

FABLE
A Fable About A Musical Fable

By Doug DeVita

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Older June	Retired actress, bedridden	90+	F
Middle Aged June	Working actress, former child star	40+	F
Baby June	Child star	7	F
Gypsy/Nurse	Burlesque Star / Older June's Nurse	40+	F
Ethel/Rose	Broadway STAR / June's Mother	40+	F
Arthur/Emcee	A writer. / A Marathon bandleader	40+	M
Jerry/Floor Manager	A director. / A Marathon employee	40+	M

SYNOPSIS:

Who has the right to tell your story? Especially when it's the same story told from the differing memories of two legendary show business siblings? And one sister's version is about to become a big, Broadway musical that is also destined to become legendary? June Havoc was famously ambivalent about *Gypsy*, which her sister, burlesque star Gypsy Rose Lee, referred to as her legacy. And in *Fable*, which is itself a fable about the creation of that musical fable, the sisters' loyalty to each other is tested in a mounting battle that takes place in rehearsal rooms, dressing rooms, onstage, backstage, and all in the memory of the aging Ms. Havoc as she faces her imminent death, still battling with fiction and truth in order to keep her own legacy alive.

LOG LINE: A Fable About A Musical Fable.

SET REQUIREMENTS: A bare stage, a red velour traveler curtain, a ghost light, some chairs and a hospital bed.

BIO:

A two-time O'Neil Semi-Finalist (*Just A Rumor* and *Fable*), Doug's other honors include: Semi-Finalist for Barrington Stage Company's Burman New Play Award (*Phillie's Trilogy*), Semi-Finalist for B Street Theatre's New Comedy Festival (*Goddess Of The Hunt* and *Upper Division*), and Semi-Finalist for We Screenplay's Diversity Competition (*The Fierce Urgency Of Now*). In addition, he has won Fresh Fruit Awards of Distinction for Outstanding Play (*The Fierce Urgency Of Now*) and Outstanding Production (*Fierce...* and *Phillie's Trilogy*.)

Doug is currently an advisory board member for All Out Arts, and formerly an Artistic Director for Westside Repertory Theater. His work has been seen in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, New Jersey, Connecticut, and London, and has been developed at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC (Mark Bly, Gary Garrison, Jacqueline Goldfinger, and Caleen Jennings), at ESPA/Primary Stages in New York (Robert Askins, Rogelio Martinez, Winter Miller, and Michael Walkup), and with Eric Webb at Davenport Theatrical Writers Workshop. He has also studied with Karen Hartman, Jeffrey Sweet, and Eric Webb. A member of the Dramatists Guild, he has had work published by Next Stage Press, and Smith Scripts UK.

For June, with whom I once had
an impassioned but charming conversation
which I will never forget.

RECOGNITION:

SEMI-FINALIST

Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference

Listed as one of the Top Ten Plays on
Ken Davenport's Producer's Pick List

A crumbling Proscenium Arch frames the stage, Vaudeville-style placards on either side. A red traveller hangs between upstage and downstage, the panels able to cross in front and/or behind each other to reveal a new setup as they open and close. A few lighting instruments in full view, as well as a strip of footlights. Ropes, sand bags, and a ghost light populate the otherwise bare stage. At present, the travelers are closed, the ghost light is on, and the illuminated placards read:

FABLE. A FABLE ABOUT A MUSICAL FABLE.

The placards remain illuminated as the houselights dim and the ghost light flickers out. In the dark, the ghostly figure of a tiny little girl – the 7-year old Dainty Baby June Hovick – peeps out from behind one of the curtains. A moment, then her mother, Rose Hovick, appears behind her, whispering in her ear. Throughout the play, she is always in a light that drains her of as much color as possible, since she is a ghost constantly haunting the Older June. (Rose later plays Ethel, in different, more colorful light.)

Although Older June does address Dainty Baby June directly, the child is always a memory and never responds directly to her.

The Emcee (he later plays Arthur) bursts onto the stage.

EMCEE

Hey, hey, hey, Ladies and Gents, Gents and Ladies!

(Directing the next few questions to various other audience members.)

– Ya’ll have a good dinner [or lunch]? Satiated, huh?

– Ya’ll enjoy that final smoke before comin’ in here? Ya’ll relaxed now?

– Ya’ll are anxious to get started, ain’t ya? Yeah, I can tell yer a real go-getter! Especially after... how many bourbons did yer wife have to pour into ya to get ya here?

(Addressing the entire house.)

Y’all feel refreshed and ready? Good, good, goodie! ‘Cause here at the [NAME OF THEATRE] we hope y’all are champing at the bit to let us entertain you for an all night [or all afternoon] marathon of memories:

(Gesturing to the placards.)

FABLE! A FABLE ABOUT A MUSICAL FABLE. With THREE! COUNT ‘EM!

THREE Miss June Havocs! Watch as she thrills and chills and spills her guts sharing her stories with y'all in a marathon to end all marathons!

The placards change to read:

PLACARD STAGE RIGHT: 802,200 HOURS.

PLACARD STAGE LEFT: (THAT'S 95 YEARS, FOLKS!)

EMCEE

Here we are at hour 802,200 – that's 95 years, folks – of June's life, an endurance test of greasepaint, grit, and grandeur. So sit back, settle in, and LET THE FABLE BEGIN!

Rose, who has been brushing Dainty Baby June's hair until it wings out wildly from either side of her head now pinches her cheeks until she whimpers.

ROSE

Ssh, darling. Bite your lips! Bite your lips! And smile, baby!

EMCEE

(Pulling a conductor's baton from a pocket, he starts a vaudeville style fanfare.)

Here she is boys! Here she is girls! THE POCKET SIZED PAVLOVA! THE DARLING OF VAUDEVILLE! DAINTY BABY JUNE HOVICK!

Dainty Baby June expertly bites her lips to make them redder, then smiles brightly. Rose pulls the curtains open with one hand and shoves Dainty Baby June out onto the stage with the other. She dances en pointe to the footlights, does a split, smiles and raises her arms. She sings in a high, pure, strong voice*. She does a little dance, then bows as Rose beams. The Emcee leads the applause as Dainty Baby June goes to sit by the ghost light. (*Song TBD. NOTE: Every time she performs a song or dance, it should be obvious that this kid has presence and talent; her material is sharp and polished, and there is nothing even remotely amateurish or "kiddie show" about her performance.)

EMCEE (cont'd)

TADA!

ROSE

That's my little trouper. No one would ever guess looking at you that you have a temperature of 103.

Making sure Dainty Baby June is settled comfortably,
Rose goes to the traveler curtains as the placards change.

PLACARD STAGE RIGHT: ON THE FARM WITH MISS JUNE HAVOC.

PLACARD STAGE LEFT: WILTON, CONNECTICUT. MARCH, 2008.

EMCEE

(Gesturing to the placards.)

On the farm with Miss June Havoc. Wilton, Connecticut. March, 2008.

The Emcee disappears. Rose pulls the curtains open to reveal the 95 year-old June in bed, a food tray on her lap. Rose hovers in the background as the bed moves downstage; we see that June is asleep. Throughout the play – whether seated, standing, or in bed (even when she is asleep) – Older June is always moving at least one foot, if not both. A nurse (she later plays Gypsy) is opening the blinds, and a blast of bright sunlight hits June, waking her. (This can be a light and sound effect – there is no need for practical blinds.) Both Older June and Dainty Baby June react to the light the same way, as if they were both hit with an unexpectedly bright spot light.

OLDER JUNE

Oh, that spotlight is bright tonight!

NURSE

I only opened the blinds, June. It's the afternoon sun.

OLDER JUNE

Dear God, that can't possibly have been eleven minutes already!

NURSE

You've been asleep for two hours.

OLDER JUNE

(Still slightly groggy.)

That's all we get for rest during these marathons, you know. Eleven minutes. I must keep moving. I have to stay awake...

NURSE

(Fluffing the pillows. She's heard this all before, many times.)

You haven't finished your lunch, June dear. Arthur Laurents called again.

June pushes the food tray away. She's now fully awake and angry.

OLDER JUNE

I am not going to that opening night. I do not want to see everyone staring at the ancient baby with the walker... Oh, that musical again. Must they keep reviving it? And with *that* woman, this time? She may be talented, she may even be a *star*,

(To the ghost of Rose.)

But she is not you, mother. She's even less you than Ethel was. She brays.

Rose floats forward.

ROSE

I never bray.

NURSE

That isn't why he called this time, dear.

OLDER JUNE

(To the Nurse.)

I adapted my book into a show, too.

NURSE

Yes, dear. I know. *Marathon '33*.

OLDER JUNE

Now why don't they revive that?

ROSE

Because no one cares, baby.

OLDER JUNE

(To Dainty Baby June.)

You're too young to know about this, darling, but there is a musical about us.

A big Broadway musical about mother, our sister Louise, and us. And that musical is all a bunch of lies. Big, fat, Broadway musical lies.

Throughout the play, whenever Older June talks to Dainty Baby June, the child does not respond. None of Older June's memories respond. Only Rose and the Nurse respond to her.

NURSE

(Shaking her head and smiling; she's been here before.)

I know all about it, June.

OLDER JUNE

(Pointing to Rose and Dainty Baby June.)

Shhhh. I'm talking to them.

NURSE

June, you're still half-asleep.

OLDER JUNE

(To the Nurse.)

I am completely awake.

(To Rose.)

Lies about you, mother, lies about Louise...

(To Dainty Baby June.)

And especially, lies about you. About me. About us. Everything is a lie. She calls it her legacy, our sister does. *Gypsy, A Musical Fable*. And I get thrown under the bus every 15 years so they can trot it out for a big enough star desperate to play mother.

ROSE

I've never thought any of those women were right.

OLDER JUNE

(To Rose.)

This isn't about you, mother.

ROSE

Of course it's about me. It's always been about me, baby. It hasn't been about you since you ran away, and that still drives you crazy.

OLDER JUNE

(To Dainty Baby June.)

You're too young to care about what I'm telling you, aren't you? It's all so far off in your future. And so far back in my past...

ROSE

(To Older June.)

I don't know why you keep talking to her, June dear. She can't hear you. She's only what's left of your memory of you.

OLDER JUNE

But she hears you.

Rose makes a sweeping gesture to indicate both Older June and Dainty Baby June.

ROSE

Of course she does. She's you. And I'm your mother. I may be dead, but I'm still your mother.

We hear the strains of '30s style music from a small band, and shadows of sluggishly moving bodies are projected.

OLDER JUNE

I am so tired.

Older June stops moving a foot. The Floor manager appears. (He later plays Jerry.) He snaps the air with a heavy wooden ruler.

FLOOR MANAGER

Keep moving, girly, or you'll be disqualified. Done. Finished. Out on your ass. Forgotten like all of yesterday's losers.

Older June jumps as if she'd been hit, and immediately starts moving her feet again. The Floor Manager and the shadows disappear as the music fades.

OLDER JUNE

(To the Nurse.)

So tired. But I must keep moving. Or I'm out.

NURSE

June, you haven't danced in a marathon in over 75 years.

ROSE

Baby, you haven't danced in a marathon in over 75 years.

OLDER JUNE

What do you think my whole life has been, if not a marathon?

NURSE

June dear, there's something we need to discuss. It's about this revival.

OLDER JUNE

I told Arthur. I am not going.

NURSE

Yes, dear. Arthur tells me they want you to renegotiate your royalty.

Rose starts to laugh, softly.

OLDER JUNE

Every single time, they want to renegotiate my royalty. I never should have signed that release. I ask my sister about future productions, she tells me not to worry. I ask my lawyer about adding a provision for future productions, he tells me not to worry.

NURSE

Well, dear, at the time no one thought / it would have

OLDER JUNE

/ Everyone always lies to me. My sister. My lawyers. Everyone.

(To Rose.)

Even you, mother. Especially you. My whole life.

Rose's voice takes on a ghostly sound, and her color may brighten a bit as she's now in Older June's memory.

ROSE

(To Dainty Baby June.)

June, darling? Baby, I'm sorry, but your little dog Nee-Nee was hit by a car on Hollywood Boulevard. He's dead.

Offstage, we hear a male voice yell "ACTION!" Dainty Baby June cries on cue. During the following, Rose crosses over to Dainty Baby June, fixes her costume, and pulls her thumb out of her mouth.

OLDER JUNE

(To Rose, pointing at Dainty Baby June.)

Look at me. Five years old and in every movie I make, I cry my eyes out. Every take. After the first couple of times, of course, I know you're making it all up and Nee-Nee is back in our hotel room, perfectly fine.

Rose and Dainty Baby June repeat the lie about the dog.

ROSE

(To Dainty Baby June.)

June, baby, I'm afraid your little Nee-Nee is dead. Run over. Dead.

Dainty Baby June again bursts into tears.

OLDER JUNE

(To Rose.)

That's what you wanted. That's what I was paid to do. That's what I gave them. Every single time.

ROSE

(To Older June.)

You were a pro.

OLDER JUNE

(To Dainty Baby June.)

How old are we? 95? 98? 102? Who cares? Most people, if they remember us at all, think we kicked the bucket a long time ago...

(To the Nurse.)

I danced in seven marathons during the depression, you know?

The music starts and the dancing shadows appear again as the Marathon Emcee enters.

EMCEE

Welcome back, everyone. I hope y'all enjoyed your eleven minute sleep break, also known as The Exposition Eleven! Now let's start hour 802,201 of Miss June Havoc's life with an old favorite and get y'all jumpin' again!

He raises his baton and more loud marathon dance music blasts through Older June's memory. The dancing shadows pick up the pace and dance frantically. Perhaps one or two fall.

NURSE

Yes, dear, I know. Let me brush your hair.

(As she brushes June's wispy white hair.)

I told Arthur to talk to your lawyer about the royalty, but he wants to talk to you personally.

OLDER JUNE

So he can try to charm me out of my money? I know Arthur. I know Arthur very well.

NURSE

(Finishing her brushing.)

There. Don't you look pretty?

OLDER JUNE

Seven marathons. Thousands of hours on my feet, just to have a roof over my head and food to eat. I've built up so much endurance, I am what they call a horse.

NURSE

Yes, dear.

OLDER JUNE

It's a badge of honor to be called a horse. It's probably why I'm still alive.

(The Nurse takes her pulse.)

And my sister, the "star?" She was nothing more than a cheap, vulgar burlesque dancer. Some star. Does she ever do Shakespeare? I do.

A phone rings. The nurse answers it. The third June appears. She is in her 40s, also on a phone and visibly upset. The conversations take place both in the present (the Nurse) and in the past (June.)

NURSE

No, I'm afraid she can't come to the phone right now. She's taking a nap.

JUNE

Your book, Gyps? They're making *your* book into a musical? What about my book?

NURSE

Her signature? ... I'm afraid that's something her lawyer will have to discuss with her.

JUNE

I am not signing anything until I've read a script!

June slams down her phone and stands, quietly fuming. The nurse hangs up her phone a bit more delicately.

During the following, the bed moves upstage as Dainty Baby June, en pointe, and Rose draw the travelers closed just enough to frame Older June.

We see her watching everything from the shadows. Rose moves to the side, also watching from the shadows. Meanwhile the music has segued to a burlesque style bump and grind, and the nurse begins a striptease, taking off her uniform to reveal the stylishly-dressed 48 year-old Gypsy Rose Lee.

NURSE

(Taking off her nurse's cap.)

You're getting excited again, dear.

OLDER JUNE

Everyone thinks I'm rich as Croesus from that musical.

GYPSY

(Taking off her nurse's shoes and stockings.)

She's a famous actress, my sister.

OLDER JUNE

They get around me by calling it a "Fable," you know, and they all delude themselves that everything is true, but in the end it's all lies.

GYPSY

(Taking off her nurse's uniform to reveal a stylish suit underneath.)

She prides herself on telling the truth, because...

OLDER JUNE

I told them everything was a lie, but they don't care. "Fable." I hate that word...

GYPSY

(She puts on a chic pair of stockings.)

As she is fond of saying, "you must know your truth. Only that is what will make the work respectable. "The work." How very Actors Studio. And me, well...

OLDER JUNE

She calls herself an ecdysiast, but that's just one of her fancy excuses for dancing naked five times a day.

GYPSY

I am never naked. I am completely covered by a blue spotlight.

OLDER JUNE

Oh, she tries to disguise it with witty, pseudo-intellectual banter, but she's nothing more than a cheap, vulgar burlesque dancer.

GYPSY

(She steps into an elegant pair of shoes.)

I may not be a Shakespearean actress, but I am *not* a cheap, vulgar burlesque dancer.

(She drapes a mink stole over her shoulders.)

I am an ecdysiast.

Gypsy and June face each other. June looks at Gypsy's mink. She holds out her hand. Gypsy reluctantly takes off her mink and gives it to her.

PLACARD STAGE RIGHT: SISTERS, SISTERS, WERE THERE EVER SUCH DEVOTED SISTERS?

PLACARD STAGE LEFT: GYPSY'S TOWNHOUSE ON MANHATTAN'S SMART EAST SIDE. JANUARY, 1959.

GYPSY

(Indicating the SR placard.)

Sisters,

JUNE

(Indicating the SR placard)

Sisters,

BOTH

(Indicating the SR placard.)

Were there ever such devoted sisters?

GYPSY

(Indicating SL placard.)

My townhouse on Manhattan's smart east side.

BOTH

(Indicating SL placard.)

January, 1959.

Gypsy lights a cigarette and stares intently at June, the mink now draped over her shoulder, reading a document. Dainty Baby June sits cross legged under the dimly glowing ghost light, Rose behind her.

As we head into deeper memories, Older June mouths every word June says from this point on.

JUNE

I wish you wouldn't smoke. It will kill you, you know.

Gypsy reluctantly stubs out her cigarette as June goes back to reading the document. Gypsy pours herself a scotch. June looks up at her.

GYPSY

What?

JUNE

Another scotch, Gyps? Didn't your physician tell you / not

GYPSY

/ Please, June, I have so few vices left to enjoy.

JUNE

(Handing Gypsy the document.)

I am not signing this until I've seen and approved a script.

GYPSY

Why are you doing this, June?

JUNE

This is a lousy deal for me and you know it. You've sold your story, but you can't sell mine. And I am not selling myself so cheaply.

GYPSY

If I can get you 20 grand...

JUNE

And script / approval

GYPSY

/ And script approval, will you sign the release?

JUNE

We'll see. Arthur and Jerry are coming to see my show tomorrow night.

GYPSY

I'm surprised Jerry has the balls to face you after that *Bells...* tour fiasco.

JUNE

What balls? He's going to have to kiss my ass big time if he wants me to sign anything now. They both are.

GYPSY

Arthur and Jerry are only the writer and director, June. It's the producer, David Merrick, you need to convince.

JUNE

Jerome Robbins and Arthur Laurents are two of the biggest names on Broadway right now. Mr. Merrick won't listen to me. But he will listen to them, and if their job isn't made easy, he's not going to want to listen to them bitching about me.

GYPSY

Don't underestimate Merrick; he's a slippery one. I'm meeting Arthur for lunch on Wednesday at Sardi's. I'll see what I can do, at least about letting you see the script.

JUNE

I want to be there too.

GYPSY

You have a matinee, don't you? And you know you can't eat right before a performance.

JUNE

Then I shall arrange to have tea with Arthur after my show. I'll be voracious by then.

GYPSY

Go ahead, dear. Be my guest. Take him to the Plaza. Put it on my tab.

JUNE

You're being awfully generous.

GYPSY

I'm trying awfully hard.

The placards change to read:

PLACARD STAGE RIGHT: GYPSY. HERSELF. HAVING "LUNCH" AT SARDI'S WITH ARTHUR THE AUTHOR. JANUARY, 1959.

PLACARD STAGE LEFT: JUNE. HERSELF. HAVING TEA AT THE PLAZA HOTEL WITH ARTHUR THE AUTHOR. JANUARY, 1959.

A large caricature of Gypsy flies in stage right, as a potted palm or two roll on stage left.

GYPSY

(Gesturing to the SR placard.)

Me. Having "Lunch" at Sardi's with Arthur the author.

(Gesturing to the caricature.)

And that's my caricature. Fun, isn't it?

JUNE

(Gesturing to the SL placard.)

Me. Having tea at the Plaza Hotel with Arthur the author.

BOTH

January, 1959.

June in the Plaza Hotel Palm Court, seated at a table set with tea things and pastries. Gypsy in Sardi's, seated in front of her caricature, with a bottle of Scotch and packet or two of cigarettes. She has at least two, sometimes three going at the same time. Scotch and cigarettes. Arthur is seated in between, like the ball in an out of control tennis match, taking notes, barely able to keep up as the sisters each talk to him, separately.

JUNE

You were both late last night. I could see you and Jerry slinking into your seats. But then you weren't really there to see my performance, were you? You just came to get my name on a piece of paper.

ARTHUR

(As he lights a cigarette.)

That's not entirely true, June. You know I want to hear your story, too.

JUNE

Of course it doesn't surprise me Jerry snuck in and out. After his dirty double cross with that *Bells Are Ringing* national tour last month he can't face me.

ARTHUR

He might not have had a choice. You know Judy's made quite a splash with that role.

(To Gypsy, cigarette in hand.)

So tell me, Gyps, how did you really get into stripping?

GYPSY

Oh, darling, I've given so many versions of that story, why don't you make up your own? Just call the show *Gypsy*, and I won't care about the rest. If you're after the "truth," and I use that term as loosely as I make my costumes, talk to June.

JUNE

You're supposed to be a playwright, Arthur, aren't you? How could you lend yourself to adapting my sister's book? It's vulgar. She's vulgar.

(Stubbing out Arthur's cigarette.)

And I do wish you wouldn't smoke.

(June takes a tiny dog from her large purse and sits it on her lap.)

This is Qui Qui*.

(*pronounced *Kee Kee*.)

Say "Hello" to Arthur, Qui Qui.

(She feeds the dog a pastry or two, watching as Arthur takes notes.)

Qui Qui just loves her pastry, don't you Qui Qui wee-kee?

ARTHUR

Well, the focus is really going to be on your mother, Rose.

JUNE

I know my mother's name, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Ethel Merman, after all, doesn't play second fiddle to anyone.

JUNE

Ethel Merman? As mother? I replaced her in *Sadie Thompson* years ago. She just couldn't handle the acting, you know. It was a serious part.

ARTHUR

She'll be swell, June. Relax.

GYPSY

My baby sister always forgets *I* replaced Ethel in a Broadway show first. *DuBarry Was A Lady*. That show was a hit. It kills her.

JUNE

Mother was a psychopath. Can Ethel *play* a psychopath?

GYPSY

You know, Arthur, June used to bang her head on the dressing room table when she didn't get what she wanted, and we'd all give in to her every whim because, as mother said, "The Baby can't be upset before going on, it will affect her performance." And with 5 or 6 performances a day, day in, day out, week after week, year after year, let me tell you, darling, that's a *lot* of head-banging.

JUNE

Are you planning to mention all the dance marathons I did?

ARTHUR

The dance marathons?

JUNE

Haven't you read *my* book? I had my lawyer send you the manuscript *weeks* ago.

ARTHUR

Well, actually...

JUNE

Of course you haven't. I survived seven of them. Hour after hour, 500, 600, 2,000, 4,000, it's all about survival, that fierce determination to be the last one standing. Meanwhile, that no-talent sister

JUNE (cont'd)

of mine becomes a runaway success

GYPSY

And, of course, darling, I become a runaway success.

GYPSY (cont'd)

And then after leaving us flat broke in Kansas City to marry that queer hooper, she has the nerve to come back from years of dancing in those marathons, unmarried *and* pregnant, expecting mother and me to help her get back on her feet...

They now begin speaking so fast, Arthur barely has time to take notes or get a word in.

JUNE

Standing and moving, in a circus tent or community hall, always standing and moving after months and months of never knowing whether it was day or night or in-between

ARTHUR

Yes, well that's all very interesting, June

GYPSY

And everyone, June especially, looking down their noses at me because my runaway success comes from successfully navigating a runway.

JUNE

Spending four or five months on blistered, bleeding feet in a circus tent is grueling, but at least it's honest.

JUNE (cont'd)

Gypsy always works dirty...

GYPSY

Gypsy always works dirty...

GYPSY (cont'd)

...my high-minded actress sister likes to say, but until she got back on her feet my dirty money paid her rent, fed her, clothed her, and took care of her bastard daughter.

JUNE

She's so cheap, Arthur! She eats dog food right out of the can!

Putting Qui Qui down, June daintily moves the teapot and with one deft move sweeps the remaining pastries – plates, silverware and all – into that rather large purse.

GYPSY

Of course, darling, *I* was...

ARTHUR

(Holding up his hand to stop them.)

WAIT!

(To himself as he writes a note.)

That's just too perfect! Have... Rose... steal.. table... settings... in... restaurant... scene...

(Gesturing to them to continue.)

Okay, go on.

GYPSY

Of course, darling, *I* was supporting all of them: Mother. June. Her daughter April. My Aunt Belle. My Grandmama.

JUNE

And I danced in seven of them. "7 Marathons 7!" I won 6 of them, too! I did. I hold the record for the most hours danced, ever. Did you know that?

GYPSY

And as long as they all get what they want, everyone is all much too happy to take my dirty money. I paid then, and I'm paying now. Just remember that later today when you see that mink my little sister is sporting. She wants it, she gets it.

JUNE

And would I trade it all for her “20 Girls 20?” Not on your life. Those marathons made me a survivor. A very strong survivor. I get what I want, Arthur.

The sisters finally stop to draw breath.

ARTHUR

(To June.)

Yes, well, that’s all fascinating. I’m not sure how much I can use, of course...

JUNE

Don’t underestimate me, Mr. Laurents. Without my approval, you don’t get my signature.

JUNE (cont'd)

And without my signature, you don’t have a show.

GYPSY

And without her signature, we don’t have a show.

JUNE (cont'd)

So how much of it you can or can’t use really doesn’t matter until I see a script and sign that precious release, now does it?

GYPSY

I’ll do what I can, but she is headstrong, you know. All that banging on the dressing room tables, darling.

ARTHUR

(To both of them.)

Can we start rehearsals, at least?

GYPSY

Possibly. If you let her see the script.

JUNE

Possibly. If you let me see the script.

ARTHUR

(To June. Exhausted.)

Okay June, you win this round. I’ll have a copy sent to you tomorrow.

(To Gypsy. Firmly.)

But there’s no way in hell I’m giving her script approval, Gyps.

GYPSY

That will be for Mr. Merrick to decide, now won’t it, Arthur?

Arthur exits.

ROSE

(To Older June.)

That's fascinating, June dear. Now just how the hell do you remember what Louise and Arthur talked about if you weren't there?

JUNE

Why can't you stay dead?

ROSE

I'm your mother, dear. You'll never get away from me.

The placards change.

PLACARD STAGE RIGHT READS: GYPSY'S TOWNHOUSE, STILL ON MANHATTAN'S SMART EAST SIDE.

PLACARD STAGE LEFT READS: STILL JANUARY, 1959.

June, Gypsy, with Rose in the background, Older and Dainty Baby June watching from the shadows. Older June continues mouthing June's words.

GYPSY

My townhouse, still on Manhattan's smart east side.

JUNE

Still January, 1959.

(To Gypsy.)

Arthur sent me the script this morning.

GYPSY

And?

JUNE

My lawyer advises me to allow the show to start rehearsals.

GYPSY

I suppose I should thank you for that.

JUNE

BUT... my lawyer also agrees with me there's no reason to have my childhood exploited by strangers for someone else's gain.

GYPSY

Bottom line, June?

JUNE

Bottom line? I will not allow myself to be portrayed on stage unless Arthur makes substantial changes to the script. And David Merrick gives me a substantial royalty.

GYPSY

On top of the twenty grand?

JUNE

Yes.

GYPSY

And if Merrick refuses?

JUNE

How can he? Without me, there is no first act. Without me, Gypsy Rose Lee doesn't even exist.

GYPSY

Look, darling, can we please not have this argument again? I've written a book. You've written a book. They're turning mine into a musical. Isn't that what this is all about?

ROSE

(Chuckling.)

Yes, isn't that what it was all about?

OLDER JUNE

Shut up, mother.

(To Dainty Baby June.)

Mother isn't really dead, you know. She is always with us, one way or another, always ready to give us both that kick in the pants she promised us on her deathbed.

GYPSY

(To June.)

Thank God mother is dead. We couldn't have written our books if she were still alive, she'd sue us for everything we've got, which isn't much. I do believe she'd be rather thrilled with all of this, though.

JUNE

Mother? Thrilled with Ethel Merman?

GYPSY

You know, June, I do wonder about you. You are rather un-bright sometimes.