

GOING HOME

By Bob Greenspan

The Cast:

Grandma Harriet: Age 60-80.

Isabella: A teenage girl.

Karen: Her sister, also a teen age girl.

Mom: Their mother, in her forties.

The play opens downstage right, revealing two teen age girls: Isabella, a tall graceful girl of fourteen, and her sister, Karen, the same age, who lacks Isabella's composure and beauty, but is pretty and intensely emotional. They are arguing hotly but quietly, as not to be overheard.

Isabella: We have to go back; you know we do!

Karen: I don't want to go back; I want to stay here.

Isabella: I do too. But they came to us again, just last week, remember? They told us we had to go back today.

Karen: Well, let's just tell them we won't come.

Isabella: (gently, as to a child) We can't. It wouldn't be right. You know they come to us every year, coming far from the stars, to remind us we have to return when we're a week over fourteen years old – and that's today.

Karen: (starting to cry) Can't we just wait till tomorrow?

Isabella: (sadly) We can't. But I think it will be nice to go back (hand over heart). Can't you feel it? It's our home.

Karen: (obstinate, very upset, stamps her foot). No it's not! Virginia is our home. And if I have to leave, then I'm going to tell Mom good bye.

Isabella (alarmed): Don't Karen! No one's supposed to know about us.

(Either the lights come up at center stage, or Mom comes on from the wings. She's a large, friendly woman about 45, a little plump, who deeply loves the girls. But right now she is disconsolate, looking at a cake that did not rise.)

Karen: (disregarding her sister, rushes to Mom and throws herself into her mother's astonished arms). Oh, Mom! We're going back!"

Mom: (flustered, because she's been thinking of her cake). Oh, sweetie, does your back hurt? I'm sorry. (She kisses her).

(Karen: is completely taken by surprise. She steps back from Mom.)

Karen: My back's fine, Mom, I meant...

Isabella: (breaking in) She wants to go back to the mall, Mom. She thinks those shoes she loves will be gone.

(Isabella darts a withering look at Karen, and from time to time continues to do so, hoping to keep her sister quiet.)

Mom: (kisses her) Do you think I'd forget you, my sweet girl? They're on 'hold', and I'll bring them home for you tomorrow. (Sighs) I only wish I could do something about this cake! Come, look.

(She goes over to the cake on the center of the table, the girls following.)

Mom: Do you see what happened? Or didn't happen?

Karen: I don't see anything wrong with it. (Now she's hungry) We can eat it, can't we?

Isabella: It didn't rise.

Mom: (hopelessly, as though someone had died). It didn't rise. Isabella you're always right. It didn't rise. It was going to be a layer cake. I was supposed to bring it to tonight's book club, but I can't bring a collapsed cake, can I?

Karen: So, can we eat some, Mom?

Mom: I suppose so... I don't know what else to do.

Isabella: (yawns casually) Why don't you call whoever gave you the recipe? Maybe she can think of something.

Mom: Really? Maybe I should! But I can't imagine what I could do, now that the cake hasn't budged. All right. I'll try her.

(Putting the cover over the cake, unable to bear the sight of it, Mom goes to the phone, patting Karen's cheek as she goes by.)

Karen: (again to tell her) Mom...

Mom: (wearily) Yes, my baby...

Karen: (seeing her already troubled), Oh, nothing, Mom.

(Mom goes to the cordless phone and calls Dottie, her friend. While she speaks to her, she keeps her back to the cake and Isabella, and consults the recipe which she's pulled from the drawer or from the table.)

Mom: Hello, Dottie? It's me, Janet. I have really bad news. I'm calling because my cake didn't rise. (listens) I know! What can I do? (listens) I could try to make one again, but before I got everything, and baked it, it'd be too late. (listens) Do you have any idea where I can get a good store bought cake? (Listens,) Okay, but everyone's supposed to bring something special. Thanks, Dottie. Bye. (Hangs up).

(While Mom's on phone, Isabella assures herself that her mom's back is presented to her, and quickly conceals the cake plate by turning her back to her mother. She leans over it, briefly places both hands on the cover, murmuring something softly. Then quickly goes to Mom's side.

Mom: (gloomily) I can't throw it out; it would be such a waste. Will you help me eat it?

Karen: Sure!

Mom: (ruefully) At least someone's happy. (Going to the cake, she removes the cover and emits a shriek of excited astonishment.)

Mom: Look! Will you look?

Isabella and Karen: (together) What is it?

Mom: The cake's risen!

Isabella: (a smile, pretending broad surprise) Why, yes, it has!

Karen: (sourly glancing at her sister) I wonder how that happened.

Grandma: – So do I! Congratulations.

(It was Harriet, their grandmother. She had entered the room while the commotion over the cake had been in progress).

Mom: Isn't it wonderful, Grandma?

Grandma: It certainly is. (She smiles impishly at Isabella). One wonders how these things come about. Just a lazy old cake I guess.

Mom: (ecstatic) Well, I don't care how it happened so long as it did! You know what? I'm going to go out and get you all something special for dinner. Even for your Dad. All he cares about is sitting in there and watching sports shows. I could feed him horse

radish every day and he wouldn't know the difference. But I'll find something for him too.

(Humming, she picks up her car keys and starts for the garage, but is intercepted by Karen who clasps her in her arms).

Karen: Goodbye, Mom, Good bye.

Mom: (tenderly, holding her tight) You were always the emotional one, you were, weren't you, Karen. From the day I found you, right on our porch, laid out on a blanket with your sister. You were crying, and your sister was just smiling up at me. Oh, Harriet, I wish you lived here to see them on that blanket with all those funny sequins.

Grandma: I wish I did; and my Jack was alive then, too.

(Mom gives Karen a noisy kiss. Then she sets Karen's arms apart and goes to Isabella, for whom she had always been somewhat in awe. She takes Isabella's hands.)

Mom: And you, Isabella. You are my rock. Bless you. You always look after your sister.

Isabella: I will. Always.

Mom: (blowing her nose) I don't know why I'm getting all emotional today. Maybe because it's spring. But, enough! I'm gone, you guys. I'll see you soon. Maybe we can all watch whatever game Ben's looking at. Bye!

Mom: exits. The two girls look bleakly at each other. Isabella goes to Karen and takes her hand. Solemnly, they turn and begin to walk toward stage right where they entered. But Harriet is watching them closely. She has been startled by them for the five years she had been living there, and she is convinced that they are not of this world.

Grandma: (calls to them) You're not coming back, are you?

Isabella :(stops and turns to her, smiling) You always knew, Grandma, didn't you?

Grandma: I couldn't stop watching the two of you. You're marvelous. Your Mom saw all those remarkable things under her eyes, but she didn't want to know. All she wanted was to love you.

Karen: (to Isabella) You knew Grandma knew? Why didn't you tell me?

Isabella: I didn't want to upset you. (To Grandma:) Yes, Grandma, we're going home. Where we came from.

Grandma: Oh, but please, can't you stay longer? You're all your mother has.

Isabella: I'm sorry, Grandma. We would have stayed if we could. But we can't.

Karen: She's right, Grandma. It is time for us to go. I know it now. I can feel it all through me, calling me.

Grandma: But your mother will be broken hearted. What will I tell her?

Isabella: (troubled): I don't know. I wish I did. (Starts to go, and turns again). Oh, but I was told something I think was for all of us. They said, "All will be well."

(They turn away, for the last time, and slowly but with resolution leave the stage.)

Grandma: (calling after them) Don't go! Please! I don't know what to tell her!

(Distracted, she drops helplessly into one of the kitchen chairs, awaiting what may come. An hour and a half go by. There is loud knocking at the door.)

Grandma: (thinking aloud) Who is that? The police? Are the kids hurt?

Grandma: (The door opens) You're back! Praise the Lord. Come in, come in!

(They spill into the kitchen. Isabella is wearing clothes unknown to Grandma: A very heavy outer coat from head to toe, with an immense fur collar; a very large golden arrow runs through the side of her hair. Karen wears a shirt with colors almost blinding in their intensity. Her pants are strange- the legs don't match at all. Harriet begins to suspect that the girls are the same, but not the same.).

Karen: (suspiciously) Hi, Mom.

Isabella (nudges her).No, Karen, This is *Grandma*. (To Grandma:) We never know what she's going to say next. We're very sorry. (They perform a very deep bow).

Grandma: Oh no, this will never do. Please, please get up. (pause) .You're not the same girls, are you? The girls who lived here and just went away. You're different.

Karen: Oh, but we are...

Isabella: No, Karen. We can tell her. I trust her. (to Grandma) We're not the same. It's our turn to come here.

Grandma: Well that's just fine! I am so happy to see you! You're so welcome. So welcome! I'll take you upstairs to show you your rooms, where your clothes are. You have to take those outlandish ones off and put on the ones we ordinarily wear here in Virginia. Your mother will expect to see you in them.

Karen: I never really had a mother.

Isabella: They said we would like her.

Karen: I hope.

Grandma: Please, let's hurry; we don't have much time. She'll be here soon. Come on!

(An hour passes; Mom enters, with some packages from the car.)

Mom: Helloooooo! I'm home!

(She goes out to get more stuff. The three come down, appear down stage right).

Grandma: (whispers) All right, girls. Go ahead. Just be yourselves. She'll love you.

Mom: (reappearing): I'm in the kitchen! With a surprise!

(Isabella, unafraid and serene, goes without hesitation into the kitchen.)

Isabella: What surprise, Mom?

Mom: Butter cookies! I think they're in here. (Looks in bag).

(But Karen is still hanging back, almost refusing to go. Harriet puts her arm around her and urges her to move forward. She does, but very slowly. Mom looks up and sees her there. Karen stops short, surprising Grandma, who halts also in alarm. But Karen is no longer alarmed; she is transfigured in wonderment.)

Karen: (to Grandma) She looks nice. I like her.

Mom: There's my girl! (She holds her arms out to her). Come here, my baby.

Karen: (She looks up questioningly to Grandma, who nods; then she suddenly rushes to Mom, arms outstretched.) I'm coming Mom! I'm coming!

END

\\

