

**TURTLE PLAY**  
**(THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)**

By  
Samantha Marchant

# TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

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TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

*Turtle Play (The Play about the Turtle)* was originally produced at The Space in Rochester, NY during the Rochester Fringe Festival, featuring the following cast:

Cedar.....Sarah Del Favero

Dawn.....Katie Guy

Reed.....Zac Darling

Maggie.....Drea Bim

Directed by Angela Giuseppetti

CAST: 1 Man, 3 Women

CEDAR WEBSTER Mid 30s, F, Ash Webster's widow

DAWN WEBSTER 60s, F, Ash Webster's mother

REED TALON Late 20s, M, tenant in Cedar Webster's home

MAGGIE GRAINE Mid 20s, F, Ash Webster's mistress

TIME: Early summer.

PLACE: A screen porch.

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

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# TURTLE PLAY

## (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

### SCENE 1

*The screen porch attached to Cedar's (and formally Ash's) house. It is a porch that collects things. There is a door leading inside and maybe more porch wrapping around the building. There is a window and it's implied on the other side is the kitchen. DAWN sits. CEDAR masks the struggle between herself, a large piece of luggage, and the law of inertia. Some not talking.*

**DAWN.** Am I supposed to talk to you? *(A little more not talking. Cedar manages to make it to directly in front of the inside door.)*

**CEDAR.** Are you sure you wouldn't like the master bedroom, Mrs. Webster? *(No response. Cedar takes the bag. Exits. Reenters. She stiffly sits with Dawn. Some more not talking.)* I think there might have been another bag in the Subaru. *(Exits. REED enters upstage of Dawn. He sets down a turtle tank that has large lettering depicting "AMBROSE.")*

**DAWN.** *(To Reed.)* Would you mind fetching me some coffee? *(Holds mug over shoulder. Reed hesitates almost for a moment before he gingerly takes it and heads inside.)* God knows there's not one tea bag to be found inside this house. Aunt Lil— do you remember her? I think you met her once. Was it you who said her dog smelt like sea salt? Anyway, Aunt Lil never had any tea— only coffee. When I stayed with her the summer before I married Dad, I learned how to choke the stuff down. I've kept away from it ever since. Didn't want to risk all that intraocular pressure, but it would do me good to drink something warm. *(Reed has returned with a full mug.)* Thank you. Just the way I can tolerate it. You're such a good boy, taking care of this old bag of bones— *(Cedar enters with the last bag.)* But when are you going to give me grandchildren?

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**CEDAR.** (*Delicately.*) Mrs. Webster—this isn't—Ash is—Ash—isn't here.

**DAWN.** (*Displaced only for a moment.*) Of course, he isn't.

**CEDAR.** But you said—

**REED.** It was more of a rhetorical thing. A question to the universe.

**CEDAR.** (*To self.*) And the universe always said no.

**DAWN.** I told Ashley that he should have found a girl capable—

**CEDAR.** We were perfectly capable.

**DAWN.** It doesn't matter anymore.

**CEDAR.** Doesn't it?

**REED.** Does it?

**DAWN.** (*Turning to Reed.*) Cedar, there is a strange man in my son's house merely *one* month after he—

**CEDAR.** This is not a strange man, Mrs. Webster, this is...

**CEDAR AND REED.** ...Reed.

**DAWN.** And Reed is...

**REED.** Living here.

**DAWN.** *One* month after my— Cedar, I don't care what—

**CEDAR.** Reed is renting out the back room.

**REED.** Pleased to meet you, roomie. (*Offers hand to Dawn for a shake. She rejects it.*)

**DAWN.** I'm not—

**CEDAR.** Your room is on the other side of the house.

**DAWN.** When Ash suggested I move in, he made no mention of—

**CEDAR.** Ash and I didn't know when we asked you to—

**DAWN.** Ashley would never have dreamed of— in his house—

**CEDAR.** This was *our* house. Now it's mine— ours. As in yours, mine, and...

**CEDAR AND REED.** ...Reed's.

**CEDAR.** And we are all going to try our best to share the space.

**REED.** I'm game if you are. (*Offers Dawn his hand again. She rejects.*)

**DAWN.** But who is he?

**CEDAR.** Reed.

**DAWN.** But where did he come from?

**CEDAR.** Uh...

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**REED.** (*Saving CEDAR.*) Uh... I came from a little place north of here called Picture Rock.

**DAWN.** But where did you find him?

**CEDAR.** Hmm? Well. He found us.

**DAWN.** Whatever do you mean?

**CEDAR.** You remember the other day when Mrs. Kelp called from the florist and said that she had just gotten in a huge bundle of snapdragons, and she asked if those would be all right instead of the lilies. And I said why not, he never cared too much about flowers anyway, as anyone can see from our garden outside. Ash was much more fond of clearing the front walk. He liked it free of twigs and pebbles. It's funny what people find beautiful. He said seeing that nice, white cement meant he had a clear shot to me waiting inside for him. So, I said I was okay with snapdragons. But then I called you and you insisted on lilies, that there had to be lilies that this is what lilies are for. I tried to get Mrs. Kelp back on the line, but it rang off the hook. So, I decided to drive down there and when I was in the shop, there was Reed.

**DAWN.** So, he works there. (*To Reed.*) You're a florist?

**REED.** No, I wouldn't say that...

**DAWN.** Then what would you say?

**REED.** Well—

**DAWN.** Well?

**REED.** No. I'm not.

**DAWN.** Then what were you doing there?

**REED.** I saw something pretty through the window and stumbled in. (*Beat.*) It was a lily to put in Ambrose's tank.

**CEDAR.** And I obviously had to speak to him, as I was trying to commandeer every lily in the shop, and I simply couldn't let someone come in there and buy one from right under my nose.

**DAWN.** So, you had a chat and...

**REED.** She eventually let me have it. The lily. Once I told her my turtle was going through a rough time.

**DAWN.** Your—? Never mind. None of this explains why he's here.

**REED.** It's simple really.

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**DAWN.** Going from jawing about turtle flowers to inhabiting my son's home, simple. Really?

**REED.** Yes.

**DAWN.** How so?

**REED.** After I bought Ambrose's flower—

**DAWN.** Ambrose?

**REED.** My turtle.

**DAWN.** Obviously.

**REED.** I had mentioned to Cedar that I'd just arrived in town and needed a place to stay—

**CEDAR.** And I thought about how we never use that back room and if he was willing to pay, I could sure use the money.

**DAWN.** Money! What happened to Ash's money?

**CEDAR.** It's still there.

**DAWN.** Then why—

**CEDAR.** I need some of my own.

**DAWN.** Whatever could you—?

**CEDAR.** Peace of mind.

**DAWN.** Cedar, you're being silly. What do you know about this man? And you're just letting him live here in my son's house—

**CEDAR.** Mrs. Webster, please! This home belongs to all three of us now.  
*(Some not talking.)*

**REED.** Let me take this bag to your room. *(Exits with bag. Dawn follows.)*

**DAWN.** Hold on. Please. Don't jostle it around like that! Things— might break... *(Dawn exits. Cedar is alone.)*

**CEDAR.** *(Sighs.)* Ash. You were supposed to be here for this. *(Phone rings. Cedar answers.)* Hello...? Yes, this is Mrs. Webster... The younger... Yes. Cedar... Yes, the one married to Ash... Thank you... I appreciate— Thank you... Oh, yes, I'm sorry. I just haven't been able to make it into town... Yes, it has been hard. Thank you... I will try to stop by within the next couple of days— Well, of course, I haven't picked it up already— Why else would you be calling?... What did you say your name was again? Is this— is this— *(Hard for her to say.)* Maggie? You shouldn't— never call here! *(Throws the phone back on the hook. Cries.)* Ash. Ash. Why did you leave me like this?



TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**SCENE 2**

*It is very early in the morning a couple days later. Cedar folds an afghan and puts it on the back of the couch. Her thoughts are caught in a dream. Dawn enters, fully awake.*

**DAWN.** You're up early.

**CEDAR.** Yes.

**DAWN.** Never thought of you as an early riser.

**CEDAR.** How is your room? Did you sleep all right?

**DAWN.** That's one thing gained from getting on in years. You can fall asleep just about anywhere. Even in a tuna can.

**CEDAR.** Mrs. Webster, I'd be happy to switch if you'd like more room.

**DAWN.** No, no. There's no use both of us having to give up our marital beds in this move. (*Beat.*) Any bit of memory you can hold on to.

**CEDAR.** Yes.

**DAWN.** So. What do you think?

**CEDAR.** Hmm?

**DAWN.** Do you think Oakley will take you back?

**CEDAR.** Oh, they must have filled my position ages ago. I'd be lucky to get a job at their reception desk.

**DAWN.** Rose told me that Mainland over on 8th is looking for—

**CEDAR.** Thank you, Mrs. Webster, but I don't think I'm going back to work just yet.

**DAWN.** Well, when are you?

**CEDAR.** I don't know.

**DAWN.** I thought you wanted money of your own? Afraid that Ash's money will run out?

**CEDAR.** It won't for a while yet. And Reed's rent is helping out with the mortgage. It will give me enough time to get my head on straight.

**DAWN.** I don't understand. What are you saving up for that you decide to take in a lodger but refuse to use Ash's money and you refuse to get a job?

**CEDAR.** Mrs. Webster, thank you for your concern, but I do have a plan.

**DAWN.** But what will you do?

**CEDAR.** What do you mean?

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**DAWN.** You very well can't sit around the house—

**CEDAR.** (*Genuine.*) Can't I? What do you do?

**DAWN.** I have lived my life, but you have—

**CEDAR.** I have a world of possibilities out there, but I think I want to have a baby.

**DAWN.** What?

**CEDAR.** A baby. I'm going to have a baby.

**DAWN.** Did Ashley know before—?

**CEDAR.** No—

**DAWN.** It is Ash's, isn't it? Please do not tell me it is that *man's* in the back room— He was up half the night talking to himself. I heard him. To go from Ashley to that. How long have you two been together? I'm not so old that I'm going to believe a story about a man and turtle flowers. You better not have— When my son was still—

**CEDAR.** Oh, what would it have mattered? And I'm not, nor was I ever, together with Reed. I'm not, nor am I planning to be, pregnant. If I could have Ash's baby, I would. But now that he's gone, I want to adopt.

**DAWN.** Adopt!

**CEDAR.** Yes, adopt.

**DAWN.** You can't be serious.

**CEDAR.** Why not? Our next step was to have a baby, so it's only natural—

**DAWN.** Who's going to give you a baby?

**CEDAR.** Why shouldn't I get a baby?

**DAWN.** You have no husband. Who would be the father?

**CEDAR.** I'm perfectly capable of—

**DAWN.** It doesn't matter what you are capable of. There is still a person missing. A void you shouldn't willingly invite into a baby's life. A child should have two parents. A father is needed to balance out—

**CEDAR.** Fine! Ash.

**DAWN.** What?

**CEDAR.** Ash will be the baby's father.

**DAWN.** How can he—

**CEDAR.** I'll tell the baby—

**DAWN.** Cedar, Ash can't be—

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**CEDAR.** Oh, what's the difference? Ash always said you practically raised him yourself.

**DAWN.** If I didn't have the ability to tell Ashley what his father, God rest his soul, was going to do to him when he got home—

**CEDAR.** If the only thing a father is good for is—

**DAWN.** How dare you insinuate—

**CEDAR.** I never said it. Ash did. *(Beat.)* I'm sorry.

**DAWN.** I don't know if I'm willing to forgive you just yet.

**CEDAR.** I was saying sorry to Ash. *(Some not talking.)*

**DAWN.** Since it's clear, you do not care about what I think, please consider how my Ashley would have reacted.

**CEDAR.** My Ash would have said I would make the perfect mother.

**DAWN.** Oh, Cedar. How could you say that considering—

**CEDAR.** What? What is there to consider, Mrs. Webster? *(They both know the answer to that question.)*

**DAWN.** Considering... I didn't really mean anything by it.

**CEDAR.** Oh?

**DAWN.** It's nothing.

**CEDAR.** Yes, that's what I thought you said before.

**DAWN.** It doesn't matter. However, what does matter is how could you consider obtaining a baby, in any which way, when you're still so fragile?

**CEDAR.** Fragile?

**DAWN.** *(More condescending than sweet.)* Cedar, dear—

**CEDAR.** With all due respect, Mrs. Webster, I'm the one who decides when I am or am not fragile and I have stopped being fragile quite a while ago. *(Some not talking.)*

**DAWN.** Well, I'm off back to my tuna can of a room.

**CEDAR.** Mrs. Webster—

**DAWN.** My opinion there is still held in high regard. *(Exits.)*

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**SCENE 3**

*A few days later. Reed holds Ambrose, the turtle, who is tucked into his shell.*

**REED.** *(Quietly coaxing.)* Turtle. Turtle. *(Taps the shell.)* Am—Ambrose. *(Tap.)* Turtle. *(Beat.)* Fine. *(He tosses Ambrose aside. He putters around the porch, but after a few moments he cannot help but glance back a few times at the shell. Reed tries tapping it again to make Ambrose come out. Continues tapping. As the time between taps decreases, the force of the taps greatly increases until he is using two hands. Dawn enters during one of Reed's windups. He is somehow able to recover. Dawn sits and works on a crossword puzzle. Some not talking.)* “Agnate.”

**DAWN.** Pardon?

**REED.** “Agnate.” Seven down six letters. “Agnate: any male relation on the father’s side.” That one took me forever to figure out. *(Some more not talking.)* And nine across is or—

**DAWN.** Please.

**REED.** Like to do it on your own? That’s fine. *(Beat.)* Let me know if you need help with twelve down. *(Beat.)* “A source, precursor, or progenitor.” That one’s tricky. *(Some more not talking. Reed makes some sounds as he interacts with Ambrose.)*

**DAWN.** And how is your girlfriend?

**REED.** Don’t have one.

**DAWN.** *(Bluntly.)* Boyfriend?

**REED.** *(Unfazed.)* Don’t have one of those either.

**DAWN.** How’s your mother then?

**REED.** I don’t know.

**DAWN.** Then was it your boss?

**REED.** Huh?

**DAWN.** Really, a mere acquaintance wouldn’t tolerate listening to you for that long—

**REED.** What are you talking—?

**DAWN.** Last night—

**REED.** What?

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**DAWN.** You were on the phone—

**REED.** I don't have a phone.

**DAWN.** But you were talking. Well into the night, I might add. For a couple of nights now. I could hear it through the wall. Was there someone in there with you?

**REED.** No, it was just me and Ambrose bunking together last night.

**DAWN.** Your turtle?

**REED.** Yes, the turtle. (*Beat.*) What were you doing on the other side of my wall?

**DAWN.** What?

**REED.** Your room's near the front of the house. Why were you back there?

**DAWN.** I was... It's really none of your business.

**REED.** (*Matter of fact.*) No, it's not. And it's really none of your business if I have someone in my room.

**DAWN.** No, it's not. (*Beat.*) I was getting a glass of water.

**REED.** And I was alone. Plus Ambrose. (*Some not talking.*) Maybe you dreamt it.

**DAWN.** What?

**REED.** The talking. Me talking. Because who stays up all night talking to a turtle?

**DAWN.** You're right. How silly it would be to think that. (*Some not talking.*) Ambrose is such an unusual name for a turtle. At least I'd imagine so. How did you come up with it?

**REED.** I didn't.

**DAWN.** Oh.

**REED.** His parents did. I mean his previous owners. I've only had him for a little while.

**DAWN.** It seems like you've bonded. (*Some not talking.*)

**REED.** Turtles are a lot of responsibility. They're not like goldfish that die in their baggy before you get them home from the fair. Once you get 'im you gotta take care of them for a long time. The buggers never die.

**DAWN.** Do you know how old he is?

**REED.** Yes.

**DAWN.** (*Beat.*) That's nice.

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**REED.** He turned 29 last March. *(Beat.)* We share a birthday.

**DAWN.** 29? Oh, when you said- I wasn't expecting that long—

**REED.** No one ever does. That's the trouble with people buying pets without doing their research. More beings end up down the drain that way— if they're the kind that can fit.

**DAWN.** I suppose they didn't do the research.

**REED.** Who?

**DAWN.** His previous owners.

**REED.** Oh, no. They knew what they were in for all right.

**DAWN.** Then what happened?

**REED.** Hmm?

**DAWN.** Did something happen to his previous owners?

**REED.** Why would something have happened to them?

**DAWN.** I see no reason why they wouldn't be perfectly happy with Ambrose. You two seem to be having the time of your lives. Or are you the only one who has slumber parties with his turtle?

**REED.** No, they were having a swell time together.

**DAWN.** Then why'd they give him to you?

**REED.** Oh, they didn't give him to me.

**DAWN.** All right "sold" him then. After all that time of keeping him... 29-years-old you said, right? How long do turtles normally live for?

**REED.** Unless you get one the day you're born, it'll probably out live you. Turtles can live up to as long as most humans.

**DAWN.** And how long is that?

**REED.** I'm surprised most people make it to 40. How old are you?

**DAWN.** 68.

**REED.** Well. *(Beat.)* Good for you. *(Cedar enters. She carries in a pile of mail.)*

**CEDAR.** Mrs. Webster. Dr. Quince's office telephoned.

**DAWN.** And?

**CEDAR.** And they asked why we haven't called to refill your prescription. Mrs. Webster. Are you supposed to be taking some sort of medication?

**REED.** *(To the room.)* Someone else called earlier. No one answered by the fifth ring, so I thought I would. Hope that's okay. Think she said her name was... Maggie?

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**CEDAR.** *(To Reed.)* Did you say Maggie?

**DAWN.** *(To Cedar.)* I haven't run out—

**CEDAR.** What did she say?

**DAWN.** —of my pills yet.

**REED.** *(To Cedar.)* It had something to do with...

**CEDAR.** *(To Dawn.)* The woman said you should have been out of them months ago—

**REED.** I don't know... money? That's the only reason why people call people.

**CEDAR.** Mrs. Webster. If the doctor thinks you should be taking this medication—

**DAWN.** Oh, why don't you just get your baby already so you can stop babying me? *(A moment of not talking. Cedar shifts through the mail.)*

**REED.** Congratulations. You're going to be a grandmother. *(Beat. Then to Cedar.)* Not to be rude— but shouldn't you— I mean— Is it rude to say someone isn't as fat as— expected— I mean— is super skinny— considering— I mean— it was my understanding that Ash died at least—

**DAWN.** She's not pregnant. She's adopting.

**REED.** Well. That's a bad idea.

**DAWN.** Exactly what I said.

**CEDAR.** *(Opens up an envelope.)* Oh, but it was so much nicer when you said it.

**REED.** I'm sorry. I'm not trying to be rude. But, Cedar, have you thought of the consequences?

**DAWN.** Consequences? Is that really the way to put it?

**REED.** I mean, the kid is just going to grow up to kill someone.

**DAWN.** Hold on.

**CEDAR.** What!

**REED.** Yeah, I hear it all the time on the radio.

**DAWN.** What do you hear?

**REED.** The announcer comes on and he'll say "Yadda, yadda, yadda, this just in... multiple homicide committed by a victim of adoption."

**DAWN.** A victim of adoption?

**REED.** Well, he doesn't say it in so many words. Really what he says is some people got killed by some guy. But if you keep listening to the

## TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

broadcast you hear him talk about how the murderer's *adoptive* parents just don't understand what happened.

**CEDAR.** Isn't the correlation a little weak—

**REED.** No, no, no. I swear it's not bullshit. It happens all the time. And how would you like it to turn into one of those adoptive moms who gets the phone call from the neighbors before she even hears it on the news that little Ash or little Cedar went on a killing spree? At that point, it won't matter how well you raised him, how much you loved him, or how often you told him you were his "real" mom. And all those times you helped him with his math homework, and all those boo-boos you kissed, and all those heart-to-hearts you had with him in the car, carting him back and forth to debate club competitions are all thrown out the window. Because your little adopted baby has killed someone. And everyone is going to blame you. But don't blame yourself. I've listened to enough of these stories to know there was nothing that you could have done to change the outcome. Deep inside these kids grows a little pit that tells them that you're not their mom and nothing matters. The pit grows into a great big hole as they wonder why their actual, real, biological parents left them. What possible reason did they have to decide to go on living life without their little baby? The kid begins to obsess, thinking that those "real" parents are the only things that can fill them up. So, they go out to find them. And once they find them, it's kinda a letdown. I know because nine times out of ten the radio says the adopted kid killed their biological parent. I guess this only truly applies to babies whose "real" parents are still alive, so if you really have your heart set on it... you gotta just make damned sure that the baby's "real" parents are already dead.

**DAWN.** That is the most ridic—

**CEDAR.** Reed, you can't possibly believe—

**REED.** No, really. I have some transcripts from the library in my room. It's become sort of a hobby—

**CEDAR.** Reed—

**REED.** Think about it. Sixteen years after— I mean, it's in *Freakanomics* that—

**CEDAR.** I'm sure my child would be the exception to your rule.



## TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**REED.** Probably not. Just keep in mind the whole parents already dead thing.

**CEDAR.** Is it really your place—?

**REED.** I mean, if you want a baby so badly—

**CEDAR.** Reed!

**REED.** —I'd knock you up. (*Beat. Cedar exits silently. A few moments of not talking. Then to himself.*) I would.

**DAWN.** Play with your turtle.

### SCENE 4

*That night. Cedar sits on the couch tangled in blankets. She is shifting through some things in a cardboard box in front of her. There are a couple other boxes in the room.*

**CEDAR.** (*Longingly.*) Ash. (*She hears footsteps and puts the box aside. She springs up from the couch. Reed enters. They look at each other. Cedar looks away first. She doesn't make eye contact for the rest of the scene.*)

**REED.** Uh, sorry, Cedar. I was— looking for Ambrose. (*Retrieves Ambrose from the table.*) Got 'im. (*He starts to exit. Stops.*) And Cedar— I'm sorry about— not— remembering what your friend said— and that was really— really— stupid of me, you know? I should have written it down... You know what we need? A pen— or a pencil— your choice— maybe both— one of each— right next to—

**CEDAR.** What?

**REED.** Hmm? A pen?

**CEDAR.** What friend?

**REED.** Maggie— on the phone—

**CEDAR.** She's not— It's fine.

**REED.** Okay. (*A little not talking.*) What'cha looking at there?

**CEDAR.** Hmm?

**REED.** The box.

**CEDAR.** (*Protects the box from Reed.*) I was... just looking at some old things.

## TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**REED.** Yeah?

**CEDAR.** Yeah, umm... (*Shifts through box. Looking for something she's willing to show to him.*) This is something Ash made for me in his sculpture class senior year.

**REED.** So, he was an artist? (*She reveals what she was talking about.*) Or... no. What is it?

**CEDAR.** You know, I don't know. But I've always loved it.

**REED.** Then why's it in a box?

**CEDAR.** Well...

**REED.** I mean who wouldn't jump at the chance to gaze upon this masterpiece every chance they could get?

**CEDAR.** Don't make fun of him.

**REED.** I'm not.

**CEDAR.** He tried—

**REED.** I—

**CEDAR.** And I just haven't found a place for it yet.

**REED.** Okay. That's fine. I'm sorry— I didn't mean... I'd be happy to help you find one. (*Some not talking.*) Well. Back to bed. And Cedar. I'm also sorry about—

**CEDAR.** I know.

**REED.** Okay. All right. Good. (*Exits then reenters. Cedar's back is still to him. She is looking in the cardboard box again. She cries. After a moment Reed leaves. Cedar takes the envelope from scene three out of her pocket. Inside is a photo that she drops into the box.*)

### SCENE 5

*A few days later. Dawn sits with her crossword. Reed enters from the kitchen with two mugs and hands one to Dawn.*

**DAWN.** What's this?

**REED.** Coffee. I was brewing a pot and thought I'd make enough for two.

## TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**DAWN.** How thoughtful. (Takes a gulp.) My how things change so very quickly after they haven't changed in so long.

**REED.** Yes.

**DAWN.** A week ago— (*Gestures to the mug.*) And now— (*Takes another gulp. Erupts into a fit of laughter.*) Imagine. (*Finishes laughing.*) You know, when my poor Mr. Webster was still with us, he wouldn't even allow the word "coffee" to be uttered inside his house. Forty years we lived together and never once did I say "coffee." "*Coffee.*" He used to say it made the weak tweaky and he had no use for tweaky weaklings. It is simply wild to drink this. It was one of the only reasons I agreed to Ashley and Cedar's plan to uproot me and plop me down here. Don't tell her, but I often envied the thought of Cedar getting to drink all the coffee she could ever want in my son's house. Even when my poor Mr. Webster was gone, I wouldn't dare allow myself or anyone else for that matter to bring even the tiniest tin of coffee into that house. I even asked Ash to make sure the new owners were tea drinkers. Imagine. Imagine. It's silly, I know, but— there I go again. Haven't you anything to say?

**REED.** It's fine. You miss him.

**DAWN.** What? Nothing about how did I make it through all those years without coffee? Nothing about how could I stand to stay with a man so demanding?

**REED.** There are worse things a man could do.

**DAWN.** No question like, "If he didn't let you say 'coffee' what else didn't he let you do?"

**REED.** If you wanted to talk about it, you would.

**DAWN.** What if I do want to talk about it?

**REED.** Go ahead.

**DAWN.** There's nothing really else to say.

**REED.** Nothing.

**DAWN.** Why don't some people let a story about coffee be about coffee?

**REED.** Some people feel the urge to dig.

**DAWN.** And you don't?

**REED.** I don't need to. I believe everything you say, Dawn.

**DAWN.** Well, Cedar always makes some sort of comment— Mr. Webster and I were exceptional parents.

## TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**REED.** Of course.

**DAWN.** We might have had our quirks, but what family doesn't? So we weren't allowed to breathe a word about coffee or have coffee on our breath, so what? That was to teach our boy about the harm of caffeine and the use of a good night's sleep. And so what if dinner was on the table, and all three of us were around it, at precisely 7:45 PM every evening, whether the food was burnt or raw? That taught our son family values. And so what if— (*Begins to laugh.*) What if— the capital of Canada is Alaska?

**REED.** What?

**DAWN.** (*Still laughing.*) "Father is always right."

**REED.** What?

**DAWN.** (*Laughing.*) The night before the sixth-grade world fair, little Ashley comes up to us and says, "Mom. Dad. I gotta give a presentation on Canada tomorrow." And I remembered that Dad had had a friend up there, so he probably knew more about it than I did. So, I got out all the poster supplies and I left the boys to it for some father-son bonding. And the next morning at school, we watched as our little Ash got up there in front of the whole crowd and the first words out of his mouth were— (*Cedar enters.*) Do you remember? Ashley, do you remember what you said?

**REED.** (A glance at Cedar, then to Dawn.) Ash said the capital of Canada is Alaska.

**DAWN.** (*Confused only for a moment.*) That's right, Reed. Ashley did say that. And Ashley told me later that he didn't think that sounded right, but that's what Dad said, and "Father is always right." (*Quietly to herself as she begins to exit.*) He might have been doing things other than studying geography up in Canada, but still, he was always right. (*Exits.*)

**CEDAR.** (*After her.*) Mrs. Webster—

**REED.** (*Stopping her.*) Cedar— she'll be all right. It's only when she's tired. It passes.

**CEDAR.** Thank you.

**REED.** For what?

**CEDAR.** I really wish she would take those pills.

**REED.** Well, if she doesn't want to—

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**CEDAR.** She's supposed to. And I'm supposed to make sure she does what she's supposed to. I promised Ash. I don't even know what they're supposed to do. Hopefully they'd stop letting her... do that.

**REED.** What's the harm?

**CEDAR.** She thinks you're him! Of course, there's harm in that.

**REED.** It's not all the time and I don't see how she'll get hurt—

**CEDAR.** I'll get hurt! I do. Seeing how much she believes he's there makes me want him to be here all the more. Sure, a parent shouldn't outlive a child but that doesn't trump the wife's pain. It— it sucks. Completely sucks... This might stop if she would only swallow—

**REED.** You should ask the doctor what they're for before you insist—

**CEDAR.** I can't. I tried. Ash is still listed as her— whatever it is. And— everything is a mess since he's been gone. But you know all that. I guess even death can become old news.

**REED.** Not really.

**CEDAR.** Being cooped up with only the two of us for two whole weeks, you must be tired—

**REED.** No. Everyone has their problems. They need to vent.

**CEDAR.** Everyone, hmm? And yours are?

**REED.** Oh, I see what you did there—

**CEDAR.** Listening to yours will get our minds off of mine.

**REED.** What's there to tell? I tend to keep my problems out there for the world to see. I don't let anything boil up inside. Unhealthy. I'm an open book.

**CEDAR.** (*Realizing.*) And yet I hardly know anything about you.

**REED.** Then let's fill in some of those pages. What is it that you think is worth knowing about Reed Talon?

**CEDAR.** Okay. What line of work are you in?

**REED.** Currently, I'm like Jimmy Stewart in the second third of *Vertigo*. I'm a wanderer.

**CEDAR.** So, you're—

**REED.** —A wanderer.

**CEDAR.** —Unemployed.

**REED.** Yes.

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**CEDAR.** I suppose that line makes a tingle run down every woman's spine.

**REED.** Sometimes it even lets me land a hand on a thigh.

**CEDAR.** (*Dryly.*) Ha. Ha. (*Then back to normal.*) Did you go to school?

**REED.** No one doesn't go to school.

**CEDAR.** I meant college.

**REED.** No one doesn't go to college.

**CEDAR.** What did you study?

**REED.** Isn't it obvious? Communications. Because I am so good at communicating.

**CEDAR.** And I guess that didn't lead anywhere.

**REED.** What do you mean? It led to wandering!

**CEDAR.** So, you just wandered your way here to Maplefield.

**REED.** What?

**CEDAR.** What was the draw to merry old Maplefield?

**REED.** Huh?

**CEDAR.** Well, it obviously wasn't for a job. Girlfriend?

**REED.** Don't have one.

**CEDAR.** Then what one of life's problems brought you here?

**REED.** I wouldn't say...

**CEDAR.** All people move either to get away from or to look for trouble. Which was it? Weren't we discussing your problems to give me a break from mine?

**REED.** Is that what we agreed on?

**CEDAR.** I thought you were an open book?

**REED.** Well...

**CEDAR.** No, it's fine. I'm sorry. I just— you're not supposed to skip to the last chapter, right?

**REED.** Right.

**CEDAR.** Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll stop prying into your affairs. (*Starts to exit. Takes the mugs, but bumps into some of the cardboard boxes. They tumble.*) Damn.

**REED.** I got it. (*Begins to restore boxes.*)

TURTLE PLAY (THE PLAY ABOUT THE TURTLE)

**CEDAR.** Thanks. (*Exits. Reed finishes putting back the boxes. He takes a closer look at its contents. They are photos, mostly of animals. He takes some more out. He begins to set them up around the room.*)

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