

# “The Last Leaf”

an audio theatre production script  
Level I

story by O. Henry  
adapted by Don Kisner

*Audio Theatre  
Production Script*



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**REQUIRED EQUIPMENT**

Two CD Players

**RECORDED SFX ON THE CD**

Level I script uses tracks 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 only.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Narrator  
Johnsy  
Sue  
Mr. Behrman  
Doctor

**RECORDED SFX**

Sound A  
Sound B

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**NARRATOR:** “The Last Leaf” by O. Henry

**SOUND A, TRACK 1: FADE IN MUSIC; HOLD FOR A FIVE COUNT; FADE UNDERNEATH NARRATOR**

**NARRATOR:** [*COUNT TO SEVEN AFTER MUSIC STARTS THEN BEGIN*] In New York City, there's a small district just west of Washington Square, where the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into short strips called *places*. It's a neighborhood where many of the beautiful, old, brick houses date back to the 1820's.

It is the final year of the 19th Century, and we find many colorful restaurants, theaters, and shops. Artists, actors, musicians, dancers, and writers are attracted by the unusual appearance, and they've come to this village of the big city, searching for north windows, Dutch attics, and low rents. (PAUSE)

**SOUND B, TRACK 2: FADE IN RESTAURANT SOUNDS; ESTABLISH; FADE UNDERNEATH DIALOG**

**SOUND A, TRACK 1: FADE OUT MUSIC AS RESTAURANT SOUND FADE IN; END**

**NARRATOR:** It's an evening in May, and the dinner hour finds the little 8th Street cafe busy as usual. The village old-timers blend into the surroundings, but now and then a recent arrival stands out. Joanna Gaines is one of these. Alone in the crowd, she looks out of place.

She pays for her tray of food, then standing for a moment, she looks around for a place to sit. Finally, she crosses the room to a tiny table with two chairs and only one diner.

**JOHNSY:** Excuse me! All the other tables seem to be taken. Do you mind if I sit here?

**SUE:** Oh! No! Of course not! I'd love the company. Please! Join me.

**JOHNSY:** Thank you! [*AFTER A PAUSE*] My name is Joanna Gaines.

**SUE:** Hello, Joanna! Susan Cross. Friends call me Sue.

**JOHNSY:** Hi, Sue. My friends call me Johnsy.

**SUE: Johnsy! I like it.**

**JOHNSY: It's really busy in here this time of day, isn't it. Do you eat here often?**

**SUE: Just about every day. It's the cheapest, and the best place around. I haven't seen you here before, have I?**

**JOHNSY: No, this is the first time. I just got to town three days ago. It's all so very different from California.**

**SUE: Oh, California? I was there once. What part are you from?**

**JOHNSY: A small town near San Francisco, Sebastopol. Do you know it?**

**SUE: Afraid not. I only spent a few days there, all of them in Los Angeles. Why'd you come to New York?**

**JOHNSY: To work, and study, I'm an artist. Or at least I'd like to be.**

**SUE: Oh! Wonderful! So am I.**

**JOHNSY: Have you lived in the Village long?**

**SUE: About four months.**

**SOUND B, TRACK 2: FADE OUT RESTAURANT SOUNDS; END**

**NARRATOR: Soon Sue and Johnsy become good friends and decide to share an apartment to save rent. It is at the top of a squatty, three-story brick building that, finally, they find what they want.**

**SOUND A, TRACK 3: FADE IN AND ESTABLISH WIND; FADE UNDERNEATH NARRATOR**

**NARRATOR: [*PAUSE FOR FIVE COUNT*] In November, a cold, unseen stranger, called Pneumonia, walked through the Village, touching one here and there with his icy finger.**

**Pneumonia was not a kind old gentleman. A little woman used to the warm California breezes was an easy target for Pneumonia. Johnsy he attacked; and she lay, barely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small windowpanes at the blank side of the next brick house.**

**One morning, after the doctor has finished his third visit, Sue follows him into the hallway.**

**SUE: How is she, Doctor?**

**DOCTOR: Not good. Not good at all, I'm afraid. She has one chance in let us say, ten. And that chance is for her to want to live.**

**SUE: Is there anything that I can do to help, Doctor?**

**DOCTOR:** The little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?

**SUE:** She... well, she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day.

**DOCTOR:** Paint? What foolishness! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice? A man, for instance?

**SUE:** A man? No, doctor, there's nothing of that kind.

**DOCTOR:** Well, I'll do everything that I can. But when a patient gives up hope, medicine doesn't help much. *[PAUSE]* What can you do to help? Well, if you can get her to show some interest in something, even the new winter styles in coat sleeves, then I'll promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one-in-ten.

**SOUND A, TRACK 3: INCREASE WIND AND HOLD FOR A FIVE COUNT,  
THEN FADE UNDER DIALOG**

**NARRATOR:** *[PAUSE FOR A FIVE COUNT]* After the doctor leaves, Sue goes inside and cries for awhile. Then she takes her drawing board into Johnsy's room, whistling.

**NARRATOR:** Johnsy is lying quietly under the covers, with her face toward the window. Sue stops whistling, thinking Johnsy is asleep. She arranges her board and begins a pen-and-ink drawing for a magazine story.

**SUE:** *[WHISTLING; BEGIN AS INDICATED IN NARRATOR'S LINE ABOVE]*

**JOHNSY:** *[SIMULTANEOUS WITH THE NARRATOR'S NEXT SPEECH. COUNTING BACKWARDS]* Twelve! *[PAUSE]* Eleven! *[PAUSE]* Ten! *[PAUSE]* Nine! *[PAUSE]* Eight!

**NARRATOR:** Johnsy's eyes are open wide and she's staring out the window. There seems to be nothing to count. There's only the blank side of a brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine has climbed half way up the brick wall. The cold wind has blown the leaves from the vine until now its branches cling to the crumbling bricks.

**JOHNSY:** Seven!

**SUE:** What is it, dear?

**JOHNSY:** Six! They're falling faster now. Three days ago, there were almost a hundred. It made my head hurt to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now.

**SUE:** Five what, dear?

**JOHNSY:** Leaves on the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go, too. I've known that for days. Didn't the doctor tell you?

**SUE:** Oh, I've never heard of such nonsense. What do old ivy leaves have to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so much.

**JOHNSY:** It's just a feeling I have. I don't know how I know, Sue, but somehow I do. I'm sure that when the last leaf falls off that vine, I'll die.

**SUE:** Don't be a silly goose. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances of getting well real soon, were... Let's see, exactly what did he say? He said the chances were ten to one! Try to take some broth now, won't you? And I'll go back to my drawing, so I can sell the editor with it, and buy port wine for my sick child, and pork chops for my greedy old self.

**JOHNSY:** You needn't get any more wine. *[PAUSE]* There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go, too.

**SUE:** Johnsy, dear, will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I'm done working? I must get these drawings done by tomorrow. I need the light, or I'd pull the shade down.

**JOHNSY:** Couldn't you draw in the other room?

**SUE:** I'd rather be here with you. Besides, I don't want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves.

**JOHNSY:** All right, but tell me as soon as you've finished, because I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves.

**SUE:** You try to get some sleep, now. I must go downstairs and see if Mr. Behrman will come up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to move 'til I come back.

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**SOUND A, TRACK 3:      FADE WIND TO SILENCE; END**

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**SOUND B, TRACK 1:      FADE IN AND ESTABLISH MUSIC; FADE UNDERNEATH NARRATOR**

**NARRATOR:** *[HOLD FOR THREE COUNT AFTER MUSIC BEGINS]* Old Behrman is a painter who lives one floor down. He's over sixty and has a long beard. Behrman is a failure in art. For forty years he has painted without success. According to his own words, he is always just about to paint a masterpiece, but has yet to begin it. For several years he has painted nearly nothing, except now and then an ad for a magazine, or a billboard. And occasionally, he earns a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the Village, who can't afford the price of a professional. He drinks too much gin, and still talks of his coming masterpiece. For the rest, he is a bitter little old man, who sneers at softness in any one, and thinks of himself as protector to the two young women in the studio above.

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**SOUND B, TRACK 1:      FADE OUT MUSIC; END**

**NARRATOR:** Sue finds Behrman smelling strongly of gin in his dimly lighted den below. In one corner is a blank canvas that has been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece.

**SUE:** [*SPEAKING TO MR. BEHRMAN*] ...she was counting backward. I asked her what she was counting and she said, "The ivy leaves." She's convinced when the last leaf falls, she will die too. I'm scared!

**BEHRMAN:** [*WITH AN ACCENT*] What are you saying, that little Johnsy wants not to live? Nonsense! She must not think this way. It is crazy. Why do you let it happen?

**SUE:** Oh, I don't know, Mr. Behrman. It's... It's just that she's as light as a leaf herself. I guess I'm just afraid it'll all come true and she will die when the last leaf falls.

**BEHRMAN:** [*ANGRILY*] What! Is there people in the world with the foolishness to die because leaves fall from a vine? I have not heard of such a thing. Why do you allow that silly idea to come into her brain? No, I will not pose for you. [*TO HIMSELF*] Ah, poor little Miss Johnsy.

**SUE:** She's very ill and weak, and the fever has left her mind full of strange thoughts. Very well, Mr. Behrman, if you don't want to pose for me, all right. But I think you're a mean old man.

**BEHRMAN:** You are just like a woman! Who said I will not pose? Go on. I will come with you. I have been trying to say that I am ready to pose. [*START LINE ON MIC, THEN MOVE GRADUALLY OFF MIC BY THE END OF THE LINE*] This is not any place in which one so young as Miss Johnsy should lie sick. Some day I will paint a masterpiece, and we shall all go away. Good? Yes?

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to illustrate the format of all our Production  
Scripts.}}}}