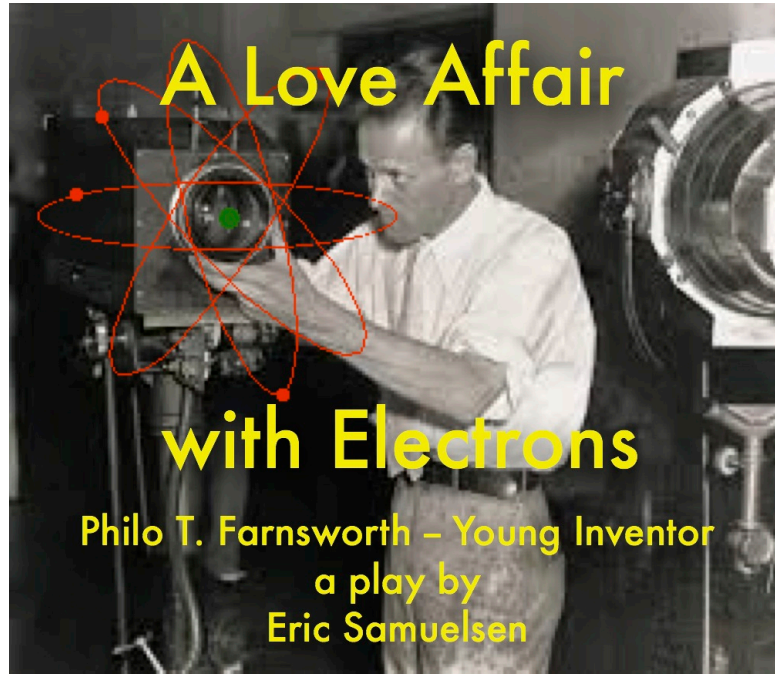


PERUSAL SCRIPT



Newport, Maine

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LOVE AFFAIR WITH ELECTRONS

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Cast of Characters (6 Men, 4 Women)

The original BYU cast from the production in March of 2000 was as follows:

Philo Farnsworth — **Ryan Rauzon**

Todd McKay — **Casey Griffiths**

Pem Farnsworth — **Shelley Tuckfield Graham**

David Sarnoff — **Jeremy Selim**

Other roles were played by: **Graham Northrop, Jason Yancey, Steve Adami, Lesley Larson, Julina Hall, and Susanna Florence**

ACTOR ONE (MALE)

PHILO T. FARNSWORTH Inventor of television. The play covers his life from childhood until his death. Medium height, very thin, charismatic, filled with restless energy.

ACTOR TWO (MALE)

TODD MCKAY He somewhat resembles the character voiced by Phil Hartman on the animated television series, *The Simpsons*, but also any other actor who works as a narrator.

ACTOR THREE (FEMALE)

PEM FARNSWORTH Elma G. Farnsworth, wife of Philo and author of his biography. Fairly short, with dark hair. Every bit as bright as her husband, fiercely loyal.

ACTOR FOUR (MALE)

DAVID SARNOFF: President of RCA, short, intense, brilliant, amoral, driven.

ACTOR FIVE (MALE)

CHARLES FRANCIS JENKINS, MR. TOLMAN, ACTOR TWO (Commercial Two.), OFFICE MANAGER, MR. SARNOFF, ENGINEER, POLICE OFFICER, LYONS, G MAN ONE

ACTOR SIX (MALE)

NEWTON MINOW, E. E. FOURNIER, D'ALBE, MR. FARNSWORTH, BOY TWO, WANAMAKER EMPLOYEE, CLIFF GARDNER, MOTT SMITH, ANNOUNCER (Commercial Six), LIPPINCOTT

ACTOR SEVEN (MALE)

JOHN LOGIE BAIRD, MODEL TWO (Commercial One), BOY ONE, ACTOR ONE (Commercial Two), WANAMAKER MANAGER, A BOY, EVERSON, ZWORYKIN, G MAN TWO

ACTOR EIGHT (FEMALE)

LEE DEFOREST, MRS. FARNSWORTH, MRS. WETZLESHOEN, AGNES FARNSWORTH, POLITICIAN (Commercial Four), McCARGAR, ATTORNEY (p. 64), JUDGE

ACTOR NINE (FEMALE)

GIRL TWO, MODEL ONE (Commercial One), MRS. BEGELMAN, MODEL (Commercial Three), A GIRL, SECRETARY, FEMALE ATTORNEY

ACTOR TEN (FEMALE)

E. F. W. ALEXANDERSON, MODEL THREE (Commercial One.), GIRL ONE, MRS. SARNOFF, SECRETARY TWO, SMITH (Attorney on page 99), NURSE

Author's Note

I am grateful to the following books.

Elma G. Farnsworth's Distant Vision: Romance and Discovery on an Invisible Frontier;

George Everson's The Story of Television;

Jeff Kisseloff's The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961;

David E. Fisher and Marshall Jon Fisher's Tube: The Invention of Television;

Eugene Lyons's David Sarnoff : a biography;

Kenneth Bilby's The general : David Sarnoff and the rise of the communications industry;

David Sarnoff's Law, worldwide communications and world peace;

Robert Sobel's RCA;

Carl Dreher's Sarnoff, an American success.

I also profited enormously from Iosif Vaisman's website, *Virtual Shtetl*, and the website Ariga, with its glossary of Yiddish terms.

A LOVE AFFAIR WITH ELECTRONS a play by *Eric Samuelsen*, about Philo T. Farnsworth, the inventor of Television. 6m 4w(doubling included) About 2 hours. Television technology in scenic design. Simple representative costumes. (*Suitable for Professional, College/University, Educational, and Community groups.*) The torturous route from 14-year-old Utah genius to recognized creator of the medium that revolutionized the world. The battles with RCA, Westinghouse, and GE to maintain the patents clearly held by Philo. The love affair that became a marriage to his wife. And the love affair they had with Television. **ORDER #3027**

Eric Samuelsen taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

LOVE AFFAIR WITH ELECTRONS

ACT ONE

(Upstage, three Video Monitors. Down front, a bare stage with, perhaps, a work bench, maybe a chair or two. The work bench could become a judge's table or other set pieces as needed. As the audience enters, the Monitors show a test pattern. White noise grows. Enter FARNSWORTH, SARNOFF, PEM, NEWTON MINOW.)

FARNSWORTH: One day, people will be able to sit in their living rooms and see dance and drama and music from all over the world.

SARNOFF: I envision the average working man, coming home from a day in the factory—

FARNSWORTH: They will study languages and cultures from their living rooms.

SARNOFF: Turning on his receiver and watching Leopold Stokowski conduct Beethoven's Ninth Symphony—

PEM: He couldn't sleep.

SARNOFF: Or, if he prefers, he'll sit with his sons, and watch Joe DiMaggio or Hank Greenberg play ball.

PEM: His mind would race and race, all night long.

NEWTON MINOW: When television is good, nothing, not the theater, not the magazines or films or newspapers, nothing is better.

FARNSWORTH: It will change the world.

SARNOFF: It's the most profitable invention in history.

MINOW: But when television is bad, nothing is worse.

PEM: Couldn't eat.

MINOW: Gentlemen of the television industry. As the President of the FCC, I invite you to sit down in front of your television set when your station goes on the air and stay there without a book, magazine, or newspaper, profit-or-loss sheet or rating book to distract you.

FARNSWORTH: And we'll see with our own eyes that people all the world over aren't monsters, or demons, but simply people. And there's no need to hate them, or fear them, or build bombs to destroy them.

PEM: He lost so much weight.

FARNSWORTH: We'll see them, trying to raise their families and get along with their neighbors.

PEM: Thin as a pencil.

FARNSWORTH: And whatever the color of their skin or the language in which they converse, they're not so different from us, or each other. It will change the world.

SARNOFF: It will change the world. And every set that's built, every receiver sold by any dealer in America, we'll own the patents, and we'll collect.

FARNSWORTH: And men will beat spears into plowshares, and the lamb will lie down with the lion.

PEM: He wore himself out, so restless, so obsessed..

SARNOFF:And our revenues will be in the billions.

MINOW: And keep your eyes glued to your set, until the station signs off.

SARNOFF: I mean it. Billions.

PEM: He could not sleep.

MINOW: I can assure you, you will observe a vast wasteland.

(Lights slowly fade on the four of them. Enter TODD McKAY.)

TODD McKAY: Hi! I'm actor Todd McKay! You may remember me from such hit biographical dramas as Liberace Liberated and David Hasselhoff: The Other White Meat. Today, I'm here to tell the tale of an Idaho farmboy who changed the world. No, I don't mean the inventor of the Tater Tot. I'm talking about television.

(Music up. On the monitors, we see a still photograph of John Logie Baird.)

But first, time for a history lesson, told in song and dance, with a few fun facts mixed in. The first man to build a working television set was a Scottish inventor named John Logie Baird.

BAIRD: *(As Scottie, from Star Trek.)* Aye, Captain, I'm an inventor of the first rank. I invented a cure for hemorrhoids, and a way to preserve marmalade, and the Baird undersock, which reduced foot moisture and odor when worn under rubber galoshes. But my greatest renown came as the first inventor of television, and ye canna forget it! I built a set with the last three hundred pounds I had in the world, knowing it would make me rich.

(On the monitors, we see a faint outline of a girl's face, surrounded by fuzz.)

I used two spinning Nipkow disks, with a spiral pattern of holes through which the image would be scanned, which cast light on a selenium cell, generating a current which lit a neon lamp, which produced pictures with forty one line resolution. A right bonny picture it was, too. And I built sets, and I sold them, and I built the first television station, and I broadcast three hours a week, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from seven to eight in the evening.

(The picture changes; we now see, very faintly, moving figures. What they are doing is quite impossible to make out.)

I broadcast the first commercial films, and a speech by the Prime Minister too. Aye, I'm the father of television all right!

(The picture is suddenly beset by static.)

She canna hold much longer, Captain! We're losing containment!

(The image disappears, replaced by static.)

I'm the first! I'm the father of television! I am.

(BAIRD is joined by CHARLES FRANCIS JENKINS, E. E. FOURNIER D'ALBE, LEE DEFOREST, and E. F. W. ALEXANDERSON)

INVENTORS: *(Sing and dance, Variety Show style. The Monitors now show a variety show set.)*

We're the unsung inventors of television

Let's state the facts with exact precision!

Though referred to today in terms of derision

We all shared the same grand vision!

BAIRD:

I was the first to broadcast trans-Atlantic!

D'ALBE:

My research drove them all quite frantic!

DEFOREST:

I was the first to call it TV!

ALEXANDERSON:

I was a flunky who worked for GE!

INVENTORS:

Yes, we are the pioneers of television!
They all sent pictures by means mechanical
Though adjusting the set drove homeowners frantical
And the picture, at times, not much more than chimerical

TODD McKAY:

And that's not all they did!

JENKINS:

I put condensed milk in a can!

BAIRD:

I shared my wife with another man!

ALEXANDERSON:

My father taught at Stockholm uni!

DEFOREST:

People who met me thought I was loony!
(Abrupt change of musical tempo)

INVENTORS:

Yes it was we.

BAIRD:

No, me!

JENKINS:

It was me!

INVENTORS: *(Big finish.)*

We who invented the truly wonderful, amazingly magical,
technological miracle that is your...TV set!

(Lights dim on them. The Monitors show the same fuzzy picture as before.)

TODD McKAY: Okay, fellas. Off the stage.

(They start to exit, grudgingly.)

BAIRD: I'm the lad who invented television. I did it first!

TODD McKAY: Of course you did!
(*As he shoves him off the stage.*)
Time for a word from our sponsors.

COMMERCIAL ONE: *Black and white picture. The Monitors show a series of zombie-like androgynous models, in pretentiously languorous poses.*

FIRST MODEL: Existential angst consumes me.

SECOND MODEL: (*After a pause.*) The meaning of life...is death.

THIRD MODEL: (*After a pause.*) I'm ready.

SECOND MODEL: (*After a pause.*) Me too.

(*The Monitors show a bottle of men's cologne. On the bottle, we read OC by KC.*)

ANNOUNCER: (*Breathlessly.*) Obsessive-compulsive. By KC.

TODD McKAY: (*Who has finally gotten BAIRD off the stage.*) My favorite cologne!
(*The Monitors go to black.*)

And believe me, chicks really do dig it! Well, back to television. The fact is, any number of men can claim to be the first who invented TV. But all their early sets used various mechanical means to send a signal, spinning wooden disks and long metallic tubes.

PEM: (*Enters.*) But they didn't. Their sets didn't work.

TODD McKAY: Yes, there were problems.

PEM: Problems! The best resolution they could manage was forty one lines on the screen. Phil's image dissector, on the other hand—

TODD McKAY: (*A hint of steel.*) You'll get your turn, Elma.

PEM: Pem. I go by Pem.

(*An awkward pause between them.*)

TODD McKAY: (*More gently.*) Let me tell the story, won't you?

PEM: I don't like the way you're planning to tell it. I've been reading the script, you've changed things, you've—

TODD McKAY: Artistic license!

PEM: It's not the way it was.

TODD McKAY: It's better than how it was!

PEM: (*Pause.*) I don't like it.

TODD McKAY: You agreed to it. Anything to tell the story, you said.

PEM: Yes, I know. I'm sorry.

(*She exits.*)

TODD McKAY: (*Shouts after her.*) You're gonna like how this turns out!
(*Back to the audience, with a disarming chuckle.*)

Forgive the interruption, folks. As I was saying. Mechanical television. Well, you can see for yourself.

(A fuzzy, terrible picture.)

Pretty darn lousy, huh?

(Enter FARNSWORTH. On the monitors, we see a boy plowing a field.)

FARNSWORTH: Protons, neutrons. Electrons.

TODD McKAY: But with mechanical TV systems, forty eight lines is about the top limit of picture resolution.

FARNSWORTH: Electrons!

TODD McKAY: A better means of projecting light needed to be found. And in the twenties, every major lab in the world knew it. Bell, Edison, Marconi, AT & T, GE, RCA. And their engineers spent their days tinkering with better rotating disks and similar mechanical contrivances. But hop in our little time machines, and journey to the past. To 1919. In 1919, the twelve-year-old Philo Farnsworth was living with his family on a farm just outside the city of Rigby Idaho.

(The Monitors show the opening credits to the sit-com "Rigby." Theme music up.)

When Philo T. Farnsworth and his family moved to the farm by Rigby, the previous owner had left behind stacks of radio, science and technological magazines. Philo was then 12 years old.

(We see a stack of magazines in an attic.)

FARNSWORTH: *(Mimes looking through magazines.)* Wow! Popular Mechanics. Science Magazine. Look at this: Science and Invention.

TODD McKAY: He read them by the hour.

FARNSWORTH: Every cent I earn from my chores, I'm going to spend on a subscription! And...and...I can read them while I plow!

(We see a farm kitchen on the Monitors.)

Wow! Mom, did you see this?

MRS. FARNSWORTH: *(Who resembles Mrs. Cleaver.)* What is it, dear?

FARNSWORTH: A contest. A twenty-five dollar first prize! For the best invention in automobile technology!

MRS. FARNSWORTH: My. What in the world would a little boy like you do with twenty five dollars?

FARNSWORTH: I'd build an electrical generator.

(Laugh track.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Really? Are you sure?

FARNSWORTH: You bet I'm sure.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: You wouldn't get yourself, say, an ice cream soda?

(Laugh track.)

FARNSWORTH: Mom!

(He looks at her exasperatedly, hands on hips. She smiles. Laugh track.)

If I win it, can I keep the whole twenty five dollars for myself?

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Of course, dear.

FARNSWORTH: The thing is, though, it has to do with automobiles.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Well, dear, I suspect it will be some years before we are able to afford an automobile.

FARNSWORTH: There are a few people in town who own cars! Maybe one of them will let me tinker.

(Laugh track.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Philo!

FARNSWORTH: I'd put 'em back together when I was done!

(Laugh track.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Before you start tinkering with people's automobiles, I think you'd better have a talk with your father.

FARNSWORTH: Okay, Mom.

(Dreamily.)

Golly. Twenty-five dollars...

TODD McKAY: Philo's job was to plow the fields. And as he plowed, he'd think.

(FARNSWORTH sits on a chair, as on a tractor. The Monitors return to the shots of a boy plowing.)

FARNSWORTH: Electrons could magnetize an ignition key, and then...the ignition could be magnetized too. And then you could...I'll betcha anything that only the proper key would work in that ignition.

(The Monitors show the horses plowing in a circle. Laugh track. Enter MR. FARNSWORTH.)

MR. FARNSWORTH: Son!

FARNSWORTH: Car theft could become a thing of the past. And—

MR. FARNSWORTH: Phil! Be careful.

(He races to FARNSWORTH, mimes grabbing the reins.)

Whoa there. Calm down.

(Calming the horses.)

Son, you have to pay closer attention to what you're doing. Did you realize you dropped a rein?

FARNSWORTH: I did?

(We see a circular furrow on the monitor. Laugh track.)

MR. FARNSWORTH: I can't plant potatoes in a circle.

(Laugh track.)

PHILO: Golly Dad, look at that.

MR. FARNSWORTH: What will the neighbors think?

PHILO: That we've been visited by creatures from outer space?

(Laugh track.)

MR. FARNSWORTH: My son is enough 'outer space' for me.

(Laugh track.)

Phil, seriously, if the horses had spooked, you could have been killed. No way for you to stop them. I know a man in Burley who died that way, thrown right into the path of the plow.

FARNSWORTH: Gosh, I'm sorry, Dad.

MR. FARNSWORTH: Just thank the good Lord for his protection. And stop this day dreaming. I want straight furrows. Not circles.

FARNSWORTH: Okay Dad.

(MR. FARNSWORTH leaves.)

I just know it will work.

(Montage theme music. Montage: on the monitors, we see FARNSWORTH talking to a neighbor, borrowing a key, magnetizing it, the neighbor trying it in the ignition, it works. Then the neighbor tries a different key, it doesn't work. He's amazed. A newspaper reporter takes a picture of FARNSWORTH and the ignition key. That photo is sealed in an envelope, with a technical description of the process. We see FARNSWORTH address the envelope, put it in the mailbox. We see him open a mailbox. Pulls out a check for twenty five dollars.)

MRS. FARNSWORTH: Well, Phil, you showed us.

FARNSWORTH: Twenty five dollars, Mom. And it's all mine!

MRS. FARNSWORTH: That's what we said.

MR. FARNSWORTH: So what are you going to do with it, son?

FARNSWORTH: I'm going to build an electrical generator. And maybe also have an ice cream soda.

(Laugh track. He exits. MR. FARNSWORTH and MRS. FARNSWORTH. Enter PEM, distressed.)

PEM: You're making him a laughingstock.

TODD McKAY: We're telling his story! This is how TV works! You'll have your turn.

PEM: I wasn't there for his childhood. We met in Provo, a few years later. But he told me about it. So many times.

TODD McKAY: I could shut it off. Right now.

PEM: I'm sorry.

TODD McKAY: You worry too much. Look!

(He gestures toward the Monitors, which continue with the scene.)

MR. FARNSWORTH: I'm sure proud of him. That's a terrific invention for a twelve year old.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: He'll be thirteen before you know it.

MR. FARNSWORTH: And off to high school.

MRS. FARNSWORTH: I hope the other boys accept him.

(They exit. The monitors show the wheat field, blowing. A shift of tone in the music, pastoral, elegiac. FARNSWORTH sits on the chair again, as though sitting by his plow.)

FARNSWORTH: *(The tone suddenly lyrical.)* Lines. Straight lined furrows. Imagine it as a picture, painted not with brush strokes, but in lines. Hundreds of lines, fooling the eye. Break the picture down into lines,

lines broken down to electrons, creating pictures at the speed of light itself.

PEM: (Who has entered, and watches him, enthralled.) Pictures made of lines, lines made of electrons.

FARNSWORTH: Spinning through space.

PEM: The breakthrough.

FARNSWORTH: No spinning disks, no selenium cells, no whirling parts poked with holes for light.
Entirely electronic.

PEM: A thirteen year old farmboy, sitting at his plow, on his farm in Rigby Idaho.

FARNSWORTH: I know how to do it. I know how it can be done.

(PEM exits. "Rigby" sit-com music starts up again. Change of tone. We see MR. TOLMAN's classroom. Enter MR. TOLMAN.)

MR. TOLMAN: Now, Philo. Everyone knows you're a bright young fellow, and we're all proud of you for winning that contest....

FARNSWORTH: That was simple, basic magnetism.

MR. TOLMAN: Yes. But you're just a freshman. This class is for the most advanced seniors.

FARNSWORTH: But I need to know chemistry. My research requires a better knowledge of conductivity and —

MR. TOLMAN: Whoa, there, young fellow. Your research?

(Laugh track.)

FARNSWORTH: I promise you, I'll keep up with the class.

MR. TOLMAN: Well, your algebra teacher says you're ready.

FARNSWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Tolman, thank you so much. You won't regret—

MR. TOLMAN: But I haven't said I'll take you —

(But FARNSWORTH is gone.)

Oh well. He'll tire of it soon enough.

(Shakes his head ruefully. Enter BOY ONE, BOY TWO, GIRL ONE, GIRL TWO.)

BOY ONE: Here comes that brain, Farnsworth.

GIRL ONE: Who does he think he is?

BOY TWO: Yeah. Who do you think you is?

(Laugh track.)

FARNSWORTH: I need this class for my research.

BOY ONE: Research? How about this for research?

(He grabs FARNSWORTH's book, and tosses it to BOY TWO. They play 'keep-away' for awhile.)

FARNSWORTH: Hey! Cut it out, you guys. I need that.

BOY TWO: Wrong again, freshman. This is a chemistry book. The class is for seniors.

(They laugh. FARNSWORTH gets his book back.)

GIRL TWO: (Egged on by the others.) Hey Fido. You wanna research me?

(Laugh track.)

FARNSWORTH: That depends. Do you know anything about electronics?

(She doesn't know what to make of this.)

GIRL TWO: I don't know!

(The bell rings. Enter MR. TOLMAN.)

MR. TOLMAN: Time to begin, everyone. Now, today's lesson is on chemical bonding. Now...

(Monitors: he draws a Lewis structure on the chalkboard: HF.)

Does anyone recognize this diagram from the reading?

(FARNSWORTH raises his hand.)

Philo?

FARNSWORTH: It's an electron dot structure, describing the compound hydrogen flourine. It's a polar compound; hydrogen lost its electron, and flourine acquired it.

(A stir in the classroom, and on the Laugh track.)

BOY ONE: Golly!

GIRL TWO: He really is a brain!

MR. TOLMAN: That's...that's right, Philo.

GIRL ONE: Those dots are electrons. And you can only have, like, eight of 'em.

MR. TOLMAN: That's right.

FARNSWORTH: Not entirely. According to the octet rule, nonmetals do tend have eight valence electrons in a chemical bond. But in certain types of covalent bonding, boron tri-flouride for example, boron has only three valence electrons which can bind to three fluorine atoms. Six electrons, yet it's a stable compound.

GIRL ONE: How do you know this stuff?

FARNSWORTH: *(Innocently.)* I did the reading.

(Laugh track. The bell rings.)

MR. TOLMAN: That's all for today, students. Philo, could I see you for a moment?

(FARNSWORTH crosses to him. Aside.)

Within a month, it was all I could do to keep up with him.

(We see a montage of PHILO in class, answering all questions correctly, PHILO after class, working through books with Mr. TOLMAN, who scratches his head. After montage, we see them in the classroom. MR. TOLMAN continues.)

Philo, Mr. Robert Millikan is the President of the National Science Foundation. And he says that the Theory of General Relativity is bunk. I guess I'm inclined to take his word for—

FARNSWORTH: *(Intensely.)* Then explain to me the Mercury results.

MR. TOLMAN: The Mercury. . . ?

FARNSWORTH: The precession in the perihelion of Mercury's orbit; they've measured an extra forty three arc seconds in the orbital shift. General relativity *predicted* that forty three second variation.

MR. TOLMAN: But it just doesn't make sense; curved time and space, matter and energy—

FARNSWORTH: It makes sense to Einstein. And when you read his theory, you—

MR. TOLMAN: You've read Einstein's Theory of General Relativity?

FARNSWORTH: Haven't you?

(Laugh track, music bridge.)

MR. TOLMAN: After school, each day, we'd talk. And he would show me his grand idea.

FARNSWORTH: I call it an image dissector.

(We see the image dissector diagram on the Monitors.)

You focus an image through a lens at one end of a cylindrical, flat ended tube onto a plate at the other end coated with photoelectric cells; a cathode tube, I call it. Then you scan the image with this, I call it an anode finger. The electrical image formed at the cathode end is emitted, sent across the tube toward the anode. Electrons flow into the finger, corresponding to the original light image. And an electrical picture forms here.

(He points.)

Camera. Receiver. Television.

MR. TOLMAN: Astonishing.

(After a moment.)

This tube. How would you build such a thing?

FARNSWORTH: I don't know yet.

MR. TOLMAN: But it's possible.

FARNSWORTH: In theory. But...I have so much to study.

MR. TOLMAN: Philo, you're only fourteen.

FARNSWORTH: I have to know so much. I don't know enough about...anything; conductivity, photoelectricity, magnetics. Glass blowing.

MR. TOLMAN: Well. Where shall we start?

(To audience.)

And we would read together. I loaned him my books, and bought more when he needed them.

TODD McKAY: And, as is usually the case in high school, girls loved the class brain.

GIRL ONE: Hi, Phil.

GIRL TWO: Hello, Phil.

FARNSWORTH: Hi.

GIRL ONE: Could you help me with my homework tonight?

FARNSWORTH: Sure, I guess. It's pretty easy; just the periodic table.

GIRL TWO: There's a dance tonight, Phil. Are you going?

FARNSWORTH: I guess. Sure. Sounds fun.

GIRL ONE: So N means sodium! Gosh!

FARNSWORTH: Well, yeah. That's pretty basic—

GIRL TWO: (Dances him away.) Let's foxtrot, Phil.

FARNSWORTH: Sure.

GIRL ONE: Darn!

(Mad at herself; she knew this.)

N equals sodium.

(She watches them dance. Ruefully.)

That's what I get for playing dumb.

(Laugh track.)

FARNSWORTH: This is fun.

(He and GIRL TWO dance for a moment. Monitors show a high school dance. Music ends; they sit.)

GIRL TWO: You're a dreamy dancer.

FARNSWORTH: No.

GIRL TWO: You are.

FARNSWORTH: I dance like a farmer. Tromping all over your feet.

(Laugh track.)

GIRL TWO: You did great.

FARNSWORTH: Look at that.

(We see a shooting star on the Monitors.)

GIRL TWO: A shooting star. So romantic.

FARNSWORTH: It's just a big rock. Burning up in the earth's atmosphere.

GIRL TWO: Don't.

FARNSWORTH: Don't what?

GIRL TWO: Spoil things.

(She kisses him. He responds. Laugh track 'oooo.')

FARNSWORTH: That was...nice.

GIRL TWO: No need to talk.

(Music shifts tone. She kisses him again. He pulls back.)

FARNSWORTH: It's getting kinda late.

GIRL TWO: It's early.

FARNSWORTH: I have chores in the morning.

GIRL TWO: Farm boy.

FARNSWORTH: I am.

GIRL TWO: But you're not going to be a farmboy forever. Are you?

FARNSWORTH: No.

GIRL TWO: Then let's pretend. That it's the future, and you're a famous scientist and we're gone from Rigby Idaho.

FARNSWORTH: Where are we?

GIRL TWO: Sitting on a porch. Watching the shooting stars.

FARNSWORTH: Asteroid. Burning up in the earth's atmosphere.

GIRL TWO: I think it's romantic.

(Snuggling up.)

FARNSWORTH: I know you do.

(Letting go of her hand.)

GIRL TWO: What's wrong?

FARNSWORTH: I have three solid hours of calculus ahead of me tonight.

GIRL TWO: It's a Friday. You can put your homework off one night, can't you?

FARNSWORTH: It's not homework.

GIRL TWO: You're doing calculus for fun?

FARNSWORTH: It's what I have to know.

GIRL TWO: Why?

FARNSWORTH: Because I have to.

(A pause. Almost more to himself than to her.)

And then I'll go home, and study for three or four hours, like I do every night. And then up at five for chores, because my father isn't well enough to run the farm anymore. And then to school. Chores before supper, and then studying the rest of the night.

GIRL TWO: Do you want to dance with me, or don't you?

FARNSWORTH: I...I want to be with you. But I have a feeling—

GIRL TWO: What?

FARNSWORTH: That you're imagining a future right now. And that I'm in it.

GIRL TWO: What if that were true?

FARNSWORTH: Honestly?

GIRL TWO: Of course.

FARNSWORTH: I'm not sure I'm imagining the same future. And I can't let you get in the way.

TODD McKAY: Yes, that Philo really had a way with girls.

GIRL TWO: *In the way?!?!?*

FARNSWORTH: Of what I have to be, of what I have to—

TODD McKAY: Now kids...

GIRL TWO: Well, I certainly wouldn't want to *get in the way* of your precious future, that would just be too bad if someone were to *get in your way*, you're going to be the big hotshot scientist aren't you, and leave us little peons back in Podunk Rigby Idaho behind, that's your plan for the future, well let me just tell you something, Fido Farnsworth, I wouldn't *dream* of getting in your precious way not now not ever, and let me tell you something else buster if you think you can toy with my affections you've got another think coming, for someone with brains you've got a lot of ner—

FARNSWORTH: *(Helplessly, to TODD McKAY.)* Help.

(TODD McKAY rapidly cues the "Rigby" theme music. As GIRL TWO continues in the same vein.)

TODD McKAY: And now it's time for a brief word from our sponsors.

COMMERCIAL TWO *(Starts on the Monitors, as PHILO exits, pursued by GIRL TWO.)*

ACTOR ONE: *(Sitting at a table. Groans.)* Ohhhhhhhh!

ACTOR TWO: Say, Charlie, it sounds like you have an embarrassing personal problem.

ACTOR ONE: You said it, Fred. I have a problem, and it is an embarrassing one.

ACTOR TWO: It just so happens that I have a solution. One of several competing biomedical corporations has a product essentially the same as many others on the market, designed to alleviate your specific discomfort. And I have a bottle of it right here!

ACTOR ONE: Wow! That is good news! Now I can go on that date slash job-interview slash dinner-with-my-boss and not be embarrassed!

ACTOR TWO: *(Very rapidly.)* For relief of minor symptoms use only as directed if problem persists see your physician.

TODD McKAY: And isn't that good to know! Now, let's shift gears for a second. We'll go back even further in time, to a place far away from the little town of Rigby Idaho. Let's visit the teeming metropolis of New York City, and visit a young man named David Sarnoff. The year is 1906.

(Monitors show credits for "Brooklyn Boy" while we hear theme music. We see an office, with a man sitting behind a desk. A help wanted sign is next to him. OFFICE MANAGER enters. He sits, working a crossword puzzle. Enter SARNOFF, all energy and spirit.)

SARNOFF: Excuse me, sir. I'm looking for the day editor.

OFFICE MANAGER: What, you meshuganah? I look like a day editor?

SARNOFF: I understand you've got an opening here at the paper for a copyboy.

OFFICE MANAGER: What paper?

SARNOFF: I'm in the business office of the New York *Herald*. Aren't I?

OFFICE MANAGER: This is the office of the Commercial Cable Company. American Marconi. The

Herald's across the street.

SARNOFF: I'm sorry to have bothered you.

(He starts to exit, pauses. Turns back.)

Sir?

OFFICE MANAGER: What do you want now?

SARNOFF: I see you're advertising for an office boy. I'd like to apply for it.

OFFICE MANAGER: Son, what do you know about the wireless telegraph business?

SARNOFF: Exactly as much as I know about the newspaper business, sir.

OFFICE MANAGER: Nothing, in other words.

SARNOFF: But I'll pick it up fast. I work hard, and I learn quickly. You won't regret hiring me, I promise. When shall I start?

OFFICE MANAGER: Hold on! What's your name? Tell me about your work experience. I haven't hired you—

SARNOFF: I'm David Sarnoff. I've worked selling papers for six years now. The last four I've been a paperboy supervisor; I have thirty-five boys working for me.

OFFICE MANAGER: Age?

SARNOFF: I'm fifteen.

(Without a trace of self-pity.)

My father's ill; I've supported my family since I was nine.

OFFICE MANAGER: A paperboy supervisor, eh? Sounds like you're pretty good at it. Why do you want this job?

SARNOFF: I see selling papers as sort of a dead end, professionally. I feel the need for a new challenge.

OFFICE MANAGER: And you thought the *Herald*...

SARNOFF: James Gordon Bennett is one of my heros, sir.

OFFICE MANAGER: As I said, the *Herald's* across the street.

(He turns away.)

SARNOFF: Guglielmo Marconi is another of my heros.

OFFICE MANAGER: Sounds like you gotta lotta heros.

SARNOFF: People who started at the bottom and worked their way up. That's what I'm gonna do. Find a business and work my way to the top. Here or across the street.

OFFICE MANAGER: Starting as my office boy.

SARNOFF: You'll find no one better qualified, sir. When can I start?

OFFICE MANAGER: *(At a loss.)* It does beat all.

(A pause as he considers.)

When *can* you start?

SARNOFF: This very afternoon.

OFFICE MANAGER: Well, all right then. I'll take a chance on you.

SARNOFF: You won't regret it. I promise. What can I do?

OFFICE MANAGER: You can give me a six letter word starting with W. Or you can start by sweeping the floor.

(SARNOFF grabs a broom and quickly gets to work. We see a montage of scenes on the Monitors as he sweeps, showing him bustling around, learning Morse code, taking messages, while the OFFICE MANAGER stares at him, bemused.)

In five years, you'll be my boss.

(The Monitors show a small Brooklyn brownstone, shabby and overcrowded. Enter MRS. SARNOFF, MRS. BEGELMAN, MRS. WETZLESHOEN.)

MRS. SARNOFF: (Cliched New York Jewish.) What I think, and God forgive me if I'm wrong, he spends time with goyim, goes to shul with goyim, the next thing you know, you have a shikseh daughter-in-law. That's what I'm saying, Mrs. Begelman.

MRS. BEGELMAN: Well, listen to her, her son's the Bal Toyreh of Brooklyn, she has all the answers.

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: I think . . .

MRS. SARNOFF: Am I talking good sense? Am I speaking truth that a certain someone does not wish to hear?

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: I don't—

MRS. SARNOFF: My David will tell this shlecht veib just what—

MRS. BEGELMAN: So I'm a nag is it! Well if we're going to use ugly names for things, let me just mention a certain shnorrer who has not paid her rent for two months and then we can—

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: I think—

MRS. SARNOFF: Shnorrer is it? I try to drop you a kindly warning, a good neighbor always, and this is the thanks I get?

(Enter SARNOFF.)

MRS. BEGELMAN: There he is, Reb David. You, you tell your mother she can keep her nose out of other people's business.

SARNOFF: Mama.
(Kisses her.)

What's going on?

MRS. BEGELMAN: Well, Mr.-Studied-Torah-with-Reb-Zippelfarb, you tell your mother to raise her own children.

SARNOFF: This is about Jake? Mama, what do you have against Jake Begelman? He's a good kid.

MRS. BEGELMAN: That's right!

MRS. SARNOFF: A little warning, that's all, he was seen at a soda fountain, in the city. And he was not alone. Some mothers would want to know this about their son.

SARNOFF: He's been stepping out with Julia Simmons, if that's what this is about.

MRS. SARNOFF: You see!

SARNOFF: She's a nice girl. I like her.

MRS. BEGELMAN: And this name, Simmons. She could be Jewish?

SARNOFF: Don't think so.

MRS. SARNOFF: So you see? When see your son marry a shikseh, you'll remember what I said.

MRS. BEGELMAN: Is it so serious, David?

SARNOFF: Mrs. Begelman. Jacob's fourteen. I don't think he's planning to marry anyone any time soon.

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: So it is not so bad.

MRS. BEGELMAN: Not so bad.

SARNOFF: Besides, Mr. Simmons is a partner at the largest law firm in New York. If Jake goes to law school...

MRS. BEGELMAN: A shikseh daughter-in-law may not be the worst thing that could happen.

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: It is something to think about.

SARNOFF: But look, Mom, all of you. I got a job today. A new job.

MRS. SARNOFF: A new job. What does it pay, this new job?

SARNOFF: Five dollars a week.

MRS. SARNOFF: Five dollars a week! What are we going to do with five dollars a week, you make twelve selling newspapers.

SARNOFF: Nathan can take over the papes, mama. I need to think of a career. Mama, get this. It's in wireless telegraphy. This is the next big thing. This is going to be huge.

MRS. SARNOFF: Huge. What is this huge thing?

SARNOFF: Sending a signal across the air.

MRS. SARNOFF: Signals through the air. You were going to work for a newspaper.

SARNOFF: Made a wrong turn. The best wrong turn of our lives.

MRS. BEGELMAN: What is this with signals in air?

SARNOFF: Messages, letters. Time will come, you want to write a letter to...someone back in the shtetl.

MRS. BEGELMAN: My cousin Chaim, God rest his soul.

SARNOFF: Sure. Whoever. You watch. Soon, you'll be able to send that message, and he'll get it the same day.

MRS. BEGELMAN: A telegram, I already know from telegrams, they cost—

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: Too true, my cousin Sadie told me she—

SARNOFF: Right now, it's like a telegram, dits and dots. But before long, you will be able to talk with your cousin, Chaim. Or anyone else. Hear each other's voices.

MRS. BEGELMAN: A telephone, I already know from telephones, they cost—

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: So true, you know my cousin Sadie, she said to me once—

SARNOFF: Not a telephone either. No wires, no cables. Sound, though the air. Music. Drama. News.

MRS. SARNOFF: For this, you studied Torah.

SARNOFF: Mama. We're not in the shtetl anymore.

MRS. BEGELMAN: Which is what I've been saying.

MRS. SARNOFF: No. We're in this dirty city, where my son sends signals through the air.

SARNOFF: There's money in it. I know there is.

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: Not a bad thing.

MRS. SARNOFF: You should have been a rabbi. I blame myself.

SARNOFF: This is America, mama, no one listens to rabbis.

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: No one listens to their mothers either, when I think—

SARNOFF: But they will listen. When I sell my wireless radios, they will listen, for hours I think.

MRS. BEGELMAN: To whom do Americans listen?

SARNOFF: Comedians. They listen to funny people. And singers. Entertainers. Anyone famous.

MRS. BEGELMAN: People who are famous for what?

SARNOFF: It doesn't matter. That's the crazy thing. You can be famous for nothing, just for being famous, and they will listen to you like you're Rabbi Akiva.

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: This I have seen. My cousin Sophie—

SARNOFF: They do like some speakers, especially rich ones, who they think will tell them how to get rich themselves.

MRS. SARNOFF: You are not rich and you are not famous. So what, now you're going to be a singing joke teller?

SARNOFF: No, mama, I'm just going to hire them. I'm going to give people what they want, and in return, they'll give me what I want.

MRS. SARNOFF: Money.

SARNOFF: Freedom. Power. Mama, Mrs. Begelman, Mrs. Wetzleshoen. You think we're safe here, in America. You think we've escaped the shtetl, the pogroms and ghettos. But I think we've just found a bigger shtetl. To be safe here....A goldener shlisl efent ale tirn.

MRS. BEGELMAN: A golden key opens all doors.

MRS. WETZLESHOEN: Such a smart boy.

MRS. SARNOFF: Your Yiddish, I can hardly understand it.

SARNOFF: I don't need Yiddish, mama. Not here.

MRS. SARNOFF: No. Just your signals in the air. You're only fifteen.

SARNOFF: I'll be running the company before I'm twenty five. We're in New York now, Mama. Where anyone can be anything.

(They look at him, dawning awareness of the power of a vision.)

TODD McKAY: And so David Sarnoff started at the bottom, and worked his way up. Before long, he was a wireless operator. He taught himself Morse code, and became the fastest at it in the company. And then came tragedy, and David Sarnoff also became famous.

(On monitors, we see a storefront, with a large sign: 'John Wanamaker's.' SARNOFF sits behind a desk, enter WANAMAKER MANAGER.)

WANAMAKER MANAGER: So, you're the young Sarnoff fellow. Heard all about you from your boss.

SARNOFF: That's right, Dave Sarnoff.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Gotta say, this is some publicity stunt you fellas thought up here. Broadcasting from our display window.

SARNOFF: Just trying to show people the possibilities of wireless radio.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: My boss, he's all for it. But you wanna know what I think?

SARNOFF: What?

WANAMAKER MANAGER: What's in it for us? You get me? It's good for you fellas, I can see that, but what's in it for us?

SARNOFF: You ever heard of something called radio?

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Can't say I have.

SARNOFF: Like a phonograph. Sort of. You turn it on, you hear music, comedy, news...just a second.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Well, I gotta say, I'm just a little skeptical, young fella—

SARNOFF: *(Into mic.)* Please repeat.

(Music starts, Celine Dion singing 'My heart Will Go On.' We see the Titanic sink on the Monitors.)

WANAMAKER MANAGER: What's the matter?

SARNOFF: They're saying the Titanic sank.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: That's...not possible. That ship's unsinkable.

SARNOFF: I didn't think so either, but...

WANAMAKER MANAGER: My wife's on that ship.

SARNOFF: I'll see what I can find out.

TODD McKAY: As it happens, a lot of people were on that ship. And for fifty-two straight hours, David Sarnoff sat in the display window at the Wanamaker Department Store, and found out what he could.

SARNOFF: Okay, again from the Carpathia. Survivors, get these names down.

(On the Monitor, we see names written on a chalkboard in the store window. The rest of the cast gathers around, reacting to the names as they're written.)

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Ready.

SARNOFF: Lillian Gertrude Asplund. Eliza Gladys Dean.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Got it.

SARNOFF: Molly Brown. And finally Rose DeWitt Bukater. Got that? Rose DeWitt Bukater. Okay, some known fatalities. Bodies recovered, definitely deceased. Ready.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: I hate these.

SARNOFF: James or Jack Dawson.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Which is it?

SARNOFF: Jack. I think. Caledon Hockley. Fabrizio De Ross. Spicer Lovejoy

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Any word yet?

SARNOFF: No. I'm sorry.

(Grabs headphones.)

Okay, here's another dispatch.

WANAMAKER MANAGER: Got it.

TODD McKAY: Day after day, it continued, for forty-six straight hours. Young David Sarnoff, commercial manager for Commercial Cable, stayed at his receiver, the lone link between the Carpathia and the families of those lost and rescued at sea. Without rest, without relief, without sleep or food, Sarnoff stayed at his post, the one point of contact between the waiting world, and the tragedy unfolding in the dark sea. For forty nine consecutive hours. His voice an exhausted, raspy whisper, Sarnoff stayed at his post..

WANAMAKER MANAGER: How much longer can he hold on?

WANAMAKER EMPLOYEE: He's been on the air now for seventy-two straight hours!

SARNOFF: Albert Adrian Dick. Vera Gillespie Dick.

TODD McKAY: *(Urgently, to SARNOFF.)* His voice an exhausted, raspy whisper.

SARNOFF: *(his voice, an exhausted, raspy whisper.)* Albert Adrian Dick. Vera Gillespie Dick. Colonel John Jacob Astor. Madeleine Talmadge Force Astor. Elsie Edith Bowerman. George Bradley. Robert Douglas Spedden. Thomas Drake Martinez Cardeza. Major Archibald Willingham Butt. Benjamin Laventall Foreman. Maximilian Josef Frölicher–Stehli. Elmer Zebley Taylor. Victor Giglio. Herman Klaber. Mark Fortune. Hammad Hassab. Benjamin Guggenheim. Victor Peñasco y Castellana. Maria Josefa Perezde Soto y Vallejo. Elise Lurette. Gertrude Maybelle Thorne. Laura Francatelli. Herbert Henry Hilliard.

TODD McKAY: *(As SARNOFF continues reading voices under, his voice an exhausted, raspy whisper.)* The story is told in all four major Sarnoff biographies. It was a turning point in Sarnoff's life, the event that made his name a household word. The heroic Titanic wireless operator became part of the Sarnoff legend.

(Reverential pause. "My heart will go on" swells. Enter PEM FARNSWORTH.)

PEM: Except it's all a fraud.

TODD McKAY: You're not in this show.

PEM: The Titanic sank on a Sunday, and Wanamaker's closed Sundays. And, shortly after the sinking, Marconi closed all its stations except four, and Wanamaker's was not one they kept open. And no

newspaper at the time so much as mentions this household name, Dave Sarnoff.

TODD McKAY: But why bother with facts, when you can tell a great story!

PEM: It's a distortion.

TODD McKAY: (*A touch of steel.*) You're not on, yet. Wait your turn.

(*Pause.*)

PEM: I'll wait.

(*PEM exits.*)

SARNOFF: (Resumes his recitation of names, his voice an exhausted, raspy whisper.) John Edward Maguire. Roberta Maioni. Pierre Marechal. Daniel Warner Marvin.

TODD McKAY: And so on. But the Titanic disaster did show the public the power and importance and immediacy of radio. And that was something Sarnoff was quick to point out to his fellow executives at Commercial Cable. But at home, more tragedy.

(*The Monitors show the Sarnoff home again.*)

SARNOFF: I came as quickly as I could.

MRS. SARNOFF: He's not well, David. He keeps calling for you.

SARNOFF: (He kneels by MR. SARNOFF, in bed.) Hi Pop. How are you doing?

MR. SARNOFF: Not so good David. The pain...

SARNOFF: Let me see if I can make you more comfortable.

MR. SARNOFF: Thank you David. You're a good boy.

SARNOFF: Can I get you anything? Mom's cooking supper; I smelled gefilte fish in the kitchen.

MR. SARNOFF: Nothing, thank you, David. Tell me about your work.

SARNOFF: Great things are happening, Pop. You remember that memo I wrote, about the commercial possibilities of radio?

MR. SARNOFF: This memo, they nearly fired you for this memo.

SARNOFF: (*Chuckles at the memory.*) They sure did! There I was, twenty two years old, and telling them the company needed to invest one hundred million dollars to develop and market commercially viable radio receivers. They thought I was crazy.

MR. SARNOFF: But you were right, David.

SARNOFF: You bet I was right.

MR. SARNOFF: Do you know who I heard today? Jascha Heifetz. Playing the Bach Chaconne on the radio.

SARNOFF: See, that's it! That's what I told 'em, Pop!

MR. SARNOFF: And then Al Jolson singing. And a new comic, Jack Benny his name was. Very funny man.

SARNOFF: That's right, Pop. The market is there, waiting. Build it, and they will buy.

MR. SARNOFF: That's my David.

SARNOFF: Anyway, Pop, it's going to be a few months before we announce it, but here it is. We're spinning off an entirely new company, just devoted to commercial radio. Radio Corporation of America. RCA.

MR. SARNOFF: And your job at this new company?

SARNOFF: I'm running it. Commercial manager of the company, reporting only to the Chairman of the Board.

MR. SARNOFF: How wonderful!

SARNOFF: When I first was hired, as an office boy, I told Mama I'd be running the company by the age of 25. Well, I missed it by two years.

(On the other side of the stage, enter FARNSWORTH. His father is also in bed. FARNSWORTH comforting him.)

MR. FARNSWORTH: The whole hundred dollars?

FARNSWORTH: I'm afraid so, Dad. The lousy crook.

MR. FARNSWORTH: That patent attorney. You think he stole the designs—

FARNSWORTH: Stole 'em and sold 'em. I've already seen 'em advertised.

MR. FARNSWORTH: Your dial?

FARNSWORTH: Look at this ad. RCA radios, better than ever.

(TODD McKAY echoes as he bitterly spits out the words of the ad.)

FARNSWORTH and TODD McKAY: "Fine tune your set with new RCA Vernier dials."

FARNSWORTH: The Vernier dial. My design, my invention. Fine tuning...they even stole the phrase 'fine tuning' from my patent application. And like an idiot, I can't prove a thing. Our last hundred bucks just thrown away.

MR. SARNOFF: This boy violinist, this Jascha Heifetz. Right on my radio.

SARNOFF: That's right, Pop.

MR. SARNOFF: I am so sorry, my David.

SARNOFF: Sorry, Pop? For what?

MR. SARNOFF: For years, I've been in this bed. Nine years old, you were selling newspapers because I was here, in this bed.

SARNOFF: Come on, Pop. You did what you could. I always knew that.

MR. SARNOFF: Other boys played stick ball, and went to the movies. My David was working. I was here.

(Begins weeping.)

Your useless father.

SARNOFF: Pop. Please.

MR. SARNOFF: My poor David.

FARNSWORTH: Dad...

MR. FARNSWORTH: I'm so sorry, son. Your education, your future—

FARNSWORTH: I'll take care of things. Don't worry about us.

MR. FARNSWORTH and MR. SARNOFF: I worry so about your mother.

FARNSWORTH and SARNOFF: I'll take care of Mom/Mama.

MR. FARNSWORTH: Sell the farm. You can use the money to go to college, like you'd planned.

FARNSWORTH: How long would it last?

MR. SARNOFF: Lizette has how much longer?

SARNOFF: October, Pop. Your first grandchild.

MR. SARNOFF: David. I won't live so long as that. We both know this.

MR. FARNSWORTH: How I wish I could see you married, son. Sealed to some nice girl, in the temple of the Lord.

SARNOFF: Pop, you don't know that.

FARNSWORTH: You never know what will happen, Dad.

(Pause. Both sons are kneeling by their father's beds.)

Dad?

SARNOFF: Pop?

MR. FARNSWORTH and MR. SARNOFF: Take care of your mother, son.

(A pause. Both FARNSWORTH and SARNOFF kneel, embracing their fathers. Pause. Closing credits of Brooklyn Boy, played somberly on the Monitors.)

TODD McKAY: Time for another word from our sponsors.

COMMERCIAL THREE

MODEL: *(Enter a fashion model. Faint accent.)* I'm a model. I have posed for the Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition, and I have appeared on the cover of Vogue, Elle, and Cosmopolitan. Most men are attracted to me, but the men who I find sexiest are men who drink beer. Think about it. Drinking beer causes people to urinate frequently and endlessly, become disoriented, aggressive and loud, burp prodigiously, grow large stomachs, and vomit on their sneakers. All of which I find most attractive. So, if you are a man and you want to date ordinary looking women, stick with water, milk, or orange juice. If you want to date me, drink beer.

(Enter TODD McKAY)

TODD McKAY: *(Hopefully.)* Say, I like a good beer!

(The Monitors flicker to black.)

Ah, well. Philo Farnsworth's father died just before Philo was about to begin his education at Brigham Young University. Philo would only have one year of college. But it was a valuable year, in more than one respect.

(Monitors begin theme music, opening credits for the show 'Inventor in Love.' Enter PEM. She

looks around, sits. Enter AGNES. Background shows a soda fountain.)

AGNES FARNSWORTH: Pem!

PEM: Hi!

AGNES: I'm sorry I'm late, had to fix a run in my hose.

PEM: Listen, for a hot sandwich and a cola, I don't mind waiting.

AGNES: *(Sits.)* I hope this is all right. I invited my brother to come along. He's just down from Idaho.

PEM: Now which brother is—

AGNES: Phil. He's starting at the B-Y next week.

(Enter FARNSWORTH.)

Phil! Over here.

FARNSWORTH: Hi.

PEM: Hello.

AGNES: Phil, this is my friend Pem Gardner, I've told you about her.

FARNSWORTH: Pam.

PEM: Pem. P-E-M. Well, actually, my name's Elma, but I've been Pem ever since...well, it's a long story.

FARNSWORTH: Pem, then. Nice...uh...nice to meet you.

TODD McKAY: *(To FARNSWORTH, affectionately.)* You silver-tongued devil.

AGNES: So, everything set for fall?

FARNSWORTH: Yeah. Drama and speech, orchestra and, you know, physics and chemistry.

AGNES: You're taking drama?

FARNSWORTH: Well, yeah.

PEM: I thought you were an inventor.

FARNSWORTH: Oh, I am. I just thought...you know. . . elocution . . .

PEM: You should meet my brother Cliff. He's sort of an inventor himself.

AGNES: He's an improver.

PEM: That's true. Any kitchen appliance, he can tinker with it, and before you know, it's working better than ever.

FARNSWORTH: That's interesting.

AGNES: But this drama class, Phil. You hate getting up in front of people.

FARNSWORTH: That's why. So I can get better at it. And, listen, I got the custodial job.

AGNES: That'll help.

FARNSWORTH: Yeah. Well, listen, I...uh...need to get going.

AGNES: Sure.

(He stands. Awkwardly.)

FARNSWORTH: It was nice to meet you. Pam.

PEM: Pem.

FARNSWORTH: Right. Uh...right.

(He starts to exit, comes back.)

Do you like math?

PEM: I'm only a sophomore in high school, Phil. But it is my favorite subject.

FARNSWORTH: Great. That's...good for you.

(He starts to exit, comes back.)

Pem. You're the one who...Agnes said she had a friend who...do you like music?

PEM: I love music.

FARNSWORTH: You play trombone?

PEM: My brother Cliff plays trombone.

FARNSWORTH: Cliff the improver.

PEM: That's right. I play piano. Cliff and I have even played for dances.

FARNSWORTH: I play violin. For dances. Sometimes.

AGNES: I told her, Phil.

FARNSWORTH: Maybe we could get together and...maybe the three of us. Piano, violin...

AGNES: And trombone! There's a combo! I'll come too. With my jews harp and ocarina.

FARNSWORTH: (Glaring at his sister.) It could be fun.

PEM: Sure.

FARNSWORTH: Yeah.

(Pause.)

Well, I'd better be... I need to... Goodbye.

(He exits abruptly.)

AGNES: (Amused.) So, anyway, that's my brother Phil.

PEM: I like him. I think.

(To audience.)

Except that's not how we met.

TODD McKAY: Sure it is!

PEM: We were actually—

TODD McKAY: Close enough.

(Escorting her off-stage.)

PEM: Listen to me! Phil wasn't...awkward, or shy. He was charming, and funny and...he wasn't some kind of misfit.

TODD McKAY: There are ways to tell a story, you know!

PEM: *(Off.)* This is not how it happened!

TODD McKAY: *(Shouting at her, off.)* Get over it!

(Back to audience, composes himself. The Monitors show a living room, '20's.)

Pem and Phil saw a lot of each other before long.

(Jazz music, scored for piano, violin and trombone. The trombone drowns out the others. We see CLIFF, PEM and FARNSWORTH playing. They finish.)

PEM: That sounded great.

CLIFF: Phil, what can I say, you've gotta be the first jazz violinist ever.

PEM: Okay, do you fellas know this one?

FARNSWORTH: Let's give it a try. Maybe a little less trombone, Cliff?

CLIFF: Hey, on this thing, you have a choice of forte, or flat. I don't have enough wind to play softer.

(They laugh.)

PEM: There goes that recording contract.

FARNSWORTH: Actually, though, what if you could fix the balance in the recording?

(A pause, as CLIFF considers this.)

CLIFF: Interesting thought.

FARNSWORTH: Did you see that article in Science America--?

CLIFF: The problem is mixing it. I can see how you'd record each track separately, but how do you put them back together?

FARNSWORTH: See, that's the problem with wax cylinders. They're making the same mistake they always make, trying to do things mechanically. But if you approached it electronically—

CLIFF: Oh, I see what you're saying, you could match frequency waves—

FARNSWORTH: See, I'm thinking maybe some kind of monitor, where you could *see* the—

CLIFF: There's gotta be some way you could—

PEM: Guys?

(But they're in a deep discussion.)

FARNSWORTH: Exactly, see, maybe some kind of pulsating—

CLIFF: Right, right, that's all a speaker is really, sounds waves transmitted through—

(PEM gives up.)

TODD McKAY: They'd gather in the Gardner's living room, for radio parties.

(We see CLIFF, PEM and FARNSWORTH with others. CLIFF and FARNSWORTH are huddled around a radio.)

FARNSWORTH: Okay, folks, if you'll just bear with us a second, we've almost got it.

A GIRL: What are we supposed to get?

FARNSWORTH: We think we'll be able to receive KFI on this set.

A BOY: KFI? In Los Angeles?

(General laughter.)

CLIFF: (At the radio.) Phil, could you give me a hand with this?

(FARNSWORTH goes back to the radio.)

FARNSWORTH: Maybe if you—

CLIFF: Just a... I think I've got—

FARNSWORTH: That black wire, if it—

CLIFF: Hang on. Try it now.

(FARNSWORTH turns on the radio. We hear dance music from the mid-twenties, a little scratchy, but unmistakable. Then an announcer.)

TODD McKAY: An Irving Berlin number, on this pleasant Friday evening. Folks, you're listening to KFI, broadcasting from the city of angels.

(Up roar. CLIFF and PEM and FARNSWORTH jump up and down, joined by the others.)

PEM: You did it!

CLIFF: Is that something?

FARNSWORTH: Cliff, my friend, you're a genius.

CLIFF: Hey, Phil, this whole notion was yours. I'm just a handy man with a soldering iron.

PEM: Well, I want to dance. Phil?

FARNSWORTH: I'd be honored.

(He takes her in his arms, and they foxtrot. The other actors slowly exit. The dance becomes more tender.)

TODD McKAY: At first, Philo would visit the Gardners, and spend his time talking electronics with Cliff, hardly noticing Cliff's kid sister. But that didn't last.

(CLIFF watches them dance. With a grin, he saunters off.)

Starry nights, dancing on the patio with soft music playing on the radio.

PEM: I love this.

FARNSWORTH: Me too.

PEM: I could float in your arms forever.

FARNSWORTH: I only wish...

PEM: What, Phil?

FARNSWORTH: How about we go on a picnic tomorrow? Just the two of us, up to Bridal Veil.

PEM: We could talk now.

FARNSWORTH: I have something very particular I need to say. And I need to think it out, clearly.

PEM: All right. If you think that's best.

FARNSWORTH: I believe it is.

PEM: Tomorrow then.

(He starts to exit. She gathers a picnic basket. Monitors show Bridal Veil Falls, just up Provo Canyon.)

TODD McKAY: Bridal Veil falls was and is a favorite trysting spot for young lovers.

PEM: No it wasn't. It was just a place to picnic.

TODD McKAY: A favorite make-out spot for young Y students and their—

PEM: *(Fiercely.)* This is my story. Let me tell it.

TODD McKAY: Aren't we huffy?

(But he does step aside. PEM sets out picnic things.)

PEM: Phil loved to hike up to the top of Bridal Veil. It was a place Phil went for solace, or inspiration. Phil?

FARNSWORTH: I'm right here.

PEM: So. I'm here. What's all the mystery?

FARNSWORTH: First of all...I'm going to have to drop out of school.

PEM: Oh, Phil, I'm so sorry. I thought something was up. Cliff said he thought your family was struggling.

FARNSWORTH: My job at school just doesn't pay enough to support us. I've got a job already. Working for a Mr. Everson.

PEM: The fundraiser? Agnes said something about it.

FARNSWORTH: That's right. But...I do have a little money, from when I was young. An invention that I sold. And I used it to get you...well, I have something for you, Pem.

(He hands her a small box.)

PEM: Oh, Phil.

(She opens the box. She pulls out an engagement ring.)

FARNSWORTH: Of course we can't get married right away, because I still have to get some money together.

PEM: Phil, you can't do this. I won't let you. You can't afford it.

FARNSWORTH: It's all right.

PEM: There's still plenty of time.

FARNSWORTH: Trust me. I wanted to get you a ring we wouldn't be ashamed of when we become rich.

PEM: *(Wryly.)* That's...something to consider.

FARNSWORTH: Yes, it is. In fact, I really do need you to trust me.

PEM: What, Phil?

FARNSWORTH: I'm sort of... in love with another woman.

(PEM reacts. FARNSWORTH continues quickly.)

And her name is television.

PEM: (*Upset.*) In love with—

FARNSWORTH: An invention. An idea. The most wonderful notion ever.

PEM: Television.

FARNSWORTH: That's right. It's a way of projecting pictures through the air, like radio projects sound through the air. People have been working on it for years. A Scottish fellow named Baird even developed a prototype. But his idea doesn't work. Mine will.

PEM: How do you know?

FARNSWORTH: I've been studying this my whole life. I think it can be done electronically.

PEM: This is what you and Cliff have been talking about.

FARNSWORTH: Cliff's an amazing guy, Pem. I don't think it's an accident I fell in love with his sister.

PEM: I don't think so either.

FARNSWORTH: Pem, it's so important that you believe in me. I've been laughed at, ridiculed....my high school science teacher believed in me, but no one else in Rigby, and only one professor at the Y. But I know it can work.

PEM: And you think there's money in this idea?

FARNSWORTH: Pem, television will change the world. I mean, think about it. Think of...of President Grant, the prophet of the Church, and he'll give a talk in Salt Lake and people in...in Africa, or Australia will be able to hear it and see it.

PEM: Wait a minute, no, what about line of sight, won't you—?

FARNSWORTH: We'll bounce the signal off satellites, like, giant weather balloons maybe. Pem, I've thought of everything. I mean, the Great War would not have happened if we'd had television.

PEM: This invention will end war?

FARNSWORTH: Yes! Of course! People everywhere will see and hear from other lands and they'll realize that we're all just people. And that there's no need to hate them, or be angry with them. The differences between races, the differences between religions, nations...aren't they just ignorance? Think about it.

PEM: I'm trying to.

FARNSWORTH: News and...and everyday events, and art and music, great speakers. And we'll see it all, as it happens, when it happens. We'll see things as they really are, and when we do that, my golly, won't we see we have nothing to fear? What do you think?

PEM: It's extraordinary.

FARNSWORTH: That's why I took you up here today, Pem. From this mountain, you can see so far. It's magnificent. But electrons, in a tube, will someday help us see a thousand times farther. A million times farther.

(He takes her hand.)

I love you, Pem. I want us to be together. But this dream...it's part of who I am.

PEM: If that's so, Phil, then it's part of me too.

FARNSWORTH: I love you so.

(After a moment, PEM breaks the embrace, turns to the audience.)

PEM: I was seventeen years old. Phil was nineteen. We had nothing. Phil was a college dropout with a low paying job, and tremendous family obligations. My family was far from well off. We had nothing but each other. And a dream.

(She looks tenderly at FARNSWORTH.)

I knew that dreams require faith, unshakable faith in something you can't see, and can barely imagine, faith in something as elusive and unreal as electrons. I couldn't doubt, not for a second. We had nothing. But we also had each other. And that was going to be enough.

(She turns to TODD McKAY.)

It was really three conversations, not one. But...close enough. Thank you.

TODD McKAY: Not a problem.

(TODD McKAY signals the Monitors, which run closing credits for Inventor in Love. She takes FARNSWORTH's hand, and slowly exits with him.)

Intermission coming up, folks. But first, this word from our sponsors.

COMMERCIAL FOUR: *(Loud rock music. Singer sings.)*

You stink!

(Montage of faces, various people reacting to various unpleasant personal odors. Song.)

Your armpits stink and your butt, it stinks, and your feet sure stink and your breath is foul.

You stink!

You don't floss enough or shower completely or change your socks or wipe very well

You stink!

(Montage changes to other shots of people using various personal hygiene products.)

But there's hope.

There's hope?

Yes hope.

Trust us, we can help you, so that you...NO...LONG . . .-ER...STINK!

TODD McKAY: See ya in ten, folks.

INTERMISSION

31 more pages in ACT TWO