

FOOTWORK

A ONE-ACT PLAY

BY

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SAMPLE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Tyler	54, the son
Chuntao	47, his wife

Setting

A large kitchen in a suburban home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on the afternoon of December 30.

Upstage center is a kitchen sink. A window above it looks out onto wooded back yard.

To the left and right of the window are good-looking wooden floor-to-ceiling cabinets. Beneath the sink are more cabinets, also of good-looking wood. Downstage right is comfortably and cozily set up for sewing, with a sewing table, baskets full of lengths of cloth, and heaps of a large variety of sewing materials. Upstage right is a settee by a door facing a dining space with a good-looking wooden dining table and chairs. Downstage left a door leads to another part of the house.

A WINTER'S AFTERNOON

Kitchen. Chuntao sits at sewing table, sewing.

Tyler *(enters from hallway, looking at watch)* Thirty days in December, right?

Chuntao *(without looking up)* Thirty-one.

Tyler *(looking at calendar on wall)* Thirty-one. Yeah.

Tyler quickly opens one cupboard after another above sink. Then opens cupboard below sink, rummages around, pulls out pair of rubber gloves, exits. Chuntao continues sewing. Tyler reenters with rubber gloves, sits down in chair, stares at gloves.

Tyler Your feet get really ugly when you're 96, you know that?

Tyler rises, exits with gloves, reenters with gloves, sits down, stares at gloves.

Tyler Really ugly. And his toenails. Have you seen them?

Chuntao Tyler.

Tyler I mean, really looked at them?

Chuntao Tyler.

Tyler They're hardly there. How are you supposed to cut toenails stuck way down inside all that purple toe flesh? You'd need an ice pick. Jab them right out of existence is all you can do. It's all you can do. You can't trim them.

Chuntao Never mind.

Tyler lunges over, grabs small pillow from settee, sits back down with pillow on his knee and jabs at it now and then.

Tyler The ugliest toe flesh ever seen.

Chuntao I just thought maybe you could help. Petey's program's tonight. I thought it was tomorrow.

Tyler Itty-bitty misshapen discolored little bubble toenails swallowed up in all that putrid morphing toe flesh. You can't cut a toenail way down there. You need an ice pick. Jab it out of existence so it doesn't grow back. That's all you can do.

Chuntao It takes a little patience, I admit.

Tyler How could anyone's toes ever get like that? How? It's disgusting.

Chuntao I think it has to do with his heart.

Tyler slaps pillow against thigh, rises, exits with gloves and pillow, reenters, sits down, puts gloves on pillow and stares at them.

Tyler His heart.

Chuntao The circulation. His heart can't pump hard enough anymore to get the water out. So it collects down there. In the lower extremities. His toes. His feet and ankles are swollen too, if you noticed. The entire lower leg is affected. He says it doesn't hurt, but he can't get around without the walker anymore either and that just makes it worse. It's not a good situation for him.

Tyler And they stink. From four inches away they really stink. A penetrating in-your-face foot stink. That's hard to take. Staring at all that ugliness besides.

Chuntao All right.

Tyler Cascading from the innermost putrid rotting cell surfaces right into my—

Chuntao All right.

Tyler Living, breathing, innocent, disease-free face.

Chuntao I thought you might be able to help. I'm sorry I asked. Just forget it.

Tyler My God, I'm not going to be able to sleep.

Chuntao It's okay, Tyler. It's okay.

Tyler Not just ugly. Sick ugly.

Chuntao You can be glad they're not your feet.

Tyler Rotting ugly.

Chuntao He can't help it.

Tyler Disease ugly.

Chuntao And he puts up with it. Very patiently. I admire that. Wait until your feet are like that. Just wait.

Tyler Puss ugly.

Chuntao Were they?

Tyler All pussy.

Chuntao I don't know what to do about that. From one day to the next, that puss keeps coming back. But he doesn't want to go to the doctor's again.

Tyler rises, exits with gloves and pillow, reenters, sits down. Gloves in one hand dangle forgotten, he jabs at pillow.

Tyler And they're all—

Chuntao All what?

Tyler Tough and stiff and—

Chuntao Tough and stiff and what?

Tyler Tough and stiff with cracks right in the middle.

Chuntao Right in the middle of what?

Tyler Right in the middle between his toes where you can't get at it. And you can't really spread the toes apart because— because—

Chuntao I use Q-tips.

Tyler Right between the toes.

Chuntao I think that's why he has trouble walking. It must be pretty painful. But he never complains.

Tyler We've been tending his toes for how long now?

Chuntao Well. The whole time.

Tyler And how long's that been? A year, right? A whole year.

Chuntao Just about.