

(ARTIE exits. CECIL B. DeMILLE crosses the stage as a group of extras from his latest extravaganza "Samson and Delilah" attempt to get his attention.)

ALL

(ad lib)
Good morning Mr. DeMille.

MYRON

Good morning, CB.

(Meanwhile, the lights have come up on SHELDRAKE's office. SHELDRAKE, a mournful dyspeptic figure, is behind a big desk, innocent of books, speaking into one of his array of phones.)

SHELDRAKE

THIS IS SHELDRAKE.
BRING SOME WATER.
GIVE ME THAT SHITHEAD, NOLAN.

NOLAN, SWEETHEART, GREAT TO TALK.
THIS DRAFT IS SO MUCH BRIGHTER.
YOU'RE THE BEST, EVEN SO,
I'VE HIRED ANOTHER WRITER.

SECRETARY

Mr. Gillis.

SHELDRAKE

JOE, WHAT THE FUCK BRINGS YOU HERE?

JOE

You wanted to see me.

SHELDRAKE

I did? What about?

JOE

"Bases Loaded." It's a baseball story.

SHELDRAKE

So pitch.

(SHELDRAKE shakes some bicarb into a tumbler of water.)

JOE

It's about a rookie shortstop batting 347. The kid was once mixed up in a holdup. Now he's trying to go straight, only...

SHELDRAKE

Wait a minute. I think I have read this.

(He presses a buzzer on the intercom on his desk.)

SHELDRAKE *(continued)*

Somebody bring me whatever we've got on ...
(He looks up at JOE, hoping for guidance.)

JOE

"Bases Loaded."

SHELDRAKE

"Bases Loaded."

(He turns his attention back to JOE.)

JOE

They're pretty hot for it over at Twentieth.

SHELDRAKE

Good!

JOE

But can you see Ty Power as a shortstop?

CHORUS

LET'S HAVE LUNCH.

(BETTY SCHAEFER steps into the room. She's a clean-cut, bright-looking girl in her twenties. She advances on SHELDRAKE, dropping a folder on his desk, not noticing JOE.)

BETTY

Here's that "Bases Loaded" material you asked for Mr. Sheldrake. I made a two page synopsis for you, but don't bother to read it.

SHELDRAKE

Why not?

BETTY

It's just a rehash of something that wasn't very good to begin with.

SHELDRAKE

Meet Mister Gillis. He wrote it.

CHORUS

WE SHOULD TALK

SHELDRAKE

This is Miss Kramer.

(BETTY turns to JOE, horribly embarrassed)

BETTY

Schaefer, Betty Schaefer. And right now I'd like to crawl into a hole and pull it in after me.

(But MAX is gone. JOE looks around, somewhat at a loss. But before he can make a move, the door to the gallery opens and another bizarre figure appears: NORMA DESMOND. Despite the gloom, she's wearing dark glasses and she's dressed in black loose pajamas and black high heel pumps. She looks younger than her age, which is probably somewhere in the vicinity of 50, and, despite a sickly pallor, she's extremely striking and was evidently once a great beauty. Her hair is encased in a leopard-patterned chiffon scarf. JOE watches her, transfixed, as she proceeds in a stately fashion down the stairs.)

MUSIC #5 - "SURRENDER"

NORMA

Any laws against burying him in the garden?

JOE

I wouldn't know.

NORMA

I don't care anyway.

(She sweeps past him to the back of the room, where she stands for a moment looking down at the child-sized bundle on the massage table. JOE, all his writer's instincts now alerted, watches her, fascinated.)

NORMA

NO MORE WARS TO FIGHT.
WHITE FLAGS FLY TONIGHT.
YOU ARE OUT OF DANGER NOW.
BATTLEFIELD IS STILL,
WILD POPPIES ON THE HILL.
PEACE CAN ONLY COME WHEN YOU SURRENDER.

HERE THE TRACERS FLY,
LIGHTING UP THE SKY.
BUT I'LL FIGHT ON TO THE END.
LET THEM SEND THEIR ARMIES.
I WILL NEVER BEND.
I WON'T SEE YOU NOW TILL I SURRENDER.
I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN WHEN I SURRENDER.

(Music continues. She sweeps up the corpse into her arms, the shawl falls away and for the first time, we see the body is that of a chimpanzee. NORMA stares defiantly at JOE, the monkey's face cradled against her own.)

NORMA

Now don't you give me a fancy price, just because I'm rich.

JOE

Lady, you've got the wrong man.

(NORMA pauses in the act of rearranging the corpse and shoots JOE a fierce glance.)

JOE (continued)

I had some trouble with my car, I just pulled into your driveway.

NORMA

Get out.

JOE

O.K. And I'm sorry you lost your friend.

NORMA

Get out of here.

(MUSIC OUT)

(JOE's almost out; then he turns back, frowning.)

JOE

Haven't I seen you somewhere before?

NORMA

Or shall I call my servant?

JOE

Aren't you Norma Desmond? You used to be in pictures. You used to be big.

NORMA

I am big. It's the pictures that got small.

(She advances on him, flushed with indignation.)

MUSIC #6 - "ONCE UPON A TIME"

NORMA

ONCE UPON A TIME, NOT LONG AGO,
THE HEAD OF ANY STUDIO
KNEW HOW AND WHEN TO PLAY HIS ACES.

NOW THEY'LL PUT SOME TALENTLESS UNKNOWN
BENEATH THE SACRED MICROPHONE.
WE DIDN'T NEED WORDS, WE HAD FACES.

YES, THEY TOOK ALL THE IDOLS AND SMASHED THEM:
THE FAIRBANKS, THE GILBERTS, THE VALENTINOS.
THEY TRAMPLED ON WHAT WAS DIVINE.

THEY THREW AWAY THE GOLD OF SILENCE,
WHEN ALL THEY NEEDED WAS THIS FACE OF MINE.

UP ON THE SCREEN
 WHERE I BELONG.
 WE'LL SHOW THEM ALL NOTHING HAS CHANGED.
 WE'LL GIVE THE WORLD NEW WAYS TO DREAM.
 EVERYONE NEEDS NEW WAYS TO DREAM.

(By now, she's gripping onto JOE, who detaches himself gently and moves to the other end of the sofa, where he turns to contemplate NORMA, who's still staring ecstatically at the screen.)

JOE

I DIDN'T ARGUE,
 WHY HURT HER?
 YOU DON'T YELL AT A SLEEP WALKER,
 OR SHE COULD FALL AND BREAK HER NECK.

SHE SMELLED OF FADED ROSES.
 IT MADE ME SAD TO WATCH HER
 AS SHE RELIVED HER GLORY.

POOR NORMA,
 SO HAPPY,
 LOST IN HER SILVER HEAVEN.

(NORMA continues to watch; and JOE watches her.)

NORMA

NOTHING HAS CHANGED.
 WE'LL GIVE THE WORLD NEW WAYS TO DREAM.
 EVERYONE NEEDS NEW WAYS TO DREAM.

(As the music continues, NORMA slowly exits.)

(The sound of heavy rain. It's daytime, but dull enough to need lights on. JOE's typewriter is no longer on the table, but closed and standing on end on the floor. He's alone in the great room, and looks up at the audience.)

JOE

In December, the rains came,

MUSIC #13 – "DECEMBER UNDERSCORE"

JOE *(continued)*

in one great big package, oversized, like everything else in California, right through the roof of my room above the garage. So she had me moved to the main house, to what Max called "the room of the husbands." On a clear day, the theory was, you could see Catalina. And little by little I worked through to the end of the script. At which point I might have left: only by then those two boys from the finance company had traced my car and towed it away; and I hadn't seen one dollar of cash money since I arrived.

(JOE sits down to his in-progress game of solitaire. MAX is at the organ, wearing white gloves, playing, as the underscoring segues to the organ music.)

IT MAY JUST BE, THE PERFECT YEAR.

(THEY dance.)

NORMA

IT'S NEW YEAR'S EVE AND HOPES ARE HIGH.
DANCE ONE YEAR IN, KISS ONE GOODBYE.
ANOTHER CHANCE, ANOTHER START,
SO MANY DREAMS TO TEASE THE HEART.
WE DON'T NEED A CROWDED BALLROOM.
EVERYTHING WE WANT IS HERE.
AND FACE TO FACE,
WE WILL EMBRACE THE PERFECT YEAR.
WE DON'T NEED A CROWDED BALLROOM.
EVERYTHING WE WANT IS HERE.
AND FACE TO FACE,
WE WILL EMBRACE THE PERFECT YEAR.

(She kisses him lightly as the number comes to an end. Then, as the orchestra strikes up the next piece, they move off the floor to take up the glasses of champagne which MAX has poured for them. They clink glasses and drink.)

MUSIC #17A – "AFTER 'THE PERFECT YEAR' UNDERSCORE"

JOE

What time are they supposed to get here?

NORMA

Who?

JOE

The other guests.

NORMA

There are no other guests. Just you and me.

(She leans in to kiss him again, this time more seriously. MAX half turns away, averting his eyes.)

NORMA (continued)

I'm in love with you. Surely you know that.

(JOE is terribly startled by this; all he can do is begin to bluster.)

JOE

Norma...

NORMA

We'll have a wonderful time next year. I'll have the pool filled for you. I'll open up my house in Malibu, and you can have the whole ocean. I have enough money to buy us anything we want.

JOE

Cut out that "us" business.

NORMA

What's the matter with you?

JOE

What right do you have to take me for granted?

NORMA

What right? You want me to tell you?

(JOE is out of his depth now; all he can do is bluster.)

JOE

Norma, what I'm trying to say is that I'm the wrong guy for you. You need a big shot, someone with polo ponies, a Valentino...

NORMA

What you're trying to say is that you don't want me to love you. Say it, say it!

(JOE doesn't answer: he looks away, avoiding her eye. Thus, it takes him completely by surprise when she slaps his face. MUSIC stops. And, before he can react, she's turned and run all the way up the stairs to vanish into her bedroom. JOE finds himself standing face to face with MAX.)

JOE

Max, get me a taxi.

MUSIC #17B - "I HAD TO GET OUT"

(MAX moves toward the phone, as JOE grabs his vicuna coat, and addresses the audience.)

JOE (continued)

I HAD TO GET OUT.
I NEEDED TO BE WITH PEOPLE MY OWN AGE,
TO HEAR THE SOUND OF LAUGHTER AND
MIX WITH HUNGRY ACTORS,
UNDER-EMPLOYED COMPOSERS,
NICOTINE-POISONED WRITERS.
REAL PEOPLE, REAL PROBLEMS,
HAVING A REALLY GOOD TIME.

SCENE 12 - INTERIOR / NIGHT: ARTIE GREEN'S APARTMENT

(The house has moved back a way to reveal ARTIE's apartment, a modest one-room affair, packed to the rafters with carefree young people, many of whom we have already encountered at the studio and at Schwab's. Several of the GUESTS cluster around the piano and there's a BOY with a saxophone. Others help themselves to some dangerous looking alcoholic concoction from a punchbowl. The house at Sunset remains visible throughout. As the new scene establishes itself, JOE encases himself in his vicuna coat.)

MUSIC #18 - "THIS TIME NEXT YEAR"

(JOE hesitates in the doorway of the apartment, suddenly embarrassed by how overdressed he is. Meanwhile, ARTIE hails him and pushes through the crowd to greet him.)

ARTIE

Hey, Gillis! We'd given you up.

(BETTY by the piano, hears this and looks around, delighted to see JOE. By now, ARTIE has reached him.)

ARTIE *(continued)*

Let me take your coat.

(He touches the coat and reacts, surprised.)

Jesus, Joe, what is this, mink?

(He's even more surprised when the coat comes off to reveal JOE's tails.)

Who did you borrow this from? Adolphe Menjou?

JOE

Close, but no cigar.

(HE gestures around the room.)

It's quite a crowd.

ARTIE

I invited all the kids doing walk-ons in "Samson and Delilah".

BETTY

Where have you been hiding? I called your apartment. I called your ex-agent. I was about to call the Bureau of Missing Persons.

JOE

They always know where to find me.

BETTY

I'm glad you came. I wanted to talk to you ...

(Before she can develop this, the boys and girls around the piano launch into their song.)

RICHARD

YOU GOTTA SAY YOUR NEW YEAR RESOLUTION OUT LOUD.

Jean ...

NORMA

Thank you Jonesy. And teach your friend some manners. Tell him without me there wouldn't be any Paramount Studio.

JONES

Get me Stage 18. I have a message for Mr. DeMille.

SCENE 3 – EXTERIOR / DAY: PARAMOUNT STUDIOS

(A scene-change reveals the cavernous interior of Sound Stage 18, where the STAND-INS for Victor Mature and Hedy Lamarr are in position, in a blaze of light, on the grandiose "Samson and Delilah" set. MR. DeMILLE, recognizable from the parody version of Act I, confers with his DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY. HE's interrupted by one of his assistants, HEATHER, who approaches with some trepidation.)

HEATHER

Mr. DeMille.

DeMILLE

What is it?

HEATHER

Norma Desmond is here to see you, Mr. DeMille.

DeMILLE

Norma Desmond?

HEATHER

She's here at the studio.

DeMILLE

It must be about that appalling script of hers. What shall I say?

HEATHER

Maybe I could give her the brush?

DeMILLE

Thirty million fans have given her the brush. Isn't that enough? Give me a minute.

(HE turns back towards the set.)

Meanwhile NORMA has arrived outside the studio with MAX and JOE. SHE hesitates a moment, gripping JOE's hand fiercely.)

NORMA

Won't you come along, darling?

JOE

NORMA

Thank you darling.

(By this time HEATHER has emerged from the studio. SHE comes over to greet NORMA. HEATHER speaks immediately after the music finishes.)

HEATHER

Miss Desmond.

(SHE leads NORMA into the studio. DeMILLE is waiting just inside; he envelops her in his arms.)

DeMILLE

Well, well, well.

NORMA

Hello, Mr. DeMille.

(A long embrace.)

Last time I saw you was someplace terribly gay. I was dancing on a table.

DeMILLE

A lot of people were there. Lindbergh had just landed.

(HE starts to lead her into the studio.)

NORMA

You read the script of course.

DeMILLE

Well, yes ...

NORMA

I know how busy you are when you're shooting, but I really think you could have picked up the phone yourself, instead of leaving it to some assistant.

DeMILLE

I don't know what you mean, Norma.

NORMA

Yes you do.

DeMILLE

Come on in.

MUSIC #23: "NORMA IN THE STUDIO"

(He leads her in the studio; a bewildering chaos of activity, which at first stuns her. HE shouts to be heard above the cacophony.)

T-H-E-E-N-D! I can't believe it, I've finished my first script!

BETTY

Stop it, you're making me feel old.

JOE

It's exciting, though, isn't it?

BETTY

How old are you, anyway?

JOE

Twenty-two.

BETTY

Smart girl.

JOE

Shouldn't we open some champagne?

BETTY

Best I can offer is a stroll to the water cooler at the end of the lot.

JOE

Sounds good to me.

BETTY

(Pause.)

I love the back lot here. All cardboard, all hollow, all phony, all done with mirrors, I think I love it better than any street in the world. I spent my childhood here.

JOE

What were you, a child actress?

BETTY

No, but my family always expected me to become a great star. I had ten years of dramatic lessons, diction, dancing, everything you can think of: then the studio made a test.

JOE

(laughs)

That's the saddest story I ever heard.

BETTY

Not at all. Come along.

MUSIC #30A: "WATER COOLER UNDERSCORE"

BETTY *(continued)*

I was born two blocks from here. My father was head electrician at the studio until he died, and mother still works in wardrobe.

JOE

Second generation, huh?

BETTY

Third. Grandma did stunt work for Pearl White.

(As they walk down the Manhattan street, the stage begins to revolve slowly, so that they end up walking downstage; and the flimsy struts holding up the substantial sets are revealed.)

JOE and BETTY walk in silence for a while; BETTY's expression is deeply preoccupied. They come to a halt in front of the water cooler.)

JOE

I guess it's kind of exciting, at that, finishing a script.

(He fixes a couple of paper cups of water: and hands one to BETTY, who's miles away and comes to with a start when he touches her arm.)

BETTY

What?

JOE

Are you all right?

BETTY

Sure.

JOE

Something's the matter, isn't it?

(Pause.)

BETTY

I had a telegram from Artie.

JOE

Is something wrong?

BETTY

He wants me to come out to Tennessee. He says it would only cost two dollars to get married in Clinch.

JOE

Well, what's stopping you? Now we've finished the script...

(HE breaks off, amazed to see that she's crying.)

Why are you crying? You're getting married, isn't that what you wanted?

BETTY

Not any more.

Don't you love Artie?

JOE

Of course I do. I'm just not in love with him any more, that's all.

BETTY

Why not? What happened?

JOE

You did.

BETTY

(Suddenly, they're in each other's arms. A long kiss.)

MUSIC #31: "TOO MUCH IN LOVE TO CARE"

BETTY *(continued)*

WHEN I WAS A KID,
I PLAYED ON THIS STREET,
I ALWAYS LOVED ILLUSION.
I THOUGHT MAKE-BELIEVE WAS TRUER THAN LIFE,
BUT NOW IT'S ALL CONFUSION.
PLEASE CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I JUST DON'T KNOW ANYMORE.
IF THIS IS REAL,
HOW SHOULD I FEEL?
WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

JOE

IF YOU WERE SMART,
YOU WOULD KEEP ON WALKING
OUT OF MY LIFE AS FAST AS YOU CAN.
I'M NOT THE ONE YOU SHOULD PIN YOUR HOPES ON,
YOU'RE FALLING FOR THE WRONG KIND OF MAN.
THIS IS CRAZY.
YOU KNOW WE SHOULD CALL IT A DAY.
SOUND ADVICE, GREAT ADVICE,
LET'S THROW IT AWAY.

I CAN'T CONTROL ALL THE THINGS I'M FEELING.
I HAVEN'T GOT A PRAYER.
IF I'M A FOOL, WELL, I'M TOO MUCH IN LOVE TO CARE.

I KNEW WHERE I WAS,
I'D GIVEN UP HOPE,
MADE FRIENDS WITH DISILLUSION.
NO ONE IN MY LIFE,
BUT LOOK AT YOU
AND NOW IT'S ALL CONFUSION.

BETTY

PLEASE, CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I JUST DON'T KNOW ANY MORE.
IF THIS IS REAL,
HOW SHOULD I FEEL?
WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?
I THOUGHT I HAD EVERYTHING I NEEDED.
MY LIFE WAS SET, MY DREAMS WERE IN PLACE.
MY HEART COULD SEE WAY INTO THE FUTURE,
ALL OF THAT GOES WHEN I SEE YOUR FACE.
I SHOULD HATE YOU.
THERE I WAS, THE WORLD IN MY HAND.
CAN ONE KISS KISS AWAY EVERYTHING I PLANNED?
I CAN'T CONTROL ALL THE THINGS I'M FEELING,
I'M FLOATING IN MID AIR.
I KNOW IT'S WRONG,
BUT I'M MUCH TOO IN LOVE TO CARE.

BETTY and JOE

I THOUGHT I HAD EVERYTHING I NEEDED.
MY LIFE WAS SET,
MY DREAMS WERE IN PLACE.
MY HEART COULD SEE WAY INTO THE FUTURE.
ALL OF THAT GOES WHEN I SEE YOUR FACE.
THIS IS CRAZY,
YOU KNOW WE SHOULD CALL IT A DAY.
SOUND ADVICE, GREAT ADVICE, LET'S THROW IT AWAY.
I CAN'T CONTROL ALL THE THINGS I'M FEELING.
WE'RE FLOATING IN MID-AIR.
IF WE ARE FOOLS, WELL, WE'RE TOO MUCH IN LOVE TO CARE.
IF WE ARE FOOLS, WELL, WE'RE TOO MUCH IN LOVE TO CARE.

MUSIC #31A: "AFTER 'TOO MUCH IN LOVE' "

(THEY fall into each other's arms and embrace passionately. Then JOE leads BETTY by the hand back into the office. They kiss again and it's obvious that they're about to make love.)

SCENE 7 - EXTERIOR / NIGHT: THE HOUSE ON SUNSET

MUSIC #32: "MAX & JOE UNDERSCORE"

(It's late at night as JOE, in the Isotta, glides back into the garage, he steps down from the car with a gleam in his eye and a spring in his step; and is therefore thoroughly startled when the somber figure of MAX steps forward out of the darkness. However, he quickly recovers. It's a murky night, wind rising, rain threatening.)

JOE

What's the matter, Max? You waiting to wash the car?

Half way down

MAX
Please be careful when you cross the patio. Madame may be watching.

JOE
Suppose I tiptoe up the back stairs and undress in the dark, will that do it?

running down

MAX
It's just that I am greatly worried about Madame.

JOE
Well, we're not helping any, feeding her lies and more lies. What happens when she finds out they're not going to make her picture?

Strong into Ben

MAX
She never will. That is my job. I made her a star and I will never let her be destroyed.

JOE
You made her a star?

MAX
I directed all her early pictures, in those days there were three young directors who showed promise: D.W. Griffith, Cecil B. DeMille and ...

(MUSIC stops)
(JOE interrupts as the realization dawns on him.)

JOE
Max von Meyerling.

(By now, they've moved out of the garage on to the dimly lit patio.)

MAX
That's right.

MUSIC #32A: "NEW WAYS TO DREAM REPRISE"

MAX
WHEN WE MET, SHE WAS A CHILD, BARELY SIXTEEN;
AWKWARD, AND YET, SHE HAD AN AIR I'D NEVER SEEN.
I KNEW I'D FOUND MY PERFECT FACE.
DEEP IN HER EYES, NEW WAYS TO DREAM,
AND WE INSPIRED NEW WAYS TO DREAM.
TALKIES CAME:
I STAYED WITH HER, TOOK UP THIS LIFE,
THREW AWAY FAME.

(HE hesitates, before steeling himself to go on.)

PLEASE UNDERSTAND,

(A beat.)

NORMA

WHEN HE SCORNEED ME, I KNEW HE'D HAVE TO DIE.
 LET ME KISS HIS SEVERED HEAD.
 COMPROMISE OR DEATH,
 HE FOUGHT TO HIS LAST BREATH.
 HE NEVER HAD IT IN HIM TO SURRENDER.
 JUST LIKE ME, HE NEVER COULD SURRENDER.

(And so, as the music swells, NORMA descends the staircase, waving her arms in some strange rendition of Salome's approach to the throne. However, halfway down, she suddenly comes to a halt and begins to speak.)

I can't go on with the scene; I'm too happy. May I say a few words, Mr. DeMille? I can't tell you how wonderful it is to be back in the studio making a picture. I promise I'll never desert you again. This is my life. It always will be. There is nothing else. Just us and the cameras and all you wonderful people out there in the dark. And now, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up.

(She continues down the staircase as "With One Look" swells to a climax.)

NORMA

THIS TIME I AM STAYING,
 I'M STAYING FOR GOOD.
 I'LL BE BACK WHERE I WAS BORN TO BE,
 WITH ONE LOOK I'LL BE ME.

MUSIC #36: "CURTAIN CALLS"

MUSIC #37: "PLAYOUT"

END OF ACT TWO