



LOVE IN ACTION

Cast: Clara; Millie; four voices offstage; narrator offstage.

Scene: Table cluttered with kitchen tools: utensils, spices, bowls, two cookie containers, one larger than the other, cookie rack, Bible, church directory and telephone.

(Clara enters wearing an apron; elderly, she walks stiffly. Carries full cookie sheet with potholder; she hums a hymn, puts cookie sheet on rack and sighs heavily.)

Clara: Oh, my! One batch of cookies and I'm beat! You're getting old, Clara. Getting old? Ha! Admit it, gal, you're already there. Never thought I'd last this long. The Lord must have some use for me yet. Well, I got the cookies baked. Now when Millie comes tomorrow, I'll have something besides graham crackers for her. She always "puts on the dog" when she invites me over, serving itty-bitty cakes and stuff. Well, I do admit, they're delicious. But the cookies will do and I'll have a little container to take to Dora when I go to see her. *(Glances at the cluttered table)* But before I clean up this mess, I'll have to take a little rest. *(Picks up Bible and reads Philippians 2:1-5 aloud)*

(Closes Bible) Lord, that's a picture of Millie. She's a saint. Always taking up a collection for some good cause, working herself to death, organizing things, leading large groups in prayer. Only You, Lord, would know how many offices she's held. Now she's in charge of redecorating the sanctuary at church and raising money for food for the poor. Oh, I wish I had talent like Millie. I could never talk to people at meetings like Millie does.

(Clara sighs, props her elbow on the table, head on hand, closes her eyes and falls asleep.)

Voice 1: Clara, I never told you how much it meant to me when you came every day while I was so sick.

Voice 2: Dear Clara, you taught me to pray when I was in despair.

Voice 3: I was in one of your Sunday School classes. I'll never forget what I learned there about Jesus' love.

Voice 4: I was so lonely before you became my friend.

Voice 1: You brought soup and casseroles and you even cleaned my house.

Voice 2: You taught me to trust in my Savior.

Voice 3: You are always so cheerful, but I know you haven't had an easy life.

Voice 4: You were never too busy to hear my problems.

(The offstage voices begin to overlap, interrupting each other, finally all speaking at once.)

Voice 1: If it hadn't been for you...

Voice 2: Your prayers sustained me...

Voice 3: Now Jesus is always with me wherever...

Voice 4: Thank you for telling me about Jesus...

Voice 1: Thank you for...

Voice 2: My faith is...

Voice 3: Everyone knows you love...

Voice 4: Jesus has helped...

(Voices cease as a doorbell rings in the distance.)

Millie: *(Offstage)* Clara! Clara, are you in there? It's Millie, Clara.

Clara: *(Waking with a start)* What a strange dream! All those voices. I wonder what they were saying. They all talked at once.

Millie: *(Louder, still offstage.)* Clara! It's Millie!

Clara: Oh my, come in, Millie. The door's not locked. I didn't hear you. I must have dozed off.

Millie: *(Enters, fashionably dressed)* I'm so sorry I woke you, dear. But a nap at 10 o'clock in the morning? Really! Here, I've already written a complaint to the Elders about the condition of the church lawn and I'm on my way to a meeting about church kneelers. I'm determined to get them installed this year. *(Picks up a cookie from sheet)* Oh, you've made cookies. May I have one? *(She has already nibbled.)* Why, they're very good! And just as I was beginning to like graham crackers. *(Giggles)*

Clara: Millie, you're a wonder. I don't know how anything would get done at church without you.

Millie: Well, I try to do my part. But Clara, that's not what I came to talk about. Tina Rogers called me right before I left the house. You know Tina and Don Rogers, don't you? They're that young couple with the three grubby kids who always sit up front on Sundays. The baby usually cries and has to be taken out, or the middle one has to go to the bathroom during the sermon. One day the oldest one tore a page from the hymnal. I trained my children better. They would never do anything like that.

Clara: Yes, of course, I know the family. It's hard to keep three children quiet in church.

Millie: Yes, well, they live in that house in back of us that is such an eyesore. *(Still nibbling cookie)*

Clara: But why did Tina call you?

Millie: I don't really know. I guess she found my name in the church directory and knew I lived close, but I really don't know what she expected me to do. Anyway, she said her husband fell off some kind of scaffolding this morning at the bank construction site. She seemed to think I could do something. Really, I could hardly hear her. The kids were screaming and she was hysterical. Anyway, I told her I was just about to leave for this committee meeting but I would stop by and tell you about the accident. I surely didn't want to get involved with those grubby kids dressed like this and...well, do you think...?

Clara: Yes, of course. *(Gently nudges Millie toward the door)* You go on to your meeting and I'll call Tina right now.

Millie: Oh, I knew you'd think of something. You're a dear. *(Exits)*

(Clara is already thumbing through the directory and dialing.)

Clara: Tina, I just heard about your husband. Do you know how he is? Oh my, I'm so sorry. Tina, can you hear me? Tina, listen to me. Give the phone to Sissy so I can talk to her while you put the baby back in his crib. Give him something to chew on. It won't hurt him to cry a little. Hurry, Tina. I need to talk to you.

Sissy, are you there? Sissy, listen to me like a big girl. Your mommy needs you to give her a big hug and tell her you love her. Listen to me, Sissy. Try not to cry. Sissy, I'm coming to see you and I want you to get out all your dolls and line them up very neatly on the floor in front of the baby's crib so he can watch you. When I get there, I want you to tell me about every single doll. *(Pause)* Yes, Teddy, too. *(Pause)* Well, maybe I can fix up the rip in his tummy. Yes, dear. Now get out all the dolls and let me talk to your mommy.

Tina, are you there? You're going through a hard time now. Let me help you. I'm coming right over. Will you pray with me now? Heavenly and merciful Father, we need Your care and mercy always but especially now. Tina and Don Rogers placed their lives in your hands long ago. You blessed their home with love and children and the Holy Spirit nourished their faith. For these great gifts we thank You. Heavenly Father, comfort Don in his pain and calm Tina's anxiety. We rely on Your promise that all things will work for good for those who love You. Give them the assurance of Your unfailing love. This we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Tina, I know you want to go to the hospital to be with your husband. Are you calm enough to drive? Good. Keep Sissy busy lining up her dolls. The baby will quiet down when he starts watching her. Now, get yourself dressed. I'll be there in 10 minutes. Try not to worry. I'll take care of little Joey when he comes home from kindergarten. *(Pause)* Now, Tina, I've bathed enough babies in my lifetime! *(Pause)* Please don't worry about a messy kitchen. I've seen enough of them in my lifetime, too. Sissy will help me find whatever I need. Three-year-olds are very good helpers. They know just about everything. No more talk now. I'll be there soon.

(Clara hangs up, takes off her apron.)

Clara: No time to change clothes. Who cares what I'm wearing? Cookies. I'll take some for the children. *(Empties contents of cookie sheet into small container. Hesitates.)* Oh well, Dora doesn't need cookies. She ought to go on a diet. I'll take her some roses instead. *(Hesitates again, then resolutely puts all the cookies into the larger container, snaps on the lid and picks it up.)* Millie did say she's getting to like graham crackers. I'll take the whole batch along. *(Exits)*

Narrator: *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.* 1 John 3:17-18

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.
Galatians 6:9-10

All Scripture is from NIV.