

FADE IN:

INT. VAUDEVILLE THEATER - NIGHT

A black signboard at the edge of the stage reads ETON AND FARRELL in white Art Deco type. A piano plays. The voice of RUTH ETON begins warbling the verse of "If I Could Be With You (One Hour To-Night)" a pop tune by Henry Creamer and Jimmy Johnson.

We PAN from the signboard, across the stage, past Ruth's studly accompanist EDDIE FARRELL, and HOLD ON Ruth, a sad-eyed jazz singer in a sexy black dress who stands in front of the grand piano, a scarf in her hand.

RUTH

(sings)

I'm so blue I don't know what to do
All day through I'm pining just for you
I did wrong when I let you go away
And now I grieve about you night and day
I'm unhappy and dissatisfied
But I'd be happy if I had you by my side...

As Ruth begins the refrain, an unseen orchestra joins in.

RUTH

(sings)

If I could be with you I'd love you strong
If I could be with you I'd love you long

I want you to know that I wouldn't go
Until I told you, honey, that I loved you so

Eddie sings the second half of the refrain, not nearly as well as Ruth.

EDDIE

(sings)

If I was free to do the things with you
If I could do the things I know I'd do

I'm telling you true
I'd be anything but blue
If I could be with you

Ruth takes the second refrain in a faster, rhythmically complex tempo.

RUTH

(sings)
If I could be with you I'd love you strong
If I could be with you I'd love you long

I want you to know that I wouldn't go
Until I told you, honey, that I loved you so

If I could be with you one hour tonight
If I was free to do the things I might

I'm telling you
I'd be anything but blue
If I could be with you

For just one hour ...

If I could be with you

Ruth bows to the audience as they APPLAUD. She gestures to Eddie who rises and bows.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUTH'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Ruth's agents enter the room looking for her: Tall Anglo-Saxon JIM and heavily-accented Jewish cigar-smoker SAUL. Ruth is out of view, changing clothes behind a screen.

JIM
Oh, Ruth! Ruth!

RUTH'S VOICE
Hello?

SAUL
Hey, Ruth!

RUTH'S VOICE
Hello! Sit down, make yourselves at home.
I'll be out in a second.

Saul strikes a match on the wall and lights his cigar while Jim takes a seat.

JIM
You certainly wowed 'em tonight, Ruthie!

SAUL

You certainly did! Five curtain calls and they could've rung up again.

(sits)

But I don't blame you, honey. Leave 'em hungry.

Ruth emerges in a plain white dress. The agents rise to greet her.

JIM

Hello, Ruth.

RUTH

Hello, boys!

SAUL

Hello, Ruth!

RUTH

To what do I owe the honor of this visit? Unwrap the bad news.

JIM

You worrying about bad news after...?

SAUL

You worrying! Mm-mm! Such a performer! It is to laughing, ain't it, Jim? Heh! The office wants to give you a new roof. Such a roof! Mm-mm! Starting with the Palace, headline billing. Even the Colonel'll tell you to sign.

RUTH

All right, all right. Let's have the "but--" ...

SAUL

(laughs)

Cute, ain't it? It's no "but," Ruthie -- it's a "because"!

RUTH

Well, because what -- ?

JIM

(hesitant)

Well, be-- Because of your partner. They don't want Farrell -- and you don't need him. Oh, why should we beat around the

bush?

RUTH

They don't want Eddie?

SAUL

They don't want Eddie -- that's the truth,
straight from the suspenders.

RUTH

Well, what's the matter with him? Why
don't they want him?

SAUL

(holds up two fingers)

I can tell you in just two words what's
the matter with him:

(counts off)

Im - possible.

RUTH

(upset)

Well, if they don't want Eddie Farrell,
they can't have me.

She retreats to her dressing table and sits, fixing her hair and powdering her nose. The agents follow and stand on either side of her.

SAUL

Never mind the display of temperature!
But, listen, it's for your own good!

JIM

Ruth, it ain't us, it's the office. They
don't want him.

RUTH

You don't understand. I couldn't break
with Eddie.

JIM

Oh, I got it. Love certainly makes the
world go 'round.

RUTH

Oh, I know Eddie's no wonder but he's
young and he'll develop.

JIM

Sure, he'll develop lockjaw the way he tries to sing.

The agents walk off in disgust. Ruth rises and confronts Saul while Jim takes a seat.

RUTH

Please, Saul, listen. I can talk to you as a friend. Let us lay off a couple of months. I'm working with Eddie. I'll give him poise and polish and I'll show him how to wear clothes.

SAUL

Say, what's going on here?

RUTH

Aw, he has the makings. I'll teach him how to sell a song and all you have to do is to book us into the Strand and have the office catch the act.

JIM

Yeah, I know. And in Newark, you'll want us to look at you in Trenton.

SAUL

Yeah, and in Trenton, you'll want us to go to Poughkeepsie. And in my condition --!

RUTH

Say, Saul, with your drag up in that office, you won't have any trouble stalling them off a few months. Tell 'em -- aw, tell 'em my health's bad. Tell them anything.

(voice breaking)

I don't care anything about the money. I want Eddie to come through and I know he can do it.

SAUL

A few months?!

RUTH

A few months. What's the difference?

SAUL

Say, it's a big difference between you and

Eddie. You're marvelous. And he's, uh, er
... Say, Jim. What's the opposite of
marvelous?

JIM
(with a dismissive wave)
That's Eddie.

FADE OUT

TITLE (to a slow instrumental version of "If I Could Be With You"):

Eddie hitched his wagon to a star --
and was on his way to success.

FADE IN:

INT. REHEARSAL - NIGHT

Ruth plays piano and looks admiringly at Eddie who, with a knee on
the piano bench, stands next to her, singing a line from "The Kiss
Waltz," a ballad by Al Dubin and Joe Burke:

EDDIE
(sings)
Kiss me, sweetheart ...

RUTH
(stops playing)
Oh, that's much better, darling. But when
you sing the word "sweetheart" open your
mouth. Don't sing through your nose. And
try this little slur of mine:
(sings and plays)
Ki-iss me, swee-ee-eetheart ...
(speaks)
Now, you try it.

But Eddie grabs her hands lovingly and sits beside her on the
bench.

EDDIE
Oh, say, honey, you're great to work with
me like this. But I don't kid myself. I
know you don't need me.

RUTH

Don't need you? Why, I wouldn't go on without you. And if you ask me, you're getting along wonderful.

EDDIE

On the level? Say, if ever I do get anywhere ...

RUTH

Well, what?

EDDIE

Well ... you figure it out.

RUTH

Well, as long as I have you by my side, I'm happy.

EDDIE

Oh ho. That sounds like a music cue, doesn't it?

RUTH

It is.

She begins to play.

EDDIE

(sings)

This waltz is the Kiss Waltz

(rises and sings as if onstage)

Telling us both what to do ...

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VAUDEVILLE THEATER - NIGHT

Eddie, in a tuxedo, stands onstage with Ruth beside him looking on proudly as he completes the song:

EDDIE

(sings)

... Kiss me, sweetheart, kiss me

While I dance the Kiss Waltz with you ...

Eddie bows twice to the audience's APPLAUSE, then turns to Ruth. They exchange bows.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Ruth and Eddie exit out the Stage Door. A crowd of young women push past Ruth to get to Eddie and surround him, chattering excitedly. Agents Jim and Saul arrive from the opposite direction from the girls and stare at the scene.

Eddie signs autographs and chats with his adoring fans while a bemused Ruth shakes her head and walks away.

SAUL

Can you beat it? Six months ago that guy was a bust!

JIM

And now he's a natural.

SAUL

Yeah, a natural imitation of Ruth Eton. She taught him everything. And such a matinee idol! Mm!

The crowd disperses and Eddie greets Jim and Saul with handshakes.

EDDIE

Hello, Saul!

SAUL

Hello, Eddie!

EDDIE

Hello, Jim!

JIM

Hello, Eddie! Oh, say, Eddie. If we're not breaking into your social life ...

SAUL

Hey, listen, Eddie, we've got to talk to you. It's important.

EDDIE

Yeah?

SAUL

Shienfeld is putting on his new Ritz Revue and we got a swell offer for you. You've been in vaudeville long enough.

EDDIE

Say, I'd like to be with that outfit.
Think we ought to take it?

SAUL

It ain't a "we" proposition, Eddie. They
want you.

EDDIE

They don't want Ruth?

SAUL

Pre-zactly!

EDDIE

Well, what'll I do with her?

SAUL

Say, why should you worry about her? She
can take care of herself. She don't do
anything anymore in the act anyway.

EDDIE

Well, she's got to live.

JIM

Oh, don't worry. Ruth can play the small
time just as long as she likes.

EDDIE

(almost persuaded)

Well, I guess that could be arranged.

SAUL

Say, why should you worry? You've got your
own troubles. You know how this business
is. Today, you're upstairs. And tomorrow
-- who knows? -- you're in the cellar,
ain't you?

EDDIE

(convinced)

Well, I guess you're right. You know, I've
always wanted to be with that--

The three men start talking simultaneously as they walk off.

FADE OUT

TITLE (to a fast instrumental version of "If I Could Be With You"):

Ruth learned that on Broadway the
billing was over when the cooing
stopped.

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Ruth opens the doors to her kitchen and turns to see a framed photo of Eddie on a table beside her chair in the living room. She sits in the chair, picks up the photo, stares at it a moment, sets it down, then turns away sadly, burying her head in her shoulder.

Ruth's roommate MARGE enters, carrying packages.

MARGE

Hello, Ruth.

RUTH

(tries to get a grip)

Hello, Marge.

Marge puts the packages in the kitchen and returns to the living to discard her purse, hat and coat. Marge is a low-paid, wise-cracking chorus girl, always on the lookout for a man or a buck.

MARGE

Well, here I am -- all tired out. I've
been from five-and-ten cent store to
five-and-ten cent store. Just couldn't
find a fur coat to fit me.

RUTH

(laughs)

Gee, I wish I had your disposition. What
are all the bundles?

MARGE

(pulls out a card table)

Rations, dearie, rations. It looks like a
hard winter -- we might as well eat while
we can.

Throughout the following, Marge sets up the table next to Ruth,

covers it with a tablecloth, brings cups, food, a chair, etc.

RUTH

Fix something for yourself. I'm not hungry.

MARGE

Oh, I've brought some swell corned beef.
(off Eddie's photo)
I thought it'd be a change from that ham o' yours.

RUTH

(takes photo and stares at it)
Aw, Eddie was all right until success went to his head.

MARGE

Yeah, it went to the place where it had the most room.

RUTH

Somehow I - I just can't work without him.

Ruth puts the photo back.

MARGE

Aw, come on, brace up! Come on, show me the chinaware, will ya?

RUTH

(faint grin, head down)
Aw, I'll get over it, I guess.

MARGE

Sure. Love 'em, tease 'em, and give 'em the ozone.

RUTH

That's all right when you're playing with numbers. But when you've just got one who's ... been everything to you.

MARGE

Say, you sound like a page out of "True Confessions"!

RUTH

Well, I feel worse. And think how hard I

worked with him. That's gratitude.

MARGE

Yeah, when you first knew him, he couldn't carry a tune if it had a handle.

RUTH

And this is the thanks I get for it.

MARGE

Oh, you'll get over it. I've had more knocks in this racket than a crosstown bus. And I been in this game since the Big Dipper was just a drinking cup.

RUTH

(chuckles)

It's the woman who pays.

Marge brings a coffee pot to the table and sits.

MARGE

Well, why don't you stop paying and do some playing? Say, you know, you've passed up more offers this week -- and for what?

RUTH

Well, I just can't get him out of my mind.

MARGE

Oh, that ungrateful double-crosser... Say, do you know if you were drowning, he'd turn a hose on you.

RUTH

Well, I'm not drowning yet.

MARGE

Yeah. With those eyes and that shape, you'll always be able to stand up.

RUTH

Maybe it would be better if I tried to forget him.

MARGE

Better? You're speaking mildly.

RUTH

Will you help me?

MARGE

Will I help you? Can Lindbergh fly?

Marge forks some corned beef onto a plate for Ruth.

MARGE

Come on, eat some of this.

RUTH

Mmmm. It does smell good.

Ruth moves closer to the table, puts a napkin in her lap, sugars her tea, etc.

MARGE

Listen, after you've huddled up with this corned beef, you'll have a better outlook on life. And after we finish, we'll put on some powder and go gunning for big game.

RUTH

(laughs)

I believe you will help me to forget him after all.

MARGE

Forget him? Say, you'll forget that that ivory-tickler ever existed.

Ruth sips her tea thoughtfully as we

FADE OUT

INSERT (to a sad instrumental version of "If I Could Be With You"):

A newspaper article. The headlines read:

Eddie Farrell, Revue Star
Suddenly Loses Voice

Broadway Playboy
Stricken At Party

The article, next to a photo of Eddie, reads:

Eddie Farrell, famous tenor who had

been touring the Inter-Mountain Circuit and other well-known vaudeville circuits, was suddenly stricken at a theatrical party given by Florenz Shufield.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

[We know we're on a train because we hear TRAIN SOUND EFFECTS and a porter enters after the first line and wanders around in the background.]

Four men, all faceless show-biz types, sit around while one of them deals out four hands of playing cards atop some suitcases. The FIRST MAN reads a newspaper which presumably contains the above article.

FIRST MAN

Well, there's the guy that got just what was coming to him.

SECOND MAN

It's the old story. Wine, women, and sauerkraut.

THIRD MAN

In other words, the boy went the way of all fish.

FIRST MAN

This paper said it started with a case of laryngitis.

THIRD MAN

Well, that ham would drink anything.

FOURTH MAN

(dealing the cards)

Eddie's no ham. You can cure a ham.

SECOND MAN

And what a terrible deal he gave that Eton girl.

FIRST MAN

I should say so. She taught him everything he knew. Nothing but a stooge piano player

till she straightened him out.

The men begin to play. The game is bridge:

FOURTH MAN

Pass.

THIRD MAN

One club.

FIRST MAN

One no-trump.

THIRD MAN

Well, just the same, boys, don't forget
to be at that benefit Sunday night.

FOURTH MAN

Don't worry, we'll be there with bells.

SECOND MAN

Never mind the belles. That's what put
Farrell on the bum. Two diamonds.

FADE OUT

INSERT (to a rousing FANFARE):

A page of the program for the Sunday night benefit:

MONSTER BENEFIT
for EDDIE FARRELL

The following guest artists
will positively appear:

JOE FRISCO
JIM BARTON
TRIXIE FRIGANZA
EDDIE FOY, JR.
WALTER WINCHELL
ANN SEYMOUR
MARK HELLINGER
JOE PENNER
HELEN BRODERICK
ROBERT L. RIPLEY
WILLIE HOWARD
SYLVIA HOWARD

YORK & KING

and other well-known artists [sic]

at the
WINTER GARDEN
Broadway and 51st Street
New York City

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATER - NIGHT

A full house. The orchestra leader conducts the rousing FANFARE.

The music stops as the show's tuxedoed MASTER OF CEREMONIES walks onstage.

THE M.C.

Ladies and gentlemen. We have waited as long as possible. I regret very much to announce that all the stars to appear, none have shown up. Your money will be refunded at the box office. However, before you go, I wish to state that we have with us tonight a very unexpected guest performer. A girl none of us can forget. Eddie Farrell's old partner, Miss Ruth Eton.

The audience APPLAUDS.

THE M.C.

Thank you.

The M.C. turns and beckons to Ruth offstage.

THE M.C.

Oh, Ruthie?
(to the audience)
Miss Eton.

MUSIC begins, lights go down, the M.C. retreats.

Ruth, dressed in ordinary street clothes, walks to center stage, her head down, her purse and gloves in her hand. She pauses, looks out at the audience sadly ... and sings the verse and one refrain of the torch song "Don't Tell Him What Happened To Me" (by B.G. De Sylva, Lew Brown and Ray Henderson) in one long glorious take:

RUTH

(sings)

I loved him, I lost him
He craved a thrill
I can't forget him
I love him still
It's over, all over
And yet I find
That he's always on my mind

Tell me where he is, tell me where he goes
Tell me what he does, tell me who he knows
But don't tell him what happened to me

If he says his life now is like a song
Tell him he was right, tell him I was wrong
But don't tell him what happened to me

Let him remember me
As I used to be
When his love for me
Made me strong and free

Ask him if the new kisses are divine
Ask him if they thrill just as much as mine
But don't tell him what happened to me

CUT TO EDDIE watching from the wings. He clutches his laryngitic throat and expresses guilt and remorse.

RESUME ON RUTH as she sings another half refrain of the song:

RUTH

(sings, clutches her purse)

Let him remember me
As I used to be
When his love for me
Made me strong and free

I wonder if the new kisses are divine
I wonder if they thrill just as much as mine
Oh, don't tell him what happened to me

The MUSIC ends. Ruth, head bowed, walks off. The audience APPLAUDS and rises -- whether to begin a standing ovation or to go home is not entirely clear.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

It's dark. A single stage lamp provides all the illumination. An IRISHMAN, in overalls, sweeps the floor with a broom as an emotionally-drained Ruth walks past.

IRISHMAN
(pleasantly)
Good night, ma'am.

RUTH
(listlessly)
Good night.

The Irishman walks off as Eddie, hat in hand, emerges from some curtains and steps in Ruth's path. She pauses, looks up, and recognizes him.

RUTH
Oh.

EDDIE
Yes, it's me.

They stand alone in the darkened backstage with the one lamp glowing between them.

RUTH
Hello, Eddie.

EDDIE
(genuinely)
Yes, I had to see you. As much as you must hate me for the way I've treated you. But I got what was coming to me. And I see now that I deserved it. Those fair-weather friends of mine certainly put the skids under me plenty. Just think of it. Not one of them showed up. Gee, Ruth, you were great.

Ruth can't meet his eye.

EDDIE
(lightly)
I used to play the piano pretty well in your act. Didn't I? I mean, as piano players go. Well, maybe ... maybe I could

come back.

Ruth looks straight at him.

EDDIE
Farrell's the name.

He offers his hand. She takes it.

RUTH
Come up tomorrow for an audition?

Relieved, Eddie holds her hand in both of his.

EDDIE
Can I bring the ring?

RUTH
What ring?

EDDIE
We're two-thirds married now, aren't we?

RUTH
What do you mean?

EDDIE
Well, I'm willing, the preacher's willing ...

He doesn't need to finish. Ruth grins and puts her head to his shoulder. Eddie embraces her. We hear a jaunty version of "If I Could Be With You" as we

FADE OUT