# Three Family Sale

## Cast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>Forty-something woman in thrift-store clothing. Appears a bit bedraggled &amp; tired but very pleasant to speak with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronda</td>
<td>A surly, biker chick without much to lose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronda's Friend</td>
<td>The best friend you'd expect for a surly biker chick without much to lose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Clare’s husband. A forty-something lay-about in a pair of stained, too-tight 70’s gym shorts &amp; a soiled t-shirt. Has a cast on his foot, and what we assume is engine grease under his fingernails.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasan (Child 1)</td>
<td>The son you'd expect from a surly biker chick without much to lose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>The younger daughter you'd expect from a surly biker chick without much to lose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsbeth</td>
<td>Thirty-something yuppie sort with immaculate hair &amp; nails. Stylish clothing, and in this case, a bit over dressed. Wife of Mitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly woman 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly woman 2</td>
<td>Two ladies ages 65-75 out for weekend yard-saling. They are obvious busy-bodies but are kind natured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitch</td>
<td>Elsbeth’s husband. Well groomed and also stylishly dressed. In this case- over dressed. Appears formal and uptight in social situations- especially this one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Downtrodden, everyman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Self-possessed woman, looking for a cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Young and stylish teenage girl with warmth her mother lacks and an easy smile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man 1</td>
<td>Weekend warrior with a thirst for a deal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy 1</td>
<td>Very well-mannered, quiet boy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>Thirty-something yuppie wanna-be. Dressed stylishly with a trendy haircut. Wife of Tom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barney the dog</td>
<td>A rather dirty but somewhat loveable mutt, who stars off-screen only, until the final scene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Taylor’s husband. Dressed less formally than Mitch or Elsbeth, but well groomed &amp; put together regardless. Tom is in his mid to late thirties and is in good physical shape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly Man</td>
<td>Older gentleman in his 50’s well dressed but rather shy. Appears quite subservient to his mother who accompanies him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mother to Elderly Man. Has a sharp tongue &amp; short temper. Scowls on a regular basis and seems to be very bothered by the warm afternoon. (Fans herself constantly with a newspaper.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Place

A shelter house in a park adjacent to a suburban cul-de-sac. It is early morning and barely daylight. Down right there is an opening to a storm shelter.

## Time

The Present.
ACT 1  Scene 1

(At Rise: A forty-something woman enters right, carrying a box of paintings and gently sets them down on right picnic table. She exits right and returns with another good sized load placing them beside the others and exits right again. Finally she returns with one last load, as well as a large sign reading THREE FAMILY SALE. She props the sandwich board sign up down left and sets about arranging the numerous paintings. When she’s almost done, a set of headlights appear left and quickly fade. Soon a middle aged man and woman appear looking slightly overdressed and carrying boxes. They watch Clare checking her arrangement of paintings- and finally- decide to place their boxes in the only remaining space, the ground. They watch with interest as she placed price tags, with no apparent reason for her price scale. Finally, she notices them and crosses.)

CLARE
Oh Hi! I didn’t see you there, good morning. I’m Clare, one of your partners for the day. You must be the Mullers?

MITCH
Meullers, we’re the Meullers? I’m Mitch and this is my wife Elsbeth. (He extends his hand).

CLARE
(Shakes his hand) Well I’m tired already, my husband Ray will be here later, we live in the blue and red double wide, you know, one eleven?

ELSBETH
It “is” different.

MITCH
First house here I understand.

CLARE
Oh yeah, we’d though no one else would ever move out here.

ELSBETH
I guess the city finally reached you.

CLARE
They’ve been developing like crazy.

MITCH
It’s hot property now, I hear more people would like to move in but there’s nothing left to buy.

CLARE
I can’t believe the houses they’re building. I can remember when it was all grass and sand hills. Back then, it didn’t matter what our house looked like. We try to keep the yard clean, but Ray’s always working on some old car, right there in the front of the house.

ELSBETH
Yes, he does always seem to be working on one. Is he a mechanic?

CLARE
Not really. He thinks he is but most of his “customers” would disagree. He keeps trying though.
ELSBeth
Is he working on those boats as well?

CLAre
That’s a recent calling for Ray. Two years ago he talked me into letting him buy one old boat, well then it needed a motor and the only motor he could find came with another old boat. In two years he’s managed to find six more.

MITCH
Any of them run?

CLAre
Not yet, but he keeps swearin he’ll fire one up one day.

ELSBeth
Well, if there’s ever a flood, there should be a safe place for everyone in the neighborhood.

CLAre
If any of em float.

MITCH
You’ve got a young son haven’t you Clare?

CLAre
Yes I do, his name is Jack, you’ve probably seen him around.

ELSBeth
He’s a tall boy.

MITCH
And I’ll bet he’s a basketball player.

CLAre
That would require something he’s never had “ambition”. And you’ve got a daughter?

ELSBeth
Yes Grace, she’s my pride and joy.

MITCH
“Our” pride and joy.

CLAre
And your name is Elsbeth, that’s so pretty. It sounds like a princess right out of a story book. You know I have loved your house since they finished it. Ray says its way too fancy, but if you’ve got the money, why shouldn’t you have a nice house?

ELSBeth
Well, um Clare, Mitch and I didn’t bring any tables and it doesn’t look as it we have any place to put “our” things.

CLAre
Oh, oh yeah, what in the world am I “thinking” taking all the room? And Tom and Taylor aren’t even here yet, I Know! I’ll just put my paintings back in the boxes and let the customers browse em that way. (*Mitch enters right carrying a box, he sets it on the floor of the shelter.*)
MITCH
Honey I’m going to get my old clubs and the other “valuables” out of the garage.

ELSBETH
Don’t be long, and get the lawn chairs.

MITCH
Done (he exits right as Elsbeth begins to unpack her neatly priced items)

CLARE
Hey, I’ve got some chains and pipe in the truck. I figured we could hang the pipe from the chains and make clothes racks.

ELSBETH
That’s not a bad idea, do you need help?

CLARE
That’s a good question. But no honey, I think I can handle it. I’ll tell you what though, if you really want to help me, you can put my paintings back in the boxes. Be careful not to scratch the frames.

(Clare exits right and leaves Elsbeth to her task.)

ELSBETH
(To herself) Great, I’m the curator of Helen Keller’s early paintings. It’s practically an auction at Kristie’s.

(She collects the paintings and over exaggerates delicate care in stacking them in the boxes. Clare returns with the rack materials.)

CLARE
So Elsbeth,

(assembling the pipe rack, handing chains from the rafters)
I can’t get over what a pretty name that is (Elsbeth winces) What do you do honey?

ELSBETH
I assume you mean do I work?

CLARE
That’s what I mean, if it’s not too personal.

ELSBETH
It’s not too personal. I’ve been doing secretarial work for my husband’s law firm for the last two years.

CLARE
Oh, he’s a lawyer?

ELSBETH
Well actually Clare, he prefers Attorney, but that’s just a pet peeve of his. He’d better not be watching television.

CLARE
Honey I’m sure he’ll be right back.

ELSBETH
I don’t know, he’s an expert at the clean getaway.
CLARE
Well, I'll be sure to call him an, "attorney" when he gets back.

ELSBETH
If he takes much longer, he may need one.

CLARE
You know it's funny. You've lived here two years now and this is the first time we've ever talked. Isn't that weird?

ELSBETH
Yes very, you know Mitch and I stay very busy most of the time.

CLARE
Yeah, you must with him being a law.. attorney and all. About the only time we catch a glimpse of you guys is when you have your outdoor parties. I never saw so many fancy cars.

ELSBETH
Just some of the partners from the firm, we like to celebrate after big cases.

CLARE
Yeah, I figured it was something like that.

ELSBETH
It looks like we’ve got just about everything laid out. What on earth is keeping Mitch? If he thinks I’m manning this business all day by myself, he’s crazy.

CLARE
You won’t be “alone” honey; this is a three family sale.

ELSBETH
Yes I understand. I just don’t want him watching television, while I’m out here slaving the day away.

CLARE
I don’t know Elsbeth, I think this day might just be a hoot. Boy I tell ya, we better make a little money on this sale. I’d hate to think I stayed up all night putting prices on all our stuff for nothing.

ELSBETH
What all are you selling Clare?

CLARE
My paintings mostly. I’ve got a few nick nacks and Rays’ got a watch to get rid of, and he’s selling his tires.

ELSBETH
No boats?

CLARE
Are you kidding? That man wouldn’t sell any of his “treasures” for nothing. Won’t sell em, won’t fix em.. I mean, can’t fix em.

ELSBETH
How do you find room for everything?
CLARE
He just keeps makin more room … Does Mitch collect anything?

ELSBETH
He’s a man isn’t he? He doesn’t tell a lot of people, but he collects Star Wars action figures.

CLARE
Toys?

ELSBETH
Don’t let him hear you say that.

CLARE
Oh I won’t.

(Mitch enters left carrying a golf bag over his shoulder and a large box.)

ELSBETH
(Haughtily) Oh speak of the devil, what kept you?

MITCH
Nick called; the party’s been moved to 6:30. Look honey, I scuffed my golf bag. Three years and not a scratch.

ELSBETH
Well, with any luck it won’t be yours much longer.

CLARE
So you’re an, “attorney”?

MITCH
Yes I’m a lawyer (looks at the art) and you’re a painter?

CLARE
Well, it’s just a hobby really. But as soon as I make my first sale, it should all be downhill from there.

MITCH
You seem to have a size-able body.

CLARE
I know, Ray’s been telling me to lose weight but it’s not easy once you pass forty.

MITCH
No, I meant that you’ve done quite a few paintings.

CLARE
Oh, well let me show them to you, maybe, if you like em, I’ll give you a "neighbor discount". (Takes a painting from a box, holding it away from audience.)

MITCH
Look Elle, it’s an angel. (looking at the painting)

ELSBETH
It is? Oh, it is, I see it now, sure.
CLARE
Yes, she’s my guardian angel. You won’t believe it, but right after I painted her she saved our lives.

MITCH
How did she accomplish that?

CLARE
Well, I hung her up on the wall while she was still wet, I was so excited. I’d never painted an angel before. Can you believe that?

ELSBETH
Yes.
(Catching herself)
Inspiration works that way sometimes.

CLARE
Well anyway, she was hanging directly over an outlet that Ray had about a million wires plugged into and sometime that night something shorted out and the wall caught on fire. Me and Ray slept right through since Ray took the battery out of the smoke detector to run Jack’s remote control car. Jack was just a little boy back then.

MITCH
How’d you get out?

CLARE
It’s the darndest thing, that fire burned its way up the wall, till it got to my angel, than it just went out.

MITCH
Just like that?

ELSBETH
Look Mitch, you can see where the frame was scorched.

CLARE
I woulda got her a new frame but I didn’t want to do anything to change her.

ELSBETH
Why on earth are you selling her, it?

CLARE
Oh my, I’m not. I brought her to watch over our sale; you notice there’s no price tag on “her”.

MITCH
Well that’s an interesting story, but did you ever think this miracle might have had more to do with building materials than guardian angels?

CLARE
Oh, I “know” it was a miracle, she watches over me, I can feel it.

ELSBETH
I hope she watches over all of us today. I’ve got a feeling we could use the help.

(From left, another couple enters carrying their own boxes.)
MITCH
Good morning, Can I give you a hand?

TAYLOR
I’d prefer a standing ovation.

MITCH
Huh?

TOM
Never mind Mitch, she’s here under protest. If you wanna help, there’s one more box in the trunk. (Mitch exits left)

CLARE
Good morning, how are you guys? Are you ready for the big sale?

TAYLOR
I did not want to get up for this.

TOM
Taylor likes to get up at the crack of noon on Saturday.

TAYLOR
I think there might be a good reason for that. Who was it that got all this junk together and priced it while you slept peacefully on the couch?

TOM
I did not sleep “peacefully”; you made a lot of noise. So what time does this disaster start..better yet, what time does it end?

CLARE
Well I told Ray to tell the paper eight o’clock, but you know how yard sale fanatics are, it’s a wonder they’re not all over us now.

ELSBETH
Well I hope we have a decent turnout after all this trouble.

CLARE
Is this your first yard sale Elsbeth?

ELSBETH
And last.

CLARE
You might be surprised, yard sales can be fun. You always meet a lot of really “neat” people.

TAYLOR
We had one a while back and it was a nightmare, people wall to wall, and very few of them had “teeth”.

TOM
You remember that woman who used our bathroom and wanted to buy your mom’s dentures?
TAYLOR
And they were still bubbling in Polident.

TOM
Your mom practically had to fight that lady for them.

TAYLOR
At least mom couldn’t have bitten her. You don’t leave anything lying around that you don’t want to sell.

ELSBETH
(Sarcastically.)
Now I’m feeling better.

TAYLOR
Oh Elle, it won’t be bad, you’ll see, it’ll be over in not time.

TOM
Just keep your dentures in your mouth.

ELSBETH
Taylor would you like some help putting out your things?

TAYLOR
Oh that would be sweet of you Elle. Hey, what time is your party tonight?

(Elsbeth shoots her a look)

CLARE
Oh a party, isn’t that nice.

ELSBETH
It’s not so much a party as a get-together. You know, the partners, some clients, and (quietly) Tom and Taylor. It’s as six thirty.

CLARE
Well Ray and me don’t get to many parties. I’m so busy, and Ray would rather be on the couch, and now that he’s hurt, well….

TAYLOR
(Changing the subject)
What happened to Ray?

CLARE
Oh, it was Barney that stupid dog of ours, he grabbed Ray’s sandwich while he was checkin his oil, so Ray went chasin him around the garage and he cracked his shin on the trailer hitch on the back of his truck.

ELSBETH
That sounds terrible, was he hurt bad?

CLARE
He broke his shin bone clean, and then he laid there for an hour waiting for me to get home. It’s a wonder that dog’s still alive.
TAYLOR
Ow! That’s terrible Clare, how’s he getting around?

CLARE
With a whole lot of pain and even more whinin. If anyone comes within a mile of that leg, he throws a fit and screams to high heaven, swearin that those bones are twistin around in there. The doctor says that his leg is immobilized but Ray doesn’t agree, he sweares they got it set wrong.

ELSBETH
And he’s coming out here today? Wouldn’t it be better if he stayed at home?

CLARE
Oh. He wouldn’t miss out on this for the world, a chance to sit in the middle of his junk while strangers come to pick through it? Are you kidding? For Ray it’s like King for a Day.

(Mitch enters left with a garment bag full of dresses and two lawn chairs. Elsbeth takes the chairs and sets them up stage right. He crosses to the center stage pipe rack, hangs the bag and unzips it.)

MITCH
Any customers yet?

ELSBETH
Where have you been?

MITCH
I had to make a quick phone call.

ELSBETH
I hope you brought the cell phone back with you.

MITCH
That’s a great idea.
(He starts to leave.)

ELSBETH
Yes, but then you’d have no reason to go back home. Bring it back with you after the next escape.

MITCH
You should have been an attorney; you have a natural talent for going for the kill.

TOM
What all are you guys selling, Mitch?

MITCH
Oh, most of this “loot” belongs to my lovely wife. Most of what “I” buy, I need.

ELSBETH
Like you needed the BMW?

MITCH
Now Elle, You know I bought that car for its safety features.
ELSBETH
Sure, to prevent a mid-life crisis?

MITCH
Tom, my wife has more outfits than Macy’s. All of these dresses were procured from exclusive vendors at outrageous prices. If only those designers could see their wares being offered at this enigmatic venue.

CLARE
Mitch you talk so pretty. Like a poet or something.

ELSBETH
Or “something” is right. I got good use out of all of these outfits.

MITCH
Let’s take this “garment” for instance, *(He reaches for a dazzling blue dress).* How many times have you worn this?

ELSBETH
I don’t know how many times, Mitch. What difference does it make?

MITCH
You’ve never worn it, not “one” time and it cost five hundred and seventy six dollars on sale.

ELSBETH
Why are doing this? How do you know exactly how much it cost?

MITCH
Because the price tag is still attached! *(Revealing the tag)* Tell me Elle; was it last years’ style to wear the price-tag “on” the garment?

*(Ellsbeth is becoming angry.)*

ELSBETH
Why do you wait until we’re in public to transform yourself into a jerk?

MITCH
I was merely making a point darling.

ELSBETH
NO! You were stabbing me with it as usual. What would you have me wear a T-shirt and cut offs? *(She turns to see Clare wearing a T-shirt and cut offs. The shelter grows suddenly silent.)*

CLARE
Well Mitch, you have a very pretty wife. She has to keep up her appearance. You can’t put a price-tag on beauty. If we could afford it, I’d wear nice clothes too.

TAYLOR
Of course you would Clare.

*(From off right we hear Ray’s voice for the first time)*

RAY
Clare, get your fat butt over here and help me!
(They all look at Clare)

ELSBETH

(Pause) I’m sorry about what I said Clare. I didn’t mean …

CLARE

Oh it was nothing Elsbeth, I’d better help Ray.

(She exits rights.)

MITCH

As usual “your mouth” has somehow managed to start us out on the wrong foot, I don’t know how you enunciate so well with your foot in there.

ELSBETH

Don’t start on one of your self righteous tirades Mitch, everyone now how you feel about “them.”

MITCH

Yes, but unlike “you” Elle, I am more expert at keeping my feelings from becoming public knowledge.

ELSBETH

Like you did about the dress Mitch? Oh. I forgot. You’re only discreet when it “matters”.

TOM

(Breaking in)

Mitch! You were going to tell me what you guys are selling.

(Before Mitch can answer the sound of Ray screaming in pain is heard off right.)

RAY

Oww, watch it! Do you have to hit every stinkin bump Clare?! You’re killing me. It’s twistin! Oh man, it’s twistin!

(Ray enters right pushing Ray in a wheel chair. He is more an event than a human. His damaged appendage is propped straight out and secured with duct tape and improvised trusses. On his lap is a television and a box with nearly every snack item known to exist, including pork rinds. He has four sixths of a six pack swinging from his left hand and is holding his wounded right leg with the other.)

RAY

Watch it Clare, don’t bump the table!

CLARE

You’re O.K. Ray; I’m not going to crash you into anything. I’ll park you right over here.

(She parks him in the down right corner of the shelter house).

RAY

Set up my TV and go back and get the rest of my stuff and my cooler.

(She reaches for the television.)
RAY  
Watch it! Oh jeez that hurts. *(She pauses.)* Go ahead and get the stupid thing off me, Clare! I’m dyin here! Ow, Ow, careful, watch the leg!

MITCH  
Can I help you with that?

CLARE  
No it’s better if I do it…. How’s that Ray?

RAY  
I’m alive. Set it right there, *(points forward.)* and put it on a box or something.

*Mitch grabs a box.*

*(Clare complies and upon doing so realizes that there is no electrical outlet.)*

CLARE  
Ray! *(Holds up the cord.)*

RAY  
Don’t just stand there, go back to the house and round up all the extension cords you can find and hook me up.

CLARE  
But Ray, people will start getting here soon.

RAY  
I’ll block em with my chair when they “rush” your paintings.

CLARE  
Just sell them at the prices marked, don’t let them talk you down. And my Angel ain’t for sale.

RAY  
Alrighty hon, Just go…wait! Where’s my ice pack?

CLARE  
Right in here.

*(She reaches into the snack box and extracts a zip-lock bag containing two ice cubes. She sheepishly looks at him, then slowly and delicately places it on Ray’s leg. Everyone watches with fascinations, especially Ray. She finishes with a smile. Ray looks at her for a moment.)*

RAY  
Burr! *(Everyone laughs until Ray shoots them an angry look.)*

RAY  
You call that an ice pack?

CLARE  
Well, that’s all there was.

RAY  
There are “two” ice cubes in that bag.
CLARE
Well, you “never” refill the ice-trays honey. I did the best I …

RAY
I can’t even reach the freezer! I sure didn’t leave em empty.

CLARE
I’m sorry Ray.

RAY
Just go to the house and get my stuff, and while you’re at it, bring me two aspirins. No honey, just bring me one aspirin. I wouldn’t want the ice pack to feel bad.

(Clare looking angry, exits right)

RAY
You see what I have to put up with?

ELSBETH
So you’re the “infamous” Ray.

RAY
What’s that supposed to mean?

ELSBETH
Nothing at all, it’s just that your wife has told us a little bit about you.

RAY
Whad she tell ya?

ELSBETH
Just nice things, and about your accident.

RAY
I thought I was gonna die there for a while but the docs pulled me through. Did she tell you how long I had to wait before she came home?

TAYLOR
Yes, a whole hour, it sounded terrible.

TOM.
Guess you won’t be working in the yard for a while.

RAY
Oh no. Say that reminds me, about your weed whacker. I was clearing out the weeds under the rabbit hutchies when a possum came up out of there and charged me. He hissed once and I cracked him on the skull. On the third swat, the whole end broke off. Now I ask you, what kind of weed whacker can’t handle a crazy possum?

TOM
Was this before or after you broke your leg?
RAY
I sure as heck wasn’t out here trimming weeds like this Sherlock. Hey maybe your house insurance will cover it.
MITCH. Yes Tom, perhaps you have a possum clause

(Ray looks at him)

ELSBETH
Hey Taylor, it just occurred to me that we don’t have any change or bags for the customers. What say you and I get out of here for a “precious” few minutes, before the fun “really” starts?

TAYLOR
Sounds like a plan to me, and I could go for a breakfast biscuit.

TOM
So you’re just going to desert your post?

TAYLOR
I would never do that without leaving things in capable hands, your hands look capable.

ELSBETH
Don’t worry gentlemen, we won’t leave town, however tempting that might be … we’ll be back in no time, hurry up Taylor, before they change their minds.

(They exit left.)

RAY
I guess that leaves just the men. You know, it’s bad enough bein with your wife during the week, but having to be with her on the weekend too. Well that’s just depressing.

TOM
At least we’re in this together. Have you met Mitch, Ray?

RAY
No, I guess he’s managed to avoid me so far. There’s no avoidin me today though huh, Mitch?

MITCH
I wouldn’t say I’ve been “avoiding” you Ray.

RAY
You live in the “mansion” of the col-de-sac don’t you? It looks like that house in Gone With the Wind, must a cost a fortune.

MITCH
Oh it was cheaper than you might think.

RAY
So tell me, how does a guy afford a house like that? I guess you’re a doctor or something.
MITCH
Hardly, I'm an attorney Ray.

RAY
Ah, almost the same thing, except you get to the ambulance “before” the doctors. No wonder he has such a ritzy house.

MITCH
I assure you that I am not in the practice of chasing ambulances or any other emergency vehicles.

RAY
I shoulda guessed, listen to the way he talks Tom, if that ain’t lawyer talk I don’t know what is.

TOM
Don’t get me in the middle of this Ray.

MITCH
How you feel about attorneys is not my concern, but when you attack me personally I have no choice but to.

RAY
Sue me? I know a lawyer wouldn’t dare “hit” a man in a wheelchair.

MITCH
I wasn’t going to start an altercation with you Ray. I was merely trying to express my feelings about the way you were characterizing me.

CLARE
Merely? What kind of word is “merely”, I mean for a “man” to be usin?

MITCH
You are making me angry.

TOM
He doesn’t mean anything by it Mitch.

RAY
I don’t mean to rile you Mitch. It’s just my way, I was mostly joking. You’ve got to admit, you do talk pretty snooty.

MITCH
I would say I talk in a precise, dignified manner.

RAY
Like a lawyer.

MITCH
There is a large segment of the population that communicates as I do. Wouldn’t you agree Tom?

TOM
Just because my house is in between the two of you, doesn’t mean I want to be.
MITCH
Look Ray; let’s forget about my avocation, for the moment, can we?

RAY
I suppose Mitch, as long as you don’t use that lawyer talk on me again. It makes me feel like I’m on trial.

MITCH
It’s a deal….so Ray, what is it that “you” do, when you’re not harassing people over their choice of careers?

RAY
Well, I’ve done a lot of things. I drove a truck for a while, then I worked construction for a few years, till I hurt my back. Boy I coulda used you then, I might have a house like yours by now. Anyway, Clare and I opened a bait shop for couple of months. , but lately I’ve been working on starting my own business out of my home.

TOM
I didn’t know you were doing that Ray.

RAY
Well its sort a recent event Tom, I been brain storming and I think I’ve come up with a sure thing.

MITCH
What’s that Ray?

RAY
Oh I’m sure you’d like that, I tell you my idea and you steal it and make a million for yourself.

MITCH
I wouldn’t dream of stealing your idea Ray, I’m pretty busy at the firm. Besides, you have the inside track. RAY. I don’t know. I’ve had a lot of good ideas over the years and had em stolen before I could use em.

MITCH
Like what?

RAY
Oh I don’t know, a lot, like … well you know that clapper thing?

TOM
Yeah.

RAY
I had that idea a long time before it was on TV. See one night I was sitting in my easy chair almost asleep, when all the sudden the station I was watchin went off for the night. I was “real” comfortable but that hissin noise made it almost impossible to sleep. I managed to get to sleep anyway, but not before thinking that there should be some way to turn things off without getting up out of your chair.

MITCH
They call it a remote control.
RAY
They didn’t have em then, everyone had to turn their TV’s off by hand.

(All three guys share a moment of horror.)

TOM
I guess you ‘were” ahead of your time with that one Ray. So what’s your new big idea?

RAY
Not so fast, that was the first time it happened. It happened again a coupla years ago. You know that “club” that’s “sposed” to keep your car from bein stolen?

MITCH
Yes, I’ve thought about getting one for my beemer. (Ray and Tom look at Mitch; he realizes his over-enthusiasm and melts.)

RAY
Well, you’d a liked my idea a lot better, with my invention there ain’t “no way” anyone could steal your car.

TOM
Was it like “The Club”?

RAY
No. it was a lot better. I thought of it when I first got old blue. Ya see, she came without a steerin wheel, took me almost a year to find one to fit her. I drove her anyway though.

MITCH
Without a steering wheel? .. How?

RAY
Vice grips son, vice grips. I just hooked em up to the bolts.

TOM
Wasn’t that a little dangerous?

RAY
Ah no. You can trust a good pair of vice grips, they hold like crazy. Ain’t no way they’d ever come off… well unless you squeeze that little release mechanism on the handle.

TOM
Good grief! That’s crazy.

RAY
Crazy like a fox, I’d probably still be usin em today, if it hadn't been for Clare.

MITCH
Made you get a steering wheel huh?

RAY
She don’t “make” me do anything, it was her crash that forced me to take action on the vice grip issue.
TOM
Clare crashed old blue?

RAY
Well she was all excited gettin her license, so I let her use blue for the drivin test. Well the officer in the passenger seat noticed right away that my steerin wasn’t up to specs. He probably wouldn’t let her use blue but his son was on our boy’s little league team so he said he’d overlook it.

MITCH
She steered with vice grips?

RAY
She was doin real fine too, up to that part where you go through the cones. Never understood what good that part did anyway. Well, with all that turning back’n forth, something was bound to happen, and sure enough on the last cone, she hit the release mechanism and that’s all she wrote.

TOM
All she wrote?

RAY
That man screamed so loud I could hear me from where I was standin! I could see Clare flailing her arms around, I never felt so helpless, I couldn’t move, I was laughin so hard.

MITCH
Laughing?

RAY
You had to be there. They were screamin and flailing and old blue was pickin up speed, I thought they’d never stop.

MITCH
Well?

RAY
Well, when blue came through the side of that building, that long line disappeared real fast, and them people didn’t come out in no single file neither.

MITCH
I’m guessing Clare flunked the test?

RAY
Heck no! They said it wasn’t her fault and there was no “good” reason why she had to come back. The guy with her lost his job though, along with a couple a teeth.

MITCH
Ray, was your thief stopping idea vice grips or a DMV building?

RAY
Inspiration always visits me at strange times, but when those grips came loose..I thought of it. The detachable steerin wheel. After seein what happened to Clare, I know no crook’s gonna get too far.
TOM
Unless he has some vice grips.

(Silence)

RAY
Hum. (Saddened) I hadn’t thought of that.

MITCH
So what’s your current idea Ray?

RAY
O.K. I’ll tell you, but you better keep this under your hats.  
(Looks around)
You know how everyone gets all excited about that America’s Cup race on ESPN?

TOM
You mean that boat race?

MITCH
“Sail” boat race.

RAY
Yeah that’s the one, well Clare’s got a brother who’s a wrestling coach and he told me he spends thousands a buck every year on wrestling gear.

MITCH
I can’t wait to see this connection.

RAY
Well, put that fact, together with that America’s Cup race’s popularity and what do you get?

TOM
I don’t know.

MITCH
I’m drawing a blank too.

RAY
Aint so easy being a “visionary” boys… Close your eyes and picture it. Making it’s network television debut, maybe during the Super Bowl or something. It’s all dark and they’re playing the national anthem. You can hear the flag flappin in the breeze, and then suddenly the lights pop on and you see it! The America’s Cup, .. Cup! A totally American idea in groin protection. A guy can protect himself on the field of athletic battle and at the same time show he’s a “real” American. (The two listeners silently resist the urge to laugh.) I’ll get that whole America Cup team to wear em. Heck they might even make a calendar.

MITCH
You think they’ll switch from the brand they “usually” wear during the race.

RAY
Them athletes are all the same, throw a little endorsement money at em and they’ve been usin your product for years.
TOM
Do they even wear cups during the race?

RAY
They will now.

MITCH
I’m speechless.

RAY
Don’t just sit there boys, tell me what you think. I know you’re just kicking yourselves cause you didn’t think of it first.

MITCH
(Pause)
It’s truly a novel idea Ray; I bet no one else has thought of it yet.

RAY
That’s why I got to move fast, before anyone else does. Now you boys better keep this quiet.

TOM
It won’t be easy Ray, (looks at Mitch) but you can count on us.

RAY
If you want to get in on the ground floor, I’m looking for investment money.

MITCH
I think you’d be wise to keep this your baby Ray.

TOM
Yes Ray, I don’t think anyone else see this vision quite as clearly as you do.

RAY
You’re probably right. It won’t be easy, but with faith and hard work, the America’s cup could really be great.

MITCH
That’s the American dream Ray, and we all follow it “wherever” it leads.

(A customer approaches from stage right and begins to browse. He eyes the items carefully and then pounces on an old pocket watch. He looks it over carefully and then speaks.)

CUST. ONE
This watch, it ways five dollars, would you take fifty-cents?

TOM
Ray, this man wants to know if you’ll take fifty-cents for your five dollar watch.

RAY
My daddy gave me that watch, I shouldn’t be sellin it. It went with him all over Korea.

CUST ONE
No the price is fine. I’ll take it.
RAY
All right, I guess, but you better take care of it!

CUST ONE
I will, does it work?

RAY
I could never bring myself to wind it, daddy wound it last.

(The man pays Ray and scurries off with his find.)

MITCH
How could you sell your father’s watch?

RAY
What, that watch? I found it in the parking lot at the Four Kings bar. I dropped my keys, bent down and there it was.

MITCH
You lied.

RAY
Yep, I also made five green American dollars.

MITCH
You lie like an attorney.

RAY
(With appreciation.)
Thank you

TOM
Ray (Thinking) that America’s Cup idea of yours.

RAY
Yeah?

TOM
I suppose the cup would be covered with stars and stripes?

RAY
Oh yeah.

TOM
Who’s going to know you’re wearing it?

RAY
I guess “that’s” up to the wearer.

BOTH MEN
Oh.
RAY
Only in America.

TOM
Hey Ray, what ever happened to Old Blue? I mean, after the accident.

RAY
Still got her. See that set of tires over there.

MITCH
You mean the set of, “three”?

RAY
Them’s the ones. I had Clare drag em over after she got off work. That whole line was recalled and I didn’t get em back to to Sears in time. One of em blew out the night me and Clare left for Branson. See we was drivin Old Blue in a rainstorm and doin next to ninety when the left front one went.

MITCH
You get hurt?

RAY
No, but Clare broke her nose on the dash, she looked like a coon for two weeks. That was about the time the rumor went around that I was beating her. Anyway my knee broke the ashtray and I bent the steerin wheel, but all in all that tree suffered more than Old Blue.

MITCH
Colorful name.

RAY
She used to be blue, the insurance painted her back and I went with yellow to change my luck. Never could bring myself to call her Old Yeller though.

MITCH
Well whether it’s blue or yellow, your truck is truly legendary Ray.

(From off left Taylor and Elsbeth enter carrying tow bags full of grocery bags.)

TOM
Hey, looks it’s the bags.

ELSBETH
Watch it Neanderthals. So did you boys bond in our absence?

MITCH
Ray has been regaling us with stories of “Old Blue”.

ELSBETH
I don’t even want to know what Old Blue is.

RAY
He’s not blue any more, he’s yellow.
ELSBETH
Does that mean his condition is worsening.

RAY
Nope, he’s better than ever.

MITCH
Maybe Ray will take us over and show us Old Yeller later.

RAY
I just might.

ELSBETH
It sounds like they’ve bonded. Tom, will you put this change in the cash box and make a note that the box owes us fifty dollars.

(She hands him the cash.)

RAY
Fifty bucks, that’s more than we’re gonna make all day!

ELSBETH
Speak for yourself Ray, we’re offering some premium merchandise. I expect to make at least a thousand dollars today.

RAY
Woo wee! What kind of stuff are you guys sellin?

MITCH
We’re selling our computer and my golf clubs, among other things.

RAY
A computer huh? I could use a computer for my American’s Cup project.

ELSBETH
Ray you dark horse you; you have some involvement with the America’s Cup race?

MITCH
I’ll tell you about it later Elle.

RAY
Don’t tell her too much, remember the clapper.

MITCH
Don’t worry Ray, this is definitely a guy thing.

TAYLOR
(Handing Tom a box)
Tom, can you price these things? This is the only box I didn't get to last night.

TOM
Sure honey, what do I mark them with?
There's a pen and tape in the box?

How much do I ask for this stuff?

Anything you want, except my Foreman grill, I want at least a “dollar” for that.

I'll help you Tom.

(He moves a lawn chair and sits beside Ray.)

Well let's see, how much for the workout tape?

Don't look at me, I've done my work.

(He hands the tape to Ray.)

It's never been opened, that increases the value. On the other hand, it's that Richard Simmons, so we better make a free box.

Hey, I like Richard.

Then how come you didn't bust his thing open and.. (Reading the cover.) sweat to the oldies with him?

She's been awfully busy.

My friend Reba's already got one, we all workout at her house and besides (Pointedly.) honey, why don't you tell everyone about the four station home gym you never finished putting together. You know the Muscle Master 2000.

I pulled a muscle ripping open the box. It didn't have all its parts anyway.

Oh, is “that” it? I thought that your parts didn't like the way the Muscle Master made em feel.

O.K., O.K. we're even, neither one of use likes to exercise.

Just tell me one thing, (Still looking at the cover.) Why doesn't this guy have any hair on his legs, he's got a bushel on his chest? And what's the deal with the hair on his head.
TOM
Too much exercise.

RAY
If that’s true, I’ll never be healthy.

ELSBETH
I don’t think you have anything to worry about, .. I mean what with your injury and all.

RAY
I thought that was what you meant.

(Clare enters from off left stringing a coil of various extension cords and carrying a blue weed eater with a price tag announcing: $10.00, works. She leans the weed eater against the picnic table.)

RAY
It’s about time, I coulda wheeled my way to the stadium by now.

CLARE
Ray, I had some trouble rounding up enough cords to reach out here.

RAY
Did you look in my tool box?

CLARE
Yes that’s the first place I looked. You only had two cords in there. I had to borrow cords from all over the house.

RAY
I got ten plugged into that outlet in the living room. You didn’t unplug my battery charger did you?

CLARE
No. One of your cords had a cut in it, it kinda worried me to plug it in.

RAY
At’s the one I was usin when that possum attacked me, it’ll be all right.

MITCH
Are you sure it’s a good idea to use it with the grass being wet.

RAY
It’ll be O.K., I don’t think it’s cut all the way through.

(Clare plugs the television into the cord while others look on.)

CLARE
It’s show time!

(She turns on the television but nothing happens.)

TOM
Must be a mime show.
RAY
Well, that’s real nice Clare you spend an hour rounding up cords and I still can’t watch baseball.

CLARE
I plugged em all in, I don’t know what’s wrong.

RAY
Well go back and check em! One of the ends musta came unplugged, and tape up that little nick. There’s a roll of electrical tape in my toolbox.

ELSBETH
Mitch, why don’t you help her, you can see she’s tired.

MITCH
(Looking at her)
Sure, love, that’s a great idea.
(He picks up the cord and begins following it, he and Clare exit left.)

RAY
Now there’s a team if I ever saw one. Clare, don’t get him hurt, he’s a lawyer, we can’t afford no law suit.

ELSBETH
Actually, Mitch “used” to be quite handy with tools when we were first married. I guess he was trying to impress me then. He won’t go near a hammer these days. He says it’s much too pedestrian.

RAY
Sounds like money’s turned him into a wimp to me.

ELSBETH
Now watch it Ray, Mitch works out three nights a week at the gym. He’s a black belt in Judo you know.

(The television comes on loudly.)

RAY
All right! He must be tougher than he looks!

MITCH
(From offstage)
Ahh! Unplug it! Unplug it!

(The television goes off.)

ELSBETH
Oh no!

RAY
He found the nick.

(Elsbeth runs off left, followed by Tom.)

TAYLOR
You think he’s all right?
RAY
Sure, it’s only one hundred and ten volts, heck, I took twice that much when I was installin Clare’s dryer.

TAYLOR
Were you hurt?

RAY
Scorched my finger tips and my hand shook all by itself for a while. Oh yeah, and I peed the bed after it happened.

TAYLOR
Oh, that seems kinda strange, I never heard of anything like that. How long did that go on?

RAY
Still happens from time to time. All those volts musta affected my bladder. I bet “real” electricians wear those bladder control pads all the time.

TAYLOR
Maybe so.

RAY
(Looking off right.)
Hey he’s gonna be all right, she’s got em on his feet. (Both of their heads go down.) ..uh oh, he’s back down.

TAYLOR
He looks a little shaky.

RAY
Sure, volts ain’t always our friends. Say, is Tom still coaching?

TAYLOR
Oh yes, his team was seven and one last season, should I call an ambulance?

RAY
No, it’d just embarrass him. Where does he buy his athletic equipment?

TAYLOR
I don’t know, why?

RAY
I’ll talk to Tom about it.

TAYLOR
Are you still coaching Babe Ruth?

RAY
Where have you been hidin? I stopped coaching Jack’s team after he quit last year. You know he was a real fine pitcher, the best pitcher in the league, till he threw him arm out.

TAYLOR
That’s a shame; he couldn’t have been a catcher of something?
RAY  
He’s as stubborn as a mule, he said if he couldn’t pitch, he wouldn’t play ball at all. He can be a real whiner sometimes. Ow! My leg is throbbing. Clare never did bring my aspirin.

TAYLOR  
At least Jack knows what he wants.

RAY  
Only when it comes to baseball, as for life, that’s a different story. He doesn’t have a clue. I keep telling him to take auto mechanics in school but he says he’s not sure he’s ready to commit to a career yet. If he thinks he’s gonna live with us till he’s thirty, he’s got another thing coming.

TAYLOR  
I’m sure he’ll make up his mind. I mean, did you know what you wanted to be when you were his age?

RAY  
Heck yes, I was already pumpin gas and changing tires. I was on my way to being Assistant Manager at that Texaco on South Main Street, course it wasn’t a Texaco then. I’d probably owned it by now if old Bob hadn’t died and willed the place to his “wussy” little son.

(Mitch and the others enter stage left. Mitch has a makeshift bandage on his left hand.)

RAY  
Glad to see you made it, cord zapped ya huh?

MITCH  
I thought I was going to die, I couldn’t let go of it. Thank God the power went off.

RAY  
You probably flipped a breaker. Do any damage to your hand?

MITCH  
My fingertips were blackened and my hand keeps trembling.

RAY  
Just wait till tonight.

ELSBETH  
What do you mean?

TAYLOR  
He’s kidding.

ELSBETH  
I don’t find this very amusing Ray, Mitch could have been killed.

MITCH  
Honey, I’m all right.

ELSBETH  
You’re lucky that’s all, that “defective” cord could have electrocuted you.
RAY
Not enough volts to kill a “man”, I’m just glad it wasn’t my better half that got the juice. Honey, I thought I told you not to get him hurt.

ELSBETH
Well he “was” hurt. Honey do you want to go to the hospital?

MITCH
I’m fine Elle, just relax.

TOM
Look out, customers at three o-clock.

TAYLOR
Tom, you didn’t finish pricing that box of stuff.

(He hurries to comply as a woman and her husband enters stage right and looks around. He looks the golf clubs over as she roams around stopping at the box Tom is pricing.)

WIFE
Can I look in that box?

TOM
I’m still putting prices on these things, but if you want to have a look, go ahead.

RAY
Richard Simmons is free.

(Looking the box.)

WIFE
I love these things; did it really work like on TV?

TAYLOR
I never tried it. I “personally” hate those things. Those commercials drive me crazy around Christmas time.

ALL
(As she lifts the item.)
Ch, Ch, Ch, Chia!

TAYLOR
I don’t know “where” we got it.

CLARE
I do, Ray and I gave it to you as a housewarming gift.

TOM
(Silence)
How did it get in here? I’m sorry this isn’t for sale.

RAY
Don’t be sentimental Tom. Sell the thing for a dollar. We only paid “twenty bucks” for it.
CLARE
Walgreens had ‘em on sale.

TAYLOR.
We’d never sell something that “you” gave us as a gift. I don’t know how it got in with our yard sale stuff.

WIFE
I think you people should figure out what is and “isn’t” for sale “before” you put the sign up, come on Steve! They don’t have anything "good" here.

(He tears himself away from the golf clubs. She kicks the three family sale sign down as they exit right.)

ELSBETH
(Fixing the sign)
Another happy customer.

RAY
Clare, bring me that weed whacker.

(Clare carries it to him.)

TOM
That looks like my broken weed eater, except mine was green.

RAY
It wasn’t actually broke see, it’s just a little bent. I figured you’d rather buy a new one than have the bent one back.

ELSBETH
You were just going to keep it? I can’t believe that. You had to know that it was only a matter of time before Tom saw you using it.

RAY
He wouldn’t have recognized it, I painted it blue.

CLARE
I’m so embarrassed.

(She exits left.)

TAYLOR
Blue?

TOM
That’s mine?

RAY
Your own “old blue”. I figured since you got all sentimental about the chia pet, the least I could do was give you back your weed whacker.

TAYLOR
This is a nice display of neighborly love.
ELSBeth  
Remind me not to loan him anything of ours.

RAY  
I wouldn’t ask to borrow anything “you” own.

ELSBeth  
But you’d borrow from Tom.

RAY  
He’s different, he’s a friend.

ELSBeth  
And “because” he’s a friend, you steal from “him” exclusively.

RAY  
Hey, I didn’t steal anything! The thing was broke. I didn’t think he’d want it back.

ELSBeth  
You were going to sell it right under his nose!

RAY  
I don’t see where it’s any of “your” business. This thing is between me and Tom. Ain’t that right Tom?

TOM  
It’s not a bid deal to me Elle. He’s giving it back, and with a new coat of paint.

MITCH  
Yes Elle, let it go.

ELSBeth  
Fine, it’s your “blue” weed trimmer. I guess it’s none of my business.

MITCH  
(Changing the subject.)  
Hey Tom, would you like to see my game room?

TOM  
Game room, when did this happen?

MITCH  
We finished it last weekend.

ELSBeth  
You talk as if “you” drove that last nail darling, when the most you did was to “try” to open a can of paint.

MITCH  
Ray and the ladies are here to man the place, let’s go take a look.

TOM  
Sounds good to me, is that all right Taylor?
TAYLOR
Live it up. Just be back here before it gets busy.

MITCH
We'll be back in flash, OK Elle?

ELSBETH
Sure, you boys go play. (Deviously) Are you taking Ray?

RAY
You'd trust “me” in your house?

MITCH
Ray? (Reluctantly.) You don't want to go, do you Ray?

RAY
You think I want to stay here with these women? I can't even watch the game.

MITCH
I just thought that, with your injury.

RAY
If one of you guys push, I'll be just fine, Tom what do you say?

TOM
Sure Ray.

RAY
Now go easy, watch the leg.

(Tom maneuvers Ray expertly through the obstacle course and the men exit right.)

ELSBETH
(Under her breath.)
Just don't “loan” him anything.

RAY
(From offstage.)
I heard that! Watch it! Watch the bumps… It’s twistin! It’s twistin! I’m losing my ice pack!
(The men exit left.)

ELSBETH
Thank God, I thought they’d never leave. Did you notice how I forced them to take Ray?

TAYLOR
Did you see the look on Mitch’s face?

ELSBETH
I savored it thoroughly.

TAYLOR
Did you see those shorts Ray had on?
ELSBETH

Are you kidding? I bet he’s had them on since he broke his leg.

TAYLOR

"I" bet he’s had them on since we moved in.

ELSBETH

He always wears them when he washes that truck of his, which he seems to do three times a week. If only “he” bathed as much.

TAYLOR

Have you seen the way his bell hangs over, and all that hair!

ELSBETH

Please, I haven’t had breakfast yet. Those shorts and that “trailer” are etched on my memory. It may take years of therapy to get them out after we move.

TAYLOR

You’re moving, since when? You just built a game room.

(Unseen by Elsbeth, Clare enters up right carrying a box of clothes.)

ELSBETH

Now if we could just find a way to hide that hideous trailer and those boats until we sell.

(Taylor sees Clare and is caught in the middle as Elsbeth goes on.)

ELSBETH

I can’t get over it, I love our house I don’t want to sell, but that trailer makes us all look like, the Clampetts. Every morning I look out the window and just hope that place is gone. It’s junk, everywhere you look! Cars, boats… They’ve got living room furniture on the porch! The developer had a contract. Ray had to sell. How did he getaway with staying?

(A moment of silence.)

CLARE

(HURT)

Ray never signed .. he kept putting it off, then the property value went up and they never could decide on a price.

ELSBETH.

(Embarrassed)

Clare, we didn’t see you there.

TAYLOR

I’m sorry Clare.

CLARE

It’s all right, I didn’t mean to eavesdrop. I guess I knew everyone felt this way…It’s nice to finally have it out in the open.

ELSBETH

I’m truly sorry Clare. You seem like a nice person, but you’ve got to know that Ray and his junk don’t exactly contribute to the suburban setting.
CLARE
I know. I know what Ray can seem like. I’ve been living with his “junk” for 20 years, but he’s a “good” man. He’s rough around the edges but he’s always been good to me.

ELSBETH
Were you just going to stay forever? I don’t mean this to hurt you Clare but your mobile home is a little out of context here now.

CLARE
This land was the only thing Ray’s daddy left him. He was gonna start a trailer park but then that developer showed up and it was like we’d own the lottery.

ELSBETH
You could have used the money to buy a nice house, somewhere else.

CLARE
I know, but we’ve been here as long as anywhere and it’s been so nice to finally live in a nice neighborhood. I thought if I could get to know you all, that someday we’d be friends. If you’re going to sell your nice houses on our account, I’ll talk Ray into moving.

TAYLOR
Clare, I don’t want you to sell your house.

CLARE
That’s the beauty of a mobile home girls, we don’t have to sell it. We’ll just take it with us …wherever we go.

ELSBETH.
(Looking off right)
Get to your posts ladies we’ve got a carload of customers.

(Elsbeth sits at the cash box. Clare half-heartedly arranges her paintings as Taylor stacks the bags. The delegation approaches from stage left and swarms the place, picking over the lot. The group includes two children and two women Harley Davidson enthusiasts. This is evident because both women are wearing black leather pants & jackets and one woman has the company logo on her buttocks. The logo-wearer eyes Elsbeth’s computer.)

RONDA
(Roughly)
How much for this computer?

ELSBETH
It’s priced.

NASAN
Mom, can I have this game?

RONDA
Hold on a minute Nasan! You’ve got to be kidding on this price lady.

ELSBETH
Why, what does it say?

RONDA
It says, seven hundred dollars.
ELSBETH
(Singsong.)
That's right.

RONDA
This is a “yard” sale lady, that’s price is way too high.

ELSBETH
Why do you say that? How much did you pay for your motorcycle?

RONDA
What?

ELSBETH
It says “Harley Davidson” on your butt, I assumed you owned one.

RONDA
Well you “assumed” wrong.

ELSBETH
Look “lady”, it’s not a Nintendo, it’s a Dell with an external hard drive and a laser jet printer, I can’t “give” it away.

NASAN
Mom can I get it?

RONDA
No! Now you go to the car before I whoop your butt good.
(The child exits with a slumped head.)

ELSBETH
That’s really no way to speak to a child, perhaps what you “need” is a book on parenting.

RONDA
You’ve got a smart mouth lady, and someone needs to smack you in it!

ELSBETH
What?

(Clare and Taylor have been watching and come forward as the conflict heats up, as does the woman’s companion.)

RONDA
I’m gonna kick your butt right now.

WOMAN TWO
Come on let’s go Ronda, she’s not worth it.

RONDA
No, I’m gonna show Miss Superior here what a slap feels like. You ever had a slap in your smart mouth?
(Still not taking Ronda seriously.)

I don’t think you need to resort to violence at eight o’clock in the morning. I know, why don’t you go home, get liquored up and then hop on your Harley and come back and kick my buttocks this afternoon?

(The woman lunges forward as the other woman moves to intervene. Ronda manages to slap Elsbeth once in the face before Clare tackles her, pulling her hair. Taylor wedges herself between the participants and the other woman. The remaining child shouts from ringside.)

CHILD TWO
Kick her butt mom! Tear her face off!

(Clare grabs the angel painting and starts hitting Ronda with it)

CLARE
Get off her! I said get off her now! Get out of here, now!

RONDA
You hit me with that one more time and you’re next!

(The woman’s companion pulls her up and starts dragging her off.)

WOMAN TWO
Come on Ronda, this is stupid, you’ve got warrants!

RONDA
(To Elsbeth)
I’ll be back, and I’m gonna kick your pretty face it.

ELSBETH
(Shaken)
I can’t wait.

CHILD TWO
You’re toast lady!

(The women and child hustle off stage left as the shell-shocked women stare in disbelief.)

ELSBETH
Do we have an ice-pack?

CLARE
Are you all right honey?

ELSBETH
(Holding her right eye.)
Yes, I think so Clare, thanks to you.

CLARE
(Still holding the painting.)
Thanks to my angel, I told you she watches over me.

ELSBETH
I wish she’d been watching over “me”.

CLARE
She was, that’s why that awful woman left.

ELSBETH
Coupled with the fact that you beat her with the angel.

TAYLOR
Talk about being touched by an angel.

ELSBETH
That woman was crazy! I had no idea she would react that way.

TAYLOR
I can’t believe it happened.

ELSBETH
(Still shaken.)
They certainly weren’t the sort of customers I was expecting. I’m not sure it’s safe to stay here.

CLARE
The men will be back soon.

ELSBETH
What are “they” going to do against a woman like “that”?

TAYLOR
You know Elle, you should probably press charges on that crazy woman.

ELSBETH
Old Ronda was probably just having a bad day, besides we didn’t even get a license number.

CLARE
I know her, and I know where she lives.

BOTH
What?

CLARE
Yeah, Ray rebuilt the motor in her car last winter.

ELSBETH
(Pause)
Did she strike him too?

CLARE
I don’t think so, he said they hit it off.

ELSBETH
Why am I not surprised?…Sorry Clare
(Pulls a compact out of her purse and looks at her eye.)
I’d sue her but she doesn’t even have a motorcycle, and I don’t wear black leather.
(The two remaining shoppers, a gentleman and his son come forward with various items. They wait at the table in front of the cash box. Elsbeth returns to her seat to wait on them.)

ELSBETH
Will this be all?

MAN ONE
Yes thanks are you OK?

ELSBETH
I’m fine, thanks. Just a little misunderstanding.

MAN ONE
Well you’ve got some god oldies here.

(He holds up a stack of eight tracks.)
...and he’s got a puzzle, and these shorts. I hope we don’t have to fight for them.

ELSBETH
Money’s fine. Let’s see, it looks like a dime each for the tapes and a quarter for the puzzle and another dime for the shorts, it all comes to eight-five cents.

MAN ONE
That’s quite a bargain for these disco classics.

TAYLOR
Do you still have an eight track player?

MAN ONE
Are you kidding? I wouldn’t get rid of it for the world. There’s something so groovy about the way the son stops right in the middle and you hear that clunk, clunk, and then it starts again.

ELSBETH
It was definitely a “transition” technology.

MAN ONE
I still love it though.

(He hands her a dollar and she makes change and bags the goods.)

MAN ONE
Thanks a lot. You know its’ lucky we were driving by. I didn’t see this one in the paper.

CLARE
Really? Ray said he called it in.

MAN ONE
I didn’t see it, and we “never” miss a sale.

(To his son.)
Say thank you.
BOY ONE
Thank you.

ELSBETH
You're very welcome.

MAN ONE
Come on Joey.

(The two exit left as the women straighten up the gone-through items.)

TAYLOR
What a cute little boy.

ELSBETH
Yes he was. It's nice to have customers with manners. Hey look you two; let's not tell the guys about my little scuffle, OK?

CLARE

ELSBETH
If you don't mind Clare, I'd rather we didn't.

CLARE
OK Elsbeth, I think I understand.

TAYLOR
Is Jack going to help us today Clare?

CLARE
If he ever wakes up. He's not too excited about the sale.

ELSBETH
How old is your son Clare?

CLARE
He just turned nineteen.

ELSBETH
Oh, so what's he doing now that he's out of school?

CLARE
Well, he's still in school. He had to repeat the twelfth grade.

ELSBETH
Does he have plan for after high school?

CLARE
Yes, I think his plan was to live with us for the next ten years. Ray says he's going to kick him out at the end of the school year no matter what happens.
TAYLOR
I know he'll figure something out before graduation.

CLARE
If he doesn't start figurin soon, there won't be any graduation. It might already be too late. He did real fine his freshman year.

(Bragging)
He had a “C” average. Then he just stopped carin for awhile. He’s trying to catch up now but I’m afraid he’s waited too long. I didn’t want him to hafta work as hard as I do.

ELSBETH
Where do you work Clare?

CLARE
I work down at the school, I’m the head custodian.

ELSBETH
It must feel good to help support the family.

CLARE
Help? Heck I “support” the family ..since Ray hurt his back.

ELSBETH
He can't work at all?

CLARE
He says he can’t, but he seems to work on every car that manages to drag itself into the driveway.

TAYLOR
Well I admire you Clare, it can't be easy.

CLARE
It's not, custodial work has really messed up my back and my feet hurt so bad sometimes they feel like they're broke.

ELSBETH
If you’ll pardon my saying it Clare, if I were you, I’d tell my husband to get off his lazy butt and go back to work.

CLARE
Oh I don’t know. Ray’s a good man, he’s got dreams. They just never work out quite like he thinks they will.

ELSBETH
I'm afraid no one pays you for dreaming.

CLARE
I know, and I’m afraid Jack’s takin after his daddy, tryin to dream his way through high school.

ELSBETH
But if he doesn't concentrate on school, he’s not going to have much of a future.

CLARE
Maybe “you” could tell him that. He never seems to listen to me.
ELSBETH
Does Ray support you on this?

CLARE
The best he can, he never did too good in school himself. So it’s kind of like the blind leading the blind. You’re so lucky to have a girl like Grace, she’s so smart.

ELSBETH
Of course, I’m biased where she’s concerned, but I think she’s going to be valedictorian. She’s had a perfect 4.0 GPA all through high school. You know, I could ask Grace if she could tutor your son through finals. I can’t guarantee anything now, but she might be willing to help out.

CLARE
Don’t you know? Grace has been tutoring Jack for the last few weeks.

ELSBETH
She has?
(Amazed)
Funny she hasn’t mentioned it to me.

TAYLOR
(Relieved)
Look out customers ..and no black leather on any of them.

ELSBETH
If you ladies don’t mind, I’m going to get some ice on this eye before I develop a “shiner”.

TAYLOR
Of course not Elle, take all the time you need.

CLARE
Go honey.

(Two elderly ladies enter stage right and browse as Clare and Taylor talk.)

CLARE
Do you think Elle’s gonna be all right?

TAYLOR
Oh yeah, if you want to know the truth, I think she enjoyed the adventure.

CLARE
But a woman like Elle, so ladylike and proper, that was an awful thing to happen. Do you think she was upset about Grace helping Jack?

TAYLOR
I’m not sure, but she’s tougher than she looks Clare, believe it or not, Elle has a wild side. Of course she hasn’t seen it for a few years.

CLARE
What do you mean?
TAYLOR
Well, and this is between you and me, before Mitch, Elle was married to a terrible man. He would drink and become abusive. I guess she was going through a rebellious phase when she met him. Anyway she got tired of the wild life and all of his trash, so she left him.

CLARE
Good for her.

TAYLOR
He stalked her for two years. He nearly wrecked her self confidence.

CLARE
How’d she get away from him?

TAYLOR
He finally died “drunk” in a car crash, it’s a miracle he didn’t kill anyone else.

CLARE
That’s terrible, poor girl. So how did she meet Mitch?

TAYLOR
Mitch was her divorce attorney, she was feeling lost during the divorce and he was there for her.

ELDERLY WOMAN ONE
So you’re saying that meeting this Mitch fella was the best thing that could have happened to her?

TAYLOR
(Surprised by the eaves dropping.)
Well … I

ELDERLY WOMAN TWO
That’s nice, no one should be alone. When my Frankie died I found comfort in the arms of the lawn man.

TAYLOR
Can we help you ladies?

WOMAN ONE
Of course, we didn’t mean to spy.

WOMAN TWO
Who’s doing the paintings?

CLARE
I am ...been working on this collection for years.

WOMAN TWO
Well I sure do like ‘em. They remind me of Bob Ross’s work. You know, I cried when he died.

WOMAN ONE
That was a terrible thing, he was so kind and gentle, and the squirrels just loved him.

CLARE
I think of him ever time I paint one. I kinda paint for Bob now.
WOMAN TWO.
Well it shows dear.

(Looking at a painting)
I can practically see his face in this one.

CLARE
That's a "portrait" of him.

WOMAN TWO
Oh, of course it is dear and I've never seen a nicer one. What's your name honey?

CLARE
I'm Clare and this is my friend Taylor.

TAYLOR
Hello.

WOMAN TWO
Hi.

WOMAN ONE
Well I love your work honey but I'm afraid I can't afford one right now, I'll keep you in mind though. My husband's birthday is coming up. I just might buy him one, if he lives that long the old coot.

(Laughs.)
Come on Nina the cab's waiting.

TAYLOR
(As they exit stage right.)
Nice to meet you.

CLARE
Browsers. The enemy of the modern artist.

TAYLOR
How many paintings "have" you sold Clare?

CLARE
Well, I haven't made what you might call my "first" sale, yet. I've "given" them away mostly. I just donated one to the Braille reading room at the library. They said they might take a couple more.

TAYLOR
That's got to be great, I mean the exposure. Once the people see… It's gotta help.

CLARE
Honestly Taylor, sometimes I don't know if I'll ever sell one. It seems like people don't understand my work.

TAYLOR
(Thinking) Maybe they're not ready for it yet.
CLARE
Do me a favor honey; take a look at this one.

(Holds one up in front of her)
What do you think?

TAYLOR
Well… it’s striking, I like it.

CLARE
But how does it make you feel?

TAYLOR
(Pauses and takes a long discerning look) There’s a lot of… blue.

CLARE
You’re getting it, (Getting excited.) oh good, go on.

TAYLOR
Well the mountains are beautiful and there are a lot of trees..

CLARE
I hate to see a tree all alone. You know Bob Ross never left a tree alone. He always gave them a little friend. Sometimes I get started and I just can’t stop.

TAYLOR
(Looking at the painting)
That little “deer” looks…

CLARE
(Curtly)
Wolf honey.

TAYLOR
Wolf, yes, what did I say? Deer? It’s clearly a wolf. I have got to get these contacts checked.

CLARE
It’s the light, the glare can make it hard to see.

TAYLOR
Yeah, that’s probably it.

CLARE
You seem to understand my work Taylor and the thought of one of “my” paintings hanging on your wall, would make me so happy.

TAYLOR
(Half-heartedly)
Oh, me too.

CLARE
Just don’t tell Ray, he said if I don’t show a profit soon, I’ve got to quit painting and help him on his America’s Cup project.
TAYLOR
America’s Cup?

CLARE
Honey, believe me, you don’t want to know.

TAYLOR
I believe you.

(Elsbeth enters left wearing dark sunglasses and a hat.)

ELSBETH
How’s business gals?

TAYLOR
Not doin much.

CLARE
Mostly browsers.

TAYLOR
How’s the eye?

ELSBETH
I just covered with up with some concealer. It’s a little swollen.

TAYLOR
You look fine.

ELSBETH
Well as sad as it sounds ladies, our little enterprise might be a bust. The weatherman says a storm front’s moving in.

CLARE
Oh no, and after we got everything laid out.

ELSBETH
Let’s just see how it goes, it might miss us altogether.

TAYLOR
Yeah Clare, let’s not worry while the sun’s out.

ELSBETH
When I left the men, they were drooling over Mitch’s billiard table.

TAYLOR
What is it about men and games?

CLARE
Men? You mean boys. That’s all they really are. Ray can sit for hours, glued to that tube watching football. He just sits there and barks at me to bring him more beer and pork rinds.
ELSBETH
Pork rinds?

TAYLOR
Oh you know, those snack things.

CLARE
Ray loves em; he can sit there and eat a whole bag.

ELSBETH
What are they made of?

TAYLOR
Pork

CLARE
Rinds

TAYLOR
I guess men will eat anything when they’re watching TV. It’s proof that they haven’t evolved very far from the caveman. Except now, instead of hunting their food in the wilderness…

CLARE
They send “us” to Kroger for it.

ELSBETH
I have to admit, even Mitch isn’t immune. In the court room he can seem so dignified but put him in front of a football game and he reverts into a regular sloth.

TAYLOR
It must be a disease. All men have it, except for gay men. Then it’s Broadway musicals.

ELSBETH
Or Streisand movies.

CLARE
Have you ever noticed how when things break around the house, they get around to fixin them whenever they get the time, but if the TV breaks, we’re at Wal-mart lookin over new ones in ten minutes.

ELSBETH
It’s simple, men can try to hide the fact that they never grow up, but things like football, show them for what they are.

CLARE
Or cars

TAYLOR
Or tools.

CLARE
Or boats.
TAYLOR
Or fishing.

CLARE
Or Victoria’s Secret catalogues.

(collective sigh)

TAYLOR
Don’t forget pork rinds?

ELSBETH
And secretaries.

(Clare and Taylor look at her)

ELSBETH
What?
(Pause)

I’m not talking about “Mitch”. I’m talking about men in “general”. You know how they say some men are attracted to their secretaries.

TAYLOR
But you’re Mitch’s secretary.

ELSBETH
You’d better believe it.

(A woman enters right and looks through the inventory. While Clare helps the upstage, Elsbeth moves Taylor downright.)

ELSBETH
Did you know that Grace was tutoring Clare’s boy?

TAYLOR
I’ve seen Grace walking over to their house after school a time or two.

ELSBETH
Why didn’t you tell me?

TAYLOR
I didn’t think it was any big deal; she was always carrying a pile of books. It was obvious what she was doing.

ELSBETH
And what was that?

TAYLOR
“Tutoring”, Elsbeth, relax. I don’t know what you’re getting upset about.
ELSBETH
I trust Grace, I do. It’s just that I’ve invested everything I have in making sure she has a bright future. I get a little nervous when it comes to the opposite sex. Especially when we’re talking about the offspring of the junkman in the red shorts.

TAYLOR
I wouldn’t worry, when it comes to Jack you’re not just talking about the opposite sex, those two are as “opposite” as they come.

ELSBETH
You know what they say about opposites… I’m just being silly, you’re right Taylor, I’m going to give myself an ulcer before she goes off to college.

TAYLOR
Don’t worry Elle; let’s just concentrate on getting this sale over with.

ELSBETH
By the look of things, (Touches her cheek) this will be one of the biggest challenges of my life. I can’t believe I’m part of a “yard” sale. This idea of yours better work.

(The customers have completed their purchases and Clare joins the others.)

CLARE
Well Taylor, you made a dollar seventy five and Elle you made three dollars on your pretty black shoes, still no luck with my paintings.

TAYLOR
I’m sure you’ll sell some Clare.

ELSBETH
It’s only a matter of time.

(The men are heard off right as they enter. Mitch is pushing Ray.)

CLARE
Looks like the boys are back.

RAY
Mitch that room is a slice of heaven. I think I could live there for the rest of my life. Ow! Watch the leg!

MITCH
Sorry Ray. You know, you can build your own, after you launch your America’s Cup idea.

RAY
I want your blue prints.

TAYLOR
So did you loafers have a good time?

TOM
I know what I want for Christmas hon.
TAYLOR
What? No, let me guess, pork rinds?

TOM
What?

CLARE
You boys missed out on a pretty good rush of business.

MITCH
We made some money? Hey Elle, what’s with the glasses, embarrassed to be seen with our junk?

ELSBETH
We’ve made three dollars so far, but we’ve met the “nicest” people.

RAY
Well we better sell all this junk soon, the weather channel says severe weather’s headed this way. Honey my ice-pack melted, I hated to waste that much water, but I threw the bag away. I though maybe later you could get me another “coupla’ cubes.

TAYLOR
You think we’ll get a storm.

(looks out)
There’s not a cloud in the sky.

RAY
You know Kansas weather, if you don’t like it, wait a minute.

CLARE
It’ll change.

RAY
Clare, why don’t you run over to the house and get my tarps, in case it does rain, and wake our lazy son up and get him over here, it we’re gonna suffer, he’s going to suffer with us.

ELSBETH
First law of parenthood.

RAY
That’s right.

CLARE
(Reluctantly)
I guess I could, you wanna come with me Taylor? I’d love to show you my garden, my zucchinis are huge.

TAYLOR
Sure Clare. I’d much rather cover up all this stuff than take it all back home.

TOM
We’ll probably need some rope or bun-gee cables too.
RAY
Back a my truck Clare.

CLARE
Gotcha

(They exit right)

ELSBETH
(Eying Ray’s shorts)
Those are interesting shorts Ray, how long have you had them?
RAY. I noticed you were starin at em, they’re “my” favorite pair too. I wear em when I wash my truck or when I’m out workin in the yard.

ELSBETH
Yes, I think I’ve seen you in them.

MITCH
So they sort of stuck in your mind did they?
(Elsbeth is not amused)

RAY
Well Mitch, since it seems your wife is “smitten” with these shorts, I guess I’ll tell ya. I think I got them at K-mart.

MITCH
I appreciate that Ray, Elle are getting this down? There’s a pencil in that box over there.

ELSBETH
Not funny ..What I “was” noticing Ray, was that they look as if you’ve had them on for a while.

RAY
You don’t miss much Ellie. As a matter of fact, I’ve been wearin em since I broke my leg. It hurts too bad to try to take em off. Now don’t get me wrong, they’re comfortable. It’s just that after a week or two they start riding up something awful.

(Others wince.)

TOM
(Changing subject.)
What about that thunderstorm last week?

RAY
Heck of a blow, I tell you, our trailer was rockin and no one came a knockin.

ELSBETH
You wouldn’t believe what it did to our pool. The wind took the cover off and blew all kinds of junk into the water. By the way Ray, are you missing a pink lawn flamingo?

RAY
Yes I am, and I want it back. Its part of a ten piece set.

MITCH
I noticed you had a bunch of them. Sometimes it looks like a flock of them landed in your yard to feed.
RAY
That's the look I was goin for, and I want that bird back.

ELSBETH
I'm afraid Mitch has already painted it blue.

RAY
What?

ELSBETH
Well it's little leg was bent and Mitch didn't think you'd want it back.

RAY
Oh that's "real" funny.

MITCH
Ever get scared living in that trailer during storms Ray? I mean it must be hard living in a trailer in Kansas.

RAY
Well Mitch, I kinda figure, when it's my time to go, it won't matter where I'm at, I'm gonna get it.

TOM
You know Ray; you're always welcome to come over to our place when it storms.

RAY
Well thanks Tom, it means more to Clare than me and Jack. She gets nervous every time the wind blows.

ELSBETH
Ray, there's a shelter right here in the park.

RAY
Don't worry Ellie, I'm not going to bring my screamin wife over to your house in the middle of the next storm...

ELSBETH
I just..

RAY
We'll be there long "before" it starts.

ELSBETH
I wasn't saying that, I was simply telling you that there's a storm shelter not more than fifty yards from your door.

RAY
Have you ever been "down" there Ellie?

ELSBETH
No, I haven't had a reason to.

RAY
Well I have, and I can tell you that that thing has a foot of water down there that smells like a sewer. I think one of you's using it for a septic tank. It couldn't be you though Elle, cause yours doesn't stink, does it?
ELSBETH
At least you’re ready to wade, in those awful shorts.  
(Mitch elbows her).

RAY
Can’t stop thinkin about the shorts, huh Elle,  
(She grimaces.)
Well you better cut it out before Clare gets back, she gets real jealous.

MITCH
Now Ray, Ellie, Elsbeth was only trying to help.

RAY
OK, if you say so. But you’ve “got” to get some red shorts of your own…soon.

(Another group of customers approaches from stage left.  While two children look around, their mother goes straight to the computer.)

MOTHER
(After a moment)
I need a computer real bad, seven hundred dollars, huh? It seems a little high. Can you tell me a little about it?

ELSBETH
It’s mine. I can tell you that only a year ago I paid a lot more for it and the peripherals.

MOTHER
O.K.

ELSBETH
All the software goes with it and that’s a laser jet printer.

MOTHER
Why are you selling it?

ELSBETH
We simply needed a computer with more memory and it seemed like a good time to upgrade.

MOTHER
It seems like a good deal, but it’s a little more than I have to spend, would you take any less?

MITCH
Make us a offer.

ELSBETH
Wait a minute Mitch, I think it’s fairly priced.

RAY
Oh come on Ellie, cut the woman a break, can’t you see she’s got kids to feed?

ELSBETH
Ray, I really don’t think this is any of your…
MOTHER
I’d give you three hundred dollars for it.

RAY
That sounds good.

ELSBETH
Not to me.

MITCH
It sounds O. K. Elle. We might not get another offer if this storm comes in.

RAY
Yeah, giver a “severe weather” special.

ELSBETH
But Mitch, it’s..

MITCH
Come on Elle..

ELSBETH
(Pause.)
I guess three hundred is all right, but you’re getting a heck of a bargain.

MOTHER
Well thank you, that’s why I shop at yard sales. Will you take a check?

ELSBETH
Oh I don’t know. I’d feel better if you paid with cash.

MOTHER
It’s Sunday. I can’t get to the bank until tomorrow.

RAY
Why don’t you fire up that fancy computer and do a credit check on the woman?

ELSBETH
(Ignoring Ray)
Why don’t you give me your name and address and I’ll drop it by your house tomorrow afternoon? Do you live here in town?

MOTHER
Yes, that sounds fine. It will give me time to tell my husband about it. Come on kids. Thank you very much.

(After she leaves the information, she and her brood exit left.)

RAY
Well that was “real” kind of you Ellie.

ELSBETH
It was rude of you to interfere in “my” transaction.
RAY
Hey I wasn’t interferin. It’s just hard to sit by and see rich people get richer, while the poor get the shaft.

ELSBETH
I don’t know what you’re talking about. That computer was worth every penny of it’s “original” price.

RAY
It might have been fair, but what’s fair isn’t always what’s right.

ELSBETH
Well let’s make a deal. I won’t tell you how to sell your.. your.. (looking around) television, and you stop plea bargaining on behalf of my customers.

RAY
The TVs not for sale.

(Grace enters right looking sleepy.)

MITCH
Hey look who’s up.

TOM
Late night Grace?

GRACE
I was studying late. I’ve got finals next week. Excuse my frumpy sweats, but I figured I couldn’t “under-dress” for “this”.

ELSBETH
I’m proud of you for working so hard on your studies honey, but you really do need your sleep.

GRACE
I know Mom, as soon as finals are over.

ELSBETH
Well honey, I’m glad you’re up. I’m going to need you to take a shift while I get my hair done.

MITCH
You’ve got a hair appointment “today”? That’s suspiciously convenient.

ELSBETH
It was the only time Rene’ could do me. He’s coming in especially for me.

MITCH
Heaven forbid I stand between you and the fabulous Rene’.

ELSBETH
(Looking at her watch)
Look people, I’ll be back in one hour. Oh Grace, I sold my computer!

GRACE
I guess it “wasn’t” priced too high.
RAY
It was, your mom’s lucky “I” helped her negotiate.

GRACE
What?

ELSBETH
Oh nothing honey. TA TA everyone, Rene’ awaits.

(She exits left.)

GRACE
What should I do Dad?

MITCH
Why don’t you watch the cash box hon.

RAY
And keep your eye on the do-dads.

GRACE
(Counting the cash.
There’s almost nothing in here.

RAY
Hey Tom, want to do me a little favor?

TOM
Sure Ray, what do you need?

RAY
I’ve been sittin here looking at them tires of mine, and I think they’d sell quicker if I had four.

TOM
What can “I” do about that?

RAY
Over at the south end of my trailer, inside the dog pen, there’s a fifteen inch radial with some decent tread on it.

MITCH
If it’s a good tire, what’s it doing in the dog pen?

RAY
Barney likes to have something to chew on, he took a liking to the old thing and I didn’t have the heart to take it away from em.

TOM
Your dog’s not going to bite me when I try to get the tire is he? I mean if he’s attached to it…
RAY
He ain't chewed on it for a while now. I threw him in an old mannequin I found behind JC Penney's. Boy did he tear right into her.

MITHCH
Good, then it's not as if he's ever bitten anything that resembles a human.

TOM
He's gonna bite me isn't he Ray?

RAY
Not if you don't show any fear.

MITHCH
Do you think that's such a good idea? I mean, can you guarantee the dog won't bite?

RAY
There no guarantees in this life Mitch.

TOM
What kind of answer is that?

RAY
Just stay clear of his "woman" and you'll be OK, at least the big pieces.

TOM
Pieces?

RAY
Come on. That old dog's hardly got any teeth left, besides I keep him fed, so he won't eat much.

MITHCH
Has the animal been vaccinated?

RAY
He's clean, cleaner than you and me.

MITHCH
Speak for yourself.

GRACE
Barney's O.K. dad, his bark is worse than his bite.

MITHCH
You've been near that animal, Grace?

GRACE
Sure daddy, I see him every time I tutor Jack.

MITHCH
You're tutoring Ray's boy? Does your mother know about this?
GRACE
I “think” she knows.

MITCH
Well, we'll talk about “that” later, in the meantime, you will stay clear of that dog from now on.

GRACE
Sure dad.

RAY
Well what do you say Tom, are you “man” enough?

TOM
(Pause)
Sure Ray …Ray, is that tire even the same “size” as those others?

RAY
Not exactly, but with any luck they won’t notice till they get em home.

MITCH
That’s a rather shabby way to treat someone isn’t it Ray?

RAY
The way I see it, they’re lucky, that old tire will be the only one that hasn’t been recalled. Don’t worry Tom, you’ll be back in a little bite.
(Snickers.)

(Tom looks at everyone as if he's going before a firing squad.)

MITCH
Be careful Tom.

RAY
Remember Tom, don’t show any fear.

TOM
What do you mean by, “showing” fear?

RAY
Like you’re doin now.

TOM
Oh.. O.K. I’m going.
(Tom exits slowly as Mitch watches with concern.)

GRACE
(Looking at the sky)
Is it supposed to rain Dad?

MITCH
The television says we’ve got a storm front coming in.
GRACE
So what are we doing here?

MITCH
(Looking at Ray)
That's a very good question.

RAY
What size tires you got on your car, Mitch?

MITCH
What Ray?

RAY
I was just thinkin. I could make you a real sweet deal on these one's of mine.

MITCH
Are you kidding?

GRACE
Yes Dad, he is.

RAY
I wonder what's keepin Clare and Taylor. I know those tarps are right there in front of the shed.

MITCH
How big "is" that shed of yours?

RAY
I don't know, I haven't seen the back of it for years, got three boats and a van in there somewhere. I suppose it's about fifteen by twenty-five.

MITCH
And that was an original structure?

RAY
It was there when we moved the trailer in.

MITCH
Does it have a concrete floor?

RAY
Yeah, Mitch why are you asking me all these questions about my shed, ya thinking of building one?

MITCH
No, I was just wondering what your property taxes were like.

RAY
They go up every year, but I'm sure they're not as high as yours, on that "mansion" you live in.

MITCH
You ever think of selling?
RAY  
(Taking a long look at Mitch)  
Why, is Tom looking to build on?

MITCH  
No, I don’t think so but I’ve got a friend at the firm who’s looking to build a new house. If you were to sell, what would you ask for the place?

RAY  
I haven’t really thought about it, but I guess around... a hunert thousand dollars.

MITCH  
That much? Is that for the trailer as well?

RAY  
No, just the land, and my nice shed of course.

(Suddenly from off left the sound of a dog barking wildly is heard.)

TOM  
(Offstage.)
Ray! Get him off me! He’s bitin me! Ray! Down! Down! Ray!  
(Ray starts to roll but Mitch stops him.)

MITCH  
I’ll go

(He runs off left, Ray and Grace are transfixed on the area of the trailer off right, after a moment Ray shouts.)

RAY  
Don’t show any fear!

(BLACKOUT)

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2  Scene 1

(The shelter is darker now with occasional flashes of lightning. The yard sale items are covered with tarps. A radio is sitting on top of one of the tarps. Taylor consoles Tom who stands looking angry with a bandaged arm. The dog is still barking off right. The group is assembled minus Elsbeth. They are seated in various positions and look defeated.)

TOM  
He’s taunting me.

TAYLOR  
Who?

TOM  
That evil dog, I swear his eyes were glowing red.
RAY
You must a showed fear. I told you not to, and his eyes are just blood shot.

TOM
I didn’t “do” anything. I just went for the tire and he went crazy on me!
(Dramatically.)
He made this low growl, so I froze. I tried to yell for help. I opened my mouth but no sound would come out. It was like a nightmare. Then he started to lunge at me. I’d already closed the gate, so the only place I could think to go was into “his” house.

RAY
Big mistake, he’s real possessive of his house, (Looking at Mitch.) kinda like me.

TOM
I know, as soon as I crammed myself in there I knew it was a mistake. He had me trapped!

TAYLOR
I’m so sorry honey, I was too afraid to go in there, Tom. First he just stood there growling at me.

RAY
You showed fear didn’t you?

TOM
Of course I showed fear, anyone would!

TAYLOR
This whole thing is ridiculous. He shouldn’t have been in there in the first place.

MITCH
I tried to tell you Ray.

TOM
He got a hold of my arm and just started jerking me all over the place. Look how he ripped my pants.

RAY
He usually don’t go for the leg, he’s kinda partial to the butt.

TAYLOR
You’re a butt. What kind of man keeps a dangerous animal like that in a nice neighborhood?

RAY
I keep him locked up.

TOM
Why’d you send me in there Ray, if you knew he’d bite me?

RAY
I didn’t “know” he’d bite you. I’m surprised he had it in him.

TOM
You sound like you’re proud of him for biting me.
RAY
I ain't proud he bit ya. I'm just sayin he stood his ground when his “home” was threatened.

TOM
I wasn't threatening his home!

RAY
You were “in it” weren’t you?

TOM
Yes, but not because I wanted to be.

RAY
Well, Barney didn't know that.

MITCH
Well Ray, seeing as how he broke the skin, that vaccination issue has reared its ugly head again.

RAY
He barely scratched his arm.

MITCH
It doesn’t matter how deep the wound is, if the skin was broken, Tom could be infected.

RAY
I told you, the dog was clean.

MITCH
Whether the dog is clean or not is no longer the issue. The issue now is whether or not the animal is carrying any diseases.

TOM
What! Good Lord, Ray, has the dog had his shots or not?

RAY
I don’t believe these pansies! I told you the dog is clean. I don’t see what the big deal is.

CLARE
He had his shots.
(Group sigh of relief.)
Two years ago.

TAYLOR
Two years! Clare why doesn't he have his “current” shots?

RAY
We couldn't afford it.

MITCH
Well pay now or pay later.

RAY
What’s “that” supposed to mean?
MITCH
I’m just saying that you may be legally liable for Tom’s injury.

CLARE
Oh my goodness.

TAYLOR
Now I don’t think we need to.

TOM
Ray, I just want to have the dog checked out, he broke the skin!

RAY
Broke the skin? You’d think he tore your arm off, the way you’re going on.

MITCH
I don’t think we have to sort all this out right now. Why don’t you take the animal to the vet Monday and have him checked out? He could have rabies Ray!

TOM
Rabies!

TAYLOR
It’s O.K. Tom.

TOM
Sure it’s O.K. for you, you don’t have rabies!

RAY
No one has rabies!

MITCH
Can’t you see? Tom’s not going to be able to relax until you have the dog checked. Why are you resisting?

RAY
Because I can’t afford it…unless you buy my tires.

GRACE
They can’t check Barney for rabies without killing him.

MITCH
Grace, I think it’s best if we discuss this “later”.

RAY
If your talking about killing my dog its gonna be a lot later. Like never.

(Elsbeth enters right, still wearing sunglasses. Her hair is immaculate.)

ELSBETH
So, what’s been going on?
(Everyone looks at her.)

ELSBETH
What?

MITCH
Look, I think we’d be wise to collect our things and go home before it storms.

TAYLOR
It does seem like this whole day was never meant to be.

RAY
I want to know whether you wussies are gonna kill my dog.

ELSBETH
What on earth is he talking about?

MITCH
I don’t think this is an issue we should discuss at this time. Everyone is too upset.

RAY
Well we’re going to talk about it! I’m not gonna let you guys sneak off to plan how you’re gonna kill my dog and sue us into the poorhouse.

MITCH
You’re already living there!

CLARE
You wouldn’t kill Barney would you? Jack loves that dog!

TAYLOR
Nobody “wants” to kill Barney. We’ve just got to make sure that Tom doesn’t have rabies.

RAY
Are you gonna sue me Tom? …You and that ambulance chaser?

ELSBETH
I won’t have you talking to Mitch that way! I’m sure that you…

RAY
Now missy, you may wear the pants in your house, but this here thing is between the “men”. Why don’t you go home before the wind picks up and messes up your fancy hair.

ELSBETH
Well you son of a …

MITCH
Elle! I will handle this!

ELSBETH
You’re going to stand here and let this white trash talk to you this way.
TOM
This whole thing is getting blown out of…

RAY
You're calling me white trash, you self-righteous snot! You've been looking down your "nose job" at my family since you moved in. I don't know where you come off sitting in judgment over me.

ELSBETH
Well at least "my" husband works. He doesn't sit around on his fat butt all day eating "pork rinds" and lowering property values by parking a run-down mobile home in the middle of a beautiful neighborhood.

RAY
I knew that's what this was really about. I'll have you know I had my house here, wheels and all, a long time before yours fell from heaven and long before this "was" a beautiful neighborhood.

CLARE
Honey stop!

ELSBETH
My point exactly!

RAY
I'm gonna have my say!

MITCH
I think you've said enough!

TAYLOR
This isn't happening.

TOM
This whole thing is about "my" arm. Now let's just calm down.

MITCH
I'm going to have "my" say too Ray! I didn't want to have this discussion but the can of worms is open. The developer had an understanding with you; you were to move when the last house was complete. You were offered more than enough for your land and that "hovel" you call a house. Why then didn't you live up to that agreement!

RAY
I'll tell you why…

CLARE
It was for me! OK, I'm sorry! Ray "wanted" to leave, he was packing, "I" begged him to stay. I wanted to live in a nice neighborhood for "once" in my life.

(Sobbing)
I am "so" sorry I caused all of this. I just thought that if you got to know us, everything would work out. I never dreamed this would happen. We'll leave as soon as we can sell our place. (Sobbing)

RAY
I hope you're happy, you made her cry.
ELSBETH
This was a great idea Taylor, have a stupid sale so we can talk this buffoon into selling his dump. I told you it wouldn’t work!

TAYLOR
Elle!

CLARE
(Hurt)
Taylor?

TAYLOR
Clare, it’s not like it sounds.

(Silence)
Thanks a lot Elle.

MITCH
You had to open your mouth.

ELSBETH
Someone had to “say” something! You all want them out as much as I do!

MITCH
Elle!

ELSBETH
You all sit around complaining about that trailer, but not “one” of you has the nerve to tell “them”. Well I do, and I did!

RAY
You sure did!

CLARE
We’re moving OK? We’re moving so everybody just stop!

RAY
The heck if we are! We’re never moving! Do you all hear? I’m gonna get ten more boats and a hundred more lawn flamingos! And the next time it storms, I’ll bring my whole family to your front door!

ELSBETH
You’d better not knock on our door! You’d better not set foot in our yard!

MITCH
No “we’re” moving. We will not sit by and watch this neighborhood degenerate any further! So you can have as many boats and birds as you want! With your run down house here, it should be easy to sell ours. I’m sure the “crack dealers” will line up for a mile for a chance to buy it!

GRACE
(Upset.)
Why are you doing this Daddy? Why are you treating them like this? Why do you have to be such a snob? You judge everyone based on money and I’m sick of it! I’m sick of you!
ELSBETH
(Amazed)
Honey?!

MITCH
Go home now! I’m surprised at your behavior.

(As all this goes on the storm is getting more intense.)

GRACE
Well I’ve got a surprise for you “Mommy” and “Daddy”. I love Jack!

(Pause, silence)
We’ve been dating for three weeks. Oh yeah! I visit him every evening when you and mom “think” I’m studying. If you ever bothered to take a minute out of your “important” lives to check on me, you might have found out by now!

ELSBETH
I can’t believe that you’ve been sneaking around!

GRACE
I didn’t have to “sneak” around! You didn’t even suspect anything! You’ve never noticed anything I’ve done!

ELSBETH
That’s crazy! I have done “nothing” but worry over you for the last seventeen years.

GRACE
You haven’t worried about me! You’ve worried about my “future” and how I look to “your” friends. You’ve had me worrying about my future for so long, I haven’t had a life! It’s all for you Mom! Everything I’ve ever done has been for “you”! You know it’s true!

ELSBETH
That’s ridiculous.

GRACE
When does “my” life start Mom!... When?

ELSBETH
(Shaken)
You’re not making any sense.

GRACE
I’m going to have a life, now! Not later! Now! There are more important things than college!

MITCH
Like what?

ELSBETH
This is making me sick!

GRACE
You don’t know what love is! You don’t know how to show love or compassion for anyone unless they have money.
MITCH
And I suppose Ray and Clare do? I suppose it’s a real loving environment inside that trailer?

GRACE
I’ve been inside that “trailer” enough to know that “their” family spends time with each other, they live for today.

ELSBETH
That’s because they have no future! They have nothing! You think that boy has anything to offer you? Half of nothing is nothing!

GRACE
He’s given me a lot… of love.

MITCH
(Suspicious)
Just how “much” love?

GRACE
What?

MITCH
What have you been doing with that loser?!

RAY
I’m about to come up out of this chair and bust you one.

MITCH
And I’ll sue your butt right off this block!

ELSBETH
That’s a great idea!
(To Grace)
Now “you” go home and wait in your room till we get over there… now!

GRACE
No! I won’t go home! I’m going to Jack’s house right now, and if you come after me, I swear I’ll elope with him tonight!

MITCH
You’d better be joking.

GRACE
No Dad! We’ve already made plans, so I recommend you don’t follow me.

(She runs off left, crying.)
(Elsbeth starts after her, Mitch grabs her arm.)

MITCH
Don’t

ELSBETH
(Incredulously)
What?!
MITCH
It will just make things worse; give her a few minutes honey.

TOM
Let’s pick up our stuff and go, I’ve had enough.

TAYLOR
Me too!

MITCH
That’s what we’re going to do. Ray, I’d appreciate it if you’d send Grace home before the storm hits.

(Silence)

CLARE
We will.

RAY
Now everyone just cool down a minute. Jack and Grace ain’t been up to nothin but watchin TV. Me and Clare have been there every time she’s been over.

ELSBETH
It doesn’t matter whether or not they’re supervised. The fact is that we do not want our daughter seeing your son!

RAY
Why? You think Jack’s not good enough?

MITCH
We didn’t say that.

ELSBETH
No, he’s not nearly good enough! Clare told us how he’s doing in school. I haven’t worked all these years to see her run off with a high school flunky!

CLARE
He hasn’t flunked…yet!

MITCH
What we’re trying to say, is that we want Grace to finish high school and go to a good college. We want her to meet a boy with similar aspirations and dreams.

RAY
It seems to me she’s already found a boy she likes and he “has” dreams.

ELSBETH
Great! and I guess they’ll just live in a room in your trailer until he figures out which “minimum wage” career is dreamy enough.

RAY
I am getting sick of you guys runnin Jack down. He’s a good boy, he’s good with a wrench. (Proudly) He could be a mechanic someday.
ELSBETH
That gives me hope, it really does Ray, and just “which” day is that going to be?

MITCH
I think it’s best to separate them for the rest of the school year.

ELSBETH
For the rest of their lives!

TOM
(Looking out.)
Turn the radio on honey, the sky looks weird!

(From the radio)
“The storm system once again has increased in intensity and the residents of the town of Hutchinson are urged to take cover, I repeat, a tornado has been spotted on the ground in the area between Hutchinson and Inman, Kansas, and is moving in a southerly direction. Stay tuned to…”

TAYLOR.
(While turning the radio off.)
We’d better get out of here.

MITCH
Does it seem “still” to anyone?

ELSBETH
Totally still…and quiet, too.

CLARE
We better do like he says.

RAY
Clare, go home and get Jack and Grace and take em over to Tom’s house.

ELSBETH
She is coming home with “us”, now!

MITCH
Tom’s house should be…

(Ronda has returned and is holding a gun downstage left.)

ELSBETH
Mitch, shut up! I’ll handle this!

RONDA
No, you shut up!

(Elshbeth turns to see Ronda who is demonic in the lightning. The group gasps as the lights go out.)
(Blackout)
ACT 2 Scene 2

(Scene as before, lightning, thunder and Barney barking- can be heard.)

RONDA
Everyone over there!
(She motions to the right of the shelter.)
Not you!
(Gesturing to ELSBETH.)
You get over there!
(Gestures to shelter left.)

MITCH
What are you doing?

RONDA
I don't know yet, but I'm sure I'll think of something. You just shut your mouth!

TAYLOR
She's gonna kill us!

TOM
Who is this woman?

TAYLOR
She was here before, she hit Elle.

TOM
What!

RONDA
Everybody shut up.

TOM
You can't.

RONDA
Now!

CLARE
Why are you doin this? You hit “her”, she didn't even.

MITCH
(To Elle)
Why didn’t you tell me?

RONDA
Shut your mouth! If I was you, I’d be worrying about what was about to happen to “me” right now.

TAYLOR
But the storm! What about the storm? We’re supposed to take shelter!
RONDA
Sure, I'll send the rest of you home so you can call the cops. Besides, a storm can't shoot you... I can. Now you just stay over there and shut up!

MITCH
Look, whatever happened, I'm sure we can...

RONDA
I told you to shut up!
(Pointing gun at him.)

You didn't tell the “hero” here how you flapped your smart mouth at me? How you acted all superior and she (Points to Clare.) jumped in the middle of it!

RAY
Ronda, what in heaven's name do you think you're doin? You flipped out or what? Is that a real gun?

RONDA
Ray this doesn't concern you! And this “is” a real gun! Now I don't have anything against you or even your nosy wife, but I'm gonna teach this woman here to show me some respect!

ELSBETH
I'm sorry! All right? I'm sorry! Now let's just get to shelter before the tornado hits!

TOM
Please! This is crazy!

RONDA
(Losing it)
Are you calling me crazy! Are you?! Cause if you are...

RAY
Ronda cool off, she's not worth it. I don't know what this is about, but if you don't stop now, they're gonna send you back to jail.

MITCH
(Nervously)
Jail?

RONDA
At least they'll have a good reason this time.
(A tornado siren is heard offstage, and all look upward.)
I've been locked up for a lot of things but this time it's gonna be worth it!

TOM
Please, let us get to shelter!

RONDA
Come on princess, get over there!
(Motions left.)

MITCH
What are you going to do?
RONDA
Get over there now!

(Mitch reluctantly lets go of Elsbeth’s hand as she slowly complies.)

RAY
If I were really as tough as you think you are, you’d put down that gun and fight like a man.

RONDA
You don’t look to me like you’re ready for a fight Ray.

CLARE
Ray?

RAY
It’s all right Clare, I know what I’m doin. Ronda, I’ve got a set of tires over there that say “Mitch” can kick your butt good.

RONDA
(Looking at Mitch.)
You mean “him”? Hah! I could break him in half!

ELSBETH
Stop it Ray.

RAY
I guess it’s true that a woman just can’t stand up to a “man”.

RONDA
There ain’t no way that wimp could whip me.

RAY
That “wimp” is a karate expert, you’re lucky he ain’t killed you already.

MITCH
(Nervously)
Ray…

RONDA
(Tucking the gun in her pants.)
Come on Karate boy.

MITCH
I don’t want to fight you.

RONDA

RAY
He’s man enough to kick “your” butt.
Ronda
All right, all you guys just sit down. *(Mitch starts to sit with them.)* Not you! Get up Grasshopper, let’s see what you got!

Elsbeth
Be careful honey!

Mitch
I… um, I would really rather not fight a woman.

Ray
You better change your mind “real” quick, or she’s gonna make a fool outta ya!

Ronda
Come on!

*(The two slowly look each other over. They slowly circle looking for an advantage. Suddenly, Mitch lets out a high pitched hum and strikes a peculiar pose.)*

Ray
No Mitch, not a dance of death!

Ronda
What?

Ray
Oh yeah, I seen him use this on a guy at the Four Kings, messed him up something awful.

Ronda
Dance of death huh? I got a dance for ya!

*(She swings suddenly striking Mitch in the jaw, knocking him down.)*

Ray
Get up! Get up Mitch!

*(To Ronda)*

That was a lucky shot!

Ronda
Luck had nothin to do with it!

*(Mitch jumps to his feet angered.)*

Mitch
All right you asked for it, come on!

Ronda
Why. You gonna dance again?

*(Elsbeth starts to rise)*
RONDA
Sit down! (She reaches for her gun.)

MITCH
Sit down Elle! I'll handle this.

(They circle as before, Ronda swings and misses.)

RAY
You got her now boy!

(Ronda swings again, Mitch blocks her and hits her hard in the face. Ronda stands looking momentarily dazed. Suddenly her face becomes very angry, Mitch lets out a whimper.)

RONDA
I'm gonna kill you!!

(She hits Mitch in the stomach, bending him over, followed by a kick to the face. He falls to the floor.)

ELSBETH
Honey!

RONDA
(Pulling out her gun.)
Stay put! I guess he wasn't much of a dancer. You really thought he could beat me Ray?

RAY
No, but he mighta got lucky.

RONDA
(She eyes the shelter opening.)
Now all of you. Down there!
(She motions to the shelter.)

TOM
No, you can't make us go down there!

RONDA
Get down there.. NOW! I SAID NOW!
(She turns to Elsbeth.)

Don't you move!
(Elsbeth sits perfectly still.)

Go!
(The group slowly moves toward the shelter, Ray and Mitch remain.)

RONDA
I told you to go!

MITCH
(Between gasps.)
I can't. I can't go without her.
RAY
And I can’t get down them steps!

RONDA
Shut up! Shut up! Just let me think!
(Elsbeth is crying now.)
All right, the rest of you are going down there now, or I’m gonna shoot the queen, right here, right now!

MITCH
Please Ronda, please let her come with us, I can give you money, our car, whatever you want.

RONDA
I don’t want your money! I want you to get down that hole before I shoot her!
(Ronda shoots her gun in the air and everyone jumps, the group pulls Mitch down the stairs.)

MITCH
I love you honey!
(Ronda points the gun and the door slams on the shelter.)

RONDA
Now Ray, you just stay out of this. You stay right there.
(It is dark now except for the shelter light and occasional flashes of lightning.)

RAY
Don’t shoot her Ronda, she’s my neighbor!
(Ronda turns to Elsbeth.)

RONDA
Now honey, we’re gonna have us a little talk.

ELSBETH
(Sobbing)
Listen, Ronda, I’m “very” sorry for the way I spoke to you, but my daughter is over in that trailer house and I’ve got to get her out.

RONDA
She’ll be better off than you are “wherever” she is!

ELSBETH
I don’t understand “why” you’re so angry. What did I say to make you so mad?

RONDA
Shut up!...It’s not “what” you said, it’s the “way” you talked to me. Like you’re “so” much better. I’ve been takin it from people like “you” my whole life. I had my kids taken away by a woman just like you!

RAY
If you don’t back off Ronda, you’re gonna lose em again.
RONDA
It’s too late Ray. I’m losin’ em anyway. I’m going back in, I lost my job, my car, my old man took off. This woman’s mouth was the last straw. I got nothing left to lose!

ELSBETH
Your kids! What about them! They need a mommy Ronda!

RONDA
Shut your fat mouth! You don’t know anything about life (Pause). All I wanted was that lousy computer, so I could learn some new stuff and maybe get better job, but no, you had to be a…

ELSBETH
It’s yours! Take it!

(The shelter light flickers.)

RONDA
It’s too late for that now! You’re gonna get what you deserve!

ELSBETH
All those things that happened to you, they’re not my fault. I didn’t “do” anything. You think I don’t have problems, I do. I’ve had a hard life. My ex-husband was a jerk and a drunk!

RONDA
(Pause)
Well that’s a “real” sad story. But you had no right treating me the way you did. You put me down just the way that S.R.S. witch did. I’m not taking it anymore! Do you here me! I’m gonna take care of your mouth right now!

(She starts to take aim)

ELSBETH
Wait! Wait! Please Ronda don’t!

RAY
Don’t kill her Ronda, she’s not the one you’re made at. If you want to get even with her, burn her house down.

ELSBETH
Don’t help Ray!

RAY
She’s treated me like dirt too! But I’m not going to kill her. I’ll admit she’s a loudmouth and a snob, and she wants me out of this neighborhood as bad as you want to kill her, but it’s just not right.

RONDA
This is the first thing that’s felt right in a long time, and it sounds like I’m doin’ you a favor too. The only thing I had to live for was my kids, and now I’m losin’ em.

ELSBETH
Why?

RONDA
Shut up!
RAY
Why, Ronda?

RONDA
I'll tell you why, cause some busybody reported me as an unfit mother. Me! I sacrificed my whole life for my kids! I've worked two jobs for the last three years, just so my husband could take all our money and run off with a waitress from the Four Kings.

RAY
Which one?…Sorry

RONDA
Doesn't matter. He's gone and in a couple days they're gonna take my kids and there is "nothin" I can do! People been kickin me down my whole life, and I've took it. Doctors and teachers and cops and now you! But "you're" gonna be the last.

ELSBETH
Think of your kids! If you do this, they'll never get to grow up with you. You won't see them graduate or get married. You don't want to give all that up do you?…I love my daughter, kids are all we really leave in this world…Who's going to raise those kids of yours when you're gone? Is someone else going to love them the way you do? Please, think about it.

RAY.
Think about it Ronda.

ELSBETH
I didn't know what you'd been through when I met you today. I would have never acted the way I did if I'd known.

(Ronda lowers the gun slightly.)

Why don't you give me the gun Ronda…come on honey.

RONDA
(Slow and seething)
Don't call me honey! You don't care about me. All you care about is your lousy life. You've said all you're gonna say!

RAY
Ronda don't!

(The lights flicker again and Elsbeth rushes Ronda just before the lights go out completely. In the dark loud barking is heard.)

RAY
Get her Barney, get her!

(We hear the sound of a lunging dog, Ronda screams in pain followed by a gunshot.)
ACT 2  Scene 3

(The lights come up to about dusk level revealing the shelter strewn with debris “be creative”, including a pink lawn flamingo. The actors are gathered around Elsbeth who is petting a ragged dog. Taylor is wrapping cloth around Elsbeth’s big toe.)

ELSBETH
Good dog, good doggy, you’re a good boy.

TOM
I can’t believe it.
(Looking toward the houses stage right. The only one left standing.)

MITCH
We’re lucky to be alive.

ELSBETH
No thanks to you, Mr. Black Belt!

MITCH
I did all I could honey!…She was an animal. You think I liked being down there?  (He puts his hand on her shoulder, which she promptly removes.)

ELSBETH
Well I almost died out here, between Ronda and tornado, I think I had it justa “little” rougher than you did. But “Barney” was here for me, weren’t you boy.  (Pets him briskly.)

RAY
Don’t forget, it was “me” who gave him the command to attack.

ELSBETH
Thank you Ray, I appreciate “everything” you did for me. (Looking at Mitch)  I was just glad to have a “man” here.

MITCH
Now come on Elle, that’s not fair.

RAY
He did “try” Elle, I wouldn’t fight Ronda, at least no in front of anyone.

MITCH
And I wouldn’t have either, but I had no choice, thanks to Ray.

ELSBETH
Yes, “thanks” to Ray. You weren’t even going to defend me. You were just going to let her shoot me!

MITCH
I just thought there was a better way, better than fighting!

ELSBETH
Mitch, sometimes you’ve got to fight, if you “care” about something!Obviously you don’t “care” about me!MITCH. I care, Elle, I do!
ELSBETH
You've got a funny way of showing it!

TAYLOR
How's your toe feel Elle?

ELSBETH
What's left of it feels odd, it doesn't really hurt that much, it just stings a little.

MITH
I'm so sorry hon.  (After a pause she touches his hand.)

ELSBETH
I'm keeping this,  (Holds up the seat of Ronda's leather pants bearing the Harley Davidson logo.)  as a souvenir of my brush with death...I wonder where she went.

RAY
She ran off toward "your" house.

TAYLOR
You think she's inside?

RAY
Maybe.

MITH
Wherever it landed, she can keep it.

CLARE
All of you guys are welcome to stay with us a while.  We can put Jack on the couch and clear out Ray's motorcycle parts from the extra bedroom.  Is that O.K. Ray?

RAY
Sure, I guess so.

ELSBETH
I don't think that's necessary.

RAY
Oh you don't want to be in there with all that junk.  You'd get grease all over you.

ELSBETH
As much as "Grace" would like that plan, I think we'll stay in a hotel.

MITH
I can't believe the storm took both our houses and left the " trailer" standing.

RAY
Must have been looking for a challenge.

MITH
But brick, it was a "brick" house.
TOM
So “was” ours.

TAYLOR
Suppose Ronda hadn’t come, we’d all be in our houses now.

RAY
Yep.

ELSBETH
(To Ray and Clare.)
Our daughter is alive because of you.

RAY
I think Ronda is the one you have to thank.

TAYLOR
I can’t believe this day.

MITCH
Just another day at the end of “Ray Road”

ELSBETH
I wonder how it got “that” name.

RAY
It was part of the deal.

CLARE
How about you guys, I suppose you won’t be stayin around with your homes gone and all.

TAYLOR
I’m not sure what we’re going to do.

TOM
I don’t want to think about it now.

TAYLOR
I liked this neighborhood.

CLARE
We’d sure miss having you around. After all this I can’t imagine never seeing you again.

RAY
I could, a couple a minutes ago. I don’t know what you said to that woman Ellie, but you really torqued her off.

ELSBETH
I think it was a matter of bad timing.

MITCH
What set her off!
ELSBETH
She thought my computer was priced too high.

RAY
I told you.

TOM
All of this, over a computer.

ELSBETH
It was a little more complicated than that.

MITCH
Tom, why don’t you run over to Ray’s house and tell Grace to call an ambulance

TOM
Sure, but hold Barney please.

(He exits right)

ELSBETH
He’s OK now, Barney’s a good dog

(To Barney.)
aren’t you boy?

RAY
He knows how to get the job done.

MITCH
I guess the party’s off tonight.

(Elbsbeth laughs.)

CLARE
You could have it at our house.

MITCH
It’s too late anyway, and under the circumstances, I don’t think our guests would mind.

RAY
You all should really consider the advantages of a “mobile” home.

CLARE
The new double-wides are very nice.

MITCH
I’m sure they’re very nice but, I think we’re gong to want another site builthome.

ELSBETH
(Remembering)
Oh honey, your new game room.
MITCH
I know, it’s OK, at least the “guys” got to see it.

RAY
(Solemnly.)
I’ll never forget it, it was truly a thing of beauty.

TAYLOR
Was your kitty in the house?

MITCH
No he was at the groomer’s.

RAY
Who Rene’?

ELSBETH
Taylor, you had decorated so nicely, all that work, gone. You must be so depressed.

TAYLOR
It was a lot of work, I spent two years getting it just right. I can’t believe it’s all gone…I’m just glad nobody was hurt.

CLARE
Well, I’ve got a surprise for you Taylor,

(She reaches under a tarp and pulls out a painting.)
I know this one was your favorite, “Midnight Wolf”. It can be your first new decorating item. You can plan your whole house around it.

TAYLOR
Clare…I don’t know what to say.

ELSBETH
Well, “I’m” jealous.

CLARE
Don’t worry Elle. I’ve got something “special” for you.
(She reaches back under the tarp and pulls out another painting.)

ELSBETH
Oh Clare, your angel?
(Starts to cry.)

CLARE
No honey, “your” angel, after this day, it’s clear to me she wants to watch over you.
(Overcome.)

Thank you Clare.

(Crying)

After all those terrible things I said to you and Ray. Can you ever forgive me?

TAYLOR

Me too Clare, this whole day was “my” fault.

CLARE

Are you kidding? If we hadn’t all gotten together...none of this would have happened.

RAY

Mitch wouldn’a got shocked.

TAYLOR

Tom wouldn’t have been mauled.

MITCH

Elle wouldn’t have been shot.

ELSBETH

And most of us would be dead right now ..and I wouldn’t have this beautiful angel.

MITCH

Everything’s going to be all right honey.

RAY.

So. You think you guys’ll rebuild, or move on?

MITCH

I can’t speak for Tom and Taylor but if Elle wants to stay, we will.

ELSBETH

I couldn’t leave “Barney

MITCH

I’m not sure what we’re going to do while they’re rebuilding our house.

ELSBETH

How much does a mobile home cost Ray?

RAY

Don’t know. I haven’t bought one in twenty years.

MITCH

I guess it’s an option, until our house is completed.

ELSBETH

It might be fun, just imagine our first dinner party in the new “trailer” house.
RAY
There go the property values. If you do go with the double wide, you should consider skirting. It keeps the possums out in the winter.

MITCH
I doubt if we actually going to live in a trailer that long Ray.

RAY
With you guys bein new to the mobile home experience, I guess I'll be nurse maidin you along till you get up to speed. If you all need help cleaning up, I know, Clare will bust her butt for you…Can you get a coupla days off work honey?

ELSBETH
That's really generous of you Ray.

RAY
Hey, whatever I can do. After all, what are “neighbors” for?

CLARE
We’ll help all we can.

TAYLOR
I’ll talk to Tom about joining the trailer park. I’d hate to miss out on the fun.

RAY
What about storms?

ELSBETH
There’s a shelter right here in the park.

RAY
You still haven’t been down there.

MITCH
There’s no way “I’m” going down there again.

ELSBETH
Now he takes a stand.

(They laugh)

MITCH
…Unless there’s a gun on me.

RAY
I guess we’re all gonna be busy a while.

MITCH
That’s an understatement.

RAY
What with homes to rebuild and a “weddin” to plan.
ELSBeth
(Shocked.
Wedding?

ClaRE
Oh it's gonna be beautiful.

Ray
We could have it right here in the park, and have the reception here in the shelter house.

(Ronda enters from up right, ragged and holding the seat of her pants.)

MICH
(To Ray.)
Now wait a minute!

ELSBeth
Mitch, shut up.

RONGA
No you shut up!

(Everyone gasps and spins around.)

RONGA
Can somebody give me a ride home? I've got to check on my kids.

(Everyone stares in amazement.)

BLACKOUT, CURTAIN
(The end.)
PROPERTY LIST

Various yard-sale merchandise (Books, clothes, etc.)
Chia pet
Sign reading, THREE FAMILY SALE
15-20 paintings (Fair to mediocre landscapes.)
Two lengths of chain and a six to eight foot pipe.
Various boxes Golf bag and clubs
Computer and printer
5 –10 eight track tapes
Pocket watch
Wheel Chair
Old portable television
Practical snack items
Four sixths of a six pack of pop
3 tires- matching
Pink lawn flamingo
Gauze bandage
Radio
Blank pistol- Practical (Starter)
Board Game
Puzzle
Cash-box with paper and pen
Paper bags
Dollars and coin change
5-6 nice dresses, one with price-tag attached
Ice pack with two cubes
Two picnic tables
Cast for leg
Weed eater – blue

SOUND EFFECTS

Barking Dog
Snarling Dog
Thunder- lightning
Tornado siren
Wind sound
Weather service bulletin
Electrocution Sound