

ACT ONE

ANNOUNCER: Hello everyone, and welcome to Radio (*name of your theatre company*). Tonight, we present *Husband? What Husband?* by John Cook. Our tale takes place in the modest home of Bea and Elizabeth, two middle-aged sisters, who due to circumstances not of their doing, are eking out a meager existence. As we begin, Bea is sitting at the kitchen table, reading her favourite tabloid, *The Telling Ink*.

BEA: Well how about that. Descendent of Black Beard the Pirate claims to have a map of buried treasure. Alex Blackentroff says he found the map while planting petunias in his back yard. (*READS OUT LOUD*) "It was in an old coffee tin, Blackentroff stated. There was a big, black x right in the middle, so I knew it was genuine," (*STOPS READING*) Lucky fellow. I wish I could find some buried treasure in my back yard.

SFX: KNOCK ON BACK DOOR

BEA: Now who could that be, knocking at the back door. I'll just take a peek out the window to see.

BEA: He looks harmless, although it's hard to tell, with those sunglasses and hat. Nice golf shirt, though.

SFX: SOUND OF BACK DOOR OPENING

BEA: Hello.

RUDY: Telegram for Mrs. Beatrice Taylor.

BEA: That's me, but I'm not expecting...do they still send telegrams?

RUDY: Is the coast clear?

BEA: Pardon?

RUDY: I just saw Elizabeth leave. Is there anyone else here?

BEA: Who are you?

RUDY: It's me. Rudy. Here, I'll take off my sunglasses and hat.

BEA: Rudy?

RUDY: You've got to help me, Bea.

BEA: Rudy?

RUDY: Yes, it's me.

BEA: But...but you're supposed to be in prison.

RUDY: I escaped.

BEA: You escaped?

RUDY: Yes.

BEA: You escaped prison?

RUDY: Yes.

BEA: You're not supposed to escape. That's bad.

RUDY: I had to, Bea. I couldn't take it anymore.

BEA: No. You have to go back.

RUDY: I can't. Please. You've got to help me. I need a place to hide out until it gets dark.

BEA: How did you manage to escape, anyway?

RUDY: I hopped the fence during a golf game.

BEA: You can't stay here. This is the first place the police will look. At least that's what they say in all the movies.

RUDY: Don't worry. They don't do bed checks on the weekend, so they won't know I'm gone until Monday.

BEA: Wouldn't that make me a felon, you know, helping out another felon?

RUDY: We don't say felon in Canada.

BEA: What do we say?

RUDY: Criminal.

BEA: Okay. Wouldn't that make me a criminal, you know, helping out another criminal?

RUDY: It's just for a couple of hours.

BEA: You have to go back.

RUDY: I can't, Bea.

BEA: But you were doing so well with your counselling.

RUDY: That's just it. I'm a changed man now and no one believes me. They want me to finish my sentence.

BEA: But isn't that what you are supposed to do?

RUDY: I can't stay there any longer. The place is full of criminals. And I'm not a criminal. I've reformed. Please, Bea. I just need some time to...get organized and then I'm heading south.

BEA: To Mexico?

RUDY: No. Sarnia. I have a buddy there who can help get me a new identity. You have got to help me, Bea. You're my only hope.

BEA: But you told me you were going to get a job and pay back the money you stole.

RUDY: I did?

BEA: Yes, on the phone the other day.

RUDY: That's right, I did say that, but now, I'm, ummm, I've decided to do something better.

BEA: What's that?

RUDY: Yes...something better...much better...Say. Is that today's The Telling Ink?

BEA: Yes. I was just --

RUDY: -- Do you mind if I take a quick look at it? We don't get such high-class publications at the farm.

SFX: SOUND OF PAPER RUSTLING

BEA: So what did you say you're going to do?

RUDY: Umm... yes...I'm going to...

SFX: SOUND OF PAPER RUSTLING

RUDY: Ahha. I'm going to Africa and help dig wells.

BEA: Really?

RUDY: Yes. And look. What a coincidence. There's an article about it right here on page nine. I'm going to join Professor Thedavid, on his expedition to the Sahara Desert.

BEA: Oh. I was just reading about that. They say he can smell underground water. But you don't know anything about digging wells.

RUDY: My...roommate...Gary...was a... hydro engineer. He was supposed to be part of The David's team but had a dispute with Revenue Canada and ended up on the farm. He was devastated. This project was his life's work. So...So...he planned to escape, but then he...he...discovered he had cancer and only a few months to live. So, he begged me to go in his place.

BEA: Oh, that poor man.

RUDY: Yes. He taught me all about digging wells. We spent hours in the library, pouring over the internet. It was then I discovered, this is what I was meant to do with my life.

BEA: Now Rudy, you're not pulling my leg, are you?

RUDY: No. No.

BEA: But what about all the money you stole?

RUDY: What's more important? Giving back money to a bunch of rich stiff people or saving the lives of millions of thirsty people.

BEA: I suppose, but --

RUDY: -- I really feel this is my calling, Bea.

BEA: Digging wells in Africa?

RUDY: I want to make amends for the wrongs I have done. I want to do something to make the world a better place. But most of all, I want to do this, for Gary.

BEA: But --

RUDY: -- I made him a promise on his death cot, Bea. (PAUSE) Tears streamed down his eyes as I held his hand, and I said I would carry on, where he couldn't. And then, with a smile on his face, he left this world. I have to do this, Bea.

BEA: (TEARFULLY) How noble of you, Rudy. That poor man. Of course, you can stay.

RUDY: Oh, thank you, Bea. You are the best.

BEA: But we need to tell Elizabeth.

RUDY: No! She'll turn me in, in a second.

BEA: No, she won't. We'll tell her about your plans for Africa. How you've changed.

RUDY: I'm afraid she's not as understanding as you.

BEA: I don't like keeping secrets.

RUDY: Of course, but sometimes, one has to think of the greater good. Do this for Gary.

BEA: Okay. You can stay in the storage room under the basement stairs. But you have to be gone by the morning.

RUDY: No problem. Say, what happened to that lovely red rose bush in your back yard?

BEA: Red rose bush?

RUDY: Yeah. It's gone. There's a Buddha statue in its place.

SFX: SOUND OF FRONT DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

BEA: That must be Elizabeth. Quick, into the basement.

RUDY: Okay, but could you bring me something to eat? I'm starving.

BEA: How about a tuna sandwich?

RUDY: Tuna? I was thinking maybe smoked meat on rye. With a bit of mustard and a dill pickle. You know how much I love dill pickles. And a beer. Not a domestic, I --

BEA: -- Tuna is all we have. And you'll have to settle for a ginger ale. Now get downstairs.

RUDY: But --

BEA: -- Now.

SFX: SOUND OF BASEMENT DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING