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An American Wife

By
Karen Blomain & Michael Downend

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An American Wife

By Karen Blomain & Michael Downend

SETTING:

A miner's row house near Scranton, PA; 1945, at the end of World War II

CHARACTERS:

PHIL FLYNN, *a young married man, working in the mines during the War*

MOLLY FLYNN, *his wife*

JODY FLYNN, *their daughter, about 10*

AGNES FLYNN "NANNA", *the matriarch of this strong Irish Catholic family*

FRANK FLYNN, *the son returning from fighting in the War*

STELLA FLYNN, *Frank's new Polish war bride*

FLORENCE "FLOSSIE" ROCHE, *Nanna's life-long friend*

ETC:

AN AMERICAN WIFE premiered at The Northeast Theatre in Scranton, Pennsylvania on March 23, 2007 directed by David Zarko, scenery by Lousanne Carpenter, lights by Jim Langan, costumes by Cheri Vasik, props by Liz Feller, and sound by Malcolm Bowes. Production stage manager was Marybeth Langdon.

THE ORIGINAL CAST

<i>PHIL FLYNN</i>	MIKE MARIA
<i>MOLLY FLYNN</i>	MELANIE BROWN
<i>JODY FLYNN</i>	TESSA BARRETT
<i>AGNES FLYNN "NANNA"</i>	AGNES CUMMINGS
<i>FRANK FLYNN</i>	CONOR MCGUIGAN
<i>STELLA FLYNN</i>	AMBER IRVIN
<i>FLORENCE "FLOSSIE" ROCHE</i>	CHRISTA MANNING

AN AMERICAN WIFE

By Karen Blomain & Michael Downend

ACT I, SCENE 1

(AT RISE: A miner's 1945 row house with a porch. Inside is a large dining table with six chairs, a telephone on a stand down center, a wall mirror, and a small sitting area. The kitchen and bedrooms are located off this main room. A radio sits on a small table next to one of the chairs in the sitting area. The stage remains dark except for light on the radio.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is ABC, the American Broadcasting Company, this is the Mutual Broadcasting Company, this is NBC the Nation Broadcasting Company, this is CBS the Columbia Broadcasting System, 7pm Eastern War Time.

I have received this afternoon a message from the Japanese Government, in reply to a message from that government from the Secretary of State on August 11th. I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, which specifies the unconditional surrender of Japan. In the reply there is no qualification.

(SOUND: World War II MUSIC FADES UP with LIGHTS UP. The MUSIC underscores PHIL and MOLLY enter onto the porch and through the door, jovially celebrating the end World War II. In the spirit of revelry, PHIL and MOLLY ad lib then kiss like the Eisenstaedt's Life cover couple. The two continue to dance as JODY and NANNA enter from one of the bedrooms. PHIL stops dancing and looks at JODY.)

PHIL

(To JODY) You're a vision.

JODY

My new dress. Nanna's going to hem it.

PHIL

The war's over, Ma. Did you hear?

NANNA

I did.

MOLLY

It won't really be over until Frankie's safely home.

NANNA

(To JODY) Up with you. *(PHIL lifts JODY to chair)* Wilson said any day now.

MOLLY
You went over to the Big Chief?

NANNA
Monday.

PHIL
Coupla guys from Mayfield got home.

NANNA
Thank God. *(Blesses herself)*

MOLLY
That means Frankie will be home soon.

NANNA
(To PHIL) Did you talk to them over at the Number Five?

PHIL
Poor guy's not home yet and you're putting him to work.

NANNA
He'll have responsibilities.

PHIL
What responsibilities?

NANNA
Did you?

PHIL
There'll be plenty time for that once he's home.

(PHONE RINGS – one long, twice. NANNA motions to PHIL to turn off radio. NANNA picks up the phone.)

NANNA
(After short pause) No, Maggie, nothing yet. *(Pause)* Of course I heard the news. I know you're storming heaven.

PHIL
Maggie and her pals in the convent taking credit for ending the war.

NANNA
Yes, I know. You're worn to a nubbin just saying all those novenas. You're a martyr suffering for all of us.

MOLLY

Everybody's praying.

PHIL

The patron saint of the number five mine

NANNA

I'll call you as soon as we know. *(NANNA pauses and listens intently then hangs up.)* Maggie saw an angel in the chapel.

PHIL

You don't say.

NANNA

Standing right at the rail. Smiling at her. Maggie could tell from the smile Frankie'd be back safe.

MOLLY

That's lovely.

(MOLLY exits to the kitchen.)

JODY

A real angel?

PHIL

Maggie spends a little too much time in the chapel.

(MOLLY enters from the kitchen with a plate of cookies and places it on the table.)

NANNA

Like some people spend at Malloy's Saloon? *(PHIL crosses for a cookie passing close to NANNA who waves him away.)* The smell of you!

PHIL

A few drinks to celebrate?

NANNA

What else is new?

PHIL

The whole town's gone mad. Hard to believe the war's over.

MOLLY

Two years. I wonder if Frankie will have changed?

NANNA

We'll see.

PHIL

You don't seem very excited, Ma?

MOLLY

We're all afraid to believe it's really over. *(Picking up a cookie)* I wish he'd call.

PHIL

(To NANNA) Did you ask Florence? Might have called Bridget.

MOLLY

She *is* his fiancée.

NANNA

(Indignant) He'd call his mother first.

PHIL

Of course he would. *(Hands JODY a cookie.)*

NANNA

(To JODY) Turn.

MOLLY

I could hear the racket from Malloy's clear over here.

NANNA

Probably even in Olyphant.

PHIL

They're celebrating.

(PHONE RINGS two short. NANNA motions for everyone to "shush" crosses to the phone, picks up the receiver, covers mouthpiece and listens. NANNA tenses.)

PHIL

(Helps JODY from chair, then crossing to NANNA) Ma. What is it?

(NANNA hangs up the phone.)

MOLLY

That was the Quinn's ring.

NANNA

They're back. Bobbie Quinn called. The bunch of them got to New York yesterday.

JODY

Why didn't Uncle Frank call?

PHIL

He's coming home. That's all that matters.

MOLLY

But you think he would have called.

(NANNA take a piece of paper from her apron and hands it to PHIL.)

NANNA

Here.

PHIL

When did this come?

MOLLY

What is it?

PHIL

A telegram. *(Reading)* Arriving Sunday. With new wife.

MOLLY

A new wife?

(ALL look at NANNA and freeze. NANNA exits to kitchen in anger.)

PHIL

I wonder what the *angel's* been up to.

(PHIL, MOLLY shrug and then begin to cheer. MOLLY turns on radio. "VICTORY MUSIC" up. PHIL takes two glasses from the table dance MOLLY dances and JODY spins in a circle, eating her cookie. PHIL crosses to MOLLY and hands her one of the glasses. THEY clink their glasses and smile. LIGHTS OUT.)

ACT I, SCENE 2

(AT RISE: Sunday. NANNA is cleaning up from Sunday dinner, muttering to herself about FRANK'S NEW WIFE. We hear the voice of the RADIO ANNOUNCER.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Now back to New York. People who have seen Times Square celebrations before declare that this is the biggest spectacle in New York history. Estimates of the crowd go beyond half a million.

(NANNA turns off the radio as JODY, PHIL, and MOLLY enter still in their clothing from Sunday Mass.)

JODY

Why didn't we wait for them?

NANNA

(Continuing to clear the table) He knows we have Sunday dinner right after Mass.

PHIL

She's just excited to meet her new aunt, Ma.

MOLLY

(Helping to clean-up) Long drive from Scranton.

NANNA

We're not going to start changing things around here just because your brother drags home some war bride.

MOLLY

Ma!

NANNA

This house isn't crowded enough?

JODY

She can use my room and Uncle Frank can sleep on the couch.

NANNA

He should have thought of that right off. Now she has her hooks in him. Probably some hunky. They'll do anything to get over here.

MOLLY

Ma—do you have to?

NANNA

He's too good-hearted. *(Beat)* I hope he's coming back to a job.

PHIL

He'll go back to the number 5 mine. I already told you I talked to the boss.

NANNA

If it's not closed. Now that the war's over, the mine will close. That's what they say.

PHIL

Party line gossip?

MOLLY

Don't borrow trouble, Ma.

(SOUND of horn honking)

NANNA

Huh. There's trouble for you.

(ALL excited, even NANNA who tries to conceal it.)

PHIL

Ma, just be glad he's coming home.

JODY

They're here! They're here!

(FRANK enters, STELLA follows behind. JODY runs to FRANK.)

FRANK

This is my little bunny rabbit?

JODY

Uncle Frank, you were gone so long. *(FRANK hugs JODY)*

FRANK

All grown up.

MOLLY

Two years, Frank.

FRANK

Lots of changes in two years. *(FRANK remembers STELLA who's behind him.)* How 'bout one of those kisses for your new aunt? *(JODY kisses STELLA. STELLA's taken with JODY.)* Stella, meet your new family.

JODY

She's pretty.

NANNA

Jody, go outside and play.

JODY
Ma?

MOLLY
Go on. You heard Nanna. *(MOLLY takes JODY'S mantilla. JODY exits past STELLA who looks after JODY)*

NANNA
She'll pester the daylights out of you.

MOLLY
We're glad you're here, Stella.

PHIL
Pleased to meet you, Stella. *(PHIL hugs STELLA, greets FRANK)* Swell homecoming. I'm sorry. I tried to get a car to meet you at the train.

FRANK
It's okay, Phillie. Some guy at the station was going to Carbondale. Dropped us off. *(FRANK looks tentatively at NANNA)* Well, Ma? *(Hugs NANNA. SHE melts. FRANK looks at partially cleared table.)* Something smells good? What's for dinner?

(They all look at NANNA who glares at STELLA. NANNA turns and exits to the kitchen.)

MOLLY
I better see to her.
(MOLLY exits)

PHIL
Don't worry about it. You know how she is. I'll take your stuff up. You guys have Jody's room.

(PHIL exits with luggage)

STELLA
Your mother not like me.

FRANK
It's not you. She just doesn't like change. She'll get over it.

STELLA
I hope so. *(Beat)* I am the only change.

FRANK

Nah. The war. I was gone so long. She'll like you. You wait and see.

STELLA

Molly...you call her?

FRANK

Yes. Molly.

STELLA

Molly. She nice.

FRANK

Phillie's a lucky guy.

STELLA

I am sorry we take the little girl's room.

FRANK

Jody. *(FRANK pours a glass of water fro STELLA.)*

STELLA

Nice name. She reminds me...

(STELLA reacts the same as when she first saw JODY.)

FRANK

(FRANK hands STELLA the glass of water.) Here we are then, home sweet home.

STELLA

House is nice. Is room for us? *(SHE peers around.)*

FRANK

Don't worry. I'll be back to work. We'll have our own place. Soon.

STELLA

(Glances through doorway at kitchen) We paint our kitchen yellow?

FRANK

Sure. Whatever you want. It'll be your kitchen. *(Beat)* As soon as the pay starts coming.

STELLA

I happy we live in this place.

FRANK

Maude's Hill. (*FRANK checks the coffee pot.*) It's a swell place to raise kids. People look out for each other in a place like this. And it's going to get better. The war's over. The guys are back. Maude's Hill is going to boom. Phillie says even the paper's going to come out every day. (*PHONE RINGS three short rings. FRANK doesn't move to answer it. Rings continue.*) Party line. It's not for us.

STELLA

Party? When is party?

FRANK

Not that kind of party. Telephone. Three houses on the same line. Everybody has their own ring. We get one long. (*PHONE RINGS three short. NANNA enters, picks up phone, covers mouthpiece. FRANK catches NANNA eavesdropping.*) And if the paper's not enough news for us, there's always the party line. (*Pouring a cup of coffee, adding milk.*) C'mon, Ma. The coffee's still hot.

NANNA

(*NANNA carefully hangs up. FRANK hands her the cup.*) I don't like milk. How soon you forget.

FRANK

Sorry, Ma. It's been awhile. (*FRANK pours fresh cup.*)

NANNA

Seems like you forgot a lot of things about home. (*Beat*) A lot of people too.

FRANK

(*Ignoring remark*) Black it is. Now this is what I've been waiting for. Home again with my two girls. (*FRANK kisses Stella. NANNA glares.*) Ma, I'm going down to see Watkins. I can probably start next week.

NANNA

Watkins is gone.

FRANK

What are you talking about?

NANNA

New owners. New boss.

FRANK

New owners?

NANNA

West Virginia Company.

When? FRANK

Months ago. Phillie didn't write to you? NANNA

Not a word. FRANK

He didn't want you to worry. NANNA

Should have told me. FRANK

I'm telling you now. NANNA

(Beat) That's okay. They still need miners. They'll hire me. FRANK

Maybe no work for you? STELLA

Stop that. I don't want you worrying about anything. I'm going to take care of you. There's always a job for a hard worker. FRANK

My work's staring me in the face. Tomorrow's Monday. Wash day. NANNA

(Eagerly) You show me, I do. STELLA

Sure, Ma. Stella can help. FRANK

(Regards STELLA) You must have dirty clothes. NANNA

Yes. From trip. STELLA

I bet you do. NANNA

STELLA

I get.

NANNA

(Calls as STELLA exits) What you have on, too.

FRANK

Easy, Ma. She's been through a lot.

NANNA

What about me? Did you think of how I'd feel? A telegram. What a slap in the face. Coward's way. No surprise there.

FRANK

I thought it would be better. Time for you to get used to the idea.

NANNA

It's not just me, ya know. Molly and Phil, they'll pretend they accept her.

FRANK

If I did things wrong, it's not Stella's fault.

NANNA

The last thing I expected from you was to drag home some hunky war bride.

FRANK

She's Polish. We can go somewhere else.

NANNA

Where? This is your home.

FRANK

Doesn't feel much like home. You're as cold as that icebox.

NANNA

She's not our kind. Mark my words. This one's trouble.

FRANK

Give her a chance. She wants a family. Take her over to town tomorrow. Show her around. Get to know her.

NANNA

(Beat as NANNA softens towards FRANK) Not unless she pulls back that mop of hair.

ACT I, SCENE 3

(AT RISE: The next day. MOLLY enters from kitchen, JODY reading at table.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

General Dwight D. Eisenhower announced today that all allied forces have pulled...

(MOLLY turns off RADIO as NANNA enters with groceries.)

MOLLY

(Taking one of the bags) Where's Stella?

NANNA

Lollygagging. I didn't have all day to stand there mooning at the river.

MOLLY

I hope she knows she has to pitch in around here.

NANNA

If she even knows how.

MOLLY

Sister Maggie called.

NANNA

She's out of talcum powder. I'm taking it down on Saturday.

MOLLY

She wants to come here.

NANNA

Hunh! There'll be two of them. And just where will we put them— especially now?

JODY

Why do they come in pairs?

NANNA

It's the rule. Join the convent? Travel in pairs.

JODY

But why?

NANNA

Not for children to know.

JODY

Like Noah's ark?

NANNA

They're not elephants, honey.

MOLLY

Maggie's always disappointed when none of the other sisters will come with her.

NANNA

They love visiting around with the families, if they have a big house and lots of money. That lot down in Scranton. But here? Maude's Hill? Miners? We're not fancy enough for them.

MOLLY

It's a long ride on the bus.

NANNA

It's the same ride both ways. It's okay for me to drag myself down to that convent every month. The drivers are speed demons. My hands are raw from clutching me rosary the whole way.

MOLLY

Do you have to go so often?

NANNA

She's the only sister I've got.

MOLLY

Phillie said he would try to borrow Father Burke's car so we can all go. Then she can meet Stella— and see Frank, too.

(STELLA, tired, enters with more bags)

JODY

Can I sit by Stella?

MOLLY

(To STELLA) So, you had the ten cent tour. How do you like Maude's Hill?

STELLA

The river like home.

NANNA

Butter's up again. Fifteen cents a pound. Think the miners are made of money.

STELLA

Frank come home?

MOLLY

Not yet. Don't worry. There's a job for him. Phil lined it up.

JODY

Aunt Stella. Your hair looks so pretty.

NANNA

Read your book.

(STELLA wavers)

MOLLY

Are you alright? Give me those bags.

STELLA

It is nothing. Small headache.

MOLLY

We'll put this away. Just go in and lie down. Jody, go play.

(STELLA exits to her room followed by JODY.)

NANNA

She met another hunky at the store. They fell all over each other with that gibberish. Never saw anything like it.

MOLLY

It's her language. *(Beat)* I know what you mean though. Sounds awful.

NANNA

Made a fool out of me. Didn't know a word they were saying. Everybody gawkin' at me. They should speak English.

MOLLY

They *should* speak English.

(NANNA begins to ad lib faux Polish. MOLLY laughs and joins in, then both laughing.)

NANNA

Frank wasn't thinking about me when he—

MOLLY

What's done is done.

She's pregnant. NANNA

We'll make the best of it. MOLLY

That's how she got him in her coop. NANNA

She's not a bad woman, Ma. MOLLY

Time will tell. NANNA

MOLLY
(*Had enough*) I'm gonna get the wash off the line.

(*MOLLY exits.*)

Suit yourself. NANNA

(*NANNA finishes putting away the groceries. FLORENCE calls from outside.*)

FLORENCE
Yoo hoo. Yoo hoo. Agnes. Agnes. Are you home?

NANNA
(*Grimacing*) Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. In here, Flossie.

(*FLORENCE, NANNA'S contemporary and lifelong friend, enters.*)

FLORENCE
I brought cobbler.

NANNA
Apple. Smells grand.

(*NANNA exits with cobbler to kitchen. FLORENCE snoops around, about to peek in JODY'S room when NANNA re-enters with two cups of coffee catching her.*)

FLORENCE
So, where's the bride herself?

NANNA

No secrets in this town.

FLORENCE

Word travels. So, where are they?

(FLORENCE and NANNA sit with coffee.)

NANNA

She's having a bit of a lie-down. God love her. The poor thing's just worn down from all that traveling and the excitement. Big homecoming.

FLORENCE

Did I see her just coming across the bridge with you— the purple dress, the blonde?

NANNA

Oh, such a head of hair on her. Don't you know. It's beautiful. Never saw the likes of it. She's gorgeous, that one.

FLORENCE

Those blonde Polacks sure are lookers. (Beat) Can you talk to her?

NANNA

Talk to her? Of course, I can talk to her. What's got into you? And speak with respect, will you? I know it came as a shock. But I'll hear nothing bad said about her. She's one of us now, to be sure.

FLORENCE

She speaks the language, does she?

NANNA

She does. She's quick. And Frankie's teaching her all the time.

FLORENCE

I hate it when those foreigners come and just want to talk that blather of theirs. Like they want to take over.

NANNA

She catches on fast. In no time, she'll be talking just as good as the rest of us.

FLORENCE

I give you credit, Agnes. Not everybody'd take in one of that kind.

NANNA

What are you going on about? Why wouldn't I?

FLORENCE

(Indicates pregnancy with her hand.) By the look of her, you had no choice.

NANNA

She's a lovely girl, this one.

FLORENCE

As lovely as my Bridget?

NANNA

Your Bridget's a wonder.

(Beat)

FLORENCE

(FLORENCE pulls a clay pipe from her housedress pocket.) Will you smoke then?

NANNA

(NANNA retrieves a pipe from a coffee tin) She'll be in soon. Outside with you or they'll think I was smoking.

(NANNA and FLORENCE exit as MOLLY enters with a laundry basket. SHE doesn't see FRANK and PHIL slipping in behind her.)

PHIL

So there you are. C'mere you beautiful—

(PHIL, covered in coal dust, chases MOLLY).

MOLLY

Aahhhhh! Don't you dare, Phillie Flynn.

PHIL

Ah, Molly, my love, I wouldn't dirty up that beautiful, white body of yours now, would I?

MOLLY

Hah. In a second, you would. *(Points back out the door, to the porch.)* Out with you both. *(FRANK and PHIL exit back to porch, remove overalls.)*

FRANK

Ma's still sucking on that pipe?

PHIL

I wouldn't bring it up if you know what's good for you.

FRANK

Still has her own version of reality.

(Beat. FRANK and PHIL re-enter.)

FRANK, *Continues*

Where's Stella?

MOLLY

Taking a lie-down. Bit of a headache when she came from the store with Nanna.

PHIL

That'd give anybody a headache. How much was the butter this week?

MOLLY

More than last. *(Picks up lunch pail)* And will I be filling one for you tomorrow?

FRANK

You will indeed.

MOLLY

There now. I knew you were worried for nothing. Oh, Frankie. I'm so happy for you. *(FRANK and PHIL exchange glances.)* Now what's that all about?

PHIL

(Beat) It's not all good news.

FRANK

I have a job as long as there's work.

PHIL

New guy they brought in? Says there are rumors.

MOLLY

(Beginning to set the table.) Maybe he was kidding.

PHIL

I doubt it.

FRANK

He's worried. It's his job, too.

PHIL

No, he was serious. Just giving us some notice.

What on earth are you saying, Phil? MOLLY

Rumors about closing. FRANK

Now you stop that teasing. MOLLY

The war's over. They don't know what'll happen. PHIL

You can't tell Stella. FRANK

Or Ma. PHIL

Oh, that's just talk. There's always talk. MOLLY

No use worrying them. FRANK

You're serious? MOLLY

Doesn't sound good. PHIL

What on earth will we do, Phil? MOLLY

I don't know. But right now... Dinner ready? PHIL

Pot roast. MOLLY

Mashed potatoes and gravy? FRANK

Just what you like. MOLLY

PHIL

Homecoming dinner. Finally.

MOLLY

C'mon everybody. It's time to eat. (*JODY and STELLA enter. JODY, her hair in braids, is carrying a doll dressed in traditional Polish costume.*) Look how beautiful you are.

JODY

Stella fixed my hair like her doll. She's my doll now, isn't she, Stella?

STELLA

Yes. With her braid. Braid, yes?

FRANK

Catching on.

NANNA

(*Entering*) No toys at the table.

MOLLY

Listen to Nanna. No toys at the table.

(*JODY puts doll on radio table*)

FRANK

Pretty smoky in the kitchen when we got home, Ma.

NANNA

Flossie came by with her pipe again.

MOLLY

She brought the cobbler?

PHIL

I thought I smelled apple pie—and smoke.

FRANK

So it was her then?

NANNA

Who else?

(*Beat. ALL sit at table.*)

PHIL

Will the little lady with the beautiful hair lead us in grace?

JODY

Do I have to?

FRANK

Show Aunt Stella how it's done.

JODY

Oh, all right. (*SHE prays*) Thank you God for bringing Uncle Frank home and God bless this food so we can eat it.

ALL EXCEPT STELLA

In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost. Amen.

NANNA

(*To JODY*) You said it so fast it might as well have been Polish.

FRANK

Ma.

MOLLY

We have a lot to be thankful for. Our Frankie's home safe.

NANNA

Tomorrow my boyos go back to Number Five.

FRANK

How do you know that?

NANNA

I have me ways.

STELLA

Number Five? What is this number five?

FRANK

The mine. It's what they call it where we work.

STELLA

And not working there—what is it called—lay down?

PHIL

Laid off, you mean?

STELLA

Laid off. Yes. No work.

FRANK
What are you talking about?

STELLA
Mine closes. No work soon.

NANNA
Listen to her. That foolish, girl. *(Beat)* Two days in town and she's full of gossip.

FRANK
Easy, Ma. *(To STELLA)* So, what did you hear?

STELLA
Lady in store, husband boss. She tell me. Mine close.

NANNA
The new foreman's Polack wife. She was at the grocery store today.

FRANK
Ma! For the last time.

NANNA
Falling all over each other in the store. In that hunky talk.

FRANK
Goddamit, Ma. That's enough.

NANNA
This is my house.

FRANK
And she's my wife.

PHIL
C'mon. Calm down. We're all family.

STELLA
Did I say wrong?

MOLLY
Stella, this is important. What did you hear?

STELLA
I tell her Frank go in mine. She say work two months only. Mine close.

MOLLY

It's more than gossip if Lara Evans said it. She knows what's going on from her man.

FRANK

Look. If she's right, we've got two months to find something. The war's over, a lot's going on. There'll be plenty of jobs.

NANNA

I hope you're right. *(Beat)* Change isn't always for the better.

JODY

Mommy, I'm scared. Will we have to eat in the front yard?

MOLLY

Jody!

JODY

Nanna always says eat your dinner. Children in Greece are eating grass.

STELLA

In Poland, too. *(ALL laugh until they realize STELLA is serious)* In Poland, too.

(WWII MUSIC in as LIGHTS FADE OUT)

ACT I, SCENE 4

(AT RISE: A few days later. MUSIC plays on the radio; a lively WWII era song. JODY is giving STELLA an English lesson. As they talk, STELLA places a peasant-style apron on JODY. MOLLY turns off the radio.)

JODY

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Now you say it.

STELLA

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch--three days I learn this--but what means fetch?

JODY

Fetch? Fetch. Go get, I guess. Get a pail of water. Getting water.

STELLA

(Glottal G's) Get-tin-ugh.

JODY

(Laughs) Getting.

STELLA

When I'm girl in Poland--was long ago--this feast day there. "Swietojanski".

MOLLY

You should have a feast day for even pronouncing it. Where did you get that apron?

JODY

Stella made it for me.

MOLLY

Really?

STELLA

Just scraps I bring.

MOLLY

You sewed this by hand?

STELLA

Sure I sew. Not hard. Swietojanski, important day in Poland.

MOLLY

Swietojanski?

STELLA

(STELLA pronounces it phonetically) Sweitojanski. In springtime, right word? In springtime we dress like this. Make wreaths. Float on river. *(STELLA saddened)* At night fires everywhere. Much food, how you say--celebrate. Sing-ing. Sing-ing. *(STELLA's sad, teary.)*

JODY

Why is she crying? She can have the apron back.

STELLA

No. No. I make for you. Apron not make me sad.

MOLLY

You're still exhausted from the trip.

STELLA

I never see again.

MOLLY

I know it's hard for you.

STELLA
Never see my sister.

JODY
Don't be sad, Stella.

STELLA
No use sad. Apron pretty on you.

JODY
(JODY twirls) I love it.

MOLLY
I hope you thanked Aunt Stella.

STELLA
We trade. Jody teach me how speak American. Then I am American wife. I fetch scraps for apron. For dinner, I make halupkis.

MOLLY
That's what I smell. *(PHONE RINGS two short twice. NANNA enters with pipe in mouth, quickly remove it and hides it. SHE picks up phone in eavesdropping mode. MOLLY watches. Beat. NANNA hangs up.)* Wrong number, Ma?

NANNA
(Ignoring MOLLY) Whatever's cooking it stinks.

MOLLY
Halupki. Stella made it special.

NANNA
This isn't Poland in case you forgot. Polopkees!

MOLLY
Halupkis, Ma.

STELLA
Halupkis. You like?

(PHONE RINGS one long.)

NANNA
I'll get it.

MOLLY
Maybe it's another wrong number.

NANNA

Hello. *(Beat. To STELLA)* For you. The foreman's missus.

STELLA

Call for me? *(In phone)* Yes?

(STELLA speaks sotto voce in Polish. FRANK and PHIL enter backyard, hang overalls, MOLLY gets water for them to wash.)

PHIL

Whatever you're cookin' I could smell it coming up the hill.

(FRANK and PHIL enter through kitchen. PHIL chases MOLLY around table again.)

MOLLY

Now that's enough. I'll spill the water.

PHIL

(Sniffs the air) Lucky we don't have half the mine here for supper.

JODY

Stella made it. Halupkis.

NANNA

Cabbage.

STELLA

(Hanging up phone and crossing to FRANK) Tired? Working hard?

FRANK

Nah. Just another day in. You got a phone call?

STELLA

Is Lara.

FRANK

Lara Evans?

STELLA

She tell me mine slow. Work three days only.

PHIL

They're going to close. You can bet on it.

MOLLY

Oh, God, Phillie. What'll we do?

NANNA

Don't tell me about slowdowns. Your father was out for twenty weeks in thirty seven.

PHIL

Maybe we can go to Pittston.

NANNA

We knew what it was like, not knowing if we'd eat.

STELLA

Lara say new mill open in place where the food store is empty. I work there?

FRANK

I didn't bring you over here to work.

MOLLY

I'd go, too. If I could sew.

STELLA

Lara say they teach how sew machine.

MOLLY

We could walk there.

JODY

Who'll take care of me?

PHIL

Nobody's going any place. I don't know how they do it over there in Poland. Here, the man takes care of his family.

MOLLY

Just for a while, Phillie?

PHIL

Goddamit, Molly. No.

NANNA

I wish I could have walked to work in thirty-seven. We had vegetable soup and bread to eat every day. Your father and I were out of our minds with worry. I would have done anything.

PHIL

My wife's not working.

STELLA

I'm sorry to say about job.

NANNA

(To PHIL) Whoever can get a job should work. You can't eat pride.

PHIL

(To NANNA) Things sure as hell are changing around here.

(PHIL exits. FRANK follows. NANNA exits to her room. MOLLY and JODY look after PHIL and FRANK. STELLA stares out window. LIGHTS FADE OUT.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

(AT RISE: Weeks later, another Sunday morning; SOUND of soap-opera playing on the radio. FRANK and PHIL open the door for MOLLY, JODY and STELLA, just returning from high mass. NANNA, off, talking with FLOSSIE.)

FRANK

One good thing about the war. I didn't have to listen to Father Kane. I don't know what's worse, the same old sermons or the times when he thinks he has something new to say and forgets what he's talking about.

PHIL

Twenty solid minutes today. I thought he'd never give it up.

FRANK

Ma was all over him. "Lovely sermon, father. Inspiring, father. You give us so much to ponder."

PHIL

He could say let's shoot all the old people at noon on the third bridge and she'd tell him it was a lovely, lovely sermon, Father. Indeed, inspiring it was. She still yakking with Flossie out there?

FRANK

Yeh. They only spent all day yesterday on the bus.

PHIL

That was yesterday.

MOLLY

Be nice, Phillie. They have to go over all the high mass gossip.

JODY

I hope we have bacon.

PHIL

Ma's probably soothing the waters with Flossie.

MOLLY

Hush with that. It will sort itself out.

STELLA

(As MOLLY sets table) I make bacon.

JODY

Can we have eggs too?

MOLLY

Change your clothes first.

(JODY exits to her room.)

STELLA

I make to eat for everyone.

FRANK

I guess somebody's got to work on Sunday.

STELLA

Not understand. Priest talk about factory.

NANNA

(Entering) The nerve of that man. *(NANNA puts hat on rack)* As if he ever had to provide for a family. Chicken dinner every Sunday. I'd like to know who Father Kane thinks makes that dinner. That Millie Pryor waits on him hand and foot. He has the nerve to say women should stay home. What are we supposed to do--eat grass?

PHIL

Like the kids in Greece, Ma?

NANNA

(Hits PHIL) Don't mock your mother. Who fed you in the Depression?

PHIL

C'mon, Ma. Don't get wound up. We're just havin' a little fun.

NANNA

I don't like to talk against the Church. But that man has no common sense. Half the women in town start at the mill tomorrow and he has to make them feel bad about it.

We're lucky to be in that half. MOLLY
 I said we'd try it. We'll see how it goes. PHIL
 Thanks to Stella. MOLLY
 Thanks my friend Lara you say. Her telling me. STELLA
(Entering from bedroom, clothes changed) “Thanks to my friend, Lara” you should say— JODY
 Jody. Stop. MOLLY
 No, Molly. Is good for me. She teach. STELLA
 She's learning, mommy. JODY
 Father High and Mighty talking against the women who work— as if they didn't want to be home with the little ones. NANNA
 I wasn't the only one, was I? PHIL
 Don't get in the same boat with him. MOLLY
 Kane's come down a peg or two around here since the war. FRANK
 Priest see. Women work good. STELLA
 There now. Even this one knows. NANNA
 Ma. FRANK

PHIL

It's only for a couple of weeks. The Flynn boys will find something.

MOLLY

Then we'll quit. So what are we worried about.

(The Angelus chimes.)

STELLA

Why bells rin-ging now? Church over.

JODY

(Correcting STELLA) Ringing. Ringing.

MOLLY

Jody—

STELLA

No. I ask her help me say right. Ring-ing. *(SHE gets it right this time)* Ringing.

FRANK

You got it, Stella.

STELLA

I try more hard.

ALL

(Laughing) Harder.

STELLA

(Upset) I never talk American right.

(STELLA exits.)

MOLLY

She didn't have to take it like that. C'mon, Jody, we'll talk to her.

(MOLLY and JODY exit. FRANK starts to leave as well.)

PHIL

Frankie. Gimme one of those Luckies.

(Frank tosses him the pack as he calls after STELLA.)

FRANK

Stella!

(FRANK exits. PHIL turns on radio. A Lucky Strike commercial plays. PHIL gets coffee, sits by radio, pulls out cigarette. LIGHTS FADE OUT.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

(AT RISE: The following evening. MOLLY enters, STELLA just behind. THEY are in housedresses with their hair in bandannas just returning from work.)

MOLLY

God, it's like a steam bath in that place.

STELLA

Machines get hot, yes?

MOLLY

Too hot for me. *(MOLLY sits)* C'mon, Stell. Take a load off.

STELLA

(Sitting) There. Load off, yes?

MOLLY

You got it. *(Beat)* Cripes, what a day!

STELLA

What a day!

MOLLY

I still have a lot to learn.

STELLA

You do good. Machine go fast. You learn. We make money.

MOLLY

I'll catch on. You do what you have to do.

STELLA

Is good work.

MOLLY

(Removing a slip from her pocket) The faster I go the more I make. Three bucks today.

STELLA

We join club for Christmas, yes?

MOLLY

Christmas Club, Stell. Maybe. Maybe not. We could use that money every week.

STELLA

They save money for us. Is good. We don't spend.

MOLLY

Phil says it's our money. We should get it when we make it.

STELLA

I think no. We save for Christmas.

MOLLY

God, Stell. I hope we're out of that sweatbox long before that. I can't imagine doing this for the rest of my life. *(Beat)* No place for us.

STELLA

Good have plan. Work is good. I like. More Christmas money.

MOLLY

If it comes to that.

STELLA

Make supper?

MOLLY

Nah, they won't be home for awhile. Relax, honey. Let your hair down. *(STELLA loosens her hair. MOLLY laughs. STELLA's confused.)* That, too. *(MOLLY removes her bandana.)* Cripes, I hate this more than anything. Putting my hair up. I'm afraid to look in the mirror.

STELLA

Not look bad. *(As MOLLY frees her hair)* Rule in factory. Danger in machine.

MOLLY

I know. I know. Safety first. I still hate it.

STELLA

Lady caught in machine. Pulled out her head.

MOLLY

(Laughs) Hair caught, Stell. Pulled out her *hair*. How 'bout a Lucky, honey?

(MOLLY takes cigarettes from purse, hands one to STELLA.)

STELLA

L S M F T.

MOLLY

You're catching on swell.

STELLA

I hear on radio when I learn. Lucky Strike Mean Fine Tobacco.

MOLLY

Now there's an idea. I need music.

STELLA

Is good. I learn English with songs. Remember words.

(STELLA turns on radio, MUSIC plays. SHE twirls to APPLE BLOSSOM TIME as LIGHTS FADE OUT on living room and up on porch.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 7

(AT RISE: The same evening. FRANK and PHIL, drinking beer on the porch.)

FRANK

Jesus. Up and down the valley.

PHIL

All the mines will be closed by winter.

FRANK

The war wasn't bad enough. Never thought we'd come home and be out of work.

PHIL

What'll we do?

FRANK

Stella's been through enough. Now she's working in a factory paying for my food.

PHIL

Dragging Molly in with her.

FRANK

Don't start with that again.

PHIL

What kind of man lets his wife—

FRANK

What choice do we have? *(Beat)* But I know what you mean. I wanted her first Christmas to be special. Our own place by then.

PHIL

You love her?

FRANK

Married her, didn't? *(Beat)* You're not saying anything. You don't like her?

PHIL

Nah. Nothing like that. I just thought— ladies man —bound to get yourself in trouble.

FRANK

What the hell. Maybe that's how it used to be. But over there— the stuff I saw—Jesus Christ!

PHIL

You sure got a short fuse on you now. You've changed, Frank.

FRANK

Damned right, I've changed. War changes everybody.

PHIL

Lots of people in town calling you a real bastard.

FRANK

I don't give a damn. Let 'em talk. As long as they don't take it out on Stella.

PHIL

Ah, you're still a dreamer, Frank.

FRANK

What the hell do you know? You weren't over there.

PHIL

I'm not judging you. *(Beat)* But the town is.

FRANK

As soon as I met Stella, I knew I had to tell Bridget. Then we moved up on the lines. We got into it again. I was looking out for my own ass. I thought okay, soon as I'm out of this one I'll send her a letter. Next thing you know another fire fight, then another—

PHIL

You know what Pop would say? *(In older man's voice)* That's an explanation— not an excuse.

FRANK

If I wanted a sermon, I'll ask Father Kane. *(Beat)* She lost her family in the war.

PHIL

When she screams at night...those nightmares? Never heard anything like it. That word—over and over.

FRANK

Tekla. Her sister. She loved her so much. *(Beat)* Stella. I saw that hair first. She turned around— saw me looking at her. She smiled...that was it. She was so beautiful. Broke my heart. Now all I want to do is make life good for her. Maybe that's what love means when you come right down to it. *(Beat)* Malloy's?

PHIL

Malloy's.

(LIGHTS FADE DOWN as MUSIC FADES IN: A White Christmas.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 8

(AT RISE: Shortly before Christmas. MUSIC continues to play. LIGHTS UP on STELLA, now very pregnant, dancing in the center of the living room. MOLLY sits at the dining table counting wage slips. NANNA and JODY enter. STELLA stops dancing and turns off the radio, MUSIC OUT.)

MOLLY

Sixty-one, sixty-two. Sixty-three. *(Noticing Jody)* You're late.

JODY

The Christmas play. I'm a talking angel.

NANNA

No surprise there.

JODY

I get to stand right next to the baby Jesus.

NANNA

No surprise there either.

JODY

(To NANNA) What if Stella's baby came on Christmas, too? *(To STELLA)* Will you name it Jesus?

STELLA

(Rubbing her back) Oh, I hope before that. My baby's a girl. *(Exits to kitchen to check on dinner.)*

JODY

Why can't we get a baby too? *(ALL look at MOLLY.)*

MOLLY

Sixty-four, sixty-five, SIXTY-SIX!

JODY

A sister.

STELLA

(Entering with plates, setting table.) My baby can be like your sister. She's a girl.

NANNA

Now how would you know that?

STELLA

I just know. A little girl. Tekla.

NANNA

Tek-la! Whoever heard of such a name for an Irish baby?

(NANNA opens a cupboard and pulls out boxed milk, which she pours into a glass for JODY.)

STELLA

My baby is American.

MOLLY

It's her baby.

NANNA

Frankie's, too. You'll not forget that.

STELLA

He likes Tekla. *(Exiting to kitchen for more dinner items.)*

NANNA

(Sarcastically as NANNA gives JODY glass of milk.) To be sure.

JODY

Arrrghh! Box milk. Why do I have to drink that stuff? Why can't we get Burschel's?

NANNA

You're lucky to have it.

STELLA

(Entering, To JODY) Did you forget?

JODY

I know. I know.

JODY AND STELLA

(In unison) Children in Greece are eating grass.

MOLLY

(To Jody) Run over to Malloy's and tell your father and Unkle Frank it's time for supper.

(NANNA gets JODY's coat and puts it on her.)

NANNA

It's cold. *(JODY exits just as PHIL and FRANK head up the porch, stomping off their boots.)*

MOLLY

Smells good. *(Begins to help set the table.)*

STELLA

Kapusta.

NANNA

Cabbage.

MOLLY

(Changing the subject) We'll all know Jody's lines by heart before this is over.

NANNA

Remember when our Frankie was an angel? People are still talking about how gorgeous he was.

(JODY, PHIL and FRANK enter.)

PHIL

The angel's home. His brother too.

FRANK

(Hanging up his coat.) –Yeah, and Sister Edward Michael Joseph knocked the feathers off my wings more than once 'cause I forgot my lines. I thought she'd be dead by now.

NANNA

She's my age. Show some respect. *(Beat)* See what happens when you do too many shifts on barstools over there at Malloy's with those good-for-nothing dreamers.

FRANK

We've been up and down the line lookin' for work.

PHIL

The only way we're gonna get something is to put on a dress.

FRANK

Phil.

PHIL

Wouldn't we look swell in hairnets.

MOLLY

C'mon Phillie. We've got food for the table.

PHIL

Give us a little credit. If we stop for a drink it doesn't mean we're going to turn into stumblebums.

NANNA

(Placated) Sister Edward Michael Joseph was only a year ahead of me. Mary Walsh, she was then. Played the piano like a wonder.

MOLLY

You look a lot younger than her.

NANNA

It's the habit. Squeezes their faces together. *(NANNA squeezes her cheeks together)* It's bound to age them. *(Beat)* Younger? Do I now?

STELLA

You are, Nanna.

NANNA

(Stares at STELLA for a moment. Smiles.) Then I should be getting my beauty sleep, wouldn't you say?

FRANK

(Hugs her) You're my beauty, Ma. *(FRANK squeezes his cheeks together.)* How's this for being a nun?

NANNA

You're still an angel, Frankie. Would you mind holdin' dinner for a half hour? I need a bit of a lie down. God bless you all. *(To Phil)* And you too, ya brat. *(SHE exits to her room.)*

PHIL

Ah, Frankie, you're still an angel.

FRANK

Maybe I should put in for that job. My wings might be rusty but what the hell.

STELLA

I make lunches ready for tomorrow while we wait.

(STELLA limps slightly as she goes towards the kitchen.)

FRANK

You okay?

MOLLY

God, you're swollen, honey. Get your feet up.

FRANK

(Pulls out chair for STELLA. HE sits on the floor next to her, sets her feet on the stool and rubs them.) You're not going back.

STELLA

I'm just tired a little.

FRANK

You shouldn't be working.

PHIL

I been thinking. You get the Christmas Club on Friday?

MOLLY

Oh, no you don't. That's for Christmas and the baby.

PHIL

What do you have in now?

FRANK

Whatever you're cooking up, leave their money out of it.

MOLLY

You didn't want us to do it in the first place.

PHIL

I was wrong. *(Beat)* So, how much do we have?

FRANK

Goddamit, Phil.

STELLA

A plan? Maybe we should listen.

PHIL

(Mimes Christmas tree shapes with hands. Everyone looks blankly at him) Christmas trees.
(Silence) We'll sell'em up and down the line. Go to Scranton.

MOLLY

You're nuts.

FRANK

Christmas trees? You lost your mind?

STELLA

We have Christmas trees?

PHIL

We rent a truck. Go upstate New York. Buy a load of trees and bring them back.

MOLLY

In other words, what do we have in the Christmas Club? Not on your life are you gonna touch that money.

FRANK

(Warming to the idea) What do we need, Phil?

PHIL

Ten bucks for the gas and the truck. Drive up to a tree farm. Load the truck a dime a tree. Sell'em in Scranton for fifty cents, maybe even a buck.

MOLLY

I worked too damned hard for that money.

FRANK

How many trees?

STELLA

(Pulls pay stub from purse) I save twenty-two dollars?

PHIL

Times two?

(MOLLY fumes and exits to kitchen for food for dinner. STELLA calculates on paper)

STELLA

Forty-four. Ten dollars truck. Thirty-four. *(Calculates)*

PHIL

We can get a lot of trees for that. We'll sell them and that'll give us time to find something steady. (*MOLLY enters with a bowl of hot food.*) Then you can stay home.

MOLLY

(*Resigned, setting dish on the table.*) Three against one.

PHIL

How many dresses do you have to sew to make a hundred bucks?

MOLLY

(*Exits to the kitchen once again.*) You're dreaming.

(*LIGHTS FADE OUT*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 9

(*AT RISE: Several days later. LIGHTS UP on FLORENCE and NANNA smoking their pipes.*)

NANNA

(*Sighs*) Tek-la.

FLORENCE

Well, it's not what I would pick, now would I?

NANNA

It's a beautiful name. Tekla. It has a ring to it.

FLORENCE

And what's wrong with Catherine. Or Margaret. Or Agnes?

NANNA

It's her baby.

FLORENCE

Mmmm. (*Beat*) Number five's shut for good.

NANNA

We're already feeding Jody box milk. And another one on the way.

FLORENCE

Don't worry. Something'll turn up.

NANNA

(Brightens) The boyos are onto something. You can't let on, Floss.

FLORENCE

And that would be?

NANNA

(Thinks better of it.) You'll know soon enough.

(They puff their pipes a beat)

FLORENCE

I guess we can both have our secrets.

NANNA

And what do you mean by that?

FLORENCE

Time will tell.

NANNA

How's Bridget taking it?

FLORENCE

She's fine. Right as rain.

NANNA

Frank did it wrong.

FLORENCE

It's not your part to make up for him.

NANNA

Still, he coulda...

FLORENCE

If wishes were horses...

NANNA

I know. Beggars would ride.

FLORENCE

So leave it.

NANNA

I didn't think one of my boyos would do something like that.

FLORENCE

It was a mistake to begin with. We should have stayed out of it.

NANNA

Aye.

FLORENCE

There's ice on the river.

NANNA

There is.

FLORENCE

You'll be glad having a wee one to watch after so long.

NANNA

Tekla. Tekla. I'll get used to it. For sure I will.

(LIGHTS FADE OUT)

ACT ONE, SCENE 9

(AT RISE: Later that night, near dawn. The silent darkness is broken by STELLA's screams.)

STELLA, *(O.S.)*

(Screaming) Teeeeeeklaaaaaa! Teeeeeeklaaaaa!

FRANK, *(O.S.)*

It's okay, Stell. It's okay. I'm here.

(PHIL, MOLLY enter – LIGHTS UP as MOLLY turns on living room light. NANNA enters)

PHIL

She having the baby?

NANNA

Jesus, Mary and Joseph. I thought the house was burning down.

MOLLY

(STELLA'S murmuring cry underscores the dialogue.) She's having one of those dreams again.

NIGHTMARES.
NANNA

THE WAR.
PHIL

SHE PUTS ON A GOOD FACE DURING THE DAY.
MOLLY

FRANK SAYS SHE WON'T TALK ABOUT IT.
PHIL

NO GOOD KEEPING THINGS BOTTLED UP.
NANNA

(STELLA'S cries subside.)

SHE'S QUIET NOW. I'M GOING BACK TO BED. *(Molly exits)*
MOLLY

SOMETHING YOU GOT BOTTLED UP, PHIL?
NANNA

(Stares at NANNA. Long Beat.) I've been meaning to talk to you about it, Ma.
PHIL

NANNA
You and that brother of yours. Selling Christmas trees in the middle of Scranton like shanty Irish. Neither of you with a lick of sense. He marries that Polack and you— you with your hair-brained ideas. Another kid on the way now. I'll end up watching that one, too. And where are we going to put it? All of us crammed in here like steerage.

PHIL
Ma—

NANNA
I'll not be giving you one penny for those trees. Dumbest thing I every heard. If your father ever.

PHIL
Don't drag Pop into this. You kept your heel on his throat his whole life. Ridiculed every good idea he ever came up with.

NANNA
I wish you'd all just get the hell out and leave me alone. I'm too old for all this worry. I ended up with nothing but a pack of dreamers.

(JODY enters in angel costume. Flaps her angel wings. Circles the kitchen.)

PHIL

What's my angel doing up so early?

JODY

Why is Stella crying?

NANNA

Baby Jesus wouldn't like your robe dragging on the ground. Flap yourself up on that chair so I can fix it. *(Pulls chair out.)*

JODY

(Rubbing her eyes as she climbs onto the chair) Lo, what light beckoneth in the distance? Do wise men cometh?

NANNA

(Taking some pins from the drawer on telephone table) I don't believe a word of it.

JODY

That's what I'm supposed to say.

NANNA

Hold still.

JODY

Lo, what light beckoneth—

NANNA

Sounds like your times tables. Don't wiggle. Say it again.

JODY

(FRANK enters) Lo, what light beckoneth in the distance? Do wise men cometh?

FRANK

The wise man is here.

NANNA

And just in time. Frankie, tell her how you saw the wise men coming.

FRANK

(Poses like an angel) Lo, what light beckoneth in the distance? Do wise men cometh?

NANNA

There now. Sister Edward Michael Joseph would love that.

FRANK

Fat Eddie.

NANNA

Not to her face, you didn't. And live to tell it.

JODY

That's what we call her. I mean the boys.

(PHIL and FRANK break out in laughter.)

NANNA

Give me those lines again.

JODY

I hope I can say it like Uncle Frank.

NANNA

They still talk about what a gorgeous angel our Frankie was. His head was a mass of curls.

FRANK

(Hamming it up) Lo, what light beckoneth--

PHIL

(In good humor) House full of angels. Last thing I'd thought I'd see this morning. And Ma on her knees no less.

JODY

(Grand gesture to PHIL) Lo, what light beckoneth—

FRANK

(Peering out) I don't see a light out there?

JODY

I'm just pretending.

FRANK

You have to believe it's there.

JODY

But it's not.

FRANK

Then it won't be. Honey, Sister Edward Michael Joseph wants everybody to know that light's really out there. So, it's up to you. You have to make them believe it.

PHIL

Like Fat Eddie's coat hanger halos?

NANNA

Everybody believed they were halos.

JODY

Beckoneth. Who believes that? Nobody knows what it means.

PHIL

It's old-fashioned talk.

NANNA

Like prayers, honey. You don't have to know what all the words mean to believe them. Sometimes the sound of them just makes you feel good.

PHIL

You sound like FDR, Ma.

NANNA

Don't speak ill of the dead. *(To JODY)* Now turn. And *stop* wiggling.

JODY

(With much improvement) Lo, what light beckoneth in the distance? Do wise men cometh?

FRANK

Look. There they are. I see them.

PHIL

There are three of them.
(Applause. AD LIB kudos to JODY)

FRANK

(Sings off key) Angels we have heard on high--

NANNA

Don't wear it out, boys. Today's only Monday. We've got a week to go.

(ALL laugh as LIGHTS FADE OUT)

ACT ONE, SCENE 10

(AT RISE: Friday evening after a long week of work. LIGHTS UP as MOLLY enters angrily, tossing her purse on the chair. STELLA follows, perplexed, looking at MOLLY.)

STELLA

You didn't wait for me.

MOLLY

I don't like to stand around gabbing.

STELLA

You left without me this morning too.

MOLLY

(Shrugs, letting her hair down) You're always yakking Polish.

STELLA

All she said was "jak sie masz". Then we talk English. It feels good to speak my tongue sometimes.

MOLLY

You always seem to have a lot to talk about.

STELLA

(Realizing) The tree money.

MOLLY

Nothing to do with that.

STELLA

You've been angry about that all week.

MOLLY

If you want to let them risk our savings...

STELLA

They'll sell the trees...

MOLLY

We make fun of Ma going on about the Depression. But what if it happens again?

STELLA

They'll sell the trees, then we have more money.

MOLLY

(Coolly) That's all the money we have.

STELLA

(Pause, digging in her satchel) I forget. Look what Lara gave me. *(Pulls out a bunch of large metal wave clips)* Tomorrow we try these, yes?

MOLLY

(Curious despite herself) Do you think this is how Bridget Roche got her hair all wavy?

STELLA

The way she had it at Mass?

MOLLY

Yeah.

STELLA

She doesn't like me.

MOLLY

Bridget?

STELLA

Her mother too.

MOLLY

Can you blame them?

STELLA

(Confused) Because I am Polish?

MOLLY

(Beat) He didn't tell you?

STELLA

I did something wrong?

MOLLY

Not you. Frank.

STELLA

They don't like Frank?

MOLLY

(Reluctant but relishing it) He doesn't let on. Acts like there's nothing wrong.

STELLA

I know something wrong.

How? Big mouth Lara Evans? MOLLY

People. STELLA

People? MOLLY

They act funny. STELLA

(Beat) He figured you'd never find out. MOLLY

What is it? STELLA

Men. They can be so thick sometimes. MOLLY

What? Tell me. STELLA

Typical Flynn. Pretend something doesn't exist and it doesn't. *(Softens toward Stella)* He plops you down in the middle of that mess and then ignores it. MOLLY

The middle of what mess? STELLA

Frank and Bridget. MOLLY

Bridget? Roche? I want to know what? STELLA

(Beat) Engaged. MOLLY

I'm not understanding. STELLA

Engaged. *(Beat)* To be married. MOLLY

STELLA

(Stunned.) No, this cannot be. He would tell me this.

MOLLY

Didn't it occur to you? That he had a life here. Someone to come back to.

STELLA

Why wouldn't he tell me?

MOLLY

Didn't tell Bridget either.

STELLA

This is not like him. Lots of soldiers like that over there. But not Frank.

MOLLY

Before the war. Around the girls—a good looking guy like Frank. They were all in love with him.

STELLA

(Devastated) Why didn't I know this thing?

MOLLY

That's how it was, honey.

STELLA

I should not have come.

(FRANK, PHIL enter)

PHIL

We got the truck.

FRANK

We're leaving in the morning. Get there by ten, couple of hours to load the trees, be home by supper.

(FRANK tries to hug STELLA who rejects his attention)

STELLA

(Taking the cash from her purse, handing it to PHIL) Christmas Club. I don't want this.

(STELLA exits)

FRANK

Stell? *(Beat)* What was that all about?

MOLLY
You should have told her.

FRANK
About what?

MOLLY
Bridget.

FRANK
Jesus, Molly. I figured I could count on you to keep that under wraps.

MOLLY
Did you want the town to tell her first? *(Beat)* Bridget sits two machines away at the Blue Seam. It's a miracle she didn't hear it already at work.

FRANK
I'll talk to her after I take out the ashes.

MOLLY
Just tell her the truth. *(FRANK exits to the porch)* She deserves that much.

PHIL
What about it, Molly?

MOLLY
I only told her because she knew something was going on.

PHIL
Molly, Molly. Three women in one house? All trying to get one over on each other. You put her in her place, made you feel powerful.

MOLLY
It wasn't...

PHIL
Are you going to give me the tree money or not?

MOLLY
You mean the money I put aside so that Jodie could have a nice Christmas.

PHIL
I only need it for a while.

MOLLY
Sure.

PHIL

They shoulda named that place the Blue Steam. Ever since you hit that factory, you've been on a real tear.

MOLLY

I'm tired.

PHIL

This was your idea. I didn't want you going into the pants factory.

MOLLY

And what would we be doing now for money?

PHIL

Are all the women turning into bitches or just you?

MOLLY

Because we want to have a say in what happens to the money we're sweating our arses off for?

PHIL

Because now that you wear the pants around here you can't stand the thought that we might turn a little profit.

(MOLLY starts to say something then stops. She cries softly)

PHIL

(Softens) The mines can't stay closed forever.

MOLLY

It's not just the money.

PHIL

Then?

MOLLY

Listen to us. When did we start ripping into each other like this? You're right. I told Stella because I couldn't stand how she is all the time. *(Imitates Stella)* Frankie, Frankie, Frankie, I'll go to work. Frankie, Frankie, Frankie here, take my money. Like he's some kind of saint.

PHIL

(Laughing) Not a saint. An angel maybe.

MOLLY

Sorry. *(Goes to the phone table and opens the drawer and takes out a wad of bills similar to Stella's, hands it to Phil)*

PHIL

(Holds her and draws a deep breath) Okay, my turn...

MOLLY

What?

PHIL

Promise me you won't blow your stack.

MOLLY

I will if you don't tell me.

PHIL

The deal. It's not as good as we thought.

MOLLY

Go on.

PHIL

Went to pick up the truck. Old man Doyle, he said he'd rent it to us for ten bucks, complete, for the day. Frankie and I get over there and the ten's just for the rental. The gas, we gotta spring for. And then he tacks on extra three for insurance. Cause we're going out of state. Says there's bad weather. We have to rent chains.

MOLLY

You should have thought about all that before.

PHIL

I felt like telling him he could stick his truck, but we'll never find another rig by tomorrow. Changes the numbers though. Won't make out as well.

MOLLY

Not much you can do about it now.

(NANNA and JODY enter)

PHIL

What kept you two ladies?

JODY

Dress rehearsal, Daddy. Two more days. Did you forget?

PHIL

(Arm around Molly) Never.

JODY

I'm the only angel who knew her lines.

PHIL

Tomorrow, if you say your lines perfectly we'll see what ice cream parlor beckoneth.

MOLLY

I'm exhausted. I need to rest for a moment before we start dinner.

NANNA

Jody, help your mother off with her dress and come back down and set the table.

PHIL

I'll help your mother. You get out of those wings before you spill something on them.

(NANNA exits to the kitchen, PHIL, JODY, and MOLLY exit to their rooms. FRANK enters from outside and pours a glass of water. Drinks it. STELLA enters. SHE stands silent regarding FRANK. HE turns and looks at her.)

FRANK

So you know about Bridget. I'm sorry.

STELLA

You're telling the wrong person.

FRANK

Who should I be telling?

STELLA

Start with the woman you were engaged to.

FRANK

(Beat) I should have told you.

STELLA

How could you do that? She's a nice girl.

FRANK

I don't know. When I met you. It became clear to me how— how I could really feel about someone. Before I knew it, I'd put this town, my family, all of it, out of my mind.

STELLA

That woman was waiting for you.

FRANK

I know how narrow-minded this town can be. Nobody ever forgets anything.

STELLA

(In charge now) She was in love with you. Who can forget it?

FRANK

It wasn't... Flossie and my ma grew up together. It was like the same family. People expected it. I expected it. And I guess it would have worked. But then the war. Even if I didn't meet you—and fall in love with you— It wouldn't have worked with Bridget when I came back. The war changed me. It changed everything.

STELLA

You must speak with her.

FRANK

There's just been so much. The mine closing and getting back into...

STELLA

You must do this. *(Beat)* Or as soon as I have our baby, I will leave.

FRANK

O God, Stella, no. Don't talk crazy.

STELLA

I'll never fit in here.

FRANK

I love you. I know I should have straightened things out with Bridget as soon as we got back.

STELLA

So you will do it now.

FRANK

Soon.

STELLA

Now.

FRANK

(Moves toward STELLA) When we come back with the trees.

STELLA

(Stops him with a look) When you come back with the trees? Leave me. Now.

(FRANK exits without saying a word. STELLA sits in the chair and covers herself with a blanket. LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.)

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

(AT RISE: Early the next morning. LIGHTS UP on MOLLY making lunches for the men as STELLA sleeping restlessly in the chair where SHE spent the night. SHE moans and frets then moans again.)

MOLLY

(Crossing to STELLA) Stella. Stella, honey. You okay. C'mon, wake up. Are you alright?

(STELLA stirs)

STELLA

(Moans, half awake) Feel funny. I'm so tired.

MOLLY

It's morning. You sat there all night. Let's get you some coffee. I have to get the sandwiches for the boys.

STELLA

Don't say anything to them. I just lay in the bed for a minute.

(MOLLY helps STELLA out of the room as PHIL enters from the porch.)

MOLLY

So there you are.

PHIL

Truck's ready.

MOLLY

Food's ready. There's baloney and cheese for you. Liverwurst and onion for Frank.

PHIL

Don't mix'em up. What kind of mick would eat liverwurst?

MOLLY

Frankie developed exotic tastes in Germany.

PHIL

Good thing he wasn't in France. We'd be hauling snails along.

MOLLY

Cinnamon buns, coffee in the thermos, hard-boiled eggs—

PHIL

Christ, woman. Between the liverwurst and the eggs, we won't have to buy gas for the truck.

MOLLY

Just drive with the windows down. It'll keep you awake.

(FRANK enters from porch, dressed warmly for the trip.)

FRANK

You sending us away for a week?

MOLLY

I'm just looking out for you.

(The PHONE RINGS one long.)

NANNA *(O.S.)*

I'll get it.

(NANNA rushes in with hat box, satchel, and purse wearing winter coat and stone marten boa. Picks up phone.)

NANNA

Hello. Yes. Yes, Maggie. *(Searches her satchel.)* No, I wouldn't forget your talcum powder. *(Pause)* Maggie, no, it's not snowing. *(Pause)* Yes, I'll bring my rubbers just in case. *(Pause)* Yes, they're off this morning. No flies on my boys. Driving all that way. *(Pause)* Oh yes, of course. God will be with them. *(Pause)* Yes, Maggie, God be with you, too. Maggie. Maggie, if I don't get off from here, I'll miss the bus. Then I won't be coming at all. *(Pause)* Yes, yes I will. Goodbye, Maggie. *(Hangs up.)* It was Maggie. *(She retrieves her hat.)* She could talk the leg off a table.

FRANK

Where's Stella?

PHIL

I'll watch for a fresh beast in the woods for your neck, Ma, up north there.

NANNA

(She takes the fur piece off and puts it back in the box.) Don't be going on about my good stone marten.

PHIL

Aren't you going to wear it?

NANNA

Won't do to be showing off down there. That convent is a gossip mill.

PHIL

Ma, we'll drop you off.

NANNA

Never mind that. I'm taking the bus. *(NANNA hands money to PHIL.)* But you might be needing this though.

PHIL

What's this?

NANNA

Not a word. A little something just in case. *(To Frank)* Who's driving?

FRANK

I am.

NANNA

Thank God. *(To Molly)* You're in charge now, watch the house. Well I'm off. *(To FRANK and PHIL)* God bless ya. Goodbye!

(NANNA exits carrying hat box and purse, PHIL picks up satchel and runs after her onto the porch)

PHIL

Ma, ma, you forgot.

NANNA

Oh, God love ya. *(SHE takes satchel and hands him hat box.)*

PHIL

(ENTERS house with satchel.) Crack Pot.

FRANK

Stella must have fallen back to sleep.

MOLLY

I guess. Shall I—

FRANK

Tell her I said goodbye.

MOLLY

I'm going back to bed, too. Be careful out there. The paper says we might have some snow. *(MOLLY kisses PHIL and FRANK goodbye. EXITS to bedroom)*

What if it warms up?

PHIL

It's December.

FRANK

Still and all.

PHIL

It'll be cold enough.

FRANK

You can't sell trees that don't have needles.

PHIL

He said as long as it stays under forty-five.

FRANK

(*Beat*) Who's going to want bare-naked trees? (*Pause*) Sounds like we're in for some tricky driving.

PHIL

Relax. I went halfway across Europe in stuff like this. You see any marks on me. Hunh?

FRANK

No marks.

PHIL

Let's just get on with it.

FRANK

(*FRANK and PHIL exit house as LIGHTS FADE OUT.*)

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

(*AT RISE: Same day, late afternoon. LIGHTS UP on MOLLY alone, going through a box of Christmas decorations. STELLA shrieks off-stage.*)

(*Rising quickly*) Oh, my God. What now?

MOLLY

(*Running into the room*) Frank! Frank!

STELLA

MOLLY

They're gone, Stella. You fell back to sleep. He didn't want to wake you.

STELLA

(Hysterical) Where is he?

MOLLY

They're gone. They left first this morning. You've been sleeping all day.

STELLA

We have to stop them.

MOLLY

Stella, they left hours ago.

STELLA

I was dreaming about Tekla. It was as though she was warning me. Something bad for Frank and Phil. Out on the road.

MOLLY

They're fine.

STELLA

Always she warns me. How can we tell them?

MOLLY

There's nothing we can do now. Try to relax.

STELLA

I think something bad... I sat up all night. I couldn't sleep.

MOLLY

That business with Bridget has you upset.

STELLA

I took what was hers and I can't give it back.

MOLLY

C'mon, Stell. A person isn't a cake pan—something you can borrow and give back.

STELLA

You know what I mean. Now with the baby coming, I can't just leave.

MOLLY

Don't even say that. Frankie was wrong. He adores you. He should have told her.

STELLA

He should have told me.

MOLLY

Jody and I ate early, she had play practice again. I saved you a plate. *(As SHE exits to the kitchen)* There was no big romance. Ma practically forced him into it. *(Entering with plate)* You know how she can be.

STELLA

Yes. This I know.

MOLLY

Eat. She got it in her mind that if he didn't have some tether he'd run wild over there.

STELLA

What you said yesterday. Frankie having so many girls.

MOLLY

God, did he ever. A different one every week. But none of them mattered. Never as crazy about anyone as he is about you. *(Beat)* He's different now.

STELLA

I hope this is true.

MOLLY

There's nothing to worry about. About anything. We just need to keep busy. God knows there's plenty to do around here of a Saturday. You can help me put up the Christmas decorations.

(MOLLY takes a wreath from the box and looks for the right place to hang it.)

STELLA

I can make halupki.

MOLLY

(Laughs.) Oh, God. Nanna hates garlic. Let's stink up the house with it. Get even for the pipe.

STELLA

Did she take with her? *(Crossing into kitchen)*

MOLLY

(Looking in the tin) Nope. No smoking in the convent. No wonder she hates going there.

STELLA

(From kitchen) She isn't so bad.

MOLLY

(Continuing to decorate) It's still nice to have the house to ourselves for a day.

STELLA

(Entering) Cabbage is cooking.

MOLLY

You're feeling better.

STELLA

The baby's telling me she smells the cabbage.

MOLLY

Kicking like a Flynn. Won't be long, huh?

STELLA

Two weeks. *(BEAT. Starts back towards kitchen.)* Come, I show you halupkis. It's simple. You take the leaf in your hand. Put the meat in the leaf. Roll it tight. Cozy-like little babies in a blanket, yes?

MOLLY

Blankets? That reminds me. *(Crossing to an unopened box on the table.)* I have Jody's baby things here. I brought them down from the attic when I was getting the decorations. Blankets, bibs, kimonos. We can wash them.

STELLA

That will be good. Funny thing this. Lara gives me boy's clothes but I know it's a girl.

MOLLY

Boys are a handful. Frank and Phil gave Nanna a run for her money.

STELLA

This little one will be good for us, I think.

MOLLY

(JODY enters from porch) Now there's a girl I was glad to have. Is that snow on your jacket?

JODY

Kapusta!

STELLA

(Laughing) I learn English. She learns Polish. Today we make halupkis. Ready for tomorrow. After the angels, we celebrate.

(STELLA exits to the kitchen to get the makings for the halupkis.)

.MOLLY

How was practice?

JODY

Fat Eddie can't find baby Jesus. And some angels still don't know their lines. And she slapped Tommy Hoban because he was chewing gum.

MOLLY

Who needs Walter Winchell with Jody Flynn around? How bout a weather report?

JODY

It snowed. Not enough for a snow man.

STELLA

(Entering with pan) Do you think it snows where the trees are?

MOLLY

Don't borrow trouble.

JODY

You sound just like Nanna.

STELLA

(To JODY) You roll.

MOLLY

(Let me try) You know what I wish. I wish we had a cold beer.

STELLA

(To MOLLY) Here, like this. Tight. Roll very tight. Zimni piva. Cold beer. Oh, is good idea. We can get some.

JODY

Zimni piva.

STELLA

More Polish lesson, eh? A beer will taste good.

MOLLY

No money.

STELLA

This is not so.

(Wipes hands on apron, opens a cigarette pack. STELLA shakes out two green cylinders. Holds one out to MOLLY)

MOLLY

(Quickly wiping her hands and taking the tube.) Funny looking smoke. *(Unrolls the tube revealing money)* Where'd this come from?

STELLA

The grocery money. I saved it.

MOLLY

If Nanna finds out you've been stashing away—

STELLA

She won't know.

MOLLY

No flies on you, Stell.

STELLA

And Jody will get for us, yes?

MOLLY

Bundle up again and run across to Malloy's for us. Tell 'em you want some beer.

JODY

(Quickly wiping her hands then running to coat rack.) Is there enough for a piece of licorice for me?

STELLA

(STELLA hands JODY a pail.) One piece.

JODY

(Taking the pail) Thanks! *(SHE exits)*

MOLLY

(Returns to working on the halupkis) Did you bring the wave clips?

STELLA

In my bag. *(STELLA opens the bag and takes out the clips.)* We can do each other. Hair, manicure. Everything.

MOLLY

That'll be a job. My hands look like I put in two eight hour shifts in the mines.

STELLA

(Returns to making halupkis) Good thing Ma is gone.

MOLLY

I can hear her now. *(In Nanna's voice)* The two of you, primping all afternoon.

STELLA

Primping?

MOLLY

Fussing with your looks.

STELLA

I thought it was something else.

MOLLY

(Beat. Eyes widen— SHE motions Stella to hush) Oh, god, that. Don't say that. *(Beat)* How'd you know about that?

STELLA

(Taking the pan) And now a pan full. *(STELLA takes the pan of halupkis and places it in the pantry.)* The war. Over there. Some girls, I knew... The girls did what they could. Some of them even killed themselves rather than do it. I was lucky I didn't have to, but I guess...

MOLLY

What?

STELLA

I guess I would have, if it came to that. To starving. Seeing your family starve.

MOLLY

I would too. *(Sitting on one of the chairs at the table.)*

(STELLA unpins MOLLY's hair and starts putting wave clips in.)

STELLA

Nobody knows what they'd do.

MOLLY

You never say much about what it was like over there.

STELLA

Imagine the worst things you can. It was worse.

(The door opens. JODY works her way in, closing the door with her foot, then SHE crosses to place the pail on table.)

STELLA

Snowing more now?

JODY

By tomorrow, there'll be enough to make an igloo.

MOLLY

Go back out on the porch and stamp your feet.

JODY

Can I have some foam?

MOLLY

No. It's still beer.

JODY

(From the porch) Just a little? A cupful?

MOLLY

Close the door and sit down. We'll curl your hair.

(JODY sits at the table. MOLLY begins to wrap JODY's hair in rags as STELLA fills a small juice glass with foam from the beer in the pail and then pours two large glasses for herself and MOLLY. STELLA sets the juice glass in front of JODY. SHE picks it up and tastes the foam.)

MOLLY

(To Jody) Hold still.

JODY

(Reaching for the mirror) Do I have a beer mustache?

MOLLY

Stop wiggling.

JODY

Ouch. You're putting them in too tight.

MOLLY

It will be worth it when we brush you out.

JODY

(Looking in the mirror) I don't think I can see right. My eyes are slanted.

MOLLY

We want our angel to have prettiest curls.

(STELLA watches how MOLLY wraps JODY's hair around the rags and joins in.)

JODY

Mary Margaret Quinn got a permanent. Can I get one?

MOLLY

A frizzy mess like that. I don't think so.

JODY

She doesn't have to sleep in rag curls.

STELLA

(Laughs) Rag curls?

JODY

That's what we call these.

STELLA

Like sausages. I think you should call them kielbasa curls.

JODY

The men over at Malloy's were laughing at Daddy and Uncle Frank.

STELLA

Laughing at them?

JODIE

Making fun. About the trees.

MOLLY

The thick-headed omedons. Pay them no mind.

STELLA

What did they say?

JODY

Said they were corkers with big ideas.

MOLLY

They're just jealous because they didn't think of it. *(To JODY)* There now, you're done.

JODY

How can I sleep like this?

MOLLY

You'll get used to it. Just think about the snow falling. You'll fall asleep.

STELLA

The price of beauty. *(Sips beer)* Good for the baby.

MOLLY

(Drinking from her glass) And the mama.

STELLA

Zimne pivowe.

MOLLY & JODY

Jimmine Piovie.

(THEY laugh)

STELLA

(Turning on the radio, flipping to a station with POLKA MUSIC) Here. Zimnie Pivowe. Time to be Polish.

MOLLY

I know that song.

STELLA

Good song for dancing.

(STELLA starts twirling around the kitchen.)

JODY

I want to dance too.

(STELLA takes her hand)

STELLA

Like this.

(Swings JODY around and catches her waist. JODY fumbles, but catches on.)

MOLLY

Watch the baby!

STELLA

We're careful. You try.

MOLLY

(STELLA swings her like she did JODY.) Wait. *(Laughing)* Wait. I think I have it. *(SHE twirls and counts)* One, two and one two and one one one two.

STELLA

(Hooting and clapping as dancers do for polka music) Yoo! Hoo! One, two and one two and—

MOLLY

Ya, da, da, da, da, da dadadada.

STELLA

Yippee!

(STELLA hoots and dances, JODY imitates her hoot.)

MOLLY

Be careful, Stella.

STELLA

Dancing's good for baby. Make her come soon, if she's ready.

(STELLA Grasps MOLLY and they execute the side by side polka step, mincing around the kitchen)

MOLLY

Jimmine Piovie.

(Laughing, the three of them twirl in variations of polka steps. The kitchen is alive with energy and it builds to a crescendo. The PHONE RINGS one long ring. THEY do not notice.)

TOGETHER

Jimmine P...

(The PHONE RINGS a second time and it suddenly registers. The PHONE RINGS a third time and THEY freeze. Then MOLLY rushes to the phone.)

MOLLY

Hello. Yes, Ma. *(Pause)* Music? The radio. *(Motions to STELLA to turn off radio.)* Yes, Ma. Yes, here, too. *(Pause)* No, not yet, Ma. Didn't hear from them. *(Pause)* Oh, yes. Tell Maggie we love her, too. *(Pause)* Sure. God bless you, too, Ma. *(MOLLY hangs up and looks out the window.)* Nanna's staying at the convent tonight. She said the buses have stopped running. Two feet of snow in Scranton already. *(To JODY)* Bedtime, angel. Big day for you tomorrow.

JODY

Do I have to?

MOLLY

Go now.

JODY

Goodnight, Aunt Stella.

STELLA

(STELLA kisses JODY on the head.) Goodnight, little one. Sleep well. *(STELLA weeps)*

JODY

What's wrong, Aunt Stella?

STELLA

Just thinking about another little girl I knew a long time ago. The polka makes me remember.

MOLLY

Okay. Give us kisses. Don't forget to brush your teeth and say your prayers. *(JODY kisses STELLA and MOLLY and then exits.)* Shouldn't have sent her to Malloy's on a Saturday. I can't believe somebody said something about the trees in front of her. Her father means the world to her. Those jerks.

STELLA

They make fun of me too.

MOLLY

What do you mean?

STELLA

Me. All the Polish women. I hear them. You know they do. Make like they are talking Polish.

MOLLY

I'm so sorry.

STELLA

Not your fault. They make fun of everybody— Jews, Italian, everyone not Irish like them.

MOLLY

I hoped you didn't notice.

STELLA

I don't listen.

MOLLY

Even though I'm angry with Phil about taking the money and going up there knowing it would snow, I...

STELLA

They try to do something for the family.

MOLLY

I can't blame them.

(MOLLY opens the drawer on the radio table and takes out a valentine candy box containing nail files and polish.)

STELLA

No jobs. Is there Candy Apple Red left?

MOLLY

(Opens the box and takes out a bottle, tipping it up to the light) Enough for one, maybe. You have it.

STELLA

No. It's yours.

MOLLY

I want violet.

STELLA

I'll do you first.

MOLLY

(As STELLA files her nails.) Feels nice.

STELLA

Yes.

MOLLY

Today's one of the days I'm glad I'm not a man.

STELLA

You want to be a man?

MOLLY

Of course not. Who'd want to have to wear those shoes? *(Points at shoes by door.)*

STELLA

Because of the shoes. *(Looks at men's shoes)* I don't like either.

MOLLY

That's the point.

STELLA

Who would want to wear these things? Clunky. Yes?

MOLLY

But you have to admit, men have it easy.

STELLA

You think this?

MOLLY

I didn't use to. But now. We work every day. Then we come home and work some more.

STELLA

Only till they get other jobs. I don't mind. *(SHE begins to paint MOLLY's nails.)*

MOLLY

You just wait till that baby comes and you have to leave it every day. You'll mind then.

STELLA

But what else can we do? We have to keep on.

MOLLY

I don't know how you do it. When I was pregnant with Jody, I got so tired just walking to the store, I thought I'd have to lie in the street for a nap. *(Beat)* What a place this must seem like to you.

STELLA

Nice place. I wanted to come. And I'm not sorry. When Frank finished, he said we could go anywhere. Didn't have to be here. I wanted it. To be with family.

MOLLY

Frank wanted to go someplace else?

STELLA

He said it might be hard here. That they don't like foreigners. Maybe he was thinking about Bridget too.

MOLLY

Could be.

STELLA

I said if there is a family, that's where we should be. I want family. This is a good place. We are safe here. No people are taken away. Or hungry.

MOLLY

I guess we take things like that for granted. Maude's Hill was a wonderful place when I was growing up. Close families. Lots of work...good work. The women got together in the afternoons to talk.

STELLA

And smoke? That's why Nanna still walks down there by the tracks.

MOLLY

They'd wait for the men to come down the hill hanging from the back of the coal cars. Then they'd walk home together.

STELLA

(Picturing it) That was good.

MOLLY

It was such a nice little town. *(Beat)* I wonder how far they are.

STELLA

(Looks out the window) They will chain the wheels. Frank tells me this.

MOLLY

I wish they'd call.

STELLA

(Weepy) Oh, too much beer, maybe. Yes?

MOLLY

Nah, you only had half a glass. I'm sure the boys are fine. God, Stella. You're not in labor, are you?

STELLA

Baby's sleeping.

MOLLY

You should be too.

STELLA

No. Tonight I'm not tired. Just Jody reminds me sometimes of my little sister.

MOLLY

I'm sorry, honey.

STELLA

No one thought it would happen. Down the street the stores were closing and some houses stood empty where people had left in the night. Telling no one. My little sister, Tekla. Small, like Jody. She was like father, dark eyes, dark hair. "Little Jew" the boys called her.

STELLA, *Continued*

She was sure they would come for her. If they could take you away for being a Jew, couldn't they take you for having dark hairs? All night she hangs onto me. In the morning, I have to unwrap her arms and legs. If there is noise under the window or the cat scratches at the door, she cries out.

MOLLY

Maybe you shouldn't... talk about it. This is upsetting you, Stella. It's not good for you.

STELLA

When the sun came up and nothing happened, I laughed at her. There were only two of us. I was older but only by two years. She was much littler. If I got punished, Tekla would cry. When she was sick, I would suffer too. But that, I didn't want to believe what she said. Maybe Tekla knew what was coming more than the rest of us did. She had feelings sometimes about how things would be. Little dark one. Maybe she knew she wouldn't make it to the other side of the war.

MOLLY

Let's sit over there. These chairs are murder on your back.

(MOLLY helps STELLA up and they start towards the sitting area. STELLA stops Center.)

STELLA

She's so real. She comes and I wake in the night and think it's Tekla beside me and not Frank. Father and my Uncle Stanley were arguing in the hall. It was late at night. Stanley was leaving. Father was begging him to take us. At first, Uncle Stan said no. Mother cried not to send us, but father insisted. Then my uncle said yes, but only me because I was stronger. I was taken from my bed. Tekla woke and followed behind. Mother got blankets, warmed bricks. Father and Stanley carried me out into the wagon and put me in the back under straw and rags, and then sacks of food. Nobody but me noticed her standing there in her nightclothes, barefoot. She must have been terrified. But her eyes said go. Wanted me to go. All the night, bouncing along in the back of the wagon, I kept seeing her eyes. Now she's gone. My parents. Everything in my street. Nothing left. *(MOLLY helps STELLA sit in the easy chair)* I can't explain but there's a scent and I know she is around. She tells me things. Before she comes, there is the smell like the flowers in our wreaths...

(MOLLY covers STELLA with a blanket and steps back and looks at her as STELLA closes her eyes. LIGHTS DOWN.)

ACT TWO, SCENE 3

(AT RISE: Morning. LIGHTS UP on MOLLY covered by an old blanket sprawled in the chair opposite the sleeping STELLA. THEY are startled awake by the PHONE RINGING one long ring. MOLLY leaps up to answer it.)

MOLLY

Hello! *(Pause)* Not yet. *(Pause)* Yes. Yes. God bless you too. *(Hangs up)* Nanna's on her way. The phone's were down most the night. Buses must be running.

STELLA

(Distraught) Where are they?

(JODY enters still in her night clothes.)

JODY

Dad and Uncle Frank didn't come home?

MOLLY

Hush. They probably just stayed out of the storm. They'll be home soon.

STELLA

Don't worry, little one.

JODY

(Looking out the window) There's enough snow for a fort. Can I go out and play?

MOLLY

Breakfast first.

STELLA

I make. *(Starts to rise, rubs her back and moans.)*

MOLLY

You sit tight. I can do it.

(MOLLY goes to pantry gets bowl of cereal for JODY.)

JODY

They'll be here for the play, won't they?

STELLA

(Hiding her concern) Sure, they will.

MOLLY

(MOLLY sets JODY's cereal in front of her. JODY inspects it with her spoon.) Something wrong with your cereal, my dear?

JODY

You poured the milk when I wasn't looking.

MOLLY

I poured it.

JODY

It's box milk, I can tell.

MOLLY

(Puts coffee pot on stove) You can tell, Miss Quiz Kid?

JODY

Anybody can tell. It's blue. All those lumpy things floating around in it.

MOLLY

Lo, your cereal beckoneth. Eat it.

JODY

I think I forgot my lines.

MOLLY

Anything to get out of— *(There are footsteps on the porch, the door opens and PHIL enters)* Oh, thank God. *(MOLLY runs to PHIL, JODY follows. They all hug.)*

STELLA

See. Just what I'm telling you!

JODY

Where's Uncle Frank? *(JODY runs to porch and looks out)* Come see. There must be a thousand trees.

PHIL

(Smiling) They didn't even count. Let us fill the truck.

STELLA

(Nervously) Phil. Where is Frank?

PHIL

He's coming.

JODY

But he isn't in the truck.

MOLLY

What'd you do? Leave him there so you could load more trees?

PHIL

He's coming.

STELLA

You dropped him off?

MOLLY

Phil, what's going on?

PHIL

He's at Roche's. He said you'd know.

STELLA

I know.

MOLLY

C'mon. Let's get you warmed up. Coffee's ready. There's cereal.

JODY

Arrrghhh!

MOLLY

(Takes coffee from stove) First you get the coffee. Then I get an explanation.

JODY

(As STELLA pours the coffee) Ma was really worried. And you could have missed my play.

STELLA

He's here now. He would not miss your play for anything. *(MOLLY indicates she wants JODY to leave the room. STELLA acknowledges.)* Let's go see if you know your lines.

JODY

But Daddy just got home. I want to—

MOLLY

Go with Stella. I want to talk to your father. *(STELLA takes JODY by the hand and THEY exit. To PHIL)* I can't believe how irresponsible you are. Heading up there when you know there's a snowstorm on the way.

PHIL

We didn't know.

MOLLY

What do you know about driving a truck in the snow?

PHIL

Frank drove. He drove all over Germany in the snow.

MOLLY

So where were you all night?

PHIL

Slow down, will you?

MOLLY

I kept thinking something happened to you.

PHIL

We're home aren't we?

MOLLY

You had an accident.

PHIL

Nothing like that.

MOLLY

Get it out.

PHIL

You're right. We had no business being up there. The storm was bad— real bad. Couldn't see a foot in front of us. The truck was all over the road. Snow coming at us from every direction.

MOLLY

Did you have the chains?

PHIL

Yeah! Then when—

MOLLY

When?

PHIL

Okay. Okay. I'm telling you. You're going to think I'm nuts.

When...
MOLLY

Jesus.
PHIL

Phil.
MOLLY

PHIL
In the middle of the road. This kid, standing there. Couldn't have been any older than Jody.

MOLLY
A kid? You two were boozing. Drinking and driving in a storm like that.

PHIL
We were not drinking. Barefoot in the snow. Standing there in a nightgown. We were heading right toward her.

MOLLY
You hit a kid?

PHIL
Frank hit the brakes. The truck slid. Then the chains grabbed. And we stopped.

MOLLY
You hit the kid?

PHIL
We jumped out. We could hardly see the truck once we got five feet from it. And the lights were on. We looked everywhere. No sign of her.

MOLLY
People don't just disappear.

PHIL
We couldn't find her. Nothing. Then Frank says to me, what's that smell?

MOLLY
A smell?

PHIL
Flowers. Smell of flowers. Strong. In the snow. We smelled flowers.

MOLLY

You were looking for the girl? That's why it took you so long coming home?

PHIL

We kept looking. For the girl. The snow got worse. Then we went to the other side of the truck. And—

MOLLY

Come on, Phil.

PHIL

The guard rail was knocked down. Another ten feet and we'd of been over the edge. Down the mountain for chrisakes.

MOLLY

(Doubting) Hmmhunh. And the girl?

PHIL

(Ignores this) Frank drove the truck. Real slow. I walked ahead until we got it off the road. And we stayed right there. All night— in the truck. We couldn't sleep. Jeez, I thought we'd freeze to death.

MOLLY

Maybe it was the snow. Maybe headlights played tricks on your eyes.

PHIL

Both of us? If Frank hadn't seen her too, I never would have told you.

MOLLY

You were tired, Phil.

PHIL

A barefoot girl in a nightdress, in the middle of a snow storm, standing in the road? I wouldn't buy it either. But that's the way it was.

(MOLLY looks at PHIL with wonder. LIGHTS FADE OUT.)

ACT TWO, SCENE 4

(AT RISE: After the Christmas play. LIGHTS UP as FRANK, STELLA and NANNA enter dressed in their Sunday best and JODY still in her angel costume.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes