

"TIN MINE"

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2-18-2021

FADE IN:

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY, NY, 5-3-1939

The clouds set to explode during these early morning hours can't stop New York City's famous hustle and bustle.

EXT. MAXWELL MUSIC COMPANY - DAY

PEDESTRIANS hurry by this major Fifth Avenue building whose ground-floor tenant is this staid-looking retail outlet.

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

Records take up one wall of this salesfloor...but racks of sheet music dominate the other walls.

An 1880-1929 upright piano proudly stands in the middle of the salesfloor.

Maxwell Music's song plugger, SUE ELLEN CORNWALLIS (27, spoiled, squeaky-voiced; Los Angeles native), pounds out "I'm Nobody's Baby." Today, she wears a three-piece suit.

A COUPLE (20s) stand by the old piano and watch Sue Ellen improvise her way through the tune.

WIFE

Ma'am, we'll take it straight,
thank you.

SUE ELLEN

Just got a bit carried away.

Sue Ellen finishes "I'm Nobody's Baby" with a bang...and the couple look at each other.

HUSBAND

She can really play, can't she?

The wife looks indifferent.

HUSBAND (CONT'D)

(to Sue Ellen)

We'll take it, ma'am.

With a flair, Sue Ellen takes that copy of "I'm Nobody's Baby" off the piano's music rack and hands that copy to the husband in the couple.

SUE ELLEN

Just take it over to Charley.

The husband nods.

CHARMAINE MARIE "CHARLEY" HALLOCK (20, whimsical) stands at the cash register as she watches the young couple walk toward her to pay for that piece of sheet music.

Charley brushes dust from her frilly dress.

HUSBAND

You're Charley?

Charley nods while the wife gives her husband an icy stare.

A wooden door with a window in the middle opens...and reveals the boss, JOHN MAXWELL (42, gruff), who stands in the doorway as if he's ready to pick a fight.

JOHN

Hey! Sue Ellen!

MAIN TITLES APPEAR OVER ACTION.

John gestures Sue Ellen toward the office; Sue Ellen sprints inside before John closes the door.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sue Ellen comes into a mess of an office.

John takes a seat behind his paper-cluttered desk. He thumbs Sue Ellen into sitting across from him.

Sue Ellen eases her way into a very uncomfortable chair. She digs into her purse and takes out a big cigar.

John shakes his head as he watches Sue Ellen light up.

SUE ELLEN

George Gershwin certainly had good taste.

JOHN

This ain't the place.

SUE ELLEN

It's not as if I'm smoking in public.

(takes a puff)

It's only your office.

John grunts.

JOHN

Sue Ellen, you gotta remember ya
not back home in Hollywood. You're
in The City.

Sue Ellen looks at John's highly-cluttered desk.

SUE ELLEN

Hollywood's a city, too.

JOHN

Not to us, it ain't. More like a
state of mind.

Sue Ellen rises and walks toward the door, but John points
her into sitting back down.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I ain't done. Look: Back there, you
can fancy up a song and slick it up
any way you like...just like in the
movies.

SUE ELLEN

Of course! After all, it's the
sizzle that sells the steak.

JOHN

Lotta people can't afford no
steak...so, when ya workin' for me,
I want you to give it to 'em
straight. Got that?

SUE ELLEN

I'll try.

JOHN

Got that?

Sue Ellen nods and takes another puff from that cigar.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You keep playin' like that...like
you're at Radio City...and you're
gonna lose us even more customers.

SUE ELLEN

Well, something must be done. This
is almost the last store that has
its own song plugger. The days of
the--

John and Sue Ellen find a KNOCK on the door.

JOHN

Come in!

The door opens...and reveals Charley.

CHARLEY

Mr. Maxwell, we've got a customer
who wants a song played.

JOHN

Tell 'em it's on a platter, too,
Charley.

CHARLEY

Sure thing, but it's "Blooie
Blooie," by Edythe Baker...and we
don't have that on a record.

JOHN

(gesturing Charley out)
Charley--

Charley nods and exits.

Sue Ellen bolts up as if to leave...but straightens up her
skirt instead before she sits back down.

SUE ELLEN

I was only clearing my skirt!

JOHN

Boy. Women...where were we?

John rests his hand on his chin.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh. Not everybody can pound a piano
like you can, Sue Ellen. That's why
you gotta give it to 'em straight.
Let them worry about fancyin' it
up.

SUE ELLEN

But isn't that all the more reason
for me to put as much into these
songs as poss--

JOHN

Got that?

SUE ELLEN

If you say so, Mr. Maxwell.

JOHN
Straight.

Sue Ellen gets up again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
'Cause if you don't start playin'
straight, like I want you to,
you'll be playin' in the streets.

John gestures Sue Ellen out of his office and watches her fondle that cigar of hers.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Remember: There's only one
Gershwin.

As she leaves the office, Sue Ellen stares at John.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Next thing you know, she'll want a
new nose.

Sue Ellen closes the door behind herself.

EXT. HOTEL MCALPIN - DAY

PEDESTRIANS hurry around this impressive, twenty-five-story Herald Square landmark.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE WAPP - DAY

A handpainted sign on a door reads (in Art Deco lettering):
"RADIO STATION WAPP- 680 KC."

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

With headphones on her ears, BARBARA ELLEN MCKENZIE "BABS" STEUART (26, unflappable; Alabama-Florida twang) plays "When Day Is Done" on the studio's two-manual theater pipe organ.

Babs finishes "When Day Is Done" with a flourish, rips her headset off, breathes relief, and saunters off the set.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE STUDIO A - DAY

Babs knocks on a door labeled (also Art Deco style)
"MANAGER'S OFFICE."

VINCENT (O.S.)
COME IN!

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Babs walks in and finds VINCENT VALENTINE (35, heavysset; a worrier) seated at his desk in a room that screams Art Deco.

She closes the door behind herself.

BABS

Mr. Valentine...may Ah have a word with you?

VINCENT

Sure, Babs.
(nodding)
You really play beautifully.

Babs grins.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

What'd you wanna talk to me about?

BABS

Well...it's mah radio show.

VINCENT

Still great after two years on the air.

BABS

What Ah wanted to talk to you about was...well...Ah just wanted to try something different.

VINCENT

What kinda...uh...different?

BABS

Well, Mr. Valentine, after five years...two here and three at that little ol' Miami station..."Oh Promise Me" and "When Day Is Done" seem a might old hat.

Vincent's mouth flies open.

BABS (CONT'D)

Ah just think the listeners may be ready for a bit jazzier music coming from me, don't you think?

Vincent studies Babs for a moment.

VINCENT

So what are you trying to say?

BABS

Ah just thought mah show was too confining...

Vincent's mouth drops another notch.

BABS (CONT'D)

Doesn't give me a chance to razzle 'em and dazzle 'em...like, uh, Dick Leibert on WJZ.

VINCENT

Even Dick Leibert knows when not to razzle and dazzle 'em, Babs.

Babs nods.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Also, the housewives who tune in our organ program don't want razzle-dazzle.

BABS

But you took that survey in '32, and that's long before Ah came here.

Vincent throws Babs a "so what?" look.

VINCENT

Where you gonna find that kinda stuff for organ? They just don't write it!

BABS

No problem, Mr. Valentine. Ah'll just go up to Findlay's. They've got a lot of bouncy little numbers.

Vincent doesn't look convinced.

BABS (CONT'D)

And the biggest collection of unusual and special-order sheet music in any of the five boroughs.

Babs catches Vincent's blank look.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Don't you worry, Mr. Valentine.
 Ah'll work it in slowly. That way--

VINCENT
 You sure you can please the
 audience...and yourself...

Babs nods away.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Babs, think of all those little
 housewives!

BABS
 (heads for the door)
 Housewives like a little
 excitement, too.

Babs opens the door and turns to Vincent.

VINCENT
 Right after your show, we've got
 Sallee and Sammee. The Corn Flakes.

Babs shakes her head "yes."

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 You sure you wanna do this to your
 public?

Now Babs nods enthusiastically.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Your loyal, grateful public?

BABS
 They'll be glad Ah did it to 'em.

A worried Vincent watches Babs close the door behind her on
 her way out.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

Briefcase-toting Babs walks toward the subway stop. Once the
 train comes to a halt, she boards.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

In a car halfway filled with PASSENGERS, Babs finds (and
 occupies) an empty seat. She opens her briefcase and pulls
 out some sheet music.

Babs looks at the sheet music for a few seconds, then puts the music away and closes the briefcase.

BABS
 (looking at briefcase)
 How in the world did Ah git myself
 in such a rut?

Babs gets a shocked look from the passenger alongside her, HATTIE (40s).

HATTIE
 You think you're in a rut, lady?
 All I do is clean the same old
 building every day...

Hattie receives a sweet smile from Babs.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. SALESFLOOR AT FINDLAY'S MUSIC - DAY

Babs looks around the sheet music section for something a bit jazzier than her radio fare.

No dice.

INT. SALESFLOOR AT SCHWARTZKOFF & COMPANY - DAY

A CLERK moves over to Babs' side...to no avail.

INT. SALESFLOOR AT J.R. WATKINS COMPANY - DAY

Babs strikes out here, too, in her increasingly-desperate search for novelty organ music.

INT. SALESFLOOR AT PEARSON & WILSON MUSIC - DAY

Babs' search for off-the-wall organ music proves fruitless.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MAXWELL MUSIC COMPANY - DAY

A tired Babs walks toward the front door.

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

Sue Ellen's piano playing ("You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby") fills the salesfloor when Babs reaches the sheet music section to browse.

Charley leaves the counter to wait on Babs.

CHARLEY

Miss, may I help you?

BABS

Ah hope so...Ah'm a professional organist on WAPP, and Ah'm looking for some novelty sheet music for organists.

Charley stares blankly at Babs; Sue Ellen stops playing when the CUSTOMER alongside her stares at Babs.

CHARLEY

Miss, this is a music store. Are you sure you've got the right place?

BABS

Ah've been all over town trying to find myself some novelty sheet music...and to no avail. All over town!

CHARLEY

Did you try Brooklyn?

BABS

All five boroughs.

Charley nods.

BABS (CONT'D)

Ah know there's novelty sheet music for pianists...but why not for organists?

Babs heads for the front door.

BABS (CONT'D)

Ah should've known...Ah never have good luck with this store.

When Babs reaches the door, a grin forms on her face as she eyeballs Charley.

BABS (CONT'D)

Say...have you seen the manager?

Charley looks flummoxed.

CHARLEY
 Check his office.
 (points to door)
 It's the one that's always closed.

Babs nods, then heads for John's office...and Sue Ellen leaves the piano to go over to Charley.

SUE ELLEN
 I don't think you should let her go in there, Charley...especially considering the mood he's in.

CHARLEY
 The customer's always right.

SUE ELLEN
 In John's mood, he's the only one who can ever be right.

Charley and Sue Ellen watch Babs knock on John's door.

CHARLEY
 That's Mr. Maxwell.

Sue Ellen gives Charley a mean look.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)
 It won't do you any good to get mad at me...besides, the first place you went when you applied for work here was the office.

Sue Ellen looks embarrassed.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

A surprised John opens the office door and lets Babs in.

She remains erect as John takes a seat at his desk, where he grabs his copy of "Variety."

JOHN
 Can I help ya?

BABS
 Mah name's Barbara Steuart, staff organist at WAPP...but you can call me Babs.

JOHN
 We don't sell organs here. Not even pianos.

BABS
Ah know, but Ah just wanted to talk
business with you.

John looks puzzled.

BABS (CONT'D)
Ah've checked music stores all over
town, and Ah've come to the
conclusion that: One, your firm
isn't selling enough sheet music.

John puts down his "Variety" to study Babs.

BABS (CONT'D)
And two, nobody seems to stock
enough organ music.

JOHN
So?

BABS
Ah've thought it over, and Ah feel
Ah can fill both voids by becoming
a composer.

JOHN
Ya think you can set the biz on its
ear? According to you, it ain't
doin' well. And, like you said, we
ain't movin' enough sheets.

BABS
Not if they went for novelties.
That's what Ah'd like to write.

Babs heads toward the chair opposite John's desk.

BABS (CONT'D)
You don't mind if Ah sit down, do
you?

John doesn't react...and Babs helps herself to a seat.

BABS (CONT'D)
If all the right stops are pulled,
people'll latch onto a good little
ol' novelty song, especially in
times like these...and, maybe,
times in general.

Babs leans toward John.

BABS (CONT'D)

See, what Ah'd like to do is do all mah own printing and sell mah songs directly to you, and maybe--

John rises from his seat.

JOHN

If you don't get outa here, I'm gonna call the cops!

Babs' mouth flies open.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And don't come back with your harebrained ideas!

A stunned Babs strides out of John's office. Along the way, she looks at John.

BABS

Not until Ah've got enough songs to sell you.

Babs closes the door behind her on the way out.

EXT. EAST 78TH STREET TRIPLEX - NIGHT

Like many of the houses in the area, this one's a triplex. Tonight, only the upstairs living-room lights are on.

A 1934 Chevy coupe rests in the street in front of the house.

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Old furniture makes this adequately-sized living room cozier than it looks.

Babs sits at an 1890-1929 upright piano, where she painstakingly fills up a sheet of music.

Babs erases and rewrites away when her husband, LAIRD STEUART (28, folksy, protective; North Carolina-Florida twang), walks into the apartment...and peers over Babs' shoulder.

BABS

Looks like you had a good time at the grocery.

Laird nods.

LAIRD

Whatcha brewin' there?

BABS
Are you ready for this?

Babs shows Laird her sheet music (it's still on the piano)...and receives a half-annoyed, half-amused look.

BABS (CONT'D)
Well, Ah'm ready for this. Meet Tin Pan Alley's newest songwriter...me!

Laird chuckles to himself.

BABS (CONT'D)
Honey, Ah'm serious.

LAIRD
If you worryin' 'bout payin' the bills, it ain't no problem. Ah got mah grocery store and you got that li'l' show on the radio.

He sits next to Babs and gives her a hug.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
Now what mo' do you want, Babs?

BABS
Ah want to open up mah show, Laird.

Laird looks lost.

BABS (CONT'D)
Why, you're a big fan of mah show.

LAIRD
The biggest one around.

Babs gives Laird a pretty smile.

BABS
Well, you oughta know what Ah mean. You know what kind of music Ah play on mah show.

LAIRD
Well, it ain't nothin' wrong with your music. It's...well, it's purtier than a bagful of--

BABS
And you know how much Ah love a good novelty song.

Babs grabs the sheet music off the piano's music rack.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Ah've been itching to write a
 novelty tune for a few years
 now...and here it is.

She hands the sheet music to Laird; he looks at it...and
 busts out in a laugh.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Ah should warn you right now: It's
 not done yet.

Babs smiles as Laird continues to laugh.

LAIRD
 You gonna try to put this stuff
 over?

Babs' sunny look turns into a blank...

BABS
 That's what Ah'm gonna try to do,
 honey.

...which morphs into a concerned look as Laird continues to
 read and laugh.

BABS (CONT'D)
 It doesn't sound like you're
 laughing at the lyrics.

LAIRD
 Never mind the lyrics.

Laird puts Babs' work back on the piano's music rack.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
 Ah feel sorry for the organ.

Babs thumbs Laird into leaving his seat beside her.

EXT. MAXWELL MUSIC COMPANY - DAY

Sue Ellen (in a light coat on this nippy morning) arrives at
 her place of work earlier than usual.

She puts down her briefcase and her purse as she stands at
 the front door, then fishes into her purse for the keys to
 unlock the door.

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

Sue Ellen walks inside, turns on a few lights, and heads straight for the store's 1880-1929 upright piano.

Sue Ellen puts her briefcase and her purse on top of the piano, then digs into the former...and pulls out a copy of "I'm Nobody's Baby."

She opens the copy and places it on the piano's music rack.

SUE ELLEN
Straight.

Sue Ellen plays the song...straight, note for note.

It's a struggle.

Halfway through her first attempt, Sue Ellen gives up...only to start over.

On this second go-'round, Sue Ellen sings!

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
*I used to be my mother's baby./When
I was near, my dad went
wild./Whenever we had
company,/They'd bounce me on my
knee.*

Things still don't work out for Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
*The neighbors thought I was a
darling child./Once I was
ev'rybody's baby,/But right now,
I'm lonesome as can be./You see,
I'm nobody's baby./I wonder
why./Each night and day--*

Sue Ellen gives up and pulls a cigar out of her purse.

She lights up that stogie, then pulls fresh music paper and a pencil out of her briefcase.

Sue Ellen writes down the first eight bars of a lingering melody.

Now that's ease.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Now this is what I should be doing.

As soon as Sue Ellen tries the chords out on the piano, she finds a KNOCK on the door.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
We're not open yet!

But the knock PERSISTS.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
We're not open!

At last, the knocking STOPS...the door opens...and John enters the store.

John walks over to the piano and watches Sue Ellen write. He holds out his copy of the store key and dangles it in front of her.

JOHN
I knew we wasn't open. Just testin' ya.

SUE ELLEN
Well, don't do that again.

JOHN
You coulda let me in without me usin' a key, seeing how you beat me to the door today.

John sticks his keys back in his pants pocket while he watches Sue Ellen craft her budding ditty.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Whatcha call that? A song?

SUE ELLEN
I don't know yet...eventually...

Sue Ellen writes the word "EVENTUALLY" on top of her embryonic music sheet, then gives John a sly grin.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Thank you for the song title, Mr. Maxwell.

JOHN
You workin' on givin' it to 'em straight, like you said you would?

SUE ELLEN
I'm trying, but it's such a struggle.

Sue Ellen takes a puff from her cigar.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
That's why I've decided to--

JOHN
Keep trying, Sue Ellen.

John walks away while he shakes his head sideways.

Meanwhile, Sue Ellen puts away her original and turns to "I'm Nobody's Baby."

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Babs' first two tunes as a commercial composer rest on the organ's music rack.

Right now, she tests out a stop registration for one of her tunes...only to find:

BABS
That won't work.

Babs works on a new registration...but doesn't look satisfied with what the WAPP organ has to offer.

BABS (CONT'D)
(shutting organ off)
It's time to make like Joe DiMaggio
and git me a bigger bat.

She leaves the studio without her sheet music...only to backtrack a few steps later to retrieve said sheets.

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY

A worried Babs converses with Vincent's secretary, LEONA FANTETTI (30s).

LEONA
You look like you swallowed a whole
box of Arm & Hammer baking soda.

BABS
Ah cain't seem to locate Mr.
Valentine. Would you give him this
message?

Leona whips out a notepad and a pen.

LEONA
Shoot, Barbara.

BABS
Nah...just tell him Ah'm commencing
to go to Radio City.

Leona eyeballs Babs' sheet music and nods.

LEONA
When'd you start writing songs?

BABS
Well, Miss Fantetti, Ah started
last night at home.

With another nod, Leona writes down Babs' message.

LEONA
Trying for Dick Leibert's job?

BABS
(on the way out)
Ah'm trying to help him out!
(at the door)
Don't worry...Ah'll be back
tonight!

Leona watches Babs leave the office...and nods once more.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

Music in tow, Babs boards the subway.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Babs finds only one empty seat in the entire car...and it's
the one next to the seat Hattie occupies.

HATTIE
Hey...ain't you the lady that
thought she was in a rut?

BABS
Why...uh...yes. But Ah'm starting
to climb out of it right now.

Hattie flashes a somewhat smug nod.

HATTIE
Lady, you ain't been in a rut 'til
you've gone to work cleanin' the
same old building every day.

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

All the lights are on, and Charley's behind the counter while John's office door is open.

Sue Ellen's still at the piano, where she plays and sings "Cathedral in the Pines" for EVELYN MCNERTNEY (early 20s), who stands next to the old upright.

SUE ELLEN

*It's a quaint old-fashioned church
where ivy twines,/But to me, it's
my cathedral in the pines./Daddy
wore a happy smile/When his bride
came down the aisle/In that little
old cathedral in the pines.*

Evelyn gazes dreamily at Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

*When a baby filled their nest,/He
was taken to be blessed/In that
little old cathedral in the pines.*

In the tradition of a movie musical, AN ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENT FOR "CATHEDRAL IN THE PINES" RISES OVER SUE ELLEN'S SINGING AND PLAYING.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

*He grew up and joined the
choir,/Where the organ played every
day.*

John gazes at the scene at the ivories. The longer he listens to Sue Ellen's squeaky-voiced treatment of "Cathedral in the Pines," the deeper his frown.

But Evelyn doesn't mind the music.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

*And he found his heart's desire/In
a girl who came to pray.*

Sue Ellen looks annoyed by the CONTINUING orchestral accompaniment given her.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

*Once again, the wedding bells will
softly--*

(spoken into the CAMERA)

Would you mind? I can make my OWN
music!

The orchestral backing STOPS...and Sue Ellen's piano playing does, too.

EVELYN
I thought it was very lovely
myself, Miss!

John storms onto the salesfloor.

JOHN
SUE ELLEN! WHO WERE YOU YELLING AT?
(to Evelyn)
We're terribly sorry, ma'am.
(to Sue Ellen)
Don't you ever yell at our
customers again!

John storms back into the office.

JOHN (CONT'D)
EVER!

SUE ELLEN
(to Evelyn)
I wasn't yelling at you! I was
yelling at that orchestra.

EVELYN
You weren't really...

SUE ELLEN
Yes, I was. The orchestra that came
up out of nowhere and tried to horn
in on my song.

Evelyn nods in presumably mock understanding.

EVELYN
Have you got anything else like it,
Miss? I'm trying to build up a
repertoire.

Evelyn sits next to Sue Ellen at the piano.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
And when you're staff pianist at
your college's radio station, you
need all the material you can
muster.

SUE ELLEN
Right!
(flexes her fingers)

SUE ELLEN(CONT'D)

Yes...we do have a copy of this song.

Sue Ellen simply hands Evelyn the former's copy of "Cathedral in the Pines."

Evelyn looks surprised.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

We've got another three in stock.

EVELYN

Have you got "Somebody Else Is Taking My Place?"

SUE ELLEN

(nodding)

Hold on for a minute.

Sue Ellen goes to the sheet section and skims through it until she finds a copy of "Somebody Else Is Taking My Place."

Copy in tow, she goes back to the piano to beat out the tune.

Sue Ellen finds it difficult to play it straight...so she jazzes it up a bit (and draws a smile from Evelyn).

JOHN (O.S.)

That's not how it goes!

Sue Ellen plays "Somebody Else Is Taking My Place" for a few more bars...then, almost without missing a beat, launches into her own self-written effort, "Eventually."

JOHN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

That's not how it goes, either!

Sue Ellen stops playing. She and Evelyn eyeball each other.

SUE ELLEN

Maybe you'd better play.

The two women trade spots on the piano bench.

EXT. RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL - DAY

Babs reaches her already-iconic destination...but finds the front doors closed.

She finds the stage door...and finds it open.

INT. RADIO CITY BACKSTAGE - DAY

Babs prances through the backstage area amid O.S. CHATTER when a security guard named MAX (20s) meets her.

MAX

Miss, are you part of the Rockettes' auditions?

Babs shakes her head "no."

MAX (CONT'D)

Are you a Rockette?

BABS

No, but Ah would like to find the organ.

Max looks at Babs' body...and snickers.

BABS (CONT'D)

When Ah'm not playing for WAPP, Ah'm writing those little ol' ditties.

MAX

You're...kidding.

Babs extends a hand to Max.

BABS

Mah name's Barbara Ellen McKenzie Stuart...but you can call me Babs.

The man and the woman shake hands.

MAX

Follow me.

Babs and Max stroll together.

BABS

You might've heard mah radio show. It's on in the morning three days a week.

Max nods.

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

Babs works somewhat quietly from the four-manual console of Radio City's Mighty Wurlitzer.

The more work Babs does, the more pleased she looks. When she's done with the registration for her first tune:

BABS (CONT'D)

Done!

Babs plays a Dixielandish introduction, runs through eight bars in 4/4 time (with the same Dixie feel), and then:

BABS (CONT'D)

(singing)

Raise your left foot in the air, / Then you stomp it on the ground. / Raise your right foot in the air, / Then you stomp it on the ground. / Keep a-stompin' and a-stompin' / And a-stompin' all day long. / That's the way you do the Swamp Stomp.

INT. RADIO CITY GREAT STAGE - DAY

A CHORUS LINE OF (WHAT ELSE?) ROCKETTES quietly runs through a series of can-cans while Babs sings and plays.

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

It's Jubilee Time for a grateful Babs.

BABS

Raise your left arm to the sky, / Pump it like you milk a cow. / Raise your right arm to the sky. / Pump your arm the same way now. / Keep a-pumpin' and a-pumpin' / And a-pumpin'; you know how. / That's the way you do the Swamp Stomp.

INT. RADIO CITY LOWER LEVEL - DAY

EARLE NYMAN (30s) and AL O'FLAHERTY (40s), two important-looking men, watch the Rockettes from the hall's front row.

Al looks annoyed by the way the famous organ's put through its paces.

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

Babs continues to sing and play "Swamp Stomp."

BABS

You can do it in the South./You can do it in the West./Everywhere from coast to coast,/They say the Swamp Stomp is the best./You can do it in the North./You can do it in the East./It's for every single one,/From the largest to the least.

Now Babs catches a glimpse of the lower level.

BABS (CONT'D)

So if you up and come along/And you do this dance with me,/And you do it like Ah say,/Oh, how happy you will be./Keep a-pumpin' and a-flailin'/And a-stompin', just like me./Everybody do the Swamp Stomp.

Babs pushes a few expression pedals as she launches into the song's instrumental passage.

INT. RADIO CITY LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Earle tries to absorb both the music and the practicing Rockettes, while Al's beside himself.

EARLE

Al, Al, why don't you relax?

Al rises up and paces the floor.

AL

As soon as I find a way to get that nut off of my organ, I will.

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

Babs finishes "Swamp Stomp's" instrumental break, and:

BABS

You can do it in the West./You can do it in the North./This is just the kind of dance/That you'll wanna do some more./You can do it in the East./You can do it in the South./If you do it with a partner,/Kiss that partner in the mouth.

INT. RADIO CITY GREAT STAGE - DAY

The Rockettes still try to rehearse; however, as Babs' song continues, some of them give up on their can-cans.

ROCKETTE #1
 Maybe we oughta take that song's
 advice.

Some other Rockettes laugh.

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

Babs comes down the home stretch with her tune.

BABS
*You don't need a mushy swamp/Just
 to do this little dance./But
 anywhere you wanna do it,/It'll put
 you in a trance/When you're pumpin'
 and a-flailin'/And a-stompin',
 yessiree,/Every time you do the
 Swamp Stomp./Every time you do the
 Swamp Stomp.*

Babs leaves it up to her fingers for eight bars. Then:

BABS (CONT'D)
 (a cappella)
Every time you do the Swamp Stomp.

Two crashing chords from the Wurlitzer close out the tune.

INT. RADIO CITY LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Al heads for his seat.

AL
 (sitting back down)
 Thank goodness!

EARLE
 Well, it did sound sort of catchy.

AL
 Not on my organ!
 (to the Rockettes)
 All right! Show 'em whatcha got!

INT. RADIO CITY GREAT STAGE - DAY

With an O.S. PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT, the Rockettes can-can to "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight."

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

Babs works out a stop combination for her second self-written piece...in no short order, at that.

AN O.S. BOING!!! arouses her.

It's the sound of a piano wire coming loose...foiling the accompaniment for the chorus line.

Babs grinds out an instrumental called "I Spent All Saturday at the Movies." It starts out noisily, and it's supposed to resemble a Saturday matinee...right down to the cartoons.

INT. RADIO CITY LOWER LEVEL - DAY

Al's back on his feet.

AL
I'm gonna call security!

EARLE
Won't do you any good, Al. Them gals need music, anyway.

AL
(sitting back down)
Earle, that ain't no music!

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

At the organ, Babs leaves the "cartoon" for what's supposed to sound like a series of features...including something akin to a community sing!

After thirty-two bars of this, Babs floors the crescendo pedal and slows the music down for eight majestic bars.

Now Babs utilizes every single trap found on the Wurlitzer.

INT. RADIO CITY GREAT STAGE - DAY

The Rockettes have quit dancing.

ROCKETTE #1
This is ridiculous! We've only got five minutes 'til we gotta be outa here!

A DANCER NEXT TO HER gives her a stare.

ROCKETTE #2
How come you're worried? We've had
this down for years!

ROCKETTE #1
Well, I haven't!

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

Babs finds a ton of fun with that Mighty Wurlitzer.

She cranks up the sforzando pedal and leads "I Spent" into a
final passage.

WAPP's staff organist wrings all the pomp she can out of this
last passage before she brings the tune to an end.

INT. RADIO CITY LOWER LEVEL - DAY

A smiling Earle stands up and claps wildly...while a redfaced
Al stands up and yells toward the right-side arch.

AL
You...you! Get off my organ! This
is a theater, not
a...a...a...circus!

Babs looks surprised as she points to herself.

BABS
Sir, Ah was just testing out a few
songs Ah've written--

AL
I don't care! This ain't Loew's
State, where the organist wears a
funny-looking hat with an eleventh
finger!

BABS
Just let me explain, Mis--

Earle grabs Al by the shoulder.

EARLE
Al, give the girl a break.

AL
(through Earle's line)
Don't come back here again with
that...that...that...stuff!

INT. RADIO CITY RIGHT-SIDE ARCH - ORGAN - DAY

Babs shuts the Wurlitzer off and gives Al a look of pity.

Then she very slowly gets her belongings together before she leaves the arch.

EXT. EAST 78TH STREET TRIPLEX - NIGHT

Only the living-room lights are on.

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Babs sits at the piano and scribbles out the first eight bars (or so) of a new tune while she hums out bass notes. Plus, she pretends the floor is a thirty-two-note organ pedalboard.

BABS

If Ah could only git Albert Schweitzer to come over to New York and build me a pedalboard for this piano here.

Babs scribbles, erases, scribbles, and hums away.

BABS (CONT'D)

No...don't wanna use that.

Babs erases what she's got and replaces it with what she'd rather have.

Now she goes right to the bass notes before she fills out the rest of the song.

Babs proceeds smoothly when she HEARS the door open...and Laird come in.

LAIRD

Hey, if it ain't the Irving Berlin of East 78th Street.

As Laird walks over to Babs, she gives him a slight smile.

BABS

This isn't funny, Laird...Ah'd like to be in his league, but right now, Ah'd like to know Ah can hit, run, and throw.

Laird peeks over Babs' shoulder as she continues to write her very latest.

LAIRD

Whatcha gonna call this one, baby?

BABS

Ah don't know...unless you can come up with a workable title.

Babs looks at Laird, who quickly shakes his head sideways.

LAIRD

Now if it came at five cents a loaf or twenty-five cents to a pound, then you'd have yo'se'f a deal.

Laird sits next to Babs.

LAIRD (CONT'D)

You think you can sell ol' John Maxwell...or anybody...one o' your songs?

BABS

It's worth a try.

LAIRD

You really think you can sell ol' John Maxwell one o' them songs o' yours?

BABS

Sure Ah do.

LAIRD

You absolutely, positively believe you can sell ol' John Maxwell one o' them songs o' yours?

BABS

You ask me that question one more time, honey, you're gonna git another rendition of "Little White Lies."

Babs goes right back to work on her composing while Laird watches her.

EXT. MAXWELL MUSIC COMPANY - DAY

Purse on her shoulder and briefcase between her legs, Sue Ellen unlocks the front door as she starts her workday earlier than usual.

She's on her way in when Charley sprints through the open door and into the store.

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

Sue Ellen looks shocked as she eyeballs Charley.

SUE ELLEN
I see you've got some extra work
ahead of you today.

Briefcase and purse in tow, Sue Ellen heads right for the store piano.

So does Charley, who watches Sue Ellen set up.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Charley, didn't you come here to
get some extra work done?

CHARLEY
Well, uh...yes...and...no.

Sue Ellen throws a surprised look at Charley, then pulls out two self-written songs...one of them the now-finished "Eventually."

CHARLEY (CONT'D)
Before one of us gets let go or
something, I just...wanted to hear
you knock the guts out of that
piano.

Sue Ellen studies Charley for a moment.

SUE ELLEN
Is that all...

Sue Ellen pounds out "Eventually," a number that sounds like "The Man I Love."

After eight bars or so, Sue Ellen notices Charley standing next to her...and stops pounding the ivories.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Wasn't there something else you
came here early for?

Charley moves away from the piano and heads for the counter, where she finds a pencil and some paper.

CHARLEY

You know, Sue Ellen, you're right...I've gotta do some...inventory.

SUE ELLEN

Don't be silly. It'll take both of us, and it'll take us two or three days.

CHARLEY

Not if I get right on it now! As it is, we don't sell too much of this sheet music.

Charley moves over to the sheet music section, where she logs song titles with paper and pencil.

Meanwhile, Sue Ellen plays "Eventually" again.

All the while, Charley divides her attention between the inventory and Sue Ellen's prework "concert."

At the end of "Eventually," Sue Ellen lights up a cigar.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

I think that's a very nice song, Sue Ellen.

Sue Ellen nods.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

A bit derivative, but...nice.

SUE ELLEN

Well, I'm certainly happy you enjoyed it, Charley.

CHARLEY

I've been watching you the last two years, and--

SUE ELLEN

You, too?

CHARLEY

Sue Ellen...it just seems to me like you're not really happy being a song plugger.

Charley continues to write down the titles of songs for sale.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)
You're spending a lot of time
writing your own songs lately.

Sue Ellen writes "SPENDING A LOT OF TIME" on top of the first sheet of her latest unfinished song. With the title out of the way, Sue Ellen works on the melody.

Sue Ellen tackles the whole thing with ease...while Charley's inventory effort becomes a breeze.

SUE ELLEN
I've been writing since I was
eleven. Sixteen years.

Sue Ellen takes a puff.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
My sixth-grade music teacher held a
contest...and we had to confine our
subjects to our childhood
experiences.

Charley stops her inventory to hear Sue Ellen reminisce.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
My song was about my grammar school
principal, Mr. Zickfoose. I had a
crush on him...he's still that
school's principal.

CHARLEY
What happened to your song?

SUE ELLEN
I won first prize. And I figured
that if my first song was that
good, I might have a career
possibility.

Charley nods in earnest.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
So, once I got into high school, I
pursued songwriting with a
vengeance. I wrote songs for the
girls' chorus, the boys' chorus, a
jazz combo my former boyfriend and
I were in...

Charley moves over to the piano.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Too bad hardly anybody's singing
 them now.

CHARLEY
 Didn't you get 'em published?

SUE ELLEN
 I started to, but all the folks
 back home in Los Angeles told me to
 go to New York City. Even my old
 cronies at Stanford told me I'd
 have to go to New York.

Sue Ellen takes a puff from that stogie.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 They also told me my songs weren't
 good enough for Tin Pan Alley
 yet...and they also told me there's
 no song-publishing industry in Los
 Angeles.

CHARLEY
 Well, it sounds to me like your
 songs are good enough for Tin Pan
 Alley.

SUE ELLEN
 Charley, you have good taste.
 (turns her back to keys)
 Yes, songwriting is what I really
 want to do.

Now Sue Ellen takes a longer puff.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 I hope that answered your question.

CHARLEY
 Question? Did I ask a question?

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Babs, who sits at the organ, and Vincent, who stands next to
 her, shoot the breeze.

VINCENT
 Miss Fantetti told me you played
 the big organ at Radio City.

BABS

Ah had the time of mah life on that organ.

Babs gives the WAPP organ a gentle pat.

BABS (CONT'D)

Makes this one sound like a hurdy gurdy.

(turns organ on)

Mr. Valentine, you've never played a concert organ or theater organ 'til you've played the one at Radio City.

VINCENT

I'd like to personally take you to Atlantic City and let you try the seven-manual organ in Convention Hall.

Vincent looks at Babs' arms and flashes a smug look.

BABS

Tell Atlantic City Ah'm ready.

Vincent looks surprised.

VINCENT

You still pushing the idea of a novelty organ show?

BABS

Ah'm gitting there.

Now Vincent looks lost.

BABS (CONT'D)

Ah've got five, six songs written and Ah'm working on an arrangement of "Star Dust."

VINCENT

A..."Star...Dust?"

Vincent shakes his head as he leaves the studio.

BABS

Don't worry, Mr. Valentine...Ah'll work it in slowly.

Babs arranges the music on the organ in order of performance.

A VOICE COMES OUT OF THE STUDIO LOUDSPEAKER.

VOICE (V.O.)
TEN SECONDS TO AIR TIME!

BABS
(toward loudspeaker)
Not so loud, please!

When the ten seconds fade away, Babs watches the "ON THE AIR" light blink on, puts her headset over her ears, and grinds out "At Dawning."

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

Sue Ellen completes the writing of her "Spending a Lot of Time," then turns to Charley, who resumes counting stock.

SUE ELLEN
Charley, do you need help with the inventory?

CHARLEY
I'm almost done, Sue Ellen.

Sue Ellen's mouth drops in surprise.

SUE ELLEN
There's also the stockroom.

CHARLEY
I'll burn that bridge when I get to it.

Charley finishes up what little salesfloor inventory remains. Once finished, she walks back over to the piano.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)
(along the way)
That's an entire inventory in itself.
(leaning on piano)
Let's hear what you've got.

Sue Ellen's fingers give out with the romantic-sounding "Spending a Lot of Time."

SUE ELLEN
(after eight bars or so)
Needs words.

CHARLEY
You took the words out of my mouth.

Sue Ellen continues to play "Spending;" toward the end of the tune, a smiling John walks onto the salesfloor.

JOHN

I heard that song as I was comin' in.

Charley and Sue Ellen give John warm looks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's pretty good. What is it?

Sue Ellen now ends the song.

SUE ELLEN

I call it..."Spending a Lot of Time."

John looks puzzled.

JOHN

That stinks...you been workin' on givin' it to 'em straight?

SUE ELLEN

To tell you the truth...not exactly.

John puts his fists on his hips.

JOHN

I told you if you don't start playin' straight, you'd be playin' in the streets, didn't--

CHARLEY

Mr. Maxwell, I've been reading up on the competition and I've come to realize that all the other music stores in town have gone to other methods of promoting--

JOHN

Miss Hallock, when I want your opinion, I'll write you!

In a huff, Charley leaves the conversation to check her inventory figures.

SUE ELLEN

Charley's right, Mr. Maxwell. You know how much I take off on these songs.

JOHN
All too well.

SUE ELLEN
I get carried away when I play. I
get wrapped up in the music and in
the piano. I just love watching
those keys fall and rise, fall and
rise--

JOHN
Miss Cornwallis--

SUE ELLEN
Mr. Maxwell, I just don't seem to
have what you want in a song
plugger anymore.
(standing up)
I want to spread my wings...I want
to be the engineer of my own
train...I want to--

JOHN
You want Irving Berlin to write ya
some music for the words comin'
outa ya mouth?

SUE ELLEN
What I'm doing is archaic--

JOHN
Would you like your career with our
company to be archaic?

In a huff all her own, Sue Ellen sits back down at the piano.

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Babs uses an arpeggio to finish "Oh Promise Me."

BABS
And now, for you listeners, Ah'd
like to play something Ah
git...excited about playing.
(changes organ stops)
Ah hope you'll be excited about
hearing this selection, too.

Babs pushes the pedal(s) a little more open and launches
into...a highly uptempo "Sweet Georgia Brown!"

A big smile jumps onto Babs' face.

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Vincent sits at his desk, where he drinks coffee and listens to "Songs by Steuart" on his office radio.

When Babs' version of "Sweet Georgia Brown" heats up, Vincent spills his coffee.

He jumps out of his seat and throws himself at the intercom on his desk.

VINCENT
Miss Fantetti! Get me another cup
of coffee!

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Wrapped up in (and excited about) the music, Babs floors the expression pedal(s).

Unbeknownst to her...the "ON THE AIR" light goes blank.

That's the way it stays until her song is finished.

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Vincent holds a fresh new cup of coffee as, over the radio, Babs finishes up her show with "When Day Is Done."

Coffee cup in hand, Vincent leaves the room...

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

...and arrives at Studio A as Babs takes off her headset.

Babs catches the pained expression on Vincent's face.

VINCENT
(nearly in tears)
Babs, Babs, Babs, you promised me
you wouldn't--

BABS
(getting up)
Cain't talk to you now, Mr.
Valentine.

She gathers up her belongings and steps out of the studio.

BABS (CONT'D)
Got a date with a music-store
owner.

VINCENT
(following Babs)
Which one?

BABS
Tell you all about when Ah git
back.

Vincent watches Babs prance away.

EXT. MAXWELL MUSIC COMPANY - DAY

Songs in hand, Babs walks toward the store as if on air.

She opens the front door, and...

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

...as she walks inside the store, A MAN (70s) browses through
sheet music.

The man finds something he likes; he lifts the item out of
the rack and shows the music to Charley, who stands behind
the counter.

CHARLEY
Sir, would you like Sue Ellen to
play it for you?

The man stares in space while Sue Ellen eyeballs him. He
looks at Charley.

MAN
Nah. I trust the writers.

Charley nods, then accepts the customer's money, which she
puts into the cash register.

Babs saunters over to the counter as the man walks away with
his sheet music.

CHARLEY
Thank you, sir. Hope you like the
music.

Babs leans on the counter.

BABS
Is the manager in?

CHARLEY
You must be the organist who writes
songs.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

(nodding)

He should be in his office.

Babs looks over at the office door.

BABS

Right. The one that's always closed.

Charley watches as Babs goes over to John's office.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

John tries to clean out his desk...but it's too big a task for him to continue.

He seats himself in his chair behind the desk when he hears a KNOCK on his office door.

JOHN

Yeah! C'm'in!

The door opens...and Babs enters the messy office.

JOHN (CONT'D)

So it's the Miss Fixit of Tan Pin...Tin Pan...of Song!

(reaches for phone)

I told you--

BABS

Ah know you did, Mr. Maxwell.

(shows John her songs)

Ah've got enough songs to sell you, so don't you call the police.

(heads toward the door)

Ah would like for you to hear 'em.

Babs gives John an almost pitiful look; John returns it with a look of grudging resignation.

JOHN

All right. Make it fast.

Babs and John walk out of the office; he closes the door behind him.

INT. MAXWELL SALESFLOOR - DAY

They go right to the piano, where a seated Sue Ellen looks over some sheet music.

BABS
 (to Sue Ellen)
 Ma'am, is it all right to use your
 piano?

Sue Ellen stands up and moves out of the way for Babs.

SUE ELLEN
 Be my guest.

Babs clears her dress and sits down at the piano.

BABS
 Mr. Maxwell, the first song Ah'd
 like to do for you is "Swamp
 Stomp."

Babs plays "Swamp Stomp's" Dixielandish introduction, runs through eight bars in 4/4, then sings:

BABS (CONT'D)
*Raise your left foot in the
 air,/Then you stomp it on the
 ground.*

JOHN
 (through Babs' singing)
 Make it fast!

BABS
*Raise your right foot in the
 air,/Then you stomp it on the
 ground./Keep a-stompin' and a-
 stompin'/And a-stompin' all day
 long./That's the way you do the
 Swamp Stomp.*

AN ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENT RISES OVER BABS' SINGING AND PLAYING.

BABS (CONT'D)
*Raise your left arm to the
 sky./Pump it like you milk a
 cow./Raise your right arm to the
 sky./Pump your arm the same way
 now./Keep a-pumpin' and a-
 pumpin'/And a-pumpin'; you know
 how./That's the way you do the
 Swamp Stomp.*

SUE ELLEN
 (into the CAMERA)
 Shut up up there!

The orchestral backup STOPS...as does Babs' music.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Not you, lady. I mean that
orchestra.

BABS
Ah'm sorry...Ah couldn't hear an
orchestra.

SUE ELLEN
Well, there's an orchestra that
keeps coming out of nowhere and
tries to horn in on every song
around here.

JOHN
Never mind, Miss Cornwallis!
(to Babs)
All right, lady...give!

Babs goes back to her playing and singing.

BABS
*You can do it in the South./You can
do it in the West./Everywhere from
coast to coast,/They say the Swamp
Stomp is the best./You can do it in
the North./You can do it in the
East./It's for every single
one,/From the largest to the least.*

Behind the counter, Charley tries to do the Swamp Stomp.

BABS (CONT'D)
*So if you up and come along/And you
do this dance with me,/And you do
it like Ah say,/Oh, how happy you
will be./Keep a-pumpin' and a-
flailin'/And a-stompin', just like
me./Everybody do the Swamp Stomp.*

Now at the song's midpoint, Babs pounds the upright's keys
with all her might.

BABS (CONT'D)
This is nothing like when Ah played
it on that organ at Radio City.

While John gives Babs an indifferent look, Sue Ellen's feet
tap to the beat of Babs' music.

JOHN
I can't help that.

Done with the middle of "Swamp Stomp," Babs sings again.

BABS
*You can do it in the West./You can
do it in the North./This is just
the kind of dance/That you'll wanna
do some more./You can do it in the
East./You can do it in the
South./If you do it with a partner--*

SOME CUSTOMERS stop inside the store...and watch Charley do the Swamp Stomp.

BABS (CONT'D)
*Kiss that partner in the mouth./You
don't need a mushy swamp/Just to do
this little dance./But anywhere you
wanna do it,/It'll put you in a
trance/When you're pumpin' and a-
flailin'/And a-stompin', yessiree--*

Charley's dance recital comes to a halt.

BABS (CONT'D)
*Every time you do the Swamp
Stomp./Every time you do the Swamp
Stomp.*

For the next eight bars, the song moves into an instrumental phase. Then:

BABS (CONT'D)
(singing a cappella)
Every time you do the Swamp Stomp.

For the song's finale, Babs plays two crashing piano chords.

SUE ELLEN
(applauding)
Ma'am, that was marvelous!

John's scowl ends Sue Ellen's applause.

BABS
Mah name's Barbara Steuart...but
you can call me Babs.

Sue Ellen nods.

SUE ELLEN
 Barbara...Babs, my name is Sue
 Ellen Cornwallis...and when I'm not
 here, I write songs.

JOHN
 You write songs here, too, Sue
 Ellen.

The customers gather around Babs, John, and Sue Ellen.

BABS
 Ah've got seven more songs Ah've
 finished in the past week.

JOHN
 (shakes his head "no")
 Show's over.

Babs shrugs and gathers her things; Sue Ellen strides next to
 John and faces him.

SUE ELLEN
 What in the world was wrong with
 that song, Mr. Maxwell?

JOHN
 Couldn't you tell, Miss Cornwallis?
 That didn't sound like a song...in
 fact, that ain't no song!

SUE ELLEN
 (stomps on floor)
 Fiddlesticks! I found myself
 patting my feet, and if a song like
 that doesn't get a body to--

JOHN
 Whaddya know about music? Seems
 like you don't--

Charley moves in to separate John and Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN
 Let me assure you that I didn't get
 my--

JOHN
 (to Charley)
 STAY OUTA THIS!

Charley sprints to her place behind the counter.

SUE ELLEN
--my music degree from a box of
Cracker Jacks!

John looks even more exasperated.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
I don't know where you got yours,
but--

John gestures as if he's a baseball umpire.

JOHN
YERRRRROUT!!

Sue Ellen strides to the piano, where she gathers up her own music and her purse.

SUE ELLEN
Fine. Okay.

Belongings in her grip, Sue Ellen storms between Babs and John on her way out. Halfway between them and the front door, she faces John.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
But just remember:

Sue Ellen waits a few seconds for John's response...in vain.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
You can't fire me. I QUIT!!

Sue Ellen sticks her tongue out and makes a noise in John's direction as she walks out of the store.

EXT. MAXWELL MUSIC COMPANY - DAY

Sue Ellen's walk picks up speed as Babs comes out of the store herself.

BABS
Sue Ellen! Wait!

Sue Ellen just slows down.

BABS (CONT'D)
Sue Ellen!

Now Sue Ellen stops as Babs runs up to her.

They're now face to face.

BABS (CONT'D)
So you write songs, too, huh?

Sue Ellen nods.

BABS (CONT'D)
Ah'm probably in the same straits
you're in.

Sue Ellen looks confused.

BABS (CONT'D)
That song you heard and liked so
much Ah wrote because nobody's
bothered to check into the field of
novelty organ music...and so, Ah
thought Ah'd give it a try.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

The newly-fired song plugger and the radio organist stroll.

BABS
All Ah wanted to do was open up mah
little ol' radio show on WAPP.

SUE ELLEN
(nodding)
Charley mentioned that you did have
a show.

Babs is all smiles.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
I just want to open up my career in
music. And being a song plugger is
no longer the way to go.

Babs slowly nods.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Not when song publishers have
turned to radio, records, and
pictures to insure their songs get
before the public.

BABS
Tell me about it!

SUE ELLEN

What's more, their results are more impressive than under the old system of song plugging that Mr. Maxwell still uses.

BABS

Ah'm with you right there, Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN

Somebody should get through to him that it's 1939.

BABS

Sue Ellen, Ah don't know what he's got against you, but--

SUE ELLEN

He doesn't like my piano playing. It's too flashy for him. He doesn't like my own songwriting efforts...

Both women stop in their tracks.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

Barbara...I mean Babs...would you be able to...could you use a partner?

Babs looks at the traffic, then at Sue Ellen.

BABS

Ah don't know...a little ol' child of the Everglades...by way of Huntsville, Alabama...and a sophisticated lady like you...Ah don't know.

SUE ELLEN

We're both after the same thing: To advance our musical careers. Why not do it together?

Babs scrunches up her face as she eyeballs the traffic.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

How long do you want to be held back?

Now Babs slowly and repeatedly nods.

BABS

Consider us partners, Sue Ellen.

Sue Ellen yells in delight while she hugs a surprised Babs.

EXT. EAST 100TH STREET APARTMENTS - NIGHT

This large brownstone building features windows that look too small to do their job.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sue Ellen's living room is barely furnished; its two main extravagances are a floor-model radio and an upright piano from the 1880-1919 period.

Sue Ellen herself looks out a window.

She walks over to an easel that features an unfinished still-life painting.

Sue Ellen eyes the painting-to-be and shakes her head "no."

Now she walks over to the piano.

SUE ELLEN

George Gershwin just had to take up painting, didn't he?

Sue Ellen lights up a cigar, takes out a sheet of music paper, and grabs a pencil.

It's time to create a tune.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Her material in tow, Babs walks along the hallway and shakes her head sideways over what she experiences.

Once she finds the door labeled with a metal number, she knocks on that door.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sue Ellen stops her work to answer the knock.

When Sue Ellen opens the door, Babs saunters in and looks around the living room, then at Sue Ellen.

BABS

Good evening, Sue Ellen.

Babs looks around the living room again.

BABS (CONT'D)
Ah cain't believe you live here.

SUE ELLEN
Good evening, Barb...I mean Babs.

BABS
Ah cain't believe you live here.

Nevertheless, Babs heads for a couch.

BABS (CONT'D)
Mind if Ah sit down, Sue Ellen?

Sue Ellen nods and shows Babs the couch. While Babs sits down on the couch, Sue Ellen goes right back to the piano.

SUE ELLEN
Would you like me to get you anything?

Babs shakes her head "no."

BABS
A nice, sophisticated young woman like you...Ah cain't believe you live here.

SUE ELLEN
It's the only place of residence I could afford on what Mr. Maxwell was paying me...fifteen dollars a month.

Babs nods in a shaky way.

BABS
That's pitiful, Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN
No, Babs. That's my rent.

Sue Ellen's cigar has gone out...so she relights it.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
If my father hadn't strongly insisted on my succeeding on my own, the way he did, I'd still be living with him...I'm sure you're familiar with the Chrysanthemum Company, aren't you?

BABS

Why, yes. Mah mama raised me and mah six brothers and four sisters on Chrysanthemum evaporated milk.

(stands up)

They call it "The Milk from Jubilant Cows."

(sits back down)

Ah still cain't believe you live here.

SUE ELLEN

You did come here to help write songs, not inspect apartments for Mayor LaGuardia...didn't you?

Babs walks over to the piano, where Sue Ellen's cigar dies once more.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

(looking at cigar)

I'll never patronize that tobacconist again. He's never sold cigars to a woman before.

BABS

Ah'm sorry...it's just that Ah never expected to see you live in...

An annoyed Sue Ellen relights that stogie of hers.

BABS (CONT'D)

Forget it.

Babs puts an arm around Sue Ellen.

BABS (CONT'D)

Let me hear what you've got, Sue Ellen.

Sue Ellen uses an arpeggio to launch, from memory, "Spending a Lot of Time."

SUE ELLEN

(through her playing)

Well, anyway, my father started the Chrysanthemum Company...with a goat and an old wagon...to say nothing of a team of horses heading for the glue factory.

Babs produces some notebook paper and writes some lyrics.

Sue Ellen leaves the music to her right hand; with her left, she locates the sheet music for "Spending a Lot of Time" and hands the sheet(s) to Babs.

BABS
Sue Ellen, you'd be better off
playing from those lyrics.

But Sue Ellen shakes her head sideways...while Babs nods and accepts the sheet music.

Babs continues to develop lyrics when her partner finishes her rendition.

BABS (CONT'D)
Looks like you're ready.

SUE ELLEN
All right.

BABS
What do you think of these for
lyrics, Sue Ellen?

Babs reads from her piece of paper.

BABS (CONT'D)
"Spendin' a lot of time sittin' in
Central Park, watchin' street
vendors sell 'til after dark..."

Sue Ellen looks displeased.

BABS (CONT'D)
(still reading)
"Spendin' a lot of time watchin'
people feed flocks of pigeons
bread, corn, and wild bird seed."

Babs receives a cold look from Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN
Babs, that's not what I had in
mind.

Babs looks puzzled.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
There's nothing romantic about
feeding pigeons.

BABS
Sue Ellen, why don't you let me
finish mah lyrics?

Sue Ellen puts her hands on her hips as she eyeballs Babs.

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Babs sits at the organ, but doesn't wear her headset; Sue Ellen sits next to Babs and holds her own notebook.

BABS
We've got plenty of time 'til mah
little ol' show comes on the air,
Sue Ellen.

Babs peeks at Sue Ellen's notebook.

BABS (CONT'D)
Let's see what you've written.

Sue Ellen hands Babs the notebook, and the latter gazes at Sue Ellen's notations.

BABS (CONT'D)
(reading)
"You've got the corn, Ah've got the
peas. You've got the lock, Ah've
got the keys. We go together like
honey and bees, so let's make us
some love, pretty please."

Babs looks at Sue Ellen and comes away all smiles.

BABS (CONT'D)
Why, that's very...purty.

SUE ELLEN
Pretty simple.

BABS
Nothing wrong with that.

Babs' eyes widen in inspiration.

BABS (CONT'D)
Last night, Ah worked up a little
ol' melody that just might work
with this song.

A nodding Sue Ellen's got a big smile on her face.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Ah think you'll just love it.

Babs turns the organ on, selects her stops, and grinds out a fast 4/4 melody that's a bit peppier than "Swamp Stomp."

Four bars later, Sue Ellen's smile becomes a frown.

SUE ELLEN
 Stop!

Babs takes Sue Ellen's advice.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 That's not what I had in mind!

Babs looks puzzled.

BABS
 Why, it's a bouncy little melody.
 And with lyrics like these, Ah
 think it's a great combina--

SUE ELLEN
 With a tempo like that, Babs,
 people will lose the words!

The Alabamian-turned-Floridian looks even more startled.

BABS
 Would you like to show me what you
 had in mind?

Babs shows the Californian the organ and gestures her into sitting down to play.

But Sue Ellen takes one look at the organ and winces.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Ah'll work the stops for you.

Sue Ellen still stares at the WAPP console.

BABS (CONT'D)
 You don't even have to play the
 pedals.

SUE ELLEN
 I'm not going to get my feet
 tangled up in the pedals!

Babs can only shrug.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sue Ellen plays Babs a self-written tune along the lines of "Rhapsody in Blue."

Babs falls asleep...and earns a scowl from Sue Ellen.

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sue Ellen tries her song again; this time, Babs gestures her into something different.

Result: The song shows echoes of Spike Jones...much to Sue Ellen's dismay.

INT. SALESFLOOR AT J.R. WATKINS COMPANY - DAY

Babs and Sue Ellen listen to records.

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Babs tickles the ivories this time.

Sue Ellen doesn't like the tune...so she rips the song's sheet music into little pieces.

EXT. EAST 100TH STREET APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Only the lights upstairs and the light above the front entrance burn on.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sue Ellen's kitchen is also sparsely furnished.

She and Babs look bleary-eyed as they sit at a small table and drink coffee.

The songsmiths' sheet music (now ready to publish) rests on the table.

A small cuckoo clock on the wall shows that it's 11:55 PM.

Babs nods off and on. During the latest "on" moment, she puts her chin on her fists.

BABS

If Ah find myself seated at that
organ tomorrow staring at one giant
white key and one giant black key,
Ah'm holding your coffee
responsible.

Sue Ellen sips some of "your coffee."

SUE ELLEN
My coffee? It's one of the few
pleasures left I can afford.

Babs nods.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
You should be glad we've got enough
songs to present to the chieftains
of Tin Pan Alley.

A still-groggy Babs nods with a faint smile.

Sue Ellen leaves the kitchen while Babs pours herself another
cup of java.

BABS
Good luck, Babs.

When Babs settles down with her coffee cup, Sue Ellen returns
to the kitchen...with a couple of cigars.

SUE ELLEN
(offers Babs a cigar)
You should congratulate yourself,
too.

BABS
No thanks, Sue Ellen. Mah ahs are
still trying to find themselves.

So Sue Ellen lights up one cigar and puts the other one on
the table.

BABS (CONT'D)
Ah'd join you, but mah oldest
sister, Judy Ellen, scared me off
for life.

Sue Ellen flashes a look of cheerful surprise.

SUE ELLEN
I didn't know she also smoked
cigars.

BABS
(shaking her head "no")
She smoked an old corncob pipe. She
tried to git me started, but the
smell was so bad...maybe she forgot
to clean it out.

Babs makes a few faces.

BABS (CONT'D)

Sue Ellen...what're you gonna do if
you cain't make it in the ol' tin
mine?

SUE ELLEN

Me? What about us?

BABS

Awraht...us. Ah've still got a
radio show, but...well, you don't
have a thang to fall back on.

SUE ELLEN

I don't, huh?

(takes a puff)

Well, I can...well...teach piano.
Let's just think about setting Tin
Pan Alley on its ear.

Babs stands up and yawns.

BABS

We'll both be thrown out on our
ears if we don't git some sleep!

Babs sits back down and...closes her eyes.

EXT. SIXTH AVENUE - DAY

Babs and Sue Ellen stroll the street in search of a
publishing company to visit.

INT. OFFICE AT FENWICK & COMPANY - DAY

Sue Ellen and Babs fall asleep in their quest to be heard.

INT. LOBBY AT J. WALKER & COMPANY - DAY

They watch A RECEPTIONIST tend to every other kind of
business but theirs.

In boredom, Sue Ellen and Babs play tic tac toe...on one of
their...song sheets.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AT J. WALKER & COMPANY - DAY

Babs and Sue Ellen play "Pretty Please" for THE COMPANY
PRESIDENT...who throws them out of the office.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AT N. WHITMAN & SONS - DAY

Babs and Sue Ellen try "Swamp Stomp" on THE OWNER...who gives them a "thumbs down."

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AT UNITED PUBLISHING COMPANY - DAY

Sue Ellen and Babs find themselves thumbed out of the office...without their work.

A few seconds later, the songwriters' work is handed back to them. And the office door SLAMS SHUT.

EXT. EAST 28TH STREET - DAY

As they walk along, Sue Ellen looks glum and Babs' face shows a blank look.

SUE ELLEN

Every publishing company in New York showed us the door! Every company!

Sue Ellen's glum look becomes an angry one.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

If it were left up to me, I'd take every one of those executives and take them out to the woodshed and spank them!

BABS

Look around you.

Sue Ellen doesn't heed...so Babs gestures her into looking around her.

Sue Ellen looks all around her.

BABS (CONT'D)

There isn't a woodshed for miles.

SUE ELLEN

All right, Fanny Brice, I'd take every one of those executives out to the nearest garage and spank them!

BABS

With all the song publishers there are in New York, you wouldn't have any time to write songs.

Sue Ellen stops walking and zeroes in on Babs, who, as a result, stops in her own tracks.

SUE ELLEN
You and your novelties! That's
probably why we got turned down!

Babs puts a hand on Sue Ellen's shoulder as the two tunesmiths resume their walk.

BABS
Now wait...wait a minute, Sue
Ellen. This was a team error. We
both went after the same pop fly
and got hit on the head with it.

Sue Ellen nods.

EXT. THE RUTABAGA RESTAURANT - DAY

Sue Ellen and Babs turn toward a building whose awnings cover the front windows. The two composers go up the stairs.

BABS
Here. Sit down in here and cool
off.

Babs and Sue Ellen go on inside.

INT. RUTABAGA DINING ROOM - DAY

Babs and a still-steamed Sue Ellen wait next to the door when a tuxedo-clad HOST approaches them.

BABS
Sir, does your restaurant serve
unescorted ladies?

The host nods with a wry grin before he escorts the ladies to the dining area.

Sue Ellen and Babs find an empty table and sit there.

SUE ELLEN
What a thing to say, Barbara Ellen
McKenzie Steuart!

BABS
We could've barged on in here like
a couple of runaway bulls and
gotten kicked out on our cabooses.

Babs touches her songwriting partner's hand.

BABS (CONT'D)
 C'mon...let the steam outa your tea
 kettle.

SUE ELLEN
 Where do you get these bright,
 witty homilies? From the radio?

BABS
 (shaking her head "no")
 From mah father.

SUE ELLEN
 I wonder what station he's on.

BABS
 Sue Ellen!

A food server named HEDY (20s) comes over to the songwriters' table, menu in one hand a pitcher of water in the other. She pours each woman a glass of water.

Hedy hands the menu to Babs.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Ma'am, may we have one more menu,
 please?

HEDY
 Certainly.

But Sue Ellen shakes her head "no."

SUE ELLEN
 I want the biggest steak you
 have...and the oldest wine you
 have.

Babs and Hedy look on in surprise. Nevertheless, Hedy whips out a pencil and writes Sue Ellen's order down.

Meanwhile, Babs scans the menu.

BABS
 Think Ah'll try the chef's salad.

Hedy writes that down, too. She nods toward Sue Ellen.

HEDY
 A steak for you...will that be
 rare, medium rare, or well done?

SUE ELLEN

Well done.

HEDY

(nodding at Babs)

And a chef's salad for you. And wine for both. Will that be white, rose, burgundy--

SUE ELLEN

The oldest wine you've got. Period.

A nodding Hedy leaves the dining area.

Babs turns to her colleague.

BABS

Sue Ellen, can you really eat that big a steak? Ah mean, not even mah Laird can eat that--

SUE ELLEN

When I feel this way, Barbara...I mean Babs, I always eat more than usual.

Babs nods. A moment later, she gazes at Sue Ellen again.

BABS

Got any solutions to the problem, Sue Ellen?

Sue Ellen shakes her head "no."

BABS (CONT'D)

Same here.

(folds arms on table)

Ah guess we'll have to take these songs back to the little ol' drawing board.

Sue Ellen and Babs look at each other. A grin forms on the former's face.

SUE ELLEN

Perhaps not!

BABS

They weren't good enough for Tin Pan Alley.

SUE ELLEN
 Sometimes the captains of Tin Pan
 Alley don't know what the public
 really wants to hear.

Babs looks surprised as Sue Ellen talks on.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 I dare say most of the time.

Sue Ellen digs into her purse, pulls out a cigar, and lights
 that stogie up.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Why don't you perform these songs
 on your radio show tomorrow
 morning?

Babs stares in space.

BABS
 And bypass the ol' tin mine?

SUE ELLEN
 Exactly.

At surrounding tables, CUSTOMERS stare at Sue Ellen while she
 and Babs continue to gab.

BABS
 Ah don't think mah show is the
 right place to spring our songs.
 Why, the Hoopers show mah show
 eighth out of nine in the same time
 slot.

SUE ELLEN
 Babs, didn't you tell me the day
 you came to...that music company on
 Fifth Avenue...didn't you tell me--

The people at the surrounding tables stop eating as they
 continue to stare at Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 --that you wanted to open up your
 show?

Now Babs stares at Sue Ellen.

BABS
 Well, yes...

SUE ELLEN

The opportunity is here. Now. Take it!

(looks toward kitchen)

Something tells me the cooks have yet to kill the cow yielding that steak I ordered.

Hedy comes back to Babs' and Sue Ellen's table...with a bottle of 1918 burgundy and Babs' chef's salad.

Hedy sets the salad in front of Babs and the wine in the middle of the table before she stares at Sue Ellen.

HEDY

Miss, I'll...be back with...the...steak.

But first, Hedy and Babs still stare at Sue Ellen.

HEDY (CONT'D)

(to Babs)

Miss, your salad.

While she continues to stare at her cigar-smoking partner, Babs shovels a knife into that chef's salad!

Hedy leaves the table.

SUE ELLEN

Never use a knife to eat salad, Babs.

Babs puts down her knife and picks up a fork. She looks up at Sue Ellen.

BABS

Sue Ellen, do you realize just where you are?

SUE ELLEN

Of course.

(sets cigar in ashtray)

We're at a restaurant.

As Babs eats her salad, Sue Ellen looks around at all those staring customers.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

(picking up her cigar)

Let 'em stare.

Sue Ellen blows a smoke ring toward the ceiling.

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

A highly-enthused Babs, seated at the organ console, arranges her sheet music so that her first song on the show is on the far left on the music rack.

While Babs finishes her pre-show task, THAT VOICE YELLS THROUGH THE LOUDSPEAKER.

VOICE (V.O.)
TEN SECONDS TO AIR TIME!

Babs watches the clock while she puts her headset on. She's so pumped up that she bounces up and down on the organ bench.

At the end of the ten-second interval, the "ON THE AIR" light comes on...and Babs launches her opener, "At Dawning."

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Full cup of coffee in hand, a contented Vincent listens to "Songs by Steuart" on his office radio.

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Right after "At Dawning," Babs goes into...an instrumental version of "Pretty Please," peppy melody and all.

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY

The peppy melody makes Vincent spit coffee out of his mouth.

SAME SCENE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

At the switchboard, Leona accepts a growing number of calls.

The whole thing surprises her as she hurries to get to as many phone calls as possible.

LEONA
(to herself)
Looks like a cross between the
Fourth of July and the Great War...
(into phone)
Fireworks Unlimited...I mean WAPP.
May I help you?...I don't know. I
think it's called "Pretty Please."
No, ma'am, Miss Steuart isn't drunk
today! Good day!

Now the music over Leona's own RADIO is that cross between Spike Jones' music and "Rhapsody in Blue." It's now called "Just Another Little Kiss."

The switchboard's lights continue to go crazy.

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Babs plays "I Spent All Saturday at the Movies."

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Vincent, seated at his desk, buries his head in his arms.

INT. WAPP STUDIO A - DAY

Happy Babs plays on as she ends the "cartoon" segment of her song to go to her majestic eight-bar transition, where she floors the crescendo pedal.

During this "feature" segment, Babs uses every trap found on the organ. She hits the sforzando button to lead "I Spent All Saturday at the Movies" into its grand finale.

Babs goes on to her closing tune, "When Day Is Done."

Vincent enters the studio, handkerchief in his hand, tears in his eyes.

VINCENT

Barbara, Barbara, Barbara, Barbara
Ellen McKenzie Steuart!

Babs' sunny look withers away as she stares at Vincent.

BABS

(trying to hug Vincent)
Mr. Valentine, what's--

Vincent shakes away from Babs.

VINCENT

You've besmirched the organ and
organists everywhere--

BABS

But, Mr. Valentine, Ah was having
the time of my life!

VINCENT

(blowing his nose)
And, what's more, you've made all
those housewives...all those little
housewives out there...squirm in
their dresses and spill their
coffee cups!

Babs' mouth flies open in disbelief.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
And now they want my head! Before
that happens, I want your head!

Now Babs shakes her head.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
You made that switchboard go crazy
like Times Square!

BABS
But...but...Ah didn't exactly kill
anybody, did Ah?

VINCENT
(blows his nose)
You killed your job at WAPP, that's
what!

BABS
Mr. Valentine, all Ah wanted to do
was open up mah--

VINCENT
You opened up your show, all right!
(blows his nose again)
You opened up your show to another
organist!

Babs looks shaken as she gathers her things and heads for the door. She watches a still-tearful Vincent along the way.

BABS
Ah just wanted to do something
different on mah show...really, Ah
did.

VINCENT
(pointing toward door)
Say goodbye to WA...
(blows his nose again)
PP!

Babs winces her way out of the studio.

EXT. EAST 78TH STREET TRIPLEX - NIGHT

Only the upstairs bedroom lights are on.

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom door's shut.

With the covers still on the bed, Babs rests her head on a pillow as she looks at Sue Ellen's and her individual and collective songs.

BABS
What a way to spend Memorial
Day...losing your job.

A forlorn Babs shuts her eyes.

When Babs buries her head in her pillow, she finds a KNOCK on the door.

BABS (CONT'D)
Is that you, Laird? That barbecue
couldn't be over this soon.

Babs' answer is ANOTHER KNOCK on the door.

She gets up to get the bedroom door. When Babs opens it, she finds Sue Ellen on the other side.

SUE ELLEN
You weren't in the living room, so
I--

BABS
(nodding)
C'mon in.

Sue Ellen enters and seats herself on a chair.

SUE ELLEN
Why aren't you enjoying this
pleasant Memorial Day?

BABS
Guess what, Miss Cornwallis.

Sue Ellen catches Babs' look of anguish.

BABS (CONT'D)
Ah got fired.

Sue Ellen's mouth drops.

BABS (CONT'D)
Canned.

Babs sits on her bed.

BABS (CONT'D)
Ah'll never git to play the organ
at WAPP again.

SUE ELLEN
I'm...I don't know what to say.

BABS
Ah do!
(gets back up)
Mah songwriting career's down the
drain.
(walks around)
On top of mah career as an organist
down the drain.

SUE ELLEN
WAPP isn't the only station in New
York. In fact--

BABS
All those people called up and said
they thought Ah was playing drunk.

SUE ELLEN
Babs, I'm sure there are stations
in Connecticut or New Jer--

BABS
Ah've probably got no chance with
any other station in this area as
long as they know Ah worked for
Vincent Valentine.
(stops walking around)
Ah'd have to play in Siberia!

SUE ELLEN
Maybe the Giants or the Yankees or
the Dodgers will let you play.

Babs shrugs.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
It's not exactly farfetched, you
know. The Garden's getting a lot of
recognition from having Gladys
Goodding as their organist at
Rangers' hockey games.

The newly-canned radio organist sits back down.

BABS
 (shaking her head "no")
 Ever since Ah got fired, Ah've
 spent all day in this room. And
 Ah've been thinking about it.

Sue Ellen studies Babs.

BABS (CONT'D)
 And it's begun to hit me...Ah...Ah
 should never have listened to your
 crazy idea of playing our songs on
 WAPP.

SUE ELLEN
 Barbara, wait a minute!

BABS
 It turned out to be wrong thing to--

SUE ELLEN
 It attracted attention, didn't it?

BABS
 You're right about that! Only it
 backfired!
 (standing up)
 Ah've also thought about something
 else: Maybe this partnership won't
 work.

Sue Ellen's mouth drops again.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Make that definitely.
 (walks toward Sue Ellen)
 It's time you left, Sue Ellen
 Cornwallis.

Sue Ellen now shakes her head sideways.

BABS (CONT'D)
 It's time to quit the partnership.

A stunned Sue Ellen hesitates before she leaves the bedroom.

EXT. EAST 100TH STREET APARTMENTS - DAY

A 1928 Ford Model A rests next to the brownstone building.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sue Ellen sits on the couch, where she writes on a large piece of cardboard.

A schedule of sorts fills up the cardboard.

As soon as Sue Ellen's done with the schedule, she finds a KNOCK on her door.

SUE ELLEN
Come in! It's open!

JUDY VAN DE VELDE (16, a bit naive) opens the door and enters the space.

JUDY
Miss Cornwallis?

SUE ELLEN
(looking at cardboard)
Yes?
(looks up at Judy)
Oh, yes. Sit down at the piano,
Judy...you're my first student.

Judy does just that; Sue Ellen joins her a few seconds later.

JUDY
This apartment smells...well,
interestin'.
(looks at Sue Ellen)
I thought you were a Miss
Cornwallis, not a Mrs.

The teacher and the student trade looks of embarrassment.

SUE ELLEN
Never mind...Judy, have you ever
taken lessons before?

JUDY
I wanted to, but...I never had th'
money.

SUE ELLEN
That's the great thing about never
having taken lessons before: No bad
habits.

Judy nods.

JUDY

My friend from school started
takin' piano lessons a coupla years
ago...but, accordin' to her, she
ain't never developed no bad habits
yet.

SUE ELLEN

Maybe it's the teacher.
(pointing to the keys)
Why don't we begin by going over
the scale?

Judy shakes her head "yes."

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

I'll be back, but first,
(getting up)
I need some lipstick.

But Judy grabs her own purse, digs into it, and...

JUDY

That's okay, Miss Cornwallis.

...comes up with a tube of lipstick of her own.

Sue Ellen sits back down at the piano.

SUE ELLEN

You must make quite a scout.

Sue Ellen hits middle C on the ivories.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

That was middle C.

Now Sue Ellen extends her right hand to Judy.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

Lipstick.

Judy hands the lipstick to her teacher, who marks a "C" on
middle C.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

If you can't locate this key on a
piano, you're lost.

And Judy nods.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Now I'm going to play the C scale.
 Afterwards, I'll mark each key in
 the C scale.

Sue Ellen plays the C scale, then marks the octave directly
 to the right of middle C with her pen-of-sorts.

She plays the C scale for the entire length of the
 keyboard...several times.

Judy looks puzzled.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Just got a bit carried away...now
you give me the C scale.

Judy delivers the C scale, all right...but only on the marked
 keys. And with one finger!

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Very...good!

Sue Ellen's face tells another story.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Judy...I'd like to ask you a
 question. You don't have to answer
 me right away.

JUDY
 Huh?

SUE ELLEN
 Judy...how would you like to be a
 songwriting partner?

Judy gives Sue Ellen a blank stare.

EXT. LAIRD'S GROCERY - DAY

Laird's Grocery is a small store in the SoHo area; out front
 is a functional display of fruits and vegetables.

INT. LAIRD'S SALESFLOOR - DAY

Laird's is crammed to the gills!

Laird himself stands behind the meat counter, where he puts
 beef onto a paper wrapper; on the other side is a customer
 named CLAUDETTE (50s), who handles a shopping cart.

LAIRD
 (checks beef on wrapper)
 Two pounds o' prime ribs o' beef.

CLAUDETTE
 Nah...better make it three.

Laird takes out some more prime ribs and weighs them until he reaches a pound. He puts the extra pound on the paper.

LAIRD
 Kinda hot for early June, ain't it?
 (wrapping up beef)
 Three pounds...that'll be seventy-five cents.

He hands the package to a grateful Claudette.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
 Ah can understand it bein' this hot back home in Florida...or mah birth state of North Carolina...but not like this right here.

Claudette puts the package into her shopping cart.

CLAUDETTE
 Laird, the other day, didn't ya tell me that if this was Florida, it wouldn't be hot enough?

LAIRD
 Well, Ah...

Babs walks through the front door as Laird and Claudette continue their conversation.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
 Ah must admit Ah said that, ma'am, but...
 (notices Babs)
 Hey, honey, you doin' some shoppin'?

Babs spots her husband. She grabs a shopping cart and joins Laird at the meat counter.

CLAUDETTE
 Well, I'll leave ya two lovebirds to yourselves.

LAIRD
 See you tomorrow, Claudette!

As Claudette wheels away, Laird turns to his wife.

LAIRD (CONT'D)

Yeah, Ah guess it's time for some
shoppin', all right.

BABS

That's all that's left for me to do
these days.

Babs wheels her shopping cart into the aisle nearest the meat counter and searches for edibles on the ensuing shelves.

BABS (CONT'D)

At least, what with mah picture not
being in the radio log in the
papers, nobody'll be able to
recognize me.

No such luck: A man named MERLIN (30s) comes inside the store (but doesn't grab a shopping cart) and spots Babs. He heads for the aisle Babs occupies.

MERLIN

You...you're the lady who plays the
organ on WAPP.

BABS

Played.

MERLIN

Babs Steuart. I saw you play at the
Roxy last year when the featured
organist got the flu.

BABS

(nodding)

Me and mah little arms struggling
away on that five-manual Kimball.

MERLIN

Yeah, but you won.

Merlin finds the grocery item(s) he wants.

MERLIN (CONT'D)

Hey, Babs, how come I don't hear
you on the radio no more?

Babs just stares at Merlin.

EXT. EAST 100TH STREET APARTMENTS - DAY

No vehicle of any kind rests in front of the brownstone.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

This time, Sue Ellen and RUDY PASCUZZI (10) sit at the piano.

SUE ELLEN
All right, Rudy, see if you can
play the C scale...with all your
fingers and thumbs.

Rudy tries the C scale...only to hit C sharp instead of D.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Nope.
(hits D on piano)
D. Not C sharp.

RUDY
All right.

Rudy starts over. He's got C and D down...but gives Sue Ellen
a D sharp rather than an E.

SUE ELLEN
Wrong.
(plays E on piano)
It's an E, not a D sharp.
Try...wait a minute.

Sue Ellen plays the C scale herself...and, again, she goes
the length of the keyboard.

Rudy looks amazed.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
See how easy that is?

RUDY
(applauding Sue Ellen)
Yeah, Miss Cornwallis!

SUE ELLEN
Don't worry about the black keys
when you play the C scale. You
don't need them.
(hugging Rudy)
Shall we try again?

RUDY
Sure, Miss Cornwallis!

Sue Ellen nods Rudy into starting all over.

Things run smooth...until Rudy plays an F sharp (when he should be at G).

Result: Sue Ellen rests her head on her fists.

INT. LAIRD'S SALESFLOOR - DAY

The Steuarts are the only people in the store at the present time. Babs is in another aisle in her quest for groceries...and her cart fills up in a nice way.

And Laird's still behind the meat counter.

BABS

Ah could've told you that night,
but you had such a good time at
that little ol' barbecue that Ah
didn't wanna bust your bubble.

LAIRD

Try me. Ah got a rubber bubble.

BABS

Ah tried playing mah songs...well,
the ones Sue Ellen and Ah
wrote...on the radio, and it didn't
work out. So, Ah'm giving up as a
composer.

Laird looks confused.

BABS (CONT'D)

Mah songs got me kicked off the
air.

LAIRD

Ah thought they was you an' Sue
Ellen's songs.

BABS

What hurts so much is Ah shouldn't
have listened to her in the first
place.

Now Laird nods.

BABS (CONT'D)

But she had to come up with what
turned out to be one ridiculous
idea.

Babs wheels her shopping cart toward the meat counter.

BABS (CONT'D)
Why did Ah ever meet up with that woman?

LAIRD
And Ah thought you were goin' through a change.

Babs shakes her head sideways.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
Well, Ah guess now it looks like you're comin' to your senses...like Ah said, you shoulda left your show alone.

Babs now looks glum.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
And now you done shot down two birds with the same bullet.

BABS
Sue Ellen really picked up on how Ah wanted to open up mah show. She never made me forget it. And with hardly anybody listening to mah show, Ah...

LAIRD
Now Ah'll have to sell mo' groceries than before.

BABS
If you can find a way to do that, maybe you should serve on President Roosevelt's cabinet.

Babs wheels her full shopping cart toward THE CASHIER.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sue Ellen and her third student, JUNE BRADFORD (12, Black), sit at the piano.

SUE ELLEN
June, you're the first student I've had yet to get through the C scale successfully...would you like to try the D scale?

JUNE

All right.

Sue Ellen shuts her eyes and moves her hands toward her ears...but pulls her hands toward her lap when she hears June play the D scale without a hitch.

Next, June demonstrates the E scale...the F scale...the G scale...the A scale...

SUE ELLEN

June, wait a minute!

...the B scale...the B-flat scale...the A-flat scale...the G-flat scale...the E-flat scale...

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

Juuuune!

...and the D-flat scale before she speeds up the tempo and plays arpeggios up and down the keyboard.

June crashes into "Alexander's Ragtime Band" while Sue Ellen's mouth flies open in much amazement.

As June continues to play, Sue Ellen's look of amazement becomes a look of longing.

When June brings "Alexander's Ragtime Band" to a final, raucous chorus, Sue Ellen applauds.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

You...you remind me of my youth!

JUNE

I thought you didn't have any children!

Sue Ellen chuckles.

SUE ELLEN

I was saying, June, my piano teacher from way back when told me I play the same way you were playing...watching you play gave me quite a thrill.

JUNE

Thanks a bunch, Miss Cornwallis.

SUE ELLEN

June...do you know anything about songwriting?

JUNE

I thought you were only a piano teacher!

Sue Ellen leaves the piano bench and gestures June into staying right there.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Sue Ellen comes back with a book on songwriting. She sits back down at the piano and hands the book to June.

SUE ELLEN

Between me and this book, you'll find all you need to know on songwriting.

June's fired up and all aglow.

JUNE

Thank you, Miss Cornwallis.

Now June looks glum.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Will this mean my mother'll have to pay more money for my piano lessons?

Sue Ellen's mouth hangs open.

EXT. EAST 78TH STREET TRIPLEX - NIGHT

The sun's about to go down on the Big Apple.

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Babs and Laird set a table that's right in the middle of the kitchen. Placements for two as well as a pitcher of grape juice rest on the table.

While Babs puts a plate of fried chicken on the table, Laird places a casserole dish full of okra there.

BABS

Oops, dear...Ah forgot bread.

Laird nods as Babs walks over to a refrigerator, opens it, and grabs a loaf of bread. She sets the loaf on the table.

Laird looks shocked.

BABS (CONT'D)
 Don't worry. There's plenty more
 where this came from.

The twosome seat themselves at the table.

LAIRD
 Way you're jokin', you'd think
 that...well, Ah'd think that you'd
 gotten over feelin' poorly over
 losin' your job.

Babs unleashes a slight grin.

BABS
 Why don't we say grace?

LAIRD
 Awraht.

The grocery store owner and the former songwriter-radio
 organist bow their heads.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
 Lord...bless this food which we're
 about to eat.

BABS
 Through Christ, our Lord...Amen.

LAIRD
 Amen to that!

Babs and Laird dig in at last.

BABS
 (through bites)
 You know, dear, this is good
 chicken...once you git at it, you
 can really cook.

LAIRD
 Well, it's easy...when Ah follow
 the recipe you left on the
 countertop.
 (takes a bite of okra)
 You sho' know how to make okra,
 honey.

BABS
 Well, there's not much you can do
 to mess up a can of okra.

The Steuarts' phone RINGS O.S.

Nobody reacts.

After a SECOND RING:

LAIRD
Forget the phone.

Laird and Babs continue to chow down.

And the phone RINGS a third time...a fourth...and no more.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
Have you thought 'bout whatcha
gonna do with yo' life now, honey?

BABS
Why...no.

LAIRD
Good.

Babs makes a face at Laird in jest; after a few seconds, her look turns serious.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
Babs--

BABS
Ah'd been trying to put music out
of mah life, but...it's begun to
just hit me. After all of...fifteen
years...starting with piano lessons
from that nice lady who played at
the Tuttle Theater in Miami...

Laird looks lost.

BABS (CONT'D)
You remember Eleanor Grandjean,
don't you? They called her "The
Grande Dame of the Mighty
Wurlitzer."

Laird still looks puzzled.

BABS (CONT'D)
The "Miami Herald" said she could
make pictures talk long before
Warners invented Vitaphone.

Now Laird looks attentive.

LAIRD

Right! She killed herself 'cause
the stock she bought offa
Confederate Motor Car Company
plunged ninety-two points.

Babs makes a somewhat playful face at Laird.

LAIRD (CONT'D)

Jumped offa the tallest HO-tel in
Miami.

BABS

That woman taught me everything Ah
know! And because of her, Ah find
it purely hard to put away mah
music.

(shaking her head)

Just too hard to put away mah
music.

Laird's face brightens up.

LAIRD

Ah guess Ah'd feel bad, too, if Ah
had t' give up fifteen years worth
o' sellin' groceries.

BABS

Fifteen years shot down by a portly
little sausage with his own radio
station!

Babs shakes her head sideways, looks down at her plate, and
pushes the plate away.

BABS (CONT'D)

A sausage that leaks tears, at
that...fifteen years!

LAIRD

Ever thought 'bout New Jersey?

BABS

Laird--

LAIRD

Well, look, hon: After what happened at WAPP, the only way you'd git yo'se'f on the radio here in New Yoke is if you disguised yo'se'f as Hitler and took up a shotgun an' picked off Joe DiMaggio.

Babs chuckles.

BABS

Now, dear, you know me a little bit better than that, don't you?

Babs' look turns serious again as Laird draws a blank look.

BABS (CONT'D)

Don't you?

Laird nods as he flashes his own serious look.

LAIRD

You shore you wanna try makin' music again in public after the WAPP mess?

BABS

Ah've gotta know if Ah can still have 'em humming.

One of Laird's hands touches one of Babs' hands.

LAIRD

(through bites)

Babs, honey, don't worry 'bout that. You got the best audience in the world right here--

BABS

Wanna chew your food first?

Laird chews his food first.

LAIRD

Me.

BABS

Ah know, but--

LAIRD

Now that's enough for one, ain't it?

Once again, the phone RINGS O.S.

BABS
 (through the RING)
 Would you say that if the one was
 Yip Harburg?

LAIRD
 You wanna be a good li'l' wife an'
 git that, honey?

Babs rises up and looks at Laird on the way to the phone.

BABS
 Cole Porter?

Laird just grins as Babs shrugs while she leaves the kitchen.

The phone CONTINUES TO RING until...

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

...Babs picks it up and answers.

BABS
 (into phone)
 Hello?...Who?...So you were the one
 who was clapping at Radio City when
 Ah played those two little ol'
 songs?
 (with a grin)
 Is that right?

Laird sneaks a peek as the phone conversation continues.

BABS (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 You mean you actually liked mah
 "Swamp Stomp?"...You what?

An openmouthed Laird looks on.

BABS (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Nah, you really don't want mah
 "Swamp Stomp," now do you?...You
 do?...Even after Ah got canned by
 WAPP and kicked out of Radio City?

Laird saunters, mouth open even wider, into the living room.

BABS (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 You don't care about that?

Now Laird sits on the couch.

BABS (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 You still want that song?...And the
 other one?...Well, Ah don't know
 what to say!...Well, okay! Thank
 you, Mr. Nyman! You won't be
 disappointed!

Babs hangs up the phone and stares into space.

Laird gets up from the couch and stands next to Babs.

He hugs her...but his isn't a secure embrace.

Laird and Babs look too shocked to talk.

EXT. ALTMAN'S - DAY

Altman's is a department store in a Renaissance Revival-era
 building on the Lower East Side.

INT. ALTMAN'S FOURTH-FLOOR MUSIC DEPARTMENT - DAY

A determined-yet-exhausted Sue Ellen combs the space for some
 phonograph records.

SUE ELLEN
 Why bother?

A clerk named MINNIE (20s) approaches Sue Ellen.

MINNIE
 May I help you?

SUE ELLEN
 I hope so. I want to buy a
 recording machine and some acetate
 discs. A portable machine.

Minnie and Sue Ellen walk over to a display of disc recording
 machines. The latter inspects the recording machines and
 finds one she likes.

MINNIE
 I take it you'd like to record bird
 calls.

Sue Ellen hoists the disc machine of her choice out of the display area.

SUE ELLEN
 (shaking her head "no")
 I've got to attract attention as a
 composer in this town.

Sue Ellen finds a stack of acetate discs. She sets the machine down and takes several platters from the stack.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 I've run out of avenues. This is
 it.

The two women walk to the counter, where Minnie moves behind a cash register while Sue Ellen clutches her purchases.

MINNIE
 I wanna warn you, Miss, you're
 trying to make it in a tough
 racket.

SUE ELLEN
 (nodding)
 If I don't make it, I'm going to
 end up recording bird calls.

Sue Ellen sets the discs on the counter and the machine on the floor, then goes into her purse for some money.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 I may have to sing over those bird
 calls.

Sue Ellen pays Minnie.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

Purchases and purse in tow, a determined Sue Ellen strides along the street.

Her trip takes her to the subway stop.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Sue Ellen gets stares from many of the PASSENGERS who flank her. One of them, a man named HERMAN (30s), nudges Sue Ellen on the shoulder as he sits next to her.

HERMAN
 Next time ya go on a trip, pack
 more clothes.

Herman gets a blank stare from Sue Ellen.

SUE ELLEN
I'm not taking a trip. I'm going
home.

She tilts her recording machine and acetate discs at another angle for him to see.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Have you ever seen a suitcase with
air vents before?

Herman looks embarrassed.

EXT. EAST 100TH STREET APARTMENTS - DAY

One of the inadequate-looking windows closes.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sue Ellen leafs through her sheet music to find Babs' and her musical collaborations.

The piano teacher continues to comb through the stack of songs until, near the bottom, she finds "Spending a Lot of Time" and "Eventually."

Sue Ellen opens both sheets, one after the other, and puts them on the piano's music rack.

Now Sue Ellen takes the telephone off the hook, then puts an acetate on the recording machine's turntable before she gets the machine's cutting edge ready.

At last, Sue Ellen moves over to the piano, lowers the needle with one hand, and begins her assault on the keyboard with "Spending..." when a KNOCK on the door stops her after a bar.

In disgust, she yanks the cutting edge off the disc and grabs the door.

When she opens it, Sue Ellen finds Judy on the other side.

SUE ELLEN
I'm trying to make a recording.

JUDY
Miss Cornwallis, you promised me I
could come over and spend some
extra time practicin'.

Sue Ellen stares into space.

JUDY (CONT'D)
You really did.

Sue Ellen's blank look continues.

JUDY (CONT'D)
This mornin'.

SUE ELLEN
Maybe so. Would you like to see a
real live recording session first?

Now Judy draws a blank look.

Sue Ellen gestures Judy into entering the apartment.

EXT. EAST 78TH STREET TRIPLEX - DAY

A 1939 car goes by the house.

INT. BABS' AND LAIRD'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Babs, the only person in the house right now, sits in a lounge chair and listens to WAPP on the RADIO.

She listens as Sallee and Sammee flash their brand of humor on "The Corn Flakes Show." Still, the more Babs listens, the further down it brings her.

So...Babs shuts the radio OFF. She picks up a copy of today's "New York Times" and returns to the lounge chair.

Babs turns to the classified ads...and looks in the "HELP WANTED" section.

INT. SUE ELLEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Judy runs Sue Ellen's recording machine while Sue Ellen herself sings and plays "Eventually..." with music more Babs' speed than Sue Ellen's.

Sue Ellen comes down the song's home stretch.

SUE ELLEN
*Eventually, you'll come and take me
in your arms/And let me feel the
magic of your charms./I'm gonna
stay awaiting at the front of your
door/Until you show me everlasting
amor.*

Judy tries to stifle a chuckle.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
*Eventually, you'll buy me an
 engagement ring./Until you do, I'll
 continue to sing./Sooner or later,
 you'll come a-running to me./We
 both would make great harmony.*

Sue Ellen looks over at the machine between lines to see how much acetate remains.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
*Let's face it. We both would make a
 perfect pair./You can't deny it,
 baby. Don't you dare./I've never
 met another man who's quite like
 you;/A person that I can tell my
 troubles to.*

She grabs another peek at the record in progress. Judy uses a hand gesture to assure Sue Ellen that all's well.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
*Eventually, we're gonna have to
 find a church,/Then set the date
 before we call the
 Hearsts./Eventually, my boy, you're
 gonna be mine, you know./I hope
 your next word isn't "no."*

A glissando...a pair of staccato notes...The End.

Sue Ellen's record is done...with a little room to spare.

With the greatest of care, Judy takes the record off the machine and shows the disc to Sue Ellen.

JUDY
 Close call, Miss Cornwallis.

Sue Ellen handles the record and nods.

SUE ELLEN
 Good work, Judy. Now put this
 record in the brown envelope on top
 of the table and put another
 acetate on the turntable.

Judy goes to the coffee table, locates the brown envelope, and puts the record in the envelope. Then she grabs another unused disc and puts it on the machine's turntable.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Don't get fingerprints on the disc.

Judy gives Sue Ellen a tired nod.

JUDY

I didn't get no fingerprints on the first record, either.

Sue Ellen fishes in the pile of sheet music on top of the piano; after she fumbles around, she locates "Swamp Stomp" and "Just Another Little Kiss."

Judy readies the cutting edge for this next disc.

SUE ELLEN

Ready, Judy?

JUDY

Ready!

SUE ELLEN

Don't drop the needle yet...I'm singing "Swamp Stomp" first, then, for Side B, I'll sing "Just Another Little Kiss." Agreed?

JUDY

Agreed!

Judy almost drops the needle...except:

SUE ELLEN

(watching Judy)

When I give you a cue, you drop the needle on the disc. Remember: "Swamp Stomp" is on Side A. "Just Another Little Kiss" goes on Side B.

JUDY

Right.

Judy waits for Sue Ellen's cue; Sue Ellen herself tries to relax at the keys.

After a few seconds:

SUE ELLEN

Drop!

Judy drops the needle on the record, and Sue Ellen waits a couple of seconds before she plays an improvised introduction to "Swamp Stomp."

Once the intro ends, Sue Ellen gives "Swamp Stomp" a much more sluggish beat than Babs' version.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

(singing)

Raise your left foot in the air,/Then you stomp it on the ground./Raise your right foot in the air,/Then you stomp it on the ground./Keep a-stomping and a-stomping/And a-stomping all day long./That's the way you do the Swamp Stomp.

AS BEFORE, AN ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENT RISES OVER THE SINGING AND PLAYING.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

Raise your left arm to the sky./Pump it like you milk a cow./Raise your right arm to the sky./Pump your arm the same way now./Keep a-pumping and a-pumping/And a-pumping; you know how./That's the way you do the Swamp Stomp.

Sue Ellen bangs on the piano keys in disgust...and the orchestral augmentation ENDS.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

Thanks for ruining my record!

(into the CAMERA)

What've you got against me?

JUDY

I don't have nothin' against you, Miss Cornwallis.

SUE ELLEN

I don't mean you! I mean that orchestra that keeps horning in every time I want to sing and/or play the piano.

Judy looks some kind of puzzled.

JUDY

But Miss Cornwallis, I didn't hear no orchestra!

Judy lifts the ruined record off the turntable.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. ALTMAN'S FOURTH-FLOOR MUSIC DEPARTMENT - DAY

Sue Ellen shows several copies of her two homemade discs to Minnie, who shakes her head "no."

INT. SALESFLOOR AT FINDLAY'S MUSIC - DAY

Sue Ellen shows THE CLERK here her two records...but is gestured off the salesfloor.

INT. MUSIC DEPARTMENT AT MACY'S - DAY

THE CLERK (a mean-looking, hefty man) breaks one of Sue Ellen's records...on his knee!

INT. MUSIC DEPARTMENT AT GIMBEL'S - DAY

This music department's CLERK (a diminutive woman) breaks one of Sue Ellen's platters, too...on the counter.

Sue Ellen retaliates: She grabs several factory-made 78s from a display...and smashes them.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sue Ellen's back with John Maxwell in an attempt to stir up business with her discs.

The twosome almost come to blows when Charley walks inside the office.

END MONTAGE

EXT. LAIRD'S GROCERY - DAY

TWO GRADE-SCHOOL-AGE KIDS (a boy and a girl) pick through the display of fruits and veggies.

The ones they like go into a paper bag.

INT. LAIRD'S SALESFLOOR - DAY

Laird looks at the children through the store window, then steps outside.

EXT. LAIRD'S GROCERY - DAY

The two youngsters show that deer-in-the-headlights look.

LAIRD
 Hey, y'all save some o' them good
 fruits fo' th' other customers!

The kids nod as Laird goes back inside.

Sue Ellen, with some copies of her two recordings, walks through the door of the grocery store.

INT. LAIRD'S SALESFLOOR - DAY

Sue Ellen strides right over to Laird.

SUE ELLEN
 Excuse me, sir, but where may I
 find the manager?

LAIRD
 Ah'm him.

With her free hand, Sue Ellen shakes Laird's hand...only to grimace from the tight grip.

LAIRD (CONT'D)
 What can Ah do fo' you?

SUE ELLEN
 If I could show you a way to
 increase your profits, would you
 let me show you?

LAIRD
 Ah'd like to have me some profits
 to begin with.

Sue Ellen chuckles.

SUE ELLEN
 Allow me to introduce myself. My
 name is Sue Ellen Cornwallis, and
 I've recorded these discs.

Laird does a doubletake.

LAIRD
 Mah wife's tole me a lot aboutcha.
 You and her used t' be songwritin'
 partners.

Sue Ellen nods as she hands Laird the records.

SUE ELLEN
 I only wish it wasn't "used to."

Laird leafs through the stack of records.

Behind him, the two young shoppers enter the store and pay the cashier for their items.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 These songs are the best of what
 was our collaborative effort.

Laird nods.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Would you mind if I smoke?

LAIRD
 Well, Miss, Ah don't know--

SUE ELLEN
 You wouldn't mind if Bette Davis
 came in and smoked, would you?

Laird shrugs.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 I find myself having learned a lot
 from Babs.

Sue Ellen digs into her purse...

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 It's really strange...so strange.
 As long as I can remember, my
 father drilled into me the value of
 being independent...independent in
 thought, independent in action,
 even independent in earning a
 living.

...and pulls out a cigar.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 Even though I'm the only daughter
 in the family, he still expected me
 to go out and earn a living, just
 like Edna St. Vincent...

Now Sue Ellen lights up that cigar of hers.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 You've heard of Chrysanthemum milk,
 haven't you?

LAIRD
 (nodding)
 Right: "The Milk from Ecstatic
 Cows."

SUE ELLEN
 (shaking her head "no")
 You mean "Jubilant Cows."
 (takes a puff)
 Chrysanthemum is my father's
 company back home in Los Angeles.
 He built it from the ground up and
 kept it up until it became a major
 national dairy company.

A FEW MORE PEOPLE come inside the store.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 He started with just a goat and an
 old wagon...to say nothing of a
 team of horses heading for the glue
 factory.

Laird nods again.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
 More than anyone else, then, my
 father's responsible for my trying
 to depend on my own talents. But
 your wife, uh--

LAIRD
 Jus' call me Laird.

SUE ELLEN
 I find myself more and more
 depending on her...especially her
 inner strength. If I only knew
 where she got it...I only wish we'd
 made it as partners.

Sue Ellen watches Laird guard those records with his life.

LAIRD
 Girl, you musta enjoyed writin'
 with Babs.

Sue Ellen shakes her head "yes."

LAIRD (CONT'D)

You really oughta git together with Babs 'bout that, if that's how you feel, 'cause she's been mopin' every day since she lost that radio show--

SUE ELLEN

I'd really like to, Mr. Steu...I mean Laird...except your wife blames me for her losing her show! She probably won't listen to me!

LAIRD

Cow droppings! It coulda worked th' other way, now couldn't it?
(hefts records)
Ah'm gonna try 'n' sell these, Sue Ellen...on one condition: You gotta have a talk with Babs.

Sue Ellen nods with authority; a second later, she plants an enormous kiss on Laird's cheek.

Laird looks surprised...and amused.

EXT. SEVENTH AVENUE - DAY

Babs' walk along the street is slow and pensive.

Her walk is so slow that SEVERAL PEOPLE bump into her along the way...and give her angry stares.

INT. LAIRD'S SALESFLOOR - DAY

Sue Ellen and Laird look embarrassed.

SUE ELLEN

That wasn't very businesslike of me, Laird.

The twosome shake hands.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

We've got a deal. How does fifty-fifty sound?

LAIRD

You couldn't a-put it no better.

Sue Ellen nods as she heads for the door. Just short of the door, she turns to Laird.

SUE ELLEN
I'm going to see if Babs is home
right now.

As Sue Ellen leaves the store, Laird gestures his approval.

EXT. LAIRD'S GROCERY - DAY

Cigar in mouth, Sue Ellen spots Babs, who heads toward the
grocery store.

Once she sees her former partner, Babs stops in her tracks.

BABS
The partnership is over...remember?

SUE ELLEN
I don't think so.

Babs walks off as Sue Ellen fondles her cigar.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Wait!

Babs stops in her tracks again.

BABS
Because of you, Ah lost mah job at
WAPP. And because of you, Ah'm
almost afraid to write another
song. AND--

SUE ELLEN
Barbara, you're not being fair. You
lost your job because of the
station manager.

Now Babs looks surprised.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)
Is it my problem that he's--

BABS
Timid, afraid!

SUE ELLEN
Right! Well...is it?

BABS
No...but your idea was ill-timed
and just plain wrong, now--

SUE ELLEN

Now let me tell you what's happened to me because of you...mostly by example, you've given me the strength to go on trying to make it as a composer. As well as the drive.

Babs' mouth flies open.

Meanwhile, A CROWD forms around the duo.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

I couldn't have quit the way you apparently have, but I went on and started giving piano lessons, and, as a result, I've picked up some ideas for songs.

As Babs nods, Herman and Hattie join the crowd around Sue Ellen and Babs.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

On top of that, I've decided to make my own records. I've just gotten through making a deal with your husband to sell them.

A smile of nervous surprise forms on Babs' face.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

Right now, they consist entirely of songs we've written.

Most people in the crowd look restless.

BABS

What...why...

SUE ELLEN

It was the only way I had left to get our songs across to the public. Our songs!

BABS

Why...why'd you do it? Even after we broke up...why?

SUE ELLEN

As I said, it was the only way people would ever hear our songs. The way I see it, nobody's willing to give our music a--

BABS

Wait...not exactly nobody.

A surprised Sue Ellen puts her cigar back in her mouth and squeezes Babs' shoulders.

SUE ELLEN

Who? WHO?

BABS

About a month ago, Ah went over to Radio City to try writing some songs, and Ah got a few of 'em done. Well, this Earle Nyman...he's a bandleader...heard mah "Swamp Stomp" when Ah was over there.

Babs winces under Sue Ellen's grip.

BABS (CONT'D)

And he liked it! He liked it enough to buy it!

Sue Ellen nods.

BABS (CONT'D)

Well, at least put it in his repertoire...Sue Ellen, you're pinching mah shoulders.

Now Sue Ellen lets go of Babs, puts her cigar out on the sidewalk, and grabs Babs' hands.

SUE ELLEN

Sorry...isn't that the best reason, then, for us to go on as a partnership?

BABS

Well, Ah don't know...

SUE ELLEN

Listen, Babs...we may not always agree on how to present a song...we may not know whether someone else will like it...or whether we will...but how are we going to know unless we try?

Some more people leave a crowd that's still got Hattie and Herman in it.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

How?

BABS

We...cain't.

Sue Ellen nods as she studies Babs, then picks her stogie up.

SUE ELLEN

I just hated to waste fifteen cents
that way.

Sue Ellen drapes an arm around Babs' shoulder.

SUE ELLEN (CONT'D)

What do you say, Babs? Shall we try
it again?

Herman studies the twosome.

HERMAN

Yeah...so we can go home!

Now the crowd thins down to Herman and Hattie.

HATTIE

Well, it sure beats "Young Widder
Brown," Mister!

Babs looks out into space.

BABS

Why don't we go back to work this
evening...

A smile forms on Sue Ellen's face.

BABS (CONT'D)

Partner?

Hattie and Herman give a cheer of sorts. He goes on home.

SUE ELLEN

This evening it is...partner.

Hattie leaves the two songwriters to themselves.

HATTIE

(on her way home)
Good luck, you two!

Babs and Sue Ellen nod as they resume their excursion.

SUE ELLEN
Who was that lady?

BABS
Well, Sue Ellen, Ah saw her on the
subway one day.

Sue Ellen shrugs before she relights that cigar.

BABS (CONT'D)
You know what she told me?

EXT. SEVENTH AVENUE - DAY

Babs and Sue Ellen stride down the street together.

BABS
She said: "Lady, you ain't been in
a rut 'til you've gone to work
cleanin' the same old building--"

Before Babs can finish the sentence, Sue Ellen goes into her
own purse.

SUE ELLEN
(pulling out a stogie)
Have a cigar.

BABS
(shaking her head "no")
No thanks...Ah have an idea for a
song.

With her free hand, a jubilant Sue Ellen pats her partner on
the shoulder.

FREEZE FRAME as hand hits shoulder.

FADE OUT.

THE END