



READ-ALoud

Assign roles to your family and friends for this read-aloud from *I Survived the Molasses Flood, 1919*. Carmen, unsure where she is or what's happened to her, is slowly opening her eyes...

Assign roles to your family and friends.

CHARACTERS:

Narrator
Carmen
Nurse

Frankie
Teresa
Marie

Mrs. Grasso
Tony

Narrator: As Carmen lies unconscious in a hospital bed, she hears her father's voice. "Hold on," he says, over and over again. But what does he mean? Is she in danger? Is she in another molasses tidal wave? Carmen's eyes flutter anxiously under their lids.

Nurse: Hello? Are you awake?

Narrator: Her father's voice drifts away as Carmen realizes that someone with an Irish accent is speaking to her. She forces her eyes open and sees a woman wearing a white cap holding her hand.

Carmen: Am I...in the hospital?

Nurse: You are, darling. But you're safe. And getting stronger every day.

Narrator: As the nurse takes her pulse, Carmen tries to sit up. Her leg throbs horribly and she winces.

Nurse: Don't try to move. You've lost a lot of blood from a serious wound on your leg. Don't you worry, though—you'll be running around soon enough.

Carmen: How long have I been here?

Nurse: Three days. Who would have ever thought a molasses tank would explode like that? Such a tragedy.

Narrator: The nurse's words bring everything back to Carmen in a rush. She shudders, remembering the raging river of molasses... She sits up suddenly, gasping at the bolt of pain that shoots through her leg.

Carmen: Tony! My best friend! Is he...where is he?

Nurse: I'm not sure, darling. But I'll try to find out.

Narrator: As the nurse leaves the room, Carmen worries—what will become of her if she's lost Tony and his family, after having lost Papa? Will she have to leave America? Does she even *belong* in America? Does she belong *anywhere*? As Carmen begins to panic, she hears voices rushing down the hall.

Frankie: I want to see her first!

Teresa: No, me!

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Marie: You pushed me!

Mrs. Grasso: Children, enough!

Narrator: Suddenly, the curtains around her bed are thrown back to reveal Mrs. Grasso and her three youngest children.

Frankie: She's alive!

Mrs. Grasso: Oh, thank goodness!

Narrator: Mrs. Grasso cries with joy as the children pepper Carmen with questions. But Carmen can't answer—all she can think about is Tony. Where, where is Tony?

Carmen: Mrs. Grasso, please, is Tony—

Tony: I'm right here.

Narrator: Carmen lifts her eyes to see her best friend, battered and scraped up but smiling. As her eyes fill with tears, she tries to make a joke.

Carmen: Do you think you'll ever eat molasses again, Tony?

Tony: I'll be fine if I never so much as smell it for the rest of my life.

Narrator: Tony leans over the bed to give his friend a hug.

Mrs. Grasso: Are you hungry, Carmen? We brought you some lasagna.

Frankie: And I brought my baseball cards.

Teresa: And I can braid your hair!

Marie: So can I! So can I!

Narrator: Carmen looks around at her friends and smiles. Strangely, her father's voice floats back into her head. *"Hold on..."*

Nurse: Let's all give Carmen some time to rest now. You can come back and see her later.

Carmen: Can Tony stay, just for a minute?

Nurse: Just for a minute. The rest of you—out,

out, out.

Mrs. Grasso: We'll be right outside.

Narrator: Once the Grassos leave, Carmen gives Tony a sad smile.

Carmen: What happened to you after we got separated?

Tony: I got swept onto Commercial Street. There were people, and children, and horses, all just—. It was terrible. My mom found me quickly. We looked for you, but...

Carmen: I know. It's okay. I'm okay.

Narrator: The nurse slips back into the room.

Nurse: She needs her rest now.

Tony: All right. I'll be back, Carmen. We all will.

Narrator: After Carmen says goodbye to her beloved friend, she slowly gets up and limps over to the window. As she looks out over the city of Boston, she hears father's voice in her head

again—*"Hold on, mia ragazza.*

Hold on..." But

this time, after

visiting with the

Grassos, she

isn't confused. A feeling of warmth spreads through her as she finally realizes what her father is saying to her.

Carmen: I hear you, Papa. And I will. I will hold on to my life here in America, no matter what it takes. Because I *do* belong here. I have the friends—and the love—to prove it. ■

