

ACT ONE**PROLOGUE: Rooftop, Dawn****#1 - Overture**

(Summer, 1899. A figure sleeps peacefully on a rooftop amid the moonlit Manhattan cityscape. It is JACK, a charismatic boy of seventeen. Across the rooftop, another figure stirs. CRUTCHIE, a slight and sickly boy of fifteen, walks with the aid of a wooden crutch. He crosses to the fire escape ladder and fumbles, trying to climb down. JACK stirs.)

#2 - Santa Fe (Prologue)**Jack, Crutchie****JACK**

Where you going? Morning bell ain't rung yet. Get back to sleep.

CRUTCHIE

I wanna beat the other fellas to the street. I don't want anyone should see; I ain't been walkin' so good.

JACK

Quit gripin'. You know how many guys fake a limp for sympathy? That bum leg of yours is a gold mine.

CRUTCHIE

Someone gets the idea I can't make it on my own, they'll lock me up in The Refuge for good. Be a pal, Jack. Help me down.

(loses his footing and almost falls, yelps)

Whoa!!!

(JACK rushes to CRUTCHIE's rescue, pulling the boy back from danger.)

JACK

You wanna bust your other leg, too?

CRUTCHIE

No. I wanna go down.

JACK

You'll be down there soon enough. Take a moment to drink in my penthouse high above the stinkin' streets of New York.

CRUTCHIE

You're crazy.

JACK

Because I like a breath of fresh air? 'Cause I like seein' the sky and the stars?

CRUTCHIE

You're seein' stars all right!

JACK

Them streets down there sucked the life right outta my old man. Years of rotten jobs, stomped on by bosses. And when they finally broke him, they tossed him to the curb like yesterday's paper. Well, they ain't doin' that to me.

CRUTCHIE

But everyone wants to come here.

JACK

New York's fine for those what can afford a big strong door to lock it out. But I tell you, Crutchie, there's a whole other way out there. So you keep your small life in the big city. Give me a big life in a small town.

THEY SAY FOLKS IS DYIN' TO GET HERE
ME, I'M DYIN' TO GET AWAY
TO A LITTLE TOWN OUT WEST THAT'S SPANKIN' NEW
AND WHILE I AIN'T NEVER BEEN THERE
I CAN SEE IT CLEAR AS DAY
IF YOU WANT, I BET'CHA
YOU COULD SEE IT, TOO

CLOSE YOUR EYES...
COME WITH ME
WHERE IT'S CLEAN AND GREEN AND PRETTY
AND THEY WENT AND MADE A CITY OUTTA CLAY
WHY, THE MINUTE THAT YOU GET THERE
FOLKS'LL WALK RIGHT UP AND SAY
"WELCOME HOME, SON
WELCOME HOME TO SANTA FE!"

(CRUTCHIE is taken under Jack's spell.)

PLANTIN' CROPS,
SPLITTIN' RAILS
SWAPPIN' TALES AROUND THE FIRE
'CEPT FOR SUNDAY, WHEN YOU LIE AROUND ALL DAY
SOON YOUR FRIENDS ARE MORE LIKE FAM'LY
AND THEY'S BEGGING YOU TO STAY!

(JACK)

AIN'T THAT NEAT?
LIVIN'S SWEET
IN SANTA FE

CRUTCHIE

You got folks there?

JACK

Got no folks nowhere. You?

CRUTCHIE

I don't need folks. I got friends.

JACK

How's about you come with me? No one worries about no gimp leg in Santa Fe.
You just hop a palomino and ride in style.

CRUTCHIE

Feature me: ridin' in style.

JACK

I bet a few months of clean air and you could toss that crutch for good.

JACK, CRUTCHIE

SANTA FE
YOU CAN BET
WE WON'T LET THEM BASTIDS BEAT US
WE WON'T BEG NO ONE TO TREAT US FAIR AND SQUARE
THERE'S A LIFE THAT'S WORTH THE LIVIN'
AND I'M GONNA DO MY SHARE:

JACK

WORK THE LAND
CHASE THE SUN

JACK, CRUTCHIE

SWIM THE WHOLE RIO GRANDE
JUST FOR FUN!

CRUTCHIE

(stands on his own)

WATCH ME STAND!
WATCH ME RUN.

(CRUTCHIE realizes his recovery is just a fantasy and turns away from JACK.)

JACK

Hey...

(CRUTCHIE looks at him. JACK wraps his arms around his friend protectively.)

~~DON'T YOU KNOW THAT WE'S A FAM'LY?
WOULD I LET YA DOWN?
NO WAY!
JUST HOLD ON, KID
TILL THAT TRAIN MAKES SANTA FE~~

(CRUTCHIE leans against JACK as the sun rises behind them. The church bell tolls 5 a.m., which breaks the spell.)

Time for dreamin's done.

(JACK takes Crutchie's crutch and bangs it on the fire escape metal, sounding an alarm.)

Hey! Specs, Racer, Henry, Albert, Elmer. Get a move on, boys. Them papes don't sell themselves!

#2A - Prologue (Playoff)

(SNYDER and the POLICEMAN have been slowly moving toward the BOYS. LES spots them and points.)

#5 - Chase

LES

Is that the guy you're meetin'?

(JACK looks up and sees SNYDER.)

SNYDER

Kelly!

JACK

(grabbing LES)

Run for it!

SNYDER

Officer, grab him. You, Jack Kelly, stop! Kelly!

(JACK, DAVEY, and LES leap onto a fire escape ladder and take off. The POLICEMAN and SNYDER try to follow. The BOYS climb over the roof and back down the other side, into the flies of a burlesque house.)

SCENE FOUR: Medda's Theater**JACK**

Slow down. We lost 'em.

DAVEY

Someone want to tell me why I'm running? I got no one chasing me. Who was that guy?

JACK

That was Snyder the Spider. A real sweetie. He runs a jail for underage kids called The Refuge. The more kids he locks up, the more money the city pays him. Problem is, all the money goes straight into his own pocket. Do yourself a favor and stay clear of him and The Refuge.

(MEDDA LARKIN, a burlesque star, appears in a revealing costume. The STAGE MANAGER and two showgirls, the BOWERY BEAUTIES, get ready for the performance.)

MEDDA

Hey, you up there, shoo! No kids allowed in the theater.

JACK

Not even me, Miss Medda?

MEDDA

(recognizing the intruder)

Jack Kelly, man of mystery. Get yourself down here and give me a hug. Where have you been keepin' yourself, kid?

(JACK, DAVEY, and LES come down to the stage.)

JACK

Never far from you, Miss Medda. Boys, may I present Miss Medda Larkin: greatest star on the Bowery today. She also owns the joint.

MEDDA

The only thing I own is the mortgage. Pleasure, gents.

DAVEY

A pleasure.

(DAVEY bows gallantly, but LES just stands wide-eyed, staring at the BOWERY BEAUTIES. DAVEY smacks him.)

What's wrong with you?

LES

Are you blind? She got no clothes on!

DAVEY

That's her costume.

LES

But I can see her legs!

MEDDA

(to DAVEY)

Step out of his way so's he can get a better look. Theater's not only entertaining, it's educational.

(posing)

Got the picture, kid?

JACK

Miss Medda, I got a little situation out on the street. Mind if I hide out here a while?

MEDDA

Where better to escape trouble than a theater? Is Snyder after you again?

LES

Hey Jack, did you really escape jail on the back of Teddy Roosevelt's carriage?

DAVEY

What would the Governor be doing at a juvenile jail?

JACK

So happens he was runnin' for office and wanted to show he cared about orphans and such. So while he got his mug in the paper, I got my butt in the back seat and off we rode together.

LES

You really know the Governor?

MEDDA

He don't, but I do! Say, Jack, when you've got time, I want you to paint me some more of these backdrops.

(indicates a park scene drop behind her)

This last one you did is a doozy. Folks love it. And things have been going so well that I can actually pay.

JACK

I couldn't take your money, Miss Medda.

LES

You pictured that?

MEDDA

Your friend is quite an artist.

JACK

Don't get carried away. It's a bunch of trees.

DAVEY

You're really good.

MEDDA

That boy's got natural aptitude.

LES

Geez. I never knew no one with a aptitude.

(The STAGE MANAGER calls to her.)

STAGE MANAGER

Miss Medda, you're on!

MEDDA

(struggling to hear)

Yeah? How 'm I doin'?

(to the BOYS)

Boys, lock the door and stay all night. You're with Medda now!

STAGE MANAGER

(announcing MEDDA as she moves toward the stage)

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the star of our show... Miss Medda Larkin!

(MEDDA is captured in a spotlight. The BOYS watch from the wings, completely entranced, while she performs.)

#6 - Thal's Rich

Medda

MEDDA

I'M DOING ALL RIGHT FOR MYSELF, POLKS,
I'M HEALTHY, I'M WEALTHY, I'M WISE
MY INVESTMENTS AND SUCH
HAVE ALL GONE UP SO MUCH
SEEM WHATEVER I TOUCH STARTS TO RISE
I'VE SEEN ALL KINDS OF LUCKY, AND YET
THE THING I WANT MOST
I CAN'T GET

(MEDDA)*(loud, right to "him")***THAT'S RICH!***(out to the audience)***THAT'S RICH!***(spoken)***THAT'S RICH!***(MEDDA bows. JACK's attention is drawn to a box seat out front where KATHERINE sits watching the show. He shifts as he crosses the stage and climbs the stairs.)***#6A - I Never Loved - You /
Don't Come a-Knocking****Jack, Bowery Beauties****(MEDDA)**

And now, gentlemen, let's have a big hand for the Bowery Beauties!

*(The BOWERY BEAUTIES begin to dance.)***BOWERY BEAUTIES****DON'T COME A-KNOCKING ON MY DOOR***(MEDDA climbs into the box.)***JACK**

Well, hello again.

KATHERINE

This is a private box.

JACK*(moving closer)*

Want I should lock the door?

(moving closer still)

Twice in one day. Think it's fate?

KATHERINE*(dismissive)*

Go away. I'm working.

JACK

A working girl, huh? Doin' what?

KATHERINE

Reviewing the show for the *New York Sun*.

JACK

Hey! I work for the *World*.

KATHERINE

Somewhere out there someone cares. Go tell them.

JACK

The view's better here.

KATHERINE

Please go. I am not in the habit of speaking to strangers.

JACK

Then you're gonna make a lousy reporter. The name's Jack Kelly.

KATHERINE

Is that what it says on your rap sheet?

JACK

A smart girl. I admire smart girls.

(admiring KATHERINE)

Beautiful. Smart. Independent.

KATHERINE

(getting too loud)

Do you mind!?

MEDDA

(Challenging up to JACK and KATHERINE)
You get in for free. At least pay attention

JACK

Sorry, Medda

(KATHERINE returns to watching the show, but JACK only has eyes for her. He takes a piece of newspaper and a pencil from his pocket and begins to sketch a portrait of her. The image of the drawing appears in a projection behind them.)

I GOT NO USE FOR MOONLIGHT
OR SARDONYA
LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT'S FOR SLICKERS
AT LEAST IT USED TO BE
LOOK, GIRLS ARE NICE
ONCE OR TWICE

JACK

You heard Davey. We're on strike.

DAVEY

Hold on. I didn't say—

JACK

We shut down this place like them workers shut down the trolleys.

FINCH

And the cops will bust our heads! Half them strikers is laid up with broke bones.

JACK

Cops ain't gonna care about a bunch of kids. Right, Davey?

DAVEY

Leave me out of this. I'm just here trying to feed my family.

JACK

And the rest of us is on playtime? Just because we only make pennies don't give nobody the right to rub our noses in it.

DAVEY

It doesn't matter. You can't strike. You're not a union.

JACK

And what if I says we is?

DAVEY

There's a lot of stuff you gotta have in order to be a union. Like membership.

JACK

What do you call these guys?

DAVEY

And officers.

CRUTCHIE

I nominate Jack President!

(The NEWSIES cheer their approvals.)

JACK

Gee, I'm touched.

DAVEY

How about a statement of purpose?

JACK

Must'a left it in my other pants.

RACE

What's a statement of purpose?

DAVEY

A reason for forming the union.

JACK

What reason did the trolley workers have?

DAVEY

I don't know. Wages? Work hours? Safety on the job?

JACK

Who don't need that? Bet if your father had a union you wouldn't be out here sellin' papes right now. Yeah?

DAVEY

Yeah.

JACK

So, our union is hereby formed to watch each other's backs. "Union'd we stand." Hey, that's not bad. Somebody write that down.

LES

I got a pencil.

JACK

Meet our Secretary of State. Now what?

DAVEY

If you want to strike, the membership's gotta vote.

JACK

So let's vote. What do you say, fellas? The choice is yours. Do we roll over and let Pulitzer pick our pockets, or do we strike?

NEWSIES

Strike!!!!

#7 - *The World Will Know*

Jack, Davey, Les, Crutchie, Newsies

JACK

You heard the voice of the membership. The Newsies of Lower Manhattan are now officially on strike. What next?

CRUTCHIE

Wouldn't a strike be more effective if someone in charge knew about it?

FINCH

If they think they can just waltz in here and take our jobs—

CRUTCHIE

We can handle them!

(The NEWSIES move menacingly forward as the SCABS collect their papers from the distribution window.)

ROMEO

Let's soak 'em, boys!

FINCH

Yeah! Let's get 'em!

DAVEY

No! We all stand together or we don't have a chance!

(calling for help)

Jack!

JACK

All right. I know. I hear ya.

(looks to his NEWSIES, then addresses the SCABS)

Listen, fellas... I know somebody put yis up to this. Probably paid ya some extra money too. Yeah? Well, it ain't right. Pulitzer thinks we're gutter rats with no respect for nothin', includin' each other. Is that who we are? Well, we stab each other in the back and, yeah, that's who we are. But if we stand together, we change the whole game. And it ain't just about us. All across this city there are boys and girls who ought to be out playin' or going to school. Instead they're slavin' to support themselves and their folks. Ain't no crime to bein' poor, and not a one of us complains if the work we do is hard. All we ask is a square deal. Fellas... for the sake of all the kids in every sweatshop, factory, and slaughter house in this town, I beg you... throw down your papers and join the strike.

Please?

(The SCABS look at each other, and the first steps forward.)

SCAB 1

I'm with ya.

(The first SCAB throws down his papers. The NEWSIES surround the two remaining SCABS.)

SCENE THREE: Medda's Theater

(JACK paints a backdrop of the Taos Mountains. It's an explosion of color. MEDDA enters in a dressing robe.)

MEDDA

Here's everything I owe you for the first backdrop, plus this one, and even a little something extra just account'a because I'm gonna miss you so.

(MEDDA hands JACK an envelope full of money.)

JACK

Miss Medda.

MEDDA

Jack.

JACK

You're a gem.

MEDDA

Just tell me that you're going somewhere and not running away.

JACK

Does it matter?

MEDDA

When you go somewhere and it turns out not to be the right place, you can always go somewhere else. But if you're running away, nowhere's ever the right place.

(DAVEY finds his way in through the stage flies, excited to see JACK.)

DAVEY

How 'bout lettin' a pal know you're alive?

MEDDA

Why don't I leave you with your friend.

(MEDDA exits.)

DAVEY

Where'd you go? We couldn't find you.

JACK

Ever think I didn't wanna be found?

DAVEY

(indicating the backdrop)

Is that a real place? That Santa Fe?

(DAVEY)

(suddenly remembering, holds out the newspaper)

Hey! You see the pape? We're front page news, above the fold. Oh, yes. Above the fold.

JACK

Good for you.

DAVEY

Everyone wants to meet the famous Jack Kelly. Even Spot Conlon sent a kid just to say: next event you can count on Brooklyn. How about that?

JACK

We got stomped into the ground.

DAVEY

They got us this time. I'll grant you that. But we took round one. And with press like this our fight is far from over.

JACK

Every newsie who could walk showed up this morning to sell papes like the strike never happened.

DAVEY

And I was there with them. If I don't sell papes, my folks don't eat.

JACK

Save your breath. I get it. It's hopeless.

DAVEY

But then I saw this look on Weasel's face; he was actually nervous. And I realized this isn't over. We got them worried. Really worried. And I walked away. Lots of other kids did, too. And that is what you call a beginning.

(LES enters, calling to KATHERINE behind him.)

LES

There he is, just like I said.

JACK

For cryin' out loud... Where's a fella gotta go to get away from you people?

DAVEY

There's no escapin' us, pal. We're inevitable.

LES

(to DAVEY)

So, what's the story? Can we have the theater?

DAVEY

Pipe down. I didn't ask yet.

LES

What's the hold up? I need to let my girl know we've got a date.

DAVEY

Your girl?

LES

You heard me. I've been swattin' skirts away all morning. Fame is one intoxicatin' potion. And this here girl, Sally, she's a plum.

JACK

(sees KATHERINE)

Word is you wrote a great story.

KATHERINE

(tentatively approaches JACK)

You look like hell.

LES

(studying the painting)

Hey, Jack. Where's that supposed to be?

DAVEY

It's Santa Fe.

KATHERINE

I've got to tell you, Jack, this "Go west, young man" routine is getting tired. Even Horace Greeley moved back to New York.

LES

Yes, he did. And then he died.

JACK

Ain't reporters supposed to be non-partisan?

KATHERINE

Ask a reporter. Pulitzer's had me blacklisted from every news desk in town—

LES

Can we table the palaver and get back to business? Will Medda let us have the theater?

DAVEY

(to JACK)

It's what I been trying to tell you: we want to hold a rally - citywide meeting where

(DAVEY)

every newsie gets a say and a vote. And we do it after working hours so no one loses a day's pay. Smart?

JACK

Smart enough to get you committed to a padded room!

KATHERINE

The guy who paints places he's never seen is calling us crazy?

JACK

Want to see a place I seen? How about this?

#14B - Jack's Painting

(JACK turns the backdrop around and reveals a large, passionately executed political cartoon of the newsies being crushed by Pulitzer in Newsie Square. DAVEY, LES, and KATHERINE stare in awe.)

JACK

Newsie Square, thanks to my big mouth, filled to overflowing with failure. Kids hurt, others arrested—

DAVEY

Lighten up. No one died.

JACK

Is that what you're aiming for? Go on and call me a quitter, call me a coward. No way I'm puttin' them kids back in danger.

DAVEY

We're doing something that has never been done before. How could that not be dangerous?

JACK

Specs brung me a note from Crutchie at The Refuge. I tried to see him. Climbed the fire escape. But they busted him up so bad he couldn't even come to the window. What if he don't make it? You willing to shoulder that for a tenth of a penny a pape?

DAVEY

It's not about pennies. You said it yourself: my family wouldn't be in the mess we're in if my father had a union. This is a fight we have to win.

JACK

If I wanted a sermon, I'd show up for church.

#15 - Watch What Happens (Reprise)

Davey, Jack, Katherine, Les

DAVEY

Tell me how quitting does Crutchie any good?

(JACK doesn't answer him.)

Exactly. So...

HERE'S HOW IT GOES: ONCE WE WIN
AND WE WILL BE WINNING, MAKE NO MISTAKE—

JACK

WE'LL BE WHAT?!

DAVEY

WE'RE ALREADY WINNING

JACK

RIGHT!

DAVEY

AND WE'LL TELL 'EM STRAIGHT OUT
THEY LET CRUTCHIE GO
OR THEY KEEP GETTING POUNDED

JACK

DAVE, WHAT THE HELL?
DID THEY BUST UP YOUR BRAINS OR SOMETHIN'?
AS I RECALL, DAVE, WE ALL GOT OUR ASSES KICKED
THEY WON!

DAVEY

WON THE BATTLE

JACK

COME ON!

DAVEY

JACKIE, THINK ABOUT IT:
WE GOT THEM SURROUNDED!

JACK

HERE'S WHAT I THINK:
JOE'S A JERK, HE'S A RATTLESNAKE!

DAVEY

YOU'RE RIGHT
AND YOU KNOW WHY A SNAKE STARTS TO RATTLE?

SCENE SIX: Rooftop, Night

#17A - To the Rooftop

(KATHERINE has discovered JACK's drawings stuffed in an air vent pipe and opens them up. JACK arrives.)

KATHERINE

That was some speech you made.

JACK

How'd you get here?

KATHERINE

Specs showed me.

JACK

(snatches his drawings)

He say you could go through my stuff?

KATHERINE

I saw them rolled up, sticking out of there. I didn't know what they were. These drawings...? These are drawings of The Refuge, aren't they?

(takes the drawings back and studies them closer)

Is this really what it's like in there: three boys to a bed, rats everywhere, and vermin?

JACK

A little different from where you were raised?

KATHERINE

Snyder told my father you were arrested stealing food and clothing. This is why, isn't it? You stole to feed those boys.

(JACK, embarrassed, turns away.)

I don't understand. If you were willing to go to jail for those boys, how could you turn your back on them now?

JACK

I don't think you're anyone to talk about turning on folks.

KATHERINE

I never turned on you or anyone else.

JACK

No. You just double crossed us to your father. Your father!!

KATHERINE

My father has eyes on every corner of this city. He doesn't need me spying for him. And I never lied. I didn't tell you everything...

JACK

If you weren't a girl you'd be trying to talk with a fist in your mouth.

KATHERINE

I said that I worked for the *Sun*, and I did. I told you my professional name was Plumber, and it is. You never asked my real one.

JACK

I wouldn't think I had to unless I knew I was dealing with a backstabber.

KATHERINE

And if I was a boy, you'd be looking at me through one swollen eye.

JACK

Don't let that stop ya. Gimme your best shot.

(JACK presents his face to her. KATHERINE, out of nowhere, grabs JACK and kisses him full on the lips. They part. A moment of silence and then JACK tries to get another kiss, but is blocked.)

KATHERINE

I need to know you didn't cave for the money.

JACK

I spoke the truth. You win a fight when you got the other fella down eatin' pavement. You heard your father. No matter how many days we strike, he ain't givin' up. I don't know what else we can do.

KATHERINE

Ah. But I do.

JACK

Oh, come on...

KATHERINE

Really, Jack? Really? Only you can have a good idea? Or is it because I'm a girl?

JACK

I didn't say nothin'...

KATHERINE

This would be a good time to shut up. Being boss doesn't mean you have all the answers. Just the brains to recognize the right one when you hear it.

JACK

I'm listening.

KATHERINE

Good for you. The strike was your idea. The rally was Davey's. And now my plan will take us to the finish line. Deal with it.

(KATHERINE takes a piece of paper from her pocket and hands it to him.)

JACK

(reading)

"The Children's Crusade"?

KATHERINE

(snatches it back and reads)

"For the sake of all the kids in every sweatshop, factory, and slaughter house in New York, I beg you... join us." With those words, the strike stopped being just about the newsies. You challenged our whole generation to stand up and demand a place at the table.

JACK

"The Children's Crusade"??

KATHERINE

Think, Jack, if we publish this - my words with one of your drawings - and if every worker under twenty-one read it and stayed home from work... or better yet, came to Newsie Square - a general city-wide strike! Even my father couldn't ignore that.

JACK

Only one small problem: we got no way to print it.

KATHERINE

Come on, there has to be one printing press he doesn't control.

JACK

(suddenly remembering)

Oh, no.

KATHERINE

What?

JACK

I know where there's a printing press that no one would ever think we'd use.

KATHERINE

Then why are we still standing here?

(KATHERINE starts climbing down the fire escape ladder, but JACK stops her.)

JACK

Wait. Stop. What's this about for you? I don't mean "The Children's Crusade."

(JACK)

*(indicating the two of them)*What's this about? Am I kiddin' myself or is there something...

KATHERINE

Of course there is.

JACK

Well, don't say it like this happens every day!

KATHERINE

Oh, Jack...

JACK

I'm not an idiot. I know girls like you don't wind up with guys like me. And I don't want you promisin' nothin' you gotta take back later. But standing here tonight... lookin' at you... I'm scared tomorrow's gonna come and change everything.

#18 - *Something to Believe In*

Katherine, Jack

(JACK)

If there was a way I could grab hold of something to make time stop. Just so's I could keep looking at you.

KATHERINE

You snuck up on me, Jack Kelly. I never even saw it coming.

JACK

For sure?

KATHERINE

For sure.

~~THE MOMENT I FOUND YOU
 I THOUGHT I KNEW WHAT LOVE WAS
 NOW I'M LEARNING WHAT IS TRUE:
 THAT LOVE WILL DO WHAT IT DOES
 THE WORLD FINDS WAYS TO STING YOU
 AND THEN ONE DAY DECIDES TO BRING YOU
 SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN
 FOR EVEN A NIGHT
 ONE NIGHT MAY BE FOREVER
 BUT THAT'S ALL RIGHT
 THAT'S ALL RIGHT
 AND IF YOU'RE GONE TOMORROW
 WHAT WAS OURS, STILL WILL BE:~~