

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. Yes.

YOUNG SHIRLEY. I promise. Thank you, Papa, thank you! *(She hugs him.)*

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. On one condition: Your mother mustn't know. Do you understand that?

YOUNG SHIRLEY. Yes, Papa.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. God help us both if she finds out. *Oy* *(Transition.)*

SHIRLEY. Every day for the next two weeks, we work on the play ... *(School auditorium. Rehearsal.)*

STUDENTS. *(Sing.)*

WESTWARD LEADING, STILL PROCEEDING,
GUIDE US TO THY PERFECT LIGHT.

SHIRLEY. And as soon as rehearsal is over ...

MR. HILTON. All right, boys and girls, you're dismissed! *(Above the hubbub.)* And learn those lines! *(Rehearsal over, the kids disperse.)*

YOUNG SHIRLEY. Good night, Mr. Hilton, Miss Glacé.

MR. HILTON. Good night, Shirley.

MISS GLACÉ. *Bonsoir.*

EVIE. Want to come to my house?

YOUNG SHIRLEY. Can't, I gotta run. *(She grabs her things and runs out.)*

SHIRLEY. And I do — all the way home — and walk through the door just in time for dinner. *(She runs upstairs, into the apartment.)*

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Shirley? — There you are.

YOUNG SHIRLEY. *(Breathlessly.)* Hi, Mama, Papa. Is there anything I can do to help?

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Thank you for asking. As a matter of fact there is. You can set the table. *(Young Shirley and her father exchange conspiratorial looks as she sets the table.)*

SHIRLEY. It looks like I'm going to get away with my secret. I'm almost home-free. That is, until the very last rehearsal. Which also happens to be the first night of Chanukah. *(Transition. Rehearsal. An uncharacteristically frazzled Miss Glacé conducts a lackluster rendition of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." The kids are restless. Ira and Jackie are being mischievous and disruptive.)*

MISS GLACÉ. All right, that's enough! Ira Pushkov! Stand in the corner!

IRA. What do you want from me? He started!

JACKIE. I did not! You did!

Mr Hilton

MISS GLACÉ. I don't care who started! Jackie Sauerfeld, you, too!

JACKIE. What did I do?!

MISS GLACÉ. Into the corner!

JACKIE. The same corner?

MISS GLACÉ. No! You, *droite*. Ira, *gauche*. Now! *(Mr. Hilton enters during the above.)*

MR. HILTON. What is going on here?! Now, look, I know you're all tired. You all have worked incredibly hard to put on this show. But so has Miss Glacé. This *extraordinary* woman has devoted so much of her time and energy to you boys and girls, way beyond the call of duty. And I want you to show her the respect she deserves! Do you think you can do that? Do you?

CHILDREN. Yes, Mls-ter Hil-ton.

MR. HILTON. We're in the final stretch. Tomorrow's our big show. I need you to hold it together just a little while longer. Ira? Jackie? Do you think you can behave?

IRA. *(Dully.)* Yes, Mr. Hilton.

JACKIE. Yes, Mr. Hilton.

MR. HILTON. All right, then, you may rejoin the others. Miss Glacé...?

MISS GLACÉ. *Merci.* From the top, please. *(They resume rehearsing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." Transition. The Abramowitz apartment. Mr. Abramowitz anxiously glances at his pocketwatch and looks out the window. His wife hums while polishing the menorah.)*

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Shirley! Come set the table! *(To her husband.)* The last couple of weeks, all she does is shut herself away in her room and do homework. What kind of a life is that for a girl? *(Calls.)* Shirley? Enough with the homework already. We gotta get ready for Chanukah. *(She looks in her room.)* Shirley...? *(To her husband.)* She's not here. I have a funny feeling, Misha. Something is wrong. Go look for her.

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. I don't have to look for her.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. What do you mean?

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. I don't have to look for her because I know where I'd find her.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. What are you talking about, Misha, where would you find her? *(Pause.)*

MR. ABRAMOWITZ. At school.

MRS. ABRAMOWITZ. Almost sundown and she's still at school? What would she still be doing at school?