

scarf and bunches it up to form a pillow. She speaks to her stomach.)

It's funny — It's so cold you can really see your breath, but I don't feel cold at all ... just very sleepy. We're gonna curl up together, all snug and warm, and ... just ... fall ...

(Rebecca is out cold on the bench. In a dim light, a shadow is cast across the sleeping sister on the bench, and then we can make out the grown Stephen, standing, watching. Suddenly there is an eerie sound: an amplified breath prolonged, plaintive, that ends as a moan of winter wind. Rebecca's eyes, startled, open with a start. She sits up quickly.)

Stephen?!

(Only the wind answers her back. She stands, shivering like a sick dog, and runs. Stops. Wraps her coat tightly around her. Wide awake now:)

I have to find the car.

(And then she turns, quickens her steps, and leaves to look for shelter, for warmth, for a bed. Stephen watches her go. Beat.)

STEPHEN.

And in the car as our father drew back his right hand:

WOMAN.

Well, what a lovely Christmas you've given me.

(The man repeats his action, draws back his hand to strike his wife.)

CLAIRE.

If I had let Stephen wear it. If I hadn't yanked it away. If I had tried to fix it myself. If I'd made it into a joke. If I hadn't run to Daddy —

MAN.

Jesus — Christ!

CLAIRE.

"If, If, If, If, If ... "

(The woodblocks/percussion beat again as the puppeteer holding Claire rises; she strips off the puppet and rises from the car. She walks to an apartment door upstage. It is twenty-four years in the future. She presses an intercom buzzer and speaks into a speaker.)

Naomi? Naomi. Naomi. Naomi. Come on, answer. I saw you go in. Naomi. Naomi.

Naomi? Naomi? I'm going to play "Jingle Bells" on the buzzer until you let me in —

"Dashing through the snow; in a one-horse open sleigh — o'er the fields we go — laughing all the way — Ha! Ha! Ha!"

(Suddenly the gaiety is gone; Claire slumps for a moment. Then she steps out onto the street.)

They won't answer the intercom. That's not a good sign. I know

they're in there; I tracked Naomi all the way from the apartment and I saw her go in. Ostensibly to study with Betty for tort class.

She's been studying a lot, lately.

As my luck spirals, I keep looking more and more for signs. As harbingers of fate. On the sidewalk the entire way here I didn't step on a single crack. So, tonight is the night. The Feast of Stephen. Tonight, I'm looking for the sign — one way or the other — for what the future holds. If Naomi looks out the window — if she sees me down here on the sidewalk — if she stops what she's doing — If, if, if!

(Lights rise in the second-floor window.)

Ah, the floor show is about to begin. Anyone parked in a dark car or standing on the sidewalk looking up at the second-floor window can see it. Second floor, third window from the left.

(Two naked lesbian law student puppets, one short, one tall, appear, entwined.)

Naked lesbian law students. They'll make out like this for a long time, until Betty's law school work ethic pops up, stronger than their libidos: time to crack the books for tort class.

Naomi, I'm down here. I'm watching. Look down here, I'm down here.

(The lesbian law student puppets, still entwined, suddenly both read law books with a free hand while still necking.)

Once upon a time, I went through my own golden girl stage. I determined a long time ago that I would never again be a golden girl, but oh I could bed them. I still can't believe that I talked these girls into sleeping with me: tall, blue-eyed, blonde — the difference in height just spurred me on: as they stretched themselves down on the bed, they were a large canvas, and I a young Jackson Pollack, ready to fill every inch.

Naomi, Naomi, down here — I'm down here.

(The puppets make out more vigorously; in response:)

Okay; tonight will be the night that Naomi stops; she thinks for a moment, she remembers me and —

(Claire turns her attention to the window for a moment. The smaller puppet works her way down Betty's body.)

And she comes back to me ... Naomi ... For God's sake, stop ...
(Another puppet throe of love. The two puppets, entwined, tumble to the floor and out of sight. Suddenly, the light in the second floor, third window to the left, snaps off.)

Oh — oh that's not a good sign. I fear my Naomi has found her

golden girl.

(Beat.)

I am so very tired. I still wake on cue every four hours without an alarm; time to give Stephen his AZT. It would be about that time now.

And near the end with Stephen ... Fantastic pale lavenders and dark maroons ravaged the canvas of his skin until only his hands remained unchanged ... a young boy's hands ...

(The wind comes up.)

My hands are cold.

(Claire draws out mittens without fingertips and puts them on; she hesitates.)

There should be a word for me. "Cuck-old." Such an ugly sounding word. There should be a word for a female of the species.

I always imagined cuckolds murderous in a red hot rage, but it doesn't feel like that at all. It feels like inside it's snowing ...

(Claire sits there for a long moment. She reaches under her coat and brings out a revolver. Claire checks the ammunition and snaps the barrel closed.)

If she'd answered the door. If she'd looked down my way ... If I hadn't lost Naomi. If I'd kept Stephen alive. If If If ...

(The adult actor playing Stephen emerges into the shadows behind Claire and watches. Claire moves the gun up to her mouth, and closes her eyes. As she opens her mouth, the adult Stephen opens his mouth as well and blows his breath: we hear the spooky, amplified sound of breath — of a human sigh — that changes into the howl of winter wind. Claire opens her eyes. She lowers her gun. She listens, intently, to the wind. And then she rises, walking right by Stephen. She does not see him, and he watches her go.)

STEPHEN.

And as the air was cut by our father's hand.

WOMAN.

— Lovely Christmas —

MAN.

— Jesus —

REBECCA.

I will never have children!

CLAIRE.

— If If If If If!

STEPHEN.

— I will never strike a woman like that — !