Things My Mother Taught Me

by Katherine DiSavino

A Samuel French Acting Edition



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ISBN 978-0-573-70089-7 Printed in U.S.A. #20479

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***Things My Mother Taught Me* was originally produced at the Rainbow Dinner Theatre in Pennsylvania in the Summer of 2012**

THINGS MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME was first produced by The Rainbow Dinner Theatre in Paradise, Pennsylvania on June 5th, 2012. The play was produced by David DiSavino and Cynthia DiSavino, with direction by Scott Russel and Katherine DiSavino. Set, Decor, and Costumes were designed by Cynthia DiSavino with Technical Direction by Scott Russell, Lighting Design by Jeff Cusano and Props by Jimmy "2step" Cosentino. The production stage manager was Scott Russell. The cast was as follows:

OLIVIA . . . . . .Kate B. Diem
KAREN . . . . . Cynthia DiSavino
CARTER . . . . . David DiSavino
GABE. . . . . Jonathan Erkert
LYDIA . . . . . Casey Allyn
WYATT . . . . . Joe Winters
MAX . . . . . Scott Russell

CHARACTERS

OLIVIA - late 20s

KAREN - her mother

CARTER - her father

GABE - late 20s

LYDIA - his mother

WYATT - his father

MAX (male or female) - late 50s, building Super

SETTING

An open, two bedroom apartment in Chicago, in a neighborhood in the beginning stages of gentrification.

For my parents, who taught me everything I know.
For their parents, who taught them.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(Lights up on the mostly empty living room/kitchen area of an apartment in Chicago. It's an open space, brightly lit, in a building that has seen better days, in a neighborhood that is slowly building itself back up. But there's a fresh coat of paint on the walls, and an air of hopeful possibility about the place.

A few unopened boxes are placed against the back wall, each labeled: "GABE'S BOOKSHELF," "OLIVIA OFFICE," "KITCHEN CRAP" and so on.

Also, there's an oversized armchair stuck in the front door.

A siren sounds outside.

OLIVIA KEEGAN, *late 20's, full of energy, dressed in "moving day" denim, is currently trying to yank the chair into the apartment. This is not easy. She pulls. She pushes. She tugs. She wrenches. Nothing happens.)*

OLIVIA, This is why people hire movers, isn't it? *(to the chair)* Isn't it?

(She pulls her hair up into a pony tail. She takes an aggressive stance. She rubs her hands together. She runs towards the chair and tries to shove it into the hallway.)

Hi-ya!

(It doesn't budge.

She pushes it again, her hands on the back of the chair. Her feet slide out beneath her. She runs in place for a moment, trying to push the chair.

A change of tactics. She grips underneath the seat cushion and pulls. She pulls harder. One last huge heave. **OLIVIA** *loses her grip on the bottom of the chair and lands on her back.*

She lays on the floor. She throws a small fit, still on the floor.

MAX MIROWSKI, *the building super, appears in the doorway behind the chair.)*

MAX. *(to the chair, clucks)* Uh-oh.

OLIVIA. *(sits up)* I'm sorry – who are –

MAX. Max. Mirowski. Building Super. Nice to meet you.

OLIVIA. Oh! *(She stands.)* Hi! Nice to meet you too.

MAX. You got a problem here, yes?

OLIVIA. Oh, well. Yeah. The chair seems to be stuck.

MAX. Yeah. Uh-oh. *(beat)* Well. Happy Move-In!

(He turns to leave.)

OLIVIA. Oh – uh – Max? Do you – do you think you could help me at all with –?

MAX. *(perfect English)* I'm sorry. My English is not so good. I don't understand what you're saying.

OLIVIA. I see.

MAX. Here's a good thing to remember, new tenant: if it's not a problem with building, it's not my problem.

OLIVIA. So – you don't think a chair stuck in the door is a problem with the building?

MAX. No. It's a problem with your chair. Should be smaller.

OLIVIA. Great. Thanks.

MAX. You are welcome! Oh, and, is that your truck downstairs? With the gangly man unloading the things?

OLIVIA. Oh! Yes. That's us –

MAX. Uh-oh.

OLIVIA. Uh-oh? What do you mean, uh-oh?

MAX. In this neighborhood, maybe you don't leave so many things on the sidewalk if you don't want someone to walk away with them very fast.

OLIVIA. Oh? *(realizing)* Oh! Oh dear!

MAX. As I said, Happy Move-In! Oh – and, ah – nice chair.

*(***MAX** *exits.)*

OLIVIA. *(calls after him, not insincerely)* Thank you?

*(***OLIVIA** *runs to the window and tries to open it. It doesn't budge. She tries playing with the locks. It still doesn't budge. She has a quiet, succinct tantrum, manages to get the window open, and sticks her head outside.)*

(calling) Gabe? Gabe? HEY! Sir! Sir – I can see you. That is not up for grabs. That's right. Up here. Keep walking! GABE?

*(***GABE LAWSON***, late 20's, appears in the door frame behind the armchair. He is carrying a large box.*

As if having a chair block the entrance to your apartment were the most normal thing in the world, he climbs over the back of the chair, steps on the seat, and hops down into his new apartment.)

GABE. You calling me?

(His voice startles her. She slams her head on the bottom of the window sash.)

OLIVIA. Holy mother of –

GABE. Whoa. That looked like it hurt –

OLIVIA. Did it? *(stares at him, then at the chair)* Did you just walk on the chair?

GABE. I climbed over it to get in–

OLIVIA. Gabe! It's brand new!

GABE. It's blocking the entire door, Liv. How else am I supposed to get in here? Pole vault?

(He puts the box down on the floor and crosses to her.)

Let me see your head.

OLIVIA. We're never going to get that chair out of the door.

GABE. *(inspecting her head)* Oh, sure we will. Eventually. Is this where it hurts?

OLIVIA. Yes.

GABE. *(kisses the spot)* Come on, grumpy. I love you!

OLIVIA. *(grumbling)* I know it.

GABE. Happy Move-In Day!

OLIVIA. Happy Move-In. I'm sorry I'm kind of –

GABE. It's okay. There's a chair stuck in the front door of our brand new apartment.

OLIVIA. No. There's a *brand new* chair, that we picked out together, and drove *eight hundred miles* across the country, stuck in the front door of our brand new apartment.

GABE. So I guess this is a bad time to remind you that my old chair, currently sitting in the truck downstairs, would have fit through the door just fine?

OLIVIA. That smelly, old, flea infested, *orange* chair is not coming into the apartment. I told you that in New York and you snuck it into the truck anyway.

GABE. Shhh. You're upset. Don't say things you don't mean.

OLIVIA. Why would we bring that chair in here when we have a perfectly wonderful, *new*, not smelly, neutral colored chair that is a thousand times better –

GABE. But stuck.

*(***OLIVIA** *wails.)*

Come on, Liv! It's not a big deal. It's just a chair.

OLIVIA. It's not just a chair! This is *our* chair! It's our first chair that we picked out together, and we can't get it into our new home!

GABE. Olivia –

OLIVIA. And not only can we not get it into our new home, we can't get anything *else* into our new home. Oh no! What if this is a sign, Gabe?

GABE. It's a sign that we should bring my orange chair up.

OLIVIA. Gabriel. This is a big deal.

GABE. The chair?

OLIVIA. *You and me!* Our first apartment. Our first chair. I just wanted everything to go smoothly.

GABE. That chair means a lot to you, doesn't it?

OLIVIA. Our chair. Our chair, Gabe. It's such a nice chair!

Look at how nice it is.

(She pets the chair.)

GABE. Alright. Come on. We'll give it the ol' heave-ho one more time.

(They move to the armchair, each grabbing the underside of it.)

Pull on three. One.

OLIVIA. Two.

GABE. Three!

(They pull as hard as they can. They lose their grip at the same time. They both fall backwards.)

(They lie on the floor together. A beat.)

OLIVIA. Why didn't we hire movers, again?

GABE. You said it was bourgeois and we both needed the exercise anyway.

OLIVIA. I said that?

GABE. Yes, you did, pretty.

OLIVIA. That chair is going to stay there. Forever.

GABE. *(Sits up. Affecting an over-the-top air.)* Oh my goodness! This looks like a job for Carlton Prettyouse of HGTV! Now, hmm. Let me see. Oh! We could just put the couch next to the door, and make this the seating area. Do you think we can put the TV in the middle of the room? A little off center? Oh no. That would look weird, wouldn't it?

OLIVIA. No, I think that could fit the current aesthetic nicely.

(She sits up and covers her face with her hands.)

GABE. *(back to normal)* Uh-oh. Is someone hungry? Because you will be very happy to know that I did manage to carry up a case of the best cereal in the world.

(He pats the box he brought in.)

A full case of Cocoa Bites, just for us.

OLIVIA. I can't believe you brought an entire case of cereal from New York.

GABE. Well, I didn't think I would be able to find it in Chicago. Olivia, this is one of the few cereals left that still have cool toys in the boxes. Race cars, plastic decoder rings, stickers – breakfast doesn't get much better than that. Also, it turns your cereal milk into chocolate milk like magic.

OLIVIA. Well, I'm very glad the Cocoa Bites made it in safely. What else is left in the truck?

GABE. Most of our clothes. The couch. The bed. The Futon. The Mattress. Your desk, and every other piece of furniture we own…you know what? Let's just move into the truck! An urban mobile home – what do you say?

OLIVIA. Hm. Parking our house might get complicated.

(She stands.)

GABE. But think of all the new neighborhoods we'll be able to try out! So much better than being stuck in one place, right?

OLIVIA. And if any relatives come to visit – we can just drive off!

GABE. Very funny.

OLIVIA. Speaking of which – isn't it kind of weird we haven't heard from anyone today?

GABE. *(a little too off hand)* No. That's not weird. Why would that be weird?

OLIVIA. Usually your mom calls four times a day just to say "How's my baby boy?!"

*(***OLIVIA** *makes kissy noises and coos at* **GABE***, teasing.)*

You just moved half-way across the country, so I kind of counted on her checking in at least ten times by noon.

GABE. Huh. Yeah. Well. *(a beat)* Actually. Have you heard from your parents at all? About anything?

OLIVIA. No. Why?

GABE. Oh. No reason – just wondering. *(a beat)* They knew today was the move, right?

OLIVIA. I only told my dad ninety times. Maybe everyone is

just trying to give us a little space.

GABE. Wouldn't that be something? I mean, we are twenty-eight – so it's kind of about time, but still –

OLIVIA. Baby – *you* are twenty-eight.

GABE. Ah, here comes the rub.

OLIVIA. *(playfully moving around the apartment away from him)* *I* am a spry twenty-seven –

GABE. *(following her)* – and a half –

OLIVIA. – wildly attractive and sought after by most –

(She coyly dodges away from his grasp.)

GABE. – taken and loved by one man only

(He catches hold of her and pulls her towards him.)

OLIVIA. Twenty-seven and a half and very much in love.

(She kisses him.)

GABE. That's my girl.

OLIVIA. Oh shoot! Did you leave the truck open downstairs?

GABE. Yeah. Why?

OLIVIA. GABE!

*(***OLIVIA** *sprints to the window and practically half hangs out of it to get a good view of the truck.)*

*(***GABE** *laughs.)*

GABE. Olivia. We just moved from New York. You seriously think I left the back of our truck open while we were both upstairs?

OLIVIA. Don't laugh at me! You've done dumber things –

GABE. Like what?

OLIVIA. Like saying – "Let's just push the chair a little harder, Liv, I'm sure we can make it fit."

GABE. Ha-ha.

OLIVIA. I just wanted to make sure, because I met the building super, and he casually mentioned that our neighborhood is crawling with criminals.

GABE. Sounds like every neighborhood in New York. Did the Super say anything about the chair?

OLIVIA. Yes. He said, "Uh-oh."

GABE. Uh-oh? Anything else?

OLIVIA. Yes. "If it's not a problem with the building, it's not my problem."

GABE. Did he at least offer any advice on how to get it out?

OLIVIA. No. Ugh! Gabe. The truck is still full. How are we going to get everything in here?

GABE. We can still carry some of the smaller things up from the truck!

*(***GABE** *starts towards the front door and begins to climb over the chair.* **OLIVIA** *grabs his hand and hauls him off of it.)*

OLIVIA. *(panicked)* No! We can't just climb all over this thing like a – like a pack of monkeys.

GABE. A pack of what, now?

(He moves towards the window.)

OLIVIA. What are you doing?

GABE. Problem solving.

(He disappears into the bedroom.)

There's a fire escape in here! Hey! Liv!

OLIVIA. *(suddenly wary)* What?

GABE. *(reappearing in the bedroom doorway)* Since we're a pack of monkeys, why don't we climb down the fire escape and bring the rest of the smaller stuff up?

OLIVIA. What?

GABE. This way, we don't have to go anywhere near the new chair.

OLIVIA. What about the bed and everything? We can't just haul a mattress up the fire escape under one arm.

GABE. One thing at a time, my dear! C'mon!

(He grabs her hand and starts pulling her to the bedroom,)

OLIVIA. Whoa! Gabe! The fire escape isn't just a flight of stairs. You're only supposed to use it in an emergency.

GABE. Olivia. I thought the preservation of our brand new chair meant more to you than this. Think of all the times we would have to step on it if we do this the other way. With our *dirty, smelly, city shoes.*

OLIVIA. Gah! FINE. Let's do this, monkey!

*(***OLIVIA** *marches into the bedroom.* **GABE** *follows after her, laughing. We hear a window open, and the sounds of the city outside get louder for a moment. There's some clanking offstage as* **GABE** *clumsily climbs out onto the escape. There is a beat while the apartment stands empty. Then, heavy footsteps from the stairwell are heard.)*

WYATT. *(off)* How many floors up are they? Hail Mary and Joseph!

LYDIA. *(off)* Don't stop, Wyatt! Keep climbing! If I stop moving, I'll never be able to start again!

WYATT. *(off)* Hey little lady, get your hands off my butt!

LYDIA. *(off)* I'm helping! I'm propelling you forward!

*(***WYATT** *and* **LYDIA LAWSON** *appear on the landing, behind the armchair.* **WYATT** *is a good-natured man in his sixties who loves his son, marriage, golf, and beer – not always in that order.* **LYDIA** *is a retired psychologist, well dressed, and always thinking of what's best for her only child.*

LYDIA *is carrying an enormous purse filled with various cleaning supplies.*

WYATT *is carrying the largest package of multiple paper towels you have ever seen.*

They contemplate the chair in the door frame. They confirm that they have the right apartment number. They look back at the chair.)

WYATT. *(regarding the chair)* Huh. Interesting idea.

LYDIA. Oh Wyatt, for goodness sake. It's not a burglar alarm. The children have gone and wedged a piece of furniture into the door.

WYATT. Well, that's nothing a little elbow grease can't fix!

(He rolls up his sleeves and puts his shoulder to the chair, trying to push it into the apartment. As he pushes, he sinks lower, and lower behind the back of the chair.)

(From behind the chair:) It's stuck.

LYDIA. Good assessment, darling. Hold still.

(She takes off her shoes and steps onto the back of her unseen husband, using him as a stepping stool to swing her leg daintily over the back of the chair, then the other, then onto the seat and into the apartment.)

Hello!! Surprise! Gabe! How's my baby boy?!

WYATT. *(slowly stands, holding the small of his back)* How the heck they manage to get this thing stuck like this?

LYDIA. Wyatt, I don't think they're here! Gabriel? Olivia? Hello?

WYATT. I mean, they must have just jammed it in there.

(He is trying to climb over the back of the chair. It's difficult.)

LYDIA. Honestly – did they just run out and leave their apartment standing wide open in an unfamiliar city? We could have been criminals.

WYATT. Uh –

(He is stuck halfway over the back of the chair.)

LYDIA. *(sees him, begins laughing)* We wouldn't have made very good criminals, huh?

(She crosses to him and helps him into the apartment. They hug. He's left a rather large, dirty shoe print on the chair.)

Oh! Look what you did, you old man.

WYATT. Whoopsa-daisey!

LYDIA. Go wet down a dish towel. Olivia is going to have a fit if she sees this.

WYATT. What's the big deal? It's just a little dirt.

LYDIA. *(tries to brush the dirt off with her hands)* They got this chair together.

WYATT. I can't find a dishtowel.

LYDIA. Wyatt, for goodness sakes, open up some of the boxes and find one.

WYATT. It's just a chair. Olivia's a big girl. She won't have a hissy if it's got a little dirt on it.

LYDIA. Wyatt –

WYATT. *(He starts looking.)* I'm looking, I'm looking.

LYDIA. The first furniture piece a couple purchases together is momentous. A lot of time and effort goes into selecting the right thing. And your whole apartment takes shape around that item. It will always be your first "x".

(He finds a bag of potato chips and opens them, his search for the dish towel forgotten.)

WYATT. Lydia, I love you. But that sounds like a big, steaming pile of horse hoo-ha.

LYDIA. Don't be such a grump. You remember our first – ?

WYATT. *(too quickly)* Of course I do.

LYDIA. You do?

WYATT. Oh yeah. Of course. How could I forget – that thing. It's just, you know. What I'm saying is – kids these days. They don't look at their…furniture the way we did.

LYDIA. You sure loved sitting on it, didn't you.

WYATT. Sure did! Why – it was the most comfortable… thing in the world.

LYDIA. *(smacks his chest)* It was a coffee table, you unromantic old poop.

WYATT. *(playfully fending her off)* Ah, yes, the coffee table! How I loved that coffee table.

LYDIA. Oh, you.

(They kiss. A loud thud from the bedroom scares them. They freeze, afraid for a moment that perhaps another home invasion is taking place with actual burglars.)

OLIVIA. *(off, out of breath)* Hurry up. I'm already there.

GABE. *(off – grunting noises as he struggles to climb to the fire escape landing.)*

*(***LYDIA** *and* **WYATT***, minds firmly in the gutter, look at each other horrified.)*

LYDIA. *(stage whisper)* He knew we were coming today! This is just rude.

WYATT. Well, Olivia didn't know we were on the way. When we were young, you found it hard to contain yourself, too – remember?

LYDIA. Wyatt –

OLIVIA. *(off)* Let me help –

GABE. *(off – straining)* I can do it – I'm almost there –

LYDIA. Maybe we should go!

(She motions towards the door.)

WYATT. You kiddin' me? I'm not climbing Mt. Everest again.

(He crosses to the chair and sits in it.)

You said Gabe wanted a weekend full of surprises.

(The kids grunt offstage.)

(He puts his fingers in his ears.) Well, surprise!

OLIVIA. *(off)* Want me to pull it all the way in?

GABE. *(off)* Yeah – get a good hold on it, though.

*(***LYDIA** *is horrified. She motions to* **WYATT***, unable to speak.)*

GABE. *(off)* That tool bag is a lot heavier than it looks.

OLIVIA. *(off)* Good thing I carried it up almost the entire way, then, huh?

GABE. *(off)* Shut up.

OLIVIA. *(enters the living room)* You shut up.

*(***GABE** *follows* **OLIVIA** *into the living room.* **OLIVIA** *is carrying a box,* **GABE***, a large bag of tools.* **OLIVIA** *sees* **LYDIA** *first. She drops her box.)*

Oh my God!

LYDIA. Oh my God!

WYATT. *(fingers still in his ears)* You kids all done breaking the new place in?

GABE. *(simultaneously confused and horrified)* What? Wait – what?

LYDIA. Surprise!

OLIVIA. *(to* **GABE***)* Surprise?

*(***WYATT** *hugs* **OLIVIA**.*)*

GABE. *(to* **OLIVIA***, nodding vigorously.)* Surprise! I had no – *(to his mother, winking at her)* I had NO idea you were going to drive here! *(hugs her)* Wow – Mom. *(a whisper)* You are REALLY early.

WYATT. *(crosses to* **GABE***)* My boy!

GABE. Dad. Hey!

(They hug.)

LYDIA. *(hugs* **OLIVIA***)* You look – lovely. What were you two doing? We didn't interrupt anything, did we?

OLIVIA. What? *(slow realization)* OH! Oh – no, no, no. We – because of the chair – so I – we went down the fire escape to get some –

GABE. We tried out a different route to the van.

OLIVIA. Just trying to stay on track with moving day!

LYDIA. *(to* **WYATT***)* See? We weren't interrupting anything! I told you so!

GABE. Nope, not a thing.

*(***GABE** *puts his arm around* **OLIVIA**. *They smile, trying to be comfortable. They realize they are touching. And that his parents thought they were having sex. They jump apart.)*

OLIVIA. Wow. Wow, guys. Wow. So, you drove all this way to –

LYDIA. To help, of course!

WYATT. *(about the chair)* Looks like we should have gotten here a little earlier, though – huh, son?

GABE. Oh yeah. You sure should have.

OLIVIA. *(notices the dirt on the chair)* The chair! OH MAN! The chair!

LYDIA. *(to* **WYATT***)* I told you.

OLIVIA. Oh no. Oh no. Gabe –

(She points at the dirt.)

GABE. Dad. Did you –

*(***WYATT** *takes his shoe off and wipes it on his shirt.)*

WYATT. What?

GABE. The – the shoe print? Olivia's just a little sensitive about dirt getting on the new chair.

OLIVIA. *Our* new chair, Gabe. Lydia – did you see that?!

LYDIA. I told him you would be upset.

GABE. Liv, it'll come out. We'll just wipe it off! No big deal.

OLIVIA. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'm so – agh. And I'm sorry you had to climb over the stupid thing, Wyatt.

WYATT. Almost didn't make it, to tell the truth!

OLIVIA. Lydia – do you think it'll come out?

*(***OLIVIA** *and* **LYDIA** *inspect the foot print.* **OLIVIA** *is very clearly having a minor panic attack and trying valiantly to conceal it.)*

GABE. You guys, really, it's not –

WYATT. He's right, you know. What's a little dirt compared to the fact that it's stuck in the doorway?

GABE. Dad. Now is not the best time –

OLIVIA. *(in total despair)* We'll never get it unstuck!

LYDIA. This never would have happened if you had hired professionals to help you move in. I told you two to hire movers. Olivia, didn't I mention that would be a good idea?

OLIVIA. *(Unpacking boxes in the kitchen. Through clenched teeth:)* You sure did, Lydia.

LYDIA. So where are they?

GABE. We wanted to save money and do it ourselves, Mom.

LYDIA. And look what happened. That's all I'm saying.

GABE. Mom, don't.

LYDIA. Gabriel, you're bringing two separate lives together in a brand new city! This is a very big deal. You should be taking it seriously.

*(***OLIVIA** *slams a cabinet door.)*

GABE. We are, Mom. We are taking it very, very seriously.

WYATT. Of course you are, Gabe! Of course he is, Lydia. We just – we figured you would need an extra set of hands. Especially since you got twice the amount of crap to move.

(He wanders to the door and inspects the armchair.)

LYDIA. And when have we ever *not* helped you move into a new apartment?

GABE. *(a bit pained)* You've been there every single time, Mom.

LYDIA. Darn right we have! From college until now! Why would I tarnish my perfect record?

*(***OLIVIA** *slams a cabinet door.)*

WYATT. She wouldn't dream of it!

(He moves to the tool kit and takes it back with him to the door. Throughout the next section he fiddles with the door frame and the chair quietly, trying out different tools as he attempts to pry the chair from the frame. No one notices.)

LYDIA. That's right! My baby boy just moved to Chicago with his lady!

OLIVIA. His lady needs cleaning supplies. Gabriel? Come help me find cleaning supplies.

LYDIA. Open your eyes, Olivia, they are right in front of you! I brought them. I can scrub down the cabinets while you unpack!

OLIVIA. No, Lydia – please. It's okay. You just drove here from Connecticut. Relax. Do you want some water?

LYDIA. I'm fine! The drive was a piece of cake.

WYATT. That's cause I did all the drivin'!

OLIVIA. You guys must have gotten up mighty early.

LYDIA. *(no big deal)* Two a.m.

OLIVIA. And you didn't stop at all?

LYDIA. Straight through.

GABE. Straight through? Seriously? I thought I told you to – *(He catches himself.)* That's a little crazy, Ma.

LYDIA. It's how you young kids do it, isn't it?

OLIVIA. Listen, Lydia, you and Wyatt should go and take a nap at your hotel.

(A beat.)

LYDIA. Hotel?

(A beat.)

GABE. You – you did book a hotel, didn't you?

LYDIA. Why would we book a hotel? You've got two bedrooms right here!

GABE. Mom. *(under his breath)* This is not what we discussed.

LYDIA. Hotels in Chicago are extremely over-priced. It's like they think this is New York City or something. Ridiculous.

GABE. Mom.

OLIVIA. Gabe?

WYATT. And don't even get us started on how much we spent on gas.

GABE. Mom – you and Dad – that is to say, Olivia and I, we –

LYDIA. Oh, sweetie, it'll be fun! A big slumber party. And think of the manual labor you'll get out of us. *(with a sly smile)* This is a very big weekend, after all.

GABE. *(stiffly)* Yes. It is.

OLIVIA. Gabe?

GABE. Mom – I –

LYDIA. *(gives* **GABE** *a hug)* I'm so excited! Oh! We'll even put together the extra bed ourselves. You don't have to worry about a thing.

(A beat. The sound of sawing. Everyone looks at **WYATT***, who has found a handsaw and is using it on the door.)*

GABE. Dad – no!

OLIVIA. THE CHAIR!

(She moves towards the chair and **GABE** *swiftly grabs her and pulls her into a straight jacket sort of hug without taking his eyes off of his father.)*

WYATT. *(sawing the door frame as he talks)* You know, Gabe, if there's one thing I've learned in sixty five years, it's that there's always a way to make something work.

(He has sawed off an enormous portion of the door frame. He tosses it to the ground with the saw and reaches under the chair to give it a tug. The chair pulls easily into the room.)

There we go!

*(***MAX***, the super, appears in the doorway. He looks at the sawed-away portion of the door frame, then at the chair, then at* **OLIVIA***.)*

MAX. Uh-oh.

*(***MAX** *shakes his head.)*

(There is a collective beat of silence.)

WYATT. So! Which bedroom is ours? This old man needs a nap.

(blackout)

Scene 2

(Several hours later. At rise, it looks like a few more items in the truck have been brought in – though the apartment is still suspiciously empty.

LYDIA *is in the kitchen, cleaning. She is currently standing on a chair and Windex-ing the top of the refrigerator.* **WYATT** *has a dry mop in one hand and a beer in the other.)*

LYDIA. It's so dusty up here.

*(***LYDIA** *scrubs harder.* **WYATT***, with dry mop in hand, wanders over to a wall sconce that is not working. He fiddles with it.)*

It's really disgusting.

(She scrubs again. A beat. She sighs. A beat. She scrubs more viciously.)

I mean, I can't believe the landlord let them move in with the apartment in this condition. This is black mold. It has to be.

*(***GABE** *enters with an end table.)*

WYATT. Not yet! She's not finished!

GABE. Are you serious?

LYDIA. No furniture until we're done cleaning, Gabriel. Why don't you go get groceries? And take that back down to the truck!

*(***GABE** *sighs, grabs the end table and exits.)*

WYATT. When are you going to let us bring up the rest of their furniture, Lydia? The truck is still full down there.

LYDIA. We have to make sure the whole apartment is properly cleaned first. Olivia never would have thought to clean up here. It takes a lot of living in apartments before you remember to clean the top of the fridge. That's what my mother taught me. When

you move into a new place, always clean the top of your refrigerator. And always, *always* buy a new toilet seat. You don't know what could be on one, and you know *exactly* what's been on the other.

WYATT. You know what my mother always said? Out of sight, out of mind.

LYDIA. Your mother was a lunatic. Hand me another paper towel.

WYATT. In a second.

LYDIA. The sooner you dry mop, the sooner we can wet mop, and the sooner we can unload the truck.

WYATT. You sure you don't want to take a power hose to the floor after we wet mop?

LYDIA. Don't be cute.

WYATT. Lydia, cool your jets.

LYDIA. I just – I really need another paper towel, Wyatt. Please.

WYATT. Okay, okay.

(He crosses to the counter and grabs the roll of paper towels, then hands it to her.)

You doing alright? Do you need to lie down?

LYDIA. No – they'll be back soon with the groceries, and I'll have to get dinner started.

WYATT. I thought Olivia said she was going to cook tonight.

LYDIA. Mmm. Yes.

WYATT. Now, Lydia –

LYDIA. She isn't used to cooking for so many people. She'll need a hand.

WYATT. Lydia –

LYDIA. I'm here to help!

(A beat. She begins to scrub again.)

She needs my help.

WYATT. Get down from there.

LYDIA. I'm not done –

WYATT. Get down from there right now.

LYDIA. Alright, fine.

(She climbs down.)

What?

WYATT. Olivia can cook dinner. Gabe can help, and you can relax.

LYDIA. They need help.

WYATT. Lydia, they're twenty-eight. They're grown adults.

LYDIA. I'm worried, okay? Are you happy? I'm worried about them, and I – I don't know. I thought I was okay with this.

WYATT. You're having second thoughts about what they're doing?

LYDIA. Am I old fashioned?

WYATT. You are *old.*

LYDIA. Wyatt –

WYATT. *(softening)* Come here.

(He holds her.)

LYDIA. Is this how all the kids are doing it now? Moving in before they're married…or even engaged?

WYATT. They love each other, Lydia.

LYDIA. Of course they do – any idiot can see that, Wyatt.

WYATT. Then what's the problem? If they love each other, and they're happy, why shouldn't they take this next step?

LYDIA. Because this *isn't* the next step! That's the whole thing. An engagement ring is the next step. A wedding is the one after that – and *then* you get an apartment together. That's how we did it – and that's how our parents did it –

WYATT. He's not going too far out of order, Lydia.

LYDIA. I know that he's planning on proposing this weekend. I know – it's just – what if everything goes wrong? What if she says no?

WYATT. I imagine that he would be very hurt.

LYDIA. And then what? Does she move out? Does he? Right now, the biggest commitment they have made is the one to their apartment.

WYATT. Lydia – how long have Gabe and Olivia been seeing each other now?

LYDIA. What? I don't know – since college, I suppose.

WYATT. Junior year of college, Lydia. They've been together for seven years. We dated for six months and then got engaged. Got married the next year.

LYDIA. And?

WYATT. They keep choosing to be with each other. I'm just saying, after a year and a half, I was stuck with you!

LYDIA. Wyatt!

WYATT. Married or not, they're making the same decisions we made. But they're doing it their way – not ours.

LYDIA. *(sniffles)* You're a nice, romantic old man.

WYATT. They're going to be okay, my love.

LYDIA. You know, every now and then, I remember why I'm glad I married you.

WYATT. Good. Now, get me another beer.

LYDIA. And then I forget all over again.

WYATT. And some duct tape.

LYDIA. A beer I can do. You're on your own for the tape.

*(***WYATT** *crosses to the door and opens it, just as* **OLIVIA** *and* **GABE** *arrive on the landing, out of breath and laden down with groceries.*

OLIVIA *really, really needs to pee.)*

WYATT. Here come the pack mules!

OLIVIA. *(crosses to the kitchen counter)* Oh wow! You're still cleaning? I thought you were just going to do a quick floor-sweep while we got the groceries –

LYDIA. Oh, no. You've got to clean much more thoroughly than that before you bring any of the furniture in.

OLIVIA. We need to clean the top of the fridge before we bring the furniture in?

LYDIA. Certainly.

OLIVIA. Okay. Well, it's just – it's getting kind of late in the day, and we've got a lot to still bring up from the truck–

GABE. Yeah. Like – basically everything we own.

LYDIA. Don't you two worry! We're almost done! We just need to finish scrubbing the kitchen. *(a beat)* Then we'll dry mop the living room – and then wet mop it – and then dust, sweep, mop, and mop both bedrooms. Again. Then we can bring in the furniture.

OLIVIA. *(overwhelmed)* Oh. Is that all? Well. We'll get started in a second. If you guys would excuse me –

(She starts towards the bathroom.)

LYDIA. *(frantic)* Where are you going?

OLIVIA.…the bathroom?

LYDIA. No! No! The other very good piece of advice is that you should always, ALWAYS replace the toilet seat when you move into a new apartment.

OLIVIA. Okay. Well – I kind of really need to take care of this now –

LYDIA. Absolutely not. On a scale of one to ten, how bad is it right now?

OLIVIA. I'd say I'm a solid nine and a half.

(She edges towards the bathroom door.)

GABE. Mom. Let Olivia pee.

WYATT. *(sotto)* Son, you don't want to get in the middle of this. Beer?

LYDIA. *(counters* **OLIVIA***, incredulous) Nine and a half?* And you can't wait for me to run to the hardware store to pick you up a new one?

OLIVIA. A new toilet!?

LYDIA. A new seat! Focus!

OLIVIA. Lydia – *please*. This is serious.

LYDIA. NO! Think of all of those foreign germs – my mother would roll over in her grave.

OLIVIA. Okay, well, I'm about to pee on the floor, so think of all of *those* foreign germs.

GABE. MOM! What about a Pee-Pee Pad?

OLIVIA. A what? No. What?

GABE. A Pee-Pee Pad. It's sort of like those seat protectors–

WYATT. Except eight inches thicker –

GABE. We took this road trip once, and I really had to take a –

OLIVIA. Okay. Stop. Yup. Got it.

LYDIA. Gabriel, that is a GREAT idea. Okay! Here's the plan! Olivia, we will make a pee-pee pad!

OLIVIA. We?

WYATT. It's a very involved process.

LYDIA. Requires two people minimum. But it'll be a nice, thick, barrier for you to *hover* over whilst you take care of business.

OLIVIA. Lydia – this sounds a little –

LYDIA. DO YOU WANT TO USE THE RESTROOM OR DON'T YOU?

OLIVIA. Okay! Okay – let's do this!

LYDIA. Wyatt! Paper me.

WYATT. *(throws the roll of paper towels to her)* Go get 'em tiger.

*(***LYDIA** *pulls* **OLIVIA** *into the bathroom.)*

GABE. *(yelling)* I'm so sorry! I love you!

WYATT. That's not gonna help you one bit.

GABE. I know. Can I have that beer, now?

WYATT. Yup.

*(***GABE** *and* **WYATT** *drink their beers in silence. A moment.)*

GABE. Is she just going to stay in there with Olivia?

LYDIA. *(offstage)* I'm not looking!

GABE. Dad –

WYATT. And there's something I can do?

GABE. We're gonna need a lot more beer.

*(***WYATT** *glances at the bathroom door and tiptoes over to* **GABE**.*)*

WYATT. *(sotto)* Does she – you know – suspect anything yet?

GABE. Between the chair being wedged in the door and Mom's toilet seat phobia, I think we've done a pretty good job of keeping her distracted.

WYATT. You got the ring on you?

GABE. *(a beat – very proud of himself)* I hid it in the van! No way she'll find it – even if she snoops.

(They clink beers and drink.)

Hey – Dad? Thank you for coming.

WYATT. You think we would miss our son proposing to the girl of his dreams? *(Brooklyn accent)* Fugget about it.

GABE. *(laughing)* It means a lot to me that you're here. Hopefully Olivia will feel the same way when her –

WYATT. She doesn't know you invited her parents?

GABE. *(happy)* No. I didn't tell her. *(panic)* Is that bad?

WYATT. Gabe – don't you think you should have at least prepped her?

GABE. But it's a surprise. Her mom doesn't even know I'm proposing. I just talked to her dad, asked permission, invited them up but said to keep it a secret –

WYATT. Wait. Karen doesn't know?

GABE. *(happy)* Nope. *(panic)* Is that bad?

(The toilet flushes. Sound of water running in the sink. **LYDIA** *reenters the living room.)*

LYDIA. There. All better.

OLIVIA. *(enters. At a loss.)* I – I …

LYDIA. You're welcome, dear! Now, Wyatt, we need to go get a new seat for them so we don't have to go through this again.

OLIVIA. Yes. Please. Let's not do this again.

WYATT. But I didn't finish fixing the door yet.