

## Act I, Scene 3

*Friday about noon. Macfarlane kitchen. Kitty is seated at kitchen table surrounded by shoe boxes filled with papers and heaps of loose papers. A bill is in her hand.*

**Kitty** *(talking into cell phone)* Kathryn, this is your mother. It is eleven fifty-two Friday—just a minute—June eighteenth. I was led to believe your gutter dripped and I sent Tommy over there to fix that, so I do not understand what this bill with all the zeros is all about. You're going to just hate me, but I am going to have to ask Tommy—*(stops abruptly)* That beats everything. *(dials, continues message)* I've not been idle—this is your mother again, Kathryn. Your message machine just cut me off. It is eleven fifty-four Friday, June eighteenth. I have to figure out how I'm going to pay all these zeros—Huh. *(dials, speaks quickly)* You were to get an estimate for fixing the gutter—it's eleven fifty-something Friday still June eighteen—which I thought you said you had, and if Tommy is doing the work then it couldn't possibly—For crying out loud. *(dials, speaks very quickly)* I would stop calling if I got enough time to tell you quite emphatically—at eleven fifty-seven or thereabouts June eighteenth—that I know I am letting you down and I am so sorry, but I do not know how—*(dials, speaks extremely quickly)* I will not arrange—June eighteenth again, Kathryn, or still, noon sort of—with Tommy's teacup man to reset your windows, or re-lead them, or whatever they need doing to, until this not-to-be-believed bill for a solid gold gutter—*(stops abruptly)* I am going to choke. *(dials)* Good-bye. *(hangs up)* It's enough to make my blood boil.

**Chester** *(enters, dumps coffee mug in sink; envelope is sticking out of his back pocket)* Your room okay?

**Kitty** You are so sweet and you have worked so hard to make me feel at home and you promised to show me how to work the coffee machine, so I have no excuse whatsoever for being so jumpy. But the faucet doesn't work, my undies are nothing but wrinkles, and my curls are drooping already because I can't find my shower cap. I'm about to jump out of my skin.

**Chester** Which faucet?

**Kitty** The hot water one.

**Chester** Where?

**Kitty** In my bathroom.

**Chester** I just had those fixtures tuned up.

**Kitty** Whoever did it tuned the left one upside down. You have to shut it off up. It just falls down again. What else can it do? It's driving me crazy.

**Chester** I think the guy only had two right parts.

**Kitty** Why didn't you tell him to get a left part?

**Chester** He didn't point it out at the time.

**Kitty** Did he ever?

**Chester** He showed me the other one. That one okay?

**Kitty** It's a dream, but I can't shut the hot water off. It dribbles out all the time. It makes me want to scream.

**Chester** I've just put it at the top of my list, kiddo.

**Kitty** What list?

**Chester** My list of things to figure out.

**Kitty** Not your list of things to forget?

**Chester** I've misplaced that list.

**Kitty** Just hope you never find it. Your guilt register will skyrocket.

**Chester** I don't have a guilt register.

**Kitty** That's what makes you men impossible. Fatherhood stops the moment you get out of the bed.

**Chester** We can fix faucets.

**Kitty** That remains to be seen. You forget. I'm new here.

**Chester** I'm going up there and show you right now.

**Kitty** If you haven't got the right part for the left side, you can forget it. But before you do—fix it, that is—could you please go down to my car and bring up the rest of my papers? I couldn't carry them all and the stairs in this house are killing me.

*Chester exits. Kitty picks up phone and dials.*

**Kitty** Hello, Tommy. This is Kitty Bruce. Thank you so much for not having an answering machine. I'm my own answering machine too. I'm not going to ask about your evening business course because I know you are putting all those other poor students to shame. I'm sure you are, but the day will come when you are eight-five—oh, you will be. You're such a strong, healthy man. Well, you look it. And when you are—eighty-five, that is—you will know how very disorienting it is for someone who is eighty-five to get a bill with so many zeros in it. How can a gutter cost that much? Roman tiles? For a gutter? A roof? No one ever said anything about a roof. Where did she get that idea? She had a perfectly good roof, didn't she? Ah. I have to say I feel slightly less obliged to hop to my granddaughter's tune, and it's hard to get worked up even about a leaky gutter when all we've had so far is no rain. Tommy, I'll be frank with you: I don't know how I'm going to manage this. I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to please stop your work until I figure out what to do. Yes, I mean it. I'm very sorry about it, but I have all my papers in one spot now and have to go through them all to figure out where this money is going to come from when all the stock market has been doing is nosedive. Don't worry. I may be eighty-five, but I was a whiz at math. Yes, I really was. I could add things up faster than anybody. That's because my teacher let me get up and show off my new shoes while everyone else finished. But that was a while ago and I can't say how long it will take me now. I am sorry about this, really I am. Good-bye. Yes, you, too, if it's possible. Good-bye.

*Chester enters carrying armful of thick notebooks containing Kitty's financial records.*

**Kitty** Thank you, darling. Who would ever have thought I'd be glad to see all that again. Well, I'm not. I have to get through all that before it rains.

**Chester** (*sets notebooks on bench*) What happened?

**Kitty** I told Tommy to stop the work. Kathryn is going to be furious with me, but what else can I do?

**Chester** I mean with the car.

**Kitty** How do you like it? (*indicating notebooks Chester brought up*) Can you please give me the one with Kathryn 2009 on it? That's a good boy. Wait a minute. That's not going to work. There's no room to put it down. Here. Take this. (*hands Chester a shoebox*) Put it with the notebook that has Karen's name on it, if you would please. There's only one because she's a dependent's dependent and always will be, I guess. If at thirty-eight you can't say, oh Granny, thank you so very much, but I don't need your allowance anymore, then I don't think you ever will. (*Chester does as Kitty asks. Kitty chooses papers, puts them in another shoebox*) And take this. (*hands Chester shoebox*) And put it with the Kitty 2010 notebook and slide both to my end of the bench. I've got to get to them next. Now you can put Kathryn 2009 right here, if you would. Thank you, sir.

**Chester** The doors on the passenger side are practically shaved off.

**Kitty** I don't need those doors. Where did I put my bookkeeping specs? (*rises, marches very slowly over to a desk, gets another pair of glasses, marches very slowly back, seats herself*)

**Chester** What happened exactly?

**Kitty** I decided I was going to get through that Route 28 light whatever color it was when the mountain sideswiped me.

**Chester** There's a guardrail there. Did you hit that?

**Kitty** I was sideswiped.

**Chester** By the guardrail?

**Kitty** Whatever it was, it made the most horrible screeching noise. But I gunned it and we were out of there like you wouldn't believe. That car's as good as a tank. I always knew it and got my proof today. Nothing got in our way. But nothing.

**Chester** You all right?

**Kitty** I will be horribly black and blue from all the bumps, but just pretend you don't notice. It won't mean a thing.

**Chester** The doors don't open.

**Kitty** I don't use those doors.

**Chester** The handles are gone.

**Kitty** And not a car in sight. No witnesses. No victims. No judgments. We can forget it ever happened.

**Chester** We should take it down to get checked.

**Kitty** That's dear of you, Chester, but it looks worse than it is.

**Chester** It may not be safe.

**Kitty** It got me home just fine.

**Chester** We can get it looked at. Just to be sure.

**Kitty** I will get it looked at just as soon as I can afford another bill, thank you, Chester, which I can't right now.

**Chester** I can take you wherever you need to go in the meantime.

**Kitty** You're precious, but I'll manage just fine.

**Chester** You must feel a little shaky.

**Kitty** I'm mad, is all.

**Chester** Mad?

**Kitty** I got the light anyway.

**Chester** And stopped for it?

**Kitty** It makes my blood boil. (*points to envelope hanging out of Chester's pocket*) Whatever that is, you're about to lose it.

**Chester** Oh yeah. (pulls out envelope)

**Kitty** Your list of things to forget?

**Chester** I just got this notice from Longwood.

**Kitty** And?

**Chester** It says we've got until Monday.

**Kitty** For what?

**Chester** To confirm that we'll be moving up there.

**Kitty** Why would they ask us to confirm something like that?

**Chester** They're taking us off the waiting list if we don't.

**Kitty** I didn't know we were on the waiting list.

**Chester** I signed us up—well, Norma and me.

**Kitty** When was that?

**Chester** In January. She was just beginning to recover.

**Kitty** A dreadful time.

**Chester** She had beaten it. She was over the worst. Starting to work out in that metal frame they have for standing up in. She wobbled all over. Sweat poured down her face. But she stood there and stood there until they said she could lie down. She was putting everything into it.

**Kitty** She always did.

**Chester** I'd never seen her work so hard. I also never saw her so weak. I knew we had to make the move to Longwood. I signed us up. For five hundred dollars.

**Kitty** Five hundred dollars to sign up?

**Chester** To get on the waiting list.

**Kitty** For five hundred dollars?

**Chester** To be kept on the waiting list for a year. We have six months left.

**Kitty** I couldn't begin to think about moving again.

**Chester** In six months.

**Kitty** I'm not moved in here yet.

**Chester** They want a written confirmation by Monday.

**Kitty** I'm wearing the wrong color stockings because I can't find my navy ones. My nighties are still in Tupperware. I can't work your microwave. I don't even know where the coffee is.

**Chester** I could send it in today. It's in the envelope.

**Kitty** No. The idea makes me feel very, very unwell inside.

**Chester** You'll feel better about it in six months.

**Kitty** Can we pretend to confirm, then change our minds?

**Chester** I'd lose my deposit.

**Kitty** Your deposit for what?

**Chester** I have to make a down payment on our accommodation a month after we confirm.

**Kitty** I can't make a down payment on anything. I'm at my wit's end about this. (*picks up and rattles bill*) I was told about a gutter. I was ready to pay for a gutter.

**Chester** I'm prepared to cover the accommodation. I've drawn up a plan. I'd like to go over it with you.

**Kitty** I slipped into a wormhole the night of Norma's memorial and it's been closing in on me ever since. I can't wiggle in and I can't wiggle out. I'm not sleeping at all and when I do, I'm having the worst dreams.

**Chester** I'm sorry to hear that. I thought you said your room was all right.

**Kitty** It's not my room.

**Chester** And I'm going up to fix the faucet in your bathroom right now.

**Kitty** It's not my bathroom. This isn't my house and you aren't my beau. It's Norma's bathroom and it's Norma's room, this is

Norma's kitchen and Norma's tea towel. She picked all this out. And you're Norma's husband. What am I doing here?

**Chester** I thought you were comfortable.

**Kitty** Everything is very, very comfortable, Chester, and you've been very considerate and the sweetest dear, but I am feeling very unwell inside and outside my body and I just don't think I can do this. It makes me cringe to think what Kathryn makes of this arrangement. I have to go back to my own house. This is wrong. This is wrong all over.

**Chester** My perspective on Longwood might alleviate all this. I'd like to explain it to you.

**Kitty** They won't let us in unless we're married anyway. There's no point in even discussing it.

**Chester** I'm hoping they'll understand times have changed and accept us as peers, so to speak. They will not accept us if either of us is not ambulatory. We have to keep ourselves on our feet and get ourselves moved up there within six months.

**Kitty** I can't think of anything else until I figure out where all the money is going to come from to pay this bill.

**Chester** Figure out some for me while you're at it. (*exits*)