

*In this excerpt from Act I, Scene 3, it is 1966. 19 year old Catherine has returned home for Christmas. She has been hiding a pregnancy from everyone but her younger sister Emily, who has just left the room.*

CATHERINE

She's getting really fresh, Mama. You ought to do something.

GRACE

I try, Catherine, I try. She'll get sorted out, though. Sooner or later we all do. I was a lot like her. So was Molly, actually. A mind of her own. That's one thing all my children have going for them.

CATHERINE

But Molly's not yours.

GRACE

She is though. Catherine, why do you always bring that up? She's been my daughter since she was twelve. You've been my daughter your whole life. It's not a contest. I love you both, and Jason and Emily as well.

CATHERINE

Yeah.

GRACE

It's just different, that's all.

CATHERINE

That's cool. (gets up, starts putting groceries away)

GRACE

Oh, don't get all moody on me.

CATHERINE

I'm not. You said you needed help.

GRACE

Yes, I did. Well...thank you. (Pause) So have you given much thought to college applications?

CATHERINE

Not really.

GRACE

Why not?

CATHERINE

I just finished high school, Mama. I'm not in much of a rush to get back to that, if you want to know the truth.

GRACE

Get back to what? (Pause) Well then, what do you propose to do with your life?

CATHERINE

I don't know, Mama! I guess I need time to figure that out. What's the rush, anyway? Why do I have to decide now? All I want to do for now is paint, and do some modeling, and have fun. What's wrong with that?

GRACE

I'll tell you what's wrong with that. You have to have some goals for your life. You're turning into one of those beatniks.

(CATHERINE cracks up)

What's so amusing?

CATHERINE

That word! Beatniks! Mama, this is 1966, not 1956! Nobody says that any more! (Laughing) Beatniks!

GRACE

Listen, Catherine. I don't care what you call it. You're nineteen years old, it's time you made some decisions. Your father and I will help you if you go back to school. Otherwise, you'd better think about getting a job.

CATHERINE

That's not fair! Mama, why do I have to do what you want me to do? I just need time to think about it, that's all. Don't worry, Emily will be your college kid. She's a good girl. Pick on her for a change.

GRACE

I'm not picking on you! (Calmer) I'm just concerned, that's all.

CATHERINE

Well, don't be! Mama, I just need some more time. Honest. Just give me till June. You promised me a year. Why are you changing the rules now?

GRACE

All right, you have a point. We did say that, didn't we?

CATHERINE

Yeah, you did.

GRACE

Catherine?

CATHERINE

Yeah.

GRACE

Look at me.

CATHERINE

What for?

GRACE

Are you putting on weight?

CATHERINE

I guess a little.

GRACE

I can't put my finger on it. You almost...no, it can't be.

CATHERINE

What can't be?

GRACE

You almost look like you're pregnant. (Laughs, then falls silent) Catherine.

CATHERINE

(Squares her shoulders, turns to face her mother)

I am.

EMILY (bursting in)

Mom! I put the cider in the fridge in the garage! Was that where you wanted it? (Long pause) Mama? (Pause) What's up?

GRACE

(keeping her eyes on CATHERINE)

Emily, would you please leave us alone for a while?

EMILY

Oh, shit, you told her, didn't you?

GRACE

You knew about this?

CATHERINE

I didn't have to. She guessed.

GRACE

Wait a minute! Back up. (To EMILY) How on earth could you keep this a secret from me?

EMILY

I promised.

GRACE

This isn't a game.

CATHERINE

She knows that!

GRACE

Do you?

CATHERINE

Look, I made her promise not to tell. I wanted to break it to everyone at dinner.

GRACE

Oh, Lord. (Sits.) I feel...strange.

CATHERINE

What's wrong, Mama?

GRACE

What's wrong? What's wrong! (Deep breath) How far along are you?

CATHERINE

Twenty-one weeks.

EMILY

Five months. Why not just say it?

CATHERINE

You don't know everything. You're supposed to go by weeks, not months. The doctor told me.

GRACE

When did this happen? I mean...how long have you known about it?

CATHERINE

I figured it out after about five weeks. It was when Emily was visiting me, just before school started. She overheard me talking to one of my friends.

GRACE

What friends? Whose baby is it?

CATHERINE (taking a deep breath herself)

I won't say.

GRACE

What? Catherine!...

CATHERINE

No. I'm not saying. It doesn't matter. He's not in the picture.

GRACE

It's not a picture, Catherine. This is a living creature. The father needs to be told.

CATHERINE

He knows. He'd just rather not be involved. This is my decision too.

GRACE

Decisions! You have no decisions. You have no choices left! It's too late to do anything about this now. Why did you wait so long? Why didn't you come to us sooner?

CATHERINE

I guess because I knew you'd act like this.

GRACE

Like what? Catherine, be reasonable. You can't have a baby.

CATHERINE

But I am having one. Around May 10th, in fact. And you know what, Mama? I'm glad.

GRACE

You're glad. Well, I'm so happy for you! What about your future? How are you going to manage?

EMILY

We'll help, won't we, Mama?

GRACE

Emily, hush.

EMILY

No, I won't hush! This is going to be your first grandchild with Daddy. Doesn't that mean anything?

GRACE

That's beside the point.

CATHERINE

How can my child be beside the point, Mama? Molly's not even yours, and you love her kids.

GRACE

First of all - that is not the same thing at all. Molly has a husband to help her with the girls, she has a home, Hal has a good job. How are you going to take care of a baby?

CATHERINE

I'll manage!

GRACE

You've got to do better than that! Catherine, you have no idea what you're saying.

CATHERINE

What are *you* saying, Mama?

GRACE (backing down)

I don't know! I can't think about this now. It's simply absurd! When your father gets home, we're going to sit down and discuss it. Just the *three* of us, Emily!

CATHERINE

There's nothing really to discuss. I'm going to have this baby.

GRACE

Don't start, Catherine. We have to talk about the future. What to do afterwards. (Deep breath) I can't think straight. Lord, how am I going to get dinner ready?

EMILY

Who gives a damn about dinner?

GRACE

I do! Okay. It's Thursday night. We're going to have a nice quiet meal for a change. The Wards are coming over for cards later. Tomorrow your father will be home. And on Monday, after everyone's left, Joseph and you and I are going to sit down and have a long talk.

CATHERINE

Sure. We can talk about it all you want. I've made my decision.

GRACE

Nobody's making any decisions right now. Not me, not you. This is too emotional.

CATHERINE

I'm not emotional, Mama. I'm perfectly calm. I've had a long time to think about this.

GRACE

Fine, now I'm entitled to the same courtesy. I don't want either of you to say a word about this tonight. In fact, nobody is to know until after Christmas. Is that clear?

EMILY

Sure, but why not?

GRACE

Because we're going to have a nice, family holiday. I don't want anything to ruin it.

CATHERINE (mutters)

What bullshit.

GRACE

Catherine? Promise me. No big scenes. (Pause) Don't you think your father deserves to be told next?

CATHERINE

Sure, Mama.

GRACE

Nobody says a word till Monday. Agreed? Emily?

EMILY

I promise.

CATHERINE

Okay. No big scenes.

GRACE

Fine. Who wants to help me with the pies?

EMILY

I don't really feel like it.

CATHERINE

I think I'll go lie down for a while.

GRACE

Catherine? Have you been taking care of yourself?

CATHERINE

Sure. I'm fine, Mama. Just tired, that's all.

GRACE

Eating all right?

CATHERINE

Yes, I said!

EMILY

You want help with your bags?

CATHERINE

Sure. Thanks.

(They grab the bags and exit. GRACE pours herself a drink, sits at the table, and lights a cigarette. MOLLY enters from outside.)

MOLLY

Whew, it's really nippy out there! (Shrugs out of her coat)

GRACE

Here, sit down. I'll take that. (hangs up MOLLY's coat. MOLLY is hugely pregnant.) Enjoy your walk?

MOLLY

It was wonderful! I'd forgotten how beautiful the trees look when they get covered in snow. In Washington, everything just melts right away. It's been warm so far this winter.

GRACE

Not up here.

MOLLY

I can see that! Abby and Annie...?

GRACE

Last time I checked, they were fast asleep.

MOLLY

Wonderful. (Grimaces) Oh, boy. Sometimes I think this one is twins again. He's so strong. Cath get in all right?

GRACE

I suppose.

MOLLY

Martinis in the afternoon? This looks serious.

GRACE

My funny daughter. (Pause) I was just trying to relax a little.

MOLLY

Grace? Is something wrong?

GRACE

Not a thing. I'm just preoccupied. (Forcing a smile) I've got so much to do.

MOLLY

I could help if you'd let me.

GRACE

No, you won't. One of the main reasons for having you all up here this year is so you wouldn't have to lift a finger. And I meant that. Besides, Emily's a great help to me.

MOLLY

Sure, when she thinks about it. And Cath-... (Really looking at her) You look kind of drawn out. Are you getting enough sleep?

GRACE

I should be asking you that. (Gets up) Would you like some hot chocolate?

MOLLY

I'd love some! I miss your hot chocolate more than just about anything else on the farm.

GRACE

Flattery will get you everywhere. (Gets down two mugs) I think I'll join you.

MOLLY

Are you *sure* you're feeling all right?

GRACE

Molly, let it go. I'm fine.

MOLLY

Okay, okay. At least let me make the sweet potatoes?

GRACE

Nope. You can help next year.

MOLLY

With *three* kids hanging on me? It'll be a miracle if I get anything done.

GRACE

You love it though.

MOLLY

This one's going to be a boy. I just know it.

(unable to take any more, GRACE begins to cry.)

Grace? What is it? (gets up and embraces GRACE) I *knew* something was wrong.

GRACE

No...

(GRACE tries to compose herself. CATHERINE bursts in.)

CATHERINE

I'm going to the store. You need anything else?

GRACE

Oh...no, I don't think so. I thought you were tired.

MOLLY

Why don't you slow down for a second? Can't you see she's upset?

CATHERINE

Mind your own damn business, Molly! (To GRACE) I see you couldn't keep quiet for ten minutes.

MOLLY

Keep quiet about what?

GRACE

Catherine, calm down.

CATHERINE

No, I won't calm down! God, you're such a hypocrite!

GRACE

Catherine...

CATHERINE

You said we'd keep this quiet till after Christmas! But the minute I get out of the room, you blab to her! Thanks a lot, Mom.

MOLLY

What are you talking about?

CATHERINE

Come off it, Molly. Don't pretend she didn't tell you I'm pregnant!

MOLLY (stunned)

You're *what*?

CATHERINE

Some secret, Mom. Thanks a lot.

GRACE

Actually, I didn't tell her.

CATHERINE

Sure. Then what was all that about when I came in? You crying, your precious Molly hugging you...

GRACE

I needed a little comfort, that's all! But I didn't tell her why I was upset, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Yeah, right.

MOLLY

She's telling the truth. You just told me yourself.

(Awkward silence)

CATHERINE

Oh, man...I gotta get out of here for a while. Where's the car keys?

GRACE

Where *are* the car keys?

(CATHERINE just glares at her)

Here. (Hands them to her)

CATHERINE

Do you have a couple of bucks?

(GRACE hands her some money)

Thanks. See ya. (grabs her coat and slams out)

GRACE (trying to joke)

Car keys, money...if I closed my eyes and her voice was a little lower, I'd think Jason was here.

MOLLY

Grace...I'm sorry.

GRACE

You didn't do anything wrong, honey. (Getting tearful again) I don't know what to do. How did this happen? I'm scared for her, Molly. I'm so scared.

EMILY

Cath! Wait for me! (EMILY bursts in, runs to kitchen door, and stands looking out)

MOLLY

She's going to be all right, Mom. Catherine's a survivor. Like you were.

GRACE

I wish I felt that way.

EMILY

She never waits for me! (Suddenly starts crying) She's always running on ahead.

GRACE

It's okay, honey. It's okay. Shh. She just needs some time to herself, that's all. Shh. Everything's going to be fine.

(GRACE hugs EMILY tight, nearly crying herself. MOLLY looks on.)

LIGHTS FADE

END SCENE THREE