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Characters:

SUSAN HART	16 years old, Catholic schoolgirl
VINNIE HART	19, college student, her brother
GERT HART	50, ex-Junior League, their mother
JOHN HART	50, architect, their father
EDITH CARR	70's, GERT's aunt
PEGGY CARR	30's, EDITH's daughter, attorney
ELMO MACAULIFFE	20's, wears overalls
THOMAS DONAHUE, S.J.	40's, priest
JIMMY MAGUIRE	70's, bookie
PERRY ZILM	30's, sensitive
LOLLY ZILM	30's, PERRY's wife, fashion entrepreneur
MRS. BATTISTA	50's, real estate agent
DR. JERRY TRACEY	40's, urologist, buddy of JOHN's
GWENN RITZENTHALER CARR	20's, EDITH's daughter-in-law

Synopsis:

WAKE takes place in the kitchen of a house in suburban Cleveland. It is St. Patrick's Day, and a blizzard is raging outside. The Hart family is gathered because **GERT**'s mother has just died, and are busy with preparations for that evening's wake and the next day's funeral. Unbeknownst to **GERT**, **JOHN** is having an affair with **PEGGY**. But **EDITH** is convinced that **PEGGY** is having an affair with **VINNIE**, **GWENN** is sure she's after **SUSAN**, and **SUSAN** is certain that it's really **PEGGY** and **Fr. DONAHUE**. The agent from the real estate office starts showing the house a week earlier than she should to the Zilms, and **PERRY** turns out to be **PEGGY**'s long-lost college boyfriend. **GERT** is trying to fix up **PEGGY** with **JERRY**. A mistake was made at the funeral home: the body in the casket is not the right one, and it is up to **ELMO** to switch the bodies without the family finding out. **Fr. DONAHUE** is an old flame of **GERT**'s, and in revenge has secretly married her mother to the family bookie, **JIMMY MAGUIRE**. At the end of the play, the secret marriage is revealed, the will is contested, the right body is in the casket, and **PEGGY** has forever lost her trust in **JOHN**. The play is in two acts with one set, and doubling of the cast is possible.

This play was given a staged reading at Chelsea Rep in New York City, directed by John Grabowski in 1986, and another by the Aegean Theatre in New York

City directed by Douglas Wagner in 1996. It received a non-Equity production at 13th St. Repertory Theatre, New York City, in 1987, directed by Thom Yarnal.

(Large kitchen of a house built just after World War I. There are Hallmark Saint Patrick's Day decorations on the doors and windows. There are five doors- one outside to the back porch, one to the pantry, one to the basement, one to the library, and one to the front hall. The kitchen has a large 30's style stove, refrigerator, cabinets, sink, a table with six chairs. There is a desk with a chair in front of it, a telephone is on the desk. There is a dog dish full of water in front of the back door. Two windows, on one of the windowsills is a fishbowl with a large goldfish in it. It is late afternoon on Saint Patrick's Day, and has been blizzarding for several hours. From the door to the dining room comes a female voice practicing scales, not very well. After a moment, the doorbell rings. The voice continues. The doorbell rings again)

SUSAN (OFF):

Okay, okay.

EDITH (OFF):

Will you answer that please, Susan dear?

(The doorbell sounds one continuous ring until it is answered)

SUSAN (OFF, yelling):

I AM!

(SHE enters the kitchen from the pantry door. SHE is about sixteen, dressed in a Catholic school uniform. SHE crosses to the back door and opens it, revealing VINNIE. HE is twenty, dressed in a parka and carries a suitcase and an over-stuffed book bag)

SUSAN (CONTD.):

Don't you have a key?

VINNIE

I left it at school.

SUSAN:

Get in here. It's cold.

(HE enters. SHE closes the door)

VINNIE:

Yeah, it's nice to see you, too.

(HE tries to walk into the room, trips
over the dog dish)

What the-

SUSAN:

Julie's dish. Mom's gonna be really sore at you. She just
washed the floor this morning.

(SHE picks up the dish, refills it at
the sink)

VINNIE:

(Drops his bags)

God, I'm freezing.

SUSAN:

You flew?

VINNIE:

Plus two busses, the train from the airport and the walk
from the train, yeah.

(HE takes off his hat and gloves)

SUSAN:

So, you didn't see them?

VINNIE:

Who?

SUSAN:

Mom and Dad. They went out to get booze.

VINNIE:

Oh, no! I'm missing the green beer party at the Blue
Llama.

SUSAN:

(Replacing the dog dish)

Gross.

(SHE looks at his bag)

You'd better move that stuff or she'll be pissed.

VINNIE:

How can she be pissed? She's dead.

SUSAN:

Not Grandma. Gertrude.

VINNIE:

Didn't anyone ever tell you not to call your mother by her first name? It's rude.

SUSAN:

You do.

VINNIE:

That's different.

SUSAN:

Why? Cause you're a boy?

VINNIE:

I'm older.

SUSAN:

Not so much.

VINNIE:

Enough. Anyway, Mom never called Grandma "Anna."

SUSAN:

'Cause she would've smacked her, that's why. You know, Grandma looks kind of funny.

VINNIE:

Well, she's dead, isn't she?

SUSAN:

Besides that. They did something weird with her hair.

VINNIE:

Like what?

SUSAN:
It's greyer. Got more curls in it.

VINNIE:
You're imagining things.
(SUSAN goes to the counter and sneaks a
cookie out of a plate covered with
tinfoil)
I won't tell.

SUSAN:
I know, it's practice. Whenever she catches me, she
screams.

VINNIE:
(Taking off his coat)
I'm so glad to be home.

SUSAN:
The nuns sent'em over for the lunch after the funeral
tomorrow. You'd think they were gold.

VINNIE:
(Throwing his coat on top of his bags)
Why don't you make yourself useful?
(HE gestures to the bags)

SUSAN:
Do it yourself. I have to rehearse.
(SHE exits through the pantry door.
Resumes her scales)

VINNIE:
Who else is here?

SUSAN (OFF):
Edith's in the living room.

VINNIE:
Aunt Edith.

SUSAN (OFF):
Yeah. Gwenn was, but she had to take the baby home. That
kid is a real porker!

VINNIE:
It was pretty fat at Christmas.

SUSAN:

It looks like a fullback for the Miami Dolphins.

(SHE enters from the pantry.)

You get to spend five whole days with it.

VINNIE:

I'm leaving on Friday, right after the funeral.

SUSAN:

Uh uh. You get to hear the will read Monday afternoon.

VINNIE:

I thought they only did that in the movies.

SUSAN:

Dad said you better be there, just in case.

VINNIE:

I wonder how much money Grandma had.

SUSAN:

Tons.

VINNIE:

I was thinking of numbers, Susan. Not just tons.

SUSAN:

I'm so sick of you.

VINNIE:

I've only been home for five minutes. What're you gonna do with yours?

SUSAN:

I'm going to study in Paris.

VINNIE:

Mom and Dad will never let you go away to school, let alone Paris.

SUSAN:

They will when I'm old enough. It'll be great- I'll just sing and talk French all the time. No algebra ever again.

VINNIE:

I don't have to take algebra anymore.

(SUSAN glares at him)

C'mon. Grandma's only been dead two days-

SUSAN:

Vinnie-

VINNIE:

First, I'll move outta the dorms and get an apartment. And a place in the Hamptons. Could you put me up in Paris for a few weeks?

SUSAN:

Maybe. I want to get one of those doggie coats for Julius, too.

VINNIE:

Those are stupid. He won't wear it.

SUSAN:

He will so!

(SUSAN crosses to the basement door. SHE opens it. We see the shadow of an enormous hound. It barks)

You would, wouldn't you, Julius?

(More barks)

Told you so.

(SUSAN closes the basement door, exits through the pantry and resumes her scales offstage. VINNIE crosses to the cookie plate as EDITH enters. HE doesn't see her. SHE catches him just as the cookie is in his mouth)

EDITH

Vincent, dear-

(VINNIE jumps. Chokes on the cookie. Swallows what HE can and the other half is left in his hand. HE doesn't know what to do with it)

- it's so good to have you home.

VINNIE:

How are you, Aunt Edith?

EDITH:

(SHE hugs him.)

It's too bad that it had to be under these circumstances.

VINNIE:

(SHE breaks the embrace, sees the cookie in his hand. HE tries to hide it. Finally, eats it. With his mouth full)

Yes.

EDITH:

(Crossing to the suitcase)

I'll take these up, dear.

VINNIE:

Oh, no, you don't have to do that.

(SHE picks up just the coat)

EDITH:

Not to worry, dear.

(Stops just below the library door)

You haven't been in yet?

VINNIE:

(Looking a bit green)

No.

EDITH:

Maybe it's just me but.... I've known your grandmother for forty years, but I'd swear her eyes look a bit odd.

VINNIE:

(Very green)

They're not open?

EDITH:

No, of course not. But the size, and the way the brows.... Never mind. I'll leave this in the front bedroom.

(SHE exits)

VINNIE:

Thank you, Aunt Edith.

(Phone rings)

EDITH (OFF):

Please answer that, Susan dear.

SUSAN:

(Entering from the pantry)

Okay.

(SHE picks up the phone. Into the phone)

Hello? No, it isn't. No, she's out right now.... This is her daughter.

(SHE grimaces)

Is there a message? Fine. Bye.

(SHE slams down the phone)

I do NOT sound just like Mom!

VINNIE:

Who was it?

SUSAN:

I dunno. Some lady.

(As SHE starts to exit)

Oh, yeah. Mom said make ice.

VINNIE:

What?

SUSAN:

She said to tell you when you got here to make ice. It's your job.

(SHE exits into the pantry.
Resumes her scales)

VINNIE:

Anything else you forgot to tell me? Like we're having 25 for dinner?

(The singing gets louder)

Susan?

(SHE sings. VINNIE goes back to the cookies. Takes one, puts it back. HE opens the freezer and finds three empty ice trays. HE closes the door, sets them on the table)

What's this stuff on the table?

SUSAN (OFF):
My algebra. You touch it, you're dead.

VINNIE:
(*Sotto voce*)
Nice, real nice.
(HE looks out the window)
Who drives a brown Jetta?

SUSAN (OFF):
Is that a knock-knock joke?

VINNIE:
No.

SUSAN (OFF):
What, you mean a car?

VINNIE:
Yes, I mean a car.

SUSAN (OFF):
Do they have hatchbacks? It must be Peggy.

VINNIE:
Thank Christ.
(SHE starts singing again)
Don't they let you sing songs yet?

SUSAN (OFF):
Yeah, but I have to do all my exercises on all my vowels first. Very important. I could do terrible damage to my instrument.

VINNIE:
What do you sing? Like show tunes? Like "What I Did for Love?"

SUSAN (OFF):
No, that's gross. Art songs.

VINNIE:
What do you mean, art songs?

SUSAN (OFF):
Like art songs. Like-

SUSAN (OFF, CONTD.):
(SHE sings)
"Caro mio ben, credi mailman--"

VINNIE:
Mailman?

SUSAN (OFF):
It's Italian.

VINNIE:
Thank Christ.

(PEGGY enters through the back door.
SHE is EDITH's daughter, fifteen years
older than VINNIE. Not as snowy as HE
was)

PEGGY:
Oh, my God, I'll never be warm again. How's my favorite
godson?

(SHE closes the door)

VINNIE:
Well enough. How's lawyering?
(HE helps her off with her coat)

PEGGY:
Fine and dandy.
(VINNIE puts her coat over a chair)
I haven't been at the office much this week. The place
looks like a cyclone hit it. Lord God Almighty, what
you've missed. Last night was all about whether Anna would
wear her glasses or not.

VINNIE:
Who won?

PEGGY:
Your mother. I can't put my finger on it, but there's
something about those glasses.... I remember them being
bluer. Don't you?

VINNIE:
I haven't been in yet.

PEGGY:
I meant- I think you need a hug.

EDITH:

(EDITH enters from the hall. PEGGY hugs VINNIE. Neither of them see EDITH. Waits a moment, watching them. Clears her throat)

Ahem, Margaret. You went to the church?

PEGGY:

(Breaks the embrace, ruffles his hair)

Yes, Mother. All set.

SUSAN:

(Entering from the pantry)

Hi, Peggy. Who'd you get for tonight?

PEGGY:

Tom.

SUSAN:

Father Donahue? He's got eyes like a pig. Little beady ones.

PEGGY:

They aren't beady like-

SUSAN:

Ick. He used to have a crush on Mom. She told me.

EDITH:

(To VINNIE)

Why don't we go in, dear?

SUSAN:

Do you think he tried to kiss her? He's a priest.

(EDITH leads VINNIE out the library door)

PEGGY:

He wasn't always a priest.

(Rifling through her purse)

When did your mother say she'd be back? The driving's terrible.

SUSAN:

I don't know.

(SHE crosses to the pantry door)