

Some Day for a Crown
by
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Betty Draft

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ACT I

SCENE 1

THE SET: a kitchen and living room. A hallway can lead to unseen bedrooms and a bathroom. A functional front door is needed and a back door from the kitchen to the back yard.

The play takes place in the home of 85 year-old EDITH KRUGH. She is the daytime caregiver for her son TED who has early-onset Alzheimer's disease. He has been diagnosed for 10 years. His wife LENA has recently turned in her papers for retirement since she faces caring for her husband after EDITH passes on. TED's younger brother, FRANK, works at the nearby college. He eats lunch with EDITH and TED most days and often stops in for breakfast and coffee, as well.

SHERIFF CARSON, a widower, has been friends with LENA and TED for years. CARSON was dating LENA when they were teens . LENA broke up with CARSON after she became interested in TED. The men became friends as realized that they had more in common than just their interest in LENA. As CARSON tries to keep tabs on TED while still doing his duty, a bit of old romantic spark is rekindled.

A professional caretaker, JUDITH, often takes TED on excursions that seem to interest him. She is a bit feisty, and opinionated. She knows what is best for TED and for her own sanity. She can carry a camera and "take" pictures whenever she wants to. No flash.

The actor playing TED can say anything or nothing. If he's asked a question he may or may not respond.

He should not try to influence the behavior of anyone else, including the audience, or even try to think of anything to say in advance. Except for responses he might make to JUDITH, it would be better if the things TED says are fairly unrelated to whatever else is being said or done. Otherwise, the other characters might seem callous or indifferent. After 10 years of dealing with TED the others don't really expect a coherent response. The other characters may include TED in questions and comments to try and stimulate his mind a bit. They DO NOT act as though TED doesn't understand them or that he isn't in the room. Regardless of what he says, the other actors DO NOT ad lib. They may pause to consider what TED said or react with expressions but they don't change the script. TED is able to perform some of the routine tasks he has done all his life. Although tone deaf, he still knows the words to the old Baptist hymns. When prodded he will write letters (even though they are illegible). He will drive a car, given a chance. He can operate the TV remote control, etc, but he doesn't seem to process the fruits of his efforts. TED has a toy talking dog called TANK. It has about 6 recorded rude phrases. It was given to TED as a gag gift. Anyone, including TED, can respond to the phrases verbally, if they feel motivated. Just be sure that the responses seem like other aural aspects of the play. TED should not improvise blocking. We're already being cruel enough to the other actors. :-)

LENA opens the front door and leads TED into the kitchen. She calls out to EDITH who is offstage in her bedroom.

LENA

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

EDITH (OFF STAGE)

Just sit him down. I'm not quite dressed yet. Junior sent a package for him yesterday. It's on the coffee table.

TED sits. LENA kisses him on the top of his head.
EDITH enters in her robe. She carries TED's talking dog.

LENA

(to TED)

Stay out of trouble.

(to EDITH)

Is Judith here, yet?

EDITH

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

LENA

He should be fine. I've gotta run.

(Tasting the coffee to be sure it isn't too hot.
Sets it on the table.)

EDITH

Can't you stay for a cup of coffee?

LENA

Not today.

(to TED)

Love you!

(She checks her watch. Tries to slow down
Then to EDITH)

Do you want me to stay until Judith gets here?

EDITH

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

(She hands the stuffed dog to TED)

LENA

Mother Edith, you need to toss that thing. 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.)

TANK

(whatever)

EDITH

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

She goes to her bedroom. TED tears open the package. It is a boxed plush dog called HUMPHREY that humps when his ear is pinched. TED gets up and goes out the back door. We can hear a short exchange between LENA and JUDITH behind the front door. Then as JUDITH enters and calls out.

JUDITH

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

EDITH (OFF STAGE)

Just a minute, I'm not dressed, yet. There's coffee ready.

JUDITH goes into the kitchen. Pours a cup of coffee. She closes the back door. She goes back to the living room and calls toward the bedrooms. Sound of toilet flushing.

JUDITH

I'll sit on the porch and look for them!

She picks up the boxed dog and presses its ear. It starts humping. She laughs and puts it back on the table. She goes out the front door. TED enters from the back door with a bucket of paint, a roller, and a tray. He hears Humphrey and goes into the living, sees it, and laughs. When it stops he shakes it, pushes its chest, but can't make it work. He goes back to the kitchen.

He pours paint into the tray. He puts his roller into the paint tray. He begins to paint. Paint splatters all over him. He rubs his hair with a paint covered hand and it smears his face. He puts down the roller. It drips paint. He picks up a rag. He wipes paint off the stove and then steps in the paint tray, not even thinking that this might be a problem. He walks out the back door, unaware that he is tracking paint.

EDITH

(Entering and seeing the mess.)

Teddy! What have you done? Teddy!

FRANK

(Entering the front door and going into the kitchen.)

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

(He picks up TANK and activates it.)

No. Judith said he wasn't here, yet. You should have said something. I could have painted it.

TANK

(whatever)

FRANK

That thing kills me.

EDITH

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

FRANK

(Noticing the footprints)

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 gets a pitcher of tea from the refrigerator. She gets a rag and wipes off paint before putting down a place mat. SHERIFF CARSON enters.)

SHERIFF

Hello! Everyone decent?

EDITH

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

SHERIFF

Everything OK?

EDITH

Is there a problem?

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

Judith said he wasn't here, yet.

EDITH

He was painting the kitchen and made a mess.

SHERIFF

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

EDITH

Wait, I'll get you some tea.

FRANK

(Calling out as HE enters from the back door)

I found him. He's in the shed!

EDITH

(Returning to the kitchen)

Sheriff Carson's here.

FRANK

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

(He slugs down the glass of sweet tea.)

EDITH

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

(FRANK begins washing his hands in the sink. EDITH reaches into the refrigerator.)

FRANK

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

EDITH

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

(She begins to prepare a more elaborate breakfast.)

FRANK

Ughh!

(He turns off the water, shakes off his hands and heads for the bathroom. CARSON picks up HUMPHREY and activates the humping.)

I'll go wash up.

(He goes into the living room)

Hey Carson. What's that?

SHERIFF

Some crazy toy. I was just checking in. I saw the shed door open.

FRANK

Junior must have sent it. He loves those gag gifts. Better not let Ted see it. Yeah, Ted made a mess. He's sulking in the shed.

(FRANK hides HUMPHREY behind the television. TED can try to look for it later.)

EDITH

Don't use the guest towel.

(Continues to prepare breakfast.)

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.

SHERIFF

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

FRANK

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

SHERIFF

Ha! I'll stop by after work.

EDITH

(entering living room)

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

SHERIFF

You're something, Edith.

(He leaves.)

EDITH

Have a nice day!

(Closing the door)

Did you wash your hands?

FRANK

I need to get to work.

EDITH

You can sit and eat.

FRANK

I will. But that paint needs to be cleaned up before it sets.

SHERIFF

(coming back in)

Looks like Judith took off. Just letting you know.

EDITH

Oh dear. Well, let's get you some breakfast.

(They return to the kitchen.)

Judith and I will work on that paint this afternoon while Ted is taking his nap.

SHERIFF

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, if he's still out there.

SHERIFF

(as he leaves)

Let me know if you need anything.

EDITH

Thanks for stopping by.

FRANK

(Going to the back door)

He probably won't come in.

EDITH

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

(FRANK sits at the table.)

FRANK

Maybe Charlie can come over. I really need to get going.

(Phone.)

EDITH

(Answering phone.)

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.

(She covers the mouthpiece.)

Did you walk here, Frank?

FRANK

No, why?

EDITH

Go ahead and eat.

(FRANK waits for the ritual prayer as
EDITH lays the phone down and prays
with him.)

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

(eating)

Amen.

EDITH

Teddy can eat when he comes in. More tea?

FRANK

No.

EDITH

(adding sugar)

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

(HE downs the glass and puts his hand over
the top.)

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?

EDITH

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

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.

(He goes out the back door.)

EDITH

Tell Ted to come in and eat. I'll put your tea in the refrigerator.

(She puts things away.)

(The phone rings. She answers.)

Hello? 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.)

Wait, here he is.

(She covers the mouthpiece of the phone. To
FRANK.)

Will he come in?

FRANK

My car's gone. He must have taken 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

(He snatches the phone/)

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 gold.

(reflects for a moment)

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 presses the cradle and 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 the 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.)
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 Sheriff Carson have him now?

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

FRANK
A cab.

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?

(She gets more food out.)

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

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.

JUDITH

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

FRANK

Shit!

EDITH

Frank!

FRANK

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

JUDITH

What happened?

FRANK

Ted stepped in the tray and tracked it around.

JUDITH

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

FRANK

Goddam, 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?

JUDITH

No thanks.

EDITH

(Pours some tea for her.)

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 wanders into the kitchen and guzzles it down.)

We better get him cleaned up. I guess I should have clocked in before we drove off.

FRANK

Where did you go?

JUDITH

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

FRANK

Ted, you're going to be going to the bathroom all morning.

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?

(She gets out stationery.)

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

(She whispers to EDITH.)

Don't let him know there's money in the envelopes.

(MORE)

JUDITH (CONT'D)

Lena said he isn't supposed to have money.

(TED presses the button on TANK.)

TANK

(whatever)

JUDITH

(Quickly)

Let's see what's on TV.

(She leads TED to the television and hands him the remote. TED turns on the TV. 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.

FRANK

(Goes to TED and takes the remote.)

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.

JUDITH

(She takes the remote and gives it to TED.)

You go on, now. I can handle things.

(TED flips channels.)

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

(to TED)

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

EDITH

Here, take some money for gas.

JUDITH

Big plans! Big plans, right buddy?

(TED gets up and awkwardly embraces
JUDITH and tries to kiss her.)

FRANK

Okay, better get going.

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

JUDITH

Now behave yourself!

FRANK

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

JUDITH

Call Lena and let her know.

EDITH

What?

JUDITH

Call Lena and let her know.

EDITH

Let her know what?

JUDITH

That Ted tried to take Frank's car.

EDITH

She already knows. Sheriff Carson called her.

JUDITH

She needs to keep an eye on him. Frank, did your wife go and call the sheriff 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.

(FRANK leaves as JUDITH leads TED back to the TV. EDITH gets out a bucket and scrub brush. She starts to clean the footprints. She puts the brush down, looks at the footprints going out the back door, puts TED's empty tea glass in the sink, puts the pitcher into the refrigerator, and cries.)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT ISCENE 2

Later that day. Lunch time. EDITH is sitting at the kitchen table with TED. SHE is prodding HIM to write a letter to HIS son, ED who lives in Shreveport, Louisiana. None of TED's writing is legible but EDITH pretends she knows just what is written as she reads the letter she has actually written.

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. 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.

FRANK

I'll put it out.

EDITH

I don't have a stamp on it, yet.

FRANK

So, what did he do now? Ted, what have you done?

EDITH

He's been fine.

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 some iced tea and your lunch ready.

(TED picks up the paint tray as FRANK is bent over and EDITH is getting the pitcher of tea. He puts his hand into the paint tray then tries to wipe off his hand on a dish towel. He hands FRANK the towel.)

FRANK

(Without looking up.)

Thanks, Ted.

EDITH

(Notices him.)

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

FRANK

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

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

EDITH

Ted! You have paint all over you again.

FRANK

Ted!

(FRANK rubs paint on TED's face. TED laughs again.)

You think it's funny, huh?

EDITH

Boys!

(TED laughs)

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.)

EDITH (CONT'D)

Ted 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 think so.

FRANK

Let me read it.

EDITH

We need to get that paint cleaned up. Oh, there's the mailman. We'll write another letter tomorrow.

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

FRANK

I need to check and see if Shreveport 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

(She returns)

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? 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 go to the door TED pulls a Playboy magazine from between the sofa cushions. He puts his hand down his pants.)

EDITH

Let me give you some gas money.

FRANK

Mother, will you stop?

EDITH

Still, you need a little money.

(She goes to the freezer compartment of the refrigerator and retrieves a plastic bag of money. She counts out 12 dollars.)

FRANK

Okay, but just because I'm tired of arguing with you.

(He notices TED.)

Ted! C'mon. What are you doing?

(FRANK snatches the magazine, looks interested and then quickly stuffs it into his pants when EDITH returns. TED still has his hand in his pants.)

EDITH

Teddy, do you have to go to the bathroom? Come on. Here you are, Frank.

(She hands him the cash from the freezer. He smiles.)

FRANK

Cold cash.

EDITH

I'll take care of this. You go on.

(She pulls TED up.)

FRANK

He might surprise you.

EDITH

He has a diaper.

FRANK

You need to finish your lunch. Let me take care of it.

(FRANK leads him away.)

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.

EDITH

You are a good boy.

TED's erection is apparent as FRANK takes him to the bathroom. EDITH sits down to eat lunch. She prays.

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IScene 3

Later. Doorbell rings. LENA arrives to pick up TED.
EDITH answers the door.

MOTHER EDITH

Hello Lena. Ted! Lena's here!

(To LENA.)

Ted's been working on a puzzle.

LENA

How was your day?

EDITH

Too much excitement. Ted wrote to Eddie.

LENA

Ed needs to write to him.

EDITH

Ted said he gets letters.

LENA

That's not true. Come on, Ted. Let's give your mother a break.

EDITH

Can't you stay for a few minutes? Have some iced tea. I made sugar cookies this afternoon. Sheriff Carson is coming by.

LENA

Now you've got me. No tea though.

EDITH

I'll be right back.

(EDITH goes to the kitchen and prepares tea
and cookies.

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

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

LENA

(SHE sees TED.)

Good lord, Ted! You look like you were in a knife fight. Tell me about your day. I see you're working on our old favorite puzzle. The Grand Canyon. I wish we had taken the kids there. Maybe some day they'll go with their families. Remember when we took the kids to Washington, D.C.? 1968 wasn't it?

EDITH

Here you go. 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

Mostly. Frank used a razor. He shaved Ted. A couple of nicks but he put tissue paper on them. We should have a septic pencil.

LENA

Styptic.

EDITH

Yes. Orley's is here somewhere.

LENA

I'll put some alcohol on it when we get home. Looks like he got his throat slit.

EDITH

It's not 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.

LENA

Didn't it hurt?

EDITH

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

LENA

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?

(TED laughs.)

EDITH

He can stay here if you want.

LENA

Mom, you do enough.

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.

EDITH

I prayed. And I knew I needed a job so I got trained. The church folks helped quite a bit.

LENA

Why didn't you stay in Ohio City?

EDITH

You and Ted were here. Frank and Junior were too young to help me.

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.

(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.

EDITH

Goodness, thank you. I'll get you some money. Are you hungry? Ted and Lena are here.

JUDITH

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

(TED starts for the kitchen. JUDITH follows.)

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.)

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. If you'll excuse me a moment, I'll use the little girls' room.

(MORE)

LENA (CONT'D)

(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!

(TED falls back as She goes to the bathroom.)

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

Sounds like an infection on a stick! 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, but he shouldn't sing very well.)

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

(Entering from the hallway.)

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?

LENA

Yes. Our son 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.

EDITH

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

(Opening her purse.)

Mother, I'm responsible for this.

(EDITH opens the door.)

EDITH

Well look who's here! Sheriff Carson again..

SHERIFF

Sorry to interrupt, Mrs. Krugh. Hello Lena, Judith. Well, Teddy old boy, glad you made it back safely.

LENA

Carson. Is it business or pleasure?

SHERIFF

A little of both since I find you here.

LENA

Oh?

SHERIFF

I mean with the melons, tea, and sugar cookies. Uh, well, I need to talk to Ted.

LENA

Good luck.

EDITH

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

SHERIFF

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?

SHERIFF

No thanks.

(She goes to get tea.)

Lena?

LENA

He isn't feeling well. Can I help?

SHERIFF

This was at 527 Center Street. Earlier today.

LENA

Our son, Ed, used to live there. He lives in Shreveport, Louisiana, now.

SHERIFF

Yes, I know that. But 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.

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

Thanks. I might just try some.

EDITH

Check and see if the tea's sweet enough.

SHERIFF

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

(EDITH adds sugar. SHERIFF eats a bit of melon. LENA whispers to JUDITH and hands her some money. TED gulps down the tea.)

LENA

Don't tell Frank about this.

SHERIFF

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
cantaloupes. He calls after her.)

SHERIFF

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

(She hands him 2 melons.)

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

SHERIFF

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

(JUDITH is helping TED with the jigsaw
puzzle.)

LENA

Thanks for looking out for us, Carson.

SHERIFF

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

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.

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

Sometimes it's hard to remember how he was before ...

LENA

No Carson. Please don't say it.

SHERIFF

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.

(JUDITH is putting puzzle pieces in place.
She and TED seem to be taking turns
quickly finding the right places for the
pieces.)

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?

EDITH

He closed up right away after he told me the names.

SHERIFF

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?

SHERIFF

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

(She looks out the window.)

I'll be back next week.

SHERIFF

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.

(She kisses TED on the cheek.)

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. LENA looks perplexed.)

EDITH

Get a little something for the kids.

JUDITH

Mrs. Krugh, please stop. We're fine.

(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.

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

Well, thanks for the melon.

LENA

I hope we don't see you soon.

SHERIFF

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

LENA

You know what I mean.

SHERIFF

Sure. I'm just teasing you. Still, I just don't want anyone to get hurt.

(He leaves.)

LENA

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

(TED doesn't get up.)

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 9 years old. Junior was in Sunday School and Ted was in the Navy.

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.

(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!

(TED tries to go to the jigsaw puzzle but LENA steers him out the front door.)

EDITH

(SHE reads the note.)

"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?

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

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? 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. What were some others? "Jesus is Just All Right With Me." Remember that? Hell, even I liked that one. I liked "Spirit in the Sky" better. And "The Seekers." Didn't we love us some Seekers! (OK to sing) "This Little Light of Mine."

(EDITH enters from front door.)

EDITH

I'm home!

FRANK

Look sharp, Ted. Mother's here. You didn't leave any dirty magazines out, did you?.

(To EDITH in the living room)

We're in the kitchen!

EDITH

Goodness that cab fare is getting expensive.

FRANK

I said we could take you.

EDITH

(Entering the kitchen.)

I don't want to be a burden.

FRANK

Hey, the hair looks great.

EDITH

This is how it always looks. Ted, how are you doing? Judith is taking him for a haircut later.

(TED presses the button on TANK.)

TANK

(whatever)

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 goes to the sofa and picks up the remote. He stares at the blank TV.)

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.

(FRANK takes the remote from TED and
turns on the TV. An infomercial is on.
FRANK mutes it.)

FRANK

Get out your credit card, Ted.

EDITH

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

FRANK

(He goes to the kitchen.)

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.

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 Ted was having problems. I told him Ted wasn't here but I thought he'd 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.

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 sees the front door open.)

Shit! Where's Ted?

EDITH

Oh my! Your language!

FRANK

(Rushing out the front door.)

Ted! Get back in here!

EDITH

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

FRANK

(He returns.)

A car pulled away. I didn't see Ted. Oh Lord!

EDITH

Hear our prayers! Where would he get a car?

FRANK

It wasn't his.

EDITH

Oh no, he took your car? 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. As she's dialing and talking TED comes out from the hallway and begins to work on the puzzle.)

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.

(She sees TED.)

Never mind. Here he is. But now Frank's gone. 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. Thanks! Good-bye.

(She hangs up the receiver.)

Ted! You gave us a fright! Where were you?

(She goes to the bathroom. TED looks for HHUMPHREY. Toilet flushing. She returns with a washcloth and cleans Ted's hands.)

I'll have to mark that on the calendar.

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT ' D)

(She checks to be sure his diaper is intact.)

Judith will be over shortly. I'll put a roast on for supper.

(She turns off the TV. TED works on the puzzle.)

Now stay put while I get some potatoes peeled.

(She goes to the kitchen as TED picks up the remote. He rubs his hands on the top of his thighs and 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, rinses off the potatoes and picks up a peeler. She goes back to the living room with her potatoes.)

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.

(Ted walks to the television and stands in front of it. Edith starts peeling potatoes. She imagines what might be on the TV.)

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

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT ' D)

(FRANK walks in without ringing the bell or knocking.)

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 just down the block 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. Come on Ted, let's clean you up.

FRANK

Did he do his business?

EDITH

I probably wouldn't be able to turn it off. There were bubbles in the bowl.

FRANK

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

(Doorbell rings.)

(EDITH goes to the door, peeks out the curtain.)

EDITH

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

(She opens the door.)

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.

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 smooths TED's hair. He stands as if he knows his schedule.)

FRANK

Beauty shop day for Edith and Teddy!

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 goes to the door.)

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.

(She heads for the freezer for money.)

JUDITH

Bye!

(JUDITH and TED leave.)

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.

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 opens the door. LENA is holding a bag.)

LENA

This was on your settee. Smells like supper.

EDITH
Oh that rascal, Clifford!.

LENA
Where's Ted?

EDITH
Judith took him to get a haircut.

LENA
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 Wooster 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 went to the bathroom himself yesterday.

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

Good god!

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

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

There's nothing I can 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

He doesn't carry any money.

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

Look at these pictures. When do you ever see him grinning like this?

LENA

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

(She takes the album and throws it across the room into the kitchen.)

FRANK

Hey, take it easy!

LENA

Why should I? Put yourself in my position.

EDITH

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

(She goes into the kitchen and picks up the album.)

LENA

I worked 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 Delta Kappa Gamma 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

You listen to me and you listen carefully. 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.

(MORE)

LENA (CONT'D)

It's not going to happen so just forget it. Besides, the paperwork is already done. Now you can either join with me or get out of my way.

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.

(changing the subject)

When did you first think Ted was sick?

(TED walks in the back door. EDITH indicates for him to be quiet. They set the table for supper.)

LENA

Before the boys were even born.

FRANK

C'mon, talk sense.

LENA

You asked.

FRANK

And what evidence do you have? 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 he 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. 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 walks to the doorway to the living room.)

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. It's all he had! 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

(Knocks perfunctorily and enters.)

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

LENA

Where is he?

JUDITH

He wanted to put his things in the shed before supper. Didn't he come in?

(All look to TED standing in the doorway.)

EDITH

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

END OF ACT II

INTERMISSION

ACT IIIScene 1

The house is decorated for Christmas. JUDITH is reading a magazine as TED puts the finishing touches on a badly decorated artificial tree. Christmas music is playing from a cassette recorder and TED is singing along. Badly. EDITH walks in from the front door. She is in a summer dress and her purse hangs limply at her side.

MOTHER EDITH

Oh my goodness.

JUDITH

We thought we'd surprise everyone.

EDITH

Well you sure have!

JUDITH

Who else celebrates Christmas in August?

EDITH

Ted, you need to put all of this back in the boxes.

JUDITH

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

EDITH

I hate to put this all away and just get it out again in a few months.

JUDITH

We'll see how it goes.

(EDITH moves a box. TED continues to place imaginary ornaments on the tree.)

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.

(She goes to the kitchen.)

JUDITH

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

EDITH

I turned the mattress this morning.

(TED plugs in a revolving color wheel.)

JUDITH

Oh, I like that!

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

JUDITH

We stopped at the bank yesterday. What do you know?

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.)

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.

LENA

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

EDITH

Come on, Ted. Let's lay down for our naps.

LENA

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

EDITH

I understand. Come on, Ted.

(EDITH leads TED to the bedroom.)

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

Really funny. 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. Or, is it octopi? 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

Since we're reflecting on funny memories of Ted, you'll get a big laugh out of this one. Cosmo Yarrow blew his brains out with Ted's gun.

JUDITH

Who?

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, we can't be the judge.

LENA

Sure we can. Cosmo Yarrow sat alone in his living room. His wife had been long dead. His business was long gone. He had no children. He had terminal 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.

(EDITH re-enters)

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.

(Referring to Christmas decorations.)

Am I to take all this stuff down by myself?

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

JUDITH

Mrs. Krugh, this isn't your decision.

LENA

Excuse me?! I am responsible for his behavior.

JUDITH

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

LENA

Mother is just too nice to say anything.

(She picks up TANK.)

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.

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

So. What are your plans for the day?

JUDITH

She had a doctor's appointment this morning.

(LENA pushes the button on TANK.)

TANK

(whatever)

(LENA and JUDITH laugh. Then LENA
throws the toy.)

JUDITH

It's just a toy.

TANK

(electronic sound followed by mechanical voice over the house speakers: Do you love
me?)

(LENA rips the batteries out of the toy but
the voice continues: "Do you love me?")

JUDITH

Mrs. Krugh!

(JUDITH helps EDITH.)

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?

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

I wish you had let me know.

EDITH

Frank bought them.

LENA

I mean so we would know if we got a call.

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

It's temporary. No one is trying to interfere. We're just concerned that this might be too much for your mother now.

(TED walks in. EDITH starts toward the bedroom to turn off the alarm then turns to pick up the box of ornaments. TED walks toward the kitchen. LENA follows.)

LENA

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

(TED picks up TANK.)

Leave that alone.

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

JUDITH

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. 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 .

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

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

(She leaves. Alarm fades.)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IIIScene 2

The Christmas decorations are still up. TED is at the kitchen table. He is wearing a large bib. FRANK is feeding him.

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, through the living room and into the kitchen.)

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

(TED squeezes Tank's button.)

TANK

(silence)

FRANK

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

TANK

(silence)

EDITH

(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. You probably won't need to use the bedroom or kitchen alarms much.

EDITH

All these gadgets.

TANK

(silence)

FRANK

(To TED.)

You want to see what's on TV?

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.

(He starts to leave.)

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 turns on the alarm after FRANK leaves. She gets stationery.)

EDITH

Let's get this bib off. Do you remember what we were writing? Here's our letter.

(She puts the bib in a hamper, wipes off the table, and hands him a pen. He aimlessly scribbles. EDITH gets a fresh piece of paper and her own pen. She looks at the actual letter they had been writing. She "reads" the letter as TED scribbles.)

"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.

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IIIScene 3

EDITH turns off the front door alarm and takes a letter out for the mailman. She turns the alarm back on when she comes back inside. We realize that she knows how to operate the system and is not forgetful. TED comes in from the bedroom. We realize that she is not setting the bedroom alarm.

MOTHER EDITH

Did you have a good nap, Teddy? I put your letter out for the mailman. I almost dozed off myself. Are you hungry? I'll get some lunch ready.

(TED gets a pencil and paper. He sits at the kitchen table and begins to scribble.)

Who are you writing to today? Oh, Ed. I bet he misses you. "It's time to come home. We'll go fishing."

(To TED.)

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?

(She gets a picture from the corner cupboard.)

Not bad, huh? Cosmo lived beside me for over 30 years. He tried to kiss me once. 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.

(She goes to the window.)

Well look at that! The college has put balloons on the lamp posts. I wonder why?

(MORE)

MOTHER EDITH (CONT'D)

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 alarm sounds. She gets the alarm from the bedroom door. Shakes it and it sounds. She puts on her hat, lays her shawl across her kitchen chair, and fades in a pool of bright light as she goes out the back door. Soon Teddy returns with a dozen balloons. He is barely able to get them in the door. He is unperturbed by the alarms. He walks to the kitchen table and sees his mother's shawl. He releases the balloons. He takes the alarm, lays it on the table by his letters 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)

ACT III

SCENE 4

LENA arrives. She comes in the open door. She goes to TED. He picks up TANK and squeezes him.

TANK

(electronic static and voice over the house speakers: "Hey sailor! Let's go for a ride!")

TED looks up and laughs. LENA puts TED's sailor hat on him.

He stands, takes it off and puts it on her own head.
Together they leave. Lights fade. Sound of a siren on the
street.

(END OF SCENE)

ACT IIIScene 5

TED sits staring at the blank TV. LENA is cleaning out EDITH's freezer and refrigerator. Doorbell rings. LENA answers the door. LENA is facing the terror of handling the next 10 years or so alone with TED.

LENA

Thanks for coming over, Judith.

JUDITH

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

LENA

He'll be fine. I've got the canned goods packed in small boxes.

(They go to the kitchen.)

JUDITH

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

LENA

I wish you'd stay on, you know.

JUDITH

You'll do fine. 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

We'll get the freezer after we empty the refrigerator. 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 was certainly not 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)

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 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. Besides, he is sick.

LENA

I wouldn't write that and I'm the one saddled with caring for a man who doesn't even know who I am.

JUDITH

You're not sick. 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 universe he finds himself inhabiting?

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

Did Ted want to sleep with you?

JUDITH

Excuse me?

LENA

I'm sure that some days that was his world. Did he?

JUDITH

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

LENA

He's still able.

JUDITH

And?

LENA

And I'm just curious if he would.

JUDITH

I wouldn't know.

LENA

I'm sorry. I really didn't intend to ask you that.

JUDITH

But it was on your mind.

LENA

You just seems so willing 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

But you could have.

JUDITH

And you?

LENA

He could. I couldn't.

JUDITH

Why?

LENA

He doesn't know who I am.

JUDITH

He's sick.

LENA

Too sick to know right from wrong?

JUDITH

I can't answer that.

LENA

Too sick to know not to hurt me?

JUDITH

I'm a care-giver. Some couples in your situation divorce.

LENA

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. 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

To find out that he would make love to someone he didn't even know would be too much for me to bear. 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.

(FRANK enters.)

FRANK

What's for lunch?

(END OF SCENE)

ACT III

Scene 5

The back door is broken. SHERIFF CARSON is with LENA in the kitchen. TED is at the jigsaw puzzle.

SHERIFF

That was good thinking to set the alarms.

LENA

It wasn't their intended use but I thought it couldn't hurt.

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

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

LENA

Judith helped me clean out the refrigerator and the freezer. 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.

SHERIFF

No. She sure lived modestly. We'll get that door fixed.

LENA

Oh no!

SHERIFF

What?

LENA

I left her cash in the freezer.

SHERIFF

(He opens the freezer door and takes out a stash of cash wrapped in tinfoil. TED laughs.)

LENA

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

SHERIFF

Yeah?

LENA

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

SHERIFF

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

LENA

I mean about us.

SHERIFF

We don't get do-overs.

LENA

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

SHERIFF

Lena. Don't talk about it now.

LENA

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

SHERIFF

We don't know that.

LENA

I don't care what he hears.

SHERIFF

Lena, don't.

LENA

It seems he has had this disease forever.

SHERIFF

Maybe he has.

LENA

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

SHERIFF

He would have never come this far without you.

LENA

When?

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

Ted had you.

LENA

Terry had Becky.

SHERIFF

Maybe he was considering how young they were.

LENA

Meaning?

SHERIFF

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

LENA

What did Ted say to you?

SHERIFF

When?

LENA

You know what I'm talking about.

SHERIFF

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.

SHERIFF

Do what?

LENA

Beg you.

SHERIFF

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

LENA

Carson? I can't do this.

SHERIFF

You'll make a new life for yourself.

LENA

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

SHERIFF

Lena, look at him.

LENA

He'll have to be watched all the time.

SHERIFF

Less and less. Soon he'll be gone.

LENA

And then what?

SHERIFF

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

LENA

We were going to do that together.

SHERIFF

Lena, that world won't be coming back. You need to build something new, for yourself.

LENA

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

SHERIFF

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

LENA

You should have!

SHERIFF

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

LENA

All these wasted years.

SHERIFF

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

LENA

And you're single, but what am I?

SHERIFF

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 broken back door.)

LENA

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

SHERIFF

What?

LENA

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

SHERIFF

(He starts out the back door, turns and they embrace. TED puts the last puzzle piece in place, looks up and smiles as the lights fade on him.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY)