

*(At rise, we see a bell, the kind of bell one might find on an old-fashioned hotel's front desk. Then, as the lights open out, we see CHANSON, beautiful and tragic; JOE, smiling ineffectually; and MABEL, who never met a bad mood she couldn't stomp into submission with the sheer power of her freakish optimism. They stand, facing the audience.)*

ALL THREE

“One more time, repeat after me: I will not call you my girlfriend in public ever again!”

CHANSON

With those harsh words, our tale is set in motion!

MABEL

With that firm statement, two souls were set free!

JOE

With that mean...thing she said, she cut my heart to...tiny little...like, strips? Um... what's the word –

CHANSON

Let us travel back to a chilly December, not so long ago.

JOE

Ribbons!

*(MABEL dings the bell. Now we're in a diner or a café or something.)*

JOE

GOSH you're pretty. Buy ya a soda-pop?

CHANSON

A what?

JOE

Name's Joe! I'm a salesman of the Fuller Brush variety, and I thought ya might like a nice refreshing soda-pop! Whaddya say? OOH! Root beer float?

CHANSON

It is two degrees outside.

JOE

Naw, it's 37!

CHANSON

I was speaking Celsius.

JOE

Beg your pardon, I'm not...um, I...I don't know how to speak it, what's the word for –

MABEL

Hey there! I'm Mabel, and I'll be yer waitress today! But then you probably guessed that from my nametag and my uniform! *(she is wearing neither a nametag nor any discernible uniform)*

JOE

Fluent!

MABEL

What can I do ya for? *(big smile)*

CHANSON

I should like a pot of Chamomile tea. He is not with me.

MABEL

*(she pretends to write with a pretend pen on a pretend pad, probably crossing her eyes while she does, and speaks very slowly)* Cha...mo...meeeeeeeeee...tea for the lady, and what about you sir?

CHANSON

He'll have the door. *(imploring JOE)* Please!

JOE

Gimme a chance here! It ain't every day I sees a foxy broad like – *(off CHANSON's terrified look and MABEL's glare)* – Gosh, I sure am sorry, seems sometimes my head gets ahead of my, uh... my...uh...

MABEL

I'll get ya that tea. Won't be a minute, doll! *(she throws CHANSON a wink, and off she goes, cheerily)*

JOE

Tongue.

CHANSON

*(meditatively, about MABEL)* I like her...