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THE INSPIRATION OF IMOGENE COCA:  
A BIOGRAPHY AND ORIGINAL MUSICAL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in Theatre Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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May, 2014

### Acknowledgement

*“A PhD in Philosophy? So, you’re gonna be a bullshit artist.”*

- Sam Guida, Jr., responding to his daughter’s announcement that she plans to continue her studies.

My father made sure that I was exposed to comedy from a very early age. It wasn’t just entertainment or something going on in the background of our lives. Finding the humor, the jokes and sharing the laughter was always on the forefront. My father’s influence and unquestioning support is the fuel that keeps my flame burning. So, first, I thank you, dad, because this adventure would not have been possible without Sam Guida, Jr.

My eternal gratitude is owed to Dr. Noreen Barnes, the bright, positive and ever encouraging beam of light guiding me through the darkness. She has led me to paths I didn’t know existed and gently nudged me to take a hike and chart new territory. Where once I saw limits I now see opportunities.

Dr. Aaron Anderson’s lessons in physical comedy led me to Imogene Coca. The inclusion of this work in our program is essential. It has helped me grow as an artist and find my niche as a scholar. I can’t imagine life without a red nose and for that I am most appreciative.

This project is a continuous collaboration of scholars and artists. It is the first step on a long and exciting journey. My biggest thanks to NYC’s power couple, Amy Dickenson and Adam Nowak, and my brilliant bestie, Benjie Randall for their artistry and advice which immensely influenced the story. Thanks to my life long bestie, Nicole Cimato for encouraging



me with her excitement for this project and for bearing an uncanny resemblance of Imogene. This play is for Nicole and Imogene.

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My final acknowledgement is impossible to put to words. Everything I write is just not enough. If that this section were a musical, I would sing a thousand verses of thanks to my number one fan and heaven's sweetest angel, Janeen Guida, mom.

I am a changed woman since getting to know Imogene. To say that I have been inspired would be putting it mildly. I have a new perspective and a much deeper appreciation for women in comedy. If I have anything to say about it, and I do, Imogene and her image will never fade away.

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## Abstract

### THE INSPIRATION OF IMOGENE COCA: A BIOGRAPHY AND ORIGINAL MUSICAL

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A submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in  
Theatre Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014

Major Director: Dr. Noreen C. Barnes  
Director of Graduate Studies, Dept. of Theatre

Imogene Coca was a pioneer of comedy for women on stage and television. Her career in performance spanned the twentieth century. In the 1950s she was known as America's funnyfaced little imp and "Imogene Coca" was a household name. Today that name is getting lost amidst a sea of male clowns and her funny faces are nearly forgotten. Imogene's contributions to theatre, television, and comedy are too important to forget. This thesis includes a biography of her work in vaudeville, Broadway, television, and film, and an original musical inspired by that body of work. Coca's comedy is timeless and the next generation deserves an opportunity to know her.

## Introduction

While studying the work of physical comedians I came across a tribute webpage for clowns. As I scrolled through the photographs of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Abbott and Costello, The Three Stooges, Red Skelton, Laurel and Hardy, I realized a theme - they were all men. I found images of two women, one of whom I could immediately identify, Lucille Ball. The second woman was unfamiliar. In the photograph she was holding up a stem with no flower and dressed as a tramp in a suit, tattered hat and oversized coat, ripping at the seams. As there is a limited supply of funny female role models, I was not about to let this one slip through my fingertips. I started digging and re-discovered one of comedy's finest performers of the twentieth century, Imogene Coca.

My initial research was to satisfy personal curiosity. Who was this woman in such impressive company? And why did I know all of her male colleagues but not her? A quick internet search will identify Coca's body of work spanning over seventy years in nearly every medium. My curiosity grew as I read through her biography. When I came across her partnership with Sid Caesar and footage of their work on the 1950s television program, *Your Show of Shows*, I was delighted and distraught. It was wonderful to see Coca's work and learn about her now, but I was upset that I had gone through thirty-four years of life without her. I've since been on a mission to make up for a lifetime without Imogene. The mission includes preserving her legacy as a pioneer of comedy for women and a twentieth century working actress. Coca's image is important to remember and can serve as a great source of inspiration for generations to come.

This thesis includes Coca's biography of work and the first draft of an original musical inspired by her life.



*Figure 1*

## CHAPTER 1 Biography

### **Vaudeville Roots**

Imogene's career on stage began before she was born. In the early 1900s, in Philadelphia, PA, an Irish-American girl, Sadie Brady, fell in love with the Spanish/Cuban/Mexican-American, Joseph Fernandez y Coca. Brady was a vaudeville chorus girl and assistant to one of America's top magicians, Howard Thurston (Kalter 120). Coca was a violinist and led the orchestra in vaudeville houses around Philadelphia. (You will find my vision of how Joseph and Sadie met captured in a scene titled Imogene's Conception.) Sadie came into the business when she saw an ad in the Philadelphia newspaper looking for "young ladies" (120). The sixteen year old Brady got the job as an assistant to Thurston, with whom she toured the vaudeville circuit from Philadelphia to New York City and back again.

Vaudeville was a leading form of live entertainment from the mid 1800s into the early 1900s. There were a variety of performers and styles, including musicians, magicians, comedians, singers, dancers, jugglers, plate spinners, dare devils, and acrobats. Theaters all over the country booked acts, big and small, to play for about one week, sometimes more, sometimes less, before the performers packed up, took the train to the next city and did it all over again. These performers were lucky to have steady work and maintain an income. When Brady happened to be performing in her hometown of Philadelphia, she met Joseph Coca who was conducting the orchestra, and as Imogene said, "that was that." (120). Sadie Brady gave birth to their only child, Imogene, on November 18, 1908. Since Joseph had steady work leading

orchestras in the local theaters such as the Chestnut Street Opera House the Coca family lived in Philadelphia throughout Imogene's childhood.

She remembered her father taking her to the theatre, "ever since I could walk." (120).

Both of Imogene's parents encouraged her to perform from a very early age. At five years old she was taking piano lessons and her father hoped she would become a concert pianist. Imogene later regretted not following through with her lessons saying, "You can never learn too many things if you're going to be in the theatre." (121). At age six she began singing lessons and at eight was training in classical dance and ballet. As soon as he thought she was ready, Joseph pushed to get his daughter on stage. In Ted Sennett's book, *Your Show of Shows*, the author describes Joseph as "...a proud, brash, salty tongued man, liked to gamble, and he would occasionally lose the band's entire Saturday payroll between the bank and the theatre." (57). Despite the gambling problem, Joseph Coca had an excellent reputation as the orchestra conductor and convinced the theater managers to give Imogene a spot on stage. She had her first paid dancing gig at age 11, making two dollars. By age 13, Imogene had her own solo number, performing the song "Oh! Gee, Oh! Gosh, Oh! Golly I'm In Love" at the Dixie Theater in Manayunk, Pennsylvania, a neighborhood just outside of downtown Philadelphia. In an article about Imogene published in *The Sunday Morning Star* on March 31, 1940, Sammy Cohen reported that the neighborhood in Manayunk was so rough that, "...even the cops go about with bodyguards." (Cohen). Imogene recalled the Fourth of July performance at the Dixie Theater when the rowdy audience ran up and down the isles shooting off fireworks. Coca said, "That was the first theater I had ever worked at, and I was petrified. But my mother was standing in the

wings and I realized that she expected me to behave like a professional, so I stayed on in spite of my fear.” (Kalter 122).

### **Broadway Bound**

Coca continued studying dance through her graduation from eighth grade at which time her family moved to Atlantic City and continued to encourage, if not push, her career in the theatre. Imogene’s mother and aunts took her to New York to audition on a regular basis. When asked if she thought the early exposure to the profession was an advantage to her success, Imogene replied, “If my mother had brought me into New York to play children’s parts, perhaps that would have been better for me. But I was actually working as a member of the chorus!” (Kalter 121). Imogene’s debut on Broadway was in the 1925 musical comedy, *When You Smile*. She was so naive it didn’t cross her mind that, “...there was anything particular about being on Broadway.” (122). *When You Smile* was not a success, running only forty-nine performances in October and November. After the show closed, seventeen year old Coca found work as a singer and dancer in the night clubs of New York City, such as the Silver Slipper, owned and operated by gangsters. This was during the era of Prohibition, and nightclubs were rife with illegal activities and unsavory characters. Employees of the Silver Slipper gave it the nickname, the “Upholstered Sewer”, not the most ideal place for an underage girl who was afraid of everything (Adir 90). It was in nightclubs like the Silver Slipper and later the Rainbow Room that Imogene began developing her own act which continued to expand as the years went on, eventually sending her soaring to stardom. (In my script there is a number titled, “The Spoofing Song”, where Imogene regales the audience with some of her best solo spoofs, including Carmen Miranda, a clumsy ballerina, and an opera diva.)



After a stint in the clubs, Imogene made a cross-gendered appearance as Jimmy, the office assistant, in a production of *Queen High* at the Mayfair Theatre in Brooklyn in 1928. *Queen High* is a musical comedy that had a run of 367 performances on Broadway two years prior. The role of Jimmy the office assistant was played by a man on Broadway and in the film version which came out in 1930. Years later on *Your Show of Shows*, Imogene played the roles of young men, boys, and even a lion at the zoo. I consider that role as a testament to her versatility and the earliest signs that Coca knew how to capitalize on her unusual looks. After the closing, Imogene went back to the night clubs where she met her first partner, Leonard Sillman, who eventually introduced her to the world as one of America's finest comediennees.

Sillman was an innovative dancer, writer and producer who started his career at the age of sixteen as a replacement for Fred Astaire on tour. By the time he was in his early twenties Sillman had made it to Hollywood and began writing, producing and starring in his own productions. He and Coca created a duo act they performed in the clubs and theaters around New York in the late 1920s and early 30s. They were noted in the very last sentence of an article featuring vaudeville acts at the Palace Theatre in 1928, "Leonard Sillman and Imogene Coca score in a program of dances." (NYTimes). Their act was put on hold when Coca was cast in the 1930 production of *The Garrick Gaieties* produced by the Theatre Guild. Previous *Gaieties* were produced in 1925 and 1926. *The Gaieties* spoofed life in New York, celebrities and other Broadway shows. The production in 1930 ran for 170 performances from June to October. Brooks Atkinson's early review in the New York Times did not mention Imogene but was favorable, describing the show as, "...a lively collection of songs and turns...one of the best topical satires ever written." A review that came out at the end of the Broadway run spoke well

of the show and mention of Coca was, once again, saved for the last line, "...fortunately for the show are Philip Loeb with his dry wit and professional touch and Imogene Coca with her big brown eyes." (NYTimes). After closing in October the show went on tour with Imogene in tow. She was officially a Broadway gypsy, earning a living singing and dancing on the road.

With two Broadway shows under her belt before the age of 23 Coca wasted no time in adding a third to her resume, *Shoot the Works* in 1931. This musical review ran for only 87 performances from July to October. I find this show to be special because it was written by newspaper columnist, Heywood Broun, for the sole purpose of providing work to his unemployed artist friends. It was Broun's hope for "a cooperative review- that is, nobody but the actors and chorus would reap from the box-office intake." (Zimmer 14). The music is credited to twelve people, the book, ten people, with lyrics by an additional twelve. The cast was made up of more than fifty performers, not including special guests like the Marx Brothers, who appeared one weekend to help boost sales. Imogene sang a duet with Broun in addition to her first solo on Broadway, "Let's Go Out in the Open Air", written by Ann Ronell, who was a protégé of George Gershwin. Ronell rehearsed the song with Coca and the two would go on to become friends for a lifetime (14). A duet with Coca and Broun was added to the show soon after it opened. The duo would be immortalized by one of Al Hirshfeld's caricatures that accompanied a New York Times review. The cartoon features a bucktoothed Imogene tousling the hair of a rather heavy set Heywood Broun who is looking through sheet music and enjoying a cigarette. The New York Times review by Atkinson called it, "...a swell show - if you happen to like Mr. Broun. Fortunately, a lot of people do." (19).

The musical revue, *Flying Colors*, produced at the Imperial Theatre in 1932 was Imogene's fourth Broadway production. Producer Max Gordon hired Coca as understudy to featured performer Patsy Kelly. In the large cast of sixty-two Coca was given two small features as Jo-Jo and Miss Maris. While there is no mention of Coca, this description of Kelly by Atkinson gives us an idea of the character Coca was hired to understudy, "The hobbledehoy Kelly is an amusing wench in her shrill, tomboy fashion." (NYTimes 1). A second notice of Atkinson's claimed the show to be, "...a revue of taste, skill and finished splendor, but a tepid copy of two spirited predecessors." *Flying Colors* closed in 1933 after 188 performances.

### Success with Sillman

It was back to the rowdy vaudeville theaters and nightclubs for Imogene. Her saving grace would

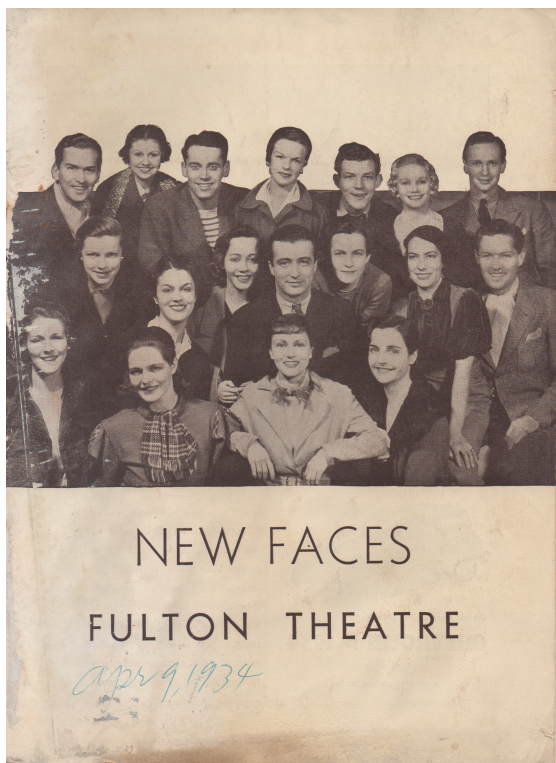


Figure 2

come from her former partner, now producer, Leonard Sillman, in the first of several productions titled *New Faces*. Sillman's concept was a variety show that featured talented performers who were not very well known - hence the title, *New Faces*. Each version was named for the year in which it was produced. This production was the first, *New Faces of 1934*. I was fortunate to obtain an original playbill. Figure 1 displays the front cover which is a photograph of the cast including Leonard Sillman seated in the center with Imogene directly to his

right. Coca was hired as a dancer and did not originally have a very big role. The day before

opening, Imogene and some of the other dancers and performers were back stage goofing around. At this moment a clown was born and that little bit of improvisation turned Imogene into an overnight sensation. As she recalled, the heat wasn't working in the theatre and she was very cold so she borrowed an overcoat belonging to her male colleague, Chuck Walters. Imogene's tiny frame in the huge coat was comedic in itself. When Coca tried to imitate the dance steps another cast member was rehearsing, it turned into a mock strip-tease pantomime. The funniest part of the story is Imogene didn't even know what she was doing. When Sillman said, "That's very funny." Imogene replied, "What's very funny?" (Kalter 123.) He decided to add a few other cast members and put the act in the show which terrified Coca. Her fear was validated after the first performance when they "...filed out in a line and faced the audience with no expression at all; we did these nothing things and walked off. At first there was dead silence." (123).

According to Coca, the second appearance of the skit got the audience laughing, the third appearance got them applauding and the fourth appearance was "a triumph." (123). It was a huge hit and the press was all a buzz for the "new young comedienne" they hailed as a combination of Fanny Brice and Beatrice Lillie (Adir 93). The overcoat strip-tease would become a fixture in Coca's career. She can be tracked performing that routine from 1934 to 1991 (Hunt). Coca had found the niche in which her career would thrive.

Coca's professional relationship with Sillman had only just begun. Their friendship is the first great example of how Coca's like-ability factor helped her career. It was not just dumb luck or her incredible talent that kept her working all those years. People like Sillman enjoyed working with her and brought her back to work for them whenever possible and recommend her to other producers and directors. Sillman would sign Coca on for six more Broadway shows that

are well noted by Karin Adir in the book *The Great Clowns of American Television*; “*Fools Rush In* (1935); *New Faces of 1936*, (Coca played a Cinderella who begged her fairy godmother to let her be a stripper); *New Faces of 1937*; *Who’s Who* (1938); *Calling All Men* (1939); and *All in Fun*, which had a rather short run - it opened on December 27, 1941, and closed the next day.” (94). *Fools Rush In* was kicked out of the Playhouse Theatre after only ten days and fourteen performances because Sillman owed a “considerable amount for stagehands’ and musicians’ salaries” (NYTimes). *All in Fun* was a comedic musical revue, which seemed to be a running theme in Coca’s career. The New York Times review of the try-out in New Haven listed Imogene, among several others, as, “...seen in specialties.” (29). Imogene performed the popular vaudeville comic sketch “Slowly I Turn” and spoofed the ballet in “Morning After of a Faun”. Versions of these two skits, among others, were immortalized by her on television one decade later in *Your Show of Shows*.

In the mid 1930s Coca met her first husband, actor Robert Burton, at a party given by Sillman. They met for a second time while performing together in the Sillman flop, *Fools Rush In*, which ran for fourteen performances. The title of the show seems prophetic given that Coca and Burton were married two days after the closing, having borrowed \$2.00 for a marriage license. Times were tough for the well liked, always working yet struggling performer, Imogene Coca. The marriage to Burton doubled the financial burden since he was out of work more often than not, and would continue to be for the majority of their 21-year union. The couple kept their nuptials a secret for nearly one year and lived apart because they could not afford to get an apartment together. Eventually they told their families and friends, and decided to do whatever it took to be together. This included couch surfing, boarding houses, cheap hotels from which they

would get evicted, and a couple of nights sleeping on benches at Grand Central Station (Adir 94). From 1935 to 1949 Imogene struggled professionally and almost quit the business all together. She continued performing in night clubs, revues on and off Broadway, and on tour.

### **Max Liebman & Tamiment**

In 1938, the out-of-work couple, Coca and Burton, bumped into a friend who told them he knew of someone who could use their talent at his summer show in the Poconos. The friend arranged a meeting with Max Liebman. Liebman began his career writing and producing vaudeville acts and he had a very sharp eye for talent, a keen instinct he developed while working as a social director for summer resorts. The career changer for Liebman came at an adult summer camp, called Tamiment, located in the Poconos. It was there in 1934 that he produced a new variety show every Saturday night for fifteen hundred guests (Sennett 7). Liebman wrote, directed, supervised costumes, lighting, scenery, music and performers. Of this experience he said, “For all that period of time before television, I was really preparing myself for that medium at Tamiment. I was doing what you might call television without cameras. Our big show was Saturday night - one performance before a very tough audience.” (Sennett). Liebman had seen Sillman’s shows, so he was familiar with Coca’s work and liked her very much. Of the meeting at Liebman’s Greenwich Village apartment, Coca recalled; “Bob and I and Max ended up talking, drinking, and laughing late into the night. Bob and I ended up going back to Tamiment for five summers.” (Adir 95).

Liebman’s weekly shows were such a success that he took them to Broadway in the fall of 1939. *The Straw Hat Revue* featured his Tamiment performers including Coca and Burton. Other recognizable names in the *Revue* were Danny Kaye and future Broadway director and

choreographer, Jerome Robbins. The production was in two acts with twenty five sketches, of which Imogene appeared in eight. Liebman utilized skits the performers had created on their own, in addition to new ones. Imogene's routines from her nightclub performances came in handy. One sketch that she developed was a spoof of Carmen Miranda's "South American Way", "Soused American Way", which made up the finale of *The Straw Hat Revue* (Adir 95). The show only ran for seventy five performances, but it further established Coca's reputation as an excellent performer and comedienne.

### **Coca Considers Quitting**

In the early 1940s Imogene went to Boston to perform in a revue, *A Night at the Folies Bèrgere*, followed by the Noel Coward play, *Tonight at 8:30*. After which she returned to New York and performed her act in the night club circuit. Coca satirized popular performers such as Fanny Brice, ballerina Vera Zorina, Lillian Gish, Pola Negri, Clara Bow and child star, Jane Withers. Coca did not care for working in nightclubs and said of her performances there, "The drunks threw things at me - salt cellars sometimes. Sometimes money. This is a terrible way to get money. Worse than being without." (Adir 96). The work was so awful that in 1942 when her husband entered the army, she went back to live with her family in Philadelphia. Her mother asked her every day, "When are you going back to New York?". Imogene decided to stay in Philadelphia since she didn't care for being alone. That very same day, she received a phone call from Oscar Hammerstein who asked if she would come to New York to audition for a new show he was working on, *Oklahoma*. Coca recalls the audition, "Richard Rodgers wanted me to sing, and I couldn't think of a single song. They weren't too happy about that so I didn't get the role." (Kalter 124). Considering Imogene was on the fence about leaving show business, this

experience could have been very damaging to her career and self esteem. As Coca puts it, her career was made up of a series of accidents, and it is the next accident that she claims kept her going. After walking out of the unsuccessful audition for *Oklahoma*, a man recognized Imogene and stopped her on the street. He ran a summer show similar to Liebman's at Tamiment and he invited her to work for him that summer. As for quitting the business, Coca figured the decision had been made for her and said, "Why fight it? From that time on, I've worked steadily." (124).

### **The Admiral Broadway Revue**

In the late 1940s Coca found herself working in the night clubs again. It was about this time that regular television programming was becoming popular around the country. The medium quickly caught the attention of Max Liebman, who had gone on to Hollywood to work on films while continuing to produce revues all over the country. Along the way Liebman met another very talented comedian, Sid Caesar, with whom he worked through the 1940s, helping to prepare his act. Liebman noticed that the successful television programs, such as *Texaco Star Theatre* starring Milton Berle, were an extension of vaudeville, night club acts and radio. Liebman believed his revues held to a higher level. He said, "...sophistication tempered by a sense of showmanship that brings the audience something they may not be as familiar with as they were in vaudeville - but something within their grasp to comprehend and appreciate." (Sennett 10). It was his experience in "legitimate theatre" that Liebman believed tipped the scale toward sophistication. Liebman would get his shot at television when advertising agent Pat Weaver, was brought to the Poconos to see the Saturday night show. Weaver enjoyed the performance so much he and Liebman stayed up talking about it until four in the morning. One of the concerns was the possibility to produce a new show every week. Knowing very well



he was up to the challenge, Liebman invited Weaver to return the next week and the week after that, and so on. It was lucky for Leibman that Weaver took a new job as Vice President of NBC. Word of mouth had spread that Liebman was looking to produce his revue on television and everything very quickly fell into place. The electrical appliance company, Admiral, was interested in sponsoring the weekly revue only if, “Liebman could bring it in as a one-hour program with singing, dancing, and comedy for no more than fifteen thousand dollars a week.” (10).

In the meantime, *Happy Birthday*, a comedy by Anita Loos, was a great success on Broadway and getting ready to go on tour. A review by Brooks Atkinson in the New York Times 1946 said *Happy Birthday* was “unpretentious entertainment...A Cinderella story” (Atkinson 39). Imogene agreed to replace Helen Hayes in the role of Addie the “dowdy Newark librarian” who tries to win the man in a local bar in New Jersey (Atkinson 31). After the tour Coca received a very welcome offer from her old friend, Max Liebman. The deal was four weeks of work on a new television program titled *The Admiral Broadway Revue* in 1949. Imogene was so excited to get out of the night clubs, it didn’t even occur to her that she was going to be appearing on national television.

On a visit to the Paley Center for Media, in New York City, I was fortunate to view the series premier of *The Admiral Broadway Revue* which originally aired on January 28, 1949. Coca was featured in a ballet spoof, “The Afternoon of a Faun”, which was brought back for *Your Show of Shows*, a few years later. A skit about three female baseball players afforded me the opportunity to see Coca’s unique comedic quality in comparison to her co-stars, Mary McCarty and Ronnie Cunningham. McCarty was a very funny and talented performer who had just as

many features as Coca. In the baseball sketch Coca's comedy comes at ease, while McCarty is larger than life, pushing her way through. Poor Cunningham would have disappeared all together if she hadn't been so tall. McCarty does too much, Cunningham doesn't do enough, but Coca is just right.

### **Immy Meets Her TV Hubby**

In Sid Caesar's autobiography he recalls the first meetings with Liebman regarding *The Admiral Broadway Revue*, "If it flopped, who would know? Neither of us knew anyone who owned a television." (Caesar 73). Caesar had a very popular nightclub act in New York City and was earning \$3,500 a week. The agency running the deal for the program tried to contract Caesar for \$900 a week. He countered with \$1000 per week and they turned him down. When Liebman heard that he was to find a new star he refused saying, "I built the entire show around him. No Caesar, no show." (Caesar 74). Sid got his \$1000 per week and during a photo shoot he remembered meeting "a lovely little lady with big brown eyes named Imogene Coca. I always called her Immy because she was so little." (Caesar 74). The infamous duo didn't start out as such. Imogene had so much of her own material from her solo act, the writers didn't write much for her. When she began to run out of material Coca pitched an old duo sketch she had done with her husband at Tamiment. He loved it and told Coca to perform it with Caesar. She remembers not having the nerve to tell Liebman she would rather perform the act with her husband and found herself, "in a room with this strange actor, telling him what to do." (Kalter 125). Knowing how much actors dislike being told what to do by anyone except the director, Coca was not excited about being put in the situation of teaching Caesar the act. To her surprise, working with him was easier than she anticipated. She told him the story, which was a pantomime, and "He

just did it and did it beautifully and when we performed it on the air, it was a big hit.” (125). The very next week Coca was in the same situation, pitching an old skit to Liebman and hoping he’d ask her husband to perform it with her on television. Once again, Liebman paired her with Sid. This time Caesar questioned Coca, “Do you really want to do this old burlesque bit? It’s so old, everybody does it.” Imogene saw this as a possible opportunity to work with her husband and the normally very shy Coca welcomed the challenge; “I very much want to do it. Burlesque bits are like folklore. Each burlesque comic has his own version of the sketches and this one was given to me as a present by someone I greatly respect. I know exactly what should be done in it, but *if you don’t want to do it, that’s fine.*” (125). The sketch was the very popular and now classic “Slowly I Turned”. The sketch ended up being such a phenomenal success that the writers used different variations of it for Sid and Imogene, over and over again, throughout the years.

Those sketches set the foundation for a partnership that would last over forty years. When asked about their success as a team Coca and Caesar credit it all to a kind of science that can’t be taught in school.

Coca - “I think it just happened chemically that we worked well together and the audience accepted us immediately.” (Kalter 126).

Caesar - “We had chemistry right away and liked each other immediately. We did one or two sketches together early on, and I didn’t even have to think about her timing. We were in sync.

Our creative minds both worked the same way.” (Caesar 74).

### **Your Show of Shows**

*The Admiral Broadway Revue* ran for nineteen weeks from January to June 1949 and was an enormous success, until the sponsor was forced to back out. The show had created a such a



*Figure 3*

high demand for one of Admiral's products, television sets. The company was faced with the decision of continuing their sponsorship or using that money to expand the business. NBC may have lost a sponsor, but Liebman had no intention of throwing in the towel. Pat Weaver was still a big fan of Max's work and he agreed they had something special, so he found them new sponsors and a time slot every Saturday night. Sid was the star and had a big say in who would join the

cast on their second go around. Liebman noticed that Sid and Imogene worked very well together so he recommended her to be a co-star. Sid, "Loved the idea of teaming up with her again." Two more performers were selected, mostly due to their height, to round off Caesar's crew, Howard Morris and Carl Reiner. Morris got the job because Sid was looking for a side-kick he could "pick up with one hand". Max Liebman was insistent that the straight man to Caesar's clown must be taller. The only man to fit the bill, literally, was Carl Reiner who came in at six feet, three inches tall, which was just enough over Caesar's six feet and one inch stature (Caesar 85-87).

James Starbuck continued on as their choreographer which was very important for Imogene. He utilized her dancing skills as often as possible and would partner with her in a great

many numbers. Coca got along well with everyone, although she was said to be very shy and quiet. Instead of lunching with Sid and the boys, she preferred to spend her time with the dancers. Neil Simon remembered Imogene coming to the writers meetings and not being “very funny. But she was a great laugher...and she shined once she got on stage.” (Sennett appendix). Coca’s co-stars were equally impressed by her versatility and work ethic. In an interview which would appear in the fiftieth anniversary DVD edition of the *Sid Caesar Collection*, Carl Reiner said of Coca, “She was a frail little thing, but she could work longer and harder than anyone. She was in most of the sketches we did. She was also doing dance numbers. There was a full chorus of singers and dancers behind her, and she never got tired. She was a phenomenon.” Howard Morris gave a nod to the Broadway veteran’s experience, “She was a lady who was a real pro. She had had three careers before she ever met up with us.” Max Liebman credited Coca’s versatility to her theatrical upbringing, “She was the most disciplined performer of all the people I had - the discipline really arising out of her experience in the theatre.” (Sennet 60, appendix).

On Saturday night, February 25, 1950, the very first *Your Show of Shows* was broadcast before a live studio audience. The “staple components” of the show included; a refinement of the cast to the four leading players, a set dance troupe led by Starbuck, and a live orchestra managed by Aaron Levine (Caesar 86). Some elements that were different from *The Admiral Broadway Revue* were the inclusion of world class ballet, opera performances, and a special guest star.

Almost overnight Imogene Coca and Sid Caesar had become America’s favorite couple. Caesar recalls an evening out with his wife, Florence, when a woman approached him and said, “I wonder if Imogene knows about her.” (Caesar 91). Two very popular characters made famous by Coca and Caesar were Doris and Charles Hickenlooper. The Hickenloopers were inspired by





Figure 4

the real marriages of the show's writers; Mel Tolkin, Neil and Danny Simon, Lucille Kalin, Mel Brooks, and Sid Caesar. They have all said, in one interview or another, that the show's comedy was successful because the situations and characters came from a place of truth.

Coca and Caesar performed a great deal of pantomime and old vaudeville sketches. One of Caesar's greatest talents was double-talking, which is the art of imitating a foreign language without actually speaking the language. In other words, it's heightened gibberish. Caesar was so adept at double-talk he often fooled people who actually spoke the language he was mimicking. Reiner and Morris could also double-talk fluently in any language. Imogene's versatility far surpassed her male counterparts in many respects, but double-talking was not one of them. She knew it wasn't her best skill and the writers would adjust the dialogue accordingly. In the famous

“Mata Hari” sketch Caesar, Reiner, and Morris conversed at length in “German” while Imogene uttered about five words, two of which were “Mata Hari”.

### **All Good Things**

In 1954 *Your Show of Shows* was in its fourth season. The critics who had once loved them were now looking for fresh material. Imogene was getting calls from the press asking if she would be starring in her own show. She went to Max and Sid to discuss their future and told them, “If *Your Show of Shows* is going to die, let us at least be brave about it and present a united front to the press.” (Sennett 173). Liebman and Caesar had assured Imogene they would speak about it the next day. Coca remembered that day well in Ted Sennett’s book *Your Show of Shows*;

“I was rehearsing - dancing away like mad - when David Tebet (public relations) came up to me. He was very white. He said: ‘Coca, you’d better come upstairs.’ We walked into a room full of reporters and cameras. That’s when I learned *Your Show of Shows* was dead. I made a fool of myself, crying and carrying on.” (173). The producers thought they could get more bang for their buck if they split up the stars. Imogene and Sid were offered separate shows and one million dollar contracts payable over the next ten years with NBC. Coca was nominated for an Emmy Award, for her work on *Your Show of Shows*, as Best Actress in 1951, 1952, and 1954. She took home the award in 1952.

*Your Show of Shows* found Imogene at the height of her career. She would never stop working, but she would never again achieve that type of fame. *The Imogene Coca Show*, which premiered in October of 1954, was a total flop. The format was changed three times but nothing worked and it was cancelled before a second season. The contract with NBC prevented Coca

from working elsewhere, so she terminated it after her show was cancelled because she wanted to continue performing. Her husband, who had returned from the army in 1946, had never been able to find steady work, and although he was happy for the success of his wife, he drank his cares away. In 1955 Imogene suffered through the deaths of her husband and her mother within weeks of each other. If the emotional pain weren't enough Coca was responsible for an overwhelming amount medical expenses incurred by her family. And to top it all off she was under investigation by the IRS.

### **Coca Never Quits**

Despite needing or wanting to take a break, it was back to work for Coca. After an eleven year absence from the stage she was back on Broadway in the romantic comedy *Janus*, by Carolyn Green. Imogene stepped in to replaced Margaret Sullivan in the co-starring role of Jessica. The New York Times theatre critic, Louis Calta, gushed over Coca and her performance, "...Miss Coca is possessed of a singular flair for comedy, both the subtle kind...and the broad. From all outward indications, Miss Coca's return to Broadway last night was an auspicious one, and we hope that her stay will be a long one." (Calta). By 1958 things were really looking up, personally and professionally. Coca and Caesar got back together for the first of many reunion performances they starred in through the late 1980s. Imogene was disappointed that she had to end their tour in London to return to New York for her next Broadway performance, the 1958 comedic play *The Girls in 509*. In this comedy by Howard Teichmann, Coca played the quirky niece, Mimsy, to Aunt Hettie. Brooks Atkinson reviewed Imogene's performance as "pleasant...Miss Coca chirping away like a happy robin." (Atkins). The show ran for 117 performances on Broadway and took Coca out on tour with fellow cast member King Donovan.



The couple fell madly in love and were married in 1960. Donovan's parents were also vaudeville performers and he had begun his acting career as a teenager in New York City. He and Coca spent their twenty-seven year marriage performing together in a variety of plays and musicals, some of which include; *The Fourposter*, *Never Too Late*, *You Can't Take It With You*, *The Rivals*, *Send Me No Flowers*, *Don't Drink The Water*, *Bells Are Ringing*, *Once*

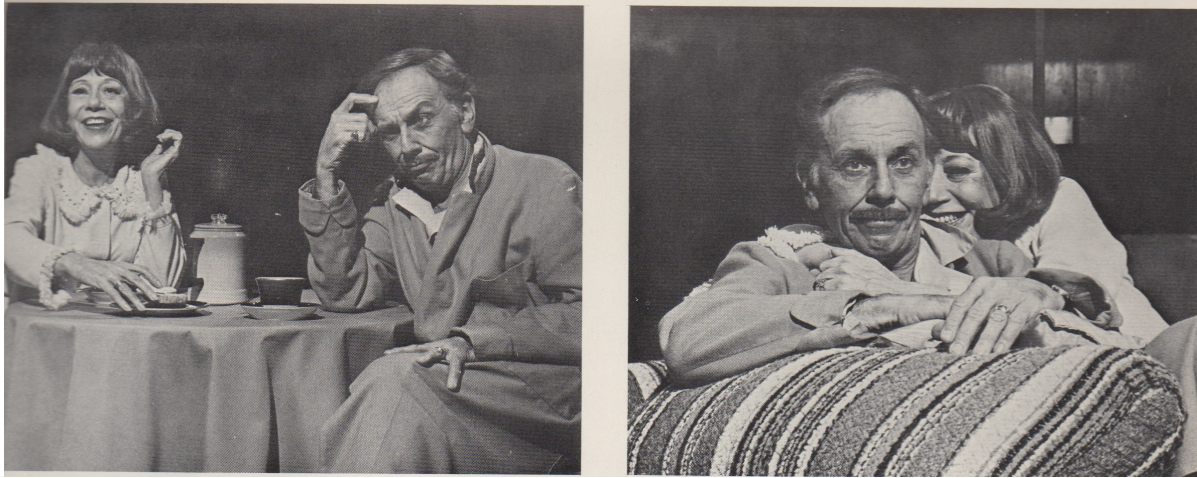


Figure 5

*Upon A Mattress*, *You Know I Can't Hear You When The Water's Running*, *Luv*, *Thurber Carnival*, and *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (Faye Programs).

To round off her career on Broadway Imogene was nominated for a Tony Award in the category of Best Supporting Actress in a Musical for her role as Letitia Primrose, the in *On the Twentieth Century*, in 1979. Mrs. Primrose is a wacky religious zealot who tries to convince everyone to repent their sins while fooling the leading men into thinking she is going to fund their next project when, actually, she has just escaped from a mental institution. It was lucky for Imogene's legacy that she was performing on Broadway at this time. Writer Joanmarie Kalter was contracted to write a book, *Actors on Acting: Performing in Theatre & Film Today*, which included interviews with an eclectic group of ten actors. In an interview with Ms. Kalter I asked why she chose to feature Imogene. She said the selection was based on who was performing on Broadway during the time she was writing the book. (Another happy accident for Imogene.) The

national tour of *On the Twentieth Century* was the last show Coca and Donovan performed in together. The happy couple was known for being inseparable and they remained so until Donovan's death in 1987.



*Figure 6*

The theatre was in Coca's blood, but America loved to see her on television. In 1963 NBC brought Coca back to star in the situation comedy, *Grindl*. The show followed the daily adventures of an optimistic woman who worked for a temp agency and the whacky things that would happen with each new job she took. Unfortunately for Imogene it was another flop and would not return for a second season. Her final shot at a regular series was in the 1966 CBS science-fiction, comedy, *It's About Time*. Two astronauts travel back in time and discover what life was like for a family of troglodytes before bringing them back to live in the 1960s. Coca played the role of cavewoman/mom, Shad. In a familiar turn of events for Imogene, the series was cancelled after the first season. Coca didn't have much success with her own television shows, but she made several guest appearances on a variety of shows from the mid 1950s through the late 1980s. Ed Sullivan, Danny Kaye, Steve Allen and Carol Burnett are just some hosts who featured Imogene on their programs. Coca's resume also included guest roles on

*Bewitched*, *The Brady Bunch*, *One Life To Live*, and *Mama's Family*. In 1988, at the age of eighty, Coca was nominated for her fourth Emmy for her guest starring role of Clara DiPesto on *Moonlighting*. Clara was the mother of series regular, quirky receptionist, Agnes DiPesto, played by Allyce Beasley, whose features greatly resemble Coca's.

### **Imogene on Film**

Coca's career in film began with three shorts, *Bashful Ballerina* (1937), *Dime a Dance* (1937) and *Beauty Shop* (1938). A day on the set of *Bashful Ballerina* with Imogene is well preserved in the New York Times. B.R. Crisler wrote of Coca's eyes being "sadder than usual" as she tried to comprehend working with the absence of an audience. "She felt that she was a failure on the screen and ought to quit now at the outset of her career." She didn't notice the stifled laughter and admiration of the crew who were desperately trying to be quiet during the filming. Coca plays "a ballet dancer who seems to have missed her calling - one who, apparently, should have been a truck driver." (141). The next short, *Dime a Dance*, featured a co-star from Coca's time at Tamiment, Danny Kaye. In this film Coca plays the quirky Esmerelda who cons her way into a job as a dance hostess in order to meet and an odd ping pong champion and sailor named Homer. In an attempt to woo Homer, Esmerelda seats him on the couch and beats him to submission. She had accidentally grabbed a jiu-jitsu manual instead of a love-making book and followed the instructions to the letter.

Coca's first role in a full length feature was as housemaid, Lulu Thorpe, in the 1941 film *They Meet Again*. Coca's small performance of the lovestruck Lulu brought a great deal of fun to an otherwise dull and slow paced story. Lulu was an unattractive housemaid who was taken on a date by the leading man, Roy, for the purpose of gaining information about her boss. The

moment he has the details he needs, Roy runs from Lulu. I will take a deeper look into the roles of Lulu, Esmerelda in a later section.

Over twenty years passed before Coca returned to the big screen with a small uncredited role as lady under the hair-dryer in *Promises, Promises*, directed by her husband King Donovan in 1963. The same year also released *Under the Yum Yum Tree*, starring Jack Lemon as a playboy landlord who only rents to beautiful women. Coca plays the disapproving maid, Dorkus Murphy who is married to the groundskeeper played by Paul Lynde, who happens to be an alumni of *New Faces (1952)*. The New York Times reviewer Bosley Crowther noted, “Paul Lynde and Imogene Coca are killing as custodians.” The reviewer also shared his opinion on the perfect audience for the film, “Tired businessmen should love it.” (43). Coca’s next appearance was in *Rabbit Test*, written and directed by Joan Rivers, starring Billy Crystal as Lionel the first pregnant man. The movie is filled with comic veterans including Paul Lynde and another alumna of *New Faces of 1952*, Alice Ghostly. Coca played Madame Marie, the fortunetelling mother of Lionel’s love interest. The movie was not well received and the New York Times noted the “wasted cameos” of Coca and her co-stars “are almost always funnier than they are here.” (Maslin 53). At the age of seventy-five Coca was cast as the infamous and crotchety Aunt Edna in *National Lampoon’s Vacation*, starring Chevy Chase. This role was instrumental in keeping her image alive for another generation. I have found that people in my age range who do not know the name Imogene Coca, do know Aunt Edna from *Vacation*. (I was born in 1979.)

The final two films Coca worked on were flops that went straight to video; the 1987 comedy *Buy and Cell*, starring Robert Carradine, and *Hollywood: The Movie*, in 1996. Coca is listed as Reggie’s Mother in *Buy and Cell* and Roxy in *Hollywood*. In between the last two films

Coca lent her talents to the medium of voice-overs, giving life to characters in the animated series *Garfield and Friends*.

### Cast as Ugly

Coca knew she had an unusual look, “I don’t think I fit into films, and it’s because of the way I look. I have a strange face; I hate it, I always have. Of course, they’re going for strange faces now. Maybe now I could do more films.” (Rubin 20) The characters she played on and off film were often defined by their unattractiveness. Three very strong examples appear in her first films, *They Meet Again* and *Dime a Dance*, and a much later guest appearance on *The Brady Bunch*.

In the *They Meet Again* the scene preceding the date sets up Lulu as a shy, good girl who has never had a boyfriend. Roy, who is already spoken for by a beautiful blonde, is begrudgingly convinced to ask her on a date. When he protests, asking what his girlfriend will think if she hears he took Lulu out, the response is, “Probably will think you’ve gone berserk if she ever gets over the shock.” Coca’s signature bob was replaced with longer locks, curled for the period. The make-up accentuated wrinkles around her face and bags under her eyes, and it appears as though she is wearing false teeth because her speech seems altered. It is hard to tell for certain because Coca was slightly bucktoothed to begin with,



Figure 7

a distinction that was specifically illustrated by Al Hirschfeld in his famous cartoons. For Lulu’s voice Coca employed a more monotoned pitch than usual. Coca’s vocal range was very

impressive and the characters she played would often utilize every octave. Lulu, on the other hand, remained within a very tight vocal bubble. The vocal quality added to the oddness of this woman and the comedy of the scene.

The character Esmerelda in *Dime a Dance* was introduced as the unattractive friend to the blonde bombshell played by June Allyson. The boss at the dance hall didn't want to hire Esmerelda because she "didn't have any presence". Esmerelda proved to him she could make



Figure 8

men stop in their tracks by sauntering away and making funny faces at each man as he passed. The boss couldn't see her sticking out her tongue and crossing her eyes to get their attention, so she was hired. When she went out on the floor with the rest of the women, all of the men passed her by. On a couple of occasions men would look at her and gasp before running to find another woman. Imogene's dress was not the sexiest one in the bunch and her hair was curled and haphazardly pinned

up, but nothing about her face was altered with prosthetics.

In 1972 Coca played the role of Jenny in an episode of *The Brady Bunch*, titled "Jan's Aunt Jenny". The daughters were looking through their mother's old photographs and Jan mistook a picture of Aunt Jenny for herself. Curious to know what she would look like in the future, Jan writes to Aunt Jenny asking for a recent photograph. Aunt Jenny happily responds with a picture and a personal visit. Jan is so devastated by how unattractive Aunt Jenny is that

she cries for days and announces that “...she’s considering the Peace Corps or a nunnery since she is nothing to look at.” (Stoddard 92).

## **Conclusion**

Imogene Coca worked for the better part of a century because she was an extraordinarily dedicated performer, employee, and colleague. Her comedy was successful because she was aiming for honesty and sincerity in the moment. When asked why people thought she was so funny, Coca replied, “I don’t know. Maybe it’s because I seem so vulnerable-which I am.” (Kalter 132). After Coca’s comic genius was discovered in 1934 her fate was sealed. There was no hope of ever playing the ingenue or the bombshell, unless she spoofed them; and she did. She was cast as the wacky friend, impish aunt or the goofy girl next door. Some of the quirkiness carried over into her real life. Coca claimed to be afraid of everything, especially transportation. She never learned to drive and crouched down, covering herself as though she was bracing for impact when riding in taxis. These fears were confirmed in 1973 when she and her husband were in a car accident driving home from a performance and New Year’s Eve party in St. Petersburg FL. Donovan ran a red light and collided with another vehicle. The rearview mirror ruptured Coca’s right eyeball and broke her cheekbone. She also suffered a fractured ankle and her leg was ripped open. Her appearance was permanently altered with with a cosmetic lens covering the blind eye which added to her unique appearance. Coca’s paranoia existed in performance as well. When rehearsing she often complained that she was afraid forgetting her lines or dance steps. She was petrified of the rowdy audiences in her nightclub days and would handle hecklers by trying to ignore them. Terrified to speak up for herself, Coca never talked back. One thing she was never afraid of made her the standout performer that she was; Coca was not afraid to be

ugly. Imogene Coca passed away of natural causes in her home of Westport Connecticut on June 3, 2001, at the age of 92. She worked very hard, never played down to her audience and was never vulgar. It is that generosity and bravery which has inspired me to share her story.

Growing up I was fed a steady diet of female characters whose worth was in direct relation to their appearance. Media places a very obscured view on beauty and women. We are told what is beautiful through photoshopped advertisements depicting imaginary body types that are impossible to attain. We are saturated with images of people who are valued for their good looks or sex appeal, like Marilyn Monroe. In an attempt to keep Imogene's image from fading away I am proud to present the first draft of an original musical inspired by her life and work.

At the onset of this project I had intended only to write the book and later raise money to hire a composer with whom I could collaborate. Very early in the process I accidentally wrote a song, and then another, and another. I call it an accident because I have never written a song before and, truthfully, did not think I could. (To date, I have written seven and I am quite pleased to have proven myself wrong.) The next steps are to raise money for a musician to take the melodies from my head and put them on paper, followed by a formal reading for an audience. I was fortunate to collaborate with Benjamin Miller on one song, "Imogene Coca". Miller has created the piano accompaniment and drafted a lead sheet which is included in this thesis. The following script is in format for a Broadway Musical. Song lyrics are in bold, action is listed to the far right. With no further adieu please enjoy the first draft of the original musical, *Not Afraid to be Ugly*.



## CHAPTER 2

Not Afraid to be Ugly

A Musical

by Marisa Guida

## Scene 1

## ENSEMBLE

FLAT ABS PERFECT SMILE A BETTER THINNER NEWER YOU  
LUSCIOUS LIPS GORGEOUS LASHES SMOOTHER SKIN FANTASTIC  
FASHIONS YOU CAN BE BEAUTIFUL DON'T YOU WANT TO BE  
BEAUTIFUL LOOK AT HER SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL COME BUY  
BEAUTIFUL

MOM

Like me.

MOM enters DOCTOR'S office.

Hello Dr. X.

DR X

Oh my beautiful friend. Tell me, when are we gonna run away  
together?

MOM

Oh Dr. X! What about Mrs. X?

MRS X  
(Pops in.)

Hi darlin'.

MOM

Hi Mrs. X.

MRS X

Don't you listen to him. Old dog! Although no man or woman in the  
world can blame him, I mean look at you!

BEAUTIFUL! ISN'T SHE SO BEAUTIFUL?

DR X

MY GOD YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL MY HEART IS FULL

MRS X

OH PLEASE!

MOM

I TRY TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF I WATCH WHAT I EAT I NEVER  
EAT WHEAT I RUN FIVE MILES A DAY I GUESS YOU COULD SAY  
I'M PROBABLY TYPE A PERSONALITY  
BUT LOOK AND SEE THE TRICK THAT'S UP MY SLEEVE  
BEATYMAXX14000

MRS X

OH MY GOD THERE'S A FOURTEEN-THOUSAND?

MOM

YES! FOURTEEN-THOUSAND BEAUTY ENHANCERS HAVE GOT  
ALL THE ANSWERS

ENSEMBLE

WE ALL WANT TO BE BEAUTIFUL DON'T YOU WANT TO BE  
BEAUTIFUL

MOM

STEP RIGHT UP AND BY BEAUTIFUL AND YOU'LL FEEL SO FINE

Transition: girls at school  
in gym class working out then to the  
locker room, getting dressed, hair,  
and make-up.

PRETTY GIRLS

BEAUTIFUL OH WE'RE GONNA BE BEAUTIFUL  
SO FIT AND BEAUTIFUL WE WANNA BE BEAUTIFUL

PRETTY GIRL 1

LIKE ME WITH BUNS OF STEEL AND A SLIM TRIM WAIST  
GORGEOUS BLONDE LOCKS PERFECTLY FRAME MY FACE  
I'M GONNA BE A KNOCK-OUT OH JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE  
IF I FIND AN IMPERFECTION I'LL HAVE PLASTIC SURGERY  
NO FRIZZY HAIR OR FUZZY LIP FOR ME

(to Genny)

PRETTY GIRLS 2 & 3

EW GROSS!

PRETTY GIRL 2

SHE HAS A MUSTACHE!

PRETTY GIRL 3

AND SIDE BURNS! LIKE THAT OLD FAT GUY MY NANA LOVES YOU  
AINT NOTHIN' BUT A HOUND DOG

PRETTY GIRLS 2 & 3

AND THE HAIR ON HER LEGS AND CHECK OUT HER PITS!

PRETTY GIRL 1

Not every girl can be

ENSEMBLE

BEAUTIFUL DON'T YOU WANT TO BE BEAUTIFUL

MOM

STEP RIGHT UP AND BUY BEAUTIFUL AND YOU'LL FEEL SO FINE

MOM'S BOSS

Your numbers are through the roof. You know what this means right?

MOM

Promotion? Corner office?

MOM'S BOSS

Even better, San Francisco office.

MOM

San Francisco office?

MOM'S BOSS

Right on the water, managing your own team with bigger clients,  
bigger accounts.

MOM

Move to San Francisco?

MOM'S BOSS

Oh no, we're not giving you up that easy. It'll be a fifty-fifty split, half the time there and the other half here. We've got a beautiful condo, company car, everything you need ready and waiting.

MOM

Well, that's a lot of time away from my family.

MOM'S BOSS

And you will be handsomely compensated for your sacrifice.

MOM

That sounds...

BEAUTIFUL.

MOM'S BOSS

Good, you better leave now or you'll miss your flight.

MOM

I'm leaving tonight?

MOM'S BOSS

You're leaving now. Company jet is waiting for you.

MOM

But I haven't packed...

MOM'S BOSS

I told you, we have everything you need. This is a whole new ballgame. You're playing with the big boys now. Are you in or out?

MOM

I'm in.

Transition: House, Genny's room.

## Scene 2

GENNY enters and slams the front door, walks by DAD without a word, into her bedroom and slams the door. DAD follows.

DAD

Hey princess. Everything ok?

GENNY

Yeah.

DAD

How was school?

GENNY

Fine.

DAD

Fine?

GENNY

Fine.

DAD

Aw, come on princess, you know I don't like to see you blue. I know what'll cheer you up.

DAD grabs a guitar and hands  
GENNY her pink ukulele.

GENNY

That's ok dad.

DAD

Come on, we haven't played in a while. Ok, ok, I'll start and you jump in.

DAD begins playing D in 1/8th notes, waiting for GENNY to start singing. She doesn't.

DAD (con't)

ONCE UPON A TIME IN A LAND FAR FAR AWAY THERE LIVED A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS WHO LOVED TO SING AND DANCE AND PLAY ALL DAY AND SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL LIFE WAS MAGICAL FOR THE BEAUTIFUL BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS.

DAD gets carried away. Key change  
- minor and finger pick.

AND THEN ONE DAY THE WITCH CAME OUT TO PLAY THE UGLY, VILE, NASTY, REPULSIVE, REPUGNANT, APPALLING, HIDEOUS, ODIOUS, HORSE FACED, SNAGGLE TOOTHED, WITCH CAST A SPELL ON THE PRINCESS LOCKING HER IN A TOWER OF HELL SURROUNDED BY GHOULS, GOBLINS, MONSTERS, AND FREAKS THE PRINCESS CRIED NOOOOOOOOOOOO SOMEBODY SAVE ME PLEASE

DAD looks at GENNY to take over,  
he plays the first chord and hums the first couple of notes to get her going.

GENNY

AND THEN THE PRINCE DOESN'T SAVE HER

DAD

Huh?

GENNY

THE PRINCE NEVER SAVES HER

DAD

Sure he does.

GENNY

NO HE DOESN'T HE RIDES ON AND SAVES THE PRETTY PRETTY PRINCESS IN THE VILLAGE NEXT DOOR SHE'S SO PRETTY GOLDEN HAIR SPARKLING EYES PERFECT SMILE SUPER THIN EVERYONE ADORES HER THE PRINCE GOES TO SAVE HER AND THEY LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER THE OTHER NOT SO PRETTY PRINCESS STAYS LOCKED UP IN THE TOWER WITH THE MONSTERS GHOULS AND GOBLINS AND FREAKS WHERE SHE BELONGS BECAUSE SHE'S NOT PRETTY ENOUGH.

GENNY (con't)

Good idea dad. I feel better.

DAD

Hey, kiddo, what's going on?

GENNY

Fairytales are stupid, princesses are dumb and I hate pink, everything is pink! Can we paint my room? Please?

DAD

Well, sure. But, is this really about paint? Come on, princ...Genny...

GENNY

And I don't want to be called Genny anymore. Genny is a little kid name. Please call me Jennifer, with a "J".

DAD

But your name is Genevieve, with a "G".

GENNY

That's too different, Dad. Just Jennifer. With a "J".

DAD

If you tell me where all of this is coming from, maybe, maybe I'll consider it.

GENNY

(Beat.)

The girls at school were teasing me about my hair.

DAD

Your hair is gorgeous! Women would kill for those curls!

GENNY

My face hair! And the hair under my arms and on my legs.

DAD

You don't have hair on your face.

GENNY

I have a mustache and side burns.

DAD

You most certainly do not. Who are these girls? I'll call their parents.



GENNY

NO! Are you crazy? When's mom coming home?

DAD

Oh, well, I was going to wait until later so we could celebrate over ice cream and then tell you the good news...you know that promotion your mom was working really hard for? Well, she got it!

GENNY

Does that mean we're rich?

DAD

No. More stable, perhaps, but that's not the point. The point is, we're super proud of your mom and now she's got a whole new bunch of responsibilities on top of all her other responsibilities, and that includes traveling out to San Francisco.

GENNY

(hopeful)

Are we moving?

DAD

No, we're not going anywhere. But we have to be supportive of your mom because she's going to be away from home and she's going to be missing us an awful lot. So, you and me gotta be tough kid, ya hear?

GENNY

Yeah.

DAD

I said we gotta be tough, ya hear?

GENNY

I heard ya!

DAD

All right then soldier, get your gear and prepare to retreat for dance class.

DAD gives GENNY a kiss on the head and exits.

Transition: Dance school

Scene 3

GENNY enters dance school. There is a boy her age in the middle of a fierce tap routine. GENNY quickly and awkwardly gets ready and watches the boy. When he finishes the whole studio applauds. As GENNY takes her place he passes by, exiting, and says "hi". GENNY wasn't sure he was talking to her. Dance class begins. The other girls look very put together, their hair tightly wrapped in scarves, no fly always hanging out. They all dance very well. GENNY'S hair is battling the scarf, the scarf is losing. Her tights are bunched up and you can see her underwear. She tries her best to have a positive attitude. She gives everything she's got, but she just doesn't have the same technique as the others. The other girls start giggling at GENNY and eventually mock her which turns into pushing her out of the way and to the back of the room and off the dance floor completely.

Scene 4

DAD'S office. DAD enters, DB is at his computer.

DB  
Dude! You gotta see this.

DAD  
I'm good, thanks

DB  
I'm serious. Check it out.

DB plays an ad he's working on. It objectifies women. Literally, the woman becomes the object.

DAD  
Wow. That's...

DB  
Yeah. I fucked her.

BOSS enters.

Boss  
I need one more funny lady.

DB  
Do you prefer Asians or blondes?

BOSS  
One more comedienne covered in this piece.

DB  
Blonde Asian?

BOSS  
Here's the list of the ones we've already covered. I need another feature.

DAD  
Great we'll have it for you by...

BOSS

Yesterday!

BOSS exits. DB begins scrolling through his phone.

DAD

Crap! OK, who do we have here? Joan Rivers, Carol Burnett, Lucille Ball, duh, Betty White, super duh, Mary Tyler Moore, Tina Fey, Lisa Lampenelli, Gilda Radner, wait a minute...what's her name? Come on, what's her name?

DB

Who?

DAD

(Googling as he speaks.)

Aunt Edna...short, big brown eyes, Sid Caesar's partner! Yes! She's perfect!

DB

Who?

DAD

IMOGENE IMOGENE COCA

DB

I have no idea who you're talking about.

DAD

DB exits. IMOGENE appears and performs throughout the number. ENSEMBLE joins. After first verse BOSS re-enters to hear Imogene pitch.

IMOGENE IMOGENE COCA RUBBER FACE BIG BROWN EYES  
PIONEER OF COMEDY FOR FUNNY LADIES ON TV SHE WAS A  
HOUSEHOLD NAME IN THE 1950S LITTLE IMP WHO SANG AND  
DANCED PANTOMIME EXTRAORDINAIRE SPOOFED THE BEST  
ACTS WITH THE MOST CLASS NEVER VULGAR NEVER CRASS BUT  
SHE'LL HAVE YOU LAUGHIN' OFF YOUR *(CYMBAL CRASH)*

IMOGENE IMOGENE COCA  
 HER STUFF IS STILL SO FUNNY NOW LOOK AT HER HERE HA! BOY  
 WHAT A CLOWN SUCH A SUCCESSFUL CAREER FOR OVER  
 SEVENTY YEARS HOW COULD WE FORGET SHE HAD US IN TEARS  
 WITH HER RUBBER FACE BIG BROWN EYES AMERICA'S DARLING  
 LITTLE IMP IMOGENE IMOGENE IMOGENE IMOGENE COCA  
 IMOGENE COCA IMOGENE COCA!

DB re-enters as BOSS and DAD are  
 shaking hands.

DB

I've got Jenny McCarthy calling in for an interview in twenty  
 minutes. Boom! Hashtag, Winning!

DAD

Jenny McCarthy? No, no, we've decided to go with Imogene Coca.

BOSS

Is that the blonde one with the nice rack?

DB

Yes and not Asian. LOL!

BOSS

Yeah, she'll do.

Dad

But what about Imogene?

BOSS

Coca's cut.

DAD

Wait, no, we can't cut Coca, she's important.

DB

Dude, nobody knows who she is. And even if they did, Jenny  
 McCarthy is way hotter, am I right? Up top!

(Tries to high five BOSS who does not respond.)

DAD

Fine, you interview McCarthy and I'll do a feature on Coca.

BOSS

No, no. Just go with McCarthy, people know the name. Coca's cut, end of story.

DAD

No!

BOSS

Excuse me?

DAD

I said no! Coca deserves that spot, sir and I insist that we include her in this piece.

BOSS

You insist?

DAD

Yes, sir. I must put my foot down.

BOSS

And if I refuse?

DAD

Then...I quit.

BOSS

Coca is cut.

DAD

I QUIT WRITING SHIT I'M NOT PROUD OF I QUIT WRITING SHIT  
FOR THE MAN I QUIT WRITING SHIT WITH THIS DOUCHE BAG IT'S  
TIME I START GIVING A DAMN I QUIT WRITING SHIT THAT'S  
MISLEADING I QUIT WRITING SHIT THAT'S A LIE WE HAVE A  
RESPONSIBILITY NOT TO REWRITE HISTORY AND AS FOR  
BEAUTY WELL, WHO THE HELL IS HE TO DECIDE?

BOSS

Good bye.

DAD

Good bye.

Scene 5

DAD calls MOM.

DAD

Hey honey. How was the flight?

MOM

Pretty amazing.

DAD

You all settled in?

MOM

Well, I wouldn't say settled, I've got a meeting first thing in the morning and people here now for a pre-meeting meeting.

DAD

Wow. Well, I know you're busy, but, well, a couple of things...

MOM

Everything ok?

DAD

I think the kids at school are being mean.

MOM

You're a big boy.

DAD

I'm serious. Genny's pretty upset.

MOM

Mean how? What did they say?

DAD

Picking on her hair.

MOM

Well if she would just use the product I bought for her and take the time to blow it out...

DAD

Her face hair.

MOM

Oh. Well, our little girl is growing up.

DAD

I politely decline.

Mom

You decline what? Our daughter going through puberty?

DAD

Yes.

MOM

Come on hon, we can handle it. You said you were going to be ok with this promotion...

DAD

I am, I am ok with it, but I mean you're not even gone twenty four hours and our daughter's self esteem is at zero.

MOM

No, it's not.

DAD

I'm serious, she's pretty upset. I've never seen her like this. I think she thinks she's not pretty.

MOM

All girls think they're not pretty.

DAD

That's the craziest thing I've ever heard.

Mom

It's the truth. Especially at her age, but I promise you, she's going to be fine.

DAD

How do you know?

MOM

While she sings MOM gets busier and busier multi-tasking. She's talking to DAD on autopilot.



BECAUSE SHE HAS YOU BECAUSE SHE HAS ME BECAUSE SHE HAS  
US IT'S CLEAR CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S THE LUCKIES KID IN THE  
WHOLE UNIVERSE BECAUSE SHE HAS US SHE WILL GET  
THROUGH THE WORST

DAD

SHE'S NOT QUITE A KID

MOM

NOT QUITE A TEEN

DAD

NOT A LITTLE GIRL

MOM

BUT IN BETWEEN

DAD

TTHIS IS SUCH A BIG TIME IN HER LIFE

MOM

WE CAN DO IT

DAD

DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE THIS THING RIGHT

MOM

TRUST YOUR GUT

DAD

I'M SO SCARED THAT I'LL PUSH HER AWAY

MOM

HEY! BECAUSE SHE HAS YOU BECAUSE SHE HAS ME BECAUSE  
SHE HAS US IT'S CLEAR CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S THE LUCKIEST KID  
IN THE WHOLE UNIVERSE BECAUSE SHE HAS US SHE WILL GET  
THROUGH THE WORST AND THERE WILL BE WORSE DAYS THAN  
THIS ONE

DAD

GOD NO!

MOM

YES THERE WILL BE WAY WORSE DAYS THAN THIS ONE SHE'LL  
BE LOST AND CONFUSED HURT AND REJECTED

DAD

OVER MY DEAD BODY!

MOM

SOME DAYS WILL BE VICTORIOUS AND OTHERS JUST A PERFECT  
MESS TESTING US TO OUR LIMITS

DAD & MOM (joins in)

BECAUSE SHE HAS YOU BECAUSE SHE HAS ME BECAUSE SHE HAS  
US IT'S CLEAR CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S THE LUCKIEST KID IN THE  
WHOLE UNIVERSE BECAUSE SHE HAS US SHE WILL GET  
THROUGH THE WORST.

DAD

I love you so much.

MOM

I gotta run babe. I love you too.

MOM hangs up. DAD is a little  
stung.

Scene 6

At school.

TEACHER

And that is the story of \_\_\_\_\_. For your next assignment you will be researching and writing a term paper on an important person in history. You will let me know Monday who you have chosen to research and what sources you will be using. And don't forget auditions for the talent show are next Friday at 3 o'clock in the auditorium. The sign-up sheet is on the Director's door. Any questions?

GENNY raises her hand.

Yes, Genny?

GENNY

Oh, um, I just wanted you, and everyone to know, um, about my name. I'd like to be called Jennifer, from now on. With a "J".

TEACHER

But isn't your name Gen...

GENNY

It's Jennifer, with a "J."

The bell rings and the students begin to disperse. (Perhaps the following is a song.)

PRETTY GIRL 1

(Mockingly.)

Jennifer with a J? How about Frizzy with an F?

Pretty GIRLS 2 & 3

Yeah.

PRETTY GIRL 1

Or Mustachio with an M.

PRETTY GIRLS 2 & 3

Ha ha!

PRETTY GIRL 1

No, I know what we'll call you. The bearded lady!

GENNY

You know, sometimes you can be a real bitch!

DIRECTOR steps up behind  
GENNY just in time to hear her  
curse.

DIRECTOR

Genny!

GENNY

Jennifer.

DIRECTOR

Principal's office. Now!

## Scene 7

Car ride home with DAD.

DAD

You know, the English language really can be beautiful, but when we muddy it up with words like, well, like the one you used, all it really does is show ignorance.

GENNY

Dad...

DAD

Now hold on, I'm not quite finished young lady. I'm not happy about getting that phone call from the principal. And your mother is going to be very disappointed.

GENNY

Well, we don't have to tell her, do we?

DAD

Are you asking me to lie? Genny...

GENNY

Jennifer.

DAD

Excuse me, I will not call you Jennifer. Your name is Genevieve after your mother's grandmother who was supposedly a remarkable woman. Now I don't know exactly what's gotten into you, but I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt and assume that you thought you had a very good reason for telling off your friend.

GENNY

She's not my friend. She's so mean, Dad. They all are.

DAD

Listen kiddo. Sometimes people lash out at others because they are really insecure with themselves.

GENNY

She is not insecure.

DAD

I don't know about that. It seems to me she has to belittle others to make herself feel better, and that has nothing to do with you, that is her insecurity. Seeing as how that is the case, I want you to write an apology note to this girl.

GENNY

Dad, please, no!

DAD

Yes. And one to your teacher. End of story. Now, what's done is done and we're going to move on. What do you have for homework?

GENNY

I have to choose an important person in history for my term paper.

DAD

Ok, that's fun! Who are you thinking about.

GENNY

I don't know, maybe Susan B. Anthony, or Eleanor Roosevelt.

DAD

No!

IMOGENE

GeNNY

What?

DAD

IMOGENE COCA

GENNY

I don't know who that is.

DAD

RUBBER FACE BIG BROWN EYES AMERICA'S DARLING LITTLE IMP  
IMOGENE IMOGENE IMOGENE IMOGENE COCA IMOGENE COCA  
IMOGENE COCA

Yes! She's absolutely perfect!

GENNY

Well if she was so important how come I don't know who she is?

DAD

I don't know kiddo, maybe you'll be able to answer that question yourself. She was a very popular actress who worked for over seventy years, vaudeville, Broadway, film, television, voice overs, even a music video! You name it, she did it.

GENNY

What's vaudeville?

DAD

(Slams on the breaks.)

What do you mean what's vaudeville? You don't know what vaudeville is?

GENNY

Nope.

DAD

What's vaudeville? What's vaudeville? It's the greatest show there ever was.

GENNY

If it's so great how come I've never heard of it.

DAD

The theatre fills, the house lights fade, the orchestra bursts into song

## WORKSHOP

Lights up on the opposite side of the stage where a vaudeville show has just begun. 10-20 second bits of authentic acts - TBD, ending with a magic show. Transitions to,

Imogene's Conception: Imogene's mom, SADIE is the assistant to THURSTON the magician. JOSEPH COCA is leading the orchestra and catches eyes with SADIE. They flirt through the end of the act which transitions backstage. No words are spoken. JOSEPH begins clapping and the guitarist picks up his cue and

accompanies him by playing Jacaras por la E, by Santiago de Murcia. JOSEPH seduces SADIE and they conceive and give birth to IMOGENE. Lights back up on DAD & GENNY now at home. DAD is ferociously looking for his collection of VHS tapes.

DAD (con't)

So that's how it all started for Imogene. Wait'll you see! I've got tapes, I know they're in here, she was on a show with Sid Caesar, he was, basically, the king of comedy, I mean, the man was a genius and the show was one of the first television shows, ever...they were hilarious, you're gonna love it! Yes! Here they are!

GENNY

What are those?

DAD

VHS tapes of *Your Show of Shows*, well, not the whole show, just certain skits. Mostly ones that feature Sid, because, well, I guess he was the top banana.

GENNY

How do we watch them?

DAD

Right, hang on, I'm sure it's going to be near by...yes, voila, VCR. You get the snacks and I'll get everything all set up...here...now...if I can find instructions...I think this wire...from the wall...

GENNY

Dad...you plug that into that and then into...here, I'll hook this up and you make the popcorn.

DAD

Good plan!

Dad exits GENNY quickly hooks up the VCR. She pops in a tape and hits play. Lights up on the opposite side of the stage where IMOGENE and



SID re-enact live a portion of either the Symphony skit or another pantomime, Coney Island? OR IMOGENE performs a solo number.

WORKSHOP.

DAD re-enters to find GENNY laughing.

Pretty funny right?

GENNY

Yeah. They're super silly.

DAD

Exactly! Look,(shows her his mobile device) a simple little search pulled up all of this information. We can go to the library tomorrow and get some books and find more footage. What do ya say?

GENNY

Yeah, I like her.

DAD

Well all right,  
IMOGENE COCA!

TRANSITION: the East Indian Dancing Routine, *Admiral Broadway Revue*. Music plays, Imogene enters in a very elaborate and shiny costume. The hook of this piece are the different gestures and poses which demonstrate words or part of the story. The following words always have a movement: Daughter, Forest, elephant, sorcerer and spell. At some point Imogene should invite Genny to join.

IMOGENE

Now in this dance which I have selected for you, you will see me do this. That clearly means that once upon a time the ancient god Zeva

had a beautiful daughter. Who one day went walking through the forest. Where she met an elephant. But a sorcerer. Who lurked nearby cast a spell. Whereupon the beautiful daughter, turned into the elephant and the elephant turned into the beautiful daughter and the sorcerer turned home. Only to be greeted by his wife with these words. "Where have you been all day." And the sorcerer replied. "Lo I have been reeking vengeance." Whereupon his wife replied, "That's not the only thing you reek of you drunkard." Which brings me to the next movement. Now in this dance which I have selected for you, you will see me do this, (dance). That doesn't mean anything. Purely decorative. But when you see me do this. That means that once upon a time an ancient warrior named Rubin Roo had to go off to the wars and on the eve of his departure he had a tryst with his twist. He sang to her thusly, (*SINGS*)

Rapoonoofishnoo Punjabi clover, rapootfish punjabi before.

IMOGENE and GENNY DANCE.

Transition: IMOGENE dances off,  
GENNY studies in her room.

## Scene 8

GENNY'S room. She is reading and very focused, surrounded by books. DAD knocks at the door.

DAD

Hey princ...kiddo, mom's on the phone.

GENNY

Hi Mom! Did dad tell you we had the best time at the library today? It was so cool. I saw all these old TV shows with Imogene Coca, do you know who she is? I'm writing my term paper about her, she was awesome.

MOM

Wow, yeah, I think I remember the name. She wasn't very pretty.

GENNY

What? Well, I mean she was really silly, but I think she's pretty.

MOM

Oh well, she's dead right?

GENNY

Yeah, but she lived from 1908-2001! She was in vaudeville. Do you know what vaudeville is mom?

MOM

I do.

GENNY

It's so cool. I wish I could see a vaudeville show.

MOM

Well, I'll tell you what, when I come home we'll go to the theatre! We'll have a girls day, starting at the hair salon and then shopping and then a show! Doesn't that sound great?

GENNY

Oh, ok. Yeah, sure.

MOM

All right sweetie, I have to run, I love you, hugs and kisses to you and daddy.

(She hangs up the phone. GENNY hands it back to DAD.)

Dad

Hey, honey...hello? Hon? Oh...shoot. Hey, how's the research going over here?

GENNY

Totally awesome. Look, here are all the shows she did on Broadway, and this is all the stuff she did on television.

DAD

Wow.

GENNY

I'm just at the point in this book where she talks about her big break in comedy...

DAD

So cool!

GENNY

So, if you don't mind, dad, I don't mean to be rude, but I've really got to concentrate here.

DAD

Oh, oh, sure! Right, of course. You'll tell me about it later before we watch Imogene's performance in the 1985 classic, *Alice in Wonderland*. Also starring Ms. Carol Channing, (imitates Carol) isn't that just wonderful? OK. Carry on young scholar.

DAD exits. GENNY opens a book and IMOGENE appears. She is backstage during a rehearsal for *NEW FACES of 1934*. It is very cold, IMOGENE borrows an overcoat that is far too big for her. Trying to keep warm she starts doing a few dance steps she sees someone else doing. It turns into a mock strip-tease. (It doesn't go on too long, just a brief preview.) LEONARD SILLMAN enters.

LEONARD SILLMAN

I love it, Coca! We're putting it in the show!

IMOGENE

Love what?

LEONARD SILLMAN

What you were just doing. It's hilarious!

IMOGENE

What was I just doing? I wasn't doing anything.

GENNY

You mean you weren't even trying to be funny.

IMOGENE

Oh, I never try to be funny. Trying to be funny is most unfunny thing in the world.

GENNY

Then how are you so funny?

IMOGENE

Honesty. Like when I spoof something...

GENNY

Spoof?

IMOGENE

You know, like to imitate, or satirize.  
Make fun of.

IMOGENE breaks into her signature crooked grin and then into THE SPOOFING SONG. IMOGENE spoofs her most famous acts, ballerina, opera diva, Carmen Miranda.

Say, you should do the overcoat number for the talent show at school!

GENNY

I don't know if I can pull it off.

IMOGENE

You don't pull it off! That's what's so funny!

GENNY

Ha. Ha. I mean I don't know if I'm good enough.

IMOGENE

Don't be silly! You'll be wonderful! But we've really got to practice, rehearsal is very important. Oh, and, we're going to need two overcoats.

GENNY

My dad has one and he kept his dad's coat, they're almost the same.

ImogeNE

Perfect! Now, before I teach it to you, you should know that it is an honor to have a classic burlesque bit, like this one, passed down by an old pro, like me.

GENNY

I'm very honored!

IMOGENE

You must promise to commit to the bit. Commitment is an actor's greatest strength.

GENNY

I promise to honestly commit to the bit.

IMOGENE

Very good.

GENNY

Is that it?

IMOGENE

Is what it?

GENNY

That's all I have to do, is be committed?

IMOGENE

And lots of rehearsal, now go get those coats!

GENNY

Right!

Transition to School.

## Scene 9

School auditorium. Talent show auditions. Lights up on RANDY is tapping his face off. GENNY is next. She performs Imogene's famous overcoat strip-tease. The introduction for "Speak Low" by Kurt Weil begins. GENNY peaks out from the wings, smiles and enters. She takes a couple of steps, checks to see if anyone is looking, continues DS and for a moment becomes lost in a swell of the music. Continues all the way DS as her arms extend wide, her hands twirling at the wrists and then the fingers sparkling. Still with arms out-stretched, she raises and lowers her eyebrows a few times, coyly wrinkles her nose and takes a pin from her hair, holds it out to the audience, tosses it away, grabs the freed lock and uses it to wave hello. More eyebrows before grabbing the next pin, removing it and throwing it away. Waves hello with both freed locks. Checks behind to see if anyone is looking. Urges the band to step up the tempo and they reply with a new bouncy beat. GENNY circles the stage clapping her hands before stopping center stage and lifting the coat to reveal her ankles. A moment of stillness before slowing stepping SL,(step with right foot, step together with left, step right, together left) across the stage. Stops, wrinkle nose, grab final hair pins, remove, toss and skip in big circle around the stage while clapping hands vertically. Anytime passing DS winking and giving face to the audience.



and gets as far as going behind the curtain but the DIRECTOR stops her before she re-enters. The DIRECTOR is disgusted.

DIRECTOR

Cut, cut, cut the music! Get out here Miss Thing.

GENNY

But, I wasn't finished.

DIRECTOR

Oh, I've seen more than enough. We will not be stripping in my show, thank you very much.

GENNY

But, it's not strip...

DIRECTOR

Don't you tell me what I saw Miss Missy!

GENNY

Jennifer!

DIRECTOR

To the principal's office, Jennifer!

GENNY exits. The PRETTY GIRLS take their place. They are scantily clad and perform a dance number that is highly sexualized, filled with twerking, crumping, bumping, grinding, freaking, cooter-slamming, and/or the equivalent dance craze.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Yes! Yes Girls! Get it! Werq! Fierce! Yes! Yes! Living! I am living for you! Yes!

Transition to the hallway.

GENNY walks up on RANDY and two bullies.

BULLY 1

Hey faggot! I'm talking to you little girl. Come here, I want you to dance for us.

BULLY 2

Come on, show us your moves. What's the matter? Are you afraid?

GENNY

Hey! Knock it off!

BULLY 2

Who's this? Your little fag hag?

GENNY

My name is Jennifer. You're Jimmy, right? We live a few blocks away from each other. Your mom, she works at the market where we shop.

BULLY 2

Yeah, so what are you gonna do? Go tattletale and tell my mom I was being mean?

GENNY

No. Why would I do that, Jimmy? You're not being mean. We all just bumped into each other in the hallway and then we went about our day. Right?

BULLY 2

Maybe that's what happened today. But tomorrow is a whole new story.

GENNY

Well I look forward to seeing you again gentlemen. And to more of your puerile patter.

BULLY 1 smells under his arms as they exit.

GENNY (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm...

DIRECTOR enters.

DIRECTOR

Jennifer! Principal's office! Now!

## Scene 10

DAD picks GENNY up from school.

DAD

So, how did it go?

GENNY

Didn't you get a phone call?

DAD

Oh, did I? (Looks for phone.) I guess I did, from school...what happened?

GENNY

The director didn't like the routine.

DAD

What do you mean he didn't like it?

GENNY

He stopped me as soon as I went behind the curtain.

DAD

Well, did you tell him...

GENNY

I tried.

DAD

So, you didn't get a spot in the show.

GENNY

No, but I did get another week of detention.

DAD

What? I'm calling the principal...

GENNY

No, dad, don't. It'll probably just make things worse.

DAD

But it was great! When you were rehearsing last night, I just thought, it was so great, you were having so much fun.

GENNY

Well, it's over. And I'm done.

DAD

What do you mean, you're done?

GENNY

I'm quitting show business.

DAD

Whoa, whoa, whoa! You can't just quit because something doesn't go your way.

GENNY

You did.

DAD

Excuse me?

GENNY

Come on dad. You quit your job.

DAD

How did you know that?

GENNY

Because you haven't been to work.

DAD

I could be taking time off.

GENNY

Are you?

DAD

No, I quit.

GENNY

Then I quit show business.

DAD

I quit my job because I fundamentally disagree with their mission. You are quitting because one person didn't like your performance. Did you have fun learning the number?

GENNY

Yes.

DAD

Did you give it your best shot?

GENNY

I did.

DAD

Then I'm proud of you and I hope you don't quit because it,

SURE IS NICE TO SEE YOU SMILE. YEAH, IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU  
SMILIN' RIGHT BACK UP AT ME. ALL A DAD EVER WANTS TO SEE  
IS HIS LITTLE GIRL LIVIN' SO HAPPILY.

GENNY

Hey, I'm not little anymore.

DAD

I PROMISE YOU UNTIL THE DAY I DIE, I'LL DO ANYTHING, JUST TO  
SEE YOU SMILE.

GENNY

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT DAD, YOU'RE NOT WRONG, ALL THIS  
STUFF'S BEEN A LOT OF FUN AND IT'S BEEN COOL SPENDING THIS  
TIME WITH YOU I REALLY MISS THE SILLY THINGS WE USED TO  
DO

DAD

REMEMBER WHAT GRANDFATHER USED TO SAY

GENNY

WHEN IN DOUBT

GENNY AND DAD

STOP EVERYTHING AND PLAY

DAD

BECAUSE HE KNEW HOW GREAT HIS DAY WOULD BE WHEN EVER  
HE WOULD SEE US SMILE

GENNY

IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU SMILE

GENNY AND DAD

OH I LOVE TO SEE YOU SMILE

Transition to home. MOM is falling  
asleep on the couch.

GENNY

Mom!

Runs and jumps MOM who screams  
in terror.

MOM

Ahh! Oh my God! Oh, Genny. You scared me.

DAD

Hey honey. We weren't expecting you.

MOM

Sorry. Did I come at a bad time?

DAD

I just mean I would have cleaned up a little. Come here.  
(Hugs.)

GENNY

Mom, you have to come look at all of my research. It's so awesome.  
Dad, show Mom your VD'S!

MOM

VD'S...?

DAD

H, H, VHS.

GENNY

Should I show mom the routine?

DAD

Absolutely!

MOM

Ok, ok - hang on a second. Mom is a little bit exhausted so let's do  
the routine another time. We have to get up early.

GENNY

Why?

MOM

Girl's day! We've got hair and nails first thing in the morning, followed by a little shopping spree and then to a show! Yay!

DAD

That sounds like fun. What am I going to do while you're having girls day?

MOM

I figured you'd probably be working.

DAD

Right. Ok young lady, don't you have some research to do?

GENNY runs to her bedroom.

IMOGENE

So...how'd it go?

GENNY

Not very well.

IMOGENE

Oh no! Did you forget the steps? I'm always so nervous I'll forget the steps.

GENNY

No, no, I did everything just like we rehearsed. I guess the director just didn't get it.

IMOGENE

What do you mean?

GENNY

Just not his style. He really liked the other girls' dance number.

IMOGENE

What kind of dance was it? Modern? Tap?

GENNY

I guess, sort of like this...

(GENNY imitates the sexualized dancing.)



IMOGENE

(Horried.)

Oh my word! Clearly this director has no taste. No taste at all, I tell you. Well, there it is, the ugly side of the business. I suppose it's always going to be there.

GENNY

What is?

IMOGENE

Oh, never mind. Tomorrow's a new day and with every new day brings a new song and dance. Isn't that right?

GENNY

I guess so. I have to go shopping with my mom.

IMOGENE

Oh, your mother is back? How fantastic. I'm dying to meet her.

GENNY

She can't tonight, she's really tired.

IMOGENE

Oh.

GENNY

Maybe tomorrow.

IMOGENE

Of course! Well, why aren't you terribly excited to go shopping? I just love shopping!

GENNY

It's not very fun.

THE CLOTHES DON'T REALLY FIT ME RIGHT THEY'RE JUST TOO TIGHT OR SAGGING AND I'M LACKING IN STYLE I TRY TO FOLLOW ALL THE TRENDS AND FIT MYSELF INSIDE THEM BUT I ALWAYS SPILL OUT I NEVER LOOK LIKE THE MANNEQUINS AND I NEVER LOOK LIKE THE MAGAZINES ALL THE PICTURES THAT I SEE ARE NEVER ME. THEY'LL NEVER BE. *(TO BE CONTINUED)*

OR WORKSHOP THE  
FOLLOWING IDEA

Imogene and Genny sing a spoof of  
"Fur Fashions" poking fun of today's  
fashion. "A pretty girl is like a  
melody when she's wrapped in daisy  
dukes..."

Perry Como's Kraft Music Hall  
Program, Wednesday December 30,  
1959.

## Scene 11

GIRL'S DAY. HUGE MUSICAL  
NUMBER. SINGING AND  
DANCING AND MAKE OVER  
AND WAXING AND SHOPPING.  
GENNY ends up with a red rash  
from the eyebrow and upper lip  
waxing, her hair is cut ambitiously  
short and the outfit is trendy and hip  
and awkward and uncomfortable.

## Scene 12

At school.

PRETTY GIRL 2

Hey helmet head!

PrettY GIRL 1

Oh my God!

PRETTY GIRL 3

You look like a boy!

PRETTY GIRL 2

Ew, and what's wrong with your face?

PRETTY GIRL 3

Eeeewwww! Gross!

GENNY

At least I don't have a mustache anymore, right?

PRETTY GIRLS exit grossed out and laughing. RANDY comes running through chased by BULLY 1. He runs right into BULLY 2 who has entered from the opposite direction. BULLY 2 throws him off.

BULLY 2

Get off me fag!

GENNY

Hey!

BULLY 2

Here we go again.

BULLY 1

It's the little fag hag.

BULLY 2

I think you mean bull dyke.

GENNY

If you're trying to insult me you'll have to do better than that.

BULLY 2

What?

GENNY

Simply implying I'm a lesbian is kind of a lame comeback. I just thought you could do better.

BULLY 2

So you are a dyke?

GENNY

My sexual preference is, A. None of your business. And, B. Yet to be determined. I mean let a girl at least hit puberty. Jeeze.

RANDY laughs and BULLY 1  
pushes him down very hard.  
GENNY attacks BULLY 1, knocking  
him down to the ground. BULLY 2  
pulls her off and she attacks him.  
DIRECTOR enters and pulls her off,  
not before taking an accidental  
elbow to the face. He points  
GENNY to the Principal's office.

## SCENE 13

GENNY'S bedroom. GENNY is reading. MOM enters.

GENNY (CONT'D)

Hi Mom.

MOM

Hi Mom? Hi Mom. Hi Genny.

GENNY

Jennifer.

MOM

Your name is Genevieve.

GENNY

Well, I would prefer to be called Jennifer.

MOM

Oh you would? Well, I would prefer not to get a phone call from the principal informing me that my daughter has been suspended from school.

DAD enters.

DAD

Suspended?

MOM

Swearing, stripping and fighting?!

DAD

Fighting?

MOM

Oh, you knew about the stripping?

GENNY

And the swearing.

MOM

Wow! Anything else happen while I was gone?

DAD

I quit my job.

MOM

What?

DAD

I can't do it anymore, babe.

MOM

Don't "babe" me.

DAD

Listen, I have been trying to tell you, but it's been very difficult to get your attention.

MOM

Are you kidding me? This is a joke, right? I'm being Punked or something?

(MOM'S phone begins to ring. She tries to find it in her bag.)

DAD

Honey...

MOM

Stop!

DAD

Sweetie...

(MOM glares.)

DAD (CONT'D)

I just can't say anything right.

MOM

Then try something else.

(Finds the phone, sends it to voice-mail.)

GENNY

Guys, stop. I'm sorry, OK? I'm sorry I got in a fight. They, just pushed this kid, and I guess I was trying to help...

DAD

Fighting is never the answer, never.

GENNY

I know. But, how else do you defend someone from getting beat up?  
How else was I going to stop those guys?

DAD

Your words.

GENNY

I tried! They called me a dyke.  
(MOM'S phone rings again.)

MOM

A dyke?

GENNY

Yeah, my awesome new haircut gave the whole school plenty to  
work with today.

MOM

I told you to tell the stylist to give you a trim.

GENNY

I wanted to look like Jennifer Lawrence.

MOM

I have to take this.  
(Exits.)

DAD

Are you OK? I mean, did you get hurt?

GENNY

Not a scratch.

DAD

(Impressed.)

And you say there were two of them?

GENNY

Yeah, and kind of big.

DAD

I do not condone fighting, you know that.



GENNY

I know.

DAD

I don't ever want to hear about something like this happening again.

GENNY

Me neither.

DAD

I love you. And I'm proud of you for defending your friend.

GENNY

Thanks, Dad. I love you.

DAD

(In the middle of a hug.)

You're totally grounded, you know that, right?

GENNY

I figured. I think you might be too.

DAD

Yeah. I'm going to go have a chat with Mom.

DAD exits. IMOGENE appears.

IMOGENE

So, that's your mom?

GENNY

Yup.

IMOGENE

I suppose we'll get better acquainted another time. How are you?

GENNY

I'm actually OK. I mean, I know I should probably feel bad about fighting...

IMOGENE

And getting suspended from school...

GENNY

Yeah, but, it felt good to..

IMOGENE

Let 'em have it?

GENNY

And to help someone.

IMOGENE

Your dad's right, you know. Violence is never the answer.

GENNY

Then what is the answer? Words? What good are words if we don't speak the same language?

IMOGENE

What is the universal language of love and peace?

IMOGENE begins with a glimmer in her eye and passes it on to GENNY. The glimmer grows to a closed mouth smile which GENNY passes to IMOGENE who graciously accepts and adds a light chuckle which gets passed to GENNY. GENNY accepts chuckle which grows to a light guffaw and gets passed to IMOGENE who accepts and grows to a hearty laugh and passes to GENNY who accepts and grows to slapping oneself, pass, slapping one another, pass, falling to the floor in hysterics.

(I learned the above exercise at clown camp with Dody DiSanto. It is equally fascinating for the audience and participant. I have only experienced this exercise with 4-6 people and I am not sure how well it will go over with two. The image of this exercise continued to appear for this moment. I will continue to explore the opportunities. The point is - What is the universal language of love and peace? Ha Ha Ha Ha He He He He Ho Ho Ho Ho WHEEEE! It very well may be a song.)

## SCENE 14

MOM and DAD - Bedroom. MOM  
is packing.

DAD

I think you're supposed to take the clothes out of the suitcase.

MOM

I've got to fly back tomorrow morning.

DAD

You just got home.

MOM

I know. It's going to seem like a lot at the beginning. Once everything is set up over there...

DAD

It's OK. I'm not upset.

MOM

Well that makes one of us.

DAD

I tried to tell you.

MOM

You've told me. Now what?

DAD

I'm going to get another job. I've been looking, my sister asked if I'd be interested in teaching a few classes.

MOM

At the community college?

DAD

Yeah. The community college. Where you and I got our associate degrees.

MOM

It seems like a step backwards.

DAD

All right, what's going on? Is it about the money? Are you feeling pressured? Is this promotion not...

MOM

This promotion is the best thing to happen to me, to us.

DAD

I agree. I'm proud of you, I support you. And I will get another job, babe...

MOM

Enough with the "babe"!

DAD

I've called you babe for seventeen years! You babed me long before I ever babed you. We babe each other. OK, forget the babe thing for a minute, can we focus on Genny?

MOM

How did you let her get so out of control?

DAD

Now hold on a second.

MOM

What are you even doing all day?

DAD

Maybe, maybe you should go talk with Genny right now. You and I can talk when you've calmed down a little bit.

(Exits.)

MOM

(Turns around, he's gone, calls after him.)

I'm calm! I'm calm!

(Deep breath. Goes to GENNY'S room. GENNY is not there. MOM opens book, IMOGENE appears.)

IMOGENE

Oh, hello.

MOM

Imogene?

IMOGENE

That's right. You must be Genny's Mom.

MOM

That's right. So. You were an entertainer.

IMOGENE

Well, that's one way to look at it.

MOM

I'm not quite sure I approve of the influence you are having over my daughter.

MOM and IMOGENE battle it out.  
Mom thinks Genny should be  
interested in pop culture so she can  
*fit in*. Imogene argues the benefits of  
*standing out*.

## SCENE 15

GENNY'S house. RANDY rings doorbell. DAD answers.

RANDY

Hi, is Jennifer home?

DAD

Genny? Yes, but I'm afraid she's grounded.

RANDY

Oh, well, I just wanted to thank her.

DAD

Thank her for what?

RANDY

Well...she sort of helped me handle a situation.

DAD

Oh.

(Beat.)

Come on in.

(Turns to call GENNY who has been listening in the hallway and comes running out immediately.)

GENNY

Hi.

RANDY

Hi.

DAD

You two have five minutes.

(Exits.)

RANDY

I just wanted to say, thanks.

GENNY

Oh, no problem.

RANDY

Nobody's ever done anything like that for me before.

GENNY

Really?

RANDY

Yeah, this is the first time someone has tackled two boys to the ground for me.

GENNY

Well, I hope it's not the last.

RANDY

You're pretty funny.

GENNY

Thanks. And you are an amazing dancer. The stuff you can do...

RANDY

You mean like this?

(Shows off a little.)

That's nothing. Anybody can do that.

GENNY

No they can't! I can't do that.

RANDY

Have you ever tried?

GENNY

I guess not. I've only taken jazz and ballet.

RANDY

Well give it a shot.

RANDY teaches GENNY a basic step. Meanwhile DAD has been watching from the hall. He also tries to learn the step.

POSSIBLE MUSICAL NUMBER.  
HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU  
CAN'T DO IT IF YOU NEVER  
TRIED?

The moment ends with DAD  
dancing his way out with reckless  
abandonment.

DAD

One semester of tap...an elective...

RANDY

You're pretty good.

DAD

Yeah, I got an A.

GENNY

Dad, this is, my friend, Randy.

DAD

Pleasure to meet you Randy.

RANDY

You too sir. I guess I'm supposed to go now.

DAD

Oh, right. Yes. Genny is grounded. And...so I'm fairly certain that  
means no visitors.

(Everyone is disappointed.)

RANDY

Well, I guess I'll see you in a week?

GENNY

Yeah, I guess.

(RANDY begins to go. Beat.)

DAD

Unless...the visitor were here for the purpose of school work...

GENNY

Randy's input would be very beneficial for my project.

DAD

I agree.

RANDY

Who are you writing about?



GENNY

Imogene Coca. (Brief reprise?)

RANDY

You're kidding.

GENNY

I don't understand how or why anybody would kid about that.

RANDY

I'm writing about Sid Caesar.

GENNY AND DAD

No way!

DAD

How? Why?

RANDY

The day Caesar died, my dad showed me a bunch of his old videos. We stayed up laughing all night long. It was like, something we could agree on. Oh, so that's where you got the idea for the overcoat routine?

GENNY

You saw my audition?

RANDY

Yeah, it was awesome! I can't believe he didn't let you finish.

DAD

I know, right?

(Beat.)

Well, what are you two still hanging around here for? Go on and get to work. I've got to get back to work myself, lots to...

(They're gone.)

Do.

Transition: Genny's room

GENNY

Imogene Coca.

(Opens book, IMOGENE appears.)

IMOGENE

Hello.

GENNY

This is Randy. He's amazing.

IMOGENE

Randy the Amazing! The Amazing Randy! Eh, keep brainstorming.  
(RANDY takes book out of bag.)

RANDY

And this is Sid Caesar.  
(SID appears.)

SID

How do you do?

(WORKSHOP. Sees IMOGENE. Off stage they were said to be shy around each other, but very comfortable. They would never say much. When they would call each other on the phone it could take a minute or two of giggling before the conversation could begin. Nobody speaks a word. SID and IMOGENE are drawn to each other, laughing, giggling. They find their way to an embrace. When they part begins the *Your Show of Shows* MONTAGE. Scenes to work with - 1812 Overture, The Hickenloopers, Coney Island, From Here to Obscurity. Perhaps GENNY and RANDY step in for Carl Reiner and Howard Morris, adding on, The Bavarian Clock & Mata Hari.)

Hey Immy, are you thinking what I'm thinking?

IMOGENE

I think so. What are you thinking?

SID

I think these two would make a great team.

IMOGENE

That's what I thought you were thinking! What do you think?

RANDY

I think it's a terrific idea. Let's do something together for the talent show!

GENNY

How? There's no way Director is going to give me another chance.

RANDY

He doesn't have to. I've already secured a spot in the show.

GENNY

Are you suggesting we sneak me in?

RANDY

Yes.

GENNY

We can't.

RANDY

Says who? It's my spot. Nobody said I couldn't make improvements.

GENNY

Yeah, it's your spot. You'd actually share it with me?

RANDY

Yeah, actually, I would.

GENNY

What would we do?

IMOGENE

What do you think Sid? Which one of our old routines?

SID

Oh, no. Not our routine. No, no, I think you better call Jimmy out for this one.

IMOGENE

Oh, Sid! You're brilliant.

(Flips a few pages in one of the books. JAMES STARBUCK appears.)

JAMES

Well, what are we all just standing around for? Let's get to work.

DAD has been eavesdropping. He couldn't be happier. He calls his sister.

DAD

Hey sis, it's me. Are you still looking for instructors?

## Scene 16

MOM'S office. Moment of silence  
before phones start ringing off the  
hook.

ASSISTANT

Um, there's a woman on the phone who wants you to tell her why  
her daughter is dead?

MOM

Excuse me?

(PRESS comes in one at a time with cameras rolling.)

ANCHOR 1

WE ARE COMING TO YOU LIVE FROM THE HEADQUARTERS OF  
BEAUTYMAXX

ANCHOR 2

A LITTLE GIRL IS DEAD

ANCHOR 3

SHE WAS TEN YEARS OLD

ANCHOR 2

A LITTLE GIRL IS DEAD

ANCHOR 4

COMPLICATIONS CAUSED BY

ANCHOR 2

A LITTLE GIRL IS DEAD

All ANCHORS

BEAUTYMAXX FOURTEEN-THOUSAND

Look to MOM.

WHAT...HAVE YOU GOT TO SAY HOW COULD YOU LET THIS  
HAPPEN WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO A LITTLE GIRL IS DEAD

MOM

NOW WAIT JUST A MINUTE I DON'T HAVE ALL THE FACTS THIS IS  
A TRAGIC LOSS PLEASE SHOW SOME RESPECT FOR THE FAMILY  
AND LET ME GET TO THE TRUTH

## ANCHORS

THE FACTS THE TRUTH THE FACTS THE TRUTH THE FACTS THE TRUTH THE FACTS

## MOM 2

THE FACT IS MY DAUGHTER THOUGHT THAT SHE WAS UGLY THOUGH I TOLD HER SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL EVERY DAY BUT THAT'S JUST A THING MOM'S SAY, RIGHT? SHE READ ALL THE MAGAZINES KNEW ALL OF THE POP STARS AND SHE THOUGHT SHE SHOULD BE MORE AND LESS MORE LIKE THEM LESS LIKE HER SHE CRIED DAY AND NIGHT MAKE THE UGLY GO AWAY SHE THOUGHT BEAUTYMAXX FOURTEEN-THOUSAND WOULD SAVE THE DAY

## MOM'S BOSS

AND YOU SAID OK

## MOM 2

What?

## MOM'S BOSS

YOU GAVE YOUR PERMISSION FOUND A SPECIALIZED PHYSICIAN READ ALL OF THE LITERATURE AND SIGNED CONSENT TO ADMINISTER BEAUTYMAXX FOURTEEN-THOUSAND TO YOUR CHILD.

## MOM 2

Yes, but...

## MOM'S BOSS

BEAUTYMAXX OFFERS OUR MOST SINCERE CONDOLENCES

(Song and dance)

No further comment.

## MOM 2

Wait!

## MOM'S BOSS

You may direct any additional questions, comments and concerns to our lawyer, Shana The Shark, Esquire.

## ANCHOR 1

YOU'VE JUST HEARD ALL THE FACTS

ANCHOR 2

AN UGLY LITTLE GIRL

ANCHOR 3

CRIED BOTH NIGHT AND DAY

ANCHOR 2

AN UGLY LITTLE GIRL

ANCHOR 4

MOTHER SIGNS CONSENT

ANCHOR 2

AN UGLY LITTLE GIRL

ALL

IS DEAD SINCERE CONDOLENCES

### Scene 16

MOM confronts BOSS.

MOM

NOW HOLD ON JUST A SECOND WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

MOM'S BOSS

THAT, MY DEAR, IS JUST PART OF THE JOB. I HOPE YOU PAID ATTENTION, NEXT TIME HANDLE IT YOURSELF.

MOM

THIS IS NOT WHAT I SIGNED UP FOR

MOM'S BOSS

IT IS EXACTLY WHAT YOU SIGNED FOR. ON THE DOTTED LINE. NOW, NOW DEAR DON'T GET SO UPSET YOU'RE BEING EMOTIONAL YOU CAN'T BE EMOTIONAL IF YOU WISH TO SUCCEED.

MOM

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU. I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU SPEAK AS THOUGH YOU HAVE NO HEART, SIR. I WILL NOT BUY THAT. I WILL NOT STAND FOR THIS

MOM'S BOSS

YOU DON'T HAVE A CHOICE

MOM

I MOST CERTAINLY DO. AND I DON'T CHOOSE YOU. I DON'T CHOOSE THIS. MY GOD CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT WE'RE DOING? THIS POISON WE'RE SELLING. LOOK AT WHAT WE'RE TELLING WOMEN THEY SHOULD BE? ALL OF THIS SHIT DOESN'T MATTER IT'S JUST A TRICK TO MAKE SOMEBODY RICH. WELL I AM NOT BUYING IT AND I REFUSE TO PEDDLE IT

MOM'S BOSS

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN MONEY?

MOM

I believe there are more honorable ways to make it.

MOM'S BOSS

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN BEAUTY.

MOM

BEAUTY. WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL? WHAT ON EARTH DO YOU SEE? I SEE MY FAMILY, MY HUSBAND, MY DAUGHTER, SMILING AND LAUGHING, NOW THAT SIR IS BEAUTIFUL, THE MOST EPICALLY BEAUTIFUL THING I HAVE EVER SEEN.

### Scene 17

Talent Show. PRETTY GIRLS are in the middle of their act. DIRECTOR is patrolling backstage and sees GENNY. Without speaking he tries to get her out of there. Shenanigans ensue and in attempting to be rid of her DIRECTOR foolishly finds himself strung up in the rafters or perhaps fallen into the pit, either way, interrupting the PRETTY GIRLS' routine and leaving GENNY free to perform with RANDY.



They perform their version of the duet - Imogene's tramp character with Starbuck as the grumpy bellhop, "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams, Dream Your Troubles Away". At some point Mom enters. Standing ovation. Hugs for all.

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APPENDIX A

Lead sheet for “The Imogene Coca Song” composed by Marisa Guida. Accompaniment arranged by Benjamin Miller. Contains 3 pages.





Handwritten musical score on ten staves, featuring lyrics and musical notation. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#).

**Staff 1:** (cymbal) HAVE YOU LAUGHING OFF YOUR

**Staff 2:** 1 - MO-GENE 1 - MO-GENE

**Staff 3:** D B7/D# A/E F# HER STUFF IS STILL SO FUN-NY NOW LOOK AT HER HERE HA!

**Staff 4:** 2

**Staff 5:** Bm7 3 BOY WHAT A CLOWN SUCH A SUC-CESS-FUL CA-REER

**Staff 6:** E9 3 3 Cm7 FOR D-VER SE-VEN-TY YEARS HOW COULD WE FOR-GET SHE

**Staff 7:** F7 A6 CHORUS (repeat) Dm7 G#dim7 C#7

**Staff 8:** HAID US IN TEARS WITH HER RUB-BER FACE BIG BROWN EYES A

**Staff 9:**



Handwritten musical score on page 107, featuring lyrics and musical notation.

**First System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $B\#sus^7$ ,  $B^7$
- Lyrics: MER - I - CAS DAR - LING LIT - TLE IMP
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Second System:**

- Chords:  $A^6$ ,  $F$ ,  $A^6$
- Lyrics: CO - CA I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Third System:**

- Chords:  $F$ ,  $A^6$
- Lyrics: CO - CA I - MO - GENE
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Fourth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: CO - CA I - MO - GENE
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Fifth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Sixth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Seventh System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Eighth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Ninth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Tenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Eleventh System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Twelfth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Thirteenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Fourteenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Fifteenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Sixteenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Seventeenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Eighteenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Nineteenth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**Twentieth System:**

- Chords:  $F\#dim^7$ ,  $Bm^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $D/E^7$ ,  $Dm/E$
- Lyrics: I - MO - GENE I - MO - GENE CO - CA
- Measure 2 contains a large handwritten "2" and a double bar line.

**ARCHIVES**

## APPENDIX B

### Figure 1

Coca, Imogene. Stars of NBC Trading Card #84.1953. Bowman Gum, Philadelphia, PA. 2014.

The Bowman Gum Company produced a series of trading cards Television and Radio Stars of NBC. This card is number 84 in a series of 96. The photograph shows Imogene wearing her famous striptease overcoat, as she begins to untie the belt with a hint of a wink. The back of the card contains a brief biography and one trivia question. Imogene was at the height of her popularity at that time. This card is from the personal collection of the author.

### Figure 2

Dillingham, Charles, prod. *New Faces of 1934*. New York City. 1934. Playbill. 2014.

This photograph is the front cover of the playbill from *New Faces of 1934*. The cast of 18 people is clumped together with Leonard Sillman seated in the center with Imogene Coca directly to his right. The playbill is from the author's personal collection.

### Figures 3 & 4

Cowles Magazines. "America's Funnyface." *Quick News Weekly* 29 Sept. 1952: Cover+. Print.

Figure 3 is a photograph of the front cover of the pocket News Weekly magazine, Quick. Imogene Coca is featured on the cover wearing a ballerina costume, tying her shoe and winking for the camera.

Figure 4 is a photograph of pages 38 and 39 which feature photographs of Imogene starring in *Your Show of Shows*. The character holding the trombone is Imogene's famous tramp clown. The characters featured in this magazine display a hint of Coca's versatility. The bottom right photograph also features Max Liebman and Sid Caesar. The bottom left photograph features Imogene with her choreographer and friend, James Starbuck. This magazine is from the author's personal collection.

#### Figures 5 & 6

Program. *Prisoner of Second Avenue* by Neil Simon. California Theatre of Performing Arts. San Bernardino, CA. 7 March 1974. Print.

Figure 5 is Imogene's headshot featured in the program for *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* on page 4, adjacent to her biography. Figure 6 features photographs on page 8 of Imogene & King Donovan performing together as the middle aged husband and wife, Mel and Edna Edison. The program is from the author's personal collection.

#### Figure 7

Kenton, Erle C., dir. *They Meet Again*. *Archive*. Internet Archive, n.d. Web. 4 May 2014.

<[https://archive.org/details/they\\_meet\\_again](https://archive.org/details/they_meet_again)>.

This is a screenshot of Imogene Coca playing the role of Lulu Thorpe in the film *They Meet Again*. The shot was taken at about forty two minutes into the film. This photograph demonstrates Imogene's appearance was made to be less than attractive.

## Figure 8

*Dime a Dance*. Prod. Al Christie. *Library of Congress*. Library of Congress, n.d. Web. 4 May 2014. <<http://www.loc.gov/item/ibas.200198142>>.

This is a screenshot of Imogene Coca as Esmerelda the love sick goofball in the short film, *Dime a Dance*. This shot was taken at approximately 6 minutes into the film and depicts Imogene making funny faces to attract the attention of men. It is a perfect example that from so early in her career, she was not afraid to be ugly.

### Vita

Marisa Guida was born on June 24, 1979 in Buffalo, New York. She graduated from Williamsville South High School in 1997. She received her Associate of Arts from Palm Beach State College, Lake Worth, Florida in May 2011 and her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, December 2011 from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Marisa has been a member of Actors Equity Association since 2002.