

THE AMERICAN DREAM was first produced by Theatre 1961, Richard Barr and Clinton Wilder, at the York Playhouse, New York City, on January 24, 1961. It was directed by Alan Schneider. The sets and costumes were by William Ritman. The cast was as follows:

DADDY John C. Becker
MOMMY Jane Hoffman
GRANDMA Sude Bond
MRS. BARKER Nancy Cushman
THE YOUNG MAN Ben Piazza

The American Dream

A living room. Two armchairs, one toward either side of the stage, facing each other diagonally out toward the audience. Against the rear wall, a sofa. A door, leading out from the apartment, in the rear wall, far R., an archway, leading to other rooms, in the side wall, L. At the beginning, Daddy is seated in the armchair L. Curtain up. A silence, then—Mommy enters from L.

MOMMY. (Crossing to R. arch.) I don't know what can be keeping them.

DADDY. They're late, naturally.

MOMMY. Of course, they're late; it never fails.

DADDY. That's the way things are today, and there's nothing you can do about it.

MOMMY. You're quite right. (Sits chair R.)

DADDY. When we took this apartment, they were quick enough to have me sign the lease; they were quick enough to take my check for two months rent in advance . . .

MOMMY. . . . and one month's security . . .

DADDY. . . . and one month's security. They were quick enough to check my references; they were quick enough about all that. But now! But now, try to get the ice-box fixed, try to get the door bell fixed, try to get the leak in the johnny fixed! Just try it . . . they aren't so quick about that.

MOMMY. Of course not; it never fails. People think they can get away with anything these days . . . and, of course they can. I went to buy a new hat yesterday. (Pause.) I said, I went to buy a new hat yesterday.

DADDY. Oh! Yes . . . yes.

MOMMY. Pay attention.

DADDY. I am paying attention, Mommy.

MOMMY. Well, be sure you do.

DADDY. Oh, I am.

MOMMY. All right, Daddy; now listen.

DADDY. I'm listening, Mommy.

MOMMY. You're sure!

DADDY. Yes . . . yes, I'm sure. I'm all ears.

MOMMY. (*Giggles at the thought, then.*) All right, now. I went to buy a new hat yesterday and I said, "I'd like a new hat, please." And so, they showed me a few hats, green ones and blue ones, and I didn't like any of them, not one bit. What did I say? What did I just say?

DADDY. You didn't like any of them, not one bit.

MOMMY. That's right; you just keep paying attention. And then they showed me one that I did like. It was a lovely little hat, and I said, "Oh, this is a lovely little hat; I'll take this hat, oh my, it's lovely. What color is it?" And they said, "Why this is beige, isn't it a lovely little beige hat?" And I said, "Oh, it's just lovely." And so, I bought it. (*Stops, looks at Daddy.*)

DADDY. (*To show he is paying attention.*) And so you bought it.

MOMMY. And so I bought it, and I walked out of the store with the hat right on my head, and I ran spang into the chairman of our women's club, and she said, "Oh, my dear, isn't that a lovely little hat? Where did you get that lovely little hat? It's the loveliest little hat; I've always wanted a wheat-colored hat myself." And I said, "Why, no, my dear; this hat is beige, beige." And she laughed, and said, "Why no my dear, that's a wheat colored hat; wheat. I know beige from wheat." And I said, "Well, my dear, I know beige from wheat, too." What did I say? What did I just say?

DADDY. (*Tonelessly.*) Well, my dear, I know beige from wheat, too.

MOMMY. That's right. And she laughed, and she said, "Well, my dear, they certainly put one over on you; that's wheat if I ever saw wheat. But it's lovely, just the same." And then she walked off. She's a dreadful woman, you don't know her; she has dreadful taste, two dreadful children, a dreadful house, and an absolutely adorable husband who sits in a wheelchair all the time. You don't know him. You don't know anybody, do you? She's just a dreadful woman, but she is chairman of our woman's club, so naturally, I'm terribly fond of her. So, I went right back

into the hat shop, and I said, "Look here; what do you mean selling me a hat that you say is beige, when it's wheat all the time; wheat. I can tell beige from wheat any day in the week, but not in this artificial light of yours." They have artificial light, Daddy.

DADDY. Have they!

MOMMY. And I said, "The minute I got outside I could tell that it wasn't a beige hat at all; it was a wheat hat." And they said to me, "How could you tell that when you had the hat on the top of your head?" Well, that made me angry, and so I made a scene right there; (*Rises and crosses to Daddy.*) I screamed as hard as I could; I took my hat off, and I threw it down on the counter, and oh I made a terrible scene. I said, I made a terrible scene.

DADDY. (*Snapping to.*) Yes . . . yes . . . good for you.

MOMMY. And I made an absolutely terrible scene; and they became frightened, and they said, "Oh, Madam, oh, Madam." But I kept right on, and finally they admitted that they might have made a mistake; so they took my hat into the back, and then they came out again with a hat that looked exactly like it. I took one look at it, and I said, "This hat is wheat-colored; wheat." Well, of course, they said, "Oh, no, Madam, this hat is beige; you go outside and see." So, I went outside, and lo and behold, it *was* beige. And so I bought it. (*Crosses to arch R.*)

DADDY. (*Clearing his throat.*) I would imagine that it was the same hat they tried to sell you before.

MOMMY. (*With a little laugh.*) Well, of course it was!

DADDY. That's the way things are today; you just can't get satisfaction; you just try.

MOMMY. Well, I got satisfaction.

DADDY. That's right, Mommy. *You did* get satisfaction, didn't you.

MOMMY. Why are they so late? I don't know what can be keeping them.

DADDY. I've been trying for two weeks to have the leak in the Johnny fixed.

MOMMY. You can't get satisfaction; just try. (*Sits chair R.*) I can get satisfaction, but you can't.

DADDY. I've been trying for two weeks and it isn't so much for my sake; I can always go to the club.

MOMMY. It isn't so much for my sake, either, I can always go shopping.

DADDY. It's really for Grandma's sake.

MOMMY. Of course it's for Grandma's sake. Grandma cries every time she goes to the Johnny as it is, but now that it doesn't work it's even worse, it makes Grandma think she's getting feeble-headed.

DADDY. Grandma is getting feeble-headed.

MOMMY. Of course Grandma is getting feeble-headed, but not about her Johnny-dos.

DADDY. No, that's true. I must have it fixed.

MOMMY. (Crossing to arch R.) Why are they so late? I don't know what can be keeping them.

DADDY. When they came here the first time, they were ten minutes early; they were quick enough about it then. (Enter Grandma from the archway, L. She is loaded down with boxes, large and small, neatly wrapped and tied.)

MOMMY. Why, Grandma, look at you! What is all that you're carrying?

GRANDMA. They're boxes. What do they look like?

MOMMY. Daddy! Look at Grandma, look at all the boxes she's carrying!

DADDY. My goodness, Grandma, look at all those boxes.

GRANDMA. Where'll I put them?

MOMMY. Heavens! I don't know. Whatever are they for?

GRANDMA. That's nobody's damn business.

MOMMY. Well, in that case, put them down next to Daddy, there.

GRANDMA. (Dumping the boxes down, on and around Daddy's feet.) I sure wish you'd get the John fixed. (Exit archway, L.)

DADDY. Oh, I do wish they'd come and fix it. We hear you . . . for hours . . . whimpering away. . . .

MOMMY. Daddy! What a terrible thing to say to Grandma!

GRANDMA. (Re-entering with more boxes.) Yeah. For shame, talking to me that way.

DADDY. I'm sorry.

MOMMY. Daddy's sorry, Grandma. (Sits chair R.)

GRANDMA. Well, all right. In that case I'll go get the rest of the boxes. I suppose I deserve being talked to that way, I've gotten so old. Most people think that when you get so old, you

either freeze to death, or you burn up. But you don't. When you get so old, all that happens is that people talk to you that way.

DADDY. (Contrite.) I said I'm sorry, Grandma.

MOMMY. Daddy said he was sorry.

GRANDMA. Well, that's all that counts. People being sorry. Makes you feel better; gives you a sense of dignity, and that's all that's important; a sense of dignity. And it doesn't matter if you don't care, or not, either. You got to have a sense of dignity, even if you don't care, 'cause, if you don't have that, civilization's doomed.

MOMMY. (Crossing to Grandma.) You've been reading my book club selections again!

DADDY. How dare you read Mommy's book club selections, Grandma!

GRANDMA. Because I'm old! When you're old you gotta do something. When you get old, you can't talk to people because people snap at you. When you get so old, people talk to you that way. (Mommy sits chair, R. Grandma crosses to her.) That's why you become deaf, so you won't be able to hear people talking to you that way. And that's why you go and hide under the covers in the big soft bed, so you won't feel the house shaking from people talking to you that way. (Crossing to Daddy.) That's why old people die, eventually. People talk to them that way. I've got to go and get the rest of the boxes. (Grandma exits, L.)

DADDY. Poor Grandma, I didn't mean to hurt her.

MOMMY. Don't you worry about it; Grandma doesn't know what she means.

DADDY. She knows what she says, though.

MOMMY. Don't you worry about it; she won't know that soon. I love Grandma.

DADDY. I love her too. Look how nicely she wrapped these boxes.

MOMMY. Grandma has always wrapped boxes nicely. When I was a little girl, I was very poor, and Grandma was very poor, too, because Grandpa was in heaven. And every day, when I went to school Grandma used to wrap a box for me, and I used to take it with me to school; and when it was lunch time, all the little boys and girls used to take out their boxes of lunch, and they weren't wrapped nicely at all, and they used to open them and eat their chicken legs and chocolate cakes; and I used

to say, "Oh, look at my lovely lunch box; it's so nicely wrapped it would break my heart to open it." And so, I wouldn't open it. DADDY. Because it was empty.

MOMMY. Oh, no. Grandma always filled it up, because she never ate the dinner she cooked the evening before; she gave me all her food for my lunch box the next day. After school, I'd take the box back to Grandma, and she'd open it and eat the chicken legs and chocolate cake that was inside. Grandma used to say, "I love day-old cake." That's where the expression 'day-old cake' came from. Grandma always ate everything a day late. I used to eat all the other little boys' and girls' food at school, because they thought my lunch box was empty. They thought my lunch box was empty, and that's why I wouldn't open it. They thought I suffered from the sin of pride, and since that made them better than me, they were very generous.

DADDY. You were a very deceitful little girl.

MOMMY. We were very poor! But then I married you, Daddy, and now we're very rich.

DADDY. Grandma isn't rich.

MOMMY. (Rising, to c.) No, but you've been so good to Grandma she feels rich. She doesn't know you'd like to put her in a nursing home.

DADDY. I wouldn't!

MOMMY. Well, heaven knows, I would! I can't stand it, watching her do the cooking and the housework, polishing the silver, moving the furniture. . . .

DADDY. She likes to do that. She says it's the least she can do to earn her keep.

MOMMY. Well, she's right. You can't live off people. I can live off you, because I married you. And aren't you lucky all I brought with me was Grandma. A lot of women I know would have brought their whole families to live off you. All I brought was Grandma. Grandma is all the family I have.

DADDY. I feel very fortunate.

MOMMY. You should. I have a right to live off of you because I married you, and because I used to let you get on top of me and bump your uglies; and I have a right to all your money when you die. And when you do, Grandma and I can live by ourselves. . . . if she's still here. Unless you have her put away in a nursing home.

DADDY. I have no intention of putting her in a nursing home. MOMMY. (Crossing to arch R.) Well, I wish somebody would do something with her.

DADDY. At any rate, you're very well provided for.

MOMMY. (Crosses to Daddy.) You're my sweet Daddy; that's very nice.

DADDY. I love my Mommy. (Enter Grandma again L., laden with more boxes.)

GRANDMA. (Dumping the boxes on and around Daddy's feet.)

There; that's the lot of them.

DADDY. They're wrapped so nicely.

GRANDMA. (To Daddy.) You won't get on my sweet side that way.

MOMMY. Grandma!

GRANDMA. . . . telling me how nicely I wrap boxes. Not after what you said: how I whimpered for hours. . . .

MOMMY. Grandma!

GRANDMA. (To Mommy.) Shut up. (Mommy crosses to arch R. To Daddy.) You don't have any feelings, that's what's wrong with you. Old people make all sorts of noises; half of them they can't help. Old people whimper, and cry, and belch, and make great hollow rumbling sounds at table; old people wake up in the middle of the night screaming, and find out they haven't even been asleep; and when old people are asleep, they try to wake up, and they can't. . . . not for the longest time.

MOMMY. Homilies; homilies! (Sits chair R.)

GRANDMA. (To Mommy.) And there's more, too.

DADDY. I'm really very sorry, Grandma.

GRANDMA. I know you are Daddy; it's Mommy over there makes all the trouble. (Sits on big box R. of Daddy.) If you'd listened to me you wouldn't have married her in the first place. She was a tramp and a trollop and a trull to boot, and she's no better now.

MOMMY. (Rises.) Grandma!

GRANDMA. (To Mommy.) Shut up. (Mommy sits. To Daddy.) When she was no more than eight years old she used to climb up on my lap and say, in a sickening little voice, "When I grow up, I'm going to mahwy a wick old man; I'm going to set my widdle were end right down in a tub o' butter; that's what I'm going to do." And I warned you Daddy; I told you to stay away

from her type. I told you to. I did. (*Mommy crosses to Grandma, pulling her up and pushing her D. R.*)

MOMMY. You stop that! You're my mother, not his!

GRANDMA. I am?

DADDY. That's right, Grandma, Mommy's right.

GRANDMA. Well, how would you expect somebody as old as I am to remember a thing like that? You don't make allowances for people. (*Crossing L. to Daddy.*) I want an allowance. I want an allowance!

DADDY. All right, Grandma; I'll see to it.

MOMMY. Grandma! I'm ashamed of you.

GRANDMA. (*Running from Mommy around to R. of sofa.*) Hum! It's a fine time to say that. You should have gotten rid of me a long time ago if that's the way you feel. You should have had Daddy set me up in business somewhere . . . I could have gone into the fur business, or I could have been a singer. (*Mommy crossing after Grandma around sofa.*) But no; not you. You wanted me around so you could sleep in my room when Daddy got fresh. But now it isn't important, because Daddy doesn't want to get fresh with you anymore, and I don't blame him. (*Grandma crosses D. L. of Daddy.*) You'd rather sleep with me, wouldn't you Daddy?

MOMMY. (*Mommy, R. of Daddy.*) Daddy doesn't want to sleep with anyone. Daddy's been sick.

DADDY. I've been sick. I don't even want to sleep in the apartment.

MOMMY. You see? I told you.

DADDY. I just want to get everything over with.

MOMMY. That's right. (*Crossing to arch R.*) Why are they so late? Why can't they get here on time?

GRANDMA. (*Crossing to Mommy. An owl.*) Who? Who? . . . Who? Who?

MOMMY. You know, Grandma.

GRANDMA. No, I don't.

MOMMY. (*Sits chair R.*) Well, it doesn't really matter whether you do, or not.

DADDY. Is that true?

MOMMY. Oh, more or less. Look how pretty Grandma wrapped these boxes.

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GRANDMA. (*Sits on sofa.*) I didn't really like wrapping them; it hurt my fingers, and it frightened me. But, it had to be done.

MOMMY. Why, Grandma?

GRANDMA. None of your damn business.

MOMMY. Go to bed.

GRANDMA. I don't want to go to bed. I just got up. I want to stay here and watch. Besides. . . .

MOMMY. Go to bed.

DADDY. Let her stay up, Mommy; it isn't noon yet.

GRANDMA. (*Crosses to Daddy.*) I want to watch; besides. . . .

DADDY. Let her watch, Mommy.

MOMMY. Well, all right, you can watch; but don't you dare say a word.

GRANDMA. Old people are very good at listening; old people don't like to talk; (*Mommy starts for Grandma who crosses D. L.*) old people have colitis and lavender perfume. Now I'm going to be quiet.

DADDY. She never mentioned she wanted to be a singer.

MOMMY. Oh, I forgot to tell you, but it was ages ago. (*The doorbell rings.*) Oh, goodness! Here they are!

GRANDMA. (*Crossing to Mommy, C.*) Who? Who?

MOMMY. Oh, just some people.

GRANDMA. The van people? Is it the van people? Have you finally done it? Have you called the van people to come and take me away?

DADDY. Of course not, Grandma!

GRANDMA. Oh, don't be too sure. She'd have you carried off, too, if she thought she could get away with it.

MOMMY. Pay no attention to her, Daddy. (*An aside to Grandma.*) My God, you're ungrateful! (*The doorbell rings again.*)

DADDY. (*Wringing his hands.*) Oh, dear; oh, dear.

MOMMY. (*Still to Grandma.*) Just you wait; I'll fix your wagon. (*Now, to Daddy.*) Well, go let them in, Daddy. What are you waiting for?

DADDY. I think we should talk about it some more. Maybe we've been hasty . . . a little hasty, perhaps. (*Doorbell rings again.*) I'd like to talk about it some more.

MOMMY. There's no need. You made up your mind; you were firm; you were masculine and decisive.

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DADDY. We might consider the pros and the . . .

MOMMY. I won't argue with you; it has to be done; you were right. Open the door.

DADDY. But I'm not sure that. . . .

MOMMY. (Pushing Daddy up out of his chair.) Open the door.

DADDY. (Crosses to arch R., thinks better of it, turns back to Mommy.) Was I firm about it?

MOMMY. Oh, so firm; so firm.

DADDY. And was I decisive?

MOMMY. So decisive! Oh, I shivered.

DADDY. And masculine? Was I really masculine?

MOMMY. Oh, Daddy, you were so masculine; I shivered and fainted.

GRANDMA. (Sits chair L.) Shivered and fainted, did she? Hum! MOMMY. You be quiet.

GRANDMA. Old people have a right to talk to themselves; it doesn't hurt the guns, and it's comforting. (Doorbell rings again.)

DADDY. (Crosses to arch R.) I shall now open the door.

MOMMY. What a masculine Daddy! (To Grandma.) Isn't he a masculine Daddy?

GRANDMA. Don't expect me to say anything. Old people are obscene.

MOMMY. Some of your opinions aren't so bad. You know that?

DADDY. (Backing off from the door.) Maybe we can send them away.

MOMMY. Oh, look at you! You're turning into jelly; you're indecisive; you're a woman.

DADDY. All right. Watch me now; I'm going to open the door. Watch. Watch!

MOMMY. We're watching; we're watching.

GRANDMA. (Rises, stands D. L.) I'm not.

DADDY. Watch now; it's opening! (He opens the door.) It's open! (Mrs. Barker steps into the room.) Here they are!

MOMMY. Here they are!

GRANDMA. Where?

DADDY. Come in. You're late. But, of course, we expected you to be late; we were saying that we expected you to be late.

MOMMY. (Crossing to Mrs. Barker.) Daddy, don't be rude! We were saying that you just can't get satisfaction these days, and we were talking about you, of course. Won't you come in?

MRS. BARKER. (Crosses c.) Thank you; I don't mind if I do.

MOMMY. We're very glad that you're here, late as you are. You do remember us, don't you? You were here once before. I'm Mommy, and this is Daddy, and that's Grandma, doddering there in the corner.

MRS. BARKER. Hello, Mommy; hello, Daddy; and hello there, Grandma.

DADDY. Now that you're here, I don't suppose you could go away and maybe come back some other time.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, no; we're much too efficient for that I said, hello there, Grandma.

MOMMY. Speak to them, Grandma.

GRANDMA. I don't see them.

DADDY. For shame, Grandma; they're here.

MRS. BARKER. Yes, we're here, Grandma. I'm Mrs. Barker. I remember you; don't you remember me?

GRANDMA. I don't recall; maybe you were younger, or something.

MOMMY. Grandma! What a terrible thing to say!

MRS. BARKER. Oh, now, don't scold her, Mommy; for all she knows she may be right.

DADDY. Uh. . . . Mrs. Barker, is it? Won't you sit down?

MRS. BARKER. (Sits sofa.) I don't mind if I do.

MOMMY. Would you like a cigarette, and a drink, and would you like to cross your legs?

MRS. BARKER. You forget yourself, Mommy; I'm a professional woman. But I will cross my legs.

DADDY. (Sits chair L. Mommy sits chair R.) Yes, make yourself comfortable.

MRS. BARKER. I don't mind if I do. (Pause.)

GRANDMA. Are they still here?

MOMMY. Be quiet, Grandma.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, we're still here. My, what an unattractive apartment you have.

MOMMY. Yes, but you don't know what a trouble it is. Let me tell you. . . .

DADDY. I was saying to Mommy. . . .

MRS. BARKER. Yes, I know. I was listening outside.

DADDY. About the icebox, and . . . the doorbell . . . and the . . .

MRS. BARKER . . . and the johnny. Yes, we're very efficient; we have to know everything in our work.

DADDY. Exactly what do you do?

MOMMY. Yes, what is your work?

MRS. BARKER. Well, my dear, for one thing I'm chairman of your women's club.

MOMMY. (*Crosses to Mrs. Barker.*) Don't be ridiculous. I was talking to the chairman of my women's club just yester . . . why, so you are. (*Crosses to Daddy.*) You remember, Daddy, the lady I was telling you about? The lady with the husband who sits in the swing? Don't you remember?

DADDY. No. . . . no. . . .

MOMMY. Of course you do. I'm so sorry, Mrs. Barker. I would have known you anywhere, except in this artificial light. (*Crossing around sofa to R.*) And look! You have a hat just like the one I bought yesterday.

MRS. BARKER. (*With a little laugh.*) No, not really; this hat is cream.

MOMMY. Well, my dear, that may look like a cream hat to you, but I can . . .

MRS. BARKER. Now, now; you seem to forget who I am.

MOMMY. Yes, I do, don't I? Are you sure you're comfortable? Won't you take off your dress?

MRS. BARKER. I don't mind if I do. (*Mrs. Barker removes her dress. Mommy lays it neatly over sofa back.*)

MOMMY. (*Mommy sits chair R. Mrs. Barker sits sofa.*) There; you must feel a great deal more comfortable.

MRS. BARKER. Well, I certainly look a great deal more comfortable.

DADDY. I'm going to blush and giggle.

MOMMY. Daddy's going to blush and giggle.

MRS. BARKER. (*Pulling the hem of her slip above her knees. Daddy giggles.*) You're lucky to have such a man for a husband.

MOMMY. Oh, don't I know it!

DADDY. I just blushed and giggled.

MOMMY. Isn't Daddy a caution, Mrs. Barker?

MRS. BARKER. Maybe if I smoked . . . ?

MOMMY. Oh, that isn't necessary.

MRS. BARKER. I don't mind if I do.

MOMMY. No; no, don't, really.

MRS. BARKER. I don't mind. . . .

MOMMY. (*Rising and crossing to Mrs. Barker.*) I won't have you smoking in my house, and that's that! You're a professional woman.

DADDY. Grandma drinks AND smokes; don't you, Grandma?

GRANDMA. No.

MOMMY. (*Crosses L. into boxes.*) Well, now, Mrs. Barker; suppose you tell us why you're here.

GRANDMA. (*As Mommy walks through the boxes.*) The boxes . . . the boxes.

MOMMY. Be quiet, Grandma.

DADDY. What did you say, Grandma?

GRANDMA. (*As Mommy steps on several of the boxes.*) The boxes, damn it!

MRS. BARKER. Boxes; she said boxes. She mentioned the boxes.

DADDY. What about the boxes, Grandma? Maybe Mrs. Barker is here because of the boxes. Is that what you meant, Grandma?

GRANDMA. I don't know if that's what I meant, or not. It's certainly not what I thought I meant.

DADDY. Grandma is of the opinion that . . .

MRS. BARKER. Can we assume that the boxes are for us? I mean, can we assume that you had us come here for the boxes?

MOMMY. Are you in the habit of receiving boxes?

DADDY. A very good question.

MRS. BARKER. Well, that would depend on the reason we're here. I've got my fingers in so many little pies, you know. Now, I can think of one of my little activities in which we are in the habit of receiving baskets, but more in a literary sense than really. We might receive boxes, though, under very special circumstances. I'm afraid that's the best answer I can give you.

DADDY. It's a very interesting answer.

MRS. BARKER. I thought so. But, does it help?

MOMMY. (*Sits chair R.*) No; I'm afraid not.

DADDY. I wonder if it might help us any if I said I feel misgivings, that I have definite qualms.

MOMMY. Where, Daddy?

DADDY. (*Unbuttoning his jacket and indicating stitches.*) Well, mostly right here, right around where the stitches were.

MOMMY. Daddy had an operation, you know.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, you poor Daddy! I didn't know; but, then how could I?

GRANDMA. (Crossing to Mrs. Barker.) You might have asked; it wouldn't have hurt you.

MOMMY. Dry up, Grandma.

GRANDMA. There you go. Letting your true feelings come out. Old people aren't dry enough, I suppose. My sacks are empty, the fluid in my eyeballs is all caked on the inside edges, my spine is made of sugar candy, I breathe ice; but you don't hear me complain. Nobody hears old people complain because people think that's all old people do. And that's because old people are gnarled and sagged and twisted into the shape of a complaint. (Signs off.) That's all. (Crosses D. L.)

MRS. BARKER. What was wrong, Daddy?

DADDY. Well, you know how it is: the doctors took out something that was there and put in something that wasn't there. An operation.

MRS. BARKER. You're very fortunate, I should say.

MOMMY. Oh, he is! he is! All his life, Daddy has wanted to be a United States Senator; but now . . . why, now he's changed his mind, and for the rest of his life he's going to want to be governor . . . it would be nearer the apartment, you know.

MRS. BARKER. You are fortunate, Daddy.

DADDY. Yes, indeed; except that I get these qualms now and then, definite ones.

MRS. BARKER. Well, it's just a matter of things settling; you're like an old house.

MOMMY. Why Daddy, thank Mrs. Barker.

DADDY. Thank you.

MRS. BARKER. Ambition! That's the ticket. I have a brother who's very much like you, Daddy . . . ambitious. Of course, he's a great deal younger than you; he's even younger than I am . . . if such a thing is possible. He runs a little newspaper. Just a little newspaper . . . but he runs it. He's chief cook and bottle washer of that little newspaper, which he calls The Village Idiot. He has such a sense of humor; he's so self-deprecating, so modest. And he'd never admit it himself, but he is The Village Idiot.

MOMMY. Oh, I think that's just grand. Don't you think so, Daddy?

DADDY. Yes, just grand.

MRS. BARKER. My brother's a dear man, and he has a dear

little wife, whom he loves, dearly. He loves her so much he just can't get a sentence out without mentioning her. He wants everybody to know he's married. He's really a stickler on that point; he can't be introduced to anybody and say "hello" without adding "of course, I'm married." As far as I'm concerned, he's the chief exponent of Woman Love in this whole country; he's even been written up in psychiatric journals because of it.

DADDY. Indeed!

MOMMY. Isn't that lovely.

MRS. BARKER. Oh I think so. There's too much woman-hatred in this country, and that's a fact.

GRANDMA. Oh, I don't know.

MOMMY. Oh, I think that's just grand. Don't you think so, Daddy?

DADDY. Yes, just grand.

GRANDMA. (Crossing L. C.) In case anybody's interested. . . .

MOMMY. Be quiet, Grandma.

GRANDMA. Nuts! (Turns her back on the group.)

MOMMY. Oh, Mrs. Barker, you must forgive Grandma. She's rural.

MRS. BARKER. I don't mind if I do.

DADDY. Maybe Grandma has something to say.

MOMMY. Nonsense. Old people have nothing to say; and if old people did have something to say, nobody would listen to them. (Rises. To Grandma.) You see? I can pull that stuff just as easy as you can.

GRANDMA. Well, you got the rhythm, but you don't really have the quality. Besides, you're middle-aged.

MOMMY. I'm proud of it.

GRANDMA. Look. I'll show you how it's really done. Middle-aged people think they can do anything, but the truth is that middle-aged people can't do most things as well as they used to. Middle-aged people think they're special because they're like everybody else. We live in the age of deformity. You see? Rhythm and content. You'll learn. (Crosses D. L.)

DADDY. I do wish I weren't surrounded by women, I'd like some men around here.

MRS. BARKER. You can say that again!

GRANDMA. I don't hardly count as a woman, so can I say my piece?

MOMMY. (Sits chair r.) Go on, Jabber away.

GRANDMA. It's very simple; the fact is, these boxes don't have anything to do with why this good lady is come to call. Now if you're interested in knowing why these boxes are here. . . .

DADDY. I'm sure that must be all very true, Grandma, but what does it have to do with why . . . pardon me, what is that name again?

MRS. BARKER. Mrs. Barker.

DADDY. Exactly. What does it have to do with why . . . that name again?

MRS. BARKER. Mrs. Barker.

DADDY. Precisely. What does it have to do with why what's-her-name is here?

MOMMY. They're here because we asked them.

MRS. BARKER. Yes. That's why.

GRANDMA. Now, if you're interested in knowing why these boxes are here. . . .

MOMMY. Well, nobody is interested!

GRANDMA. (Crossing r. To Mommy.) You can be as snipity as you like for all the good it'll do you.

DADDY. You two will have to stop arguing.

MOMMY. (Crossing to Daddy.) I don't argue with her.

DADDY. It will just have to stop.

MOMMY. Well, why don't you call a van and have her taken away?

GRANDMA. Don't bother; there's no need.

DADDY. No, now, perhaps I can go away myself. . . .

MOMMY. Well, one or the other; the way things are now it's impossible. In the first place, it's too crowded in this apartment. (To Grandma.) And it's you that takes up all the space, with

your enema bottles, and your Pekinese, and God-only-knows what else . . . and now all these boxes. . . . (Kicking the boxes.) GRANDMA. These boxes are . . .

MRS. BARKER. I've never heard of enema bottles. . . .

GRANDMA. She means enema bags, but she doesn't know the difference. Mommy comes from extremely bad stock. And, besides, when Mommy was born . . . well, it was a difficult delivery, and she had a head shaped like a banana.

MOMMY. You ungrateful . . . Daddy? Daddy, you see how ungrateful she is after all these years, after all the things we've

done for her? (To Grandma.) One of these days you're going away in a van; that's what's going to happen to you!

GRANDMA. Do tell!

MRS. BARKER. Like a banana?

GRANDMA. Yup, just like a banana.

MRS. BARKER. My word!

MOMMY. You stop listening to her; she'll say anything. Just the other night she called Daddy a hedgehog.

MRS. BARKER. She didn't!

GRANDMA. That's right, baby; you stick up for me. MOMMY. I don't know where she gets the words; on the tele-

vision, maybe.

MRS. BARKER. Did you really call him a hedgehog?

GRANDMA. (Crossing D. R.) Oh, look; what difference does it make whether I did or not?

DADDY. Grandma's right. Leave Grandma alone.

MOMMY. (To Daddy.) How dare you!

GRANDMA. Oh, leave her alone, Daddy; the kid's all mixed up. MOMMY. You see? I told you. It's all those television shows.

Daddy, you go right into Grandma's room and take her television and shake all the tubes loose.

DADDY. Don't mention tubes to me.

MOMMY. Oh! Mommy forgot! (To Mrs. Barker.) Daddy has tubes now where he used to have tracts.

MRS. BARKER. Is that a fact!

GRANDMA. (Crossing to Mrs. Barker.) I know why this dear lady is here.

MOMMY. You be still.

MRS. BARKER. (Rising, To Grandma.) Oh, I do wish you'd tell me.

MOMMY. No! No! That wouldn't be fair at all.

DADDY. Besides, she knows why she's here; she's here because we called them.

MRS. BARKER. (Crossing L. to Daddy.) La! But that still leaves me puzzled. I know I'm here because you called us, but I'm such a busy girl, with this committee and that committee, and the Responsible Citizens Activities I indulge in.

MOMMY. Oh my; busy, busy.

MRS. BARKER. Yes, indeed. So, I'm afraid you'll have to give me some help.

MOMMY. Oh, no. No, you must be mistaken. I can't believe we asked you here to give you any help. With the way taxes are these days, and the way you can't get satisfaction in ANYTHING. . . . No, I don't believe so.

DADDY. And if you need help . . . why, I should think you'd apply for a Fulbright Scholarship. . . .

MOMMY. And if not that . . . why, then a Guggenheim Fellowship. . . .

GRANDMA. Oh, come on; why not shoot the works and try the Ford Foundation. (*Under her breath, to Mommy and Daddy.*) Beasts! (*Crosses D. R.*)

MRS. BARKER. Oh, what a jolly family. (*Crosses R.*) But let me think. I'm knee-deep in work these days; there's the Ladies Auxiliary Air-Raid Committee, for one thing; (*To Daddy.*) how do you feel about air-raids?

MOMMY. Oh, I'd say we're hostile.

DADDY. Yes, definitely; we're hostile.

MRS. BARKER. Then you'll be no help there. There's too much hostility in the world these days, as it is; but I'll not badger you. There's a surfeit of badgers, as well. (*Sits chair R.*)

GRANDMA. While we're at it, there's been a rum on old people, too. The Department of Agriculture, or maybe it wasn't the Department of Agriculture . . . anyway, it was some department that's run by a girl, put out figures showing that ninety per cent of the adult population of the country is over eighty years old . . . or eighty per cent is over ninety years old. . . .

MOMMY. You're such a liar! You just finished saying that everyone is middle-aged.

GRANDMA. (*Crosses C. to Mommy.*) I'm just telling you what the government says . . . that doesn't have anything to do with what . . .

MOMMY. It's that television! Daddy, go break her television.

GRANDMA. You won't find it.

DADDY. (*Nearly getting up.*) If I must. . . . I must.

MOMMY. And don't step on the Pekinese, it's blind.

DADDY. It may be blind, but Daddy isn't. (*He exits, through the archway, L.*)

GRANDMA. (*Crossing to L. arch after Daddy.*) You won't find it, either.

MOMMY. (*Crosses to Mrs. Barker, R.*) Oh, I'm so fortunate to

have such a husband. Just think: I could have had a husband who was poor, or argumentative, or a husband who sat in a wheelchair all day. (*Mrs. Barker rises.*) . . . OOOHHHH! *What* have I said? *What* have I said?

GRANDMA. You said you could have a husband who sat in a wheel . . .

MOMMY. (*Starting after Grandma who sits chair, L.*) I'm mortified! I could die! I could cut my tongue out! I could . . .

MRS. BARKER. (*Forcing a smile.*) Oh, now . . . now . . . don't think about it. . . .

MOMMY. (*Crosses to Mrs. Barker.*) I could . . . why, I could . . .

MRS. BARKER. . . . don't think about it . . . really . . .

MOMMY. You're quite right. I won't think about it, and that way I'll forget that I ever said it, and that way it will be all right. (*Pause.*) There . . . I've forgotten. (*Pulling Mrs. Barker to sofa, both sit.*) Well, now, now that Daddy is out of the room we can have some girl talk.

MRS. BARKER. I'm not sure that I . . .

MOMMY. You do want to have some girl talk, don't you?

MRS. BARKER. I was going to say I'm not sure that I wouldn't care for a glass of water. I feel a little faint.

MOMMY. Grandma, go get Mrs. Barker a glass of water.

GRANDMA. —I would prefer not to.

MOMMY. Grandma loves to do little things around the house; it gives her a false sense of security.

GRANDMA. I quit! I'm through! (*Begins to stack boxes.*)

MOMMY. Now, you be a good Grandma, or you know what will happen to you. You'll be taken away in a van.

GRANDMA. (*Crossing up to Mommy.*) You don't frighten me. I'm too old to be frightened. And besides . . .

MOMMY. WELL! I'll tend to you later. I'll hide your teeth . . . I'll . . .

GRANDMA. Everything's hidden.

MRS. BARKER. I am going to faint. I am.

MOMMY. (*Rises.*) Good heavens! I'll go myself. (*As she exits, through the archway, L.*) I'll fix you Grandma. I'll take care of you later. (*She exits.*)

GRANDMA. Oh, go soak your head. (*To Mrs. Barker.*) Well, dearie, how do you feel? (*Sits next to Mrs. Barker on Sofa.*)

MRS. BARKER. A little better, I think. Yes, much better, thank you, Grandma.

GRANDMA. That's good.

MRS. BARKER. But . . . I feel so lost . . . not knowing why I'm here . . . and, on top of it, they say I was here before.

GRANDMA. Well, you were. You weren't here, exactly, because we've moved around a lot, from one apartment to another, up and down the social ladder like mice, if you like similes.

MRS. BARKER. I don't . . . particularly.

GRANDMA. (Rises. Resumes stacking boxes.) Well, then, I'm sorry.

MRS. BARKER. (Rises. Suddenly.) Grandma, I feel I can trust you.

GRANDMA. Don't be too sure; it's every man for himself around this place. . . .

MRS. BARKER. Oh . . . is it? Nonetheless, I really do feel that I can trust you. Please tell me why they called and asked us to come. I implore you!

GRANDMA. Oh my; that feels good. It's been so long since anybody implored me. Do it again. Implore me some more.

MRS. BARKER. (Crosses R.) You're your daughter's mother all right!

GRANDMA. (Crossing to Mrs. Barker.) Oh, I don't mean to be hard. If you won't implore me, then beg me, or ask me, or entreat me . . . just anything like that.

MRS. BARKER. You're a dreadful old woman!

GRANDMA. (Resumes stacking boxes.) You'll understand some day. Please!

MRS. BARKER. Oh, for heavens sake! . . . I implore you . . . I beg you . . . I beseech you! (Sits chair R.)

GRANDMA. (Crosses R, to Mrs. Barker.) Beseech! Oh, that's the nicest word I've heard in ages. You're a dear, sweet woman . . . You . . . beseech . . . me. I can't resist that.

MRS. BARKER. Well then . . . please tell me why they asked us to come.

GRANDMA. (Checks through arch L, then crosses to Mrs. Barker.) Well, I'll give you a hint. That's the best I can do, because I'm a muddle-headed old woman. Now listen, because it's important. Once upon a time, not too very long ago, but a long enough time ago . . . oh, about twenty years ago . . . there was a

man very much like Daddy, and a woman very much like Mommy, who were married to each other, very much like Mommy and Daddy are married to each other; and they lived in an apartment very much like one that's very much like this one, and they lived there with an old woman who was very much like yours truly, only younger, because it was some time ago; in fact, they were all somewhat younger.

MRS. BARKER. How fascinating!

GRANDMA. Now, at the same time, there was a dear lady very much like you, only younger then, who did all sorts of Good Works. . . . And one of the Good Works this dear lady did was in something very much like a volunteer capacity for an organization very much like the Bye-Bye Adoption Service, which is nearby and which was run by a terribly deaf old lady very much like the Miss Bye-Bye who runs the Bye-Bye Adoption Service nearby.

MRS. BARKER. How enthralling!

GRANDMA. (Crossing L, then back to Mrs. Barker.) Well, be that as it may. Nonetheless, one afternoon this man, who was very much like Daddy, and this woman who was very much like Mommy came to see this dear lady who did all the Good Works, who was very much like you, dear, and they were very sad and very hopeful, and they cried and smiled and bit their fingers, and they said all the most intimate things.

MRS. BARKER. How spellbinding! What did they say?

GRANDMA. Well, it was very sweet. The woman, who was very much like Mommy, said that she and the man, who was very much like Daddy, had never been blessed with anything very much like a bundle of joy.

MRS. BARKER. A what?

GRANDMA. A bundle; a bundle of joy.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, like a bundle.

GRANDMA. Well, yes; very much like it. Bundle, bundle; who cares? At any rate, the woman, who was very much like Mommy, said that they wanted a bundle of their own, but that the man, who was very much like Daddy, couldn't have a bundle; and the man, who was very much like Daddy, said that yes, they had wanted a bundle of their own, but that the woman, who was very much like Mommy, couldn't have one, and that now they wanted to buy something very much like a bundle.

MRS. BARKER. How engrossing!

GRANDMA. Yes. And the dear lady, who was very much like you, said something that was very much like, "Oh, what a shame; but take heart; I think we have just the bumble for you." And, well, the lady, who was very much like Mommy, and the man, who was very much like Daddy, cried and smiled and bit their fingers, and said some more intimate things, which were totally irrelevant, but which were pretty hot stuff, and so the dear lady, who was very much like you, and who had something very much like a penchant for pornography, listened with something very much like enthusiasm. "Whee!" she said. "Whoooopeeeeee!" But that's beside the point.

MRS. BARKER. I suppose so. But, how gripping!

GRANDMA. Anyway . . . they *bought* something very much like a bumble, and they took it away with them. But . . . things didn't work out very well.

MRS. BARKER. You mean there was trouble?

GRANDMA. You got it. (*With a glance through the archway*) But, I'm going to have to speed up now because I think I'm leaving soon.

MRS. BARKER. (*Rises and crosses c.*) Oh. Are you really?

GRANDMA. Yup.

MRS. BARKER. But, old people don't go anywhere; they're either taken places, or put places.

GRANDMA. Well, this old person is different. (*Both sit on sofa.*)

Anyway . . . things started going badly.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, yes. Yes.

GRANDMA. Weeeeeeelllll . . . in the first place, it turned out the bumble didn't look like either one of its parents. That was enough of a blow, but things got worse. One night, it cried its heart out, if you can imagine such a thing.

MRS. BARKER. Cried its heart out! Well!

GRANDMA. But that was only the beginning. Then it turned out it only had eyes for its Daddy.

MRS. BARKER. For its Daddy! Why, any self-respecting woman would have gouged those eyes right out of its head.

GRANDMA. Well, she did. That's exactly what she did. But then, it kept its nose up in the air.

MRS. BARKER. Ufgh! How disgusting!

GRANDMA. That's what they thought. But then, it began to develop an interest in its you-know-what.

MRS. BARKER. In its you-know-what! Well! I hope they cut its hands off at the wrists!

GRANDMA. Well, yes, they did that eventually. But first, they cut off its you-know-what.

MRS. BARKER. A much better idea!

GRANDMA. That's what they thought. But after they cut off its you-know-what, it still put its hands under the covers, looking for its you-know-what. So, finally, they had to cut off its hands at the wrists.

MRS. BARKER. Naturally!

GRANDMA. And it was such a resentful bumble. Why, one day it called its Mommy a dirty name.

MRS. BARKER. Well, I hope they cut its tongue out!

GRANDMA. Of course. And, then, as it got bigger, they found out all sorts of terrible things about it, like: it didn't have a head on its shoulders, it had no guts, it was spineless, its feet were made of clay . . . just dreadful things.

MRS. BARKER. Dreadful!

GRANDMA. So you can understand how they became discouraged.

MRS. BARKER. I certainly can! And what did they do?

GRANDMA. What did they do? Well, for the last straw, it finally up and died; and you can imagine how that made them feel, their having paid for it and all. So, they called up the lady who sold them the bumble in the first place and told her to come right over to their apartment. They wanted satisfaction; they wanted their money back. That's what they wanted.

MRS. BARKER. My, my, my.

GRANDMA. How do you like them apples?

MRS. BARKER. My, my, my.

DADDY. (*Off-stage.*) Mommy? I can't find Grandma's television, and I can't find the Pekinese, either.

MOMMY. (*Off-stage.*) Isn't that funny? And I can't find the water.

GRANDMA. (*Rises and crosses to arch l.*) Hel, heh, heh. I told them everything was hidden.

MRS. BARKER. Did you hide the water, too?

GRANDMA. (*Puzzled.*) No. No. No, I didn't do that.

MOMMY. (*Off-stage.*) Oh, I found the water, Daddy. It wasn't where I thought it would be at all.

DADDY. (*Off-stage.*) The truth of the matter is, I can't even find Grandma's room.

GRANDMA. (*Sits sofa.*) Heh, heh, heh.

MRS. BARKER. My! You certainly did hide things, didn't you?

GRANDMA. Sure, kid, sure.

MOMMY. (*Still off-stage.*) Did you ever hear of such a thing, Grandma? Daddy can't find your television, (*Entering L., crosses to Grandma.*) and he can't find the Pekinese, and the truth of the matter is he can't even find your room.

GRANDMA. I told you. I hid everything.

MOMMY. Nonsense, Grandma! Just wait until I get my hands on you. You're a trouble-maker; that's what you are.

GRANDMA. (*Rises. Crosses R. and sits R. chair.*) Well, I'll be out of here pretty soon, baby.

MOMMY. (*Following Grandma R.*) Oh, you don't know how right you are! Daddy's been wanting to send you away for a long time now but I've been restraining him. I'll tell you one thing, though. I'm getting sick and tired of this fighting, and I might just let him have his way. Then you'll see what'll happen. Away you'll go, in a van, too. I'll let Daddy call the van man.

GRANDMA. I'm way ahead of you.

MOMMY. How can you be so old and so smug at the same time? You have no sense of proportion.

GRANDMA. You just answered your own question.

MOMMY. Mrs. Barker, I'd much rather you came into the kitchen for that glass of water, what with Grandma out here, and all.

MRS. BARKER. I don't see what Grandma has to do with it; and besides, I don't think you're very polite.

MOMMY. You seem to forget that you're a guest in this house.

GRANDMA. Apartment!

MOMMY. Apartment! And that you're a professional woman. (*Crosses to L. arch.*) So, if you'll be so good as to come into the kitchen, I'll be more than happy to show you where the water is, and where the glass is, and then you can put two and two together, if you're clever enough. (*She vanishes through L. arch.*)

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MRS. BARKER. (*After a moment's consideration.*) I suppose she's right.

GRANDMA. (*Rises, crosses up to Mrs. Barker.*) Well, that's how it is when people call you up and ask you over to do something for them.

MRS. BARKER. I suppose you're right, too. (*Rises.*) Well, Grandma, it's been very nice talking to you.

GRANDMA. And I've enjoyed listening. (*Mrs. Barker crosses L. to arch, Grandma stops her.*) Say, don't tell Mommy or Daddy that I gave you that hint, will you?

MRS. BARKER. Oh, dear me, the hint! I'd forgotten about it, if you can imagine such a thing. No, I won't breathe a word of it to them.

GRANDMA. (*Crossing to Mrs. Barker L.*) I don't know if it helped you any . . .

MRS. BARKER. I can't tell yet. I'll have to . . . what is the word I want? I'll have to relate it . . . that's it . . . I'll have to relate it to certain things that I know, and . . . draw . . . conclusions . . . what I'll really have to do is to see if it applies to anything. I mean, after all, I do do volunteer work for an adoption service, but it isn't very much like the By-Bye Adoption Service . . . it is the By-Bye Adoption Service . . . and while I can remember Mommy and Daddy coming to see me, oh, about twenty years ago, about buying a bumble, I can't quite remember anyone very much like Mommy and Daddy coming to see me about buying a bumble. Don't you see? It really presents quite a problem . . . I'll have to think about it . . . mull it . . . but at any rate, it was truly first-class of you to try to help me. Oh, will you still be here after I've had my drink of water?

GRANDMA. Probably . . . I'm not as spry as I used to be.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, well, I won't say goodbye then.

GRANDMA. No. Don't. (*Mrs. Barker exits through the archway. Grandma sits on the sofa.*) People don't say good-bye to old people because they think they'll frighten them. Lordy! If they only knew how awful hello, and my, you're looking chipper sounded, they wouldn't say those things either. (*Rises and starts stacking rest of boxes.*) The truth is, there isn't much you can say to old people that doesn't sound just terrible. (*The doorbell rings.*)

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Come on in! (*The Young Man enters, R. archway. Grandma looks him over.*) Well, now aren't you a breath of fresh air!

YOUNG MAN. Hello there.

GRANDMA. My, my, my. Are you the van man?

YOUNG MAN. The what?

GRANDMA. (*Crossing to Young Man.*) The van man. The van man. Are you come to take me away?

YOUNG MAN. I don't know what you're talking about. (*Crosses to L. arch, looking out.*)

GRANDMA. Oh. (*Pause.*) Well. (*Pause.*) My, my, aren't you something!

YOUNG MAN. Him?

GRANDMA. I said, my, my, aren't you something.

YOUNG MAN. (*Sits chair L.*) Oh. Thank you.

GRANDMA. You don't sound very enthusiastic.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, I'm . . . I'm used to it.

GRANDMA. (*Sits on arm of chair L.*) Yup; yup, you know, if I were about a hundred and fifty years younger, I could go for you.

YOUNG MAN. Yes, I imagine so.

GRANDMA. Unh-huh, will you look at those muscles!

YOUNG MAN. (*Rising C. and flexing his muscles.*) Yes, they're quite good, aren't they?

GRANDMA. (*Crossing to him.*) Boy, they sure are. They natural?

YOUNG MAN. Well the basic structure was there, but I've done some work too . . . you know, in a gym. (*Sprawls on the sofa.*)

GRANDMA. I'll bet you have. (*Crossing up behind sofa.*) You ought to be in the movies, boy.

YOUNG MAN. I know.

GRANDMA. (*Leaning over back of sofa.*) Yup! Right up there on the old silver screen. But I suppose you've heard that before.

YOUNG MAN. Yes, I have.

GRANDMA. You ought to try out for them . . . the movies.

YOUNG MAN. Well, actually, I may have a career there, yet I've lived out on the west coast almost all my life . . . and I've met a few people who . . . might be able to help me. (*Sitting up on sofa.*) I'm not in too much of a hurry, though. I'm almost as young as I look.

GRANDMA. (*Crossing R. of sofa.*) Oh, that's nice. And will you look at that face!

YOUNG MAN. Yes, it's quite good, isn't it? Clean-cut, midwest farm boy type, almost insultingly good-looking in a typically American way. Good profile, straight nose, honest eyes, wonderful smile. . . .

GRANDMA. Yup. Boy, you know what you are, don't you? You're the American Dream, that's what you are. All those other people they don't know what they're talking about. You . . . you are the American Dream.

YOUNG MAN. Thanks.

MOMMY. (*Off-stage.*) Who rang the doorbell?

GRANDMA. (*Shouting off-stage.*) The American Dream!

MOMMY. (*Off-stage.*) What? What was that, Grandma?

GRANDMA. (*Crossing to arch L. Shouting.*) The American Dream! The American Dream! Damn it!

DADDY. (*Off-stage.*) How's that, Mommy?

MOMMY. (*Off-stage.*) Oh, some gibberish; pay no attention. Did you find Grandma's room?

DADDY. (*Off-stage.*) I can't find anything.

MOMMY. (*Off-stage.*) All right. I can't find Mrs. Barker.

YOUNG MAN. (*Crossing to Grandma.*) What was all that?

GRANDMA. (*Taking Young Man C.*) Oh, that was just the folks, but let's not talk about them, honey; let's talk about you.

YOUNG MAN. All right.

GRANDMA. (*Sits on sofa.*) Well, let's see. If you're not the van man, what are you doing here?

YOUNG MAN. I'm looking for work.

GRANDMA. Are you! Well, what kind of work?

YOUNG MAN. Oh, almost anything . . . almost anything that pays. I'll do almost anything for money.

GRANDMA. Will you . . . will you. Hmmm. I wonder if there's anything you could do around here?

YOUNG MAN. There might be. It looked to be a likely building.

GRANDMA. It's always looked to be a rather unlikely building to me, but I suppose you'd know better than I.

YOUNG MAN. (*Crossing behind sofa and leaning over to Grandma.*) I can sense these things.

GRANDMA. There might be something you could do around

here. (*As she turns and sees Young Man.*) Stay there! Don't come any closer.

YOUNG MAN. (*Crosses down and sits next to Grandma.*) Sorry. GRANDMA. I don't mean I'd mind. I don't know whether I'd mind, or not. . . . But, it wouldn't look well, it would look just awful.

YOUNG MAN. (*Sprawling with his feet in front of Grandma.*) Yes, I suppose so.

GRANDMA. (*Lifting his feet away, Young Man moves to end of sofa.*) Now stay there; let me concentrate. What could you do? The folks have been in something of a quandry around here today, sort of a dilemma, and I wonder if you mightn't be some help.

YOUNG MAN. I hope so . . . if there's money in it. Do you have any money?

GRANDMA. Money! Oh, there's more money around here than you'd know what to do with.

YOUNG MAN. I'm not so sure.

GRANDMA. Well, maybe not. Besides, I've got money of my own.

YOUNG MAN. You have?

GRANDMA. Sure. Old people quite often have lots of money; more often than most people expect. Come here, so I can whisper to you. . . . (*As he moves closer.*) not too close. I might faint.

YOUNG MAN. (*Back to his end of sofa.*) Oh, I'm sorry.

GRANDMA. It's all right dear. Anyway. . . . have you ever heard of that big baking contest they run? The one where all the ladies get together in a big barn and bake away?

YOUNG MAN. I'm . . . not . . . sure . . .

GRANDMA. Well, it doesn't matter whether you've heard of it or not. The important thing is . . . and I don't want anybody to hear this; the folks think I haven't been out of the house in eight years . . . the important thing is that I won first prize in that baking contest this year. Oh, it was in all the papers; not under my own name, though. I used a nom de boulangere; I called myself Uncle Henry.

YOUNG MAN. Did you?

GRANDMA. Why not? I didn't see any reason not to. I look just as much like an old man as I do like an old woman. And you know what I called it . . . what I won for?

YOUNG MAN. No. What did you call it?

GRANDMA. I called it Uncle Henry's Day-Old Cake.

YOUNG MAN. That's a very nice name.

GRANDMA. And it wasn't any trouble, either. All I did was go out and get a store-bought cake, keep it around for a while, and then slip it in, unbeknownst to anybody. Simple.

YOUNG MAN. You're a very resourceful person.

GRANDMA. Pioneer stock!

YOUNG MAN. Is all this true? Do you want me to believe all this?

GRANDMA. Well, you can believe it or not; it doesn't make any difference to me. All I know is, Uncle Henry's Day-Old Cake won me twenty-five thousand smackerolas.

YOUNG MAN. Twenty-five thou . . .

GRANDMA. Right on the old loggerhead. Now; how do you like them apples?

YOUNG MAN. Love 'em.

GRANDMA. I thought you'd be impressed.

YOUNG MAN. Money talks.

GRANDMA. (*Pause, then, softly.*) Hey. You look familiar.

YOUNG MAN. Him? Pardon?

GRANDMA. (*Rising and crossing D. L., sits L. chair.*) I said, you look familiar.

YOUNG MAN. Well, I've done some modeling.

GRANDMA. No; no. I don't mean that. You look familiar.

YOUNG MAN. Well, I'm a type.

GRANDMA. Yup; you sure are. Why do you say you'd do anything for money . . . if you don't mind my being nosy?

YOUNG MAN. (*Rising.*) No, no. It's part of the interview. I'll be happy to tell you. It's that I have no talents at all, except what you see . . . my person, my body, my face. In every other way I am incomplete, and I must therefore . . . compensate.

GRANDMA. What do you mean, incomplete? You look pretty complete to me.

YOUNG MAN. (*Crossing to Grandma.*) I think I can explain it to you, partially because you're very old, and very old people have perceptions they keep to themselves, because if they expose them to other people . . . well, you know what ridicule and neglect are.

GRANDMA. I do, child, I do.

YOUNG MAN. Then listen. My mother died the night that I was born, and I never knew my father; I doubt my mother did. But, I wasn't alone, because lying with me . . . in the placenta . . . there was someone else . . . my brother . . . my twin.

GRANDMA. Oh, my child.

YOUNG MAN. We were identical twins . . . he and I . . . not fraternal . . . identical; we were derived from the same ovum; and in *this*, in that we were twins not from separate ova, but from the same one, we had a kinship such as you can not imagine. We . . . we felt each other breathe . . . his heartbeats thundered in my temples . . . mine in his . . . our stomachs ached and we cried for feeding at the same time . . . are you old enough to understand?

GRANDMA. I think so, child; I think I'm nearly old enough.

YOUNG MAN. I hope so. But we were separated when we were still very young, my brother, my twin and I . . . inasmuch as you can separate one being. We were torn apart . . . thrown to opposite ends of the continent. I don't know what became of my brother . . . to the rest of myself . . . except that, from time to time, in the years that have passed, I have suffered losses . . . that I can't explain. A fall from grace . . . a departure of innocence . . . loss . . . loss. How can I put it to you? All right; like this: once . . . , it was as if all at once my heart . . . became numb . . . almost as though I . . . almost as though . . . just like that . . . it had been wrenched from my body . . . and from that time I have been unable to love. Once . . . I was asleep at the time . . . I awoke, and my eyes were burning. And since that time I have been unable to see anything, anything, with pity, with affection . . . with anything but . . . cool disinterest. And my groin . . . even there . . . since one time . . . one specific agony . . . since then I have not been able to love anyone with my body. And even my hands . . . I can not touch another person and feel love. And there is more . . . there are more losses, but it all comes down to this; I no longer have the capacity to feel anything. I have no emotions, I have been drained; torn asunder . . . disemboweled. I have, now, only my person . . . my body . . . my face. I use what I have . . . I let people love me . . . I accept the syntax around me, for, while I know I cannot relate . . . I know I must

be related to. I let people love me . . . I let people touch me . . . I let them draw pleasure from my groin . . . from my presence . . . from the fact of me . . . but, that is all it comes to. As I told you; I am incomplete. . . . I can feel nothing. I can feel nothing. (Sits chair L.) And so . . . here I am . . . as you see me . . . I am . . . but this . . . what you see. And it will always be thus.

GRANDMA. Oh, my child; my child. (Long pause, then rises and crosses to him.) I was mistaken . . . before. I don't know you from somewhere, but I knew . . . once . . . someone

very much like you . . . or, very much as perhaps you were. YOUNG MAN. (Rises.) Be careful; be very careful. What I

have told you may not be true. In my profession . . . GRANDMA. Shhhhhhhhh. (The Young Man bows his head, in acquiescence.) Someone . . . to be more precise . . . who might have turned out to be very much like you might have turned out to be. And . . . unless I'm terribly mistaken . . . you've found yourself a job.

YOUNG MAN. What are my duties?

MRS. BARKER. (Off-stage.) Yoo-hoo! Yoo-hoo!

GRANDMA. Oh-oh. You'll . . . you'll have to play it by ear, my dear . . . unless I get a chance to talk to you again. I've got to go into my act now. (Crosses up to L. arch.)

YOUNG MAN. But, I . . . GRANDMA. Yoo-hoo!

MRS. BARKER. (Coming through the archway.) Yoo-hoo . . . oh, there you are, Grandma. I'm glad to see somebody; I can't find Mommy or Daddy. (Double takes.) Well, who's this?

GRANDMA. This? Well . . . um . . . oh, this is the . . . um . . . the van man. That's who it is; the van man.

MRS. BARKER. So! It's true! They did call the van man. They are having you carted away.

GRANDMA. (Struggling.) Well, you know. It figures.

MRS. BARKER. (To Young Man.) How dare you cart this poor old woman away!

YOUNG MAN. (After a quick look at Grandma, who nods.) I do what I'm paid to do. I don't ask questions.

MRS. BARKER. (Brief pause.) Oh. (Pause.) Well, you're quite right, of course, and I shouldn't meddle.

GRANDMA. (*To the Young Man.*) Dear, will you take my things out to the van? (*She points to the boxes.*)

YOUNG MAN. (*After only the briefest hesitation.*) Why, certainly.

GRANDMA. (*As the Young Man takes up half the boxes, exits by the front door.*) Isn't that a nice young van man?

MRS. BARKER. (*Shaking her head in disbelief, watching the Young Man exit and crossing to arch R.*) Unh-hunh . . . some things have changed for the better. I remember when I had my mother carted off, the van man who came for her wasn't anything near as nice as this one.

GRANDMA. Oh, did you have your mother carted off, too?

MRS. BARKER. (*Cheerfully.*) Why, certainly! Didn't you?

GRANDMA. (*Puzzling.*) No. . . . No, I didn't. At least, I can't remember. (*Now back to business.*) Listen, dear, I got to talk to you for a second. (*Pulling Mrs. Barker away from arch.*)

MRS. BARKER. Why, certainly, Grandma.

GRANDMA. Now, listen.

MRS. BARKER. Yes, Grandma. Yes.

GRANDMA. Now, listen carefully. You got this dilemma here with Mommy and Daddy. . . .

MRS. BARKER. Yes! I wonder where they've gone to.

GRANDMA. They'll be back in. Now, listen!

MRS. BARKER. Oh, I'm sorry.

GRANDMA. Now, you got this dilemma here with Mommy and Daddy, and I think I got the way out for you. (*The Young Man reenters the front door.*) Will you take the rest of my things out now, dear? (*To Mrs. Barker, while the Young Man takes the rest of the boxes, exits by the front door again.*) Fine, now listen, dear. (*She begins to whisper in Mrs. Barker's ear.* Mrs. Barker follows Young Man to arch R., Grandma with her, still whispering.)

MRS. BARKER. Oh! Oh! Oh! I don't think I could. . . . do you really think I could? Well, why not? What a wonderful idea. . . . what an absolutely wonderful idea!

GRANDMA. Well, yes, I thought it was.

MRS. BARKER. And you so old!

GRANDMA. Heh, heh, heh.

MRS. BARKER. Well, I think it's absolutely marvelous, anyway. (*Crossing L. to arch.*) I'm going to find Mommy and Daddy right now.

GRANDMA. Good. You do that.

MRS. BARKER. Well, now. I think I will say goodbye. I can't thank you enough. (*She starts to exit through the archway.*)

GRANDMA. You're welcome. Say it!

MRS. BARKER. Huh. What?

GRANDMA. Say goodbye.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, Goodbye. (*She exits.*) Mommy! I say Mommy! Daddy!

GRANDMA. Goodbye. (*By herself now, she looks about.*) Ah, me. (*Shakes her head.*) Ah, me. (*Sits chair L. Takes in the room.*) Goodbye. (*The Young Man re-enters.*) Oh, hello there.

YOUNG MAN. All the boxes are outside. (*Sits on sofa.*)

GRANDMA. (*A little sadly.*) I don't know why I bother to take them with me. They don't have much in them. . . . some old letters, a couple of regrets, Pekinese. . . . blind at that. . . . the television. . . . my Sunday teeth. . . . eighty-six years of living. . . . some sounds. . . . a few images, a little garbled by now. . . . and, well, (*She shrugs.*) you know. . . . the things one accumulates. (*Rises.*)

YOUNG MAN. (*Rising.*) Can I get you. . . . a cab, or something?

GRANDMA. Oh, no, dear. . . . thank you just the same. (*Crossing to arch R.*) I'll take it from here.

YOUNG MAN. And what shall I do now?

GRANDMA. Oh, you stay here, dear. It will all become clear to you. It will be explained. You'll understand.

YOUNG MAN. Very well.

GRANDMA. (*After one more look about.*) Well. . . .

YOUNG MAN. (*Crossing to Grandma.*) Let me see you to the elevator.

GRANDMA. Oh. . . . that would be nice dear. (*They both exit, by the front door slowly.* Enter Mrs. Barker, followed by Mommy and Daddy, L.)

MRS. BARKER. (*Crossing R, gets her dress and starts putting it on.*) . . . and I'm happy to tell you that the whole thing's settled. Just like that.

MOMMY. Oh, we're so glad. We were afraid there might be a problem, what with delays, and all.

DADDY. (*Sits chair L.*) Yes, we're very relieved.

MRS. BARKER. Well, now. That's what professional women are for.

MOMMY. (*Looking around room.*) Why . . . where's Grandma? Grandma's not here! (*Grandma enters far D. R., secretly.*) Where's Grandma? And look! The boxes are gone too. Grandma's gone, and so are the boxes. She's taken off, and she's stolen something! Daddy!

MRS. BARKER. Why, Mommy, the van man was here.

MOMMY. (*Startled.*) The what?

MRS. BARKER. The van man. The van man was here.

MOMMY. (*Shakes her head.*) No, that's impossible.

MRS. BARKER. Why, I saw him with my own two eyes.

MOMMY. (*Crossing C. Near tears.*) No, no, that's impossible. No. There's no such thing as the van man. There is no van man. We . . . we made him up. Grandma? Grandma?

DADDY. (*Moving to Mommy and seating her in chair L.*) There, there, now.

MOMMY. Oh, Daddy . . . where's Grandma?

DADDY. There, there, now.

GRANDMA. (*To the audience.*) I want to watch this. (*Mrs. Barker tip-toes to the front door, and motions to Young Man who enters.*)

MRS. BARKER. Surprise! Surprise! Here we are!

MOMMY. What? What?

DADDY. Him? What?

MOMMY. (*Her tears merely smifle now.*) What surprise?

MRS. BARKER. (*Pushing Young Man C.*) Why, I told you. The surprise I told you about.

DADDY. (*Turns and sees Young Man.*) You . . . you know, Mommy.

MOMMY. Sur . . . prise?

DADDY. (*Urging her to cheerfulness.*) You remember, Mommy, why we asked . . . uh . . . what's-her-name to come here?

MRS. BARKER. Mrs. Barker, if you don't mind.

DADDY. Yes. Mommy, you remember now? About the bumble . . . about wanting satisfaction?

MOMMY. (*Sees Young Man. Her sorrow turning into delight.*) Yes. Why, yes! Of course! (*Rises and crosses to Young Man.*) Yes! Oh, how wonderful!

MRS. BARKER. (*To the Young Man.*) This is Mommy.

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YOUNG MAN. How . . . do you do.

MRS. BARKER. (*Stage whisper.*) Her name is Mommy.

YOUNG MAN. How . . . how do you do, Mommy.

MOMMY. Well! Hello there!

MRS. BARKER. (*To the Young Man.*) And that is Daddy.

YOUNG MAN. (*Crossing with hand outstretched out to Daddy, who backs off D. L.*) How do you do.

DADDY. How do you do.

MOMMY. (*Pulling Young Man C. Himself again, circling the Young Man, feeling his arm, poking him.*) Yes, Sir! Now this is more like it. Yes, Sir! Now this is a great deal more like it! Daddy? Come see. Come see if this isn't a great deal more like it!

DADDY. I . . . I can see from here, Mommy. It does look a great deal more like it.

MOMMY. Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir! Mrs. Barker, I don't know how to thank you.

MRS. BARKER. Oh, don't worry about that. I'll send you a bill in the mail. (*Starts to leave, crossing to arch R.*)

MOMMY. What this really calls for is a celebration. It calls for a drink.

MRS. BARKER. (*Comes back in to R. chair.*) Oh, what a nice idea.

MOMMY. There's some sauterne in the kitchen.

YOUNG MAN. I'll go.

MOMMY. Will you? Oh, how nice. (*Showing him to arch L.*) The kitchen's through the archway there. (*As the Young Man exits . . . to Mrs. Barker.*) He's very nice. Really top notch; much better than the other one.

MRS. BARKER. I'm glad you're pleased. And I'm glad everything's all straightened out.

MOMMY. (*Crossing to Mrs. Barker.*) Well, at least we know why we sent for you. We're glad that's cleared up. By the way, what's his name?

MRS. BARKER. Ha! Call him whatever you like. He's yours. Call him what you called the other one.

MOMMY. Daddy? What did we call the other one?

DADDY. (*Puzzles.*) Why . . .

YOUNG MAN. (*Re-entering with a tray, on which are five glasses.*) Here we are! (*Crosses C. to Mommy.*)

MOMMY. Hooray! Hooray!

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MRS. BARKER. Oh, good!

MOMMY. (Moving to the tray.) So, let's . . . five glasses! Why five? There are only four of us. Why five?

YOUNG MAN. (Catches Grandma's eye, Grandma indicates she is not there.) Oh, I'm sorry.

MOMMY. You must learn to count. We're a wealthy family, and you must learn to count.

YOUNG MAN. I will.

MOMMY. Well, everybody take a glass. (They do.) And we'll drink to celebrate. To satisfaction! Who says you can't get satisfaction these days!

MRS. BARKER. What dreadful sauterne! (Mrs. Barker sits chair R., Daddy sits chair L.)

MOMMY. Yes isn't it. (Taking tray and putting it on table R. of sofa. Then pulling Young Man down with her on sofa. To Young Man, her voice already a little fuzzy from the wine.) You don't know how happy I am to see you! Yes Stree. Listen, that time we had with . . . with the other one. I'll tell you all about it some time. (Indicates Mrs. Barker.) After she's gone. She was responsible for all the trouble in the first place. I'll tell you all about it. (Places his arm around her and slides up to him a little.) Maybe . . . maybe later tonight.

YOUNG MAN. (Not moving away.) Why, yes. That would be very nice.

MOMMY. (Puzzles.) Something familiar about you . . . you know that? (Pulling him up to take a better look.) I can't quite place it. . . . (Daddy and Mrs. Barker turn to look at them as Grandma stops the scene. The lights dim to half and Mommy, Young Man, Daddy and Mrs. Barker are in tableau.)

GRANDMA. (To audience.) Well, I guess that just about wraps it up. I mean, for better or worse, this is a comedy, and I don't think we'd better go any further. No, definitely not. So, let's leave things as they are right now . . . while everybody's happy . . . while everybody's got what he wants . . . or everybody's got what he thinks he wants. Goodnight, dears.

CURTAIN

