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ETHEL. It makes me feel so good to think that Chelsea is finally settling down.

NORMAN. Yes. Want to play a quick game of Parcheesi? Loser drives.

ETHEL. No. Haven't you been humiliated enough? You owe me four million dollars.

NORMAN. Double or nothing?

ETHEL. When we get home, Norman. We've got the whole winter ahead of us.

NORMAN. Yes.

ETHEL. Come on, let's get the other boxes, and be gone. *(She heads into the kitchen. Norman stays where he is, looking about. Ethel calls from offstage.)* Norman!

NORMAN. Yes

ETHEL. Would you come here? *(He crosses to the kitchen door.)*

NORMAN. What is it? *(He exits.)*

ETHEL. *(Offstage.)* Get the last box, if it's not too heavy. *(She enters, carrying a box.)*

NORMAN. Of course it's not too heavy. Good God, this is heavy!

ETHEL. Well, wait and I'll help you with it then.

NORMAN. *(Offstage.)* You're trying to kill me.

ETHEL. I've thought about it. *(She carries her box downstage as he comes out with his. He crosses to the platform. She waits for him at the door. He moves slowly.)*

NORMAN. Whatever have you got in here?

ETHEL. My mother's china. I've decided to take it to Wilmington and use it there.

NORMAN. Good God.

ETHEL. Are you all right?

NORMAN. Yes. Your mother never liked me.

ETHEL. Oh, stop. She loved you.

NORMAN. Then why did she have such heavy china?

ETHEL. Set it back down if it's too much trouble.

NORMAN. I don't want to break your mother's china. Ouch.

ETHEL. Norman! Put the box down! *(He drops his box, which crashes to the floor. Ethel sets down her box as Norman crumples, clutching his chest. She runs to him as he sags to his knees. She helps him lie down, frightened now.)* Where's your medicine? I'm afraid it's in the car. Oh, God. *(She runs to the door and exits. Norman lies still, gasping for breath, in pain. Ethel runs back in with his pill bottle. She kneels by him, struggling to open the bottle.)* Here, take this and

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NORMAN. What is it?

ETHEL. Nitrolycerin. Put it under your tongue.

NORMAN. You must be mad. I'll blow up.

ETHEL. Do it! *(Norman takes the pill. She kneels beside him, watching. He breathes deeply and leans his head back, his eyes closed. Ethel begins to weep.)* Norman? Norman!

NORMAN. *(His eyes closed.)* Maybe you'd better call a doctor.

ETHEL. Oh, yes! *(She jumps up.)* Dear God. *(She rushes to the phone and dials "0.")* Hello, hello. Dear God. How are you feeling, Norman?

NORMAN. Oh, pretty good. How are you?

ETHEL. Is the medicine doing anything?

NORMAN. No.

ETHEL. Why don't they answer the phone?

NORMAN. Whom did you call?

ETHEL. The stupid operator. *(Into the receiver.)* Hello? Hello! I'm going to have to call the hospital directly. *(She hangs up and pulls out the phone book, thumbing through it frantically.)* Hospital, hospital.

NORMAN. Ethel ...

ETHEL. *(Fearing the worst.)* What is it?

NORMAN. Come here. *(Ethel drops the phone book.)*

ETHEL. Oh, God. *(She rushes over and kneels by his side.)* Yes, Norman.

NORMAN. Ethel.

ETHEL. *(Crying.)* Yes. I'm here.

NORMAN. I think I feel all right now.

ETHEL. Are you serious?

NORMAN. I think so. My heart's stopped hurting. Maybe I'm dead.

ETHEL. It really doesn't hurt?

NORMAN. Really doesn't. Shall I dance to prove it?

ETHEL. *(Falling against him.)* Oh, Norman. Oh, thank God. I love you so much. *(She cries.)*

NORMAN. Now my heart's starting to hurt again. Sorry about your mother's china.

ETHEL. Why did you strain yourself? You know better.

NORMAN. I was showing off. Trying to turn you on.

ETHEL. Well, you succeeded. There's no need for you to try that sort of thing again.

NORMAN. Good. *(They sit quietly for a moment.)*

ETHEL. What if we never leave? What if we just stay here and let the leaves fall and the winter come across the lake?

NORMAN. Okay. Then Charlie can find our bodies in the spring.
ETHEL. Then we'll take it with us. We'll pack up the lake and the house and everything and every ... thing and put it in a suitcase and take it home.

NORMAN. Okay, but you're carrying it.

ETHEL. Norman. (*A pause.*) This was the first time I've really felt we were going to die.

NORMAN. I've known it all along.

ETHEL. Yes, I know. But when I looked at you across the room, I could really see you dead. I could see you in your blue suit and a white starched shirt, lying in Thomas's Funeral Parlor on Bradshaw Street.

NORMAN. How did I look?

ETHEL. Not good, Norman. (*Pause.*) You've been talking about dying ever since I met you. It's been your favorite topic of conversation. And I've *had* to think about it. Our parents, my sister and brother, your brother, their wives, our dearest friends, practically everyone from the old days on Golden Pond, all dead. I've seen death, and touched death, and feared it. But today was the first time I've felt it.

NORMAN. How does it feel?

ETHEL. Odd, I guess. But not that bad, really. Almost comforting, not so frightening, not such a bad place to go. I don't know.

NORMAN. (*He nods, affected by her little poem.*) Want to see if you can find my book?

ETHEL. Here it is. (*She finds it on the couch.*) Going to take it?

NORMAN. Nope. It belongs here. Put it on the shelf. (*She crosses and returns the book to its place.*) I'll read it next year.

ETHEL. Yes. Next year. (*She wanders around behind the couch.*) We'll have the whole summer to read and pick berries and play Monopoly, and Billy can come for as long as he likes, and you two can fish, and I'll make cookies, and life will go on, won't it?

NORMAN. I hope so.

ETHEL. This is my favorite time of year on Golden Pond. No bugs.

NORMAN. Nope.

ETHEL. I guess I'll go down and say goodbye to the lake. Feel like coming?

NORMAN. Yes. (*He rises slowly.*)

ETHEL. You sure you're strong enough?

NORMAN. I think so. If I fall over face first in the water, you'll know I wasn't.

ETHEL. (*Waiting for him.*) Well, go easy, for God's sake.

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NORMAN. (*Finally standing and facing her.*) Hello, there.

ETHEL. Hi.

NORMAN. (*Taking her in his arms.*) Want to dance? Or would you rather just suck face?

ETHEL. You really are a case, you know. (*Call of a loon.*) My word, Norman, the loons. They've come round to say goodbye.

NORMAN. How nice.

ETHEL. Just the two of them now. Little baby's grown up and moved to Los Angeles or somewhere.

NORMAN. Yes. (*They kiss. A long, gentle moment passes. They look at each other, and then look away.*)

ETHEL. Well, let's go down. (*They exit. He follows her across the porch and down the steps.*) Hello, Golden Pond. We've come to say goodbye.

End of Play