

LOUDIN AND GEORGIA

They're dancing really intimately, nearly fornicating in motion.

White BREAKS IN and RIPS THEM APART.

WHITE

It's a dance floor, not a mattress.

They glower at White. He glowers back. Then his saber eyes snap to:

MINNIE

As she blissfully waltzes with a dashing young man, White BARGES IN and SHOVS HIM AWAY.

WHITE

We said five minutes per, no repeats!

Minnie sadly nods. White passes her off to the next guy in queue, a decorated young soldier in uniform, and gravely warns him:

WHITE

You can touch the arms, but maintain
an infinite chasm between torsos or
you hobble home - *capiche?*

The poor guy practically wets himself. He tries to flee, but Minnie snatches him back and whisks him off to the dance floor.

And now we CUT TO:

THE POV OF AN UNSEEN SOMEONE

SC 1. The POV moves through the ballroom searching faces... then discovers Ella playing in the band. Wearing a scintillating blue dress and glistening jewels, she looks beyond beautiful. Beside her is the handsome violinist JOHN, a hot-blooded Romeo who brazenly loves her.

CLOSE ON ELLA AND JOHN (BETWEEN NUMBERS)

START → You're radiant tonight, my dear.

ELLA

John...

JOHN

You know my weakness for bergamot.

He strokes her perfumed neck. Ella smiles but isn't really there; she's gazing wistfully into the crowd as if at a distant love.

STEAL AWAY

JOHN

You see him everywhere - how do I compete with a ghost? I want this finger, Ella Sheppard, and the woman that comes with it.

He kisses her ring finger. From afar, these two look like lovers.

An USHER approaches with a collection tray.

USHER

For Jubilee Hall?

John sighs, then gives up his gold watch. He looks around at the ARMY OF USHERS taking up cash and jewelry from guests.

JOHN

Deep pockets have opened for Jubilee Hall. Some are suspicious about its *failures to appear*. There've been rumors --

ELLA

Tabloid lies. There were delays, but Jubilee Hall will soon be unveiled.

JOHN

Let's hope so. *Look*.

He points to PLAINCLOTHESMEN discreetly surveilling the scene.

JOHN

Those aren't guests; they're investigators.

ELLA

But we've given no cause!

JOHN

Except that tonight was to be a *celebration* of Jubilee Hall's much-belated completion, not yet another pitch for money. Watch out, the mere appearance of *fraud* puts you in the crosshairs of the Prosecutor.

ELLA

Prosecutor??

JOHN

A venomous prig whose sole joy is inflicting misery. He's hated but powerful, and never misses when he aims. It appears he's setting his cannons on you.

STEAL AWAY