



ONCE Plot Synopsis Courtesy of "The Guide to Musical Theatre"

Act I

An unnamed, thirty-something Dublin busker ("Guy"), sings and plays guitar in a local bar. He then puts his guitar away and is about to leave without it when a young, unnamed Czech woman ("Girl") approaches him. She persists in asking him personal questions about his songs. It is revealed through their conversation that he had written most of his songs for his unfaithful ex-girlfriend who now lives in New York City and he is giving up on his music to escape the memories he has of her. It is also revealed that he works as a vacuum cleaner repair man in his father's shop. The Girl reveals that she has a vacuum that needs repairing and offers to pay him with music, as she plays piano. She snatches sheet music for one of his songs from his jacket and although reluctant at first, the Guy picks up his guitar and they play the song together.

After the song, the Girl suggests that if he plays that song for his old girlfriend he will win her back. He brushes this off and they go to his father's repair shop.

While there, as the Guy fixes the vacuum, the Girl becomes acquainted with his father, who seems to like her. After repairing her vacuum, the Guy impulsively asks the Girl if she would like to see his room. Once in there, the Guy attempts to kiss the Girl, but she stops him and leaves. The next day he apologizes to her and the two quickly patch things up. They then excitedly write, rehearse and record songs, and get to know each other. The Girl even introduces the Guy to her family, including her young daughter, Ivonka. After the Guy leaves, the Girl listens to one of his songs and provides her own lyrics as she thinks of him.

The Girl finds the Guy the next morning and tells him she has arranged a meeting with a banker. The pair attempt to persuade the banker to invest in the Guy's music, as they plan for him to take his music to New York. To convince the Bank Manager, the Guy plays him a song. Blown away by the Guy's talent, the Bank

Manager reveals that he can play guitar as well and offers to join his band. He plays a song for them, however, he isn't a very good singer. The two allow him to play in the band anyway. The following night, the two go into a night club where the Guy thanks the Girl for showing him that his music really means something. The Girl has secretly signed the Guy up to perform for open mic under the alias of "The Hoover Man", to encourage him about singing in front of an audience. The Guy is reluctant, but he eventually takes the stage. While the Guy is singing, it is hinted that he is singing for the Girl this time rather than his ex-girlfriend.

Act II

During band practice, one of the musicians gets into an argument with the Bank Manager, saying he opposes capitalism despite the fact that he is a shop owner. To escape the commotion, the Guy and Girl retreat to a hill overlooking the city, where the two share a brief, tender moment. Before she departs, the Girl tells him in Czech, "I love you", but when he asks what it means, she merely tells him "It looks like rain". Wondering how he's going to live without her, the Guy proceeds to sing and play his guitar.

The next day, the Guy's band records a demo for a major record label. After receiving praise for their performance, the band takes a break while the Girl

remains at the piano. Thinking she is alone, she begins to play one of her own compositions, one that reveals the depths of her feelings for the Guy, unaware that he is listening. The Guy compliments her on the song and suggests that she and her family come to New York with him. He goes on to tell the Girl that although he originally wrote those songs for his ex-girlfriend he can only think of the Girl when he sings them now. After a moment of silence, the Girl reveals that her husband, Ivonka's father, has called her and is trying to reconcile. Though she loves him, the Girl snaps at the Guy and tells him that he can not feel that way. The following morning, the band gathers at the hill to reflect on their success with the album. Once alone, the Guy asks her to spend his last night in Dublin with him; she says that it would only result in "hanky-panky", which is a "bad idea", but after the Guy's pestering she ultimately agrees to come over.

Back at the shop, he plays the demo for his father, who, moved and impressed gives him money to help him get settled in New York. Before leaving for the airport, the Guy, encouraged by the Girl, calls his ex-girlfriend, who is happy about his imminent arrival. A few days later, the Girl comes home to find a piano with a bright red bow on it, a gift from the Guy. After shedding a few tears at the sight of the gift, she sits down and begins to play, while the Guy plays his guitar in his new apartment.