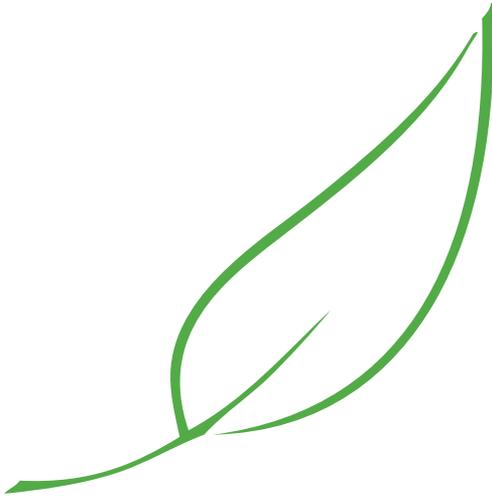


# Second Time Around

By Renee Clark



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# **SECOND TIME AROUND**

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### CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(4 male, 7 female, 3 either)*

- MARION PENDERGAST (f).....Middle aged mother of three girls. Motherly, sarcastic, humorous, and sometimes exasperating. *(249 lines)*
- MISS TERMAGENT (f).....Tall, prim tenant of the Pendergast family. She takes herself too seriously, although at times some warmth is shown. *(37 lines)*
- OXYGENIA (f) .....The youngest of the three daughters, age 14. The non-conformist of the family. Should have outrageous hair, somewhat long - - perhaps spiked or sprayed multi-colors, loud baggy clothes, and facial jewelry such as four earrings in each ear, lots of bangle bracelets and “gothic” black makeup. Has a caustic and sarcastic sense of humor and is very outspoken and often downright rude. *(63 lines)*
- LITHIA (f) .....The middle of the three daughters, about age 17, conservative compared to her younger sister, and very attractive. Sensitive and wants to please. *(51 lines)*
- PLUTONIA (f).....Eldest of the Pendergast girls, in her early twenties. Mature and attractive, she is always in control of herself and the situation. *(51 lines)*

- CARTER DOCKPIN (m) .....Lithia’s boyfriend, about age 17. He is “classic” nerd, a computer geek, and is always overly polite to everyone, especially Marion. Although Carter is the brunt of many jokes, there is something very likable about him. (66 lines)
- BELINDA (f).....Carter’s mother, middle-aged, and Marion’s best friend. Generally very passive and content with her life. (74 lines)
- MORGAN (m).....Belinda’s husband, age 46-50. Although he is somewhat frail, his passion is photographing parts of exotic bugs and selling them on eBay. He is eccentric and has not left his house since the year 2000, when Gore lost the election to Bush. (97 lines)
- AUNT SERAFINA (f).....Elderly, sharp-tongued and full of self-pity. (31 lines)
- DR. FAGAN (m/f).....Could be male or female. Elderly. (39 lines)
- \*CAB DRIVER (m/f) .....May be male or female. A bit rough around the edges. (4 lines)
- \*DELIVERY PERSON (m/f) .....May be male or female. Age 20s - 35. Dressed in brown pants and shirt, ala UPS. (8 lines)
- \*MR. JACK NYSTROM (m) .....20s - 30s. Clean-cut. (2 lines)
- \*DR. REX OEDIPUS (m) .....25-30s. Handsome. (3 lines)

- \* While the delivery person and cab driver can be played by females, it would be really funny to have the same male play both Nystrom and Oedipus, if not all four parts. It ties in the recognition scene at the end of the play.

**SYNOPSIS OF ACTS***Act One:*

Marion Pendergast has raised her three daughters (Oxygenia, Lithia, and Plutonia) virtually without the help of her traveling husband Herbert, a chemist whose specialty is analyzing water samples from every fresh water lake or stream in the world. Her favorite pastime is regretting the past decisions that led her to her current lot in life, and she often wishes she could have done things differently. She will get her chance through a strange Amazonian wishing god, a statue her husband sends from Brazil.

*Act Two:*

The statue has worked its peculiar charm. The house is the same but Marion's husband is now Morgan, who hasn't left home since 2000 and who spends his time collecting and photographing insects to sell as art on eBay. Furthermore, her eldest daughter Plutonia insists she is called "Tiffany," and the obnoxious boy next door is now her "son." To make matters worse, her best friend Belinda now is married to Herbert and has Lithia for a daughter, except she is now named Urania. Finally, Morgan's eccentric Aunt Serafina sweeps through the household periodically, dominating anyone she can find. All this throws poor Marion into a state of confusion, and her strange behavior leads the others to believe she is mentally deranged. Act Two closes in complete chaos.

*Act Three:*

Nice Dr. Fagan enters the story, sedating Marion, who now regrets her wish and the way everything has turned out. If only she could change everything back the way it was. She gets her chance when Herbert sends Belinda the same Amazon statue that appeared in Act One. Marion fervently pledges never to wish for things to be different again if only the statue will restore everything to the way it was. She gets her wish.

**PROPS***Act One*

- Assorted makeup, including black lipstick (OXY)
- Mirror (OXY)
- Sewing materials (MARION)
- Dish towel (LITHIA)
- Small bouquet of flowers (CARTER)
- Thick typed pages of poem (CARTER)
- Small bag w/ vegetables (BELINDA)
- The Statue wrapped in box with shipping labels, etc. (DELIVERY PERSON)
- Tea service, cups saucers, tray, etc. (MISS TERMAGENT)

*Act Two*

- Card table (CENTER STAGE)
- Laptop computer open with back to audience (ON CARD TABLE)
- Digital camera (CARD TABLE)
- Sm box with rubber scorpion (CARD TABLE)
- Wire running from computer across to (STAGE LEFT wall near phone. It is not plugged in.)
- Tweezers (CARD TABLE)
- Set up for photographing bugs, white cloth, etc. (CARD TABLE)
- Several small terrariums with plant and various rubber bugs) (COFFEE TABLE and BOOK CASE)
- Bag of groceries (MARION)
- 2 boxes of health food (MARION)
- Small cloth (PLUTONIA)
- 5 or more photos of insects and insect parts on all the walls.
- Poster of Periodic Table of Elements (UP LEFT WALL above bookcase.)
- Clusters of opened shipping boxes, most of them small (BOOKCASE, TABLE PHONE TABLE)

*Act Three*

- Medical bag with stethoscope and 2 toy hypodermic needles, each with a different color label. (DR. FAGAN)
- Blanket, pillow, cloth (MARION)
- 2 suitcases (AUNT SERFINA)
- Packed box of health food (PLUTONIA)
- Box containing wrapped statue (DELIVERY PERSON)

\* NOTE ON SPECIALTY PROPS: It is suggested that there is much flexibility with the specialty props. When something cannot be purchased or borrowed, have an industrious person make them.

THE STATUE: There are several options for the statue. The script calls for a stone replica of a head, similar to the giant stone heads found in South America or on Easter Island. If one cannot be found at a novelty store, it could be made out of clay or wood and painted. Also a statue of a gargoyle or any kind of animal found in South America could also work. Gargoyles can be found in novelty stores like Spencer's Gifts or patio and garden shops. The lines in the script should be adjusted accordingly.

PHOTOS OF INSECT PARTS: These can be found on the Internet and printed out. Or they can be sketches or photos that are blown up. They should be framed, if possible. They do not have to be authentic in any way, just enough to give the impression of bug bodies.

THE PERIODIC TABLE OF ELEMENTS: The chart is the focus of the UP RIGHT wall above the book case. This could be borrowed from the local high school chemistry department or duplicated or copied by hand on a large piece of poster board. It should be legible. The Internet can also lead to many sites that sell these for science classes.

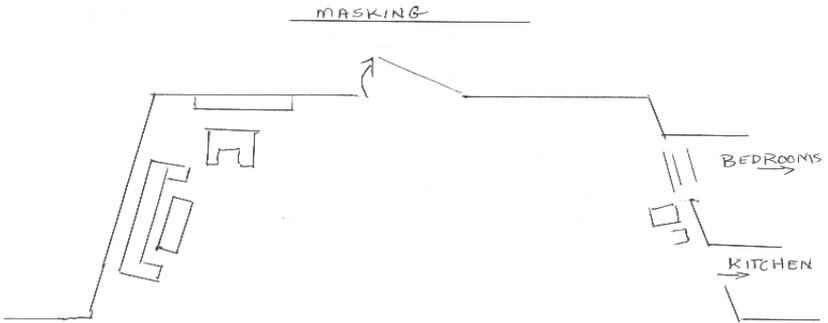
INSECTS: Toy stores and novelty stores sell inexpensive rubber insects. Get spiders, scorpions, centipedes, flies, anything to add to the set visually. Lines can be adjusted to fit the type of bug that is acquired.

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*To Bruce Clark, for all the  
love, support, and inspiration.*

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**THE SET**



**ACT ONE****AT RISE:**

*A sofa is stage RIGHT near the wall. There is a coffee table in front of the sofa with a bowl of flowers on top and a side chair upstage of the coffee table. Above the sofa on the right wall is a large picture. UP CENTER is the front door to the outside. UP LEFT wall has the exit to the bedrooms up stairs. There may also be a suggestion of stairs leading up and off stage. DOWN LEFT is the exit to the kitchen. Between the two left exits is a small phone table with a portable phone on it and a lamp. There is a straight-backed chair DOWNSTAGE of the phone table. On the UP RIGHT back wall to the side of the front door is a framed picture or chart of the Periodic Table of Elements. Below it is a small bookcase with books and various knickknacks, including a few exotic looking statues.*

*MISS TERMAGENT is sitting reading on the upstage end of the sofa. OXYGENIA is sitting on the floor DOWN CENTER with a mirror, and a small box of jewelry and makeup, including black lipstick and black or fluorescent nail polish. She is struggling to put in 4 or 5 earrings in each ear, followed by rings on every finger and bracelets. (Earrings can be clip-on if the actress does not have pierced.) Throughout the scene, she works her way through all the jewelry, makeup and nail polish. MARION enters from bedroom carrying a blouse and small sewing kit and crosses right to armchair. She sits and begins sewing a new button onto the blouse.*

**MARION:** Hello Miss Termagent.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Good evening, Mrs. Pendergast.

**MARION:** Hello, Oxy. *(She receives no response from her daughter. Then, with a bit more force.)* Hello, Oxy.

**OXYGENIA:** *(Annoyed.)* Hello, Mother.

**MARION:** Where is your sister?

**OXYGENIA:** *(Not looking up.)* Chicago.

**MARION:** Not the one I meant, but aren't you clever today. *(OXYGENIA looks up and smiles sarcastically. MARION calls out.)* Lithia?

**LITHIA:** *(Offstage.)* I'm doing the dishes!

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*There is suddenly a crash of breaking glass from offstage left.*

**MARION:** Was that my new casserole dish?

**LITHIA:** (*Offstage.*) No. That was the lid to your new casserole dish.

**MARION:** Please be - -

*Another crash, this one louder.*

**LITHIA:** (*Offstage.*) That was the dish. (*MARION looks irritated, but determined to remain calm.*)

**OXYGENIA:** I'm tired of my hair like this.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Looking over her book at OXYGENIA.*) You shouldn't keep coloring it like that, Oxy. You'll ruin the follicles. You'll be bald before you're 16!

**OXYGENIA:** (*As she looks in the mirror.*) I think I've decided to shave my head! Except for a nice long strand right down the middle. (*Traces down the center of her forehead.*)

**MARION:** I think I've decided that you won't.

**OXYGENIA:** (*Excited, she rises.*) I want to change my whole image. I want to give myself the Shaolin or Kung Fu look! (*She kicks the air and does a karate-like pose.*) Ayiiiiia! (*She goes into the crane stance - - on one foot balanced, hands held high, making weird sounds.*) Eeeeeeee . . . OOOOOOO . . . (*Then she jumps and kicks.*) Hah! (*Doorbell rings. Breaks her pose.*) I'll get it! I'll get it! (*She runs to the door and opens it.*)

**CARTER:** (*Entering with a small bouquet of flowers. He is tall and "geeky" looking, but very sweet in his own way. He wears "dorky" glasses. Tries to be polite to OXYGENIA.*) Good evening, Oxygenia.

**OXYGENIA:** Oh, it's you. (*Angry.*) And how many times do I have to tell you not to call me Oxygenia. Call me Oxy! Or Genie, or George! But do NOT call me Oxygenia! Got it?! Now, what do you want?

**CARTER:** I came over to see Lithia.

**MARION:** Who is it, Oxy?

**OXYGENIA:** It's that creepy geek, Carter.

**MARION:** Oxy, be nice and let him in. How are you, Carter?

**CARTER:** *(Still standing in the doorway.)* Good evening, Mrs. Pendergast. How are you, Miss Termagent?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Good evening, Carter. It's good to see you again.

**CARTER:** *(Takes only one step in. Politely.)* Thank you. It's good to see you again, too.

**OXYGENIA:** *(Annoyed.)* Carter, will you please move your body in further so I can close the door? *(CARTER moves in a few steps and stands there awkwardly as OXYGENIA slams the door in a huff.)*

**MARION:** Oxy, please tell your sister Carter is here.

**OXYGENIA:** *(Leaving CARTER UP CENTER, she angrily crosses DOWN LEFT to kitchen exit and shouts.)* All right! Hey, Lithia, the geeky creep is here! Come and get 'im!

**MARION:** Oxy, I don't like you speaking about Carter that way, calling him a geeky creep right in front of his face. I think you should apologize to him. Right now.

**OXYGENIA:** Okay, Mom. *(Walks UPSTAGE to CARTER.)* I'm sorry you are such a geeky creep, Carter.

**MARION:** *(Sharply.)* Oxy!

**LITHIA:** *(Entering from kitchen LEFT.)* Hi, Carter.

**CARTER:** *(Holding out flowers, shyly.)* Hi, Lithia.

**LITHIA:** Come on into the kitchen. I'm still doing the dishes.

**CARTER:** *(Bowing slightly.)* Excuse me, everyone. *(Crosses DOWN LEFT to LITHIA.)*

**OXYGENIA:** You are quite excused, Carter. *(Bows as he did.)* With pleasure!

**LITHIA:** *(Taking CARTER's arm.)* Ignore her, Carter. She's so immature! *(As they exit to kitchen, taking flowers.)* Are these for me?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Carter has such beautiful manners!

**MARION:** *(Glumly looking after them.)* I suppose so.

**OXYGENIA:** *(Crossing back to her place on the floor, resuming her primping.)* It's too bad he's such a dork. He makes me want to puke!

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Pointedly to OXYGENIA.*) Good manners are so hard to find these days. Like all of the finer qualities in life, good manners can be so (*Pauses thinking of the perfect word.*) so . . . ephemeral. (*She goes back to her reading.*)

**OXYGENIA:** (*A beat as she stares at MISS TERMAGENT, puzzled by this new word.*) Huh?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Ephemeral. It means transitory, fleeting.

**OXYGENIA:** (*Another beat as she stares at MISS TERMAGENT. Then abruptly to MARION.*) Did you get an email from Dad today?

**MARION:** No, I don't expect one until next week when he's back to civilization. He's out on some river in the rainforest.

**OXYGENIA:** Do you think he'll be home for my birthday this year?

**MARION:** I don't know, dear. You know how he is when he's off on one of his expeditions. Taking all those water samples. Maybe another month.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Looking up from her book.*) Is he still in South America?

**MARION:** As far as I know. (*Sarcastically.*) Maybe he got himself eaten by one of those piranha fish or some of the local natives.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Patronizingly.*) Mrs. Pendergast, piranha are very elusive fish, and cannibalism is rarely practiced today, especially in South America.

**MARION:** I'm certainly happy to hear that, Miss Termagent. It takes a big load off my mind. On the other hand, Herbert never looked too digestible to me.

**OXYGENIA:** Me neither.

*Enter LITHIA and CARTER from kitchen, crossing CENTER STAGE.*

**LITHIA:** Miss Termagent, Carter wrote a poem today that he would like to share with us.

**OXYGENIA:** We don't want to hear it!

**CARTER:** (*Hesitant, to LITHIA.*) Maybe I shouldn't read it in here. Oxy will probably laugh.

**LITHIA:** Just ignore her, Carter. What does she know about anything? She's only 14!

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Encouraging.*) I'd love to hear your poem, Carter. I still remember that lovely essay you wrote on toadstools.

**OXYGENIA:** So do I. I was sick all night.

**LITHIA:** Oxy, why don't you go preen somewhere else?

**OXYGENIA:** I'll preen wherever I like. It's a free country.

**LITHIA:** Then please SHUT UP! Go ahead, Carter.

**CARTER:** *(Pulling a thick sheaf of papers out of his pocket. He accidentally drops them on the floor and frantically picks them up one by one putting them in the correct order as he does. As they watch, LITHIA bites her lip nervously, OXYGENIA mutters to herself, MARION shakes her head in her hands, and MISS TERMAGENT smiles and nods approvingly. He then does his slight little bow first to MISS TERMAGENT, then to MARION, who rolls her eyes at this formality.)* Thank you. I call it "My Life."

**OXYGENIA:** *(Sarcastic.)* Oh, great! It's going to be funny.

**LITHIA:** Mother! Please tell her to be quiet.

**MARION:** *(Sighs.)* That's enough, Oxy. Go on, Carter. Read your poem.

**CARTER:** *(Takes a step forward, proudly.)* "My Life" by Carter Dockpin.

**OXYGENIA:** Ugh.

**CARTER:** *(Reading in a singsong voice.)* I was born in a shack on the west side of town.

The shutters were green, and the chimney was brown.

The windows were blue, and the grass was all yellow.

The sky was all clear, and the weather was mellow . . .

**MISS TERMAGENT:** *(Nodding and smiling.)* Excellent meter, Carter. And a rhyme scheme of double-A, double-B.

**CARTER:** *(Little nod.)* Thank you. *(He continues reading.)* The path was o'ergrown, and the hedgerow was dead . . .

**OXYGENIA:** *(Interrupting, in a mimicking singsong.)* "And when he was born, he was dropped on his head!"

**LITHIA:** *(Crossing RIGHT angrily to MARION.)* Mother, would you please make her shut up?!

**OXYGENIA:** *(Matter-of-factly.)* I don't have to shut up. It's a free country.

**LITHIA:** She's being deliberately obnoxious! Tell her to leave the room!

**OXYGENIA:** (*Jumping up and crossing to her.*) And I don't have to leave the room. Why don't you and Carter leave the room? In fact, why don't you and Carter leave the planet?

**MARION:** (*Weakly.*) Now, girls. This just isn't worth fighting over.

**LITHIA:** Mother!

**MARION:** Oxy, I think you better go to your room.

**OXYGENIA:** (*As she collects her things from the floor.*) All right! At least I won't have to stay here and suffer! I may just shave my head while I'm up there.

**MARION:** Oh no, you won't.

**OXYGENIA:** (*As she exits LEFT.*) I consider this to be undemocratic and downright dictatorial!

**MARION:** (*Sighs, resigned to listening to the poem.*) Go ahead, Carter, finish your poem.

**CARTER:** (*Nods to MARION.*) Thank you, Mrs. Pendergast. (*Shuffles the papers back to the first page.*) "My Life" by Carter Dockpin. "I was born in a shack on the west side . . ."

**LITHIA:** Why don't you just pick it up where you left off, Carter? (*She crosses to DOWN STAGE end of sofa and sits.*) I'll just sit over here where I can listen better.

**CARTER:** All right. (*Reading.*) The path was o'ergrown, and the hedgerow was dead . . .

"That place is deserted!" everyone said.

But then, in a twinkling, they heard on the roof

The prancing and pawing of a little stork's hoof . . .

*Lights dim and CARTER's voice softens until mute. The stage is dark for two or three seconds before the lights come up - - more quickly than they went down. CARTER's voice also comes back. More than an hour has passed, and CARTER is just finishing his poem. All three of the women seem exhausted, though LITHIA only slightly.*

**CARTER:** (*Reading.*) . . . And now that I've reached the prime of my life, I hope someday to make Lithia my wife . . .

*MISS TERMAGENT and LITHIA clap their hands.*

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**LITHIA:** That was wonderful, Carter. I don't know when two and a half hours have gone by so fast.

**CARTER:** It was only an hour and a half, Lithia.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** That certainly was an epic poem, Carter.

**CARTER:** Thank you. But there's more . . . an epilogue . . .

**LITHIA:** Why don't we leave that for another night, Carter? We don't want to, um . . .

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Gild the lily, as it were?

**CARTER:** It does run a little long, doesn't it.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Kindly.*) It is just a little overpowering, Carter. I don't want to be overpowered too much.

**LITHIA:** (*Crossing to MARION.*) Well, Mom, what did you think of Carter's poem? Wasn't it great?

**MARION:** (*Sleepily.*) Well, I think . . . I'm not really sure. I think I dozed off.

**LITHIA:** (*Hurt.*) Mother, how could you?

**MARION:** To be truthful, Carter, I don't understand why you spend so much time writing poetry. Doesn't your father have something for you to do around the house? Like mowing the lawn or painting or something? (*Pause, an idea.*) I know, why don't you help him photograph his insects for his little, uh . . . business?

**CARTER:** He won't let me near his new digital camera. Besides, I hate insects. They make me break out.

**LITHIA:** Mom, Carter spent all those hours writing this poem and that's all you can say to him? That he should help his dad photograph bug parts? (*MARION shrugs.*)

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Well, I *loved* your poem, Carter. I think you have some talent.

**CARTER:** (*Does his little nod.*) Thank you. I guess I was born with it.

**LITHIA:** (*To MARION, still angry.*) Mom, why is it you never try to encourage anyone? No wonder Plutonia took off to live in Chicago. You never gave her any encouragement for anything she did. You always tried to run her life. You can be such a control freak!

**MARION:** (*Patiently.*) Now that's just not true, Lithia. I never tell people what to do.

**LITHIA:** (*Crossing to CARTER and taking his arm.*) Come on, Carter. Let's go for a walk. It's too stuffy in here.

**CARTER:** But I haven't read the epilogue. (*She drags him out the door, slamming it behind her.*)

**MARION:** (*As they exit.*) Don't stay out more than thirty minutes! (*To MISS TERMAGENT.*) What did I say? Did I say anything so terrible? (*She rises, crosses to front window and looks out.*)

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Mrs. Pendergast, as no more than your humble tenant, it would be far from my place to meddle in your personal family affairs. But in my opinion, you handled that with great *opacity*.

**MARION:** (*Crosses back to the side chair and sits.*) With great what?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** With great opacity. (*Slowly, as if to a child.*) I mean with a clear lack of understanding.

**MARION:** Oh, I know you think I'm stupid, Miss Termagent. But I can't help that. It may be that we all can't be as *ephemeral* as you are! (*Doorbell rings.*) Now who can that be?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Haughtily.*) I'm sure I don't know.

**OXYGENIA:** (*Enters quickly from UP LEFT and dashes to the door.*) I'll get it! I'll get it! (*She opens the door and BELINDA enters carrying a plastic grocery bag.*) Oh hi, Mrs. Dockpin.

**BELINDA:** Hello, Oxy. Is your mother at home? (*Enters.*) Oh, there you are, Marion.

**MARION:** (*Rising.*) Come in, Belinda. (*She motions to the upstage end of the sofa, then resumes her place in the side chair.*)

**BELINDA:** (*Crosses to MARION, hands her the bag and sits.*) I brought you some kohlrabi from the garden.

**MARION:** Thanks, Belinda. (*To OXYGENIA.*) Oxy, take this out to the kitchen, please.

**OXYGENIA:** Okay. But don't say anything 'til I get back. I don't want to miss anything. (*Exits LEFT to the kitchen with bag.*)

**BELINDA:** (*To MISS TERMAGENT.*) Oh, hello, Miss Termagent. I haven't seen you in a while. How have you been?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** I'm quite well, thank you.

**MARION:** Anything new with you today, Belinda?

**BELINDA:** Not much. The usual thing. Morgan spent the day photographing a giant tarantula. Actually, he was taking various shots of its rear end this time. Plans to blow them up, mat them in chartreuse, and sell them for \$35 each on eBay.

**MISS TERAGENT:** I do love chartreuse.

**MARION:** I still can't believe there is a market for photos of bug parts.

**BELINDA:** It's art, Marion. And lately the photos are really selling. He can't keep up with the demand.

**MARION:** How can you stand having all those bugs around? Aren't you afraid they might escape?

**BELINDA:** You get used to it. Besides, once Morgan finishes with a bug, he donates it to the University of Chicago for their live insect display. You should see the collection he has now. He just got a new shipment in - - Burmese bung beetles. Last week it was Titsy flies from Africa and blood-sucking conenoses from Florida. That reminds me, he asked Herbert to bring him back one of those giant spiders from South America. Do you think he'll remember?

**MARION:** Who knows? When Herbert starts analyzing water samples, the world could blow up and he wouldn't notice.

**BELINDA:** Not to change the subject, but I saw Lithia and Carter walking down the street. They make such a handsome couple. Who would have thought our children would end up together? Don't you think they make a handsome couple?

**MARION:** (*Thinking about it.*) No - - not particularly.

**BELINDA:** NO? What do you mean "not particularly?"

**MARION:** (*Delicately.*) Well, I mean they were nice playmates when they were growing up, but now? . . . I just don't think they are suited to each other, that's all. (*Looks out the front window.*)

**BELINDA:** I don't know what you mean.

**MARION:** They just don't have anything in common. Carter likes poetry, and Lithia likes rock music and going to parties. (*Still looking out the window.*) Lithia just sort of humors him.

**BELINDA:** What do you mean, she just sort of humors him?

**MARION:** (*Sitting.*) Look. Belinda. You are my closest friend, and I don't want to offend you. I just think we ought to nip this thing between them in the bud before it goes too far. You don't get a second chance, you know.

**BELINDA:** (*More intense.*) What do you mean, she just sort of humors him?

**MARION:** Okay, I have an example. Carter came over today and spent over an hour reading a poem he had written. And Lithia encouraged him!

**BELINDA:** Well, what's wrong with that?

*OXYGENIA enters LEFT from kitchen.*

**MARION:** Who would want to sit for over an hour, listening to bad poetry?

**OXYGENIA:** (*Sitting in chair, LEFT near telephone.*) Oh, are you talking about Carter's poem? I think he oughta take up raising hamsters instead.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*To BELINDA.*) It was an excellent poem, Mrs. Dockpin. You have good reason to be proud of Carter. He's a fine poet. *Very prolific.* (*Pause.*) Quite *nonpareil*.

**MARION:** (*To MISS TERMAGENT, puzzled at this new word.*) Huh?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** I said he is quite *nonpareil*. (*Pause.*) *Nonpareil*, meaning without equal or rival.

**MARION:** (*Stares at her for a beat, then abruptly turns back to BELINDA as continues as if there had been no interruption.*) He should raise hamsters or gerbils or something. I mean, really, Belinda. Poetry?

**BELINDA:** Well frankly, I do wish he'd get outside a bit. Mow the lawn, paint the house or something.

**MARION:** Maybe he could even help Morgan photograph his bugs.

**BELINDA:** No, bugs give Carter a rash. Besides, Morgan won't let anyone touch his new digital camera. He is so afraid someone will break it.

**MARION:** Oh, come on. That's being a little difficult, don't you think?

**BELINDA:** Look, when your husband is making good money off of eBay selling photos of a bug's behind, you don't quibble with how he does it. If the digital is off limits, that's fine with me.

**MARION:** And at least he's home where you can talk to him once in a while. I haven't seen Herbert in two and a half months!

**BELINDA:** Have you heard from him lately?

**MARION:** He usually emails me a couple of times a week when he's able to hook up his laptop. But he has been out on some river for awhile. I haven't heard from him in two weeks.

**BELINDA:** Where is he now?

**MARION:** I think he's on some river in the Amazon. I am not sure exactly. Say, would you like some ice tea? It will only take a minute.

**BELINDA:** That would be nice, if you are sure it's no trouble.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Rising.*) Let me get it. I have been sitting with this book all day. I need to move around. (*Crosses LEFT.*) Why don't you come help me, Oxy?

**OXYGENIA:** Sure, okay. (*They both exit kitchen LEFT.*)

**MARION:** Thank you, Miss Termagent.

**BELINDA:** She's a nice person, that Miss Termagent. A bit strange, but nice.

**MARION:** She's all right, I guess, if you have to have a stranger in the house. Things would be different, though, if Herbert were here and he had a normal job. We wouldn't need to take in boarders.

**BELINDA:** Well, at least Herbert is doing what he loves.

**MARION:** Always off somewhere collecting new water samples and analyzing them for the university. What a life for a chemist. (*Rises and crosses to BELINDA.*) Belinda, you are my best friend; we grew up together. I want to tell you something. (*Pause.*) Of the two of us, I think you made the better choice of a husband.

**BELINDA:** But you . . .

**MARION:** (*Cutting her off.*) At least your husband is home where you can talk to him once in awhile. Even if he is too preoccupied to say anything back.

**BELINDA:** He sure is home, you got that right. He hasn't left the house since 2000! That recount was just too much for him. He still thinks Gore should have won.

**MARION:** (*Crosses DOWN LEFT, talking to herself.*) If I had it all to do over again, things would be different, I can tell you.

**BELINDA:** And how would they be different?

**MARION:** (*Crosses CENTER.*) More normal. I wouldn't be married to someone who insists on naming children after the elements. Someone who spends half his time in another part of the world looking at water. I would like a homebody. Someone who stays around the house once in awhile.

**BELINDA:** (*Laughing.*) Then you'd like Morgan. The farthest he's ever been from the house is the dump at the edge of town.

**MARION:** Well, you should count your blessings, Belinda. (*Doorbell rings.*) Again with the bell! What is this, Grand Central Station?

**OXYGENIA:** (*Running out from the kitchen to the front door.*) I'll get it! I'll get it! (*She opens the door to a person dressed in brown, ala UPS. He/she is holding a package and a clipboard. When OXYGENIA opens the door, he/she should just stare at her with all her trimmings, mouth open, dumbfounded. She stares back, then after a beat . . . sharply.*) Well, don't just stand there gawking! Tell me what you want!

**DELIVERY PERSON:** Uh . . . Uhhh . . . sorry. I, uh . . . (*Checks the clipboard.*) I have a package for a Marion Pendergast?

**OXYGENIA:** You're at the right place.

*NOTE: If the timing on this next bit of schtick is good, it should get a laugh.*

**DELIVERY PERSON:** You need to sign here, p-please. (*He/she gingerly holds out clipboard.*)

**OXYGENIA:** (*Takes clipboard a little too swiftly. She then taps her foot impatiently, hand out.*) Well? . . . What else?

**DELIVERY PERSON:** I beg your pardon?

**OXYGENIA:** How am I supposed to sign this, with my tongue? (*She sticks her tongue out then makes a hissing sound and clicks her teeth. The DELIVERY PERSON is mortified at this performance. He/she fumbles through pockets to find a pen. As she snaps it from his hand, he pulls back with a start. She quickly signs.*) THERE! (*She signs and smashes the clipboard into his/her chest. She starts to walk away with the pen when he/she stops her.*)

**DELIVERY PERSON:** (*Hesitantly.*) Uh, Miss? (*OXYGENIA freezes, her back to her/him.*) My pen? It's the only one I have, and . . .

**OXYGENIA:** *(Turns back to him/her.)* Oh, all right. Here, take it! *(She holds it out but won't release the pen. After a little tug-of-war, she abruptly lets go, and the DELIVERY PERSON stumbles back holding the pen.)*

**DELIVERY PERSON:** *(With a false cheerfulness.)* Thank you . . . and have a great day! *(He stares at her in awe as she slams the door in his/her face. OXYGENIA crosses down to MARION.)*

**OXYGENIA:** It's for you, Mom.

**MARION:** *(Taking box and examining it.)* For me? I wonder what it can be. *(She looks at return address.)* Oxy, it's from South America! From Dad!

**OXYGENIA:** *(Excitedly.)* Open it! Open it!

**MARION:** *(Unwrapping package carefully.)* I wonder what he's sending this time.

**OXYGENIA:** *(Impatient.)* Hurry up! Hurry up, Mom! Get it open! Do you want me to do it?

**MARION:** There! *(She carefully takes out a statue of a . . . HEAD. This can be made from wood or stone and can look like the ancient stone heads found in South America or something similar to those found on Easter Island. She holds it out and slowly turns it in her hands as everyone silently stares in puzzlement.)*

**OXYGENIA:** A head!?!

**MARION:** Well, look at this, Belinda. *(Amused.)* Look what my wandering husband sent me from South America . . . a statue of . . . a head!

**BELINDA:** *(Stands, crosses to MARION and carefully takes the statue from her.)* It's certainly beautiful. So . . . lifelike. I can almost hear it speak. *(To the statue.)* Hello, there. *(Wiggles the statue as if it "speaks." Between frozen lips, she tries to be funny as a ventriloquist. Disguises her voice for the statue.)*

**HEAD:** Buenos Dias!

**OXYGENIA:** *(Ignoring her.)* A head!?!

**BELINDA:** And how are you today?

**HEAD:** Buenos Dias!

**MARION:** *(Laughing, taking the statue from her and putting it on the coffee table.)* Honestly, Belinda. You are too much! I'll put it right here. *(Stands back to survey it.)* It looks nice here, don't you think? Perks up the room a bit.

*OXYGENIA and BELINDA sit on the couch. MARION slowly sits on the side chair. All three sit in silence staring at the statue. After about four slow beats, OXYGENIA speaks.*

**OXYGENIA:** *(Very slowly leans toward the statue. In awe.)* Geez, it IS a . . . head, isn't it.

**BELINDA:** Just beautiful. Was there a note or card or anything with it?

**MARION:** *(Still staring in awe at the statue.)* I don't know. I didn't even look. Oxy, would you please check the wrappings for a note?

*OXYGENIA crosses to the pile of wrappings, picks them up and takes them to the chair RIGHT. She sits and goes through each piece of wrapping.*

*MISS TERMAGENT enters with the ice tea. She crosses to the coffee table.*

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Here's the ice tea. Freshly brewed. You can help yourselves. I'll just put the tray down here next to this *(She freezes with tray and stares at the statue.)* this . . . *(Looks at MARION questioningly.)* this . . . HEAD?

**MARION:** You got it!

*MISS TERMAGENT crosses to the DOWN STAGE end of sofa and sits intensely staring at the statue, as BELINDA helps herself to some tea.*

**OXYGENIA:** *(Rises and crosses to CENTER of MARION with note.)*

There WAS a note with it. It says: "Dear Marion, Oxy, and Lithia, this is a genuine replica of an ancient Amazon wishing god. Supposedly it has the power to grant your every wish. So be very careful what you say in its presence. I will try to be home for Oxy's birthday. I miss you all. Love, Dad."

**MARION:** An Amazon wishing god. What will he think of next?

**BELINDA:** *(Amused.)* I hope he doesn't go to the South Pacific. He might send you a statue of a fertility goddess.

**MARION:** Bite your tongue!

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Or he could go to Scotland and send you some bagpipes!

**BELINDA:** (*Giggles as she tries to top that.*) Or he could go to the Middle East. Then he could send you a (*Pause.*) burka!

**OXYGENIA:** (*Excited.*) Or maybe he could go to Transylvania. Then he could send us a vampire!

*They stare at OXYGENIA. It is not funny. A beat. Then simultaneously they all turn to stare at the statue again. Pause.*

**MISS TERMAGENT:** (*Looks again at the head, transfixed.*) It certainly is a remarkable gift!

**BELINDA:** AND it has the power to grant wishes. So you'd better be careful what you wish for.

*MARION rises, crosses to OXYGENIA and takes the statue. As she crosses DOWN LEFT near chair, OXYGENIA takes her place on the side chair near the sofa. She stands facing audience, thinking aloud, as she stares at the statue in her hands.*

**MARION:** Yes, it is remarkable. But it grants wishes? I doubt it. That's nothing but superstitious nonsense. Herbert's idea of a joke. (*Looks around, amused.*) Hah! Maybe I should wish to have the walls in this place painted. They haven't been done since my father gave me the place 25 years ago. (*Sits in chair LEFT and continues to stare at statue, thinking aloud. With a chuckle.*) You know, if I could really have a wish come true, I wish I could do a few things over. Things would be different the second time around.

**BELINDA:** I think you should be happy with the way things are. After all, they could be worse.

**MARION:** Look who's talking. You have a husband who stays home once in awhile. I haven't seen mine for months. And what does he send me, the joker? A stone (*Or "wooden."*) head!

**OXYGENIA:** Mom, he could have sent you a shrunken head. Don't complain!

**MARION:** (*Sighs.*) I could have had my pick of any man in this town when I was a young girl.

**OXYGENIA:** Then why didn't you marry the guy that owns the Burger Barn? Then we could have had all the free Cokes and burgers that we want.

**BELINDA:** Or what about that man who owns the service station, Tom Watkins, I think his name is. Then you could have had all the free gas you want.

**MARION:** That's not a bad idea. Gas is so high these days. *(Pause.)* Don't think I couldn't have married either one of them. I could even have married your husband, Belinda. I think back in the old days he might have had a little crush on me.

**BELINDA:** *(Amused by this.)* Then why didn't you?

**MARION:** *(Grimly.)* I fell in love with Herbert. I thought he was a good catch. *(Wistfully.)* Ahh, love.

**OXYGENIA:** Now, Mom. You know you love Daddy, and he loves you. And you didn't do too badly. You got three girls and a stone head out of it.

**MARION:** Three girls! One of them lives in Chicago and won't talk to me. Is it wishing too much to hear from her? *(She puts the head down on the phone table.)*

*Sound of talking and laughing outside.*

**OXYGENIA:** What's that noise? *(Crosses to window and looks out.)*  
Oh, it's just Ugly and the Beast.

**MARION:** Who?

**OXYGENIA:** Ugly and the Beast - - you know, Lithia and Carter. Uh, sorry, Mrs. Dockpin. I was only kidding. *(Looking out window.)*  
Yuck! I think he's going to kiss her.

*Suddenly, a low roll of thunder is heard.*

**BELINDA:** Is that thunder? I didn't know it was supposed to rain today. *(Thunder again, louder. Then again, even louder.)*  
Sounds like it's going to be a big storm.

*Suddenly there is a loud, frightening crack, which continues to boom as the lights flicker and go out . . . all except the little lamp on the phone table.*

*They all scream, ad-libbing "I can't see." "Turn on the lights, someone." "What happened?" etc. OXYGENIA shouts, "Ouch! I tripped over something!"*

*In the middle of the chaos, LITHIA and CARTER enter in the dark and shout above the noise as the thunder continues in the background.*

**CARTER:** Wow! That came on fast!

**LITHIA:** Why is so dark in here? Mom? Oxy? Where are you?

**MARION:** Over here. Don't move or you might trip over something!

**CARTER:** They must have blown a fuse.

**LITHIA:** No, the lamp by the phone is still on.

*Suddenly the phone is heard ringing as the thunder dies out. The lights flicker and come back up. They are in the following places: LITHIA and CARTER UP CENTER at the front door, CARTER on LITHIA's right; BELINDA behind the side chair RIGHT; MISS TERMAGENT DOWN RIGHT end of sofa; MARION CENTER STAGE. OXYGENIA is on the floor RIGHT in front of the coffee table.*

**OXYGENIA:** Wow! That was so cool. *(Phone continues to ring.)*

**BELINDA:** Is anybody going to answer the phone?

**MISS TERMAGENT:** I'll get it. *(Cross LEFT to phone table and picks it up.)* Hello. Yes. Just a moment. *(To MARION.)* Mrs. Pendergast . . . it's *(Stunned.)* Plutonia! *(The others ad lib their surprise.)*

**MARION:** (*Takes portable phone and sits at chair LEFT as MISS TERMAGENT crosses center.*) Shhh! Be quiet! Hello, Plutonia? Is that you? (*The others gather around eagerly to listen to MARION's side of the conversation.*) Oh, honey, it is so good to hear from you. I've been so worried. I was wishing you would phone or email or something. I thought you were so mad at me I would never hear from you again. (*Pause.*) Why? (*Pause.*) Well, I just thought . . . well, you know, we had that awful fight a few months ago. We both said some terrible things to each other. You said you never wanted to speak to me again. But I am so glad you changed your mind. We need to talk. We can start all over again . . . (*Long pause.*) You what? (*Pause.*) What do you mean you don't remember having a fight? But you must remember it! Remember, you said . . . well, never mind. It's over now, and it just doesn't matter. You've called me. That's what matters now.

**OXYGENIA:** Ask her what she did with my blue makeup case.

**ARION:** (*On phone.*) You're what? You're coming home for a visit? Oh Pluto, that's wonderful! I can hardly wait to see you, honey. We will talk everything out and fix what went wrong between us. . . . Yes, dear . . . uh, huh . . . yes, okay. See you soon. Bye. (*Hangs up phone.*) Plutonia's coming home!

**LITHIA:** That's great!

**BELINDA:** That's just wonderful, Marion. And you thought everything was broken off between you.

**MARION:** Yes, it's like a wish come true! I still can't believe it!

**LITHIA:** Did she say anything else, like how's she's doing or anything?

**MARION:** No, there wasn't time. She just said to say hello to everyone and that she was coming home.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** That is simply splendid.

**MARION:** (*Troubled.*) But I still can't get over how she didn't remember how we argued the day that she left. Strange.

**CARTER:** Probably amnesia.

**BELINDA:** (*Moving to CARTER.*) Carter, I really think we should be getting home. We need to pull your father away from his bugs before he forgets to go to bed. Good night, everyone. (*There is a chorus of goodnights as they exit through the front door.*)

**MISS TERMAGENT:** So you have another chance to work things out with Plutonia.

**MARION:** Oh, yes . . . another chance. Things will turn out differently this time, Miss Termagent. I'll see to that. I won't make the same mistake twice.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** I hope not. (*Starts towards coffee table RIGHT.*) Well, it's getting late. I think I will clean things up and then go read in bed.

**MARION:** Never mind. I'll clean things up. You go on. I'd like to be alone, if you don't mind.

**MISS TERMAGENT:** Very well. Good night, everyone. (*She exits LEFT to bedroom as the others say "good night."*)

**LITHIA:** I'm going up, too, Mom. (*She crosses to her and kisses her on the cheek.*)

**OXYGENIA:** Me, too. 'Night, Mom

**LITHIA:** Good night, Mom. (*They exit LEFT.*)

**MARION:** (*Absently.*) Yes, girls. Go on to bed. (*She stands CENTER for a moment, lost in thought. Her gaze falls upon the statue, still on the phone table. Crosses to it, picks it up and studies it.*) So maybe you can grant wishes, after all. (*Thinks it over.*) Nah . . . It was only a coincidence. (*Pause. Dreamily.*) But wouldn't that be something? If only you were for real. Boy, would I wish for the chance to do the WHOLE thing over again. (*As lights fade to black, she giggles softly.*) It could never happen. Never happen.

**ACT TWO****AT RISE:**

*It is the same room, same furniture, but with some significant changes. The statue of the head and the flowers have been removed. On the coffee table are several small shipping boxes, some of them plain and some USPS priority. All have various stamps and labels on them, and they are open. A large terrarium filled with fake bugs and plants is also on the table. A card table is LEFT CENTER and the chair that was against the RIGHT of the back wall is now at the upstage end of the card table. On the card table is a small laptop computer with long obvious wires running to the wall where the phone is. Wires need to be secured to the floor with gaff tape to make them safe. A throw rug can be added to cover them. They disappear behind the phone table out of sight. The laptop is open with its back facing the audience. It has no power; the audience just thinks it does. Also on the card table is a small digital camera, an opened shipping box with a rubber scorpion, and a little set-up for taking photos, perhaps a white cloth draped over another box. On the right of the back wall where the bookcase is, the Periodic Table of Elements has been removed and in its place is a photo of an insect. On the shelves of the bookcase are priority mail envelopes, and as many small cages or terrariums that can be scrounged. There are photos or posters of all kinds of bugs on all the walls. The entire room should look disorganized and more like a workroom than a living room.*

*At rise, the stage is empty. After a few seconds, MARION enters through the front door, carrying groceries in plastic bags. She starts across the room, exits to the kitchen, then immediately comes back in VERY slowly, still holding the groceries, realizing something is different. From DOWN LEFT she stares at the room. She spots the terrarium on the coffee table and crosses to it. She puts down her purse, still holding the groceries, and peeks into the terrarium. She jumps back, startled.*

**MARION:** Oh my gosh! What on earth . . . ? *(Realizing she still has the groceries, she crosses slowly to STAGE LEFT pausing behind the card table. She touches the laptop.)* Where did this come from? *(She picks up a shipping box and looks inside. Another bug. She gasps and hurries off to the kitchen with the groceries. She enters again and stands STAGE LEFT in wonder and anger.)* Lithia! Oxygenia! Is anyone home? Where are you? *(Crosses CENTER.)* And what's happened to this room?

*MORGAN enters LEFT from upstairs.*

**MORGAN:** Is that you, Marion? *(MARION jumps, startled.)* I was upstairs.

**MARION:** What - - what are you doing here?

**MORGAN:** Just the usual. *(Sits at card table.)* Did you get everything you needed at the store?

**MARION:** Yes, I . . .

**MORGAN:** *(Excited.)* Marion, I am so excited. I just received some specimens from the Entomology Society. *(Shows her an open box. She peers in.)* Just look at them. The one on the left is a pleasing fungus beetle - - I named him Johnny. The middle one with the red spot is actually called a handsome fungus beetle, that's Paul.

**MARION:** Lemme guess. That big sucker in the corner is George, right?

**MORGAN:** Right, he's the dung beetle. Look at the size of him. Did you know a dung beetle can roll dung into a large ball and roll it a huge distance before it buries it? The female will lay her eggs in it.

**MARION:** *(Sarcastic.)* How resourceful! Morgan, thank you for sharing that vital information. It has truly made my day.

**MORGAN:** And Marion, look! I've been shooting this new bug I just had shipped from Arizona. *(He takes tweezers and pulls a rubber scorpion out of a box on the table.)* Just look how big his pedipalps are! Isn't he great? *(MARION lets out a shriek and backs away left of the table.)* Marion, it's okay. I have him sedated so I can shoot him. *(MORGAN places the scorpion on the white cloth and gets the camera. He starts focusing.)*

**MARION:** (*Wide-eyed.*) Uh, Morgan. Aren't you in the wrong house?

**MORGAN:** (*Looks around. Smiles.*) Don't think so. Haven't left it since 2000.

**MARION:** That's not funny, Morgan.

**MORGAN:** You bet it's not funny. There's nothing funny about Gore losing that election to Bush!

**MARION:** That's not what I'm talking about.

**MORGAN:** I still think they should have had another recount. I know there was some definite cheating with those dangling chads. (*Pause, thinks aloud to himself.*) Or was it chads with dimples? No, no, it was PREGNANT chads! And there was some cheating in that count!

**MARION:** (*Looks at MORGAN for a moment, then straight out front, then back at MORGAN again.*) This . . . this is some kind of joke, isn't it? You and Belinda are in on it together, aren't you? (*Crosses RIGHT to sofa and sits. As she speaks, she inspects the boxes and terrarium with appropriate reactions.*) And it's a good joke, too. (*Hollowly.*) Ha! Ha! HA! Who thought it up? Were the girls in on it, too?

**MORGAN:** (*As he works.*) Who thought what up? What are you talking about?

**MARION:** You know. Having you here in the house when I got back . . . and all these . . . bugs and pictures. It must have taken hours to carry everything over here.

**MORGAN:** (*Continues shooting the scorpion from different angles.*) Where else would I be except in this house? Marion, are you sure you're feeling all right?

**MARION:** Okay, Morgan, where are the girls?

**MORGAN:** (*As he types on the computer.*) What girls are those, dear?

**MARION:** My *daughters*, Lithia and Oxy! Where are they?

**MORGAN:** I'm not sure I understand what you are talking about.

**MARION:** (*Impatient.*) I am talking about my two daughters, Lithia and Oxygenia! I left them here in the house to go buy some groceries, and I come back to find them gone.

**MORGAN:** But I . . .

**MARION:** (*Stands.*) And what do I find in their place? YOU and a bunch of bugs! Now where are they hiding?

**MORGAN:** I don't . . .

**MARION:** Never mind. I'll go up and look in their rooms. (*Starts to cross LEFT.*) And I better find them there or I'll be playing a few jokes on you!

**MORGAN:** (*Jumping up, he stops her.*) No, don't go up there!

**MARION:** Hah! So they are up there. (*Through her teeth.*) Wait'll I get hold of them! (*She calls at the steps LEFT.*) Lithia! Oxygenia! Come down here right now!

**MORGAN:** Shhh! (*Whispers loudly.*) Aunt Serafina is taking her nap. You'll wake her up!

**MARION:** And *who* is Aunt Serafina?

**MORGAN:** You know she always takes her mid-morning nap at this time. You'll throw her off schedule if you wake her up. You know how she gets when she misses her nap and is thrown off her schedule.

**MARION:** I'll throw both you and Aunt Serafina out on your butts if you don't get out of my way!

**MORGAN:** Please, Marion, be reasonable. What's gotten into you, anyway?

*AUNT SERAFINA enters from stairs LEFT. She is about 70 years old and very waspish.*

**AUNT SERAFINA:** What on earth is all the racket down here? (*MARION falls back RIGHT, as AUNT SERAFINA crosses CENTER to MORGAN.*) A body can't take a little nap around here with the whole house comin' apart. I've told you before, Morgan, that your wife has no consideration for anyone else.

**MORGAN:** (*Going to her and leading her DOWN RIGHT to end of sofa. MARION crosses DOWN LEFT in front of entrance to kitchen, keeping her distance.*) I'm sure she didn't mean to wake you, Aunt Serafina.

**AUNT SERAFINA:** Well, she did! And I suppose she forgot to buy me my chamomile tea with ginkgo biloba and echinacea when she was at the grocery store, too! (*MORGAN gestures to MARION as if to ask, "Did you?"*) Go ahead, Morgan. Ask her if she forgot to buy my chamomile tea with ginkgo biloba and echinacea.

**MORGAN:** (*Weakly.*) Marion, did you remember to buy Aunt Sefina's chamomile tea with ginkgo biloba and echinacea?

**MARION:** (*Furious.*) No, I didn't remember to buy any chamomile tea! (*To AUNT SERAFINA.*) Who are you? What are you doing in my house?

**MORGAN:** You should have remembered it, Marion. You know Aunt Serafina likes her tea every afternoon. (*He helps AUNT SERAFINA sit on center of sofa.*)

**AUNT SERAFINA:** (*Wagging her finger to punctuate.*) Chamomile tea! And I don't want any of that American junk! It has to be Japanese! (*Pause.*) Well, it's just another way your wife has of reminding me that I am not wanted.

**MORGAN:** (*Crossing DOWN LEFT to MARION.*) I'm sure Marion didn't mean to offend you, did you, dear?

**AUNT SERAFINA:** I'm your mother's only sister, but I guess that doesn't count for much.

**MORGAN:** Aunt Serafina, you know we are glad to have you living with us.

**AUNT SERAFINA:** Well, your wife has a funny way of showing it.

**MORGAN:** Look, Auntie, you have to admit that sometimes you act a little sulky yourself. You know you haven't spoken directly to Marion now for nine years.

**MARION:** *Nine years!?!*

**MORGAN:** And you haven't eaten with us in the dining room for nearly five years.

**AUNT SERAFINA:** I prefer eating in my own room. Away from your wife's glares of hatred.

**MORGAN:** Marion doesn't hate you, do you, dear? Tell Aunt Serafina you don't hate her.

**MARION:** Hate her? I don't even know her! Where did you find her, anyway, Morgan - - on eBay?!

**AUNT SERAFINA:** There, you see! She's pretending she doesn't even know me!

**MORGAN:** I think Marion means that she doesn't even know you as a person, right, Marion?

**MARION:** (*Crosses CENTER, pushing MORGAN aside.*) No! What I mean is I don't understand what's going on around here! (*Pointing to MORGAN.*) I don't understand what you're doing in this house! I don't know why there are insects on the walls, on the furniture . . . yech! Everywhere! And I don't know who that weird old lady is who keeps demanding chamomile tea! Look, I don't know why you're playing this kind of joke, but I want it to stop right now!

**MORGAN:** Marion, dear, calm down. What joke are you talking about?

**MARION:** (*Moves to DOWN LEFT to confront AUNT SERAFINA. MORGAN counters LEFT.*) Just who are you? What are you doing in my house? (*AUNT SERAFINA crosses her arms stubbornly and looks out front.*) Well, answer me! What are you doing here?

**MORGAN:** She's living with us, Marion. You know that. Why are you acting this way?

**MARION:** Well, who is she, anyway? Why is she living with us? (*To AUNT SERAFINA.*) You answer me! Why are you living here?

**AUNT SERAFINA:** (*Still looking out front. Smugly.*) Morgan, tell your wife that I am living here because I was *invited* by the master of the house!

**MARION:** (*To MORGAN.*) Master of the house? Who's the master of the house?

**MORGAN:** (*Timidly.*) I guess she means me.

**MARION:** Oh, she does, does she!?! Well, tell *her* that the *mistress* of the House says that meals are not served in people's rooms! And when the mistress of the house speaks to someone, the mistress of the house expects an answer! And furthermore, as far as the mistress of the house is concerned, *you*, Aunt Serafina, can climb back on your broomstick any time and fly out of here! (*Angrily crosses DOWN LEFT to card table.*)

**MORGAN:** Marion, I really think you should lie down for while. Maybe you'll feel better after lunch. (*He sits and resumes work at the card table.*) By the way, Marion, what are we having for lunch?



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