"10 and Now"

Book, Music, and Lyrics By

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ACT I

Scene 1

Lights up on OLDER BELLA (23 - Present Day) entering a living room decorated for a girl’s birthday party. She’s wearing a ‘HAMILTON HIGH BASKETBALL’ hoodie, pacing the room. She considers every area of the house as if re-living memories, until she stops at a shelf, grabs a wooden box labeled "Work Documents - PRIVATE", pulls out a torn-then-taped-up letter, and begins to read it on the couch. Just then, LITTLE ETHEL (10) runs down the stairs to join OLDER BELLA.

OLDER BELLA:
You ready?

LITTLE ETHEL:
Yes!

OLDER BELLA:
What would you like to hear today?

LITTLE ETHEL:
How about a story about fitting in?

OLDER BELLA:
I think I have you covered.

She considers the letter.

Not so long ago, in a house not so far away lived a little girl named Bella.

Lights up on [YOUNGER] BELLA (10).

LITTLE ETHEL:
Bella! Just like you!

OLDER BELLA:
Exactly! Just like me! Bella loved her family, more than anything. Her dad, Tony...

Lights up on TONY.
...was an architect. He was a very hard worker. He raised Bella and put her older sister Francine...

Lights up on FRANCINE.
...through college all alone. Bella hadn’t seen her mommy in years.

Lights up on BELLA’S MOM.

(MORE)
OLDER BELLA: (cont’d)  
She traveled the world, helping people in need. But, that was the week Bella finally would get to see her! She was finally coming home!  

They exit.  
Bella’s birthday was on a sunny tenth of May in Los Angeles, California. Tony was throwing her one of the best birthdays ever!  

CUE: "PREPPING THE PARTY"  

YOUNGER BELLA (10 – In Memory) sits on the couch. TONY (35) enters through the front door, carrying bags full of groceries and decorations for the party. ETHEL (55) enters from the kitchen and grabs the bags from TONY. She begins hanging the last decorations. OLDER BELLA and LITTLE ETHEL exit.  

TONY:  
(sung)  
THE HOUSE IS NEAT, THE YARD IS DONE.  
WHAT’S MISSING? WHAT’S MISSING?  
WHEN CHILDREN MEET TO HAVE SOME FUN,  
IT’S GOTTA BE PLANNED. AND, WHO’S THE ONE?  
WHAT’S MISSING? WHAT’S MISSING?  
I TRY TO GIVE THESE PARTIES EXTRA LIFE.  
THE ONE WHO ALWAYS GOT IT WAS MY WIFE.  

He notices BELLA on the couch.  
BUT, SHE’S IN AFRICA.  

BELLA:  
Africa?!  

TONY:  
Africa! Haven’t I told you? She’s back, helping build elephant sanctuaries, again.  

BELLA:  
She’s so cool.  

TONY:  
Yup!  

Phone rings.
TONY:
It’s your grandma Barb...

BELLA:
Mimi!

He answers the phone. BARB (55) appears to be in the back of a car with PETER (38) sitting next to her.

TONY:
Hello?

BARB:
We’ll be there in 10 minutes. Is the room ready?

TONY:
Wait, what?

BARB:
We are on our way. Is the room ready?

PETER:
Is the room ready?

BARB:
Shut up, Peter.

FRANCINE (17) walks downstairs and begins helping ETHEL.

TONY:
No, I understood you. I didn’t know you were coming.

BARB:
Well, I’m a mother. Surprise.

She hangs up.

BELLA:
Is she coming?!

TONY:
Yes.

BELLA:
Yay! Mimi is coming, Francine is home, mom is coming! The whole family is finally coming together! Best Birthday Week. Ever!
TONY: I’m glad, honey.

FRANCINE: (under her breath)
Great!

TONY: (mockingly)
I know... (to ETHEL)
Ethel!

ETHEL (55) comes in from the kitchen drying her hands.
(sung)
PLEASE CLEAN THE GUEST ROOM, MAKE THE BED.

ABUELA IS COMING...

ETHEL: (spoken)
¡Ay, dios mio!

TONY: (spoken)
I know...
(sung)
JUST PREPARE FOR WHAT’S TO COME AHEAD.
EV’RY WORD WE SAY WILL BE MISREAD.
SHE’S COMING. SHE’S COMING!

BELLA: Who else is coming?

TONY: Umm...

BELLA: Dad?

TONY: You classmates...

BELLA: DAD! (sung)
MY CLASSMATES TREAT ME LIKE I DON’T BELONG.
I’VE NEVER TREATED ANY OF THEM WRONG.

(MORE)
BELLA: (cont’d)
    I’M NOT READY.

TONY: What’s wrong?

BELLA: I just don’t really talk to anybody in my class. They all look at me funny.

TONY: It’ll all be okay! All the parents seem to be very excited! I told the Langfords...

BELLA: ...he’s a bully...

TONY: ...the Allens...

BELLA: ...aw, they’re nice, but weird.

TONY: ...the Zuckerma-

BELLA: (shocked)
    What? Dad, not Matthew!

TONY: Is he mean?

BELLA: No, he’s just...it’s just...

TONY: Oh! I get it.

BELLA: (embarrassed)
    Ugh!

TONY: Bella, there’s nothing to be ashamed about! If you want to talk to him, go ahead. You’re talented, beautiful, and extremely smart. Sweetie, you’ll be fine.
    (sung)
    THIS PARTY IS YOUR TIME
    TO SHINE YOUR LIGHT THAT IS SO BRIGHT.
    SO, SHOW THEM HOW TO LOVE YOU,
AND I PROMISE ALL WILL BE ALRIGHT!
(spoken)
Go talk to some people!

BELLA:
Do I have to?

TONY:
Just try it!

BELLA:
Okay...

She walks to a group of kids.

FRANCINE:
Dad, can we talk?

TONY:
What’s up?

FRANCINE:
Well, can we sit down for a second?

TONY:
It’s not the best time, Frankie. Shoot! I’m listening.

FRANCINE:
Okay, well...
(sung)
I’VE BEEN GONE FOR SEVEN MONTHS.
SOME NEW THINGS HAVE COME UP...
BETTER YET, I’VE DISCOVERED THAT I JUST WANT TO BE-

Tony’s phone rings.

TONY:
Babe, I have to take this.

Outside, CORDELLIA primps her hair and checks her makeup in her car.

CORDELLIA:
(sung)
(This is your chance, Cordelia. This is your chance.
These kids need a smile, and it gets you through, too.
Just smile and look cute. No need to use your brain.
Just sit there and smile.)

BUTTONS eats a hot dog in his car.
BUTTONS:  
(MUSICALIZE)  
(Why did the chicken cross the road? To never hear the joke again. Jokes get old, a person should not. I gotta keep young, because the older I get, the more stale life could turn. If I take myself too seriously, I’ll eat myself to death.)

TONY:  
IT’S YOUR PARTY!

CORDELIA:  
I’LL DO IT FOR YOU, BELLA.

TONY AND GUESTS:  
YOUR PARTY!

BUTTONS:  
ALL FOR LITTLE BILLY.

ALL (EXCEPT BELLA):  
SHINE YOUR LIGHT THAT IS SO BRIGHT!

IT’S YOUR PARTY!

YOUR PARTY!

YOUR PARTY!

TONY’s phone rings.

TONY:  
(on phone)  
Hello? Yes...No, not today...It’s...you know what? Okay. I’ll work something out.

FRANCINE:  
Office?

TONY:  
(to BELLA)  
Bella, I have to take a little trip to the office for a meeting.

BELLA:  
What?!

TONY:  
I know. I’m sorry, but this means I can finally close the deal with the school district. High school gyms don’t build themselves.
BELLA: And ten-year-olds don’t raise themselves.

Beat.

TONY: Alright, friends! Some very special guests will be here very soon. Go enjoy some games in the patio while they arrive!

Guests begin to exit to the patio.
(to FRANCINE)
Can you lend me a hand, out there?

FRANCINE: Sure, dad.

TONY: Thanks, hun! Shoot me a call. We’ll talk.

BELLA: Dad, do you really have to go?

TONY: Yes, baby. This will never end if I show them that I’m not actually interested in helping them.

BELLA: You’re not?

TONY: No! This is my job, sweetie. Someday, you’ll have to work too. Just promise me you’ll find something you love.

BELLA: If you don’t love your job, why can’t you stay with me? Don’t you love me?

TONY: Uncontrollably, Bella. I have to go, though! Sometimes, you have to pretend to like someone so that they like you. It’s a part of business.

BELLA: So you’re in "business" with grandma Barb?

TONY: No, I actually like her. She’s your mom’s mom. That makes her my family, no matter what. Sure, she could get a little mean sometimes, but without her there would be no mom. That means there would be no Bella or Francine. I owe her my world. I don’t know why she doesn’t like me. I’m the best.
(they chuckle)

BELLA:
Yup.

TONY:
Cheer up, Bella! I promise I’ll be back tonight in time to cut the cake. I wouldn’t miss it. It’s my baby girl’s birthday!
(remembering)
Oh! Before I forget...

He walks over to the cabinet marked "WORK DOCUMENTS - PRIVATE" and retrieves a sealed letter.
...here’s the letter from mom! Happy Birthday!

BELLA:
(excited)
Yes! Thank you, daddy.

CUE: "MOM’S LETTER"

BELLA:
Woah!
(sung)
JUST THE WAY SHE ALWAYS SENDS IT;
DELIVERED BY DAD, HE ALWAYS BENDS IT!

TONY:
THE STAMP IS CROOKED, BUT I KNOW SHE TRIED;
I SMELL THE PERFUME THAT SHE SPRAYED INSIDE;
AND FEEL THE WRINKLES WHERE HER TEARS’VE DRIED.
(spoken)
She’s a crier.

BELLA:
IT’S THE BEST GIFT I GET EACH YEAR,
BUT I DON’T UNDERSTAND WHY SHE CAN’T BE HERE.

Text ding.

TONY:
SHOOT, I HAVE TO GO!
(spoken)
I have to pack my briefcase. Bella, remember the rule: Don’t open it until everyone has left and you’re alone.
BELLA:
(overlapping)
"Don’t open it until everyone has left and you’re alone." I know, I know.

TONY:
Good!
(to ETHEL)
Ethel, can you make a coffee to-go, please? Café?

ETHEL:
Si, señor Tony.

He exits into his upstairs room. ETHEL exits into the kitchen. BELLA squeals.

BELLA:
A LETTER FOR ME ADDRESSED FROM MOMMY.
A SIMPLE GIFT THAT I GET EV’RY YEAR.
I HOPE SHE KNOWS I’M GOING CRAZY WAITING FOR THE DAY SHE FIN’LLY COMES AND I CAN HAVE HER HERE.
I KNOW THAT AFRICA CAN USE HER, AND GUATEMALA REALLY NEEDS HER, TOO.
BUT, I WISH TO HAVE HER WITH ME.
IF NOT DREAM, WHAT’S A TEN-YEAR-OLD TO DO?
AND, I’VE KEPT WAITING WHILE SHE’S BEEN UPDATING ME EV’RY YEAR AND SENDING BIRTHDAY CHARMS.
SHE’S COMING HOME, NOW! I LOVE TO THINK HOW I’LL HAVE HER HERE, AND HOLD HER IN MY ARMS.

TONY reenters downstairs with papers and his briefcase.

BELLA:
Did she call you today?

TONY:
Who?
BELLA:
   Mommy. She said she’d be getting here this week. Has she called?

TONY:
   No, not yet! Don’t worry about that, though. We’ll get there when we get there.

BELLA:
   Can I talk to her?

TONY:
   Remember, mommy can only talk at nighttime. She can’t answer the phone while she’s asleep!

BELLA:
   I can wait up-

TONY:
   (changing the subject)
   I got Princess Cordelia, again!

BELLA:
   Princess Cordelia! I love her. She’s so beautiful.

TONY:
   Gorgeous! And she’s been very good to you. I also got a Buttons The Clown for the boys. I found him on Craigslist.

BELLA:
   Right...

   MATTHEW (10) enters from the patio.

MATTHEW:
   Hi, Mr. Monroe. Hi, Bella!

TONY:
   Hey, Matthew!

   BELLA stays silently smiling.
   Are you having fun?

MATTHEW:
   So much fun! Thanks for having me over. Bella’s one of the nicest people in the class. I’m so glad to be here.

   BELLA giggles. Beat.
   Umm, where can I find the restroom?
TONY:  
You can use the one in the guest room, right behind the stairs.

MATTHEW:  
Cool. Thanks, Mr. Monroe! See you outside, Bella!

BELLA:  
Hi!

*MATTHEW exits into the restroom.*

TONY:  
Wow! You really do like him, huh?

BELLA:  
Dad! He can hear you!

TONY:  
No he can’t! And if he can, he’s lucky to have your attention. He clearly likes you, too...

BELLA:  
Dad!

TONY:  
You think I’m kidding? Besides, I’d be more worried about whatever scene your grandma’s going to—

*BARB swings open the front door, making an entrance. She’s holding her purse in one hand, while extending her other to greet BELLA.*

CUE "A WOMAN’S TOUCH"

BARB:  
Bella!

BELLA:  
Grandma!

TONY:  
(to self)  
Speak of the in-law.

BARB:  
Hello, my little pork chop! Come give your mimi a kiss. I’m so glad I could be here. Wow! You’ve put on a few pounds. Here, go try this on. Happy Birthday.

*BARB hands BELLA a dress in a gift bag.*
BELLA:  (excitedly)
   Thank you, Grandma!

   *She exits into her bedroom upstairs.*

BARB:  Hello, Tony. Looks like you’re an aging whale, yourself.

TONY:  Hello, Barb. Don’t you mean "you’re aging well"?

BARB:  No. Lead by example, Tony. Get the girl on a diet.

TONY:  Thank you, Barbara. How was your flight? Was it a plane this time?

BARB:  Good one, Tony. I’m too busy holding my breath to laugh. This house is as putrid as ever. It wasn’t always like this. You have to clean the house if you want to keep up appearances.

TONY:  I think we’re okay.

BARB:  I think you’re not.
   *(sung)*
   YOU HAVE TO DUST THE DESK AND SPRITZ A SPRAY TO KEEP THE VILLA FROM SMELLING VILE.
   YOU SHOULD WASH THE WALLS FOR A FLASHY’ER FOYER.
   TRY TO TIDY ONCE IN A WHILE.
   MOMMY MISSING, OR NOT, YOU ALL NEED A WOMAN’S TOUCH.

TONY:  Ethel does a great job.

BARB:  In what language?
   *(sung)*
   REDO THE DRAPES; THE CARPET’S OKAY,
   ALTHOUGH I THINK THE THREAD SHOULD BE THICKER.
   WHISK THE WEBS FROM THE WINDOWS AWAY.
LEAVE A LITTLE LOCK ON THE LIQUOR.
FIGHT THE FEAR A FATHER ALWAYS FEELS OF A WOMAN’S TOUCH.

TONY:
(to BELLA offstage)
Honey, I’m about to order the pizza. What do you want?

BELLA:
(O.S.)
Pepperoni, please!

TONY:
Pepperoni. You got it!

BARB:
Good. Have you talked to the girl?

TONY:
What am I supposed to say? "Your mom’s not coming this week?"

BARB:
Yes.

TONY:
Barbara, today’s not the day for that. It’s her birthday. Besides, I don’t think she’s ready-

BARB:
She’ll never be ready as long as you hold on to her the way you do. Talk to her. If you don’t, I will.

TONY:
That is not your conversation to have.

BARB:
Of course it is. I’m her grandmother. (sung)
YOU DON’T COOK, YOU DON’T CLEAN,
AND YOUR MAID HAS NO MEANS TO COMMUNICATE

TONY:
Ethel is an amazing member of this-

BARB:
YOU SHOULD SACK THE SEÑORA.

GO BACK TO BEFORE:
A RESTART.
PLAY THE PART.
MAKE THE MOM MEAN MORE THAN A MEASLY POSTCARD.

BELLA waddles downstairs in a striped green dress
too tight for her.

BELLA: What?

BARB: Nothing, honey. Try undoing the zipper a bit.

TONY: Barbara.

BELLA: No, she’s right, dad. I’m getting a little big.

She exits upstairs.

BARB: See? I won’t say anything out of respect of my
daughter’s choices. You must find the moment to talk to her.

(sung)
YOU COULD ONLY LIVE A LIE FOR SO LONG.
SO, GET THE GIRL AND FEED HER THE FACTS.
THE SLIGHTEST SHIFT IN SHARING IS STRONG.
DON’T TRY TO TALLY THUMB NAILS FROM TACKS.
The point’s to pass the prickling,
SO GO START THE STICKING.
KEEPING BACK COULD QUICKLY KILL HER TRUST.
USE THE WOMAN’S TOUCH.

THE WOMAN’S TOUCH.

USE THE WOMAN’S TOUCH.

Go.

(speaked)
PETER barges through the front door with suitcases.

PETER: Did somebody say Pepperoni?!
TONY: They let both of you out, today...

PETER: Very funny, Thomas.

TONY: It’s Tony.

PETER: Tommy. What do I do with these bags?

TONY: Ask a doctor, Peter.

BARB: I’m assuming we’re in the guest room for the week?

TONY: Yes. I’m aware Peter hates taking stairs.

PETER exits into the guest room, glaring at TONY. He shrieks.

PETER: (offstage) There’s a little boy in our room.

MATTHEW enters.

MATTHEW: I’m gonna head outside.

He exits.

TONY: I have to get going to the office. I should be back in just a few hours.

BARB: Beautiful! Just what the girl needs. Two absent parents.

TONY: Well, at least I know she’s left with a strong father figure in the house...

Places his hand on BARB’s shoulder. ...and Peter.

ETHEL enters with the to-go coffee in hand.
17.

ETHEL:
Ya llego esta diabla.

BARB:
Bless you, Maria.

ETHEL:
(annoyed)
Tu madre.

She exits into the kitchen.

TONY:
(on phone)
Yes, could I get five pepperoni and five cheese pizzas.

He takes a sip of the coffee.
(to ETHEL offstage)
I drink it black, Ethel! No more sugar or cream.

BARB:
Leave it to the Help.

BELLA returns in decent fitting clothes. BARB walks over to the bar cart with PETER not far behind her. She pours herself a glass of scotch.

TONY:
(on phone)
Sorry, all large...no wings...yes. Card and address on file. Thanks.

BARB:
(overlapping, to PETER)
There he goes, doing the bare minimum again. Pizza?!

PETER:
(to BARB)
And skimping out on the chicken wings. What an ass.

TONY:
I’m off. Francine’s in the patio with the guests. I requested the princess for 1pm and the clown for 2pm.
(discreetly to BARB)
Please, whatever you do, show her a good time. She’s been feeling a little off. There’s a boy-

BARB:
I’m her grandmother. We know these things.

PETER:
We know these things.
TONY:
Okay. (to BELLA) Honey, you look gorgeous!

BELLA:
Really?

TONY:
Yes, really!

She smiles.

BELLA:
Thanks, dad.

TONY:
Remember, I’ll be back in time for the cake! Don’t cut it without me! You’ll have a great time. I promise. (to BARB) Please.

BARB nods. He kisses BELLA on the forehead and exits.

BELLA:
Grandma, wanna see what I got today?

BARB:
What is it?

BELLA pulls out the letter. Bella-

BELLA:
Why don’t you like them? Are you jealous that mommy writes me and not you?!

BELLA laughs as she exits to the patio. She tucks the letter into her pocket.

PETER:
You didn’t tell him about Marcel.

BARB:
We got your magician friend. He should be happy we brought entertainment.

PETER: (annoyed) He’s an illusionist! There’s a difference.
BARB: Okay. Then, it’s a princess, a clown, and an illusionist.

PETER: Sounds like my ex!

BARB: (dryly) You don’t have an ex.

PETER: (ashamed) Sorry.

They exit into the guest room. There’s a knock on the door. ETHEL enters to open it. PRINCESS CORDELIA makes a grand entrance with pixie dust, and all.

CORDELIA: Hello, princess! It is I, your friend Princess Cordelia from the Valley of Heart. You’re not the birthday princess!

ETHEL shakes her head ‘no’ awkwardly. I’m sorry, are you the queen of this kingdom? Are you finally back from your faraway adventures?

ETHEL shakes her head ‘no’. Isn’t this the castle for...

Looks at a piece of paper in her hand. ...Princess Bella’s party?

ETHEL nods her head ‘yes’. Where is everybody?

ETHEL: Están en el patio.

CORDELIA: (relieved) Oh, yes! In the pah-tee-oh! Thank you, fair maid.

CORDELIA exits to the patio.

ETHEL: Esto es una fiesta de locos.

ETHEL exits into the kitchen. BARB and PETER enter from the guest room.
BARB:  
He hasn’t changed one linen in the house. What is this? A Hilton?

They laugh. There’s a knock on the door.  
See who that is, Peter.

He opens it. BUTTONS is standing in complete makeup holding balloon animals and his briefcase of jokes.

BUTTONS:  
Hey-Hey!

PETER:  
Oh, god. That’s terrifying.

Steps back behind BARB.

BUTTONS:  
It’s okay. That happens all the time. Where’s little Billy?

BARB:  
You mean Bella. She’s in the back.

BUTTONS:  
That’s what I said. I’m an hour early. I can come back if you want me to...

He starts to walk away.

BARB:  
No, stay. Lord knows this place needs some color. Set-up in here, right next to the child’s cake.

BUTTONS:  
Ooh, yum! I love children cake.

BARB and PETER gasp.  
It’s a joke, ma’am.

He steps in and sets down his bags by the cake. He examines the room and happens upon a table with snacks. He picks up some strawberries. FRANCINE enters.

FRANCINE:  
Hello, grandma. Hi, uncle Peter.

BARB:  
Francine?
PETER:
Francine?

FRANCINE:
Yes!

BARB:
You’ve gotten so big. Come in. Tell me: what are you
now, a sophomore?

FRANCINE:
I am.

BARB:
Have you been applying to colleges?

FRANCINE:
I’m actually a sophomore in college. I just got back
this morning for break.

BARB:
(shocked)
A sophomore in college?!

PETER:
(shocked)
Actually?!

FRANCINE:
Yes! I skipped fourth grade.

BARB:
Why didn’t I know that?

FRANCINE:
I’ve told you, at least, 3 times.

BUTTONS:
You see, the fourth time would’ve helped.

PETER:
Oh! Because it was fourth grade. That’s a good one. Get
it, mom?

BUTTONS:
Not the joke...

BARB:
Peter, forget the comedy. Stick to groveling.

She exits into the guest room. PETER sinks into
the couch.
BUTTONS:
Tough crowd. I’m gonna go do a photo-op before the show. With these vibes, the kids are sure to need some cheering up.
(to kids in the patio)
Hey, kiddos! It’s Buttons The Clown, and I’m here for you!

Strawberry juice residue is smeared on his face and white gloves. Kids scream in horror. He looks in a mirror and screams.
I should probably retouch the face.

He sits at the desk, applying makeup. FRANCINE begins rummaging through her suitcase.

FRANCINE:
How are you, Uncle Pete?

He stays quietly texting.
Uncle Peter?

PETER:
Oh, you’re talking to me?

FRANCINE:
Yes...Do you want something to drink?

PETER:
I...I don’t...I don’t know how...

FRANCINE:
You don’t know how...to have a conversation?

PETER:
...a conversation.

FRANCINE:
Okay. You don’t always need grandma to feed you lines!

She giggles.

PETER:
What? No! I can think for myself. I’m original. I don’t copy everything she does.

CUE: "A WOMAN’S TOUCH (REPRISE)"

You should be worried about you. You look like a boy.

FRANCINE:
Excuse me?
PETER:
Your hair is short, your voice is low, and those shorts, honey. Are you a lesbian?

FRANCINE:
Uncle.

PETER:
(sung)
YOU DON’T DRESS LIKE A "DAISY".
YOUR LIPSTICK IS LAZILY LATHERED ON.
YOU SHOULD STICK TO THE SEQUINS,
THE DRESS OF THE WEEK WINS
THE EYE.
FLASH SOME THIGH.
PLUS, YOU WON’T GET NONE IF YOU LOOK LIKE THIS GUY.

BUTTONS:
(spoken)
Hey!

FRANCINE:
Don’t bully.

PETER:
Don’t dikey. Just saying...
(sung)
SO, DITCH THE DENIM, SLIP ON A SKIRT.
YOUR JACKET MAKES YOU FLAT AS A PAN.
A HELPING HAND FROM UNCLE WON’T HURT.
LET’S MAKE A LADY OUT OF THIS MAN.
I HAVE ALL THE CREDENTIALS
AND BEAUTY ESSENTIALS
MAKING ME THE MAN TO GIVE THIS BUTCH
A BIT OF THE WOMAN’S TOUCH.
THE WOMAN’S TOUCH.
USE THE WOMAN’S TOUCH!
FRANCINE:
    That was rude.

PETER:
    You wanted my opinion.

FRANCINE:
    I wanted to know if you wanted something to drink.

PETER:
    Oh, no thank you. I’m okay. I have some important things to get to.

    Peter exits into the guest room. Immediately after exiting, Barb enters through the same door. He trails behind her, groveling all over her.

BARB:
    That short hair suits you fine, Francine.

PETER:
    (agreeing)
    Yeah, nice short hair, Francine.

FRANCINE:
    (ignoring PETER)
    Thank you, grandma.

BARB:
    Though, you could use a little bit of makeup.

PETER:
    I’ll get my kit.

BARB:
    Shut up, Peter. Have you talked to your father?

FRANCINE:
    (nervous)
    About what?

BARB:
    Your mother.

FRANCINE:
    Oh, um...not today. Why?

BARB:
    He hasn’t talked to Bella. According to her, she is still "supposed to be coming this week".
FRANCINE: I agree, grandma. It’s not my place to share that with her, though. He’ll have the conversation as soon as he’s ready.

ETHEL walks in, carrying snacks for the table.
FRANCINE runs to greet her.
Ethel, todo esta bien?

ETHEL: Muy bien, mija. Gracias.

BARB: You speak tamale?

FRANCINE: I’m taking Spanish. Ethel and I talk on the phone weekly to practice. She teaches me Spanish, and I teach her English. We exchange a different word every week.

BARB: Maybe you can teach her how to say ‘work’ in English.

PETER: Teach her how to say-

BARB: Peter, shut up.

PETER: I’m sorry.

FRANCINE: You guys, please.
(to ETHEL)
Gracias, Ethel.

She hugs her.
I’m going to invite the kids in. We should get the entertainment started.

She exits to the patio.

BARB: I don’t know how long I could stay here. I’m starting to feel sick.

She puts on her shades and sits on the couch.
FRANCINE enters with the rest of the party.

MATTHEW: This party is fun.
BELLA: Yes! Very fun! Thanks for coming.

MATTHEW: Of course-

MASON: (loudly) Your house stinks.

BELLA: (embarrassed) Umm, I’m sorry?

MATTHEW: Mason, leave her alone. (to BELLA) Bella, I hope you’re having a great time.

BELLA smiles. Everybody settles as CORDELIA begins her set.

CORDELIA: I’ve had the chance to meet all of you. Now, I wish to sing a song or two.

BUTTONS quickly recognizes her.

BUTTONS: Oh, wow! This is gonna be fun.

CORDELIA: Okay, princesses and princes. You might know this one from your favorite movie. Sing along if you do!

She presses ‘play’ on a boombox.

CUE: "A SIMPLE WISH"

(sung) I HAVE A SIMPLE WISH:

FOR A PRINCELY MAN TO FIND ME.
HE’D RIDE ON A NOBLE STEED,
AND HIS ARMOR WOULD BE SHINY.
AND I’LL KNOW WHEN IT’S HIM.
I WILL FEEL IT IN MY HEART.
HE’LL BE SMART AND FUNNY. CHARMING AND FUN!

(MORE)
CORDELIA: (cont’d)

I’LL KNOW IT RIGHT FROM THE START.

WALTZ BREAK.

GIRL 1:
Wow, you’re so pretty!

GIRL 2:
I wish I had that hair.

CORDELIA settles down.

CORDELIA:

SO I WILL JUST SIT AND WAIT.

FOR, MY PRINCE WILL COME. I KNOW IT.

HE HASN’T THE NEED TO ASK

FOR MY HAND. I WILL BESTOW IT.

OH, CAN’T HE PLEASE COME SOON?

CORDELIA:
Thank you, thank you!

She walks to her belongings after greeting a few kids.

BUTTONS:
Hello, princess.

CORDELIA:
Oh, gosh. It’s you - Let’s play nice. Remember what happened last time.

BUTTONS:
Hey, look on the bright side! You could only soil a kid’s funeral once, right?

CORDELIA:
You lifted my dress in front of a grieving family. We were there to lighten the mood.

BUTTONS:
And lighten it we did. Plus, you got me arrested. We’re pretty even. Who gets entertainment for meaningful family functions, anyway? Am I right?

She ignores him.

Have you not found Prince Charming, yet? I’m still single.
CORDELIA:  
Please focus on the word *charming*.

BUTTONS:  
What’s not charming about this?!

> He squeezes a hidden whoopee cushion. Children laugh.

CORDELIA:  
I want a prince, not an ogre, Shrek.

BUTTONS:  
Hey! I actually love that movie, so I’ll choose to take that as a compliment. Hold on, you clearly haven’t seen Shrek.

CORDELIA:  
I have. You have the onion part down, that’s for sure.

BUTTONS:  
Move aside, toots. This ogre’s gotta claim his swamp.

> BUTTONS stretches as if to start his set. PETER’s phone dings.

PETER:  
HE’S HERE! Just in time. This is gonna get this party started.

> He pulls out a DVD he’s had ready in his pocket and advances toward the TV.

BUTTONS:  
But, I’m about to start my...

PETER:  
Move, Ronald McDonald. I have to get to the TV.

> BUTTONS steps aside to stand next to CORDELIA.

BUTTONS:  
(under breath)  
Idiot.

CORDELIA:  
Show some class, clown.

> PETER inserts the DVD, and addresses the crowd as it loads.
PETER:
Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor of introducing Los Angeles’ finest illusionist...

CORDELIA:  
(stricken)
Oh, shit.

BUTTONS:
Ha, "class"...What?

CORDELIA:
I think I know this guy.

PETER:
...a winner of not one, but two "Is This Your Award?" Awards...

CORDELIA:
Yes.

PETER:
...and the only surviving member of "Abracada, Bruh", California’s premier illusionist stunt troupe.

CORDELIA:
Not a doubt.

PETER:
Please put your hands together for...Marcel The Great!

CORDELIA:
That’s the one!

BUTTONS:
He can’t be that bad...

CUE: "MARCEL THE GREAT"

PETER presses play on the DVD player. The television flashes brightly with strobing images of slight of hand tricks, smoldering looks from MARCEL (17 – in video), fire (etc.) in early-2000s handheld camera quality.

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

BUTTONS:
Oh. I get it, now!
MARCEL:

(V.O.)
In a world...

CORDELIA:

(brassy)
HA!
(princess voice)
Excuse me.

MARCEL:

(V.O.)
...where illusions are a thing of the past, one man has
taken it upon himself to bring back the
magic...one...party...at a time.

PETER opens the front door to allow MARCEL (34) to
sneak in to the house behind the unsuspecting
guests. He hides in the pantry.

CORDELIA:

(to BUTTONS)
I went on ONE date with him. He made me watch this
right before picking me up. You can only imagine how
that date went.

BUTTONS:
Was there a second?

CORDELIA:
Does he seem "Great"?

MARCEL:

(V.O.)
And today’s your lucky day...
(from pantry)
...BELLY...
(V.O.)
because the party he chose is yours.

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
(sung)
MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL springs out of the pantry, appearing
through a smoke bomb he threw down.

MARCEL:
I am here, and you are lucky. Let’s get this party
started.

The smoke bomb doesn’t stop. He kicks it into the
pantry.

(MORE)
MARCEL: (cont’d)
If you’re ready, let me hear you scream!

    *PETER screams the loudest.*
I can’t hear you!

    *Same reactions.*
That’s it!
(sung)
YES, I AM MARCEL THE GREAT, AND I AM AT YOUR EVENT

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
WITH ILLUSIONS TO DISORIENT.

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
I CAN APPARATE,

    *LEVITATE,*
CONCENTRATE!

    *Approaches BUTTONS.*
NUMBER ‘EIGHT’?

BUTTONS:
Nope.

MARCEL:
YES!

MARCEL/VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
I AM/HE IS MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
WITH ALL THE CRAZY ILLUSIONS THAT MARCEL CAN DO...

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
YOU’LL BE ASKING "HOUDINI, WHO?!"

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!
MARCEL:
I HOLD THE CROWN
OF MAGIC TOWN,
I’M WORLD-RENNOWNED,
AND I DIDN’T DROWN!
HA!

MARCEL/VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
I AM/HE IS MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
And now, for some illusions! First, I shall use my regular, everyday non-altered deck of cards.

BUTTONS: (heckling)
We get it.

MARCEL:
I need a volunteer. Can I get you, little girl? Is it your birthday today?

BELLA comes up.

BELLA: It is!

MARCEL:
Thank you! Now, without letting me see it, PICK A CARD! And show it to the rest of your friends and/or cousins.

The child does.
Good. Now, return the card and I shall use all of my knowledge to find your card. This. Is. Magic.
(sung)
I WILL PULL OUT A CARD FROM THIS Deck WITH NO PEEKING!

WATCH AS I FIND OUT THE ANSWER I’M SEEKING!
(spoken)
Is THIS your card?

Just then, the cards fly uncontrollably all around the room.

BIRTHDAY GUESTS:
These are all the two of hearts!/They’re all the same card (etc.)
MASON:
He’s cheating!

MARCEL:
(sung)
AND UNLIKE BEFORE, YOUR CARD’S ON THE FLOOR!
(spooken)
Ooh! Magic!

_PETER and BUTTONS clap enthusiastically._
Okay! I shall try another illusion! One that takes
years of practice. One that not many can master. Lend
me your ears, and I shall show you some of my
own...This. Is. Magic.
(sung)
I WILL CONJURE UP STUFF.

HERE’S SOMETHING! LET ME GRAB IT!

OUT OF THIS HAT, I WILL PULL OUT A RABBIT-
A RABBI-
A RAB-AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!

MARCEL pulls out only a pair of bloody rabbit ears
from the hat.
(spooken)
Well, that’s new!

He and the children panic for a second, and goes
on, as the show always should.
(sung)
I KNOW WHAT YOU’LL LOVE:

I’LL GET YOU A DOV-

_Similarly, a bloody dove rolls out of his sleeve
onto the floor. The audience gasps._
(spooken)
Okay, you see _that’s_ more common. And NOW, for a _fire
trick_!

BIRTHDAY GUESTS:
_No!

MARCEL:
Are you sure?

BIRTHDAY GUESTS:
Yes!/Please don’t do it!/Think of the children! (etc.)
MASON: (screaming)
Do it!

MARCEL:
Alright, then! I’m gonna take a short break. I’ll be back with more tantalizing bits. Until then...
(sung)
IF THERE’S A PARTY THAT REQUIRES SOME FLARE

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
JUST CALL MY NUMBER, I CAN MOST LIKELY BE THERE.

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
I JUST BALLYHOO
FOR THE REVENUE.
I GET THE BEST REVIEWS,
AND I’M SINGLE, TOO!

MARCEL/VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
I AM/HE IS MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL:
Take me home, babies!

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!
MARCEL THE GREAT!
MARCEL THE GREAT!
MARCEL THE GREAT!

The DVD begins to skip.
MARCEL TH-
MARCEL TH-
MARCEL TH-
MARCEL TH-
MARCEL TH-
MARCEL slaps the DVD player.

MARCEL:
    (spoken)
This. Is. Magic.

    He slaps the DVD player again.
    (sung)
MARCEL...THE GREAT!

MARCEL/VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
    THANK YOU!

BUTTONS:
    Charming.

CORDELIA:
    Shut up, Shrek.

MARCEL:
    Thank you. Thank you all.

    He approaches CORDELIA.
    Hello, my dear.

CORDELIA:
    Fifteen feet, Marcel.

MARCEL:
    Fair enough.

    He steps backwards.
    Have you considered my proposal?

CORDELIA:
    Magically, it’s still a firm no.

BUTTONS:
    Proposal?!

CORDELIA:
    Slow down, clown. We were setup on one unforgettable date by a mutual friend. He got down on one knee and asked me out on the second. Without flinching, I said no. Who gets on their knee for a second date?!

MARCEL:
    "Unforgettable". You said it, darling! Who’s Bozo? Is he your new boyfriend?

CORDELIA:
    New boyfriend?! What I do with my life is my own business. One-and-a-half hours of hanging out with you doesn’t determine our future. And, no. He is not.
BUTTONS:
And how does that make you feel, Mr. The Great?

MARCEL:
Like my chances just got better.

CORDELIA:
Your mind tricks don’t work on me, Marcel.

MARCEL:
Well, just think of it this way: you have three options. You can get with an amazing, spontaneous, stud of a man like me, you can settle, or you can die alone. Your choice!

BUTTONS:
Hey, I know a joke. And while that was a really good one, it wasn’t nice. Apologize, and get away from her.

MARCEL:
It wasn’t a joke, valiant oaf.

MARCEL struts away.

CORDELIA:
What was that about?

BUTTONS:
I dont like the way that guy talked to you.

(beat)

CORDELIA:
Shouldn’t you get to performing?

BUTTONS:
I’m not scheduled until 2pm.

CORDELIA:
Why did you get here so early?

BUTTONS:
Well, I have a little method. You get to the party an hour early. If the family isn’t ready, then you just go back to your van and watch "I Love Lucy" until the time arrives. If they want you to stay, which they usually do because they think it’s a misunderstanding between them, then you typically get a whole other hour of ‘work’ in. I don’t even do more than chat for the first hour. Charge ’em in the end, pocket the difference, and take yourself to Applebee’s.
CORDELIA:
To think we were just about to start seeing eye-to-eye...

BUTTONS:
It’s business, babe. It’s like selling cupcakes to a diabetic: If they really didn’t want it, they wouldn’t buy it.

CORDELIA:
You’re so grimy. I don’t know what’s worse: you or your analogies skills?

BUTTONS:
Okay, I guess I should get this show on the road.

CORDELIA:
Show us what you got, conman.

BUTTONS heads to his makeshift stage.

BUTTONS:
Are we ready for some laughs?

Light reactions from the guests.
Okay! Let’s start with some jokes! Hey, Marcel, come do one of your tricks again!

Audience laughs lightly.

PETER:
They’re called illusions!

BUTTONS:
Right! And who puts the ‘lose’ in ‘illusions’?!

He hits the DVD player.

BUTTONS/VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

More audience laughs.

BUTTONS:
(to TV)
Thanks, girls. We’ll free you soon enough!

He slaps the DVD player again.

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
THANK YOU!

Audience loses it.
BUTTONS:
Let’s move on to games! How about a nice little magic trick? What’s you’re name, kid?

He points to LYLE (7) in the crowd of children.

LYLE:
(excited)
Lyle!

BUTTONS:
(in disbelief)
Lyle? Let me check my bag, here...

He rummages through a satin bag full of wood blocks with letters on them.
Looks like I only have one ’L’. What the ’L’, right?!

PETER:
Boo.

BUTTONS:
(to PETER)
Thank you, ma’am.
(to LYLE)
Looks like I’m also missing the letter ’E’! Well, I guess
(cheeky)
"A ’E’ I owe you!" Huh? Huh?!

BARB:
(annoyed)
Why, clown?

BUTTONS:
Only sometimes, grandma!

BARB pours herself a drink and exits into the guest room.

PETER:
You suck!

PETER exits.

BUTTONS:
Hey, look! ’F’ and ’U’!

He throws the blocks into the guest room. PETER hollers from offstage.
(Realizing)
I’m sorry, kids. I don’t mean to ’B’ vowel! I’m no chicken.
PETER:  
    (offstage)  
    A fowl multi-pun? That’s terrible.

BUTTONS:  
    Okay. Any other volunteer?

    Silence.  
    How about you, little girl?

    He points at MASON (9), a skinny boy with tight clothes.

MASON:  
    I’m a boy.

    Kids in audience giggle.

BUTTONS:  
    My apologies, the lighting is a little off in here. Get up here! What’s your name?

MASON:  
    Mason.

BUTTONS:  
    Mason?! Is that like ’Jason’ with a capital ’M’?

    MASON nods.  
    Sounds like something you pick up at an Estate Sale for $12.

LYLE:  
    What’s an Estate Sale?

BUTTONS:  
    Well, fake Kyle, when your parents realize they named Mason after a pickle jar, the family might have to have an estate sale if they choose to kill-

FRANCINE:  
    Okay, Mr. Buttons! How about a dance?

BUTTONS:  
    I’m not done with the roast section...

FRANCINE:  
    (discreetly)  
    Read the room. I think people are getting offended by your jokes.
BUTTONS:
(aloud)
Offended?! We’re all adults here...of varying ages!
Sure, it’s not that hard to point out something that ‘offends’ us. What about what offends others around us?
We have to realize: Everything can be offensive to somebody...and it’s all fair game!

INSERT "ANYTHING IS FUNNY (IF YOU WANT IT TO BE)", WHERE MR. BUTTONS TEL...
ACT II

Scene 1

(Outside - Park) TONY sits on a bench in a park, considering a picture in his hand. His phone rings.

TONY:
Hello? Yes, I’m on my way. I just had to make a quick stop. I should be there in 10. Thank you.

Beat. Phone rings again.
Hello?

A light shines on FRANCINE, who is in her room calling TONY.

FRANCINE:
Hey, dad. Something happened.

TONY:
What do you mean?

FRANCINE:
Long story short, the clown accidentally kicked a kid in the face and a big fight broke loose. Everybody’s gone now, but we’re all okay.

TONY:
Damn it. How’s Bella taking it?

FRANCINE:
She doesn’t seem too phased. She’s more worried about reading her letter.

TONY:
Okay. I have to go to this meeting, but I really have to talk to her tonight. Would you mind entertaining her while I get this done? I’ll be two hours, tops.

FRANCINE:
Okay, dad.

TONY:
Thanks, Francine. Can’t wait to see you.

FRANCINE:
Me neither, dad.

They hang up. Lights dim on FRANCINE. TONY considers his wife’s picture again.
TONY: What do I do, babe?

CUE: "WOODBRIDGE PARK"

(sung)

REMEMBER THE DAY YOU DRAGGED ME TO WOODBRIDGE PARK?

IT WAS JUST YOU AND ME ALL DAY.

WE WERE JUST FRIENDS, BUT THAT DAY I FELT A SPARK.

ALL MY DEFENSES WENT AWAY.

IT TOOK ME WEEKS, BUT I FINALLY ASKED YOU OUT;

A MINUTE LATER IT WOULD STORM!

YOU SAID YES, AND WATERED MY HEART’S WORST DROUGHT.

THE RAINFALL NEVER FELT SO WARM.

BECAUSE YOUR SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING’S OKAY.

EVERYTHING’S OKAY.

EVERYTHING’S OKAY.

BECAUSE YOUR SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING’S OKAY!

EVERYTHING’S OKAY, AND NOW OUR LIFE CAN GO ON.

WE MOVED IN, GOT MARRIED, AND HAD THE GIRLS.

IT QUICKLY WENT FROM TWO TO FOUR.

WE WEREN’T READY, BUT THAT’S JUST HOW LIFE UNFURLS.

THERE’S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW IN STORE.

IT WAS HARD, BUT WE MADE IT ALL WORK OUT;

EVEN THE TIMES THAT YOU GOT SICK.

I DID FINE, BUT HONEY THERE’S NOT A DOUBT

THAT YOU’RE THE ONE WHO MADE IT STICK.

BECAUSE YOUR SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING’S OKAY.

EVERYTHING’S OKAY.

EVERYTHING’S OKAY.

BECAUSE YOUR SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING’S OKAY!

EVERYTHING’S OKAY, AND NOW OUR LIFE CAN GO ON.

(MORE)
TONY: (cont’d)
THEN, ONE MORNING CAME; A TUESDAY LIKE ANY OTHER.

THE GIRLS GOT UP TO PESTER THEIR HARDWORKING MOTHER.
SHE SERVED ME COFFEE JUST THE WAY I LIKE IT EVERYDAY:
TWO CREAMS, TWO SUGARS.
EVERYTHING’S OKAY!
EVERYTHING’S OKAY.
WE SPENT THE MORNING LYING IN THE BED.

THE KIDS PLAYED IN THE LIVING ROOM
WHILE YOU TOLD ME WHAT THE DOCTOR SAID:
"WE CAUGHT IT TOO LATE."
"IT ALREADY SPREAD."
WITH TEARS IN YOUR EYES,
YOU HELD ME AND SAID, "SMILE..."
"...BECAUSE YOUR SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING’S OKAY.
EVERYTHING’S OKAY.
EVERYTHING’S OKAY.
BECAUSE YOUR SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING’S OKAY!
EVERYTHING’S OKAY, AND NOW OUR LIVES CAN GO ON."

His phone rings.

TONY:
I’m on my-

He looks at the picture.
You know what? I actually had something come up. I
could come in as soon as tomorrow morning.

He hangs up the phone and sprints toward the car.
Scene 2 - LIVING ROOM

We open to a disheveled house. Scattered decorations, broken furniture, and blank faces. BUTTONS lies in the middle of the living room, upside-down.

BARB: This is what happens when there’s no order.

FRANCINE: This is hardly the time for that conversation, grandmother.

BARB: I’m not starting a conversation, I’m stating an observation.

FRANCINE: Either way, what you’re saying is not constructive.

BELLA: Is he dead?

She pokes BUTTONS. He startles awake. CORDELIA sits him at the stairs and tends to him.

BUTTONS: What happened?

BARB: You ruined the girl’s party. I have to shower.

PETER: We have to shower.

BARB: Leave me alone, Peter.

PETER: Sorry.

He exits to the patio. FRANCINE sits at the desk.

BELLA: Grandma, people are gone. Can I read my letter?

BARB: (agitated) This is no time for letters, Bella. Did you see what just happened? Learn to prioritize.
BARB snatches the letter from BELLA’s hands and sets it on the desk. She exits into the guest room. BELLA sinks into the couch.

BELLA:
I just want to read the letter.

CORDELIA:
Princess Bella...

BUTTONS:
Hey, sweetie. I’m sorry for breaking up the party.

BELLA:
It’s okay. I know it was an accident.

BUTTONS:
Yeah, terrible situation. Perfect kid, though! He was annoying!

They all chuckle.
Kid, it’s your birthday, and we’re all paid up. Princess Cordelia and I decided we will not be leaving until we feel the party is perfect.

CORDELIA:
Is there anything we can do for you? A game? A story?

BELLA:
You really don’t have to...

BUTTONS:
Please. We want to.

BELLA:
Well, a story would be nice.

BUTTONS:
And a story it shall be! Now we’re talking!
(to CORDELIA)
I got this.
(to BELLA)
What kind of story are we looking for? Pirate? Nay. Cowboys? Yee-NAW! Would thou preferest some Shakespeare?

BELLA:
How about a story about fitting in?

BUTTONS looks at CORDELIA. They smile.
BUTTONS:
I think we have you covered. Let’s make this simple:
Marcel!

BUTTONS hits the DVD player. We hear:

VIDEO BACKUP SINGERS:
MARCEL THE GREAT!

MARCEL slinks out of the pantry with a bowl of chips in hand.

MARCEL:
Yes?

BUTTONS:
You’ll play the evil sorcerer who casts a spell on the royal family.

He takes the quilt from the couch and makes a makeshift robe for MARCEL.

MARCEL:
If only I could...

BUTTONS:
Cordelia...

CORDELIA:
Yes, Mr. Buttons?

BUTTONS:
You shall play the fair princess in distress.

He sits her on a thrown, as if royally serving her.

CORDELIA:
(British dialect)
I will try my best-

BUTTONS:
I’m sure you have it in you, somewhere deep inside.
(to BELLA)
And I, your humble storyteller, shall play the court jester. We begin!

BUTTONS, CORDELIA, AND MARCEL SING A SONG TO ENTERTAIN BELLA. IN AN EERIE MIRROR TO BELLA’S TRUE LIFE, THE KING SAT ON A BENCH EVERY DAY, HOPING THE QUEEN WOULD COME. AS HE DOZED OFF, SHE DID IN HIS DREAMS. THE STORY ENDS WITH THE QUEEN BEING TAKEN AWAY BY THE SORCERER TO FAR AWAY LANDS TO NEVER RETURN.
BELLA: Thank you. That means a lot more to me than you think.

She begins to cry softly.

BUTTONS: Was Marcel that bad?

BELLA: No, he was fine.

BUTTONS: But-

CORDELIA: Hey boys, could you guys give us a moment?

BUTTONS: Sure.

FRANCINE: I’ll be upstairs for a bit.

MARCEL exit into the patio. FRANCINE exits upstairs. BUTTONS sits on the stairs, minding his business, but within ear’s reach.

CORDELIA: What’s going on, sweetie?

BELLA: All day, people have been talking about how tight my clothes is, and what I shouldn’t eat, and how – I just feel like I look like an alien. Look at my face. It’s weird, isn’t it? Am I fat? I just don’t feel...beautiful.

CORDELIA: Don’t listen to them, hun. People will always say what they want to say. It doesn’t mean they’re right.

BELLA: But I know they are. Look at me. I wish I had your life. You’re so sweet and pretty.

CORDELIA: I don’t have the life you think I do...

CUE: YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL

(sung)

I GOT A JOB THAT HONESTLY SUCKS.

I GIVE UP MY WEEKENDS FOR TWO HUNDRED BUCKS.
THE CAR RIDES ARE LENGTHY, I CAN’T STOP TO EAT, BECAUSE DRESSED UP LIKE THIS MEANS A FREE MEET-AND-GREET.

I GET TO THE HOUSE, BUT PARK TWO BLOCKS TOO FAR, BECAUSE “PRINCESSES SHOULDN’T ARRIVE IN A CAR.”

THE CHILDREN ARE CRAZY, THE MOM’S FULL OF SASS BECAUSE DAD’S IN THE CORNER JUST OGLING MY ASS.

I PRAY FOR THE DAY THIS WILL ALL GO AWAY. PEOPLE WILL PRAISE YOU AS PRETTY.

KIDS ALWAYS CLAIM YOU AS CUTE.

BUT, WHAT WOULD THEY SAY WHEN THE DRESS GOES AWAY, AND UNDER THE DRESS THERE ARE ROOTS?

I HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE FEELINGS WHEN ALL THE PRETTY WIPES CLEAN.

THE COMPLIMENTS FLUSH DOWN THE DRAIN WITH THE BLUSH, AND I’M LEFT WITH NOBODY BUT ME. AND SOMETIMES I DON’T FEEL SO PRETTY;

I’M STUCK WITH THE THOUGHTS IN MY HEAD.

I LOOK AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR, AND I IMITATE ALL THAT THEY SAID: "YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL,"

PEOPLE WILL SAY SO BLINDLY.

"YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL."

IF THEY SEE IT, WHY CAN’T I? I HAD A DAD WHO ACTED A LOON.

LIKE, JUST FOR A LAUGH, HE’D HOWL AT THE MOON.

THE KIDS, WE ALL LOVED IT; MY MOM, NOT SO MUCH. ALONG WITH THE LIFE THAT HE LED, WHICH WAS LUSH. A NIGHT ON THE TOWN FOR A DRINK WITH THE BOYS.

(MORE)
CORDELIA: (cont’d)
AND, THE OCCASIONAL HOUSE CALL FROM ONE OF HIS TOYS.

MY MOTHER, SHE HAD IT THE DAY I TURNED TEN.

WE LEFT, AND I’D NEVER SEE DADDY AGAIN.

FROM THE BACK OF THE CAR, HE JUST KEPT GETTING SMALLER...

SOME PEOPLE GROW UP JUST PERFECT.

OTHERS, APPARENTLY NOT.

THE LESSON TO LEARN HERE IS YOUR LIFE WILL BURN UNLESS YOU WORK WITH WHAT YOU’VE GOT.

DADDIES CAN TAKE YOU JUST PART WAYS;

MOMMIES CAN FINISH THE CHORE.

BUT THERE COMES A TIME WHERE HER HELP HITS A LINE,

AND THE PROBLEMS TO SOLVE BECOME YOURS.

I CAN’T PRETEND THAT MY HIST’RY IN LIFE HAS NO HOLD ON MY HEART.

BUT, MAYBE TO TACKLE THIS MIST’RY I HAVE FOUND A QUICK WAY TO DEPART:

SAY, "YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL,"

WHEN YOU ARE FEELING LONELY.

"YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL,"

HELPS TO NOT FEEL THE GRIEF.

"YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL."

EVEN IF YOU DON’T FEEL IT.

"YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL."

LIE UNTIL YOU BELIEVE.

They have a moment. ETHEL enters with trash bags and begins collecting trash.
BELLA: Thank you, Princess Cordelia.

She looks at the letter.

CORDELIA: What is that? You’ve been holding that all day.

BELLA: It’s a letter from my mom.

CORDELIA: Why haven’t you opened it?

BELLA: I’m not supposed to until my dad says it’s okay and I’m all alone.

CORDELIA: I see.

BELLA: This is the best gift I get each year. I haven’t seen mommy in a long time, but she’s finally coming home! My dad always says that she’ll be here for my tenth birthday, and it’s my tenth birthday! She’s coming all the way from Africa!

CORDELIA: Wow. I didn’t know she was in Africa.

BELLA: She travels the whole world, helping people in need. It’s her passion. It’s my passion, too. Someday, I’ll get to travel the world and help just like her.

CORDELIA: And that makes you the most beautiful person I know, Princess Bella.

(beat) Let’s go outside for some air.

BELLA: Okay. Come, Mr. Buttons!

They exit to the patio. BARB peeks her head out from the guest room.

BARB: Are they gone? Good. Sap isn’t going to help the girl...
ETHEL:
   Si no se calla esta...

BARB:
   Why are you speaking, woman? Do your job.

ETHEL:
   No me hable así, Barbara...

BARB:
   I hear you gabbing and the house is still dirty.

ETHEL:
   (agitated)
   Por favor...

BARB:
   Maybe if your husband hadn’t been deported he could’ve taught you how to pretend to work, too.

   ETHEL stares at her speechless before breaking down. Her pleas become incoherent. FRANCINE runs down the stairs.

FRANCINE:
   What’s going on?

BARB:
   This maid has no respect for her position in this household.

FRANCINE:
   She doesn’t seem to be the only one.
   (to ETHEL)
   ETHEL, esta bien. Don’t cry.

BARB:
   You’re going to choose to defend this worker over your own blood relatives?

FRANCINE:
   I’m going to choose to respect. She’s been around my whole life and has acted as a mother for this family.

BARB:
   You’ve had your mother.

   BARB storms out the front door.

FRANCINE:
   Don’t worry, Ethel. She’s not okay. We love you, and we wouldn’t be who we are without you. You matter more than you think.
(beat)
How about a word?

She pulls out a dictionary from the bookshelf. 'Feel'? We've done 'feel', right? 'Sentir'? Yeah. How about 'Fight'? Not the best time for that one. 'Frank'. Yes. 'Frank'.

CUE: JUST BEING FRANK
Adjective - "Open, sincere, or undisguised in manner or appearance."

ETHEL:
'Franco' - adjetivo - "Que es sincero y habla con claridad."

FRANCINE:
Franco.

ETHEL:
Frank.

FRANCINE:
DO YOU HAVE A SECRET YOU’RE AFRAID TO SHARE?

WHEN YOU FACE THE MIRROR, CAN YOU DO ANYTHING BUT STARE?

WHEN YOU MEET YOUR OWN EYES,

HAS THERE EVER BEEN ANYTHING MORE CERTAIN IN YOUR LIFE?

DO YOU SEE IT THERE?
YOU DON’T CLOSE YOUR EYES EXCEPT WHEN YOU HAVE TO BLINK.

THEN, YOU REALIZE YOU’RE CLOSING THEM LONGER THAN YOU THINK

'CAUSE YOU’RE IN YOUR OWN WORLD

AND DIFF’RENCE IS WHAT CONNECTS THE PEOPLE IN YOUR MIND.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO SHRINK.

I JUST WANT TO BE FRANK:

WHAT’S SEEN ISN’T ALWAYS WANTED.

I JUST WANT TO BE REAL:

I KNOW WHAT’S RIGHT FOR ME.
ALL MY LIFE I’VE SEARCHED FOR A WAY TO SAY WHAT MY HEART’S ALWAYS WHISPERED...

I JUST WANT TO BE FRANK, AND THAT’S WHAT I’LL BE. IF THEY GIVE SUGGESTIONS AND YOU STILL GO YOUR WAY, WHEN YOU LAY TO REST, AT LEAST YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE PRICE TO PAY.

’CAUSE YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE, AND NO ONE SHOULD EVER MAKE YOU MOVE OR MAKE YOU STAY. NEVER GO ASTRAY. FOR THE LONGEST TIME, I’VE COLORED INSIDE THE LINES. AND, I BLINDLY THOUGHT THAT WHAT I WAS DOING WAS JUST FINE.

BUT, THEN I REALIZED THAT MAKING A CHOICE WILL ALWAYS BE A WASTE OF TIME IF IT ISN’T MINE. I JUST WANT TO BE FRANK:

A SCENE ISN’T ALWAYS NEEDED. I JUST WANT TO BE HEARD,

SO I’LL LET YOU HEAR ME NOW!

IN A WORLD WHERE OTHER COULD BE ANYTHING THEY SET OUT TO BE: WELL, SO CAN WE. WE CAN BE WHO WE WANT TO BE. WE CAN SEE WHO WE WANT TO SEE OURSELVES BE, AND JUST BE FREE.

They embrace.

ETHEL: Gracias.

(beat)

Thank you.
Before stepping into the kitchen, ETHEL takes a glance in the mirror on the wall. She turns and smiles at FRANCINE. She exits. FRANCINE sits on the couch. BARB enters.

BARB: And that’s what I get? An uncalled for slap to the face. What haven’t I done for you, Francine?

BELLA enters from the patio.

BELLA: Mimi?

FRANCINE: Grandmother...

BARB: What lengths have I gone to to make your life...

BELLA: Grandma?

FRANCINE: Grandma, not in front of Bella...

BARB: Have I not tried every way to-

BELLA: Mimi Barb?

BARB: (monstrous) What?!

BELLA: I just want to know if I can read the letter-

BARB: I said that letter is useless. What’s the point of it? It’s just a reminder that your mother isn’t here.

BELLA: But, she’s coming this week!

BARB: No, she is not.

BELLA: Yes, daddy said she is.
BARB:
Your mother is dead.

CORDELIA and BUTTONS are walking in from the patio, but they hold themselves back when they realize what was just said. BARB tears the letter to pieces.

She died years ago. She left these stupid letters for every birthday until god knows when. It doesn’t matter. She’s dead. Your idiot father makes up this "Save The World" lie to cover the fact that she’s never coming back.

Beat.

BELLA:
Francine?

FRANCINE stays silent.
Is this true?

FRANCINE:
(to BARB)
Grandmother...

BELLA exits upstairs in tears.

FRANCINE:
That was unnecessary. I have to call my dad. Bella!

She exits upstairs while hurriedly dialing for TONY. BARB storms outside. BUTTONS and CORDELIA pick up the pieces and begin to tape them together on the coffee table.

BUTTONS:
Wow.

CORDELIA:
That was...a lot.

BUTTONS:
Yeah. There’s too much going on at this gig.
(beat)
This whole letter thing is messed up.

CORDELIA:
Yeah. Thanks for helping me. Every year, when I get the call to do this party, the dad always reminds me to "distract the girl, distract the girl". Now, I understand why. This letter means a lot to her. I see it every year, but she finally shared about it. She talked to me like no one else has. She trusted me; not Cordelia, but me.
(beat)

BUTTONS:
Did you mean what you told her earlier?

CORDELIA:
What?

BUTTONS:
About not feeling beautiful-

CORDELIA:
Let’s not talk about that.

BUTTONS:
Okay. That’s fair.

(beat)

Do you have any dreams?

CORDELIA:
I feel like we’re getting into personal territory. I’m not ready-

BUTTONS:
No, it’s all good! Let’s not talk about you, ’kay?

(beat)

I was born in Ashland, Oregon to the town’s number one disk jockey and his high school sweetheart, a painter. Lots of jazz and show tunes growing up. They always pushed me to follow all of my dreams! It started with wanting to play the drums in a rock band. When that dream faded, they jumped on every sinking stepping stone that I led them on until I found my true, realized passion: acting. No, not this funny pie-in-the face, honking-nose bull. True, theatrical monologue work that was unrivaled because no one else could play me. So, what did they do? They sent me off to the best private teachers they could find until I got my acceptance letter to Juilliard. No joke. I worked with it. I graduated a favorite of my class, I fell in love, fell out of love, lost my drive, lost a bunch of time, and happened upon some easy money. So, now, I sit around binge-watching Netflix with a mint chocolate chip pint from 7-11 in hand. Only time I move is when the phone rings for a gig. It pays the bills, but not the heart. I do miss the theatre. The crowds, the sets, the rehearsals. Berlin was right: "There’s no business like show business."

(beat)

CUE: "ROB’S VISION/YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL [REPRISE]"
I HAVE A DREAM... IT’S MORE LIKE A VISION...
WHERE I’M STANDING ON A STAGE; NO FRIGHT.
IT’S ME IN A STANCE. NO SETS, NO COSTUMES.
JUST A TURTLENECK, WORDS, AND A LIGHT.
I TAKE ON A ROLE AND WORK OUT THE PROBLEMS
THAT USU’LLY COME WITH A PART.
I STEP IN HIS SHOES TO ASK MEATY QUESTIONS,
BUT I ANSWER THEM WITH MY OWN HEART.
I SHARE WITH STRANGERS.
I’M BOUND’RY FREE.
I WEAR NO MAKEUP. I’M JUST ME.
I’M JUST ME.
I FINISH THE SHOW AND RUN OUT THE STAGE DOOR
TO PUT NAMES TO THE FACES I SAW IN ROW ‘A’.
I TAKE LOTS OF PICTURES AND HEAR THEIR LIFE STORIES.
THEN, I JUMP IN MY CAR AND JUST DRIVE FAR AWAY.
THE CAR RIDES ARE LENGTHY, I HAVE TIME TO THINK ABOUT
ALL OF THE SCENES THAT I DIDN’T GET RIGHT.
I’M GIVEN A SHOT TO MAKE IT ALL WORK AGAIN
NIGHT-AFTER-NIGHT-AFTER-NIGHT.
AND, I KNOW MY STRENGTHS.
I CAN FIN’LLY SEE.
I CAN TRUST MYSELF TO BE ME.
TO BE ME...
TO BE ME!
TO BE ME!
NOW, WHAT IS THE POINT OF SHARING MY VISION?
I KNOW IT SOUNDS CHEESY, BUT LET ME EXPLAIN.

(MORE)
BUTTONS: (cont’d)
I HEARD WHAT YOU TOLD HER ’BOUT NOT FEELING "PRETTY",

AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT WE SHARE THE SAME PAIN.
NO, I HAVE NO DOUBTS OF WHAT I MAY LOOK LIKE,

'CAUSE I CAN ADMIT IM SORT OF A "THREE".
IT’S THE PAIN OF NOT KNOWING JUST HOW I SHOULD FEEL.
IT’S THE PAIN OF NOT KNOWING WHO’S ’ME’.

(beat)
SO, YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND YOU’RE NOT YOURSELF.

IN JUNE YOU’RE A PRINCESS, DECEMBER AN ELF.
BUT, YOU GO JOB-TO-JOB ’CAUSE YOU HAVE TO PAY RENT.
BY THE END OF THE WEEKEND YOUR MONEY IS SPENT.
AND, YOU SIT THERE JUST ASKING WHERE SEVEN YEARS WENT.
YOU TAKE A BREATH...

BUTTONS leads CORDELIA in "unmasking" herself to
reveal her true self.
AND YOU TAKE OFF THE POWDERS AND LIPSTICKS AND CREAMS.
BACK TO REALITY, DONE WITH THE DREAMS.

OFF WITH THE HIGHLIGHTS AND SHADOWS AND BLUSH.
THE SPONGE GOES AWAY IN THE BOX WITH THE BRUSH.
LOOK AT THE FRECKLES THAT TRAIL ’ROUND YOU FACE.
THERE’S NO NEED FOR MAKEUP. YOU’RE BORN WITH TRUE
GRACE.

WHAT THEY’VE ALL TOLD YOU IS ACTUALLY REAL;
YOU MIGHT NOT SEE IT, BUT THAT’S HOW I FEEL
ABOUT YOU!
YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL!

NOT JUST WHEN YOU ARE DRESSED UP.
YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL;

"PRINCESS" YOU, AND THE REST.
YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL,
YOU BETTER START TO BELIEVE IT.
YOU’RE BEAUTIFUL,
YOUR MASSIVE HEART SHOWS IT BEST.

BUTTONS:
Rob.

CORDELIA:
Hope.

*They shake hands. TONY runs in from the front door.*

TONY:
What’s going on?

BUTTONS:
We’ll give you some space, sir. Excuse us. Come, Princess Cordelia. Let’s finish this on the deck.

*They exit to the patio. BARB saunters in.*

TONY:
Barb-

BARB:
I just told the girl.

TONY:
You what?!

*BELLA sneaks in at the top of the stairs.*

BARB:
She had to know. She was rambling on about that stupid letter.

TONY:
That letter is all some of us have to keep her with us.

BARB:
Well, let go. She’s gone. Do you realize what I have to live with every day of my life? I lost my daughter. I held her at birth. I fed her. I raised her. I made it work with just her, Peter, and I. And for what? So some starry-eyed sorry excuse for a father could ruin the only precious things she left behind? They’re innocent, Tony. And you are only making them as weak as you turned out to be.
TONY: I’m trying the best I can, Barbara. This family is all I have.

BARB: Well, this family is clearly falling apart.

TONY: I will die before this family falls apart. I am doing my best, and I know nothing is in vain. You just have to open your eyes to see what’s right in front of you.

BARB: I don’t care what is happening outside of my grandchildren growing up. My daughter is dead. You or your parenting tactics aren’t going to change that.

TONY: And I have no fault in her dying in the first place. I loved her in life, and I am loving her to this very moment. How could you say I’m doing anything wrong? I’m giving an in-law all they ever dream of.

BARB: So, you’re doing it for me?

TONY: No, I’m doing it because I feel the responsibility to show my children that love supersedes fantasy. Love is a choice, and I choose to continue to love.

BARB: Keep dreaming.

ETHEL walks in, bags packed and ready to head out. Looks like you can’t even keep the maid happy.

ETHEL takes a long look at BARB. And what could you possibly add to the conversation?

ETHEL: (broken English to BARB) I — forgive — you. I understand everything. To make job, I have to sound like I don’t, but I do. And I have enough. My English less important than my value of life and respect.

CUE: "JUST BEING FRANK — REPRISE"

(to BELLA) Your mama love you very much. You should be proud for who you become. You are just like her. Beautiful young woman. Happy Birthday.

(to TONY) (MORE)
ETHEL: (cont’d)

Gracias, Señor Tony. You be very kind to me, and is being a good father to girls and good example for my boys. God bless you, señor.

(to FRANCINE)

And, big thank you, mama. You not know how your love means to me. You care, and I care for you, too. You give me strong. I will make better life. My boys will grow and being just like you. Love and frank.

(sung)

YOU CAN BE WHO YOU WANT TO BE.

YOU CAN SEE WHO YOU WANT TO SEE YOURSELF BE,

AND JUST BE FREE.

(spoken)

I love you, mama. Gracias.

ETHEL heads to the front door. Before she makes it out:

ETHEL:

One more thing, Barbara. Learn your position in this...

She opens the coat closet. PETER and MARCEL fall out, entangled in a kiss. She exits through the front door.

BARB:

(shocked)

Peter?!

PETER:

(shocked)

Peter?! (realizing)

No, wait. Yes. Peter.

BARB:

Leave it to you to embarrass me even more than I already was.

PETER:

I’m quickly learning that being embarrassed is a choice. I’m choosing to be myself, and not care what you or anyone else has to say.

He smiles at FRANCINE.

BARB:

This is ludicrous!
MARCEL AND PETER:

This. Is. Magic.

They kiss and exit through the closet.

BARB:

Would you look at that?

FRANCINE:

Luckily, it’s something you can just let be without it hurting or affecting you.

BARB:

Francine, stay out of this. You will understand, and soon enough. Life has brought me terrible situations that I’ve overcome alone.

FRANCINE:

Age is only the amount of time we have to make choices and grow. Some people just never take the opportunity to make them.

BELLA begins to walk downstairs.

BELLA:

Everybody, please!

TONY:

Bella, honey-

BELLA:

No, dad. Give me a second. Today has probably been the craziest day of my life. I witnessed my uncle punching a birthday clown, I said some words to Matthew, and I got some news that I never wish to have gotten. But, it wasn’t bad news. It was maybe the best news I could ever get. I’ve always wished that mommy would come back, but now I know that she never left.

(to TONY)

I never understood why you leave for work so much, but now I see it. Thank you for everything that you do.

(to BARB)

I hope you can see how special this day is for me. Not only because it is my birthday, but because I have you here with me.

BARB begins walking toward the guest room.
TONY:
Where are you going?

BARB:
I feel like all has been said that’s needed to be said.
I want to fly back tonight. You three need some family
time.

BELLA:
No, grandma. Please stay a little longer.

BARB:
I can’t, Bella. I will say, you are one spunky little
ten-year-old. You remind me of your mother at your age.
I would give anything to be with my girl, again.

She removes the locket around her neck.
Here, take this. I gave it to your mom when she was a
child. It belongs to you.

She places it around BELLA’S neck.

BELLA:
I love you, mimi.

BARB:
And, I love you.
(beat)
Well, I have to pack. Change the linens, Tony. This
isn’t a Hilton.

BARB pats TONY on the shoulder and exits into the
guest room.

TONY:
Can you give us a second, Frankie?

FRANCINE:
Sure.

FRANCINE hugs BELLA and exits upstairs.

TONY:
What you did was very brave, Bella. I’m sorry that I
didn’t tell you earlier. It’s not an easy subject to
touch. I hope you understand.

BELLA:
I’m just glad that mom hasn’t died.

They embrace. CORDELIA and BUTTONS reenter with
the letter taped-up. They hand it to BELLA.
The letter!
She runs to them.

BUTTONS:
I think our work here is done. Sorry it’s a little crooked. Just know we tried.

BELLA:
No, it’s beautiful.

CORDELIA:
Happy birthday, Bella.

BELLA:
Thank you for everything.

CORDELIA:
Thank you, Princess.

CORDELIA and BUTTONS exit through the front door.

TONY:
You know the rule! I’ll leave you alone. I love you, Bella.

BELLA:
I love you, dad.

CUE: "YEAR 10"

BELLA opens the letter. The party disperses and exits into different parts on the house.

BELLA:
Dear Bella,
(sung)
I CAN’T IMAGINE WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE;
NOW, YOU’RE TEN!
I REMEMBER WHAT IT FELT LIKE WAY BACK THEN.
LIFE IS MOVING FASTER THAN YOU KNOW;
A NEWER SIDE OF YOU BEGINS TO SHOW;
JUST DON’T FORGET THAT YOU COULD ALWAYS GROW.
THINGS MIGHT CHANGE NOW WITH YOUR DADDY AND FRANCINE.
FIGHTS WILL HAPPEN! AFTER ALL, SHE’S SEVENTEEN.
THE FIGHTS YOU’LL HAVE AREN’T THE KIND THAT LAST,
(MORE)
BELLA: (cont’d)
JUST LOVE HER LIKE YOU MIGHT HAVE IN THE PAST.

ENJOY THESE YEARS BECAUSE THEY GO SO FAST.

UNTIL I SEE YOU AGAIN, REMEMBER I LOVE YOU,
Mom.

BARB walks out, wearing her traveling coat and hat, bags in hand. She stands next to BELLA, smiling over her. BELLA’S MOM walks out of the guest room, and stands at BARB’s side. They see each other and smile. YOUNGER BELLA hands OLDER BELLA the letter. BELLA’S MOM leads BARB and YOUNGER BELLA out of the front door. The scene changes back to the present. OLDER BELLA and LITTLE ETHEL are revealed on the couch, finishing the letter in the same position as the opening. As they finish, FRANK comes down the stairs with his wife.

LITTLE ETHEL:
Dad!

FRANK:
Morning, Ethel. Happy birthday, sis.

Doorbell. They make their way to the table to eat. LITTLE ETHEL runs to the door and excitedly lets ROB and HOPE in. They are holding hands. PETER pops out of the kitchen, holding plates of breakfast.

PETER:
Breakfast is served!

FRANCINE:
Is everybody here?

BELLA:
Yup.

They all find a seat. YOUNG BELLA and TONY watch on from the stairs. His wife and BARB walk up next to him to join him looking down. TONY’s wife touches his shoulder. He smiles. Blackout.