

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn

[A]

A short montage of current newspaper headlines fades in:

INVASION JITTERS

HEAVY CASUALTIES EXPECTED

ITALIAN Foothold THREATENED

Over these comes a woman's voice:

VOICE

One small paragraph in this morning's news of death, and blood, and tears -- and a sudden wave of nostalgia swept over me. I found myself remembering sharply the Brooklyn of my childhood. And why? The paragraph had nothing to do with me, nor even with Brooklyn. It told of an American soldier in Italy, a Texas boy. They were in danger of being swept into the sea, when the soldier took from his pocket a small box and spilled its contents on the Italian earth. "That's dirt from Texas," he said. "Now I'm standing on Texas soil, let's see them push me off it." As simple as that, but infinitely deep. For that single moment I could not understand why it should take me back to Brooklyn. And then I knew. In the end, that is the true thing for which men so bravely die -- not the pretentious phrases, but for that place which is their own, where grew their roots. It makes no difference where the place is. Most families have their roots in soil; we Nolans drove our roots down through the cement of the Brooklyn sidewalks -- like the occasional miraculous tree -- but no matter. It is all the same. Saturdays were the same, for children in Brooklyn or in Texas -- we were free -- free from school. There was never anything finer than the beginning of a Saturday in Brooklyn.

Over this, the headlines dissolve first to the Williamsburg Bridge, and then back through views of modern Brooklyn into the Brooklyn streets of a generation ago. We see horse-drawn

beer trucks; the swinging doors of a saloon; a street sweeper; bedding piled on fire escapes; a wooden cigar-store Indian; the tree near the Nolan tenement and finally the Nolan street and tenement.

This dissolves to the NOLAN KITCHEN. It is early Saturday morning. Katie and Francie are finishing cleaning up the breakfast dishes. Neeley is struggling in from the hall with Katie's scrubbing pail and cloths and mop. He sets them down inside the door.

KATIE, the mother of the family, is in her early thirties, still young enough to be quick and alive to life. She is attractive, but is always so busy that she never has time to pay much attention to herself. The flat is a small one, on the second floor back, sparsely furnished, but its spotlessness reflects Katie's passion for cleanliness.

FRANCIE, her daughter, is about thirteen. She is a rather quiet child. She has inherited from Johnny, her father, a sensitiveness and an imagination that make her by far the more difficult problem in parenthood for the Nolans.

NEELEY is a year younger, and is completely a normal, healthy boy. He is much more Katie's child, while Francie was born with something of both of them.

NEELEY

(setting down
the bucket)

Is that all, mom, can we go now?

KATIE

Not so loud, Neeley, you want to
wake papa?

NEELEY

(much quieter,
to Francie)

Gosh, ain't you through with them
ole dishes yet?

KATIE

She'll only be a minute. My, I wish
you was as anxious to get going on
a school morning as on a Saturday.

FRANCIE

(wiping the dishes)
Papa was late last night.

KATIE.

I was dead asleep when he come in,
I guess.

FRANCIE

He says if people didn't like to

make speeches so much at dinners,
waiters could spend more time with
their families.

KATIE

Wasn't much of a job, I guess. Them
club dinners don't tip much.

FRANCIE

(finishing)

Is that all, mama?

KATIE

Yes, yes, go on, and I'll do the
rest.

(she indicates the
sack Neeley has
dragged out)

Don't look like you got much in
there this week.

NEELEY

One of these days Mrs. Gaddis is
goin' to throw away that ole wash
boiler of hers. Carney will pay us
plenty for the copper bottom off of
that.

KATIE

He won't pay you any more than he
has to. You watch him on the
weighin'.

NEELEY

(in a hurry)

Yes'm. Good-bye, mom.

KATIE

Parents ought to have a day that's
like Saturday for kids. Maybe if I
start in the lower hall and scrub
my way up today it'll make somethin'
special out of it. Keep an eye on
him now, Francie.

FRANCIE

Yes, mama.

NEELEY

Aw, come on.

Their exit has been a scramble of getting their coats on,
and hardly being able to wait to get outdoors. When the door
slams behind them, Katie looks after them a second with a
little smile, half-envious of their childhood. Then she
starts to get her implements together to begin her day's
work as janitress, and the scene dissolves to Francie and

Neeley pulling their sack of junk along the crowded street. The street is alive and vital with activity, but Francie and Neeley pay no attention to it.

NEELEY

Well, he was silly to stay down there that long. I'd've kicked and kicked that ole whale's stomach good, so he'd have got sick right off. I wouldn't have waited like Jonah did.

(to a passing boy)

Hi, Snozzy.

SNOZZY

(matter-of-factly)

Hi yourself and see how you like it.

This brief exchange of courtesy is quite routine. Neeley stops suddenly as he sees something about to happen down the street.

NEELEY

There she comes!

From their angle we see a big garbage wagon swing around a corner. Four boys are waiting matter-of-factly, and just as the wagon swings around the corner, they throw a chunk of wood under its rear wheels. It makes the truck take quite a bump, and shakes off some of its cargo. The boys are on this like a shot to redeem anything of value. The driver yells back at them and they shriek answering derision.

CHORUS OF BOYS

Aw, go chase your self. It's a free country, ain't it? Stick in the mud, and so's your ma. It's a free country.

One of the boys shies a can at the driver. The wagon goes on and the brief exchange is over. Neeley and Francie make no effort to horn in on the other kids' beat, but watch with a detached interest.

NEELEY

They done good today.

Neeley and Francie start on down the street. At that moment a man passes, takes the last cigarette out of a package and throws the empty package into the gutter. Francie and Neeley dive for it. So does another boy. The Nolan teamwork shows long practice. Francie dives onto the other boy, and they go down together while Neeley retrieves the package. The boy scrambles up, ready for battle, but thinks better of it when he sees there are two of them.

BOY

(saving his dignity)

Aw, rag pickers! Rag pickers!

He beats it. Francie picks up the junk sack. Neeley separates the tinfoil from the paper. Neeley then becomes fascinated as he drops the paper through the grating into the sewer.

NEELEY

You know somethin'. I bet she goes clear down to the river.

FRANCIE

(joining him)

Maybe clear to the ocean -- maybe clear over to foreign climes.

(Neeley lust gives her a "You're nuts" look; and she adds matter-of-factly:)

It stinks awful, don't it?

NEELEY

Yeah.

FRANCIE

I bet that's the worst stink in the whole world, don't you?

NEELEY

I don't know. I can't remember everything I smell.

They pick up their sack and move on; the view moving with them.

NEELEY

You know what, I'm goin' to get a job cleanin' up over to the fights. Skinny's cousin's doin' that and you'd ought to see alla stuff he finds -- joolry and pocketbooks and alla candy he can eat.

FRANCIE

Thou talkest very big.

NEELEY

You talk crazy.

FRANCIE

I do not. I talk like God talks.

NEELEY

How do you know how God talks?

FRANCIE

Well, it's in the Bible, and I guess

it's His Bible isn't it, and so
that's the way He talks.

NEELEY

Aw, you talk crazy.

Neeley changes the subject rather than admit defeat. They have reached an old stable which carries the sign "CARNEY'S, GOOD PRICES FOR JUNK." Beyond them, inside the old barn, CARNEY can be seen weighing out the junk that some of the children have brought in. Neeley stops Francie and addresses her with male authority.

NEELEY

Now look, stand on the same side as
him when he weighs it so's he can
reach you; and don't forget to stand
there after he pays you, you forgot
that last time, and a penny's a
penny, ain't it?

FRANCIE

Well, I guess I know it is.

NEELEY

(triumphantly)
Well, all right then.

As Francie starts dragging the sack inside, a boy who has sold his junk comes out past them. "Rag pickers, rag pickers!" he jeers. But Neeley passes this insult, being more interested in watching Francie.

Francie drags the sack in and gets next in line. Carney is paying off the kid who preceded her, counting pennies into his hand.

KID

(starting to protest)
Look--

CARNEY

(interrupting)
Shut your trap. I say what things
weigh around here. Who's next?

The kid subsides and goes out. Francie moves up.

CARNEY

(seeing her)
Oh, hello, little girl.

Francie gives him a mechanical smile in answer. His manner is somehow different with girls. He dumps out the contents of the junk sack, starts to sort and weigh them.

Francie shoots a look at Neeley. He motions her to edge

closer. And as she obeys, Carney finishes the weighing.

CARNEY

You done pretty good. Nine cents.

He counts the pennies into her hand. Francie stays there. Carney chuckles a little and reaches out and pinches her cheek. Having done this, he brings forth another penny. Francie's hand is out immediately. -- Neeley is well-satisfied.

CARNEY

And there you are, an extra penny
because you're a nice little girl.

The very matter-of-factness of all this is somehow worse than if it were an ordeal to Francie. The moment she has the penny, she runs out and joins Neeley. His manner is approving.

NEELEY

That's better. Gosh, I wisht Carney
liked to pinch boys.

FRANCIE

Nine, and my pinchin' penny. That's
five for us, and five for the bank.

NEELEY

Now wait a minute. The pinchin'
penny don't count, it's yours by
rights.

FRANCIE

Well, I don't know, Neeley, if you
got somethin' it counts, don't it?

NEELEY

Sure it don't. Look, half what we
get for the junk is for the bank,
that's what mama says, ain't it?

FRANCIE

Well, yes, but--

NEELEY

Well, we didn't get that penny for
junk, we got it for pinchin', so
it's yours, so there ain't use in
talkin' any more about it.

FRANCIE

Well--

NEELEY

Anyway that leaves nine, don't it,
and now you tell me how we're goin'

to divide nine in half, go ahead.

FRANCIE

Well, we could put--

NEELEY

You can't do it, not without splittin' a penny in two, and then it wouldn't be any good. So we got an extra penny, and by rights it's mine, cause you already got one.

FRANCIE

But Neeley, mama said--

NEELEY

All right, wisenheimer, you show me how to split a penny!

FRANCIE

Well, I guess-- Well, maybe the next time it don't come even the bank gets it--

NEELEY

Sure, ain't that just what I been sayin'. And that leaves eight -- two more for me, two for you, and four for the bank.

(Francie divides
the pennies)

You see, it comes out just right. I don't see why you got to be so dumb.

He leads the way as they start on down the street, while other children come up with some junk.

FRANCIE AND NEELEY

(as scornfully as
they were yelled at)

Rag pickers! Rag pickers!

As they go on down the street the scene dissolves to the exterior of CHEAP CHARLIE'S, a neighborhood store, one of the places where the boys hang out. -- Francie and Neeley come down the street, kicking a little block of wood down the sidewalk, and trying to keep it on the sidewalk. The game automatically ceases as they come to the door of the shop.

NEELEY

Now wait a minute! Don't go in like you was with me.

FRANCIE

Well, hurry up then.

Neeley swaggers in and in a moment Francie follows him into CHEAP CHARLIE'S. Neeley joins some boys before a form of punchboard, the prizes hung on the wall -- a few good ones -- a catcher's mitt, a pair of roller skates, a doll. This is the sort of place that is the forerunner to the poolhall where the boys will hang out when they are older. One of the boys puffs a cigarette self-consciously. -- Francie lingers near the cash register. -- One of the boys has just taken a chance on the board and is opening the envelope.

CLAMOR OF VOICES

Fourteen! A pencil! It's a gip!
Looka the sucker thinks he can win
somep'n! Gimme a drag, Red. Get
away, I got dibs on butts.

Neeley dives for the board immediately and pulls a number.

NEELEY

Twenty-six!
(he looks at the board)
A penwiper!

CHEAP CHARLIE

Prize or candy, mister?

NEELEY

Candy -- a lickorish whip.

Charlie hands him one, which Neeley wraps around his wrist. Charlie starts toward the register to wait on Francie, but keeps an eye on the boys.

BOYS

It's a gip! Aw, there ain't no
numbers for them good prizes!

CHEAP CHARLIE

(as he passes them)
All of life's a gamble, gentlemen,
you never win if you don't keep on
takin' chances.
(coming to Francie)
What's yours, young lady?

FRANCIE

(counting out five
pennies onto the
counter)
Change to a nickel, please.

CHEAP CHARLIE

Well, I'll get fat on that kind of
business.

But he grudgingly takes the pennies and gives her a nickel from the cash register. She slips out without answering, and

Cheap Charlie looks after her a second before he starts back to the boys.

Francie hurries down the street. A group of girls are playing pottsie -- a form of hopscotch -- on some marked-out squares on the sidewalk. Francie has to pass near them.

GIRLS

Hi, Francie. How much did you get?
Want to play, Francie?

FRANCIE

(hurrying past them)
I can't. I'm in a hurry.

This dissolves to a FIVE AND TEN CENT STORE, where Francie is seen wandering languidly down an aisle. She is in the midst of the beauty of the world. Her longing to be here is not at all the desire for acquisition; there is nothing wistful or envious about her. Being here is complete fulfillment. She pauses a time or two to look at or touch something as if she were in fairyland. -- A floorwalker observes her curiously. -- Unaware of him, she continues to look her way down the counter. She is fascinated by a pile of colored bathing caps and picks one up tentatively. A salesgirl steps up and Francie puts it down quickly. -- The floorwalker steps up to her.

FLOORWALKER

Do you want something, young lady?

FRANCIE

(with great dignity,
opening her hand to
display the nickel)
I'm merely looking, thank you. I got
a right. I got money.

Her confidence that the money justifies her being there is complete. She goes on her way. Her attitude rather than the nickel defeats the floorwalker. He looks after her as she stops again to look at something and then moves on unhurriedly to the door.

Francie emerges from the store replete with the fulfillment of the adventure. She gives a deep and happy sigh, then starts down the street. She has only gone a few feet when a fragrance strikes across her dream world and penetrates to her healthy child's stomach. The stomach wins hands down over the dream. Her manner changes completely as she turns to the window and sees the candy. She looks at it for a moment and goes in.

Inside the CANDY STORE, Francie presses close to the case to make her important choice. The proprietor comes up.

FRANCIE

(deciding)
Three cents worth of peppermint
drops, please.

The proprietor isn't particularly pleased by the magnitude of the sale but reaches for a sack as the scene dissolves to the STREET. The bag of candy in one hand, her mouth full of peppermint, Francie is absorbedly trying to avoid stepping on the cracks in the sidewalk.

FRANCIE
(to herself)
Step on a crack, break your
mother's back.

She pauses to readjust the peppermint drop in her mouth. You don't chew these, and if you suck them just right they last longer. In the midst of this process of careful adjustment, she hears the shrill yelling of some boys, and looking off she sees a CAR TRACK where Neeley and a gang of boys are putting a tin can on the track so that the streetcar will smash it. -- Francie comes into the scene and watches.

BOYS
(seeing the car
approaching)
Here she comes! Cheese it!

They tear to the sidewalk. -- The streetcar rolls over the tin can without a tremor. -- The boys emerge cautiously, as though they had done something very daring.

BOYS
That ole can's mashed good and flat.
Boy, did you see the look on that
motorman's face. That ole car came
near jumpin' the track, I bet.

They retrieve the can and study it.

FRANCIE
(from the sidewalk)
Neeley, we got to go home.

The boys turn. They are aware of her for the first time. Neeley is in a spot, in being told what to do by a mere girl.

NEELEY
(uncomfortably)
Beat it.

FRANCIE
(firmly)
Mama said.

BOYS
(derisively)
Mama said! Go on, we don't want no
skirts around! Look who's got to do
what his mama said!

Neeley is definitely in a spot. Keyed by the situation, one
of the boys gets a new idea. He staggers as if drunk.

BOY
(walking drunkenly)
Look at me, I'm Neeley's old man.

There is laughter. Both Nolans stiffen. They are together
now. Neeley unwinds what is left of the licorice whip and
gives it to Francie to hold.

NEELEY
(ready for battle)
Do that again!

BOY
Do what? -- Auggie pushed me.

NEELEY
Go on, I dare you.

AUGGIE
He didn't say nothin'. It's a free
country, ain't it?

NEELEY
I never said it wasn't.

FIRST BOY
Then the sidewalk's free, too!

NEELEY
I guess what I'm standin' on is
mine while I'm standin' on it.

AUGGIE
Then I guess what he's standin' on
is his.

FIRST BOY
Sure, and I can do what I want to on
it.

NEELEY
Well, let him come over on my piece
and say somethin', I dare him.

BOY
Well, who wants your old piece?

NEELEY

Well then, don't talk like you was
on my piece.

BOY

Well, who wants to.

NEELEY

Well, all right, then.

This procedure doesn't make much sense but it seems to satisfy the immediacies. Neeley is victorious. With a lordly air he walks over to Francie and takes back his licorice whip and starts to wind it around his arm again.

NEELEY

(to Francie)

Come on.

They start down the sidewalk together and the scene dissolves to the TENEMENT HALL as Francie and Neeley come up the stairs to where Katie, their mother, is on her knees beside a bucket, scrubbing the floor.

KATIE

Heaven's sake, is it that late
already? I'll have to leave these
stairs go till later.

She gets to her feet.

FRANCIE

(showing the pennies)

Four cents.

KATIE

Pretty good. Dump the bucket, Neeley.

NEELEY

(tentatively)

Mama, can I--

KATIE

No. Bring the bucket and dump it.

(starting up
the stairs)

It's the day for the insurance
collector. I don't want him to catch
me lookin' like this.

They go up the stairs, Neeley struggling with the bucket. They pass a blowzy woman going down with a basket on her arm.

WOMAN

Hot, ain't it?

KATIE

Yes, but Christmas'll be here before
you know it.

WOMAN

I got enough troubles without
thinkin' about that.

They go on down the hall toward the flats at the back.
Neeley disappears into the lavatory to dump the bucket. --
Katie stops at the door to search for their key. A boy,
HENNY GADDIS, comes out of the door across the hall.

KATIE

How's your sister today, Henny?

HENNY

(matter-of-factly)
Poorly, thank you.

Just as he answers, Neeley comes up with the bucket. His
answer means so little to him that almost simultaneously
Henny kicks the bucket out of Neeley's hand. It clatters to
the floor. Henny beats it and Neeley gives chase.

Katie unlocks the door just as Flossie, Henny's sister,
appears in the doorway. She is pathetically thin, with dark,
luminous eyes; and is dressed unlike any other occupant of
the tenement in a soft, feminine dress. She is very
conscious of the dress as she smiles shyly at them.

KATIE

Why, hello, Flossie dear.

FLOSSIE

Hello, Mrs. Nolan.
(then, shyly)
Don't -- don't you notice somethin'?

KATIE

(not getting it)
Why, seems to me you look mighty
well. Much better, don't she,
Francie?

FLOSSIE

No, I don't, I don't--

This is not what she wanted to hear. She slams the door shut
quickly. The sound of coughing can be heard. Katie stares at
the door for a second without understanding and then unlocks
her own door and goes in.

The NOLAN KITCHEN as Katie and Francie enter: The kitchen is
the most used room of the flat. -- They cook and eat and
live here. It is bare but clean and neat. It has an iron
stove. A fire escape can be seen past the window. Beyond
this we get a glimpse of the scraggly tree in the yard.

KATIE

(as she crosses
to the bedroom)

Heat up the coffee while I fix up.

Francie starts to make the fire. Neeley appears in the doorway, triumphantly, with Henny meekly carrying the bucket. He sets it down inside the kitchen.

NEELEY

(victoriously)

That's better.

Neeley pushes Henny outside and shuts the door. Being always hungry, Neeley starts to look for something to fill in until dinner is ready and finds a few crumbs in a cracker box on the table. As he does so, he sees the four pennies where Francie has put them down. He stares at them a moment, and an idea takes shape in his mind.

NEELEY

Mom!

KATIE

(from the bedroom)

Yes, Neeley.

NEELEY

(craftily)

Mom, if there was a rule about somethin', that doesn't mean you couldn't do somethin' else once in a while, I mean if it was important, does it?

KATIE

(offscene)

No, Neeley.

NEELEY

If it was important, I mean, people could change their minds about somethin', and it's all right, ain't it?

KATIE

(still offscene)

Yes, I guess so.

NEELEY

Well, mom, I was just thinkin', you know I never smoke cigarettes because you said I mustn't, even if some of the fellers make fun of me. I don't but, it's been kinda hot lately, and--

KATIE

(interrupting, quite
pleasant about it)

Neeley, you cannot have any of those
pennies to buy an ice-cream cone.
They go in the bank, same as usual.

Neeley gives this a quick, startled reaction. How in the
world did Katie know what he was trying to do before he
really got to his point? It is a distinct letdown. --
Francie, busy at the stove, smiles at his reaction.

KATIE

(from another room)

Bring 'em in here, Neeley.

Dutifully Neeley picks them up and starts for the other
room, and the scene cuts to the BEDROOM, which is small,
with a lumpy double bed and an old bureau with a wall
mirror. Katie is primping before the mirror, and you have to
be rather careful to look in the right place or it will
distort. Neeley enters with the pennies. Katie goes to the
closet, and Neeley follows her. -- The closet contains very
little in the way of clothes. The condensed milk can, used
as a bank, is nailed to the floor.

KATIE

Half of everything we get goes into
the bank. That's the way it is, and
that's the way it's going to stay.
Now put 'em in there.

NEELEY

(obeying)

Gosh, I bet we got about a hundred
dollars in that ole bank by now!

Katie comes out of the closet and returns to the mirror.

KATIE

(dryly)

Nine's more like it.

There is a sound outside of a limb of a tree splitting. At
this the scene cuts to the KITCHEN where Francie has turned
from the stove in time to see the limb outside the window
sway and disappear from view.

FRANCIE

Mama -- they're cutting the tree!

Neeley tumbles into the kitchen followed by Katie carrying
her hairbrush. They crowd behind Francie at the window to
look out.

Looking out the window from their angle, we see two men

sawing the limbs off the tree. Katie stares at it a moment.

KATIE

Oh, that's too bad, it was kind of pretty there, and the birds sittin' in it sometimes like they do.

FRANCIE

Papa loved that tree.

KATIE

(abruptly)

Oh, quit moonin' over it, it got in the way of the washing. A tree ain't goin' to put no pennies in the bank.

She starts for the bedroom. Francie is mildly bewildered by this sudden change. Katie is a little sorry for her abruptness, but before she can say anything there is a knock on the door.

KATIE

It's Mr. Barker. Get out the saucer and give it a wipe. I think there's matches in it.

(then, as a small apology for her outbreak)

If -- if you want you can stay in the room while he's here.

Katie hurries back into the bedroom. Francie gets the saucer out, sets it down, and then hurries to the door to admit Mr. Barker. Mr. Barker is a kindly enough little man, rather old, but with the soul of a busybody. He is an important visitor, since in making his collections he sees almost everyone, and is a sort of newspaper for the neighborhood gossip. Consequently the Nolans treat him with their best manners.

FRANCIE

(with her best book-manners)

How do you do, Mr. Barker. Mama is temporarily detained, but will join you directly.

Neeley gives her a withering look.

MR. BARKER

You got manners right out of a book, Francie.

(to Katie as she enters)

And company or no company, Mrs. Nolan always looks the lady. You should see some of my people, even

ladies with husbands that work
steady--

He stops, realizing this is not a very good point to
bring up. Katie stiffens a little.

KATIE
(with dignity)
Won't you come in the parlor and
have a cup of coffee.

MR. BARKER
That I will, and your hospitality is
very kind, Mrs. Nolan.

They start for the parlor. Mr. Barker bows gallantly for
Katie to precede him through the door. She pauses to take
some coins out of an old cup on a shelf. Francie
automatically starts to get the cup of coffee.

The PARLOR is dark, small, and stuffy. It is seldom used.
The couch that serves as Francie's bed is under the window.
-- Katie and Mr. Barker are followed by Neeley. Mr. Barker
seats himself in the best chair, and takes out his fountain
pen to write the receipts. He talks steadily.

MR. BARKER
(cheerfully)
Well, old man Gentry's off to jail
again.

KATIE
That's too bad.

MR. BARKER
(hurriedly)
But she's keepin' up his insurance
just the same.

KATIE
And here's ours -- ten cents for me,
ten for Mr. Nolan, a nickel for each
of the children.

MR. BARKER
And you'll never regret it. A fine
funeral for every member of the
family, heaven forbid.

He is busy writing the receipts as Francie appears with the
cup of coffee and can of condensed milk. Mr. Barker accepts
it and pours the condensed milk lavishly. -- The Nolan
family watch fascinated as he continues to pour the milk.
-- Mr. Barker finally ceases pouring, and the Nolans are
relieved. He talks steadily as he does this.

MR. BARKER

Thank you, Francie. And your weekly receipts, Mrs. Nolan.

(he gives them to her)

Now there's one party, not far from here, I wouldn't like to say who, that didn't get no receipts this week. And not naming any names, I will say that it's a family that the Angel of Death has marked on its invitation list, heaven forbid.

NEELEY

Henny says his sister's got one leg in the grave.

KATIE

Neeley!

MR. BARKER

It'll mean Potter's Field, most likely. Well, that's what people get, wastin' good money to give her dresses instead of insurance, dresses that'll last longer than she will. It all depends on what folks thinks is important.

FRANCIE

But papa says that sometimes--

KATIE

That's right, Mr. Barker, it all depends on what folks think is important.

MR. BARKER

And how is Mr. Nolan, is he working or not working, some tell me one thing, some another -- I don't listen.

KATIE

Mr. Nolan bein' a singing waiter, Mr. Barker, and what you might call an artist, his work don't come steady like other peoples'. But I'm sure you'll remember, when you talk to folks, that the Nolans have always paid their insurance on the dot.

Francie gives her mother an admiring look for this defense of Johnny.

MR. BARKER

(retreating)

You surely don't think I'd go around spreadin' gossip about my clients,

Mrs. Nolan?

KATIE

Oh, sure not. How is my mother, Mr. Barker?

MR. BARKER

In the prime, Mrs. Nolan, fine as can be, she says to tell you she'll be over tonight the same as usual.

(then, with relish)

And I trust you're happy with the news about your sister.

Katie is instantly alert. It is quite evident that here is news she does not know, but she does not like to admit it.

KATIE

Just which news do you mean, Mr. Barker?

MR. BARKER

Well, it must be she's savin' it to surprise you with tonight when the family's all here together.

KATIE

(apprehensively)

I'd take it kindly if you told me what you mean.

MR. BARKER

(warming to his work)

Well, I trot around the same as usual to collect her weekly dime, and what do you think happens -- well, sir, she gives me two dimes.

(he pauses for effect)

Yessir, she's done it again, she's got herself a brand-new husband, and--

KATIE

(startled)

Oh, no!

She breaks off abruptly. It is none of Mr. Barker's business that Sissy had never been divorced from her last spouse. The children are fascinated. Mr. Barker is in his element. Katie's worry about the marriage will make a fine story indeed.

MR. BARKER

Well, now, I suppose you mean about her still bein' married. I don't mind sayin' the same thought occurred to me. But I'm sure it must

be all right, she must have made
some arrangement, but--

KATIE

I'm quite sure she did, Mr. Barker,
I'm sure that--

NEELEY

(fascinated)

Does she call this one Bill, too?

His question makes Katie sharply aware of the presence of
the children. They shouldn't be hearing such a discussion.

KATIE

You children run along now, and do
the marketing. Take some money from
the cup--

NEELEY

Aw, but mom! I want to hear about
Aunt Sissy!

KATIE

Take the money and get a five-cent
soup bone off of Hassler's; don't
get the chopped meat from him
though, he grinds it behind closed
doors, and heaven only knows. Go to
Werner's for the meat, get round
steak chopped, ten cents worth, and
don't let him give it to you off the
plate. Take an onion with you and
ask him to chop it in. And don't
forget, just at the last, to ask for
a piece of suet to fry it with.

During this domestic discussion, Mr. Barker does a little
snooping. He tries, with his finger, to see if there is any
dust on the table, and is disappointed when there is none.
Then he moves a small hassock with his foot and is delighted
to discover, as he suspected, that it covers a hole in the
carpet. The Nolans are unaware of this.

FRANCIE

He won't always do that, mama, he--

KATIE

Tell him your mother said. And then
go for the bread.

NEELEY

It's Saturday, mom, can we--

KATIE

All right, all right. Ask for a nice
pie, not too crushed, and go on now

and do it.

FRANCIE

(reluctant to go)

Mama, we know Aunt Sissy's been married before.

NEELEY

Sure, I can remember two Uncle Bills.

KATIE

That's nothing for you to talk about; go on now and get things done.

Reluctantly they leave. Katie turns back to Mr. Barker.

KATIE

You got no right, Mr. Barker, to be carryin' tales about my sister as though there was somethin' wrong. She's funny some ways, maybe, but she wouldn't do nothin' wrong. So I'd like it if you didn't talk to anybody about it like it was.

MR. BARKER

(lying, of course)

Strike me dead if I'd ever think of mentionin' it to anybody but you.

KATIE

(dryly)

Yeah, sure, I know.

(she sits down)

Well, you might as well go on and tell me what you do know. No point in my bein' the only one that don't hear it.

MR. BARKER

(eagerly starting his story)

Well--

The scene dissolves to WERNER'S BUTCHER SHOP, with Francie and Neeley in front of the counter. Werner is waiting on them.

WERNER

Ten cents worth of round steak. You want it ground?

FRANCIE

No.

WERNER

You're sure now? Wasn't twenty minutes ago I ground that whole plateful fresh.

FRANCIE

No, thank you.

Werner takes some chunks of meat out of the case and starts to wrap them.

FRANCIE

Oh, I forgot. My mother wants it ground.

WERNER

(giving her a
dirty look)

You don't tell me!

The children make no answer. He gives an angry exclamation and gives up -- starts to grind the meat. Francie reaches timidly across the counter with her onion.

FRANCIE

Mama said to chop up this onion in it.

WERNER

Oh, she did!

But he takes the onion angrily and puts it in the grinder with the meat. He starts again to wrap the ground product. At this point Francie takes a deep breath and blurts out the last instructions.

FRANCIE

And-a-piece-of-suet-to-fry-it-with-
mama-said.

Werner stands for a moment as though turned to stone.

WERNER

Sweet jumpin' Christopher!

But he takes the piece of suet and puts it on top of the meat as he folds the paper around it. The Nolans have won.

This dissolves to HASSLER'S BUTCHER SHOP. Neeley is peering through the window to watch Francie, on the inside, make her purchase. He is taking pains to keep himself and the package of ground meat out of sight.

Inside the BUTCHER SHOP, Hassler, a kindly man, is exhibiting a husky-looking soup bone before he wraps it up for Francie.

HASSLER

Ain't that a beauty, though? Now you

tell your mama when she cooks it,
tell her to take the marrow out and
spread it on a piece of bread for
you. That's good, and you need to
get some meat on your bones.

(he laughs at this
joke as he slaps the
package down)

And here.

(he slices off a thin
slice of liverwurst and
offers it to Francie)

Do me a favor -- try this and see if
you think it's all right for my
customers.

He is "thin-make" covering up a good deed and Francie knows
it. She takes the slice of liverwurst and tastes it.

FRANCIE

Yes, sir.

HASSLER

Well, that's fine. Now you finish
that before you get home. How's
your papa?

FRANCIE

He's fine, sir!

Francie exits, Hassler smiling after her.

Outside the butcher shop, Francie joins Neeley and they
start down the street. She breaks the piece of liverwurst in
two and gives Neeley half. He wolfs it.

NEELEY

Free?

FRANCIE

(moved by the kindness
of the world)

He made out he wanted me to tell him
did it taste all right.

(she blurts out
with sudden passion:)

I wish we could buy all our meat
from Hassler's. I wish he didn't
grind his meat behind closed doors.

NEELEY

Well, you don't have to bawl about
it.

Francie isn't really crying, but she could.

This dissolves to the exterior of LOSHER'S BAKERY and STALE

BREAD STORE. A sign reads "NOT QUITE FRESH BREAD, 2 LOAVES FOR 5¢." A long queue is waiting patiently for the doors to open. The scene moves to the bakery window next door where Francie and Neeley, meat packages tucked under their arms, are gazing longingly into the window at a huge chocolate cake on display.

FRANCIE

You know, mama thinks we don't know anything.

NEELEY

(getting the
drift at once)

Yeah, she acts like we were kids or somethin'.

(they edge along to
a platter of cream
puffs and stare)

I bet she has a fight with Aunt Sissy tonight.

FRANCIE

It's got something to do with men who like Aunt Sissy too much.

NEELEY

Papa says we'd ought to make everybody like us.

FRANCIE

I guess maybe ladies shouldn't.

(then, thoughtfully)

Maybe Aunt Sissy wouldn'ta changed husbands so much if any of her babies had lived. She's crazy about babies.

NEELEY

Look who's talkin' about babies! A lot you know!

FRANCIE

I know as much as you do!

NEELEY

You don't know nothin'.

FRANCIE

You think you're so smart. Boys make me sick!

NEELEY

Well, what do ya think girls make people, you think--

But there is a sudden interrupting shout from the crowd as

the stale bread store door is thrown open and the people push forward.

Francie and Neeley, their argument forgotten at once, adjust their packages and stalk toward the entrance. Their eyes flash with the light of battle, like a fighter advancing across the ring to engage his opponent.

At the entrance the crowd is pressing forward. A kid dashes out of nowhere to the head of the line and worms his way through the door. This seems to be the signal for the disappearance of all semblance of order. Neeley fights his way in; Francie follows through the hole made by him. The crowd is storming the counter behind which two harassed clerks dole out the bread and collect the money.

AD LIBS

Two loaves! I was first! Four loaves!
Quit shovin'!

Neeley squirms, pushes, fights his way to the counter; Francie is right behind him.

NEELEY

Six loaves.

FRANCIE

And a pie not too crushed!

This dissolves to the NOLAN KITCHEN where the children are just dumping their packages onto the table. This marks the end of their chores, and the beginning of that part of the day which is theirs. Katie examines the bread.

KATIE

This bread's fine. I wouldn't be surprised if it wasn't more'n three days old.

NEELEY

Is that all, Mom? Can we go now?

KATIE

Yes -- you're free.

Neeley bolts for his room and Francie for the parlor, while Katie starts to put the things away. In a moment Neeley reappears with a baseball glove, and heads for the door. Francie emerges more quietly with a library book.

KATIE

Where's the fire?

NEELEY

(on his way)

There's a Dodgers scout around.

He disappears and the door bangs behind him.

KATIE

(to Francie)

Where you goin'?

FRANCIE

Oh, no place much.

KATIE

Well, don't go dream walkin'
crossin' the streets.

Francie is gone too, and as Katie smiles after them the scene dissolves to the exterior of the PUBLIC LIBRARY.

It's a rather small library, but it has dignity. Francie hurries down the street, her attitude and pace changing as she arrives. She stops a moment, then starts slowly and reverently to mount the shallow steps as the scene dissolves through to the interior. Francie enters into the hush of the room, the door closing soundlessly behind her and she advances to the librarian's desk. A few people are reading at the tables or are at the stacks.

At the desk she offers her book. The librarian takes the card, stamps it mechanically, returns it without once looking at her. Francie meantime has reverently touched the blue bowl with yellow flowers and the polished desk. Now she takes her card and almost tiptoes to the shelves. The librarian stacks the returned book; we see it is by Browning.

FRANCIE, passing the shelves, lingers at the C's. Then she turns dutifully to the B's, runs her finger through the Brownings, and chooses the volume which comes next. She goes back to the desk.

At the desk, she offers the B book. The librarian stamps mechanically, then notices the title: Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, and for the first time looks curiously at Francie.

LIBRARIAN

Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy! Are you sure you want this?

FRANCIE

Yes, ma'am.

LIBRARIAN

Don't you think it's a trifle over your head?

FRANCIE

Yes, ma'am -- I mean, yes, ma'am.

LIBRARIAN

Well, why did you select it?

FRANCIE

Well, I -- I read all the authors that far, all the ones that begin with A and then the B authors up to Burton. It's next.

LIBRARIAN

You don't mean you're trying to read your way straight through the library?

FRANCIE

Yes, ma'am.

LIBRARIAN

But a book like that, you'll only be confused and--

FRANCIE

Please, I want to go on, through the alphabet -- I want to get to know everything in the world.

The librarian stares at her a moment. It is evident that Francie means it.

LIBRARIAN

Well, all right.

(she marks the book --
then before she hands
it to Francie she adds:)

Only -- look, do something for me, will you -- take another one too -- here, Lavender and Old Lace -- just for fun. It's Saturday. I'll have a headache thinking about you wrestling with The Anatomy of Melancholy all weekend. Will you?

FRANCIE

(smiling shyly)

Yes, ma'am.

The librarian marks the book and Francie starts out with it, the librarian smiling after her.

This dissolves to the YARD of the NOLAN TENEMENT in the afternoon. The tree, shorn of its limbs, stands like a scarecrow. A man is mounted on a ladder retying the clotheslines. Women hang from the windows giving free advice and gossiping.

WOMEN

A little to the left, Mrs.

Crackenbox! You think I want for Mrs. Wittely's baby-clothes to drip on my good sheets? Why don't you try oil of cloves? Nothin' won't make her stop, she's cuttin' her teeth. Didja hear old man Hammerslaw taken out last night? They'd oughta make the stairs wider or the coffins narrower ...

Mixed with this are the sounds of a baby crying and the shouts of kids.

The camera moves steadily past this bedlam and up to the second-floor rear fire-escape outside the Nolan window, to discover Francie, completely oblivious to all the noise, eating peppermints and having "fun" crying pleurably over the sorrows of her book. The bedlam continues over her but she hears nothing. She comes to a pausing place where it is just too beautiful to go on, closes the book, and sits reveling in its tragedy -- but managing to take another peppermint through the tears. -- Suddenly her head lifts as she hears singing, faint at first, then stronger. It is her father's voice, singing "Molly Malone." As soon as she is sure, she is galvanized into action and scrambles toward the kitchen.

The KITCHEN: Francie rushes to the door and throws it open as the singing comes closer. She gets it open before the last line is finished, and Johnny, her father, is revealed. This is a game of long-standing, to try to get the door open before he finishes the last line. Johnny holds out his arms and Francie flings herself into them joyfully.

FRANCIE

I won. I won!

Johnny laughs and holds her for a moment. Johnny is nice-looking, debonair. He is a free soul who could give and take superb happiness if only the world contained no economic problems, no responsibilities beyond the joy of living. It isn't so much that he shirks the responsibilities of a family man, as that he simply cannot cope with them. He is man enough to be bitterly ashamed of his weakness, but not quite man enough to overcome it. The truth is that Johnny has never quite grown up. His charm and his gift of play are something like those of a child. His moods are extravagant and volatile, like a child's. He wears the only suit he possesses -- a shabby Tuxedo, badge of his trade, with it a derby, jauntily worn. At the moment he is in a very high mood because he has a job for tonight, so that momentarily he feels more like the head of his house than he ordinarily does.

JOHNNY

Well now, I wouldn't be so sure o' that if I was you.

FRANCIE

But I did, I got it open before you finished, that's the rules!

JOHNNY

But I come up one flight two steps at a time before I remembered. Don't that make a difference?

FRANCIE

No sir, the rules--

JOHNNY

And in a manner of speakin', you never stopped me at all, because my heart kept right on singin'.

FRANCIE

Oh, papa, you're joking.

JOHNNY

Well, maybe I'll let you get away with winnin' this time, Prima Donna.
(looking around)
And where's your beautiful mama?

FRANCIE

Finishing the halls. She must be up on the top floor or she'd have heard you.

Unconsciously and almost imperceptibly, Johnny relaxes. He is instinctively more at ease with Francie than with Katie.

JOHNNY

Well, in that case you'd better be gettin' busy. Why aren't you layin' out my clothes?

FRANCIE

You're always makin' fun, papa, you know you haven't any more clothes.

JOHNNY

What's this, then?

FRANCIE

A tie.

JOHNNY

What's this?

FRANCIE

A dickey.

JOHNNY

And this?

FRANCIE

An apron.

JOHNNY

Them's clothes, aren't they? And you'd better be gettin' that apron ironed.

FRANCIE

Oh, papa, you've got a job for tonight?

JOHNNY

(savoring his
good news)

Do you see the palm o' that hand? That's right where I got the world, tonight.

FRANCIE

Where is it, papa?

JOHNNY

Klommer's -- big wedding party. There'll be lots of tips.

FRANCIE

Singing or waiting?

JOHNNY

Both.

FRANCIE

Oh, Papa, maybe tonight will be it, maybe he'll be there, the impresario, and he'll hear you and put you on the stage.

JOHNNY

Why not, ain't I the Brooklyn thrush? Only if that's the case, hadn't you better be gettin' that apron ironed?

FRANCIE

I'll have it in a jiffy, papa. And the coffee's on.

JOHNNY

That's my Prima Donna.

(then, teasing her)

"I've got a lassie, a bonny, bonny lassie, She's as fair as -- as--"

He pretends not to remember.

FRANCIE

(fussed)

Oh, papa, I can't sing.

JOHNNY

Come on, you're holdin' up the
singin'.

FRANCIE

(shyly)

"As fair as the flowers in the dell--"

JOHNNY

Better singin' I never heard.

FRANCIE

(shyly)

I love to iron for you, papa.

JOHNNY

(pouring the coffee
and bringing it down
to the table)

You know, a day like this is like
somebody givin' you a present,
everything just right. I wonder how
did folks get on before coffee was
invented. Ah, the world would be a
fine place if--

(he gets away from
this thought as
quickly as possible)

Prima Donna, do you know you're
gonna make a mighty nice wife for
somebody some day.

FRANCIE

Oh, papa!

JOHNNY

(teasing)

And pretty, too -- that is if your
nose don't grow crooked.

FRANCIE

Could it really -- honest?

JOHNNY

Ah, it's the prettiest nose in
Brooklyn.

FRANCIE

Oh, papa, it isn't!

JOHNNY

Who says it isn't? You just tell me
who says so and I'll take care of

him.

FRANCIE

Papa, you're crazy.

JOHNNY

You know somethin' else, you ain't gonna be ironin' like that no more when that impresario comes around. Things are gonna be different around here, you wait and see.

FRANCIE

Yes, papa.

JOHNNY

What's the wish you wish the most, when our ship comes sailin' in?

FRANCIE

(not looking at him)

It already came true.

JOHNNY

What was it, baby?
(she irons, and
won't look at him)
Come on, tell me now.

FRANCIE

I -- I wished when you came home today, you wouldn't be -- sick.

JOHNNY

(moved)

Who told you to call it sick, baby?
(then, trying to
get away from this)
Ah, now, you shouldn't be wastin' wishes like that; you ought to be savin' them for a silk dress or somethin'. Haven't you got a better wish than that?

FRANCIE

(hesitantly)

Well--

JOHNNY

Come on.

FRANCIE

I wish mama won't be too mad with Aunt Sissy.

JOHNNY

What about Aunt Sissy?

FRANCIE

She's gone and got herself a new husband again.

JOHNNY

(laughing)

No! If there ain't a woman for you -- If one husband don't suit her, she keeps right on lookin' for the best. Uh -- what did your mama say?

FRANCIE

Well -- she didn't like it.

JOHNNY

Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised.

FRANCIE

Couldn't you -- sort of say something to mama, not to be too mad.

JOHNNY

Why, sure I could, Prima Donna -- and I will.

FRANCIE

Oh, thank you, papa.

JOHNNY

Now ain't you got a real wish -- one just for you?

FRANCIE

Well -- did you see it, papa?

JOHNNY

What?

FRANCIE

Out the window -- our tree, they've killed it.

He crosses to the window, and she follows.

JOHNNY

(looking out)

Well, look at that now.

FRANCIE

(fiercely)

They didn't have any right to kill it, did they, papa?

JOHNNY

(sensing how serious

it is with her)
Wait a minute now, they haven't
killed it. Why, they couldn't kill
that tree!

FRANCIE

Honest?

JOHNNY

Why sure, baby. Now look, don't you
tell me that tree's goin' to lay
down and die that easy. You look at
that tree, see where it's comin'
from -- right up out of the cement.
Didn't anybody plant it, it didn't
ask the cement could it grow, it
just couldn't help growin' so much
it pushed that ole cement right out
of the way. When you're bustin' with
somethin' like that, can't anybody
stop it. Like that little ole bird,
listen to him--

(he imitates a bird)

He don't ask nobody can he sing. He
don't take no lessons, he's just so
full of singin' it's got to bust out
someplace. Why, they could cut that
tree way down to the ground and the
root'd shove up some place else in
the cement. Just you wait until next
Spring, and you'll see, Prima Donna.

(their eyes meet and
Francie's worry is
laid to rest)

Well, now, this ain't earnin' the
family bread.

(he gets his hat and
brushes it carefully
with his sleeve)

Haven't you got one little wish
that's just for you?

FRANCIE

No, papa I -- I just --

JOHNNY

Just what?

FRANCIE

I just love you so much, papa!

She clings to him, tightly. Johnny holds her.

JOHNNY

(gently, moved)

Well, what do you know. Listen, if I
get a lot of tips tonight, you know

what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna put two bucks on a horse I know runnin' Monday. I'll win ten, then I'll put the ten on another horse. If I use my head and have any luck, maybe I'll run it up to five hundred. Then you know what I'm gonna do?

FRANCIE

What, papa?

JOHNNY

I'm gonna take you on a trip, just you and me, on a regular train. Maybe we'll go down South, and see where the cotton grows. You know, "Down where the cotton blossoms blow."

To make her laugh, he does a little step with this.

JOHNNY

(very gently)

You're a nice girl, baby. Come on, we better go tell your mama the news about my job.

He puts his derby on at a rakish angle, and Francie gives him the package with the apron. They go out together. -- We then see them in the HALL. Johnny is feeling very good indeed, and he deliberately turns on the charm as he calls up the stairs.

JOHNNY

(calling)

Anybody seen Johnny Nolan's wife?

He starts gayly up, Francie looking after him, adoringly, and the scene cuts to the UPPER HALL where Katie is on her knees on the stairs, scrubbing her way down. She is slightly apprehensive as she looks down quickly.

KATIE

Johnny! You all right?

JOHNNY

(coming up the stairs)

And why wouldn't I be, married to the most beautiful woman in Williamsburg, Brooklyn?

KATIE

(relieved)

You're shoutin' it so, they'll hear you over to Manhattan.

JOHNNY

Don't you get fresh with me tonight!
Happens I'm workin' at Klommer's --
big weddin' party.

Katie is pleased in a maternal way, but values the news for what it is -- a one-night job -- whereas to Johnny it changes the complexion of his world and ought to change her world. To Katie his enthusiasms are an old, and now a somewhat humorous, story; her humor is a necessary defense against disappointments.

KATIE

I thought you was kinda extra dressy!
Well, looks like you won't get home
before the sun comes up.

JOHNNY

The later the better; the more tips
the more fine silk stockings for my
wife's pretty legs.

KATIE

(smiling)
Silk stockin's is just what I need.

She turns away to go on working. A man comes up the stairs past them and a couple of tenants look out from their doors to see what's going on. An audience always inspires Johnny.

JOHNNY

Just a minute, Mrs. Nolan. Don't you
think you better kiss me for luck?

KATIE

The whole house is lookin'!

JOHNNY

Who cares!
(But he draws her back,
then speaks softly:)
This is the best job I had in a
couple a months. Maybe I'll get
more, from tonight.

He puts his arm around her. She pretends to be out of patience with him, but she is pleased. None of the other women in the tenement get treated like this by their husbands.

KATIE

You better get on then, good jobs
don't wait--

JOHNNY

A job's no good without you kiss me.

She lets him kiss her, and is warmed in spite of herself.

Then she gives him a playful push, and speaks almost ruefully.

KATIE

Well, you still got a way with you,
Johnny Nolan! Go on now, before you
know it those folks at the weddin'
will be an old married couple.

JOHNNY

Before you know it, I won't go at
all. Theirs ain't the only weddin'
that counts.

KATIE

(smiling)

Put your hat on now and get out of
here before somebody else cops that
job!

He puts his hat on jauntily, grins, and comes to the head of the stairs. But he catches Francie's eye fixed on him from the bottom. He turns back to Katie, outwardly jauntily but actually a bit awkward.

JOHNNY

(hesitantly)

Oh -- Francie tells me Sissy's gone
and done it again. Don't -- I mean,
maybe he's a nice fellow -- don't be
too hard on her, huh?

KATIE

(dryly)

They've all been nice fellows. Beat
it now, Johnny.

A little lamely, Johnny turns away. He is glad to have this over with. His jauntiness returns. He tips his hat to Katie elaborately.

JOHNNY

That's just a sample, Madam. If you
like my stock, drop me a card and
I'll be around again.

Katie has to smile. Johnny starts down the stairs, pretending to be aware for the first time of his small audience. He tips his hat again.

JOHNNY

Oh -- evening, folks.

At the foot of the stairs Francie, delighted by the whole scene, slips her hand into his and accompanies him proudly. -- The view moves with them and "picks up" Flossie Gaddis, still in her pretty dress, shy and wistful in her doorway.

When she sees him, she starts to smile. Johnny stops.

JOHNNY

Well, will you look at our beautiful princess tonight, in a brand new gown.

FLOSSIE

(shyly, but infinitely pleased)
It's made out of silk.

JOHNNY

Why, let's see. Silk! Why, don't you tell me that -- that dress is made out of flower petals and birds' wings and a little old piece of cloud. Anybody could tell that!

Flossie laughs softly, and it is beautiful to see. Johnny laughs too, pats her head and starts on. -- Francie's reaction marks her worship of this father of hers. The scene moves on again as they go on down the stairs. They pass two old ladies who are standing in the doorway. On the door is a sign: Piano and Vocal.

JOHNNY

(tipping his hat)
Evening Miss Lizzie, Miss Maggie.

THE MISSES TYNMORE

We wish you well, Mr. Nolan.

JOHNNY

Thank you, ladies. Evening, Mr. Spencer.

MR. SPENCER

(going up stairs)
Working tonight, Johnny?

JOHNNY

Sure, big weddin' party.

They pass through the front door and on to the street.

We get a glimpse of Katie looking down for a moment after Johnny. Her face shows the mixture of her feelings. She sighs a little and turns back to work.

The STREET: Johnny and Francie come down the front steps, and what is, to her, a small triumphal march, continues. She holds onto his arm and is enormously proud. A couple of young girls are sitting on the steps.

JOHNNY

(tipping his hat again)

Good evening, young ladies.

GIRLS

Good evening, Mr. Nolan.

They giggle, a little flirtatiously. Johnny is unaware but Francie gives them a look. Her head goes higher and she holds tighter to Johnny's arm.

FRANCIE

What did mama say about Aunt Sissy?

JOHNNY

Don't you worry -- it'll be all right. Your Aunt Sissy's a fine woman, Francie.

Suddenly he stops at the window of the hardware shop as they pass it.

JOHNNY

Look at all the things they got. No use talkin', some day I'm gonna get you them skates.

FRANCIE

(maternally)

Mama said not to be late, papa.

JOHNNY

God invented time, Prima Donna, and whenever He invents somethin' there's always plenty of it.

(moving down the window)

Look at them knives!

FRANCIE

(gravely)

Mama says time is money.

JOHNNY

Well, I guess maybe He wasn't worryin' about money right then.

FRANCIE

(a little worried)

There's your car, papa.

JOHNNY

(looking, and
grinning at her)

Might as well catch it, I guess.

He kisses her quickly and goes toward the car. Francie calls "goodbye" after him and stands watching anxiously.

Johnny swings onto the car just as it starts to move on. He

smiles back, then tips his hat with a fine flourish to Francie.

Nobody but papa has ever yet tipped his hat to her. She is so proud her eyes glisten suspiciously. Her concern is gone and nothing is left but worship. She waves till the car is out of sight. And the scene fades out.

[B]

The NOLAN KITCHEN fades in. It is evening. First we see FRANCIE setting the table but more concerned with reading her book, which is open on the table. Then the scene pulls back to reveal Neeley washing at the sink, and Katie transferring the food from the stove to the table.

KATIE

Now tomorrow this bread'll make up
real nice with a sauce of ketchup
and coffee. Use soap, Neeley. Monday
we'll slice it and fry it in bacon
fat and -- Francie, you're not
listening, put up that book.

FRANCIE

(obeying)
Yes mama ... bacon fat.

KATIE.

Supper's ready.

She and Francie sit while Neeley, having splashed his face with water, dries it with a dish towel, looking over longingly.

NEELEY

Oh boy, we won't have to play no
North Pole this week! Hey! Am I
hungry!

He comes to the table, starts wolfing his food standing up.

KATIE

And when weren't you?

FRANCIE

Mama.

KATIE

Yes, Francie.

FRANCIE

(dreamily)
What does white mean?

KATIE

Just white, I guess. What do you

mean, what does it mean? Neeley, sit
down at your place.

He sits down.

FRANCIE

Well, what do girls always wear it
for when they get married, and when
they're confirmed, and when they
graduate -- why does it always have
to be white?

KATIE

I don't know, somebody just started
it I guess. Lots of things like that.

FRANCIE

Will I have a white dress when I
graduate?

KATIE

We'll see. Neeley'll probably need
shoes by then.

FRANCIE

But mama.

KATIE

Talk to him about it. If you can get
him to quit always comin' through
his soles ...

FRANCIE

Just because he's a boy ...

(she changes; right
out of her book)

All right, mama. I will gladly do
without so my little brother can be
happy with new shoes.

NEELEY

Little brother my eye, you--

KATIE

That'll do.

(to Francie)

You read too much.

The door suddenly bursts open and Aunt Sissy comes in -- but
she gives the impression of blowing in, like a fresh breeze.
She is a couple of years older than Katie, lively,
completely natural, looks not unlike a street-walker, but is
actually a simple, direct, earthy woman. She carries some
magazines.

SISSY

Well, hey, everybody!

THE CHILDREN

(with cries of delight)

Aunt Sissy, Aunt Sissy! What did you
bring us, Aunt Sissy?

They fly into her arms and she embraces them warmly,
magazines, and all.

SISSY

I brung myself, chickabiddies, ain't
that enough! Oh -- and a couple
magazines from the dentist's -- what
does he need 'em for -- or me either,
I can't read like my eddicated
little niece here! --

(Francie takes the
magazines, Sissy
looks at Katie)

Hello, Katie my darlin'!

KATIE

(a little stiffly)

Good evening, Sissy.

SISSY

(getting the fact
that there's a
chill on)

Well, you look fine, Katie.

KATIE

Yes, I look fine.

SISSY

(with rueful humor)

Who spilled the beans -- oh, that's
right, I forgot it was old Barker's
day here. Where's Johnny? I was
kinda countin' on him to be in my
corner!

KATIE

Oh, sure, you and Johnny.

SISSY

(abruptly putting
her arms around Katie)

Aw, look Katie, I didn't tell you
because I wanted to bring Bill
around, but I couldn't, he's home
sleepin', he's a milkman, see ... Ah
listen, you're goin' to wish me
happiness, ain't you?

KATIE

Naturally I wish you happiness --

this time, too.

SISSY

Oh, golly -- can't you just skip to the place where you forgive me. You're goin' to before you're through, you know I'll get around you in the end. Why can't you just be human now and get it over with?

KATIE

(laughing in spite
of herself)

Well, I'll say that much, there ain't anybody in the world like you to get around a person -- unless it's Johnny. You better sit down, you're in time for pie.

SISSY

Now that's more like it, that's my kid sister talkin'. Just coffee for me. I gotta get home soon and make breakfast for Bill.

NEELEY

Breakfast? At night?

SISSY

Yeah, ain't it a riot. We sleep all day with the shades pulled down to keep out the sun and the windows shut to keep out the noise. It's fun, you don't live like nobody else.

KATIE

(dryly)

No, you sure don't.

SISSY

Easy on the whip, kid. Ah, wait'll you meet my Bill -- you and him will--

NEELEY

Wouldn't you marry nobody that they wasn't named Bill, Aunt Sis?

KATIE

She mightn't remember 'em if they wasn't.

SISSY

(laughing)

Oh, Bill's got some other name -- Steve I think it is -- but I always

like Bill. A good man's name with no stuck-up about it. Ah, like I say, you'll be crazy about him, Katie.

KATIE

Yeah ... but the question is, how'll him and you get along?

(genuinely troubled)

It's wrong, Sissy, it's ... I mean, the other ones, and--

SISSY

What's wrong about it? The others was wrong. What's right about keepin' on with a guy when you don't love each other any more?

KATIE

But it ain't just as easy as that, it--

FRANCIE

(earnestly - dreamily)

I think Aunt Sissy is right about when love is dead.

KATIE

(to Sissy)

Now look what you started. It ain't anything to talk about in front of them. Every time you come around you fill their heads with--

SISSY

All right, kids, you go on downstairs awhile. Your mama's got a spankin' up her sleeve, and she ain't gonna feel right till she gives it to somebody. Might as well get it over with.

Neeley and Francie start out. Francie turns at the door, a little worried about her aunt and mother.

SISSY

You don't want to frown like that, snuggle-pup. The fellows don't go for that at all.

Her grin is contagious and Francie is relieved. She follows Neeley out. Sissy turns back to Katie with a grin.

SISSY

All right, kid, let's have it, the works. I'm a disgrace, you don't know what you're goin' to do with me, you can't hardly face the

neighbors with what they must be sayin', I'm old enough to know better. -- Go on, get it all off your chest, and then we can make up and forget about it.

KATIE

That's right, talk your way out of it, and you probably will, too. What did mama say?

SISSY

Oh, you know mama, she don't say much, but--

KATIE

Yeah, I know.

(imitating her mother)

"Sissy is bad only where the men are concerned, but she is good in the heart."

(her smile dies)

But that ain't it. You make me ashamed, Sissy. Folks got a right to talk, and the kids are bound to hear. It ain't right for them. And you can get in trouble. You ain't real sure what happened, and there's laws about things like that.

SISSY

Look, Katie, so help me, this time it's for keeps. I ain't even goin' to look at another guy. And as for the last one, he can't be alive, or I'd have heard from him. I been pretty good. Seven years is a long time for me to wait around, not bein' married -- they said seven years was all you had to wait, and I waited. Where would I get the money for a divorce?

KATIE

(Sissy is hopeless)

Well, for the life of me, I don't know what you've talked yourself into -- but I got a feelin' it ain't right.

SISSY

(on the level)

Look, kid, all I know is, it can't be wrong, or I couldn't feel like I do about it. I'm dumb, sure -- but I know this much, if I feel bad about somethin', it's wrong, and if

I feel good, it's right. Ah, you couldn't get it, Katie, you got all the breaks I never had -- you got the kids, and you got a guy you're clear overboard about. You're lucky.

KATIE

(with a touch
of bitterness)

Yeah, I'm that, all right.

SISSY

Sure, you are. And that makes all the difference. You got somethin' to stick to, you--

KATIE

(with a sudden flare
she didn't know was
in her)

All right, and where does crazy over somebody get you! It don't put no pennies in the bank, it don't buy no clothes for the kids to go to school -- maybe you got it better, not stickin' to one man. I wish I wasn't crazy over him sometimes--

SISSY

Hey, Katie--

KATIE

(unconsciously
her voice rises)

--And I won't have the kids takin' after him either, him and those dreamy ways I used to think so much of -- not if I got to cut it right out of their hearts!

There is a pause that means a lot. Katie hadn't the least intention of saying that. Sissy stares at her. It is the first knowledge Sissy has had that there was something deeply wrong between Katie and Johnny.

SISSY

Hey, kid, what're you sayin'?

KATIE

Nothing, I--

SISSY

Yes you are, you're sayin' plenty. What's happened between you and Johnny?

KATIE

I don't know what I'm sayin'. I
don't know what come over me.

SISSY

Well, look, hon, we better find out.
Sure, we got somethin' to talk about
now.

KATIE

No, I don't want--

SISSY

Uh-uh, you're the kid sister, you
listen now. Look, you was awful
crazy about Johnny -- Don't tell me,
I seen you: it was like every woman
wants to be with a guy.

KATIE

Yeah, I know, but--

SISSY

All right, maybe Johnny didn't turn
out just like you figured; sure he
drinks and all, and you're the one
has had to make most of the livin'.
But everybody's got somethin'. And
you wasn't crazy about Johnny
because he was goin' to be a banker.
It was on account of-- well, how he
laughed, and how he could talk about
things, and -- and how you felt walkin'
down the street holdin' on to him and
havin' other women look at you -- and
the way he had of sayin' hello to
everybody like -- like he was givin'
away somethin'. That's what you was
crazy about, and that ain't changed;
I don't know, them things couldn't
change in Johnny, not even if he
tried, he's just -- different. And
that's what you was crazy over. If
there's been any changin', maybe
it's you, kid. You still got all you
was crazy over, ain't you?

KATIE

(moved, looking
away from Sissy)

Yeah, I--

SISSY

Then you thank your lucky stars for
what you got, Katie Nolan, and take
the rest along with it. And take it
from me, you got a lot, and don't
think you haven't.

There is a pause. Sissy really means it. And it has moved Katie enough to make her very near tears, but she would not show this for anything in the world. She manages a little grin.

KATIE

I might've known, startin' out to
take you apart, I'd wind up with
you workin' me over.

It is as close as she can come to acknowledging in words the truth of what Sissy has said. But their eyes meet, and there is a nice moment between them. These two sisters like one another at that moment as well as they have in a long time.

SISSY

Nice goin' -- You're a nice girl,
Katie.

The warmth between them holds as the scene dissolves to the NOLAN TENEMENT BUILDING: First we see NEELEY, bent over with his hands on his knees, playing he's an infielder. He's playing all by himself. He throws a small ball against the wall, feels it as it bounces back to him and tags out an imaginary runner on second base. He's very intent on all this. Evidently there's some question about the decision. Neeley speaks to the imaginary umpire with righteous anger.

NEELEY

Aw, he was out a mile, I tell you.
Don't give me that -- well, that's
better.

Evidently he wins the argument with the umpire, because he is mollified and returns to his fielding position. The camera pulls back to reveal the front of the tenement just as Sissy emerges from the front door. Francie is sitting quietly on one of the doorsteps fingering a pair of roller skates. A man and his wife are on the steps higher up, and Sissy has to step over them to get down.

SISSY

(cheerfully)
Don't stir yourself, Pal.

She steps over him with a grin. He grins in answer. The wife recognizes Sissy.

SHEILA'S MOTHER

(stiffly)
We better go in, Alfred.

Sissy gets it but doesn't care. Francie looks up eagerly, and Neeley quits his hall game to come over to Aunt Sissy.

NEELEY

How'd you come out, Aunt Sissy?

SISSY

(grinning)

No decision. It was a draw.

(she smiles at them)

Ah, your mom's bark is worse than her bite -- you know. Look, tell me somethin', when papa's home, I bet him and mama laugh a plenty, don't they -- you know, like they always did.

NEELEY

Sure, pop can make anybody laugh when he wants to, except when he's drunk.

FRANCIE

Sick, Neeley, mama says to call it.

NEELEY

(returning to
his ball game)

Okay, sick then. Funny, he ain't like other guys when he gets that way, he gets all quiet.

(he tags another
runner)

That'll teach you to steal a base on, I guess.

FRANCIE

(to Sissy)

Mama kind of doesn't want to, sometimes, but after a while mostly she does.

SISSY

Sure, I'll tell you somethin' you can do for me; do all the laughin' you can -- you know, keeps everybody healthy.

NEELEY

Okay.

FRANCIE

(quoting from
a book again)

Laughter is the singing of the angels.

SISSY

You're a funny kid, head full of all them things, kind of like your pop.

NEELEY

She tells lies like pop, too.

FRANCIE

(quickly)

He doesn't tell lies.

NEELEY

Well, I don't know what you'd call
it, he--

SISSY

(averting war)

Hey, time out, I've had enough
battlin' to last me today.

(then to change
the subject)

Where'd you get the skates?

FRANCIE

Oh, they aren't ours. Papa said he
was going to get us some though.

NEELEY

Aw, he didn't mean it, he just said
that and I'd like to know what you
call that if it ain't lies.

FRANCIE

He did so mean it, Neeley Nolan.

SISSY

Easy, now.

(to Francie)

Kind of like your papa, don't you,
lamb?

FRANCIE

He does mean it, doesn't he, Aunt
Sissy?

SISSY

Sure he means it, hon, he means it
-- every word. Only -- well,
sometimes things, you know, happen.
But it kind of ain't his fault, he--

(realizing she is
becoming more and
more involved she
changes the subject)

I tell you what -- let's make out
Johnny gave you them skates like he
said, and they're yours, it won't
hurt nobody.

FRANCIE

But Aunt Sissy, we couldn't, it--

SISSY

No sense things standing around and
nobody using them.

She starts to strap the skates on. Neeley leaves his ball
game to come over for this new excitement.

NEELEY

Hey, can I put 'em on next?

SISSY

All right, now. Take it easy.

Francie laughs in high enjoyment as Sissy steadies her. The
front door of the tenement flies open and the little girl,
who is the owner of the skates, shows up.

SHEILA

Hey, you come back here with my
skates. Mama!

SISSY

It's all right honey, we ain't gonna
hurt 'em.

Sheila's mother appears. She's the woman who was sitting on
the step.

SHEILA

Ma, they stole my skates.

The child's father appears in the doorway. The woman
advances down the steps.

SHEILA'S MOTHER

You bring them back. You put them
kids up to it, you--

SISSY

(facing her)

Easy now, nobody's hurt. I only
borrowed 'em.

SHEILA'S FATHER

(mildly)

She isn't going off with them, Effie,
just--

SHEILA'S MOTHER

(to her husband)

Don't you take up for that woman like
that, you--

SISSY

(smiling at the husband)

You poor little guy, you got to put

up with that all the time?

The clamor of the argument has brought forth other neighbors.

WOMAN

(horning in)

Ask her whose husband she'd like to borrow.

SHEILA

(to Francie)

My mother says your aunt's got dyed hair.

NEELEY

(belligerently)

Yeah!

A KID

Hey, the cop!

The hubbub ceases. McShane, a rather young and nice looking cop, comes in.

MCSHANE

Come on, break it up, break it up now, take it easy.

SISSY

(smiling full at him)

Well. I'm sure glad you come along, handsome. You look like you ought to be able to whip a bunch of women into line.

MCSHANE

(making no response to her impertinence)

That's fine, but maybe somebody better tell me what all the excitement's about.

SHEILA'S MOTHER

She tried to steal my little girl's skates.

WOMAN

She tried to vamp her husband.

FRANCIE

We only borrowed them for just a minute, honest.

SISSY

That's right, there wasn't nobody using 'em, and a little fun and frolic on a Saturday never hurt

anybody. I'll bet you know all about that, don't you?

MCSHANE

It's kind of you to ask, but I'm afraid I don't, lady.

SISSY

(studying him)

You mean it, too, don't you. Yeah, I should've known you weren't the type. That's kind of nice, handsome.

SHEILA'S MOTHER

If you think you're goin' to get out of it makin' eyes at the law--

SHEILA

Your aunt's goin' to the station house, your aunt's goin' to the station house!

Bedlam breaks loose again. It is at this point that Katie comes but the door and hurries forward.

KATIE

Officer, please.

(as she comes up to him)

This lady's my sister. She didn't mean any harm, I'm sure she didn't.

MCSHANE

(studying her a moment -- impressed)

Sure, and it doesn't look to me like any harm's been done.

(to the crowd)

Clear the streets now, all of you.

His tone is authoritative, and the crowd starts to disperse.

MCSHANE

(turning to Katie)

I'll see you ladies to your door.

SISSY

(with a grin)

Thanks, handsome.

KATIE

(in reproof)

My sister is always trying to be funny, officer, she doesn't mean anything by it.

(they pause

at the door)

I'd like you to know this is the

first time my family ever got into
any trouble on the streets--
 (looking at Sissy)
and I'll see it don't happen again.

MCSHANE

I guess I know a lady when I meet
one, ma'am -- My name is McShane and
I'm glad I could be of service to
you, ma'am.

He turns and goes.

SISSY

 (grinning)
He sure took a shine to you, Katie.

KATIE

Go on!
 (fussed)
Who'd look at me?

SISSY

He would.

KATIE

 (in an odd mood for
 a moment -- looking
 at her hands)
Funny, you kind of forget sometimes
that you're a woman.

FRANCIE

He wasn't going to arrest us, mama.
Aunt Sissy talked him out of it. And
we got to skate on 'em anyway,
didn't we, Aunt Sissy?

This makes Katie look at Francie. Francie has evidently
enjoyed the excitement from the adventure, and this
disturbs Katie.

KATIE

You go on down the street and tell
Sheila and her mama you're sorry
now, Francie.

FRANCIE

Do I have to, mama?

Katie doesn't answer, and Francie starts reluctantly down
the street. Katie watches her go a minute, and then turns
back to look at Sissy levelly.

KATIE.

I don't like sayin' what I'm goin'
to, Sissy.

SISSY

(ruefully)

Oh, golly, are we off again?

KATIE

You're the only sister I got, but-- I don't care for myself, what people think about you, only-- I got the kids to worry over, and if I don't do it nobody else will. You're bad for 'em, Sissy, you got Francie in trouble right on the street. You -- you might even make 'em trouble at school.

SISSY

(very quietly)

What is it you're tryin' to say, kid?

KATIE

Sissy, I'm askin' you not to come around any more. My mind's made up, and don't try changin' it with any more of that soft talk.

SISSY

I won't, Katie, not if you mean it. But let's keep on talkin' about you. Soft's one thing, kid, but-- bein' too hard is another.

KATIE

(flaring)

All right, it ain't nice to be hard, but my children are goin' to be somebody if I got to turn into granite rock to make 'em!

Sissy studies her for a long moment. Their eyes hold. Katie doesn't yield.

SISSY

(with a funny
little smile)

I kind of wish you hadn't said that, kid.

(she turns)

So long, Katie. I'll give your love to Bill.

She goes. Katie stares after her. Some of the inflexibility leaves as she watches Sissy go. She is bewildered, mixed up with the inner conflict; she turns abruptly to go into the tenement.

The scene dissolves to the NOLAN KITCHEN at night. First the cover of a Gideon Bible in Neeley's hands comes into view, then the scene pulls back to reveal Neeley, ready for bed, reading aloud. Francie sits near, holding a volume of Shakespeare. Katie is remaking a dress of hers for Francie. Grandma Rommely sits quietly listening. Grandma Rommely is of Austrian peasant stock, old, given much to silence. She has a faraway look, and nods occasionally while she listens to this reading, which is very important to her. It is a good thing.

NEELEY

(reading)

"--and Nahor lived nine and twenty years and begat Terah, and Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years." -- boy, that's older'n Grandma, ain't it? -- "and begat sons and daughters" -- Okay, that's the end of the page.

FRANCIE

(reading immediately)

"And dreaming night will hide our joys no longer, I would not from thee. Cressida: 'Night hath been too brief.' Troilus: 'Beshrew the witch with venomous'"--

NEELEY

(interrupting,
disgusted)

Aw, that ain't even English.

FRANCIE

It is so. Shakespeare wrote the best English of anybody.

NEELEY

All right then you tell me what it means, you're so smart.

FRANCIE

I didn't say I know what it means, I said I liked it.

KATIE

That'll do, now.

NEELEY

Okay, but I bet you don't know what it means either.

KATIE

Maybe not, but I know it's good for you.

FRANCIE
(resuming her reading)
"'Beshrew the witch'" --

NEELEY
(grumbling to himself)
She don't know what it means, mom
don't know what it means, Grandma
can't even read, and gosh knows I
don't know--

FRANCIE
Mama, I can't read if he--

NEELEY
--Just wastin' time every night
readin' stuff nobody knows what it's
all about.

KATIE
Well, it ain't as bad as that, I get
some of it. That about nights is too
brief, that means short, and
goodness knows they are, and the
days too.

(she measures the dress
against Francie as she
speaks)
Hold still a minute. Now listen,
Aunt Sissy brought us that Bible
from Sheepshead Bay, and papa blew
in all his tips one time on that
Shakespeare because Grandma said
they was the greatest books and we
should read a page every night. So
we ain't gonna waste 'em. And I
don't know, sometimes it does seem
kinda foolish but -- I guess it gets
you somewhere, might help you find a
job someday, you can't tell.

Her defense of the custom winds up a little lamely, but it
is the best she can muster. None of them notices Grandma
until she speaks abruptly.

GRANDMA ROMMELY
This reading will not stop. I say
this thing.

This is said quietly, but with so much determination that
all three turn toward her. She is completely immobile as she
tries to gather words, which are difficult for her.

GRANDMA ROMMELY
In the steerage we come, to this new
land, your grandfather and I. Hard
we work, but there is something we

look for that we do not find. So this is not different, I think, from that old country. And then I watch my children, and then their children. And then I know, when I am old, I know. In that old country, the child can rise no higher than his father's state. But here, in this place, the children need not to walk out their lives in the shoes of their elders. And this has to do something with the learning which is here free for all people. This is the thing, that with this learning each one is free to go so far as he is good to make of himself. This way each child can be better than the parent, and this is the true way things grow better. This, to me who am old, is the great wonder of this country, in this way to be free. I have missed this thing, and I have let my children miss it, but this shall not be so for my children's children. This reading will not stop.

Probably never before has Grandma Rommely put so many words together. She is lost in them, almost transfigured, there is deep strength behind her feeling. The others are silent, a little awed by the unaccustomed speech. The argument about the reading is ended forever.

GRANDMA ROMMELY

And you, Katie. It is not just for the job. You do not think well about this, nor about what you do with your sister. You have forgotten to think with your heart. There is a coldness growing in you, Katie.

She has finished; and she retires inside herself again, settling back in her chair. There is a pause, and there is definitely nothing more to say. It has had an effect on Katie. Francie looks from one to the other. -- Finally Katie's eyes leave her mother and meet Francie's. Katie nods. Francie resumes the reading.

FRANCIE

"'Beshrew the witch! with venomous wights she stays
As tediously as--'"

Katie's eyes go back to her mother. The old lady does not look at her, but nods again, almost imperceptibly. It is good. But her words, coming on top of Sissy's, have shaken Katie.

The scene dissolves to a STREET late at night. It is practically deserted. The shadowy figure of Johnny, carrying a couple of paper bags, comes down the street from the carline. He is singing "Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon" to himself. Thereupon the scene cuts to the NOLAN PARLOR where Francie is on her couch under the window. The faint sound of Johnny's singing awakens her. Her face lights up. She looks out the window. Then, in her nightgown, she scurries for the kitchen.

In the KITCHEN Katie is asleep with her head on her sewing on the table as Francie enters. Francie is startled at seeing her mother there. As she hesitates, Katie stirs and lifts her head. The sound of the singing is closer as Johnny comes up the stairs. -- Katie's and Francie's eyes meet and there is a sense of understanding between these two who wait. Instinctively Katie's hands start to fix her hair.

FRANCIE

He's all right, mama. I don't think he's sick.

The singing approaches the door. True to their game, Francie goes to open it before the song finishes. The open door reveals Johnny and his paper bags. There is a second of relief for both women when they're sure he is sober.

FRANCIE

Papa!

JOHNNY

Well, what do you know, if it isn't my beauty.

(he is a little surprised at seeing Katie still up)

Hey! What're you doing up this time of night?

KATIE

(a little awkwardly)

Oh, I made up my mind to sit up for you. But I guess I ain't used to the hours, any more.

Johnny sets his bags on the table. Katie resumes adjusting her hair.

JOHNNY

Leave it, it's nice.

KATIE

(pleased)

Go on. What you got in them bags? Francie, the coffee.

FRANCIE

(going to light
the stove)
Is it something to eat, papa?

JOHNNY
And what else, with me comin' from a
grand banquet?
(and he empties
the bags)
French rolls, a whole half of
lobster from the shores of Maryland,
caviar all the way from sunny far
off Russia, fried oysters, cheese--
from -- from the mountain fastnesses
of la belle France.

KATIE
What do you know about the mountain
fastnesses of France?

FRANCIE
Is it better comin' from there, papa?

JOHNNY
Supposed to be mighty good.
(looking at Katie)
But comin' home like this -- I know
that's good.

KATIE
(a little awkwardly)
Well, let's eat it, no reason we
shouldn't have a party of our own.

Abruptly Katie turns from setting the table and, without
explanation, disappears into the bedroom. At the same time a
very sleepy Neeley appears from the other bedroom.

NEELEY
I'm hungry.

KATIE
(from the bedroom)
Is that all you got to say to your
papa?

NEELEY
Hello, papa.

He starts immediately pulling a chair up to the table.

JOHNNY
(laughing)
His stomach's like the Irish sea, no
bottom to it.

Katie reappears, shy and pretty, her hair arranged and held

in place by a tortoise shell comb. Johnny looks at her, moved.

FRANCIE

Mama, your wedding comb!

KATIE

(a little shy at
her own sentiment)

Well, ain't this a kind of wedding party.

JOHNNY

(pulling out a
chair, playing
up to the mood)

You bet it is. I wish I could've swiped some champagne.

(then, as he
meets her eyes)

No, I don't, coffee's better.

Francie brings the coffee to the table and sits down next to her father. Neeley is already eating.

JOHNNY

(looking at Katie;
teasing)

Only will you look at who's tellin' me I don't know about the mountain fastnesses of France.

KATIE

(looking down, fussed)

Oh, that.

JOHNNY

Yeah, that -- imagine you forgettin'.

KATIE

Well, I didn't, not exactly, only that was a while back and--

JOHNNY

(to the children)

What do you think of havin' a mama that'd forget where we went on our honeymoon.

FRANCIE

Did you really go there, mama?

KATIE

Of course not, papa's joking.

JOHNNY

Sure we did -- or just the same as.

We spent our honeymoon in a school,
was as big as a palace, and--

KATIE

(interrupting)

We just worked there nights,
cleanin', the both of us. It was
right here in Brooklyn, before you
was born.

JOHNNY

Well, that wasn't what you said then.
You mean to tell me, when we was
havin' our supper all alone there,
and I used to pull down them maps and
take the teacher's pointer and pick
out the places we'd pretend we was
that night -- you mean to tell me we
really wasn't there? You mean you
forgot that sunny France was where we
liked the best, and all the laughin'
we done there, and you goin' to sit
right there and tell me we wasn't
even there?

He is making arrant love to her with this. Katie is stirred.

KATIE

(finding this
rather trying)

Yeah. I guess we kind of was, at
that.

JOHNNY

And you're askin' how I know about
the mountain fastnesses of France.
I'm ashamed of you, Katie Nolan.

Francie has been watching this between her father and mother;
she doesn't quite understand the mood between them, but she
is fascinated.

FRANCIE

Wasn't there anybody in the school
but you, papa?

JOHNNY

No sir, we--

KATIE

(interrupting)

Your papa better quit talkin', he'll
have you believin' you was in France
too.

FRANCIE

No, talk some more, papa--

NEELEY

What's this here stuff?

JOHNNY

Caviar, that's fish eggs come all the way from Russia.

NEELEY

(appalled)

Fish eggs!

JOHNNY

(as he and Katie laugh)

Tell the truth, I never could get the idea myself why they like it, except it's hard to get and costs a lot.

FRANCIE

And that makes it good, papa?

NEELEY

What about the Russians -- it ain't hard for them to get -- do they like it?

JOHNNY

(to Katie)

Can you tie that, ain't we got the smartest kids?

FRANCIE

Papa, talk some more, tell us about the party tonight, don't leave out anything.

JOHNNY

Oh, that can wait.

(he lays three

dollars before Katie)

How's that?

KATIE

Three dollars! That's good wages.

JOHNNY

(jingling his pocket)

Good tips, too.

FRANCIE

Papa, start. Was there music? Did they dance?

JOHNNY

Aw, your mama's got no time for all that.

KATIE

(softly, not
looking at him)

You -- you could tell me. You used
to.

Johnny starts uncertainly at first, watching Katie. Neeley
continues to eat. Francie listens to her father with her
elbows on the table.

JOHNNY

Well, it was pretty swell. Klommer's
best room, all fixed with white
flowers -- flowers on the table, on
the chandeliers, even on the floor.
There was a big horseshoe table, and
lots of people, and right in front
was a big tall wedding cake, must
have been two feet high.

NEELEY

Why didn't you bring home some of
that?

KATIE

Was the bride pretty?

JOHNNY

Well, she was maybe not so young,
but--

Johnny cannot spoil a moment like this with the truth.
Everything must be perfect, so he improves on the bride a
little.

JOHNNY

Sure, she was awfully pretty, in
that blue dress and all. She had
diamonds on her hands and even in
her ears so she kind of glittered,
and when she walked her clothes
swished, kind of. Well, sir, the
champagne flowed like water, and
the smell of it got all mixed with
the flowers and the powder the
ladies wore and it was like a
wonderful new kind of perfume,
made you feel good just to smell it.

FRANCIE

(with a little
shiver of delight)

And did you sing for them, papa?

JOHNNY

Sure thing, I was comin' to that. I

got three encores for "My Wild Irish Rose," and -- everybody clapped and clapped so I did "Irish Eyes Are Smiling" four times.

KATIE

It must have been awful nice.

JOHNNY

It was all right. And when it was time to cut the wedding cake the band played "Kiss Me Again" and she put her arms around him and boy, did he look scared!

NEELEY

What was he scared of papa?

JOHNNY

Huh?

KATIE

You kids ask too many questions. Go on, you heard the story, go back to bed now, it must be three o'clock.

NEELEY

(matter-of-factly)

I got a bellyache.

KATIE

Lay on your right side.

NEELEY

(kissing her)

Goodnight, mom.

KATIE

Goodnight, Neeley.

FRANCIE

(a little stiff --
not kissing Katie)

Goodnight, mama.

KATIE

Goodnight, Francie.

(laughing awkwardly)

Francie's kind of mad at me because Sissy made a scene of herself out on the street and I -- I told her to stay away.

FRANCIE

Papa--

KATIE

Run along now, both of you.

Both of the kids start to obey. The small incident has broken the perfection of the evening, and this disturbs Johnny.

FRANCIE

Goodnight, papa.
(kissing him,
then whispering)
Was -- was there an impresario
there?

JOHNNY

Not tonight there wasn't, Prima
Donna. Come here.
(awkwardly)
You got no call to be mad at your
mama, Francie, she -- she always got
a reason for what she does.

Johnny means this. Unaccustomed to reproof from Johnny, even as gentle as this is, has its effect on Francie. She hesitates, then goes over and kisses her mother with some restraint. Katie, who is feeling more deeply than she has felt in a long time, holds her close for a moment. Suddenly Francie flings her arms around her mother, and they are very close for a moment.

FRANCIE

(in a completely
different tone)
Goodnight, mama.

Francie hurries into her room and shuts the door. Her going makes a little awkward moment between Johnny and Katie, who are left alone, each lost in his own thoughts.

KATIE

(after another
little pause)
Johnny. What else happened at the
party -- tell me.

JOHNNY

Well, it was nice like I said it
was, awful nice -- the bride all
dressed up and all, and--

But he cannot get going again. And Katie hasn't really heard.

KATIE

(interrupting)
Johnny.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

KATIE

Do you think-- I mean, have I-- well,
changed a lot-- you know.

JOHNNY

(misunderstanding
-- quickly)

Changed, why, she couldn't hold a
candle to you. She wasn't so hot, I
just said that, for the kids. No
sir, you're--

KATIE

(interrupting)

No, I mean -- am I gettin', you know,
hard?

She is troubled, inarticulate. Johnny is bewildered.

JOHNNY

Why, where'd you get hold of an idea
like that, hard?

KATIE

I don't know, I don't want to be,
but-- well, there's the kids and all,
I want to do what's good for them--
and maybe sometimes--

JOHNNY

Aw, baby, don't talk like that. Why,
you know something, you're prettier
than you ever was. I could near
tellin' it to the whole party
tonight-- hey, you ought to see my
bride that's waitin' home for me.

(softly, looking
straight at her)

And you was waitin'. That was --
nice, Katie, it was -- like it used
to be.

KATIE

You -- you told about the party nice,
Johnny. I -- I should've waited up
more, I guess.

JOHNNY

Aw, it ain't your fault, baby, you
workin' like you do.

(he touches the comb)

I -- I wish I'd bought you the rest
of that set when we was married, the
man said it came all the way from
Spain.

KATIE

What else was there to it? You ain't
told me for a long time.

JOHNNY

There was two little side combs and
a locket on a chain.

KATIE

And a bracelet, you said.

JOHNNY

You know what, I'm gonna look up
that man some day and get you the
rest of that set.

Johnny is deeply moved. This is the closest that he and Katie have been in a long time. If things were entirely right between them, most of all if they were entirely right between Johnny and himself, this is the moment in which he would take her in his arms. Subconsciously, both of them know it. They enjoyed perfection, when they were young together, as closely perhaps as people come to it. Life together, when they were young, was very right between them. This day has moved Katie to an instinctive reach back toward that old perfection, which they have not felt in a long time. This is what she is subconsciously asking from Johnny. And subconsciously he realizes this. And because of his failures, he has not quite the feeling of this perfection, this completeness, to give her. This feeling is taut between them for a moment. And then Johnny feels instinctively the necessity of talking a little more, to try to reassure himself, to try to build with his words something more of reassurance that everything is all right within him. This very feeling is an acknowledgment that he no longer has that perfection to offer her. So, with his words, they go past the perfect moment. Katie senses this. There is a desperate need in her for Johnny to take her in his arms, without any more words, as he would do if their world were right. She is trying to hold on to this moment, not to let it get by, when after a moment she speaks.

KATIE

That's nice, Johnny, but--

JOHNNY

(eagerly, working
himself into believing)
Ain't no buts about it, I mean it.
Things are goin' to be different
around here, you -- you got no
business workin' like you do.

KATIE

I don't mind the work, I--

JOHNNY

No sir, I ain't goin' to have it.
Look at them pretty hands, they got
no business bein' in water all the
time. I'm goin' to change a lot of
things. I'm goin' to quit the
drinkin' too. And just to show you,
here's my tip money, you can--

KATIE

No, Johnny, the tips are yours --
you take all a man's money, it ain't
right.

JOHNNY

(accepting this a
shade too easily)

Well, there's a dime anyway. I -- I
had to take a nickel out of the bank
for carfare, you can put a dime back.
But I'm goin' to keep at 'em down at
union headquarters and make 'em get
me jobs. Tonight's the beginning of
somethin' new, Katie -- you believe
me, don't you, Katie?

KATIE

(wanting to)

Sure, Johnny, sure I do.

JOHNNY

I'll be singin' all over Brooklyn
and maybe Manhattan too. Have you
heard Johnny Nolan sing, they'll say.
Yes sir, our luck's turned, and some
day--

KATIE

(from her heart)

Ah, stop it, Johnny, stop it, stop
talkin'!

He looks at her, hurt, amazed. Katie has had all she can
stand. It isn't any good, it's phony.

KATIE

(bitterly)

Talkin' like that only makes it
worse! We ain't got a chance, who
are we tryin' to kid!

There is a long pause. The truth that has been torn from
Katie is the last thing either of them wanted to face -- it
is the sort of thing people try the hardest to keep from
facing. But it is here. All Johnny's desperate effort to kid
himself dies within him. He stares out the window. He could
not possibly look at Katie in this moment.

JOHNNY

(very quietly)

Yeah. That's right, sure, who am I tryin' to kid.

Katie feels sorry for him, for them both, but there is no use in weakening -- you can no longer evade the hard truth.

KATIE

I didn't go to hurt you, but it's the truth, I can't change it, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Yeah, and I can tell you somethin' else, too. All that baloney about the encores tonight -- that was just because they was a little drunk and feelin' good. I wasn't so hot.

KATIE

(dry and hard)

No use talkin' like that, it won't help any.

JOHNNY

I don't know, as long as we're on the truth, let's keep lookin' at it. I'm the one ought to be kicked out, not Sissy. I got a wife and kids and I don't take care of 'em, I don't know why. I didn't want the kids when they come, but I love 'em -- how could you help it -- sure, I love 'em a lot, but I just can't seem to turn into a hard-workin' man to take care of 'em. What sense does that make, all I want to do is sing, I don't know why. And I guess that's right, I ain't ever goin' to be able to change it. Sure, you're right, who am I tryin' to kid.

This comes so quietly from Johnny that it is frightening. For the first time in his life he has faced himself. Katie made him do it, even if she did not intend to. They have both faced him. So these two will never again feel quite the same about one another. What he has said is bitterly true, there is no answer to it. -- Katie slowly picks up some of the dishes from the table, as though she would take them to the sink. But even lifelong habit is no good, and she sets them back on the table.

KATIE

(dully)

We better get some sleep.

JOHNNY
(without turning)

Yeah.

Katie stands helplessly a moment, and then starts toward the bedroom. Johnny doesn't move.

In the PARLOR Francie is lying on her bed beside the window, illumined by the faint moonlight. She is awake, staring at the ceiling, as if feeling a presentiment about the next room. Outside the window stands the Tree in the backyard, bereft of most of its branches, but stark and strong in the moonlight. The scene fades out.

[C]

MCGARRITY'S SALOON fades in, in the early morning. It is a small corner saloon. Next to a big free lunch sign is a cigar store with a wooden cigar store Indian. -- McGarrity, the proprietor, is just finishing sweeping the sidewalk.

PASSING MAN

Morning, Mac.

McGarrity waves in answer and goes inside. -- The place is deserted except for Johnny, who is sitting at a table, head down on his arms at a table. Before him is a whiskey glass and a litter of cigarettes. McGarrity studies him compassionately, then goes over and shakes him gently by the shoulder.

MCGARRITY

Seven o'clock, Johnny, better be
goin' home.

Johnny raises his head wearily. He has not been asleep. And he is not as drunk as he would like to be, although he has tried hard to drink enough so that he would stop thinking.

JOHNNY

(wearily)
Sure, sure, home.
(singing)
"Home is where the heart is--"

He pulls himself to his feet and moves somewhat uncertainly to the bar. Automatically, McGarrity goes behind the bar, and just as automatically wipes the polished surface.

JOHNNY

(tonelessly)
Write nice songs about it, don't
they, Mac?

MCGARRITY

Sure, Johnny.

JOHNNY

I sing 'em good, too, don't I, Mac?

MCGARRITY

Sure, Johnny, sure.

JOHNNY

Don't just sure me like that, Mac.
You're wrong about somethin', you
don't know it, but you're wrong. I'm
not ever goin' home any more.

MCGARRITY

Sure you are, Johnny, you got a
mighty nice family to go home to.

JOHNNY

You don't get it. I'm goin' there,
I'm gonna walk down the same street,
I'm gonna turn in the same door, and
there'll be my nice family, but I
won't ever be goin' home again. Give
me a drink, Mac.

MCGARRITY

I don't get you, boy.

JOHNNY

Sure you don't, I don't get it
either. I pretty near did, sittin'
there thinkin' about it. Listen, Mac,
listen good now.

(singing)

"Maxwellton's braes are bonnie,
where early fa's the dew--"

(stopping)

What did you hear, Mac?

MCGARRITY

You always sing good, if that's what
you mean.

JOHNNY

If that's what I mean I don't know
what I mean. What good is singing --
you feel somethin', but there ain't
nobody hears what you feel. It's no
good -- she used to hear, but not
any more. So I won't ever be goin'
home again. I hate singin'. I
should've been tendin' bar like you.
Don't ever sing, Mac.

McGarrity studies Johnny closely. He knows Johnny is in pain
about something, but he isn't quite sure what.

MCGARRITY

(polishing the bar)
Lots of angles to it, boy. You
wouldn't be any good tendin' bar.
You're a funny fellow, Johnny.

JOHNNY
Sure, sure, I'm funny. I want a
drink, Mac.

MCGARRITY
I don't know if I'd trade with you
-- a poet that can't write, that's
bad. But it takes all kinds of
people, maybe some of 'em just
wasn't meant to make a livin'. And
maybe I would trade, at that. And
now you better get home to that nice
family, your missus will be worryin'.

JOHNNY
(flaring up)
All right, it's the nicest family in
the world, you think I don't know
that. Give me a drink, I said.

MCGARRITY
Easy, Johnny, easy.
(he sets out a drink)
Have one on the house.

JOHNNY
(bitterly)
Sure, that's better, and I'll sing
for it, that's what I'll do, I'll
sing for it.

McGarrity studies Johnny compassionately as Johnny pours the
drink. Johnny's bitterness toward life, and most of all his
hatred for himself and what he is, is at its peak.

The scene dissolves to the NOLAN TENEMENT as Francie emerges
with pencil box and books, starting out for school. In a
moment the door bursts open and Neeley emerges, always a
little late. He has his books in a strap. As he joins her,
Neeley starts to rip off the tie he is supposed to wear to
school.

FRANCIE
Neeley Nolan, you stop that.

NEELEY
Aw, I don't want to wear no old tie,
it's--

FRANCIE
(maternally)
Mama said.

NEELEY

Aw, go chase yourself.

But he submits to her mothering as she starts to pull the tie back into place. Suddenly they hear a clamor off scene -- and we then see what they see: Johnny, drunk and unsteady, is just coming around the corner surrounded by a swarm of derisive kids. Johnny pays no attention to them.

THE KIDS

Just pickle my bones in alcohol.
He's stiffer than a goat, look how he
walks.

Francie and Neeley run to their father. Francie pushes her way to him and tries to take his arm.

FRANCIE

(fiercely)

You leave him alone! Papa -- come
on, let's go home, let's hurry, papa.

Johnny tries uncertainly to smile, but he is pretty far gone.

NEELEY

(to the kids)

You leave him alone or I'll bust you
one.

The kids pay no attention. Neeley socks one of them and a fight is on. Francie tries desperately to help Johnny toward their door.

McShane enters from across the street, and breaks up the fight.

MCSHANE

(to the kids)

Come on now, quit it -- quit it or
I'll run you in. Beat it now.

The kids break and beat it, still yelling derisively. Francie and Neeley remain and McShane turns back to them.

MCSHANE

Now, my lad, where do you live?

FRANCIE

(fiercely)

I'll take him home, he's my father.

MCSHANE

I expect you'd best be gettin' on to
school, hadn't you? I'll look after
him for you.

(Francie hesitates)

Don't you worry, he ain't in any trouble, I'll take good care of him. This the building?

FRANCIE

(nodding)

Second floor back. If -- if you talk to him, he -- he's always all right and you'll--

MCSHANE

Don't you fret a minute.

(he takes Johnny's arm)

Come on now -- we'll make it, lad.

Johnny gives him a blurred look but submits to being led up the steps, and as Francie stands looking after them, miserable, the scene dissolves to the TENEMENT HALL where McShane helps Johnny toward the Nolan door. Johnny only half-coherently tries to sing.

JOHNNY

"When Irish eyes are smiling--"

MCSHANE

Quiet, now, quiet does it.

JOHNNY

Got to sing, don't you, very important, and she'll hear you, but you got to sing ju-u-st right, so she can get the door open first, very important.

MCSHANE

All right, sing then, if it eases what's hurtin' you.

JOHNNY

"When Irish eyes are smiling--"

The noise causes a couple of neighbors, who open their doors, to look out. McShane knocks at the Nolan door, and Katie appears, just ready to start her morning's janitor work. McShane is surprised to see her.

KATIE

Johnny!

Scarcely noticing McShane, she starts to help Johnny into the kitchen. McShane helps. -- The scene cuts to the KITCHEN as they get Johnny into a chair at the table. McShane studies Katie, who is busy with Johnny.

MCSHANE

I -- I didn't -- I didn't expect to see you, ma'am. Is there anything I

can do?

KATIE

He's my husband, I can take care of him.

(to Johnny)

It's all right now, Johnny, I'll get you a nice cup of coffee.

JOHNNY

(blurred)

Nice cup of coffee, nice cup of coffee.

Katie goes to the stove. McShane stands awkwardly for a moment.

MCSHANE

I just wanted to tell you, the gentleman wasn't makin' no trouble, just -- needed a little help.

Katie stops pouring the coffee to look at him. She is instinctively defensive about Johnny, so her look is antagonistic at any intrusion into their family troubles.

MCSHANE

(awkwardly)

If -- if there's anything I can do, ma'am--

Katie comes over and puts the coffee down in front of Johnny.

KATIE

There, Johnny, drink it.

(then, turning to McShane)

If you wasn't new on the beat, Mr. McShane, you'd know Johnny never makes trouble -- and you'd know the whole Nolan family don't need anybody's help, and -- and I'd thank you very much, Mr. McShane, to mind your own business.

Her eyes meet his squarely.

MCSHANE

(after a moment)

Sure -- Mrs. Nolan.

He turns and goes, closing the door behind him. Katie turns to Johnny.

Out in the HALL, McShane pauses a moment beside the door and looks back toward the room a little ruefully. He sure caught hell. He grins in admiration, then starts down the stairs.

The scene dissolves to the PUBLIC SCHOOL. The school yard is swarming with children. The bell is ringing, and the youngsters start to form lines to march in. This dissolves to the EIGHTH GRADE CLASSROOM. The view is focused on one group and then moves past the intent, struggling faces of other children as they recite in unison, with a curious cadence with which poetry is scanned.

KIDS

"Beau-ty is truth truth beau-ty that
is all Ye know on earth and all ye
need to know."

The camera comes to Neeley, and then Francie; then pulls back to reveal a classroom so crowded that some of the children have to sit in the aisles in chairs without desks. The teacher, MISS TILFORD, middle-aged, and tired, is at the blackboard, marking off with chalk the metric divisions of the lines which are written on the board. Miss Tilford is repeating it with them.

MISS TILFORD

(as they finish)

Now, who knows the name of the meter?

(looking at the class;

Francie's hand is up)

Frances Nolan?

FRANCIE

(standing up)

Yes, but--

MISS TILFORD

You can't "know but." You either know or you don't know.

FRANCIE

I know it's iambic pentameter, five metric feet, with a long syllable coming after a short one, but-- I only meant to say-- I was thinking about the words, what they mean, and I wondered--

MISS TILFORD

You don't have to know the words, Frances, only the meter. And we're late now for our arithmetic. The class will get their arithmetic books.

She moves to the desk. There is a general rustle in the class as the exchange of books is made. Francie sits down slowly.

MISS TILFORD

(opening her book)

Now then! The farmer has a hundred and sixty-nine apples in a barrel. He wants to divide them into equal piles, with as many apples in each pile as there are piles of apples. How would he go about it?

(as there is no answer, she goes on)

What method would he use -- What is the latest process we've been studying?

FRANCIE

(with hand raised)

Miss Tilford--

MISS TILFORD

Yes, Frances.

FRANCIE

(rising)

If beauty is truth and that's all ye need -- I mean all you need to know -- Then that means it's the most important thing, and if a man -- I mean somebody -- spent all their time just trying to live like that -- Well it's hard to put, but no matter what else he did, then -- then --

She falters, feeling strongly what she wants to say, but unable to say it. Neeley knows what she is getting at.

MISS TILFORD

Then what, Frances?

FRANCIE

(lame)

Then -- it would be all right, wouldn't it -- I guess.

MISS TILFORD

I'm afraid I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about, Frances, but I do know we're disrupting the arithmetic! Now, class! Square root! Does no one remember square root!?

As Francie sits down, deeply humiliated, the scene dissolves to the CLASSROOM while the children are filing past a doctor and a nurse, who examine briefly the head of each child, looking for lice. As they finish, the children are free to leave. Francie and Neeley are in line. The doctor is examining a boy, and indicates for the nurse to look.

DOCTOR

Report to your principal and give
him this card.

The boy goes on with the card nonchalantly, but as he leaves
some kids who successfully passed the examination, jeer:

KIDS

Mickey's lousy, Mickey's lousy!

Neeley, next in line, submits indifferently, and dashes to
his cronies as soon as the doctor murmurs "All right."
Francie steps up. She offers her head, enduring the
examination as a necessary evil, but clearly knowing it
is not necessary in her case. Miss Tilford, checking the
line, observes her.

DOCTOR

All right.

He has turned to the next child and misses Francie's
scornful glance -- as much as to say "I know that" -- but
Miss Tilford sees it, and suddenly feels a compunction.

MISS TILFORD

(as Francie passes her)

Frances...

FRANCIE

Yes, Miss Tilford?

MISS TILFORD

Er -- maybe I was a little too
abrupt with you this morning -- I
mean, you are a smart girl and --
it's just that you must learn to
stick to the point and not go
wandering off the subject.

FRANCIE

Yes, Miss Tilford.

MISS TILFORD

If you'll do that, you needn't worry
about passing.

FRANCIE

I wasn't worrying about--
(giving up; meekly)
Yes, Miss Tilford, thank you, Miss
Tilford.

As she wanders out, completely lost, the scene dissolves to
the SCHOOLYARD. Neeley has waited for Francie and they are
now walking across the yard toward the gate. Francie is
vaguely troubled.

NEELEY

How should I know if they knew you was talkin' about him. I don't see what for you want to talk so much anyway. Pop was just a little drunk, that don't hurt nobody.

(he breaks off as
he sees something
offscene)

Hey, look!

We then see SISSY, from their angle, waiting at the corner for them. She waves. -- The children stop short in a quandary.

NEELEY

What'll we do? We ain't supposed to talk to her.

FRANCIE

(troubled)

I don't know--

(she has an idea)

Neeley, that's all they said, we was only supposed not to talk to her.

Neeley's face brightens. Francie hurries toward Sissy and Neeley follows.

Sissy embraces them both, and doesn't notice their silence.

SISSY

Chickabiddies! I couldn't stand it no longer! I just had to get a peek. Man alive, you both look good enough to eat!

NEELEY

Gee, it's--

Francie shakes her head warningly. Sissy doesn't notice.

SISSY

Well, how are you anyway?

(no answer --

Francie stares at
her miserably)

Tell me all about it, how's things at home?

(there's a
miserable
silence)

Well, you're not lettin' me get a word in edgewise. Oh -- I catch! You ain't allowed to talk to me,

huh?

(they nod -- she
laughs and hugs
them)

Well, you do just like your mama
said. But there ain't nobody said
anything about me talkin' to you,
is that it?

(they nod and
shake their
heads in happy
confusion)

Smart enough for lawyers, the both
of you! Well, let's see, you can nod
and shake and make faces, can't you
... How's Katie?

(they nod)

And your papa?

(they hesitate, then
nod uncertainly)

Not workin' much?

(they shake their
heads sadly)

Well, don't you worry, he will.

(they nod; then
tentatively)

Any sign of the ice meltin' in my
direction yet?

(they shrug and Sissy
sighs humorously)

Guess I'll have to tell Bill you
still got scarlet fever, he's kinda
wonderin'... Oh, well. And how's
school?

There is a divided opinion on this. Neeley's shrug implies that it's okay enough, but to hell with it. But the question has revived Francie's problem, and her shake of the head is troubled. Sissy's interest centers on her.

SISSY

What's wrong, ain't you doin' good?

(Francie shakes
her head)

Well ... got in any trouble?

(there is a
confused shrug)

Teacher mean to you?

(there's a division
of opinion -- a half-
hearted negative from
Francie, a nod from
Neeley. Sissy is
puzzled)

I don't get it, lamb, somethin's
troubling you, maybe I ain't askin'
the right questions.

Francie looks at her miserably, wanting terribly to talk to Sissy, to someone, about it. For a moment the scene is at an impasse. Then Francie has an idea.

FRANCIE

Neeley.

(he looks at her)

Neeley, Aunt Sissy wants to know if it's because the teacher's mean to us.

NEELEY

Sure she is, she--

Francie touches his arm, shakes her head, indicates that he is to talk to her, not Sissy. The great light dawns on Neeley.

NEELEY

Oh -- was you speakin' to me, Francie? Why yes, Francie. I'd say that teacher was pretty mean, wouldn't you, Francie? I'd say all teachers was pretty mean, Francie.

FRANCIE

(as Sissy grins at this subterfuge)

Well, Neeley, I wouldn't say that she was mean, exactly. That isn't what we mean, Neeley, is it?

NEELEY

Ain't it, Francie?

FRANCIE

No, what we mean is, Neeley, school's to learn things in, that's what it's for, isn't it, and if you got questions--

NEELEY

Well now, look, Francie -- if you mean all that talkin you did about pop, then I don't know--

FRANCIE

Neeley Nolan, you don't understand anything. You got to know things, if they're important, that's what school's for, isn't it? It's just if she'd tell you things, not just the meter but what they mean, that's what teachers ought to do -- Isn't it, Neeley?

NEELEY

(giving up)

Well, Francie, maybe you know what you're talkin' about, but if you ask me, you just talk but don't say nothin'.

FRANCIE

But, Neeley--

SISSY

(gently)

It's all right, lamb. I can't say I could draw a map of it, but I get some of it.

(she draws

Francie to her)

You quit worryin' about it, hon, and run along home. Maybe your old Aunt Sissy can do somethin' about it.

(she hugs them

both tightly)

Look, maybe it's just as well if you don't say nothin' at home about seein' me -- you know, it ain't lyin' as long as nobody asks you.

NEELEY

(lightly)

I guess we can't help it, Francie, if people listen to us in the street.

He is off like a shot, calling to a group of boys. Francie smiles gratefully into Sissy's eyes. Sissy watches after her a moment, and then her face hardens. Nobody is going to make Francie suffer because of her father's weakness, or for any other reason, whatever it may be. She starts toward the school.

The scene dissolves to a CLASSROOM. Sissy is standing belligerently in front of a bewildered Miss Tilford's desk.

SISSY

(belligerently)

What I'm sayin' is, whatever it is you're teachin' the other kids that Francie ain't gettin' -- I ain't gonna have it!

MISS TILFORD

But I assure you that your daughter is being taught exactly the same as the other children. If you could just tell me what it is that you mean--

SISSY

(interrupting; humbly)
Look, lady. I don't know myself what we're talkin' about. I ain't very smart, I guess you seen that. But somethin's eatin' that kid, and she's a good kid and don't you hold out nothin' on her, don't you teach the other kids nothin' she ain't gettin', or--

(confused)
Well, you see that you do like I said.

(she attempts
belligerence again)
Or I'll call a cop, and that ain't kiddin' either. I used to be married to one!

With this last lame threat she stalks out, leaving Miss Tilford shaking her head in relief as though at a lunatic who hasn't affected her at all.

The scene dissolves to the NOLAN KITCHEN where we get a close view of the Sunday funny paper spread on the floor. The text is the Katzenjammer Kids. This dissolves to a full view of the kitchen to show Neeley sprawled on the floor with the funny paper. Francie is quietly staring out the window, preoccupied, drumming on it idly. Katie enters from the hall, with a few clothes over her arm that she has just brought in from the line to be ironed. She stops abruptly when she doesn't see Johnny in the room. Her question carries quick, instinctive apprehension that Johnny may have gone out to get drunk again.

KATIE
Where's your papa, did he go out?

NEELEY
No'm, he--

Johnny appears from the bedroom. He has heard.

JOHNNY
(with quiet bitterness)
No, he didn't go out.

KATIE
Oh. I thought--

JOHNNY
(quietly)
I ain't goin' to McGarrity's, if that's what you mean.
(to Francie)
Them's fine compositions -- they read nice, Prima Donna.

FRANCIE

(absently)

Thank you, papa.

Johnny has the compositions in his hand. He goes over to the table and puts them down. He isn't looking at Katie. This Sunday is a hard day for Johnny. With what has happened between him and Katie, it is very difficult to be shut in these small quarters with his family, with something dead between them. Life is at low ebb for Johnny. He picks up a piece of the newspaper and studies it absently, to avoid looking at Katie. Katie studies him for a second. She, too, is aware of the tension, but life has to go on. She puts the clothes into her work basket and starts to mend some of them. There is a little silence.

NEELEY

(quite unaware
of all this)

Pop, why don't the Katzenjammer Kids
talk plain English?

JOHNNY

Supposed to make it funny, I guess.

KATIE

Francie, you been staring out that
window for half an hour. Can't you
make up your mind to do something?

FRANCIE

What shall I do?

KATIE

You used to like to do your homework
Sundays.

FRANCIE

I -- I don't know, I don't like
school as much as I used to.

NEELEY

Now you're gettin' some sense!

KATIE

School's just the same this year as
it was last.

FRANCIE

Mama.

KATIE

Yes.

FRANCIE

You know that big market on Clancy
Street, down the hill?

KATIE

We can't deal there, if that's what you mean. That neighborhood's expensive.

FRANCIE

Well, I wasn't talking about the market.

KATIE

You said did I know that market. Neeley, don't just lie there and scuff your shoes out.

FRANCIE

Well, I meant, the other day I walked home that way, and -- and do you know what's just a couple of blocks away from that market?

KATIE

Another market, I guess, and am I supposed to guess what's two blocks away from that. Why don't you say what you mean, Francie?

FRANCIE

(discouraged)

I didn't mean anything, I guess.

From behind his paper, Johnny gives her a quick look. He knows Francie has something on her mind, and is getting no place with it. He is very much aware of the unconscious duel between the two.

KATIE

Sometimes it looks like you make these holes on purpose, Neeley.

NEELEY

(grinning)

Aw, can I help it if things just happen?

FRANCIE

Papa.

JOHNNY

Yes, baby.

FRANCIE

You know what I read in a magazine once?

JOHNNY

(getting a look

from Katie)
What was it, Francie?

FRANCIE
Well, it said walking is a good thing, it said people would look and feel better if they walked a lot. "Walk and put rose petals in your cheeks," it said.

KATIE
Then I ought to be a ravin' beauty with all those stairs.

Francie wanders over to her father's chair, and stands in back of it. As she talks it is clear it is for his benefit.

FRANCIE
It didn't mean that. It meant -- Well, like on a Sunday, people would feel lots better if they took a long walk or something, instead of just sitting around and--

KATIE
Francie, I want you to stop talkin' around things like that. It ain't right. If you got somethin' to say, I want you to say it right out, plain.

FRANCIE
(defeated, starting back to the window)
I wasn't going to say anything. I was just talking about walking.

Johnny, from behind his paper, shoots a quick look at Katie and then at Francie. He lays down his paper, gets to his feet and stretches himself. When he speaks, it is indirectly a reproof to Katie.

JOHNNY
Been so much talk about walkin', I think I'll take one. Come along, Prima Donna.

Francie's face lights up, but she restrains herself quickly.

FRANCIE
Oh, yes, sure, papa.

Johnny grins at her and starts to pick up his coat. As Katie looks sharply at him the scene dissolves to a STREET in a BETTER NEIGHBORHOOD: Francie and Johnny are walking together. She has hold of his arm proudly.

JOHNNY

(teasing)

Must be pretty special, this place
you walk to that's two blocks from a
market.

FRANCIE

This way, papa.

They come to a corner and Francie stops. Johnny looks around,
but can't make out just what it is.

JOHNNY

Is this it, Prima Donna?

FRANCIE

(shyly)

Yes, papa.

Johnny looks where she points, and we next see the new
school from their angle. It is a long way from being the
best school you ever saw, but it is different from the old
one -- a bigger yard, a few trees, less dingy. Johnny looks
from the school back to Francie. It doesn't make sense,
somehow.

JOHNNY

The school?

(Francie can only nod)

I don't get it, baby.

FRANCIE

(hesitantly)

It must be just as nice inside,
don't you think? The teachers and
all, and--

She falters to a stop.

JOHNNY

(gently)

What are you gettin' at, Prima
Donna?

Francie can't look at him. It is such a hard thing to
explain, even to papa. Her reply is almost a whisper.

FRANCIE

Bend down, papa.

(he does)

I wish I could go to that school,
papa.

The strange intensity of her feelings touches Johnny. He
doesn't want to let her down, but he doesn't know quite what
to do about it. He puts his arm around her.

JOHNNY

I don't know. It would be awful nice
but they got rules, honey, you got
to go to the school where you live.

Francie's face falls. She knew that this was the answer.

FRANCIE

I know. I didn't really--

She can't go on.

JOHNNY

(he can't stand it)

Wait a minute, maybe there's a way,
it's a free country, ain't it?

(as he sings)

"School days, school days--" Maybe
we could move near to here.

FRANCIE

(like a shot)

When?

JOHNNY

(taken aback)

Well, not just yet, Prima Donna, not
for a while. But just as soon as our
ship comes in, you'll see.

FRANCIE

(let down)

Oh, only by that time I'll--

JOHNNY

You want to go there awful bad,
don't you, baby?

(Francie nods)

Then, look, we're goin' to find a
way.

FRANCIE

Honest?

JOHNNY

Well now, I've got to turn this
thing over some. Let's us do a
little more walkin', it's -- maybe
it's good for thinkin' too.

With complete faith in this, Francie takes his arm again and
as they start to walk the scene dissolves to a RESIDENCE
STREET composed of small houses, fairly attractive. Johnny
and Francie come down the sidewalk. They are walking slowly.

JOHNNY

(making conversation)

That's not a bad house, how'd you like to live there? Nice little porch.

FRANCIE
(shaking her head)
I don't like brown houses.

JOHNNY
Well, maybe a coat of paint.

FRANCIE
(seeing the next house)
Oh, papa!
(Johnny looks, Francie goes on:)
That's it.

Johnny looks and we get a view of the next house -- small, white, a neat white fence, and flowers.

JOHNNY
Yes sir, that's it.

FRANCIE
If we only could!

JOHNNY
Well, why can't we. Our luck's bound to turn, and the first thing we'll do is buy that little house when--
(lamely)
some day.

The fairy tale is back, and Francie's elation is gone. Johnny looks at her, cornered.

JOHNNY
(in desperation)
Look, as long as we're goin' to buy that house some day, why can't we maybe borrow it for now? Like -- say we make out it's ours, then your address is--
(looking)
98 Hibbard Avenue -- startin' right now! Then, you see, you got to transfer from your old school.

FRANCIE
(it is too much to understand all at once)
How do you mean, papa?

JOHNNY
That's it ... We could say you come here to live with your aunt, your

rich old aunt. She's lonely and she's goin' to leave you all her money.

FRANCIE

Oh papa, could we really!

JOHNNY

Sure we could, it's nobody's business. And every day you eat off real china dishes with little cherries painted onto 'em, and when you drink coffee, you have a cup and saucer to match, and a plate too, like they come from a restaurant.

FRANCIE

(ecstatic)

Sometimes I forget to water the geraniums and you ought to hear Auntie scold me!

JOHNNY

You got to put up with her crotchets -- after all, you're her heir.

FRANCIE

(pointing)

That -- that could be my room up there where the little window is.

Johnny, watching her, suddenly becomes troubled by the enormity of what he is doing.

JOHNNY

Now look, Prima Donna, you know what we're doin' ain't exactly accordin' to the rules.

FRANCIE

(fearfully)

You mean it's wrong?

JOHNNY

Not by a jugful it ain't wrong. See, the house is here, and we're here, and the school -- we wasn't all brought together like this just for no reason. But ... we'll have to keep it a kind of secret, you won't be able to tell anybody, and you'll have to be extra good to make up for it.

FRANCIE

(relieved)

Oh, I will!

(she looks around)
I think here comes auntie now.

An elderly man and woman, coming down the street, turn in at the gate. They are very nice looking.

JOHNNY
(whispering)
I see you got an uncle too.
(they both laugh;
everything is settled)
Now, I'm goin' to show you a way to
your new school through a little
park. I know right where it is, and
you can see the seasons change on
your way.

He has taken her by the arm and they are moving again down the street.

FRANCIE
(trying to speak)
Papa -- bend down.
(but she is too
moved for mortal
words)
My cup runneth over.

Her eyes glisten softly.

The scene dissolves to the NOLAN KITCHEN at night. Francie is helping Katie with the dishes, but hovering over Johnny who is laboriously writing a letter on the kitchen table. Across from him Neeley scowls over his homework.

KATIE
It's dishonest, that's what it is.
You're settin' the child an awful
bad example.

FRANCIE
Papa says if it doesn't hurt anybody,
and you're not dishonest in your
heart--

KATIE
You two with your fancy words --

JOHNNY
(paying no attention)
How you spell "transfer," Prima
Donna?

FRANCIE
T-r-a-n-s-f-e-r.

NEELEY

I'd ruther be shot than do this
arithmetic.

KATIE

(mechanically)

It'll come to you, sonny ... And
another thing. We kept Francie out a
year so's she and Neeley could be in
the same class, so's she could look
after him, and here just the year
they're gettin' ready to graduate,
you go and--

(she breaks off,
exasperated)

It's against the law and it's makin'
her live a lie and -- I won't have
you doin' it.

Johnny stops writing. For the first time he turns and looks
squarely at her, speaking very quietly.

JOHNNY

I'm goin' to do this for her, Katie.
Maybe it's my fault or not there
ain't much I can give her -- but
this is one thing she's goin' to
have.

There is a pause. Katie is surprised by his firmness. She is
the first to falter.

KATIE

(yielding)

It'll make an awful long walk for
you, mornings.

FRANCIE

(with a gleam of hope)

I don't mind gettin' up early.

KATIE

It'll be lots harder on your shoes,
and you won't have dresses like the
other children.

FRANCIE

I'll wash and iron my dress every
single night.

JOHNNY

(writing again, with
a funny little smile)

How do you spell appreciate,
Francie?

FRANCIE

A-p-p-r-e-c-i-a-t-e.

KATIE

(awkwardly)

If the principal of the school
swallows that story -- which I don't
think he will -- I'll see what I can
do about makin' over that checked
dress of mine.

Katie goes on washing the dishes to cover her surrender.
Francie's face is radiant. Johnny smiles a little to himself
as he writes.

The scene dissolves to the PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE where Francie
is standing anxiously before the principal as he reads
Johnny's note. At length he looks up from the note.

PRINCIPAL

Why not? My school's overcrowded as
it is.

Francie smiles tremulously. It is almost too good to be true.
-- This dissolves to "FRANCIE'S LITTLE HOUSE." Francie, her
coat over the new plaid dress, approaches the little house.
She pauses near the gate, looks in. It is a miracle, this
little house of hers. She sees a scrap of paper, and a
broken dead flower stem inside the fence. Making sure no one
is looking, she slips through and picks these up. It is her
gesture of serving the little house. As she starts out the
gate again, her manner changes and for a fleeting moment she
has the job of pretense that it is really hers, and she is
emerging to start to school. She walks through the gate with
something of the manner of a princess. The gate squeaks a
little. She tries it again.

FRANCIE

(proprietary)

Dear me, I must remember to oil that
gate.

As she goes on down the street, completely happy, the scene
dissolves to a CLASSROOM in the NEW SCHOOL. The room is
different, less crowded, cleaner. Class has just taken up.
Miss McDonough, the teacher, is standing beside her desk,
her arm around Francie's shoulder.

MISS MCDONOUGH

This is Frances Nolan, class. I'm
sure you'll all make her welcome to
our school. Now this will be your
desk, Frances.

(she takes Francie
to the desk)

And one more thing, Frances. Don't
worry about marks at first. I've
told the class, often, it isn't the
marks that count, it's the knowledge

that you make your own, that you
make forever and forever a part of
you. Now you may go to your desk.

Miss McDonough turns to her desk. Francie stands a second.
For a moment it is too good to be true. Then she slips down
into the desk. It is hers. She begins to smile.

The scene dissolves to the NOLAN KITCHEN where we first see
Francie ironing her school dress as she talks. She is
thrilled over her first day at the new school. Then the
scene pulls back to reveal Johnny and Katie also in the
kitchen. Katie is laying the table for supper. Johnny is
finishing getting dressed to go out on another job.

FRANCIE

And oh, Miss McDonough is just
wonderful. She said we could choose
anything in the world to write this
composition about, just anything.
She said it was good for us to
choose our own subject.

JOHNNY

Well, that's mighty fine, Prima
Donna. What did you decide on?

FRANCIE

She said it'd be nice if we wrote
about something in nature. But we
don't know much about nature, do we,
papa?

JOHNNY

Well, your tree's nature.

FRANCIE

But just one tree for a composition,
it'd be awful short. What else is
nature?

JOHNNY

Grass, wind, dogs -- why don't you
write about a dog?

FRANCIE

Are dogs nature?

JOHNNY

Sure.

FRANCIE

But I'd like this to be kind of a --
special composition. She was so
wonderful.

JOHNNY

I'll tell you what then -- what am I doin' tonight but goin' to sea on the good ship Governor Clinton, and the ocean's nature, ain't it? I'll keep an eye on the sea tonight, and tell you all about that.

Through this, Katie busies herself with the scanty preparations for the meal. Johnny is getting a warm glow out of Francie's happiness over the new school that he has given her. Katie knows deep inside herself that she never would have given Francie this odd gift, so there is an instinctive little resentment of the closeness between father and daughter. None of it is lost on her.

KATIE

Bein' a waiter on a little excursion boat goin' up the Hudson River ain't exactly goin' to sea.

JOHNNY

Sure it is, it's a kind of a sea, it's water. I'll remember everything about it, so you can write about the bright blue sea, Prima Donna. How's that?

FRANCIE

I think that would be kind of special.

KATIE

(drily)

Your Miss McDonough bein' so wonderful, she didn't happen to mention where our supper was comin' from tonight, did she?

NEELEY

(appearing suddenly from his bedroom, on cue)

Did you say supper, mom, I'm hungry.

KATIE

There ain't much, sonny. But maybe we can fill out with one o' them compositions about the bright blue sea.

JOHNNY

Prima Donna, you know what -- this ought to be extra special for your new school. You know what we're goin' to do?

FRANCIE

What, papa?

JOHNNY

If there's tips enough on this job
tonight, come Sunday, I'm goin' to
take you to see the ocean for
yourself.

FRANCIE

The really ocean?

NEELEY

Me, too, pop?

JOHNNY

You bet. It ain't right livin' this
close and you never even seen it.
People ought--

KATIE

(sharply)

Johnny!

JOHNNY

Yeah.

KATIE

(changing her mind)

Nothing. Maybe at that it's better
than that McGarrity gettin' your tip
money.

JOHNNY

Yeah. I get it -- I -- I wasn't
thinkin'.

(to the children)

Sure, your mama's right, we better
get a little bread and bacon in that
old cupboard before we go to takin'
fishin' trips. But we'll go one of
these days, when-- well, you wait
and see.

(he takes his hat)

Well, this ain't earnin' the family
bread.

(ready to go, grateful
to escape this)

Needn't wait up. If I know the
Governor Clinton, I won't be bringin'
home no caviar. Goodnight, my
hearties.

FRANCIE

Goodnight, papa.

NEELEY

Goodnight, pop.

JOHNNY

I'll keep an eye out good, Prima
Donna, and tell you all about it.

He is gone. There is an odd little tension in the room for
a moment. Katie sets the last things on the table.

KATIE

All right, men, step right up and
get your rations.

NEELEY

Oh, golly, mom, you mean we got to
play North Pole again?

KATIE

(quickly)

I couldn't help it, son, there wasn't
a penny in the pitcher.

FRANCIE

Look, you can be captain, Neeley,
and when we find the Pole you can
drive in the stake with your name on
it.

The children sit down and Katie pours the coffee. What food
there is, is on the table -- a heel of bread, a bit of cold
potato, cracker crumbs.

NEELEY

(glumly)

Gosh, even caviar would look good,
lookin' at that stuff.

FRANCIE

My, fish from Alaskan waters and
chopped Eskimo whale.

KATIE

(bitterly)

That's right, knowin' about all them
ocean things sure helps to keep you
from feelin' hungry, don't it?

NEELEY

I'd rather think about all that free
lunch down at McGarrity's. Mom, how
much longer do I got to be a minor?

KATIE

You ain't ever goin' to start takin'
anything from that place.

FRANCIE

I bet papa'll bring home some swell
food, nice rolls and--

NEELEY

Aw, quit it. Mom -- I'm hungry.

KATIE

Steady, captain.

Neeley's eyes meet hers, and he gets hold of himself, and gulps some coffee.

FRANCIE

(watching this)

Mama, you'd rather do anything than break into the star bank, wouldn't you?

KATIE

Just about. Bein' a little hungry ain't never as bad if you know you got a little somethin' in the bank.

FRANCIE

Mama.

(Katie looks at her)

When explorers get hungry, there's a reason, something big comes out of it, like they discover the North Pole. But what's the big thing comes out of us bein' hungry.

KATIE

(wearily)

You found the catch in it, Francie.

(then, ashamed of admitting it)

Aw, that's no way to talk. Sure, somethin' comes out of it. Courage, my men, the Spring thaws will be here before you know it.

She roughs Neeley's hair affectionately as she goes to get some more coffee. The scene fades out.

[D]

The BEDROOM CLOSET fades in. Katie is prying the star bank loose. Neeley, loaded down with blankets and frying pans, watches avidly.

KATIE

Run along, sonny -- I ain't goin' to spill a penny!

She slides a paper under the bank, lifts it, and wraps it quickly in a dish towel, keeping her word. They go out through the now bare bedroom.

The scene cuts to the KITCHEN, which is empty of everything but the stove. The Nolan bedstead is just going through the door, borne out by Charlie, whose cap bears the simple legend "Ice."

KATIE
(taking a last
look around)
I guess we got everything.

Out in the HALL, Charlie, carrying the bed up, and Mr. Crackenbox, carrying a trunk down, have difficulty passing each other on the stairs, and Katie and Neeley have to wait. A humble bit of crepe hangs on the Gaddis door; Katie straightens it.

KATIE
Poor Flossie.

A couple of women tenants peer out their doors at the moving.

FIRST WOMAN
Johnny ain't doin' too well, eh,
Mrs. Nolan?

KATIE
(starting up
the stairs)
Just movin' nearer to the sun.
Soon's we heard Mrs. Waters was
vacatin', we made up our minds.

She goes on up determinedly with Neeley.

Next, on the FOURTH FLOOR, Francie is seen leaning excitedly over the banister, as Charlie struggles up the last of the stairs and through the door of a rear flat, just over the Nolans' old one.

FRANCIE
Neeley, our new fire escape leads
right up onto the roof.

NEELEY
(coming up)
Whoever lives on the top floor gets
dibs on the roof!

As Katie follows him up, Mrs. Waters, the vacating tenant, comes out of the flat, and addresses her anxiously. The children fly into the flat.

MRS. WATERS
I been waitin' for' you, Mrs. Nolan.
There's somethin' I got to ask you
-- a favor. I -- I better show you.

She leads the way into the KITCHEN of the NEW FLAT. This is a little smaller, darker, meaner. Some of the Nolan belongings are in place, some in a tangle. Mrs. Waters leads Katie to the parlor. Francie and Neeley climb in the window from the fire escape and follow. The scene cuts to the PARLOR, which is empty of furniture except for a small, old-fashioned upright piano. Mrs. Waters touches it lovingly.

MRS. WATERS

The late Mr. Waters gave it to me for a wedding present. It won't go down the stairs, and they want fifteen dollars to move it lowerin' it out the window. Do you mind my leavin' it, Mrs. Nolan? It don't take much room, and some day, when I get the fifteen dollars, I'll send back for it.

KATIE

(touched)

Why, sure I don't mind, Mrs. Waters.

FRANCIE

(to Mrs. Waters)

Can you play it?

MRS. WATERS

No, neither one of us could.

(to Katie)

And if it ain't too much trouble, you could dust it off once in a while and leave the kitchen door open a little so it won't get cold or damp.

KATIE

Sure I will. And I hope it won't be long until you can send back for it.

She follows Mrs. Waters out and both children cross their fingers instantly, showing they don't share their mother's "hope." Then, reverently, each strikes a note.

The scene cuts to the KITCHEN as Mr. Crackenbox comes out of the smaller bedroom carrying the last of Mrs. Waters' possessions, topped by a small, cheap, old bassinet. Mrs. Waters is about to follow him out, when Katie sees the bassinet. (Charlie is heard putting up the bedstead in the bedroom.)

KATIE

Mrs. Waters. That -- that -- is it
a ...

MRS. WATERS

(smiling)
Yeah, we kept the baby in it --
about thirty years ago.

KATIE
(with difficulty)
I was just thinkin'... if you don't
need it. ... Make a nice handy
little washbasket. I'd be glad to
give you a quarter for it.

MRS. WATERS
(looking at
her curiously)
Why sure. My Edgar's kids is even
too old.

Tenderly the two lift the thing down, and Mr. Crackenbox
goes out with the rest of the load. Katie gets a quarter out
of the bank, then quickly wraps it up again.

MRS. WATERS
(touching her; softly)
Excuse me for askin', Mrs. Nolan,
but-- it won't really make a very
handy washbasket?

Their eyes meet.

KATIE
(nodding; quietly)
Please don't say nothin'. I -- I
ain't told nobody yet.

MRS. WATERS
(with deep feeling)
I know it ain't always easy, when
you're poor, but-- it'll be a
blessin' to you.

KATIE
(very low)
Yes, sure -- sure it will--

The children, starting to run in, rouse her, and she nods a
hasty farewell to Mrs. Waters as she hurries with the
bassinet into the bedroom. Mrs. Waters understands and goes.

NEELEY
(gleefully, to Francie)
I tell you, there ain't--

He runs into the smaller bedroom, as Katie comes back
carrying only the bank. Charlie emerges sweating.

FRANCIE
(in a low tone)

Don't forget we're supposed to give
him a beer -- or the price of one.

Charlie wipes his sweating brow significantly, hopefully.

CHARLIE

I'm done.

KATIE

I can't thank you enough, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Always glad to do my customers a
favor, of course.

He doesn't move.

KATIE

(firmly)

We're real grateful, Charlie.

CHARLIE

It ain't as though I was in the
regular movin' business.

KATIE

We'll be takin' ice, once a week,
same as usual.

CHARLIE

(after a pause; grimly)

Well, goodbye.

KATIE

Goodbye, Charlie.

He goes out, slamming the door. Francie looks reproachfully.

FRANCIE

He worked awful hard, Mama!

KATIE

(hardening)

We moved to this flat to save money.
We're not goin' to make a start by
throwin' away dimes.

NEELEY

(entering joyfully)

No-sir, there ain't a bathtub
anywhere, I looked all over.

Katie grins, leads him to the kitchen sink and lifts out a
partition by which a tub can be improvised.

KATIE

That's the tub, young man -- every

Saturday and Wednesday, same as
always.

A knock causes Katie to breathe "Mr. Barker!" She sets the
bank down and quickly puts her hand to her hair as Francie
opens the door. Mr. Barker enters, looking around for
gossip.

MR. BARKER.

Well, seems like the Nolans have
come up in the world.

He means "down."

FRANCIE

(glibly, like Katie)

Yes, we're so very very fond of the
sunshine.

KATIE

(polite but hasty)

Sorry I can't ask you to sit, Mr.
Barker. I ain't even got the coffee
on yet. But I got the insurance
money handy.

She reaches in her pocket.

MR. BARKER

(taking out his pen)

Smaller'n your old flat, ain't it?

Suddenly Johnny's voice singing "Molly Malone" is heard.

KATIE

(quickly, to Neeley)

Run down and catch him before he
goes in the old place.

(to Mr. Barker, defensively)

Mr. Nolan happened to be -- working
when we found we could make the move.

Neeley goes out.

MR. BARKER

(dubiously)

I suppose you're too busy to listen
to a bit of news -- about your sister.

(he pauses for effect)

She's goin' to have a baby.

Katie stares. After a moment, she speaks.

KATIE

(quickly)

Tell her -- please tell my sister
she shouldn't make herself such a

stranger.

MR. BARKER

(in his best manner)

I shall be very happy to render your message. Your receipts, Mrs. Nolan.

FRANCIE

(delighted)

Be sure to now, Mr. Barker.

Johnny appears in the doorway with Neeley. He is a little bewildered by the move, can't say anything to Mr. Barker.

MR. BARKER

Good day to you, Mr. Nolan. Well, I'm not one to spoil a family party. I'll be on my way.

He scurries out. Johnny looks around the cheap little flat.

FRANCIE

Surprise, Papa! Welcome to your new home.

JOHNNY

Yeah, it's kind of a surprise, all right.

(after a moment,
to Katie)

Did you move up here because it was cheaper -- I mean, because --

KATIE

(not looking at him)

We got to save where we can, somebody's got to. I don't mind the extra stairs.

JOHNNY

(very quietly)

Yeah.

He goes dejectedly to the window, accepting the full measure of his defeat. The children, lost in this adult mystery only know that Papa needs cheering.

FRANCIE

We can still see the tree.

NEELEY

Pop, the top floor tenants, the roof is theirs, and I ain't goin' to let anybody up there except Henny Gaddis because-- Hey, does Pop know?

KATIE

Flossie Gaddis died last night.

JOHNNY
(instinctively)
Ah, the poor baby.

FRANCIE
Everybody says it's a mercy, but I
think it must be awful sad to die.

JOHNNY
(touching her hand)
Well, I don't know, baby. Maybe not,
if you get to a place where things
are goin' to keep gettin' worse for
you instead of better. Nice her mama
got her all them pretty dresses.

KATIE
(impulsively)
Only now it'll mean the poor
thing'll have to lay in Potter's
Field.

JOHNNY
(quietly)
Yeah, but she had the dresses.

Katie doesn't like this kind of talk, that makes her kids
brood over things "way over their heads."

KATIE
(abruptly)
You better show your papa the piano.

JOHNNY
Yeah, we better look at the piano,
Prima Donna.

FRANCIE
(going into the parlor)
The lady that was here left it--

Alone, Katie picks up the bank, and the scene cuts to the
PARLOR. Johnny, under the fascinated gaze of his children,
strikes a chord.

JOHNNY
Good tone. It's nice.
(he sits down, his
spirits rising)
It'd be nice if you kids had some
lessons, now we got it. Maybe--

It isn't any good. His fingers move over the piano and
strike a note or two which suggest a song to him. He starts
to sing "Annie Laurie," simply, beautifully. The children

are spellbound. Katie appears in the doorway and listens a moment. She is moved, not only by the singing, but by an obscure sense of guilt. She speaks softly.

KATIE

I never heard you sing that before.
It's -- pretty.

He doesn't look at her but goes on singing. As though it were a reproof, Katie shrugs, and leaves the doorway. Johnny's song goes on, all his longing and defeat pouring out. Francie watches and listens with all her heart. After a moment, a faint sound of hammering comes from the bedroom and we next see the BEDROOM CLOSET and Katie kneeling, hammering down the bank with an old shoe, fastening it to the floor exactly as it was in their old closet. In a dark corner the little bassinet stands hidden, waiting. The song drifts in. Katie pauses almost imperceptibly, listening. Her eyes rise to the bassinet. She goes back determinedly to nailing down the star bank as the scene fades out.

[E]

FRANCIE'S CLASSROOM fades in, and we first get a close view of a well-filled Christmas basket on Miss McDonough's desk and "A Merry Christmas" card from the Eighth Grade. Then the camera pulls back to reveal Miss McDonough finishing tying a bow on the basket, and the class in their seats. The room has some decoration for the Christmas season.

MISS MCDONOUGH

(brightly)

Well. This winds up a very pleasant term. And I'm sure we'll all enjoy our holidays more, knowing we've helped some unfortunate family who'd have had no Christmas dinner without this basket.

(she turns to the
class to dismiss them)

And so a very Merry-- Oh, one last thing. This little pie Miss Shilling brought up was left over. It's a bit crushed, but-- anybody want it?

There is no answer from the class. They are all anxious to get going. Francie has the impulse to speak, but is afraid to. Her mouth waters for the pie.

MISS MCDONOUGH

(smiling)

My, what well-fed boys and girls ...
All right, class--

FRANCIE

(unable to stand it)
Miss McDonough.

MISS MCDONOUGH

Yes, Frances.

FRANCIE

I -- I just remembered -- I know a very unfortunate family -- They live in a -- a hovel, and there are two children, little golden-haired twins, and they're all starving! The pie will -- will probably save their lives.

Miss McDonough knows the story is phony. She eyes Francie with a barely perceptible compassion.

MISS MCDONOUGH

Then you shall take the pie, by all means. You can come and get it after class is dismissed--

(smiling)

--which is now. Merry Christmas to you all.

CLASS

Merry Christmas, Miss McDonough.

The class breaks up and stampedes for the door, some of the youngsters coming past Miss McDonough's desk, wishing her an added Merry Christmas. -- This dissolves to FRANCIE standing in front of MISS MCDONOUGH'S DESK.

MISS MCDONOUGH

(very kindly)

That was a very fine Christmas spirit, Frances, but -- it seems such a tiny pie to save so many lives.

FRANCIE

It won't seem small to them, Miss McDonough; even a little pie can look awful big if you haven't had very much to eat for days and days. I'll have to tell them to eat it slowly because if they eat it too fast on an empty stomach -- they'll -- they'll --

Miss McDonough doesn't say a word through this, but her level gaze is too much for Francie.

FRANCIE

(miserably)

It isn't true, it's all a lie. I wanted it for myself.

(desperately)

I'll stay after school, I'll do
anything, but don't send a note
home.

Francie is near tears. Miss McDonough takes her hand
consolingly.

MISS MCDONOUGH

(gently)

I'm not going to punish you, child,
for being hungry -- or for having an
imagination.

At these magic words, Francie looks at the teacher
incredulously. There is a little pause.

MISS MCDONOUGH

(with a little twinkle)

You know, that's something very few
people have. It's very precious.

(a trifle more seriously)

But it can also be dangerous, unless
we learn how to use it. Our everyday
lives are real and true, aren't they?
But all the stories in the world,
all the music, came out of someone's
imagination. So if we read the truth
and write the lies, then they aren't
lies anymore, they become stories.
Like some of the very nice
compositions you've written,
Frances.

FRANCIE

(carried away)

Like the one about my father taking
me to see the cotton fields down
South? We didn't really go.

MISS MCDONOUGH

Well -- I rather guessed you hadn't.
But don't you think it would be
still better if you'd write about
the things you really know about,
and then add to them with your
imagination? Even stories shouldn't
be just-- well, pipe dreams. Pipe
dreamers can be very lovable people
but -- they don't help anybody, not
even themselves.

(patting the
wondering Francie)

Think about it a little. And now
enjoy your pie and have a Merry
Christmas.

FRANCIE

(in a daze)
Yes, Miss McDonough. Thank you, Miss
McDonough.

She goes, so entranced that she is quite unaware of the pie she is carrying. Miss McDonough looks after her affectionately.

The scene dissolves to a STREET with Francie walking home so beautifully deep in thought that she is still completely unaware of the pie. As she comes to a corner she is met by an impatient Neeley, who has been waiting for her.

NEELEY
For gosh sakes, where you been? You
was supposed to meet me at--
(seeing the pie)
Where'd you swipe that?

FRANCIE
Neeley, I'm-I'm going to be a writer!

NEELEY
All right, but let's eat the pie.

Francie looks at the pie, surprised that she has it. Neeley promptly takes it and breaks it in two -- gives her half and starts on the other half himself.

NEELEY
(his mouth full of pie)
Come on, we got to get there about
our Christmas tree!

FRANCIE
(coming back to earth)
Oh, golly, it isn't gone, is it?

Neeley shakes his head, already moving on. Francie starts to eat her part of the pie as she follows, and the scene dissolves to a CHRISTMAS TREE STAND in the afternoon. There's a rather small selection of Christmas trees near the sidewalk. The Christmas tree vendor, a big man, is trying to keep warm by flapping his arms as he waits for customers. He has a head cold. A few other kids are hanging around. -- Francie and Neeley appear and go straight to the biggest tree.

NEELEY
Yeah, it's still here. He ain't got
much time left to sell it.

The vendor comes up, a woman customer with him.

VENDOR
(to all the kids)
Go on, beat it, you know I ain't

goin' to throw 'em till midnight.
You tryin' to block the sidewalk --
keep customers out?

NEELEY AND FRANCIE

Aw, you don't own the sidewalk. It's
a free country, ain't it?

WOMAN CUSTOMER

(indicating "their" tree)
No, that one's too big. I want a
small one.

As the woman leaves their tree, Francie and Neeley breathe
again.

NEELEY

(looking at the tree)
It's awful big, to get throwed at
you. Why does he have to throw 'em
at us anyway? Why can't he just give
'em to us if he don't sell 'em?

FRANCIE

If he just gave them away everybody'd
wait and he'd never sell any of 'em.
(she touches the
tree gently)
Gee, it smells good.

As they settle down to wait the scene dissolves to the
CHRISTMAS TREE STAND at NIGHT. A number of excited kids are
standing in two lines, forming a sort of lane, at one end of
which stands the Christmas tree vendor, ready to throw the
trees. At the other end of the lane stands a ten-year-old
boy. -- The vendor lets go with the tree, hits the boy with
it and he goes down. There is laughter and jeers. -- The kid
gets up, scratched and almost crying with disappointment.

KID

(almost crying)
I -- I stumbled, I could've--

ANOTHER KID

Gimme a try, I'm next.

The boy who failed is shoved aside; the new boy takes his
place. The tree is passed back. The vendor heaves it, and
the boy holds his feet. There are cries of triumph.

VENDOR

All right, take it and get out.
(he picks up
the big tree)
Now, who's man enough to take a
chance with this here one?

Francie pushes forward eagerly, but a bigger boy shoves her out of the way and gets there first.

LARGE BOY

I can take anything you got, mister,
let her fly.

FRANCIE

(fiercely)
I'm next, that's my tree!

VENDOR

Aw, go on, you're too little.

FRANCIE

Me and my brother -- we're not too
little together.

VENDOR

(grinning)
Spunky, huh?
(he picks up
the tree)
All right, but if one of you goes
down, you lose the tree.

LARGE BOY

That ain't fair, the two of 'em.

VENDOR

Shut your trap! Who's throwin' these
trees?

Neeley and Francie take their places, holding hands to brace themselves. The vendor raises the tree and lets it fly. Neeley would have gone down but Francie catches him. Together they manage to stay on their feet. There is an approving yell from the crowd.

VENDOR

(in gruff admiration)
All right, take it and get out. You
got it comin'!

The two come to, a little dazed. Then they grin proudly and start to drag the tree away.

The scene dissolves to the KITCHEN at NIGHT, with Katie, Johnny, Sissy, Steve (her husband, to whom she refers as Bill) and Grandma Rommely in the room. They are drinking coffee, waiting for the children to come home. There is an awkwardness and constraint over the whole scene. It is Christmas Eve, which should be a very happy time, but conversation has been lagging. -- Johnny is playing solitaire, and not looking at anyone. Sissy is watching first one and then the other, as she tries to carry the burden of the conversation.

SISSY

Bill thinks the same as me, we're
goin' to keep ours believin' in
Santa Claus as long as we can.

GRANDMA ROMMELY

(nodding)

Is good, yes.

Katie has gotten up restlessly, and gone to the window to
look out. She has scarcely heard what Sissy has been saying.
Sissy watches her narrowly.

SISSY

Quit worryin' about 'em, Katie,
they'll be here pretty quick.

KATIE

(from the window)

They ain't old enough to be out this
late. Johnny should've made 'em tell
what they was up to. No tellin' what
kind of notion Francie's likely to
get in her head.

SISSY

They'll be all right.

There is no answer from Katie. There is silence for a while.
Then Steve yawns.

SISSY

(a little uncomfortable)

Maybe we better be gettin' on home
and see 'em tomorrow.

JOHNNY

(quickly)

Don't go.

Sissy gives him a quick look. There is another little
silence. Then it is broken by cries from outside.

VOICES OF FRANCIE

AND NEELEY

Pop, hey, mom! Papa!

Katie turns back to the window. Johnny hurries across to
join her, and the others follow. They look down, and from
their angle we see, at the street entrance, Francie and
Neeley, dragging the Christmas tree. They have stopped to
call up to their parents. They wave and start on.

The scene cuts back to the PARLOR. Johnny's spirits lift.

JOHNNY

Holy smokes, will you look what they
went and done!

He dashes out to help them bring the tree up the stairs.
Katie is relieved that the youngsters are all right.
Johnny's exit gives Sissy a little moment alone with Katie.

SISSY

They're tryin' to make a Christmas.
Help 'em, kid.

Her eyes meet Katie's levelly. Katie smiles in answer -- a
reassurance that she will try to make Christmas what it
should be for them in spite of the constraint within their
house.

In the NOLAN TENEMENT VESTIBULE Francie and Neeley are now
seen dragging the tree through the door. Officer McShane
comes in and starts to help.

FRANCIE

(defensively)
It's ours, we won it.

NEELEY

(proudly)
Looka my face, we got it throwed at
us.

MCSHANE

I was only wonderin' if you couldn't
use a little help.

He picks up the other end of the tree and helps them along
with it. Francie accepts his geniality with just a trace of
surprise. Next we see the HALL as Johnny comes running down
the stairs. He opens the door and the children come in. All
speak at once.

JOHNNY

How in Jerusalem--?

FRANCIE

We won! We stood up to 'em!

NEELEY

Looka my face, Pop, looka my face!

McShane, helping with the tree, comes through the door.

JOHNNY

Nobody around here ever saw a tree
like that!

FRANCIE

We won it fair.

NEELEY

Looka my face if you don't believe me.

JOHNNY

I see you got the law on your side,
too.

MCSHANE

Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Nolan,
and it looks like you're going to
have one.

JOHNNY

Same to you, Mr. McShane, and
thanks.

TYNMORE SISTERS

(having opened their door)

Merry Christmas, Mr. Nolan. Merry
Christmas, children.

JOHNNY

Merry Christmas, Miss Maggie. Merry
Christmas, Miss Lizzie.

FRANCIE

Isn't it a wonderful Christmas,
papa?

JOHNNY

Well, it is now, Prima Donna.
Imagine us having a tree like that
-- and the nicest kids in the world,
I guess.

Johnny and the youngsters have started up the stairs,
dragging the tree. The racket brings the neighbors to their
doors.

JOHNNY

(out of pure exuberance
he starts singing)

"Silent night, holy night--"

As they mount the stairs, another door or two open. Some of
the neighbors have been in bed, some are still dressed --
Mrs. Gaddis, at her door, joins in the singing. -- A man
starts to sing. McShane opens the door from the street and
stands looking up after them, listening. -- A little girl
claps her hands delightedly. -- More singers join in.

SISSY

(to Katie)

He ain't any older than they are.

Katie is at the head of the stairs. With her is Sissy,
Sissy's husband Steve, and Grandma Rommely. A man from the

fourth floor joins them. He sings. -- Katie is moved, and starts to sing. As she does, tears glisten in her eyes. -- Sissy is also moved. Her tears are more uninhibited than Katie's. Grandma Rommely joins in, in German. -- Johnny and his children struggle their way up the stairs. Several people are singing now. -- Neeley's excitement somehow subdues. He finds himself singing with the others. -- But Francie is too thrilled and awed to sing. Her eyes are wide with the wonder of her father -- of what he has done to these people.

This dissolves to the NOLAN PARLOR somewhat later. The tree, braced in Katie's scrub bucket, stands in the middle of the room, pretty well filling it. The family is gathered round the tree, and have been opening various small presents. Grandma Rommely sits in her chair near the window. Sissy is on the floor with the children. Neeley has several strips of court plaster on his face. The tree is sparsely decorated, principally with strips of colored paper the children have torn. Uncle Steve is standing on a chair, hanging a few candy canes. The usual evidences of coffee and cups are about.

KATIE

Can you put it higher, Bill?

STEVE

(mildly; obeying)

Steve's the name.

SISSY

That's better, Bill.

KATIE

(with a deliberate
effort for Johnny)

It was real nice of your friend --
of Mr. McGarrity, sendin' the kids
them canes.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

But Neeley, opening a package, breaks across.

NEELEY

Aw -- old itchy underwear!

JOHNNY

Think of all the fun you can have,
scratchin'.

FRANCIE

(taking out an
identical pair)

Thank you, mama. They -- they're
just fine.

KATIE
(smiling)
You know you hate 'em.

FRANCIE
(a little shyly)
I got something for you too.

She goes to her couch and starts pulling out the large box from under it in which she keeps her treasures. During this, Steve has dismounted, and Grandma now takes out of her bag a thick, home-made candle.

GRANDMA ROMMELY
I have made this candle for today.
It is time now to light it.

Steve and Johnny take and light it. Francie has pulled out two small packages from her box, and gives one to Katie.

FRANCIE
Merry Christmas, mama -- from Neeley
and me.

KATIE
(opening it)
Rose water and glycerine. It's
pretty -- what is it?

FRANCIE
You rub it on your hands.

NEELEY
I think it's silly. But Francie
said papa was always talkin' about
what nice hands you got. It cost a
dime, but we had a seltzer bottle
top in the junk.

KATIE
(rubbing some
on awkwardly)
My, I'll be quite the thing, won't I?

FRANCIE
(giving the other
package to Johnny)
This is for you, papa, from me and
Neeley.

Johnny opens it and holds up a rather odd-looking affair -- a watch fob made out of braided shoelaces.

FRANCIE
It's a watch fob. It's made out of
shoelaces. I wove it on a spool with

nails.

JOHNNY

(touched)

Well now, if that ain't about the
nicest thing I ever saw.

He takes his union button from his lapel and pins the fob on his trousers as if he had a watch. He makes a little show of parading up and down with it, then tosses a handkerchief over his arm like a waiter's napkin.

JOHNNY

(bending over Francie)

We're all out of mushrooms under
glass, madam, but I can tell you the
time.

FRANCIE

Maybe it's kind of silly, with you
not having a watch.

JOHNNY

(holding her to him)

Prima Donna, it's the nicest present
I ever got. And thank you, son.

NEELEY

You're welcome. I guess the
shoelaces was mine.

Everybody laughs.

FRANCIE

It was silly ...

SISSY

(gaily)

Ain't nothing silly on Christmas.

Steve clears his throat, and reaches into his inside pocket, half pulling out a parcel.

STEVE

I -- I got a little present here--

He is interrupted by a knock on the door. Everyone is a little startled. Francie goes out to the kitchen to open the door.

STEVE

(trying again)

Like I was sayin', I got--

But he is interrupted by Francie, returning with McShane, who is carrying a bag of candy canes. He makes no attempt to come in, but takes in the scene appreciatively.

MCSHANE

Merry Christmas, folks.

CHORUS OF ANSWERS

Merry Christmas.

SISSY

Hello, handsome!

MCSHANE

I was passin' and saw your light was still on and -- I got to thinkin' I'd like a hand in fixin' that fine tree -- but I see somebody's already provided you.

KATIE

(charming and shy)

We can always use more of 'em, Mr. McShane, and we thank you kindly.

She takes the candy canes.

JOHNNY

Would you come in and have a cup of coffee with us?

MCSHANE

Thank you, but this evenin' is for families. I got to be gettin' home myself, so I'll be sayin' goodnight, and Merry Christmas to all.

AD LIB

Merry Christmas. Good night.

Johnny follows him out to see him to the kitchen door. Everyone is silent for a moment, touched by the little visit.

JOHNNY

That was mighty nice of him.

SISSY

He's cute.

KATIE

Mr. McShane is a fine man.

GRANDMA ROMMELY

He is, I think, sometimes a lonely man.

STEVE

Like I was sayin', I -- I got somethin' here -- I mean I gotta present for -- for somebody that

ain't exactly here.
(he extracts a tiny baby
sweater from his parcel)
Grandma helped me pick it out. It's
for -- you know who.

SISSY
(deeply touched)
Aw Bill, it's beautiful. Look,
everybody, look at the size of them
little sleeves! Aw gee, I ain't
never been so happy, Bill, honey--

Katie turns from the tree and looks at the sweater with a
strange expression.

KATIE
I'm goin' to get some coffee.

She turns abruptly and goes into the kitchen, closing the
door.

SISSY
(on whom the
impression is
not lost)
I better see if I can help.

She follows Katie.

This cuts to the KITCHEN. Katie is not bothering with the
coffee. She is staring out the window as Sissy enters. When
she hears Sissy, she turns quickly to the stove and pretends
to be busy.

KATIE
(dissembling)
I just wanted a breath of air for a
minute, I--

SISSY
(quietly)
Katie.

KATIE
(after a pause)
Yeah.

SISSY
(coming closer to help)
I'm glad for you.

Katie meets her eyes for a moment in acknowledgment of the
truth.

KATIE
I don't know. I -- I'm scared, I

guess.

SISSY

You got no call to be. Look at how
swell them two are.

KATIE

Yeah, I know.

SISSY

Have you told Johnny?
(Katie shakes her head)
You'd ought to, maybe it'd help him.

KATIE

Yeah.
(she gives Sissy an
affectionate smile)
We better take the coffee in.

SISSY

You're a fine girl, Katie. I never
said any different.

Their eyes hold for a minute with a feeling of understanding
between them. Then Sissy picks up some cups and takes them
into the other room. Katie prepares to follow.

This cuts to the PARLOR as SISSY comes in with the cups.
Johnny is picking out a tune on the piano; the children are
beside him. -- Sissy pauses for a moment and looks at
Johnny, with Francie leaning close against him. To Sissy, it
looks like a portrait of a good enough parent. -- She sets
the cups down on the piano. Then she bends over suddenly and
kisses Johnny on the top of his head.

SISSY

That's for nothin', Johnny -- except
maybe bein' a nice guy.

Johnny looks up and smiles at her. Then Sissy breaks the
little moment of feeling between them.

SISSY

Coffee, everybody!

As she starts to set out the cups and Katie comes in with
the coffee, the scene dissolves to the KITCHEN where the
cups are being put into the sink. It is late, and the family
is alone, carrying things into the kitchen, straightening up
after the party. Katie is getting ready to wash the dishes.

JOHNNY

Don't do 'em tonight, it's Christmas.
I'll give you a hand tomorrow.

KATIE

(with a little smile)
You better give me a hand right now,
before it slips your mind.

JOHNNY
(grinning)
Yeah, I guess you're right.

KATIE
And you better get to bed, son,
before you go to sleep standin' up.

NEELEY
Okay. Goodnight.

He goes to his bedroom, practically asleep. They smile.
Katie starts to wash the dishes, and Johnny and Francie pick
up cloths to wipe them.

JOHNNY
Bill was funny, wasn't he -- nice, I
mean.

KATIE
Yeah, Sissy's awful happy.

JOHNNY
There's somethin' good about
Christmas, everybody was swell.

FRANCIE
Papa, why did Grandma say Mr.
McShane was lonely?

JOHNNY
I don't know, maybe he is at that.

KATIE
How do you mean, Johnny? What do you
know about him?

JOHNNY
Oh, some. He's a fine man. Come to
this country with nothin', worked
hard, studied to get on the force.
Some folks was kind to him when he
first come, he lived with 'em, and
then their daughter was in trouble,
her husband ran off and left her
when she was goin' to have a kid. So
McShane married her to take care of
her.

KATIE
Have they got -- children?

JOHNNY

(shaking his head)
There was a couple, but they died
when they was young with lung
trouble they took from their mother.
He don't ever talk about it, but I
guess he is kind of lonely.

KATIE
(abruptly)
It ain't right.

JOHNNY
(quietly)
No, I guess it ain't.

KATIE
It ain't right. Why did she have to
put her troubles off on him? A fine
man like him, steady and all, he
ought to have a fine home, and
children, that's every good man's
right.

Katie had no intention of saying this. It comes from her a little too violently, born of her feeling of desperation. But once said, it hangs between them like a shadow. There is a little pause. Johnny grows very quiet and the gaiety of the Christmas is gone.

Francie, wide-eyed, looks from one to the other. She senses that Johnny has been hurt. Instinctively, she slips her hand into his.

Johnny, suddenly aware of the touch, looks down at her and smiles thinly, his hand tightening on hers.

JOHNNY
That's about all the dishes, baby,
you better get to bed.

FRANCIE
Yes, papa.

KATIE
And go to sleep -- don't just lie
there lookin' at the tree all night.

FRANCIE
I won't, mama. Goodnight, papa

JOHNNY
Goodnight, baby.

Francie goes into the parlor and closes the door. Left alone, there is an awkward little pause between Johnny and Katie.

JOHNNY

They're fine kids.

KATIE

Yes, they are.

JOHNNY

(hanging up
the dish cloth)

That's about all, I guess.

There is a moment's pause, but Katie makes no move to go. Johnny stands uncertainly. Then abruptly Katie turns to him.

KATIE

Johnny, I got to tell you somethin', maybe it ain't the best time, maybe it is. The reason I moved us up here -- we're goin' to have a baby. Johnny, that's why I been scrimpin' so much and tryin' to save.

Johnny feels that he ought to take her in his arms -- he would have if everything were really all right between them. But instead, there is a little pause.

JOHNNY

(quietly)

That's-- I mean, I'm awful glad, Katie, if -- if you are.

KATIE

There's a lot we got to think about, Johnny.

JOHNNY

I know, but -- we'll manage. Maybe things'll be -- better havin' one to kind of grow up with again.

KATIE

I got things all figured out. I oughta be able to keep on workin' till anyway April. Then Francie'll have to leave school and get her workin' papers. She's young, but with what she can make, we can make out, and--

JOHNNY

(instinctively)

Aw, no, Katie, we can't--

KATIE

(quickly)

I don't like it any better than you do, but I thought and thought, and there ain't any other way. And you

got to help with somethin', Johnny.
She listens to you, you got to quit
keepin' her all so excited about her
school, and--

JOHNNY

But Katie, why does it have to be
Francie? Neeley's the boy, and he
don't care like she does.

KATIE

Maybe that's why, maybe it'll do her
good to get out in the world and
learn how to take care of herself,
learn somethin' practical while she's
young. She's got to learn some day.

JOHNNY

There -- there must be somethin'
else, Katie -- Don't tell her yet,
Katie, there's time till April.
Maybe I -- I'm goin' to try to swing
somethin'.

KATIE

We can't count on that, Johnny.
 (then, defensively)
School ain't everything, maybe
sometime she can go back.
 (she can't stand
 his look)
Don't look at me like that! It ain't
my fault!
 (she manages to get
 hold of herself a
 little)
It ain't yours either, I guess, I
don't know.
 (turning away)
Anyway, one member of the Nolan
family will get to graduate, and she
come close, that's somethin'.

This small effort at optimism gets no response from Johnny.
Katie hardens.

KATIE

You better put out the light, and
let's try and get some rest.

She goes into the bedroom without looking at him again.
Johnny stands alone -- looks after her a moment, brooding.
His hand plays with the watch fob, and he looks toward
Francie's door. After a moment he crosses the room and very
gently opens the door to the parlor.

Johnny closes the door and moves softly to Francie's couch.

The light from the window shows her wide awake, looking up at him.

JOHNNY

I thought you'd be asleep, Prima Donna.

Francie is in a new mood, a little girl just stepping over the line into wondering adolescence. They both talk softly, secretly, alone in the world. He sits on the edge of the bed.

FRANCIE

Uh-uh. I been -- thinking.

JOHNNY

Well now you ought to be careful about that, so many things in this world to think about you might never get to sleep.

FRANCIE

Papa. I might be going to be a writer. I -- I've just about decided.

JOHNNY

(gently)

I knew you when you was goin' to be a lady fireman.

FRANCIE

Don't joke, papa, I'm serious.

JOHNNY

(gently)

All right, baby. All I meant, maybe it's better sometimes not to get your heart set on -- on just the one thing, oh, in case somethin' happens, or--

FRANCIE

(scarcely hearing him)

She said, Miss McDonough, I mean, she said maybe I could be. She says I have imagination. Do you think I have, papa?

JOHNNY

Sure I do, baby. Those compositions of yours, they been fine. But--

FRANCIE

She said I'd have to work hard; she said imagination wasn't any good if you were just a pipe-dreamer about it, you didn't help anybody that way,

not even yourself.

JOHNNY

I see, yeah, a pipe-dreamer.

FRANCIE

I'm not putting it good like she did -- Oh, I just understood everything she said, and now I don't, but-- I kind of still do. I wish you could've heard her, she was wonderful. Forever and ever I'll be glad you helped me go to that school.

JOHNNY

(finding it
pretty tough)

You kind of like that school, don't you, baby?

FRANCIE

Yes, oh yes. And she said lots more. I've been trying to remember -- she said even if you have imagination it's better to write about things you know about, so it will be true, and -- and the way things are. I've been looking at things all day, to see them that way, only--

JOHNNY

Only what, baby?

FRANCIE

Papa, the people in the hall when we brought up the tree, the look on their faces, all friendly and nice -- why aren't people like that all the time, not just Christmas?

JOHNNY

Well, I'd say it was -- I don't know. Maybe it's just they take time at Christmas, or -- or maybe you oughtn't to think like that, baby. Maybe Christmas is like people really are, and the other part ain't true, and with all that imagination you got, maybe if you just think about it hard enough that way, you know, like it ought to be--

He flounders to a stop.

FRANCIE

But when you get to thinking -- papa, the people in Aunt Sissy's magazines,

they don't just live happily ever
after, do they?

JOHNNY

No, baby.

FRANCIE

Well, the trouble is -- it doesn't
feel good when you think about
things like that -- I mean, the way
they really are.

She is really troubled. Johnny's smile as he looks down at
her is curious, gentle, and somehow infinitely sad.

JOHNNY

You better stick out your tongue,
baby.

(as she obeys him)

Just what I was afraid of. You got a
bad case, a very bad case.

FRANCIE

Case of what, papa?

JOHNNY

You got a very bad case of growing
up, Prima Donna.

She realizes he is joking, and smiles shyly.

JOHNNY

(gently)

That's all it is. It ain't fun
sometimes, but don't you be afraid,
I don't want you should ever be
afraid.

Francie smiles, then settles back, relaxed. Almost as if in
confirmation of his words, she makes a small, almost
unconscious movement of pulling the covers up higher -- the
first subconscious awareness of herself as something more
than a child. It is not lost on Johnny.

FRANCIE

(sighing deeply)

You're so nice, papa. I was feeling
kind of funny before you came in.
Now I feel good.

(she yawns
contentedly)

I guess it's better if you don't
just stay young all your life; it
will be nicer growing up.

Johnny looks at her for a long moment, then gets to his feet.
He has had about all he can take, and there is a weariness

about him. His eyes are shadowed by the vision of that not far distant day when Francie will no longer look at him with the eyes of a child, but will see him as Katie sees him, and as he sees himself.

JOHNNY
(very quietly)
Yeah. When you begin to see things
like they really are.

The bitterness of his meaning is lost on Francie. He bends down and kisses her gently.

JOHNNY
Goodnight, baby.

FRANCIE
(drowsily)
Goodnight, papa. I'm sleepy now.

JOHNNY
That's fine, baby, that's fine.

He goes out and closes the door quietly. Francie is half-asleep.

Back in the KITCHEN, Johnny stands a moment near the door. Then mechanically he turns off the gas. There is a light from Katie's bedroom. He crosses to the door and stops at the bedroom. Katie is in bed in the background, an arm over her eyes to shield them from the light. A feeling of revulsion comes over Johnny. How can she lie there so peacefully, so soon after making her decision about Francie? At that moment it would be inconceivable for Johnny to go into that room and lie down beside her. He turns abruptly and starts to go. Katie stirs.

KATIE
(sleepily)
Ain't you comin' to bed, Johnny?

JOHNNY
I'm goin' out for a little walk.

He moves out into the kitchen. Katie sits up.

KATIE
Don't start drinkin', not tonight,
Johnny.

JOHNNY, near the door leading to the hall, is taking down his hat.

JOHNNY
(quiet, strained)
I won't. Katie -- I won't.

KATIE

(from the bedroom)

Well --- take your muffler, it's cold.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

He goes out. Katie is troubled for a moment, then gives it up and lies down wearily.

The HALL is dark and deserted. Johnny starts down the stairs mechanically, slowly putting the muffler around his neck. His eyes are desperate as the scene fades out.

[F]

The SIGN of the WAITERS' UNION HEADQUARTERS fades in. Above it is a banner with the legend "Happy New Year." This dissolves to the UNION HEADQUARTERS in the late afternoon. Katie is at the desk talking to the man in charge.

MAN

No, ma'am, Mr. Nolan hasn't been around for several days.

KATIE

Is he out on a job, do you know?

MAN

If he is, he didn't get it through us.

KATIE

Thank you.

As she starts out, the scene dissolves to MCGARRITY'S SALOON. Katie enters, hesitates, decides to go on, passes the sign at the side that says "family entrance," hesitates again and goes in.

This in turn dissolves to MCGARRITY'S SALOON disclosing several customers, and quite a bit of noise. McGarrity is behind the bar. A boy comes in from the back room, speaks to him, but we cannot distinguish what he says. McGarrity looks surprised, and starts for the back room.

We see the BACK ROOM as McGarrity enters from the saloon. There are a few people in this room. Katie is standing just inside the street door, a little uncomfortable. McGarrity goes to her.

MCGARRITY

How are you, Mrs. Nolan, and Happy New Year.

KATIE

The same to you, Mr. McGarrity. I
-- I just came to--
 (she can't make it --
 to ask about Johnny)
I just happened to be passin' and I
thought I'd run in and thank you for
the candy canes. It was nice of you.

MCGARRITY
That's all right. It wasn't much.

KATIE
Well, it was nice of you anyway.
 (then, after an
 awkward pause,
 she turns to go)
Well, goodnight, Mr. McGarrity.

MCGARRITY
Goodnight, Mrs. Nolan.

She gets the door open, and then McGarrity stops her.

MCGARRITY
Mrs. Nolan.
 (Katie turns)
Johnny ain't here -- he hasn't been
in since before Christmas.

Katie stands for a moment, caught between gratitude for his understanding and the stubbornness of her pride. The latter wins. She hurries out, and the scene dissolves to the NOLAN TENEMENT at night. Most of the lights are out, but the light is still on in the Nolan kitchen. This dissolves to the NOLAN HALL as McShane's feet are seen mounting the stairs, and then to the NOLAN DOOR as McShane comes into view. He stands for a moment before he knocks. Almost immediately the door opens to reveal Katie, still dressed and anxious eyed. -- Behind her Francie appears, in her nightgown, from the parlor, and stands wide-eyed and apprehensive.

MCSHANE
I'm afraid it's bad news I'm bringin'
you, Mrs. Nolan. Our station got a
report that Mr. Nolan was found over
in Manhattan very sick. He's been
taken to the hospital.

Francie's eyes are tragic but she makes no sound. -- Katie turns without a word and picks up her coat. Then she sees Francie.

KATIE
See that Neeley gets to school in
time in the morning. There's an
apple for your lunches.

Francie stares at her as Katie struggles into the coat.

MCSHANE

The report was that he just collapsed right in the doorway of an employment agency. He was just goin' out on a job, sand hog in a tunnel, they said. He hadn't been drinkin', ma'am, he'd been waitin' there a long time for the job -- he was just sick.

Katie is going out past him as he finishes. McShane follows and closes the door, shutting out the tragic little figure of Francie.

This scene dissolves to a HOSPITAL CORRIDOR as Katie comes out of a ward accompanied by a nurse. The nurse closes the door.

NURSE

We did everything we could.

KATIE

Yeah, I know.

As she starts walking down the hall, the scene dissolves to the HOSPITAL DOCTOR'S OFFICE, where Katie is standing in front of the doctor at his desk.

DOCTOR

Just a few questions, Mrs. Nolan -- date of birth and so on.

KATIE

What are you writin' down that he died from?

DOCTOR

Acute alcoholism and pneumonia. One led to the other.

KATIE

I don't want you to write down that he died like that. Put just the pneumonia, doctor.

DOCTOR

I can't do that. Pneumonia was the direct cause of death, but the alcoholism--

KATIE

(breaking through)
Look, he's dead. I got two nice kids. They're goin' to grow up to amount to something. Why do you have to

make it harder, sayin' their father died because of the drink, when that -- that's only a little piece of the truth. He wasn't drinkin', they said so, he was out looking for work, why don't you put that down?

DOCTOR

(after a moment)

Cause of death, pneumonia. Date of birth?

There are tears in Katie's eyes, but something fierce, too, shines through them, as the scene dissolves to the KITCHEN. We get a close view of Francie, dry-eyed, staring out of the window. She is looking down at the tree, hardly aware of the sordid conference with the undertaker that is going on in the room. Then the camera pulls back over the dialogue to reveal Katie, Sissy, Grandma Rommely, Neeley and the undertaker. Neeley is crying. He stands next to his mother's chair. Her arm is around him, and from time to time she gives him, half automatically, a comforting pat.

UNDERTAKER

It's a first-class funeral with nickel handles on the coffin, and for two hundred dollars it includes--

SISSY

(bitterly)

Ain't it odd that the best you can do comes to just what his insurance amounted to.

UNDERTAKER

I'll make it one eighty five, and I won't be makin' hardly a cent.

KATIE

(dully)

All right.

UNDERTAKER

(producing pen and printed form quickly)

Sign here, please. That gives me the right to collect the insurance, and I'll give you the fifteen dollars in cash now.

GRANDMA ROMMELY

(as Katie takes the pen)

Read it before you sign.

Katie pauses, and stares at it for a moment. She looks at Neeley, who is sniffing. Then she looks around for Francie and sees her at the window.

KATIE

Francie.

(Francie turns slowly)

You're the best reader.

Francie comes down slowly, not looking at them. She takes the paper and studies it, dry-eyed. -- Sissy studies this strange shut-in quality in Francie with compassion.

FRANCIE

It says what he says.

She hands it back, and goes back to the window. -- Katie signs the paper. The undertaker takes it from her.

UNDERTAKER

And now, Mrs. Nolan, if you have the deed to the funeral plot.

KATIE

Plot? We don't own no plot. I thought--

SISSY

You was awful careful not to mention it till she signed.

UNDERTAKER

But, Mrs. Nolan--

KATIE

Never mind. How much is a plot?

UNDERTAKER

All prices. Twenty, thirty -- the least would be twenty.

There is a silence. Then Katie gets wearily to her feet, and crosses to the bedroom. As she passes Francie, Francie does not turn, but continues to stare at nothing out the window.

Once in the BEDROOM, Katie picks up a shoe-horn from the dresser, goes to the closet, and as she starts to pry up the star bank the scene dissolves to a CEMETERY where Johnny's coffin is in place over the grave. There are quite a number of people, and quite a number of floral offerings, some large and some very small. The priest is reading the service for the dead as the view moves down the line of the Nolan family, successively disclosing: Grandma Rommely, eyes closed, lips moving in silent prayer; Uncle Steve, his honest face full of emotion; Sissy, crying openly, the tears welling straight from her warm heart; Neeley, awed, sniffing a little, standing close to his mother and holding on to a fold of her coat; Katie, moved, feeling strange things at the sight of all the flowers, and all the people who have

turned out to offer their affection to Johnny's memory.

We get a view of the people, and the flowers, as she sees them -- McGarrity, the man from the union headquarters, several recognized neighbors from the tenement, and quite a number of people we have never seen before. The feeling of all of them is so apparently genuine. Johnny's coffin is covered with their flowers.

Katie, seen close, is a little bewildered. So many people loved Johnny, he must not have been just a failure to them. She looks down at Neeley, and then on the other side, at Francie.

Francie stands, unlike Neeley, quite apart from Katie. She is still dry-eyed, lost. If Neeley has lost a father and Katie a husband, Francie has lost her whole world. And in her loss, she has no inclination, as has Neeley, to reach toward Katie.

Katie's eyes are troubled, a little puzzled, as she watches her daughter -- and the scene dissolves to the FUNERAL CARRIAGE disclosing KATIE, FRANCIE, SISSY, NEELEY. The carriage is coming down the street toward the tenement. Francie sits dry-eyed and aloof. Katie, still in the bewildered mood of the funeral, is trying to puzzle things out.

KATIE

All them people, and the flowers --
some of 'em from people I never heard
of even. Who'd've thought that many
folks -- I mean, they was carryin'
on like -- like they was his family,
or -- I don't know.

Katie is so intent on her own troubled problem that she is quite unaware of Francie. But Sissy is aware of what both of them are feeling. She sees that Francie's eyes hold something like the beginning of hatred for Katie.

SISSY

Yeah, he took the time to make a lot
o' people love him, all right.

KATIE

It's hard to figure, so many of 'em
showin' up, and they was feelin'
somethin', there wasn't no reason
for 'em to put on. I mean, he wasn't
nobody big, he was just--

SISSY

(putting her hand
quickly on Katie's
arm)

I wouldn't talk about it no more

now, kid.

She has seen Francie turn bitterly away from her mother. Quite unintentionally Katie's words have been a violation of Francie's feeling about her father.

This dissolves to the NOLAN TENEMENT, the carriage just stopping. Francie, still bitterly tense, gets out first and starts swiftly down the street. Katie, climbing out with Neeley, sees this.

KATIE

Francie!

SISSY

Best leave her go, Katie. She maybe wants to be by herself.

KATIE

(watching Francie
go, troubled)

She's takin' on kind of funny. She ain't even cried.

SISSY

Best leave her come out of it her own way.

KATIE

(not even hearing)

They was always funny together -- nice, I mean. They was like kids, they never ran out of talk.

(after a little pause)

Well, one thing -- he never lived to see that change; he beat that one.

SISSY

You want for me to come up with you?

KATIE

(as Sissy watches her
trying to puzzle it out)

And there's somethin' else, maybe that was it -- he wasn't drinkin', they told me, there was somethin' drivin' him -- maybe that was it, maybe he was tryin' to be different like -- like --

(she turns this over for
a moment, then gives up)

I don't know.

She turns abruptly, without even saying goodbye, and starts into the house. Neeley follows. Sissy watches after her with deep compassion as the scene dissolves to a STREET and we see Francie, all alone, coming down the street. She pauses

in front of a little barber shop, and then goes in.

In the BARBER SHOP: The head barber, a little Italian, is half-asleep in the first barber chair. The other barber is working on a customer. Francie enters, and goes to the head barber.

FRANCIE

(hesitantly)

I'd like my father's shaving cup,
please.

(pointing to it)

It's that one.

BARBER

(looking up)

Oh.

(he takes down the
cup with Johnny's name)

You're the little girl. Yes, I'll
clean it up for you.

(he starts to clean it)

He was a fine man. Tell the mama
that I, his barber, said this.

Francie watches as he finishes cleaning the cup and hands it to her. She starts to turn away, and then asks--

FRANCIE

Is -- there isn't anything else of
my father's here, is there?

BARBER

No, that's all he had.

As Francie turns and goes, the scene dissolves to the NOLAN KITCHEN. Katie is alone in the kitchen. The door opens and Francie comes in carrying the mug. Without looking at her mother she goes straight into the parlor. Katie looks after her, forcing herself not to stop her.

In the PARLOR, Francie pulls out her box from under the couch, adds the shaving mug to a carefully put away collection of memories of Johnny: his tuxedo shirt, his waiter's apron, his union button, the whisk broom with which he always brushed himself before going out. Her face never changes as she slides the box back under the couch, rises and goes into the kitchen.

The KITCHEN: Again not meeting Katie's anxious eyes, she crosses the kitchen toward the door into the hall. Katie can contain herself no longer.

KATIE

Francie.

FRANCIE

(stopping, but
without turning)
What?

KATIE
Francie dear ... Where you going?

FRANCIE
No place.

She gets as far as the door.

KATIE
Francie.

FRANCIE
(still not turning)
Yes, mama.

KATIE
The neighbors were awful nice,
leavin' all this food. Don't you
want a little somethin'?

FRANCIE
No, mama.

KATIE
Well, I -- I wanted to talk to you.
I want things to go on, the reading
and all, just like-- I want to do--
(desperately)
I got to be mama and papa both to
you now--

She has said the impossible. Almost imperceptibly Francie stiffens.

FRANCIE
Yes, mama. Is that all, mama?

KATIE
(sheepishly)
Well--
(Francie starts
to go out)
You got to go right now, Francie,
I--

FRANCIE
(desperately)
I'll be back, honest I will.

She goes out. Katie sighs, defeated, and sinks into a chair by the table. After a moment Neeley's door opens. He wants to comfort her, and boyishly says the only thing he can think of.

NEELEY

Mom, I -- I guess I'm a little
hungry.

Katie manages a smile, and reaches out a hand to pull him to her. -- Next the ROOF of the NOLAN TENEMENT comes into view. At the edge of the parapet overlooking the city and the harbor Francie stands, living out her own private ceremony for her father. She is unaware of the street noises which float up, unaware even of a woman hanging out wash to dry on the roof behind her. She doesn't even know that tears are in her eyes, because they are not the burning tears that give relief. She might be a very young and bitterly passionate priestess, dedicating herself. After a long moment of silence she lifts her head and looks up.

FRANCIE

(very low, half
in a whisper)

Look -- he can't be gone, he can't.
They don't understand. Maybe --
maybe you could let me have a baby
some day, and it could be a boy, so
-- so it could be just like him. It
would have to be me, nobody else
loved him like -- like I do. Maybe
you could do that for me, and if
you could -- he wouldn't even --
die.

She can't go on, as the scene fades out.

[G]

The KITCHEN fades in. Francie is ironing her school dress. Katie is just admitting McGarrity. He is constrained, has something to say and doesn't know quite how to go about it. He is in his best suit.

KATIE

(as he enters)

I hope you don't think I'm forward
just comin' in like this. Oh, how
are you, Francie?

FRANCIE

I'm well, thank you.

KATIE

Have a chair. Francie, see if Mr.
McGarrity won't have some coffee.

MCGARRITY

Not for me, thank you.

He does not sit down, but stands turning his hat. There is

an awkward little silence. Francie keeps on with her ironing.

MCGARRITY

(ill at ease)

I -- I figgered I'd ought to come.
You might say I knowed Johnny pretty well, in a manner of speakin'.

KATIE

(with a flicker of humor)

Yes, I guess that's right.

MCGARRITY

Well, the first thing is, I guess you know how Johnny and I done business. He used to give me money sometimes to keep and then draw against it, and when he -- I mean, I got to lookin' around, and what do you think, I had pretty near five bucks in his box. I -- I figgered it belongs to you.

He ends very lamely. McGarrity is not a facile liar. It doesn't fool Katie, but she is touched by his intent. -- Francie, unnoticed, stops ironing at the mention of her father's name.

KATIE

(with little smile)

If you told the truth, it'd more likely be that he owed you. But I thank you very much.

McGarrity shifts uneasily. He does not like being caught at being a good man.

MCGARRITY

Well, I -- I just thought--

KATIE

(quietly)

We'll make out.

McGarrity uncomfortably returns the bill to his pocket.

MCGARRITY

(examining his hat intently)

Well, there was somethin' else. I was thinkin' -- you know, I try to run a nice place, clean, so nice folks can-- Well, who I hire is important, they got to be nice too, and I was thinkin' that -- that maybe you wouldn't mind if the kids

come to work for me, afternoons like. I mean after school, and Saturdays. Maybe it ain't just the kind of place you'd favor 'em workin', but I'd keep an eye on 'em. I could pay 'em two dollars a week a piece and-- I'd take it as a real favor, ma'am.

McGarrity runs down lamely. Katie is really touched.

KATIE

(after a moment)

You're an awful bad liar, Mr. McGarrity. But you're a very good man. I'm ashamed I didn't know it before.

MCGARRITY

(uncomfortably)

No ma'am, it ain't that. Johnny was-- I don't know, Johnny was always talkin' about his family like -- like folks ought to, only they don't; funny, the things he talked about pretty near always made you feel better, or laugh, like a sea shell I had down there he was always listenin' to and tellin' you what it was singin'. He was always givin' things like that to people. He -- he was a fine man, Mrs. Nolan.

McGarrity's tribute to Johnny is somewhat confused, but the feeling behind it is so earnest that it cannot be mistaken. -- Francie listens intently. McGarrity's whole wish to do something for them is because of his feeling for her father. -- Katie too is moved. Enough that she forgets momentarily that Francie is in the room.

KATIE

I'd be glad for the children to work for you, Mr. McGarrity. Four dollars a week will keep us until the baby comes, and Francie won't have to quit school; she can keep on and they can both--

She stops. She had not intended to say this. She looks quickly at Francie. Francie's eyes refuse to meet her mother's. She turns back and starts ironing again.

MCGARRITY

(sensing tension he does not understand)

It's a deal. Tell 'em to come to the

family entrance tomorrow right after school. Is that all right with you, Francie?

FRANCIE
(not looking up)

Yes.

MCGARRITY
It's all settled then. Well --
goodbye, Mrs. Nolan.

KATIE
(gratefully)
And thank you again, Mr. McGarrity.

McGarrity goes a little awkwardly. Francie and Katie are left alone, and there is a sharp constraint between them. Francie does not look at her mother. Katie studies her, troubled.

KATIE
Francie.

FRANCIE
(ironing)
Yes, mama.

KATIE
I -- I'm glad you can keep on with your school. I didn't tell you because I was hopin' somethin' would happen. I didn't want to say anything until the time came. But there were reasons, your papa and I talked it over, there wasn't any other way--

Francie still avoids looking at Katie.

FRANCIE
(quietly)
It doesn't matter. Papa saved me from it.

She turns and goes into the parlor, closing the door on Katie as the scene dissolves to MCGARRITY'S SALOON. Sissy enters down the street. She doesn't bother going around to the family entrance, but barges nonchalantly through the swinging doors.

Two or three customers are visible. McGarrity is behind the bar. Neeley is putting a ham and some other things from a tray onto the free lunch end of the bar. The men look up, surprised at seeing a woman enter the bar.

SISSY

(to Neeley)
Hi, kid. They're takin' chances I
wouldn't, leavin' you handle the
eats. Where's Francie?

NEELEY
(with a full mouth)
Kitchen.

SISSY
Thanks. Hi, Mac.

She waves nonchalantly to McGarrity, and disappears through
the family entrance toward the kitchen. The men look after
her approvingly.

In the KITCHEN, Francie is dispiritedly cutting some dill
pickles into long lengths as Sissy enters.

SISSY
Hello, lamb.

Francie looks around, but does not light up as she generally
does when she sees Sissy.

FRANCIE
Hello, Aunt Sissy.

SISSY
(taking a paper
from the top of
her stocking)
How are you, kid? Look, you got to
help me with somethin'. This was in
the paper and I cut it out. You got
to read it to me and--
(she is suddenly aware
of Francie's mood)
What's the matter, hon?

FRANCIE
Nothing. I'm all right, Aunt Sissy.

SISSY
No you ain't, kid, you ain't been
since -- look, hadn't you better
spill it to your Aunt Sissy.

FRANCIE
(on the defensive)
What is it you want me to read to
you? Let me read that, Aunt Sissy.

SISSY
Well, we'll get that out of the way
first. Look, here it is, likely you
don't remember him, but it's my last

husband, Bill -- the one I thought was dead. But he ain't, he's got his picture in here, and I got to know what it says.

(Francie takes the clipping and studies it)
Maybe it'll tell where he is, so I can write to him about gettin' a divorce or -- or somethin'. I don't want this here one bobbin' up and makin' no trouble. He's a fireman somewhere, I can tell that by the clothes. He was just startin' out in the fireman business when--

FRANCIE

It says here he's a hero, Aunt Sissy. He saved some people in a fire.

SISSY

Does it say where?

FRANCIE

The Ninth Precinct, Manhattan.

SISSY

Manhattan, huh -- couldn't make the grade in Brooklyn, I guess. Now listen, Francie, I want you to write him for me. Write this, "Dear Bill--"

FRANCIE

This says his name is Roland Pulaski.

SISSY

That's right, I remember. Make it "Dear Mr. Pulaski: Being I'm now married to somebody else, I want you to see about gettin' a real legal divorce because I thought you was dead, and because you got the money now on account of the reward. Yours very truly, Sissy." Something like that.

FRANCIE

But Aunt Sissy, he must have already done that, because it says here he's married again.

SISSY

It does!

FRANCIE

(reading)

"On the human interest side of the story, Mrs. Pulaski had returned

home only the day before from the hospital, after presenting Mr. Pulaski with a brand-new son, the fourth child of the marriage. Perhaps it was his pride that--"
(looking up)
So if he got a divorce that long ago, you don't have to.

SISSY

Then my bein' married to Bill -- this one, I mean -- is all legal.

Francie nods, and turns back to slicing the pickles.

SISSY

Well now, if that ain't a load off my mind. You know, I think I'll send Bill Pulaski a weddin' present.

FRANCIE

But you can't, Aunt Sissy, he's been married for years.

SISSY

(this news bothers her)
Four kids, huh?
(then, trying to comfort herself)
Must be a pretty sickly woman, this Mrs. Pulaski, goin' to a hospital just to have a baby.

FRANCIE

(dully)
No. Lots of people go there now to have babies. It's better.

SISSY

Sure enough?
(Francie nods)
You know somethin', I'm going to cash in my funeral policy and have my baby in the hospital. And when my baby is born and lives, I want you to write to that R. Pulaski and -- and announce it!
(she takes a deep breath)
Hey, do I feel better!

Francie turns back to her work. Sissy has been so concerned with her own problem, that she has hardly been aware of the apathy with which Francie has shared it. But now, her own problem settled, she looks down at Francie's miserable little figure, her back turned as she works away at the pickles. Sissy suddenly pulls up a chair beside Francie and sits where she can see Francie's face.

SISSY

And now, chickabiddy, we're goin' to talk about you. Can't your Aunt Sissy help any?

Francie shakes her head miserably.

FRANCIE

I'm all right.

SISSY

But you ain't, honey, not all shut up like that.

(Francie doesn't answer)

I know how you feel, but you can't just keep hangin' on to it.

FRANCIE

I'm all right, I don't want to talk about it.

SISSY

All right, baby, sure. But I tell you what, you can do somethin' for me. Look -- your mama feels awful bad too. She needs you. Why don't you talk to her about it--

FRANCIE

(with sudden bitterness)

She doesn't need me.

SISSY

Why, yes she does, hon, she--

FRANCIE

No, she doesn't. She's got Neeley. Why wasn't it Neeley she was goin' to make quit school, he never cared about it. She doesn't love me like papa did. And she didn't love him, either, not really. She hurt him. I saw her. And he never hurt anybody. I'm going to finish this grade because he gave it to me, and then I'll work for her, but she can't be papa to me, she can't ever!

This pent-up feeling blazes out of Francie with so much passion that it frightens Sissy. When it is over, Francie turns blindly back to her work, shutting out even Sissy. Moved, Sissy puts an arm around her and tries to draw Francie to her.

SISSY

Aw, baby, don't feel like that,

don't--

FRANCIE

(twisting away
from her)

Leave me alone, I'm all right.
Please go away and leave me alone.

Rebuffed, Sissy is at a loss as to what she can do. The feeling is so fierce that it frightens Sissy. Francie is crying, but it is hard and dry, not like a child ought to cry. She is fighting it terribly, instead of giving way to it.

SISSY

(helplessly)

All right, chickabiddy, all right.

Sissy turns helplessly and goes out. Shaken with her feeling, Francie tries to go on with her work as the scene dissolves to a SCHOOL ROOM where Francie, standing by her desk, is reading a composition in the English class.

FRANCIE

(reading)

"But when he died, although many of the older people said he drank too much and was a failure, the little children took their pennies and built this monument to him, because he was so good in his heart and they loved him best of all. And after a time--"

Francie is very earnest as she reads this, carried away with this attempt at justification of Johnny. To the children, it is pretty dull. But Miss McDonough watches her curiously, unable to understand quite what this is all about, as the scene dissolves and the CLASSROOM is seen after the others have gone and Francie is standing again in front of Miss McDonough's desk. She is troubled. Miss McDonough holds the composition.

MISS MCDONOUGH

--And the sentence structure is excellent, Francie, but there's something else that worries me. If we are going to write, the choice of subject -- what we write about is just as important as the writing itself. We ought to write about the best of things, we shouldn't choose a subject that is ugly and sordid, like--

Francie has been listening miserably, and not looking at Miss McDonough. But with this her head comes up.

FRANCIE

It isn't sordid, it isn't.

MISS MCDONOUGH

(surprised)

But, Francie, I only meant--

FRANCIE

(interrupting)

Maybe I didn't say it right but it isn't sordid. I won't write about it any more if you don't want me to. I don't care if I don't write anything any more.

She turns quickly to go. Miss McDonough is bewildered by this outburst and would like to get to the bottom of it.

MISS MCDONOUGH

Francie--

But Francie hurries on out, and Miss McDonough knows there is no use in trying to stop her.

The scene dissolves to the PARLOR. Francie has the box of her treasures pulled out from under the couch. She puts alongside the apron and the shaving mug and the other treasures, the composition about Johnny. Her face is hard and set. She shoves the box back under the couch. Then she pulls out another smaller box which she has kept here for English compositions. She picks this up and marches toward the kitchen.

Francie enters from the parlor and carries the box of papers to the garbage can in the KITCHEN. Fiercely she starts to tear them up and stuff them into the garbage can ... She is never going to write anything again. -- The scene fades out.

[H]

A HOSPITAL room fades in, and we get a close view of a white-robed doctor bending over a table out of scene. The sound of his slapping a baby to try to start it breathing can be heard. We get a closeup of SISSY in bed, half-conscious, as she turns her head to look in the direction of the sound. A nurse comes into the scene and stands near the doctor.

DOCTOR

(quickly)

Oxygen.

The nurse goes out quickly.

We again get a closeup of SISSY, and over it the baby beginning to cry as the scene dissolves to a HOSPITAL

WAITING ROOM where Steve, Katie, Neeley, Francie and Grandma Rommely are waiting, ill at ease. There are a couple of other expectant fathers in the room. Steve gets up and paces a little and then sits down again, but nobody pays any attention to him. -- Neeley is sitting next to Katie, and Katie is watching Francie, who is quite apart from the rest of them, staring at nothing out of the window. The hospital and the coming of Sissy's baby have made Katie very much aware of the imminence of her own motherhood. -- In a moment Katie gets up and moves over near Francie.

KATIE

(hesitantly)

Francie.

FRANCIE

Yes, mama.

KATIE

I -- I wanted to talk to you,
Francie.

FRANCIE

Yes, mama.

KATIE

It isn't going to be long now -- for
me. I mean, my baby. We can't come
to the hospital -- there isn't goin'
to be money enough even for the
woman to help.

For the first time, Francie looks at her.

KATIE

I'm goin' to need you, Francie, don't
ever be far away. Neeley, he's -- a
boy ain't no good at a time like
this, I'm countin' on you. You -- you
won't forget that, will you, Francie?

It is hard going for Katie to put this much into words. For this very reason, it is so real that for the first time Katie's need of her stirs something in Francie. She looks at Katie a little wonderingly. In the background Grandma Rommely watches, missing nothing.

FRANCIE

All right, mama. I -- I'll remember.

In that moment they are closer than they have been in a long time. But the mood of it is broken by the entrance of the doctor. Through the open door a baby's crying can be heard.

DOCTOR

Which one of you is Mr. Stephen
Edwards?

STEVE
(rising weakly)
That's -- that's me.

DOCTOR
(to Sissy's husband)
Well, there are three in your family
now. You're the father of a pretty
fine boy.

GRANDMA ROMMELY
(quickly)
Alive?

DOCTOR
Very much so. He was a little
reluctant about it at first, so I
had to rouse him with a little
oxygen. Now he's mad at me -- hear
him?

STEVE
(hardly able to talk)
I got to see him.

DOCTOR
Well, neither of them are quite up
to a visit just now. In a little
while.

He goes out.

GRANDMA ROMMELY
(quietly)
The learning. It is the learning
that has saved this baby.

KATIE
That's fine, Bill.

Steve is so excited that he doesn't know what to do.
Suddenly he grabs up his hat and starts out.

NEELEY
Where you goin', Uncle Bill?

STEVE
(stopping)
I'm goin' out and get some strawberry
ice-cream and a rattle for my son.
And what's more my name ain't Bill,
it's Steve. Do you hear that -- I'm a
papa, and my name is Steve. And it's
Uncle Steve too -- Steve, Steve!

He goes out and slams the door. The little family look at

him in surprise.

GRANDMA ROMMELY

So! We have a man in the family.

She nods, well content, as the scene fades out.

[I]

The NOLAN TENEMENT fades in, in the afternoon, as Francie and Neeley, with their school books, come down the street. Francie stops on the steps of the tenement. She takes Neeley's books.

FRANCIE

As quick as we see if she's all right, you go on down to McGarrity's and see if you can do my work too. I'm going to stay here.

NEELEY

You're just gettin' out of work, that's what you're doin'.

FRANCIE

No, I'm going to finish the scrubbing for her. She oughtn't do anymore, she wasn't feeling good this morning.

There is a new little note of authority in Francie's manner. She leads the way into the tenement and Neeley follows as the scene dissolves to the UPPER HALL and we see Francie and Neeley come up the stairs.

FRANCIE

(calling)

Mama?

We get a view of the KITCHEN as Francie and Neeley come in. Katie is nowhere in sight.

FRANCIE

(apprehensively)

Mama!

KATIE

(from the bedroom)

In here, Francie.

FRANCIE

(quickly, to Neeley)

You wait.

She goes into the bedroom. -- In the BEDROOM, Katie is lying down on the bed. She is ill, and knows that the time for the coming of the child is near. Francie enters, and stops,

worried, as she sees her mother.

FRANCIE

You -- you all right, mama?

KATIE

Give Neeley a nickel to go after
Grandma and Sissy. He can walk home
after. Tell him to stop at
McGarrity's on the way back and
explain.

FRANCIE

(gravely)

Yes, mama.

She starts out, but Katie stops her.

KATIE

Get me a nightgown -- the bottom
drawer.

Francie obeys, and puts it on the bed. Katie gets up.
Francie stands staring at her, worried.

KATIE

Hurry, don't stand there staring.

Francie turns quickly and goes out. -- Katie laboriously
starts to stir herself to get into the nightgown.

Francie enters the KITCHEN. Neeley is very frightened by
what he has heard.

NEELEY

Is she goin' to die?

FRANCIE

(in a tone of assurance
she does not feel)

Of course not. It's the baby.

(she gets the nickel)

You heard what mama said. And hurry.

And don't forget stopping at
McGarrity's on the way back. We
can't lose the work.

(with a strange
little pride)

She -- she just wants me now.

Awed, Neeley starts out. When he is gone, Francie is lost.
She doesn't quite know what to do next. She starts to light
the fire under the coffee, then listens for any sound from
the other room. There is none.

FRANCIE

Mama?

KATIE
(from the bedroom)
What is it?

FRANCIE
(relieved)
Oh. I'll be there in -- in a minute.

She gets the coffee started, and then goes into the bedroom.
-- The BEDROOM: Katie is in bed as Francie comes in. Francie is helpless now, doesn't know what to do next.

KATIE
Francie.

FRANCIE
Yes, mama.

KATIE
Don't go away, stay close by me.

FRANCIE
Yes, mama.

KATIE
I don't want to be alone. What time is it?

FRANCIE
Five to four. I'm -- I'm fixing you some coffee, mama.

KATIE
That's nice.

Francie stands helplessly for a moment, then goes again to the kitchen. -- Francie feels the coffee pot to see if it's hot enough, then gets a can of milk and a cup. She picks up the coffee pot and starts in with it, then decides to put it on a kitchen chair for a tray, and starts with the whole thing into the bedroom. -- Back in the BEDROOM, Francie puts the improvised tray beside the bed, and then waits.

KATIE
You pour it.
(Francie obeys)
Is it dark out?

FRANCIE
No, mama.

KATIE
It's dark in here.

FRANCIE
I'll light the gas.

KATIE

No, it'll hurt my eyes.

Francie puts the cup of coffee on the side of Katie's bed and puts milk in it. Then she goes to Katie's dresser and gets what is left of the Christmas candle and starts to light that. -- Katie takes a deep sip of the coffee.

KATIE

Tastes good.

(she sees what

Francie is doing)

You're takin' real good care of me.

FRANCIE

Am I, mama?

She puts the candle near the bed. She wants so desperately to do something more, but doesn't know what.

FRANCIE

Can I -- can I get you a glass of water, mama?

KATIE

(with sudden irritation)

When I want something, I'll ask for it.

FRANCIE

Yes, mama.

KATIE

Don't just throw questions at me, I'm too tired. You better have some coffee too.

Francie obeys mechanically. She is hurt.

FRANCIE

(after a moment)

Mama, -- even if Neeley is a boy, wouldn't you rather have him here, he's always such a comfort to you.

KATIE

No, it's you that's the comfort now. What time is it?

FRANCIE

I don't know, mama.

KATIE

Get the clock.

Francie obeys and goes to the kitchen. -- Katie turns restlessly as there is a spasm of pain. -- In a moment

Francie returns with the clock and puts it down beside the bed.

FRANCIE

One minute to four, mama.

KATIE

Are you sure it isn't slow?

FRANCIE

No, mama.

KATIE

Maybe it's fast then.

FRANCIE

I'll look at the jeweler's clock out the parlor window.

She starts to go, but Katie hasn't even heard her.

KATIE

The candle is pretty. Like Christmas. That was the night I told him.

(after a little pause)

It's -- nice, havin' a visit with my daughter. Hey, that's funny, you're drinking your coffee.

FRANCIE

(who hadn't known she was)

Yes, mama.

KATIE

I didn't want for you to have to grow up so soon. I didn't want for you to quit school, I tried to tell him that. He didn't mind about the baby, but he never forgive me for wantin' you to quit school. I told him and he just went out. You never forgive me either.

FRANCIE

Please don't, mama.

KATIE

He woulda bought you dolls instead a milk, and I don't know, maybe you woulda been happier, I don't know. I never woulda thought of givin' you that school like he did. And all them fine compositions of yours, I never read any of 'em. I should've had time, Johnny did.

(she stirs restlessly)

But I couldn't do any different, I
don't know how I could do any
different. What time is it?

FRANCIE

Five after four.

KATIE

Wring a cloth out of cold water and
wipe my face.

She turns restlessly. Francie, awed and frightened, gets up
and goes to the kitchen again. -- She gets a cloth and
starts to wet it and wring it out in the sink. She is
frightened and terribly moved.

FRANCIE

(half under her breath)

Don't let her die, please don't let
her die. I'll give you anything,
I'll - I'll give you my writing,
I'll never write anything again, if
you just let her live.

This is only half-articulate. She hurries back to the bedroom.

In the BEDROOM, Katie is quieter again; Francie wipes her
face with the cloth, and it soothes Katie so that she smiles
a little.

FRANCIE

Mama, suppose the baby comes before
Grandma and Aunt Sissy get here--
What -- What --

KATIE

(dryly)

I wouldn't be that lucky.

Her eyes close for a minute. Francie watches her helplessly.
In a moment Katie's eyes open again and she looks at Francie.

KATIE

You can see I couldn't do any
different. Neeley -- he doesn't like
school, if he stopped he'd never go
back again. But you-- No matter how
hard it was you'd find a way to go
back, you'd fight to go back. You
can see that, can't you?

FRANCIE

I -- Yes, mama.

KATIE

Read me something, Francie.

FRANCIE

Yes, mama.

KATIE

Read me one of your compositions. I never read any of your compositions, it's on my conscience.

FRANCIE

I tore all those up.

KATIE

No you didn't, not all of 'em.

FRANCIE

Can't I read you the Shakespeare, it -- it's better.

KATIE

Read about "'Twas on a night like this." I'd like to have something pretty on my mind.

(Francie gets the book
from the dresser and
opens it)

Sit by the candle.

FRANCIE

"The moon shines bright!--
In such a night as this
When the sweet wind did gently kiss
the trees--"

KATIE

Did you ever find out who Troilus was, and Cressida?

FRANCIE

Yes, mama. Troilus was--

KATIE

Some other day, when I got time. Read me one of your compositions now.

FRANCIE

You won't like them, mama.

KATIE

You thought about them, and wrote them, and got good marks on them, and I never read one of them.

(a little petulantly)

Get them, I said.

Reluctantly Francie goes to get them. Katie stirs restlessly. The pain is getting worse.

We see the PARLOR as Francie comes in, pulls out the box from under the couch and reluctantly takes out one of the compositions. She starts, back to the bedroom with it.

In the BEDROOM, Katie's eyes are closed as Francie comes in. Seeing this, Francie moves very quietly, a little relieved that she may not have to read the composition. But Katie's eyes open.

KATIE

Sit here.

(Francie obeys, but does not start immediately)

Go on.

FRANCIE

(not looking at her)

It's called "The Man People Loved."

(breaking off)

Please don't make me read it, mama.

KATIE

Read it.

FRANCIE

(reading)

"Perhaps many people might have said of him that he was a failure. It is true that he had no gift for making money, but he had a gift for laughter, and for making people love him. He had the gift of making you feel proud to walk down the street with him. He had nothing to give but himself, but of this he gave generously, like a king. And--"

KATIE

Like a king, that's right, walkin' down the street with him you always felt like that.

FRANCIE

Did you, mama?

KATIE

You were real smart to write it down like that, that's like it was. Oh, Francie, I miss him so much.

There is a new light in Francie's eyes as she looks at her mother. Katie stirs restlessly. Hardly knowing she is doing it, she reaches out a hand to Francie, and hangs on to her hard. She is more than half delirious now, so that her speech is disjointed. But at last Johnny, and their feeling for him, is in the open between these two.

KATIE

If the baby's a boy, we'll call him Johnny. Where's Sissy -- Neeley's been gone a long time. Wipe my face, Francie -- No don't let go my hand. Everybody loved him, you could tell that at the funeral. Maybe if it's a girl we'll call her Annie Laurie -- remember that tune he played? You oughta have music lessons, maybe we can manage it. You won't forget to dust the piano, will you, Francie? Who'd cry about me like that if I died? I never done a wrong thing in my life, but that ain't enough. I didn't mean to be hard, Sissy, like you said. If Johnny was here, he could go to your graduation and I'd go to Neeley's. I can't tear myself into two pieces, how am I goin' to go to both? Where are you, Francie?

FRANCIE

(frightened)

I'm here, mama.

KATIE

You're such a comfort. I'm so tired, leave me sleep now.

Her eyes are closed in half-sleep, half-unconsciousness. Francie, awed, sits holding on to her hand and staring her as the scene dissolves to the KITCHEN, which Aunt Sissy and Grandma Rommely have just entered from the hall. They cross immediately to the bedroom. -- Here, Francie is still holding on to the restless, fretful hand. She stands up as Sissy and Grandma come in. She is frightened. Sissy and Grandma take off their coats and get ready to go to work immediately.

SISSY

(noticing Francie's fear)

You better go out and start some water boilin', chickabiddy. We'll call you if there is anything we need.

KATIE

(eyes opening)

I thought you was never comin'.

SISSY

You quit worryin' now.

She motions to Francie with her head to go on into the kitchen, and the bewildered Francie obeys. Sissy starts looking in the dresser drawers for cloths and the baby's

clothes.

The scene dissolves to the KITCHEN, where Francie is mechanically tending the water on the stove. The door from the bedroom opens and Sissy hurries out. She tests the water with her hand.

FRANCIE
It isn't boiling yet.

SISSY
You let me know when it is, I'll
take it in. You're to stay out here.

FRANCIE
(wanting to help)
She -- She doesn't want any light,
just the candle.

SISSY
She's goin' to be all right, baby.

Sissy starts back to the bedroom.

FRANCIE
(troubled)
Aunt Sissy?
(Sissy stops)
I just wanted to know -- Did she
want me to stay out -- or --

The question means so much to her, in her uncertainty, that she can't go on. Sissy understands, and comes back to her.

SISSY
(gently)
She said you was to stay out, kid.
People always want to spare the ones
they love.

She looks at Francie for a long moment, and then turns and goes on into the bedroom closing the door behind her. Francie stares at it, then turns to the window and stares out. Next, from Francie's point of view we get a view of the tree, struggling into life again. -- As Francie stands looking out at it the scene dissolves to the KITCHEN, and we get a close view of the bedroom door as it opens and Grandma appears. Francie turns quickly.

GRANDMA
(smiling)
The baby is here. And the mama does
good, she sleeps. A very small baby
sister it is.

Francie is infinitely relieved.

FRANCIE
(tremulously)
Annie Laurie. Papa would have liked
that.

As Grandma smiles at her gently, the scene fades out.

[J]
The exterior of FRANCIE'S SCHOOL fades in as children, dressed for their graduation, are going inside with their parents, and this scene dissolves into the SCHOOL CORRIDOR, where Sissy is waiting for Francie, who comes out of the girls' washroom and joins her. Francie has on a very simple white graduation dress. Excited girls are milling back and forth in the corridor.

FRANCIE
Where's Grandma?

SISSY
(chuckling)
I got her into a front seat so she
won't miss a thing.

As they talk they go on into the classroom. The exercises have not yet begun. There are flowers on a number of the girls' desks. As Sissy and Francie enter, one girl calls to Francie.

BERNICE
Hey, Francie, you better come get
your flowers.

She indicates some roses on Francie's desk. Francie knows they can't be for her.

FRANCIE
(calling back)
They aren't mine, I'm not wearing
flowers tonight.
(then, to Sissy)
Some of the girls, their families
send them flowers.

SISSY
(with a little smile)
They're on your desk, lamb, I'd go
see.

Francie hesitates. She would rather not.

FRANCIE
Well, I've got to get my things
anyway.

She goes toward her desk. Sissy watches her. Francie comes

up to her desk. She makes a show of starting to get her things together from the desk. As she does this, she looks down at the flowers. -- We then see a card on the flowers. It reads: Miss FRANCES NOLAN. -- Francie can't believe it. Then she opens the little envelope and we see that the card, which is in it, reads: "To Francie on graduation day. Love from Papa." -- Francie stares, awed and frightened. She does not know what to believe, and a wave of emotion catches her. Anticipating this, Sissy steps in beside her quickly.

SISSY

He gave me the money to buy 'em, way before Christmas. To make sure of havin' it, he said. And he wrote out the card.

Francie stands unbelievably for a moment. Then it is too much for her. A wave of feeling catches her, and her face goes down into the flowers. Sissy knows that in a moment there will be a flood of tears.

SISSY

(quickly)

Come on, kid.

An arm around Francie's shoulders, she hurries her up the aisle as the scene dissolves to the GIRLS' WASHROOM. A girl is just leaving as Sissy leads Francie in. Sissy closes the door, and they are alone.

SISSY

Now, let it go, baby.

Francie looks at her and the emotion is too much. A sob catches in Francie's throat.

SISSY

There, nobody won't hear you and I won't let nobody in. You just have it out.

Francie stands clutching the flowers to her, and then the flood of tears breaks.

FRANCIE

Papa, oh papa--

She starts to cry as she should have long ago, and as Sissy comforts her, the scene dissolves to the SCHOOL AUDITORIUM where we see a line of children filing by to get the diplomas which are being given out by the principal. There is applause at each name.

PRINCIPAL

Eugene Bricker!
(holding out the
next diploma)

Frances Nolan!

Francie, eyes shining, receives her diploma. -- Sissy applauds vociferously. -- Miss McDonough applauds too, and her eyes are a little misty. -- Grandma Rommely is too moved to applaud. She has lived for this moment. This is fulfillment.

This dissolves to an ICE CREAM PARLOR with several marble-topped tables. The Nolans are occupying one -- Francie, Neeley, Katie and Sissy. They are having ice cream. Francie still has her flowers. Sissy is talking but Katie is watching Francie and the flowers.

SISSY

Well sir, I don't think Grandma spoke one word the whole time, and from the looks of her when I put her on the streetcar, she'll probably ride clear out to Coney Island and never know the difference. Heaven only knows what she'd have been like if she could've got to both graduations.

KATIE

(looking at Francie)
Looks to me like it was a pretty good day. Your soda all right, Francie?

FRANCIE

(looking at her shyly)
Pineapple's not as good as chocolate.

NEELEY

Then what did you order it for?

FRANCIE

Because I'm up to the P's. I'll try raspberry next.

SISSY

(laughing)
There's somethin' to that idea --
Try everything once.

At this, Katie gives her a significant look.

At the table behind them a man pays his check and gets up.

MAN

(to the waiter)
And a dime for you, my boy. This is a special night.

His party goes out. Their boy too has a diploma.

KATIE

(smiling)

He don't know how special -- Two diplomas in the Nolan family all in one day.

FRANCIE

(leaning close to her mother; whispering)

Mama.

(Katie leans closer)

I got a nickel if you want to leave it. People do.

KATIE

It'll be all right, Francie.

(she leans back)

You know somethin'? They ain't goin' to be the last diplomas, either. I don't know how we're goin' to work it, but--

Her speech is interrupted by the arrival at the table of two boys, one Auggie, whom we have seen before, about Neeley's age. The other, a little older.

AUGGIE

Hi, Neeley, how you doin'?

NEELEY

(indicating his diploma)

Okay, I got out o' jail.

HERSCHEL

(Auggie's older brother)

Nice goin'. Say, wasn't it you I saw workin' behind the bat the other day?

NEELEY

(flattered)

Yeah, but--

HERSCHEL

(with phony enthusiasm)

Say, you were pretty good. You know what, I'm comin' out and give you some pointers some day.

NEELEY

Honest?

HERSCHEL

Sure I will.

(looking at the others)

That is, if your ma don't mind.

NEELEY

Naw, she won't mind.

The obviousness of his attempt to get introduced is apparent to both Katie and Sissy. It amuses them.

HERSCHEL

Well, I'll see you on the lot.

(stalling)

Maybe you better ask your ma. I don't want to do nothin' she wouldn't want me to.

NEELEY

Aw, she wouldn't care.

SISSY

(grinning and coming
to Herschel's rescue)

Maybe you better ask her yourself, just to make sure. I'm Neeley's aunt, and this is his ma, but this is his sister. What's your name, big boy?

HERSCHEL

Herschel Knutsen.

SISSY

Mr. Knutsen, I'd like for you to meet my niece, Miss Francie Nolan.

HERSCHEL

Pleased to meet you.

FRANCIE

Hello.

SISSY

(to break the silence
that has ensued)

Nice night if it don't rain. Why don't you sit down, Herschel?

Herschel does so promptly, next to Francie.

HERSCHEL

Doin' anything tomorrow afternoon, Miss Nolan? It's Saturday.

FRANCIE

I don't know. Why?

HERSCHEL

There's a swell picture, Bill Hart. Maybe you'd like to go.

FRANCIE
Who with?

HERSCHEL
Me.

FRANCIE
Oh.

It is Francie's first date. Sissy and Katie are amused and interested. Francie hesitates and then passes the feminine crisis beautifully.

FRANCIE
Well, I -- I might be busy. I'll let you know.

HERSCHEL
(docilely)
Well, I'll come around and see.

NEELEY
I thought we was goin' to play ball tomorrow.

HERSCHEL
We can do that any time, sure.
There's lots o' time.

Both Neeley and Auggie are overwhelmingly disgusted with the feet of clay that Herschel has shown.

AUGGIE
(disgusted)
Aw, come on, Hersch.

HERSCHEL
(getting up)
Well, I'll be seein' you, Miss Nolan.

Francie smiles, but doesn't answer and Herschel and Auggie leave. Francie has made her first conquest.

NEELEY
(in pain)
Him, mushy!

SISSY
I'm proud of you, chickabiddy. You handled him fine.

Francie is flustered, but it is very pleasant.

KATIE
(smiling)
It's the hair that done it.
(then, reluctantly)

I hate to bust up the party, but --
them babies got to be fed.

SISSY

Steve will need a little somethin',
too -- Three hours with the both of
'em.

They make preparations to leave. The waiter enters with the
check. Katie puts a half dollar on the table.

WAITER

Thirty out of fifty.

He starts to take out some change. Katie hesitates, looks at
Francie, and then at Johnny's roses. Then she gets to her
feet.

KATIE

Keep the change.

It is a decision monumental in its importance. Francie's
eyes shine as she looks at her mother.

WAITER

(surprised)

Thank you, ma'am.

SISSY

Why, Katie Nolan!

KATIE

I don't care! There's times when
feelin' good and -- and things like
that is important. I don't care.

They gather their things and start out. Neeley takes a last
noisy pull at the straw in his drink. As they start out,
Francie walks next to Katie.

As they get to the door, and the others pass through,
Francie hesitates a moment.

FRANCIE

(shyly, to Katie)

You -- you want to carry my flowers,
mama?

Katie looks down at her, a little tremulously. Their eyes
meet, and things are fine. Katie takes the flowers a little
awkwardly. It is the measure of their sharing of Johnny.
They start out together. Francie is close beside her as the
scene dissolves out.

The NOLAN KITCHEN dissolves in as Katie, Sissy, Francie and
Neeley are just entering. Their spirits are high.

AD LIBS

You missed it, Steve. How are the babies?

They stop short as they see McShane sitting at the table with Uncle Steve. Each holds a sleeping baby. McShane gets to his feet, embarrassed.

MCSHANE

I'm beggin' your pardon, ma'am, but I just dropped in, and your brother-in-law seemed to be needin' a little help, and the baby didn't seem to mind. I hope I'm not intruding.

KATIE

Not at all, Mr. McShane.

SISSY

Sit right down, we're just goin'.
(she takes her baby)
Come along, Steve.

KATIE

(to McShane)
I'll take her, Mr. McShane.

MCSHANE

I'd like it if you'd leave her. Her and me has got to be good friends.

Katie hesitates and then complies. Francie moves about putting her flowers in water. Sissy and Steve are getting ready to go.

KATIE

(to Sissy)
I wish you wouldn't hurry.

SISSY

Got to get this family of mine home. Steve's got his milk to deliver to a lot more babies that like that bottled kind.

They move toward the door. Katie goes with them.

SISSY

(grinning, and
whispering to Katie)
Quit frownin', Katie. The fellers don't go for that at all.

Katie flushes but has no answer. Sissy is enjoying the situation thoroughly.

SISSY

(to the others)
Goodbye, kids. So long, Mac.

MCSHANE
(grinning a little)
Goodbye, Mrs. Edwards.

FRANCIE
(coming closer)
Thank you, Aunt Sissy.

Sissy ruffles her hair a little, then suddenly bends and kisses her. Sissy and Steve go. Suddenly there is a little constraint in the room.

KATIE
Well, I -- I'll take the baby off
you now, Mr. McShane.

She does, and sits down across the kitchen table from him. McShane doesn't know quite what to do with the blanket that has been across his lap. Conversation lags for a moment.

MCSHANE
You -- you got a nice family, Mrs.
Nolan.

KATIE
Thank you, Mr. McShane.

There is another silence, and then McShane gets to his feet. He has something to say, but doesn't know how to go about it. Then he takes a long breath.

MCSHANE
Mrs. Nolan, likely you're wonderin'
why I came here tonight. Let your
wonderin' be over. I came on a
personal matter.

He pauses and clears his throat. Francie looks at her mother uncertainly.

FRANCIE
Mama, shall I go and--

MCSHANE
No. Don't be leavin', children. My
conversation would be concernin' you
as well as your mother.
(he clears his
throat again)
Mrs. Nolan, I feel it is no
disrespect to speak my mind at this
time. The last thing I'd intend
would be any disrespect. But -- I
mean, I'm in line for a sergeancy

now, and I feel that it has been a decent interval since the passin' of Mrs. McShane, God rest her soul--

KATIE

I didn't know, Mr. McShane, I'm sorry.

MCSHANE

I said nothing, Mrs. Nolan, because it was near the time of your own bereavement, and I didn't wish -- that is, I know it is barely six months now since your husband too, left this world, rest his soul -- But intendin' no disrespect -- and even without the sergeancy, I feel I'm in a position to speak my mind now. So that when you feel a decent interval has elapsed, I'm -- I'm askin' to start keepin' company with you, Katharine Nolan, with the object of a weddin' when -- when a decent time has elapsed.

There is a silence. Katie looks first at Francie. Francie smiles a little. Then Katie looks up at McShane.

KATIE

(very simply)

For my part, I will be glad to keep company with you, Mr. McShane. Not for the help you offer, because I know we'd manage some way. But because you are a good man, Mr. McShane.

MCSHANE

There's one more thing. There's little enough I can be offerin' to such a fine family, but it's little enough I'd be askin' of the children. Their father was a fine man, and I'd have no wish to be tryin' to take his place. It would be my intention to be more like -- like a real good friend.

(directly to Francie)

As the eldest, could you be approvin'?

His understanding about her father has been the winning stroke with Francie. She looks at him squarely.

FRANCIE

Yes, Mr. McShane.

MCSHANE

I was thinkin' it wouldn't be right
that I should ever ask the two
oldest to take my name. But the
little one -- the one that never
looked on her father -- Would you
think of letting me legally adopt
her?

KATIE

(smiling ever
so little)

If that time comes, the child shall
have your name.

MCSHANE

(drawing a deep
breath of relief)

Now I'm wonderin' if I could smoke
my pipe?

KATIE

You could have smoked any time, Mr.
McShane.

MCSHANE

I didn't want to be takin' privileges
before I was entitled to 'em.

He fishes for his pipe with enormous relief. -- Francie
comes to her mother and starts to take the baby from her.

FRANCIE

Help me put her to bed, Neeley.

NEELEY

Why?

FRANCIE

To fix the blankets.

She starts for the bedroom, giving Neeley a gesture with
her head for him to follow. Left alone with McShane, Katie
goes to the stove.

KATIE

I'll just heat up the coffee. Will
you join me in a cup, Mr. McShane?

MCSHANE

Thank you, Katharine, I will.

In the BEDROOM, Francie and Neeley are putting the baby in
the basket.

FRANCIE

(with a superior air)

They want to be alone. They've got things to talk over.

NEELEY

Oh.

They finish tucking in the sleeping baby. Francie goes to the window and looks out. She is in a strange mood.

FRANCIE

Neeley -- let's go up on the roof?

NEELEY

Okay.

He laughs.

FRANCIE

What's the matter?

NEELEY

He called her Katharine.

Francie smiles too, and as they start out, the scene dissolves to the ROOF, where Francie and Neeley are leaning against the parapet, looking out at the world.

FRANCIE

Annie Laurie McShane.

NEELEY

Yeah.

FRANCIE

She'll never have the hard times we did, will she?

NEELEY

She'll never have the fun, either.

FRANCIE

We did have fun, didn't we, when we were young?

NEELEY

Yeah.

FRANCIE

Remember those olden days when we collected junk?

NEELEY

Poor Laurie.

FRANCIE

Neeley, look at the tree, it's growing again just like papa said.

(after a little pause)
I -- I feel kind of sad, like --
like we're saying goodbye to
something.

NEELEY

Yeah.

Again there's a little pause.

FRANCIE

Neeley?

NEELEY

Uh-huh.

FRANCIE

Am I good looking?

NEELEY

Aw, what's eatin' you?

FRANCIE

No, honest, Neeley, I want to know.

NEELEY

(grudgingly)

You'll pass.

This is high tribute from Neeley. Francie smiles happily.

FRANCIE

You're sweet, Neeley.

NEELEY

Aw, cut the mush.

Content, they gaze out over the world which their diplomas
have made theirs as the scene fades out.

Screenplay by Tess Slesinger and Frank Davis
Additional dialogue by an uncredited Anita Loos
Adapted from the novel by Betty Smith (Elizabeth Lillian Wehner)

The author's original ending

... In the manuscript of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* in the archives of the Southern Historical Collection in Chapel Hill, the novel ends after the death of the father. The two children, Francie and Neeley, are sitting miserably at the kitchen table looking forward to a life of increased poverty and hunger. [Author Betty] Smith writes with her characteristic mixture of sentimentality and despair. Francie says:

"I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and His mother, Holy Mary. Jesus was a baby like we were once. And he went barefoot in the summer like we do. I saw a picture. And he had no shoes on. He lived like other people lived and He went fishing like papa did once. He was always where there were poor people" She made the sign of the cross as every Catholic does when speaking of Jesus.

Then she put her hand on Neeley's knee.

"But I will say now and I will always say - To hell with God!"

Neeley put his hand on Francie's hand and echoed fearfully,

"To hell with God!"