

**SAMANTHA.** Well Virginia, if you can prove me otherwise. Please do. This has been a miserable Christmas for me. *(Sighs.)* I want to believe again too.

**VIRGINIA.** You will Samantha. You will. Tonight! Stay up with me! Please? Please? *(Adlibs more "pleases" to get SAMANTHA to say yes.)*

**SAMANTHA.** Well... Okay.

**VIRGINIA.** And don't fall asleep!

**SAMANTHA.** I won't.

### Scene 7 The Soup Line

*(People are standing in line to get soup. MARY LOU'S MOTHER and WENDY are in line, followed by MARY LOU.)*

**MARY LOU'S MOTHER.** *(To MARY LOU:)* Well, that was very nice of her to give you those hat and gloves.

**MARY LOU.** I know, she's one of my best friends.

**WENDY.** *(Coughs.)* Mama, I'm cold.

*(FRANCIS enters and falls in line with the others.)*

**MARY LOU'S MOTHER.** I know sweetheart. We are going to get you some hot soup. Then, you will feel better. Let me feel your forehead *(Feels forehead:)* Oh no, you're getting a fever.

**WENDY.** I'm sorry Mama

**MARY LOU'S MOTHER.** Martha. Could we have a little more soup for Wendy?

**MARTHA.** Of course. Here you go Wendy. *(Pours extra soup into her bowl.)*

**MARY LOU'S MOTHER.** Wendy, why don't you head over to the grocer to get warm. I will be there in a minute.

**WENDY.** *(Coughs.)* Okay mama. Thanks Martha! *(Exits.)*

**MARTHA.** You're welcome! *(To MARY LOU'S MOTHER:)* She's not looking good Hannah. She's starting to look like how your Tom looked before he got real si—

**MARY LOU'S MOTHER.** *(Interrupts:)* I don't want to think about it Martha. It's Christmas. My girls already have a lot to deal with.

**MARTHA.** Well, make sure you get her to a doctor.

**MARY LOU'S MOTHER.** I would if we had the money. I just hope things begin to turn around for her. Well, for both my daughters really.

**MARTHA.** I'm sure it will, Hannah. Merry Christmas.

**MARY LOU'S MOTHER.** Merry Christmas. *(Looks over to MARY LOU:)* Mary Lou, there's Mrs. Simmons over by the grocer. I'm going to get your sister and then talk to her about a job. You stay right here, and I'll be back for you. Stay here and enjoy your soup.

**MARY LOU.** Okay, Mother.

*(She exits. Poor people are sitting around the area drinking the hot soup slowly. MARY LOU sits down. FRANCIS gets his bowl and notices her. Looking a bit frightened in this new area, he feels safe confronting the child.)*

**FRANCIS.** Hey kid, do you mind if I join you?

**MARY LOU.** Sure.

**FRANCIS.** Thanks. *(Pause.)* Merry Christmas.

**MARY LOU.** Okay.

**FRANCIS.** *(An awkward silence. FRANCIS tries to make conversation.)* So, your mother's looking for a new job? Not happy with her old one?

**MARY LOU.** No. She was happy. She lost her job. I felt terrible. They told her they had to make cut backs. I don't really know what that means, but my mom said it wasn't my fault or hers.

**FRANCIS.** Yeah you're right. It wasn't you or your mother's fault. Times are really hard right now. I'm sorry about your sister too. She doesn't look well.

MARY LOU. I know. I hope she gets better too.

FRANCIS. (*Awkward pause.*) So, I bet you're looking forward to Santa coming tomorrow!

MARY LOU. I don't believe in Santa.

FRANCIS. Don't believe in Santa?! How old are you?

MARY LOU. Eight.

FRANCIS. Eight. And you don't believe in Santa. Why not?

MARY LOU. Well, how can I believe in a person that I've never met?

FRANCIS. I feel like I've just had this conversation.

MARY LOU. What?

FRANCIS. Oh nothing. Go on.

MARY LOU. Well, I've been good all year. I was last year. And the year before that. And the year before that. Santa hasn't brought me anything.

FRANCIS. (*Reflective and somewhat sad:*) I see.

MARY LOU. I mean, every year, my mother, sister, and I go to our church and they serve a big Christmas meal. We look forward to that. We also get new coats from them every year too. (*Refers to the coat she has on:*) This is the only one they had last year that fit me. I wish it was a little warmer. But the thing is, Santa didn't give it to me, or my Christmas meal.

FRANCIS. Well, how do you know that he didn't make the meal? Or how do you know he didn't make you that coat?

MARY LOU. I don't know. Because it wasn't under a Christmas tree.

FRANCIS. Well, is there a rule anywhere that says, "Gifts from Santa Claus can only be found under Christmas trees?"

MARY LOU. I guess not. But that doesn't prove that he's real.

FRANCIS. But it also doesn't prove that he isn't real.