

*LAST ACT*

*by Alex Roe*

In honor of the The Metropolitan Playhouse  
in New York City's East Village

Presented August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at The Connelly Theater, New York City.

## CAST

(In order of appearance)

LES (aka EVC, AC, ESS, and Luis Ayotte).....*Rafael Jordan*

COLUMBIA .....*Sidney Fortner*

VICTORIA.....*Teresa Kelsey*

MAUD EHREN .....*Kim Yancey Moore*

WILLIS P. ARMBRUSTER (WPA) ..... *Michael Hardart*

WONDERFUL LIFE .....*John Long*

MUSICIAN .....*Alyssa Simon*

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER.....*Amanda Vincenti*

VIRTUAL PLAYHOUSE .....*Erin Leigh Schmoyer*

*Backstage at Metropolitan Playhouse, dimly lit with clip lights. Barely audible, incomprehensible voices are heard from offstage. LES sits before a dressing table with a laptop computer open on it and facing him (turned away from the audience), holding a mechanical doorbell, and listening attentively to the offstage sounds. COLUMBIA enters.*

COLUMBIA: What cheer? Whoever haunts the dressing room?

LES: Shhh!

COLUMBIA: How?

LES: Shhh! [*sotto voce*] I'm listening for my cue.  
Sorry.

[*Silence.*]

COLUMBIA: I—

LES: Shh! *Please.*

COLUMBIA: I do not doubt that you have ample time.

LES: Sh— What?

COLUMBIA: I see you wait, attending to the scene  
List'ning, rapt, your hand upon that knob,  
So I conclude you ring the entry bell.  
The bell that heralds my most timely entrance.  
That bell rings only when the play concludes.  
But well I know, that scene is still far off.

LES: I— I don't know. I wanna be sure.

COLUMBIA: You seek assurance I can ready give.  
I enter only at the very end,  
A fit, if clumsy, *deus ex machina.*

LES: But we gotta be there by now?

COLUMBIA: Oh, nay. We've quite a while longer still.

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LES: I feel like it's been a while. Like, forever.

COLUMBIA: Nay.

LES: It's really long.

COLUMBIA: Not in this place.

LES: It's like, nearly 3 hours.

COLUMBIA: Oh, longer, sure. And often longer seems.

LES: Plus intermissions.

COLUMBIA: To ease the ... spirit. Shame about the stairs.

LES: The cue's gotta be coming—

COLUMBIA: But not yet for some time.

*EV relaxes a little.*

I assure you.

LES: Sorry. What's your character's name? Dejesus X. Maca—?

COLUMBIA: How?

LES: I didn't hear you earlier?

COLUMBIA: I never spoke my name. I am Columbia.

LES: Oh. Sorry. I—I didn't get to know all the parts.

COLUMBIA: 'Tis evident. And you? How are you called?

LES: EVC.

COLUMBIA: For *nom de guerre*, you made an awkward choice.

LES: I go by my initials. EVC. Or AC. ESS, sometimes.

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COLUMBIA: For what do all these different letters stand?

LES: Depends on who you ask.

COLUMBIA: If I ask you, what do they represent?

LES: My name? Luis Ayotte. So sometimes LES.

*Columbia is speechless.*

So. You come on at the end?

COLUMBIA: I do. My spirit haunts most every scene..

LES: Oh. I'm only at the end. Kinda sucks.

COLUMBIA: How very crass a way you choose to speak.

LES: Huh? Oh. Sorry. I...just—

COLUMBIA: It “Sucks.” Which image I should take to mean—

LES: Sorry. I thought this was a good gig... They get reviewed in the *Times*, I think they got awards. One of them really big.

COLUMBIA: ‘Tis so—

LES: But I found out that that was from a paper that hardly exists any more. Now it's all online. And even though this is a new play, which is great, and it's about the neighborhood, which is really important, but it turns out I only appear at the end. One line. One word.

COLUMBIA: A life in art begins with just one Word.

LES: I have an MFA. And I also have to do this sound cue. I'm an *actor*. Sucks.

COLUMBIA: I feel your disappointed hope. I'm sorry.

LES: No, you're fine.

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COLUMBIA: I—? *[thinks]* Thank you?

LES: No worries.

*[Silence. LES listens. VICTORIA enters, out of breath, and moving as if wearing large hoop skirt.]*

VICTORIA: Hooo. ‘Scuse me. Whoo.

*[Crosses carefully, still as if wearing skirt, trying to avoid hitting anyone.]*

LES: You good?

VICTORIA: Excellent! What a scene! Oh, we triumphed! Ribald!

COLUMBIA: You filled the hall with honest cries of Mirth?

VICTORIA: *[stops in place, back turned to audience]* No. No— That would not do justice to the scene—

COLUMBIA: Our citizens, though strangers, laughed as one?

VICTORIA: No, I would not say they laughed. Not out loud, as it were.

COLUMBIA: Oh. Then fellowship stirred countrymen to smile?

VICTORIA: It would be difficult to say.

LES: Give her a break. You were probably so focused, you wouldn’t notice.

VICTORIA: I beg your pardon? Of course I’d “notice.”

LES: I usually can’t tell—

VICTORIA: Nonsense! How can you perform if you are not aware of the audience’s reaction?

LES: Well, if you’re into the part, you don’t notice them.

*COLUMBIA laughs in spite of self.*

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VICTORIA: *[looks offstage as if addressing someone there]* Extraordinary!  
*[addresses LES]* How absurd! However would you reach them if you don't notice them?

LES: They're paying attention.

VICTORIA: Not if you fail to command it. Demand it. *[to offstage interlocutor]* What a silly puppy. *[Back to LES.]* They'd be talking, or eating, or buying oranges, or whoring, or any number of follies.

LES: Like on their phones—

VICTORIA: The worst of all! Appalling inventions. But of course you must be scrupulously attentive to the tone of the hall, even as you enter *into* your role, as you put it, and give them no alternative to attend to you.

COLUMBIA: You might—?

VICTORIA: Might what?

COLUMBIA: You might attend the hall.

*[COLUMBIA points to the audience. VICTORIA turns, notices, surprised.]*

VICTORIA: Oh! Are they *all* there?

COLUMBIA: All of them.

VICTORIA: Oh! *[Peers off left and off right. Sees there is no one seated there. Turns fully to audience, with an apologetic bow]* I am terribly sorry. *[turns back to C, thinks again, and as an "aside" to audience]* Confusion! *[back to C.]* What a preposterous way to arrange a theater.

*With some effort, still maintaining hoop skirt illusion, VICTORIA adjusts to play out to audience.*

LES: I don't like being too close to the audience.

VICTORIA: You do not wish to engage them.

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LES: I want to stay in my part.

VICTORIA: *[sighs]* There need not *be* any distinction. *[to audience]* Extraordinary!

LES: I don't think they like being talked to, by the way.

VICTORIA: Nonsense! *[to audience]* Whelp! *[to EV]* It's equitable. And inclusive.

LES: They don't seem to like it.

VICTORIA: I thought you weren't paying attention to them. *[to audience]* Got him.

LES: *[to audience, deliberately/sarcastically]* Curses. *[to VICTORIA]* Yeah, I don't think so. You said they weren't laughing at your scene.

VICTORIA: Not out loud.

*[VICTORIA makes way to chair to sit, maintaining skirt illusion]*

LES: And if you're so conscious of them, you can't be real in your role. It's dishonest.

VICTORIA: Being looked at and spoken to by the characters draws an audience into the drama. Or the comedy. It reminds them of the artifice as it maintains the artifice, and in so doing is *more*, not *less* honest.

LES: So you mean, like, "immersive."

VICTORIA: We don't wish actually to drown them.

COLUMBIA: Oh, Heavens, no—

VICTORIA: Though a flood on stage is gripping!

LES: No—but they participate in the performance.

VICTORIA: Oh no! How dreadful.



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COLUMBIA: They haven't the gifts. Even the education.  
In many cases any education.

LES: You're elitest.

VICTORIA and COLUMBIA: Of course we are. We're artists.

COLUMBIA: You're the one with the MFA.

LES: That's different.

*[VICTORIA laughs as she sits, adjusting as needed with "skirt".]*

LES: Do all "artists" move like that? *[gestures]*

VICTORIA: Oh. Oh, yes. *[to audience]* Silly. *[to others on stage]* I forget.  
We have a deficiency in the costuming for this one. As you  
yourselves have found. *[to LES]* Well, I don't know about you.

COLUMBIA: No question, and it is a dreadful plight.  
I've always held the costume tells the story.

VICTORIA: Have you? Well. So, the director's asked us to disport ourselves  
*as if* we are in full costume. *[Does so... hoop, fan, curtsy.]*

*Silence.*

LES: That's bullshit.

COLUMBIA: 'Tis paltry, but I see it might be hopeful.

VICTORIA: Merely another convention! Very easy, once you accustom  
yourself. *[Accustoms herself.]* Feigning the corset is work.  
*[Exhales with relief.]*

COLUMBIA: Forgive me, but I don't believe we've met.

VICTORIA: You and I? Of course we have.

COLUMBIA: Forgive me, please. I'm terrible with names.

VICTORIA: You've played a part in every play we've played.

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COLUMBIA: Forgive me. It's my fault. Columbia.

VICTORIA: I know. Charmed. Again. And I am Victoria.

LES: L.E.S.

VICTORIA: Les?

LES: No.

*[MAUD enters. Pensive, crosses stage and leans against proscenium leg. back to audience. Silence as the others watch.]*

VICTORIA: Ahem. *[no response]* Hello? A-hem!

*MAUD looks up. VICTORIA indicates audience. MAUD sees audience, establishes there's no audience on the sides. Rolls eyes and turns to face audience. Leans against proscenium leg, and thinks.*

VICTORIA: Well, however did you fare?

MAUD: It's all so fake. We're all so fake. It's like there's a truth out there—just past what you see, beyond the horizon, out past the Outside, under the skin—and we just...can't... get to it.

LES: So—

MAUD: Good. It was good.

COLUMBIA: Forgive me, but...I'm terrible with names.

MAUD: Maud. Maud Ehren. You can call me Maud.

COLUMBIA: Columbia.

VICTORIA: Victoria.

LES: L.E.S. Modern?

MAUD: Yes.

COLUMBIA: A charming name that sounds the note of liberty.

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VICTORIA: A name that conjures villainy and guile.

LES: It's kinda cool.

MAUD: *[indicating COLUMBIA and VICTORIA ]* That's what's killing the theater.

COLUMBIA: The theater is a sturdy beast whose spirit—

MAUD: Oh, will you stop!

VICTORIA: I wanted to hear the metaphor.

MAUD: It's so false. It's archaic. Everything put into words, black and white, heroes and villains, "Men" and "Women", Virtues and Vices, Husbands and Wives.

VICTORIA: But very, very complicated!

MAUD: Everything about the theatrical tradition is artificial. Dishonest. It depends on the most superficial display of human conflicts, while the truth...the real and motivating truth...is yearning, and hoping, and fearing, and losing...

VICTORIA: Personified on stage!

MAUD: And then all tied up so neatly.

COLUMBIA: In service of a moral point of view.

MAUD: What can that possibly mean?

LES: Yeah.

MAUD: When you've experienced war—

COLUMBIA: The Revolution.

VICTORIA: Several wars—abroad and home.

MAUD: And oppression—

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COLUMBIA: Whose jaws from which we dragged ourselves with blood

VICTORIA: We practically defined oppression!

MAUD: And understand that no one is free from the same passions and fears that possess us all.

VICTORIA: I believe that is the very thrust of every act I've staged.

COLUMBIA: For were it not, what would be the point?

MAUD: But not everything can be put into words

LES: Yeah. Such as....

*He searches for the words. COLUMBIA and VICTORIA wait for him to finish.*

MAUD: There. Such as that.

VICTORIA: Oh, well done! Very suspenseful.

MAUD: I give up.

COLUMBIA: Oh no, you mustn't ever fail your dreams.

MAUD: Right.

*WPA enters, wearing tiger face paint, about to light a cigarette.*

COLUMBIA: Oh!

VICTORIA: Oh, no!

MAUD: Ooohhh!

LES: Woah! No. No. No. Dude.

WPA: What? *[Indicates the cigarette.]*

COLUMBIA: Your – *[indicates WPA's face]*

VICTORIA: Honestly.

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WPA: I'm acting.

LES: Seriously? Tigerface? Man, you can't do tigerface.

WPA: This? Oh, no... this isn't me. I'm *not* a tiger.

MAUD: Obviously.

LES: Yeah, that's the point.

WPA: I'm *playing* a tiger.

LES: But you're *not* a tiger.

WPA: Obviously.

LES: So you can't put on a tiger's—you know—stripes—with makeup and just expect everyone to accept you as a tiger.

WPA: Well I don't expect them to believe I'm a tiger.

LES: I don't know if that's not worse.

WPA: It's a political statement. I'm playing a Capitalist who's devouring the workers and the immigrants and getting away with it because the courts and banks are locked so tightly in one another's embrace that the average person, the little guy, the Mr. and Mrs. Buttoncoopers of the country are like frightened rabbits.

MAUD: So it's a social commentary.

WPA: Of course.

VICTORIA: And it's a theatrical convention.

WPA: Obviously.

COLUMBIA: Beneath th'Opressor's boot the Spirit of Liberty  
Hears th'inspired cry and takes good heart:  
Mighty is the hare who stands against the tiger.

WPA: Exactly.

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LES: I don't know. It's kinda... you're not a tiger.

WPA: We also use puppets.

LES: Oh, that's cool.

WPA: Who are you people? How come I never seen ya? You're not strikebreakers, are you? Y'in the union?

VICTORIA: The what?

WPA: The union.

COLUMBA: I forged the Union from the ragged lands  
Each rallied to the cause of Liberty.

WPA: Huh.

MAUD: Professionalism is the death of theater.

WPA: Scab, are ya?

LES: She's cool. I'm in the union. Got my card through school.

WPA: Comrade. (*Shake LES's hand.*) Willis P. Armbruster.

LES: LES.

WPA: Very smart... initials. Stayin' outta sight. You could call me WPA. (*Pauses.*) But you gotta stand up for what you stand for, and say it out loud! Who're the rest of ya?

COLUMBIA: Columbia.

VICTORIA: Victoria.

MAUD: Maud Ehren.

WPA: Well, whatever you're trying to do here, I'll be honest with you. I don't think this play has much longer.

LES: What?! No! Did I miss my cue?

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WPA: No, oh no. We have a while. I mean this run. In this climate. Theater – the government supports it for a while, then it gets offended, changes its priorities, funding dries right up. No one gets paid. Who can keep going if no one's getting paid? Only the swells, the powerful, the Influentials.

LES: Influen-TIALS?

MAUD: You reveal the uncomfortable truths— Society is never ready.

VICTORIA: You cannot depend on the government. You must appeal to the *people*.

COLUMBIA: The people must be shown the way through art.  
And we must find that art within our hearts.

LES: Oh my god. That's *all* elitest. What are you talking about: "shown the way?" Who are the people? What society? Who's the "we?"

COLUMBIA: The "we" are all the ones who come together,  
Whether high or low or in between,  
To fan the common flame that warms us all  
In this, our striving ever to create  
A better nation. All who come to hear  
The promise Liberty has made its heirs.  
To hear, again, affirmed the Character  
That raised Rebellion's brutal and just Sword.

LES: I don't even know where to start with that.

COLUMBIA: You do not know to read "between my lines."  
My theater tells the story of the Nation  
And its triumph: "free from yoke of Tyrant."  
Yea. But more: it lets that freedom live  
Within its halls. It knows that whereso e'er  
We hail, only together may we truly  
Know our Selves. And only with our Fellows  
May we hope to find a purpose. Here:  
Sitting side by side, attending to the words  
That actors utter, here, before their eyes—  
'Tis in this very Act of joining Hearts

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We may affirm the Spirit that our Nation  
Holds to be its only Sacred Cause.

WPA: E Pluribus Unum. It's on the dollar.

COLUMBIA: You find it easy sure to mock, but don't  
You seek to frame your land's most dear Ideals?

*EVERYONE ELSE speaks words of assent.*

VICTORIA: We do. And yet, my God how dreary when you put it so! Theater  
has to entertain! Music, and Laughter, and Characters—not these  
Ideals, but flesh and blood

MAUD: That's more like it.

VICTORIA: And Good and Evil

MAUD: That's a little abstract.

VICTORIA: Oh, but it isn't! It's what everyone responds to. And it's the only  
way to let them see what's wrong with the world they live in. Their  
vices and their pretense, and their greed and their cruelty, and their  
capacity for bravery and fortitude. The unfairness of the world the  
way they make it and the role that luck plays in most everything  
they accomplish.

MAUD: But you make people into caricatures: you ignore the individual.

VICTORIA: We lay bare what every individual feels in easy and exciting ways.  
Don't you wish to unite us on our common path?

*EVERYONE ELSE speaks words of assent.*

MAUD: But there's more to living life, under the surface. The hardest  
battles aren't with fate, or with our enemies: they're with our  
selves. That's what theater best reveals—the ineffable moments of  
loss and revelation—subtler than the rumbling of a freight train,  
but as devastating as a house's collapse. The imperceptible  
chipping away of a marriage by habit, or the corrosion of a  
brother's envy, the quiet follies of misplaced hopes. In the



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language of people—in silences, and everything people can't say. To see them struggle for words, to feel the silences. We feel them just the same as we feel sand pulled away from beneath one's feet as a wave recedes.

VICTORIA: In a small house, maybe.

MAUD: The more intimate are the better.

VICTORIA: One makes due...

WPA: Sure, that's all a part...But none of that makes any difference to other people.

MAUD: How we are driven by the secrets we keep, even from ourselves, doesn't make a difference to our neighbors?

*EVERYONE ELSE speaks words of assent.*

WPA: Sure. Of course. But what matters is what you do with that. What's your theater for? What do people need to see? You're either fighting the society you live in or it's answering to your fundamental needs, and people need to know that. People think their luck, or their failings, or their longings are causing their problems. They hear the promises of their country's ideals, and they think they're falling short. But that's because they don't see what's really going on. If the people with power are constantly taking away from the people without it, it's not lack of patriotism, it's not Fate, it's not secret longings they're fighting. It's power. And we can spell it right out for them. It's all right in front of us, in the news, in the laws, in the contracts. We just have to show it.

VICTORIA: So impersonal—

WPA: With song, and dance, and comedy—

VICTORIA: Oh, yes!

WPA: And statistics.

*[Silence.]*

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LES: I don't think we're even in the same play.

COLUMBIA: We each of us described for you the Soul  
Of the art to which we've given all our Selves.  
Perhaps you'd be so generous in turn  
To tell us why you're sitting here, contraption  
In your hand, awaiting a cue that may  
Or may not, come—

LES: I'd like a motivation.

COLUMBIA: The Soul of the Nation.

VICTORIA: Social ills

MAUD: Internal strife.

WPA: Corporate oppression.

LES: I mean to ring the bell. I'd like to be here, thinking about what my character would be thinking about before he comes into the scene. It's 1953. He lives on First Avenue. He's arrived at his lover's house, whose father stands between them because he's prejudiced. What's he thinking about before he enters? But I have to do the sound cue because the Assistant Stage Manager is on the other side of the stage and there's no crossover.

COLUMBIA: Forgive me if I deign to speak the obvious—

VICTORIA: But in the service of a most insistent plot—

MAUD: And whatever internal struggle he might have—

WPA: Whatever the Fat Cats want, before he enters the house, it seems that he'd be thinking about—

ALL: Ringing the bell.

LES: Thanks. I think. The world is so fucked up.

*EVERYONE ELSE speaks words of assent.*

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LES: And I just feel like... it's important to be present. To pay attention, and not impose your views on other people, but to keep your eyes open and speak what you know, when you know it. But not didactically, because who knows? And to explore the story of our lives—and I mean all kinds of peoples' lives—but also our own, not so much to repeat the things that make us happy and avoid things that don't, but to expand into new and surprising ones. To ... to keep learning. And the best way I know to do that is through... acting.

VICTORIA: Well, yes.

WPA: That's the point.

MAUD: It's the only point.

COLUMBIA: True.

LES: If you're all in this show, how come I've never seen you?

COLUMBIA: We all have haunted this theater from the start.

MAUD: Implied. We're implicit.

VICTORIA: I did, however, hear the manager say—

MAUD: Yes?

VICTORIA: Well at the beginning of rehearsals, he said he'd never read the play. And of course, we all had a good laugh, and off we went.

LES: Yeah?

VICTORIA: It seems increasingly evident that, perhaps, he never *did* read the play. That is, he doesn't *know* the ending.

COLUMBIA: In Liberty's struggle there is but one known:  
The spark that starts the blaze will never see it burn.

MAUD: What she said.

WPA: So not one of us has ever rehearsed the final scene?

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*EVERYONE ELSE speaks words of denial.*

WPA: It's brilliant!

MAUD: If the scene is even written.

WPA: Exactly. It's typical of the Controlling Classes: they don't even know where the show is going. They don't care! There might not even *be* an ending, so it will be up to the people to carry on.

LES: Wow. But I have a cue. It must be coming up. Would you mind...?

*[All wait, very quietly.]*

WONDERFUL LIFE: *[Entering hurriedly]:* Am I late? Have you started? Are we here? Where's the cider? Have you drawn the parts? I wanna play George. Not George as a kid. George at the end. George when he's angry. Or Mary. But Mary when she's a teenager. I wanna play Potter. I wanna play Potter. I wanna play Potter.

MAUD: Not 'til December.

IAWL: Oh. OK. *[turns to go]*

VICTORIA: Won't you stay to—

IAWL: Nah. I only like the movie thing. *[exits.]*

LES: Well, that was clear.

MUSICIAN: *[enters with instrument case]* Is this the dressing room?

*[All affirm.]*

MUSICIAN: It's pretty small.

*[All affirm.]*

VICTORIA: Are you here to add the *melos* to the *drame*?

MUSICIAN: I think my quartet is doing a concert.

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MAUD:           Bourgeois.

MUSICIAN:     I also do some dance...

MAUD:           That's more modern

WPA:            Musicians always get paid.

MUSICIAN:     I don't think so. We have to share the box office.

LES:            All four of you?

VICTORIA:     It's a grand tradition.

MUSICIAN:     There're five of us.

MAUD:           But you said—

MUSIC:          Tonight it's just me.

COLUMBIA:     One might suggest your marketing misleads.

MUSICIAN:     I don't think there was much. I mean, I tried to put the word out. It seems like it was sort of an afterthought.

*EVERYONE ELSE cries denials: ["No! Oh, no. Surely not. No."]*

VICTORIA:     It's a perfect hall for a quartet.

MAUD:           Or a soloist.

WPA:            Can't put many people to work, though.

LES:            Maybe, but it could be a really interesting space. There's lots of work that would be really well served by it. Readings, workshops, classes, film shoots—

WPA:            And when do you come in?

MUSICIAN:     After the show. There's a show, tonight, right?

MAUD:           It's going on now.

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MUSICIAN: Oh. I didn't notice—I'm not much into theater. It's really quiet out there.

LES: What?

WPA: You should have been part of the whole thing.

VICTORIA: Agreed.

MUSICIAN: Are you a tiger?

WPA: I'm a Capitalist.

MUSICIAN: Right. Well, anyway, I think I'll wait outside. Maybe let me know when you're done. *[exits]*

*[Silence.]*

VICTORIA: I'd like to hear some music.

*ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER Enters.*

ASM: What are you doing?

LES: How'd you get over here?

ASM: What the actual fuck are you doing? Why aren't you on stage?

LES: Did I miss it?

ASM: You all missed it. All of you!

VICTORIA: Oh, my!

MAUD: I was distracted.

WPA: Tyranny.

COLUMBIA: I know I only appear after the bell;  
As to the others, I can only guess.  
But if each one has missed an entrance call,  
Whatever has been going on on stage?

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ASM: What do you think? The director went on.

WPA: For all of us?

ASM: Yes... he's on now.

WPA: Outrageous. That's how the bosses save money: one person plays five parts!

MAUD: How's he doing?

ASM: Get on stage!

VICTORIA: The final scene! My favorite part!

*[All but Columbia and LES exit. ASM turns the laptop on the dressing table away from LES so it faces the audience and grabs bell from LES.]*

ASM: I can do this, as long as I'm over here. *[exits.]*

LES: What you said earlier was –

COLUMBIA: Yes.

LES: Being together...people being together to watch people...

COLUMBIA: 'Tis in this very Act of joining Hearts  
We may affirm the Spirit that our Nation  
Holds to be its only Sacred Cause.

LES: You always talk like that.

COLUMBIA: It's just a convention.

*Silence.*

*Offstage, the bell rings.*

*Silence.*

LES: We should go

COLUMBIA: Yes

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*They do not move.*

LES:            *[musing]* They do not move.

COLUMBIA:    What?

LES:            After your time

COLUMBIA:    Come along. It's our cue.

LES:            I know. But... I'm not ready to go on.

COLUMBIA:    But it's time. Trust me...I've been doing this for centuries.

LES:            It doesn't make sense, but—

COLUMBIA:    No

LES:            I don't want to ...

COLUMBIA:    To go on?

LES:            No. When we go, it's over.

COLUMBIA:    But it's time.

*[They take hands. Exit.*

*Lights fade very slowly to black.*

*The laptop on the dressing table springs to life with the image of a host trying to start a Zoom™ meeting.]*

VIRTUAL PLAYHOUSE:    Hello, and welcome to the Metropolitan Virtual Playhouse. I— Hello? Hello? Hello! I— Shit. Am I muted? Is anyone there? Hang on... OK. Hello, and welc— Oh, man. Didn't anyone join? Is there really no one —

*An unseen figure slaps the laptop shut.*



*LAST ACT*