

Scene One

Darkness.

A rattle of drums is heard, exploding into a march, like a regiment of Canadian infantry about to hit the parade ground.

This continues for a few seconds, then fades into a swing tune; played in the Glenn Miller style, loud. The two pieces of music contend for a moment, then the swing tune swamps the march, which fades quickly. The swing tune continues.

The lights come up on five women, standing or seated, waiting.

JANET is standing, holding on to the back of a chair, moving her feet to the music, aggressively cheerful.

The others are motionless, moody or preoccupied. Pause. They wait.

Eventually JANET crosses to CATHERINE, taps her on the shoulder and nods towards the dance floor. CATHERINE shrugs and they move onto the dance floor together.

They dance for a moment. Both know the latest steps. Then JANET tramps on CATHERINE's toes. CATHERINE winces, limps away to the edge of the stage where she sits, takes off one of her toeless pumps, and massages her foot.

Pause.

JANET looks all around, then crosses to MARGARET, taps her on the shoulder and nods towards the dance floor. MARGARET grimaces, but allows JANET to drag her to the perimeter of the dance floor. They dance. MARGARET executes a few furtive, old-fashioned steps, awkwardly. JANET tries to "spin" her. MARGARET stumbles. Angry and embarrassed, she pushes JANET away, hastily returns to her chair and sits, turning her back on the others.

Pause.

JANET looks all around. She crosses towards MARTA who is sitting apart, her back also turned. As JANET approaches, MARTA swivels around and looks at her. JANET recognizes MARTA, stops, smiles very feebly, and quickly moves away in the opposite direction. MARTA turns her back again.

Pause.

JANET sees EVE, crosses to her, taps her on the shoulder and nods towards the dance floor. EVE hesitates but finally accepts, unhappily. She and JANET move onto the dance floor. They dance — JANET, anxious but determined, smiling; EVE, nervous and growing unhappier by the moment as she watches her feet. JANET's dancing becomes livelier. She is literally propelling EVE around the dance floor. EVE tries to break away from her, whispering incoherent apologies. JANET pulls her back again and forces her to dance.

Suddenly EVE bursts into loud sobs, pulls free of JANET roughly and covers her face with both hands. She crosses upstage, takes out a handkerchief and blows her nose. She continues sobbing, her body shaking.

Pause.

JANET looks around, lost. Pause. She returns to her chair, stands behind it as before, fastens her hands to the back of it, begins moving her feet to the swing tune. She tries to smile.

The five women wait.

The swing tune comes to a rousing conclusion.

The lights fade to a glow on all except CATHERINE.