

# **NORMAN AND BEATRICE**

## **A Marriage in Two Acts**

### **ACT ONE.** **January 2001.**

The kitchen of a modest mid-western house.

**NORMAN** (85) is standing alone in the living room. He's wearing a coat, hat and gloves.

**BEA** (80) enters from basement. She carries a laundry basket so worn it has scraps of cloth tying the torn plastic together. She is humming softly.

**NORMAN**

Let's go!

**BEATRICE**

Where are we going?

**NORMAN**

They're waiting for us.

**BEATRICE**

Who's waiting?

**NORMAN**

You made the arrangements.

*She ignores him.*

I can't believe this. What kind of an outfit are you running here?

**BEATRICE**

I don't want to drive in this weather.

**NORMAN**

So we're not going?

**BEATRICE**

I think it will be fine if we have lunch first.

**NORMAN**

What will they say?

**BEATRICE**

Are you hungry?

**NORMAN**

Not especially.

**BEATRICE**

Well, lunch will be ready in a flash.

*She works at the stove.*

*He goes to the back window, looks out.*

**NORMAN**

Is it time to go?

**BEATRICE**

Let's have lunch first.

**NORMAN**

Okay.

*He walks towards her and puts his arms out for a hug.*

**BEATRICE**

Oh!

*He stands his ground.*

What do you want?

*He puckers up.*

*He holds his arms out further*

If you want something to eat, I'm going to have to keep my hands free.

*He doesn't move. Neither does she.*

**BEATRICE**

Why don't you take off your coat?

**NORMAN**

Do we have time?

**BEATRICE**

Sure.

**NORMAN**

Won't we be late?

**BEATRICE**

They won't mind.

**NORMAN**

Maybe you should call.

Whom?  
**BEATRICE**

What's-his-name.  
**NORMAN**

After we eat.  
**BEATRICE**

Okay.  
**NORMAN**

*He hangs up his coat, puts the gloves in the coat pocket, but  
leaves his  
hat on.*

*He sits down to eat.*

Next time we make the world we should put everything in the same place so we don't have to drive.

*She ties an apron around his neck.*

*Removes his hat.*

***NORMAN**, seeing a cup in front of him, takes a sip.*

There's nothing in there yet.  
**BEATRICE**

Tastes pretty good.  
**NORMAN**

You're a cheap date. Want some hot tea?  
**BEATRICE**

Sure.  
**NORMAN**

***BEA** pours tea into his cup. He lifts it to drink.*

Don't scald yourself!  
**BEATRICE**

***NORMAN** freezes.*

Let it cool down first.  
**BEATRICE**

Til it's lukewarm?  
**NORMAN**



**BEATRICE**

You don't want to burn your tongue, do you?

**NORMAN**

Not particularly. Do you have our tickets?

**BEATRICE**

Which ones, dear?

**NORMAN**

How are we going to get there without them?

**BEATRICE**

Where are we going?

**NORMAN**

Rome!

**BEATRICE**

Oh?

**NORMAN**

They're waiting for us.

*He gives her a kiss.*

I'll be back in an hour.

**BEATRICE**

Is that so?

**NORMAN**

I have an appointment with the Sisters.

**BEATRICE**

Really?

**NORMAN**

They didn't tell you?

**BEATRICE**

Maybe they forgot.

**NORMAN**

Staggering.

**BEATRICE**

What?

**NORMAN**

How anything gets done around here with this kind of communication.

**BEATRICE**

Did they tell you?

**NORMAN**

Of course they - you thought it all up. You and the Sisters.

**BEATRICE**

Thought up what?

**NORMAN**

The trip to the Vatican and the Holy Land!

**BEATRICE**

Do you think we may have cancelled it because of the bad weather?

**NORMAN**

What?

**BEATRICE**

The bad weather. Do you think we may have cancelled it because of that?

**NORMAN**

Could be. I wasn't informed.

*A timer dings.*

**BEATRICE**

Lunch!

**NORMAN**

Shouldn't we be at Mass?

**BEATRICE**

We couldn't go this morning.

**NORMAN**

Why not?

**BEATRICE**

I don't like to drive in the snow.

**NORMAN**

I'll drive.

**BEATRICE**

Mass is over.

**NORMAN**

It's over?

Yes.

**BEATRICE**

Hmph.

**NORMAN**

Is that okay?

**BEATRICE**

Sure! I thought it would never be over.

**NORMAN**

Where's my car?

*He looks out the window again.*

Your grandson uses it for his job delivering pizzas after school.

**BEATRICE**

How does that line of work suit him?

**NORMAN**

Keeps him out of trouble.

**BEATRICE**

What about when I need a vehicle?

**NORMAN**

Oh, you don't drive anymore, Norman.

**BEATRICE**

I don't?

**NORMAN**

No.

**BEATRICE**

My eyes aren't so good.

**NORMAN**

That's a nuisance, isn't it?

**BEATRICE**

I'll say.

**NORMAN**

*She dishes him out a bowl of soup. He goes to drink the tea.*

Blow on it!

**BEATRICE**

**NORMAN**

Are you trying to poison me?



**BEATRICE**

Now why would I poison you?

**NORMAN**

That's how you'd get away with it. No motive.

*He sips his tea. Ignores his food.  
BEA eats, but watches him..*

**BEATRICE**

Aren't you going to try your sandwich?

**NORMAN**

Is there mustard on it?

**BEATRICE**

Would you like mustard?

**NORMAN**

Yes, please.

*She gets up, gets the mustard out of the refrigerator,  
takes the lid off, and hands it to him.*

*He looks at it.*

**BEATRICE**

Take some out of the jar with the knife and spread it on the bread.

**NORMAN**

That's what I was about to do! You read my mind.

**BEATRICE**

After fifty-three years you don't think I can read your mind?

*He still hasn't touched his food.*

Do you like your soup?

**NORMAN**

Did I have soup?

**BEATRICE**

It's right in front of you.

**NORMAN**

Well, what do you know? So it is.

**BEATRICE**

Are you tired?

Is it bedtime?  
**NORMAN**

It's noontime.  
**BEATRICE**

Naptime?  
**NORMAN**

Lunchtime!  
**BEATRICE**

*The phone rings.*

Oh now I wonder who is calling us?  
**BEATRICE**

If it's the Academy, tell them I decline.  
**NORMAN**

Is that all?  
**BEATRICE**

And thank them very much for thinking of me.  
**NORMAN**

*On the next ring, Bea answers.*

**BEATRICE**  
Hello?.....oh, Anne, at this hour? It's much cheaper after seven o'clock...Yes, he's fine. He's right here. We're just having lunch. Norman? Anne's on the phone!

*NORMAN puts his ear to the phone.*  
Say hello!

**NORMAN**  
Hello?

*He mouths to Bea "Who is it?"*

**BEATRICE**  
It's our Anne.

**NORMAN**  
Where are you, Anne?...California!!.....are you hungry? Why don't you come over and have a bite to eat?.....oh, I see.....atta girl!...

*BEA busies herself in the kitchen.  
He still holds the phone and nods his responses.  
BEA takes the phone from him.*

**BEATRICE**

Anne...he was nodding and smiling, but our lunch is getting cold and I don't want to have to re-heat --...okay. Bye.

**BEATRICE**

Well, what did she have to say for herself?

**NORMAN**

She said it's warm and sunny in San Francisco.

**BEATRICE**

Anything else?

**NORMAN**

She's published another paper.

**BEATRICE**

On what?

**NORMAN**

Some class of economics.

**BEATRICE**

Why did she call?

**NORMAN**

For advice.

**BEATRICE**

Oh.

**NORMAN**

I told her -- to keep chipping away. One chip at a time.... I wonder if she has a fella. She should get married.

**BEATRICE**

Young people don't run off and get married like we did.

**NORMAN**

We didn't run off, did we?

**BEATRICE**

You know...doing everything without thinking.

**NORMAN**

I don't know about you but I put a hell of a lot of thought into this.

*NORMAN gets a plate, cup and utensils for the table.*

Don't tell me you haven't been thinking all this time!

**BEATRICE**

What's that you're doing?

**NORMAN**

Setting a place for her.

**BEATRICE**

Did she say she was coming?

**NORMAN**

Why, yes she did. And she's bringing Peter.

**BEATRICE**

She is not.

**NORMAN**

She said she was.

**BEATRICE**

She isn't.

**NORMAN**

Why not?

**BEATRICE**

He's too far away.

**NORMAN**

That's right. He was in Korea.

**BEATRICE**

Vietnam.

**NORMAN**

I see.

*He pauses, then gets another place setting to put on the table.*

**BEATRICE**

Now what are you doing?

**NORMAN**

Setting a place for him.

**BEATRICE**

I don't like it when you do that.

**NORMAN**

It's vital.

We mustn't wait for him anymore.

**BEATRICE**

Of course we can. I'm not so hungry!

**NORMAN**

I have no appetite.

**BEATRICE**

He'll eat enough for all of us. He nearly ate us out of house and home, that boy!

**NORMAN**

*She watches him.*

Anne's in California. She couldn't possibly get here on time to eat with us.

**BEATRICE**

Oh.

**NORMAN**

*He realizes his mistake.*

What a shame. She doesn't know what she's missing.

Why, thank you.

**BEATRICE**

Anytime. Any time t'all.

**NORMAN**

*He sits down.*

Are they all upstairs?

**NORMAN**

Who?

**BEATRICE**

The children.

**NORMAN**

Our children live in their own homes.

**BEATRICE**

Even the little ones?

**NORMAN**

They're all grown up.

**BEATRICE**

I saw little ones this morning.

**NORMAN**

They're gone now.

**BEATRICE**

Ah.

**NORMAN**

You know?

**BEATRICE**

Killed.

**NORMAN**

*BEA can hardly stand this.*

Won't you try your soup while it's still hot?

**BEATRICE**

*NORMAN looks at the bowl for a moment.  
Then he puts his face down near the bowl to sip from it.*

*It takes a while for her to notice this.*

What are you doing?

I don't know.

**NORMAN**

Use your spoon.

**BEATRICE**

Where's it gone to?

**NORMAN**

Right next to the bowl.

**BEATRICE**

*He takes soup spoon and drinks soup.*

Dee - licious.

**NORMAN**

I told you so.

**BEATRICE**

From now on, I'll take your word for everything.

**NORMAN**

If I had a penny for every time you told me that.

**BEATRICE**

*He looks at her.*

I was joshing you.

**NORMAN**

Oh.

**BEATRICE**

You think you're the only one who is allowed to kid around?

**NORMAN**

I thought so.

**BEATRICE**

Maybe I'm just not funny.

**NORMAN**

Oh, you're funny. That's why I've always got to keep my eye on you.

**BEATRICE**

Think I'll take something while you're not looking?

**NORMAN**

You already have.

**BEATRICE**

I have?

**NORMAN**

My heart.

**BEATRICE**

Finish your sandwich. Wup! How can you finish it when you haven't even started? Will you take a bite?

**NORMAN**

It might be poisoned.

**BEATRICE**

No, it's not.

**NORMAN**

How do you know?

**BEATRICE**

You have to trust people.

**NORMAN**

And wind up dead?

*NORMAN goes back to window.*





**BEATRICE**

Is something the matter?

**NORMAN**

I'd like to go home as soon as possible.

**BEATRICE**

And where are you now?

**NORMAN**

Well, this place, for crying out loud. How did we get here?

**BEATRICE**

This is our home.

**NORMAN**

Are you sure?

**BEATRICE**

Yes.

**NORMAN**

I'll have to look around and see if it is.

*He does.*

Why would anyone - what were the people thinking, settling down in a place like this? There's nobody here. It's too cold!

*He goes back to the window.*

And who gave them permission to paint the grass white?

**BEATRICE**

Are you cold?

**NORMAN**

Aren't you?

**BEATRICE**

No.

**NORMAN**

I'm frozen to the bone.

**BEATRICE**

Maybe we can march around the table after lunch. It'll warm you up. Get your knees in the air.

**NORMAN**

Am I still in the Army?

Oh, the War is over.

**BEATRICE**

There was a war!

**NORMAN**

Oh, Norman, you remember the War?

**BEATRICE**

The big one or the little one?

**NORMAN**

The --

**BEATRICE**

The west one or the east one?

**NORMAN**

Norman --

**BEATRICE**

The first one or the second one --

**NORMAN**

There were more than two!

**BEATRICE**

The mustard gas or the napalm --

**NORMAN**

You are dreadful!

**BEATRICE**

The good one or the dreadful one!

**NORMAN**

Norman, how can you forget the Second World War!

**BEATRICE**

*A pause.*

It slipped my mind.

**NORMAN**

*A pause.*

What am I going to do with you?

**BEATRICE**

Warm me up!

**NORMAN**

**BEATRICE**

We have to get the blood pumping by moving around a little.

**NORMAN**

Wouldn't it be easier to crawl into the furnace?

*He looks around again.*

Where is everybody? Where are the children?

**BEATRICE**

Which children?

**NORMAN**

Lucille.

**BEATRICE**

Your sister? She's been gone for years.

**NORMAN**

Where'd she go?

*He is bewildered.*

**BEATRICE**

Would you like some ice cream?

**NORMAN**

Where's Lucille?

**BEATRICE**

I'd like some ice cream!

**NORMAN**

This is no good. You're no help at all.

**BEATRICE**

We'll call Joe after lunch. Ask where she is.

**NORMAN**

Joe who?

**BEATRICE**

Lucille's husband.

**NORMAN**

What sort of a fella is he?

**BEATRICE**

A very nice man.

**NORMAN**

A gentleman?

**BEATRICE**

Yes.

**NORMAN**

Good provider?

**BEATRICE**

He's a dentist.

**NORMAN**

That's terrific.

**BEATRICE**

Have a seat and finish your sandwich while I prepare the ice cream.

**NORMAN**

Am I allowed?

**BEATRICE**

Yes you are. After your sandwich.

**NORMAN**

How are you going to make it?

**BEATRICE**

I'm going to scoop it from the box into a bowl.

**NORMAN**

That won't take long.

**BEATRICE**

Little boys don't get dessert without eating their supper.

**NORMAN**

Good thing I'm not a little boy.

**BEATRICE**

You're not?

**NORMAN**

Nope. Where are they?

**BEATRICE**

Who?

**NORMAN**

The boys.

**BEATRICE**

They're -

**NORMAN**

Oh, I know.

You do? **BEATRICE**

*NORMAN nods.*

Where are they?

Out swimming. **NORMAN**

In January? **BEATRICE**

I told them. They wouldn't listen to me. **NORMAN**

They're a handful. **BEATRICE**

I'll say. **NORMAN**

*The doorbell rings.*  
That must be them.

Now why would they ring the bell? **BEATRICE**

In case some hanky-panky was going on in here. They wouldn't want to witness that. **NORMAN**

What sort of hanky-panky? **BEATRICE**

All sorts of that can go on in a household. **NORMAN**

Not in OUR household. **BEATRICE**

**NORMAN**

Oh no! Heaven forbid.

**BEATRICE**

Will I answer the door?

**NORMAN**

If it's the police, don't tell them I'm here.

**BEATRICE**

Oh you! Don't you budge. I'll be right back.

*She exits.*

*He looks for a place to hide.*

*Retrieves his hat.*

*Goes into closet and shuts the door.*

*She return to the empty room.*

**BEATRICE**

Norman?

*He bursts out of closet – half-serious, half in play.*

**BEATRICE**

What's going on?

**NORMAN**

We're both suspects for a murder.

**BEATRICE**

No one would believe we could commit murder.

**NORMAN**

Lots of old people commit murder!

*BEATRICE goes to drawer and sifts through coupons..*

**BEATRICE**

Aggie and Nettie are in the sun parlor -- they only have a few minutes to visit --

*NORMAN puts his hand to his back pocket.*

**NORMAN**

Who stole my wallet?

**BEATRICE**

I did.

**NORMAN**

Where is it?

**BEATRICE**

You don't need it.

**NORMAN**

Don't tell me you're taking care of everything?

**BEATRICE**

I try to.

**NORMAN**

Are you any good at it?

**BEATRICE**

I think so.

**NORMAN**

The mortgage?

**BEATRICE**

We paid that off years ago.

**NORMAN**

Delightful! And the heat?

**BEATRICE**

Every month.

**NORMAN**

And incidentals? We have enough to cover groceries and incidentals?

**BEATRICE**

Plenty.

**NORMAN**

How did you get all those funds?

**BEATRICE**

I've taken you for every cent you've got.

**NORMAN**

It was worth it.

**BEATRICE**

Will you sit here for just a few minutes --

**NORMAN**

Where are you going?

**BEATRICE**

Aggie and Nettie are here. I'll let them know I'm too busy for a visit.



**NORMAN**

Good idea. I'll create a diversion.

**BEATRICE**

You just sit tight.

**NORMAN**

You're no fun at all.

*BEA exits.*

*NORMAN pats his back pocket for his wallet. A framed family picture on the counter distracts him. Unsure of what he sees.*

*Notices his sandwich. Takes a bite.*

*He sees his hat, puts it back on.*

*BEA re-enters.*

**BEATRICE**

I gave them my coupons. They're headed to Piggly Wiggly to pick up the flour and the sugar for tomorrow.

They miss us at Mass in the mornings. When it warms up maybe you can watch baseball on television while I do the shopping. Do you think you might ---

*NORMAN, mouth still full, looks at BEATRICE in alarm.*

What's wrong?

**NORMAN**

*(mouth full)*

Do I spit it out or swallow?

*She is taken aback. This is new.*

**BEATRICE**

Let me see.

*He opens his mouth. She looks inside.*

You can swallow.

*He does.*

Would you like a sip of your tea?

*He nods. She hands him his cup. He drinks.*

**NORMAN**

Thank you very much.

**BEATRICE**

You're welcome.

*She unties the apron around his neck.*

**BEATRICE**

There.

*She wipes his mouth.*

Aggie and Nettie stopped by to see how you're feeling.

**NORMAN**

Fit as a fiddle.

**BEATRICE**

You are?

**NORMAN**

No. But it's always polite to keep up appearances with company. Think they'd like to play cards?

**BEATRICE**

They left.

**NORMAN**

How come?

**BEATRICE**

Everyone has things to do, dear!

*A pause.*

What will we do today?

**NORMAN**

How about a whole lot of nothing?

**BEATRICE**

Aren't you a lazybones!

**NORMAN**

Just shows I'm all caught up.

**BEATRICE**

I wish I could say the same.

**NORMAN**

What's wrong with you?

**BEATRICE**

I'm behind on everything.

**NORMAN**

What seems to be the problem?

*She looks at him.*

Time slips by me.

**BEATRICE**

You better shape up --

**NORMAN**

I'm doing my best.

**BEATRICE**

-- because in case you hadn't noticed, I'm an old man.

**NORMAN**

I didn't notice.

**BEATRICE**

Very kind of you. Or maybe you're just not paying attention.

**NORMAN**

Do you expect me to keep track of everything?

**BEATRICE**

Don't you miss me in a uniform?

**NORMAN**

No!

**BEATRICE**

Or in a suit?

**NORMAN**

You still wear your suits. On Sundays.

**BEATRICE**

Being old isn't so bad.

**NORMAN**

Oh dear.

**BEATRICE**

*NORMAN looks down at his aged hands.*

At least they can't draft me.

**NORMAN**

*He looks around the room again.  
(politely)*

Is this your home?

It's our home.

**BEATRICE**

Where in the world is it? **NORMAN**

It's in the town where you and I were both born. **BEATRICE**

How did we get here? **NORMAN**

Oh, I don't remember anymore. **BEATRICE**

I think we walked. **NORMAN**

I don't think it matters. **BEATRICE**

Oh yes it does. **NORMAN**

Would you like me to look it up? **BEATRICE**

Where? **NORMAN**

In the genealogy work I did at the bicentennial. **BEATRICE**

What's that going to tell us? **NORMAN**

I thought we could go over our lineage. Talk about our families. **BEATRICE**

Have we ever done that before? **NORMAN**

No. **BEATRICE**

You picked a helluva time to start all that. **NORMAN**

Watch your French! **BEATRICE**

Aw! For crying out loud, Bea – **NORMAN**

**BEATRICE**

I thought we could go over some research about our ancestors.

**NORMAN**

That's a terrible idea.

**BEATRICE**

How come?

**NORMAN**

We can't ask them any questions! What are we supposed to get out of it? What's in it for me?

**BEATRICE**

Exercise!

**NORMAN**

Not for me.

***BEA** takes out a 500-piece puzzle and pours it onto the table.*

What in the world --

**BEATRICE**

We can do this together.

**NORMAN**

What is it?

**BEATRICE**

A battleship.

**NORMAN**

Doesn't look like much.

**BEATRICE**

That's why we have to put it together. Come on. Help me find a corner.

*She searches the pieces.*

**NORMAN**

Where did it come from?

**BEATRICE**

The attic. It must have belonged to one of our boys.

**NORMAN**

How about a smooch?

**BEATRICE**

Listen to me. Tomorrow I have to help the ladies to get the cookie sale going.

**NORMAN**

What will that entail?

**BEATRICE**

Well, after church, we'll go to the school kitchen and you can sit with the newspaper.

**NORMAN**

Today's newspaper?

**BEATRICE**

Tomorrow's paper.

**NORMAN**

How will we acquire that?

**BEATRICE**

We'll wait until tomorrow.

**NORMAN**

I see. Will it have a listing of the lost and wounded?

**BEATRICE**

Please don't, Norman.

**NORMAN**

I'd like to have a look at that.

**BEATRICE**

You'll find other things to read. Sports.

**NORMAN**

Basketball?

**BEATRICE**

Sure. Did I tell you I've loaned them all my cookie sheets, so I just have to supervise the crew. With the mixing and the baking and then the boxing.

**NORMAN**

And what is my role?

**BEATRICE**

You can read the paper.

**NORMAN**

Aloud?

**BEATRICE**

Oh no! We'll be busy. They have a very nice young girl to watch the ovens this year. That's the most important thing. It's a shame when they burn on the bottom.

**NORMAN**

You have quite a knack for business. We must have a fortune!

**BEATRICE**

Hardly!

**NORMAN**

Are the children provided for?

**BEATRICE**

They provide for themselves now.

**NORMAN**

Excellent. Where are they? I want to commend them all on a job well done. I'm sure they'd all like cookies. I'd certainly like one.

**BEATRICE**

They're for the sale. I don't let any of the girls eat them.

**NORMAN**

Do I look like a girl!

*A beat.*

What a shame!

**BEATRICE**

What?

**NORMAN**

I think we missed Mass!

**BEATRICE**

Oh, we didn't go today because of the snow.

**NORMAN**

Are we trapped?

*A pause.*



**BEATRICE**

Well.

**NORMAN**

You can tell me.

**BEATRICE**

It's safer to stay in today. The elderly have to be cautious in the winter, you know.

**NORMAN**

Who are the Elderlies?

**BEATRICE**

Old people! Like us!

*A pause.*

**NORMAN**

I see.

*A pause.*

So what did we do?

**BEATRICE**

Exactly what we were supposed to do.

**NORMAN**

Excellent. Nobody caught us?

**BEATRICE**

Of course not.

**NORMAN**

Nice work.

**BEATRICE**

I got lucky.

**NORMAN**

How so?

**BEATRICE**

I got to stay home and take care of you.

**NORMAN**

So you're the lucky one?

**BEATRICE**

Yes.

**NORMAN**

May I trade places with you?

**BEATRICE**

You'd rather be with you than with me?

**NORMAN**

Only if I wanted to go golfing. Or watch a ballgame.  
Did the fellow from Notre Dame come over this morning?

**BEATRICE**

Which one was that?

**NORMAN**

The point guard.

**BEATRICE**

Why would he be calling us?

**NORMAN**

He wants us to play on his team.

**BEATRICE**

Since when?

**NORMAN**

Since he found out I got out of the Army! What position do you play?

*A pause.*

**BEATRICE**

Oh, we resigned from the team.

**NORMAN**

What on earth for?

**BEATRICE**

We decided we were too old.

**NORMAN**

I'm not dead yet! I'd like to have a word with him.

**BEATRICE**

I'll call him this afternoon.

**NORMAN**

You do that.

*She sighs.*

You're hard to please sometimes.

**BEATRICE**

I am?

**NORMAN**

Yes you are.

**BEATRICE**

You're no picnic either.

**NORMAN**

Norman!

**BEATRICE**

Can't you tell when I'm teasing?

**NORMAN**

How am I supposed to tell?

**BEATRICE**

It's too cold for a picnic. And there aren't any sandwiches!

**NORMAN**

It's time for your pills.

**BEATRICE**

Pill-time!

**NORMAN**

*She goes to the cabinet and returns with their daily  
assortment of pills.  
Then she brings two cups of milk to the table.*

What do I do with these?

**NORMAN**

Swallow them.

**BEATRICE**

With what?

**NORMAN**

Your milk.

**BEATRICE**

*She takes her pills to demonstrate.*

Are you taking my share?

**NORMAN**

**BEATRICE**

You have your own.

**NORMAN**

What are yours for?

**BEATRICE**

None of your business.

**NORMAN**

What are mine for? I suppose that's none of my business either.

*He takes his pills, but pretends to miss his mouth. He makes sure he has an audience, and then does it again.*

**BEATRICE**

You should have been on stage.

*She holds out his glass of milk.*

*He swallows pills and drinks.*

**NORMAN**

I didn't like the spotlight in my eyes.

**BEATRICE**

You loved cutting ribbons and kissing babies and sitting in a convertible during the parade next to Miss Wisconsin!

**NORMAN**

I got to do all that?

**BEATRICE**

When you were Mayor.

**NORMAN**

I always wanted to be in public office!

**BEATRICE**

Well, you were.

**NORMAN**

And what happened?

**BEATRICE**

A lot of things happened. You'll have to be specific.

**NORMAN**

I want all the details.

**BEATRICE**

You can't expect me to remember all of those!

**NORMAN**

Was I a success?

**BEATRICE**

Mostly.

**NORMAN**

Don't be modest.

**BEATRICE**

You were re-elected five times.

**NORMAN**

I must have been terrific!

**BEATRICE**

You were well liked. Popular.

**NORMAN**

So what happened?

**BEATRICE**

I was busy with the children! You can't expect me to recall what YOU were doing all that time!

**NORMAN**

Well, how about that.

*A pause.*

What happened to the sixth term? Did they kick me out?

**BEATRICE**

They thought you deserved a rest.

**NORMAN**

Did they think my salary deserved a rest, too?

**BEATRICE**

Would you really want to get up at seven o'clock every morning and go to the office?

**NORMAN**

Doesn't sound too bad.

**BEATRICE**

And how would you get there?

The chauffeur.

**NORMAN**

I suppose you mean me.

**BEATRICE**

Are you applying for the job?

**NORMAN**

I was volunteered.

**BEATRICE**

Do you drive with two feet?

**NORMAN**

Why do you ask that?

**BEATRICE**

No reason.

**NORMAN**

You must have had a reason.

**BEATRICE**

My wife used both of hers.

**NORMAN**

What's next on the agenda?

*A pause.*

**BEATRICE**

I wasn't aware you had an agenda.

**NORMAN**

Did you lose it?

**BEATRICE**

Was it on a piece of paper?

**NORMAN**

Don't tell me you lost it! How do we expect to get anything accomplished with this lack of leadership? Aren't you going somewhere? Rome?

**BEATRICE**

I have responsibilities here.

**NORMAN**

The children?

They don't live here anymore.

**BEATRICE**

Why not?

**NORMAN**

They're all grown up.

**BEATRICE**

How many?

**NORMAN**

Seven.

**BEATRICE**

Seven?!

**NORMAN**

How many did you think we had?

**BEATRICE**

Not that many. That's wonderful.

**NORMAN**

We should get married.

*A pause.*

We are married!

**BEATRICE**

We are? Holy Toledo. I'm a lucky guy.

**NORMAN**

Should we retire to the bedroom?

*A pause.*

We just had lunch!

**BEATRICE**

But you just said we were married? Why don't we go upstairs?

**NORMAN**

I don't know.

**BEATRICE**

What do you mean you don't know?

**NORMAN**

You keep asking questions I don't know how to answer.

**BEATRICE**

I'd like to lie down with you.

**NORMAN**





I have to do the dishes.

**BEATRICE**

Before we go?

**NORMAN**

Where are we going?

**BEATRICE**

To Italy.

**NORMAN**

I'm not going.

**BEATRICE**

What about your speech?

**NORMAN**

I have to give a speech!

**BEATRICE**

Aren't you prepared?

**NORMAN**

I didn't know I had to give a speech.

**BEATRICE**

**NORMAN**  
For crying out loud, they're all waiting! Good heavens, Bea, you're always making me look foolish!

**BEATRICE**  
Well, then, what should I say?

*He thinks for a moment.*

**NORMAN**  
Thank you for coming. I'm glad there are so many of you, because I've hired robbers to move among you.

**BEATRICE**  
I can't say that!

**NORMAN**  
Why not?

**BEATRICE**  
We can't go. It's going to be dark soon.

**NORMAN**

Why didn't you tell me you couldn't a long time ago instead of leading me on? I'm not going. There's going to be dope there anyhow and I can't stand for that. Call them and let them know.

*The clothes dryer buzzes in the basement.*

**BEATRICE**

Finally!

*BEA goes to door.*

**NORMAN**

Do you have to leave right this second?

**BEATRICE**

I like to fold the clothes while they're still warm.

**NORMAN**

If that's how it's done.

**BEATRICE**

I'll be right back.

**NORMAN**

Oh, I won't be here.

**BEATRICE**

Where are you going?

**NORMAN**

Rome.

**BEATRICE**

How are you going to get there?

**NORMAN**

I'm going to walk.

**BEATRICE**

Wait until I finish. I don't want you to go without me.

**NORMAN**

Hmm.

**BEATRICE**

Let's see what's on television.

*She looks at the TV listings.*

Golf!

**NORMAN**

Is Larry playing?

**BEATRICE**

Your brother? Goodness, I don't think so.

**NORMAN**

Too bad.

**BEATRICE**

That is too bad, isn't it?

*She fiddles with the remote.*

**NORMAN**

He never practiced anyhow. Always horsing around.

**BEATRICE**

You never horsed around.

**NORMAN**

Oh no.

*After struggling with the remote, she turns on television manually and exits.*

*Sound of golf commentary from the TV. NORMAN sees the pitcher, carries it to the stove. He places the pitcher on the burner and turns the stove on.*

**NORMAN**

*(sings)*

Ro-ly Po-ly!  
Daddy's little fatty --

*He goes to closet, exchanges his winter hat for his summer cap.*

*Finds a golf shirt in the closet and puts it on over his turtleneck.*

*Picks up the golf club. Practices. He has a beautiful, if weak, swing. He makes sound effects to go with his shots.*

*(sings)*

Hopes to grow up and be a man someday --  
Ro-ly Po-ly!  
Daddy's little fatty --  
Gonna grow up and be a man someday ---

*Smoke rises from the stove. NORMAN stares at the pitcher as smoke begins to rise and fill the kitchen.*

*NORMAN doesn't move or say anything.*

*BEATRICE enters.*

**BEATRICE**

Oh!

*She quickly pushes Norman aside. He falls.*

*She throws the pitcher into the sink and runs the water,  
then turns on the stove hood to dispel the smoke.*

Look at this! Everything's ruined! How on earth am I supposed to --

*She goes to the TV and turns it off.  
She looks at him and sees that he is wearing a sports  
shirt over his shirt.*

Where did you find that shirt?

**NORMAN**

On me.

**BEATRICE**

On you! It wasn't on you a minute ago! --

*BEA is done. Speechless. A pause.*

*NORMAN is distraught.*

**NORMAN**

Where's the baby?

**BEATRICE**

What baby?

**NORMAN**

Our baby.

*She is moved. She becomes his wife again.*

**BEATRICE**

Sleeping. The baby's sleeping.

**NORMAN**

Thank God. I was afraid--.

**BEATRICE**

Shush. There, there.

He's asleep?

**NORMAN**

Yes.

**BEATRICE**

Good boy.

**NORMAN**

Yes. Yes, he is.

**BEATRICE**

Ro-ly po-ly --

**NORMAN**  
(sings)

Oh Norman!

**BEATRICE**

Where is Peter? Let's wake him up! What a boy! I miss him!

**NORMAN**

Norman.

**BEATRICE**

Yes?

**NORMAN**

Listen to me. You know, if that ever happens, if you ever see flames, you must shout out "Fire!" as loud as you can---

**BEATRICE**

Somebody did.

**NORMAN**

Who?

**BEATRICE**

I heard a shout.

**NORMAN**

*She looks at him, helpless.*

You're not hurt, are you?

**BEATRICE**

My feelings.

**NORMAN**

Who hurt your feelings?

**BEATRICE**

You did.	<b>NORMAN</b>
How did I do that?	<b>BEATRICE</b>
I don't remember.	<b>NORMAN</b>
Well, then, it couldn't be so bad.	<b>BEATRICE</b>
It feels pretty bad.	<b>NORMAN</b>
Oh Norman.	<b>BEATRICE</b>
Where are we?	<b>NORMAN</b>
At home.	<b>BEATRICE</b>
Where?	<b>NORMAN</b>
You're with me.	<b>BEATRICE</b>
How did that come about?	<b>NORMAN</b>
God gave us to each other.	<b>BEATRICE</b>
Very nice of him.	<b>NORMAN</b>
How did we get here?	<i>(whispers)</i>
We moved into this house the year we got married.	<b>BEATRICE</b>
How could we afford it?	<b>NORMAN</b>
We got a mortgage like everybody else. And then when Mother died we paid it off.	<b>BEATRICE</b>

**NORMAN**

Mother's dead?

**BEATRICE**

She's in Heaven now! Don't be upset.

**NORMAN**

Are you sure Mother's dead?

**BEATRICE**

Yes, dear.

**NORMAN**

Then who are you?

*An awful pause.*

**BEATRICE**

You don't know who I am?

*Another pause.*

**NORMAN**

You don't think I know who you are? Ha!

*A pause.*

Prettiest girl I ever saw.

**BEATRICE**

Oh, you ....

*She takes his cap off. Pets his head.*

If anything happens where you don't know what's going on or you're afraid, just yell. Yell "Help" or "Fire"! Will you do that for me?

*A real pause.*

**NORMAN**

Help!.....Help!.....

**END OF ACT ONE.**

## ACT TWO

*A Sunday morning in January 1947.*

*The same modest mid-western house.*

*The tablecloth and kitchen items are brand-new.*

*Norman and Beatrice are wrapped in an embrace.*

**NORMAN**

Next time God makes the world He should put everything in the same place so we'd never have to leave home ---

*They kiss.*

That is the best news --

*He stands away to look more closely at her.*

**BEATRICE**

Yes?

**NORMAN**

I have ever heard.

**BEATRICE**

It is?

**NORMAN**

Makes me want to -- shout out to the whole damn neighborhood ---

*If there's a window on the set, Norm sticks his head out.*

**BEATRICE**

Norm!

**NORMAN**

What? I want to tell everybody --

**BEATRICE**

You want to tell the neighbors?

**NORMAN**

Why not?

**BEATRICE**

They'll know pretty soon anyhow.

**NORMAN**

This is really something.



*A beat while they get used to the idea.*

It's great to see all that snow. Never snowed like that in Europe.

**BEATRICE**

I read that it did.

**NORMAN**

Mere inches. It's not really snow 'til you're up to your knees in it.

**BEATRICE**

Well, we'll be up to our necks in it before it gets dark...

*A pause.*

Do you think we'll be able to get to Mass?

**NORMAN**

Unless you have a sled –

**BEATRICE**

The radio said it wouldn't stop until Wednesday.

**NORMAN**

You mean we're trapped?

**BEATRICE**

Not exactly.

**NORMAN**

Have we got some provisions?

**BEATRICE**

We have cans of soup in the pantry.

**NORMAN**

How about lunch?

**BEATRICE**

What do you mean?

**NORMAN**

If we're not going to Mass, we might as well have something to eat.

**BEATRICE**

It's too early for lunch.

**NORMAN**

I'm starving...

*She goes to fridge, gets vegetables.*

Aren't you hungry?

**BEATRICE**

You can eat and eat and never put on an ounce! I have to watch my figure.

**NORMAN**

You're just right. Just perfect. Nothing in the world better than sitting down to a prepared meal. A man could live forever and never get tired of sitting down to a good hot dinner. What are you making?

**BEATRICE**

Stew.

**NORMAN**

Mmm.

*She gets a pot from the cabinet. He sneaks up behind her and kisses her neck.*

**BEATRICE**

If you want to eat, I'm going to have to keep my hands free.

*He takes the pot from her hands.*

**NORMAN**

Bea?

**BEATRICE**

Yes?

**NORMAN**

Are you sure?

**BEATRICE**

Pretty sure.

**NORMAN**

Well, I don't see anything.

**BEATRICE**

You will.

*A pause.*

**NORMAN**

Holy cow.

*He takes out his wallet and pulls out a piece of paper.*

*Reads to himself.*

**BEATRICE**

What's that?

*He holds it out and then it behind his back. She reaches and they make a game of keep away.*

**NORMAN**

Information.

*She reads briefly but he pulls it away again.*

**BEATRICE**

I can't read your handwriting --

**NORMAN**

How would you like to go to Lake Geneva in July?

**BEATRICE**

Switzerland?

**NORMAN**

Wisconsin!

**BEATRICE**

Oh.

**NORMAN**

See, the fella above me at the insurance office has a place there right on the lake and he is putting together a contest --

**BEATRICE**

You're in a contest?

**NORMAN**

We're all in it. It's part of the job. But if I win you and I can spend a week in the lap of luxury on the shores of Lake Geneva.

**BEATRICE**

It sounds nice.

**NORMAN**

I thought you'd be thrilled.

**BEATRICE**

I just thought -- Switzerland.

**NORMAN**

Oh.

**BEATRICE**

Of course that was just a dream. People like us only get to go to Europe if there's a War.

*A beat.*

You'll win. I know it. You are the best one they've got in that office.

**NORMAN**

How would you know?

**BEATRICE**

That's what you always say.

**NORMAN**

Do I? I try. It's a heck of a way to make a living.

**BEATRICE**

I thought you liked it.

**NORMAN**

I like some of it. I like talking to people. I just don't feel like selling them anything after we get into a real conversation. Some of those guys'd shove a policy down a housewife's throat if they thought it would get them a new automobile or a bigger home.

**BEATRICE**

You wouldn't strong-arm anyone, would you?

**NORMAN**

No. I believe in insurance. There are so many things that can befall a family and no one likes to think about them, and if you don't have some protection in place -- Nobody likes to prepare. That's the trouble with society --

**BEATRICE**

Do we have insurance?

**NORMAN**

Of course we do! First thing I did when we got married was put you on my GI policy so if anything were to happen to me, you'd be taken care of. -- What's the matter?

**BEATRICE**

Nothing.

*She turns away from him.*

**NORMAN**

What is it?

*It takes her a moment to answer.*

**BEATRICE**

I just don't like to think about anything ever happening to you.

**NORMAN**

Nothing's going to happen to me.

*A short pause as he looks at her.*

I promise.

**BEATRICE**

I know. I'm just being silly.

**NORMAN**

I think you'll really get a kick out of Lake Geneva. There are paddleboats and carriage rides—  
Someday I'll take you on a round-the-world cruise. On the Queen Elizabeth.

**BEATRICE**

Do you think we can canoe on Lake Geneva?

**NORMAN**

Sure.

**BEATRICE**

In the moonlight?

**NORMAN**

I'm sure that can be arranged.

**BEATRICE**

I'd like that very much.

**NORMAN**

We could go ice-skating there tomorrow if you'd get in the car --

**BEATRICE**

That's foolish. There's a blizzard.

**NORMAN**

Look at that. Buried in snow. I was hoping to take you out for a drive. Give you another lesson.

**BEATRICE**

Maybe when the snow melts.

**NORMAN**

That won't be until April! Don't you want to learn how to operate a machine like that?

**BEATRICE**

I don't know why I should learn to drive when we don't even have a car.

**NORMAN**

What do you call that?

*He points to car out the window.*

**BEATRICE**

I don't think your brother likes me driving his car.

**NORMAN**

Let me worry about Larry. You know, sooner or later I'm going to need my own vehicle.

**BEATRICE**

We just bought the house.

**NORMAN**

A man needs a car to drive to work.

**BEATRICE**

My father took me to school in his bicycle basket.

**NORMAN**

That was a different generation.

**BEATRICE**

I read that in France they had no gasoline and put wine in their tanks for fuel.

**NORMAN**

I remember when my Jeep was stolen in Paris. Boy, was I sore about that! I told the lieutenant to stay with the vehicle - everybody and his brother were hot-wiring motors after the liberation, so I give him a direct order - Don't take your eye off it -- and then some -- painting passes by and he follows it -- next thing I know I look out the window and some Frenchie is driving off in our jeep.

**BEATRICE**

A painting was passing by?

**NORMAN**

A girl. It was a pretty girl.

**BEATRICE**

How do you know she was pretty?

**NORMAN**

I just assumed.

**BEATRICE**

You didn't see her for even a minute?

**NORMAN**

For crying out loud.

**BEATRICE**

How do you know she was so pretty?

*A pause.*

**NORMAN**

She was a -- you know, a prostitute.

**BEATRICE**

I don't want to hear about Paris anymore.

**NORMAN**

It's just a story about another fellow ---

Lots of things happen in a War.

*He looks out the window.*

That Nash wouldn't last thirty seconds on the Place de la Concorde.

**BEATRICE**

Not if there are -- paintings on every corner!

*A pause.*

**NORMAN**

Is there any bread?

**BEATRICE**

It's in the bin.

**NORMAN**

Mustard?

**BEATRICE**

In the icebox.

**NORMAN**

Cheese?

**BEATRICE**

Beside the milk.

*He gets up, gets the bread from the bin, the cheese and the mustard out of the refrigerator, takes the lid off, and makes himself a sandwich.  
He watches her cut carrots.*

**NORMAN**

You really are a good cook! And you think of everything! You read my mind.

**BEATRICE**

After three whole months of marriage you don't think I can read your mind?

*She watches him bite into sandwich.*

Save room for your stew!





**NORMAN**

To tell you the truth, I'm not crazy about stew.

**BEATRICE**

But I make it every Sunday.

**NORMAN**

I know.

**BEATRICE**

Why didn't you say something?

**NORMAN**

To be polite. I figure it's time to drop all that.

**BEATRICE**

Politeness?

**NORMAN**

You don't want me to tell you I like it just to keep up appearances, do you?

**BEATRICE**

Yes, I do!

**NORMAN**

But it's important for a man and his wife to get along and understand each other a little.

*Bea gets bin and dumps all the cut vegetables in.*

**NORMAN**

For Pete's sakes, I just wanted a sandwich to start me off. I like eating in courses.

**BEATRICE**

You never mentioned that before.

**NORMAN**

In France, they sat down to eight course dinners, even during the War.

*The phone rings.*

*BEA answers.*

**BEATRICE**

Hello?.....oh, yes! Hello. He's right here. Norm?

*He mouths to Bea "Who is it?"*

It's your Mother.

*He makes a face.*

**NORMAN**

Hello...No, we won't be at Mass ...Well, have you looked out the window, Mother? It's snowing -- and Bea's not feeling very well -- we decided to have a bite to eat..... Stew. I think it's a stew....can I call you back?....All right then. Goodbye.

*He hangs up.*

**NORMAN**

We should invite her for supper. Tell her in person about...the news.

**BEATRICE**

All right.

**NORMAN**

Why don't you want anyone to come over?

**BEATRICE**

I was hoping it could be just the two of us. We won't have that for much longer!

**NORMAN**

Well, I don't mind that -- do you?

Mmm mm.

I saw it all this morning. While you were sleeping there beside me. I lay back with my hands behind my head on the pillow and I dreamt about our future. We have the house and now we'll get a car--

**BEATRICE**

And we'll start our family --

**NORMAN**

And I'll get that place on the city council --

**BEATRICE**

What?

**NORMAN**

The empty spot on the city council. Some of the fellas think I should run.

**BEATRICE**

Oh.

Honey?

**NORMAN**

Yes?

**BEATRICE**

Why would you want to run for city council?

**NORMAN**

You have to start somewhere --

**BEATRICE**

I thought you liked selling insurance.

**NORMAN**

Who likes a job like that, Bea? Anyone can do a job like that! Wouldn't you like to see me get a few laws passed? Get some motions in motion? Fill a few potholes? I think there should be a park in that vacant lot off Lincoln Boulevard and maybe we could even get a pool built where citizens could cool off in the summertime---

**BEATRICE**

That sounds like a lot of work.

**NORMAN**

Wouldn't you want to sit in the back of a convertible and wave to the crowds on the Fourth of July?

**BEATRICE**

Oh, I'd hate that! I really would!

**NORMAN**

--in a new dress with your hair done waving at your friends from high school?

**BEATRICE**

If I'd known you were interested in that, I'd never have married you!

*A pause.*

**NORMAN**

Excuse me?

**BEATRICE**

I didn't mean it quite like that. I just don't care for politics.

**NORMAN**

Only way to change the world is through politics.

**BEATRICE**

I don't want to change the world.

*A pause.*

**NORMAN**

I didn't know you had an opinion about that sort of thing.

**BEATRICE**

Well, I do.

**NORMAN**

Hmm.

**NORMAN**

When I was in Europe, most days I would have given anything to be home.

**BEATRICE**

And now?

**NORMAN**

Well, I wake up sometimes and wonder how we got here.

**BEATRICE**

This is our home.

**NORMAN**

Hard to believe.

*He looks around, inspecting the kitchen.*

What were the numbskulls in their covered wagons thinking, settling down in a place like this?

**BEATRICE**

They must have looked at all this farmland and seen the opportunity to --

**NORMAN**

It's too darn cold!

**BEATRICE**

Are you cold?

**NORMAN**

Aren't you?

**BEATRICE**

No.

**NORMAN**

I'm frozen to the bone.

**BEATRICE**

Maybe you can do some jumping jacks after lunch. It'll warm you up. Get the blood pumping.

**NORMAN**

I have another idea...

**BEATRICE**

Norm!

*He wraps his arms around her.*

**NORMAN**

Am I still in the Army or are you my wife?

**BEATRICE**

I'm your wife.



**NORMAN**

That's better.

**BEATRICE**

And the War is over.

**NORMAN**

How about that? I thought it would never be over.

*They kiss.*

**BEATRICE**

Norman, darling --

*BEA is upset.*

**NORMAN**

What on earth is the matter?

**BEATRICE**

I turned off the heat.

**NORMAN**

Now why would you do that?

**BEATRICE**

To save on the bills.

**NORMAN**

I bring in a decent income!

**BEATRICE**

I was worried.

**NORMAN**

Well, worry about us catching pneumonia and let's get the furnace cranked up. Where's Lucille these days? We should have the whole family over for a visit. I'll call Joe after lunch. Ask if they can come over later and play cards.

**BEATRICE**

How many of them?

**NORMAN**

All of 'em! Isn't that all right with you?

**BEATRICE**

Yes, but --.

**NORMAN**

Wait until we have our own children running around -- we won't have time to relax and have a cocktail and play cards --

**BEATRICE**

I don't know how to play cards!

**NORMAN**

Oh, is that all. Why didn't you say something?

**BEATRICE**

I thought you'd think I – wasn't very worldly.

**NORMAN**

Well, you're not.

**BEATRICE**

I know!

**NORMAN**

So what?

**BEATRICE**

You wouldn't prefer a girl who can play cards and swear like a councilman?

**NORMAN**

Who in their right mind would want a girl like that?

**BEATRICE**

You might.

**NORMAN**

Well, I don't. How about you? What about that fella you were seeing when we met? You were practically engaged.

**BEATRICE**

We were engaged.

**NORMAN**

What about him? Would you rather be with him?

**BEATRICE**

No.

**NORMAN**

You must have liked him an awful lot to go with him for so long.

**BEATRICE**

I must have liked you a whole lot more to break off an engagement ---

**NORMAN**

Hmmph.

**BEATRICE**

Well, here we are.



Buried.

**NORMAN**

Snug as two bugs in a rug. ---

**BEATRICE**

Three. Bugs.

**NORMAN**  
Spark. I want children with some spark in their engines.

**BEATRICE**  
Not too much.

**NORMAN**  
Can never have too much spark, Bea.

**BEATRICE**  
They ought to have manners.

**NORMAN**  
Sure...

**BEATRICE**  
I don't want them running around breaking things –

**NORMAN**  
They can run around outside.

**BEATRICE**  
But what if -

**NORMAN**  
You just have to take everything in stride, Bea. Lots of things happen you haven't got an ounce of control over. But you can't waste time worrying about it all. You'd understand better if you'd been through the War.

**BEATRICE**  
I've been through the War!

**NORMAN**  
I mean overseas.

**BEATRICE**  
I worked for the Army.

**NORMAN**  
No one was shooting at you.

**BEATRICE**

No. I see what you mean.

**NORMAN**

Aw, skip it. Anyhow, now we have a mortgage and heat bill and groceries and incidentals to pay for. I've recently discovered you've taken me for every cent I've got.

**BEATRICE**

I didn't intend --

**NORMAN**

It was worth it.

*He kisses her.*

*BEA cleans up.*

*He goes to the mirror. Looks in.*

**BEATRICE**

You'll get a swollen head looking in that mirror.

*A beat.*

**NORMAN**

Do you think you'll always love me, Bea?

**BEATRICE**

What sort of a question is that? We're married, aren't we?

**NORMAN**

I mean do you think you'll always love me, Beatrice.

*A short pause.*

**BEATRICE**

I love you now.

**NORMAN**

You do?

**BEATRICE**

And I'm not going to change.

**NORMAN**

You're not the kind of girl that's going to change her mind?

**BEATRICE**

No, I'm not.

*A moment.*

**NORMAN**

Hey, why don't you want me to teach you how to drive? You know the basics already. You just have to get the hang of using one foot. Can't have one foot hovering over the brake the whole time. You'll flood the engine.

**BEATRICE**

What if I have to stop very quickly?

**NORMAN**

Just move the one from the gas onto the brake.

**BEATRICE**

Maybe.

**NORMAN**

Makes me jumpy with your foot waiting to slam on the skids all the time.

**BEATRICE**

Maybe I better not drive it.

**NORMAN**

Confidence. That's all you need. Think you can whip up some confidence?

**BEATRICE**

I'll try.  
What if I cause some kind of an accident?

**NORMAN**

You'll never get anywhere with that negative thinking.

**BEATRICE**

I got here.

**NORMAN**

I wasn't talking about --.

**BEATRICE**

I'm happy where I am.

**NORMAN**

You are?

**BEATRICE**

Yes.

*A beat.*

**NORMAN**

The house sure feels big and empty now.

**BEATRICE**

It won't stay that way.

**NORMAN**

Excellent. I want some boys running around. Liven things up around here.

**BEATRICE**

Should I put on a record?

**NORMAN**

What?

**BEATRICE**

Some music? Would you like to hear some music?

**NORMAN**

In the middle of the day?

**BEATRICE**

It might be nice.

**NORMAN**

Maybe after supper.

**BEATRICE**

All right. Honey?

**NORMAN**

Yes, dear?

**BEATRICE**

Do I bore you?

**NORMAN**

No, just -- you gotta admit this joint isn't a hub, not a center of any sort of activity, is it?

**BEATRICE**

But me.

*A short pause.*

After three months. You must have a point of view about that.

**NORMAN**

You're terrific, Bea! The only thing is...you're no real help if I wanted to go golfing. Or watch a ball game.

**BEATRICE**

Oh.

**NORMAN**

See. That's where the children come in.

**BEATRICE**

It will be a while before they're golfing.

**NORMAN**

One of Larry's buddies from the Country Club asked if I'd commit to a foursome in the spring.

**BEATRICE**

I thought you weren't going to play golf anymore on Saturdays.

**NORMAN**

Why on earth not?

**BEATRICE**

I thought you decided you would like to spend more time at home.

**NORMAN**

For crying out loud, I'm just getting good again! Let me know if he calls.

*He gets out a set of golf clubs and pulls out a driver.*

**BEATRICE**

All right.

*She sighs.*

You're hard to please sometimes.

**NORMAN**

I am?

**BEATRICE**

Yes you are.

*He swings.*

**NORMAN**

You'll get the hang of it.

*A pause.*

It's an adjustment. That's all.

*Swings again.*

If we had a car, you could visit your mother on Saturdays while I golfed.

**BEATRICE**

Wouldn't YOU be driving the car --

**NORMAN**

You can't be so practical about everything. Sometimes you just have to be yourself.

**BEATRICE**

But I AM practical.

*He takes her by the waist.*

**NORMAN**

As soon as it warms up, I'll teach you how to be the best driver in the state and we can cruise off to Lake Geneva any time we please

**BEATRICE**

I would like that.

*A pause.*

**NORMAN**

Sure is quiet around here. What's next on the agenda?

**BEATRICE**

I didn't know I had to have an agenda.

**NORMAN**

A person has to have an agenda if they want to accomplish anything at all in this world. Gotta know who you are and where you're going.

*A pause.*

**BEATRICE**

I'm your wife. And I'm going to be with you.

*He drinks this in.*

**NORMAN**

I've put you in my speech!

**BEATRICE**

You have to give a speech?

**NORMAN**

I'm writing something up – for the campaign.

**BEATRICE**

What are you planning to say?

**NORMAN**

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming. I'm glad there are so many of you, because my wife has hired robbers to move among you.

**BEATRICE**

Don't say that!

**NORMAN**

Why not?

**BEATRICE**

I don't think that's a laughing matter.

**NORMAN**

You don't know anything about politics. You have to warm 'em up with a joke.

**BEATRICE**

Don't put me in your joke!

*Norm is putting on and buttoning his shirt.*

**BEATRICE**

Where are you going?

**NORMAN**

Practice my speech over at Larry's.

**BEATRICE**

How are you going to get there?

**NORMAN**

I suppose I'm going to have to walk!

**BEATRICE**

I don't want you to go without me.

**NORMAN**

All right. But do me a favor and don't cover your ears if I tell a joke.

**BEATRICE**

What kind of joke?

**NORMAN**

I have to appeal to all kinds of people if I'm going to be in government. That's what Larry says.

**BEATRICE**

Why doesn't he run for office?

**NORMAN**

He's always horsing around.

**BEATRICE**

You never horse around.

**NORMAN**

Oh no. Drive, drive, drive plow, plow, plow.

*Norm practices his swing. He makes sound effects to go with his shots.*

**NORMAN**

Bea?

**BEATRICE**

Yes?

**NORMAN**

I made a deal with Larry this morning about that car.

**BEATRICE**

What sort of a deal?

**NORMAN**

I bought it. So you better learn how to drive before July!

**BEATRICE**

I don't know what to say.

**NORMAN**

Say: "That's Terrific!" That ought to do it.

**BEATRICE**

I didn't know you were going to spend money like water.

**NORMAN**

I didn't know you were going to watch every damn penny!

**BEATRICE**

Don't swear.

**NORMAN**

Bea -- you can't stop me every time I -- I'm nowhere near perfect.

**BEATRICE**

Oh, I know that.

**NORMAN**

Lots of guys didn't make it back home that were a hell of a lot better men than me.

**BEATRICE**

Don't say that.

**NORMAN**

Makes you wonder about who you are and what you're here for.

**BEATRICE**

That's how it happens in a war.

**NORMAN**

There was a guy in my outfit --- Peter Markowitz. Guy from New Orleans. Always cracking a joke or pulling a fast one on one of the other guys -- you'd have scrubbed his mouth out with



soap ten times before breakfast. Beat us all hands down at cards whenever we had the chance to play. He talked about --

*A beat.*

What kind of life would he have lived? What would he have done if he'd made it back? Grabbed life by the ba---.

He would have done things.

**BEATRICE**

I thought we were doing something.

**NORMAN**

Something bigger. Something significant.

*She doesn't show her hurt or at least he doesn't see it..*

**NORMAN**

I just can't help lying awake thinking -- some of those guys -- when I'm an old man, they'll have been dead fifty years. Fifty years, Bea! You know how much can happen in fifty years?

**BEATRICE**

Who knows why these things happen. But they happen all the time in a War.

Just believe that you have a purpose, darling. And that you are here for a reason.

*He sees her innocence and goodness.*

**NORMAN**

I want a house full of reasons -- I want a family and I want to have people over and go to ballgames and have a barbecue in the backyard in the summertime. I don't want to --- I want to have a car and go for drives in the country and --- and -- I want to get that park built and maybe a highway to Chicago even --something you can look back on at the end of and think --I helped some people have a better life. Not just you and me and our family. People I don't know and never will know. People who will never even know I was here.

*They are quiet.*

**BEATRICE**

I'm very happy.

**NORMAN**

It's wonderful news about the baby. Just wonderful.

*Again, some quiet.*

*He looks at her.*

*She looks down.*

**NORMAN**

You're not hurt, are you?

My feelings.

**BEATRICE**

Who hurt your feelings?

**NORMAN**

You did.

**BEATRICE**

How did I do that?

**NORMAN**

Oh, I don't know.

**BEATRICE**

Well, then, it can't be so bad.

**NORMAN**

(sings)

"Ro-ly po-ly! Daddy's little fatty..."

*He hums the song. She laughs.*

Why are you laughing?

**BEATRICE**

You look so happy.

**NORMAN**

Heck, we could have six of 'em if you want to. Fill the place up, sweetheart! I don't mind at all!

**BEATRICE**

I want to make this a home!

**NORMAN**

Then turn up the heat!

**BEATRICE**

Norman?

**NORMAN**

Yes?

**BEATRICE**

You know I'll – You know you can talk to me, don't you? About anything.

**NORMAN**

Sure.

**BEATRICE**

Sometimes you're very far away. Sometimes I say "penny for your thoughts" and you don't even hear me.

**NORMAN**

I have an awful lot on my mind. That's all.

**BEATRICE**

All right.

**NORMAN**

Don't worry. I'll take care of you. I'll take care of everything.

*BEATRICE believes him, for now.*

**NORMAN**

Hey, you know what you are?

**BEATRICE**

What?

**NORMAN**

Prettiest girl I ever saw.

*They hold on to each other.*

**END OF PLAY**