

ETHEL. Thanks a lot. Charlie says Miss Appley is just too frail, and Miss Tate won't come without her. One of them has a nephew, I believe, who'll get the house. It's sad, isn't it?

*She finds an ancient doll in a heap by the fireplace.*

Oh, poor Elmer has had a terrible fall.

NORMAN. Who's poor Elmer?

ETHEL. *Elmer*. My doll. He fell in the fireplace. Poor little Elmer. The life you've had. Did you know he turned sixty-five this spring?

NORMAN. No, I must say I wasn't aware of that.

ETHEL. I got him on my fourth birthday. I remember it quite clearly. I wanted a red scooter, but my father said red scooters were excessive and contrary to the ways of the Lord. He told me I'd understand when I was older. I'm a *lot* older now, and I'm afraid I still don't understand. But, he gave me Elmer. And Elmer and I became inseparable. The times we had. He was my first true love, you know.

NORMAN. There's no real need for you to review the vagaries of your youth. I've realized all along that I wasn't the first in line.

ETHEL. No, you were a rather cheap substitute for my darling Elmer. Sixty-five years old. It's hard to think of a doll as being old. He doesn't look much different than he did. A bit faded perhaps. He'd still be a delight to a small child. Chelsea used to love him; and now he's had a fall, poor dear.

NORMAN. Maybe he was trying to kill himself. Maybe he wants to be cremated. Probably got cancer or termites or something.

ETHEL. Would you please shut up? I swear you get more morbid every year.

NORMAN. Wouldn't be a bad way to go, huh? A quick front flip off the mantel, a bit of a kick at the last minute, and land right in the fire. Nothing to it.

ETHEL. Are you hungry, Norman?

NORMAN. Nope. When my number's up, do that for me, would you? Prop me up on the mantel and point out which way is down. I may even shoot for a full gainer with a half twist.

ETHEL. Norman...

NORMAN. It's that little kick at the end I might have trouble with. You could get Charlie and hoist me back up again if I make a mess of it.

ETHEL. Norman...

NORMAN. Give me three tries and we'll go with the highest score. I'd be pretty well dead anyway after three full gainers with half twists, so if I haven't managed to hit the fire by the third go, you could just give me a bit of a nudge.

ETHEL. Norman, you really are becoming a nitwit, aren't you?