

ED: I wanted to see you. I've been worried about you. I wanted to make sure you were all right.

ARNOLD: Five months ago you checked out on me with a single phone call. You said that you knew what you wanted and I wasn't it. Not a word from you since. What do you want?

ED: To see you.

ARNOLD: Done. Get out.

ED: Arnold, please. I'd like to talk to you.

ARNOLD: No.

ED: Just listen for a minute. It has nothing to do with us.

ARNOLD: The one nice thing I could say about you was when you left, you left.

ED: I told you I wanted us to be friends. You mean a lot to me.

(Ed makes the "I love you" sign with his hand.)

ARNOLD: Don't get cute with me.

ED: Maybe I shouldn't have come, but as long as the harm's done can't I talk to you? Just while you dress. It's important to me.

(Arnold points behind him. Ed looks around. There is a stool covered with some clothes. He pulls it up and sits.)

ED: So . . . How've you been?

ARNOLD: Could we skip the little niceties and get to the meat?

ED: It's not the kind of thing you blurt right out.

ARNOLD: *(Resigned)* So, how are the folks?

ED: Great. My dad had a little trouble with an ear infection, but it cleared up nicely.

ARNOLD: They go back south for the winter?

ED: Two days ago.

ARNOLD: Two? What took you so long?

ED: What?

ARNOLD: Ed, forget it. It's over. You're not coming back.

ED: I don't want to come back. Really. Things are going fine with Laurel. We spent a really fantastic summer upstate with my folks. We even used their place in Florida for a week.

(Pause)

ED: *(Continued)* At first things were a little strained. She'd hang around me all the time wanting us to do everything together. But I talked to her.

(Pause) **START**

ED: *(Continued)* Mid-August my sister came up with her two kids and Laurel was great with them. Actually, it was a marvelous experience for both of us. Almost like having a family of our own.

ARNOLD: Sounds wonderful. Pa out in the fields. Ma tendin' to the young'uns. Grandma and Grandpa swingin' on the porch.

ED: It was nice. A good summer. I thought about you a lot up there. You would have liked it.

ARNOLD: Not really the farm-girl type.

ED: No. You would have loved it. I worried about you; how you were getting on.

ARNOLD: You could have called and found out.

ED: I wanted to. I thought about it. Once, when everyone was out of the house I even started dialing. I didn't want to build up your hopes.

ARNOLD: Oh, Ed, when I think about you there's only one thing I regret.

ED: What's that?

ARNOLD: That I never beat the shit out of you.

ED: Maybe I'd better go.

ARNOLD: No. Stay. Please. I'm sorry. I was having a little fun.

Someone has to. Come back. Sit down.

(He does as told.)

ARNOLD: So . . . How's your sex life?

ED: You're doing it again; asking questions you really don't want the answers to.

ARNOLD: Maybe I do.

ED: Arnold, I'm not sure the sex we had was always as good for me as it was for you. Sometimes I think it got out of control. Those last few times, it was like losing myself. I remember once, I don't even think I was fully conscious. All I remember was kissing you and then nothing until waking up in your arms, my body all wet . . .

ARNOLD: And that's bad?

ED: It's not what I want.

ARNOLD: Funny, it's what I pray for.

ED: That's fine when you're twenty-five. I'm going on thirty-five. I have other needs.

ARNOLD: Where would you be if I was a woman?

ED: What?

ARNOLD: If I was a woman, would you even have looked at her?

ED: I love her, Arnold.

ARNOLD: Like you loved me?

ED: Like I could never love you.

ARNOLD: Good to know.

(Long silence between them)

ED: *(Quietly)* Sometimes . . . Sometimes when I have trouble reaching orgasm I imagine you behind me just about to . . .

ARNOLD: Stop. She doesn't know.

ED: No.

ARNOLD: Does she know anything about me at all?

ED: Your name. She found one of the drawings you made. The one of the tree outside my dining room window. She may know more.

I saw her looking at the music book you gave me. She didn't say anything, but remember you wrote poems to me on half the pages.

(Pause) STOP

ED: *(Continued)* I couldn't, Arnold. It's not what I want.

ARNOLD: What was it you wanted to tell me? Huh? Talk to

me. I'll understand.

ED: ~~Next I'd just in my parents' house and I noticed in my father's workshop and got an old rag and a can of turpentine. Then I went to the kitchen and got a plastic bag. I took it all up to my bedroom, where I soaked the rag in turpentine and put it into the plastic bag.~~

Then I made myself comfortable in bed, pulled the covers right up to my neck, and put the plastic bag over my face. The funny part was, while I was gathering the