

*Penelope Vanderhof Sycamore is a round little woman in her early fifties, comfortable-looking, gentle, homey. One would not suspect that under that placid exterior there surges the Divine Urge—but it does, it does.*

*After a moment her fingers lag on the keys; a thoughtful expression comes over her face. Abstractedly she takes a piece of candy out of the skull, pops it into her mouth. As always, it furnishes the needed inspiration—with a furious burst of speed she finishes a page and whips it out of the machine. Quite mechanically, she picks up one of the kittens, adds the sheet of paper to the pile underneath, replaces the kitten.*

*As she goes back to work, Essie Carmichael, Mrs. Sycamore's eldest daughter, comes in from the kitchen. A girl of about twenty-nine, very slight, a curious air of the pixie about her. She is wearing ballet slippers—in fact, she wears them throughout the play.*

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.)*

SCENE 3  
START

*(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.)*

*(Penny returns to her work, sits—puts fresh paper in and types—as Rheba removes table centerpiece and goes to buffet.)*

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"...

*(Paul Sycamore comes up from the cellar. Mid-fifties, but with a kind of youthful air. His quiet charm and mild manner are distinctly engaging. He is carrying a frying pan containing several small firecrackers. He is smoking a cigarette.)*

PAUL. *(Turning back as he comes through door D. R.)* Mr. De Pinna! *(A voice from below: "Yah?")* Mr. De Pinna, will you bring up one of those new skyrockets, please? I want to show them to Mrs. Sycamore. *(An answering "Sure!" from cellar as he crosses toward Penny, who rises.)* Look,

Penny—what do you think of these little firecrackers we just made? We can sell them ten strings for a cent. Listen. *(He puts one down in the pan on table and lights it. It goes off with a good bang.)* Nice, huh?

PENNY. Yes. Paul, dear, were you ever in a monastery?

PAUL. *(Puts half of firecrackers in pan, quite calmly as he crosses to her.)* No, I wasn't... Wait till you see the new rockets. Gold stars, then blue stars, and then bombs, and then a balloon. Mr. De Pinna thought of the balloon.

*(De Pinna enters.)*

PENNY. Sounds lovely. Did you do all that today? *(Crosses to desk chair.)*

PAUL. Sure. We made up—Oh, here we are. *(De Pinna comes up from cellar. A bald-headed little man with a serious manner, carrying two good-sized skyrockets. He crosses to Paul. Paul takes one to show Penny.)* Look, Penny. Costs us eighteen cents to make and we sell 'em for fifty. How many do you figure we can make before the Fourth of July, Mr. De Pinna?

DE PINNA. Well, we've got two weeks yet—what day you going to take the stuff up to Mount Vernon?

PAUL. *(Picking up his pan and firecrackers.)* About a week. You know, we're going to need a larger booth this year—got a lot of stuff made up. *(Paul starts R.)* Come on, we're not through yet. *(De Pinna follows.)*

DE PINNA. Look, Mr. Sycamore, *(Examining rocket in his hand.)* I'm afraid the powder chamber is just a little bit close to the balloon.

PAUL. Well, we got the stars and the bombs in between.

DE PINNA. But that don't give the balloon time enough. A balloon needs plenty of time.

PAUL. Come on—come on. Let's go down in the cellar and try it. *(He exits D. R.)*

DE PINNA. *(Starting off.)* All right.

PENNY. *(Rising and crossing two steps R.)* Mr. De Pinna, if a girl you loved entered a monastery, what would you do?

DE PINNA. Oh I don't know, Mrs. Sycamore... it's been so long.

*(Penny sits at her desk, as De Pinna exits D. R. She starts to type again as Rheba enters from kitchen bringing a pile of plates and salt and pepper shakers.)*

RHEBA. *(Crossing down to table.)* Miss Alice going to be home to dinner tonight, Mrs. Sycamore? *(She puts pile of plates on table.)*

PENNY. *(Deep in her thinking.)* What? I don't know, Rheba. Maybe.

RHEBA. Well, I'll set a place for her, but she's only been home one night this week.

PENNY. Yes, I know.

RHEBA. *(She puts down a plate or two.)* Miss Essie's making some mighty good candy today. She's doing something new with cocoanuts. *(More plates.)*

PENNY. Uh-huh. That's nice.

RHEBA. Let's see... six and Mr. De Pinna, and if Mr. Kolenkhov comes that makes eight, don't it? *(Penny types. At which point, a whistling sound of a rocket followed by a series of explosions comes up from cellar. Penny and Rheba, however, don't even notice it. Rheba goes right on.)* Yes, I'd better set for eight. *(Puts napkins from chair to table. Puts down one more plate, looks over her setting of the table, and starts off U. R.)*

PENNY. *(Rising.)* Rheba, I think I'll put this play away for a while and go back to the war play.

*(Essie returns from kitchen carrying a plate of freshly made candy.)*

RHEBA. Oh, I always liked that one—the war play. Boom, boom! *(She exits U. R.)*

ESSIE. *(Crossing over to Penny.)* They'll be better when they're harder, Mother, but try one—I want to know what you think.

PENNY. Oh, they look lovely. *(She takes one.)* What do you call them?

ESSIE. I think I'll call 'em Love Dreams. *(She places them on c. table.)*

PENNY. Yes, that's nice... *(Nibbling on one of the candies.)* I'm going back to my war play, Essie. What do you think?

ESSIE. *(Dances back to buffet.)* Oh, are you, Mother?

PENNY. *(Puts script down.)* Yes, I sort of got myself into a monastery and I can't get out.

ESSIE. *(Pointing her toe.)* Oh, well, it'll come to you, Mother. Remember how you got out of that brothel... *(She looks at snake solarium, a glass structure looking something like a goldfish aquarium, but containing, believe it or not, snakes.)* The snakes look hungry. Did Rheba feed them?

*(Rheba enters U. R. carrying silverware.)*

PENNY. (*As Rheba reenters, puts silverware down on table. Sets two places.*) I don't know. Rheba, did you feed the snakes yet?

RHEBA. No, Donald's coming and he always brings flies with him. (*Essie dances to R. of buffet.*)

PENNY. Well, try to feed them before Grandpa gets home. You know how fussy he is about them. (*Crossing to desk, she picks up file box with kittens in it.*)

RHEBA. (*Starts to go.*) Yes'm.

PENNY. (*Crossing to Rheba. Handing her the kittens.*) And here, take Groucho and Harpo into the kitchen with you. (*Rheba exits U. R.*) Believe I'll have another Love Dream. (*Sits at her desk.*)

(*Paul emerges from cellar again.*)

PAUL. (*Enters D. R. and crosses to Essie.*) Mr. De Pinna was right about the balloon. It was too close to the powder.

ESSIE. (*Points to plate.*) Want a Love Dream, Father? They're on the table.

PAUL. (*Starts for stairs.*) No, thanks. I gotta wash.

PENNY. I'm going back to the war play, Paul.

PAUL. Oh, that's nice. We're putting some red stars after the bombs and *then* the balloon. That ought to do it. (*He goes upstairs.*)

ESSIE. (*Crossing down to back of chair L. of table.*) You know, Mr. Kolenkhov says I'm his most promising pupil.

PENNY. You'd think with forty monks and one girl that *something* would happen.

(*Ed Carmichael comes downstairs. A nondescript young man in his mid-thirties. He removes his coat as he crosses to xylophone.*)

ED. Essie! Heh! Essie! (*Penny sits as music starts. He hums a snatch of melody as he heads for the far corner of the room—the xylophone corner. Arriving there, he picks up the sticks and continues the melody on the xylophone. Immediately Essie is up on her toes, performing intricate ballet steps to Ed's accompaniment.*)

ESSIE. (*After a bar, rising on toes—dancing—to R. below table.*) I like that, Ed. Did you write it? (*Penny types.*)

ED. (*Pauses in his playing. Shakes his head.*) No, Beethoven. (*Music continues.*)

ESSIE. (*Never coming down off her toes.*) Lovely. Got a lot of you in

it... I made those new candies this afternoon, Ed. (*Dancing to the L. Penny puts scripts from U.S. end to D.S. end.*)

ED. (*Playing away.*) Yah?

ESSIE. (*A series of leaping steps.*) You can take 'em around tonight.

ED. All right... Now, here's the finish. This is me. (*He works up to an elaborate crescendo, but Essie keeps pace with him, right to the finish, pirouetting to the last note.*) How's that?

ESSIE. That's fine. (*Penny picks up half of pile of scripts, D.S. end desk.*) Remember it when Kolenkhov comes, will you?

PENNY. (*Who has been busy with her scripts.*) Ed, dear. Why don't you and Essie have a baby? I was thinking about it just the other day.

(*Ed puts xylophone hammers down—comes down from alcove.*)

ED. (*As Essie busies herself with her slippers.*) I don't know—we could have one if you wanted us to. What about it, Essie? Do you want to have a baby?

ESSIE. Oh, I don't care. I'm willing if Grandpa is. (*And off into kitchen.*)

ED. (*Calling after her.*) Let's ask him.

PENNY. (*Running through a pile of scripts.*) Labor play, (*Ed works printing press with a bang.*) religious play, (*Another bang. Rheba enters U. R. with silverware. Puts table cover from chair on buffet arm.*) sex play— (*Still another bang.*) I know it's here some place.

~~DE PINNA. (*Coming out of cellar U. R., bound for kitchen to wash up.*) I was right about the balloon. It was too close to the powder.~~

~~ED. (*Who has crossed to his press.*) Anything you want printed, Mr. De Pinna? How about some more calling cards?~~

~~DE PINNA. No, thanks. I've still got the first thousand.~~

~~ED. Well, call on somebody, will you?~~

~~DE PINNA. All right! (*Exits U. R.*)~~

~~ED. (*Coming downstage—type stick in hand.*) What have we got for dinner, Rheba? I'm ready to print the menu.~~

~~RHEBA. Let's see. Corn flakes, watermelon, some of these candies Miss Essie made, and some kind of meat—I forget. (*Sets silverware.*)~~

~~ED. I think I'll set it up in bold face Cheltenham tonight. (*Going to printing press U. R.*) You know, if I'm going to take those new candies around, I'd better print up some descriptive matter after dinner.~~

~~PENNY. Do you think anybody reads those things, Ed—that you put in the candy boxes?... Oh, here's the war play. (*She pulls a*~~

END  
SCENE-3