

ALL

JULIA. (*Into phone.*) I'm staying put, Mr. Shubert, or whatever the hell your name is. I'm putting my finger in the dyke and holding back the night. The Barrymore is not available. Budder's back in business. (*She hangs up.*) Now let's get crackin'.

IRA. What happened to my play?

GUS. The second act needs work.

IRA. How do you know?

JAMES. He's right. I flipped ahead

GUS. Every second act needs work. That's the first thing they taught us.

JULIA. Sorry to get your hopes up, Mr. Drew.

START PETER. All right: "We are in the bedroom of a townhouse on Manhattan's East Side. Downstairs an opening night party is in progress. We hear laughter and music wafting up the stairs."

GUS. "Wafting"! I can do wafting. (*He wafts.*)

JULIA. I like it better already.

VIRGINIA. Can you imagine going from one play right into another?

JAMES. What about going from a canceled series right into the lead of a new play? There must be a name for something like that.

PETER. "*Coup de théâtre.*"

VIRGINIA. *Coup de fucking fabulous.*

IRA. You can't write a play in one night, Mr. Austin.

PETER. I can with this one.

VIRGINIA. I want a personal assistant and a trainer this time, Julia.

PETER. "A young man enters carrying coats. He is moony-eyed and star-struck, like every one of us at our first opening night party."

GUS. I can do that.

JULIA. You're so young to be so talented.

GUS. Thank you, ma'am.

PETER. "A dapper, funny, big-hearted beloved star of the theatre enters. He is handsome and flush in his designer tuxedo. The audience applauds wildly."

JAMES. No one writes for me like you, Peter. Is this my first monologue?

PETER. "With him is a beautiful, sexy, sophisticated woman. There is a standing ovation at her entrance."

VIRGINIA. This is so much better already, Peter.

PETER. "A dog barks stage right." (*Torch accommodates him from offstage in the bathroom stage left.*) All right, Torch, stage left, have it your way!

FRANK. No dog.

PETER. There has to be a dog.

FRANK. I won't work with animals, children, or F. Murray Abraham.

JULIA. He's right, people love dogs, darling. I'm not sure about F. Murray Abraham.

IRA. A play about an opening night party! Theatre people! F. Murray Abraham! Who cares about them?

JULIA. I certainly do.

IRA. Well of course *you* do. I'm talking about the audience.

PETER. They can decide for themselves.

IRA. That's my job! *(They are all eager for Peter to begin, even Ira, who has whipped out his trusty pad and pencil, ready to criticize. Peter is their Pied Piper now. They all depend on him and will follow him anywhere.)*

PETER. At rise ... and if those aren't the two most exciting words in the English language, I'd like to know what are.

IRA. *(Writing on his pad.)* Sentimental claptrap. *(The lights are beginning to fade.)*

PETER. The house has gone to dark ...

JULIA. I'm ... what's the word? Somebody Jewish help me ... I'm *kerplunkt*.

PETER. ... the actors are in place ... *(James and Virginia take hands. Her ankle bracelet goes off again. She doesn't even bother with it this time.)*

VIRGINIA. You'll get used to it.

PETER. ... all is in readiness ... *(Ira stops taking notes and listens. He, too, is caught up.)* ... the play can begin.

JULIA. This is when I look at the audience and wonder where do all these people come from?

PETER. How do you like it so far, Jimmy?

JAMES. Wonderful, just wonderful.

PETER. Cue lights.

FRANK. Go.

PETER. And curtain! *(He gestures with both arms for the curtain to rise. At the same time, our curtain falls. The play is over.)*

End of Play

(IMPORTANT NOTE: The first curtain call is taken by Torch. He comes out of the bathroom. He is an adorable Beagle.)