

Over the River and Through the Woods – Audition Sides

MONOLOGUES

Nick

It was always hot in my grandparents' house. And I'm not talking "I should've worn short sleeves" hot. No, it was more like "It's August in Ethiopia" hot. Growing up, I remember sitting in their living room, sweating, and trying to figure out my relation to these people who not only didn't seem to share my same environmental needs, but who also had reached an age I could barely comprehend. But my grandparents firmly believed in the three "f's" of life: family, faith and food. So, every Sunday for twenty-nine years, I bore the heat and religiously showed up for dinner.

Nick

In one month, I'm gonna get on that plane and fly to a new life! And live the way I want to live! And date the women I want to date – not relatives of my nanny's canasta partner! And I'm gonna go to therapy if I want, and I'm gonna eat all the Chinese food I want! I might even go to therapy and eat Chinese food there! Yeah! Cause guess what – and this will be news to you all – but I am an adult! Yes! There is a fully functioning, grown-up man standing before you who is perfectly capable of taking care of himself – taking care of him - *(Suddenly, he gasps for breath. He clutches his chest, then falls to the ground.)*

Caitlin

I really have to go, Nick. The date offer was nice, but, oh, I don't know, I'd just sit there the whole time hoping I didn't like you. That's just too weird. Okay, take care of yourself. *(Caitlin begins to exit. Nick sings the first line of the old song that Nunzio sang earlier. Caitlin stops. A beat. Nick quickly sings a couple more lines of the song.)* Wow. Alright, all right. Nick, if you decide not to go to Seattle – all right, call me, and a date with no relatives, you're on. But if you decide to go – then go. Start over. Sometimes you just have to be a little selfish. *(She kisses him on the cheek.)* You know something – just now, when I didn't immediately agree to go out with you – that was probably one of the most mature things I've ever done.

Frank

The very day I turned fourteen, my father put me on a boat. In my pocket, he stuffed two hundred lira and the address of a cousin in a place called Hoboken, New Jersey. The only advice my father gave me: “*Tengo famiglia.*” If you just said that in English, it would be “I support my family.” But in Italian, it means more, much more. “I am a man, I am doing well for my woman and my children, I have a reason for being alive.”

Aida

Nicholas, do you know where I always wanted to go for years and years? Atlantic City. That’s right, Nunz and Emma always came back with such stories, but your grandfather, he would have no part of such a fancy place. But one day, I left him a plate in the icebox and I went. And you know what? I didn’t like it. No, the whole time I was there, I was wishing I was back home, taking care of your grandfather. I had to take care of him, Nicholas. He needed me to – so much. How many people can get to be my age and can say that – that there was someone who needed them that much. I can say that, Nicholas. I can’t go. Not from here. Your grandfather built this house for me. How can I go? Stay for dinner. Please.

Nunzio

Nicky, what I have to tell you – I have to... (*a beat.*) Nicky, remember when I told you I’ve been thinking about your Uncle Nicky lately? Well, I been thinking about him ‘cause - well I been thinking about when we had to say goodbye. Strange, you know, he would’ve been in his fifties now, but I can only think of him as young. I always think I should be able to picture him as older, having lived the life he should’ve lived. But no, all I can see is this young, perfect man, waving goodbye in his uniform. And I knew how dangerous Korea was, oh I knew that. Still I just stood there and waved back, but inside, inside I was wishing so hard that there was something I could say or do, anything, anything, anything at all, that would make him stay. But there was nothing, Nicky, nothing. But now you’re leaving, Nicky, and... (*a beat.*) Nicky, let me ask you something first. And tell me the truth, Nicky. Tell me the truth.

Emma

That's right. Because we never expected like you expected, Nicky. We were told a good life is when you find a husband and have kids and you put food on the table and send your kids to school and you don't die doing it – that's a good life. Then we went ahead and told our kids that they can have so much more – they can go to any school they want, have any job they want, meet wonderful people. And maybe that's the way it should be. And you already have much more than we ever had and we are so proud. But then you gotta go to a head doctor and the whole family moves away from each other. And we never had to do that. So did we make a better life for you? It's not a worse life. But better? Just different, maybe.

SCENES

Nick, Nunzio, Emma

NUNZIO: Hey Nicky!!

EMMA: Yoohoo!

NICK: Hi, Nanny. Hi, Gramps.

NUNZIO: What a pleasure to see you on a Thursday!

NICK: I'm glad you came. I have something to tell you.

NUNZIO: Wait Nicky, first I wanna take a picture.

NICK: Of what?

NUNZIO: Of you.

NICK: Why?

NUNZIO: I got two pictures left on this roll since last Easter. Stand by your grandmother and smile.

NICK: Gramps, I got this announcement.

NUNZIO: It's one picture-

NICK: Gramps!

NUNZIO: One picture!

NICK: All right, all right...

EMMA: *(Going for his hair.)* Fix your hair nice first.

NICK: Nan, stop! All right, Gramps – shoot.

NUNZIO: But you don't look happy.

NICK: I'm not happy!

NUNZIO: Why would I take a picture if you don't look happy! *(Nick forces a smile as Nunzio snaps away.)*

FRANK: Nunz, make me a copy, I'll pay ya for it.

NUNZIO: Okay, I got one more.

NICK: No! Enough with the pictures. *(Calling toward the kitchen.)* Nan, could you get back in here, please!

EMMA: Nicky, that present you bought for us. The one we don't know how to use-

NICK: The answering machine?

EMMA: The other one. The CPU-

NICK: VCR.

EMMA: Right. We need the receipt.

NICK: It broke?

NUNZIO: No, we just hate it.

EMMA: We don't hate it! It's just too expensive, we can't enjoy it.

NICK: Why you worried about the expense? I bought it for you.

EMMA: Give us the receipt, we'll give you back the money.

NICK: I don't want the money!

NUNZIO: It's too much to spend on us for a BCP!

NICK: It's your sixtieth anniversary present!

EMMA: Fine, we'll keep ten dollars!

NICK: Look, we'll talk more about this later. I've got something much more important to...

NUNZIO: So Nicky, guess where your grandmother want to drag me – again! – next Tuesday!

EMMA: I'm sorry if I like to go places and do things. I'm a do-er!

NUNZIO: Atlantic City! With the senior citizens from St. Anne's!

NICK: Gramps, what I have to say is real important. Can we talk about...

Nick, Frank, Aida, Nunzio, Emma

NICK: Thank God. Can I start now?!

FRANK: Wait! I feel a draft.

EMMA: Me too. What's open?

NICK: It's a hundred and ten degrees in here!

NUNZIO: We're old, we're chilly.

AIDA: *(Closing with window.)* Oh my lord, I forgot all about it!

NICK: Good thing you got that, Nan. For a moment, you almost let air seep into the room! All right, does everyone have their crumb cake? Does everyone have their coffee? Is anyone disturbed by any unbearable drafts?! *(Nunzio snaps a flash picture of Nick).*

NUNZIO: Okay, all done.

FRANK: Make me a copy, Nunz, I'll pay you for it.

NICK: Can I please say this now?!

NUNZIO: What's he getting so upset about?

EMMA: He's always anxious. Remember how he used to chew on his rattle?

NICK: Can we not tell the rattle story right now?!

EMMA: We're just trying to understand you better, Nicky.

NICK: Oh, and the rattle story just explains it all! I don't even know why I bother going to therapy!

EMMA: What?

NICK: Nothing! I said nothing!

NUNZIO: He said he's going to therapy.

FRANK: What in the world is that?

EMMA: He's going to a psychiatrist.

FRANK: Foot doctor?

EMMA: Head doctor.

FRANK: What?!

AIDA: Nicholas, you're seeing a head doctor?

NUNZIO: Oh my word!

NICK: Look, it's no big deal. All my friends are in therapy – it's just someone to talk to -

EMMA: What kind of friends do you have, Nicky?

NICK: I said it was no big deal.

NUNZIO: Can't you just talk to us?

NICK: How?! I can't even get this announcement out!

FRANK: Do you pay this person? Or is it covered with insurance?

NICK: I really don't want to talk about this right ...

FRANK: I hope you don't pay this person.

AIDA: We listen to your problems for free.

EMMA: A priest would, too, Nicky. Should I call a priest?

NUNZIO: She's always calling a priest!

EMMA: Shut up, I'm talking to my grandson!

NUNZIO: The other day, my back hurts, I hear her on the phone to the parish.

AIDA: Tell us your problems right now, Nicholas.

NUNZIO: I walk out of the bathroom, Father Fanelli's standing there waiting to bless my spine.

NICK: Look, I'm seeing this therapist, yes! But I won't be seeing him much longer-

EMMA: Thank goodness!

NICK: And that ties in with my announcement! Can I please tell you now?!

AIDA: Nicholas, go ahead, say your announcement. We're all listening very hard.

NICK: Okay!

FRANK: All right!

EMMA: Everyone quiet!

NUNZIO: Okay!

AIDA: Okay!

FRANK: All right!

EMMA: Okay!

NUNZIO: We're ready!

AIDA: Okay!

FRANK: All right!

EMMA: Say it loud!

NUNZIO: Okay!

AIDA: Okay!

FRANK: All right!

NICK: Okay! Let me start with this – I got offered a promotion at work.

Nick, Frank, Aida, Nunzio, Emma, Caitlin

AIDA: Here we are! Caitlin, I made some lovely veal. Pick a piece.

CAITLIN: Oh Aida, no thank you. I'll just have the vegetables.

AIDA: No, have some veal. It's nice from the Shop Rite.

CAITLIN: Thank you, Aida, but I'm a vegetarian. *(A beat. Grandparents stop and stare at her.)*

NUNZIO: She's a what?

EMMA: Vegetarian.

FRANK: What in the world is that?

EMMA: Animal doctor.

AIDA: Very nice.

FRANK: So she won't eat veal?

NUNZIO: She fixes animals so she don't eat them. Makes sense.

CAITLIN: No, no, "vegetarian" - I don't eat meat. My job is I'm a nurse.

NUNZIO: She's an animal nurse?

FRANK: What do animals need nurses for?

NICK: *(To Caitlin)* Trust me on this – don't try to correct them, just ride it out.

AIDA: Whatever you do, it sounds very nice. Have some veal.

CAITLIN: Oh I really can't, thank you.

AIDA: No? None at all?

CAITLIN: I'm sorry, Aida, I should have told Emma before I came.

AIDA: Aw, no need to apologize. *(Putting veal on her plate.)* Just have some veal.

NICK: *(Switching plates with Caitlin.)* Nan, the veal issue is closed! She doesn't eat veal!

AIDA: It's from the Shop Rite -

NICK: Nan!

CAITLIN: Aida, that's so sweet of you, but the vegetables really look so delicious. Really, just an extra forkful of those would be wonderful. *(Aida retreats to her seat.)*

NUNZIO: The squash is beautiful from my garden.

CAITLIN: Looks fabulous.

NUNZIO: You could serve it to the Pope.

AIDA: The Pope would eat the veal, too.

FRANK: So Caitlin, tell me, how come a pretty girl like you doesn't have a boyfriend?

NICK: Caitlin, please don't answer that-

CAITLIN: It's okay, Nick, I don't mind. Well Frank, I like to think that it's just that I haven't met the right guy lately.

EMMA: Maybe if you did something with your hair-

NICK: Nan!

EMMA: I meant that nice! *(To Caitlin)* You know I meant that nice-

NICK: Caitlin, I would just like to take a moment to apologize for – basically everything that's been said this afternoon.

FRANK: What? We said nothing bad! Nunz, did we say anything bad?

NUNZIO: No, we've been delightful.

NICK: Delightful?!

EMMA: Now don't mind Nicky, Caitlin, he just gets a little excited sometimes.

CAITLIN: That's okay. I like passionate people.

EMMA: That's a nice way of saying that.

NUNZIO: See, we ain't loud, we're passionate.

Nick & Caitlin

CAITLIN: Nick, I knew you'd be here today. That's the real reason I came. I've just been, I don't know, feeling a little lonely, maybe even a little desperate – Oh my gosh, I said that word out loud. But yeah, maybe even a little desperate, and I figured – well, since I liked your grandmother so much, maybe she's got a grandson so – well... Oh, gosh -

NICK: Hm. Interesting. Well then, if I may be so bold – what *did* you think of Emma's grandson?

CAITLIN: Well that's the thing. I mean, seeing you with all four of your grandparents, well I was thinking of mine and-

NICK: Right, you said they were all gone.

CAITLIN: I did know my mom's mom, but what I'm saying is – well – you spent the whole evening yelling at them.

NICK: Oh, that. Well, ya know, family. It's just the way we speak to each other. I take it you and your grandmother didn't speak so...

CAITLIN: No, we never yelled. We used to – talk.

NICK: Talk? I'll have to try that with them sometime.

CAITLIN: Actually, my grandmother used to read to me. But not children's stories, no. You see, after my grandfather died, she started to read these books, these wonderful books, as a way to get through the day without him. When I was about nine years old, she read me *Great Expectations*.

NICK: Wait. She read you Dickens? In its entirety?

CAITLIN: It took six months. And you know how people read to children to put them to sleep? Not my grandmother. She read to enthrall me. And I'd hold onto her so tight, her voice just covering me like a blanket.

NICK: So Caitlin, how about it? Dinner? Tomorrow night? *(A beat.)* You okay?

CAITLIN: Yeah, I, uh – well, seeing you all here – um, my grandmother, when I was thirteen, she, well... I'm sorry Nick – I can't do this with you.

NICK: What?

CAITLIN: I mean – oh Gosh – you seem like an okay guy, but – but you just acted like such a jerk with them!

NICK: What?!

CAITLIN: Us going out – I'm sorry, I – I ...

NICK: Now wait a minute, Caitlin! Caitlin, come on! *(Caitlin quickly exits.)* Wait! So what're you saying then? You're desperate *and* you're turning me down?! Caitlin!