

*To Anna,
With Love*

One year ago, Albert lost his wife of forty-eight years. Family and friends have comforted him, watched over him, fed him and seen to his every need. Almost. When Florence, the “Black Widow” begins to show interest, the alarm is sounded by all, but Albert is an old-fashioned real gentleman and agrees to take her to a dance.

A touching, humorous look at love, life and the “golden years”. We all want to get there, but for many we are not quite sure what to do once we arrive.

2M, 2F
1M teen

Great Stage Publishing

*To Anna,
With Love*

by
Kathy Campshure

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“To Anna, With Love”

A Comedy/Drama in Four Acts

by Kathy Campshure

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Synopsis

This full-length play is a comedic and touching look at the life of a widower who is trying to find purpose in life following the loss of his devoted wife. Despite the protests of a well-meaning neighbor and a concerned daughter, Albert agrees to take Florence (a.k.a. 'The Black Widow') to the church dance. The results are a fast-paced adventure that leads to an emergency room visit, a publishing contract, and one last chance for Albert to find love in his golden years.

Description

“To Anna, With Love” is a four-act comedy centered around Albert, a widower in his golden years. Albert’s wife, Anna, has been deceased for over a year, and he has decided to take up writing to occupy his time. However, his so-called empty hours are anything but empty. His daughter Patty calls daily to check up on him, Frank (his next-door neighbor and best friend of thirty years) continuously drops in unannounced, and Florence (a widow who has buried five husbands and attends Albert’s church) has her sights set on making Albert husband number six.

Being a man of old-fashioned principles, Albert agrees to take Florence (a.k.a. the ‘Black Widow’) to the church dance so she won’t have to go alone. Frank, however, is certain that Albert is making a huge mistake by escorting Florence to the dance, and he protests in earnest, terrified that Albert will not survive the ‘ordeal’. To further complicate the situation, Patty shows up on the same weekend for a surprise visit with her thirteen-year-old son, Benjamin, in tow.

As Frank predicted, Albert’s date with Florence does not go as planned, and Patty is awakened at 1 A.M. by a phone call stating that there has been an accident and her father is in the hospital. Will Albert ever get to write his life stories, or has the ‘Black Widow’ claimed her sixth victim? More importantly, does our love for a spouse, now deceased, prevent us from ever feeling whole again—or can we honor it by daring to fall in love just one more time?

Cast

- Albert:** Widower of one year; age 65-80
Frank: Elderly neighbor; age 65-80
Patty: Albert’s daughter, age 35-45
Flo: Albert’s friend; age 65-80
Benjamin: Albert’s grandson, age 13

Set

The play is set in the kitchen of Albert Samuals, a widower of one year. Kitchen cabinets line the sides and back of the set, and an island (complete with a coffee pot and sink) extends onto the stage at DSR. There is a break in the cabinets at UC for a doorway that is the main entrance into the home; a coat rack is mounted on the wall SR of the door. At SL, the cabinets end at mid-stage, where there is a refrigerator, stove, and a doorway that leads to a hallway and bedrooms beyond. A functioning window is centered over the counter at SR that looks out onto the side yard. A small table sits at CS.

Setting

Present day, early summer.

Props

This play requires the following props:

- Portable telephone
- Coffee pot and cups
- Boxed carnation
- Frozen TV dinner
- Two sets of suitcases
- An electric yard trimmer
- Kitchen appliances
- Dog leash
- Large screwdriver

Sound Effects:

This play requires the following sound effects:

- Dog barking
- Telephone ringing

Act One

At lights up, it is 8:15 A.M. The phone is ringing on the kitchen counter, but there is no one on stage to answer it. After the third ring, the front door opens and Albert enters carrying a dog leash, which he hangs on a hook by the door.

ALBERT: “I’m coming, I’m coming! Hold your horses already!” (*He crosses to answer the phone, forgetting to close the door behind him.*) Hello? . . . Well Patty, honey, how are you? . . . And how’s Bob and Benjamin? . . . Well, that’s nice. I’m fine, too. . . . Of course I’m sure. . . . Where was I? Just out taking Sam for his morning stroll. If he doesn’t get to saunter past that little beagle down on Third Street at least once a day, he gets very depressed. . . . Patty, it’s July. Why would I wear my coat to walk the dog? . . . Well, it’s not raining here Honey, you’ve got to stop worrying about me. If you don’t quit calling every day to check up on your dear old dad, you and Bob are going to need a second mortgage just to pay your phone bill! . . . I am *not* being ridiculous. . . . No dear, you’re not being a bother. I still remember how you’d call and talk to your mother for hours. I guess I’m just not as good at making conversation, that’s all. . . . I know, baby. I miss her, too. (*Frank enters through the still-open door. He is carrying his own coffee cup. He walks over to the island and reaches past Albert for the coffee pot resting there. He fills his cup. Albert studies him through the next line.*) Listen honey, I’ve got to go. Someone just dropped by . . . Of course, I promise to call if I need anything . . . I love you too, dear. Bye.

FRANK: (*Making a face as he tastes the coffee.*) Coffee’s cold.

ALBERT: It ought to be. It’s been sitting there since yesterday.

FRANK: (*Marching over and dumping it down the sink.*) Yup, that would account for it. So, was that Patty on the phone?

ALBERT: Yeah. She still calls—every day. I can practically set the clock by it. I think she’s afraid her old man can’t take care of himself.

FRANK: Well, I, for one, am glad she's keeping an eye on you. It makes my job that much easier.

ALBERT: And what job might *that* be—looking out for the elderly, neighborhood widower?

FRANK: It's a thankless job, but someone's got to do it.

ALBERT: I didn't realize I was such a burden. I suppose I should be grateful you haven't hit me over the head and dragged me out back, just to be rid of me!

FRANK: Oh, you're not *that* much of a burden—at least, not yet. But when you send me out to buy your Depends, I'm out of here! Got it?

ALBERT: I'll keep that in mind. (*He crosses and begins tidying up the table.*) Speaking of burdens, Frank, to what do I owe this early morning visit? I was under the impression you didn't roll out of bed until somewhere after nine.

FRANK: Nine! I haven't slept in that late since . . . last Saturday!

ALBERT: Well, I'm surprised you remembered; that was so long ago.

FRANK: I'm tellin' you, Al. I'm still sharp as a tack.

ALBERT: And?

FRANK: And what?

ALBERT: To what do I owe this early visit?"

FRANK: Oh yeah, I'd almost forgotten. Mae wanted me to come over and invite you to dinner so—

ALBERT: Sorry, I can't make it.

FRANK: That's rude; I haven't even finished inviting you yet!

ALBERT: I know. I'm sorry, but I can't make it.

FRANK: At least say you'll think about it. She's planning to make a pot roast . . .

ALBERT: Sounds great.

FRANK: And mashed potatoes.

ALBERT: Yummy.

FRANK: And sweet potatoes with cashews, just swimming in caramel sauce.

ALBERT: Sounds like I died and went to heaven.

FRANK: So you'll come?

ALBERT: Nope.

FRANK: Come on, Al—don't do this to me! If I go back there and tell her you're not coming, she'll probably put the dang roast back in the freezer and I'll get leftover zucchini casserole again!

ALBERT: I sympathize with you, Frank. I really do. And I'm sure Mae's pot roast would be delicious—just like Wednesday's chicken casserole was, and Sunday's baked ham. If the two of you have that much extra food, maybe you ought to go out and adopt a second family. You know—the pitter patter of little feet, crayon sketches on the refrigerator door . . .

FRANK: But Al, I'd much rather keep you; you're already potty trained!

ALBERT: (*Crossing with coffee pot and dumping the remaining coffee down the sink.*) And here I thought you adored me for my personality and quick wit! I'm hurt, Frank.

FRANK: Don't be that way, Al. Tell you what, if you won't come to dinner, how about a night on the town? We could go bowling . . .

ALBERT: I'd love to, Frank, but I'm busy.

FRANK: How can you be busy when I haven't said what night we were going?

ALBERT: It doesn't matter what night; I'm busy.

FRANK: Why do I get the feeling you're trying to tell me something?

ALBERT: You know, I just had a great idea! Why don't you invite Patty up and take *her* bowling? That way I'd have both of you out of my hair for a while!

FRANK: Tell me, pal, has your daughter seen this side of you? Frankly, I find your pent-up hostility a little disturbing.

ALBERT: (*Impatiently.*) I don't have any pent up hostility! (*He takes a deep breath and calms himself before continuing.*) Look, it's obvious what the two of you are trying to do. Calling and stopping by every day, just to see how I'm doing - inviting me over on a regular basis for meals. It's not that I don't appreciate it, Frank. Really, I do. But it's gone on long enough. The truth is, you've somehow come to believe that you can save me from being alone. But you can't. Anna and I had forty eight wonderful years . . . (*Beat.*) But she's gone now, and neither you nor Patty can change that. It's time for me to get on with my life; it's that simple.

FRANK: I'm sure Patty doesn't *mean* to be a nuisance.

ALBERT: No, and neither do you. Listen, I'm fine—honest. So would you please go back home and stop hovering over me like I'm some sort of derelict vessel headed for a reef at low tide?

FRANK: (*Surprised.*) Say, that was a pretty colorful speech.

ALBERT: (*Brightening.*) Do you really think so?

FRANK: Yes, I do. It was *very* colorful—for a grumpy, old codger.

ALBERT: Good, then I haven't lost it completely.

FRANK: (*Looking puzzled.*) Maybe not, but you've lost me.

ALBERT: (*Pacing.*) I've been doing a lot of thinking, Frank. I've got all this time on my hands. I've decided I need something to fill the empty hours.

FRANK: Something? Something like what?

ALBERT: (*He crosses to Frank, then turns away again.*) If I told you, you'd probably think I was getting senile.

FRANK: (*Abruptly.*) Why, you aren't going to do something stupid, like sell Tupperware, are you? I've already laid down the law with Mae. No more Tupperware parties! The cupboards are so full now there's a 'superseal' avalanche every time I open the door!

ALBERT: Relax Frank, I'm not going to be selling Tupperware - or anything else, for that matter.

FRANK: Good. But, then what *will* you be doing with your time?

ALBERT: Now, promise me you won't laugh

FRANK: Sure, sure, I promise.

ALBERT: (*Hesitantly.*) I . . . I thought that I'd try my hand at writing.

FRANK: (*Suppressing a chuckle.*) Writing? What kind of writing? Letters, recipes, greeting cards—that sort of stuff?

ALBERT: (*Defensively.*) No, more like memoirs, short stories, articles—that sort of stuff. Anna and I had quite a life together. When you combine those experiences with my years spent overseas . . . Eight years I spent in the service, did I ever tell you that?

FRANK: Yeah, a million times but . . .

ALBERT: There's a lot of facts and stories packed away in this old, gray head. I think it's time to start putting them to use.

FRANK: (*Sitting at the table.*) Writing, heh? I never knew you were a writer. Just goes to show you never quite know *who* you're living next door to.

ALBERT: I never said I was a 'writer'—I said I'd like to try my hand at writing, there's a difference.

FRANK: Have you ever done that sort of thing? I mean, have you written anything—that is, anything that someone else has actually read?

ALBERT: (*Joining him at the table.*) Yes, but it was a long time ago. I got a small taste of it in high school, working on the school paper. And I've jotted down a few notes over the years. I tried to keep track of important occasions, special things that Anna and I did, that sort of stuff. As a matter of fact . . . (*He retrieves a large shoebox from the cupboard, crosses back to the table, and opens it, allowing the scraps of paper to cascade down in front of Frank.*) I've got them all right here!

FRANK: (*Sifting through the scraps.*) Wow, it looks like this writing business could keep you busy for quite a while.

ALBERT: It will. Which is exactly why you don't have to worry about me anymore, okay?

FRANK: Maybe. But even writers have to eat. I really wish you'd reconsider Mae's invitation to supper. Besides, I don't want to be the one who tells her you turned her down—she's not likely to take it well. *(Trying to reassure himself.)* Not that I'm afraid of her or anything. She knows who wears the pants in this marriage, yes sir'ee. But you know how they can get. She'll probably start carrying on about how you never really liked her cooking, that you've just been pretending to enjoy the meals so as not to hurt her feelings, how you're nothing but an inconsiderate, old . . .

ALBERT: All right, all right! I'll come to supper!

FRANK: Yes! I can almost taste that beef roast already!

ALBERT: But this is absolutely the last time—at least for a while. I'm not a charity case, you know!

FRANK: Of course you're not a charity case, but you know how the little wife can be.

Suddenly realizing he said the wrong thing.

ALBERT: *(After a beat.)* Yes, I know. And I pray I'll never forget.

FRANK: *(Moving toward the door.)* Well, I'll see you later then.

ALBERT: *(Solemnly.)* Yup. The usual time?

FRANK: You bet. I'll tell Mae to be expecting you. And I'll tell her to put on some *fresh* coffee. That stuff you leave setting around could kill you!

Frank starts to exit, forgetting his coffee cup on the counter.

ALBERT: Don't forget your cup!

FRANK: *(Returning.)* Oh yeah.

Frank retrieves his cup and exits.

ALBERT: Still sharp as a tack, eh?" *(With Frank gone, Albert looks around the kitchen and takes a deep breath. He gets some water from the tap and crosses to water a plant on the windowsill at CR. Muttering to himself.)* I'm surprised I haven't killed you yet. *(He then crosses back and returns the glass to the sink. He faces DC, leans back against the counter, and looks around the kitchen again. He crosses to*

the refrigerator, opens the freezer door, and removes a TV dinner.) There, that ought to take care of lunch. *(He gazes at the box for a moment, then remarks.)* Oh boy, Salisbury steaks again. If they ever put the Salisbury beast on the endangered species list, I'm going to be in a heap of trouble. And Frank thought I was going to go hungry! *(He plops the frozen entrée down on top of the stove with a loud thud, then turns and leans against the stove. After a long beat.)* Well, I suppose—if I'm going to be a writer, I'd better start writing. *(He exits CL. After a moment, he returns carrying an old manual typewriter, which he carefully places on the kitchen table. He looks at it, amused, for a moment, then he bends down to blow on it. A cloud of dust billows up from the machine. Albert coughs softly and waves his hand back and forth over the typewriter to disperse it. He thinks for a beat.)* Let's see, I need some paper, don't I. Where in the world would Anna have kept the typing paper? 'A place for everything, and everything in its place.' Boy, if I had a dollar for every time she said those words I'd be independently wealthy! Then again, if I'd just paid attention, I'd know where that damn paper was! *(He exits again CL, then returns after a beat, empty handed. He places his hands on his hips and looks about the stage.)* Where in the world would she have put it? *(He circles around behind the counter and begins to systematically search through the drawers.)* Paper, paper, where on earth is the paper? *(He straightens up after closing the bottom drawer, stating loudly,)* Darn it, paper, where are you? *(At that moment a loud 'You Who!' is heard offstage. Albert looks confused, then shakes his head.)* Maybe Frank is right, maybe I *am* spending too much time by myself. Now darn it, where is that paper?! *(Again there is a voice offstage. 'You who, can't you hear me?') Before Albert can react, there is a loud knock at the door, followed by, 'Albert, are you in there? It's Flo.'* She knocks again. *Albert crosses to open the door and Florence enters with a flourish.)*

FLO: My goodness, I was beginning to think the worst. When it took you so long to answer the door, I was worried . . .

ALBERT: I'll be sure to add your name to the list.

FLO: What?

ALBERT: It's nothing. You just surprised me, Florence, I wasn't expecting a visitor so early.

FLO: I rise with the sun every day. Why, I have most of my daily chores done before other folks have even stumbled out to fetch their morning paper off the step. My Mama, God rest her soul, always said it was a sin to dawdle in bed. Unless, of course, you were sick, then she went easy on you.

ALBERT: I'd say your mother must have been a real fine lady.

FLO: (*Moving in closer to Albert.*) Indeed she was. She had real class; everyone who knew her said so. (*Winking at him.*) And, if I might be so bold as to say it, it runs in the family. There's nothing like

FLO: (Cont.) fine breeding. I'm sure a man such as yourself can appreciate that, can't you, Albert?

ALBERT: (*Clearing his throat loudly and changing the subject.*) Now Florence—

FLO: It's 'Flo' to you, remember? Full names are so, well—you know—stuffy. Wouldn't you agree Al? I *can* call you 'Al', can't I?

ALBERT: Ah sure, Al is fine.

FLO: (*Laughing lightly.*) Good, that's so much better. (*Flo smiles at him warmly.*)

ALBERT: Flor . . . Flo, you have me at a disadvantage. Precisely what do I owe this visit to?

FLO: That's so very much like you, Al. Straight and to the point. I find that so attractive in a man—it shows a 'take charge' frame of mind. My, would you just look at that, you're twisted! (*She steps in close to Albert and slowly, deliberately fixes his collar. She notices that he is frozen in place.*) Why Al, you're not bashful, are you? (*Albert breaks away from her and crosses to the table.*)

ALBERT: Me, bashful? Of course not. Don't be ridiculous! You just caught me off guard, that's all. When you arrived, I was thinking about something very important—something I'd been meaning to do for a long time. So of course when you came in, I just wasn't prepared and—

FLO: It's the church dance, isn't it, Al? You were thinking about it, and trying to get up the nerve to ask me to go with you, and suddenly there I was—at your doorstep, like fate had delivered me to you. So, ask away, Al.

ALBERT: Flo. I . . .

FLO: I just hate to see a man struggling so! I guess I ought to be merciful and help you out. Of course I'll go to the dance with you. It'll be great fun! (*She moves to the left of the table.*) Now, you must realize that you haven't given me much time to find the perfect outfit, but I'll manage to throw something together. It is *this* Saturday night, isn't it?

ALBERT: I hate to disappoint a lady—

FLO: Believe me, Al. I don't think I'll find you disappointing.

ALBERT: Flo, I hadn't even considered going to the dance—let alone taking a lady with.

FLO: (*Obviously disappointed.*) You hadn't?

ALBERT: (*Sitting at the typewriter.*) No. I'm sorry, Flo. But I'm really not ready for . . . for whatever it is that you have in mind. When I mentioned that I was going to 'do' something, I meant a hobby - or a past-time . . . like writing.

FLO: (*Still blatantly disappointed.*) Writing?

ALBERT: Yes, writing. I need something to fill my days, and—

FLO: Now Al, if you want to fill your days, (*she moves around behind him and places her hands on his shoulders*) there are plenty of ways to accomplish that, and they don't even require being good at spelling.

ALBERT: Flo, please! (*He stands and turns to face her.*) I don't mean to be rude, really I don't. But it's just too soon for me. You do understand, don't you, Flo?

FLO: What I understand is that a very attractive, virile man has shut himself up in this house and given up on life.

ALBERT: But I *haven't* given up, don't you see? That's why I'm taking up writing!

FLO: Writing? You call that ‘living’? You *have* been out of circulation too long!

ALBERT: Dear Flo, how can I make you understand? You’re a wonderful woman, and a good friend, but what Anna and I had together was very, very special. I don’t believe I could ever find something like that again.

FLO: Well you won’t if you’re not looking!

ALBERT: Flo, how would it be if I agree to take you to the dance - but as friends, nothing more. Would that work?

FLO: Sweetie, I’ll take you any way I can get you.

ALBERT: Fine. I’ll pick you up at seven sharp.

FLO: I’ll be ready and waiting. And it’s bad luck to keep a woman waiting.

ALBERT: Don’t worry, I’ll be on time.

FLO: It’s a date then. I’ll show myself out now, so you can get back to your writing. I wouldn’t want to be the one who stifled you at a moment of inspiration. *(She moves to the front door, opens it and turns back to Albert.)* If you find yourself suffering from writer’s block, I’ve heard that writing love poems can help to open the heart and soul.

ALBERT: I’ll try to keep that in mind, Flo. Thank you.

FLO: Anytime, dear. *(She starts to leave then turns back again.)* One more thing, Al. I’d never claim to be a writer, but I believe it works better if you put paper in the typewriter.

ALBERT: You’re right again, Flo. Thank you.

FLO: Anytime, Al.

Florence exits, closing the door behind her. Albert shakes his head, then crosses to the counter and begins sorting through the trash container that sits on the floor at the end of the counter. After a beat, he pulls out a piece of junk mail and flips it over, noting that the back side is blank.

ALBERT: Ah, paper!

He crosses back to the typewriter and inserts the paper. He rubs

his hands together as though he's accomplished a major feat. He then sits down at the typewriter. For a long moment, he doesn't move. He clears his throat, pulls his chair in closer and places his fingers on the keys. Again he is still. He stares straight ahead for a beat, then begins looking slowly about the room, never removing his fingers from the keys. Something on the refrigerator catches his eye and he studies it intently. He rises, crosses to the sink, takes a dish rag and wrings it out carefully. He then moves to the refrigerator and scrubs on an imaginary spot. He steps back to inspect the area, tosses the dish rag back in the sink and returns to sit at the table. Again he places his fingers on the keys and freezes. He begins staring at the sink, then rises and crosses back to it. He retrieves the crumpled dish rag and drapes it neatly over the side of the sink. He again sits at the table and places his fingers on the typewriter keys. After a long beat, he reaches over and flicks a piece of lint off the table to his right, then returns his fingers to the keys. Just when he seems to be ready to begin typing, there is the sound of a dog barking offstage. He rises and crosses to the window at CR, opens it and yells out.) Sam, quiet down out there! (The barking stops and he again sits at the table and places his fingers on the keys. He concentrates for a moment, then gets up and fetches a glass of water from the sink, which he slowly drinks. He hesitantly returns to the table again. He sits one last time and places his fingers on the keys. His expression changes from uncertainty, to deep concentration, to obvious frustration, then exasperation. He finally pushes himself away from the table and begins to pace about the kitchen. At last he is rescued as the phone rings. He eagerly rushes to answer it.)

ALBERT (cont.): Hello? . . . Frank, I'm surprised to hear from you. Supper can't be ready this early, it's only (*checking his watch*) 8:45. . . . Well of course I'm busy writing. Your call cut me off at a very difficult spot! . . . No, that's all right. It can wait. So, why the call? . . . I see. Doesn't want to run at all, huh? Funny thing, it was running fine when you borrowed it. . . . No, of course I don't mind. You can't very well mow your lawn if you can't get *my* mower started. . . . I'll be right over. Bye. (*Albert hangs up the phone and crosses to the table. He points at the typewriter accusingly.*) We're not through yet! I've got

ALBERT (cont.): lots of stuff to write—so much that I just don't know where to start, that's all! So get ready for a real workout! (*He moves to the door UC, then turns back.*) And, while you're sittin' there waiting, try to figure out where that damn paper is! (*He thinks for a beat, then looks up toward heaven.*) Did you hear that, Anna? Your old fool is talking to a typewriter now. (*He shakes his head sadly and exits.*)

Lights down.

**Perusal
Only
NOT FOR
PRODUCTION**

Act Two

(8 A.M. Friday)

Lights up on Albert sitting at the table with the typewriter still in front of him. The room is littered with clumps of wadded paper. Albert's hair is tousled and his face is buried in his hands. He slowly drags his hands down over his face and stares at the typewriter through elongated eyes.

ALBERT: Why can't I do this? It shouldn't be this hard to think of something to write about! *(He gets up and crosses to pour himself a cup of coffee. He takes a drink and grimaces.)* I never could make a decent cup of coffee. *(He takes another drink and crosses back to the table with cup in hand.)* All I need is one good idea—just one. Once I get started, I just know the old creative juices will start flowing again. Maybe Florence was right, maybe I *should* try to start out with some poetry. Let's see . . . *(He types for a bit, then reads.)* 'The irises grow tall and wild, around my neighbor's tree.' *(He types a bit more, then reads again.)* 'They give my dog a place to crap, where no one else can see.' *(He rips the paper out of the typewriter, crumples it, and tosses it aside. He then puts a new sheet in.)* I better try that again. *(He thinks for a beat, types some more, then reads.)* The morning sunshine flits across, the frosted blades of grass. And northern winds are whispering that soon I'll freeze my . . . *(He shakes his head and again rips the paper out of the typewriter. He wads it up and fires it across the room.)* I always did think poetry was stupid!

Frank enters UC and looks about. He picks up several wads of paper and juggles them.

FRANK: Does this mean you're over your writer's block, or is it just spreading?

ALBERT: *(From the table, without looking up.)* Very funny. If that's your idea of a stand-up comedian, don't quit your day job.

FRANK: I don't have to—I'm retired, remember?

ALBERT: Right.

FRANK: There is a hidden bright side to all of this. (*He tosses the crumpled pieces of paper he's been holding into the air, letting them fall where they will.*) If you keep it up, you won't have to wipe your floor anymore. No one will ever see it!

ALBERT: (*Rising.*) You know, it never ceases to amaze me how a nice woman like Mae puts up with a schmuck like you.

FRANK: (*Chuckling.*) That's a good one! You'd better write it down before you forget it! (*Pointing to the typewriter.*) I believe schmuck is spelled s - c - h - . . .

ALBERT: Enough, I get the point. (*Pointing to the papers scattered about.*) Come on, help me clean up this mess.

FRANK: Sure. (*They begin picking up the scattered papers.*) You're really having a hard time with this, aren't you?

ALBERT: It's crazy! I don't know how Dave Barry does it. I can't seem to think of a single thing that's worth writing about!

FRANK: Maybe you're just trying too hard. A person can do that, you know.

ALBERT: I suppose, but it doesn't make it any less frustrating!

They finish picking up the papers and Frank directs Albert to the table.

FRANK: What you need to do is clear your mind. I think you need to sit down and forget all about writing for a while. (*Frank removes the typewriter from the table and sets it on the floor LC. He and Albert then sit. For a beat, neither speaks. Frank clears his throat loudly.*) The mechanic down at the hardware store got your mower running again. It seems you sheared the flywheel key—that's why it wouldn't start.

ALBERT: I sheared the flywheel key?

FRANK: Yeah. I told him to go ahead and put in a new spark plug—and change the oil, seeing he had it apart and all.

ALBERT: That was real nice of you. And what is all that going to cost, or shouldn't I ask?

FRANK: (*Fidgeting.*) Ah, I don't know for sure. I, um, told them to put it on your tab—seeing it *is* your mower.

ALBERT: You what?!

FRANK: Now don't go getting all worked up! They were real nice about it. They said you could take up to thirty days to pay—interest free. (*Albert throws him a look and he changes the subject.*) How would you like to come over for supper on Saturday—we're grilling out.

ALBERT: Really? I thought you returned my grill last fall.

FRANK: I did. Johnson lent me his.

ALBERT: Who's supplying the charcoal?

FRANK: Very funny! It's not like yours - *Johnson's* cooks with gas.

ALBERT: Ooo, a fancy one! How about the meat? You got that from the Carson's, right—or is someone's pet pot-bellied pig missing?

FRANK: Al, is this your way of telling me that I should pay for the repairs on *your* mower?

ALBERT: That would be nice—seeing it died mowing *your* lawn.

FRANK: Okay, Al, I get the point. I'll write you out a check for the repairs, all right?

ALBERT: That would be fine.

FRANK: Now, about Saturday . . .

ALBERT: Frank, I've already told you how I feel about sponging off you and Mae.

FRANK: It's not 'sponging' if you're invited. Mae and I would never think of you as a charity case. Of course, I don't know *what* they're going to think down at the hardware store when *I* pay your tab!

ALBERT: Frank!

FRANK: Sorry, I couldn't resist. So, you coming on Saturday, or what?

ALBERT: I'd love to, Frank, but it just so happens that I have plans for Saturday.

FRANK: Really? You don't say. What kinda plans?

ALBERT: (*Rising and crossing to the sink.*) Florence wanted to go to the dance, so I agreed to take her.

FRANK: (*After a beat; eyes wide.*) You're taking the black widow out on a date?

ALBERT: It's not exactly a 'date'—and you shouldn't be calling her the black widow, either. That's not very nice.

FRANK: And why not? That's what she is! Have you forgotten how many husbands that woman's buried?

ALBERT: Four, I believe.

FRANK: Five!

ALBERT: Five? Who was the fifth one?

FRANK: Have you forgotten about the teenage sweetheart?

ALBERT: Teenage sweetheart?

FRANK: Yes, the teenage sweetheart. They eloped when she was seventeen - and their parents didn't even know about it!

ALBERT: Come on, Frank, be reasonable! How can a couple of kids elope and the parents not know about it? It seems to me they would have caught on rather quickly that there was one less bed in the house that was being slept in!

FRANK: The way I hear it, they got married and returned to their respective homes on the same night. Go figure! Anyway, I guess they were going to announce their marriage the following week, but . . .

ALBERT: Don't tell me, he died. Right?

FRANK: How'd you know?

ALBERT: Lucky guess.

FRANK: The story has it, he drove his car into a cement wall doing about 90 mph—and only two days after the wedding!

ALBERT: And she survived?

FRANK: Don't be ridiculous! Does Florence look like she was riding in a car that hit a cement wall doing 90 mph? Of course not! She wasn't with him when it happened.

ALBERT: You say this happened *two days* after the wedding? Boy, that's what I call a short honeymoon.

FRANK: I'd say!

ALBERT: Still, if she wasn't even with him when it happened, then you really can't say it was Florence's fault.

FRANK: Come on, Al. You know how women can be - they're ruthless! She didn't have to actually be behind that wheel to 'drive' him to his death!

ALBERT: I'm sorry, Frank. But Florence hardly strikes me as being 'ruthless'.

FRANK: Al, listen to me - I'm your friend, I care what happens to you. Don't get involved with this woman!

ALBERT: For the last time, I'm *not* getting involved! She just wants to go to the dance. What's wrong with that?

FRANK: Plenty! That's probably the same way she hooked her other four husbands!

ALBERT: Five.

FRANK: Who's counting?

ALBERT: You are. You distinctly said there were five.

FRANK: Four, five—what's the difference? They're all *dead*! That's the important part! (*Beat.*) Does Patty know about this little tryst?

ALBERT: Tryst?!

FRANK: All right, 'rendezvous' then. I would hate to think of calling it an 'affair'.

ALBERT: It's nothing, Frank. Got that? Nothing! It's not even a date! It's just two people who both happen to be alone and going to the same social function.

FRANK: (*Sarcastically, after a beat.*) Right. Sure. I believe you. Really.

ALBERT: I don't care what you believe! She needed a ride, so I said I'd pick her up . . .

FRANK: You're taking a car?! Do you realize what all can happen on a date if you're in a car?! Of course you do - you were sixteen once!

ALBERT: Come on, Frank! What do you think—that I'm going to take Florence parking on some lonely country road? Maybe run out of gas? Get lost?

FRANK: The thought had crossed my mind.

ALBERT: Frank, men over sixty don't go parking anymore. And do you know why? (*Frank shakes his head.*) Because they own houses, Frank! You don't have to go parking if you own a house! Although I must admit, I'd probably have more privacy in my car—parked on the interstate!

FRANK: Joke if you want. I'd feel better if you weren't taking the car.

ALBERT: So what do you propose I do, *walk* her to the dance?

FRANK: Dear God, please tell me Patty doesn't know about all of this!

ALBERT: (*After a beat.*) Could we possibly go back to the lawn mower conversation? That was much more logical—and pleasant—than this!

FRANK: You'd like that, wouldn't you?

ALBERT: Yes, very much.

FRANK: Better yet, I bet you'd like me to forget all about this! But answer me one thing, Albert. When they ask me to deliver your eulogy, can I talk about it then? (*Albert rises, crosses to the phone, and begins dialing.*) Please tell me you're calling Florence to break it off! Thank God you came to your senses in time!

ALBERT: No Frank, I am not calling FLO. I'm calling Mae. I'm going to tell her to get over here pronto and escort her raving lunatic of a husband back home!

FRANK: So, that's the way it is. You can hang up the phone. (*Heading toward the door.*) I'm going. But don't think I'm above saying 'I told you so!' And when you're lying in that casket, I'll say it good and loud, too—so I can be sure you heard me! And I won't care the least bit what the other four people at the wake think, either!

ALBERT: Four?

FRANK: Florence, Mae, myself and the hardware store mechanic.

ALBERT: (*Indignantly.*) And where might Patty, Bob and Benjamin be during this touching service?

FRANK: Are you kidding? Patty isn't going to have anything to do with you—not after you've disgraced Anna's memory with all your running around!

ALBERT: Oh, so now I'm running around, am I?

FRANK: If the shoe fits!

ALBERT: It's a good thing you're leaving—or I might just lose my temper and throw you out!

FRANK: You know something? (*Pointing his finger in Albert's face.*) You talk pretty tough for a wrinkled, old codger who's got one foot in the grave!

ALBERT: Oh yeah? Well, even if I *do* have one foot in the grave, I can still take you!

FRANK: Oh yeah?

ALBERT: Yeah!

The two men stare at each other for a beat, then begin to laugh. Frank goes to exit UC.

FRANK: I know it's none of my business but, you just be careful, you old fool.

ALBERT: You're right; it is none of your business. But I'll do just that, okay? And say 'hello' to Mae for me, will you?

FRANK: (*Exiting.*) You got it.

Albert crosses and puts the typewriter back on the table. He stands, studying it for a beat, hands on hips. He then sits and feeds a fresh piece of paper into the machine. He rubs his hands together briskly, then places his fingers on the keys. There is a knock at the door. He shakes his head in disbelief and rises to answer it. Patty and Benjamin enter. Patty kisses her father's cheek lightly as she passes.

ALBERT: Patty, honey, what are you doing here? (*Crossing and looking out the still-open door UC expectantly.*) And where's Bob?

PATTY: I'm sorry, Dad. I know I should have called first.

Albert closes the door and crosses to his daughter. He embraces her again, then holds her out at arm's length.

ALBERT: Don't be silly. This is still your home—anytime you need it. You're always welcome here. (*Turning to Benjamin.*) And you, you're growing like a bad weed! What's your mother feeding you?

BENJAMIN: She force-feeds me vegetables!

PATTY: Benjamin!

BENJAMIN: And she works me too hard, too.

PATTY: And on that note, why don't you go out and get our bags, Ben?

BENJAMIN: (*Exiting to get the suitcases.*) See what I mean?!

ALBERT: (*After Benjamin exits.*) All right, Patty. What's **really** going on?

PATTY: Nothing, Dad. Bob's company sent him to some conference up in New England for the weekend, so Ben and I decided to take a ride.

ALBERT: I see.

PATTY: And what does *that* mean?

ALBERT: It means you decided to drive eighty miles to check up on your old man.

PATTY: (*Laughing lightly.*) Check up on you? Nah, I came here to see Sam. I noticed he wasn't in the yard to greet us. Is he locked in the bathroom for destroying yet another pair of slippers?

ALBERT: No, he's out being shampooed and groomed—just like clockwork. Every three months, whether he likes it or not. So, (*he crosses back to the door and opens it, then motions for Patty to leave*) I guess if it's Sam you came all this way to see, you might as well be on your way. Sorry you missed him. (*Ben enters through the open door carrying the bags.*) Sorry you had to go through all that trouble, son, but you can take those bags right back out. It seems your mother drove all this way to see Sam, and he's not here. So, it looks like you'll be leaving. (*Ben shrugs and turns to go back out to the car.*)

PATTY: Benjamin, you bring those right back in here. (*Ben shrugs and re-enters.*)

ALBERT: No, it's always late before the kennel has him dried and ready for me to pick up. I'd hate to have you just sitting around waiting for him. Now take those bags back out, and the *next* time your mom wants to come and visit Sam, have her call and make sure he's available. (*Ben turns to leave again.*)

PATTY: Benjamin, bring those bags in here right now!

BENJAMIN: (*Entering and dropping the bags loudly DC.*) Boy! I wish the two of you would make up your minds!

PATTY: (*To Albert.*) Okay, you were right. I *am* checking up on you. Is that so bad? It's been a long time since we spent a weekend together, just the two of us.

ALBERT: (*Counting the people in the room.*) I might be getting up there, but I can still count. Ben makes three.

PATTY: Well, you'd better take a good look at him, dad. He brought his Sega. He wants to hook it up in the back room. Once he does that, you'll have to slip a plate of food under the door every few hours just to be sure he's still alive.

ALBERT: You mean to tell me he's going to spend the whole weekend hooked up to some electronic game? What ever happened to

ALBERT (cont.): quality time with kids?! I ought to take the boy fishing, *that's* what thirteen year old boys are supposed to do with their grandfathers!

PATTY: He thinks fishing is cruel to fish.

ALBERT: What?! I never heard of something so stupid.

BENJAMIN: (*Shrugging.*) I wouldn't want a metal barb jerked through *my* cheek!

ALBERT: And what are your views on hunting?

PATTY: Take my advice, dad. Don't even go there. (*To Benjamin.*) Ben, would you please take our bags down to the spare room?

BENJAMIN: 'Bring the bags in, take the bags out.' At least now I know why you brought me along. You needed a pack mule. (*Ben starts to exit with bags CL.*) Wait a minute, there *is* a TV in the spare room, isn't there?

ALBERT: Yes, Sir. State of the art. At least, it was in 1960.

BENJAMIN: 1960! They actually had television back then?

PATTY: Benjamin!

BENJAMIN: Yes Mom, I know. I'm going. (*Leaving CL with the suitcases.*) Can I set my game up and play for a while?

PATTY: Sure, Hon. But remember, we're here to visit—not to play video games all weekend.

BENJAMIN: (*Exiting, rolling his eyes.*) Yes mother!

PATTY: Sorry, Dad. To him, 1960 seems like the dark ages.

ALBERT: To him it was. But that's nothing, wait until he turns the old thing on and discovers it's black and white!

BENJAMIN: (*Offstage.*) You've got to be kidding?!

ALBERT: Typical kid. Has to check out the entertainment before he even unpacks his underwear.

PATTY: Unpacks? He has every intention of living out of the suitcase.

ALBERT: Well, it's only for a couple days. (*Beat.*) Right?

PATTY: Yes, Dad. Just the weekend.

ALBERT: Great, sounds like fun.

PATTY: You know, Dad, if you really want to spend time with him, there's a fishing game he plays on the Sega. I'm sure he'd be thrilled to show it to you.

ALBERT: A fishing *game*? What kinda sissy stuff is that?!

PATTY: Ben doesn't think it's sissy stuff.

ALBERT: You're not fishing if your hands don't get dirty and the mosquitoes aren't attacking!

PATTY: (*Sarcastically.*) Sounds like real fun, Dad. I'm sure Ben prefers his own type of fishing. The only physical danger is the threat of calluses on his playing thumbs. (*Changing the subject.*) So, how long has it been since we've had a weekend together?

ALBERT: It was 1978. Your mother was in the hospital recovering from her appendectomy. You tried to make supper. It was a blackened grilled cheese sandwich and some cold tomato soup.

PATTY: Hey, I tried! I only wanted to surprise you!

ALBERT: And you did! I was surprised I ate it!

PATTY: Okay, so I won't cook this time. We can call out for pizza and stay up late watching movies. Or, better yet, we can play cards.

ALBERT: Oh no, you cheat! I remember.

PATTY: I do not! Prove it!

ALBERT: I can't *prove* it! I couldn't prove it when your mother used to cheat at canasta, either. But I know she did it! And sometimes, gosh darn it (*more softly*), you and she are just an awful lot alike.

PATTY: (*Hugging him.*) Thanks, Dad. I think that's just about the nicest thing anybody ever said to me. And it's even more special coming from you. So (*pleading*), is it okay that we dropped in for the weekend?

ALBERT: Of course it's okay. But, I might as well tell you up front. I've got plans for tomorrow night.

PATTY: Plans?

ALBERT: Yes. (*Clearing his throat.*) The church dance is tomorrow night, and I'm going.

PATTY: I see. Are you going . . . alone?

ALBERT: No, I'm taking the black widow—I mean, Flo. And before you go and get yourself all worked up, this is *not* a date.

PATTY: Dad, you don't have to explain anything to me.

ALBERT: (*Continuing his explanation anyway.*) The poor girl really had her heart set on going, and she didn't have anyone to take her. Well, gosh darn it, I know it's the 21st century and all, but I just can't see a woman having to go to a dance all alone. So I said *I'd* take her - as a *friend*, that's all.

PATTY: Dad, why are you telling me all this? I think it's *great* that you're going to the dance tomorrow night.

ALBERT: You do?

PATTY: Of course I do. You shouldn't have to sit home alone every night for the rest of your life . . . just because Mom can't be with us anymore.

ALBERT: Then you'll still come to my funeral?

PATTY: What?

ALBERT: Never mind. This is all so confusing. (*Sitting at the table.*) I know you're right. I can't sit home alone for the rest of my life. But your mother is the only woman I ever dated. We had some wonderful
ALBERT (cont.): times. Back then, we had our whole lives in front of us . . .

PATTY: (*Sitting next to him and taking his hand.*) It's good to remember, Dad.

ALBERT: Yes, yes it is. It's all I seem to be able to do. At night, when the house is quiet, I lay awake and remember. I remember all those years, all our dreams . . .

PATTY: Most of the dreams came true, didn't they?

ALBERT: Yes, but don't kid yourself. We worked at it. No matter how tough it got, or how dark it seemed, she never let me give up. It's sad and ironic, that I need her most because she's gone.

PATTY: I think the dance is a good start. There's nothing wrong with moving on. I think that's just what you need - new plans and new goals.

ALBERT: I know, believe me. And I'm trying, really. (*Pointing to the typewriter.*) I even thought I'd try my hand at writing. You know, capture all the wonderful times your mother and I had, all the places we've seen . . .

PATTY: That's a great idea! I was wondering what this old typewriter was doing out of the closet. It's been years since I've seen it.

ALBERT: Your mother had it out in '75 to type up her recipes and get them all organized. She must have spent days stuffing those little cards in that binder. She had a hard time deciding if she should file them by the main ingredient, by how well I liked them, or just plain alphabetically. Which reminds me (*he rises and crosses to take a recipe book out of a drawer in the cabinet. He carries it back to the table and hands it to Patty*), you might as well take this with you when you leave. I'm sure she wanted you to have it. Besides, it's just gathering dust in that drawer.

PATTY: So, can I read something?

ALBERT: Sure. There's a great recipe for chicken dumpling soup on page twenty seven.

PATTY: No, Dad. (*Pointing to the typewriter.*) Can I read something of yours?

ALBERT: Boy, I sure wish you could. But the truth is, after spending three whole days at it, I haven't written a single thing. I've recycled a lot of paper, though. So I guess I accomplished something.

PATTY: Maybe it's just too soon. I think this dance you're going to might be what you *really* need. But you've got to tell me, Dad. Who is this lady you're taking, and why did you call her the 'black widow'?

ALBERT: Because Frank is a louse.

PATTY: What?

ALBERT: Never mind. Just forget I said it.

PATTY: (*Shrugging and crossing to the refrigerator.*) So, have you started lunch yet? (*She opens the frig and looks inside.*)

ALBERT: Lunch? It's not even nine o'clock in the morning! Who thinks about lunch at this hour?

PATTY: Okay, let's forget about lunch for the moment. What did you have for breakfast?

ALBERT: Coffee. (*He quickly adds*) and eggs and toast. (*Patty crosses her arms and studies him.*) Okay, it was just toast. (*She cocks her head to one side and begins drumming her fingers on her arm.*) All right, all right. Don't look at me like that. So all I've had so far is a cup of coffee. I was busy trying to write, then Frank came over—and by the time *he* left, *you* were knocking. When's a body supposed to eat with all of that going on?! (*There's a knock at the door.*) See what I mean?

Albert crosses and opens the door. Florence strides into the room, but stops when she notices Patty.

FLO: I'm sorry, Al. I didn't realize you had company. Perhaps I should come back another time.

ALBERT: Don't be ridiculous. I'm sure you remember my daughter Patty.

FLO: Patty? Well of course. (*Crossing to Patty and taking her hand.*) It's been a long time, but I could never forget that face. You look more and more like your mother every time I see you.

PATTY: I'm sorry. I don't mean to be rude, but I don't remember you.

FLO: There's no need to apologize. I really didn't think you would. You came to a church picnic with your parents, probably thirty some odd years ago. I don't remember what year it was—time flies by so quickly. But you were there, I remember that all right, dressed in blue lace, complete with a bonnet . . .

PATTY: I remember that dress! It was robin egg blue. I always hated the color pink. Mom used to scold me. She'd say, 'What's the sense of having a little girl if I can't even dress her in pink?' But she didn't mind, not really.

FLO: You were lovely in blue - and quite the young lady. I believe I was with Phil at the time. We'd gone to the dance for the sole purpose of announcing our engagement. (*To Patty on the side.*) Phil was just dying to see the expressions on the old women's faces, what with him being my third husband and all. (*Patty draws back, her eyes wide.*) That was a picnic I'll never forget. We dressed casual. Phil wore his favorite jacket - the brown tweed one with leather patches on the elbows - and I wore a denim skirt with a white cotton blouse. The band set up under a canopy by the church. They played all our old favorites. Phil took me in his arms and we danced. I kicked off my sandals and the dry autumn grass tickled the soles of my feet. I was laughing. Phil was laughing, too. But he was laughing at a little girl who was darting in and out among the other dancers, twirling to the music, her arms embracing an invisible partner who was guiding her over the lawn.

PATTY: Me?!

FLO: Yes, dear. It was you. You stole the show that day. To see you now, all grown up . . . well, it takes me back. Those are good memories.

PATTY: I'm sorry, did you say that Phil was your *third* husband?

FLO: That's right. Sometimes it's very hard to keep it all straight, so I use word association to help me remember. With Phil, it's easy. You see, my second husband's name was John, and my *fourth* husband's name was also John - now *that* can get confusing. That's why Phil really helps me keep it straight.

PATTY: 'Phil' helps you keep it straight?

FLO: Well yes, don't you see? Phil filled in between the two 'Johns'—he was kinda like the filling in an Oreo cookie, separating the two chocolate halves. Filling—Phil, get it? That's so clever! Forgive me, I *am* rambling, aren't I? But where is *your* husband, dear? Anna always spoke about how happy the two of you were. What was his name again?

PATTY: Bob.

FLO: That's right, Bob. Where is Bob, did he come with?

ALBERT: He had a little business trip to take, so Patty thought she'd come spend a weekend with her father.

FLO: A business trip, you say? Hmmm.

ALBERT: That's all it is, FLO. Don't make anything more out of it.

FLO: I wouldn't dream of it. But I suppose, with you having company and all, that you've probably reconsidered going to the dance.

ALBERT: Don't worry, FLO. We're still on for tomorrow night.

FLO: (*With genuine relief.*) Really? That *is* good news. But are you sure it won't be an imposition? I mean, I wouldn't want to come between family. That would be terrible. I'd hate myself.

ALBERT: I assure you, Patty is *completely* in favor of our going to the dance.

FLO: (*Surprised.*) Really?!

PATTY: Really. Dad needs to get out of this house more, and you and Frank are the only two who seem to be able to accomplish that.

ALBERT: That's not true. I go out with Sam all the time.

FLO: I guess that means I'm in the same class as a cheapskate neighbor, and a shaggy old dog. I *am* a lucky woman.

ALBERT: Hey, Sam isn't *that* old, and he's not shaggy—not anymore. And Frank isn't cheap, he's just thrifty, that's all.

FLO: He's downright tight, Al. And you know it!

ALBERT: Okay, I guess you're right. Frank *is* cheap, and Sam is old, but they're both pretty darn good to me. Which brings us back to you, FLO. You haven't said why you're here. Are *you* having second thoughts about the dance?

FLO: Second thoughts? Oh, heavens no. I came over for the selfish reason of saving myself some embarrassment. I wouldn't want to be overdressed or underdressed, so I thought the best thing to do was to ask you right out what *you're* planning to wear.

ALBERT: Overdressed? Underdressed? Where do women come up with this stuff? If you put your clothes on, and all the important parts are covered, you're dressed, right? How can you overdo something that simple?!

PATTY: Dad!

ALBERT: It's true, isn't it? And another thing—why do you always have to 'put on your faces'? Don't you come into this world with your faces already attached, just like us men-folk do?

PATTY: Father!!

ALBERT: What, am I wrong? I can't be. If I was wrong and women really *did* have to 'put on their faces', just think how easy it would be for all those overweight women to lose weight. They could just skip penciling in their mouths for a few days and 'tah-da'—they're ten pounds thinner!

FLO: (*Giggling.*) Oh Al, you're such a kidder. You really had me going for a moment there!

ALBERT: Who's kidding?

PATTY: (*Sternly.*) What *will* you be wearing, Dad?

ALBERT: My gray suit, of course. What else?

FLO: Oh dear, I don't think I have anything that will go with a gray suit.

PATTY: Dad, you're not planning on wearing the light pink shirt with it again, are you?

ALBERT: It's not light pink, it's off white. And why *shouldn't* I wear it? Don't tell me, let me guess—I'll be overdressed, right?

FLO: Grey and light pink? Oh heavens, I *am* in a bind. I'll have to go shopping; that's all there is to it.

ALBERT: Would you like some company while you're shopping? To help with matching your outfit to mine, I mean.

FLO: I'd *love* some company. That's very sweet of you, Al.

ALBERT: Great! Patty, how'd you like to go shopping with Florence?

PATTY: Me?

ALBERT: Well sure, unless you had something else planned for the day. *I'd go, but I've got to get back to my writing. And the women's apparel department is no place for a man!*

PATTY: But what about Ben? I hate to leave him here alone. And what will the two of you do for lunch?

ALBERT: We'll be fine. No one's ever starved to death in this house yet. I think I've got another slain Salisbury beast in the freezer. Unless my memory fails me, kids are crazy about TV dinners.

PATTY: Are you sure?

ALBERT: Of course I'm sure. Now go along—and have some fun. From what you've told me about Ben's fondness for those games of his, he probably won't even notice you're gone.

PATTY: Well, I can't argue with that.

ALBERT: Good, then it's settled. And don't hurry home. I definitely won't be watching the clock. I've learned that time just flies by when you're writing. *(He crosses and opens the door.)* Oh, and here. *(He takes out his wallet and hands Patty a bill.)* Get yourself a little something while you're at it.

PATTY: Jeez, Dad. Five dollars. Thanks.

ALBERT: Don't mention it. I'll see you when you get back. *(He escorts them out the door, closes it, and leans against it, smiling.)* Let's see. *(He counts on his fingers.)* That's Frank taken care of, Florence and Patty momentarily out of the way, Ben is busy saving the world in the other room, and Sam is still at the kennel getting shampooed. I'd say the house is mine. But, just to be safe, *(He crosses and takes the phone off the hook.)* There, that ought to do it. *(He crosses back to the table.)* It's just you and me, Mr. Underwood, and I mean business this time! Rats, I should have asked Patty to pick up some paper. Well, maybe she'll get some with the leftover money I gave her. If not, I'll make do. *(He sits and places his fingers on the keys. Long beat. Albert appears to be deep in thought.)* Last Thursday? It couldn't have been! I haven't mowed the lawn since last Thursday? *(He rises and crosses to the window to look out.)* Yup, it's

ALBERT (cont.): waving in the wind. Looks like a gosh darn hayfield out there. Well, that does it. I've got to get that mower back from Frank and knock those weeds down. And just when I finally had some time to myself, too. Oh well, work comes first. (*He passes the table on the way to the door UC. Shaking his finger at the typewriter.*) But don't worry, I'll be back - so rest while you can! (*From the door.*) Ben, I'll be outside for a bit. Got some mowing to do.

BEN: (*Offstage.*) Sure thing, Grandpa. I'll hold down the fort.

ALBERT: (*To typewriter.*) And just because I talk to a typewriter doesn't mean I'm losing it, either. What do you expect when they leave a poor old man like myself home all alone? All I've got to say is that mower better start on the first pull, or heads are going to roll!

(*Lights down as he exits.*)

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