

Maggie

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Celeste

Stuart

Ida

June

Grace

Winnie

STUART. Patiently. And you'll be hearing it every night.

(He exits and CELESTE approaches.)

CELESTE. The strangest thing, Maggie? I must confess to some nerves.

MAGGIE. It's not just any other opening, is it?

CELESTE. Indeed not. I feel as if I'm making my debut.

MAGGIE. And I suppose you are. All of us are.

(JUNE passes by in military garb, looking adorable.)

Oh June, those pants suit you.

JUNE. I think so, too. We'll see if Max does.

MAGGIE. Max? He didn't make it after all?

JUNE. Nope. But I sent him a photo or two. Pants! He's gonna blow his top.

(GRACE passes by, her hair cut very short.)

MAGGIE. And Grace! Your hair!

GRACE. Do you like it?

MAGGIE. As long as Ida does.

GRACE. It was her idea. It started out as a Victory Roll, but I kept telling her, "Shorter, shorter," till we ended up here. Paul's mother hates it, my Danny even more. But it feels right, and that will have to be that.

MAGGIE. Well, it suits you.

(GRACE smiles. MAGGIE addresses the group.)

Everyone, everyone, can I have a word?

STUART. Gather, please!

(ALL do so.)

MAGGIE. First thing, Winifred, Ellsworth told me to tell you to break a leg.

WINIFRED. The sweetheart. And does he look beautiful?

MAGGIE. He does, indeed.

WINIFRED. I knew he would.

(To ALL.) Oh, my dears. I'm sorry that my snorer is our only special someone out there tonight.

JUNE. Any word, Ida?

IDA. Joshua's safe. But not here.

STUART. Grace?

GRACE. (*Bucking up.*) No word, no. Mother and Danny will have to do.

MAGGIE. And they will. But let's take a moment, shall we? For all of those empty seats.

(*Silence.*)

Safe return.

ALL. Safe return.

MAGGIE. Now. I must warn you. We have a little more to worry about tonight than picking up our cues.

JUNE. What do you mean?

(*MAGGIE takes out the tomato, to a collective gasp.*)

CELESTE.

JUNE.

Good Lord!

Someone brought that in?!

MAGGIE. I'm going to stretch the Chorus bit out as long as I can, see if I can draw their fire, empty out their pockets, so that by the time the play proper starts they'll be out of ammunition.

(*ALL speak simultaneously.*)

IDA. I promise you, they'll save some for me.

JUNE. They might really – applesauce!

STUART. (*Of himself.*) They wouldn't dare hit a lady!

WINIFRED. Surely not the Women's Committee –?

CELESTE. I'll walk off. I won't stand to be humiliated by –

(*MAGGIE breaks in, trying to rally the troops.*)

MAGGIE. No, no, it's all going to be fine, I promise, and you know, I've got those disclaimers in my opening speech, the lines I've added, they should be enough to –

CELESTE. God help us if your faux-Shakespeare is all that stands between us and a rotten egg.

(*Again, simultaneous:*)

WINIFRED. Ellsworth won't allow them to lift a finger –!

CELESTE. Never! Never in my twenty-six years –!

STUART. There won't be – they're not really going to –

IDA. I won't – I refuse to just stand there and –!

JUNE. Applesauce, applesauce, applesauce, applesauce –!

(*GRACE interrupts, speaking above the crowd, now fully inhabiting the leadership role at last, full of confidence and fiery passion.*)

GRACE. Let he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse.
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the Feast of Crispian.
He that outlives this day and comes safe home
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall see this day and live old age
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors
And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."
Then he will strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's Day."
Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
Familiar in his mouth as household words –

CELESTE. Grace the King –

GRACE. Celeste –

MAGGIE. And June –

STUART. Winifred –

WINIFRED. And Maggie –

IDA. Stuart –