

Readings for “Surprise Party” - Ross Valley Players RAW

Choose both readings from the character of your choice; we may also ask you to read other characters, so please be familiar with all the readings. We may also ask you to cold-read scenes from the play. By reading all of the character speeches below, you'll get clues to the play and references that may not be clear in a single reading. Please note that these readings have been cobbled together, sometimes from multiple speeches, with other characters speaking in between. Feel free to utilize pauses to aid in transitions.

Please review the character descriptions provided by the author as you prepare your reading. You may memorize your reading or not, but please carefully prepare it. These short readings should not feel “cold.”

RADIO ANNOUNCER *(who will also be the **NARRATOR** for our reading - could be male or female. Please also prepare one of the other, gender-appropriate readings)*

(S/he is in the middle of a broadcast, after reporting war news and potential domestic infiltration. This is a small, country station.)

My friends, don't let fear tear us apart. This is the season of love and peace. A savior was born, the prince of peace, and his last wish to his disciples was love one another. (Pause) Whew! I know I went on and on, so I'll quit for now. Oh, one more thing - Sterns General Store is sponsoring its 4th annual Christmas party tomorrow night at the Elks Lodge at 7. There'll be cookies and punch and gifts for the children, no since it's so late, I can tell you there's gonna be a surprise - yep! A visit from you-know-who — Ho! Ho! Ho! Don't tell your kids. So, Merry Christmas to all and an early Happy New Year. Hopefully 1944 will bring us that peace we so dearly pray for. That said, my next spin is going to be - *(the radio is clicked off)*

BOB *(Two readings; please prepare both)*

1. What were you talking about when I crawled in? Winterfest? Too bad it got cancelled. Remember that photo I took last year? “Fear in the First Degree?” Almost made me famous. There he was King of the Silver Screen Cowboys, up there on his horse - wouldn't ride in the sled. The lake was a clean sheet of ice. The princesses skated out with the torches, lining his path, and the throne was about 50 feet ahead, when old paint slipped and skidded, and just as he flew off and went ass over teakettle, I snapped it. His mug said it all! Mr. J. Put it on page one. We sold more papers that week than we did when the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor.

2. *(Bob is talking to his wife, Ida. He was unfaithful to her two years prior, and she has not forgiven him.)*

It's been so long since... Ida, how long? You've got to forgive me. I'm drowning. Two years ago - and I've paid and paid. I love you, Ida. God knows, I do. I don't know what to do. I'm in quicksand. *(Impulsively, she reaches out to him and they embrace. This is the break Bob has longed for. His mood immediately changes to one of excitement and anticipation.)* I'll be home by one and... maybe we could put on an extra log on, and... I wish old Mr. J. was still with us. He set type faster than god parted the Red Sea. One o'clock, maybe even earlier! *(Laughing)* I can see it now, The Eagle printed upside down and backwards! In Pig Latin!

JACKIE *(Please also prepare Rose or Ida readings)*

(She has seen Will and Marty, who are already in the cafe, burning crosses in front of Jewish homes as she enters; she is very drunk.)

You ought to be shot! Shame on you. You're disgusting. You make me sick. I saw the whole thing, and I reported it. I told Sheriff Pierce you'd be coming here. *(To Bob)* This is a big story, but front me a beer first. I ain't even got rent money. Simons locked me out. I really need a break. And don't anybody leave. I can't wait to see the look on your faces when Sheriff Pierce comes through that door. *(To Bob)* I was coming down Oak Street with Mrs. Cohen's wash. *(To Will and Marty)* And you can't play dumb with me, Will Patton! *(To the others)* They was wearing ski masks, but I'd know them any place. I reported it to Sheriff Pierce. He should be here any minute.

ROSE *(Two readings - please prepare both)*

1. *(She is talking to Will and Marty)*

This is supposed to be a melting pot: Give me your tired, your poor... And how were the Jews "asking for it?" How do they control your money? Not one of 'ems a banker. Jacob Schwartz doesn't even work - he can't. So he cleans streets every day. He does it for free. His girls all went away to get work, and his son, Abe's in a fox hold somewhere. Fighting for you! Bob says the girls send home money every week. You hate them for no good reason.

2. *(She is speaking to Bob and Ida who need some private time, and he is not making it easy.)* I'll be in the kitchen if you need me. If you want me to, I'll put up the "Closed" sign... If you need anything... Like a sandwich, or some meatloaf with mashed potatoes and green beans? It was our luncheon special. I've got some left over. I could make a meatloaf sandwich. One day of meatloaf is enough for me. And meatloaf, well.... I'll make you a meatloaf sandwich. I make very good meatloaf. No fillers. You can split it.

IDA *(Two readings - prepare both)*

(She enters the cafe upset, on the verge of tears because of the cross burnings; she is talking to Rose)

1. Hello, Rose. Bob asked me to meet him here. *(She starts to cry.)* Bob didn't want to meet at The Eagle. *(The Eagle is the local newspaper where Bob works.)* I can't understand. In '35 my mother headed up the soup kitchen at the church. Abe's fighting in the Philippines. We love this country. Now there are signs all over town - "Jews — Go! Or else!" I couldn't let the kids go out and play. My sister wrote the school's alma mater. Abe set the record in the 100. I was on the debate team. *(She sips her drink.)* Thank you, Rose. It's nice in here. And warm. Right now we're pretty slow on wood, so we're wearing sweaters and hats and gloves and... This is Bob's after work haunt. He says nice things about the place - and you. He likes you.

2. I hear that liquor bucks you up and right now I need some bucking up. When Bob came home last night, he looked like he'd been in a fight. He's got a temper and when it boils over... Last night he was all riled up. He threw a chair and... He scares me when he's like that. I told him to simmer down, so he went downstairs and wrote and wrote and wrote. I read it this morning and I asked him if it was for The Eagle. You know he's been doing more of the writing, and now that Mr. Johnson died, he'd doing it all. This'll be his first time doing the whole paper and he wants it to be good. You know that column, "As the Wind Blows?" I called him an hour ago and begged him not to put it in.

MARTY *(Two readings; please prepare both)*

(Marty and Rose had a very brief fling in the past that now means nothing to Rose, but Marty would like to rekindle it. He is entering the cafe. The "last night" is a reference to a fight that occurred in the cafe the night before)

1. Seen Will? *(No response)* Rose, I'm sorry about last night. Rose? I was hoping we could... you know, figure something out... about us. If it's because of the Boyer kid... or is it because of the Jews? Ya know, they... Damn! What kind of Christian are you? The Jews killed Jesus! Father Patrick said so. It was a big mistake me coming in here, me thinking that you and me could have some kind of something together. Who the hell do you think you are? You're no better than me. You're just... I'm going. I don't know why you... why you... well, bye for now. See ya around. I'll be back real soon. *(Realized he can't leave.)* Damn it! I can't go. Will wanted me to come early and get the lay of the land. *(Decides to leave anyway, given Rose's cold behavior)* Rose, I'm sorry, real sorry. See you soon.

2. *(Rose has told Marty that she and Jackie have reported his behavior to the sheriff.)*

Sheriff Pierce? You're bluffing. It's just your word against ours. And nobody will believe that drunken bitch, Jackie. She said she was blink drunk and didn't see a thing. Damn her! I know why you're doing this! You're in love with Bob! He deserves what he got. Anybody who marries a Jew gets what he deserves. Yes! Says me, and a lot of other people. Henry Ford, himself, says so, and Charles Lindbergh, he says so too.

WILL *(Please also prepare Marty readings)*

(Sarcastically, to Rose) Can we sit here? *(Quietly, to Marty)* He'll be coming in here later, just like he always does on Fridays. We'll be waiting. Marty, you're across the street. After he enters, I'll come in the back way. When I do that, move in and block the front door, just in case he breaks for it. I got my cousin's brass knuckles. This is a good old-fashioned beat down, a get-out-of-our-town you God damn kike lover Surprise Party. And if we don't finish him, there could be trouble. No one will know it's us. We'll drill a hold out in the middle of the lake. They won't find him till Spring. And he'll be rotten by then. Rose is gonna get "an emergency call" from her sister Grace in Upper Hayes Falls, we we get rid of her.