

Poor Micky Spencer's Daughter Ordeal

*Winner of the 2006
Lakewood Theatre Company and
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It is the sizzling Chicago summer of 1917. The 18th Amendment—Prohibition—needs only to be ratified to shut down every bar in the country, and World War I plays out far off in Europe, but in the “Old Neighborhood” the only worry is will Poor Micky Spencer—a hard-drinking, hard-headed musical savant and the father of five daughters—get the son he has declared that God “had better” give him? When his sixth daughter is born, Micky goes to war with God, the Catholic Church, and especially the local priest with wild antics only his best drinking buddies can overlook—but there’s a limit to what they will put up with too!

by

Sharon Sassone

*Recipient of the 2006
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Characters:

1. **Micky Spencer**, 35-40ish, a funny, nasty, musically-gifted, hard-drinking Irish Catholic, father of five daughters and no sons—and legend in his own time to the parishoners of the St. Eulalia's Church in the Old Neighborhood; he warns that God had better give him a son—and you know what happens when you threaten the Almighty!
2. **Fitzgerald**, a less-than-angelic Catholic priest who can be found drinking with his parishoners as often as saving their souls; he and Micky are great friends until Micky's daughter ordeal begins.
3. **O'Donoghue**, owner of O'Donoghue's Barrelhouse, everyone's home away from home;
4. **Timothy**, younger than the others but old enough to drink with them at O'Donoghue's; Exempt from the draft because his vision is poor, he is an acolyte (alter boy) at St. Eulalia's Church and always asks the wrong question;
5. **Sullivan**, a poker-player who loves to get Micky Spencer's goat every chance he gets;
6. **Lew**, another poker-player, the only non-Catholic who frequents O'Donoghue's, an irreverent Jew, who is also Micky Spencer's next-door-neighbor;
7. **Charlie**, an elderly man whose hearing is failing—but who manages to hear the juiciest gossip in the bar;
8. **Edna**, Charlie's wife, still able to kick up her heels at the barrelhouse;
9. **Pat**, a masculine woman, who hangs with the men and keeps up with their hard drinking;
10. **Mary Elizabeth**, Micky's long-suffering but nevertheless saucy wife and mother of his five children—with a sixth one on the way;
11. **Lily**, age 7, Micky's eldest daughter—a precocious girl who isn't the least bit afraid of her tough-talking father;
12. **Lulu**, 30ish, the midwife, considered by the neighborhood men to be an old maid because she hasn't got a husband at her advanced years;
13. **Fiona**, barmaid at O'Donoghue's and friend to Mary Elizabeth;
14. **Mortie**, age 7, Lew's son and the proud owner of a brand-new baseball mitt;
15. **Rudy**, age 7 (played by the same actor as Mortie), Micky's son named after Rudolph Valentino.

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ACT ONE.

Setting: *The sizzling summer of 1917.*

World War I is being fought in Europe.

Congress isn't thinking about the War, however. It's decided its citizens drink too much and has passed the 18th Amendment—Prohibition. It needs only to be ratified to go into effect.

But in Chicago, in the Old Neighborhood, the parishioners of St. Eulalia's Church—many of them regulars at O'Donoghue's Barrelhouse—aren't very worried about the War or Prohibition. They live in an insulated cocoon where only neighborhood events shatter their peace.

Scene One: *O'Donoghue's Barrelhouse*

There is a dimly-lit piano on stage. MICKY SPENCER enters and begins playing ragtime softly. His playing is amazing—and as it gets louder and more intricate the bar comes to life. As he swings into legendary James P. Johnson's lively version of the "Charleston", the cast "dances" on stage.

TIMOTHY, and CHARLIE push a long, ancient-but-beautifully-carved wooden bar on stage. O'DONOGHUE and FIONA, each carrying a barrel, take their places behind the bar, and EDNA and PAT carry on stools. Only Edna sits down—real men stand at the bar—but she can't stay down for long and jumps up and dances too, cutting the rug with her husband, Charlie..

SULLIVAN and LEW enter, one carrying a card table which he places downstage, and the other carrying two chairs. They sit down, take a hand of playing cards out of their jackets, and a poker game becomes in progress. They, too, listen appreciatively to the music and tap their feet.

FITZGERALD enters carrying a wooden chair which he positions backward at the card table, plops himself onto with legs straddling either side. He is dressed in a black short sleeved shirt and pants and is laughing in a slightly—ever so slightly—tipsy way. He wipes his sweating brow with a handkerchief and takes out his hand of cards.

When MICKY SPENCER swings into Jelly-Roll Morton's "Finger Buster," a exhilarating display of his mastery of the piano, everyone in the bar simply stops and listens. He is not playing for anyone else—his joy is in his ability to play like this—but the others in the bar listen in rapture.

When he finishes, he ends like a showman, jumping up and throwing his arms in the air. The bar goes up for grabs with applause and cheers for Micky. He laughs and takes many bows.

Fitzgerald

(To the audience) Who is he??? You can't be from this part of Chicago or you wouldn't ask me that. No, he's not a professional piano player—although he used to play with a professional band. No, not classical—did that sound classical? Never had a lesson in his life. Plays everything "by ear," as they say. He traveled around with the band until he met Mary Elizabeth and she settled him down—well, as much as he could be settled.

All

Bravo! More, Micky! More! *(etc.)*

Micky

Ah, but yer too kind, too kind.

O'Donoghue

Here you go, Micky—and thank you! *(He serves him a drink.)*

Micky

Thanks, O'Donny!

Charlie

I'll get the next one.

Pat

I got it.

Every time somebody "gets" a drink, Fiona writes it down.

Fitzgerald

(To audience) That's Micky Spencer. *(Waiting)* Nothing's wrong...I was just waiting for a reaction. You never heard of Micky Spencer? Really?

Everyone in the bar is laughing, toasting, slapping Micky Spencer on the back, and, he, in turn, is making each one feel like he's his best friend. Fitzgerald begins to laugh too—laughs so much he has to hide his face in his hand while he tries to get control.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

He's something, isn't he? I told you, didn't I? He never had a lesson! Picked it up somewhere—don't know where. He just loves to play, except on the nights he won't go anywhere near that piano. Moody, you could say. Well, he's a genius, really. Did I mention he plays by ear? Any instrument—well, almost any

instrument. I've never seen him with a tuba or anything like that, but the piano, the organ at church—when you can get him into church to play it—and any stringed instrument, any—banjo, mandolin—ah, what was that instrument called that Russian fellow brought in here last year, O'Donoghue?

O'Donoghue brings drinks over to the table.

O'Donoghue

The balalaika.

Fitzgerald

(Whistling) Did Micky Spencer give that bella-lika the playing of its life! And you ought to hear him play the fiddle!

Timothy

Whew—it'd be grand if we could get him to play the fiddle.

Sullivan

He won't play the fiddle tonight—it's too hot. *(Playing his hand of cards)* I'll raise.

Lew

You never can tell what he'll do, Sullivan. I'll see you and double it.

Timothy

I say, tonight will you be playing the fiddle, Micky?

Micky

Not tonight, darlin', my shirt's wet clear through as it tis. Wet shirt, dry throat. I'll just buy myself another drink.

Charlie

I'll get it.

Timothy

I got it...but, Micky, I brought my wife's own violin specially for you to fiddle with tonight.

Micky

I don't care if you brought your own wife for me to fiddle with tonight, Timothy, it's too hot.

Fitzgerald

Keep it clean, Micky.

Charlie

What did he say? That's my bad ear.

Pat

You haven't got a good ear, Charlie.

Timothy

I just enjoy when you fiddle, Micky, that's all.

Micky

I won't be fiddling in this heat, Timothy. O'Donoghue you need one of those electric fans for this joint.

Fiona

I've been trying to tell him—

O'Donoghue

I'm not spending money if the Prohibitionists are just going to shut me down anyway.

Charlie

There's not going to be Prohibition.

Fiona

Congress passed the bill already, Charlie.

Pat

Yeah, they can pass Prohibition fast enough but they can't pass our Suffrage bill...just can't seem to get to it.

Charlie

I still don't see why you women think you have to vote. When a man votes, he votes for his whole family. I've always voted for us, haven't I, Edna?

Edna

I told you to vote for Teddy Roosevelt.

Charlie

That fool? I'm proud to say I didn't vote for him.

Pat

I rest my case. We women need our own votes, Charlie.

Charlie

Well, they're not passing Suffrage and they're not passing Prohibition neither.

Fiona

I think they are, Charlie.

Edna

Don't try and tell him nothin'—he never listened—not even when his ears were still good.

Charlie

But it ain't ratified...all forty-eight states have got to ratify

it—and I say they won't!

Timothy

What are you going to do with the barrelhouse if we get Prohibition, O'Donoghue?

Sullivan

Turn it into a Russian tea room.

Fiona

And how am I going to earn a living if they shut us...you...down?

Charlie

How long you think you're going to have that pretty face, Fiona? It's time you get O'Donoghue to marry you. You're not getting any younger.

Edna

A diplomat, as always, Charlie.

Fitzgerald

But not a bad idea.

O'Donoghue

What's the whole bunch of you going to do without my place? You'll have to stay home with your wives.

Micky

Bite your tongue, O'Donoghue!

Fiona

We'll miss your piano playing when it's gone, Micky.

Micky

You make me sound like I'm dying, Fiona.

Edna

Can't we persuade you to play just one more tune?

Timothy

Play *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee*, Micky. I love when you play *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee*.

Micky

A man could die of thirst waiting for the Robert E. Lee here.

O'Donoghue

Fiona, another beer for Micky Spencer!

Fiona

Done.

Timothy
I'll get it.

Pat
I got it.

Fitzgerald
It *is* hot. I could do with another myself.

Micky
You must let me get it.

Timothy
Nope, I got it.

Sullivan
It's payday. I'll get it.

Fitzgerald
Thank you, laddies.

Charlie
Save your money—I got it.

Edna
Save your money and let him get it!

Charlie
Go home and cook supper, Edna.

Edna
In this heat? Have a couple of hard-boiled eggs here.

Fiona
Our kitchen's closed. All the ice melted in the icebox and I had to throw out the eggs.

Edna
Then I'd better get to the market before it closes. Mick, don't you have one more tune in you before I go?

Micky Spencer goes to the piano, looks as if he might play, and then slams down the piano lid.

Micky
Naw, Edna, go on to the market. This heat has taken the music's out of me.

Edna
You're sure?

Micky

I'm sure.

Edna

Then it's to the market and home for a cool bath.

Pat

If there's any water left with those kids opening the hydrants all day.

Micky

Brats.

Sullivan

I saw a couple of your girls out there, Micky.

Micky

Beautiful brats.

Edna

See you all later. Goodbye, Charlie.

Pat

Hear that, Charlie?

Charlie

Eh?

Pat

Edna's leaving.

Charlie

Good.

Edna

Ah! *(She exits.)*

Fiona

How I wish I had your talents, Micky. I'd play every time somebody asked me.

Micky

I heard that's what you do now, Fiona...

Fitzgerald

Micky.

Micky

...but if you had my gift, you would also have my sensitive nature, and you would NOT play the piano unless the spirit moved you.

Timothy

Would you play the banjo instead? I brought my banjo for you to play tonight, Micky!

Micky

I thought you said you brought your fiddle.

O'Donoghue

Timothy's got a whole orchestra back here...

Fiona

...which I can't be responsible for if I step on all this...

Timothy

I'll get it out of your way then, Fiona.

Sullivan

I brought my banjo too!

Like little boys, they get their instruments from behind the bar and present them to Micky.

Micky

What were you fellas expecting—a floor show in this heat? O'Donoghue, can't you part with a teensy bit of your millions and buy one of those rotating fans for the ceiling?

O'Donoghue

I will when you part with a bit of your millions and start leaving it right here on top of the bar.

Micky

One never tips the owner of the establishment. It's disrespectful.

O'Donoghue

Go ahead, disrespect me.

Fiona

My tip can's looking a little anemic.

The drinkers, except for Micky, guiltily put a few coins in it.

Micky

You want a tip?

Fiona

Yes.

Micky

Don't bet on horses!

She laughs and whacks his head. Micky pretends to box with her, and does some fancy footwork.

Sullivan

Doesn't look like the heat is affecting you that much, Micky.
Just play us a little tune on the banjo.

Micky

I said I'm not in a banjo-playing mood tonight, Sullivan.
I'm suffocating in here.

Micky goes to the door to try to catch some air. Timothy trails him.

Timothy

Let me show you the new strings I bought, Micky.

Micky

New strings? Let me see them.

Micky tests the strings, then plays a song on the banjo. Once again, the bar applauds wildly when he finishes.

Pat

Ah, that was splendid, Micky.

Charlie

Edna's going to be sorry she missed that.

Timothy

Ah, thank you, Micky. I always knew you liked playing my banjo best.

Sullivan

When did he say that?

Timothy

He always says my banjo plays the best.

Sullivan

I never heard him say that. Micky, play something on mine so you can tell us which one of us has the best banjo.

Micky

Are you boys trying to kill me in this heat?

Sullivan

Fiona, a drink for Micky here now.

Fiona

On you?

Sullivan

On me. *(Everyone in the bar pretends they are shocked. Micky examines Sullivan's banjo like a detective searching for clues.)*

Micky

Ah, yes, now I remember this piece of rot, Sullivan. You see, your strings keep breaking—that's the crux of the matter. You buy the cheapest strings in town.

Sullivan

I don't.

Timothy

You do.

Micky

Timothy, if I were going to play the banjo anymore tonight, I'd play yours.

Timothy

Oh, thank you, Micky!

Sullivan

The undeserved luck of some people.

Micky

And I'd let you wet my whistle too.

Timothy

O'Donoghue, another shot for Micky Spencer!

O'Donoghue

Done.

Fitzgerald

I could do with another one myself.

Lew

I'll get it.

Pat

I got it.

Fitzgerald

Thank you, boys.

Timothy

She wishes.

Fitzgerald

No offense, Patsy.

Pat

None taken.

O'Donoghue

You're cut off, Timothy.

Charlie

What did he say?

Timothy

All I said was that Patsy wishes she—

Fitzgerald

Button up, Timothy.

Lew

I wish you'd reconsider and play us another tune, Micky.

Micky

Lew, if I want to be harassed, I'll stay at home where at least Mary Elizabeth has a prettier face than yours. Here, Sullivan, take this piece of trash—or should I just put it out of its misery? *(He lifts the banjo as if to smash it.)*

Sullivan

(Grabbing the banjo) You need to have your head examined, Micky.

Micky

I had my head examined once.

Sullivan

When?

Micky

When I was trying to enlist, they had this fellow give me a test. He drew a squiggle on a sheet of paper and asked me what it was. Well, it was obviously a man and woman going at it like rabbits, and I told him so. Then he drew another squiggle and asked me the same and I told him the same—man and woman screwing their brains out, no doubt.

Fitzgerald

Micky.

Micky

Then he drew one last squiggle—thank God because I was tiring of it—and he asked me what is this picture and I told him again—a man and woman doing it fast and furious. Then he says to me, "For Petessake, Mr. Spencer, you sure have a preoccupation with sex," and I said to him, "Me? You're the one drawing all the dirty pictures!"

Everyone has a good laugh, except for Sullivan who was taken in.

Charlie

Good one, Micky!

Micky

That joke's as old as Methuselah, Sullivan. If you didn't know it was coming, it's not my fault.

Sullivan

Ak! I still say you need your head examined—for real!

Micky

I must for baking in this oven. I might as well go home.

O'Donoghue

No! Stay and have one on me, Micky!

Micky turns on his heels and does a little tap dance back to the bar.

Micky

Your too kind, O'Donny-boy.

Fitzgerald

You're in splendid form tonight, Micky!

Micky

Why, thank you, Father. *(Takes his drink and tap dances to the door Even his tap dancing is extraordinary—and he doesn't spill his drink!)*

Fitzgerald turns laughingly to the audience, who had not known he was a priest.

Fitzgerald

Oh????????? You didn't know I was a priest, did you? Sorry. Father Paul Francis Fitzgerald, at yer service. Well, it's a hundred in the shade tonight. It's cooler without my collar. Whew, but I could do with a glass of water.

Fiona

Did you say water, Father????!!

Micky

I'll get it!

Fitzgerald

If Micky's paying, I'll have a little chaser with it.

Lew

Naw, I'll get it.

Timothy

Micky, how 'bout after that drink you do an encore for us on the piano?

Micky

Encore? This isn't the Schubert Theater, Timothy.

Timothy

Sorry, Micky.

Micky

Well, I can't let the good Father drink alone. I'll have a chaser, too.

O'Donoghue

You want water, Micky?

Micky

I never drink water. It's bad for the stomach.

Fitzgerald

You want to play a hand, Micky?

Micky

With you, Father? If I want to throw my money away, I'll take it home to my wife. Now, Fiona, don't go telling Mary Elizabeth I said that. I know you report everything I do here to her.

Fiona

I don't.

Micky

You do. You two are thick as thieves, but it's kind of useful actually. Means I don't have to talk to her that much myself.

Pat

Play us a tune, Micky, and leave Mary Elizabeth alone.

Sullivan

She's been alone since the day she married him!

Micky

How'd you like your banjo broken into smithereens?

Fitzgerald

Boys, boys. *(To the audience)* No more music tonight, I'm afraid. He's just not feeling that musical in this heat. Another time.

Sullivan

Probably has a lot on his mind, what with Mary Elizabeth getting ready to drop his sixth daughter.

The bar goes stone silent.

Micky

I ought to kill you dead for those dirty words, Sullivan!

Charlie

What dirty words, what?

Fitzgerald

Sullivan, show respect. A woman doesn't "drop" a baby!

Micky

Not those dirty words—the ones that Mary Elizabeth is having another girl!

Sullivan

Face the truth, Micky.

Micky

She's having a boy this time—my son!

Sullivan

Sure she is.

Pat

You said that last time, Micky, darlin'.

Fiona

And the time before.

Timothy

And the time before that.

Fitzgerald

(To the audience) Poor Micky Spencer has four—

All Except Micky

Five—

Fitzgerald

Five daughters. I lost count.

Charlie

Poor Micky! If I had five daughters, I'd shoot myself.

Micky

Don't waste your sympathy on me, Charlie—God's giving me a son this time. I'm sure of it.

Sullivan

You were sure of it last time.

Micky

You butt out, Sullivan, or you'll be wearing that cheap banjo around your neck. Father Fitzgerald has been praying for me—devoutly, eh, Father? Devoutly, day and night, asking the Almighty to give me the son I so richly deserve.

Fitzgerald

Well, I haven't been phrasing it quite that way.

Micky

Of course not, you've been pitching it like it should be pitched in heavenly words to the Heavenly Father. I'm counting on you, Father, my good, dear, bosom buddy—and sacred friend. *(Giving him a sloppy hug and kiss on the cheek.)*

Fitzgerald

(Wiping it off with his handkerchief) Thank you, Micky.

Micky

I've got to take a piss. *(He exits.)*

Charlie

Sensitive, isn't he?

Sullivan

He's got a right to be. Five daughters. The rag bill alone is going to keep him in the poorhouse.

Fitzgerald

Keep it clean, boys!

Sullivan

(Laying his cards down) A full house.

Lew

Jesus H. Christ.

Sullivan

He had nothing to do with it.

Lew

Well, I should probably get going...almost sundown...and Ruth and Mortie will be wanting to light the candles.

Sullivan

Oh, yeah, it's Friday. I can never get used to your Sunday being a Friday.

Enter LILY, about seven years old, Micky's eldest daughter.

Timothy
Out! We don't serve liquor to children!

O'Donoghue
You're cut off, Timothy. It's only Micky's oldest girl.

Lily is a picture of politeness. She speaks in a very angelic voice. She even curtsies.

Lily
Hello, Mr. O'Donoghue. Hello, Miss Doolin.

Timothy
Sorry, Lily, I didn't recognize you.

Lily
That's all right, Mr. Monahan.

Fiona
You need stronger glasses, Timmy.

Timothy
Eye doctor says if he has to give me a stronger prescription,
he'll have to give me a white cane too.

Pat
You are getting tall, Lily. You're looking like a lovely young
lady now.

Lily
Thank you, Miss Crowley. *(She goes to the priest and curtsies.)*
Excuse me, Father. Is my da here?

Pat
Your daddy's in the crapper, sweetheart. He'll be out in a minute.

Fitzgerald
Anything wrong at home, Lily?

Lily
No, Father. Ma's just having her baby, and she wants Da to come
home, that's all.

Sullivan
Holy shit!

Pat
Did you hear that?

Charlie
What?

Pat
Mary Elizabeth's having her baby!

Charlie
Holy shit!

Fiona
How long has she been in labor?

O'Donoghue
How long until she delivers?

Everyone—including the priest—hurries to the bar and begins wagering, with O'Donoghue writing down the bets. They totally forget that Lily is present.

Pat
Twenty to one it's another girl.

O'Donoghue
Twenty? You mean Fifty!

Everyone
I'm in. Me too. *(etc.)*

O'Donoghue
Cash only, Sullivan!

Sullivan
I'm good for it.

O'Donoghue
It's payday, Sullivan. If you don't have it now, you're never going to have it. Cash or nothing.

Sullivan
You're harsh, O'Donoghue. Here's a fin, ah, make it ten—no twenty!

The bets continue as Micky Spencer comes out of the toilet and sees Lily. Everyone in the bar tries to look like nothing has happened.

Micky
Well, now, what are you doing here, Missy? It's not payday.

A change comes over Lily when she sees her father. She puts her hands on her hips and talks to him as sharply as a fishwife.

Lily
Momma says push yourself away from the bar, Da, and come home—and bring the midwife with ya.

Micky

Aw, not today. It's a hundred and two in the shade.

Lily

Momma says it's a hundred and *five* in that tenement—and ya better bring ice too.

Micky

You see what I have to put up with? (*Looking like he's going to slap her, but does not*) I oughta...

Lily

(*Not the least bit frightened*) And her throat is as dry as the Sahara. Better get Fiona to give you a bottle of Canada Dry too.

Charlie

Poor Micky, I don't envy you!

Micky

Keep a civil tone in your voice, girl, or I'll...

Sullivan

Better hurry home, Micky. Your sixth girl is on her way!

Micky

I'm never playing your damned banjo again!

Sullivan

You won't have time, working your arse off to pay for all the pretty little party dresses!

Micky takes a swing at Sullivan, but others stop him.

Micky

Ah, you're not worth it. Let me see your book, O'Donoghue.

O'Donoghue

What book?

Micky

You know damned well what book! (*He takes the betting book and everyone in the bar looks guilty.*)

Lily

Da, Momma says—

Micky

Put a sock in it. This will only take a minute. Give her a pretzel stick, Fiona.

Fiona

There you go, sweetheart. And one for each of your sisters.

Lily

(As sweet as can be) Thank you, Miss Doolin. *(Like a fishwife to her father)* Ma says none of your lolly-gaggin', Da.

Micky

I'm only protecting my interests. *(He checks the bets.)* Oh for crissake, Fitzgerald, you bet against me!

Fitzgerald

I didn't!

Micky

It says so right here!

Fitzgerald

Now why did you put my real name down, O'Donoghue?

O'Donoghue

Sorry, Father, I forgot in the excitement.

Lily

Daaaa!

Micky

All right, I'm coming! Fiona, put a Canada Dry in a bag.

Fiona

I did. *(She gives Lily a large bottle of ginger ale in a brown bag.)*

Micky

Put it on my tab.

Fiona

I did. *(He gives her a dirty look.)*

Lily

Thank you, Miss Doolin.

Fiona

Tell your ma I'll be there soon to help out.

Lily

Ma always says she appreciates your help, Miss Doolin, seeing as Da is worthless most of the time.

Micky

You boys are going to lose your shirts. I'm telling you this time it's a boy! And you, Fitzgerald, you oughta be ashamed of yourself, a

priest betting in a bar like a common grifter—and against me!

Timothy
Isn't it a sin for a priest to bet?

O'Donoghue
You're cut off, Timothy!

Lily
Da, Momma's gonna be mad if...

Micky
And I want my cut of the action, O'Donoghue.

O'Donoghue
Don't I always, Micky?

Micky
Let's go, Lily. So long, suckers! *(He and Lily exit.)*

The others wait for only a moment, then swing into action, much like The Keystone Cops. Barrelhouse piano music begins.

O'Donoghue turns over a blackboard on the bar that advertises the availability of sandwiches. On the back it reads: "Closed—Micky's baby coming. Go to his apartment. Bets taken on premises." The others exit the stage with the same piece of furniture they came on with.

Fitzgerald
(To the audience) Well, you don't think we're going to just sit here when poor Micky Spencer's wife is dropping another daughter, do you?

Black.

Act One.

Scene Two.

Ragtime music plays as lights up reveal a carnival atmosphere in the courtyard of Micky Spencer's apartment building. Two men from the bar roll a fire escape with a large window atop it onstage. The others enter carrying lawn chairs or blankets. Everyone is drinking and eating picnic suppers and chattering away. Timothy is pitching a ball to Lew's son MORTIE, who is about Lily's age. The only ones missing are Fiona, Father Fitzgerald and Micky Spencer.

Lew
Good catch, son, good catch!

Mortie
Thanks, Pappa.

Timothy
You've got a fine mitt there, Mortie.

Mortie
Thanks, Timmy.

Lew
I gave it to him last week for his birthday.

Timothy
Let me see. You've got it broken in real good.

Mortie
I keep a ball in it every night.

Timothy
Good. And you're oiling it down now and then?

Mortie
Yep. Catch! *(He throws to Timothy and they continue playing.)*

Edna
Here, Charlie. *(Handing him a sandwich)*

Charlie
Aw, tuna fish?

Edna
It's Friday and it's a hundred and ten in the shade. What'd ya want—a catfish boil?

MOANS are heard from the window. The crowd stops.

Pat
Can't be yet—it's too soon.

Fiona enters from the apartment building.

O'Donoghue
Did the midwife say when she started, Fiona?

Fiona
Right after lunch.

O'Donoghue
Who'd they get as a midwife this time?

Fiona
That Lulu Brannigan girl. Whew, you don't want to get in her way!

Timothy
Lulu Brannigan?

Pat
Remember her from the Southside?

Timothy
Butch Brannigan's spinster sister?

Pat
Just the one.

Timothy
Why'd they call her all the way from the Southside?

Pat
It gets harder and harder every year to get anybody from around here.

Sullivan
Everybody around here knows Micky Spencer.

Pat
You got that right.

Timothy
So Butch Brannigan's primrose sister is...

Lew
Shush! There she is!

LULU, the midwife, appears at the window and everyone rushes to listen to her.

Lulu
No, no, no. Not yet. *(She sits on the window sill and fans herself.)* I had to come out before I suffocated. You could fry an egg on the sink up here.

Edna
You giving her plenty of water, Lulu?

Lulu
I guess I know how to bring a baby into this world. I been doing it for ten years now.

Fiona
(To Edna) Told you.

Edna
(To Fiona and Pat) You'd think she'd be embarrassed to admit how old she is without a husband...oh, sorry Pat. We all know you don't

want a husband, and you still got plenty of time, Fiona. No offense.

Pat
No offense, Edna.

Lew
(kindly) How's it going, Lulu?

Lulu
I'm not feeling too well. It's like an oven in there.

Timothy
He means how's Mary Elizabeth doing, Lulu.

Lulu
Oh. She's still fighting it. As soon as she decides to push it out instead of keeping it in, things will happen fast.

Timothy
Why would a woman want to keep it in?

Sullivan
Because it hurts like hell to push it out!

Lulu
It's just a natural instinct for a woman to fight it. Poor Mrs. Peterson over on Lake Street under the El stop fought it for three days...she was practically dead by the time her boy was born.

Lew
She had a boy, huh? Lot of boys being born this time of year?

Lulu
Bout as many as usual I guess. There's no one season for boys, Mr. Ruben.

Timothy
Can't you talk Mary Elizabeth into pushing?

Lulu
Not yet. She's not quite there yet.

Lew
You'd think after five babies, she'd just get it over with.

Charlie
She's been in labor since after lunch, you say?

Lulu

Yep. She was hanging her sheets on the back porch, and—splat—her bag a' water broke. I understand her neighbors told her to get in bed, but...

Lew

...yeah, Ruthie tried to convince her but she refused to even sit down till she had finished the laundry. She wanted to start on the ironing...

Lulu

...but then I arrived and got things under control.

Charlie

If it was right after lunch, she should be delivering soon.

Lulu

I'm telling you, it could still take hours.

Timothy

It took her all night last year, remember?

Edna

But you're giving her water, aren't you?

Lulu

A woman in labor can vomit up water and choke on it. I'm giving her ice chips to suck on.

Charlie

Butt out, Edna.

Edna

Lily, go upstairs and ask your momma if she needs a drink of water.

Lulu

Really—I guess I know what I'm doing. *(She turns her back on all of them.)*

Fiona

(To Edna and Pat) I told you.

Lily exits. Another moan is heard.

Sullivan

She sounds like she's close to having it.

Fiona

Since when are you a doctor?

Pat

I don't envy that woman tonight.

Charlie

When did you ever envy any woman, Pat?

Lew

Charlie, there are ladies present.

Charlie

Can't hear you, Lew, my bad ear.

Lew

You got very selective hearing, don't you, Charlie?

Louder moans are heard from within and continue in intervals.

Lulu

Oops. Duty calls. *(She disappears back into the apartment.)*

Lew

What time is it, O'Donoghue?

O'Donoghue

Ten minutes past when you asked me the last time.

Lew

Why does she always have to have these babies on the sabbath? Ruthie is inside fuming that I won't come in before sundown.

O'Donoghue

Go on in, then, we'll let you know what happens.

Lew

What'dya think—I'm daft? I'm not missing this!

Fitzgerald enters and speaks to the audience without the neighborhood noticing that he's arrived.

Fitzgerald

I see you made it—I almost didn't! Bingo every Friday night like the seven-year locust—everyone believing they're going to win the grand prize of two hundred dollars. With big money like that at stake, I couldn't talk them into canceling tonight. I thought I was going to miss this whole damned thing—pardon my French—until someone closed all the windows and the two fans broke down simultaneously and the bingo players literally couldn't breathe. They went home in droves after that. It was like a miracle. *(He pulls two wires out of his pants pocket and looks to Heaven.)* Forgive me, Father.

Lily enters.

Lily

I tried to give Ma some water but she slugged me and told me to get out.

Pat

Same old Mary Elizabeth...feisty as ever.

Fiona

What else can she be? Look who's she's married to.

Lily

Good evening, Father Fitzgerald. *(Everyone stands for the priest.)*

All

Good evening, Father.

Fitzgerald

Good evening, Lily. Sit down, sit down, everyone. The poor woman's still suffering, huh?

Fiona

I'm afraid so, Father.

Fitzgerald

Lily, where are your little sisters?

Lily

They're staying at the shoemaker's house.

Fitzgerald

Why aren't you there too?

Lily

It's more fun here, Father.

More moans are heard. They are definitely stronger.

Fitzgerald

Doesn't sound like fun to me.

Fitzgerald kneels on a blanket where there is some picnic food. He picks up something to eat.

Charlie

Everybody down on your knees. Father's going to lead us in a prayer for Poor Micky Spencer!

Everyone kneels, even Lew. Fitzgerald puts down the food.

Fitzgerald

I was going to eat something, Charlie, I haven't had any supper.

Charlie

Sorry, Father.

Fitzgerald

But praying is a good idea—let's do it—but it's Mary Elizabeth we're praying for.

Charlie

Of course, of course.

Fitzgerald

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost...

Mary Elizabeth's moans get noticeably louder and wilder during the prayer. The louder she gets, the louder the group gets. The more frantic she gets, the more frantic they get.

Fitzgerald

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

All

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
Amen!

Mary Elizabeth screams many times. It is deafening—so frightening that Fitzgerald covers Lily's ears. Suddenly, there is absolute silence. Everyone waits for what seems like forever.

Timothy

Is she dead?

Everyone shushes him and they continue to wait silently. Finally, a baby's cry is heard, and they all cheer.

Fitzgerald

Thank you, O, Lord! Amen! *(Makes the sign of the cross.)*

Lew

Praise God!

Edna

I can't take their having very many more babies!

Sullivan

How do you think Mary Elizabeth feels?

Fiona
That's why I'm not in a hurry to get married!

Pat
I need a drink.

Every adult except the priest offers her a drink from a paper bag.

Timothy
Listen, Lily, you have a new baby sister. (*Everyone glares at him.*) Or brother.

Lew
What time is it?

O'Donoghue
(*Checking his watch*) Eight-thirty-two.

Sullivan
I won—I bet a girl at eight-thirty!

O'Donoghue
We don't know if it's a girl, Sullivan.

Suddenly Micky Spencer appears in the window at the top of the fire escape. He is carrying the new BABY wrapped in a blanket.

Sullivan
What is it, Micky?

Micky
What is it? What is it? What do I look like it is?

O'Donoghue
A girl? Another girl?

Micky
This is your fault, Fitzgerald!

Fitzgerald
How do you figure that, Micky?

Micky
You didn't pray hard enough. You were supposed to put in a good word for me! And look what I got!

Fitzgerald
Careful with that baby, Micky.

Micky steps out of the window onto the fire escape.

Micky

Oh, so you want me to be careful, do you? What's one baby girl, more or less?

He comes to the edge of the fire escape.

Charlie

The poor man's besot with grief!

O'Donoghue

Micky, stand back now—you could trip.

Micky

Or I could jump, or I could throw! *(Everyone gasps.)*

Fitzgerald

You're not being funny now, Micky. Take that baby back to Mary Elizabeth!

Micky

She doesn't need another daughter, I tell you. We don't need another girl. Who needs this girl? You want it? You want it? Here, you take her!

He walks menacingly close to the edge, taunting everyone by almost tossing the baby. The group goes into action, closing together and moving in unison under Micky. When Micky goes to his left, they all move to their right under him. When he goes right, they go left. Lily grabs Mortie's baseball glove.

Mortie

Hey!

Lily

I need it!

With her legs apart and feet planted firmly, Lily takes a position under her father and raises her hands. With the baseball glove, she is ready to catch the baby if he throws it.

Pat

Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Stop 'em!

Fitzgerald

Give that baby back to...

Fiona

Somebody climb up there and grab his legs!

O'Donoghue

Don't grab his legs! You'll make him drop the baby!

Edna
Someone run and get the police!

Timothy
What the hell can the police do?

Sullivan
Micky, step back, dammit, step back!

Micky
All I wanted was a son. One little son. Was that too much to ask for? Now I've got this...this....

He holds the baby over the people below.

Fiona
Oh, my God! O'Donoghue, do something!

O'Donoghue
What can I do? He's a lunatic! You're a lunatic, Micky!

Charlie
Put down that baby, Micky! But not down here! Not down here!

Fitzgerald
Micky, if you drop that baby your soul will burn in eternal hell!

Sullivan
It won't do the baby much good either.

Micky
Why won't God give me a son? Haven't I been good? Didn't I take my pay envelope home to Mary Elizabeth most of the time? Didn't I give up my band, and tell Esther Macy I couldn't you-know-what—even though *she* was the one who wanted to? Didn't I buy my mother that expensive plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, right next to the circus elephants like she wanted? I paid *extra* for that grave near the elephants—but did she use it?

Timothy
She's not dead yet, Micky, give her time, give her time!

Fitzgerald
Don't help, Timothy! Micky, take the baby back to—

The midwife comes to the window.

Lulu
Mr. Spencer, Mrs. Spencer wants the baby.

Micky
Nobody wants this baby!

Lulu
You give me that baby, Mr. Spencer!

Micky
You take one step closer, you old maid, and...

Lulu
You're drunk, you old drunk! Give me that, baby!

Micky
This is my baby and I'll do what I want with it.
(He dangles the baby.)

Lulu
Oh, my God—Mrs. Spencer! *(She rushes back into the apartment.)*

Pat
(calmly) Please be careful, Micky...

Micky
Shut up, you old queer!

Fitzgerald
Watch your mouth, Micky!

Micky
Watch the baby, here it comes!

Everyone screams, but, of course, he does not throw the baby.

Fiona
Micky, please Micky, take the baby to Mary Elizabeth.

Fitzgerald
Come on now, Micky, be good.

Micky
I am good! That's my problem! I'm *good* and it doesn't even get me anywhere! Every single one of my kids gets three squares a day... and shoes...they all got shoes! I'm a good provider...and...and I'm a good neighbor. Aren't I good neighbor, Lew?

Lew
Ah...well...there was that time you threw the hammer at me and I had to get stitches...

Fitzgerald

Lew!

Micky

Only because you were hammering so loud and I had a headache!

Lew

I'm sorry about that, Micky! It won't happen again—please take the baby back to Mary Elizabeth...

Micky

And aren't I a good Democrat? I'm a precinct captain, for crissake! Haven't I let every Catholic vote twice?

Charlie

And we appreciate it, Micky! Take the baby back...

Micky

And didn't I make O'Donoghue stay closed on election day until after the polls closed, except maybe for a quickie at lunch, and don't try to tell me I didn't!

O'Donoghue

Sure, you did, Micky, boy! You've been strict with me...You're a great precinct captain! Now take the baby...

Fiona

What's keeping Mary Elizabeth?

Micky

And didn't I try to enlist for the war?

Sullivan

I doubt it.

Micky

Yes, I did, Sullivan...

Sullivan

Sorry, Mick, you did, you did!

Micky

...but they said I was too old! Me? Do I look too old?

Pat

Not a day, Micky!

O'Donoghue

You're still a lad, Mick!

Charlie

A kid!

Micky

So why am I being punished? Because I don't go to Mass every Sunday? Is that it? I'm sick every Sunday. Every Sunday I have a headache. I can't go to Mass with a headache.

Sullivan

It's called a hangover, Micky.

Fitzgerald

Don't worsen the matter, Sullivan! Just step back away from the edge, Micky, step back! God will forgive you anything, but not dropping an innocent baby.

Micky

Then that's not anything.

Fitzgerald

Anything but *killing a baby*, dammit! You know damned well that He'll accept your Act of Contrition if you really mean it, Micky, but *not for this!* Now dammit, take that baby back to its mother!

Timothy

I never heard such talk from a priest! *(Everyone shushes him.)*

Edna

There's Mary Elizabeth!

Fiona

Finally!

MARY ELIZABETH, weak but assisted by the midwife, appears at the window.

Mary Elizabeth

Micky, give me the baby, Micky.

Micky

Aw, go back to bed, Mary Elizabeth.

Lulu

You're a jerk, Micky Spencer!

Mary Elizabeth

I'll handle this, Lulu. Micky, the baby. Give me the baby.

Micky

You know I wouldn't hurt her, Mary.

Mary Elizabeth
I know it, Micky, I know it. She needs to be fed now.

Meekly, he hands over the baby. Everyone cheers. Mary Elizabeth disappears back into the apartment with the midwife's help, and Micky sits down on the windowsill and sobs.

Charlie
Poor Micky Spencer.

Fitzgerald
Show's over. Everyone go home.

Everyone gathers up their belongings and begin exiting, murmuring

Everyone
Poor Micky Spencer. Poor Micky Spencer.

Fitzgerald
Come on, Lily, I'd better take you to the shoemaker's.

Lily calls over her shoulder to her father as she exits with the priest.

Lily
Poor Da! I'm sorry you got another girl, Da!

The midwife, carrying her purse and hastily putting on her hat, appears at the window and snaps at Micky.

Lulu
Low class, shanty Irish! You owe me five dollars.

Micky
I'm not paying for a...

Lulu
You'll pay me right now or you'll be the one being thrown off this windowsill, I swear you will!

Micky
Aw, here, take it, you old maid.

Lulu
(Grabbing the money from him.) Prohibition can't come too soon for the likes of you! *(She exits.)*

Micky just sits on the window sill and sobs.

Black.

Act One.**Scene Three. Five days later. O'Donoghue's barrelhouse.**

At rise, VIOLIN MUSIC—a tragic funeral-like piece is heard.

Lights up on Micky Spencer, who is lying on the bar, playing the violin. The rest of the drinkers sit morosely and listen.

Fitzgerald

(To the audience) He's been up there all week since Daughter Number Six was born. Says he's not coming down till next week.

Timothy

If then.

Sullivan

Hey, Micky, we can't keep calling her Number Six forever. What are you going to name this one? *(Playing cards to Lew)* Raise ya.

Micky

Don't bother a dead man.

Lew goes to the bar, gets three drinks, and pays for them over Micky's body on the bar.

Fiona

Micky, this reaching over you is getting a bit old.

Charlie

Now be kind to poor Micky after his terrible ordeal. Six daughters, you poor sainted martyr.

Micky

You were always a good friend, Charlie.

Lew carries the drinks back to the table and gives one to Fitzgerald and one to Sullivan.

Sullivan

Thanks, Lew. You got to name the baby something, Micky.

Micky

I don't. I used up my last idea with the last one.

Fitzgerald

(To the audience) You know what he came up with last year? Evelyn Nesbitt. You know the one. Yes you do. Think hard. Back about ten years ago. "The Girl on the Red Velvet Swing." Yes, that's the one. The Gibson Girl model. Only fifteen years old when those pictures were taken. A real beauty...or so I've been told...I've never actually seen the pictures.

Sullivan

I have. She was buck naked on that swing.

Micky

(Singing and playing the violin) “She’s the girl on the red velvet swing!”

Timothy

What a beauty!

Fitzgerald

How would you know? You were still in school ten years ago.

Timothy

I was sixteen, Father.

Edna

Everyone remembers Evelyn Nesbitt.

Pat

The “Scandal of the Century.”

Charlie

Nineteen-o-six. I remember every detail.

Lew

Your hearing seems to have improved, Charlie.

Edna

His ears are shot but his memory is just fine—leastwise where women are concerned.

Fitzgerald

(To the audience) Her husband shot that famous architect, what was his name?

Charlie

Sanford White. Filthy rich. And she only fifteen and he ruined her.

Micky

(Singing and playing) “Her honor was soiled. Her future was spoiled...”

All

(Singing) “She’s the Girl on the Red Velvet Swing!”

Pat

Then she married that millionaire Harry Thaw...

Fiona

Why didn’t Sanford White marry her?

Pat

Cause he was already married to somebody else, the pig,
but when Harry Thaw found out that she wasn't a virgin...

Fitzgerald

Keep it clean, Patsy.

Pat

...that she had been "ruined," they say he went crazy with
jealousy and shot that bastard...pardon me...Sanford White...
shot him dead...

Charlie

... and he deserved it too! It was in all the papers for months.
What a trial! Yep, nineteen-o-six, Father, I remember.

Micky

The good old days. Before I was married.

Timothy

I've still got a magazine with photographs of Evelyn Nesbitt.
I could bring in if you'd like me to, Father!

Fitzgerald

Have you? Where? I mean...you shouldn't have such vile
things, Timothy. You'd better bring that magazine to me so
I can dispose of it properly.

Timothy

I just remembered me sainted mother threw it in the trash.

Edna

Evelyn Nesbitt...I haven't thought of her in years.

Sullivan

And Micky names his baby daughter after her—Evelyn Nesbitt.

Micky

Mary Evelyn Nesbitt.

Fitzgerald

Only because *I made you* put the name Mary in front of it. (*To
the audience*) I make him put Mary in front of each of his
daughters' names. Ah, I was afraid you'd ask me that. Well,
let's see, what are all their names? Micky, help me out here.

Micky

Suck eggs, Fitzgerald.

O'Donoghue

Speak nice to the Father, Micky.

Timothy
Let's see...Lily is the first one.

Fitzgerald
Mary Lily.

Timothy
It's short for Lilian, isn't it, Micky?

Micky
I've told you a million times—it's short for Lily Langtry,
the Jersey Lily.

Timothy
Sorry, I forgot.

Sullivan
Another whore!

Fitzgerald
Watch your mouth.

Micky
She was an actress!

Sullivan
She was the mistress of King Edward of England. He was the
son of Queen Victoria—the biggest prude who ever lived—
and her own son was a sex maniac.

Micky
What are you, an encyclopedia?

Fitzgerald
(*To the audience*) Aren't you sorry you asked?

Sullivan
Your second girl is Theda Bara, isn't that right, Micky?

Micky
Mary Theda Bara. A very great actress.

Sullivan
All actresses are whores.

Fitzgerald
I'm warning you, Sullivan.

Micky
Not so. They're artists.

Sullivan

Hah! Artists! Because they're in one of those silly flickers?

Micky

They are called *movies* now, Sullivan, but the trouble with you is that you are too common to appreciate our newest form of art.

Pat

I doubt he appreciated our oldest form of art. Did you ever go to a museum on your day-off, Sullivan?

Sullivan

Why? To look at some pansy paintings of guys in tights? I go to a Cubs game on my day off. And as much as I like the players, I don't name my kids after them.

Micky

And what do you name your kids after, pray tell?

Sullivan

You mean my *three sons*, Micky? Well, let's see, I named my *first son* William Michael Sullivan, Jr., after me, and my *second son* James Joseph Sullivan, after my father. And my *third son*...

Micky

Nobody's listening, Sullivan.

Sullivan

Of course, the Lord doesn't have to go looking for me on Sunday morning.

Fitzgerald

Leave it alone, Sullivan.

Timothy

What were you thinking of naming a boy, Micky?

Micky

He was going to be Rudolph Valentino Spencer.

Fiona

Wouldn't you name him after your father, Micky?

Micky

You ever meet my father?

Fiona

No.

Micky

That's what I thought or you wouldn't have asked.

Sullivan

Rudolph Valentino and Evelyn Nesbitt, Lily Langtry,
Theda Bara...let's see...who are the other two "artists"...

Micky

Hah! I guess you don't know everything.

Sullivan

Ah, yes, Gloria Swanson.

Micky

Mary Gloria Swanson.

Pat

Now that's a handsome woman.

The men all look at each other, then break into laughter.

Pat (Cont'd)

What? What did I say?

Fitzgerald

Behave, boys.

Fiona

Demented minds.

Charlie

I can't remember the little gal sandwiched in the middle.

Fiona

I know.

Micky

You stay out of it, Fiona!

O'Donoghue

This is my bar. She'll say what she likes.

Fiona

Mary Pickford.

Micky

Mary Mary Pickford.

Edna

America's sweetheart.

Sullivan

Why would a man name his little girls after a bunch of trappy actresses, I'd like to know, unless he wants them to be tramps too.

Edna

Mary Pickford a tramp?

Micky

Why, I oughta...*(Two others restrain him.)*

Sullivan

Come get me, Micky.

Timothy

Careful, Micky, you swore you wouldn't get off the bar until next week!

Fitzgerald

(To the audience) Micky claims he hasn't set foot off the bar since last Friday, but you know it's a lie or there'd be a pile of you-know-what all around him and O'Donoghue would have him off the bar fast enough.

Micky

You're calling me a liar, Fitzgerald?

Fitzgerald

I'm not calling you anything, I'm just curious as to how you have been using the toilet if you've been up there six days?

Micky

Cause if you're calling me a liar, I'm calling *you* a liar!

O'Donoghue

Speak civilly to the Father, Micky. We all know you've been through a terrible ordeal, but that doesn't give you the right to speak disrespectfully to our priest.

Micky

Wasn't he supposed to be praying for me? Putting a good word in with God for me?

Fitzgerald

I did my best.

Micky

Your best? Did you say any rosaries for me, any novenas?

Fitzgerald

Did you ever once come to Mass or to confession?

Sullivan

Touche, Father.

Micky

I'm warning you, stay out of this, Sullivan. This is between the Father and me.

Sullivan

And how are you going to hurt me? Throw your violin?

Micky springs up, and again others restrain him.

Micky

Aw, you're not worth it.

He lies back down and crosses his arms over his chest. Lily enters but does not immediately see her father atop the bar. She goes to Fitzgerald and speaks like a little angel.

Lily

Excuse me, Father. Would you know the whereabouts of my da?

Everyone in the bar indicates Micky on the bar.

Fitzgerald

He's still up there, Lily.

Lily

Thank you, Father.

Lily goes to Micky, and, hands-on-hips, again speaks to her father like a fishwife.

Lily

Da, Momma says we need five dollars for food so we don't starve to death while you're on your bender.

Micky

Get out of here with your smart mouth or I'll smack you one!

Lily

Momma says the baby is collicky.

Micky

Well, isn't that just great—it isn't even a good baby girl—it's collicky! Just my luck.

Pat

Aren't you ashamed, Micky Spencer—your children hungry?

Micky
(Springing up) No, I'm not! Maybe you're forgetting I'm the wronged party here. Are any of the rest of you stuck with five daughters?

All
 Six!

Micky
 Mother of God—six now—six daughters to feed!

He collapses back down on the bar, arms folded.

Lew
 You shouldn't have them if you're not prepared to feed them!

At the hint of the subject of birth control, the bar screeches to a halt; everyone looks to the priest.

Fitzgerald
 Now, Lew, stay out of this. You're not Catholic so you might not know what you're saying, but God determines how many babies we'll have, not ourselves.

Lew
 Sorry, Father. No offense meant.

Fitzgerald
 None taken.

Timothy
 How do Jews *not* have babies?

Charlie
 I couldn't have heard that right.

Fitzgerald
 Now what kind of question is that, fella?

O'Donoughe
 You're cut off, Timothy.

Timothy
 I just wanted to know.

Lew
 Now, wait, I don't mind explaining, Father, just so he knows. We use...ah...protection.

Fitzgerald
 Offense now taken, Lew! This is a Catholic bar!

Sullivan
What's a "Catholic bar?"

Charlie
What's "protection?"

Fitzgerald
Oh, we get your full attention now the conversation's turned smutty.

Lew
What's smutty? All I said was "We use protection."

O'Donoghue
Now, Lew, please. I'm asking you not to say that word again. There's a child present...and ladies.

Micky
Questionable on both counts. Now, about this "protection" that you Jews have, is it anything like the Protestants "spilling their seed upon the ground?" I've heard that's what they do.

Fitzgerald
I'm warning you, Micky, you'll burn in the fires of hell!

O'Donoghue
Micky, send your kid on home. You're gonna get me closed down even before Prohibition.

Micky
Scram, Lily.

Lily
Da! I still need five dollars!

Micky
Well, I don't have it, fresh, so get outa here!

Fitzgerald
Here, Lily. *(He gives her money.)* Take this to your mother.

Lily
(With a curtsy) Oh, thank you, Father! *(She turns back to her father and becomes a fishwife again.)* And you're to stop this foolishness and come home soon, Da. The garbage needs to be taken out.

Micky
Why, I oughta... *(Somebody pushes him back down.)* Well, at least that was kind of you, Fitzgerald, giving her the fin.

Fitzgerald
You'll pay me back every red cent later!

Micky
I shoulda known, ya cheap....

Lily
Goodbye, then, Father. Momma said to tell you she'll see you
Sunday for the baptism. *(She curtsies and exits.)*

Micky springs up again. The bar goes stone silent.

Micky
What baptism?

Fitzgerald
Your daughter's baptism on Sunday.

Micky
Who said you could baptize my daughter?

Fitzgerald
Her mother.

Micky
I forbid it.

Fiona
You know what happens to a baby who dies before she's
baptized. If something were to happen, she'd spend eternity
in Limbo!

Micky
Why should I care? *(Everyone is aghast.)*

Edna
Mother of God!

Charlie
What'd he say? Speak up!

Pat
You pig, Micky Spencer!

O'Donoghue
You don't care if your baby languishes in Limbo forever?

Micky
I don't believe in Limbo.

Fitzgerald
Careful, Micky.

Charlie
What? What?

Micky
And you know what else I don't believe in? The fires of hell!
They're just made up by you priests to control the rest of us!

Charlie
I know I didn't hear that right!

Timothy
He said he doesn't believe in...

O'Donoghue
Get off my bar, Michael Spencer!

Micky lies back down defiantly.

Micky
I'll get off your bar when I'm good and ready. What's the matter with you people? Does your pity for a poor man stuck with six daughters only last a week? I've just been through a terrible shock and you're treating me like I'm the one to blame. I had plans, plans for my son—several sons—we were going to...

Pat
You know the old saying, Micky. If you want to hear God laugh, tell him your plans.

Micky
Then it's God! God is to blame! If there is a God.

Everyone is horrified.

Fitzgerald
I'm getting weary, Micky, very weary.

Timothy
You didn't mean that, Micky.

Sullivan
You must be drunker than I thought.

Fiona
He can't mean it, Father. Say you didn't mean it, Micky.

Charlie
What did he say?

Timothy
He said...

Fitzgerald
Don't repeat his blasphemy.

Edna
Well, I'm not staying to hear this talk. I'm leaving. (*She thunders out of the barrelhouse.*)

Fitzgerald
Listen here, you damned fool. There is a God and every man with a soul knows it—and fears it—and you better get your head on straight, Micky Spencer, or...

Micky
Or what? Are you going to tell on me to the Almighty? He doesn't listen to you. What is it you did, I wonder, to make God stop listening to you?

O'Donoghue
Calm down, now, Micky, you're talking to our priest.

Micky
There's something wrong when a priest prays—*says* he prayed—and his prayers don't even count. You promised me a boy, Fitzgerald!

Fitzgerald
I said the odds were that eventually you'd have a boy.

Micky
You said you'd pray for me!

Fitzgerald
I did!

Micky
Then why didn't God answer your prayers?

Fitzgerald
Do you think God has nothing more to do than sit around and answer my personal prayers all day?

Micky
If not, then I don't know what He's good for!

O'Donoghue

Mickey Spencer, you're pushing it. Get off my bar.

Micky

Touch me again and I'll bust your jaw, O'Donoghue. I'm serious now. If God isn't thinking about our problems, what the hell is he thinking about then?

Timothy

Stuff like earthquakes...

Fiona

...and floods...

Charlie

Floods? Where?

Pat

...diseases...epidemics...

Lew

...and famines...

Micky

You mean "acts of God?" Catastrophes that He causes and then decides if He's going to help the victims or not?

Fitzgerald

Stop right there.

Micky

If that's the God you want me to pray to, I'm not praying any more. I'm quitting being a Catholic. Forever! I'll...I'll become a Jew!

Lew

We Jews have had plenty of catastrophes, Micky, and we still pray to God.

Micky

Then, then I'll become a Protestant.

Everyone is more aghast than ever before.

Charlie

Did I hear what I heard?

Micky

That way I won't have to have any more children—any more girls. I'll become a Protestant and do what they do.

Timothy
Spill your seed upon the ground?

All
Timothy!

Micky
Yeah, I'll spill my seed upon the ground—just like the
Protestants!

That's the final straw. Father Fitzgerald leaps up and grabs Micky Spencer off the bar, drags him to the poker table, and throws him down onto his knees.

Fitzgerald
The rest of you, clear the table!

Micky
Hey!

Fitzgerald
Now you were born a Catholic and you were raised a Catholic
and you are a Catholic today and you'll be a Catholic tomorrow.
Now you make a Good Confession and you make it quick.

Micky
Here? In public?

Fitzgerald
Right here—everyone else over by the door. And don't listen.
You, Micky, you keep your voice down so only I can hear.

Micky
I'm not sure I want to...

O'Donoghue
You better want or you'll never be able to show your face in
this bar again!

Micky
Prohibition will take care of you soon enough!

Fitzgerald
Make a Good Confession now. Now. And you better be
sincere because I'll know if you're not.

The priest sits down, takes his collar out of his pocket, puts it on, and makes the sign of the cross. Micky stares at him for a moment and then grudgingly makes the sign of the cross too.

Micky
Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was...

He glares back at everyone, and they try to look as if they're not listening. As soon as he resumes his confessions—whispering—they bend in to hear better. Micky whispers a date. Everyone groans.

Lew
I'm not a Catholic, but that seems like a very long time.

They all listen intently as Micky continues to whisper his confession. The priest tsks and shakes his head in dismay. Fitzgerald becomes more aghast as Micky gets more and more animated and rebellious.

Fitzgerald
Ah, Micky. Ahhh!

Charlie
Did he say St. Louis?

Timothy
I heard "truest."

Fitzgerald
Hummm, oh, no. When?

Charlie
Fix the glass?

Lew
No, "kick his ass."

Fitzgerald
Nooo! How many?

Pat
A hundred dollars?

Timothy
A hundred hours.

Sullivan
Who's a slameel?

Fiona
Did he say steal?

Fitzgerald
You're kidding! Get back down, Micky. You're not done.
How many times?

Charlie
What's he saying now? Damn this bad ear!

Fitzgerald
You're a disgrace. Now shut up and keep talking.

EDNA opens the door but Timothy doesn't let her in.

Timothy
Sorry, lady, we're closed.

Edna
It's me—Edna—you damned fool. Tell Charlie to come on home.

Lew
Hear that, Charlie? Edna wants you to come home.

Charlie
She's been wanting that for forty years. Get outa here, Edna.

Edna
What's going on?

Pat
Micky Spencer's making his Good Confession.

Lew
You call that good?

Edna
Move over...I'll have a beer, O'Donoghue.

Fitzgerald
Quiet over there...and there'll be no selling of spirits while we're conducting the Sacrement of Confession.

Edna
But I'm dying of thirst, Father!

Fitzgerald
Dammit, Edna, I'm trying to save this man's soul...excuse my French, no offense.

Edna
None taken, Father. I'm as parched as the Dead Sea, though, so I'll just be slipping out again.

Charlie
I'll be home for supper later, Edna.

Edna
Well, I won't. Make yourself a sandwich. *(She exits.)*

O'Donoghue

If it wouldn't be too inconvenient, Father, can you wind it up soon? I can't afford to lose Edna's business. The way she laps it up.

Charlie

I heard that.

O'Donoghue

Of course you did.

Micky

I'm almost done, O'Donoghue.

Fitzgerald

Oh, no, you're not! Tell me more about...*(He whispers something.)*

Micky

That wasn't my fault! (Micky gets animated and long-winded.)

Sullivan

A man with that many sins ought to be in jail.

Fitzgerald

Calm down, Micky, and make a good Act of Contrition.

Micky

Don't tell me to calm down!

Fitzgerald

Are you sorry for your sins or not?

Micky

Not! I need a drink! *(He is up in a flash.)*

O'Donoghue

Well, you're not getting one here.

Micky

Clear the door, you yahoos!

Charlie

Where you going, Micky?

Micky

Anywhere that's not here!

Fiona

Don't leave, Micky!

Pat

Oh, but we're going to miss you, Micky!

Timothy

Will we never see you again, Micky?

Micky

For Petie's sake, I'm just going to find a drink. *(He exits.)*

Fitzgerald

A drink, O'Donoghue. A big one.

O'Donoghue

Done.

Timothy

I'll get it.

Pat

I've got it.

Timothy

Father, what did Micky tell you?

Fitzgerald

Now, Timothy, even you are bright enough to know that everything said in confession is a secret.

Timothy

Even in a bar?

Fitzgerald

God knows everything, Timothy, and is everywhere. A bar can be a holy place too.

Sullivan

Say, Father, my lucky crap dice have been slipping lately. Will you bless them to get 'em started again?

Fitzgerald

What do you think I am—a goddamn witch doctor?

Timothy

I thought priests didn't take the Lord's name in vain?

All

Shut up, Timothy.

Pat

Sit down, Father, you're looking faint.

O'Donoghue

Drink this beer quick, Father. Your nerves are frazzled.

Charlie

Wasn't Micky even a bit contrite, Father?

Fitzgerald

Did he sound contrite?

Timothy

But he did see the error of his ways?

Fitzgerald

Did he look like he saw the error of his ways?

Timothy

Then he's still not in a State of Grace, is he, Father?

Fitzgerald

The only state he's in is Illinois. Now let's drop it and have a drink. O'Donoghue, I need a shot.

O'Donoghue

Done.

Lew

It's on me, Father.

Charlie

No, let me.

Fitzgerald

I'll take one from you both. Hearing Micky Spencer's confession would turn any man into an alcoholic.

Lew

Maybe a nice hand of poker will make you feel better, Father.

Fitzgerald

Yeah, deal them, would you, Lew? I hope Edna didn't leave because I cussed at her, Charlie.

Charlie

I've been cussing at her for forty years and she ain't gone nowhere.

Sullivan

(Looking at his cards) I'm in. I'll raise you, Father...

Fitzgerald

This hand is no better than the rest of my day.

Lew
He's bluffing.

Sullivan
No doubt.

Micky Spencer storms back in, carrying a beer.

Micky
And another thing I want to tell you, Fitzgerald—I heard
the Pope likes little boys!

Fitzgerald
Only you can get a drink somewhere else that fast.

Micky
I did—at Tristan's—where they have the decency to pity a poor
man with six daughters and buy him a drink to commiserate.

O'Donoghue
You took your business to Tristan's Tavern?

Micky
I didn't give them a penny, O'Donny. You know you're my
one-and-only, but I was gettin' harassed by that snake in the
grass so I had to go to Tristan's—Charlie, your wife is there
by the way. Said to forget about supper altogether. They're
really quite nice at Tristan's—everyone understood my ordeal—
not like some people. We ought to have a softball game against
them one of these days.

Lew
We ought to!

Timothy
Let's!

O'Donoghue
So if everything's so ducky at Tristan's, why'd you come back?

Micky
To face this Benedict Arnold!

Fitzgerald
No need to shout, I'm not deaf, Micky.

Micky
Then listen to this—the good Lord can kiss my arse before
I set one foot into church until He gives me the son I am
entitled to. All I'm asking for is what I've earned after eight
years of working a goddamned factory job instead of traveling

around with the good old band I used to, eight years of not sleeping with anyone but my wife, and eight years of letting her give my hard-earned pay to your precious St. Eulalia's Church so that you and your cronies can sit around in the rectory like fat cats eating chicken every Sunday. Eight years, in fact, of being an all-around prince of a nice guy.

Fitzgerald
Are we still talking about you?

Micky
And no more babies for you to baptize, Fitzgerald, cause I'm definitely spilling my seed upon the ground.

Fitzgerald
(Calmly, still playing cards) Sorry to hear you say so, Micky, but it's your soul that's going to burn in hell.

Micky
Let it burn.

Fitzgerald
I intend to...but not that of your child's. So I'll see you in church on Sunday where I'll be baptizing your daughter.

Micky
And I say you won't.

Fitzgerald
(Calmly, very calmly) I will.

Micky
(Waiting for Fitzgerald to react more) You won't.

Micky stares at Fitzgerald, who continues to play cards silently. Finally, Micky goes to the piano and after only a moment, bangs on the keys like a child having a temper tantrum.

Micky
God damn you, Fitzgerald!

O'Donoghue goes over and slams down the piano top.

O'Donoghue
Get out, Micky. Nobody damns a priest in my place.

Micky
Fine, then. I'll find somewhere else to spend my money, O'Donoghue. But I'm telling you, Fitzgerald, don't try baptizing my kid on Sunday! *(He exits.)*

Timothy
Don't listen to him, Father. Micky's just off his nut because
he's got six daughters now.

Fitzgerald
I know.

Sullivan
I'm out.

Fitzgerald
Me too.

Lew
I guess that makes me the winner.

Sullivan
Well, it's supptime.

*Sullivan and Lew pick up the table and their chairs and exit. The others take their stools and
begin to leave too. Everything is taken off except the piano. A soft Ragtime tune begins playing.*

Pat
He'll change his tune, Father, don't worry.

Fitzgerald
I won't.

Timothy
Nobody quits being a Catholic forever.

Fitzgerald
Uh-uh.

Charlie
He'll be back at church one of these days, you'll see.

Fitzgerald
Probably so.

O'Donoghue pushes his bar off with the help of the last of the others.

O'Donoghue
I couldn't let him treat you that way, Father, enough was enough.

Fitzgerald
Thank you, Donny.

O'Donoghue exits. Fitzgerald stands alone on stage.

Fitzgerald

Well...you're welcome to come to the baptism on Sunday. Yes, I certainly am baptizing her. Ten o'clock. St. Eulalia's, that big church catty-corner from here. Can't miss it. All right then, I'll see you there. Bye. *(He exits.)*

The music plays and ends. Lights out.

Curtain on Act One.

Intermission

ACT TWO.

Pre-Scene: MICKY SPENCER plays an appropriate blues.

Scene One: *Sunday morning—THE morning of the baptism.
The home of Micky and Mary Elizabeth Spencer.*

At Rise: *CHURCH BELLS peal. MARY ELIZABETH, dressed in her finest, looks out a window. A cradle is nearby.*

Mary Elizabeth

Oh, those bells! Couldn't Father Fitzgerald have turned them off for today?

LILY storms in and Mary Elizabeth jumps sky high. Lily is dressed in her finest too. She peeks into the cradle and plays with the baby.

Lily

Momma, look she's smiling at me.

Mary Elizabeth

She recognizes her big sister already. Here, your bow's untied. Stand still.

Lily fidgets over the baby as her mother ties a large bow at the back of her waist.

Mary Elizabeth (cont'd)

Your sisters behave on the way to the Tannenbaums' house?

Lily

Glory and Mary behaved, and Evie fell asleep in the pram...

Mary Elizabeth

...good...

Lily

...but Theda wouldn't go. She's sulkin' on the curb outside. She says she's six and-a-half years old and should be allowed to go to Mass to see Da flatten Father Fitzgerald same as me.

Mary Elizabeth

Oh she does, does she?

Mary Elizabeth goes to the window, looks out, and shouts like a fishwife.

Mary Elizabeth (cont'd)

Theda! You get down to Mrs. Tannenbaum's or the person you see flattened is going to be yourself! (*Watching*) She's not going, the little brat. Why do all you kids have to take after your father? Get her to go to Tannenbaum's, Lily.

Lily

(*Screaming out the window*) Theda, Momma says you have to go...

Mary Elizabeth

I already did that. Go chase her to the Tannenbaum's with the switch.

Lily takes a long tree branch from the corner and exits.

Lily

I'll get her, Ma.

Mary Elizabeth

Not too hard, Lily. (*Calls out the window*) Here comes your sister to thrash you—you'd better run! (*Turning her attention to the baby.*) Every one of them more hard-headed than the next. I hope you're planning on being a very good little girl—quiet and obedient like a little girl should be. Do you know how much easier it would have been if you'd been a boy? Ah, but you're a pretty little thing—you look as pretty as your sisters did in this christening dress. I wore this dress too—yes I did—and your grandma before me. Oh, is that a yawn? Am I disturbing your sleep? Well, fair is fair, you disturbed mine all night.

She fumbles nervously making sure her clothes are properly fitted and that her hair is neat.

Mary Elizabeth (cont'd)

It's not even ten yet and I'm already damp under the arms.

She sits down weakly on the chair and tries to calm herself.

Mary Elizabeth (cont'd)

I hope I don't faint in church.

Lily thunders back in.

Lily
Ruthie took her to the Tannenbaum's, Ma.

Mary Elizabeth
That's Mrs. Ruben to you.

Lily
Mrs. Ruben says you shouldn't have to worry about Theda what with Da's being drunk all week and all.

Mary Elizabeth
I could die of shame. Everybody's laughing at us.

Lily
I haven't seen anybody laughing, Ma. Everybody just feels sorry for us.

Mary Elizabeth
Well I don't want anybody's pity! We're not shanty Irish.

Lily
What's the difference, Ma?

Mary Elizabeth
Are you being insolent, Lily?

Lily
No, Ma, I was just wondering.

Mary Elizabeth
Don't ask so many questions. Um, was there anyone else out there, Lily?

Lily
Mr. Ruben.

Mary Elizabeth
Anyone else?

Lily
Mortie.

Mary Elizabeth
I mean other than the Rubens!

Lily
Mr. Sullivan was heading toward the church.

Mary Elizabeth
Oh, for Petie's sake—I mean was your father out there?

Lily

No, Ma. I haven't seen him since the last time he threw me out of O'Donoghue's.

Mary Elizabeth

Good. Wherever he is, he can just stay there. Can you tell this jacket is too tight, Lily?

Lily

Yes. You're busting out of it, Ma.

Mary Elizabeth

You see what you look like after having six babies!

Lily

You asked me, Ma!

Mary Elizabeth

Fetch our hats, Lily. I hope my buttons don't pop!

Lily gets hats and white gloves for each of them. They don their hats.

Mary Elizabeth (cont'd)

This heat. I hope Father Fitzgerald keeps the Mass short. Well, how do I look?

Lily

Good.

Mary Elizabeth

Really? I feel like a stuffed sausage.

Lily

Just keep sucking in.

Mary Elizabeth

Do I look dignified?

Lily

Um. Yes.

Mary Elizabeth

Confident?

Lily

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth

Straighten your hat, Lily. And keep your shoulders back. Head high. We don't want to look like shant—low class—Irish.

Lily
No, Ma.

Mary Elizabeth
No. (*She watches intently out window.*) Here comes Fiona.

Lily
Momma?

Mary Elizabeth
What?

Lily
Is Da really going to flatten Father Fitzgerald?

Mary Elizabeth
No, no, no, no, no. That's just talk. Everything is going to be fine, just fine. (*Still watching out window.*) There's O'Donoghue, going in. He's the one whose made out like a bandit in this whole thing—your father performing in his bar like an organ grinder's monkey.

Lily
What's "Pro-a-bish shun," Ma?

Mary Elizabeth
Why?

Lily
Da told Mr. O'Donoghue that it'll serve him right when "Pro-a-bish-shun" closes him down.

Mary Elizabeth
It'll serve your father right too. Maybe I can get a few bills paid off if he isn't always drinking away his paycheck.

Lily
But what is "Pro-a-bish-shun," Ma?

Mary Elizabeth
Nobody will be able to drink anymore.

Lily
No more water?

Mary Elizabeth
Booze, Lily—beer, whiskey—like your father slurps up!
(*She puts on her gloves.*) Put on your gloves.

Lily
Aw, Ma, it's so hot.

Mary Elizabeth
Put on your gloves. Fiona's here. *(Lily does as she's told.)*

Lily
Ma, they don't fit! I grew out them since the last time I wore them!

Mary Elizabeth
Grew.

Lily
I grew out them.

Mary Elizabeth
You grow out of everything—you think we're the Rockerfellers?

Lily
I couldn't help it, Ma!

Mary Elizabeth
Squeeze your hands into them. *(She tries.)*

Lily
I can't move my hands!

Mary Elizabeth
Take them off then.

Lily
Thanks, Ma. *(She looks for a place to put the gloves, then drops them in the bassinette.)*

Church bells PEEL again. FIONA enters, dressed for church, gloves included.

Fiona
Final bells. You ready?

Mary Elizabeth
Fiona, is he anywhere out there?

Fiona
I didn't see him, and I walked around the block twice.

Mary Elizabeth
Thank you.

Fiona
We gotta go. People are packing into the church. You'd think

it was Christmas. I told Pat to save us some seats up front.

Mary Elizabeth
Let's go, Lily.

Fiona
Chin up, Mary. Don't shake so. Lean on me.

Lily
Ma.

Mary Elizabeth
What? Don't dawdle, Lily.

Lily
The baby.

Mary Elizabeth
Oh, yes...ha...ha...yes...the baby.

Fiona
What's a baptism without a baby?

Mary Elizabeth
Indeed. We need the baby. *(Picks up baby)* All right then. Here we go.

Lily
Here we go.

Fiona
Here we go. *(No one moves.)*

Lily
You scared, Ma?

Mary Elizabeth
No, no, no. Now stop asking questions and let's go. You'll make us late. Go on now. *(Lily exits.)*

Mary Elizabeth and Fiona exchange nervous looks, take deep breathes, link their arms, and exit.

Act Two.

Scene Two. MICKY SPENCER plays "Faith of Our Fathers."

At Rise: *The interior of St. Eulalia's Church. Parishioners sing as they carry in benches, and a pulpit. The baby basket and table cloth from the previous scene are removed and the table is now a baptismal font. The chair becomes the priest's*

chair. Everyone stands, clearly nervous and throwing glances at the door to see if Micky Spencer is anywhere around.

Parishioners

(Singing) Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to you till death...

FATHER FITZGERALD, resplendently dressed as an actual priest, enters, followed by his acolyte—no other than TIMOTHY—who carries a huge candlestick. The candlestick is heavy, and Timothy cannot keep it straight up. He bumps into the priest with it from time to time.

FIONA and MARY ELIZABETH enter with the BABY and LILY. LEW and his son MORTIE slink in. nervously. Timothy recognizes them.

Timothy

Lew! You ain't Catholic!

Lew

(Whispering) Did you think I'd miss this?

Lily

(Half-whispering) Hi, Mortie.

Mortie

Hi, Lily!

Lew

Shush!

LULU, the midwife, enters wearing a hat pulled down to conceal her face, but Lily recognizes her too and waves from across the pews.

Lily

Hello, Miss Lulu! Ma, it's the midwife, Lulu.

They all finish the entrance hymn.

Fitzgerald

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Everyone makes the sign of the cross. Lew pretends to do it but gets it all wrong. Lew and Mortie sit down, then bounce back up realizing their error.

Fitzgerald

Good morning.

Parishioners

Good morning, Father.

Fitzgerald

Be seated. Will everybody scoot on over and let those people standing in the aisles sit down? If I didn't know better, I'd think it was Easter Sunday—what with all those faces I seldom see out there—and some faces I've never seen here before.

Lew and Mortie both slouch. Lulu pulls down the brim of her hat.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

Just make sure you all remember to put something in the collection plate when it comes around.

The slamming of a big church door is heard. Fitzgerald is noticeably rattled, and the parishioners are too. Fitzgerald speeds up the Mass.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

Let's hop to it...I mean...a reading from the...the...

Timothy

Ephesians. *(As he turns, he hits Fitzgerald with the candlestick.)*

Fitzgerald

The Ephesians, I know.

Lights down.

Lights up.

Fitzgerald is seated, and the parishioners are nervously passing the collection basket. Lew nervously empties his pockets into the basket in an attempt to be nervous. The big door slams again, and the priest jumps up. As no one can stay seated when a priest has leapt to his feet, the parishioners jump up too, and the baskets get thrown instead of passed.

Lights down.

Lights up.

Fitzgerald is rapidly giving a sermon to the seated parishioners.

Fitzgerald

...And...ah...you'll remember in today's Gospel, when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, "Is it a ghost?" *(The door bangs again.)* Somebody see why that door keeps banging. *(No one moves.)* Ah, let's see...and they cried out for fear...But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ah...ah... "It is I, do not be afraid." And...um...Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And Jesus said, um, "Come," and Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But, ah, the wind was blowing and the waves were crashing *(and the door bangs again)* and that door is banging! And, um, Peter became afraid... and began to sink, and he cried out to the Lord, "Save me!" *(Another*

slamming of the door) Somebody better stop banging that door...ah,
and so forth, and so forth. Amen.

Parishioners

Amen.

Lily

But, Ma, what happened to St. Peter?

Mary Elizabeth

Hush! (*Frantically looking for Micky*)

Lily

Did he drowned?

Mary Elizabeth

(*Unaware of what she's answering*) Yes, Lily, yes!

Lily

(*aghast*) St. Peter drowned!

Lights down.

Lights up.

Everyone is rushing to take communion, bumping into each other, tripping over those kneeling, still watching for Micky Spencer. Lew and Mortie are in line too. Lily grabs Mortie's arm.

Lily

You can't take communion, Mortie!

Mortie

Why?

Lily

You ain't old enough!

Timothy

And you ain't Catholic—sit down!

Lights down.

Lights up.

Everyone is sitting, fanning themselves from the heat, still watching the door.

Fitzgerald

(*His arms up in blessing the congregation*) And, lastly,
we beseech Thee, O, Lord, to listen to the prayers of Thy
Church and bring to naught all the assaults of her enemies.

Parishioners
Amen. *(They stand.)*

Fitzgerald
Go now the Mass is ended.

Parishioners
Thanks be to God.

The door slams again. Timothy nervously hits Fitzgerald with the candle again.

Fitzgerald
The closing hymn is...

Timothy
(Whispering) The bans, Father!

Fitzgerald
Ah, the bans! Let's see—Mary Ellen Doherty and John O'Malley are getting married.

Sullivan
And it's about time.

Fitzgerald
You shut up! Now, the closing hymn...

Timothy
Announcements, Father!

Fitzgerald
Oh, yes, there are some announcements—um...um...

Timothy
The second collection for the Archdiocese, Father.

Fitzgerald
Forget the second collection!

The parishioners are aghast. A collection for the Archdiocese is never forgotten!

Fitzgerald (cont'd)
Put your donation in the poor box...and you better do it...
I'll be watching! Now, the closing hymn...

Timothy
The pancake breakfast, Father.

Fitzgerald
Oh, for the love of Mike—the Knights of Columbus are having a pancake breakfast next Saturday. Go. Eat pancakes. Now,

are we done?

Timothy
Wednesday is a holy day of obligation.

Fitzgerald
Well I should hope everyone knows that! It's the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary!

Timothy
An extra Mass...

Fitzgerald
They know that! Get your butts here for Mass on Wednesday. Now, the closing hymn...*(lifting the Bible over his head and beginning down the aisle.)*

Mary Elizabeth
Ah, Father.

He stops abruptly, and Timothy crashes into his back.

Fitzgerald
Now what?

Mary Elizabeth
Will you be baptizing my baby, Father?

Fitzgerald
Oh...the baby, the baby. We're baptizing the baby. Why didn't you remember *that*, Timothy? *(He and Timothy stumble back to the altar.)* Will you bring her up here, Mary Elizabeth?

Mary Elizabeth and Lily come forward. The door slams again. In twisting his head to check the door, Timothy hits the priest with the candlestick again.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)
One more time with that candlestick, Timothy...*(Loudly)*
and one more time with that door....

Timothy
(Whispering) Sorry, Father.

Fitzgerald
Brothers and sisters in Christ, today we celebrate the entrance into our parish family of a new little soul, but anyone unable to stay for the baptism is free to go. *(No one moves.)* No? Then let's get on with it...I mean...will the godparents step forward?

Pat comes forward. Everyone laughs.

Timothy
Are you the godmother or the godfather?

Fitzgerald
Shut up, Timothy!

Mary Elizabeth
Miss Crawley has graciously agreed to act as a stand-in for my sister in St. Louie.

Sullivan
Micky scared off the rest of her family!

Fitzgerald
Somebody's going to get thrown out of here if he doesn't shut his trap! Patricia Crawley, are you prepared to act as a surrogate godmother to this little baby?

Pat
Well, if there were somebody else who would...

Mary Elizabeth
Paddy, you promised!

Pat
I mean, sure, sure, Father. I'm prepared.

Mary Elizabeth
And Charlie's prepared too. Charlie, come up here!

Charlie
What's that?

Edna
Get up there, you old coot! *(He goes reluctantly.)*

Fitzgerald
Charles Hanrahan, are you prepared to act...

Charlie
Keep your voice down please, Father! You'll wake the dead...

Sullivan
...or Micky Spencer!

Timothy
Is he here? *(He swings around and everyone at the baptismal font ducks so as not to get hit with the candle.)*

Fitzgerald
Get a grip, everybody! Pat, take the baby.

Pat takes the baby and holds her over the font. Fitzgerald puts a small cloth over the baby's head and pours a little water on the baby's forehead.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I baptize you, ah—what is the baby's name, Mary Elizabeth?

Mary Elizabeth

I don't know! Micky always names the babies.

Fitzgerald

The baby's got to have a name, Mary Elizabeth. You'll have to choose one. *(She is reluctant.)* Quickly.

Mary Elizabeth

Well, it has to be an actress, of course...

Fitzgerald

Of course.

Lily

Ma...

Mary Elizabeth

Hush, Lily.

Charlie

What about that sweet actress Lillian Gish?

Mary Elizabeth

We already have a Lily.

Charlie

Oh, yeah, but what about her sister, Dorothy Gish?

Mary Elizabeth

Micky says she's not as talented as Lillian.

Lily

Ma...

Fiona

Does it have to be an actress? How about a singer?

Fitzgerald

Who?

Fiona

Elsie Janis who sings all the war songs.

Lily

Maaa!

Mary Elizabeth

I don't think any singers, Fiona.

Fiona

What about that little girl actress that everyone is saying is so talented? Helen Hayes?

Mary Elizabeth

Helen Hayes—she was just performing at the Schubert last year... yes, Micky said she was very talented...

Fiona

And she's a good Irish Catholic.

Fitzgerald

That settles it! It's Helen Hayes!

Sullivan

Micky won't like a good Irish Catholic!

Fitzgerald

I'm warning somebody...shut your trap. Please make a decision, Mary Elizabeth.

Mary Elizabeth

Well...

Lily

No, Ma. Da told me what the baby's name is.

Mary Elizabeth

Why didn't you say so, Lily?

Lily

I was trying to!

Fitzgerald

(Urgently) What's the name, Lily?

Lily

Da says he's calling the baby "Fanny Brice—the star of the Zigfield Follies."

Sullivan

Now that's more like it—she's married to that gangster Nicky Arnstein!

Lew

Ah...I don't know if it matters...but she's a Jew.

Pat

But she can sure sing.

Fitzgerald

Good enough. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I baptize thee *Mary Fanny Brice*.

Fitzgerald

(More like a warning than a blessing) Go now, the Mass is ended!

All

Thanks be to God!

Fitzgerald

The processional is...ah...

Sullivan

“Onward Christian Soldiers!!!!”

Fitzgerald

That's not even a Catholic hymn...*(Everyone starts singing anyway)* Oh, what the heck. *(Sings)* “Onward Christian Soldiers, marching as to war...” *(Timothy hits the priest again.)* And will you watch that damned—blessed—candle!

The parishioners sing “Onward Christian Soldiers” in double time as they rush everything off stage, tripping over each other as they keep a lookout for Micky Spencer. A piano rendition begins of the same hymn.

Act Two.

Scene Three. *In front steps of St. Eulalia's Church*

Still singing the last of “Onward Christian Soldiers” the parishioners enter on stage in a mirror image of how they left in the previous scene. They are now outside the church. Fitzgerald and Timothy are first in the processional, then the christening party, then the rest of the parish. They all slam into each other like an auto pile-up on an icy highway when they see Micky Spencer standing there. His clothes are disheveled, so much so that his pants fly is open, and he is drunk as a skunk.

The piano music switches from “Onward Christian Soldiers” to a tune of dread.

Micky

So you defied me, eh, Fitzgerald?

Fitzgerald

Go on home, Michael, you're drunk.

Micky

I'm asking a simple question. Did you baptize that baby?
Yes or no?

Fitzgerald

Yes.

Micky

I knew it! You Judas, you Benedict Arnold, you...you...

Fitzgerald

You can't even talk, you're so drunk. Go on home, now.
Everyone, go on home. *(No one moves.)*

Micky

Put up your dukes, Fitzgerald.

Mary Elizabeth

Micky! A priest?

Fitzgerald

I have no fight with you, Micky. I just did my duty.

Micky

What'd you name this baby, huh?

Lily

I told them "Fanny Brice," Da. So you don't have to...

While speaking, Lily steps in front of Micky and tries to take his fisted hand.

Micky

You stay outa this...

Micky pushes Lily away and she falls backward on Fitzgerald. Both men try to prevent Lily's falling but somehow hit each other instead.

Timothy instinctively protects the priest by shoving Micky with the candlestick.

Micky grabs for something to hold onto as he is about to fall. What he grabs is Fitzgerald, and both men fall to the ground and start pummeling each other.

The other men immediately react in order to get their priest up off the ground, but—oddly—instead of fighting only with Micky Spencer, they start fighting with one another too. Suddenly, a donnybrook is in full swing.

Appropriate fighting piano music commences.

Fitzgerald, removes his priest's stole in record time and throws it to Edna.

Lily and Mortie join in the fight gleefully, and Lily grabs the leg of any man who looks like he is getting the best of Micky.

The women scream—except for Pat who gets her lick in on Micky and other men from time to time. Lulu hits the men with her umbrella as they swing by her.

At one point, Sullivan grabs the candlestick from Timothy and hits Micky with it. The two men struggle with it as if they are lumberjacks on logs.

Mary Elizabeth
Micky! Stop! Stop!

Lily
(Grabbing the legs of one of the men) Leave my daddy alone!

Lew and Micky come face-to-face at one point. Lew slugs Micky.

Micky
Lew! *(Feeling his jaw)* And you're not even Catholic!

Lew
I am today!

Lew happily throws a right at Micky, who happily hits him back.

Lulu, the midwife, hits Micky over the head with her umbrella.

Lulu
That's for calling me an old maid!

Micky
(Feeling his head) And it's not even raining!

Micky finds Fitzgerald again and attacks him.

Mary Elizabeth
Micky! Oh, the shame! How will I ever....

Lily drags herself on one man's leg and falls on the ground at her mother's feet.

Mary Elizabeth (cont'd)
Lily, get up! Oh, We're not shanty Irish...
Oh, no, oh, noooooo!

She stops suddenly, screams and looks down. Lily looks at her mother's shoes.

Lily
Ma, did you pee on yourself????

Lulu
Poor Mrs. Spencer soiled herself!

The donnybrook stops and everyone looks at Mary Elizabeth's face, then down at her shoes. In horror, Mary Elizabeth runs offstage, sobbing. Lily runs after her. Mortie runs after her.

Lily
Momma!

Mortie
Lily!

Edna
That woman's earned her crown in heaven.

Lulu
This is your fault, you poor excuse for a husband!

Micky
Shut up, ya old maid!

Fitzgerald
Now everyone just stop it. Collect yourselves. Look what we've done to that poor woman!

Pat
And her just having a baby a week ago!

Micky
(*To everybody*) Ah, forget it. It's not worth it.

Fitzgerald
Timothy, take that candlestick back into the church. It's not a weapon, you know. (*Timothy exits.*)

Micky
Now you say it's not a weapon? Sullivan knocked my brains loose with that candlestick.

Sullivan
Your brains got knocked loose long before now.

Fitzgerald
Zip up your fly, for godssake, Micky.

Micky
Ooops! Sorry, ladies, no intentional offense.

Fiona
The pleasure was all ours.

Charlie
I told you you need a husband!

Fiona

Maybe I do.

Fitzgerald

Go on home, Micky, before you make us all lose our immortal souls. You've shamed yourself before, but this time takes the cake. Get out of here, everybody. I mean it.

Sullivan

O'Donoghue, you going to open the barrelhouse soon?

O'Donoghue

Come on, boys, I'll open it right now.

Fiona

It's not noon yet.

O'Donoghue

I won't tell if you won't.

Sullivan

Come on, Paddy, I'll buy you a drink. You fought like a man today.

Pat

Why, thank you!

O'Donoghue

Coming, Fiona?

Fiona

After I go check on Mary Elizabeth.

Micky

Good. See how she's doing, Fiona. Show her a little kindness. Poor thing's been through quite an ordeal, what with peeing on the sidewalk. Well, she's had six babies, you know—ain't her fault. Someone ought to clean that up.

O'Donoghue

If you don't need us anymore, Father, we'll just be going.

O'Donoghue begins exiting with the parishioners following after him as if he were the Pied Piper.

Micky (cont'd)

And don't think I won't be in later to collect my percentage of the winnings, O'Donoghue.

O'Donoghue

And I'll be waiting for you, Micky. I knew you'd come to your senses!

No one is left on stage except Micky and Fitzgerald. The two men eye each other up for a minute, then Micky snickers. Fitzgerald snickers too. Micky puts his arm around Fitzgerald.

Micky

Ah, come on, Fitzgerald, I'll buy you a drink.

Fitzgerald

A drink? You'll buy me *several* drinks.

They stagger off, laughing and retelling the details of the grand fight they just had.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

I swear if you had slammed that door one more time....

Act Two.

Scene Four. *In O'Donoghue's Barrelhouse—now O'Donoghue's Coffeeshouse, several years later.*

At Rise: *MICKY SPENCER plays a soulful tune as the bar is reassembled. All the regulars are present except Fitzgerald. They are drinking from coffee cups.*

Micky

I can't go on, I just can't go on!

Edna

Play, Micky. You know it soothes your soul.

O'Donoghue

Aw, he's going to have another crying jag. Micky, you just gotta get over it.

Pat

Micky, darlin', you've got to give it up. You're going to have a stroke if you don't.

Micky

Why did this have to happen? Why?

Fitzgerald enters and hurries to Micky. Everyone seems more-than-usually happy to see him.

Everyone

Father! Hello! It's Father Fitzgerald!

O'Donoghue

Father, welcome back—it's been too long!

Fitzgerald

I came as soon as I heard. I know how devastated he must be.

Timothy

It's grand to see you, Father! How do you like your new parish?

Fitzgerald

Well, it's not St. Eulalia's, but the people are very nice at St. Catherine's too.

Timothy

Nicer than us?

Fitzgerald

Now I didn't say that.

Pat

We've missed you, Father.

Fitzgerald

I missed you too, Paddy.

Lew

I still don't know why they had to transfer you.

Fitzgerald

That's a priest's life—every eight years or so. But what about Micky? When I heard, I borrowed the pastor's car...

Timothy

The pastor's got a car?

Sullivan

'Course he does, that's a swank parish there in Oak Park.

Fitzgerald

I didn't ask to be transferred, boys, but I do admit it's refreshing to see a twenty-dollar bill in the collection plate from time to time.

Charlie

Twenty dollars? What fool gives twenty dollars?

Fitzgerald

I'd like to chat with you boys, but I really came to see how Micky's doing. Then I have to get back for five o'clock Mass. Micky, lad, how are you doing?

Micky
Fitzgerald...you came...

Fitzgerald
Of course. When I heard...

Micky
I feel empty inside, like a light's gone out.

Fitzgerald
I know, I know, Mick. O'Donoghue...

O'Donoghue
They're waiting for you right here, Father. (*Indicating coffee cups*)

Timothy
I'll get them.

Lew
I got them.

Fitzgerald
Thank you, boys. Just like old times. I don't know how you manage to keep in business, O'Donoghue.

O'Donoghue
What business? We're just a group of friends having some coffee together.

Fitzgerald
I guess Elliot Ness has bigger bootleggers to chase. (*Turning back to Micky*) How long has he been like this?

O'Donoghue
He heard it on the radio this morning, and came right here. Banged on my back door until I opened the place.

Timothy
Lucky you live over the bar.

O'Donoghue
It's a coffeehouse, Timothy. And watch that door. Make sure the curtains are closed all the way. Just in case Elliot Ness IS in the neighborhood.

Micky
Who cares when the great one is dead?

Charlie
He was so young. It should have been me.

Micky
Yes, it should have been you, Charlie—no offense.

Charlie
None taken.

Micky
It'll never be the same—never.

Fitzgerald
(To O'Donoghue) He's in bad shape.

Micky
I wanna die—I just wanna die too!

O'Donoghue
He's shattered.

RUDY, a little boy about seven years old, enters. He runs to Fitzgerald and hugs him.

Rudy
(As sweet as pie) Hello, Father Fitz!

Fitzgerald
Hello, Rudy. Look at the size of my godson, everybody!

Rudy
It's grand to see you too, Father. Will you please excuse me, Father? *(He goes to Micky and his attitude changes to that like Lily used to have.)* Da, Ma says enough is enough. Time to come home now.

Micky
Can't you see I'm in mourning?

Mary Elizabeth
Ma says forget about the dead and do right by the living!

Micky
Listen to that—I'm married to Mother Jones! Rudy, Rudolph Valentino is dead! He's dead! Don't you even care if your namesake is dead?

Rudy

I never even saw one of his movies, Da!

Micky

Get out of here, I tell you! You're a disgrace to your name!
Fitzgerald, loan me a fin and give it to the boy.

Fitzgerald

(Giving Rudy money) Here, Rudy, buy your brothers what they need.

Rudy

Thank you, Father. You'd better come home, Da! *(He exits)*

Sullivan

I wonder how many groceries you've bought for Micky's family over the years.

Fitzgerald

I probably could have bought a gold Cadillac—not that I begrudge it, Micky—it all evens out in the wash *(giggling in his tipsy way again)* And I did make a lot of money betting against you when all your daughters were being born. *(Even Micky laughs.)* Come on, Mick, I came all the way from Oak Park. Play me a tune for old time's sake.

Micky

Only for you, old buddy.

He begins to play something special as everyone listens in a freeze, except Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald

(To the audience) So now you know Micky Spencer—oh—say, did you notice when Micky's oldest boy came in? Well, besides my Godson Joseph Rudolph Valentino, there was Joseph Douglas Fairbanks and then Joseph Charlie Chaplin. *Charlie*, mind you. Micky wouldn't let me baptize him Charles. Had to be Charlie. But I made him put Joseph in front of each of their names. The point I'm making is that he got his sons—not just one but three. Six daughters, three sons. The undeserved luck of some people.

The lights dim, turning the stage surreal. Micky's music becomes low. Fitzgerald looks around the bar, fondly, and at his friends.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

That was a long time ago now. The Spencer kids have all long grown up and gone their separate ways—in fact, we

lost Rudy in the war. Well, we lost a lot of kids in the war. Sullivan lost two of his boys. But I remember everyone here at the barrelhouse, just like it was yesterday, just as he was, young—or almost young.

One-by-one, they come and say goodbye to the good Father.

Timothy
Good to see you again, Father, really good.

Fitzgerald
You too, Timmy, boy, you too.

Timothy freezes in a soft spotlight.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)
(To the Audience) Nice lad. His eyesight just kept getting worse and worse, then he had to start using a white cane. Broke his heart. Became sort of a recluse after that. *(Timothy exits.)*

Charlie
I'm not getting any younger, Father. Don't be such a stranger.

Fitzgerald
I won't, Charlie, I won't.

Charlie
What's that? My bad ear—

Fitzgerald
I said, I won't, Charlie, I won't. *(Charlie freezes.)*
(To Audience) He wasn't getting any younger, that was the truth. I officiated at his funeral. *(Charlie exits.)*

Edna
You'll come for dinner, Father? I've asked you a million times.

Fitzgerald
Ask me a million and one, Edna. *(Edna freezes.)*
(To Audience) And at her funeral, too. They're buried side-by-side at Queen of Heaven Cemetery. I'm sure they're still bickering with each other. *(Edna exits.)*

Sullivan
Borrow that car more often and come visit us.

Fitzgerald

I will, Sullivan, I will. *(Sullivan freezes.)*
(To Audience) A decent sort of man, even though he didn't get along with everyone...and then there was that scandal about his wife...well...who knows...she might have had her own good reasons for leaving him. *(Sullivan exits.)*

Lew

Come to one of Mortie's baseball games sometimes, Father. He's their pitcher, and he's good.

Fitzgerald

Thanks, Lew. Say hello to him for me, and Ruthie too. *(Lew freezes.) (To Audience.)* Good? Mortie was great—pitched in the major league—a couple of years even for the Cubs. Can't get much better than that. His folks never missed a game. *(Lew exits.)*

Lulu

Remember me, Father? Lulu, the midwife? I'm married now. Got children of my own. Everything's fine, just fine. I'm a member of your old parish. I married Tommy Gallagher from St. Eulalia's. Remember him?

Fitzgerald

Indeed I remember him, Lulu. Glad to hear things are going well with you. *(Lulu freezes.) (To Audience)* Going well, phooey. Tommy Gallagher was the bully of the neighborhood and poor Lulu walked around with more black eyes and broken arms than any one woman could come by naturally. *(Lulu exits.)*

Pat

Glad you came, Father. We've missed you terribly.

Fitzgerald

I know. I know. Take care of yourself, now.

Pat

(She hugs him.) God bless you, Father.

Fitzgerald

Thank you, Patsy. God bless you. *(Pat freezes.)*
(To Audience) Poor, misunderstood, Pat. Had her foot in both camps but never at home in either one of them. I didn't bury her—no priest did. I don't blame her for

what she did, and I know the good Lord welcomed her with open arms. The pain she had to be in to do that to herself. But you know the Church, they wouldn't bury her. *(Pat exits.)*

Fiona
It's a treat just to see you standing here, Father.

Fitzgerald
And how's married life treating you, Mrs. O'Donoghue?

Fiona
Very nicely, thank you.

O'Donoghue
Ah, she's a good wife. Don't know why I didn't marry her sooner.

Fitzgerald
I don't either.

O'Donoghue
Anytime you want a cup of coffee, Father, just come knock on my door upstairs. I'll unlock the place for you anytime. We miss you here, Father, we really do. *(O'Donoghue and Fiona freeze.)*

Fitzgerald
I miss you dearies, too, more than you know. *(To Audience)* He ran that coffee shop right up until they repealed Prohibition, and then he ripped the sign "coffee" off "barrel" and it was the barrelhouse again. I don't know how he got away with it all those years. *(The O'Donoghues exit.)*

They are all gone except for Micky, who continues a soft tune. Mary Elizabeth enters.

Mary Elizabeth
Time to come home now, Micky.

Micky
In a little while, Mary, just a little while.

Mary Elizabeth begins to leave. Fitzgerald goes and speaks to her.

Fitzgerald
You spent far too many years of your life trying to talk

your husband into coming home. I hope you got your crown in Heaven.

Mary Elizabeth

You didn't help things, you know, drinking with him and urging him on to perform like a circus elephant.

Fitzgerald

Now there you got it wrong, Mary Elizabeth. There was nothing circus-elephant-like about Micky. He was a class act.

Mary Elizabeth

Uh huh. Well. Maybe we saw things differently, but I thank you anyway, Father, for the lovely eulogy you gave at my funeral.

Fitzgerald

You died too young.

Mary Elizabeth

(Jokingly) It was the only way I could get any rest! *(She exits.)*

Fitzgerald

(To Audience) And then there was just Micky. You know how they say the good die young? Well, Micky lived to be ninety-four. I didn't get back to the old neighborhood as often as I liked. Well, when they transfer you—things change. But Micky and I got together from time to time—whenever a Democrat got elected or a war ended—when they repealed Prohibition—whew! Oh, yes, and when John Ford won the Academy Award for *The Quiet Man*.

Micky raises a glass to that.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

I know you'd be glad to hear that Micky became a reformed man with the birth of his sons—that he gave up the drink and started attending Mass regularly. You'd be glad to hear that but it didn't happen so I can't say it did. Sons or no sons, Micky never did start going to church again. Always found an excuse. Spent most of his life in his cup—well, to be truthful, so did I—but that's another story.

He has a laughing spell, much like the one he had at the top of the play, and he takes a moment to compose himself and go on.

Fitzgerald (cont'd)

Who says booze will kill you? Just made Micky more ornery as the years went by, so ornery that his kids, when they were all grown, couldn't stand to be around him and moved away left and right—all except one. He went and lived with her and she took wonderful care of him right up until the day he died. She was his favorite, you know, always was. Not the boys. Nope. *She* was his favorite. And you know who that was, don't you? Uh huh. Not his oldest girl, Lily. His youngest girl. The one he almost threw out the window that summer—his sixth daughter—Mary Fanny Brice. Well, like I've said on more than one occasion, the ways of the Lord are strange indeed, aren't they?

Micky picks up speed on the piano and finishes in a flourish. Micky joins Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald

You're a gift, Micky!

Micky

Well, some people would agree with you, and some people would not. But as for me, playing the piano makes me very thirsty. Come on, old buddy, old pal, I'll buy you a drink.

Fitzgerald

A drink? You'll buy me *several* drinks.

Piano music begins. They exit, arms around each other, laughing and reminiscing about the grand old times they had together over the years.

Piano music ends.

Curtain.