

GRANDMA Get out of my house. Go live with your thief friend. You want the rest of the money, go, take it . . . It won't last you long . . . You'll both have to steal again to keep alive, believe me.

BELLA I don't want the rest of your money . . . You can have this too . . . Louie gave it to me. I stayed in Gertrude's house the last two nights . . . Louie came to say goodbye and he gave me this out of his little black satchel and God knows how much more he had . . . I didn't ask him. Maybe he's a thief too, Momma, but he's my brother and he loved me enough to want to help me . . . Thieves and sick little girls, that's what you have, Momma . . . Only God didn't make them that way. *You* did. We're alive, Momma, but that's all we are . . . Aaron and Rose are the lucky ones.

GRANDMA (*Crushed*) NOOO!! . . . Don't say dat! . . . Please Gott, don't say dat to me, Bella.

BELLA I'm sorry, Momma . . . I didn't mean to hurt you.

GRANDMA Yes. You do . . . It's my punishment for being alive . . . for surviving my own children . . . Not dying before them is my sin . . . Go, Bella. Take Louie's money . . . You think I don't know what he is . . . He stole since he was five years old . . . The year Aaron died . . . And I closed off from him and everybody . . . From you and Louie . . . From Gert and Eddie . . . I lost Rose, then Aaron, and I stopped feeling because I couldn't stand losing anymore . . .

BELLA Momma!

Climax

GRANDMA (*She picks up the bills and looks at them*) Vere did you get dis? (*She turns quickly and looks toward her room*) Did you steal from me? You know vere I keep my money. Nobody else knows but you. (*She throws her cup of tea in BELLA's face*) You thief!! You steal from your own mother? *Thief!!*

BELLA (*Screams at her*) Go on, hit me, Momma! Crack my head open, make me stupid and crazy, because that's what you really think anyway, isn't it?

LOST IN YONKERS

GRANDMA Go open your restaurant, live your own life, haff your own babies. If it's a mistake, let it be your mistake . . . If I've done wrong by you, then it's for me to deal with . . . That's how I've lived my life and no one, not even you, can change that for me now.

BELLA . . . There is no restaurant, Momma . . . He's afraid to be a businessman or a manager . . . He likes being an usher . . . He likes to be in the dark all day, watching movies whenever he wants . . . Then he can live in a world he can feel safe in . . . He doesn't want babies . . . He doesn't want to get married . . . He wants to live with his parents because he knows that they love him . . . And that's enough for him.

GRANDMA Then maybe he's more lucky than you.

BELLA Maybe he is . . . But I'll never stop wanting what I don't have . . . It's too late to go back for me . . . Maybe I'm still a child but now there's just enough woman in me to make me miserable. We have to learn how to deal with that somehow, you and me . . . And it can never be the same anymore . . . *(She gets up)* I'll put my things away . . . I think we've both said enough for today . . . don't you?

(Bella picks up her things, crosses into her room, and closes the door.)

GRANDMA sits, stoically . . . and then her hand goes to her mouth, stifling whatever feelings are beginning to overcome her.

(We go to black)

Denouement/ End —

SCENE 4

BELLA (*Voice-over*) "Dear Eddie . . . This postcard is from Bella. I just want to tell you that Arty and Jay are alright and I have good news for you except I don't have no more room. Love, Bella."

(Nine months later. We hear the church bells chime.)

ARTY and JAY are dressed in the same outfits they wore on that first day. They each have a suitcase sitting in the middle of the room)

ARTY . . . How long you think Pop's going to be in there?

JAY I don't know, but we made it, Arty. Ten months here and we're still alive. We got through Grandma and we're alright.

ARTY You know who I miss? Uncle Louie . . . I'm glad those two guys never caught him.

JAY No, but maybe the Japs will. You think he's safer fighting in the South Pacific?

ARTY No. But he's probably the richest guy on Guadalcanal.

(The front door opens and BELLA comes in carrying two shopping bags)

BELLA Oh, thank God. I thought you'd be gone before I got back. I ran all over Yonkers looking for these

. . . *(She puts the bags down)* Okay. Close your eyes. *(They do. She takes out a basketball and a football. She gives the basketball to JAY)* The football is for you, Jay. *(She gives the football to ARTY)* And the basketball is for you, Arty. Do you like 'em?

ARTY Ho-lee mackerel!

JAY This is incredible.

BELLA I hope it's the right size. I just took a guess.

JAY This is one of the best gifts I ever got, Aunt Bella.

BELLA Well, you two were the best gifts I ever got too. I hate to give you up.

JAY You don't have to. We're coming out all the time.

ARTY I really love this, Aunt Bella. Thank you.

BELLA Well, it's not just from me. It's from Grandma too. I just have to tell her later.

(The bedroom door opens and EDDIE comes out)

EDDIE Well, Grandma and I are through talking, boys. You ready to go?

JAY Hey, Pop. Look! It's from Aunt Bella. And Grandma.

ARTY Aunt Bella, go out for a pass.

(GRANDMA comes out of the bedroom, just as ARTY throws the football to JAY)

GRANDMA Vot's dis? Vot did I tell you about games in da house?

EDDIE They're not playing games, Momma. They know better than that.

GRANDMA If dey break someting, dey'll pay plenty, believe me.

JAY Thank you for the ball, Grandma. I love it.

ARTY I never owned a football in my life, Grandma.

EDDIE Alright. Grandma's tired, boys. Let's say good-bye and go.

GRANDMA Ve said goodbye dis morning. Two goodbyes is too much.

EDDIE *(With some sincerity)* Well, Momma . . . I just wanted to say thank you. You did a lot for me and the boys. I don't know how to repay you for that.

GRANDMA I'll tell you how. Don't do it again.

EDDIE I pray to God I won't have to.

GRANDMA And if you have to, I'll say no again. And this time I'll mean it . . . When Louie left for the army, I thought about sending you the money. Even Bella asked me to. But then I said no . . . Eddie has to do things for himself. And you did it. That's good.

EDDIE Yes, Momma. I'm glad you finally approve of me.

GRANDMA I didn't say that. All I said was "Good."

EDDIE I'll accept that, Momma.

GRANDMA So, I suppose you'll get married again, and I won't see your boys for another ten years.

EDDIE I'm not ready for marriage yet, Momma, but from now on the boys won't be strangers anymore. They'll be grandchildren . . . And I'm going to kiss you goodbye whether you like it or not. *(He leans over and kisses her)* Thank you for not putting up a fight. *(He nods, then turns to BELLA)* Goodbye, Bella. What can I say?

BELLA I know, Eddie. I know.

EDDIE I love you so much. *(He bugs her)* I'll meet you downstairs, boys. Thank Grandma, go on.

(And he goes before the tears come)

JAY I er . . . I just want to say thank you for taking us in, Grandma. I know it wasn't easy for you.

GRANDMA Dot's right. It wasn't.

JAY It wasn't easy for us either. But I think I learned a lot since I'm here. Some good and some bad. Do you know what I mean, Grandma?

GRANDMA *(She looks up at him)* You're not afraid to say the truth. Dot's good . . . You want to hear what my

truth is? . . . Everything hurts. Whatever it is you get good in life, you also lose something.

JAY I guess I'm too young to understand that.

GRANDMA And I'm too old to forget it . . . Go on. Go home. Take care of your father. He's a good boy but he always needs a little help.

(JAY nods and crosses to the door, waiting for ARTY)

ARTY Well, you sure gave me and Yakob a lot of help, Grandma. Danker Schein . . . That means, "Thank you."

GRANDMA He's sneaky, dis one. Tries to get around me . . . Don't try to change me. Sometimes old people aren't altogether wrong.

ARTY You're absolutely right . . . Can King Artur give you a kiss goodbye?

(He kisses her and crosses to the door)

GRANDMA . . . What were you two looking for that night under the boysenberry? My money maybe?

ARTY No! I swear!

GRANDMA You should have looked behind the malted machine.

(The boys bit themselves for their stupidity and leave. BELLA looks at her mother)

LOST IN YONKERS

BELLA Well, I'll get dinner started . . . Do you mind eating early, because I'm going out tonight. With a friend. (GRANDMA looks at her) It's a girl, Momma. I have a new girlfriend. She likes me and I like her . . . And she also has a brother I like . . . He works in the library . . . He can read everything . . . I'd like to have them both over for dinner one night . . . Can we do that, Momma? (GRANDMA looks away, not knowing how to deal with this) It's alright . . . It's no rush. You don't have to make up your mind right now. (She turns on the radio) . . . I thought Thursday would be a good night. (The music, "Be Careful, It's My Heart" sung by Bing Crosby, comes up. BELLA hums along happily) It's called music, Momma.

(And she disappears into the kitchen.)

GRANDMA watches BELLA, then nods her head as if to say, "So it's come to this . . .")

Curtain