

# LIBERTY STREET

By Craig Sodaro

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Katie O'Brien and her four daughters land in America with plenty of hope and little else to establish themselves in the New World. They quickly fall prey to a scheming landlord, but despite this, one of Katie's daughters, Colleen, has eyes for the landlord's son.

Her sister, Mary, soon meets their disgruntled neighbors, the Gianettis, who own a sausage shop. Unfortunately, the Gianettis have fallen under the thumb of Tom Corrigan, the "boss" of Liberty Street who forces business owners to pay him for "protection." Mary finds herself torn between helping those who are desperate and keeping the trust of her family.

A pair of anti-immigrant students make life difficult for the Jenny and Lily, the younger daughters. A school teacher, Virginia Adams, hopes that a street fair will help unite the children from such different backgrounds. But it's an uphill battle. Lily falls in with a gang of pickpockets who lead her into near disaster.

Despite all the hardships, however, each newcomer ultimately comes to understand what liberty really means. Set at the turn-of-the-century, the large, richly-textured cast shows us what it takes to pursue happiness on Liberty Street.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(12 m, 13 w)*

**KATIE O'BRIEN:** Immigrant from Ireland, a widow and mother.

**COLLEEN O'BRIEN:** Katie's 18-year-old daughter.

**MARY O'BRIEN:** Katie's 16-year-old daughter..

**JENNY O'BRIEN:** Katie's 14-year-old daughter.

**LILY O'BRIEN:** Katie's 10-year-old daughter.

**FRANKIE STANLEY:** Neighborhood boy, about 14.

**CORRINE STANLEY:** Frankie's sister, about 13.

**ED ELLIS:** A farmer, about 22.

**DANA TEMPLETON:** A wealthy landlord.

**JIMMY TEMPLETON:** His 21-year-old son.

**CONSTABLE CHANDLER:** Local lawman.

**OLAF STEVENSON:** Immigrant pipe fitter, about 22.

**CHARLIE:** A local thug.

**ROCKY:** A pickpocket, about 12.

**IVAN:** His friend, also 12.

**SAM:** A tomboy, about 12.

**LENA:** Another 12-year-old friend.

**TOM CORRIGAN:** About 35, the "boss" of the street.

**CARLO GIANETTI:** About 50, a butcher from Italy.

**TONY GIANETTI:** Carlo's son, 18.

**ANGELICA GIANETTI:** Carlo's daughter, 20.

**INGA:** A young bride.

**NELLIE:** Another.

**HELENA DEGERMAN:** A third.

**VIRGINIA ADAMS:** A teacher.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

ACT I: Scene 1: Morning, early spring, 1900, Liberty Street.

Scene 2: That afternoon.

Scene 3: Immediately after.

Scene 4: The following day.

Scene 5: Later that evening.

Scene 6: Later that night.

ACT II: Scene 1: The following day.

Scene 2: Later that morning.

Scene 3: That evening at eight.

Scene 4: The following morning.

## **SETTING**

The setting is Liberty Street in a large American city at the turn of the century. The outline of the city is suggested in the background - a series of silhouettes indicate the growing skyscrapers. Several platforms UPS act as the tenements in which the O'Briens and the Gianettis live. We clearly see porches, then a door frame leading to a room. Beyond that, there is another door in each apartment through which the actors can enter and exit. The O'Brien porch must have a working light. Suggestions of other buildings on the street would help create the cluttered atmosphere of an immigrant section of the city. A pair of streetlights, one right, one left, will add dimension and some nice lighting effects. Much of the time characters are visible in the houses while action is going on in the street. Extras, occasionally walking down the street or carrying out business, would help establish the busy, crowded area.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: The O'BRIENS are huddled at CS, holding or sitting on their suitcases, baskets, and bundles. KATIE stands center, with COLLEEN, MARY, JENNY, and LILY sitting or standing around her. They look apprehensively at their surroundings.)*

COLLEEN: T'isn't exactly the promised land.

MARY: *(Worried.)* Smells no better 'n Dublin.

JENNY: Won't be no better, neither! Can't see why we had to leave in the first place.

LILY: *(Whining.)* When are we goin' home, Mother?

KATIE: *(Firmly.)* This is home, Lily. For better or worse, this is it from now on. You ... you know what street this is, don't you?

LILY: The sign says Liberty Street.

KATIE: And you now about liberty, don't you? It's in America's "Declaration of Independence" ... "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." We've got our lives, girls, and now our liberty.

JENNY: *(Fearfully.)* What about our pursuit of happiness?

KATIE: *(Determined.)* Let's just take it one step at a time.

COLLEEN: Which place is ours, do you think?

MARY: I don't like the looks of that one. But the one with blue shutters ain't so bad.

KATIE: Isn't so bad. Mind you grammar, Mary, if you intend to get anywhere here.

JENNY: Oh, so you think Americans will all be speakin' the Queen's English? Ha! We all know they butcher the language better 'n they butcher cattle.

KATIE: Jenny, that's enough. I'll not have you sayin' such things.

JENNY: You can't tell me what to say or not say. This is the land of the free, ain't it? *(There is a moment of silence.)*

LILY: I'm hungry, Mummy.

KATIE: Here ... have a bit of bread.

*Liberty Street*

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COLLEEN: Wasn't Mr. Templeton supposed to meet us here at 8:00?

KATIE: Aye, Colleen.

MARY: It's quarter to nine now.

KATIE: He'll be here. We've got an agreement. They told me at the boat dock he's very good with new arrivals. Always has a nice place for 'em.

JENNY: From the smell of things, we've been snookered.

KATIE: Maybe, Jenny, girl. But right now Mr. Dana Templeton's all we've got.

*(FRANKIE and CORRINE enter SL.)*

FRANKIE: Well, will you look at this!

CORRINE: *(Sarcastically.)* Oh, yuck! I thought it smelled particularly bad out here this morning.

FRANKIE: Where do you suppose they're from, Corrine?

CORRINE: Well, Frankie ... looking at the quality of that shawl, I'd say they are from someplace where weaving machines haven't been invented yet.

FRANKIE: And look at that hair. Hasn't been washed in a month of Sundays!

CORRINE: Aren't the fashions interesting? Here I thought it's 1900 not 1875!

JENNY: *(Bitterly.)* And who thinks you look so sweet, darlin'?

FRANKIE: They talk! At least one of 'em does.

MARY: *(Sweetly.)* Of course we talk. I'm Mary. Mary O'Brien.

CORRINE: Another O'Brien? Is that the only name you've got over there?

KATIE: It's a fine name and we're proud of it, Miss.

JENNY: Aye! You should have one so good.

FRANKIE: What's this? I think she's pickin' a fight.

KATIE: She ain't pickin' nothing, lad.

JENNY: Who says? I'd fight you any day. You and that cow you're with.

COLLEEN: Jenny! Don't!

## **End of Freeview**

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