

BESSIE. I don't feel like guessing.

LEE. Guess.

BESSIE. Three hundred dollars.

LEE. That's right. Three hundred dollars. Why did you guess that?

BESSIE. It just popped into my head.

LEE. Most people would have guessed lower.

BESSIE. Three hundred dollars is a lot of money.

LEE. It's a lot for one day. I feel like my life is finally starting.

BESSIE. Who would take care of them here?

LEE. Doctors. Did you see they have a pool? They have a mirror ball in the cafeteria for disco night. This is a nice place. It even smells nice. Do you want a candy?

BESSIE. No.

LEE. I should take them all. She's kept us waiting so long. Serve her right. I could give them to the boys.

BESSIE. Don't steal them. She'll notice they're gone.

LEE. She's not going to accuse us. She'd be too embarrassed. *(She dumps the candies into her purse.)*

BESSIE. Lee!

LEE. Relax or she'll think you took them.

BESSIE. Put them back.

LEE. I can't. They're all rolling around in my purse.

DIRECTOR. *(Reenters with Xeroxes.)* All right. *(Gives them Xeroxes.)* If you turn to page four, you'll see a chart of the various state and national financial-aid programs for this institution. Do you see that? Page four.

BESSIE. I have the low-impact aerobic schedule.

LEE. So do I.

DIRECTOR. *(Takes Xeroxes and exits.)*

BESSIE. Is the woman at the front desk a nurse?

LEE. She was wearing white.

BESSIE. They do that so you'll think there are more nurses around than there are. Did you touch her hands?

LEE. Why would I touch her hands?

BESSIE. They're ice. She has no circulation. I can't believe they let her touch patients.

LEE. She's probably just a receptionist.
BESSIE. So she's a fake.
LEE. She's not a fake. She's a real receptionist dressed in white.
BESSIE. Dad would have never done this.
LEE. Well.
BESSIE. Do you remember how he cared for Mom?
LEE. I was little. Mom was just this vague presence in a shut room at the end of the hall.
BESSIE. I remember.
LEE. We're doing the mature thing. We're seeing what our options are.
BESSIE. Why can't you take Dad and Ruth?
LEE. The nuns would love that.
BESSIE. You could move down here. You could have the house.
LEE. I don't think so.
BESSIE. Why not?
LEE. I've got Hank to think about.
BESSIE. He's very unhappy there.
LEE. Of course he's unhappy there. If he were happy he wouldn't be there.
BESSIE. You could find a nice place for him here, Lee. You'd have the whole house. The sunshine. You could find work down here.
LEE. No.
BESSIE. Give me one good reason.
LEE. Just no.
BESSIE. Why?
LEE. Because I don't want to. *(Pause.)* I made this decision once already. When Daddy had his first stroke, I made this decision then. I wasn't going to waste my life.
BESSIE. You think I've wasted my life?
LEE. Of course not.
BESSIE. I can't imagine a better way to have spent my life.
LEE. Then we both made the right decision.
BESSIE. You are the most ...
LEE. Say it. You've been saying it a million different ways

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since I got down here.

BESSIE. I have not. I have bent over backwards to avoid having this conversation with you.

LEE. What conversation? ~~(Pause. Bessie opens her purse and puts about a dollar in change in the candy bowl.)~~ What are you doing?

BESSIE. ~~I'm paying her for them.~~

LEE. Put that back.

BESSIE. I'm not going to steal them. It's wrong.

LEE. It's not wrong.

BESSIE. Wrong is wrong.

LEE. It's your money.

DIRECTOR. ~~(Reenters with Xeroxes.)~~ Turn to page four. You'll see a chart of the various financial-aid programs available.

LEE and BESSIE. ~~(Together.)~~ Uh-huh.

DIRECTOR. And you'll see that you don't qualify for any of them.

BESSIE. So you're wasting our time.

DIRECTOR. No. It means you have to drop into a lower income bracket.

BESSIE. Lower?

DIRECTOR. You need to deplete your savings on non-asset acquisitions. Including your home equity.

BESSIE. Lower?

DIRECTOR. Let me explain it again.

LEE. I understand.

DIRECTOR. Then for your sister's benefit. You need to spend your savings and your home equity on something that has no resale value and cannot be considered an asset. Seventy percent of our residents have done this to qualify for assistance.

LEE. What do they buy?

DIRECTOR. Most buy very elaborate tombstones. It's the perfect financial solution. ~~(Pause.)~~

BESSIE. I'm going to wait in the car. ~~(She exits. Pause.)~~

LEE. Do you have something I could take with me? ~~(The Director reaches to pick up a brochure off the table, sees the money in the candy bowl and looks at Lee.)~~

END