

## Essie / Penny / Rheba

ESSIE. (*Enters U.R. as PENNY crosses back with skull and fanning herself takes paper out of typewriter.*) My, that kitchen's hot.

PENNY. (*Finishing a bit of typing.*) What, Essie? (*Rises and crosses to R. a step.*)

ESSIE. (*Crossing to R. of table.*) I say the kitchen's awful hot. That new candy I'm making—it just won't ever get cool.

PENNY. Do you have to make candy today, Essie? It's such a hot day.

ESSIE. Well, I got all those new orders. Ed went out and got a bunch of new orders. (*Leg limbering exercise on chair.*)

PENNY. My, if it keeps on I suppose you'll be opening up a store.

ESSIE. That's what Ed was saying last night (*She leans body forward.*), but I said No, I want to be a dancer. (*Points to C.*)

PENNY. (*Returning to her desk.*) The only trouble with dancing is, it takes so long. You've been studying such a long time.

ESSIE. (*Slowly drawing a leg up behind her as she talks.*) Only—eight—years. After all, Mother, you've been writing plays for eight years. We started about the same time, didn't we?

PENNY. Yes, but you shouldn't count my first two years, because I was learning to type. (*At her desk.*)

(*From the kitchen comes a colored maid named RHEBA—a very black girl somewhere in her thirties. She carries eight napkins.*)

RHEBA. (*As she enters.*) I think the candy's hardening up now, Miss Essie. (*Puts napkins on U.S. chair of table.*)

ESSIE. Oh, thanks, Rheba. I'll bring some in, Mother—I want you to try it. (*She goes into kitchen U.R.*)

RHEBA. (*Taking a tablecloth from buffet drawer.*) Finish the second act, Mrs. Sycamore?

PENNY. Uh? What?

RHEBA. (*Returning to table, she throws tablecloth over back of a chair and removes table cover.*) I said, did you finish the second act?

PENNY. (*Crosses to R. a step with script, papers, and pencil.*) Oh, no, Rheba. I've just got Cynthia entering the monastery.

RHEBA. She was at the Kit Kat, wasn't she?

PENNY. (*Crosses to L. of table.*) Well, she gets tired of the Kit Kat Club, and there's this monastery, so she goes there.

RHEBA. Do they let her in?

PENNY. Yes, I made it Visitors' Day, so of course anybody can come.

RHEBA. Oh. (*As she spreads tablecloth.*)

PENNY. So she arrives on Visitors' Day, and—just stays.

RHEBA. You mean she stays all night?

PENNY. Oh, yes. She stays six years. (*Crosses to her desk and sits.*)

RHEBA. Six years? (*Starting for kitchen.*) My, I bet she busts that monastery wide open. (*She is gone.*)

PENNY. (*Half to herself, as she types.*) "Six Years Later." . . .

## ***Grandpa / Henderson / Essie / Penny / Ed***

HENDERSON. (*Pulling a sheaf of papers from his pocket.*) Now, Mr. Vanderhof, (*A quick look toward hall.*) we've written you several letters about this, but have not had any reply. (*PENNY sits in her desk chair.*)

GRANDPA. Oh, that's what those letters were.

ESSIE. (*Sitting on couch R.*) I told you they were from the Government.

HEND. According to our records, Mr. Vanderhof, you have never paid an income tax.

GRANDPA. That's right.

HEND. Why not?

GRANDPA. I don't believe in it.

HEND. Well—you own property, don't you?

GRANDPA. Yes, sir.

HEND. And you receive a yearly income from it?

GRANDPA. I do.

HEND. Of—(*He consults his records.*)—between three and four thousand dollars.

GRANDPA. About that.

HEND. You've been receiving it for years.

GRANDPA. I have. 1901, if you want the exact date.

HEND. Well, the Government is only concerned from 1914 on. That's when the income tax started. *(Pause.)*

GRANDPA. Well?

HEND. Well—it seems, Mr. Vanderhof, that you owe the Government twenty-four years' back income tax.

ED. *(Coming down as ESSIE joins him.)* Wait a minute! You can't go back that far—that's outlawed.

HEND. *(Calmly regarding him.)* M-m-m! What's *your* name?

ED. What difference does that make?

HEND. Ever file an income tax return?

ED. *(Turns to ESSIE, ESSIE steps in.)* No, sir.

HEND. Ah! What was your income last year?

ED. Ah—twenty-eight dollars and fifty cents, wasn't it, Essie?

ESSIE. Yes, sir.

HEND. *If you please! (Dismissing ED and ESSIE. They drift U.S.)* Now, Mr. Vanderhof, you know there's quite a penalty for not filing an income tax return.

PENNY. Penalty?

GRANDPA. Look, Mr. Henderson, let me ask you something.

HEND. Well?

GRANDPA. Suppose I pay you this money—mind you, I don't say I'm going to pay it—but just for the sake of argument—what's the Government going to do with it?

HEND. How do you mean?

GRANDPA. Well, what do I get for my money? If I go into Macy's and buy something, there it *is*—I see it. What's the Government give me?

HEND. Why, the Government gives you everything. It protects you.

GRANDPA. What from?

HEND. Well—invasion. Foreigners that might come over here and take everything you've got.

GRANDPA. Oh, I don't think they're going to do that.

HEND. If you didn't pay an income tax, they would. How do you think the Government keeps up the Army and Navy? All those battleships . . .

GRANDPA. Last time we used battleships was in the Spanish-American War, and what did we get out of it? Cuba—and we gave that back. I wouldn't mind paying if it were something sensible.

HEND. Sensible? Well, what about Congress, and the Supreme Court, and the President? We've got to pay *them*, don't we?

GRANDPA. Not with my money—no, sir.

HEND. (*Furious. Rises, picks up papers.*) Now wait a minute! I'm not here to argue with you. (*Crossing L.*) All I know is that you haven't paid an income tax and you've got to pay it!

GRANDPA. They've got to show me.

HEND. (*Yelling.*) We *don't* have to show you! I just told you! All those buildings down in Washington, (*To PENNY. She nods.*) and Interstate Commerce, and the Constitution!

GRANDPA. The Constitution was paid for long ago. And Interstate Commerce—what *is* Interstate Commerce, anyhow?

HEND. (*Business of look at PENNY—at ED—at GRANDPA. With murderous calm, crosses and places his hands on table.*) There are forty-eight states—see? And if there weren't Interstate Commerce, nothing could go from one state to another. See?

GRANDPA. Why not? They got fences?

HEND. (*To GRANDPA.*) No, they haven't got fences. They've got *laws!* (*Crossing up to arch L.*) My God, I never came across anything like *this* before!

GRANDPA. Well, I might pay about seventy-five dollars, but that's all it's worth.

HEND. You'll pay every cent of it, like everybody else!

