

THE MOON IS BLUE

ACT I

SCENE 1

TIME: *Early evening of a spring day.*

PLACE: *Observation tower of the Empire State Building.*

AT RISE: *The entire stage is seen through a grayish scrim to create the illusion of fog. From C. to off L., we see the observation tower, which is comprised of a three-sided steeple which projects upward to out of sight, at base of which is a section of the building containing three oblong casement windows in front and another on the receding R. wall, acting platform rising 3 feet from stage level, all of which is surrounded by a thick 6-foot wall, on top of which a railing is supported by 8-inch poles spaced 3 feet apart. Against railing C. is a coin-operated, mechanical set of binoculars on a swivel base. Behind tower and going completely across stage is a translucent skyline drop of Manhattan and the Hudson River showing the Jersey Shore in the distance. The entrance to the platform is off-stage L. Off-stage R. and L. are masked by two gray velour drops. Covering R. leg is gray fish netting. Down R. is some netting covering 6 feet of stage parallel to footlights. The entire setting is parallel to footlights.*

As curtain rises, the stage is empty for a brief moment. PATTY O'NEILL enters from off L. She is wearing a light jacket over her dress, and gloves, and carrying a small purse. She crosses to L. C., looks back, then eases to R. end of platform, looking out with studied indifference. She looks back off L. again, as if expecting someone. She waits a moment, then disappointedly gazes out front. At this point we hear off L. a man whistling. PATTY quickly looks in that direction and immediately goes to binoculars and feigns peering through lenses. DONALD GRESHAM enters from L. carrying topcoat with small package

in hand. He approaches her and closely watches her, still whistling. He fades out on his whistling, she straightens up, looking at him. He speaks. His topcoat is on rail.

DON. Why were you in such a tearing hurry?

PATTY. (Straightens up.) What?

DON. I was just putting my wallet in my pocket—I spoke to the woman selling tickets—(Snaps fingers.)—and bingo—you'd vanished into thin air.

PATTY. (Crosses to R. of lenses.) I'm sorry. . . . I wasn't sure whether—why didn't you say something?

DON. I did. I yelled "Hey!"—but you were off in a cloud of dust.

PATTY. No—I don't mean then. Why didn't you say something before in the drug store when we—when we first sort of noticed each other? Why were you buying pumice-stone?

DON. Because I had ink on my hands and pumice-stone takes it off.

PATTY. Oh. And all those rubber bands—what do you need them for?

DON. I need those for my business. I didn't know you were watching me that closely.

PATTY. Well, I was just across the counter from you and I couldn't help noticing. Besides I'm always fascinated by what other people buy in drug stores. You got razor blades too.

DON. I shave. You didn't buy anything, I notice.

PATTY. I was flirting with a divine new shade of lipstick, but it was a dollar fifty and I decided to be sensible. It's lovely, too, it's called—"Dusty—" (DON instantly produces a little package from his pocket, hands it to her.)

DON. "Dusty Dawn"—and a damn silly name if you ask me.

PATTY. For me?

DON. I rarely use lipstick.

PATTY. (Takes lipstick.) How perfectly sweet of you. You must've been watching me in the drug store.

DON. When a man's waiting to buy pumice-stone and rubber bands, he has to watch something.

PATTY. (Unwrapping lipstick.) Why didn't you speak to me then?

DON. I was just rehearsing a suitable gambit—when you mooched off.

PATTY. I did not mooch off.

DON. You never looked back once.

PATTY. Well I should hope not. I was trying to create the impression that I'd suddenly remembered an urgent appointment.

DON. (Taking wrapper from her before she can drop it over side.) You almost fooled me. (She smiles at him.) Why didn't you smile at me like that in the drug store?

PATTY. I don't smile at men in drug stores.

DON. Well, a few minutes later then—when I obviously followed you into the lobby where they sell tickets for up here. You could have smiled at me then.

PATTY. Did I look very aloof?

DON. Aloof and forbidding—and rather scared. You scowled.

PATTY. Nonsense, I was trying to look sultry and provocative.

DON. You beat me to the elevator, too. (Throws wrapper D. L.)

PATTY. I know . . . I got in before I realized. . . . (He glances at her.) I wondered what happened to you. (She yawns vigorously.) Are your ears still popping? Mine are. (Touching her ear.)

DON. That's just your imagination.

PATTY. (Puts lipstick on ledge.) It is not. They are popping. It's the pressure or something. Haven't you ever been up in an airplane? (Another yawn.) It's okay now. They're un-popped. Now I feel fine. (Gazes out as she eases R. a bit.) Gosh. Isn't this wonderful?

DON. Not particularly. Fog's coming in. Can't see much today.

PATTY. (Pointing off D. R.) You can see Staten Island.

DON. (Crossing to her.) You're crazy. You can hardly see a thing.

PATTY. I can.

DON. You can't even see the Chrysler Building.

PATTY. I can.

DON. Well, you're nuts.

PATTY. (Crossing back to R. of binoculars.) Well, I can imagine it anyway.

DON. Couldn't you imagine it just as well from the street? They told you it was crazy downstairs. Remember the sign: "Visibility Poor." (Crossing to her R.) Look—Not a soul up here.

PATTY. I don't care. I'm glad I came. I like it up here. Just think—we're over a thousand feet up. The tallest building in the world. I think it's wonderful. I mean—just look—doesn't it take your breath away? (Leans over rail.) It's a wicked extravagance, but it's worth every single penny of it. (DON takes out dollar bill and two dimes.)

DON. (Offering them to her.) By the way—here's your dollar-twenty.

PATTY. What do you mean?

DON. Despite your sultry scowl, I paid for two tickets—and when the

woman said you'd already paid for yours, I told her we'd had a little spat—she gave me the money back.

PATTY. You mean you're treating me to this? How perfectly sweet of you. Thanks a lot. (*Takes it, puts money in her purse.*) Now I can really enjoy it. One always gets a bigger kick out of things for free. And you don't even know my name. I think that's perfectly charming. My name's Patty—Patty O'Neill. What's yours?

DON. Don Gresham.

PATTY. Don. Yes. That suits you. You look like a Don.

DON. Patty—let me ask you a question. I don't usually do things like this, and I have a hunch that you don't make a practice — (*PATTY pretends to be absorbed in the slot machine binoculars. She wants to duck questions.*)

PATTY. I wonder how this gadget works, anyhow?

DON. (*Holds up dime.*) For a dime you can find out.

PATTY. (*She looks at him—takes it.*) Why, thanks a lot. You are nice. Before when you came out I was pretending. (*She drops in dime, looks through lenses and swivels gadget around, looking through binoculars.*) Oh—this is terrific. Now you can really see. Would you like a look?

DON. No, no thanks. I've seen it before. My office is in this building. Patty—listen to me a minute. I'd like to tell you —

PATTY. Oh, stop jabbering. I want to enjoy this, and I can't while you keep on talking. (*He drums on balustrade with his fingers.*) Are you drumming like that because you're bored or nervous—or do you want to hold my hand? You can if you want to. (*Still looking through binoculars, she pulls glove off R. hand, thrusts it at him. He takes it.*)

DON. You are a screwball—and no fooling. And you have very sweet hands. (*She straightens up, looks out.*) What are you thinking about?

PATTY. I want to cry.

DON. What for?

PATTY. All those people.

DON. What people?

PATTY. In Brooklyn.

DON. (*Indicates with head the opposite direction.*) Brooklyn's over there.

PATTY. I don't care. It doesn't matter. I still want to cry.

DON. Why?

PATTY. Because it's so sad.

DON. What? Living in Brooklyn?

PATTY. Please don't be funny. I was born in Brooklyn.

DON. I'm not trying to be funny. I swear I don't know what you're talking about.

PATTY. Oh, those poor drab little people—sweating their lives out in a —

DON. Nobody's sweating on a day like this. Don't worry.

PATTY. Don't be so darn practical.

DON. Then quit talking like a play by Saroyan.

PATTY. I adore him, don't you?

DON. Who?

PATTY. Saroyan.

DON. I can take him or leave him.

PATTY. I think he's wonderful. (*Into the void.*) HELLO OUT THERE!

DON. (*Does a take.*) Huh?

PATTY. "Hello Out There." It's a play of his. Saroyan's. "Hello Out There" by William Saroyan. It's about a man who was in jail. He loves poor little drab, gentle, people. Saroyan—not the man who was in jail.

DON. Look, Patty—let's go down, shall we? It's getting all fogged in.

PATTY. (*Circling U. C.*) No—I like it up here.

DON. (*Turns to her.*) Aren't you cold?

PATTY. (*Easing U. R. a bit, putting glove back on.*) Only my hands. They always get cold when I get excited.

DON. What are you excited about?

PATTY. (*Crossing R. a bit.*) Coming up here. I've wanted to for years.

DON. (*Crossing up a bit.*) Then why didn't you?

PATTY. (*Eases to front rail.*) Frankly because I couldn't afford it. You can get a lovely pair of nylons for a dollar-twenty. I don't know why I decided to splurge tonight.

DON. (*Crossing D. to her.*) You're sweet —

PATTY. No, no, I mean it. I had no idea you'd pay for my ticket. Imagine charging a dollar twenty just to ride to the top of an old building. It's enough to make you a Communist.

DON. You think Stalin doesn't charge admission to go to the top of the Kremlin?

PATTY. (*Seriously.*) You know, I never thought of that.

DON. Are you hungry?

PATTY. Starving.

DON. (*Steps back.*) So am I. Let's go down and get some dinner.

PATTY. Oh, no.

DON. Why not?

PATTY. No, you've spent enough on me already.

DON. (*Steps to her.*) Don't be silly.

PATTY. You have, too. A ticket to the tower—and a lovely lipstick—
(*Picks up lipstick.*)

DON. Don't forget the dime for the gadget.

PATTY. That's right.

DON. Now—don't be a little dope. We're going some place to eat. I don't want any arguments out of you.

PATTY. Where would we go?

DON. You name it.

PATTY. Are you *very* flush?

DON. Just name it.

PATTY. Would you take me to the Stork Club?

DON. Sure.

PATTY. It's very expensive.

DON. Well, Mr. Billingsley has to live.

PATTY. Do you like the Stork Club?

DON. I don't go there very much. It's mostly for people in show business, and I don't know many of those. Do you like it?

PATTY. (*Puts lipstick down.*) Gosh, yes. I've only been there once—an agent took me—but I'd adore going again. None of the boys I know can afford it. We usually go dutch to a spaghetti joint. I love spaghetti, do you?

DON. Frankly I prefer a good steak. Come on—let's go. (*Starts L.*)

PATTY. (*Steps R. Looks off D. R.*) No, it's early yet. I'm not *that* hungry.

DON. (*Steps to her.*) Fine. We'll go to my place first, and have a drink. How about it?

PATTY. (*Looks at him for a long time.*) Would you try to seduce me?

DON. (*Pause.*) I don't know. Probably. Why?

PATTY. *Why?* A girl wants to know.

DON. A girl is supposed to be intuitive about those things. I mean, you just don't go bluntly asking people such questions.

PATTY. I do. I *always* do.

DON. (*Steps to her.*) And what if they say Yes, they're *going* to try to seduce you?

PATTY. I usually believe them—and then I'm out one dinner.

DON. And if they say their intentions are honorable?

PATTY. I usually believe *them*—but you get fooled sometimes. I hate men like that. After all, there are lots of girls who don't *mind* being seduced. Why pick on those who do?

DON. (*Thinks a moment.*) Okay. I won't make a single pass at you. Do you believe me?

PATTY. Yes, I do. You're nice. I like you.

DON. I could be lying.

PATTY. That's true. *Are* you?

DON. Frankly, I don't know. I've never run up against anything like you.

PATTY. Really? How *nice*.

DON. I won't take an oath that I'm not going to kiss you.

PATTY. Oh, *that's* all right. Kissing's *fun*. I've *no* objection to *that*.

DON. I'll be damned if I know whether you're incredibly naive or whether you're just ribbing the pants off me.

PATTY. (*Steps to him.*) Oh, now look—it's very simple. Let's face it—going to a man's apartment almost always ends in one of two ways: Either the girl's willing to lose her virtue—or she fights for it. I don't *want* to lose mine—and I think it's vulgar to fight for it. So I always put my cards right on the table. Don't you think that's sensible?

DON. Okay. Sold. Affection, but no passion. (*Offers his hand.*) Word of honor.

PATTY. (*Taking his hand.*) "Affection, but no passion." Why, that's *lovely*. You could run for *president* on *that*.

DON. You're terribly sweet even if you are a little bit nuts. (*He pulls her to him, they kiss. He holds her by the shoulders.*) Patty O'Neill. You must be very Irish.

PATTY. Both of my parents were born in Brooklyn, but Pop's Irish from way back. When he gets good and mad, he can even talk with a thick brogue.

DON. What does he do?

PATTY. He's a cop.

DON. (*Dropping his arms away from her.*) Oh. Then you must have lots of brothers and sisters?

PATTY. No. Why?

DON. I always thought Irish cops had at least ten kids.

PATTY. (*Amused.*) No. I was the only one. My mother died when I was twelve. She was swell.

DON. You live at home?

PATTY. Oh, no. Irish cops are much too strict and old-fashioned, and Pop's a holy terror. All my beaux were scared to death of him. I've been on my own since I was eighteen. Are you married?

DON. No.