

or seven, but not one.

B. How you *do*.

A. (To C.) How you *do*. (To B.) How *what!*?

B. How she goes on.

A. (Cheerful.) Yes! How you go *on!*

C. (Smiles.) Yes; I do.

A. (Suddenly, but not urgently.) I want to go.

C. On?

A. (More urgently.) I want to go. I want to go.

B. You want to go? (Rises.) You want the pan? Is it number one? Do you want the pan?

A. (Embarrassed to discuss it.) No.... Noooo!

B. Ah. (Moves to A.) All right. Can you walk?

A. (Weepy.) I don't know!

B. Well, we'll try you. O.K.? (Indicates walker.) You want the walker?

A. (Near tears.) I want to walk! I don't know! Anything! I have to go! (Starts to fret-beep.)

B. All right! (B moves A to a standing position. We discover A's left arm is in a sling, useless.)

A. You're hurting me!! You're hurting me!!

B. All right; I'm being careful!

A. No, you're *not!*

B. Yes, I am!

A. No, you're *not!!!*

B. (Angry.) Yes, I am!

A. No, you're *not!* (On her feet, weeping, shuffling off with B's help.) You're trying to hurt me; you know I hurt!

B. (To C, as they exit.) Hold the fort.

C. I will. I will hold the fort. (Muffled exchanges off-stage. C looks toward them, shakes her head, looks back down. Continued; both to herself and to be heard.) I suppose one could lie about one year — some kind of one-upmanship, a private vengeance, perhaps, some tiny victory, maybe. (Shrugs.) I don't know, maybe these things get important. (She sits in A's chair.) Why can't I be nice?

B. (Re-enters.) Made it that time. (Sighs.) And so it goes.

C. Not always, eh?

B. In the morning, when she wakes up she wets — a kind of greeting to the day, I suppose: the sphincter and the cortex not in sync. Never during the *night*, but *as* she wakes.

C. Good morning to the morning, eh?

B. Something to something.

C. Put a diaper on her.

B. (Shakes her head.) She won't have it. I'm working on it, but she won't have it.

C. Rubber sheet?

B. Won't have it. Get her up, put her in the chair and she does the other. Give her a cup of coffee ...

C. Black.

B. (Chuckles.) Half cream and all that sugar! Three spoons! How has she lived this long? Give her her cup of coffee, put her in her chair, give her her cup of coffee and place your bets.

C. (Looks at the chair she is in.) What chair!? This chair!?

B. (Laughs.) You got it. Don't worry.

C. It must be awful.

B. (Deprecating.) For whom?

C. (Rising to it.) For her! You're paid. It's probably awful for you, too, but you're paid.

B. As she never ceases to inform me ... *and* you.

C. To begin to lose it, I mean — the control, the loss of dignity, the ...

B. Oh, stop it! It's downhill from sixteen on! For all of us!

C. Yes, but ...

B. What *are* you, twenty-something? Haven't you figured it out yet? (Demonstrates.) You take the breath in ... you let it out. The first one you take in you're upside down and they slap you into it. The last one ... well, the last one you let it all out ... and that's it. You start ... and then you stop. Don't be so soft. I'd like to see children learn it — have a six-year-old say, "I'm dying" and know what it means.

C. You're horrible!

B. Start in young; make 'em aware they've got only a little time. Make 'em aware that they're dying from the minute they're alive.

- STOP
- C. Awful!
- B. Grow up! Do you know it? Do you know you're dying?
- C. Well, of course, but ...
- B. (Ending it.) Grow up.
- A. (Wobbling, shuffling in.) A person could die in there and nobody'd care.
- B. (Bright.) Done already!
- A. A person could die! A person could fall down and break something! A person could die! Nobody would care!
- B. (Going to her.) Let me help you.
- A. (Good arm flailing.) Get your hands off me! A person could die for all anybody'd care.
- C. (To herself, but to be overheard.) Who is this ... "person"? A person could do this, a person could do ...
- B. It's a figure of speech.
- C. (Mildly sarcastic.) No. Really?
- B. (Not rising to it.) So they tell me.
- A. (Flailing about.) Hold on to me! Do you want me to fall!? You want me to fall!
- B. Yes, I want you to fall; I want you to fall and shatter in ... ten pieces.
- C. Or five, or seven.
- A. Where's my chair! (Sees it perfectly well.) Where's my chair gone to?
- B. (Playing the game.) Goodness, where's her chair gone to! Somebody's taken her chair!
- C. (Realizing.) What!?
- A. (Does she know? Probably.) Who's got my chair?
- C. (High horse.) I'm sorry! (Gets up quickly; moves away.) Your majesty!
- B. (Placating.) There's your chair. Do you want your pillow? Shall I get you your pillow? (To C.) Fetch her pillow.
- A. I want to sit down.
- B. Yes, yes. Here we go. (B gently lowers A into the vacated arm-chair.)
- C. (At bed.) Which pillow?
- B. (To A.) Are you comfortable? Do you want your pillow?
- A. (Petulant.) Of course I'm not comfortable; of course I want

my pillow.

- C. (Still at the bed; to B.) I don't know which one!
- B. (Moving to the bed.) It's two, actually, one for the back (Takes it.) and this one for the arm. (Takes it; moves toward A.) Here we are; lean forward. (Positions back pillow.) That's a girl.
- A. My arm! My arm! Where's the pillow!?
- B. Here we go. (Arranges arm pillow.) All comfy? (Silence. Continued.) All comfy?
- A. What?
- B. Nothing. (A knowing smile to C.)
- C. And so it goes?
- B. Un-huh.
- C. What a production.
- B. You haven't seen anything.
- C. I bet!
- A. (To B.) You can't just leave me in there like that. What if I fell? What if I died?
- B. (Considers it; calm.) Well ... if you fell I'd either hear you or you'd raise a racket, and if you died what would it matter?
- A. (Pause; then she laughs; true enjoyment.) You can say that again! (Amused at seeing C not amused.) What's the matter with you?
- C. (Small silence, until she realizes she's being talked to.) Who!? Me!?
- A. Yes. You.
- C. What's the matter with me?
- B. (Amused.) That's what she said.
- A. That's what I said.
- C. (Panicking a little.) What are you all doing — ganging up on me?
- B. (To A.) Is that what we're doing?
- A. (Enjoying it greatly.) Maybe!
- C. (To defend herself.) There's nothing the matter with me.
- B. (Sour smile.) Well ... you just wait.
- A. What did she say?
- B. She says there's nothing the matter with her — Miss Perfect over there.
- C. I didn't say that; that's not what I...!!