

Scene Two

(Afternoon, three weeks later. **KITTY** and **MILLIE** enter through the front door, both dressed for a day out with hats, handbags, and gloves. **MILLIE** struggles with the key, her purse, and two large grocery bags. **KITTY** makes no effort to assist.)

KITTY. I suppose I just don't understand when she finds the time. Normie's at the Department as much as Theodore or Bob, how does she maintain her home?

MILLIE. Norma's a very industrious woman. And Jim helps her around the house, picking up and such.

KITTY. No! Goodness, I can't imagine what our house would look like if Theodore did the cleaning. I don't think he knows where we keep the carpet sweeper. Hm.

MILLIE. What?

KITTY. I don't think I know where we keep the carpet sweeper either. Well, we have Beulah for that sort of thing. She is a treasure. Tell the truth, Millie. Is Normie's house clean?

MILLIE. Oh, quite. It sparkles. Like something out of an advertisement. Although, I'll tell you a secret. If you look in her icebox, you know what you'll find?

KITTY. Tell me.

MILLIE. *Frozen pie crust!*

KITTY. No! Stop, I cannot take it! You're the Devil!

MILLIE. You must swear you'll never mention it! She'd positively die from embarrassment!

KITTY. Listen to us! Gossiping! Like real girlfriends!

MILLIE. Yes. These past few weeks have been...such a kick.

KITTY. I never had girlfriends when I was younger. Did you?

MILLIE. I've had a few.

KITTY. Of course you have, you're delightful. I always tried... You know, there was this girl in my neighborhood? Fanny Robinson. Her cat had kittens,

and all the other children would come over to play with them, you know? And I thought, oh, I can do that. Fanny's not the only one who can get people in the door with a few furballs. So! I got a side of bacon and a pillowcase, and I trapped every darn stray cat in the neighborhood, hid them in our cellar.

MILLIE. How many cats are we talking here?

KITTY. Oh, probably fifteen, sixteen. So many cats! And then I invited everyone over!

MILLIE. How'd that turn out?

KITTY. There were a lot of injuries. But after that, everyone called me Kitty!

MILLIE. Ah. Well. How about that? Um, thank you so much for recommending that bakery, Kitty. I can't believe all I picked up!

KITTY. The French. They make the best pastries.

MILLIE. I do like a good crêpe.

KITTY. Always buy bread from the French, your produce from an Irishman, and get your meat from a Polack.

MILLIE. I'll keep that in mind. I'd best get these things put away –

KITTY. (*Removing her gloves.*) Oh, Millie. You're my very dearest friend!

MILLIE. Oh, Kitty, that's so...unlikely. I mean, we've only known each other a few weeks.

KITTY. No, I'm quite sincere! You and Normie, you're such fun! We're going to have so many adventures together!

MILLIE. Well, of course we will. Now, I hope you'll forgive –

KITTY. Something's been bothering me, Millie dear. I was hoping I could speak with you. It's about Normie's husband.

MILLIE. Well of course. You can speak to me about anything at all. What about Jim?

KITTY. Well, oh this is so delicate...

MILLIE. No, I insist.

KITTY. I don't wish to offend.

MILLIE. Please, we're dearest friends. I told you about the pie crust – we have a *bond*.

KITTY. That is true.

MILLIE. Confide in me, Kitty.

KITTY. Well, it's just that...when you see the Baxters together... Jim seems a little –

MILLIE. Young.

KITTY. Young?

MILLIE. Younger than Norma.

KITTY. Does he?

MILLIE. People usually don't notice.

KITTY. I'm good at noticing things.

MILLIE. Yes you are!

KITTY. It's so *unusual*.

MILLIE. There is a year or two between Normie and Jim, but nothing scandalous. Some fellows just have those faces, you know?

KITTY. Like Mickey Rooney!

MILLIE. Exactly, like Mickey Rooney!

KITTY. That makes sense! I could tell something was off, I just couldn't –

MILLIE. Also, Jim didn't go to war like Bob did, and I think that ages a man.

(She sighs with heartbreak.)

Oh, *war*! I cannot stand war. It's just awful, don't you think?

KITTY. It is!

MILLIE. It is!

KITTY. And gracious, Teddy keeps talking about Korea now, what if it happens all over again? We've just got to stop those Communists and drunks and fags before they destroy America!

MILLIE. Yes, well, I hope you'll excuse me, I have to –

KITTY. (*Removing her hat.*) That's why what our boys do is so important. We have to protect the future, make it safe. Imagine one day, you having to put your son in uniform to fight those freedom-hating primitive monsters.

MILLIE. Wait, when did I have a baby again?

KITTY. Well, really, sweetheart. You're not getting any younger, I just naturally assumed –

MILLIE. Oh, Kitty, feel my hands!

KITTY. Whatever for?

MILLIE. Aren't they terribly soft?

KITTY. Oh my, they are!

MILLIE. It's Mrs. Franklin's Hand Cream, and it belongs on your dressing table.

KITTY. Well, if it's Mrs. Franklin's, doesn't it belong on *her* dressing table?

MILLIE. Oh, you're such a card. Go to the bedroom, you'll see it right by my jewelry box. Give it a try while I put those parcels away in the kitchen.

KITTY. Alright! I will! Eeeee!