

ibretto

Prelude: vivo toccata, with quotes from later themes, tram-bells.

ACT ONE: Scene One
Seamless musical transition from

Prelude. Pearl is looking out a window into the street. Her luggage stands at the foot of the stairs. She wears a black, formal dress, sensible shoes, a string of pearls.

OLIVE
(*offstage*)
There's fire in the air
There's fire in the air

Pearl touches her palms to her cheeks

PEARL
My face is burning.
I can't stop trembling.
Should not be here.
I should leave now.

Olive appears on the landing, wearing a dressing-gown. She carries a frock suspended from each hand - one patterned with red roses, one green.

OLIVE
What to wear? What to wear?
The linen or the crepe de chine?
The red frock or the green?

PEARL
Green might be cooler.

OLIVE
Fire in the air!

PEARL
My face is burning,
a flush of excitement,
a blush of shame.

OLIVE
Roo and Barney are coming to town.
Come on, Pearl, wipe away that frown!

PEARL
It doesn't seem quite decent for a widow.

OLIVE
You'd better make up your mind.
It's all or nothing for these two.
They're a coupla cane-

cutters fresh from the tropics not two professors from the University.
Here, look, you never met a bloke like Barney, only about so big, yet the women go mad for him.

PEARL
Why am I always stuck with little men?
Even with my hubby I had to wear low heels.

OLIVE
He's not that little! You'll see. My Roo's the big man of the two, the best man in his gang.
He's the boss, what he says goes. Oh, Pearl, you should see them. They walk into the pub like they own it. The soft white city blokes stand aside. The bar falls silent. The sparrows stop their chatter, no word is spoken. The boys walk through like kings, like eagles coming south with the sun.

Taxi horn off. Pearl moves to the window

PEARL
It's stopping next door.

OLIVE
I must go get a dress on!

Olive exits. Bubba the girl next door enters.

BUBBA
I thought I heard them in the street.

PEARL
No, no, not yet.
I need more time to think.

BUBBA
You must be Pearl.
I'm Bubba, I live next door. They call themselves my sugar knocs.
I've known them both for years.

PEARL
I can't believe a man would use a phrase like that with just a girl.

Olive appears on the landing in the red dress, holding a brooch and a string of red beads.

OLIVE
The brooch or the beads?
What do you think?

BUBBA
Red beads catch the flames in your dress.

PEARL
You look like a summer day.

OLIVE
You look like a winter's night.
Unpack your bags, shake out your gladrags, put some war-paint on, find some colour to wear.

PEARL
Not till I finally decide,
Not till I see for myself.

Olive exits

BUBBA
You mean you might not stay?

PEARL
It's all so different.
It doesn't seem decent to a mother and a widow - I've never done this before.

BUBBA
You'll have such fun - Nancy always did.

PEARL
If Nancy had such fun then why did she leave?

OLIVE
To wait all winter is easy, but the last few minutes before he comes I feel I want to die.
Time slows and stops, the seconds won't pass.

Trio: Olive, Bubba, Pearl

OLIVE
There's fire in the air.
I feel more and more alive. A flame grows inside me.
The waiting is over, the summer begins when they arrive.

PEARL
My face is burning.
I still can't decide to stay.
My hands are trembling,
It's all too different
I still can't decide to stay
My face is burning,
My hands are trembling,
it's all too different

it's all too different
Doesn't seem decent.
Wonder what others will say?

BUBBA
You'll have such fun, Take your bags upstairs, find some colour to wear.
You'll have such fun. You'll have such fun. Take your bags upstairs, find some colour to wear.

OLIVE, PEARL, BUBBA
Fire in the air.

Car horns offstage. Bubba looks out. The others look expectant.

BUBBA
No, no, not yet.

PEARL
You make them sound like gifts from God,
you make them sound too grand.

OLIVE
You'll understand when they arrive.
You too were waiting, don't deny it,
willing the time to pass, pressing your nose to the glass.

PEARL
I was only a little curious, because of all your talk.
Eagles, you call them, flying southwards from the sun.
I want to know what happens when the mating season's done.
If eagles are so wonderful, Why did Nancy fly off with a sparrow?

OLIVE
No-one is tying you down, no-one is making you stay.
If you can't see the good, if you twist things about, if you make things seem dirt, take your bags! Clear out!

Pearl moves towards her bags, but Bubba intervenes.

BUBBA
You want to stay, you know you do,
You'll have such fun. Take your bags upstairs, put them away.



OLIVE
(*counterpoint*)
Fire in the air.
Fire in the air.
Fire, fire, fire!

PEARL
I have a daughter your age,
a daughter too young to know
the things you seem to know.

BUBBA
I know you want to stay.
Tell her, Olive, tell her to
stay.

*Olive takes the framed
photograph of Roo from the
piano.*

OLIVE
The lay-off time is the time
that I live for.
Five months nearer
heaven each year.

PEARL
Seven months of waiting
for five months of living?
The balance sheet's
not right somewhere.

OLIVE
Seven months of waiting
make five months of heaven,
when my eagle flies south
with the sun. Twelve
months of marriage
could never match this!
Dark winter days are
forgotten.
He fills the whole world
with light.
He fills my small heart
with fire.

Even in the lonely waiting-
room of winter,
No second thoughts
will ever clip my wings.
I've seen the streets at five
o'clock,
the men that shuffle home
the flightless birds each night.
I've seen the wives that
wait and wait,
their earthbound lives,
their empty hearts.

Summer is the season for
living,
leaving the clay and dust
below.
He enters my life like its
owner,
an eagle taking to the sky.
He gives me wings to fly, to
soar.
Five months nearer heaven

each year.
He fills the long days with
light,
He fills the dark nights
with fire.

*Third car horn is heard. All
move towards the window*

BUBBA
They're here.
This time they're here.
I must get home and change.

Bubba exits.

PEARL
Suddenly too late to leave.

OLIVE
Someone bring the beer,
cold beer.

ACT ONE: Scene Two
*Barney enters with Emma
over his shoulder. Olive
kisses him, looks eagerly
past him through the door.*

OLIVE
Where is he? Where is Roo?

EMMA
Don't panic, he's coming.

BARNEY
Bringing the other bags.

Barney sets Emma down.

EMMA
Don't call me a bag.

BARNEY
Not if you fetch me a beer.
The trip was long, I'm dry,
I thought you'd have a case of
Foster's Lager waiting for us
at the airport.

EMMA
Summer must be here:
meeting planes, running
errands.
Chief cook and
bottlewasher
for the rest of the year.

*Emma exits as Roo enters with
two different bags, his and
Barney's. Both men are deeply
tanned, a strong contrast to the
women. Olive goes to Roo on the
verandah, they embrace.
Barney spots Pearl.*

BARNEY
Hello. S'pose they've told
you about me, have they?
I'm Barney.

PEARL
Yes, Olive did mention. I'm
Mrs Cunningham. How do
you do?

BARNEY
I'm pretty good. How's
yours?

PEARL
Oh, you know. A bit hot.

BARNEY
You must be Pearl.

PEARL
Mrs Cunningham to you.

BARNEY
To me I must be Mr Ibbott,
Pearl.

PEARL
Mrs Cunningham to you.
I'm pleased to meet you,
Mr Ibbott.
How was your trip from
the north?

BARNEY
Meeting you has made it all
worthwhile...Pearl.

PEARL
I'm a widow and the mother
of a seventeen year old girl - so
it's Mrs Cunningham to you.

BARNEY
Mothers are a subject
I know all about, Pearl. I'm
a father with three myself.

PEARL
I wasn't told that you were
married, Mr Ibbott.
Your wife has passed away?

BARNEY
Never married, Pearl.
Three children from three
different mothers: at the
latest count; spread across
three states.

PEARL
Then it's definitely Mrs
Cunningham to you.

BARNEY
I'll call you anything you like if
you will be my girl...Pearl.

PEARL
Mrs Cunningham to you.

*Olive and Roo sing out on the
verandah, holding each other:*

OLIVE
To wait all winter is easy,
but the last few minutes
before he comes
I feel I want to die.
Time slows and stops,
seconds won't pass.
Thinking of you.

ROO
To work all year is easy,
drowning myself in sweat
and beer,
thinking of you at the end
of the day
I know you'll be waiting here.

*Following Barney/Pearl duet ends
in a quartet with Olive and Roo
singing refrain of above*

BARNEY
I'll take you to the pictures.
I'll take you out for
counter-meals
We'll go to the aquarium
and see the juggling
seals...Pearl.

PEARL
Mrs Cunningham to you.

PEARL AND BARNEY
We'll go out to the pictures.
We'll go for a counter-tea.
We'll take a tram down to
St Kilda
And watch the sun set in
the sea.

*Emma returns from the
kitchen.*

EMMA
Who's been at my vinegar?

OLIVE
Oh, probably another
bottle on the shelf hidden
in full view.

EMMA
It's gone I tell you.
If no-one owns up
I'm off to the copshop just
as fast as...

OLIVE, ROO, BARNEY
(*Join in with Emma*)
Just as fast as my legs can
carry me!

Laughter

EMMA
You think it's funny - just
look at the mess
Can't you get these bags



out of here?

Emma exits to kitchen, Roo heads upstairs with the two bags.

ROO

I'll take these ports upstairs and pack my things away.

OLIVE

I'll help.

RECIT

Barney restrains her:

BARNEY

Tread carefully - things are not the same. We need to talk.

PEARL

I'll help with the food Mr Ibbott and leave the two of you alone

Pearl exits to kitchen.

BARNEY

If she's a pearl, she's stuck inside a clam.

OLIVE

You never had no trouble opening up a clam. She's a decent sort inside, a barmaid where I work. Her bags are still down here. If she doesn't take to you, she's shifting out.

BARNEY

She'll take to me. I can always talk them around, But there is trouble brewing for you.

OLIVE

It's getting dark. How suddenly it's dark.

BARNEY

Listen to me, Olive - don't run away. He's broke - stone broke. I had to buy his ticket to come down.

OLIVE

How could he be broke before he even got here?

BARNEY

It was the worst season, everything went wrong.

OLIVE

No work, no pay.

BARNEY

No luck. Listen to me, Olive, hear it first from me. There was a new man in the team this year, A boy man, name of Johnnie Dowd. He thought he was as good as Roo, He thought he should be boss. These two were racing through the work, cutting cane, much faster than the rest, The young 'un worked his way out front, He looked around to see how far Roo was behind. Just then Roo's back gave way, his knees buckled under him. He fell - fell helpless to the ground: a loser, beaten. Dowd laughed - a winner's laugh. Roo went for him, cane knives and all, and it was on. Toe to toe they fought, locked together, muscles straining. None would give an inch. Fire fighting fire.

OLIVE

My Roo - beaten.

BARNEY

Took six of us to pull those brawling bulls apart.

OLIVE

Was he hurt?

BARNEY

Only his pride, his stupid pride. He packed his bag that night, and headed off alone.

OLIVE

Alone? You let him go alone?

BARNEY

I had to stay, I had to work. I didn't know what I should do. I'd never seen him wrong before, He's always been tin-god to me. I found him on the coast a week ago, stone-broke. He'd pissed his money against the wall.

OLIVE

You betrayed him.

BARNEY

What should I have done? He was to blame, I had to work.

OLIVE

You betrayed him.

BARNEY

I'd never seen him wrong before, I'd always seen him win.

Roo descends with Kewpie Doll hidden.

ROO

You talk too much, you shut your mouth, or better still, clear out.

Barney exits.

OLIVE

He means well, in his way.

ROO

He couldn't tell his birthday from his breakfast. He wouldn't know a sheep from a goat. You could tell him that his arse was on fire, but he wouldn't even think to put it out.

OLIVE

I've never seen you in this mood.

ROO

He should never have told you.

OLIVE

Would you ever have told me?

ROO

How could I tell you that I'm broke? Olive, I'm broke. Flat story, motherless broke.

OLIVE

You think I wouldn't have you? You think you'd find me at the door, counting cash behind a till? You think I'm one of those?

ROO

I would never say that. But a man's got to pay his way.

OLIVE

How many times in summers past have you dug deep to help me out? It's my turn now you're down, surely that's what

love's about.

ROO

I still had enough for this, Just enough for this - the seventeenth doll.

OLIVE

Ah!

Duet: Olive, Roo.

ROO

Even when you're far away I feel that you are here, as solid as the earth beneath my feet. I think of you at night, turn you like a pillow in my mind, to keep my hot head still and cool, a refuge from the sweat and heat.

Even when you're far away I feel that you are here A refuge from the sweat and heat.

OLIVE

I feel the heat that glows inside your body and your hands. Each year I feel you coming as the days get longer, and the sun shines hotter on my face - I know you're heading south, A fire spreading south.

Even when you're far away I feel that you are here A refuge from the cold and sleet.

OLIVE AND ROO

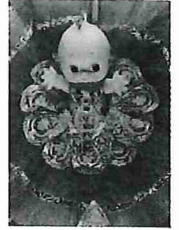
Time apart and time together, each depends on each. You give me wings to fly, to soar, through day of sun and laughter, through nights of burning fire.

Bubba enters. Barney enters with a tray of beer; followed by Pearl with a tray of savouries.

BUBBA

The seventeenth doll! Even more beautiful this year than the last.

Emma enters, nicks a beer and goes out to the verandah to listen.



BUBBA
Romance is coming for me.
I feel it getting near.
My own first doll,
my own first summer.
I feel it in the air.
Somewhere, coming nearer;
with luck, I'll find a man
for me.

EMMA
Silly girl, she's in a dream.

OLIVE, ROO, BARNEY,
PEARL, BUBBA
Cheers.

OLIVE
Here's mud in your eye.

BUBBA
Here's to Roo and Barney.

BARNEY
Here's to you, Bub, good luck.

PEARL
What will summer be like?
I've never done this before.
Mr Ibbott seems a decent
sort
beneath his flashy talk
maybe this will work out -
with luck I'll find the man
for me.

EMMA
Mutton dressed as lamb.
She's too old now,
too strict for Barney. She
wants to be a lady.

OLIVE, ROO,
BARNEY, PEARL,
BUBBA
Cheers. (repeated)

BARNEY
Bit more beer, Olive? How
'bout you Bub?

BUBBA
Thanks: nice and cold.

*Barney dips a small sausage
seductively in tomato sauce.*

BARNEY
How about a cheerio, Pearl?

PEARL
Oo! No thanks, not yet.

OLIVE, ROO,
BARNEY, PEARL,
BUBBA
Cheers. (repeated)

BARNEY
He'll understand me and
forgive.
We've had rough times before.

ROO
I'll do my best, one day at
a time.
I won't bludge on Olive:
maybe things can be the
same.

BARNEY
This Pearl, she seems a
decent sort,
a little hard to get,
but every oyster needs a
bit of work.
Things will be as good this
year.

ROO
I'll do my best.
Take one day at a time.

EMMA
Barney has to chase the
women,
at work, Roo likes to be
top dog.
Great fun while the going's
good,
but all things change and
men grow old.

OLIVE, ROO,
BARNEY, PEARL,
BUBBA
Cheers. (repeated)

OLIVE
The waiting is over,
summer begins now.
These are the months I
live for,
five months nearer heaven
each year. Money never
mattered before,
things will be the same
this year.

EMMA
Like hell they will. There's
trouble brewing, Olive's
still a child. Seventeen
years and still a girl.
Anyhow, let's have a beer,
My tired life needs a bit of
cheer.

OLIVE, ROO,
BARNEY, PEARL,
BUBBA
Cheers. (repeated)

BARNEY
Come and have a beer Emma.

EMMA
Wouldn't soil me lips.
OLIVE
Come on Emma, be a sport.

EMMA
I've earned a drink putting
up with you lot.

Barney offers Pearl a sausage.

BARNEY
How about a cheerio, Pearl?

PEARL
Just one, I'm hungry now.

BUBBA
It's party time, party time.

OLIVE
Up there, Cazaly - here's to us.

EMMA
Great tucker, nice cold beer.
I've certainly earned this
puttin' up with you lot.

BUBBA
It's party time, it's party time
Romance is coming for me
(repeat)

OLIVE
The waiting is over.
(repeat)

PEARL
What will summer be like?
I've never done this before.

BARNEY AND ROO
Here's mud in your eye.
(repeat)

ALL
Cheers.

*Quintet: Bubba, Olive, Pearl,
Emma, Roo, Barney*

BUBBA
Romance is coming for me.
I feel it in the air.
Love coming closer.
Somewhere coming near.

OLIVE
Romance is coming for me. I
feel it in the air. Summer
begins,
waiting is over now.
Five months of heaven.

PEARL
Never done this before,
I think it might work out
Mr Ibbott seems a decent
sort of man.

With luck I'll find the right
man for me.

EMMA
My tired life needs a bit of
cheer
Let's have a beer.
Time for sowing, time for
reaping.
Anyhow, let's have a beer.

BARNEY
He'll understand and
forgive me.
Every oyster needs a bit of
work.
Things will be the same
this year.
Things will be good this year.
Pearl seems decent.

ROO
I'll do my best.
I'll take one day at a time.
Things will be the same
this year.
I'll do my best, things will
be just fine.
I won't bludge on Olive.

ALL
This year will work out.
Waiting is over now,
and summer's here. We'll
have fun, we'll have fun.
Things will be good this
year. Cheers!

ACT TWO: Scene One
*Nocturne. Night, small hours.
Emma is revealed, insomniac
old woman, sitting at a teapot.
She sings - a nocturne of the
changes she senses ahead - a
monologue becoming more a
lullaby, a concluding
benediction, for the couples,
Bubba and the house.*

EMMA
I see most clearly in the
dark of night,
sitting here with the day's
first brew,
steaming open my tired
mind, its memories
like letters, long forgotten,
from the past.
Yesterday has gone, but
years long past are crystal
clear.
I remember still that first hot
summer she brought him
home, a young girl flushed
with fire,
and a sunbrowned man who
pushed back his hat and
grinned, as if he owned
the world.
She said she met him at
the Aquarium:



a thousand fish, but only this one out of the water. I understand at once and couldn't blame her. A girl must take her chance with love, but even then I knew, each summer since I've known, a time would come when things would change. I sense its shape about me in the dark tonight.

I saw their days of laughter, I sensed their nights of fire. Seventeen summers are more than I'd have thought, or Olive hoped; Can they be blessed with any summers more?

Something seems wrong this year, no-one will say. Ask no questions, hear no lies, but I've learnt to keep my ears open in this house. I saw their days of laughter, I sensed their nights of fire. Seventeen summers are more than I'd thought, or Olive hoped. Can they be blessed with summers more?

ACT TWO: Scene Two
Emma, still sitting, sings up to the sun.

EMMA
I see less clearly in the light of day
The narrow foreground of the here and now sharpens into light. The larger backdrop of the past blurs from sight, The bright surface of another day hides the deep beneath.

Emma shuffles out.

Olive, dressed for work, descends. Roo, carrying milk and paper, enters from outside. Emma, carrying fresh tea-things emerges from kitchen. She turns on the radio. Music is heard. They sing over music. (Stranger in Paradise, as Beguine) All three converge on the breakfast table.

EMMA
A cool change is coming, I feel it in my bones.
OLIVE
You never miss a chance to harp on the darker side of things.

EMMA
There'll be cold and rain before the day is gone. The change is coming soon.

ABC news theme interrupts. Olive turns it off.

OLIVE
Some things stay the same. Some things never change. Open your eyes a little wider; the sun's in full flight Its fine and clear outside.

EMMA
I'm telling you: it's going to be wet and cold There'll be rain before the day is gone You'll feel it on your face like tears Trust nothing you can't see beyond: a change is coming soon.

OLIVE
It's summer and the sun is here, just like every other year.

Olive massages Roo's back in passing and moves upstairs.

OLIVE
How's the back? Barney told me how you strained it, Least, not how you did it, just the way it slowed you down.

ROO
Trust Barney.

OLIVE
Hope you saw a doctor - didn't just let it...

ROO
Better ask him, he's got all the news.

OLIVE
Right-o. No-one's going to make an invalid of you. I know how you hate being sick.

Olive exits. Roo is reading the paper; Emma pours tea.

EMMA
Reading the social pages, looking for your name?
ROO
Just looking through the jobs, seeing what's around.

EMMA
I don't believe my eyes and ears! You're looking for work down here?

ROO
Just something to fill the days and help to tide things through.

EMMA
If it's money you need I can always lend a bit I've never told you this but I've a few quid put aside.

ROO
Just wait a bit. It's not the money, and I'd never bludge on you.

EMMA
Just like a man to never ask for help. Your stupid pride will bring you down.

Emma exits. Barney enters.

BARNEY
The first morning of the summer - how shall we spend the day?

ROO
Spend yours how you like. I'm off to look for work.

BARNEY
You can't work in the layoff! I've plenty stashed away - I'll always help you through.

ROO
I'd never beg from you.

BARNEY
Swallow your stupid pride! What about those summers when my pockets emptied, faster than yours? You always carried me - can't you let me do the same?

ROO
Not when I can earn my own.

BARNEY
If you hadn't walked out then, you wouldn't need the work.

ROO
I could never have stayed with Dowd. You should never have stayed with Dowd.

BARNEY
I had to work.

ROO
Long before the war I knew that I could count on you - a mate who'd stand behind me, thick or thin.

BARNEY
That was then, but this is now, and things are not the same. I had to work.

ROO
You should never have stayed with Dowd.

BARNEY
I had to work.

ROO
You turned your back and let me down.

BARNEY
I had to work.

ROO
You turned your back and let me down.

BARNEY
I had to work.

ROO
I have to work, so let me be.

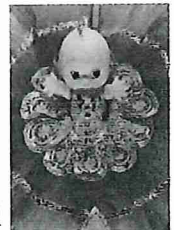
Roo takes his paper outside to the verandah as Pearl descends. Comic Wooing Duet: Pearl, Barney

BARNEY
Come down for your bag, Mrs Cunningham? Shall I carry it upstairs?

PEARL
I still can't decide to stay. There were noises at my door all night - I couldn't sleep.

BARNEY
If you'd opened up your door I could have helped you sleep.

PEARL
I've met your type before - You want too much too soon. You've already got three



growing boys, spread across three different states.

BARNEY
I want too much too soon.
It's something I can't help.
Now, ever since I was a kid,
a good-looking woman has
made me feel like an eel in
a fishbasket.

PEARL
I bet you've seen the insides
of a lot of baskets.

BARNEY
Every now and then you
meet a woman,
who sees you might have
done a bit of chasing,
not because of all the
loving you could get,
but because of all the
loving you could give.

PEARL
Because of all the loving
you could give?
I bet you've got a lot more
than you've given.

BARNEY
Ask them yourself, they'll
tell you true.
I paid their bills right
through,
Did everything for them. If
anyone's left out in the
cold because of what I've
done,
It's only me myself.

PEARL
If you'd told me that last night,
sober and tender, Mr Ibbott,
instead of banging on my
door,
as drunk as Chloe.

BARNEY
As drunk as whoey?

PEARL
As drunk as a skunk,
as full as a boot.

BARNEY
As pissed as a newt?

PEARL
Mind your language, Mr Ibbott.
Lets just say you weren't
quite as sober as a judge.

BARNEY
Beer and women - I always
want too much too soon.

PEARL
A little later, might be better,
Slow and tender...

BARNEY
Sober and wise...

BARNEY AND PEARL
...one step at a time.
We mustn't rush a love
That might last a lifetime,
maybe forever.

BARNEY
Quiet and steady wins the
day,
she'll come round by close
of play.

PEARL
Slow and tender...

BARNEY
Sober and wise...

BARNEY AND PEARL
One step at a time.

BARNEY
I'll offer her sugar,
then I'll add some spice.
Within a short time she'll
think I'm so nice, to have
and to hold around the
house.
This woman needs love.
She's shy like a mouse.
This woman needs love,
and care and attention,
and just one other thing,
I'm not going to mention.

PEARL
Slow and tender

BARNEY
Sober and wise.

BARNEY AND PEARL
...one step at a time.

PEARL
Don't go jumping to
conclusions
Don't take too much here
for granted.
Don't assume, there must
be no confusion. I'm a
widow. I have no illusions.

BARNEY
Slow and tender...

PEARL
Sober and wise...

BARNEY AND PEARL
...one step at a time.

PEARL
I've crossed a few gullies,
and I'm not as green as grass.
I'm not craving your affection,
I've still got a bit of class,
but a woman needs a
man's protection,
so I'm still quite open-minded,
but I haven't yet decided
and there's nothing cut
and dried.

BARNEY
(counterpoint with above)
Quiet and steady wins the
day.
She'll come round by close
of play.

BARNEY AND PEARL
Slow and tender, slow and
tender
We mustn't rush a love,
That might last a lifetime,
maybe forever.

PEARL
You want too much too soon.

BARNEY AND PEARL
Slow and tender.
Sober and wise.
One step at a time.

BARNEY
I want too much too soon.

PEARL
Sober and tender, Mr Ibbott.
One day at a time.

Olive descends.

OLIVE
Time for work.

PEARL
Be right there.

Roo enters from verandah.

ROO
I'll walk you to the tram.

Roo and Olive exit. Emma returns

EMMA
Will someone get this luggage
out from underfoot?

Emma exits to the kitchen

PEARL
You might take my bag
upstairs,
but jump to no conclusions,
there's nothing settled yet...
Mr Barney Ibbott.

BARNEY
See you tonight then... Pearl

PEARL
Tonight... Barney
BARNEY
Sober...

PEARL
And tender...

BARNEY
One step...

PEARL
One step...

BARNEY AND PEARL
One step at a time.

*Pearl exits. Barney jauntily
swaggers, and takes Pearl's
bags up. Emma, who has been
eavesdropping enters.*

EMMA
Sober and tender?
One step at a time?
Not a snowflake's chance
in hell.

Emma exits.

INTERVAL

ACT THREE: Scene One
New Year's Eve.

*Knitting Aria: Pearl
Pearl, dressed now in red, is
knitting. Barney is holding a
skein of wool, wound around
two hands. Roo, work-weary,
is playing cards with Olive. We
hear children offstage, singing
Charlie Over The Water.*

CHILDREN
Charlie over the water
Charlie over the sea
Charlie broke the teapot
and blames it onto me

*(Ad Lib chaotic banter; share
the following lines: You're
cheating. No I'm not, you're
too slow. He was, too. He
wasn't. Don't be stupid. Aw,
come on. No fighting. Stop.
Let's start again.)*

CHILDREN
Charlie over the water
Charlie over the sea
Charlie broke the teapot
and blames it onto me
(and can't catch me)

(Ad Lib lines, laughter Voices



7.

recede into the distance, repeating: You're cheating again; he was, too; he wasn't; catch me if you can, coming ready or not.)

PEARL
Listen to the kids,
we used to play that.
Charlie Over The Water,
it's called.
Knit one, purl one, purl
one, plain.
Nothing ventured, nothing
gained,
Barney seemed a little boy
at first,
a little boy of forty, never
grown up.
Always getting what he
wanted.
You know there's always a boy
inside each man I've ever met,
A boy who only needs a
firmer hand,
The mothering of a decent
wife,
To set him straight.

ROO
You bid.

OLIVE
No bid.

ROO
No trumps.

OLIVE
You lead.

BARNEY
I've done a lot a wild things
On New Year's Eves gone
past - but this must take
the cake.
Come on, let's go out.

OLIVE
Shut up, Barney. Can't you
see that no-one wants to
go? Roo's tired.

ROO
Who me? I'm not tired. You
don't have to stay home on
my account.

OLIVE
Course we don't.
I just couldn't be
bothered, that's all.

BARNEY
Well, what are we going to
do, then?

PEARL
I know. Come now, come now.

Try this on for size.
Keep still. Keep still.

BARNEY
You'll knit yourself around
the world at this rate.
It's New Year's Eve, Come
on, let's go out.
I can't believe I'm stuck at
home in woollen handcuffs.

OLIVE
Your trick. My game. You
shuffle. I'll deal...etc

ROO
My go. Right bower. You
lead, my lead...etc.

BARNEY
I can't believe I'm stuck at
home in woollen handcuffs.
It's New Year's Eve, I can't
believe I'm stuck at home.

PEARL
Knit one, purl one, purl
one, plain.
Slip stitch, twist stitch,
pearl one, plain.
Bubba offstage.

BUBBA
There's fire in the air.
There's fire in the air.
Hello, everyone. Happy
New Year.
Brooch or the beads?
What do you think?

OLIVE
That dress is new?

BUBBA,
I bought it for the dance.

PEARL
Isn't it late to be going out?
You're still a girl,
the same age as my daughter.
Dressed like that you're a
lamb to the slaughter.

BUBBA
It's New Year's Eve, it's
New Year's Eve,
There's only one each year.
What's happened here?
What's happened here?
There's only one each year.
There's only one each year.
Can't you see I'm not a girl
no more?
This New Year's Eve, this
New Year's Eve, I'm on the
eve of love.

I can't sit still, I can't sit still.
My head is all aflutter, I'm

in a hurry and I'm not.
I want to stay, I want to go.
I'm happy and I'm sad. I'm
burning hot and then I'm
cold.
I'm bashful and I'm bold.

It's New Year's Eve, it's
New Year's Eve,
There's only one each year.
What's happened here?
What's happened here?
There's only one each year.
There's only one each year.

Can't you feel the things I
feel,
feelings that you used to feel.
I hate to leave you but I must.
Please get up and have
some fun.
Don't just sit there acting
glum.

Tonight's a night to celebrate.
Why not party at the
Morrises?
I've loved you all my
childhood years but New
Year's Eve's no night for tears.

Tonight's so full of life.
I want to shout and dance.
Why don't you come out
with me
Instead of staying here?
Why not party at the
Morrises?
like every other year.

It's New Year's Eve,
it's New Year's Eve
There's only one each year.
There's only one each year.
Can't you see I'm not a girl
no more?
La-la-la-la-l a-la-la-la. This
New Year's Eve,
I'm on the eve of love. La-
la-la-la-la-la-la-la!

OLIVE, ROO,
BARNEY, PEARL
Take care, Bubba, have fun,
but take care. *(repeat)*

Bubba exits.

Knitting Aria: reprise

PEARL
Knit one, purl one, plain
Who are the Morrisises?
You've never mentioned
them before.

ROO
Clubs are trumps.

OLIVE
My turn.
ROO
My go now.

OLIVE
My trick.
PEARL
Will someone please tell me
who are the Morrisises?

OLIVE
They're cousins of Nancy's
that's who they are and that's
why we're not going.

BARNEY
It's hot and stuffy here.
Let's head down to the
beach and get a little air.

PEARL
The mozzies will eat you alive.

BARNEY
They can't be any worse
than here.

ROO
It's them ferns on the
verandah -
They're full of them.

PEARL
Knit one, twist stitch, slip
stitch, plain.
It's too late for going out.

BARNEY
Half past eleven on New Year's
Eve - how late is that?

ROO
(throws cards down)
I'm sick of cards, waiting
for the stroke of twelve is
bloody stupid. Can't I go to
bed?

PEARL
Knit one, purl one.
So much for glamorous nights.
She boosted you two up so
much before you came
down, I thought I'd dance
each night till dawn.

OLIVE
You're the one wants to
knit all night!
You're the one who says
we're up too late!
You're the one who wants
to sit at home.

BARNEY
Calm down Ollie,
at least let's have our own
small party, have some,
fun and drink the New



Year in.

OLIVE
I'll make some savouries.
Come on Pearl, go find Emma,
we'll have a sing-song
round the piano,
drink a toast to Happy Days,
and see the New Year in.

*Olive and Pearl exit.
Recitative: Barney/Roo*

BARNEY
I meant to tell you:
the boys are in town,
come south
for the fruit-picking season.
I found them all this morning
propping up the bar
at Young and Jackson's

ROO
All the boys?

BARNEY
Young Dowd is with them
if that's what you mean.

ROO
That's not what I mean.

BARNEY
Yeah - I think it's what you
mean.
He wants to see you, wants
to clear the air.

ROO
The young cock come to goat.

BARNEY
They're heading west, and
want us with them, back
together, like we always
was:
fruitpicking, up along the
river.

ROO
I don't need work, I've got
good work,
but if you want to go, don't
let me stop you. Running
away again - you're getting
good at that.

BARNEY
How much longer will you
twist the knife?
I've said that I was sorry -
it's only once I've let you
down.
I've stood by you every
other time.

ROO
I didn't need you other times.
That was the once I did.

Olive returns

OLIVE
Let's gather round the piano
wet our whistles while we
sing.
We'll drink a toast to
happy days,
we'll see the New Year in.

BARNEY
Now we're going places.
I'll open up some beer.

OLIVE AND BARNEY
Let's wet our whistles
while we sing.

ROO
I'll do the best I can,
I'll do my best.

BARNEY
Happy New Year.

ROO
Olive needs some fun.

OLIVE
Some fun - let's have some fun.

ROO
A toast.

BARNEY
A toast.

OLIVE
A toast.

ROO, BARNEY AND
OLIVE
Cheers.

Emma, and Pearl enter.

EMMA
What's going on in here?

BARNEY
Nothing - what have you
been up to?

EMMA
Getting a sea-breeze off
the gutter,
what do you think?
Now on your feet, the lot of
you, around the piano,
don't muck about.

*They all surround her at the
piano.*

BARNEY
Who picks the tunes?

EMMA
Who pays the piper calls
the tunes.

*Barney gives her a quid note.
Emma eagerly stuffs it in
her dress.*

BARNEY
Valencia, for Roo, his
favourite song might cheer
him up.

ROO
(*taciturn*)
That was years ago, and
who needs cheering up?

OLIVE
Some things stay the same
Some things never change.

EMMA
Alright then - it's *Valencia*.

Emma plays Valencia.

ALL
*Valencia - where there's
passion in the songs a lover
sings beneath the moon
Valencia - I am waiting in
my garden for a loved one
to come soon.*

(*sinister counterpoint in
orchestra*).

Emma suddenly stops.

EMMA
Someone's singing flat.

OLIVE
It's not me.

PEARL
Who's she talking about?

BARNEY
Come on, Emma, be a sport.

ROO
Cut it out Emma - let's
have some fun.

EMMA
It's Pearl, she's out of key.

PEARL
Who do you think you are -
Nellie Melba?

EMMA
I'm just trying to be a bit
professional.

OLIVE
Give her a quid, and it

goes to her head.

BARNEY
We don't want a singing
lesson.
We just want a bit of fun.

EMMA
I want it done just right, in
time, and on the count.

*She plays again, singing
Valencia alone. Others interject.*

EMMA
*Valencia - where there's passion
in the songs a lover sings
beneath the moon.*

PEARL
I thought you said who pays
the piper calls the tune - I
know a better one.

EMMA
*Valencia - I am waiting in
my garden for a loved one
to come soon.*

OLIVE
She gets worse and worse
each year.

ROO
Come on, Emma, be a sport.

BARNEY
We only want a bit of fun.

OLIVE, ROO AND
BARNEY
Come on, Emma.

*Emma, exasperated, slams
down piano lid.*

EMMA
To hell with the lot of you.

She storms out.

BARNEY
Oh, well - that's it. Here's
to happy days and
glamorous nights.

PEARL
Oh you fool Barney. Don't
say things like that.
I mean - glamorous nights!
Just look at us.

*Strokes of midnight sound.
Barney to verandah. Pearl
on sofa. Olive on piano stool.
Roo at table.*

KIDS OUTSIDE
Happy New Year in there!
Happy New Year!



Should Auld Acquaintance
be forgot and never brought to
mind. Should Auld
Acquaintance be forgot in
Days of Auld Lang Syne.

Happy New Year! Catch me if you
can. Coming ready or not.

*Quartet: Olive, Pearl, Roo
and Barney*

OLIVE
There's nothing new I want,
nothing I can celebrate
tonight.
Give me back the year
that's passed,
and all the other years before,
relived again, unchanged,
the way they were.
I want the stroke of
midnight stopped,
the clocks turned back;
I want my summers past,
again.

PEARL
She promised love and fire.
She promised men like
eagles flying southwards
with the sun.
I never wanted eagles,
I only hoped to find a man
to knit a sweater for.

ROO
The New Year holds no joy:
no promises, no dreams
for me at all.
This New Year's day is
nothing more than the
first of all the rest. Scratch
its mark on the nearest
wall: there's no way out,
the borders of my life have
shrunk to the prison of a
city street.

BARNEY
I've made my single
resolution:
I'll try to make this work a
little longer,
but if I can't
I'm heading for the river
with the boys.
It's not the same this year,
with Nancy gone, and Roo
gone strange, everything
has changed.

REFRAIN
The old year vanishes, like
music into air.
The old year ends, and
with it
seventeen other years
before.

All exit. Emma re-enters.

EMMA
They say I see the blacker
side of things
but perhaps black's the
way things are,
my mind grown old and cold is
the only mind to trust
a mind that steps back
from the heat
and sees things coldly as
they are.

Each summer past I've
known a time would come
when things would change
that time has come, the
change is here,
their lives will never be
the same.

For now they sleep, for
now they sleep.
They can't accept a
change has come.
Their hearts can never be
the same.
For now they sleep, for
now they sleep,
Their hearts cannot believe a
change has come.
My Olive, trying hard to
hide the truth
if only from herself; her
Roo, silenced
by pride, unable to ask or
reach for help.
He can't accept he's not
getting any younger.
Barney and Pearl, a last
minute match
that can never last. They
cannot find each other in
their dreams,
and Bubba, poor Bubba,
seeking her future in
memories of summers past.
For now they sleep, for
now they sleep.
They can't accept a
change is here.
The time has come to reap
their sorrows.
A mother's tears are
useless.
Their hearts can never be
the same again.
I am tired.
I must rest.
I must sleep.

*Fade softly. Emma exits. Short
scene change music to
following Friday, 6.30pm.*

ACT THREE: Scene Two
Prelude, Very short. The

*following Friday, 6.30pm.
The verandah is flooded with
a fading sunlight that slowly,
through this scene, takes on a
deep bloodtinge - a Russell
Drysdale red - as the sun sets.
Roo is sleeping on the
downstairs sofa, in paint-
splattered overalls. Olive
tenderly removes the boots,
folds the paper.*

Car-horn, offstage voices.

BARNEY
Wake up in there!

DOWD
Quiet, Barney, you noisy lout!

*Olive moves to the window
Roo wakes.*

OLIVE
Some young bloke is at the
gate with Barney.

ROO
(rousing)
What's he look like?

OLIVE
A big man with Barney
yapping round him like a
poodle.

ROO
It's Dowd. Young Dowd.
How could Barney bring
that bastard here?

OLIVE
I'll tell 'em you're not here.

*Barney appears in the door,
with Dowd. Olive attempts to
block entrance.*

OLIVE
Roo's sleeping, you can't
bring anyone in here.

ROO
No - let 'em in, I'm not the
kind to hide.

*Barney is drunk and oblivious to
the drama of the moment.*

BARNEY
I knew if we just got the
two of you face to face...

DOWD
Shut up, Barney.

Roo and Dowd eye each other.

DOWD
Giddy, mate.

ROO
Giddy, Dowd.
DOWD
Looks like you've been
painting the town.

ROO
Some of us have work to do.
*Emma and Pearl appear at
the edges of this drama,
drawn instinctively. Emma
at the kitchen door; Pearl at
the top of stairs.*

DOWD
I wanna shake hands with
you. Will you shake hands -
Roo?

*The women watch, on tenterhooks.
Roo pauses, his fists are clenched,
reluctantly they uncurl, he holds
out his hand. Barney clasps his
hands above his head in triumph.*

BARNEY
(drunkenly)
You see - I told you that
was all it took.

*The women turn on him,
hissing asides. Dowd half-
apologises to Roo.*

DOWD
Two things I want to say:
First - that time in the cane
when you went down I
shouldn't have laughed.

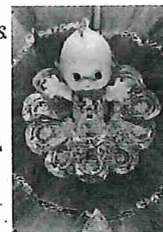
ROO
I slipped - that's all.

DOWD
Whatever you say, but I
shouldn't have laughed.
Next is a message from the
boys.
They want to see you.
What about it?
Tomorrow afternoon we'll
take you to the races.

BARNEY
You know you like the races.
Me and Pearl and you and
Olive, all of us can go.

OLIVE
Maybe we've got
something else to do.

ROO
Speak for yourself, Olive.
(turns back to Dowd)
I'll come, to show there
aren't hard feelings.
You fix it all with Barney.
But now I'm gunna have a
shower.



Roo exits, followed by Olive, carrying his boots. Emma exits.

BARNEY
I told you it would work -
easy as winking.

DOWD
Only just.

BARNEY
He shook your hand.

DOWD
Like it was a prickly pear. I
don't mind saying I was
sorry but that's all the
crawling I will do.

BARNEY
I'll cheer you up. To make a
day of it tomorrow you'll
need a girl: we'll ask Pearl's
daughter.

*Pearl, overhearing, descends
angrily.*

PEARL
What the hell do you think
you're doing?
Leave Vera out of it, she's
just a child, such company
is far too wild.

BARNEY
The company is you! How
bad is that?

PEARL
Worse than I had ever
thought and getting far
worse still.

BARNEY
All I did was ask for some
company at the races.

PEARL
Yes, and the rest that goes
with it.
I know what you asked.
You proposition her
through me.
What do you think I am?

BARNEY
What do you think I am? A
baby-snatcher?

PEARL
Just look at you, full as a
boot again.
I know who you are,
it ain't a pretty sight.
It's taken far too long for
me to see the light.

BARNEY
C'mon, Pearlie,
wipe away that frown.

PEARL
Get your hands off me you
drunken bludger.

Pearl exits upstairs.

BARNEY
Don't worry Johnnie,
Plenty of fish in the sea.

*Barney walks to the kitchen
door and shouts.*

BARNEY
Bubba!

DOWD
I don't want any trouble. I
think you've had enough.
We'll make it just the blokes.

BARNEY
You'll change your mind
when you see Bubba.
Shouting
Bubba! Hey, Bubba!

BUBBA
(offstage)
What's going on Barney?

Bubba enters.

BARNEY
Here's the girl next door,
name of Bubba Ryan...

DOWD
How are yer?

BARNEY
She's fine.
(to Bubba)
This feller here, he's one of
us from way up north, the
best of us.
He has the strength of ten
of us.
He wants to take you to
the races.

DOWD
I'll do the asking. Clear off
Barney, and wait outside.

Stares at Barney until he leaves

DOWD
Dowd's the name, Miss -
Johnnie Dowd.

BUBBA
Pleased to meet you,
Johnnie Dowd.

DOWD
I'm asking you myself to join
me at the races.
I'm not a man for flow'ry talk
If the answer's yes, that's
beaut.
If the answer's no - I'll take a
walk.

BUBBA
The answer is yes.

DOWD
That's settled then.
Barney has a lot of hide, I
had the feeling he was
rushing you
he's always rushing people
into things.
But I guess that news is
nothing new.

BUBBA
I live next door,
I've known him all my life.

DOWD
I often saw this place
inside my head.
From things that Barney
said, and bits of talk the
boys picked up. I had a
picture in my mind that's
nothing like the truth.

BUBBA
What do you mean?

DOWD
The fun they say they have.
I just can't see it here.

BUBBA
Things aren't always what
they seem.

DOWD
These kewpie dolls - what
are they?
Why are there so many?

BUBBA
Roo gave one every year to
Olive, like a mascot.

DOWD
A doll's the best that he
can do?

BUBBA
(a little angrily)
You shouldn't say that, you
don't know.

DOWD
I didn't mean to hurt you.
I only spoke my mind.
If what I say, is wrong tell
me straight - I won't mind.

BUBBA
The dolls mean everything
to Olive and to me. This
house is small but holds a
giant world of love
squeezed inside its tiny
rooms. Things that happen
in a house you just can't
share with talk. Every-
where I look I see the
times they've had, the love
they've shared. *You're just
too young to understand.*

DOWD
Too young to understand? It
seems to me they treat you
like a doll. How old are
you?

BUBBA
I'm twenty two.

DOWD
And they they still call you
Bubba.
What's your real name?

BUBBA
Kathie.

DOWD
I'll call you Kathie, then.

*They smile at each other -
perfect understanding.*

BUBBA
(aside)
He called me by my name.
A woman's name. Should I
have told him yes so
quickly?
Is tomorrow my day?
Should I have answered yes?
Should I have told him yes?
He called me by my name.
A woman's name.
He called me Kathie.
Is this the first page of a
brand new book
I'll fill with everything I want?
Can this be true?
Is tomorrow my day?

DOWD
(aside)
Is she all she seems to be?
I can't believe I'd find a girl
like this here in this place.
Is there something real
and true beneath the
stories I've heard?
Could she be right, that
even here inside this tiny
house, there is something
real and true?
Is she all she seems to be?
Can this be real and true?



Could she be right,
that even here, inside this
tiny house,
beneath the dolls and
ornaments, there is
something real and true?

DOWD
Look at the time. I must
be off.
Walk me to the tram - Kathie?

*He offers her his arm, she takes
it, they leave together. Roo
descends, and sees them
leaving. Barney re-enters,
pleased with himself.*

BARNEY
He wasn't such a bad sort
of bloke.

ROO
You just can't help
yourself, can you?

BARNEY
Easy Roo - I'm just a little
full.

ROO
You forced me. Brought
him right in here and
made me knuckle under.
*And not content with that
you had to throw him
Bubba.*

BARNEY
Easy Roo, I told you, I'm full.

ROO
Don't pull that drunken act
on me. You had to have a
beer to get through what
you've done.

*Emma appears in the kitchen
door; Olive and Pearl upstairs
drawn by the noise.*

BARNEY
All right - so I brought him
here.

ROO
And I know why.

BARNEY
For your own good.
I want to see you back on top.

ROO
Liar! Liar! Filthy, rotten liar!
You brought him here to
see how low I'd sunk
to let him see me covered
in stinking paint.

BARNEY
Are you a flower?
I've seen you in the cane
as black as pitch.
You want to tell the truth?
Let's look at you for once.

OLIVE
What does he mean?

BARNEY
Ask him about his back

OLIVE
His back was bad.
Next year he'll be right
and he'll beat Dowd.

BARNEY
Tell them.

OLIVE
Tell us what?

ROO
Ask him - the lie is his.

BARNEY
You went along with it.

OLIVE
Tell me Roo - what does he
mean?

BARNEY
No, I'll tell you.
That bit about his back
was bull.
His back was never bad.

*Roo turns away, unable to
face Olive or Barney.*

ROO
Dowd did a better job
'cause he's a better man,
that's all.
I've faced the truth - can you?
The world's great lover -
what a joke that is.

BARNEY
Enough, Roo.

ROO
You give it out, then be
prepared to take it.

BARNEY
I said, enough.

ROO
You want the names...

BARNEY
You keep the names...

ROO
The dates...

BARNEY
I don't want dates.

ROO
What about the places where
you couldn't get it up?
After seventeen years you
couldn't even hold Nancy!

BARNEY
You bastard! You're rotten
to the core...

*They fight. Barney picks up
the vase containing the
seventeenth doll, and swings it at
Roo. The doll flies out of the vase
and the vase smashes.*

OLIVE
Stop it, for Christ's sake,
stop it!

*There is a sudden silence, she
sinks to her knees...*

Uptempo Quintet

OLIVE
A broken doll and broken
dreams.
The seventeenth summer
and it's come to this.
Why must it change?
I want my summers past
just like every other year.

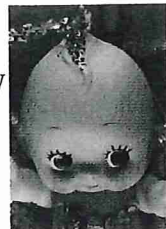
ROO
I don't know how to feel.
No joy, no promises.
I've had to heel to a bigger
dog.
Barney is poison to me.
There's nothing left.
No joy, no dreams.
No more summers, it's all
finished now.
Only a grim horizon.

PEARL
So much for eagles, so
much for love and fire. So
much for eagles flying
south.
I'm through with Barney,
through with Olive.
This is no place for me.

BARNEY
Enough's enough.
I've had my share.
It's finished now, I just
don't care.
I've taken more than any
man should take. Roo is
finished, our mateship, dead
and gone.

I'm outer here.
I'm heading for the river
with the boys.

EMMA
I always knew that it
would come to this.
I tried to warn
but she wouldn't listen.
Her tears won't wash away
the pain.
Did they think it would
last forever?
REFRAIN
A broken doll and broken
dreams.
All smashed in pieces, broken.



*Blackout, spot on Olive on
the floor clutching doll.*

*End fortissimo, orchestral
interlude*

ACT THREE: Scene Three
*The walls have been stripped
of their ornaments. Olive is
still clutching doll.*

OLIVE
The morning light rebuilds
the world but leaves it
incomplete. Why must it
change? Why must things
change?
Why can't my world
remain the same?

Broken dolls and broken
dreams.
I took them down to dust
and they just fell apart.
Brilliant butterflies, and
birds of paradise - they
filled the house like sunlit
dreams, too beautiful to
watch too delicate to
touch.
Ashes to ashes, wishes to
dust
I took down my dreams
and now they're dust.

The morning light rebuilds
the world
yet leaves it incomplete.
Why must it change? Why
must it always change?
Why can't my world
remain unchanged?

*Pearl descends, in a black
dress, with her bag.*

PEARL
Just come down to say I'm
leaving soon.
The taxi should be here at

any minute.

PEARL
You've cleaned the place up.
You must have worked all night.

OLIVE
I couldn't sleep.
I couldn't go to bed.
You look like you're dressed for a funeral.

PEARL
Just trying to be respectable again.

OLIVE
I'll let you in on a secret -
You've never been anything else.

PEARL
(stung)
If it's time to tell the truth then I've a few home-truths for you.
I couldn't sleep myself last night.
Tossing there I figured out just what's the matter with you.
Not one thing here was anything like you said.
You're blind to everything outside this house, outside the layoff.

OLIVE
If I was blind it's 'cos I want to be.

PEARL
And now this morning, can you see?
Look around with open eyes.
Whatever was so wonderful?
Beneath the tatty decorations nothing but an ordinary room looks the worse for wear.
Just like the rest of your story.

OLIVE
One thing I can clearly see is this -
If it wasn't the same this year I know who to blame.

PEARL
You're blaming me?

OLIVE
Yes - I'm blaming you.

Olive exits to kitchen.

PEARL
I'm wasting my breath
She'll never grow up.
I s'pose it has its moments,

Living in a dream.
A doll herself, left on the mantelpiece for seven months each year dreaming of the other five.
The balance sheet's not right somewhere.

Barney enters.

BARNEY
Morning, Pearl.

PEARL
I suppose it's too much to ask where you have been all night?

BARNEY
It's a question for a missus and you were never mine.

PEARL
Too respectable for you?

BARNEY
Look at what you're wearing.
I don't mind you walking out on me but must you look like you're leaving a corpse.
Barney ascends stairs. Pearl stands alone.

PEARL
Where is the Pearl who stood here just a month ago, like a nervous girl who wanted too much to believe?

Where is the man who said he had a lot of loving he could give? I've seen a lot of things inside this house but little sign of love for me.

Perhaps he spent the balance of his love on Nancy.
What's left above the ledger he needed for himself.
He needed all he had and none was left for me.
None was left for me.

She picks up her bag and slips away into the dawn.

ACT THREE: Scene Four
Emma enters into stark, bare surrounds, stripped of decoration. Roo descends, Stranger in Paradise on the radio shades into ABC News Theme. Roo switches off the radio.

ROO
You're the one with all the

news.
You're supposed to know the lot.
Everything this year's gone wrong.
Who's to blame for messing up?

EMMA
You're kidding aren't you?

ROO
No - I want to know.
It's got me all boxes up.
Who's to blame for messing up?

EMMA
I just can't believe my ears.
These layoffs are not for keeps.
They're only seasons.

ROO
Yes - but whose to blame?

EMMA
Nobody's to blame. You're getting old.

ROO
Old?

EMMA
You're getting old -
You and Barney and Olive -
you're getting old.

ROO
I'm as good a man as ever.
Old is what you are.

EMMA
You're lying to yourself again.
You and Barney - two of a kind.
Why do you think he lied about your back?

ROO
Lying comes natural to him.

EMMA
It needs to now
he's past his prime
And he's not the only one.
There's a time for sowing,
and a time for reaping,
and that goes for a lot
more than cutting cane.

ROO
You make too much of it - a single lousy season
When the reaping's done It's time to sow again.

EMMA
It's not that easy.

ROO
Maybe you're talking sense.
Maybe I've been blind to things I should have been.

EMMA
Nancy saw - and she got out.

ROO
What about Olive?

EMMA
Olive - Olive's a fool.

Emma collects the seventeenth doll

EMMA
In the middle of the night
Olive sat here on the floor
and hugged this doll and howled.
A grown woman crying over a doll - that's Olive for yer

Emma sets down doll and returns to kitchen. Barney comes down with his bags. River images and river music.

ROO
First rat to leave the sinking ship?

BARNEY
The mob is puffing out on Monday,
heading up the river for the grapes.
The river might be what we need to cool our heads.

ROO
You're going with Dowd.

BARNEY
With all the boys, Dowd's not the only one.

ROO
He's the man who cracks the whip.

BARNEY
No more than you when you were boss.
Lets give the kid a go. It's finished for us here.

ROO
For you it might be finished.
Always leaving, always running. I'm staying here.

BARNEY
Maybe that's best for the both of us.
Split up for a while and meet again next year,
up north, when things



might be the same again.

ROO
Things will never be the same
because I'm never going back.

Olive descends, sees Barney's bag

BARNEY
I can't believe you've
changed so much.
You're nothing like the
man I used to know.

OLIVE
(angry, to Roo)
You're going?
Sneaking off in the morning?

ROO
(to Barney)
Give us a moment, Barney.

BARNEY
I'll say goodbye to Emma,
the only one of us
who hasn't changed.

Barney exits to kitchen.

ROO
We need to talk.

OLIVE
Time for settling the account?
The things you broke the
old cracked vase and tatty
decorations,
all that's left of seventeen
years.
I guess it's not worth much -
you want to make an offer?

ROO
That's not it at all?

OLIVE
This is where you pay me
off.
In cold hard cash.
Let's work some yearly rate
and multiply by seventeen.
Who needs to talk?
You can sneak off in the
morning,
leave your money on the
mantelpiece
hidden underneath the clock.

ROO
How can you talk that way?
We were never cheap or low.
If you'd stop to listen you
might hear
the truth is, I'm not going.

OLIVE
You're not going?

ROO
Only Barney's going.

Olive is close to tears.

OLIVE
I shouldn't have talked
that way
but cheap and low is how I
feel,
especially in Pearlie's eyes.
The way she looked at me
as if I had no clue
of what was real and was
dreams,
and all the time it's Pearl
who didn't know.

*She weeps, Roo takes her in
his arms.*

ROO
We'll just pretend that
Pearl was never here. This
summer's just the same as
every other year.
Except this year there'll
only be the two of us.
It's going to work just fine
with just the two of us.

OLIVE
The butterflies are dust -
but the birds of paradise,
I could patch them up.
Maybe some things stay
the same,
some things never change.
It's summer and the sun's
still here
just like every other year.
A new doll's here
like every other year.
Maybe things can be as
good again.
Our love is new again.

ROO
(tenderly)
A man's a fool to treat you
like a woman.
You're just a little girl, 'bout
twelve years old,
a doll yourself, living in a
dream.

OLIVE
(dabbing her eyes)
I must look like
the wreck of the Hesperus.

ROO
Take the afternoon off
we'll have a picnic in the
park
Just the two of us.
There's still a little
fire in the air.

OLIVE
Summer won't be quite the
same with Barney gone.
How will you meet up for the
canecutting season?

ROO
I'm not going back, Olive.
Not for this season,
or for any other.

OLIVE
(shocked)
You're not going back?

ROO
I know what I'm saying is
seventeen years too late, But
marry me Olive,
I want to marry you.

OLIVE
No!

ROO
Olive - what's wrong.

OLIVE
No! No! No!
You can't get out of it like
that.
I won't let you.

ROO
Olive!

OLIVE
You've got to go back.
It's the only chance we've got.

ROO
Stop it, Olive. Stop it.

OLIVE
You think I'd let it end in
marriage.
Every day a paint factory.
You think I'll marry you?

ROO
What else can we do? You
don't know what you want.

OLIVE
I do know. I want what I
had before.
I want those summers past,
unchanged, unchanged.
(Attacking him)
You give it back to me.
Give me back what you've
taken.
Give it back to me.

ROO
You're mad.

OLIVE
I won't marry you.

ROO
Olive - it's gone.
Every little scrap has gone.

OLIVE
I won't let you.
I won't let you.
I'll kill you first.

Roo throws Olive to the ground.

ROO
Kill me then.
But this is the end. There'll
be no more eagles
flying from the sun.
This is our dust,
the dust of our dreams,
we'll walk it till we die.

*Olive is stunned, on the floor;
weeping. Emma and Barney
enter. Emma crouches by her.*

EMMA
Olive. Ollie - what's the matter.
Tell me.

*Olive rises and staggers out.
She makes a noise that is
described as 'elemental'.*

EMMA
It's finished.
Clear out and never come
back.
The lay-offs in this house
are over for all of you.

*No more singing from this
point. Roo smashes doll as
per play, to underscore.
Barney's spoken, as per play,
to quiet underscore.*

BARNEY
Come on, Roo.
Come on, boy.

Black, Curtain.

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