

IDA. (Searching for a topic.) So, how's business?

SAM. Business is fine.

IDA. That's good.

SAM. Yeah. (*Pause. Searching.*) I've been having trouble with the help though.

IDA. No.

SAM. Yeah. I don't know, kids today they don't want to work so fast. Not like when we were young. Lately I've been thinking maybe I should sell the shop altogether.

IDA. You're kidding.

SAM. I keep asking myself why is it the kids I hire get younger and younger? The boy I got now looks to me like he's just out of diapers. But then I realize-the kids aren't getting younger. People don't get younger.

IDA. No.

SAM. (*Pause.*) You uh ... you have a beautiful home.

IDA. Thank you.

SAM. *(Re: the piano.)* You play?

IDA. A little. The children took lessons when they were young.

SAM. *(Looking at the many framed pictures on the piano.)* That's quite a family.

IDA. You happen to be looking at a woman who's five times a grandmother.

SAM. I've got my first on the way. Maybe you'll give me some pointers.

IDA. That's the best part. You don't need any. You just enjoy your grandchildren then sit back and smile as you watch them do everything to your children that your children did to you.

*(SAM laughs. His eyes focus on a particular picture. IDA notices.)*

IDA. That's Murry and me on our twenty-fifth anniversary. At the Concord.

SAM. Merna and I spent ours at Grossingers. I'll never forget it.

IDA. It's nice to have such good memories.

SAM. What good? We were playing mixed doubles on the tennis court, I had a heart attack at the net. My twenty-fifth anniversary present was a double bypass. *(Jokingly.)* At least it was something I could use.

*(IDA laughs. Pause. SHE reaches for his cup which is beside the pipe rack on top of the humidor.)*

SAM. *(Re: the pipe rack.)* Funny, I don't remember Murry as a smoker.

IDA. Mostly just after dinner. He didn't really smoke during the day. *(Pause. Changing the subject.)* You want some more tea?

SAM. Sit. I'll get it.

*(IDA sits on the couch as SAM refills the two cups. HE laughs to himself.)*

IDA. What?

SAM. I was just thinking about Sylvia Green. Doris made me think of her.

IDA. What's funny about that?

SAM. Well, you probably know. I mean, it's a small neighborhood.

IDA. *(Playing dumb.)* Know what?

*(SHE makes room for him on the couch but HE shies away and sits in the armchair.)*

SAM. Well ... we had this son of date a while back.

IDA. Really?

SAM. If you could call it that. The whole thing was a fiasco. It all started at Lou's unveiling.

IDA. At the unveiling?

SAM. I know it sounds awful. It was all because of my son, Richie. After Merna died he didn't like the idea of my being on my own. He wouldn't stop buzjuring me to find someone. I think what he was really afraid of was that if he didn't find someone to move in with me I might move in with him. So he kept saying what I needed was a "friend." He loves to use that word "friend" for

someone he thinks I should spend the rest of my life with. Anyway, after a few months I started thinking maybe I could find someone. So I started to go out. Each date was worse than the one before. Not that it was their fault. It was mine. Instead of looking at what a woman was like I kept looking at how unlike she was from Merna.

IDA. Not a fair thing to do.

SAM. No ... So my last date was with Sylvia. We were going out for dinner and I was determined to have a good time. I specifically picked a restaurant Merna and I had never been to- The Majestic on Jewel Avenue. You know it?

IDA. The Majestic ... isn't that where Sylvia's husband had his heart attack?

SAM. That's the place. Who knew? I pulled up in front of the restaurant and all of a sudden she starts screaming, "Take me away from here! Take me away from here!" We drove around for about an hour which gave her enough time to calm down about Lou and me enough time to start thinking about Merna. We both agreed that this was probably not the best time for us to continue our date. I took her home, apologized and said good night. We never tried again. I guess even without the fiasco we knew we wouldn't have been right for each other. We talk every now and then. She's a good woman and a nice friend. Oy, don't let Richie know I said that.

*(THEY laugh. Pause.)*

SAM. I shouldn't have been going out like that so soon after Merna died. I don't know what I was thinking. Funny, how after you lose someone, someone that close, you find yourself doing things you never even dreamed of, behaving in ways you never thought possible.

IDA. *(Confiding.)* I used to cook. Like a crazy woman, day and night. I don't think I left the kitchen for about a month after Murry passed away. I made meals that would put a French restaurant to shame. Five course dinners; roasts, chickens, breads, compotes, pies, you name it. Murry used to love my food. He used to say that my dinners were what brought him straight back home every day right after work. So after he died I kept making the dinners. I thought maybe if I made them, he— *(Stopping herself. Pause.)* I don't cook that much now. I still bake for the kids every once in a while.

SAM. You're close with them.

IDA. Oh yeah.

SAM. That's nice.

*(SHE holds out the pot of tea for him. HE gets up, lets her refill his cup and then sits beside her.)*

IDA. So, have you been going to the cemetery often lately?

SAM. Not really.

IDA. And what made you decide to go today?

SAM. This week would've been forty years Merna and I are married. I felt I should go.

IDA. *(Relieved.)* So you didn't go for any other reason.

SAM. For what other reason would I go to the cemetery?

IDA. Of course.

SAM. While I was there I was thinking back over all the years.

IDA. They do go by.

SAM. One day you're on your knee proposing, the next day you're standing at a grave remembering how nervous you were. *(Reflecting sadly.)* And somehow, before you know it, forty years have passed between the two days. *(Pause. Feeling very awkward.)* I should get going.

IDA. Wait. I'll get a bag, you'll take the rest of the cookies.

SAM. You don't have to.

IDA. It's my pleasure.