

Theresa at Home

A one-woman show for three or more actresses

by

Janet Kenney

Janet Kenney
52 Strathmore Road #44
Boston, MA 02135
617.543.1403
missjanetkenney@gmail.com

Theresa at Home

Characters

Theresa: newlywed, former novice nun. Late twenties.

Mom: newly abandoned by her husband. Early to mid-fifties.

Marie: Theresa's older sister. Mother of eight, soon to be nine. Late thirties.

Lucille: Theresa's younger sister. Wild. Early twenties.

Emilia Lee: One of the Welcome Wagon Ladies. Early forties.

Maya: The other Welcome Wagon Lady. Early forties.

Irene: Upstairs neighbor. Weight-lifter. Late thirties.

Mother Mary Michael: Mother Superior of Saint Anthony's Convent. Age: hard to tell with nuns. Fifties or sixties?

Nana: Theresa's Nana. She sleeps quite a bit. Eighties or so.

Note: If working with three actresses, Theresa and Nana should be played by the same actress. It works to have another actress play both Welcome Wagon ladies and both of Theresa's sisters, and the third play Mom, Irene and Mother Mary Michael; however, flexibility around that is appropriate.

Time: Morning, 1956

Place: A small apartment in a middle-income suburban neighborhood; it's the second floor of a triple-decker.

At Rise: Visible are the living room and kitchen, separated by a counter.

There are a bunch of new appliances in the kitchen - the refrigerator looks new. There might even be a dishwasher. The counter is loaded with toasters and blenders, etc., all brand new.

Mainly, there are boxes. Boxes upon boxes upon boxes. Some are wrapped in wedding paper. Some are plain brown packing boxes and are marked "kitchen," "bedroom," etc. Some are stacked on tables, some on chairs, the counter, the mantel, the floor -- all over. You have to watch where you step. There's a bird cage that's shrouded with a light cloth.

THERESA, late twenties, is dressed in a plain gray dress and she wears a white apron with minimal but nice trimming, maybe some blue rick-rack. Her hair is up in a very simple coif. She's sorting through boxes. She opens one: another toaster. She checks the gift tag, marks it in a notebook, and places the toaster on the counter near the others. Arranges them by color. Then by size. Then by color.

There's a LOUD THUMP on the floor from the upstairs apartment. A moment, then Theresa opens a box that contains a radio - this is quite a find.

She turns it on, fools with the dials. 50's doo-wop plays. She dashes to the phone. It's not absolutely necessary that she dial; it just goes right to her husband.

THERESA

Honey? Hi, honey! Guess what! No, not another toaster -- well, no, that's not true. I just opened another one - but guess what? Here, here! Listen --

She holds the phone up to the radio. Listens.

No! It's a radio! A brand new shiny -- it's, uh, it's from my Uncle Sam and Auntie Mattie. Of course I'm tracking all that. He's not mean to her. He's cranky at everyone. It's his war wounds. He certainly does. He was shot. He was not shot in the hair, Bobbie, you're awful.

Guess what? I'm going to the butcher's later. To get meat. Pot roast. With carrots and onions. That's what my mother does. Parsnip? What's a parsnip?

I'm just unpacking. Um. A dress. The one I was wearing when you left this morning.

Um. Yes. The gray one. Why do you want to know which apron I'm wearing?

You're silly. No, *you* are. All right. I miss you more. Here - here listen one more time.-

She holds the phone up to the radio again.

Like that? We'll play it all the time. And dance. OK, bye. Miss you more. Honey? I'll be lonely till you get home.

She straightens her dress, apron. She heads for more of the boxes in the living room. There are several small boxes.

She opens the first one; it's a statue of the Blessed Mother. She sets it on the mantel. She opens the second. It's a statue of the Blessed Mother. She sets it on the mantel. She opens a third. It's a statue of the Holy Family. She sets

it - on the - uh - mantel -- no - the coffee table -- no, the TV. On top of the TV. No, the mantel. Settles on the mantel.

She's got a nice little mini-church there, so she kneels. She prays. She gets up, lights a candle. Kneels, prays. DOORBELL CHIMES - something angelic and sweet. She blows out the candle and dashes towards the door.

THERESA

Coming! Oh, good morning! Oh, isn't that sweet! I'm Theresa Miller. Come in, come in. Oh, yes, it's nice to meet both of you -- Emilia Lee - what a pretty name. Maya - what a pretty name. Here, please let me get you some coffee -- oh, let me move those boxes --

Theresa slips away and exits as Emilia Lee gushes in. She's a lovely woman with a Welcome Wagon basket to offer.

EMILIA LEE

I can do it, I don't mind at all -- oh, isn't this just the cutest place! It'll be so sweet when you clean up.

She lifts the cloth and peeks at the bird.

Oh, my -- look at this little fellow. What's that? A parakeet? Isn't he pretty. Of course, I don't think you should keep a bird in the house because it is a harbinger of death. It is, Maya. What about that time the blue jay flew right through Julia's mother's house? Dead as a doornail the very next week. Well, what caused the heart attack, I'd like to know? She was not an old woman. Dead as a post. We are the official Welcome Wagon Ladies for this area. Today is your lucky day, because it's my turn to talk! Oh, Maya, I'm just kidding. Maya and I take turns,

otherwise we just run all over one another and one of the new ladies in the neighborhood complained to Welcome Wagon. It was that woman over on Hyland Ave. She's Jewish. We have Jews on Hyland, on Allegheny and two on Bryden street. You can tell the houses because they don't have Mary statues in the yard. Honey, hand her that crucifix. It was blessed by the Pope himself. No, Maya, I did not see him do it, but if the Cardinal says he did it, then he did it. I'm telling Father O'Malley you said that.

This chair in this spot is a death trap. I'll just scooch it over for you. We have a lamp like this – it's better over here, I think. Maya, a young wife would want a more experienced eye on things! Theresa, do you mind if I re-arrange your furniture? She doesn't. There we are – that looks nice. Maya, I'm talking.

We worked it out this way. I'm better at it anyway because I'm from the South, and we're just naturally more welcoming. I'm not saying anything bad about Northern people – but some of you do act like you got your girdles on too tight. It's only got to be tight enough to keep down that glob of horse fat hanging from your abdomen. Maya can fit in her wedding gown, but that's because she doesn't have children, so she wasn't destroyed inside and out. How many are you planning on having, missus? Nothing makes for a nice neighborhood like children running around. Maya's sterile. Well, you are. She thinks it's because of that chemical plant. If it's that bad why don't you move? Oh, "money" my eye. You don't move because you like it here and all your friends are here and you're perfectly safe and you know it. There are plenty of people who've had perfectly lovely children right in the neighborhood. But he's still a lovely boy. That's little Dan Banner - you'll meet him

at church. We call him Dan the Man because he'll 11 and he's already the size of a grown man. He's got a beard coming in, did you notice, Maya?

So, here's some nice fruit for you - apples, and pears and - I know she knows what it is, I'm just making conversation. Ah! She doesn't know what these are: kiwis! Very exotic! A special treat! And what else have we here? Spam. There was so much left over from the War, we just have to use it up. So - a recipe book: *Spam Love: Home Cooking with Spam*. My favorite thing is to sauté it with pineapple and brown sugar and just a tiny bit of mustard. Make sure you brown it well - nothing worse than soggy spam. Ah Fruit Cocktail. MUCH better than the real thing because it's so consistent. My husband always steals the maraschino cherries but such are the losses of married life, eh, my dear?

Oh, my. This is interesting coffee. Maya, you haven't touched your coffee. Maya, don't fib to the child. You can't possibly like it. Ah, yes, it's a little -- maybe it's a little strong. I put chicory in the water - right in the water, not in the basket, and I let it percolate a little bit longer than you would think because it thickens the coffee. My husband says it's the only thing he still likes about me! Isn't he awful? Maya, he is joking. Maya can't follow a joke if it grabs her by the nose and drags her. Maya, if he were mean to me, I'd know it.

She dumps the coffee into the sink. Perhaps she checks the cabinets for supplies and orderliness.

Did you stitch these dishtowels? I can't stitch a knot, though some of the ladies do knit. We have knitting club on Tuesday, sewing club on Wednesday, book club every third Thursday - I pick the books - Quick Cooking on Thursday morning --and

-- uh. Oh. Visit the sick? Well. We have a nursing home about a mile away. You could visit Dan the Man - his liver is failing. I suppose you could visit Maya if you want to visit the sick, eh? Maya, Heavens! Is she blind? You shake like a twig in a wind. She keeps pestering the doctors to find something wrong, but they can't. She's just nervous.

Now, as members of this neighborhood, you have access to the community bomb shelter. You need these ID cards or we can't let you in. Put them in your wallet or over by the door, depending on where you think you might be when they drop a nuclear bomb. Well, sure we know what you look like, but we don't know your husband, plus, what if we're in the back and don't see you, plus, what if we're dead? If there's a bomb, God forbid, just bang on the top of it and if it's safe we'll let you in. Last year we had a drill and three people from the wrong shelter group tried to get in and we just couldn't take them. Maya was saying, "Let them in, for heaven's sake," all dramatic, but we had to draw the line somewhere and we drew it on Pleasant Street. It's not because of that black family, Maya – it's just a street. Although, it could be a month in a shelter before the air clears and you'd like to think you could enjoy a conversation with your fellow survivors. Maya voted against it, calls it a waste of money: "Who wants to survive a nuclear attack?" Well, I do; lots of us do. Maya, if you want to keep talking and just skip your next turn, that is fine with me, but if you open your mouth one more time, this visit is NOT going to count as one of mine.

Now, how did you meet your husband? In a convent! Oh, my! A girl doesn't meet too many men in a convent! So was he -- uh, was he visiting – visiting his aunt – isn't

that nice. Were you the secretary or – a novice? A novice nun? Oh, my! I never met a former nun before – former novice, right. I guess you're glad you met him, eh? You could have been stuck in a convent all your life. What kind of life is that for a woman?

Well, I guess that about wraps things up, unless you have any questions but we don't really have time to answer them right now because we have two other appointments before I pick up my passel of brats from school. Maya, I'm just kidding – they are angels.

Oh! And one thing I almost forgot: once you've been here for six months, you can apply to become a member of Welcome Wagon and you can do just what we've done today! Come on, Maya, let's move this wagon out.

Emilia Lee heads out as Theresa comes back in through a different entrance.

THERESA

I can't thank you enough for visiting. I feel so welcome. Yes, right, Welcome Wagon. Right. Stop by anytime. No, no, I don't expect you to stop by every day. Right. I'll see you at Church. Thank you. Bye -- bye-by (etc.) Oh! Maya! Careful on that step!

Waving them out the door, then Theresa alone. She checks on the coffee, perhaps turns down the heat on it. She tidies and straightens – it's hard to know where to start.

She opens more boxes: a large wooden salad bowl; a NASTY afghan; a very, sexy, racy negligee. She's horrified. She holds it by two fingers by the

strap. She puts it back in the box. Walks the box into the bedroom. Walks it back out. Puts it behind some other boxes. Opens it again.

There's no knock, no ringing of doorbell, but MOM comes in anyway. Theresa stashes the negligee

It's possible that Mom is visible for the next lines, but she is not in the room yet. Perhaps it's her silhouette, or a still image of her. She's an attractive middle-aged woman with a nice new hat.

THERESA

Mom! Oh, Mom! I didn't hear a knock! No, I don't mind at all! Come in, come in!
Oh! You brought Nana! HELLO NANA -- yes, yes, sit her over here -- here, I'll clear some boxes -- here -- HERE'S A NICE AFGHAN FOR YOU NANA. GOOD NIGHT.
Well. Good morning.

Theresa drapes the afghan over a chair to cover "Nana," who stays on stage from this point onward, under her afghan.

No, I don't mind. I'm sure she'll like it here, huh, Nana? She knows where she is, Mom.

Oh, it was lovely. Did you get the postcard we sent? The Falls are just so, they're wild and, very – very, uh, just wild! It was fine. It was lovely. He's fine. He's lovely. It's great. We're just great. Oh, Mom, I can't do this! I can't get anything right! Bobbie choked on his coffee this morning. He said, "hand me the scissors, please, honey," and I said, "Why, and he said, "So I can drink my coffee, honey!" And he laughed, but I don't see what's so funny about it. And I cried, and he said he had Niagara Falls for a wife! You should have let me make the coffee, Mom. Because

he's going to need the scissors tomorrow morning, too, because you don't learn to make coffee in one day! Oh, this was a bad idea! Falling in love, getting married. It was all too fast! It was like tumbling. Really, tumbling. It was nice, but then, next thing, we're standing at the altar and then you have to make coffee and . . . do other things. Do other things that, uh -- at night. And once, um, once in the afternoon. But, because, he's my husband, so he can, you know -- oh, Mom, I don't think we talked enough about this in advance -- because when he - the first night that he, I mean, on the honeymoon, and he, uh - well, I hadn't given it much thought. Lucille teased a little bit, but it seemed like we'd just kiss more than usual, so I wasn't prepared and --

Oh, no, no big deal. You look different -- something. I don't know. But when we were on the honeymoon - I'd been so busy with travel plans for it that I forgot that it was -- that the honeymoon was for, uh -- oh, gosh.

Every day at the motel, the maids came in and every day we'd come in and we'd have new sheets on the bed. I know, I know. But what I mean to say is, what I'm telling you is, they had to. Because every night they got -- they were, uh - stained. Before we left for the day, while Bobbie was in the shower, I'd, well, first I'd . . . first I'd look. Then I pulled back the linens to make the bed. But when I saw the sheets, I cried. Should I have done that? Both. Either. So I pulled up the bed clothes just as Bobbie was coming out of the shower. He asked me why I was crying. I told him I was crying because I was so happy. He said I was just tired, and we went to Niagara Falls.

Oh, it was magnificent, but it made me, yeah, cry. Bobbie said, "I've got a waterworks for a wife. Sorry you married me?" I leaned into his jacket. He smells so good. Sometimes I think I married his smell. After that, every day I made the bed, but when we came back to the room, the bed linens were changed. So the maids knew. It's not funny. Those maids knew for sure! Oh, bless me, I couldn't face them in the hallway. I'll have to wash the sheets every day if he keeps this up.

Theresa slips away as Mom sweeps into the room.

MOM

Theresa: what is this fussing? You've seen me make coffee. The trick is cold water. You know, I keep that bottle of water in the Frigidaire? It's one level teaspoon of coffee for each cup, meaning a teacup, which is also, in this case, that's right, a coffee cup. Are you using Nana's china? For every day? I thought, just for special, but, do what you want. It's your home, but don't come crying to me if it breaks. Is that where you're putting the tea towels? They'll be ruined. None of my business.

A huge burp from over by Nana.

Oh! Nana! A burp! Bad Nana! Oh, God, Theresa, remember when Nana was a civilized person?

It's a new hat - that's what's different. I know, I'm a bad girl! I have a hundred of them! But a nice new hat never hurt a girl, Theresa. You should wear hats, I've told you, but now that you have a husband, NOW maybe you'll listen - you have to keep Bobbie surprised. I think you're pretty but in five years he won't.

She picks up the nasty afghan that is covering Nana.

Good Lord! That's an eyesore! Who? Bobbie's Aunt? Just throw it out. I threw out most of Daddy's junk when we got married. You got your good taste from me - you can't help it. Although, I don't go for as many statues -- all those years in the convent, Theresa, that was bound to catch up with you. I don't know where you got that. We only go to Mass because -- well, I'm not sure why we go to Mass. You had us scared for a while there. I could only see half your face behind that veil. Those doors closing between us, no, I could not have borne that, not for my dearest child. Your sisters don't mind; they know you're the nicest one.

Theresa: have children soon, will you? I need to be a grandmother. Not Marie's children - they were cute when they were born but as soon as Marie got hold of them, they became just like her. Theresa, that fire at the house was not an accident. Have children, honey, but then: bring them up. Marie forgot that part. I know she's doing her best, honey, but sometimes -- Theresa, was I a good mother? Do you think so? Was I -- do you think I've been a good wife?

Ah, just wondering. Never mind me. I'm emotional. It's just seeing my little baby all married and, you know, not a nun. You were not named after that Saint you like -- Therese (*French pronunciation of Therese*). You were named after the Halifax toast advertising girl - she had bright, sparkly eyes like you. And you shouldn't quote *Saint Therese* at Bobbie. I've heard you do it. Men put up with all kinds of things for the first year or two but you'd better be ready to knock that off the minute his eyes glaze over when you do it. Don't be ridiculous: you should not have stayed in the convent where you're allowed to quote nuns --

Theresa, don't carry on. THOSE things. People have figured out "those things" since the cavemen. You'll figure them out for yourself, just like I did and just like Nanny did -- DIDN'T YOU FIGURE THINGS OUT FOR YOURSELF, NANNY? She must have because here we are. You'll be pregnant before you know it, then you'll just sort of put the pieces together, then you'll put on a ton of weight - that's what happened to me - you've seen my wedding pictures - that was a 19 inch waist - NANA, IT WAS 19 INCHES - IF IT WAS 20 INCHES I'D HAVE KNOWN IT - IT WAS MY WAIST. You're thick in the middle like your father's side of the family, who are a bunch of deadly mean awful fat cows! Oh, I don't mean that the way it sounds. Daddy's fine. He says to say "hello."

Actually, he left me and he's not coming back. He left right from the wedding. He had a suitcase in the trunk, Theresa. You know Daddy - thinks ahead. He sent a postcard. From Tahiti. It's an island. In the Caribbean. I think that's south. Maybe it's east. Who knows where the heck it is? Lucille would know. It's a palm tree. The postcard. He wishes I were there. Well, no, he crossed that part out. It's just a little growth spurt he has to go through, it's perfectly normal at his age, so he took Auntie Grace with him. Oh, honey, she's not your real Auntie. That would be dirty. No, she was my best friend since high school she was just called Auntie so you kids wouldn't call her by her first name, which is fresh from children. But she is a wretched filthy bitch. Oh! Oh, listen to me! Theresa, get the soap! Get the soap, we have to wash out my mouth! Get the pepper! I'll stick out my tongue and you can put the pepper on it! You can put the pepper on it till it chokes me! Just keep pouring the pepper till my tongue swells up and I choke and die!

I'm fine.

I wish I were one of those women who could say "good bye" and "good riddance" to their husbands and mean it, but I like to cook, you know? If I just cook for me, I'll get fat. Oh, sweetheart. I want him back. Daddy - he should at least call. Shouldn't he -- he should call his children. Check on the bride.

You know those pills Daddy had when he broke his ankle? They were for the pain. They help you sleep, honey. But I don't know what I'll do when I run out of them. I guess I'll break my ankle. I'm only kidding. I'll break my finger - that'll be enough to get the -- or maybe -- or my head. I could break my head in a second. But if I take them at night, when it's dark and he's not there, at least I sleep. That way, if Daddy calls, he'll wake me up, and he won't think I'm awake all the time thinking about him. Oh, stop that. We can't be sitting around here crying and fussing all day - I have errands to run and you have to write thank you notes and iron.

NANA, YOU STAY WITH THERESA WHILE I'M GONE. NO, IT'S THERESA,
NANA, NOT MARIE. IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'LL BE BACK.

She shouldn't be any trouble. Just -- here -- just give her some food at around noon.

She takes a jar of baby food out of her purse and sets it down.

Pray? For what? God won't kill Daddy just because I ask him to.

Mom leaves. Theresa comes back on and spends a moment alone absorbing the last visit --

Covers Nana with another blanket.

She finds an album in a stack and sets it on the phonograph: A recording of Schubert's "Ave Maria".

She lights some incense. She kneels in front of a statue or two, prays. After a moment, Theresa retreats as,

MARIE, her older sister, roars through the door with a load of children in tow.

Marie is disheveled and breathless from all the kids.

MARIE

Christ! It smells like a High Mass in here! God, put it out, T. You'll choke the kids. No, Tommy Junior is at school, you goose, and Anne Marie is at her friend Brenda's house, so I'm down to four -no, five - six - count 'em -- I should leave with the same number. So we just came over to see how the bride is, how's the unpacking going - Jesus, you got enough toasters? Keep them in the boxes - you can use them for gifts. Yes, you can. Angela Marie put that skirt down this minute - no one wants to see your underwear. No, she doesn't.

Who gave you incense? Father Donovan? Why didn't he give you a vase like a normal person? Theresa, only you would ask for incense for a wedding present.

Ryan, don't lick Auntie Theresa. He's in a phase -- sorry.

Oh, and that rumor that the church would fall over when I walked in after all these years - that was bunk. Who can take these children to church? I had a nun throw a spit ball at Tommy Junior. I don't miss it. I'm not like you, Theresa - I don't go to Mass four times a day -- all right, two. It's still too much. Wait till the kids come.

You'll be lucky if you get to go on Sundays. Oh, don't worry, you can leave them with Bobbie and you can do your nun show on Sundays. It is a "nun show."

Theresa, your wedding dress looked like a nun's habit - I never saw a plainer one in my life. Bosoms aren't bad things, you know. Nana has those, even though they're

lying on her belly. GOT SOME BOSOMS ON YOUR BELLY, EH, NANA? GOT TO KEEP YOUR BELLY WARM.

Course, I should talk. Every kid you have sends your boobs another inch and a half towards your knees. Thank God I didn't nurse. "Nurse" is not a dirty word. You're such a prude.

Patrick, put that down. If you drop the Blessed Mother and break her, you'll go to Purgatory and you don't get out of Purgatory anytime soon, young man. You could end up there forever if no one's praying for you, and don't expect me to pray for you if you're not a good boy. You watch your mouth, young man. Auntie Theresa has soap at her house. Theresa, do you have soap at your house? She sure does.

See, Theresa? This is what happens. When they're born, they're beautiful, then the next thing you know you're hiding the breakables, and your husband comes home and complains about the mess as if you can do anything about it short of selling them to the Gypsies. All your furniture has vomit and juice stains on it and they have runny noses every minute - you wonder if they're Martians - all that green stuff coming out of their noses.

There's a loud THUMP from upstairs. Marie looks up.

What the heck is that? Is your neighbor moving in, too? I hope you don't have to listen to that all the time.

What's the matter with you? What? Don't mumble - I can't understand you. It won't be noisy all the time - it's probably just an accident - Oh, any idiot can make coffee - -T, they don't *always* have runny noses -- Theresa, pull yourself together -

Theresa appears as Marie is less the focus.

THERESA

It's just that, uh, it's only that, well, see, uh, see, Bobbie is not what I expected, I mean, in certain ways. That is, he has surprised me in some ways, in ways that I didn't expect him to surprise me. I mean -- Oh, gosh, Oh, Marie. I knew -- I guess I knew the basic idea. But. . . but every night? Every night? It was a shock.. And, and, Sunday! We're home now! Sunday morning! You can't do that before Mass! He's -- and he's -- he wants me take my clothes off! All of my clothes! And he wants the lights on! He says he wants to see what he got! What's the big secret he has to find out! He's known me for over a year, NOW he has to know what I look like! We can get babies with the lights out! (Right?) We can make babies with pajamas on! You can just loosen them!

Oh, Marie, why didn't anyone tell me?

The first time, the first time, well I thought I was going to die! Bobbie's bigger than I am, of course, and I -- it was like having a hope chest on top of me! A person who is bigger than another person should NOT lie on top of that person. And he's saying, "I love you, I love you, Oh, my love," and I said the same kind of thing, you know, to be polite, but I'm thinking: GET OFF OF ME! Just get off of me. You're going to kill me—

Theresa disappears as Marie takes over again.

MARIE

Kids. Go out on the porch. It's not cold. Well, put your coats on. Go out on the porch or Auntie Theresa will beat you. Yes, she will. Yes, you will. Out. Out, out, out, out. And don't hang on the railing till I find you, splat, on the driveway.

Theresa, don't contradict me in front of the children. If I say you're going to beat them, say you will.

I didn't tell you this before the wedding because I didn't want you to back out. I didn't hate sex for the first few years. Sex is not a dirty word, Theresa. Wait till you have kids and people you hardly know talk about your vagina like it's a rug. Sex is disgusting, but you have to do it. It's like having your monthly time or tweezing your eyebrows.

Door slams as the children charge back inside.

Kids! I said to stay outside! You'd be outside if Auntie Theresa had a skating rink on the porch. Yes, you would. Well, fine, go tear up boxes. EMPTY BOXES. And don't bother that bird!

(back to Theresa) If you're not in the mood, tell him you have a headache. It usually works. Unless he's had a bad day at work, then you just have to ride it out. Maybe sometimes a husband might climb the hedge and mow the neighbor's lawn, if you follow me. Theresa, how can you not follow that? It won't kill you to have a glass of wine before bed. Get it blessed if you want. If you're like me, it'll just make you a little sleepy. After a while it cuts down to three times a week anyway, and that's not that bad. Just buck up, that's my advice.

Oh, geez, we have to scram. OK, kids, let's leave Aunt Theresa to her housework -- she sure has plenty of it. Did we get you a gift? Oh, we did. Honestly, Theresa. It's the kids. David! Put your sister down - she's too heavy to lift. What did we get you? Oh, that's right. See? That's what happens. Two kids - the brain leaks out of your head and you never see it again.

John Patrick, help Margaret with her coat – not like that, you’ll pull her arm off. Let’s see: two, three – six. OK, got ‘em all. I came with six, right? God help me. Kids, kiss auntie bye – say “bye” – say “bye” – John Patrick, you did that on purpose –

Marie continues to scold as she marches the children out as Theresa is, once again, the focus.

THERESA

Bye! Bye, kids. Auntie loves you. Oh! Margaret – careful sweetie!

Theresa alone. She sits on the edge of chair where Nana is sleeping.

She may even put her head on Nana’s shoulder and close her eyes for just a moment. She doesn’t really have a moment to catch her breath.

A LOUD KNOCK on the door. Theresa exits as IRENE, the upstairs neighbor, comes in with several large boxes. She’s sort of a hold-over from World War II.

IRENE

I didn’t open nothin! They were bringing boxes by and bringing boxes by and I was starting to worry about them there on the porch so I says to the mailman, I says to him, I’ll take those in so she won’t come home to soggy presents! Hey, hey, careful, let me move that where you want it! A little thing like you, you shouldn’t be picking that up! You got no place to walk in here! You need a path!

Irene is moving heavy boxes around the room. She ends up clearing a walking path.

I’m Irene, and that’s me upstairs, and if you need some coffee or flour, you just haul yourself right on upstairs. Oh, boy. Catholic, huh? My husband, Charlie’s an usher.

Usher – hah! They all hang out in the back of the church and talk, or they go outside and smoke while the rest of us have to sit there, so he'll be the one taking your money. I tell him to keep a little of it, we'll go have brunch after church, but, no. I tell him, We're just paying for whiskey for the priests, but he says, ah, shut up, Irene. I tell him, shut up yourself. Well, things are set with us, you know? We were married in 1940—whew! 16 years! Time flies!

Where do you want this? No, I got it. You lift with your knees, not your back. Hey, feel this – feel my arm. That's a bicep. This is a tricep. Pecs: pectoral muscles. Make a muscle. Ew. Not much to show there, huh. Not to worry. I heard from the mailman that we had a young newlywed couple coming in, so I took the liberty, I hope you don't mind, to get you a present. Dumbbells! Yeah, weights. Here – hold it like this – here you take the little one and I'll take the big one. First, you wanna keep your knees bent. Protects your back.

Now the basic lift is called a curl – because you're curling your arm, that's right. Well, don't try to do as many as I can do – just do a few to start with. Oh! Careful there – here's a booklet with all the basics. Hey, this'll make a nice punching bag. I'm gonna show you a few basic jabs.

Thumb outside – inside, you break it. I learned most of my boxing technique from books, because it's hard to get someone to teach you. Down at gyms, it's all guys, so how am I gonna learn? They don't teach women this stuff. Men are men and that is the truth. Now, my Charlie - you know how the Irish are. I'll be honest with you, and I shouldn't say this to a newlywed, but when he left for the war, I was glad. Oh, I didn't want him to get killed, no, of course I didn't want that, but somehow, just not

come back. Meet a nice English girl or something. Or a German girl – I didn't even care! Boy, you sure got a sweet little tap there, Theresa. I don't think a bird would feel it. Oh, hey! You got a bird! I made a joke and I didn't even mean to!

So, once the war got going, they put us all to work. You know, in the factories – and within a few weeks we all noticed we were developing muscles. I'd always been big, but in a flabby kind of way. He always said, if you wouldn't eat like a horse, you wouldn't look like one. I know, that's not a nice thing to say. And if I told him, shut up, you're not exactly the prince of charming yourself, CLOCK. A good one to the gob - oh, the gob - that's the face - the head - it's Irish - he's Irish, did I tell you that? Now, hit with the right, block with the left. Protect your face, like this.

And then the war ended. It was six months at least before the men came home. I'm thinking: I'll be without muscles by then, right? So, I got myself a set of barbells and when he came home, I was even bigger! Stronger! When I met him at the train station, I squeezed him so hard I knocked the breath out of him! He said, Jesus, Irene, give a man a breath! I could have lifted him up, but I didn't want to show off. On the car ride home, he told me all he wanted to do: which meal he wanted me to cook (lamb stew), and he wanted to watch "Gunsmoke," and put his feet up on the ottoman, and maybe I could rub his feet with castor oil like I used to when we were first married, because the war ruined them, and he wasn't kidding about that - they're still disgusting.

Anywho, when he's telling me all this in the car, I'm thinking: first of all, you told me this in the last four letters, and, second, I'm thinking: I know you're gonna be sweet

as pie for the first couple of weeks, but if there's trouble after that, there won't be the same kind of trouble, if you follow me.

So we get home, and he peels off his coat, hands it to me, asks me, "honey," to put a pot of coffee on the stove - he missed my coffee more than anything - probably more than me, I'm thinking, then I think, that's a bad thought (Oh, my God, how many toasters do you need?) and then, as soon as I got the coffee on, and, yeah, yeah, I'm happy to see him, I am, I love the stupid jerk, and there he is, finally back in his chair and I felt suddenly really sorry for him. Because we saw the war pictures. Yeah, I thought, it's good to have him home. So, I had sorta forgotten about my arms. And when the coffee was finished brewing - he's making little snoozy noises like he's dozing off, but still he's saying, oh, Irene: the smell of your coffee! Oh, it's easy, I'll show you how - the trick to good coffee is a pinch of cinnamon in the basket.

Anywho, there he is, and I fixed his coffee the way he likes it, and I brought it over to him. I even whispered, in case he had fallen asleep: Charlie, Charlie, want your coffee? And he sat up, and he kissed me again, even though he'd already done that at the train station. I thought: Jesus, he musta really missed me, so I kissed him, and we get into a little snuggling and huggin and I forgot all about my arms till he says: Christ, Irene! What's under your shirt! What's under your shirt, he says!! I says: ME! It's from the war, from working in the factory. And, oh, by the way, I says, see that curtain? And I go over and whip it all back and there's this gym.

He said a woman oughtn't have arms like that and I told him: wait till you see my legs. And he's bellowing, and I says, it's too late now, and he says, Well, stop. I'm home now. I can protect you, and I says, SO CAN I.

The phone rings –

Oh, you get that – off I go – I'm right upstairs if you need me. You practice -- you'll be solid as a rock!

Irene goes and Theresa comes back. She gets the phone.

THERESA

(overlapping with Irene) I can't thank you enough – I will – they're lovely.

Hello? Hi, Daddy. Thank you. We got in late yesterday. It was great. Very wet.

Lots of water at Niagara. Yes. Yes. Yes. Auntie Grace, Daddy? Auntie Grace?

Why did you have to – Mom doesn't have to – you don't have to torture her, Daddy.

Are you really in Tahiti? I'm sure it is. Mom's postcard, Dad. Did you have to cross it out? If you made a mistake, you could just use another postcard – they're cheap, Daddy. They're cheap. Don't be – don't be awful. It is awful. It's childish. Well, I'm sorry, but --

I thought you were going to wait till after the wedding. I thought you meant, this year, or several months from now. Not, I didn't think, as soon as I threw the bouquet.

Auntie Grace, Dad? You forgot to mention that part, Dad. That makes things a little worse. I should have listened to Bobbie. We should have told Mom. Because then she might have been able to brace herself in some way – who cares if it ruined the wedding? I know it was expensive, and I appreciate it, we appreciate it, but we --

Dad, I wish you hadn't told me. It's not a secret if you tell other people. Well, why tell me? Why tell anyone? Just, go if you're going. I thought you were just going to go away for a little bit. Clear your head, take a little rest. But this is – Daddy. If you're with Auntie Grace, what are you planning on –

Dad. This is wrong. You need to pray for guidance. I'm not telling you what to do. No, wait, I guess I am. I didn't make up the Commandments. They just make sense.

Dad, I'm unpacking. I have to go.

OK. Love you, too.

She hangs up. She kneels at her little altar. Says the Hail Mary (the head is bowed on the name of "Jesus."):

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners. . . " Pray for us sinners. . .

She gets up and opens some more boxes. Then, a find. An idea. She calls Bobbie.

THERESA

Honey? Hi honey. Your Auntie Mil sent the nicest present. Bed spreads! Isn't that nice? Yes, bedspreads. Yes, two. Uh. Twin beds. That's not funny, Bobbie. It's a very nice gift. Bobbie, what do you think? We could get twin beds and use the spreads your aunt sent. But if she comes to visit and she doesn't see them being used, she'll be hurt. Minnesota's not that far off. We. Uh. We could push them together. Sometimes. Uh. Whenever you want. Whenever we want. Sure. Every

night. Bobbie, it's not funny. What about your aunt? Sure. We'll just put them on if she comes.

(DING! From the oven timer).

Oh! There are my muffins. OK, miss you more. Bye.

Theresa and her muffins. They won't come out of the pan. She bangs and smashes and tries to force them out. No good.

She gives up on them, tossing the whole pan in the sink.

She starts to peel some onions for the pot roast. They're strong, and they make her eyes tear. Distracted, she wipes her eye with a hand that has onion juice on it, and that's really bad. She wipes and splashes and tries to get the onion crying jag under control, but it develops a life of its own. A moment of that, then:

The DOORBELL chimes repeatedly while the door is beaten aggressively.

LUCILLE (O.S)

Theresa Miller!!! Theresa! Whhhhooooohhhooooooooo!!

Theresa retreats as her younger sister, LUCILLE, crashes through the door. She's dressed in too many layers of garish African clothing and her hair is Lucille Ball-red.

LUCILLE

AAAAAAGGGGGGGHHHHHHHH! Trey! Lemme see my married sister! Hey! You've had sex! How was it? Hah! It was juicy, right? It was sticky, right? AAAGGGGGGGHHHHHHH!!! "Interesting"? What does that mean? I can't believe Bobbie waited till you were married. He's a weirdo.

She notices the color of the wall(s).

Ach! What is that? That, what is that color we always had to have in our room – the only reason I put up with that Mary-blue paint – what do you call it? *De La Robia* Blue – was because it was the same color as the ocean on all the maps. Yuck.

She checks on the bird.

Hey, Saint Francis of Assisi! Hey! The bird's dead. Just kiddin'. He's all right. He's fat. You feed him too much. If he flew he'd hit the floor in about two seconds.

Look at all this shit! Theresa, you have to have a yard sale already! "Shit" is not a dirty word, Trey – it's something we all do. Well, maybe not you, but the rest of us do. On the islands, they have a fruit called a mango – it make "man go!"

(re: her own hair) You like it? It's two shades redder than last time! Theresa, there's nothing wrong with dying your hair. I bet half the nuns at Saint Anthony's dye their hair – Oh, yah, they take off their wimples and it looks like a beauty salon in there. God, Theresa. What'd you get, 600 "Mary" statues? Don't people know you already have 300 of them? And you were not supposed to play with your Mary statues, Trey. You're lucky the Pope didn't find out about that.

She manipulates the statues the way little girls play with dolls; first, a statue of

The Holy Family, then a statue of the Blessed Mother.

"Oh, Joseph, let's go to Bethlehem." "Oh, thank you Angel Gabriel: I AM blessed amongst women."

And Nana shouldn't have made those nun costumes for your dolls. It's just bizarre to march dolls around the room for afternoon prayers.

Oh, hey! Hey! Here's my song!

She bolts over to the radio and blasts a rock & roll tune. Her dance is not slick - it's messy and aggressive. She moves ferociously and, to the best of her ability, it's very African.

How's this? How's this? Huh? This is how it's done in Africa! It's not lovely! It's rock and roll. And if you ever had any fun you'd know that. And now you're married and it's too late. Theresa, you're just like Mother Mary Michael. I know she's nice, but she's a nun! No, no, I don't want to sit! I'm jiving. Jiving. It means dancing great. I don't want any juice. How about a beer? In Europe, 12 year olds drink beer.

The song ends, or she turns it down.

Oh, all right, all right. Whew! Whoa! That rocks! That rocks and rolls!

Ew. My armpits smell. I'm breaking myself in, Theresa. In other countries, they don't use deodorant and things like Americans do. Theresa, smell your pits – they smell like a garden, I bet. That's not the way they're meant to smell.

(re: her LARGE gold hoop earrings) Like 'em? I got em pierced! Pierced! Trey, it'd take me five seconds. Two ice cubes and a pin and you'd have pierced ears! It's not a desecration of the body, honey. It's jewelry. I bet half the nuns at St.

Anthony's – I bet they do! In Africa, they pierce the ears of newborns, and they just keep adding holes and adding holes and by the time they're old woman, their ears look like crowns. Fabulous!

So, NOW that you're wedding's over, now I can tell you, but don't tell Mom and Dad yet: we're going. We're going to Africa! Nigeria!

Ah, Trey, he's wonderful! He's smart and funny - he's SO funny - I never met anyone who makes me laugh that hard! And he's funny because he's angry - he's so angry! Oh, he's a dream! He's dark and strong – he's got a Charles Atlas stomach – he does! And he's going to grow his hair long when we get there.

Trey: we're living in the same hut. Mtumba says it's better so if the war starts he'll be able to find me. I don't know what war: they didn't start it yet. M-tumba.

It's not a sin to live together - listen, sins are not an idea we agree with. No, no, we're neither going back to university -- because we don't need that kind of education. We need the real kind of education - being out in the world, not this dopey little mini-city, but the real world. So living together is part of our education - it's part of the gift that we -- just like we give ourselves to one another in physical union. Oh, Trey. Physical union. Those nuns have made you dense. I bet half of them are virgins!

You need to read the Kinsey Report - it's not a dirty book. It's scientific - he says that pre-marital sex tends to produce better marriages. Otherwise, you could be in for some nasty surprises. OF COURSE we're having pre-marital sex, Trey. What other kind can we have? Look -- I keep them on me all the time, and so does Mtumba --

She pulls several condom packets out of her pocket and opens one up.-

Theresa. You're not serious. It's a condom. Oh, Theresa, you're from another planet! You fit it over the fellow's thing - his doo-hickey -- his PENIS, Theresa. Penis is not a dirty word, Trey, it's just a body part, like ELBOW. Oh, Theresa, they're not - - uh oh! If it touches you, you'll die!

Lucille chases Theresa around the room with a condom. Theresa may make an appearance for the condom chase.

Theresa, run, run! If it touches you, you'll turn Protestant! You'll have a scar! Look! They look like balloons! Mtumba calls it a "love balloon." All right, all right, I'm throwing it away -- where's your trash? Well, where am I supposed to put it - it doesn't go back into the package. Oh, get out from behind the chair. You're ridiculous.

We just don't want to have a baby right now. You and Bobbie should use them - otherwise you'll be pregnant next week and you won't even have a chance to unpack the boxes. It's not a sin to have a condom in the house. I'm not, uh, I'm not Catholic anymore. I'm not going to hell, I promise. I'm going to paradise. With Mtumba. Please don't pray for my immortal soul. I hate when you do that. Be happy for me, Trey. You're my only hope in this family.

Lucille is less prominent now as Theresa takes over.

THERESA

Mtumba? Mtumba? So, he's from Africa? Then why does he have an African name? What's his original name? Phil? Phil is a nice name. Why doesn't he just go by Phil? A what? What's an African Revolutionary? That doesn't sound good at all, Lucille. Overthrow what? Oh, I don't like the sound of that at all.

Now, honey, honey, you've always been, um, high-spirited. But, you know there's a limit. That man, that other man - we don't have to mention his name, honey. But that man - well, we thought that was the limit. We thought that was the absolute limit - because he was married! Now, I'm not saying that Phil is married. Mtumba. All

right. Mtumba. But, so you'd be, what? Mrs. Mtumba? That's his first name? What's his last? No one can pronounce, that Lucille. How do you spell it? There are no names without vowels. They need vowels in Africa, too, Lucille - you're spelling it wrong. How will I write to you with no vowels?

Lucille, this is not a good time to leave. I just think you should wait till everything settles down – I know you already waited. I just, I just don't want you to leave. Don't leave. Don't leave me. Don't leave me.

Oh, Lucille - What have I done? What have I done? Mother of God, help me. I shouldn't have left the convent. No, I shouldn't have. Why didn't ANYONE in this family think this was a good idea? Saint Therese's four sisters were all nuns! No, I don't think you would be a good nun, Lucille. Uh, no, not Marie, that's not what I'm – I would have appreciated it if someone had thought it was not a stupid idea.

The convent is so, I don't know, so clean and still and quiet. And the sisters are so sure. So quiet and still and sure. And I miss the chores. Devotion is apparent in the simplest thing – gardening and laundry and dishes -- and, ah, sometimes, Lucille, sometimes in the very early morning – the birds wake you, and the tiniest gray light comes in through the window, and you just move out of bed, you don't even stand, you just go from lying to kneeling. You bless yourself – and you pray, you just think about the Lord and his burden, and his life of love and devotion, and, oh, oh, Lucille, it's a wonderful way to be. You could be like the Lord. Or his Mother. His brave and wonderful, his divine, his devoted mother. Oh! I love her, Lucille! I just love her. The Blessed Mother. Blessed Virgin. That must have been nice. To be so

chaste. To be so sure. To have an angel land in your room and tell you what to do.
Is it too much to ask for a sure path?

Why did I leave? I was – I was sure – about, about being a Sister -- well, no, but pretty sure. Kind of sure, about the -- but suddenly, there's Bobbie. And all I can think about is babies. And curtains. And baking. A home. A home with him in it. Suddenly, the convent doesn't seem right either. *Saint Therese* said, "Given a choice, I would choose nothing." I guess that's what I did. And I will be a terrible disappointment to my husband. In so many ways. I can't do it, Lucille. I can't go back to the convent, I guess. And I can't stay here. What should I do? Oh, sissy, what should I do?

I don't want to come to Africa.

You're sweet. I think you are. I don't care what everyone else says. Bobbie thinks so, too. Yes, he is sweet, I know --

Phone rings.

Excuse me. Hello? Oh. Sure she is. For you.

A pause, while Lucille is on the phone, and Theresa is tidying the kitchen and trying not to listen to Lucille's quick conversation. Lucille has hung up.

He doesn't sound African. But I would think an African would sound – he's from Philadelphia? Phil from Philadelphia. Philadelphia Phil. Well, well. OK, no, it's OK.

You go meet him. I have to – I'm making a cake, so, yeah, I'd better get that going.

Oh, I'm fine. Just a little newlywed jitters, right?

Don't leave for Africa yet, honey. I couldn't stand it. I just couldn't.

Love you, too. Bye.

With Lucille gone, Theresa works on the cake. She turns on the radio. A moment. The phone RINGS.

Hello? Hi, honey. Oh, just making a cake. Orange cake with butter cream frosting. What? What do you – how can you not like that? It's good. How could I not know that? I've known you over a year and I didn't know you didn't like any kind of fruit baked into – but it's just orange flavoring, honey. Uh, no, I never saw you eat banana bread. But I guess I wasn't really watching for it. Oh, no, it's fine. I didn't add the orange flavoring yet. No cooked fruit. Got it. Well. Now I know. Miss you more. OK, bye.

Theresa dumps a whole bowl of orange cake mix into the sink.

She shuts off the radio and puts on the "Ave Maria."

She takes her apron off and ties it around her head as a wimple.

She kneels. Prays, or tries. She can't do it.

She checks on the bird, whistles to it, or tries, but it just makes her sad.

She kneels again, but as the music envelops the room, she can't pray.

Lights out.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Lights up. Apartment is empty, except for the boxes, etc. There hasn't been much progress with the unpacking.

After a moment, Theresa enters with a few bags of groceries. She plunks them on the table, checks on Nana, dashes back to the kitchen and unpacks the bags: among the goods there's a slab of meat and a bag of parsnips. She takes one out of the bag. Not sure she wants to peel it.

From the refrigerator, she removes a Saran-Wrap-covered pan with onions and carrots nicely arranged. She plops the meat into the middle of it.

She turns on the radio and works on dinner, struggling with the parsnips.

She manages a few then places the whole thing carefully in the oven, turns it on, then reaches for the phone.

THERESA

Honey? Hi honey. Guess what? No, not another toaster. Really – no, honey -- dinner is in the oven! I got the parsnips! Uh, no, not too much salt. I don't think there is, anyway. Garlic, yes, a bit. Right. Parsley? You don't mean parsnip – you mean – uh, OK. Do you want mashed or baked? Potatoes. I can make mashed. You just mash them, right? I can do it. Are you sure? OK, baked.

There might be a TAP at the door. Hard to tell. It just barely catches her attention, not sure she even heard it.

Honey – the butcher calls me 'Mrs. Miller'. Isn't that nice? I know that's my –

Another TAP?

Yes? Hello? Is someone there?

Sweetie, there's someone at the door. OK, All right. Miss you more. Bye.

I'm coming – Oh, Maya! Hello! Where's Emilia Lee?

Theresa recedes as Maya, a frail, shaky woman enters without her Welcome Wagon partner. Theresa is, perhaps, still available for Maya's small gift:

MAYA

I hope you don't mind my coming back – I forgot to give this to you this morning. This is a pen from my husband's company – it's a little book store. He can order anything you want. He's using the pens for advertising – isn't that clever? Then anytime you pick up the pen, you think of him.

Theresa may even take the pen before she goes for now.

(re: the boxes, etc.) Oh, I see you're making some progress.

I'm sorry about Emilia Lee and me. We've known each other too long, I guess. Mrs. Mi– Theresa, thank you. Uh, Theresa, Emilia Lee doesn't know this – no one does – I'll be away for a few days. She knows I'm going away for a few days -- I told her I'm going to my sister's to help with her fall cleaning. My husband thinks I'm going to my mother's to help with some polishing – she has some very nice old furniture. Uh, I wonder, Theresa. You being a nun – a former – almost a nun – a former novice, right. Uh. Do you still pray, dear? I'm sorry to ask such a personal question -- oh, good.

I'm going into the hospital for a few days. Just for some tests and things. They're just going to be finding out some, oh, some questions about things. There are just some, uh, some lumps that I've found. And so they want to – to check. That's all. I'm so sorry to trouble you with this – might I ask you to say a few prayers for me?

Or one, if you think of it. Thank you. You're a dear girl. That's very sweet. I won't keep you --

Oh. No, don't bother right now -- well, certainly. I don't know if I can kneel -- fine. I'll just sit.

Maya sits. She looks down at Theresa, who's apparently kneeling beside her.

Maya blesses herself.

Maya places her hand on the arm of the chair, apparently under Theresa's hand. A moment, while Maya absorbs Theresa's prayer for her.

Thank you. That was very sweet. Very pretty. You're a nice girl. We're lucky to have you in the neighborhood.

I guess I'll scoot on home. I have some things to tidy up before I --

Oh, you don't have to do that. I'll just bring some magazines to read, and -- well, all right. I'll be at St. Elizabeth's. The bus goes right by it. Thursday would be fine. I'll see you then.

Well, I'll let you get back to your -- goodness, there are a lot of boxes -- thank you, Theresa. I will.

Maya leaves as Theresa takes focus. She may say a prayer or light a candle for Maya. The phone RINGS.

THERESA

Hello? Hi, Daddy. No, I'm not mad at you. Disappointed. A little amazed. I'm sorry that you were so unhappy. I mean, you must have been so terribly unhappy. Yeah. I know. Just found yourself in the wrong place. Yes, I know. I don't know, Dad. It's

not for me to – to judge, yes. Daddy, don't send any more postcards to Mom. Just leave her alone for a while.

No, I don't mind. You can call whenever you like. OK, bye. Love you.

She hangs up. After a moment, there's a lively RAP at the door. MOTHER MARY MICHAEL looks like an apparition or a statue, but she is a well-worn and supremely happy nun. She carries some gifts.

THERESA

Mother Mary Michael! What a surprise! I'm so thrilled – I'm so happy to see you!

Oh, look at this. Holy water from Lourdes. Oh, my! I'll keep it forever. Thank you.

Mother, you shouldn't have – oh! (*it is yet another Madonna statue.*).. No, no, I love it – you can't have too many!

Yes, yes, this is it – this is my home! You'll have to bring a toaster back to the sisters! Tell them hello for me. Tell them I miss them all terribly. Tell them I'm fine, just fine. Married, I guess they know that. . . So, here we have this apartment, and soon we'll have a house -- Bobbie's working so hard. Here I am, surrounded by toasters and ashtrays and tablecloths, more than anyone could ever use in one life time – I'm sure I'll have it cleaned up in no time at all. Those are dumbbells – weights. My neighbor brought them. Yes, the neighbors seem very nice. I think it's a nice neighborhood. I think, yes, I think I'll be a good housewife, not right away, no, but, no, oh, Mother -- he's got himself Niagara Falls for a wife, and Saint Therese for a wife -- pray for Bobbie, Mother! Look at this mess! I'll make a horrible wife! I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm not fine. Oh, Mother! Mother, I should have taken my vows! Poor, Bobbie! I should never have married him. I should have joined the convent. I

should have remained celibate. I see now that it's awful. Bobbie's such a gentleman, you know, he never tried anything too fresh, but then, boom, as soon as we were married he expected -- he expects -- Oh, Mother, I shouldn't be telling you this -- really? You don't? That's very sweet. Can I -- let me get you some coffee. Oh, Niagara was beautiful! Yes, yes, God's wonder, indeed. Yes.

As you're driving into the valley, you can see the river. And there are boats! So many are little power boats. And there are ferries and tug boats - big tug boats - you know, they get pulled. The boat has so much cargo that it can't push itself, so it's being dragged. There was one - the Water Way it was called, it was going in the same direction we were. Right below us on the canal, and we were right with it. I got to watch it the whole way. I didn't notice I was crying till Bobbie said, Oh, the Water Works! Not the Water Way! The Water Works! My wife, the Water Works! Then he talks about the wedding. Then he talks about our week together, here at The Honeymoon Haven, and then we'll go home and there'll be all these presents waiting for us, and all our friends and our family, and we'll move into the apartment and start our life together, all these things he's saying, and I stop crying, because now I want to throw up.

Later, we were standing on rim of the dam. The wind was strong, and Bobbie tucked me inside his coat, against him, so I was warm. We stood there and I felt I wanted to go into the Falls. To go into them, plunge, and down into all that -that rush of water. It was this feeling of not being clean. The shower only goes over you, and a bath only means you're sitting in whatever you came in with. The Falls,

they're so rapid. So much water. It would go everywhere. And you would finally get clean. Really clean. But I'll never be that kind of clean again.

I'm tired, Mother. Really tired. As soon as he falls asleep, I cry. I shouldn't tell you this -- you're so sweet - but as soon as he falls asleep, I run to the bathroom and I run a little bit of a bath and – the first night we were there, I found some Lysol under the sink, so I put it in the water, really hot water . . . that kind of hurts. But I did it every night. I'm getting a little -- um, sore. Mother, I just don't know what to do. Poor Bobbie.

What's a douche?

Mother Mary Michael takes over the room. Theresa fades but doesn't completely go away.

MOTHER MARY MICHAEL

A little bit of water and white vinegar – no other kind of vinegar. In the drugstore, you can buy the container and you'll be clean as a whistle, and anyway in the littlest time you won't mind it at all because this is the way of things, dear.

For the baths, try Johnson's Foot Soap. It's the best thing for everything.

Now as for all this soreness and such, surely, your mother explained these thing to you. Well, surely she meant to.

Now, now, Theresa. There, there. Do you recall sending in a few young wives to see me? We have lots of visits from young wives who were, let's just say, a little amazed at the whole system, but we mustn't question the genius of God's work.

Have you ever looked in the bottom drawer behind my desk? Textbooks, Theresa,

dozens of them. On this very subject. Do you think you're the only one with questions. You're not.

Oh, darling, don't cry. Oh, my! Water Works for a wife! Isn't Bobbie sweet? You understand the basic mechanics, right? How can you not – oh, my. You'll do just fine when you understand. We'll start from scratch. Uh, let's see. Usually I use a pen and the ink bottle -- here. Oh, my. A parsnip. Ooh – Theresa, dear, take a deep breath. Bless yourself. This will work. Now, may I? Here you have, a spoon. A wooden spoon. Let's just say, for the sake of explanation, that the spoon represents a certain thing that I am thinking of. Theresa, open your eyes. It's just a spoon. Now, dear. This spoon has a lot to offer. Here now, let's take these two -- what are these? Kiwi? Oh, boy. I need to keep these at the convent. Say like this, when I hold them up against the spoon - oh, doesn't that look familiar! Well, for goodness' sake, take a look one of these nights. Now these two kiwis are full of life! Yes, that's right! Full of life -- half a life, Theresa. And your body - the receptacle for the wooden spoon and the kiwis contains the other half of life!

Do you have -- oh, here we are. Yes, so you have eggs. But these eggs are no good without what's inside the kiwis. This is called "sperm." Theresa, sit down if you're getting woozy, we'll be through in no time. So, the kiwis empty out into the spoon. Then - here – we need a narrow opening for the spoon to fit into – we can use this toaster -- don't worry, it's not plugged in. No, how about a loaf pan? This is nice -- I love these ceramic ones - I can't believe they can go right into the oven. All right, so then for the narrow opening, let's use this bowl. You would agree that a spoon can go in a bowl? How else could you make a cake? All right, we'll use a

smaller bowl - this is a nice set. Who gave this to you? Oh, I do like your Auntie Joan - she's very sweet. Well, I realize that, and you must offer your pain to God, and in time, I'm sure, He'll grant you some -- all right, then let's use this glass.

These are lovely. Who gave these to you? Oh, Mrs. Murphy is very sweet, God bless her.

Well, now the kiwis empty their juice into the wooden spoon - yes, I know the spoon is solid, Theresa we're just using it as an example - say it's a turkey baster. So, the kiwis empty out into the turkey baster, then the turkey baster empties out into the glass and the juice, the semen - they hit the egg -- oh, here, I'll put the egg in here - you know - crack, here we are -- the egg is all smushy and the kiwi juice is all smushy, and the kiwi juice and the egg sit in the heat, not the oven as with baking, but 98.6 degrees heat and they sit there until, God willing, until they make a baby. Then you can bring the baby to the convent and all the sisters will fuss over it and have a special Mass for it and we'll go to the Christening and we'll pray for the baby all his life, and it doesn't do any harm to a child to have a bunch of nuns praying for it all its life.

Any questions?

You look pale. I'll get you some coffee.

Theresa, the calling was not for you. I've said this before to you, and I hope one day you'll forgive me. You like children too much. You like cooking. You wanted a refrigerator of your own - it's nothing wrong with it. You like linen. Who'll be a better housewife than you? This home will be tidy as a convent. The wedding veil was yours.

This coffee is thick as paint. Oh, I'm teasing you. I can drink it.

Theresa: If I had had a daughter, I'd have wanted her to be you. Not like you - but you.

I want you to come by the convent next week. We'll go through that drawer. We'll look at the books, and we'll figure out everything you need to know. I just bought The Kinsey Report – I'll try and finish it before you come. Theresa, we offer what help we can in this world.

Well, now, I'd best get back. I don't miss the outside, Theresa. Too much noise and light and – oh – just motion! I have to go back to chapel and lie prostrate at the foot of the cross for hours before I feel quiet again. I guess this old turtle's lost her shell, eh?

We miss you at the convent, Sist --- oops! Theresa. No one mends like you do.

Sister Adam can do it, but not like you. We'll be a bunch of old patched up ragamuffin penguins in six months. But, we offer our losses to the Lord.

Theresa, you're going to grow a little shell, just enough, and you'll be a lovely, bright beacon in a beautiful, peaceful home and love will be drawn in.

Bless you, my child.

No more Lysol.

Theresa receives her blessing and Mother Mary Michael bustles out.

Something has fallen onto the floor of the oven and smoke trickles out of the oven. Theresa dashes over and starts waving the smoke away with a dish towel.

The phone RINGS. She grabs it. She can just barely reach the oven while on the phone. The smoke is getting thick.

THERESA

Hello? Hi honey. Just cooking. What happened? Uh, sure go ahead. Uh huh. Uh huh. He did? What did you say? Uh huh. No, that seems right. Well, what did he say?

The phone cord won't reach very far - maybe she has to put it down and pick it up to say "uh huh" once in a while -- but in the end, she has no idea what he said.

Really? No, honey, that seems great. Yeah, we'll talk about it when you get home. You can tell me the whole thing again so I'm sure I've got it. OK. Miss you more. OK, bye.

Theresa waves the towel at Nana to make sure she's not had too much smoke. The fanning wakes her up as Theresa becomes NANA.

Nana uses the French pronunciation of Therese.

NANA

Ah, what's a little smoke? I'm fine. All new brides burn a few dinners. My little Therese, cooking dinner. I was waiting for a moment alone with you. I had a few naps. I listen when I'm awake. Although, I don't listen if I can help it. No one wants to listen to me. Why should I listen to anyone else? I could tell them so much. I have recipes in my head no one's even tasted. Or I could say: stop doing that, that's stupid. Like that.

Therese: brush your hair at night. They like that. Make sure you let him watch you do that. Let him brush it if he wants to. It feels very nice. Don't go to bed with curlers in your hair. You don't need pins sticking in your head when you're trying to sleep - you need your sleep, and he needs to be able to touch your hair.

Don't wear too much lipstick. It gets on his shirt. Get him some coffee in the morning. Put it the way he likes it. And when he comes home from work, kiss him – don't forget. Even if you're in the middle of doing something. Don't forget.

Call him "dear" or "darling." 20 years from now, when you think you don't love him, call him "darling" anyway. Because if you wait, it will come back. It comes and goes. You have children, they distract you. You'll find he's very strange and annoying at times. Call him "dear" anyway. God forbid, you lose a child, call him "darling." You have a tragedy, you both fall apart - you're no good to one another. Suddenly you hate the sight of him. That'll pass. Hard work.

The hair thins, the teeth yellow, the waist spreads. Honey, my bosoms are on my belly! Ha! Ah, it's no matter. Call him "dear" and, as you age, when the children go away, and there you are alone again, if you're lucky, and you've been good to each other, you will be *dear*.

Your grampa, God rest him, was so shy. Of course he knew the farm animals but we were not cows. I think he was afraid he'd hurt me. The night of our wedding, he slept in a chair in the living room. (We didn't go to honeymoons in those days, you know. We had work to do). I didn't want him to be in the dark, so I brought out a candle, and set it by the fireplace for him. He did it again on the second night, so I brought out two candles and slept in the chair across from him. Night after night, I

moved the chair a few inches closer, till I could hold his hand while he slept. Just hold his hand. Have him hold your hand while you fall asleep. You can start the children next month. Learn to hold the hand first, my dove. And teach him to hold yours. The heart is in the hand, my Therese.

It appears that Nana's fallen asleep again, so Theresa is back.

THERESA

Nana? Nana? Pretty Nana.

She sits and settles into Nana's chair. Fussess with her blankets. She tends the woman she remembers.

After a moment, there's a WHHHOOOPP from outside: LUCILLE

approaching. Theresa fades as the door is BANGED, the doorbell CHIMES --

LUCILLE

I GOT IT I GOT IT I GOT IT I GOT IT! Trey! I've been waiting for this my whole life! Look! Look! It's a passport, you goose! A passport! You can go ANYWHERE. Mtumba got his, too. Oh, look, look: that's me! Ha! International traveler! In a few days, that'll have a stamp on it! From Africa.

Because Africa is where we have to be. In Nigeria, they just discovered oil. Oil! Do you know what that's going to mean? Freedom – Power – New life for the people of Nigeria. They've been dominated by the English, Trey, but the oil is THEIRS. It's on their land. Black people, in this world, they're not free! They're not even free in this country. But they will be. They're getting mad, and that's good. But their freedom's going to start in Africa - where the land was lost, it has to be taken back. Back to the roots of – I know I'm white, Theresa. Mtumba's so good to take me – I just hope

I don't get in his way. I won't belong at first. But then, in time, if I do everything right, and people see that I believe in freedom – what I believe and how much I believe it – they'll take me in. And, then. . .

No, not really. Would you tell Mom you were going Africa with a black boy? And I can't tell Marie. She'd tie me to a kitchen chair and God knows what the kids would do to a target like that. Trey, with you married and safe, I think all hell is gonna break loose in this family. It's gonna hit the fan, honey. Could you tell them for me? No. I'll write. They'll figure it out then. But don't say anything yet – let me get outta here first.

Trey, I want you to have this. It's a wedding present. I didn't really get a nice wrapping for it – here. Yeah, The Kinsey Report. Trey, take it. Oh, fine, fine, I'll put it under the couch -- Oh! Nana's here! HI NANA! She was here earlier? With the condom and the – ha ha. Well, if that didn't wake her up, I give up. NANA, I'M GOING TO AFRICA. MISS ME, OK?

Here. This is for you. It's from Mtumba. I told him you were sad.

Theresa and Lucille share the stage while Theresa reads the letter.

THERESA

“My dearest sister Theresa. Lucille has asked me to write to assure you that she will always be safe with me. There is great work to be done. Freedoms to be achieved. There are hearts to be opened and hatreds to be washed away. Your sister is a burning heart – she must burn brightly. I promise to be her friend and her man as long as she will have me. I will remain, always, your loving brother, Mtumba.
(Philadelphia Phil.)

Well.

Don't get too much sun. It's hotter in Africa, so you have to be careful. And if you do wear African clothing, I want you to promise me that it won't be immodest. And send me a picture. Not a postcard: a picture of you. And write to everyone as soon as you get there – I won't say anything till you write. And tell Mtumba I said hello. And visit as soon as you can. And write me every week. Every single week. Of course I'll write. I'll write every week. Every day sometimes.

Lucille, I have to pray for you. I can't help it. Be careful. Oh, my gosh, I love you. Be safe. God bless.

When Lucille goes, Theresa takes another crack at the coffee but then doesn't bother.

She blesses herself and prays the Hail Mary. She stops mid-prayer, checks that there's no one at the door, then takes off her apron and ties the strings under her hair, covering her head. She makes a swell nun.

After a moment, Marie charges in. Theresa stays on stage with her, though they don't necessarily physically connect yet.

MARIE

Theresa, get that thing off your head! That's stupid! If you want to be a nun, go back to the convent. If you want to be a wife, have kids and do dishes, but don't be running around the house in a wimple! Do you have any aspirin?

She takes about six.

It's not too many. It's one aspirin per kid.

Kids: living room. Now. Don't touch ANYTHING or I'll put you through a wall.

“Gentle”? If I don’t talk loud enough, they ignore me. Theresa, when you have eight, you can tell me how to do it. I can see it now, Saint Theresa, with eight kids, no, 10, and it’s “yes, dear” this and “no, my darling,” that. Let me see how you do it when you’re up to your eyeballs in them.

From the living room, an explosion of noise: kid noise swells, the bird squawks, Irene drops a dumbbell on the ceiling, etc. At least one of the statues goes to bits. There’s a domino effect and the toasters and some other gifts go flying.

Oh, no!

Marie runs to pick up the statue, takes a quick swat at a kid.

Porch! All of you! Now!

Oh, geez. Theresa, I’m sorry. Your nice statue. Who gave you this? Oh, geez.

I’m sorry. I just can’t control them. Then I wonder why no one ever seems to want us around. I’ll have to move out of state or something. Go somewhere where there are no breakables. Because, really, I can’t -- if I can’t handle eight. . . oh, my God -- if I can’t handle eight -- how am I going to handle nine?

I just saw Doc Manning. I was pretty sure. Nine it is. Mother of God.

Do you have any wine - or – schnapps? What kind of wedding present is that? I’ll – just get me a little glass, will you, T?

T, I’ll die. I can’t go through this again. Tommy and I were even talking about, you know, some ways to prevent these things – oh, don’t go crazy. Nothing drastic. We tried that thing where you count the number of days since your monthly and that kind

of thing – rhythm method. The Church doesn't mind it, you know that. But, ach, we barely know what day it is, so, OK, so we blew it. Nine.

Remember Great Aunt Danielle? She fell down a flight of stairs, you know that. What you probably don't know because no one talks about it, is that she was pregnant. Yeah, it was number 10 or 12 or something, I can't remember. These things happen. You know. Sometimes you just break an ankle or a finger or something and it's not your fault if you fall down a flight of stairs. And sometimes you don't break an ankle.

I didn't tell Tommy yet. I'll tell him tonight, or this weekend. Ah, he'll be, I don't know. I guess he won't care that much. He doesn't have to have them sit there for nine months till his whole body explodes. And then, in the morning, he goes to work. Comes home just as they're going to bed. What'll he care? Ah, what am I saying? He likes having a bunch of them around. They all like their father better than they like me. I guess he's more fun.

I have to use your bathroom. Geez, here we go again. In the bathroom every ten seconds. Oh, my poor bladder.

Marie heads into the bathroom and MOM comes in. Theresa stays on stage with Mom.

MOM

OK, kids, Grandma's going inside – no, no, you stay out here. It's not cold.

I went and got my hair done. Oh, I do love that hair dryer. The silence in that dome, all you can hear is the air blowing down on you, the warm air on your shoulders and

on your face, down your chest, knowing your hair is coming out nice. I wonder if Tahiti's like that. There's a warm wind blowing on Daddy right now.

Where's Marie? (*calling into the bathroom*) Hi Marie!

So. I didn't go to Tahiti. It's south. I was going to. I was at the airport. Actually there. Actually, had a ticket. I just swung by the house and picked up a few things. And, off I went. I don't know where he is. I figure some sort of hotel or resort. I could find him. It's a small island. But, no. I won't go after him.

Daddy's watch is gone. I was putting away his clean socks, and I happened to rifle through all his drawers, and his watch is gone. The one Granddad gave him. It's gone. So I didn't go to Tahiti.

I was heading back here, and I thought the car sounded funny - that it had started making a noise. Except, no, it had stopped making a noise. So I listened. But it was Nana. NANA? I COULDN'T HEAR YOU. There's just some little noise that she makes. I missed it. And you know what? I miss my mother. MOM? Isn't that funny? I mean, because she's alive, but not really. She just sleeps all day. You can't understand a word she says. And she, ah, Theresa, she used to spray herself with rose water every day. Once in a while I dab a little rose water on her, when she seems perky, when she has a good day, but it doesn't help. She still smells old, and I can't ask her anything. You might like to ask your mother a thing or two. You might want to ask me things, in case I can offer you any tips.

Marie comes out of the bathroom, so she and Mom and Theresa are all in the kitchen together.

MARIE: Hi Mom. Have some schnapps. T - don't keep your glasses under the sink
– you keep them up above –

MOM: She's right, honey, you keep the glasses above your head. So you don't
drop things on them –

THERESA: Marie – that's OK, you don't have to move them – I'll do it. Do you have
something you want to tell Mom?

MARIE: No.

MOM: Theresa, you need some shelf liner.

THERESA: What's shelf liner –

MARIE: It's liner – it goes on the shelf.

MOM: We can go to the department store tomorrow.

THERESA: Mom, I really don't think I need any more stuff.

MOM: But you'll scratch your glasses.

MARIE: Why do you need two of these?

THERESA: They were gifts.

MARIE: Can I have a toaster?

MOM: Marie! You can't have her toaster –

MARIE: She's got a ton of them –

MOM: The pot roast smells good. You're using parsnips?

MARIE: What's a parsnip?

THERESA: It's a vegetable –

MARIE: It looks like a guy's --

MOM: Marie!

Mom notices the mess that Mother Mary Michael left behind --

MOM: Theresa, WHAT are you making?

THERESA Oh, it's nothing – I just dropped some – those are kiwi.

MARIE: What's a kiwi?

MOM: It's your home. If you want odd fruit in it, that's your business.

MARIE: Oh my God. I'm gonna be sick. Clean it up! Clean it up! (etc.)

THERESA: Ok, OK, I'm getting it – I'm getting it – OK – Mom, help me --

MOM: All right, all right, we're getting it – what's the matter with you –

MARIE: Nothing, nothing, I'm fine –

THERESA: Sit down Marie, sit, it's fine – we've got it, it's all right. She's fine, Mom.

She's – uh, Marie --

MARIE: Let me alone, T.

MOM: What? What? Fine, don't tell me. I don't care. Keep your little secrets.

MARIE: No secrets.

MOM: No, no secrets. We don't have any secrets in this family.

MARIE: What secrets? Theresa, what secret?

THERESA Oh, I don't –

MARIE Oh, come on, everybody tells you everything –

THERESA No, they don't –

MARIE: Oh, come on – Mom tells you everything –

MOM: I don't care – it doesn't matter to me.

MARIE: What doesn't matter -- **MOM:** Nothing – it's nothing –

THERESA: Daddy's gone.

MARIE Gone?

MOM: Gone.

MARIE: What kind of gone?

MOM: Gone, gone – Tahiti gone. He’s at the Riki Tiki something so and so with –

MARIE: For what?

MOM: For the golf! What do you think –

THERESA: He’s with Auntie Grace.

MARIE: What??

THERESA: She’s not our real auntie.

MARIE: I know that.

THERESA: You do? I didn’t know that --

MARIE: But he -- What did you do?

MOM: Do? What did I do? Why are you asking me what I did? I’m here, aren’t I?

What did I do?

MARIE: Well he wouldn’t just leave unless you – geez, Mom – what am I supposed to do without Daddy? He’s the only one who takes the kids for me – who’s going to take them bowling?

MOM: What are you supposed to do? What am I supposed to do? I’m the one he left --

THERESA: Now, let’s all, let’s all speak gently to one another –

MARIE: But what did you DO??

MOM: Well, I guess I cooked and cleaned and I guess I had a delicious hot meal waiting for him every night when he got home for thirty years. I guess I kept the

house spotless. I guess I was a perfect wife and mother for all these years! Yes, I can see where that would drive a man away.

I don't know what I did. I just don't.

MARIE: But you didn't see it coming?

THERESA: Marie, don't talk to her like that –

MARIE: Like what? I'm asking a question –

THERESA: Sometimes your voice is a little harsh --

MOM: It's like a cat screeching – maybe you should pack a bag for Tommy because he'll be taking off one of these --

THERESA: Mom! Please, don't upset Marie – she's had a rough day –

MOM: She's had a rough day!

THERESA: We've all had a long day, so, all right, why don't I make us some tea –

MARIE – where's that aspirin – what is Daddy thinking?

THERESA: Don't take any more aspirin, Marie, you'll get sick --

MOM: No one knows - how can anyone know what that man is thinking –

THERESA: He called.

MARIE & MOM: What?

THERESA: He – I talked to him.

MOM: He – he called you? Today? He called – why did he call you?

THERESA: I don't know – he –

MARIE: Why didn't he call -- Mom. He should call Mom.

THERESA: He was asking about the honeymoon, and –

MOM: What – did he – is he coming home or anything? Or –

THERESA I don't think so. Not, uh, not right now.

MARIE & MOM: Why?

THERESA: I don't know. He doesn't really know --

MOM: What did he say?

THERESA: He said he's fine, and we shouldn't worry, and we shouldn't wait. And he said he'd call again. I guess that's about it.

MOM: You didn't forgive him, did you?

THERESA: Um, no, not really --

MOM: Oh, my God -- you did!

MARIE: Theresa! How could you forgive him?

THERESA: I didn't! I just made sure he'd call again. We don't know what's happening yet, so --

MOM: You have too much sympathy!

THERESA: I was very firm with him. I really was.

MARIE: Firm! Theresa, you're impossible. Daddy needs a smack. I'm going. I have to get Tommy Junior --

THERESA: No, don't go --

MOM: Oh, let her go -- she's just going to blame me for --

MARIE: Kids! Car!

THERESA: Marie's pregnant.

MARIE: Theresa!

MOM: Marie!

THERESA: Marie! Mom! I'm sorry. She's pregnant. It's great news. We should be happy.

MARIE: Yeah, well, things don't always work out that way.

MOM: Don't – are you all right? Are you healthy?

MARIE: As much as I can be, I guess.

MOM: Geez, Marie. Nine. My goodness. You're a baby machine!

MARIE: Theresa, make her go away.

THERESA: Mom, I don't think that's what she needs to hear right now. I think – we should think about how we can help --

MARIE: Right. Mom can do the labor for me and you can get up six times a night for a year and take care of eight others.

THERESA: Exactly. Bobbie and I can take the others sometimes, and he can take them bowling sometimes, and I can sleep over when the baby's born and give you some rest and Mom can, um, Mom can –

MOM: I can cook. What's eight grilled cheese sandwiches to someone who's used to nice meals. I can do eight grilled cheese with no –

MARIE: You say that now, but they're a handful –

MOM: Are you telling me about my own grandchildren? I'll wear a helmet.

THERESA: Marie, please forgive me. I've been a terrible aunt. I was too young to enjoy the older ones and I've been in the convent or getting married for the others, to really appreciate them – but here I am now. I'm home, and I can be over whenever you need me.

MARIE: Ah, you'll be pregnant yourself before you know it.

THERESA: Not right away, I bet. There's no rush. Or we'll be pregnant together.

MOM: I like to cook. You know that –

MARIE: They just like spaghetti –

MOM: I make great spaghetti.

THERESA: Let us help.

MOM: Even Lucille can do something – nine is – we just have to pitch in more.

THERESA: I'll tell Lucille.

MARIE: Fine. You tell Lucille. I'll tell Tommy – oh, geez, I do have to get Tommy Junior from school.

MOM: I'll get him.

MARIE: You will?

MOM: Sure. It's not out of my way. I'll take the whole bunch of them with me. You just go straight home. Put your feet up. And when I drop them off, I'll stay and I'll put on a batch of spaghetti.

MARIE: Mom, you don't have to –

MOM: I have no one to cook for.

MARIE: I guess that's true.

MOM: Marie, hush. I guess we'd better leave our little bride to her housework, huh?

MARIE: Toss the coffee, Theresa. See if he'll go for tea in the morning.

THERESA: I'll figure it out. Bobbie can drink bad coffee for a little while. He doesn't mind.

The next three lines are simulatenous:

MOM: Come on, Marie. KIDS! Get in the car! No, my car – head for my car!

NANA! Come on, off we go. WE HAVE TO PICK UP TOMMY, JR. NANA.

MARIE'S PREGNANT AGAIN, NANA! ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL! Isn't that something.

MARIE: Kids! Grandma's car! Anne Marie, what is that? Well, spit it out, goosey.

No, Grandma's car! Don't start, Mom. Because she's going to take you with her to the moon --

THERESA: Bye, Mom. BYE, NANA. Nana: thank you for visiting. Bye, Marie. Call me later. Um. Mom. Marie. Please knock before you come in. Just knock.

Bye kids! Bye bye! Auntie loves you! Bye!

Silence in their absence. Theresa fiddles with the radio dials till something sweet and romantic comes on. She checks on the pot roast. Cleans up the kiwi mess, if there's anything left. Surveys her still quite messy home. Calls Bobbie.

THERESA

Honey? Hi honey. The house is still a mess! Yes, it'll take a while. We can do some more when you get home. I've got the radio on. When you get home, there'll be music playing, and wonderful smells: coffee, and cake and pot roast. The parsnips smell good. They smell like sweet carrots. And I'll be making gravy. Well, I'll be trying to make gravy. So all you'll smell is good cooking.

And me. That's sweet. Thank you.

Honey. Know what Saint Therese said once? She said, "I think only of the Love I'll receive, and the love I'll be able to give." Isn't that nice?

Sweetie, Nana told me the nicest story about her and Grampa. Yeah, she did, she told a whole story. It was really, really nice and -- sweet. I'll tell you later, OK? I'm going to tell you that story. After dinner. We can unpack and I'll tell you the story. Honey? Hurry home.

Theresa checks on the parakeet, perhaps rests for a bit. The radio keeps her company.

BLACKOUT

End of play