

NOT MRS. SINGER

Written by

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BLACK SCREEN.

TITLE:

THE SEWING MACHINE IS ONE OF THE FEW USEFUL THINGS EVER
INVENTED. - GANDHI

FADE IN:

EXT. DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN, 1862.

MARY ANN, mid-40s, walks alone on crowded streets, the only woman in a sea of men. She stops to compose herself outside an imposing building: "Abbott & Fuller Attorneys".

INT. FULLER'S OFFICE. DAY.

FULLER, late 30s, tall, lean, looks up, surprised.

FULLER

Mrs. Singer -- to what do I owe
this --

MARY ANN

-- He's back.

FULLER

I'm sorry, how did you --

MARY ANN

He's in New York.

FULLER

Since when?

MARY ANN

This morning. Using the name
Simmons.

FULLER

Have you seen him?

MARY ANN

I know where he's staying.

She hands him a piece of paper.

FULLER

Well, that does change things.

MARY ANN

We have to move now.

FULLER
How long is he here?

MARY ANN
I don't know.

FULLER
Success is 99 percent preparation.

MARY ANN
So what percent are we at?

FULLER
Mrs. Singer --

MARY ANN
-- You told me it was simple, we need to show that we were married and that adultery took place, and then a divorce would be granted.

FULLER
I need to look at the file.

MARY ANN
We might never get another chance.

FULLER
Why did he come back?

MARY ANN
Some threat to his throne. He brought a new trollop with him.

FULLER
I'm sorry --

MARY ANN
-- I'm guessing he'll be here more than a couple of weeks.

FULLER
It still doesn't give us --

MARY ANN
I spoke to the people we talked about, they all agreed to give evidence.

FULLER
Saying is one thing, doing is another.

MARY ANN

Then we'll go see them together.

FULLER

The minute we start, Mr. Singer will hear about it. There'll be no going back.

MARY ANN

I don't want to go back.

FULLER

With a man like that --

MARY ANN

-- I know, he'll disinherit me and all of our children. And if I lose I won't even get alimony. But no-one should suffer the abuse I did without some kind of justice.

FULLER

Excuse me one moment.

Fuller pops his head out of his office door.

FULLER (CONT'D)

Mr. Bancroft, bring me the Singer file - yes, Singer, Isaac Singer - and cancel my next appointment.

MARY ANN

Thank you.

FULLER

I'm still not sure if this is a good idea. For you, I mean.

MARY ANN

I wasn't aware I needed permission.

FULLER

It's my best advice. Could you refresh my memory? Mr. Bancroft can be a little slow.

MARY ANN

Where should I start?

FULLER

At the beginning. He's a very rich man with a very good lawyer. We need to be thorough or they'll blow the case to smithereens.

INT. SPONSLER HOUSE, BALTIMORE. KITCHEN. DAY.

It's twenty-five years earlier. Mary Ann, 19, rehearses lines as she prepares supper with a text of Richard III in front of her. MR. SPONSLER, her father, 40s, thin, frail, sits in a wheelchair, frozen, watching, silent.

MARY ANN

O, cursed be the hand that made
these holes; cursed the heart that
had the heart to do it; cursed the
blood that let this blood from
hence --

She turns to her father.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

And curse your ailments too.

Mr. Sponsler tries to speak. It comes out as a groan. Mary Ann goes to him.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Papa, what a wicked girl
I am. I'll tell you what, you can
help. I'll do your part too.

(as Lady Anne)

Didst thou not kill this king?

(as herself)

And now this is your line.

(as Richard)

I grant you.

(as herself)

Very good.

(as Lady Anne)

Dost grant me, hedgehog? Then, God
grant me too. Thou mayst be damnèd
for that wicked deed.

EXT. SPONSLER HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

MRS. SPONSLER, 40s, starchy, pulls her coach up outside the perfect family home. She ties the horse, then walks to the door and pauses. She can hear Mary Ann's voice inside.

MARY ANN (O.S.)

(as Richard)

For he was fitter for that place
than Earth.

INT. SPONSLER HOUSE, KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS.

MARY ANN

(as Lady Anne)

And thou unfit for any place but hell.

(as Richard)

Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.

(as Lady Anne)

Some dungeon.

(as Richard)

Your bedchamber.

(as Lady Anne)

I'll rest betide the chamber where thou liest!

(as Richard)

So will it, madam, till I lie with you.

Mrs. Sponsler marches in. Mr. Sponsler groans.

MRS. SPONSLER

Mary Ann Sponsler, what is going on here?

MARY ANN

We're rehearsing.

MRS. SPONSLER

Well you can stop. It's obscene.

MARY ANN

It's Shakespeare. And I can't stop, I have a dress rehearsal tonight.

MRS. SPONSLER

You should have told them. It's only fair. Gives them time to find a replacement.

MARY ANN

They don't need one.

Mr. Sponsler groans.

MRS. SPONSLER

(to Mary Ann)

The doctor says he needs fresh air. You could take him to the park. I'll finish supper.

MARY ANN
Come on, Papa. Looks like we're
rehearsing elsewhere.

MRS. SPONSLER
Uh-uh. None of that in public.

Mrs. Sponsler scowls as Mary Ann drops her Shakespeare text
onto her father's lap and releases the wheelchair brakes.

INT. BALTIMORE THEATRE. NIGHT.

Mary Ann hurries in, still wearing street clothes. The rest
of the Troupe are already in costume. SINGER, 25, tall and
handsome, lights up when he sees her.

SINGER
I told them you'd make it.

MARY ANN
Everyone looks so wonderful.

SINGER
And so will you, but hurry.

She hesitates.

SINGER (CONT'D)
Nerves?

MARY ANN
Mama still won't believe it.

SINGER
No one does those parts the way you
can. I'll tell her that myself.

MARY ANN
It wouldn't help, believe me. How
old were you when you left home the
first time?

SINGER
Ten.

MARY ANN
Ten?

SINGER
It was better than school. I
learned how to act. And fix
anything. Wood. Metal. Steam
engines. I love steam engines.

MARY ANN
I wish I had your courage.

SINGER
But you do, you only have to summon
it. In your heart is written the
part you want to play. Listen to
it, be it. And remember what the
greatest actors always say --

MARY ANN
-- what? --

SINGER
-- Remember your lines and don't
bump into the furniture.

Mary Ann hides a smile and scurries to the dressing room.

INT. BALTIMORE THEATRE. NIGHT. LATER.

The cast take an end of show bow. Mary Ann and Singer are
front and centre. Singer pushes her forward for a solo bow.
She flashes a thousand-watt smile. Audience clap extra hard.

INT. SPONSLER HOUSE. MAIN HALL. FOLLOWING DAY.

It's all stained glass and wood, like a church. Mary Ann
comes downstairs lugging a trunk. Mrs. Sponsler hears the
noise and comes to see what's happening.

MRS. SPONSLER
Mary Ann -- What about Papa? You
think this is easy for us?

MARY ANN
I'll be back in a few months.

Mary Ann's brother STEPHEN, 16, enters pushing Mr. Sponsler.
He parks the chair in front of Mary Ann, blocking her exit.

MRS. SPONSLER
Thank you, Stephen. Go to your
studies.

STEPHEN
I can take him this afternoon.

MRS. SPONSLER
Go to your studies.

Stephen stays.

MRS. SPONSLER (CONT'D)
 (to Mary Ann)
 If you go, don't come back.

STEPHEN
 She doesn't mean that.

MARY ANN
 Yes, she does.

MRS. SPONSLER
 Everyone in this house must follow
 the same rules, that's what your
 father would say.

STEPHEN
 Don't put words in his mouth.

MARY ANN
 He was the same. Or worse.

STEPHEN
 Stop talking about him like he's --

Mary Ann drags her trunk around the chair.

MRS. SPONSLER
 Were the rules really so hard to
 follow?

Mary Ann stops and hugs Stephen.

MARY ANN
 Look after Mama.
 (to Mrs. Sponsler)
 Wish me luck?

MRS. SPONSLER
 I'll give you a week.

Mary Ann drags the trunk to the door. Stephen looks to Mrs. Sponsler hoping for a change of heart, but she stays firm. Mary Ann rushes back and kisses her father.

MARY ANN
 Goodbye Papa.

She reaches to hug her mother, but Mrs. Sponsler backs away.

EXT. WAGON TRAIN. AUTUMN DAY.

A wagon train rolls up a dirt road. A sign painted on the back says "The Baltimore Players, Central Theatre, Richmond."

INT. RICHMOND THEATRE. NIGHT.

Audience applaud. Curtain rises and the PLAYERS take an end of show bow. Singer and Mary Ann hold hands.

INT. RICHMOND COCKTAIL BAR. NIGHT.

Players are in a group at the bar, sipping cocktails, laughing. Singer is holding court. Mary Ann enchanted.

EXT. WAGON TRAIN. SNOWY NIGHT.

Sign says: "The Baltimore Players, Bijou Theatre, Knoxville."

INT. KNOXVILLE THEATRE.

Applause. Cast take a bow.

INT. KNOXVILLE RESTAURANT.

Cast are at the bar. A fight breaks out. Singer decks one of the combatants. Cast run, laughing, into the street.

EXT. WAGON TRAIN. RAINY SPRING DAY.

Sign says: "The Baltimore Players, Sol Smith Theatre, Columbus."

INT. SOL SMITH THEATRE, COLUMBUS.

Louder applause. Cast bow. Mary Ann singled out for solo bow.

INT. COLUMBUS RESTAURANT.

Cast are seated at a long table. Mary Ann next to Singer. They're looking into each others' eyes, a couple now.

EXT. WAGON TRAIN. AUTUMN DAY.

Sign says: "The Baltimore Players, Park Theatre, New York."

INT. PARK THEATRE, NYC. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

Mary Ann and Singer, in costume as Richard and Lady Anne, come off together, hand in hand. Mary Ann is now pregnant.

MARY ANN

I'm so excited for you to show me
New York.

SINGER

Shouldn't you be taking it easy?

MARY ANN

No way. Where are we going?

SINGER

Oh -- I don't know about the others
-- but I can't tonight.

MARY ANN

Why not?

SINGER

I have plans.

MARY ANN

But we always go out.

SINGER

I know, but I had a letter, in
Philadelphia. From old friends.

MARY ANN

Why didn't you say? You can knock
on my door later.

Singer stays silent.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

You're staying with them? Who are
they?

SINGER

Just some friends.

MARY ANN

You've never mentioned them.

SINGER

Haven't I?

MARY ANN

No.

SINGER

I try not to think about home when
I'm on the road.

MARY ANN
I'd like to meet them.

SINGER
You - you can't.

MARY ANN
Why not?

SINGER
They're just some people from
before.

MARY ANN
Before what?

SINGER
When I was a laborer.

MARY ANN
Don't be embarrassed.

SINGER
I'm not.

MARY ANN
It's not nice.

SINGER
I need to give them some time.

MARY ANN
It's just strange that you never
mentioned them.

SINGER
(acts dumb)
I didn't think.

MARY ANN
You didn't think? Since when does
Isaac Singer not think?

SINGER
I'm sorry.

EXT. PARK THEATRE NYC STAGE DOOR. NIGHT.

Singer exits from the stage door. It's a cool night. He pulls his coat tight and begins walking. A few seconds later, Mary Ann pokes her head out and sees him disappearing up the alley. She slips out behind him.

EXT. THEATER LAND. NIGHT.

Mary Ann shadows Singer past the brightly lit marquees.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE. NIGHT.

It's a sketchier area. Immigrant families queue for food. Beggars reach from doorways. Mary Ann is puzzled, what's he doing here, and why is he alone, where are these friends?

EXT. HOUSE ON LOWER EAST SIDE. NIGHT.

Mary Ann creeps closer, careful to avoid the lamplight.

Singer knocks on a door. CATHERINE, early 20s, dark, strong, answers. Singer spreads his arms but she doesn't embrace him. A boy of three comes running out.

YOUNG WILLIAM

Papa...

Singer scoops him up and the two have a loving hug. Catherine makes way and Singer carries the boy indoors. The door shuts.

On the other side of the street, Mary Ann can barely believe her eyes. She marches off, but after fifty yards she stops. Tears form. She brushes them away sharply and turns back.

EXT. HOUSE ON LOWER EAST SIDE. EARLY DAWN.

Mary Ann dozes against a railing. Singer creeps out trying to close the door silently, but he spots her and in his surprise the door slips out of his fingers and closes heavily.

It's enough to wake Mary Ann. She sees him, remembers where she is and what she saw, and screams.

Singer rushes to stop her. She's suddenly frightened as his huge frame bears down on her.

A light goes on in an upstairs window. Catherine appears.

MARY ANN

Is she your wife? Was that your son?

SINGER

Why did you have to follow me?

MARY ANN
I'm not stupid.
(imitates him)
I didn't think.

SINGER
It's over. Been over for years.

He checks the window -- Catherine's gone. A second later she comes out of the front door in her nightclothes.

CATHERINE
What's going on out here? Who is
this woman?

SINGER
She's with me, Catherine.

CATHERINE
I guessed that.
(to Mary Ann)
Who are you?

MARY ANN
He said he was seeing friends.

CATHERINE
Never told you about me, did he?

SINGER
Catherine...

As Catherine comes closer, she and Mary Ann both see for the first time that not only are they about the same age, they're both pregnant, and their bumps are about the same size. They turn to Singer. He holds up his hands.

SINGER (CONT'D)
It's lonely on the road.

MARY ANN
You said they were from the past.

SINGER
They are.

Mary Ann glances at Catherine's belly.

MARY ANN
That's not.

SINGER
What can I say -- you're both
irresistible.

CATHERINE
You're saying it's our fault?

Catherine and Mary Ann exchange a glance then reach down to scoop handfuls of horseshit and fling it at him.

SINGER
Okay, enough, enough.
He stands, brushes the shit off.

SINGER (CONT'D)
(to Catherine)
I suppose you'll want a divorce.

CATHERINE
Hell no. I want you right where I can see you. If it weren't for my brother you'd have left me bleeding in that hotel room.

MARY ANN
Isaac...

SINGER
That didn't happen.

CATHERINE
You promised to take care of me.

SINGER
I'm true to my word.

CATHERINE
And her too. What's your name?

MARY ANN
Mary Ann.

CATHERINE
How many you got with him?

Mary Ann points to her belly.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
(to Singer)
Sell this place. Buy me somewhere near my kin and send money regular.

MARY ANN
He can't afford that on an actor's salary.

CATHERINE

Not my problem. I hate New York. I only stayed because I thought he needed someone.

SINGER

Oh, so that's the reason.

CATHERINE

If you don't, my family's gonna hunt you down and skin you.

Mary Ann begins to cry.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Oh boo-hoo. You need to harden up around this polecat.

SINGER

I'll surprise you. I'll surprise everyone.

CATHERINE

I hope so. The kinda place I want's going to cost you at least two thousand dollars. You can send details once it's bought.

Mary Ann and Singer watch Catherine go inside. He slides an arm around her but she shoves him away.

EXT. SPONSLER HOUSE IN BALTIMORE. DAY.

Mary Ann arrives back at her family home, suitcase in hand. She's about to knock then stops. Takes a deep breath. Goes to knock. Stops again. Summons the strength. Knocks. Waits. No-one home? She's about to leave when she hears heels on a hard floor. Must be her mother. She braces. Door opens.

MRS. SPONSLER

You've just caught me, I was about to go --

Mrs. Sponsler freezes as she sees who it is.

MRS. SPONSLER (CONT'D)

What do you want?

She glances down and sees the bump. Door closes.

INT. FULLER'S OFFICE. DAY. PRESENT.

FULLER
So you went back to him.

MARY ANN
I didn't have a choice.

FULLER
And he took care of you.

MARY ANN
He went away to work.

FULLER
He supported you and your family.
Did he ever complain?

MARY ANN
No. Whose side are you on, here?

FULLER
If we file for divorce, Mr.
Singer's lawyers will scrutinize
every statement, every witness.
They may even play dirty. Be
prepared for one tough fight.

EXT. NATALIE'S FINE CLOTHING. DAY.

Pretty dresses in the window. Mary Ann enters.

INT. NATALIE'S FINE CLOTHING.

Natalie, 40s, Eastern European accent, lights up when she
sees her.

NATALIE
Mrs. Singer.

MARY ANN
Natalie. This is looking more
splendid than ever.

NATALIE
Thank you, darling. We added
evening wear, and nightwear. It's
the machine, you know, one day we
have idea, next day we can sell.

Mary Ann takes her arm and speaks quietly.

MARY ANN

And the man who invented it is
back.

Natalie steers her toward the back room.

INT. NATALIE'S SEWING ROOM. DAY.

Three SEAMSTRESSES work at Singer sewing machines. Natalie
sees Mary Ann pondering the brand name.

NATALIE

But he jumped bail.

MARY ANN

Went to England.

NATALIE

So why hasn't he been arrested?

MARY ANN

I dropped those charges on my
lawyer's advice. To make it easier
for him to come back so we could
serve divorce papers.

NATALIE

I like this lawyer.

MARY ANN

I did too but now he seems to be
getting cold feet.

NATALIE

He does what he is told to do.

MARY ANN

Will you help me?

NATALIE

What do you need?

MARY ANN

Persuade witnesses to go on the
record. Some might still have
feelings for him.

NATALIE

Fools.

MARY ANN

He saved his best for me. But that
was later.

NATALIE

No, I saw you in the market, do you remember? That wasn't later.

MARY ANN

No. That was the first time.

EXT. TENEMENT BACKYARD. EARLY MORNING.

Mary Ann, 20s, shovels coal into a bucket. Two BOYS are playing nearby. The outhouse door opens. Out steps NATALIE, 20s, waving a hand in front of her face. Mary Ann laughs. Both women pick up their coal and water buckets. Boys run past and accidentally knock over Mary Ann's water bucket.

NATALIE

Hey. Boys. Come. Fill.

The boys pay no attention and carry on playing. Natalie marches after them. It's only a small yard and there's nowhere to hide. She returns holding them by their collars.

MARY ANN

I'm glad you weren't around when I was a kid.

Natalie hands them Mary Ann's bucket.

NATALIE

You pump. Go.

Sheepishly, the boys refill it. Mary Ann smirks.

INT. TENEMENT STAIRWAY. CONTINUOUS.

Mary Ann and Natalie slog their way up one flight, then another, then another, and another, and another. At the top, they come to two doors across the hall from each other. Natalie lets herself in and puts her buckets inside.

NATALIE

Good day.

Natalie's matter-of-factness amuses Mary Ann.

MARY ANN

Good day to you too.

Natalie is about to go into her apartment when she stops.

NATALIE

Mrs. Singer.

MARY ANN
Mary Ann, please.

NATALIE
Mrs. Singer, where is your husband?

MARY ANN
He's away working. Why?

NATALIE
In New York?

MARY ANN
No, he's in Chicago. They're
building a canal.

NATALIE
My husband too.

MARY ANN
Working on the canal?

NATALIE
No, he is here. But he is not here.

MARY ANN
Would you like to come in for tea?

Natalie wants to decline, but Mary Ann takes her arm.

INT. SINGER TENEMENT. CONTINUOUS.

It's a cramped, two-room hovel - a sitting room with a kitchen alcove, and a single bedroom. The beams, floors and windows are plain wood, the walls simple white. Net curtains cover the windows. Mary Ann pulls out the table in the sitting room and a rat scurries away. She smacks with a broom, but the rat escapes, somewhere...

NATALIE
I get him.

Natalie takes the broom and probes for the rat while Mary Ann scoops a few coals into the tiny coal stove. She pours water from her bucket into a kettle and sets it on top.

Natalie jabs obsessively at the rat.

MARY ANN
You won't...

But as she says it, she sees that Natalie's crying. She puts an arm around her, takes the broom.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
Hey... Hey, it's okay.

She guides Natalie to a chair.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
What's all this about?

NATALIE
He go away for one day, one night.
Maybe two, three night.

MARY ANN
Then he comes home for a while?
Does he bring you money? Does he
explain, say where he's been?

NATALIE
I don't ask.

Mary Ann reaches out and Natalie accepts the hug. For a moment they sit, gently rocking. Mary Ann stares at the wall, her own fears soon turning to fury.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Do all men do this?

MARY ANN
If the world is as Mr. Shakespeare
would have us believe then it's
full of evil men who deceive and
thieve and murder - and the women
are no better. I always thought
that was make-believe but it seems
he was just scratching the surface.

Suddenly Natalie leaps up, grabs the broom, charges and dispatches the squealing rat. Mary Ann applauds.

EXT. TENEMENT BACKYARD. AFTERNOON. WEEKS LATER.

It's a summer day and all residents are outside. KIDS play in sweltering heat. Their MOTHERS huddle in the shade. Suddenly the back door opens and Singer emerges, more full of himself than ever. He spots Mary Ann and throws his arms wide.

SINGER
We're rich.

The Mothers react even quicker than Mary Ann, laughing excitedly. Mary Ann gets up slowly, nervously.

SINGER (CONT'D)

Come to me.

She acquiesces and he wraps his enormous arms around her.

SINGER (CONT'D)

I missed you so much.

MARY ANN

I missed you too.

SINGER

How much?

MARY ANN

What, on a scale of one to ten?

SINGER

Yeah.

MARY ANN

Nine point seven.

SINGER

(elated)

Nine point seven? Wow, I must be doing something right. It's going to get even better, because I'm going to take you away from this godawful place.

She holds him at arms length.

MARY ANN

You didn't rob a bank, did you?

SINGER

I sold an invention.

MARY ANN

What do you mean an invention?

SINGER

It's called a rock drill.

MARY ANN

Since when do you invent things?

SINGER

Since forever.

He pulls her closer. Whispers in her ear.

SINGER (CONT'D)
Why don't you come upstairs and
I'll tell you more about it.

She turns away from him.

SINGER (CONT'D)
I didn't come to watch the
Knickerbockers play town ball.

MARY ANN
Did you get lonely?

SINGER
There wasn't a lonelier man on the
whole continent, waiting to get my
hands on you.

She runs away inside, with Singer chasing after her.

INT. SINGER TENEMENT. BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

They're in bed, exhausted.

MARY ANN
So what's this invention, your rock
drill?

SINGER
Digging the canal, we kept hitting
huge boulders. All we had was our
own muscle and a couple of horses.
The company didn't care, so I tried
to even things up.

EXT. CANAL DIG. DAY.

A horse struggles to pull a rope, its hooves sliding on rock. It makes a couple of yards. Then the rope is released and a drill fractures a boulder. DIGGERS in rough old clothes scrape the rubble with shovels and pickaxes, their hands blistered and bloody. Some faint. Singer watches a man being loaded onto a stretcher and carried away.

EXT. CANAL DIG. NIGHT.

While Diggers sit around campfires and in tents, Singer pounds steel at a makeshift forge.

EXT. CANAL DIG. DAY.

The rock-breaking drill is now connected to a small steam engine. It hisses and heaves, piston turns. Rope goes taught. Then the piston gives way and parts fly.

SINGER

Look out --

Diggers dive for cover.

EXT. CANAL DIG. FOLLOWING NIGHT.

Singer pounds away at the makeshift forge.

EXT. CANAL DIG. DAY.

Steam engine whirrs. Singer's completed rock drill splits a stone. Diggers shovel the rubble into wheelbarrows.

INT. SINGER TENEMENT. DAY.

MARY ANN

Where is it now?

SINGER

I sold it to the canal company.

MARY ANN

(surprised and worried)

Why?

SINGER

It was too heavy to bring back.

MARY ANN

So we're not rich.

SINGER

Not unless two thousand dollars sounds like a lot of money.

MARY ANN

Two thousand?

SINGER

Shhh, people'll kill us for less.

MARY ANN

Where is it? We could buy a house.

SINGER

Better than that, I'm going to make our dreams come true. Our own theatre company.

MARY ANN

The could be fun.

SINGER

I need a lead actress.

MARY ANN

Or we could buy a house. With a garden for the kids. One of those new ones with an indoor privy.

SINGER

I already bought the wagons.

MARY ANN

What?

SINGER

Every ticket we sell goes straight into our own pockets, so pretty soon we'll be rolling in it. Get two privies if you want. But we need to be careful, some places don't like unmarried couples. Specially as I'm already married.

MARY ANN

We could pay her off, maybe.

SINGER

Oh God no, she'd try to take all of it. No, we'll use my middle name. I'll be Isaac Merritt, you'll be Mary Ann Merritt. Trust me. It'll be fine.

MARY ANN

Where will we go?

SINGER

Everywhere we can get a booking.

EXT. WAGON TRAIN. DAY.

A wagon train, like the Baltimore Players', but with only three wagons, rolls up a road. Seasons change, along with the advertising for "The Merritt Players": Richmond, Raleigh, Columbus. The train shrinks to two carriages. Then to one.

A wheel falls off. Singer tries to push it back into place but it's heavy and he kicks wildly in frustration.

TITLE: TWO YEARS LATER

INT. COUNTRY INN. NIGHT.

Mary Ann and Singer and their four children, including the eldest ISAAC JR., 8, arrive outside. They're thin and their clothes are dirty and patched. A sign on the door says: NO Tramps, Vagrants, Negroes, Jews. Singer knocks. Door opens. The INNKEEPER, male 50s, takes one look at them and frowns.

INNKEEPER

Didn't you see the sign?

Singer is about to speak but Mary Ann stops him.

MARY ANN

Sir, we're a family acting troupe presenting the most modern interpretation of Shakespeare's greatest plays for the enjoyment of a discerning clientele. We've travelled twelve states before arriving here, leaving spellbound customers in every single one.

INNKEEPER

How many of you?

MARY ANN

Six. Mr. Merritt and I play all the main parts.

ISAAC JR.

Not all of them. I play a prince. They kill me. Sometimes I even die for real.

INNKEEPER

That's mighty impressive. One night. One room. You do a matinee and an evening. Then you move on.

SINGER

If they like it would you consider longer?

INNKEEPER

If they don't like the matinee you won't be staying the night.

INT. INN COMMON AREA. DAY.

Half a dozen INN GUESTS sit at tables. The Singer clan are on a low stage. They have no costumes or props.

ISAAC JR.

Then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are liars and swearers enough to beat the honest men and hang up them.

He acts out being stabbed.

ISAAC JR. (CONT'D)

He has killed me, mother. Run away, I pray you.

He spreads his arms and lets himself fall off the front of the stage and lands flat on his face. Guests gasp. Singer and Mary Ann run to him.

MARY ANN

Isaac --

SINGER

My boy, my boy --

Isaac Jr.'s eyes are closed.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Oh God, he's hurt. My love, are you alright?

Singer leans down to listen to his breath. Isaac Jr. peaks out the corner of an eye.

ISAAC JR.

Shhh. If they think I'm really dead, they might give us another night.

Mary Ann and Singer look at each other, heartbroken.

MARY ANN

You had your dream. We're going home.

Singer nods.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT 2. FAMILY ROOM. WEEKS LATER.

The Singer clan have just arrived. It's very similar to their previous tenement and they're gloomy. Mary Ann and the kids come through the door first, followed by Singer, carrying six large holdalls plus a knapsack, showing his amazing strength.

MARY ANN
Well, here we are again.

SINGER
What's that supposed to mean?

MARY ANN
Two thousand dollars later and
we're back where we started.

ISAAC JR.
Why did we have to sell the wagon?

Singer flings the bags down angrily.

SINGER
We were too small. Should have had
more costumes, more props, a few
more actors.

MARY ANN
And gone broke twice as fast. We
were never very good.

SINGER
Thanks.

MARY ANN
Not just you, me too. Face it, if
we were so great, why are we here?

Singer kicks one of the bags. Children draw back.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
Calm down.

SINGER
I'll have to go away again.

MARY ANN
Don't run away.

SINGER
I'm not running away.

MARY ANN
I didn't mean that -- I meant stay
here, with us.

SINGER
And do what?

MARY ANN
Find work.

SINGER
The pay is barely worth it.

MARY ANN
Any money's good.

SINGER
I need time, Mary Ann. Time. Don't
you understand?

MARY ANN
No, clearly I don't.

SINGER
When I was in a print shop, an idea
came to me for a new machine. It's
the only way we'll get out of this.

MARY ANN
We can't live on hope.

SINGER
I did it before, and I can do it
again.

MARY ANN
And if you do? By some miracle?
What then? Chase your dreams again?

SINGER
-- It was my money --

MARY ANN
We could have had our own house.
Our own garden. An inside privy.

SINGER
-- My money, from my invention --

MARY ANN
You took our fortune, and you spent
it on you.

SINGER
I gave you a life, a family, an
adventure, a future --

MARY ANN
-- in a slum. With a dreamer --

SINGER
Ungrateful bitch --

Singer raises his hand and swings to slap her. We freeze.

EXT. NYC IMMIGRANT DISTRICT. STREET MARKET.

Mary Ann, with a black eye showing under the scarf covering her face, weaves her way through the barrows and hawkers.

NATALIE (O.C.)
Mary Ann, Mary Ann...

Mary Ann turns to see Natalie coming towards her. She tries to hide in the throng, but Natalie taps her shoulder.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Mary Ann. Is that you?

MARY ANN
Natalie.

NATALIE
So happy to see you.

MARY ANN
And you. You're still living here?

NATALIE
Yes -- Are you visit?

MARY ANN
No, we're back. It didn't work.

NATALIE
I'm so sorry. And Mr. Singer?

MARY ANN
What about him?

NATALIE
Is he back?

MARY ANN
He left this morning.

NATALIE
Mine left too.

MARY ANN
Left... for work?

Natalie shakes her head, then takes Mary Ann's arm.

NATALIE
So we have day off.

MARY ANN
But I have chores.

NATALIE

Come.

EXT. HORSE DRAWN TROLLEY. DAY.

Natalie and Mary Ann board a trolley. Mary Ann's still slightly apprehensive but Natalie pulls her aboard.

EXT. BOWLING GREEN PARK. DAY.

They walk through the park where men play bowls on the green.

EXT. SOUTH STREET SEAPORT.

They marvel at the busy wharves and sailing ships.

EXT. JEFFERSON MARKET.

They buy muffins, pies and fruit for a picnic.

EXT. CROTON RESERVOIR.

They eat their picnic on the steep banks of the reservoir.

MARY ANN

-- and then Isaac Jr. pretended to be dead and fell off the stage.

Natalie laughs. Mary Ann laughs too.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

At the time I was so angry.

Natalie touches the scarf.

NATALIE

Is that what this is about?

Natalie begins to untie it. Mary Ann stops her.

MARY ANN

No.

NATALIE

Let me see.

The scarf falls open. Mary Ann's face is badly bruised.

MARY ANN
How do you do it? By yourself.

NATALIE
I work as seamstress. And I teach
piano.

The word 'piano' Mary Ann begins to cry. Natalie's confused.

MARY ANN
Vouli wants to learn.

NATALIE
Send her to me.

MARY ANN
No, no I couldn't.

NATALIE
Yes. Send her to me.

INT. NATALIE'S FINE CLOTHES. DAY. PRESENT.

NATALIE
We go see your lawyer. You and me.

MARY ANN
If I lose, the children will get
nothing.

NATALIE
Win or lose they get a mother who
shows them how to fight.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. EVENING.

Mary Ann clears dishes from the dinner table. John FOSTER,
30s, gets up to help.

MARY ANN
Please sit, darling. I have the
most awful favor to ask of you.

FOSTER
You didn't buy a wild turkey in the
market again did you? I'm a city
boy. I don't do wildlife.

MARY ANN
It's about to start. You need to go
away.

FOSTER
Go away where?

MARY ANN
Boston, maybe, to your parents? Or
your sister? We're going to begin
preparing the witness statements.
Isaac's bound to hear about it.
He'll come after me and I don't
want you --

FOSTER
-- I understand.

MARY ANN
You do?

FOSTER
At some point we can tell the world
who we are, but until then --

MARY ANN
-- Until then.

They embrace.

INT. FULLER'S OFFICE. FOLLOWING DAY.

Mary Ann and Natalie wait while Fuller looks thru the file.

FULLER
That incident, did you report it to
the police?

MARY ANN
He left for Boston.

FULLER
So it's your word against his.

MARY ANN
It wasn't the only time.

FULLER
I know, I am on your side, but --

NATALIE
-- But what?

FULLER
Who told you he was in New York?

MARY ANN
George Zieber. Why?

FULLER
There are vast sums of money here,
people with axes to grind --

MARY ANN
-- George is a kind man. Too kind.

FULLER
He was the initial investor.

MARY ANN
He put \$3,000 into Isaac's wood
carving machine. Then that was
destroyed in a fire. But it was the
best thing that could have
happened.

FULLER
Why?

MARY ANN
Made Isaac desperate. So when the
sewing machine came along he threw
everything into it.

Fuller hands a draft of the divorce papers to Mary Ann. She reads, nods at Fuller and hands the papers to Natalie. Natalie doesn't need to read, she nods and hands them back.

FULLER
We won't serve until the last
possible moment.

Natalie wants to argue but Mary Ann calms her.

MARY ANN
We'll go see George. He can be our
first witness.

INT. ZIEBER'S HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. EVENING.

Zieber is 60s, bewhiskered, kindly. Mary Ann, Natalie, and Fuller are sitting at a table.

ZIEBER
Well, this is quite the delegation.

MARY ANN
It's very good of you to see us, at
short notice.

ZIEBER

No problem. But it may be a wasted trip.

MARY ANN

But George, we're only doing this --

ZIEBER

-- Thanks to me. I know. When I collected him at the Seaport and he had that new woman on his arm I saw red. I wanted to do right by you, but I can't denounce him publicly.

MARY ANN

He got you to sell him your shares by convincing you you were dying.

ZIEBER

You stuck by him too.

NATALIE

She loved him.

ZIEBER

I discovered him. As soon as I met him I thought, if there's such a thing as a genius, he is one. And I was right. People say you might meet an Isaac Singer once in a lifetime, but it's not true, you could live a thousand lifetimes.

FULLER

Why did he come back to New York?

ZIEBER

Do you know who Edward Clark is?

FULLER

His business partner.

ZIEBER

They despise each other. Every day Isaac was in London he was thinking Clark was plotting against him.

FULLER

If they don't trust each other how did they build an empire together?

ZIEBER

Imagine someone who's your opposite in every way, except one. Greed.

INT. PHELPS' WORKSHOP. DAY.

Men in their 30s and 40s in aprons bang, drill, carve and fettle, using power tools connected by belts to two rotating poles overhead, driven by a steam engine. A SHOVELER heaps coal into the engine's boiler. Sparks fly. Pistons race.

OTIS, 40s, is working on an elevator. He piles bricks into the car, then hoists it with a rope.

PHELPS, 30s, rotund, the workshop owner, keeps a close eye.

Otis cuts the rope. The car plummets but a safety brake engages. Metal creaks and bulges. Then a gear pops out of the mechanism. The car plummets. Bricks tumble. Dust clouds billow.

Phelps shakes his head.

PHELPS

Singer! Give Otis a hand, would ya.

Singer, now late 30s, goes to Otis. Shadowing his every move is his apprentice/son WILLIAM, 18, also tall and blonde.

Singer picks up from the floor the gear which gave way. He lays it on his workbench and uses his huge frame to drive a drill into the hole, then places it back into the mechanism.

SINGER

(to William)

Hold it there.

Singer screws it in hard.

SINGER (CONT'D)

Load her up.

Otis piles bricks into the car. He pulls the rope and it climbs. He hands the knife to Singer who slashes the line. Car plummets. Safety engages. Gear holds. Phelps applauds.

PHELPS

Singer, come here a minute.

Phelps is in a corner of the workshop with half a dozen sewing machines. Singer shakes his head.

SINGER

They're coming back faster than you can make them.

PHELPS

Can your boy help?

SINGER

Come on.

(points at machines)

The workmanship's fine. It's Howe's design.

PHELPS

Oh yeah, so what am I gonna do?

SINGER

Get a better one.

PHELPS

Where am I gonna to get that?

SINGER

Me.

PHELPS

You? Just 'cos you fix 'em don't mean you can design 'em.

SINGER

I'll bet you forty bucks I can make a better one.

PHELPS

Where are you going to get forty bucks?

SINGER

George Zieber will cover my side.

PHELPS

Pah - you still owe him for the last screw up.

Singer pulls Phelps's lapel and hisses in his ear.

SINGER

Not in front of my boy.

Phelps nods an apology.

PHELPS

How long for these?

SINGER

Few days. Pay me in advance.

Phelps scoffs but Singer pulls again. Phelps nods.

INT. OYSTER BAR. NIGHT. LATER.

Zieber, 50s, a well-fed man, is having supper. Singer is sitting alongside, half-cut.

ZIEBER

No way.

SINGER

But George. These sewing machines sell great, it's just the design's all wrong.

ZIEBER

I told you, no more loans, you need to make your own wage.

SINGER

I have enough for two weeks - that's the wager, a working prototype in two weeks. We could make a fortune here.

ZIEBER

Forty dollars. No more.

SINGER

Thank you for believing in me.

ZIEBER

Who said I did? Just trying to make back what you owe me.

INT. PHELPS WORKSHOP. DAY.

Singer works tirelessly, first welding a frame from pieces of wrought iron, then stripping one of Phelps's machines down to its individual components and labelling them.

He hammers a shell around a wooden buck, then threads an arm down the middle of it and attaches a hand-crank. He then begins fitting labelled components from the workbench.

Once he has a prototype, he puts some fabric in, but it won't sew. Annoyed, he rips the shell off and throws it to the ground.

He sleeps for a few hours, and when the sun rises he knows what to do, he reassembles, tweaks, and tries it again. Stitches appear in the fabric. Excited, he runs out.

Singer comes back with both Phelps and Zieber. On the table is a sheet of plain cotton fabric.

SINGER

There are numerous small improvements,
but eight of significance.

ZIEBER

Patents?

SINGER

Oh yes.

Close up as Singer directs them to look underneath the fabric, to where a mechanism directly below the needle slides back and forth, through loops in the thread, tightening it.

SINGER (CONT'D)

First, the shuttle moves in a straight path, not in a circle. And, second, because it travels straight, it goes further, tightening the stitch.

The needle, powerful and shining, pierces the fabric. The shuttle glides back and forth, in perfect rhythm.

SINGER (CONT'D)

And the needle itself travels vertically, not horizontally, for more efficient puncture. And because the needle is straight not circular, it's stronger. And you can sew heavier cloth. Number five...

SINGER (CONT'D)

...A friction pad to control the tension of the thread from the spool. And the spool itself placed on an adjustable arm. What number next Mr Phelps?

PHELPS

Seven?

SINGER

Correct. Placing the needle well away from the body of the machine so that a hand may guide the cloth.

He shows how as he cranks with his right hand, the left can guide the fabric through the needle.

Singer stops, as if he's finished.

ZIEBER

Eight. What's eight?

Singer gently removes a covering from the front of the shell. Beneath is the word 'Singer' painted gold in copperplate.

SINGER
The guarantee of my good name.

ZIEBER
How soon can we demonstrate it?

SINGER
Right now.

ZIEBER
(to PHELPS)
When's your showroom free?

PHELPS
Next week. I'll put word out.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT 2. KITCHEN AREA. DAY.

William, Isaac Jr., Vouli, and the younger kids John, Fanny and Jasper are dressed and at the table. Zieber is there too. Singer, grinning and singing, spoons syrup onto their porridge, raising his arm so high it falls in a long ribbon, making the kids laugh. Mary Ann enters, surprised.

MARY ANN
When did you get back? Hello William. Hello Mr. Zieber.

WILLIAM
Good morning, ma'am.

ZIEBER
Good morning, Mrs. Singer.

MARY ANN
I slept in. What time is it?

SINGER
Time for Vouli and me to play the piano before school.

MARY ANN
What piano?

Singer points to the front room. There's now an old, small piano in the corner. The men grin.

SINGER
We brought it up last night.

MARY ANN
We can't afford that.

SINGER

We can soon.

MARY ANN

Oh my God, not another rock drill.

(firmly)

And before you say anything, you are not starting another theatre.

SINGER

You loved our theatre.

MARY ANN

I was twenty-one.

(to William)

We had to walk home from Ohio to New York.

ISAAC JR.

I remember. That was fun!

SINGER

George and I, along with Orson Phelps, have established the Singer Sewing Machine Company.

MARY ANN

A sewing machine?

WILLIAM

It's amazing. It'll make a whole row of loop stitches in the blink of an eye.

ZIEBER

We're going to see the patent lawyer today.

MARY ANN

I love that idea. Can I have one?

SINGER

I thought you enjoyed sewing?

MARY ANN

No-one enjoys sewing, silly man.

SINGER

But those nice covers you made.

MARY ANN

That's embroidery. How much?

SINGER
Two hundred.

MARY ANN
That's far too much. Bring the
price down and every housewife in
America will want one --

SINGER
Na. They're for cobblers and
tailors.

MARY ANN
Surely there are more housewives
than cobblers.

SINGER
Women might love it to pieces one
day then walk away the next.

MARY ANN
How dare you? And what do you care,
so long as they buy it?

Singer gives her a kiss on the head.

SINGER
You leave the business to us.
(to Vouli)
But first, piano.

MARY ANN
We shouldn't play it 'til the
neighbors are out.

Singer cups a hand to his ear.

SINGER
I can't hear any neighbors.
(to Isaac Jr.)
Can you?

Isaac Jr. copies cupping his ear.

ISAAC JR.
I can't.

John cups his ear.

JOHN
I can't.

Zieber cups his ear.

ZIEBER

I can't.

Fanny cups her ear.

FANNY

I can't.

All laugh. Vouli slips off her seat and they go to the front room.

VOULI

(excited)

Papa are we really going to be rich?

SINGER

One day I'll buy you the best piano in the whole world.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT 2. FAMILY ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Vouli plays well and Singer sits on the stool as she practices her scales. There's a bottom note in the exercise and every time she arrives, it's his job to press the key. They both laugh each time he does it.

As Mary Ann watches, proud of her whole family, her hand inadvertently goes to her face, where Singer hit her. She rubs away the memory and puts on a smile.

INT. JORDAN & CLARK ATTORNEYS. CLARK'S OFFICE. DAY.

Clark, owly, mid 30s fusses over paperwork. Legal books fill his shelves. Singer and Zieber wait.

CLARK

Didn't we file a patent for you a couple of years back?

SINGER

My wood carver.

ZIEBER

A beautiful piece of engineering. The balance, the controlled power.

CLARK

Don't you still owe us for that?

SINGER

It was destroyed in a fire.

ZIEBER

We'll pay.

SINGER

But my new invention, it's a million dollar a year idea.

CLARK

Oh, really? What is it?

SINGER

It's a sewing machine.

CLARK

(laughs)

You're five years too late. Elias Howe got that one.

SINGER

His machine doesn't work.

CLARK

Well enough to get a patent.

Singer lays his drawings on the table.

SINGER

This is a whole new design.

Clark spreads the drawings and examines them.

CLARK

Impressive -- I hear the sewing machines are popular.

ZIEBER

We've put a deposit on a store. 458 Broadway.

CLARK

I can't come today.

ZIEBER

It's not open yet. Give us a couple of weeks.

CLARK

Fine. I'll get going on these.

As they leave, Zieber turns back and Clark gives him an appreciative glance. Zieber tips his hat.

EXT. SINGER & COMPANY SHOP. DAY. TWO WEEKS LATER.

It's a corner store in a busy street with a black frontage. A PAINTER is up a ladder, applying the final touches to the Singer logo above the door. In each large corner window is a DEMONSTRATOR, female 20s, sewing. SHOPPERS watch, amazed. Zieber stands in the doorway.

ZIEBER

Come inside, try it for yourself.
No obligation. It's so easy even I
can do it.

Carriages squelch their way through tracks of manure large as snow-drifts. A fancy, two-horse brougham pulls up. Out steps Clark. He pulls a face at the stench. Three filthy URCHINS, under ten, carrying brooms, sweep a path.

URCHINS

Hey swell, where's our tip?

Zieber flicks them a coin. It lands in the shit. Urchins dig.

ZIEBER

Sorry, kids!

INT. SINGER & COMPANY SHOP. CONTINUOUS.

It's airy and bright. Sewing machines are lined up on wood tables. Young, eager floor STAFF attend to wealthy CUSTOMERS.

SFX: Theatre bell.

Shoppers turn to a stage at the rear of the shop. On the stage is a sewing machine and a stack of clothing. Singer's face peaks out from behind the curtain. He feigns surprise at such a large audience. Clark joins the shoppers.

SINGER

Where did all these people come
from?

Staff laugh. Customers join in.

SINGER (CONT'D)

We're going to make history here
today. Because every once in a
while a new product comes along
that changes everything. Welcome to
a better future.

He walks to the table and picks up different colors of the same shirt, holding them out.

SINGER (CONT'D)

A future where the same shirt is available in every size and color and costs no more than eggs and pancakes. It takes fourteen hours to sew a shirt by hand, ladies and gentlemen. With my machine you can do it less than an hour.

He swaps the shirts for a filthy pair of working trousers which he holds at arm's length while holding his nose.

SINGER (CONT'D)

How about a future where a working man doesn't wait three months before washing his britches.

Laughter. Gratefully, he throws the trousers to one side.

SINGER (CONT'D)

And where women will have more time for more rewarding pursuits. Just like our own Mary McGonigle, who manages our recruitment and training.

Singer applauds and Staff join in.

MARY MAC, 20s, a sturdy Scots woman, pokes her head shyly from behind the curtain. Singer pulls her onto the stage.

SINGER (CONT'D)

She's in charge of our lovely demonstrators and our wonderful floor staff. The truth is we would be nothing without her. Let's hear it for Mary Mac. What a star.

Singer jumps down from the stage, then lifts Mary Mac down.

MARY MAC

I'm not used to this much attention.

SINGER

You deserve it. Every bit.

He holds her longer than necessary and she taps his shoulder.

MARY MAC

There's someone coming over.

Singer turns.

SINGER

Edward Clark, as I live and breathe.

CLARK

A new product that changes everything. Very impressive.

SINGER

And my patents?

CLARK

Looking strong, but I was wondering if we could speak about a couple of other things.

SINGER

Come to my office.

As they exit, Zieber watches Singer's every move.

INT. SINGER'S OFFICE. CONTINUOUS.

Sewing machines in various states of assembly cover the work surfaces. At one end of the room is a small steam engine. It powers a rotating pole that runs the length of the room.

Zieber listens-in, hiding in an office next door.

CLARK

Fifty-fifty, you and me. Do you think you can do that?

SINGER

My partners have no idea what this could be worth. They'll sell it for peanuts, especially George, he's up to his eyes in debt.

CLARK

Let me know once you agree a price with them and I'll get you the money.

SINGER

You're even more of a cunning little weasel than I'd hoped.

CLARK

(laughing)

I suppose that's some sort of compliment. There is just one other thing.

SINGER
What's that?

CLARK
Your marital status.

SINGER
I'll tell you a little secret. Mary Ann and I aren't actually married.

CLARK
That's what I want to talk about. What you and Mary Ann have is a common-law marriage. That's fine, except you're still married to Catherine. So being married to someone else, even as common-law, is bigamy. It's illegal. You could get five years. And it's sinful.

SINGER
Oh please.

CLARK
This is still a puritan country, and the women of America --

SINGER
They're probably fucking half the neighborhood --

CLARK
Even if they are, they're not going to buy a sewing machine from someone who they see as a common adulterer.

SINGER
How dare you call me that.

CLARK
I'm trying to help you. It's free advice.

SINGER
So what do you propose?

CLARK
Divorce Catherine.

SINGER
Come on, the only legal grounds for divorce in New York is adultery.

(MORE)

SINGER (CONT'D)

And you don't want me branded as an adulterer.

CLARK

So we get Catherine to admit adultery.

SINGER

She'll never do that.

CLARK

Everyone has a price.

SINGER

You have no idea what her family are like.

CLARK

Perhaps we could accommodate them. Will you at least think about it?

SINGER

I'm not promising anything. Do we still have a deal?

Zieber watches from his office as Singer extends a hand. Clark wants to refuse, but shakes.

INT. SINGER & COMPANY SHOP. CONTINUOUS.

The shoppers have gone. Mary Mac straightens piles of material and picks stray threads off the floor. Zieber watches from upstairs.

Singer sees Clark out, then comes over to her, puffed up.

SINGER

Let's get out of here.

MARY MAC

We'll close in an hour.

SINGER

I need you now.

MARY MAC

Someone's full of himself.

Singer checks to see there's no-one listening.

SINGER

He wants to be partners. Fifty-fifty.

MARY MAC

What about Mr. Phelps and Mr. Zieber?

Singer slices his hand across his neck.

MARY MAC (CONT'D)

A man after your own heart.

SINGER

No one understands me like you. You are the only one who really, really gets me.

MARY MAC

I think you get me too.

SINGER

And the more I get the more I want.

INT. ZIEBER'S HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. EVENING. PRESENT.

ZIEBER

I'm sorry, Mary Ann.

MARY ANN

Oh, I knew all about that.

NATALIE

You did?

MARY ANN

Of course. He might have been a genius at inventions but he wasn't very good at hiding his tracks.

FULLER

That could be a problem. You were never formally married, so we're relying on a judge agreeing that between the day Mr. Singer's divorce from Catherine was granted to the day he left home - a period of just seven months - you and he lived as common-law man and wife.

MARY ANN

You said that was the same as a regular marriage in the eyes of the law.

FULLER

It is. But if you and Mary McGonigle knew about each other and tolerated it, the defense might argue that neither of you should be accorded the status of wife. You were a pair of concubines.

NATALIE

That's outrageous.

ZIEBER

How dare you suggest that.

FULLER

Please, I'm not saying this, it's what the defense --

MARY ANN

What if she admits adultery? Mary Mac -- if she admits to being an adultness, then she can't possibly have been a wife.

NATALIE

You should have been a lawyer.

MARY ANN

I played a mean Lady Macbeth.

ZIEBER

Can you persuade her to testify?

MARY ANN

I once persuaded a man to kill his own father.

Natalie's eyes go wide with alarm.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

In the play --

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Mary Mac is late 30s. Mary Ann and Fuller have just arrived.

MARY MAC

What do youse want, then?

MARY ANN

I know this is strange for you -- for me too -- and you don't owe me any favors --

MARY MAC

-- Damn right. But Isaac's in town,
so the fun begins --

MARY ANN

He came to see you?

MARY MAC

Of course, and he had presents for
the weens. Did yours not get any? --

MARY ANN

-- I want to get out of your way.

MARY MAC

You're not in my way now. You're
wanting a divorce aren't you?

MARY ANN

Yes. Would you be willing to make a
statement?

MARY MAC

Maybe. But I reserve the right to
withdraw it at any point.

MARY ANN

Depending on how much he offers?

MARY MAC

Just like you.

MARY ANN

I can't be bought.

MARY MAC

We'll see about that.

FULLER

Mrs. Singer, I can't prepare a case
based on --

MARY MAC

-- It's not me you want anyway,
it's Katie.

MARY ANN

Your sister.

MARY MAC

She cheated on you, me, everyone.

MARY ANN

But he took her to England.

MARY MAC

Aye. And who's he come back with?
She's spitting feathers.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. EVENING.

KATE, Mary Mac's younger sister, 19 - tall, blonde, glamorous, carefree - and her housemate ELLEN - quieter, shyly flirty - sit smirking at the sounds of heavy sex coming from an upstairs bedroom. As it finishes, Kate laughs. She shares her sister's accent. Ellen is English.

KATE

He's got staying power, that fella.

An unopened bottle of scotch sits on top of a small piano. Kate reaches for it but Ellen stops her.

ELLEN

That's for Mr. Singer.
(corrects herself)
I mean, Mr. Matthews.

Kate rolls her eyes. She takes the bottle and pours a drink.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Don't you want a job?

KATE

He sounds a bit demanding to me.

Ellen laughs. Kate chugs her drink and pours another.

INT. MARY MAC'S BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Singer and Mary Mac are in bed. Mary Mac cocks an ear. From downstairs she can hear women giggling.

MARY MAC

Why do you have to make so much
damned noise?

SINGER

(laughing)
Do I?

MARY MAC

They heard everything.

SINGER

Who?

MARY MAC
My tenants.

SINGER
What tenants?

MARY MAC
Two girls.

SINGER
But I haven't even met them.

MARY MAC
You don't need to.

SINGER
Uh -- who bought the house?

MARY MAC
I can't rely on you forever.

SINGER
Of course you can.

MARY MAC
You're married to someone else. In fact, two someone else's, and how many weens? Ten?

SINGER
Eight. What do you take me for?

Mary Mac frowns.

SINGER (CONT'D)
Hey, most men don't even care. I know their names, birthdays.

MARY MAC
Alright, just get dressed.

As Mary Mac throws her dress over her head and hustles out Singer, laughing, pulls on his trousers.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Mary Mac enters and sees the opened scotch.

MARY MAC
Who's been helping themselves?
As if I need to ask.

KATE
Just a wee nip.

MARY MAC
I told you, room and board. Nothing
else.

KATE
I thought sisters shared
everything.

Singer comes down the stairs.

SINGER
Good evening, ladies.

ELLEN
Good evening, Sir.

KATE
Good evening.

MARY MAC
(to Singer)
Just off the boat, the pair of
them.

Singer offers a hand to Ellen. She takes it and he kisses
hers. She giggles.

SINGER
Enchanted.

Singer offers his hand to Kate but she folds her arms.

MARY MAC
Mind your manners.

Kate offers her hand. Singer kisses it. Kate rolls her eyes.

SINGER
Do they have jobs?

MARY MAC
They need some or they're no
staying here.

Singer eyes them up and down. He's impressed by Kate in
particular.

SINGER
We always need demonstrators.

MARY MAC
Ach, we've plenty.

SINGER

We're opening in Philadelphia. But that's tomorrow's problem. Right now, we're celebrating.

KATE

What are we celebrating?

SINGER

My new partner. Anyone play piano?

ELLEN

I can.

SINGER

Then give us a tune. Someone fetch glasses.

Kate fetches glasses as Ellen sits and begins to play. Singer pours tumblers of scotch and hands them out. He grabs Mary Mac by the waist.

SINGER (CONT'D)

As lady of the house you get the first dance. Tra-la-la-la-la...

He twirls her as he sings along. Kate hands Singer a scotch. He knocks it back and holds his glass out for another. Kate refills and he downs that too. He twirls Mary Mac a couple more times then reaches out for Kate. She takes his hand.

Mary Mac tries to laugh it off. But as she sits down, her eyes, consumed by jealousy, stay fixed on him.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. PRESENT.

MARY ANN

I remember that night.

MARY MAC

There were many.

MARY ANN

He never came back drunk. Stayed somewhere else. Except that once.

INT. SINGER TENEMENT 2. LATER SAME NIGHT.

It's very late. Singer creeps in. Drunk. Giggling. But as he shuts the door, he sees a small candle illuminating Mary Ann's face.

SINGER
(drunk)
Schnukiputzi.

MARY ANN
Don't call me that. Who were you
with?

SINGER
I was celebrating my new partner.

MARY ANN
New partner? What about George?

SINGER
If you don't believe me, come with
me. You never come with me.

MARY ANN
You never invite me.

SINGER
You're invited. And we'll get you
out of this horrible apartment too.

INT. NEW YORK NIGHTCLUB. NIGHT. A FEW DAYS LATER.

It's a fancy vaudeville-style club. A live band plays and a chorus line dances in front. Glamorous women sip champagne and powerful men smoke cigars. At tables along the wall, men play Faro. Singer and Mary Ann enter, dressed for the occasion. A MAITRE D', 40s, slim, approaches.

MAITRE D'
Good evening Mr. Singer.

SINGER
Hello Gilles. Usual table.

MAITRE D' shows them to a table, both men and women wave hello to Singer. He waves back.

MARY ANN
I never knew you were so popular.

SINGER
Like being back on stage, isn't it.

They sit. A WAITRESS, 20s, arrives.

WAITRESS
Good evening, sir. The usual, Dutch
and bitters?

SINGER
Splendid.

WAITRESS
And how about for your new friend?

SINGER
She'll have the same.

Waitress leaves.

MARY ANN
New friend?

SINGER
I usually come with Edward or
George. Brought William once.

Singer tries to laugh it off, but Mary Ann isn't convinced.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. PRESENT.

MARY MAC
He was rolling in it by that point.

MARY ANN
Tell me about it.

MARY MAC
He used tell me everything. When
he'd been good, when he'd been bad.
I was like his bloody mum.

MARY ANN
He told me nothing.

Fuller is astonished but carries on writing.

INT. ASTOR HOUSE. CONSERVATORY. DAY.

A huge buffet runs the length of the room. The ELEGANT LADIES of Fifth Avenue fill their plates (elegantly). Mary Ann overhears two Elegant Ladies whispering behind her.

MRS. DU PONT
Who's that?

MRS. ASTOR
Just moved in. House at the end.

MRS. DU PONT
Oh, Mrs. Singer.

MRS. ASTOR
Only I heard she's not Mrs. Singer.

MRS. DU PONT
You don't mean --

MRS. ASTOR
-- oh yes I do.

Mary Anne freezes with embarrassment.

ELEGANT LADIES
(whispering)
-- Not Mrs. Singer -- not Mrs.
Singer -- not Mrs. Singer --

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. LATER.

The enormous house is empty, except for the few items they've brought from the tenement, which look tiny and wrong. Boxes of new furniture and accessories litter the living room.

Mary Ann unpacks a bedroom lamp.

MARY ANN
Did you buy this?

SINGER
It's for one of the bedrooms.

MARY ANN
We probably won't even use them.

SINGER
Then what was the point of seven bedrooms?

MARY ANN
You wanted seven bedrooms.

SINGER
So the kids could have one each.

MARY ANN
They don't like sleeping alone.

SINGER
Teach them.

Mary Ann slams the lamp down.

SINGER (CONT'D)

All day you've been acting like you don't belong here.

MARY ANN

I miss my friends.

SINGER

We're going up in the world.

She holds out her ring finger.

MARY ANN

Am I?

Singer pulls a wad of money from his pocket.

SINGER

Charles Tiffany. 237 Broadway.

MARY ANN

I can see the headline: Harlot buys band for own hand.

SINGER

You should work for the newspapers. Look, one day we'll treat ourselves to the wedding of a lifetime.

MARY ANN

In my lifetime?

EXT. SINGER'S COACH IN CENTRAL PARK. DAY.

It's sixty feet long, canary yellow, with the Singer logo painted on the side. Vouli stands on top. Riders-by shake their heads in amazement. Kids run alongside. Singer peers out from a window, flicking pennies to them. The kids dive for the pennies, fighting in the dirt. He laughs and flicks more. Vouli cheers them on.

CARTER, the driver, 50s, African American, looks straight ahead, pretending it's not happening.

INT. STEINWAY STORE. DAY.

It's a Manhattan loft full of expensive pianos with vases of flowers perched on top. Singer and Vouli enter.

VOULI

Papa, you don't have to do this.

SINGER

I promised one day I'd buy you the best piano in the world.

Vouli sits and plays. She's good. It brings Henry STEINWAY, late 50s, strong German accent, out from a back room.

STEINWAY

Good day.

SINGER

Are you Steinway?

STEINWAY

Ja.

SINGER

Guten tag. My father was German too. His name was Reisinger. Adam Reisinger.

STEINWAY

It is polite to ask permission before playing the instruments.

SINGER

Oh, sorry, she forgot her manners. Like I was saying, we changed the name to Singer. Made it easier. How about you, did you change yours?

STEINWAY

In Germany our name was Steinweg.

SINGER

Yeah, so you made it Steinway, more American. Like us. How long you been here?

STEINWAY

Two years.

SINGER

And you already got yourself quite a reputation. Just like me. What do you think, Vouli, my sweetness?

VOULI

It has a nice tone, but the action is a little heavy.

SINGER

(to Steinway)
It's a little heavy.

STEINWAY

The action has already been made lighter, for American tastes.

SINGER

Sure, sure. Is this the only model?

STEINWAY

No. We can make to custom size, but that is more expensive.

SINGER

Well, what do you think for someone like her?

STEINWAY

Our instruments are appreciated by the more skillful player.

SINGER

Oh really?

Singer points to an enormous ornate piano with beautiful wooden inlays and marquetry.

SINGER (CONT'D)

How much for that fancy-shmancy thing over there?

STEINWAY

Four thousand dollars.

SINGER

Four thousand, huh.

STEINWAY

But there is this strange American practice from our competitors, so we must also follow.

SINGER

What's that?

STEINWAY

You can pay a deposit. You take the piano, and then pay the rest, an amount each month.

SINGER

Why would you want to do that?

STEINWAY

I don't want to do that. The customer want to do that.

(MORE)

STEINWAY (CONT'D)

You can't afford four thousand dollars for a piano.

SINGER

Can't I?

STEINWAY

No. I don't think so.

SINGER

Oh, you don't. Do you have any idea who you're talking to?

VOULI

Papa --

SINGER

No, I'm serious. Do you know who I am? I'm the owner of one of the most successful companies in New York.

Vouli begins pounding angrily on the piano.

STEINWAY

Please ask your daughter to stop.

SINGER

(to Vouli)
Knock that off.

Vouli keeps pounding.

STEINWAY

That is one thousand dollars.

SINGER

I'll take it.

VOULI

I don't want it.

SINGER

Why not?

Vouli's embarrassed and jumps off the stool.

SINGER (CONT'D)

Hey, get back on there.

Singer goes toward Vouli but Steinway is in his way. Singer shoves him and Steinway bumps into another piano, sending a vase crashing to the floor. Vouli screams.

INT. 19TH CENTURY SWEATSHOP.

Fifty weary SEAMSTRESSES sew denim garments by hand. It's heavy work, they keep breaking needles and catching fingers.

SWEATSHOP OWNER, skinny, 40s keeps a squinty eye on his staff while Singer demonstrates the machine.

SINGER

You see that. An entire seam in the blink of an eye. It never needs a break. Never gets sick.

SWEATSHOP OWNER

So you're proposing to do away with the only thing that keeps women quiet.

SINGER

Your staff will be more than busy. My customers use the machine for routine tasks, the seamstresses then do finer work, collars, buttons, pockets, lace.

SWEATSHOP OWNER

How much?

SINGER

Two hundred dollars.

SWEATSHOP OWNER

You gotta be nuts.

SINGER

I'm selling two a day. Don't get caught behind your competitors.

SWEATSHOP OWNER

At that price I'll take my chances.

A seamstress, Mary MARY W, 20s, petite, striking, pricks a finger accidentally. Blood spurts across her fabric.

MARY W

Ouch!

SWEATSHOP OWNER

For chrissakes. Get a bandage.

As Mary W sucks her finger, Singer sees fabric and scissors.

He cuts a bandage for Mary W, but as he's doing it, she shakes her hand in pain, flicking blood across a fabric roll.

SWEATSHOP OWNER (CONT'D)
 Aw, look. That's coming out of your wages.

MARY W
 It was an accident.

Sweatshop Owner marches across and hits her on the head.

SINGER
 Leave her alone.

SWEATSHOP OWNER
 These girls need discipline.

He swats Mary W on the head again.

MARY W
 Ow. Stop it.

He keeps doing it. Mary W swings an arm to defend herself and catches Sweatshop Owner in the face.

SWEATSHOP OWNER
 Strike your master?

He raises his arm to deliver a massive blow but Singer dashes across and catches his wrist. He fights but Singer is too strong.

SWEATSHOP OWNER (CONT'D)
 You're fired. Get out of here. Go.

Mary W throws down her sewing and storms off.

SWEATSHOP OWNER (CONT'D)
 And don't you go badmouthing me.

Singer grabs his things and goes after her.

EXT. NEW YORK DOCKS. DAY. CONTINUOUS.

Stevedores unload cargo. Gulls swoop. Immigrants wait in lines. Singer, carrying his machine, chases after Mary W.

SINGER
 Miss. Miss. Hold on.

MARY W
 What do you want?

SINGER
 I want to help.

MARY W
It'll take me weeks to find a
decent job.

SINGER
I can give you a job.

MARY W
Hornswoggle.

SINGER
There's my carriage.

He points to the huge yellow coach. Carter touches his hat on
cue. Walters' jaw drops.

EXT. SINGER & COMPANY SHOP. DAY. CONTINUOUS.

Shoppers gawp as the coach arrives. Carter grins and salutes
them. Singer helps Mary W out.

INT. SINGER & COMPANY SHOP. CONTINUOUS.

Mary Mac spots Singer coming in with Mary W.

MARY MAC
Mr. Singer. Welcome back.

SINGER
I've found a new demonstrator.

MARY MAC
But we've just hired two.

SINGER
We always need more. Besides, I've
promised a job to Miss -- Sorry --

MARY W
Mary Walters.

SINGER
Ah, another Mary. Seems all the
women I know are called Mary.

MARY MAC
Must be confusing for you.

SINGER

On the contrary, makes everything much simpler, and I am a man of my word, so, Mary, could you please escort Mary to the training room. And while you're about it, set her up on the payroll.

MARY MAC

Of course, sir. And perhaps we could speak, afterwards.

SINGER

Oh, I hope so.

Mary Mac glares as she steers Mary W toward the rear of the shop. Kate, helping a customer, notices and giggles.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Singer enters. It's eerily silent.

SINGER

Where the hell's the maid.

Hearing a noise, DOCTOR, early 20s, Bostonian, enters.

DOCTOR

Mr. Singer?

Singer turns, surprised.

SINGER

Boy or girl?

DOCTOR

Mr. Singer, I'm very sorry. I have grave news --

SINGER

-- What about Mary Ann? Mary Ann --

DOCTOR

-- Your wife is healthy --

Singer doesn't stop to listen as he dashes to the bedroom.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Mary Ann is crying, cradling the stillborn child to her chest. She kisses its head.

MARY ANN

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. Poor child.

Singer goes to hug them but she pushes him away.

SINGER

My darling, don't be upset, I'm sorry too, we'll make another.

MARY ANN

I'm not your baby factory, Isaac. I don't know what I am to you anymore. What am I?

SINGER

My darling, you're my companion, my partner in life, whom I love more than life itself -- I'll do anything, just don't torture yourself over this.

Doctor, who has been listening, steps forward.

DOCTOR

There's no fault here, Mrs. Singer. It happens sometimes.

MARY ANN

Get out. Both of you. Leave me with my child.

Doctor nods to Singer, who's crying, and they leave.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Singer sits on the sofa, disconsolate. Mary Mac hands him a cup of tea and pours one for herself. She's pregnant too.

MARY MAC

What's got you all drear, then?

SINGER

Mary Ann was giving birth. I went to see if it was a boy or a girl.

MARY MAC

And?

SINGER

I never got to know.

Mary Mac realizes what's happened and puts an arm around him.

MARY MAC
Shouldn't you be with her?

SINGER
She didn't want me.

Mary Mac sets her tea down.

MARY MAC
She knows. About us.

It comes as such a surprise that Singer fumbles his tea.

SINGER
What? Impossible.

MARY MAC
She was here.

SINGER
At this house? When?

MARY MAC
A few weeks ago.

SINGER
Why didn't you tell me?

MARY MAC
I wasn't sure. I didn't speak to her, it was Kate. She came to the door and asked who owned it. Katie said it was a Mr. Matthews and she went away.

SINGER
Then how do you know it was her?

MARY MAC
She came to the shop the other day looking for you. Kate comes and gets me and says that's the woman who came to the door.

SINGER
She must have found the deeds in my desk. How dare she go through it.

MARY MAC
We should have put them in my name.

SINGER
I'll get Clark to change them.

MARY MAC
You should buy her a present.

SINGER
Do you think?

MARY MAC
Crofts. 28th Street.

SINGER
Thank God for you, Mary. I don't
know what I'd do without you.

MARY MAC
Go on then, off you go.

He kisses her cheek then slips out. As Mary Mac watches him
go, Kate comes in, ready to go out.

MARY MAC (CONT'D)
And where are you off to?

KATE
Just out with friends. Shouldn't be
too late.

Mary Mac watches suspiciously as her sister slips out.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. PRESENT. DAY.

MARY MAC
Like I said, she's the one you need
to speak to. Mind you, she's off
men just now.

MARY ANN
What do you mean?

MARY MAC
She's off men. She won't talk to
him. She mightn't talk to you,
neither.

MARY ANN
I could ask Natalie.

MARY MAC
Who? Maybe. If she knows how to bat
an eyelash.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT. PRESENT. NIGHT.

Kate's in her late 20s. She and Natalie are drinking wine.

KATE

I mean, can you believe it? I was stuck in this stuffy hotel in London and he was out on the town. I knew exactly what he was up to.

NATALIE

I had same with my husband.

KATE

And I was giving him everything he asked for, and I mean everything, so I left. And then he comes back here, to New York, with some new bint. I mean, I'd already given up on men, but this is the worst.

NATALIE

So you help us?

KATE

Oh, I don't know.

NATALIE

Look, we are going to get him, one way or the other. And he is going to try to get out of it the one way he knows. Money. You can be part, or you can read about it in the newspaper? Hmm?

INT. CROFTS FANCY GOODS STORE. DAY.

Singer sprays perfumes. Checks himself in hand mirrors. Spots a lovely set of ivory combs and brushes, but baulks at the price. Kate, just 20, follows him but he doesn't see her.

Singer spots a display of soap bars in wooden boxes. Some have a man painted on them. Others have a woman. He takes one with a woman to the till, placing it on the counter as he waits to pay. Kate does the same, getting in line behind him.

SINGER

Miss Kate, fancy seeing you here.

KATE

It's my favorite shop. Everything's so soft and silky and smooth. Costs a pretty penny though.

Kate puts her soap down next to his. There's a man on hers.

SINGER
Are you buying for someone special?

KATE
Maybe.

SINGER
He's a very lucky man.

KATE
(laughing)
It's for me. I already have the woman. She seemed lonely so I wanted to get her a friend.

Singer pulls her box next to his.

SINGER
Will you allow me to pay?

KATE
You don't need to.

SINGER
Please. It would cheer me.

KATE
Go on, then.

Singer picks her box up and puts it on top of his.

SINGER
They'll enjoy each others' company.

KATE
I'm sure they will.

Kate picks hers up and places the man face down on top of the woman. Singer titters. She feigns innocence, then smiles. He swaps the boxes so the woman is on top. She pretends to be shocked and rotates the woman head-to-toe, so they're in a sixty-nine. Singer chortles and places them on their side with the woman facing out and the man behind, spooning.

TILL LADY, 50s, prim, clears her throat. They laugh.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. DAY. WEEKS LATER.

Mary Mac comes in and sees two wine glasses, a half-smoked cigar, and used cake plates. She's furious. There are noises upstairs. She listens closer - they're cries of ecstasy.

She storms up.

MARY MAC
Kate? Is that you? Who's with you?

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Kate slaps the back of the man on top of her.

KATE
Get off, get off. That's my sister.
Singer rolls off.

SINGER
You said she was out.

Singer throws on a shirt but can't find his trousers.

Footsteps on the stairs.

MARY MAC (O.S.)
I've told you before, no men.

KATE
Go.

Behind him is a small balcony. He rushes to open the window and steps out, still bottomless.

Kate pulls the curtains across. The bedroom door flies open.

EXT. BALCONY. DAY. CONTINUOUS.

Two floors up, Singer shivers in the cold, his shirt covering his top, but his bare ass on show to the world.

MARY MAC (O.S.)
Who do you have in here?

KATE (O.S.)
Nobody.

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Mary Mac throws back the bed covers. It's empty.

MARY MAC
I heard noises.

KATE
I make noise sometimes.

MARY MAC
By yourself? In the middle of the
day? You dirty slut.

EXT. BALCONY. CONTINUOUS.

KATE (O.S.)
Well you said no men.

Singer is finding the whole thing hilarious, but then he spots a NEIGHBOR coming out of her front door.

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM. CONTINUOUS.

MARY MAC
Why aren't you at work?

KATE
Mr. Singer gave us the afternoon
off.

MARY MAC
First I've heard of it. Get
yourself downstairs.

As Mary Mac turns away, Kate sees Singer's trousers on the floor and kicks them under the bed. Mary Mac catches it out of the corner of her eye.

MARY MAC (CONT'D)
What was that?

KATE
Nothing.

Mary Mac bends down and pulls the trousers out.

MARY MAC
I bloody knew it.

She marches over to the curtains and yanks them aside. Standing facing her is a petrified Singer.

MARY MAC (CONT'D)
Get in here this minute.

KATE
We weren't doing anything.

Singer steps in.

SINGER
No, we weren't.

Mary Mac throws his trousers at him.

MARY MAC
And I'm the Duchess of Argyll.

Mary Mac storms out. Singer runs down the stairs after her, pulling on his trousers.

INT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. SITTING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

SINGER
Mary. Wait. It's not what it looks like.

MARY MAC
So you weren't buttering her bread?

SINGER
Let me explain.

MARY MAC
Don't bother.

SINGER
Listen, please. She's being courted by a man and doesn't want to disappoint him.

MARY MAC
You're giving her lessons? Is that your excuse? Kate. Kate get down here. And bring your things.

SINGER
Please Mary, don't be like this. It was innocent.

MARY MAC
Innocent -- my own sister.

SINGER
Educational.

MARY MAC
Kate. I'll give you two minutes. And then I'm putting your things on the street.

SINGER

But where's she going to go?

MARY MAC

Plenty of work for the likes of her.

SINGER

You can't do this.

Mary Mac opens the front door.

MARY MAC

And you, out. Right now. Out.

SINGER

Who bought this house.

MARY MAC

Do I need to call the police?

SINGER

Kate. Come with me, I'll make sure you're alright.

EXT. MARY MAC'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

Kate comes out with a carryall spilling over.

MARY MAC

You'll be fine, long as you bend over when the two-timing shite wants it.

KATE

A fine example you are. Oh Isaac, oh, oh, Isaac. Over and over every night.

MARY MAC

And what did I get for it -- another bairn on the way.

KATE

You weren't careful?

Hearing the commotion, NEIGHBORS come out. NEIGHBOR 1, a woman in her 50s, points at Singer.

NEIGHBOR 1

Aren't you that sewing machine man -
- Singer?

SINGER

My name's Matthews. Isaac Matthews.

NEIGHBOR 1

I've been to your store. Seen you.

SINGER

I'm in the wood business.

NEIGHBOR 1

I bet you are.

Neighbors laugh. NEIGHBOR 2 is another woman, older.

NEIGHBOR 2

I saw the full moon on the balcony.

MARY MAC

Just be gone, all of you.

SINGER

I'll leave, but I'm coming back.
Mary, you are Mrs. Matthews, and I
intend to live with you and our
children, whatever it takes.
Kate, we'll find you a place to
stay. I'll work all of this out.
Please just don't hate each other,
it's my fault.

Singer and Kate climb into the carriage.

NEIGHBOR 1

I'd never let my husband go off
with another woman.

MARY MAC

She's my sister.

NEIGHBOR 2

Even worse.

Mary Mac slams the door behind her.

INT. NATALIE'S FINE CLOTHES. DAY. PRESENT.

Natalie spots Mary Ann and Fuller entering. Comes over.

MARY ANN

How did it go?

NATALIE
Never ask me to do anything like
that again.

MARY ANN
She didn't.

NATALIE
She thought about it.

FULLER
Will she give a deposition?

NATALIE
She can't wait.

FULLER
So we have the adultery. Now we
just need the marriage.

MARY ANN
But you have the divorce
certificate.

FULLER
I don't know if it'll be enough.

MARY ANN
We could ask Catherine. If he said
he wanted to divorce her to marry
me, would that help?

FULLER
Probably. Did he say that?

NATALIE
That's what you have to find out,
Mr. Lawyer. What? I did my part.

MARY ANN
No. I need to do this.

FULLER
And then we need to put it all in
front of a judge for an initial
view. Then we can decide whether to
proceed.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE IN PALMYRA. DAY.

It's small and rustic, with exposed beams. A raccoon on the sofa hears a noise, raises its head and chirrups. Catherine is now mid-40s, with unkempt hair and dowdy clothes.

She looks out of a window and sees Mary Ann coming up the path. She opens the door.

CATHERINE

Well, if it ain't the fool of fools.

MARY ANN

Hello, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Never thought I'd see you here in Palmyra. Long way from Fifth Avenue.

MARY ANN

You hated New York. Told me that yourself.

CATHERINE

You remember.

MARY ANN

How did you two meet?

CATHERINE

Me and Isaac?

MARY ANN

He never told me.

EXT. FAIR IN ROCHESTER. EVENING.

Teen Singer spots Teen Catherine with a bag of candy. He goes up to her and she smiles, all nonchalant. They're not strangers.

He takes a blue candy, throws it in the air, then tips his head back, and chases around to get under it. There's a plop. Teen Singer chews. Teen Catherine claps. She throws a red one for herself and tries to catch but misses. She picks it up and eats it. He feigns disgust. She pushes him and laughs. He offers an arm but she looks askance - too familiar by half. As they walk off, we see the blue candy still on the ground.

Singer steers them toward a stall advertising "beer, wine, cider, liquor" and buys one for them both. She drinks and is surprised by the taste - she's never had it before. She begins to guzzle. Singer reaches and stops her.

EXT. OUTDOOR BARBECUE. LATER THAT EVENING.

They eat ribs at a bench surrounded by others, goofing around, smearing sauce, laughing, inebriated.

They don't notice a young man, BOBBIN, sitting by himself, keeping an eye on them.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE IN ROCHESTER. NIGHT.

They arrive at Singer's digs, arm in arm, stealing kisses. Bobbin watches from behind a building.

TEEN CATHERINE

I told Ma and Pa I was staying with a friend tonight.

Singer's taken aback - he can't believe his luck. He checks around to see if anyone is watching, then pulls her up the stairs, giggling, into the boarding house.

INT. SINGER'S BEDROOM IN BOARDING HOUSE. NIGHT. CONTINUOUS.

He closes the door and turns up the light. The room has patterned gold wallpaper, and brass fittings.

TEEN CATHERINE

My, this is fancy.

Singer grabs her and pulls her close.

YOUNG SINGER

We didn't come here to admire the room.

She puts her arms around and kisses him. They begin pulling at their clothes. Singer tears off his shirt, revealing a taut torso. Catherine slips her skirt off and he picks her up and carries her to the bed.

They're so enraptured they don't see or hear the door creaking open. Bobbin enters, moving slowly, silently.

They pull off the rest of their clothes. They begin making love when suddenly Singer feels a sharp pain in his neck.

BOBBIN

Feel that, prick.

Bobbin applies pressure. Singer holds still, mortified. Teen Catherine, startled, looks out from under him.

TEEN CATHERINE
Bobbin... What are you doing here?

BOBBIN
(to Singer)
Get off her.

Singer rolls off. There's blood on the sheet.

TEEN SINGER
I meant no harm.

Bobbin ignores him.

BOBBIN
You think Ma and Pa believed you?

TEEN CATHERINE
I'm a grown woman.

BOBBIN
Sure are.

TEEN CATHERINE
Give me my clothes.

He fake-throws once, twice, then tosses them to her.

BOBBIN
We can go tell 'em the good news.

TEEN CATHERINE
What news?

BOBBIN
Laying your own family table.

TEEN CATHERINE
What are you talking about?

Bobbin flashes his skinning knife at Singer.

BOBBIN
You can come by tomorrow and ask
Daddy's permission.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE IN PALMYRA. PRESENT.

CATHERINE
But you didn't come here for that,
now did you.

MARY ANN
I'm finally divorcing him.

CATHERINE
Didn't know you were married.

MARY ANN
I have to prove I was. It might help to know the reason he gave for divorcing you.

CATHERINE
Got me to plead guilty to adultery. Well, he didn't, that little weasel Edward Clark did.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE IN PALMYRA. 10 YEARS EARLIER.

Catherine spots Clark coming up the path. She answers the door with shotgun in her hand.

CATHERINE
Turn around right now. Whatever you're selling I'm not buying.

CLARK
Good day to you, Ma'am. My name is Edward Clark. I'm a lawyer.

CATHERINE
Then I'm definitely not buying.

CLARK
I'm acting on behalf of Mr. Isaac Singer.

CATHERINE
Ha - hope you got paid in advance.

She stands aside at the doorway. Clark enters. She points to the sofa with her gun.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Sit over there.

Clark sits on the sofa and relaxes for a second, then notices the raccoon and sits up, alarmed.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Don't mind Tyrell.

Tyrell rolls over.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Rub his belly. He expects it. If you don't, he might bite you.

Terrified, Clark puts his fingertips to the animal's soft fur. Tyrell gives a happy sigh. Catherine cackles.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I was only pulling your leg.

Clark snatches his hand away.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I always thought this day might come. For many years I longed for it. So why now?

CLARK

Someone is challenging one of his patents. The case isn't particularly strong so my suspicion is they'll try to extort an out of court settlement by threatening to expose his unorthodox private life.

CATHERINE

Which you find distasteful.

CLARK

Yes, ma'am, I do.

CATHERINE

But not unpleasant enough to stop you taking the money.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE IN PALMYRA. PRESENT.

CATHERINE

Sorry to disappoint. Wasn't about you.

MARY ANN

Do you have any idea what Isaac's company is worth? How much did Clark pay you?

CATHERINE

Ten thousand dollars.

MARY ANN

They make that much every day in the New York store alone.

(MORE)

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Then there's Philadelphia, Boston, Richmond -- if I win this case he's going to have to renegotiate everything. With everyone. Including you.

Catherine gets up, retrieves a bible box, and hands it to Mary Ann. Inside are hundreds of letters.

CATHERINE

He told me everything. The Marys. The Ellens. All of them. Where they live. What he liked about them. What he didn't like about them. Guess none of them ever saw the hole.

As she talks, Mary Ann dives in and skim reads half a dozen.

MARY ANN

The whole of what?

CATHERINE

Not the whole of, the hole in -- in him. From when his momma went. He was ten and all he had left was his crazy old man.

MARY ANN

She wasn't called Mary was he?

CATHERINE

Ruth.

They laugh.

INT. FULLER'S OFFICE. DAY.

Fuller wears a long face. Mary Ann and Natalie look shellshocked.

FULLER

So, that's it, I'm afraid. I cannot in all good conscience recommend taking the case forward at this time.

MARY ANN

But how can a judge disregard all this evidence?

Natalie rubs her fingers together: he's been bribed.

FULLER

It's not that, it's the problem I highlighted before. You, Miss McGonigle, the other Miss McGonigle, and all the others, even Catherine Singer, you knew about each other, and you accepted it. So who's the wife? Who's the wronged party?

MARY ANN

I was the one he lived with. The one who went in the big yellow coach. The one he always lied to -- oh, what's the use. I could say anything, there's always going to be some reason why he's right and I'm wrong.

FULLER

There's no right and wrong here, Mrs. Singer.

MARY ANN

I'm not Mrs. Singer. I never was, isn't that what you're telling me?

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Mary Ann pulls letters from the bible box, scans each. Natalie makes tea. Mary Ann's tearful.

NATALIE

You never told me you knew about all this.

MARY ANN

Not all of it. I mean, cheating's one thing, but this -- there were one-night stands, prostitutes, mistresses -- Ellen Brazee, Ellen Livingston, Mrs. Judson --

Natalie brings tea, puts a hand on her arm.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Why write to Catherine about it?

NATALIE

Needed someone to tell him off.

MARY ANN

But Mary McGonigle said he told her everything too. Not me. Ever.

NATALIE

Because you were the wife.

MARY ANN

No-one else seems to believe it.

NATALIE

Then we have to convince them?

Mary Ann combs through the letters.

MARY ANN

If there was someone in here who didn't know about the rest of us --

She brightens.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

-- There might be. Ideally someone with children by him. Calling herself Mrs. Singer or Mrs. Merritt probably. Then it's clearly bigamy. That means jail. And if he's in jail then someone can steal his kingdom.

She begins rifling through the the letters faster.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

But it could be any of these, or maybe someone we don't even know about. It's a needle in a --

She stops suddenly.

NATALIE

What is it?

MARY ANN

He knows we don't know.

NATALIE

So?

MARY ANN

So he thinks he can do what he wants. That's Isaac all over. He'll go and see that family and pretend nothing's wrong --

NATALIE

-- We follow him --

MARY ANN

-- If she exists, he'll lead us
right to her --

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL. DAY.

Mary Ann and Natalie take turns watching the front door of the hotel, sometimes from nearby, sometimes the opposite side of the street.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL. NIGHT.

Still no sign of Singer.

INT. ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL. FOYER. DAY.

Natalie positions herself inside. A waitress is just delivering her a second cup of tea when she spots Singer exiting the elevator, dressed in a plain suit. Natalie follows him outside.

EXT. BROADWAY. DAY.

Natalie walks behind Singer, desperately trying to catch the attention of Mary Ann on the other side of the road.

EXT. HOUSE ON LOWER EAST SIDE. DAY.

They watch as Singer knocks on the door of a small house. The door opens and out steps Mary W, now mid 30s, and a little girl, Alice, 6. Mary W gives Singer a big hug and kiss. Alice hides behind her mother.

MARY W

Alice, darling, you remember Papa --

INT. FULLER'S OFFICE. DAY.

Mary Ann and Natalie rush in.

FULLER

Ladies, to what do I owe this --

MARY ANN

Serve him.

FULLER
I beg your pardon?

MARY ANN
Serve the divorce papers, we're
going ahead.

FULLER
Mrs. Singer, Mrs. Gompertz, you've
obviously put in a lot of effort,
but the guidance from the judge was
unequivocal, and --

MARY ANN
-- Stop your fiddle-faddle --

FULLER
-- And Mary McGonigle has pulled
her testimony.

MARY ANN
Since when?

FULLER
This morning.

MARY ANN
We've still got Kate.

FULLER
It's not enough.

MARY ANN
We're going ahead.

FULLER
Ma'am, we will lose.

MARY ANN
I don't care.

FULLER
-- Mrs. Singer --

MARY ANN
-- Serve him, dammit. And let me
know when we've got a court date.

INT. ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL. CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

SERVER, a lawyer in his 20s, knocks on a door. It opens.
SINGER, late 40s, huge, with long flowing blonde hair and
beard, resplendent in red velvet, answers.

SERVER

Mr. Singer.

SINGER

My name's Simmons.

SERVER

Thank you for confirming. You've been served.

Server hands him an envelope. He tears it open and reads.

TROLLOP (O.C.)

What is it, lovely?

SINGER

Oh, Mary Ann, who's put you up to this?

INT. DIVORCE COURT. DAY.

The divorce court is a simple set-up - just a JUDGE, male, late 50s, bulldog face, BAILIFF, male 60s, and SCRIBE, female, 20s. But the trial is taking place in a large courtroom to accommodate a huge, noisy CROWD.

Judge bangs his gavel. Hush descends.

JUDGE

The court is now in session. Would counsels approach the bench.

CLARK, late 40s, and Fuller, both come up, curious.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Let me get this straight. Mr. Fuller, your client wishes to divorce a man she was never married to? And Mr. Clark, your client is your business partner, who jumped bail on another charge and fled the country?

Both lawyers nod.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Mr. Fuller, can you establish the existence of a marriage?

FULLER

We can, Your Honor.

CLARK
That's highly debatable.

JUDGE
And is one of the parties willing to admit adultery?

FULLER
We can prove Mr. Singer's adultery.

JUDGE
Mr. Clark, wouldn't a payment be a better option?

FULLER
Excuse me, Your Honor, but for my client this isn't about money. She wants it recognized that she was his wife.

CLARK
So then she can make a larger claim. Your Honor, Miss Sponsler was no different to the other women who Mr. Fuller will call as witnesses. They were Mr. Singer's lovers, as was Miss Sponsler. But none was his wife, and they all knew about each other. They were equivalent concubines.

FULLER
And my client contends that's hogwash.

JUDGE
Very well, we'll proceed. But mark my word all you'll do is sell newspapers.

He shoos them away.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
Mr. Fuller, you may call your first witness.

FULLER
Your Honor may I first say a couple of words, for the record?

JUDGE
If you must.

FULLER

Your Honor this is a divorce case, but there's a larger question here of whether someone is above the law. Perhaps they're an entertainer. Or they run a mighty corporation. Or they've brought the world a miraculous new product. And perhaps they can hire a fancy lawyer. Mr. Singer is all of those. The question is whether any of that entitles him to be treated differently under the law than any other citizen.

CLARK

Objection, Your Honor, this has nothing to do with the divorce.

JUDGE

Sustained.
(to Scribe)
Delete that from the record.

FULLER

The plaintiff, Mrs. Mary Ann Singer -- sorry, my error -- Miss Mary Ann Sponsler, is called to the stand.

Mary Ann, wearing a very fine dress and perfectly coiffed hair is in the plaintiff's seats, worried. The Crowd are unsympathetic, one or two make faces at her.

Mary Ann places her hand on the bible.

MARY ANN

I, Mary Ann Sponsler, promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

As she sits in the witness chair, Mary Ann suddenly finds herself facing Singer.

FULLER

Miss Sponsler, please could you read your prepared statement.

Mary Ann is holding a piece of paper in her hand, but she doesn't need it - she has this rehearsed.

MARY ANN

During my whole married life --

CLARK

-- Objection --

JUDGE

-- Sustained --

MARY ANN

-- I received from my -- from Mr. Singer -- the most cruel and inhuman treatment.

Singer stands. Rising to 6'3", he towers over the courtroom. Crowd hold their breath.

SINGER

My darling, I apologize here and now for any grievance I may have caused you, it saddens me terribly to think --

JUDGE

-- Mr. Clark, control your client.

FULLER

-- He's been trying for years, your Honor --

Crowd laughs. Clark motions for Singer to sit. He obeys.

JUDGE

Mr. Fuller, I expect better. Continue, Miss Sponsler.

MARY ANN

His conduct towards me has been such as to render it unsafe and improper for me any longer to cohabit with him --

Singer stands again.

JUDGE

Mr. Singer, sit down.

SINGER

My dearest one, are you forgetting everything we had together? Twenty-five beautiful years. Eight gorgeous children. We two pirates of life's cruel sea with a shared trove of memories. Let us stop this now lest our love be washed away forever.

CROWD

Ahhhh.

MARY ANN

The only boat you've ever been on
when was when you jumped bail to
England.

Crowd laugh.

FULLER

Your Honor, the plaintiff would
like to enter into evidence Exhibit
A which is the divorce decree for
Mr. Singer and his wife Catherine
Singer, on January 24, 1860, naming
a Mr. Stephen Kent as her partner
in the adultery.

Fuller walks the decree up to the Judge for inspection.

FULLER (CONT'D)

By that date, Mr. Singer and the
plaintiff had been living together
with their children as husband and
wife for fourteen years. In the
eyes of the law, Mr. Singer's long
cohabitation with Miss Sponsler at
that moment became a common-law
marriage, because the only
impediment to that state of
affairs, the marriage to Catherine,
had been removed.

CLARK

A very subtle interpretation.

FULLER

As subtle as a fist, Your Honor,
which Mr. Singer understands well.

JUDGE

Watch your language, Mr. Fuller.

Mumbles in the Crowd. Mary Ann turns to look.

FULLER

The plaintiff would like to call to
the stand Miss Vouletta Singer.

JUDGE

Hold on. Mr. Clark, do you have any
questions for Miss Sponsler?

CLARK
No, Your Honor.

As Mary Ann goes back to her seat, Vouli, now mid-20s, braces herself and places her hand on the bible.

VOULI
I, Vouletta Singer, promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

She sits.

FULLER
Miss Singer, you were in the house with Miss Sponsler when a telegram arrived, from Mr. Clark here, I believe, to say that Catherine Singer had agreed to the divorce, is that correct?

VOULI
Yes.

FULLER
Could you tell us what happened, and after Mr. Singer came home.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. DAY.

Vouli is a little younger here, late teens, with the younger kids playing around her, as Mary Ann watches.

VOULI
I'm the carriage and you're the horses, so when I shake the reins, you run. Ready... shake shake shake!

The kids run out of the room.

VOULI (CONT'D)
John, wait, you have to run at the same speed. You're a team.

MARY ANN
Vouli, don't you need to practice your piano?

VOULI
Oh Mama, we're having fun.

MARY ANN

Get your hour done then you can
play with the little ones.

There's a knock on the door. Mary Ann opens it. On the
doorstep is a TELEGRAM BOY, 15, wise-ass face.

TELEGRAM BOY

Telegram for Mr. Singer.

Mary Ann holds out a few coins.

TELEGRAM BOY (CONT'D)

You ain't Mr. Singer.

She retracts her hand. Telegram Boy thinks then hands over
the telegram.

TELEGRAM BOY (CONT'D)

Don't go opening it now.

She pays him and the Telegram Boy runs off. Mary Ann puts the
telegram on the table and walks away. Vouli watches.

VOULI

What if it's urgent?

MARY ANN

How do you mean?

VOULI

They only send telegrams if it's
urgent. We might need to find him.

Mary Ann shrugs and opens the telegram. She can barely
believe her eyes.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. LATER.

Mary Ann is waiting when Singer comes home. As soon as he
steps inside, she throws her arms around him and kisses him.
Vouli plays piano in the background.

SINGER

What's all this?

MARY ANN

You finally did it.

SINGER

Did what?

She hands him the telegram. He's horrified.

SINGER (CONT'D)

You had no right to open it.

MARY ANN

But it's wonderful, we can be married.

SINGER

No, no, no this isn't about us.

MARY ANN

You're planning to marry someone else?

SINGER

No, it's just business.

MARY ANN

It's that Scottish one, isn't it? I went to that house.

SINGER

You had no right to do that either. Or to go through my desk.

MARY ANN

I have every right to do anything I want.

SINGER

Mary Ann, please understand, this divorce has nothing to do with marrying anyone. Clark insisted.

MARY ANN

Clark? You did it for him?

SINGER

It's part of a legal case. Some people are suing us but they're hoping to embarrass me into paying them off instead of going to court.

MARY ANN

Marry the woman you live with, then you're protected.

SINGER

All these years Catherine had me in her power. I won't allow it again. You will not have me in your power.

MARY ANN

I don't have any power. You took it all. I was going to be an actress. I got curtain calls. I gave it up to raise your children and be your wife. All I'm asking is for you to let me call myself Mrs. Singer.

SINGER

Who's stopping you? Now that I'm divorced it's what you are, in the eyes of the law.

MARY ANN

People don't know that.

SINGER

People, people, people -- I don't think like other people, I don't live like other people, I don't behave like other people. And they hate me for it. So to them I say be damned. I thought you were the same, I thought we were together against the world. Damn it, I give you everything.

MARY ANN

If you give me everything then give me this: promise not to make a fool of me. Can you promise that?

Singer storms out, slamming the door. Vouli enters upset. Mary Ann hugs her.

INT. COURT ROOM. DAY. PRESENT.

JUDGE

Your witness, Mr. Clark.

CLARK

Good morning, Miss Singer. You have my sympathies, it must be very difficult to give evidence in court against one's own father.

FULLER

Objection.

JUDGE

Please proceed, Mr. Clark.

CLARK

Miss Singer, do you recall visiting a piano store with your father a few years ago? The Steinway store.

VOULI

Y-yes.

CLARK

And do you recall your father taking a swing at Mr. Steinway?

Crowd laugh.

VOULI

It was more of an accident.

CLARK

I see. But could you tell the court what happened afterwards.

VOULI

Afterwards?

CLARK

Yes, what was said between you and your father, right afterwards? I remind you that you are under oath.

INT. STEINWAY STORE. DAY.

The vase crashes to the floor. Vouli screams.

STEINWAY

Schwein.

SINGER

Vouli, come on, let's get this thing and get out of here.

STEINWAY

Get out now.

VOULI

I don't want anything from you. I hate you. We all hate you. Mama hates you.

SINGER

No she doesn't.

VOULI

Yes she does because you won't marry her.

SINGER

How dare you.

VOULI

So she'll marry Mr. Foster.

Singer's jaw hits the floor.

SINGER

Who is Mr. Foster?

He marches over and grabs Vouli's arm. She yelps.

SINGER (CONT'D)

I said, who is Mr. Foster?

Vouli snatches her arm away and runs out of the shop. Steinway tuts at Singer, shaking his head.

INT. COURT ROOM. DAY. PRESENT.

CLARK

Perhaps you could tell us that now, Miss Singer. Who is Mr. Foster?

Vouli bursts into tears.

VOULI

I'm sorry, Mama.

CLARK

Is it not the case, Miss Singer, that Mr. John Foster is your mother's lover, and that his existence was known to you, to Mr. Singer, and to other members of your family?

VOULI

No.

CLARK

No?

VOULI

Only to me and Mama. And to Papa.

CLARK

And to Papa. Of course he knew,
Your Honor, because they all knew
about each other, and they accepted
it. Mr. Singer and Miss Sponsler
were not married, not in the way
that you or I or any other God-
fearing person would understand it.
She was his lover. And Mr. Foster's
lover. And as the statements
prepared for the court demonstrate,
Mr. Singer had multiple lovers too.
He has, at last count, at least
twenty children to show for it.

Crowd gasp and laugh.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Mr. Singer might be a bad man, a
very, very bad man indeed. I'm his
business partner and my wife won't
even allow him in our house.

Crowd laugh harder.

CLARK (CONT'D)

But that doesn't make him a married
man. Nor does it make him an
adulterer. And without a marriage,
or proof of adultery, there can be
no divorce. No more questions.

Vouli returns to her seat, shell-shocked.

JUDGE

Mr. Fuller?

FULLER

The plaintiff calls Mr. Clarence
Carter.

There's a mumble in the Crowd as Carter goes up. He places
his hand on the bible. Singer glares at him.

CARTER

I, Clarence Carter, swear to tell
the truth, the whole truth, and
nothing but the truth, so help me
God.

FULLER

Mr. Carter, you work for the
Singers as a driver, is that
correct.

CARTER

Yes, and I run the stable and maintain the coaches.

FULLER

And before we go into your main testimony could you confirm if Mr. Singer offered a payment to you if you declined to testify today?

CLARK

Objection.

JUDGE

Overruled. Please answer.

CARTER

He did. Five thousand dollars.

Crowd gasp.

FULLER

And can you tell us why you turned down this attempted bribe. Apart from being an honest man.

CARTER

What he did to Mrs. Singer, it ain't right.

FULLER

Thank you Mr. Carter. Could you please tell us what happened in late July, 1860. If I may refresh your memory, you were waiting for Mr. Singer outside the Singer store on Broadway when something caught your attention.

EXT. SINGER & COMPANY SHOP. DAY.

The heavens have opened. The streets are empty and the store is quiet. Carter waits outside in Singer's yellow coach. He sees A NEWSPAPER BOY deliver a newspaper. He can't see much except as Singer flicks through the paper his face turns to panic. As Newspaper Boy exits, Carter flags him down.

CARTER

Let me get one o' them.

Carter hands over coins and receives his paper. He sees the headline "SINGER, SINNER?", and beneath is a cartoon of a man hiding on a balcony with his butt on show.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Lawd have mercy.

Singer hurries out of the store. Carter quickly hides his copy of the newspaper under his coat.

EXT. SINGER MANSION. STABLE. FOLLOWING DAY.

It's a sunny morning. Carter grooms the white stallions. Mary Ann comes in holding the newspaper from the day before.

MARY ANN
Do you know anything about this?

Carter smiles.

CARTER
Can't read ma'am.

MARY ANN
Look at the picture. You drive him everywhere.

CARTER
He often drives himself. Uses that racing buggy. The red one.

She reaches into her bag, pulls out dollar bills and thrusts them toward him.

MARY ANN
Tell me what you know.

CARTER
Mrs. Singer, please.

Mary Ann takes out more bills and begins to throw them.

MARY ANN
You're a decent man. Tell me.

CARTER
Please, ma'am. He's my employer.

MARY ANN
I'm your employer too. Is this him?
Is it?

Carter considers, then takes the money and counts it.

CARTER
He sees her every Tuesday and Thursday.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)

Leaves work during the morning and goes to her house. Stays for a while then they go for lunch. O'Reilly's. Tuesday I drive, Thursday he drives.

MARY ANN

Why, what's special about Thursday?

CARTER

Market on Canal Street. This big coach can't get through the traffic so he takes the little red one.

Mary Ann climbs onto the coach.

MARY ANN

We'll go next Thursday and look for him.

CARTER

Ma'am, that's not a good idea.

MARY ANN

I'll tell you what's a good idea. Not a word until next week.

As she walks off, Carter heaves a worried sigh.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE. DAY. FOLLOWING WEEK.

Mary Ann and Carter pull out in the yellow coach.

EXT. CANAL STREET. DAY.

The Thursday market is in progress and there's a huge jam of streetcars, wagons, carts and carriages. The coach pulls into the middle of it, attracting angry shouts.

They wait but there's no sign of Singer. Carter goes to one of the stalls for drinks and rolls.

They're eating the rolls when Carter spots Singer's buggy on the far side of some stationary vehicles.

CARTER

There.

MARY ANN

Drive.

Carter shakes the reins and threads the enormous yellow coach through the traffic, forcing people to move their horses out of the way, enraging the other drivers.

Singer hears the commotion and looks across, astonished to see his own coach coming toward him. He tries to turn around and flee, but he's hemmed in on all sides.

As they draw nearer, Mary Ann stands up next to Carter on the driver's platform.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Hey you, in the red buggy. I want to talk to you. Isaac Singer of Singer Sewing machines.

Singer hunkers down behind the hood of his buggy.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Don't try and hide, coward.

With nothing else to do, the other drivers hush to watch.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Come out and face me, or are you chicken? Bawk-bawk-bawk-bawk. Chicken!

Singer peers around the hood, forcing himself to stay calm.

SINGER

Mary Ann, what a pleasant surprise.

MARY ANN

Who's in there with you?

SINGER

No-one.

MARY ANN

Bullshit.

Drivers gasp at hearing a woman speak like this in public.

SINGER

You're making a fool of yourself.

MARY ANN

No, Isaac Singer of Singer Sewing Machines, I'm making a fool of you. I've caught you red-handed with another woman.

Drivers begin to turn and pay attention.

DRIVER 1
Shame, sir, shame.

MARY ANN
I even know who you're with. She
works at Singer Sewing Machines,
it's that big ugly Scottish one.

Mary Mac stands up in the red buggy, furious.

MARY MAC
Watch your mouth, Missie!

MARY ANN
What are you going to do, fight me? I
wouldn't waste my time.

MARY MAC
Good, so fuck off back to your big
house.

MARY ANN
Yeah, I got the money. And you? A
beer at O'Reilly's.

Drivers laugh. Mary Mac climbs down from the buggy.

MARY MAC
Aye, and you'll get a slap n'all.

Drivers whoop and laugh. Pedestrians come closer.

MARY ANN
He's not worth it, Mary.

Mary Ann waves her hand toward the approaching pedestrians.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
Over here. Keep coming. Come see Isaac
Singer, big shot sewing machine guy,
making a total fool of himself.

The Drivers cheer as Mary Mac arrives at the yellow coach and
climbs onto the driver's platform. Carter holds her off as
she fights to grab Mary Ann.

Singer comes running across as Mary Ann climbs from the
driver's platform onto the roof of the coach, out of reach.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
Come on then, you big lummox. If
you want to fight for him we'll do
it up here.

A shrill whistle cuts through the noise. Half a dozen POLICE in navy-blue uniforms come towards them.

SINGER

Is this what you wanted?

MARY ANN

It's exactly what I wanted.

Singer pulls Mary Mac off the coach.

SINGER

Take her home. Use the buggy.

Reluctantly, Carter jumps down and takes hold of Mary Mac who shakes him off. As Carter pulls her toward the red buggy, Singer climbs up the yellow coach onto its roof. He holds his hand out to Mary Ann.

She responds by running away, further along the roof. Carter and Mary Mac stand to watch.

SINGER (CONT'D)

Jesus H. Christ. Can't we talk about this at home?

MARY ANN

So you can put a fist in my mouth?

DRIVERS

Shame. Coward.

The Police arrive along with a couple of REPORTERS busy scribbling in their books.

MARY ANN

Front page here we come.

The Police begin to climb onto the coach. Mary Ann runs to the far end of the coach. Singer goes after her.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

That's Isaac Singer of the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Love cheat. Wife beater. Adulterer. Bigamist.

She runs forward to taunt Singer and then back the other way - but as she turns she loses her footing and slips. Singer tries to grab her hand, but gets it wrong and falls into her. Mary Ann is thrown from the coach and hits the ground hard.

Singer leaps down to see if she's okay.

SINGER

Mary Ann.

She's out cold. Singer cradles her face with his hands.

SINGER (CONT'D)

Mary Ann, Mary Ann. Wake up.

Mary Ann's eyes blink open.

SINGER (CONT'D)

Thank God you're alive. She's
alive.

Singer's joy is cut short as the Police hover over him.

POLICEMAN 1

Do you know this woman?

SINGER

She's my wife.

MARY ANN

(groggy)
No I'm not.

SINGER

She's delirious.

MARY ANN

I'm not Mrs. Singer.

POLICEMAN 2

Can't you take her home?

SINGER

I will.

MARY ANN

I don't want to go home.

POLICEMAN 1

It's either that or the slammer.

SINGER

(to Mary Ann)
Mary Ann, you've had your fun.

MARY ANN

No. No. I don't want to go home.

As she protests, Policemen put their hands under her shoulders and hoist her back onto the yellow coach.

Singer climbs into the driver's chair. He flicks the reins and Drivers cheer as the coach departs.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. KITCHEN. LATER.

Carter is making himself a hot drink, sneaking some booze into it from a hip flask. He hears the front door fly open and peaks out. Singer walks up the stairs. Carter follows behind, quietly, staying just out of sight.

Singer pounds on a bedroom door.

SINGER
Let me in, dammit.

MARY ANN (O.C.)
Go away.

SINGER
I want to talk. Open the door.

VOULI (O.C.)
She said go away.

SINGER
Keep out of it.

MARY ANN (O.C.)
Not now.

SINGER
I promise I won't hurt you.

CARTER
(under his breath)
Don't do it.

Carter winces as he hears the key turn in the lock. Singer barges into the room.

SINGER (O.C.)
I'll give you such a beating as any woman ever deserved.

VOULI (O.C.)
Papa. No.

Mary Ann screams. Carter's hand shakes as he takes a belt from his flask.

SINGER (O.C.)
Who is Mr. Foster?

MARY ANN

He's from a good family. Educated.
Humble. Everything you're not.

Mary Ann screams again.

VOULI (O.C.)

Papa. Stop it. Stop it.

SINGER (O.C.)

What's this, huh? Was he here? In
my house? With my wife?

MARY ANN (O.C.)

Vouli, run.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. LIVING ROOM.

Carter ducks back inside the kitchen as Vouli comes running down the stairs, followed by Mary Ann, and then Singer, who's more inebriated than Carter realized.

As they reach the bottom, Singer raises his hand to strike Mary Ann but Vouli grabs it. But he's too strong, twists her around and puts her in a half-nelson. She kicks backward, bending his knee out and making him double-over in pain.

SINGER

Aagh.

Vouli turns and spots Carter.

VOULI

Get the police. Go.

Mary Ann runs and grabs a poker from the fireplace tools.

SINGER

Go on. Run me through.

She swipes at him and misses. And again. Singer laughs and picks up a coal shovel.

She lunges but he bats it away with the shovel. She swipes but he blocks it. She lunges again, but this time he grabs the poker and pulls her close.

SINGER (CONT'D)

And now for that beating I promised
you.

Carter runs out the front door.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE. NIGHT.

Carter sees two policemen on the beat in the far distance. He sprints down the street waving at them.

CARTER
Hey. Hey. Come quick.

INT. SINGER FIFTH AVENUE HOUSE. LIVING ROOM.

Carter and the two Policemen see Mary Ann laying on the floor, unconscious. Singer has his hands around Vouli's neck, choking her. The Policemen run and pull him off.

INT. COURT ROOM. DAY.

FULLER
Mercifully, both women survived.
Mr. Singer was charged, but with
Mr. Clark's help he was bailed and
then fled the country.

Crowd boo. Judge bangs the gavel.

FULLER (CONT'D)
Your Honor Mr. Singer himself
recognized that a common-law
marriage existed between himself
and Miss Sponsler. And we have
established that adultery took
place during that same period with
at least one if not both of the
McGonigle sisters. The plaintiff
has satisfied the conditions for
the granting of a divorce.

JUDGE
Mr. Clark. Cross-examine?

Clark shakes his head.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
Mr. Carter you may step down.

Judge folds his hands and considers.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
Miss Sponsler, you have my deepest
sympathies.
(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

The defendant is without doubt a deeply unsavory, violent and profligate man, and I as a Christian am offended that such a dissolute individual may walk freely among us. But I am troubled by this case, deeply troubled, because I make the inescapable observation that you women knew about each other. Miss Mary McGonigle had a house and children with Mr. Singer, and she knew about you, and you knew about them, so how can one be given the status of 'wife' and not the other? Moreover it appears you had another lover and perhaps she did too. I don't care for the phrase 'equivalent concubines' but it does seem brutally accurate.

CLARK

Moreover, Your Honor, if they knew, but did nothing about it, does that not constitute consent? And if there was consent, how can it be adultery?

JUDGE

I am minded to agree.

Mary Ann stands suddenly.

MARY ANN

Your Honor, the plaintiff would like to call Miss Mary Walters to the stand.

Singer's face falls.

CLARK

Objection, Your Honor, the plaintiff is out of order.

JUDGE

Mr. Fuller, control your client.

FULLER

Mrs. Singer, please --

MARY ANN

No, no Mr. Fuller, I'm sorry I kept this a secret from you, but if Isaac found out he would have paid her off. Your Honor after this witness has been heard, I believe not only will the divorce be granted but a new charge of bigamy will be brought against the defendant.

Crowd gasp.

JUDGE

Who is this witness? I can't see that name on the witness list.

MARY ANN

She's on the list as Mrs. Singer.

CLARK

Objection, Your Honor. The only Mrs. Singer was Catherine Singer, as named in the divorce decree.

MARY ANN

Your Honor, the defense is confused. And I have some sympathy for the gentleman, because his client has deliberately sewn confusion with lies and false names to throw everyone off the track. The plaintiff calls Miss Mary Walters.

CRASH FLASHBACK

INT. SWEATSHOP.

Blood spurts from Mary W's finger. Singer ties a bandage around it.

CRASH TO PRESENT

Everyone turns to the crowd. There's silence. No-one moves.

MARY ANN

Miss Mary Walters.

Still, no-one moves.

SINGER

Mary Ann, sit down. You've made your point.

She doesn't sit, she walks toward the crowd.

MARY ANN

I know you're here. How could you not be? You want to know the truth, but it's terrifying. You believed something else with all your heart. And who should you believe? The man you love, or some stranger who comes knocking at your door.

She waits. Still no movement.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

I was the same. I know how it feels to be loved by him. He can be warm, sweet, charming. That's what it takes to get what he wants. And as you've heard today, you're not the only one to give him what he wants, far from it. We were all taken in by him. Is that the kind of love you want?

Suddenly there's a murmur in the crowd. A way parts, and Mary W emerges.

MARY W

Your Honor, I'm Mary Walters.

Crowd erupts. Judge bangs gavel.

CLARK

Objection.

JUDGE

Overruled.

Mary W gives Mary Ann a quick, sympathetic glance as she walks up and puts her hand on the bible. Singer growls.

MARY W

I, Mary Walters, solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

She takes the witness seat.

MARY ANN

Miss Walters, could you please start by telling us where you live.

MARY W

I live in a house on South Street, near the East River.

MARY ANN

And with whom do you live?

MARY W

With my daughter, Alice, and my husband. Although he's not my husband yet. We plan to marry.

MARY ANN

And this house on South Street. Did you buy this yourself?

MARY W

No, my husband bought it for us to live in, as a family.

MARY ANN

And that man you refer to, is he the father of your daughter, Alice?

MARY W

Yes.

MARY ANN

And would you describe him as a good father?

MARY W

He travels a lot on business but when he is in New York he gives us his attention.

MARY ANN

Is he in court today?

MARY W

He's sitting right over there.

Mary W points at Singer.

SINGER

Lies. All lies.

MARY ANN

Why do you call yourself Mrs. Merritt, and not Mary Walters?

MARY W

Mr. Singer said we were a married couple as far as he was concerned. But when he learned that I had begun to call myself Mrs. Singer he became angry. He told me until we married I would be Mrs. Merritt.

MARY ANN

And were you aware that Mr. Singer was married to someone else?

MARY W

No.

Another gasp from the Crowd.

MARY ANN

And that he was living at that point with me, and that we had eight children?

An even louder gasp.

VOICE IN CROWD

Bigamist!

MARY W

Not until I came here.

FULLER

And why did you come here?

MARY W

(points at Natalie)
Because that woman came to my house. She said if I came I'd learn the truth about my husband.

MARY ANN

Did you know that I have sometimes used the name Mrs. Merritt?

It takes Mary W by surprise but she summons courage.

MARY W

No.

MARY ANN

How did you meet Mr. Singer?

MARY W

I was employed by the Singer Sewing Machine Company as a demonstrator.

MARY ANN

And was your supervisor at the company Mary McGonigle?

MARY W

Yes.

FULLER

And did you know that Mr. Singer had another family, with Mary McGonigle, under the name Matthews?

MARY W

No.

Crowd go crazy.

CROWD

Bigamist. Adulterer. Lock him up. Lock him up.

Judge bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

Order. Order.

Amid the commotion, Singer hangs his head.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE: MARY ANN SPONSLER'S DIVORCE WAS GRANTED AND SINGER ORDERED TO PAY \$8.5 MILLION, AT THAT POINT THE LARGEST DIVORCE SETTLEMENT IN HISTORY.

INT. ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL. SINGER'S ROOM. NIGHT.

There's a knock. Singer opens. Mary Ann enters.

MARY ANN

Where's your friend?

SINGER

What do you want?

MARY ANN

I have a proposal for you. It's about our children.

SINGER

You want to take them, too?

MARY ANN

No. I want them to stay yours.

SINGER

Ha. You mean my will. Fat chance.

MARY ANN

I'll waive the settlement. A small alimony will be enough. But you restore our children to receiving their full share of inheritance.

SINGER

And how do we restore my reputation?

MARY ANN

You took care of that yourself.

Singer considers, then nods.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Well -- good night.

SINGER

You know I loved you.

MARY ANN

You did. In your way.

INT. NATALIE'S FINE CLOTHING. LATER SAME NIGHT.

A party is in progress. Foster is there, along with Fuller, Mary Ann, Zieber, and Kate. The guests are mainly women, including Mrs. Du Pont and Mrs. Astor. Natalie spots Foster with Mary Ann and comes across.

NATALIE

Ah, so this is your mystery man.

MARY ANN

John Foster meet Natalie Gompertz.

FOSTER

Delighted to meet you.

MARY ANN

Natalie and I knew each other many years ago, before --

ALFRED, 50s, distinguished, slips an arm around Natalie.

NATALIE
-- And this one is mine. Alfred.

As Alfred shakes Foster's hand Natalie leans in to Mary Ann.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Did he go for it?

MARY ANN
Best deal he'll ever get.

NATALIE
It's what you wanted all along,
isn't it?

MARY ANN
You know me too well.
(to Alfred)
Perhaps you and Natalie can join
John and I for supper some time. We
can tell you about the old days.

Natalie shakes her head.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
You won't come?

NATALIE
I don't want to talk about old
days.

MARY ANN
No, of course, we'll talk about the
future.

NATALIE
Yes. Then we will come.

Mary Ann takes her arm, excited.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
And we'll never, ever go back.

MARY ANN
No, we never, ever go back.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END