

Scene Three
Celeste's Home
Later That Day

(Celeste's home, more modest than one might expect. CELESTE recites from Henry IV, Part Two.)

CELESTE AS HENRY IV. And wherefore should these good news make me sick?

I should rejoice now at this happy news,
And now my sight fails and my brain is giddy.

O, me! Come near me. Now I am much ill.

(She swoons to the ground. Then, dissatisfied by her swoon, rises again.)

Now I am much ill.

(Another swoon. She quickly rises.)

Much ill.

(A perfect swoon this time. She stays on the ground. A knock at the door. She doesn't budge.)

I've swooned.

(Another knock.)

Come back later, I'm swooning.

(Another knock. She rises, opens the door.)

Does a swoon mean nothing to –

(It's MAGGIE.)

Oh. You. Hat in hand.

MAGGIE. Your home – it's much more modest than I might have –

CELESTE. I don't know what you expected. I've had the odd patron here and there over the years, my voice students – no, I save my extravagance for the stage.

MAGGIE. You do indeed.

CELESTE. Now, how may I assist?

MAGGIE. I need you to come back.

CELESTE. Not quite the same as “I’ve made a mistake.”

MAGGIE. I don’t think I have. Grace is where she belongs.

CELESTE. Your shiny new toy.

MAGGIE. You’ve heard her read, she’s more than that.

CELESTE. Time will tell. Put an audience in front of her, she might freeze up altogether. Might fall apart if she forgets a line, or if she can’t do a quick change backstage. Recitation in a rehearsal room is one thing, but there are some skills that come with practice. The skills that make one a professional. Grace is an amateur – a talented one, but an amateur nonetheless.

MAGGIE. That’s why she needs you by her side. To guide her, mentor her.

CELESTE. Flattery.

MAGGIE. Truth.

CELESTE. Perhaps, but immaterial. I have made my decision, and you, yours. Oh Maggie, I think of your sad little troupe every now and again while I delight the youth of Woonsocket – that poor, misguided Winifred –

MAGGIE. Oh! We’ve cracked that.

CELESTE. Mrs. Snow? How?

MAGGIE. A beard.

CELESTE. Really? An outside-in type. I never would have thought we shared – but still, with you playing every other role I don’t see how –

MAGGIE. Not anymore. Stuart and Ida pled their case.

CELESTE. Well. Aren’t we progressive. And Andrew approves?

(**MAGGIE shrugs.**)

Forging ahead on our own, are we? Well, a pity Ida’s acting will take time away from her costumes.

MAGGIE. Not at all. They are magnificent.

CELESTE. (*Tempted.*) They are?

MAGGIE. Modern.

CELESTE. Pardon?

MAGGIE. Modern dress.

CELESTE. Wigs?

MAGGIE. No wigs, no hose.

CELESTE. (*Ridiculous.*) That's -! (*Or is it?*) Bold, bold. And how are their strides coming along?

MAGGIE. Manfully.

CELESTE. The cods are helping?

MAGGIE. The cods my dear, were a stroke of brilliance.

CELESTE. I'm glad, I'm glad.

(They sit for a moment.)

MAGGIE. ...Come back.

CELESTE. I can't.

MAGGIE. Why not? You'd be playing a wonderful role.

CELESTE. And setting a dangerous precedent. I shall have the taint of age about me, Maggie, and when our men return to the company, and I go back to my given sex? There aren't enough crones in the canon to cobble together a career.

MAGGIE. You're not at crone stage yet, Celeste. There's Titania, Cleopatra -

CELESTE. But not Juliet.

MAGGIE. Perhaps not.

CELESTE. I would miss her.

MAGGIE. And she you. There will never be another to do her such justice. But it's time to move on. Bring that insight to someone new. Bring it to Henry.

CELESTE. The wrong Henry -

MAGGIE. You'll never know.

CELESTE. Oh, but I'm so far behind you all. You open in two days, I'd never be able to learn the lines in -

MAGGIE. Celeste. I heard you rehearsing.

CELESTE. (*Playing dumb.*) Heard what?

MAGGIE. You can hit the back wall of the theater without breaking a sweat; one front door isn't going to stop you.

CELESTE. My gifts have undone me. In truth, it's not a bad part. As you said, great death scene.

MAGGIE. One of the best.

CELESTE. And he's a thinker, isn't he? A brooder.

MAGGIE. Not everyone gets that, yes.

CELESTE. Almost a minor Hamlet at times – like his sleep soliloquy?

MAGGIE. I think Andrew cut that.

CELESTE. I think it's back in.

MAGGIE. All right.

CELESTE. Although I understand the impulse. Always dangerous to bring up sleep in a theater. Next thing you know half your audience has nodded off.

MAGGIE. That was the thinking.

CELESTE. A deal: if I get so much as a yawn, it's out again.

MAGGIE. Deal.

(CELESTE recites in a beautiful, simple fashion. MAGGIE sits to listen on the couch, getting more and more comfortable as the soliloquy goes along.)

CELESTE AS HENRY IV. How many thousand of my poorest subjects

Are at this hour asleep! O sleep, O gentle sleep,
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude,
And, in the calmest and most stillest night,
Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

(MAGGIE is out, sleeping like the dead.)

CELESTE. Poor thing. This hasn't been easy, has it? I imagine you've had a sleepless night or two, yourself.

(She tucks MAGGIE in.)

CELESTE. Your poor uneasy head.

*(She touches **MAGGIE's** forehead.)*

But you wear it well, my dear. You do wear it well.