

Some Day for a Crown
by
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Betty Draft (Radio Play Version)

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CHARACTERS

TED KRUGH 65 years old but as an early-onset Alzheimer's patient appears much older. He can say anything or nothing as long as he doesn't try to elicit a response from other characters or the audience. If he does say anything it should be unrelated to anything anyone else says or does.

LENA KRUGH Ted's wife of 45 years. She is a high school teacher ready to retire.

EDITH KRUGH 85 years old. Ted's mother. She has been caring for Ted while Lena is at work.

FRANK KRUGH Ted's younger brother. He works nearby at the college and joins his mother and brother many days for lunch. He also stops often in the morning before work.

JUDITH COLLINS a professional caregiver. Middle-aged woman who indulges in Ted's whims. She usually comes when called, as needed. She is a stabilizing force.

SHERIFF CARSON has been friends with Lena and Ted for many years. He was a childhood buddy of Ted's. For a short time, he dated Ted's girl Lena but Ted won out. They remained close friends.

THE SET: Sofa, coffee table, side table for living room. Kitchen table, two chairs, sink/counter for kitchen. Small bar with phone to divide the areas.

TED is the only character who occupies the set, although JUDITH goes on a couple of times and EDITH leaves through the set when she dies. TED may wander around, at times agitated, at other times he may dance, sing, work his jigsaw puzzle, watch TV, drink iced tea, or do other things that the other actors suggest. It's not particularly important that his actions match the dialogue.

The other actors are seated on stools with their scripts. There is one empty stool for Ted. They are dressed in black or nondescript clothes except for JUDITH who wears a professional smock. Their faces are lit by the music stand lights. There are three tables for sound effects and props. There should be no effort to make it seem that the voices are strange, terrifying or even confusing to TED.

LENA

Mother Edith! Ted's here. I'll get him a cup of coffee. I have to run. I'm late.

EDITH

Just sit him down. I'm not quite dressed yet.

(TED sits. He might pick up HUMPHREY.)

LENA

(SHE kisses TED on the top of his head.)

Stay out of trouble. Let me put a little spit shine on your cute dome.
HMMMMM....muh!

(calls to EDITH)

Is Judith here, yet?

(TED might put his hand on the top of his head.)

EDITH

She should be here shortly. Have you been to the bathroom, Teddy?

LENA

He should be fine. I've gotta run.

EDITH

Can't you stay for a cup of coffee?

LENA

Not today.

(to TED)

Love you! You rascal.

(TED gulps down the hot coffee.
(MORE))

LENA (CONT'D)

HE activates HUMPHREY. HE might
laugh. EDITH enters from sl)

One of these days you're going to burn your esophagus Do you want
me to stay until Judith gets here?

EDITH

No. You're in a hurry. We'll be fine.

LENA

Mother Edith, you need to toss that crazy dog. I don't know what
Junior was thinking.

EDITH

Teddy loves it. It makes him laugh.

LENA

Right. Love you! I should be back at about 4:30. Tell Judith, will you?

(LENA leaves. TED activates the dog.)

EDITH

Have a good day! Teddy, you can listen to the radio. Have you had
breakfast? I'll be ready in a minute.

(SHE turns on the radio and leaves. TED
turns off radio, inserts cassette tape of
"Doggie in the Window." TED goes off
right. JUDITH enters.)

JUDITH

Hello! Ms. Edith, I'm here! Is Ted here yet?

EDITH

Just a minute, I'm not dressed, yet.

(JUDITH turns off cassette and pours a cup
of coffee.)

JUDITH

I'll have a cup of coffee on the porch and look for them!

(SHE exits. TED enters from the back door
with a paint tray and a roller. HE makes a
mess and leaves. HE can sing a hymn.
EDITH enters and sees the mess.)

EDITH

Oh my! Look at this mess! Teddy! What have you done? Teddy!

(FRANK enters)

FRANK

Hey Mom, just a quick cup of coffee and I gotta get to work what happened?

EDITH

Ted was painting the kitchen. Did you see him?

FRANK

Judith said he wasn't here, yet. You should have said something. I could have painted it.

EDITH

I didn't know he was going to do it. I don't know where he got all of this.

(FRANK notices footprints on the floor.)

FRANK

Looks like he left a trail. Footprints in the sand. I'll check out back.

(HE leaves)

EDITH

Make him take off his shoes.

FRANK

Ted! Ted!

EDITH

I'll get you some breakfast. Do you want iced tea?

(SHE pours a glass of tea. SHERIFF
CARSON enters.)

CARSON

Hello! Everyone decent?

EDITH

Good morning Sheriff Carson. Come in. Have a cup of coffee.

CARSON

Everything OK?

EDITH

Is there a problem?

CARSON

Oh no. Just checking in. I saw your shed door open, thought maybe someone was trying to steal your lawn mower.

EDITH

Frank just went out to look for Ted.

CARSON

Judith said he wasn't here, yet.

EDITH

He was painting the kitchen and made a mess.

CARSON

Oh. Just wanted to be sure everything was all right. I'll let Judith know.

EDITH

Wait, I'll get you some tea.

(FRANK enters.)

FRANK

I found him. He's in the shed!

EDITH

Sheriff Carson's here.

(FRANK slugs down tea. Washes his hands.)

FRANK

Hey, Carson. Mom, I can't stay. I've got to get to work.

EDITH

Oh you can sit for a minute. Is Teddy all right?

FRANK

He's in the shed. He's probably embarrassed.

EDITH

I found him washing his underwear out in the sink yesterday.

FRANK

Yuck!

(He turns off the water.)

What's going on, Carson?

CARSON

I was just checking in. I saw the shed door open.

FRANK

Ted's out there sulking.

EDITH

Don't use the guest towel.

FRANK

We need to clean up the kitchen.

EDITH

I don't know what possessed him to do this.

FRANK

How long has it been?

EDITH

Charlie painted it about 5 years ago.

FRANK

No, I mean since he tracked the paint.

EDITH

Just a few minutes.

FRANK

It should come off fairly easily.

CARSON

Well, I'm off. Tell Lena I stopped by.

FRANK

Sure you can't stay and help us clean the kitchen?

CARSON

Ha! I'll stop by after work.

EDITH

I'll have some cookies and melon ready for you.

CARSON

You're something, Edith.

(He leaves.)

EDITH

Have a nice day!

(To FRANK.)

Did you wash your hands?

FRANK

I need to get to work.

EDITH

You can sit and eat.

FRANK

That paint needs to be cleaned up before it sets.

(CARSON comes back in.)

CARSON

Looks like Judith took off. Just letting you know.

EDITH

Oh dear. Well, sit down for some breakfast. Judith and I will work on that paint this afternoon while Ted is taking his nap.

CARSON

Her car's still here.

FRANK

Judith isn't a cleaning lady, she's paid to keep my big brother off the streets and out of jail. Besides, by then you'll need a scraper.

EDITH

There should be some tools in the shed. Tell Ted to come in.

CARSON

Let me know if you need anything.

EDITH

Have you had breakfast?

CARSON

Some other day. Gotta look after Mayberry.

EDITH

Oh my. You better get going.

(CARSON leaves.)

EDITH (CONT'D)

He's so good to us.

FRANK

He's been Ted's best friend since high school. Except for a few months when he was chasing after Lena.

EDITH

What?

FRANK

Never mind. I'll see if I can get Ted to come in.

EDITH

Eat first. Maybe he'll get hungry and change his mind.

FRANK

Maybe Charlie can come over. I really should get going.

(Phone. EDITH answers. * = Garbled sound
of "Grace's" voice. LENA?)

EDITH

Hello? * Yes, he's here. * He doesn't eat enough to keep a bird alive.
* I'll see that he gets plenty. * Oh nothing. He just had a little accident.
* No. He's wearing a diaper. * He was painting. * No! I was talking
about Teddy. * Oh! Did you walk here, Frank?

FRANK

No, why?

(HE starts to eat.)

EDITH

Your car is ... just a minute, Frank.

(EDITH lays the phone down and prays
with him.)

EDITH (CONT'D)

Our heavenly Father, bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies.
Forgive us our trespasses and guide and direct us in everything we do
and say. Amen

FRANK

Amen.

EDITH

Teddy can eat when he comes in. More tea?

FRANK

No.

(SHE adds more sugar.)

EDITH

Try it now.

FRANK

Mom. It was already too sweet.

EDITH

There you are. Taste it.

FRANK

Mom, I'll be going to the john all morning.

EDITH

Nonsense. Is it sweet enough?

FRANK

Perfect. Thanks. Listen, Mom, I've got to get to work. We need to get this mess cleaned up. Who's on the phone?

EDITH

What?

FRANK

The phone.

EDITH

Oh, goodness! Let me see, Hello? Hello? We got disconnected. It was Grace. She thought I said you were wearing a diaper.

FRANK

What did she want? Never mind, I'll call her back. I wonder if Charlie's home?

(As HE goes to the phone SHE fills his glass
with tea and adds extra sugar.)

EDITH

I don't know what to use to get that paint off.

FRANK

I'll take care of it, Mom. Charlie can help.

EDITH

I can't get over how my grandsons have grown into such strapping young men. How much money do you need?

FRANK

She's not answering.

EDITH

Isn't she working today?

FRANK

No. She has the day off. Listen, if she calls back holler for me. I'll see what I can clean up before it dries.

EDITH

But you haven't eaten a thing.

FRANK

Put it in a sack. I'll check in the shed for a scraper.

(HE goes out the back door.)

EDITH

Tell Ted to come in and eat.

(The phone rings. SHE answers. * = Garbled
sound of "Lena's" voice.)

Hello? * Oh`, Hello, Lena. * Sheriff Carson? Why he was just here. *
Oh good! * That can't be, Ted is in the shed. * Oh, that's bad. * Yes,
that's good. * No, that's bad. * Frank just went out to bring him in.

(FRANK enters.)
(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

Wait, here he is.

(To FRANK.)

Will he come in?

FRANK

My car's gone. He took my car. Give me the phone.

EDITH

(Into the phone.)

He left in Frank's car. *

(to FRANK)

Did I give you some money for gas?

(Into the phone.)

Hello? Are you still there? *

(FRANK snatches phone)

FRANK

Mom, I need to call the police. Let me talk to her.

EDITH

He didn't steal your car!

FRANK

I know, Mom. I just need to let them know to pick him up.

EDITH

Why?

FRANK

He could hurt someone.

EDITH

Ted would never hurt anyone.

FRANK

Not on purpose.

EDITH

Lena told me not to give him any money. I knew something like this would happen. He needs to have money.

FRANK

Mom, he just spends it on candy and bicycles. He spent his entire coin collection on candy.

EDITH

Not the gold.

FRANK

Only because it was so shiny and pretty. He could have bought a car with the I wonder whatever happened to the gold?

EDITH

He has a bicycle.

FRANK

Hello, Grace? * Oh. Sorry Lena. * I was supposed to call Grace back.

EDITH

He tried to sell your car for 10 dollars.

FRANK

What the hell is going on?

EDITH

Frank Lee, watch your language!

FRANK

He's where? OK, I was just ready to call her. We'll take care of this.
Sorry to bother you.

(FRANK hangs up and then dials.)

I'll call her back.

EDITH

And a bicycle. But the man didn't have a bicycle. I don't know why Ted would want another bicycle, anyway. Why did you leave your keys in the car?

FRANK

I was heading right back to work. Mom, what did she say?

EDITH

She said Sheriff Carson called.

FRANK

Oh lord.

EDITH

Yes.

FRANK

She's still not answering.

EDITH

She used to be so polite.

(FRANK hangs up the phone.)

FRANK

I've got to get back to work. How do you put up with him all day?

EDITH

He's my son.

FRANK

He rides a bike. Why would he take my car?

EDITH

Maybe his chain came off again.

FRANK

So does Carson have him now?

EDITH

I don't know. Lena didn't finish telling me. Who are you calling?

FRANK

A cab.

(JUDITH might actually go to get TED.)

EDITH

What about Ted?

FRANK

I'll get Charlie to come over and help clean up. He'll turn up. He always does.

EDITH

Did Charlie run away again?

FRANK

Ted! For cryin' out loud, Mom. **TED!** I *wish* Charlie would run away. He's 26 years old.

(HE slams the receiver down.)

EDITH

Watch that temper! Well sit down and eat.

FRANK

I'll just take it with me. I can walk.

EDITH

Here. Have some tea.

(JUDITH enters with TED. TED goes to the
jigsaw puzzle.)

FRANK

Ted! Where's my car?

(JUDITH returns to her stool.)

JUDITH

It's here.

FRANK

Is it damaged?

JUDITH

No, he hopped in while I was on the porch. Said he was supposed to
pick you up to go fishing.

FRANK

I've never fished in my life.

JUDITH

Maybe it was bowling.

FRANK

Nope.

(SHE holds out a parking ticket.)

JUDITH

Whatever. I just put on my chauffeur's hat and Jesus took the wheel.
You got a parking ticket.

(Hands HIM the ticket.)

FRANK

Shit!

EDITH

Frank!

FRANK

We need to get this paint cleaned up before it sets.

JUDITH

Good Lord! What a mess! What happened?

FRANK

Ted decided to paint the kitchen.

JUDITH

He wasn't supposed to start until I got here.

FRANK

Dammit, Judith, you knew about this?

JUDITH

Oh lord. I wondered what happened to him. We'll have to clean up this mess. You don't look like you're dressed for painting a kitchen, Mr. Frank.

EDITH

Have you had breakfast, Judith?

FRANK

Ted was painting. I just stopped for a cup of coffee with mom before work.

JUDITH

You should have told him to wait until I got here.

EDITH

How about a glass of tea?

FRANK

I wasn't here, yet!

JUDITH

No thanks.

(EDITH pours tea.)

EDITH

I don't know where he got it. He always has a box full of stuff he's found on his bicycle. I didn't think anything of it. Say when.

JUDITH

Really, I don't want any.

FRANK

Mom, she said she didn't want any.

EDITH

See if it's sweet enough.

JUDITH

Maybe later.

(SHE sets it aside and TED grabs it,
unnoticed, and guzzles it down.)

We better get him cleaned up.

FRANK

Where did you go?

JUDITH

Now, Mr. Frank, I don't pry into your business.

(FRANK notices TED finishing the tea.)

FRANK

Ted, put that tea down! You won't be able to walk in that diaper!

EDITH

He cleaned his own...

FRANK

Yes, Mom, you already told me.

EDITH

Is it sweet enough, Ted?

FRANK

Mom, the doctor said he shouldn't have so much sugar.

EDITH

Pooh.

FRANK

I'll call Charlie to come over and help clean up.

JUDITH

I thought you said he was at camp.

FRANK

Oh, that's right. At least all those years of Scouting got him some kind of job.

EDITH

Does he have enough money?

FRANK

Yes, mom. He's fine. He'll be starting back to college in the Fall. I'll talk to you then about money.

EDITH

I'll send him 5 dollars.

FRANK

Mom, he'll be home in 2 days. He won't even get it.

EDITH

I sent him 10 dollars yesterday. Judith took Ted to the post office with it.

(JUDITH whispers to EDITH.)

JUDITH

Don't let him know there's money in the envelopes. Lena said he isn't supposed to have money.

(JUDITH might actually lead TED to the
sofa.)

Hey fella, Let's see what's on TV.

(SHE hands him the remote and returns to
her stool. He goes from channel to channel
and stops at a fishing show.)

FRANK

The post office will return it. You can give it to him later.

JUDITH

Mr. Frank, if you need to go I can clean things up.

(TED puts the remote down.)

FRANK

I can stay a few minutes. Watching fishing? Let me help you.

(HE mutes the TV.)

JUDITH

Mr. Frank!

FRANK

What?

JUDITH

He was watching that.

FRANK

I just turned off the sound.

(TED gets agitated.)

JUDITH

You go on, now. I can handle things.

FRANK

Well, okay.

JUDITH

Well, go already!

FRANK

I'll bring some tools to scrape off that paint after work.

EDITH

Will you be here for lunch?

FRANK

What are we having?

EDITH

Meat loaf sandwiches.

FRANK

I'll be here.

JUDITH

Big plans. Don't we have big plans, fella?

(SHE goes onto the set and leads TED to the sofa.)

EDITH

Here, take some money for gas.

JUDITH

Big plans! Big plans, right buddy?

(TED awkwardly embraces JUDITH and tries to kiss her. FRANK stares.)

FRANK

Okay, better get going.

(JUDITH struggles gently out of TED's embrace.)

JUDITH

Now behave yourself!

(SHE returns to her stool.)

FRANK

I'll come by after work, Mom. To clean up.

JUDITH

Call Lena and let her know.

EDITH

What?

JUDITH

That Ted tried to take Frank's car.

EDITH

She already knows. Sheriff Carson called her.

JUDITH

Frank, did your wife go and call the police on us?

FRANK

Maybe. Probably not. Yes.

JUDITH

What does she think? We just sat there for a few minutes and drove right back.

EDITH

Lena doesn't let him have the keys.

JUDITH

Yes, but she's having work done on the house. Contractors leave their keys in the trucks a lot of times.

EDITH

Teddy has never driven a truck.

FRANK

He was in the Navy.

EDITH

He can't swim. I don't know why he went into the Navy.

FRANK

But maybe he drove trucks.

EDITH

Teddy, stay away from the trucks.

JUDITH

I'll talk to her.

EDITH

Come on, Ted, let's finish eating and then we'll clean up.

FRANK

See you at lunch. I've gotta run.

(Transition music as FRANK leaves.
 JUDITH leads TED to the kitchen table.
 TED writes as JUDITH returns to her stool.
 EDITH makes up stuff as they write. Music
 fades.)

EDITH

What do we have so far? "Dear Eddie and Ellen. How are you? My garden has been doing well. So far the melons are starting to ripen. Mom played in a faculty band at Van Buren. She played the tambourine." We're not sure about the spelling there, are we Ted? "Earl Sonnet's house was broken into while he was in the hospital. All his drugs were stolen." Maybe we should say "medicines" instead.

(erases and corrects the word.)

"We haven't received your Christmas list, yet. Mom and I ordered a new bedroom suit. It's the Cadillac of bedroom suits." I'm not sure how to spell that, either. "A huge bed and dresser.

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

Two end tables with marble tops. We'll be living the good life! It's cherry. Well, better sign off. Keep your chin up. Love," Here Ted, why don't you sign it?

(She pushes the pen into TED's hand and he scrawls something as she guides his hand.)

Let's put a stamp on it and put it out for the mailman. I'll see if he's come yet.

(She opens the door. FRANK is coming up the walk.)

Hello Frank! I was just about to put a letter out. Why aren't you at work?

FRANK

I'll put it out.

EDITH

I don't want you to get fired. I don't have a stamp on it, yet.

FRANK

I'll be ok. I couldn't leave things here like they were. We better get that paint cleaned up. What have you done now, Ted?

EDITH

He wrote a letter to Ed.

FRANK

I wonder what kind of paint he had. I should check the can.

EDITH

He went to the bathroom already.

(FRANK looks at the tracks going out the back door.)

FRANK

I meant the *paint* can, mom. There you go, Ted, disappearing out the back door.

(He begins scraping the paint with his fingernail.)

I'm afraid I'll need a razor.

EDITH

I'll get you some iced tea.

(TED wipes paint brush on a towel then hands the towel to FRANK who doesn't look up.)

FRANK

Thanks, Ted.

(EDITH sees her towel.)

EDITH

Frank! That's my good dish towel! Don't use that.

FRANK

Ted gave it to me. Oh crap! It's got paint on it.

(TED laughs and rubs his hand in FRANK's hair.)

EDITH

Ted! You have paint all over you again.

FRANK

Ted! For god's sake! You think it's funny, huh?

EDITH

Boys!

(TED laughs as FRANK rubs paint in his
face.)

Boys! Be careful of my linoleum!

FRANK

The paint's still a little soft. I can probably scrape it up with a razor.

EDITH

Ted needs a shave.

FRANK

I can do it after I clean this off. We don't want to wait much longer.

EDITH

Yes. He's starting to look like a mountain man.

FRANK

I meant the paint.

EDITH

Come on Ted, let's wash your face. Oh, I forgot about the mailman.

(She gets her letter and a stamp and
envelope.)

Teddy wrote a letter to Eddie. Did you want us to write anything for
you?

FRANK

Tell him we'll be coming down on our way to New Orleans.

EDITH

I'll get a pencil.

FRANK

He wrote this?

EDITH

Yes. I helped him.

FRANK

But who wrote it?

EDITH

We wrote it together.

FRANK

Ted, write a message to Ed. Tell him I'm coming down on my way to New Orleans.

EDITH

I'll write it. Ted's tired.

FRANK

Does Lena know he's writing to Ed?

EDITH

I don't know.

FRANK

Let me read it.

EDITH

We need to get that paint cleaned up. Oh, there's the mailman.

(She quickly puts a stamp on the envelope,
seals it and heads for the door.)

FRANK

I need to check and see if Memphis is on the way to New Orleans.

EDITH

Just a minute. I have a map. Let me catch the mailman.

(SHE goes out.)

FRANK

Ted, let's get you cleaned up. Been watching fishing, huh? So what did you write to Ed? Did you tell him how you and Jimmie got lost on your fishing trip in Michigan in 1992? That boy of yours said he had to ask someone where you were when he woke up. Is that right? That will teach him to fall asleep in the back seat at a rest stop, huh?

(EDITH returns.)

EDITH

I got there just in time. Ted writes to Eddie every week. I try to always mail them. Last week Ted wrote about his melons getting stolen and putting Prince to sleep.

FRANK

That was years ago.

EDITH

It makes him smile. He said you were getting a sweet girl. He said Grace is a "peach."

FRANK

Getting a peach in 1956, huh?

EDITH

It makes him smile.

FRANK

I wish he'd stop trying to take a bite.

EDITH

Now that tickles me.

FRANK

Hey Ted, you think Grace is a peach, huh?

EDITH

That's what you said, didn't you Ted? And he said he bowled a 420, whatever that means.

FRANK

The bowling alley of his mind is all spares and strikes. Isn't it, Ted?

EDITH

We'll write about it, won't we Ted? Did the college students steal your melons? That's usually what happens.

FRANK

He was digging in the dumpster at the college yesterday. It's getting embarrassing.

EDITH

Why?

FRANK

People know he's my brother. I have to work there, you know.

EDITH

I mean why was he digging in the trash?

FRANK

What did you find in the dumpster, Ted? They still buying back soda pop bottles? He had a couple of Sports Illustrated magazines.

EDITH

He likes to watch the football team practice.

FRANK

I'll run home and get a razor blade.

EDITH

Orley's razor is here.

FRANK

I mean to scrape the paint off. I'll take care of Ted's whiskers when I get back.

(As they look at the paint on the floor TED pulls a Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue from between the sofa cushions. He rubs his crotch.)

EDITH

Let me give you some gas money.

FRANK

Mother, will you stop?

EDITH

Still, you need a little money.

FRANK

Okay, but just because I'm tired of arguing with you. Mom, don't keep your money in the cookie jar.

EDITH

Someone might break in.

FRANK

That's the second place they'd look, after they got your stash from the freezer....

(He notices TED.)

Ted! C'mon. What are you doing?
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

(FRANK snatches the magazine, looks interested and then hides it as EDITH approaches. TED is still rubbing himself.)

EDITH

Teddy, do you have to go to the bathroom? Come on. Here you are, Frank. Is ten dollars enough? Let me get you a little more. Wait, let me take care of Ted first.

(TED staggers, as if pushed, toward the sl hallway hallway.)

FRANK

He might surprise you.

(SHE goes to a package by the back door.)

EDITH

I'll get a diaper.

FRANK

You need to finish your lunch. Let me take care of it. You just sit right here at the kitchen table while I go see to Ted.

EDITH

I can take care of him.

FRANK

Where's Judith?

EDITH

I can take care of him.

FRANK

I'm just trying to help, Mom.

(TED comes back in and leaves out the front door.)

EDITH

You are a good boy.

FRANK

Mom, let me take care of this. You can't keep trying to do it all. Sit down. That's it. Enjoy your lunch. I'll take care of Ted.

EDITH

I *am* getting tired.

FRANK

Rest a few minutes. Eat.

EDITH

Go on now.

(FRANK starts to leave again.)

Aren't we forgetting something?

(SHE turns her hands palms up and closes her eyes. FRANK waits and crosses back to her. SHE prays and FRANK joins in.)

Our heavenly father, bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies.
Guide and direct us in everything we do and say,

(FRANK notices the front door open.)

FRANK

Shit! Goddam it, Ted! Where did he go? Ted! Ted! Get back in here!

(HE rushes out the front door.)

END OF SCENE ONE

Scene 2

4:30 pm. LENA arrives to pick up TED. CARSON is sitting in the living room. TED is off in the bathroom. Doorbell rings.

EDITH

Hello Lena. Ted! Lena's here! Ted's been working on a puzzle. (sotto)
Carson has some unpleasant news, I'm afraid.

LENA

Where is he?

EDITH

In the kitchen.

LENA

I mean Ted.

EDITH

Frank shaved him. Ted! Lena's here!

LENA

Hello Carson. How was your day, Mother?

EDITH

Too much excitement.

LENA

Come on, Ted! Let's give your mother a break!

(CARSON rises.)

CARSON

Lena.

LENA

Well, Sheriff Carson, give it to me straight.

(CARSON laughs.)

CARSON

You've got keep an eye on him. One of these days he's going to get hurt. This is the last time. I can come back later. I just wanted to be sure you were going to look after him, now.

(HE kisses her on the cheek and starts out the door.)

EDITH

Frank was with me. We won't let it happen again. Can't you stay for a few minutes? Have some iced tea. I made sugar cookies this afternoon.

CARSON

Now you've got me. No tea though.

EDITH

I'll have it ready for you in a jiffy.

(TED enters from bathroom/hallway. He has many tiny pieces of tissue stuck to his face.)

CARSON

Back safely with only a few minor scrapes. Welcome to Edith and Frank's tonsorium.

LENA

Good lord, Ted! You look like you were in a knife fight.

EDITH

Frank shaved him. A couple of nicks but he put tissue paper on them. I couldn't find a septic pencil.

(LENA rolls her eyes and corrects her, CARSON laughs.)

LENA

Styptic.

EDITH

Yes. Orley's is here somewhere.

LENA

I'll put some alcohol on it when we get home. Did he use an axe?

EDITH

Now that tickles me. Let me get those treats.

LENA

Tell me about your day, Ted. I see you're working on our old favorite puzzle. The Grand Canyon.

CARSON

Hannah and I have always treasured that trip there with you and Ted.

LENA

Hard to remember we had a life before children.

I wish we had taken the kids there. Maybe some day they'll go with their families.

CARSON

Remember when we took the kids to Washington, D.C.? 1968 wasn't it?

LENA

Two campers and all ten of us. Where have the years gone?

(EDITH brings in a tray with tea and cookies.)

EDITH

Here you go. Cookies and iced tea. I'll set it right here. Ted was painting the kitchen this morning.

LENA

So I hear. I hope Frank wasn't upset about the car.

EDITH

I tried to pay him for the gas.

LENA

Is the paint cleaned up?

EDITH

Frank used a razor. He shaved Ted. It's wasn't easy but it got the paint off.

LENA

What?

EDITH

Frank rubbed paint on his face. They were being rowdy.

LENA

Ted!

EDITH

Shaved him and then cleaned the paint off.

CARSON

It must have been painful.

EDITH

Yes, arthritis in my fingers. I'm glad Frank took care of it.

CARSON

I meant Ted. What a day you've had.

EDITH

Oh, I don't mind.

(TED chugs the glass of tea and eats a
cookie.)

LENA

Let's get you home. Ted! Put that down!

EDITH

Oh, he's fine.

LENA

You won't want your supper.

EDITH

He eats like a bird.

LENA

Birds are voracious. With Ted it's like a baby. "Here comes the
airplane! Open the hangar." Gets on your last nerve.

EDITH

I don't mind. Yesterday he ate an entire peach pie.

LENA

I meant me. Why do I have such a hard time getting him to eat?

EDITH

I can't imagine.

(CARSON laughs.)

LENA

Mom, you do too much.

EDITH

You need a break.

LENA

I've got to get the yearbook done. Don't want to have to go back when classes are getting started.

EDITH

I mean from Ted.

LENA

Mother.

EDITH

I've told him that myself, haven't I, Ted? I said, "Ted, you need to give Lena a break. Stay in the guest bedroom."

LENA

I don't know how you did it.

EDITH

What?

LENA

Raised 3 boys and now Ted all over again.

EDITH

Ted was in the Navy when Orley died so now's my chance.

LENA

I'll write it down. "Never too late to be a single mother." I don't know how you did it. Okay Carson. What's the story this time?

CARSON

I really should talk to Ted.

LENA

Good luck.

EDITH

It was his brother's car. Ted just borrowed it. He didn't even drive. Judith did.

CARSON

Yes, that's all straightened out. But now we've had a complaint about a prowler. A neighbor recognized your son, Mrs. Krugh.

EDITH

Would you like a glass of tea?

CARSON

Lena?

LENA

He isn't feeling well.

CARSON

527 Center Street. Again.

LENA

Ed's old house.

CARSON

Yes. But this time he was trying the doors and peeking in windows. Told the neighbor he was supposed to pick up clothes or something. He was hollering that he was Ed's dad and they should let him in.

LENA

He said he was Ed's dad??? Ted, what do you know about this?

(To CARSON.)

Sorry, he's not giving up much today.

CARSON

Of course, but we have to follow up on it, anyway. Gave those folks a bit of a scare.

(EDITH brings in tea and a fruit dish of sliced melons.)

EDITH

This melon is from Ted's garden. Try some.

CARSON

Thanks.

EDITH

Check and see if the tea's sweet enough.

CARSON

No m'am. I try and stay away from caffeine in the evening.

(EDITH adds sugar. CARSON eats a bit of melon. TED gulps down the tea.)

LENA

Don't tell Frank about this.

CARSON

This melon is delicious.

EDITH

Let me get you one to take home with you. I bet your boys would enjoy it.

(She goes to the kitchen and picks up 2 canteloupes. He calls after her. sfx paper bag.)

CARSON

Thanks, Mrs. Krugh. I've stopped gardening since Hannah died. I could never do all the canning and cooking she did. Well, listen up, old boy. You can't be peeking in people's windows. You hear?

(EDITH hands him a sack.)

EDITH

Here, Carson. Stop by if you're in the neighborhood. We have plenty. He dumped the rinds in the compost pile last winter and now we have more melons than we know what to do with.

CARSON

Thanks. I think. Keep track of your son, all right? I know it must be difficult.

LENA

Thanks for looking out for us, Carson.

CARSON

Lena, I'll always be here for you, you know that.

(Doorbell rings.)

LENA

Come on, Ted. Your mother has company.

EDITH

Who could it be?

LENA

You look good, Ted. Frank and your mother cleaned you up nice. I hear you were doing some painting. Where did you get the paint and brushes?

EDITH

Judith! Come in. I didn't expect you back.

JUDITH

I thought you might need a little extra help.

(TED perks up.)

EDITH

Goodness, thank you. I'll get you some money. Are you hungry? Ted and Lena are here. And Sheriff Carson! What a day!

JUDITH

Hey fella! How have you been? You look good!

(Okay for JUDITH to actually look at TED or even join him on the set. TED starts for the kitchen. JUDITH follows. CARSON sets his sack down and starts to follow.)

EDITH

Be careful. There's wet paint in there.

JUDITH

I love the smell of fresh paint, but we better stay out of it.

LENA

I don't know how he got hold of this stuff.

JUDITH

We were at Sunny Acres the other day where they were tearing down the old laundry building.

LENA

Oh Lord.

JUDITH

He came back to the car with a box of lumber. I guess he scored some paint, too.

(JUDITH kisses TED on the cheek and goes back to her stool.)

LENA

I wish you wouldn't let him wander around.

EDITH

I'll get you a sandwich and some tea.

LENA

I was just about to take him home.

(She pushes TED down as he starts to get up. This is the first time she raises her voice to him.)

Just a minute, Ted!

CARSON

Well, I better get going.

LENA

Sorry to bother you again.

CARSON

Lena.

(HE leaves. LENA closes the door and wearily leans against it.)

JUDITH

Tell me about this, old friend. Looks like you've been working on something here.

EDITH

Oh, we had quite a mess.

(TED goes to the jigsaw puzzle.)

JUDITH

Yes.

EDITH

Frank got it mostly cleaned up. He shaved Ted. Nicked him up quite a bit but I found a septic pencil.

JUDITH

A septic pencil?

EDITH

You know, to stop the bleeding.

JUDITH

Sorry, I shouldn't laugh. Well the little bits of tissue look cute. Like it snowed on his face in July.

EDITH

We've been working on a puzzle. And we wrote Ed, didn't we, Ted?

(TED puts a puzzle piece in place.)

We got out his old Sunday school picture. And we sang some songs.

(Sings. JUDITH can join in. TED, too. He sings confidently and badly.)

I will cling to the old rugged Cross
And exchange it some day for a crown.

JUDITH

That's something he always enjoys. He usually knows all the words.

(She picks up the picture.)

I bet I know which one's him.

EDITH

Which one is you, Teddy?

JUDITH

I'll bet it's this cute little fella right here.

LENA

He's a cutie, all right. What's that?

EDITH

Ted's second grade Sunday School class. Was the guest towel clean? I told the boys not to use it.

LENA

Yes Mother, it was like new.

EDITH

I sent Ellen and Eddie a set of towels for their housewarming. I felt bad not bringing them something last summer.

JUDITH

Was that when the camper broke down?

EDITH

Yes. Jimmie was with us. That boy must bring bad luck to traveling. We all sat in the camper for over four hours until we finally got help. I was worried sick Ed would come try to find us.

LENA

All those years we've been members of Triple A and I didn't even think to try and contact them for help. Jimmie walked for miles trying to get a mechanic.

EDITH

But we had a lot of time to talk and it wasn't too hot.

LENA

Ed was sure glad to see us.

EDITH

He was a nervous wreck.

LENA

Served him right. Now he knows how we felt when he disappeared for days at a time on his bicycle when he was in high school.

(Doorbell sounds.)

EDITH

My goodness, this is quite an evening.

LENA

C'mon, Ted. Let's get you home.

JUDITH

I guess I'll go, too. Seems you have things under control.

EDITH

Don't go until I get you a little extra money.

LENA

Mother, I'm responsible for this.

(EDITH opens the door.)

EDITH

Well look who's here! Sheriff Carson again.

CARSON

Sorry to interrupt, Mrs. Krugh. I forgot my melons.

EDITH

He told me he has so many melons in the basement that it's a wonder he hasn't turned into one. Ha ha! He made me a fern stand in his woodworking class. I don't like him taking the electricity class, though.

CARSON

He takes shop classes?

JUDITH

He's not always like this. He has good days. Well. I really don't like to say, "good days". We usually say that when it's good for us, don't we, Mrs. Krugh?

LENA

There are cruel days when we think he'll recover.

JUDITH

Well, look there! Three pieces just like that!.

EDITH

There you go, Teddy. The Grand Canyon!

JUDITH

I love it when things fit together. Whoa, buddy, you're on a roll! Let me do a couple.

EDITH

Last year the doctor told him that when you get to be a certain age the brain may shrink but his was okay. The CAT scan was all okay.

LENA

Thanks for coming by, Carson. I hope your boys enjoy the melon.

CARSON

Sometimes it's hard to remember how he was before, well, before, you know.

LENA

No Carson. Don't.

CARSON

We had some good times, didn't we?

EDITH

Milt Nagley said he was at Sunny Acres Nursing home looking for the world like he did when he worked there.

LENA

Mom that was five years ago.

EDITH

No. Just yesterday he told me that Ted was over there last week looking really good. He even remembered Milton's name.

LENA

That can't be true.

(TED is confidently putting puzzle pieces in place.)

EDITH

I didn't think so, either. But I asked Ted about it and he smiled big as you please and named about six other residents and told me the names of two who had died.

LENA

Ted. Is this true?

CARSON

Well, I better be getting on with my calls. Had a report about some mischief at the College Church.

EDITH

Why that's where we go. Was there a break-in?

CARSON

No. Someone has apparently been putting construction materials on the lawn. They just moved it from the new dormitory they're building across the street.

(JUDITH rises, enjoying her guilt.)

JUDITH

I'll be back next week.

CARSON

I better get going, too. Try to keep better tabs on him. Don't want people getting scared. Someone might even shoot.

JUDITH

I'll see you tomorrow.

EDITH

Judith, don't you need some money for gas?

JUDITH

No.

EDITH

But you've been driving a lot with Ted. Gas isn't cheap.

JUDITH

It's nothing.

(EDITH tucks ten dollars into JUDITH's
purse.)

EDITH

Now you take this. Get a little something for the kids.

JUDITH

Mrs. Krugh, we're fine. But if it pleases you, it'll please me to take it.

(JUDITH leaves. TED tries to follow her.)

LENA

Ted! I'm not ready, yet.

(She sits him back down.)

EDITH

Ted used to have a shotgun.

CARSON

Oh?

EDITH

When he was a boy. He gave it to Ed. Ed gave it to Cosmo Yarrow.
Someone bought it at Cosmo's estate sale.

LENA

He had it when the boys were small. Just for hunting squirrels and
rabbits. Sometimes a pheasant.

CARSON

I see.

LENA

I haven't seen it for over 30 years. Did you say he gave it to Cosmo Yarrow, Mother?

EDITH

Yes. I believe he did.

CARSON

Well, keep an eye on him..

LENA

I hope we don't see you soon.

CARSON

You're so mean to me and all I show you is love. Well, bye now.

(HE opens the door. LENA picks up the bag of melons.)

LENA

Carson?

(HE stops, gathers his strength, turns.)

Your melons.

CARSON

Thanks!

(He leaves.)

LENA

How do you do it?

EDITH

What?

LENA

I should say, how *did* you do it?

EDITH

Do what?

LENA

Raise the boys by yourself. 45 years ago.

EDITH

By myself? Goodness, not by myself. I prayed. And you were a big help getting me the training I needed for the hospital. The church folks helped quite a bit, too.

LENA

Why didn't you stay in Wooster?

EDITH

You and Ted were here. Frank and Junior were so young.

LENA

So now you're looking after Ted because he took care of you?

EDITH

Oh my goodness, no! He's my son.

LENA

But I'm the one who vowed "in sickness or in health."

EDITH

A mother doesn't need a vow like that.

LENA

I'm sure you're ready for some rest, Mother. Come on, Ted.

(TED doesn't get up.)
(MORE)

LENA (CONT'D)

Is it okay if I bring him over a little early tomorrow? I want to finish the yearbook so there are no loose ends.

EDITH

Of course, that's fine. I'll have breakfast ready for him

LENA

Isn't it strange?

EDITH

Yes. Cosmo Yarrow. I'll never forget standing at the kitchen sink when....

(TED gets up and wanders to the kitchen.)

LENA

What? I mean the way Judith never says, "Ted" or "Mr. Krugh".

EDITH

She talks to him all the time.

LENA

But she never says his name.

EDITH

They work on puzzles together.

LENA

We'll go in a minute, Ted! I better get him home; he's starting to get agitated.

(TED sits down at the kitchen table and writes a note.)

EDITH

Let him write. Sometimes I can read his writing. Sometimes I just guess and rewrite it.

LENA

He just scribbles for me.

EDITH

I can remember his writing when he was a little boy. He wrote letters while he was in the Navy, also.

LENA

Ted and his letters. He wrote poems to me in high school.

EDITH

He was a mess when he thought you were breaking up with him.

LENA

He told you about that? Carson was so silly. Ted was so romantic.

EDITH

He moped around the house all day. But it was right after his dad died so he was pretty blue already. He came home from California for his dad's funeral.

LENA

Frank was with him, right?

EDITH

No. Frank was just 13 years old. Junior was only 15. Ted was in the Navy. My, how they admired their big brother.

LENA

I mean Frank was with Dad Krugh when he died.

EDITH

Oh yes. He ran to the church through the back alley in his bare feet to get us.

LENA

I'm not sure why we were breaking up.

EDITH

He was probably messing around. Ted, were you messing around?

LENA

He was a charmer. I couldn't bear to see him with MaryBeth Frazier so we got back together fast.

EDITH

I hope you don't regret it.

LENA

What?

EDITH

Getting back together.

LENA

Oh.

EDITH

You're lucky to have skills.

LENA

And you and my folks. Well, come on Ted. Put down the pencil.

(EDITH helps him up from the table. He puts the pen in his pocket. The letter falls to the floor.)

EDITH

Bright and early, Teddy. We'll have pancakes and juice.

(EDITH picks up the letter.)

LENA

Ted, listen to me. Ted! Come on. It's time to leave. Your mother needs to rest. Stop acting like you don't know what's going on. One step after another. Hup! Hup! To the left, to the left, out we go.

(EDITH reads the note)

EDITH

"It would be good to hear from you sometime. Please write. Come home and we'll go fishing. Love, Dad." My goodness! His old handwriting. Isn't that something? I need to tell Ed that he wrote this all by himself!

(SHE folds it neatly and puts it in an envelope. Takes it out the front door to mail it.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 3

FRANK is with TED at the kitchen table. They are looking at TED's Sunday School picture.

FRANK

Ted! You named every kid in this picture. Now, who am I? Just look at me and tell me who you see. Answer me. Say you don't know if you don't know. Who am I!? This sure went nowhere fast. Hey, you found your watch. Mom said you lost it in the snow last winter while you were shoveling. Where was it at? Was it while you were working at Sunny Acres? I know you shoveled Herb and Helen's sidewalks. Was it there? Let's see what's on TV. You want bowling or fishing? Nope.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey, here's women's beach volleyball, no, better not. Mom's getting her hair done. She took a cab. Isn't that something? She took a cab to work every day until she retired. We'd be rich if she'd just bought an old car, wouldn't we? If she would have agreed to learn to drive I'd have bought her one. She likes her routine, doesn't she? I'll see what's in the refrigerator. Maybe lemon meringue pie. Wouldn't that taste good? You find any more racy books in the dumpster? I did when I was a kid. I think I learned it from you. Dug through the dumpsters at the boys' dorms. Turned in soda bottles for a penny apiece. Collecting scrap metal. You remember that? You want to listen to the radio? Music or news? You sure used to like that "Doggy in the Window" song. Remember "How Much is that Doggie in the Window"? You always liked that song, I remember. Well, Ted, that was fifty years ago. You can forget that dog now. He's been dead for years. Oh, and how about "Spirit in the Sky"? Hell, I even liked that one. That was by Norman Greenbaum, wasn't it? Greenbaum. That's a Jewish name, isn't it? I always wondered why he had a friend in Jesus. I think about things like that sometimes. Do you ever think about things like that? ... I wonder what you do think about. And "The Seekers." Didn't we love us some Seekers!? "This Little Light of Mine."

(EDITH enters from front door.)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Look sharp, Ted. Mother's here. Hide your magazines. We're in the kitchen!

EDITH

Goodness that cab fare is getting expensive.

FRANK

I said we could take you.

EDITH

I don't want to be a burden.

FRANK

Hey, the hair looks great.

EDITH

This is how it always looks. Judith is taking Ted for a haircut later.

FRANK

He about wore me out. I don't see how you do it every day.

EDITH

Do what?

FRANK

Keep him entertained.

EDITH

Goodness, I don't even think about that. He's my son.

FRANK

Sure. He's my brother and I don't have it in me. As soon as Lena wraps up the yearbook stuff she'll be officially retired. Then you'll have some relief.

EDITH

Oh, I imagine we can work out a schedule with Ted.

FRANK

Why? She can take over. Wouldn't need Judith, anymore. Save some money. Hey, maybe we can all go down to Ed and Ellen's.

EDITH

I don't think I'm up for any more trips.

FRANK

I see Ted found his watch.

EDITH

Judith took him for a ride yesterday and he had it on when they came back.

FRANK

The places they see!

EDITH

I thought he had sold his watch to buy candy. I didn't want to tell Lena.

FRANK

You're sharper than we think, aren't you Ted?

EDITH

I'll ask Judith about it. Have you had lunch, yet?

FRANK

I can't stay. We're going to take the girls to Cleveland to shop for school clothes and stuff for their dorm rooms.

EDITH

Hard to believe school will be starting in less than a month. Judith took him to a Shopsmith demonstration at the mall yesterday.

(TED picks up the remote and stares at the blank TV screen.)

FRANK

You still have your Shopsmith, Ted? I should lock it up. He might cut a finger off or something.

EDITH

I remember when Cosmo Yarrow cut his fingers off.

FRANK

Give him half a chance and he'd still putter. Lord, remember when he tried to build an addition onto the garage with lumber he brought home from Sunny Acres? Luckily Herbert took over the project.

EDITH

Herbert seems to think he'll get better if he just saws enough firewood.

FRANK

That's the truth! I finally had to say, "Herb, leave him alone! He's sick".

EDITH

Ted shouldn't have an axe.

FRANK

He was using a two man crosscut saw.

EDITH

Mary had her friend Claire tole paint scenes from Herbert and Helen's life on that saw. It's just beautiful.

(TED manages to turn on the TV with the remote. An infomercial is on. CARSON and JUDITH act it out.)

CARSON

Hello, everyone! I'm here with a new and improved classic novelty!

JUDITH

The classic prank of the Whoopee cushion under the chair is BACK!

BOTH

And smellier than ever!

CARSON

This new product comes complete with smell.

JUDITH

So now, your friends will be blamed for breaking wind any time you want.

CARSON

How about a little demonstration for the audience?

JUDITH

Great idea.

(FRANK mutes the TV.)

FRANK

Get out your credit card, Ted.

EDITH

Last week I called in when the 700 club was on.

FRANK

Mom! You didn't.

EDITH

It was for some new equipment for the church.

FRANK

What church?

EDITH

For any church I wanted. Of course I told them I wanted it for our church. I wasn't born yesterday.

FRANK

Mom, don't give your credit card out to strangers.

(FRANK takes a rag and tries to clean a spot off his pants.)

EDITH

I mailed a check.

(TED opens the front door, waits a moment,
leaves it open then goes to the bathroom
unnoticed.)

FRANK

Don't do that, either.

EDITH

I almost fell for that guy claiming to be Jimmie.

FRANK

What?

EDITH

You didn't hear about that? Some fellow called and said that he was Jimmie. First he asked if his dad was having problems. I told him Ted had been acting odd. Then he said he was stranded in Michigan with Ted. Said he fell asleep while Ted was driving and they ran out of gas. They were only supposed to go to Round Lake but they ended up somewhere far away. Said that he needed money to get home. Hah!

FRANK

Mom, that really was Jimmie.

EDITH

Pooh. I wasn't about to fall for that. I have a friend who lost \$4,000.00 That way.

FRANK

Seriously. He never told you because he knew you'd be upset.

(He turns and sees the front door open.)

Shit! Where's Ted?

EDITH

Oh my! Your language!

FRANK

Ted! Get back in here!

EDITH

I'll call Judith. Don't let the neighbors hear that cursing!

FRANK

He just pulled away. Oh Lord!

EDITH

Hear our prayers! Where would he get a car?

FRANK

It wasn't his.

EDITH

Oh no, he took your car, again? Why did you leave your keys in it?

FRANK

It wasn't mine.

EDITH

You rode your bike, didn't you?

FRANK

No Mom, I don't know whose car it was.

EDITH

Oh no, he's a ... what is it?

FRANK

Sick man.

EDITH
No. Like hijack.

FRANK
Carjacker?

EDITH
That's it.

FRANK
I'll call Sheriff Carson.

EDITH
No. We'll get in trouble.

FRANK
I'll see if I can catch up with him. It was a maroon Chevy Nova, I think.

EDITH
I'll call Judith.

FRANK

(He hurries out.)
Wait til I get back. Geez, I gotta get to work.

EDITH

(Goes to the phone.)
Hello, Judith? This is Edith. Ted is gone. He kojacked someone. Kojacked. He stole their car. Frank went to try and find him. Could you please? I'm beside myself.

(We hear a toilet flush. EDITH calls out.)
Be sure to wash your hands! Don't use the guest towel. Oh my goodness, he's here after all. But now Frank's gone.

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

He's speeding and cussing. I hope he doesn't hurt anyone. No, you don't need to come over. Well, okay. It wouldn't hurt to take him a little earlier, anyway. Could you stop at the store on the way and pick me up a roast and some cheese? Stop at Clifford's store. I think they're having a rough patch. Give the little girl a tip. I'll pay you for it. And for the gas.

(TED enters)

Thanks! Good-bye.

(She hangs up.)

Ted! You gave us a fright! You even flushed. I'll have to mark that on the calendar. Judith will be over shortly. I'll put a roast on for supper.

(TED works on the puzzle.)

Now stay put while I get some potatoes peeled.

(She starts for the kitchen as TED picks up the remote. He rubs his hands on the top of his thighs. He utters a sound as his lips open and close as if trying to gather some words from the air.)

Were you saying something, Ted? I'll be right back.

(She puts on an apron. Picks up some potatoes and a peeler.)

I wonder why Frank didn't eat any lunch today? I suppose he ate at the college. He works too hard. I'll just save his lunch and give it to him tomorrow. How many potatoes do you think we'll need? You think five will be enough? Better make it six. I know how Frank likes mashed potatoes.

(Edith sits with TED and peels potatoes. She imagines what might be on the TV.)

You think Eddie liked that letter you wrote without any help from me?

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

I don't mean it to sound like I write your letters but sometimes it's pretty hard to read your writing you know. It helps if I clear up a few words. It does my heart good to have you say a few words even if they don't add up to sentences. What are you looking at? That's dandy! Maybe we should get one of those. A bug exterminator that you plug right into an electric outlet. I should order one for Lena, too. I better be careful. I'm spending too much of Velma's money. Sometimes I wonder what she did all day. No children and Ermond made good money. I suppose she belonged to women's clubs. Your Aunt Velma. My big sister. You remember how many brothers I had? Five. I'll bet you can't name them. Frank, Charlie, Sam, Arthur, and Carey. Just one sister and little Bessie who died a baby. It would have been nice if the boys came to my brothers' funerals. I suppose they are busy with their own families. I'm glad they came to Velma's though. Of course they were always closer to her. She bought them Christmas gifts and sent them birthday cards. Now I'm the only one left.

(FRANK walks in. He is waving a speeding ticket.)

FRANK

I couldn't find him.

(He sees TED.)

Jesus Christ Ted, where were you?

EDITH

Frank Lee!

FRANK

Sorry. I got a speeding ticket and your neighbor tried to have me arrested for trying to run her off the road!

EDITH

Swearing and speeding. Oh my!

FRANK

Sorry. I said I'm sorry. Where was he?

EDITH

In the bathroom. He must have gone out and come back in. Eddie sent Lena an alarm to put on the door so she would know when he opened it. We should get one for here.

FRANK

Did he do his business? Were there bubbles in the bowl?

EDITH

I probably wouldn't be able to turn it off. He flushed before I could check.

FRANK

Put that down on the calendar. We'll call this a good day.

(Doorbell rings. EDITH opens door.)

EDITH

That can't be Judith so soon. My goodness, it is Judith.

FRANK

Hey Ted, your girlfriend's here. I hear you're going to get a haircut.

EDITH

Judith, did you get the meat and cheese?

JUDITH

Clifford said he'd bring it over when he gets off.

(TED perks up at the sound of her voice.)

EDITH

That rascal! He never lets me pay for things. I'm sorry to make you come so early.

JUDITH

I wasn't doing anything.

FRANK

He's figured out that his profits are better when he delivers! Hey Judith, where'd you find Ted's watch?

JUDITH

He kept looking at his wrist. When we went to Sunny Acres a few weeks ago he was searching in the grass.

EDITH

I thought he lost it when he was shoveling snow. Goodness, that was 2 years ago.

JUDITH

They had it in the lost and found.

FRANK

So today you want a haircut, eh Ted?

JUDITH

It was my idea. I saw him looking in the mirror and fussing with his hair.

FRANK

What hair?

JUDITH

That doesn't matter.

(sotto)

He likes to sit in the barber chair.

FRANK

How can you tell?

JUDITH

Oh for goodness sake, Mr. Frank! He just sits a minute and then we go home.

(JUDITH goes onto the set. SHE smooths TED's hair. He stands as if he knows his schedule.)

FRANK

Beauty shop day for Edith and Teddy!

(TED pulls JUDITH toward the door.)

JUDITH

Off we go!

EDITH

He could have gone with me.

FRANK

I'm leaving anyway. I can take him.

JUDITH

We have our little routine.

(TED puts his arm around her.)

FRANK

Looks like you better get going.

JUDITH

I'll have him back shortly.

EDITH

I hope Clifford gets here soon. I'm putting the potatoes on right now.

JUDITH

I'm sure he'll bring us much more than you can eat

EDITH

Frank and Teddy will enjoy the leftovers for their lunches.

FRANK

Bye Ted! Don't be too rough on her.

EDITH

Oh wait, Judith, let me give you some money for his haircut.

JUDITH

He has good credit.

EDITH

Don't let her leave, yet.

JUDITH

Bye!

(JUDITH returns to her stool. TED leaves.)

FRANK

This is something, isn't it Mom?

EDITH

I told you to make her wait!

FRANK

Ted and me eating lunch with you almost every day.

EDITH

It's our family. We have to take care of each other. I wish Clifford would get here. The meat will never be ready in time.

FRANK

So what's the deal with Judith?

EDITH

What do you mean?

FRANK

She takes him to odd places.

(EDITH gets a small photo album.)

EDITH

She takes his picture wherever they go. Here, look, we keep an album.

FRANK

Has Lena seen this?

EDITH

I don't know. Look. Here's Ted at Van Buren Lake. Doesn't he look nice?

FRANK

Where did he get a fishing pole?

EDITH

Judith must have found one somewhere.

FRANK

She took him bowling?

EDITH

Oh my. I thought that was an old picture from the church league.

(Doorbell rings.)

FRANK

I don't think I've seen him bowl in over twenty years.

(EDITH rises. LENA enters before she can answer. FRANK sits. LENA is holding a bag.)

LENA

This was on your settee on the porch. Smells like supper.

EDITH

Oh that rascal, Clifford!.

LENA

It's ready to eat. Where's Ted?

EDITH

Judith took him to get a haircut.

(SHE prepares dinner while LENA tells her story.)

LENA

Frank, we need to talk.

FRANK

What's up?

LENA

I was at a professional dinner meeting at the college last night. The speaker was the State president of Delta Kappa Gamma.

FRANK

What's that?

LENA

A society for women educators. She told the most amusing story before she delivered her speech.

FRANK

Yeah?

LENA

Yes. She told about getting lost on Howard Street. She was staying with the Fricks. She was told it was a short walk to Brewer Hall but she seems to have made a wrong turn. It seems a man on a bicycle tried to help her.

FRANK

Oh no.

LENA

Oh yes. A very nice man who said he grew up in the neighborhood and even graduated from Findlay College. Of course I immediately thought that it couldn't be your brother. When was the last time he knew he had to go to the bathroom, let alone where Brewer Hall was?

EDITH

He just went to the bathroom himself. He even flushed.

FRANK

So what did Ted tell her? Did she figure out she asked the wrong guy?

LENA

You're quicker than I was. I didn't figure it out until she told how the man convinced her to get on his bike with him so he could take her there.

(FRANK laughs. Sings.)

FRANK

"Raindrops keep falling on my head!"

LENA

You're amused? In a business dress! I could have died. I wanted to run from the room but Darlene Todd was staring right at me with her silly grinning face.

FRANK

"Cryin's not for me. I'm never gonna stop the rain by complainin'"

LENA

Shut up!

FRANK

So she got to the meeting, okay?

LENA

No. Not okay. She was terrified. She called the police. I mean she tried to make light of it and the group had a big laugh but I was mortified.

FRANK

Did you tell her who he was?

LENA

Heavens, no! The police knew who he was after they checked out his alert necklace but fortunately Dr. Winton didn't connect him with me.

FRANK

He's sick. It's nothing to be embarrassed about.

LENA

Easy for you to say. When are they due back?

FRANK

What will you say to him?

LENA

What can I say to him? However, Judith needs to know that this can't continue.

FRANK

Judith was with him?

LENA

She must have been. She can't continue to take him to all these odd places. There are liability concerns.

FRANK

She watches him closely. I don't think it's a problem.

LENA

How could she just watch Ted ride off with that woman on his bicycle?

FRANK

"Nothin's worryin' me."

LENA

So you find it funny?

FRANK

Sort of. So what do you plan to do in the Fall? You can't just lock him in. Won't it be the same for you?

LENA

I assume I'll have some help.

EDITH

Oh yes, we'll take turns.

LENA

I mean from my sons. Except Ed.

FRANK

Lena, look at these pictures. Judith is good for him. When do you ever see him grinning like this?

LENA

Everyone seems to know what's best for him except me!

(SHE knocks the album out of his hands.)

FRANK

Hey, take it easy!

(HE picks up the album.)

LENA

Put yourself in my position.

EDITH

I said I'd help, Lena. We're a family. We'll be all right.

LENA

I worked for 10 years after Ted retired. Now I retire and look at what I have to look forward to.

FRANK

Lena, you can still travel, there's other things you can do. You enjoy your Alpha Sigma Pythagoras group.

LENA

Do you think I want to show my face there again?

FRANK

So why are you retiring? You could teach another 10 years.

LENA

Think about it. Your mother is 85 year old. For God's sake, do the math.

FRANK

We can find a place for him

LENA

No!!

FRANK

Let's at least see what's out there.

LENA

I taught math. I've run the numbers. I don't plan to work every day just to deposit my check in a nursing home.

FRANK

What does that mean?

LENA

I mean he's going to stay at home. We know his routine and we know what to do.

FRANK

What about Judith? He's going to need more and more care. You can't lift him by yourself.

(TED walks in from the back door. He is dressed in a Christmas sweater. He carries a box of Christmas decorations.)

LENA

What do you know about what I can or can't do?

(FRANK sits in awkward silence for a moment.)

FRANK

When did you first think Ted was sick?

LENA

Before the boys were even born.

(JUDITH walks onto the set and leads TED
to the back door. She goes back to her stool.)

FRANK

C'mon, talk sense.

LENA

You asked.

FRANK

I don't remember any problems.

LENA

Really?

FRANK

Maybe a few quirky things. I remember he got a bit panicky when Ed caught the house on fire.

LENA

He had them melting off old paint with blowtorches.

FRANK

Yeah. That. And when Ed tried to clean up spilled gas with a match and caught the lawn mower on fire. And the garage.

LENA

Forget it. I have just had it up to here with everyone telling me how I'm supposed to react to this horror. My friends say, "at least he isn't violent." Whoopee! Most of the time you look into those eyes and there's nothing there. Nothing there.

(MORE)

LENA (CONT'D)

Oh sometimes there will be a little fear, like someone might be ready to hurt him. But mostly just nothing. I've tried everything I can think of to trigger some memories. I show him scrapbooks, grade school report cards, his discharge papers. I take him to places we've been, places where we used to talk about going. I take him to family reunions to see cousins he hasn't seen in 50 years. Still nothing. But how could I live with myself if I put him in a home only to find out some day that it's all in there but just so mixed up that his system shuts down? Could you live with that? You're his blood relatives. I'm just some woman who happened to fall in love with an 18 year-old boy who suddenly went downhill fast after decades of slow decline.

FRANK

How can you say that?

LENA

Because I watched it happen. I covered for him just like his fellow teachers who got him through to full retirement. All the "quirky" things, as you say, I hid from others or laughed off like he was some kind of absent-minded professor.

FRANK

Lena, you can handle this.

(TED reappears SR.)

LENA

No shit! I've been "handling it" for 25 years. Mother just took over when the poor guy was too far gone to keep standing in front of students. But for 25 years, whether either of you knew it or not, I was doing the heavy lifting. Who do you think paid the bills, filed the taxes, fixed meals, did laundry, and made sure the kids were dressed and educated?

FRANK

You're not being fair. Ted loved being with the family. They can all help.

LENA

Sure. Somehow this will all take care of itself.

FRANK

I didn't say that.

LENA

Starting this Fall I have to face the very real possibility that I will be in prison.

FRANK

Lena!

LENA

Oh not that kind of prison. I could never hurt him or divorce him, though I'm sure no one would fault me. I'm talking about years of waking up next to a man who lays there staring at the ceiling while marinating in his own piss.

FRANK

Judith can help.

LENA

Well, that settles everything.

JUDITH

Did you see Ted's haircut? Wink, wink.

LENA

Where is he?

JUDITH

He wanted to put his things in the shed before supper.

(All look to TED standing in the doorway.)

EDITH

Come on! We're ready for the blessing. Let's eat.

Lights fade on set. Christmas music.

Scene 4

(JUDITH is on the set with TED. TED decorates for Christmas. Turns on the color wheel.)

JUDITH

Well, isn't this special?

(TED starts for the front door. JUDITH takes him back to the sofa.)

We have alarms on the doors now, you rascal! If I hear one go off I'll be hot on your heels. Maybe I'll wait until I'm ready to leave. Don't want to fray my nerves. Goodness, look at all the pretties!

(JUDITH returns to her stool. EDITH walks in from the front door. She is in a summer dress and her purse hangs limply at her side.)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Hello, Ms. Edith!

EDITH

Oh my goodness.

JUDITH

Surprise!

EDITH

Ted, what are you up to now?!

JUDITH

Who else celebrates Christmas in August?

EDITH

Well, we better get this cleaned up.

JUDITH

I'm sure Christmas will be over tomorrow. Let's enjoy it for awhile.

EDITH

Well, I do hate to put it away and just get it out again in a few months.

JUDITH

We'll see how it goes.

EDITH

Be careful with the ornaments, Ted. Orley and I got these when we first went to housekeeping.

JUDITH

(whispers)

He wanted to put straw over the strawberries. He's convinced winter is coming. Lena said he had a fire going in the fireplace last night.

EDITH

What would my days be like without Teddy? He keeps me going.

JUDITH

Well, that's one bright thing.

EDITH

Can you stay for lunch? We're having meat loaf from last night. Ted said, "page 193 in Mom's cookbook." I wonder if he was right? I'll go check.

JUDITH

Probably so. He hasn't steered me wrong yet.

EDITH

I turned the mattress this morning.

JUDITH

You never cease to amaze me.

EDITH

No. Not in this cookbook. Maybe Lena's. I'll ask her sometime. She's had a headache for over a week. I told her to see a doctor when she snapped at Teddy.

JUDITH

I'll talk to her.

EDITH

He said he cashed in a life insurance policy. Where did you spend the money, Ted? He won't tell.

JUDITH

We stopped at the bank yesterday. Wink, wink.

EDITH

Sam's girl, Inez, has one side of her face paralyzed. She has to tape her eye shut at night to sleep.

JUDITH

Okay.

(LENA enters from front door. TED heads
for the hallway.)

LENA

Sorry I couldn't get here sooner. For heaven's sake, Ted. Let's get this
cleaned up.

JUDITH

It's not hurting anything.

(TED turns off color wheel.)

LENA

We're putting all of this away. Right now!

EDITH

Ted, let's lay down for our naps.

LENA

I'm sorry Mother, but this can't continue.

EDITH

I understand. Come on Ted. We'll take care of this later.

(TED leaves off left.)

LENA

Judith, I appreciate your good intentions, but this is just too much.
Mother can't handle this.

JUDITH

I called you because I thought you would enjoy seeing what he did.
Sorry it upset you.

LENA

That's right. It's me. I can't stand the heat so I'm putting out the fire.

JUDITH

Ms. Krugh, I was just trying to help.

LENA

Well, you can't. No one can.

JUDITH

He just likes Christmas.

LENA

You think I don't know that? Last Christmas he opened all the gifts at my mom and dad's.

JUDITH

He hit the mother load!

(LENA can't help but being a little amused.)

LENA

We were all in the basement.

JUDITH

I'm sure Mrs. Alexander enjoyed re-wrapping them.

LENA

Judith! *All* the gifts. Children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. 35 decoupage clocks made from cypress slabs, 20 yarn octopuses. Dioramas made from cotton she found in fields on vacation with driftwood and plastic deer from the dollar store. Over 70 packages.

JUDITH

I hope the children didn't see it.

LENA

Are you kidding? That's how we found out. Billy went up to go to the bathroom and discovered a dozen grandchildren crying in the wreckage of it.

JUDITH

I'm sorry. I shouldn't laugh.

LENA

Funny memories of Ted.

JUDITH

We can put this all away. No need to stress ourselves over Christmas.

LENA

Cosmo Yarrow blew his brains out with Ted's gun.

JUDITH

What?

LENA

That's how Cosmo cured his cancer. But that's not an option for Ted. I wonder if he would if he could?

JUDITH

Mrs. Krugh, no need to be thinking about such things.

LENA

Cosmo Yarrow sat alone in his living room. His wife was gone. His business was sold. He had no children. He had stomach cancer. He was in constant pain. He said, "I'm out of here." What's your verdict?

JUDITH

It's not for me to judge.

LENA

Well one of Mother's neighbors thought she could. She told Mother that Cosmo was now resting uncomfortably in hell because he blew his brains out. A man who finally had no one left on Earth except Mother Edith, to even know he existed.

EDITH

Cosmo wouldn't sell his house to Sunny Acres.

LENA

That's why he's in hell. Not for killing himself but for not giving his house to the church nursing home.

EDITH

Ed shouldn't have given him Orley's gun.

LENA

What's the difference?

JUDITH

Who found him?

LENA

Ed.

EDITH

I didn't see him for a couple of days so I called Ed.

JUDITH

I probably would prefer to die alone, myself.

LENA

But we'd like to send the kids out of the room while we do it. Am I to take all this stuff down by myself?

EDITH

Just let me take care of things. I don't mind.

(EDITH picks up some ornaments and puts them in a box. sfx)

JUDITH

Ms. Lena, I think you're making too much out of this.

LENA

I can take care of my husband, thank you..

JUDITH

No one is complaining about this except you. I mean that respectfully.

LENA

Mother is just too nice to say anything.

JUDITH

She has no visitors except family. What does it matter if these decorations stay up for the next 4 months?

LENA

This is not fair to Mother.

(LENA picks up HUMPHREY. Could be non working one at the prop table.)

EDITH

I can put things away. It will be all right, Lena.

JUDITH

Just as important as picking our battles, we have to pick our messes to clean up.

LENA

How was your doctor's appointment, Mother?

JUDITH

Let's not worry ourselves over the little things.

EDITH

Nobody needs to worry about me.

(LENA throws down HUMPHREY.)

JUDITH

It's just a toy.

(LENA kicks HUMPHREY)

Mrs. Krugh!

LENA

Mother, I'll take care of this. Ted's my responsibility.

EDITH

I just want to be careful with the ones Orley and I bought. I think we can leave the rest up for a little while. I don't mind.

LENA

Where is he? We need to go.

EDITH

Taking a nap. I have alarms for the doors now. There's one on every door including the bedroom and bathroom.

LENA

Since when?

JUDITH

Frank got them.

LENA

Why?

EDITH

If I fall asleep or... well, fall asleep. They're hooked up to my phone. I just need to remember to turn it off when I open the door.

LENA

So it will go off and call the police or something?

JUDITH

If it's the bedroom or the bathroom it will call you and Frank. The outside doors will alert the police.

LENA

Why am I just finding this out?

EDITH

Frank was going to explain it to you. I don't really understand these things.

JUDITH

Mrs. Krugh, it's just temporary until you finish at work.

LENA

Don't be patronizing.

(The alarm sounds from the hallway.)

So it's calling my house now?

JUDITH

No. Frank hasn't programmed them, yet. He'll talk to you about it.

LENA

So nice of you all to include me in this.

JUDITH

No one is trying to interfere. We're just concerned that this might be too much for Ms. Edith now.

(TED walks in.)

LENA

This is none of your business! Come on, Ted, I'm taking you home.

(TED picks up HUMPHREY.)

Leave that alone.

(She tries to take it from him but he has a firm grip.)

JUDITH

Ms. Lena, please!

(EDITH starts to carry her box of ornaments to the bedroom.)

LENA

Stop it, Ted. Look at me! You know who I am!

(She lets go of the toy. TED falls back, holding onto the dog but bumping the box of decorations out of EDITH's hands. sfx They shatter. EDITH sadly sifts through the box to save the undamaged ornaments.)

Ted! You know who I am! Last night he said he didn't know who I was but he said I looked old. I held a mirror to him and told him he was no spring chicken, either. He laughed and laughed. I laughed, too. That is until.

(MORE)

LENA (CONT'D)

(She pulls out a compact, opens it, and forces
the little mirror in TED's face.)

Until. Who is this, Ted? Ted, who is this in the mirror?

END OF SCENE

Scene 5

TED takes mutilated HUMPHREY from behind the sofa to the kitchen table. Slips a bib on. Lights up.

TED works at the dog with a pair of pliers. Wires and batteries lay on the table. The Christmas decorations are still up. FRANK feeds TED baby food.

FRANK

Here comes the airplane. Into the hangar. Open up! We've got to get some fuel in this engine.

(EDITH walks in from her doctor's appointment.)

Hi mom. What's the doctor's report? The bathroom and bedroom alarms are set.

EDITH

That's fine.

FRANK

Remember when Junior got that thing for Ted? He couldn't stop pressing the button.

EDITH

(She is firm and serious.)

You can go on now. I don't want you to get fired over me.

FRANK

The alarms are programmed. Just push the button to turn them on or off. When you go out to get the mail or the paper turn it off. Turn it back on when you come in. Same with the back door.

EDITH

All these gadgets.

FRANK

You want to see what's on TV, Ted?

EDITH

Let me take him to the bathroom first. You need to get on in to work. You'll lose your job.

FRANK

I'm the boss. I won't fire myself.

EDITH

You go on. I'll remember to push the buttons on and off.

FRANK

We need to get you one of those alarms you can carry, too.

EDITH

A waste of money. Now you're being silly.

FRANK

Ask your doctor about it next time you go in.

(He kisses EDITH)

I love you, Mom. Have a good day.

EDITH

You are all too good to me. We started a letter yesterday. We'll put it out for the mailman today.

FRANK

Great! Bye. Turn on the alarm.

EDITH

I won't forget.

(TED aimlessly scribbles on the table. SHE
recites as she wipes the table with the bib.)

"I sold some coins the other day to get some money but I spent it all to get my bike repaired. I'm broke most of the time."

(To TED.)

Well, I wish I could give you a little but Lena would be upset with me. Maybe we should tell him about Abbie. Since Carey died, I'm the last one. Poor Abbie. You remember Aunt Abbie, don't you, Teddy? Oh yes, and Frank's roof. We need to tell Ed to come home and do some roofing.

(TED walks into the hallway. Alarm
sounds.)

EDITH (CONT'D)

I'm going to put your letter out for the mailman.

(Alarm sounds. She returns.)

Are you hungry? I'll get some lunch ready. "It's time to come home. We'll go fishing."

(TED enters and goes back. Alarm sounds.)

Isn't that nice. Maybe he'll come home and look at Frank's roof. Remember when you and Ed put the roof on this house? And gutter. He put on the one on Frazer Street, also. The house that was beside Cosmo Yarrow's. Cosmo was a fine man. I think he was a bit sweet on me. Your dad wouldn't like that, I bet. Your daddy was a minister but he still had a bit of a jealous streak. Lena says you're a little jealous, too. Is that right? But I could just never bring myself to see other men. You know I was only 44 years old when he died. You remember how I looked then? Here, look at my picture. Not bad, huh? Cosmo lived beside me for over 30 years. He tried to kiss me once.

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

I bet I never told you that. That was so sad. I never even knew he had a gun. Katy Docky saying he was in hell. I don't think that's right, do you? Well, let's see if the mailman's come yet. Maybe there's a letter from Ed. Wouldn't that be nice? I suppose he sends most of his letters to your house but it sure would be nice to sit here with one or two and read them to you. I'll just peek out the window. Well look at that! The college has put balloons on the lamp posts. I wonder why? Maybe it's for the new students. Isn't it festive?

(TED walks to the window. He is excited to see the balloons.)

Balloons outside and Christmas in here. Life is good. We're having quite a day, aren't we Teddy?

(TED stands looking out the window. He walks to the door and goes out. The front door alarm sounds. EDITH goes onto the set. She goes to the coat tree, puts on her hat and lays her shawl across her kitchen chair. Resigned to die, she leaves through the front door. Teddy returns with a balloon from the back door. The alarm sounds. He is unperturbed by the alarm. He walks to the kitchen table and sees his mother's shawl. He ties the balloon to the chair. He takes the alarm, folds it in a letter as if to send a message to his son. He picks up the shawl, goes to the jigsaw puzzles and begins to quickly put pieces in their places.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 6

LENA

Thanks for coming over, Judith.

JUDITH

Gonna miss that old girl. And you and Ted, of course.

LENA

I've got the canned goods packed in small boxes.

JUDITH

Thank you Jesus. These bones don't work like they used to.

LENA

I wish you'd stay on.

JUDITH

Funny how Mrs. Krugh passed on just as you retired. God works like that.

LENA

Mother Edith works like that.

JUDITH

I'm sure that's right. Well, let's get on this mess.

LENA

I have three boxes for you already.

JUDITH

For me?

LENA

Well, to take wherever.

JUDITH

Ms. Lena. Let me make this clear. I've been with you folks for nearly two years. Ms. Edith was always trying to give me extra money for whatever. I never minded pitching in with a few extra chores even though it wasn't my job. I took her little money because it made her happy. But never once did she try to give me food or clothes or old magazines and we're not going to start now.

LENA

I just meant that I had some things ready to carry out.

JUDITH

That's not what you said.

LENA

But you took the money.

JUDITH

It made her happy. And she was just a little bit old school. Maybe I am, too.

LENA

So it's okay for me to give you a "little money" for your help today, but not food?

(JUDITH laughs)

JUDITH

You might prefer to give me canned food and half-used boxes of biscuits but I'd prefer cash.

LENA

How much?

JUDITH

Let's just clean out the kitchen so you can wrap up your business.

LENA

I wouldn't have called you except that things in the refrigerator will spoil.

JUDITH

If I can help keep things from spoiling, I'm glad to be of help.

LENA

He really doesn't need a lot of attention anymore, does he?

JUDITH

I think you do a good job with him.

LENA

Really?

JUDITH

Yes. He loves you even if he doesn't show it.

LENA

I'm not so sure.

JUDITH

Ms. Lena, anything would be guesswork. You've had a good life together.

LENA

I read the book.

JUDITH

What?

LENA

The book he wrote in while he was in the hospital.

JUDITH

Ms. Edith helped him with his letters.

LENA

You know what I'm talking about. He wrote the answers himself.

JUDITH

He's sick.

LENA

Most of it was scribbling. But one thing was written clearly: "Do you have any regrets?"

JUDITH

Please, Ms. Lena. This doesn't concern me.

LENA

"Any regrets?" Just one. "Getting married."

JUDITH

I'm sorry.

LENA

Why should you be sorry? I'm the one who has to look after him for the next God knows how many years.

JUDITH

Ms. Lena, any married person might have written such a thing. We're not even sure what he meant. Maybe he regretted putting you through all this. Try to think of the good things.

LENA

Oh? Any suggestions? What has he told you?

JUDITH

I won't discuss anything he has said to me.

LENA

Of course not. I'm sorry.

JUDITH

I was hired to look after your husband and help tend to his needs. I think we'd better get that refrigerator cleaned out.

LENA

Does he even realize that Edith is gone?

JUDITH

I'm sure he does. She was his mother.

LENA

Would he know if I died?

JUDITH

I wouldn't know.

LENA

But you're sure about Edith.

JUDITH

It was just a manner of speaking.

LENA

Of course.

JUDITH

Well, let's get started.

LENA

Are you sure you can't stay on with us?

JUDITH

Ms. Lena, we've been through all that.

LENA

Have you found other work?

JUDITH

No. I just think it would be better if you handled things yourself.

LENA

So I need to play along with whatever nutty idea he has?

JUDITH

I think those days are gone now.

LENA

I suppose.

JUDITH

I just know what seemed to make my life here a little easier. You'll find what works for you.

LENA

Seems a bit selfish.

JUDITH

No sense stressing ourselves out over something that is so far beyond our abilities to manage.

LENA

He still wants to, well, you know

JUDITH

What?

LENA

You know what I'm talking about.

JUDITH

Ms. Krugh, we have to accept that this sickness is very hard for us to understand.

LENA

He's still able. I'm sorry. It's so confusing.

JUDITH

It would be on my mind, too. Nothing to be ashamed about.

LENA

But if I'm to humor my husband in whatever seems to be his world-of-the-moment...

JUDITH

Yes, as long as no one is hurt.

LENA

Who would be hurt?

JUDITH

You.

LENA

Yes. How could I make love to a man who might be making love to anyone? A man who can't even say any name, let alone mine?

JUDITH

Ms. Krugh, he can hear us.

LENA

But is he listening?

JUDITH

You called me to help with cleaning out the kitchen. If it would make you feel better, I'll take the food home with me.

(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Give me everything you want. Just so you know that it's not for me or for anything I've done or haven't done. I'm not leaving you out of guilt, money, or anything else. I'm leaving because my work is done. Just like Ms. Edith. Well, sort of like Ms. Edith. We have done our best.

LENA

I realize ...

JUDITH

I know you do. Mr. Frank can stop in and keep his brother company for lunch just like old times. But I don't think Ted will be wandering off anymore. Nor will he be discovering new worlds for any of us to share.

LENA

You called him Ted. Not Mr. Ted or Mr. Krugh. Why?

JUDITH

I didn't notice.

LENA

You never called him by any name when you talked with him.

JUDITH

It confused him at first so I stopped.

LENA

What should I call him?

JUDITH

I don't know. Just like me. Just like Ms. Edith, you'll know when your work is finished. You'll love him, care for him, keep him from hurting himself or anyone else, and you'll finally be finished.

LENA

How long?

JUDITH

You'll know.

LENA

It's too much.

JUDITH

Discover your own new worlds. Share them with him.

LENA

Then I'll be just like ...

JUDITH

Yes.

(THEY embrace.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 7

CARSON is looking at the damaged front door. LENA is in the kitchen. TED is at the jigsaw puzzle.

CARSON

Remember when we didn't even bother locking our doors? The door can be fixed. It wasn't too hard to bust it open. That was good thinking to set the alarms.

LENA

I thought it couldn't hurt.

CARSON

Yeah, crooks read the obituaries and especially notice when old single ladies pass. What's with the Christmas decorations?

LENA

Ted likes Christmas. Judith encouraged him to pursue his dreams. Now I have the job.

CARSON

Good thing you left the power on. You need any help?

LENA

Judith helped me clean out the food. The boys will be here over the weekend to help clean and move things out. Frank's will be here also. It shouldn't take long.

CARSON

No. She sure lived modestly.

LENA

Oh no!

CARSON

What?

LENA

I left her cash in the cookie jar.

(SHE opens the cookie jar. sfx)

I can't believe he didn't take it. Carson?

CARSON

Yeah?

LENA

I've really messed things up, haven't I?

CARSON

Not at all. You and Ms. Edith had it all timed out.

LENA

I mean about us.

CARSON

We don't get do-overs.

LENA

He wrote me 3 times a week while he was in the Navy.

CARSON

Lena. Don't talk about it now.

LENA

Look at him. He doesn't care what we talk about.

CARSON

We don't know that.

LENA

I don't care what he hears.

CARSON

Lena, don't.

LENA

It seems he has had this disease forever.

CARSON

Maybe he has.

LENA

You've known him longer than I have. When did you notice?

CARSON

He would have never come this far without you.

LENA

When?

CARSON

I don't know. Maybe when he was 35 or 40.

LENA

Terry Williams was diagnosed at 44 and hung himself before he turned 45.

CARSON

Ted had you.

LENA

Terry had Becky.

CARSON

Maybe he was considering how young they were.

LENA

Meaning?

CARSON

I don't know. Maybe that she deserved a better life.

LENA

What did Ted say to you?

CARSON

When?

LENA

You know what I'm talking about.

CARSON

Not much. Just that I should stay away from his girl. And that he'd stick a knife in me if I tried again.

LENA

Right. A guy who couldn't stand to have his finger pricked for a blood test. Please don't make me do this.

CARSON

Do what?

LENA

Beg you.

(CARSON shifts uncomfortably and looks at
TED working on the puzzle.)

Carson? I can't do this.

CARSON

You'll make a new life for yourself.

LENA

Doing what, for god's sake? Waiting on him day and night?

CARSON

Lena, look at him.

LENA

He'll have to be watched all the time.

CARSON

Less and less. Soon he'll be gone.

LENA

And then what?

CARSON

You're young enough. You'll travel. Meet new friends. Find new hobbies. Spoil grandkids.

LENA

We were going to do that together.

CARSON

You need to build something new. For yourself.

LENA

I can't do it alone. Edith was his mother. I'm not.

CARSON

Lena, when Hannah died it took all my strength not to come running to you.

LENA

You should have!

CARSON

No. Ted wasn't like this, then. Besides, we were buddies.

LENA

All these wasted years.

CARSON

No, Lena. Don't say that. You have a fine family and so do I.

LENA

And you're single, but what am I?

CARSON

I'll keep checking on things. We'll take it one day at a time. I know a carpenter fellow who can fix her door up this afternoon. Let's take care of the things we can control. What do you say?

(He examines the door. TED walks to back door.)

LENA

Always the pragmatist. Look. You can still see his footprints on the linoleum.

CARSON

What?

LENA

Last week when he was painting. He stepped in the paint and there he goes.

CARSON

(they embrace. TED puts the last puzzle piece in place, walks to the projector center stage. Projections come up on the screen as TED stares at it.)

(BLACKOUT)

Curtain call on the set with TED.

(END OF PLAY)