

[SHELDON exits with a sigh. HENRY enters carrying a lunch box. WILETTA turns; she looks so distressed.]

HENRY: They've all flown the coop?

WILETTA: Yes.

HENRY: What's the matter? Somebody hurt your feelin's?

WILETTA: Yes.

HENRY: Don't fret, it's too nice a day. I believe in treatin' folks right. When you're just about through with this life, that's the time when you know how to live. Seems like yesterday I was forty years old and the day before that I wasn't but nineteen . . . Think of it.

WILETTA: I don't like to think . . . makes me fightin' mad.

HENRY [*giving vent to his pent-up feelings*]: Don't I know it? When he yelled about jelly doughnuts, I started to land one on him! Oh, I almost did it!

WILETTA: I know it!

HENRY: But . . . "Hold your temper!" I says. I have a most ferocious temper.

WILETTA: Me too. I take and take, then watch out!

HENRY: Have to hold my temper, I don't want to kill the man.

WILETTA: Yeah, makes you feel like fightin'.

HENRY [*joining in the spirit of the discussion*]: Sure I'm a fighter and I come from a fightin' people.

WILETTA: You from Ireland?

HENRY: A fightin' people! Didn't we fight for the home rule?

WILETTA: Uh-huh, now you see there.

[WILETTA doesn't worry about making sense out of HENRY's speech on Ireland; it's the feeling behind it that counts.]

HENRY: O, a history of great men, fightin' men!

WILETTA [*rallying to the call, she answers as though sitting on an amen bench at a revival meeting*]: Yes, carry on.

HENRY: Ah, yes, we was fightin' for the home rule! Ah, there was some great men!

WILETTA: I know it.

HENRY: There was Parnell! Charles Stewart Parnell!

WILETTA: All right!

HENRY: A figure of a man! The highest! Fightin' hard for the home rule!
A parliamentarian! And they clapped him in the blasted jailhouse for
six months!

WILETTA: Yes, my Lord!

HENRY: And Gladstone introduced the bill . . . and later on you had
Dillon and John Redmond . . . and then when the home rule was
almost put through, what did you think happened? World War One!
That killed the whole business!

WILETTA [*very indignant*]: Oh, if it ain't one thing, it's another!

HENRY: I'm descended from a great line! And then the likes of him
with his jelly doughnuts! Jelly doughnuts, indeed, is it? What does he
know? Trampin' upon a man's dignity! Me father was the greatest,

most dignified man you've ever seen . . . and he played vaudeville! Oh,
the bearin' of him! [*Angrily demonstrating his father's dignity*] Doin' the
little soft-shoe step . . . and it's take your hat off to the ladies . . . and
step along there . . .

WILETTA: Henry, I want to be an actress, I've always wanted to be an
actress and they ain't gonna do me the way they did the home rule! I
want to be an actress 'cause one day you're nineteen and then forty and
so on . . . I want to be an actress! Henry, they stone us when we try to
go to school, the world's crazy.

HENRY: It's a shame, a shame . . .

WILETTA: Where the hell do I come in? Every damn body pushin' me
off the face of the earth! I want to be an actress . . . hell, I'm gonna be
one, you hear me?

[*She pounds the table.*]

HENRY: Sure, and why not, I'd like to know!

WILETTA [*quietly*]: Yes, dammit . . . and why not? Why in the hell not?

[*Blues record in; woman singer.*]