EQUAL RIGHTS

by Dick D. Zigun

A Play (With Music)

For Three Actresses

About:

The Equal Rights Amendment,

Alice Paul,

Amelia Earhart,

Eleanor-and Franklin-Roosevelt,

And a few other people

In 1937

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1208 Surf Avenue

Coney Island, N.Y. 11224

(718) 372-5159

CHARACTERS:

Alice Paul – A die-hard feminist. In her fifties. She wears a long skirt and an armband.

Eleanor Roosevelt – In her fifties. She wears a long skirt and a Roosevelt button.

Amelia Earhart – In her late thirties. She wears pants, a white shirt, tap-dance shoes, a leather pilot’s jacket, and a long, white, Isadora Duncan-type scarf. When in flight, she also wears an aviator’s cap decorated with a sequined American flag, and goggles.

Fred Noonan – Amelia’s navigator. He wears pants, a white shirt, tie, and a pilot’s jacket. In flight, he also wears goggles and a plain aviator’s cap.

Witch – As in the movies, she wears a black cape and a witch’s hat.

Franklin Roosevelt – In his fifties, and confined to a wheelchair by polio. He wears a suit, lap rug, glasses, and cigarette holder.

Lucy Mercer – Franklin’s secret lover and Eleanor’s former secretary. In her forties. She wears a ruffled skirt, blouse, and hat.

NOTES:

The script has been prepared for three actresses playing all seven roles. Each character is easily assumed by distinctive costume. Modification of the prologue, however, will enable the play to be performed by any combination of actresses and/or actors.

The play was first performed in an earlier version at Bennington College on October 7, 8, and 9, 1974; familiar tunes were then used for the lyrics, as listed in the script. Future productions may use those melodies or else original music.

For Alex (Lynn) Brown, Lisa Honig, Shawn MacKenzie and all the other women I knew at Bennington.

PROLOGUE:

(The stage should have a cabaret/vaudeville quality about it. On stage are several steamer trunks which hold props and costumes for the show. Also on stage are wooden stools and cubes of various sizes which can be rearranged and redecorated to create sets for each of the scenes. Some costumes are hanging on coatracks, or perhaps a series of coat hooks on one wall hold, in advance, the costume for each character. If individual costumes are separated on such hooks, the name of each character—except for the surprise witch—and even a photograph of the actual person, might hang above. An arrangement on one-half of the stage is set up and identified as the headquarters of The Woman’s Party. There is a desk, a chair, and a phone. Ancient, tattered, suffragist picket signs calling for votes for women are propped against a wall. One new picket sign has its placard carefully wrapped in paper. The Woman’s Party set is covered with the dust and cobwebs of forgotten history. On the other half of the stage is now a cube decorated with the presidential seal and a flag. There is also a chair. The three ACTRESSES, as themselves, enter dressed in black leotards. They prearrange set pieces and dress for their initial roles during the course of the prologue—which can be wildly staged. ACTRESS ONE is the same woman who will later play ALICE PAUL. ACTRESS TWO will play ELEANOR. ACTRESS THREE plays AMELIA. By the quoted amendment which ends the prologue, ACTRESSES TWO and THREE have withdrawn and removed the old suffragist picket signs. The prologue ends with an image of ACTRESS ONE, now dressed as ALICE PAUL, seated at her desk in The Woman’s Party headquarters, writing out her wording of The Equal Rights Amendment for the very first time.)

ONE

A play

THREE

with music

TWO

for three actresses

THREE

about:

ALL

The Equal Rights Amendment;

ONE

Alice Paul,

THREE

Amelia Earhart,

TWO

Eleanor,

THREE

AND Franklin

TWO

-Roosevelt,

ONE

and a few other people

TWO

in 1937.

THREE

A show

TWO

for three actresses

ONE

sometimes playing men,

THREE

with music.

TWO

A script

THREE

written during the 1970’s

ONE

during a rebirth of American feminism,

TWO

after Congress had finally passed

ALL

The Equal Rights Amendment-

THREE

half a century late

TWO

-but before its ratification by two-thirds of the states.

ONE

A play

TWO

about history.

THREE

A fantasy

ONE

based on facts.

THREE

A play wondering why that amendment has not passed

ONE

and showing some of the lives it has-

TWO

could

ONE

-involve.

ALL

The E.R.A.

TWO

was introduced in 1923

ONE

by The Woman’s Party,

THREE

diehard feminists,

ONE

led by Alice Paul.

THREE

Her proposed amendment

TWO

split an aging movement

ONE

of tired suffragists

TWO

who had just won the vote.

THREE

This amendment-

TWO

almost passed in the late 1930’s

ONE

-almost guaranteed the other rights

ALL

equal to men.

THREE

Historical fantasy

TWO

to shape your opinion

THREE

while entertaining

ONE

on a real cause

ALL

we believe in,

ONE

on a cause

THREE

somehow lost in the thirties,

ONE

on a cause

TWO

reborn lately-

THREE

and still dividing people

ONE

still an IMPORTANT cause

TWO

worth fighting for.

ONE

A cause

THREE

worth a happy ending.

TWO

A repeat of history

ONE

needing a new ending.

THREE

A made-up play-

TWO

coming soon

ONE

-about a real woman we admire.

TWO

Some other women we treat unjustly,

ONE & THREE

not as opinion,

ONE

just so the play

THREE

can entertain,

ONE

can reinvigorate forgotten history:

TWO

can have three actresses-

ALL

count ‘em

TWO

-having fun,

THREE

with music.

ONE

A play

THREE

finally about commitment

TWO

and about mistakes-

THREE

real or not

ONE

-we need to learn from;

THREE

during our second chance

TWO

in the 1970’s

THREE

when the play was written,

ONE

about the still-waiting amendment

ALL

we do believe in

TWO

whose history we will play with

THREE

now that we’ve put on our costumes.

ALL

The Equal Rights Amendment.

THREE

We need

TWO & THREE

to insist that:

(ACTRESSES TWO and THREE exit.)

ALICE PAUL

“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”

(ALICE unwraps the covered picket sign. It is worded with the amendment. She takes a pen and signs the quote and dates it, 1923. ALICE returns to her desk and quietly rests her head and falls asleep. End of Prologue.)

SCENE ONE:

(ALICE is asleep in her office. The PIANIST either counts down, or else plays a stepped down scale of notes.)

PIANIST

-5-4-3-2-1:

(She rings an alarm clock and throws a streamer:)

Happy Nineteen Thirty Seven!!!!!

ALICE PAUL

(Waking groggy:)

’37 already?

(She blows a party horn)

Resolutions: We will not need sleep til it passes. We will not get sick till it passes. We will not grow old till it passes.

(A toast:)

So, here’s to a certain victory in the new year of-

(She corrects the poster date and turns:)

No one else here?...I thought?...what a dream…but here…suppose I had a party…The Woman’s Party, and nobody came?...no one comes anymore; no wonder it’s not much fun…not one toast…not one drink…

(She yawns)

…yay: what a headache…

(She takes one aspirin)

…and what a dream: Susan B. Anthony called…and Hamilton, Madison, Lincoln: all asked me over; invited me to join them…

(She yawns)

…Washington…

(She perks up)

Washington? Congress is due back in town! Early 1937…and every politician with another party: “We’re short a couple.” Well, The Woman’s Party is “short a couple”—a couple of votes! Do they have to be invited? Alright: If there’s no other help, I’ll mail each out a letter myself. Where were those forms?...

(She finds a huge stack of printed form letters. She reads along with the pre-printed text, only pausing to stop and write as she fills in the blanks, referring to a Congressional Directory:)

“You can be certain, Congressman\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”…Smith…”not every representative from­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”…Massachusetts…”is getting one of these letters today.” “You can be certain, Congressman\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” …Smith, Jr.… ”not every representative from­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”…Massachusetts…”is getting one of these letters today.”

(Aside:)

The rest will get it tomorrow.

(She recites by heart:)

“…as you well know, CongressMEN, every year since 1923…” since 1923…

(She counts to fourteen on her fingers. She rubs her forehead and takes another aspirin.)

“…I’ve proposed an amendment to the Constitution…”

(She skims the letter.)

…and so on and so forth, sincerely, Alice Paul.

(She stamps her signature on each letter.)

…sincerely, Alice Paul; sincerely, Alice Paul; sincerely, most sincerely, Alice Paul, Alice Paul, Alice Paul, Alice Paul…

(She rips up the letters.)

…Alice Paul…I will not grow old till it passes…fourteen years…sincere years…and no closer at all: No closer for my sincerity, no closer for honesty, no closer for righteousness, no closer to rest…What has to be done to pass it? I thought I knew, yet nothing’s new. Forgive me amendment, I’ve been good, but good advice might not suffice…so?...what have I never tried before? Who have I never listened to? Who gives bad advice? Who gives no advice at all?

(Pause.)

Would I entrust the amendment to—?...Never!...but maybe I wouldn’t have to come out and ask her…I might just ask a lot of questions until I heard an answer that sounded…original, even novel…what harm could her spineless self do anyway…anyway, am I desperate enough to call on Eleanor? Eleanor!

(ALICE reaches for the phone. Blackout on her, cross-fade to The White House. Eleanor has her coat on. A phone rings. She picks up a book entitled: “For Whom The Bell Tolls”. She nervously yells offstage:

ELEANOR

(Yelling off:)

Nooo, I don’t hear any phone ringing, Franklin, dear, but you go on ahead, I have to wait for the…the iceman to cometh…I’ll catch up with you as soon as I can…just put on your overcoat, and scarf and boots and mittens…I know I don’t have to tell you…that’s a good boy…and you just leave without me and I’ll see you real soon. Bye-bye-bye-bye!

(She listens for his leaving. She uncovers a secret spy phone built into the book.)

Resident Roosevelt here!

(Lights up again on Alice. They are both on the phone for a conversation/duet. They sing to the tune of Alan Sherman’s *Hello Mother, Hello Father*:)

ALICE ELEANOR

Hello? Elea? Nor!

Guess who this is. Miz…

Yes, it’s Alice. Paul?

How’s the wife-biz? -----

Been a long time. Well…

Life been quiet? Why?

I’ve got work to do and

Thought you’d like to try it.

ELEANOR ALICE

Didn’t I warn you? What?

Never call here! Why?

Love to help out Now?

Maybe next year. -----

Nothing like the Helpless!

Woman’s movement. But?

I’d be with you ‘cept

Franklin’s disapprovement.

BOTH

Stay my friend - You only know me.

So unlike - But both so lonely.

Time lures all - Of what we knew away.

Until - We learn to love what stays.

ELEANOR What can I do?

ALICE I need assistance.

ELEANOR You’re a leader.

ALICE I’ve met resistance.

ELEANOR I’ll stand behind you.

ALICE You’ll think of something-

BOTH

There must be one thing we can do to get along.

(Lights out on ALICE. The rest of the conversation we only get from ELEANOR’s end.)

ELEANOR

-Listen, I can’t talk now, I’m supposed to be at some award ceremony with Franklin today…

(To an imaginary FDR:)

Don’t kiss *my* cheek you two-timing, sneaking, little-

(Into phone:)

Didn’t fool who? What makes you so positive he’s not really here?... Well…I *do* try to irritate him whenever I can…I nagged him about dressing warm…I know it’s not enough, I’ll find the courage…someday… anyway, what I was saying, was, if I can dodge the Prez later on, I’ll sneak away and…

(Fadeout on ELEANOR. End of scene 1.)

SCENE TWO:

(AMELIA EARHART spotlit on stage. She displays a huge medal with ribbon pinned onto her flight jacket. She puts on her goggles, gets into her cockpit, starts her engines, speeds down the runway, is airborne, climbs: a song and a dance routine.)

AMELIA EARHART

(Sings to the tune of: *Oh, Suzanna*:)

Oh, I am Amelia Earhart.

I fly an areoplane.

I fly in stormy weather

Through lightning and in rain.

(Tap dance interlude.)

I fly when no one dares to,

When they’re all on the ground.

I like to fly my areoplane

When no one is around.

(Lights crossfade to FRED NOONAN on stage. He is at the hanger, and holds a map and compass. He can’t decide which way to hold the map. He finds his position with the compass. He gets the map in the right direction. He licks his finger and sticks it up over his head to check the breeze. AMELIA EARHART comes flying on stage past FRED.)

FRED NOONAN

Hey, Amelia! Amelia!

(He grabs hold of her and makes her stand still.)

Let me see it!

AMELIA EARHART

Not just yet. Which way is: North? East…east south? Down? Yugoslavia?

FRED NOONAN

I got every one right. I’ve been studying.

AMELIA EARHART

You’ll be a great navigator yet, Fred.

FRED NOONAN

Well? Do I get to see it?

AMELIA EARHART

The first Distinguished Flying Cross ever awarded to a woman.

FRED NOONAN

Wow! Was the ceremony exciting? Who was there? Tell me everything.

AMELIA EARHART

Didn’t you listen to the radio?

FRED NOONAN

Yes, and I’ve been reading everything in the papers, but I need you to tell-a-vision, complete my image. I’ll close my eyes.

AMELIA EARHART

I flew along with the clouds and birds in a very dark blue, almost purple, sky. When I landed in Washington, my plane was reflecting the red of the rising sun. The Marine Corps Band was on the side of the runway playing:

(She sings:)

“She floats through the air with the greatest of ease, That daring young woman who flies overseas…” Then, as I climbed down from my plane, I heard applause. Entire families had waited to see me. When everything grew quiet, except the birds, President Roosevelt made a speech. He talked about how I had been the first woman to fly over both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Mr. Roosevelt had to stay in his wheelchair, so Eleanor came up and pinned the medal on me. Then, she winked and kissed me, and when her face was close to mine, whispered that it all seemed so exciting that she wanted to ask me to teach her to fly.

FRED NOONAN

She better not want to be a navigator!

AMELIA EARHART

I agreed, but Franklin said it would be foolish since they couldn’t afford an airplane. So, she just said she admired my courage, kissed my cheek again, gritted her teeth and went to stand behind Franklin. He saluted me, the Marines started to play, and the sunlight shined on my ribbon brightening all the colors. I yelled out, “Thank you” to everyone, got back into my plane, and flew back home singing and soaring over eagles. I felt very proud. Well, say something!

FRED NOONAN

(Off a written card:)

I, humble navigator, Fred Noonan, offer the opinion that Mrs. George Palmer Putnam, also known as Amelia, and her husband-financer, Mr. George Palmer Putnam, my boss, the man who hired me to chaperone, are two of the best friends and flying talents a guy could ask for.

(He trips.)

AMELIA EARHART

You *may* be a decent navigator, Fred, but you’re a lousier toastmaster.

FRED NOONAN

Then let me put it this way:

(He sings to the tune of *Red River Valley*:)

I am only the poor navigator,

I am no one, who should be ignored,

But Mrs. George Palmer Putnam:

Is a pilot to adore.

Her fame is growing daily,

To keep track of her is quite a chore.

Stand amazed at all her records,

She’s just practicing her encore…

Mrs. George Palmer Putnam…Yeah!

AMELIA EARHART

You’re to call me Amelia EARHART, and not mention Putnam anymore.

FRED NOONAN

What? You and George have another fight?

AMELIA EARHART

We had to drive down to Washington-he gets airsick-and as soon as we met at the ceremony he started complaining that my career doesn’t leave us enough time together. He runs a successful publishing company, but as soon as I got my medal, he claimed that by continuing to fly under my maiden name, I’m causing him embarrassment.

FRED NOONAN

Can’t the two of you stop arguing and talk it over?

AMELIA EARHART

I’d be willing to try, Fred, except this happened at the worst time possible. Now that I’ve gotten a following I can’t suddenly start using a new name just because my husband feels left out. I could straighten out and love George if I had time, but I need to be with my plane. I can’t compromise the momentum, not just when everything is moving towards something big. I haven’t found my potential yet.

FRED NOONAN

You’ll ruin your potential as a wife if you don’t shuttle both ways.

AMELIA EARHART

Right now I have to reach into the sky and clouds for my potential as a human being.

FRED NOONAN

You might be choosing one at a time at the expense of losing the other. Remember, George controls the money, and if her cuts you off, you’ll have to grab the next thing that comes along. I’ll try and chart something out, meanwhile, you think it over too, Amelia.

(FRED exits.)

AMELIA EARHART

(Sings to the tune of *McNamara’s Band*:)

I love to be up in my plane,

Above the clouds I glide.

And doing that and nothing else

Has made me known worldwide.

The fame I’ve won so recently

Has filled me up with pride,

That now I’ve reached the point

Where I won’t stand to be denied.

My husband, you and flying are

Two interests that collide,

And knowing that I can’t mind both,

I’ll tell what I decide:

Oh, George, I hate

To say this but

I won’t stay by your side.

Oh, George, I hate

To tell you but

I cannot stay your bride.

I’ve only got time now for trying

To search for the me that’s unknown.

I’ve only got time now for flying,

If you love me then leave me alone.

(Blackout ends Scene Two.)

SCENE THREE

(The National Headquarters of The Woman’s Party, with the desk and emblem that say so. ALICE PAUL is suppressing sneezes. She looks up at hearing a whistle from offstage. She hides the Kleenex. A series of secret signals follow between ALICE and ELEANOR, who is offstage. Finally, after the last duck call, ELEANOR sneaks onstage and removes a blatant disguise.)

ALICE PAUL

Come in!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

We’ve got to stop meeting like this.

ALICE PAUL

There’d be no need if you’d stop being silly and told Franklin you were a member of The Woman’s Party.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Shhh! Quiet, Alice.

ALICE PAUL

Why?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

He thinks I’m a Democrat.

ALICE PAUL

I’m beginning to think that’s all you are, too.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

You know it’s not. It’s just easier to influence his politics if he thinks I’m on his side. I really support The Woman’s Party.

ALICE PAUL

Prove it.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Well, I got Franklin to appoint the first woman cabinet member, the first woman director of the mint, and the first woman minister to Denmark.

ALICE PAUL

But it’s not enough!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Why not?

ALICE PAUL

Because that was all his first term and Franklin’s just been re-elected, and the Depression is putting many people out of work and women are the first to be fired, and even when jobs are available, either women are not hired or else are excluded from top positions, AND because The Equal Rights Amendment is in trouble!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Not The E.R.A.?

ALICE PAUL

Yes, Eleanor…I said The E.R.A.!

ALICE & ELEANOR

(Sing to the tune of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again*:)

We won’t be led astray

Until we win The E.R.A.

The Woman’s Party won’t

Give up until

We see that day.

We’ve been too long the prey

Of rules that do betray.

The jobs we do

As well as men

Pay less to our dismay.

You know we’re here to stay

Until the case turns out okay,

For equal rights to

Credit, schools and

All that they delay.

We need a law to say

We are equal in every way,

And not till then

Will we agree

To put our fight away.

We’ve organized this party

But not for some holiday,

This office works on overtime

Till we can shout, Hurray!

The girls’ll cheer, then women shout,

The best of men’ll all turn out,

Then we’ll raise our glasses

To toast The E.R.A.!

(Musical interlude.)

Oh, we’ll take that holiday

When we win The E.R.A.

But The Woman’s Party won’t

Give up until

We see that day.

ALICE PAUL

I said: The E.R.A. is in trouble.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Trouble right here?

ALICE PAUL

In D.C. City, with a capitol “T”, that rhymes with “C”, and that means Congress.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

But just last year the amendment was endorsed by a House sub-committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee is about to hold hearings on it soon.

ALICE PAUL

They’ll let the bill onto the floor alright, but only to make us stop pestering Congressmen. But if we want to see the amendment adopted as part of the Constitution, we’ve got to find a new strategy. We’ve got to compensate for the momentum we’ve lost since the suffragists went back home to suffer after winning the vote. We’re suffering from old blood. Younger women aren’t joining the cause. Our membership role reads like a waiting list for menopause…maybe we need some front-page publicity…like we had after Wilson’s inauguration when we burned him in effigy.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Ohh, remember that…Wilson!…Franklin…oh…

(Pause. She realized the current implication.)

…but what could we do now?

ALICE PAUL

You could speak out at Franklin’s re-inauguration as a member of The Woman’s Party?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I thought we agreed I can do more from the inside as a secret agent.

ALICE PAUL

You always sound like such a liberal: why don’t you go join The League of Women Voters! Can’t you think of a good idea to publicize The E.R.A.?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I hadn’t really thought about it.

ALICE PAUL

Well, think now!

(They pace.)

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Suppose-

ALICE PAUL

Everybody does that.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

If-

ALICE PAUL

We tried it once before.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

…no.

ALICE PAUL

What?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Nothing.

ALICE PAUL

What are you thinking?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I was thinking about the ceremony the other day: it was broadcast on the radio and reported in all papers. The Marine Corps Band was there too, I even remember the tune they were playing.

(She begins singing the tune, but not the words, of *The Man on the Flying Trapeze*.)

ALICE PAUL

Never mind the la-la’s: What was this ceremony for?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

For Amelia Earhart. She was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Didn’t you read about it in the paper?

ALICE PAUL

I’ve been too principled politically to read a newspaper.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Amelia Earhart is a fine woman, and she’s becoming very famous. Maybe we can get her advice on publicity.

ALICE PAUL

Is she a feminist?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I don’t know.

ALICE PAUL

You met her.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I was with Franklin.

(Pause.)

She still uses her maiden name.

(Pause.)

Are you thinking what…

ALICE PAUL

…I’m thinking!

(They sing a round to the tune of *Brother John*:)

ALICE ELEANOR

Amelia Earhart,

The Woman’s Party, Amelia Earhart,

The Equal Rights Amendment, The Woman’s Party,

Your era has come. The Equal Rights Amendment,

Amelia Earhart, Your era has come.

The Woman’s Party, Amelia Earhart,

The Equal Rights Amendment, The Woman’s Party,

Your era has come. The Equal Rights Amendment,

Your era has come. Your era has come.

(ELEANOR sneaks out in disguise. ALICE throws out her boxes of Kleenex. A blackout ends Scene Three.)

SCENE FOUR:

(AMELIA EARHART in her living room. She goes about finding possessions of her husband, slippers-pipe-a photograph, and throws them off stage. She removes all traces of him from the room. There is a knock on an offstage door.)

AMELIA EARHART

Coming.

(She exits towards the knocking. From off stage:)

Eleanor Roosevelt!

(They enter.)

Eleanor Roosevelt, as I live and breathe.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Yes, Amelia. It’s me alright.

AMELIA EARHART

What brings you here?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Oh, I was just passing through the neighborhood, and thought I’d stop by.

AMELIA EARHART

Passing through the neighborhood? But you live hundreds of miles from here.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Never mind, Amelia. I just stopped by to chat a minute.

(Pause.)

Is your husband home?

AMELIA EARHART

Who?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Your husband.

AMELIA EARHART

You mean George. No. We don’t see each other anymore.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

You are married, aren’t you?

AMELIA EARHART

Yes.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

To each other, I mean, you and George?

AMELIA EARHART

Yes.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Yet you still use your maiden name.

AMELIA EARHART

Well, so do you.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I married my cousin.

(She takes out a notebook and pencil. Freud shtick.)

Now, I think this odd marital relationship of yours needs some explaining—hmmm?

AMELIA EARHART

We just left each other!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Oh.

(She starts to put the pad and pencil away, but Amelia says:)

AMELIA EARHART

I guess George might have really loved me in his own way, but if he couldn’t stand me doing things on my own anymore…I’m not about to give up all my dreams, not just because I’m a woman.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Aside:)

Then she is a feminist!

(Making a note:)

Dreams of fulfilling herself as a woman.

AMELIA EARHART

Why are you asking me all these questions?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Putting down her pad and pencil:)

I had to make sure you were one of us.

(She pulls open her blouse to reveal a concealed t-shirt silk screened with a drawing of the symbol for woman with a clenched fist holding up an airplane inside the circle.)

AMELIA EARHART

I’m not quite sure I understand.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Listen:

(She sings tom the tune of *I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night*:)

We women have no rights at all;

Our fight is all uphill.

We need to join in sisterhood

To see our dreams fulfilled.

To see our dreams fulfilled.

A woman applies for a job

And though she may be skilled,

They say they want a look around.

A man comes in-it’s filled.

A man comes in-it’s filled.

A couple take their wedding vows

And swear to love each other.

The husband’s guaranteed control.

The wife contracts to mother.

The wife contracts to mother.

We women have no rights at all;

Our fight is all uphill.

We need to join in sisterhood

To see our dreams fulfilled.

To see our dreams fulfilled.

And if we protest we are told

Change takes a while and we should wait.

But tolerance has left for laws

That leave us second-rate.

That leave us second-rate.

We women have no rights at all;

Our fight is all uphill.

We need to join in sisterhood

To see our dreams fulfilled.

To see our dreams fulfilled.

AMELIA EARHART

That was real nice, Mrs. Roosevelt, but why make a special trip to sing all this to me?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Because you can help us.

AMELIA EARHART

Who are you?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Eleanor Roosevelt.

AMELIA EARHART

I already know that.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I’m also a woman.

AMELIA EARHART

So am I.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Then prove it.

AMELIA EARHART

What are you talking about???

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

You’re not a woman unless you help your fellow women.

AMELIA EARHART

How?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Feminism!

AMELIA EARHART

I thought you were a Democrat.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Oh, that’s just a front. I’m really a member of The Woman’s Party.

AMELIA EARHART

I’ve never heard of The Woman’s Party.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Don’t you know anything?

AMELIA EARHART

Yes. Airplanes.

(Short tap dance.)

And better than anyone.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Exactly. Amelia Earhart sets records in distance, altitude, and courage, and every other woman reads it in the papers and walks prouder that day knowing there is no limit to what a determined female-like you-can accomplish. You provide all of us with a spiritual uplift. You know that, don’t you, Amelia? You fly for us?

AMELIA EARHART

I’ve never thought about it that way.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Then, if not for feminism, why the public career, the danger, the record setting?

AMELIA EARHART

You see, every woman seeks her own private pie-in-the-sky. I’m possessed by this need to—to be like a rainbow. When I was born, it’s as if that was the beginning of a rainbow that’s me, one end of it. Now I’ve got to aim up high into the sky, being so bold, striking, and colorful that nothing else matters at all. Because only when I’m at the very top, only then will I be able to see the other end of the rainbow that’s me. Then I’ll find who I am and what I’m capable of doing.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

And why do you still use your maiden name?

AMELIA EARHART

Because I was born Amelia Earhart, and that was the only rainbow I had when I began to fly. I’ve got to stay on that same one now and try to get to its top.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I think I’m beginning to understand. When you see your name in print or hear it on the radio, it just makes you feel more you.

AMELIA EARHART

Right.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

But you wouldn’t mind if your publicity also helped other women fulfill themselves—motivated them to find their own…pies-in-the-sky, would you?

AMELIA EARHART

No. Good for them.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Aside:)

Alice will be so proud of me.

(To Amelia:)

Amelia, remember my mentioning The Woman’s Party a few minutes ago?

AMELIA EARHART

Yes.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

We’re sponsoring an amendment to the Constitution that would guarantee equal rights for women.

AMELIA EARHART

That’s a worthwhile cause.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

It is. But the legislation’s in a little bit of trouble in Congress right now. We have the votes to get the amendment onto the floor, but not enough to pass it.

AMELIA EARHART

That’s too bad.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Most unfortunate. Our only hope is that new blood might rejuvenate the cause, gain mass support: you could help us get enough votes, Amelia.

AMELIA EARHART

I don’t know…I have my plane and career and I don’t know a thing about lobbying…

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I’m sure…but you could help us most by letting us help you help yourself.

AMELIA EARHART

Say that again.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Flying airplanes helps you get closer to self-fulfillment. And the higher, farther, more dangerous, more unprecedented, more publicized the flight-the better your chances of coming to a peak in your life, and thus, self-realization.

AMELIA EARHART

…Yeah!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I bet it takes a great deal of money to finance record-breaking stunts of that magnitude.

AMELIA EARHART

(Aside:)

That’s exactly my problem!

(To Eleanor:)

Without this Even Flights Amendment, George has controlled all the money in our marriage-which was fine when we got along and he financed my flights-but not now when he has every penny in his publishing company.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Suppose The Woman’s Party gave you money?

AMELIA EARHART

For what?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I don’t know…to fly around the world?

AMELIA EARHART

Fly around the world? Around the world!

(Aside:)

No woman’s ever tried that before.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(She heard:)

I know. Will YOU do it?

AMELIA EARHART

You’ll finance my flight and there’s nothing I have to do in return?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

With all the attention you’ll get as the first woman to fly around the world, no Congressman would dare suggest our sex is anything but equal. Oh, just one more small thing: let us handle your publicity and press releases…

(Whisper:)

…and don’t tell anyone who arranged this. My husband thinks I’m a Democrat.

AMELIA EARHART

That’s all?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

That’s all! And leave soon!

AMELIA EARHART

To fly around the world…Yes!

(She sings to the tune of *Oh, Suzanna*:)

Oh, I am Amelia Earhart.

I kept my given name,

Flew solo ‘cross the oceans

And added to its fame.

And now we’ll stage an exploit;

You’ll get your equal wage.

I’ll circle earth for glory,

Get headlines on front-page!

(AMELIA flies off stage. ELEANOR gets her coat and exits. Blackout ends Scene Four.)

SCENE FIVE:

(ELEANOR ROOSEVELT enters with pad and pencil, working on the final draft of a press release.)

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Correspondent’s Report: “From: National Headquarters of The Amelia Earhart Far Club. Progress Report: July 2, 1937. Amelia Earhart left New Guinea early this morning. She is expected later today at Howland Island in the mid-Pacific. Successful completion of today’s flight will leave only two more short sections in Earhart’s unprecedented, breath-taking, death-defying, twenty-seven-thousand mile round-the-world flight.

ALICE PAUL

(Enters with a radar monitor:)

This fan club front was a great idea, Eleanor, but Amelia *herself* is actually fantastic. Who knows what will happen when she’s finished?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

We do. That’s exactly the reason we set all of this up to begin with. When she gets back to America, she’ll be so taken by crowds, parades, and applause that she won’t even bother to notice who says what about her. Then we can uncover the fan club as a front for The Woman’s Party, reveal ourselves as the backers of the flight, and watch your Equal Rights Amendment fly through Congress and ratification as a tribute to Amelia.

ALICE PAUL

It’ll be a fine day for women.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

It’ll be a day for fine women.

ALICE PAUL

Maybe you’ll even tell Franklin you belong?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

There won’t be any reason not to know if The E.R.A. passes.

(ELEANOR exits.)

ALICE PAUL

(Sings to the tune of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again*:)

The girls’ll cheer, the women shout,

The best of men’ll all turn out,

Then we’ll raise our glasses

To toast The E.R.A.!

(Blackout. End of Scene Five.)

SCENE SIX:

(AMELIA EARHART is in flight dress. She sits on a stool with a flight stick in her hand. FRED NOONAN sits directly behind her on another stool. FRED carries maps and instruments of navigation. They are in the air. FRED is terrified.)

AMELIA EARHART

Fred?

FRED NOONAN

Y-y-y-yeah?

AMELIA EARHART

What’s our altitude?

FRED NOONAN

Ten thousand, five hundred feet.

AMELIA EARHART

Check. Fred?

FRED NOONAN

YEAH?

AMELIA EARHART

What’s our speed?

FRED NOONAN

Cruising at two hundred miles an hour.

AMELIA EARHART

Check. Fred?

FRED NOONAN

Yeah?

AMELIA EARHART

Are you happy?

FRED NOONAN

Half a tank full.

AMELIA EARHART

Check…what?

FRED NOONAN

Oh, sorry. What’d ya ask?

AMELIA EARHART

I said, Fred, are you happy with your life?

FRED NOONAN

I haven’t thought about it much…yeah. With my two feet on the ground, it’s okay. What about yours?

AMELIA EARHART

I don’t know, Fred. When we started out back in May, I thought by the time we finished this flight I’d need a rest from the thrill. But now, it’s the beginning of July, we’re almost done, and instead of being over-excited, I’m just a little bit sad.

FRED NOONAN

What’s wrong, Amelia?

AMELIA EARHART

Flying around the world is the culmination of my career; once this flight is over, I can’t think of anything I can do to surpass it. But I need to. I just don’t feel like I’ve fulfilled my potential. I haven’t gone as far as I might have.

FRED NOONAN

(Checking a map:)

Twenty seven thousand miles is pretty far!

AMELIA EARHART

Shut up, Fred.

(They fly.)

FRED NOONAN

Maybe you’re too self-achievement oriented, Amelia. You should take a vacation. When we get back to the states, I’m planning on taking a fishing trip to relax. Why don’t you come along? We can catch some rainbow trout.

AMELIA EARHART

(Aside:)

…Rainbow…

FRED NOONAN

Yeah. Think it over.

AMELIA EARHART

(Aside:)

…Catch a rainbow…

(Pause.)

What’s our course to Howland Island?

FRED NOONAN

Continue due east. Now that it’s stopped raining, we can’t miss it.

(They fly. AMELIA moves the flight stick. FRED checks his compass.)

We’re not headed east.

(Pause.)

Amelia, why have we changed course?

(Pause.)

Why are we climbing?

AMELIA EARHART

I see a rainbow.

FRED NOONAN

You’ve seen rainbows before.

AMELIA EARHART

Not as personal as this one. Not as colorful, not as big, not as grand.

FRED NOONAN

What are you gonna do?

AMELIA EARHART

I want to put the plane on it—ride it to the top—like a roller coaster car.

FRED NOONAN

Have you gone crazy? Rainbows are illusions!

AMELIA EARHART

What do you know? It’s not your rainbow!

FRED NOONAN

You’re pushing too high! It’s too dangerous!

AMELIA EARHART

I know what I’m doing.

FRED NOONAN

But you’re supposed to be flying around the world! Get on course!

AMELIA EARHART

This is a new course and I’m plotting it just for myself!

(She knocks FRED down with the flight stick and pushed him out of the plane.)

FRED NOONAN

(Falling off stage:)

AAHHHHH!!!!!!!!!

AMELIA EARHART

That’s my rainbow up there and I’m determined to get to its top, to get over my rainbow. Now that I really have the chance, no obligations are going to stop me: none to George, none to The Woman’s Party-

(FRED hits the ground and thumps.)

-and none to you, Fred Noonan!

(She goes back to her cockpit seat, speeds, climbs.)

Almost!

(She flies higher.)

Almost!

(Her flight stick now becomes a cane. She sings to the tune of *I’ve Got Rhythm*:)

Just a little higher,

Just a little farther,

I’ll be over my rainbow.

Now I’ve got the chance

At my fate to glance

If I can peak this mist glow.

Find out who I am,

See my life span-

All about me I will know.

In Kansas I was born,

Grew with the corn.

I left there so long ago.

Spent time in school,

Acting like a fool.

I tried that as I did grow.

Took up flying,

Always trying

To leave simple things below.

Just a little higher,

Just a little farther,

I’ll be over my rainbow.

Just a little higher…

Just a little farther…

Just a little higher…

Just a little farther…

…higher…

…farther…

…higher…

…farther…

(Her plane shakes. She becomes dizzy but more determined.)

I’m there! I made it! I’m over my rainbow!

(She faints. The plane goes out of control, tailspins, and crashes. All is quiet. AMELIA slowly comes to, gets up, leaves the wreck and looks around. Suddenly, the dim light gives way to bright beautiful colors, and the song *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* emerges from some ethereal piano.)

Oh, my, this isn’t Kansas anymore…

(THE WITCH appears in an evil cloud of smoke.)

THE WITCH

Who abandoned everything? Who’s so very selfish? Who betrayed The Woman’s Party? Was it YOU?

AMELIA EARHART

I didn’t mean to bother anybody.

THE WITCH

I’ll get you, my pretty, and your little airplane too!

(THE WITCH chases AMELIA.)

AMELIA EARHART

(In a freeze:)

I shouldn’t have flown, not just for me alone…

(THE WITCH chases AMELIA off stage.)

SCENE SEVEN:

(The radar room. As before. The alarm rings again.)

ALICE PAUL

Eleanor! It’s the alarm! The warning on the radar, Amelia’s off course. She’s speeding in the wrong direction and her altitude’s way too high.

(She gets a radio microphone.)

Come in, Flight 10-4ERA2DAY. Come in please. Calling 10-4ERA2DAY. Come in please, Amelia. Amelia! Amelia?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Enters.)

Well?

ALICE PAUL

She won’t answer.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Why not? Too much depends on this. Check the radar. What’s she doing now?

ALICE PAUL

…I’ve never seen anything move so fast…

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Also at the radar.)

Or go so high…

ALICE PAUL

She’s breaking all records.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

She’s out of her mind!

(The “beeps”, the buzzer, and all sounds end.)

What happened?

ALICE PAUL

…she just disappeared…

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

She what?

ALICE PAUL

…poof!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

You mean…that her plane…went off the radar screen…and we can’t track her for a while!

ALICE PAUL

No. One second she was right there in the middle…and the next—she vanished.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Where is she?

ALICE PAUL

I don’t know. Poor Amelia, she was such a courageous woman.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

And this press release is no good anymore! All my efforts, the money, the publicity, the time…all the sympathy is lost.

ALICE PAUL

(Glaring at the radar in her office.)

Our Amelia is lost…what a headache…

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

We’re back to where you were months ago; even worse off. Imagine how people will react when they find out that the first woman in years to attempt something really important—a woman the whole world’s been looking up to—just suddenly disappeared into thin air?

ALICE PAUL

Not very well?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Horribly! Congressmen are going to point to this as an example of what happens to a woman when she “steps out of place.” The whole plan has backfired!

ALICE PAUL

Do we have to tell them?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

If we don’t make another announcement soon the reporters’ll wonder why, and then when Amelia doesn’t show up anywhere—they’ll at least know something’s gone wrong.

ALICE PAUL

You’re right. We may as well tell them.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

They’d figure out everything but the details.

ALICE PAUL

(Aside:)

The details…

(To ELEANOR:)

Eleanor! You’re brilliant! You’ve saved Amelia’s name…You’ve saved The E.R.A.!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

What did I say?

ALICE PAUL

No one knows the details but us. We don’t have to say that Amelia’s plane vanished in mid-air. If there’s no evidence, they’ll have to believe anything. We’ll make Amelia Earhart into a martyr of the woman’s fight for equality.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

What could be said to make *Amelia* a martyr?

ALICE PAUL

We’ll invent a new press release. A sad story…the brave and bold Amelia Earhart, and her trusty navigator Fred.

(Whispers into ELEANOR’s ear.)

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Crying:)

That’s the pits! Poor Amelia! Let’s have a press conference and tell everyone right now!

(They put on disguises and cross downstage. The press conference. They sing to the tune of *The Titanic*.)

ALICE & ELEANOR

Oh she flew her plane so bravely

Across the ocean blue

And she thought she had a plane

That would always see her through

But the Lord’s almighty hand

Knew her plane would never land.

It was sad when Amelia’s plane went down.

(Chorus:)

It was sad—It was sad. (It was oh so sad.)

It was sad when Amelia’s plane went down.

(To the bottom of the)

Husbands, and wives, and little children—they all cried.

It was sad when Amelia’s plane went down.

Oh she started from the U.S.

And was almost back again.

She was circling the world

And had equaled the best of men,

But her plane ran out of gas

And we lost that noble lass.

It was sad when Amelia’s plane went down.

The plane fell into water

And it started sinking fast,

When her navigator shouted:

“My life has surely passed”,

She tried to get him on the raft

But he just stayed inside the craft.

It was sad when Amelia’s plane went down.

Oh her life raft drifted ou

O’er the deep and endless sea,

But she never gave up hope

That a rescue boat she’d see.

She ignored the sharks’ broadside

As the waves began to rise.

It was sad when Amelia’s plane went down.

(Blackout ends Scene Seven.)

SCENE EIGHT:

(FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT is on stage in a wheelchair with his back to the audience. He is smoking a cigarette in a long holder. In front of his wheelchair, facing the audience, is a desk with the presidential seal, and a radio microphone. Lights come up near the end of the one of his famous “fireside chats.” The speech sounds like a television commercial.)

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

…now, you might ask: “Happy Days? How can he talk about happy days after just admitting so much trouble?” Well, my friends, you and I know that Prohibition ended during my first administration—and that was a happy day, wasn’t it?

(He turns around and takes a swig from a whiskey bottle.)

With the same GOOD SPIRITS, I ask you to help me make my second term just one good time after another. If we can’t stop unemployment, if we can’t stop union-management fights, if we can’t bypass an ultra-conservative Supreme Court, if we can’t seem to straighten out anything at all in 1937, then let’s just forget we even had these problems. Go into the kitchen, get yourself a bottle, and sing along with my theme song at the end of this radio broadcast. By the time you sing the last chorus, you’ll feel better already. Goodnight, and be happy!

(*Happy Days Are Here Again* plays and he drunkenly sings along in the best wino fashion:)

Happy days…here again…

Sky above…clear aga…

…Sing a song…clear…

Happy days…again!

(LUCY MERCER sneaks into the room and hides. FRANKLIN eventually stops singing and switches off the microphone, but LUCY continues the song. FRANKLIN nips at the bottle, and looks for the source of the additional lyrics.)

LUCY MERCER

(Sings:)

Happy Days I had with you

Before the time that your wife knew

Her secretary loved you too

And made me go away,

But over the past nineteen years

I’ve kept in touch with your career

In case you’d need a volunteer

Now you do and I appear!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

A voice out of my past! It couldn’t be-

LUCY MERCER

Lucy Page Mercer? Yes, it’s me, Franklin.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Lucy, Lucy, Lucy. Let me look at you. Ah, you’re still so pretty. Nineteen years you say since Eleanor discovered our-

LUCY MERCER

-DISRUPTED our affair.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

That’s right! She doesn’t talk about you…ALL THE TIME! But before she makes me take my nap…did anyone see you come into the White House? Anyone at all?

LUCY MERCER

No one. They were all listening to the radio.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

My speech.

LUCY MERCER

No. A baseball game.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Not even the Democrats listen to me anymore.

(He reaches for a drink. LUCY knocks it from his hands.)

LUCY MERCER

You wimp!

(FRANKLIN drinks from a baby bottle.)

You’ve become such a-a milksop!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

A milksop?

(Pause. Nostalgic:)

That’s not what you used to call me.

LUCY MERCER

Let me tell you something frank: You’re confronting problems like a “franklin,” not like…F.D.R.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

(Standing:)

What’s the difference between him and me?

LUCY MERCER

The man…I knew…had answers. But since Eleanor found out about us, you’ve been going downhill!

(FRANKLIN collapses back into the chair.)

Look at you, you can’t even stand up for America anymore!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

But it’s the world that’s really changed. There are too many problems now, and I have trouble organizing.

LUCY MERCER

It would be my patriotic pleasure to help you realize what’s holding you back from taking control.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

What?

LUCY MERCER

Not a what, but who? And the answer is: Eleanor. She’s been dressing in mourning and delivering eulogies in public, getting everyone upset over the loss of that flying woman. The papers are making Amelia Earhart into a martyr, and you…even ordered the Navy to search for her!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

She had quite a large following. That’s what the people wanted.

LUCY MERCER

That’s what Eleanor convinced them they wanted! She’s getting out of hand. I saw that she behaved herself when I was her social secretary, but now! Don’t you think it’s about time she started acting like a first “lady”?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

What can I do? I can’t put you back on the staff—Eleanor would over-starch my underwear if she knew I’d even thought about you again. Besides-

LUCY MERCER

Test her yourself: Find out if she’s married to you, the body politic, submissive to your desires, or whether the traitor thinks she has a right to have some interests of her own.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

And if what you claim is true?

LUCY MERCER

Put her in her place. Find out what she’s really up to, and defeat it.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Would I have that right?

LUCY MERCER

You’re the President, aren’t you? You’re a man…aren’t you?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Yes…but-

LUCY MERCER

Do you want to stay President for a third and fourth term?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

No one’s served more than two-

LUCY MERCER

Do you want to run the country for the rest of your life? Do you want to be more than just a confused, crippled, castrated old man in a wheelchair?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

YES!!!!!!

(Pause.)

…what do I have to do?..

LUCY MERCER

Assert yourself, and do it bolder than anyone’s ever dared to before. Find out what Eleanor’s up to, wait until she just about wins…and then-

(Blackout ends Scene Eight.)

SCENE NINE:

(FRANKLIN again in his office. He has his ear to a door. We hear ELEANOR humming *The Titanic* off stage.)

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Eleanor! Dear Eleanor!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(She enters dressed in mourning.)

Good morning, Franklin.

(He points to his cheek asking for a kiss on it.)

What are you doing?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

You’re my wife.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I’m in mourning.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Mourning Becomes Eleanor.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I must remain somber.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Oh, why?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

A brave woman has died.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

That happened months ago.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I’ll never forget.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

What’s it to you?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Amelia Earhart was a martyr for the independence of women.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

What’s that?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

The aspiration of every woman.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Including the first lady?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I’ll mourn for Amelia until the country finds a proper way to posthumously honor her.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

(Aside:)

Sounds decadent to me.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

But it could be positively legal and constitutional!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

What exactly did you have in mind?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

The passage of The Equal Rights Amendment? Pretty please, Franklin?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

(Aside:)

…so she likes The E.R.A….NO!!!!!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

No?????? Why not?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

It would be another divisive issue at a time when the country’s already paralyzed. I’ve got to bring us all back together. Unify! No more special-interest group legislation.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Special interest? I’m not talking about any special-interest group, I’m talking about the plight of over half of the population!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

I don’t care.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Don’t turn your back on me! Next election, if you’re still so mean, I’ll get every woman to vote for your Republican opponent.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

It won’t work. Some handsome candidate like Warren G. Harding comes along and you women swoon over him and forget about which is the “correct” candidate.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Suppose I revealed that you weren’t handsome?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Why did you ever marry me?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Because it finally stopped Uncle Teddy’s talk about Dynasty, and I got to keep my maiden name besides.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

How can you call yourself my wife and be so contrary?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

How can you call yourself a liberal and *sit* in the way of women’s basic freedoms?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

What are you complaining about? You’ve had it pretty good.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

You’ve not only had it good…you had a mistress!!!!!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

So! Nineteen years after you unfoundedly accused poor misunderstood Lucy Mercer of having a romance with me-you STILL harbor paranoid jealousy and for the sake of revenge try to undermine my authority by advocating radical politics. Well, as long as I’m President, there won’t be any chance for The Equal Rights Amendment!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Then I’ll…I’ll…I’ll campaign against you!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

TRY! Ha-ha. Uppity Eleanor. You’re a Democrat—and I control the party.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Unveiling another t-shirt:)

But I’m also a member of…THE WOMAN’S PARTY!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

What?..Uh—ooh..since when, dearest?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I’ve been a secret member for years.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

(Aside:)

That explains everything: the mock mourning, the feminist talk…

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

And it’s going to explain your sudden loss of popularity as soon as I hold a press conference!

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Press conference?...well, then…well, then…Don’t count on my *losing* any popularity, in fact, you might as well not even call the press, because no one will come. No one is going to be interested in “causes” anymore, not for women or anyone else. There’ll be only one big issue from now on.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

What are you hinting at?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

(Sings to the tune of *The Star Spangled Banner*:)

When a country enters war,

There is a sudden harmony,

No dissention anymore-

Wait and see.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

War?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

(Sings:)

When a country enters war,

No one dares to disagree

And be branded a traitor-

Wait and see.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

That’s the kind of leadership you think the country needs?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

(Sings:)

When a country enters war,

It helps the economy.

We will prosper evermore-

Wait and see.

(ELEANOR starts to walk out.)

Wait!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Why?

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Can’t you see I’m the stronger, Eleanor? I’ll win and you’ll only have to give up, come back home and take your proper place.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

If you think I’ll have to…

(Sings on her way out:)

…wait and see!

(She gives him a Bronx cheer and exits. Blackout ends Scene Nine.)

SCENE TEN:

(ALICE PAUL alone in her office. She is dressed in mourning. She might be sleeping.)

ALICE PAUL

(She speaks to the audience:)

Everything slipping…everything dying…the amendment …when? …later? …Never?...

(Pause.)

…and now?...what now for Alice Paul?

(Aspirin.)

Poor Alice Paul…Poor Alice…Alice…I feel so old with the old Alice gone…who noticed her leaving? …I need to face her now! …no self-respect, no future, no where to go…oh, Eleanor! …Worse than Eleanor! Eleanor finally stood up to Franklin! Alice-Alice gave in, Alice couldn’t wait, Alice just…has headaches…

(She yawns. She rests. She listens to a real sound.)

…did I hear a plane…and two…and three…and it’s starting, war maneuvers. War games. Everything is headed…I don’t know where…I’ve lost your only chance, amendment, if there ever was a chance…but there was hope…once…conviction kept me alive…kept me busy…so busy I needed every hour…I pledged my time, my health, I took vitamins, I took aspirin-

(She takes the bottle in hand.)

I should have swallowed my doubts, my impatience, my indulgences; but I stomached pills…false courage…expedient…painless…

(She pours the bottle in her hand and holds it to her mouth, and hesitates listening for a sound we cannot hear.)

…a distant plane?...alone—it’s engine sputters—it struggles on!

(She throws the pills to the floor.)

NO! This is NOT the way Alice ends! There is an energy, a will to go on. To believe…at least to survive. A chance to outlast, maintain…30 years? 50 years? I can wait! It will certainly revive. Someday…I know…And now: Determined! Withstanding loneliness, withstanding mortality, I wait, patiently, forgiving.

(Blackout. End of Scene Ten.)

EPILOGUE:

(ELEANOR and ALICE are in The Woman’s Party office. ELEANOR has a nightbag. ALICE is all smiles. A parade can be heard off stage, in the distance. The troops are training for war and the band is playing *Over There*. ELEANOR begins to hum along. ALICE watches, amused.)

ALICE PAUL

Eleanor…

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Oh, I’m sorry, Alice…it’s such a catchy tune.

ALICE PAUL

I understand the whole country’s caught it.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

You too?

ALICE PAUL

No. I’m immune. I am a Quaker.

(Pause.)

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

So we’ll shut the window on it.

(She does, the music stops, she returns.)

Me in exile…you forgotten…things change quickly. I guess they won.

ALICE PAUL

Just one battle, but not this whole war.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Just one battle? You never stop, do you? Teach me how to be like? Admirable Alice! Equal Rights Eleanor!

ALICE PAUL

First, you should abandon The Equal Rights Amendment-

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Alice??

ALICE PAUL

Then you might even go back to Franklin-

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY SUGGEST…

(Pause.)

ALICE PAUL

…ha, ha…NOT to be his wife…but so you can become an outspoken first “woman” of the country.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Aside:)

…first woman…

ALICE PAUL

He’s a strong and popular president right now and the prestige of the White House will focus attention on a lot of people who need your help. There are many other good social issues ignored since all this preparation for war began that don’t have guardian angels watching over their interests.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

…pioneering new causes! What about you? Work with me, Alice! Why not?

ALICE PAUL

Because I’m still busy…and you STILL don’t understand? I will *not* give up till it passes!

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Alice, you’ll have to wait for more than just a war to end-there’s that new “mystique” in your way now, too.

ALICE PAUL

Dedication alone, not luck or secret plans just might do it. The E.R.A. is that important to me. Just my dream…maybe…but a life’s work might wake everyone else up…”An idea whose time has come…”?

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Yeah! I do understand, now…but I don’t know what to say…my sneaky plots-

ALICE PAUL

Forgotten history. Who really knows what happened? Amelia, oh, Amelia, will be best honored with her myth; and you, Eleanor, you will always be better as a liberal Democrat anyway.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

You can be sure of that. Goodbye, Alice…and…Solidarity Forever!

(ELEANOR leaves.)

ALICE PAUL

(ALICE shrugs and smiles. She crosses out the 1937 date on the poster and replaces it with a question mark. As she begins to recite, the house lights come up.)

They’ll finally pass The E.R.A.

When women are united,

And when they look back on these days-

They’ll say…we were foresighted.

Till then, I’ll find strength in a song

To join me-feel invited.

And if we sing it loud and long,

I’d be the more delighted:

(She sings:)

We won’t be led astray

Until we win The E.R.A.

The Woman’s Party won’t

Give up until

We see that day.

We’ve been to long the prey

Of rules that do betray.

The jobs we do

As well as men

Pay less to our dismay.

You know we’re here to stay

Until the case turns out okay,

For equal rights to

Credit, schools and

All that they delay.

We need a law to say

We are equal in every way,

And not till then

Will we agree

To put our fight away.

We’ve organized this party

But not for some holidays

This office stays on overtime

Till we can shout: Hurray!

Then girls’ll cheer, then women shout,

The best of men’ll all turn out,

Then we’ll raise our glasses

To toast The E.R.A.!

(Musical interlude. The OTHER ACTRESSES reenter.)

Oh, we’ll take that holiday

When we win The E.R.A.

But The Woman’s Party won’t

Give up until

We see that day!

(The audience is urged to follow the words printed in their programs and sing as the song is repeated. THE END.)