, and say hello to our newest employee, Mr. Allen Franklin.

MISS CAVENDISH: Hmm . . . I'll get the necessary paperwork in order.

ALLEN: I don't think she likes me too much.

KARL: Hell, I don't think I like you too much! Her, she doesn't like ANYONE too much, so you ought to fit right in. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to scream obscenities into the phone and act like a producer.

ALLEN: Shouldn't we discuss salary or something?

KARL: And pollute your artistic sensibilities with crass commercialism? I wouldn't dream of it! Figure you work for free and anything I give you is charity. Jill will now give you the facts of life.

ALLEN: I think I'd like that. Not the charity, the part where you - -

JILL: Why don't we step into my office, Mr. Franklin?

ALLEN: Call me Allen.

JILL: All right, Allen. Right this way.

She leads him over to her "office" which is just the little typewriter stand.

ALLEN: Should I call you Miss Montgomery?

JILL: Good God no! That makes me sound like a third grade school teacher. Call me Jill. I'd like to think of us as a team.

ALLEN: Okay, coach . . . what's the game plan?

JILL: Well, right now we've got a couple of projects going. I can show you the stuff I have here, but I do a lot of writing at home when this place gets too crazy. We'll need to get together after work and go over it. Would it be better going to your place or mine?

ALLEN: Better make it yours. I'm not actually certain that I still have a place. I have a little problem with my landlord. I owe him forty-two dollars, but I've got a couple of friends I'm going to hit up for a loan now that I've got a job. Why don't I see them first and swing by your place around eight?

JILL: That's fine. At least we can get started with what we've got here. I've got two scripts that are in progress. Which do you want to take a look at first - - "Island of the Bikini Bimbos" or "The Blood-Sucking Monster from Hell?"

ALLEN: Oh, give me bimbos over bloodsuckers anytime.

JILL: Well, that says a lot about you, though I don't know what. *(Tossing him a screenplay.)* Bimbos for you, bloodsuckers for me. After awhile it won't make much of difference. One bad - - I mean "B" - - movie is pretty much like another.

BLACKOUT. A large motion picture screen comes down across the front of the stage. See Production Notes.

FILM CLIP: "The Incredible Creature from Planet Zaatar"

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING:

Jill's apartment.

AT RISE:

Later that evening. There are a few pieces of furniture to suggest an apartment set. There is a couch or small loveseat facing the audience. There is also a chair next to it and a small table nearby. Upstage is another small table with a record player on it and some albums stacked on a shelf below. ALLEN and JILL enter as the lights come up.

JILL: *(Taking off her coat and heading across the stage.)* Make yourself comfortable. I'll grab the stuff and be right there.

ALLEN looks around for a moment and then decides to settle down on the couch. JILL soon returns with a pile of papers, which she dumps on the couch next to ALLEN.

JILL: Feel free to dive right in.

ALLEN: They really do keep you busy, don't they?

JILL: You said it. It'll be nice to have someone else at least sharing the headache, if not alleviating it.

ALLEN: So why do you stick around? I can't imagine you really enjoy writing these pictures.

JILL: I DO enjoy the challenge . . . sometimes. But as you obviously have noticed, this is a very difficult business to get into. Extremely tough if you're a woman who wants to work behind the scenes, maybe direct someday. And like you and everyone else in this world, I've got bills to pay. That . . . and other reasons.

ALLEN: What kind of reasons?

JILL: Personal.

ALLEN: We should get to know each other if we're going to work together.

JILL: You're absolutely right. And maybe if you're still around in a few weeks I'll tell you that story.

ALLEN: Fair enough. What do you want to know about me? I have no secrets.

JILL: Well, for starters, what do you drink?

ALLEN: Just about anything if it's free.

JILL: That's good. I only know how to fix one drink anyway.

JILL exits. ALLEN gets up and wanders around the apartment for a bit. He sees the record player and begins checking out the albums on the shelf below it.

ALLEN: You've got a rather eclectic album collection, I must say.

JILL: *(Offstage.)* That's because I'm moody, and I need a lot of different background music to accompany my erratic disposition. I've written everything from cockroach love stories to tuna salad on parade with the inspiration of those albums.

ALLEN: Mind if I put one on?

JILL: *(Offstage.)* Help yourself. There's something for just about every taste in there if you look hard enough!

ALLEN selects a record and puts it on the turntable. A Chuck Berry-style rock tune starts playing. ALLEN snaps his fingers along with the beat of the intro and then begins singing his thoughts to the tune of the record.

**SONG 3: LET'S GET ACQUAINTED
(ALLEN AND JILL)**

ALLEN:

SHE'S KIND OF ATTRACTIVE
IN A KIND OF ARTISTIC WAY.
I CAN SEE US TOGETHER
WORKING SIDE-BY-SIDE EVERY DAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS COULD LEAD ME, BUT
I WONDER IF SHE'D DATE A FELLOW EMPLOYEE?

ALLEN continues to listen to the record as JILL enters holding a tray with two drinks on it. She observes ALLEN and sings her own thoughts.

JILL:

HE'S SORT OF GOOD-LOOKING
WITH A SORT OF INTELLECTUAL STYLE.
IT MIGHT BE AMUSING IF HE
DECIDES TO STICK AROUND FOR AWHILE.
IT MIGHT BE GREAT TO COLLABORATE WITH A GUY,
BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT TROUBLE THAT MIGHT BRING?

JILL serves the drinks.

ALLEN:

I LIKE YOUR APARTMENT.

JILL:

IT'S A MESS, BUT I GUESS IT'S OKAY.

ALLEN:

MUCH NICER THAN MY PLACE.
OR MY "OLD" PLACE, AS I GUESS I SHOULD SAY.

JILL:

DID YOU MAKE THE RENT?

ALLEN:

COULDN'T RAISE A CENT.

JILL:

I SUPPOSE I COULD LOAN YOU FORTY BUCKS UNTIL
PAYDAY.

They both stand looking out at the audience.

BOTH:

I GUESS WE'LL BOTH BE WORKING CLOSELY EVERY DAY.

Suddenly they are both struck with the same idea simultaneously and turn to face each other.

BOTH:

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED RIGHT AWAY.

They dance to a short musical interlude.

JILL:

YOU'RE PRETTY LIGHT ON YOUR FEET, KID,
BUT HOW FAST CAN YOU WRITE A SCRIPT?

ALLEN:

I'VE NEVER WORKED WITH A STOP-WATCH.

JILL:

WELL, ON THIS JOB, YOU MAY THINK THAT YOU DID.
YOU'LL WORK TWICE AS FAST
OR YOU'LL NEVER LAST, BUT I CAN
SEE THAT YOU'RE A VERY FAST WORKER

BOTH:

IT COULD BE FUN TO WORK WITH SOMEONE
LIKE YOU EVERY DAY.

ALLEN:

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED RIGHT AWAY . . .

JILL:

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED RIGHT A . . .

BOTH:

LET'S GET ACQUAINTED RIGHT AWAY!

BLACKOUT.

FILM CLIP: "Attack of the Atomic Robot"

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

SETTING:

The office of Stupendous Pictures.

AT RISE:

One week later, morning. Busy as ever. People come and go in a steady stream of weird-looking activities. There is always someone tinkering with a model or trying on a costume. KARL is on the phone, as usual.

KARL: Yes, I understand you have a schedule . . . we all have schedules. We just happen to be slightly behind ours at the moment . . . what do you mean you want the picture by the end of the week? Are you trying to say that someone is actually sitting around *waiting* for this s-s-s . . . stuff? (*With rising disgust and anger.*) There's war; there's starvation. Pestilence, famine, and hunger - - and someone can't wait to see if Frogzilla beats the Human Fly? I'll give you a hint. He DOES!!! Look, I gotta go. I got New York on the other line. We'll talk about this later.

He slams down the phone in disgust and leans back in his chair. He obviously has no other call waiting for him.

KARL: (*To HIMSELF.*) There must be an insatiable appetite out there for bad movies when I've got people fighting to book one of mine!

JOE BENNETT, a cameraman, passes by and overhears KARL.

JOE: They always make money.

KARL: That's true. I've made nearly fifty pictures and never lost a dime!

JOE: Yeah . . . nor spent one!

JOE EXITS. GLORIA calls over to KARL.

GLORIA: Hey . . . Karl! Got time to look at our new creature costume?

KARL: Yeah, bring it in. Which creature is it?

GLORIA: You know, the bloodsucker from hell.

KARL: It's about time. We need to shoot some scenes with that thing tomorrow.

GLORIA: Come on in, Jimmy!

JIMMY ROBERTS, a self-effacing production assistant, enters the room wearing a ridiculous outfit that looks remarkably like a giant "bunny" suit.

GLORIA: So . . . whaddaya think?

KARL: THAT is my blood-sucking creature from hell? He looks like . . . Harvey!

GLORIA: Well, we can make him scarier.

KARL: How?

GLORIA: I don't know . . . we can pin his ears down or something.

She pulls the bunny ears down, and JIMMY changes from a happy to a sad expression.

KARL: *(With sarcasm.)* Now he looks like Thumper. All we need now is a man-eating Bambi and we'll make a fortune.

JIMMY: *(Trying shyly to help.)* Um, I can grow!

KARL: *(Angrily.)* SO CAN I!

GLORIA: But look at the construction on this thing, Karl. It's beautiful. Can you believe it's fully lined? That's union craftsmanship!

KARL: Where did you get that thing? An Easter outlet sale?

GLORIA: Freddie got it for me.

KARL: I should have known. And where did Freddie uncover this treasure?

GLORIA: You know that kiddie show "Uncle Pops and His Pals"? Well, this is Mister Sunny Bunny! *(She releases his ears and they pop back up. JIMMY changes back to a happy expression.)* It seems that the guy who wore this suit had a bit of a drinking problem and got a wee bit tipsy last week and puked all over a bunch of kids on live TV. Freddie said that's why he got the outfit so cheap.

KARL: Well . . . do something to it. Rip its ears off. Anything!

STRETCH: *(Deeply offended.)* Rip the ears off Mister Sunny Bunny?!

JIMMY: Could I get out of it first?

KARL: Well, you better do SOMETHING to it, otherwise the only people who'll be frightened by it are my accountants! Damn that Freddie and his bargain hunting!

FREDDIE: (*Sweeping on stage with a huge bag of raisins.*) Have I come at a bad time?

FREDDIE is a very smooth operator. His hair is slicked-back, he wears dark glasses and favors loud Hawaiian shirts. He obviously operates on his own schedule and under his own rules.

KARL: No, Freddie, you're just the man I want to see.

GLORIA: My raisins!

She grabs the bag out of his arms and hauls it away. JIMMY reacts throughout. KARL drags FREDDIE over to stare at the bunny suit.

KARL: Look at this thing. *Look at it!* What am I supposed to do with this? Does this look like a creature from hell? Does this look terrifying to you? I am trying to make a horror film and you give me a buck-toothed vegetarian! (*Pauses suddenly, struck.*) Hey . . . that's not such a bad idea. Why does he have to be a vicious creature? Why not a bunny? A big, mean bunny that'll rip your face off! Now THAT would be UNEXPECTED!

FREDDIE: I knew you'd like it.

KARL: Jill! Allen! Get over here, quick!

JILL and ALLEN cross over from their work area to see what KARL is raving about.

KARL: We need to make some changes to the "Creature from Hell" script. In fact, I need a complete overhaul, starting with the title. It's now the "Blood-Sucking BUNNY from Hell"! Do whatever you can to make it work . . . but don't knock yourselves out. And I need it by tomorrow morning.

JILL: Whatever you say.

ALLEN: Wait a minute . . . you can't be serious. This is some kind of prank, like an initiation stunt or something, isn't it?

KARL: What are you talking about?

ALLEN: The creature idea was bad enough, but at least it had some *shred* of believability. But a bunny from hell is just . . . absurd.

KARL: Don't worry about it. The weirder the better, I always say.

ALLEN: But it's . . . it's . . . garbage, and I don't want to write it.

Everyone in the office stops and looks at ALLEN.

KARL: If you're looking for an "Emperor's New Clothes" reaction, I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed. I've had my films called every name you can think of - - but never Unprofitable! I have absolutely no pretensions left. No delusions of grandeur. When I started this company, I left all my noble ideals behind me.

SONG 4: I USED TO BE . . .

(KARL)

KARL:

I USED TO BE A MAN JUST LIKE YOU,
WITH A PLAN TO SET THE WORLD ABLAZE
WITH HIS AMAZING TALENT FOR
CINEMATIC MAGIC.

I USED TO BE A MAN FILLED WITH PRIDE,
WHO'D PUSH A MOUNTAIN TO THE SIDE
INSTEAD OF GOING 'ROUND IT, AND
LOOKING BACK., IT'S TRAGIC

THINKING OF ALL THE TIME THAT I HAVE WASTED. I'M
SORRY TO SAY, BUT IT'S TRUE
THAT I'M HAPPIER NOW THAN I WAS BEFORE
WHEN I HAD AMBITION LIKE YOU!

There is a musical interlude. KARL leads a "circus-like" parade around the office with everyone, including JIMMY in the bunny suit, participating in the choreography. At some point, ALLEN gets pushed into the chair with wheels and is rolled about the stage. JILL is delighted and amused. Even MISS CAVENDISH gets dragged into the procession.

KARL:

I USED TO BE A MAN WRACKED WITH PAIN
FROM WATCHING DREAMS GO DOWN THE DRAIN
WITH JUST A HELPLESS WHIMPER AND
NOTHING THERE TO STOP IT.

TILL I DISCOVERED THAT TIMELESS PHRASE
THAT SAYS YOU JOIN THOSE YOU
CAN'T BEAT, AND NOW I'M

Climbs up on his desk.

TEN FEET TALLER. THERE'S
JUST NO WAY TO TOP IT!

Jumps off the desk.

I MAY SEEM JADED BY LIFE THAT HAS PASSED ME BY,
BUT TELL ME, WHAT ELSE COULD I DO?
'CAUSE I'M HAPPIER NOW THAT I'VE SOLD MY SOUL,
AND I RECOMMEND YOU DO, TOO!

BLACKOUT.

FILM CLIP: "Night on Zombie Island"

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

SETTING:

Same.

AT RISE:

Two weeks later, evening. JILL and ALLEN are working late at the office. There is no one else around and the lighting suggests that it is nighttime. JILL sits at the typewriter while ALLEN paces back and forth.

ALLEN: How about this . . . the priest is really an escaped convict.

JILL: What do we gain by that?

ALLEN: It would explain why he's so reluctant to talk about his past.

There's also a nice psychological twist there by having him choose to impersonate a priest. It's not only a good cover, but in his own way he's attempting to reconcile his guilty conscience.

JILL: And we could throw in some flashbacks of his hideous crimes!

ALLEN: Make it a dream sequence. It's very Freudian.

JILL: *(Starting to type.)* I like it! A fake priest with a sordid past and a guilty conscience.

ALLEN: Speaking of sordid past, you never have told me your dark little secret.

JILL: *(Still typing.)* What's that?

ALLEN: That first night in your apartment, you told me that you had personal reasons for working here, but you didn't say what they were. You also said that if I was still around in a few weeks you'd tell me. Well, I've been here three weeks or so, and by my calculations that qualifies as a few.

JILL: *(Stops typing and looks up at him.)* It interests you that much?

ALLEN: Everything you do interests me. You must have noticed that by this time.

JILL: I suppose I should have. Perhaps I did notice and just tried to ignore it.

ALLEN: It's that bad, is it? You really don't like me at all?

JILL: Quite the opposite. I probably like you too much, now that you've brought it up.

ALLEN: So what's the problem? We like each other. We work well together. Just give me one good reason why we shouldn't see each other socially.

JILL: I'll give you two. We like each other, and we work well together.

ALLEN: You lost me. Does this have something to do with your secret?

JILL: Indirectly. You see . . . I've had a number of relationships with people I've worked with over the years. People that seemed like a perfect match. But somewhere along the line things always got . . . complicated. My personal life gets mixed up with my business life, and my dearest, closest friends become strangers, if not enemies.

ALLEN: I'm still not sure that I follow you.

JILL: I wish you hadn't brought this up, but I guess it's inevitable that we talk about it sometime. I hate to shatter any illusions you may have about me being the virginal "girl next door" type, but I used to live with Karl Van Horton.

ALLEN: With Karl? You mean you used to be married to him?

JILL: I believe "living in sin" is the popular phrase. Still want me to go on?

ALLEN just nods his head "yes".

JILL: Karl and I hit it off right away. There was a chemistry between us that was just unbelievable. We fell for each other hard and fast, and before we had time to really think about it, I had moved into his apartment. That's when the trouble began. Although we loved each other, we couldn't live with each other. I would neatly roll up the toothpaste tube from the bottom, and he would always squeeze it right from the top . . .

ALLEN: That doesn't seem like a very big deal.

JILL: . . . Him, toilet seat up, me, toilet seat down.

ALLEN: Well . . .

JILL: Me, socks in the drawer, him, socks in the refrigerator. Him, loud music until three in the morning, me, trying to sleep at ten in the evening.

ALLEN: I see.

JILL: An inconvenience slowly builds into a bone of contention and finally ends up a battleground. We were killing our friendship, our business relationship and would probably have killed each other if we hadn't split up. But we got out just in time. We stayed friends. We still work together. We still have that chemistry between us. We just know better than to let our emotions get out of control. That's why I'm so reluctant to get involved with anyone right now. Especially with someone I like as much you.

ALLEN: I don't care about all of that. Sometimes you *can't* control your emotions. That's what passion is all about, isn't it?

JILL: Oh, Allen, I used to feel that way.

ALLEN: I'll squeeze the toothpaste at the top . . . ?

JILL: When I was your age.

ALLEN: I'll put the toilet seat down . . . ?

JILL: But I've been burned too many times.

ALLEN: My socks are never refrigerated!

JILL: You've just got to be patient with me. I'm not prepared to jump headfirst into another whirlwind romance, no matter how appealing it sounds.

SONG 5: I'D BETTER WAIT (TO FALL IN LOVE)
(JILL)

JILL:

I WISH I COULD FEEL LIKE A SCHOOLGIRL ON HER
VERY FIRST DATE, BUT IT'S TOO LATE TO TURN
BACK THE CLOCK NOW AND BE SOMEBODY NEW.

I'VE BEEN IN LOVE ENOUGH TIMES TO KNOW THAT
IT NEVER GOES AS EASILY AS YOU WOULD LIKE IT TO GO.
IT'S SAD, BUT TRUE.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND, I JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE
TIME TO THINK.
I HOPE YOU SEE MY POINT OF VIEW.
AND THOUGH I FEEL LIKE I AM
STANDING ON THE BRINK,
I THINK I'D BETTER WAIT TO FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU.

I WISH I COULD JUST ENJOY ALL THE BEAUTY OF
FALLING IN LOVE, BUT I CAN'T FORGET ALL THE PAIN
MY HEART HAS SUFFERED IN THE PAST.

MAYBE SOMEDAY I WILL LOOK BACK AND WONDER
WHAT I LET SLIP AWAY, BUT MAYBE I'LL
JUST CONFIRM MY FEAR THAT LOVE CAN'T LAST.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND, I'M JUST NOT
READY TO DIVE BACK IN.
I HOPE YOU SEE MY REASON WHY.
I'D BETTER STOP THIS NOW BEFORE IT CAN BEGIN.
I THINK I'D BETTER WAIT TO GIVE LOVE ANOTHER TRY.

The music continues as an underscore.

ALLEN: What happened before has nothing to do with me. Maybe
things will be different this time.

JILL: I know I shouldn't be such a slave to my past but I just have to
work things out in my own way, and in my own time.

JILL:

PLEASE UNDERSTAND, I JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE
TIME TO THINK.

I HOPE YOU SEE MY POINT OF VIEW.

AND THOUGH I FEEL LIKE I AM

STANDING ON THE BRINK,

I THINK I'D BETTER WAIT, THOUGH I KNOW
IT'S HARD TO DO.

I THINK I'D BETTER WAIT,

THINK I'D BETTER WAIT,

THINK I'D BETTER WAIT TO FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU.

*After the song she gives ALLEN a polite "friendly" kiss, but he turns it
into a more passionate embrace.*

JILL: Maybe I better not wait too long!

BLACKOUT.

FILM CLIP: "Confessions of a Killer Priest"

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

SETTING:

Same.

AT RISE:

*The next morning. The office is buzzing with activity, as usual. JILL,
ALLEN and KARL are nowhere to be seen. We hear bits and pieces
of conversation as the OFFICE WORKERS go about their business.*

MISS CAVENDISH: *(Crossing the stage while talking to STRETCH.)*

No, you may not use my filing cabinet as part of your spaceship!

STRETCH: How about your chair?

FREDDIE: (*Talking to JIMMY.*) So I ask this guy, “How come you don't want to book our new film?” And he says, “I got a problem with all those half-naked girls. I'm gettin' in trouble with the local cops.” So I go into my routine about the First Amendment and art and freedom of speech, and he just cuts me off and says, “Look, I don't care about all that. I run a drive-in, and every time we show one of your pictures there's at least three accidents from people staring up at the screen! The cops want to shut me down . . . for being a *traffic hazard!*”

KARL: (*Enters and stands down center.*) Listen up, folks! I need your attention please.

Everyone stops what they're doing and gathers around KARL.

KARL: We've got a problem. As you may or may not have noticed, our writers have become very infrequent visitors to this office. And you also may or may not have noticed that we've been falling further and further behind schedule. Now, I believe that there is a correlation between these two events, and I'm not very happy about it. But be that as it may, we've got work to do. So if our writers don't wish to honor us with their presence, that leaves us only one choice.

GORDON: Fire them both?

KARL: Believe me, it's tempting . . . but with my luck, I'd probably get stuck with some new writers who expected to get paid on time!

SONG 6: WHAT IF?

(JIMMY, STRETCH, GORDON, KARL, JOE, MISS CAVENDISH, GLORIA AND FREDDIE)

KARL: So until I have a chance to at least give them the sound thrashing they deserve, we need to come up with a few ideas of our own. Now put your heads together and think!

THE OFFICE STAFF begin pacing back and forth, trying to come up with some ideas. When someone gets a stroke of genius they rush forward and sing. The pacing continues during each of the small musical breaks.

JIMMY:

WHAT IF A TOWN WAS SECRETLY THE HIDING PLACE
OF A FAMILY OF ALIENS WITH EYES IN THE BACK
OF THEIR HEAD?

STRETCH:

OR MAYBE A CRAZY SCIENTIST WHO USED TO BE A NAZI
AND IS TRYING TO RAISE UP HITLER FROM THE DEAD!

GORDON:

HOW ABOUT IF WE MOVE TO STORY TO TRANSYLVANIA,
MAKE IT GORY, GET PETER LORRE, MAYBE
VINCENT PRICE?

KARL:

I LIKE THIS KIND OF THINKING . . . KEEP UP THE GOOD ADVICE.!

JOE:

DOES ANYONE REMEMBER THE SCENE IN "THE BIKER AND
THE BEAUTY QUEEN" WHERE THE GIRL GETS THROWN IN JAIL
FOR SLUGGING A COP?

Ad-libbed reactions like "Yeah," "What of it?" "I liked that one!" etc.

JOE:

WELL, A WOMAN'S PENITENTIARY SOUNDS AWFULLY
PROMISING TO ME. I THINK YOU'LL HAVE TO AGREE
IT'S HARD TO TOP.

MISS CAVENDISH:

WE'VE ALREADY DONE THAT TWICE BEFORE
IN '51 AND '54 WITH "WOMEN IN CHAINS" AND "PRISONERS
OF LUST."

JOE:

WELL, WE'VE STILL GOT ALL THOSE LEG IRONS IN STORAGE
COLLECTING RUST.

KARL:

THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO BICKER WITH ONE ANOTHER.
THERE HAS TO BE SOME OTHER WAY
TO TAKE SOMETHING OLD AND MAKE IT SEEM LIKE
SOMETHING NEW AGAIN.
AND I WANT A SOLUTION BY THE END OF THE DAY!

CLEOPATRA AND THE SLAVE GIRLS OF VENUS

JIMMY:

WHAT IF WE HAD A CREATURE WHOSE EXTRAORDINARY FEATURE WAS THE POWER TO DESTROY THINGS WITH ITS MIND?

GLORIA:

OR MAYBE A PSYCHOPATHIC NUT WHO WANTED TO BE AN ARTIST BUT WAS DRIVEN INSANE WHEN AN ACCIDENT MADE HIM BLIND?

GORDON:

WE CAN'T FORGET ABOUT OUTER SPACE, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THE PERFECT PLACE TO SET ANY KIND OF STORY YOU CAN WRITE.

KARL:

WE HAVE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM EVEN IF IT TAKES ALL NIGHT.

STRETCH:

WHAT IF SOME NICE OLD VET IS ACCIDENTALLY SERVING PET FOOD THAT'S SOMEHOW BEEN TAINTED RADIOACTIVELY?

AND SOME LITTLE KITTEN EATS IT ALL AND NOW HE'S TWENTY STORIES TALL AND GOING TO DEVOUR NEW YORK CITY!

FREDDIE:

DINOSAURS ARE ALWAYS FUN, I BET I CAN GET A MECHANICAL ONE FROM UNIVERSAL IF I MAKE A CALL.

KARL:

THESE ARE SUCH GOOD SUGGESTIONS, LET'S TRY TO USE THEM ALL.

ALL:

LET'S TRY TO USE . . . THEM ALL!

BLACKOUT.

SOUND EFFECTS: "MOVIE SOUNDTRACK"

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

SETTING:

A screening room.

AT RISE:

One month later, afternoon. The stage is basically dark, except for a projector light beaming through a small window on a wall that has been placed slightly upstage. The light is aimed towards the audience. We hear the soundtrack of the movie, which appears to be just ending. As the music of the final credits swells up to its conclusion, the lights come back to normal on stage and the projector is shut off. We can now see members of the OFFICE STAFF seated on folding chairs that face the audience.

FREDDIE: Whaddaya think?

KARL: What the hell am I supposed to do with that?

FREDDIE: Didn't you like it?

KARL: Freddie, I asked you to pick up some cheap European sci-fi flicks that we could do a quick dub job on, and instead you bring me an Italian art film version of "Oedipus Rex"! What on earth were you thinking?

FREDDIE: I got a great deal on it. Besides, it's in color. What more do you want?

KARL: I want . . . *spaceships*. There are no spaceships in "Oedipus Rex."

JOE: It's got plenty of blood.

KARL: Freddie, I wanted special effects. It's the only thing those guys do over there that's worth a damn. I can't make a science fiction movie out of this thing.

ALLEN: Who says we have to make it science fiction? If you think about it, "Oedipus Rex" has the potential to be a great exploitation film, if you wanted to do that sort of thing.

KARL: What do you mean?

ALLEN: Well, the story is basically a murder mystery, but you've got Oedipus killing his father, marrying his mother and poking his eyes out with sharp pins. Fratricide, incest and self-mutilation. If that isn't fertile ground for sensationalism, I don't know what is.

KARL: My boy, you're a genius! You're finally starting to think like one of us!

ALLEN: I always knew my classical training would come in handy someday.

KARL: I can see it . . . "Oedipus Rex: The Incestuous Eye Gouger." We could shoot a couple of sexy bedroom scenes, edit them in, dub the whole thing in English, and have prints made by the end of the week. I LIKE this idea. Keep up the good work, son, and you'll go far in this business. Now let's grab a quick lunch and then get back to work.

Everyone gets up to leave except ALLEN and JILL, who linger behind.

JILL: I'm impressed. I didn't know you had that kind of shlock in you.

ALLEN: Adapting Sophocles to the screen just seemed like an opportunity that one wasn't likely to get around here very often.

JILL: Don't try to con me. I know that smug look you get when you think you're being clever.

ALLEN: You've got to admit, it is a good idea.

JILL: So is lunch. I'm starving.

ALLEN: I was thinking maybe we should stay here and run that film again. In order to write a script that fits the action, we'll have to be familiar with what's already been shot. Besides, it's a great deal. Sure beats paying seventy-five cents to go to the movies.

ALLEN has taken a seat in the back row against the wall. JILL comes over and sits next to him.

JILL: This wouldn't, by any chance, be just an excuse for a cheap date?

ALLEN: (*Broadly putting his arm around her.*) Do I seem like the kind of man who would fool around with a girl at the movies?

JILL: You seem like the kind of man who would fool around with a girl in a crowded elevator.

ALLEN: Well, we're safe enough here. No moving parts, no buttons to push.

JILL: I'm not too sure about that. You seem to have been pushing the right buttons a lot lately.

She leans over and kisses him. They continue to talk while "making out."

ALLEN: Shouldn't we turn the projector on?

JILL: No, just turn the lights out. I don't think either one of us would pay much attention to the movie, anyway.

They continue to kiss. BLACKOUT.

FILM CLIP: "An Important Announcement"

ACT ONE, SCENE 7

SETTING:

The office of Stupendous Pictures.

AT RISE:

Two weeks later, afternoon. A "normal" day at the office. KARL is on the phone. ALLEN and JILL are at the typewriter.

KARL: No, don't be ridiculous, I never said anything about trained poodles! I wanted barnyard animals . . . I won't pay a cent for anything else . . . if those damn poodles want to be in my film, they better not expect to get paid, that's all I've got to say . . . unless, of course, they're trained to "moo." They're not trained to "moo," are they?

MISS CAVENDISH has been standing for a few moments by his desk, holding some kind of trophy.

KARL: What is it, Miss Cavendish? Did your bowling team win again?

MISS CAVENDISH: Another award for your "Oedipus" film.

KARL: Oh my God! You'd think I'd made "Gone with the Wind."

MISS CAVENDISH: Shall I put it with all the others?

KARL: Please do, Miss Cavendish.

MISS CAVENDISH: As you wish.

She takes the trophy back offstage. KARL turns his attention back to the phone.

KARL: Look, we'll talk about this tomorrow, I gotta run. I got New York on the other line.

FREDDIE sweeps in.

FREDDIE: Greetings, all! How's life in the snake pit?

KARL: What brings you into your alleged place of employment?
Run out of suntan oil?

FREDDIE: I have been to the promised land, and I return with joyous news. How would you like to shoot a film on the most elaborate set ever constructed?

KARL: What the hell are you talking about?

FREDDIE: You know that big costume epic over at Fox? Well, they'll be finished with principal photography in a couple of weeks, which means the set will be vacant. A beautiful re-creation of ancient Egypt, done in traditional, excessive, big-budget opulence. And I can get it for you . . . for *free!*

KARL: What's the catch?

FREDDIE: You can only have the set for two weeks. Then they're gonna tear it down.

KARL: So all I've got to do is come up with an idea for a period story, write a screenplay, hire actors, scrounge up all the costumes and props, and film the whole thing on a two-week shooting schedule?

FREDDIE: Piece of cake. I can probably get some leftover spears and stuff, if that'll help.

KARL: Yeah, that'll make all the difference. Freddie, what on earth made you think I would want to make an Egyptian epic?

FREDDIE: I don't know. That "eye gouger" movie's been a blockbuster. I thought maybe you were on some kind of a "classics" kick. You know, orgies and all that sort of stuff.

KARL: Give me a second, will ya, Freddie?

FREDDIE: Sure thing, Karl.

KARL: Jill . . . got a minute?

JILL: Yeah, what's up?

They move downstage away from everyone else.

KARL: Jill, I've just had a crazy idea, and I want you to talk me out of it.

JILL: Every idea you have is crazy, Karl. How could this be any different?

KARL: *(He looks around and they move even further downstage.)*

Do you remember some of the things we used to talk about? You know, late at night . . . in bed?

JILL: What . . . you mean about the French maid and the leprechaun?

KARL: No, not that! Why, did you buy that feather duster we talked about? *(He smiles. She shoots him a glance. He clears his throat.)* Uh, never mind. Anyway . . . what I meant was, do you remember some of the dreams we used to have?

JILL: Sort of. Is that what's on your mind? You want to make an orgy film?

KARL: What? No! I want to make "Antony and Cleopatra."

JILL: *(Trying to figure it out.)* You mean Tony and Cleo down in accounting?

KARL: Who? No!!

JILL: Well, you can't mean THE "Antony and Cleopatra"? We are talking about Shakespeare, aren't we? The anti-shlock of the writing business?

KARL: That's right . . . Shakespeare.

JILL: *(Laughing.)* Oh, yeah! Right!

KARL: I'm serious. And why not?

JILL: *(Looking at him closely.)* You are serious, aren't you? Why not? *(Reciting some past movie titles.)* Stupendous Pictures presents, "The Man-Eating Elm Trees from Oz!" Stupendous Pictures presents, "West Side Scary Story!" Stupendous Pictures presents . . . Shakespeare?!! What is with you?

KARL: I'm afraid I am serious. That "Oedipus" movie has really been bugging me.

JILL: But why? It's a smash hit. It's winning awards.

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