

At the same time, TOM holds out his hand for a shake and BRIDGET opens her arms for a hug. Beat. They switch, BRIDGET going for a handshake and TOM for a hug. Beat. TOM pats BRIDGET's arm, awkwardly. He exits.)

Start

BRIDGET. What on earth was wrong with Tom going into the closet?

SYLVIA. It's like I said! I didn't want him to strain himself. Oh, come on now, Cornflake. I wasn't embarrassing you in front of anybody – Vera probably can't even hear me.

VERA. I can, actually. I just wish I couldn't.

BRIDGET. It was just weird, that's all.

SYLVIA. Nonsense – I didn't want him to over-exert himself! I take care of all the men in my life in special ways.

BRIDGET. Men?

SYLVIA. Yes. There's sweet little Thomas, of course. And old Mr. Tompkins, the man at the desk downstairs. I give him treats now and then, as long as he's behaving.

BRIDGET. You – what?

VERA. There are many things in that sentence you don't want to know about.

SYLVIA. And of course there's Mr. Schmidt.

BRIDGET. Who's that?

SYLVIA. Our landlord.

BRIDGET. I thought Mr. Haven was the landlord –

SYLVIA. Oh no, dear, not anymore. His son-in-law took over six or seven years ago. Mr. Schmidt.

VERA. That penny-pincher! He charges the highest rates this side of the Duck Pond – except for Sylvie, of course.

SYLVIA. I got in on the ground floor – rent control

keeps me paying a fraction of what everyone else has to. Mr. Haven never minded, but it really gets under Schmidt's skin.

BRIDGET. So how do you take care of him?

SYLVIA. I act like Vera. The more senile he thinks I am, the happier he gets. The frailer I act, the closer he thinks I'll be to that rent-free apartment in the sky. Or assisted living. I don't think he has a preference.

VERA. Nothing like the prospect of a good funeral to get people light-hearted again!

(The intercom buzzes. SYLVIA crosses to it.)

SYLVIA. Yes?

VOICE. Mrs. Charles? Your dry cleaning was just dropped off. Do you want one of the boys to run it up?

SYLVIA. My dry cleaning?

VOICE. The frilly stuff you insisted –

SYLVIA. *(Cutting him off. Loudly.)* Oh yes! Of course. Well – do you think you could –

BRIDGET. Nana, everything okay?

SYLVIA. Yes dear! Why wouldn't it be?

BRIDGET. You look worried –

VERA. She's probably constipated.

SYLVIA. Do you think you could send it up later?

VOICE. Okay, Mrs. Charles –

BRIDGET. Nana, if you don't want them to send it up, I can go get it – *(BRIDGET starts towards the front door.)*

SYLVIA. NO! No, dear. No. You've had a long day. You needn't run downstairs and get anything. *(to the intercom)* Yes, are you still there?

VOICE. It would seem so.

SYLVIA. I'll be right down to get it!

BRIDGET. Nana, I could –

SYLVIA. *(still at the intercom)* No!

VOICE. No you won't be down?

SYLVIA. No! No, yes I will. Be down. But wait for me.
Only me! Over and out!

VOICE. 10-4, good buddy.

BRIDGET. Nana, are you sure you're okay?

SYLVIA. I am absolutely fine – but you! You look tired.
Why don't you go and lie down?

BRIDGET. I'm wide-awake, Nana.

SYLVIA. Nonsense! You look tired. Doesn't she look tired, Vera?

VERA. *(didn't hear the question)* Yes, I am tired, actually.

SYLVIA. Vera, you help Bridget make up her bed and get settled in while I pop downstairs! Oh, and Bridget, see if you can find the hearing aid batteries for Vera. I keep a spare set here. *(She runs out of the apartment, slamming the door behind her.)*

VERA. *(didn't hear)* What? This damn thing keeps shorting out on me –

BRIDGET. C'mon Vera, do you know where your batteries are?

VERA. No idea. Hey kid, you want a drink?

BRIDGET. It's not even noon, Vera.

VERA. Good point. How about a Bloody Mary? *(She exits into the kitchen with her walker.)*

BRIDGET. I have a feeling this is going to be an interesting summer... Okay. Well, if I were hearing aid batteries, where would I be?

(BRIDGET begins searching the living room for likely places for batteries. We hear VERA rattling around the kitchen. BRIDGET checks a small chest of drawers, the bookshelf and a few knick-knacks around the room before moving to the fireplace.)

VERA. *(off)* CELERY?

BRIDGET. I'm sorry?

VERA. What?

BRIDGET. What did you say, Vera?

VERA. *(poking her head out of the kitchen door)* DO YOU WANT CELERY?

BRIDGET. FOR WHAT?

VERA. For what? Honestly! You don't deserve celery in your Bloody Mary! *(She's back in the kitchen.)*

(BRIDGET faces the fireplace. There are several small decorative boxes on the mantel and she opens each one looking inside for a hearing aid battery.

She opens the largest box on the upstage side of the mantle. As soon as the box is open, the faux-grate on the fireplace slides to the side.

Like a tongue, a rack of geriatric walking shoes made to look like frilly, colorful bedroom slippers rolls forward out of the fireplace.

BRIDGET does not notice, because at the same moment, there is a loud CRASH! in the kitchen.)

BRIDGET. *(turning towards the kitchen door)* VERA? Are you okay?!

(BRIDGET absentmindedly shuts the box lid, still facing the kitchen, alarmed.

The shoe display rolls back into the fireplace.

The faux-grate slides back into place.

BRIDGET pauses. Faces the audience. Beat. She looks at where the shoe display had been moments before. She looks at the audience.

CRASH! VERA rams her walker into the kitchen door.)

VERA. *(Enters with a lemonade pitcher perched on her walker and three large Santa mugs.)* Sylvie might have to get a few more glasses. I seem to have dropped a lot of them. Drink?

End



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