

ACT II, SCENE 6 - CONTINUED

KITTY

You said I said my house goes to Kathryn and you said you understood that and you knew I would never take it away from her, that it's her inheritance, and that's right, I won't, so I can't imagine what you were thinking that you wanted to tell me.

CHESTER

Yeah. So what about asking Kathryn to sell her house and move into yours?

KITTY

Oh. That is a thought.

CHESTER

You'd have someone in your house taking care of it and you wouldn't be paying to keep up two houses.

KITTY

She's going to hate the idea.

CHESTER

You said her house is a rundown, ramshackle rat's nest with a leaky gutter. She ought to jump at the chance.

KITTY

The view of Old Man Joe's.

CHESTER

The view of what?

KITTY

Old Man Joe's. A rickety old windmill on the crest of a hill that's still standing because the health department doesn't have enough money to knock it down, they say, although I could do it myself with an old broom. And a flock of black apple trees that look like they were sneaking up the hill when wham - the blight hit.

CHESTER

Your daughter doesn't want to leave that?

KITTY

It makes her feel pure.

CHESTER

Black apple trees?

KITTY

All that unspoiled farmland she imagines just over the hill makes her feel free. Wind-swept fields just over yonder where fresh air and sky and sun reign in blissful union over an untamed sea of grass topped by an ocean of clouds that connects her with all parts of the universe in the most soothing way. It makes her feel like she's in an eggshell.

CHESTER

In an eggshell?

KITTY

All protected.

CHESTER

Does she realize that if she insists on staying there you won't be able to pay for your services at Longwood? Have you told her that?

KITTY

It reminds her of the past - roots she doesn't have, by the way. We had no farmers in our family. But she says she knows exactly what the farmhouse was like: narrow, gray, grimy. Inside too: shabby bedrooms with rickety walls and beds with high headboards, thin quilts, and huge hard pillows. How can that make anyone feel good?

CHESTER

My uncle had a farmhouse and maybe we would consider it simple today, but I would never call it shabby. It was clean, well-swept, worn but well taken care of. A lot of work went into that house. And they had the farm to look after on top of it. They worked from dawn to midnight.

KITTY

I don't know where she came up with that farmhouse or why she thinks she knows about the pillows, but she says the memory is very potent and pleasant and makes her feel full and ...

CHESTER

And?

KITTY

Useful. She cherishes that memory, and she loves that view. I don't know how I'll ever get her away from it.

CHESTER

I don't think she's got a choice. You're going to need the money from the sale to subsidize your services at Longwood.

KITTY

I could use it for that, couldn't I?

CHESTER

Judiciously, yes.

KITTY

I can never get a hold of her to say anything anyway.

CHESTER

That's why I think we ought to go over there tomorrow to suggest it to her in person. I can wait in the car.

KITTY

That's out of the question, I'm afraid.

CHESTER

I don't mind.

KITTY

That's not it.

CHESTER

I'd feel better if I drove. Until we get your car looked at.

KITTY

That's not it. I'm not allowed over there.

CHESTER

What do you mean?

KITTY

That house is off-limits. I haven't set a foot there since that day.

CHESTER

Since what day?

KITTY

Since the day Marshall left.

CHESTER

Marshall being?

KITTY

Kathryn's two-week husband.

CHESTER

You've never been over there since then?

KITTY

She holds it against me.

CHESTER

What?

KITTY

His leaving.

CHESTER

She's never invited you for Thanksgiving?

KITTY

Kathryn doesn't roast turkeys.

CHESTER

Or Christmas?

KITTY

Or hams. When I absolutely have to see her, I invite her out to lunch. And afterwards I get a great big present all wrapped up as fancy as you please of the centerpiece she snatched from the table and I thank her very, very graciously. You have to wonder who's the bigger fool.

CHESTER

Fourth of July? That's easy. Baked beans and a barbecue.

KITTY

She said she needed her turf, and I have given her her turf. I've never once even been in the neighborhood since then. I doubt I could find my way.

Kitty's cell phone rings. She answers.

KITTY (CONT'D)

Hello? Yes. Yes, it is. No. No, I couldn't possibly come down until tomorrow, or Monday.

(listens)

I understand it's urgent, but I can't drive after a certain time. There's not enough light for me. You told me that already. I'm very sorry. I can't change it. Can't you just tell me?

(listens)

Just a moment please. Just a moment.

(hands phone to Chester)

It's the bank. You better listen to what she's saying and

tell me what it's all about because I don't believe I believe my ears.

CHESTER

(takes phone)

Hello? Yes. Yes, I am.

(listens as Kitty sits at desk and folds and unfolds a scrap of paper)

Yes, I will. Thank you for calling. Good-bye. Oh, by the way, could you fax us a copy? Yes, a fax of a fax is fine. No, we don't care about that. Oh. I don't have it here. Could I call you from upstairs? In about ten minutes? And your number is?

(Kitty hands him a pen and paper; he jots down number)

Thank you. Good-bye. Yes. Thank you. Good-bye.

(returns phone to Kitty)

KITTY

Well?

CHESTER

It looks like you're getting sued.

KITTY

And by whom?

CHESTER

Well ...

KITTY

By my granddaughter.

CHESTER

That's kind of how it looks.

KITTY

There it goes.

CHESTER

What?

KITTY

That Parkinson's. I'm feeling all jiggly.

CHESTER

It just shows you're perfectly healthy. That would be anyone's reaction.

KITTY

Thank you, darling. I'm so sorry tomorrow is Sunday.

CHESTER

Why is that?

KITTY

Because I have to play hooky from God to trespass on some turf.

CHESTER

I'll drive you.

KITTY

You most certainly will not.

CHESTER

I'll wait in the car.

KITTY

I couldn't care less who sees the sparks.

CHESTER

You don't know the way.

KITTY

It's on a road, isn't it? All those roads are connected.

ACT II, SCENE 7

Early evening. ACCETTULLA porch.
Sound of dog in background.

KATHRYN

(calls out to someone not
visible)

You'll be taking Lynch with you, I expect. That at least will be some relief.

(KAREN reappears at doorway
and looks at her wordlessly)

You are, aren't you?

KAREN

I need to leave him here just for the shortest, absolute the minimum -

KATHRYN

That you cannot do. I won't stay a single day alone in this house with that dog.

KAREN

I can't take him with me. You must realize that.

KATHRYN

Then you'll have to take him back to the Animal Rescue League before you go. That means tomorrow if they're not open now.

KAREN

Just for the shortest time, Mom. While I'm at the shelter. And with the schedule I'm going to have - just at the beginning. Just for the shortest time.

KATHRYN

It's out of the question. I will not be left alone with that dog. I don't know why you got him in the first place or why you picked such a vicious one. You've only kept him shut up in that bathroom ever since. Why?

KAREN

He's for Ritchie. I'm taking him to Ritchie.

KATHRYN

Then take him to Ritchie tomorrow.

KAREN

All you have to do is shove in water in the morning. The food falls down the chute by itself. He won't even know I'm gone.

KATHRYN

I will. I'm telling you now, if you leave that dog behind, he is going back before the hour is up. You should never have cooped him up in there in the first place. He's gotten so bad I'm too scared to even peek inside to see what state he's in. If he didn't bark himself to sleep every once in a while, I would have gone out of my mind long ago.

KAREN

He's not cooped up. He's used to being in there.

KATHRYN

I do not believe that.

KAREN

He doesn't mind it. He has a different perspective.

KATHRYN

That's not how it sounds to me.

KAREN

Dogs are cage animals, Mom. He's a cage animal.

KATHRYN

Who told you that?

KAREN

The girl at the Animal Rescue League.

KATHRYN

I'm surprised you, of all people, would believe something like that, or her, even if she is, presumably, a humble, underpaid, exploited, uninsured, uneducated, honest, industrious illegal alien.

KAREN

If a creature doesn't fight for its rights, it doesn't have any, so it can't be deprived of them. It sounds harsh, but it's a very basic principle of any political world view.

KATHRYN

True Christians are charitably amenable to getting disfigured and scorched. Are you saying they have no rights?

KAREN

That's different.

KATHRYN

How?

KAREN

That's civil disobedience.

KATHRYN

So?

KAREN

They're withholding their right to fight for their rights on purpose. A dog doesn't fight for its rights because it doesn't feel any, and if it doesn't feel any, they can't be taken away. That's straightforward, isn't it?

KATHRYN

It sounds to me like Lynch has been fighting for his rights ever since you packed him in there five weeks ago.

KAREN

Come on, Mom. It hasn't been that long.

KATHRYN

You don't seem to hear the barking, whining, scratching. He's trying to get out any way he can.

KAREN

I'll be back for him, I promise.

KATHRYN

What more does an animal have to do to convince you he doesn't want to be in there? You may refuse to call them rights, but you would be contradicted by no one in calling them needs, and you can't tell me it's okay to confine an animal with light-sensitive eyes to a dark hole twenty-four hours a day.

KAREN

There's a night light in there.

KATHRYN

To coop up an animal with powerful lungs and a nose much more sensitive than ours in that airless tank filled with nothing but its own smells that stink all the way to out here.

KAREN

There's a vent. I keep it open. Always.

KATHRYN

Just because he can't spell 'torture' doesn't change what it is. Consider the fact that he doesn't know the words 'future' or 'hope' and then reflect on what depriving him of freedom of movement must mean. At the very least it's far worse than depriving a human being, who is foolish enough to believe it will get better. And you're the only one in a position to supply or deprive him because Lynch was sold, as per your favorite slave example, with the rope already around his neck, to you, the one with the thinking faculty, the one with the power of empathy, the one with the Masters degree in library science. What does it take to make you realize you can't treat any living creature that way? Do you not hear that?

KAREN

I don't see why you're making such a fuss about it now. You never said anything before.

KATHRYN

I thought you had something else in mind for him besides leaving him here with me.

KAREN

He has to learn to be alone.

KATHRYN

He most certainly does not. And that's not how you would teach him if that's what you were trying to do. Just be warned: If you go and he's not in that vehicle with you, he goes straight back where he came from.

KAREN

He loves you, Mom. You ought to see how he wags his tail when he hears your voice. Wait. I'm going to prove it to you. I'm going to prove it.

(exits)

KATHRYN

No.

Sounds of scratching and barking get louder, KAREN's voice shouting, a door slams, silence. KAREN reenters, glowing with a strange fury.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

What was that all about?

KAREN

He attacked me.

KATHRYN

He goes back now.

KAREN

It's okay, Mom. It's okay. I taught him. I taught him. I hit him and hit him and hit him. I couldn't stop.

(sobbing)

I wanted to beat the life out of him. Beat the life out of him.

KATHRYN

Oh God.