

# STUFF

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by SEVAN

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**CHARACTERS:**

**EDITH** - 50s, a matriarch, a widow, a compulsive hoarder. Tough as nails and no-nonsense. An expert manipulator.

**DR. MEREDITH** - late 20s, an OCD therapist specializing in hoarding. She may be new but she has bite.

**BETH** - early 30s, Edith's daughter, anxious, neurotic, self-abusive when emotionally distraught.

**DAVID** - late 20s, Edith's son, socially awkward, kooky, germaphobic, and OCD. But the most human of the lot.

**TIME:** Now.

**PLACE:** A run-down and jampacked South Boston split level home.

**ACT ONE**

**SCENE 1: THURSDAY AFTERNOON**

*A cataclysmically overstuffed living room in a South Boston home. There are piles of yellowed and frayed newspapers. Stacks of filled-to-brimming plastic bags. Random detritus throughout including fast food bags and containers and soda bottles. Only one thing seems to have any attention paid to it: A credenza covered with various-sized elephant figurines.*

*EDITH is asleep in a lazy boy chair next to the credenza. The TV is blaring the morning news. An empty bag of UTZ chips sits on her chest. She's snoring. Loudly. She's giving the TV a run for its money.*

*It's snowing outside - steadily.*

*Knocking.*

*More knocking.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Hello?

*Knocking.*

*A hand wipes a swath across a window pane. DR. MEREDITH's face appears in the window.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Mrs. O'Neill?

*She knocks on the window. EDITH stirs. She belches. She snores.*

*DR. MEREDITH knocks on the window again.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Mrs. O'Neill? Edith O'Neill? Hello?

*The snoring stops with a halt.*

**EDITH**

Quit knocking fer Crissakes.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I tried ringing the doorbell?

**EDITH**

It ain't worked since Bush senior.

*A pause.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Can I come in, Mrs. O'Neill?

**EDITH**

I don't know you so no.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It's me? Dr. Meredith?

**EDITH**

Who?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Dr. Sylvia Meredith?

**EDITH**

Yeah and?

**DR. MEREDITH**

We have an appointment?

*EDITH turns off the TV.*

**EDITH**

Who are you?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Dr. Sylvi-

**EDITH**

I'm not fucking deaf I heard you. WHO are you?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm sorry I don't quite -

**EDITH**

(finally opening up her eyes  
and lifting her head up -  
marginally)

Who who WHO - why're you here?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Oh! WHO am I? As in what do I do?

**EDITH**

Yeah that, genius.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm the court-appointed therapist.

**EDITH**

What now?

**DR. MEREDITH**

You should have gotten a letter in the mail? I'm here to help you? With your problem?

**EDITH**

You always speak in questions?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Sorry?

**EDITH**

Jesus H. Christ.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Mind if I come in?

**EDITH**

Suit yourself doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Just walk in?

**EDITH**

Well I certainly ain't gettin' up sweetheart.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ok.

*DR. MEREDITH goes to the front door.  
Turns the handle. Nothing.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm afraid it's locked.

**EDITH**

No it ain't.

*She tries again.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

The knob turns but the door won't open.

**EDITH**

Oh Jesus - push woman. Put some weight behind it.

*She does and the door opens with  
some effort - just enough room for  
her to squeeze through.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Oh I see - you have stacks of books right here.

**EDITH**

Yeah - it's my to-read pile.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Doesn't it make it difficult for people to come in and out with them sitting here?

**EDITH**

It's why I got a back door. Besides I ain't much into entertaining. Hey - you wanna come around this side so I can actually see your face. Crissakes you could be standing there with a knife or something. Gimme some kind of fighting chance.

*DR. MEREDITH tries to navigate her  
way around.*

*She gets hit with the odor in the house. She trips on a pile of bottles.*

**EDITH**

Yeah watch out for those. I gotta recycle them.

*DR. MEREDITH comes into view.*

**EDITH**

Well hey, Doc. Ain't you just a perky vision in brown.

**DR. MEREDITH**

A pleasure to meet you Mrs. O'Neill.

**EDITH**

Miss. Just Miss will suit me fine. The Mr. up and died more than 5 years ago. I suppose that means I didn't really stop being a Mrs. given he just died instead of, God forbid, cheat on me or divorce me or something. But Miss is better - makes me sound younger.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ok - Miss O'Neill.

**EDITH**

Call me Edith.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ok - Edith.

**EDITH**

You?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Dr. Meredith.

**EDITH**

Ain't ya got a first name?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I actually prefer Dr. Meredith.

**EDITH**

Oooo - well get you then. Ok, Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Dr. Meredith.

**EDITH**

That ain't Irish is it?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not at all.

**EDITH**

Oh. Too bad, Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

DOCTOR Meredith.

**EDITH**

DOC - what can I do you?

**DR. MEREDITH**

As I said - I'm the court-appointed-

**EDITH**

(trying to put on airs and  
imitate Dr. Meredith)

Well as you have said it I don't see why you are needing  
to say it again. Why're you here sweetheart?

**DR. MEREDITH**

The court sent you a letter?

**EDITH**

Letter letter - what letter?

**DR. MEREDITH**

About your property?

**EDITH**

That's some skill you got - making any sentence sound  
like a question.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Is there someone here who looks after the mail maybe?

**EDITH**

Ha! Just me here sweetheart - and occasionally the meals-  
on-wheels people. Here - hand me that pile over there.



*DR. MEREDITH looks around - EDITH could mean any one of several piles.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Which?

**EDITH**

That! That one there! The envelopes. The desk.

*DR. MEREDITH walks to the desk. She looks at two different piles. She pauses.*

**EDITH**

Oh Jesus H Christ - the ones that are still SEALED.

*DR. MEREDITH grabs the pile and takes it to EDITH.*

**EDITH**

You're a real peach, Doc.

*As EDITH searches through the piles, DR. MEREDITH surveys the room. She lands on the elephants.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's an impressive collection.

**EDITH**

(still rifling)

Hm?

**DR. MEREDITH**

The elephants.

**EDITH**

(rifling)

Thanks.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You must care for them a lot.

**EDITH**

(rifling)

Hm?

**DR. MEREDITH**

They seem to be in great condition.

**EDITH**

Are, Doc. No seemin' to bein'.

**DR. MEREDITH**

How long have you been collecting?

**EDITH**

Since my youngest dropped out of college. Aha! Here. This what you talkin' 'bout?

**DR. MEREDITH**

(taking the letter)

Yes. Unopened.

**EDITH**

So open it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

(she does)

This was sent over two months ago. What about the follow-ups?

**EDITH**

(looking in pile again)

Um - hm - here - here - here - here - and here. Wanna open them all?

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's alright. This one will do just fine.

**EDITH**

Suit yourself, Doc. So what's it say?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Perhaps you should read it for yourself.

**EDITH**

I ain't got my glasses.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I can get them for you if you'd like.

**EDITH**

Sure - they're somewhere in there.

*She motions to the piles. DR.  
MEREDITH takes one glance and looks  
at the letter.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Dear Mrs. Edith O'Neill -

**EDITH**

Miss, I told you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

The letter says -

**EDITH**

Keep reading.

**DR. MEREDITH**

The city of Boston / has been -

**EDITH**

(finally taking the UTZ bag  
off her chest and crumpling  
it)

Those sons of bitches - let me tell you. Those cock  
suckers should all be fired. They're supposed to pick up  
my trash once a week. I'm lucky if it they show up once a  
month. Assholes - the whole lot of 'em. Hope they rot in  
hell.

*A pause.*

**EDITH**

Read read read.

**DR. MEREDITH**

- has been informed of several issues regarding your  
property on 56 Lorraine -

**EDITH**

(cleaning off her house dress)

Raised property taxes is what they did. They bamboozle us  
with their election bullshit talk and once they get  
elected they make us bend over and take it over and over  
and over. I been in this house since 1971 and I can't pay  
it off coz they keep raising rates and taxes. I'll be  
dead before it ever gets paid off.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Several issues regarding your property -

**EDITH**

Here it is the son of a bitch!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Pardon?

**EDITH**

My glasses. They were here. Right between my tits.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Several issues -

**EDITH**

Yeah yeah yeah - gimme the goddamn letter, Doc.

*DR. MEREDITH hands the letter. As EDITH reads she looks around some more. Finally:*

**EDITH**

Fucking cock sucking soulless bastards! How can they - they dare - they - ASSHOLES! You know what this says, Doc?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Well, yes, I was given -

**EDITH**

(pointing at Dr. Meredith)

Asshole!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Mrs. O'Neill, I don't think -

**EDITH**

I said MISS goddamit and call me Edith I said.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith, I don't think it's necessary for you to speak to me in that manner.

**EDITH**

Screw you and your manners, Doc. They're trying to take my house.

**DR. MEREDITH**

And how does that make you feel?

**EDITH**

How does that - assholes! That's how it makes me feel.

**DR. MEREDITH**

They do have grounds, Edith.

**EDITH**

So what - the house is a little messy. Who's it killing?

**DR. MEREDITH**

A concerned citizen reported that the city might -

**EDITH**

Gotta be that whore Mrs. Johnson from next door. She's always had an eye on this house. Wanted to buy it for her son 10 years ago. He's one of them gays - and an alcoholic on top of it. I told her to fuck off. Was it her?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm afraid I can't -

**EDITH**

Ha! It WAS her.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I can't say because I don't know. I don't see that paperwork.

**EDITH**

I'll bet you my left tit it was that whore from next door, Mrs. Johnson. Who gives a shit if there's a little dirt here and there. This is my house. MINE.

**DR. MEREDITH**

The concern is that it might be hazardous to your health.

**EDITH**

You're hazardous to my health bringing me this shit.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I can see why they're concerned.

**EDITH**

'Scuse me?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Take a deep breath, Edith.

**EDITH**

I don't need to.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Humour me. A deep breath.

*EDITH does so.*

**EDITH**

What now?

**DR. MEREDITH**

What do you smell?

**EDITH**

Air.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Describe what it smells like.

**EDITH**

You tryin' to tell me my house stinks without tellin' me my house stinks, Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not at all. I just want to know what you think it smells like.

**EDITH**

Air. A little stuffy.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ammonia?

**EDITH**

(she sniffs)

Nope.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Mildew?

**EDITH**  
(a longer sniff)

Nope.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Waste?

*EDITH looks at her. Then reaches over and grabs a can of Lysol freshener and releases a long, very long, stream in the direction of DR. MEREDITH. She smiles throughout it. She eventually stops and puts the can away.*

**EDITH**

There. Better?

*DR. MEREDITH smiles at her and goes to open the windows to let some air circulate.*

**EDITH**

Hey hey - all that snow's gonna ruin my stuff.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Some fresh air will do you good.

**EDITH**

(under her breath)

Wasting my time.

**DR. MEREDITH**

(coming back to her)

Let's try something else. Look around and tell me what you see.

**EDITH**

My things.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Useful things?

**EDITH**

I don't keep trash, Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**  
(reaching for an empty bottle)

What about this?

**EDITH**

It's a bottle.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It's empty.

**EDITH**

I know that, Doc, I ain't stupid. I just told you I ain't had time to put it out for recycling.

**DR. MEREDITH**

There must be more than 100 bottles here. When's the last time you left that chair, Edith?

**EDITH**

I dunno. A week. Maybe two.

**DR. MEREDITH**

How is your leg doing?

**EDITH**

It's still attached to my body.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Has it healed?

**EDITH**

Doc said it would take time.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You have a Baker's cyst on your right leg, isn't that true?

**EDITH**

Am I on trial or something?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not at all, Edith. I just want to know what you know. You never went in for a follow up with your doctor.

**EDITH**

That cocksucker can kiss my ass. They're all after my money - filing false insurance claims and shit.



I ain't sick. They tried to give me some bullshit operation. Like they think I got thousands of dollars sitting around shoved up my ass or something.

**DR. MEREDITH**

If left untreated you could die, Edith.

**EDITH**

Don't use that scare tactics shit on me. It's just a bump. It'll go away.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I can see it from here.

**EDITH**

Well then stop looking up my dress. You come all this way just to tell me things I already know, Doc?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm here to help you.

**EDITH**

So you said. How so?

**DR. MEREDITH**

The court wants an assessment of your situation.

**EDITH**

And you're the fresh meat.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm the last one, yes.

**EDITH**

Didn't think there were any more of you left.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm your last lifeline.

**EDITH**

In others words my ass is in your hands now. And if I don't impress and kowtow then I get hauled off to jail or the looney bin.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not at all.

**EDITH**

Don't give me the runaround, Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

There is no jail sentence for this.

**EDITH**

Then what.

**DR. MEREDITH**

They'll do what they say in the letter.

**EDITH**

Take my house.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**EDITH**

Sell it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**EDITH**

Or [looking at letter] "raze if deemed unsafe and uninhabitable."

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**EDITH**

Well Happy Fucking Day to me then, Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's why I'm here. To help you through this problem and to get you back to living healthy.

**EDITH**

This that Eat, Pray, Love bullshit?

**DR. MEREDITH**

This is help, Edith. Plain and simple.

**EDITH**

I don't need it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I think you do.

**EDITH**

I said -

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith, I believe you have a hoarding problem whether you choose to believe it or not. And this house is evidence of that. So I need you to stop being defensive with someone who really has your best interest in mind. I want you to live to a very old age, but if you continue in this lifestyle you may not even make it to next year. Now I would appreciate a smidgen of cooperation unless you have no interest whatsoever in your well-being in which case I can crawl back over these piles and squeeze myself out of here.

*They look at one another.*

*EDITH starts raucously laughing.*

**EDITH**

Well shit - the Doc's got some balls.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I didn't mean to -

**EDITH**

Don't take it back, Doc. I respect honesty and truth. You gotta find my feelings before you can try to hurt them. So how much?

**DR. MEREDITH**

For what?

**EDITH**

All this help.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Free.

**EDITH**

Bullshit.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm paid by the state.

**EDITH**

Whether I live or die.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I don't see it -

**EDITH**

Whether I live or die - right?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**EDITH**

Good. I like a challenge. Ok then, Doc - go ahead. Cure me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It doesn't work like that.

**EDITH**

Then like?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Well, I'd like get to know you, your history, what you see for yourself in the future. And - I'd like to speak to your children.

**EDITH**

I don't have children.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth and David?

**EDITH**

Oh - those bastards. Forget 'em, Doc. They're bad news.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I think it's important they take part in this process - if for no other reason than you're going to need some help getting this house cleaned up.

**EDITH**

Thought this was about my mental health.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It's part of the agreement. You have sessions with me, we clean the house so it can pass inspection, and we get to the root of your hoarding.

**EDITH**

I ain't calling those kids.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I can do that for you.

**EDITH**

I don't give a flying poodle shit what you do. But you'll be wasting your time. Those ungrateful little shits won't come within 10 miles of this house. They hate me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm sure they don't.

**EDITH**

I'm sure they do.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Do they live nearby?

**EDITH**

Oh hell no. The oldest one -

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth.

**EDITH**

Yeah, her. Got knocked up young and moved to Georgetown. Wasted her life is what she did. Goddam loser.

**DR. MEREDITH**

And David.

**EDITH**

Dropped outta school and holed himself up in some flea dump in East Boston with the 'Spics.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's not appropriate, Edith.

**EDITH**

Fuck you, Doc. They're Hispanic. Spic is an abbreviation. Like "can't" or "Jap."

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'll make arrangements for them to meet with us tomorrow.

**EDITH**

Don't say I didn't warn you. Gonna be one big waste of time.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let that be my surprise then.

**EDITH**

Ha! Ok, Doc. Ok.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith I need you to understand how serious this situation is.

**EDITH**

I got it I got it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

The city inspector will be here in four days - if what he sees doesn't satisfy him there won't be a second chance. They will forcibly remove you from the house. Do you understand?

**EDITH**

I - got - it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Good. That's good.

**EDITH**

So pull up a pile or a box. Let's get this show started.

*DR. MEREDITH goes for a sturdy box and drags it over and has a seat.*

**EDITH**

What do I do first?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Just talk.

**EDITH**

About?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Tell me about your parents.

**EDITH**

Those bastards - oh they were real trips lemme tell you -

BLACKOUT.

**SCENE 2: FRIDAY MORNING**

*Lights up on EDITH in her chair. DR. MEREDITH off to the side. And a shocked BETH, one hand to her face, standing in the middle, looking around.*

*The snow falls more heavily outside.*

**BETH**

Oh my god.

*She looks around.*

**BETH**

Oh my god.

*She turns around.*

**BETH**

Oh my god.

*Prolonged silence.*

**BETH**

Oh my god.

**EDITH**

For Crissakes, Beth. We get it.

**BETH**

What in the HELL happened here?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth, when is the last time you were in this house?

**BETH**

I dunno. Maybe five years ago.

**EDITH**

Eight.

**BETH**

It was five, Ma.

**EDITH**

Eight, I tell ya. You got married to that cocksucker Dick/ - funny, right Doc? His nickname is Dick and he's a cocksucker.

**BETH**

His name is Richard.

<  
<  
<

**BETH**

He is NOT a -

**EDITH**

You married DICK in [insert the date 11 years before now], you had that son -

**BETH**

His name is Herbert - HERBERT.

**EDITH**

What kinda goddamn name is that - Herbert. That sound Irish to you, Doc?

**BETH**

It's Richard's grandfather's name.

**EDITH**

Herbert - sounds like an 80-year-old pedophile.

**BETH**

Can we leave my kid out of -

**EDITH**

So she has "Herbert" soon after. Married outta wedlock - what a gem lemme tell you, Doc. I saw the kid once maybe twice and that was it.



**BETH**

Don't you be a liar, Ma. Don't. You saw that kid plenty.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Did you have any idea what was going on over here?

**BETH**

I never thought it was this bad. The house was always messy - she wasn't no prize-winning housekeeper. It kinda got worse after my dad passed, God rest his soul.

**EDITH**

Not when I get up there.

**BETH**

I even got a maid to visit her once a week.

**EDITH**

Stole my jewelry is what she did - so I let her go.

**BETH**

She quit because you kept harassing her. So the house got worse. I told her she needed to clean up before I would bring Herbert back. But I had no idea it had gotten this bad. Ma - Ma - how can you live like this?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Try not to ask questions that sound like judgements, Beth. Remember what I said on the phone.

**EDITH**

Might as well ask her to breathe through her ass.

**BETH**

This house. This poor poor house.

*BETH starts tugging hard at her hair.*

**EDITH**

No "poor poor" Ma? I'm the one stuck in this chair here, Beth. How about a little hair pulling for me.

*BETH self-consciously stops and yanks her hand away from her head.*

**EDITH**

You'd have a field day with this one, Doc. Are we gonna get started or something soon? I got my stories to watch.

**DR. MEREDITH**

As soon as David arrives. Beth have you heard from him?

**BETH**

(still looking around in  
astonishment)

Yeah, said he was stuck in traffic.

**EDITH**

Probably some Mexican warfare drug shootout or something. Why didn't you convince him to move closer to you? Or here even.

**BETH**

He likes that neighbourhood.

**EDITH**

He don't fit in there.

**BETH**

How would you know?

**EDITH**

He's my son.

**BETH**

Yeah?

**EDITH**

And he ain't a 'Spic.

**BETH**

Ma! I can't believe you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith - we talked about  
this.

<

**EDITH**

Oh god fine he ain't a HISSpanic. Better?

**BETH**

It's close to his job.

**EDITH**

Yeah, a janitor. You spend your life raising kids and he becomes a janitor. How's that for gratitude?

**DR. MEREDITH**

What do you do Beth?

**EDITH**

Works on last nerves.

**BETH**

I'm in between jobs right now.

**EDITH**

Dick still grease monkeying?

**BETH**

Yes, Richard is still an auto mechanic.

**EDITH**

Hope a jack gives out and a Buick falls on his head.

**BETH**

If you're gonna keep talking to me like that I'm outta here.

**EDITH**

So go! Who needs you? I ain't call you. This one did. So don't pretend like you're here for me or something. Why are you here anyway?

**BETH**

Because I'm concerned.

**EDITH**

You're a liar. You want this house.

**BETH**

What?

**EDITH**

You've had your eye on this place for a while now.

**BETH**

I want THIS?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ladies.

**EDITH**

Butt out, Doc. You want to get her to declare me stupid or something.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's not the term.

**EDITH**

And have me sent to some crazy people home where I can shit myself all day long.

**BETH**

That's NOT true.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth, don't give in to -

**BETH**

Butt out, Doc. Listen to me old woman -

**EDITH**

Fuck you, I ain't old!

**BETH**

You can either take the help or you're on your own.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Well she wouldn't be.

**BETH**

Say what now?

**DR. MEREDITH**

She could live with you, Beth.

**BETH/EDITH**

The hell you say.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Well, from what Edith says David only has a studio apartment. Whereas you live in a large home. It's the obvious solution.

*A moment.*

**BETH**

Well let's get cleaning then.

*BETH starts attacking boxes and piles.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth that's not what -

**EDITH**

(going into a panic attack)

Leave my things alone, Beth. Beth - leave them. Leave them be. I said. Put that down. Doc, stop her. She's destroying everything. Beth put that down. Stop touching my things goddammit! Crissakes stop her someone!

**BETH**

I mean if we gotta clean to keep her in here then let's do this. Leave what, ma. This is all junk. This is trash. And this is trash. It's an empty bottle. All these McDonald's wrappers. How old is this shit. Just throw it out, Ma. Ma. Ma! It's junk!

**DR. MEREDITH**

(overlapped with above)

Beth - please put those things down. Ladies - can we - ladies. Please let's calm down.

*The door swings open and DAVID stands there.*

**DAVID**

My god - the traffic. Let me tell you the traffic. It was horrible. I forgot what it was like trying to get into this part of town during rush hour. And the snow isn't helping at all. It's actually starting to blow in sideways. Sideways! So traffic and snow aren't a good mix. Sorry I'm late everybody - Mom - Beth. And you? Oh you! You! You must be that doctor I talked to on the phone right? That Dr. Mar - mare- Mary? No that's not right. Wait lemme think. Mer mer mer mermaid merlot merchant - process of neural elimination - Meredith! Dr. Sylvia Meredith! Right? Right. Nice to meet you. So nice to meet you. No no can't shake hands it's a thing you see well not really a thing a habit too many germs and I don't know if you well anyway not a big deal. So I'm here sorry I'm late again. Traffic. Snow. So much snow. Ma Beth you two look good. This place looks it looks. Oh Jesus. Oh God. Oh Jesus good God. This - what happened. Oh my god. The air - the air feels a little thin. It's thin right?

**EDITH**

And that is my David.

**DAVID**

Hi Dr. Meredith. I'm David. So nice to meet you. Hey Beth.

*They share an awkward hug - he tries desperately not to make contact. She tries desperately to make contact.*

**BETH**

Thank God you're here.

**DAVID**

Jesus - look at all this - this -

**EDITH**

Shit?

*DAVID pulls out a medium sized bottle of Purell and empties an ungodly amount into his hand.*

**DAVID**

Mom - how are you feeling?

**EDITH**

I'm fine.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Everything alright, David?

**DAVID**

Hm? Oh sure. Sure sure sure. Just - you know - preventative.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Why don't we all have a seat, hm?

**BETH**

Where?

**DAVID**

Here?

**EDITH**

Sit on the floor for all I care.

**DAVID**

Oh no. No no no. Can't do that. Not there.

**EDITH**

Pull up a goddamn box then. Jesus.

*DAVID runs out of the house.*

**BETH**

David!

**EDITH**

Ah let him go. The chicken shit. You grab that box and sit down. Let's get this over and done with so I can watch my stories.

**DR. MEREDITH**

This may take some time.

**EDITH**

You got 'till 10AM, Doc.

**BETH**

Not keen on being trapped in a snow bank, Dr. Meredith. I gotta pick up my kid later.

**DR. MEREDITH**

We're here and we're committed. All of us.

*DAVID walks back in with a folding stadium chair which he pulls out of a bag and unfolds. He takes out he Purell again and empties it onto the seat. Then pulls out a Kleenex and wipes the seat. He squirts some more onto his hands. Then has a seat. Re-adjusts. Gets comfortable. Then looks at everyone.*

**DAVID**

I'm ready.

**EDITH**

You're nuts.

**BETH**

Ma!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Please.

**EDITH**

What? He's acting crazy.

**BETH**

Oh that's rich coming from you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Please! Stop it.

*They all sit there. Arms folded.  
Quiet.*

**DAVID**

I'm not nuts.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I know.

**DAVID**

I just like keeping things clean.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It's ok, David.

**DAVID**

But I'm not nuts.

**EDITH**

We get it!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith. Tone.

**EDITH**

(sweet as sugar)

We get it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Before we even approach the hoarding issue.



**EDITH**

I ain't got a hoarding issue.

*BETH guffaws.*

**EDITH**

Up yours!

**DR. MEREDITH**

BEFORE we address any other issues I want you to talk openly - WITHOUT judgement - about the situation in this house, first. And the effect it has had on your lives, second. Who would like to begin?

**BETH**

I will.

**EDITH**

We're gonna be here all day.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Go ahead. Tell us how the current condition of this house makes you feel.

**BETH**

Embarrassed. Humiliated.

**EDITH**

Who gives a shit what they think? I live here.

**DR. MEREDITH**

No more interruptions. We are going to let everyone have their say with the same respect that you will get when you speak.

**EDITH**

Go ahead. Crucify me. Not like I can get away from it trapped here.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Continue, Beth.

**BETH**

This is so sad.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Why?

**BETH**

My dad. He worked his ass off for this house. Paying the bills. Making sure the roof stayed over our heads. Did all the renos when something broke down or wore out. This ain't what he left behind. This ain't what he wanted for us. I mean, Jesus, look at this stuff. This ain't normal.

**DR. MEREDITH**

No judgements, Beth. Just how you feel about the condition of the house.

**BETH**

I want my Daddy's house back.

**EDITH**

(mockingly)

I want my Daddy's...It was MY house, too. Ya hear? WE found it. WE filled it. WE lived in it. And I'M the one who cared for him when he got the cancer.

**BETH**

We visited him a lot.

**EDITH**

Once or twice a month ain't a lot. I cooked for him. Wiped his shitty ass when he couldn't get up to go to the bathroom no more. I held his hand when that son of a bitch left me in this house alone.

**BETH**

We both helped out, too!

**EDITH**

Throwing some money at us for groceries or medication. I still ain't paid off all his hospital bills - you gonna help with that? House got a third mortgage on it now - you gonna help with that?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Is that when the house started to become cluttered?

**BETH**

The house was never super clean but it was never this. I don't even know when it started.

**DR. MEREDITH**

David?

**DAVID**

Hm?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Do you know when it started?

**DAVID**

Me? Oh I don't know at all.

**DR. MEREDITH**

And how do you feel about the house?

**DAVID**

It's dirty.

**DR. MEREDITH**

But how do you feel about what has happened to it?

**DAVID**

Is my room still clean? You didn't throw anything in there or anything did you?

**DR. MEREDITH**

David.

**DAVID**

Hm?

**DR. MEREDITH**

The house?

**DAVID**

I used to do all the cleaning. I liked the cleaning. Passed the time.

**DR. MEREDITH**

And now?

**DAVID**

It was fast.

**DR. MEREDITH**

What was?

**DAVID**

This house got dirty fast didn't it? I mean look at it. Where's the floor?

**EDITH**

Can the suspect be convicted now, Doc?

**DR. MEREDITH**

You're not on trial, Edith.

**EDITH**

Sure as shit feels like it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your turn.

**EDITH**

What.

**DR. MEREDITH**

How does the house make you feel?

**EDITH**

Doesn't make me feel like anything. I live here.

**BETH**

This is living?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Respect, Beth.

**EDITH**

Yeah! Respect dumbass!

**BETH**

(yanks on her hair)

See what she does?

**EDITH**

Stop yanking!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith - focus - the house.

**EDITH**

So the housekeeping got a little away from me. I forgot to do the dishes once in a while. I didn't mop the floors as much.

**DAVID**

That was my favourite part.

**EDITH**

Shit didn't get dusted. My husband got sick. What do you want from me?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Did Beth and David visit more after your husband died?

**EDITH**

I coulda been a dried up corpse in here and no one would've known.

**DR. MEREDITH**

What about your other relatives?

**EDITH**

Ain't got none.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your husband's?

**EDITH**

They disowned him after we married.

**BETH**

You drove them off!

**EDITH**

I did not!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Why?

**EDITH**

They thought I was trash.

**DAVID**

(chuckling)

Irony.

**EDITH**

You got something to say smartass?

**DAVID**

No. No no.

**BETH**

Don't do that to him. You always shut him down. Let him talk.

**DAVID**

I'm good. Nothing to say.

**DR. MEREDITH**

David you should feel free to say what you want here.

**EDITH**

Yeah, David, say what you want here.

**DAVID**

(taking a moment first)

You didn't take down my racing car posters off the wall by any chance did you?

**EDITH**

Jesus Tap Dancing Christ.

**DR. MEREDITH**

So, Edith, would it be safe to assume then that after your children left and your husband passed the house started to get filled?

**EDITH**

Sure let's assume that.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ok. This is good.

**EDITH**

Great. Can you all get out now so I can watch my stories?

**BETH**

How's about you get off your fat ass and do some cleaning?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth.

**EDITH**

Coz I got a medical problem and I can't get around, shit-for-brains.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith.

**DAVID**

You could always hire another maid.

**EDITH**

You gonna pay for it? Your sister? Neither of you's helped with shit these last few years. Can't even get a call on Christmas or a Mother's Day card.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It would be best for us to focus on / the issue at hand.

**BETH**

Yeah coz you were SUCH a stellar model of motherhood.

**EDITH**

Did you ever go hungry? Or barefoot?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let's focus.

**BETH**

What about the other stuff, Ma?

**EDITH**

Oh God not this I didn't get enough hugs bullshit.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Stop it.

**BETH**

What we needed was you!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Stop it!

**EDITH**

You need your head checked.

**DR. MEREDITH**

(clapping her hands)

HEY HEY HEY! ENOUGH! Ok, change of plans. Here's how we're gonna do things.

(EDITH starts to say something.)

And I don't want anyone to say anything until I'm done talking.

*They nod. In their own ways.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Here's the reality check folks. It's Friday and the clean-up crews arrive on Monday bright and early. And by 6PM when the inspector arrives this house needs to be up to code or that's it. We're done. You're done. No more outs.

**EDITH**

You tell them to leave my things alone.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That will depend on how quickly we resolve the issues here. Now it's very clear I can't have you all in the room, so we're going to do this one-on-one so I can get a handle on the deeper issues. And we're going to do it right here - ground zero - as it were. Are we clear?

**EDITH**

As mud.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth?

**BETH**

Sure - why not.

**DR. MEREDITH**

David?

**DAVID**

Does it have to be in here?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**DAVID**

Can I bring a plastic tarp?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Whatever you need to feel comfortable.



**EDITH**

A strait jacket.

**BETH**

MA!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth we'll start with you. Alright?

**BETH**

Sure.

**DAVID**

Can I go see my room?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I don't think that would be a problem.

**EDITH**

Give my regards to the lovely family of roaches I left in charge of your estate.

*DAVID stares at her wide-eyed then runs upstairs. EDITH cackles.*

**BETH**

You're a horrible old woman.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Have a seat, Beth.

*EDITH turns on the TV. A soap opera theme or scene plays. Everyone stares at her. After a moment she turns to look at them.*

**EDITH**

What?

*DR. MEREDITH gives EDITH a steely look. Without looking to the TV, she turns it off and folds her arms across her.*

**BETH**

I'm not saying nothing as long as she's here.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let me help you into the kitchen and make you some tea while Beth and I chat.

**EDITH**

I ain't goin' nowhere. I wanna make sure she don't lie to you.

**BETH**

You afraid of the truth?

**EDITH**

Just the ones you got made up in your head.

**DR. MEREDITH**

If you're here then Beth won't feel as comfortable being honest. Two days, Edith. Two days.

**EDITH**

Fine. Desk drawer. Top right. Open it.

*DR. MEREDITH gives her a raised-eyebrow look.*

**EDITH**

Please.

*DR. MEREDITH goes to the desk, opens the drawer after pushing aside a pile and a stack her and there. She withdraws an old Walkman with orange ear bud headphones.*

**BETH**

You gotta be kidding me.

**EDITH**

That's my compromise. Bring it here.

*DR. MEREDITH does so and hands it to EDITH who blows off some dust.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

This is a bit unorthodox.

**EDITH**

Yeah, well, I'm Catholic whattaya expect.

*EDITH places the headphones on and presses play. Nothing.*

**EDITH**

Ah hell come on.

*EDITH opens the back of the remote control and smacks it on her palm. Two batteries pop out and she places them in the Walkman discarding the dead batteries over her shoulder. DR. MEREDITH retrieves them as EDITH puts the new ones in. She holds them out to EDITH.*

**EDITH**

Right. Apologies, Doc.

*She reaches over and gingerly, and sarcastically, places each one in an overflowing trash can. EDITH smiles at her and presses play. She lays her head back and closes her eyes.*

**EDITH**

Ah - take me away Tony.

*No one moves. We hear music coming from the headphones. EDITH pops one eye open then lifts her head up.*

**EDITH**

(loudly)

Well go ahead then! I can't hear shit!

*She resumes her head position with eyes closed. At some point, early in the following, she sneakily removes the headphone from the ear facing away from BETH and DR. MEREDITH.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let's begin.

**BETH**

Hang on.

*She walks up to behind EDITH.*

**BETH**

Daddy made the biggest mistake of his life marrying you.

*Nothing. BETH smiles. Goes to sit.*

**BETH**

We're good.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That was a bit harsh.

**BETH**

She couldn't hear me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's not the point. I gather you have a lot of animosity towards your mother.

**BETH**

What gave it away?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Is it linked to her hoarding?

**BETH**

She ain't a hoarder. She's dirty.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It looks like that. But there are things in this house she's very protective of.

**BETH**

She's got bags of clothes in my bedroom. You can barely move around in her and daddy's room 'coz of all the boxes of God's knows what. It's random garbage lying around.

**DR. MEREDITH**

To us it's a random collection of things, but they hold some special meaning for her.

**BETH**

The trash is special?

**DR. MEREDITH**

The trash is a by-product of the hoarding and her medical issue. But this about you right now. I notice you and Edith spend more time talking AT one another.

**BETH**

Always been like that. 'Two stubborn jackasses in a pea pod!' my daddy used to say.

**EDITH**

(singing along loudly and off key)

"...best is yet to come and won't it be fine"

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your father had a sense of humour.

**BETH**

I woulda lost my mind in this house if it hadn't been for him. I was a typical Daddy's little girl.

**EDITH**

"The best is yet to..."

**BETH**

She spent most of her time smoking her cigs and burning dinner. Poor David had to do all the cleaning around here growing up. Old man made sure I could handle an electric drill. Took a whole summer teaching me to solder when all the fuses blew out. Always wanted to restore this place down to the moulding. But she wouldn't have it. 'We got a roof, four walls, and nothing leaks. Now eat your goddamn TV dinner'. If I hadn't gotten pregnant I would never have left him alone with her.

**DR. MEREDITH**

And after he got sick?

**BETH**

Maybe I didn't see him as much as I should have. But I had Herbert to take care of and we weren't having any luck winning the lottery. And she didn't want to 'exhaust him.'

**EDITH**

"too hungry for dinner at eight!"

**DR. MEREDITH**

So you feel like she kept you away from him?

**BETH**

She finally had him all to herself and she wasn't lettin' go. And then he died, and the house got messier, and she got nastier, and I just stopped coming around.

(As she gets more distraught  
she starts to tug her hair  
and hit her thigh with a  
closed hand)

I couldn't take her mouth anymore. I didn't have to. I was a grown up. She terrorized David until he couldn't even talk to people. I wasn't gonna let her do that to me. Always telling me how weak I was. How I wasn't gonna amount to nothin'. Making fun of my husband and my kid. I'd heard it all my life and I wasn't gonna let her do that to me as an adult. No right.

**EDITH**

"That's why the lady is a tramp!"

**BETH**

She had no right!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Are you alright?

**BETH**

Huh? Oh yeah. This is - it's nothing. I ain't a danger to myself or anyone around me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It just seems that -

**BETH**

This is about her - not me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

So why are you here helping her?

**BETH**

Coz I don't want her to live with me!

**DR. MEREDITH**

You found out that was a possibility after you showed up. What motivated you to come here in the first place? Maybe you still do feel something for her.

**BETH**

This house deserves better.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let's talk about you and Edith. Can you tell me one happy memory?

**EDITH**

"That's why the ladyyyyyyy."

**BETH**

Not a one.

**EDITH**

"Is a traaaaaaaaaaaaamp!"

**BETH**

Not a god-damned one.

BLACKOUT.

**SCENE 3: LATER**

*DAVID sits with DR. MEREDITH - a plastic tarp under the chair and around him. He dry washes his hands throughout. EDITH is sound asleep, mouth agape, music still playing.*

**DAVID**

(staring at her)

Is she dead?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Sleeping.

**DAVID**

She looks dead.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Does that scare you?

**DAVID**

She loves Tony Bennett. Played his records all the time when I was a kid.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Has some pretty good songs.

**DAVID**

I hate Tony Bennett. Unorthodox isn't it?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your mother insisted.

**DAVID**

She does that. A lot. Beth gave up, huh?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Grabbing us some lunch.

**DAVID**

She didn't last long.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Length of time isn't a measure of success or failure.

*Moments of awkward silence. DAVID looking around, smiling at DR. MEREDITH, looking at EDITH. DR. MEREDITH just watches him.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

What's on your mind, David?

**DAVID**

Hm?

**DR. MEREDITH**

What were you just thinking about?

**DAVID**

Scabies. And scoliosis.

**DR. MEREDITH**

How come?

**DAVID**

The house is dirty. And that chair doesn't look like it has any lumbar support.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Are you worried about your mom?

**DAVID**

(thinking a moment)

Yup. I kind of have to be.



**DR. MEREDITH**

Why do you say that?

**DAVID**

I'm her son.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I see.

**DAVID**

Honour your parents.

**DR. MEREDITH**

So this is just moral obligation?

**DAVID**

What else would there be?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Love.

**DAVID**

Funny.

*Some more silence. EDITH lets out a loud snore.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Any thoughts on the house?

**DAVID**

It's dirty.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**DAVID**

Really dirty.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**DAVID**

But my room is clean. A little dusty but that was easy to fix.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It says a lot that she left your room untouched.

**DAVID**

Not really.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I disagree. She clearly has some affection for you.

**DAVID**

I locked it when I moved out - three high security steel-hardened padlocks.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ah.

**DAVID**

I'm not stupid.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not at all.

**DAVID**

I'm not.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm agreeing with you.

**DAVID**

Ok.

*A minor awkward pause.*

**DAVID**

You're very young.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I am.

**DAVID**

I thought you would be older.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Sorry.

**DAVID**

Your voice. Mature. Not that it sounds weird or anything. I just didn't expect someone so young.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Keeps people on their toes.

**DAVID**

Too young maybe. To handle this. Us.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I can take care of myself.

**DAVID**

Maybe.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth said you were still living here when your father got sick.

**DAVID**

For a few months. Then I went to college. Because I graduated.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Did you visit?

**DAVID**

I talked to them on the phone. And then he passed away.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Did you ever get a sense something was happening with your mother?

**DAVID**

The house got dirty. She used to keep it clean.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your sister said she never liked to clean.

**DAVID**

Beth exaggerates to make her point.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Apparently you were responsible for all the cleaning.

**DAVID**

Mom made me her little helper when I could walk. Then she just let me do it all the time because I asked her to. I would do the big things and she would handle the small. So there's no way the house was messy when we were kids. And then Beth left for college and I took over the little things, too.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Did you ever talk to her about it?

**DAVID**

You've talked to her about it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

*He gives her a "there you go" look.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

But you're her family.

**DAVID**

Mom doesn't listen to anybody. Ever.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Good point.

**DAVID**

Why did you become a therapist?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Psychiatrist.

**DAVID**

Thank you for the correction. So how come?

**DR. MEREDITH**

It's not really important to this conversation.

**DAVID**

It might be. Would build trust. Trust is important in these situations. And I'm curious. Did something bad happen in your life that you couldn't control so now you try to make up for it by helping other people?

**DR. MEREDITH**  
(taken aback by the question  
and pausing)

No.

**DAVID**

Really?

**DR. MEREDITH**  
I find mental health interesting. I like helping people.  
No secret story.

**DAVID**  
I was hoping for a more exciting answer.

**DR. MEREDITH**  
Most people usually do.

**DAVID**  
Too bad.

**DR. MEREDITH**  
David, I want to ask you a question I asked Beth. Do you  
have any happy memories of your mother?

*He thinks.*

**DAVID**  
How did Beth answer?

**DR. MEREDITH**  
It doesn't matter. Your answer does.

**DAVID**  
Why?

**DR. MEREDITH**  
You're very different from your mother and sister.

**DAVID**  
Thank you.

**DR. MEREDITH**  
It's easy to tell what they're feeling when they speak.

**DAVID**  
I do black-and-white talking.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That is a very interested way to put it.

**DAVID**

Gets to the point.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Some people would see it as indifference.

**DAVID**

Only the dead are indifferent. If you're breathing you're having an opinion.

*She smiles and nods at him. He mimics her pleasantly.*

**DAVID**

We'd go to Carson Beach on Sundays. All of us. After church. My father loved the ocean. My mother would lounge in a chair with a large hat, smoking from a long filter. Beth and I would make sand castles. Or bury dad. We laughed. Mom laughed. She used to do that a lot. And then she stopped.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Do you know why?

**DAVID**

I don't really remember to be honest. I just know she stopped one day. Just like the cleaning. Maybe the answer is really simple and she doesn't / like doing any -

*BETH comes in the house carrying take-out. She kicks the door behind her and it slams.*

**EDITH**

(waking with a start)

Fucking Christ what's happening?!

**BETH**

Lunch.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm not finished talking to David.

**DAVID**

It's ok. I didn't have much else to say.

**BETH**

(taking off her coat)

Doc we're gonna have to hurry this up. Storm's kicking up out there.

**EDITH**

What'd you bring?

**DAVID**

The forecast didn't say there would be a storm.

**EDITH**

What is that?

**BETH**

Those idiots are never right.

**EDITH**

(smelling the air) )

Oh God not chink food.

-----IF THE ACTRESS PLAYING DR. MEREDITH IS EAST  
ASIAN-----

*They look at DR. MEREDITH.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm Korean.

**EDITH**

Oh well that's alright then.

-----

**BETH**

Real, classy, ma.

**EDITH**

I hate kitty lo mein.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Excuse me?

**EDITH**

They eat cats.

**BETH**

They do not!

**DAVID**

Five seconds. I think that's a record.

**EDITH**

So counsellor? The stool pigeons give you enough to send me up the river?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Enough for a 10-year sentence. I'm hoping to get you life.

**BETH**

(cackling)

Good one.

**DAVID**

Can I go now?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I think it would be lovely if you could join us for some lunch. Give us a chance to check in.

**DAVID**

Might set another new record.

**DR. MEREDITH**

A mouth full of fried rice will stall that. Let me help you.

*She goes to help BETH. EDITH leans over and smacks DAVID's thigh. He turns to find her lasciviously moving her index finger in and out of a fist. He looks away embarrassed.*

**BETH**

Give us a hand, D.

**DAVID**

(moving far away)

No thanks. I'm alright thanks.

*EDITH cackles. BETH stumbles into a box bringing a plate of food to EDITH.*



**BETH**

Jesus! I'll be so happy when we can throw this crap out.

**EDITH**

You keep away from my things.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let's save this topic for after we eat.

**BETH**

Great. We can have a philosophical discussion about stacks of newspapers or my Daddy's clothes still hanging in the closet.

**EDITH**

You went into my room?

**BETH**

Well yeah.

**EDITH**

Why the hell were you in there?

**BETH**

I wanted to see what needed cleaning.

**EDITH**

You have no right to be in there. I trust you, Doc, and you stab me in the back.

**BETH**

I was just looking.

**DAVID**

30 seconds.

**BETH/EDITH**

Shut up you!

**EDITH**

What'd you take? Huh? What'd you sneak off with? Your daddy's watch? His cufflinks for Dick.

**BETH**

(shoving an eggroll in  
EDITH's lap)

I LOOKED. LOOKED. You think I'm gonna willingly touch anything in this house? You're nuts.

**EDITH**

What'd she take, Doc?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Nothing has been taken or touched. Let's all / sit and

**EDITH**

Liar!

**BETH**

You know, maybe if you got off your ass and cleaned instead of sitting there barking orders we wouldn't have these arguments.

**EDITH**

I already told you I can't.

**BETH**

Right. Your leg. Whatever. Get up and exercise. Get it looked at. Get it cut off. You're always making excuses.

**EDITH**

(throwing an eggroll at BETH)

I ain't making excuses. I'm stuck in this chair, dumbass.

**BETH**

Hey!

**EDITH**

I can't walk. You get that? I can't walk! I'm stuck here.

**BETH**

So get a cane! Or a walker! Shit, do something. And don't throw food at me!

**EDITH**

Are you LISTENING to me??

**BETH**

I HEARD you MA!

**DAVID**

She means she's stuck to the chair.

**BETH/DR. MEREDITH**

What?

**DAVID**

She's been there how long? How long you been there, mom?

**EDITH**

I dunno - when I got back from the hospital - which thank you two by the way for not coming to visit me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith that was six weeks ago.

**EDITH**

Ooooo she can count, too.

**BETH**

You tellin' me you ain't moved from that chair in six weeks?

**EDITH**

Yeah shit-for-brains.

*BETH goes to the chair and grabs  
EDITH's arms trying to lift her up.*

**BETH**

Oh this is just bullshit.  
Come on. Stand up. Stand up,  
I said. You're just running  
a game on us. Get up!

**EDITH**

What're you doin? Get off!  
Get off, Beth! Leave me be!  
You're hurting me. Ow. OW!  
Beth - Shove off dammit!

**BETH**

Oh Jesus.

*BETH carefully looks at the chair  
and her mother. She starts to gag.*

**BETH**

Oh Jesus God.

**DAVID**

Please don't, Beth. I'm a sympathetic gagger and barfer,  
Dr. Meredith. How do you fix that?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not now, David. Beth?

**BETH**

She's stuck.

**EDITH**

Everyone's got shit-for-brains here.

**BETH**

Her skin is like a part of that chair.

**DAVID**

Fascinating.

**DR. MEREDITH**

What?

**DAVID**

Gross.

**EDITH**

You all happy now? It's embarrass-the-shit-out-of-Edith weekend everyone!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth - call 911.

**EDITH**

No.

**DR. MEREDITH**

This is / serious.

**EDITH**

I said NO. You listen to me and you listen to me good. You bring any nurses or doctors or ambulances around here and I stop talking. You won't get another fucking word out of me. Then the city can do whatever they want and you can have this all on your head, Doc. The fresh new meat fucking up her job. Wouldn't look pretty on your record. You got it?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your safety is more important than my career.

**EDITH**

Is that why you're moving so quick to get to your phone?

**DR. MEREDITH**

What if it's infected?

**EDITH**

It ain't.

**BETH**

You don't know that.

**EDITH**

Move on.

**DR. MEREDITH**

How long have you known?

**EDITH**

Beats me.

**DAVID**

But - how do you - you know...bathroom?

**EDITH**

Mind your business you pervert.

**BETH**

You're an animal.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's a judgement.

**BETH**

You're damn straight it's a judgement. You're an animal, Ma. No, wait. Animals live better. They have sense of decency. And cleanliness. Look at this - this - shit. Look what you're doing to daddy.

*BETH starts to go on a tirade pushing over piles and boxes.*

**EDITH**

Stop that! Put it down! Doc, she's doing it again. Make her stop. Make her stop! David! Do something. Tell your sister to leave off.

**BETH**

This is shit. And this is shit. And this. All this. None of these things matter. What the hell are you doing with all this stuff? Why can't you be a human being? Do you not have a soul or something.

*She makes her way to the credenza and picks up one of the elephants.*

**BETH**

All these things don't MATTER. They're killing you! You are sick, ma! SICK!

**EDITH**

(panicking)

DON'T! Don't you DARE! Put that down. Now. Put it down. Put it down put it down put it down.

**BETH**

(holding the figurine like a weapon)

This? You care about this shit? A buncha fucking toys.

**EDITH**

(hyperventilating)

You leave them. You hear me? LEAVE THEM! Don't you DARE dirty them with your hands.

*EDITH manages to reach over enough to push BETH, who trips on a pile and falls into another one.*

**EDITH**

David - David - get it from her. Please. Please baby - get it from her.

**BETH**

Fuck, Ma! Jesus H. Why'd you push me?

**EDITH**

Please, David.

*DAVID walks over to BETH and holds out his hand.*

**DAVID**

Elephant, Beth.

**BETH**

(shoving it in his hand)

You always take her side.

**DAVID**

(his hand going to his mouth)

Oh god.

**BETH**

It's clean, David. Relax.

*He points to the pile she's in.*

**BETH**

What? What is it?

*She looks around her.*

**BETH**

Oh god. Oh my god.

*She jumps out of the pile. She takes it in.*

**BETH**

You're not human.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth? What is it? Edith?

**DAVID**

Bathroom.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Pardon?

**DAVID**

There. Bathroom.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let me look.

**EDITH**

Stay way, Doc.

**BETH**

Diapers. Bags of shitty diapers. Bottles of piss. Piles of - oh Jesus. Who are you?

**DAVID**

I need - I can't - oh God.

*He pulls out the Purell but the bottle is empty no matter how much he smacks it and tries to get some out of the bottle. He even tries to uncap the bottle and shove his pinky finger in. BETH starts to wander and smack her head lightly.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Help me understand this, Edith.

**EDITH**

Don't you judge me, Doc. With that fucking holier-than-thou tone in your face. What you think I was gonna do? It hurt too much to walk, ok? Then I couldn't walk. You want me to shit myself? Drown in my own piss?

**DR. MEREDITH**

But the food. The supplies.

**EDITH**

Deliveries. I call they come. They drop things off. Welcome to the modern age! I told them I was renovating upstairs so everything got moved down here. They don't care as long I tip them well. They're the kind you like, David. Not a damned word of English.

**BETH**

You're sick.

*DAVID pulls out a brown paper bag from his back pocket and starts to breathe in and out of it.*

**DAVID**

(face in bag)

I need the broom. The mop. Clorox!



**BETH**

(starting to tug and smack  
herself)

You're a disgusting sick woman. We should set a match to this fucking place. What you've done. If Daddy were here. If he saw this.

**EDITH**

Yeah well he's not Beth! He's not! It's just me in this goddam house! You hear me. Just ME! You ain't here. He ain't here. I live how I gotta live so don't you dare judge me. And stop hitting yourself!

**BETH**

This is you! This is all you! You hear me?

**EDITH**

Don't you lay your shit on me girl.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let's everyone take a breath.

**EDITH**

Fuck you and your breathing.

**DAVID**

(face in bag)

Dirt. Dirt. Dirt.

**EDITH**

And screw you and your dirt. Get out all of you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

We can't do that, Edith.

**EDITH**

The hell you can't. Get them out of here! And take your skinny ass out with them too.

*BETH's head smacking intensifies.*

**BETH**

And you wanted me to bring Herbert here. In all this. You wanted him to visit and spend the night. You coulda made him sick. You wanted to kill him. Kill him with all this. He coulda found - you're a monster. A MONSTER!! I gotta get out. I gotta leave.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Hold on, Beth. We need to talk this out calmly and rationally.

**BETH**

The woman has a pile of shit and piss there. RIGHT THERE!  
Let me out!!!

*She shoves by DR. MEREDITH and heads out the door.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

David?

**DAVID**

What? Huh? What?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Can we talk?

**DAVID**

Are the cleaning supplies still in the basement?

**EDITH**

David?

**DAVID**

Yeah, mom?

**EDITH**

Fuck off.

**DAVID**

Yeah. A breath. A clean one for a bit.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Can you please try to talk Beth back in?

*DAVID heads to the door. DR. MEREDITH sighs and rubs her temples.*

**EDITH**

Take my advice, Doc: Don't ever have kids. They ain't worth the 5 minutes of heavy breathing to make 'em.

*BETH storms back in.*

**BETH**

Congratulations, Doc. Blizzard of the decade and we're right in the middle of it. No one's going anywhere.

BLACKOUT.

**ACT TWO**

**SCENE 1: LATE NIGHT**

*The blizzard is in full swing. The wind is howling and snow is flying by the window in a blur. DR. MEREDITH stands at the window warming herself*

*EDITH is dead asleep in her chair. A blanket draped over her. She mutters something and grumbles. She looks at EDITH. She catches her breath in an almost cry, she tries to suppress it, then shakes it off.*

*BETH comes down the stairs.*

**BETH**

Hello?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Hope I didn't wake you.

**BETH**

Eh. Never got used to the creaky boards. Daddy tried to fix them but the house beat him. Jesus it's getting worse.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Means it'll be gone by morning.

**BETH**

You study meteorology, too?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Wisconsin girl knows her snowstorms.

**BETH**

A hayseed in these parts.

**DR. MEREDITH**

(putting on the drawl)

Yes indeed, ma'am.

*They laugh lightly.*

**BETH**

Didn't think your kind had a sense of humour.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Hard to imagine past the professional veneer, I'm sure.

**BETH**

Suppose you gotta keep it together.

**DR. MEREDITH**

We're meant to be the rudders while you steer the ship.

**BETH**

Yeah, well old lady almost broke your mast.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Takes a lot more than a raised voice.

**BETH**

Give her time. She always wins. Sorry about the guest room by the way.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Bed's comfy.

**BETH**

As long as one of those piles don't topple on you in the middle of the night and suffocate you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not much of a sound sleeper anyway.

**BETH**

At least you got clean linens. My room smells like a few dead cats laid up in there. And frankly I just don't wanna know. I'll be mouth breathing all night long.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Herbert and Richard alright?

**BETH**

Oh yeah. Had to talk Richard down. Was ready to wade through the snowbanks to come get me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Good marriage.

**BETH**

He knows what being here does to people. You married, Doc?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not exactly proper for me to get / too personal -

**BETH**

Doc. You're the only normal person here and you've seen some awful shit in this house. I won't tell if you won't.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Relationship of 5 years.

**BETH**

Good lord. Ain't he ready to commit?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm not.

**BETH**

Playing hard to get, eh?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Career comes first. Then I can settle down.

**BETH**

Ain't much of a career - dealing with crazies like us.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You're not crazy.

**BETH**

Come on, Doc. I know my crazy and where it comes from. I'm not playing normal like David.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Everyone deals with issues in a different way. One is no worse than the other.

**BETH**

This house?

**DR. MEREDITH**

It's a reflex. Like your hair pulling.

*BETH looks away.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

You don't have to be embarrassed.

**BETH**

I stay here any longer and I'll end up looking like daddy.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It's actually a common problem.

**BETH**

Yeah, for kids.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Many adults.

**BETH**

They got medication for it?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Fluoxetine. But there's an easier remedy.

**BETH**

Breathing?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Wear a baseball cap.

**BETH**

Get out.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your hand won't have anything to lock on to. You could always try yoga.

**BETH**

We look like the kind of people who can shut up and clear our minds?

**DR. MEREDITH**

True.

**BETH**

A baseball cap, eh? Think it'll work?

**DR. MEREDITH**

If you want it to.

**BETH**

Wicked. . .Can you fix her, Doc?

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's really up to her.

**BETH**

Will be sad to see this old baby torn down.

**DR. MEREDITH**

It won't come down to that.

**BETH**

Right. Gonna make myself some tea. If I can find a clean mug. Care to join?

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm alright thanks. Gonna watch the snow for a bit then try to get a little more sleep.

**BETH**

You're a good egg, Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You too, Beth.

*They share a smile. BETH heads into the kitchen. DR. MEREDITH looks out. She sits on a nearby box and leans her head against the window.*

*Time shifts and day breaks through. She wakes with a start and checks her watch. The storm isn't raging but it's still blowing hard. She works the kink out of her neck, gets up and stretches herself out a little, preparing for the day. She walks over and lightly touches EDITH's shoulder.*



**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith?

**EDITH**

(waking with a start)

Whozzat?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Just me.

**EDITH**

Was a damn good dream you interrupted. Russel Crowe just lost his shorts and was climbing into bed with me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I was always partial to James Dean.

**EDITH**

Too soft for me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

A sucker for blue eyes. How's the leg?

**EDITH**

The same as it always is.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I really do think you should let me call an ambulance for you

**EDITH**

Even if I let you, Doc, no one's getting through in all that nonsense out there.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You're putting yourself at risk.

**EDITH**

Don't start on me, Doc. I said I was fine.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Well, you're putting me at risk.

**EDITH**

How's that then?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Malpractice lawsuit for negligence.

**EDITH**

Oh, so she DOES have a selfish bone after all.

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's not how I meant it.

**EDITH**

Sure it is. Gimme a pen and a piece of paper from the desk.

*DR. MEREDITH does so. Once EDITH has it, she starts writing.*

**EDITH**

I can appreciate a good self-motivated threat. You just gotta mean it when you say it. Too many people just laying down and taking it up the ass for other people. That kind of kindness gets you nowhere. No one cares. They take what they need and they move on to the next sucker believe me. Here.

**DR. MEREDITH**

(reading)

'I, Edith O'Neill, do swear that if I die the Doc (Doctor Meredith) ain't to blame for shit. So leave her alone you cocksucking government shit-for-brains.'

**EDITH**

It's good right? A regular Robert Frost am I. Now what do we doin' today?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Talk to you and Beth together. And then you and David together.

**EDITH**

Sure are a glutton, aintcha?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Don't believe in giving up without a fight.

**EDITH**

My kind of broad, Doc. Annoying. But my kind of broad.

**DR. MEREDITH**

From you - I'll take that as a compliment.

**EDITH**

Like you have a choice.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You know, Edith, that won't work.

**EDITH**

What won't?

**DR. MEREDITH**

The whole passive-aggressive thing to get a rise out of me. Don't let the baby face fool you.

**EDITH**

I'm just getting warmed up. Now boil us some tea. Should be a couple tea bags in the oven.

*DR. MEREDITH looks at her.*

**EDITH**

Please.

**DR. MEREDITH**

My pleasure.

*She heads off into the kitchen.*

*EDITH pulls out a bag of pork rinds from seemingly nowhere and delves into it. BETH comes down bleary-eyed. She sees her mother and no one else. Curses silently and tries to climb back up the stairs hitting a particularly creaky one.*

**EDITH**

Morning, Beth.

**BETH**

*(under her breath)*

Dammit. The doc around?

**EDITH**

Making tea.

**BETH**

(going to window)

Shit. Thought it woulda let up by now.

**EDITH**

God ain't on your side today.

**BETH**

Look. Can we please, please try not to go at one another today?

**EDITH**

Tired already? You're out of practice.

**BETH**

Neither of us wants the other one here.

**EDITH**

Don't let a little snow stop you. Ice queen like you should survive / just fine.

*BETH bolts to EDITH and turns the chair to face her.*

**EDITH**

What the hell.

**BETH**

Shut up. Say something nice.

**EDITH**

Get off my chair.

**BETH**

No. Say something nice to me.

**EDITH**

What's gotten into you?

**BETH**

You ain't never had a kind word for me.

**EDITH**

You're bein' nuts.

**BETH**

If I had a gun to your head right now you still wouldn't be able to come up with something.

**EDITH**

I've said plenty of nice things to you.

**BETH**

Would I be asking if you had?

**EDITH**

The way you remember things...

**BETH**

Just one. Come on.

*The women stare at one another. BETH might break but she wouldn't ever come close in front of her mother. She moves away.*

**EDITH**

That Herbert's a good kid.

*BETH turns to look at her mother.*

**EDITH**

You done right by him.

*BETH offers up the briefest and smallest of smiles.*

**EDITH**

For God's sake, though, give him a nickname like Killer or Bulldog. Keep the bullies away.

**BETH**

Kid's got enough bite.

**EDITH**

The O'Neill curse.

**BETH**

How about we play nice and get through this as quickly as possible.

**EDITH**

I'll try. No promises.

**BETH**

I never expect any.

*DR. MEREDITH re-enters.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Couldn't find the sugar and that fridge should be condemned.

**EDITH**

Now now, Doc, no judgements.

*EDITH pulls out a bottle of honey shaped like a bear and squeezes a liberal amount in the mug, stirring it with a pencil.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Morning, Beth.

**BETH**

Heya Doc.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Tea?

**BETH**

I'm good.

**DR. MEREDITH**

(looking at both)

Everything alright?

**BETH/EDITH**

Yeah./Peachy.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Why don't we go ahead and start. David can join when he wakes up.

**BETH/EDITH**

Come on then. / Fine by me.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Things got a little out of control yesterday. But these bumps are expected and are actually a healthy sign of progress, so please don't be discouraged.

**EDITH**

She's back to egghead talking.

**BETH**

Big words and all.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Despite how she behaves, I'm sure Edith appreciates that you're here. It shows concern and care. Let's come at this with fresh eyes and a clear mind. Talk, ask questions, no pointing fingers. And no yelling.

**EDITH**

You hear that, Beth?

**BETH**

She was talkin' 'bout you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

No no no. If you feel the urge to get emotional we all stop and count to 10 before resuming. Ok?

**EDITH**

(crunching on a pork rind)

Works for me.

**BETH**

Sure.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Great. Beth, let's start with you.

**EDITH**

Why does she get to go first?

**DR. MEREDITH**

You'll get your chance. Beth, do you have a question for your mother?

**BETH**

Yeah - why?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let's articulate that question a little more. Why what?

**BETH**

Why all this stuff?

**DR. MEREDITH**

That's a very good question. Let's get to the root of the connection you have to these objects, Edith. If you can detach your connection to some of them then we won't have a problem taking them away and cleaning up the house. I want you to start recognizing what really has worth and what you're ascribing worth to.

**EDITH**

Speak English, wouldya?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Excuse me?

**EDITH**

Abscribe?

**BETH**

Ascribe. It means give to.

**EDITH**

I ain't askin' you am I?

**DR. MEREDITH**

10 - 9 - 8 -

**DR. MEREDITH/BETH**

7 - 6 - 5 - 4

**ALL**

3 - 2 - 1.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I want you to start to see, Edith, what items truly have value. Can we do that?

**EDITH**

You're calling the shots and I'm stuck in this chair so let's have it.



*DR. MEREDITH randomly pulls out an old newspaper from a nearby pile.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Can you talk to me about this?

**EDITH**

About that?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**EDITH**

Is she serious?

*BETH shrugs her shoulders.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

So?

**EDITH**

It's a paper.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes, and?

**EDITH**

It's a newspaper.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Right. But why is it so important?

**EDITH**

I dunno. It's in the pile. I'm sure I put in there for a reason. So it's important. If it wasn't I woulda thrown it away.

**BETH**

That why you got all this other stuff here too?

**EDITH**

I ain't talkin' to YOU, Beth!

**BETH**

Then why am I here, MA?

*DR. MEREDITH coughs.*

**EDITH**

10 - 9 - 8

**EDITH/DR. MEREDITH**

7 - 6

**ALL**

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

**DR. MEREDITH**

So, Edith - the paper?

**EDITH**

Give it here.

(quickly scanning the paper)

Yeah, it's important.

**DR. MEREDITH**

But why? It's important we hear the reason. It's important you try to verbalize why you feel you can't part with it.

**EDITH**

It's a paper from [replace with date from 7 years previous to now].

**BETH**

Not this again.

**EDITH**

Shut up you! Have some respect.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth?

**BETH**

It's the year my dad died.

**EDITH**

He didn't die. He passed. PASSED.

**BETH**

What's the difference?

**EDITH**

He didn't get hit by some runaway car. He had cancer. He passed away quietly in the night.

**BETH**

FINE. It's the year he passed away from this world and far away from you.

**EDITH**

Without either of you by this side.

**BETH**

Why you - 10 - 9 - 8

**BETH/DR. MEREDITH**

7 - 6 - 5 - 4

**EDITH**

This is gonna get fucking old real quick.

**ALL**

3 - 2 - 1.

**DR. MEREDITH**

So it's important because of the year.

**EDITH**

Yea.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Any important news in that issue?

**EDITH**

Probably.

**DR. MEREDITH**

But it's important for you to keep it because of the year printed on it.

**EDITH**

Yea - I keep anything from that year. It was an important year.

**DR. MEREDITH**

And you've never really gotten over it.

**EDITH**

You gonna keep saying stupid things?

**BETH**

Ma!

**EDITH**

Ma! Ma! Ma! You're like a goddam broken record!

**DR. MEREDITH**

10 - 9

**BETH**

It makes no sense? You're keeping shit because it has the year daddy died on it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

10 - 9

**EDITH**

That man was a saint!

**DR. MEREDITH**

10 -9

**BETH**

He shoulda been sainted for living with you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

10 -9

**BETH/EDITH**

Cut that shit out!

**BETH**

Is that why you're keeping his clothes around. All his / stuff up there.

**EDITH**

Don't you DARE disrespect/ the man.

**BETH**

What are you gonna do / with all of it?

**EDITH**

That man bled to raise / you right.

**BETH**

Let the man rest / in peace!

**EDITH**

Nothing but a goddam / ingrate.

**BETH**

(starting to lightly smack  
her head)

If he were here right now it wouldn't / be like this.

**EDITH**

Stop doing that. / Stop it!

**BETH**

(adding the other hand)

If he could see what you did/ to the home he worked so  
hard for!

**EDITH**

Lay off. I said LAY OFF, Beth.

*DR. MEREDITH lets out a frustrated  
scream for the ages. A rather long  
one.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Fucking shit. I mean you just - you just - I mean the two  
of you - fucking shit.

**BETH**

(applauds to her mother)

You actually managed to drive one of them nuts.

*DR. MEREDITH screams again.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

I have never seen two people more incapable of being in  
the same space.

**EDITH**

That's on her.

**DR. MEREDITH**

And two people who are so clearly suited for one another.

**BETH/EDITH**

Come again?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Two stubborn jackasses in a pea pod! You just harp and and and feed on one another long after you've drained the blood from each other's veins. I've had Southies pull knives on me and felt more at ease than in this den of rabid hyenas. You just nag and nag and nag and pick pickpickpick and no one actually listens to anyone else. You don't. You think you do because you reply with some witty insult but you don't listen. YOU BOTH NEED HELP! I'm sorry to be this harsh but it seems to be the only thing you people respond to. Yelling and insults! WELL IS THIS LOUD AND CLEAR ENOUGH FOR YOU?? YOUUUUUU. ARE BOOOOOOTH. SHITS!

*DAVID enters from the kitchen in a DIY hazmat suit made up of a painter's smock, household rubber gloves duct taped to the sleeves, plastic bags duct taped around his ankles, and a full-face gas mask.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Oh my god!

**EDITH**

What the hell?

**BETH**

AHHHHH!!!

*DAVID screams as well.*

**EDITH**

Sweet Jesus, is that you, David?

*DAVID says something, but it's muffled.*

**EDITH**

What the hell did he say?

**BETH**

I dunno.

**DR. MEREDITH**

David?

*DAVID muffles.*

**EDITH**

Take the damn mask off you idiot.

*DAVID takes off the mask to reveal:  
swimming goggles and a surgical  
mask.*

**EDITH**

Oh, Jesus.

**DAVID**

I said, "I heard yelling. What's wrong?"

**EDITH**

Just the Doc joining the pack.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I'm really sorry / for that -

**EDITH**

Ya need more practice but it was a good start.

**BETH**

David, what the hell is all that?

**DAVID**

All this dirt everywhere. And dust. And germs. Spent all night cleaning the basement. Kitchen is the next step in the logical progression of the house. But the maggots in the kitchen - oh god -

*DAVID starts to gag then puts his  
face into the mask and breathes  
deeply.*

**EDITH**

(to Dr. Meredith)

You see what I have to deal with?

**DAVID**

There are yoghurt cups in that fridge from 3 years ago. I think I found the remains of a carrot, or maybe it was asparagus, I'm not sure.

**EDITH**

Don't throw out my food.

**DAVID**

It's beyond expired, Mom.

**EDITH**

Those dates are just there so you have to throw shit away and spend more money on the food these monopolies are creating in their little labs.

**DAVID**

There's a wedge of cheddar covered completely in green, pink and white fur.

**EDITH**

Scrape it off and eat the good parts.

*DAVID gags. Replaces the mask to breathe.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Why don't we let David dispose of all the food. Would give us less to do on Monday.

**EDITH**

Whatever.

**DAVID**

Oh God I'm interrupting aren't I. Am I? Is it ok I'm here?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes. God. Please have a seat.

**DAVID**

So what were you talking about?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Well - um - I was just trying to get your mother to explain her attachment to some of these objects. Like this newspaper.

**DAVID**

It's yellow.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.



**DAVID**

And old.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yes.

**DAVID**

I don't get it.

**BETH**

She's keeping it 'coz daddy died in the same year.

**DAVID**

Well that's just silly.

**BETH**

THANK you.

**EDITH**

You kids, I swear to god, no goddam respect. I tell you what, when I go why don't you just douse me in kerosene, shove some marshmallows on a stick, and make some S'mores over my burning body.

**DR. MEREDITH**

We'll come back to this. Edith, yesterday you got a little angry with Beth when she questioned you about those figurines. Can we talk about those?

**EDITH**

Whattaya wanna know?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Explain why they are so important.

**EDITH**

They're elephants.

**BETH**

(to David)

Can she ever just answer a question?

**DAVID**

African elephants are pretty.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith, why are the elephants so important to you?

**EDITH**

They just are. They're pretty. They catch the light real good. They look expensive.

**BETH**

What about the ones with cracks in them? Or the ones missing trunks or legs?

**EDITH**

Just 'coz it's broken don't meant it's worthless. I ain't exactly fully operational. You wanna throw me out too?

**BETH**

That an option?

**EDITH**

Watch it.

**DAVID**

That's not our point.

**EDITH**

Sure it is. You kids don't want anything around you unless it's perfect.

**BETH**

You think we want our homes to end up looking like this?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Why elephants?

**EDITH**

What now?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Why elephants? Why not, I don't know, bears? Or flowers? Maybe even butterflies. Most everything in this house is discarded or in a random pile.

**EDITH**

It ain't random, I know where everything is.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Ok. But that cabinet is the only thing in this room that you keep meticulous. What is it about elephants?

**DAVID**

Dirty and smelly.

**EDITH**

They are not! They are beautiful. And majestic. And they understand the value of family.

**BETH**

They're animals!

**EDITH**

YOU'RE the animal!

**DR. MEREDITH**

Tell me more.

**EDITH**

Why? So those two can make fun of me some more? Laugh at their crazy, dirty, insane mother?

**BETH**

When you live like this, yes.

**EDITH**

Would you just get off my back! Please! Why'd you even come here if you weren't gonna help?

**BETH**

Because you asked us to!

**EDITH**

SHE did. I didn't have nothing to do with it.

**DAVID**

Mom, we don't wanna see you end up in jail and this house torn down.

**BETH**

She wouldn't go to jail. She would stay with one of us.

**DAVID**

Oh.

**BETH**

Yeah.

**DAVID**

That's not good.

**EDITH**

See what I mean, Doc? Ungrateful shits.

**DAVID**

Mom, we just want to see this house like we remember it.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let Edith speak, please. Go on.

**EDITH**

I don't wanna. They'll just interrupt or make fun.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I would like to know. And it might be useful for your children. You have to give us something to go on. Help us understand. Please.

*EDITH considers this for a moment.*

**EDITH**

You ever see that documentary on 'em? On PBS? They ran it during one of their 'give us your goddam money' weeks. I musta watched it every time it was on. I couldn't stop. I cried every goddam time, too. Amazing creatures. Herds run entirely by the females. Those ladies spend their entire lives in these groups made up of mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts - all of 'em. They stay with each other for life. Roaming around from one place to another. They never leave one another. I've watched a mother get in the way of a group of these lions trying to take her baby. She didn't care. She just stood there darin' 'em to come at her. And then some others joined in. All huddled around this little baby. And when one of them dies, you know what they do? It's amazing what they do. They feel the body with their trunks. All of 'em. And they never forget. Ever. They carry that memory and live with 'em for the rest of their lives. They come across bones and run their trunks over them and you can see in their eyes how sad they are to have lost one of their own even if it wasn't from their herd.

(starting to lose her shit)

But even with just the bones they can see one of their own. They can feel them. They just reach out and they can feel the spirits, or ghosts I dunno, of the ones they have lost. And they never cry. Or wail. Or scream. They don't ever say a goddam thing! They just pick up and move on.

They just move on going from one watering hole to another standing up to predators and feeling on the bones of their kind. It's like it's the only thing they know how to do. It's who they are - what they are. How can they be smarter than us? How can they care more? How come THEY can show affection to even a pile of bones lying in the goddam desert. I'm more than a pile of bones! / I'm worth more than that. I am, I tell you, I am.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith - Edith! Please, calm down.

**EDITH**

Can someone get me a pickle?

**BETH**

No, we can't get you a pickle! We're IN a pickle! God, let me out of here.

*BETH heads for the door. DR.  
MEREDITH intercepts and bars her  
way.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Beth, please.

**BETH**

I'd rather take my chances out there then spend one more second in here.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Your mother needs us here to help see her through this.

**BETH**

That woman can't be helped. Let her rot in that chair.

**EDITH**

Let her go, Doc. Let them both go. They never cared for anything. Certainly not me, so why start now. Let them go back to their homes and forget about it like they been doing for years and years and years. They forget that I was there every goddamn time they scraped a knee or got a splinter. If this is the thanks they wanna heap on me, then go right ahead. I can take it. My daddy beat me and I didn't cry. My momma locked me in the basement and I didn't cry. My husband died and I didn't cry. I can't walk and get out of this chair and I don't cry. I'll be DAMNED if I'll cry for either one of them.

**BETH**

Get off the cross, Ma! Everything we try and do you turn away.

**EDITH**

Because you do it for you.

**DAVID**

That's not true, Mom.

**EDITH**

You shut up, you. I shoulda had you checked out when I dropped you on your head.

**BETH**

You've really lost it now.

**DAVID**

I'm not stupid!

**EDITH**

You want this house so you can move in with DICK. He kept you away from me. You let him control your life.

**BETH**

You never liked him. Didn't want him around.

**EDITH**

HIM. Not YOU. Not HERBERT. And you, I don't even know where to begin with you. You care more about the goddam walls and floors than people. You can't even look me in the eyes when you talk to me.

**DAVID**

Tha - that's not no-no-not tr-true, Mom.

**EDITH**

Yes it is. You're stuttering. You're lying. You think I don't know the two of you. You think I don't know what I'm living in? My brain is as sharp as a nail and sharper by more than half of you two put together. You wanna help me? Then shut up and clean and help. But if this is gonna be about you attacking me so you can feel better about your damned pathetic lives then spare me your applications to sainthood 'coz compared to my life NONE of you gets room to complain.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I don't think you're being fair.

**EDITH**

And you can shove it too, Doc. You don't care either.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I do, Edith.

**EDITH**

You're here 'coz they made you show up. Because they pay you to show up and pretend you care so you can fill out some goddam paperwork and cash your check. 'Coz you're the new kid with something to prove. When this is over you won't know what happens to me and you won't care. I'll be the crazy broad who talked too loudly and you'll be on to your next pity case where you can feel better about yourself looking down that nose at us and thanking God silently that you ain't as fucked up as we are.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You have it all wrong.

**EDITH**

Get out. I'm done.

**BETH**

Ma, they'll take the house.

**EDITH**

Let 'em try. Get out.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Edith, please let me -

**EDITH**

GET OUT I SAID!

*EDITH thrashes in the chair pulling away and ripping her skin in the process. She screams.*

**BETH/DR. MEREDITH**

Ma! / Edith!

**EDITH**

GET OUT! I don't need you here. I can take care of myself.

*She reaches for random pieces of garbage and starts throwing.*

*They duck and move until they clear the house leaving the front door open. The wind howls and the snow blows in.*

*EDITH sits there heaving and clutching her leg, wincing and yelping in pain.*

*After a few moments, DAVID walks back in - tentatively at first then with some purpose.*

**EDITH**

I told you to get out, David.

**DAVID**

(Pausing for a moment)

I know.

*DAVID resumes and walks up the stairs. EDITH groans. DAVID comes back down with a first aid kit and goes to EDITH.*

**EDITH**

Where'd you find that?

**DAVID**

Always keep one in my closet.

**EDITH**

Go open that drawer and get me my cigs.

**DAVID**

You don't smoke anymore.

**EDITH**

Yeah well I'm celebrating today. Please get 'em. It'll calm me.

*DAVID does so. Retrieving a matchbook and a crinkled pack of Marlboro Reds. He starts to work on EDITH's leg.*

**EDITH**

Ain't you gonna barf or something.



**DAVID**

I'm just pretending I'm in biology class.

**EDITH**

You failed that class.

**DAVID**

Sh. Please.

*She winces.*

**DAVID**

Sorry.

*He patches.*

**DAVID**

You should go to a doctor, you know.

**EDITH**

No.

**DAVID**

What I'm doin' is only temporary. It could get worse.

**EDITH**

I'll think about it.

**DAVID**

Ok.

*More patching.*

**DAVID**

I don't just care about walls and floors you know.

**EDITH**

Uh huh.

**DAVID**

People too. Just not all of them.

**EDITH**

Uh huh. Ow.

**DAVID**

Sorry. Walls and floors are easier. They don't change. They take to what you do to them. They're easier to talk to. Make you feel smart. Mostly because they don't argue back. And I'm not crazy. I know what I'm saying.

**EDITH**

Sure.

**DAVID**

(stopping)

I'm not. I know you think I am. I'm not. I need you to agree.

**EDITH**

Fine.

**DAVID**

Mean it.

**EDITH**

You're not crazy - or stupid.

**DAVID**

(he resumes)

Thank you.

**EDITH**

But you do have some odd habits.

**DAVID**

Oh for sure. But I like them. They make me special. Important.

**EDITH**

To?

**DAVID**

The floors. The walls. Myself. Maybe you. I dunno. Beth doesn't hate you.

**EDITH**

Sure, kid.

**DAVID**

She's mad as hell. But she doesn't hate you. You know that. You don't either. You two always yell. She's like you, you know. Of course you know.

That's why you yell back. Right? Right. You two yell and no one listens. And I hide in the background. That's the way it's always been. Right?

*A moment.*

**DAVID**

I won't be coming back again. And I'd prefer you don't call me anymore. I don't like coming back here. I don't like seeing this. Can't shine my memories or wipe them clean. And you make them dirty. You and Beth. I don't wanna see her either. I like my floors. I like my walls. And I like how I look in them. And I like my apartment. And I like my Hispanic friends. They laugh with me. Not at me. I know the difference. They make me feel - like family. And I like that. So I'm not coming back. Ok?

**EDITH**

Whatever.

**DAVID**

Ok. You're done. Good for two or three days. Call a doctor. Ok?

*No response.*

**DAVID**

Good.

*DAVID takes off his gloves, closes the kit and leaves it by the chair. He kisses EDITH on the head then heads to the door and waits in the doorway. DR. MEREDITH appears.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

Hi, David.

**DAVID**

Hi Dr. Meredith.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You ok?

**DAVID**

Me? Oh yeah. Yeah. For sure. I'm gonna go now ok?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Sure. Can I call you later? To check in.

**DAVID**

If you feel like it. I probably won't pick up though.

*DAVID leaves.*

*DR. MEREDITH hovers for a bit.  
Closes the door. And walks to and  
sits on a box.*

**DR. MEREDITH**

So.

**EDITH**

Beth gone?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Lost her in the snow. I don't think she's coming back.

**EDITH**

Just you and me. Ain't we a pair?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Would you like to talk about it?

**EDITH**

We done enough talking.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Anything I can do for you?

**EDITH**

Think you pretty much done it, Doc. You poked the  
hornet's nest and this is what you got.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You don't accept any responsibility do you?

**EDITH**

The gift of old age. The closer to death you get the less  
a shit you give.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Family included?

**EDITH**

Shit unto others as they shit unto you.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Strangers?

**EDITH**

Oh - especially. Less to lose.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Yourself.

**EDITH**

Heh - you're good, Doc. But you're not that good. Why don't you go home to your boyfriend or husband or lover or whatever?

**DR. MEREDITH**

Girlfriend.

**EDITH**

Poor James Dean.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Well he always did / look like -

**EDITH**

Yeah I don't care. But good for you. Go home and hug her.

**DR. MEREDITH**

We're not done here.

**EDITH**

Sure we are.

**DR. MEREDITH**

We still have time. And I don't mind getting some rubber gloves on and getting this place cleaned up.

**EDITH**

Nah.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Let me tell you why.

**EDITH**

And if I don't wanna listen.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Not like you can go anywhere so you can just sit there and listen and enjoy it.

**EDITH**

Balls, Doc. Balls.

**DR. MEREDITH**

If you wanted to give up you would have done it already. You're a fighter. Sometimes you fight dirty, but you fight. So you're gonna fight and I'm gonna help you. And nothing you say is really gonna bother me. You're right - I don't have to care about you because tomorrow it will be someone else. But I'm the best thing you got right now. And this house will be a home again.

**EDITH**

You sound pretty sure of yourself.

**DR. MEREDITH**

I am. So I'm going to go out there and find some breakfast somewhere for us. Then I'm going to find a doctor to look at your leg. And before you know it you'll be up and walking and able to curse people out from here to the edge of town and beyond.

**EDITH**

Sure, Doc. Whatever you say.

**DR. MEREDITH**

You good with bacon and eggs?

**EDITH**

Sausage.

**DR. MEREDITH**

Done. I'll be right back.

**EDITH**

Goodbye, Doc.

*DR. MEREDITH smiles at her. EDITH smirks. She heads out and closes the door behind her.*

*EDITH lays her head back and breathes.*

*She starts to cry a little but it turns into laughing quickly then coughing then silence. She fishes out the remote control from the chair and tries to turn the TV on. It doesn't work. She remembers she took the batteries out. She throws the remote over her shoulder.*

*She reaches over and grabs an elephant figurine and holds it in her hand. She rubs it on her cheek. She closes her eyes and places her lips on it. She hums. She opens her eyes. Smiles and places the elephant on her lap. She methodically picks up each elephant and puts it on her. The last is a stuffed Indian elephant that she turns over. She pulls out a bottle of whiskey. She uncaps it and takes in a deep breath. She takes a swig, winces, releases a burp and looks around her for a moment. She turns the bottle over and empties it all over her body and around her chair, wincing as it seeps into her leg wound. She douses her head. She douses the elephants.*

*She pulls a cigarette out of her pack. It's the last one. She places it between her lips. She takes a single match out. Takes a deep breath. Lights it. Smiles.*

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.