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Family Plays

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Or
A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight

Comic melodrama in two acts by
Craig Sodaro



MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Melodrama. By Craig Sodaro. *Cast: 17m., 18w., extras.* This show is a comic melodrama in two acts, which include the Chicago fire. Nellie Cavandish is saintly; her greedy brother, Creepstone, is diabolical. Their daddy willed \$1,000 to each with the stipulation that the one who increases the amount most within 30 days will inherit his entire fortune. The struggle between good and evil becomes a tug of war, with Nellie and her gentle friends, including the Chicago Fire Department, pulling honestly and earnestly, and Creepstone and his hoods, gamblers and show girls using every underhanded, dishonest play they can conjure up. First produced by a middle school in Torrington, Wyoming, and then discovered by professional melodrama theatres, *Million Dollar Baby* is a play for all groups and all ages. With a beautiful, pure heroine, a brave, handsome hero and a vicious villain, the play has all the requisites of the old-fashioned thriller—but this one has more. *Million Dollar Baby's* illustrates an authentic atmosphere as it includes the Chicago fire and a Clark Street mission for the homeless. The play's main roles are three-dimensional characters that offer more than the usual melodrama stereotypes, and there are a number of feature roles that are fun to play and to watch. There is also a sociological message—in a subtle, nonpreaching manner, the script invokes pity and compassion for the homeless, and a desire to do something to help them in a well-developed plot. *Million Dollar Baby* can also been done as a musical, using old favorite songs as suggested in the production notes. *The set is representational with very brief (3 seconds) blackouts to provide fluid movement.* Place: Chicago. Time: 1871. Approximate running time: 100 minutes. Code: MM4.

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ISBN-13 978-0-88680-275-2



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Million Dollar Baby

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A HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN TONIGHT

A Comic Melodrama in 2 Acts

by

CRAIG SODARO

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(MILLION DOLLAR BABY)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-275-2

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Characters

Clinton Carnody, the lawyer

Nellie Cavandish, the saintly daughter of the late Curtis Cavandish

Creepstone Cavandish, the diabolical son

Lotta Gall, Creepstone's doting partner

Adeline, the aged cook

Nick O'Tyme, a fireman, inventor, hero

General Beauriguard, former commander of Confederate forces

Bill, a fireman

***The Hobos:**

Larry	Rudy
Harry	Ida
Mack	Ada
Gus	Betsy
Monroe	

Jenny, a young helper at the Mission

Penny O'Shea, reporter from the Chicago *Centinel*

Mr. Brown, a wealthy Chicagoan

Mrs. Brown, his wife

Mrs. Gabbylips, a gossiping neighbor

Turk, Creepstone's left-hand man

***The Golden Gals:**

Annie	Lillie
Fanny	Millie
Mandy	Tillie
Pansy	Billie

Jake the Snake, a big-time bookie

Ruff, a thug

Ready, another thug

Curtis Cavandish, a ghost

Monsters, assorted creatures from the sulfur mines

**If a smaller cast is desired, adjust the number of Hobos and Golden Gals. Double casting of other roles is possible.*

PLACE: Chicago

TIME: 1871

ABOUT THE PLAY

First produced by Torrington, Wyoming, Middle School and then discovered by professional melodrama theatres, *Million Dollar Baby* is a play for all groups and all ages.

With a beautiful, pure heroine, a brave, handsome hero, and a vicious villain the play has all the requisites of the old-fashioned thriller. But this one has more: **Authentic atmosphere**—the Chicago fire and a Clark Street mission for the homeless. **Three-dimensional characters**—the main roles offer more than the usual melodrama stereotypes, and there are a number of feature roles that are fun to play and to watch. **A sociological message**—in a subtle, non-preaching manner, the script invokes pity and compassion for the homeless, and a desire to do something to help them.

On top of all that, the plot is well developed, and the play is well written. The author, a native of Chicago, and a graduate of Marquette University, has had a number of plays published, with productions in community, professional, and educational theatres.

Million Dollar Baby has been done as a musical, using old favorite songs as suggested in the Production Notes, beginning on page 53.

PRODUCTION NOTES*Props***ACT I, Scene 1**

Nail file—Lotta (used throughout)
Legal papers, pad—on “desk” in Carmody’s office
Will—Carmody
Cigar—Creepstone
Checks—Carmody

Scene 2

Bean pot, bowls, coffee cups, donation box or bucket, etc.—on small table
Sign reading “Saints and Sinners Alike!”—on wall
Fireman’s gear—Nick
Coffee pot—Adeline
Floppy disc; horseshoe—Nick
Wooden spoon—Adeline
Tiny tin of chew—Larry
Note pad, pencil, camera—Penny

Scene 3

Newspapers—Turk, Mrs. Gabbylips
Candy bar—Mrs. Brown

Scene 4

Wad of bills; cigar—Creepstone
Milkshake—Lotta
Tiny black book—Jake
Newspaper—Lotta
Candy bar—Turk

Scene 5

Newspapers—Turk, Mrs. Gabbylips

Scene 6

Sodas, sundaes—Golden Gals
Newspaper; wad of bills—Creepstone
Newspaper—Nellie
Light bulb—Nick
Poster of scantily clad dancer with Nellie’s face crudely pasted on—Lotta
Malt—Lotta

ACT II, Scene 1

Sword—General
Old sandwich—Adeline
Larry’s hat—on table
Bench or stool with large “X” on middle of seat (Mommygraph)—Nick

Scene 3

Milkshake—Lotta
Note pad—Penny
Mommygraph—General
Ghetto blaster (portable radio)—Nick
Lantern—Creepstone
Suitcase—Lotta
Hose, ladders—Firemen

(continued on next page)

Scene 4

Charred furniture—Carmody's office
 Legal paper—Creepstone
 Cigars—Creepstone

Scene 5

Pan of water—General (soaking his feet)
 Kettle of hot water—Adeline
 Money—Bill
 Bowls of soup—Jenny, Adeline
 Beard—Creepstone
 Envelope with million dollar check—Creepstone
 Mommygraph—on stage
 Old-fashioned telephone—Nick

Special Effects

The fire sequence (page 43) is a terrific audience pleaser. It is successful if it lasts from one to two minutes. Select some old-fashioned ragtime piano music, and record it. Assign cast members the actions desired. For example, have four people carrying cardboard ladders, two from each side; have an old codger chasing a saloon hall girl with the wife chasing both of them; have a bucket brigade that tosses "confetti" on the fire; have firemen drag hose on stage while another person chases them with the hydrant. Many wild, crazy, and funny things can be done by using the imagination. In the original production red and blue lights flashed in an alternating pattern providing enough light for a hilarious show-stopper.

Music

The play may be turned into a musical by using songs in the public domain. The following were used in the premiere: "When the Saints Go Marching In" (Act I, Scene 2, sung by Nellie, Adeline, General, Hobos, Jenny; reprised in Act II, Scene 3, same singers; and again for the curtain call); "Father, Dear Father, Come Home With Me Now" (Act I, Scene 2, by Nellie); "Goober Peas" (Act I, Scene 2, by Hobos, Nellie, General, Adeline, Jenny); "O, Dem Golden Slippers!" (Act I, Scene 4, by Golden Gals); "Ragtime Gal" (Act I, Scene 5, by Nick and Company); "O, Susanna!" (Act I, Scene 5, by Golden Gals); "Out of Work" (Act II, Scene 1, by Nellie); "Wait 'Til the Sun Shines Nellie!" (Act II, Scene 1, by Nick, General, Adeline, Jenny); "A Hot Time In the Old Town Tonight" (Act II, Scene 3, by General, Adeline, Nellie, Jenny, Company); "Sweet Adeline" (Act II, Scene 5, by General); "Keep the Money Rollin' In" (Act II, Scene 5, by Company); "Chicago" (Act II, Scene 5, by Company). Music for the above songs is easily found in collections of old songs in libraries. The fire sequence was choreographed to "Hurry" from the record *Silent Movie Music*, manufactured by Major Records, Thomas J. Valentino, Inc., 150 W. 46th St., New York, NY.

Costumes

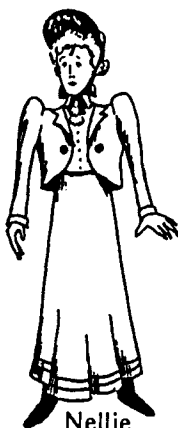
The costume sketches on this page were used in the premiere production. Many variations are possible, of course.

An old band uniform works well for General Beauriguard's old, worn Confederate army uniform (although grey was the official color of the Confederate soldiers, they wore a wide variety of colors and styles—especially as the war neared its end).

A shredded garbage bag (with a hole for the head, of course) makes an excellent jacket for a monster. Add torn, spray-painted pants plus a Halloween mask or weird make-up and wig.



Nick O'Tyme



Nellie



Creepstone



Gen. Beauriguard



Lotta Gall



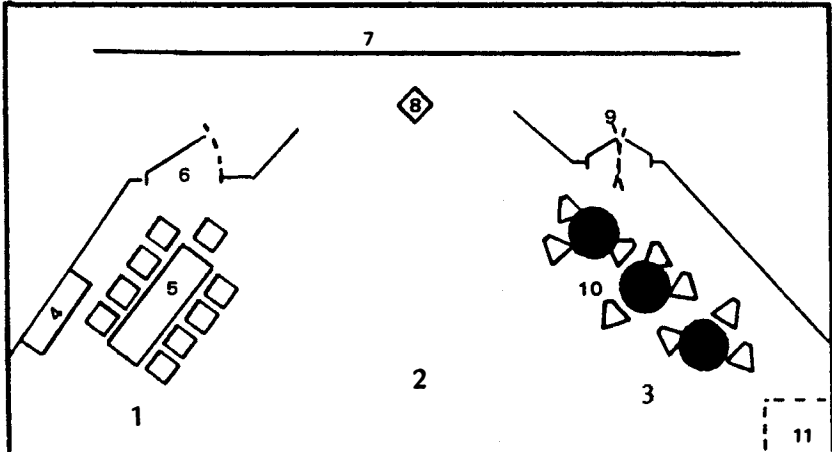
Larry



Monster

The Set

The play may be set against stage curtains, or within flats and profile pieces as suggested in the Floor Plan and Elevations below.

Floor Plan

1—The Clark Street Mission

2—A Chicago street. This open space also serves as part of the Mission and part of the Saloon, as needed

3—The Golden Dipper Soda Saloon

4—Side table

5—Crude dining table, with stools, benches, or boxes for chairs

6—Door to Clark Street

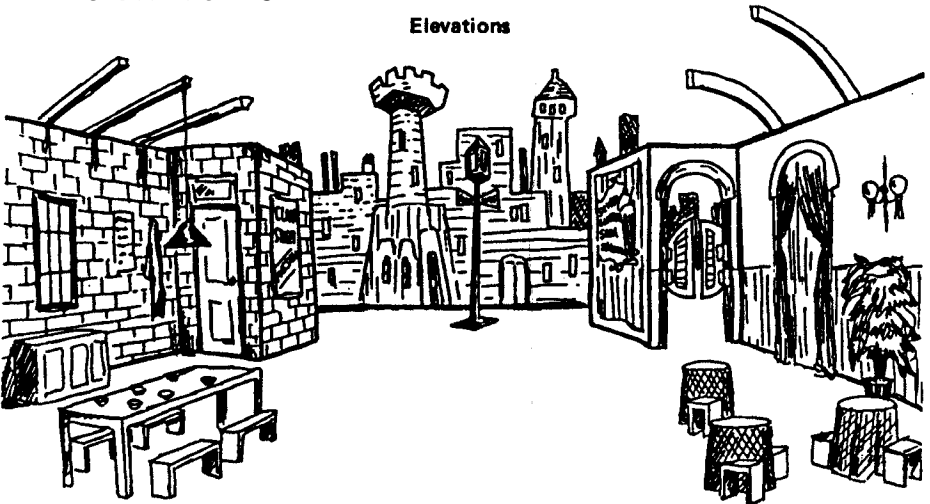
7—Building cut-outs

8—Lamp post, perhaps with "Clark Street" street sign

9—Swinging saloon doors

10—Small tables and chairs

11—Carmody's office may be set at either side of the stage or on the apron

Elevations

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

ACT I

[Chicago, 1871. The set is representational, dividing into three sections. Stage Right represents the Clark Street Mission. Center Stage represents a Chicago street. Stage Left represents the Golden Dipper Soda Saloon. NOTE: Very brief (3 seconds) blackouts should separate "Scene" from "Scene" to provide a fluid movement]

Scene 1

[We are in the law office of Clinton Carmody. This scene can be played in front of the curtain or Down Left at a table used as a desk. Two benches flank the table/desk. Legal papers and pads clutter the tabletop.]

AT RISE: CLINTON CARMODY is seated at the table/desk. At Carmody's left we see NELLIE CAVANDISH, in black, weeping quietly. At his right we see CREEPSTONE CAVANDISH and LOTTA GALL, who is chewing gum and filing her nails]

CARMODY. *[Pompously, reading a will]* "I, Curtis Rockheart Cavan-dish, being of sound mind and body do execute and authorize this, my last will and testament. As owner of Cavandish Candies, I was known in life for my sweet, sugary disposition. But beneath the candy coating I was always a man of sound business sense. I amassed a fortune off little boys and girls who ate my Chewey Gooeys until their teeth rotted out. But now that I have been called to the big bon-bon in the sky, I must leave my fortune—real and imagined—including the Cavandish Candy Company, to my rightful children and heirs, Nellie and Creepstone Cav-andish."

CREEPSTONE. *[Mockingly]* Dear old dad!

LOTTA. Don't sound like the bum you said he was, Creepy.

CREEPSTONE. *[Mockingly]* Lotta, please . . . what was said in a moment of anger is now forgotten in this time of grief! *(Aside: GRIEF MY BUNIONS! THE THOUGHT OF LAYING MY CLAWS ON FA-THER'S FORTUNE MAKES ME THE HAPPIEST WRETCH ALIVE!)*

NELLIE. *[Sniffing]* Poor father . . . it's hard to believe he's gone a week already.

CREEPSTONE. A pity . . . he's dipped his last Chewey Gooley.

LOTTA. [*Giggling*] Literally!

NELLIE. Poor father . . . drowned in a vat of chocolate.

CREEPSTONE. Chocolate covered, dipped in nuts, nearly wrapped in a Chewey Gooney wrapper.

LOTTA. Fittin' end if you ask me.

NELLIE. [*Proudly*] Father died as he lived.

CREEPSTONE. [*With relish*] Candy-coated outside, chewey nougat inside, and very, very rich!

LOTTA. Now you're gonna be very, very rich, right, Creepy? And we can finally get hitched, right, Creepy?

CREEPSTONE. [*Terrorized*] Let's not rush into anything!

LOTTA. [*Angered*] Rush? You call hangin' around you for ten years a rush? You get your hands on that check 'n' we're gonna put your Bob Hancock on a marriage license before you cash that hummer!

NELLIE. Creepstone . . . money is the root of all evil.

CREEPSTONE. Yeah? Well, I wouldn't mind havin' a pretty extensive root system, Sis.

CARMODY. Excuse me, but I should like to complete the reading of the will.

LOTTA. Yeah, so shut up, the lot of you! Go ahead, Mr. Commodity.

CARMODY. Carmody.

LOTTA. Whatever. Go ahead already!

CARMODY. The will stipulates a condition.

CREEPSTONE. A condition?!

CARMODY. I'm afraid so.

CREEPSTONE. I knew it! Father was a nut!

LOTTA. "Like father like son," Chakespeare used to say.

CREEPSTONE. What's this condition, Carmody?

CARMODY. Your father has stipulated that only one of you will receive the entire fortune.

CREEPSTONE. What?

NELLIE. Which one?

LOTTA. Oldest?

CREEPSTONE. That's me!

LOTTA. Alphabetically?

CREEPSTONE. That's me!

LOTTA. Tallest?

CREEPSTONE. [*Jumping up on a bench*] That's me!

NELLIE. [*Angered*] Greediest!

CREEPSTONE. That's me!

CARMODY. Allow me to finish! Your father wrote, "My interest in leaving my fortune is to multiply it. Therefore I bequeath each of my offspring the sum of one thousand dollars which is to be invested and increased through hard work and industry. After one month following the reading of this will, my executor, Mr. Carmody, shall decide which of my heirs has been most successful; and that clever Cavandish will lay claim to the bulk of my fortune, one million dollars, give or take a buck or two."

CREEPSTONE. [*Excitedly*] A million bucks?

LOTTA. That's a lot of smackers!

CREEPSTONE. And you're to decide, Carmody?

CARMODY. I and I alone.

CREEPSTONE. [*Taking out cigar*] Here, have a cigar! Imported from Iowa.

CARMODY. [*Taking it*] Thanks, Cavandish. Now, I believe the stipulation is quite clear. I have a check made out to each of you in the sum of one thousand dollars. You are to use this money in any way you see fit, and whoever increases the sum shall retain the entire fortune and the Cavandish Candy Company. [*He gives Nellie her check*]

NELLIE. Thank you, Mr. Carmody. Best of luck to you, Creepstone.

CREEPSTONE. Thanks, Sis! [*CARMODY gives Creepstone a check, but LOTTA swipes it from him*]

LOTTA. I'll keep this good and safe, Creepy.

CREEPSTONE. What are you going to do with yours, Sis?

NELLIE. [*Majestically*] I've long had a mission in life, Creepstone . . . something I fear you would never understand . . . but this money will enable me to begin.

CREEPSTONE. Sounds nauseatingly good.

NELLIE. And you, Creepstone? What will you do with your money?

CREEPSTONE. Seeing as how I inherited father's business sense, I'll put it into something I know will turn a profit.

LOTTA. [*Excitedly*] You're gonna buy that little place on Clark Street?

CREEPSTONE. Mum's the word, mummy! Good luck, Sis . . . see you around! [*NELLIE exits. CARMODY works at his desk*] Lotta, this'll be like stealing a Chewey Gooley from a baby! Hahahahahaha!

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

[The Clark Street Mission, Stage Right. We see a table crowded by old benches, a bean pot on a smaller table that also has a bucket for donations. Behind there is a suggestion of old stable walls, decorated with a sign that reads, "Saints and Sinners Alike!"

AT RISE: The Mission is empty. After a moment NICK O'TYME, in fireman's gear, enters Right. He pauses, looks around, calls out:]

NICK. Hello? Anybody here? Miss Cavandish? *(Aside: HOW I LONG TO GAZE INTO THOSE DEEP BLUE EYES!)* *[ADELINE bustles on from Left carrying a coffee pot which she sets on small table]*

ADELINE. Well, now, a customer!

NICK. *[Horried]* (HAS WORK AGED YOU SO, MY NELLIE?)

ADELINE. We ain't open yet, young man, but I suppose we can get a cot ready for you.

NICK. (HORRORS! SHE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW ME!) I'm . . . I'm Nick . . . Nick O'Tyme.

ADELINE. Names ain't important, son. And there's no need to tell me any of the terrible details of how you fell into despair and sunk to the gutter. The Clark Street Mission is for anybody who's down and out! No questions asked.

NICK. *[Slumping onto a bench, in despair]* Really, all I wanted was to—

ADELINE. 'Course sometimes it helps to get things off your chest, you know. Tellin' your troubles is what these new doctors call therapy.

NICK. But, Nellie, don't you know me?

ADELINE. *[Amused]* Nellie? ME?!

NICK. *[Hopefully]* You aren't Nellie Cavandish?!

ADELINE. I'm Adeline. Nellie's upstairs fluffin' pillows so you can rest your weary head. Here, you enjoy this cup of coffee . . . *[She pours him a cup]* I'll bet from the looks of you you haven't had a bite in days!

NICK. As a matter of fact, I just ate.

ADELINE. *[Sadly]* I know, chicken bones out of the garbage can behind the hotel.

NICK. *[Sickened]* Gross!

ADELINE. Who knows to what depths a man in misery will sink. And son, you look as miserable as they come.

NICK. *[Dejectedly]* Gosh, I felt great when I came in!

ADELINE. The tragedy of your life ain't nothin' that can't be over-

come. Why, you stay here as long as need be 'til your wounds heal and you're ready to hold your head high once again. *[Grabbing his cheeks she lifts him up from his seat. NELLIE hurries on from Left, JENNY slowly following]*

NELLIE. Twenty-five cots!

JENNY. I never made so many beds in all my born days. All I wanna do is sleep in one of 'em! *[She sits tiredly]*

ADELINE. Looky here! We got a customer already. C'mon, Jenny . . . you gotta help me stir up the beans!

JENNY. *[With a disgusted sigh]* If it ain't one thing, it's another! *[JENNY and ADELINE exit Left, as NELLIE approaches Nick with a pleased expression hiding the rapture she feels]*

NELLIE. Welcome, Mr. O'Tyme. (MY HEART BLAZES WITH PASSION AT THE SIGHT OF YON FIREMAN. BUT I MUSTN'T LET ON!)

NICK. Thank you, Miss Cavandish! (WOW! NELLIE'S ENOUGH TO SET THIS FIREMAN'S HAT ON FIRE!)

NELLIE. *[Coily]* You . . . you ARE a fearless firefighter from yon fire station, are you not?

NICK. I am! And I have watched you turn this ratty livery into a not-so-ratty livery. If I may be so bold, Miss Cavandish, you are a paragon of industry and virtue!

NELLIE. (I AM BLUSHING TO MY TOES!) Thank you. *[NELLIE notices NICK holds something in his hand]* What have you got there?

NICK. *[Proudly]* An invention to revolutionize the world!

NELLIE. How thrilling! What is it?

NICK. I call it my floppy disc.

NELLIE. What does it do?

NICK. It contains thousands of bytes.

NELLIE. You eat it, then?

NICK. No, you put it in your disc drive.

NELLIE. *[Embarrassed]* I . . . I didn't know I had one.

NICK. You don't. I haven't invented it yet. *[NICK drops the floppy disc]* Ooooooops! *[They both kneel to pick it up, reach for it, eyes locked]*

NELLIE. Your disc slipped, Mr. O'Tyme.

NICK. No harm done, Miss Cavandish. *[They stand now. NELLIE turns away in embarrassment]*

NELLIE. What brings you to our Mission, Mr. O'Tyme?

NICK. I came to wish you luck.

NELLIE. How thoughtful of you. I feel I'm the luckiest person alive now that I'm able to open this haven for the downtrodden. Ever since I was small, riding about Chicago in father's carriage, I saw the homeless, the hungry, with nowhere to go but the alleys. And now, thanks to good fortune, I can provide help to make them useful, productive citizens.

NICK. Gosh, Nellie! You oughta run for mayor! Here . . . a token of my esteem. [*He hands her a horseshoe*]

NELLIE. Oh, Mr. O'Tyme . . . a horseshoe. But I fear it's not my size.

NICK. You don't wear it . . . you hang it up and you'll always have good luck. [*BILL runs on from Right*]

BILL. Nick! We've been looking all over for you! There's a fire down on the wharf.

NICK. Another one?

BILL. Yup, and some lamebrain pulled a shoe off old Tenderfoot so he can't pull the water wagon! [*NELLIE hides the horseshoe behind her back*]

NICK. I'm off, Miss Cavandish . . . but I shall return!

BILL. Hurry, before the entire city goes up in flames!

NICK. They don't call me Nick O'Tyme for nothing! [*NICK and BILL run off Right*]

NELLIE. Farewell, Nick!

[*NELLIE hangs the horseshoe on the wall. From Right, GENERAL BEAURIGUARD marches the HOBOS on in military fashion*]

GENERAL. Left, left, left right left, company . . . halt! [*The HOBOS crash into one another in a sloppy halt. NELLIE is thrilled*]

NELLIE. General Beauriguard! What have you here?

GENERAL. Ragamuffin Company, Vagabond Division from the alleys of the city. All right, troops, left face! [*One HOBO turns right*] LEFT FACE, SOLDIER! [*The HOBO flips around*] Stand up straight and pretty for Miss Cavandish. That's it, men! Bid her good morning!

HOBOS. Good morning, Miss Cavandish.

NELLIE. And good morning to all of you.

GENERAL. And now your names!

LARRY. I'm Larry, ma'am . . . a hobo from Hoboken.

HARRY. I'm Harry, without an "i."

MACK. [*Fashionably*] Mack's the name, ma'am. Charmed to make your acquaintance.

GUS. [*Folding arms across his chest*] Don't muss with Gus!

NELLIE. [*Amused*] I won't, Gus.

MONROE. Call me Monroe, like the president.

NELLIE. And what's your name?

RUDY. [*Shyly*] It's Rudy. . . Rudolph, really, 'cause I got a red nose.

ADA. I'm Ada.

IDA. I'm Ida.

HARRY. Allrida!

BETSY. Just call me Betsy, and a finer seamstress you ain't never met noplase. Flags used to be my specialty 'til I got my stars mixed with my stripes.

NELLIE. I'm pleased to meet you all. [*She moves Right*] Jenny! Adeline! Come out here quickly! [*Back to the Hobos*] I've got cots for you upstairs and we have plenty of hot food.

LARRY. We're much obliged, ma'am.

HARRY. But we can't pay.

MONROE. I used to work. Fifteen years ago.

NELLIE. That's what's special about the Clark Street Mission. You don't pay.

MACK. Why, that's right kind of you. If it weren't for this place, we'd be sleepin' between a couple of garbage cans again.

GUS. And that ain't too comfy on an old back.

BETSY. Or a young one, neither!

ADA. I used to own a big fancy house.

IDA. [*Sarcastically*] Yeah? And I used to be the Queen of Rumania!

RUDY. Well, this place suits me just fine. [*JENNY and ADELINE run on. ADELINE holds a wooden spoon in her hand*]

JENNY. What's wrong, Miss Cavandish? Holy hobos!

ADELINE. [*Pleased*] Well, General, when you goes out to get your man, you gets your man!

GENERAL. Say hello to Miss Jenny and Miss Adeline.

HOBOS. Hello, Miss Jenny; hello, Miss Adeline.

NELLIE. These fine ladies and gentlemen are our first guests here at the Clark Street Mission.

JENNY. We got lots of cots.

ADELINE. And beans on the stove that'll fill every achin' corner of your empty bellies.

LARRY. Why, I can smell the aroma of your fine cookin' on the spoon.

ADELINE. Sorry, son, but I was usin' this spoon for bleachin' the wash.

NELLIE. Speaking of wash, let me lead you to water where you can scrub up. Remember, cleanliness is closest to chow!

GENERAL. Left face! Left, left, left right left. [*The HOBOS follow NELLIE off Left. JENNY exits at rear of column*]

ADELINE. Cold outside today, General?

GENERAL. Brisk, ma'am, brisk.

ADELINE. Cup of coffee, then?

GENERAL. Never been one to turn down tarry brew, ma'am. Thank you.

ADELINE. If I might say so, General, you look splendid in your uniform.

GENERAL. Haven't worn it since the war ended.

ADELINE. Still fits! And the buttons are so shiny.

GENERAL. My men must be spit-polished. I can't expect less of myself.

ADELINE. With you commanding the army, it's no wonder the North won the Civil War!

GENERAL. [*Angrily*] I led the Confederate Forces of Alabama!

ADELINE. [*Smoothly covering*] Then you gave General Grant a run for his money.

GENERAL. [*Venomously*] I'd have given him a run all the way to Boston and forced him to swim the Atlantic if Jeff Davis had only listened to me!

ADELINE. You're so forceful when you're mad. I like men in uniform, General.

GENERAL. [*Nervously*] You do?

ADELINE. Oh, yes, my late husband Humbert died in uniform.

GENERAL. A war casualty, ma'am?

ADELINE. No, he was a bellhop. Crushed by a three hundred pound trunk.

GENERAL. A pity. He must have been a brave man, marrying you and all.

ADELINE. I loved him dearly. But there comes a time when life must go on. New fields to till, new wood to split.

GENERAL. [*Nervously*] That why you joined up here at the Mission . . . to split new wood?

ADELINE. Oh, yes! Why, ever since Humbert's death, I've devoted myself to helping others. It's what Humbert wanted.

GENERAL. He told you?

ADELINE. [*Dreamily*] He certainly did! He came to me in a vision, right after the trunk fell. Though his voice was terribly flat, he said, "Shortcakes"—he called me that 'cause my pancakes were always too small—anyway, he said, "Go out and do good. Here, there, everywhere. Spread your good deeds like manure in a barnyard." And that's just what I've been doin' ever since. Spreadin' manure.

GENERAL. He visit you often?

ADELINE. [*Sadly*] Just the once. I took it as a sign. Did YOU have a sign, General?

GENERAL. [*Dejectedly*] Yup. Said, "No jobs." Who needs me? Confederate generals are 'bout as useful as skis in Nebraska.

ADELINE. Maybe it's fate, then.

GENERAL. [*Nervously, backing from her*] Fate?

ADELINE. You do believe in fate, don't you?

GENERAL. Depends on whose!

ADELINE. Ours. We're fated, General! [*She circles him about the table*]

GENERAL. Now, ma'am . . . I don't feel fated a bit.

ADELINE. Humbert must have seen you in my future. And this Mission was his way of getting us together!

GENERAL. Thanks for the coffee, ma'am, but I'd better tend the troops! [*As he races off Left, JENNY enters*]

ADELINE. Carry on, General!

JENNY. Oh, Miss Adeline, you sure tickled the General's fancy!

ADELINE. He IS splendid, ain't he!

JENNY. Why, you got eyes for him, don't you? Well, we got a mission, Miss Adeline . . . remember?

ADELINE. That's right, Jenny girl . . . we all got a mission here. You tend to yours, I'll tend to mine.

[*GENERAL marches the HOBOS on from Left. NELLIE follows*]

GENERAL. Left, left, left right left. Company, HALT! [*Again they smack into each other*] Right face! [*A HOBOTurns left*] Right face, soldier! Or I'll lock you in the hot box!

NELLIE. Is it necessary to be so military, General?

GENERAL. Discipline keeps us on the straight and narrow, ma'am. It's what keeps us on the pathway to heaven!

ADELINE. Bravo, General! Bravo!

NELLIE. All right, then, company, fall in rank and file . . . soup's on!

[The HOBOS dash madly for the small table where JENNY and ADELINE stand ready to serve the food. GENERAL interrupts the action, firmly:]

GENERAL. All right, men! Back it up and form a line! There's plenty of grub for the grubby lot of you! *[The HOBOS get in a straight line, and receive a bowl of beans each. They then crowd about the table]*

JENNY. Ever seen such hungry hobos in all your born days?

NELLIE. I never realized the want in the world 'til now. I only hope my meagre inheritance can last.

ADELINE. You COULD get the whole fortune.

NELLIE. A sweet thought, Adeline, but Creepstone presents a cavity. Ours is not a venture for profit, but his most assuredly is!

ADELINE. A scandalous wretch if I ever seen one. *[NELLIE steps to the head of the table]*

NELLIE. May I have your attention, please? *[The HOBOS are so busy eating and talking that they pay no attention]* Your attention, please!

GENERAL. Company HALT! *[The HOBOS freeze]*

NELLIE. Thank you, General. At ease, men! *[The HOBOS relax]* Before we consume another bite, I must welcome you with open arms, and assure you there IS hope in the world. You can be a testament to the power of positive thinking and hope! The Clark Street Mission is your home until you are able to stand on your own two feet again! *[LARRY stands]*

LARRY. Ladies and gentlemen . . . and the rest of you bums!

GENERAL. Silence in the ranks!

NELLIE. No, General . . . let him speak.

LARRY. Thanks, ma'am. I don't suppose nobody knows this 'cause I never told nobody 'bout it before, but ten years ago I owned the finest haberdashery this side of the Mississippi River.

ADA. Go on, you rotter! You couldn't tie a tie if you had the instructions pinned to your eyelids!

LARRY. It's the truth! I had a partner, a scoundrel who robbed me one day. Emptied the till and brought ruin to my life.

IDA. Mercy!

LARRY. *[Sadly]* Lost my haberdashery, then pestilence struck. My dear wife . . . whatsername . . . was borne to the angels one frosty winter morn.

BETSY. *[Wailing]* Don't go on, Larry! I'm saltin' up my beans with all my tears!