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# Home for Christmas

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

DRAMATIZED BY

ANNE COULTER MARTENS

FROM THE STORY BY

LLOYD C. DOUGLAS



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(HOME FOR CHRISTMAS)

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# Home for Christmas

*A Play in Two Acts*

FOR THREE MEN, SEVEN WOMEN AND EXTRAS

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## CHARACTERS

MOTHER CLAYTON.....	<i>whose time is short</i>
NAN CLAYTON.....	<i>her younger daughter</i>
JIM CLAYTON.....	<i>her son</i>
GERTRUDE CLAYTON ELDRIDGE.....	<i>her married daughter</i>
MIRIAM.....	<i>Gertrude's daughter</i>
JACK.....	<i>a young neighbor</i>
JEAN.....	<i>an old friend</i>
PACKY.....	<i>a retired teacher</i>
ELLEN.....	<i>the housekeeper</i>
TIMMIE.....	<i>her brother</i>

## BIT PARTS

MR. AND MRS. BAILEY  
DR. AND MRS. COLLINS  
MR. AND MRS. DUTTON  
MRS. APPLE AND CHILDREN

OTHER EXTRAS AS DESIRED

PLACE: *The old Clayton home in the country.*  
TIME: *The present. The day before Christmas.*

## SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: *The Clayton living-room. Morning.*  
ACT TWO: *The same. Evening of the same day.*

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## NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

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**NAN:** She is a cheerful, pleasant-looking woman in her thirties. She wears a tailored fall outfit in Act One, and may change to something a little dressier for Act Two.

**ELLEN:** Ellen is a plodding, colorless farm woman in her late forties, abrupt of speech and manner, but a loyal, tireless worker. She wears a plain house dress and a big apron in Act One. In Act Two she wears her "best" dress, a black, old-fashioned affair in which she looks stiff and slightly uncomfortable.

**TIMMIE:** Timmie is a small, graying man of fifty with an aversion for work. He is spry enough when he wants to be, but always manages to get a "twinge of lumbago" in his back when there is work to be done. He wears old overalls, heavy snow boots, an old plaid jacket and a battered cap in Act One. He, too, looks stiff and uncomfortable in Act Two, when he is dressed in his "best" suit, a blue serge, worn and shiny.

**JIM:** He is a big man, nearly fifty, with more waistline than he needs. He is poised and forthright, a successful man who has earned his success. He wears expensive-looking sports clothes and a heavy jacket and boots in Act One. He may wear the same sports clothes in Act Two, without the jacket and boots.

**JACK:** Jack is a good-looking young fellow of twenty with an engaging grin. His portrayal of the country yokel is on the "corny" side, but he enjoys himself immensely. In Act One he wears a good sport shirt, slacks and a sweater with the letter "C," but a frayed and somewhat ancient mackinaw, an old cap and gaping galoshes. He discards the mackinaw, cap and galoshes in Act Two for a sport coat.

**MOTHER CLAYTON:** She is in her seventies, a woman who has known hard work and, in late years, loneliness, but who is very happy now with the prospect of her family about her once again

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for Christmas. Her clothes are plain and a little out of date. She may change for each act. In Act One she puts on an apron.

**GERTRUDE:** Gertrude is in her early forties, a woman who wears a veneer of aloofness to hide an inner hurt. She feels her daughter and husband no longer need her, and she has grown apart from them. She looks very chic and smart upon her appearance in Act One, wearing a fur coat over a fashionable suit, and a good-looking hat. She wears the same suit in Act Two.

**MIRIAM:** Miriam is nineteen, a vivacious, high-spirited girl, and not at all snobbish. She, too, is smartly dressed in a winter coat over an expensive-looking dress. She may wear the same dress in Act Two. At the end of Act One she appears briefly in the dress she finds in the old trunk, and her hair is appropriately arranged.

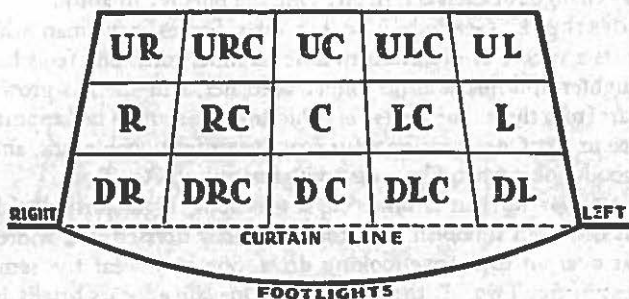
**JEAN:** She is a youthful fifty, sweet, quiet and pretty. She is dressed for the outdoors upon her entrance in Act One, and her clothes are warm, sensible and attractive. She wears snow boots. She puts on an apron in Act One. She may change to an attractive informal dress for Act Two.

**PACKY:** She is a retired school teacher, very old, but still brimming with energy. Her verve and zest for people have remained undiminished through the years. She speaks her mind unequivocally. In Act One she is dressed warmly in rather out-of-date clothes. She wears her "best" dress in Act Two.

**GUESTS:** They are friendly country people, dressed in their best but uncertain at first as to how much formality is required of them. They soon loosen up and enter into the spirit of the occasion as Packy begins the program. Mrs. Apple is plump, middle-aged and jolly. Her children range from five years on up.

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## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



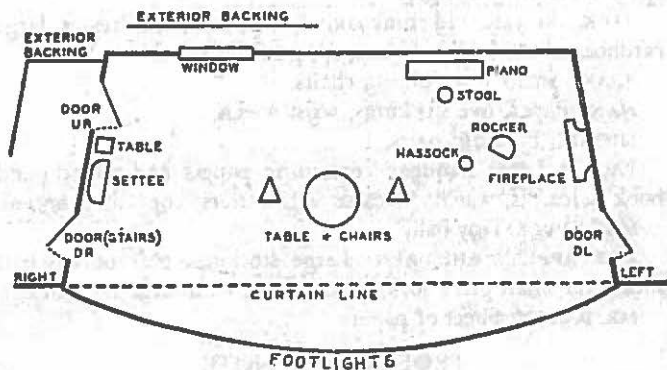
### STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

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**NOTE:** Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

## STAGE CHART



## PROPERTIES

**GENERAL:** Fireplace accessories; clock on mantel; family portraits on wall over mantel; rocker; hassock; upright piano and round stool; sheet music on piano; lace curtains on window; newspaper around window cracks; settee; round table and two straight chairs; photograph album, holly wreath, several sprigs of mistletoe, narrow red ribbon and roll of scotch tape on table; electric lamps; telephone table and telephone; five hooks over fireplace to hang stockings; hook over window to hang holly wreath; **ACT TWO:** tree partially decorated; gift packages under tree; fire in fireplace; red candles in holders on mantel; open trunk near tree containing tree ornaments (including bird ornament and angel), doily and framed crayon drawing; ladder near tree; materials for making paper chains and several completed chains; sewing basket on hassock.

**ELLEN:** Dustpan and brush.

**JIM:** Armload of wood, snow shovel, two suitcases, evergreen tree, folding chairs.

**TIMMIE:** Small stick of wood, small suitcase, small sheet of paper, piece of pie on plate.

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**MOTHER:** Tray with pot of coffee, three cups, saucers and spoons, cream and sugar.

**JACK:** Suitcase, old trunk containing boxes and dresses, large cardboard box, folding chairs, sprig of mistletoe.

**JEAN:** Small jug, folding chairs.

**NAN:** Paper, five stockings, wrist watch.

**MIRIAM:** Folding chairs.

**PACKY:** Large handbag containing papers and paperbound book of carols, watch, placards with letters, copy of program.

**MRS. APPLE:** Tiny baby's sock.

**MRS. APPLE'S CHILDREN:** Large stocking, pair of baseball socks and small girl's sock, skating sock with large hole in toe.

**MR. BAILEY:** Sheet of paper.

#### PRODUCTION NOTE

Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag.

It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

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## ACT ONE

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BEFORE RISE OF CURTAIN: *As the houselights fade, VOICES offstage are heard singing a Christmas carol. The VOICES seem to come from far away. For a moment this is the only sound in the darkness. The curtain rises. A small spotlight comes on, lighting the face of NAN, who is standing alone in the middle of the stage in front of the table C. The sound of the singing fades away, and NAN begins to speak. Her voice is soft, unhurried, a little as though she is sorting something out in her own mind.]*

NAN. Home for Christmas—all of us. [*Thinking aloud.*] A family scatters, because—because that's the way of life. Your brother lives in California, your sister has an apartment in New York, your mother still clings to the old farm—and you never come together—because it never quite works out. And—the time is slipping past. *You're* losing something—and so are they. [*Expels a breath.*] Then a doctor decides to be frank. Your mother has a heart condition. [*In a doctor's voice.*] "And frankly, when a woman your mother's age has a heart condition . . ." [*In her own voice.*] And so forth. [*Now firmly.*] That's why *this* family can't wait for *next* Christmas. It has to be *this* Christmas. [*Reassuringly.*] Oh, I promised not to tell them about Mother. And Mother doesn't have to know how difficult it is to get them here. My brother Jim finally broke free from his business. He came in this morning. I've phoned my sister Gertrude several times. It's so hard to make her see the importance of coming—because Mother won't let me explain. But Gertrude *is* coming—[*Trying to silence her doubts.*]—I'm *sure* she'll come! [*Worried.*] There won't be another chance. And it's so important for Mother—[*With a rueful smile.*]—and perhaps—it's so

important for each of us. [*Picks up a holly wreath from table at C, speaking thoughtfully.*] Home for Christmas . . . [*The holly registers. She starts and smiles.*] I'd better put this in the window.

[*The lights come up revealing the living room of the Clayton farmhouse, which has changed very little with the years. The furnishings are typical of the period of about fifty years ago. There is a fireplace in the L wall at C. On the mantelpiece is a clock, and on the wall above are family portraits of a woman and a man. Near the fireplace is a large, comfortable rocker. Slightly to the right of the rocker is a hassock. Against the upstage wall, U L C, are an upright piano and a round stool. There is a window, also, in the upstage wall, at U R C, with immaculate lace curtains. Newspaper is stuffed around cracks of the window. A prim little settee sits against the R wall at center. In the center of the room is a small, round table (perhaps marble-topped), with straight chairs of the period on either side of it. On the table are a photograph album, a holly wreath, several sprigs of mistletoe, some narrow red ribbon and a roll of scotch tape. The only incongruous notes in the room are a couple of rather out-of-date electric lamps on the piano and on a modern telephone table by the upstage end of the settee, which also holds a telephone. A door D L leads to the dining room and kitchen; a door U R opens onto the front porch. There is another door D R, leading upstairs; if convenient, a section of the stairway can be seen. Just upstage of the door D L is a small stepladder. As the lights come up, NAN is crossing to the window to hang up the wreath. ELLEN is kneeling beside the fireplace with a dustpan and a brush, cleaning the hearth. NAN hums to herself as she starts to hang the wreath. Then she pauses and looks out the window.*]

NAN. [*Smiling, as she looks out*]. That brother of mine!

ELLEN [*without turning*]. What's he up to now?

NAN. Splitting wood—and no hat on! [*Tugs at window, as if*

*trying to open it.*] He hasn't had an axe in his hand since he was a boy.

ELLEN [*turning*]. No use tryin' to open that window. I got the cracks stopped up with newspaper like your ma told me when the cold weather set in.

NAN. I should have known.

ELLEN [*as NAN taps on window*]. Can't expect him to hear when he's splittin' wood.

NAN. Maybe he'll have sense enough to come in when he's cold.  
[*Hangs wreath on hook at window, adjusting it.*]

ELLEN. If he don't have sense now, he ain't ever goin' to get it.

NAN [*coming C*]. Are you glad we're here, Ellen?

ELLEN [*slowly getting up*]. Mebbe. Me and Timmie has taken care of your ma the best we could. [*Faintly disapproving.*]

The rest of you Claytons ain't used to country life no more.

NAN [*defensively, crossing L C*]. Mother never wanted to leave the farm.

ELLEN. Well, it's her home, ain't it?

NAN. Yes—her home. [*Arguing.*] And *our* home. [*More decisively.*] And that's why we've come back for this Christmas.

[*Determined.*] We're going to recapture something—something we seem to have—[*With vague gesture.*]—lost.

ELLEN [*smiling*]. You didn't lose nothin' around here. I keep this place clean as a pin.

NAN [*smiling back at her*]. That isn't what I mean, and you know it.

[*TIMMIE comes in D R.*]

TIMMIE. Goin' out to watch Jim work. [*Comes R C.*] Ain't every day a feller gits to see a rich man splittin' wood. [*Chuckles.*]

ELLEN [*crossing C*]. Timmie Ruggles, you get right out there and help. [*Points D L.*] This ain't no time to show your laziness.

TIMMIE [*crossing D L*]. It jest so happens I got a twinge of lumbago in my poor back. [*Pauses at door D L and bends over, putting his hand to his back.*]

NAN [*sympathetically*]. Does it bother you often? [TIMMIE chuckles and goes out D L.]

ELLEN [*snorting*]. As often as necessary. [*Starts D L with pan and brush, and pauses to look at clock on mantel.*] Gettin' on to nine-thirty. Train's in, and your sister Gertrude should be here pretty soon.

NAN. Mother's resting up in her room. Let her know the instant Gertrude comes.

ELLEN. I'll tell her. [*Goes out D L.*]

[*Telephone rings. NAN crosses to answer it.*]

NAN [*into telephone*]. Hello . . . Oh, Jean, I was going to call you. . . . Not yet, but we expect her any minute. I don't think I've ever seen Mother so happy. . . . Jim? Believe it or not, he's cutting wood and actually enjoying it. I'm a little worried about Gertrude—she may not take to this. . . . Why don't you come over, Jean? We'll have a big old-fashioned breakfast when Gertrude gets here—the kind we used to have when we were children. . . . Grand! . . .

[*As NAN talks, JIM pushes open the door D L and comes in with an armload of wood for the fireplace. He pauses in front of the fireplace and looks at NAN questioningly.*]

NAN [*to JIM*]. Jean Hunter. [*Into telephone.*] Jim just came in. [*To JIM.*] Jean says her father made syrup last spring and she'll bring over a jug of it.

JIM. Great! [*Puts wood down beside fireplace.*] Maybe I'd better go over and get it.

NAN. She wants to come. She and Gertrude used to be good friends. [*Into telephone.*] Thanks a lot, Jean. [*Hangs up.*] My, what a load of wood! [*Comes R C.*]

JIM [*proudly, disclaiming*]. Nothing to it! [*Then he looks ruefully at his hands.*]

NAN. Blisters? [*Gets sprig of mistletoe and scotch tape from table C and goes to stepladder by door D L.*]

JIM [*moving toward table C*]. Been years since I cut wood. [*Soberly.*] The winter before I graduated from the university.

NAN [*soberly*]. Jim, tell me. Are you glad I persuaded you to come back this Christmas?

JIM. Oh, sure. [*Takes off his jacket, then sits left of table C and tugs off his boots.*]

NAN. Ellen will have a fit if you get snow on the carpet.

JIM. I stamped it all off on the back porch. [*Looking up.*] Funny, I hadn't realized it would mean so much to Mother. [*Soberly.*] We've been away so long.

NAN. Too long. [*Concerned.*] I'm not sure Gertrude wanted to come. [*Climbs ladder and fastens mistletoe over door D L, using scotch tape.*]

JIM. Did she say why Jason's not coming?

NAN [*as she works*]. Tied up with business, and Miriam's spending the holidays with her college roommate.

JIM. The old farmhouse has no memories for them.

NAN [*adjusting mistletoe*]. There. [*Gets down and looks up at it.*] Okay?

JIM. I'd say so. [*As NAN starts to move ladder.*] Let me do that. [*Rises and takes ladder.*] Where to?

NAN [*indicating door U R*]. Over there. Thanks.

JIM [*as he puts ladder U R*]. This reunion was your idea, wasn't it? [*Leans against window frame U R C.*]

NAN [*on ladder, putting up another sprig of mistletoe*]. Mother's too proud to ask. [*Shrugs.*] I decided to take over. [*After a pause.*] We've grown so far apart since the days when we used to gather in this funny old parlor with Mother and Father. Gertrude playing the piano—

JIM. You and Mother singing—

NAN. While you and Father popped corn at the fireplace.

JIM. And sometimes Sam Bailey would come over—

NAN. Or Jean Hunter. Isn't it odd that when we finally do come home after all these years, Jean should be back home, too, spending Christmas with her parents?

JIM [*after a pause*]. Jeanie's a widow now.

NAN [*remembering*]. Many a night you used to tramp a path through the snow to Jeanie's back door when you were eighteen.

JIM. That was a long time ago. [*Crosses abruptly to fireplace, arranging wood in pile.*]

NAN. Did you ever wish things had been different, Jim? That you had married—someone?

JIM. What about you?

NAN [*airily*]. Oh, I wouldn't say it's too late.

JIM [*pleased*]. Maybe you have someone in mind?

NAN [*coming down from ladder*]. Could be. But I asked you first. [*Comes in front of table C.*]

JIM [*abruptly*]. I never had time to get married.

NAN. Too busy getting rich?

JIM [*a trifle belligerently*]. I made it, didn't I? My own factory before I was thirty.

NAN [*softly*]. Meaning college for Gertrude and me, pretty clothes, a whole new life.

JIM [*crossing toward her*]. There wasn't much I could do for Mother. I had to bully her into putting in a bathroom.

NAN. I'm glad you insisted. Gertrude would *die* if . . . [*They look at each other and laugh*].

JIM. Our sister Gertrude is very much the grand lady. Do her good to rough it a bit.

NAN [*repressing a laugh*]. I asked young Jack Bailey to meet her with the ancient sleigh and Timmie's old nag. [*Crosses U R and puts ladder out of way, in U R corner.*]

JIM. I can see Gertrude's face—Jack might have trouble with the sleigh. The main roads are cleared of snow.

NAN. He's taking the back road. [*Comes R C.*] When Gertrude sees him in those ridiculous country bumpkin clothes . . .

JIM. Maybe we shouldn't have talked him into being a rube.

NAN. I want Gertrude to get into the spirit of things.

JIM [*crossing to her, putting arm around her affectionately*]. The old days, when we were all rubes?

NAN. Well, weren't we? And happy?

JIM [*seriously*]. A good deal of water has gone over the dam since any of us lived the simple life.

[ELLEN comes in D L.]

ELLEN. Sleigh's comin' up the back lane.

NAN. Good!

[*Sound of sleigh bells can be heard faintly, off R.*]

JIM [*looking out window, as NAN joins him*]. It's here! Gertrude bundled up in that old buffalo robe! [*Laughs.*]

NAN [*looking out*]. Someone's with her. Why, it's Miriam! [*Turns from window.*] Go tell Mother, Ellen. [ELLEN goes out D R.] I think this is going to be her happiest Christmas.

[JACK BAILEY comes in U R.]

JACK [*pausing U R*]. Could I have a shovel to clear the path? The ladies aren't wearing boots.

NAN. Why, sure, Jack.

JACK. I mean—[*Changes to a yokel's voice.*]—I 'lowed as how they might get cold feet wallerin' through the snow. [JIM laughs and hurries out D L.]

NAN [*laughing*]. You're perfect! [*Turns and waves at window.*]

JACK. Why didn't you tell me your niece was coming?

NAN. We didn't know. Keep up your act a little longer, Jack. We'll all have fun.

[JIM comes in D L with a snow shovel and crosses U R.]

JACK. Especially me! [*He and JIM go out U R.*]

[TIMMIE ambles in D L, carrying one small stick of wood. He holds it up to show how helpful he is, then lays it carefully on the pile of wood by the fireplace.]

NAN [*coming L C*]. Thanks so much, Timmie. I hope you didn't strain your back?

TIMMIE [*grinning*]. Think mebbe I did. [*Puts his hand to his back.*]

[*ELLEN comes in D R.*]

EILLEN [*briskly, crossing C*]. You get right out there and help the ladies with their bags.

TIMMIE [*starting U R*]. Don't holler or I might git one of my spells! [*Goes out U R.*]

NAN [*excitedly*]. Mother's coming down? [*ELLEN nods. NAN crosses to her.*] Did you get out the big square griddle for the buckwheat cakes? Is the sausage ready to fry?

ELLEN [*abruptly, crossing D L*]. I'm tendin' to everything just like it should be. [*Goes out D L.*]

[*MOTHER CLAYTON comes in D R.*]

MOTHER. She's here, Nan—she's really here!

NAN [*going to her*]. Yes, Mother. I told you she'd come. She was very eager to come. [*Takes her mother's hands in hers.*]

Take it easy, now. [*Brings her over to rocker by fireplace.*]

MOTHER. Don't worry about me, dear. I feel better than I've felt in a long time. [*After a little pause.*] You'll keep your promise not to tell?

NAN [*steadily*]. I'll keep my promise. [*MOTHER sits.*]

[*GERTRUDE comes in U R.*]

MOTHER [*holding out her arms*]. Trudie! [*GERTRUDE crosses to MOTHER and kisses her.*] It's been so long.

GERTRUDE. It's good to see you, Mother.

NAN. Glad you made it, Gertrude. [*Kisses GERTRUDE on cheek.*] Your cheek is cold.

GERTRUDE. I'm frozen!

[*JIM comes in U R, carrying a suitcase.*]

GERTRUDE. When did you make it out to the wilderness?

JIM. Yesterday. [*Goes R C. GERTRUDE moves C. NAN stands*

by MOTHER, who watches first one, then another, as if she finds it hard to believe they are really here.]

NAN [*bubbling over*]. He spent the day with Timmie, butchering a pig and making sausage. Can you imagine?

GERTRUDE [*making a face*]. Don't give me any of the details.

JIM [*bappily*]. Just as I was getting the knack of it, the handle of the sausage grinder broke——

NAN. And he had to walk through the snow to the Hunter farm to borrow theirs. And Jean's home for Christmas. Isn't that something?

JIM. You remember Jeanie, don't you?

GERTRUDE [*with a half smile*]. To be frank—I'm not really interested. [*Walks to fireplace, hoping to warm her hands.*]

JIM [*coming c*]. We'll have a fire there pretty soon. I just finished cutting wood.

GERTRUDE. That's all right. I knew I'd be uncomfortable. [*NAN exchanges a discouraged look with JIM.*]

[*The door U R is pushed open and JACK comes in carrying MIRIAM.*]

MIRIAM [*struggling a little*]. Put me down!

JACK [*in his yokel voice*]. Yuh can't walk on slippery snow in them there heels. [*To others.*] Seems like these city girls ain't got enough brains to make a good rattle.

MIRIAM [*as he sets her down at R C*]. Oh, no? You country boys aren't half as slow as you look. [*Gives him a look.*]

JACK. We aim fer to be obligin'! [*Grins at her.*]

NAN [*crossing to her*]. Miriam, dear! [*Hugs MIRIAM, then brings her to MOTHER.*] Here's your grandmother.

MIRIAM [*kissing MOTHER*]. Hi, Gram!

MOTHER. You've grown so. I can't believe it!

MIRIAM. It's good to see you.

NAN. Did you enjoy the sleigh ride?

MIRIAM. Wonderful!

JACK [*twisting his cap bashfully*]. Thank you kindly, ma'am.

Guess mebbe I'd better unhitch the horse, and sech-like.

[*Grins at MIRIAM and goes out U R.*]

GERTRUDE [*still in front of fireplace*]. A local yokel? [*NAN nods.*]

MIRIAM [*glancing toward door U R*]. I didn't know they grew them so good-looking in the country.

GERTRUDE [*moving R C*]. Why did you send the sleigh when there's a perfectly good car in the barn?

MOTHER. You children used to love the sleigh. And that old buffalo robe you had over your knees—it's the same one you used to play on with your dolls. [*JIM has crossed and now stands behind MOTHER'S chair.*]

GERTRUDE. More moth-eaten than ever.

[*ELLEN comes in D L and starts D R. GERTRUDE has taken off her gloves, coat and hat and hands them to her as she passes.*

ELLEN gives her a look, indicating that she is not used to being considered a servant.]

NAN [*with a smile*]. Will you take Miriam's things, too, please, Ellen? Put them upstairs in the front bedroom. [*ELLEN merely grunts as MIRIAM crosses to her and hands ELLEN her wraps. ELLEN marches stiffly out D R without a word.*]

GERTRUDE. The same old Ellen. Disposition of a grumpy bear.

NAN. You didn't even say hello.

GERTRUDE. Did she say hello to me? [*Sits right of table C. MIRIAM stands beside her.*]

MOTHER. I hope Jason's all right? Too bad he couldn't come along with you.

GERTRUDE [*abruptly*]. He was too busy.

MOTHER. You've all been busy these last few years. [*Simply.*] I've missed you.

NAN [*quickly*]. But we're here now, and we're going to have a grand time.

MIRIAM [*moving L C*]. Nobody told me what a darling, quaint room this is. [*Looks toward portraits over mantelpiece.*]

Grandma, who are they?

MOTHER [*getting up, as MIRIAM joins her*]. My own mother and father. Claytons have lived in this house for a long time.

MIRIAM. So still and solemn; bless their hearts. [*Eagerly.*] May I look around? I suppose there's a big old kitchen?

MOTHER. Big enough to seat a threshing crew when your grandfather was here. Come, I'll show you. [*Starts D L with MIRIAM.*]

NAN. We'll have breakfast in a little while.

MIRIAM. I'm starved! [*She and MOTHER go out D L.*]

GERTRUDE [*irritably, rising, crossing U R C, glancing out window*]. Miriam's here because her college roommate got the measles. Most irritating.

JIM. Especially for the roommate. [*Settles comfortably in rocker.*]

NAN [*standing L C*]. Too bad Jason's busy.

GERTRUDE [*shortly, without turning*]. Yes.

NAN. He'll miss you at Christmas time.

GERTRUDE [*after a pause*]. No doubt.

JIM. Nan wants us all to recover our childhood. Popcorn and maple taffy, evergreen and tinsel, holly and candles, sleds and snow fights, roast turkey—and a bad cold. [*Chuckles, and NAN taps him playfully on head.*]

GERTRUDE [*turning, crossing R C*]. Followed, perhaps, by pneumonia. [*Laughs a little.*] How could you leave California for this?

JIM. I'd forgotten how much I used to like snow.

GERTRUDE [*to NAN*]. This may be your idea of fun. But I don't care for anything that ridicules the poverty we endured as children.

JIM. I don't recall that we fretted much about it. [*Rises.*]

NAN. And think how much more we appreciate what we have now.

JIM [*crossing U R*]. Maybe we'll even come to appreciate what we had *then*. [*Goes out U R. There is an uncomfortable pause.*]

GERTRUDE. May I go to my room now?