

The Drowsy Chaperone

Man in Chair, a mousy, vaguely depressive Broadway fanatic, is feeling blue. To lift his spirits, he decides to listen a record of the cast recording from his all-time favorite show, the 1928 Broadway musical, *The Drowsy Chaperone*. When he first turns on his phonograph and static breaks from the speakers, he wistfully tells the audience, "I love that sound. To me, that's the sound of a time machine starting up."

By the time the first note sails out of his speakers, he's been transported to a magical dream world, one where the actors in the recording enter his dingy apartment and transform it into a gloriously garish set complete with seashell footlights, sparkly peacocks, glittery sugarplum trees, and costumes that would put Ziegfeld to shame. In the show's Opening Number (***Fancy Dress***), the show-within-a-show centers on a showgirl, Janet Van De Graaff, who is about to marry handsome playboy Robert Martin, a man she only just met. Feldzieg, her cigar-chomping producer, has come to Mrs. Tottendale's estate where the wedding will be hosted to stop her. He doesn't want to lose his valuable starlet.

It's the day before the big wedding and Robert confides to Best Man George that he fears he is getting ***Cold Feet***. Meanwhile, a sunbathing Janet is questioned by the 1920's version of paparazzi. She assures them she doesn't want to ***Show Off*** any more, but is ready to settle down into married life with Robert... or is she? Aging actress Beatrice Stockwell is *The Drowsy Chaperone* (drowsy meaning tipsy). She has been engaged to keep the bride-to-be and her groom from bumping into each other. This being the era of Prohibition, the chaperone has brought along her own bar (***As We Stumble Along***).

In a last ditch effort to ruin the upcoming nuptials, Feldzieg engages the Latin Lothario, Aldolpho, to distract the bride-to-be (***I Am Aldolpho***). In a mix-up, he instead distracts the Chaperone. Left to her own devices, Janet roams the estate and bumps into a blind-folded, roller skating Robert (***Accident Waiting to Happen***). Testing his devotion, she pretends to be someone else and flirts with him. When he flirts back, she is incensed and calls off the wedding! Meanwhile, two gangsters posed as pastry chefs (***Toledo Surprise***) have arrived at the estate to collect on a debt from Feldzieg.

Watching from his armchair, Man in Chair is torn between his desire to absorb every moment of the play as it unfolds and to insert his own personal footnotes as he continuously brings the audience in and out of the fantasy. Alas, it is time to

change the record for Act II of *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Man in Chair settles back into said chair to enjoy the rest of the show but a surprise awaits (***Message from a Nightingale***). Once the show is back on track, Janet is distraught about her predicament (***Bride's Lament***). Nevertheless, everyone continues to work to prepare for the wedding and its celebration of love... especially Mrs. Tottendale and her long-suffering butler, Underling (***Love is Always Lovely in the End***). Indeed, love is always lovely in the end as the couples "take off" *literally* to happily ever after (***I Do, I Do in the Sky***).