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A Tree Grows in Brooklyn

By Tess Slesinger

Blackberries!
I got blackberries!
This'll be the last
of them now, Francie.
Is that all, Mom?
Can we go now?
Not so loud, Neeley. Do
you wanna wake your papa up?
Gosh, Francie, ain't you
through with them dishes yet?
She'll only be a minute.
My, I wish you was as anxious
to get going on school
mornings as you is on Saturday.
Papa was late
last night.
Yeah, I was dead asleep
when he come in, I guess.
He says if people didn't like to
make speeches so much at dinners,
waiters could spend more
time with their families.
It wasn't much
of a job, I guess.
Them club dinners
don't tip much.
Is that all, Mama?
Yes, yes. Go on.
I'll dry 'em.
You don't look like you
got much there this week.
One of these days,
Mrs. Gaddis is gonna throw away
that old wash boiler of hers.
Carney will pay us plenty for
the copper bottom off of that.
He won't pay you any
more than he has to.
You watch him on that
weighing, now. Yes'm.
Parents ought to have a day that's
like Saturday is for kids. Go on.
Maybe if I start
the lower hall

and scrub
my way up today,
it'll make something
special out of it for me.
- Keep an eye on him, Francie.
- Come on!
Yes, Mama!
Rags! Old iron!
Rags! Old iron!
Rags! Old iron!
They done good today. Come on.
Boarding!
89th Street!
Neeley!
Boarding!
89th Street!
Ragpickers!
Come on.
Now, look. Stand on the same
side as him when he weighs it
so as he can reach it.
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?
Well, I guess
I know it is.
Well, all right, then.
Three cents. That stuff's
worth more than that.
Shut up! I say what things
are worth around here.
Who's next?
Hello, little girl.
Come on.
Shut up!
Shut up!
You done fine.
Nine cents.
Three, five, nine.
There you are,
an extra penny
because you're a nice,
little girl.

That's better. I sure wish
Carney liked to pinch boys.
Nine and my
pinching penny.
Thirty-nine!
It's a pencil!
Give me one.
Twenty-six.
A pen wiper.
Something you want,
little girl?
I'm merely looking,
thank you. I have a right.
I have money.
Step on a crack,
break your mother's back.
Here she comes!
Cheese it!
Neeley. Neeley,
we gotta go home!
Beat it!
Mama said.
Mama said!
Mama said!
I'll beat you!
No, you won't!
For heaven's sake.
Is it that late already?
Well, I guess I'll just let
these stairs go till later.
Four cents, Mom.
That's pretty good.
Dump the bucket, Neeley.
Mama, can I...
No. Dump the bucket
and bring it.
Today's the day for
the insurance collector
and I certainly don't want him
to catch me looking like this.
Hot, ain't it?
Yeah, but Christmas will
be here before you know it.
I got enough troubles

without worrying about that.
How's your sister
today, Henny?
Poorly, thank you.
Well, hello,
Flossie, dear.
Hello, Mrs. Nolan. Don't
you notice something?
You look like you
was feeling better,
much better.
Don't you, Francie?
No, I don't!
I don't!
Heat up the coffee
while I fix up.
Right there.
That's better.
Mom?
Yes, Neeley?
Mom, if there was a rule
about something,
that doesn't mean you couldn't
do something else once in a while.
Neeley, you cannot have any of those
pennies to buy an ice cream cone.
They go in the bank, the same as
usual. Bring them in here, Neeley.
Half of everything we get
goes into that bank.
That's the way it is and that's
the way it's gotta be, now.
Put 'em in there.
Gosh, I bet we got about
\$100 in that old bank by now.
Nine's more like it.
Mama! Mama, they're cutting the tree!
Oh, that's too bad.
It was kind of pretty there with
birds sitting in it sometimes.
Papa loved that tree.
Quit mooning over it. It got
in the way of the washing.
A tree ain't gonna put

no pennies in the bank.
It's Mr. Barker.
Get out the good cup and
saucer and give it a wipe.
And, Francie, you can stay in the room,
if you want,
while Mr. Barker's here.
How do you do,
Mr. Barker?
How do you do,
Francie?
Mama is temporarily detained,
but will join you directly.
Hello, Neeley.
Hello.
Why, Francie, you got
manners right out of a book.
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.
Won't you go into the parlor
and have a cup of coffee?
That, I will. And your hospitality
is very kind, Mrs. Nolan.
Well, old man Gentry's
off to jail again.
That's too bad.
But she's keeping up his
insurance just the same.
And here's ours. Ten cents
for me, 10 cents for Mr. Nolan,
a nickel for each
of the children.
And you'll never
regret it, Mrs. Nolan.
A fine funeral for every member
of the family, heaven forbid.
And now your weekly
receipts, Mrs. Nolan.

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 naming no names,
I will say
that it's a family
that the angel of death
has marked on his invitation
list. Heaven forbid.
Henny says his sister's
got one foot in the grave.
Neeley!
It'll mean Potter's Field, most likely.
Thank you, Francie.
Well, that's
what people get.
Wasting good money to give her
dresses instead of insurance.
Dresses that'll last
longer than she will.
All depends on what
folks thinks is important.
Papa says dresses...
That's right,
Mr. Barker.
It all depends on what
folks thinks is important.
And how is Mr. Nolan? Is
he working or not working?
Some tell me one thing, some
another. Of course, I don't listen.
Mr. Nolan, being a
singing waiter, Mr. Barker,
and what you might
call an artist,
his work don't come steady
like other people's.
But I'm sure you'll remember
when you talk to folks
that the Nolans have always
paid their insurance on the dot.
You surely don't
think I go around

spreading gossip about
my clients, Mrs. Nolan.
Sure not. And how's
my mother, Mr. Barker?
In the prime, Mrs.
Nolan. Fine as can be.
And she says to tell
you she'll be over...
Over tonight,
same as usual.
And I trust you're pleased
with the news about your sister.
Just which news do you mean, Mr. Barker?
Well, now, she must be saving
it to surprise you with tonight
when the family's
all here together.
I'd take it kindly if
you told me what you mean.
Well, I trot around, same as
usual, to collect her weekly dime
and what do you
think happens?
Well, sir, she gives me two dimes.
Yes, sir,
she's done it again.
She's got herself
a brand-new husband.
Oh, no!
Well, now, I suppose you mean
about her still being married.
I don't mind saying I had
the same thought myself.
But I'm sure
it must be all right.
She must have made
some arrangement.
I'm quite sure she did,
Mr. Barker.
Does she call
this one Bill, too?
You children run along now
and do the marketing.
Go on. Take some money from the cup

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.
Ask for round steak,
chopped, 10 cents' worth.
And don't let him give
it to you off the plate.
Take an onion, Neeley!
And ask him to chop it in.
And then just at the last, ask
for a piece of suet to fry it with.
But he won't always
do that, Mama.
Tell him
your mama said.
And then go
for the bread.
It's Saturday, Mom.
All right. Ask for a
nice pie, not too crushed.
Now, go on.
But, Mama, we know
Aunt Sissy's been
married before.
Sure. I can remember
two Uncle Bills.
That's nothing for
you to talk about.
Now run along now
and get things done.
You got no right, Mr. Barker, to
be carrying tales about my sister
as though there were
something wrong.
She may be funny some ways, but
she wouldn't do nothing wrong,
so I'd like it if you didn't
talk to people like it was.
Strike me dead if I'd ever

think of mentioning it to anyone
but you, Mrs. Nolan.

Yeah, sure. I know.

Well, you might as well go on
now and tell me what you do know.

No point in my being the
only one who don't hear it.

Well...

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

No, thank you.

You're sure now?

It wasn't 20 minutes ago I
ground that whole plateful fresh.

No, thank you.

Oh, I forgot.

My mama wants it ground.

You don't tell me.

And she said to
chop that in with it.

She did?

And a piece of suet to
fry it with, Mama said.

Sweet jumping

Christopher!

Olives!

Sweet potatoes!

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

Yeah. She acts like we
were kids or something.

I bet she has a fight
with Aunt Sissy tonight.

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

But Papa says we ought
to make everybody like us.

I guess maybe
ladies shouldn't.

Maybe Aunt Sissy wouldn't
have changed husbands so much
if any of her babies
would've lived.

She's crazy

about babies.
Look who's talking about
babies. A lot you know.
I know as much
as you do.
You don't know nothing.
You think you're so smart.
Boys make me sick!
What do you think
girls make people?
Here she comes!
Come on!
Mister, give us a white bread.
Six loaves!
And a pie,
not too crushed!
This bread's fine.
I wouldn't be surprised
if wasn't more
than three days old.
Is that all, Mom?
Can we go now?
Yes, you're free.
Where's the fire?
There's a scout for
the Brooklyns around.
They're looking
for a catcher.
Where are you going?
No place much.
Well, don't go dream
walking crossing the street.
"Browning."
"B-U... Burton."
Anatomy of Melancholy.
Burton's
Anatomy of Melancholy.
Burton's
Anatomy of Melancholy?
Are you sure
you want this?
Yes, ma'am.
Don't you think it's a
trifle over your head?

Yes, ma'am.

Well, then,

why did you select it?

Well, I've read all the
authors beginning with "A"
and all the "B's" down
to Burton. It's next.

You mean you're trying to read your
way straight through the library?

Yes, ma'am.

But a book like this,
you'll only be confused.

Please. I wanna read
clear through the alphabet.

I want to know
everything in the world.

Well...

All right. Only do
something for me, will you?

Take another book,
too. Here.

When Knighthood Was in
Flower, just for fun.

It's Saturday. I'll have a
headache thinking about you
wrestling with The Anatomy
of Melancholy all weekend.

Will you?

Yes, ma'am.

A little more to the left,
Mr. Crackenbox!

You think I want Mrs.
Whittely's baby clothes?

It's your wash,
your baby.

Don't forget to fix
mine, Mr. Crackenbox!

Maybe you'd like to come up
here and fix it yourselves
and that's just what you'll
be doing if you don't shut up!

Mr. Crackenbox, it still sags!

Now, Mr. Crackenbox, get it just a
little bit higher, if you don't mind.

...her wheelbarrow
Through streets broad
and narrow
Crying cockles and mussels,
alive, alive-0
I won, I won!
Well, now, I wouldn't be too
sure about that if I was you.
But I did! I got it open before
you finished and that's the rules.
But I came up one flight two steps
at a time before I remembered.
Don't that make
a difference?
No, sir.
The rules...
And in a manner of speaking,
you never did stop me at all
because my heart kept
right on singing.
Papa, you're joking.
Well, I guess
I'll let you get away
with winning this time,
prima donna.
And where's your beautiful
mama? Finishing the hall.
She must be on the top floor
or she'd have heard you.
Well, in that case, why
ain't you getting busy?
Why ain't you
laying out my clothes?
Papa,
you always make fun.
You know you haven't
any more clothes.
Haven't any
more clothes?
What's this?
A tie.
And this? And this?
A dickey. An apron.
Them's clothes, ain't they? And you'd

better be getting that apron ironed, too.

Papa, you got a job
for tonight?

You see the palm
of that hand?

That's right where
I got the world tonight.

Where's the job, Papa?
Klommer's.

A big wedding party.

And you know something, prima
donna? There'll be plenty of tips.

Singing or waiting?

Both.

Maybe tonight will be it.

Maybe tonight he'll be
there, the impresario.

And he'll hear you sing, and
he'll put you on the stage.

And why not?

Ain't I the Brooklyn Thrush?

Papa!

And now you'd better be
getting my apron ironed.
Have it in a jiffy, Papa.

The coffee's on.

That's my prima donna.

Early one morning

I heard a maiden singing

Oh, Papa, I can't sing.

Come on, now. You're
holding up the singing.

Oh, don't deceive me

Oh, never leave me

And better singing

I never did hear.

I love to iron

for you, Papa.

You know something,

a day like this

is just like somebody

gave you a present.

Everything just right.

I wonder what people did

before they invented coffee.
This sure could be
a fine world if...
Hey, you know something,
prima donna?
You're going to make somebody
a mighty fine wife someday.
Papa!
And very pretty, too. That is,
if your nose doesn't grow crooked.
Could it really?
Honest?
No. It's the prettiest
nose in all Brooklyn.
Papa, it isn't.
Who says it isn't?
You just tell me who said it
and I'll take care of him.
Papa, you're crazy. And
you know something else?
You're not gonna be ironing like
this when that impresario comes along.
Things are gonna be different
around here. You wait and see.
Yes, Papa.
Hey.
What's the wish
you wish the most
when our ship
comes sailing in?
Well, it already
came true.
What is it?
Come on and tell me.
Well, I wished that when
you came home today
you wouldn't be sick.
Who told you to
call it "sick," baby?
You shouldn't waste your
wishes on things like that.
You should be saving them
for a silk dress or something.
Haven't you got a better wish than that?

Well...

Come on.

Well, I hope Mama won't be too mad with Aunt Sissy.

What about Aunt Sissy?

She's gone and got herself another husband again.

No!

No! Gee, if there isn't a woman for you.

Hey. What did your mama say?

Well, she didn't like it.

Yeah.

I can imagine that.

Couldn't you sort of say something to her, not to be too mad to Aunt Sissy?

That I could, prima donna, and that I will.

Thank you, Papa.

Now, haven't you got just one little wish for yourself?

Just one wish just for you?

Well, did you see it, Papa? What?

Out the window, our tree, they've killed it!

Well, will you look at that, now?

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

Now, wait a minute.

They didn't kill it.

Why, they couldn't kill that tree. Honest?

Why, sure, baby.

Don't tell me that tree's gonna lay down and die that easy.

Look at that tree. See where it's coming from?

Right up

out of the cement.
Didn't nobody plant it. It didn't
ask the cement could it grow.
It just couldn't help
growing so much,
it pushed that old cement
right out of the way.
But when you're busting with something
like that, can't anybody help it.
Like, like that little old
bird up there. Listen to him.
He didn't ask anybody
could he sing.
And he certainly
didn't take any lessons.
He's so full of singing it's
just got to bust out someplace.
Why, they could cut that old
tree right down to the ground
and a root would push up
someplace else in the cement.
You wait till spring,
prima donna, and you'll see.
Well, this ain't winning
the family bread, huh?
Come on. Ain't you got one nice,
little wish just for yourself?
No, Papa. I just...
Just what?
I just love you
so much, Papa!
Well, what do you know?
Listen.
If I make a lot of tips tonight,
you know what I'm gonna do?
What, Papa?
I'm gonna put two bucks on the nose
of a horse I know is running Monday.
And I'll win 10. Then I'll
put it on another horse.
If I use my head
and I'm lucky,
I'll run it up
to 500 bucks.

Then you know what I'm
gonna do? What, Papa?
I'm gonna
take you on a trip,
just you and me
on a regular train.
Maybe we'll go down south
and see the cotton.
You know, down where
them cotton blossoms blow.
Way down
upon the Swanee River
Far, far away
You're a nice girl, baby.
Come on! We'll go up and tell
your mama the news about my job!
Anybody seen
Johnny Nolan's wife?
Johnny, you all right?
And why not?
Ain't I married to
the most beautiful lady
in all Williamsburg,
Brooklyn?
Well, you're shouting
it so loud
they'll hear you
over to Manhattan.
Don't you get fresh with
me tonight, Mrs. Nolan.
Happens I'm working Klommer's
big wedding party.
I thought you looked
kinda extra dressy.
I guess you won't get home
until the sun comes up.
The later, the better.
The more tips,
the more fine silk stockings
for my wife's pretty legs.
Silk stockings is
just what I need!
Now, just a minute,
Mrs. Nolan.

Ain't you gonna give me
a kiss for luck?
The whole house
is looking.
Sure. I know they're
looking, but who cares?
This is the finest job
I had in months.
Maybe I'll get
more from tonight.
You better get on with it.
Good jobs don't wait.
But the job's no good
without you. Kiss me.
Well, you still got a way
with you, Johnny Nolan.
Now, go on!
Get out of here!
Before you know it,
the folks at that wedding
will be an old,
married couple.
Before you know it,
I won't go at all.
Theirs ain't the only
marriage that counts.
Take your hat
and get out of here
before someone else
cops that job!
Our Francie was
telling me that
Sissy's gone
and done it again.
Well, maybe
he's a nice fella.
Don't be too hard
on her, huh?
They was all nice fellas.
Beat it, now, Johnny.
That's just a sample, madam.
If you like my stock,
drop me a card
and I'll be back again.

Good evening.

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

It's made out of silk.

Silk?

Don't you tell me that.

This dress is made out of
flower petals and birds' wings
and a little old
piece of cloud.

Anybody can tell that.

Good evening,

Mr. Spencer.

Working tonight, Johnny?

Yeah. Big wedding party.

Good evening,

Miss Lizzie, Miss Maggie.

You're looking fine today,

Mr. Nolan. Indeed, you are.

Thank you, ladies.

Here comes the bride

Here...

- Good evening, young ladies.

- Good evening.

Allow me, princess.

Blackberries!

I got blackberries!

Hi, Mr. Ching.

Hello.

What did Mama say about Aunt

Sissy? Now don't worry about it.

Everything's

gonna be all right.

Your Aunt Sissy's

a fine woman, Francie.

Look at them things!

There's no use talking. Someday

I'm gonna buy you them skates.

Mama says not to be

too late, Papa.

Look.

God invented time.

And when he invents something,

there's always plenty of it.
There's your car, Papa.
Boy!
Look at them knives!
Mama says
time is money.
I guess he wasn't worrying
much about money right then.
There's your car, Papa.
Well, I might
as well catch it.
Ice! Any ice today?
Supper's ready.
Hey. Am I hungry!
And when weren't you hungry? Mama?
Yes, Francie?
What does white mean?
Just white, I guess. What do
you mean what does it mean?
Neeley, sit down
at your place.
Why do girls always wear it
when they're married
and when they're confirmed
and when they graduate?
Why does it always
have to be white?
Just one of those things somebody
started. Lots of things like that.
Will I have a white
dress when I graduate?
We'll see. Neeley will probably
have to have shoes by that time.
But, Mama. Well, talk to him about it.
If you can get him to quit coming
through the soles of his shoes.
It's just because he's a boy.
All right, Mama.
I will gladly do without so my little
brother can be happy with new shoes.
Little brother, my eye!
That'll do! Francie,
you read too much.
Well, hey, everybody.

Hi, Aunt Sissy!
What did you bring us?
I brung myself, chickabiddies.
Ain't that enough?
And a couple of magazines
from the dentist's.
What does he need
'em for or me, either.
I can't read like my
educated little niece here.
Hello, Katie,
my darling.
Good evening, Sissy.
Well, you look
fine, Katie.
Yeah, I look fine.
Who spilled the beans?
I forgot. It was old Barker's day here.
Where's Johnny? I was kinda
counting on him to be in my corner.
Sure. You and Johnny.
Look, Katie,
I didn't tell you
because I wanted to
bring Bill around.
But I couldn't. He's home
sleeping. He's a milkman, see?
Listen. You're gonna wish
me happiness, ain't you?
Naturally, I'm going to wish
you happiness this time, too.
Golly, why can't you skip to
the part where you forgive me?
You're going to
before you're through.
You know I'll get
around to you in the end.
Why can't you just be human
now and get it over with?
There ain't no one like you to get
around a person in the whole world,
unless it's Johnny.
You're in time for pie.
Go on now and sit down!

That's more like it.
That's my kid sister talking.
Just coffee for me. I gotta get
home soon and fix breakfast for Bill.
Breakfast? At night?
Yeah. Ain't it a riot?
We sleep all day long 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.
No, you sure don't.
Easy on the whip, kid. Wait till
you meet my Bill. You and him will...
Wouldn't you marry nobody if
they wasn't named Bill, Aunt Sis?
She might not remember
them if they wasn't.
Bill's got some other name.
Steve, I think it is.
But I always liked Bill.
A good man's name with
no stuck-up about it.
You'll be crazy about him, Katie. Yeah?
But the question is how
will him and you get along?
It's wrong, Sissy.
I mean, the others...
The others was wrong.
What's right about
keeping on with a guy
when you don't love
each other anymore?
But it ain't as easy as that.
I think Aunt Sissy's right
about when love is dead.
Now, look
what you started.
It ain't nothing to talk
about in front of them.
Every time you come here,
you fill their heads with...
Go on downstairs

for a while, kids.
Your mama's got a spanking up her sleeve
and she ain't gonna feel
right until somebody gets it.
Might as well
get it over with.
You don't wanna frown
like that, snuggle pup.
The fellas don't go
for that at all.
All right, kid. Let's
have it, the works.
I'm a disgrace. You don't know
what you're gonna do with me.
You can hardly
face the neighbors
with what they
must be saying.
I'm old enough
to know better.
Go on. Get it all
off your chest,
then we can make up
and forget about it.
That's right. Talk your way out
of it. You probably will, too.
What'd Mama have to say?
You know Mama.
She don't say much.
Sure. I know Mama.
"Sissy is bad only where
the men are concerned,
"but she's good
in her heart."
But that ain't it, Sissy.
People got a right to talk.
And the kids are bound to hear,
and it ain't right for them.
And you can get in trouble. You
ain't real sure what happened,
and there's laws about...
Katie, so help me,
this time it's for keeps.
I ain't even gonna

look at another guy.
And as for the last one,
he can't be alive
or I would have
heard from him.
I've been pretty good.
Seven years is a long time to
wait around not being married.
They said all you had to wait
was seven years and I waited.
For the life of me,
I don't know what you're
trying to talk yourself into,
but I got a feeling
it ain't right.
All I know is
it can't be wrong,
or I wouldn't feel
like I do about it.
I'm dumb, sure,
but I know this much,
if I feel bad about
something, it's wrong.
If I feel good,
it's right.
You wouldn'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.
Yeah, 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 in.
Maybe you got it better
not sticking to one guy.
I wish, sometimes,
I wasn't so crazy over him.
Hey, Katie.
I won't have the kids
taking after him, either.

Him and those dreamy ways of
his I used to think were so fine.
Not if I gotta cut it
right out of their hearts!
Katie,
what are you saying?
I don't know.
Yes, you do.
You're saying plenty.
What's happened
between you and Johnny?
I don't know
what I'm saying.
I don't know
what's come over me.
Look, hon,
it's time we found out.
Sure we got something to
talk about now. I don't wanna.
Uh-uh. You're the kid
sister. You listen now.
You was awful
crazy about Johnny.
Don't tell me.
I seen you.
It was like every woman
wants to be with a guy.
Yeah.
All right,
maybe Johnny didn't turn
out just like you figured.
Sure, he drinks and all, and you're the
one who's had to make most of the living,
but everybody's
got something.
And you wasn't
crazy about Johnny
because he was
gonna be a banker.
It was on
account of...
Well, on account of
how he laughed
and how you felt walking down

the street holding on to him
and having other
women look at you.
And the way he could
talk about things
and the way he had of
saying hello to everybody
like he was giving
away something.
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,
kinda. He always was.
But he ain't changed.
If there's been any
changing, hon, maybe it's you.
You still got all you
was crazy over, ain't you?
Yeah.
Then thank your lucky stars
for what you got, Katie Nolan,
and take the rest
along with it!
And you got a lot, you can take it
from me. Don't think you haven't.
I might have known, starting
out to take you apart,
I'd wind up with you
making me over.
Nice going.
Don't stir yourself, pal.
Thank you.
Better go inside,
Alfred.
How'd you come out,
Aunt Sis?
No decision. It was a draw. Your
mom's bark is worse than her bite.
Look, tell me something.
When Papa's home, I bet...
I bet him and Mama

laugh aplenty, don't they?
You know,
like they always did?
Sure. Pop can make anybody
laugh when he wants to,
except when he's drunk.
"Sick," Neeley,
Mama said to call it!
Okay. "Sick," then.
Look, hon. Tell you
what you can do for me.
Do all the laughing you can.
You know,
keeps everybody healthy.
Okay.
Laughter is the singing
of the angels.
You're a funny kid, head
full of all them things,
kinda like your pop.
She tells lies
like Pop, too.
He does not tell lies!
Well, I don't know
what you call 'em.
Time out!
I've had enough battling to last me
for today. Where did you get the skates?
They aren't ours. Papa said
he'd get us some, though.
He didn't mean it.
He just said that.
He did, too, mean it,
Neeley Nolan, and...
Easy now!
Kinda like your pop,
don't you, hon?
He does mean it, doesn't he, Aunt Sissy?
Sure, he means it. He
means it, every word.
But, well, you know,
sometimes things happen.
But it kinda
ain't his fault. He...

I tell you what.
Let's make out like Johnny gave you them
skates like he said and they're yours.
Ain't gonna hurt nobody.
Aunt Sissy!
No sense in them things standin'
around and nobody usin' them.
Come on.
Here we go. Easy now.
Isn't that fun? Huh?
Can I put them on next,
Aunt Sissy?
Sure, you can.
Mama! Mama! Mama!
Hey! You come back
here with my skates!
She's not gonna hurt 'em.
Bring back
my daughter's skates!
You was the one that
put them kids up to it!
Easy now! Nobody's hurt.
We only borrowed them.
She's not going
off with them, Effie!
Don't you dare take up
with that woman like that!
You poor little guy. Do you
put up with that all the time?
Hey, Officer!
Come on over here!
Now this woman here,
she tried to...
Break it up.
Take it easy.
I'm sure glad you come along, handsome.
You look like you could whip
a bunch of women into line.
Well, that's fine, but now
I suppose somebody tells me
what all the
excitement's about.
She tried to steal
my little girl's skates!

She tried to nab her.
We only borrowed them
for just a minute. Honest.
That's right. There
wasn't nobody using them.
And a little fun and frolic on
a Saturday never hurt nobody.
Bet you know all about that, don't ya?
If you think you're gonna get out of it
making eyes at the law...
I don't know what
the world's coming to!
Get back a little bit,
buddy, huh?
This lady
is my sister.
She didn't mean any harm,
I'm quite sure she didn't.
Well, as far as I can see,
there's been no harm done.
Now, just break it up. Run
along. Go to your homes.
Go on. You, too. Go
on, buddy. Run along.
Now, suppose I see
you women to your home?
Thanks, handsome.
My sister's always trying
to be funny, Officer.
She don't mean
nothin' by it.
I'd like you to know
this is the first time
that any of my family ever got
into any trouble on the street.
And I'll see to it
that it don't happen again.
I guess I know a lady
when I see one, ma'am.
I'm glad I've been of
service to you, ma'am.
He sure took a shine
to you, Katie.
Go on.

Who'd look at me?
He would.
Funny. Sometimes you kinda
forget you are a woman.
He wasn't gonna
arrest us, Mama.
Aunt Sissy
talked him out of it.
And we got to skate on them
anyway, didn't we, Aunt Sissy?
You go inside and tell Sheila
and her mama you're sorry.
Do I have to, Mama?
I don't like to say to you
what I'm going to, Sissy.
Golly, are we gonna
start that again?
You're the only
sister I got.
I don't care what people
say about you for myself,
but I got the kids
to worry about,
and if I don't worry about
them, nobody else will.
Well, you're bad
for them, Sissy.
What are you
trying to say, kid?
I don't want you to
come around here no more.
My mind's made up,
so don't try to change it
with any of that
soft talk of yours.
Why, I won't, Katie,
not if you mean it.
But let's keep on
talking about you.
Soft's one thing,
but hard's another.
All right, it ain't nice to be hard.
But my kids
is gonna be somebody

if I gotta turn into
granite rock to make 'em!
I wish you hadn't
said that, kid.
Bye, Katie.
"And Nahor lived nine and
20 years and begat Terah.
"And Nahor lived after
he begat Terah 119 years."
Boy. That's older
than Grandma, ain't it?
"And begat sons
and daughters."
Okay. That's the end
of the page. "Troilus.
"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..."
That ain't even English!
It is, too!
Shakespeare wrote the
best English of anybody!
All right, then you tell me
what it means, you're so smart.
I didn't say I know what
it means. I said I liked it.
That'll do.
Okay, but I bet you don't
know what it means, either.
Maybe not, but I do know
it's good for you.
"Beshrew the witch!
With venomous..."
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 what it...
Mama,
I can't read if he...

Just wasting time
every night reading stuff
nobody knows
what it's all about.
Now, listen. Your Aunt
Sissy brought that Bible
all the way from
Sheepshead Bay,
and your papa blew in all his
tips one time on that Shakespeare
'cause Grandma said
they was the greatest book
and you should read from 'em every
night, so ya ain't gonna waste them.
I don't know. Sometimes it
does seem kind of foolish,
but it might
get you somewhere.
Might even get you a job
someday, who can tell?
This reading will not
stop. I say this thing.
To this new land, your grandfather
and I came very long ago now
because we heard that here
is something very good.
Hard we worked, very hard, but
we could not find this thing.
For a long time, I do not
understand, and then I know.
When I am old, I know.
In that old country,
a child can rise no higher
than his father's state.
But here,
in this place,
each one is free to go as far
as he's good to make of himself.
This way, the child can
be better than the parent
and this is the true way
things grow better.
And this has to do
something with the learning,

which is here
free to all people.
I, who am old,
miss this thing.
My children
miss this thing.
But my children's children
shall not miss it.
This reading
will not stop.
And, you, Katie.
It is not only for the job
that this is good,
but for the true things
inside of us.
You don't 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.
"Beshrew the witch! With
venomous wights she stays
"As tediously as hell, but
flies the grasps of love"
In Dublin's fair city
Where the girls are so pretty
I first set my eyes
on sweet Molly Malone
As she wheeled
her wheelbarrow
Through streets
broad and narrow
Crying cockles and mussels,
alive, alive-0
Alive, alive-0
Alive, alive-0
Crying cockles and mussels,
alive, alive-0
It's all right, Mama.
I don't think he's sick.
Alive, alive-0

Alive, alive-O
Papa!
Well, what do you know?
If it ain't my beauty.
Hey. What are you doing up
this time of night?
I just made up my mind
to wait up for you.
I guess I ain't used
to the hours anymore.
No. Leave it.
It's nice.
Go on.
Francie, coffee.
Is it something
to eat, Papa?
And what else, with me
coming from a grand banquet?
I got some
French rolls,
a whole half a broiled lobster
from the shores of Maryland,
fried oysters,
caviar from far-off,
sunny Russia,
and cheese from the mountain
fastnesses of la belle France.
What do you know about the
mountain fastnesses of France?
Is it better coming
from there, Papa?
Well, it's supposed
to be mighty good,
but coming home like this,
I know that's good.
Well, let's eat it. No reason we
shouldn't have a party of our own.
I'm hungry.
Is that all you got to say
to your papa?
Hello, Pop.
His stomach's like the
Irish Sea, no bottom to it.
Mama,

your wedding comb!
Well, ain't this
a kind of weddin' party?
You bet it is.
I wish I could have
swiped some champagne.
Oh, no, I don't.
Coffee's better.
But, look who's
telling me
I don't know about them
mountain fastnesses of France.
That. Yeah, that.
Imagine you forgetting.
Well, I didn't forget, not
exactly. It was a long time ago.
What do you think of
a mama that forgets
where she went
on her honeymoon?
Did you really
go there, Mama?
Of course not.
Your papa's joking.
Sure we did,
or just the same as.
We spent our honeymoon in a
school. It was as big as a palace.
We just worked there nights,
the two of us, cleaning.
It was right here in
Brooklyn, before you was born.
That ain't what you
told me then.
You mean to say when we was
having our supper there alone
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 say
we really wasn't there?

You mean you forgot that sunny
France was where we liked the best?
And all the laughing
we used to do there?
You're gonna sit right down and
tell me we really wasn't there?
Well, I guess we was kind of at
that. And you're gonna tell me
I don't know about them
mountain fastnesses of France.

Katie Nolan,
I'm ashamed of you!
Wasn't there nobody in
school but you, Papa?

No, sir.
We had the whole place
to ourselves. Your papa
better quit talking,
or he'll have you believing
you was in France, too.

No, Papa.
Talk some more!
What's this
here stuff?
Caviar. That comes
all the way from Russia.
Them's fish eggs.

Fish eggs!
Yeah. I never could get it
why they like it, myself,
except that it's hard
to get and costs a lot.
And that makes
it good, Papa?
What about the Russians?
It ain't hard for them
to get. Do they like it?
Well, can you tie that? Now,
ain't we got the smartest kids?
Papa, talk some more.

Tell us all about the party
and don't
leave out anything!
That can wait.

Here. How's that?
\$3. Them's good wages.
And good tips, too.
Papa, start! Was there
music and did they dance?
Your mother's got
no time for all that.
You could tell me.
You used to.
Well, it was
kind of nice.
Klommer's, their best room, and
all fixed up with white flowers.
There was flowers
on the table,
flowers on the chandelier
and even on the floor.
Here was a great
big horseshoe table
with lots of
people all around.
And right in front,
a great big wedding cake!
It must've been
three feet tall.
Why didn't you
bring home some of that?
Was the bride pretty?
Well, she was maybe
not so young, but...
Sure! She was beautiful
in a blue dress and all.
And she had diamonds on
her fingers and in her ears!
And she glittered sort of.
And when she walked,
her dress swished kinda.
And the champagne
just flowed like water.
The smell of it got all
mixed up with the flowers
and the powder
the ladies wore,
and it made a wonderful,

new perfume
that made you feel good
just to smell it.
Did you sing
for them, Papa?
I was coming to that.
I got three encores
for My Wild Irish Rose,
and everybody
clapped and clapped.
Then I sang Irish Eyes
are Smiling four times!
It must have been
awful nice!
It was all right.
And when it come time
for them to cut the cake,
the band played
Kiss Me Again,
she put her arms around him,
and, boy, did he look scared!
What was he scared of, Papa?
Huh?
You kids ask too many
questions. You heard the story.
Now go on and go to bed.

It must be 3:

I got a bellyache.
Well, lay on
your right side.
Good night, Mom.
Good night, Neeley.
Good night, Francie.
Francie's kinda
mad at me because...
Well, Sissy made a scene
on the street today
and I asked her
to stay away.
Papa, was there
an impresario there?
No, not tonight,
prima donna.

But you got no call
to be mad at your mama.
She's always got a good
reason for what she does.
Good night, Mama.
Good night, Francie.
Johnny, tell me what else
happened at the party.
Well, it was nice,
just like I told you.
Awful nice.
Johnny, do you think...
I mean,
have I changed a lot?
Changed?
Why, she couldn't hold a
candle to you. She ain't so hot.
I just said that for the kids. No, sir.
No. That's not
what I mean.
What I mean is am I
getting hard, you know?
Now, where did you grab
onto an idea like that? Hard?
I don't know.
I don't want to be,
but, well, there's the kids and all,
and I wanna do
what's right for them,
and maybe sometimes I...
Will you stop
talking like that?
Why, you're prettier
than you ever was!
I almost told that to the whole
bunch down at the party tonight.
I almost said,
"You oughta see my bride
"that's waiting home
for me tonight."
And you was waiting, Katie.
That was nice, awful nice.
It was just
like it used to be.

You told about the party
awful nice tonight, Johnny.
I should have waited up
more often, I guess.
It ain't your fault,
working hard like you do.
You know something?
I wish I could have got you the
rest of that set when we was married.
The guy said it came
all the way from Spain.
What else was in
that set, Johnny?
You ain't told me
for a long time.
Two little side combs
and a locket on a chain.
And a bracelet,
you said?
There's no use talking.
Someday I'm gonna
look that guy up
and get you
the rest of that set.
That's nice,
Johnny, but I...
There's no "buts"
about it. I mean it.
Things are gonna be
different around here.
You ain't gonna be workin'
hard like you are now.
I don't mind the work,
Johnny.
No, sir. I ain't gonna stand for it!
Look at them
pretty hands.
They ain't got no business
being in the water all the time.
I'm gonna change a lot
of things around here.
I'm gonna cut out
the drinking, too.
And just to prove it to ya,

here's my tip money.
No, keep your tips, Johnny. Take
all a man's money, it ain't right!
And I'm gonna keep at 'em
down at the union headquarters
to make 'em
get me some jobs.
Yes, sir. Tonight's the
beginning of something new!
You believe me,
don't you, Katie?
Yeah, Johnny.
Yeah, sure, I do!
I'll be singing all over
Brooklyn and maybe Manhattan, too!
"Have you heard Johnny
Nolan sing?" They'll say.
And then
maybe someday...
Johnny, stop it!
Stop it! Stop talking!
We ain't got a chance.
Who are we
trying to kid?
Yeah.
Sure, you're right.
Who am I trying to kid?
I didn't go to
hurt you, Johnny,
but it's the truth,
and I can't change it.
Yeah.
And I can tell you
something else.
All that baloney about
them encores tonight,
that was just because they was
a little drunk and feeling good.
I wasn't so much.
That's right. I'll never
be able to change it.
Sure, you're right.
Who am I trying to kid?
Neeley Nolan,

you stop that!
I don't wanna wear
no old tie. It's...
Mama said!
Hey, fellas, look at me!
I'm Johnny Nolan!
Hey! Look at me!
All right! Now break it up! Break it up!
Run along! Run along!
All of you! Go on.
He's my pop.
All right now, lad.
Where do you live, huh?
I'll take him home!
He's my father!
Wait a minute, honey.
I expect you'd better be running
along to school, hadn't you?
I'll look
after him for you.
Now, don't you worry.
He ain't in any trouble.
I'll take good care of him.
Here, is this the house?
No, the next one,
second floor, back.
And if you talk to him,
he's always all right.
Sure, sure. I know. Now, don't
you fret. You just run along, huh?
All right, lad.
Come on. We'll make it.
Alive, alive-0
Alive, alive-0
Johnny.
I didn't expect to find you here,
ma'am. Is there anything I can do?
He's my husband.
I can take care of him.
It's all right, Johnny. I'll
get you a nice cup of coffee.
A nice cup of coffee.
Well, I just wanted
to say, ma'am,

that the gentleman
wasn't making no trouble.
He just needed
a little help.
Here.
Drink it, Johnny.
Isn't there anything
that I can do?
If you wasn't new on
the beat, Mr. McShane,
you'd know that Johnny
never makes any trouble
and you'd know that the whole Nolan
family don't need anybody's help.
I'd thank you, Mr. McShane, if
you'd mind your own business.
Sure, Mrs. Nolan.
"Beauty is truth, truth
beauty, that is all
"Ye know on earth,
and all ye need to know"
Now, class.
"Beauty is truth,
truth beauty, that is all
"Ye know on earth,
and all ye need to know"
Now who knows
the name of the meter?
Frances Nolan?
Yes, but...
You can't know "but."
I only meant to say,
I was thinking
about the words,
what they mean,
and I wondered...
You don't have to know the
words, Frances, just the meter.
But 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, if somebody

spent all his time
trying to be like that,
well, it's hard to put, but no
matter what else he did, then...
Then what, Frances?
Then it would be all right,
wouldn't it?
I'm afraid I don't understand
a thing you're saying, Frances,
and we're late now
with our arithmetic.
Class will get
their arithmetic books.
Pop, why don't the Katzenjammer
Kids talk plain English?
Supposed to make
it funny, I guess.
Francie, you been staring out
that window over a half an hour.
Can't you make up your
mind to do something?
What shall I do?
You used to like to do
your homework Sundays.
I don't know. I don't like
school as much as I used to.
Now you're
getting some sense.
School's the same
this year as it was last.
Mama.
Do you know that big market
on Clancy Street down the hill?
We can't trade there,
if that's what you mean.
That neighborhood's
expensive.
Well, I meant...
I mean,
well, the other day, I
passed that way on my way home
and, well, Mom,
you know what's just a couple
of blocks away from that market?

Another market, I guess.
And am I supposed to guess
what's two blocks away from there?
Francie, why don't
you say what you mean?
I didn't mean anything,
I guess.
Neeley, sometimes I think you
make these holes on purpose.
Papa.
Yes, baby?
You know what I read
in a magazine once?
What was it, Francie?
Well, it said that
walking was a good thing.
It said people would
look and feel a lot better
if they did more of it.
Walking puts rose petals
in your cheeks, it said.
Then I oughta be a raving
beauty with all them stairs.
That isn't what it meant. It
meant, well, like on a Sunday,
people would feel a lot better if they
got out and took a walk or something,
instead of just
sitting around.
Francie, I want you to stop talking
around about things like that.
It ain't right. If you got something
to say, just say it right out, plain.
I wasn't going
to say anything.
I was just talking
about walking.
Well, there's been so much talking
about walking, I think I'll take one.
You wanna go along,
prima donna?
Yes, Papa. Sure, Papa.
Must be pretty special,
this place you walk to

that's two blocks away
from the market.
This way, Papa.
Is this it?
Yes, Papa.
The school?
I don't understand.
It must be just as nice
inside, don't you think?
The teachers
and all and...
What are you
driving at, baby?
Bend down, Papa.
I wish I could go
to that school, Papa.
Well,
I don't know, baby.
It would be awful nice,
but they got rules.
You gotta go to the
school where you live.
I know.
I didn't really...
Well, now.
Now, wait a minute.
Maybe there's a way. It's
a free country, ain't it?
School days,
school days
Hey! Maybe we could
move near here. When?
Well, now, whoa, whoa.
Sometime soon.
As soon as our ship comes
in, prima donna. You'll see.
Only by that time,
I'll...
You wanna go there awful
bad, don't you, baby?
Then we're gonna
find a way.
Honest?
Well, now, I gotta

turn this over a little.
Let's do some more walking.
Maybe it's good for thinking, too.
School days,
school days
Hey, that ain't
a bad little house.
How'd you like
to live there?
It's got a nice
little porch.
I don't like
yellow houses.
With another
coat of paint?
Papa. That's it.
Yes, sir. That's it.
If we only could.
Well, why can't we?
Our luck's
bound to change,
and the first thing we'll do
is buy this little house when...
Someday.
Look. Come here.
As long as we're gonna
buy that house someday,
why don't we maybe
borrow it for now,
like we'll make
out it's ours.
Then your address would be 98
Hibbard Avenue, starting right now.
Then you see, they gotta
transfer you from your old school.
How do you mean, Papa?
Yes, sir, that's it.
We could say you come here
to live with your aunt,
your rich, old aunt.
She's lonesome and she's
gonna leave you all her money.
Papa, could we really?
Sure, we could.

It's nobody's business.
And sometimes I forget
to water the geraniums,
and you oughta hear
Auntie scold me.
But you gotta put up with her
crotchets. After all, you're her heir.
That little room up there.
That could be mine, couldn't it?
Uh...
Look, prima donna.
After all, you know,
this ain't exactly
according to the rules.
You mean it's wrong?
No, sir. Not by a jugful it ain't wrong.
Look, the house is here, we're
here and the school's here.
Now, we wasn't all thrown
together for no reason.
But we gotta keep
it kind of a secret.
You know,
you can't tell nobody
and you gotta be extra
good to make up for it.
I will.
Look. There goes
Auntie now, I think.
It looks like
you got an uncle, too.
Now, I'm gonna show you a way to your new
school through a beautiful, little park
and I know
right where it is.
And you can see the
seasons change when you go.
Bend down, Papa.
"My cup runneth over."
It's dishonest,
that's what it is.
You're setting the child
an awful bad example.
Papa says if it

doesn't hurt anybody,
it's not dishonest
in your heart.
You two
and your fancy words.
How do you spell
"transfer," Francie?
T- R-A-N-S-F-E-R.
I'd rather be shot
than do this arithmetic.
It'll come to you, Sonny.
And another thing,
we kept Francie out a year so she
and Neeley could be in the same class,
and she could
look after him.
And here, just the year when they're
getting ready to graduate, you go and...
I tell you,
it's against the law,
and you're making
her live a lie
and I won't
have you doin' it!
I'm gonna do this
for her, Katie.
Maybe it's my fault or not that
there ain't much I can give her.
But this is one thing
she's gonna have.
It'll make an awful long
walk for your mornings.
I don't mind
getting up early.
And it'll be much harder on your shoes
and you won't have dresses
like the other children.
I promise to wash down my
dress every single night.
How do you spell
"appreciate," Francie?
A- P-P...
Wait a minute.
R- E-C-I-A-T-E.

If the principal swallows that
story, and I don't think he will,
I'll see what I can do about making
over that checked dress of mine for you.
Why not? My school's
overcrowded as it is.
This is Frances Nolan, class.
I'm sure you'll all make
her welcome to our school.
Now, that will be
your desk, Frances.
Run along, Sonny. I
ain't gonna spill a penny.
Well, I guess
you got everything.
Neeley, our new fire escape
leads clear up onto the roof!
Whoever lives on the top floor
has got dibs on the roof!
Johnny ain't doing so well,
eh, Mrs. Nolan?
Just moving
near the sun.
Soon as we heard Mrs. Waters was
vacating, we made up our minds.
I've been waiting to
see you, Mrs. Nolan.
There's something I
got to ask you, a favor.
I better show you.
Hey.
Look at this thing!
Oh, boy! Just think, we can have a
lot of fun running up and down that!
We ain't gonna let
anybody but us up there.
It's in here.
Look how high it is!
The late Mr. Waters gave it
to me for a wedding present.
It won't go
down the stairs
and they want \$15 to move it,
lowering it out the window.

Do you mind my leaving it, Mrs. Nolan?

It don't take up

much room,

and someday when I get the
\$15, I'll send back for it.

Why, sure, I don't mind, Mrs. Waters.

Can you play it?

No.

The neither

one of us could.

If it ain't too much trouble, you
could dust it off once in a while,
and keep the kitchen door open a
little so it won't get cold or damp.

I sure will.

Thank you.

I hope it won't be long before
you can send back for it.

Have you got
the curtains?

Yes. They're coming.

Is it...

Is that...

Yeah, we kept a baby in it
about 40 years ago.

Well, I was just wondering,
if you don't need it,
it would make a nice
handy little wash basket
and I'd be glad to give
you a quarter for it.

Why, sure. My Edgar's
kids is even too old.

Excuse me for asking,

Mrs. Nolan,

but it won't really make
a very handy wash basket.

Please don't say nothing.

I ain't told nobody yet.

It ain't always easy

when you're poor,

but it'll be

a blessing to you.

Yeah, sure.

Sure, it will.
But there must be!
I tell you, there ain't!
Well, goodbye,
Mrs. Nolan. Goodbye.
Goodbye, and thank you very much.
Don't forget we're supposed to give
him a beer, or the price of one.
Well, I'm done.
I can't thank you
enough, Charlie.
Always glad to do my
customers a favor, of course.
Well, we are
real grateful.
It ain't as though I was in
the regular moving business.
We'll be taking ice from you,
same as usual, once a week.
Well, goodbye.
Goodbye, Charlie,
and thanks.
He worked
awful hard, Mama.
We moved up to this flat to save money,
and we're not gonna start
by throwing dimes away.
No, sir, there ain't a bathtub
anywhere. I looked all over.
There's the tub,
young man.
Every Wednesday and
Saturday, same as always.
It's Mr. Barker.
Well, it seems like the Nolans
have come up in the world.
Yes, we're so very, very
fond of the sunshine.
In Dublin's fair city
Where the girls
are so pretty...
Run and catch him before
he goes to the old place.
Mr. Nolan happened

to be working
when we found
we could make the move.
Smaller than your old flat, ain't it?
I'm sorry I can't ask
you to sit, Mr. Barker.
I ain't even got
the coffee on yet.
But I got my
insurance money handy.
I suppose you're too busy to listen
to a bit of news about your sister.
She...
She's gonna
have a baby.
Please tell my sister she shouldn't
make herself such a stranger here.
I shall be very happy
to render your message.
Your receipts,
Mrs. Nolan.
Be sure to, now,
Mr. Barker.
Good day to you,
Mr. Nolan.
Well, I'm not one to spoil a
family party. I'll be on my way.
Surprise, Papa.
Welcome to your new home.
Yeah. It is kind of
a surprise, all right.
Did you move up here because
it was cheaper or because I...
We have to save where we
can. Somebody's got to.
I don't mind
the extra stairs.
We can still
see the tree.
Pop, the top-floor
tenants, the roof is theirs,
and I ain't gonna
let anybody up there
except Henny Gaddis,

because...

Hey. Does Pop know?

Flossie Gaddis

died last night.

The poor baby.

It was nice that her mama got

her all them pretty dresses.

Only now the poor thing will

have to lie in Potter's Field.

But she did have

the dresses.

You better show

your papa the piano.

Yeah, you better show me

the piano, prima donna.

The lady that was here left it.

It's got a nice tone.

It's all right.

Hey! Now that we got it, maybe

you can take some lessons!

Nah.

Maxwellton braes are bonnie

Where early fa's the dew

And 'twas there

that Annie Laurie

Gave me her promise true

Which ne'er forgot will be

And for

Bonnie Annie Laurie

I would lay

me doon

and dee

I ain't never heard you sing that before.

It's pretty. It's...

Maxwellton braes are bonnie

Where early fa's the dew

And 'twas there

that Annie Laurie

Gave me her promise true

Which ne'er forgot will be

And for Bonnie Annie

Laurie

I would lay

me doon

and dee

Well, this is the beginning of a
vacation we've all looked forward to,
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.

And so a merry...

Oh, one last thing.

This extra pie

Miss Shilling brought in,

it's little and a bit

crushed, but anybody want it?

My! What well-fed

boys and girls.

All right, class.

Miss McDonough!

Yes, Frances?

I just remembered. I know
a very unfortunate family.

They live in a hovel.

They have two children,
little golden-haired twins,
and they're all starving.

The pie will probably
save their lives.

Then you should take
the pie, by all means.

You can come and get it
when class is dismissed,
which is now. A merry
Christmas to you all!

Here. Merry Christmas!

That was a very fine
Christmas spirit, Frances,
but it seems such a tiny
pie to save so many lives.

It won't seem small
to them, Miss McDonough.

Even a little pie
can look awful big
if you hadn'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...
It isn't true. It's all a
lie! I wanted it for myself!
I'll stay after school. I'll do
anything, but don't send a note home!
I'm not going to punish
you, child, for being hungry,
or having
an imagination.
You know, that's something
very few people have.
It's very precious.
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 tell 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.
Like the one about
my father taking me
to see the cotton fields
down south.
We didn't really go.
I rather imagined
you didn'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.
Now, think about it a little,
and have a merry Christmas.
And enjoy your pie.
Yes, Miss McDonough.
Thank you, Miss McDonough.
For God's sakes!
Where you been?
You were supposed
to meet me...
Where'd you swipe that?
Neeley, I'm going
to be a writer.
All right,
but let's eat the pie.
Come on, we gotta see
about our Christmas tree!
Golly! It's still there, isn't it?
Yeah, it's still here.
He ain't got much time
left to sell it.
Go on. Beat it! You know I ain't
gonna throw them till midnight.
What are you trying to do, block
the sidewalk, keep customers out?
Hey! You don't own the
sidewalk! Free country, ain't it?
How about this one,
madam?
No, that one's too big.
I want a small one.
I got just what you want.
Come over here, lady.
Well, now, that's more like it!
That's the size.
It's awful big to
get throwed at you.
Why does he have to

throw them at us, anyway?
Why can't he just give them
to us if he don't sell them?
If he just gave them away,
everybody would wait.
He'd never sell
any of 'em.
Smells good.
There she goes!
Hey, I stumbled!
Go on! Beat it!
Who's next?
Come on, give me a chance. I'm next.
All right,
here she goes.
Got it, didn't I?
All right, take it!
Go home!
Now, who wants
to try this one?
Who's man enough for
this big one right here?
I can take anything
you got, mister. Let her...
I'm next!
That's my tree!
You're too small.
Go home.
Me and my brother, we
ain't too small together.
Spunky, huh?
All right,
but if one of you drop,
you're not gonna
get the tree.
There she goes!
That a girl!
You got it!
Okay, you got it coming.
Go ahead! Who's next?
Quit worrying about them, Katie.
They'll be home pretty quick.
They ain't old enough
to be out this late.

Johnny should have made them
tell what they was up to.
No telling what's likely to
happen if Francie gets a notion...
They'll be all right.
Well, I guess
we better get on home.
I'll see them tomorrow.
No, don't go!
Hey, Pa! Hey, Ma!
Hey, Ma!
Look!
Holy smoke! Will you look
what they've went and done?
They're trying to make a
Christmas. Help 'em, kid.
We got it thrown at us!
Well, sure,
I was only wondering if you
couldn't use a little help.
Come on, come on,
come on.
How in Jerusalem
did you...
Look, Papa! Look at my
face, Pop! Look at my face!
Nobody around here ever
saw a tree like that!
Look at my face
if you don't believe it.
And I see you got the law
on your side, too.
Merry Christmas, Mr. Nolan! And it
looks like you're gonna have one.
Same to you, Mr. McShane, and thanks.
Merry Christmas,
Mr. Nolan.
Merry Christmas,
Miss Maggie.
Isn't this a wonderful
Christmas, Papa?
It is now,
prima donna.
Imagine us having

a tree like that,
and the nicest kids
in the world, I guess.
Merry Christmas,
everybody! Merry Christmas!
God bless you, Mr. Nolan.
Merry Christmas, Neeley!
Merry Christmas!
He ain't any older
than they are.
Round yon
virgin mother and child
Holy infant
so tender and mild
Merry Christmas.
Sleep in heavenly peace
Silent night, holy...
Here!
Put it up
higher, Bill!
Steve's the name.
That's better, Bill.
Old itchy underwear!
But look at all the fun
you can have scratching!
Thank you, Mama.
You know
you hate them.
They're fine, Mama.
I got something
for you, too, Mama.
Johnny. It was real nice
of your friend Mr. McGarrity
to send over those
candy canes to the kids.
Yeah.
Here. I made this
candle for today.
You better light it now.
It's time.
Merry Christmas, Mama,
from me and Neeley.
Oh, it's pretty.
What is it?

Rose water
and glycerin.
You rub it
on your hands.
This is for you, Papa,
from me and Neeley.
My!
I'll be quite the thing,
won't I?
I think it's silly,
but Francie said
Papa was always talking about
what nice hands you got.
It cost a dime, but we had a
seltzer bottle top in the junk.
It's a watch fob. It's
made out of shoelaces.
I wove it on a spool
with nails.
Well, if that ain't about the
nicest thing I ever did see.
Maybe it's kinda silly,
you not having a watch.
Well, now, madam, we're all
out of mushrooms under glass,
but I can
tell you the time.
That's the nicest present
I ever did get, prima donna.
And thank you, too, Son.
You're welcome. I guess
the shoelaces was mine.
It was silly.
There ain't nothing
silly on Christmas.
I got a little
present here.
Like I was saying,
I got...
Merry Christmas,
Miss Francie.
Come on. They're in here.
It's Mr. McShane.
I hope I'm not intruding.

Merry Christmas,
Mr. McShane.
Merry Christmas!
Merry Christmas.
I was just...
Hello, handsome.
Mrs. Edwards.
I was just passing, and I happened
to see the light still burning
and I got to thinking
that I'd like to have a hand in
decorating that fine Christmas tree.
I see somebody's
already provided.
We can always use more
of them, Mr. McShane.
Thank you kindly.
Won't you come in and have
a cup of coffee with us?
Thanks, no. This evening's for families.
And I got to be
getting home now,
so I'll say goodbye and
merry Christmas to everybody.
Thank you, Mr. McShane.
Merry Christmas!
That was mighty
nice of him.
Mr. McShane's
a fine man.
He's, I think,
sometimes a lonely man.
Like I was saying,
I got something here.
I mean, I got a present for
somebody that ain't exactly here.
Grandma helped me pick it out.
It's for you know who.
Bill, it's beautiful.
Look, everybody!
Bill, darling, I've never been so happy!
I'm gonna get some coffee.
Katie?
Yeah.

I'm glad for ya.
I don't know.
I'm scared, I guess.
You got no call to be.
Look how swell them two are.
Yeah, they are.
You told Johnny yet?
Well, maybe you ought to.
It might help him.
Yeah.
We better take
the coffee in.
You're a fine girl, Katie.
I never said any different.
That's for nothing, Johnny,
except maybe being a nice guy.
Coffee, everybody!
Well, I guess
that's about all.
Johnny, I got to
tell ya something.
Maybe it ain't the right
time, and maybe it is.
The reason
I moved us up here...
We're gonna have
a baby, Johnny.
That's why I've been scrimpin' so
much and tryin' so hard to save.
That's...
Well, I'm awful glad,
Katie, if you are.
There's a lot we got
to think about, Johnny.
I know!
But we'll make out.
Maybe things
will be different.
And we'll have one to grow
up with all over again.
I got things
all figured out.
I ought to be able to work
until, well, anyway, April,

and then Francie will have to leave
school and take out a working paper.
She's young, but with what she can make,
we ought to be
able to make out.
But we can't
do that, Katie!
I don't like it any better
than you do, Johnny.
But I thought and I thought,
and there ain't no other way.
And, Johnny, you got to help with
something. She listens to you.
You got to quit gettin' her so
all excited about her schoolin'.
But why can't it
be Neeley?
He's the boy, and he
don't care like she does!
Well, 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 someday.
Well, there must be
another way!
I don't know. I'll try and
swing anything. I'll do anything.
We can't count
on that, Johnny.
Don't look at me like that,
Johnny. It ain't my fault.
It ain't your fault either,
I guess. I don't know.
Anyway, one member of
the Nolan family'll
get to graduate,
and she come close.
That's somethin'.
You better put out the light,

and let's get some rest.

Oh!

I thought you'd be asleep,
prima donna.

Uh-uh.

I've been thinking.

I might be going to be a
writer. I've just about decided.

I knew you when you was
gonna be a lady fireman.

Don't joke, Papa.

I'm serious.

All right, baby.

All I meant was maybe it's
better not to get your heart set
on just one thing,
in case something happens.

She said, Miss McDonough, I mean,
she said maybe I could be.

She said I have imagination.

Do you think

I have, Papa?

Sure you have, baby.

Them compositions of yours
are sure fine, but...

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, she said.

Yeah, I see.

A pipe-dreamer.

I'm not putting it
good like she did.

I wish you could've heard
her. She was wonderful.

Forever and ever, I'll be glad you
helped me go to that school, Papa.

You kind of like that
school, don't you, baby?

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
the things you know about
so they'll be true.
And the way things are.
Only...
Only what, baby?
Papa, the people in the hall
when we brought up the tree,
the look on their faces,
all friendly and nice.
Why can't people be like that all
the time, not just on Christmas?
Well, I guess
it's because...
Well, I don't know.
Maybe it's because Christmas
is like people really are
and the other
part ain't true.
And with that
imagination of yours,
if you think
about it hard enough,
you know,
like it ought to be...
But when you
get to thinking,
Papa, the people
in the stories,
they don't just live
happily ever after, do they?
No, baby, but...
But the trouble is,
it doesn't feel good when you
think about things like that,
I mean,
like they really are.
You better stick out
your tongue, prima donna.
It's just like I thought.

You got a bad case,
a very bad case.
Case of what, Papa?
A very bad case
of growing up.
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.
You're so nice, Papa.
I guess it's better if you don't
just stay young all your life.
It'll be much nicer
growing up.
Yeah.
Then you get to see things
like they really are.
Good night, baby.
Good night, Papa.
I'm sleepy now.
That's fine, baby,
just fine.
Ain't ya comin'
to bed, Johnny?
No. I'm gonna take
a little walk.
Don't start drinking,
not tonight, Johnny.
I won't, Katie.
I won't.
Well, did he go out
on a job, do you know?
If he did, he didn't get it through us.
Thank you.
How are you, Mrs. Nolan?
And happy new year to you.
Same to you,
Mr. McGarrity.
I just came to...
Well, I happened to be passing
by, and I thought I'd run in
and thank you for the
candy canes you sent us.

It was nice of ya.
That's all right.
It wasn't much.
Well, it was
nice of you.
Good night, Mr. McGarrity.
Good night, Mrs. Nolan.
Mrs. Nolan.
Johnny ain't here. He ain't
been here since before Christmas.
I'm afraid it's bad news
I'm bringing you, Mrs. Nolan.
Our station just got
a report that Mr. Nolan
was found over in
Manhattan very sick.
He's been taken
to a hospital.
See that Neeley gets to
school on time in the morning.
There's an apple
for your lunches.
The report said
that he just collapsed
right in the doorway
of an employment agency.
And he'd just been
going out on a job.
A sandhog in a tunnel, they said.
And he hadn't been
drinking, ma'am.
He'd been waiting there
a long time for the job.
He was just sick.
We did everything
we could.
Yeah, sure. I know.
What are you writing down
that he died from, Doctor?
Acute alcoholism and
pneumonia. One led to the other.
I don't want you to write
down that he died like that.
Put just the pneumonia.

I can't do that.
Pneumonia was the direct cause of
death, but the alcoholism was...
Look, he's dead.
I got two nice kids that are gonna
grow up to amount to somethin'.
Why do you have to make it hard by
sayin' their father died from the drink
when that's only a
little piece of the truth?
He wasn't drinkin'. They said
so. He was out lookin' for work.
Why don't you
put that down?
Cause of death,
pneumonia.
"Everlasting rest
and happiness
"through the infinite merits
of Jesus Christ.
"Oh, God, great and omnipotent
judge of the living and the dead,
"before whom we are all to
appear after this short life
"to render an account
of our work.
"Let our hearts,
we pray Thee,
"be deeply moved at
the sight of this death.
"And while we consign the body
of the deceased to the earth,
"let us be mindful of our
own frailties and mortality,
"that walking
always in Thy fear
"and in the ways
of Thy Commandments
"we may, after our
departure from this world,
"experience
a merciful judgment
"and rejoice in
everlasting happiness

"through Christ, our Lord."
All them people
and the flowers,
some of them from people
I never heard of even.
Who would've thought
that many folks...
I mean,
they was carrying on
like they was
his family or, or...
I don't know.
Yeah. He took the time to make a
lot of people love him, all right.
It's hard to figure out
so many of them showing up.
And they was
feeling something.
I mean, there was no
reason for 'em to put on.
He was nobody big.
He was just a...
Katie.
Don't talk about
it no more, kid.
Francie.
Just leave her be, Katie.
She maybe wants
to be by herself.
She's taking on
kind of funny.
She ain't even cried.
Goodbye.
I'd like my
father's shaving cup.
That one. "Nolan."
Oh, you're the little girl.
Yes. I'll clean it
up for you.
He was a fine man.
Tell your mama that I,
his barber, said this.
Francie.
What?

Francie, dear,
where are you going?
No place.
Francie.
Yes, Mama?
It was nice of the neighbors
to send over all that food.
Don't you want something?
No, Mama.
I wanted to talk
to you, Francie.
I want things to go on,
the reading and all.
I want to do...
Well, I got to be mama and
papa both to you now, Francie.
Yes, Mama.
Is that all, Mama?
Well...
You gotta go right now,
Francie, I...
I'll be back.
Honest, I will.
Mom.
I guess
I'm a little hungry.
Look. He can't be dead. Can't!
They don't understand.
Maybe you could let me
have a baby someday,
and it could be a boy.
So it could be
just like him.
It would have to be me.
Nobody else
loved him like I do.
Maybe you could
do that for me.
And if you could,
he wouldn't even die.
I hope you don't think I'm forward
coming in like this, Mrs. Nolan.
How are you, Francie?
I'm well, thank you.

Have a chair. Francie, see if Mr.
McGarrity won't have some coffee.
Not for me,
thank you.
I figured
I ought to come.
I suppose you know how
Johnny and me done business.
He'd give me some money to keep
sometimes and draw against it.
And when he...
Well, I got to looking
around and what do you think?
I had, I had nearly
five bucks in his box.
And so I, I figured it belonged to you.
If you told the truth,
it would be more than
likely that he owed you.
But thanks very much.
Well, I just thought...
We'll make out.
Well, there's
something else then.
I thought maybe
you wouldn't mind
if maybe Francie and Neeley came
down to work for me afternoons,
like, after school
and Saturdays.
And, of course, maybe it
ain't the kind of a place
you'd favor them working in,
but I'd keep an eye on them.
And I'd pay them
\$2 a week apiece.
And I'd take it as
a great favor, ma'am.
You're a very bad liar,
Mr. McGarrity,
but you're a good man, and I'm
ashamed I didn't know it before.
No, it ain't
like that, ma'am.

Johnny was...
Well, I don't know.
Johnny... Johnny always
talked about his family
like, well, like folks
ought to and don't.
And, whenever he talked about
anything, he always made you...
You felt better
or you wanted to laugh.
Like that seashell
I had there.
He was always, he was
always listening to it
and telling you
what it was singing.
He was always giving
things like that to people.
He...
He was a fine man,
Mrs. Nolan.
I'd be glad to let the children
work for you, Mr. McGarrity.
And the \$4 a week will keep
us until the baby comes,
and Francie won't
have to quit school
and she can keep on,
and they can both...
Well, it's a deal then.
And you tell 'em
to come through the family
entrance tomorrow after school.
Is that all right
with you, Francie?
Yes.
Well, well,
it's settled then
and, good day to you,
Mrs. Nolan.
And thank you again,
Mr. McGarrity.
Francie.
Yes, Mama.

I'm glad you can keep
on with your school.
I was hoping something
like this would happen,
but I didn't want to say
anything until the time come.
But your papa and I
talked it all over
and there were reasons.
And there just
wasn't any other way.
It doesn't matter.
Papa saved me from it.
Hiya, kid.
Well, they're sure
taking chances.
I wouldn't, leaving
you handle them eats.
Where's Francie?
Kitchen.
Thanks. Hiya, Mac.
Hello, kid. How are you,
lamb? Hello, Aunt Sissy.
Look. You got to
do something for me.
This was in the paper,
and I cut it out.
You got to read it to me,
and... What's the matter, hon?
Nothing. I'm all right,
Aunt Sissy. No, you ain't.
You ain't been since...
Look. Don't you think you better
spill it to your Aunt Sissy?
What is it you want me to
read to you, Aunt 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 there,
and I wanna know
what it says.
Maybe it says where he lives
so as I can write to him
about getting a divorce
or something.
I got the best husband
in all the world now
and I don't want this here one
bobbing up and making no trouble.
He's a fireman someplace. I
can tell that from his clothes.
He was just starting out
in the fireman business...
This says he's a hero. He
saved some people in a fire.
Does it say where?
The 9th Precinct,
Manhattan.
Manhattan, huh?
Couldn't make the grade
in Brooklyn, I guess.
I want you to write to
him, Francie. Write this,
"Dear Bill..."
This says his name
is Roland Polaski.
That's right,
I remember.
Make it
"Dear Mr. Polaski.
"Being's as now I'm married
to somebody else
"I want you to see about
getting a real legal divorce
"because I thought you
was dead, but you ain't.
"And because you got the money
now on account of the reward.
"Yours very truly, Sissy."
Something like that.
But, Aunt Sissy, he must

have already done that.

Because it says here
he's married again.

It does?

"On the human interest
side of the story,
"Mrs. Polaski had returned home
only the day before from the hospital
"after presenting Mr. Polaski
with a brand-new son,
"the fourth child
of the marriage."

So, if he got a divorce that
long ago, you don't have to.

Then my being
married to Bill,
this one, I mean,
is all legal?

Well, now, if that ain't
a load off my chest.

You know something? I think I'll
give Bill Polaski a wedding present.

But Aunt Sissy, you can't.

He's been married for years.

Four kids, huh? Must be a pretty
sickly woman, this Mrs. Polaski,
going to the hospital
just to have a baby.

No. Lots of people go
there now to have babies.

It's better.

Sure enough?

You know something?

I'm gonna cash in
my funeral policy
and have my baby
at a hospital.

And when my baby
is born and lives,

I want you to write that
R. Polaski and announce it.

Boy, do I feel better!

And, now, chickabiddy,
we'll talk about you.

Can't your Aunt Sissy help
you any? I'm all right.
No, you aren't, honey,
not all shut up like that.
I know how you feel, but you
can't keep hanging on to it.
I'm all right. I don't
want to talk about it.
All right, baby.
All right.
But I'll tell you what.
You can do something for me.
Look. Your mama feels awful bad, too.
She needs you. Why don't
you talk to her about it?
She doesn't need me.
Yes, she does.
No, she doesn't!
She's got Neeley!
Why wasn't it Neeley she was
going 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 gonna 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!
Don't be like that,
baby. Don't.
Leave me alone.
I'm all right.
Please go away
and leave me alone.
All right, chickabiddy.
All right.
Mr. Stern.
Yes, sir.

Francie.
Yes, Mama?
I want to talk
to you, Francie.
Yes, Mama.
It isn't gonna be
long now,
for me, I mean,
my baby.
We can't come
to a hospital.
There isn't even gonna be enough
money for a woman to come and help.
I'm gonna
need you, Francie.
Don't ever be far away.
Neeley's...
Well, a boy ain't much good
at a time like this.
I'm counting
on you, Francie.
You won't forget that,
will you?
All right, Mama.
I'll remember.
Which one of you
is Mr. Stephen Edwards?
That's me.
Well, there are three
in your family now.
You're the father
of a pretty fine boy.
Alive?
Very much so.
He was a little reluctant
about it at first.
I had to rouse him with a little
oxygen. Now, he's mad at me.
You ought to hear him.
I've got to see him.
Well, neither one of them are
quite up to a visit just now.
In a little while.
The learning...

The learning that
saved that baby.
That's fine, Bill.
Where are you going,
Uncle Bill?
I'm going 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's Steve.
And it's Uncle Steve, too.
Steve. Steve. Steve.
So, we have a man
in the family.
As quick as we see if she's all
right, you go on up to McGarrity's
and see if you can
do my work, too.
I'm gonna finish her scrubbing for
her. She ought not to do any more.
She wasn't feeling
good this morning.
Mama!
Mama?
In here, Francie.
You wait here.
You all right, Mama?
Give Neeley a nickel to
go after Grandma and Sissy.
He can walk home after.
Get me a nightgown
in that bottom drawer.
Hurry! Don't stand
there staring.
Is she going to die?
Of course not.
It's the baby.
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.
She only wants me now.
Mama!

What is it?
I'll be there
in a minute.
You're taking real good
care of me, Francie.
Am I, Mama?
Mmm.
Tastes good.
Can I get you
a glass of water, Mama?
When I want something,
I'll ask for it.
Yes, Mama.
Don't just stand there and throw
questions at me. I'm too tired.
You'd better have
some coffee, too.
Mama, even if
Neeley is a boy,
wouldn't you rather
have him here?
He's always such
a comfort to you.
No, it's you that's a
comfort. Now, what time is it?
I don't know, Mama.
Get the clock.
One minute

to 4:

Are you sure
it isn't slow?
No, Mama.
Maybe it's fast then.
I'll look at the jeweler's
clock out the parlor window!
The candle's pretty
like Christmas.
That was the night
I told him.
It's nice having a visit
from my daughter.
I didn't want for you to
have to grow up so soon.

I didn't want for you
to have to quit school.
I tried to tell him that.
He didn't mind about the baby
but he never forgive me for
wanting you to quit school.
I told him,
and he just went out.
You never
forgive me, either.
Please don't, Mama.
He would've bought you
dolls instead of milk, and...
I don't know. Maybe you
would've been happier.
I don't know.
I never would've thought of
giving you that school like he did.
And all them fine compositions of yours,
I never read one of 'em.
I should've had time.
Johnny did.
But I couldn't
do no different.
I don't know how I
could do any different.
What time is it?
One minute

after 4:

Wring a cloth out of cold
water and wipe my face.
Don't let her die.
Please!
Mama, suppose the baby comes before
Grandma and Aunt Sissy get here?
You can see I couldn't
do no different, can't you?
Neeley, he don't like school. If
he'd quit, he'd never go back again.
But you, no matter what happens,
you'd find a way to go back.
You'd fight to go back.
You can see that, can't you?

I...
Yes, Mama.
Read me something,
Francie.
Yes, Mama.
Read me one of
your compositions.
I ain't never read any
of your compositions.
It's on my conscience.
I tore all those up.
No, you didn't.
Not all of them.
Can't I read you Shakespeare?
It's much better.
Read "'Twas on
a Night Like This."
I'd like to have something
pretty on my mind.
Sit by the candle.
"The moon shines bright
in such a night as this
"when the sweet wind
did gently kiss the trees."
Say, did you ever find out
who Troilus was and Cressida?
Yes, Mama. Troilus was...
Some other day
when I've got time.
Read me one of
your compositions now.
You won't like them, Mama.
You thought about 'em,
and you worked on 'em
and you got
good marks on 'em.
Get 'em, I said.
Sit here.
Go on.
It's called
"The Man People Loved."
Please don't make me
read it, Mama.
Read it.

"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."

"Like a king."

That's like it was.

Walking down the street with him,
you always felt like that.

Did you, Mama?

You're real smart to write
it down like that, Francie.

That's like it was.

Francie.

I miss him so much.

If the baby's a boy,
we'll call him Johnny.

Where's Sissy?

Neeley's been gone a long time.

Wipe my face.

No, don't let go
of my hand.

If it's a girl, we'll
call her Annie Laurie.

Remember that tune
he played?

You ought to have piano lessons.

I'll see if I can manage.

You won't forget to dust
the piano, will you, Francie?

Who'd cry for me
like that if I died?

I never did a wrong thing in

my life, but it ain't enough!
Sissy, I didn't mean to
be hard like you said.
If Johnny was here,
he could go to your graduation,
and I'd go to Neeley's.
But I can't tear myself
into two pieces.
How am I gonna do both?
Where are you, Francie?
I'm here, Mama!
You're such
a comfort to me.
I'm so tired.
Leave me sleep now.
You better start
some water boiling.
We'll call you if
there's anything we need.
I thought you was never
coming, Sissy.
Come on.
You quit worrying now.
The baby is here and
the mama is doing good.
She's asleep.
A small baby sister,
it is.
Annie Laurie.
Papa would've
liked that.
Look, Francie.
Aren't the flowers pretty?
Where's Grandma?
I got her in a front seat,
so she won't miss a thing.
Isn't your classroom
around here somewheres?
Yes, but I...
How about
giving me a peek?
Wouldn't hurt me none, seeing
a little more places like that.
Hey, Francie, you forgot your

flowers. They aren't mine.
I'm not carrying
flowers today.
Some of the girls, their
family sends them flowers.
They're on your desk, lamb.
Better go see.
Well, I have to
get my things anyway.
He gave me the money to
buy 'em way before Christmas
to make sure
he had it, he said.
Then he wrote out the card.
Come on, kid.
Let it go, baby. There ain't
a soul gonna hear. Let it go.
Frances Nolan.
Well, sir, I don't think Grandma
said 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 knows what
she'd have been like
if she'd got to
both graduations.
Looks to me like it was a pretty
fine day. How's your soda, Francie?
Pineapple's not as
good as chocolate.
Then why did you
order it for?
Because I'm up to the "P's."
I'll try raspberry next.
There's something
to that idea.
Try everything once.
Sissy!
And a dime for you, my boy.
This is a special occasion.

Thank you.
He don't know
how special it is.
Two diplomas in
the Nolan family
all in one day?
Mama, I've got a nickel
if you want to leave it.
People do.
It's going to be
all right, Francie.
And you know somethin'? These ain't
gonna be the last diplomas, either.
I don't know how
we're gonna work it,
but we're gonna find
some way for you and...
Hi, Neeley.
How are you doing?
Okay. I got out of jail.
Say, wasn't it you
I saw working
behind that bat
the other day?
Why, yeah, but...
Hey, you were
pretty good.
You know what? I'm coming out and
give you some pointers sometime.
Honest?
Sure, I will.
That is, if your ma
don't mind.
Nah, she don't mind.
Ya mean it?
Sure.
Well, I'll see you
on the lot.
Maybe you better
ask your ma, you know.
I don't want to do anything
she wouldn't want me to.
Nah, she won't care.
Maybe you'd better ask her

yourself just to make sure.
I'm Neeley's aunt.
This is his ma.
But that's his sister.
What's your name, big boy?
Herschel Knutsen.
Mr. Knutsen, I'd like
for you to meet my niece,
Miss Francie Nolan.
Pleased to meet you.
Hello.
Nice night if it don't rain.
Sit down, Herschel.
Doing anything tomorrow
afternoon, Miss Nolan?
It's Saturday.
I don't know. Why?
Well, there's a swell picture,
Bill Hart. Maybe you'd like to go.
Who with?
Me.
Oh.
Well, I might be busy.
I'll let you know.
Well, I'll come
around and see.
Hey! I thought we was
gonna play ball tomorrow.
Yeah. Well, we can
do that any time.
Sure.
There's lots of time.
Come on, Hersch.
Well, I'll be seeing you, Miss Nolan.
Him, mushy!
I'm proud of you, chickabiddy.
You handled him fine.
It was the hair
that done it.
Well, I hate to
bust this party up,
but then babies
got to be fed.
Steve will be needin'

a little something, too.
Three hours with
the both of them.
Thirty out of 50.
Keep the change.
Well, thank you.
Why, Katie Nolan!
I don't care.
There's times
when feelin' good
and things like that
is important.
I don't care.
You wanna carry
my flowers, Mama?
He called ya
"Miss Nolan."
You missed it, Steve!
Well, hello, handsome.
I'm beggin' your pardon,
Mrs. Nolan.
I just happened to drop in,
and your brother-in-law here
seemed to be needing a little help.
And the baby didn't seem to mind,
so... I hope I'm not intrudin'.
Well, not at all,
Mr. McShane.
You sit right down. We're
going home. Come along, Steve.
I'll take her,
Mr. McShane.
I'd like it
if you'd leave her.
Her and me has got
to be good friends.
Well, I wish you
didn't have to hurry.
Got to get this
family of mine home.
Steve's got to deliver milk to a lot of
those babies that like that bottled kind.
You don't want to
frown like that, Katie.

The fellas don't go
for that at all.
Goodbye, kids.
So long, Mac.
So long, Mrs. Edwards.
Thank you, Aunt Sissy.
Goodbye, Mac.
Mr. Edwards, goodbye.
Well...
Well, I will take the
baby from you, Mr. McShane.
Mrs. Nolan.
Likely you've been wonderin'
why I came here tonight.
Let your wonderin' be over, because
I came here on a personal matter.
Mama, shall I go and...
No, no, don't be
leaving, children.
My conversation will be concernin'
you as well as your mother.
Mrs. Nolan, I feel that
there's no disrespect
in my speaking
my mind at this time.
And I feel a decent time has elapsed
since the passin' of Mrs.
McShane, God rest her soul.
I didn't know,
Mr. McShane.
I'm sorry.
Well, I said nothin',
Mrs. Nolan,
because it was near the
time of your own bereavement.
And I didn't wish to...
Well, I know that it's
barely six months now
since your own husband, too,
left this world. Rest his soul.
But when you feel a decent
interval has elapsed,
I'm askin' to keep company
with you, Katherine Nolan,

with the object of a weddin'
when a decent time has elapsed.
And for my part,
I'll be glad to keep company
with you, Mr. McShane,
not for the help
you can give us,
because we know
we can manage some way.
But because you're a
good man, Mr. McShane.
And there's
one more thing.
Their father was a fine man, and I'd have
no wish to be tryin' to take his place.
It would be more my intention to be
like a real good friend.
Now, as the eldest,
would you be approvin'?
Yes, Mr. McShane.
I was thinkin' it
wouldn't be right
for me to ask the two
eldest to take my name.
But the little one, the one who
has never looked on her father,
could you be thinkin' of
lettin' me legally adopt her?
If that time comes, the
child shall have your name.
And now I'm wonderin'
if I could smoke my pipe.
You could have smoked
anytime, Mr. McShane.
Well, I didn't want to take any
privileges before I was entitled to 'em.
Help me put her
to bed, Neeley.
Why?
To fix the blankets.
I'll be heatin' up
the coffee now.
Will ya join me in a cup,
Mr. McShane?

Thank you, Katherine.

I will.

Annie Laurie McShane.

Yeah.

She'll never have the hard
times we had, will she?

She'll never have
the fun, either.

We did have fun when we
were young, didn't we?

Yeah.

Remember the olden days
when we collected junk?

Poor Laurie.

Neeley,

look at the tree.

It's growing again,
just like Papa said.

I feel kind of sad, like we're
saying goodbye to something.

Yeah.

Neeley?

Mmm-hmm?

Am I good-looking?

What's eatin' ya?

No, honest, Neeley.

I wanna know.

You'll pass.

You're sweet, Neeley.

Oh, cut the mush.