

Helen

far." Jesus, how many times have I heard that! (*smiling at Peter*) Okay – just one more little drink, then home. Okay?

PETER It's getting late.

HELEN So what? It's Christmastime – I'm with my friends – and I'm happy. Come on; relax. (*turning to JULIE*) Hey – do you know what this reminds me of? Christmas at Aunt Sophie's. We always went to Aunt Sophie's when I was a kid – every Christmas. She had the most beautiful little house. Beautiful. And she loved brass – there was brass everywhere: kettles, spark guard, candlesticks, a great brass pot filled with indoor plants. A log fire and gleaming brass. And she'd do everything as it was when she was a kid. We always had a roast goose and chocolate honey-cake. And there she'd sit, after dinner, my old Aunt Sophie, licking her fingers to pick up the crumbs of chocolate honey-cake – and all of a sudden she'd burst out crying. "What's the matter?" we'd say. "Why are you crying, Aunt Sophie?" And she'd dry her eyes and blow her nose and lick her chocolatey fingers. "Nothing's the matter," she'd say. "I'm crying because everything's just poifeck." (*She smiles.*) Well, I reckon that's how I feel right now.

*Moved by this story, JULIE goes to HELEN and embraces her. HELEN kisses JULIE on the forehead. The telephone rings.*

JULIE That'll be Maureen.

*JULIE goes to the hall. HELEN looks at BARBARA, BOB, and PETER – three unsmiling faces.*

HELEN Oh, come on, you guys. It's party-time, remember? Jesus, I've had more laughs at a funeral. Come on – let's goose it up a little!

JULIE (*calling from the hall*) It's for you, Dad. It's Mr Stewart.

BOB *glances sharply at BARBARA, and hurries to the phone.*