

CHELSEA. Great.

ETHEL. I'll get the yard light. *(She reaches by the door and flicks it. The trees light up.)* I generally keep it off to discourage the June bugs. *(She starts to open the door.)* Now, we're going to have to make a run for it all at once. Ready? *(She opens the door and pushes Billy through. Chelsea follows.)*

CHELSEA. The screen door has fallen down.

ETHEL. Oh, really? Norman will fix it. *(She steps through the door, closing it. Their voices can be heard as they cross the porch and disappear down the steps. Norman, in the meantime, has sat down in his chair. Bill stands for a moment, a shade uncomfortable.)*

BILL. So. You're a baseball fan, huh?

NORMAN. No.

BILL. Oh. I like baseball. I like the Dodgers.

NORMAN. Oh, really? They moved out west somewhere, didn't they?

BILL. Um. Yes. To Los Angeles. Some years ago.

NORMAN. They still in the big leagues?

BILL. Oh, yes. They're a real powerhouse in the National League West.

NORMAN. Well, bless their little hearts. *(There is a long pause.)*

BILL. Um. How does it feel to turn eighty?

NORMAN. It feels twice as bad as it did turning forty.

BILL. Oh, well, I know what that's like.

NORMAN. Do you?

BILL. Yes. I turned forty five years ago. I'm forty-five now. *(Realizing how stupid that sounded, he forges on.)* I ... love your house.

NORMAN. It's not for sale.

BILL. Oh, no. I wasn't thinking about buying it. I just like it.

NORMAN. Oh. Me, too.

BILL. It has a charming ambiance.

NORMAN. Does it?

BILL. Yes. Norman?

NORMAN. Yes?

BILL. May I call you Norman?

NORMAN. I believe you just did.

BILL. I don't want to press.

NORMAN. No.

BILL. I'll call you Norman then.

NORMAN. Fine.

BILL. What shall I call your wife?

NORMAN. How about Ethel? That's her name. Ethel Thayer. Thoundth ath ith I'm lithping, doethn't it? Ethel Thayer. It almost kept her from marrying me. She wanted me to change my last name to hers.

BILL. What was that?

NORMAN. I don't remember. Ethel's all you need to know. That's the name she goes by.

BILL. I never knew. Chelsea always calls her Mommy.

NORMAN. There's a reason for that.

BILL. But she calls you Norman.

NORMAN. There's a reason for that, too. *(He pauses.)* I am her father, if you're trying to figure it out. I'm her father but not her daddy. Ethel is her mommy, and I'm Norman.

BILL. *(Confused.)* Oh. Is it all right if I sit down?

NORMAN. As far as I'm concerned it is. *(Bill sits. Norman stares at him. Bill tries to smile. Norman abruptly rises.)* I think I'll start a new book. See if I can finish it before I'm finished myself. Maybe a novelette. *(He steps to the shelves and studies the collection.)* Maybe something in Reader's Digest Condensed. *(He pulls down a book.)*

Here's *Swiss Family Robinson*. Ever read it?

BILL. Oh, yes. It's great. I'd recommend it.

NORMAN. No need for that. I've read it, too. *(He sits again.)* But my mind's going so it'll all be new to me. *(He opens the book.)* Has that son of yours read this book?

BILL. I ... don't think so.

NORMAN. Your son hasn't read *Swiss Family Robinson*?

BILL. No. But I intend to have him read it. I'm afraid his mother's been the motivating force in his life the last few years, the poor kid, and now I'm making a move to eradicate some of the ... dishevelment. *(Norman stares at Bill without comment. He returns to his book. Bill feels compelled to communicate.)* Yeah, things are coming together for me pretty nicely now. The practice is real strong, and I'm feeling very good about myself. Meeting Chelsea has been a major...thing. And she's really flowering. She likes her job a lot, and she's been doing some beautiful paintings. We have a very kinetic relationship. Very positive. I'm sure you'd be pleased. *(Norman looks up. There is a pause.)*

NORMAN. What do you charge for a filling?

BILL. Huh?

NORMAN. You're a dentist, aren't you? What do you charge for

Norman, Bill