

(HEATHER YOUNG enters from the bedroom carrying a box filled with knick knacks from a teenage girl's room. She puts the box down on the coffee table and begins to wrap the contents, preparing them for storage.)

HEATHER

You know, this is really terrific of you.

KRISTEN

There's nothing terrific about it. It needs to be done and neither you nor Dean can do it, so it's up to me.

HEATHER

Are you sure you don't mind? You don't think I'm dumping on you, do you? 'Cause I kind of feel like I'm dumping on you.

KRISTEN

You're not dumping on me. She's my mother too.

HEATHER

I don't want you to think I don't care about her, because I do. It's just that I'm not really in a position to do anything about it right now. I mean with Charlie out of work and his back acting up again. He's being an especially large pain in the ass.

KRISTEN

Heather, I've got a house with a spare bedroom and bath. You've got an unemployed husband with a bad attitude. It only makes sense she should move in here.

HEATHER

What did Wade say when he found out she was moving in with you?

KRISTEN

He hasn't said anything, because I haven't told him.

HEATHER

I thought you were going to call him.

KRISTEN

I did, but he was driving. I thought it would be dangerous to break this kind of news while he was behind the wheel.

HEATHER

Wow, you must be pretty secure in your marriage.

KRISTEN

I guess we'll find out.

WADE

(Enters through the front door, HE is surprised to see Kristen and Heather)

Oh, hi sweetheart. I didn't expect to find you home - Hey, Heather.

HEATHER

Hello Wade.

KRISTEN

How was the first day back at school?

WADE

It's the same old same old. Thirty desks for thirty-five kids in a room made for twenty people. I should forget history and teach wood shop. Then I could have the kids build on a room addition.

KRISTEN

At least there's only one first day of school a year.

WADE

It's not over yet. I have, the ever popular, parent teacher orientation tonight. What are you doing home so early? I thought you had the big meeting this afternoon.

KRISTEN

Something came up. We had to reschedule.

WADE

(Noticing the box on the table)

Is that stuff from Jenny's room?

KRISTEN

Yes, well Sweetheart, I need to talk to you about that. There's been kind of a minor family crisis.

WADE

What's that have to do with the stuff from Jenny's room? - Oh hell! Heather, did you leave Charlie?

HEATHER

No, why would you ask that?

WADE

I put two and two together and figure you're moving into Jenny's room.

KRISTEN

Wade, Heather's not moving in with us.

WADE

Thank god! - No offense Heather.

KRISTEN

My mom's had an accident.

WADE

(With hesitation)

What kind of accident?

KRISTEN

She's okay, nothing serious.

WADE

With your mother it's always serious. What happened?

KRISTEN

She was cooking and her stove caught fire.

WADE

And?

KRISTEN

She got a minor burn on her hand.

WADE

And?

KRISTEN

Her house burned to the ground.

WADE

Oh shit!

KRISTEN

The good news is she wasn't seriously hurt.

WADE

You want to let her move in here don't you?

KRISTEN

Try to understand -

WADE

The answer is no. She cannot stay here.

KRISTEN

You can't say no. This is my house too and I say yes.

WADE

Why do you get to say yes when I can't say no?

KRISTEN

Because I said yes before you said no.

WADE

I say we go with no because yes is the wrong answer.

KRISTEN

Heather would you take the bed back and set it up?

HEATHER

Okay, sure.

(Pushes the roll-a-way bed
into the bedroom)

KRISTEN

Wade, I'm sorry I didn't ask you alright? But it's something I have to do. I need you to understand, please?

WADE

Oh, understanding it isn't a problem, tolerating it is. Why can't she stay with Heather? She's her mother too.

KRISTEN

We thought about that but it isn't a good time. Charlie's lost his job and his back is bothering him again.

WADE

He doesn't have to carry her around the house, just lift his legs up and make room on the couch.

KRISTEN

Wade, Heather and Charlie live in a mobile home. It doesn't make sense when we've got a spare bedroom.

WADE

It's not a spare bedroom, it's Jenny's room.

KRISTEN

Jenny's married and has her own place. It's not her room anymore.

WADE

What about Dean? She wouldn't bother him, he's never home.

KRISTEN

No, but when he is, he usually has a girl with him. And if she stayed with him, he'd kill her.

WADE

I don't see the down side... What about a hotel? - Or one of those retirement villages?

KRISTEN

This is only temporary.

WADE

That's what God told Moses when he asked him to relocate to the desert. - A tent at the K.O.A.!

KRISTEN

I'm not finding this funny.

WADE

Neither am I, but it beats cutting my wrists

KRISTEN

Wade, she's my mother and I'm not going to let her down. I'm not gonna walk away from her like daddy did. Please, don't make this harder than it has to be. I'll do my best to keep her out of your way. You'll hardly know she's here.

WADE

Kristen, she's the proverbial elephant in the room.

KRISTEN

She's my mother.

WADE

I'm going to regret this; I know I am. And so are you.

KRISTEN

I'm sure you're right, honey. You always are.

(Beat)

Are we okay?

WADE

Ask me in a week.

KRISTEN

You wouldn't want to help us straighten up before she gets here would you? I want to make her feel comfortable.

WADE

The only time your mother is comfortable is when everyone around her isn't.

(Beat)

I'm sure she'll be very comfortable here.

(There's a knock at the door.)

KRISTEN

That's probably Dean and Mom now. Please behave.

(Answers the door)

I thought that might be you. Come on in.

(DEAN MARSHALL and VALARIE FORAY enter. VALARIE'S left hand is bandaged and SHE is carrying a large purse. DEAN is dressed in business casual. HE is carrying a

small duffle bag and two
paper sacks.)

KRISTEN

So mom, how are you?

VALARIE

I'm still standing. I guess that's something.

DEAN

She just has that burn on her hand. The doctor said she'll
be fine.

VALARIE

That was no doctor. He could barely speak English. I
couldn't understand a word he said.

DEAN

He spoke perfect English. He just did it with a strong New
England accent.

VALARIE

How would you know? You didn't even talk to him. You were
glued to the nurses' station looking for free range
cleavage.

KRISTEN

Look, it's all water under the bridge. You weren't hurt and
that's the important thing. We're just glad you're here
aren't we Wade?

WADE

Yes, of course. We're glad you're here, Valarie.

VALARIE

You're a lousy liar, Wade.

WADE

Well, it's the thought that counts.

HEATHER

(Enters)

Oh, you're here.

VALARIE

What is this, a family reunion?

KRISTEN

Heather came over to help me straighten some things up before you got here.

VALARIE

(Looking around)

You should have called in more help.

HEATHER

We've been setting up Jenny's old bedroom for you. You should see it. It's really nice.

VALARIE

Compared to what?

KRISTEN

We've moved most of Jenny's things out and Wade will get the rest of it tomorrow. The one drawback is, when Jenny and James got married, we gave them the bed. But we set up a roll-a-way for you.

VALARIE

A roll-a-way? Why don't you blow up an air mattress and toss a sleeping bag on top?

KRISTEN

I know it's not like having your own place, but it'll give you some privacy until something permanent can be worked out.

HEATHER

It's kind of like a little studio apartment.

KRISTEN

And you'll have the bathroom off the hallway all to yourself.

VALARIE

There's no bathtub in that bathroom.

HEATHER

No, but there's a shower.

VALARIE

What am I supposed to do if I wanna take a bath?

KRISTEN

You can use the bathtub in our bathroom.

WADE

Kristen, did we discuss that?

KRISTEN

It would only be to take a bath. I'm sure it won't be a big problem.

VALARIE

Is your water soft? I need soft water when I take a bath.

DEAN

What are you talking about, "soft water?" Mother can't you at least unpack your bags before you start making demands?

VALARIE

I guess you don't care if my skin flakes off into a pile of dust.

(To Kristen)

If you don't have soft water then I'll need a moisturizer. Do you have any moisturizer?

KRISTEN

Sure I do and you're welcome to it.

VALARIE

Not the stuff you use. I need a quality product.

KRISTEN

I'll take you to the store you can get whatever you need.

DEAN

(To Valarie)

I don't believe you.

KRISTEN

Dean, it's okay, really.

VALARIE

(To Dean)

Asking for a moisturizer is too much?

KRISTEN

Mother, it's not a problem.

VALARIE

Because if there are some rules on what I can and can't ask for, you should probably write them down.

WADE

I need some paper.

KRISTEN

There are no rules. We want you to feel at home. If you need anything let me know. I'm sure we can take care of it.

VALARIE

I don't want to be a burden, but there are a few things I need.

KRISTEN

Of course there are.

VALARIE

As long as you understand.