

Scene 5

Frank's kitchen, Christmas Eve. The scene opens in darkness. There is a woman's scream, instantly suppressed. Dim figures are revealed in the darkness; Hilda standing, and Frank lying on the bench. Their movements cast gigantic shadows on the wall.

Frank

Startled
What is it, Hil?

Hilda

Tonelessly
Baby's dead.

Frank

In terror
No.
He leaps up. He listens for its breathing.
I'll get someone—I'll get the doctor.

Hilda

What's the use of the doctor? He won't come now.

Frank

He will!

Hilda

You can't get him in time.

Frank

I'll go. I'll run.

Hilda

How can you run two miles through all this snow?
You haven't even got shoes.

Frank

I must go.

Hilda

With finality

Don't go. I know she's dead.

She faces him fiercely.

What do we mean bringin' a baby into the world when we can't even take care of it? What did we get married for? Folks like us haven't got no right to get married and have kids.

Frank sits down at the table and sobs. Hilda looks at him and laughs hysterically. Frank, goaded almost to madness, springs to his feet.

Frank

Wardell killed her. She's never been right since he stopped the milk on her. The dirty, lousy Red! He did it! He killed her!

Hilda

Don't be a fool. He gave us the milk as long as his cow lived. And his wife bought milk for her as long as the money held out. She got us milk as long as there was any to get. Now there ain't none. I been to the Red Cross all day long. They say maybe tomorrow. Tomorrow!

Frank

Then Purcell killed her—that's it. He moved all his cows where he could get more money for the milk. He killed her! Somebody killed her—God curse 'em!

Hilda

Don't be a fool. I killed her myself. Do you think I wanted to see her tortured to death by inches? I killed her—with the blanket.

Frank shudders away from her.

Black Out