

# FILE COPY

Citizens Housing Council  
Publications Committee

(First Draft)

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HOME SWEET HOME

## Characters:

Mr. and Mrs. Pat Moran  
Mrs. O'Grady, Mrs. Moran's mother  
Mary Moran, young daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Moran  
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Reilly  
Junior Reilly, their young son  
Dr. Morris

Mrs. O'Grady owns a candy store and news stand, in which her son-in-law is employed. She has always lived in the Irish section of the Upper West Side, - Hell's Kitchen, and loves it because she and her husband settled there when they first came over from Ireland, her friends and her life-long customers surround her and here among familiar scenes and faces she is at home.

She is a fiercely independent woman, proud of the fact that she has never accepted private or public charity, nor been "on relief", as have many of her old neighbors. Fiercely determined that she and her daughter and her daughter's family shall earn a livelihood out of the little candy store.

She resents any implication that she lives in the slums, or in a substandard building. Of course, her home is no mansion, but it is the best the likes of her can afford - she wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth - and it's clean and tidy, and she pays her rent promptly, and always has - and always intends to!

Mrs. Moran . Brought up as a nice Irish Girl should be - to keep house well and respect and obey her husband, and respect and obey her Mother. A good cook, a good wife and a good mother.

Mr. Moran. Works hard in the candy store and news-stand. would rather be working at his trade as a dock worker, and does occasionally, but such work has been scarce since 1929. Takes a nip now and then, for which his wife and mother-in-law can't be too harsh on him, nor too unforgiving. Mrs. Moran's father took a nip himself

(more)

now and then, and any sensible Irish woman knows any Irishman worth his salt does the same now and then, and a good Irishman is never drunk until both feet give out from under him.

Mary Moran. Irish by nature and disposition, of course, but unlike her mother and grandmother, more American than Irish. Her grandmother grew up in County Cork amid primitive conditions, her imagination nourished by tales of The Little People, the Terrible English, The Lovely St. Patrick, etc. Mary's mother grew up in earshot of all this, coming to her second-hand from her father and mother, and their friends. But Mary, as a child, heard little and remembered less, of such talk. Looming large in her childhood memory were a crowded tenement, the eternal four flights of steps that had to be climbed every day after school, and descended again before she could go out into the streets to play with the boys and girls of the neighborhood.

Mary goes to PS 37, and her classmates are not only Irish, but Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Jewish, Negro and Chinese. On her street Italians dare not linger, and English are mentioned angrily, with sharply in-drawn breath and hisses, but Mary's class-mates seem to her not Italians, English, etc., but fellow-Americans. Together they study spelling, arithmetic, American History, Civics, and domestic science, and there is little, if any, racial feeling. They vie with each other for high marks, for excellence in basketball and baseball and football, they learn together to cook on electric stoves and use electric dishwashers and modern conveniences in their domestic science kitchens - they learn to sew, to budget, to plan balanced meals... all of which sounds like nonsense to Grandmother, just nonsense, and mother smiles indulgently - maybe some day her daughter will have an electric stove and all those lovely kitchen gadgets, it is not as impossible as Grandmother makes out!

Mr. Reilly, also of Irish extraction, but born in New York City, drives a truck for a warehouse in Hell's Kitchen, and still works there, commuting from Red Hook.

Mrs. Reilly. Hard-working busy mother of five children, including a new-born baby.

Junior Reilly. In Junior High School class with Mary Moran.

Time: . The Present.

Place: New York City

(Music, "Home Sweet Home" fades in, then out).

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Mary - Mother, we ought to go visit the Reillys. It is only the polite thing to do, and I don't see why you keep putting it off. The baby's almost a month old already.

Mother - Now there you go again, Mary. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, pretending to be so interested in Mollie Reilly's new baby. What is it, anyhow? Is it you're wantin to go into Junior Reilly's house, to call on the young man himself in his own home? For shame. When I was a girl, I waited home for the young man to call on me. Go along, hurry and get that table set - they'll be here any minute, now, and we must have supper on the table.

Mary (slamming the silverware on the table - indignantly) Mother! That's not fair. You know I don't want to go over there just to see Junior. I don't care a thing about seeing Junior.

Mother - Oh, is that so? Then why is it you've been after me every day for the past two weeks telling me (mimicking) "we must go over and see the Reilly's new baby". Since when, my young lady, did you develop such a keen interest in babies?

Mary - Mother (almost in tears) I - I - do think we ought to be polite and go and see the baby.

Mother - You think it's polite! Well, and do you think it's polite to call on people just because you're burning up with curiosity to see their new home - now tell me do you? You just want to get us over there, don't you, so you can start talking again about what a wonderful place Red Hook is, and start begging again for us to apply for one of the apartments? I tell you, child, you're just wastin' your breath and your time. You ought to know by now that when your Grandmother says no, she means no!

Mary - Oh, Mother, sometimes I get so mad at Grandmother, she's so stubborn -

Grandmother (coming in and slamming door). What's that - stubborn, am I? Well listen, my young lady, if it weren't for my "stubbornness" you'd be in a fine fix, I'm tellin' you. It takes stubbornness to hang onto a stationary store these days, and fight off the bill collectors, and the tax collectors, and God knows what.

Mother - Oh Mary didn't mean -

(more)

Grandmother - Ldidn't mean, eh? I heard what she said, with my own ears. And I don't care to hear any explanations.

Mary - I was only saying

Grandmother - I'm not interested in what you were sayin. I'm interested in something to eat. I'm worn out. Every child in P.S. 37 stopped in tonight for a penny's worth of peppermints, and I'm that tired of countin them out I got peppermint spots before my eyes. And not a dime's profit in the lot of them - by the time you give each one of them a paper bag for a penny's worth of peppermints!

Mother - Where's Pat?

Grandmother - Yes, where's Pat. Don't ask me. He left the store before I did. Said he was going to stop by the Docks. Why he wastes his time doing that, I don't know. There's plenty of work for him to do in the store.

Mother - Well, you know how he feels, Mother. He'd rather work at the docks, if he could. He feels dependent, working for you.

Grandmother - Nonsense. When he works for me, he works, don't he? I'd have to pay someone else to help me, if he didn't, wouldn't I? No reason why he should be ashamed to work for me just because he happens to be married to my daughter. No wonder you're full of perverseness, Mary, (but indulgently) comes from your Father's side.

Father - Talking about me behind my back, eh? (slams door). Now what is it comes to Mary from her father's side?

Grandmother - Her perversity. Now come, sit down, and let's eat. I'm hungry. We've been waiting for you.

Father - I stopped by the docks.

mother - Anything doing?

Father - (Dejectedly) No. (Hopefully) Boys said it looks like things will be pickin' up soon, tho.

Grandmother - (Snappishly) They've been sayin that for the last ten years. Why don't you stop hanging around there and settle yourself to the store?

Father - Well, I'd rather -

Grandmother - You'd rather, what?

Father - Well blast it! Store work's no man's work!

(more)

Grandmother - (Indignant) Is that so! Well don't you be speaking slightly of that store! It earned a man's living for my husband and me, and it's earnin it now for all of us, and Thank God we've still got it. Thank God we've not had to ask anybody's charity, and Thank God we've not had to go on relief, no matter how bad times got - and you can thank the store for that, too, Pat Moran.

Father - Ah, well, I didn't mean -

Mary - Grandmother, tonight after we get the dishes washed let's go out and -

Grandmother - Go out! A body'd think to listen to you I was 16 years old and hadn't done a lick of work today. I'll not be going out tonight - it's to bed for me. And to bed for you, too, young lady, if you had sense in that head of yours.

Mary - but I only thought we ought to go -

Mother - (Interrupting warningly) Mary, don't anger your Grandmother tonight. she's tired.

Father - Where was it you wanted to go, girl?

Mother - (warningly) whatever it was, it can wait till another time. Now Mary, let's be clearing off this table. Put the water on to get hot to wash the dishes, and Pat, I'd like you to carry this garbage downstairs, and bring me up some more coal and kindling.

Father - Oh Good Lord, all those steps again.

Grandmother - Listen to him. What do you want, that your wife, or I, should run down the steps and fetch the coal and kindling?

Mary - We wouldn't have to run up and down steps if we lived at Red Hook. Nor have a coal stove - they have electric refrigerators and elevators and ---

Grandmother - And doornen and footmen I suppose, and someone to bring us breakfast in bed, and bathe us, and play sweet music for us to get up by -

Father - It's true about the elevators and the electric refrigerators - I was talking to Bill Reilly this morning and -

Grandmother - Oh you were, eh. And did you ask him how his brother Jim, that's on relief is gettin along? and how he likes havin the Government tell him to put his lights out at ten o'clock every night, and puttin his company out -

(more)

Mary - It's not true. The Government don't do that.

Grandmother - Now listen, Miss Smarty. I don't want to hear any more about Red Hook. I've told you time and time again they'll never get me in one of those Government projects as long as we can make a living out of that store, and Thank the Lord we've made our own livin so far.

Mary - But it's not charity, living in Red Hook, Grandmother.

Grandmother. Is that so? Well then who pays for it? Do the Reilly's have enough money to pay for elevators and electric refrigerators and fancy apartments? Well, maybe they do, but we don't, and we are certainly not going to live in a place we can't pay our own rent for. Thirty years I've lived in this very building, and this very apartment, and never missed paying the rent.

Mary - But you do pay your own rent in Red Hook. The Reillys pay their own rent -

Grandmother - \$5.90 a week, huh, (very sarcastic) and that pays for elevators and electric refrigerators. Why that's two dollars less than we pay.

Mary - I know - and they have playgrounds for the children and a nursery school, and club rooms for the grown-ups and every-thing.

Grandmother - (Sarcastically) That so? And all for \$5.90 a week. And you expect me to believe \$5.90 a week pays for all that? (Still very sarcastic).

Mary - Well, the Government built it, and that's why -.

Grandmother - (snorting) The Government! And still you tell me it's not relief!

Mary - It's not relief! Do you think the Reilly's - - -

Grandmother - Sure the Reilly's was a fine family back in County Cork, Ireland, but lots of Irish do strange things when they come to America. To listen to Mollie Reilly talk you'd think livin in a tenement and not havin' running hot water and steam heat and havin' the toilet out in the hall was living in the stone age. As if her own mother didn't live like me, in a one-room thatched cottage, with the whole family sleeping in the same room, and the toilet in the back yard instead of the hall, and the pigs in the lean-to, and cookin over a fireplace. Why this is a palace compared to that, I remember when Tim and I first came here, what a palace we thought it was.

Mary - But that was 30 years ago, Grandmother, and this is America, not Ireland. Maybe this place was nice 30 years ago, but it's 30 years older now, and you know no matter how hard (more)

mother and I work we can't keep the bugs out, and I'm ashamed to bring my friends here!

Grandmother - Ashamed! Now, Mary, I'd ought to box your ears. That an O'Grady should ever be ashamed, and you with the best blood of Ireland in your veins!

Mary - What difference does it make what blood's in your veins if you live in a place like this? Even if it's nice and tidy in here, what is it outside and down stairs? Noise and dirt and smells. And you know yourself if the Reillys hadn't moved out of that damp place they were living in, the rest of their children would get sick with consumption and die like their oldest two did.

Grandmother - Now Mary - is it damp in here? And are we sickly? Some families just naturally get consumption - it's in their blood.

Mary - It's not! Our school doctor knows. It's the way you live. And you should see how healthy the Reilly children look since they moved to Red Hook.

Grandmother (Angry) And you should see how healthy we'd all look if we moved to the poor house and let the Government feed us, or if we went on relief and let the Government feed us. I tell you, I'm not going to live in a Government project, and that's all there is to it! (Mary leaves room, crying).

Grandmother to mother. I tell you, I never saw a girl so set on such nonsense, and so stubborn. That's what comes of Domestic Science lessons and learning to cook on electric stoves and the like. Children ought to go to school to learn reading, writing and arithmetic, not such nonsense.

Mother - We really ought to go over and see the Reilly's new baby soon, tho.

Grandmother - Oh - so you're joined up with Mary against me, too!

Mother - No. But we ought to be polite and call on the Reillys. after all - -

Grandmother - Well, nobody ever accused me of not having good manners. Let's go next Sunday afternoon.

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The next afternoon in the stationery store, children's chatter heard. School just out. Door squeaks open and shut and above chatter of children Grandmother (calls out)

(more)

Hello, Dr. Morris.

Dr. Morris. - Hello, Mrs. O'Grady.

Grandmother - What can I do for you?

Dr. Morris. - When you get time, I'd like to talk to you.

Grandmother - (Amazed) What? - Oh - uh - yes, I'll be with you directly. Here, now children, hurry up and decide what you want and get out of here. (Business of selling candy and chatter dies away after several bangings of door).

Grandmother - Now Dr. Morris, what is it?

Dr. Morris - Is Pat here?

Grandmother - No. I sent him over to - - -

Dr. Morris - Good! I want to talk to you alone.

Grandmother - why -- ah -

Dr. Morris - Mrs. O'Grady, I'm the Union doctor, you know. Every year when the Union members renew their cards I examine them. I discovered 4 years ago that Pat had a bad heart. I didn't tell him and I didn't tell you because you're a brave woman with a hard struggle on your hands, and I didn't want to add to your worries.

Grandmother - why - Dr. Morris - I -

Dr. Morris. - Yes, that's why Pat hasn't been able to get any work at the Docks. I didn't tell him about his bad heart, but I told the Union officials and that's why they never assigned him to any job. I told them his heart couldn't stand any more of that heavy lifting and heaving.

Grandmother - Mercy upon us.

Dr. Morris - I'm telling you about it now, for this reason. He was in yesterday, for his yearly examination, and I found his heart is a little worse. Nothing serious, and nothing to worry about - if he takes it easy. Work around the store here can't hurt him. But he mustn't clumb steps any more. They're bad for him.

Grandmother - But he's got to climb steps. We live on the 5th floor. How can he -

Dr. Morris. He can't. That's just it. You'll have to find a place on the first floor.

Grandmother - But the house we live in is full, no vacant apartments on the first floor. and the houses all around us are  
(more)



all full. It's going to be hard, finding a place. And I couldn't bear to move out of Hell's kitchen. I've lived here ever since I came to New York, 30 years - my friends are here - my life - long customers. I know every inch of it. It's home, almost as much as County Cork was. But I'll find a place, don't you worry, Dr. Morris. Oh -- here comes Pat now.

Pat - (puffing) Saints preserve us, don't know what makes my wind so short. Just ran into Mary, and she would make me stop and listen to Junior Reilly tell all about Red Hook. Then I hurried to get back.

Dr. Morris. Glad to see you, Pat. Just happened to be in the neighborhood and I stopped in to get a paper. By the way, Mrs. O'Grady, why don't you try to get an apartment in Red Hook?

Pat - Oh - Dr. You don't know what you're letting yourself in for. Saying Red Hook to Ma O'Grady is like waving a red flag before a bull. She and Mary been fighting about Red Hook for weeks.

Dr. Morris - Why, I don't understand that - - .

Grandmother - You understand, don't you, that this store's made a living for us all these years and we've taken care of ourselves without the Government's help and we'll keep on taking care of ourselves without the government's help.

Dr. Morris. Now strictly speaking, Mrs. O'Grady, that's not exactly true. Not many of us get by any more without the government's help. The government gives us policemen and firemen to protect us, inspects our food to make sure it's pure, educates our children, purifies our water, - -

Grandmother - Yes, and feeds some people, too. Well, it doesn't have to feed us, and doesn't have to give us a house to live in, and I guess the taxes I pay take care of all the police and fire protection I get. Taxes on this, taxes on that, taxes on cigarettes, taxes for a license, I declare, every day seems like they invent a new tax.

Dr. Morris - There you are - your own taxes go to pay for Red Hook, so why shouldn't you enjoy living there?

Grandmother - Begging your pardon, Dr. I don't care to hear any more about it.

Dr. Morris - (Goodnaturedly) Well, I can't help admiring your spunk, Mrs. O'Grady, but I think you're all wrong. This is a new age we're living in, and you have to adjust yourself to the changing social order.

Grandmother - Changing social order indeed! Humph! Well, thanks for stopping in Dr. (He goes, door closes).

(more)

Grandmother - (Kindly) C'Mon Pat, let's close up and go home. Most time for supper.

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After supper that night.

Music: Home Sweet Home fades in, then out)

Mary - But Grandmother, if we're going to move, why not try to get into Red Hook. Why move into that awful place the Reilly's moved out of?

Grandmother - It's not an awful place. It's as large as this, and it's nearer the store, and it's on the first floor - no steps to climb.

Mary - On the first floor! You mean in the basement! It's so damp the Reilly children were always sick, and two of them died and - oh (wailing) why are you so stubborn? why can't we move to Red Hook like the Reilly's did?

Mother - Mary, stop fussing with your Grandmother. She knows that's best. Where would we all be if it weren't for her? She's a smart woman.

Grandmother - I wonder - whether I'm so smart after all.....

Sound of children playing joyfully - birds singing -  
Sunday Afternoon.

Mary - Isn't it wonderful Grandmother, isn't it. Look at all the nice trees and grass and flowers and the benches where you can sit and sun yourself in the afternoon, and everything so quiet!

(Noise of children rises)

Grandmother - What do you mean, quiet?

Mary - Well, it is quiet compared to the street noises and the trains roaring by and the trucks and that awful factory across the street from our house.

Father - It is pretty, here. No wonder the Reilly's like it.

Mother - Quite a difference in this place for the new baby to grow up in and the old house where her other children were babies.

Grandmother - Here - this must be the building. #7. Hicks St. Now listen, all of you. We came here to call on the Reilly's and see their new baby - not to get ourselves an apartment. Here, it says, Reilly 3-A, must be on the third floor. And here are the stairs.

Mary - Oh, but we don't have to use the stairs. Here's an elevator.

Grandmother - But there's no one to run it.

Mary - There isn't supposed to be. It's self-operating. Look, I'll show you. Come on, get in. See - just press this button - 3 - (noise of door sliding shut). The door closes, and here we go up

Father - Well, Saint's preserve us!

Mother - Isn't it wonderful? Don't you wish we had this to carry the coal and kindling up in our house. (Elevator stops and door slides open).

Mary - Here we are. Third floor. 3-B, 3-C, 3-D, here it is - 3-A. (They knock on door. It is opened).

Mrs. Reilly - Well, for Goodness sake! Hello! Come on in.

(All except Grandmother Oh! and ah! over the apartment).

Mrs. Reilly - Here, let me take your things. Sit down. Make yourselves at home.

Grandmother - We came to see the new baby.

Mrs. Reilly - Oh, she's asleep right now, but I have to wake her up in a few minutes to feed her. Tell me all about yourselves. How are you getting along?

Grandmother - We're getting along fine, thank you.

Junior - Hello, Mary.

Mary - Hello, Junior.

Junior - The other kids are out playing but wanta see around the house? I'll show you.

Mrs. Reilly - Let's all look around. Come on. Wouldn't you like to, Mrs. O'Grady, and Mr. & Mrs. Moran?

Junior - Here's my room, Mary. See - windows in two walls.

Mrs. Reilly (proudly) - Yes, cross-ventilation. We have it in our bedroom, too. The girls have a big window in their room, and the baby has a room all to herself. We can fix it up as a playroom when she gets a little older.

Mrs. Moran - Playroom!

Mrs. Reilly - Yes, Playroom. Honestly, this is the grandest place you ever saw. I wouldn't trade it for Park Avenue. When

I think back to how we used to live in that tiny, damp place I don't know how we stood it all those years. If only my two oldest children (voice breaks)

Grandmother - Now, now, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. No use talking about them now, God Rest their souls. Let's see the rest of the house.

Mrs. Reilly - well - here's the bathroom. See. It has a built-in medicine cabinet and a clothes drier up there on the ceiling I use for little things like the baby's wash. They have laundry rooms down in the basement, with stationary tubs, plenty of hot water and a washing machine you can use by putting dime or a quarter in - depending on how big your wash is, and big drying rooms you can hang your clothes in.

Grandmother - Suppose some one steals your clothes.

Mrs. Reilly - They can't. You lock up your drying room where you've hung up your wash. Now here's the kitchen. See - it has all these nice built-in kitchen cabinets and this work table and here's the nice new gas stove and here is my pride and joy the electric refrigerator. After all the years I used to keep the children's milk in a window box, or on the window sill, or in that old wooden ice box of mine! Isn't this kitchen sunny and nice? It's a pleasure to work in it, honestly!

Mrs. Moran - Do your gas and electric bills run high here?

Mrs. Reilly. - Oh no. Gas and electric is included in the rent.

Grandmother - Included in the rent?

Mrs. Reilly - Yes. We pay only \$ . a week and that includes our 6-1/2 room apartment, steam heat all the time, hot water all the time and all our gas and electricity. Let's go back into the living room and sit down.

Mrs. Moran - Why, this is the same furniture you had in the old place. I thought it was new when I first came in.

Mrs. Reilly - Sure, it's our same old stuff. Some of our old neighbors told us we'd have to buy new furniture when we moved in but we didn't. You can see for yourself. 'Course we fixed it up a bit. Mike varnished that chair. And I made a new cover for this one, but we didn't have to. We just wanted to fix the things up to make the place look nicer.

Mr. Moran - Where is Mike?

Mrs. Reilly - He's over in the Community Center. The men in this building have formed a club, and they're meeting now - they play cards, and talk, and have little parties. We women have a club, too. Meets Thursday afternoons.

(more)

Grandmother - How come you have time to take care of your family and go gollivantin to clubs, too?

Mrs. Reilly - Oh, but I do. All the women do. It's so easy to keep house in this place. You're through before you know it. Mop up the kitchen, put your garbage in the incinerator out in the hall, dust up - no bugs to fight, no dark corners, you're through in a jiffy. Little Sheila goes to nursery school, so I have most of the afternoon to myself.

Mrs. Moran. Must be grand.

Mrs. Reilly. Junior, run over to the Community Building and tell your father Mrs. O'Grady and the Morans are here.

Junior. - Yes, Mother, want to come with me, Mary? I'll show you our baseball diamond on the way. (They leave, door closes).

Grandmother - Takes your husband a long time to get to work from here, doesn't it, Mollie?

Mrs. Reilly. Yes, but he doesn't mind. It's worth getting up a little earlier, and, getting home a little later, to live in a place like this.

Grand mother - I suppose they investigated you to death before they took you in here, didn't they.

Mrs. Reilly. - Well, they investigated us, but it wasn't so bad. We only had to prove we were American citizens, and residents of New York City, and that our income last year wasn't more than \$1400. You'd be surprised how nice they are, Mrs. O'Grady, honest, you would. They show you how to use the electric refrigerator and all about everything, and they never come around if you don't send for them.

Oh, I heard so many wild stories about how it would be to live here, but they are not true. People told me you had to have pull to get in here, but you don't! who do I, or Mike know? We just wrote a letter and asked for an apartment and they investigated us, and here we are.

Mrs. Moran - Don't they have a lot of rules and regulations?

Mrs. Reilly - No, honestly, they don't. People told me before I moved here that we'd have to turn our lights off at 10, that we'd have to sign in and out, that we couldn't have company, that inspectors would come snooping around all hours of the day and night -

It's all a lot of lies! This is our home, to do as we please. They gave us our keys and we come and go as we please, and nobody bothers us. All you have to do here is pay your rent, and behave nice, like you'd behave wherever you live.

(more)

Mr. Moran - Sure sounds too good to be true.

Grandmother - Certinly does. (Baby cries).

Mrs. Reilly - Oh, there's the baby awake at last. Come, now you may see her. ( Fades out - Music "Home Sweet Home")

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In the cary store - chatter of children in background.

Grandmother - (Angrily) And that's exactly what I think about you and I don't give a darn if you go back and tell the Mayor, himself, to his face. Now get out of here. If these young children weren't here I'd tell you in plainer language what I think of you. (Screams) Get out! (he goes).

Dr. Morris.- (Coming in) "hy Mrs. O'Grady! what on earth ---? "

Grandmother - Another tax! What does the City think I'm made out of - money? I didn't get \$100 a month out of this store last year, and here they are asking for an Occupancy tax!

Dr. Morris - Hmm- What tax did you say it is?

Grandmother - Occupancy tax!

Dr. Morris - What's it for?

Grandmother - How do I know what it's for? Gotta pay it, that's all I know!

Dr. Morris - How much is it?

Grandmother - \$2.00

Dr. Morris - Two dollars for a whole year?

Grandmother - Yes, for a whole year.

Dr. Morris - Well, that oughtn't to break you.

Grandmother - No, it won't. But it's the principle of the thing. (Calmer) And then, I was so worried when he came in. I've looked and looked, and the only place I can find to move into around here is the one on the next street, the Reilly's moved out of. Mary'll just have a fit if we move in there. It's not much of a place.

Dr. Morris - Have you tried to get into Red Hook?

(more)

Grandmother - Now, Dr. Please don't start on that again. I've heard Red Hook, Red Hook, Red Hook all week until I'm sick of it. Can't anyone understand how hard I've fought to keep off relief, and how hard I'll fight to keep out of a place like that?

Dr. Morris - I understand, Mrs. O'Grady, and I admire you, but you've got the wrong slant on Red Hook. It's not a charity place, not for relief families. It's for families like you - families who work and try and try but through no fault of their own can't earn enough to pay rent on a place that's decent to live in.

You see, rents in this City, and in most big cities, are way out of proportion. It's nobody's fault, really. It's just that taxes go up and up, and houses get older and older, and folks with money move into the new buildings and folks with little money have to live in the old buildings.

Suppose your landlord was a kindhearted man -

Grandmother - Well, a bank owns our house.

Dr. Morris - Right - a bank owns it, because the man who had it just couldn't get enough rent out of it to pay expenses and so he lost it to the bank.

Grandmother - What's that got to do with me? What difference does it make whether I pay rent to a man, or to a bank?

Dr. Morris - No difference, Mrs. O'Grady. I'm just trying to show you that the owners of buildings like you live in couldn't charge you less rent if they wanted to, and couldn't fix up the buildings with modern kitchens and bathrooms if they wanted to. Where would they get the money? They couldn't collect more rent from people like you, because you couldn't afford to pay more than you do.

Grandmother - I certainly could not!

Dr. Morris - So - if there's any new building done for families like you, the Government's got to do it, because nobody else can and make money out of it, and private business men don't use their money to build where there's no profit.

Grandmother - Well, why should the Government either? And waste the taxpayers money?

Dr. Morris - For this reason - it is not a waste of taxpayers money. The Government feels that by building public housing projects it saves money that would otherwise be spent for extra police and fire protection in slum areas, extra health costs, public hospitals, clinics, sanitariums, money spent in courts, homes for juvenile delinquents, prisons, etc.

(more)

Grandmother - Sounds far-fetched to me.

Dr. Morris - But it's not far-fetched, Mrs. O'Grady. You have a fine, upstanding family, but look at other families in this neighborhood. Look at the Jenkins. How much do you think it cost the government to keep that Jenkins boy in a juvenile home and then later to try him several times, and now to keep him in the penitentiary? And what do you suppose it costs the government to support his wife and baby? There are thousands of boys like him in the slums who might have been saved to be decent citizens if they'd had half a chance when they were kids.

Remember what happened to Alice Johnson in the dark hall of her house, before anyone could get to her to save her? Remember how the whole Ailor family burned up on the top floor of the house a block away from yours?

Grandmother - Sounds like you're right. Neighborhoods like this do cost the Government a lot. But what's the answer? Must we all live in a concentration camp, just because we can't afford to pay high rents?

Dr. Morris - Now, Mrs. O'Grady. Weren't you to Red Hook yourself? Didn't you see for yourself it was no concentration camp? Come, now, don't be stubborn.

Grandmother - 'Twas a nice place, I'll grant you that. But why should I live there? Why should the Government pay my rent?

Dr. Morris. - You should live there because if you go on living where you are you're not only making Mary unhappy and making your daughter work harder than necessary, but you're killing your daughter's husband, Pat.

And I'm telling you again the Government's not paying your rent. You pay your own rent, and what you pay covers the expenses of your living there. All the Government does is to build the place for you, because no one else will build unless he gets a profit, and he can't get a profit out of you.

The Government feels an obligation to you, to help you have a decent home for your family, because it's no fault of yours that you're no profit to the builders and the landlords. God knows you work as hard as you can, and if you don't earn enough to live decently, why then it is somebody else's fault. - Maybe the Governments -

Grandmother - You're a convincing talker, Dr. Morris, and here it is closing time and I'm afraid I've used up too much of your valuable time.

Dr. Morris - If I've convinced you, Mrs. O'Grady, 'twas worth the time.

Grandmother - Well, you've convinced me to this extent, Dr. Morris, that I am going to apply for an apartment at Red Hook. But I don't feel right about it. I'll do it, but only because I don't want Pat to get worse, and because I know it would break Mary's



heart to move into the place the Reilly's moved out of.

But I don't feel right about it, Dr. I'M an old woman, and I've fought it out against the world this long, I hate to give in against my principles.

Dr. Morris - (kindly) Now, Mrs. O'Grady, will you listen to me one minute more, and see if this doesn't set your heart at ease?

Grandmother - Now what are you going to tell me?

Dr. Morris - Just this. Remember when I came in the store this afternoon, and you were throwing the tax collector out?

Grandmother - (Getting angry all over again) Yes that! - that!

Dr. Morris - What did you say was the name of the tax he wanted?

Grandmother - It was - it was - Occupancy tax.

Dr. Morris - Yes - \$2.00 a year you said, but it won't break you. And he'll collect \$5.00 a year from people that \$5.00 won't break, and \$10 a year from people with bigger businesses, and so on. And do you know what that money is used for?

Grandmother - No.

Dr. Morris - That's the money, Mrs. O'Grady, which the Government of New York City will use to keep the rents at Red Hook down to where you and folks like you can pay it.

You see, even if you don't move to Red Hook, you'll be paying \$2.00 a year towards keeping the Reillys there. So which would you rather do? Pay \$2.00 a year to keep them there, while you live in the old apartment they moved out of, or move to Red Hook with your family?

Grandmother - I never thought of it that way before ---- I give up Doc.... There's only one answer to that.

(Chuckling) Wait till Mary starts on me tonight. Won't that young lady get the surprise of her life?

(Music "Home Sweet Home")

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# FILE COPY

## CHRISTMAS IDEA

from The Citizens' Housing Council of New York  
470 Fourth Avenue New York 16, N. Y.

Dear Member:

You must have many friends who are as interested as you are in a better New York. . . .

These friends probably have enough neckties and bookends and handkerchiefs - and they will certainly be overloaded with greeting cards. . . . So-o-o-o

**WHY NOT GIVE THEM A MEMBERSHIP IN THE CITIZENS' HOUSING COUNCIL OF NEW YORK as a Christmas gift?**

They will be reminded of your thoughtfulness each month when the Newsletter arrives. . . their interest in New York and city planning will be kept fresh and up-to-date. . . they will receive leaflets and other material, notices of panels and meetings. . . .

A number of members have taken out memberships for their friends - that's where we got the idea.

If you think it's a GOOD idea, list below the names of friends you want to interest, mail us a check for the total amount, and we'll send each of them a membership card, with a Christmas greeting card from you!

Simple for you. . . fine for your friends. . . good for New York and getting on with the job we have in mind for 1945!

Cordially yours,

CITIZENS' HOUSING COUNCIL OF NEW YORK

Please send membership to the following friends, in my name:

Name..... Address..... Zone.....

Name..... Address..... Zone.....

Name..... Address..... Zone.....