

The Edge of Forever

Terri Ryburn





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THE EDGE OF FOREVER

by Terri Ryburn

CAST

EMORY JOEDELL SMITH: Called "Bud," age 72.

LOIS IONA SMITH: Called "Lo," age 68. She and Bud have been married nearly 50 years.

Props: Kitchen table and four chairs, old-style man's suit, white dress shirt, wide tie with large tie bar, suspenders, wing-tip shoes, white socks, newspaper, tablet, pencil, reading glasses, coffee maker, two coffee mugs, deck of cards, and calendar.

Setting: Play opens on a breakfast table with four chairs, center stage. An out-of-style man's suit with a white shirt under the jacket is laid over the chair that is stage left, turned slightly to face the audience. A wide tie with a large tie bar (pinned high on the tie) and a pair of suspenders are draped over it. A pair of wing-tip shoes and white socks sit in front of the chair.

At Rise: BUD sits at the table, stage right, facing the clothing-draped chair. He wears plaid boxer shorts (or a pair of pajama bottoms), a white t-shirt, a pair of suspenders, old bedroom slippers, and is drinking coffee from a mug. LO enters, wearing an old bathrobe and worn slippers and hands the morning paper to BUD. He makes a great show of putting on his reading glasses and opens the paper. LO moves to the counter to retrieve the coffee pot from the coffee maker, pours a mug for herself, and sits down at the table, center stage, to drink it. There is a well-used deck of cards and a drug-store calendar, with nothing written in the squares, except a big '50' on November 11.

When BUD finishes with one section of the paper, he hands it to LO. She carefully folds it and places it on the table as she makes a grocery list from the ads. They are drinking coffee throughout what is obviously a well-rehearsed ritual.

LO: *(cheerfully)* Good Morning, Bud.

BUD: *(grunts)* Mornin' Lo. Paper's late.

LO: Five minutes is all. What's your rush?

BUD: Places to go and people to meet.

LO: *(laughs)* Bud Smith! You look like going places and meeting people!

(BUD grunts and hands the ads to LO. She glances at them and lays them on the side of the table farthest from BUD. She sips her coffee and begins to make a grocery list.)

BUD: *(looking at the front page)* Good God. Now you can't even carry a cup of coffee onto an airplane. *(continues to read)* And everyone has to take off their shoes so they can check for explosives. What is this world comin' to?!

LO: *(shakes her head)* I don't know.

BUD: *(excited, talking loudly)* Next time I fly, I'll show up in my uniform, with my old boots laced up good and tight, by God. Let them tell me to take off the boots that fought for this country! I'll put my boot right up their...

LO: Bud! *(pauses, then continues)* We haven't flown anywhere since we went to Des Moines in 1972 for your nephew's wedding.

BUD: Well, you know what I mean. *(turns the page)*

LO: Emory, I need to talk to you about something.

BUD: Uh, oh. Look out when you call me Emory! It better not have anything to do with that monkey suit there *(nodding at the suit-covered chair)*.

LO: Well...actually...

BUD: Whatever it is, I'm not goin'. *(he hands the front section of the paper to LO. She folds it carefully as she speaks to him and places it on top of the ads.)*

LO: *(stands and begins to rub BUD's neck)* You know our 50th anniversary is coming up in November. The girls want to have an anniversary party for us, Bud.

BUD: I'm not goin' to some fancy pants party where I'm expected to dress up like Tyrone Power.

LO: Come on, now, Bud. How many 50th wedding anniversaries do you have?

BUD: I'm just sayin'...

LO: *(trying a different tack, says sternly)* Joyce and Elaine have worked hard to put this together. We can't disappoint them, can we? *(she sits down and looks at her grocery list)*

BUD: We can...and we have. *(reluctantly)* All right, I'll go but I'm not dressin' up. Since they opened that new Holiday Inn, everybody thinks they have to dress up on Sunday and sashay around the buffet like a bunch of idiots!

LO: They opened that 'new' Holiday Inn in 1979. What harm would it do you to put on a suit once every 25 years or so and 'sashay' around down at the Holiday Inn?

BUD: I said I'd go, didn't I? But I'm not wearin' a suit just to please a couple of ungrateful kids.

LO: Ungrateful kids? What are you talking about?

BUD: They live in the same town and do you think they could drop by once in a while to see how we're doin'. No, too busy with work and manicures and Pilates *(he pronounces it "pie-latties")* whatever the heck that is. Their kids aren't any better. And you can't even have a decent conversation with those lazy grandkids of theirs...got those earplugs in, listenin' to God only knows what. They'll need hearin' aids someday soon, mark my words.

LO: *(defensively)* Now, Emory JoeDell Smith, don't get on a rant. Joyce and Elaine have busy lives, that's all. They call every week and you know if we really needed something, we could call them.

BUD: I don't mind so much for me. Heck, those girls don't even know me. I was always workin' when they were growin' up. It just hurts me that they don't come to see you more than they do. You were a good mother.

LO: *(gently)* And you were a good father, Bud. That's just what people did then: the man worked and the woman stayed home with the kids. It's different now, that's all. Joyce and Elaine both work.

BUD: *(Settling down)* Well, those girls could show a little more respect for their mother, that's all I'm sayin'...

(pause)

LO: *(Looks at BUD)* Do you have any regrets, Bud? About the girls? About us?

BUD: *(studying the paper)*

LO: Well...?

BUD: *(still looking at the paper, pointedly doesn't answer.)* How about you? Any regrets?

LO: *(Looking at BUD, says without hesitation)* No, none. Absolutely none.

(BUD hands LO the second section of the paper, which she immediately folds and places on the stack beginning to form on the table. He looks briefly at the sports section, then hands it to LO. He holds up the last section of the paper--the obituaries. LOIS leans forward in anticipation. This is obviously the highlight of the morning paper-reading ritual.)

BUD: Here's a guy—98 years old. He looks about 20 in this picture.

LO: Let's see. *(BUD turns the paper so that she can see the picture)* Oh, Bud, that's a picture of him when he was 20.

BUD: Well, how are you expected to recognize him, if you didn't know him when he was 20? They should use recent pictures. That way people'd recognize 'em.

LO: I think the family just wanted to remember him as a young man.

BUD: *(sarcastically)* Well, he wasn't, was he? *(looks at paper)* Ollie Lundquist. Ever hear of him?

LO: No, I don't think so.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!