

Second Career

Ellen Margolis



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SECOND CAREER

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CAST

DIANE: Recently retired. Middle-class.

JAMES: Her friend, a few years younger. Middle-class.

Place

A room in Diane's home, indicated by a dining room table.

Time

Late morning, this year.

NOTE: A slash indicates overlapping lines, with the following line starting at the /.

SECOND CAREER

SETTING: Dining room in a small home or apartment. A dining table is covered with stacks of bills, receipts, etc. It's not messy but is a work in progress. A couple of full shopping totes are on nearby chairs.

AT RISE: Diane is on the phone, on hold, classical music comes through her phone, which is on speaker. As she waits, she continues organizing papers, making some decisions, and writing a note or two.

(Music cuts out. Diane grabs the phone.)

DIANE: Uh-huh, hello? Yes, I'm here. Yes—hello? Right. Great! *(listens)*

Because it's... (silence, in which she picks up a smoke alarm from the table and stares at it)

(interrupting) So if the *packaging* were damaged, I could—yes, right—but since the thing just *died* two days after I plugged it in, you guys will take no responsibility—

(doorbell rings)

Can you hold a second? *(sweetly)* Thank you! *(Diane goes to the door, quickly pops it open, and signals to James that she'll just be a minute. James follows her in, waits uncertainly. Diane picks up phone.)*

Still there? OK, I'm going to ask you to hold *just another second*.

(Diane loudly hums a few phrases of Vivaldi as hold music. Exits and returns with a tool kit from which she selects a small hammer. James watches her, amused. Diane picks up the phone.)

You there? Great! Listen, craziest thing. I just flipped over the box, and— *(bangs on the box several times with hammer)* oh, my goodness! Can you believe it? The *packaging* is damaged! There's a big old dent in the back of the box.

(Diane gives the box another whack for good measure. Listens.)

Hello? You're there, yes? So, do I send you the whole thing in a *bigger* box, or...

Well, you probably have it right in front of you, but it's six-two-nine Harrison Lane, Dayton, Ohio, and the zip—as we've already confirmed twice in this very conversation! —is four-five-four-zero-four. *(beat)* I will do that, yes. Thank you so much. Bye.

(Diane hangs up, feeling modestly triumphant. Nothing from James.)

DIANE: Are you a little early?

JAMES: Maybe a few. I've been looking forward to our lunch!

DIANE: OK. (*looks over table*) All right. I'm at a pretty good stopping place.

JAMES: What are you up to? Doesn't look like much fun for your first official week of retirement. / What is all this?

DIANE: Fun, no. Satisfying, oh yes. (*pointing around*) Customer response forms. Receipts with instructions for those dumb phone questionnaires. And see that bag?

(*James goes to one of the shopping bags and begins pulling things out.*)

JAMES: What is all this?

DIANE: *Those* are cheap shoes that didn't last two weeks, sunglasses whose lenses popped out on the way home from the store, generic shampoo that invites you to compare it to Head & Shoulders. *Foolishly* invites you to make that comparison, I should say.

JAMES: So you're...returning all this stuff?

DIANE: That's just from this neighborhood. The blue bag is for stores downtown. That'll be my day on Friday. (*crosses to it, pulls out a fancy silk mask*) Look at this "sleep mask." The strap broke the first night I used it!

JAMES: I guess I admire your discipline, but don't you want to pace yourself? Do one of these annoying things every week or so, and spend the rest of your time in the garden?

DIANE: Garden?

JAMES: Or writing? Sitting at some little outdoor café with a stack of legal pads and a latte?

DIANE: That's just what they're counting on.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!