

ACT TWOScene 6

The FAN-DANGO BALLROOM

Sign: "A SLOW NIGHT"

HELENE and OTHER HOSTESSES are scattered about the lounge section. THEY are reading magazines, etc. ALL bored. Not one customer in the place.

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SPENDER - REPRISE

HELENE

Oh boy! Ya can't make a dime in this joint.

HERMAN

Psst. Psst. A live one.

(Suddenly a lone, YOUNG MAN in a sweater enters. THEY ALL spring up and start to sing.)

GIRLS & HELENE

(Sing)

DO YOU WANNA HAVE  
FUN FUN FUN  
HOW'S ABOUT A FEW  
LAUGHS LAUGHS

(BOY selects a girl and retires into booth.)

HELENE

Some business, heh? One fifteen year old dropout!

(NICKIE enters with ROSIE, a new girl. This is her first night as a hostess. SHE's attractive and very nervous.)

NICKIE

Girls! Girls! Good news. Besides stinkin' business, we now have a new, young, good-lookin' chick which we need like Idaho needs potatoes.

ROSIE

(Cheerfully to ALL)

Hello. I'm Rosie.

HELENE

Not for long you ain't.

(OTHERS all "HI.")

ROSIE

(Looks around.)

So this is the ballroom.

NICKIE

The ballroom? That's right. This is where you'll meet Prince Charming who'll carry you off on his white horse to Scarsdale. You should live so long.

ROSIE

It's awfully dark in here, isn't it?

HELENE

That's called 'merchandising.' When the goods are a little shopworn, don't put 'em in the window.

NICKIE

You got no problems, honey. You're worth six-fifty a half hour.

ROSIE

Is that what the men pay to dance with us?

HELENE

Uh, huh. Which you split with the owner, a nice kindly old Argentinian gentleman named Adolph Hitler.

NICKIE

Every penny of which you will earn. You dance a little, talk a little, roll your eyes a little, swivel your hips a little ... and like this, you kill a lifetime.

ROSIE

Oh, I only expect to stay a few weeks.

NICKIE

(Sarcastic)

Oh, sure.

ROSIE

My boy friend's in California. When I save up enough money here, we're gonna get married.

HELENE

You'll make a sweet old couple.

(CHARITY enters, excitedly.)

CHARITY

Gather around, ladies -- gather around and take a good look. It has happened to me. What every girl in this ballroom dreams about and it's happened to me.

HELENE

You've been drafted.

CHARITY

I'm in love. That's what's happened to me. I'm in love, I'm in love. I'm in love.

NICKIE

That's the eleven o'clock news. We listen to it every night.

CHARITY

Well, that was the last broadcast. This time it's different. This one is really serious.

CARMEN

Has he -- talked about marriage?

CHARITY

Er -- a -- well, not in so many words.

ELAINE

How many?

CHARITY

-- None.

NICKIE

And now we turn to the local weather and sports.

HELENE

Look kid, ya got any questions about this place --

(Pats CHARITY.)

you just ask the house mother. She was with the original owners in 1794.

ROSIE

There's just one thing. I'm not a very good dancer.

NICKIE

Who dances? We defend ourselves to music.

CARMEN

All you gotta know is when they touch you, make like you're excited.

NICKIE

Of course a cute lookin' thing like you can always go into the 'extra-curricular' business.

CHARITY

What are you telling her a thing like that for?

(To ROSIE)

Hey, kid. You want some good advice, get out of this crummy joint ... before you wind up like the rest of us.

HELENE

Don't look at me, I was always like this.

(A MAN enters the ballroom alone.

HERMAN signals from booth.)

HERMAN

Hey! C'mon.

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RE-VAMP

FRENCHY

A live one!

(THEY ALL get up.)

ROSIE

What do I do?

NICKIE

Sugar, from hereon it's every man for himself.

(ALL the GIRLS move down to the rail. ROSIE and CHARITY are standing side by side.)

HELENE

(To MAN)

Hey, can I talk to you for a minute?

SUZANNE

Got a cigarette? Come here. I wanna tell you something.

FRENCHY

Ooh, so tall. Americans always so tall.

NICKIE

Chicago, right? I can always tell a home town boy.

CARMEN

(Snapping fingers)

You look like a good dancer.

(THE MAN walks silently up and down the line-up of GIRLS. HE goes back and seems to be making up his mind between CHARITY and ROSIE.