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About Schmidt

By Alexander Payne

WeII, for my part,
I wouId just Iike to say...
that as the new guy
taking over for you...
I hope
I can fiII your shoes...
because from the Iooks
of the peopIe here...
and what they think about you,
they seem awfuIIy big.
As most of you know,
I just moved here recentIy...
from Des Moines
with my wife Patty here...
and KimberIy our 14-month-oid...
and you aII have made us
feeI so welcome.
Warren, I want you to feeI
just as welcome...
to drop by the office
any time you want.
As we've been discussing
the Iast coupIe of weeks...
I might have some questions
about our various products...
Iike the universaI Iife poIicy
we're Iaunching next month.
And...
Anyway, here's to you, Warren.
Warren...
how do you feeI about these
young punks taking our jobs?
Seems Iike
some kind of conspiracy to me.
I've known Warren here...
probabIy Ionger than
most of you have been aIive.
Warren and I go way back...
way back...
to the horse and buggy days
at Woodmen.
But that's ancient history.
I know something
about retirement...

and what I want to say
to you out loud, Warren...
so all these
young hotshots can hear...
is that all those gifts
over there...
don't mean a goddamn thing.
And this dinner doesn't mean
a goddamn thing.
And the Social Security
and pension...
don't mean a goddamn thing.
None of these superficialities
mean a goddamn thing.
What means something...
what really means something,
Warren...
is the knowledge
that you devoted your life...
to something meaningful...
to being productive
and working for a fine company--
Hello, one of the top-rated
insurance carriers...
in the nation...
to raising a fine family,
building a fine home...
being respected
by your community...
to having wonderful,
lasting friendships.
At the end of his career...
if a man can look back and say,
'I did it. I did my job.'
then he can retire in glory
and enjoy riches...
far beyond the monetary kind.
So, all of you
young people here...
take a good look
at a very rich man.
I love you, buddy.
I'll be right back.
Good evening.

-Vodka gimlet, please.
-Coming right up.
Hello?
Hi, honey.
Yeah, we just got in.
We just walked in the door.
Yeah, he is.
Just a minute.
Warren. Get on the phone.
It's Jeannie.
Jeannie? How you doing?
It went just fine.
Nice event.
I know, but don't give it
another thought.
You've got bigger fish to fry.
I know, but we'll see you
out there real soon anyway.
What?
Did I get the robe?
Yes. That was quite an item.
You sure went overboard.
From you and Randa?
I see.
Well, thank you both.
It's sure going to
come in handy now.
You betcha.
OK.
Yeah. Bye, now.
Did you thank Randa?
-I did.
-What'd he say?
I just told Jeannie.
You didn't thank him
personally?
-No.
-Why not?
He didn't come to the phone.
Why not?
I don't know.
He didn't come to the phone.
You should have asked for him.
Make an effort.

He'll be your son-in-law,
and you hardly know him.
I know him well enough.
I wish you'd try to be
more positive.
She's lucky to have him.
Yeah.
My father didn't think
so much of you at first.
Yeah.
Where to, mister?
Looks like you need a ride.
Yeah.
Surprise!
I thought it'd be fun to have
breakfast in here today...
see what it'll be like.
Fine.
Isn't this fun?
Well...sort of
gives us a rough idea.
We'll have a lot of
good times in here.
Yeah.
Here's to a whole new chapter.
...Angela Lansbury
for Childreach...
and we need people
who want to help.
Throughout the world in
many of the poorest countries...
there is a organization
called Childreach...
that is making
a profound difference...
in the lives of children
just like these.
For just \$22 a month...
just 72 cents a day...
you can become
a Childreach sponsor...
and not only personally
touch the life...
of a needy boy or girl

overseas...
but also help the child's family
and community.
Think of it--
just \$22 a month...
and a little girl like this
will never feel the agony...
of dysentery from dirty water.
A child like this will
be able to go to school...
to learn and grow.
I'm so glad you've watched...
but now that you have,
what are you going to do?
No, pity and guilt won't help.
The answer is Childreach...
for a needy child, family,
and community overseas.
I'm glad that you're glad.
Right.
No, no,
you're buttering me up now.
I can't take
all the credit for that.
No. No.
I did use a calculator.
That's my motto.
All righty. Bye-bye.
Hey! There he is!
What do you say, partner?
Pretty good.
How are you doing?
Not too shabby.
I see you're all moved in.
Oh, yeah.
What brings you by
this neck of the woods?
I was just driving by.
I thought I'd pop up...
and see what kind of trouble
you've been getting into.
You know, keeping busy.
I wanted to make sure
you didn't have any questions...

about those pre-teen mortality
risk models I was working on.
They seem pretty
straightforward at first--
No, no. I've got a pretty good
handle on things.
You did a super job
of handing everything over.
Just super.
Smooth sailing all the way.
I have been concerned
about some of those items...
that I walked you through
slipping through the cracks.
It's been nagging at me.
Nope.
A business degree from Drake
ought to be worth something.
Yeah.
Oh, boy. If anything bubbles
to the surface, Warren...
I'll give you a hooper.
You can bet on that.
OK.
I got to get
to a meeting out west.
You want to take
the elevator down with me?
OK. Sure.
Great. Great to see you.
Looking good!
-Thank you.
-You been working out?
Hi.
How'd it go at the office?
Oh, fine.
Good thing I stopped by.
He needed my help
with a couple of loose ends.
That's wonderful.
Dear Ndugu...
My name
is Warren R. Schmidt...
and I'm your new foster father.

Let's see.
Personal information.
All right.
I live in Omaha, Nebraska.
My older brother Harry
lives in Roanoke, Virginia...
with his wife Estelle.
Harry lost a leg
two years ago to diabetes.
I am 66 years old
and recently retired...
as Assistant Vice President
and Actuary...
at Woodmen of the World
Insurance Company.
God damn it if they didn't
replace me with some kid who--
So maybe he's got a little
theory under his belt...
and can plug a few numbers
into a computer...
but I could tell right off
he doesn't know a damn thing...
about genuine
real world risk assessment...
or managing a department
for that matter...
Little cocky bastard!
Anyway...
sixty-six must sound pretty old
to a young fellow like yourself.
The truth is,
it sounds pretty old to me, too.
Because when
I look in the mirror...
and see the wrinkles
around my eyes...
and the sagging skin
on my neck...
and the hair in my ears
and the veins on my ankles...
I can't believe it's really me.
When I was a kid...
I used to think

that maybe I was special...
that somehow Destiny would
tap me to be a great man...
not like Henry Ford
or Walt Disney...
or somebody like that...
but somebody, you know,
semi-important.
I got a degree in
Business and Statistics...
and was planning to start
my own business some day...
build it up
into a big corporation...
Watch it go public,
you know...
maybe make the Fortune 500.
I was gonna be one of those guys
you read about.
But somehow...
it just didn't work out
that way.
Remember, I had
a top-notch job at Woodmen...
and a family to support.
I couldn't exactly
put their security at risk.
Helen--that's my wife--
she wouldn't have allowed it.
But what about my family,
you might ask.
What about my wife and daughter?
Don't they give me all
the pride and satisfaction...
I could ever want?
Helen and I
have been married 42 years.
Lately, every night...
I find myself
asking the same question--
Who is this old woman
who lives in my house?
Why is it that every thing
she does irritates me?

Like the way she gets the keys
out of her purse...
Long before we reach the car...
and how she throws money away
on her ridiculous collections.
And tossing out
perfectly good food...
just because
the expiration date has passed.
And her obsession...
her obsession
with trying new restaurants.
Seafood buffet.
Let's go there Sunday.
And the way she cuts me off
when I try to speak.
And she seats the people
who came in behind us.
-The thing that happened--
-I wouldn't mind it--
I hate the way she sits
and the way she smells.
For years now...
she has insisted that I sit
when I urinate.
My promise to lift the seat
and wipe the rim...
and put the seat back down
wasn't good enough for her.
No!
But then there's Jeannie.
She's our only.
I'll bet she'd like you.
She gets a big kick
out of different languages...
and cultures and so forth.
She used to get by
pretty good in German.
She'll always be my little girl.
She lives out in Denver...
so we don't get
to see her much anymore.
We stay in touch by phone
every couple of weeks...

and she comes out
for the holidays sometimes...
but not as often as we'd like.
She has a position of
some responsibility out there...
with a high-tech
computer outfit...
so it's very hard for her
to break away.
Recently, she got engaged...
so I suppose we'll be seeing
even less of her now.
The fellow's name
is Randall Hertzell.
He's got a sales job
of some sort.
Maybe Jeannie is
a little past her prime...
but she could have done
a heck of a lot better.
This guy's not up to snuff,
if you ask me...
not for my little girl.
I'll close now
and get this in the mail.
Here I am
rambling on and on...
and you probably want
to cash that check...
and get yourself
something to eat.
So, take it easy...
and best of luck
with all your endeavors.
Yours very truly,
Warren Schmidt.
Honey?
I'm going out to mail a letter.
Do you need anything?
No. Don't dillydally.
And I have been doing
some research reading on this.
I actually looked
at a couple pieces of video...

and it just amazes me.
The Liberals in the media...
continue to look for
a dark lining here...
in a silver cloud.
Have you noticed--
What can I get for you?
I'll have a Blizzard
with vanilla ice cream.
What would you like in it?
I'll have some...
Reese's Pieces
and some cookie dough.
-What size?
-Medium.
Medium? OK.
Helen?
Helen!
What's the matter?
Honey? Helen?
Wake up, honey. Wake up.
Honey. Oh, Helen.
Oh, my God!
Before we go any further,
Warren...
I want to go over
some of the expenses with you.
We itemize all of our charges...
and break them down
into different categories.
Our professional services,
our embalming...
and other preparation
of the body--
those figures would total up
to about \$1,550.
Then for the use of facilities
equipment and staff...
for the visitation
and the funeral service...
In addition to that,
we have some other expenses...
out at the cemetery of charges
totaling about 1,500.

In addition to that,
we also have the casket.
These total up to about 2,700.
Finally, for the use
of our automobile...
and a total of services,
that'll be about \$430.
Do you have any questions
about that?
What if I drive myself?.
I want to tell you about anger.
Anger's OK.
God can handle it
if we're angry at him.
And I'll tell you why.
Nine years ago...
You OK, honey?
No man dieth to himself...
for if we live...
we live unto the Lord...
and if we die,
we die unto the Lord.
We'll miss Helen so much.
She was the greatest woman.
Just the sweetest, warmest,
most wonderful woman.
I know, I know.
We're praying for you, Warren.
If there's anything you need,
call us, OK?
OK. OK.
-Really, now. All right.
-Yeah. Yeah.
I can't believe it, Warren.
I still can't believe it.
I know, Ray, I know.
She was just...
She was too young.
She was just so...
I know, Ray.
Thank you.
You're a good friend, Ray.
Take care of yourself, Warren.
You, too, Ray.

Thanks for everything.
-You bet.
-We'll see you real soon.
Nice of people
to bring all this food.
All these cold cuts...
There's going to be
a lot of leftovers.
Oh, Dad.
I know, Jeannie.
She was a very special lady.
I, for one,
am really gonna miss her.
I miss her already.
I know we all do.
Let's drink to her.
Here's to Helen.
They broke the mold.
They broke the mold.
Helen...we love you.
We miss you.
We always will.
How you doing?
You doing OK?
Fine.
You sure?
Yeah.
It must be really tough.
I remember when my aunt died.
It was so unreal.
It was the Fourth of July.
I'll never forget it.
So, listen, Warren...
I know now is not the time
to talk about it...
but if before we leave
you take a few minutes...
to get your mind off
all of this craziness...
there's something real important
I want to talk to you about.
What's that?
It's an investment opportunity.
It's really exciting...

and I want to get you in
on the ground floor.
It's not a pyramid scheme.
A lot of people think
it's a pyramid scheme...
but it's not.
It's almost guaranteed
you can double your money...
maybe even triple it
in the first year alone.
The thing is, Warren...
I'm not going to be
selling waterbeds forever.
I got plans.
We haven't had much chance
to talk about it...
but I got a pretty good
business head on me...
and I've been going to
a lot of seminars...
and listening to a lot of tapes.
-Mayonnaise or mustard?
-I like both.
And don't toast the bread
too much.
I don't like my bread
very toasted.
And I'll have
some barbecue potato chips.
Not the plain ones,
those are your mother's.
The barbecue ones are mine.
You and Randa
can take those plain ones.
They'll just go to waste.
I won't eat them.
Maybe you can eat them
on the plane.
Fine.
It's so good to see you.
I wish you didn't have
to get back so soon.
Can't you take a few days more?
Couldn't you talk to them

at work?
They'd understand.
Heck...
who's gonna take care of me?
Here's your sandwich.
WonderfuI. Just wonderfuI.
Dad, you have to get used to
taking care of yourseIf now.
I know, I know.
You might have to hire a maid.
A maid?
No. I'II be aII right.
I don't need the extra expense.
At least for a few weeks
whiIe you're dealing with this.
That's why I'm asking you
to stay and heIp me out.
Dad, I toId you.
I wish I couId,
but I can't.
I've got too much going on.
Even if
I couId get more time off...
I've got the wedding.
That's a fuII-time job
aII its own.
Now that you mention it,
honey...
I think you shouId
consider postponing it.
Postpone the wedding?
We can't do that.
It's aII set.
I'm just saying you might want
to take this opportunity...
to rethink things, that's aII.
But everyone's invited
and RSVP'd.
They'd understand.
Out of respect for your mother.
She wouId have approved.
Mom wouIdn't want us
to change anything.
The thing is, Jeannie...

your mother and I spoke
a number of times...
very seriousIy
about you and RandaII.
And what did she say?
Just that she Ioved you...
and she wanted you
to be very happy...
and maybe this thing
with RandaII--
She just wanted to be sure...
you weren't
going to have any regrets.
So you might want to keep
your options open.
But she heIped us pick the date.
And I was on the phone with her
aImost every day...
pIanning it and ordering things.
I don't know what
you're taIking about.
Mom wouIdn't want us
to change it at aII.
AII right!
Have it your way.
You know best,
you and your mother.
Good sandwich.
Dad?
Why did you get
such a cheap casket?
What?
I couId teII
you got the cheapest casket.
Everybody couId.
That is not true.
I specificaIIy
did not choose...
as you say,
the cheapest casket.
There was
one Iess expensive...
which they showed me,
and I refused it.

You mean a pine box?
I don't remember what it was.
She waited on you
hand and foot.
CouIdn't you have spIurged
on her just once?
What are you taLking about?
What about the Winnebago
out there?
That's an expensive vehicIe.
I didn't want to get it,
but I did.
That was completeIy
your mother's idea.
She had to pay for haIf of it.
She had to seII some of
her stock to pay for it.
That was her decision.
I was wiIIing to go
as far as the Mini Winni...
but she had
to have the Adventurer.
She wanted the whoIe shebang.
What was I supposed to do?
It was her money.
No, you can't caII me
to task on that one.
No, sir.
Jeannie!
In here, RandaII.
-Where?
-In here!
There you are.
You better get packed.
RandaII, did you teII Dad
about that book?
That's right, I forgot.
Warren,
have you ever read...
' 'When Bad Things Happen
to Good PeopIe''?
-No.
-It's reaIIy amazing.
It reaIIy heIped me out

when my aunt died.
You should read it.
When me and Jeannie
get back to Denver...
I'll send you my copy.
The workbook, too.
I did most of the exercises...
but you can write
your answers in next to mine.
Final boarding call
for Midwest Express...
Flight 420
to Denver, Colorado.
So long, Randall.
You'll be in our prayers.
And I'll call you
about that thing.
Thank you.
Well, Jeannie...
Take care of yourself, Dad.
That's a good one.
It's gonna be
a really great shot.
Yeah, very cool.
I got the plane
in the background, too.
-Bye, Dad.
-So long, Jeannie.
See you in a few weeks, OK?
OK.
Bye, Warren.
You take care.
Dear Ndugu...
I hope you're sitting down...
because I'm afraid
I've got some bad news.
Since I last wrote to you...
my wife Helen,
your foster mother...
passed away very suddenly
from a blood clot in her brain.
The services were lovely
and very well attended.
Jeannie came in from Denver

with her friend...
and folks drove up from as far
away as Des Moines and Wichita.
It was a very moving tribute
any way you look at it.
I wish you could've been there.
But now that
all the excitement is over...
and the smoke has cleared...
it's just me and my thoughts...
knocking around
in this big old house.
I believe I mentioned
in my previous letter...
that I was an actuary...
at Woodmen of the World
Insurance Company.
If I'm given a man's age,
race, profession...
place of residence...
marital status,
and medical history...
I can calculate
with great probability...
how long that man will live.
In my own case,
now that my wife has died...
there is a 73% chance
I will die within 9 years...
provided that I do not remarry.
All I know is...
I've got to make the best of
whatever time I have left.
Life is short, Ndugu...
and I can't afford to waste
another minute.
There's nothing like a hot bath
when you're happy.
As long as you're
with the right person.
I love you so much.
I love you, too.
I love being able to say that.
Now, I don't want to kid you.

Adjusting to life without Helen
has been quite a challenge.
But I think
you'd be proud of me.
Yep, this house
is under new management...
but you'd never know
the difference.
Sure, sometimes
I can be a tad forgetful...
and miss a meal or two...
but I guess that's hardly
worth mentioning...
to someone in your situation.
Helen wouldn't want me
sitting around...
wallowing in self-pity--
no, siree, Bob.
She'd tell me to shape up
or ship out.
So I try to get out
as much as I can...
try to stay active,
stick to my routine.
That's very important in
the face of big changes in life.
Sure, I'm not quite
the cook Helen was...
but I remember a trick or two
from my bachelor days.
It's a lot of work
keeping a household together...
and I suppose eventually
I'll sell the place...
and move to a little condo--
less upkeep and so forth.
But for now,
I'm getting by just fine.
It occurred to me
that in my last letter...
I might have misspoken and
used some negative language...
in reference to my late wife.
But you have to understand...

I was under a lot of pressure
following my retirement.
I'm not going
to lie to you, Ndugu.
It's been a rough few weeks.
And I've been pretty,
you know...
broken up from time to time.
I miss her.
I miss my Helen.
I guess I just didn't know
how lucky I was...
to have a wife like Helen
until she was gone.
Remember that, young man.
You've got to appreciate
what you have...
while you still have it.
Jesus, you scared me.
What are you doing here?
I thought you might
want these back.
Jesus.
That was so long ago, Warren.
It's 25, 30 years.
I mean--Jesus.
I never thought--
She kept these?
I can't believe she kept these.
God!
Stop! Stop hitting me!
Let's talk about this.
You were my friend.
It was all a big mistake.
You went up to Frisco
and things started up...
and we just got out of hand,
that's all.
I'm sorry!
You have reached
Moondog Electronics.
If you know
your party's extension--
Shipping and receiving,

this is Jeannie.
Jeannie?
It's Dad. How are you?
I'm totaIIy swamped, Dad.
What's up?
I have a big surprise for you.
-Guess what?
-What?
I'm on the road.
I'm on my way out to see you.
Right now I'm just outside
Grand IsIand.
Dad, what are you talking about?
Jeannie...
I've been thinking about things
and how much you mean to me...
and how IittIe time
you and I spend together...
and I reaIized what the heck
am I doing in Omaha...
when I couId be with you?
We shouId be together.
Wait. You're coming now?
If I drive straight through,
I'II be there for supper.
Gosh, I don't think so, Dad.
This is not a good idea.
Sure, it is.
Don't teII me you couIdn't use
a IittIe extra heIp...
with aII those
wedding arrangements.
I'II take the burden off.
The thing is, Dad,
Roberta and I and JiII...
we've pretty much got
everything under controI.
Use the bubbIe wrap.
It's too big.
It's such a nice offer,
but Iet's stick to the pIan.
Get here a day or two before
the wedding, Iike we said.
I assume you won't object to me

sending any more checks.
Jesus, Dad,
I do not have time for this.
Call me when you get home. OK?
Fine. Bye, Jeannie.
Bye, Dad.
Dear Ndugu, how are you?
I'm fine.
A week or so ago...
I decided to take
a little road trip...
on my way to Jeannie's wedding
out in Denver.
Jeannie begged me
to come out early...
and help her
with the arrangements...
but I told her
I needed some time to myself.
I've decided
to visit some places...
I haven't been to
in a long time.
So much has happened
in my life...
that I can't seem to remember.
Whole sections of my life
that are just gone.
So, you might say
I've been trying...
to clear a few cobwebs
from my memory.
My first stop was none other
than Holdrege, Nebraska.
I thought it'd be enlightening
to visit the house...
where I was born
We moved away from Holdrege...
when I was not much older
than you...
and I've often wondered...
what our old house
would be like today.
Funny, I never forgot

the address...
Yes, sir.
Can I help you, sir?
No, thanks.
I'm just looking around.
I used to live here.
Here in the store?
Yep. My childhood home
was right on this spot.
In fact...
the bedroom would have been
right about here.
The living room over here,
and the dining...
Well, that was a long time ago.
Before you were born.
Warren! Warren!
Hey, Mom!
Mommy loves you, Warren.
Yes, she does.
Happy birthday, Warren!
You're not gonna believe this...
but we used to have a tire swing
right out front here.
An awful lot had changed
since my day...
but it was still good
to be home again.
Very good, indeed.
Next stop--Lawrence, Kansas...
where I paid a visit
to my old alma mater, K.U.
I hadn't been there
in years and years...
and now seemed like
the perfect time to stop by.
I even managed to hook up
with some kids...
at my old fraternity,
Beta Sigma Epsilon.
Hence, the company motto--
'As a woodman clears the way.'
Well, Ndugu,
I highly recommend...

that you pledge a fraternity
when you go to college.
After that little walk
down memory lane...
it was tourist time
for yours truly.
I made my way back to Nebraska
and stopped in...
at the Custer County
Historical Museum in Broken Bow
to see their fine collection
of arrowheads.
Later that same day...
I happened
to meet a real Indian...
or Native American...
as they like
to be called nowadays.
We had a nice chat about
the history of the area...
and he really opened my eyes.
Those people got a raw deal...
just a raw deal.
Next stop...
Buffalo Bill Cody's house
in North Platte.
What a remarkable man.
You can read about him
in the enclosed pamphlet.
I pull the Adventurer over
whenever I feel like...
stretching my legs,
taking in a local sight...
or browsing for antiques.
The other day, for example,
at an antique store in Cozad...
I came across a fine collection
of rare Hummers.
I guess I never really
appreciated...
how exquisitely crafted
they are.
Each one comes with its own
certificate of authenticity.

HeIen Ioved HummeIs.
Ahoy there.
Yes?
I said ''ahoy.''
WeII, ''ahoy'' yourseIf.
John Rusk,
Eau Claire, Wisconsin.
Warren Schmidt, Omaha.
I hope I'm not disturbing you...
but I couIdn't heIp noticing
you got a new Adventurer.
-That's right.
-35-footer?
That's right.
What a beauty.
Man, oh, man.
I'm pretty happy with it.
Permission to step aboard,
Captain?
How's that?
Can I take a look inside?
Sure, heIp yourseIf.
Thank you.
Yeah, jeez.
Look at aII this room.
These pop-outs
reaIIy make a difference.
Yep.
You keep a mighty
cIean gaIIey, mister.
I've onIy been
on the road a week.
You're kidding.
This is your maiden voyage?
Yeah.
-And you're traveIing soIo?
-That's right.
HoIy Christ,
come over for dinner.
We gotta ceIebrate.
My Vicki's one heck of a cook.
If you're free, of course.
I'II have to check my scheduIe.
Ahoy there.

Ahoy!
Get yourself up here.
I'm Vicki Rusk.
Warren Schmidt.
John was so excited to meet you.
Gosh, you shouldn't have.
Smells delicious.
-I hope you like beef stew.
-Yeah.
There he is!
How are you?
Good, good.
Can I take your jacket?
Sure. Yep.
There we go.
-Is something burning?
-Huh?
No, no, no.
I just lit a couple of matches.
Oh.
Shall we adjourn
to the living room?
-You're almost done?
-Just about.
Warren brought us beer.
Thank you, Warren.
Here, have a seat.
All right.
Right there.
Take that one there.
Ok.
So...
What do you do
back in Eau Claire?
My brother and I
have a little shoe store.
It's a Famous Footwear.
And, well,
people will always need shoes.
Vicki, here,
she's an occupational therapist.
So that's our day job,
you might say.
How about yourself?.

I was in the insurance game,
but I'm retired now.
OK, boys, dinner is served.
This is a couple
we met in Kansas.
Remember I was telling you about
the guy with the wooden leg?
But we loved them.
We spent a whole weekend
with them out in Kansas.
This is Roger and Denise
and their daughters.
Denise is your oldest?
She's the middle one.
They live out in Delaware.
And these little cuties
are Katie and Sloan.
A girl named 'Sloan.'
I never heard that one before.
Neither had we.
Do you have any pictures
of your daughter with you?
No. Not on me.
I don't, no.
Nothing in your wallet?
Well...
I might have one
of George Washington.
Or Abraham Lincoln.
Who?
Hey, easy.
We're a little low
on truth serum.
If I go get another six-pack,
will you guys be OK?
-Yes!
-Oh, yeah.
Abraham Lincoln.
Back in a flash.
-Not bad, huh?
-I like that.
'Who?'

Here's the little cart
we got them for Christmas.

-Is that cute?
-That's darling.
Those adorable little dresses.
And these are
their christening dresses.
That's quite a family
you got there.
You and John are very lucky.
I know. We really are.
Yep.
Warren...
would you mind
if I made an observation?
Sure.
Well...
you put a pretty good face
on things...
considering everything
you've been through lately.
I know I've just met you...
but I have good instincts
about people...
and the feeling
that I get from you...
is that despite
your good attitude...
and your positive outlook...
I think inside
you're a sad man.
Well...
it does take quite an adjustment
when you lose a spouse.
It's something more than that.
I see something more
than grief and loss in you...
something deeper.
Like what?
I just met you, but...
my guess is anger.
Anger and, I don't know,
maybe fear...
loneliness...
Well...
I am kind of lonely.

See, there, I knew it.
Can I tell you something?
I'm listening.
I've only known you
for an hour or so...
and yet...
I feel like
you understand me...
better than my wife Helen
ever did...
even after
Forty-two years.
Maybe if I'd met someone
like you earlier...
Oh, you sad man.
You sad, sad man.
You sad man.
-Yeah.
-Yeah.
-Oh.
-Mm-hmm.
Get off me!
Are you insane?
God, what is wrong with you?
I don't know what kind
of ideas you got...
but you better go right now!
-I'm sorry.
-No, no! Go!
-I'm sorry.
-I don't care about sorry!
-I didn't mean to--
-Go!
Can I have my jacket?
Christ!
Go!
Ray? It's Warren.
I know we separated
on a bit of a sour note...
but I just thought
I should call and tell you...
that I've been doing
some thinking...
and some soul-searching...

and, well...
I just wanted to tell you
that I'm willing...
to talk about this
because of all the things--
If you are satisfied with
your message, press one.
To listen to your message,
press two.
To erase and re-record,
press three.
To continue recording
where you--
Message erased.
At the tone, please
re-record your message.
At the end of your message,
press one.
Hello?
What did you really
think of me?
Deep in your heart.
Was I really the man
you wanted to be with?
Was I?
Or were you disappointed
and too nice to show it?
I forgive you for Ray.
I forgive you.
That was a long time ago...
and I know I wasn't always
the king of kings.
I let you down.
I'm sorry, Helen.
Can you forgive me?
Can you forgive me?
And so, Ndugu...
I must say it's been
a very rewarding trip.
And this morning...
I awoke from my night
in the wilderness...
completely transformed.
I'm like a new man.

For the first time in years,
I feel clear.
I know what I want...
I know what I've got to do...
and nothing's going
to stop me ever again.
Meanwhile, along with
the usual check...
I'm enclosing
a little something extra...
to spend as you please.
Yours very truly,
Warren Schmidt.
Warren,
how grand to see you again.
I hope I'm not intruding.
Not at all.
I was happy to get your call...
and I learn that
you were finally in town.
I'll bet that trip did you
a lot of good...
after all you've been through.
I sent you a card.
Did you get it?
Oh, yes.
Lovely card. Thank you.
But I want to say it to you
in person.
I am so sorry about Helen.
I only met her that once...
but we talked often on the phone
after the engagement.
She was a fine, fine woman.
A fine, fine human being.
Thank you.
What can I get you to drink?
I'll bet you could use
a cocktail.
No, I'm fine. I'll wait
till the kids get here.
I am having a Manhattan.
What the heck?
Make it two.

OK.
That's better.
This last week
has been so stressful.
The only way
that Helen is lucky--
and I do mean the only way--
is that she didn't have to...
go through this week
with Jeannie and me.
The florist, the dress...
the relatives,
the travel arrangements...
the motels, the bridesmaids...
the groomsmen, the gowns.
And do you realize
how many people...
still have not RSVP'd?
Warren,
it simply does not stop.
By the way...
we do still need that check
for the church.
Did Jeannie mention it to you?
Because we've needed it
for some time now...
and actually,
it's been a bit of a problem.
Roberta.
Roberta?
What?
I can't make
this goddamn thing work.
Somebody really screwed it up.
Would you excuse me?
What is your fucking problem?
Don't you see
I have enough to deal with?
That's why I offered
to come over and help.
I am trying to help.
This is no help.
Look at it.
What do you expect me

to do now?
I will fix it.
Tell me how you want it.
I'm not a mind reader.
Forget it.
I'll do it myself.
Like I have to do
everything else around here.
-Just get out.
-I'm not a mind reader!
Do you understand English?
Get out!
I'm sorry.
You met Larry last time.
Just briefly, yeah.
He's like a little boy.
Ever since our divorce,
he thinks the only way...
he can get my attention
is by causing a fuss.
I understand it, I do.
I feel sorry for him.
My first husband
was exactly the same way.
He turned out to be
a real asshole.
Now, Randall, he knows how
to treat a woman.
Honestly, don't you think
he's something special?
Well...
I know Jeannie seems to be
very taken with him.
That always helps,
doesn't it?
When I had my hysterectomy...
that boy did not leave my side
for one minute.
Not one minute.
People used to raise
their eyebrows...
because I breast-fed him
until he was almost five...
and I say, well,

just look at the results.
I raised a sensitive,
devoted boy...
who has turned into
a sensitive, devoted man.
And he's also
quite easy on the eye...
if I do say so myself.
Don't you agree?
Look who's here.
Dad. How's it hanging?
Fine. Fine.
You're finally here.
I'm stoked.
-Hi, Dad.
-Hi, sweetheart.
God, how was your trip?
I was a little worried.
Just great, yeah.
But I did run into
a lot of traffic...
getting into town
this afternoon.
Ended up veering off
the 25 onto 70.
That wasn't any better.
I guess it must've been
construction or an accident.
That's Denver for you.
You won't catch me
driving on the interstate.
Next time, get off 25 at Speer
and take a left.
That turns into First, which
leads you directly to Gaylord.
That's good to know.
RandaII, bring that
into the kitchen.
Jeannie, I need to talk to you
about something.
Sure, Dad.
Can it wait?
It's very important.
I need some time alone

with you.
DefiniteIy.
Maybe after dinner.
Say, RandaII...
how'd that investment situation
work out for you?
You never caIIed me.
Don't bring that up.
You mean that pyramid scheme?
No, it wasn't.
AII I know is
I Iost 800 bucks.
If you'd stuck with it
a Iittle Ionger...
you'd have seen resuIts.
You baiIed out too soon.
Can we change the subject?
You didn't find enough
quaIity reps of your own...
and you screwed
the whoIe thing up for me.
You didn't take the time...
to understand how
the power system works.
Principle, ownership, weaIth...
As father of the groom,
I'd Iike to weIcome our guest.
Larry, we know who you are...
and you'II have
pIenty of chances...
to make toasts tomorrow
and the next day--
WiII you Iet me finish, pIease?
Can't we just enjoy our food?
OK, enjoy your food...
but I have something
I want to say.
I wanted to acknowIedge
that we're gathered together...
around this table as a famiIy
for the very first time.
And on behaIf of
Saundra and myseIf...
I wanted to weIcome Warren...

who has journeyed
a very long way...
to be with us here tonight.
And, Warren...
we really, really love
Jeannie very, very much.
I also want to say
how proud I am--
Larry, you're
embarrassing yourself.
You're embarrassing me.
You're embarrassing Sandra.
-No, he's not.
-Sandra, please.
Anyway, I'm done.
You're interrupting me,
and I'm already done.
Why do you have to spoil
a perfectly enjoyable evening?
Why do you always do this?
Why do you have to be
so negative?
I'm not negative.
You're just trying to grab
all the attention.
'I'm not negative.'
That's not negative?
All I was doing was welcoming
somebody into the family.
Larry, we've
been welcomed by you.
Thank you so much.
Now drink your fucking milk
and shut the fuck up.
-Get some rest.
-OK, you, too.
-See you.
-See you tomorrow.
-Warren.
-Larry.
Get a good night's sleep.
Sandra, nice to meet you.
-Very nice to meet you.
-Thank you.

Good night.
Jeannie?
I stiIII want to taIk to you.
Yeah, right.
WeII, can it wait?
Because we got
a reaIIy big day tomorrow.
No, it can't.
Take your time.
I'II get the car started.
Good night, War.
Good night.
What's up?
You're making a big mistake.
Don't marry this guy.
Don't do it.
What are you taIking about?
The other night...
I had a dream,
and it was very reaI.
Your mother was there,
and you were there...
and your Aunt EsteIIe.
And there was a--
It wasn't reaIIy a spaceship...
it was more Iike a bIimp
or an orb.
And then a bunch of
weird creatures came out...
and tried to take you away,
and you know what?
They aII Iooked Iike RandaII.
Do you understand?
I was jumping up
trying to save you.
Dad, it's OK.
You're just
wiggling out a IittIe...
and Mom is not here
to caIm you down.
No. This isn't Iike that.
I am begging you.
Don't marry RandaII.
This guy is not up to snuff.

He's not in your league.
I can't let this happen.
I will not allow it.
Look at these people!
Suddenly, you're taking
an interest in what I do?
You have an opinion
about my life now?
You listen to me.
I am getting married
the day after tomorrow...
and you are
coming to my wedding.
You will sit there
and enjoy it and support me...
or you can turn around
right now and go back to Omaha.
You come right back here!
I'm talking to you, young lady!
Oh!
Good morning,
Mr. Sleepy head--
Warren, what is the matter?
I'm fine.
I'm just a little stiff.
My neck. I'm OK.
Did you fall out of bed?
-Let me help you.
-No, no, no.
I think I'm better off
on a hard surface.
I don't know.
It seems pretty weird...
for this to be happening
today of all days.
I'm sorry, Jeannie.
I'm sure I'll rally
in a couple of hours.
The Advil's kicking in
pretty good.
We've been really stressed out
the last two weeks.
While you were
out on your little trip...

we've been barely
holding this thing together...
and so for you
to just crap out on us...
I think it's the bed.
No way.
That's an Aquarest Z9000.
It's top of the line.
It's definitely not the bed.
I don't know. I think
I need something firmer.
All right, fine.
Let's just deal with this.
Dad, where's that receipt
that I gave you?
Receipt?
For the programs at the printers
you were picking up?
-It's over there.
-Where?
On the chair
in my jacket pocket.
Fine. RandaII,
you have to pick them up.
I don't think so. I gotta get
Brian and Dave at the airport--
Do you think that I can do it?
I can't do everything.
I cannot do everything!
I know.
-Jeannie--
-Get off of me!
WeII...
I'II do it.
Thanks for everything, Dad!
-Jeannie...
-Fuck you!
By goIIy.
Anybody hungry?
I could eat a horse.
How about
some chicken noodle soup?
WonderfuI.
Anything for me in the bedpan?

Yes.
Jeannie told us about your
little panic attack last night.
And I don't blame you.
It's a perfectly
natural reaction.
In the beginning,
I had my own reservations.
As the veteran
of two failed marriages...
I have learned a lot
about what works...
and does not work
between two people...
and I can tell you these kids
are in very good shape.
They have
a very healthy relationship--
spiritually, emotionally,
and physically.
And, well...
you know how famously
they get along as friends...
but did you know
that their sex life...
is positively white hot?
The main reason my marriages
failed was sexual.
I am an extremely sexual person.
I can't help it.
That's just how I'm wired.
Even when I was a little girl.
I had my first orgasm
when I was six in ballet class.
Anyway, the point is
that I have always been...
very easily aroused
and very orgasmic.
Jeannie and I have a lot
in common that way.
Clifford and Larry
were nice guys...
but they just could not
keep up with me.

Anyway...
I don't want to betray
Jeannie's confidence...
but let me assure you
that whatever problems...
those two kids may run into
along the way...
they will always
be able to count on...
what happens between the sheets
to keep them together.
More soup?
No. I think I'm fine now.
How we doing?
Just dandy.
Could more Advil
ought to do it.
You look like you need
something stronger.
Give me a second.
OK.
I have these left over
from my hysterectomy.
They've expired,
but I think it's OK.
What is it?
Percodan. I guarantee you,
within half an hour...
you'll be on cloud nine.
Okay-smokes.
So, following the procession...
I'll have the bride and groom
accompany me.
I'd like the best man
and the maiden of honor...
to follow closely,
all right?
But don't forget to leave
the bride and groom space.
They need room
to maneuver in here.
And the father of the bride,
Mr. Schmidt...
will have a seat

in the front row right there.

All right?

Mr. Schmidt?

Mr. Schmidt?

Want to take your seat
in the front row, please?

If I could be permitted
a personal note...

I learned about love
from my parents.

Two extraordinary people
who were married 62 years.

And they're right here
in this room tonight.

I can feel...

Hello, Mom. Hi, Pop.

I miss you, and I love you.

And I know every time

I look at Randall and Jeannie...

I think, Randall's hands
and mine are a lot alike...

and Jeannie's hands are...

You seem to have come around
pretty good, Warren.

That stuff you gave me--Wow.

You gotta write the name
of that down for me.

It really does the trick.

I know what'll really get you
out of the woods.

As soon as we get home,

I'll fire up the hot tub...

and you're gonna take

a long soak before bed.

You'll sleep like a baby.

Tomorrow,

you'll be good as new.

How does it feel?

This is incredible.

I had no idea.

It's...it's indescribable.

Didn't I tell you?

Mind if I join you?

Oh.

That's better.
What a night.
I was very moved.
I've been so stressed
these last few weeks...
that I lost sight of the fact...
that my little boy
is getting married.
So's your little girl.
You think about it
from the day they're born...
and now it's here.
It's a miracle.
Just think, after tomorrow,
we'll all be one big family.
And I insist that you
consider this your second home.
I'll set a place for you
at the table...
for Thanksgiving
and for Christmas.
We don't give traditional gifts
at Christmas.
We make them.
We're a very creative family.
It can be a painting
or a poem or a song.
Whatever inspires you.
And it goes without saying...
you'll come to our timeshare
in Breckenridge.
Just you and me while the kids
are out on the slopes.
Here we are,
a divorce and a widower.
Sounds like
a perfect match to me.
What's the matter?
I have to go to bed now.
Just like that?
We were having such a nice talk.
I'm all tuckered out.
Thank you, Roberta.
Good night.

Longer than there've been
fishes in the ocean
Higher than any bird ever flew
Longer than
There've been stars
up in the heavens
I've been in love with you
Stronger than
any mountain cathedral
Truer than any tree ever grew
Deeper than any forest primeval
I'll be in love with you
I'll be in love with you
Let us pray.
Dear Heavenly Father...
our hearts are filled
with great happiness...
for the union
of Randa and Jeannie...
'Love is patient. Love is kind.
'Love is not envious or boastful
or arrogant or rude.
'It does not insist
on its own way.'
And I shall love you
every day of my life.
And when I say every day,
I mean every day.
And when I say day,
I mean all 24 hours...
all 1,440 minutes...
all 86,400 seconds.
Well, a man shall leave
his mother
and a woman leave her home
They shall travel far...
Do you,
Randa Mead Hertzell...
take Jean Boardwine Schmidt
as your lawful wedded wife?
I do.
And do you,
Jean Boardwine Schmidt...
take Randa Mead Hertzell to be

your lawful wedded husband?
I do.
Yeah.
I now pronounce you
husband and wife.
I could tell there was something
different in his voice...
and, remember, Randy,
you called me up?
And he says, 'Dennis,
I met this girl last night...
'and this might sound a little
weird coming from me...'
'But this is one chick...
'I might actually
want to see again.'
And then he told me
a bunch of other stuff...
which I'm not at liberty
to go into right now.
But what was in his voice
two years ago...
was confirmed here today.
I mean...
You guys are a great couple.
You know, and...
you both really helped me
through that thing...
a couple of months ago,
and I'll never forget it.
I love you guys.
I love you guys.
Randy and Jeannie forever!
Hoist 'em! Let's go!
They want a little smooch.
Give us a little smooch here!
Come on! A little smooch!
Come on!
These people paid good money!
There's children here.
Now I'd like to turn things
over to the--
Do you want us all to leave?
I'd like

to turn things over...
to the proud
father of the bride...
Mr. Warren Schmidt.
I didn't get
much sleep last night...
so forgive me
if I'm a little foggy.
But you know...
today is a special day.
We're here to mark a crossroads
in the lives of two people.
A crossroads
where they come together...
and now walk along a new road.
It's not the same road
that they were on before.
It's a new road.
A road that...
As many of you know,
I lost my wife recently.
And Jeannie lost her mother.
Her and I were married
She died very suddenly.
I know we all wish
she could be with us today...
and I think
it would be appropriate...
to acknowledge
just how pleased she was...
that Jeannie had found someone
to share her life with.
A companion.
A partner.
I recall the day when
Jeannie first told us...
she had been proposed to.
We hadn't yet met
this Randall fellow...
so we were understandably
a little suspicious.
Later, she brought him
home for Christmas...
so we could get a look at him.

I remember
there was a big snowstorm...
and RandaII here helped me
shoveI off the front waIk.
He pitched right in.
But that brings me
to what I reaIIy want to say.
What I want to say...
What I reaIIy want to say is...
Thank you, to you, RandaII...
for taking such good care
of my daughter...
especiaIIy recentIy
with our Ioss.
Ever since I arrived here
a coupIe of days ago...
I have so enjoyed getting
to know Jeannie's new famiIy.
Roberta, thank you
for your generosity...
for opening your home.
Your taIent
in the kitchen is...
Larry,
your wonderfuI eIoqueNce.
Saundra, your skiII with
handicrafts is truIy remarkabIe.
That item you showed me
was so very artistic.
Duncan, I haven't gotten
to know you very weII...
but I couId teII from
our brief conversations...
that you are
a very thoughtfuI young man.
Everybody eIse...
terrific peopIe.
Terrific.
And in concIusion...
I just want to say
on this speciaI day...
this very speciaI day...
that I am very...
pleased.

Hear! Hear!
Dear Ndugu...
you'll be glad to know...
that Jeannie's wedding
came off without a hitch.
She and Randa are on their way
to sunny Orlando...
on my nickel, of course.
As for me,
I'm headed back to Omaha.
I'm driving straight through
this time...
and I've made only one stop...
the impressive new arch
over the interstate...
at Carney, Nebraska...
an arch that commemorates...
the courage and determination
of the pioneers...
who crossed the state
on their way west.
You've really got to see it
to believe it...
and it kind of got me thinking.
Looking at all that history...
and reflecting
on the achievements...
of people long ago put things
into perspective.
My trip to Denver
is so insignificant...
compared to the journeys
that others have taken...
the bravery
that they've shown...
the hardships they've endured.
I know we're all pretty small
in the big scheme of things...
and I suppose
the most you can hope for...
is to make
some kind of difference.
But what kind of difference
have I made?

What in the world
is better because of me?
When I was out in Denver...
I tried to do
the right thing...
tried to convince Jeannie
she was making a big mistake...
but I failed.
Now she's married
to that nincompoop...
and there's nothing
I can do about it.
I am weak...
and I am a failure.
There's just
no getting around it.
Relatively soon, I will die.
Maybe in twenty years,
maybe tomorrow.
It doesn't matter.
Once I am dead, and everyone
who knew me dies, too...
it will be as though
I never even existed.
What difference has my life
made to anyone?
None that I can think of.
None at all.
Hope things are fine with you.
Yours truly, Warren Schmidt.
'Dear Mr. Warren Schmidt...
'my name is
Sister Nadine Gautier...
'of the Order of the Sisters
of the Sacred Heart.
'I work in a small village
near Mbeya in Tanzania.
'One of the children
I care for...
'is little Ndugu Umbu,
the boy you sponsor.
'Ndugu is a very intelligent boy
and very loving.
'He is an orphan.

' 'RecentIy, he needed
medicaI attention...
' 'for an infection of the eye,
but he's better now.
' 'He Ioves to eat meIon
and he Ioves to paint.
' 'Ndugu and I
want you to know...
' 'that he receives
aII of your Ietters.
' 'He hopes that you are happy
in your Iife and healthy.
' 'He thinks of you every day...
' 'and he wants very much
your happiness.
' 'Ndugu is onIy six years oId
and cannot read or write...
' 'but he has made for you
a painting.' '
' 'He hopes that
you wiII Iike his painting.
' 'Yours sincereIy,
Sister Nadine Gautier.' '