

SCENE FROM ACT ONE

(SPOT ON a lone figure. He is MAX COBB, a pug-nosed leprechaun of a man. "MAX'S THEME" begins to play and MAX begins DANCING. He pauses briefly in between his lively steps, to rub out a smudge on his shoe. The dance ends and MAX raises his arm and prepares to knock on a door...

The CANTOR home. It is early evening and the house is quiet. SAM is lying on the couch. A DOOR KNOCK. SAM doesn't move. A second KNOCK and MAX COBB walks in.)

MAX COBB

Hey kid. How ya doin?

(HE walks further into the room)

Ehh, you're in the pink. And I can tell.

SAM

Can I help you?

MAX COBB

(looking around)

No. No. Oh, maybe something cold to drink.

(MAX is drawn to a picture on the mantel.)

SAM

(incredulous)

What?

MAX COBB

Ehh. Ice tea, Cola, something cold - with ice. And saying "what" like that my young stud, is very rude. If you must - say pardon. It's more refined and almost acceptable. Otherwise, just something cold - with ice.

(MAX lifts the picture off the mantel. SAM takes a step toward getting this stranger a drink but changes HIS mind and moves to MAX.)

SAM

Please put that down and leave.

(VOICES are heard outside the front door.)

MAX COBB

(hands SAM the picture)

You've got good instincts kid. But you don't trust'em.

(The front door opens and JACOB, MIRIAM and the OLDER BOYS enter. JACOB and MIRIAM'S recognition of MAX is immediate and heartfelt.)

JACOB/MIRIAM

Max!

(MAX glances at SAM before turning to HIS old friends.)

MAX COBB

(dancing to Miriam)
Miriam. Look at you. After all this time, you are...

SAM

...in the pink?

MAX COBB

With polka dots! And I can tell.

MIRIAM

(SHE hugs MAX warmly)
Oh Max.

JACOB

Let go of my wife you mangy pug.

MAX COBB

(to MIRIAM)
Ten years later, he's still jealous.

(MAX and JACOB hug each other.)

JACOB

Stewart, do you remember Mr. Cobb?

STEWART

Mr. Cobb. Yes I do. My dad use to take me to the Garden for the wrestling matches. And you were a trainer.

MAX COBB

That's right.

STEWART

We still have that picture of you and dad and those other guys.

JACOB

Sam, come over here.

MAX COBB

And bring the picture with you.

JACOB

Joe? You were younger but I took you a couple of times. Do you remember?

JOE

Kind of. Hello Mr Cobb.

MAX COBB

(takes the picture from SAM)

Well I remember you Joe. But you were cuter than I was. Then. Now the roles are reversed, huh?

(a LAUGH and a LIVELY STEP; then to MIRIAM)

Hey, Polka-dots.

(HE shows MIRIAM the picture)

Tell us, who is in this classic photo taken at the Russian Baths on tenth street, in 1990?

(EVERYONE has gathered around MAX and MIRIAM except SAM. HE is the odd man out.)

MIRIAM

Well.

(pointing to picture)

That's you Max.

MAX COBB

(pointing from JACOB to HIMSELF)

I still don't know how you picked that *crumb* over this mug.

STEWART

And look how young the *crumb* looks. I mean dad looks.

MAX COBB

Go ahead Polka-dots, now tell'em who the other guys are.

MIRIAM

This is Johnny. Johnny "The Tower" Powers.

MAX COBB

May he rest in peace.

(JACOB puts a comforting arm on MAX.)

MIRIAM

(back to the picture)

Next to Johnny is the Champ, Bruno Sammartino.

MAX COBB

The "Champ of Champs."

JACOB

That's right Maxy. The "Champ of Champs."

MIRIAM

And the last guy on the left is Angelo Sivuldi, the wrestler with the cauliflower ear.

JOE

What's a cauliflower ear?

STEWART

I remember that. The other wrestler would hit him on his ear and he would grab his ear, stamp his feet and scream, "A-Wa-Wa-Wa-Wa-WaW."

(SAM walks away from the group.)

MAX COBB

Come on Polka-dots. You do it.

(MAX clobbers MIRIAM, slow-motion.)

MIRIAM

(grabbing her ear, stamping feet)
"A-Wa-Wa-Wa-Wa-WaW."

(THEY laugh again. SPOT on SAM, off by HIMSELF.)

SAM

What's so funny about that? A cauliflower ear? It's the first physical condition named for a vegetable. How about a celery appendix or a tomato chin.

(SPOT on MAX.)

MAX COBB

Hey kid. You should come down to the gym sometime. I could train you. Your father thinks the discipline would be good for you. I agree with him. And I can tell.

(SPOT OUT on SAM. LIGHTS UP. MAX is standing outside the front door of the CANTOR home. Jacob is sitting on the stoop.)

JACOB

(weary)
Thanks for coming.

MAX COBB

I busted the kid's balls a little.

JACOB

I knew you were the right one to call.

Jacob? You okay? MAX COBB

Me? In the pink. Can't you tell? JACOB

Yea. MAX COBB
(HE starts off.)

Okay. Get Sam down to the gym. Twist his arm as hard as you have to.

Hey Max. What about The General? His control over wrestling is stronger than ever. JACOB

I'm not a threat to him anymore. But your boy has something he'll want. MAX COBB

(considering)
So this is another chance for me, maybe?

I hope it works out. JACOB

(MAX'S THEME plays, MAX begins DANCING away. HE pauses and looks back at JACOB.)

Hey Jacob, did you notice the gleam in Miriam's eyes when she saw me? MAX COBB

I saw Maxy. I saw. JACOB

(MAX dances off. MIRIAM enters.)

It's time to tell the boy, Jacob. He won't say no to you. MIRIAM

No, he's too good a boy for that. Miriam, what can I do? JACOB

I WOULDN'T ASK
BUT I DON'T SEE ANOTHER WAY

YOU WOULDN'T ASK
WE WOULDN'T ASK

IF I COULD SELL MY SOUL
I'D NEVER TELL A SOUL
AND THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE TO ASK

SAM

(entering)
Dad, you wanted to see me?

MIRIAM

BUT ONCE THE CHOICE IS MADE
JUST FORM THE WORDS YOU HAVE TO SAY
AND LET THEM OUT
AND YOU WON'T HAVE TO ASK AGAIN

SAM

Is something wrong?

(JACOB and MIRIAM guide SAM to sit on a
small bench.)

JACOB/MIRIAM

WE WOULDN'T ASK SON
BUT WE DON'T SEE ANOTHER WAY

(END OF SCENE.)

SCENE FROM ACT TWO

(The stage fills with smoke. As it clears, we are inside the RUSSIAN BATHS. The year is 1990. In a sauna, JACOB sits with BRUNO SAMMARTINO, JOHNNY "THE TOWER" POWERS, and ANGELO SIVULDI, the wrestler with the cauliflower ear. Also present is MAX COBB.)

MAX COBB

Johnny. Go get some extra towels, will ya please?

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

Leave the kid alone, Maxy. He doesn't have to do that.

JOHNNY POWERS

I don't mind Bruno. I mean champ.

ANGELO SIVULDI

Thanks Powers.

JOHNNY POWERS

Watch out!

(JOHNNY strikes ANGELO, with a playful tap.)

ANGELO SIVULDI

(HIS trademark)
A-Wa-Wa-Wa-Wa-WAW!

(JOHNNY puts a supportive hand on JACOB'S shoulder and then HE exits the sauna room as SAM enters. SAM remains unseen to the others.)

SAM

(HE calls after JOHNNY)
Hey! How you doing?
(recognizing HIS father)
Dad?

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

Jacob? What's the matter, bubbie?

JACOB

I just had another fight with Miriam.

MAX COBB

Maybe I could help.

ANGELO SIVULDI

Yeah. We know how you'd like to help.

MAX COBB

Hey. Just cause Miriam has a soft spot for me.

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

Come here Maxy and I'll tenderize your soft spot.

MAX COBB

I'm kidding. Jake knows that.

JACOB

Stop trying to cheer me up guys. Ever since I lost the business, Miriam's been after me to try again.

ANGELO SIVULDI

You made beautiful furniture. I still have that credenza you made for me. With the little flying cherubs on the doors.

MAX COBB

That's nice Angelo.

JACOB

All she asked me to do was make a phone call.

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

Who'd she want you to call?

JACOB

Fred Draper from Draper Appliances. He wants to talk to me about starting a furniture division.

ANGELO SIVULDI

I know that place. My third wife and I bought a grille there.

MAX COBB

That's great Angelo.

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

So Jake? Why didn't you make the call?

JACOB

Because I'd rather keep doing what I'm doing now. I take a custom job here and there. It keeps us going. I couldn't succeed with a good business that was handed down to me. How could I start from scratch? I'd just fail again.

ANGELO SIVULDI

No you wouldn't.

JACOB

No? You know for sure?

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

Jake, nobody knows for sure. You just have to have faith and feel that everything's going to be okay. No matter what.

(Johnny Powers reenters with extra towels.)

JOHNNY POWERS

Until it's not.

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

Yeah, but by then, I'm sure it turns out to be okay. In the meantime, you have to have confidence.

YOU START OUT FEELING
DEEP DOWN INSIDE
THAT YOU COULD BE THE CHAMP
BUT YOU NEVER KNOW
WHAT YOUR INSIDES KNOW
SO YOU HAVE TO TAKE A CHANCE
INSTEAD OF WAITING TO BE SURE
WHICH COULD MEAN WAITING OUT YOUR LIFE

BRUNO/ANGELO/MAX

TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT AT GLORY
AND HISTORY WILL BE YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND
THERE'S NO ONE WHO CAN SAY
YOU'RE REACHING HIGHER THAN YOU SHOULD
IT'S NOT THEIR BUSINESS IF YOU MAKE THE TOP
OR YOU GET STUCK HALFWAY
SEARCH YOUR HEART
FOR WHAT YOU'VE GOT
THEN SHOW SOME PASSION FOR WHATEVER YOU MAY DO
TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT AT GLORY
CAUSE A BEST SHOT'S ALL IT CAN BE ANYWAY

BRUNO/ANGELO/MAX/JACOB/JOHNN

TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT AT GLORY
AND EVEN IF YOU FALL SHORT OF YOUR GOAL
THE GREATER GOOD STILL NEEDS
YOUR SIGNIFICANT LITTLE PIECE
MAKE THE EFFORT STRONG BE POSITIVE
THEN DON'T SWEAT THE RESULTS
AND IF AT FIRST
YOU DON'T SUCCEED
GIVE FATE THE FINGER AND THEN CHALLENGE HER AGAIN
TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT AT GLORY
AND DO YOUR BEST TO DUCK
WHEN LIFE SHOOTS PELLETS AT YOUR HEAD
(SAM joins in.)
TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT AT GLORY
CAUSE A BEST SHOT IS THE BEST SHOT YOU WILL GET

JACOB

That's right. And go out a champion, like you did Bruno.

MAX COBB

Come on, enough! Let's take the picture. Come on Johnny.

(THEY line up for the photo that will stand on JACOB and MIRIAM'S mantel.)

MAX COBB

(to JACOB)

By the way, I'd gladly take the combination of Miriam and failure, anytime.

(The FLASH of a camera snaps the shot of JACOB and his FRIENDS.)

(END OF SCENE.)