

# **TWO STRANGERS** **(CARRY A CAKE ACROSS NEW YORK)**

A new musical by Jim Barne and Kit Buchan  
Directed by Tim Jackson

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

**Robin Rainey** - a New Yorker, 26 - Christiani Pitts  
**Dougal Todd** - an Englishman, 25 - Sam Tutty

Original Broadway Production:  
Longacre Theatre, New York NY, November 2025

Original US Production:  
American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge MA, May 2025

Original West End Production:  
Criterion Theatre, Piccadilly, April 2024

Original London Production:  
Kiln Theatre, Kilburn, November 2023

*New York City, present day.*

## PROLOGUE – NYC/UK

*An introductory **Overture** bursts over the stage, fading out to the five beeps of the BBC clock. The lights come up on one half of the stage where a radio clicks into life:*

**BBC RADIO 4 NEWSREADER:** *“This is the BBC News at 12 o’clock. The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee has today released a statement calling on the Prime Minister to support an immediate ban on the sale of...”*

*Abruptly, the lighting switches, illuminating a different radio in a different world. An American voice emerges, picking up the thread of the sentence:*

**US PODCAST HOST:** *“Starbucks seasonal gingerbread lattes. Am I right? They’re back on the menu and you know what that means? We’re deep in cuffing season ladies. I checked my DMs this morning and what did I find?”*

*We flick back to the UK side of the stage, where the radio is now playing a mainstream breakfast programme:*

**BBC RADIO 1 DJ:** *“/your boyfriend’s dad asleep in the bathtub. How did this happen? Why did you go in? Were there bubbles, or was the whole Dad visible? But most importantly/...”*

*Again, the lights and the radios click back to America, and continue to alternate:*

**US ADVERTISEMENT:** *“/...tell me this. Are your children safe from bedbugs? Take a magnifying glass and look under your mattress. Because you might catch a glimpse of .../”*

**UK SOCCER COMMENTATOR 1:** *“/Jack Beesley, and that’s a lovely bit of footwork to keep the ball in play. I’ll tell you what, John, he’s having a brilliant season this lad...”*

**UK SOCCER COMMENTATOR 2:** *“Couldn’t agree more Steve, Chelsea haven’t had an attacking player of this quality since.../”*

*In the American hemisphere, a young woman, ROBIN RAINEY appears, looking sleepy. A piano **Overture** begins to return beneath the voiceovers, quietly at first.*

**US RADIO DJ:** *“Mariah Carey, getting us in the mood the old-fashioned way now the long nights are creeping in. A lot of texts coming in talkin’ this and that, but on WNYZ, it’s never too soon for Mariah, and it’s never too soon.../”*

*A young man, DOUGAL TODD, appears on stage, eating toast and putting on shoes.*

**UK COOKERY PROGRAMME:** *“...to make a lovely, festive meringue. Simply whip the egg whites into stiff peaks, and when it’s got a nice wobbly texture you can just pour the mixture carefully.../”*

*Snap to ROBIN again, preparing for work. The **Overture** steadily grows beneath.*

**NYC TRAFFIC REPORT:** *“...across the westbound BQE, gridlocked all the way out to Astoria - that’s thanks to ice on the roads so remember to check your tyres and take it easy out there. Later this morning we’ll be asking our listeners.../”*

*ROBIN exits. Back in England, DOUGAL is now packing a small wheeled suitcase.*

**BBC RADIO 1 DJ:** *“When did it become OK to boil an egg in a kettle? That’s not a life-hack, Jason. That’s.../”*

*In their separate worlds, ROBIN and DOUGAL are both brushing their teeth.*

**US RADIO DJ:** *“...His Majesty King Michael Bublé. We’ve been spinning his new record all morning/...”*

*They spit simultaneously into their respective sinks.*

**BBC RADIO 4 NEWSREADER:** *“Forcing dozens of people to abandon their cars on the M39.../”*

*The **Overture** continues its crescendo, now with scattered drums and bass. ROBIN and DOUGAL’s worlds begin to overlap, as they perform their respective rituals.*

**US ADVERTISEMENT:** *“So come on down to Bushwick Bob’s Bargain Bazaar this Friday.../”*

**BBC RADIO 3 DJ:** *“...for an evening of Tchaikovsky by candlelight..../”*

**US TALK-RADIO HOST:** *“...don’t forget to hit like and subscribe.”*

**UK NEWSREADER:** *"Thanks for that, Tom. It's 12.25pm/..."*

**US WEATHERGIRL:** */"It's 7.25 here on WNYZ..."*

*The two nationalities now begin to blend together, and the voices of the two different weather reports talk over one another in a chattering medley. The **Overture** reaches its full volume, filled with energy and anticipation:*

**US WEATHERGIRL:** *"...and here's that five-day forecast for the tri-state area. More and more of us will be feeling the chill as we come into the weekend as that frosty front comes through; it could bring with it some low figures as we make our way into Saturday so keep an eye out for those freeze warnings if you're driving or flying. Sunday stays mild, with temperatures topping out in the upper forties around Buffalo and the Hamptons, but if you're here in the city get your mittens at the ready, because by Tuesday we could see some flakes flying."*

**GB WEATHERMAN:** *"It'll be a fine, dry start for many of us, with sunny spells across southern and central England - by the afternoon though we'll see an area of low pressure moving across Scotland and Northern Ireland, bringing with it a scattering of showers. That rain will sink south as we head into the weekend, with highs of 13 in Cornwall and the West Country and more wet weather expected in fits and starts throughout the week. So, not quite the cold snap we were expecting, but it might still be time to dust off the wellies. Back to you Adrian."*

*As the two radios mingle in a combined cacophony, we hear the sounds of an aeroplane roaring overhead. ROBIN appears, dressed in warm clothing and holding a handwritten sign: **'DOUGAL TODD'**. Meanwhile DOUGAL strides across the stage, his arms full of possessions, gazing delightfully around him. ROBIN turns, not seeing him, and **bang!** - they collide.*

**ACT I, SCENE 1 - JFK/Subway**

*The **music** and **radio** sounds abruptly disappear. DOUGAL's clothes and effects scatter across the floor. ROBIN recoils indignantly.*

**ROBIN:** Jesus!

**DOUGAL:** I'm so sorry... that's completely / my fault...

**ROBIN:** /Watch where you're going!

*In the background, the distant chatter and rumble of a busy airport terminal.*

**DOUGAL:** I...

**ROBIN:** What?

**DOUGAL:** You're standing on my passport.

**ROBIN:** [*lifting her foot*] Don't you have a bag?

**DOUGAL:** Yes, but they emptied it at customs. Sniffer dogs, rubber gloves and everything.

*ROBIN steps aside while DOUGAL gathers his belongings.*

**DOUGAL:** [*realising the implication*] Not that sort of rubber gloves. Although I was worried for a minute.

*She glances back at him and he notices.*

**DOUGAL:** I think it was the Marmite.

*ROBIN barely acknowledges this.*

**DOUGAL:** Apparently people who travel with Marmite are sometimes...dodgy customers.

*She doesn't answer.*

**DOUGAL:** I think they put, you know, naughty stuff in the Marmite. Drugs or guns or, probably just drugs. [*pause*] Because it's quite thick and smelly isn't it, Marmite?

**ROBIN:** [*curiosity prevailing*] What's Marmite?

**DOUGAL:** What's Marmite? It's kind of, it's kind of a shiny, brown...fluid? I've never had to describe Marmite before. I mean it's delicious.

**ROBIN:** You eat it?

**DOUGAL:** Sorry yes, on toast.

**ROBIN:** Right.

**DOUGAL:** Not straight out the jar.

**ROBIN:** Listen I'm meeting some/one.

**DOUGAL:** /Do you want to see it?

**ROBIN:** Not really.

*He tosses it to her, she catches it reluctantly.*

**ROBIN:** [*examining it*] It looks like sh/it

**DOUGAL:** /Don't open it! It's a present for Mark. For dad. For my dad.

**ROBIN:** Wait. *You're* Dougal. Dougal Todd?

**DOUGAL:** Yes!

**ROBIN:** Fantastic.

**DOUGAL:** How did you know/?

**ROBIN:** [*showing him the sign*] I'm here to meet you.

**DOUGAL:** Oh, OK [*looking around*]

**ROBIN:** Were you expecting someone else?

**DOUGAL:** I just wondered... is he here?

**ROBIN:** Is who here? Your dad?

**DOUGAL:** I just thought...

**ROBIN:** I think Mark's at work.

**DOUGAL:** Oh. Where does he work?

**ROBIN:** Uh, Hudson Yards?

**DOUGAL:** Cool. Is that nearby?

**ROBIN:** No.

*There's a strained silence.*

**ROBIN:** I'm Robin. Robin Rainey.

**DOUGAL:** Where are my manners? Robin, bring it in!

*DOUGAL envelops ROBIN in a huge hug.*

**ROBIN:** [*suffocating*] OK.

**DOUGAL:** I am so pumped to meet you!

**ROBIN:** OK, Dougal.

**DOUGAL:** I know this must seem a bit weird, but I'm genuinely pumped to be part of this wedding, and I'm even more pumped to have a new sister.

**ROBIN:** [*fending him off with the Marmite*] I'm not your sister.

*He releases her, and takes the jar.*

**DOUGAL:** I'm coming on too strong?

**ROBIN:** No I mean factually I'm not your sister.

**DOUGAL:** But, your mum is the bride?

**ROBIN:** No, my *sister* is the bride.

**DOUGAL:** Your sister?

*ROBIN nods.*

**DOUGAL:** Your older sister.

**ROBIN:** Yeah. By three years.

**DOUGAL:** Right. So that'd make her...

**ROBIN:** She's thirty.

**DOUGAL:** And Dad's/...

**ROBIN:** /Your dad's fifty-seven.

**DOUGAL:** Wow. Go Dad.

**ROBIN:** Go Dad. [*pause*] You don't know your Dad, do you?

**DOUGAL:** Well, yes and no...

**ROBIN:** Yes or no?

**DOUGAL:** Well no. But I do know of him.

**ROBIN:** [*brandishing the jar*] So what kind of drugs you got in the Marmite?

**DOUGAL:** Oh I don't have any/ drugs...

**ROBIN:** /I know. Can we get going? It's a long way into the city.

*DOUGAL is taking a photograph of something.*

**ROBIN:** Dougal?

**DOUGAL:** Yep!

**ROBIN:** AirTrain's this way.

**DOUGAL:** Lead on.

*They mount the AirTrain. A brief silence as they stand side-by-side.*

**ANNOUNCEMENT** [*male, robotic*]: *This is a Jamaica Train, please hold on.*

**ROBIN:** Where are you headed, by the way?

**DOUGAL:** New York, baby!

**ROBIN:** Right, but, where exactly.

**DOUGAL:** You tell me! Where shall we go first? Let's do something touristy.

**ROBIN:** I'm not a tourist.

**DOUGAL:** I'm thinking, the Statue of Liberty.

**ROBIN:** What?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah it's like a big statue, of lib/erty...

**ROBIN:** /I know what it is.

**DOUGAL:** We have to go there. It's a spiritual journey.

**ROBIN:** A spiritual journey...

**DOUGAL:** But you're from New York so you probably go up the Statue Of Liberty all the time.

**ROBIN:** I've never been up there.

**DOUGAL:** Great! Let's go now!

**ROBIN:** You don't understand./

**DOUGAL:** /Or later?

**ROBIN:** [*firmly*] We're not doing anything together.

*Pause.*

**DOUGAL:** You don't like statues, or...?

**ROBIN:** Actually I have work in the morning.

**DOUGAL:** Where do you work?

**ROBIN:** Bump 'n' Grind Coffee. In the East Village.

**DOUGAL:** Bump 'n' Grind. That's clever.

**ROBIN:** Super clever.

**DOUGAL:** Does dad like statues?

**ROBIN:** I don't know.

**DOUGAL:** [*brandishing his phone*] Shall we Whatsapp him?

**ROBIN:** I think he's busy. Are you staying someplace?

**DOUGAL:** Do you have Whatsapp in America?

**ROBIN:** I mean like a hotel.

**DOUGAL:** Sorry, yes. Here.

*He hands her a piece of paper. She examines it.*

**ROBIN:** You got a place on Canal Street.

**DOUGAL:** Yes.

**ROBIN:** At eighty bucks a night.

**DOUGAL:** Is that good? Is that bad?

**ROBIN:** Not if you like bedbugs and hookers.

**DOUGAL:** I don't know. I've never slept with a bedbug.

**ROBIN:** Ok.... so this is where we change for the Subway.

**DOUGAL:** Ah! The subway. Love it.

**ROBIN:** You love the subway?

**DOUGAL:** Love it. New York is kind of my second home. [*US accent*] New Yoik Citteh!

**ROBIN:** Is that right.

**DOUGAL:** The Empire State, The White House, The Golden Gate Bridge...

**ROBIN:** The Golden Gate is/...

**DOUGAL:** *It's the capital city  
of the USA.*

**ROBIN:** It's not.

**DOUGAL:** *The city I swore I would see for myself one day...*

**ROBIN:** But, you've actually been to New York before?

**DOUGAL:** Yes. *[pause]* Uh, no. But I have seen Home Alone 2 quite a few times, so...

**ROBIN:** You serious/?

**DOUGAL:** *There's pizza for breakfast,  
there's steam in the air.  
It's 'candy' not 'sweets', and the streets are called 'sidewalks' there...*

**ROBIN:** *[baffled]* Uh...

**DOUGAL:** *My town:  
where everyone has an apartment to spare with a skyline view;  
where even improbable dreams come true.  
Where everything comes with a smile, a high five and a side of cheese;  
I'm down on my knees...*

**ROBIN:** That's our train!

*They dash for the train. We hear the bells of the closing door, and the famous announcement:*

**CHARLIE PELLETT (V/O):** *"Stand clear of the closing doors, please."*

**DOUGAL:** *[bursting with excitement]*  
*New York!*  
*I'm already talkin' the talk*  
*In New York!*  
*I'm already popping the cork,*  
*'cos I'm ready*  
*I'm ready to be in New York.*  
*Are they ready?*  
*Are they ready for me in New York?*

**DOUGAL:** *[gazing out the window]* Is that Times Square?

**ROBIN:** Nope, that's Queens.

**DOUGAL:** Awesome.

*She's called the Big Apple*

*No one knows why  
But she's my kind of town and I'm her kind of street-smart guy.  
I'll stroll up the Broadway,  
I'll order a beer;  
I'll scream at the Statue of Liberty  
"Hey Lady! I'm walkin' here!"*

*My home:  
the city of stories where everything's seventy stories high;  
where everyone kisses their blues goodbye.  
The cinema city I've waited the whole of my life to see.*

*DOUGAL fixes his face into an unconvincing Robert De Niro mask. ROBIN is horrified.*

**DOUGAL:** [*De Niro*] "Are you talkin' to me?"

*In New York!  
I'm already talkin' the talk  
In New York!  
I'm already popping the cork  
'cos I'm ready  
I'm ready to be in New York.  
Are they ready?  
Are you ready for me in New York?*

**ROBIN:** [*putting on her headphones*] I'm just gonna...

*She retreats away from him. DOUGAL sits contemplatively, quieter now.*

**DOUGAL:** *It's the City of Angels,  
it's the City of Sin.  
It's a city of immigrants buddy I'll fit right in.  
The land of the brave,  
the home of the free;  
the liberty city where even my father wants to hang out with me...*

*Home,  
there's snow in the city tomorrow just see it come twinkling down  
and that's why they all call it 'Tinseltown'.*

*There's hundreds of thousands of people just living the dream out there,  
and there's love in the air...*

**ROBIN:** [*removing headphones*] OK we're about to get off the train and then we're gonna be in New York.

**DOUGAL:** Yes.

**ROBIN:** You're not gonna freak out?

**DOUGAL:** No.

*They leave the train. He freaks out.*

**DOUGAL:**     *NEW YORK!!!  
I'm already talkin' the talk,  
New York!  
I'm already popping the cork,  
'cos I'm ready,  
I'm ready to be in New York.  
Are they ready?  
Are they ready for me in New York?*

*Somehow, he finds another gear. ROBIN strides ahead of him, determined to ignore him.*

*For two whole days...  
I'll literally be in New York!  
NYC, JFK, FBI, CIA  
See I'm already talking the talk!  
And I'm ready,  
I'm ready to be in New York  
Yes I'm ready;  
Is it ready for me,  
Are they ready for me,  
Are you ready for me...  
...in New York?!*

**ACT I, SCENE 2 – Canal Street, Chinatown**

*The song reaches its climax: they stare up at a building before them.*

**DOUGAL:** [*with relish*] The Downtown Parlour Guesthouse and Spa.

**ROBIN:** It's a shithole.

**DOUGAL:** Have I made a mistake?

**ROBIN:** Nah you're good. Chinatown's dope. I used to come here every year.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah?

**ROBIN:** There's a place, right around the corner...

**DOUGAL:** What?

**ROBIN:** Doesn't matter.

**DOUGAL:** No tell me, what's special about Chinatown?

**ROBIN:** It's not special.

**DOUGAL:** You like the restaurants?

**ROBIN:** I mean, it's drunk businessmen, and tourists, and kids' birthday parties, but yeah.

**DOUGAL:** You had your birthday parties here?

**ROBIN:** Ugh. Sometimes. I have to get going.

**DOUGAL:** When's your birthday?

**ROBIN:** Are you always like this?

**DOUGAL:** You'll get used to it.

**ROBIN:** I have work in the morning, so...

**DOUGAL:** Does Dad live near here?

**ROBIN:** No.

**DOUGAL:** Should I tell him I've arrived?

**ROBIN:** It's ten o'clock at night.

**DOUGAL:** I could send another email?

**ROBIN:** Maybe just check in to your hotel first.

**DOUGAL:** Yes.

*An awkward pause.*

**ROBIN:** OK, I'm gonna shoot/...

**DOUGAL:** /Do you want to get a hot dog?

**ROBIN:** What?

**DOUGAL:** Or we could go ice-skating? I'll drop my bag off and then.../

**ROBIN:** /Once again: not a tourist.

**DOUGAL:** Right. Sorry.

**ROBIN:** You good from here?

**DOUGAL:** Definitely.

**ROBIN:** OK.

**DOUGAL:** OK.

**ROBIN:** [*putting headphones on*] Later.

**DOUGAL:** [*as ROBIN exits*] See you later alligator!

*She's gone.*

**DOUGAL:** [*to himself*] In a while, crocodile.

**ACT I, SCENE 3 – Dougal's Hotel**

*A bare bulb illuminates a primitive twin bed. As he enters the room, DOUGAL takes out his phone and dials:*

**DOUGAL:** Hi mum! You still awake? I'm in my hotel! Oh yeah. It's really fancy. There's a bed, there's a...bed. [*He listens.*] Yes, I remembered my inhaler.. [...] No, I won't do heroin. Listen Mum, thanks for letting me do this. [...] Yep, got the invitation. [*he produces it from his pocket*]. Miss you too. "Keep the change, ya filthy animal!" [*signing off affectionately*] OK bye, love you, bye, bye, bye.

*He hangs up, then, after a pause, picks up the invitation and contemplates it.*

**DOUGAL:** [*reading aloud*] 'You are cordially invited to the wedding of Miss Melissa Rainey to Mr Mark Todd, at Trinity Church, Wall Street, at 4 o'clock on the 2nd December. Gift registry at Bergdorf Goodman.' [*pause, then repeating the name:*] 'Mr Mark Todd.'

*He shuts his eyes in awed contemplation, then sings:*

*"Dad",  
Is that a word that I can use for you?  
It's been a while since we had news from you;  
Since your picture left the frame.*

*Dad,  
It's been forever since I heard from you,  
...I mean **forever** since I heard from you:  
I didn't even know you knew my name...*

*Dad,  
You spelt it wrong but that's all right with me.  
I never dreamed that you would write to me,  
And then this invite just appears...*

*Dad,  
I can't believe I'm in New York with you.  
This time tomorrow I can talk with you!  
How can I catch you up on all these years?*

*After a moment's pause, he sets about the task:*

*I got mostly bs and cs in my GCSEs,  
I got chickenpox and measles and contagious gum disease.  
I slept with Alice Matthews (who was in the year above)  
and for several weeks at least I was sure I was in love...*

*Dad!  
Have I held a candle high for you?  
Have I waited all my life for you?  
Should I feel the way I feel?*

*And Mum,  
She never had a bitter word for you;  
All my life I've heard of you,  
Can it be that you're alive and real?*

*Do you still have all your hair? Are you still a millionaire?  
Do you live in an apartment fifty stories in the air?  
Send a chauffeur-driven Bentley; lets go meet your future wife!  
I don't want to sound too keen,  
but where have you been  
all my life?*

*Again, the enormity of the moment stills him.*

*Maybe I can spend the day with you.  
While the afternoon away with you.  
At the wedding I could sit with you;  
'chew the fat' and 'shoot the shit' with you...*

*Maybe we could kick a ball together?  
Reminisce about it all together?  
Catch a game and grab a beer together;  
Hug it out and shed a tear together.*

*Watching Lethal Weapon 2 together;  
Eating chicken Vindaloo together;*

*Singing carols round the tree together;  
Watching Lethal Weapon 3 together!*

*Grilling burgers till they're burnt together;  
Sharing everything we've learnt together;  
Think of all the time we've earned together,  
After all the time we weren't together...*

*Dad.  
I can't imagine what I'll say to you,  
I got a million things to say to you.  
Can I shake your hand and say to you:  
..."Dad"?*

*He lies back blissfully on his hotel bed.*

**ACT I, SCENE 4 – The Coffee Shop, Manhattan**

*ROBIN hurries onstage. Under this speech, a tense musical underscore gradually increases, while ROBIN prepares for a day of work in the cafe, and juggles her phone-call with asides to customers and colleagues. She gives an impression of clockwork competence.*

**ROBIN:** *[answering the phone]* Hey Melissa... no, sorry, I'm just running late this morning, sorry... Hey, so, I got the kid last night, from JFK? Yeah, he's incredibly extra. Kind of like a golden retriever but, actually less boundaried than/... no, sure, you're busy, ignore me.

*[entering the cafe]* Hey y'all, sorry I'm late!

Sorry, yep, still here. No, now's a perfect time. What d'you need?

*[to a customer]* G'morning ma'am, welcome to Bump 'n' Grind.

Say that again Melissa? No, I am listening.

Be right with you, just a moment.

I'm listening I promise. Did you say Flatbush? Like, today? Does it have to be...no, that's OK, I'll make it work.

If you just wait at the end of the counter, it'll be right out.

I'll switch my shifts again, it's no big deal. Happy to do it. Is there anything else I can...? OK, bye.

*Evidently, MELISSA has hung up. ROBIN gathers herself, then turns to her next customer.*

**ROBIN:** Welcome to Bump 'n' Grind, sir; menu's on the board.

*The piano underscore has now reached an insistent rhythm. Politely at first, ROBIN begins to sing:*

**ROBIN:**       *Good morning.  
                  What'll it be?  
                  I'm Robin,*

*I'll be serving you this morning.  
Thanks for waiting,  
I'll be right with you,  
what'll it be?*

**ROBIN:** *[to her colleague]* Tony baby I need two espressos, one single, one double.

*She turns back to the counter, as her thoughts become more reflective.*

**ROBIN:** *This morning:  
what'll it be?  
Just a morning;  
one more Friday in December.  
Same black coffee,  
same cold city,  
same old me.*

**ROBIN:** That'll be two minutes, ma'am...

**ROBIN:** *And you smile  
as the morning crowd arrives,  
day after day,  
year after year.  
And you watch  
as they go about their lives  
while you stay here...*

**ROBIN:** You have a great day, sir, see you tomorrow..

*She sets about bussing and cleaning tables, as her enquiries become gently existential.*

**ROBIN:** *What's happening,  
what'll it be?  
Are you happy,  
are you coming, are you going?  
in the mirror, in the future  
what d'you see?*

*Is there something round the corner*

*in the distance?  
if you're waiting  
what'll it be that makes the difference?  
will you know it  
when you see it;  
What'll it be?*

*And I stare  
through the windows at the world  
- this bit of world  
that I can see -  
and I try  
not to think about that girl  
who looked like me...*

*Surprising even herself, she emerges into a quiet, nostalgic place:*

**ROBIN:** *...who laughed, and danced,  
and knew what she was facing;  
who believed the world  
was hers to find a place in;*

*ROBIN's frustration grows as the song builds to its climax:*

*and I tell myself  
this year could be the right year  
but we both know  
this time tomorrow I'll be right here saying...*

*...Morning!  
What'll it be?  
I'm Robin,  
waiting tables, waiting patiently for something,  
never knowing  
what'll it be?  
And you're fine,  
they say time is on your side,  
you'll work it out.  
Just let it be.*

*And you smile  
at the people going by...  
...and they don't see...*

*The passion drains from her voice, as she arrives at her final tableau:*

*...that you stand wide awake in the window at night  
and you stare down the street in the flickering light  
through the wide-eyed reflection of the girl that you might still be,  
at a city you can't quite see...*

*saying "Robin, what'll it be?"*

*A hushed pause. A bell dings as DOUGAL strides into the cafe, puncturing the song's magic. He approaches the counter. ROBIN doesn't look up.*

**DOUGAL:** [US accent] I'd like a large gingerbread cappuccino please, with whipped cream.

**ROBIN:** What name please?

**DOUGAL:** Macaulay Culkin.

*ROBIN looks up. She is unpleasantly surprised.*

**ROBIN:** Oh shi..., Hi Duggle.

**DOUGAL:** It's Dougal.

**ROBIN:** What are you doing here?

**DOUGAL:** I was in the neighbourhood. Thought I'd drop in on some family.

**ROBIN:** [to a colleague] Rosa, I need a tall whip ginger. To go! [to DOUGAL] I thought you were sightseeing.

**DOUGAL:** I am! I was.

**ROBIN:** Well, what d'you see?

*As DOUGAL talks, ROBIN continues with the bustle of her work: tidying, cleaning and preparing to finish her shift.*

**DOUGAL:** Er, stood outside the Freedom Tower, stood outside Katz's Deli, rang my mum, stood outside the Tenement /Museum...

**ROBIN:** /You didn't wanna go inside.

**DOUGAL:** I did but I'm...conserving my budget so that I can...

**ROBIN:** Eat?

**DOUGAL:** Yes.

**ROBIN:** I know the feeling. Listen/ Dougal...

**DOUGAL:** And then I thought I'd just check in on Robin, see what she's up to.

**ROBIN:** She's very busy. [*to a colleague*] Tony! There's still two vegan flatbreads for table 9.

**DOUGAL:** Is Dad around?

**ROBIN:** Sure, he works in the kitchen.

**DOUGAL:** Really!?!/

**ROBIN:** No, Dougal, I don't know where your dad is.

**DOUGAL:** Oh.

**ROBIN:** Sorry, it's just, I'm working.

**DOUGAL:** Can I help with anything?

**ROBIN:** You can pay me six dollars and forty-nine cents.

**DOUGAL:** You don't have a family discount?

**ROBIN:** That's with the discount.

**DOUGAL:** Maybe I'll have a coffee later.

**ROBIN:** Uh-huh. Look it's so nice to see you and everything, but my shift finished like fifteen minutes ago. [*to her colleagues*] OK, y'all, I'm out!

**DOUGAL:** Perfect! Let's do something.

*ROBIN removes her apron and shuts up her station.*

**ROBIN:** I can't. I have to get to Brooklyn by [*checking her phone*] Shit. Five o'clock. See you on Monday Tony!

**DOUGAL:** [*getting in her way*] Brooklyn! Cool.

**ROBIN:** Rosa, we still need oat milk and we need lids! [*pushing past him*] Do you mind?

**DOUGAL:** What are we doing in Brooklyn?

**ROBIN:** I don't know what you're doing, but I have to pick up my sister's cake from - guess what? - Flatbush Avenue.

**DOUGAL:** What's wrong with Flatbush Avenue?

**ROBIN:** Nothing, it's just...nothing.

**DOUGAL:** Wait - do you mean the wedding cake?!

**ROBIN:** ...and the bakery closes at five so if you don't mind.../

**DOUGAL:** /I'll come with you!

**ROBIN:** This is not a spiritual journey, Dougal.

**DOUGAL:** I really feel like I can be of assistance here.

**ROBIN:** Why? How?

**DOUGAL:** Well, I'm a dynamic individual, I'm a team player, and I'm good in a crisis. Look:

*He holds out his hand flat.*

**ROBIN:** Put your hand down.

**DOUGAL:** I can guess people's star signs. Pisces.

**ROBIN:** Nope.

**DOUGAL:** Virgo.

**ROBIN:** Nope.

**DOUGAL:** Plus I know basic first aid. And conversational German.

**ROBIN:** Where do you think I'm going?

**DOUGAL:** "Entschuldigung mein Frau, wie kostet dieser /hund?"

**ROBIN:** /Stop!

**DOUGAL:** Let's be realistic here, we both know carrying a wedding-cake is a two-person job.

**ROBIN:** [*after a pause*] OK fine.

**DOUGAL:** Yes! Let's do this!

*The underscore for **New York!** roars back in, as DOUGAL prepares to celebrate.*

**DOUGAL:** *New York!!!/*

**ROBIN:** /Don't.

*The music abruptly disappears. They sit down in a subway carriage.*

## ACT I, SCENE 5 – The Subway

**SUBWAY VOICE [V.O.]:** *This is a Brooklyn-bound Q express train. Next stop Canal Street.*

*An awkward pause as they sit side-by-side.*

**DOUGAL:** Auntie Robin.

**ROBIN:** Excuse me?

**DOUGAL:** If my dad's marrying your sister, that means you're my... aunt.

**ROBIN:** Really.

**DOUGAL:** Technically you're my step-aunt-in-law. To be. [*pause*] I'm your nephew!

**ROBIN:** Can we talk about something else?

**DOUGAL:** Sure. Tell me, tell me, tell me.

**ROBIN:** Tell you what?

**DOUGAL:** Anything. Everything. Where do you live?

**ROBIN:** Alphabet City.

**DOUGAL:** In a house?

**ROBIN:** In a shared walk-up.

**DOUGAL:** Who do you share with?

**ROBIN:** With two chefs. And a rat.

**DOUGAL:** Cool.

**ROBIN:** But they work late, so I never see them.

**DOUGAL:** The chefs or the rat?

**ROBIN:** The chefs. I don't think the rat has a job.

**DOUGAL:** Where does Dad live?

**ROBIN:** TriBeCa.

**DOUGAL:** Oh yeah. Next to Central Park.

**ROBIN:** Uh, no, it's/

**DOUGAL:** /Does he live in a penthouse?

**ROBIN:** It's more like a loft.

**DOUGAL:** Cool. Like in Friends?

**ROBIN:** Yeah, but with like three bathrooms. And a gym.

**DOUGAL:** Cool.

**ROBIN:** You think a lot of stuff is cool.

**DOUGAL:** I just can't believe that there are people who live here. Full time. And you're one of them.

**ROBIN:** Yep.

**DOUGAL:** What's it like?

**ROBIN:** Living in Manhattan?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah.

**ROBIN:** That depends. How much money you got?

**DOUGAL:** On me? About sixty dollars.

**ROBIN:** Then it sucks.

**DOUGAL:** Sixty bucks! [*brandishing the bills*] I'm going to tear the city up with these mothers.

**ROBIN:** Good luck with that.

**DOUGAL:** Maybe I could pay for the cake? That could be my wedding present.

**ROBIN:** Good idea.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah?

**ROBIN:** Assuming you have another, like, fifteen hundred dollars?.

**DOUGAL:** Oh, erm. I don't know if I/

**ROBIN:** [*producing a credit card*] It's OK. I got it.

**DOUGAL:** Is that yours?

**ROBIN:** Temporarily. My sister dropped it off.

*He takes the card and examines it.*

**DOUGAL:** 'Mr M. Todd Esquire' This is Dad's!

**ROBIN:** That's right.

**DOUGAL:** [*holding it like a holy relic*] Wow. It's made of metal.

**ROBIN:** I guess that helps with the... [*she mimes a chopping motion*]

**DOUGAL:** With what?

**ROBIN:** Nothing.

*ROBIN takes the card back.*

**DOUGAL:** Everyone on this train is really stylish.

**ROBIN:** You think?

**DOUGAL:** I like this guy's hat.

**ROBIN:** He can hear you.

**DOUGAL:** [*to a nearby man*] I like your hat, man! [*pause*] He's ignoring me.

**ROBIN:** So am I.

**DOUGAL:** [*gesturing to his outfit*] Do you think this is the right vibe?

*He stands; she surveys him.*

**DOUGAL:** You think it's scruffy?

**ROBIN:** I don't hate the coat.

**DOUGAL:** Thanks, it's Dad's.

**ROBIN:** Really?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, my mum's attic is full of stuff he left behind when he moved to America.

**ROBIN:** When was that?

**DOUGAL:** When was what?

**ROBIN:** When he, you know... /left

**DOUGAL:** /Actually technically he didn't leave me because I wasn't actually born yet.

**ROBIN:** I guess that's OK then.

**DOUGAL:** He was only 31. Just a scared kid who wasn't ready.

**ROBIN:** Poor little guy.

**DOUGAL:** But that's ancient history. Tell me about now. Tell me about the bride!

**ROBIN:** She's, yeah, she's my big sister.

**DOUGAL:** What's she like?

**ROBIN:** Great, yeah. She's smart, beautiful, very determined.

**DOUGAL:** So you're a bridesmaid?

**ROBIN:** I think those are her friends from work.

**DOUGAL:** Will you make an embarrassing speech?

**ROBIN:** Melissa doesn't love to be embarrassed.

**DOUGAL:** Obviously, that's the point.

**ROBIN:** You clearly haven't met her.

**DOUGAL:** I can't wait. My new step-mum!

**ROBIN:** Yeah. I recommend you never call her that.

**DOUGAL:** What should I call her?

**ROBIN:** Try "Melissa". And go easy on the hugging.

**DOUGAL:** OK. Should I be nervous?

**ROBIN:** No, no, not at all, she's great. You'll love her, everybody does.

**DOUGAL:** You should say that in your speech!

**ROBIN:** I'm not making a speech.

**DOUGAL:** But surely/...

**ROBIN:** /Could you just, like, move your leg? It's kind of in my space.

**DOUGAL:** Roger.

**ROBIN:** My name's Robin.

**DOUGAL:** No, I mean, "Roger!". You know. It's what they say in war movies. Instead of 'I understand you'.

**ROBIN:** OK. "Roger"?

**DOUGAL:** "Roger!"

**ROBIN:** I think I got it.

**DOUGAL:** Roger that!

**ROBIN:** Let's not say it anymore.

*Pause.*

**DOUGAL:** I understand you.

*ROBIN smiles despite herself.*

**DOUGAL:** Are we in Brooklyn yet?

**ROBIN:** Almost.

**DOUGAL:** God I love the Subway. We need to make a plan.

**ROBIN:** We do?

**DOUGAL:** You know, what we're going to do tonight!

**ROBIN:** What *you're* going to do tonight.

**DOUGAL:** Sure.

**ROBIN:** Knock yourself out.

*DOUGAL stands to extemporise his itinerary; ROBIN turns to her phone, barely acknowledging his monologue.*

**DOUGAL:** Right OK I'm only in New York for forty-eight hours so I was thinking: Statue of Liberty first, cos, you know: *Ghostbusters, Independence Day, Men In Black 2*. And after that we hit the town, drink some Budweiser Light and go ice-skating. And then we've got to be in bed by ten so we're fresh for the wedding. Oh and at some point I want to buy a souvenir snowglobe for my bedside table.

*DOUGAL pulls two ties from his pocket. Looking at her.*

Speaking of the wedding: normal, or American flag? [*She ignores him*] You're right! The flag's too much. [*He studies her phone over her shoulder, reacting to something*] No! Jonathan! Why?!

**ROBIN:** Huh?

**DOUGAL:** [*pointing to the screen*] What was wrong with Jonathan?

**ROBIN:** [*hiding her phone*] Hey! That's private!

**DOUGAL:** Oh come on, let's have a look. I'm brilliant at Tinder.

**ROBIN:** It's not a video game!

**DOUGAL:** You'll thank me! I pulled two girls off of Tinder this year.

**ROBIN:** You did what to them?

**DOUGAL:** You know, I...

**ROBIN:** What?

**DOUGAL:** Paid them a friendly visit?

**ROBIN:** Who are you my grandma?

**DOUGAL:** Go on. We're family now!

**ROBIN:** I don't know if I see Tinder as like a family pastime?

**DOUGAL:** I'm an expert on male psychology! Trust me.

*She thinks about it.*

**ROBIN:** Fine. [*relenting, showing him the phone*] Just don't interfere with anything, [*she joins him, looking over his shoulder*] I'm keeping a low profile.

**DOUGAL:** OK let's have a look. [*pause*] What about Ethan?

**ROBIN:** No.

**DOUGAL:** JJ?

**ROBIN:** No. Carter?

**DOUGAL:** No.

**ROBIN:** What's wrong with Carter?

**DOUGAL:** Instinct. You'll learn.

*They continue to swipe through more options:*

**ROBIN:** Too many piercings. Lying about his age.

**DOUGAL:** Oh hello handsome!

**ROBIN:** OK that's you.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah it's me.

**ROBIN:** Is that your mom in the picture?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, that's Big Polly!

**ROBIN:** Just gonna swipe left on that one.

**DOUGAL:** Classic Libra. No taste.

**ROBIN:** Yeah, not a Libra.

*The names they encounter become more rhythmic, and a patter **song** begins to develop, weaving their insights tightly together:*

**DOUGAL:** *Jake?*

**ROBIN:** *No, He's fake.*

**DOUGAL:** *Shame.*

**ROBIN:** *Andre?*

**DOUGAL:** *Boring.*

**ROBIN:** *Calvin?*

**DOUGAL:** *Same. Rick the Dick Machine?  
What's wrong with Rick the Dick Machine?*

**ROBIN:** *I don't think Rick the Dick Machine is actually his name.*

**DOUGAL:** *Cedric?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Dante?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Jaden?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Cedric?*

**ROBIN:** *Again?*

**DOUGAL:** *Chuck?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Drake?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Chet?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Brad?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Rod?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Joe?*

**ROBIN:** *No.*

**DOUGAL:** *Look at these magnificently underwhelming men.*

**ROBIN:** You have no idea.

**DOUGAL:** Let's do this!

**ROBIN:** Buckle up!

*They begin to examine the men more intently, we begin to sense they are enjoying themselves.*

**ROBIN:** *He shaves his chest.*

**DOUGAL:** *He loves his booze.*

**ROBIN:** *His beard,*

**DOUGAL:** *His shoes,  
his vibe,*

**ROBIN:** *his views.*

*He lives in Queens,*

**DOUGAL:** *he rips his jeans,*

**ROBIN:** *that's way too many neck tattoos.*

*[showing DOUGAL] He says he's my soulmate.*

**DOUGAL:** *I'm thinking... [he peers at the phone] ...he isn't?*

*He's dressed like a wizard!*

**ROBIN:** *He's holding a lizard?*

*And not to be judgemental but he's...*

**BOTH:**        *currently in prison!*

*Again, the energy increases as they compete playfully, trading objections:*

**ROBIN:**        *Attention-seeking narcissists  
who seem to think they're geniuses,*

**DOUGAL:**      *and though you never asked insist on...*

**BOTH:**        *showing you their penises!*

**ROBIN:**        *Insatiable lotharios'*

**DOUGAL:**      *fellatual scenarios*

**BOTH:**        *and overbearing, oversharing,  
earring-wearing Casanovas...*

*ROBIN emerges dramatically into an ironic, self-pitying chorus:*

**ROBIN:**        *Please! Jesus on high!*

**DOUGAL:**      *Don't let her die alone!*

*She punches him in the arm.*

**ROBIN:**        *There must be a decent, available guy  
somewhere inside this phone.*

*At this point, they have begun to flick through ROBIN's 'matches', examining each contender in more critical detail. The song is flavoured with digital frippery and sound-effects.*

**ROBIN:**        *What about Cody?*

**DOUGAL:**      *Cody?*

**ROBIN:**        *Cody could be fun.*

**DOUGAL:**      *He's terrible at spelling and he seems to have a gun.*

**ROBIN:**        *He's Scorpio.*

**DOUGAL:**      *He's Scorpio? He's dangerous!*

**ROBIN:**        *So what?*

*He's fascinating.*

**DOUGAL:** *[swiping Cody away] Absolutely not.  
What about Zachary?*

**ROBIN:** *Zachary?*

**DOUGAL:** *Zachary's OK.*

**ROBIN:** *Zachary is married with a baby on the way.*

**DOUGAL:** *How did you/...?*

**ROBIN:** *He's lying and his name is really Joe.*

**DOUGAL:** *But how did you/...?*

**ROBIN:** *Don't ask me how I know.*

*The chorus returns, this time with even more high camp, DOUGAL singing BVs:*

**ROBIN:** *Help God if you can!*

**DOUGAL:** *(Help this poor girl!)*

**ROBIN:** *No need to be so mean.*

**DOUGAL:** *(No need to be so mean)*

**ROBIN:** *There must be a vaguely acceptable man  
trapped in this tiny machine!*

**DOUGAL:** *(Woah, tiny machine!)*

*DOUGAL finds reinforcements:*

**DOUGAL:** *What about Rudy?*

**ROBIN:** *Careful! Rudy is a shock.*

**DOUGAL:** *It's generous of him to send a photo of his*

**ROBIN:** *Stop!*

**DOUGAL:** *Admittedly it's...*

**ROBIN:** *No!...*

**DOUGAL:** *But you can really see the...*

**ROBIN:** *Hey!*

**DOUGAL:** *It's beautiful.*

**ROBIN:** *Just take that thing away.*

**DOUGAL:** *What about Justin?*

*ROBIN is suddenly gripped with attention:*

**ROBIN:** [*whispering*] Justin.

**DOUGAL:** You've matched with Justin!

**ROBIN:** I know.

*Pause, the music slows. Evidently, ROBIN has been nursing her attraction to Justin.*

**DOUGAL:** So what about/...

**ROBIN:** *Justin, sweet Justin!  
he loves his dog,  
he's gorgeous,  
he swiped me too!*

**ROBIN:** [*deflating*] Who am I kidding. He's Perfect Justin. He's out of my league.

**DOUGAL:** Don't say that! Sure, he's big and handsome, but so are you! Although, you did message him at 3am to ask if his dog is single./

**ROBIN:** /If his dog is single. I know! Stupid drunk Robin.

**DOUGAL:** Hey, that's quite good. [*typing*] "Sorry about last night: stupid drunk Robin."

**ROBIN:** What are you doing?!

**DOUGAL:** Nothing.

**ROBIN:** You did not just send that!

**DOUGAL:** You're welcome.

*The music starts to climb back in as they bicker...*

**ROBIN:** Are you serious?

**DOUGAL:** I'd buy some condoms if I were you.

**ROBIN:** Oh my God.

*Exasperated, she collapses into a final chorus, as DOUGAL playfully reassures her:*

**ROBIN:** *Please, Jesus on high!*

**DOUGAL:** *Trust me it's/ fine.*

**ROBIN:** *Just give me back my/ phone.*

**DOUGAL:** *Everything's under /control!*

**ROBIN:** *There must be a halfway /acceptable man.*

**DOUGAL:** *There must be a slightly /less horrible man*

**ROBIN:** *There must be a clean and /convenient man.*

**DOUGAL:** *He must be here somewhere...*

**BOTH:** *There must be a decent, available guy,  
somewhere in New York...*

**ROBIN:** [*snatching her phone back*] Give me that.

*The song ends with a bump: we're back in their subway carriage, trundling into Brooklyn.*

**DOUGAL:** I don't know what you're doing on Tinder anyway.

**ROBIN:** Excuse me?

**DOUGAL:** I just thought Tinder was only for people like me.

**ROBIN:** White people?

**DOUGAL:** No, [*as though it was obvious*] You're just, very...

**ROBIN:** What?

**DOUGAL:** You seem to have a lot going for you.

**ROBIN:** You sound like my grandma again.

**DOUGAL:** People like you just get...swept off their feet.

**ROBIN:** Yeah, well. Last time that happened things didn't go so well.

**DOUGAL:** Ah, the plot thickens.

**ROBIN:** You really, really don't wanna know.

**DOUGAL:** I really, really do.

**ROBIN:** No, you don't.

**DOUGAL:** I'll tell you about what happened between me and Gemma Boggins.

**ROBIN:** I would pay good money not to hear about that.

**DOUGAL:** Fine, tell me about your ex and I won't tell you about what happened between me and Gemma Boggins.

**ROBIN:** It was just... a huge mistake.

**DOUGAL:** We've all been there. Imagine how I felt when I woke up next to Gemma /Boggins

**ROBIN:** /I really don't want to talk about it.

**DOUGAL:** Why not?

**ROBIN:** It's just, a bad situation.

**DOUGAL:** What kind of dude are we talking about?

**ROBIN:** He was the kind of guy who could put you on top of the world and then make you feel like nothing.

**DOUGAL:** My mum has a special name for people like that.

**ROBIN:** Oh yeah?

**DOUGAL:** Hmm. "Dickface."

**ROBIN:** [*smiling*] Yeah, he's a dickface all right.

**DOUGAL:** So what happened?

**ROBIN:** Let's just say it didn't end well.

**DOUGAL:** The plot continues to thicken.

**ROBIN:** No it does not.

**DOUGAL:** It's good to talk about this stuff! Get it off your chest. [*pause*] So you copped off with Mr Dickface, it's not the end of the world.

**ROBIN:** Yeah, well Mr Dickface was not single.

**DOUGAL:** Ooh, you naughty devil.

**ROBIN:** Excuse me?

**DOUGAL:** "Ten points from Gryffindor!"

**ROBIN:** Are you laughing at me? It's not funny!

**DOUGAL:** I'm sorry, I just...it's not a big deal. People make mistakes.

*Pause, ROBIN doesn't reply.*

**DOUGAL:** Well, if Justin falls through, I'm your wing-man at the wedding.

**ROBIN:** I doubt that.

**DOUGAL:** Trust me, wedding receptions are the sweet spot. It's almost impossible not to shag someone.

**ROBIN:** Yeah, I'm not doing that.

**DOUGAL:** Never say never.

**ROBIN:** I mean I'm not going. To the wedding.

**DOUGAL:** What?

**ROBIN:** I can't... make it. I have to go to work.

**DOUGAL:** Are you serious? They didn't let you off work for your sister's wedding?

**ROBIN:** Yeah, well, everyone else already booked their vacation.

**DOUGAL:** This is outrageous! Can't you pull a sickie?

**ROBIN:** Pull a what?

**DOUGAL:** Ring them in the morning and tell them you've got the flu.

**ROBIN:** I can't.

**DOUGAL:** Well there has to be some/thing...

**ROBIN:** [*changing the subject*] Listen I'm getting off here, you don't have to come with me.

**DOUGAL:** But I've come all this way.

*ROBIN stands and heads for the doors.*

**ROBIN:** And I didn't ask you to do that.

## ACT I, SCENE 6 – Flatbush

*DOUGAL hurries after ROBIN and they exit the train into a new environment. There are sounds of traffic and bustle. DOUGAL looks around, puzzled and intrigued.*

**DOUGAL:** So this is Flatbush.

**ROBIN:** *Flatbush.*

**DOUGAL:** Flatbush. It's...different.

**ROBIN:** You better believe it.

**DOUGAL:** Look at that bar! It looks like a bar from a film.

**ROBIN:** Mm-hmm.

**DOUGAL:** Like a film about a really cool bar.

**ROBIN:** [*distracted*] They used to have a dog, back in the day.

**DOUGAL:** Really?

**ROBIN:** Yeah, he had his own private booth.

**DOUGAL:** You know it round here?

*ROBIN doesn't answer.*

**DOUGAL:** Robin?

**ROBIN:** Huh?

**DOUGAL:** You come here a lot?

**ROBIN:** Not any more.

*She stares around her, stilled. DOUGAL watches her face.*

**DOUGAL:** Are you OK?

*Hesitantly, almost to herself, she begins to sing:*

**ROBIN:**        *This is the place, this is the preschool where we used to go;  
these are the streets, these are the dollar-vans and delis that I used to know.  
This is the church, where everyone knew me by name;  
this is the place, where nothing changes and where nothing is ever the same...*

**ROBIN:** [*turning to DOUGAL with a new spark*] Wanna take a detour?

**DOUGAL:** What about the cake?

**ROBIN:** This way, c'mon...

*ROBIN strides ahead, as a kinetic rhythm animates the city around her:*

**ROBIN:**        *This is the street...*

**DOUGAL:** What street?

**ROBIN:**        *...this is the block where you can pick up whatever you need:  
ten-dollar shoes, fake nails, a broken record-player,  
Cuban quesadillas and weed.  
I used to ride my bike around this neighbourhood,  
I never thought I'd run out of space;  
and the cats in the bodegas, the kids on every corner playing pickup  
and graffiti on the subway baby: this is the place...*

*DOUGAL's alertness suddenly spikes:*

**DOUGAL:**        **WAIT!**  
*I know this place! This is the street from the beginning of Ghostbusters 2*

**ROBIN:** I dunno, maybe?

**DOUGAL:**        *This is the scene we see Sigourney Weaver step in psychomagnotherical goo!*  
I can't believe this!

**ROBIN:** *Right over there that's Brooklyn Public Library,  
my grandma used to take us to read.  
And the sounds along the aven/ue:*

**DOUGAL:** *the lights in every window.*

**ROBIN:** *if you're looking for the beating heart of Brooklyn baby, this is the place...*

*A brief lull in the music as they admire their surroundings:*

**DOUGAL:** You actually lived here?

**ROBIN:** For twenty years. In a tiny little apartment, my grandma, my sister and me.

**DOUGAL:** And this still counts as real New York?

**ROBIN:** This is Brooklyn, man, this is the only part that's real!

*With this triumphant line, the music roars back in with renewed energy:*

**ROBIN:** *This is the place,  
where you can come and watch the city on Saturday nights.  
This is the place:  
that pizzeria makes the greatest white slice in South Crown Heights...  
Hundreds of cabs fly by into Manhattan;  
hundreds of trains roll down to Coney Island;  
thousands of planes fly out and never find  
whatever paradise they're trying to chase...*

*ROBIN stops abruptly in her tracks.*

*...this is the place.*

*She stares intently into the middle-distance, as the song fades out:*

*This is the street...*

**DOUGAL:** What street?

*DOUGAL watches her expectantly. She is lost in thought.*

**DOUGAL:** Robin?

*ROBIN snaps out of her reverie.*

**ROBIN:** What time is it?

**DOUGAL:** Erm, just gone half four.

**ROBIN:** [*back to reality*] Four-thirty? I gotta go.

**DOUGAL:** Wait, Robin./

**ROBIN:** [*making to leave*] We're gonna miss the bakery.

**DOUGAL:** What happened just now?

**ROBIN:** Nothing.

**DOUGAL:** Are you all right?

**ROBIN:** I'm fine, I need to get the cake.

**DOUGAL:** But...

**ROBIN:** [*exiting*] Just, wait here, OK?

**DOUGAL:** [*calling after her*] I'll wait here!

*He looks around, bemused, then sits down.*

**DOUGAL:**     *Is this the place?  
                  Is this what a city can be?  
                  Remember to breathe, just drink it in, every tiny little detail you see:  
                  All of the sights, the lights, the giant buildings in the distance,  
                  and the smile on her face...*

We hear a **ding**, as a coin falls at his feet.

**DOUGAL:** [*confused, to a passer-by*] Oh, er, thanks very much.

*ROBIN re-enters carrying a stack of four cake-boxes, of diminishing sizes.*

**ROBIN:** You all right?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah. Someone just gave me a quarter.

**ROBIN:** Maybe it's time for a new coat. Hold these, I need to get an Uber. [*She takes out her phone*] Just don't drop it, OK.

**DOUGAL:** [*sniffing*] It smells amazing. What is that, coconut?

**ROBIN:** Stop smelling the cake.

**DOUGAL:** I bet it's coconut.

**ROBIN:** OK Hector is gonna be here in two minutes. It's a red Camry.

**DOUGAL:** I've never been in an Uber before.

**ROBIN:** For real? How do you get home when you're drunk?

**DOUGAL:** Generally I'm already at home.

**ROBIN:** What if you're not?

**DOUGAL:** Like if I've had a few in the Old Queen's Head?

**ROBIN:** Sure. If you've "had a few in the Old Queen's Head".

**DOUGAL:** Mum usually picks me up in the van.

**ROBIN:** Your mom picks you up?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, but when she's had one too many I pick *her* up. It's a reciprocal arrangement.

**ROBIN:** Why a van?

**DOUGAL:** Mum had a gardening business, before her knees packed in. "Polly Todd - Good in a Bed" - still says it on the van.

**ROBIN:** My grandma used to collect houseplants.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah?

**ROBIN:** Our whole apartment was like a rainforest.

**DOUGAL:** You should get into it.

**ROBIN:** I wouldn't know where to start.

**DOUGAL:** Call big Polly!

**ROBIN:** That's OK.

**DOUGAL:** The Pollinator! She's an Aries, like you.

**ROBIN:** Swing and a miss.

**DOUGAL:** She'll give you some tips.

**ROBIN:** Don't worry about it.

**DOUGAL:** I'll give you her email address...

**ROBIN:** I'm not going to email your mom?

**DOUGAL:** That's OK she can email you.

**ROBIN:** No.../

*A ping comes from Robin's phone.*

**DOUGAL:** Justin! Please be Justin.

**ROBIN:** It's not gonna be Justin.

**DOUGAL:** You never know!

**ROBIN:** It's Melissa.

**DOUGAL:** [*in an energetic African-American style*] Yo, yo, yo! Bride in the house! Whaddup sis!?

*ROBIN turns to him slowly, raising an eyebrow. DOUGAL is instantly regretting it.*

**DOUGAL:** Oh my God. [*mortified*] I'm so sorry, I have no idea why I said that.

**ROBIN:** Uh-huh.

*She continues to stare at him.*

**DOUGAL:** Won't happen again.

*Pause. DOUGAL squirms with discomfort.*

**ROBIN:** You got black people in England, right.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, loads.

**ROBIN:** Do you, like, know any of them?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah. [*pause*] And actually I have an aunt who's black.

**ROBIN:** Oh yeah?

**DOUGAL:** She's really cool.

*Pause.*

**ROBIN:** Is it me?

**DOUGAL:** [*hanging his head*] It is you, yes.

*ROBIN shakes her head.*

**DOUGAL:** So. Melissa keeps you on your toes, huh?

**ROBIN:** What do you mean?

**DOUGAL:** I mean she just seems kind of tough.

**ROBIN:** She knows what she wants, that's all.

**DOUGAL:** Must be nice.

**ROBIN:** Right?!

**DOUGAL:** What does she want?

**ROBIN:** [*thinks*] She wants...to have the same honeymoon as Serena Williams.

**DOUGAL:** She sounds great.

**ROBIN:** She is. She's always been very special.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah?

**ROBIN:** When we were kids I was super proud she was my big sister.

**DOUGAL:** That's sweet.

**ROBIN:** She hated ketchup; I hated ketchup. She got Alicia Keys braids, I got Alicia Keys braids. She moved to Manhattan...you get the idea.

**DOUGAL:** I'm sure she thinks you're special too.

*ROBIN doesn't reply.*

**DOUGAL:** I'm an only child.

**ROBIN:** You don't say.

**DOUGAL:** Dad's an only child too, right?

**ROBIN:** I don't know.

**DOUGAL:** Do you think we're alike? Me and Dad I mean.

**ROBIN:** [*pointing*] I think that's Hector.

*They approach the cab.*

**DOUGAL:** So *this* is an "Uber".

**ROBIN:** Yep.

**DOUGAL:** It just looks like a perfectly normal car.

**ROBIN:** I guess.

**DOUGAL:** [*examining the car*] You'd never know it was an Uber.

**ROBIN:** Just get in, OK? And don't drop the cake.

**DOUGAL:** Shotgun!

**ROBIN:** No. Get In.

**ACT I, SCENE 7 – The Uber**

*They sit down in the back of the cab, the doors thud shut.*

**DOUGAL:** Hello Hector! I'm Dougal and this here is Robin.

**ROBIN:** [*embarrassed*] Hi.

**DOUGAL:** Is that mistletoe? Already?!

**ROBIN:** It's plastic.

**DOUGAL:** Nice touch, Hector.

**ROBIN:** Don't get any ideas.

**DOUGAL:** [*examining a cake*] Can we look inside?

**ROBIN:** No.

**DOUGAL:** Your one smells like chocolate.

**ROBIN:** [*exasperated*] Could you turn on the radio please?

**RADIO ANNOUNCER V/O:** *...this is WXAP 78.5 live and online bringing you the sweet sounds of the season, so keep warm and stay cool...*

*The opening to 'Jingle Bells' blasts from the radio. DOUGAL and ROBIN immediately chime in with competing demands:*

**DOUGAL:** /Could you turn that up please?

**ROBIN:** /Turn that off Hector.

**DOUGAL:** Listen Hector/

**ROBIN:** I'm warning you, Hector./

**DOUGAL:** Don't listen to her, man./

**ROBIN:** I swear to God Hector, one star. I will give you one star./

**DOUGAL:** She won't do it, Hector, she's all talk./

**ROBIN:** One star, Hector. [*The music stops.*] My man.

**DOUGAL:** You don't like Jingle Bells?

**ROBIN:** I don't like Christmas music.

**DOUGAL:** I beg your pardon.

**ROBIN:** It's not that deep.

**DOUGAL:** It is to me!

**ROBIN:** I don't care.

**DOUGAL:** You're Scrooge! You're the Grinch!

**ROBIN:** I'm the Grinch, baby.

**DOUGAL:** [*pointing at her*] Scorpio.

**ROBIN:** No, but you're not the first person to think that.

**DOUGAL:** Christmas music is the breath of life!

**ROBIN:** All of it?

**DOUGAL:** All of it.

**ROBIN:** 'All I Want for Christmas is my Two Front Teeth'?

**DOUGAL:** I like that tune.

**ROBIN:** 'The Chipmunk Song'?

**DOUGAL:** Banger!

**ROBIN:** 'I saw Mommy/ Kissing Santa Claus'?

**DOUGAL:** /'Kissing Santa Claus' yes all right that one is a bit worrying.

**ROBIN:** It's like a nightmare!

**DOUGAL:** Strange family dynamic going on there.

**ROBIN:** Right? If she actually thinks it's Santa, if she actually doesn't know it's her dad in a suit, why isn't she more freaked out by her mom making out with a total stranger?

**DOUGAL:** Yes, and if she does know it's her dad, why is she perving on them?

**ROBIN:** She's a little freak, that's what she is.

**DOUGAL:** You know, for someone who hates Christmas songs you certainly know a lot of deep cuts.

**ROBIN:** Sadly I do.

**DOUGAL:** Maybe someone isn't so cynical as they let on.

**ROBIN:** Maybe someone works at Bump 'n' Grind Coffee. Maybe someone has to listen to the official Bump 'n' Grind Christmas Catalogue every year, for weeks, until she wants to put her head in the sandwich toaster.

**DOUGAL:** Sounds great.

**ROBIN:** Shut up.

**DOUGAL:** I would love that.

**ROBIN:** You know what I really hate? Frank Sinatra.

**DOUGAL:** [*deadly serious*] What did you say.

**ROBIN:** Yeah Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, and all those other old creeps pretending they're four years old and they're waiting for Rudolph to come down the chimney.

**DOUGAL:** Rudolph doesn't come down the chimney.

**ROBIN:** But then you keep listening and - guess what? - he's just tryna get some, you know what I'm saying?

**DOUGAL:** [*laughing*] OK maybe that's true. But/

**ROBIN:** I'm serious bro,

*She organically starts singing, mocking the style of a mid-century crooner:*

**ROBIN:**       *It always starts with a guy singing about how cold it is,  
and then maybe something about a fireplace...*

*Taking the bait, DOUGAL chimes in:*

**DOUGAL:**       *...and then he wants his sweetheart to build a snowman or roast a turkey,*

**ROBIN:**       *but really it's just a metaphor for an old-ass dude in the 1950s  
tryna get freaky in the missionary position with a woman who's half his age...*

*Picking up where ROBIN started, DOUGAL begins the song in earnest:*

**DOUGAL:**       *There's snowflakes falling sleepily like wishes from above  
So rub your nose against my nose like Eskimos/ in...*

**ROBIN:** Inuits./

**DOUGAL:**       *...Inuits in love. Thanks.  
There's no one here but you and me...*

**ROBIN:** And Hector.

**DOUGAL:**       *...there's nowhere else to go.  
So come and stand beside me...*

**BOTH:**        *...under the mistletoe.*

**ROBIN:** *[drawn into the song]* And then the sleigh-bells come in and she'd be like...  
*I gave away my scarf to build that snowman on the hill*

**DOUGAL:** Mmm, tell 'em.

**ROBIN:** *So wrap your arms around me just in case I...*

**BOTH:** *...catch a chill.*

**DOUGAL:** Delicious.

**DOUGAL:** *They're singing Christmas carols on the late-night radio*

**ROBIN:** *So may I have this dance, dear,*

**BOTH:** *...under the mistletoe?*

**DOUGAL:** *[proffering his arm]* Milady.

**ROBIN:** We must stop meeting like this.

*They stride together arm-in-arm, like a fancy couple.*

**DOUGAL:** I love your dress.

**ROBIN:** *[swaying an imaginary dress]* What, this old thing?

*They two begin to dance a sprightly, romantic duet as they sing:*

**DOUGAL:** *It's after eleven, too late to go home*

**ROBIN:** *so let's do what the Romans would do back in Rome*

**BOTH:** *it's too cold to go walking, believe me I've tried  
so let's open our stockings and see what's inside...*

*ROBIN gets carried away performing a sexy hip-hop sequence:*

**DOUGAL:** *[snapping his fingers]* Focus please.

*I've left a glass of sherry and some cookies by my flue*

**ROBIN:** *If you come down my chimney I'll stay up until you do*

**DOUGAL:** *Your eyes are filled with starlight,*

**ROBIN:** *the streets are filled with snow...*

**BOTH:** *The world is filled with wonder,  
under the mistletoe.*

*The song reaches its syrupy conclusion, but somehow, something has thawed between them. Emerging from dreamland, we come back to Earth, into the back of the taxi. The moment of playful intimacy fades.*

**ROBIN:** That's Melissa's building. Thanks Hector.

*They exit the cab, with two cake-boxes apiece.*

**DOUGAL:** Thanks Hector, I love you man. Six stars!

**ACT I, SCENE 8 – Tribeca**

*Out in the stree again, the two of them look up at Melissa's building.*

**DOUGAL:** Which one's hers?

**ROBIN:** The whole sixth floor.

**DOUGAL:** Blimey. Is Dad there?

**ROBIN:** I'm not sure...

**DOUGAL:** Can we ask?

**ROBIN:** Actually, he won't be there. I think that's bad luck. To see/ the bride.

**DOUGAL:** /Right, to see the bride before the wedding.

*Pause.*

**ROBIN:** Listen Dougal, I didn't mean to be...

**DOUGAL:** Didn't mean to be what?

**ROBIN:** You're a... it's been...ok. You're ok. It's been nice meeting you.

**DOUGAL:** You're ok too.

**ROBIN:** [*shivering*] I'm cold.

**DOUGAL:** [*after a pause*] You're not as cold as you think you are.

*A brief moment, as ROBIN lets this pass.*

**ROBIN:** I'm sorry I didn't show you a good time or whatever basic TikTok shit you're tryna do in Manhattan.

**DOUGAL:** That's OK. I can show myself a good time. [*pause*] That came out wrong.

*ROBIN smiles.*

**ROBIN:** It's not that I don't want to, it's just/

**DOUGAL:** /I get it.

**ROBIN:** Next time you're in New York, we'll go uptown.

**DOUGAL:** Shake on it?

**ROBIN:** OK.

*They shake hands awkwardly, beneath their cake-boxes.*

**ROBIN:** Right, I need to get this thing off my hands as quickly as possible.

*She stacks the four boxes together, but as she moves towards the exit she turns too sharply, dislodging the smallest, topmost box which, with sickening slowness, tumbles from the stack.*

*The box hits the ground with a dead thud. Utter silence.*

*A long pause. ROBIN is frozen in shock and disbelief.*

**DOUGAL:** Er, I think you dropped something.

*ROBIN is silent, her back to the cake.*

**DOUGAL:** [*police radio voice*] "Kssshk, we got a 3-9-1 cake down, repeat cake down, over."

*No answer.*

**DOUGAL:** It's probably fine. The cake's probably fine! It's probably better!

*DOUGAL approaches and picks it up gently, retreating to examine it alone, gradually opening the lid while he speaks:*

**DOUGAL:** I'm not an expert but. [*gently weighing the box in his hands*] It feels fine. It feels normal. [*loosening the lid*] I mean, there might be a bit of wear-and-tear, but...

*DOUGAL opens the lid, takes a look and instantly shuts it again. Silence. He takes a brief second look, then turns to ROBIN.*

**DOUGAL:** [*feigning optimism*] The thing about wedding cakes is...four layers is too many.

**ROBIN:** Show it to me.

**DOUGAL:** Three is traditional.

**ROBIN:** [*approaching him*] Let me see.

**DOUGAL:** [*retreating*] I can't let you do that.

*ROBIN finally allows her stress and terror to erupt. Their exchange becomes increasingly manic.*

**ROBIN:** [*beginning to freak out*] Holy shit. Holy shit.

**DOUGAL:** [*desperately attempting reassurance*] It could have happened to any/one!

**ROBIN:** What am I gonna tell her.

**DOUGAL:** Blame it on me. Tell her I dropped it.

**ROBIN:** But you didn't.

**DOUGAL:** I could have.

**ROBIN:** Even you are not dumb enough to drop a wedding cake in the street!

**DOUGAL:** Yes I am. Look!

**ROBIN:** No, /no, no, don't!

*On a panicked impulse, DOUGAL drops the cake again. ROBIN is appalled.*

**ROBIN:** [*exploding*] What is wrong with you, Dougal, Jesus! Who are you?

**DOUGAL:** I'm your nephew?

**ROBIN:** What are you even doing here?

**DOUGAL:** We...wuh...weega...we can get another one/?

**ROBIN:** That's a two thousand dollar cake. You wanna pay for it/?

**DOUGAL:** Then let's ask Meliss/a.?

**ROBIN:** Don't say her name, her apartment is right up there!

**DOUGAL:** Sorry, look/...

**ROBIN:** Oh my God.

**DOUGAL:** We'll work it out.

**ROBIN:** We? You're going home after the wedding, Dougal. I have to deal with this for the rest of my life. *Pause.* What am I going to do?

*A very long and deeply uncomfortable pause while DOUGAL stares at her, racking his brains.*

**DOUGAL** [*eventually*]: Ice-skating?

**ROBIN:** What.

**DOUGAL:** That's what we'd do now if this was a movie. We'd go ice-skating.

**ROBIN:** Ice-skating.

**DOUGAL:** Take our minds off it. We'd head uptown, maybe see a Broadway show, buy some fancy clothes, you know?

**ROBIN:** Would we.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah and there'd be a montage of you coming out of the changing room wearing loads of different crazy outfits and I'd be like "that's too sexy", "that's too floral", "that's not enough sequins" and then eventually I'd be like "Yes! That's the dress! That's the one!"

**ROBIN:** Sounds great.

**DOUGAL:** Really?

**ROBIN:** No Dougal, those movies are all about rich people. You know how much it costs to go for dinner in midtown Manhattan? To see a Broadway show? New York is just money, that's all it is.

**DOUGAL:** Well let's ask Dad.../

**ROBIN:** [*schooling him directly*]...Be real, man. You're staying in a shitty hotel, you're going to a fancy wedding, and then in two days' time you're gonna be back in your mom's basement.

*Pause, as this sinks in.*

**ROBIN:** I'm sorry, I just... [*pause*] You don't know me. You have no idea.

**DOUGAL:** Then tell me

**ROBIN:** She is never going to forgive me.

**DOUGAL:** It's just a c/ake.

**ROBIN:** She's never gonna forgive me.

**DOUGAL:** OK, maybe this is a bit of a hiccup [*indicating the cake*]. But taking everything into consideration, things are going pretty well.

**ROBIN:** I'm about to turn 27, I'm a server who can barely make rent, and I just destroyed my sister's wedding cake. Please explain to me how things are going well.

**DOUGAL:** You're not really a waitress though.

**ROBIN:** Excuse me?

**DOUGAL:** I mean, you're an actress.

**ROBIN:** What? No.

**DOUGAL:** But, I mean, deep down you're an artist or a musician or something, but you're jobbing as a waitress because – hey – that's New York!

**ROBIN:** No.

**DOUGAL:** Journalist?

**ROBIN:** No.

**DOUGAL:** Ballet dancer?

**ROBIN:** No, Dougal, I'm just a waitress.

**DOUGAL:** It's a noble profession.

*She glares at him.*

**DOUGAL:** You know, for a waitress you're not very good at...carrying cakes.

*Pause. She continues to glare in disbelief.*

**DOUGAL:** [*hanging his head*] That was a joke.

**ROBIN:** OK asshole. What do you do that's so important?

**DOUGAL:** I work in a cinema.

**ROBIN:** A movie theatre?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah.

**ROBIN:** Selling popcorn?

**DOUGAL:** Selling popcorn, sweeping it up, and watching movies.

**ROBIN:** And you're not a journalist on the side?

**DOUGAL:** No. But, I'm happy.

*Pause. He has unwittingly wounded her.*

**ROBIN:** [*stirred*] You don't know me.

**DOUGAL:** I feel as though/ I do...

**ROBIN:** Who says I'm not happy?

**DOUGAL:** Are you?

*The conversation begins to swell towards acrimony:*

**ROBIN:** You sound like Mr Dickface when you say that.

**DOUGAL:** I'm just trying/...

**ROBIN:** You're not my family, OK?

**DOUGAL:** How can I put this/...

**ROBIN:** You don't get to tell me how I /feel.

**DOUGAL:** I'm not, I'm just saying you should/...

**ROBIN:** Don't say it!/...

**DOUGAL:** ...be happy.

*This word is the final straw. After the emotional crescendo of the preceding scene, ROBIN erupts into a frustrated, sarcastic outburst:*

**ROBIN:**       *Be happy! Be happy!*  
                  *close your eyes and just be happy;*  
                  *feel it rising every morning like the sun!*  
                  *Feel the lightness, feel the laughter,*  
                  *the rest will follow after.*  
                  *It's easy to be happy when you know...*

*...how it's done.*

**DOUGAL:** I didn't mean anything by it.

**ROBIN:** Nobody means anything by it.

*As she warms to her theme, ROBIN's song finds its rhythm.*

**ROBIN:**     *It's a heartbeat deep inside you,  
It's a friend who walks beside you,  
and it shines above to guide you like a star..  
...right?*

*It's the prize to keep your eyes on,  
and it's just on the horizon,  
but you'll get there, you can get there  
if you know who you are...*

*Her sarcasm makes way for an earnest entreaty.*

**ROBIN:**     *So you move to the city that the songs are about;  
get a job selling coffee while you figure it out,  
and you wake every morning thinking what am I going to be?*

*Be happy, that's the answer  
be the centre of attention  
be the person people mention to their friends.  
Be a winner, be a dancer,  
be the life of every party  
then go home and don't be lonely when it ends*

*She turns to DOUGAL, returning briefly to speech:*

*"If you're happy, I'm happy": that's what Grandma used to tell me  
so I'd tell her I was happy and she'd smile*

**DOUGAL:** What's wrong with being/ happy?

**ROBIN:** You're the expert. You tell me.

*With renewed energy and indignation, she sings again:*

**ROBIN:**     *Can you go there on vacation?  
Like a secret destination?  
Can you feel a sweet vibration when it's near?  
Is it hiding right behind you?  
Do you find it? Does it find you?  
Is it someplace you can get to in a day, or in a year?*

*So the world keeps spinning but you're stuck on your phone  
and you turn 23 in Chinatown on your own  
and your friends start leaving and you turn 25  
and you do what you can to keep the feeling alive:*

*The underscore grows urgent and insistent as ROBIN unleashes a catalogue of impossible demands:*

**ROBIN:**     *Give up smoking, cut out dairy, do a yoga pose on Insta,  
get off xanax, get a boyfriend, drop a dress-size, make your sister  
love you back, be your best self, change the future for the better  
rise above it, learn to love it, call your Grandma on the phone and tell her...*

*The band drops out suddenly, leaving ROBIN exposed:*

**ROBIN:**     *Grandma. It's Robin.  
How you been? I've missed your cooking.  
Make the bed up, light the stove,  
I'm coming home tonight to Brooklyn  
cos it's happened, I'm happy,  
and that's all I have to give you...*

*ROBIN halts suddenly, startled by her own emotional abandon:*

*...thanks for waiting ...  
...I'll be right with you*

*Pause. ROBIN recovers her composure.*

**ROBIN:** Does that answer your question?

**DOUGAL:** [*after a pause*] When did she die?

**ROBIN:** My grandma? [*matter-of-factly*] She didn't. She lives in Flatbush. That was her building, we stopped outside. [*level-headed*] I haven't visited her in almost two years.

*Pause, DOUGAL doesn't answer.*

**ROBIN:** [*brushing off the emotion*] Run out of shit to say? What would we do now, if this was a movie?

**DOUGAL:** [*awkwardly, lost for words*] I don't know, I haven't seen this one.

*There's a heavy pause.*

**DOUGAL:** I've seen Die Hard though. A lot of times. [*pause*] Have you seen it?

**ROBIN:** No.

**DOUGAL:** Oh. [*inarticulately, fumbling for his point*] It's about this policeman, John McClane, who gets trapped in a skyscraper, and he has to find the detonators, and kill all the terrorists, and save everyone, and get back with his ex-wife. All in one night. Do you know what I mean?

**ROBIN:** Not really.

**DOUGAL:** It's just a lot to ask of someone, you know? [*pause*] And if I was in that skyscraper I'd wanna say to him, John, we obviously don't really know each other, I mean, we've only just met. But I actually think you're doing really well. In fact, I think you're...absolutely [*he checks himself*]...you're the best damn cop in the LAPD.

*Pause.*

**ROBIN:** Just do me a favour and throw that cake in the trash.

*DOUGAL nods.*

**ROBIN:** And don't come back, OK?

**DOUGAL:** Don't come back?

**ROBIN:** [*frustrated, divided*] I have to talk to my sister. Just go be a tourist.

**DOUGAL:** I'll get us a hot-dog.

**ROBIN:** No...

**DOUGAL:** [*exiting*] An authentic NYC 'weiner'

**ROBIN:** [*as he leaves*] Nobody calls it that.

*She approaches SL and takes out her phone.*

*After a pause, there is a muffled noise from the phone, which should be indistinctly audible as the other half of ROBIN's conversation. ROBIN is unusually supplicant.*

**ROBIN:** Hey Liss, it's me. Can you buzz me up? [...] It's like forty degrees. [...] Yeah, it's right here, it's all here. Do you need anything else? [...] I didn't even know bridal stockings were a thing. [...] No, sure, of course. I'll go get them right away.

*ROBIN pauses a moment on the phone, then plucks up the courage.*

Hey, so, I was just with Dougal [...] Dougal, you know, the kid? [...] No, it's just, he's come a long way and... he's very excited. Have you told Mark, yet? That he's coming? [...] Sure, you're busy.

Yeah, I'll just drop this in the lobby.

*Pause. She takes a deep breath.*

**ROBIN:** Melissa can I please come tomorrow. Please.

*There is silence. MELISSA has hung up. ROBIN knuckles tears from her eyes. She exits with the cakes into the lobby of her sister's building; we hear the door buzzer sound.*

*As she leaves, DOUGAL re-enters with a hot-dog. He looks around.*

**DOUGAL:** Robin?...Robin?

*ROBIN re-enters, visibly upset.*

**DOUGAL:** There you are.

**ROBIN:** [*drying her eyes*] Shit.

**DOUGAL:** No ketchup, I remembered... Are you OK?

**ROBIN:** Me? I'm fine, I'm fine.

**DOUGAL:** You've been crying.

**ROBIN:** Yeah? I'm just... emotional. About the wedding.

*DOUGAL produces a spotted handkerchief and offers it to her. They sit down on a bench.*

**ROBIN:** What are you, the last guy in the world who carries a handkerchief.

**DOUGAL:** Don't knock it till you've tried it.

*She looks at him askance, then blows her nose.*

**ROBIN:** Have you used this?

**DOUGAL:** Barely.

*She hands the handkerchief back, disgusted. They sit.*

**DOUGAL:** I'm emotional too. I mean, obviously I'm pumped about tomorrow. But it's also kind of terrifying. [*pause*] I mean you know him, so he's just plain old Mark Todd to you. But to me... I mean, he's obviously just this extraordinary man.

**ROBIN:** You gonna eat that?.

*He hands her the hotdog.*

**DOUGAL:** There aren't too many people from Basingstoke who move to America and become millionaires. Not in my family anyway. And then when that person happens to be your dad, and he's invited you to New York. It's literally like being in a film.

**ROBIN:** [*offering the hotdog*] Do you wanna finish this?

**DOUGAL:** Nah, I'm not really hungry.

**ROBIN:** You're not hungry? It's like 7 o'clock.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, I ate a lot of cake.

**ROBIN:** [*appalled*] Are you serious?

**DOUGAL:** You heard me, I ate the cake. Most of it anyway.

**ROBIN:** You're out of your mind. What flavour was it?

**DOUGAL:** According to the label it was a gluten-free coconut chiffon.

**ROBIN:** Trust Melissa to get some ridiculous-ass cake.

**DOUGAL:** It was really good. Thanks for dropping it.

**ROBIN:** Don't mention it.

**DOUGAL:** When it hit the deck/ I was like...

**ROBIN:** /No really don't mention it.

**DOUGAL:** Roger.

**ROBIN:** Cake is the only good thing about weddings.

**DOUGAL:** We could get it out the bin?

**ROBIN:** No, that's OK. Maybe if it was chocolate.

*Somehow, against the odds, she smiles. Pause.*

**ROBIN:** I have to tell you something. You're not gonna like it.

**DOUGAL:** What?

*A pause of breathless indecision.*

**ROBIN:** You're wrong about John McClane. He's not in the LAPD. He's from Brooklyn. Like me.

**DOUGAL:** 'Course he is.

**ROBIN:** [*composing herself*] So... Melissa's got a run in her bridal stockings.

**DOUGAL:** Bridal stockings?

**ROBIN:** Yeah, turns out that's a thing. I have to go get new ones.

**DOUGAL:** Why?

**ROBIN:** Because a bride needs stockings, I guess.

**DOUGAL:** No but, why do you have to get them?

**ROBIN:** Because I'm her sister. She needs me.

**DOUGAL:** She's lucky to have you around.

**ROBIN:** No she's not. Are you gonna be OK tonight?

**DOUGAL:** I'm guessing buying stockings isn't a two-person job.

**ROBIN:** Probably not.

**DOUGAL:** [*suppressing disappointment*] That's OK. I can find my own way.

**ROBIN:** If you like dumplings, there's a place on Mulberry, like a block from your hotel.

**DOUGAL:** Oh yeah?

**ROBIN:** It's nothing fancy but, it's my favourite.

**DOUGAL:** Thanks.

*A loud 'PING' from ROBIN's phone.*

**ROBIN:** That'll be Melissa.

**DOUGAL:** Good luck.

*DOUGAL makes to leave. ROBIN checks her phone.*

**ROBIN:** No. Way.

**DOUGAL:** [*halting*] What?

**ROBIN:** I don't believe it.

**DOUGAL:** [*turning back*] Wait. No. Is it? No.

**ROBIN:** Just chill.

**DOUGAL:** It's him isn't it.

**ROBIN:** It's him.

**DOUGAL:** [*delighted*] Justin! You juicy devil! I knew it!

**ROBIN:** It's Justin.

**DOUGAL:** I knew it! [*he leaps up*] Go on, what does it say?

**ROBIN:** It says "Thanks for asking about my dog, his name is Rufus and he hasn't found the right girl yet."

**DOUGAL:** Oh Justin. I love this guy. How are you gonna play it?

**ROBIN:** I'll... I think I'll leave it for a while.

**DOUGAL:** [*to himself*] Ooooh dear.

**ROBIN:** Well, what then?!

**DOUGAL:** No, this is your business. You got this.

**ROBIN:** No, please, I need you. Just tell me what to say. Ballpark.

**DOUGAL:** [*he is drawn in*] Fine. Firstly I'd say if you don't reply in the next [*he looks at his watch*] two minutes, the moment will pass.

**ROBIN:** What moment?

**DOUGAL:** The electric moment.

**ROBIN:** Shit. OK, what do I say?

**DOUGAL:** What was the dog's name again?

**ROBIN:** "Rufus"

**DOUGAL:** "Rufus". [*he chuckles*] It's just so Justin.

**ROBIN:** But what do I say?

**DOUGAL:** You need to keep the dog theme.

**ROBIN:** OK.

**DOUGAL:** But nothing too weird.

**ROBIN:** OK, like, "I would like to give him a treat."

**DOUGAL:** [*stony-faced*] A treat.

**ROBIN:** Well I don't know!

**DOUGAL:** Who are you trying to have sex with here, Justin or the dog?

**ROBIN:** What, then?!

**DOUGAL:** You need something funny, but suggestive. You with me?

**ROBIN:** Right...

**DOUGAL:** Remember, concealment is the essence of seduction.

**ROBIN:** I don't wanna know where you pick this shit up.

**DOUGAL:** The clock is ticking.

**ROBIN:** Can't I just go with my usual? It's pretty effective.

**DOUGAL:** Which is?

**ROBIN:** Text them around midnight saying: "You up"?

**DOUGAL:** You're better than this.

**ROBIN:** But I hate flirting!

**DOUGAL:** Ten seconds!

**ROBIN:** OK. Seductive, funny, dog-related... "woof woof"?

**DOUGAL:** That's... *[pause]* That's...*[pause]*... Sensational.

**ROBIN:** Really?

**DOUGAL:** It's perfect. Send it.

**ROBIN:** OK done. *[pause]* "Woof woof." *[chuckling]* "Woof woof". *[staring at her phone]* "Woof woof"! What the hell is that?

**DOUGAL:** Keep it together.

**ROBIN:** What was I thinking! "Woof woof"! Girl that's not seduction, that's insane!

**DOUGAL:** Just trust the process.

**ROBIN:** How could you let me say that! Woof Woof! That's what a dog says!

**DOUGAL:** Exactly.

**ROBIN:** But I'm not a dog!

**DOUGAL:** Trust the process.

**ROBIN:** Stop telling me to trust the process!

**DOUGAL:** *[looking at his watch]* Any second now.

**ROBIN:** I'm freaking out, Dougal.

**DOUGAL:** 3, 2, 1...

*There's a 'ping' from the phone.*

**DOUGAL:** Boom.

**ROBIN:** It's him!

**DOUGAL:** And?

**ROBIN:** "Can you escape for a drink tonight? I'd like to introduce Rufus to Drunk Robin."

**DOUGAL:** That is vintage Justin. I would shag this guy.

**ROBIN:** *[embracing him]* We did it! We're going on a date with perfect Justin!/  
/

**DOUGAL:** Steady on, I don't think he's ready for a threesome.

**ROBIN:** Oh God, I haven't had sex in months.

**DOUGAL:** It's like riding a bike.

*A moment of embarrassment passes between them.*

**DOUGAL:** [*successfully masking his disappointment*] Well, one of us needs to get some sleep tonight.

**ROBIN:** You're a genius.

**DOUGAL:** Send Justin my warmest regards.

**ROBIN:** You gonna be OK?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, yeah, of course. I'm thinking I might text Dad, see if he wants a drink.

**ROBIN:** I'm pretty sure/he's...

**DOUGAL:** /Do you have his number, by the way?

**ROBIN:** He's getting married tomorrow. He's busy.

**DOUGAL:** But maybe he's nervous. Maybe he needs a Budweiser Light.

**ROBIN:** Nobody calls it that.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, but/ what if...

**ROBIN:** /I'm sure if he had the time, he would reach out.

*Pause, as this remark deflates DOUGAL.*

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, I guess so.

*A pause.*

**ROBIN:** Sorry, I didn't mean...

**DOUGAL:** Oh my god, no. It's totally fine. Don't worry. I'll be heading off then.

**ROBIN:** Dougal/

**DOUGAL:** /It's fine! It's fine. I'll be fine. Have fun tonight. And don't be nervous.

**ROBIN:** [*looking at her phone*] This is perfect Justin we're talking about.

**DOUGAL:** And you are just as perfect as perfect Justin.

*He gives her a smart salute, with a brave face.*

**DOUGAL:** [*exiting*] Good luck Auntie Robin. Don't do anything I wouldn't do!

*ROBIN is torn by indecision as he leaves.*

**ROBIN:** Wait!

*She taps something on her phone. DOUGAL returns apprehensively.*

**ROBIN:** [*holding up her phone*] I got a rain check.

**DOUGAL:** No! Why?

**ROBIN:** I don't wanna look too thirsty, you know what I'm saying.

**DOUGAL:** But...Justin!

**ROBIN:** Yeah, but, [*hesitantly, nonchalantly*] I was thinking, maybe we could do something. Tonight.

**DOUGAL:** You and me.

**ROBIN:** I have to go uptown anyway, so...

**DOUGAL:** You mean/

**ROBIN:** /I mean just like one thing. Like a small, quick thing.

**DOUGAL:** Like the Empire State? Or The Rockefeller Center?

**ROBIN:** I mean.. sure.

**DOUGAL:** I thought you said that stuff was only for people with money.

**ROBIN:** Yeah, well. What if we are people with money.

**DOUGAL:** What do you mean?

*She surreptitiously slides the metal card out of her pocket and waves it.*

**DOUGAL:** That's Dad's credit card/

**ROBIN:** /It's one of his credit cards.

**DOUGAL:** But, won't he mind?

**ROBIN:** [*blasé*] I just spoke to him just now and he said it was fine.

**DOUGAL:** Really?

**ROBIN:** He said "screw it, I'm rich, go nuts".

**DOUGAL:** He said that?

*ROBIN's idea is gaining momentum.*

**ROBIN:** Yeah pretty much. [*raising her hand*] Taxi!

**DOUGAL:** Are you sure?

**ROBIN:** You got one night in New York, Dougal. Let's do this. [*music begins. To cab driver:*] Uptown please; like, fifty-eighth and Madison. And don't take The Drive.

**DOUGAL:** Where are/ we...?

**ROBIN:** /We need to get dressed.

**DOUGAL:** I am dressed!

**ROBIN:** [*she looks him up and down*] Hell no! Get in!

**ACT I, SCENE 9 – Midtown Manhattan**

*A brisk flourish from the band, and we're in midtown, staring into the window of a grand boutique. A big number is brewing:*

**ROBIN:**        *We're buying this tux.*

**DOUGAL:**     *We're buying this tux?  
It's twelve hundred bucks!*

**ROBIN:**        *Your attitude sucks;  
we're buying this tux.*

**DOUGAL:**     *We're buying this tie,*

**ROBIN:**        *We're buying success,*

**DOUGAL:**     *Hell yes!*

**ROBIN:**        *Now swallow your pride.*

**DOUGAL:**     *I'll swallow my pride!*

**ROBIN:**        *I'm Bonnie you're Clyde*

**DOUGAL:**     *You're Bonnie I'm Clyde*

**BOTH:**         *We're gonna be hitchin' a ride  
on the American Express!*

*As if by magic, DOUGAL is suddenly wearing a tuxedo. ROBIN exits in a hurry.*

**DOUGAL:** [*admiring himself*] The name's Todd. Dougal Todd.

**ROBIN (O/S):** How do I look?

**DOUGAL:** [*surveying her outfits*] That's too sexy! That's too floral! That's not enough sequins! Yes! That's the dress! That's the one!

*At impossible speed, ROBIN appears in a sequined evening gown.*

**BOTH:**         *Strolling down the avenue together  
Dressed in shoes of alligator leather  
Swapping smart remarks about the weather:*

**DOUGAL:** Do you think it's gonna snow?

**ROBIN:** I think we make it rain...

**ROBIN:** *Now that we've successfully defrauded /Dad,*

**DOUGAL:** *Now that we can suddenly afford it,*

**BOTH:** *New York City isn't such a sordid town.*

*Puttin' on the glitz,  
puttin' on the spritz...*

**DOUGAL:** [*while spraying cologne*] We'll take a bottle.

**ROBIN:** *...sprinkling a little bit of glitter on my tits.  
We're grabbin' a cab,*

**DOUGAL:** Taxi!

**DOUGAL:** *We're having the crab;*

**ROBIN:** Waiter!

**DOUGAL:** *It's on the tab,*

**ROBIN:** *it's on the tab,*

**BOTH:** *it's on the tab!*

*They are drunkenly skating with a bottle of wine.*

**ROBIN:** Why do you people love ice-skating?

**DOUGAL:** Cool people?

**ROBIN:** White people. You're not even good at it!

**DOUGAL:** You have to become one with the ice.

*DOUGAL abruptly tumbles onto his ass.*

**DOUGAL:** [*lying on the ice*] I have become one with the ice.

**ROBIN:** Hey is that dude smoking weed?

**DOUGAL:** Hey mate!

**ROBIN:** Can we hit that?

**DOUGAL:** Can we go twos on yer bifter?

**ROBIN:** [*to DOUGAL*] Wait, what did you just say?

**DOUGAL:** We'll give you a thousand dollars!

**ROBIN:** Tell him it's my birthday tomorrow.

**DOUGAL:** It's her birthday tomorrow!

**ROBIN:** Get back here you little bitch!...Shit. Security.

**DOUGAL:** What?

**ROBIN:** Security's coming. Let's move.

**DOUGAL:** Help me up!

*ROBIN drags DOUGAL to his feet. The faster music snaps back in.*

**BOTH:**       *Cruising, boozing up the Rockefeller,  
                  feeling sweet and swell as Cinderella,*

**DOUGAL:**    *"fetch the finest liquor in the cellar"*

**ROBIN:** May I see some ID?

**DOUGAL:** Are you flirting with me?

**BOTH:**       *One more round of lobster cappuccino!*

**ROBIN:** *'Scuse me while I Instagram the vino.*

**BOTH:** *New York City isn't such a mean old town.*

**DOUGAL:** *Where am I?!*

**ROBIN:** *Just stick by my side,*

**DOUGAL:** *[slurring] I'll stick by my stide,*

**ROBIN:** *I'm Bonnie, you're Clyde....*

**DOUGAL:** *[tipsy] Wait a second, wait a second, which one's Bonnie, and which one's Clyde?*

**BOTH:** *We're gonna be hitching a ride  
on the American Express!*

*In an instant, they find themselves in a thumping nightclub, twerking and grinding. Disco lights flash as they whoop and cackle. Just as suddenly, they're alone side by side on a bench:*

**DOUGAL:** *I pity the rich!*

**ROBIN:** *(Wait, you pity the rich?)*

**DOUGAL:** *They'll never know what it's like!*

**ROBIN:** *(To go to a laundromat?)*

**DOUGAL:** *To only be rich*

**ROBIN:** *To only be rich*

**BOTH:** *for one magical night!*

*The band slows, as though drawing breath for the song's final flourish. DOUGAL and ROBIN snap back into their drunken euphoria, and the music crashes into an old-school kickline:*

**ROBIN:** *I'm buying those stars*

**DOUGAL:** *I'm buying that moon*

**ROBIN:** *I'm buying these cars*

**DOUGAL:** *I've stolen this spoon*

**ROBIN:** *I'm selling my soul  
and buying this whole  
impossible mess*

**DOUGAL:** Where now?

**ROBIN:** [*pointing*] The Plaza Hotel!

*Already out of breath, the two carousers throw themselves into a final dash through the city:*

**ROBIN:** *Just follow /my stride.*

**DOUGAL:** *I'll follow /your, follow your stride*

**ROBIN:** *Just follow my stride!*

**DOUGAL:** *I'm Bonnie /you're Clyde*

**ROBIN:** [*correcting him*] *I'm Bonnie /I'm Bonnie, you're Clyde*

**DOUGAL:** *You're Bonnie, I'm Clyde!*  
*New York!*

**ROBIN:** *New York!*

**BOTH:** *We're gonna be hitching a ride*

**ROBIN:** *on the American...*

**DOUGAL:** *on the American...*

**BOTH:** *on the American Express!*

*They stride through the lobby, bold as brass, and approach the concierge with breathless euphoria:*

**ROBIN:** Penthouse Suite, please!

**END OF ACT I**

**ACT II, SCENE 1 – The Plaza**

*Romantic waltz music brings us into lavish Plaza suite, complete with windows on the park, chandelier, a large mirrored dressing-table and an enormous, four-poster bed. At any rate, this is what we must imagine. The bed bulges with two human shapes; an arm dangles out of a duvet. Shoes and other finery are strewn, along with evidence of overindulgence.*

*The **entr'acte** continues over the scene and this crystallises, while ROBIN begins to stir. After a moment of silence, she bursts upright in bed:*

**ROBIN:** *[suddenly awake]* Stockings! Oh my God! Stockings.

*Slowly at first, but getting faster and faster, ROBIN begins to unleash a torrent of her internal monologue: a growing snowball of scattergun anxieties.*

**ROBIN:** *I didn't get the stockings for my sister  
I'm an awful human being  
and I think I'm gonna die.  
The government should cancel student debt,  
I should have known the Nets would lose,  
I'm wearing someone else's bra?  
I didn't know I had a chandelier  
Jesus Christ I'm twenty-seven and I don't know how to drive.  
The polar ice is melting in the arctic and my sister's getting married  
and I think I'm gonna die.*

*As the waves of hungover panic come thicker and faster, the tempo increases*

**ROBIN:** *Whitney Houston's dead?!  
I don't remember getting these aggressive yellow curtains  
what the hell is going on?!  
The economic policy of this administration...  
Jesus Holy Shit is that a human head?*

*She leaps out of bed:*

**ROBIN:** *Is it mine?! No wait of course it isn't mine I'm going crazy,  
is it moving should I touch it is it gone?  
There's someone in my bed no wait this bed is not my bed  
I've got amnesia what the hell is going on?*

**ROBIN:** *[unnaturally relaxed] Oh that's right I remember.*

*I spent a zillion dollars worth of someone else's money  
buying sushi and tequila with my crazy British nephew  
or my soon-to-be-step-nephew or whatever anyway it isn't  
healthy and he's lying in my bed which as I said is not my  
bed I need a filling and I haven't done my taxes and  
America is dying and the planet is exploding  
in a giant subterranean volcano so excuse me  
for a moment 'cos I think I'm gonna...*

*ROBIN claps a fist to her mouth dashes out of the room. We hear sounds of retching from the  
bathroom o/s.*

**DOUGAL:** *[waking, seeming drowsy at first] Oh God...oh my God...I feel...*

*He explodes out of bed in a dressing gown, a picture of ecstasy:*

**DOUGAL:** *Woooohooo! Wonderful!  
It's another day in dream town!*

*He admires his reflection, does a twirl:*

**DOUGAL:** *I look Woooohooo! Magical!  
in this Egyptian cotton dressing gown;  
and I'm naked from the waist down!*

*He slides offstage into the suite's other room; there is still a vaguely human-shaped bulge in  
the sheets. ROBIN re-enters, and the music shifts back to the plinking discomfort of her  
hangover.*

**ROBIN:** *On the soap it says 'The Plaza'  
On the towels it says 'The Plaza'.  
On the bed it says 'The Plaza', on the door it says 'The Plaza';*

*I dunno but all the evidence suggests I'm in The Plaza!  
And I'd rather be unconscious or in prison I just need to be alone  
and I need to find my phone.*

*She turns to the bed.*

*Wake up!  
Wake up!  
Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!*

*She violently beats the bed with a pillow.*

*Oh my God I've killed him. Have I killed him? Is he hiding?  
Dougal speak to me! Oh God I think he's gone.*

*She whips back the duvet.*

*He's turned into a phone I can't believe it, is that likely?  
No it's crazy what the hell is going on?!  
He's left. He's left! Was he ever even here? Am I here? Is he me? Is this a dream?  
The room is kinda spinning and I'm going round in circles,  
oh and once again I think I'm gonna...*

*ROBIN flees once more to the bathroom, hand clapped to her mouth, and DOUGAL  
simultaneously re-enters.*

**DOUGAL:** *Woooooohoo! Wonderful!  
There's a pigeon on the windowsill.  
Yeaaaaaah! Incredible!  
It's another day in dreamsville*

*DOUGAL climbs on the bed and strikes a pose of majestic rapture.*

*Yes another day in dreamtown!  
It's the wedding day in dreamtown!*

*The accompaniment dies out as DOUGAL continues to groove and croon. ROBIN enters from  
the bathroom and sees DOUGAL standing on the bed. They stare at each other a moment.*

**DOUGAL:** Here's lookin' at you, kid.

*She claps a hand to her mouth and re-exits.*

**DOUGAL:** Don't worry, I often have that effect on women.

*There is the sound of vomiting. DOUGAL begins to tidy the suite:*

**DOUGAL:** How's it going in there?

**ROBIN (O/S):** Excellent. Love the bathroom.

**DOUGAL:** Of course. Aquarius.

**ROBIN (O/S):** Nope, and it's not a great time to chat.

**DOUGAL:** Sure. Have you seen my/...?

**ROBIN (O/S):** Nope.

**DOUGAL:** What time did we/...?

**ROBIN (O/S):** That's enough questions.

**DOUGAL:** Which of us drank the, uh/...?

*The sound of vomiting.*

**DOUGAL:** I'm going to go and investigate the breakfast situation.

**ROBIN (O/S):** You're so British right now it's disgusting.

*He exits.*

**ROBIN:** [*entering SR in a dressing-gown*] It's adorable, actually.

*She looks around and sees that he's left the room. She is wearing a dressing-gown over her dress, her hair in disarray. ROBIN goes to the minibar, opens it and lifts a ginger ale.*

**ROBIN:** [*English accent*] "I'm going to investigate the breakfast situation."

*She sits at the dressing table and hums a few notes of Stevie Wonder's 'Happy Birthday'. DOUGAL enters, unnoticed. He looks at her, as if seeing her for the first time.*

**ROBIN:** [*without looking at him*] Window-shopping?

**DOUGAL:** Sorry. Hi. You look.

**ROBIN:** Do I?

*He is somehow shy, seeing her again.*

**DOUGAL:** Yeah. You look...yeah.

**ROBIN:** You're into women who have recently vomited?

**DOUGAL:** It would seem so. How do I look?

**ROBIN:** Hungover, terrified. Have a drink.

**DOUGAL:** Robin, I'm about to meet my father for the first time in my life. [*pause*] Maybe just a little one.

*He takes a miniature of whiskey and swigs from it.*

**DOUGAL:** What should I call him? Mark or Dad? Should I shake his hand, should I hug him?

**ROBIN:** Would you just sit down for a moment? You're making me dizzy.

*He sits.*

**ROBIN:** It's just you and your mom, at home, right?

**DOUGAL:** Just me and big Polly.

**ROBIN:** You got a good thing going, you two?

**DOUGAL:** Mum always says we're like an old married couple: we bicker, we do the crossword, we don't have sex.

**ROBIN:** Little weird, not gonna lie.

**DOUGAL:** I'm used to it. When I first brought a girl home Mum rang my Auntie Lil from the other room – "You were right, Lil! He's not gay!" – I think she was a bit disappointed.

*They both chuckle.*

**ROBIN:** But your mom's not enough.

**DOUGAL:** [*caught off-guard*] Of course she's enough. What do you mean?

**ROBIN:** My dad took off before I can remember, and I guess two kids was just too much for my mom to face.

**DOUGAL:** OK.

**ROBIN:** We started going to my grandma's after preschool, and then we started staying over and then, one day we realised: that's where we lived. That was home now.

**DOUGAL:** Sounds nice.

**ROBIN:** I loved it.

*Dougal nods warily*

**ROBIN:** But Melissa was like you – always feeling like something was missing.

**DOUGAL:** That's not how I feel.

**ROBIN:** She hasn't been single since she was, like, fourteen. And always the older guys, you know?

**DOUGAL:** How does this apply to my situation?

**ROBIN:** Because you don't need him. You're you, and admittedly that's something a little different, but it, it works. You're OK.

**DOUGAL:** Thanks.

**ROBIN:** Dougal.../

**DOUGAL:** /I wouldn't expect you to understand. So, maybe he wasn't around, but he was always there, in the background. When I was little he used to send me presents. Every Birthday and Christmas. The Xbox, the Barracuda, [*showing his wrist, with a bright velcro watch-strap*] this watch. And even if Mum gave up on ever seeing him again, I always believed. I always knew this day would come.

*A silence, then ROBIN tentatively begins to sing. Only a distant drone underscores her at first.*

**ROBIN:**     *How long has he shone in the distance?  
How long has he hidden from view?  
How long have you longed to belong to his world;  
how often does he think of you?*

*I know a few things about fathers,  
I've met one or two in my day.  
And one thing I've learned is they always seem bigger  
and better from farther away...*

**DOUGAL:** [*trying not to listen*] Why are you doing this?

**ROBIN:**     *You stare at the screen in December  
you glimpse him each year on TV:  
a thick woollen coat and a scarf round his throat,  
with a smile that you only can see.*

*Announced by a jingle of sleigh-bells,  
he'll sail into view through the mist.  
He's handsome, he's tall, he's the substance of all of your dreams,  
and he doesn't exist.*

*Cold wind in his hair,  
gold skyline behind him.  
I wish it were true,  
I wish we could find him...*

**DOUGAL:** [*already wounded*] Whatever you're about to say, don't.

**ROBIN:** Dougal.../

**DOUGAL:** /He's my dad. [*pause*] He wants to meet me. He wants me to be there.

*ROBIN finds more confidence and emotion as she pushes her point. DOUGAL stands icily still.*

**ROBIN:**       *You're locked in the sorcerer's castle.  
You're lost in the forest at night.  
You're waiting for someone to ride to the rescue  
and tell you you turned out all right.*

*It sounds like a fairytale ending,  
but on the last page there's a twist:  
the petals turn black, the coachmen turn back into rats  
and he doesn't exist...*

*This snowman you've made;  
this future beside him  
all just melts away:  
there's nothing inside him...*

*He's finally ready to meet you,  
to hold out his heart in his fist;  
to show up at last  
and make up for the past  
for the days and the years that he missed...  
And he'll ruffle your hair,  
like he's always been there;  
and I know it's not fair  
that he doesn't exist.*

*The music dies. There's a pause. DOUGAL is disconsolate.*

**DOUGAL:** I've got my invitation/...

**ROBIN:** /It was Melissa. She invited you.

**DOUGAL:** What?

**ROBIN:** I didn't want to tell you.

**DOUGAL:** She sent the invitation?

**ROBIN:** Melissa's a good person, but.../

**DOUGAL:** What are you saying?

**ROBIN:** She found out about you.

**DOUGAL:** And.

**ROBIN:** She didn't want you to be...

**DOUGAL:** What?

**ROBIN:** Mark's little secret. [*pause*] Anymore.

**DOUGAL:** I'm not a secret.

*A pause*

*There's a sudden, neat knock at the door. DOUGAL goes to answer it.*

**DOUGAL (O/S):** Thanks.

*DOUGAL re-enters holding an envelope. He opens it, removing a gold-edged wedding invitation and a folded card. He opens it and reads:*

**DOUGAL:** [*reading*] *Little Robin,*

*We seem to be developing some expensive tastes.*

*The concierge tells me there's a young man in your room - I hope he's of a suitable calibre. I've spoken to your sister, she's agreed you can come to the ceremony...*

*DOUGAL looks interrogatively at ROBIN, confused by this revelation.*

*According to my banking app, you've already bought a dress. See you at the church, and feel free to bring your friend.*

*Yours, Mark*

*ROBIN seems deeply uncomfortable.*

**DOUGAL:** Oh my God. Oh, my God. [*pause*] That is so dad.

*DOUGAL develops an air of desperate gladness. ROBIN is dismayed.*

**DOUGAL:** Look at this guy! He's not even annoyed!

**ROBIN:** He's/ not...

**DOUGAL:** /He invited me! See? Right there it says "bring your friend". [*brandishing the invitation*] That's an invitation!

**ROBIN:** Dougal.

**DOUGAL:** [*becoming manic*] You know what, I am going to wear the American flag tie!

**ROBIN:** Stop a second...

**DOUGAL:** It goes with your dress! Everything's going just like I imagined!

**ROBIN:** Will you just/...

**DOUGAL:** I knew it would work out. I knew it! Let's not fight any more. OK? Let's do this, Yeah? Together!

**ROBIN:** Dougal I need you to trust me. Do not go to this wedding, all right?

**DOUGAL:** What do you mean? Of course I'm going.

**ROBIN:** Please don't.

**DOUGAL:** Why not?

**ROBIN:** [*firmly*] Because you're not wanted there.

**DOUGAL:** So why are you going?

*ROBIN is silent.*

**DOUGAL:** Sorry I didn't mean that. Let's just get dressed and do this, OK?

**ROBIN:** You're right.

**DOUGAL:** [*pleading*] It's going to be fine, it's gonna be great. Yeah?

**ROBIN:** [*a moment of clarity and realisation*] No. You're right, I'm not going.

**DOUGAL:** No, no, no, I didn't mean /that!

**ROBIN:** Dougal you're right! Listen, we don't need to go to this wedding, OK? We don't need to. We can...get out of here, go to my place. We'll do something...touristy. The Statue of Liberty. Chinatown. Please.

**DOUGAL:** Why do you think I came all this way? To meet you?

**ROBIN:** Excuse me?

**DOUGAL:** I've travelled four thousand miles, with the express intention of meeting my father, and that's what I'm going to do.

**ROBIN:** He's not who you think he is.

**DOUGAL:** So who is he?

**ROBIN:** He's not a superhero, Dougal. He's just some guy. Some rich, self-involved/

**DOUGAL:** /Don't talk about my dad that way.

**ROBIN:** Fine. You wanna know about your dad?

**DOUGAL:** I know about my dad.

**ROBIN:** He cheated on her.

*Pause.*

**DOUGAL:** You're making this up.

**ROBIN:** I'm trying to help you!

**DOUGAL:** You're trying to ruin this for me! Because you're jealous!

*An ugly silence.*

*The song begins as a quiet, measured disagreement, happening in an ambient rhythm. The audience may at first not notice it is a 'song' per se. As we progress, we begin to hear the sounds of ghoulish synths and, eventually, a sporadic scattering of drums. Their words have a rhythmic magnetism, but at first are uttered casually, colla voce.*

**ROBIN:** What did you say?

**DOUGAL:** Nothing.

**ROBIN:** What did you say?

**DOUGAL:** I didn't say anything.

**ROBIN:** Do you seriously think that I'm jealous?

**DOUGAL:** Just forget it.

**ROBIN:** Jealous of what?

**ROBIN:** Jealous of what?

**DOUGAL:** Of your sister?

**ROBIN:** Melissa?

**DOUGAL:** Maybe.

**ROBIN:** Really.

**DOUGAL:** Maybe you don't want to let other people be happy.

**ROBIN:** Oh really?

**DOUGAL:** Yeah maybe.

**ROBIN:** Well maybe you don't even know me.

**DOUGAL:** Yeah, well maybe I do.

**ROBIN:** Oh yeah? Maybe I'm just an imaginary girl in a movie that's all about you.

*The song becomes increasingly rhythmic and tense.*

**DOUGAL:** Say that again?

**ROBIN:** It's all just a /party to you.

**DOUGAL:** No, no, no, say that again, I want to be sure that/I heard you correctly.

**ROBIN:** It's all just a great big adventure and Dougal's the star, right?

**DOUGAL:** Wrong. You're just try'na make me as bitter and angry/ as you.

**ROBIN:** I'm just some irrelevant character, right, who takes you to dinner and listens/ to all of your bullshit...

**DOUGAL:** Excuse me, I think you'll find it was my father who paid for/ the dinner

**ROBIN:** Your father! Your father! I swear if you mention your father again,

**DOUGAL:** My father...

**ROBIN:** I swear if you mention his name /then I'm going completely insane.

**DOUGAL:** This is going completely insane.  
How can you be this insensi/tive?

**ROBIN:** What am I, your therapist?

**DOUGAL:** What kind of person would/ even consider this...

**ROBIN:** Am I your pers'nal /assistant?

**DOUGAL:** No serious/ly what kind of person...

**ROBIN:** Just answer the question.

**DOUGAL:** ...no tell me/ it's interesting

**ROBIN:** No tell me I'm listening/ I'm serious

**DOUGAL:** I'm curious. What/...

**ROBIN:** What the hell is e/ven wrong with you?

**DOUGAL:** What's wrong with you?

*Brief pause. ROBIN softens infinitesimally, but it doesn't last.*

**ROBIN:** I'm so/rry.

**DOUGAL:** No I'm sorry, it's just that/ I don't understand.

**ROBIN:** You don't understand./

**DOUGAL:** No I don't under/stand.

**ROBIN:** Maybe just lis/ten?

**DOUGAL:** If you just let me finish I don't understand why you don't wanna go to the wed/ding.

*By now, the song is in full swing, their words swirling in rhythm.*

**ROBIN:** Do you think this is easy for me?/

**DOUGAL:** No I don't.

**ROBIN:** Do you think this decision is easy/ for me?

**DOUGAL:** OK so it's all about you./

**ROBIN:** You serious Dougal,/can you even hear yourself?

**DOUGAL:** Can you even hear yourself? This is important./

**ROBIN:** Important for you.

**DOUGAL:** Keep it down.

**ROBIN:** Cos the planet revolves around you and/ your dad.

**DOUGAL:** I fail to see how this/ is even your business.

**ROBIN:** It's none of your business./

**DOUGAL:** You made it my business!./

**ROBIN:** Stop yel/ling.

**DOUGAL:** Let me finish/...

**ROBIN:** Stop yelling at me/...

**DOUGAL:** Let me finish, you made it my business/ by trying to stop me.

**ROBIN:** Whatever! Just do what you want.

**DOUGAL:** Fine.

**ROBIN:** Fine.

**DOUGAL:** Fine! I don't care what you think I should do/

**ROBIN:** You don't care about anything else except you.!

*Another awful pause, and then DOUGAL and ROBIN begin to speak freely over one another, abandoning all pretence at communication. It's hard to make out who's saying what, but ROBIN's voice gradually becomes clearer, until her final revelation rings out:*

**ROBIN:**  
He's been with Melissa for six, seven years  
man, he bought my computer, I cleaned  
his apartment, he came to the shop every  
day for a summer and never in all of that  
time, never...

**DOUGAL:**  
I couldn't care less what you tell me, I'm  
going and honestly, I'm really glad you  
won't be there 'cos this is my day, it's my  
moment and nothing you tell me can take  
that away from me...

*ROBIN's voice emerges solo from the melee, delivering a terrible blow:*

**ROBIN:** ...not even once, not even once has he mentioned you. Not once.

*Pause. The music lingers as a skeletal theme.*

**DOUGAL:** That's a lie.

**ROBIN:** He travels to London for work. Every couple months. He was there last week.

*A deafening pause. All eyes are on them. DOUGAL stares at her for an interminable moment.*

**ROBIN:** [*softening with pity*] I'm sorry.

*Another awful pause, as something sinks in for DOUGAL. Then:*

**DOUGAL:** [*quietly*] Who was the girl. Who was she.

*Pause. ROBIN is lost for words.*

**DOUGAL:** Who did he cheat on Melissa with?

**ROBIN:** [*gutted, reaching to touch his arm*] Dougal...

**DOUGAL:** [*recoiling*] Don't fucking touch me.

*The piano stops abruptly. DOUGAL is silent. ROBIN steps away from him.*

**ROBIN:** Go ahead. Go to the wedding. I didn't see it at first, but you're just like him.

*DOUGAL exits.*

**ACT II, SCENE 2 – Manhattan**

*This interlude acts as a kind of split-screen medley duet: the songs which provided their solos early in Act I are revisited, with ROBIN reprising **What'll it be?** and DOUGAL reprising **New York!** In his hotel room, DOUGAL dresses for the wedding, while ROBIN attempts to compose herself in the Plaza, as the events of the preceding scene sink into their hearts:*

**DOUGAL:** *It's the capital city; the land of the brave...*

**ROBIN:** *What'll it be that makes the difference?*

**DOUGAL:** *Everything comes with a smile and a skyline view.*

**ROBIN:** *In the distance...*

**DOUGAL:** *Even impossible dreams come true.*

**ROBIN:** *You smile that smile,*

**DOUGAL:** *I'll fit right in,*

**ROBIN:** *and they don't see...*

**DOUGAL:** *New York!*

**ROBIN:** *This time tomorrow...*

**DOUGAL:** *New York!*

**ROBIN:** *Will you see it?*

**DOUGAL:** *New York,*

**ROBIN:** *I'll be serving you this morning*

**DOUGAL:** *I'm rea-dy.*

**ROBIN:** *I'll be right with you.*

*By the end of the sequence, DOUGAL is dressed in his ill-fitting suit, ready to meet his father.*

**ACT II, SCENE 3 – Outside Trinity Church**

*DOUGAL stands alone in front of the church, holding a buttonhole rose, looking timid and vulnerable. Playing for time, he produces his phone and dials a number.*

**VOICEMAIL V/O:** “Please leave your message after the tone. After you’ve finished your message just hang up, or to hear more options, please press 1.”

*The piano gleams in the background. In his own time, hesitantly, DOUGAL begins to sing:*

**DOUGAL:**     *Mum,  
I’m here at the church,  
I’m about to go in,  
and I thought that I’d call you.*

*It’s late,  
you’re five hours ahead;  
you must have gone out.  
But I thought I’d just call you...*

*...to say hi, and America’s grand,  
I’m here at the church with a flower in my hand,  
and things haven’t turned out exactly as planned...  
but I’m fine.*

*It’s cold,  
like zero degrees;  
there’s lights in the trees;  
it’s just like a movie.*

*Last night,  
last night I think I was...  
I stayed at the...  
...you wouldn’t believe me.*

*I’m wearing my suit with the scuffs in the knees,  
the one that we got for my GCSEs;*

*if I stand in the street any longer I'll freeze...*

*If I put my eye to the door I can just about see,  
there's hundreds of people and stars on the tree;  
I'd better go in and say "Hi Dad, it's me!"*

*He peers through the doors:*

*Maybe that's him...  
I'd better go in.*

*DOUGAL slips his flower into his buttonhole, and finds himself examining his suit jacket. A memory moves him.*

*The last time I wore this I looked like a clown.  
The last day of school, with my hair gelled down,  
and all of my friends went out on the town,  
but me.*

*The day when our lives were supposed to begin,  
when everyone else had gone out I stayed in,  
and we sat by the fire drinking gin  
and watching TV.*

*Almost without knowing it, he is rising towards some sort of revelation.*

*And I know it hasn't been cheap,  
and I know that it hasn't been easy to sleep,  
and I know our road was steep and rough.  
We were always enough.  
You were always enough.*

*He palms tears from his eyes, and digs up some courage:*

*And mum,  
I met a girl.  
I know what you'll say:  
"sounds rather unlikely".*

*We talked,  
and just for a while  
I could almost have thought  
she was starting to like me.*

*It's funny how cities can make you feel small,  
I'm wondering now why I came here at all  
and I don't want to know how expensive this call has become.  
So I'd better go in, mum.  
I'd better go.../*

*Just as he arrives at his conclusion, the machine unceremoniously cuts him off.*

**VOICEMAIL V/O:** *To re-record your message press one, or for more options, please press star.*

**ACT II, SCENE 4 – Manhattan**

*ROBIN is alone in her apartment, pacing and drinking coffee. She taps her phone and a voice message begins: an older woman, speaking gently but firmly. ROBIN closes her eyes.*

**GRANDMA (V/O):** Hey Robin, it's me. I know you don't know how to pick up the phone right now, so I'm going to have to talk into this thing like a crazy lady talking to nobody.

Life is dusting along same as always out here. I started doing - what do you call it? - pilates, couple months ago. They got free classes for seniors at the library now, and I swear on his holy name I feel ten years younger.

*ROBIN smiles.*

Anyhow, everybody's always asking after you, I can't barely walk down the street without someone asking me: how's Robin. You remember Sylvie, from three eighteen? Her son Cairo is back from college. Mercy, that's a fine looking young man.

*ROBIN chuckles, choked with emotion.*

He's going to nightschool now, studying to be some kind of, what did he say? Systems engineer. How d'you like that?

I'm gonna hang up this phone and then remember fifteen things I was fixing to tell you, but the main one is this. Happy Birthday little girl. I don't know where you are or who you're spending it with, but the good lord sees you and loves you. And so do I.

*A rising pad reflects the tension in the air; from somewhere deep inside, ROBIN begins to sing:*

**ROBIN:**     *Outside there's a world,  
                  there's a planet spinning silently through space.  
                  Inside there's a girl,  
                  with a featureless expression on her face.  
                  Standing on the sidelines,  
                  keeping life at bay,  
                  she grows a little smaller every day.*

*This year, the summer and the fall just blew across my phone;  
This year, every chance I had I spent the day alone.  
The end of this December  
is slowly drawing near,  
will it all just be the same  
next year?*

*ROBIN is animated by a stirring of frustrated determination. She begins to move around her room.*

*It's nice on your own:  
you can never get it wrong if you refuse  
to answer the phone;  
to let anybody close enough to lose.  
But while I'm treading water,  
I'm drifting out to sea,  
and nobody can save me now but me...*

*So this year,  
it doesn't matter what they yell at me about...  
This year,  
I have to find a way to drown those voices out.  
And if I listen closely,  
there's someone I can hear:  
the someone I could be  
next year...*

*ROBIN swings on her jacket like a suit of armour, gathering the energy to leave:*

*Wide awake in the city tonight,  
and New York is alive in the flickering light  
like it can't wait to find out who  
the girl that you might still be...  
...will be...*

*She steps from her apartment, into the lamplit street:*

*Out here in the world,*

*through a city full of sirens, full of songs;  
make way for a girl  
heading out to find a place where she belongs.*

*And all the lights are blazing  
in green and red and gold,  
and Chinatown is shining in the cold...*

*And this time,  
it doesn't matter where I am on New Year's Eve,  
this year  
is gonna be the year I let myself believe  
that after all the stormclouds  
the sky is blowing clear,  
and I can see the mountain,  
and I can feel the fear,  
but everyone that I can be  
is already inside of me,  
and everything I need is here!  
And all the world is new...*

*This year.*

*In a gesture of defiance which we haven't seen before, ROBIN stands for a moment bathed in the light of her city, as though radiating with hard-earned self-possession.*

**ACT II, SCENE 5 – Chinatown/Uptown**

*ROBIN has arrived at her favourite restaurant in Chinatown. Meanwhile, elsewhere on stage, DOUGAL appears, writing in a greetings card. The scene continues in split-screen, an underscore chiming beneath.*

**ROBIN:** Table for one, please.

**DOUGAL:** Dear Mark. Dear Dad.

**ROBIN:** Is it too late for dumplings?

**DOUGAL:** I don't suppose you're expecting a card from me.

**ROBIN:** Can I get some hot tea?

**DOUGAL:** I hope you've had a wonderful day.

**ROBIN:** Yeah, and a beer.

**DOUGAL:** I've been looking forward to this day for weeks. For my whole life, in fact.

**ROBIN:** Pork and cilantro dumplings, sesame noodles...

**DOUGAL:** I've wondered all my life if we're alike.

**ROBIN:** Chinese broccoli, and some fried rice.

**DOUGAL:** And I suppose we are alike, in one way. In the sense that, now that I get the chance to meet you, I've got somewhere else to be.

**ROBIN:** That's all.

**ACT II, SCENE 6 – Ho Ho! Restaurant**

*ROBIN sits at a small table, slurping noodles and swigging Tsingtao. The clatter and chatter of the restaurant is dimly audible. The lights adjust over the restaurant, they flicker clumsily. Unnoticed, DOUGAL enters and stands hesitantly in the doorway, trailing his suitcase. He is out of breath and carrying the top tier of a wedding cake in one hand.*

**DOUGAL:** Auntie Robin?

**ROBIN:** [*unpleasantly surprised*] It's you.

**DOUGAL:** I think so.

**ROBIN:** Please tell me that's not what I think it is.

**DOUGAL:** I believe this one is a pistachio white chocolate Genoise.

**ROBIN:** You stole a wedding cake.

**DOUGAL:** Three layers is too many.

**ROBIN:** Why would you do that?

**DOUGAL:** Because...it's your birthday.

*They stare at one another a moment, ROBIN giving nothing away.*

**DOUGAL:** Sagittarius. Very secretive.

*Pause.*

**ROBIN:** Who are you?

**DOUGAL:** I'm your nephew.

*The lights flicker again. Carefully, DOUGAL places a small candle on top of the cake.*

**ROBIN:** How was it? How was the wedding of the century?

**DOUGAL:** I don't know.

**ROBIN:** You don't know?

**DOUGAL:** I didn't go. I went to the venue and I stood outside, and all I could think was, this is my last few hours in New York, and do I want to spend them with someone I've never met, or with someone I might never see again?

*Pause.*

**ROBIN:** It's a little late.

**DOUGAL:** I recognise that I've been... something of a dickface.

**ROBIN:** Yeah, well, it runs in the family.

**DOUGAL:** Look, I don't have to stay, my plane leaves at midnight. I just wanted to give you this and say... I know what you were doing, what you were trying to protect me from. Thank you.

**ROBIN:** [*reluctantly, to a waiter*] Could we get another set of chopsticks?

*DOUGAL moves to the table and sits, still unsure of how welcome he is.*

**DOUGAL:** And maybe a cake-knife?

*He removes his coat and scarf. ROBIN looks impassive. There is a sense of coolness between them still, an awkwardness. Neither of them knows what will happen.*

*An awkward pause. The lights flicker.*

**DOUGAL:** [*gesturing to the lights*] Atmospheric.

**ROBIN:** How did you find me?

**DOUGAL:** This is the... sixth restaurant I've tried.

**ROBIN:** Mm-hmm. [*pause*] Well, here we are. Two broke-ass cousins.

**DOUGAL:** Two iconic New Yorkers.

**ROBIN:** Skipping a wedding where nobody wants us anyway.

**DOUGAL:** You know what we'd do now if this was a movie?

**ROBIN:** I have a feeling you're gonna tell me.

**DOUGAL:** We'd have our own wedding.

**ROBIN:** Would we.

**DOUGAL:** We'd get married right here, in this restaurant.

**ROBIN:** [*sensing his intentions*] No. No.

*DOUGAL begins to stand.*

**ROBIN:** [*panicked*] No no no no no...Dougal Todd sit your ass down.

*He dings his glass with a chopstick, silencing the restaurant around him. To ROBIN's horror, DOUGAL begins his 'wedding speech':*

**DOUGAL:** Dearly beloved we are gathered here today...

**ROBIN:** [*hissing*] No we're not.

**DOUGAL:** We've got the cake, we've got the venue.

**ROBIN:** No we don't!

*DOUGAL gestures to the waiting staff:*

**DOUGAL:** Cheers guys, appreciate it. [*pointing to a nearby table*] And Cousin Julieta has flown all the way from Venezuela.

**ROBIN:** Cousin Julieta?

**DOUGAL:** *[blowing a kiss to the stranger]* Buenas Noches.

**ROBIN:** Oh my God.

**DOUGAL:** *And this may not be a wedding like the one we had in mind,  
but it's still a celebration of its own special kind...*

**ROBIN:** Sweet Jesus kill me now.

*A sense of anticipation as DOUGAL begins to sing. Using a chopstick, he accompanies his speech by dinging the bottles and bowls on the table. The band begin gently to assist him.*

**DOUGAL:** *We've got noodles;  
We've got beers;*

**ROBIN:** Ignore him.

**DOUGAL:** *We've got Chinese cover versions of the hits of Britney Spears.  
Here's the steeple; here's the band  
Here's a group of German tourists who don't really understand*

*The underscore rising gently to meet him, he lifts ROBIN, livid with embarrassment, from her chair:*

**DOUGAL:** *And who's that coming down the aisle,  
a satin veil across her winsome smile...*

**ROBIN:** I swear to God if you put /that...

*He flings a napkin over her head.*

**DOUGAL:** *[displaying her to the restaurant]* Ladies and Gentlemen, the bride!

*Applause from some other diners. She turns her veiled head to look at him. At first there is silence. DOUGAL leans in beside her, ventriloquising her voice:*

**DOUGAL:** *[as ROBIN]* Dearly beloved we are gathered here tonight  
Before this gorgeous congregation...

**DOUGAL:** That's good, yeah, work the room.

*Hesitantly, very reluctantly, ROBIN agrees to contribute to the proceedings:*

**ROBIN:**        *The sweetcorn soup is free here, I'm glad you all could be here,  
For this spectacular occasion...*

*He lifts her veil to reveal a stony expression, she turns to DOUGAL, visibly displeased. After an anxious, silence, she whips off the veil:*

**ROBIN:**        *Fuck it.  
We got Dim Sum!*

**DOUGAL:**       *Yes!*

**ROBIN:**        *We got booze!*

**DOUGAL:**       *Yeah we do!!*

**ROBIN:**        *We got relatives from out of town with questionable views.  
We've got pictures - check it out - hung with pride,*

**DOUGAL:**       *Oh yeah...*

**ROBIN:**        *...of celebrities who ate here and have subsequently died.*

**DOUGAL:**       *We got moonlight,*

**ROBIN:**        *We got striplight,*

**DOUGAL:**       *We got cash,*

**ROBIN:**        *Do you have cash?  
We got something borrowed, something blue and all that other trash!  
We got chow mein,*

**DOUGAL:**       *We got chow mein,*

**DOUGAL:**       *[brandishing the beer] We got Champagne,*

**ROBIN:**        *That's not Champagne.*

**DOUGAL:**       *We got seventy bewildered people that I'm never gonna see again.*

*ROBIN grabs a menu and ushers DOUGAL onto a chair:*

**ROBIN:**        *And who's that preaching from the stand,  
With a bible and some chopsticks in his hand...*

**ROBIN:** Good evening Reverend!

*DOUGAL instantly occupies the role and stereotypical accent of a Catholic priest:*

**DOUGAL:** *Dearly Beloved we are gathered here today*

**ROBIN:** No, no. Don't make him Irish it's too obvious, make him, like, Greek?

*She flings him a bamboo steamer.*

**DOUGAL:** [*placing it on his head*] Greek, right...

**DOUGAL:** *Dearly beloved would you kindly settle down.  
Can someone wake up Uncle Trevor?  
If there is some objection,  
To this divine connection,  
Speak now or hold your peace forever....  
If anyone here knows of any just cause/ why...*

**ROBIN:** [*heckling*] I object!

**DOUGAL:** *On what grounds?*

**ROBIN:** They hardly know each other!

**DOUGAL:** *To the pure in heart all things are pure...*

**ROBIN:** The groom is the bride's nephew.

**DOUGAL:** *God is forgiving.*

**ROBIN:** She had a thing with his dad.

*A heavy pause.*

**DOUGAL:** *...It's probably fine...*

*The drums crash back in, as DOUGAL leaps from the chair.*

**DOUGAL:** *We got sweet,*

**ROBIN:** *We got sour,*

**DOUGAL:** *We got spice,*

**ROBIN:** *Can I get some ice?*

**DOUGAL:** *We got everlasting happiness*

**BOTH:** *and it comes with a side of rice*

**DOUGAL:** *We got spring rolls,*

**ROBIN:** *We got spring rolls,*

**DOUGAL:** *We got roast duck,*

**ROBIN:** *We got roast duck!*

**BOTH:** *We didn't go to the wedding  
and we don't give a fuck...*

**DOUGAL:** *...don't give a fuck!*

**BOTH:** *Dearly beloved we are gathered here tonight,  
with all these witnesses before us.*

**ROBIN:** *I see their smiling faces flick/er in the light.*

**DOUGAL:** *I see their hopes and dreams unite.*

**BOTH:** *I see them trying to ignore us!*

**DOUGAL:** *And this may not be the greatest wedding money could provide  
but I've got this tiny cookie with a secret wrapped inside...*

*He opens and snaps a fortune cookie, before slowly unravelling the fortune...*

**DOUGAL:** *'You may now kiss the bride!'*

*They stare at each other for a breathless moment, straight-faced. Infinitesimally, they begin to lean together. Just as we sense they might kiss, abruptly the lights snap off, with the sound of a power cut and surprise from other diners. Silence.*

*Total darkness. They whisper:*

**ROBIN:** Did you arrange this?

**DOUGAL:** Maybe. We could run away without paying.

**ROBIN:** We could go back to the Plaza - I think I still have my key.

*In the pitch darkness, we see a tiny spark, as DOUGAL lights the little candle on the cake. They stare at each other across the flame.*

**DOUGAL:** Blow it out and make a wish.

**ROBIN:** What do I wish for?

**DOUGAL:** You'll think of something.

*She takes a breath, leans close to the candle, and blows it out, plunging the stage into total darkness. Through the silence, for a moment, we hear the sounds of the restaurant and the city beyond. A rising pad begins to hum, growing until...*

*...the lights abruptly snap back on, and we hear the other diners gasp with surprise. The world is back to reality - there is a new self-consciousness between DOUGAL and ROBIN - the moment has passed.*

**ROBIN:** What time is it?

**DOUGAL:** Just gone eight. The flight's at midnight.

**ROBIN:** You should get going soon.

*Another pause. Reality has stepped painfully back into the room. They both look up in the same direction.*

**DOUGAL:** /Just the bill please.

**ROBIN:** /Just the check please.

**ROBIN:** So.

**DOUGAL:** So are we married?

**ROBIN:** I guess so.

**DOUGAL:** Robin Todd.

**ROBIN:** Fuck that.

**DOUGAL:** Wait 'til I tell mum.

**ROBIN:** Big Polly?

**DOUGAL:** You'd like her.

**ROBIN:** I know.

**DOUGAL:** Saturday night, she's probably still in the pub.

**ROBIN:** The Old Queen's Head?

**DOUGAL:** That's the one.

**ROBIN:** [*attempting a cockney accent*] "Down the old boozier"

**DOUGAL:** Nobody calls it that. [*ROBIN smiles. Pause.*] I know it sounds silly, but I really thought if I came to New York, something big was going to happen to me.

**ROBIN:** Sorry it didn't happen.

**DOUGAL:** [*after a pause*] It did. [*pause*]

**ROBIN:** You could still catch a glimpse of the Statue of Liberty, from a distance.

**DOUGAL:** It's OK. I know I'm not the world's most significant person. I live with my mum, I watch too many films.

**ROBIN:** Far too many.

**DOUGAL:** I'll fly home in a minute and when I wake up on Monday I'm going to start wondering whether any of this really happened.

**ROBIN:** Dougal.

**DOUGAL:** Whether I ever really ran into you.

*Hesitantly - half-spoken, half-sung - he finds the words for the way he feels:*

**DOUGAL:**     *But if this is all  
                  the dreams come true  
                  I ever find,  
                  I don't mind.*

*Pause.*

**DOUGAL:** Robin/...

**ROBIN:** Don't say anything else. Let's just walk, for a while.

**ACT II, SCENE 7 – Downtown Manhattan**

*The intro to **If I Believed** begins, the restaurant fades away. ROBIN stands and steps out into the street. DOUGAL is nearby, but the song is an internal monologue, unheard by DOUGAL.*

**ROBIN:**       *Step outside, get some air,  
find a window, fix your hair;  
feel the wind blow down the street,  
sweet and cold.*

*Take his hand, hold his gaze;  
it's been a strange few days.  
It's been a strange few years, truth be told.*

*But if I believed  
the girl I knew  
was left behind,  
I've changed my mind.*

*As they walk, a light dusting of snow begins to fall from the sky.*

**DOUGAL:** [*gesturing to the snow*] Did you arrange this?

**ROBIN:** Maybe. Maybe your flight will be cancelled.

*They begin to walk more confidently through the streets. Again, DOUGAL sings his interior thoughts, unheard by ROBIN:*

**DOUGAL:**   *Is it me, has it changed?  
Has the city rearranged?  
is there something new and strange  
about this street?  
If I could,*

**ROBIN:**       *If I knew*

**DOUGAL:**   *Would I say?*

**ROBIN:**       *Would I try...*

**DOUGAL:** *To explain,*

**ROBIN:** *...to ask him why?*

**DOUGAL:** *Could I find a way?*

**ROBIN:** *Out of all the million people I could meet,*

**DOUGAL:** *Of all the strangers...*

**BOTH:** *Did I believe  
that nights like these  
were hard to find  
in lives like mine?  
  
Cos if I believed  
the story's end  
was predefined  
I've changed my mind.*

**ROBIN:** *And I know he's just a stranger  
heading back the way he came*

**DOUGAL:** *and I don't know how to tell her  
if I'll ever be the same  
but I/ see...*

**ROBIN:** *But I can see.../through the snow*

**DOUGAL:** *the way the snow falls out of sight,*

**ROBIN:** *in the fading /light*

**DOUGAL:** *how/ beautiful*

**ROBIN:** *just how beautiful*

**BOTH:** *New York could look tonight...*

*Half in reality, half in their imaginations, they finally climb high above the streets, conquering the pinnacle of the city for a moment of poignant triumph.*

**BOTH:** *...if I believed  
that nights like these  
in lives like mine  
could change my mind.*

*And if this is all*

*the dreams come true  
I ever find  
you've changed my mind.*

*As the orchestration reaches its climax, ROBIN and DOUGAL swirl in a blizzard of snowflakes and music, staring across the gulf that divides them. At last, the swell of music evaporates and through the dwindling snow they stare at one another with a new recognition.*

**DOUGAL:** *So if I believe...*

**ROBIN:** *And if something strange  
could change my world...*

**DOUGAL:** *...in something new  
at least it's true.*

**ROBIN:** *...I'm glad it's you.*

*DOUGAL climbs down from the tower, back down to his ordinary life. ROBIN watches him descend.*

**ROBIN:** *Just take this tiny step before you go;  
do it now before his footsteps disappear into the snow...*

**ROBIN:** [*half embarrassed*] I got you something.

**DOUGAL:** What? When?

**ROBIN:** Last night, when you were buying tickets for the ice rink.

*She produces something from her bag. He takes it: it's a snowglobe. He is stilled with emotion.*

**ROBIN:** It's a cheap one. The Chrysler Building should be larger than the Statue of Liberty.

*ROBIN also descends. They stand in the gentle snowfall, nothing but muffled street sound.*

**DOUGAL:** I don't know what to say.

**ROBIN:** It's nothing.

**DOUGAL:** I didn't get you anything.

**ROBIN:** You did.

**DOUGAL:** Right. [*pause*] A date with Justin.

**ROBIN:** Sure. A date with Justin. [*pause*] Subway's that way.

**DOUGAL:** Love the subway. Where are you going?

**ROBIN:** [*pointing the other way*] Brooklyn.

**DOUGAL:** Brooklyn.

**ROBIN:** I know an old lady in Flatbush. She loves cake.

**DOUGAL:** It's the only good thing about weddings.

**ROBIN:** Right.

*Pause.*

**DOUGAL:** If you ever need anything, I'm only 4,000 miles away.

**ROBIN:** Roger.

*They nod at one another. DOUGAL begins to leave.*

**ROBIN:** [*calling him back*] Hey Dougal.

*He returns, curious.*

**ROBIN:** What did your fortune cookie really say?

**DOUGAL:** Oh. [*fumbling for it in his pocket and opening it*] "You will go on a cruise." Pretty cool. [*pause*] What about yours?

**ROBIN:** [*reading it*] "This time next year, you'll be happy"

*They stand staring at each other for a moment, frozen with incommunicable feeling. Then the familiar piano leitmotif begins to rise beneath them, and DOUGAL begins:*

**DOUGAL:**     *New York!*

**BOTH:**        *New York!*

*They turn downstage, half together, half apart:*

**ROBIN:**        *Good morning,  
                  What'll it be?*

**DOUGAL:**     *Are you ready,*

**ROBIN:**        *I'll be serving you this morning.*

**BOTH:**        *Thanks for waiting,  
                  I'll be right with you...*

*The piano riff snaps off into blackness, never quite resolving.*

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*The End*