

***SWING FEVER***

***A Musical Farce (in three acts)***

***By Craig Slivka***

347-595-2507

Craigslivka1@gmail.com

(C) COPYRIGHT 2020 CRAIG SLIVKA

ACT 1 SCENE 6

(The study doors fly open. Arthur and Diaphrama walk down the stairs)

ARTHUR: Mrs. Lipshitz when--

DIAPHRAMA: --Huh?

ARTHUR: I mean Miss Zimmerman when I define the word either, it can never, nor could it be confused with the term either (either).

DIAPHRAMA: Oh for the love of--

ARTHUR: --Miss Zimmerman, this is no time for idle debate. I have two weeks to fix this show. I appreciate your assistance in these matters of urgent importance.

DIAPHRAMA: Okay, I guess.

ARTHUR: The suffering that the selected chosen must endure from mingling with the illiterate masses. Agnes, I need--

(Agnes runs in from the kitchen wearing traditional maid uniform carries a tray with two glass filled with Dom Perignon)

AGNES: --Coming Sir.

DIAPHRAMA: Hey! Wait a cotton-picking minute. I think, no, I know when I'm being insulted! You are almost impossible to decipher the hieroglyphics outta yer mouth, I QUIT!

ARTHUR: You mayant (Middle English may not)quit! None may leave my royal court unless they're ousted, and you, my dear, are dismissed! Now flea yonder peon!

(Diaphrama hurries to the front door. Agnes at the door opens it)

DIAPHRAMA: I don't who is nuttier! You, yourself, or you! (lets out ear-piercing "AH!")

DIAPHRAMA: So, there! (exits)

AGNES: (slams door)Stay out to never return!!

ARTHUR: (feeling faint from aggravation)Thank you, Agnes. You are always kind to me. Please help find Tchaikovsky to clear the dirty air.

AGNES: (crosses to depression-era wooden radio and adjust the dial

searching for a station playing Tchaikovsky) Here's a little Tchaikovsky to tickle your fancy.

ARTHUR: Agnes, I seem--

(Agnes pours Champagne into a glass. Arthur sighs relief)

AGNES:(Pours Arthur a glass) --Sir, I hate to be a bug-a-boo, but that's number three you fired this week.

ARTHUR: I didn't fire her. I could never do anything mundane and boorish. The female was excommunicated.

AGNES: I don't care what you "iated her." Sir, you still need a secretary. This show goes up in two weeks.

ARTHUR: I know... I know, but I'm Arthur heir to the throne! (looking around)Why doesn't anybody ever believe me?

DAVID:(turns off radio) I believe you, daddy.

ARTHUR: David, my son, has come home from school. Is it time for another vacation? Wait a cotton-picking minute you were on vacation last month. David! What are you doing at home?! Aren't you supposed to be in school?

DAVID: That's what I wanted to tell you--

ARTHUR: (Gulping down Champagne)--Give it to me straight.

DAVID: Well...

(Doorbell)

ARTHUR: If you can't spit it out, then save it for dinner when I get buried alive under everyone's problems.

(Agnes crosses an almost ballet-like cross to door)

DAVID: But Daddy!

(Arthur greets his producer Orville Bluenbocker. Orville puts gloves in his coat pocket then hands coat and hat to Agnes)

ARTHUR: Orville, thank you for coming today.

(They shake hands)

ORVILLE: Arthur, nothing would give me more pleasure than to help you bring this show to the heights of your former magnificent glories.

ARTHUR: Orville, you are too kind. Agnes, more Dom, and a glass for Mr. Bluenbocker. I've a hunch we are going to be rather busy.

DAVID: (tugs at Arthur's arm)Daddy, I need to tell...

(Agnes pours more Champagne)

ARTHUR: David, be a proper young lad and tell your mother the reason for your return. Daddy has work to do.

(Arthur and Orville head upstairs, David debates whether to follow, then hears mother's voice)

## ACT 1 SCENE 7

(Gwen and Tracey rehearse Arthur's new play. David quietly stares)

GWEN: But Tyrone, it is my burden and my hardship. I love them all, and they mean so much to me. What'll I do? Yes, I'll do it. But what if it doesn't work?

TRACEY: It has to work, my beloved. For our future to be safe, we...

We kill your husband.

GWEN: But murder, it's bloody and cruEL. Can't we let them live by shipping them to Siberia?

TRACEY: No, my betrothed, there is no other option. I don't care how good of a bridge player he is... I want you more, more, do you hear me?

(Tracey steps in front of Gwen. Gwen pinches Tracey then jabs elbow into Tracey's stomach for upstaging her)

TRACEY: Now it's time for us to play our hand. For the first time, I'll have a royal flush. I...I will do it. When love is in the cards, nothing beats a... a...

GWEN: (lifts up record player needle, and background music record stops) --Loaded thirty-eight dear.

TRACEY; Darn lines, the similarities cause me confusion.

GWEN: Tracey, the beauty of a comedic masterpiece, is the familiarity. Maybe a little patchwork of dialogue couldn't hurt.

TRACEY: Gwen, you're a genius, a beautiful genius.

GWEN: I know, tell me more.

DAVID: Hello, Mother.

(Gwen hugs David)

GWEN: David, what are you doing here? Did another silly war break out again? Men and their toys. It's just like teenage acne, darling; it takes a while to get rid of it. But they keep breaking out again and again. Ah well, the follies of military men. (rushing to Tracey) Tracey, tell me is my face is clear of acne!

TRACEY: You look as lovely as ever, Gwen.

DAVID: But Mother!

GWEN: David, my darling baby boy, how you've grown. Now you're old enough to know never interrupt Mother while she's rehearsing. Run along and find one of your little friends to play with...

DAVID: But--

GWEN: --No buts. Mother said, go, and Mother doesn't like to get angry and yell at my little one. Be a good child and skedaddle.

(David exits. Gwen turns to continue rehearsal. She hears footsteps outside the living doors. Gwen turns, crosses to the door, and lets out a maniacal scream)

GWEN: David! Mother told you I need privacy to rehearse this bomb your father wrote!!!

GWEN:(Weary) Agnes. Forgive me it's been a long day.

AGNES: It ain't over, Mrs. S. By the by, how many for dinner?

GWEN: Agnes, if you paid more attention to the details of the day, you wouldn't need me to make any trivial decisions for you. Now would we? I thought not. The pressure I must endure. Must I decide everything for everyone? Ask around, ask around. It's my burden and...

(Tracey puts needle back on a phonograph record, melodramatic music plays)

GWEN: --and my hardship, but I love you all so much, but I love Tyrone too. What'll I do? Yes, I'll do it, but what if it doesn't work?!?

TRACEY: It has to work. The only way we can be a hundred percent safe is to kill your husband.

GWEN: Murder! But it's so cruEL! What about Siberia, can't we ship him there instead?

TRACEY: Sorry, my love, but this is our only option. I don't care how good of a bridge player he is. I want you more! More, do you hear me!

GWEN: Yes, my dear, I'm still right here, ready to take on the big fight, to go for the gold, no matter the cost.

TRACEY: Now it's time for us to play out our hand, and for the first time, I'll have a royal flush.

(Gwen lifts up needle, melodramatic music stops) GWEN: Darn it, Tracey! A flush is poker, not bridge. TRACEY: But that's what Arthur wrote.

GWEN: Fiddlesticks, Agnes make a note. Find a bridge rulebook, write a flush is in poker, then leave it on Mr. Stradavariouskinisi's desk to read and decide which way he wants to swing the line.

AGNES: Yes, ma'am. (Agnes exits)

TRACEY: So now, I will do it. When love is in the cards, nothing beats a... a...

AGNES: (mimics Tracey's voice)... A loaded thirty-eight.

GWEN: Tracey darling, how marvelous you remembered the line. Now we can do the rest of the first act.

TRACEY: I did?

GWEN: You did.

(Agnes shakes her head no)

GWEN: Agnes, now what?

AGNES: It was me.

DAVID:(David re-enters, thinking rehearsal is over)Mother. GWEN: Not now, David, mummy's about to have a palpitation. TRACEY: I know what's wrong. The playwright is inconsistent. DAVID: Mom!

GWEN: David, dear sweet child, my baby is growing up so fast, but nonetheless, Mother has work she must do. Be a proper young gentleman, run along and keep yourself occupied.

DAVID: But--

GWEN: --Go! Agnes, read my part.

AGNES: You mean, I can read your lines. Who knows next will be an understudy part. The day is here. I'm ready.

GWEN: Always surrounded by commoners and never common myself.

DAVID: Mother!

AGNES: 'Scuse me, Mrs. S. beat it kid, scram!

GWEN: Agnes for shame, that's no way to talk to my baby boy. Tracey, whatever are we to do with Agnes?

TRACEY: Ship her to Siberia. The publicity will help the box office.

AGNES: The sling and arrows of misguided suffrage a maid like me to be--

DAVID: --It's super-duper important!

GWEN: How's a leading lady to concentrate with chaos swirling in from the heavens?

TRACEY: David, this is a fragile time in the rehearsal process for your mother and me. We need to be focused on ensuring your father's play is a hit. Whatever is troubling, you can wait for dinner.

DAVID:(Defeated, he exits) Don't say I didn't try to warn you.

AGNES: Dinner might be a real titanic.

GWEN: Agnes, not you now too. Buck up Agnes and read.

AGNES: Yes, Ma'am. (She takes the script from Gwen)But Tyrone, it is my burden and my hardship. I love them all, and you mean so much...

## ACT 1 SCENE 8

(The study doors fly open, Arthur and Orville descend the grand staircase. David walks up the stairs to meet his father at the halfway point)

ARTHUR: Orville, the word is either not either (either).

ORVILLE: Whither?

ARTHUR: No, either, either, either! The trials and tribulations of the selected educated few--

ORVILLE: --Cut the dribble, Arthur, it's me.

ARTHUR: Sorry, Orville. Lately, I'm surrounded by incompetent Neanderthals that have limited command of English. Agnes, my head is splitting; more champers, please. Brahms, where are you? You have always soothed my head swells.

DAVID: Hello, Father.

ARTHUR: Not now, David, father's in the middle of taxing rewrites of my latest masterpiece.

DAVID: But Father--

ARTHUR: --David, here's twenty cents, call up one of your friends and catch a movie.

DAVID: I don't have any around here. You sent me to military school to beat the swing out of me.

ARTHUR: At least I've accomplished something. David, what are you doing here? On second thought, I don't have the time to hear how you earned a visit home from school. So go hello to your sister.

(David runs up steps)

ARTHUR: Now, where were we... Ah yes, the importance of being either?

(c) 2020 Craig Slivka