

V-E DAY

[In Act I, we have met Evelyn, 79, a widow in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, whose life centers around the Home Shopping Network, the occasional telemarketer, and new ways to challenge her care-taking daughter. On May 8, 2003, a strange man arrives with a carton: it's a box of World War II-era newsletters she had edited and mailed to area boys in the service. She soon discovers her gentleman caller is Bernard Cohen, the man she probably should have married.]

Act II, Scene 1

December 25, 1943. EVIE, 20, the younger version of Evelyn, reads what she has written in a newsletter to the troops ...as EVELYN looks on.]

EVIE

(Reading) "...Rest assured those of us on the home front are doing our part...Your gals are at full employment, all helping in the effort. You can't walk off a job now, even if you want to. Shortages are mounting, of course. Serving butter is a thing of the past. The bootleggers don't know whether to bootleg rye whiskey or rye bread. But there's a good feeling in the air, as everyone pulls together. The new overworked saying is 'for the duration.'"

(EVIE doesn't notice BERNIE, 24, at her door.)

BERNIE

Ho ho ho...

(EVIE looks up to find BERNIE, wearing a uniform and a Santa beard.)

EVIE

Bernie? Oh, my God! Tell me it's really you!

BERNIE

I saw the old Nash, in the drive. I thought my heart was gonna pop right outta my chest!

EVIE

Ya might've warned me, ya big lug!

BERNIE

I was hoping for something a little warmer.
(THEY embrace.)

Jesus, let me look at you...

EVIE

I'm gonna kill that sister of yours. She never said a word!

BERNIE

They don't know, either. I came straight here.

EVIE

From New Mexico?

BERNIE

Three days. Four trains. Talk about a sight for sore eyes!

EVIE

What can I get you? Let me put up coffee...

BERNIE

How 'bout something stronger? For courage.

(HE kisses her again. SHE pours him bourbon that he devours.)

EVIE

You want some *Coke* with that?

BERNIE

Look, honey. I gotta tell ya something.

EVIE

Me, first!

BERNIE

It's pretty important...

EVIE

No-no. Close your eyes!

(EVIE gathers several tear sheets with photographs.)

BERNIE

Now?

EVIE

Hold your horses!

BERNIE

I only got a week...

(Pause)

EVIE

Okay. ...Now.

Voila!

BERNIE

Very impressive.

EVIE

Read the credits!

BERNIE

These are swell, really swell.

EVIE

This one was from Flag Day, at the Art Museum. They turned the grounds into a huge Victory Garden. The kids were collecting cans. If you look, you can see the stars and stripes reflected in the can...

BERNIE

Wow.

EVIE

Which one?

BERNIE

“Three A.M., Statler Bar.” Who’s the couple?

EVIE

I don’t know. I just kind of *caught* them. He was shipping out the next day.

BERNIE

It’s like they were the last two people in the world.

EVIE

Exactly! ...Your hands are shaking!

BERNIE

All right. My turn?

(BERNIE pulls out an invisible “ring” and takes EVIE’s hand.)

EVIE

Is this some kind of a joke?

BERNIE

I just made up my mind, on the train from St. Louis to Chicago! But go find a jeweler open on Christmas. Here. Try it on. This was the best I could do.

(HE places the “ring” on her finger.)

I’m afraid I don’t have a lot of time.

EVIE

Apparently not!

BERNIE

I’m heading overseas, any day now. And every night, I wake up in a cold sweat, thinking I’m gonna read about you-and-somebody-else in *Keeping Posted*. You’re always writing about the canteens, and all the fellas you’re hauling around in that ambulance, ... Do you understand that I’m more afraid of losing you than ...anything?

EVIE

I’ll put up that coffee.

BERNIE

Please, sweetheart, don’t make this any more difficult...

Will you be my lawful wedded?

EVIE

Oh, Bernie... You know I... When?

BERNIE

Sunday.

EVIE

This Sunday?

BERNIE

Why, you had other plans?

EVIE

For one thing, it’s nearly the end of the month and I have an issue to get out! And besides, I promised Pop this weekend at the hospital... They’re short-staffed, on account of the holidays.

BERNIE

I see.

EVIE

Don't get me wrong, darling. But I need time. You know I need time! You're not angry with me...

Look, I'm wearing your ring. Doesn't that tell you something?

BERNIE

...It's thirty carats. I wanted more.

EVIE

Thirty's fine.

BERNIE

Honest?

EVIE

... I'll have to have it sized, of course. And insured.
(THEY kiss.)

Overseas, huh.

BERNIE

So it's official, right? ...

EVIE

But let's keep it *entre nous*, for the time being.

BERNIE

Tell you what. When you're ready to give the "all clear," just put it in Lil's column. And then the whole world will know...

EVIE

You bet.

BERNIE

Say! How 'bout we celebrate tonight, at the Terrace Room? They don't do the Jersey Bounce where I'll be going.

EVIE

Meantime, go home and see your folks.

What.

BERNIE

I could use a lift.

(EVIE tosses him some keys.)

EVIE

Still remember how to start ‘er up?

BERNIE

Single engine, right?

EVIE

I’ll be there in two shakes...

(BERNIE EXITS. EVIE waits a beat, then removes the “ring”
and puts it in the dining room drawer.

DOORBELL RINGS. EVELYN hears it. LIGHTS DOWN
on EVIE. DOORBELL RINGS AGAIN.)

EVELYN

Coming!]