

LOUISE. How did you know my name?

~~BILLY. Somebody told me you lived here. I knew your father.~~

~~LOUISE. My father!~~

BILLY. I heard what that little whippersnapper said. It ain't true - any of it.

LOUISE. It is true - all of it.

(Pause. He is stunned.)

BILLY. Did your mother tell you that?

LOUISE. No, but every kid in town knows it. They've been throwin' it up at me ever since I ken remember. I wish I was dead.

(She looks away to hide her tears.)

BILLY. *(Softly.)* What - what did yer *mother* say about - him?

LOUISE. Oh, she's told me a lot of fairy stories about how he died in San Francisco - and she's always sayin' what a handsome fellow he was -

BILLY. Well, he was!

LOUISE. *(Hopeful, rising.)* Was he - really?

BILLY. He was the handsomest feller around here.

LOUISE. You really knew him, did you? And he was handsome?

(He nods his head.)

What else about him? Know anythin' else *good* about him?

BILLY. *(Passing right hand through his hair.)* Well-ll... he used to tell funny jokes at the carousel and make people laugh.

LOUISE. *(Her face lighting up.)* Did he?

(They both laugh.)

What else?

(Pause. He's stuck and changes the subject.)

BILLY. Look – I want to give you a present.

LOUISE. *(Backing up right, immediately suspicious.)*
Don't come in, mister. My mother wouldn't like it.

BILLY. I don't mean you any harm, child. I want to give you somethin'.

LOUISE. Don't you come any closer. You go 'way with yer frightful face. You scare me.

BILLY. Don't chase me away. I want to give you a present – somethin' pretty – somethin' wonderful –

(He looks at the 1ST HEAVENLY FRIEND, who turns front and smiles. BILLY takes the star from his inside vest pocket. LOUISE looks at the star with wonderment, then at BILLY.)

LOUISE. What's that?

BILLY. Psst! A star.

(He points up to the sky with right hand to indicate whence it came. LOUISE is terrified now.)

LOUISE. *(Backing up right.)* Go away!

BILLY. *(Growing panicky and taking her arm.)* Darling, please – I want to help you.

LOUISE. *(Trying to pull her arm away.)* Don't call me "darling." Let go of my arm!

BILLY. I want to make you happy. Take this –

LOUISE. No!

BILLY. Please!

(She pulls away from him, holding out her right hand to keep him away from her.)

Please - dear -

(Impulsively, involuntarily, he slaps her hand. She is startled.)

LOUISE. Mother!

(She runs into the house.)

Mother!

(BILLY puts the star on the chair nearest center. Then he looks at the 1ST HEAVENLY FRIEND guiltily.)

1ST HEAVENLY FRIEND. Failure! You struck out blindly again. All you ever do to get out of difficulty - hit someone you love! Failure!

JULIE. *(Coming out of house, agitated.)* Where is he?

[MUSIC NO. 30 "PORCH SCENE (IF I LOVED YOU - REPRISE)"]

(She stops suddenly. BILLY turns to her. She stares at him.)

BILLY. *(To HEAVENLY FRIEND, but looking at JULIE.)* I don't want her to see me.

1ST HEAVENLY FRIEND. Then she doesn't.

BILLY. She looks like she saw me before I said that.

LOUISE. *(Coming out of the house and crossing downstage of BILLY, almost touching him.)* Oh, he's gone! *(Turning to JULIE.)* I didn't make it up, Mother. Honest - there was a strange man here and he hit me - hard - I heard the sound of it - but it didn't hurt, Mother! It didn't hurt at all - it was just as if he - kissed my hand!