

**PROLOGUE**

*The theatre is dark. A voice from the stage addresses the waiting audience.*

**START****MAN**

I hate theatre. Well, it's so disappointing, isn't it? You know what I do when I'm sitting in a darkened theatre waiting for the show to begin? I pray. Oh, dear God, please let it be a good show. And let it be short, oh Lord in heaven, please. Two hours is fine, three hours is too much. And keep the actors out of the audience...God. I didn't pay good money to have the fourth wall come crashing down around my ears. I just want a story, and a few good songs that will take me away. I just want to be entertained. I mean, isn't that the point? Amen.

*(pause)*

You know there was a time when people sat in darkened theatres and thought to themselves, "What have George and Ira Gershwin got for us tonight?" Or "Can Cole Porter pull it off again?" Can you imagine? Now it's, "Please, Elton John, must we continue this charade?" It used to be, sitting there in the dark, you knew that when the show began you would be taken to another world, a world full of color and music and glamour. And you thought to yourself, "My God. When are they going to bring up the lights?"

*(lights up)*

Oh, how things have changed. Hello. How are we today? I'm feeling a little blue myself. You know, a little anxious for no particular reason, a little sad that I should feel anxious at this age, you know, a little self-conscious anxiety resulting in nonspecific sadness: a state that I call "blue". Anyway, whenever I'm feeling this way, blue, I like to listen to my music. So, I was going through my records this morning—yes, records—and I was about to put on the sound track recording of Meredith Willson's THE MUSIC MAN. I had a craving for a young Ronny Howard. But then I said "No! Let's have a treat! Let's disappear for a while into the decadent world of the 1920's. When the champagne flowed while the caviar chilled and all the world was a party"—for the wealthy anyway. So, I dug about and what did I find—

*(extracting a record)*

—but one of my favorite shows Gable and Stein's "The Drowsy Chaperone;" Remember? Music by Julie Gable, lyrics by Sidney Stein. It's a two record set, remastered from the original recording made in 1928. It's the full show with the original cast including Beatrice Stockwell as the Chaperone. Isn't she elegant? And this is a full 15 years before she became Dame Beatrice Stockwell. Can you believe it? Let me read to you what it says on the back—it says "Mix-ups, mayhem and a gay wedding!" Of course the phrase gay wedding has a different meaning now, but back then it just meant fun. And that's just what the show is—fun. So. Would you... would you indulge me? Would you let me play the record for you now? I was hoping you would say yes.

**END**

*He puts the record on the record player. He places the needle.*