

CHARLOTTE: No, I don't think *you* understand. We're very busy now, so good-bye!

*(And she pushes Howard out the door and slams it)*

CHARLOTTE: These people! They walk right in as if they own the place.

ETHEL: You didn't have to be rude to him.

CHARLOTTE: Mother, stay out of this.

*(Charlotte is heading off)*

ETHEL: I used to know a man named Capra. I wonder if he's related . . . ?

*(Charlotte stops cold)*

CHARLOTTE: . . . Capra?

ETHEL: What?

CHARLOTTE: *Capra?!?*

ETHEL: What about him?

CHARLOTTE: *Why did you say Capra?!?*

ETHEL: I didn't say it. He said it. He introduced himself. Frank Capra. It sounds extremely familiar . . .

CHARLOTTE *(it sinks in and she clutches her breast)*: . . . Oh my God! *(shaking Ethel)* Mother,

# SIDE #6 Howard & Charlotte

*why didn't you tell me?!? (She rushes out the street door) Wait a second! Please! Wait!*

ETHEL *(as she heads backstage)*: It's like living in an asylum on the guard's day off.

*(Ethel exits; then Charlotte reappears, leading a bewildered, reluctant Howard into the room)*

CHARLOTTE: I am *so sorry*. I could just beat myself with a stick! Please, come in. 7

HOWARD: . . . You're sure? I could wait outside. It's a nice day, which is pretty much what I predicted.

CHARLOTTE: Oh no no no no! Oh, God. You must think I'm completely mad.

HOWARD: Mmmno.

CHARLOTTE: My mother should have said something. The older lady who was standing here. I'm afraid she's just a teensy bit hard of hearing.

HOWARD: "Grandma."

CHARLOTTE: Hm?

HOWARD: Maybe I should call her "Grandma." Heh heh. Or "Granny!"

*(He chuckles about this)*

CHARLOTTE: . . . Why not?! Granny it is! So. Perhaps we should start over. (*Extending her hand, with enormous charm*) I'm Charlotte Hay.

HOWARD: Hi . . .

CHARLOTTE: Now before you say another word, I just want to tell you what a *huge fan* I am of your work.

HOWARD: . . . Gee, thanks.

CHARLOTTE: "It Happened One Night!"

HOWARD: . . . Well, actually it happens every night at six and eleven.

CHARLOTTE: "It's A Wonderful Life." Wow.

HOWARD: Gee, you have such a good attitude.

(*Absentmindedly, he picks up a paperweight from the table and plays with it*)

CHARLOTTE: "You Can't Take It With You."

(*He quickly puts it down*)

HOWARD: I'm not! I-I-I-

CHARLOTTE: And you're such a young man to have accomplished so much. I had no idea.

HOWARD: Thanks. A lot of people think it's easy. Like there's nothing to it.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, come now . . .

HOWARD: They do! They think it's all just a matter of barometric pressure.

(*He laughs at this; Charlotte joins in—trying to figure it out*)

CHARLOTTE: I'm sure the pressure must be intense these days.

HOWARD: It's pretty bad. But there's a cold front moving up from Atlanta, so that should give us some relief.

CHARLOTTE: . . . Really? Well. Can I get you some coffee?

HOWARD: Mmmmmno. No thanks.

CHARLOTTE: A drink drink?

HOWARD: I never drink.

CHARLOTTE: Nor do I. Nor does George, my husband. The minute we start to work, there is no such thing in the world as liquor.

(*At which point, George bursts in through the backstage door with a new bottle of whiskey in his hand, reeling with drunkenness. He wears an undershirt and trousers*)

GEORGE:

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more!  
Or close the wall up with our English dead!"