

RED & SCOOTER

By
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for Tracy

CAST: 1 man, 1 woman

RED - A woman in her mid-thirties

SCOOTER - A man in his sixties

TIME: December 31, 1949

PLACE: Hollywood, California

RED & SCOOTER

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Hollywood studio. There's a sofa, a couple of chairs, a small refrigerator, a table with a couple of scripts on it, and an upright piano. The door to the hall is on the right and the door to a bathroom is on the left. It's December 31, 1949. SCOOTER, a man in his early sixties, is sitting on a stool by an elaborate electric train set. He has a bottle of Irish whiskey nearby. The train is coming around the corner. He stops it, makes an adjustment or two, then puts an empty shot glass on one of the cars.

SCOOTER. Fill her up, palomino. *(He sends the train off, sits back and waits. The train comes back around. The shot glass is full.)* Told ya I'd get you working again. *(He downs the drink. There's a knock on the door.)* Yeah. *(Another knock.)* I said yeah.

RED. *(From outside the door.)* Oh. Sorry.

SCOOTER. Come in.

RED. Right. Sorry. *(RED enters. She's in her mid-thirties. She has dyed red hair. It's pretty, but it's dyed.)*

SCOOTER. *(Working the train set.)* Put it down. I don't sign for things.

RED. Okay. What?

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SCOOTER. Put it down. (*He turns and sees Red for the first time.*) Oh.

RED. Eddie told me I should come see you.

SCOOTER. Eddie did?

RED. Yeah. If it's a bad time...

SCOOTER. Miserable time. Damndest most miserable time.

RED. Sorry. (*She starts to leave.*)

SCOOTER. Drink?

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. Would you like a drink?

RED. Oh.

SCOOTER. With me. A New Year's Eve morning drink.

RED. Okay.

SCOOTER. Would you care to join me in a drink?

RED. Sure.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. You missed it.

RED. I did?

SCOOTER. Don't think we'd both fit.

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. How long you've known Eddie?

RED. Not long. I'm pretty new around here.

SCOOTER. Well, yeah, I'd say that's clear. Not me. Not new around here. No, ma'am. Been going forever.

RED. Eddie gave me a note. I showed it to the guard. He told me where your office was, and then I got lost coming over from the gate. This is a really big studio, you know?

SCOOTER. Used to be.

RED. Feels big to me, I guess. So, then I found your office and I knocked. And here I am. Want to see the note?

SCOOTER. I believe you.

RED. (*Memorized.*) I am sorry to impose on you in a manner such as this, but my situation is most dire and time is very much of the essence. (*A pause. He shows her the train setup.*)

SCOOTER. You know anything about this stuff?

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RED. Toy trains.

SCOOTER. Model.

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. Model trains. Not toy trains. Model trains. Grown-up hobby. Big difference.

RED. Excuse me. Model trains. Got it.

SCOOTER. Thatta girl.

RED. I'm a quick learner.

SCOOTER. I can see that. How about a drink?

RED. I don't think we'd both fit.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Wrong set-up.

RED. Oh.

SCOOTER. Would you care to join me in a drink?

RED. Sure.

SCOOTER. That's the set-up.

RED. I get it.

SCOOTER. No, you don't.

RED. Don't what?

SCOOTER. Get it.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. It. You don't get it.

RED. No, I do. Get it.

SCOOTER. I'll have a drink. Would you like a drink?

RED. I don't get it.

SCOOTER. I'm offering you a drink, that's all.

RED. Oh.

SCOOTER. Would you like a drink?

RED. No, thanks. Time is of the essence...

SCOOTER. You said.

RED. ... and, anyway, I haven't had lunch yet.

SCOOTER. You like peanuts?

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. Do you like peanuts?

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RED. Who doesn't like peanuts?

SCOOTER. And bread.

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. That'll be lunch.

RED. Peanuts and bread?

SCOOTER. Bread's a little old, but no mold so far.

RED. I don't think...

SCOOTER. Lots of discussion over the years about the sequence: peanuts, old bread, whiskey... or old bread, peanuts, whiskey... or whiskey, old bread... I generally start off with the whiskey and save the old bread and peanuts for later.

RED. Could've guessed that.

SCOOTER. Excuse me?

RED. About the whiskey being first.

SCOOTER. Excuse me?

RED. About the... never mind.

SCOOTER. Nice to have met you, young lady. (*He returns to tinkering with the train.*)

RED. Okay. Sure. (*She leaves, closing the door behind her, then opens it.*) Not much of a joke. That's why it slipped by me.

SCOOTER. Figured it out, did you?

RED. "Join me in a drink. Don't think we'd both fit." It just ain't funny. Maybe if you're ten years old or something, but you're a long way from ten years old. A long way. Long, long way. "Don't think we'd both fit." Jeez. That joke stinks. I've got to tell you, you're a disappointment. Expected a lot more from a big-time movie director like you. Ah, well. I'll tell Eddie how grand it was to meet you. (*She's on her way out again.*)

SCOOTER. Hey!

RED. Yeah?

SCOOTER. I thought your needs were dire and time was of the essence.

RED. It is. They are.

SCOOTER. How soon?

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Is time up?

RED. Tomorrow.

SCOOTER. What do you know about model trains?

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RED. Nothing.

SCOOTER. They're something special.

RED. Listen...

SCOOTER. Dire situation.

RED. Yeah. It is. Dire. Really.

SCOOTER. You may find this hard to believe, I've had my own share of dire situations.

RED. Not like this.

SCOOTER. Come the morning most dire situations ain't so dire.

RED. I got one chance left. And then, forget it. All done. Aw, what the hell. You gotta beer?

SCOOTER. Say?

RED. Beer? You gotta beer?

SCOOTER. Whiskey.

RED. Beer.

SCOOTER. Refrigerator in the corner. *(She goes to the fridge and pulls out a beer.)*

RED. Last one.

SCOOTER. All yours. Church key coming in. *(He tosses her the bottle opener.)*

RED. *(Catching it.)* Got it.

SCOOTER. Can you hit worth anything?

RED. Older brother loved to pitch, taught me how to catch. Never got to bat much.

SCOOTER. Too bad.

RED. Yeah. *(She opens the beer.)* Gotta glass?

SCOOTER. Might be one in the sink in the john.

RED. No problem. *(She drinks from the bottle.)* Good beer.

SCOOTER. *(Pointing to the train.)* Take a look at this. Standard gauge, Lionel-Ives combination. *(He sets the train in motion.)* Keep your eye on the bar car.

RED. And?

SCOOTER. Keep a-looking, lady. Here she comes, puffing through the tunnel. My baby... my palomino. *(The shot glass reappears full.)*

RED. Well, what do you know about that?

SCOOTER. Ain't modern engineering full of miracles. To your health. *(They clink, bottle to shot glass.)*

RED. That train's something else.

SCOOTER. I never was a big-time movie director. Darn fine medium-time movie

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director. Before you were born.

RED. I don't think so.

SCOOTER. C'mon, you ain't that old.

RED. Old enough.

SCOOTER. Gotta name?

RED. Yup.

SCOOTER. Gonna share it?

RED. Don't know yet.

SCOOTER. Coy?

RED. No point. Sorry. This is stupid. Never gonna happen for me. Thanks for the beer.

SCOOTER. Anytime.

RED. Okay. *(She's going.)*

SCOOTER. Bring back the empty.

RED. Oh. Sorry. *(She gives him back the beer bottle.)* So long. *(She's going again.)*

SCOOTER. Yo, Red!

RED. Yeah?

SCOOTER. Got it first try.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Your name. I'm Scooter.

RED. Knew that.

SCOOTER. Not my birth name, but a good name.

RED. Nice to meet you.

SCOOTER. Likewise. I gotta tell you something.

RED. Yeah?

SCOOTER. You look a lot like a girl I used to know.

RED. Hah! That's a new one!

SCOOTER. I've got a question for you.

RED. Yeah?

SCOOTER. Do you play cards?

RED. Some.

SCOOTER. Wanna play some now?

RED. Don't think so.

SCOOTER. Mind if I do?

RED. What?

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SCOOTER. Play cards.

RED. Great. Sure. Fine. Go ahead. Play cards. (*He pulls out a deck of cards.*)

SCOOTER. So, tell me, did my good pal Eddie send you here so I could rescue you from your dire situation?

RED. You making fun?

SCOOTER. No. Just making conversation.

RED. He thought maybe you could help me with something.

SCOOTER. Maybe I can. But first, let me say that it is a pleasure to have you standing here while I shuffle this deck of ordinary playing cards. Take a peek. See? Regular, everyday playing cards. And while you're peeking, pick a card. Any card.

RED. I hate card tricks.

SCOOTER. You won't hate this one. It's terrific.

RED. I hate card tricks.

SCOOTER. Fine. You've got pressing business. After all, it's New Year's Eve... new decade about to begin... the fifties... oh, boy... I understand. Great night coming. No doubt a big party to get to.

RED. Not going to a party.

SCOOTER. Really?

RED. Nope.

SCOOTER. So stick around and you will see one of the most amazing card tricks since the world was an infant... learned at the feet of the great Houdini - an illusionist beyond compare. Your red-headed life is too full for a little free, New-Year's-Eve-Day, one-of-a-kind-for-you-only entertainment?

RED. I hate card tricks.

SCOOTER. Red, look at me.

RED. I'm looking.

SCOOTER. Pick a card. C'mon, pick a card. Best trick you'll ever see. Guaranteed. C'mon gorgeous, have some fun. Pick a - (*She picks a card.*) Thatta girl. Now show it to me.

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. Show me the card.

RED. This is some kind of trick.

SCOOTER. Just show me the card. (*She does.*) Queen of hearts.

RED. Right. Very good. Queen of hearts. Great trick.

SCOOTER. There's more.

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RED. Oh.

SCOOTER. That was only the beginning of the trick.

RED. Ah.

SCOOTER. Now I shuffle. (*He does. Very well.*)

RED. Wow.

SCOOTER. I like shuffling.

RED. I can see that.

SCOOTER. (*Still shuffling.*) So, you and Eddie know each other long?

RED. No.

SCOOTER. Didn't think so. We're good pals - me and Eddie. We tell each other pretty much everything. Watch this shuffle. Learned it from Bill Fields. (*He tries some fancy shuffle and messes it up badly.*) For the love of Mike...

RED. It's okay.

SCOOTER. I used to be able to do that one blindfolded. I guess I am getting old.

RED. Could happen to anyone.

SCOOTER. Never happened to that son-of-a-bitch Fields. Sorry. Gotta watch my language in front of a lady.

RED. Nothing I haven't heard before.

SCOOTER. Here you are coming to me for advice about something, all in a rush - a pretty girl like you - and I waste your time with some stupid card trick my hands can't do anymore. I'm sorry.

RED. Don't worry about it. I was very impressed with your shuffling.

SCOOTER. Do you mind if I try the trick again? I know you're pressed for time, but how's about indulging an old man for one more minute?

RED. Sure. Go ahead.

SCOOTER. Aw, geez, you got too much going on for my stupid games. Forgive me. Forget the cards. I'm sorry. Let me just get myself a little drink and then we can talk about your dire situation. And don't you worry, me and the whiskey do fine together. Won't be a problem at all. Did I show you how the specially equipped train car works?

RED. You did.

SCOOTER. Well, why don't you take another gander while you're standing here?

RED. Sure. (*Scooter sets the train in motion.*)

SCOOTER. Keep your eye on the bar...

RED. Bar car. Yeah, I know.

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SCOOTER. Where are you from, by the way?

RED. Wilkes-Barre, P.A.

SCOOTER. Been there. Some town.

RED. Yeah.

SCOOTER. Look at that train. Here she comes puffing through the tunnel. My baby... my palo... well, for pity's sake, what have we here? This ain't no shot of Ireland's finest. It looks like a playing card, and glory hallelujah, I bet you can't guess which card she be...

RED. Queen of hearts?

SCOOTER. Why, lookee, lookee do, that's exactly the card she is.

RED. Holy mackerel.

SCOOTER. You ain't just whistling Dixie.

RED. Holy mackerel.

SCOOTER. Couldn't agree more. And look what else my little palomino's brought. It's another shot of whiskey. Ain't life chock full of wonders? (*He drinks his Irish.*)

RED. How'd you do that?

SCOOTER. Magic.

RED. No. C'mon, how's you do it?

SCOOTER. Can't tell you. The Magicians' Code.

RED. C'mon.

SCOOTER. Nope. Sorry, babe. But just so's you know, the train part is what makes the trick one-of-a-kind. That's the magic. Took me six weeks to figure out how to do it and a month to build it. Honestly wasn't sure it would work today. But, heck, it went like gangbusters. And you, Red, are the first to witness the show.

RED. It's great.

SCOOTER. That it is. So, young lady, what brings you here from the wasteland of Wilkes-Barre, P.A.?

RED. I've got an audition.

SCOOTER. Yeah?

RED. Eddie said you sometimes can help people when they've got an audition.

SCOOTER. Sometimes I can.

RED. It's for Mr. Arnold Fishman.

SCOOTER. Junior.

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. Mr. Arnold Fishman, Junior.

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RED. Oh. Mr. Arnold Fishman, Junior.

SCOOTER. Right.

RED. Is there a Mr. Arnold Fishman, Senior?

SCOOTER. Not anymore.

RED. That's too bad.

SCOOTER. Yes, ma'am, it sure as shooting is. What's it for?

RED. Mr. Arnold Fishman, Junior.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. What's the audition for?

RED. Oh. Sorry. I thought you were testing me.

SCOOTER. What's the audition for?

RED. Sorry. It's for some new television show.

SCOOTER. Television.

RED. Variety type of show. You know, songs, skits, snappy patter.

SCOOTER. Snappy patter.

RED. Yeah. They're gonna have a different celebrity guy host it every week, but they want to have the same girl each time. She'll do lots of stuff with the different hosts and, you know, gradually everyone watching will get to know her. And it'll be great. Bing Crosby might be the first one. That's what Mr. Fishman said. The girl who was supposed to do it got pregnant, so they had to let her go. Mr. Fishman said he liked me a lot and he would give me a shot. Eddie told me to talk to you. He said you know pretty much everything they could ask me to do at the tryout. Scooter, this is my only chance to be somebody. Do you understand what I mean? I mean...if it doesn't happen I'm on my way back to whatever I have left in Wilkes-Barre, which, I got to tell you, ain't, at this point, very much. That's why I'm here. Now or never. Last chance. Aw, heck, I gotta go.

SCOOTER. You just got here.

RED. No, I gotta go.

SCOOTER. Where?

RED. You know.

SCOOTER. I don't.

RED. Go. I gotta.

SCOOTER. What?

RED. Go.

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SCOOTER. Oh.

RED. Probably the beer. And maybe I'm a little nervous.

SCOOTER. Over there. (*He points to the bathroom door.*)

RED. Thanks. Forget it. I'm fine. I can wait.

SCOOTER. Hey, you gotta go, you gotta go.

RED. Nah. I'm fine. Really.

SCOOTER. You sure?

RED. Oh, yeah. I'm sure. So, will you help me?

SCOOTER. We're talking about Fishman, right?

RED. Mr. Arnold Fishman, Junior.

SCOOTER. A girl like you needs to be careful when you're with a guy like him.

RED. Nah. He was a perfect gentleman. Couldn't have been nicer. Showed me a picture of his wife and kids.

SCOOTER. Don't trust him.

RED. Never stepped out of line or said anything that wasn't, you know, up and up and altogether proper. Aw, I really gotta go.

SCOOTER. Over there.

RED. Don't listen, okay?

SCOOTER. What?

RED. It's embarrassing.

SCOOTER. If you've gotta go, you've gotta go.

RED. Yeah, but...

SCOOTER. I'll play the piano. Won't hear a thing.

RED. Eddie said that, too.

SCOOTER. What?

RED. You could work with me on my song.

SCOOTER. Eddie said that?

RED: Yup. (*A pause.*) You gonna play? (*He goes to the piano and starts noodling. She dashes to the bathroom.*)

SCOOTER. Sorry about the mess in the john. I've been living here for a couple of days. I sort of stash everything in there. Studio and I have a deal. I can stay here as long as I want until they tell me I can't stay here anymore.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Sounds nice.

SCOOTER. What?

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Your piano playing sounds nice.

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SCOOTER. You don't know much about music, do you?

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) I know a thing or two. Sounds nice.

SCOOTER. I used to be pretty good.

RED. You still are.

SCOOTER. Nope. Not anymore. Took my last ex-wife to a club one night. Heard some guy playing. Swear to god, that fella had a dozen extra keys and a couple more fingers than the rest of us. Couldn't believe what I was hearing. Wouldn't go near my piano for months after that. Didn't want to embarrass my ears. Finally I tricked myself into playing "Chopsticks" when I wasn't looking. (*To himself.*) What the hell does she care about me playing "Chopsticks"? (*Calls.*) You all right in there?

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Be out in a second.

SCOOTER. Take your time. Don't want to injure yourself.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) One second.

SCOOTER. Okeedokey.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) You can stop with the piano if you want to.

SCOOTER. Thanks. (*He stops playing. Red returns.*)

RED. It's called Tango Red. House of Westmore. Out of a bottle. (*Scooter is silent.*) My hair. Did it a week ago. Got to be noticed. Look special. Eddie said it might be too flashy.

SCOOTER. Eddie's been known to make mistakes.

RED. You don't think it's too much?

SCOOTER. Red suits you fine.

RED. He wanted to come over with me. Eddie. But I thought it would go better with just the two of us. Less confusing.

SCOOTER. Does Mabel know?

RED. Sure.

SCOOTER. That had to be an uproar.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Mabel. You and Eddie.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. You and Eddie. Mabel finding out.

RED. Aw, no. Aw. Gee. No. Me and Eddie. No.

SCOOTER. Stranger things have happened

RED. Mabel's my cousin, so Eddie's like my big cousin-in-law. Oh, no. Me and

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Eddie. That's funny. Do you know how old he is?

SCOOTER. Yup

RED. 59.

SCOOTER. Yup.

RED. That's pretty darn old.

SCOOTER. Well...

RED. He says when he was getting started you'd been around for a while so you helped him out.

SCOOTER. Yeah...

RED. So that's why I figured maybe you could help me out. I can pay you for your time. I've got sixty-five dollars.

SCOOTER. Don't want your money.

RED. I should pay you.

SCOOTER. No money.

RED. But it'll be more professional...

SCOOTER. Listen...

RED. Yes.

SCOOTER. If I help you...

RED. Please help me.

SCOOTER. ... it ain't gonna be for money.

RED. I should pay you.

SCOOTER. I don't want your money.

RED. But...

SCOOTER. I don't want money!

RED. Sorry. No money. Sorry.

SCOOTER. When are you supposed to see Junior?

RED. Not only him. A bunch of guys.

SCOOTER. When?

RED. Tomorrow.

SCOOTER. New Year's Day?

RED. Yeah. Early. 9:30.

SCOOTER. You're kidding?

RED. I guess they're in a rush.

SCOOTER. Sunday?

RED. Yeah.

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SCOOTER. Television. I'm telling you.

RED. I'm sorry about talking about the money. *(She starts to cry.)*

SCOOTER. Don't.

RED. Sorry. Didn't mean to. Sorry. *(Scooter offers her a hanky.)*

SCOOTER. Here.

RED. Got my own. *(She pulls out a hanky, wipes her eyes, and blows her nose.)* It ain't ever gonna happen.

SCOOTER. What?

RED. Me getting the job. Not special enough.

SCOOTER. How many tomorrow?

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. Girls. How many they seeing?

RED. Eddie said three or four, he thought.

SCOOTER. Pretty darn good odds.

RED. I guess...

SCOOTER. You want it?

RED. The job?

SCOOTER. Yeah.

RED. Oh, god, Scooter, yes, I want the job.

SCOOTER. I'll help you.

RED. You will?

SCOOTER. Happy New Year.

RED. You'll help me?

SCOOTER. That's what I said.

RED. Thanks. Thanks. Thank you. You're a good man.

SCOOTER. Sometimes.

RED. *(She pulls sheet music out of her bag.)* I brought some music...

SCOOTER. Oh.

RED. ... so you could hear my song.

SCOOTER. Very nice. *(He offers her the piano seat.)*

RED. I don't know how to play the piano.

SCOOTER. You'd like me to be the accompanist?

RED. Sure. Yeah, I guess. Or I could do it a cappella...

SCOOTER. No.

RED. ... without music...

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SCOOTER. I'll play.

RED. ... which is what a cappella means. Without music. But you know what a cappella means 'cause you play the piano and I don't. Play. The piano. Must be the beer...

SCOOTER. Give me the music...

RED. ... or nerves. 'Cause I guess I am kinda nervous.

SCOOTER. Don't be nervous about me.

RED. Not nervous about you. Nervous about Mr. Arnold Fishman, Junior. And you, too. I guess. Sort of. Maybe I could eat a couple of peanuts. Help calm me down.

SCOOTER. Sure.

RED. Like an elephant. I'll eat a couple of peanuts and then I'll sing except elephants don't sing.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. It'd be pretty darn funny if they did. You know. Through the trunk.

SCOOTER. (*Offers the peanuts.*) Peanuts.

RED. Thanks. Pretty funny to see an elephant sing. (*She imitates an elephant singing.*) Maybe not so funny. (*She eats a couple of peanuts.*) Good peanuts.

SCOOTER. Give me the music.

RED. Oh. Sorry. Here.

SCOOTER. What's this?

RED. It's a new song.

SCOOTER. New?

RED. Wait'll you hear it. It's so cute. Everybody likes it. Friend of mine wrote it. Eddie thought it was swell. "Really swell," he said. One second. Sorry. (*She takes a drink of beer and swirls it around in her mouth.*) Got it. The peanut. Got caught in my tooth. I hate when that happens. Good thing I'm not an elephant. Hah. Hah.

SCOOTER. The song.

RED. Yeah. You'll love it. No kidding. When you see how I do it. I'm pretty darn good at putting it over. Okay. You sit down and I'll count you in. Unless you want to count me in.

SCOOTER. You count.

RED. No. No. You're much more experienced at counting. You count me in. Okay? I don't know. What should we do?

SCOOTER. We'll count together.

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RED. We can do that?

SCOOTER. Do what?

RED. Count together.

SCOOTER. People do it all the time.

RED. Wow. Learn something new every day.

SCOOTER. That stops after a while.

RED. No, it doesn't.

SCOOTER. Haven't learned anything since May of '47.

RED. You're pulling my leg.

SCOOTER. Who, me?

RED. Yeah, you.

SCOOTER. (*Smiling.*) That's a smart girl.

RED. You look nice when you smile.

SCOOTER. (*At the piano.*) Okay. Here we go.

RED. Right.

SCOOTER. And...

RED. One and two and three and four and go now... I thought we were counting together.

SCOOTER. I got lost. You were going a little fast.

RED. Sorry. Let's try again.

SCOOTER. And...

RED. (*Still too fast.*) One and two and three and four and play. (*He plays "Chopsticks".*) That's not funny. At all. I need this job. I need your help. No time for kidding around. Please, Scooter. Please.

SCOOTER. Watch me. No. Really look at me. Right at me. Focus. Deep breath. Good. Now nice and easy. Focus. Breathe. And we're off. (*He plays. She sings.*)

RED. "I'm a girl/who'd love to meet a boy/who's looking for a girl/to bring him joy./And I hope/that someday he and I/will build our little cabin in the sky." (*She stops singing.*) That's the intro.

SCOOTER. I could tell. (*He plays and she sings.*)

RED. "I've got a heart that's ready for some loving/It beats and beats/but what's the beating for?/I've got two lips,/they're ready for some kissing./They're round and wide/But the boys seem to ignore..." (*He stops playing.*)

SCOOTER. Hello?

RED. (*Pointing to the music.*) We're right there.

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. I know where we are, but what's that you said about lips?

RED. (*Sings.*) "They're round and wide/But the boys..."

SCOOTER. "Round and wide"?

RED. Yeah.

SCOOTER. "Round and wide"?

RED. Yeah.

SCOOTER. Okay.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Nothing.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Sounds odd to me.

RED. Odd?

SCOOTER. Not sure exactly what it means.

RED. Where I come from, "round and wide" means "round and wide".

SCOOTER. Okay.

RED. Maybe here in Los Angeles, California, Hollywood, these words have a different meaning of which I am unaware of and need to be informed of, but, in the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, pretty much everyone over the age of say three or maybe two has a clear understanding of the meaning of "round and wide". Okay. You're right. I know. "Round and wide" lips. What's a round lip and how does it make any sense with a wide lip and, really, what's a wide lip anyway.

SCOOTER. Bingo.

RED. Okay. Okay. Okay. Here's what happened. Hand to god. The lyric writer person got a little stuck there, and things were flowing and it's a sweet, sweet song and, you know, it's not like the audience is sitting around thinking about all the details.

SCOOTER. No?

RED. C'mon. Trust me. It's a sweet song. Once you hear the finish you'll see. Keep going. C'mon. Please.

SCOOTER. Look at me. Breathe. Focus. Nice and easy. Focus.

RED. From where?

SCOOTER. "Lips"... Focus. And we're off.

RED. "I've got two lips, they're ready for some kissing,/They're round and wide/But the boys seem to ignore/I know somewhere he's waiting just to find me,/I'll be his bride/and who could ask for more?"

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. Rhymes with bride. Wide... bride.

RED. Pretty darn good, huh?

SCOOTER. Do the finish one more time.

RED. (*Sings.*) "I'll be his bride,/and who could ask for more?"

SCOOTER. Eddie said it was swell?

RED. Mabel, too. They both said it was a swell song, but you don't like it.

SCOOTER. I, uh...

RED. The "round and wide" thing?

SCOOTER. Wide... bride. It's a solid rhyme.

RED. But you don't like it.

SCOOTER. What I like don't matter. Junior's the one you've got to impress.

RED. Right.

SCOOTER. And he's the kind of man who likes a song he's heard before.

RED. Oh.

SCOOTER. Makes him feel more secure. Lets him concentrate on the singer not the song.

RED. Okay.

SCOOTER. It's less challenging for him and safer for you.

RED. So what you're saying is I should forget about the "I'm a Girl" song?

SCOOTER. For now.

RED. Just forget about it?

SCOOTER. For now. Maybe another time.

RED. Another time. Sure. Forgotten. Gone. Bye, bye, "I'm a Girl" song.

SCOOTER. Maybe try something like an Irving Berlin tune.

RED. Irving Berlin?

SCOOTER. Simple, straightforward, clean melody. Pick the right one, we can make you shine.

RED. Irving Berlin?

SCOOTER. Got a great one for you. "Always". (*He sings.*) "I'll be loving you, always..."

RED. I know it.

SCOOTER. Okay then. Here we go. Look at me. Focus. Breathe. And go.

RED. That song's all wrong.

SCOOTER. It is?

RED. "I'll be loving you, always/with a love that's true, always..." No good. The

RED & SCOOTER

song I sing has to be about a girl who's ready to fall in love, and wanting to fall in love, but not in love yet. 'Cause the men watching the show want to think they might be able to catch her. But, at the same time, the girl can't look so easy that it'll get the wives all crazy and jealous. The song's gotta be sort of innocent and sort of sexy, but not too sexy. And it's got to be pretty easy to sing, 'cause I ain't got the greatest voice ever to come down the pike. Though you can tell I'm pretty darn good at putting the number over once I relax. So, as good an idea as "Always" is, it's not so good for me tomorrow for Mr. Fishman for my tryout for their show.

SCOOTER. You've got it all figured out.

RED. Maybe I didn't write the greatest song ever, but I'm no ninny.

SCOOTER. You wrote it?

RED. What?

SCOOTER. The lip song? You wrote it?

RED. No. Yeah. Well, yeah. I wrote it.

SCOOTER. Had a feeling.

RED. It's not that bad.

SCOOTER. No, no, not that bad.

RED. But bad?

SCOOTER. Well?

RED. The "round and wide" stinks. I know. I know. But I got stuck cause there aren't that many words to rhyme with "bride".

SCOOTER. Happens to the best of them.

RED. Getting stuck?

SCOOTER. It can take a heckuva long time to write a good song.

RED. You're telling me. I worked on that one for almost three hours.

SCOOTER. "I'm Old Fashioned".

RED. What?

SCOOTER. I've got the music. It's innocent and sort of sexy but not too sexy.

RED. Don't mock.

SCOOTER. Not mocking. We can go sort of up tempo on it. Like this. (*He plays and sings.*) "I'm old fashioned,/I like the moonlight..."

RED. Needs an intro.

SCOOTER. No intro.

RED. I like intros.

SCOOTER. You want to hit Junior with it, bam. Intro might make him feel stupid,

RED & SCOOTER

“Hey, she's singing a song I don't know, what's with her?” So you're out of there faster than whatever through a goose.

RED. Shit.

SCOOTER. What?

RED. Shit through a goose. I'm used to those words.

SCOOTER. Not here you're not.

RED. Sorry.

SCOOTER. Here we go. Breathe. Focus. Nice and easy. Focus. (*He plays.*) “I'm old fashioned/I like the moonlight...” (*He stops.*) Come on, Red, sing.

RED. (*Sings.*) “I love the old fashioned things...”

SCOOTER. Keep going.

RED. “The sound of rain/Upon a windowpane...”

SCOOTER. Atta girl.

RED. “The starry song that April sings...” (*She stops.*)

SCOOTER. What's the matter?

RED. “The starry song that April sings”?

SCOOTER. Yeah.

RED. “The starry song that April sings...” Who wrote that?

SCOOTER. Johnny Mercer.

RED. “Starry song that April sings...” Geez. “April sings”. April's a month. Months don't sing. People sing. Birds sing. Months don't do anything. And what the heck is a starry song? Can't answer that can you? Didn't think so. “Round and wide” ain't sounding so bad right about now, is it? Bet you're sorry for making fun of me.

SCOOTER. You got an audition tomorrow, right?

RED. Right.

SCOOTER. This is the song to sing.

RED. Okay, but I'm telling you those words sure don't make a lot of sense. (*Scooter plays.*)

SCOOTER. (*Sings.*) “I love the old fashioned things...”

RED. (*Sings.*) “The sound of rain/Upon a windowpane/The starry song that April sings./This year's fancies are passing fancies/But sighing sighs, holding hands,/This my heart understands...” Those words are a lot better.

SCOOTER. Finish up.

RED. (*Sings.*) “I'm old fashioned,/But I don't mind it/That's how I want to be/As long as you'll agree/To stay old fashioned with me...”

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. (*Sings harmony with Red.*) “To stay old fashioned with me.” (*The song is over.*)

SCOOTER. That's harmony.

RED. I know. Don't care.

SCOOTER. Pardon me?

RED. Can't do harmony by myself and I don't think you're going to be at the tryout for the girl for the television show for Mr. Fishman, so I don't care about your harmony.

SCOOTER. That's enough for today.

RED. You're mad.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. Because I didn't like your harmony.

SCOOTER. Not mad.

RED. I did like it. It was lovely to sing with you.

SCOOTER. I gotta be some place in a little while.

RED. I see Mr. Fishman in 22 hours and 15 minutes.

SCOOTER. You're serious?

RED. Tomorrow. 9:30. In the morning.

SCOOTER. You weren't stretching it?

RED. No.

SCOOTER. New Year's Day, for chrissake.

RED. Yes.

SCOOTER. Can't be done. Sorry.

RED. You gotta to help me.

SCOOTER. Look. It's not that you ain't got talent. You're an okay singer. Good working voice. There's just not enough time.

RED. Kicking me out?

SCOOTER. What?

RED. You're kicking me out. That's just swell. Thanks for seeing me. And the little sing together. Jesus. God. You don't get it, do you? My last chance. Damn it. Thanks. So long. (*She heads out the door, closes it behind her, then opens it and comes back in.*) Oh, by the way, that trick with the train and the card needs work.

SCOOTER. It's perfect.

RED. No reason to have me show you the card. Messes with the mystery. Makes the rest of it way too obvious.

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. What are you talking about?

RED. It would be much more magical if it seemed like a regular old card trick. You know, I pick a card, I memorize it, I put it back in the deck, then you do the screw up with the shuffle. I feel sorry for you and forget all about the trick. And then, bingo, out of nowhere the card shows up on your toy train.

SCOOTER. Model...

RED. That's the big surprise 'cause I totally forgot you were doing a trick. But, hey, what do I know? I'm just a girl with an okay singing voice.

SCOOTER. Trick's perfect.

RED. Yeah. Right. Okay. Sure. Whatever you say. Goodbye.

SCOOTER. Red.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Finish your beer.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Finish your beer.

RED. Give it.

SCOOTER. Catch.

RED. You going to throw it?

SCOOTER. You going to catch it?

RED. If the throw's halfway decent, I'm going to catch it. (*He tosses her the beer. She catches it but jams her finger.*) Ouch.

SCOOTER. What happened?

RED. Jammed my finger.

SCOOTER. Let me look.

RED. No.

SCOOTER. Let me look.

RED. No.

SCOOTER. Let me see.

RED. Why'd you go and heave a bottle of beer at a girl on New Year's Eve anyway?

SCOOTER. It was a toss.

RED. It was a heave. You son of a bitch. And it hurts. First you sing harmony with me for no good reason, then you kick me out of your office, then you break my finger by heaving a bottle of beer at me, middle of the day when you're not supposed to be drinking anyway. Jesus. Ouch. And now I'm crying again. Aw, jeez. Give me your hanky.

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. *(He gives her a handkerchief and grabs her hand.)* Here.

RED. Ow! Hey, what are you doing?

SCOOTER. Looking.

RED. Well, you don't need to touch it. You can look, but don't touch.

SCOOTER. Ain't busted.

RED. Might be.

SCOOTER. Ain't.

RED. You don't know.

SCOOTER. I know.

RED. No, you don't.

SCOOTER. You're right.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. You're right about the trick with the train.

RED. No doubt about it.

SCOOTER. The bigger surprise the better.

RED. Yup.

SCOOTER. *(Points at something.)* What's that?

RED. Where? *(She turns and looks. He yanks her finger. Hard.)* Oh, my god. Ouch. Oh. Aw, gee. Ouch. Gee. Aw. Aw. What the hell did you do?

SCOOTER. Fixed your finger.

RED. You crazy old coot.

SCOOTER. Don't hurt anymore, does it?

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Your finger.

RED. What about it?

SCOOTER. Does it hurt?

RED. No, it doesn't hurt.

SCOOTER. Hah!

RED. Pretty proud of yourself, aren't you, now that the finger you broke when you heaved a bottle of beer at a girl in the middle of the day for no reason doesn't hurt anymore?

SCOOTER. You got a husband?

RED. I got nine working fingers and one with no blood left in it, is what I got.

SCOOTER. What's his name?

RED. There's no reason for that.

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. What?

RED. Do I have a husband.

SCOOTER. Need to know who I'm dealing with.

RED. Not dealing with anyone, Captain. You kicked me out.

SCOOTER. Kids?

RED. I got an audition tomorrow and if that don't work out, I got nothing. You don't hear me asking you all kinds of personal, none of your business questions.

SCOOTER. Want to see another magic trick?

RED. No.

SCOOTER. It's a swell trick.

RED. Look, I've got a real time problem here. It's late, and I'm too old for stupid magic tricks.

SCOOTER. How old?

RED. Too old.

SCOOTER. Dames.

RED. Fine. How old are you?

SCOOTER. Older.

RED. Older than what, dirt? Hah!

SCOOTER. Older than you.

RED. That's for sure. And I'm a lot cuter.

SCOOTER. No argument from me.

RED. Didn't think you noticed.

SCOOTER. Soon as you walked in. And you're a brave girl.

RED. Thanks.

SCOOTER. Wanna see the trick?

RED. I thought you had to be some place.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. You said you had to be some place.

SCOOTER. I was lying.

RED. Oh. Okay. Show me the trick.

SCOOTER. Later. Tell me the first rule to making a gag work?

RED. What?

SCOOTER. First rule to making a gag work?

RED. Why?

SCOOTER. Just answer. First rule to making a gag work?

RED & SCOOTER

RED. Don't know.

SCOOTER. The first rule to making a gag work is you've got to tell the truth. Always. Otherwise you're wasting my time, your time, audience's time. No point. But if you tell the truth, you can control time. You can do what you want with it. Push it. Squeeze it. Stand it on its head. But only if you tell the truth. That's the first rule to making a gag work.

RED. I don't get it.

SCOOTER. You will. The other first rule is: Look. Listen. React. Act.

RED. Easy.

SCOOTER. No, it's not.

RED. Look. Listen. React. Act. Ta-dum!

SCOOTER. You know how to take a pie?

RED. What do you mean?

SCOOTER. Take a pie. Do you know how to?

RED. I don't understand.

SCOOTER. Do you know how to take a pie?

RED. Where am I taking it?

SCOOTER. What?

RED. Where am I gonna take the pie?

SCOOTER. In the face.

RED. Huh?

SCOOTER. Take. A. Pie. In. The. Face.

RED. Oh. A pie in the face.

SCOOTER. Right.

RED. I thought you meant take a pie to someone's house.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. But you meant take a pie in the face like in the movies.

SCOOTER. Yes.

RED. That's funny.

SCOOTER. What's funny?

RED. Me thinking you meant take a pie to someone's house.

SCOOTER. Nothing funny about that.

RED. A funny kind of misunderstanding.

SCOOTER. Not funny.

RED. Like George Burns and Gracie Allen funny.

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. Junior hates them.

RED. Nobody hates George and Gracie.

SCOOTER. Junior does.

RED. Impossible.

SCOOTER. You wearing a watch?

RED. Yeah.

SCOOTER. Look at it. *(Red looks at her watch.)*

RED. Oh. Okay. Time's running out. Got it. All ears.

SCOOTER. Tell me the first rule.

RED. Easy-peasy. Truth. Look. Listen. Act.

SCOOTER. Nope.

RED. That's what you said.

SCOOTER. You left something out.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. React.

RED. Right. Sorry. Truth. Look. Listen. Act. React.

SCOOTER. Nope.

RED. C'mon.

SCOOTER. You can't act until you react.

RED. That don't make a lot of sense.

SCOOTER. If you understand it, it makes a whole world of sense.

RED. You can't "re" something until you do it first.

SCOOTER. Sometimes, but not in this case.

RED. Re-heat... re-read... re-go. I gotta. Go. Again. Re-go. Nerves. Sorry. Be back in a second. *(She doesn't move.)*

SCOOTER. Need music?

RED. Promise you won't listen.

SCOOTER. I'll talk. You go and I'll talk.

RED. Okay. *(She still doesn't move.)*

SCOOTER. I won't hear a thing.

RED. Promise?

SCOOTER. Scout's honor.

RED. I'm trusting you.

SCOOTER. As well you should. *(She runs to the bathroom. He pours a drink.)*

RED. *(From the bathroom.)* So?

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. What?

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) I don't hear talking.

SCOOTER. Right. I forgot.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Talk.

SCOOTER. I'm hungry. You hungry or did the peanuts fill you up?

RED. Hungry!

SCOOTER. You like Chinks?

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Hello?

SCOOTER. Chinks?

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Hello?

SCOOTER. To eat. Do you like Chinks? (*She comes out of the bathroom.*)

RED. Excuse me?

SCOOTER. Chinks. You know, Chinese. Chinese food.

RED. What did you call it?

SCOOTER. Chinks.

RED. That's not right.

SCOOTER. That's what they call it.

RED. Who?

SCOOTER. Everybody.

RED. Everybody calls it Chinks?

SCOOTER. They do.

RED. You've heard it?

SCOOTER. Yes, I have. At the restaurant. Formosa. Everybody calls it that.

RED. The people in the restaurant?

SCOOTER. Yes.

RED. The ones who work there?

SCOOTER. We're gonna fight about this?

RED. I don't know. Are we?

SCOOTER. You're gonna judge me. Criticize me.

RED. It's not right to use that name.

SCOOTER. You don't know me or anything about me, so don't be quick to think you do.

RED. I've got to go.

SCOOTER. Good idea.

RED. (*She runs back to the bathroom.*) Don't listen.

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. Damn it. (*He calls out.*) You don't know who I am. I don't go calling people names, if that's what you're thinking. Anybody who knows the least little thing about me, about where I come from... if you had talked to Eddie, or even Mabel, for more than I don't know how long you talked to either one of them about me, if you even did before coming over here and begging me for help. Jesus criminy... I was working with Negroes and Jews before you were a glint in your Daddy's eyes. What the heck do you think Harry Houdini was? He was a Jewish boy. Named Weiss. Erik Weiss. Great pal of mine. Whenever he was in Hollywood a couple of us would get together for a little baseball game. Right out back of the studio. And I'd call him Erik just to make him crazy. "Yo, Erik, can't hit the curve ball, can you?" Then I'd throw the fast ball right by him. Worked every time. He'd get mad as hell. I hope you're listening to this 'cause if you think I'm some prejudiced old S.O.B., you can leave right now. I don't need the aggravation. People who know me... I'm going to order some food. I don't know if you eat the stuff. The oriental food. The food from Asia. The Chinese food. I'm going to order from Formosa. Chinese food. But only if you believe me that I'm telling you the truth that I carry not an ounce of bigotry in me. Otherwise feel free to vamoose out of here. And I mean that from the depth of my soul. You don't judge people when you don't know them. I'm serious about this. I don't need some filly making my life any more miserable than it already is. You have got to be finished by now. I know elephants take half the time it's taking you.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) I believe you.

SCOOTER. Well, all right then.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Don't look.

SCOOTER. I'm going to order the Chinese.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Turn your back. I've got something I want to show you.

SCOOTER. Listen, kid, I'm old enough to be your whoever.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) I'm not going to show you any of that.

SCOOTER. Good.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) I want your honest opinion about something. And I need to really look at your face when you first see it, so turn your back to the door.

SCOOTER. (*Sarcastic.*) I love surprises.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) Turn around.

SCOOTER. I'm turned.

RED. Promise?

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. Yes. (*Red comes out from the bathroom and stands right behind Scooter.*)

RED. Okay, you can look. (*He turns. She hits him in the face with a shaving cream pie. She thinks it's funny. Very funny. He is not amused.*)

SCOOTER. What the... ?

RED. Shaving cream...

SCOOTER. Yeah.

RED. ... from the bathroom. Pretty funny.

SCOOTER. Oh, boy.

RED. That really is funny.

SCOOTER. For the love of Mike...

RED. React. Act.

SCOOTER. Unbelievable.

RED. (*Can't stop laughing.*) I'm sorry.

SCOOTER. What the hell were you thinking?

RED. It's funny.

SCOOTER. No...

RED. I...

SCOOTER. Not funny.

RED. The shaving cream was sitting in there...

SCOOTER. Yeah.

RED. All those plates in the sink.

SCOOTER. Not funny without a story.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. A pie in the face without a story behind it ain't funny.

RED. (*Stops laughing.*) Oh.

SCOOTER. Not funny at all.

RED. I'll get you a towel. (*She goes into the bathroom.*)

SCOOTER. Gotta give you credit though, you're a pip.

RED. (*From the bathroom.*) What?

SCOOTER. You're a pip. (*Red returns with a towel.*)

RED. Is that good? Here's a towel. A pip, is that good?

SCOOTER. Not right now it ain't. Get me a drink.

RED. Sure.

SCOOTER. From the train.

RED & SCOOTER

RED. Right. (*She goes to the train set.*)

SCOOTER. Crank it right, then hit the black button when she goes in the tunnel.

RED. C'mon, the pie was funny.

SCOOTER. Not laughing. (*He goes into the bathroom.*)

RED. I was trying to learn from watching you. You know. Take the pie. React, act stuff. Truth. Listen. React. Act. Oh, my god. I'm sorry. I never had a beer this time of day in my life ever. I got stupid. (*To herself.*) I'm an idiot. I hate, hate, hate myself. (*She calls.*) Listen, Scooter...

SCOOTER. (*From the bathroom.*) Be right out.

RED. I'm sorry. Really. I got carried away. How do you stop this train?

SCOOTER. (*From the bathroom.*) The drink come through?

RED. Uh... yeah.

SCOOTER. (*From the bathroom.*) Crank center. Hit the red button when she comes to the station. (*Red stops the train.*)

RED. Hey, listen Scooter, I'm an idiot. I'll tell Eddie I messed up and you were terrific. Happy New Year and all that. I'll be leaving now.

SCOOTER. No. Stay. I've got something else to teach you. (*He returns from the bathroom. He's carrying something behind his back.*)

SCOOTER. You need to understand the different kinds of pie gags. There's the surprise pie in the face, like you just did with me, which is not without its adherents in the business...

RED. Uh, huh.

SCOOTER. ... but that surprise pie is really only a set-up pie.

RED. Set-up?

SCOOTER. Yes, ma'am.

RED. For what?

SCOOTER. For the rest of the story.

RED. What's the rest of the story?

SCOOTER. The second pie.

RED. The second pie?

SCOOTER. That's the one I think is funny. I call it "the inevitable". (*He reveals a shaving cream pie from behind his back.*) The victim knows it's coming, and she knows she's powerless to do anything about it. And the audience knows it's coming. And everyone is maybe just a little on the edge of their seats. Because, it's, well... it's gonna happen. It's "the inevitable".

RED & SCOOTER

RED. (*Pointing to the pie.*) That's "the inevitable", isn't it?

SCOOTER. Yup.

RED. And it's gonna happen?

SCOOTER. Yup.

RED. Okay, what do I do?

SCOOTER. What do you mean, what do you do?

RED. To make sure it's funny.

SCOOTER. You don't do nothing. If you want it to be funny, you do nothing.

RED. Nothing?

SCOOTER. Yup.

RED. Okay. (*She tries to do nothing.*) C'mon. Hit me with it. I'm doing nothing.

SCOOTER. You're not doing nothing.

RED. I am so doing nothing.

SCOOTER. You're trying to do nothing, but you're doing something.

RED. I am not.

SCOOTER. Yes, you are.

RED. What am I doing?

SCOOTER. Not nothing.

RED. I'm telling you, I'm doing nothing.

SCOOTER. Aw, forget it. Too hard to make it work with a girl, anyway. Get me that drink, would you? If it looks she's getting hurt... it's tricky with a girl.

RED. You're not going to hit me with the pie, are you?

SCOOTER. Should be whipped cream, anyway, not shaving cream. Gets in your mouth. Bring me that drink over here.

RED. I know what you're doing.

SCOOTER. No, you don't.

RED. "The inevitable"'s going to get me right in the face when I give you the drink, isn't it?

SCOOTER. No.

RED. Oh.

SCOOTER. Don't want to get shaving cream in the whiskey.

RED. Ah.

SCOOTER. But once I take the whiskey from you (*He takes the whiskey.*), and drink it (*He drinks the whiskey.*), and give you back the glass (*He gives her back the glass.*), then bam, right in the kisser.

RED & SCOOTER

RED. You mean like now.

SCOOTER. Nope.

RED. Oh. *(She turns to put the glass down.)*

SCOOTER. Red?

RED. *(Turns back.)* Yeah?

SCOOTER. Now. *(He hits her with the pie. Right in the kisser.)*

RED. Wow! I did it, didn't I?

SCOOTER. What?

RED. Nothing.

SCOOTER. Here's the towel.

RED. You said do nothing, so that's what I did. Nothing.

SCOOTER. You did nothing cause you didn't know it was coming.

RED. Oh, please.

SCOOTER. Took you totally by surprise.

RED. Saw it a mile away.

SCOOTER. Then why didn't you duck?

RED. 'Cause I was doing nothing.

SCOOTER. You were doing so much more than nothing.

RED. Fine. Makes you feel better, it caught me completely by surprise.

SCOOTER. I knew it.

RED. Because I was so good at doing nothing.

SCOOTER. You still got some shaving cream on your face.

RED. Where?

SCOOTER. Left cheek. *(She wipes her right cheek.)* Other left cheek. *(She wipes her left cheek.)*

RED. Got it?

SCOOTER. Give me the towel. *(He wipes her face. They are very close.)* Here. That's better.

RED. Thanks.

SCOOTER. Got to admit, you did do pretty good at doing nothing. *(A pause. They are still very close.)*

RED. Chicken chop suey.

SCOOTER. Huh?

RED. I like chicken chop suey. From the Chinese restaurant.

SCOOTER. Chicken chop suey.

RED & SCOOTER

RED. Great.

SCOOTER. I'll call. *(He goes to the phone. Speaks with the operator.)* Hey, Susie... Happy New Year to you, too. Get me the Formosa, would you?

RED. I'm starving.

SCOOTER. You like moo goo gai pan?

RED. That's funny.

SCOOTER. It's a dish at Formosa.

RED. No, it's not.

SCOOTER. Moo goo gai pan.

RED. Stop.

SCOOTER. I'm telling you it's a dish... *(Into the phone.)* Hey this is Scooter. Could I get some chicken chop suey, a couple of cold beers, and some moo goo gai pan.

RED. Moo goo gai pan.

SCOOTER. *(Into phone.)* Chopsticks and fortune cookies. Soon as you can. Thanks. Yeah. Happy New Year. *(He hangs up.)*

RED. Moo goo gai pan. Sounds very Chinesey.

SCOOTER. Give me a dollar.

RED. For the food?

SCOOTER. Yeah.

RED. Cost more than a dollar.

SCOOTER. Give me one dollar.

RED. You're gonna do another trick?

SCOOTER. This one's a knockout. One dollar, if you please. *(She goes for her purse to get the dollar.)*

RED. You wanted to kiss me, didn't you?

SCOOTER. Awww...

RED. Probably been a while since you had the chance for a kiss.

SCOOTER. Geez, Louise.

RED. Nothing to be shy about, wanting to kiss a girl.

SCOOTER. *(Grumpy.)* I ain't being shy.

RED. Or grumpy.

SCOOTER. I don't get grumpy.

RED. Well, you're doing a helluva good imitation of it.

SCOOTER. Watch your language.

RED. What'd I say?

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. You're not careful, they hear you talk like that, you're out on your keister without no fare thee well.

RED. 'Cause I said you wanted to kiss me.

SCOOTER. No. Not that.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Watch how you talk, that's all.

RED. I said you're doing a helluva good job of being grumpy. Mr. Fishman'll kick me out for that?

SCOOTER. Been known to happen.

RED. Shit.

SCOOTER. And I'll kick you out for that.

RED. What's going on all of a sudden?

SCOOTER. You want to get a job being a beautiful girl, you got to not only look like one, but behave like one and talk like one. Understand?

RED. Yes, sir.

SCOOTER. Not joking.

RED. I can tell. And thank you for calling me beautiful.

SCOOTER. Give me the dollar.

RED. I think you're kinda cute yourself.

SCOOTER. Been a while since I've been cute.

RED. You still are.

SCOOTER. Should've seen me about a million years ago. I wasn't so bad. Give me the dollar.

RED. Your face is pretty.

SCOOTER. That's funny.

RED. When you look at it, you know, from the right angle. Pretty.

SCOOTER. Pretty old. Dollar.

RED. By the way, you could've kissed me if you wanted to.

SCOOTER. For the love of Mike. If I wanted to kiss you, trust me, you would've been kissed.

RED. You didn't want to?

SCOOTER. Give me the dollar.

RED. Here.

SCOOTER. I'm going to show you something special which you will be able to put to good use if Junior hires some magician to host his show.

RED & SCOOTER

RED. You wanted to kiss me.

SCOOTER. Magician could use the services of an assistant.

RED. I know you did. Admit it.

SCOOTER. Keep your eye on General Washington.

RED. Hey, I've got a great idea.

SCOOTER. Not gonna kiss you.

RED. Teach me the trick. I'll do some magic for Mr. Fishman.

SCOOTER. Whoa, Nellie.

RED. Do the trick. Make my dollar disappear.

SCOOTER. I can show you the trick, but I can't teach it.

RED. You said you would.

SCOOTER. Show it to you in case you get to assist somebody on the show. Not my trick. It's against the code. Magicians are all sworn to secrecy. And anyway, the girl's got to be the assistant.

RED. Says who?

SCOOTER. It's the rule.

RED. That a girl can't be a magician?

SCOOTER. What are you gonna do? You gonna saw some guy in half?

RED. Might just.

SCOOTER. Never happen. Dollar. Keep your eyes fixed on it.

RED. Might be great to see some cute, sexy girl do a little magic.

SCOOTER. No.

RED. Mr. Fishman will be floored.

SCOOTER. If you're so clever, you watch Georgie Porgie here, you can figure it out for yourself. But, trust me, Junior won't want a dame doing magic.

RED. You know, Scooter, you're still in the running for that kiss.

SCOOTER. Watch this.

RED. Teach me the trick and you've got yourself a kiss.

SCOOTER. Forget it.

RED. Now what?

SCOOTER. You gonna do stuff like that to get ahead.

RED. What are you talking about?

SCOOTER. Not my kind of deal. Sorry. Tell Eddie hi for me.

RED. Oh, my god.

SCOOTER. Here's your dollar.

RED & SCOOTER

RED. Bastard.

SCOOTER. Nice to have met you.

RED. You think I'm like some...

SCOOTER. No.

RED. You're a jerk.

SCOOTER. Never said you were anything.

RED. That's what you were thinking.

SCOOTER. You're the one can't stop talking about kissing and stuff, not me.

RED. I would never...

SCOOTER. Okay...

RED. No, not okay.

SCOOTER. Listen, honey, you're a swell kid and I'm not calling you names or...

RED. You've got some goddamn nerve...

SCOOTER. You deserve lots of good luck...

RED. ... sitting here playing with your toy trains...

SCOOTER. Model trains...

RED. ... drunk as a sailor...

SCOOTER. Not drunk.

RED. ... flirting with some girl you don't even know, young enough to be your daughter...

SCOOTER. Not so sure about that.

RED. Young enough to be your goddamn daughter, you old, drunk, son of a bitch. Playing your crappy songs. Don't even have the decency to crack the teeniest smile when you get hit with a pie, 'cause it was pretty goddamn funny if you were standing where I was standing. Ridicule my song...

SCOOTER. I did not.

RED. ... and then you accuse me of being some kind of two-bit whore 'cause I'm trying to learn some lame magic trick. No, not because I was trying to learn the stupid trick, 'cause I was talking about kissing. Jesus, look pal, yeah, I really gotta get this job, but you son of a bitch. Christ... You think I couldn't've slept my way into a couple of jobs? Made some money? You think I ain't been grabbed by a bunch of bastards trying to get lucky. I had a life before today, you know, and sex wasn't invented in Hollywood. Believe it or not, there's plenty of creeps in Pennsylvania who tell a girl a whole lot of crap, and if she's young enough, and stupid enough, she believes it. Some of those bastards don't care whether you

RED & SCOOTER

believe it or not. And then, all of a sudden, you're pushed up against a wall or a desk or you're on the floor. You think I wanted to knock on a goddamn door and ask some old coot I don't even know for a favor? But they said, "Scooter's okay. He'll help." And then I walk in and I look at you and I'm an idiot 'cause I think you understand what it's like to be so goddamn petrified 'cause there's nothing and nobody gonna catch me if I fall and, dollars to donuts, I'm going to fall. You son of a bitch. And you think I'd screw somebody for a goddamn job. Shit. What the hell would I be doing here with you when there's slews and slews of younger, better looking men I could make friends with who've got money and power and could give me everything I want. But I've got talent and you were supposed to be one of the... aw, shit... forget it... shit... shit... I'm a god damn idiot... shit... you son of a bitch... keep the crappy dollar so I don't owe you anything for taking up so much of your precious time. *(A pause.)*

SCOOTER. I made a mistake.

RED. Well, hell, yes. You could say that.

SCOOTER. We got Chinese coming. From Formosa. Formosa Café. Very tasty Chinese. Formosa Café, world-renowned purveyor of chicken chop suey. When the King of China comes to Hollywood, he always stops first at Formosa for their chicken chop suey.

RED. The King of China?

SCOOTER. Absolutely. He and the Queen of China... her name is Mary...

RED. Mary?

SCOOTER. Yes. Mary, Queen of China. The King, Bernie...

RED. Bernie?

SCOOTER. ... said to me one time when we were sharing a bowl of Formosa's chicken chop suey, "Scooter," he said, "I've tasted chicken chop suey thousands of times in every corner of the globe and I've got to say this is the finest chicken chop suey which has ever crossed my lips. And if ever," he continued, "if ever you have the opportunity to share this most delicious chicken chop suey with a fair red-headed damsel from the Keystone State of Pennsylvania, you make sure that she understands this is the crème de la crème of chop sueys." Those were his exact words.

RED. King Bernie?

SCOOTER. Of China. His exact words. Except that he said it in Chinese. *(A pause.)* So, you're staying?

RED & SCOOTER

RED. Yeah. For the chicken chop suey.

SCOOTER. I'm glad. That's some temper on you.

RED. Got a ton more swear words where those came from.

SCOOTER. Looking forward to hearing them.

RED. Don't be so sure.

SCOOTER. Makes me feel young. Younger. How's about I show you the magic while we're waiting for our chicken chop suey?

RED. This better be good.

SCOOTER. You're telling me. Can't teach it to you, like I said, 'cause it don't belong to me, but if you stay alert some hints will fall your way and there won't be any violations of the Magicians' Code.

RED. Does Mr. Fishman even like magic?

SCOOTER. Who doesn't like magic?

RED. Lots of people.

SCOOTER. You're a smart girl, you can figure out if it's right for Junior or not.

RED. 'Bout time you noticed how smart I am. A lot of men miss that 'cause I'm so cute.

SCOOTER. Ready?

RED. Waiting on you, Pops.

SCOOTER. You, my dear, are trying to keep your eye on this beautiful dollar bill which, as you can see, I am rolling up into a lovely cylindrical shape. You can see that, can't you?

RED. As clear as day.

SCOOTER. Now be sure to stay focused...

RED. I am focused.

SCOOTER. ... as I attempt to fool you by creating a diversion. For this particular piece of magic, I will use a vocal diversion such as: I had the most curious dream the other night.

RED. You did?

SCOOTER. Don't fall for the diversion.

RED. No. No. I am focused on that dollar.

SCOOTER. In this dream, I'm walking, all by myself, on the beach. I look up and you won't believe who I saw.

RED. Who?

SCOOTER. Focus on the dollar not the vocal diversion.

RED & SCOOTER

RED. Right. Focus.

SCOOTER. So, who do you think I saw?

RED. Not listening to your diversion. Focused on the dollar.

SCOOTER. Bunch of guys from before. Clyde, Roscoe, and Erik.

RED. Houdini.

SCOOTER. Very good.

RED. Excellent memory.

SCOOTER. Would you get me my scissors from over there?

RED. I'm watching you. *(She gives him the scissors. As he's talking, he cuts the dollar a couple of times.)*

SCOOTER. Now you've got to realize these guys, all of them, are long gone. Dead. Dead. And dead. So I'll bet you can imagine how astonishing it is to see them walking arm-in-arm, out of the clouds, happy-go-lucky, coming right towards me. I just cut up your dollar, by the way.

RED. I could see that.

SCOOTER. It's not that I'm not happy to see them, I'm just, I guess the word is surprised, or like I said, astonished. You heard me say that I was astonished, right?

RED. Not falling for your diversion.

SCOOTER. So, these three guys are coming towards me.

RED. I know how you did it.

SCOOTER. They get right up to me and I say, "I went off on a bit of a bender and I don't know where little Joe has gotten to and I have this horrible feeling that I may never get another chance to see him." What do you make of that?

RED. I figured out your trick.

SCOOTER. Some kind of funny dream, huh? Oh, my gosh.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. There's something coming out of your ear.

RED. Where?

SCOOTER. Don't move.

RED. What?

SCOOTER. Stay still. *(He reaches behind her ear.)* Well, would you lookee here. *(He pulls out a rolled piece of paper currency from her ear.)*

RED. *(Totally tricked.)* Oh. Gee.

SCOOTER. Diversions. *(He gives her the money.)* Here you are.

RED. You're pretty darn good.

RED & SCOOTER

SCOOTER. That's what I'm telling you.

RED. *(Looking at the money.)* Hey, wait a minute.

SCOOTER. Yes?

RED. This ain't my dollar.

SCOOTER. It's not?

RED. This is a five.

SCOOTER. Well, I'll be. Georgie seems to have turned into Abe. How could that have happened?

RED. I thought the trick was getting my dollar back.

SCOOTER. Turn for a second.

RED. What? *(He looks into her ear.)*

SCOOTER. Jumping Josephat...

RED. Aw...

SCOOTER. Something's coming out of this ear. *(He touches her head.)* Tilt your head to the side a little.

RED. Aw... *(She tilts her head. Four quarters fall out of her ear into his hand.)*

SCOOTER. Here you go. Four quarters.

RED. How'd you do that?

SCOOTER. I love magic.

RED. I can tell.

SCOOTER. Makes me happy.

RED. There you go. Look how pretty you are when you smile. *(They are close again.)*

SCOOTER. You are a beautiful, smart, funny, talented woman.

RED. Thank you.

SCOOTER. It's the truth. *(They are about to kiss when there's a knock on the door.)* Lunch is here. We're having Chinese.

RED. My favorite. *(Another knock.)*

SCOOTER. Coming. *(He starts towards the door, then turns back.)* Oh, by the way, here's your dollar. *(He gives her the dollar bill and heads to the door. She looks at the dollar and smiles as the LIGHTS FADE.)*

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