

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

A COMEDY DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

By Matthew Carlin

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SYNOPSIS: Have you ever lost anything that meant a great deal to you? Something that if you could ever find it again would make a huge difference in your life? If you have, “A Little Piece of Heaven” is the shop for you. The owners of this curiosity shop where people find things they’ve lost are known only as Elizabeth and Henry - - there’s something unusual about these two, but your guess is as good as mine. One day into “A Little Piece of Heaven” comes Michael, a biker, who is definitely looking for something. Michael goes to work for Henry and Elizabeth and meets Lily, an 87 year-old woman who has been coming around the shop for years searching for something. Lily is a strong-minded woman who does not hesitate to say what she’s thinking, and she and Michael seem to disagree about everything. Soon, however, their relationship grows from suspicion to trust to everlasting respect. Funny and poignant, *A Little Piece of Heaven* might have just what you’re looking for.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 MEN, 8 WOMEN, FLEXIBLE)

HENRY (m)	Owner of the “A Little Piece of Heaven,” appears to be around mid-fifties. (146 lines)
ELIZABETH (f)	Co-owner of the shop and Henry’s wife, younger than Henry by 15 years or so. (131 lines)
JUDITH (f)	The town’s mailperson, probably early thirties. (43 lines)
JARED HAVENS (m)	Long-time friend of Henry’s and about to turn fifty. (83 lines)
GLORY HAVENS (f)	Jared’s wife, a dozen or so years his junior. (27 lines)

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MICHAEL CAIN (m)	Pleasant looking man in his mid-thirties. When we first see him, he appears to be a biker, Harley and all. (369 lines)
FRANK THOMAS (m).....	A customer in the store, mid-thirties. (22 lines)
JANET THOMAS (f)	Frank's wife, of the same age. (24 lines)
GIRL (f).....	Frank and Janet's daughter, around age eleven. (10 lines)
BOY (m).....	Frank and Janet's son, around age seven. (15 lines)
LILY ADAIR (f)	A woman who appears elderly only in her age of 87. (192 lines)
HERB (m)	Jared's elderly father. (20 lines)
DEB (f).....	Jared's elderly mother. (23 lines)
SAM (m)	Judith's boyfriend, a librarian of around thirty. (3 lines)
MAN/WOMAN (m/f)	Another customer in the store, a young man/woman in their late twenties. (17 lines)
LILY ST. JOHN (f)	An attractive woman in her late twenties, early thirties. She is Lily Adair's granddaughter. (21 lines)

*The artwork for **A Little Piece of Heaven** was created by Brenda Henning.*

PROPERTIES

It would be very difficult to give you a full prop list. In the store you can have almost anything. It is a curiosity shop. You can have antiques, toys, sports memorabilia, clothing, paintings, old photos, almost anything. There are a few specific props as follows:

- ☐ Trays of cookies
- ☐ Old baseball with signature
- ☐ Tea service
- ☐ Coffee cups
- ☐ Box of old record albums
- ☐ Purse
- ☐ Record Album (a 78 since it should be from 1946, with Al Jolson on cover)
- ☐ Box of cookies
- ☐ High school letter jacket
- ☐ Toy soldier
- ☐ Letter
- ☐ Telephone

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The most important thing I'd like the director and actor to understand is how to play the character of Lily. Even though some of the dialogue Lily delivers in Act Two could seem sentimental, Lily is not sentimental. She is a strong-willed, strong-minded woman; there is very little soft about her. This is why she clashes so much with Michael and why Henry seems terrified of her. Does she have a few softer moments? Yes, but even then we see the strength behind this woman. She is intimidating. At the same time, she is not mean or vicious; she just says what's on her mind in a matter-of-fact way, without hesitation. If Lily is played this way, it will greatly add to the humor in the show and will add to the poignancy of her final scene.

The prop master can have great deal of fun with this show since the props used in the shop can be just about anything, with of course, a few specifics. The cookies can be a big hit also. We had cast members make some of their favorites and used different cookies for just about every performance.

A Little Piece of Heaven was first produced by the United Players of Friendswood, Texas in April of 2008 with the following cast:

HENRY	Larry Fletcher
ELIZABETH.....	Kim Griffith
JUDITH.....	Lori Brown
JARED HAVENS	Bill Tarver
GLORY HAVENS.....	Julie Simpson Garcia
MICHAEL CAIN.....	Jeremy Smith
FRANK THOMAS.....	Chris Wahm
JANET THOMAS	Cindy Tarver
GIRL.....	Haley Holtje/Laura Tarver
BOY	Noah Carlin/Matthew Tarver
LILY ADAIR	Candy Bernsen
HERB	Bob Burton
DEB.....	Carmen Sherrard
SAM	Scott Holtje
WOMAN.....	Kym Wade
LILY ST. JOHN.....	Melanie Bernsen

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ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

The scene opens on the interior of a small store. Up left, there is a counter with cash register or cash box, phone, candy dish and other assorted junk one might find on any counter of a neighborhood store. To the right of this, upstage, is the front door. The top of the door is glass and we can see the name of the store, "A Little Piece of Heaven," painted on it. We also see two signs hanging there. One is a "Help Wanted" sign. The other, an open/closed sign. The store is now closed, so we see the open side of the sign from the interior. Down left is a bookshelf filled with every kind of knick-knack imaginable. Down center is a table filled with the same. At right is a small sitting area with a small round coffee table and a couple of armchairs. There is a door at right leading off to another part of the store. Through this door, we can see the base of a set of stairs that lead up to the second floor. There are assorted pieces of small furniture lining the walls. The store is a smorgasbord of items. As we will learn, there are a few specific things, but other than that one can use their imagination to fill the table and shelves. Dolls, statuettes, airplane models, toys and any other number of things will do. The place does not seem particularly well kept. In fact, it looks and feels old. At rise, the front door, which has an old-fashioned bell hanging on it, opens and a man, probably in his early fifties, enters. He is dressed conservatively and wears a hat. He carries a cardboard box filled with old record albums. We know him only as HENRY, one of the owners of the store. Closing the door behind him, he crosses to the sitting area at right.

HENRY: Elizabeth! I'm home!

He puts the box down on the coffee table, then removes his hat and places it on a hat rack that is stationed in the up right corner. Then he goes to the door at right and calls offstage.

HENRY: Elizabeth? *(No response.)* Are you deaf, woman? I said, I'm home! *(Still no response.)* Huh! *(Complaining to himself.)* Make me set an alarm clock. Get up at five a.m . . . in the morning, that is! Make me drive halfway across the county to run your errands for you. The least you could do is drag your old carcass out of bed by . . . *(Looks at his watch disgustedly, then sits at the armchair right of the table.)* . . . by eight-thirty and have a cup of coffee ready for the love of your life. *(Another pause and then speaking a little louder and with feigned annoyance.)* Woman! The man of the house has arrived!

He props his feet up on the table. At that moment, ELIZABETH appears at the door up right which leads to another part of the store. She appears younger, maybe by ten years or so. She is also dressed conservatively. She holds two cups of coffee. As she enters, he does not see her as she crosses behind the chair and promptly removes his feet from the table.

ELIZABETH: I made the coffee. I'm still waiting for the love of my life to show up.

HENRY: *(Not even looking up he begins to riffle through the record albums in the box.)* If you haven't found him by now, might as well give up. You're not quite the catch you used to be, you know.

Coming around the chair, she hands him a cup of coffee and then sits in the chair opposite him.

ELIZABETH: *(She sits in the opposite chair.)* Still enough of a catch to keep you here after all these years.

HENRY: *(Gives her a smile.)* That you are. That you are. *(Gives her a kiss.)* Morning.

ELIZABETH: And to you.

HENRY: *(Takes a sip of coffee and gives an approving sigh.)* Hmmm! It's the simple things in life. I'm a simple man.

ELIZABETH: Truer words have never been spoken. *(He gives her a look as she continues.)* Did you have any trouble finding the place?

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HENRY: Oh, no! No! Why would I have any trouble? He gave such detailed directions. (*Takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and reads.*) Go out east on Highway 12 until you come to a water tower. Turn right on the third dirt road after that. Stay on that road until you cross two bridges and look for a wooden fence on your right. You'll see an old mobile home. Turn left there onto another dirt road. A little ways down, you'll see an iron gate back off the road a ways. That's my place. Watch out for the dogs. Better honk before you get out.

ELIZABETH: Sounds pretty easy to me.

HENRY: Easy? I had to drive an hour on highway twelve before I saw anything remotely resembling a water tower, and do you know how many wooden fences and mobile homes there are out on those back roads?

ELIZABETH: Quite a few, I would guess.

HENRY: You would guess right!

ELIZABETH: Well, you found it, didn't you?

HENRY: I found it. You'd think a man could give you an idea of how many miles you have to travel between points, is all. I got a crick in my neck from looking off to the right all morning long.

ELIZABETH: Well, just look off to the left for a while and you can balance out your cricks.

HENRY: Don't start.

ELIZABETH: You can't just squirt a little oil like Dorothy did the tin man, you know.

HENRY: Don't!

ELIZABETH: Heaven forbid you should stretch a muscle now and then!

HENRY: For the hundredth time, I am not joining your water aerobics class down at the Y.

ELIZABETH: That would involve you in a bathing suit, wouldn't it? You're right. Probably shouldn't force my friends to submit to something like that.

HENRY: (*Closes his eyes and does some good-natured ribbing.*) Can you feel the love in this room?

ELIZABETH: Shut up.

HENRY: It just . . . permeates the air.

ELIZABETH: *(Smiling she stands and puts the coffee cup down on the table and starts through the door up right.)* I see your jaw wobbling but I can't make any sense of it.

HENRY: Good thing there aren't any poets around, they'd all be lining up with pen in hand to capture this magical moment in time.

ELIZABETH: *(From offstage.)* You're a moron!

HENRY: But you love me anyway!

ELIZABETH: *(She enters carrying a plate of fresh baked cookies.)*
That I do.

ELIZABETH leans over and gives him a kiss then sets the plate of cookies down on the table and heads for the front counter of the store. HENRY watches her for a moment then starts to reach for a cookie.

ELIZABETH: *(Busy behind the counter she doesn't even look at him.)*
Don't touch those!

HENRY pulls his hand away and acts innocent.

ELIZABETH: Those are for our customers. But of course, you know that.

HENRY: I know that, and I wasn't about to touch them.

ELIZABETH: *(Looks up from the counter.)* It's too early in the morning.

HENRY: *(Feigning looking through the albums again.)* Didn't touch them.

ELIZABETH: If you would get some exercise now and then . . .

HENRY: *(He stands coffee in hand.)* Yes sir, a poet's paradise. That's what we are.

ELIZABETH: Gets more oxygen to the blood . . . and the brain!

HENRY: *(Changing the subject, he crosses over to her.)* No bites on the help wanted?

ELIZABETH: *(Gives him a look.)* Not yet. Of course, I only put it in the window when we closed last night. You know that, too.

HENRY: I know that.

ELIZABETH: Next time you want to change the subject, maybe you could be a little more original.

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Stumped, he gives her a look but says nothing. She opens the cash register and begins putting in change for the day from a change box she brings from beneath the counter.

ELIZABETH: Trash still needs to be put out in the back, Henry. *(He doesn't move until she gives him the eye. He starts off right.)* And take those records with you.

HENRY: *(Takes the records and mumbles as he exits.)* Woman's going to make me lose my mind someday.

ELIZABETH: Doesn't sound like much of a challenge to me! *(Calls after him.)* And don't take all day! I'll be opening up in a few minutes!

At that moment we see a woman, early thirties, come up to the door to the store and try to open it. She is the town's "postman" in full uniform. JUDITH is a lovable character who is looking for a husband, and one might say she is man-crazy. When the door does not open, she knocks.

ELIZABETH: Coming! *(Unlocks and opens the door.)* Morning, Judith. Come on in!

JUDITH enters, carrying the mail bag with her. She has mail in hand as well.

JUDITH: *(Handing the mail in her hand to ELIZABETH as she enters.)* Not much there today, Elizabeth. Couple of bills . . . catalogues. There is a letter in there from Tom Bailey. Probably asking you to vote for him for mayor again. As if anybody else wants the job.

ELIZABETH: Thanks for the heads up, Judith. *(Sets the mail down on the counter.)*

JUDITH: Not a problem. I see you got the help wanted sign out again. Katie's moved on, has she?

ELIZABETH: Yes. She has.

JUDITH: That girl sure did do a lot of growing up the last few years. Jim Thompson said she was nothing but trouble in junior high. That was her principal, you know.

ELIZABETH: I know.

JUDITH: Said she was a smart kid but could have cared less about school. Then she comes to work for you, finds a couple of old books about the ocean stuck in a box somewhere, and all of sudden she's winning science awards and going to college to become a marine biologist. Some career choice for a kid who lives about a thousand miles from the nearest ocean.

ELIZABETH: She had to find her niche is all. She's a good girl. We're going to miss her.

JUDITH: *(Eyes the cookies.)* I suppose so. Any luck finding a replacement?

ELIZABETH: Not yet but we just put the sign up last night. *(Crosses down right to the cookie tray.)*

JUDITH: Well, it wouldn't hurt you to hire a man this time.

ELIZABETH: *(Picks up the cookie tray and crosses to JUDITH.)* We'll see.

JUDITH: And I mean a man, not a boy. I'm not as young as I used to be. *(ELIZABETH offers a cookie to her.)* I shouldn't. *(ELIZABETH gives her a knowing look.)* Oh. All right. Just one.

ELIZABETH: You're welcome. *(She starts back with the tray.)*

JUDITH: *(Takes a bite of the cookie and a look of ecstasy crosses her face.)* You're sure you can't give me the recipe?

ELIZABETH: Now, Judith. You've asked me that same question six days a week for the last ten years, and you know my answer's going to be the same as it always is.

JUDITH: Doesn't hurt to try.

ELIZABETH: No, it doesn't. *(Puts the tray back and then moves back to her.)* But it wouldn't be a secret family recipe if I started giving it out, now would it?

JUDITH: *(Starts for the door.)* I know. I know. *(Turns back.)* If you do hire a man and he's of the right age, you will introduce me?

ELIZABETH: Of course.

JUDITH: He doesn't have to be exactly my age.

ELIZABETH: I know.

JUDITH: Five, ten years difference isn't that big a deal.

ELIZABETH: I know.

JUDITH: *(At the door.)* Gray hair's not a problem. Bald, even.

ELIZABETH: If it's a man and he's breathing, you'll be the first to know.

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JUDITH: (*ELIZABETH starts to close the door on her but she gets the last word in.*) Oxygen tanks are okay as long as he can carry it around with him! (*She smiles.*)

ELIZABETH: (*Laughing as she begins to close the door on her.*) Go to work!

Before she can close the door, we see another woman rush into the doorway. She is GLORY HAVENS, an attractive woman in her mid-thirties and a ball of energy. She brushes past JUDITH and into the room.

GLORY: Have you opened yet, Lizzie? (*Pauses and looks behind her out the door.*) Who was that? (*Goes to the door, looks out and then calls to JUDITH.*) Oh. Sorry, Judith! I didn't see you there. I was rushing! As usual! (*Waves to her and then comes back into the room closing the door behind her.*) I need eyes in the side of my head. When I get in a hurry, I have tunnel vision.

ELIZABETH: What's the rush, Glory?

GLORY: I wanted to talk to you before Jared gets here.

ELIZABETH: I was about to say. He is coming for his morning cookie, isn't he?

GLORY: Doesn't he always?

ELIZABETH: It would be a first.

GLORY: (*Pulling her aside.*) Listen, Lizzie! Jared's birthday is next week . . .

ELIZABETH: I didn't know!

GLORY: That's because he won't let me talk about it in polite company. It's his fiftieth!

ELIZABETH: Really? I had no idea! He doesn't look fifty!

GLORY: That is exactly the right thing to say! In fact, when the time comes, please say exactly that same thing to him.

ELIZABETH: (*Bewildered.*) Okay.

GLORY: He is having a cow about this birthday, and he is driving me crazy. I told him if he doesn't stop his whining, we're going to spend the two weeks vacation we have coming up at my mother's. You know how he feels about that! He doesn't even want me to have a party for him but . . . please!

At that moment, HENRY enters through the up right doorway.

HENRY: Morning, Glory. *(With a huge smile.)* I never get tired of saying that.

GLORY: I would have never known.

HENRY: *(He bows to ELIZABETH and in his best Elizabethan accent.)*
The refuse hath been disposed of, my lady.

ELIZABETH: Thou had better not bend down too far, you won't be able to get back up.

HENRY: *(Crossing over to them, he addresses GLORY.)* Where's Jared?

GLORY: He's coming! *(Pulls ELIZABETH past him toward right and whispers to her.)* Can we go upstairs and talk? I don't want him to hear this.

ELIZABETH: *(Whispers back.)* Sure. *(Turns to HENRY.)* I'm going to take Glory upstairs and show her the new dress pattern I just got. *(Starts off.)* Turn the sign around and open up. We'll be back. *(They exit.)*

HENRY: Take out the trash. Turn the sign around. Open the store. I don't know what that woman would do without me.

He turns the "open" side of the sign out and checks to make sure the door is unlocked then heads behind the counter. As he does, a man opens the door. This is JARED HAVENS. Obviously he is fifty, but probably doesn't look his age. He seems a little disheveled and distracted.

JARED: *(To HENRY.)* Where's Glory?

HENRY: Well I don't know, Jared. Glory can be fleeting. The path to glory can be treacherous. And how do we really define glory . . . ?

JARED: Don't those jokes ever get old?

HENRY: *(Shakes his head.)* Not now. Not ever.

JARED: *(Crosses to him.)* Great! Look . . .

HENRY: She's upstairs with Elizabeth, looking at some dress pattern or other.

JARED: Good! Good! I need to talk to you. Man to man. *(Takes him down center.)*

HENRY: Oh? Sounds serious.

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JARED: Yeah. A little. (*HENRY waits.*) Look at me, Henry. (*HENRY just looks puzzled.*) Look at me!

HENRY: What am I looking for?

JARED: Do I look old to you, Henry?

HENRY: (*Not sure what his answer should be.*) No?

JARED: Because I'm not old! I can't be old! Do you know how old I am, Henry?

HENRY: I don't.

JARED: I'm forty-nine years old, Henry. Forty-nine years old! Next week, I turn fifty, Henry! Fifty! I can't be fifty!

HENRY: (*Hesitantly.*) Happy . . . birthday?

JARED: (*Vehemently.*) No! No! Not yet! Not happy!

HENRY: Okay. I . . . Ummm . . . I'm not quite sure what . . .

JARED: (*Crossing over to the sitting area.*) You're not understanding me, Henry. I can't be fifty. I've seen fifty! I can't be fifty!

HENRY: (*Crossing over to him.*) Jared, you're overreacting here.

JARED: (*Pauses as he stares at HENRY.*) We are obviously not communicating on a deep level here. (*Stares him right in the eye and then with great emphasis.*) Fifty! I know people who are fifty, Henry. They look old! I don't look like that! I do not look like that!

HENRY: You don't. You absolutely don't.

JARED: You don't even know what I'm talking about! (*Exasperated he begins pacing about again.*) It really started to hit me when Glory and I took that trip back to my hometown about a month ago. You remember that?

HENRY: I remember.

JARED: I hadn't been back there in years. I told you that.

HENRY: You did.

JARED: Exactly. When we were there, I saw people. People I went to high school with. It was like . . . a nightmare, Henry. A really scary nightmare! They all got . . . old!

HENRY: It happens, Jared.

JARED: But they're my age, Henry. My age! You know me. I'm objective! I'm honest. I'm honest with myself. And honestly . . . I cannot be that old!

HENRY: Jared, you look great. You're right. You don't look fifty.

JARED: *(Sits in the chair.)* Thank you! *(Trying to rationalize.)* People age differently, that's all! They have different clocks! I heard that! On Oprah! So it's got to be true. Right? I mean a person might be fifty in years but only forty in real age!

HENRY: *(Incredulously.)* Forty?

JARED: *(Accusingly.)* That is not positive affirmation! I could really use some positive affirmation here!

HENRY: Sorry!

JARED: Whatever! The point is we all age differently.

HENRY: That I will most definitely agree with.

JARED: Look at you. I know you're over fifty. I don't know how much over fifty but . . . How long have we known each other? Ten years?

HENRY: *(Sits.)* Almost ten years.

JARED: Almost ten years. In all that time, it doesn't seem like you've aged at all.

HENRY: Well, I . . .

JARED: *(Takes a harder look at him.)* You know. You really don't look like you've aged at all. All these years.

HENRY: Jared, when you're around people on a daily basis, you just don't notice the change. It's gradual. You look the same to me, too.

JARED: Really?

HENRY: Really.

JARED: *(Sadly.)* I'm getting old, Henry. I don't like getting old.

HENRY: Think about this. You have a wife who's several years younger. She'll keep you young.

JARED: Yeah. I've heard that one before.

HENRY: It's true.

JARED: It's bull. She keeps after me all the time about exercising . . . eating right. It's killing me!

HENRY: That, I can relate to.

JARED: Makes me feel even older when she does that. I can see in her what I used to be.

HENRY: Come on. You're not old!

JARED: *(Just stares at him and sums it all up in one word.)* Fifty!

HENRY: It's a state of mind!

JARED: Fifty!

HENRY: You're as young as you feel!

JARED: Tell that to my lower back. *(He reaches and rubs his back.)*

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HENRY: *(Picks up the plate of cookies.)* Have a cookie.

JARED: Thanks.

JARED takes a cookie from the plate. He starts to take a bite then looks down at his waistline and decides he better not. This inner battle goes on for a little while. The door to the shop opens and MICHAEL CAIN, late thirties, enters. He is dressed in jeans, t-shirt and a biker jacket complete with a sort of fairly tame biker emblem on the back. He seems a rough character, used to life on the road and used to communicating with somewhat colorful language, although that soon becomes an issue as we will see. He stops just inside the door. HENRY and JARED turn and look at him.

MICHAEL: *(Hesitantly, points to the door.)* The sign says you're open.

HENRY: *(Rises and crosses toward him.)* We are. We are. Sorry.

MICHAEL: No problem. I don't mean to intrude, but my bike broke down and the mechanic dude across the street said you'd be cool with me hanging out here while I waited for the verdict.

HENRY: The verdict?

MICHAEL: Yeah. You know. The damage. What's wrong with the bike, how much it's gonna cost. You know.

HENRY: You may absolutely "hang out" if you'd like.

MICHAEL: *(Offers his hand.)* My name's Michael. Michael Cain. Not the actor.

HENRY: *(Shaking his hand.)* I'm Henry. Not the king. *(Laughing.)* Make yourself at home.

MICHAEL: Cool. I'll just look around, if that's all right.

HENRY: Please do. There's another room back here. *(Pointing off right.)* We have some really interesting items in the shop. You never know, you may find something meaningful.

MICHAEL: Okay.

HENRY: Make yourself at home. If you have any questions, just let me know.

MICHAEL: You know, I do have one question. Gomer Pyle . . .

HENRY: Gomer Pyle?

MICHAEL: The mechanic? (*HENRY gives him a look.*) Sorry. I forgot his name. He reminds me of Gomer Pyle. Anyway, he kept insisting that I ask you about a cookie? What the heeee . . . aahhh! (*The word seems to catch in his throat, and he almost gags as if he has a terrible taste in his mouth but he finally gets something out.*) What the . . . heck is that all about?

HENRY: Ah! A cookie! Follow me.

As they get to the sitting area, JARED still stands there looking like a little lost kid holding his cookie. HENRY picks up the plate of cookies to offer one to MICHAEL.

HENRY: Cookies! These are famous around here. Have one.

MICHAEL: (*Still trying to get the taste out of his mouth.*) Maybe later.

JARED: (*To MICHAEL.*) Who are you?

MICHAEL: Excuse me.

JARED: Who are you?

MICHAEL: (*A little taken aback.*) Who are you?

JARED: (*To MICHAEL.*) Look at me.

They stop. JARED still has that same pathetic look on his face.

MICHAEL: (*Bewildered.*) Do I have to?

HENRY: Jared!

JARED: Do I look old to you?

MICHAEL: In relation to what?

JARED: What do you mean in relation to what?

MICHAEL: Am I comparing you to a pup or a forty-year-old dog?

Because a forty-year-old dog would look . . . well . . . (*Pause.*) Dead!

HENRY laughs.

JARED: I'm not a dog.

MICHAEL: (*Smiling, he looks at him closely.*) I can most certainly see that you are not a dog.

JARED: So how do I compare in people years?

HENRY: Jared!

MICHAEL: Twenty-year-old people or seventy-year-old people?

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

JARED: Both!

HENRY: Jared!

MICHAEL: Somewhere in between.

HENRY: (*Nods appreciatively.*) That was good. I like that. Answering a question without answering a question.

MICHAEL: The benefits of higher education.

JARED: Really! How old would you say I am? Take a guess.

HENRY: Ignore him. He hasn't had his medication yet.

JARED: Come on! Take a shot?

HENRY: Leave the boy alone.

JARED: I need a second opinion!

MICHAEL: Let me take a shot in the dark here and guess that . . . Jared, is it? (*JARED nods.*) Jared, I am betting that you are about to celebrate a birthday. One of the big ones. (*JARED nods as MICHAEL comes up and put a hand on his shoulder.*) Is it the big 6-0?

JARED: (*In near spasm.*) 6-0? 6-0! Did you hear that Henry? 6-0?

MICHAEL: (*Laughing.*) I'm just messing with you, man. Relax!

HENRY: (*Starts him off right again.*) Why don't you start back here? There's some good stuff in here. Any questions, let me know.

JARED: (*Plops in the chair, dejected.*) 6-0!

MICHAEL: You know what? Is there a bank close by? I'm sure I'm going to need some cash. (*Taking out his wallet.*) It's time for me to restock this thing anyway.

HENRY: About two blocks down on the right. You can't miss it.

MICHAEL: I'm going to go and pick up a few bucks. If Gomer comes over before I get back, ask him to wait, would you? I'll be back in a flash.

HENRY: I will. (*MICHAEL starts for the door.*) His name is Rupert, by the way.

MICHAEL: Seriously? (*HENRY nods.*) Even better. (*Points to JARED.*) Good luck with that one.

HENRY: Thanks. (*MICHAEL exits, and HENRY, after closing the door behind him, turns his attention back to JARED.*) Would you not scare off the nice man, please?

JARED: Nice? He said I looked sixty.

HENRY: It was a joke!

JARED: (*Still stands there looking pitiful.*) I'm middle-aged!

HENRY: (*Crossing to him.*) Probably not. You'd have to live to be a hundred to be middle-aged.

There is a moment as JARED just stares at him and then . . .

JARED: Thanks for that.

HENRY: Oh, come on!

JARED: I'm . . . past middle-aged!

HENRY: (*Laughs.*) Another joke! Both jokes. I promise. (*JARED just stares.*) So you're turning fifty. You should be thankful!

JARED: I know. I know, I should. I should. (*Pause.*) I'm not!

We hear the voices of ELIZABETH and GLORY from offstage.

JARED: Don't tell them we were talking about this! I told Glory not to tell anyone! If she knows I told you, she'll want to blab it all over town! No one else knows! No one!

HENRY: My lips are sealed!

The women enter and see the two men standing there looking much too innocent.

ELIZABETH: Jared! Good morning. How are you?

JARED: (*Rushes up to ELIZABETH and somewhat out of character, gives her a big hug.*) Good! I'm good! How are you? I'm good!

GLORY: (*Gives ELIZABETH a knowing look and then looks at the men.*) What is going on?

JARED: Not a thing! Not one thing. Just a little guy talk. That's all. A couple of guys talking guy talk. Talking about stuff. Stuff guys talk about. Sports! Fishing! Wouldn't be interesting at all to you ladies! Boring for girls, interesting to guys! Just . . . guy talk! Right, Henry?

HENRY: Right.

JARED: Guy talk. So, you ready to go, honey? We probably should get to work.

GLORY: Sure, sweetheart. (*Pause.*) Are you going to eat that cookie or just squeeze the life out of it?

JARED: Oh! (*He laughs nervously, then places the cookie back on the plate.*) Not really hungry.

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

GLORY: Are you ill?

JARED: No. No.

ELIZABETH: Jared. You have eaten one of my homemade cookies every morning for the last ten years. *(Holds the plate out to him.)* You've never refused one of my cookies.

JARED: Just watching the waistline. Not getting any younger, you know. *(Again the nervous laugh that turns almost into a cry.)*

The women give each other that look.

GLORY: *(Goes to him and takes his arm.)* And they say marriage gets stale after a while. You are just full of surprises.

JARED: Yeah! That's me. Mr. Surprising! Well. Let's go. *(Starts for the door with her in tow.)*

GLORY: We'll talk more later. Bye, Henry.

HENRY: And once more we see that Glory can be here one minute and gone the next.

GLORY stops at the door and looks back as if she wants to say something but just gives up and leaves, closing the door behind her. The door opens again almost immediately as JARED comes back and grabs a cookie off the plate.

JARED: *(ELIZABETH stares at him.)* I plead temporary insanity. *(Heads quickly back to the door then turns back and waves.)* Thanks. *(Exits.)*

After watching him leave, ELIZABETH puts the plate of cookies down, folds her arms and then stares at HENRY as if waiting for him to say something. There is a moment as HENRY looks at her uncomfortably. He's seen this look before.

HENRY: What? *(She continues the look.)* What? *(He shuffles uncomfortably.)* We were just talking guy talk, like he said. Just stuff. Of no importance. *(The look becomes even more accusing as he attempts his best macho man act.)* Just sports stuff. You know how I like my . . . *(Hesitates as he tries to decide what he likes.)* . . . baseball. *(Again, he gets the look.)* Okay. *(Pointing.)* You do not have to know everything! *(Pause.)* A man has a right to keep man talk between men. It's a bond! A solemn bond! *(Still the look.)* And on top of that, a man deserves a little privacy now and then in his own home! That's right! *(Another pause.)* A man's home is his castle, and this castle owner's gates are closed! *(He zips his mouth shut.)* Closed and impenetrable. *(He zips again as her look becomes more of a knowing half-smile and he quickly starts to lose the bravado.)* I was sworn to secrecy. *(Another pause.)* A gentlemen's agreement. *(Still another.)* I am a rock! *(She just gives him the eye and suddenly it comes pouring out.)* Oh, all right! Jared is turning fifty next week, he's having a major middle-aged crisis, and he doesn't want anyone to know. *(She smiles.)* Are you satisfied?

ELIZABETH: *(Crosses past him over to the counter.)* I know. Glory told me all about it.

HENRY: *(Showing his frustration at being duped.)* Then why did we have to go through all of that?

ELIZABETH: *(Smiles.)* For fun.

The front door opens and MICHAEL enters. He has a stunned expression on his face. He carries a wallet in his hand, and as he enters, he looks back over his shoulder like he can't believe what has just transpired.

HENRY: You're back.

MICHAEL: Yeah.

HENRY: *(Turning to him.)* Are you married, son?

MICHAEL: *(Lost in thought.)* I'm sorry. What?

HENRY: *(He really gets on a roll here and flies through this speech.)*
Never mind. Personal question. Don't want to influence you one way or the other but if you are, then, God bless you. If you're not . . . Well, before you even begin to think about it, you sit down with someone like me who's been married for . . . *(Gives ELIZABETH a look.)* forever and discuss it long and hard. *(Slows to emphasize this last.)* There are things a man should know! *(Stepping from behind the counter.)*

ELIZABETH: Things like, how long he has actually been married. *(Addressing MICHAEL.)* How can we help you?

MICHAEL: I, uh . . . *(Looks at his wallet.)* Wow!

ELIZABETH: I beg your pardon?

HENRY: Elizabeth. This is Michael Cain. Not the actor. He came in a little earlier. His motorcycle broke down, and he was waiting to get an estimate from Rupert so he can get it repaired. *(To MICHAEL.)* He hasn't come by yet, I'm afraid.

MICHAEL: Oh. No. He . . . uh . . . he stopped me outside when I was on my way to the bank.

HENRY: Good news?

MICHAEL: *(Shaking his head almost as if in a daze.)* Not really. He's going to have to order the parts, and it's going to cost me a thousand bucks.

HENRY: Ooh! Sorry!

MICHAEL: Me too! Especially since I don't have a thousand bucks.

HENRY: Rupert's a good guy. I'm sure he'll work something out with you. How short are you?

MICHAEL: *(Looks in his wallet and takes a few coins out of his pocket.)* About nine hundred eighty nine dollars and . . . twenty-seven cents.

HENRY: Oh.

MICHAEL: *(To himself.)* I'm broke! I'm actually broke!

ELIZABETH: It happens.

MICHAEL: No. You don't understand. It's been seven years. I guess I should have kept track of things, but I never did. I never did.

ELIZABETH: Seven years?

MICHAEL: *(Looks at them and sighs.)* It's a long story.

ELIZABETH: I'm sorry. Is there anything we can do?

MICHAEL: I don't suppose you'd want to hire a down on his luck biker? I haven't worked in seven years either, but I guess I don't have much choice now.

ELIZABETH: You'd like to work with us?

MICHAEL: I noticed the help wanted sign. *(There is a moment as HENRY and ELIZABETH look at each other with an eyebrow lifting, knowing smile.)* If you don't want to, I understand. I have worked for a living in the past. It just hasn't been necessary for a while.

ELIZABETH: Well, Michael. Michael . . . *(Trying to remember the last name.)* . . . what was it?

HENRY: Cain. Not the actor.

ELIZABETH: I got that part. *(Offers MICHAEL her hand.)* I'm Elizabeth.

HENRY: My wife. *(To MICHAEL.)* She thinks she's the Queen. *(ELIZABETH pops him on the shoulder.)*

MICHAEL: Nice to meet you, ma'am. *(They nod to each other.)*

ELIZABETH: When could you start?

MICHAEL: When could I start?

ELIZABETH: When could you start?

MICHAEL: *(He looks a little shocked by the suddenness of it all.)* Right away?

ELIZABETH crosses over to the window and takes down the "Help Wanted" sign.

HENRY: Welcome. *(Shaking his hand.)*

MICHAEL: *(Hesitates.)* I'm hired? Now?

HENRY: You said right away.

MICHAEL: I did. I just . . . I mean, don't you want to know more about me? Interview me?

ELIZABETH: *(Puts the sign behind the counter and crosses to them.)* You seem like a nice young man. We could do the twenty questions kind of thing but somehow, I still don't think we'd really know you.

MICHAEL: That's true.

HENRY: Is there something ominous we should know about?

MICHAEL: *(Laughs.)* No. *(Shaking his head.)* No!

ELIZABETH: Then, we'll get to know each other over time. That's all anyone really can do.

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

HENRY: Pays \$8.50 an hour. If that doesn't scare you off.

MICHAEL: No. That's fine. Thanks.

ELIZABETH: And I'm assuming since you just arrived in town, you don't have a place to stay.

MICHAEL: No. Not yet.

ELIZABETH: We have a room upstairs. It's yours if you want it. No charge. We live here ourselves, you know.

MICHAEL: No, I didn't know.

ELIZABETH: The upstairs is our home.

MICHAEL: I don't want to impose on you folks.

HENRY: It's not a problem, son. *(Crossing over to the front door and looking out the window.)* It sure makes the commute to work short and sweet. Makes that \$8.50 stretch a little more, too.

MICHAEL: Definitely. Thanks. I'll take you up on that.

ELIZABETH: You're welcome to have meals with us too.

HENRY: *(Aside to MICHAEL.)* That part you might want to think about. *(ELIZABETH shoots him a look.)* I'm guessing you travel light?

MICHAEL: Yes sir, I do. My bag is on the back of my bike. I'll go over and get it.

HENRY: *(Anxious to get away from her after his cooking comment.)* I'll get it for you, and I'll let Rupert know what's going on. Elizabeth will show you to your room. After you get unpacked, we'll see if any of us can actually get some work done today.

ELIZABETH: Come along, Michael. *(She stops and picks up the plate of cookies.)* Oh. You should try one of these. I bake them fresh every day.

He takes one and is about to take a bite when HENRY still at the door calls to him.

HENRY: I wouldn't do that if I were you! You'll never leave this town.

ELIZABETH: You hush! *(To MICHAEL.)* You. Eat that cookie.

Taking a bite, a look of near euphoria comes across MICHAEL'S face.

HENRY: Warned you. Too late now.

ELIZABETH: Go!

He heads out the door, closing it behind him.

MICHAEL: *(Takes another bite.)* Holy cow!

ELIZABETH: I know. I'm good, aren't I? *(Holds the plate out and nods for him to take another. He does so, eagerly.)* Now, come along. I'll show you to your room. *(Continuing speaking as they head out the room and up the stairs.)* By the way, are you a good speller? We've got a big bunch of old record albums in the back room that need to be alphabetized. I've been trying to get Henry to do it, but spelling is not one of his strong points. At least, that's his excuse.

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

It is a several hours later, same setting. There are a few customers in the store now: a family of four (mother, father and two children), a girl of around eleven or twelve, and a boy of about seven or eight. They are spread around the store looking at different items except for the boy, who is looking out the front door window. He holds in his hand what appears to be an old-fashioned toy soldier. MICHAEL is behind the counter. The jacket is gone, and at the moment, he is speaking on a cell phone.

MICHAEL: I appreciate you letting me keep the bike there until I can afford to get it fixed.

BOY: *(Crossing over to MICHAEL and tugging on his shirt.)* Hey, Mister.

MICHAEL: Just a minute, kid! *(Back to the phone.)* I'll have it out of there as soon as possible. I promise you.

BOY: *(Tugging on his shirt again.)* Mister?

MICHAEL: *(Pulling away.)* Just a minute, little dude!

MICHAEL puts his ear back to the phone and tries to listen. The BOY backs away a step, puts his hands on his hips and looks annoyed. Then he comes right back for more.

BOY: *(This time instead of pulling at this shirt, he gives a swift kick in the shin.)* Mister!

MICHAEL: *(Caught by surprise.)* What the heee . . . ugh! *(Again that awful taste hits him.)* . . . heck do you want.

BOY: You almost said a bad word, didn't you? You aren't supposed to say bad words! I'm just a sweet little kid! You don't say bad words in front of little kids!

MICHAEL: I didn't say anything!

BOY: Yeah, right! *(Now that he has his attention, he's not about to let go.)* Is that your bike I saw over there across the street? That's a cool bike! Is that yours?

MICHAEL: *(Quickly back into the phone.)* Rupert, I've got to help a customer now. I'll let you know. Thanks. *(Puts the phone down and then stares at the boy.)*

BOY: That's a 1985 Harley-Davidson Sportster XLX, isn't it?

MICHAEL: *(Shocked.)* What?

BOY: Chrome headers and muffler and an ironhead engine! That's cool!

MICHAEL: How do you know that?

BOY: *(Very matter of fact.)* I read. *(Then he holds up the toy soldier.)* How much is this?

MICHAEL: I don't know.

BOY: *(Rattling away.)* Why not? You work here, don't you? If you don't know, who does? You're not very smart, are you?

MICHAEL: Why, you little pain in the aaaa . . . *(The words try to come out but again for some reason, they don't.)*

Finally, the BOY'S sister has taken notice and crosses over to them. She grabs her brother by the arm. She has the look of a sister who knows her little brother all too well.

BOY: You did it again!

GIRL: Will you stop bothering the nice man!

BOY: He's not nice! He almost said a bad word!

MICHAEL: *(Defending himself.)* He kicked me!

GIRL: Come on!

She tries to pull him away, but he resists.

BOY: *(Holding the toy soldier up again.)* I just want to know how much this costs. That's all. *(Smiles at MICHAEL.)* Could you please find out how much this cost for me . . . sir?

MICHAEL: *(With admiration.)* You're good. *(To the GIRL.)* He's good. *(Both look at the BOY.)* Look at that. Doesn't even flinch. He must give you fits.

GIRL: Tell me about it.

MICHAEL: *(Smiles at the BOY.)* It's my first day, but I will find out for you, young man.

BOY: Thank you, sir.

GIRL: Thank you. *(Takes her brother's arm and starts to move away.)* Now come on!

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

As the GIRL turns away and MICHAEL starts to move past them, the BOY, unseen by his sister, reaches out and gives MICHAEL another swift kick. When MICHAEL turns on him, he has arms crossed and an innocent expression on his face.

MICHAEL: Hey! *(Turns.)* You do that again, and I'll . . . !

He is stopped as the GIRL turns and gives him a puzzled look. He looks around and sees the BOY but knows he has been beaten.

MICHAEL: *(Gives her an exaggerated smile.)* I'll be right back! *(He limps off stage right.)*

FRANK: *(Who is the BOY'S father, has been rummaging through a rack of clothing and now pulls out what appears to be a high school letter jacket.)* Oh no. No way. *(He turns the jacket one way and the other.)* I don't believe it. I don't believe this. What? How in the . . . ? *(Calling for his wife.)* Janet? Janet? Come here. Come look at this.

JANET: *(She crosses to him.)* What is it, Frank?

As she approaches, he holds up the jacket, which is green and gold with a bear patch on it and the school name, "Little Cypress."

FRANK: This can't be what it looks like.

JANET: *(Takes the jacket and inspects it.)* I think it is, Frank. It looks identical. What if . . . *(She looks closely at a tag on the inside of the jacket.)* Oh, Frank. Look! *(Shows him the tag.)* The initials. F. T.

FRANK: That is impossible! It's a coincidence! It can't be the same jacket!

ELIZABETH: *(Entering from right, followed by MICHAEL.)* Did you find something you liked?

FRANK: Wow! Maybe.

JANET: Do you have any idea where this jacket came from? How long you've had it?

ELIZABETH: I think we've had that for quite some time now. Several years, in fact. Why?

JANET: I'm sure it can't be, but this jacket looks identical to one that Frank . . . Oh. I'm sorry. This is my husband, Frank. Frank Thomas . . . and I'm Janet, and those . . . *(Indicates the children who continue to rummage through the store.)* . . . are our children.

ELIZABETH: Nice to meet you.

The kids sneak down and grab a couple of cookies.

JANET: Anyway, this jacket is identical to one that my husband gave me when we were in high school. He gave it to me when we started going steady. *(A little embarrassed.)* When we first realized we were falling in love.

GIRL: *(Close enough to hear this she gives her mom the reproach.)* Mother! Young children in the room!

JANET: *(Ignoring her.)* Unfortunately, less than one week after he gave it to me, it was lost. I won't go into details, but suffice it to say it was not good. In fact, it's one of those things in a relationship that the significant other tends to bring up now and again, even though it's been almost twenty years.

FRANK: Eighteen years.

JANET: Eighteen years.

FRANK: Three months and eleven days.

JANET: *(Shoots FRANK a look.)* Yes. Eighteen years, three months and eleven days. But this can't be the same jacket. That was . . . eighteen years and a thousand miles ago.

FRANK: I gave it to her the same day I got it. I'll always remember it.

JANET: Frank.

FRANK: We had gone to the movies that night. A Richard Dreyfus flick called Always.

MICHAEL: I remember that flick!

JANET: Frank, dear. They don't need the details.

FRANK: The movie went along with the theme for the evening. I gave it to her with a card that said, "For you to . . . keep . . . always to always remember that I will always love you, always!" I've always been quite the romantic.

GIRL: *(Cringing.)* Again! Innocents present! *(Turning away.)*

JANET: *(Sarcastically.)* Quite the literary genius, too.

ELIZABETH: That's sweet.

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

FRANK: And as she said, a few days later it was gone.

JANET: And I have apologized a million times, Frank!

FRANK: It's all right, sweetheart. I've never harbored any bad feelings about it. You know that.

JANET: Please! *(To ELIZABETH and MICHAEL.)* If you knew how many times that has been thrown in my face over the years. Every time we have a fight it's *the jacket!* Every time he does something that makes me mad, he reminds me of *the jacket!*

FRANK: *(To her.)* I don't do that. *(Assuring the others.)* I don't do that.

JANET: He does that. *(Suddenly remembers.)* Wait a minute. Frank. I know how to tell if this is *THE* jacket.

FRANK: How?

JANET: It's always.

FRANK: What?

JANET: Always. That night, I went home and on the back of the tag where you put your initials, I wrote, "Always." So I'd remember everything about that night.

By now both kids have stopped to listen. They stand with arms crossed and a look of disbelief on their faces.

GIRL: This is wrong in so many ways. *(Covers her brother's ears.)* Are you, like, trying to permanently scar your children?

BOY: *(Pushes her hand away.)* Quit! I want to hear!

JANET: *(She hugs the jacket.)* I'm almost afraid to look!

Everyone watches expectantly as she turns the jacket and then slowly reaches for the tag. She reads the initials again.

JANET: There are the initials, F. T. *(She turns the tag, lets out a gasp and then looks excitedly at ELIZABETH.)* How much?!!!

FRANK: It's not! It's not! It can't be! *(She shows the tag to FRANK and he in turn asks.)* How much?

MICHAEL: It really is the jacket? You've got to be kidding me.

JANET: It is! Look at this. This is incredible. After all these years! We definitely want it. How much will you take?

ELIZABETH: I . . . I hate to charge you for it at all. You already paid for it once.

FRANK: I'll give you a hundred dollars! *(Takes out his wallet.)*

ELIZABETH: That's too much. *(Hesitates.)* Twenty-five.

FRANK: Fifty!

ELIZABETH: I don't know.

JANET: We insist!

ELIZABETH: Well. *(Looking at the toy soldier in her hand.)* If you let me throw in the toy soldier.

FRANK: It's a deal.

FRANK gives her the money and puts the wallet away. The two of them look at the jacket and then go into a big hug. The kids have had enough.

GIRL: Can we go now? *(To ELIZABETH.)* They're usually not like this. Really.

BOY: They're in love!

GIRL: Shut up!

JANET: *(Gives the kids a look and then turns and grabs ELIZABETH'S hand.)* Thank you so much! You will never know how much we appreciate this.

ELIZABETH: You're very welcome. I'm just happy that it and you ended up in the same place again. Even if it did take eighteen years.

GIRL: Three months and eleven days!

FRANK: *(Ushering the kids toward the door.)* Let's go. *(He starts for the door.)* I still can't believe it. What are the odds? Incredible!

Following, JANET begins to put the jacket on.

JANET: Isn't it? I'll finally get to wear your letter jacket.

FRANK: *(Opening the door, he takes the jacket from her.)* What do you mean, you wear it? It's my jacket.

JANET: Which you gave to me!

FRANK: Which you lost!

JANET: *(As they leave.)* Oh! Here it comes! Here we go again!

A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

FRANK: *(Fading as they leave.)* Here what comes? What do you mean, here we go again? You did lose it, didn't you? I'm not making that up, am I?

We hear the argument continue as they exit. ELIZABETH crosses behind the counter, to the cash register to put the money in. MICHAEL has watched them leave and now closes the door behind them.

MICHAEL: That was wild!

ELIZABETH: It was very nice.

MICHAEL: *(Moving over to the counter.)* Nice? What are the chances they would find any jacket here from their high school, much less the very same jacket they lost eighteen years ago.

ELIZABETH: You'd be surprised.

MICHAEL: Oh, come on! This kind of thing doesn't happen every day.

ELIZABETH: Not every day, Michael, no.

MICHAEL: Obviously!

ELIZABETH: But it happens. Quite frequently, actually.

MICHAEL: *(Pause and then he looks at her and shakes his head with a little laugh and moves right.)* You're trying to tell me out of this vast conglomeration of . . . of . . .

ELIZABETH: *(Crossing over to him.)* Junk?

MICHAEL: Stuff . . . that you have in this shop . . . people walk in and find things they've been missing for twenty years?

ELIZABETH: Not all the time. *(Pause.)* Sometimes it's one year, five years, ten. Sometimes maybe only a month. That's hard to say.

MICHAEL: *(Laughs.)* This is a joke, right? You're picking on the new guy because I know you can't be serious.

ELIZABETH: *(Crossing to him and indicating for him to sit at one of the chairs.)* Join me, would you?

MICHAEL: *(He shrugs but then sits.)* Okay.

ELIZABETH: *(She sits in the other chair.)* This is a special place, Michael, this little shop of ours. A very special place.

MICHAEL: It's a nice little place, I guess.

ELIZABETH: It's more than that.

MICHAEL: *(Looks around the store doubtfully.)* Okay. I don't know if I really . . .

ELIZABETH: Maybe I'd better start at the beginning. Would that be okay?

MICHAEL: Unless God has decided to work a little miracle and fix my Harley, I'm not going anywhere any time soon. So why not?

ELIZABETH: *(She settles herself, takes a deep breath and begins.)* When I was a little girl, my mother gave me a necklace. Her mother had given to her when she was very young. As far as monetary value, I'm sure it wasn't worth much. It was just a simple chain with a little heart on it that opened up and inside was a picture, a picture of my great-grandmother when she was a child. I think she was around twelve years old when the picture was done. The picture itself was actually a painting, a rendering of a photograph that had been taken of my great-grandmother. She, of course, had given it to my grandmother. So it was a family heirloom. Are you with me?

MICHAEL: Sure. I think most families have something similar that might be passed down from one generation to another. My dad has an old pocket watch that he's told me stories about. He says someday it will be mine.

ELIZABETH: Exactly. When she gave it to me, she told me the history behind it. It was really quite something. When my great-grandmother was a little girl, she visited Paris with her mother and father. Felix Toumachon had just opened his portrait studio there that same year. The first photographic studio in the world, I believe. They had a portrait done of her, and on the same day, a French artist painted a duplicate of the portrait inside that little heart. Her mother and father, of course, kept the photograph to hang in the family home but wanted their daughter to have a memory of that day to carry with her. It was then handed down daughter to daughter until it reached me. She told me these things in the hope that I would realize how much it meant to her and in the hopes that I would always treasure it as much as she did.

MICHAEL: Right.

ELIZABETH: Well. I have a whole list of excuses. I was eight years old, for crying out loud. I was a tomboy. I spent most of my time climbing trees, playing baseball, wrestling with my two brothers.

MICHAEL: You lost it?

ELIZABETH: I lost it. I had no idea of how or when.

MICHAEL: I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH: Not as sorry as I was. And the older I got, the sorrier I got. My mother was great about it. Never got mad at me, never blamed me. Sometimes I wish she had. Sometimes it seems to hurt a lot worse when the people you love just . . . forgive you.

MICHAEL: *(Solemnly.)* I know what you mean.

ELIZABETH: *(Pause.)* So as the years went by and I turned from tomboy to a young woman and my memory of my grandmother faded, I really hated the fact . . . that I had lost that piece of her.

They sit quietly for a moment. MICHAEL waits as ELIZABETH gathers herself.

ELIZABETH: Now, I told you that so I could tell you this. Some years back, right after Henry and I were married . . . I was just a child, by the way. Twenty years old is much too young to get married, especially to a man nearly twice your age. If you ever have a daughter, you impress that upon her every chance you get. Henry, of course, would tell you different. The old leech. *(She smiles.)* Anyway, we had just gotten married and had moved to the little town that he grew up in. This was probably two hundred miles or so from my hometown. We needed a new sofa for our home because the one we had . . . well . . . let's just say you don't want to know what a sofa that has been in the home of a single man for fifteen years looks or smells like. *(She literally seems to shudder.)* We decided to drop into a little antique shop and . . . *(She trails off and just looks at him expectantly.)*

MICHAEL: The necklace was there.

ELIZABETH: *(She reaches up and pulls the necklace that has been hidden under her blouse to show him.)* It was. As far as I was concerned, it was a gift from heaven above. I decided right then and there that if I could help people get a feeling even close to the feeling I had that day, that's what I wanted to do.

MICHAEL: And Henry went along?

ELIZABETH: At first, he was a little like you. Skeptical. We gathered together what little savings we had, gathered up as much stuff as we could to stock our first little shop, and within a month we were in business.

MICHAEL: That's great. *(He stands, moves behind the chair.)* That's great for you. I can see how finding the necklace meant a lot to you. I saw how happy the jacket made Janet and Frank, at least for the moment.

ELIZABETH: See. There again. Skeptical.

MICHAEL: What do you mean?

ELIZABETH: I believe that jacket will heal a very old wound, and Janet and Frank will have a much brighter future because they found it.

MICHAEL: *(Obviously still very skeptical.)* If you say so. But people finding something like that jacket has got to be a million to one.

ELIZABETH: Michael, not everything people find in our shop makes a big difference in their lives.

MICHAEL: Thank you!

ELIZABETH: However, in the years we've owned our little shops, and this is not our first, there have been hundreds, if not thousands, just like Janet and Frank, who discovered a piece of their lives that they desperately needed to find.

MICHAEL: *(Doubtfully.)* Thousands?

ELIZABETH: *(Smiling.)* Thousands.

Through the front door enter HENRY and LILY ADAIR. LILY is an elderly woman dressed appropriately. She has been a friend of ELIZABETH and HENRY for the ten years they have been in town. LILY is a dynamo. Some might call her an ornery old woman. We'll just say she tells it like it is, to the point of being intimidating. Even Henry, after all these years, is a little freaked out by her.

HENRY: *(Holding the door open for her.)* Look who I found. *(LILY enters and he closes the door behind her.)*

ELIZABETH: *(Rises and moves to center and MICHAEL follows.)* Lily! We were wondering when we would see you again. *(She goes to LILY and gives her a hug.)*

HENRY: I told Lily about our new employee . . . *(LILY plops her purse in his gut, catching him by surprise. He gulps and goes on.)* . . . and she wanted to meet him.

LILY: I was due for a visit anyway.

ELIZABETH: *(She ushers MICHAEL toward LILY.)* Michael. We'd like you to meet Lily Adair. Lily, this is Michael Cain. Lily is one of our oldest customers.

LILY: Oldest?

ELIZABETH: You know what I mean.

LILY: *(Smugly.)* I'm afraid I do. Don't know that you can call me a customer, since I've never purchased anything. I think longest-term shopper might be more appropriate. *(Eyeing him suspiciously, she offers her hand in greeting to MICHAEL, which he takes.)* Pleased to meet you, Michael.

MICHAEL: Thank you. Same here.

LILY: *(Not letting go of his hand.)* Are you some kind of a hippie?

MICHAEL: Hippie?

LILY: *(To ELIZABETH.)* Do they still call them that?

MICHAEL: Them?

LILY: *(Not letting go right away, she eyes him closely. Then she moves her hand up to his chin and turns his head to get a good look at both profiles. To ELIZABETH.)* He's a looker, though. Handsome! *(Looks back to him.)* You're a looker.

MICHAEL: *(A little shocked.)* Thank you. I guess.

LILY: Has Judith seen this one yet?

ELIZABETH: *(Seemingly a little amused by all of this.)* Not yet.

LILY: *(Back to MICHAEL.)* Watch out for that one. She's on permanent husband watch. If they still let you knock them in the head and drag them home you'd be in trouble.

HENRY: *(Jovially.)* I think it was the cavemen who did the dragging.

LILY: *(Staring him down.)* That's what they'd like you to think.

HENRY: They?

LILY: Men!

ELIZABETH: Lily!

LILY: It's the truth, and you know it. *(To MICHAEL.)* Or are you already married?

MICHAEL: I beg your pardon?

LILY: *(Matter of fact.)* What are you, deaf? I'm the senior citizen in the room. I said, are you already married?

HENRY: Lily, give the boy a little privacy.

LILY: *(Still looking at MICHAEL.)* Well, it's not like I asked for his social security number! It's a fair question.

HENRY: *(Steps between them.)* Lily. Why don't you go ahead and take a look around the store. We did get some new things in . . . *(Before he can finish, LILY puts a hand on his shoulder and pushes him out of the way.)* . . . the last couple of weeks.

LILY: *(Aside to MICHAEL.)* They're trying to protect you from me. *(Crosses away from MICHAEL.)* Fine! I don't think the young man needs interference run for him. I'm sure he can take care of himself. *(Turns back to MICHAEL.)* You can take care of yourself, can't you?

MICHAEL: *(He is a little overwhelmed.)* I . . . I . . .

LILY: *(Looks back at HENRY.)* Perhaps not!

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