

SCENE 2

THE BRADLEY HOME

(Home is decorated for Christmas...there is a dining table, chairs, and poinsettia centerpiece...GRACE is either setting the table with TV dinners or she runs in as the doorbell rings)

[SFX: doorbell ringing and ringing and ringing]

BOB

(offstage)

Grace! Grace!

GRACE

Bob! Stop ringing the doorbell. People will think I locked you out.

BOB

(offstage)

I need your help. I can't open the door.

(GRACE opens door offstage or, depending on the set, onstage)

GRACE

Come inside.

(BOB enters, carrying a briefcase, a bag of ice cream, and a newspaper under his arm)

BOB

I tried to call but you weren't home. I bought dessert.

GRACE

Ice cream! You're a saint.

(kisses him...takes ice cream to kitchen)

GRACE

We're having TV dinners.

BOB

Again?

GRACE

You won't believe what happened today.

(CHARLIE enters)

CHARLIE

Claude Herdman brought his cat to show-and-tell.

For perusal purposes only.

(Setting table, GRACE hands silverware or napkins or plates to CHARLIE to help)

GRACE

It was a disaster.

CHARLIE

You should have seen it, Dad. The Herdman's cat shot out of his box and clawed four big long scratches all the way down the blackboard.

BOB

Wow.

CHARLIE

Then it started scratching kids, and shedding fur, and scattering books and papers everywhere.

BETH

(entering)

All the kids were running up and down the halls screaming.

GRACE

(handing BETH napkins or glasses for the table)

Here, Beth. Put this on the table.

CHARLIE

Then Miss Brandell pulled a coat over her head, grabbed a broom and started swinging and yelling, "Here, kitty-kitty."

BOB

Wish I'd seen that!

GRACE

Unfortunately, she broke the aquarium full of sixty goldfish and twenty gallons of water.

(GRACE either exits to get TV dinners or gets them from the sideboard)

CHARLIE

It was like a tidal wave.

BETH

The Herdman's cat gobbled up the goldfish, glass and all.

CHARLIE

Then it swallowed Ramona Gaffey's pet hamster —

For perusal purposes only.

BETH & CHARLIE

—whole!

BOB

What did Ramona do?

BETH

She cried so much they had to send her home.

BOB

What happened to the Herdman kid?

CHARLIE

Nothing. Nothing ever happens to them.

BOB

I've seen that cat before. Mrs. Herdman walks it on a chain down by the railroad tracks. It's missing an eye and has that short leg and broken tail.

GRACE

The postman thinks it's a bobcat.

(GRACE puts TV dinners down during the next few lines)

BOB

I don't think you can tame a bobcat.

CHARLIE

The Herdmans don't want to tame it. They just want to make it the meanest cat on the planet.

GRACE

Well, I was called in to administer first aid. Then the whole class, including Miss Brandell, was given recess for the rest of the day.

BOB

That's much more exciting than selling insurance.

(CHARLIE and BETH rip foil off their dinner trays)

CHARLIE

TV dinners! All right!

(CHARLIE checks out BETH's and sticks his fork in her dessert)

BETH

Charlie, stop! Mom!