(*Blackout. During Blackout, GINO exits,* L. *SAMOVAR enters through door 4. The doors are revolved by the CAST so that when the lights come up, all doors have been changed from black to red. Lights up on SAMOVAR, wearing a floppy cap and holding a clapper-board. On it are the words THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG.*)

SAMOVAR. You know out here in Hollywood, sometimes real life can have a funny way of looking exactly like a corny movie. Here are three stories about Hollywood songwriters and every story is *true* . . . True Story Number One: The scene—a small bar near Paramount Studios, shortly after the repeal of Prohibition. Enter two songwriters—(*CONSTANTINE—LYRICIST, and CARLO—COMPOSER, enter through doors 1 and 2, respectively, and pose,* C.)—Sam Coslow and Arthur Johnston, tired and discouraged after spending seven hours seeking the muse in vain.—Action! (*SAMOVAR claps board, and exits,* R.)

(*At "Action!" NINA enters* D.L. *as a Hat-Check Girl. During CONSTANTINE's speech, CONSTANTINE and CARLO cross to her and mime handing her their invisible hats. NINA then exits with "hats".*)

CONSTANTINE. It was a great idea of yours, Arthur, comin' here for a drink. We really *need* one, after trying all day to come up with a number for that new picture "Murder At The Vanities".

CARLO. Yeah, but we're all dried up.

CONSTANTINE. (*The COMPOSER's choice of words gives him a sudden idea.*) "Dried up"?! Say—now the *country's* no longer dry, maybe we ought to write a *drinking* song for the picture!

CARLO. Hey! That's a peach of an idea! But what'll we call it?

(*Enter WAITRESS, (GINO) behind counter.*)

GINO. Good evening, Mr. Coslow . . . Mr. Johnston. How are you?

CONSTANTINE. Not so hot, honey—we're stuck for a song title. Gimme a large Manhattan.

CARLO. I'll take an old fashioned.
GINO. O.K. Cocktails for two.
CARLO & CONSTANTINE. *That's it!!!!!* (*They rush to the piano. CARLO plays as BOTH sing.*)
AND MAYBE HEAVEN WILL COMPLETE OUR PLAN
THAT ALL BEGAN—WITH COCKTAILS FOR TWO!
(*They shake hands and freeze.*)
GINO. Gee, I'm so proud! (*exits*)
SAMOVAR. (*pops up behind counter*) Cut!

(*During SAMOVAR's following speech, CONSTANTINE and CARLO move to join their "wives" as MRS. PAVLENKO (MRS. LOESSER) and NINA (MRS. CARMICHAEL) enter through doors 3 and 4, respectively. All FOUR pose until "Action!"*)

SAMOVAR. True story number two. The scene: the Hollywood home of Mr. and Mrs. Hoagy Carmichael, 1938. Lyricist Frank Loesser and his wife are the Carmichael's dinner guests.—Action! (*claps board and exits*)
MRS. LOESSER. (*MRS. PAVLENKO*) Gee, thanks, Hoagy. Frank and I had a divine time.
LYRICIST. (*CONSTANTINE*) Yeah we really *needed* a break, Hoagy. After trying all day to write a number for Bob Hope and Shirley Ross to sing in that new picture . . . but we're all dried up.
COMPOSER. (*CARLO*) Yeah, we've been seeking the muse in vain.
MRS. CARMICHAEL. (*NINA*) How's about a little nightcap?
MRS. LOESSER. No thanks, honey. (*yawns*) Frank and I are just—Two sleepy people.
LYRICIST & COMPOSER. That's it!! (*They rush to piano and sing and play in quick tempo:*)
TWO SLEEPY PEOPLE
BY DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT
AND TOO MUCH IN LOVE TO SAY GOODNIGHT.

(*CARLO stands. BOTH shake hands and freeze.*)

MRS. LOESSER & MRS. CARMICHAEL. Gee, we're so proud!
SAMOVAR. (*enters* D.L.) Cut!

(*During the following speech, NINA and MRS. PAVLENKO exit* R. *CONSTANTINE and CARLO take up new positions —CARLO slumped at the piano, CONSTANTINE standing.*)

SAMOVAR. True story number three. The scene: The Hollywood home of songwriter Harold Arlen, 1939. Harold and lyricist Yip Harburg are seeking the muse in vain.—Action! (*claps board, exits* R.)

(*CONSTANTINE paces, concentrating hard. CARLO plays a few notes, rather hopelessly.*)

COMPOSER. (*CARLO*) Fine songwriters we are, trying all day to finish a number for Judy Garland to sing in that new picture "The Wizard of Oz".

LYRICIST. (*CONSTANTINE*) That's a great refrain you got there, Harold. If only you could come up with the middle section . . .

COMPOSER. It's no use, Yip, I can't come up with anything. I'm all dried up.

(*MRS. ARLEN (GINO) enters through door 5, near piano.*)

MRS. ARLEN. (*GINO*) Harold, have you fed the dog yet?

COMPOSER. Sorry, honey, I forgot—I'll call him. (*COMPOSER goes* D.S. *and whistles "Someday I'll wish upon a star" section of "Over the Rainbow."*)

LYRICIST. Say, Harold! That tune you're whistling!

MRS. ARLEN. He always calls the dog that way. (*COMPOSER whistles again, begins adding "And wake up where . . ."*)

COMPOSER & LYRICIST. *That's it!!!* (*They rush to the piano. Sing and play.*)

SOMEDAY I'LL WISH UPON A STAR
AND WAKE UP WHERE THE CLOUDS ARE FAR
BEHIND ME
WHERE TROUBLES MELT LIKE LEMON DROPS
AWAY ABOVE THE CHIMNEY TOPS
THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND ME . . .

COMPOSER. (*to audience*) Everybody!

CONSTANTINE. Nina, was I hearing things? Did you really mean what you said?

NINA. Of course, darling, every word of it. (*NINA places the last flower in the vase* D.L.)

CONSTANTINE. Then let's elope.

NINA. Elope?

CONSTANTINE. Tonight.

NINA. Tonight?

CONSTANTINE. Tonight.

NINA. Oh, Constantine.

(*They exit* L. *SAMOVAR enters* S.R.)

SAMOVAR. How about a nice round of applause for the young lovers? (*Speaking too quickly for audience to applaud.*) No? perhaps you're right. Anyway, it's about time I saw Madam Pavlenko. It's already a quarter to nine, or eight-forty-five if you like it the other way around, and if you do, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! (*He exits* US.C.)

(*The male voices hum "UKRAINE" again as MRS. PAVLENKO enters* D.R.)

MRS. PAVLENKO. That tune again! Oh, Nicholas, Nicholas. . . (*She sings.*)

THE SNOW WAS HEAVY, BUT MY HEART WAS LIGHT
ON A NIGHT
IN THE UKRAINE
HE CLUNG TO ME . . .
AND THEN WE TURNED TO SEE
THE CHERRY ORCHARD ALL IN WHITE . . .

(*While she sings SAMOVAR hops across center corridor from* R. *to* L. *calling "Oo-oo!" Then, cigar in hand, enters* US.C. *and climbs on top of piano, meowing like a cat. MRS. PAVLENKO finally turns and sees him. She gasps.*)

SAMOVAR. (*taking her in*) Well, what do you know! Somebody wrapped a skirt around the Battleship Potemkin!

MRS. PAVLENKO. Who are you? And why are you smoking that vile cigar in my drawing room?

SAMOVAR. I might ask you the same question!

MRS. PAVLENKO. But I'm *not* smoking a cigar.

SAMOVAR. Well that's why I'm not asking it. One up to me, I think. And if it were up to you, I don't know where we'd be, and speaking of you, you remind me of my younger sister, which is strange because you look more like my older brother. And speaking of my brother, why don't you? You haven't mentioned him once! I suppose you think he's not good enough to talk about! You hate my brother, don't you? You'd like to see my brother six foot under, wouldn't you?

MRS. PAVLENKO. Why no, of course I wouldn't.

SAMOVAR. Oh, that's nice. My brother a coal miner and you don't want him to make a living!

MRS. PAVLENKO. I don't under . . .

SAMOVAR. Will you let me get a word in edgewise? Talk, talk, talk! Why don't you have your tongue painted to match the wallpaper. (*MRS. PAVLENKO is open-mouthed.*) Why you *did!* Who are you—Anyway?

MRS. PAVLENKO. I am Madam Pavlenko.

SAMOVAR. What, *you're* Madam Pavlenko? Why, they never told me you were young, beautiful and charming.

MRS. PAVLENKO. (*flattered*) Well—

SAMOVAR. And now I know *why!*

MRS. PAVLENKO. I see! And who may you be?

SAMOVAR. My card, Madam.

MRS. PAVLENKO. (*reading*) "Serge B. Samovar, lawyer. Juries bribed while you wait. G.M.T.C.B.C." What does G.M.T.C.B.C. stand for?

SAMOVAR. "Give me the card back Chubby." (*snatches back card*)

MRS. PAVLENKO. Mr. Samovar, why are you here?

SAMOVAR. Why am I here? Why are any of us here? I'm too young to worry about such morbid things. I want gaiety, laughter, dancing, romance—whee!--with a hi-dee-ho and a ha-cha-cha. (*dances round her, finishing up on the chaise*)

MRS. PAVLENKO. Sir, you shake my sanity!

SAMOVAR. No, you shake mine, it's looser.

MRS. PAVLENKO. Mr. Samovar. You are in my home uninvited and unless you leave immediately I shall ring for my footman.

SAMOVAR. (*leaping up again*) Why? Is he too lazy to ring for himself? You know, that's the trouble with footmen these days, they're all lazy. Why, when I was a footman I used to work twenty-five hours a day.

MRS. PAVLENKO. How could you possibly work twenty-*five* hours a day?

SAMOVAR. I used to get up an hour early! (*MRS. PAVLENKO goes to desk and rings bell at length.*)

MRS. PAVLENKO. Well?

SAMOVAR. Beautiful, I didn't know you played.

MRS. PAVLENKO. I mean, have you anything to say before you leave?

SAMOVAR. Yes, I'm staying. (*sits on chaise*) I refuse to budge until I get my money.

MRS. PAVLENKO. Money? What money?

SAMOVAR. The money your husband owed me, of course. Eighteen hundred roubles.

MRS. PAVLENKO. If Nicholas owed you money, you will certainly be paid, but not tonight.

SAMOVAR. But it's *got* to be tonight! If I don't have that money by tomorrow morning, I'll be sent to prison and I hate living with relatives. Oh, the shame of it! You should have heard my poor old mother sob this morning when they took away her bed.

MRS. PAVLENKO. She was upset?

SAMOVAR. She was in it!

MRS. PAVLENKO. Will you please allow me to speak? My Steward will return from town the day after tomorrow. You will be paid then and not before. Do I make myself plain?

SAMOVAR. Well, *somebody* certainly does.

MRS. PAVLENKO. I refuse to listen to another word!

SAMOVAR. Then get out of here. (*She turns to leave.*) Both of you!

MRS. PAVLENKO. Oh!

(*She sails out. CARLO enters* L.)

CARLO. Hey, boss, what happened with Mrs. Pavlenko?

SAMOVAR. She absolutely refused to give me the money. You know, I've got a good mind to sit down and write her an angry letter!

CARLO. (*runs to sit at desk*) Atsa good idea, I help-a you.

SAMOVAR. Why, do you take dictation?

CARLO. Well some-a-times I'm-a take it, and some-a-times I'm-a leave it alone. . . . Ready?

SAMOVAR. Ready. "To whom it may concern. Dear Whom. I

most strongly protest about your high-handed attitude of a few moments ago, comma . . ."

CARLO. How do you spell comma? With a C or a K?

SAMOVAR. Yes.

CARLO. O.K.

SAMOVAR. "And unless I receive an immediate ipso facto, (*to the painting*) or in your case, Madam, ipso fatso, I shall be forced to take the following unpleasant measures, dash . . ."

CARLO. Sure! (*CARLO leaps up and dashes off* U.L.)

SAMOVAR. Well, I've got no one to blame but myself, I did say dash. My tongue ran away with my brain—and what they see in each other I'll never know. (*CARLO re-enters with a sandwich.*)

CARLO. Hey, boss—I'm-a go to the kitchen, make-a myself a nice sandwich.

SAMOVAR. All right, let's carry on. Pull up a chair and sit down.

CARLO. It's-a garlic sausage and gorgonzola.

SAMOVAR. All right—pull up a *window* and sit down. (*CARLO crosses to desk, throws the sandwich into the waste paper basket, and sits at the desk.*)

CARLO. O.K., now, where we was?

SAMOVAR. Oh, I don't know, let's start over. Ready?

CARLO. Ready. (*SAMOVAR throws himself on chaise in girlish pose.*)

SAMOVAR. "Dear Madam, I am seventeen and considered quite pretty. However, I'm terribly shy with boys. Every time I see one, I rush home and hide under the bedclothes. What should I do? Signed, Worried Brown Eyes". Now read that back, will you?

CARLO. O.K. (*reads*) "Dear Worried Brown Eyes, I'm-a very gladda you wrote-a me. If you wanna cure-a you shyness, next time you hide under the bedda-clothes, take-a the boy with-a you." Hey, you wanna add something?

SAMOVAR. (*rising*) Yes, take this down. "Finally Madam, it behooves me at this juncture to state most emphatically that unless . . . (*GINO on one roller skate chases MASHA across the stage from* U.R. *to* D.L. *honking his horn. They both disappear. After their exit:*) Was that an optical illusion or am I seeing things?

CARLO. Atsa my brother.

SAMOVAR. Well he ruined my flow.

CARLO. Maybe your Flo, she no run fast enough.

SAMOVAR. May I see the letter? (*CARLO hands the letter to him, he studies it gravely.*)

CARLO. What do you think, boss?

SAMOVAR. My friend, if you ever decide to leave your employment here and seek work elsewhere, I want you to feel free to avoid me like the plague.

CARLO. Fine. What's-a that mean?

SAMOVAR. It means I wouldn't touch you with a ten foot pole. And neither would Igor Krasnapolski.

CARLO. Who's he?

SAMOVAR. He's a six foot Pole. (*to the audience*) You pay your money, you take your chances. (*gives back the letter to CARLO*) Here now, take this, type it out, and then type it back in again. (*CARLO sits at the piano and puts letter on the music stand.*) Meanwhile, I'm going to the kitchen and over-eat.

CARLO. Atsa good idea. Today the cook, she make Hungarian galoshes.

SAMOVAR. The cook, eh? Tell me, is that the cook you recommended in a previous scene?

CARLO. At'sa right, Olga.

SAMOVAR. Olga! You know, I once had a girlfriend named Olga. She lived over in Kiev, and every weekend, I'd jump into my Balalaika and go visit her.

CARLO. But a balalaika, atsa musical instrument.

SAMOVAR. No wonder it took me so long. (*sings, as CARLO plays*)

I'VE BROKEN MANY A WOMAN'S WILL
I'M SAMOVAR THE SHNORRER!

(*SAMOVAR exits with a "Whee!" CARLO lays the music stand flat. GINO enters, whistling excitedly.*)

CARLO. Hey, whassa matter? (*GINO runs around the room, scattering confetti from his pockets. CARLO runs after him.*) Hey, what do you do? Gino, you make-a the mess! (*GINO whistles triumphantly.*) Mess? (*GINO then starts scratching.*) And now you scratch-a youself. Whassa matter—you itch? (*GINO nods, whistles and honks, then scratches and throws confetti, again and again.*) Itch . . . mess . . . itch . . . mess . . . itch . . . mess . . . itch . . . mess . . . (*triumphantly*) *Mess-itch!* (*GINO whistles and honks, and they embrace twice, rapidly,*

posterior, even though they face each other; CARLO throws a wild punch simultaneously and misses.) Hey! Come on . . . you kick-a my brains out! O.K., now, how we throw out-a Samovar? (*GINO does the door-locking business.*) First, you lock-a the door. (*GINO repeats stork flight business, without standing on the chaise.*) Next a stork . . . (*GINO mimes digging a hole and continues throughout CARLO's speech.*) Then you dig-a the sand . . . dig-a the earth . . . dig-a the mud . . . dig-a the hole . . dig-a the grave. . . . (*GINO honks his horn.*) *Grave!!!* Grave . . . I got it, I got it! We throw out-a Samovar, *lock stork and burial!*

(*GINO throws a shower of confetti and collapses into CARLO's arms. CARLO drags him backwards toward the exit,* L., *when NINA and CONSTANTINE enter* R. *CARLO and GINO instantly take up conspiritorial positions, and watch.*)

CONSTANTINE. Then it's all settled.

NINA. Of course, darling. I'll just run upstairs and pack.

CONSTANTINE. Wonderful.

NINA. So are you. (*They kiss and NINA exits.*)

CONSTANTINE. Oh boy!

CARLO. Hey boss, we eaves-a-droop! (*goes to CONSTANTINE, followed by GINO*) You marry Miss-a Nina right away?

CONSTANTINE. Yes, we're eloping. Isn't it marvelous?

CARLO. Well you know what-a they say. The heart she's only a muscle, so when you get married you not-a really in love, you just-a musclebound. (*laughs, then*) I don't get it.

CONSTANTINE. Well I'm really in love with Miss Nina. Why, she's even given me the confidence to rewrite my play.

CARLO. Hey, you write a play!

CONSTANTINE. Yes! (*He takes out his play.*) It's called "The Fortune Hunter." Let me tell you about it.

CARLO. Go ahead. (*CARLO sits on piano stool. GINO crosses* S.L., *sits, takes out popcorn, eats it, greedily. CONSTANTINE puts foot on chaise.*)

CONSTANTINE. It's about an unscrupulous, impoverished young nobleman who'll do anything for money. In the second act he has a very powerful scene, when he says to his friend, Grischa . . . (*reads*) "That's right, my friend—Anna Platov, the daughter of the rich landowner, has fallen helplessly in love with

me. (*NINA enters, smiling, wearing a fur coat and carrying a suitcase, and listens, unseen by CARLO and CONSTANTINE.*) She and I are to be married as soon as possible. Of course I don't love the little fool. She thinks I do, but then, as a ruthless fortune hunter, it's my business to be convincing, isn't it?" (*Laughs callously. NINA drops suitcase. From the sound, we know it's empty.*)

NINA. Constantine, how could you?

CONSTANTINE. (*realizing*) Oh Nina, let me explain!

NINA. No explanation is necessary, I heard everything!

CONSTANTINE. But darling you don't understand—it was only a . . .

NINA. Get out! (*She slaps him. CARLO, who has been watching, turns to the keyboard and begins to play the introduction to "Again". CONSTANTINE exits* D.L.) Oh, Constantine, you've broken every bone in my heart! (*CARLO plays.*)

AGAIN
I'M CRYING
I'M ACHING, THROBBING,
SHAKING, SOBBING,
SIGHING—
LOVE IS DYING
AGAIN!
NO HOPE FOR ME NOW.
AGAIN I'M ON THE SHELF
AND UP A TREE NOW.
ALL AT SEA NOW
AGAIN!
HIS EYES WERE DARK AND DREAMY—
'TWAS SO SUN-BEAMY
THEN!
BUT NOW THERE'S HEART ACHE.
I KNOW I'LL FEEL THE SMART FROM CUPID'S DART
ACHE . . .
AGAIN AND . . .

(*MUSIC continues. GINO meanwhile, has attempted to cheer NINA up while she is singing. He offers her popcorn, then takes out a lollipop. NINA is touched, emotion overcomes her and she collapses on the chaise, sobbing. CONSTANTINE re-enters* D.L. *GINO exits. CARLO picks up his magazine and begins to read.*)