

SIDE # 2

Needed:

Shirley
Mr. Abramowitz
Mrs. Kornblum
Young Shirley
Mrs. Abramowitz
Clara

SHIRLEY. It is me! See how young I am?

EVIE. (*To Young Shirley.*) I did not tell him! He guessed!

YOUNG SHIRLEY. Yeah, after you gave him plenty of hints!
(*Evie sticks her tongue out.*)

CLARA. Who is *she*? (*Meaning Evie.*)

SHIRLEY. Evie Slotnick? My very best friend. We love each other only as best friends could.

YOUNG SHIRLEY. I hate you, Evie Slotnick! I hate you, I hate you!

EVIE. Oh, yeah? Well, I hate you, too!

SHIRLEY. Every Sunday afternoon, Evie and I go to the Tilyou Theater for popcorn and a double feature. (*Young Shirley and Evie are seated together at the movies eating popcorn. We hear a few bars of Shirley Temple singing "Good Ship Lollipop."**) Shirley Temple is my favorite movie star. I figure if her name is "Shirley Temple" ... she's gotta be Jewish. (*Pedestrians pass stores with signs in Italian. Chinese. Russian. Polish. Spanish. Irish names. Yiddish.*) A few doors down from Shapiro the barber and Goldstein the shoemaker; nestled between Needleman the tailor and Feigenbaum the pawnbroker, is a little grocery store — Abramowitz's Appetizing — run by my darling papa, may he rest in peace. (*Mr. Abramowitz appears, wearing a shopkeeper's apron. Shirley Abramowitz assumes the role of Mrs. Kornblum, a customer. The shop doorbell tinkles.*)

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Ah, Mrs. Kornblum. What can I do for you today?

SHIRLEY. (*As Mrs. Kornblum.*) Mr. Abramowitz, what have you got that's fresh?

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Everything's fresh. I was at the Fulton Fish Market this very morning, before the sun came up.

SHIRLEY. (*As Mrs. Kornblum.*) That's what you said the last time. That cod fillet you sold me, by the time I got it home, it stank to high heaven.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. The problem with fish ... is it smells like fish. What can I get you?

SHIRLEY. (*As Mrs. Kornblum.*) Half-pound of chopped liver, half-pound of cole slaw, and keep the funny stuff to yourself. (*Mr. Abramowitz fills her order during the following.*)

YOUNG SHIRLEY. (*Still on the street.*) Evie Slotnick, I HAVE HAD IT WITH YOU! I don't want to talk to you ever again! (*Mrs. Abramowitz appears.*)

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Shirley Abramowitz, enough shouting on the street already!

SHIRLEY. Also in this faraway place, my long-gone mama is there, still as full of breathing as me.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. You're giving the neighborhood a headache!

YOUNG SHIRLEY. (*Enters the shop.*) Yes, Mama. Hello, Papa.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Hello, my darling.

SHIRLEY. I plant myself next to the pickle barrel. I'm supposed to be doing homework but my mind wanders. In my head, I'm dancing with Shirley Temple on the good ship *Lollipop*. My pinky makes tiny whirlpools in the brine. (*Her dance reverie is interrupted.*)

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Shirley Abramowitz, get your fingers out of the pickle barrel! What's the matter with you? Do something useful for a change! Unpack those cans. (*She hands Young Shirley a box of cans that the girl proceeds to unpack.*)

YOUNG SHIRLEY. (*Loudly.*) Campbell's Tomato Soup!

SHIRLEY. (*As Mrs. Kornblum.*) Must she always be so loud?

YOUNG SHIRLEY. Campbell's Vegetable Beef Soup! Campbell's Chicken Soup!

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. (*Overlap.*) Shirley, please! The labels are coming off the cans!

SHIRLEY. (*As Mrs. Kornblum.*) Mrs. Abramowitz, really, parents should not be afraid of their own children.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. You hear that, Shirley? You're bothering everybody. Now be quiet!

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Let her speak, Clara. — (*The action freezes.*)

CLARA. Her name is Clara? Like me!

SHIRLEY. That's right, *bubeleh*, you're named for my mama, may she rest in peace. (*Action resumes.*)

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. The girl is too loud, Misha!

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. So what if she's loud? Better she should use her voice *now*, while she's alive. In the grave it'll be plenty quiet. From Coney Island to the cemetery, it's the same subway, the same fare. (*Mr. Abramowitz completes the transaction with Mrs. Kornblum.*)

Goodbye, Mrs. Kornblum. (*The sun begins to set over Brooklyn. He unties his apron and turns out the lights.*)

SHIRLEY. At the end of every workday, Papa closes up shop and we go home.

CLARA. Where?