

Characters

TONY MORELLI, age 25

SOPHIE MORELLI, Tony's wife, age 23

PATRICIA, their daughter to be

BART MACINTYRE, a man in a bar

Sophie's brother:

BROTHER, age 32

Sophie's sisters:

ANNA, age 30

FRAN, age 26

JAY, age 25

JEANNIE, age 21

MARIE, age 19

Act I, Scene 1

(Our story begins in Staten Island, where it will stay, seemingly incapable of moving to another location, even if it wanted to. It is January 7, 1942. TONY MORELLI, a young Italian-American man, sits in a small, Catholic, worn but comfortable living room. On one side of the living room is a small entryway to the Morelli home, on the other side there is a dining room/kitchen area.

TONY listens to music on the radio, which is interrupted for a news update. Within the update, the newsman reminds his listeners that it is the one month anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. TONY listens attentively to a summary of the attack, glancing occasionally at his right arm, which is completely bandaged and rests in a sling. Eventually he removes the sling and tries to move his hand, but he winces at the pain in spite of himself. The radio calls for all red blooded American men to enlist, for their loyalty is needed now more than ever. TONY glares at the machine defensively. He picks up an empty glass and thinks about throwing it, but instead drops it loudly to the floor and stands. As the music returns, TONY crosses to the radio and bows his head, as though asking forgiveness in a very silent, very male way. His back is turned to the door, through which his wife enters.

SOPHIE MORELLI is also Italian-American.)

SOPHIE

What happened?

(TONY does not acknowledge her. SOPHIE sighs and picks up the cup, noticing the sling near the chair)

SOPHIE

Arm feelin' better?

(TONY looks at her and turns off the radio. TONY continues to stand with his back to SOPHIE. SOPHIE picks up the sling and walks to him, hesitates, and then tries to put it on him. TONY lets her try for a few moments but becomes embarrassed and gently takes the sling from her. TONY slowly and ineffectually puts it on as SOPHIE tidies up the room.)

SOPHIE

Did ya talk to Brother?

(Again she is ignored. SOPHIE goes to TONY but he crosses away from her and sits in the chair again. SOPHIE continues to clean as she talks.)

SOPHIE

Brother's always been there for you, y'know. He's always talkin' about when you were kids. How your mouth was always goin'. Always so smart with the other kids, always askin' for trouble. Even when those kids were gonna throw you right off the ferry. Holdin' ya over the rail by your buster browns, you upside down, still talkin', of course, still the tough guy. And then there's Brother comin' to ya rescue, pullin' you back in an' tellin' them kids they mess with his friend again, they're the ones who're gonna get wet. You sure were a big talker, huh?

(No response)

SOPHIE

All I'm saying is, I think you could talk to him—

TONY

How the hell am I gonna drive a train with one arm?

SOPHIE

Maybe someone could help you.

(Pause)

Maybe there's other jobs in the subway.

(Pause)

I... I just think you should talk to him, that's all.

(Pause. SOPHIE looks out the imaginary window on the fourth wall.)

Sun's settin.

(There is a pause as SOPHIE stares at the sun. TONY watches her.)

You want ya dinner?

(TONY looks his watch and shrugs as though to say "of course." SOPHIE goes to the kitchen and makes a plate of salad, pasta, and meat sauce. She places the food on the already set table.)

SOPHIE

Comin'?

(TONY rises and slowly walks to the table, where he sits.)

SOPHIE

You want milk? Good for ya arm.

(SOPHIE goes to the kitchen and brings a glass bottle of milk and pours it into his glass, TONY eats as SOPHIE returns to the kitchen and makes herself a plate and a glass of water. At long last she sits with a sigh, says a quick silent prayer, prepares a perfect bite of salad, and looks at TONY with a smile. TONY holds up his empty wineglass. She quickly puts down her fork and fetches a bottle of red wine from the kitchen. She brings the opened bottle to TONY, who pours himself a glass. SOPHIE reaches for the bottle to put it back but TONY sets it out of her reach, wishing to keep it for later. Again she sits, prepares her perfect bite, then hesitates and looks at TONY, who is holding a piece of bread and surveying the table. TONY looks at her. Again, without hesitation she rises and fetches butter from the kitchen. She sets it in front of him. While SOPHIE sits and takes a long drink of water, TONY attempts to butter his bread with one hand. SOPHIE prepares her first bite and again glances at her husband. Seeing his difficulty, which he tries to conceal, SOPHIE rises and begins to reach across the table to help. TONY quickly sets the butter knife down, picks up his bread and takes a large bite.)

SOPHIE

The girls are comin' over for cards tonight. Brother's bringing Anna (pronounced "Anner"), Jeannie and Marie. Maybe you two can talk.

(TONY is very nonplussed by this idea. They eat in silence. SOPHIE picks up a piece of bread from the basket and looks at the butter, which she cannot reach. She sets the bread on her plate and goes back to constructing bites. TONY watches her doing this and slowly we see some trace of caring in him.

TONY pushes the butter to his wife, but avoids her surprised look of gratitude by returning to his food. She watches her husband, touched. SOPHIE slowly slides the butter to the far end of the table in a show of solidarity. She then returns to her food. TONY looks at SOPHIE for a moment. They eat silently.)

(Fadeout)

Scene 2

(Lights fade up to reveal SOPHIE setting up the kitchen table for cards. TONY sits in the living room reading a book. The doorbell rings, TONY looks up and then returns to his book. SOPHIE listens to see if her husband is answering the door, and eventually goes to get it herself. BROTHER, ANNA, JEANNIE and MARIE enter.

BROTHER

Hello, hello!

(BROTHER and the sisters exchange cheek kisses with SOPHIE)

SOPHIE

Hello, c'mon in, how are ya?

BROTHER

(Pitches his cigarette out the door) Still livin', right? (He coughs—a lot). So where's the war hero?

(TONY loudly closes his book as the sisters show BROTHER their disapproval.)

What!? Jesus Christ, you drive your sisters around like a god-damned chauffeur and all ya get is grief. Some world!

(The sisters shake their heads disapprovingly. Still, they can't help but be amused. BROTHER enters the living room and throws his coat on a chair. TONY stares at it.)

Some world, huh? Hey, how's the arm there?

(TONY shrugs)

Mind if I smoke? (Not waiting for an answer, BROTHER lights a cigarette) My doc's got some crazy new idea these things might be bad for

ya. (Coughing again) But what's he know, right? (He raises his voice playfully for his sisters to hear) Now I say if anything's gonna kill me it's all the grief I take around here! But, who the hell, knows, huh? So what ya readin there?

(TONY slowly hands him the book and BROTHER begins to read the back cover. Meanwhile the sisters have been taking off their coats and hats and making their way toward the kitchen. The doorbell rings and SOPHIE answers it. FRAN and JAY enter and kisses are exchanged.)

SOPHIE

C'mon in. How was ya walk?

FRAN

Oh my God (pronounced "gawd") is it cold! There was a man carrying his dog! He said its paws ("poors") hurt.

JAY

I says to him, buy the dog some shoes.

FRAN

Shoes.

JAY

Ya know, like babies' shoes.

FRAN

Shoes for the dog!

JAY

I was jokin'.

FRAN

Ya can't buy dog shoes.

JAY

The man thought it was funny.

FRAN

Ya gotta knit 'em.

JAY

He laughed right out loud like.

FRAN
Ya know, what are they called?

JAY
He was a good lookin' man, too.

FRAN
When ya knit 'em, ya know.

JAY
Very dignified.

FRAN
Booties! Ya know, the booties.

JAY
Sure, the booties.

FRAN
He was very handsome.

(Pause)

JAY
Ya thought so?

FRAN
Dignified like.

SOPHIE
Well, c'mon in. They're all in there.

JAY
Brother drive em?

FRAN
No, the chauffeur drove 'em.

SOPHIE
Brother drove 'em.

JAY
(Yelling) Hey Brother!

BROTHER

Hello, hello!

JAY

(Pointing to the kitchen) In here?

FRAN

(Sarcastically) No, out by the pool.

(FRAN and JAY head into the kitchen. SOPHIE sticks her head into the living room and smiles at TONY. TONY shows her his exasperation with BROTHER. SOPHIE blows him a kiss and then exits to the kitchen, where she sits down at the table with her sisters. Pennies and a few nickels are piled in front of each woman. In the living room, BROTHER finishes reading the back of TONY's book.)

BROTHER

Huh. Good to read, sharpens the mind. Hard for me to find the time though. Must be pretty nice for you, just sittin' around here livin' the good life. The, uh, army give ya some sort of pay since you was injured at the uh...

TONY

Boot camp.

BROTHER

Yeah, the boot camp.

TONY

They *did*.

BROTHER

No more, though, huh?

(Pause)

Well, maybe ya come back to work for me, huh?

TONY

How the hell am I gonna drive a train with one arm?

BROTHER

Yeah. Well, there's other jobs down there. I mean ya gotta work, right?

(Pause)

Anyways, here's ya book back.

(BROTHER lights a cigarette and coughs. He heads toward the kitchen.)

TONY

Brother... I'll, uh, come down Monday morning to—

BROTHER

Monday morning's no good for me. I got a doctor's appointment. (He starts to head out again)

TONY

When... When should I come down?

BROTHER

Let's see... I don't know when I'll get finished. So, let's make it Tuesday. Give ya a chance to finish ya book. (Waits for a response)

TONY

Yeah.

(BROTHER goes to the kitchen. The sisters have begun to play poker. FRAN and JAY pass each other cards under the table, as well as look at the other sisters' hands.)

BROTHER

So when do I pick up ya majesties?

ANNA

How long yas wanna play?

JAY

Couple hours.

FRAN

You'll be broke in twenty minutes.

JAY

Couple hours.

ANNA

Couple hours, Brother.

BROTHER

All right, that'll give me time to get the horses some water.

ANNA

Horses?

BROTHER

For the chariot!

FRAN

Horses? Why not youneecorns?

BROTHER

All right, couple hours. (Starts out)

ANNA

What you gonna do?

BROTHER

Get some water for the youneecorns, what else?

ANNA

Ya goin' to the bar.

BROTHER

All right, couple hours. (Exits to living room) Hey Ton ("tone"), you wannou ah, (Makes a drinking motion) get some water for the old youneecorns with me?

(TONY opens his book and begins to read. BROTHER stares at him for a moment.)

Suit ya'self. (Coughs. Raises his voice, teasing) I'll be back for the princesses in a couple hours.

(Chorus of "Bye Brother" from the kitchen followed by chorus of "stay warm" and "wear a hat". MARIE says "Godbless." BROTHER exits. TONY immediately closes his book and sits, staring.)

JAY

I hope he's got a good hat.

FRAN
He's just goin' to the car.

JAY
Yeah.

ANNA
It's not that cold.

FRAN
What are ya talkin' about. There was a man carrying his dog.

JEANNIE
What?

JAY
A very handsome man.

FRAN
His feet were cold.

MARIE
How could you tell?

FRAN
He told us.

JEANNIE
He told ya?

JAY
Why not?

FRAN
Jay says to him he should get some shoes.

MARIE
He didn't have no shoes?

FRAN
Of course not.

JAY

He was very handsome.

FRAN

Dignified like.

JAY

Fran says he should knit him some booties.

JEANNIE

Booties!?

MARIE

The dog was handsome?

(Pause)

ANNA

The man! The man was handsome! The dog didn't have the shoes!

(FRAN, JAY, MARIE and JEANNIE slowly realize their error. They all laugh. ANNA shakes her head with a wry smile. SOPHIE seems not to have noticed anything.)

ANNA

What's a matta, So? ("So" is a diminutive of Sophie)

(SOPHIE does not appear to hear her. But when TONY rises and goes to the entryway to put on his coat she is instantly responsive, listening to his every movement. TONY pokes his head into the kitchen.)

TONY

Goin' for a walk.

(Pause)

SOPHIE

Take a hat.

(TONY exits. Solemn choruses of "stay warm" and "bye Tony". Then a pause after he is gone.)

ANNA

(Deadpan) At least he's got his shoes on.

(Pause. Then slow understanding of the joke.)

MARIE

(laughing) I thought you's was talkin' about the dog!

JEANNIE

Me too.

FRAN

We thought you was talkin' about the man!

JAY

A man with no shoes!

JEANNIE

Some men ain't got no shoes.

FRAN

How's a man with no shoes gonna be dignified?

JAY

And handsome.

MARIE

You can be handsome with no shoes.

ANNA

You're all nuts!

(Pause)

(To SOPHIE) So? Sophie!

SOPHIE

Yeah?

ANNA

What is it?

SOPHIE

It's... It's him. He don't talk, don't work, barely eats. Ya can't know what's in his head.

FRAN

Like Pop.

JEANNIE

Ya could never help Pop with nothin. (Pointing to MARIE) 'Cept Marie.

FRAN

His little baby.

JAY

The treasure.

MARIE

So he let me hold nails for him sometimes.

ANNA

Tony should talk to Brother. Ask him to go back to work. You need money comin' in here now.

FRAN

What do ya mean *now*, Anna.

(SOPHIE averts her eyes from theirs.)

ANNA

She's gonna have a baby.

(Eruption, all talking at once)

FRAN

Oh my God!

JAY

A baby!?

JEANNIE

A baby!

MARIE

How far along are ya?

JAY

(To SOPHIE) How long have ya known?

FRAN

(To ANNA) How long have *you* known?

ANNA

All right, all right. You gotta talk to him, So. Tell him to talk to Brother.

SOPHIE

I know. But he hates askin' anybody for anything. Especially Brother. Brother always looked out for him. Protected him when they was kids, got him a job, even got him me in a way. And now that he needs another job, that's just one more thing Brother'll hold over him. And how's he gonna drive a train with one arm?

ANNA

There's other jobs down there.

SOPHIE

I know... A part of me was so happy when he got hurt. I don't wanna raise a child by myself. Husband buried thousands of miles away and me lookin' into his sons eyes every day.

FRAN

How you know it's a boy, So?

SOPHIE

He always wanted a boy.

JAY

But that don't mean—

(FRAN waves her silent)

SOPHIE

But he wanted to fight so bad. And now... With his arm... And the baby. I don't know.

(Pause. ALL stare at SOPHIE.)

I'll talk to him.

FRAN

What's all the gloom, huh? Ya gonna have a baby.

JEANNIE

It's a blessing.

FRAN

(To JAY) You better start knittin'.

JAY

What?

FRAN

The booties.

(They all laugh a little)

ANNA

Are we gonna play cards here, or what?

(Fadeout as they begin to play poker.)

Scene 3

(Lights up to reveal JEANNIE, MARIE and ANNA putting on their coats in the entryway to the house. SOPHIE helps them while BROTHER lights a cigarette.)

BROTHER

All right, ya highnesses. The youneecorns are waitin' outside.

ANNA

Enough with the youneecorns.

BROTHER

(Slowly) Uh-oh, Anna, you better be careful. (Approaching her) Ya don't want em gittin' angry with ya.

ANNA

Get away from me.

BROTHER

I mean they got them big horns. (He starts to butt her with his head.)

ANNA

Brother, I swear to God—

JEANNIE

(Scolding) Anna.

(BROTHER begins to poke ANNA with the skilled tickling of an older sibling)

BROTHER

Uh-oh, Gratziano's got 'er on the ropes.

ANNA

(Punching him in the arms ineffectually) Oh, you are gonna get it.

BROTHER

(Increasing the onslaught of tickling) She's in real trouble here folks. Is her corner gonna throw in the towel.

ANNA

(Laughing in spite of herself) Brother! Stop! Ah!

(TONY opens the door and stares at BROTHER and ANNA. ANNA straightens herself up, embarrassed, and hurries to finish getting ready to go. JEANNIE and MARIE are all set by this point.)

BROTHER

Hey Ton. Just showing Anna here a few a the old moves, ya know?

(BROTHER begins to play box with TONY. TONY tries to inconspicuously to protect his arm against a barage of body blows. SOPHIE gets in between them to protect TONY.)

SOPHIE

(Angry with BROTHER) Ya gonna hurt him!

(There is an awkward moment as TONY gives SOPHIE a quick angry glance and then tries to avoid eye contact with the others. It is clear that being defended by his wife has been far more painful for TONY than any damage to his arm might have been. TONY leaves the entryway and goes to the kitchen where he stands alone, not knowing what to do next. ANNA is ready to go by this point.)

ANNA

(Punching BROTHER hard in the shoulder) What's a matta with you?

BROTHER

What!? Jesus Christ, I was just playin' around.

ANNA

You play too much.

SOPHIE

It's alright, Anna.

BROTHER

(Bowing very dramatically) Forgive me, ya highnesses.

ANNA

All right, all right.

JEANNIE

(To BROTHER) I don't know how you make her laugh like that.

MARIE

We could never get a squeak out of her.

BROTHER

Ya gotta practice.

ANNA

He was doin' it before any of you's was born.

BROTHER

She'd scream, "Stop brudda. No brudda."

ANNA

I couldn't say his name.

BROTHER

You loved it.

ANNA

Yeah, yeah. (Herding JEANNIE and MARIE) C'mon, c'mon, let's go!

(Some cheek kisses and choruses of "Bye So" as they leave. ANNA pops her head back in.)

ANNA

You all right, So?

Yeah. SOPHIE

Ya gotta tell him. ANNA

I know. SOPHIE

BROTHER
(From offstage) The youneecorns are gettin' ansty!

(ANNA glares behind her)

What!?

Alright, I better go. ANNA

Bye Anna. SOPHIE

Ya be all right, So. (She exits) ANNA

(SOPHIE goes to the kitchen. TONY exits to the entryway to take off his coat. SOPHIE begins to clean up. TONY returns to the kitchen and sits at the table.)

Ya want a snack? SOPHIE

Sure. TONY

(Begins preparing a sandwich) Where'd ya go? SOPHIE

Just walked. TONY

Where'd ya walk? SOPHIE

TONY

Just around.

(TONY shrugs. Pause.)

SOPHIE

So what did you and Brother talk about?

(Pause)

TONY

Books.

SOPHIE

Books?

TONY

Yeah. Good to read. Sharpens the mind.

SOPHIE

Sure. So, is that all?

TONY

Uh... They pass the time, I guess.

SOPHIE

What? No, no. Is that all ya's talked about?

TONY

Pretty much.

(SOPHIE serves him and sits down at the table.)

SOPHIE

So, did he say anything about how things are goin' with the trains.

TONY

No.

SOPHIE

Ya ask him about goin' back to your job?

TONY

How the hell am I gonna drive a—

SOPHIE

I know, I know.

(TONY eats as SOPHIE sits silently. SOPHIE wants to tell him about the baby but is scared.)

SOPHIE

I did pretty good tonight. Won a couple bucks. Every little bit helps, right?

(Pause)

SOPHIE

Ya want somethin' to drink. All that walkin' probably made ya thirsty, right?

TONY

I'm fine.

SOPHIE

Well I'm havin' somethin'. Winnin' all that money made me thirsty I guess!

(SOPHIE is not usually a big joker and TONY stares questioningly at her back as she pours herself a glass of water from a cool pitcher in the fridge. SOPHIE sits back down.)

SOPHIE

Want a cookie with that sandwich? I think we got some in the jar.

TONY

I'm fine.

(Pause)

SOPHIE

Well I'm havin' one. Nice cookie'd hit the spot.

(As SOPHIE gets a cookie from the jar, TONY again stares at her back questioningly and somewhat alarmed. SOPHIE sits back down and begins eating her cookie.)

SOPHIE

Glass of milk? Helps ya sleep. Pop always said—

TONY

Sophie!

SOPHIE

What?

TONY

What the hell's a matter with you?

(Pause)

SOPHIE

(Takes a bite of her cookie and mumbles inaudibly) I'm pregnant.

TONY

What?

SOPHIE

(Takes another bite and mumbles again) I'm pregnant.

TONY

What the hell are you saying?

(SOPHIE starts to take another bite out of the cookie and TONY grabs the cookie from her)

SOPHIE

I'm pregant.

(TONY stands up and paces the room with his fist clenched. He looks down at SOPHIE, who is waiting nervously. TONY slowly sits.)

TONY

Oh. (He opens his hand and the crushed cookie spills onto the table. He slowly tries to wipe the crumbs off his hand but it is difficult with only one hand.)

SOPHIE

I'm sorry Tony, I know you didn't want this now. I know you wish you was over there fightin'. I know this ain't how we wanted it to—

TONY
How far?

SOPHIE
How far what?

TONY
How far... How far are ya?

SOPHIE
Oh. Two months I think.

(TONY looks at her)

SOPHIE
What? (Then suspiciously) What!?

TONY
Nothin'.

SOPHIE
I think you should talk to Brother.

(Pause)

I mean we gotta think about how to pay for—

TONY
I did.

SOPHIE
What?

TONY
I talked to him. I'll see him Monday—Tuesday.

SOPHIE
(She gets up and sits in a chair next to him) Thank you. I know you don't like to ask him for nothin'. But there's other jobs down there and then when ya arm's better ya go back to your old job.

TONY
I'll take what I can get.

SOPHIE

I'm sure they'll give it back to ya. Or else ya get a job somewhere else.

TONY

We'll see.

SOPHIE

I love you.

(SOPHIE embraces him. TONY does not reciprocate. After a few moments TONY stands up as SOPHIE continues to hold him around the middle. Eventually TONY takes her wrists and gently pulls her arms apart. TONY walks to the entryway and picks up his coat. He stands by the door holding his coat. SOPHIE quickly pushes the cookie crumbs onto a plate and puts the dishes in the sink, turns out the kitchen light, and walks into the living room where she expects to find TONY. SOPHIE quickly walks to the entryway where she stands a few paces away from him. SOPHIE looks very alarmed.)

SOPHIE

Goin' for a walk?

(Pause)

TONY

No.

(SOPHIE goes to him and TONY slowly lets her take his coat. SOPHIE faces him for several awkward moments. SOPHIE takes a step towards him and slowly touches his face.)

SOPHIE

Come to bed?

(Pause)

I'm sure Brother'll help ya... With ya job.

(Pause)

TONY

I'll take what I can get.

SOPHIE

Let's go upstairs.

TONY

Gonna read a while.

(TONY goes to the living room and sits with his book. SOPHIE watches him and then slowly exits for bed. TONY sits with the book on his lap staring into space. Fadeout, end of act.)

Act II, Scene 1

(It is now September of 1953. The Morelli home has perhaps been modernized a bit, but not much. The theatre should be completely dark at the beginning of the act. A flashlight is turned on by TONY, dressed in coveralls, who slowly walks back and forth on the apron, sweeping the flashlight back and forth in front of him and occasionally stopping to pick up a piece of rubber, wood, or metal and deposit it in the sack he carries. The lights slowly come up just enough that we can see TONY in the darkness, but not enough that the light of the flashlight is no longer visible. The furniture of the Morelli home should be as hard to make out as possible, as TONY is supposed to be in the subway clearing the tracks. The sound of a fast approaching train is heard and TONY fumbles the flashlight, which turns off and falls to the floor. The theatre should again be completely darkened when the light turns off and the train roars by. A few seconds later, a similar, but weaker flashlight is turned on. It is assumed TONY is holding the flashlight but we should not be able to tell. After a few more sweeps the light is turned off as the stage is simultaneously fully illuminated. PATRICIA Morelli, who can be played by a young adult, is age eleven. She holds the second flashlight. TONY is sitting in the same chair as he was in the beginning of the previous act, drinking what looks like whiskey. SOPHIE is cleaning up the living room.)

PATRICIA

Look Mom, I'm just like Pop. (She imitates his voice) Uh-oh, there's some stuff on the tracks, better pick it up. (She picks up something from the floor, then spots a stuffed animal on the floor a few feet away. Reverting back to her own voice.) Oh no, somebody threw a puppy on the tracks, and here comes the train. (She starts to make train noises which get louder and louder as she slowly moves towards the stuffed animal) Will our brave hero have time to save the puppy? (Louder noises) Here it comes! Look Mom! (She grabs the puppy and leaps to one side as the train roars by.)

(TONY watches PATRICIA with somewhat glazed eyes.)

PATRICIA

Did ya see, Mom. I'm a hero.

SOPHIE

(To TONY) How 'bout that, your daughter's a hero.

(TONY gets up and goes to the kitchen. He pours himself another straight whiskey. SOPHIE follows him, talking to PATRICIA on her way)

SOPHIE

Pick up those toys now, it's almost supper time.

PATRICIA

Aww Ma!

SOPHIE

Hey.

PATRICIA

Yes ma'am.

SOPHIE

(In the kitchen, to TONY) What's a matta, somethin' happen today?

TONY

I'm fine.

SOPHIE

I know you're fine, but that don't mean you're not upset.

TONY

I ain't upset.

SOPHIE

Would ya tell me if ya was?

TONY

Sure.

SOPHIE

(Sarcastically) Yeah, sure.

TONY

We gonna eat?

SOPHIE

Yeah. Trisha! You set the table?

PATRICIA

I'm pickin' up toys!

SOPHIE

Well ya can finish that after dinner, it's time to set the table!

(While she talks, SOPHIE takes a pill bottle from the cupboard and gets a glass of water.)

PATRICIA

Work, work, work.

SOPHIE

What?

PATRICIA

Nothin' ma'am.

SOPHIE

(Taking a pill) Doctor says I gotta take these with meals.

TONY

What for?

SOPHIE

Somethin' with the blood pressure. Why you still wearin' ya work clothes? You sure you're all right?

TONY

Fine.

SOPHIE

Fine. Trisha!

PATRICIA

Yeah Ma!

(PATRICIA and SOPHIE set the table and get dinner ready as TONY goes to the entryway and takes off his coveralls. PATRICIA pretends to be doing grueling labor as she goes about setting the table.)

SOPHIE

(Playfully sarcastic) Oh I know, I know. It's so hard, right? How will ya ever survive?

PATRICIA

I've... Just... Got... To keep.... Going... (She dramatically collapses)

(TONY enters and stands over her, confused.)

SOPHIE

I'll give ya a reason to get goin', c'mon lazy bones.

(TONY sits and waits as SOPHIE and PATRICIA finish getting ready and sit down. TONY immediately begins serving himself. PATRICIA tries to do likewise but her hand is swatted by SOPHIE.)

SOPHIE

What a' ya doin'!?

PATRICIA

Pop's eatin'!

SOPHIE

You never mind what he's doin'.

(SOPHIE gives TONY an annoyed look and then she and PATRICIA say a silent prayer as TONY continues to serve himself. They eat. PATRICIA has trouble cutting her meat.)

SOPHIE

The girls are comin' over for cards tonight.

PATRICIA

Is Uncle Brother bringin' 'em?

SOPHIE

He'll bring Anna and Jeannie.

PATRICIA

What about Aunt Fran and Aunt Jay?

SOPHIE

They'll walk.

PATRICIA

And then Aunt Fran'll say, (Imitating FRAN) "Oh my GAWD is it cold!"

SOPHIE

Well, it is cold, ain't it?

PATRICIA

"Oh my GAWD it is!"

SOPHIE

Oh, you're very funny. A regular comedian we got here, huh Tony?

TONY

What?

SOPHIE

Your daughter, a real comedian, huh?

TONY

Sure.

PATRICIA

So Uncle Brother's comin'?

SOPHIE

I said yes already, didn't I?

PATRICIA

You think he'll take me out for a soda?

SOPHIE

He just took ya out last week for ya birthday.

PATRICIA

I know. He kept asking me how it felt to be a hundred years old.

SOPHIE

So how does it feel?

PATRICIA

I am not a hundred! I am eleven! Eleven!

SOPHIE

Oh.

PATRICIA

So do you think he'll take me out for soda?

SOPHIE

Why don't ya father take ya out?

PATRICIA

He's probably too tired, right Pop?

TONY

What?

PATRICIA

You're tired, right?

TONY

Yeah, pretty tired.

PATRICIA

So can I ask Uncle Brother, Mom?

SOPHIE

Sure, if you want to. But ya gotta help clear the table first.

(PATRICIA starts to slouch in her chair as though the thought is just too much to bare. TONY watches her.)

SOPHIE

Patricia.

SOPHIE

Yes ma'am.

(PATRICIA continues to struggle to cut her meat and TONY reaches over and takes her plate. He pulls it to him and quickly begins cutting it up for her.)

PATRICIA

Pop, you don't have to cut it up so small!

(TONY ignores her)

SOPHIE

He don't want you to choke.

PATRICIA

I won't choke!

SOPHIE

You know when you was little you started chokin' on a piece of meat one time. You was coughin' and cryin'. I never seen him so scared in my entire life.

PATRICIA

Pop?

SOPHIE

Sure. His face got all white and he kept sayin', "Do somethin' Sophie. Do somethin'." I says "if she's coughin' she's all right." But he kept pattin' you on the back, tellin' you it was gonna be O.K.

PATRICIA

You was scared, Pop?

SOPHIE

He thought he hadn't cut up ya meat enough for ya and that was why you was chokin'.

PATRICIA

That true, Pop?

(TONY shrugs)

SOPHIE

You coughed it up and everything was fine. But for years he'd check ya food to make sure it was O.K. Took me forever to convince him ya could cut up ya own meat. But I guess I overcooked it a little tonight.

(TONY slides the plate back to PATRICIA.)

PATRICIA

Thanks Pop.

TONY

Yeah.

(PATRICIA stabs her plate once, then looks at her fork, which doesn't really have anything on it. She bends closer to it and starts stabbing her plate over and over again trying to collect enough meat for a bite as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 2

(The scene is split into three groups. GENIE, FRAN, JAY, ANNA and SOPHIE are playing poker in the kitchen. PATRICIA and BROTHER are off to one side eating cotton candy and popcorn: they sit on a bench which has been placed downstage to one side. TONY sits next to BART at a bar which has been placed on the opposite side of downstage from BROTHER and PATRICIA. Throughout the scene, the lights may be used to accentuate which of the three groups is the focus. Given that each of the groups has something to do when not speaking, the actors need not freeze while they are silent. The mood at the poker table is somber and tense. An extra chair sits conspicuously empty. They play for a while with no conversation.)

ANNA

So where's Tony at, So?

SOPHIE

I don't know. He says he's tired, but then he goes out.

JAY

He probably is tired.

FRAN

Then why's he goin' out?

JAY

I don't know.

(Pause)

But we got the house all to ourselves, right? Just the old gang, huh?

ANNA

Not the whole gang.

(JEANNIE makes the sign of the cross. There is a pause.)

JEANNIE

She's in a better place.

(Pause)

JAY

Funny it'd be her though.

ANNA

Funny?

JAY

Not funny funny, Anna. Ya know, like the sad funny.

FRAN

Yeah, like the sad funny. 'Cause she was the youngest and all.

JAY

You would'a thought it'd be somebody else.

(ANNA looks at her.)

JAY

You know what I mean. I didn't *want* it to be nobody. Ya just wouldn't have thought it'd be Marie who'd be the first to go, bein' the youngest.

(Pause)

ANNA

You don't think I'd a taken her place if I could?

JEANNIE

That's not for us to decide.

ANNA

(To JEANNIE) Maybe it ain't, but so what? You don't think if I could'a taken the medicine for her I would'a? If I could'a gotten into the bed for her and sent her home to take my family cause she'd never get her own I would'a?

JEANNIE

She was never meant for that.

ANNA

Who the hell knows what she was meant for? We never got to find out, did we? Because she sure wasn't meant for that, to die like that. Don't you

sit there, Jean, and tell me she was meant to be lyin' in that bed day after day cryin' till there were no tears left cause her body was all dried up.

JEANNIE

I'm just sayin'—

ANNA

You don't know! How many times you go see her last year? Two? Three?

JEANNIE

I prayed for her every day!

ANNA

And where'd it get ya, Jean, huh? Where'd it get Marie?

JEANNIE

She's in a better place!

ANNA

Ya convincin' me or ya'self?

FRAN

All right! That's enough. We all saw what the cancer did ta her. We all would'a done whatever we could ta help her.

(Pause)

JAY

We couldn't do nothin'.

FRAN

Nobody could do nothin'.

(Pause)

SOPHIE

(Softly) We were there, though.

FRAN

What, So?

SOPHIE

I mean I know if somethin' ever happened to me. . . I mean I know it was terrible. And I know she was too young for that. But, I gotta believe it helped her havin' us there.

(Pause)

Maybe I should'a gone more, but I had Trisha to take care of and there was always somethin' to do here, and I tried to go whenever I could, but. . .

JEANNIE

I could'a gone more too. It was so hard to see her like that, though. It was. . . But I probably should have—

ANNA

You did fine. You too, So. It was easier for me, my kids could take care of themselves. We all did what we could. (Looks at JEANNIE) Prayin' for her, (Looks at FRAN and JAY) makin' her laugh, (Looks at SOPHIE) holdin' her hand.

FRAN

Just strange bein' here without her.

JAY

Hard to care about cards, ya know?

ANNA

So let's take a break. I could use some fresh air, who wants'a take a walk?

JEANNIE

I'll go with ya, Anna.

SOPHIE

Think I'll go lay down upstairs a minute while ya's walk.

ANNA

(To FRAN and JAY) How 'bout you two?

FRAN

I'll stay.

JAY

Me too.

ANNA

Suit ya'selves.

(SOPHIE exits to the upstairs and JEANNIE goes to the doorway where she struggles with the lock. ANNA follows and helps her. They embrace, and then exit. FRAN and JAY are left alone. They look at each other a moment, then JAY gathers the cards and passes them to FRAN, who shuffles and then deals the cards to her sister.)

JAY

Got any twos?

(During the following sections, FRAN and JAY silently play Go Fish. PATRICIA now begins excitedly giggling and jumping around BROTHER while eating her cotton candy. BROTHER continues to sit.)

PATRICIA

So what happened then?

BROTHER

So Donny says to ya father, "What did you say about my mother?" And so ya father looks him right in the eyes, which was hard cause Donny was holdin' em upside down over the rail of the ferry. (Building intensity) So ya father looks him right in the eyes and tells him— Well, anyway, he said it again.

PATRICIA

But what was it?

BROTHER

What?

PATRICIA

What did he say!?

BROTHER

(Teasing) Who?

PATRICIA

Pop!

BROTHER

My Pop?

PATRICIA
No, mine!

BROTHER
When?

PATRICIA
To Donny! What did he say to Donny?

BROTHER
(Teasing) I'm not sure.

PATRICIA
Oh come on!

BROTHER
What!? I'm an old man, it's hard for me to remember things.

PATRICIA
(Falling to her knees) Please Uncle Brother, just tell me this one time.

(Pause)

BROTHER
Maybe when you're older.

PATRICIA
That's what you always say!

BROTHER
It is?

PATRICIA
(Collapsing to the ground exhausted) Yes it is.

BROTHER
Hey don't let that cotton candy get all dirty, ya think it grows on trees?

PATRICIA
(Morose) No it doesn't.

(Pause)

BROTHER

Well, maybe not in this country.

PATRICIA

(Sits up) What?

(Focus changes to TONY, who nurses a mug of beer at the bar. BART sits next to TONY and sips a huge mixed drink with plenty of fruit and umbrellas. BART pops peanuts into his mouth with a substantial amount of fanfare. He speaks with a Midwestern accent.)

BART

Man o man, I tell ya, some days ya just wanna say, "THAT'S IT!"

(Pause)

(To TONY) No what I mean, buddy?

(Pause)

Sure ya do. Every hard workin' fella in here knows what I'm saying.
(To the entire bar) Am I right?

(Pause as he waits for a response which does not come.)

Sure I am. But I guess ya just keep on goin', right? Just keep on griiiiindin' along, eh? (Yelling offstage) Hey barkeep, how bout another one of these? Barkeep? Barkeep?

(Pause)

(Offering his hand to TONY) Name's MacIntyre, Bart MacIntyre.

TONY

(Shaking his hand) Irish?

BART

Oh, little bit I suppose. That a problem?

TONY

No problem.

(Pause)

BART

So how about you then? What's your name and what's your game?

TONY

Tony Morelli.

BART

And your game?

(Pause. TONY does not respond.)

All righty. Myself, I work in the city. Yes sir, moved here when I was eighteen and never looked back. Well, maybe looked back once or twice if you know what I mean. (Chuckles at his own joke) This is a tough town. Tough town, yes sir. But ya just keep on tryin', right? Just keep on grindin' along, ya'know? God gives you lemons, you make lemonade. Least that's what Mom always—

TONY

Me too.

BART

I'm sorry, what's that?

TONY

I, uh, work in the city too.

BART

Oh great. I'm in midtown, how 'bout yourself?

TONY

I'm in midtown some days. Then I walk uptown. Sometimes downtown.

BART

You a uh, messenger or something?

TONY

No, I. . . I'm in the subways.

BART

You *walk* in the subways?

TONY

Yeah. Takin' stuff off the tracks, makin' sure all the switches are all right.

BART

Is it tough to hear the trains comin' down there?

TONY

Sometimes.

BART

Seems to me the best way not to get hit by a train is to be the one behind the wheel, huh?

TONY

Sure.

BART

Course, I guess maybe they don't have wheels. Do they have wheels?

TONY

Steerin' wheels?

BART

Yeah.

TONY

No, no steering wheels. Cause, they only go on the tracks, so. . .

BART

So no wheels necessary, huh?

TONY

Nope.

BART

But somebody's still gotta drive 'em, right?

TONY

Sure.

BART

Seems to me that's the place to be, huh? In the *driver's seat*, that is. (Holds out his drink to TONY as though he's made a great toast.)

TONY

(Confused, slowly clinks his beer on BART's drink.) Sure.

(Focus shifts back to the Morelli kitchen. JAY is looking expectantly at FRAN.)

FRAN

Go fish.

JAY

Are you sure?

FRAN

What do you mean am I sure?

JAY

I mean ya didn't check very hard.

FRAN

I checked.

JAY

All right.

FRAN

Do ya think I would cheat ya?

JAY

Well, ya always cheated Sophie and Marie when we was kids.

FRAN

I never cheated you, though.

JAY

No?

FRAN

No.

JAY

Why not me?

FRAN

'Cause ya my sister.

JAY

They're ya sisters.

FRAN

Ya know what I mean.

(Pause)

JAY

Ya know, when Marie was sick. . . I would'a switched places with her too. And I thought it was wrong too that the youngest would be the first to go. But. . . even with you being older than four of us. . . I still got down on my knees every night and thanked God it wasn't you.

FRAN

Ya sound like Jeannie with ya "on ya knees, prayin' "—

JAY

Well I mean it. Maybe it's terrible but that's what I did.

(Pause)

FRAN

Me too.

(Pause)

Ya know when you got married before me, I was scared I'd never see ya no more. I didn't wanna be the older sister hangin' on ya neck, makin' ya husband hate me.

JAY

Vincent loves you.

FRAN

Sure he does.

JAY

Just the other day he says—

FRAN

Would ya let me finish already?

JAY

Sorry.

FRAN

So. . . I thought maybe I'd only see ya like when I saw them, ya know, for cards, or at church or whatever. But then when ya told me there was an apartment next to ya house... I felt like I could breathe again, ya know?

JAY

And then ya met Franky. So ya didn't even have to worry about being lonely no more.

FRAN

And now he's gone too.

JAY

Like Jeannie says, he's in a better place. Just like Marie. They're probably lookin' down on us right now. Laughin' at us here feelin' sorry for ourselves, huh?

FRAN

Yeah, probably.

(JAY touches FRAN's hand.)

(Focus shifts back to the PATRICIA and BROTHER. PATRICIA is now sitting and BROTHER is standing, his arms stretched in front of him leaning forward.)

BROTHER

So Tony's hangin' over the edge of the ferry and he's still screamin' and cursin' at Donny.

PATRICIA

And you kept eating the hot dog?

BROTHER

Well, I'd almost finished it by the time I found them outside on the deck. So I really only had to take one bite to finish it. But I was still holdin' ya father's hot dog in my other hand.

PATRICIA

And then you told Donny to put Pop down or you'd stick the hot dog up his nose!

BROTHER

Yeah, I told him somethin' like that. I says he drops Tony in the water I'm gonna stick the hot dog where the sun don't— Or uh, up his nose, and then I'm gonna throw him in right after Tony.

PATRICIA

And my dad kept yelling at him.

BROTHER

You bet he did. (With admiration) Ya father wasn't afraid of nobody, no matter how much bigger or older they was. And that mouth he had, he used to say things that made my ears turn red.

PATRICIA

Like what?

BROTHER

(Teasing) Oh, I can't hardly remember now.

PATRICIA

Oh come on!

BROTHER

What!? I told ya, I'm an old man—

PATRICIA

(Impersonating him) It's hard for you to remember things! I know, I know!

BROTHER

Ya know you got a mouth on you just like your old man did.

PATRICIA

But not anymore.

BROTHER

No, not anymore I guess.

PATRICIA

How come?

BROTHER

How come what?

PATRICIA

How come Pop never talks anymore?

BROTHER

Well, people get older, they don't talk as much.

PATRICIA

You talk a lot.

BROTHER

Yeah, too much probably.

PATRICIA

But Pop doesn't talk at all.

BROTHER

Well, people change. He talked quite a bit right up till the war. He was real proud of the job I got 'em drivin' the trains, his beautiful wife, who I introduced him to, and goin' into the army. I din't have nothin' to do with that, though. Then when his arm got hurt it's like he broke his mouth or somethin'. He just ain't talked much since then.

PATRICIA

Why didn't he drive the trains when his arm got better?

BROTHER

I don't know. He never asked me if he could.

PATRICIA

Did you ask him if he wanted to drive the trains again?

BROTHER

No, I . . .

(Long pause)

Listen, we better get you home, princess.

PATRICIA

All right.

(Focus shifts to the bar now. By this time TONY and BART are drunk. Despite their differences they have come together through the bond of intoxication. TONY is now holding a nearly empty huge mixed drink identical to BART's.)

BART

When St. Peter says to me, "Bart! Have you paid your dues?" I'll just look him straight in the eyes and say, "Yes sir, the check is in the mail." Am I right?

TONY

Sure.

BART

You're god damned right I'm right.

TONY

Sure.

BART

How 'bout you, Tony?

TONY

What's that?

BART

You paid your dues?

(Pause)

TONY

I think so.

BART

Check in the mail?

TONY

Sure.

BART

Then neither of us has got anything to worry about, right?

TONY

Right.

BART

Sure it's right. If my wife doesn't understand that I'm too tired at the end of the day to sit around talkin' to her and my kid then she can hit the bricks, huh?

(Pause)

Right, Tony? Huh, big guy? Hey Tony... Hey Tony, you capeesh? "Capeesh," that's an Eye-talian word, ain't it? (Grabbing TONY) Well, ain't it?

(TONY slowly removes BART's hand.)

BART

(Getting in TONY's face) Hey what the hell's a matter with you, Tony? Huh Tony? Jesus Christ, I'm just jokin' around. I joke around, that ain't a crime, is it? Huh? Am I right Tony?

(TONY slowly stands.)

TONY

No. You're wrong. Ya wife can't just hit the bricks, ya gotta take care'a her.

BART

Alright. Jesus, take it easy.

(BART begins to poke TONY with his finger.)

I mean are you any better?

(TONY grabs BART and nearly lifts him into the air. BART cringes. TONY takes a deep breath, stares at BART, pushes him away, and exits.)

BART

He's in here same as me, am I right? (Waits for an answer that does not come. Stumbles offstage.) Am I right!?

(FRAN and JAY remain where they are as the lights fade out.)

Scene 3

(The Morelli home again. FRAN and JAY are still playing Go Fish. ANNA and JEANNIE enter the house followed by BROTHER and PATRICIA)

ANNA

(Calling to the kitchen) Look what we found.

(FRAN and JAY move towards the entryway.)

FRAN

(Teasing PATRICIA) Oh what an adorable little kitty cat. Should we keep it?

JAY

It's pretty cute.

FRAN

Yeah but we'd have to feed it and find a bed for it.

JEANNIE

Take it to the vet.

FRAN

Scratch its little head.

JAY

(To BROTHER) And then there's the big ugly alley cat that comes with it.

FRAN

We don't want that big ugly cat for sure.

BROTHER

Then don't be askin' the alley cat to drive ya's around no more.

PATRICIA

(Hugging BROTHER) I don't think you're *that* ugly, Uncle Brother.

BROTHER

Oh, well thank you very much.

(A still drunk TONY opens the door to see PATRICIA hugging BROTHER. There is an awkward silence as SOPHIE enters from upstairs.)

Trisha, go up to bed. SOPHIE

Aw Ma! PATRICIA

Yeah Ma! BROTHER

Brother. SOPHIE

What!? BROTHER

Trisha. SOPHIE

(Imitating BROTHER) What!? PATRICIA

(BROTHER chuckles with pride at PATRICIA's impression.)

Patricia Vincenza Morelli— SOPHIE

Yes, ma'am. PATRICIA

(PATRICIA starts to head toward the stairs then stops.)

PATRICIA
Night Aunt Anna, Aunt Fran, Aunt Jay, Aunt JEANNIE, Mom. (Inhales
overly dramatically) Night Uncle Brother, thanks for the cotton candy.

BROTHER
Night little princess.

(PATRICIA starts to exit again.)

SOPHIE
Patricia! Say goodnight to ya father.

PATRICIA

Night Pop. (She exits)

(Another awkward silence followed by an attempt to clear the congestion in the entryway. TONY seems visibly annoyed with the presence of his in-laws and brusquely moves past them into the living room. BROTHER follows him. As the sisters say good-bye and FRAN and JAY exit, TONY sits on a chair with his head in his hands while BROTHER stands.)

BROTHER

Listen, Ton. If you ever thought about drivin' the trains again, maybe I could pull some strings for ya and see what happens.

(Pause)

What'a ya say Ton? Let me help ya out.

(Another pause. Then BROTHER squats down.)

I wanna help ya, ya know? Get ya a little more money. Help take care'a my sister and my niece. (Taking his arm) Am I right?

(TONY slowly stands.)

TONY

(With growing anger) I take care of my family. I take care of Trisha. I don't need your help. And I don't need your fuckin' job! I don't want you round my daughter no more! You leave us the hell alone!

BROTHER

Forget it. Jesus Christ, I try to help you out and—

TONY

I don't need your help no more!

BROTHER

Fine, forget it!

TONY

Get out.

SOPHIE

Tony.

You get him out!

TONY

I'm goin'!

BROTHER

Tony, he's just—

ANNA

Don't you do that Anna! Don't you dare do that in my house!

TONY

(Pause)

C'mon Brother. C'mon Jean.

ANNA

(Meekly) Bye So.

JEANNIE

(Exit ANNA, BROTHER, and JEANNIE. There is an awkward silence as SOPHIE stares confused at TONY, who looks back with anger and indignation. Then soft sobs are heard from PATRICIA offstage. SOPHIE goes to her. TONY is left standing in the living room. He bows his head much like at the play's opening. He is not sure who, but he has again let someone down. Lights fade out. End of Act II.)

Act III, Scene 1

(The Morelli home. It is August of 1961. Again, the house shows a few signs of the passage of time, but is relatively unchanged. All the characters are dressed in black, JAY's funeral was earlier that day. ANNA and JEANNIE clean up the kitchen and put dishes in the sink as SOPHIE brings glasses and serving trays from the living room in to the kitchen. FRAN sits alone in the living room. TONY stands near FRAN, looking uncomfortable. TONY wants to comfort FRAN, but can't find the words. SOPHIE enters the living room.)

(To TONY) Why don't ya go change out a ya suit 'fore ya get it dirty.

SOPHIE

Sure.

TONY

(TONY scurries offstage, having been rescued. SOPHIE picks up some more dishes and returns to the kitchen. FRAN continues to stare blankly, not having noticed SOPHIE's entrance or exit. SOPHIE enters again to get more dishes and stops, she goes to FRAN.)

SOPHIE

Hey.

FRAN

Hey ya'self.

SOPHIE

You want anything else? Eat or drink somethin' 'fore we put it away.

FRAN

No.

(JEANNIE enters looking for SOPHIE and sees she is talking to FRAN.
JEANNIE picks up some dishes and returns to the kitchen.)

SOPHIE

Ya know what she's thinkin'.

FRAN

Better place.

SOPHIE

Yeah.

(Pause)

It's true though, right?

FRAN

Sure. Don't say that to Anna, though.

SOPHIE

She knows.

FRAN

Sure.

(Pause)

SOPHIE

You were close.

FRAN

We're all close.

SOPHIE

Don't give me that. (Sits by FRAN) You were like peas in the pod, you two. I was born next after Jay but I barely saw her when we was kids. You two always goin' out together, always talkin' all night in the dark. I talked to Anna more than you two.

FRAN

You had ya dollies.

SOPHIE

What?

FRAN

Jeannie and Marie. Ya called em ya dollies. You'd come runnin' in yellin', "Momma, Poppa, my dollies are cryin' and I can't make 'em stop."

SOPHIE

Then Mom'd scoop up Jeannie and take her out with her wherever she went.

FRAN

The store, the bank, the church. Maybe too much time at the church for such a little kid.

SOPHIE

And Pop'd take Marie into the basement to help with his projects.

FRAN

I used to go down there and see her carryin' around his saw for him—

SOPHIE

The big saw?

FRAN

Bigger than Marie! One time me and Jay go down to the basement and Pop's holdin' nails over a board and Marie's just smashin' 'em down with the hammer.

SOPHIE

How old was she?

FRAN

Less than two she had ta be.

SOPHIE

Where was I?

FRAN

You was probably upstairs helpin' Anna do somethin'. She was always makin' you help her.

SOPHIE

I didn't mind. No one else to play with. You and Jay off on some adventure, Marie downstairs, Mom and Jeannie who knows where, and Brother out with his good for nothin' friends.

FRAN

Like Tony.

SOPHIE

Like Tony.

(Pause)

FRAN

Jay and I used to follow him and Brother some times.

SOPHIE

Yeah?

FRAN

Yeah. We followed 'em onto the ferry that one day. When Donny Pastolli was gonna throw Tony in the water.

SOPHIE

I've heard this story a thousand times from Brother.

FRAN

You ain't heard all of it.

SOPHIE

No?

FRAN

Brother's always said he saved Tony, right?

SOPHIE

He didn't?

FRAN

No, he did. But nobody ever talks about who saved Brother.

SOPHIE

Saved him from what?

FRAN

Goin' over the rail himself.

SOPHIE

You did that?

FRAN

I just watched.

SOPHIE

So who did it?

FRAN

(Rising to tell the story.) Well, Donny's standin' there, right? Holdin' Tony over the rail. And Brother comes back with mustard all over his face and a hot dog in both hands. So he throws the hot dogs at Lenny Brucini and grabs Tony to pull him in. But while he's doin' that, Donny and Lenny start tryin' to push him over the rail with Tony. I think the whole bunch em is gonna end up dead, when I hear this screamin'. It's like a crazy person, and it's comein' from Jay. This little sixty pound, eight-year-old kid, rushes at 'em, kicks Lenny in the shin and punches Donny right between the legs. Now Donny's the one screamin', Lenny's limp'in' around and Brother and Tony are layin' on the deck not knowin' what to do. And Jay says—I'll never forget this—Jay says, "You leave my brudda alone." Real serious like. So Brother and Tony get up and we went back inside the ferry and had sodas. Brother tells us that he'll buy us any toy we want if we promise never to tell nobody what happened.

SOPHIE

So what'd ya's buy?

FRAN

You kiddin'? Brother never bought us nothin'.

SOPHIE

So why didn't ya's tell?

FRAN

It was our big secret. Somethin' only the two of us knew about. I mean Brother and Tony knew but we knew they'd never tell nobody they got saved by a girl. It was fun to have a secret like that, ya know?

SOPHIE

Sure.

(ANNA and JEANNIE have finished up in the kitchen and enter the living room.)

FRAN

Now it's just my secret, I guess.

ANNA

What secret?

(There is a short pause and a moment of recognition between SOPHIE and FRAN.)

SOPHIE

(To ANNA) Nothin'. Don't worry about it.

ANNA

All right. Brother's pickin' us up any minute, we better go outside.

SOPHIE

He can come to the door, ya know.

ANNA

He ain't gonna do that. Fran, ya better get ya coat.

FRAN

I can walk home.

JEANNIE

Maybe that's not a good idea.

FRAN

We always walk home.

(SOPHIE, JEANNIE, and ANNA don't know what to say as "we" hangs in the air.)

JEANNIE

Why don't ya come with us tonight?

FRAN

It's just a few blocks.

JEANNIE

I just think that—

ANNA

It's not safe ta walk by ya'self at night, Fran. Let Brother give ya a ride.

FRAN

Oh.

(Pause)

Sure.

ANNA

I'll help ya get ya coat.

FRAN

Sure.

(FRAN and ANNA go the entryway.)

JEANNIE

How you doin', So?

SOPHIE

Tired. This new pill I'm takin' makes me tired.

JEANNIE

How's the blood pressure?

SOPHIE

It's high. But it's been high for ten years so God knows what that means.

(JEANNIE clearly disapproves of this choice of phrase.)

Sorry, Jean.

JEANNIE

It's all right. We're all tired after today. And ya got Trisha goin' away to school in a couple weeks.

SOPHIE

Tuesday.

JEANNIE

What?

SOPHIE

She's leavin' Tuesday. They've got the orientation for a week before school starts.

JEANNIE

Trisha all packed?

SOPHIE

With the funeral today? No, I guess I'll have ta help her tomorrow.

JEANNIE

She's goin' so far away.

SOPHIE

I try not to think about it too much.

JEANNIE

She'll be fine. She's a grown woman, right?

SOPHIE

She's eighteen. I don't know about grown woman though.

JEANNIE

Well I'm sure—

ANNA

(Yelling from the door.) Brother's outside, Jean!

JEANNIE

All right.

ANNA

We gotta go!

SOPHIE

(Angrily) All right!

(Pause. Then SOPHIE walks JEANNIE to the door.)

SOPHIE

Sorry, Anna. It's been a long day.

ANNA

Sure, So.

SOPHIE

I'll see ya's later. Tell Brother I said "hello."

ANNA

Sure, So.

(Sisters exit with choruses of "bye" and "take care." FRAN and SOPHIE hug, then FRAN leaves. SOPHIE turns off the lights and slowly walks upstairs. She is very tired. Fadeout.)

Scene 2

(The next day. Several piles of clothes and objects fill much of the Morelli living room. SOPHIE attempts to fold one pile of clothes while at the same time PATRICIA is searching through a folded pile by throwing various garments (and so unfolding them) onto the floor.)

PATRICIA

Ma, have you seen that blue blouse I like?

SOPHIE

What?

PATRICIA

The blue blouse, Ma. It's like my favorite top.

SOPHIE

Um. . .

PATRICIA

God, can something go right around here?

SOPHIE

What do ya mean?

PATRICIA

I just wish we'd started packing sooner, that's all.

SOPHIE

How could I have done this yesterday?

PATRICIA

That's not what I meant.

(Pause)

You know that's not what I meant.

SOPHIE

I know.

PATRICIA

And of course Pop won't help when he gets home.

SOPHIE

Ya father's very tired after work.

PATRICIA

And you're not tired?

SOPHIE

No rest for the wicked.

PATRICIA

Now you're talkin' like Uncle Brother.

SOPHIE

I'm surprised you remember what he talks like.

PATRICIA

Course I remember.

SOPHIE

Well that's good.

PATRICIA

(Somewhat under her breath.) He was like the father I never had.

SOPHIE

Patricia!

PATRICIA

Well, it's true isn't it?

SOPHIE

Your father loves you very much.

PATRICIA

And I love him. But you know we barely talk.

SOPHIE

He works very hard for us.

PATRICIA

I know, Ma.

SOPHIE

What time is it, Trisha?

PATRICIA

(Checking her watch) It's quarter after five.

SOPHIE

I gotta finish dinner.

PATRICIA

How we ever gonna finish *this*, Ma?

SOPHIE

We gotta eat, don't we?

PATRICIA

Not right now.

SOPHIE

Ya father's hungry when he comes home.

PATRICIA

Sure.

SOPHIE

Trisha.

PATRICIA

What!? Go make dinner! It's fine!

SOPHIE

Fine.

(SOPHIE rubs the back of her neck as she goes to the kitchen where she checks some pots on the stove, dons her apron, and begins to prepare supper at a breakneck pace. The phone rings several times.)

SOPHIE

Trisha!

PATRICIA

What!?

SOPHIE

Get the phone!

PATRICIA

Fine. (Answering it) Hello? Hi Aunt Fran. . . Yeah, real busy packing. . . No, it's not that far away. . . O.K. . . O.K. . . Here's Mom.

(PATRICIA hands the phone to SOPHIE, who has a very difficult time handling it while speed-cooking.)

SOPHIE

Hello? Hi Fran, how ya holdin' up? Uh. . . Sure, I can talk. . . No no, I'm not too busy. . . Yeah, that was a good talk yesterday. . . Uh huh. . . I know. . . We all miss her. . . Uh huh. . .

(TONY enters the house in his coveralls. TONY slowly removes them and hangs them in the entryway. TONY enters the living room and stares at the mess.)

PATRICIA

Packing.

(Pause)

(Sarcastically) For college?

(TONY does not respond, but instead goes to the dining room where he stares dejectedly at the empty table. TONY goes to the kitchen where he pours a glass of whiskey. TONY is clearly in SOPHIE's way. PATRICIA turns on the radio. An upbeat pop song blares forth loud enough that the characters must yell to be heard.)

SOPHIE

(To TONY) 'Scuse me. (To FRAN) No, not you, keep going. . . No, I'm not too busy. . . Sure, but we're all tired right? . . . It was a pretty funeral, I know. . . Johnny sent those flowers?

(TONY looks in the fridge, ineffectually searching for something to eat.)

SOPHIE

Jay did look beautiful, sure. (To TONY) What are you doin' in there?

TONY

I'm hungry. (To PATRICIA) Turn that down!

SOPHIE

(To FRAN) No, I'm talkin' to Tony.

PATRICIA

Ma! I can't find my brush!

SOPHIE

(To FRAN) No, of course I wanna talk to ya. . . (To PATRICIA) Check the little green bag! (To FRAN) What? No, it's Trisha packin'. . . What?

PATRICIA

Ma! I can't find the green bag!

SOPHIE

(To PATRICIA) What?

TONY

(Moving into her way) When we gonna eat?

SOPHIE

(To FRAN) What? No, I can talk whenever ya want. No . . . No . . .

No.

TONY

Are we gonna eat?

SOPHIE

(To TONY) Yes!

TONY

When?

PATRICIA

Ma!

SOPHIE

(To FRAN) No!

TONY

Sophie?

PATRICIA

Ma?

TONY

(To PATRICIA) Turn that down!

SOPHIE

(To FRAN) No.

TONY

Sophie!?

SOPHIE

(To TONY) What!?

PATRICIA

Ma!

(To FRAN) No! SOPHIE

Sophie! TONY

Ma! PATRICIA

(SOPHIE drops the phone and puts a hand on the back of her neck.
Simultaneous blackout and stoppage of music.)

Scene 3

(JEANNIE, FRAN, and PATRICIA sit in the Morelli living room. It is three days since the last scene, and since SOPHIE's stroke. This is the day of her return home from the hospital.)

It's gonna be fine, Trisha. JEANNIE

Is it? PATRICIA

Of course it is. JEANNIE

Sure. PATRICIA

FRAN
She's right, Trisha. Ya mom's gonna be fine.

JEANNIE
And if she needs some help, she's got us, right?

(Pause)

PATRICIA

I'll be here.

JEANNIE

Sure, you got another week till school starts.

FRAN

And I'm sure your father can get some time off. I mean Brother still carries a lot weight with the subway and if he tells 'em his sister had a stroke I'm sure they'll let ya father have some time off.

(Pause)

PATRICIA

If Uncle Brother helps him?

FRAN

Sure.

(Pause)

PATRICIA

Pop don't have ta worry about it.

FRAN

What?

JEANNIE

What a ya talkin' about, Trisha?

(Pause)

PATRICIA

I can take care a Mom.

JEANNIE

Sure, for a week ya can help out, but—

PATRICIA

No, I'm not gonna help out. I'm gonna stay. Mom needs me.

FRAN

But ya father can ask—

PATRICIA

Can what? Can ask Uncle Brother for help to take care of us? That isn't gonna happen.

FRAN

Trisha—

PATRICIA

Aunt Fran! Look, I know this has been a bad week for you. I don't mean to yell but I can take care of myself. And I can take care of Mom. Pop can just go back to work. I don't want Uncle Brother helpin' him.

JEANNIE

But ya Uncle—

PATRICIA

I don't want them gettin' in another fight in this room! What would that do to Ma, huh? It'd kill her. I don't need to go to school right now, I can help her long as she needs it. Maybe work a little for extra money.

FRAN

Doin' what, Trisha?

(Pause)

PATRICIA

I'll take what I can get.

(TONY and BROTHER enter, helping SOPHIE into the living room to sit her on the couch, ANNA enters and closes the door behind them. PATRICIA, FRAN, and JEANNIE rise and go to the incoming group. SOPHIE looks very nervous and self-conscious about being unable to walk by herself. She is clearly trying to be strong for her family's sake.)

FRAN

There she is.

JEANNIE

You look great, So.

(SOPHIE's words are not hard to understand and she does not stutter. However, her voice is extremely weak, and it is clear she must concentrate very hard to speak.)

SOPHIE

Thanks Jean.

FRAN

Ya want somethin', So? Glass of water?

SOPHIE

I'm—fine—Fran. Thank you.

(Pause. BROTHER feels very awkward in the Morelli home. It is his first time in the last seven years.)

BROTHER

Well, I better get home.

(He kisses SOPHIE on the cheek and gives her a long embrace.)

BROTHER

Give me a call when ya's wanna get picked up, Anna.

ANNA

Sure.

(Pause)

BROTHER

Good to see you, Trisha.

PATRICIA

You too, Uncle Brother.

BROTHER

You grew up beautiful. Just like ya mother.

(Pause. Then BROTHER goes to the door.)

TONY

Brother.

(TONY follows BROTHER to the entryway.)

BROTHER

Yeah?

TONY

Ya... Ya don't have ta go. I mean, Sophie'd like ya ta stay, ya know?

BROTHER

Oh. Well sure. I mean we don't wanna upset her, right?

TONY

No.

(Pause)

BROTHER

Well all right.

(BROTHER starts towards the living room.)

TONY

Brother.

BROTHER

Yeah?

TONY

(Swallowing hard) I need ya help. Down at the trains. I wanna stay—

BROTHER

It's done.

TONY

What?

BROTHER

You want some time to stay home and take care a my sister. Good. You'll get the time. Much as ya want.

TONY

I . . . I don't know what ta say.

BROTHER

Don't say nothin'. It's my sister, right? I just want what's best for her.

TONY

Sure.

(Pause. TONY and BROTHER study the floor.)

BROTHER

So what are we standin' around here for, huh?

(BROTHER goes back in to the living room and sits. SOPHIE smiles.)

TONY

Sure.

(TONY goes to the living room.)

FRAN

What'd he say then, So?

SOPHIE

He said—that—some things world be hard—for me—but—

ANNA

He said she might need some help for a while. But that eventually she'd be good as new.

SOPHIE

Probably.

ANNA

You'll be fine. Ya just gotta take it easy. Relax a little more, huh?

SOPHIE

Sure.

PATRICIA

We'll be all right, Ma.

JEANNIE

Ya tired, So?

SOPHIE

Little.

FRAN

We're all tired. No more weeks like this one, huh?

(SOPHIE forces a smile.)

ANNA

Let's give you some room ta lay down here, So.

(Everyone on the couch except SOPHIE gets up. TONY and BROTHER start to help her lie down but PATRICIA moves in front of TONY and he is forced to watch as she and BROTHER get SOPHIE all situated with pillows and a blanket. BROTHER sees TONY is uncomfortable and offers him a seat on the arm of the couch by SOPHIE's head.)

BROTHER

Here ya go, Ton.

(PATRICIA is frightened of any interaction between TONY and BROTHER and swoops in to take the seat being offered.)

PATRICIA

Thanks Uncle Brother. I got her, Pop.

(There is an awkward pause as TONY and BROTHER don't seem to know where to sit. Finally ANNA stands.)

ANNA

I think it's time we was goin'. Sophie needs ta relax, right?

(PATRICIA remains where she is as FRAN, JEANNIE, ANNA, and BROTHER each embrace SOPHIE before making their way to the door. TONY shows them out to choruses of "She'll be fine" and " 'Night Tony." Once the sisters are out BROTHER stops in the doorway.)

BROTHER

You just let me know whenever you wanna go back, huh? No rush.

TONY

Sure Brother.

BROTHER

You take care a my sister, huh?

TONY

Sure.

(An awkward pause)

BROTHER

Well, uh... 'Night.

TONY

'Night.

(BROTHER exits and TONY slowly takes down his coveralls from a hook. TONY stands in the doorway for a long moment in much the same manner as the end of Act I. Finally he roughly folds the coveralls and puts them in an out of the way place. They won't be needed for some time. He reenters the living room but is "shhhd" by PATRICIA, who sits over a sleeping SOPHIE. PATRICIA goes to the kitchen and signals TONY to follow. TONY goes to the kitchen.)

PATRICIA

I have to tell ya something, Pop.

(TONY is clearly not used to talking with PATRICIA.)

TONY

Sure.

PATRICIA

I'm not going to school this Fall. I know everybody's proud a my scholarship, and I know school still doesn't start for a week, but that's not enough time. I need ta be here. I need ta take care of Mom. I mean, I've been thinkin' about it and she's been takin' care of me my whole life and I've never done nothin' for her. So now I'm gonna. You don't need to miss work. I'll clean the house and cook ya suppas and help Ma. And if we need any extra money for doctors or pills or whatever I'll just get a job at night or on weekends. I'll take anything. I just need to be here, and I wanted you ta know.

(Pause as TONY sits at the kitchen table)

TONY

Sit, Patricia.

PATRICIA

What?

TONY

Just sit.

(PATRICIA sits.)

TONY

Ya goin' ta school—

PATRICIA

What!?

TONY

Would ya be quiet!? Ya want ya mother ta here us yellin' again?

PATRICIA

I don't ever want that again.

TONY

Me either.

(Pause)

Just let me talk. I know I ain't good at it—

PATRICIA

But you used to be, right?

TONY

What?

PATRICIA

'Fore I was born?

TONY

Listen. Will ya listen ta me?

PATRICIA

Fine.

TONY

Fine. Listen. I didn't stop talkin' cuz you was born. I stopped talkin' when I was hurt. I was no good ta nobody then. And I ain't been much good since. I work. I eat. I sleep. Twenty years like that and. . . Ya forget everything ya know. Ya not gonna forget, Patricia.

PATRICIA

I need to be with Mom. I can go ta school next year, or the year after that. I'm young, Pop, I got time.

TONY

I was young. And now I'm here. I don't remember what happened in the middle. But when ya mother fell on that floor right there the only thing I could think was, "Why is she on the floor? What is she doin' there?" And then / wanted to be on the floor. I wanted to be her and make her be lookin' down at me because that would be fine. What's the difference, right? But she's the one on the floor, Patricia, and I was the one yellin' at 'er just two seconds ago.

PATRICIA

I was yellin' too.

TONY

She was yellin'. We was all yellin'. But she was on the floor. And I thought, "Just get up, Sophie. Just get up and say 'Shut up Tony! Ya dinner'll be done when it's done!' " My dinner. Ya mother was on the floor.

PATRICIA

I know she was.

TONY

And I'm yellin' about dinner!

PATRICIA

Pop.

TONY

Patricia. I don't want you ta never yell at nobody about ya dinner.

(A small pause)

PATRICIA

I won't, Pop.

TONY

You will! If you stay here you will! Ya gotta go to school now because if ya don't go now ya never will and then ya'll be forty standin' in a kitchen wakin' up from a dream thinkin' "What the hell have I done?" Ya can't get a job here, Patricia, cuz that's when it starts and when it starts it's over.

PATRICIA

So who's gonna take care a Ma? You gotta work, Pop.

TONY

No I don't. We got a little money saved up. You got the scholarship.

PATRICIA

What if ya lose ya job?

TONY

How'm I gonna lose my job?

PATRICIA

What?

TONY

(Smiling) I got connections.

(Pause)

PATRICIA

You asked him?

TONY

Why not?

PATRICIA

Why not? Because you hate him, Pop! You've always hated him!

TONY

I only hated him once. And next thing I was standin' in this kitchen prayin' ta God that ya mother'd get up and let me take back yellin' at her and let me be awake for the next twenty years cuz I don't wanna sleep no more, Patricia. I wanna just sit with ya mother on the porch like we sat 'fore I got hurt and I wanna just look at her lookin'. She's just lookin' straight at the sun goin' down over the buildings even though it hurts her eyes. And I just look at her lookin' and. . .

(Pause)

Let me take care a her, Patricia. Please. I just wanna look at 'er again.

PATRICIA

But—

TONY

Ya gotta go now. Or you'll be right here in twenty years wonderin' what the hell happened. Ya gotta go, kid.

(Pause. TONY stares toward SOPHIE in the living room. PATRICIA watches TONY.)

PATRICIA

Can I visit?

TONY

You better.

PATRICIA

Or what? You're not allowed ta yell anymore, remember?

(Pause)

TONY

You got some mouth.

PATRICIA

Like my old man, right?

TONY

Who told you that?

PATRICIA

Uncle Brother.

TONY

(Teasing) Oh, well. Then it must be true.

PATRICIA

Of course it must.

(Pause)

I'm beat, Pop. Think I'll go up ta bed.

TONY

It ain't even dark yet.

PATRICIA

It will be soon. (Standing) 'Night, Pop.

TONY

'Night.

(PATRICIA goes to the living room, where she slowly bends and kisses SOPHIE, who is laying on her side. PATRICIA just looks at SOPHIE for a moment, then goes upstairs to bed. TONY rises and enters the living room. TONY slowly sits in a chair beside SOPHIE. TONY lightly touches her head, then quickly gets up, moves the chair aside, and kneels by the couch. TONY forcefully presses his head onto SOPHIE's and takes her hand in his. She wakes and strokes his hair. SOPHIE looks out the window.)

SOPHIE

Sun's settin'.

(TONY adjusts himself to look out the window for a moment, then just watches SOPHIE. SOPHIE stares out the window as lights fade to orange, red, and yellow, then to black. End of Play.)

