

The Baby Carriage

BY BOSWORTH CROCKER

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THE BABY CARRIAGE was originally produced by the Provincetown Players, New York, February 14, 1919, with the following cast:

MRS. LEZINSKY *Dorothy Miller*. MRS. ROONEY *Alice Dostetter*.
MR. ROSENBLOOM *W. Clay Hill*. SOLOMON LEZINSKY *O. K. Liveright*.

PLACE: *The Lezinsky Tailor Shop*. TIME: *To-day*.

Application for the right of performing THE BABY CARRIAGE must be made to Mr. Bosworth Crocker, in care of the Society of American Dramatists and Composers, 148 West 45th Street, New York, or The Authors' League, Union Square, New York.

THE BABY CARRIAGE

A PLAY BY BOSWORTH CROCKER

[*THE SCENE is an ordinary tailor shop two steps down from the sidewalk. Mirror on one side. Equipment third rate. Mrs. Solomon Lezinsky, alone in the shop, is examining a torn pair of trousers as Mrs. Rooney comes in.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY [*27 years old, medium height and weight, dark, attractive. In a pleased voice with a slight Yiddish accent*]. Mrs. Rooney!

MRS. ROONEY [*30 years old. A plump and pretty Irish woman*]. I only ran in for a minute to bring you these. [*Holds up a pair of roller skates and a picture book.*] Eileen's out there in the carriage. [*Both women look out at the baby-carriage in front of the window.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. Bring her in, Mrs. Rooney. Such a beautiful child--your Eileen!

MRS. ROONEY. Can't stop--where's the kids?

MRS. LEZINSKY. The janitress takes them to the moving pictures with her Izzy.

MRS. ROONEY. You wouldn't believe the things I've run across this day, packing. [*Puts down the skates.*] I'm thinking these skates'll fit one of your lads. My Mickey--God rest his soul!--used to tear around great on them.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Fine, Mrs. Rooney! [*Examines the skates.* But couldn't you save them for Eileen?

MRS. ROONEY. Sure, she'd be long growing up to them and they be laying by gathering the rust.

MRS. LEZINSKY. My David and Julius and Benny could die for joy with these fine skates, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY. Here's an old book [*hands Mrs. Lezinsky the book*], but too good to throw away entirely.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*opens the book*]. Fine, Mrs. Rooney! Such a book with pictures in it! My Benny's wild for picture books. Julius reads, reads--always learning. Something wonderful, I tell you. Just like the papa--my Solly ruins himself with his nose always stuck in the Torah.

MRS. ROONEY. The Toro? 'Tis a book I never heard tell of.

MRS. LEZINSKY. The law and the prophets--my Solly was meant to be a rabbi once.

MRS. ROONEY. A rabbi?

MRS. LEZINSKY. You know what a rabbi is by us, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. Indeed, I know what a rabbi is, Mrs. Lezinsky--a rabbi is a Jewish priest.

MRS. LEZINSKY. You don't hate the Jewish religion, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. Every one has a right to their own religion. Some of us are born Jewish--like you, Mrs. Lezinsky, and some are born Catholics, like me.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Catholics like you are fine, Mrs. Rooney. Such a good neighbor! A good customer, too! Why should you move away now, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. The air in the Bronx will be fine for Eileen. 'Tis a great pity you couldn't be moving there, yourself. With the fresh air and the cheap rent, 'twould be great for yourself and the boys--not to mention the baby that's coming to you.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Thank God, that don't happen for a little while yet. But in the hottest weather--maybe--some Septembers--even so late yet--ain't it, Mrs. Rooney? Always trouble by us. Such expense, too. The agent takes the rent to-day. With Solly's eyes so bad it's a blessing when we can pay the rent even. And the gas bills! So much pants pressing! See? They send us this already. [*Shows a paper.*] A notice to pay right away or they shut it off. Only ten days overdue. Would you believe it, Mrs. Rooney? Maybe we catch up a little next month. It don't pay no longer, this business. And soon now another mouth to feed, and still my Solly sticks by his learning.

MRS. ROONEY. But he can't be a rabbi now, can he?

MRS. LEZINSKY. He can't be a rabbi now, no more, Mrs. Rooney, but such a pious man--my Solly. He must be a poor tailor, but he never gives up his learning--not for anything he gives that up. Learning's good for my David and Julius and Benny soon, but it's bad for my Solly. It leaves him no eyes for the business, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY. And are the poor eyes as bad as ever?

MRS. LEZINSKY. How should his eyes get better when he gives them no chance? Always he should have an operation and the operation--it don't help--maybe. [*Mrs. Rooney turns to the door.*] Must you go so quick, Mrs. Rooney? Now you move away, I never see you any more.

MRS. ROONEY. The subway runs in front of the house.

MRS. LEZINSKY. I tell you something, Mrs. Rooney: Solly couldn't keep the shop open without me. Sometimes his eyes go back on him altogether. And he should get an operation. But that costs something, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney. The doctors get rich from that. It costs something, that operation. And then, sometimes, may be it don't help.

MRS. ROONEY. 'Tis too bad, altogether. [*Looks at the baby-carriage.*] Wait a minute, Mrs. Lezinsky. [*Starts out.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY [*as Mrs. Rooney goes*]. What is it, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY [*just outside the door, calls out*]. Something else--I forgot. 'Tis out here in the carriage.

[*Mrs. Lezinsky threads a needle and begins to sew buttons on a lady's coat. Mrs. Rooney comes back carrying a small square package wrapped in newspaper.*]

MRS. ROONEY. Here's something. You'll like this, Mrs. Lezinsky. It belongs to Eileen.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*looking out at the child in the carriage*]. Was her collar stitched all right, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. It was that. Fits her coat perfect. See the new cap on her? 'Twas for her birthday I bought it. Three years old now. Getting that big I can feel the weight of her.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Such a beautiful little girl, Mrs. Rooney! And such stylish clothes you buy for her. My David should have a new suit from his papa's right away now. Then we fix the old one over for Julius. Maybe my Benny gets a little good out of that suit too,

sometime. We couldn't afford to buy new clothes. We should first get all the wear out of the old ones. Yes, Mrs. Rooney. Anyhow, boys! It don't so much matter. But girls! Girls is different. And such a beautiful little girl like Eileen!

MRS. ROONEY. She'll be spoilt on me entirely--every one giving her her own way. [*In a gush of mother-pride.*] 'Tis the darling she is--anyhow.

MRS. LEZINSKY. O, Mrs. Rooney, I could wish to have one just like her, I tell you, such a beautiful little girl just like her.

MRS. ROONEY. Maybe you will, Mrs. Lezinsky, maybe you will.

MRS. LEZINSKY. She sleeps nice in that baby-carriage.

MRS. ROONEY. 'Tis the last time she sleeps in it.

MRS. LEZINSKY. The last time, what?

MRS. ROONEY. Her pa'll be after buying me a go-cart for her now we're moving. 'Tis destroying me--the hauling that up and down stairs.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Such a gorgeous baby-carriage--all fresh painted--white--

MRS. ROONEY. It's fine for them that likes it. As for me--I'm that tired of dragging it, I'd rather be leaving it behind.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*her face aglow*]. What happens to that carriage, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. I'll be selling it.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Who buys that carriage, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. More than one has their eye on it, but I'll get my price. Mrs. Cohen has spoke for it.

MRS. LEZINSKY. How much you ask for that carriage, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. Sure, and I'd let it go for a \$5 bill, Mrs. Lezinsky.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*her face falls*]. Maybe you get that \$5 ... Mrs. Rooney. Those Cohens make money by that stationery business.

MRS. ROONEY. And sure, the secondhand man would pay me as much.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*longingly*]. My David and Julius and Benny--they never had such a baby-carriage--in all their lives they never rode in a baby-carriage. My babies was pretty babies, too. And smart, Mrs. Rooney! You wouldn't believe it. My Benny was the smartest of the lot. When he was 18 months old, he puts two words together already.

MRS. ROONEY. He's a keener--that one. [*Unwraps the package.*] I'm clean forgetting the basket. [*Holds it out to Mrs. Lezinsky's delighted gaze.*] Now there you are--as good as new--Mrs. Lezinsky--and when you do be sticking the safety pins into the cushion [*she points out the cushion*] you can mind my Eileen. Some of the pinholes is rusty like, but the pins'll cover it--that it was herself gave your baby its first present.

MRS. LEZINSKY. O, Mrs. Rooney, such a beautiful basket! Such a beautiful, stylish basket!

MRS. ROONEY. And here's a box for the powder. [*Opens a celluloid box and takes out a powder puff.*] And here's an old puff. Sure the puff will do if you're not too particular.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*handling the things*]. Why should I be so particular? In all their lives my David and Julius and Benny never had such a box and puff, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY [*points*]. Them little pockets is to stick things in.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Should you give away such a basket, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. What good is it but to clutter up the closet, knocking about in my way.

MRS. LEZINSKY. My David and Julius and Benny, they never had such a basket, but my cousin, Morris Schapiro's wife,--she had such a basket--for her baby. All lined with pink it was.

MRS. ROONEY. Pink is for boys. I wanted a girl, having Mickey then.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Me, too, Mrs. Rooney. Three boys! Now it's time it should be a little girl. Yes, Mrs. Rooney. A little girl like Eileen.

MRS. ROONEY. Sure, then, if you're going by the basket 'tis a little girl you have coming to you. Blue's for girls.... A comb and a brush for it--you can buy.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Combs and brushes! What should I do with combs and brushes? My David and Julius and Benny are all born bald.

MRS. ROONEY. Sure, Eileen had the finest head of curls was ever seen on a baby--little soft yellow curls--like the down on a bird.

MRS. LEZINSKY. If I should have a little girl--like your Eileen--my David and Julius and Benny--they die for joy over their little sister, I tell you, Mrs. Rooney. Yes, it should be a girl and I name her Eileen. Such pretty names for girls: Eileen and Hazel and Gladys and Goldie. Goldie's a pretty name, too. I like that name so much I call myself Goldie when I go to school. Gietel's my Jewish name. Ugly? Yes, Mrs. Rooney? Goldie's better--much better. But Eileen's the best of all. Eileen's a gorgeous name. I name her Eileen, I do assure you. She should have another name, too, for Solly. Zipporah, maybe--for her dead grandmother.

MRS. ROONEY. Sure, Eileen has a second name: Bridget. 'Tis for my mother in the old country. A saint's name. Her father chose it for her. Bridget's a grand name--that--too.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Zipporah--that was Solly's mother.... But I call her Eileen.

MRS. ROONEY. That's a grand compliment, Mrs. Lezinsky, and 'tis myself would stand godmother for her should you be wanting me to.

MRS. LEZINSKY. I'm sorry, Mrs. Rooney, by our religion we don't have such god-mothers.

MRS. ROONEY. I'll be running on now not to keep you from your work and so much of it with your poor man and the drops in his sick eyes. Here! [*She puts half a dollar into Mrs. Lezinsky's hand.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. For what?

MRS. ROONEY. For Mr. Lezinsky stitching the collar on Eileen's coat.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*trying to make Mrs. Rooney take it back*]. Mrs. Rooney--if you wouldn't insult me--please--when you bring all these lovely things.... [*Mrs. Rooney pushes the money away.*] And so you sell that fine baby-carriage.... That carriage holds my Benny, too, maybe?

MRS. ROONEY. Sure. Easy.

MRS. LEZINSKY. My David and Julius--they could wheel that carriage. The little sister sleeps in it. And my Benny--he rides at the foot. \$5 is cheap for that elegant carriage when you should happen to have so much money. I ask my Solly. Do me the favor, Mrs. Rooney--you should speak to me first before you give it to Mrs. Cohen--yes?

MRS. ROONEY. Sure I will. I'll be leaving the carriage outside and carry the child up. You and Mr. Lezinsky can be making up your minds. [*Mrs. Rooney looks through the window at a man turning in from the street.*] Is it himself coming home?

MRS. LEZINSKY. Any time now, Mrs. Rooney, he comes from the doctor.

MRS. ROONEY. 'Tis not himself. 'Tis some customer.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*as the door opens*]. It's Mr. Rosenbloom.

MRS. ROONEY. See you later. [*Rushes out. Through the window Mrs. Lezinsky watches her take the child out of the carriage.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY [*sighs, turns to her customer*]. O, Mr. Rosenbloom! Glad to see you, Mr. Rosenbloom. You well now, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM. Able to get around once more, Mrs. Lezinsky.

MRS. LEZINSKY. I hope you keep that way. You got thinner with your sickness. You lose your face, Mr. Rosenbloom. [*He hands her a coat and a pair of trousers.*] Why should you bother to bring them in? I could send my David or Julius for them.

MR. ROSENBLOOM. Right on my way to the barber-shop. The coat's a little loose now. [*Slips off his coat and puts on the other.*] Across the back. See?

MRS. LEZINSKY. He should take it in a little on the shoulders, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*considers*]. It wouldn't pay--so much alterations for this particular suit.

MRS. LEZINSKY. It's a good suit, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM. He should just shorten the sleeves. Those sleeves were from the first a little too long.

[*He slips the coat off. Mrs. Lezinsky measures coat sleeve against his bent arm.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. About how much, Mr. Rosenbloom? Say--an inch?

MR. ROSENBLOOM. An inch or an inch and a half--maybe.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*measures again*]. I think that makes them too short, Mr. Rosenbloom. One inch is plenty.

MR. ROSENBLOOM. All right--one inch, then.

MRS. LEZINSKY. One inch.... All right, Mr. Rosenbloom--one inch.

MR. ROSENBLOOM. How soon will they be ready?

MRS. LEZINSKY. Maybe to-morrow. He lets all this other work go--maybe--and sets to work on them right away when he gets back home.

MR. ROSENBLOOM. All right.

MRS. LEZINSKY. I send my David or Julius with them, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM. I'll stop in the evening and try the coat on.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Maybe it wouldn't be ready to try on so soon--All right, Mr. Rosenbloom, this evening you come in. [*She calls after him as he goes out.*] O, Mr. Rosenbloom! The pants? What should he do to the pants?

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*from the doorway*]. Press them. [*He turns back.*] Press the--whole thing--suit.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Press them. Sure. Press the suit. A fine suit. Certainly a fine piece of goods, Mr. Rosenbloom. Did my husband make it up for you?

MR. ROSENBLOOM. Yes.

MRS. LEZINSKY. I thought so. Wears like iron, too, this goods. Yes, Mr. Rosenbloom? With one eye my husband picks the best pieces of goods I tell you, Mr. Rosenbloom.... He should shorten the sleeves one inch.... All right, he fixes it to your satisfaction, Mr. Rosenbloom-

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MR. ROSENBLOOM. Yes, yes. [*Impatiently edges toward the door.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. This evening you come for them?

[*He nods and hurries out.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. Five dollars! [*Drops everything and stands looking dreamily through the shop window at the baby-carriage. She takes a roll of money from her bosom and counts it. Shakes her head dispiritedly and sighs. She makes an estimate of the money coming in from the work on hand. Pointing to Mr. Rosenbloom's suit.*] Two dollars for that--[*Turns from the suit to a pair of torn trousers.*] Half a dollar, anyhow--[*Points to the lady's coat on which she has been sewing buttons.*] A dollar--maybe--[*Hears some one coming, thrusts the roll of money back into her bosom.*]

LEZINSKY [*comes in. Spare. Medium height. Pronounced Semitic type. He wears glasses with very thick lenses.*] Where are the children?

MRS. LEZINSKY. Mrs. Klein takes them to the moving pictures with her Izzy.

LEZINSKY. Always to the moving pictures! The children go blind, too, pretty soon.

MRS. LEZINSKY. The doctor didn't make your eyes no better, Solly?

LEZINSKY. How should he make them better when he says all the time: "Don't use them." And all the time a man must keep right on working to put bread in the mouths of his children. And soon, now, another one comes--nebbich!

MRS. LEZINSKY. Maybe your eyes get much better now when our little Eileen comes.

LEZINSKY. Better a boy, Goldie: that helps more in the business.

MRS. LEZINSKY. It's time our David and Julius and Benny should have a little sister now. They like that. Such another little girl like

Mrs. Rooney's Eileen. When it is, maybe, a girl, we call her Eileen--like Mrs. Rooney's Eileen. Such a gorgeous name--that Eileen! Yes, Solly?

LEZINSKY. Eileen! A Goy name! She should be Rebecca for your mother or Zipporah for mine.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Sure. Zipporah, too, Solly--Eileen Zipporah! When there should be sometime--another boy, Solly, then you name him what you like. When it a little girl--Eileen. I dress her up stylish. Such beautiful things they have in Gumpertz's window. And--Mrs. Rooney sells her baby-carriage. [*Both look out at the carriage.*] She gives it away.

LEZINSKY. She gives you a baby-carriage?

MRS. LEZINSKY. For five dollars she gives me that lovely carriage good as new--all fresh painted white--and the little Eileen Zipporah sleeps at the head and Benny rides at the foot by his little sister. So elegant--Solly!

LEZINSKY. I put my eyes out to earn the bread and this woman--she should buy a baby-carriage. Oi! Oi!

MRS. LEZINSKY [*points to carriage*]. Such a baby-carriage what Mrs. Rooney has--it only happens to us once, Solly. Only five one-dollars--all fresh painted white--just like new--and such a cover to keep out the sun. She gets a little new go-cart for Eileen. Otherwise she don't give up such an elegant carriage what cost her more money than we could even see at one time except for rents and gas-bills. Five dollars is cheap for that carriage. Five dollars is nothing for that carriage I tell you, Solly. Nothing at all. She sells it now before she moves to the Bronx this afternoon. Such a bargain we shouldn't lose, Solly--even if we don't pay all the money right away down. Yes, Solly? And Mrs. Rooney--she gives our David and Julius and Benny skates and a picture book--and their little sister this fine basket. [*Shows him the basket.*] Yes, Solly. Shouldn't we make sure to buy this baby-carriage? Only five dollars, Solly, this baby-carriage--

LEZINSKY. Baby-carriage! Baby-carriage! If I had so much money for baby-carriages I hire me a cutter here. This way I go blind.

MRS. LEZINSKY. No, but by reading the Torah! And that way you lose good custom, too. [*Wheedling him again.*] Maybe you get good business and hire you a cutter when the little Eileen comes. Five dollars! Does that pay wages to a cutter? Yes, Solly? But it buys once a beautiful baby-carriage, and David and Julius go wild to ride their little sister in it--and Benny at the foot.

LEZINSKY [*waving his arms*]. I should have a cutter not to lose my customers--and this woman--she would have a baby-carriage. I lose my eyes, but she would have a baby-carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY. But it costs only five dollars. What costs a cutter?

LEZINSKY. At Union wages! I might as well ask for the moon, Goldie. Oi! Oi! Soon we all starve together.

MRS. LEZINSKY. You hire you a cheap hand here, Solly. He does pressing and all the dirty work. He works and you boss him around. That looks good to the customers. Yes, Solly? And I save up that five dollars soon and give it back to you. Yes, Solly? Business goes better now already when people come back from the country and everything picks up a little. I help now and we spare that five dollars. Mr. Rosenbloom brings us a little work. See? [*She points to the coat.*] You should make the sleeves shorter--one inch. Mr. Rosenbloom gets thinner by his sickness. His clothes hang a little loose on him.

LEZINSKY [*looks at the trousers*]. And the pants?

MRS. LEZINSKY. Mr. Rosenbloom didn't lose his stomach by his sickness. He only loses his face.

LEZINSKY. Such a *chutzpah*!

MRS. LEZINSKY. Yes, nothing makes Mr. Rosenbloom to lose his cheek, ain't it, Solly? And plenty roast goose has he to fill up his stomach. By us is no more roast goose nowadays.

LEZINSKY. We make up what we didn't get here maybe in the world to come, Goldie *leben*.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Roast goose in the world to come! Such a business! Angels shouldn't eat, Solly. I take my roast goose now--then I sure get it.... How much you charge Mr. Rosenbloom for this [*points to the suit*], Solly?

LEZINSKY. One dollar and a half--maybe.

MRS. LEZINSKY. For such a job my cousin Morris Schapiro gets three dollars and not too dear then. Everything goes 'way up and you stay 'way behind. You should raise your prices. No wonder we shall all starve together. It's not baby-carriages what ruin us. Did our David or Julius or Benny ever have such a baby-carriage? No. But it is that you let the customers steal your work.

LEZINSKY. All right--I charge two dollars.

MRS. LEZINSKY. What good should half a dollar do? Three dollars, Solly.

LEZINSKY. Two dollars. Three dollars swindles him.

MRS. LEZINSKY. All right--then two dollars. Fifty cents is fifty cents anyhow. [*She goes up to him and presses her face against his.*] Solly, *leben*, shouldn't our David and Julius and Benny have a baby-carriage for their little sister?

LEZINSKY. Baby-carriage--Oi! Peace, Goldie, my head aches.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*picking up the trousers*]. How much for these, Solly?

LEZINSKY. One dollar.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*derisively*]. One dollar you say! And for the lady's coat?

LEZINSKY. A couple of dollars, anyway.

MRS. LEZINSKY. A couple of dollars anyway! And he thinks he does good business when he charges a couple of dollars anyway. And for that, my cousin, Morris Schapiro charges three dollars each. A couple of dollars! Your children will be left without bread. [*He mutters phrases from the Torah.*] You hear me, Solly? [*He goes on with his prayers.*] Prayers are what he answers me. Soon you pray in the streets.

LEZINSKY. Woe is me! Woe is me!

MRS. LEZINSKY. Could he even answer me? Yes, if it was roast goose I was asking for or black satin for a decent *Shabbos* dress. But no! [*Satirically.*] Maybe you even get roast goose from your learning.... Yes--on account of your praying we all have to go a begging yet.

LEZINSKY. To-morrow is *Rosch Hoschana*, Gietel.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Does *Rosch Hoschana* mean a roast goose by us? Does it even mean a baby-carriage what costs five dollars?

LEZINSKY. Roast goose and baby-carriage! You have no pious thoughts.... Go away.... My head swims.

MRS. LEZINSKY. That comes by fasting. Don't you fast enough every day?

LEZINSKY. She comes now to roast goose again.

MRS. LEZINSKY. What should I care for roast goose? *Rosch Hoschana* comes next year again. But the baby-carriage--it never comes again.

LEZINSKY. Baby-carriage! Baby-carriage! When you should fast and pray....

MRS. LEZINSKY. What! Should I fast and give our David and Julius and Benny a shadow--maybe--for a little sister?... But--yes--I fast, too

... that--even--for such a baby carriage. O, Solly--that much we all do--for our little Eileen.

LEZINSKY [*wearily, putting his hands to his eyes*]. All right. How much money have you got there--Gietel?

MRS. LEZINSKY [*sweetly*]. Now call me Goldie, Solly, so I know you ain't mad.

LEZINSKY. Yes, yes.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Goldie--say it--Solly leben--Go on--count it--Goldie. [*She takes the money out and they count it together.*]

MR. AND MRS. LEZINSKY [*together*]. One.... [*Counting out another dollar bill*]--Two.... [*Counting out a third dollar bill*]--Three.... [*Counting out a two-dollar bill*]--Five dollars.... [*Another two-dollar bill*]--Seven dollars.... [*A ten-dollar bill*]--Seventeen.... [*Another ten-dollar bill*]--Twenty-seven.... [*The last ten-dollar bill*]--Thirty-seven.

LEZINSKY. Thirty-seven dollars in all--the rent and the gas!

MRS. LEZINSKY. And a little over, Solly, to pay on the baby carriage.

LEZINSKY. And to-morrow *Rosch Hoschana*. Shall we starve the children on Rosch Hoschana?

MRS. LEZINSKY. They could go a little hungry once for their little sister, Eileen.

LEZINSKY. Don't be too sure, Goldie, maybe another boy comes.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Well, even if--it needs the fresh air, too.

LEZINSKY [*firmly after a moment's thought*]. No, Goldie, it couldn't be done. In the spring we buy a baby-carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY. You think she waits till spring to sell that baby-carriage? She sells it now before she moves away--now, this afternoon, I tell you.

LEZINSKY. Well, we buy another carriage, then.

MRS. LEZINSKY. You don't find such a bargain again anytime. She gives it away.

LEZINSKY. My eyes get much better soon--now--by the operation.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Operation! Operation! Always operations! And the baby comes. No carriage for our David and Julius to wheel her in--with our Benny at the foot--in the fresh air--and she dies on us in the heat next summer--maybe--and David and Julius and Benny--they lose their little sister.

LEZINSKY. Didn't David and Julius and Benny live without a baby-carriage?

MRS. LEZINSKY. Yes, a mile to the park, maybe, and I carry them to the fresh air. And a baby-carriage for her costs five dollars. What time shall I have for that with all the extra work and my back broken? In such a baby-carriage the little sister sleeps from morning to night--on the sidewalk by the stoop; she gets fat and healthy from that baby-carriage.

LEZINSKY. When I could pay for the operation, maybe--then--

MRS. LEZINSKY [*despairingly*]. Operations again--always operations!

LEZINSKY. Go away, Goldie, I must work.

MRS. LEZINSKY. I advise you not to have that operation now. He steals your money and don't help your eyes. Get another doctor. But baby-carriages like this ain't so plenty.

LEZINSKY. God of Israel, shall I go blind because you would have a baby-carriage for our unborn son?

MRS. LEZINSKY. No, but by reading the Torah--and that way you lose good customers, too--and she shall die in the heat because David and Julius cannot push her in that baby-carriage.

LEZINSKY. Go away, Gietel, I have work to do. Maybe you could rip out the sleeves from Mr. Rosenbloom's coat?

MRS. LEZINSKY. I do anything--anything you like, Solly, for that baby-carriage.... Yes, I rip out the sleeves when I finish sewing on the buttons.... I do anything--anything--so we get this baby carriage. We never get another such carriage.

LEZINSKY. God of Israel, will she never hear me when I say: No!

MRS. LEZINSKY. Then--Mrs. Cohen--she gets that baby carriage--and every day of my life I see it go past my window--and the little sister--she goes without. [*She picks up Mr. Rosenbloom's coat, looks it over and finds a small wallet in the breast pocket. Tucks the wallet into her bosom. Fiercely, half-aloud, but to herself.*] No! No! Mrs. Cohen shouldn't get that baby-carriage--whatever happens--she shouldn't get it. [*She crosses to the mirror, pulls the wallet from her bosom, hurriedly counts the money in it, glances at her husband, then takes out a five-dollar bill. She hears a noise outside and makes a move as though to restore the money to the wallet, but at the sound of steps on the stoop, she thrusts the loose bill into her bosom. As Mr. Rosenbloom comes in she has only time to stick the wallet back into the coat. Picks up the lady's coat and sews on buttons vigorously.*]

MR. ROSENBLOOM. I left my wallet in that coat.

LEZINSKY [*with a motion of his head toward the coat*]. Goldie.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*sewing the buttons onto the lady's coat*]. In which pocket, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*crosses to coat*]. You don't begin work on it, yet?

MRS. LEZINSKY [*slowly puts her work aside*]. I rip the sleeves out so soon I sew these buttons on, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*looks in breast pocket, draws back in astonishment to find the wallet gone.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. In which pocket, Mr. Rosenbloom?

MR. ROSENBLOOM. I keep it always in that breast pocket.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*taking the wallet from an outside pocket*]. Why-- here it is, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*suspiciously*]. From which pocket does it come?

MRS. LEZINSKY [*points*]. Right here, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*shakes his head*]. I don't see how it got in that pocket.

MRS. LEZINSKY. We didn't touch that coat, Mr. Rosenbloom-- except Solly looks when I told him what he should do to it--ain't it, Solly? Otherwise we didn't touch it.

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*opens the wallet*]. Funny! It couldn't walk out of one pocket into another all by itself.

MRS. LEZINSKY. We didn't touch it, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*begins to count the bills*]. Maybe some customer--

MRS. LEZINSKY. That may be--all kinds of customers, Mr. Rosenbloom--

LEZINSKY [*as Mr. Rosenbloom goes over the money for the second time.*] But it hangs here always in our sight. Who has been here, Goldie?

MR. ROSENBLOOM. There's a bill missing here.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*pretending great astonishment*]. Mr. Rosenbloom!

LEZINSKY [*with an accusing note in his tone, meant for her only*].
Gietel?

MRS. LEZINSKY. How should I know? [*To Mr. Rosenbloom.*]
Maybe you didn't count it right. [*He counts it again.*]

MR. ROSENBLOOM. No--it's short--\$5.

LEZINSKY [*under his breath, looking strangely at his wife.*] Mr.
Rosenbloom, however that happens--I make up that \$5. Such a thing
shouldn't happen in my business. I make it up right away. Gietel!--
Gietel--give me the money.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*in a trembling voice*]. I didn't--

LEZINSKY [*checks her*]. I pay you from my own money, Mr.
Rosenbloom.... Gietel! [*He puts out his hand for the money.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. All right, Solly.... [*Turns her back to Mr.
Rosenbloom and pulls the roll of money from her bosom, thrusting the
loose bill back. Solomon, standing over her, sees this bill and puts out
his hand for it.*]

LEZINSKY [*in a tense undertone*]. All--Gietel--all!

[*Reluctantly she draws the \$5 bill from her bosom and, seizing a
moment when Mr. Rosenbloom is recounting his money, she thrusts it
quickly into her husband's hand.*]

LEZINSKY [*he crosses to Mr. Rosenbloom and counts out the five
dollars from the bills in the roll.*] One dollar--two dollars--three
dollars--and two is five dollars. [*Hands it to Mr. Rosenbloom.*]

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*hesitates*]. You shouldn't be out that \$5, Mr.
Lezinsky. Anyhow--pay me the difference when you charge for the
suit.

LEZINSKY. No, Mr. Rosenbloom--if you take the money now, please.... I couldn't rest--otherwise. In all my life--this--never--happened--before.

MR. ROSENBLOOM [*takes the money*]. Well, if you want it that way, Mr. Lezinsky.... You have the suit ready this evening anyhow?

LEZINSKY. You get the suit this evening, Mr. Rosenbloom. I stop everything else.... And I don't charge you anything for this work, Mr. Rosenbloom.

MR. ROSENBLOOM. Of course, you charge. "Don't charge"! What kind of business is that?

LEZINSKY. I make you a present, Mr. Rosenbloom--for your trouble.

MR. ROSENBLOOM. I pay you for these alterations, all right. [*He goes out.*]

LEZINSKY [*searches his wife's face, with ominous calm*]. Gietel! Gietel!

MRS. LEZINSKY. You make presents, eh, Solly? Are you a rabbi or a poor blind tailor--yes?

LEZINSKY [*bursts out*]. She makes a mock at me--this shameless one!

MRS. LEZINSKY. No, no, Solly--

LEZINSKY [*scathingly*]. Gietel!... [*His eyes never leave her face.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY [*in a hushed voice*]. Why do you look at me like that, Solly?

LEZINSKY. Blind as I am, I see too much, Gietel.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Listen, Solly--I tell you now--

LEZINSKY [*silences her with a wave of his hand.*] What I get I give-- [*He takes the five-dollar bill from his pocket, smooths it out and adds it to the roll.*] I give my money. I give my eyes ... and this woman-- she sells me for a baby-carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY. No, no, Solly, you shouldn't say such things before you know--

LEZINSKY. Silence, woman! How should I not know? It is here in my hand--the five-dollar bill--here in my hand. I have counted the money. Thirty-seven dollars we had. I have given him back his five and thirty-seven dollars remain. How is that, Gietel? What is the answer to that?... She cheats the customer and she cheats me.... Rather should I take my children by the hand and beg my bread from door to door.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Solly--Solly--I tell you--the baby-carriage--

LEZINSKY. Out of my sight, woman; I forbid you to come into this shop again.

MRS. LEZINSKY. O, Solly *leben*, that couldn't be--

LEZINSKY. The mother of my children--she sins--for a baby-carriage.

MRS. LEZINSKY. Listen, Solly--I didn't mean to keep that money. As there's a God of Israel I didn't mean to keep it. I should use it--just this afternoon--to buy the baby-carriage--and when the customers pay us--put the money back before he misses it.

LEZINSKY. Meshugge! So much money isn't coming to us. And why should you use Mr. Rosenbloom's money? Why shouldn't you take it from the money you had?

MRS. LEZINSKY. How could I use that money? Don't you pay the rent this afternoon to the agent? And they shut off the gas when we don't settle: by five o'clock they shut it off. And Mrs. Rooney moves away--[*Breaks into sobbing.*] and so--I thought I lose the baby-carriage.

LEZINSKY. Gietel--Gietel--you are a----. I can't speak the word, Gietel--It sticks in my throat.

MRS. LEZINSKY. No, no, Solly, you shouldn't speak that word. If I took it to keep it maybe. But--no. I couldn't do such a thing. Not for a million baby-carriages could I do such a thing. Not for anything could I keep what is not my own--I tell you, Solly.... [*Pleadingly.*] But just to keep it for a few hours, maybe? Why should a man with so much money miss a little for a few hours? Then Mr. Rosenbloom--he comes back in. I change my mind, but the door opens and it is too late already. Solly leben, did I keep it back--the five dollars? I ask you, Solly? Didn't I give it all into your hand? I ask you that, Solly?

LEZINSKY. Woe is me!--The mother of my children--and she takes what is not her own!

MRS. LEZINSKY. So much money and not one dollar to pay Mrs. Rooney for the baby-carriage! You see, Solly--always fine-dressed people around--the mamas and the little children all dressed fine--with white socks and white shoes. And our David--and our Julius--and our Benny, even--what *must* they wear? Old clothes! Yes. And to save the money they should wear black stockings--and old shoes. Never no pretty things! And it's all the time work--work--work and we never have nothing--no new clothes--no pretty things--[*She breaks down completely.*]

LEZINSKY. So our children grow up with the fear of God in their hearts--

MRS. LEZINSKY. What should little children know of all this pious business when they must play alone on the stoop with Izzi Klein together. For why? The Cohen children shouldn't play with our David and Julius and Benny. They make a snout at them. The Cohens dress them up stylish and they should play with Gentile children. They push my Benny in the stomach when he eats an ice-cream cone, and they say--regular--to my David and Julius: "Sheeny"--the same as if they wasn't Jewish, too.... Just for once I wanted something lovely and stylish--like other people have.... Then she asks--only five dollars for the baby-carriage--and--[*Choking back a sob.*] Mrs. Cohen--now,

Mrs. Cohen--she gets it. She gets it and I must want--and want. First David--then Julius--then comes Benny--and now the little sister--and never once a baby-carriage! [*Sobs.*]

LEZINSKY. We should raise our children to be pious.

[*There is the sound of trundling wheels. Mrs. Lezinsky looks out. The carriage is gone from the window.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY [*as the door opens and Mrs. Rooney appears wheeling the carriage in, low voices*]. Mrs. Rooney, Solly; she comes now to say good-by. [*Mops her eyes, tries to put on a casual look.*]

MRS. ROONEY. Now there you are, Mrs. Lezinsky, blanket and all.

[*Lezinsky works feverishly without lifting his eyes.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY [*low appealing voice*]. You should look at it once, Solly. [*Lezinsky stops for a moment and lets his eyes rest on the baby-carriage.*] Ain't it a beautiful, stylish baby-carriage, Solly?

MRS. ROONEY. There it is now and I'll be running on for Mrs. Klein's Anna's keeping Eileen and I have her to dress before her pa comes home. He's getting off earlier for the moving.

MRS. LEZINSKY. The little Eileen! Why didn't you bring her along with you, Mrs. Rooney?

MRS. ROONEY. She went to sleep on me or I would that.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*her eyes on her husband's face in mute appeal*]. O, Mrs. Rooney--so little business and so much expense--and my Solly has an operation for his sick eyes soon--it breaks my heart--but--Mrs. Cohen [*Shaking voice.*] she gets this lovely baby carriage.

MRS. ROONEY [*taking in the situation*]. Mrs. Cohen--she gets it! Does she now? Not if my name's Rooney does Mrs. Cohen get it and she only after offering to raise me a dollar to make sure of the baby-carriage, knowing your sore need of the same. Am I a lady or not, Mr. Lezinsky? 'Tis that I want to know. "I'll give you six dollars for it,"

says she to me. Says I to her: "Mrs. Cohen--when I spoke to you of that baby-carriage," says I, "it clean slipped me mind that I promised the same to Mrs. Lezinsky. I promised it to Mrs. Lezinsky long ago," says I--and so I did, though I forget to make mention of it to you at the time, Mrs. Lezinsky. So here it is and here it stays or my name's not Rooney.

MRS. LEZINSKY. But so much money we haven't got now--not even for the operation, Mrs. Rooney.... [*Soft pleading undertone to her husband.*] Only five dollars, Solly!... [*Sinking her voice still lower.*] Anyhow--I don't deserve no baby-carriage--maybe--[*Lezinsky makes no sign.*]

MRS. LEZINSKY. If we could possibly pay for that baby-carriage we keep it, Mrs. Rooney--[*Turns back to her husband, voice shakes.*] for our Benny and the little sister--yes, Solly? [*She waits and watches him with mute appeal, then, forcing herself to speak casually.*] But it couldn't be done, Mrs. Rooney--[*Bravely.*] Solly should have every dollar for that operation.

MRS. ROONEY. There now--no more about it! 'Tis your own from this day out.... You can take your own time to be paying for it.... I'll be wanting some work done anyhow--when the cold weather sets in.

MRS. LEZINSKY [*between tears and laughter*]. Solly!... Ain't it wonderful? Mrs. Rooney--she trusts us--for this beautiful baby-carriage!... O, Mrs. Rooney!

MRS. ROONEY. 'Tis little enough to be doing for my godchild that could be was she born a Catholic now.

MRS. LEZINSKY. O, Mrs. Rooney, dear Mrs. Rooney! Solly, Solly, we should have a baby-carriage at last! At last we should have a baby-carriage. O, Solly, Solly, what a mitzvah! Yes, Solly? [*As Mrs. Rooney starts to leave.*] But your blanket--Mrs. Rooney--

MRS. ROONEY. I'll be throwing that in--for good luck.

MRS. LEZINSKY. It breaks my heart you move away, Mrs. Rooney.

MRS. ROONEY. See you soon. [*Opens the door; looks up the street as she stands in the doorway.*] Here's the kids coming.

MRS. LEZINSKY. My David and Julius and Benny, they could die for joy to wheel their little sister in this baby-carriage.

MRS. ROONEY. Well, good luck--the both of you--and good-by! [*With a sense of pride in the greater prosperity which the new address means to her.*] Three thousand and thirty-seven Jerome Avenue--don't forget!

MRS. LEZINSKY [*bending over the baby-carriage*]. Good-by, Mrs. Rooney--next time you come, maybe you see her in the baby-carriage. [*Soothing the blanket*]--the little Eileen! [*Turns to her husband as the door closes.*] Yes, Solly?

[*They look at each other in silence for a moment.--She puts out her hands imploringly. His face softens; he lays his hand on her shoulder as the three little boys, David, Julius and Benny pass by the window. As they come into the shop*

the Curtain Falls.]