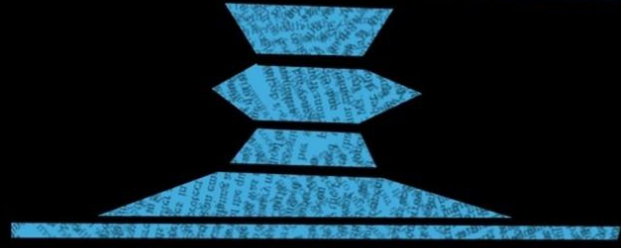




**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY
GREGORY
BLINDING!**

A TALE OF LOVE, LOSS AND MUSICAL AMBITION

BY GERARD FOSTER



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GREGORY BELLINGS!

a musical

by Gerard Foster

**with songs composed by members of the Wheatley
community**

musical arrangements by Roger Simmonds

**first performed at St. Mary's Church, Wheatley,
14th – 16th November 2024**

directed by Rachel Cave

produced by Oxfordshire Contemporary Opera

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MAIN CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

GREGORY SENIOR – an old man with dementia

YOUNG GREGORY – Gregory as a young boy, around ten years old

GREGORY – Gregory as a young man, late teens / early twenties

JUDITH – Gregory's singing partner, late teens / early twenties

JUDITH SENIOR – Judith as an old woman

IRIS – Gregory's mother, late teens

PHYLLIS – a carer in Gregory Senior's care home

STUART – Gregory Senior's son, mid-fifties

OTHER CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

WW2 CHILD – a shell-shocked child

MC – the compere in a WW2 club

MRS FAIRFAX – a kindly but somewhat fragile teacher, early thirties

MR WARREN – a fearsome headmaster

BAND-MATES ONE & TWO – two cocky young men in the 1960s

DAVE – Gregory & Judith's manager

TV HOST – a 1960s 'Top of the Pops' type presenter

AMERICAN TV HOST – an American version of the above

EUROVISION HOST – glamorous Austrian TV host

FLOOR MANAGER – slightly scary middle-aged Austrian

LEYLA – a French singer in the Eurovision Song Contest, 1967

IRENE – Gregory's pregnant bride, early-twenties

LAURA – Stuart's ex-wife, mid-fifties

ROB & ZOE – their children, early twenties

COUSIN JIM – Stuart's dull/eccentric middle-aged relative

MIA – cheery Italian restaurant manager

WAITER – her staff

TEACHER – an enthusiastic primary school teacher

VARIOUS OTHER PARTS, VOICES & SINGING to be performed by **CHILDREN**
and/or **ADULT CHORUS**

SCENE 1 (CARE HOME, 2024)

LIGHTS UP on **GREGORY SENIOR**, wearing pyjamas and dressing gown. He sits, looking lost, on the edge of his bed (a duvet and pillow laid over stage blocks).

In one corner (in front of an exit) there is a table with low-hanging tablecloth. On it are a vase of dried flowers, a framed wedding photograph from the 1960s (Gregory and Irene), and two birthday cards.

Elsewhere, a selection of clothes and ties are draped over a chair. There is also a waste-paper bin, full to the brim with various stuff.

GREGORY SENIOR sings in a frail voice.

SONG 1: 'COME TAKE MY HAND' (words & music: Paul Walton)

GREGORY SENIOR *Come take my hand, stir fading memories*
 The canvas of life is now ripped.
 Come, speak my lines, prompt doubtful recall,
 I'm lost and missing the script.

LIGHTS UP elsewhere to reveal other figures, each in their own little world: **YOUNG GREGORY** singing from a music book, **IRIS** gently rocking her baby, **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** facing each other, hand in hand. Each in turn, add their voices to the song.

YOUNG GREGORY *Come trace my past, trawl special moments.*

IRIS *The passage of time is now dark.*

GREGORY *Come, touch these lips,*

JUDITH *thaw frozen feelings,*

GREGORY SENIOR *Help me to find the lost spark.*

As the song continues, **JUDITH SENIOR** arrives holding a birthday card.

YOUNG GREGORY *Come sit with me,*

GREGORY & JUDITH *replay our movie,*

GREGORY SENIOR *Time-shift the end*

IRIS *to the start.*

ALL *Come wipe our tears and remember*

JUDITH SENIOR *I'll always be here in your heart.*

JUDITH SENIOR places her card on the table with the others. **GREGORY SENIOR**, as if sensing her presence, turns towards her. Their eyes meet for a moment, then...

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 2 (CARE HOME, 2024)

LIGHTS UP on the stage, set as before with chair, table etc. The other figures are all gone. **GREGORY SENIOR** looks around, confused, rummages through a pile of clothes, spilling them on the floor, then shuffles off down an aisle into the audience. He appears to be searching for something.

PHYLLIS enters, looking a little flustered.

PHYLLIS Mr Bellings..? Are you on the toilet, my lovely?

She looks around, finally sees him, hurries over.

PHYLLIS Mr Bellings, what are you doing out there? In you come now. We can't have you wandering off.

GREGORY SENIOR Have you found it?

PHYLLIS Have I found what, my lovely?

GREGORY SENIOR My trophy.

PHYLLIS Your trophy? I don't think so, no. Why don't we have a look inside?

She leads him back to the stage, taking both his arms to help him.

PHYLLIS That's it... Well done, my lovely... Mind your step...

GREGORY SENIOR Oh! Are we dancing?

PHYLLIS (AMUSED) Are you asking?

GREGORY SENIOR Yes!

PHYLLIS Oh go on then, if you're quick!

GREGORY SENIOR slowly swings her round and sings to the tune of 'STRANGER'.

GREGORY SENIOR (SINGING) *La-la-la-la La-la-la-la La la la la laaa.*

PHYLLIS joins in the singing...

BOTH *La-la-la-la La-la-la-la La-la-la-la-laaa. Oooh... Oooh...
Oooh... Oooh...*

GREGORY SENIOR *Come on and dance into the danger!*

PHYLLIS laughs, brings him gently to a halt and settles him into his chair.

PHYLLIS Oh, you cheeky thing! And relax...

GREGORY SENIOR You remind me of my Judith.

PHYLLIS Oh, do!! And what would your Judith say if she saw you with another woman in her arms?

GREGORY SENIOR Oh, she wouldn't let it get in the way.

PHYLLIS Oh really, lucky you.

GREGORY SENIOR (A LITTLE SADLY) Yes.

PHYLLIS scoops up clothes from the floor and starts to fold them again.

PHYLLIS Now come on, we need to get you dressed. It's your birthday. Stuart's here to take you out.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh that's nice.

PHYLLIS Yes.

GREGORY SENIOR Who's Stuart?

PHYLLIS He's your son.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh, is he..?

PHYLLIS You know Stuart. Dark hair. Quite tall. He comes to see you as often as he can.

GREGORY SENIOR Has he got my trophy?

PHYLLIS I don't think so no. What does it look like?

GREGORY SENIOR Dark hair. Quite tall.

PHYLLIS No your trophy.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh it's no good asking me. I've got dementia, you know.

PHYLLIS OK, well try not to worry, my lovely, I'm sure it'll turn up soon.

GREGORY SENIOR What will?

PHYLLIS Your trophy.

GREGORY SENIOR Have you seen it?

PHYLLIS No.

GREGORY SENIOR Well someone must know where it is.

He starts rummaging through the clothes all over again. Phyllis patiently settles him back down.

PHYLLIS Are you sure there was a trophy, my lovely?

GREGORY SENIOR Yes, I saw the whole thing on TV.

PHYLLIS Well I don't think it's here now, sorry. Maybe Stuart will know where it is.

GREGORY SENIOR Who's Stuart?

PHYLLIS He's your son, Mr Bellings.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh, yes!

PHYLLIS Now what colour tie would you like?

STUART arrives in the room looking flustered and checking his phone.

STUART Hello, happy birthday Dad, how are we doing? (LOOKS UP)
Oh for God's sake, he's not even dressed!

PHYLLIS I know, I'm sorry-

STUART I did tell them very clearly our table's booked for twelve o'clock-

PHYLLIS Yeah, I'm sorry, it's been chaos here this morning. And your Dad's still looking for his trophy.

STUART Oh great.

PHYLLIS Don't worry, we'll soon have him dressed.

STUART No it's fine, I'll take him as he is. Come on, Dad.

GREGORY SENIOR Did you find my trophy?

STUART No, I didn't, Dad, sorry.

GREGORY SENIOR Well maybe we can call in at the house.

STUART No, the house is sold.

GREGORY SENIOR Sold?

STUART Yes, I cleared it out.

GREGORY SENIOR Did you find the trophy?

STUART No I already said.

GREGORY SENIOR What about that cupboard at the back of the shed? I'm sure there was something or other in there-

STUART (FIRMLY) No there wasn't a trophy there either, Dad.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh... Well it must be somewhere round here then.

GREGORY SENIOR gets up and heads towards the table. **STUART** hastily puts his phone away and tries to bring him back to reality.

STUART Dad, there is no trophy. We need to go. It's your birthday.

GREGORY SENIOR I know. Stuart's taking me out.

STUART I am Stuart.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh, hello Stuart!

STUART Hello, now we need to go to the restaurant, yeah? We're having a birthday lunch. For you. Cousin Jim will be there. And the kids, Rob and Zoe. And Laura's going to be there as well.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh Christ.

STUART No it's fine, we're... sort of back together. Well, talking about it. But anyway. She's looking forward to seeing you, Dad. So let's not keep her waiting, eh?

STUART starts to lead **GREGORY SENIOR** off.

PHYLLIS No I'm sorry, you can't take him out like that. It's his birthday-

STUART Well if you'd got him ready on time-

PHYLLIS Oh come on, have a heart, it won't take five minutes-

STUART All right fine. But please can we make it quick. I'm parked on a double yellow line.

STUART takes out his mobile phone and starts scrolling for a number. **PHYLLIS** shows **GREGORY SENIOR** the ties.

PHYLLIS Rightio, so what colour tie would you like? We've got red, blue, yellow, green or orange.

STUART It really doesn't matter.

GREGORY SENIOR Pink.

PHYLLIS looks for a pink tie in vain. **STUART** turns away in despair and calls up a number. **PHYLLIS** heads out of the room.

PHYLLIS I'll just check the laundry room, back in a mo.

STUART looks annoyed, starts to protest, then stops to talk into his phone.

STUART (INTO PHONE) Oh hiya, only me. Stuart. Well you knew that. I'm guessing. Anyway. Sorry. Just to say we might be a few minutes late, but we will be there as soon as we can. So. Yeah. Don't order any food as yet. Just... enjoy Cousin Jim. Sorry.

STUART ends the call, puts his phone away, turns back to find his father now on his hands and knees, rooting around under the table. **STUART** hastily goes over and pulls him up.

STUART Dad, what are you doing?!

GREGORY SENIOR I think it might be under here.

STUART Dad, you need to forget about the trophy. We're going out to lunch, yeah?

GREGORY SENIOR Who, me?

STUART Yes, you. It's your birthday, remember?

He sits **GREGORY SENIOR** down on the bed and points to the cards on the table.

STUART Here's a card from all the people at the home. And this one's from your old friends, Roy and Sue. And this one...

He stops as he picks up the card Judith Senior left and sees the name written inside... Then hastily resumes talking, whilst discreetly removing the card and slipping it into an inside pocket.

STUART ...is another one too. And who knows, when you get to the restaurant, Dad, there might even be a little present for you there.

GREGORY SENIOR Ooh, is it my trophy?

STUART Well that would be telling.

GREGORY SENIOR So it is my trophy!

STUART No it isn't.

GREGORY SENIOR (CROSSLY) Why not?!

STUART Because there is no trophy.

GREGORY SENIOR Well it must be somewhere round here then.

He rifles through the waste-paper basket, spilling its contents everywhere: tissues, medicine packets, water bottles and several screwed-up, empty envelopes. **STUART** does his best to reclaim the basket and scoop everything back up.

STUART Dad, there is no trophy!

GREGORY SENIOR No I'm sure there is. Vienna. Nineteen sixty-seven. I saw the whole thing on TV.

STUART Yes! Sat at home in London, Dad. Not in Vienna, where it actually was.

GREGORY SENIOR What was?

STUART The Eurovision Song Contest.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh, yes. That's the one I won with Judith.

STUART No it isn't.

GREGORY SENIOR Well they gave us a trophy - what a night! I remember it as clear as day.

STUART No you don't, Dad. You're just old and confused.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh, am I?

STUART Yes you are, and it's not your fault. But please try and understand. There is no trophy, there never was a trophy, and you did not win the Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna in 1967 - or any other year for that matter.

GREGORY SENIOR (BEAT) Ah well, there's still time.

STUART Dad, you can't even sing!

GREGORY SENIOR I can! I choose not to, that's all. Too painful.

STUART For you or your audience?

GREGORY SENIOR (SMILES) Both!

STUART Very good. Now please hurry up and get dressed.

PHYLLIS arrives back with a pink tie.

PHYLLIS Here it is! Found it!

GREGORY SENIOR My trophy?!

PHYLLIS Oh. No.

GREGORY SENIOR Then it must be under here, hold on.

GREGORY SENIOR gets down on his hands and knees again and disappears underneath the table.

STUART Dad, for Christ's sake! We need to go!

GREGORY SENIOR Just a second.

PHYLLIS Maybe just let him have a quick look.

STUART And I can send my parking ticket to you?

PHYLLIS What, on my wages, are you having a laugh?

STUART Yeah well maybe if you did your job, they might actually pay you a decent wage-

PHYLLIS Unbelievable!

STUART Yeah, it is! I've a good mind to write and complain.

PHYLLIS gives him a furious glare.

Unsettling **MUSIC** starts, as she crouches down and peers under the table.

PHYLLIS Mr Bellings. Come on, my lovely, time to go... Mr Bellings..?
Hmm, that's strange. I can't see him...

STUART What do you mean you can't see him?

PHYLLIS Hello..? Mr Bellings! Are you there?

The unsettling **MUSIC** rises – a warped version of 'STRANGER', the tune that GREGORY SENIOR was singing earlier. The **LIGHTS** flicker. A distant **AIR RAID SIREN** sounds.

STUART He can't have just disappeared.

PHYLLIS Mr Bellings..?

STUART looks around, baffled. There's no sign of his father.

STUART For God's sake, this is ridiculous!

STUART gets down on his hands and knees and puts his head under the table.

STUART Dad!

PHYLLIS Mr Bellings!

STUART Where the hell's he gone? Dad?

PHYLLIS Yooahoo! Is that you, Mr Bellings-

STUART Ow!

PHYLLIS Oops! Sorry!

STUART Dad!

PHYLLIS Mr Bellings!

STUART This is crazy. He can't have just vanished into thin air-

SFX: BOOM! A huge explosion. **LIGHTS DOWN.**

SCENE 3 (CROYDON, 1941)

Darkness. Panic fills the air. A shell-shocked **CROWD**. Lots of **SHOUTS** and **SCREAMS**. The unsettling **MUSIC** continues along with other sound effects: an **AIR-RAID SIREN**, distant **EXPLOSIONS, COLLAPSING BUILDINGS**, a **FIRE-ENGINE BELL** etc...

VOICES Aaagh!
 Help!
 Mister!
 We've been hit!
 Run!
 Help!
 Bang!
 Take cover!
 Mummy!
 Mister!
 Crash!
 Help!
 Mrs Fairfax! What is going on?

Another **BOMB** explodes nearby. **LIGHTS** flicker up and down a fiery red. **STUART** and **PHYLLIS** stand on the now bare stage and look stunned as the noise swirls around them.

STUART Hello? What the hell's going on? Where are we?

PHYLLIS I don't know!

STUART Are we dead?

PHYLLIS Don't panic.

STUART Oh God, we're dead! We're dead and I'm parked on a double yellow line!

PHYLLIS I said don't panic, we're not dead!

Another **EXPLOSION**. More **SHOUTS** and **SCREAMS**. Children run across stage.

VOICES Aaargh!
Help!
Flippin Germans!
Flamin Adolf!
Stuff the Krauts!

STUART Wait, Germans? Did they say Germans?

PHYLLIS I don't know.

STUART What the hell is going on?!

PHYLLIS I DON'T KNOW!

STUART grabs hold of a passing **WW2 CHILD**.

STUART Where are we?

WW2 CHILD Ow! Let go!

STUART Where are we?!!

WW2 CHILD What do you mean?

STUART WHERE ARE WE?!!!!

WW2 CHILD Croydon! Help!

STUART looks stunned, lets go. The terrified **WW2 CHILD** runs off.

STUART Croydon! What are we doing in Croydon?

PHYLLIS Wait, isn't that where your Dad was born?

STUART I dunno. Yeah maybe. How would you know?

PHYLLIS We do talk to them, you know. You should try it.

STUART Yeah all right.

PHYLLIS You might learn something-

STUART I said all right!

GREGORY SENIOR shuffles in, looking even more dazed than before.

GREGORY SENIOR (WEAKLY) Help...

PHYLLIS Mr Bellings! Are you OK, my lovely?

GREGORY SENIOR No, it's the noise. I can't sleep.

PHYLLIS It's OK.

GREGORY SENIOR I want my mummy.

PHYLLIS Aw! I'm sorry my lovely, your mummy isn't here.

A **BABY** cries loudly. **IRIS** appears, wearing 1940s clothes, including an apron and headscarf. She holds a baby in her arms, gently rocking it to sleep.

IRIS There, there, sweetheart, Mummy's here...

STUART, **PHYLLIS** and **GREGORY SENIOR** all step back, watch amazed, as **IRIS** gently rocks the baby, and the **CRYING** gently subsides.

STUART What the... hell's going on..? Are we... inside his head?

GREGORY SENIOR Now who's the one feeling old and confused?

IRIS That's my boy... good boy... time for sleep...

All the **NOISE** and **CHAOS** now give way as gentle **MUSIC** starts, and she sings a sweet lullaby to her child...

SONG 2: 'SAIL AWAY (words: Gerard Foster, music: Stephanie West) / THE SEA UNDER THE STARS' (words & music: Carmen Powell)

IRIS *Sail away now*
Sail away
To an island
Far away
In your dreamboat, dear
I will always be here
There is nothing to fear
If you sail away

MUSIC continues softly as the others talk...

PHYLLIS She's so young.

GREGORY SENIOR Seventeen. She could have been a singer. It was all she ever wanted to do.

STUART Dad, I thought you said you never knew her.

GREGORY SENIOR I didn't. But I'll always remember that voice...

IRIS

Sail away now
Sail away
To an island
Far away
In your dreamboat, dear
I will always be here
There is nothing to fear
If you sail away
Sail away now
Sail away
To an island far away
Mmmm...
Mmmm...

IRIS gently lays the baby down.

IRIS 'Night sweet prince, mummy be back soon.

IRIS steps away, moves off into a corner, where she takes off her headscarf and apron and applies a quick layer of bright red lipstick.

PHYLLIS Wait, where's she going? Is she leaving you there?

GREGORY SENIOR It was all she ever wanted to do.

An **MC** arrives with an old-fashioned microphone.

MC Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome a young lady to sing for us tonight. Making her professional debut, it's the delightful Iris Bellings and the Sea Shells!

MUSIC rises as **IRIS** steps forward, now looking a lot more glamorous, and accompanied by two backing singers. She sings the lullaby through once more, this time delivering it with great power and panache, for the benefit of the whole audience.

IRIS

Sail away now
Sail away
To an island
Far away
In your dreamboat, dear
I will always be here
There is nothing to fear
If you sail away

Sail away now
Sail away
To a bright and
Sunny day
In your dreamboat, dear

*I will always be here
There is nothing to fear
If you sail away*

*The sea under the stars
Shines as bright as moonlight
The sailors on the ship
Set sail under the moonlight*

*The sea under the stars
Shines as bright as moonlight
The sailors on the ship
Set sail under the moonlight*

As the song heads towards its climax, the **LIGHTS** flicker, a **BABY** cries, an **AIR RAID SIREN** sounds. **IRIS** bravely continues to sing...

IRIS

*Sail away now
Sail away
To an island
Far away
In your dreamboat, dear
I will always be here
There is nothing to fear
If you sail away*

*Sail away now
Sail away
To a bright and
Sunny day
In your dreamboat, dear*

I will always be here

There is nothing to fear

If you... sail... away..!

The **NOISE** and **MUSIC** build to a dizzying crescendo. **IRIS** holds on, sings her last triumphant note... then **LIGHTS DOWN** and a huge **EXPLOSION** sounds.

Silence.

SCENE 4 (CLASSROOM, 1951)

LIGHTS UP on **STUART**, **PHYLLIS** and **GREGORY SENIOR**.

GREGORY SENIOR And that's when I vowed, one day, I would win the Eurovision Song Contest.

STUART At the age of six weeks old?

GREGORY SENIOR I was always a very musical child. They could never stop me singing at school.

From off-stage we hear the chatter of **CHILDREN** and a teacher, **MRS FAIRFAX**.

MRS FAIRFAX (OFF-STAGE) Settle down now. Line up two by two.

STUART tries to bring his father back to the present.

STUART OK, shall we get to the restaurant, Dad? I'd rather not keep Laura waiting-

Too late. **MRS FAIRFAX** bustles in with her music baton. She is brisk and teacherly but somewhat fragile underneath. She is followed by a line of **CHILDREN** in 1950s school uniform. They each have a music book.

MRS FAIRFAX Come along now children, let's not dilly-dally... And that includes you, Gregory Bellings, chop-chop!

YOUNG GREGORY lags behind, shirt hanging out and singing a little tune to himself.

MRS FAIRFAX And do tuck your shirt in, there's a good boy. You know how strict Mr Warren can be. Now today we're going to start by singing a song!

A wave of excitement goes around the **CHILDREN**...

MRS FAIRFAX Can you all please turn to page 23.

The **CHILDREN** react with groans. This is not what they had been hoping for.

YOUNG GREGORY But Miss, I thought you said we could sing *my* song?

MRS FAIRFAX Yes I did, and we will do another time, I promise.

YOUNG GREGORY But it's Guy Fawkes *today*, Miss. I wrote it special.

CHILDREN Guy Fawkes! / Can we sing it now, Miss? / Please! ETC

MRS FAIRFAX No, I'm sorry, maybe later, if there's time, but for now we're going to sing something nice and quiet. So, everyone following me, here we go!

SONG 3: 'DEEP UNDERGROUND' (words & music: Charlotte Walker)

PIANO accompaniment starts and the song proceeds with **MRS FAIRFAX** singing the lines and then the **CHILDREN** carefully repeating. All except **YOUNG GREGORY**, who sings along with everyone else... until he reaches the last word of each line and releases an explosive noise - still in perfect time with the music.

MRS FAIRFAX *I once went mining deep underground
When I saw something shiny – can you guess what I found?*

CHILDREN (COPYING) *I once went mining deep underground
When I saw something shiny – can you guess what I-*

YOUNG GREGORY Bang!

MRS FAIRFAX jumps a little. The **CHILDREN** laugh.

MRS FAIRFAX Settle down now, Gregory, please. Here we go...
(RESUMES) *I gave it a tug, then I gave a big gasp*
Something very special was in my grasp.

CHILDREN *I gave it a-*

YOUNG GREGORY Whizz!

CHILDREN *Then I gave a big-*

YOUNG GREGORY Pop!

CHILDREN *Something very special was in my-*

YOUNG GREGORY Crack!

MRS FAIRFAX twitches. The **CHILDREN** laugh.

MRS FAIRFAX That's enough now, Gregory, please, no more.

YOUNG GREGORY I'm just throwing in a few fireworks, Miss-

MRS FAIRFAX Yes I know, and I'm asking you to stop. We don't want to disturb Mr Warren. Now, altogether, one, two, three, four...

As **MRS FAIRFAX** and the **CHILDREN** sing, **YOUNG GREGORY** throws down his book and releases more firework noises: Zip! Whizz! Bang! Weee! Crack! Boom! Crash! Etc

ALL *All the other miners, they came to see
Something very special was found by me.*

The other **CHILDREN** all follow suit, throwing down their books and joining in with firework noises of their own. **MRS FAIRFAX** desperately tries to keep singing over all the noise. Finally, she snaps.

MRS FAIRFAX That's enough now! One more noise and I'm warning you, I'll...

CHILD ONE What, start crying again, Miss?

The **CHILDREN** all laugh up uproariously. **MRS FAIRFAX** is rapidly losing control. **YOUNG GREGORY** starts to feel a little awkward. He never meant it to go this far.

MRS FAIRFAX No, I'll... call Mr Warren-

CHILD TWO Whizz!

CHILD THREE Bang!

CHILD FOUR Pop!

CHILD FIVE Boom!

MRS FAIRFAX twitches and shakes, clearly being triggered by the loud noises.

MRS FAIRFAX No stop it now, please. It's not funny. You know I can't bear loud noises.

CHILD ONE Can we sing the Guy Fawkes song now, Miss?

CHILDREN Yeah! / Guy Fawkes! / H'ray! / Go on, Greg! / Sing!

The **CHILDREN** push **GREGORY** forward. He's feeling a little sorry for **MRS FAIRFAX** now. But it's too late to pull out now. He happily starts to sing his song and the class are soon all joining in.

SONG 4: 'WHIZZ-BANG-POP-BOOM' (words & music: Noah Tuppeney)

ALL Whizz-Bang-Pop-Boom
The fireworks go out!
Let's burn down the Houses of Parliament!
Let's burn down the Houses of Parliament!
King James the First will kill him
King James said Guy Fawkes will die
King James the First is very unkind
Very unkind indeed
Whizz-Bang-Pop-Boom
The fireworks go out
Let's burn down the Houses of Parliament!
Let's burn down the Houses of Parliament!
The 5th of November 1605 is when this will take place
The 5th of November 1605, we'll never leave a trace
Whizz-Bang-Pop-Boom
The fireworks go out
Let's burn down the Houses of Parliament!
Let's burn down the Houses of Parliament-

YOUNG GREGORY sings and dances around the room, leading his classmates in a rowdy celebration. **MRS FAIRFAX** protests, tries to calm them down, scoops up their discarded books from the floor, then gives up and retreats to a corner. **YOUNG GREGORY** carries on leading the singing, oblivious to his teacher's distress.

Then suddenly the singing comes to an abrupt halt as the fearsome **MR WARREN** arrives, wielding a cane (much bigger than her puny baton!)

MR WARREN Mrs Fairfax! What is going on?!!!!

MRS FAIRFAX Mr Warren... I'm sorry... it's my fault-

MR WARREN Silence!

MRS FAIRFAX obeys. **MR WARREN** turns to the **CHILDREN**.

MR WARREN Who is behind this infernal racket?

YOUNG GREGORY It's not a racket, sir. It's called singing.

The other **CHILDREN** shrink back a little, leaving **YOUNG GREGORY** exposed.

MR WARREN Ah, Bellings. I might have known it was you... (EXPLODES)
How dare you come into my school and SING!

YOUNG GREGORY Well it is a music lesson, sir-

MR WARREN Insolent child! I'd have thought that you of all people would show a little more respect to poor Mrs Fairfax here. A widow at the age of twenty-seven, Bellings! Her husband killed by a Nazi bomb!

CHILD SIX Please sir, Gregory lost his mother too.

MR WARREN Oh, I know. And she would still be here today, if she had not gone out to *sing*, leaving poor little Gregory a penniless orphan, entirely dependent on the mercy of the state! Couldn't wait to be shot of you, could she, Bellings? And yet you still insist on *singing*! Why?

YOUNG GREGORY (MEEKLY) I can't help it, I'm sorry, sir.

MR WARREN (IMITATING GREGORY) "I can't help it, I'm sorry, sir". Well, you'd better start helping it before it's too late! Because I tell you this for nothing, Bellings, if you don't stop your so-called singing and knuckle down to what matters in life, then you'll end up a worthless good-for-nothing, just like your wretched mother!

YOUNG GREGORY (STUNG) That's not true! I'll prove you wrong! I'm gonna be a proper singer! I'm gonna be rich! I'm gonna travel the world! I'm gonna win the Eurovision Song Contest in 1967, so there!

EVERYONE looks a little confused.

MR WARREN The Euro-what boy..?

YOUNG GREGORY Well it hasn't been invented yet. But one day it will be. And I'm gonna win. And then you'll be sorry, you ROTTEN OLD TOAD!!!

MR WARREN Right, that's it! My office! NOW!!!

YOUNG GREGORY resignedly troops off-stage. **MR WARREN** follows, already flexing his cane.

MRS FAIRFAX (WEAKLY) No, please, Mr Warren, don't...

Her protests are to no avail. A solemn hush descends as the punishment is delivered off-stage... **CRACK!... CRACK!.. CRACK!... CRACK!... CRACK!... CRACK!**

As the headmaster gives the boy six of the best, the **CHILDREN** and **MRS FAIRFAX** all shudder in sympathy then slowly make their way off-stage.

STUART, PHYLLIS and **GREGORY SENIOR** also listen uneasily, then watch as **YOUNG GREGORY** walks gingerly back in.

PHYLLIS What a monster.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh it didn't do me any harm. I had a music book down the back of my pants.

YOUNG GREGORY checks the coast is clear then pulls out the music book, grins, and tosses it to **GREGORY SENIOR**, who catches it.

STUART But the way he talked. What he said about your mother... Is that why you stopped singing?

GREGORY SENIOR Who me? No, nothing could stop me singing.

GREGORY SENIOR looks intently at **YOUNG GREGORY**, staring up at the night sky.

GREGORY SENIOR I knew she was out there somewhere. Telling me not to give up on my dream.

SONG 5: 'WHEN I LOOK AT THE STARS' (words & music: Georgie Arthur)

YOUNG GREGORY *When I look at the stars*
I know what is ours
Life is better than gold bars

When I look at the flowers

*I count all the hours
When it rains, it comes in showers*

*I don't really care
With the breeze in my hair
Taking in deep breaths of air*

*Listening to the birds
Singing all day long
That's why I'm singing my little song.*

YOUNG GREGORY bows to the audience and happily skips off, exchanging a hi-five with **GREGORY SENIOR** as he goes.

GREGORY SENIOR (TO STUART) You see, I told you I could sing.

STUART Yeah, at school when you were eight years old. It's not exactly Top of the Pops, is it Dad?

GREGORY SENIOR No of course, that didn't come till later.

PHYLLIS What really? You were on Top of the Pops?

GREGORY SENIOR Oh yes, with Judith several times. Maybe she's got the trophy.

PHYLLIS Judith?

GREGORY SENIOR Yes.

STUART OK, time to go to the restaurant, Dad. Why don't we talk about this in the in the car?

GREGORY SENIOR No we need to find Judith.

STUART Well she isn't here.

GREGORY SENIOR Who Judith? No, she sailed away.

STUART No that was your mother.

GREGORY SENIOR And Judith too.

STUART (LOSING PATIENCE) Dad, I've told you already, Judith doesn't exist!

GREGORY SENIOR stops, confused, suddenly doubtful, lost in thought.

GREGORY SENIOR No she does. I remember.

STUART No, you think you do, Dad. But it's all in your imagination, trust me. There is no Judith and there never was.

PHYLLIS So is Judith not your mother then?

STUART No.

PHYLLIS Oh right. I thought she was. The way he talks about her. All the time.

STUART doesn't look pleased. **PHYLLIS** feels awkward but ploughs on...

PHYLLIS I guess she must be some other woman he knew... before he met your mother.

STUART Maybe so.

PHYLLIS It does happen. Quite often, in fact. They'll forget about the person they loved and get fixed on someone they hardly knew-

GREGORY SENIOR (SUDDENLY) My birthday.

STUART Yeah, I know it's your birthday, Dad. That's why we need to get to the restaurant-

GREGORY SENIOR No, my birthday. 1963. That's when I first met Judith.

MUSIC starts. **LIGHTS** change. **STUART** tries to usher his father away.

GREGORY SENIOR Or at least, that's when I first remember...

STUART Dad, please... We need to get going now... Dad!

Too late. **GREGORY** (now in his early twenties) appears, along with his **BAND-MATES**.

SCENE 5 (GIG, 1963)

GREGORY sings while his **BAND-MATES** do backing vocals.

SONG 6: 'TOO LATE' (words: Gerard Foster, music: Robin Cave)

GREGORY

Tick-tock goes the clock

On my bedroom wall

Ding-dong rings the bell

On the old town hall

As I run for my bus

In the pouring rain

Will it just be another

Boring day again?

Yeah the sands of time are flowing

Just one way we're all going

So before you burn

Better take your turn

Drip-drip goes the tap

As I toss and turn

No point in living

If you don't learn

How long, how far

Who with, what for

I don't know, but I know

There's an open door

Yeah the river keeps on flowing

Just one way we're all going

So before you drown

Don't slow down

Too late!

BAND-MATES *It's not too late*

GREGORY *Too late!*

BAND-MATES *We're flying*

GREGORY *Too late!*

BAND-MATES *It's not too late*

We're flying, flying, flying high!

GREGORY *Tick-tock goes the clock*

On my bedroom wall

Ding-dong rings the bell

On the old town hall

As I run for my bus

In the pouring rain

Will it just be another

Boring day again?

Yeah the sands of time are flowing

Just one way we're all going

So before you drown

Don't slow down!

The song finishes. Cheers and applause from the crowd. The **BAND** all bow and wave, slapping each other heartily on the back.

BAND-MATE ONE Great gig!

BAND-MATE TWO Best ever!

BAND-MATE ONE Man, you were on fire!

BAND-MATE TWO No you were on fire!

BAND-MATE ONE No you were on fire!

BAND-MATE TWO We were all on fire!

GREGORY Yeah apart from the harmonies in the opening song. We really need to work on that, guys.

BAND-MATE ONE Woah, Greg, dude, stay cool. It was good.

GREGORY Yeah it was. But *Good* won't get us a recording contract. *Good* won't get us on Top of the Pops. *Good* won't get us the winning song at the Eurovision Song Contest-

BAND-MATE TWO Who cares? I tell you what *Good* will get us. A load of free drinks at the bar!

BAND-MATE ONE Yeah, and a ride home with any one of those attractive young ladies waiting over there.

FEMALE VOICES (OFF-STAGE) Hey Greg!

BAND-MATE ONE It's the sixties, Greg. You're supposed to enjoy it.

BAND-MATE TWO Not act like you're in your sixties!

BAND-MATE ONE Nice!

GREGORY looks over, hesitates for a moment, then returns to his argument.

GREGORY No, I think we should talk about that song-

But his **BAND-MATES** are already moving off.

BAND-MATE ONE Forget it.

BAND-MATE TWO There's more to life than singing, Greg.

BAND-MATE ONE Ladies!

GREGORY is left on his own. He sighs, clearly annoyed, and moodily starts to pack up his guitar. **JUDITH** appears and nervously approaches. She holds a lovingly crafted home-made birthday card. She has bare feet.

JUDITH Hi.

GREGORY (NOT LOOKING UP) No I don't need a ride home, thanks.

JUDITH looks thrown at this non-sequitur.

JUDITH Oh... No, I... just wanted to say... that was really good.

GREGORY (STILL NOT LOOKING UP) Thanks.

JUDITH No, really.

GREGORY (STILL SEETHING) Well it would have been better. But all some other people want to do is chat up members of the opposite...

As he reaches the end of his line, **GREGORY** finally looks up and finds himself looking straight at **JUDITH**...

GREGORY ...sex.

An awkward moment. Both of them equally mortified. **JUDITH** tries to extricate herself with as much grace as possible.

JUDITH No, yeah, that must be really annoying when you just want to focus on the music... yeah...

She realises she is still holding the card. Thinks about trying to hide it. Too late.

JUDITH Happy birthday...

She hands him the card. He looks pleased, surprised and a little baffled.

GREGORY Oh... wow... did you make this yourself?

JUDITH Yeah, the 24-hour card shop was closed...

She waits for him to respond to her feeble joke. But he's still somewhat blown away by the card. No one's ever made him a card before.

JUDITH It's Judith, by the way. You may remember. We chatted briefly at a gig last year. You were... doing something with an amp.

GREGORY (LYING) Oh. Yeah.

JUDITH But anyway, that was great. I mean, apart from the harmonies in the opening song which were-

GREGORY Awful.

JUDITH I was going to say brave. But no, you're right, they were really bad.

GREGORY Oh, thanks! So you reckon you could do better?!

JUDITH Oh, no. I mean I do write a bit. But I'm not in a band like you. It's just me singing words in my head.

GREGORY Well if you ever want to show someone...

JUDITH Oh God, no. No, I couldn't.

GREGORY Why not?

JUDITH hesitantly produces a crumpled sheet of paper from her pocket.

JUDITH Well there is this song I was working on today... but it's probably not your sort of thing...

She nervously hands it over... He reads... She waits... Still waits... Finally she can take no more.

JUDITH Well anyway, it was nice to see you again.

She turns to leave, already kicking herself for having messed the whole thing up.

GREGORY No wait. This is good. This is *really good*.

JUDITH Yeah?

GREGORY I'm just thinking that line into the chorus. What if it went up not down?

She takes the page back, reads, frowns...

JUDITH What you mean la-la-laaa...

GREGORY Yeah, that's it! Exactly! La-la-laaa la-la-laaa...

JUDITH joins in, harmonising with him instinctively.

GREGORY & JUDITH La-la-la-la-la-la-la-laaaa!

GREGORY Ooh nice! How was that for you?

JUDITH Yeah, good!

GREGORY Wanna take it from the top?

JUDITH OK!

SONG 7: 'MY FIRST LOVE' (words & music: Jasmine Down)

GREGORY and **JUDITH** sing, a little tentatively at first, but soon growing in confidence as the obvious chemistry between them translates into musical form.

GREGORY & JUDITH *La-la-la-la*
La-la-la-la-la-la
La-la-la-la
La-la-la-la-la-la
La-laaa... la-la-la-la
La-la-la-la-la-la
La-laaa... La-laaa... La-laaa...

JUDITH *I wish upon a star*
That you didn't have to move so far
'Cos all you did was break my heart.
I wait for the day
When you'll come up to me and say
That you'll love me again some day.

GREGORY & JUDITH *For you were my first love*
My everything, my love, my life
The air that I breathe
So please come back to me...

JUDITH This is so weird, we've only just met and I-

GREGORY Feel like I've known you all my life...

JUDITH Me too...

GREGORY Let's do it. Let's form a duo, me and you!

JUDITH What really? But what about the band?

GREGORY Forget the band. I just want to sing with you!

JUDITH Me too...

They draw closer, seem almost about to kiss... Then **JUDITH** pulls back and **MUSIC STOPS...**

JUDITH Oh and Greg, I promise... I won't let anything get in the way.

GREGORY What do you mean?

JUDITH You know, all that other stuff... You're right, we mustn't let it get in the way...

GREGORY tries to hide his disappointment, hastily agrees.

GREGORY Oh, right, no, yeah... it's all about the music.

They move apart and resume singing as the **MUSIC STARTS AGAIN...**

JUDITH *I miss your cute blonde hair
And those sea-blue eyes of yours
I'm sorry that I couldn't do more.
For you were my whole world
Thought that I was a lucky girl
But I felt my heart start to burn.*

GREGORY & JUDITH *For you were my first love
My everything, my love, my life
The air that I breathe
So please come back to me...*

DAVE, a flashy-looking manager arrives: cheap suit, trilby hat, gold chain. He sweeps them away into a corner and, with a flourish, produces a contract for them to sign. Meanwhile **BAND-MATES ONE & TWO** reappear.

BAND-MATE ONE Hey man, you hear about Greg and that chick?

BAND-MATE TWO What, Greg... you mean he finally..? Nice!

BAND-MATE ONE No, he's dumped us and gone off with her. Got a manager and a record deal.

BAND-MATE TWO What?!

BAND-MATE ONE Word is they're gonna be the next big thing.

BAND-MATE TWO Yeah right!

A crowd of screaming **CHILDREN** rush in...

CHILDREN Aaah! / Greg and Judith! / We love you! ETC

...as an excited **TV HOST** steps in with a microphone.

TV HOST And here they are with their debut single, it's **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** with 'My First Love'!

The **CHILDREN** wave their arms as **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** resume their song. The **BAND-MATES** look on, sceptically at first... but soon even they are tapping their feet and nodding their heads along with the music.

JUDITH *I wish upon a star*

*That you didn't have to move so far
'Cos all you did was break my heart.
I wait for the day
When you'll come up to me and say
That you'll love me again some day.*

GREGORY & JUDITH *For you were my first love
My everything, my love, my life
The air that I breathe
So please come back to me...*

The stage clears but **MUSIC** continues as **MRS FAIRFAX** hurries in and excitedly accosts **MR WARREN**. She holds a portable radio to her ear and is, somewhat improbably, moving her hips – for the first time in many years.

MRS FAIRFAX Mr Warren! Mr Warren! It's Gregory Bellings! The boy who wouldn't stop singing.

MR WARREN Who?

MRS FAIRFAX He's on the radio, Mr Warren. Come on, dance, you know you want to!

MR WARREN Certainly not!

The **TV HOST** steps in again.

TV HOST And here they are back again with their **FOURTH** UK top-ten smash-hit. It's the one and only Gregory and Judith!

The crowd of **CHILDREN** swamp them again with screams and demands for autographs which they happily sign. The **BAND-MATES** look on enviously. **MR WARREN** watches, stupefied. **MRS FAIRFAX** joins the throng.

CHILDREN Aaaaah! / Greg and Judith! / We love you!

BAND-MATES Hey Greg! / Greg, man! / Greg! / How you doing?

MRS FAIRFAX Gregory! Remember me?!

DAVE intervenes, wading into the crowd and pulling **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** away.

DAVE OK, that's enough now, folks. These guys need to be on a plane to L.A.

The stage clears apart from **GREGORY** and **JUDITH**. An **AMERICAN TV HOST** steps in.

AMERICAN TV HOST And here they are, all the way from London, it's Gregory and Judith woohoo!

More adoring cheers and screams. **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** wave to their fans.

AMERICAN TV HOST So your first ever Billboard number one and a sell-out tour of the United States. You guys have been hitting it outa the park!

GREGORY Uh, yeah, it's been a crazy couple of years.

AMERICAN HOST And I'm guessing you can't wait to get back home and... spend a bit of time... just the two of you... together?

She gives a little nod and a wink. **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** share an awkward look.

GREGORY Oh... No... We just want to keep on singing and...

JUDITH Not let anything get in the way.

The first **TV HOST** steps back in, taking over.

TV HOST And the winners of this year's 'Song For Europe' are...
Gregory and Judith!

CROWD Hooray!

TV HOST You're going to the Eurovision Song Contest!
Congratulations! How do you feel?

JUDITH Amazing!

GREGORY It's a dream come true!

TV HOST So tell me, you've had the most amazing three years...
what's the secret?

GREGORY Oh, there is no secret.

JUDITH Yeah, we just work really well together.

TV HOST No, come on. There's such great chemistry between you
two. Have you never..?

GREGORY and **JUDITH** share an awkward look then hastily brush it aside.

GREGORY Who us?

JUDITH Oh God, no way!

GREGORY No with us, it's-

JUDITH All about the music-

GREGORY Yeah, we just want to-

JUDITH Keep on doing what we're doing and-

GREGORY & JUDITH Not let anything get in the way...

They stop for a moment as they register they've just talked over each other... Then both relax, smile and say:

GREGORY & JUDITH Jinx!

Underwhelmed, the **TV HOST** waits for something more, but neither have anything further to say...

TV HOST Gregory and Judith! Good luck in Vienna! And don't forget to come back with that trophy!

CHILDREN & CHORUS all cheer and applaud then join in as they sing for the final time...

ALL *I wish upon a star
That you didn't have to move so far
'Cos all you did was break my heart.
I wait for the day
When you'll come up to me and say
That you'll love me again some day.*

*For you were my first love
My everything, my love, my life
The air that I breathe
So please come back to me.*

*Our love will never end
I know we can find our way again
So please come back
Come back to me!*

LIGHTS DOWN

END OF ACT I - INTERVAL

ACT II

SCENE 6 (THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST, VIENNA, 1967)

HOUSE LIGHTS still up.

The stage is set for the Eurovision Song Contest – a few glitzy decorations.

Off-stage, **MUSICIANS & SINGERS** warm up. On-stage, a flurry of activity... A glamorous **EUROVISION HOST** has her make-up checked and her wig adjusted. A **SOUND ENGINEER** checks a microphone. A **LIGHTING GUY** checks the lights, signalling up, down etc to the lighting desk.

SOUND ENGINEER Guten abend, Vienna. Eins-zwei-drei...

LIGHTING GUY Yeah, that's MK11... 8JT...

A **FLOOR MANAGER** (clipboard and headphones) leads on a group of **CHILDREN** carrying small flags to wave, each one a different European country.

FLOOR MANAGER (AUSTRIAN) And house-lights down, we are live in thirty seconds!

HOUSE LIGHTS DOWN.

FLOOR MANAGER So, children, all here in a row, stand up straight! Now let's have one more practice, ja? On three, ein-zwei-drei wave wave wave! Big smiles! Happy happy happy! Wave! And stop!

The **CHILDREN** obediently follow the ever-so-slightly-scary **FLOOR MANAGER**'s instructions.

FLOOR MANAGER Wunderbar! Twenty seconds! First positions please!

The **LIGHT & SOUND CREW** scurry off. The **EUROVISION HOST** hastily takes up her position, consults her cue-cards and prepares to speak to camera.

FLOOR MANAGER We are live on air in fifteen seconds! (TO THE AUDIENCE)
So please, lots of clapping and cheering, ja? Even if you think this whole Eurovision thing is ein great, big steaming pile of sausage, you clap, you cheer, you pretend to be happy, and then you will be happy, ja! Well, that's how it works for Gunter and me, and who am I to argue with a large Alsatian? Ten seconds! Cameras ready! Lights! Sound! VT! And everybody happy-happy-happy-here we go in five... four... stand up straight... two... one...

The **FLOOR MANAGER** points dramatically to the **EUROVISION HOST**.

EUROVISION HOST (AUSTRIAN) Meine Damen und Herren, ladies and gentlemen, willkommen, bienvenue and welcome to the Eurovision Song Contest 1967, live from Vienna!

We hear **RECORDED MUSIC**: The Eurovision Song Contest opening theme tune – 'Te Deum Prelude' (Charpentier)

The **FLOOR MANAGER** furiously gesticulates to the **CHILDREN** to smile and wave their flags, then turns to the audience and encourages them to cheer and applaud.

ALL Hooray!!!

EUROVISION HOST Now time for our first song. All the way from Gay Paree, it is... Leyla and les Coquilles St Jaques!

MUSIC starts... **LEYLA** sings with two **BACKING SINGERS**.

SONG 8: 'DANS UNE VIEILLE MAISON TRES NOIRE'

(words & music: Leyla Bourne, French translation: Gerard Foster)

LEYLA Dans une vieille maison très noire
Me voilà sans tout espoir

En attendant, en me plaignant
Dans une vieille maison très noire
Me voilà sans tout espoir
En attendant, en me plaignant

Et oui, je n'aurais pas du
Mais je n'arrivais pas
O je n'en pouvais plus
Et oui, je n'aurais pas du
Mais je n'arrivais pas
O je n'en pouvais plus

Mais ça fait très longtemps
Longtemps
Je ne pouvais pas le lire
Je ne pouvais pas l'écrire
Ne pouvais même pas réfléchir
Hélas!

Et oui, je n'aurais pas du
Mais je n'arrivais pas
O je n'en pouvais plus
Mais ça fait très longtemps
Et maintenant
J'arrive à le faire
J'arrive à le faire
Moi, j'arrive à le faire (CHORUS: Toi, t'arrives à le faire)

LEYLA bows and leaves to **CHEERS** and **APPLAUSE**.

EUROVISION HOST Wunderbar! Amazing! Thank you, Leyla. Und now, for the moment you have all been waiting. Here they are, representing the United Kingdom, the one and only Gregory und Judith!

CHILDREN Hooray!!!

The **EUROVISION HOST** sweeps off stage. **LIGHTS** change to a moody, atmospheric night. **MUSIC** starts with a familiar refrain we have heard once or twice already...

SONG 9: 'STRANGER' (words & music: Celia Young)

GREGORY stands alone on stage. He acts out the role of someone lost at night, alone in the dark, then hearing footsteps creep up behind them...

GREGORY *Standing in the moonlight in the middle of the night
Feeling like a stranger 'cos you know you don't belong
Ooh... Ooh... Ooh... Ooh...*

JUDITH now appears, as if following behind him. As before, she has bare feet.

JUDITH *Standing in the moonlight in the middle of the night
Feeling like a stranger 'cos you know you don't belong
Ooh... Ooh... Ooh... Ooh...*

GREGORY turns round, sees **JUDITH**. The two of them circle each other, both simultaneously luring and resisting.

JUDITH *Come on and dance into the danger
I know you want'a
So just come and dance with me now*

GREGORY puts out his hands. **JUDITH** approaches.

GREGORY *Have you ever wondered what it could be?*

JUDITH *Never normal, ever fierce*

BOTH *Have you ever wondered what it could be?*

Never normal, ever fierce

They join hands and dance, echoing the way that Gregory Senior danced with Phyllis in Scene 2.

BOTH *La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la! Oooh... Oooh... Oooh...
Oooh...*

*La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la! Oooh... Oooh... Oooh...
Oooh...*

Then they break away and dance freely, playing out to the audience.

BOTH *Come on and dance into the danger*

I know you want'a

So just come and dance with me now

Have you ever wondered what it could be

Never normal, ever fierce

Let's go fly to the moon

And travel through the stars

And travel through the stars

And travel through the stars

And travel through the stars

And travel through the stars

And travel through the stars

By the end, all the **CHILDREN** and **CHORUS** are joining in.

ALL *Let's go fly to the moon*
And travel through the stars
Go stranger!

CHEERS and **APPLAUSE** from the audience. **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** happily wave and bow. The **EUROVISION HOST** comes sweeping back in.

EUROVISION HOST And the votes are in! And the winner of the contest is...

A brief **DRUM ROLL...** **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** exchange a nervous look.

EUROVISION HOST The United Kingdom!!!

ALL Hooray!!!

GREGORY and **JUDITH** punch the air in delight. **ALL** cheer and applaud. The **CHILDREN** excitedly wave their flags.

GREGORY & JUDITH Yesss!

Overcome with emotion, **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** joyously embrace.

EUROVISION HOST And here it is, the famous trophy...

A moment's awkward pause as she realises she doesn't have the trophy... Then the **FLOOR MANAGER** discreetly arrives to hand it to her, just in time.

EUROVISION HOST Congratulations, Gregory und Judith, winners of the 1967 Eurovision Song Contest!

Triumphant fanfare **MUSIC** as **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** prepare to accept the trophy. The **FLOOR MANAGER** encourages the crowd to cheer and applaud. The **CHILDREN** wave their flags...

But just then **STUART** bursts in and grabs the trophy.

STUART All right, stop, just stop!

MUSIC comes to an abrupt halt. The **EUROVISION HOST** reacts with panic.

EUROVISION HOST (SCREAMS) Aaaah! Helfen!

GREGORY Hey, what are you doing?

The **FLOOR MANAGER** races on and heroically shields the **EUROVISION HOST** from any potential attack.

FLOOR MANAGER Security!!!

The scene rapidly descends into chaos with **everyone talking over one another** as **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** try to claim the trophy back from **STUART**, who resists and loudly tries to explain.

GREGORY / JUDITH Hey! Give us our trophy! / What are you doing!

STUART This is not real! None of this happened OK? It is not a real memory. It's the fantasy of a confused old man!

GREGORY SENIOR comes shuffling in as fast as he can.

GREGORY SENIOR Hey! Stop!

FLOOR MANAGER Security! Stay down!

The **EUROVISION HOST** crawls away on her hands and knees, as if escaping some aerial bombardment. **PHYLLIS** hurries in and tries to grab the trophy from **STUART**.

PHYLLIS Oh for Christ's sake, what do you think you're doing? Just let them have the trophy!

STUART No!

GREGORY SENIOR Stop thief! That's my trophy!

GREGORY No it's ours.

GREGORY SENIOR That's what I said.

FLOOR MANAGER Security! We have intruders on the stage! Someone get those children out of here now!!!

The **CHILDREN** are hastily led away.

FLOOR MANAGER Go on shoo! Happy-happy-keep smiling, go!

Finally a couple of **SECURITY GUARDS** arrive and join the fray. But far from bringing the scene to order, their clumsy presence just adds to the chaos.

FLOOR MANAGER And cut to the commercial break!

ALL argue and shout over each other. The trophy is wrestled from hand to hand and finally ends up with one of the **SECURITY GUARDS**.

Then just as the chaos reaches its climax, an unexpected character steps in: it's **MR WARREN** from the classroom scene, who enters and delivers his line in exactly the same manner as he did before.

MR WARREN Mrs Fairfax! What is going on?!!!

Everyone stops and looks at him with surprise, confusion, and even some amusement. He looks back at them, realisation slowly dawning...

MR WARREN Sorry... I think I may be in the wrong scene...

He exits, tail between his legs. **GREGORY** looks around, baffled. He waits for an explanation, but none comes.

GREGORY All right, what's going on..?

An awkward silence.

GREGORY That's Mr Warren... What is Mr Warren doing in Vienna at the Eurovision Song Contest?

Still no one wants to say anything.

GREGORY Are you telling me this isn't real?

STUART Well of course it isn't! Clearly! The whole thing's a dream! The trophy, the singing, the ridiculous German accents.

FLOOR MANAGER Excuse me, we are Austrian!

STUART Whatever, this is all in his head. We are all, literally, in my dad's head.

GREGORY Yeah I know, but we're in the memories, right? We're not dreams. Dreams are way over there with the unicorns and the talking gnomes.

He waves a hand to indicate somewhere far off-stage.

GREGORY All this, this actually happened, right..?

GREGORY SENIOR Well it's no good asking me. I've got dementia, you know.

GREGORY Oh great. So all this time... me and Judith... Four years! And none of it was real..?!

JUDITH Well it felt real.

GREGORY Oh, it 'felt' real, yeah! And how does it feel now? All those records. All those fans. All those trips around the world. All those times I thought of Mr Warren rotting in some dingy hole and knowing that I'd proved him wrong... And it was all just some old man's dream!

PHYLLIS He's not just some old man. He's you.

GREGORY Oh, great! (TO **GREGORY SENIOR**) Well thanks a lot, me! For sharing your dream. What a waste of a life that was.

GREGORY starts moving off.

GREGORY SENIOR No wait... the trophy.

GREGORY There is no trophy! You may as well forget it... like everything else.

Sure enough, there is no sign of the trophy (smuggled off by one of the **SECURITY GUARDS**). **GREGORY** leaves. **JUDITH** hesitates, awkward, then hurries after him.

FLOOR MANAGER OK, show is over, clear the set.

SOUND & LIGHTING CREW start to clear the set of all props, decorations etc, leaving **PHYLLIS, STUART** and **GREGORY SENIOR** on an empty stage.

PHYLLIS Happy now?

STUART Who me?

PHYLLIS We were so close! Could you not at least have let them lift the trophy?

STUART It didn't happen!

PHYLLIS Who cares?

STUART I care! Fifty-seven years he was married to my mother! And in the last few months he's barely mentioned her name. It's all Judith this and Judith that.

GREGORY SENIOR Yes, we need to find Judith.

STUART Judith doesn't exist! She's a figment of your imagination. Like the trophy and the records and the screaming fans.

GREGORY SENIOR No I'm sure-

STUART All right fine, you want proof. Let's ask Google, see what they think... (GETS OUT HIS PHONE AND TALKS INTO IT) Google, who are Gregory and Judith?

He waits for a moment, then holds the phone to **GREGORY SENIOR**'s face.

STUART You see? There is no Gregory and Judith. There were no records or screaming fans. And you didn't win the Eurovision Song Contest in 1967. Sandie Shaw did.

GREGORY SENIOR Who?

STUART Sandie Shaw.

GREGORY SENIOR As in beach?

STUART What?

GREGORY SENIOR Sandy Shore. I think we went there with Cousin Jim.

STUART No Sandie Shaw is the name of the singer.

GREGORY SENIOR Sandy Shore. Are you sure?

STUART Yes, I'm sure! Oh come on Dad, you told me yourself. How the two of you watched the whole thing on TV.

GREGORY SENIOR What, me and Judith?

STUART No, you and Mum.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh no, my mother sailed away.

STUART No, not your mother, my mother, Irene. You watched it with her.

GREGORY SENIOR Not Judith?

STUART No. It was one of your and Mum's little stories. How you'd just moved into your first proper house, and I was only a few months old, but you stayed up late, with me in your arms, to watch Eurovision. And Sandie Shaw won.

GREGORY SENIOR Sandy who?

STUART Sandie Shaw. Dark Hair. Bare feet.

GREGORY SENIOR Like Judith?

STUART Yes, but Judith doesn't exist.

GREGORY SENIOR She does. She gave me a card on my birthday.

STUART No she didn't, Dad. You're just confused. There is no one called Judith, OK?

PHYLLIS Well we don't know that for sure.

STUART No, we do.

PHYLLIS I mean there must have been someone-

STUART All right fine. So my Dad once knew some girl called Judith and the two of them had some kind of dream of making it in the world of pop. But it didn't happen. That's life. Sorry. Most of the time, dreams don't come true. And it's no good clinging on to them and trying to pretend that it's not too late, because in the end they'll just weigh you down and make you wish you'd gone some other way instead, when actually

the way you went was fine, and you just need to try and hold on to that fact and not let some ridiculous dream destroy a whole life's worth of memories, Dad! I mean, Christ, all those years of marriage. And it's like you've forgotten she ever existed.

GREGORY SENIOR What, Judith?

STUART (EXPLODES) No, not bloody Judith! Irene! The woman you woke up with every morning! The woman you turned to and kissed goodnight every day for God-knows-how-many years and now you can't even remember her name!

Pause... **GREGORY SENIOR** looks stunned, ashamed.

STUART Sorry.

GREGORY SENIOR Have I been a terrible husband?

STUART No you haven't, Dad. It's not your fault-

GREGORY SENIOR No, it is-

STUART We just all need to try and remember what's important and not let anything else get in the way.

GREGORY SENIOR Yes that's what me and Judith always said. Mind you, it didn't work for us. We were through by the end of the- (STOPS FOR A MOMENT) yes, that's it.

STUART Well whatever, it doesn't matter now. We just need to get to your birthday lunch-

GREGORY SENIOR No wait, 1966. That was when we won the trophy. We beat the Germans in extra time!

STUART Dad, you weren't in the England football team. And I'm pretty sure Judith wasn't either.

GREGORY SENIOR No we watched the whole thing on TV.

PHYLLIS You and Judith?

GREGORY SENIOR That was when it all kicked off.

PHYLLIS What the World Cup Final?

GREGORY SENIOR No Judith and me. That was when it all went wrong.

PHYLLIS What happened?

Unsettling **MUSIC** starts as we transition into another memory...

GREGORY SENIOR I don't know... We won the game... But I lost my Judith along the way...

GREGORY SENIOR is lost in thought. We hear **FOOTBALL CROWD** noises and a **TV COMMENTATOR**'s voice.

STUART Dad please... Laura's waiting... Dad...!

Too late. The unsettling **MUSIC** rises. **LIGHTS** flicker... **CROWD NOISES & TV COMMENTARY** get louder...

SCENE 7 (JUDITH'S FLAT, 1966)

GREGORY and **JUDITH** are sat on her sofa. **GREGORY** looks out at the audience, as if watching television. As he excitedly watches the football, he drinks from a bottle of beer. A couple more empty bottles stand on the floor. **JUDITH** meanwhile faces away from the TV. She has a pen and paper and is trying to work on a song.

TV COMMENTATOR And there's people on the pitch... They think it's all over... It is now!

CROWD cheers on the TV. **GREGORY** reacts to the goal, punching the air triumphantly. **JUDITH** doesn't respond.

GREGORY Yessss! We've done it! We've won the World Cup!

JUDITH Great. So can we switch off now?

GREGORY No, we need to see them get the trophy.

JUDITH ignores this, heads to where the TV would be and mimes pressing a button. The **COMMENTARY** switches off.

GREGORY No wait... Hey I wanted to see the trophy.

JUDITH Yeah well, you can't always get what you want.

JUDITH moodily tidies away the empty bottles.

GREGORY No chance of another beer then?

JUDITH eyes him darkly.

GREGORY Joke.

JUDITH It's not funny, Greg. I could have done a shift in the café. But you said let's meet up and rehearse. Rehearse, that is. Not sit on my sofa, watching my telly and drinking my beer!

GREGORY Well, all right then, let's rehearse.

JUDITH No it's too late now. You're drunk and I'm cross.

GREGORY (AMUSED) I'm not drunk!

JUDITH Yeah, well I'm cross!

GREGORY Oh come on Jude, it was the World Cup Final.

JUDITH What happened to nothing gets in the way?

GREGORY It's one afternoon!

JUDITH Yeah, it's not though, is it.

GREGORY What do you mean?

JUDITH It's been like this for months. Me wanting to push things on and you... It just feels like your heart's not in it.

GREGORY That's not true.

JUDITH So what's going on then?

GREGORY Nothing...

JUDITH looks unconvinced, waits for more. **GREGORY** looks evasive, hesitates, reluctantly continues...

GREGORY I'm just tired, that's all... Three years we've been grinding away, doing gigs in front of three, four people. And what have we got to show for it? Nothing.

JUDITH Well we've got a manager now.

GREGORY What, Dave? He couldn't land a goldfish, let alone a record deal.

JUDITH Well, like he says, it's early days.

GREGORY Yeah, he's been saying that for a year and a half.

JUDITH So let's take back control, get someone else, start making things happen. Before it's too late...

GREGORY I dunno... Maybe Old Warren was right.

JUDITH Who's Warren?

GREGORY You know, my old headmaster. The one who said I'd never succeed.

JUDITH No, stop. That's rubbish, you know it is. We can do this. We just need to keep the faith.

GREGORY sighs, unconvinced. **JUDITH** shows him her piece of paper.

JUDITH Look, I started writing this the other day. It's not finished, all I've got is the chorus so far, but I think there could be something in it.

She passes him the paper. He reads. She waits...

JUDITH Well..?

GREGORY (OFF-HAND) Yeah it's good.

JUDITH Is that it?

GREGORY Well I dunno, what do you want me to say?

JUDITH I want you to tell me it's brilliant. Or rubbish. I want you to be appalled or amazed. I want you to care.

GREGORY Of course I care!

JUDITH Then show me you do. Don't just say it, Greg. Show me.

GREGORY All right, just tell me what you want me to do.

JUDITH launches into the song acapella...

SONG 10: 'GIVE ME ONE' (words & music: Stephanie West)

JUDITH *Give me one [CLAP]*
One more try
Give me two [CLAP CLAP]
Ways to be with you

Three [CLAP CLAP CLAP]

Words to say

I love you I love you I love you won't go away

GREGORY listens, a little reluctantly at first, then with growing attention.

GREGORY Yeah, it's nice. So what's the story?

JUDITH I dunno. It's... love, but it's... complicated. Like, maybe they're friends who've always liked each other but-

GREGORY Something's always got in the way-

JUDITH Yeah. And now, it sounds stupid, but the closer they are-

GREGORY The harder it is to say how they feel-

JUDITH Yeah exactly. I just can't get into the verse.

GREGORY That's OK, let's take it again from the top.

MUSIC starts and they sing the song, beginning in an improvisational manner, as if making it up as they go. By the end of the song, they are fully in the swing of things, singing and dancing with complete assurance.

JUDITH *Give me one [CLAP]*

One more try

Give me two [CLAP CLAP]

Ways to be with you

Three [CLAP CLAP CLAP]

Words to say

I love you I love you I love you won't go away

GREGORY

Hey... we've got a problem

With no

Rational solution

You and me merging converging diverging

But never coming to rest

JUDITH

Like... two moons in orbit

Our paths

Circle one another

Locked face to face

But never side by side

BOTH

So give me one [CLAP]

One more try

Give me two [CLAP CLAP]

Ways to be with you

Three [CLAP CLAP CLAP]

Words to say

I love you I love you I love you won't go away

GREGORY

I... I do my best to

Differentiate

Between relationships

Those that have limits and those that will never ever end

JUDITH

(Infinite)

But... like Newton's apple

I fall

Drawn back towards you

BOTH

Invisible force across space and time

Give me one [CLAP]

One more try

Give me two [CLAP CLAP]

Ways to be with you

Three [CLAP CLAP CLAP]

Words to say

I love you I love you I love you won't go away

Give me one [CLAP]

One more try

Give me two [CLAP CLAP]

Ways to be with you

Three [CLAP CLAP CLAP]

Words to say

I love you I love you I love you won't go away

MUSIC ends. **JUDITH** and **GREGORY** look pleased with their efforts, united again, their hope renewed.

DAVE, their manager comes sweeping in – dressed as before with gold chain, trilby and cheap suit. He applauds enthusiastically.

DAVE

Oh yes! You see, you guys have still got it! (TO **GREGORY**)
Like she said, you just got to keep the faith!

GREGORY

Yeah, I know, it just feels like forever, waiting for something to happen.

DAVE

Well...

With a familiar flourish, **DAVE** pulls a contract from his inside pocket.

DAVE I may have some exciting news... No hang on, that's the new washing machine...

He puts that contract back, delves around for something else, gets increasingly flustered, as he searches through.

DAVE Twin tub. Maureen'll be over the moon... Oh for Christ's sake, I know I had it somewhere... And I promise, you will not be disappointed. We are talking all your dreams come true.

GREGORY What, next year's Eurovision?

DAVE Oh. No. Sorry, that ship has sailed. Word is they've gone with Sandie Shaw.

He finally locates the right contract, folded carelessly into four in his back pocket. He hastily unfolds it, tries to iron out the creases, then proudly presents it to **GREGORY**.

DAVE But talking of ships, feast your eyes on that.

GREGORY reads... **DAVE** waits... **JUDITH** waits...

GREGORY Six months singing on a luxury cruise?

DAVE And you don't even have to write your own songs. All covers. Nothing too racy, mind or you'll give the poor old dears a stroke. Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, maybe Nat King Cole. If they like you, it's a job for life.

GREGORY What, singing on a cruise ship?

DAVE Yeah. The money's good. All the food you can eat. And you get to sail off around the world. What more could you want? Don't answer that. Just sign on the dotted line.

GREGORY No I'm sorry, it's not for us.

He goes to hand back the contract. **JUDITH** takes it.

JUDITH We'll think about it.

DAVE Well don't think too long. Ship sets sail tomorrow morning. You'll need to be on board by ten. Bon voyage!

DAVE leaves, cheerfully whistling a tune ('SAIL AWAY'). **GREGORY** and **JUDITH** stare at each other. **JUDITH** still holds the contract.

JUDITH I guess we'd better get packed.

GREGORY You're not serious?

JUDITH What else can we do? Three years we've been waiting for some kind of break.

GREGORY Yeah, a break. Not a job singing other people's songs to a bunch of old widows on a luxury cruise.

JUDITH Who cares?

GREGORY I care!

JUDITH Yeah and so do I, Greg! It's work. It's what we love doing. At least it's a chance to get out of London and not see any rainclouds for a whole six months... You said yourself we

could do with a change... Who knows, maybe this is what we need... the two of us together... on the open sea.

She reaches out a hand to touch him, draw him closer. For a moment he allows her to... then suddenly recoils.

GREGORY No, stop!

She feels thrown, mortified by his reaction.

JUDITH Sorry... I just thought... maybe it was time that... one of us made the first move-

GREGORY No, stop!

JUDITH All right, I remember the rule... It just feels like... maybe it's *not* being a couple that's the thing that's getting in the way-

GREGORY No that's not true, it can't be.

JUDITH Why not?

GREGORY Because it can't be true!

JUDITH Why not?

GREGORY Because if it was... that would mean all this time... we could have... and we didn't... and now it's too late.

JUDITH Well maybe it's not too late.

GREGORY No it is.

JUDITH Well how do we know till we try?

GREGORY Jude, I'm telling you it's too late!

JUDITH Why..? Because we know each other too well?

GREGORY No, because... I've met someone else...

JUDITH Oh, right... So that's what's going on...

They stare at each other, both appalled at the gulf that's suddenly opened up.

JUDITH Does she sing?

GREGORY What? No. And even if she did...I wouldn't want to sing with her... I just can't go off around the world for six months.

JUDITH Yeah you can. If she loves you, she'll wait six months. I should know, I've waited three and a half years.

GREGORY She's pregnant, Jude... I can't abandon my child...

JUDITH And what about me?

GREGORY I'm not abandoning you. Stay in London. We'll carry on as we are.

JUDITH Carry on going nowhere. Or travel the world.

GREGORY Singing other people's songs on a luxury ship.

JUDITH Well at least we'd still be singing, Greg!

GREGORY There's more to life than singing.

JUDITH Now he tells me that...

GREGORY I'm sorry. Stay. And we'll work it out. Try and think of this as a new beginning... I mean obviously, when the baby comes, I'll need to be there for Irene... And working full-time to pay for it all... But this doesn't have to be the end... We can do this... We owe it to ourselves... We can't just walk away from the dream...

But they both know in their hearts, it's over. Slowly, painfully, **JUDITH** turns away and moves off, leaving **GREGORY** standing there, alone. He picks up the piece of paper she's left behind, screws it up into a ball and leaves...

MUSIC rises.

SCENE 8 (WEDDING, 1966)

JUDITH sings and watches sadly as **GREGORY**'s wedding day is acted out in mime.

SONG 11 'SONG BESIDE THE SEA' (words & music: Stephanie West)

JUDITH *See the light inside the picture*
Of what I hoped we'd be
Long summer days and longer nights
And a song beside the sea
But all those hopes so golden
Never came to rest
Made when we were bright and new
They never passed the test

GREGORY waits alone, still torn by the choice he's made. His **BEST MAN** arrives with a smart jacket and a ring. **GREGORY** tries to put on a brave face, puts on the jacket, takes the ring. They exchange a manly hug then turn and stand by side as if waiting for the bride at the altar.

JUDITH *See the rain upon my fingers*
And now upon my cheek
What trouble did I cause you?
What trouble did you seek?
So it was the storms came
Blew the ship apart
No one there to save us
Just trouble in my heart

IRENE, his bride, arrives in a wedding dress, with a **BRIDESMAID** in attendance. She is several months pregnant. In one hand she carries a bouquet of dried flowers (the same ones as used in **GREGORY SENIOR**'s room). The other she holds self-consciously over her bump. She greets friends and family. Smiles and kisses on this

joyful occasion. Even more so when she feels a little kick from the baby inside her womb.

JUDITH *What fool goes chasing mermaids*
When she doesn't have a clue
How to rig or use a tiller
Not a map amongst the crew
And what then when you find one
A siren on the rocks
Luring you to danger
Too entranced to count the cost

IRENE passes her bouquet to the **BRIDESMAID** and advances forward to meet **GREGORY** at the altar. They smile shyly at each other. She holds out her left hand and he slips the ring on her finger. They share a modest kiss.

As **MUSIC** continues, the happy couple pose for photos, then move off, followed by **FRIENDS & FAMILY**, leaving **JUDITH** alone on stage.

JUDITH *So I'm left here with this picture*
Of what I hoped we'd be
A bunch of awkward memories
And a song beside the sea
You left me blue all over
But you left me with a spark
We had been just two lost ships
Now there's a beacon in the dark

See the light inside the picture
See the light inside the picture
See the light inside the picture

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 9 (CARE HOME, 2024)

LIGHTS UP on **STUART**, **PHYLLIS** and **GREGORY SENIOR**, now back in his bedroom in the care home. **STUART** is messaging on his phone. **PHYLLIS** helps **GREGORY SENIOR** into his chair. He is exhausted.

PHYLLIS So you gave up a cruise around the world for the sake of this moody bugger?

STUART Oh thanks.

GREGORY SENIOR What's that?

PHYLLIS I was just saying, my lovely, that was a wonderful thing you did. Giving up all that for the sake of your son. And I'm sure you never regretted it once.

GREGORY SENIOR Well it's still early days.

PHYLLIS Quite right!

STUART He was happy with my Mum, you know. Nearly sixty years they were married. And always happy, weren't you, Dad?

GREGORY SENIOR Oh yes, they're very good to me here.

STUART No, with Mum. Your wife. Irene. You were happy.

GREGORY SENIOR Absolutely. The food was very good.

STUART Yeah it wasn't just the food though, was it, Dad. You were happy together. You did lots of things. Had a family. A garden. A wonderful home. You were happy. You loved her.

GREGORY SENIOR Yes, very much.

STUART You just... didn't sing.

GREGORY SENIOR No I couldn't. It would have reminded me of her.

PHYLLIS And you never heard from Judith again?

GREGORY SENIOR Not a peep.

STUART Well that's not quite true, is it, Dad..?

STUART reaches into his pocket... pulls out the birthday card he removed from his father's table in Scene 2. He hands it to **GREGORY SENIOR** who sits up and looks at it with curiosity, perhaps a vague sense of having seen it before.

PHYLLIS Wait, Judith sent him a birthday card?

STUART She's been sending him a birthday card for years.

PHYLLIS And you've been hiding them, all this time?

STUART I haven't, no. He has.

GREGORY SENIOR Have I?

STUART Yeah you have, Dad.

GREGORY SENIOR Where?

STUART That cupboard at the back of the shed. I found them when I was clearing out the house. Fifty-seven years of birthday cards from a woman I'd never even heard of, Dad, all neatly filed away in a box... So obviously that went straight to the dump.

PHYLLIS You threw them away?!

STUART I'd just lost my mum! I'm sorry. I was angry. What else could I do? I just wish you'd kept on singing, that's all. All those years. Did you never..?

GREGORY She was lost at sea.

STUART But she wasn't Dad, was she. She wasn't lost at all. She was living down the road in Milton Keynes and sending you a birthday card every year!

PHYLLIS Wait, you know where this woman lives?

STUART Well I know it's in Milton Keynes. The address was on the back of the envelopes.

PHYLLIS Which you took to the dump.

STUART Yeah.

PHYLLIS Great.

STUART Well it's not as if it matters now. I'm just saying, Dad, it's only down the road. You could have met up. You could have sung with Judith. Mum wouldn't have minded, I'm sure. She'd have loved to see you up on stage and doing what you loved doing, instead of bottling the whole thing up until now when it's all too late...

GREGORY SENIOR looks back at him blankly.

STUART Wait, maybe it's not too late...

Taken by a sudden thought, **STUART** starts rifling through the waste-paper basket.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh I don't think you'll find the trophy in there.

STUART finally locates what he's looking for – a screwed up envelope, handwritten, with a small gold sticker stuck to the back.

STUART I've got it. Judith's address. This is it. Rose Cottage, Waddham Lane-

GREGORY SENIOR (SIMULTANEOUSLY RECITING IT BY HEART) Rose Cottage, Waddham Lane, Milton Keynes, MK11 8JT...

STUART Well your memory's not that bad, is it Dad! What if you could still win that trophy?

GREGORY SENIOR What trophy?

STUART The Eurovision.

GREGORY SENIOR Oh. No, that was just a dream.

STUART Yeah, but what if we could make that dream come true?

PHYLLIS Sorry, what exactly are you planning?

STUART I don't know... I'm just thinking... Maybe there's time... If I went off to Milton Keynes and you brought him to the restaurant?

PHYLLIS Who, me? No I'm clocking off in two minutes. And your father needs a rest.

STUART He'll be fine.

PHYLLIS No he won't. He's completely done in!

STUART Please! This could be our only chance of getting all the family together.

PHYLLIS ...Oh all right then. But it had better be quick.

STUART Thank you! You're a star!

STUART instinctively embraces her, then pulls away, starts moving off.

PHYLLIS Yeah, yeah... It's Phyllis, by the way.

STUART What is?

PHYLLIS My name. You'll need it when you write to complain.

STUART looks mortified.

STUART Right...

He goes to leave then stops, turns back.

STUART Oh and... *Phyllis*... sorry, one more thing. Can you get him to make a note of the words.

PHYLLIS What words?

STUART The words to the song.

PHYLLIS What song?

STUART *Their* song!

STUART races off. **PHYLLIS**, baffled, looks to **GREGORY SENIOR** for some kind of explanation. He gives a trademark cheerful shrug.

GREGORY SENIOR It's no good asking me!

LIGHTS DOWN.

MUSIC starts and the **CHORUS** all sing, while the stage is re-set for the Restaurant...

SONG 12 'COME TAKE MY HAND' – Reprise (words & music: Paul Walton)

CHORUS *Come take my hand, stir fading memories
The canvas of life is now ripped.
Come, speak my lines, prompt doubtful recall,
I'm lost and missing the script.*

*Come trace my past, trawl special moments.
The passage of time is now dark.
Come, touch these lips, thaw frozen feelings,
Help me to find the lost spark.*

*Come sit with me, replay our movie,
Time-shift the end to the start.
Come wipe our tears and remember
I'll always be here in your heart.*

SCENE 10 (ITALIAN RESTAURANT, 2024)

LIGHTS UP on a restaurant table, set with glasses, cutlery and plates. At the table we find **ROB** and **ZOE**, both glued to their mobile phones. Also there is **COUSIN JIM**, carefully stacking dough balls in an impressive tower on his plate.

Standing a little way off, **LAURA** is in mid-conversation on her mobile phone. She is clearly not happy.

LAURA ...No I'd just like to know where you are... Yes I'm cross! I've been stuck here for nearly three quarters of an hour, stacking dough balls with Cousin Jim!

MIA, the ever-cheerful restaurant manager, arrives at the table.

MIA So are we ready to order yet, guys?

ROB and **ZOE** look up at her blankly, give the vaguest of shrugs and then return to their phones. **COUSIN JIM** is apparently engrossed in his dough balls.

LAURA (TO MIA) Uh no, just another round of drinks, thank you.

COUSIN JIM And one more plate of dough balls please.

MIA (CHEERFULLY) Okay-dokey. (CALLS OFF LOUDLY) More dough-balls for table four!

LAURA (BACK TO PHONE) For God's sake, this is getting embarrassing now, where are you? ...Who?... All right, all right! (TO MIA) Excuse me, are you Mia?

MIA That depends!

LAURA My ex-husband would like a word.

LAURA offers **MIA** her phone. **MIA** looks puzzled, takes it.

MIA Hello? ...Mr Bellings! Howyadoin'? ...No, no, we got all the time in the world! ...Who, this one? (LOOKS AT LAURA) No, don't worry, she'll be fine!

LAURA glares back at her.

MIA ...What's that? ...Yes, we can do that for you... Not a problem... At Mamma Mia's, anything goes!

MIA clicks her fingers and the **WAITER** reappears. She signals to him, and he immediately sets to work, clearing glasses, cutlery and plates from the table. **ROB** and **ZOE** look up briefly from their phones. **COUSIN JIM** tries to prevent his precious stack of dough balls from being taken away.

MIA meanwhile, moves off purposefully, still talking into the mobile phone.

MIA No, that's fine, all part of the service, Mr Bellings. We'll be ready, you take your time, no rush-

LAURA Sorry, could I have my phone back please?

MIA Oh, yes!

MIA gives the phone back to **LAURA** and moves off, barking orders to her staff.

MIA OK, let's get this show on the road!

LAURA (TO PHONE) So when are you planning on getting here exactly? Because I am not prepared to wait all day-

LAURA turns back to the table and now sees the **WAITER** clearing things away. She hastily moves over and tries to intervene.

LAURA No, excuse me, can you leave those here. We haven't ordered our main course yet.

She tries to stop him removing plates, cutlery, tablecloth etc but to no avail.

LAURA No, stop. This is not acceptable. We were told you were serving till half past three.

MIA and her **WAITER** continue to transform the restaurant into a makeshift Eurovision set with decorations etc.

A **TEACHER** arrives with a group of **CHILDREN**, all clutching little flags – like the flags we saw in Scene 6, only these ones are obviously home-made versions, scrawled in crayon and hastily sellotaped onto chopsticks or straws.

TEACHER Mrs Bellings?

LAURA Yes.

TEACHER Good, we're in the right place.

The **TEACHER** lines up the **CHILDREN** in a couple of rows – same position as they were in Scene 6.

TEACHER That's it now children, in you come. And let's have one more practice, OK. On three, one-two-three, wave-wave-wave! And big smiles! Happy-happy-happy-very good!

The **CHILDREN** all wave their flags and smile as directed by their **TEACHER**. **LAURA** looks on, bewildered. So does **COUSIN JIM**. **ROB** and **ZOE** are still fixated on their phones.

LAURA (TO PHONE) Stuart, what the hell is going on? (NO ANSWER) Hello, Stuart..?

LAURA Your Dad? I thought-

STUART Is he here?

LAURA No.

From his bag, **STUART** produces a set of cue cards and a glamorous wig – as worn by the **EUROVISION HOST** in Scene 6.

STUART Right, take these. Put this on. And talk to the camera over there.

STUART points out to the audience. **LAURA** looks utterly baffled.

LAURA What do you mean? What camera? There is no camera!

STUART Yeah I know. Just pretend.

LAURA Pretend..?

STUART Yes! You can do a German accent, can't you?

LAURA What?!!

STUART Should be Austrian, but German will do.

WAITER Mr Bellings! They're here! Just pulling up!

The **WAITER** dashes out to help. **STUART** turns back to **LAURA**.

STUART Look I'm sorry, there isn't time to explain. Just go with it. Please. For my father's sake.

LAURA No.

STUART Well all right then, for my sake-

LAURA No! I'm sorry, but if you want me to take you back, you'll have to treat me with a bit more respect than this-

STUART (INTERRUPTING) I don't.

LAURA What?

STUART I don't want you to take me back. Sorry.

LAURA is momentarily speechless. **ROB** and **ZOE** look up from their phones.

STUART I literally just realised now. And that's fine. We had a good marriage for a while. Great kids. Lovely house. We were living the dream. But things change. People change. Or they just wake up. And there's no point clinging on to what we had, when we both know deep down it's over.

LAURA Right...

STUART Sorry...

LAURA No that's fine... I was... thinking the same...

She goes to move off but he stops her.

STUART But this isn't about you and me. It's about my Dad and his dream.

LAURA What dream?

MIA Thirty seconds! First positions please!

MIA arrives, takes the wig, hurriedly puts it on **LAURA**'s head and then ushers her over towards the audience, ignoring her bewildered protests.

STUART You can do it. And don't forget the accent.

LAURA You're going to pay for this, Stuart!

MIA Twenty seconds!

TEACHER Ready children!

WAITER Standing by!

PHYLLIS and **GREGORY SENIOR** (now smartly dressed) arrive and hover uncertainly in the doorway. **STUART** hurries over to them.

STUART OK, time to go, Dad. Everything's set.

PHYLLIS Uh, yeah, slight problem.

STUART What do you mean?

PHYLLIS Your Dad can't remember the words.

STUART Yeah that's why I said to write them down.

PHYLLIS No he can't remember what they were, full stop.

PHYLLIS shows him a blank piece of paper.

PHYLLIS I tried, but it's a total blank. Sorry. I think it's all too much.

STUART Oh great. Well, we'll just have to make them up.

PHYLLIS It's *their* song. We can't make up the words!

STUART What else are we supposed to do?

PHYLLIS I dunno!

MIA And we're live in three-two-one-

STUART No wait-

Too late. **MIA** signals to **LAURA**, who reads somewhat from her cue-card, a little stiffly at first, but soon getting into it and embracing her new role.

LAURA Meine Damen und Herren, ladies and gentlemen, willkommen, bienvenue and welcome to the Eurovision Song Contest, live from Mamma Mia's!

INTRO MUSIC starts (a repeat of Charpentier's Te Deum Prelude – only this time executed on a recorder). **CHEERS** and **APPLAUSE** from **CHILDREN, WAITER, COUSIN JIM, AUDIENCE** etc. Even **ROB** and **ZOE** are fully engaged – albeit whilst filming it all on their phones.

ALL Hooray!!!

STUART hurries over to **MIA** to intervene, but he's drowned out by all the noise.
PHYLLIS meanwhile gestures to **GREGORY SENIOR** to stay where he is then hurries over to the **TEACHER** and **CHILDREN** to try and clear them off set.

STUART No wait, my Dad's not ready...

LAURA First up, representing the United Kingdom, it's the wunderbar Gregory und Judith!

ALL Hooray!!!

LAURA exits the stage and the **MUSIC STARTS...**

SONG 13 'STRANGER' – Reprise (Lyrics: Celia YOUNG)

All eyes turn to the doorway, where **GREGORY SENIOR** now stands alone in his customary daze. It's not clear whether he knows what's going on...

Then he clocks the music, the lights, the decorations, and steps forward, spellbound, to the centre of the stage...

STUART and **PHYLLIS** hesitate, not sure what to do. Should they rescue **GREGORY SENIOR**, pull him from the stage? Or just let him die a slow death as he stands there in the middle of the stage, with everyone waiting for him to sing..?

The **MUSIC** continues... goes back round to the beginning... People start to look a little confused...

But then, just as it seems that all is lost... **GREGORY SENIOR** comes in bang on cue, singing in a frail, faltering voice, the words coming back to him one by one...

GREGORY SENIOR *Standing in the moonlight in the middle of the night
Feeling like a stranger 'cos you know you don't belong
Oooh... Oooh... Oooh... Oooh...*

And suddenly there is **JUDITH SENIOR** behind him, singing in an equally frail and faltering voice.

JUDITH SENIOR *Standing in the moonlight in the middle of the night*
Feeling like a stranger 'cos you know you don't belong
Oooh... Oooh... Oooh... Oooh...

GREGORY SENIOR turns round to see her, amazed. They begin to circle each other, recreating their original routine.

JUDITH SENIOR *Come on and dance into the danger*
I know you want'a
So just come and dance with me now

GREGORY SENIOR *Have you ever wondered what it could be?*

JUDITH SENIOR *Never normal, ever fierce*

BOTH *Have you ever wondered what it could be?*
Never normal, ever fierce

They join hands and dance, singing as they do...

BOTH *La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la-la! Oooh... Oooh... Oooh...*
Oooh...
La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la-la! Oooh... Oooh... Oooh...
Oooh...

Then stay still, holding each other as they talk, with the **MUSIC** underneath...

GREGORY SENIOR Judith...

JUDITH SENIOR Hello, stranger...

GREGORY SENIOR You're here...

JUDITH SENIOR I always was...

The **MUSIC** builds again and they resume singing...

BOTH *Have you ever wondered what it could be?
Never normal, ever fierce*

The **CHORUS** join in with the singing.

BOTH *Let's go fly to the moon
And travel through the stars
And travel through the stars
And travel through the stars
Let's go fly to the moon
And travel through the stars!*

MIA gives **LAURA** a nudge forward and she reads from her next cue card.

LAURA (STILL IN GERMAN ACCENT) And the votes are in, and the winner of the contest is...

A brief **DRUM ROLL...**

LAURA The United Kingdom!

ALL Hooray!

*And travel through the stars
Go stranger!*

LIGHTS DOWN.

AUDIENCE APPLAUSE & WALK DOWN

CAST & CHORUS sing one final time...

ALL

*I wish upon a star
That you didn't have to move so far
'Cos all you did was break my heart.
I wait for the day
When you'll come up to me and say
That you'll love me again some day.*

*For you were my first love
My everything, my love, my life
The air that I breathe
So please come back to me.*

*Our love will never end
I know we can find our way again
So please come back
Come back to me!*

THE END