The girl orphans: Tessie, Molly, Kate, July, Annie, Pepper, Stevie and Duffy are all lying asleep in the dormitory. Tessie is having a nightmare...

Tessie: Mamma! Mummy!
Kate: Tessie, wake up!
Pepper: Yeah Tessie, wake up and shut up.
Molly: It’s OK Tessie.
Kate: You’re having a nightmare.
Stevie: (impatient) I’m not getting any sleep.
Duffy: She’s keeping us all up.
Pepper: As usual!
July: Hey Pepper, leave Tessie alone she ain’t hurtin’ ya.
Pepper: (getting ready to fight) You wanna make somethin’ of it July?
Molly: Don’t you guys fight...
All: Battle stations!

All the orphans scream and cheer as Pepper jumps onto July. Annie and Duffy shove Pepper and July apart.

July: Lay off!
Duffy: Better break it up you guys.
Annie: You wanna wake Miss Hannigan up in the middle of the night?
Tessie: Who took my mummy?
They all look at Tessie
Stevie: It’s ok Tessie you were just having a nightmare.

Pepper and July go back to their beds.
Tessie: I miss my Mommy.
Kate: I miss my Mommy too.

Molly: I’d miss my mummy too, if I had one.

_They all begin to cry._

Stevie: I’m never gonna get any sleep.

Pepper: Ah you girls. Molly’s right, you ain’t got parents.

Duffy: And you’re probably never gonna get ‘em.

Annie: How do you know they ain’t got parents?

Duffy: Cos that’s why we’re all called orphans.

Pepper: In case you hadn’t noticed we’re in an orphanage.

Stevie: and the only reason for being in an orphanage is cos you an orphan. Which means...

Stevie, Duffy and Pepper: (to Annie) ...no Parents.

Annie: I’m not an orphan! My parents are alive, they’re coming to get me someday.

Duffy: Yeah Annie, and you got a note to prove it! Now let’s go back to sleep!

_The girls lie down and start to go back to sleep. Pause._

Molly: Will you read your note to me Annie?

Tessie: Oh yes, read the note, please do.

Kate: Please!

Stevie: Ahhh, really? It’s got to be two o’clock.

Duffy: We’ve all got to be up a dawn...

July: Read it quietly Annie... so we don’t wake Miss Hannigan.

Kate: Please read it. I love it when she reads the letter.

Pepper: Oh brother, if you must read it then get it over with.

_Pepper and Stevie hide their heads under their pillows._
July: Quiet you lot! You’re just jealous. Go ahead Annie, we all want to hear it.

Annie: (Reading from a note) Please take care of our little darling, her name is Annie. She was....

Pepper and Annie: ...born on October the 28th...

Pepper, Annie and Duffy: We have locked half a silver locket around her neck so that when we come for her, you will know she’s our baby.

Stevie: Oh Brother!

Annie: Do you wanna sleep with your teeth inside your mouth or out?

July: We should all be asleep. What if Miss Hannigan wakes up?

They hear a noise off stage

July: (whispering) oh no, here she comes!

They all quickly lie down in bed and go silent and still. The boys (Dixon, Mack, Finn, Bobby, Jake and Spud) come creeping onto stage. Once they are near the girls Dixon pretends to be Miss Hannigan.

Dixon: Rise and shine you lazy orphans!

Annie peeks her head out.

Annie: oh you lousy boys!

The orphan girls scream and huddle away from the boys

Mack: What are you girls doing?

Finn: Yeah, we haven’t got the pox or anything.

Bobby: Yet.

Pepper: What are you guys doing here? If Hannigan catches you...

She makes a cutthroat gesture

Mack: Yeah, well Hannigan doesn’t scare us.

July: Some people it’s right to be scared of.

Dixon: We came over to introduce you to the newest orphans in the house. This here’s Jake and Spud.
Finn pushes the shy younger boys forward towards the girls.

Finn: Well, say hello to the girls

Jake and Spud: Hello to the girls

They all look at each other amused. Annie steps forward.

Annie: Welcome you two... I’m Annie. Either of you got parents?

Jake and Spud: No.

Pause

Pepper: Well, they seem chatty.

The boys sit down amongst the girls

July: Where’s Chester?

Dixon: He’s gone to the kitchen for some food.

Duffy: What about the dogs?

Finn: Chester knows what he’s doing.

Mack: What are you all doing awake?

Stevie: Annie was reading her letter... again!

Annie: I know it doesn't mean anything to you but it means the world to me. It’s proof... proof I got parents.

Molly: You really think they're out there Annie?

Kate: You heard that letter.

Bobby: What letter?

Tessie: The letter her parents left, read it to him Annie!

Annie: “Please take care...”

Pepper: Oh no, not again, make her stop, make her stop.

Bobby: Boy, that must be some letter if Pepper is scared of it.
Annie: She’s just as lonely as the rest of us.

Tessie: But Annie’s parents are out there somewhere.

*Chester creeps into the room, no-one notices.*

Annie: Yep and I’m gonna meet up with them some day. One day I’m gonna break outta this hole, hit the highway and find my folks.

Chester: Oh yeah? And when you gonna do that Annie?

*They all gasp with surprise*

Duffy: I guess we’re all getting up now!

Stevie: Chester, did you go down to the kitchen?

July: How’d you get past the dogs?

Tessie: Did you get any food?

Chester: Please ladies, one question at a time. Yes I did go to the kitchen, I have my ways of getting past the dogs, and... no, as usual there was no food around.

Molly: Aren’t you scared of Miss Hannigan catching you? You know she’d skin you for being down there at night.

Dixon: (leaping up beside Chester) Like I said, we ain’t afraid of old high pants Hannigan. It’ll take more than her to stop our games.

Chester: What’s going on over here anyway, you’re all making enough noise!

Tessie: I had a real bad dream.

Molly: She was dreaming about her Mummy.

Kate: and I was dreaming about my mummy except I ain’t got one.

Molly: And Tessie called out like “Mummy, Mummy!”

Kate: And that was keepin’ Pepper up.

July: Keeping everyone up.

Molly: And we all know what Pepper’s like with no sleep

Mack: What’s Pepper like with no sleep?
Tessie: Real cranky.
Kate: Then Pepper picked a fight with Tessie,
Molly: then July picked a fight with Pepper.
Kate: Then Annie broke it up.
Molly: Then Annie read the note from her parents
Bobby: It’s a real scary letter that Pepper hates.
Kate: And now she’s gonna break outta this hole and hit the highway and find her mum and dad.
Tessie: And that’s what I was dreaming about!
Chester: What did you all just say?
Stevie: She says we’re all bustin’ out!
Annie: Listen, you boys better get outta here.
Duffy: If Hannigan catches you over here you’re done for.
Kate: And so are we.
Bobby: Maybe we better go, (motions to the two newbies) these two don’t wanna get caught out on their first night.
Mack: Oh, come on, you guys ain’t scared are you.
Jake: well...
Spud: maybe...
Jake: Just a bit...
Spud: Cos it’s dark... that’s all.
Jake: and just cos...
Jake and Spud: (they cling to each other) We’re scared!
Finn: Ok, let’s go.
Bobby, Mack, Finn, Jake and Spud turn to go, but their path is blocked by Chester and Dixon.

Chester: We ain’t afraid of old Hannigan.

Dixon: Yeah, he don’t scare us.

July: (impersonating Miss Hannigan) You rotten Orphans.

Stevie: What do say girls?

Annie: We love you Miss Hannigan.

Chester: I can’t hear you.

All the Orphans laugh.

All the girls: We love you Miss Hannigan.

The orphans fall about with laughter.

Duffy: Well if you’re not gonna get out of here, at least keep your voices down.

Chester: Annie, you really thinkin’ of breakin’ outta here?

Annie: Yes sir-ee Chester.

Dixon: When?

Pepper: No time like the present. Is there Annie?

Mack: I dunno. This sounds like a bad idea.

Finn: Is it worth the risk?

Annie: Nothing could be worse than this place.

Duffy: I don’t like the sound of this.

Tessie and Molly: Me neither.

July: If you’re goin’ I’m goin’. There no way I’m stayin’ here by myself.

Annie: Duffy. Are you in?

Everyone looks to Duffy.

Duffy: OK, I’m in!
They all cheer.

Duffy: Listen up, nothing you can’t carry. Down the fire escape.

Kate, Molly, Tessie, Jake and Spud: Fire escape

*they move towards the fire escape*

Pepper: No, If we go out the window we can shimmy down the drain pipe.

Kate, Molly, Tessie, Jake and Spud: Drain pipe.

*They change direction to the drain pipe*

Chester: The laundry chute!

Kate, Molly, Tessie, Jake and Spud: Laundry chute.

*They change direction again to the laundry chute*

Pepper: Make up your minds.

All (except Pepper): FIRE ESCAPE!

Pepper: Fine.

Dixon: Ok, quiet as a mouse. To the laundry chute.

Annie leads the way. None of them have seen Miss Hannigan standing in the door way.

Miss Hannigan: Boo!

The orphans scatter back to their beds, Chester and Dixon dive under a nearby sheet

Miss Hannigan: Tryin’ to make a break again are you?

*Miss Hannigan flashes a torch in Annie’s face.*

Annie: Umm...

Miss Hannigan: What do you think your doing?

Annie: Are you gonna beat the tar outta me?

Miss Hannigan: Have I ever hit any of ya?
Duffy: No... but...

Miss Hannigan: You know what kid, if you think it’s bad in here, it’s lousy out there. I’m doin’ you a favour by not lettin’ you out there. What do you say?

_All the orphans are quiet_

Miss Hannigan: What do you say!?

All: We love you Miss Hannigan

Miss Hannigan: Rotten orphans.

_Miss Hannigan walks over to the beds and blows a whistle._

Miss Hannigan: Rise and shine, rise and shine.

July: But it’s the middle of the night.

Miss Hannigan: You orphans tried to run away again. So as a little welcome home party your all gonna to clean this dump till it shines like the top of the Chrysler building. What do ya say?

All: We love you Miss Hannigan.

Miss Hannigan: And I love you. Now scrub these floors and strip the beds. Get to work. Now! Why any kid would wanna be an orphan I’ll never know.

_Miss Hannigan grabs a sheet and rips it up to discover the boys hiding underneath._

Miss Hannigan: What are you doing here? _She pulls Dixon up by the ear_

Dixon: The new boys were sleep walking and so we went to get them back.

Miss Hannigan: Well, aren’t you kind. _to Jake and Spud_ You two somnambulants eh?

Jake and Spud: No Ma’am, we was just looking for the bathroom.

Miss Hannigan: Well somnambulants wind up in some ambulance around here. _she laughs to herself, grabbing Finn by the scruff_ you get that boy, “Somnambulants" - “some ambulance”, I’m a funny lady sometimes.

Chester: Well, now that we know everyone is just fine we’d best be off back to bed.
All the boys: Good morning Miss Hannigan.

_The boys start to exit. Miss Hannigan blows his whistle_

Miss Hannigan: Not so fast. Boys your days are numbered just like these girls. You will stay here and help get this place clean. And then there’ll be a special treat for breakfast.

All: *(Groans and disappointment.)*

Stevie: Hot mush?

Miss Hannigan: No...

_All the orphans cheer._

Miss Hannigan: Cold mush. You know if the Board of Orphans caught wind of this I could lose my job. That would be terrible.

Pepper: I thought you hated your job.

Miss Hannigan: Oh, no, I love my job, it’s the kids I hate!
It’s the hard knock life for us
It’s the hard knock life for us
‘Steada treated, we get tricked
‘Steada kisses we get kicked
It’s the hard knock life

Got no folks to speak of so
It’s the hard knock row we hoe
Cotton blankets, ‘steada wool
Empty bellies, ‘steada full
It’s the hard knock life

Don’t it feel like the wind is always howling?
Don’t it seem like there’s never any light?
Once a day don’t you wanna throw the towel in?
It’s easier than putting up a fight

No-one’s there when your dreams at night get creepy
No-one cares if you grow or if you shrink
No-one dries when your eyes get wet and weepy
From the crying you would think this place’d sink.
Oooooohh

Empty belly life, Rotten smelly life
Full of sorrow life, no tomorrow life

Santa claus we never see
Santa Claus what’s that? Who’s he?
No-one cares for you a smidge
when you’re in an orphanage
It’s the hard knock life.

You’ll stay up until this dump shines like the top of the Chrysler building

Yank the whiskers from her chin
jab her with a safety pin
Make her drink a mickey finn
I love you Miss Hannigan

It’s the hard knock life for us
No-one cares for you a smidge
when you’re in an orphanage

It’s the hard knock life it’s the hard knock life
Its... the... hard... knock... life!