

# ON THE ETHICS OF BROADWAY

AN OPERA IN TWO ACTS

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LIBRETTO

## CAST

Leonard (*Countertenor*): A middle-aged passionate Broadway composer turned old hermit. After Eva Rice's heavy bans on theater, he locks himself in his decaying theater, hoping to forget the past.

Aaron (*Tenor*): Leonard's business partner and romantic interest; a man who follows the wind where it takes him, and often gives in to temptation.

Nadia (*Soprano*): A young, headstrong composer brought up in a world where musicals, now banned, are a memory of the past.

Senator Eva Rice (*Soprano*): A middle-aged politician who often speaks before she thinks; her ideas are communicated in jagged, nonsensical ways. She critically suffers from germaphobia in her portrayal, often sanitizing her hands or wiping surfaces down.

Friend/Mother (*Mezzo-Soprano*): Friend is a blank-minded student with little influence on others; her purpose in the world is to hear others talk at her. Mother is a non-vocal role.

Young Eva (*Child Soprano*): An 8-year-old version of Eva Rice.

Intern/Cast Member (*Broadway Tenor*): An auditioning member of Leonard and Eva's musical. He, coincidentally, does intern work for Eva Rice on the side.

Officer (*Baritone*)

Various Background Company Members

## **THE STORY**

In a modern-day New York City, politician Eva Rice has passed a law requiring the heavy censorship of Broadway. As a result, the industry soon fails to adapt, and few theaters survive without facing bankruptcy. Leonard Wright finds himself distraught and depressed, cocooning himself within his decaying theater and deciding to forget his past as a successful Broadway composer.

Nadia, a young university student, writes her own show, breaking nearly every one of Rice's laws. Confident in her ability as a writer and composer, Nadia presents her show to Leonard, the only remaining Broadway writer who would be able to produce the show. In immediate refusal, Leonard dismisses Nadia, who in return plays a poorly written song. Catching her bait, Leonard rewrites the song with Nadia, which rouses his interest in producing the show and convinces him that defying Rice's laws will achieve the goal of bringing Broadway back to life.

In hearing rumors of the production of their show, Eva Rice appears at the theater mid-rehearsal to confront the company. Nadia and Leonard, however, give Eva a censored version of their libretto, which she agrees to read and later approves, thinking that her version is the one which will be performed. When journalists call and inquire about her sudden change of political platform, however, Eva figures out that she has been given a phony script.

On opening night, Leonard and Nadia plan to premiere their fully uncensored show, however, Eva Rice bursts in to arrest them. After a confrontational argument, the Senator discovers that her connections to Broadway exist far beyond her destructive laws, and she agrees to watch the show. Eva Rice reviews her platform regarding the destruction of Broadway, but her opportunity to decide on a definitive final decision is taken away.

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# *On the Ethics of Broadway*

## Act I

### ONE

*Nineteen Seventy-five*

*(Open to a bare stage with all backdrops raised. A single light shines upon Leonard sitting at an aged piano writing at a book of staff paper. As the prelude plays, he switches between playing a melody at the piano [unheard] and vigorously writing. He begins to speak aloud to himself passionately.)*

LEONARD:

She's my muse, the most beautiful creation. She's given me all that I could ask for. She's fed me wealth, fame, love. Who is she? Her name is theater.

*(A rehearsal metronome gradually interrupts Leonard's daydream. Light fills the stage in an instant. A company of performers, in any amount, appear on stage, snapping him back to reality. Taken aback, he frustratingly attempts to lead them through a rehearsal.)*

LEONARD:

Once again!

LEONARD:

*(Losing his temper)*

No, no no! I can write the show of the decade, but if you don't start learning your moves, we'll go broke!

AARON:

*(Interrupting, stepping forward from backstage to read aloud from a newspaper. He is calm and collected despite the surrounding chaos.)*

Ha, right!

"The results of last night's opera, were stunning; while the music could be described as droll, old, unusual, the dancing and directing, the staging and the lighting was genius."

LEONARD:

You only wish that's what happened. Here!  
*(Opening, then reading from a magazine from the piano)*  
"The works of Leonard Wright inspire..."

AARON:

Sleep, death, war?

LEONARD:

No...  
"Inspire one to walk out of the theater..."  
*(His voice trails off and embarrassment returns as he realizes he's picked up the magazine containing a scathing review)*  
God damned good for nothing fucking critics.

AARON:

Darling, it's fine. Move on with it.  
*(Picking up Leonard's rehearsal, but now much more organized. He observes the company's dance as he calls out cues.)*  
Let's go! Back to work!  
One, two, three, four, one! Yes!  
Left, right, left, right!

LEONARD:

*(Aside to Aaron as he continues to observe the company routine)*  
You humiliate me.

AARON:

One, two, three...one, two three.  
You complete me, my dear.

LEONARD:

Where were you last night after the show?

AARON:

See her, the one on the left?

LEONARD:

No.

AARON:

You ought to. She's a genius.

LEONARD:

And last night? Where were you?

AARON:

*(Giving Leonard his full attention)*

She likes me, she knew Pina Bausch. She's lovely. She's a genius.

LEONARD:

And who cares?

AARON:

We don't always have to be together, you know.

*(The company rehearsal dissolves away; lights, fading in and out, red, orange, blue, reveal Leonard and Aaron laying side by side in bed, half naked. Aaron smokes a cigarette nonchalantly, Leonard is anxious.)*

LEONARD:

What must I write? What am I doing wrong?

AARON:

Oh God, Leonard. Shut up.

*(He lights a cigarette)*

LEONARD:

What?

AARON:

*(He prematurely puts his cigarette out.)*

We need to stop.

LEONARD:

Stop?

AARON:

This. Us!

LEONARD:

What? Why?

AARON:

I'm suffocated. I'm working too hard –

LEONARD:

I'll write a new show.

AARON:

...to please you. And...she's pregnant. We're keeping the kid.

*(Leonard's look of panic slowly dissolves to stoic sorrow. Aaron quickly gets up to leave, but first frustratingly turns to Leonard.)*

AARON:

*(Dismissive, frustrated)*  
I've always wanted a family.

*(Aaron storms out, slamming the door behind him.)*

## TWO

### *Two-thousand Twenty*

*(Leonard and Aaron dissolve from the stage. During the transition, the intern quickly scurries around, dropping things frequently; they are late for a meeting. Eventually, the intern leads us to a door, swings it open, and steps in to find Senator Eva Rice pacing in her office. She hits a desk bell every once in a while to wake up the intern.)*

EVA RICE:

Oh, late! Waking up, that's the most important responsibility! Everything starts with a schedule. And you're fifteen minutes late! You can't spend your whole life *asleep*! So, wake up!

INTERN:

I have insomnia.



EVA:

Nobody wants to work anymore. Nobody!  
In order to avoid being woke, you must *wake* up. Don't you understand? It's simple!  
If you stay asleep, with your eyes closed, you risk being woke!  
But if you wake up, you're now...?

INTERN:

Asleep?

EVA:

Awake. Awake! You're not woke, you're awake!

*(Eva Rice's desk phone begins to ring, cutting her off. She picks it up cautiously with a napkin, avoiding touching the phone itself.)*

EVA:

Yes, senator Eva Rice speaking.  
*(Silence at the phone.)*  
Certainly, we could make that work.  
*(Silence.)*  
Yes, I have the votes.  
Something is harming our community.  
*(Getting closer into the phone.)*  
It's made its way into the schools. Theater, about *crossdressing*, for kids?  
*(Now fully screaming into the phone.)*  
It must stop! Now!  
*(In self-awareness, she smooths herself over and regains control.)*  
Thank you, goodbye.

INTERN:

Can I take Friday off?

EVA:

No! Get up, let's go.

*(The intern clumsily gathers their items and follows Senator Rice. The stage changes from the office to a simple podium.)*

EVA:

Ladies and gentlemen, we are on the brink of a cultural revolution! The time has come to reclaim our values, to protect our children from the corrupting influences that lurk within our theaters. We will no longer tolerate the vulgarity and moral degradation disguised as art!

*(Deafening applause fills the room.)*

## THREE *Two-thousand Twenty*

*(Open to Nadia fervently writing at her college dorm desk. She has paper notes everywhere, and a whiteboard has a few ideas scribbled upon it.)*

NADIA:

Sixteen months I've struggled with this show.  
*(She fiddles at the keyboard.)*  
There; it's done! Finally!

*(A knock at the door interrupts her and she jumps up to open the door. In arrives a friend of Nadia's. Nadia rushes to her desk to gather her papers.)*

NADIA:

Come in! Sit!

*(Nadia throws a manuscript in her friend's lap.)*

FRIEND:

What is this?

NADIA:

A manuscript!

FRIEND:

You're done?

NADIA:

Read!

*(Nadia proceeds to sing a melody from the page.)*

FRIEND:

Do you think they can perform it?

NADIA:

*(Picking up from her melody.)*

Oh, yes, they'll have to.

FRIEND:

But what about all the new bans?

NADIA:

Who cares about Eva Rice!

*(Nadia begins to write on the board.)*

FRIEND:

I do.

NADIA:

You don't mean that, I'm sure. My story starts with death, the death of the father...

*(friend gasps)*

...no, no, not The Father, but the father of the family. The family is forced to sell their home. He died from an overdose, self-induced. Our character is forced to the street. Hungry, she sells her body for food. Amphetamines take her pains away. But she pleads, nobody listens. She was beautiful, she was brilliant; "homeless addict," read the coroner's report.

What do you think?

FRIEND:

*(Not responding to the "absurdity" of the story, through laughing.)*

You couldn't possibly produce this show!

NADIA:

Yes, we could, it's just enough to not...

FRIEND:

If you have to use shock value to get your point across then you don't know what you're writing about. It's boring! Try a new plot.

*(Nadia looks to the board, throws a marker at it in frustration. She then picks up a book of sheet music. She looks at the cover intently.)*

NADIA:

You can help me.

## FOUR *Two-thousand Twenty*

*(Meditation Phase 1: we see Eva Rice praying, a single black book standing out among a series of green books around her in the background. Transition to a much older Leonard sitting in a disheveled theater room. He is frustrated with writing something at his desk. After some time, it becomes clear he is writing a letter.)*

LEONARD:

I maintain I will not leave the premises! This is a fully operational venue...

*(He looks up at his disheveled office.)*

...you are aware. As the contract reads, as long as I'm writing, as long as I'm producing, the theater remains mine...

*(A knock at the door interrupts his writing. A confused look floods his previously compressed face. He returns to writing.)*

LEONARD:

And furthermore, I'll sue you for...for...

*(His energy dies. A knock interrupts him once more. Leonard shouts at the door.)*

AH! This theater is condemned!

NADIA:

*(From behind the door.)*

But is the owner condemned too?

LEONARD:

*(Pausing.)*

Yes, he is! What do you want?

NADIA:

To enter, please.

*(Leonard stands and walks to the door. He cracks it ever so slightly.)*

LEONARD:

This is the best can do.

NADIA:

Why? Are you nude!

*(Leonard, aghast at her comment, swings the door open in surprise of her comment.)*

LEONARD:

What! No!

*(Nadia storms through the doorway, backpack in hand, and sits down amidst the messy room. She looks around, wowing. Leonard stares back.)*

LEONARD:

*(Spoken, aloof:)*

You mortgage bankers get younger by the day.

NADIA:

*(Ignoring Leonard and gazing upon his messy room)*

So, *this* is how you write a show?

*(Spoken.)*

Wow!

LEONARD:

No...who are you?

NADIA:

Nadia!

LEONARD:

Nadia who?

NADIA:

I'm here for a lesson.

LEONARD:

No. I don't teach. I don't write anymore.

NADIA

*(Holding up her manuscript.)*

Please, just a glance?

LEONARD:

*(With an initial glance of interest, then snapping out.)*

No! There is nothing left on Broadway except homeless composers and empty venues.

NADIA:

That's why I need you. Please! You are the only one left that has any experience. This is our time to get Broadway back!

LEONARD:

Yeah! Real prime time. I stopped writing years ago. You want Broadway back? Go to a senate hearing.

*(Nadia sits at the piano and begins to play one of Leonard's show tunes.)*

LEONARD:

Those days are over.

*(Nadia starts to play a tune of her own.)*

NADIA:

“I can’t pay the rent,  
Oh, now what shall I do?  
I’ll sleep with my landlord,  
And hope he’ll come through.”

*(Visibly annoyed, Leonard walks over to the piano.)*

LEONARD:

No...my god ...it’s terrible.

NADIA:

Isn’t it great?

*(Though criticizing, it is immediately apparent that Leonard’s creativity has sparked; his interest in the project is undeniable.)*

LEONARD:

Hardly. Here is the mistake...why do this?

*(He starts playing.)*

It’s way too square. Why end here?

*(Spoken.)*

There is still harmonic energy in this tune, we can do more!

Listen:

*(Leonard plays his version.)*

Continue here. See?

And are we committed to those lyrics? Certainly not.

NADIA:

*(Amazed)*

Wow.

LEONARD:

*(Shoving her out the door.)*

Come back when you've fixed that. Bye!

## FIVE

### *Nineteen Eighty-One*

*(Open to a young Eva sitting with her mother. Her mother faces away from the audience, in the dark.)*

YOUNG EVA:

Mom, mom...!

*(There is no response from Eva's mother.)*

Can you hear me? I'm bored. Listen to me! Please. I know you're busy, but I'm bored. I know you're too busy but talk to me. What was that? Did you say my name? Say Eva. Say it!

MOTHER:

*(Shouted:)*

Get away! Are you stupid?! Nobody wants you here.

*(Meditation Phase 2: A young Eva stares at her mother on stage; this scene transitions to an older Eva sitting solitary in a kneeled position. She is not praying but studying a law textbook, crossing several things out and then writing notes. As time passes, she is granted with a diploma, a suit. Now modern day: she appears at her bookshelf of books all titled "law" (or "constitution"). She disregards them. Transition to Nadia finishing up some writing at her desk. She gets up, collects her things, and leaves for Leonard's theater.)*



SIX  
*Two-thousand Twenty*

*(Leonard's office. Nadia hovers over his desk as he reads her libretto.)*

LEONARD:

*(Intensely.)*

Yes, good.

*(Pause.)*

No, no, don't word like that.

*(He takes a pencil and marks the page.)*

NADIA:

What was wrong with that?

LEONARD:

Nothing bad. We just want to show that a little vulgarity won't hurt, not end up in confession.

*(He looks up, concentration breaking.)*

Have you finished the music?

NADIA:

Yes.

*(Nadia walks to the piano, sits down, and begins playing a melody. Leonard stands up and walks over, interested. Nadia continues to play the piano as the stage transitions from Leonard's office to a blank rehearsal stage. A line of auditioners stands watching her play before Leonard stops her.)*

LEONARD:

Right, so, you all know the risk in being here for this show, so being dedicated and convinced in your love for theater is important. You've all received your books? It's crucial that all the blow, blowouts, and blowjobs don't result in unwanted blowback...from at least the audience, that is. This is going to piss the censorship authorities off, but that doesn't matter. We only need to convince the public that Broadway is worth coming back, and without the restrictions.

*(Leonard holds up his book and begins to read.)*

LEONARD:

“Nineteen-ninety-two, the Bronx; powder covers the room...the tables, seating, curtains...”

*(Looking up.)*

... you get the idea...

“In the middle of the night, we see a man sitting nervously, cocaine in front of him.”

*(Leonard gestures to Nadia to start playing.)*

Nadia...please...

CASTMEMBER:

Oh, I woke up this morning a hot shaking mess.

And I wanted to get out of bed without  
that dreaded pounding head, the cause?

Well, that should go unsaid.

Oh, I wanna stay clean but I just retrogress.

And the coffee works, but not as great,

need somethin' that'll captivate

not talkin' bout barbiturates

there's nothin' that can replicate

the feelin' that just stimulates

I think of it and salivate and then

I go and take the bait.

My engine is primed, I'm ready to go.

I don't have much time let's start the show!

I roll on up and ride the line, this sugar has me feel-in' fine

and then, oh god, here comes the sign,

re-min-der that I am con-fined!

I'm ridin' the tracks, no goin' back!

Oh, I'm chugga lugga lugga lug-gin' along,

Nothin' stoppin' me from singin' my song!

What could possibly go wrong?

Oh, I'm tired of living with constant stress.  
But the booger sugar keeps me up,  
I don't think that I'll ever stop,  
How could I, with being on top?

Oh, it's time to saddle up, let's go  
Just take a hit and let it flow  
I feel my heart rate start to grow  
Oh, god, it's so great doing blow!

*(The sound of the theater doors banging closed floods the theater and sets everyone silent. Immediately following the slam, Eva Rice starts speaking. Behind her stand authorities.)*

EVA RICE:

That's quite enough! Good afternoon.

LEONARD:

*(Annoyed.)*  
May I help you?

EVA RICE:

No, I think I've heard everything I need to. What is this show about, sir?  
*(She reaches into her bag and pulls out a legal pad.)*

LEONARD:

What business do you have here...

EVA RICE:

I am the president of the committee for state censorship and this libretto...  
*(She pulls a book from her bag.)*  
...violates several new laws. Profanity, obscenity, lust, wrath, greed! Pride! There shall be no more pride! Burn it! Burn it all!  
*(Eva Rice calms herself down.)*  
The people voted for censorship, so...

LEONARD:

Stop! What would you like changed, madam?

EVA RICE:

Here!

*(She goes to the book and rewrites some words.)*

Not this...NO, yes. There.

*(Eva hands her edited copy to the vocalist. They read through her edited lyrics.)*

CASTMEMBER:

Oh, I woke up this morning and nothing was wrong.

And I got up early from my bed

Remembering what Jesus said, and why?

Well, that should go unsaid.

Oh, I haven't a problem, the world is just swell.

And I have a stable, steady job

I'm working at a local shop

It's me, my bucket and my mop

But soon I'll climb right to the top

I'll never, ever, ever, stop

My mood will never, ever drop and then?!

I'll manage my own shop!

My taxes are paid, I follow the rules.

I'll work till I drop, there is no excuse!

I'll work to be a senator; I'll stop those gosh darn meddlers

The power feels spectacular

Especially nonsecular!

I'm moppin' the floor, doin' my chores!

Oh, I'm workin' hard and stayin' out of the way,

Gonna make those pesky protesters pay!

Move aside, you're done Broadway!

NADIA:

It's certainly clear who wrote it.

LEONARD:

A masterpiece! We'll edit the show and send a new copy right away, Madam Senator.

EVA RICE:

As is required by law!

*(Eva slams the door shut.)*

NADIA:

*(To Leonard)*

What have you done! That was possibly our final chance to get an audience in here and you ruined it!

LEONARD:

Who wouldn't want to watch a musical edited by Eva Rice herself?

*(Leonard hands the book to a cast member, who then hands it to the hands of a delivery boy; the score transitions ownership several times [light should only be focused on the score] until it reaches the desk of Eva Rice, where she sits patiently awaiting it. Finally, she is lit alone with only the book, reading it intently, nodding. She picks up her phone, has a brief nonverbal conversation, then hangs up. The light goes dark. Intermission.)*

## Act II

### ONE

#### *Nineteen Eighty*

*(Open to younger Leonard's theater, not much changed from previously. He is writing music as before, however with less enthusiasm. He speaks aloud to himself.)*

LEONARD:

“Not for our time.”

Not for our time?

What could that mean? It was great. It had everything it needed. It was the perfect show! What was wrong? How could it bomb? How?

*(Leonard, frustrated, throws some papers off the piano. He then goes on, playing a tune.)*

LEONARD:

How beautiful.

*(He stops playing.)*

I don't understand what I'm doing wrong! I don't even know where to start. That son of a bitch! He left me to die, hung me out to dry. That bastard! Bastard! Bas-

*(He starts shouting it louder into the theater as if talking to Aaron directly. Aaron appears upstage behind Leonard's line of sight.)*

AARON:

Bastard!

*(Leonard quickly turns.)*

AARON:

*(Anemic)*

Hello, darling.

LEONARD:

You look like shit.

AARON:

You look tired.

LEONARD:

Why are you here? What do you want? A job?

AARON:

*(Emitting a self-pitied laugh.)*

No, no. I've just come to say goodbye.

LEONARD:

You've already done that. I'll take an apology though.

*(Leonard throws his hands up.)*

AARON:

I'm sorry.

LEONARD:

Do you have any idea what it's like to be alone in this business?

AARON:

Yes.

LEONARD:

You ass! I don't feel bad for you.

AARON:

I'm sorry.

LEONARD:

*(Building in intensity.)*

And what about me, you selfish prick?

*(A brief, awkward pause; he regrets what he says.)*

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. It's been so hard without you, never leave me again.

*(A pause.)*

Where are you going?

AARON:

What?

LEONARD:

You're saying goodbye. Paris? Rio? Where's the great, mysterious man heading now?

AARON:

*(Sincere)*

Oh.

I don't think anyone knows. Least of all, me. And now, I'm scared, and I really am sorry. Please, forgive me.

LEONARD:

I never thought I'd hear you say that.

*(Pause.)*

And that dancer? You left her?

AARON:

I had to...

LEONARD:

*(Angrily)*

Oh, you had to. And somewhere out there there's this orphan you've abandoned.

AARON:

No, no. She is raising her.

LEONARD:

And what are you doing?

AARON:

Like I said, saying goodbye.

*(Leonard steps back, looking Aaron up and down. He embraces him, and they dance together.)*

LEONARD:

*(Jokingly.)*

Almost as good as her?

*(Getting serious.)*

Go be with your child. It's not too late.



AARON:

It is too late.

*(Leonard faces away from Aaron towards the piano.)*

LEONARD:

It's not too late to change, and I can help you, there is hope...

*(Leonard turns after a moment of no reply to see Aaron gone.)*

LEONARD:

Aaron?

## TWO

### *Two-thousand Twenty*

*(Eva Rice sits behind her desk buried in several books. Her phone rings. She answers.)*

EVA:

Yes! My position is strong, I will not be changing my vote!

*(Pause.)*

I already approved of the book. If Broadway follows this

*(pointing to the libretto)* book, I sense a revival. Tell them that!

*(She hangs up. The phone rings again, and she answers, annoyed.)*

EVA:

Yes! What! No! No, I haven't changed my platform!

*(Pause.)*

No, no!

*(Momentarily calming.)*

You're confused - that was the old show!

*(Pause.)*

You saw what!? Tonight?! Profanity, obscenity, lust, wrath,  
greed! Pride! Not pride!

*(Eva Rice slams her phone down and stands up.)*

EVA:

The people don't know what they want.

*(She gathers her things and storms out.)*

### THREE *Two-thousand Twenty*

*(On a bare stage, the Broadway Tenor rehearses through one of the opening numbers of the show.)*

BRD. TENOR:

I see the line, but I cross it again  
Dancing with shadows, I call them my friends  
Promises made, but they break every time  
Still, I keep falling like it's not a crime

I try to resist, but the pull is too strong  
Whispers of weakness, I know I'm not strong  
Drowning in choices that bury me deep  
Wishing for freedom, but it's way too far out of reach.

Cuz, I can't say no, I can't just walk away  
Oh, these chains around me, yes, they're here to stay  
I fight, but I'm losing control  
Caught in the fire, it's burning my soul  
No, I can't just go and say no...

*(Transition to backstage at Leonard's theater, moments before the beginning of the evening' show. Leonard looks out behind the curtain, somewhat distracted by the crowd.)*

LEONARD:

I'm surprised she hasn't shown up yet.

NADIA:

*(To Leonard.)*

Look at this review! From last night! Everyone loved it!

*(The Tenor rushes backstage.)*

CASTMEMBER:

They're out there...so many of them.

LEONARD:

Fuck, it's the authorities. Here she is.

CASTMEMBER:

No, the press. They've completely flooded the street.

LEONARD:

It's been forty years since I've seen the house this full.

NADIA:

Haha! Yes! We've won!

*(A door slam cuts Nadia off. In storms Eva Rice with two police officers.)*

EVA:

Arrest these two immediately! Now! Now!

LEONARD:

And what is the charge here?

EVA:

This show is a clear violation of several censorship laws, such as...

NADIA:

Would you happen to have a script to point out what rules we might have broken?

EVA:

*(To authorities.)*

I do! But the wrong one!

Don't you have a single recording from last night, a script...

*(staring at an authority.)*

Anything, anything?

*(The authorities don't move.)*

EVA:

*(Shouting to authorities.)*

I can have you fired for this, you know! Fired! It's your job to enforce the law!

LEONARD:

Senator Rice, please. We have a show to perform and a full audience.

EVA:

No! You goddamn idiot, you can't perform this at all!

*(Shouted:)*

You should be lucky that anyone's here at all, you failing, miserable, son-of-a-bitch cheat! Nobody wants you here, nobody!

*(Eva reaches down and throws her shoe at Leonard; it nearly misses him. She hears the opening number being practiced.)*

CASTMEMBER:

*(On stage)*

Cuz, I can't say no, I can't just walk away

Oh, these chains around me, yes, they're here to stay...

EVA RICE:

What is this show about? Are you mocking me?

LEONARD:

*(Addressing her insult.)*

Senator Rice, theater is who I am. It's all I have. It's my love. It makes people laugh, makes them cry, it shows us why love is great. It makes us human; it brings out our emotions! Everyone is here because they want to be, Senator.

EVA:

It doesn't matter! I'm here to clean this city up.

*(Eva rips a notice of condemnation from one of the authority's hands and slams it on a cork board to the side of the stage.)*

EVA:

You're done! That's it! Shut down! It's over! You're done!  
And...

*(Eva does a double take, immediately seeing at a picture pinned on the board.)*

EVA:

Why do you have this picture?

LEONARD:

It's an old friend of a friend. You wouldn't understand.

EVA:

You are mocking me! Aren't you? You are!

LEONARD:

*(Shouting.)*

My god! Not everything is about you!

EVA:

*(Furious.)*

I haven't given you permission to use her picture!

LEONARD:

Shut up!

*(Shouted.)*

Do we need your goddamn permission for everything? Why do you care so fucking much? This woman was screwed out of a life she deserved because the man I loved got her pregnant. And he was stupid, and he ruined a great deal of things for both of us, and she and I share that frustration with him, I'm sure! But she deserves something!

EVA:

*(Hysterical.)*

You can't use my mother's picture for this show!

LEONARD:

*(Calming after some realization.)*

My god, you're being serious.

EVA:

Yes!

LEONARD:

*(Brushing it off.)*

I'm sure she just bears a resemblance. This woman was a friend of a friend, a dancer named after Pina...

EVA:

Yes, that's her name, my mother, you idiot!

LEONARD:

*(Confused.)*

No, I don't think it's possible, you're nothing like him...

EVA:

What?

LEONARD:

Wait! Nineteen seventy-five, right?

EVA:  
What are you talking about?

LEONARD:  
The year of your birth!

EVA:  
Yes, who cares!

LEONARD:  
And your father was missing? Was he missing?

EVA:  
Stop! Stop it!  
*(Eva starts to sob.)*

*(A look of realization flashes across Leonard's eyes. He immediately softens. After some silence passes, he speaks.)*

LEONARD:  
Senator, this is your mother, you're right. Your parents were two of the most talented people I ever knew. Your father was my closest confidant...

*(Eva Rice provides only confused glances and silence.)*

EVA:  
Impossible. My mother hated theater.

LEONARD:  
I know. Your father's name was...  
*(Nostalgic.)*  
...Aaron. He was such a great director. An artist.  
*(Sadly.)*  
And yes, it was his fault your mother hated theater. I'm sorry.

NADIA:  
Please Senator, stay, watch the show.

EVA:

*(She looks to the authorities and stoically emits:)*

Tell the journalists to expect comments from me directly after the show.

*(In the background, Leonard and Nadia suddenly have a burst of anxiety as they realize their show is about to go on as Eva enters a catatonic state. She stands, picks up the photograph, and steadily walks offstage with her authorities.)*

## FOUR

### *Two-thousand Twenty*

*(Meditation phase 3. Transition to the sound of rapid applause, followed by images of positive news reviews of the show and clips display the reopening of Broadway after a successful run of shows. Move forward in time. Eva Rice's office, completely disheveled and torn up with cardboard boxes everywhere, a few months later. She sits at her desk, shocked. An officer steps in.)*

OFFICER:

Miss Rice, you have fifteen minutes to vacate!

*(Senator Rice looks up just as the officer leaves but ignores him. She clutches a newspaper.)*

EVA:

Lost! By thirty percent! The people don't know what they want.

*(She picks up a picture of her mother.)*

I tried, for you, I tried. And for what? You hurt me, and look now, look around, you've I'm just as you were!

*(She throws the picture of her mother on the ground.)*

I know exactly what it's like to suffer!

*(Eva turns to look at her mother's picture on the ground.)*

I cared for you so much, but you ruined me!

It was you. It was all for you.

*(Shouting.)*

And I'm staying here to finish what I started because of you!

*(The officer steps in again.)*



OFFICER:

Miss Rice, it's time to go. Miss Rice?

EVA:

Senator! Senator Rice!

OFFICER:

You have to go, I'm sorry, let's go.

*(Eva clutches her desk, but the officer walks over to her and grabs her to arrest her. After some struggle and screaming, she shouts as she is carried out.)*

EVA:

No! Get your hands off me! I won't leave!

*(Rice's voice trails off into nothing as she is being dragged out. We are left viewing a disaster of an office.)*

**End.**

## LIBRETTIST

**Jake s. Jordan** is a current DM student in music composition at Florida State University studying stage music ranging from modern opera to Broadway musicals. His works range from his award-winning concert band ACCBDA commission *The Last of Sailing Ships* to larger stage works like *Sella the Musical*. He has previous experience writing for film and animation through several film schools as well as writing for musical stage in Columbus, Ohio. Jake currently leads the Society of Composers, Inc. at Florida State, where he directs weekly meetings as well and works with faculty to bring guest composers and professionals to present to students. His previous degrees include a Master of Music from Florida State University and a Bachelor of Music Education from The Ohio State University. Learn more at @jakejordancomposer.

