

MOTHER

Not old, Father, I didn't mean old, simply of age. It's aged. Rather nicely.

FATHER

Yes, rather nicely.

MOTHER

It makes you look quite elegant.

FATHER

Does it?

He looks as if he's about to cry.

MOTHER

Yes, oh so elegant, Father!

(She notices his misty eyes)

Here, come now, Father...go put it on!

(Kissing him delicately on the cheek)

FATHER

No, no, Mother, I think I'll wait a bit longer. I'll wait until we see him coming up the drive...I'll wait until it means something...until it means something to wear the suit.

MOTHER

Yes, dear, very well. Very well, you wait then. Perhaps you should make yourself a drink...something delightful and refreshing for the waiting.

FATHER

Yes, perhaps...

He doesn't move.

MOTHER

Father..?

FATHER

Oh yes...

(He starts to go)

Oh, dear, what was I going to do?

(Beat, then resigned)

Oh, dear. I've forgotten.

MOTHER

Forgetfulness comes with age, I've heard, and we are no spring chickens, are we dear?

FATHER

No! No spring chickens.

MOTHER

No young things...we're- old. Are we old, Father?

FATHER

Yes, I suppose we are! We're in bed by eight thirty.

MOTHER

But nine o'clock on Saturdays.

FATHER

No spring chickens, are we?

MOTHER

No, no we're not...I was just saying that. But I think there's something I wanted to tell you...

(Beat, then remembering)

Oh yes, the dress! Wouldn't you like to hear about the dress?

FATHER

Yes, dear. I'm sure that would be nice.

MOTHER

I'm sure it will make you laugh...make you something. Perhaps it will make you hard...hearing about this dress. Perhaps it will make you hard; it's been so long. I'll try one of the things...

(A few beats in thought, then firmly decided)

Yes, I will try to make you laugh.

FATHER

Thank you, Mother. I'm sure you'll make me laugh!

MOTHER

Very well...where to begin?

FATHER

Perhaps with the dress.

MOTHER

There you are. So witty, aren't we, Father? The dress I've bought is so very beautiful, so very...perfect...for the occasion. You know, dear, when I bought it...well, before I bought it, when I was in the store...I found the dress on a rack, hanging there, waiting...and it seemed to be calling to me; "Mother" it seemed to say "I'm here for you to wear when you see dear John." Not really, but you know the feeling, don't you...of a thing calling out to you though it has no mouth, no eyes, no ears, only itself, inanimate and silent? But you see it, don't you? You see it as a person...or a character in those old Looney Tunes, you know, and you wish it would talk to you? A dress with eyes, ears, and a mouth. Speaking!

(Waiting)

Isn't that funny, Father?

FATHER
(Flatly)

Yes, dear.

MOTHER
But you didn't laugh, dear. Not so much as a chuckle, a giggle, a simple "ha ha."

FATHER
Oh! Ha ha! Better, Mother?

MOTHER
Yes...but it wasn't real. I am trying, Father.

FATHER
I know you are, dear, so am I.

MOTHER
I bought the dress, all the while hoping the young man behind the counter would ask me what it was for...so I could tell him. But he began with all the niceties...the "hello ma'am how do you dos" and the "did you find what you were looking for todays"...which I did not...I was not *looking* for the dress, the dress found me.
(Waits for a laugh. Nothing.)
And I told him that..."no, the dress looked for me"...which he found quite amusing...wouldn't you, dear? Find it quite amusing?

FATHER
Yes, I'm sure I would. Ha ha!

MOTHER
He did. And as he put it into the bag for me to bring it home...I noticed that he looked like our dear John! Something in his chin I think it was...and I knew that would be the way to tell him what it was for; the dress. "You know" I said, "you know I've bought this dress to wear when my son returns. It's been so many years. But I'm very excited" I said, "and I say that because...you look so much like him!" And his eyes went soft and he started to cry...just a single tear...but it rolled down his face and dropped onto my hand.

FATHER
Oh! This story isn't very funny, Mother.

MOTHER
Just wait, Father, it will be!
(Beat)

Where was I?

(Beat)
Yes! A tear dropped onto my hand, and I looked at him and I said "my dear John used to cry too...when he was a child. But I haven't seen him since then."

(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)

And he smiled at me, and pulled me ever so gently across the counter...and he kissed my cheek...so tenderly...and it felt just like the kisses that dear John used to give when he was a boy. And you know what, dear? It made me laugh. And oh, I laughed...and I laughed so wonderfully and happily, remembering those young boy kisses, that I began to cry...in the middle of the store. And everyone was watching me, and I became so embarrassed that my face turned completely red. But the young man behind the counter...he smiled at me again...and just as suddenly as the crying began it stopped...and I realized that he looked nothing like our dear John...it was simply my imagination, carried away with itself.

(Pause)

See, wasn't that that funny, dear? My brain..seeing dear John and then...not?

FATHER

Yes, dear. I'm sure it was.

He smiles.

MOTHER

There we are, Father, I told you! I've done my duty for the afternoon, my good deed, what I set out to do.

(Beat)

Do you feel better now?

Silence as he thinks for a few beats, and then:

FATHER

No.

(Beat)

But that's not your fault, is it, Mother?

MOTHER

(Resigned)

No, no it's not.

(Then boom!)

OOOOHHHHHHHH. OOOOOHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.

FATHER

(Reacting)

Oh, dear! It's back, isn't it?

MOTHER

OOOhhhhhhhh...yes! OOOooooohhhhhh.

FATHER

What should I do?

(Out)

Is there anything to do?

(Back)

There's nothing to do, is there?!