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LET HIM SLEEP TILL HIS FUNERAL

let him sleep
'til it's time for
his funeral

A comedy in two acts

by Peg Kehret



Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

Contemporary Drama Service

PO Box 7710 · Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710

for Carl

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Edna Dollefson

A pretty woman in her late forties.

Harold Dollefson

Age 49 and 11/12. Balding, with a slight paunch.

Elizabeth Dollefson

Age 15.

Millie and Russ Westmore

The Dollefson's neighbors. In their early fifties.

Mr. Jansen

The contest official.

THE SCENE

The living room of the Dollefson home. There is a flowered sofa and a coffee table, Center Stage. A large rocking chair is Stage Left. There are two small end tables, one next to the rocker and the other to the right of the sofa. A big, old desk is at an angle in the corner at the rear, Stage Right. There is a desk chair that doesn't match. Pots of African violets sit on the desk, coffee table, and end tables. There is an assortment of odds and ends such as vases and other knickknacks placed around the room. All are old and in poor condition. The effect is of homey clutter. A door at left leads to the kitchen and garage; a door at right, front, goes to the bedrooms. The door to the street is slightly to the right of center, at the rear.

ACT ONE

An afternoon in early June

ACT TWO

Scene One: Two weeks later

Scene Two: The afternoon of June 25th

ACT ONE

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AT RISE: EDNA and MILLIE enter from rear, struggling to carry a large, decrepit, ornate urn. It is chipped, cracked, and dirty. They manage to get it in the door and put it between the coffee table and the rocking chair before they sink, exhausted, onto the sofa.

MILLIE: Whew. When you asked me to help you carry it in, you didn't tell me it was solid lead.

EDNA: It is heavy, isn't it? The men at the auction put it in the car for me so I didn't realize.

MILLIE: Now that it's here, what are you going to do with it?

EDNA: I'm not sure. But it was too good to pass up.

MILLIE: You could put it outside and use it for a bird bath.

EDNA: *(Gets up, puts her purse on the desk, and starts arranging pots of African violets around the urn.)* Maybe I can use it to display my violets. I've always wanted something unusual to help display my violets.

MILLIE: It is unusual.

EDNA: *(Standing back, judging how the violets look)* What do you think?

MILLIE: I think when Harold hears how much you paid for that, you're going to be in trouble.

EDNA: *(Puts plants back where they were.)* No, it overpowers the plants. I'll have to think of something else. *(ELIZABETH enters from bedrooms, carrying a pad of paper and a pencil.)*

ELIZABETH: Mom, do we have any Sudsy Shampoo? I need a label.

EDNA: I think so.

MILLIE: What contest are you entering this time?

ELIZABETH: It's the Sudsy Shampoo Slogan Contest. They have a brand new ingredient that no other shampoo has and they're having this contest to find a slogan for it. First prize is a lifetime supply of Sudsy Shampoo.

MILLIE: What's the ingredient?

ELIZABETH: Soap. Do you want to hear my slogan?

MILLIE: Sure. *(She listens intently but EDNA is busy dusting off the urn.)*

ELIZABETH: *(She recites, in singsong fashion.)* "Suds your hair before your date; You'll make your boyfriend salivate." *(She looks expectantly at MILLIE and EDNA.)*

MILLIE: That's very clever, Elizabeth. I think you have a good chance of winning.

ELIZABETH: Thanks. I was going to rhyme with "drool" but I decided this is more sophisticated. As soon as I get this mailed, I'm going to start on my entry for the Heart's Desire Contest.

EDNA: *(Absently. She is still busy with the urn.)* What Heart's Desire Contest?

ELIZABETH: The one in the newspaper. Win your Heart's Desire.

1 Anything you want, as long as it doesn't cost over twenty-
2 thousand dollars. I'm going to ask for a college scholarship.
3 To Tank University.
4 **MILLIE:** But Tank University is a men's school.
5 **ELIZABETH:** I know. Wouldn't it be fun? Mom, if we do have some
6 Sudsy Shampoo, where would it be?
7 **EDNA:** Look in the bathroom.
8 **MILLIE:** If you don't find a label, you can look at my house. Russ
9 always buys Sudsy.
10 **ELIZABETH:** Thanks. *(She exits, right.)*
11 **EDNA:** Does it make you salivate?
12 **MILLIE:** You really should encourage Elizabeth more. You hardly
13 listened to her slogan.
14 **EDNA:** I encourage her by paying the postage on all those contest
15 entries. *(RUSS knocks lightly at rear door, then opens it slightly*
16 *without waiting. He calls in:)*
17 **RUSS:** Harold? Are you home?
18 **EDNA:** Come on in, Russ. *(RUSS enters, carrying a hand drill.)* Harold
19 went to get his hair cut. He should be back any minute.
20 **RUSS:** I'm just returning his drill. And borrowing a staple gun, if
21 it's OK.
22 **EDNA:** Sure. Help yourself. You know where everything is in that
23 garage better than I do.
24 **RUSS:** I see you've been to another auction. *(He circles the urn.)*
25 What is it?
26 **EDNA:** It's an urn. From the look of it, I'd say it's a real antique.
27 **RUSS:** From the look of it, I'd say ...
28 **MILLIE:** *(Quickly)* She isn't sure yet what she's going to do with it.
29 **RUSS:** Too bad spittoons aren't in fashion anymore.
30 **MILLIE:** Russ!
31 **EDNA:** Listen, I was lucky to get this! There were two other
32 people bidding against me.
33 **RUSS:** The owner and the auctioneer's assistant.
34 **MILLIE:** Don't pay any attention to him, Edna. He never has
35 appreciated antiques. *(HAROLD enters, rear. He wears a*
36 *cardigan sweater, buttoned, although the rest of the cast wear light-*
37 *weight, summer clothing. He walks slowly, slightly bent, like a much*
38 *older man. He eases into the rocking chair with a sigh, as if the effort*
39 *of walking in had been too much for him.)*
40 **MILLIE:** *(She and RUSS speak together.)* Hello, Harold.
41 **RUSS:** Hi, Harold.
42 **HAROLD:** *(Weakly)* Hi.
43 **MILLIE:** What's the matter? Don't you feel well?
44 **HAROLD:** I'm all right ... for a man my age.
45 **RUSS:** It must have been some party. You look like you were up

1 all night.

2 **HAROLD:** No, I went to bed at eight. I can't keep those late hours
3 like I used to. (*He sighs.*)

4 **EDNA:** (*Goes to HAROLD, kisses him hello.*) Please don't start this
5 again.

6 **HAROLD:** The years creep by and before you know it you can't
7 have fun like you once did.

8 **RUSS:** What's wrong with you? You sound like my grandfather.

9 **HAROLD:** Do you realize that fifty years is half a century? Half a
10 century! I, Harold Dollefson, have been alive for nearly half
11 a century.

12 **MILLIE:** Congratulations, Harold. That's quite an
13 accomplishment.

14 **HAROLD:** No! It isn't any accomplishment at all.

15 **EDNA:** (*Trying to change the subject*) Your haircut looks very nice.

16 **HAROLD:** That's good, since it may be the last one I ever get.

17 **MILLIE:** (*Surprised*) You mean you're going to let your hair grow
18 long?

19 **HAROLD:** Ha! I wish I could. I mean that pretty soon I won't have
20 enough hair left to bother cutting.

21 **EDNA:** You aren't that bald.

22 **HAROLD:** (*Rubs hand over head.*) I've seen more growth than this
23 on a moldy orange.

24 **EDNA:** You're exaggerating again.

25 **HAROLD:** You think so? Then why did the barber ask me if I
26 wanted a cut or a polish?

27 **RUSS:** He was just joking.

28 **HAROLD:** And what about the shampoo? There were three people
29 ahead of me today and he tried to sell all three of them a
30 bottle of shampoo. But did he try to sell me some shampoo?
31 No, he did not.

32 **EDNA:** You've been getting your hair cut there twice a month for
33 six years and you've never bought a bottle of shampoo. The
34 barber probably got tired of trying to sell it to you, that's all.

35 **HAROLD:** That barber's no fool. He knows I won't be needing
36 shampoo much longer. All I'll need is a damp cloth. And
37 maybe some suntan oil, so my head won't peel.

38 **EDNA:** You know what you really need?

39 **HAROLD:** Yes. A new body.

40 **EDNA:** No. A new attitude. Just because you're going to be fifty in
41 a couple of weeks ...

42 **RUSS:** So that's it.

43 **HAROLD:** (*Cringes*) I don't want to talk about it.

44 **RUSS:** But you're acting like your life is practically over.

45 **HAROLD:** It is.

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