

GRUNDY

Hmm. Well, if your *friends* from the other side of the street would excuse us, I need to talk to my cast.

*KING, KATE, BETTY JEAN and GIL exit quickly out to the "alley."*

GRUNDY

Alright WVAM family, listen up. I'd like to announce the acquisition of the jing.. er ...uh, comedy team of Skip and Chester. I was impressed with their audition earlier, and as everyone knows, I'm always an excellent judge of talent.

(smiles at VIOLET)

As we are in a sponsor war, it's important to keep the show as fresh as Mr. Sudsy Soap! Which means I think it wise to consider a few more additions to the show. And speaking of Friday's show, where is Veronica?

(a few of them hem and haw)

CHESTER

Uh... the last time I saw her,

(sashaying)

she was heading to a leisurely lunch date --

SKIP

--at the Waldorf *Astoria*. With Mr. Skink.

GRUNDY

Skink? That skunk. When she arrives, I want to speak to her right away! That scoundrel Skink better not be up to anything shady.

*As GRUNDY exits, KING, KATE, BETTY JEAN and GIL come back in to congratulate SKIP and CHESTER. As that conversation quiets, CONNIE and JACK take center stage.*

CONNIE

Jack, I'm sorry about earlier. It's just that I know you two can work it out. Maybe you guys care *too* much.

JACK

I tried talking to her, Connie. It's no use. I don't believe I can get her back.

BUDDY

Well, at least I got my jacket back!

(All on stage groan at BUDDY's attempt to help by making a joke)

*BUDDY puts his hands in his jacket pockets and feels the spy note. He pulls it out.*

*CHESTER notices right away that the paper it's on looks like specialized espionage paper from his days decoding intelligence in Europe during the war.*

CHESTER

May I?

(Taking the paper)

Where did you get this?

BUDDY

Um. Let me think....

(He notices it is still fragrant.)

Oh, yeah, I remember. It found it on the floor after Veronica and I got all tangled up in the costume rack the day Lacey and I -- well, long story. Anyway. I guess I stuck it in my pocket.

(Looking hurriedly at LACEY)

Not -- not that I love the way Veronica smells or anything. Why?

CHESTER

This is a very unusual type of paper. I saw a lot of this when I worked for the Office of Strategic Services.

BUDDY

What's that?

CHESTER

We caught spies during the war. And look - this has a coded message on it!

*(All at once together, everyone else on stage takes a line or two)*

Coded Message?

Spies?

Veronica?

Wait -- Chester caught Spies?

*CHESTER decodes part of the message, mumbling numbers then letters, but words are missing. The words he reads out loud at first sound like Russian.*

CHESTER

(Quieting them all)

Guys. Shh! Okay. It says--

(In Russian)

Barushka, obelenski ...

BUDDY

It's all Greek to me...

CHESTER

Russian, actually.

(Keeps reading in Russian.)

...Vodlemka...

BETTY JEAN, KING, SKIP, AND GIL

In English, Chester!

CHESTER

(Reads the partial message in English, still it makes no sense.)

Tonight's.... give.....all.....to

BUDDY

Not helpful.

CHESTER

(Noticing the perfume fragrance)

Aha! That's it! Buddy is obviously lacking the experience us spy catchers have in the distinctive olfactory training department.

BUDDY

I beg your pardon, my olfactory department is quite... uh.... (to Skip) What is he talking about?

SKIP

I don't know.

CHESTER

Third ...Base! (He is reading the words "third" and "base" off the paper)

SKIP

This is no time for jokes.

CHESTER

NO - This part of the code right here - it says, "Third .... Base."

JOY

Ohh... well if it's just a silly note about baseball, I don't see the big deal.

CHESTER

No, no, no - see, this is a double layer message.

ALICE

You mean like cake?

CHESTER

Yeah, a poison one! See, first you have to interpret the partial message *and then* you have to spray it with a certain chemical combination to reveal the rest of the message.

VIOLET

Oh! My goodness! I know how to read the message!

VIOLET AND LACEY

Veronica's exclusive signature perfume!

VIOLET

That explains why she was so rude to me when I asked her to borrow it.

LACEY

And why she never lets the purse she keeps it in out of her sight, even during a costume fitting.

BUDDY

So...it *is* her secret weapon.

(LACEY glares.)

BUDDY

I mean, as a spy, of course, not that I love the way she smells or anything.

JACK

Chester, this is serious business. If Veronica is a spy, we've got to notify the OSS! You've got to tell them what you're deciphering.

CHESTER

I'm afraid that may not be the best way to handle this.

SKIP

Yeah, Chester's not exactly batting a thousand with the OSS.

BUDDY AND JACK

What happened?

CHESTER

Oh, just a little mistake involving my lunch and a spy message I was decoding...

SKIP

Amazing what far-reaching damage a little drop of mustard can cause.

CHESTER

(defensively)

I only missed part of one word, but it was an important part and... well, let's just say General MacArthur wasn't too happy having to halt maneuvers until they figured out the word ending in "s t" which I decoded as *East* was actually *West*...

SKIP

So they benched him. All because of a juicy bratwurst.

CHESTER

More liked they kicked me out of the game...permanently...

JACK

Well, we can't just let it go. Too many of us lost life and limb in the last war to see our country fall to some newly rising evil regime. But why would she pose as a radio star?

STEVE

Simple. All those lyric and song changes she's always handing you - Probably secret messages, out over the airwaves for all to hear.

VIOLET AND LACEY AND CONNIE

Oh, No!

JACK

Of course. Why didn't I see it?

STEVE

Too wrapped up in your own troubles, maybe?

JACK

Which pale in comparison to this... treason.

STEVE

So..the *Most Adored American*, Miss Veronica Blake, is spying for the Russians. Ha! I knew there was a reason I didn't like her.

LUKE

Sounds like we need to get our hands on some of Veronica's perfume.

CONNIE

Luke is right!

CHESTER

Yes, so I can decode the rest of the message!

KATE

Which would build a good, solid case, vindicating Chester--

BUDDY

-- and proving to the OSS what dastardly deeds Miss Blake has been up to.

KING

And give enough evidence to get the *lovely* Veronica Blake --

LACEY

Locked away where she can't hurt anyone else!

VIOLET

Forever and Ever.

ALL ON STAGE

Amen!

*JACK realizes his duty to take the lead and the old JACK kicks in. He has a plan. HE pulls CONNIE aside.*

JACK

Connie - Will you please find Peg right away and beg her to talk to me. I want to tell her about Veronica myself. And I need to tell her some other very important things...