

THE GREATEST SHOWMAN

CURTAINS OPEN

(A single narrow spotlight goes on, revealing a RINGMASTER, with top hat, his back to us. He turns slowly with arms spread wide).

BARNUM Ladies and gentlemen! Cads and crooks! Children of all ages! Welcome to another world! Where beauty walks with danger! Where the impossible is commonplace! And where nothing is quite what you expect...Welcome...To the Greatest Show on Earth!

SONG *THE GREATEST SHOW*

BLACKOUT

CURTAINS CLOSE

SCENE 1 HALLETT ESTATE

FRONT OF CURTAIN

YOUNG BARNUM You can't catch me!

YOUNG CHARITY Well, we'll see about that. (They both laugh as they play tag. Young Barnum dodges Young Charity's attempts). You always make me do crazy things! (Both children laugh and run. Young Charity trips and falls. Young Barnum takes her hand and helps her up).

(Enter MR. HALLETT, Charity's father, glaring at them. And PHILO BARNUM, young Barnum's father who looks on worriedly).

MR. HALLETT Is this how we have taught you to behave? Like a person of no breeding? Come here! Look at your dress! How many times have I told you not to trouble the help!

PHILO It's the boy's fault, sir. I'm sorry. He's a bit touched in the head, you know. Come on, son. There's work to do.

MR. HALLETT You've done quite enough today, Mr. Barnum. There's that for your troubles. (He hands him a nickel. Philo bows).

PHILO Thank you, sir. Apologies again.

(Mr. Hallett exits. Charity follows dutifully. Then she turns and smiles at Young Barnum Philo—seeing his son's love-struck gaze—swats his head).

PHILO Are you crazy? Let's get home. (They exit).

(Young Barnum enters and sits on the edge of the stage. Young Charity enters and sits beside him).

YOUNG BARNUM How did you get out?

YOUNG CHARITY I climbed out the window once father went to his study.

YOUNG BARNUM Were you scolded?

YOUNG CHARITY Were you?

(They both nod. She is suddenly sad).

YOUNG CHARITY I'm going to miss you. Father is sending me to finishing school.

YOUNG BARNUM When will I see you again?

YOUNG CHARITY I don't know what my future will be. Father says I am to be a lady, but... It's all so dull when you're not there.

YOUNG BARNUM I can see my future. And yours too.

YOUNG CHARITY No, you can't.

YOUNG BARNUM I can. I'll show you...

CURTAIN OPENS

SONG *A MILLION DREAMS*

(MUSIC continues under. Young Barnum and Young Charity run off holding hands. Barnum enters. He is scared but determined. From the other side of the stage enter Mr. Hallet and Mrs. Hallet. Mr. Hallet is scowling. Barnum takes off his hat).

BARNUM Mr. Hallet, I know how I look to you, but you have my word, I will take care of your daughter. And one day, I'll buy her a house like this one.

MR. HALLETT With what?! You have no education, no prospects...No common sense!

(Charity enters, now a young adult. She carries a suitcase).

MR. HALLETT Charity! If you walk out that door now, I am cutting you off from everything.

(Charity summons up her strength...And walks past him. She pauses to kiss her distraught mother on the cheek).

CHARITY Goodbye, mother.

(Mrs. Hallett begins to cry and exits. Barnum takes the suitcase. Charity slips her arm thru his. Mr. Hallett turns and exits. Barnum and Charity move downstage).

BARNUM Close your eyes. Now. What do you see?
CHARITY Darkness.
BARNUM I see the future. OUR future.
CHARITY And what does our future hold, Mr. Barnum?
BARNUM Magic.

SONG CONTINUES

AND EVERY NIGHT I LIE IN BED

THE BRIGHTEST COLORS FILL MY HEAD

A MILLION DREAMS ARE KEEPING ME AWAKE...

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN CLOSES

SCENE 2 SHIPPING COMPANY OFFICE

IN FRONT OF CURTAIN

(Barnum hunches at a desk, punching buttons into an adding machine, writing the results into a ledger. Other workers are working around him. The Boss, 60s and well-dressed, walks out and waves his arms. Everyone stops working).

BOSS Gentlemen, I regret to say... you're all dismissed. The company's gone bankrupt.

WORKER 1 Bankrupt?

WORKER 2 What happened?

BOSS Typhoon. All our trading ships are at the bottom of the South China Seas. Better luck with your next job. If you find one.

(Everyone begins to exit. Worker 3 holds up a pencil holder).

WORKER 3 Would you mind if I take this home?

BOSS Take anything you can carry. It's all junk now.

(The Boss and Workers exit, leaving Barnum alone. He turns and scans the office, then he smiles. He takes his ledger, tucks it under his arm and exits).

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN OPENS

(Outside a Storefront building. Barnum enters holding a sign LOTTERY TICKETS HERE! Customers are lined up waiting to get their tickets).

BARNUM Come one, come all! Step right up! All you need is a ticket! Someone's going to go home rich! Why not you?! Why not buy a ticket?! Why not buy ten?!

(Suddenly, a police whistle and Cop 1 run in. Customers in line react with boos).

COP 1 Sorry, Barnum. The State of New York will never condone lottery gambling.

BARNUM A lottery isn't gambling! It's hundreds of people coming together with a dream.

CUSTOMERS Yeah!!

COP 1 Yeah -- while you skim twenty percent!

BARNUM Twenty? I skim thirty at least!

(COP 1 takes the Lottery sign and rips it up).

BARNUM Oh, come on. I just paid two dollars for that!

(The Cop and Customers exit. Barnum alone looks at the building and sees the foreclosure signs. He thinks, smiles and then exits).

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN CLOSES

FRONT OF CURTAIN

(Scene changes to a BANK. Barnum stands opposite two Bank Managers).

BANKER 1 Mr. Barnum, this venture you propose is risky, if not downright bizarre.

BANKER 2 The bank is going to need substantial collateral.

(Barnum hands Banker 1 a full set of legal documents from the ledgers he took earlier from his office).

BARNUM I own the deed and title to every trading vessel in this flotilla.

(The Bankers look at the documents, then at Barnum, impressed).

BANKER 1 I see. And where are these ships now?

BARNUM (Saying truthfully) In the South China Seas.

BANKER 2 Ah. Well, then! What do you plan to call this... scheme of yours?

BARNUM Barnum's American Museum of Curiosities!

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN OPENS

(The scene shifts back to the storefront. But now, it has a huge sign: BARNUM'S MUSEUM. Barnum enters with Charity, Caroline and Helen).

BARNUM This is just the beginning...

CHARITY How much did we put into this again?

BARNUM It's complicated.

CHARITY How much?

BARNUM (hesitates) Everything.

CHARITY You're either a genius or a madman.

BARNUM Or both.

CAROLINE (reads) Barnum's American Museum of Curiosities.

HELEN What kind of museum is it, Daddy?

BARNUM It's a place to be transported! To let your imagination soar!

CAROLINE Will there be acrobats?

BARNUM Every show has acrobats. Or trained animals. Or daredevils...

CAROLINE Why don't you have them all? A show with everything?

BARNUM That's not a bad idea. A show with everything! Performers you can't see anywhere else. A man with two heads! Or a giant, ten feet tall!

HELEN What about Tom Thumb?

BARNUM Tom Thumb?

HELEN He's a boy we read about in school. They say he's the size of your thumb.

BARNUM Tom Thumb. I like that. You should be doing my job.

(They all exit)

BLACKOUT

CURTAINS CLOSE

SCENE 3 CHARLES STRATTON'S HOUSE

IN FRONT OF CURTAINS

(Barnum knocks. A woman peers out).

BARNUM Good day, Madam. I am looking for a Mr. Charles Sherwood Stratton.

MS. STRATTON Never heard of him. (She leaves).

BARNUM That's a funny thing to say about your own son.

(She comes back).

MS. STRATTON Alright, Alright. Hold on, I'll fetch him.

(Barnum stands, waiting. After a moment, she enters with CHARLES STRATTON. 25 inches, 20 pounds. He is a boy, but the same chromosomal glitch that affects his growth also makes him look like a much older man. He's holding a toy soldier. Barnum looks at him and is delighted).

BARNUM Hello. My name is Mr. P.T. Barnum.

(Stratton stares at the floor, guarded and tense).

CHARLES What you want with me?

BARNUM I'm putting together a show. And I want you to star in it.

CHARLES Why? So people can laugh at me?

BARNUM They're laughing anyway, kid. You might as well get paid.

MS. STRATTON Just leave us alone!

(Barnum sees this is not going well, then notices the toy soldier that Charles is holding).

BARNUM Wait! Here is what I see, Mr. Stratton – You'll be...a soldier...Not just a soldier, a general! On horseback! Riding across the stage! With a sword, a gun! The most beautiful uniform ever made!

CHARLES (beginning interest) Go on...

BARNUM People will come from all over the world to see you ride and shoot and be a commander of men! I am creating a great spectacular, Mr. Stratton, and I want you to be my star! General Tom Thumb!

CHARLES They'll know I'm faking! I'm not a General!

BARNUM Listen to me...You can choose who you want to be! When you ride out there on that horse, you will be a soldier! A General! And you're going to be the tallest and bravest man in the room! Be proud of who you are, Charles.

CHARLES Tom...General Tom Thumb! (Charles puts his hand out to shake. They shake on the deal).

BLACKOUT

CURTAINS OPEN

(Scene shift back to the front of BARNUMS MUSEUM Grand Opening. Barnum moves center and is joined by his daughter, Helen. O'Malley stands to the side ready to sell tickets).

BARNUM Ladies and Gentlemen! Step this way! Through these doors are more mysteries than have ever been assembled under one roof!

(People walk past. No one pays attention).

HELEN No one cares.

BARNUM No, they do care. They just don't know it yet. Mr. O'Malley. What are you doing?

O'MALLEY At the moment, sir? Very little.

BARNUM Exactly. Helen, go get your sister and your mother. (Helen runs off). Here's what we're going to do...I want you to tell everyone they shouldn't buy tickets. I want you to be outraged by the show. Charity and the girls will help you.

O'MALLEY Are you sure, boss?

BARNUM Positive...Okay. Let's sell this. Come one, come all! See the wonders of the Barnum Museum!

(O'Malley takes a breath. Suddenly, he is an unhappy customer).

O'MALLEY Sir, I want my money back! You should be ashamed of this museum! Ashamed, I say!

(A few people are drawn by the ruckus).

BARNUM Now see here, sir! You bought your ticket and saw the sights...!

(Charity approaches, looking stricken, clutching Caroline and Helen to her sides. The girls cover their faces and weep).

O'MALLEY Oh, if only I hadn't! If only I could un-see what my eyes have glimpsed! Look what you've done to my wife and children!

CHARITY (Irish accent) Y' should be ashamed of yourself, Barnum! It's not fit for children and ladies!

BARNUM Maybe not for ladies, but what about you?

O'MALLEY You can't talk to my wife that way!

(He grabs Barnum. They tussle. Charity screams. Suddenly, a police whistle. Cop 2 rushes in. The crowd enters).

COP 2 Break it up! Break it up! What's going on here?

O'MALLEY This museum is unfit for decent society! No one should buy a ticket!

CHARITY You are wicked, sir! Wicked!

(Barnum attacks O'Malley. The Cop pulls them apart).

COP 2 That's it, Barnum! You're under arrest!

(Barnum breaks away and runs off).

COP 2 Stop right there! (He runs off after Barnum).

(Then we hear from offstage a scream! W.D. leaps into action).

W.D. This way, folks! No pushing! See what's inside! Have your money ready! Children half-price!

(The crowd all pay W.D. and exits offstage).

W.D. Thank you...Thank you...Try to sit near the center so we can get everyone in. Thank you...Thank you...

(After the last crowd member exits, W.D moves to the side of the stage).

W.D All clear!

(Barnum and COP 2 enter).

BARNUM Are they all inside?

W.D All seated and ready for the show. (He and O'Malley exit).

CHARITY You, Mr. Barnum, are shameless!

(Barnum grins, peels off a few bills and hands them to Cop2).

BARNUM Thanks for coming by, Tommy.

COP 2 Any time, P.T. I always wanted to be an actor. Nice workin' with ya, Charity! (He tips his hat to her and exits).

BARNUM So...How many tickets did we sell?

CAROLINE We don't know!

HELEN We ran out of tickets!

BARNUM They may not get exactly what they paid for, but they're getting their money's worth.

SONG *COME ALIVE*

BLACKOUT

CURTAINS CLOSE

SCENE 4 IN FRONT OF THE BARNUM MUSEUM

IN FRONT OF CURTAINS

(Barnum, in high spirits enters from side of stage. From the other side enters SAM ROTH, a grumpy newspaperman. They meet center stage).

ROTH Impressive, Mr. Barnum.

BARNUM Thank you, sir. And you are?

ROTH Sam Roth.

BARNUM From the Tribune! You got my letter! It's an honor, sir! How much do I have to pay you to write a good review for us?

ROTH I don't know if you have that much money.

BARNUM You might be surprised, Mr. Roth.

ROTH Yes, well...No one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American public. Your show is proof of that.

BARNUM I think perhaps you missed the point. We aim to show people the wonders of the world.

ROTH Wonders? Is that what you call freaks being paraded for entertainment?

BARNUM Sir, those people you are calling freaks are my colleagues, and my friends...

ROTH Oh, is that how you treat your friends? Putting them on display for everyone to gawk at? I have a duty to warn the public. And when I'm finished, I hope you will be finished as well. (He exits).

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN OPENS

(Scene shift to the BACKSTAGE OF THE BARNUM MUSEUM. Lord of Leeds is napping while Sasha and Deng Yan play cards. Charity, W.D., Anne, Tom, and O'Malley are all holding newspapers, they are reading Roth's review. Barnum enters).

O'MALLEY "Insulting, degrading, and perhaps just shy of criminal..."

ANNE "P.T. Barnum's show is the singularly most unpleasant evening I have spent in years."

TOM "...calling to mind the most primitive aspects of the Roman Circuses of yore."

CHARITY Phin...I'm so sorry.

(Barnum looks up--elated).

BARNUM It's fantastic!

(He leaps up, and hands the review to W.D.).

BARNUM W.D...Go to the Tribune and buy a half-page ad. Tell them to reprint the entire review, word for word.

(Everyone is stunned).

ANNE He called you The Prince of Humbug.

BARNUM Humbug is merely the time-honored use of hyperbole to create excitement and joy.

CHARITY Humbug is a lie, dear.

BARNUM What's important is: we made page one. (To W.D.) And tell them I'll give half-price tickets to anyone who brings in a review. When the other papers see people rushing to buy the Tribune, they'll review us too.

W.D. You sure, Mr. B.? The whole city will read this by dinner time.

CHARITY Of course he's sure. He was born sure!

(W.D. is about to exit when he's met by Lettie Lutz. She has strong pleasant features, and a full beard. She smiles at W.D. He is speechless).

LETTIE I'd like to see Mr. Barnum.

W.D. Excuse me, P.T., this lady...

(She pushes her way to Barnum).

LETTIE Lettie Lutz. Nice to meet you. Let me get to the point, Mr. Barnum. I've never been one for self-pity or embarrassment. So when I read in the paper about folks paying good money to see a short man, a tall man and a fat man, I thought--Why should they be the only ones making a profit? Heck, I'm as weird as any of 'em.

BARNUM Weird isn't the word I'd use, Miss Lutz. More like rare, blessed...Beautiful.

(Lettie beams, no one has ever spoken to her like this).

CHARITY Hello, I'm Mrs. Barnum, but please call me Charity. Allow us to introduce you. Our company manager, Mr. O'Malley.

(O'Malley tips his hat).

CHARITY Anne Wheeler and her brother, W.D...

BARNUM The greatest acrobats in the entire world!

ANNE Maybe Brooklyn.

CHARITY The famous Tom Thumb.

(Tom strikes a General pose).

BARNUM Our biggest star, the Lord of Leeds.

LORD OF LEEDS Pleasure, m' lady.

CHARITY Our very own, fire-breathing wonder...Sasha!

SASHA Need a light?

BARNUM And Deng Yan, our expert knife thrower.

DENG YAN (holding up four knives) Need a trim?

(Lettie stares at all of them and then starts laughing).

LETTIE Oh fellas...I think you got me beat.

BARNUM Welcome Lettie...Welcome to your new family!

SONG *THIS IS ME*

SCENE 5 IN FRONT OF THE BARNUM MANSION

(Time has passed--they are all better-dressed and more polished than they used to be. Barnum leads Charity in. She is blindfolded. Following them are Caroline and Helen).

BARNUM Right this way, m'lady.

CHARITY I'm going to break my neck.

(Barnum removes the scarf. Charity is stunned to see a magnificent Mansion).

BARNUM It took twenty years longer than I planned, but...Welcome home, Charity.

CHARITY Oh, Phin. Can we afford this?

BARNUM Of course. And even if we couldn't, it's an investment. Land is the one thing they're not making any more of.

HELEN Daddy, who lives here?

BARNUM Starting today...we do!

CAROLINE It's so...beautiful!

BARNUM Girls...I think there's something inside waiting for both of you.

(The girls look at each other, squeal with delight and rush off).

BARNUM Your parents still live nearby, don't they?

CHARITY Phin. If I didn't know you better, I might wonder if you bought this house to rub my parents' noses in your success.

BARNUM OUR success. And of course not. It's true that I've accomplished everything your father said I never would.

CHARITY Yes...But you know, to them, house or no house, you'll always be a bum from the south side.

BARNUM Yes, but now I'm a bum with a huge house...they have to walk past every Sunday.

(She laughs. He grabs her hand and they rush off).

BLACKOUT

SCENE 6 RESTAURANT

BARNUM Excuse me, Mr. Carlyle? I have been searching all over for you. P.T. Barnum.

PHILLIP (Barnum shakes his hand vigorously. Sits down). From the circus? I'm a great admirer of what you do, Mr. Barnum.

BARNUM Oh come now--

PHILLIP I'm serious. People leave your shows transformed, or at least a good deal happier than when they came in. Which is more than I can say for my plays.

BARNUM Yet you have no trouble selling tickets.

PHILLIP My audience believes it makes them sophisticated. I exploit that pretension, and everyone wins. Except art, of course. Art takes a bit of a beating.

BARNUM Well how do you exploit that pretension? Bring in the carriage trade? Go after the high-brows?

PHILLIP Funny, you want to attract the snobs and I've spent my entire life wishing to get away from them. They are suffocating.

BARNUM Well if they're so suffocating, come and join the circus! You clearly have a flair for show business.

PHILLIP "Show business"?! I've never heard that term before!

BARNUM Because I just invented it. And you were there!

PHILLIP I like it. But I'm still not clear on what you think I can do for you.

BARNUM Teach me how to appeal to the snobs, as you call them. Make it fashionable. Sophisticated. Ennobling. Shakespeare, and all that. Exploit their pretensions.

PHILLIP You've created this wonderful show and now you want to pervert it with culture?

BARNUM Anything to fill seats, Mr. Carlyle! And I'll teach you everything I know about the circus.

PHILLIP I appreciate the offer, Mr. Barnum. But such an association could, at the very least, cost me my inheritance.

BARNUM Oh, it'd cost you a lot more than that! Your inheritance, your reputation! Your place in society! Why, people would look at you the same way they look at me!

PHILLIP No offense.

BARNUM None taken!

SONG *THE OTHER SIDE*

SCENE 7 BACKSTAGE

(Barnum is talking to Phillip on one side of the stage. The performers are on the other side of the stage).

DENG YAN Who's that talking to Barnum?

TOM The new Junior Partner.

SASHA What's that?

TOM Heck if I know. Barnum just said he'd make our lives easier.

LORD OF LEEDS I'm all for that!

(Barnum and Phillip move to the Performers).

BARNUM Well, here we are. Mr. Carlyle!

PHILLIP Please, call me Phillip.

BARNUM Welcome to the circus. The most dangerous collection of wild, feral animals ever assembled under one roof...

W.D. And that's just the performers.

LORD OF LEEDS We've got big.

TOM We've got small.

LETTIE We've got bearded.

O'CLANCY We've got tall!

BARNUM But there's one thing that unites all of them!

TOM We're underpaid.

BARNUM We are free here...to be ourselves.

ANNE We are here as prophets of wonder and joy!

DENG YAN Fun is our work...

SASHA ...and our work is fun!

BARNUM Welcome to the circus!

ALL WELCOME!

BARNUM And here's your first challenge...We need to be viewed as more respectable. Anne, would you read that latest review from Mr. Roth.

ANNE "... Barnum's reputation as the national clearinghouse for the grotesque remains firmly intact. How much longer will the public indulge this man's reckless forays into the unseemly depths of bad taste?"

W.D. Can you believe he's reviewing us again?!

ANNE Why do we care about Roth? He's a prig and a snob.

LORD OF LEEDS Yes, but all the snobs in New York read him.

W.D He does their thinking for them.

PHILLIP I've been working on that. Everyone...? If you want society to accept you, do you start at the bottom? Or in the middle? No, you start at the very top.

LETTIE And what's the top?

PHILLIP Here, read this telegram. (Hands it to Barnum).

BARNUM "You are hereby invited to an audience with Her Royal Majesty, Victoria..." Is this real?

PHILLIP It took some doing, but I got us invited to England! To meet with the Queen!

(Cheers from the Performers).

LETTIE The Queen, huh? How much is she payin'?

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN CLOSES

SCENE 8 BARNUM MANSION FRONT PORCH

(Charity is waiting as Barnum rushes in).

BARNUM Sorry I'm late. Are the kids in bed?

CHARITY They tried to stay awake for you...

BARNUM Sorry. There's just a hundred things to do...Can you believe it? We're sending the whole troupe to London...

CHARITY London? That's so far away. You'll be gone for weeks. Can't Phillip take care of it?

BARNUM I have to go. If the Queen of England likes us, everyone there will.

CHARITY And everyone here too. Still needing their respect. Why does it matter to you so much?

BARNUM I don't mind if people call me coarse. But when my daughters suffer for it...It breaks my heart.

CHARITY Just tell me I'm not going to lose you to the snobs.

BARNUM Not to them. Not to anyone....(realizes he's late). Oh no, I'm late...Sorry, I've got to finish packing and get to the ship. (He exits).

SONG *TIGHTROPE*

BLACKOUT

SCENE 9 BUCKINGHAM PALACE

(Fanfare: "God Save the Queen." The group is led by a prim Lord-In-Waiting).

IN FRONT OF CURTAIN

(They all line up across stage).

LORD-IN-WAITING Don't speak to the Queen unless spoken to. Don't offer your hand unless she offers hers first. And never turn your back on Her Royal Highness. You must enter and exit the room facing forward.

LETTIE Well, at least she can't talk about us behind our backs!

(Laughs and Hoots from the performers).

PHILLIP I'm starting to think this was bad idea.

BARNUM This was your idea!

PHILLIP You shouldn't have listened to me.

CURTAIN OPENS

LORD-IN-WAITING Your Highness, Mr. Phineas T. Barnum and his troupe from America.

(One by one the performers move upstage. They bow to the Queen and then move to the other side. So far so good...The last three are Phillip, Barnum and Tom).

PHILLIP Your Majesty. It is in an honor. May I present Mr. Phineas T. Barnum.

BARNUM I am honored, Your Highness.

QUEEN The honor is mine, Mr. Barnum. And I have heard all about your little Colonel from my friends in America.

TOM General, ma'am.

(Phillip and Barnum clear to make room for Tom).

QUEEN Forgive me. General. Oh My! You're even smaller than I expected.

TOM You're not exactly reaching the top shelf yourself, sweetheart.

(There is a gasp. Everyone freezes. Phillip puts his hand over his face. The room remains silent until the Queen suddenly burst into laughter. Everyone immediately joins in, relieved).

BLACKOUT

SCENE 10 BARNUM'S MUSEUM -PROTESTERS

(As their musical finale begins, the Performers become aware of a disturbance in the audience. In the back of the theatre, a group of the Protesters move toward the stage. They carry signs: "LEAGUE OF DECENCY, "CLOSE THE CIRCUS", "PROTECT OUR CHILDREN").

PROTESTER #1 You don't belong here! You're all freaks!

PROTESTER #2 Go back to where you came from!

PROTESTER #3 We don't want your freak show here!

PROTESTERS Shut it down! Shut it down! Shut it down! Shut it down!

(The protesters have made their way to the front of the stage. Phillip enters).

PHILLIP Please, please...either quiet down or I'll have to ask you to leave.

PROTESTER #4 Oh yeah? You gonna make us?

PROTESTER #5 I don't think you can take us all.

W.D. How about me?

O'MALLEY And me!

ANNE What's the matter boys? You don't like the circus?

DENG YAN Well, we don't like you either. (She hold up her knives).

BARNUM I suggest you leave now. I can't guarantee I'll be able to control these fierce and frightening Oddities much longer.

(The Performers all take a step forward and yell a frightening roar).

PERFORMERS AUGHHH!

(The Protesters all drop their signs and run away offstage. The performers all laugh and congratulate each other).

DENG YAN (Sniffing). Wait a minute...Do you smell smoke?

O'MALLEY They set the lobby on fire!

W.D. It's spreading!! Everyone! Get water! (He runs off).

ANNE The animals are still in cages. (She exits).

PHILLIP Ladies and Gentlemen, please make your way to the exits.

BARNUM We need more water...Get the fire brigade!!!

PHILLIP It's spreading too quickly. We need to leave now!

(As the smoke grows bigger, the performers run in all direction trying to escape).

BLACKOUT

SCENE 11 RUINS OF THE MUSEUM

(Barnum is sitting in the ruins of his museum. Roth, the critic enters and stands behind him. Roth has the demeanor of someone at a funeral).

ROTH Mr. Barnum.

BARNUM Mr. Roth, of the Tribune. If you're here to gloat, I'd reconsider.

ROTH Police caught the folks who started the fire. Thought you'd like to know.

BARNUM My empire...burned to the ground.

ROTH You'll rebuild...I hope.

(Barnum looks at him, surprised).

BARNUM You hate the circus.

ROTH I did, at first. It's everything a critic is supposed to hate: big, obvious, enjoyable, fun...
But when they started protesting? I had to reconsider.

BARNUM What do you mean?

ROTH What was going on inside those four walls...was democracy at its finest. A celebration
of humanity in every form. Big, small, bearded, whatever. And that scares people.
That's why they burned you down. It may not be art...But it ain't humbug.

(Roth tips his hat to Barnum and exits as Tom Thumb enters and sits down beside Barnum).

TOM Lost your kingdom, huh?

BARNUM Someone once said "love your enemies, because they will tell you the truth."

TOM And what's the truth?

BARNUM That I'm a fraud. A charlatan.

TOM Jeez. You say that like it's a bad thing.

BARNUM That's the good part. Underneath that? I'm nothing. Barely human. A freak.

TOM Ya know? A very unwise man once said to me..."Be proud of who you are."

(Enter the rest of the performers. They are happy to see Barnum).

LETTIE That's right, Barnum...You are a freak. You don't fit in.

ANNE Welcome to the human race.

TOM THUMB My mother kept me locked in a back room for years 'cause she was ashamed of me.

LETTIE It was like that for all of us.

W.D. But you pushed us in the spotlight.

LORD OF LEEDS You told the world stories that made them love us.

ANNE You made us into a family.

O'MALLEY Your humbug gave us a home, Barnum...And we want it back.

(Barnum stands as Charity, Caroline and Helen run in. They hug Barnum).

BARNUM You know what? I've been thinking...we don't need a building! What we really need is a tent!

HELEN A big one!

CAROLINE Colorful and festive!

CHARITY That will make you stop and want to see what's inside!

BARNUM The great thing about a tent is we can go anywhere! Why, the world itself becomes our home!

SONG FROM NOW ON

BLACKOUT

BARNUM (Spotlight up on Barnum). Ladies and gentlemen! And children of all ages. Welcome to...The Greatest Show on Earth! (Full Cast enters stage dressed in the opening number costumes).

SONG THE GREATEST SHOW- REPRISE

BLACKOUT

(Final Title Card shows on screen: "The noblest art is that of making others happy." -- P. T. Barnum).