

The Mail-Order Bride

by

Daris Howard

Copyright 1999

by
Daris Howard

The Mail-Order Bride

Copyright 1999

by Daris Howard

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that THE MAIL-ORDER BRIDE is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign language are strictly reserved.

The amateur live stage performance rights to THE MAIL-ORDER BRIDE are controlled exclusively by Drama Source and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended and dates of production. Royalties are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Drama Source Co., 1588 E. 361 N., St. Anthony, Idaho 83445, unless other arrangements are made.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain, and whether or not admission is charged. For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to Drama Source Company, 1588 E. 361 N. St. Anthony, Idaho 83445.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced, the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play, "Produced by special arrangement with Drama Source Co."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright or the rights to copyright of this play may be impaired.

No one shall make changes in this play for the purpose of production without written permission.

Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Drama Source Company for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping or otherwise, without the prior

written permission of the publisher.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of THE MAIL-ORDER BRIDE must give credit to the Author and in all instances in which the title appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The names of the Author must appear on at least one separate line no other name appears on. The Author's name must be immediately following the title. The name of the author must appear in size of type not less than 50 percent the size of the title type.

© 1999 by Daris Howard

Drama Source

1588 E. 361 N.

St. Anthony, Idaho 83445

Phone: (208) 624-4726

E-Mail: dhoward@dramasource.com



Dedication

I dedicate this play to my wife. No, she is not a mail-order bride; she is a beautiful person and the light of my life. Without her I would be like a lost boat drifting in the sea of time.

Daris Howard

Cast

Eli: A good-looking young man in his early-to-mid twenties. Slight English accent.

Jim: An older man who walks with a cane but is feisty.

Whitman Harris: A middle-aged man. He is the mayor, customs officer, etc.

Victor: The ship captain. Has a strong accent.

Anya: Beautiful young lady. She is the mail-order bride.

Agnes Harris: Whitman's wife. Pretty well in charge of women's activities in town. Middle-aged.

Mabel: Lady friend of Agnes.

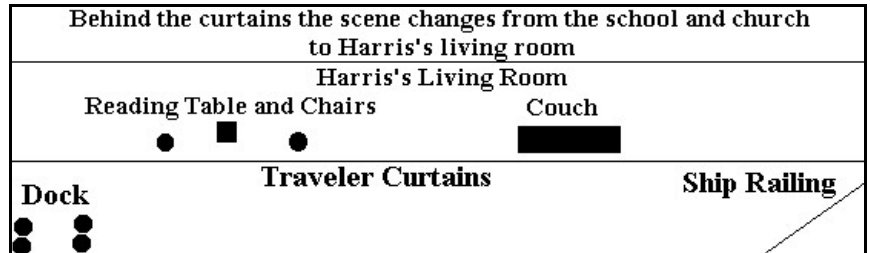
Elizabeth: Another friend of Agnes.

Costumes and Time Setting

The setting for the play is Newfoundland in the 1920's. The clothes should reflect this era. Everyone will need a nice set of clothes for church and regular, everyday clothes as well. Anya will also need the clothes she comes in with from the ship. They need to be drab and have some sort of veiling.

Stage Layout

Harris Home Scene



Church Scene



The Mail Order Bride

Act I Scene 1 (Saturday)

{The curtains open to a setting that would indicate we are on a wharf, or for easier scene changes there could simply be a wharf type of setting in front on stage right. The traveler curtains could be used to set off the areas where scenes change. Eli comes in from stage right.}

Eli: Come on, Jim. Hurry.

Jim: *{Coming in from stage right. He is old and walks with a cane.}* I'm a-comin'. I'm a-comin'. I'm not as young as I once was, you know.

Eli: This is the big day. I don't want to be late.

Jim: Late? Ha! You're about two years late, if you ask me.

Eli: Nobody asked you. You know I didn't have a choice.

Jim: You always have a choice. It's just the consequences you don't get to choose once you make the choice.

Eli: You know I would have brought her with me if I had had the money.

Jim: And **I know** that anyone who would leave his fiancée to go to another country and work is ...

Eli: Here comes Whitman now. I want to ask him about the boat's arrival.

{Whitman Harris comes on from stage left carrying a book that is the boat schedule. Eli runs up to him. He is very excited.}

Eli: Mr. Harris. I was wondering if you could boat me what tell the time is coming in?

Whitman: Slow down, boy. You're making no sense at all.

Jim: The lad's just a tad bit excited.

Whitman: Now start over and tell me what all this excitement is about.

Eli: This is the big day.

Whitman: What big day?

Eli: *{A bit embarrassed.}* You know.

Whitman: *{Looking a bit perplexed. Then suddenly brightening up.}* Oh, is the bell for the church supposed to arrive today?

Eli: No. Something more important than that.

Whitman: More important than the church bell. *{Snapping his fingers.}* Oh! Oh! I've got it. That shipment of toilet paper is arriving. It's been a pretty rough road since the town ran out.

Jim: That ain't all that's been rough.

Whitman: Pretty much defoliated the town too.

Jim: A person uses what's available.

Whitman: Yea, things have been pretty bad around here since that last shipment got caught in the storm and sank.

Jim: You think that's bad. What's bad is the time we had that big snow storm.

Whitman: The one where we all ended up having to gather in the town hall to stay warm?

Jim: That's the one. All we had to eat is chili day after day. Why, no one dared light a match for fear they would blow us all to Halifax...

{Eli breaks in as Jim is saying the last word, not quite sure what Jim will say.}

Eli: Gentlemen! Gentlemen! We didn't gather here to talk about toilet paper or chili or any other matter of a worldly nature.

Whitman: Then what other exciting news **did** we gather to talk about out here on the dock at such an early hour in the morning?

Eli: My future wife! My fiancée is coming today!

Whitman: Your fiancée?

Jim: The young lady he put on hold to come to America.

Eli: I didn't put her on hold. We just didn't have enough money for both of us to come.

Jim and Eli together: *{Jim mocking him as if he has heard it a thousand times.}* We just decided I would go ahead and earn the money

to bring her over.

Jim: Yeah, yeah. But it's just like I always said: Absence makes the heart go yonder.

Whitman: I think the statement is, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

Jim: You think of it your way and I'll think of it mine.

Eli: But you're wrong, Jim. I have written her every week, and today she is going to step off of that boat and ...

Jim: *{Sarcastically.}* And into your arms to dance off through the sunset to live happily ever after.

Eli: I didn't say it was going to be perfect. I was just saying we will be together again.

Jim: What if this here Milly...

Eli: Molly.

Jim: What if this here **Molly** don't like it here?

Eli: I'm sure she'll love it. I've been telling her all about it and she is really excited to meet everyone.

Whitman: Did you tell her you became the town preacher?

Eli: Well, no.

Jim: Did you tell her we were nothin' but a low-down bunch of lumberjacks and sailin' swine 'til you came and decided the town ought to have a church?

Eli: Not exactly.

Whitman: Did you tell her we don't even have a proper church but had to rig part of the old town hall with a steeple?

Eli: I'm not like a real trained minister neither.

Whitman: Closest we ever had, what with your Lutheran father.

Eli: Methodist.

Jim: And your quakie mother.

Eli: Quaker.

Jim: Whatever. It just wasn't that too many people ever got religious in these parts.

Whitman: Except, of course, when some natural disaster came into town.

Jim: Then you come along advocating book learnin' and bible preachin' and get all the women folk stirred up about school and Sunday meetings and all.

Eli: It's hard to be religious and learn the Bible if you can't read and write.

Whitman: Yeah, I heard tell some of the men are a bit sore at you seein' as how their wives won't let them fish on Sunday anymore.

Eli: I just thought I would try and do my part to give God a hand.

Whitman: So that's what brought you to Newfoundland?

Eli: Actually, I didn't start out for here.

Whitman: No?

Eli: No. I planned to end up in the United States. Join the Quakers somewhere around Pennsylvania like my mother wanted.

Whitman: What changed your mind?

Eli: I really didn't change my mind. The boat I was on got off course.

Whitman: Off course? Why, I'd have to say your captain had a major malfunction. You missed your target by 1200 miles.

Eli: The problem was due to a storm. I've always believed the Lord has a purpose for each of us. He wanted me here in Newfoundland, so He brought me here.

Whitman: I still think your captain had a loose rigging.

Jim: And what **I think** is that you ain't told that Dolly...

Eli: Molly.

Jim: You ain't told that Molly everything about this place. She might step off of that boat, take one look around, and get herself right back on it.

Eli: I told her the people are different than back home, but that she will learn to love them like I have.

Jim: So what have you told her about me?

Eli: I told her that I live with an old lumberjack that acts ornery to cover his big heart.

Jim: Well, you ain't so easy to live with yourself, you know.

Eli: *{Turning to Whitman.}* Anyway, Mr. Harris, I was wondering if you could tell me when her boat would get here?

Whitman: I thought you said it was today?

Eli: Yes. Yes. It is supposed to come in today. But what time?

Whitman: Hard to tell exactly. What's the name of the ship?

Eli: It's right here in this letter. *{Eli pulls a letter from his pocket and starts to read.}* It's kind of a strange name. Nacs, I guess.

Whitman: Nacs.

Eli: Yes. N-A-C-S.

Whitman: I haven't ever heard of such a ship. Well, let me check the log. *{He starts to scan the book.}* Nope. The only ship I show scheduled for today is one called the "North Atlantic Cattle Ship." I don't see any passenger boats coming until a week from tomorrow.

Eli: But the letter said she would be in today.

Whitman: I don't know about that. All I know is what my book says.

Jim: Are you sure she meant this week?

Eli: Here. Read it. *{Jim clears his throat. He can't read.}* Oh. Sorry. Let me read that part to you. "Dear Eli. Have booked passage on a ship called NACS. Watch for your bride on June 15. Molly."

Whitman: Kind of a strange letter?

Eli: I'm sure she was just in a hurry.

Whitman: Well, no matter. I can see the cattle boat coming in now. I'll be needed to help it dock and check passports and such.

{Whitman goes off stage left.}

Jim: Son, you know, it's none of my business and all, but do you think there is anyway that Lolly...

Eli: Molly.

Jim: Is there anyway that Molly would let you down?

Eli: Oh no. I remember the night I left. *{In a romantic, dreamy tone.}* It was a clear evening in late May. The geese were returning from the south. The stars shone overhead. In the moonlight I took her in my arms and she promised to wait for me until I could send for her.

Jim: *{In a bit dry, sure, right kind of tone.}* Yea. *{Then starting again.}* Well, I know I've been a bit ornery about it all. But you just can't trust life, that's all. You see sometimes life throws you a boat anchor when you expect a life raft and I was just worried ...

{Whitman and Victor come in from stage left.}

Whitman: *{Pointing at Eli}* This is the man you're looking for.

Victor: *{In a strong Russian accent as if disgusted.}* So you the man who ordered package. You look like decent enough fellow. Just as I figured.

Eli: What are you talking about? I didn't order a package.

Victor: Oh, don't try play innocent with me. Me know your type. Outside you look like good man. Inside you sneaking devil.

Eli: What are you talking about? Whitman, what is this man talking about?

Whitman: I can't say I have the slightest idea.

Victor: Me told to deliver package to you safely, unharmed. Me not like, but do as told.

Eli: What package?

Victor: As if you didn't know? *{Shouting off stage left.}* Hokay! Send her down.

{A young lady, dressed in dingy, drab clothes, with a head covering, enters stage left and stands at the edge of the stage, scared, and silent.}

Eli: Well, where's the package?

Victor: *{Pointing to the girl.}* This is package.

Eli: *{Going up to the girl.}* Okay. Give me the package.

Jim: *{Putting his arm around Eli and bringing him back over.}* No, Eli, he is saying the girl **is** the package.

Eli: *{As if a light comes on.}* Molly! Molly! *{He runs over to the girl again.}* Why Molly, in all those old clothes I didn't recognize you. And I didn't expect you to come in on a cattle boat. It's been so many years. Let me look at you.

{The girl removes her head covering and finally looks at Eli. Eli gets a bewildered look on his face. He glance at her then at the others and back at her.}

Eli: There's got to be some mistake. This isn't Molly!

Whitman: What do you mean this isn't Molly? The captain said she was sent to you.

Eli: Don't you think I would know my own fiancée when I see her?

Jim: It has been two years.

Eli: This isn't Molly!

Whitman: Then who is it?

Eli: Miss, would you come here? *{She carefully comes over to center stage.}* What is your name?

Victor: Her name is...

Eli: I think she can speak for herself. *{Turning back to her.}* Miss?

Anya: Is permitted for woman to speak in presence of men?

Eli: Of course it is. Now what's your name?

Anya: Anya.

{She then quickly tries to withdraw, but the men have her somewhat surrounded.}

Eli: Don't be nervous. We won't hurt you. Can you tell us why you were sent here?

Anya: Have letter.

{She holds a letter out to him. Eli takes the letter and opens it and moves off a bit. The others, except for Anya, follow him trying to read over his shoulder. Eli clears his throat and they all move off. Anya moves off a bit by herself. He reads for a brief instant then looks up.}

Eli: This is impossible!

Jim: Are you going to let us in on all of this or are we gonna sit around gawking all day?

Eli: *{Somewhat in shock.}* Here, read it yourself.

Jim: *{Taking the letter and passing it to Whitman.}* Would you read the durned thing?

Whitman: *{Starting to read it to himself and laughing. He says the next lines as he reads.}* Well I'll be. The nerve of...

Jim: I meant out loud, you lowlife sea serpent.

Whitman: *{Glaring at Jim and clearing his throat.}* "Dear Eli. I'm sorry I didn't have the courage to tell this to you before. I could not come to you since, you see, I am married to Jack Taylor."

Jim: Who's Jack Taylor?

Eli: He is the postman back in the town I came from.

Jim: *{laughing}* You mailed her a letter every week and she ended up marrying the postman who delivered 'em! *{laughing again}*
How fitting.

Eli: I don't see the humor in this.

Whitman: May I continue? *{Jim and Victor nod.}* Thank you. "We have been married most of a year now and have a little boy. *{Short pause as Jim laughs and they stare at him.}* We named him Eli after you. You will be his Godfather."

Jim: *{sarcastically}* Oh, that should make you feel better.

Whitman: Would you let me finish? "I've heard how in the West there aren't many women."

Jim: Not the marrying type anyway.

Whitman and Victor together: Shush.

Whitman: “I found an ad for a young lady. I am sending her to you. I’m sure she will be a good wife. Your friend, Molly”

Jim: *{In shock and somewhat laughing.}* A mail order-bride! Your friend Molly sent you a mail-order bride!

Victor: You mean you never order young lady?

Eli: No. Human beings are not property to be ordered through some magazine.

Victor: That’s not what her father say. He say she good girl and bring good price.

Whitman: You mean she was sold by her own father?

Victor: Da. He told me he get twenty-five dollar for her because she know English and is good cook.

Eli: Wait a minute. You mean that money I sent to Molly was used to **buy** a bride for me.

Victor: And pay passage on boat.

Jim: How much did she have to pay for a **cattle boat** ticket?

Victor: Boat ticket cost fifty dollar.

Eli: Fifty dollars. Why did Molly book her passage on a cattle boat? I sent her over two hundred dollars.

Victor: Two hundred dollar! Me think she must keep most of it. Me think you lucky not have such a girl.

Eli: But I can’t believe Molly would pay money for someone as if she were a package that could be bought and sold. And where did she stay on such a boat among all of the men?

Victor: She sleep with cows.

Eli: You made her sleep with the cows?

Victor: *{Indignant.}* No other bed. We not a passenger boat. And she not like to be around people.

Whitman: We could just sit around jabbering all day about things we can’t change, but we have a bigger question now. What do we do with her?

Eli: What do you mean what do we do with her, the captain can take her back and tell her father there was a big mistake.

Victor: I no want to take back. I charge **hundred dollar** boat ticket to take back.

Eli: I don't have a hundred dollars. I sent every last cent I had to Molly.

Victor: No boat ticket, no take back.

Eli: Now be reasonable. I didn't ask for her and...

Jim: You're forgetting something else Eli. You were just saying how bad it was for Lolly ...

Eli: Molly.

Jim: You were saying how bad it was for Molly to send her on a cattle boat and you are about to do the same thing.

Eli: *{Thinking fast and hard.}* Well, well, maybe...

Jim: Yes?

Eli: Whitman, you're the mayor here. Maybe you can help find her a place to stay and a job.

Whitman: Now hold on here just a minute. I may be mayor, but I am also the customs officer. The law has changed since you came over here, Eli. No one comes in unless they meet the new legal standards.

Eli: What new legal standards?

Whitman: In order to be a citizen she must have a relative here.

Eli: But, there is no way she could have a relative here.

Jim: A husband would count as a relative, isn't that right Whitman?

Whitman: Yes, a husband would work nicely.

{They all look at Eli. He looks at them and suddenly realizes what they are saying.}

Eli: Oh, no. If you think I'm going to just up and marry someone I don't even know, you are dead wrong.

Whitman: Well as I see it you have one of two choices. You can send her back or you can marry her. Either way, she's **your** responsibility.

Eli: Now wait a minute. I didn't order her and I...

Victor: Oh, one thing forgot. When keep must send father Gratitude Dowry.

Eli: Gratitude Dowry?

Victor: How you say, tip.

Eli: If she stays I'm supposed to send her father a tip?

Victor: Da. Very important custom. It tell how much you think she worth.

Jim: And just how much is this "tip"?

Victor: It depend. If not think good, you send dollar. If good, two or three dollar. Extremely good, perhaps four or five.

Jim: *{Looking at Anya and possibly holding his nose.}* I think a dollar should do it.

Whitman: What if he doesn't send anything?

Victor: When send tip she considered acceptable to her village. If you no send tip, then she disowned in village.

Eli: You mean that we are supposed to send back money for what we think she's worth, and if we don't her village will disown her?

Victor: Da.

Eli: I won't do it. Isaiah said, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold." How then can I reduce a human to the worth of three or four dollars.

Victor: I beg you consider. If you not send, village think her worthless and she feel worthless. She actually very nice.

Eli: I won't do it!

Whitman: You may want to consider everything before making a decision, Eli.

Eli: Jim, what am I to do?

Jim: Isn't there something we can do while Eli considers the options?

Whitman: Well, she can either stay on the ship or I can lock her up.

Victor: She no stay on ship. Food not free.

Eli: You can't lock her up. It's not right. She hasn't done anything wrong.

Whitman: I'm just following the law.

Jim: It seems to me the law can be bent a little bit.

Whitman: I can't break the law.

Jim: We didn't say break it. We said bend it. Like you did when your nephew was caught stealing watermelon from the...

Whitman: Okay, okay! Maybe we can give a little. We could let her stay here as long as the captain is in port. That would give Eli a bit of time to make a rational decision.

Victor: But where she stay? She no stay on ship.

Jim: She can't stay with us. What would the town folk say?

Eli: Heaven knows what they'll say anyway?

Jim: But, that leaves only one place. *{He looks at Whitman.}*

Whitman: Now wait just a minute. I never volunteered to...

Jim: Oh, come on, Whitman. All your children are gone and you rumble around in that big house of yours like a musket ball in a cannon.

Whitman: What would my wife think?

Jim: If I know Agnes, and I do, and you put anyone else in charge of this girl you're gonna be in big trouble.

Whitman: But she's so, so...

Jim: Dirty? So would you be if you had slept with cows for a month. I'm sure Agnes could even find a dress or something and make her look almost human.

Whitman: Oh, all right. But you better hurry up and make up your mind, Eli. I'm giving you until the captain leaves port which is, which is... *{Turning to the captain.}*

Victor: One week from tomorrow.

Whitman: Which is one week from tomorrow. That's all! Got it?

Eli: Yes. Yes.

Whitman: I'll go get Agnes and try to explain this to her. Heavens, I don't even understand it all myself.

{Whitman leaves stage right.}

Victor: I will go get her things.

{Victor leaves stage left.}

Jim: *{Looking at Anya and laughing.}* Mail-order bride. The preacher got a mail-order bride. I thought I'd heard it all. *{Glancing at Eli then over at Anya.}* Perhaps I should leave you two alone. The guys at the pool hall haven't heard the news.

{He leaves stage right. As he is leaving Eli is trying to stop him.}

Eli: *{A bit panicked.}* No, Jim, don't leave. Jimm, I ...

{Eli looks over at Anya who shyly lifts her eyes to meet his then quickly lowers them.}

Eli: I, uh, I mean...

Anya: You send Anya home?

Eli: Well, I don't know if that's possible, but it would probably be best.

Anya: You no like Anya?

Eli: I can't say I don't like you. I don't even know you.

Anya: Anya good cook. Anya work hard, learn cook, sew, learn English. Anya speak good English?

Eli: Yes, you speak good English.

Anya: Anya try hard to make new owner happy.

Eli: My name is Eli and I'm not your owner. A person can't own another person.

Anya: But father own Anya. Father sell, Eli buy. Now Eli own.

Eli: No, Anya. God made man in his own image. No man can really be owned by another.

Anya: No man, but woman.

Eli: No! He did not make the woman to be owned any more than the man.

Anya: Anya not understand. If Eli think this, then why buy Anya?

Eli: I didn't buy anyone. I sent money to Molly so she could come over.

Anya: Mean buy Molly and get Anya by mistake and make Eli sad?

Eli: No. I did not send money to buy Molly. Molly was my fiancée. I sent money for her boat ticket.

Anya: Oh. You already own Molly and send for her.

Eli: No. I did not own Molly. She was my fiancée.

Anya: But if fiancée. You own.

Eli: No. I'm trying to tell you that I don't own anyone.

Anya: Then you send Anya back?

Eli: Wouldn't you be happier back home with your own family?

Anya: Father beat Anya since not please new owner. Sell 'nother owner.

{She looks longingly at him. His eyes come to meet hers they look at each other for a brief time. Eli then lowers his eyes as the words Anya has just said sink in. Whitman enters with Agnes from stage right.}

Agnes: *{Running up to Anya.}* This must be the poor dear. Don't worry now. Agnes will take care of you. You are off of that awful boat. We will keep you safe from men who treat woman like property.

{With this she glares at Eli. Eli looks shocked and glances at Whitman. Whitman just shrugs.}

Eli: But I...

{Just then two more women enter. They run over to Anya.}

Mabel: Oh, there she is.

Elizabeth: To think of the poor child riding all that way on a cattle boat.

Agnes: Come on, ladies. Let's get her cleaned up.

Eli: Now Mrs. Harris, I just wanted to explain that ...

Agnes: As for you sir, you will be expected at our house for dinner at precisely six o'clock.

Eli: But I ...

Agnes: You don't think we would let you marry her until you've gotten to know her, do you?

Eli: Well no, but I...

Agnes: Six o'clock sharp! And don't you dare be late!

Eli: But who said I was going to marry...

{The ladies hurry off stage right with Anya. The ladies are saying things like: "Can you believe the nerve.... And him the town preacher besides.... I can't believe my eyes... And on a cattle boat, too."}

Eli: What did you tell her?

Whitman: I just told her that your mail-order bride came in and she had to ride a cattle boat all the way here.

Eli: But I didn't order her!

Whitman: You wanted me to get Agnes to let her stay at our house didn't you.

Eli: I didn't want you to make her think I ordered a mail-order bride. And why did you have to go telling Mabel and Elizabeth?

Whitman: I didn't tell them. Agnes told Mabel on the way down here and I guess Mabel must have told Elizabeth.

Eli: Now it will be all over town.

Whitman: Did you think there would be anyway to stop that?

{Just then Jim comes back in from stage right.}

Jim: I just passed the ladies taking Anya over to your place, Whitman. I haven't seen that much excitement out of them since old Mabel found out it was Mr. Johnson and not a weasel who was stealing her chicken eggs.

Eli: Whitman didn't tell them the whole story. He just told them my mail-order bride came in and she had to ride a cattle boat.

Jim: Yea, I told some of the boys down at the pool hall that you had a mail-order bride come in.

Eli: Oh, and what did they have to say?

Jim: *{Elbowing Eli.}* “That preacher’s a sly devil him. I didn’t think he had it in him.”

Eli: *{Sarcastically.}* Oh you guys have been a whole lot of help. And just how am I suppose to get up and preach a sermon tomorrow and face everyone when they think I ordered a mail-order bride?

Jim: Now calm yourself down. Maybe you can just preach about *{short pause}* the evils of marriage.

{Jim and Whitman bust out laughing.}

Eli: I don’t see the humor in this!

{Just then Victor comes in from stage left. He is carrying a small ugly bag.}

Victor: Here her things.

Whitman: That’s all she’s got? There couldn’t be much more than one change of clothes in there.

Victor: I think she no have more clothes than what she wear. I think just things from home.

Whitman: Let me take them. She may be wanting whatever’s in here. *{To Eli.}* As for you, Mr. Preacher, I would be at my house at six o’clock if you know what’s good for you.

Jim: Be at your house?

Eli: Agnes told me to come to dinner tonight.

Whitman: And it wasn’t a request. Oh, and Jim, you’d be invited too.

{Whitman leaves stage right with the bag.}

Victor: If you men will excuse, I have shipment to take care of.

{Victor leaves stage left.}

Jim: As for us, I think we better try to make sure the town folk are told the truth before the rumors get out of control.

{They exit stage right. Lights fade.}

Act I Scene 2

{When the lights come back up, the scene is the living room of the Harris home. Whitman is sitting in a comfortable chair reading. There is a knock at the door. Whitman gets up and goes to answer the door.}

Whitman: Eli, Jim, good to see you. Come in. Come in. *{Looking at a clock on a mantel or at a pocket watch.}* You're even just a bit early.

Jim: Eli didn't want us to be late. He said he was already in enough trouble around town.

Eli: It wasn't just me. Jim could smell that wonderful roast beef your wife makes clear over to our house.

Whitman: Yes, she is a good cook. Why I was only 110 pounds when we married. *{Or if he's skinny he could say, "Why when we first married if I stood sideways and stuck out my tongue I looked like a zipper."}*

Jim: Right, and you were seven foot tall.

Eli: Did you take some time to explain more to your wife about Anya?

Whitman: I've got a few words in. It hasn't been easy. She and her lady friends have been running around, flitting here and there, getting this bow and that ribbon. Trying this dress on Anya and that bow on Anya, and Anya this and Anya that.

Jim: Well, it sounds like they like her.

Whitman: I don't know about that, but I do know that Eli better be careful what decisions he makes. I think they've become pretty protective of her.

Eli: I just don't understand. I have tried hard to follow God's will. Why would God answer my prayer about my wife this way?

Jim: You remember how a few weeks ago you gave that sermon on how when we pray God answers our prayers through the efforts of someone else.

Eli: Why, yes. I never thought you listened to my sermons.

Jim: I try not to. Anyway, think about it, Eli. Maybe she's not the answer to your prayers, but maybe you're the answer to hers.

{There is a short pause as Eli ponders this.}

Eli: I don't understand.

Whitman: You're the one who always says you feel God will direct your life if you let him. Maybe He's directing yours now.

Jim: And who knows, maybe she is the answer to your prayers. You always say that God knows better how to answer our prayers than we do.

Eli: Maybe you two ought to get up and preach the sermon tomorrow.

Jim: *{Laughing.}* No. I can't wait to see what kind of sermon you come up with. I bet as the word gets out, you'll have a packed house tomorrow.

{Mabel and Elizabeth enter from the back of the house.}

Mabel: Eli, are you ready to greet your future wife?

Eli: Now wait just a minute here. No one said that...

{He is interrupted by Agnes escorting in Anya. She is dressed in a beautiful gown with her hair done up. She is a gorgeous girl, much in contrast to how she looked before. The men just gasp and look at each other. Jim drops his cane. Then everyone looks at Eli, who is just frozen staring at her. Finally Jim nudges him and nods his head toward Anya. Eli finally comes to himself and steps up and puts out his arm. She looks timid and starts to back away. Agnes steps up and takes her hand and links it through his arm.}

Whitman: She cleans up real nice, doesn't she?

Agnes: Dinner won't be ready for a little while. Why don't we leave you two alone to get acquainted and the rest of us will go in the kitchen to visit. *{No one moves so she strongly emphasizes to Jim and Whitman.}* I said kitchen!

Jim: Oh, yes. Kitchen.

Eli: *{Nervously.}* But I don't think that...

Jim: Eli, do as your told.

{The others exit off stage left. Eli leads Anya to a couch and they both sit down at opposite ends.}

Eli: So, um, how was your voyage?

Anya: Fine.

Eli: Did they treat you well? I mean, were the captain and his men nice to you?

Anya: They feed Anya good, and not bother.

{There is a bit of an uncomfortable silence as they both kind of look away. Finally Eli turns to her.}

Eli: Anya. Anya look at me. *{Anya looks at him. He touches her arm and scoots a little closer.}* I think we're both confused and not sure what to do. Maybe we can start by you telling me a little more about what life was like for you in your village?

Anya: Anya know not what say. Anya never speak man before except father and brothers.

Eli: Was that the way in your village?

Anya: Yes. Woman not speak to man not relative. And then only speak when spoke to.

Eli: Are many women sold as brides?

Anya: All woman sold when age to marry.

Eli: Were many sold through an ad like you were?

Anya: No. Anya first woman sold out of village. Father much progressive. He say if daughter learn English and learn cook she bring more outside village.

Eli: Are you happy to be here?

Anya: Why not happy? Have much food. Have home.

Eli: Would you not have food at home?

Anya: If man not pleased make go hungry.

Eli: They do that in your village?

Anya: Sometime father mad and make Anya so hungry Anya faint.

Eli: Would you be unhappy here with me?

Anya: No make Anya go hungry?

Eli: No, I would never make you go hungry.

Anya: Then Anya like here.

Eli: If I were to marry you, would you be happy?

Anya: Anya good cook. Anya raise many children.

Eli: But could you love me?

Anya: Anya not understand?

Eli: I would like a wife, but I want her to be able to love me.

Anya: What is love?

Eli: *{Shocked.}* What is love! Well, um, love is... Well it's a feeling you feel in here *{patting at his chest}* when you are around someone who means a lot to you. Surely there is someone you have felt that way about?

Anya: Anya feel good feeling here *{patting her chest}* for Anya's mother.

Eli: Yes, like that. Could you feel that feeling for me?

Anya: You not look like Anya's mother.

Eli: No, but could you love me anyway?

Anya: How woman feel such feeling for man? Anya no need feel. Eli own Anya.

Eli: *{Frustrated.}* No I don't own Anya! *{Then calming down.}* I would just want you to be happy here.

Anya: Why not happy?

Eli: I mean would there be any place you would rather be?

Anya: Women often talk of place where have much freedom. Place called California *{Other places could be substituted as desired.}* where no man make go hungry.

Eli: If you could go there, would that be what you would rather do?

Anya: Eli no want marry Anya?

Eli: Eli only wants to marry Anya if Anya wants to marry Eli. If you would rather go to California I would try to send you there. Is

that what you would like to do?

Anya: Anya no thought possible. No thought about.

Eli: You think about it. I'll do what will make you happy. I can send you home or to California.

{Agnes comes in from stage left and they quickly link arms again.}

Agnes: It's good to see you two talking. Dinner's ready.

{Eli carefully guides Anya into the kitchen as she smiles cautiously at him. Agnes smiles approvingly. They go off stage left as the lights fade.}

Act I Scene 3

{As the lights come up it is back to the pier. Eli is sitting on a log there. It is evening. Jim comes in from stage right, pauses a moment and then comes over to Eli.}

Jim: I thought I just might find you here.

Eli: I've just been thinking.

Jim: About what?

Eli: About Anya.

Jim: She is actually a very beautiful girl.

Eli: It's more than that.

Jim: I saw you glancing at her at dinner. Come to think of it she glanced a bit at you too. I'd say you kind of like her.

Eli: Yes.

Jim: Then why don't you marry her? You **own** her, you know?

Eli: *{Angry.}* I don't own her. A man may control a woman, but he can not own her heart. He can only have her heart when she wants to give it to him. Her father **owned** her, but he never had a place in her heart.

Jim: I'm sorry. I was only joking.

Eli: This is not a joke. I am beginning to care for her, but Jim, I only want to marry her if she wants to marry me. I want her to love me.

Jim: Don't you think she will if you treat her well?

Eli: I don't know. I'm not sure she will ever forget the way her father treated her enough to open her heart to me.

Jim: Perhaps there are more important things than love.

Eli: More important things than love? What could be more important than love?

Jim: Trust, kindness, gentleness, patience.

Eli: But aren't those what love is built on?

Jim: When I was your age I thought so. But I've learned that you can love someone and still not like or trust them very much.

Eli: Jim, why have you never married?

Jim: I did.

Eli: You did?

Jim: Many years ago. I had a beautiful wife and wonderful little son.

Eli: What happened?

Jim: The flu epidemic came through here and took my sweet Mary and my little Jimmy.

Eli: I'm sorry.

Jim: I guess I always blamed God. I could never remarry. I got so lonely I thought about taking my own life. That's when you showed up and needed a place to stay. *{Jokingly.}* And you've caused so much trouble I forgot all about it.

{They both laugh.}

Eli: Is that why you have worried so much about Molly coming over?

Jim: I was afraid what might happen. *{Jokingly.}* Why, I was... I was just worried I might get stuck with you forever.

Eli: *{Laughing.}* You old goat. You wouldn't know what to do if you weren't tramping around with me to meetings all of the time.

{Victor comes in. He could be smoking a pipe.}

Victor: What bring you men down here this time of night?

Eli: Just thinking. Wondering what to do. Victor, do you believe that God controls our lives?

Victor: Da. *{Pointing at the night sky.}* Me think God put many thing in life like a North star. If we look at them we be fine. Most men not look though and end up on reef.

Eli: Victor, what do you feel is the right thing for me to do?

Victor: Victor no able to answer. God hang different star for each man.

Eli: What would happen to Anya if we sent her back? Would her father really beat her and sell her again?

Victor: Would definitely beat her. May no sell again.

Eli: No. That's what she told me.

Victor: May no sell. May put to death.

Eli: You can't be serious!

Victor: Bring dishonor to family if sent back. Perhaps sell again. But perhaps worse. Victor no want take back.

Eli: She mentioned California. She said the women dream of running away to there. Do you know more about that?

Victor: Victor knows women often talk of go there. They hear many things, but I not know if true.

Eli: Could you take her there if she wants to go?

Victor: Need ticket for boat and ticket for train. Cost fifty dollar.

Eli: Back to fifty dollars again.

Victor: Much better take there than home.

Jim: You aren't really thinking of sending her there are you?

Eli: I am planning to do what I think will make her happy.

Victor: And you pay Gratitude Dowry?

Eli: I am not going to pay some money for someone as if they are a mere item to be bought or sold.

Victor: Then she not be happy no matter where send her.

Eli: Why not?

Victor: Because she feel worthless.

Eli: Somehow I can help her understand that the Gratitude Dowry is wrong.

{There is a short pause then Jim goes up to Eli.}

Jim: If you send her away, what would **you** do?

Eli: I don't know. I have no opportunity for marriage here. All the women are too old or too young. Maybe I was wrong in thinking God brought me here. I guess I would just go on down to Pennsylvania.

Jim: The town wouldn't be the same. No one would be here to preach, or teach reading and writing.

{They all sit or stand there silently for a few seconds.}

Eli: I suppose I better work on my sermon for tomorrow. Good night, captain.

Victor: Goodnight, Eli.

Jim: Good night, captain.

Victor: Good night, Jim.

Jim: Good night, Captain.

Eli: Coming, Jim?

Jim: You go ahead. I'll be right along.

{Eli leaves stage right. Victor leaves stage left.}

Jim: *{Looking up to heaven and removing his hat.}* Dear God. I know I haven't talked to you much since you decided to take my sweet Mary and my little Jimmy. I suppose I blamed you for what happened. You've brought Eli to me and I thank you. He has been like a

son to me. I don't know if you hear the prayers of an old man like me. I know I ain't worthy to ask, but if you do hear prayers of an old man, please help Anya to love Eli so he can stay here. The church needs him, the town needs him, *{a short pause}* and, well, I need him.

{The lights fade.}

Act I Scene 4 (Sunday)

{The scene can be just a curtain backdrop. Eli is sweeping and Jim is setting up chairs. If there are more people available then the main eight cast members you can have a lot in the congregation. Otherwise, the podium can be set so it is in front of just a few rows as if the auditorium goes offstage so it can be as if there is a large congregation offstage. People start coming in. Mabel and Elizabeth come in and sit up front. If you have cast members to play the parts you could have husbands come in with them. Soon Agnes and Whitman come in with Anya. Agnes and Whitman smile at Eli. He shakes people's hands as they come in. Jim sits up front as well. Agnes talks to Mabel and Elizabeth and they nod. They get up and move back a row so Anya can have the very front row seat closest to Eli. Whitman and Agnes then sit down by her. Victor comes up and sits by Jim.}

Eli: *{Calling off stage as if to lots of people.}* There are still plenty of seats folks. Come on in. There are even a few up front. I know how much you all love the front seats.

Jim: Folks can't fall asleep up here as easy.

Whitman: Yea, and you can hear better too.

Jim: Yea there's that disadvantage as well.

Eli: *{Calling off stage again.}* Mr. Johnson. Would you mind setting up a few more chairs in the back for those just arriving? Thank you. I have struggled today with what I should preach on. I spent a very sleepless night. I know a lot of you have heard different things about what happened yesterday. I considered just ignoring it. I realize that it would be best to come right out and let everyone know the truth and put rumors to rest. Many of you know that I was waiting for my fiancée. I had come over here without her and was saving money to send to her so she could receive passage over. After two long years I finally earned enough money to bring her over. Unbeknown to me, she had already married. Not wanting to leave me alone she sent me a, well she sent me a...

Jim: Well, she sent you a mail-order bride. Just say it.

Eli: Yes, she sent me a mail-order bride. *{At this if there are a lot of people there could be a lot of chatter as if it is unbelievable.}* The

Harrises were kind enough to give her a home while we sort this whole thing out. I want you all to know I will try to do the right thing in this matter, if I can figure out what that is.

Mabel: *{Jumping to her feet.}* By all means, you should marry her.

Elizabeth: *{Jumping to her feet.}* What if Anya doesn't want to marry him?

Mabel: And why wouldn't she want to marry Eli?

Elizabeth: Perhaps she doesn't love him. Perhaps she even loves someone else. It's so romantic and exciting.

Mabel: Of course she wants to marry him. She came over, didn't she?

Elizabeth: She was forced to come over. I think he should pay the money to send her back.

Victor: I not take her back. This not good thing.

Elizabeth: *{Cowering to the captain.}* It's not appropriate to take her away from her family.

Victor: You don't know what you talk about.

Mabel: I still think he should marry her. She won't want to go back on a cattle boat.

Jim: I think you should all be quiet and let Eli speak.

Elizabeth: You men are all the same, thinking you can tell us women what to do.

Jim: Now wait a minute. Must I remind you that it was his fiancée Dolly...

Eli: Molly.

Jim: It was his fiancée Molly who sent Anya here and she's a female.

Elizabeth: I bet her husband put her up to it.

Eli: Now calm down, all of you. We are in the church. I'm just trying to set the record straight. I did not come here today to burden the town with my problems. I came here to preach the word of God.

Elizabeth: I still think...

Agnes: That's enough. All of you. This is a matter for Eli and Anya. You talk as if it's your decision. Well it's not, and I want to hear

the sermon.

{Everyone except Eli sits down.}

Eli: Thank you Mrs. Harris.

Agnes: But so help me if you don't do the right thing, Eli Whittier, you'll answer to me.

{Everyone laughs, except Eli who looks a bit nervous.}

Eli: *{Clears his throat and begins.}* I have chosen for my sermon the topic of love.

Jim: Can't imagine why.

Eli: If you had to explain to someone what love is how would you begin? If they had never felt it or known it, what would you say? In the Bible there is a story told of Jacob. *{He comes from behind the podium and comes right in front of Anya.}* He went to get himself a wife.

Whitman: Wasn't he the one that worked to earn one girl and then the father switched them and he married the wrong one?

Eli: Well, yes.

Whitman: Quite apropos I would say.

Eli: Anyway, when he saw the beautiful Rachel he fell in love with her. For seven years he served her father for her. And the Bible says, "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had for her."

Jim: Well at least he was there to make sure she didn't marry the postman.

Eli: *{Moving over in front of Jim and looking at him.}* Sometimes, perhaps we do not know how much we love someone until they are gone. Some of us even wonder if God loves or hears us. *{Moving back in front of Anya.}* The Bible tells us that "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." What kind of fear could there be that would get in the way of love? It could be fear of rejection, *{turning to Jim who now seems to be thinking deeply}* fear of the loss of someone we love, *{turning back to Anya}* or fear of abuse by those who should love and protect us the most. If we are to love as God has said, then we must be able to unlock the chains of fear that bind our hearts, and then and only then can we truly love another. *{Going over to Jim.}* And true love will even conquer the fear of loss that extends beyond this life bringing us together again.

{In this next scene Jim can just stay there thinking and then the scene move down stage or it can be a whole new scene on the dock. Eli

can be moving the podium and then turn and see Jim thinking or he can come out on the dock.}

Act I Scene 5

Eli: You seem deep in thought, Jim. What are you thinking about, Jim?

Jim: Your sermon.

Eli: What about my sermon?

Jim: Your statement “True love will conquer the fear of loss that extends beyond this life bringing us together again.” Do you think that my Mary and Jimmy are happier where they are?

Eli: I believe that God has his own timetable for when He takes someone home to live with Him. Yes, I believe their happy.

Jim: Sometimes I have felt that I would have been better off to have never married.

Eli: Do you regret what love and time you shared with Mary and Jimmy?

Jim: No.

Eli: Would you be willing to give it up to avoid the sorrow?

Jim: No. It’s just that the pain was so dreadful when they died, I thought it would take my very life.

Eli: If you believe in God then you’ve got to believe in a Heaven, and if you believe in heaven you must believe you will see them again, because heaven wouldn’t be heaven without those we love.

Jim: So you do believe we will be together again?

Eli: I believe that is the essence of religion whether you’re Quaker, Methodist, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or any faith. Our heart just has to find it.

Jim: But how do we find it?

Eli: I don’t know. Victor said that God hangs us each a star in our life to guide us.

Jim: Perhaps we both have watched the wrong star.

Eli: *{After a slight pause.}* Well, Harrises invited us to dinner again.

Jim: One thing about this young lady, we've eaten better since she came. I don't have to put up with any more of your lousy cookin'.

Eli: Hey, I don't cook that bad.

Jim: No, but you don't cook that good neither. I ate about half of that stringy roast you had cooking yesterday, couldn't take no more, it tasted like rawhide.

Eli: I didn't put on a roast. I just put on a bunch of leather straps to soften for the doors of the new cabin I was building for Molly and me.

Jim: Leather straps! You mean I ate a bunch of leather straps!

Eli: The old taste buds aren't what they used to be, eh, Jim?

Jim: Not since I started eatin' your cookin'. I swear it tasted like one of your roasts only better. Just needed a little salt that's all.

{Lights fade as they continue to talk and move off stage left.}

Eli: You seem to have a plenty good appetite when ...

{Lights fade as they move off stage left.}

Act I Scene 6

{When the lights come up and the curtains open it is the Harris's living room. Whitman is coming in from stage left followed by Eli (who has Anya) on his arm. Jim and Agnes are next.}

Jim: Why, Agnes, that has got to be one of the best meals I have ever eaten in my life.

Agnes: *{Making sure Eli is hearing.}* Actually, Anya cooked this meal.

Jim: My goodness, Anya. You are a marvelous cook.

Anya: Mrs. Harris really do most. Very difficult for Anya. Many things different from home.

Agnes: Where Anya made dinner, I think that maybe Whitman and Jim can help me in the kitchen.

The men grumble but follow.

Jim: I hope you got some of that dish soap that makes your hands soft.

{As the three of them start to move into the kitchen Eli begins to follow.}

Eli: I didn't help cook either. Perhaps I should come help and...

{Agnes turns to face him and pokes him in the chest.}

Agnes: You, sir, have more important things to do.

{She points at Anya and with that she disappears into the kitchen. Eli comes over and offers his arm to Anya. She takes it and he leads her to the couch where they sit down.}

Anya: Eli ask Anya about Anya's life. Tell Anya about Eli.

Eli: Let's see. I grew up in a small town in Yorkshire, England. My parents were good people working hard to provide for our big family. I was the second of ten children. My father worked in a mill and also ran a small acreage. When I met Molly it wasn't long before we knew we wanted to get married. But times were hard and there was very little work. We agreed I would come to America and earn enough money to bring her over. It just didn't work that way, I guess.

Anya: Does Eli miss home?

Eli: Yes, sometimes I miss home. I miss my father and mother and brothers and sisters.

Anya: Anya miss Mother, but no miss Father.

Eli: Is it strange to be here?

Anya: Anya no understand things here. Sometime Mrs. Harris say, "husband do", and husband do. No say in Anya's country.

Eli: Were all men in your country like your father.

Anya: Anya think so but Anya not know. Woman not speak to man not relative.

Eli: Anya, the captain talked about a custom in your country, that of sending what he called a "Gratitude Dowry".

Anya: Eli not worry about Gratitude Dowry. Anya not worth much. Eli no have to pay more than dollar.

Eli: *{Pausing at this and his sorrow for what Anya feels about herself.}* No, Anya, I want to know more about it.

Anya: Father and husband gather and brag of how much worth are daughter and wife. They say important things.

Eli: So it's important to make your father proud of you.

Anya: Not so important Father. More important make Mother happy.

Eli: So it is more important to send this Gratitude Dowry to make your mother happy.

Anya: Mother know if send Gratitude Dowry that daughter worth much and husband treat good. Also, if not good Gratitude Dowry, Father beat Mother.

Eli: You mean if there was no dowry, your father would beat your mother.

Anya: Father say Mother's fault not give good daughter.

{Eli gets up and looks into space. He is disturbed by all of this. Anya rises.}

Anya: Anya say something bother Eli?

Eli: Anya, in my home we never heard of such things. My father loved my mother. He would never consider beating her. He never even raised his voice at her.

Anya: Mother never do anything wrong?

Eli: Oh, my mother did a lot of things wrong. It's just not how things were done. When you love someone you don't try to hurt them.

Anya: Anya no understand love.

{Eli reaches out to put his arm around her. Anya pulls back as if she is afraid of getting hit.}

Eli: Anya, I won't hurt you. *{He puts his arm around her but she is still very timid.}* You're shaking like a leaf.

Anya: Anya frightened. Never have anyone put arm around Anya, but mother.

{Eli takes his arm from around her and takes her hand in his.}

Eli: Anya, remember what I told you about love. The first part of love is trust. You have got to trust that I won't hurt you. You have got to believe that not all men are like your father. Please, Anya.

Anya: Anya try.

{Jim, Agnes, and Whitman come in from the kitchen.}

Agnes: It is so good to see the two of you getting to know each other a little.

Anya: Anya go bed now.

{They all look on as she leaves. Agnes turns to Eli.}

Agnes: What did you do to her?

Eli: I did nothing bad. I only asked her to trust that I would never hurt her. *{Pause.}* Does she talk much of home to you?

Whitman: She won't speak to me much at all. In fact she tries to avoid me.

Agnes: She sometimes tells me of her mother. She loves her mother.

Eli: Does she speak much of her father?

Agnes: Just enough that I know he was a very controlling person. But I understand that was common where she came from.

Eli: Do you think she will ever be able to trust men enough to love me?

Agnes: That is totally up to you.

Eli: What do you mean?

Agnes: When a woman feels like Anya feels, the only time she will gain trust in you is when she believes in herself.

Eli: I don't understand.

Jim: I think what she is trying to say is that Anya's father made her feel like she was nobody. Before she can trust you, she's got to feel like she is somebody to you.

Agnes: More than that. She has to feel like she is somebody, period.

Whitman: But it has to be genuine. Women will sense any falseness in a man.

Agnes: I think you are beginning to care for her.

Eli: Very much.

Agnes: Then in time she will know that.

Eli: Time is something I don't have. The captain leaves one week from today. If she doesn't want to stay by then, I can't force her to stay or she will never trust me, and if she doesn't trust me, she can never fully love me.

Agnes: That is true.

Jim: Come on, Eli. We should be getting home. Tomorrow is another day and perhaps things will look brighter. *{Jim and Eli leave.}*
Thank you for that wonderful dinner. I didn't have to starve to death eating Eli's cooking.

Whitman: We might as well retire, too.

Agnes: You go ahead. I'll be right along.

{Agnes goes over to a small table by the couch and picks up her and Whitman's wedding picture. As she is looking at it, Anya comes in.}

Anya: Mrs. Harris?

Agnes: *{Putting down the picture, turns to Anya.}* Yes, Anya.

Anya: Is Mr. Eli gone?

Agnes: Yes he is. Why, dear? What's the matter?

Anya: Eli frighten me.

Agnes: He did? What did he do?

Anya: Eli say Anya need trust Eli, and he put arm around Anya.

Agnes: Why did that frighten you?

Anya: Anya feel funny.

Agnes: How so?

Anya: *{Putting her hand to her chest.}* Anya feel funny here.

Agnes: Was it a good feeling?

Anya: Anya not know. Anya never feel before.

Agnes: *{Putting her arm around Anya.}* Does it feel strange for me to put my arm around you?

Anya: No. Anya like. Feel like Mother.

Agnes: And how does it feel when Eli puts his arm around you?

Anya: *{Pausing for a brief moment.}* It feel strange, and... and feel warm too. Anya scared.

Agnes: Anya, he put his arm around you because he likes you. Anya come over here with me. *{She leads her over to her own wedding picture.}* This is a picture of Mr. Harris and me when we got married.

Anya: You very beautiful.

Agnes: And he was very handsome. But you know what makes a couple beautiful? It is the love they have for each other. That warm feeling you were feeling was love. You need to concentrate on it and let go of the fear.

Anya: Eli not hurt Anya?

Agnes: No, Eli won't hurt you.

Anya: Anya go bed now. Much think about.

Agnes: Good night, dear. Sweet dreams.

{Anya goes offstage left. Agnes goes and looks at her wedding picture again. She then sets it down and goes offstage herself as the lights fade.}

Act I Scene 7 (Monday)

{When the lights come on it is the same scene. Anya comes out. Agnes is there visiting with her friends Mabel and Elizabeth. Anya can come in and cut this conversation at any time.}

Mabel: Did you hear about that traveling salesman that used Johnson's outhouse when they were out of toilet paper?

Elizabeth: He reached outside and got a hand full of stinging nettle.

Mabel: You have never seen anybody walk so funny in all your life.

{Anya comes in and Agnes notices her.}

Agnes: Good morning, Anya. Did you sleep well?

Anya: No, Anya not sleep much.

Mabel: Are you feeling ill?

Anya: Anya feel fine, but worry upset Eli.

Elizabeth: What could you have done to upset Eli?

Anya: Anya pull from Eli.

Mabel: What?

Agnes: It was just a little thing. Eli went to put his arm around Anya last night and she pulled away from him. Then she left. But it isn't anything to worry about, Anya dear. Eli understands.

Mabel: I think it is the best thing she could have done. Why, she wouldn't want him to think he owns her.

Anya: But Eli does own Anya.

Elizabeth: Oh, no he doesn't! You are in Newfoundland now. You are a free woman.

Mabel: You can do as you please.

Agnes: May I remind you ladies that if she doesn't have a husband by Sunday when the ship pulls out, she will no longer be in Newfoundland. The law states that a person must be a relative of a citizen to stay.

Mabel: One of us could adopt her.

Agnes: Adoptions take over a year.

Elizabeth: There must be some way. We can't let a man go around thinking he owns someone.

Agnes: Now where did you get the idea that Eli thinks that?

Mabel: Oh, come, come, Agnes. His money was used to pay for her and send her over here.

Anya: That why he own Anya.

Elizabeth: No, no dear. That's what we are trying to tell you. In Newfoundland no one owns anybody.

Anya: But Anya want Eli own Anya. Eli nice Anya. Anya think Anya tell Eli, fine put arm around Anya.

Elizabeth: Oh no. You can't do that.

Anya: Why? Isn't that what supposed to do?

Mabel: No, no. You don't tell him. You are supposed to hint at it.

Anya: What mean hint?

Elizabeth: Well, it means...

Agnes: It means you should show him you want him to put his arm around you, but you don't really say it.

Anya: How show?

Mabel: You should bat your eyes at him.

Elizabeth: Yes, like this. *{She bats her eyes at Mabel.}*

Anya: This strange custom.

Mabel: And everywhere he goes you try to get close to him.

{Mabel snuggles up close to Elizabeth.}

Elizabeth: Then he would have to put his arm around you.

Mabel: But you can't make him think you are trying to do it deliberately.

Elizabeth: Oh no. You must make him think it is just part of what you do and it's just natural.

Anya: How Anya *{she bats her eyes}* bat eyes and get close *{she gets close to Elizabeth}* and make Eli think natural?

Mabel: You blink your eyes gently and stare at him like he is a happy dream.

Elizabeth: And when you get up close to him, you do it when he's not looking so you are just kind of there.

Mabel: And you make small talk.

Anya: Talk small?

Elizabeth: No. Small talk.

Anya: What small talk?

Agnes: That is when you talk about something that is not really important.

Mabel: Like "How's the weather?" and "What did you do today?"

Elizabeth: And "Do you come here often?" and "What do you do?"

Mabel: And don't forget to laugh at his jokes.

Anya: Laugh at his jokes?

Elizabeth: Yes, even if they're not funny.

Anya: How know is joke if not funny?

Agnes: It's how they say it and what they say.

Anya: Anya not understand.

Elizabeth: If they say something that is kind of half off the topic.

Mabel: Like you might say, "I went to get my hair fixed today." Then a man might say, "Why, was your rabbit having too many babies?" You know hare, rabbit.

{The women all half laugh but Anya looks confused.}

Elizabeth: Here let me give you a better example, "I feel like fish tonight. What do you say?", and he would say, "Well, you don't look like a fish so maybe it's just your perfume."

Mabel: Or it could have just been your breath.

{The women all laugh again but Anya looks more confused.}

Anya: So I laugh when man say something strange.

Elizabeth: No, or you would be laughing all of the time.

{The women all laugh again and Anya is still confused.}

Mabel: And don't laugh a deep laugh. *{She laughs a deep laugh.}*

Elizabeth: Just kind of a giggle. It's more feminine.

Mabel: Yes, like this. *{She does a bad type of giggle.}*

Elizabeth: Not like that. You sound like a cow that's got pneumonia. It's like this. *{She does her version.}*

Mabel: You sound like a seal that swallowed too much sea water.

Elizabeth: Oh, yeah? Well you...

Agnes: Ladies. Ladies. Anyway, Anya, just enjoy being with him.

{Whitman comes in and the ladies start acting like nothing is happening. Mabel and Elizabeth get up to leave.}

Mabel: Now remember what we told you, Anya.

Elizabeth: And just act natural.

Anya: *{To Agnes as Mabel and Elizabeth are leaving.}* How act natural and do **those** things?

Agnes: I'm sure I really don't know.

Whitman: Weather's warming up just a bit.

Anya: Does Mr. Harris make talk small?

{Whitman looks confused.}

Agnes: No, he really is talking about the weather.

Anya: Eli come over this morning?

Whitman: I'm afraid not. He's got to work in the woods today. In the evening he usually teaches reading and writing classes.

Anya: When Anya see Eli again?

Agnes: Would you like to see him?

Anya: Yes. Anya want do something nice for Eli.

Agnes: That would be a good idea.

Whitman: What do you have in mind?

Anya: Anya not know.

Whitman: He was really impressed with your cooking the other night. Maybe you could make him another dinner.

Anya: Anya not really cook. Mrs. Harris cook.

Whitman: But I thought you said...

Agnes: Just you never mind. Anya is a good cook. She just doesn't have all the things to cook with the way she did at home.

Whitman: That's it then. Let's get her the ingredients she needs and she can cook some exotic dish from her country.

Anya: Oh, yes. Anya know just what cook. Most special dinner.

Agnes: That a girl. I'll help you get what you need at the market. Tell me what it takes and we'll see what we can do.

{Whitman and Agnes nod through all of these and say "uh huh"}

Anya: Need pepper, salt, vegteebul.

Agnes: What kind of vegetable?

Anya: Green, long, fluffy top.

Agnes: Celery.

Anya: Yes, celery.

Anya: Also need po-ta-to.

Agnes: Alright.

Anya: And red, long fluffy top.

Whitman: Carrots.

Anya: Yes, carrots.

Agnes: Anything else.

Anya: Oh yes. Almost forgot most important. Need medium dog.

Whitman and Agnes together: Dog!

Anya: Yes. Best meat.

Agnes: Anya dear. I'm afraid it probably wouldn't be a good idea to serve dog.

Whitman: I don't know. I know one I have been wanting to get rid of.

Agnes: Whitman, just stop!

Anya: Dog cost much?

Whitman: No. In fact as mayor I can tell you where there is a whole kennel of...

Agnes: I thought I told you to stop. Don't you want a drink of water or something?

Whitman: Actually no. This was just getting interesting.

Agnes: Whitman!

Whitman: Come to think of it, I was rather thirsty.

{Whitman leaves into the kitchen stage left.}

Agnes: You see, Anya, there are some differences in our culture. Over here we don't eat dog meat.

Anya: You no eat dog meat? What then you eat?

Agnes: Well we eat, chicken and rabbit and beef...

Anya: Beef?

Agnes: Cow.

Anya: You eat cow?

Agnes: Yes.

Anya: You eat cow and no eat dog?

Agnes: Yes.

Anya: In Anya's country, we eat dog and no eat cow.

Agnes: Let's compromise. We won't eat cow and you don't eat dog.

Anya: So what Anya make for Eli?

Agnes: How about a nice batch of cookies?

Anya: What cookies?

Agnes: You know. Little round things you make with flour and sugar.

Anya: What sugar?

{Just then Whitman comes back out of the kitchen.}

Agnes: Well it's sweet, and it's white or brown, and it's... *{Turning to Whitman.}* Whitman, will you get us a cup of sugar from the kitchen. *{To Anya.}* I'm sure you'll know it when you see it?

{Whitman returns and hands it to Agnes. Agnes holds it out to Anya.}

Anya: *{Taking the cup from Agnes.}* Oh. Salt.

Agnes: No. It's not salt. It's sweet.

Anya: Sweet?

Whitman: Yes. Like not sour, but sweet.

Agnes: Take a little taste.

Anya: *{Takes a little bit. Her eyes open wide with excitement.}* Anya like.

{She then takes the cup and tips it up draining the whole thing before they can stop her. She has sugar all over her face. Whitman could act like he is going to gag.}

Agnes: Haven't you ever had sugar before?

Anya: No! Anya like! Anya want make cookies for Eli!

{Agnes and Whitman laugh.}

Agnes: Then cookies it is.

{They head off into the kitchen as the lights go out.}

Act I Scene 8

{When the lights come on, it is in the city hall. Eli is setting up some tables and chairs for study. Jim comes in.}

Jim: I think you ought to just forget about reading and writing tonight and go over and visit Anya.

Eli: I thought I would end a bit early, but I didn't want someone to come and not find anyone here. I wonder why no one has come yet.

Jim: With the ice melting and the northern fishing runs opening maybe everyone has gone fishing.

Eli: I hardly think everyone went fishing.

Jim: Well, if no one's here you ought to just close up and go see Anya.

Eli: Would you stop? I'll have plenty of time tonight when I get done.

Jim: That's your problem. You spread yourself too thin. You need to concentrate on getting Anya to marry you and forget everything else. I even think you ought to get somebody to take over for you up logging. You wouldn't miss a week's wages.

Eli: Don't think I haven't tried. I talked to my boss, but he wouldn't let me off. He said with everyone fishing he didn't have enough help.

Jim: I'll talk to him with the backside of a piece of pine if he...

Eli: Now calm down, Jim. You remember how scared Anya got last night when I put my arm around her. Sometimes too much time together might not be good.

Jim: I know, I know. Absence makes the heart grow fonder. But you know what I think, I think...

Eli: *{Pulling out some wild flowers.}* Look. I picked Anya some wild flowers from up along the ridge.

Jim: Little good they'll do if they wilt before you can....

{Jim is interrupted by a knock on the door stage left.}

Jim: Who would be knocking on city hall?

{Agnes pushes Anya on out.}

Agnes: Go on in dear. You don't have to knock. *{Then turning to Eli.}* Anya baked you some cookies and wanted to bring them over to you.

Eli: That's mighty sweet.

Agnes: Well, I really need to be getting home and pick some berries.

Jim: But berries aren't on this time of...

Agnes: *{Jerking Jim towards the door.}* I'm sure Jim wouldn't mind giving me a hand.

Jim: But I don't want to...

Agnes: *{Agnes wacks Jim on the back.}* Just like Jim, always wanting to help, isn't that right.

Jim: *{Still gasping for air.}* That's right.

{Agnes heads out the door with Jim behind her.}

Eli: Oh, Jim. Wouldn't you like a cookie before you go?

{Jim turns back to Eli who is holding out the cookie plate.}

Jim: Don't mind if I do.

{Jim takes a bite and his face looks as if he is going to choke. Anya looks pleased with herself.}

Anya: Anya add lots extra sugar to make specially good.

Jim: *{Gagging}* Yes, I can tell.

{Jim leaves.}

Eli: *{Turning to Anya}* It is so nice of you to come over here. I was going to come see you when I got done.

{Eli takes a bite of cookie. His eyes get wide.}

Anya: Eli like?

Eli: *{Putting what's left back on the plate.}* I've never tasted anything quite like 'em.

Anya: Anya first time make cookie.

{Anya bats her eyes at him looking up like the ladies did. Eli leans away just a bit.}

Eli: Uh, yeah.

Anya: So how's today?

Eli: For what?

Anya: The weather.

Eli: Oh. Oh, the weather. It was fine. Yes a real, real fine day.

Anya: Do come here often?

Eli: Yes, I teach here every night.

Anya: What do you do?

Eli: *{A bit confused.}* I, uh, teach here every night.

Anya: *{Giggling a strange giggle.}* Eli funny.

Eli: *{Confused and doing kind of a half laugh.}* Uh, yeah.

{Eli continues to set up chairs. As he turns his back on Anya she quickly moves right beside him.}

Eli: I was wondering if you would... *{As he turns around with the chair he almost trips over Anya.}* Sorry. *{He sets the chair down. And turns to get another one and again she moves right up beside him.}* Anyway, I was wondering if you would like to... *{Again he turns and about trips over her.}* Uh, Anya, why do you keep moving?

Anya: I not supposed to tell.

Eli: What do you mean?

Anya: Just supposed to hint.

Eli: Supposed to hint what?

Anya: Ladies say Anya not supposed to tell what Anya want. Only hint.

Eli: *{Beginning to catch on.}* Oh, the ladies told you this. What did they tell you the hints were?

Anya: They say Anya to bat eyes, *{she bats her eyes}* talk small like “what day is weather”, laugh at jokes, *{she does her strange giggle}* and move close when Eli not looking.

Eli: Oh. So that’s it. There’s only one problem.

Anya: What problem?

Eli: Sometimes women forget to tell men what these hints are supposed to mean.

Anya: They mean Anya want Eli to put arm around Anya. *{She then quickly covers her mouth as if she told a secret.}* Oh, not supposed to tell.

Eli: That’s okay. I won’t tell anyone you told me. *{He goes up close to her.}* So it won’t scare you if I put my arm around you?

Anya: Anya no more ’fraid. Anya like. It make Anya feel good in here. *{She puts her hand on her chest.}*

Eli: *{Putting his arm around her and smiling. Maybe stretching and acting like he is doing it innocently.}* I can’t figure out why no one else has come tonight.

Anya: *{Very innocently.}* Oh, Mrs. Harris tell them not come.

Eli: Mrs. Harris told them not to come?

Anya: Yes. She say no read, write lesson all week. Eli have other things to do.

Eli: Oh, she did, did she? Well, I was going to ask you if you wanted to read a book with me anyway, so how about it?

Anya: How about what?

Eli: Would you like to read a book together?

Anya: Anya no read.

Eli: Would you like to learn?

Anya: Is permitted?

Eli: What do you mean?

Anya: In my country, not permitted for woman to read.

Eli: It is here. Here you can learn anything you want. Mrs. Harris, for example, can read very well. Would you like to learn?

Anya: Yes! Anya like!

Eli: Alright. Where should we start?

Anya: Anya look at book?

Eli: Sure. Come on. *{He leads her over to the small set of shelves.}* Let's see. Here is one by Shakespeare.

Anya: No like spear.

Eli: No. Shakespeare. That's his name.

Anya: Soldier?

Eli: No, English people just have strange names and... Never mind. It's probably a little too much anyway. Here's one. "Pygmalion" by English playwright George Bernard Shaw.

Anya: Is about pig?

Eli: Oh no. Pygmalion was a mythological Greek sculptor who creates such a beautiful work of art he wants to marry her. But in this play by George Bernard Shaw, the girl is a flower-girl that is changed into a fine lady presumed to be a princess.

Anya: Anya like that story.

Eli: I'll tell you what. Let's read some and then I'll teach you your alphabet.

Anya: Alphabet?

Eli: Yes. Those are the letters or symbols that are put together to form words.

Anya: Is so exciting!

Eli: Yes, it is. Oh, and speaking of flower-girls. I brought you some flowers.

{Eli gets up, gets them, and hands them to her.}

Anya: Why bring flowers?

Eli: It is a present. Hasn't anyone ever given you a present before?

Anya: Sometimes Anya given more food, if good. We eat flowers?

{She starts to take a bite but Eli stops her.}

Eli: No. No. We just look at them and enjoy their beauty and smell them and enjoy their fragrance. Men give them to women they like.

Anya: *{Smiling and taking a deep breath of them.}* Umm. Anya like. Anya thank Eli.

Eli: You're welcome.

{Eli helps her to a chair and sits down by her. He puts his arm around her and she smiles. He then starts to read.}

Eli: *{From the book.}* "Preface to Pygmalion. A Professor of Phonetics. As will be seen later on, Pygmalion needs, not a preface, but a sequel, which I have supplied in its due place. The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it. They spell it so abominably that no man can teach himself what it sounds like. It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him. German and Spanish are accessible to foreigners: English is not accessible even to Englishmen...."

{As Eli starts to read, Anya kind of curls up and leans her head against him. The lights fade.}

Act I Scene 9 (Tuesday)

{As the lights come up Eli is setting up two chairs or a bench and a table. Jim comes in carrying a chair.}

Eli: Oh, Jim. We won't be needing that tonight.

Jim: Since no one came last night I guess you're not expecting many customers tonight.

Eli: No. Agnes made it clear to the town folk that I was too busy to teach this week.

Jim: So why are you here at all?

Eli: Anya's coming.

Jim: Anya's coming here? What for?

Eli: I am teaching her to read and we are reading "Pygmalion" together.

Jim: *{Sarcastically.}* Oh, how romantic.

Eli: We enjoy it.

Jim: When I was courting Mary we used to go up on the point, and I can tell you we had better things to do than read a book.

Eli: Why, Jim. I'm surprised at you!

Jim: Hey, I was young once.

Eli: Jim, what was Mary like?

Jim: She had long dark hair that hung almost to her waist. She would brush it at night and the candlelight would just glitter off of it. She had big brown eyes and if I ever got mad at her, she would look at me and just melt the anger away. And she was just as innocent as a woman could be. I remember one time she was at the market and this slippery traveling salesman talked her into buying a mop. Why, we didn't have anything but a dirt floor! Oh, at first I was cross, but then she looked at me with those big brown eyes. I figured there warn't nothin' to do but build a floor, so I bought some lumber and put a floor in the cabin so she could use her mop.

{They both laugh.}

Jim: It feels good to talk about Mary again. You know, I don't think I have hardly talked about her since she died.

Eli: I like to hear about her. Why haven't you told me about her before?

Jim: It was hard bringing back the memory. But now, suddenly, watching you and Anya, it's as if it were Mary and me. She was an immigrant too. Scared, not knowing which way to turn.

Eli: I'm glad it's easier now.

Jim: It's more than that. You know how you said something about love and fear.

Eli: "Love casteth out all fear"

Jim: Yes. That one. It's as if God has brought my life in a full circle and the fear of being without Mary is gone, like I feel I will be with her again.

{Shyly Anya pokes her head in the door.}

Anya: Hello. Can Anya come in?

Eli: Yes, Anya. You don't have to ask to come into the city hall.

Jim: I think I probably better be going, but if you ask me, there are still better things to do with your time than read a book.

{Eli swats at Jim in fun.}

Eli: Get out of here.

Anya: What did Jim mean?

Eli: Uh, nothin'. So what did you want to start on tonight, the alphabet?

Anya: Anya want to talk better.

Eli: To talk better?

Anya: Yes, like girl in story. Anya want to learn to talk English better.

Eli: Oh, I see.

Anya: Anya want to be lady.

Eli: Ok. I'm not sure I'm the best teacher for that, but perhaps I can try. Let's see. Let's start with pronouns.

Anya: What pronoun?

Eli: A pronoun is a word you use instead of a proper name.

Anya: Anya no understand.

Eli: Alright. Let's take that phrase for instance. Instead of saying "Anya no understand" you would say "I don't understand."

Anya: "I" mean Anya.

Eli: "I" means the person who is talking.

Anya: Anya understand.

Eli: Uh, uh, uh.

Anya: I understand.

Eli: Good.

Anya: Eli help I speak better.

{Eli shakes his head.}

Eli: Let's try a bit more. You only use "I" when you do the action. You use "me" when the action is done to you. So you would say, "Eli helps me" since Eli does the action and "me" because it is Anya getting the help.

Anya: Oh. Eli helps me.

Eli: Right. Now there are similar words for another person. A person would say, "You help me" if you speak to the person who is doing the helping. Try a sentence.

Anya: **You** help me **smile**.

{She smiles at Eli.}

Eli: Good. Now, "you" is used for both the action and the person doing the action, like "You help me" and "I help you." Now, let's just learn two more and then we can read. For a girl you would use "she" and "her" and for a boy you use "he" and "him". For example: "She smiles at him." "He loves her."

{Anya smiles.}

Anya: Do **you** think **me** ever talk like princess?

Eli: It would be "Do you think I would ever talk like a princess.?"

Anya: “Do you think I would ever talk like a princess?”

Eli: That’s it.

Anya: No. Do you think I would?

Eli: Oh, you’re asking? Yes, I think you will. But more important will be if you feel like a princess.

Anya: How I feel like princess?

Eli: In order for someone to feel like a princess they must feel good about themselves.

Anya: What mean feel good about themselves?

Eli: That means they would have to feel they were worth a lot.

Anya: Like when someone pay much Gratitude Dowry for you?

{Eli pauses a moment and thinks about this.}

Eli: Is that what would make you feel good about yourself?

Anya: Yes. Then Anya would ... then I would know I worth much. *{pause}* You teach more.

Eli: *{As if in deep thought.}* Perhaps that is enough on that tonight. How about if we read some more in “Pygmalion”?

Anya: Anya would like... I would like very much.

{Eli gets the book. Anya curls up by him again. He puts his arm around her as he starts to read and Anya lays her head against him. Lights fade out as does his voice as he reads.}

Eli: *{From book.}* “Act III. It is Mrs. Higgins’s at-home day. Nobody has yet arrived. Her drawing-room, in a flat on Chelsea embankment, has three windows looking on the river; and the ceiling is not so lofty as it would be in an older house of the same pretension...”

Act I Scene 10

{It is again on the dock. Eli is sitting there thinking and Jim comes in. Eli is holding the book “Pygmalion.”}

Jim: Don't you believe in coming home at night any more?

Eli: What time is it?

Jim: It's almost one in the morning. That would be Wednesday, just in case you have lost track of what day it is too.

Eli: I'm sorry. I didn't realize how long I'd been out here.

Jim: You sure are spending a lot of time here.

Eli: It's a nice quiet place to sit and think in the evening. The sound of the waves breaking on the shore is soothing to the soul.

Jim: So what's troubling you?

Eli: *{Pointing to the book.}* This.

Jim: A book.

Eli: It's not just any book. It's a story of a man who helps a young lady to feel like she's a princess.

Jim: So.

Eli: You know how I said I would not pay the Gratitude Dowry because it reduces the value of a person and their dignity to the depths of filthy lucre.

Jim: Yes, I remember. So what's the problem?

Eli: Jim, I realize that Anya's feelings of self-worth are tied to how much is paid for her. I thought if I paid it I would be accepting the idea of slavery. However, now I realize if I don't pay it Anya will always feel she is of no worth to me. I don't feel I can win either way.

Jim: Surely there is some way you can pay it so that her father realizes it is a token of your gratitude and not some kind of slave payment. After all, it is called a Gratitude Dowry.

Eli: But how can I show it is that and not just a purchase acceptance?

Jim: Maybe something out of the norm or unusual.

Eli: But all they seem to understand is money and ... *{pause as if a light comes on.}* That's it! That's it!

Jim: What's it?

Eli: I know what I've got to do. Thanks for the advice. We better get some sleep. I've got a big day ahead of me.

{Eli heads for stage right in a big hurry. Jim sits there a bit confused.}

Jim: Uh, yeah. You're welcome.

{Jim goes off stage right as the curtain closes for the end of Act I.}

To Read The Rest, Please Purchase The Script

