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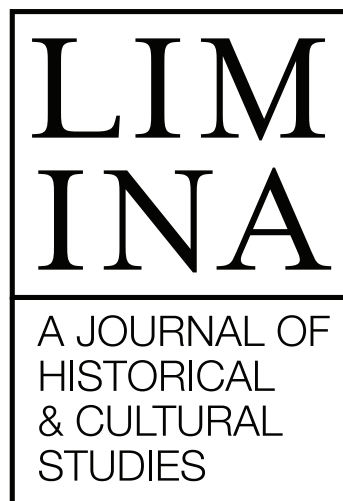
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Cover Image

UWA Japanese Garden, Perth, Western Australia. Photograph by Rebecca Repper.



It Ain't Over 'Til the Pink Lady Sings

Allison Fradkin
SUNY Purchase College

SYNOPSIS

Theatre is an ensemble of inflection, projection, and rejection. So when Marva – a performer who's part ingénue, part dreamgirl next door – desires a duet with Winifred, her BFF onstage and off, she has no idea how to go about going from Pink Lady to Pink Lady friend. Will the entrance of Francine, a triply threatening romantic rival, prompt Marva to act on her feelings before the curtain closes on her chances?

CHARACTERS

MARVA

mid-late teens

femme-presenting

FRANCINE

mid-late teens

femme-presenting

WINIFRED

mid-late teens

femme-presenting

SETTING

A bare-bones 50s-style bedroom set.

TIME

Night, now.

NOTE

The tone, pacing, and delivery of dialogue is reminiscent of the zippy, zesty screwball comedies of the 1930s and 1940s.

At rise, MARVA and FRANCINE are onstage, reflecting on the rehearsal they've just had for the pajama party scene in Grease.

MARVA

'I really flipped over the *gay* cashmere sweater'? Did I seriously sing that?

FRANCINE

It's about time you knew the score. But hey, I get it, Marva – you're not only fresh out the closet; you're also fresh off the book.

MARVA

Thank you. And I was perfectly content to continue, which I would have been able to do if you all hadn't proceeded to bust a gut – and my chops – about my little...malaprop.

FRANCINE

Technically, we were delayed by your little serenade. Rehearsal stopped cold because you have the hots for the titular Freddy in 'Freddy, My Love'.

MARVA

Cut the gas, Francine, okay? Winifred doesn't even go by Freddy.

FRANCINE

But you really did a number on *her*, didn't you? When I'm waiting in the wings, I have a clear view of the onstage goings-on. And you, Marva, were going on and on about Freddy, your love, crooning and swooning and mooning all over her. It was gutsy, yet putzy. Humiliating, yet exhilarating. All in all, a perfect way to convey the affection with which you are filled. You could flirt with all the guise –

MARVA

Exactly, Francine. Unlike Rizzo, my character Marty flirts with all the guys –

FRANCINE

Not guys, Marva. Guise. Jeez, do I have to spell it out for you? Okay, yes, I do. G-U-I-S-E, as in 'the guise of thespianism'. If I were you, I'd do something a little more outrageous, courageous, advantageous.

(Bounds onto the makeshift bed and starts singing)

Look at me, I'm Sandra Dee / Lousy with affinity / For my best friend / She is *the* living end / I cream like a Twinkie (*alternate, family-friendlier lyric: Wish she'd be my steady*)

MARVA

Okay, Francine, you've made your point: you were miscast as Sandy; you'd be boffo as Rizzo.

FRANCINE

Why be a Pink Lady when you can be a leading lady? Which is why you need to follow my lead before someone slightly less subtle swoops in and sweeps Winifred off her

tootsies. A girl like her is cruisin' for a schmoozin', what with that positively peachy personality, that pair of passion pit-perfect lips. She don't need no ciggie-butt to be smokin' hot.

MARVA

Yep, she's the ginchiest. Anyone would be kookie not to have a crush on her. Wait, are you...

FRANCINE

Kookie?

MARVA

A threat?

FRANCINE

Of course I'm not a threat, Marva. This is musical theatre. I'm a triple threat.

MARVA

But I thought you were...you know.

FRANCINE

Hey, just because I am a scintillating synthesis of Tinker Bell, the Fairy Godmother, and Glinda the Good Witch does not mean that I am straighter than a magic wand.

MARVA

You're getting your musicals mixed up.

FRANCINE

(Sotto voce) More like I'm getting them fixed up. *(Audibly)* You know that lyric in your solo, about someday being held in Freddy's arms? Well, I am angling for an ultra clutch. Now, since we're still in rehearsals, it may not be 5 to places, but it is most definitely 10 to 1 that you had better act on your feelings before the curtain closes on your chances. As my alter ego Doris Day would say: Whatever will be will be...mine.

MARVA

(Sotto voce) You'd better alter your ego, Miss Sandra Dethroned. *(Audibly)* You said you saw me crooning and swooning and mooning all over her. Did you happen to see her doing any or all of the above in a...mutual manner?

FRANCINE

Are you asking Francine your friend or Francine your romantic rival?

MARVA

That depends. Is doubling allowed?

FRANCINE

Absolutely. As Norma Desmond declared, 'I can play any role'.

MARVA

Wish I knew which role Winifred wants to play: Freddy, *my* love – or yours. Wonder what she's doing now.

FRANCINE

She's in the dressing room getting fitted for her Frenchy wig, remember? Can you believe that Winifred of all people is doing a rendition of a beautician? Bet she can't wait to doff that coif.

MARVA

You should have seen her at slumber parties when we were kids. She would play ice cream parlour, pizza parlour; she would even play tattoo parlour. But she would never play beauty parlour.

FRANCINE

Winifred balks at blow dryers.

MARVA

Cringes at curling irons.

FRANCINE

And hates the heck out of hairspray.

(WINIFRED enters.)

WINIFRED

Are you kidding? I am severely smitten with *Hairspray*! Marv and I first saw it in seventh grade, and the very next day I went out and bought saddle shoes just like Little Inez was wearing. Then I returned them because they looked too much like pandas and I was afraid I was committing animal cruelty. I know, I know: the wacker the berry... Speaking of which, my Frenchy wig really razzes my berries. Unreal, right? 'Cause normally I don't do 'dos. But since it's already flipped out, there's no point in me flipping out too. Plus, it's just plain nifty. If Eartha Kitt and Little Orphan Annie put their heads together, they'd get mine. Hey, did you hear – we might be doing *Annie* next fall. Too bad I'm too old to play her.

FRANCINE

It's not just the age, Winifred. It's the aesthetics. What I mean is Little Orphan Annie would have to grow out of her ugly duckling stage – no, she'd have to deliver a good hard knock to its homely heinie – before she could have the privilege of being played by you.

MARVA

I played Annie once. And not just any Annie. Annie Oakley. I was a real pistol. In fact, my performance was...Well, you had to be there.

WINIFRED

I was there, silly.

FRANCINE

It is pretty silly of her to think that just because she played some sexy sharpshooter in a show, she somehow has a shot with you, isn't it?

WINIFRED

A shot?

MARVA

Yeah, a shot, like of Novocain, like the demented dentist refuses to give Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*. Now that's a show we should do.

FRANCINE

Yeah, and you could call the principal character, the unprincipled plant, Freddy II. If you're A-OK with that sobriquet, Winifred?

WINIFRED

I don't know why, but I'm beginning to experience more curiosity than all the cats in *Cats* combined.

FRANCINE

If memory serves me correctly, the friends-to-lovers scenario has been done before. Plus, you couldn't possibly prefer a real-life ingénue slash dreamgirl next door to an honest-to-goodness *prima donna* who makes Motormouth Maybelle's colossal confidence seem supremely undersized, could you?

(Winifred looks to Marva for clarification and/or help.)

MARVA

Don't ask.

WINIFRED

Okay. Don't tell me more, Francine.

MARVA

If we could start anew, I wouldn't hesitate.

FRANCINE

Oh, yes, you would. You are habitually hesitant, Marva. And BTW, FYI, that lyric you just quoted is from the song 'Tears on My Pillow', which is from the screen adaptation of *Grease*, not the stage show, making it entirely incompatible with this conversation. Yet another reason why the queers on your pillow remain singular, not to mention single.

MARVA

You know what, Francine? This little love triangle –

WINIFRED

I'm in a love triangle?

FRANCINE

Don't flatter yourself. That's my job, although it would be marvellous if Marva could lighten my load a little. Unfortunately, instead of being somewhere over the rainbow with you, she's somewhere that's green with envy by herself.

MARVA

Did you ever think that maybe it's hopeless for *you* to be so devoted, Francine? You want to talk compatibility? Okay.

(indicating Winifred and herself)

We go together like Eva Perón and Patti LuPone.

(indicating Winifred and Francine)

You go together like Lina Lamont and Lena Horne.

FRANCINE

Ugh, finally, you're picking up your LGBT-cues. Now, let's see if fools will rush in where teen angels fear to tread.

(In slow motion, as if anticipating an interruption, Francine leans in to kiss Winifred. Marva hesitates, as is her habit, to interrupt them.)

Uh, Marva, could you make like good news and travel a little faster, please?

WINIFRED

Yeah, Marva, before she plants one on me, if you could plant yourself between us like the vamp on a saddle shoe, that would be just ducky, thanks.

(Marva attempts the blocking she's just been given.)

FRANCINE

Solid! Listen, I'm sorry-not-sorry to tell you this, but, Marva, I am not your romantic rival. I am your matchmaker, a fact I'll bet you never knew, as evidenced by your acute obtuseness.

MARVA

How was I supposed to know you were putting me on?

WINIFRED

Is this because the performing arts department is putting on *Fiddler on the Roof* in the spring and you've got a yen to play Yente?

FRANCINE

I'm sure we can all agree that I am much better suited for that part than I am for the part of your love interest, Winifred. As it turns out, I *can't* play any role, nor do I want to. Have neither of you noticed that I've been casting an eyeball at the catty, bratty Patty and another eyeball at the keen, unseen Eugene? Of course you haven't. Because the two of you have been too busy being helplessly devoted to each other since freshman year – and probably prior to that.

WINIFRED

Better helpless than Marva-less...I guess.

FRANCINE

Ooh, that gives me an idea. Next semester's Scene Study class will unofficially be known as *Francine* Study. Well, you must admit my performance was unmatched. As a result, that word no longer applies to you guys. Hopefully. Um, you *are* relieved, not peeved, that I deceived you, right?

WINIFRED

Well, like *Oliver!*, the narrative of any good musical requires a twist. This must be ours.

MARVA

And who wants to be in a love triangle, anyway? Love triangles are so square.

FRANCINE

In other words, you'll thank me later. I mean it. I expect an avalanche of appreciation for this...activation ASAP. Preferably tomorrow. It's only a gay away. Oh, and remember, girls: a relationship is not a hairdryer, so don't blow it.

(Francine makes a grand exit.)

WINIFRED

I like her. Oh, but not like *that*.

MARVA

Ditto. Um...yeah, I'm not really sure what to say. I feel like I've gone up on my lines, you know? I've got that majorly jittery feeling I always get right before an audition. But I've also got that ever-so-slightly snooty one I always get right before the cast list is posted.

WINIFRED

Are you hoping for the role of...Pink Lady friend?

MARVA

Only if there's the possibility of an extension. My heart is set on more than just a 'showmance'.

WINIFRED

Oh, I can pretty much promise you an extension. Do you have any idea how many times I've stood in front of the mirror practicing my 'I Have a Dreamgirl' speech? I'd say, 'Hey, Marv, I get a kick out of you,' and you'd say, 'Aw, that's sweet, Winifred, and I get a sidekick out of you.' I was so sure that after you'd come out, you'd finally come on – to me. But alas, you did not. You better shape up, 'cause I don't need a man.

MARVA

I am in ship-shape, okay? Relationship-shape. Did *you* take any initiative?

WINIFRED

No, because I was afraid that if our relationship didn't work out, our friendship would go kablooy.

MARVA

Kablooy? Phooey. Ugh, I think I accidentally aced Francine Study. Anyway, um, I know that being a couple won't be a cakewalk or anything, but if I'm going to go singin' in the rainbow that I prefer dolls to guys, I won't be all wet if I do it as a duet.

WINIFRED

So instead of being all boo'd up, we'll be all dolled up?

MARVA

Sounds swell, Freddy, my...

WINIFRED

You can say it.

MARVA

I can call you Freddy or I can call you...my love?

WINIFRED

That all depends on your answer to Frenchy's all-important question: Was it love at first sight?

MARVA

We met in first grade, so...no. But once I started noticing girls, you were the first girl I noticed, so...yeah. Yeah, it was love at first sight. What about you? With me?

WINIFRED

I have almost always marvelled at you too, Marva.

MARVA

Then I guess all that's left for us to do is to lace up our saddle shoes until we're tying a knot they never can sever.

WINIFRED

Want me to pair said shoes with my *gay* cashmere sweater? I totally have one, you know – ROY G BIV stripes wrapped around my foam-free domes and upper arms. Which reminds me: next time we play tattoo parlour, I'm drawing my name on your bicep – and vice versa.

MARVA

Is that a prerequisite for holding me in your arms someday?

WINIFRED

Someday? What's wrong with today?

(Marva and Winifred hug.)

Look at us, Marva. We're closer than the pooch on a poodle skirt.

MARVA

That explains why my stomach is all twisted up like a balloon animal and why, if I were a milk bottle, you could knock me over with a softball.

WINIFRED

LOL, but also SOL. That carnival scene is from the screen adaptation of *Grease*, not the stage show. Plus, neither of those references is even relevant, so everything involved in this conversation is woefully incompatible.

MARVA

Except us.

WINIFRED

Obviously. Now that we've got that squared away...

MARVA

Yes?

WINIFRED

Now we make our true love vow.

(As Marva and Winifred prepare to kiss, Francine enters.)

FRANCINE

I can practically see your hearts fluttering like jazz hands.

(Marva and Winifred regard her with a blend of gratitude and attitude.)

What? Like I told Marva, when I'm waiting in the wings, I have a queer view of the onstage goings-on. And when it comes to the friends-to-lovers scenario, it's clear that the two of you have got it going on. Carry on.

(Sings, to the tune of the song from Grease, as she exits)

They'll always be together...

WINIFRED

Well? Shall we act upon our matchmaker's mandate?

MARVA

Freddy...

WINIFRED

...steady...

MARVA and WINIFRED

...go!

(Marva and Winifred share an absurdly adorable, im-peck-ably innocent, foot-popping first kiss.)

Curtain.