

EUGENE - A: Let me explain Aunt Blanche's situation . . . You see, her husband, Uncle Dave, died six years ago from . . . *(He looks around.)* . . . this thing . . . They never say the word. They always whisper it. It was- *(He whispers)*- Cancer! . . . I think they're afraid if they said it out loud, God would say, "I HEARD THAT! YOU SAID THE DREAD DISEASE! -*(He points finger down.)* JUST FOR THAT, I SMITE YOU DOWN WITH IT!!" . . . There are some things that grown-ups just won't discuss . . . For example, my grandfather. He died from *(He whispers)*-Diphtheria! . . . Anyway, after Uncle Dave died, he left Aunt Blanche with no money. And she couldn't support herself because she has *(He whispers.)* Asthma . . . So my big-hearted mother insisted we take her and her kids in to live with us. My father thought it would just be temporary but it's been three and a half years so far and I think because of Aunt Blanche's situation, my father is developing — *(He whispers.)*— High blood pressure!

EUGENE - B: I guess there comes a time in everybody's life when you say, "This very moment is the end of my childhood." When Stanley left to join the Army, I knew that moment had come to me . . . I was scared. I was lonely. And I hated my mother and father for making him so unhappy. Even if they were right, I still hated them . . . I even hated Stanley a little because he left me there to grow up all by myself. And I hated my mother for leaving Stanley's name out when she called us for dinner. I don't think parents really know how cruel they can be sometimes . . . *(a beat)* At dinner I tried to tell them that Stanley left but I just couldn't get the words out . . . I left the table without even having my ice cream . . . If it was suffering I was after, I was beginning to learn about it.

JACK – A Blanche, stop this! Stop it right now. What the hell is going on here, for God's sake. Two sisters having a fight they should have had twenty-five years ago. You want to get it out, Blanche, get it out! Tell her what it's like to live in a house that isn't yours. To have to depend on somebody else to put the food on your plate every night. I know what it's like because I lived that way until I was twenty-one years old . . . Tell her, Kate, what it is to be an older sister. To suddenly be the one who has to work and shoulder all the responsibilities and not be the one who gets the affection and the hugs when you were the only one there. You think I don't see it with Stanley and Eugene! With Nora and Laurie? You think I don't hear the fights that go on up in those rooms night after night. Go on, Kate! Scream at her! Yell at her. Call her names, Blanche. Tell her to go to hell for the first time in your life . . . And when you both got it out of your systems, give each other a hug and go have dinner. My lousy ice cream is melting, for God's sake.

JACK - B. My brother, Michael, was killed in the last War. I've told you. He was nineteen years old. The day he left, he didn't look any older than Eugene . . . He was killed the second week he was overseas. They didn't take me because I was 16 years old, both parents were dead, and I lived with my Aunt Rose and Uncle Maury. They had two sons in the navy, both of them wounded, both of them decorated. Michael would have been 45 years old this month. He was a handsome boy. Good athlete, good dancer, good everything. I idolized him. Like Eugene idolizes you. You know, I hear him outside, talking to his friends. "My brother this, my bother that" . . . Brothers can talk to each other the way fathers and sons never do . . . I never knew a thing about girls until my brother taught me. Isn't it like that with you and Eugene? I'm glad you're so close . . . I missed all that when Michael went away.

STAN - A: I got fired today! It was all on account of Andrew. He was cleaning the floor in the stock room and he lays his broom against the table to put some junk in the trash can and the broom slips, knocks a can of linseed oil over the table and ruins three brand new hats: **Nine dollar Stetsons**. So Mr. Stroheim sees the oily hats and he gets **crazy**. He says to Andrew the hats are going to have to come out of his salary. **Twenty-seven dollars**. I said to Mr. Stroheim I didn't think that was fair. It wasn't Andrew's fault. He didn't put the linseed oil there, right? So Mr. Stroheim says, (*in accent*) "You vanna pay for the hets, bik mout?" So I said, "No. I don't want to pay for the hats." So he says, (*in accent*) "Den mindt your own business, bik mout." He sends Andrew over to the factory to pick up three new hats. Which is usually **my** job. He tells **me** to sweep up. He says, for this week I'm the cleaning man. I felt the dignity of everyone who worked in that store was in my hands . . . so I pick up the broom I sweep a big pile of dirt all over Stroheim's shoes. He looks at me like machine gun bullets are coming out of his eyes. He demands letter of apology to hang on the wall. And that if the letter of apology isn't on his desk by nine o'clock tomorrow morning, I can consider myself fired.

STAN - B: Hi, Pop. How you feeling? (*JACK doesn't turn. He keeps reading his newspaper.*) . . . I'm sorry about not coming home last night . . . I know it was wrong. I just didn't know how to tell you about the money . . . I know it doesn't help to say I'll never do it again, because I won't. I swear. Never . . . (*He takes money out of his pocket.*) I've got three dollars. Last night I went over to Dominick's Bowling Alley and I set pins till midnight and I could make another six on the weekend, so that makes nine. I'll get the seventeen dollars back, Pop, I promise . . . I'm not afraid of hard work. That's the one thing you taught me. Hard work and principles. That's the code I'm going to live by for the rest of my life . . . So— if you have anything you want to say to me, I'd be very glad to listen.

KATE - A. Jack's company is having their annual affair in New York next Wednesday. At the Commodore Hotel. You should see how some of those women get dressed up. Jack wants you to come with us. He told me to ask you. You need this Blanche, it'll get you out of the house, you'll meet people. Max Green'll be at our table. He's the one whose wife died last year from (*whispers*) "tuberculosis" . . . He's their number one salesman. He lives in a hotel on the Grand Concourse. He's a riot. You'll like him. Maybe you'll dance with him. What else are you going to do here every night?... You can make yourself a new dress, Jack'll get you some material. He knows everybody in the garment district...(*Blanche still says no*) What are you afraid of, Blanche? Dave is dead. You're not. If God wanted the both of you, you'd be laying in the grave next to him.

KATE - B. Don't talk to **me** about charity! I did enough in my life for people. For you! For Celia! For Poppa, when he was sick. Everybody! . . . How many beatings from Momma did I get for things that you did? How many dresses did I go without so you could look like someone when you went out? **I** was the workhorse and **you** were the pretty one.**Now** it's not just me. What do you think caused my husband's heart attack? Why did a policeman have to carry him home at two o'clock in the morning? So your Nora could have dancing lessons! So that your Laurie could see a doctor every three weeks! Go on, worry about your friend across the street, not the ones who have to be dragged home to keep a roof over your head.

BLANCHE - A (*hesitates, trying to recover, she begins calmly*) . . . I'm not going to let you hurt me, Nora. I'm not going to let you tell me that I don't love you or that I haven't tried to give you as much as I gave Laurie . . . God knows I'm not perfect because enough angry people in this house told me so tonight . . . But I am **not** going to be a doormat for all the frustrations and unhappiness that you or Aunt Kate or anyone else wants to lay at my feet . . . I did **not** create this Universe. I do **not** decide who lives and dies, or who's rich or poor or who **feels** loved and who **feels** deprived. If you **feel cheated** that Laurie gets more than you, than I **feel cheated** that my husband died at **thirty-six**. And if you keep on **feeling** that way, you'll end up like me . . .with something much worse than loneliness or helplessness and that's self-pity. Believe me, there is nothing worse than human being who thrives on his own misfortunes . . . I am sorry, Nora, that you feel unloved and I will do everything I can to change it but I will **not** go back to being that frightened, helpless woman that I created! . . . I've already buried someone I love. Now it's time to bury someone I hate.

BLANCHE - B. If I could take Nora and Laurie, and pack them out of this house tonight, I would do it. But I can't. I have no place to take them. If I can leave the girls with you for another few weeks, I would appreciate it. Until I can find a place of my own and then I'll send for them. I know a woman in Manhattan Beach. I can stay with her for a few days. And then I'll find a job. I will do anything anybody asks me, but I will never be a burden to anyone again. I love you both very much. No matter what Kate says to me, I will never stop loving her . . . But I have to get out. If I don't do it now, I will lose whatever self-respect I have left. For people like us sometimes the only thing we really own is our dignity . . . and when I grow old, I would like to have as much as Mrs. Matthew Murphy across the street. (*She turns and goes up the stairs, disappearing into her room.*)

NORA - A: (*extremely happy and excited*) Eugene! My sweet adorable handsome cousin! Wait'll I tell you what's happened to me. Where's Mom? Aunt Kate? I have to tell everyone. Everybody inside for the big news! Okay. Is everybody ready? Okay! Here goes! . . . I'm going to be in a Broadway show! (*They look at her in a stunned silence.*) It's a musical called Abracadabra . . . This man, Mr. Beckman, he's a producer, came to our dancing class this afternoon and he picked out three girls. We have to be at the Hudson Theater on Monday morning at ten o'clock to audition for the dance director. They start rehearsing a week from Monday and then it goes to Philadelphia, Wilmington and Washington . . . and then it comes to New York the second week in December. There are nine big musical numbers and there's going to be a big tank on the stage that you can see through and the big finale all takes place with the entire cast all under water . . . I mean, can you believe it? I'm going to be in a Broadway show, Momma! (*They are all still stunned.*)

NORA - B: When I was six or seven Daddy always brought me home a little surprise. He'd tell me to go get it in his coat pocket. So I'd run to his coat and put my hand in and it felt as big as a tent. I wanted to crawl in there and go to sleep. And there were all these terrific things in there, like Juicy Fruit gum or Spearmint Life Savers and bits of cellophane and crumbled pieces of tobacco and pennies and rubber bands and paper clips and his grey suede gloves that he wore in the winter time. After he died, I found his coat in Mom's closet and I put my hand in the pocket. And everything was gone. It was emptied and dry cleaned and it felt cold . . . And that's when I knew he was really gone. (*thinks a moment*) I wish we had our own place to live. I hate being a boarder. Listen, let's make a pact . . . The first one who makes enough money promises not to spend any on herself, but saves it all to get a house for you and me and Mom. Is it a pact?

LAURIE What are you going to do?...(*NORA shrugs*) Do you want **me** to speak to Mom? I could tell her I was getting flutters in my heart again. (*getting a look of angry disgust from NORA*) I wouldn't be lying, They're just not **big** flutters.... What do you think Uncle Jack will say?..*(no response)*..Daddy would have said, "No." He was really strict. I can't remember Daddy much anymore. I used to remember him really well but now he disappears a little bit every day. If you want to talk to him, you should try doing what Momma does. She talks to Daddy every night before she goes to bed. She puts his picture on her pillow and talks to him. Then she pulls the blanket half way up the picture and goes to sleep. Last year when I had the big fever, I slept in bed with the both of them. In the middle of the night, my face fell on his picture and cut my nose.