

Why is there a beat up old . . . where did the kid come from? If the scraggily street urchin thinks that I'll give her something, it's not going to happen. Tell her to get lost.

Good grief – talk about a dishrag – the vagrant is probably the ragamuffin's mother as . . . so help me – if the scrawny waif doesn't stop pulling on your arm . . . eh? What's it to her if I'm a . . . tell her that that there's no way that I'm going to be whoever's man no matter how many times that she says please. I've had it with tramps who use a kid to . . . there's no way that she's fooling me using a lame story that she's going to be six years old and that . . .

Now it's the disgusting transient who's always . . . if she calls me sonny boy one more time . . . great – now the homeless scamp just called you sonny boy.

You need to get out of here – like right now. If you don't finish doing what the flighty four and generalissima are expecting you to have finished by the time that they show up in the office, you're going to feel their stifling hands around your neck – again. Are you having fun yet being the office's whipping boy?

Ask the bag lady if she knows where the numbskull went to who parked the wreck that's behind old tin can tank. Guy – you'll be here all day if you don't tell the annoying windbag that you're tired of her telling you that a day is beautiful even when it's raining cats and dogs or freezing cold or really windy or . . . it's the scarecrow's?

If the old cart pusher doesn't stop that weird cackling . . . what's happening right now can't be the funniest thing that she's ever seen. It's not funny that . . . you've got to get her to get it that you've got to get to the office. It's going to take you at least another couple of hours to finish assembling the latest project.

Come on guy – what's wrong with you? Stop thinking about yourself and . . . the lifeless ragdoll looks like she's about to keel over. Having a hyperactive, motormouth kid would wear anyone out. Ask the walking broomstick that if she's okay with you driving her car, that you'll move it so that . . . mom mom can't drive mommy's car anymore because a tire went boom?

Twitchy told mom mom to stop mommy's car behind a nice man's car? She's glad that twitchy knows that I'm nice? And can she be a nummycall, too? Did you really think that the old coot would tell you what's happening? The meddling old fool should be glad that the mouthy imp didn't call her a witch instead of . . .

Before you say another word, walk back to the first bench that's on the boardwalk that faces the ocean, sit down on it, wait for the sun to come up over the horizon – which will be in a few minutes and . . . maybe whoever mom mom and her kid are will get the hint and . . . guy – come on – you know that they can't leave with that tire like it is.

Just because – other than sleeping for a couple of hours a night, the only break that you're taking from what you've been doing week after week – seven days a week – since you were hired right out of school to do what you haven't been able to do – yet, is to enjoy the smell of ocean air and to hear the sound of waves breaking on the beach as you walk the boardwalk every morning from this end to the other end and back – timing your walk to get back here just as the sun is – if there aren't any clouds blocking it, coming up over the horizon.

When are you going to learn that no matter how hard that you try, that not one of those gals will be happy with what you've done – and that for the next five or six hours – or until they leave, you're their slave to do whatever it is that they've to have done with each gal wanting what she's expecting you to do, to do it first. Nothing has changed. You were your family's runt and now you're the office wimp.

That little brat needs to shut up or . . . and it isn't helping that the old hag is egging the little shrimp on while her mother looks as forlorn as I've ever seen anyone look. The poor thing looks like the world has caved in on her. The least that you can do guy is to acknowledge the gal. Maybe if you talk to her, her kid will stop telling you that you're now her daddy – but that she's going to call you sonny boy, too – that you're going to help her start first grade in a school – that mom mom will have a man who can buy her nice clothes – that just as soon as mom mom throws mommy in the ocean that . . . what? You need to give the kid a pass as it's clear that someone has . . .

If that crazy beggar doesn't stop right now her . . . tell the old battle-ax that it's wrong for her at my expense to think that everything is hilarious. The old crone's body is shaking like a bowl of Jell-O. Glaring at her sure isn't . . .

You knew better than to say something again to the old drifter. No one though has the right to think that someone's misfortune can be as amusing as she seems to think that it is. Who knows how long that she has been coming here every morning – always showing up with that rickety old green folding chair that she always sits in at the end of the boardwalk perpendicular to the ocean? It's a good thing that pushing a shopping cart through sand is really hard to do otherwise . . . who knows where the bridge is where she spends her nights and hides the cart when she comes here every morning to . . . and this always trying to be friendly with me . . . I've really had it with panhandlers.

Why is this happening to me? I really need to be on my way to the office – like right now. It's hard enough trying to survive the four-headed plus one monster for however long that those five self-absorbed gals are in the office let alone now three random bottom feeders. I can't let these three misfits mess up what I really have to do today.

If the wannabee Orphan Annie hadn't pulled her old heap up almost against old tin can tank's back bumper, you'd be able to worm yourself out of where you're parked. Pulling ahead isn't an option because you're already up against the railing that keeps vehicles from driving out on the sand. Calling for an uber would be an option if I knew that old tin can tank wouldn't be impounded. The meter that's right behind the railing that's giving me free parking right now is going to have to begin to be fed in an hour or so otherwise . . .

You don't have a choice but to do what it takes to . . . now what's her problem? Why does the little minion want to know if it's time? It's time to throw her mother into the ocean? You had to have heard her wrong as . . .

Why does the little mischief maker want to know if I hear music? Tell the little scamp that the music is coming from the first building that's on the boardwalk – that that kind of music is always coming from that building every morning just as the sun is starting to peak over the eastern horizon – that . . .

And now the little troublemaker is telling her mother to get the jar out of the car – what's that about? And now everyone is to hurry up and get to the water? Her mother definitely isn't as excited as her kid is about whatever it is that . . . that presumptuous little . . . if you'd tried to at her age tell the old man to do something like she's telling her mother, you know that you would've ended up in your room until the next day with a very sore . . . that's an urn that the sorry looking gal just got of her wreck. Isn't there something else that the spunky little scallywag can say other than hurry, hurry, hurry to her mother? The sun can be seen coming up over the ocean just as easy here as it is next to the water so what's the big deal about having to . . .

Tell her that you're not her daddy and that you're absolutely not going with her to the edge of the water. There's no way that she can make me walk in dress shoes on the sand. I don't want to get them wet if a wave should . . . go with her sonny boy? Telling the crazy witch that it's none of her business that . . . what has gotten into you? Just because you now have a little snip running your life, that doesn't give you the right to jump all over an old vagabond who can't begin to defend herself. You need to apologize to the old gal before . . . guy – you know that she'll be back here at the same time tomorrow and then you can . . . right now though – it won't kill you to go with the sorry dishrag and her kid to where they're going.

Keep moving. So what if everyone is staring at you like you're some sort of freak. Face it guy – it's not every day that a guy can be seen dressed in long pants, wearing a long sleeve shirt and a tie and having on brown suede shoes walking through the sand alongside a reject and her kid? Let them stare. Make their day.

Here's hoping that I won't have my arm pulled off by the way that the little horror is pulling on it to get me to where the waves are rolling over.

Here's hoping, too, that whoever is hearing her calling me daddy that . . . now I'm to take my shoes off? There's no way that I'm going to . . . the way that she's making a scene to get you to do what she's told you to do, you don't have any choice but to do it. I'm to roll up my pants legs, too? Mommy told mom mom that she was to take her here and that they were to walk into the water with her to leave her where the heaven is and she knows that mommy is really glad that my daddy is going to go out in the water with her and mom mom? Mommy told mom mom that she'll stay in the ocean where heaven is while . . . don't guy – don't – don't say anything.

When she gets older, the little know-it-all will find out that there's no heaven in the ocean let alone anyplace else.

Why is she here? The old gal is loony in the head. She needs to go back to her pet folding chair and . . . she doesn't belong here. Maybe you'll get lucky guy. She wouldn't be the first person that the ocean . . .

Kid – come on – you needed to tell the old gal that you don't want her to . . . you tell her guy that she can't . . . and now the crazy loon is putting on a fake sad face – really?

This should be far enough. The waves are breaking over my knees – soaking my pants. Now we're going to . . . just do it – put your hands on what probably is an urn while mom mom dumps mommy into the ocean so that . . . when you get out of the water and as soon as everyone who's on the beach has stopped staring at you, ask the kid who mommy is. My guess is that the ashes are that of a grandmother. Or the ashes could be the ashes of a dog or cat. Probably not as mommy doesn't sound like a dog or cat name.

Now I know why I've never wanted to . . . the water is freezing plus the waves are bent on knocking me over.

Now what's the old moocher up to? Looking up at the sky and talking like someone is actually listening to her . . . and now the way that she and whoever mom mom is are crying . . . what do I do? Just do your best guy to be invisible. You've had enough reasons to cry already in your life let alone cry for something that you don't even know what you're crying about. Plus your little wannabee kid seems to be really happy that her mommy – whoever her mommy was, is going to the heaven in the ocean. The way that the waves are trying to pull the little terror further out into the ocean, she needs to get back to shore before she joins her mommy – whoever she is, in that heaven that's supposed to be in the ocean.

I sure hope that it was okay for the gal to dump that urn full of ashes in the ocean as . . . do I know where heaven is in the ocean? Guy – she's waiting. You're going to have to tell her something.

Tell her that you want to get out of the water first and then . . . and then what're you going to tell her? You don't know anything about a heaven other than that you've heard that some guys and gals think of it as a nirvana of some sort. Maybe she'll forget that . . .

This is ridiculous walking barefoot back to where old tin can tank is trapped. You're going to have sand in your shoes for the rest of your life. Here's hoping that the bottoms of your pants legs will dry before . . . someone needs to clue in little smarty-pants to the real world – that no kid has the right to pick his or her daddy out of a crowd if he or she doesn't have one. It's not my problem that she doesn't have a daddy – that her mother isn't married. It's not my problem that she doesn't know where heaven is – like there's really a heaven.

Ask the kid's mother where her kid's father is. What? Why won't the little . . . mommy never told mom mom who her daddy is? And I'm to call her Moony – not Moonlight. Mommy told mom mom that mom mom now has to . . .

Do you really want to go there? There's no reason to find out what world that Moony and whoever the gal is who is with her are from as . . . you've been trying to carve out your own world which you've been trying to keep as nice and orderly as possible in spite of the mayhem that the controlling, henpecking architects are bringing into your life.

See what you've got to do guy to get the thing moved that's behind your old friend so that you can get to the office before those bickering magpies show up to . . . it's not like they're going to be able to fire me if I'm not in the office when they finally show up and I'm not there. There's no way that any of those nagging, overpaid, obnoxious . . . would be able to do what I'm doing in the office. This though constantly making me change something because . . . it's never the fault of any of them; it's always my fault because . . . so why don't you quit and . . .

That tire is shot. Ask whoever mom mom is how far she drove on it after . . . okay – when Moony heard a loud boom, mom mom stopped. Mom mom said a tire wasn't good anymore but that she had to keep going because . . . the rim looks like it has had it. She's going to need at least a new tire. The best option is to call a place that'll tow her car to a place that'll have a rim – if the rim is shot, that'll work for her car and . . . have I ever changed a tire?

If that shopping cart pusher doesn't stop calling me sonny boy . . . tell her that you have but because you're dressed to go to work that . . . maybe I don't want to see if the spare has air in it. Maybe I don't want to see if there's a jack in the trunk. Maybe sonny boy has had it with always being pushed around by obnoxious gals who . . .

*If that's who the nice old lady said was . . . that can't be him? It's a kid. He's not much bigger than me. And who goes to a beach wearing long pants and a tie? Since you've never been to a beach until . . . stop her.*

*Go after Moony before . . . tell her not to talk to him. Good – the goopy looking creep obviously doesn't want to have anything to do with her.*

*Gal – move – get Moony. Stop the scheming livewire before she . . . you can't let her say anything about . . . the overdressed geek can't be the guy who's driving that thing that the nice old lady told you to park Birdie behind. No one wears what he's wearing and drives something that has to be older than what he is.*

*When are you going to learn to put a rope on Moony? Asking the kid if he's a daddy . . . Moony needs to get it that mom mom doesn't want and never will want a man – period.*

*When are you going to stop feeling sorry for yourself and . . . and what? Stars is dead. You're stuck with Stars kid. You drove as fast you could for the past fifteen or so hours so that you and Money could get here before sunrise so that . . . then one of Birdie's tires just had to . . . and you don't have any money left. And now after waiting for a guy to show up who twitchy said is really nice . . . if she thinks that that kid can . . . she has to be from another planet.*

*The way that the obviously obnoxious kid is glaring at me . . . tell him that you don't like him either.*

*Sonny boy – that can't be his name – can it? That's what twitchy just called him. Talk about someone who's not happy right now. That wasn't cool – telling an old twitchy that she needs to mind her own business and to stop calling him sonny boy.*

*Gal – you just got called a numbskull. There's absolutely nothing funny about what that idiot just called you but . . . he sure seems though to have made twitchy's day by the way that she's . . .*

*You've got to stop Moony before she tells the ignorant snob that . . . now he knows that it was twitchy who told you to pull right behind his sorry looking thing so that . . . if that old lady really thinks that someone the kid's age knows how to change a tire – let alone be able to change a tire if he knew how . . . you know that he's not going to want to get dirty what he's wearing.*

*If Moony doesn't . . . you need to buy a roll of tape to . . . the scumbag doesn't need to know that Moony plans to start school this year because she's going to be six but that she can't start school because she doesn't have a daddy – so he needs to be mom mom's man and her daddy. Yah – sure – right away that's going to happen.*

*You're not the only one here who's living in a nightmare right now as the kid looks like he'd really like to be someplace else. The kid looks like he's about ready to explode from having twitchy obviously really enjoying pushing his button. He couldn't in his wildest dreams have thought that just a few minutes ago that he'd have a stringy, disrespecting five year old pulling on his arm – telling him that he was going to be her daddy and that he has to be my man and finding a dilapidated old car parked by an emptyheaded ex-hairstylist right behind his eyesore. Now would be a really good time for the little boy to find someplace else to go.*

*Why did you promise Stars that . . . how did Stars know that she was going to die? If you'd known that Stars was going to die, there's no way that you would've taken Moony with you into the room that Stars was in at the hospital. Moony heard you promise her mother that you'd take care of her and that you'd . . . you've got to do what you promised Stars that you'd do. You can't just dump Moony off at the nearest shelter – like you were. And Stars having told her kid that she'd be starting school this year but you not being her mother that . . . and now you don't have a place to live – let alone a job. Why couldn't it have me instead of Stars who . . .*

*The sun should be coming up soon. It definitely is getting lighter and lighter. People are walking on the beach – probably waiting for the sun to appear.*

*The poor nerd looks like he has resigned himself to being stuck with doing what twitchy has told him he has to do. Here's really hoping that he's not taking seriously being Moony's daddy as . . . me having a man in my life just isn't going to happen. Moony knows that. You've told her that a thousand times.*

*It was just like Stars to tell Moony that she had to find a man for me because she knew that I'd never find a man by myself. It was the last thing that she said to Moony before she told Moony that she loved her and that she'll be watching her from where she's going to be in heaven.*

*How could ten days go by so quickly. Stars gets sick and dies two days later. Why wasn't she afraid to die? Why did she have to tell me that I'll be a wonderful mother to Moony? Then having Stars cremated because she wanted to be cremated so that I'd be able to take her here to . . . why didn't Stars ever tell me about this place? At least Birdie got you to this place before . . . the only thing that you can do now is to wait for the sun to . . . and then when you hear music coming from a place that's supposed to be really close to where Stars told you to go, you're to take Moony with you into the ocean and scatter her ashes on the water. How could Stars know that her god always knew what was best for her and that she was really looking forward to meeting whoever this god's son Jesus is face to face? I miss Stars so much. Why didn't she want to try harder to live? Why couldn't this Jesus who she was always talking about let her see Moony grow up? How could Stars know that her friend Jesus will take care of me when . . .*

*And you thought that you had dibs on being the best at being a whining crybaby who . . . the decked out, wannabee adult has it all over you. Having to get to an office because if he doesn't get done what he was told that he had to have done before some apparently domineering co-workers show up . . . and you thought that you had it bad. It must really be hard to survive having a job, enough money to buy nice clothes and having a car – even if it's something that looks way older than Birdie.*

*Is Moony ever going to . . . this jumping up and down like a grasshopper because she's hearing music playing . . .*

*Stars was right – that in the building that's at the end of what must be what she called a board something – that someone would start to play music in the place just as the sun was coming up which means that it's time to . . . why, why, why Stars? Why?*

*It's time. You've got to do it. You promised Stars that you would. But . . . gal – come on – stop stalling.*

*There's no way that Stars could be watching us now – can there be? You heard her though tell her kid that she'd be watching her from heaven.*

*Instead of telling Stars that she wasn't going to die, you should've asked Stars why at this exact moment – at this exact place, instead of back in the city where we were living and working together. Then after telling Moony . . . she closed her eyes, smiled and . . . my stomach is never going to stop hurting.*

*You know that Moony would forgive you if . . . but it's the least that you can do for Moony seeing that she no longer has a mother – and for everything that Stars did for you over the past six years.*

*You need to get the urn from out of the car before Moony . . . how can someone who just saw her mother die just days ago be so happy? I guess if I was as upbeat about life that Stars was and I had a girl . . .*

*This is not what I want to do. Oh no – tell the kid that you don't want him . . . you've got to let him tag along since Moony . . . there's no way that he can ever begin to seriously think that being called daddy means that . . . just as soon as old Birdie is ready to fly again . . ., I need to get as far away from the place as I can. There's absolutely no way that . . . and how are you going to get Birdie fixed since you've used up your money. You can't keep on using Stars credit card to . . . the money that she had saved, you had to use for medical expenses and have her cremated.*

*Just pretend that no one is watching you. Pretend like it's every day that a gal – or guy, walks to where the waves are rolling up on the beach with an urn in her or his hand, with an overexcited sprite and with a kid in a clown suit. Moony is right – we'll need to walk out a bit to dump Stars ashes on the water. At least the kid doesn't seem to like doing this anymore than I do. He's acting like he's about to freeze. This is probably far enough out. You know that if you hadn't stopped Moony that she would've . . . I sure do hope that Stars finds the heaven where she knows that she's going to – and that she'll find her friend Jesus and . . . I wish that I'd thought to thank her for all that she did for me. She right away made me feel like I was her long lost sister. And now I'll never get the chance to thank her.*

*Where did she come from? Why did she . . . why is she crying? I'm glad that she's crying – now I can cry, too.*

*Now we all have to put our hands on the jar while . . . Moony, Moony, Moony – why does she always have to have things done her way? It's obvious that the kid doesn't want to be out here in the ocean. He looks ridiculous out here in the water dressed like he is. He should've taken off his tie before . . . and the old twitchy . . . what made her think that I'd be okay with her coming out here, too, to dump Stars ashes on the water?*

*I hope that Moony is okay with how that went. Trying to dump ashes out of an urn with three other hands on it . . . and now I'm to swish water in the jar so that . . . just do it and . . . as much as you'd you like to gal, you know that you can't throw the urn out in the water as far as you can throw it. Even if you could, having Moony around is always going to remind you of Stars and how much she cared about you and helped you and . . .*

*Now what's she doing? I hope that no one is looking. No one in their right mind talks to the sky as if the sky can hear what the person is saying. Now she has the heaven in the sky. I hope that Moony didn't hear her as she knows that heaven is in the ocean – and that's why we had to dump her mother's ashes on the ocean so that . . .*

*As much as you'd like to throw yourself right now in the water and let the ocean take you to wherever it wants to take you, you know that you can't. You've got to keep the promise that you made to Stars. You owe her that much after all that she did for you.*

*Tell the whacky twitchy that you're name isn't sweetie – that . . . gal – just let her take your hand and help you out of the water. You know that she means well. But . . . you've got to stop letting other people – including Moony, make the decisions that you need to make.*

*Why did he just ask me that? What's it to him? Why did Moony have to tell him that you're not her mother? She wasn't supposed to do that. You could've told him that Stars didn't know who her father was . . . and that she didn't tell you anything about her family instead of letting Moony . . . and now he knows Moony's given name.*

*The kid walking over to Birdie . . . I don't blame him for wanting to get away from me as fast as he did. No one is ever going to believe what Moony just told him. He's probably thinking that you're a crazy who kidnapped Moony and . . . I'd find a way to get away from me, too.*

*Now twitchy is back pulling the kid's chain. She needs to watch it. The skinny runt looks like he's about ready to explode at any moment. The crazy fruitcake would be wise to stop calling the kid sonny boy.*

*Don't say what you're thinking – that he's smarter than what you thought – that you didn't know that a city boy could actually tell the difference between a flat tire and a tire that isn't flat.*

*What's the big deal about how far I drove on the flat tire? And what's this about a rim having been damaged? Rim of what? Don't ask him. He doesn't need to know that . . . you should've realized gal that when you heard the sound of the tire suddenly exploding that you'd have to buy another tire. And where're you going to get the money to buy another tire?*

*A spare? A spare of what? Whatever the old lady is trying to get the kid to do, it must have something to do with the trunk as . . . someone sure isn't a happy camper right now.*

*His moaning and groaning about having to be in the office is really getting on my nerves. And this looking at me like I'm his worst nightmare . . . I hope that I am. The way that he has been only thinking about himself . . .*

*There – the trunk is open. The way that you tossed all the clothes in the trunk, I hope that the kid has fun looking for whatever it is that twitchy thinks that he needs to fix Birdie so that he can get out of your hair.*

*You just had to look. You couldn't keep yourself from checking to see if the kid needed a haircut. And wanting to ask him if he cuts his own hair by the way that it looks . . . why would you want to do that? Just because he has nice hair – that doesn't make him nice. All one has to do is to take a look at his face . . . and now thinking about mother is going to help you get through today? How could a mother one day decide that she doesn't want her daughter around anymore because . . . calling me a piece of baggage that the guy who she was going to meet up with to live with wouldn't want around . . . if Stars hadn't been at the woman's center when mother dumped you off there . . .*

You're caught guy between a sassy little brat and an old lady who . . . now being told to man up and . . . and if you think that staring her down will . . . if she doesn't stop laughing like an old hen . . . she should consider herself very fortunate that . . . yah guy – like you'd really hit her over the head with a tire iron – but . . .

No – no – now she has the little monster telling you to be a man and . . . you need tell her that if you really were her daddy, that you'd make sure that she'd spend the rest of the day in timeout – which means that she wouldn't be able to watch any TV and . . . what's a timeout? Mom mom doesn't have a TV because mommy didn't have a TV? What? Where has her mother been hiding her that . . . her mother had to have been keeping her in a cage as . . .

You've got to get out of here. That little tyrant is worse than all five of the horrors together who're running your life at the office. She's so getting on my nerves. And did you really think that telling whoever the skinny flake is to get her kid to back off calling you daddy and always telling you what to do – that she'd do it?

Give it up guy – change the tire. They're not going anywhere – and you can't go anywhere with that rust bucket blocking old tin can tank.

Great – you must've let the end of your tie drop in the water when you . . . take it off. You know that you're going to have to go back to your apartment to take a shower and change clothes once you get the thing behind old tin can tank out of the way.

Tell the scraggly toothpick that you need to get in her car so that you can pop the trunk open so that . . . mommy always uses a key to open the trunk? Mom mom has the key in mommy's purse?

You've got to admit it – the scrawny little tyke definitely has an imagination. Now you just got called a dummy because you've already forgotten that mommy is in the heaven that's in the ocean . . . mom mom and mommy can't be two different gals – can they?

Good grief – talk about a rat's nest. You don't have a choice guy but to take everything out in order to find the jack and to get to the spare tire.

And hoping that there'd be room in the backseat of the old wreck for you to put what she has in the trunk . . . there's a ten by ten foot canvas in the back of old tin can tank. Use that for the stuff that she has in the trunk.

You're going to have to try to roll the car that the emaciated gal is driving back a couple of feet so that you can get into the back of old tin can tank for the canvas. You better tell her what you're going to do as . . . who knows what she might do when she suddenly sees her car moving.

Here's hoping that her car will move with the rim on the ground. Here's hoping, too, that the gas gauge isn't working. The needle is pinned on empty. The light on the dash says it's on empty so . . . it sure looks like she's been living in her car. She's clearly a slob. It'd only take her a few minutes to take one of the plastic bags that . . . and put all those food wrappers, empty cups, bottles . . . you know guy that not everyone is a neatnik so . . .

It wouldn't hurt you to ask the gal how she's doing. The blank look that she keeps on her face . . . she has no idea where she is right now let alone what to do next. The poor thing looks like she's going to drop over at any moment.

Ask the gal when the last time was when she had something to eat. Guy – you're going to have to ask her if she heard what you . . . mom mom can't eat anything because . . .

I'm to start calling my little nemesis Moony instead of kid because . . . I've no doubt that she'll begin to start screaming like she said that she would if I don't. This needing though to talk to her about whatever instead of talking to whoever mom mom is . . . and what's this with because mommy always knew what mom mom needed and she always told mom mom what to do and . . . so she has to do it now because mommy . . . what?

It's obvious that whoever mom mom is that she's socially challenged – and maybe even mentally challenged. Maybe she really does need help to . . . there're bottles of water as well as Gatorade in the back of old tin car tank along with enough energy bars to feed an army. So – get a bottle of water and a Gatorade from the back of old tin can tank and several energy bars and let her choose what she wants and then get to work changing that stupid tire.

I can't believe that the old tramp gave up her lawn chair for the poor gal to . . . the wretched looking thing probably didn't even know that the old gal had to practically drag her to the chair to . . . where did that sweet thank you come from? The gal can actually say something without her traveling companion's permission. Maybe there's hope.

Finally – someone has asked me what she can do to help instead of telling me what to do. Let the itinerant old bag lady help you spread out the canvas on the grass next to the parking lot.

That didn't last long. Now we're both being told what to do. Someone needs to straighten out the little runt about thinking that she can be the boss all the time. It's not going to be me as . . . she's taking way too seriously what her mother must've told her that it's going to have to be up to her to . . . her mother must've been really something else herself if it's like mother – like daughter.

Good – the old gal seems to have gotten through to the little tyrant that . . . the little jefe is letting the vagrant neatly lay out on the canvas the clothes that were probably thrown into the trunk by the way that they're piled up. Some of the clothes really look like they need to be washed – or thrown away, by the way that they look.

You should've realized by now that if her mother didn't have a TV, that she probably didn't have a suitcase – let alone suitcases, to put clothes in. And you just got called a dummy again because you should've known that she wouldn't know what a suitcase is. That presumptuous little . . .

Those are mommy's clothes that I'm now . . . her mother had some nice looking clothes. She definitely wore larger clothes than . . . you need to ask Moony who the gal is who . . .

Mom mom was mommy's helper? Mom mom helped mommy take care of her? Mom mom would cut and fix old twitchy's hair and sometimes old grump's hair, too, while mommy cut and painted fingernails and toenails – and if they'd gone to the heaven in the ocean, then mommy would paint their faces so that they would look really nice when they got to the heaven in the ocean? If I'm to understand what she just . . .

The old gal can't really believe that the emaciated kid – who probably was caged for most of her life, was referring to nursing homes and funeral homes?

It does sound though like that's where her mother and whoever she is who is with her went to since both places have what she calls twitchies like the old gal and grumps – just that in one place the twitchies and grumps were waiting for many giants to come to take them to the heaven in the ocean and in the other places, the twitchies and grumps had already gone to the heaven in the ocean because many giants had gotten them – just like they got her mother?

When did she drink and eat . . . tell the gal that there's more bottled waters and energy bars if . . . she's feeling better? Tell her guy that you don't want her to feel bad that she parked her car right behind your car – and that . . . what? What Moony calls many giants is meningitis – that meningitis caused Moony's mother to die in a matter of days after . . . that's a hug that . . . if the homeless vagrant has been looking for a friend . . .

Moony's mother and whoever the gal is must've been really good friends. Telling her that it's okay to cry is only going to . . . and what would you do guy if you had a friend die who you really liked? You're never going to find out as . . . I'm just fine with being my best friend.

You just had to start going over again . . . if ma had suddenly died when you were Moony's age . . . you know that it would've probably made your old man's day but . . . you need to stop putting off asking for those vacation days that're way overdue you and head for the mental health center where ma has been ever since . . . there's no way that I'd want to ever see the old man again – alive. I'm going to definitely enjoy the day when I can look him in the face as he's lying in a casket ready to do deep six – where he should've been put years ago.

I hope that the gal is okay with how the clothes that were in the trunk have been laid out on the canvas. Where did that come from – feeling glad that the gal seems to be . . .

Here's the jack – now to find the lug wrench. Why do people never put stuff back exactly in the place that the manufacturer made for it to be put? Maybe it's with the tire. It's a temporary spare. It should at least get her to . . .



Of course the spare doesn't have air in it. Why didn't whoever she is who owns this old wreck . . . guy – just be glad that you now have the lug wrench.

Here's hoping that the jack will slide under the car's frame with the car sitting right on the wheel's rim. Get on your knees and . . . forget the pants – you've got plenty of other dress pants in the apartment that you're renting.

Because she doesn't like that dress, I can use it to put my knees on it because mommy always needed to put her knees on something when she had to take one of Birdie's tires off – and because she knows how to take a tire off because she always watched really well when mommy did it . . . hand the little squirt the jack and lug wrench and tell the little fiend to go for it – or you can let her try to help you.

Tell the skinny imp that there's a place that's in the car's frame where the jack is to sit under in order to be able to jack up the car using the lug wrench. Do you really think that she actually knew what you were talking about?

Come on jack – go down just a bit more and . . . good – sliding the jack on its side and then standing it up where it's to go and having it slide into the spot that . . . finally – something actually is coming together.

Jack up the car a few inches and start taking off the lug nuts. Here's hoping that none of the lug nuts need a key as I didn't see one where the spare was kept. Looks like the lug nuts are all the same size.

And did you really think that you were going to be able to loosen the lug nuts without using a pipe? The one that you've in the back of old tin can tank will do just fine. Tell Moony that the pipe gives you more torque to loosen the lug nuts . . . mommy always used a pipe, too?

And now telling me that I'm blind because I didn't see the pipe when I was taking everything out of mommy's car's trunk . . . someone right now needs to be really glad that she isn't my kid because if the little punk was . . . you need to make her understand that her help isn't needed – that she's to keep her mouth shut until after you finish changing the tire because you don't need her help.

What? Mommy told her that a daddy will never hurt her feelings – so she's glad that no matter what I say to her, she knows that I'm not hurting her feelings – and that she's really glad that she has a daddy now who . . .

You're never going to win anything guy with that little pixie so . . .

And now I'm to use this end of the lug wrench to loosen those things that keep the tire on Birdie?

Before you totally loose it guy, find that gal who she calls mom mom and . . . not her, too – telling me that I don't have a choice but to let Moony . . . finally – you've just met someone who seems to get it what you're going through.

How could someone go from giving off vibes of being a nobody to giving off vibes of someone who you've known all your life? You just met her. You know that you've never seen her before.

Okay lug nuts – time to come off. Good – the lug nuts haven't rusted to the point where they won't turn without . . . someone must've taken this tire off recently by how easy the lug nuts are turning. Just let the little tyke think that you're really strong by the way that you're getting the lug nuts loose. You probably could fake it a bit on this last lug nut and ask her to help you get it off. Now thank her. You got beaten guy – having her thank you for letting her help her daddy do something.

You need to stop looking at the gal who Moony calls mom mom because . . .

Before jacking up the car high enough to pull the tire off and to put the temporary spare on, hook up to the portable air compressor that you have in the back of old tin can tank to old tin can tank's battery and see if the spare will hold enough air to make it to someplace where it won't be towed.

Good – the temporary spare is holding air. Now get the flat off and the temporary spare on, ask Moony to give you the lug nuts and . . . now let the air out of the jack. The tire seems to be holding. Good. Now I'm to . . . what?

*What is she doing? I can't let her make me sit in her thing. She needs to . . .*

*Where did she get those from? I'm to drink either a bottle of water or one of those colored drinks – whatever they are? How does she know that I'll pass out if I don't drink something? Maybe everything will stop spinning if . . .*

*And I'm to eat one of those bar things, too? Tell her that you're not hungry – that you'll be fine after you drink some water. This was nice of her to open up the water for you. You need to thank her, too, for letting you sit in her thing. You really did feel as if . . .*

*You really probably should eat something, too. I hope it's true what's said on the wrapper as I really do feel all of a sudden totally wiped out.*

*I wish the geek would stop staring at me. I don't need his pity.*

*He must've had those drinks and that thing that you're eating in the back of the old thing that he's driving. There probably is enough room in the back of the thing for him to live.*

*You need to stop beating up on the runt and . . . you can at least be thankful that he's trying to be helpful. I can't see the old twitchy being able to help me with that stupid tire. Okay – I know – you're to be thankful that you didn't have the tire go flat like it did a lot earlier. You wouldn't have made it here at all if . . .*

*Stars wasn't supposed to die. She was always so full of energy. She had so many plans for Moony – and for me. Moony listened to her. Now Moony thinks that she has to be her mother because . . . Moony is never going to let me be her mother.*

*You need to be helping instead of . . . you could at least somehow get Moony to stop trying to tell everyone what to do – and that you don't want her to call the poor kid a dummy again.*

*I'd have been surprised if the kid didn't have something in the back of his whatever that he could lay on the ground to put the stuff on that you threw into Birdie's trunk. You need to give twitchy credit for wanting to help him unload Birdie's trunk on the thing that they spread out on the grass.*

*Tell them that they don't have to lay out the clothes – that they can just pile the clothes up in a heap. Except for Stars clothes that're on the bottom of Birdie's trunk, they all need to be washed.*

*Don't go there. But . . . you didn't have a choice but to do what Stars asked you to do. Now you don't have any money left and no place to go. Birdie can't take you anyplace until . . . and not having any money left to fix Birdie's flat tire let alone buy food . . . and you really need to stop using that card that Stars always used to buy whatever.*

*You owe Stars. If Stars hadn't been at the place where your mother took you to and told you to go inside and that there'd be a place there for you to . . . the place wasn't set up to take in a young teenager. The place was set up for pregnant gals who had no place to go and for gals who were hiding from guys who . . .*

*Stars immediately pretending that I was her little sister – that she was really glad to see me – and then convincing the place to let me stay with her until after her baby was born kept me from being sent to another shelter that's set up for prostitutes who . . . who knows what would've happened to me if . . .*

*It couldn't have been any worse than the nightmare of living with someone who was constantly telling me that she wished that I was never born – that I was never going to amount to anything – that no one will ever marry me because I'm so ugly and skinny – that she couldn't wait to get rid of me.*

*Face it gal – you were probably just as happy – if not happier, that you'd never see your mother again than your mother was of never seeing you again after dropping you off at the downtown women's shelter so that she could start her life all over again with another guy.*

*It didn't take long for me to actually feel like Stars little sister – taking me along with her to the places where she dolled up old and dead people. And then when Moonlight was born, having me help her take care of Moony.*

*Stars deciding that she wanted to go to a women's shelter to have Moony instead of staying in her mother's house because she didn't want to listen to her mother telling her over and over again that what happened to Stars was her fault because she . . . and then with her mother overdosing a couple of years after Moony was born . . .*

*I'd never be able to forgive a guy who gave me something that knocked me out and then got me pregnant.*

*You know that it has to be true that Stars stopped one day at her favorite dive for a drink and sandwich – that while she was there, someone when she went to the restroom may've put something in her drink – that when she started to feely woozy, she left the restaurant for her car – that the next thing that she remembers is coming to in a room in the motel across the street from the restaurant.*

*I probably wouldn't have called the cops either but . . . then finding out a couple of months later that she was pregnant, she told her mother what happened and . . . per Stars, her mother didn't take what she told her very well.*

*I wish that I had the ambition that Stars had. Working and putting away money the last two years that she was in high school so that she could go to cosmetology school to be a beautician . . .*

*It was first having me take care of Moony when she went to her calls from funeral homes or the hours that she spent at retirement centers – then it was dragging Moony and me along to the funeral homes and retirement centers.*

*When Stars saw that you seemed to know what you were doing when you cut or shaped a twitchy's hair, making you get a GED and then paying for your way through cosmetology school . . . then telling you that helping her on her calls and at the retirement homes along with helping to care for Moony was your share of the rent and food . . .*

*How am going to live without Stars help. I can't. I don't know how. If Stars hadn't made me practice driving Birdie, there's no way that . . . using Stars driver's license because you don't have one . . . you know that if you'd gotten stopped by a cop, that it would've been because you were driving too slow.*

*Since the kid apparently doesn't have any fruit drinks in the back of his clunker, check out one of those colored drinks and . . . who came up with calling something Gatorade? Open one of the bottles – take a sip and if you don't like it . . . it's not that bad. Here's hoping that it'll give me enough pep to get out of this chair.*

*You might as well stay in the chair for now as Birdie's trunk is probably completely empty. Here's hoping that the kid finds what he's looking for in Birdie's trunk. Here's hoping, too, that he's okay with Moony's help. You know what her help is like. I hope that he has gotten it that there's nothing that anyone can do with Moony's antics.*

*Moony not being able to begin going to school in a couple of weeks might be a good thing. It'd give me a year to work at convincing Moony that she's not everyone boss – and that she doesn't know more than everybody else.*

*It looks like the kid has been able to get the thing under the car that gets it up high enough to take the tire off and to put on another tire. I saw Stars do it enough times that I'd probably be able to do it but . . . there's a lot of other things that I'd rather be doing than trying to replace a tire.*

*You probably should call Moony over. The scrawny nerd doesn't look like he needs help. He's using one of those same things that Stars would use to loosen up the wheels. The way that he's loosening up those things that keeps a tire on the car, he can't be a weakling.*

*That was nice of him to ask Moony if she'd help him with one of the things that holds on the tires – and acting like she's really helping him. Maybe the over-the-hill twitchy is right that he's a nice guy.*

*If Stars was here right now, she'd know what to do. Stars always knew what to do. I should've done what Stars wanted me to do. This thinking that I need to tell mother that I've forgiven her for treating me the way that she did – not ever going to happen. Sometimes Stars is-was . . . just because she knew that it would've been the right thing for her to do to forgive her mother for how her addictions . . .*

*Stars really was sad that she never told her mother that she wasn't holding anything against her – that she loved her. This always saying that because her friend Jesus forgave her that . . .*

*This also always telling you that you need to get to know her friend Jesus, too – that she has known her friend Jesus ever since she was Moony's age . . . just what you want to do for the rest of your life – go around with an imaginary friend who you can talk to at any time that you want to – just like Stars was always doing.*

*You need to find that book that talks about Jesus before Mooney starts asking you to read out of it. Stars found out real quick that reading it to you was a waste of time. Nothing in the book made sense to me.*

*It sure was important to Stars that she read out of that book every day – and that she read something from another book to Moony every night. This thinking that it was important that she always had to have a mindset of being thankful . . .*

*There's no way that you're going to be able to continue to help Moony be like Stars was. There's no way that you've got the get up and go that Stars had. She was always so happy and thankful and ready to do anything.*

*Everyone in the retirement centers where we went to loved Stars. She always made everyone feel important while spending more time than she needed to to paint their fingernails and toenails while you cut or styled their hair.*

*You need to start eating more than what you've been eating. It's a good thing that Stars taught Moony how to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as . . . there's no way that someone so inept as you will ever be able to raise a kid like Moony – let alone any girl. And that won't ever happen because there isn't a guy out there who'll take a second look at me.*

*Other than drinking fruit drinks and eating peanut butter and cheese crackers . . . you probably should start eating another one of those bars. You're going to have to do something to stay awake.*

*Now what're you going to do? It's obvious that the spare is flat. Why does he keep looking your way? There's nothing that you can do to help him. You can stop shaking your head.*

*If the kid really think that he can use that thing that he got out of the back of his old vehicle to put air in the tire, he has to be dreaming as . . . it looks like it's working as the weird looking tire seems to be filling up with air.*

*When Stars has to put on that spare tire, she always said that she had to have the tire that went flat plugged or something right away as she wasn't supposed to drive very far on that tire. And where would you drive right now if Birdie had four good tires?*

*You wouldn't be able to go far with the light on the dash saying that Birdie's gas tank needs to be filled with gas again. Then there's the problem of not having any money – and no way for you to get money.*

*Now what? That thumbs up must mean that the spare isn't losing air. Now giving Moony a high five . . . you need to tell Moony to stop calling the kid daddy. He'll never be Moony's daddy as long as you're responsible for her.*

*You could help put the clothes back in Birdie's trunk. At the speed that you're trying to move, they're going to . . .*

*Whatever it was that twitchy just said to him . . . the boy looks like he's about to strangle the old twitchy while she won't stop laughing at him.*

*We're going where? Twitchy has a house less than a block away from here? That's impossible. Maybe she's living in a halfway house or something.*

*There's no way that someone dressed like her could possibly have a house this close to the beach. Twitchies at the retirement centers where you and Stars would go to dress better than her.*

*You need to thank her for helping you get out of her chair. You're going to have to hang on to her because if you don't, you'll . . . tell her that you're sorry but until the world stops spinning, you won't be able to go anyplace.*

*The kid is going to drive Birdie to her house? He'll follow us as we walk? He'll come back here to get his car after he parks my car at her house? You need to tell her thank you for telling me that we're going to her house but . . . what if she really is a crazy loon who finds someone like me, takes that person home and . . .*

The grubby drifter has to be kidding – telling me that once we put the clothes back in the wreck’s trunk, that I’m to follow her in the gal’s car to her house . . . the tramp needs to get lost. She having a house – no way. And this always squawking when you . . .

I’ve got to get to the office. If that project isn’t completed by the time that any one of those five slave drivers show up . . . you don’t want to find out. I’ve already had enough berating from them to last a lifetime. Nothing like living the first seventeen years of my life being belittled and the last three years . . . guy – you need to be thankful for the three year break where you were able to do four years of normal classroom time. All you had to do was pull grades – which has never been a problem for you to do.

If you don’t want Moony to keep on throwing clothes willy-nilly into the trunk, you need to get over there right now and . . . and did you really think that Moony was going to listen to you?

I’m to stop worrying about the clothes being tossed back in the trunk because her house is only about a block away? Yah – right away. The transient having a place around here close to the beach? In her dreams as . . . the houses are around here mansions. Maybe she rooms in one of the places.

That didn’t take very long. That was nice of the vagrant to help whoever the hapless gal is out her antiquated lawn chair. Hurry guy – go over and help the old lady with the gal as . . . the thing has passed out.

Now what do I do? Carry the gal to her car and put her in it? She’s crazy if . . .

Just do it. Your day has already been ruined. You might as well let it go down the drain. There’s no way that it’s going to get any better once you get to the office.

Just lift the gal up and carry her to her car. She’s so out of it that there’s no way that she’d be able to walk over to her car.

The poor thing doesn’t have enough strength left to . . . she clearly didn’t want you to carry her but . . . the look that she had on her face and then the way that she closed her eyes when you said that she’s lights out, she’s probably thinking that she’s having a weird dream. Stop looking at her guy – focus on getting her to the car.

You need to give Moony credit for opening the passenger side door without being asked to do it. At least someone thinks that I’m strong. This though always calling me daddy . . .

Thinking now that I need to help mom mom with her seatbelt because . . . it’s obvious that her mom mom whoever needs a lot of help. Hurry up and do what Moony is ordering you to do. The sooner that you get this thing to where the old granny is living, the sooner that you can get back to old tin can tank and to the office.

The poor fruitcake is totally oblivious to what’s going on around her. You’ll need to carry her again when . . . having to carry a gal is absolutely the last thing that I would’ve ever thought that I’d be doing this morning.

What’s that light that’s lit up on the dash? Check oil? You’ll need to check the oil before . . . the skinny halfwit probably doesn’t have a clue what the check oil light means. And the gas light . . . here’s hoping that this wreck has enough gas left to make it to wherever the crazy witch lives.

I hope that no one is watching. Following an old lady while she’s toddling down the street while holding the hand of rambunctious little scamp who is skipping alongside her while she’s probably talking a mile a minute while your passenger is slumped over like she’s called it quits to life has to make anyone watching wondering what’s going on.

This can’t be the house? The house has to be over a hundred years old by the way that it looks. Why do some people let their place become overgrown? The house hasn’t been painted since who knows when.

The guy who is supposed to be your father would be drooling all over this place if he was looking at it right now. That place has to have all kinds of salvageable stuff – from the gables to who knows what’s in the house.

Guess pointing to that spot over there on the grass is where the old lady wants you to park this thing.

Now what? You're going to find out real quick now that the old gal has told Moony to tell you what to do next.

Okay – the really nice twitchy told her to tell daddy that he's to carry mom mom into the house and then we're to take everything that's in the car into the house. And did you really think that it would register with Moony that you can't help carry the stuff into the house because you've got to go back to your car before a meter maid puts a ticket on it for leaving it parked without putting money in the meter?

Carry the gal who Moony calls mom mom into the house. Get that out of the way. Then duck out and run as fast as you can to old tin can tank and head for the office. You'll be able to get to the office before any of the tormenting despots arrive.

Why did she have to do that? First mumbling thanks and then putting her arm around my neck as you were lifting her out of the car. If this is what it feels like to be holding a gal who's enjoying being held . . .

Stop it – stop thinking about the gal. Being told over and over again that gals don't like runts . . . and you bought into what that brute of a father was always beating into you.

You do know guy that you could walk faster. You do know that as much as you'd like the world to stop, it isn't going to stop – so climb those steps and carry the gal through the door and . . . wow – this place would be my dream house if . . . maybe after the autocrats go home . . . it'd make my day to be able to make a replica of this place.

I hope that she's okay with being put in this recliner. Another thanks that . . . that smile and her eyes – and you were thinking of her as being a ragdoll. Behind all that sadness and hurting that's written all over her face . . . the person whose ashes were dumped into the ocean must've been really special to her.

This can't be the old granny's house – can it? She's the only one who lives here? It makes sense that she has someone come in to help her clean her place.

Now – before I take the stuff in that's in the gal's car, I'm to get my car and park it on the other side of her car? And I'm to take Moony with me because she knows the way to get back to my car?

You saw the snarky old gal smirking when she told you that were to take Moony with you. She is something else. I've a feeling that nothing escapes that goopy . . . just be glad guy that she has stopped calling you Sonny Boy.

I really wish though that Moony would stop calling me daddy. This come on daddy – let's go – if I'd said that to the old man when I was her age, his belt would've come off and . . . and he wouldn't have stopped until I told him exactly what I said that I was never to say to him – which was when I would tell him that I was going to get or do something instead of asking or begging him for something or to do whatever.

Now it's you who's walking down the street holding the hand of a little girl who doesn't seem to have a care in the world while you've been carrying the world on your shoulders. Why? You've enough money put away to not to have to worry about working – so why are you letting yourself be emasculated by five rude loudmouths?

You know that you're marketable for what you're able to do if . . . there's no one though who's ever going to know what you can do at work except you – and those self-absorbed gals, if you keep doing what you're doing. There's no way though that I can slow down let alone stop what I really like doing. There's always something that has gotten me out of bed in the morning. I really do enjoy crafting interactive models from architectural drawings.

Ask Moony if she ever stops blabbering. This going on about whatever she sees or comes to mind – must be nice.

That'll teach you guy asking Moony something. Tell Moony that you're not like her – that there're people who don't talk very much and you're one of those people. Now you've got her thinking that she has to teach you to talk more so that we can talk to each other.

What? She's really glad that I carried mom mom through the door because that makes me mom mom's man? And she's glad because mommy told mom mom one day that when mommy found her man that her man would carry her through a door – and she's sure that her man Jesus carried her through a door into the heaven in the ocean?

Whoever the gal was who Moony calls mommy must've been some kind of Jesus freak or something. She sure has done a good job of messing up her kid's mind with what the gal apparently tried to teach Moony as being true.

Ask Moony if the gal she calls mom mom calls Jesus her friend, too. Mom mom needs to stop being so mad at her mommy before Jesus will be her friend? Jesus can't be a friend to someone who doesn't like him and won't talk to him? She knows that Jesus is her friend because he wants her to talk to him all the time – and she likes it that he is always talking to her?

Talk about being brainwashed – Moony sure has been. At least the gal who Moony calls mom mom apparently didn't buy into what the gal who Moony calls mommy was selling.

Good – no ticket. Like you really thought that there'd be a ticket under your windshield wiper when there's still another over a half hour left for free parking. You don't trust anyone or anything do you guy?

Why did I have to think of doing that? You know that when you get an idea of doing or making something that . . . taking Moony to the office when you know that all five gals are there and telling the pompous gals that she's your kid . . . so they won't believe you – but it'd still be fun to see their faces the split second after you tell them that Moony is your kid while Moony affirms you by calling you daddy while hanging onto your hand like she did when you were walking from the old dame's house to old tin can tank.

I'm to make sure that my seatbelt is buckled before I start the car otherwise . . . having that goofy, headstrong young lady telling me what to do and not to do is almost worse than having . . . there – we can go now?

I'm not to drive fast? Mommy always saying that when someone drove fast that they wouldn't be able to smell roses . . . do I smell roses? You know that you've never smelled roses – so why did you tell her that you have? She was glad that mom mom didn't drive very fast on the really, really long ride that they had to make so that mommy could meet Jesus in the heaven in the ocean?

Ask Moony where her home is. And if she's been living here, ask her where her home is here now. I'm being silly? I'm supposed to know that her new home is now with the nice old twitchy? Ask her where her old home was.

There's no way that she and who she calls mom mom drove from there to here in that beat up wreck that she's driving. The place has to be at least eight hundred miles from here. Where you grew up is over five hundred miles from here – and you thought that you were living a long way away from home.

Ask Moony what her family does back where she lives. I'm silly again? Her family now is mom mom and me? Mommy's mama was taken to the heaven in the ocean and mom mom's mother didn't want her anymore? Her mommy asked her to find a man for mom mom? She's glad that she now has a daddy who'll . . .

You need to stop asking Moony questions because . . . she has to be making up what she's telling you. It's way too farfetched. She just a little girl with a big imagination. But what if . . .

You could've guessed that she'd tell you where I'm to park. The old gal probably told her to make sure that you parked in the right place.

The nosey old coot must've either heard me driving up or keeping an eye out for us. She'll make sure that Moony gets in the house. Just as soon as Moony is in the house . . .

What're you doing? You can't go into the house. Just because the old gal was waving for you to come to the house, you don't have to be doing it. By the time that you go to your apartment to shower again and change clothes and then to the office, you'll be really lucky if you make it to the office before any of the gals do. And because you still need another couple of hours to complete putting together the latest project, you've got one miserable day ahead of you.

Wow – that's an old doorstep that she's using to keep the door open. When you get a chance, check around the internet and find out how much that thing is worth. With all the work that those narcissistic, obnoxious gals keep adding to what you can barely do now, you don't have the time to think let alone . . .

*Why is the kid . . . why are you letting him pick you up? You needed to . . . there's no way that you could've gotten away from him.*

*The way that everything was spinning, you know that you couldn't have . . . so – just close your eyes and hope that he doesn't drop you.*

*Why did I open my eyes? Why was the kid looking at me like . . . lights out? Why did he say that? Pretend like you didn't hear him and . . .*

*It has been non-stop ever since Stars got sick. It has been having to take care of Moony, Stars getting sicker, Stars dying, an autopsy that just had to be done because who knows why, Stars being cremated and then leaving before the sun came up yesterday morning so that you'd get here before the sun came up today.*

*I wish that my stomach would stop hurting. You've hardly eaten anything since . . . you can't keep on surviving on water and juice. You probably felt like nothing but bones to the kid.*

*I'd been surprised if Moony hadn't thought about opening the car door for the kid to put me into the passenger seat. And there's Moony acting out her mother again – telling the kid that he has to put the seatbelt on me because that's the law.*

*I hope that Birdie is okay with a guy driving her. It was good of her to hang in there until Moony and I were almost here before . . . and then letting me limp her to where the old twitchy told me to park her behind the kid's vehicle.*

*We've to be moving as . . . it feels so good to be floating in air. If I wasn't tied in whatever it is that I'm in that's taking me up to the clouds that're floating around like fluffy marshmallows, I'd curl up into a ball and . . . good – whatever it is that I'm in is stopping. I hope that I can get out of whatever it is that I'm in so that I can . . .*

*I'm floating again. I'm no longer tied. It's the kid. Put your arm around his neck and . . . tell him thanks. I'm glad that he wants to go with me to float . . . hang on – we're going up – I know that we are. Just close your eyes and . . .*

*Why am I sitting in a recliner? There was a kid who . . . where did he go?*

*It's the twitchy who . . . why did she just ask me if I'm okay? Why is she laughing? Just because you asked her if she was real . . . you're dreaming – aren't you? Just close your eyes again and . . . Moony – where's Moony. You need to find Moony.*

*Why is the old twitchy shaking me? Why is she asking me if I was having a bad dream? Tell her that you lost Moony – that you need to find her – that . . . Moony is with who? Hercules? Sonny Boy is Hercules?*

*How does she know that the kid's name is Hercules? She has seen the pass card that he needs to have to get into his office building? He doesn't know that she knows his name and where he works? And there's that crazy laugh again.*

*Okay – Moony went with the Hercules whoever to his car. She's glad that Moony wanted to go with him? How does she know that the kid would've headed for his office if Moony hadn't gone with him? For the past three years at least, the kid has shown up at whatever the place is called where he goes to where the boards end and then about an hour or so later, he shows up again and she knows that by the way that he's always dressed, that he'll go next to his office?*

*You'd like to know more about this Hercules whoever – wouldn't you? I can see the kid ignoring twitchy every morning when she greets him. You're used to being around old twitchies so . . . maybe he knows that once someone starts talking with an old lady like her, that the twitchy is going to want to tell whoever all kinds of stories – some of the stories over and over again.*

*I can call her whatever I want to call her? Her birth name is Lulu. Tell her that her birth name is better than your birth name. Just because your mother was hoping that if the guy who she really liked got her pregnant . . . to then give you that name that she did after the guy didn't want to have anything to do with her anymore . . .*



*You know that you're better off without your mother in your life. She made your life miserable – constantly reminding you that because you messed up her life, that no guy would have anything to do with her. To her – you sullied her life so . . . tell twitchy why your mother named you Sullied – that you've lived with being called Sul ever since. And that you know that Sul is a guy's name and . . .*

*Ask the old twitchy why she thinks that everything is so funny. Being named Sullied isn't funny. She's glad that she's met someone else who doesn't like the name that her mother gave her? That's funny? Is everything funny to someone who's going senile?*

*Tell her to please not tell anyone your birth name. Moony doesn't even know your birth name. When you told Stars, Stars told you without you saying anything to her that she wouldn't tell anyone your birth name.*

*Tell the old twitch that the reason that Moony is calling you mom mom is because Stars asked you when Moony was born to be Moony's godmother. Then when Stars was a year or so old and starting to talk and because Stars was calling you her god mom, Moony starting calling you god mom – which you were okay with Moony doing but when Stars died . . .*

*What was that sad look about that twitchy just had on her face when you said that you don't want to have anything to do with Stars god. There's no way that I want to have anything to do with a god who kills someone who . . .*

*It's okay? She's glad that you told her your feelings? Why? All you've been doing is vomiting out your insides on someone who you don't know.*

*We'll have lots of time to talk later? Later? Would I like to stay napping in the chair or would I like to help prepare some food to eat? Food? Tell her that you don't want anything to eat and that there's crackers in the car that Moony can eat.*

*You really need to drink something as . . . ask twitchy if she has some bottled or purified water that you can drink. Ask her also if you can use her bathroom. You need to wash your hands.*

*You really need to get some liquids and food in you gal. If the twitchy hadn't helped you to the bathroom, you would've never made it. That was nice of her to tell you to knock on the door when you're ready to get out of the bathroom.*

*This is a nice bathroom. It's at least four times bigger than the one that was in the apartment. The bathtub sure looks inviting. You've taken nothing but showers since the day that mother left you at the women's shelter.*

*I hope that the old twitchy wasn't waiting outside the door the whole time that I've been in here. She needs my help? What does Moony like to eat? Tell her that Moony's mother always wanted Moony to eat fruit and that she drinks fruit drinks.*

*Do I think that Moony would eat pancakes if she fixed them? You know that you would but . . . Stars was all about eating healthy – and pancakes wasn't on her list of food to eat. I hope that the old twitchy is okay with Moony not eating what she fixes.*

*Why did she ask me that? He's not my man. She knows that. No – not the screeching again. Gal – just let her laugh. Maybe she'll get it out of her system.*

*She has to believe me that . . . the kid doesn't begin to look like what a Hercules is supposed to look like. What makes the twitchy now think that I'd know what the kid eats – if he eats anything at all? The way that he carried you though, the kid must eat something to have the kind of strength that he seems to have. It'd make Stars day if she was alive and you told her that you got carried through a door by a guy.*

*You need to let her help you to the table. Any kind of juice would be fine. Tell her that you're okay with one pancake to begin with and if you're still hungry, you'll have a second. And now she has you needing to decide between bacon, sausage link or patty and ham to go with the pancake. Tell her thanks but there's no way that you're going to be able to eat very much with the way that your stomach feels.*

*Ask the old twitchy how long ago it has been since the kid and Moony left. I'm not to worry about them? She's sure that they'll be back here at any minute?*

*You probably should go and look for Moony. Moony has the ability to disappear the minute that you turn around. Who knows what she has been able to convince the kid to do? And the kid . . . he seems and acts like a nice guy – but . . . that doesn't mean that he's actually a nice guy.*

*That's one tall glass of orange juice. Woah – it's nice and cold and does it taste good. Tell the old twitchy thanks – and that you hope that she didn't give you all the orange juice that she has in the house.*

*This really is one big house. Ask her how many people are living in this house. There's no way that she can be living in and taking care of this place alone. Okay – she does have someone come in a couple of times a week to dust and clean her house.*

*Stars would go crazy if she saw this place. The room with the table where I'm sitting in right now is bigger than all the rooms together in the apartment that she was renting. I hope that the landlord was okay with us leaving like we did without talking to her first. She knew that Stars had died but . . . you really should've told her that you wouldn't be able to keep on staying in the apartment.*

*Why can't people be as nice as the funeral home director who helped me with all the paperwork with getting Stars from where she had to have the autopsy and then cremating her – and that I could give him what I could for doing what he did. There was no way that I could've begun to come up with the nearly six thousand dollars that it cost him to do what he did for me.*

*Then giving me that thing that gives directions because he had gotten a new one . . . there's no way at all that I could've gotten here without that thing.*

*Stars would really be proud of you for . . . like you had a choice. She told you that you had to take her ashes to this place to throw them into the ocean's water. Stars knew that Moony would make sure that you'd follow through with doing it when she told you what to do in front of Moony,*

*It's really pretty bad that a five year old knew more about driving old Birdie than I did the first time that . . . if it hadn't been for the parking lot of the church that's located on the same street where the apartment was located . . .*

*Moony is probably telling the kid right now how she had to show me how to start Birdie because I didn't know how. She's also probably telling him that she had to show me how to get Birdie moving, where the windshield wipers and light things are and when and where to put gas in the car.*

*It's kind of surprising that no one called the cops about the crazy gal in the church's parking lot who was backing up, going forward, driving in circles and doing all kinds of things to get used to driving Birdie. Practicing driving did take my mind off Stars dying and what I had to do with her ashes*

*That's what you should be doing now – making a list of all the things that . . . where do I start. I need to first find a place to rent, then get a job, find a school for Moony, get another tire for Birdie, get my own driver's license, pay back what you used Stars debit card for to get money out of an ATM . . .*

*That sounds like a car. That must be Moony and the kid. Someone must be coming. You need to get up and . . . you got beaten to the door. Just stay where you're sitting. There's no way that your legs would be able to get you to the door without help.*

*It sounds like Moony had the adventure of a lifetime the way that she's filling in the twitchy on her walk back to the kid's car and then driving back here in the kid's car.*

*When you were five and if it was the first time that you've gone to someplace that's totally new to you, you know that you wouldn't be acting like Moony is acting now. I can still feel mother's claws squeezing my shoulder. There was nothing that you did that was okay to her. It seemed like I was always in her way – that everything that went wrong for her was my fault – that . . . I know – I know – I know – mother is history.*

I'm going to eat something before I unload whose car? Sul? Okay – Sul is the name who Moony is always calling mom mom.

Talk about getting an earful. Nothing like experiencing a five year old's ire to start off a day. What's her problem with Sul telling the old lady her name? Yah – it's a weird name – but . . . it sort of fits her.

Whatever the old gal has been fixing is making your stomach wanting to know what it is. You're going to have to tell your stomach that you don't have time to eat anything.

Why did she have to ask me that? How does that old battleax know that you've been living off only stuff that can be unwrapped or gotten out of coin operated machines? The oven and microwave in your apartment haven't been used since you moved into it over three years ago.

You're letting the smell bring back memories of ma fixing breakfast for you. You need to call ma sometime soon again. It's been a couple of weeks since you last talked with her. I really wish that I could somehow get her out of the place where she's being cared for.

The old crone has to understand why I can't stay. There's no way that I can stay here any longer. I've got to . . .

I'm staying? And that's that? And I'm to sit right over there – next to Sul? You need to tell her to stop telling you what to do – that you're not going to let her run your life. This trying to sound like a hyena . . . does the old gal ever take anything seriously?

Not Moony, too. Daddy has to sit down next to mom mom? I'm to call her mom mom – not that other name? She knows that she won't be able to start going to school if she doesn't have a mommy so mom mom is mom mom?

Ask the old gal if she needs help. This sitting next to a wannabe zombie isn't where I want to be right now. She may be a nice gal but . . . she's definitely has serious problems – including probably an eating disorder.

Why is the old gal putting so much food on the table? She has just four place settings on the table. There's no way that we're going to be able to eat everything that she has already put on the table let alone whatever else she fixing in the kitchen. She already has a big pile of pancakes, it looks like four waffles, bananas, strawberries, blueberries and whipped cream plus orange juice and something else that's in a red juice container on the table – so what else is she fixing?

Guess shutting off the burners must mean that she has finished fixing whatever else that she's going to put on the table. That looks likes scrambles eggs on the plate in her right hand and the plate in her other hand looks like it has a couple of different kinds of sausages and crisp looking bacon. As good as everything looks, you'll have a stomach really complaining if . . . we're going to do what now?

Whose kid is she anyway? If she thinks that she really needs a daddy, she's going to have to find someone else than me as there's no way that I'm going to live in a world were a five year old is totally convinced that she knows more than anyone else and that she's the boss.

She wants to do what? Pray? Mommy said that it's always important to pray before and after every meal? So because mommy is now in the heaven in the ocean, she needs to pray. Now we're to hold hands while she prays? And now you're holding Sul's hand whether you wanted to or not. For someone who looks like the weakest gal in the world, her hands are plenty firm – and warm – and . . .

Bless the food for Jesus's sake – amen. That's it? Now we can eat? Did you really expect Sul to tell you what she'd like you to give to her? That's really encouraging – mom mom doesn't eat? Mom mom doesn't know how to fix food?

It does look like Sul has drunk some orange juice. I'm assuming that the glass in front of her was fuller than what it is now. Maybe if you cut off a quarter of a waffle and cut it up on her plate – and put a few pieces of bananas and strawberries on it and if you eat the rest of the waffle with the rest of the banana and some strawberries on it, maybe it'll give her enough motivation to eat what you're putting on her plate.

She talked again. Tell her she's welcome – and that if she sees something else that looks good to eat that . . .

Slow down. You're devouring your food like you haven't had anything to eat for months. Well . . . this may be the first real food that you've had for months.

She told you to do it – so do it – try the scrambled eggs. I'm to at least take one piece of sausage and a piece of bacon? Asking the old lady what she'd do to you if you don't . . . you need to tell Moony that she needs to listen to herself talk – that if her mommy told her that she wasn't to talk when she was eating a meal, than why does she think that she can talk now?

I can't wait to get out of here. The food is really good but . . . having a kid trying to be who her mommy is . . .

When did Sul . . . her plate is completely clean. Ask her if she'd like another quarter of a waffle. If she thinks that she can eat half a waffle if I eat the other half . . . and now you're being told by that little turkey that I'm supposed to eat the other half because mommy said that we're never to let food go to waste. Guy – when are you going to learn to not look at the old crackpot? She's enjoying herself way too much – at my expense.

Okay – I hope that Sul is okay with me adding some blueberries with the bananas and strawberries. Hand her the whipping cream so that . . . why is she staring at the can like she's never seen whipping cream before? Okay – you probably should've guessed by now that mom mom has never seen a can of whipping cream before – and that she hasn't either because mommy never . . .

Take the can from Sul and spray some whipped cream on one corner of her waffle and tell her that you'll put more on the waffle if she likes it.

You need to get to eating the food that's on your plate before it gets cold. Wow – these eggs sure are good. I hope that the old lady knows what a thumbs up means. I'm to help myself to more – and . . . if she thinks that I'm here to eat everything that's on the table and that I'll then eat more if . . .

You need to be glad guy that the eccentric old crane has the job of trying to get Moony to eat something. This not wanting to eat anything that's on the table because mommy never . . . what did her mommy fix for her to eat? Ask Sul. Moony only ate a bowl of cereal when she got up in the morning?

Ask Sul what she usually ate in the morning. A couple of pieces of toast and coffee? The old gal doesn't miss a thing – she's halfway to her kitchen to I'm sure get some coffee brewing. She'd earn points with me if she'd make enough so that I could have a cup, too. It sure wouldn't take much to beat those justgoodenough K-cups at the office.

Maybe if you took a pancake and put some butter on it – then springle some sugar on the butter – and then roll up the pancake and start eating it, maybe Moony will do the same thing. Don't pay any attention to Moony. Act like you've done it all the time. You did – actually, when there were leftover pancakes that ma had put in the frig.

That tasted even better than I remember. You know that if she decides to eat one that she's going to eat another – so fix yourself another – and this time cut up some bananas and . . . good – it's working. And I'm so stuffed now. There's absolutely no way that I can eat anything else.

And now Moony has to tell whoever she that she's eating the round pieces of bread the same way that daddy was eating them. Why did that smile that you just got from the old gal feel so good?

Good – the coffee will be ready in a few minutes. So while we're waiting for the coffee, we're going to do what? She's going to read a what from that thing that she has in her hand? Why?

Verses? She's going to first read from the Bible and then . . . just jump right in there Moony and interrupt what the old lady is saying.

She's glad that she reads from the Bible after we eat and from whatever she called it because that was what her mommy always did – and mom mom doesn't do that?

I'm on mom mom's side on this one. The old man – Bible – never would've been in the same room together. I don't know what it was that he had against the Bible – just mentioning Bible would set the old man off. Face it guy – everything set off the ogre who thinks that his boys should be like him.

That can't be a real story. No one would tell a gal to go to her neighbors to get as many jars as she could get and then have oil from one jar fill all the jars. One has to be crazy to believe that kind of thing ever happened.

If whoever wrote in that little pamphlet thing what purportedly happened thousands of years ago believing that I'm going to . . . plain common sense says that what supposedly happened couldn't have happened. And who uses the word faith today? Faith is never going to be in my vocabulary. I don't need faith when I know that I can make happen whatever I sent my mind on making happen.

Please old lady – stop asking questions from what you just read. You probably don't have to worry about her asking you anything because Moony . . . this coming up with the lady in the story being like mommy – because mommy told her that she had asked God in the heaven in the ocean to always give her and mom mom food to eat and there was always food to eat.

It wouldn't surprise me if her mother was on welfare when . . . and that drugs probably had something to do with her dying from meningitis – if that's what she really died from.

Now we're to close our eyes and hold hands again so that . . . am I glad that she's not my kid. Am I glad that I can get in my car and leave – and leave that overbearing kid and that scarecrow of gal with the old gal to figure out what to do with them. She got herself in this mess – not me, so . . . just take the skinny gal's hand before she . . .

That's it? God in the heaven in the ocean thank you for the food in Jesus' name. Amen.

If the old gal thinks that she's going to be able to change that little imp's mind that God's heaven is not in the ocean – that that it's in the sky, she's not going to win. If there's really a place called heaven someplace . . . come on guy – everyone knows that there's no heaven place.

I'm to pick up the plates and take them to the kitchen while Moony takes the silverware to the kitchen? She's got to be kidding. I'm not a little boy who she thinks that she can boss around to do something because she said so.

And telling that pushy old lady that now has Moony glaring at you like you just did the worst thing that someone could ever do. And now putting your hands on your hips like she has her hands on her hips has set the old gal off to howling so hard that she has tears running down her face.

Run guy – get out of here. There's no way that I'm going to put up with this nonsense anymore. I get enough of this kind of stuff where I work to have to get it here, too.

What is Sul doing? She needs to stay sitting. She's feeling better? Say something – you just got thanked for . . . she's glad that you helped her to eat. Why won't my mouth . . .

And now you just got thanked because you're helping to carry the leftover food to the kitchen because she . . . that probably wasn't bright of you guy to say – telling her that you're glad that you've been able to help someone who obviously needs help.

Do I want to wash or dry the dishes? Why did she ask me if I'll wash or dry the dishes when there's a dishwasher in front of her? She's not using the dishwasher because she has hands here who can wash dishes? Tell her that everyone uses a dishwasher to wash dishes.

There's no way that Sul can wash dishes as . . . tell her to sit down again. Guy – you're going to have to help Sul to the recliner as she's definitely still unsteady. She feels like she can't weigh more than a feather.

Now tell the bossy old gal that she's going to have to tell you what you need to do to wash dishes. You also need to come up with a good excuse once you finally make it into the office. Those gals are going to be all over you for showing up late and not having the project assembled that you said that you would before they show up today.

*I sure hope now that I've gotten past getting rid of Stars ashes in the ocean, Moony will calm down. Trying to sound and act like her mother has really gotten old. Having Stars do everything for me as well as always telling me what to do was fine but . . . you can't keep letting Moony do the same thing to you.*

*I'm glad that she had a super-duper good time with the kid getting his car – but this calling the kid daddy . . . why did Stars do this to me? Why did Stars stick me with a kid who thinks that I've to listen to her – and that because she doesn't think that I can take care of myself, that she doesn't have to listen to me.*

*Now telling the kid where he has to sit . . . you're going to have to let it be – at least for now, with Moony acting the way that she has been ever since Stars died. Just because your mother always tried to make you feel invisible . . .*

*Where did all that food come from? I thought that twitchy was only going to fix pancakes. If Moony eats anything, it'll probably be some of that fruit.*

*I hope that the old twitchy doesn't expect me to eat any of that bacon or those other things that're on the plate with the bacon or any of those eggs. There's no way that I'm going to eat something that mother would fix and eat every morning.*

*One pancake will be enough for me. Every day while living with mother . . . you somehow survived on a bowl of cereal with a little milk. Holidays was the only time that you ate a pancake.*

*Why? Why? Why? Why does Moony always have to have everything done her way. Moony never acted like she's been acting like these past ten days or so before Stars died. You know that Stars if she was still alive wouldn't put up with how Moony has been acting since she died – so why are you?*

*You've got to take his hand. You know that Moony won't do her praying thing until you do.*

*Gal – come on – you can't let yourself believe that he's liking holding your hand. And stop letting yourself liking holding his hand as . . . you need to stop then holding onto his hand like you're never going to let go of it.*

*You need to be thankful gal that the twitchy is going along with Moony's charade. You need to be thankful period for the twitchy. If she hadn't been sitting where Stars made you write down exactly where to go with her ashes, you'd more than likely be sitting in Birdie crying with Moony telling you over and over again to stop crying – that mommy promised her that her god will take care of us.*

*No one – especially a bossy brat, is ever going to convince me that something or someone that I can't see would have an old twitchy . . . you just got lucky on this one gal. You know that all this is going to come to an end just as soon as you finish eating so don't start hoping that . . .*

*Why did he take my plate? I didn't tell him that he could do that. Why did he just pull one of those corners off whatever that is? If it makes him happy, let him put some banana slices and strawberries on it. It might be good.*

*Good grief guy. He just ate the rest of whatever the thing is quicker than you ate your corner of the thing. The kid must've been really hungry.*

*The thing really does taste good. Tell him that you'll eat a half of another one if he'll eat the other half.*

*You know gal – you could've gotten one those things yourself – as they're right in front of you, instead as asking the kid to do what he's doing. You let Stars do way too much for you.*

*What's that stuff that he just put next to the thing? Taste it. It's sweet. You should've let him spray that stuff over everything as . . . is food always supposed to taste this good?*

*You probably shouldn't eat anymore as . . . you probably ate more in the last few minutes than what you've eaten since Stars died.*

*Moony needs to get it that she has to eat something. Just because there isn't anything on the table that Stars had her eat – other than the fruit, you need to get her to start to eat other things.*

*He's still got room to eat a pancake? Why is he putting butter on it – and now sugar? And now rolling it up like a rug and acting like it's the best thing that he's ever eaten?*

*I get it – he's gotten Moony to do the same thing. Pretend like you don't notice what she's doing. If I wasn't so full right now . . . if you get the chance to eat a pancake again, you need to do what the kid just did.*

*Good – Moony is going to eat another one. She has to have liked the one that she just ate otherwise you know that she wouldn't be fixing another one to eat.*

*That didn't make much for twitchy to convince the kid to eat some of those eggs and bacon. Where's he putting all the food that he's eating? I ate less than one of the bumpy things and I feel full while he's eating like it's the first time that . . .*

*That's the thing that Stars read every morning after we ate together. Where did she get it? I didn't see Moony give it to her.*

*It must not be the one that Stars was using as . . . I hope that twitchy is okay with having a mouthy brat tell her that she's glad that she's reading something that mommy read every morning until a mighty giant took her mommy to her god in the heaven in the ocean.*

*Whoever writes those things in that little magazine like thing has to be living in wawa land. There's no reason why I should believe what's written in those things. Someone has to have a wild imagination in order to come up with some the things that're mentioned in those thing's stories.*

*I get the feeling that the kid the way that he's shaking his head agrees with me. I'll never understand why it was so important to Stars that she read those short whatevers plus reading from the book that she called Bible – that she read every day. Be glad gal that that book was something that Stars didn't insist on you reading, too.*

*Another really far-fetched story. What kind of oil was that that there was enough to fill jar after jar? Like who really believes that it actually happened.*

*Moony needed to let the twitchy decide what to do after she read what was written in that thing that she read from for today instead of . . . maybe twitchy wanted to say something instead of having Moony say what Stars taught her to say after every meal.*

*Where did that thought come from? It's true. You're liking it that the kid is holding your hand. You didn't even have to reach for his hand this time. You know that it can't be that he was wanting to hold your hand – he probably knew that he was going to have to hold your hand so . . .*

*This having to close my eyes when Stars would go on forever about whatever and now when Moony thinks that she has to do what her mother did, doesn't make any sense to me to do.*

*At least Moony isn't adding to what her mother taught her to say after every meal other than adding god in the heaven in the ocean.*

*You probably should tell twitchy that she's not going to convince Moony of anything – that she's wasting her breath trying to convince Moony that she's wrong about something when Moony is absolutely sure that she knows what she's talking about.*

*If Stars hadn't been telling Moony over the past year that she was going to be a first grader this year . . . whoever is going to be her teacher is going to have a handful. And do you really want to spend the next year with Moony always under your feet? If Stars hadn't helped me like she did ever since mother dropped me off at that woman's center . . . I owe Stars to do everything that I can for Moony.*

*You need to thank the kid for helping you with the food that you ate. It's the least that you can do. He really didn't have to fix what he fixed for you. You didn't ask him to do it. You know that you'd never have eaten as much as you did if he hadn't helped you. Now he's thanking me for thanking him? Why?*

*I'm to sit back down in the chair where I was sitting before we ate while the kid and Moony clean off the table? Tell the old twitchy that you're feeling better – that you want to help. You probably look like a feeble old something or the other getting up from the table. Just be thankful gal that the kid now is willing to help you make it to this soft, comfortable chair.*

*This is going to be interesting. If the kid thinks that giving twitchy the eye is going to get her to change her mind about having him either wash or dry the dishes, you know that he's going to end up doing what she's asked him to do. This always laughing at him though . . . you know that you wouldn't like it if someone was always laughing at you.*

*Good – choosing to wash the dishes over Moony washing the dishes probably was what twitchy was expecting him to do. That was smart of her to tell the kid to pile up the dishes that he's washed instead of having Moony dry them.*

*You're never going to be able to wash and dry dishes, wash and fold clothes, fix hair and do nails together with Stars again. Come on gal – you need to stop thinking about Stars. She's gone. You're on your own.*

*You need to remember that Stars would never have been in that shelter if she hadn't become pregnant by a guy who she never met or saw. If Stars when she saw you hadn't called you her little sis, you know that the place wouldn't have let you stay. The place probably would've put you in a foster home or . . . there's no way that you would've lasted very long living on the streets.*

*You need to be thankful that Stars helped you get a GED. You really didn't have a choice. When Stars made her mind that I was to do something . . . you'd never have realized how much you liked cutting and shaping hair. It always feels so good to know that a twitchy is enjoying what you're doing with his or her hair and how it looks when you're done with whatever it is that you were doing with it.*

*Maybe if I ask twitchy, she might know of a place that might need a beautician. Everyone knows someone who's in a retirement center. I could also ask her about the area funeral homes if she knows if any of them are ever looking for someone to fix the hair of and to put makeup on someone who has died. Stars was who was always so good with the makeup but . . . she had me do it enough times that I'd probably be able to do an adequate job for someone to be viewed.*

*Stars accumulated enough supplies to last you for a while if . . . then with all of the stuff that she had from scissors to hairdryers to . . . plus the stuff that you have . . . you're dreaming gal if . . .*

*Why does this chair feel like I'm still sitting in the car? It sure feels like I'm still moving. You need to be thankful gal that you made it here without hitting something or getting hit by another car. Moony thinking that it was fun to count each time that someone honked at you . . .*

*It probably would've been a good idea to have made a sign that said first time driver or something else like that that other drivers could see. And how would've you explained using a driver's license that had someone else's picture and information on it if a policeman stopped you?*

*I can't keep putting off things like I did with Stars. If I would've listened to Stars and let her teach me to drive, I'd have a driver's license now. I'd also know how to fix meals, handle money, buy things, sew, talk to others – everything that Stars could do.*

*I need to find out what twitchy said to Moony to get her to sit there in that chair next to the counter watching her and the kid do the dishes. Knowing Moony – she probably thinks that she has to sit in a chair and watch to make sure that the dishes are being washed and dried right.*

*I've probably already eaten more today than I would've eaten in a day before Stars died. I needed to listen to Stars about eating more. I need to stop using the excuse of having to grow up with a mother who only thought about herself – who expected her daughter to survive on crackers and whatever other cheap stuff that she could buy that she called food. That thing that I ate with the fruit on it really tasted good. It feels so good right now to be sitting in this chair.*



What were you thinking guy? The old gal gave you a choice whether to . . . so why didn't you say that you'd dry the dishes – not wash the dishes. This is crazy. The water is so hot . . . I can wear those vinyl gloves or I can be a man and tough it out? Asking the crazed wacko how she has managed to stay alive for so long because of the way that she's constantly insulting me . . . sonny boy is funny? Telling the old gal now that she's crazy – that she's needs to be locked up someplace before she . . .

You probably should stop egging on the kook as . . . guy – come one – the old lady has your number and she knows it. Throw in the towel guy – you're never going to win with her. Focus on getting the dishes just as clean as you can get them while doing it as fast as you can so that you can escape the loony bird who's living in this place.

At least Moony has stopped telling everyone what to do – or not do. This though sitting just feet away looking like a ref who is about ready to blow a whistle because . . . tell her that you think that she should keep her mother company as . . . mom mom isn't her mother? I'm silly again for calling mom mom her mother again?

If I wasn't expected to be in the office today to finish setting up the project for its last go through before showing off the mockup to the developer who has already knocked down buildings in order to make room to build another casino . . . guy – you've got to recheck all the electronics that're embedded in the model before . . . you've got to make sure that they're all working the way that you've programmed them to work.

Poor Sul. She's zonked out again. If she really did drive from where she said that she did – she had to have driven pretty much all yesterday and through last night.

You're wanting to get to know her – aren't you guy?

You know that you feel sorry for her. The way that Moony has manhandled you . . . but if it's true what Moony said about Sul that Sul doesn't know how to do anything – that she has to always help her . . . there's no way that I'd ever want to go through life helping a gal who won't help herself. There's no way that I'd want to have a gal for a wife who I'd have to do everything for. If Moony really thinks that I'm now her daddy and that . . .

You need to thank the old lady for the delicious breakfast. The food really was tasty. I'm to get used to . . . eh?

When are you going to learn to ignore what the mental case says? It's obvious that she's whacked out. You can hope that today is the last day that you'll ever see her.

Finally. That sure seemed like a lot of dishes. It wouldn't surprise me if the old gal has been piling up her dirty dishes until she finds a shmuck like me who she can get to wash the dishes so that she doesn't have to use her dishwasher.

Now you can go through life guy saying that you washed dishes. There was no way that ma would've had me wash or dry dishes with the possibility of the hulk showing up. He already had enough reasons to call you a sissy along with a hundred other demeaning names.

Talk about a toad – that was the guy who called himself your father. Calling himself a CEO of what he did and . . . and then calling the work that he did a deconstruction enterprise. He and your older bros having the muscle . . . I'll take my brain any day over him and my bros – even if means that I'm the runt of the litter per the creep.

That's it. Go. You may be able to make it before . . .

Everything that's in Sul's car needs to be carried into the house? Ask her why? And did you really expect an answer? It would've been nice if . . . this though it won't take long to get her car unloaded so I'm to stop my fussing and start unloading her car . . . and here's a basket to use to . . .

Hurry up and get the old rust bucket unloaded so that you can still beat those idiot gals into the office. The trunk shouldn't take long. Now what do I do with this basket of . . . okay – take the clothes to the room that's over there as . . . that's a washer and dryer. I hope that old gal uses the washer and dryer as there's no way that I'm going to wash anyone's clothes by hand in that sink. Good – that'll give Moony something to do – putting the clothes into the washer that she and Sul wear and the other clothes over on the table.

Thank goodness that was the last basket of clothes as . . . now you know why ma told you that you need to wash your clothes every week.

Now get the backseat unloaded. Here's hoping that there's not a dead body under the blanket that's . . . where did Moony come from?

I'm to be really, really careful with what's in the backseat because it was mommy's and now mom mom . . .

It looks like someone cleaned out a beauty parlor. What would Sul be doing with all this stuff? She sure doesn't look like someone who'd be caught fixing or cutting hair in a hair salon.

Other than the two hair dryers and what looks like the kind of chair that is used in a hair salon, everything seems to have been packed in boxes. Where're their suitcases? There wasn't room for suitcases in the trunk. If that was all the clothes that Sul and Moony have between them . . .

We're to take everything that's in the backseat into the house? What for? If the old lady is thinking about letting Sul and Moony stay with her . . . you can't let them. The old gal is a loony bird. Who knows what she'll do to them if . . .

Yah – sure – right away – it'll only take us a few minutes to unload this thing that somehow survived being driven for about twenty-four hours by apparently someone who didn't know how to drive a car. Pat the car on the hood for making it this far. It's too bad that the thing may be on its last legs. If you weren't so tied up at the office with all the projects that're thrown at you, getting this old gal back in good running condition would be fun to do.

Come on guy – stop wasting time – start hauling the boxes and whatever else that's in the backseat into the house.

I hope that the old gal is okay with where Moony is telling me to put all the stuff that's in the backseat. You should tell Moony thanks for the good job that she's doing opening the door each time when you . . . you probably should tell the old gal that you'll carry everything into the house – that she shouldn't be carrying anything because . . .

No – no – that can't be my cell that's . . . I sure hope that it's not one of the . . . it's generalissima. Tell her that you overslept. Tell her that you're sick. Tell her . . . you know that she won't believe any kind of story that you tell her so don't even try.

Tell the control freak the truth and . . . that wasn't cool. The old witch had no right grabbing my phone out of my hand and . . . I'm not going to be seen in the office today – or tomorrow – or ever? That rude old . . . take the phone back. Generalissima needs to know that a crazed old bag lady stole your phone out of your hand.

Oh boy – there's someone out there who the old gal really doesn't like and it'd have to be the gal who . . . how does she know how many hours that I work each a day and how many days a week that I work?

Thank goodness she's not my mother – or grandmother, as . . . how did the old gal know how to turn on my phone's speaker? Is that who generalissima really thinks that I am – that I'm a mamma's boy? If that pompous ladder climber thinks that telling the old lady that if I'm not in the office by the time that she hangs up that she'll be just fine if I never show my face in the office again . . .

I'd like to see the tyrant try to get rid of me. There's no one else on her team – or on any of the Designer Plus, Inc. teams, who can do what I do. Now that she's gotten in her daily threat, take the phone from the old gal and . . .

This can't be good. The old gal has a look on her face like a cat that has just caught a mouse. She knows H. P.? High pockets is her brother? Oh no – if it wasn't for high pocket's thumb per generalissima on everything that takes place around here . . . generalissima has been right about that. The guy has been mayor of this town way too long. At the same time, it's sad to see all those beautiful old mansions being torn down for the sake of perceived progress.

The fruitcake knows what? She has figured out that I've been working about fifty hours overtime a week which I'm not being overtime for? Great – you've been for the past three plus years stalked by a creepy old gal who should be already six feet underground.

It's true that you put in between fifteen to eighteen hours days – that you've worked on projects almost every single day since you were hired over three years ago. Has he ever claimed overtime? She could've asked me that instead of asking . . . you got the same answer way back when when you asked generalissima about being paid overtime – that contract personnel are not paid overtime – that what you're paid is what you've agreed to be paid for doing what you're doing – and that it's not her problem that you work so many hours and days to satisfactorily complete a job.

You've got to get the phone back from the old gal before she completely wrecks your life. Tell her that you don't want her to visit human resources or talk to her brother about having the city inspectors make sure that any building that your place has the job of seeing to how it's built will run into all kinds of snags.

Wow – talk about losing it – if generalissima thinks that yelling at the old crone with language that . . . oh boy – hearing that everything that she has said has been recorded – and that the old gal can't wait to play what she said back to her company's president – that'll drive generalissima even more over the edge.

Knowing generalissima . . . you really need to get out of Dodge just as quickly as you can. She made it clear on day one that no one messes with her – that if someone does . . .

Why did she do that – telling generalissima that she's glad the Hercules doesn't have to put up with her anymore – that he can now spend time with his five year old daughter and with his wife?

And if you thought that the little boss would stay inside the house . . . you probably don't want to tell Moony what's taking the old lady and her daddy so long to . . .

It's about time that the old . . . gave me back my phone. Telling her now that what she did was the worst thing that anyone has ever done to you has her cackling even more.

You can't tell Moony what you're thinking. How can you tell Moony what the old lunatic is in hysterics about when you don't know what it is? Moony doesn't need to know that she's looking at a bonified nutcase. The sooner that you can get away from the wacko . . .

I'd do anything right now to get in old tin can tank and . . . you know that no matter what your boss said, you know that you still have a job. There's no way that she can assemble the model for the scheduled demonstration. You spent most of last night making the final pieces that the self-ascribed fantastic five told you that they expected you to have ready for their project. And those pieces are in old tin can tank.

You know, too, that generalissima has to know that you aren't married and don't have a five year old kid.

Face it guy – you know deep down that you'd really like to see the five hotshots look like bumbling buffoons in front of a client with the CEO sitting on the front row watching. You know that they'll blame you. At least you'd get your name mentioned. This always taking credit for everything when you're the one who . . .

It's not going to work taking two boxes into the house at a time. It isn't because they're too heavy; it's just need to know where I'm walking. I definitely wouldn't want to trip while carrying too many boxes at the same time.

Sul needs to find a bed. She's obviously fried. Tell her that she can stay in your place – and sleep in your bed while you're at work. Thirteen minutes and you'll have her there. That's what it takes you every day to drive to the boardwalk from your dive.

Sul and Moony are going to do what? They can't stay here. Tell the maniac that you don't want her to make a mess of Sul's life like she has tried to do with your life and that if she ever calls you sonny boy again that . . . and now she's back to cackling.

Guy – just carry the boxes inside the house and stop thinking about . . . the old horror better not contact H.R. where I work – and she better not try to convince her brother to make life where I work anymore difficult that what it already is.

I'm to do what just as soon as I finish carrying in the boxes? No way. Tell the . . . I don't have the time to . . .

*Why couldn't it have been me who got meningitis instead of Stars? Only Stars and Moony knew that I existed. Stars could do everything. I can't do anything. Why did I promise Stars that I'd take care of Moony? Face it gal – you're the one who's being taken care of – and it's by a five year old.*

*There's no way that I'm going to be able to help Moony the way that Stars did. Stars was always encouraging Moony to do things. All I got from my mother was don't do that – you can't do that – stop doing that – I don't remember ever . . .*

*Why are you going over again something that you've gone over a thousand times? You need to do what Stars told you over and over again – enjoy today's treasures, forget yesterday's garbage and wait for tomorrow to open the box of surprises that tomorrow has for you.*

*There's no way that I'll ever do what Stars did every morning – getting out of bed while it was still dark so that she could watch the sky become light – saying that each morning to her was like starting her life all over again knowing that her god would give her whatever it was that she said that her god was giving her.*

*Bed was the one place where I could escape being around mother. And bed up until about ten days ago was still where I went to escape thinking about . . .*

*Moony is never going to let you sleep. Why does she think that she has to be like her mother – having to get up early like her mother did. But thinking that she has to wake me up when she gets up in the morning . . . and then thinking that she can stay up as late as her mother did . . . you were always in bed well before Stars went to bed.*

*You need to get up and do something before you fall asleep in this chair. Once twitchy and the kid are done doing what they're doing in the kitchen, you'll need to get up and . . . and what're you going to do? You're not going to be able to go far if Birdie is almost out of gas – plus you're not supposed to travel on that weird looking tire . . . so . . .*

*You could ask twitchy if she knows where the nearest shelter is. You know that even if there's one that's near here, it'll probably be full. Then what?*

*Moony looks like she's bored out of her mind. I can't believe that she hasn't moved since twitchy and the kid started doing what they're doing in the kitchen. I need to ask twitchy what she said to Moony to get her to sit in one place for more than two seconds.*

*The twitchy and the kid must be finished doing what they were doing in the kitchen as . . . where's he going now? And why is he carrying a basket?*

*Why is Moony going with him? You can't let her go. Why won't she ever listen to me? She needed to stay here with me. Who knows what Moony will do as . . .*

*Good – Moony is back. Tell her to come over to where you're sitting – that you want to talk with her.*

*Grammy twitchy told her that she has to hold the door open when daddy comes back to the house with a basket of the clothes that're in Birdie.*

*This can't be happening. Tell Moony to tell the twitchy to leave all the stuff in Birdie. Just because twitchy fixed me something to eat, she has no right to take our things. The clothes in Birdie is all that Moony and you have. And what's in the backseat . . . it needs to stay there. I'll need the stuff when . . . you need to stop them from . . .*

*The look that Hercules has on his face . . . I don't blame him if he's wishing that he was someplace else right now. The clothes that he's carrying are way overdue to be washed. Instead of sitting around when you weren't spending time with Stars when she was in the hospital and then after she died – and then you had to . . . you needed to make time to wash those clothes. I don't want to ever go through a nightmare like that again.*

*Why does the world have to be so full of people like mother who . . . and why aren't there more Stars and guys in the world – like the funeral director who helped me with what I had to do to have Stars cremated? Okay – the twitchy who lives in this place has been kind to me and Moony – at least so far, but . . . twitchy needs to act like she's old.*

*Where're they going with the clothes? Ask Moony if she knows what . . .*

*Before she says daddy one more time, you need to tell Moony that the kid is not and never will be her daddy and that there's absolutely no way that you'd want someone as a husband who looks and acts like how the kid looks and acts. Moony needs to get it that she doesn't need to have a father to start classes. So gal – when are you going to tell Moony that you're going to have her wait a year before you have her start going to a school?*

*The room where they're taking the clothes has a washer and dryer in it? And she going to help grammy twitchy wash our clothes? Why would the twitchy do that? She just met us. She doesn't know me.*

*You might as well let twitchy take charge of your life like everyone else does. It'd be nice to have a say about something – at least once. It'd be nice to have someone see you as they walk past you – at least once. The way that the kid keeps walking past me without looking at me . . . and why would you want him to look at you? You've to be looking like the sorriest thing in the world that he's ever seen. That's what you really are.*

*Daddy is going to take the stuff in now that's in the backseat? No – he can't. Tell Moony to tell the kid that I want all the stuff for cutting and fixing hair and doing nails to stay in Birdie.*

*And did you really think that Moony would do what you told her to do? If you don't want to keep getting a look that says I know what I'm doing and you don't, you need to give up trying to get Moony to do something for you.*

*Moony would never act like she has been acting ever since her mother died if her mother hadn't died. No one ever questioned Stars about anything. Stars always knew what had to be done and how to do it.*

*What's he trying to prove – carrying two boxes at once. They're heavy. You had to take some of the stuff out of some of the boxes before you could get the boxes into the car. So help me if he drops one of those boxes and breaks what's inside the box.*

*The way that the kid almost ran out of the house, he'll have the backseat unloaded in no time. And then what? I sure wish that I knew.*

*That must've been the kid's phone that just rang. If he was supposed to be at work by now, I hope that I haven't gotten him in trouble by . . . there you go again – taking the blame for something that you don't need to take the blame for doing or causing to happen.*

*Stars told you over and over again to stop it – to stop taking the blame for how mother acted. You didn't make mother do what she did to try to get a guy to marry her. This thinking that getting pregnant would have the guy wanting to marry her . . .*

*How could Stars really believe that forgiving someone who really did awful things – like mother did to me, that I'd be a whole lot happier. I'd be a whole lot happier if I knew that mother has been made to feel just as worthless as she made me feel.*

*How could Stars believe that her god loved her after what happened to her – that because of what happened, her god gave her a really special gift in Moony? There's no way that Stars god – whoever her god is, will ever want to help me.*

*For someone who seemed to be in such a hurry to get everything from Birdie into the house, the kid seems to have gotten lost. It makes sense if it's his job that . . . something is happening outside. Somebody must've showed up here and is making it really clear that she isn't happy that the kid didn't show up for work.*

*Why did Moony come inside? Tell her to shut the door as . . . whoever she is outside sounds way too much like mother sounded like when she was angry – which was almost all the time. Get out of the chair and find out . . .*

*I wish that I could get out of the chair. I wish that I was back in the cramped little apartment and in my dark little room where it was for almost five years just me and no one else until Moony . . . and then the landlord telling me that I needed to give him three months' notice or pay him three months' rent if I was going to leave right away . . .*

*I'm sure that that Stars – for over five years, was never late paying the monthly rent to the landlord – and if something needed to be fixed, she'd fix it plus she made me help her paint the whole place after we moved into it. It was like Stars dying was no big deal to that heartless idiot.*

*Thinking that it was the right thing to do to tell the blowhard what happened to Stars and that you wouldn't be able to stay in the apartment anymore . . . you didn't have any choice but to throw your clothes in Birdie's trunk, fill up the backseat with my and Stars stuff and . . . there was no way that I was going to give that fool the kind of money that he said that . . .*

*Ask Moony if she knows why whoever she is who's talking so loud outside sounds so angry.*

*Daddy is talking on his phone? And she doesn't like it that the bad lady is using bad words while she's talking to the kid? Moony is right – the angry gal is using really filthy words to talk mean to Hercules.*

*Grammy twitchy told the bad lady that daddy isn't going to work for her anymore? It wouldn't surprise me at all if the kid is really, really mad by now at the twitchy.*

*The twitchy is obviously a really scary piece of work but . . . instead of sitting now in a comfortable, cozy chair, you'd be sitting right now in Birdie if twitchy hadn't told you to park behind Hercules' thing.*

*Can't you be thankful just once? You've food in your stomach, a roof over your head for the moment and . . .*

*There's no way that you're going to be able to take care of Moony. You can't even take care of myself.*

*Not again. Tell Moony that she can't make me not be sad. Tell her that I want to be sad. Tell her that nothing is ever going to make me happy again. And crying again is going to make me feel better?*

*Stars wasn't supposed to die. Only twitchies die. Stars wasn't a twitchy.*

*Tell Moony to stop telling you to stop crying. There's no way that she knows how I feel. Okay – Stars was her mother and she feels sad, too, that many giants had to take her to the heaven that's in the ocean to be with her friend Jesus who wanted her to be with him.*

*There's no way that I'd want to have a friend like Jesus. Talk about a selfish guy – thinking that it was more important that Stars be with him than to stay with her daughter.*

*Tell Moony to please leave you alone – that you don't need or want her help anymore.*

*What? She knows that I don't need her help anymore? If Moony really thinks that the kid is going to . . . the first chance that the kid can escape the twitchy, he's going to be out of here. He has absolutely no reason to hang around here and every reason to beat it from this place.*

*Why did Stars have to tell Moony to find a man for me? My life is complicated enough with trying to survive Moony. Having a guy in my life . . . not going to ever happen. The guys in mother's life . . . none of them cared about her feelings. Plus Stars had plenty of chances to have a guy in her life but she . . . she shouldn't have told her kid to find a guy for me when she wouldn't find a guy for herself.*

*Other than the funeral director who helped me with Stars paperwork, there hasn't been any other guy who has been nice to me. Okay – it was nice of Hercules to fix whatever it was for me to eat. You've to admit, too, that having him carry you . . .*

*Talk about carrying . . . you could thank Hercules for carrying in the stuff that was in Birdie's backseat – or not. Whoever was talking to him on the telephone . . . mother would start throwing things whenever she had the look on her face that Hercules has on his face right now.*

*You could say something to twitchy. As miserable as Hercules looks, twitchy looks like she couldn't be . . . if twitchy spends most of her time here in this big old house, she's probably bored out of her mind most of the time. She could be just really happy right now to have some bodies around who . . . what? Moony is to go where now with whom?*

Guy – you need to stop letting that scary old crackpot run your life. She’s ruining it. Just as soon as you take the last few things that’re left in Sul’s car into the witch’s dungeon, you need to . . .

And are you really okay with leaving Sul with that crazed old . . . and then there’s Moony. I can’t be the only guy out there who isn’t married who . . . Moony needs a father who won’t stand for her always telling him what to do. And Sul needs a husband who genuinely likes to care for a gal who can barely take care of herself.

Face it – you’re as pitiful as Sul. You’ve been living in a micro world. You wake up every morning to do battle with five ignoramuses. You go home every night doing what you understood what the dolts told you to do only to find out the next day that . . . this always changing their minds about something . . . so why do you keep putting up with their nonsense?

All you’ve to do guy is remember what it was like trying to please the self-appointed deconstruction king and . . . pleasing the five indecisive harebrains hasn’t been much easier. Knowing that you’re needed to finish a prototype versus being invisible . . . and then there’s always the satisfaction of seeing something completed that you know that you’re the one who did all the work to put it all together while . . . you were nothing more than a worthless waste of time to the old man.

Okay – if grandpops hadn’t died, I’d probably be back home right now – probably doing what I was doing before I left to challenge myself to learn as much as I could about the tech world.

And you’re in this town now because a job recruiter convinced you that you were absolutely the best coming out of your graduating class to . . .

I’m to hurry up and bring in right now what’s still in the car because we need to leave now because? And did you really think that asking Moony what she meant by because would get you more of an answer than just because?

Tell Moony that you can’t do what the old fruitcake told you to do because. Now I’ve to do it because she said that I’m to do it? Tell Moony that she needs to stop . . . it’s your phone guy. Now I’m to answer my phone because you just had Moony tell you to answer it? Let it ring. Maybe Moony will get the hint that . . . guy – you just let Moony take your phone right out of your hand – and now you’re going to let her talk to whoever is calling?

The way that Moony handed my cell back to me like it’s a hot potato and then disappeared into the house, my guess is that it’s generalissima. It is.

Generalissima had to have heard Moony calling her that really mean, nasty lady who . . . she wants to apologize for getting upset with me because I wasn’t in the office when she arrived?

You’re really being lame – telling her that it’s okay – that you don’t blame her for being upset that I wasn’t in the office when she arrived – that I’d be upset, too, if . . . she’s willing to give me a ten percent raise if . . .

And telling her now that even if she doubled your salary that there’s no way that you’d work for her anymore because you’re tired of trying to constantly please a gaggle of flakes is going to get you a good job reference?

And if she thinks that screaming at you through my cell like a stuck pig is going to change my mind, it’s not going to happen. There’s no way that I’m going to let the possibility of a ten percent raise . . . generalissima may think that she owns me but . . . you own her now.

You really should at least finish up the project that you’ve been working on for the last seven months. Tell her to postpone that scheduled meeting and showing until at least next week and . . . don’t make what she has to do to reschedule the showing your problem – because it isn’t.

Tell her that you’re okay with never coming in – that you’ve had it with working with her.

Good going guy – you’ve done it now. How does it feel to be responsible for causing someone to go bonkers?

Listening to her screaming and the language that she’s using isn’t helping you. You need to end the call.

You should've spotted a camera someplace in the meeting room so that you could watch and listen to on your cell generalissima and the four other stooges running your name over the coals. If they want to show the model where you have it right now, let them do it. They're going to look really foolish when nothing works.

Turn your cellphone off. Finish up with what you were doing. Then head for your apartment and . . . and then what? You can spend the day sitting around feeling sorry for yourself or you could begin to look for another job. Staying here isn't an option.

Leaving Sul here with the old crackpot isn't an option either. You've got enough money stashed away for you to find a place for her and Moony to stay until she can find a job and . . . and do you really see Sul ever finding a job and surviving on her own with Moony?

You've a room in your apartment where Sul and Moony can stay in – at least for the time being. It'll give Sul an address to use when she signs Moony up for classes at the elementary school that's close enough for her to walk to.

The heap that Sul is driving probably needs a good going over. It obviously needs new tires. It probably needs the oil changed and liquids checked. You can do all that – if the thing can make it the six or so miles to your place.

And here comes the little boss to . . . you probably shouldn't have told her that you've all day to get the last of this stuff into the house – and that if she keeps on telling me to hurry up that you're going to keep on staying out here.

I'm not going to stay out here? Calling her a little terror . . . forget it guy – your world and Moony's world are a couple of very different places. It's like Moony was being kept isolated from knowing what the real world is like.

Ask Moony where Sul found all this beauty salon stuff that she had in the backseat of the thing that she's driving. And did you really think that you'd be able to convince Moony that calling Sul mom mom . . . you should know by now guy that when Moony has something in her head, that nothing is going to change what she's thinking.

And now I'm to use words that she understands because? Ask her what word that you said that she doesn't understand. Salon? Moony has to know what a salon is as . . . just tell her it's a place that uses the stuff that was in the backseat of her car.

Her mama would use the stuff when she went to places where grammy and grampy twitchies lived? She'd also take the stuff to a place where a grammy or grampy twitchy was who'd gone to the heaven in the ocean?

Moony's mother must've worked as a beautician as . . . she'd paint the face of a grammy twitchy while mom mom made the hair of a grammy twitchy look really nice?

If Moony's mother and Sul were going to places where old people lived and where they were taken after they died, they really were going to nursing homes and funeral homes. And having Moony tell you again that she doesn't know what you're talking about because you used words that . . . just wait and get the skinny from Sul when – or if, she's able to communicate in an intelligent way.

It'd be good to know why Moony is so insistent that Sul is to be always referred to as mom mom. She can't really believe that always calling Sul mom mom will actually mean to her that Sul is her mother?

Let's get this over with. Get these last boxes into the house and then . . . the old lady owes me. She has to let me take Sul and Moony to my place to stay. Just because she did a good job of putting enough food on the table to feed an army . . .

Who knows how many spooks live in this place? Everything about this place reminds me of a haunted house. The kitchen and sitting areas have plenty of light but . . . the old lady that lives in this house is definitely petrifying.

The old man would have a field day taking down this place. You'd have a field day, too. Thank goodness for grandpop who let you stay in his place's basement. You had plenty of room to keep and sell the stuff over e-bay that you managed to sneak out of the places that the old man contracted to tear down. Accumulating enough money to pay all the costs to get up to speed in the tech world gave you the chance to escape his pompous ego.



And I thought that I had it made when I got a job in a place where I could do what I like to do.

I could do what I'm doing all day long – it's having to put up with five pushy, overbearing gals – each one thinking that she can claim you as her personal stoolie to do what she can't do, isn't much different than the old man using you as his personal slave to do what he was too lazy to do. You went from spending all day hearing hey runty – here's more stuff to take photos of to post – and then five minutes later asking why the stuff hasn't been sold yet, to hey geeky – here's what I want incorporated into I'm doing – and then five minutes later asking me why I haven't finished doing it.

It'd make my day to not see anyone of those gals again – just like it made my day when I told the old man where I had been accepted and that he was never going to see me again. The big dent in the trunk of grandpop's old beater where the sledgehammer landed that the old man threw at the car as I was leaving will always remind me of . . .

So – instead of having the old man constantly berating me, I've been letting five obnoxious gals constantly demeaning me. Now I've got a quirky five year ordering me around like a dog. Telling her to stop telling me to hurry, has it worked? The way that she has crossed her arms and is looking at me right now . . .

There's no way though that I'm going to have anything to do with an old lady who thinks that she has the right to call me something that I don't want to be called – and who cackles way too much while I'm trying to get something across to her.

Good – Sul looks like she's heading for wawa land. A good nap might . . .

And here comes the old troll. She must've heard Moony and me coming in with the last load of stuff from Sul's car.

Go ahead – tell the old granny what you're planning to do – that you're first going to head to your place to change clothes – then to the office to finish the project that you and the gals have been working on for months – which will take you a couple of hours of finishing synching up everything, and then back here to pick up Sul and Moony to take them to your place to stay.

They're going to stay here? I'm to move here and stay here, too? And while she's getting the rooms ready for everyone to stay in, I'm to . . . and if you were thinking that she forgot . . .

You've done it again. All you said to her was in your dreams – and she starts crowing again. You need to get her to get it that you're serious about taking Sul and Moony to your place to stay – that you don't want her to worry about a couple of indigents.

The old crone has to believe me that I can take care of them – that . . . how does she know that I wouldn't have any trouble taking care of Sul and Moony in my place?

The old coot has been stalking you. She has to have been. She knows way too much about the place where you're working and who you're working with – especially the hours that you've been putting into the job – and even where you're living.

I'd put odds on the mayor not being her brother. A cuckoo bird like her will say anything to get what she wants. And now just like that, I'm to do what she's ordering me to do – and that's to take Moony to the boardwalk.

And now it's Moony who . . . and do you really think that trying to explain to her what you want to do will get her to stop siding with the old loon?

Are you really going to let a little sprite literally pull you while an old fruitcake figuratively pushes you through the door?

Now what does she want me to do? I'm to take this money and give Moony lots of memories? Give the money back to her and tell her . . . what's it that she doesn't get – that I've got to spend a couple of hours in the office – that if I don't, that . . . how does she know that nothing will happen to me if I don't show up in the office? She can't tell me that I don't work there anymore because . . . I still work there. She has to believe me.

*You can't let Moony out of your sight. Stars made you promise her that . . . you can't let Stars down again. It's your fault that she died. You didn't try hard enough to make her stay alive. She needed to stay alive to . . . Moony is taking care of me instead of me taking care of her. You can't keep letting Moony decide what she's going to do – and always telling you what she thinks that you need to do.*

*Why did the old twitchy just lock the door? Get out of the chair gal and . . . tell the twitchy that Moony won't be fine. Tell the twitchy that she needs to let go of you so that you can . . . how does she know that Moony will be fine with Hercules? How does she know that everything is going to be okay?*

*It's okay for me to cry? You know that she's not going to stop hugging you until . . . how does she know that everyone needs a good cry and a good hug once in a while? A good cry once in a while . . . you've been having good cries ever since you've been born. And about good hugs once in a while – gal – you just got the first really good hug that you can remember from anyone – and it was really feeling good.*

*Oh no – where's Stars purse? I sure hope that Moony didn't decide to take it with her since she thinks that that it's her purse now because her mother can't use it anymore because . . .*

*You need to go out to Birdie like right now and see if it's still on the floor in front of where Moony was sitting. The thing that you've been using to put in the little bit of stuff that you have should still hopefully be in Birdie, too.*

*Tell twitchy what you need to do. Tell her that she doesn't have to go with you – that . . . gal – you know that she knows that you'd do anything right now to try to escape the mess that you've caused yourself. Why don't you just tell her thanks and let her come with you?*

*That ridiculous looking tire that the boy used to replace the tire that blew up is of course as flat as a . . . why can't something go right for you?*

*And what would you do if the tire looked like the other tires? As much as you'd like to . . . and where would you go or what would you do?*

*You don't have any choice gal right now but to stay right here until Moony gets back and then . . . and then what?*

*Thank goodness. Something has gone right. Stars purse and your thing are where they were.*

*You need to be glad that Stars can't see how messy Birdie looks right now with cheese and cracker wrappers and fruit juice containers scattered all over the floor. Use one of those plastic bags that you stuck under the seat where you were sitting when you were driving to put all those wrappers and containers into and . . . twitchy has to have some kind of thing someplace around here to put garbage in.*

*Good – Stars billfold is still here in her purse – as are the debit and credit cards that you've had to use. Like the debit card is going to do you any good since you've used up all the money that Stars had in her checking account with most of it going to the funeral director for his help to . . . why does dying cause such an awful nightmare?*

*That's nice of twitchy – telling you that she'll take the bag of trash to her garbage pail.*

*You don't have any choice gal but to go back inside whatever this place is. It's huge. It looks like it could've been a really nice place at one time. Ask the old twitchy how that long she has been living here. All her life? Her mother was born in the house? She lived here all her life with her husband? Her great-great-grandfather built this place almost two hundred years ago? And her family has been living in this same house ever since? Wow.*

*You've already lived in more places than you can remember. Your birth certificate says that you were born in a place that you don't have a clue where it is.*

*Keeping your birth certificate where she could find it along with your schools' report cards – that's something that you can give your mother credit for. Not having the name of a guy on the line that asks for the name of father . . . you know that it had to have been the guy who she thought if she got pregnant with that . . . I hate guys and what they do.*

*You need to stop letting everyone tell you what to do. Tell twitchy that she doesn't have to move your clothes from the washer to the dryer – that you're quite capable of doing it.*

*You should be glad that she doesn't laugh at you like she's always laughing at the boy. This smiling at me while telling me that she wants me to sit and relax while she . . . you've got to admit it – this twitchy is coming across as a really nice old lady.*

*We're going to talk now – now that she's got your clothes moved over from the washing machine to the dryer? This can't be good.*

*She has what? She has known Hercules for at least four years – but he doesn't know her? How can that be?*

*She has been for the past over fifteen years going to the same spot at the end . . . the place is just over a block away?*

*Tell the old twitchy that you don't remember anything from the time that you got out of the water after scattering what was in the jar to waking up in the chair that you're sitting in now.*

*I passed out? Hercules carried me to Birdie – and then he drove Birdie here to the twitchy's house, and then he carried me into this house – and I put my arm around his neck like . . . she has to be lying. There's that smile again.*

*There's no way that I would've let the kid carry me let alone put my arm . . . no way. The kid may be stronger than he looks but to carry me . . . I don't want to ever see him again. When he gets back here with Moony – and he better get back here with her or . . . you need to find a place now where you can hide when or if he shows up here again.*

*You know that he's going to show up here again. The old car that he's driving is parked next to Birdie. He has to come back to get that old thing to go to wherever he needs to go.*

*Hercules isn't going to be back here for at least an hour? How does she know that? It takes at least forty minutes to walk from one end of the boardwalk and back? And if Moony wants to go on some of the rides . . . rides? There's all kinds of rides along a what? Boardwalk? What's that? A Ferris wheel – and rollercoasters? And . . . saltwater what? And there's all kinds of ice cream and . . . there're stores that sell all kinds of fun things?*

*If she thinks that I'd like to go with the kid to walk on boards to do and see and . . . she's dreaming. There's absolutely no way that I'll ever be seen walking with a guy doing whatever.*

*What was that look all about? It's like she knows something that I don't know.*

*Okay – the first time when she saw Hercules, Hercules had a name tag clipped to his shirt? The name tag had the place where he works along with his name?*

*Even though he has never missed a day walking to one end of the boards and back, she has never talked to him? She has tried but . . . he either ignores her or tells her to stop calling him sonny boy and that's it?*

*Then how does she know so much about him? Ask her.*

*Okay – about a year after he first showed up where she always goes to sit in the morning, she went to city hall to see her brother? Her brother being the mayor . . . sure – right away, her having a brother who's this town's mayor . . . don't think so but . . . her brother was in a meeting when she got there?*

*A casino was going to be built in this town? Her brother was meeting with the builders and architects who . . . because the meeting was open for anyone interested in hearing about the casino, she stood in the back of the room as a mockup of the casino was put together room by room by a design team that was made up of several snooty gals who thought that they could run the world?*

*She was really impressed by the model's details – especially how everything was to scale – whatever that means, and how everything – like the lights, doors, walls and everything else in the place could be turned on or off or opened or shut or moved or locked by someone using an ap on a cellphone? The guy who was doing what the gals were so proud of themselves to be able to explain to everyone watching was Hercules?*

*She has since gone to some of the other design team's demonstrations – like for a couple of hotels, the town's new theater and some million dollar plus houses? It was always Hercules who'd put the model together and . . . there's no way that the kid is a tech genius – whatever the old twitchy means by that.*

*Now that Hercules no longer works for the design agency, she's going to have him do what? How does she know that the kid doesn't work anymore for whatever that place is called? She told the place that she was going to see to it that they paid Hercules for all the extra hours that he's put into his job since he started working for them?*

*No way. The kid can't move into one of the rooms that's in her place so that she can have him do what it'll take to get her place up to code so that she can begin to have roomers again. This place used to be what? And it hasn't been for well over twenty years? If she has been living in this big old place for over twenty years without anyone else living here . . . no wonder the old twitchy is so batty.*

*Now she wants to before she dies have her place taking in beachgoers like it once used to do – and that she's going to have Hercules . . . and what makes you think that he can't do it?*

*How does she know that he'll want to do it – let alone stay in one of the rooms while . . .*

*Because the city told her that she can no longer have people stay in her place if she's going to charge them for staying here, Hercules won't have to pay her anything to stay here – and neither will I?*

*You couldn't have heard her right. This place is a firetrap. She's literally crazy. As soon as Moony gets back, you need to find a way to leave. That'll get Moony away from the kid. And what about all your stuff? By the time that Moony gets back, the clothes should be dry enough to . . . you can combine a couple boxes so that you'll have a couple empty boxes to carry your clothes. And the stuff that you use for cutting and fixing hair . . . you're going to need the stuff when . . . when what? Maybe there's a shelter here that you can go to that'll let you stay until you have a job and a place to stay. And in the meantime . . . there's no way that I'm staying here no matter how nice twitchy has been treating me. There's no way that I'm going to let her lock me in a room so that I can't leave this place. It's not my fault that she's has been living by herself and now wants to have someone in this house with her.*

*You needed to go with Moony and the kid. How many times are you going to ask the old twitchy when Moony is to get back here?*

*And if she thinks that I'm going to call the kid Hercules . . . the kid probably hasn't begun shaving yet. Okay – he's old enough to drive a car but . . . that doesn't mean that he's not going to a middle school someplace around here.*

*Even though no one liked you and you didn't like anyone in any of the schools that mother had you go to, schools were still a whole lot better places to be in than to be stuck home with mother. The teachers liked it when you did your very best while you could never do anything right for mother.*

*I'll never understand why so many kids don't like to read or write or do whatever to get good grades. You're never going to have to worry about Moony doing really well in school. She probably though won't be liked either by any of the kids in her class. Knowing Moony – she'll be in charge of everything that happens in her class before the end of the first week. She's already a really good reader. Just as soon as you can, you'll need to get a library card to check out books from the local library. The last couple of weeks without having a book in front of you has been the longest time that you've spent not reading something since you learned how to read.*

*Why did she ask me that? There's no way that I want to see any rooms in this place – let alone the room where she's going to have me stay – and the room next to where I'll be staying where Moony will stay? And Hercules' room will be on the second floor?*

*Tell twitchy to stop looking at you with that goopy looking grin. It's wrong that she doesn't look like what old twitchies always seem to look like. Most of them usually look like they've something really sour in their mouth. Okay – most of them were always really nice to you and Stars and especially nice to Moony. You know that no matter how out of it that a twitchy was, he or she always seemed to like having you do whatever with his or her hair while Stars did her thing with their finger and toenails.*

Who does the shrimp think she is – telling me that it's wrong for me to yell at whatever she calls her?

Tell the twerp to back off – that she has just crossed the line – that . . . it's wrong for a daddy to get mad at his kid? This has got to stop. I've got to get as far away from these two monsters as quickly as I can before they totally ruin my life – if they haven't already.

What's wrong with that old gal anyway? How can this be the most wonderful day that she has ever had? This has to be the worst day that I've ever had. I absolutely don't want to be anyone's daddy or man – especially a daddy for a kid who's a practicing tyrant and man for a gal who probably doesn't know how to tie her own shoes. And if the old gal thought that I'd really enjoy being around someone who thinks that whatever is happening is hilarious, tell her that her constant sounding like a hyena has really gotten on my nerves – that I don't ever want to see her again.

I'm really funny? Tell her that she has to believe me that I'm absolutely serious – that I'm not going to have anything anymore to do with her and Moony and that whatever it's called who's in the house – that I'm going to get in my car now and leave and that she better not even think about stopping me and stalking me anymore.

She didn't just go in and . . . I'm not going to take Moony to the boardwalk for an hour. Tell Moony that she needs to go into the house. The door is locked? Tell Moony to knock on the door until the old gal . . . okay – if she won't knock on the door, then I will. And if the old loony bird doesn't come to the door to open it, I'll . . . there's absolutely no way that I'm about to take Moony into the office with me. There's no way that they'd buy into you being the kid's father. Who knows what those harebrains will do if . . . now what're you going to do guy?

This can't be happening. You've got to do something. Tell the little scamp to stop pulling on your arm and stop saying over and over again let's go daddy and stop calling you daddy. Tell the little fiend to zip it and get lost

That really worked didn't it guy? Tell the brazen rascal that she needs to stop pulling on your hand – that you're not going to walk on boards because a whatever said that I've got to.

And she needs to call me daddy because I'm her daddy? Come on. You can't keep on letting Moony run your life. So why are you letting her pull you in the direction of the beach? Tell her that you'll go with her if she'll stop calling you daddy.

Finally – it's about time that she listened to me and did what you've asked her to do. Tell her thanks. The little . . . you just heard her call you daddy again after she said that she wouldn't. Tell her that when someone makes a promise not to do something that . . . she had her fingers crossed? And she didn't promise for how long that she wouldn't call me daddy?

Now she has some things that she wants to tell me now that I'm her daddy and mom mom's man? I'm to read to her every night a story from a book that she has? Tell that that's not going to happen because . . . and because I'm now mom mom's man, I'm to hug mom mom and tell mom mom that I love her. Guy – you've got to explain to Moony that you're not . . . and now you're letting her tell you that you're not supposed to talk yet because she thinks that I need to know that mom mom doesn't look pretty now because she's really tired from having to drive so far but she knows that I'll think that she's really pretty when she . . .

I don't care that she didn't like it when you pulled your hand from her hand and put your hands over your ears. She needs to get it that you want her to stop talking and to never say another word about you being her daddy and being mom mom's man. That little twit – rolling her eyes at me.

Tell Moony that when I see Sul again, that I'm going to tell her that she's done a horrible job raising her kid – that a mother needs to teach her kid to respect people who're older than what she is instead of . . . a daddy needs to listen to his kids? I'm supposed to remember that the ashes that were dumped in the ocean was her mama and that I'm never to call mom mom Sul because she's mom mom?

Ask Moony who the gal is who she calls mom mom. Sul was like her mama's sister but wasn't her mama's sister? Her mama made Sul Moony's god mom when she was born but because mom mom doesn't want her to call her . . .

So that's why Moony keeps calling Sul mom mom. Sul being a godmother? Moony's mother must've been really desperate to have a godmother for her kid to have Sul be Moony's godmother.

Maybe Moony knows what her mother did before she died. Ask her. Her mother cut twitchies' fingernails and toenails and painted the faces of twitchies while mom mom cut twitchies' hair? Sul is really good at cutting hair? She likes to have Sul cut her hair? Her mother would also paint the faces of twitchies after many giants took them to heaven in the ocean while Sul made their hair look really nice? And every week her mother and Sul would go to a place where there were only ladies like her mama whose guys didn't want them anymore and her mother and Sul would . . . there's your answer guy to all the stuff that . . . and a twitchy must be someone to Moony who is old.

The house that the old gal lives in has to be worth a fortune being so close to the beach. She needs to sell it and move to a place where old people live and . . . half the people in those places don't know what's going on around them. She'd fit right in.

Now that we're at the boardwalk, ask Moony what she wants to do. Ask her if she wants to see the different places along the boardwalk.

Why does she want to do that? Tell Moony that you don't want to go into that place – that you don't like that kind of music. Tell her that just because her mama always listened to that kind of music that . . . there's no way that she can make me like that kind of music.

Did you really expect Moony to listen to you? She's doing what you told her not to do. Talk about a bratty . . . so why did you sit down on the bench that's right outside the place instead of . . . whether you like it or not – you need to go inside and get Moony out of there. Who knows what's going on in the place and what Moony might do if . . .

Of course she'd have to go all the way to the front of the place and . . . that's not good. Who knows what she'll tell whoever that gal is who she's . . . why did the gal just ask Moony why she's crying? She's crying because her daddy didn't want her to listen to the music that her mama liked to listen to? Guy – you need to get out of here before . . . you're caught. The gal sees you. Now what do I do? Moony – so . . . you've done it now guy – telling the gal that you aren't Moony's daddy. And Moony isn't helping – telling the gal that before her mama went to the heaven in the ocean, that her mama told her that her mom mom would be her new mama and that she was to find a man for her new mama and . . .

She knows me? She can't know me. I've never seen her before. She comes here early, too? She's right that I'm in another world when I finish walking the length of the boardwalk and back. She has talked to who about me when after the sun comes up she comes in here to pray? She can't really be talking about the old lady who's always sitting in the same place every morning on that old lawn chair – can she? The old gal has been praying that a gal will come into my life and . . . and now she's really happy to know that God has just answered whose prayers?

Run – run as fast as you can. Why aren't you running? Why are you still sitting here letting the gal tell you how wonderful that someone has sent a gal into your life who has a little girl who's going to be a wonderful daughter?

How could my life have gotten so messed up so quickly. One minute I'm living a normal life as a single guy with no thought at all of . . . and the next minute, I'm facing the prospect of having to be a husband, daddy and no job with a crazy old coot who comes in here to ask whoever she is to . . . thinking that she has the right to do what she does. The old witch and this gal have probably become experts at messing up people lives.

Thanks a whole lot – telling Moony that she needs to ask me to take her to where amusement rides are. It sure would be nice to be the one to be able to speak into . . . just do it. The rides aren't far away.

Ask Moony if she's ever been to an amusement park. Mama never took her anywhere because she always had to paint faces and make hair look nice . . . ask Moony what she did for fun. She always had fun? Ask her what she had fun doing. How could that be fun going to places where twitchies live? Twitchies like talking and she liked listening to their stories? Moony listening? I don't believe that. And the guy at the place where twitchies were taken to after they went to the heaven in the ocean always let her empty and wipe the ash trays while mama and mom mom . . .

What kind of life has the kid been living? It sure sounds like she was stuck in a house that was run by a couple of oddballs. Ask Moony if she has any family – like a grandmother.

You asked so . . . when she was a lot littler than what she's now, her mama's god took her mama's mother to the heaven in the ocean because she drank wrong things? Her mama's mother was really glad when mama had a baby who made her mama really happy? Mama was really glad that her mama wanted to stop drinking bad stuff – and that mama's mother had stopped complaining about everything? That was way more information than what . . .

Ask Moony if she likes saltwater taffy. She doesn't know what salty water stuff is because she's never been here before? Show Moony what saltwater taffy looks like in the place that we're walking past. Tell her that everyone likes saltwater taffy. Mama said that candy is bad to eat and because salty water stuff is candy, she's not to eat it? And daddies aren't supposed to eat candy either?

Ask Moony if there's something that her mother said that she could do or eat. Sul reads her books because mama was always doing something else? I doubt that Sul reads all that well as . . . I doubt that Sul is good at anything.

Tell Moony that if she's feeling tired that we can just sit on a bench and watch waves. She's not tired? She slept almost all the time since she left home. Sul doesn't like it when she won't stop talking? And she didn't like Sul crying all the time plus she didn't like cars honking their horns when they passed Birdie? Sul was probably getting other drivers mad at her if she was always going a lot slower than everyone else.

I'll be surprised if Moony will be interested in doing anything in the amusement park that's just ahead. Walk around the place with her. If she seems interested in doing something, buy the tickets and . . . that's what your mother did years ago when she took you to the amusement park that was near where you lived. She ended up using all the tickets because . . . then there's the old man who thinks that it's wrong doing something just for fun – that if he can't make money doing something . . .

If Moony wants to go on that little train ride that just goes in circles, get the tickets and . . . she could at least look a little excited about getting on the ride. Ask Moony if she really wants to go on the ride. She has to because the nice old twitchy gave me money for her to do things and . . . it's important that all the money is used because it'd make twitchy really sad if it isn't?

If you think that you're going to help Moony do anything . . . just let her go on her own to where the other kids are lined up who're going to ride on the train. Talk about someone bored out of her mind. At least she's getting in one of the little cars. And there goes the train – and there's that eyeroll again. No five year should be such a wiseacre.

That didn't take long. Now what? That's a rollercoaster that she's looking at. You can't let her . . . they're too dangerous.

Tell her that there's no way that you're going to ever ride on that rollercoaster. Tell her to look at how it goes straight out over the ocean and then turns really sharp way too fast and then drops straight down and then straight up and . . . don't let her get in the line. Don't let her pull you into that car with her. Why did you . . . the car that you're in is going to fly right out into the ocean. You know that it will.

We're moving. We can't be moving. Close your eyes. Hang on. I'm to open my eyes? Tell Moony that she's to close her eyes. She's screaming. Open your eyes. Why does she have both arms in the air like . . . why aren't I screaming? I sure want to but . . . she's hoping that the ride never stops? Why? Here we go again – straight out into the ocean. Be glad guy that you can swim.

We're stopping. I'm still alive? I'm still alive. That's the last time that I'm ever going on a rollercoaster again. Never ever again.

Stop her. You know where she's headed now. She can't make me do it. You can't let her go alone. Maybe the thing will stop working before . . . you can't get on. You know that heights . . . it's moving. Don't look down. Tell Moony to stop moving, stop looking, stop breathing, stop . . . that's what you're doing. And now a five year old is telling you not to be scared – that I'm to open my eyes and see the whole world from up here?

*The least that you can do gal is humor the old twitchy since she has been nice to you. Just go with her. You've nothing else to do.*

*This first room will be the room that I'll be staying in? What does she mean that I'll be staying in? Tell her that you can't stay here in her house – that . . . whoa – this room looks like no one has done anything with it for years. It's plenty large enough for Moony and me to stay in together instead of having Moony stay in another room.*

*That's a bathroom? Ask twitchy why this room has things in it that look like they're over a hundred years old. This house is filled with things that are over a hundred years old? This place used to be a what? Boardinghouse? What's a boardinghouse? Ask twitchy. When people would vacation at the ocean years ago, they would stay in boardinghouses? People who've stayed here as kids often stop here because of the really good memories they have of staying in this place?*

*That's sad that she had to over twenty years ago stop taking in guests because the city said that her place wasn't up to code or something like that to continue to have people stay in it. Ask twitchy what the city told her that she needs to do so that people could stay here again. Okay – new wiring, plumbing replaced, fire sprinklers and alarms installed, new windows . . . that's a sneaky looking grin. How can she look so happy when . . .*

*It has been her dream that before she dies that this house will be filled again with kids who've come to the ocean with their parents to enjoy the beach and walk on boards? Do I want to hear her plan? She has been praying about it a lot? Tell her if her plan has anything to do with prayer, that you don't want to hear anything about it. Stars was always saying that she was praying when she was talking to her god – like who talks to the air anyway – like there's someone there listening?*

*Gal – you don't have a choice but to hear her plan. She's going to have who do what? Ask the twitchy if she's told Hercules her plan. She's going to have Hercules fix up her house? And he doesn't know that's what she's going to have him do? He's not going to go for it. She has to know that.*

*She really does believe that Hercules would really enjoy the challenge of creating a miniature of what her house would like after doing everything that she needs to do to make the city guys happy while keeping the house looking like what it looks like now? How can she know that Hercules doesn't have a job anymore?*

*Talk about a conniving, manipulative . . . you need to get away from whoever this old twitchy is. If she has had the money, she would've fixed up this place years ago. She's probably surviving on what she gets every month from whatever it is that the government sends to twitchies.*

*What? She couldn't have just said that? She's glad that she now has someone who she can give her house to when she dies? Why didn't I insist that I had to go with Moony and the kid when they left. Why did I let myself get stuck here with a crazy twitchy?*

*Tell twitchy that you really need to go out to Birdie and then lock yourself in Birdie so that . . . and then when Moony gets back, get her to get into Birdie and . . . and then what? I need to do something to get away from here. I don't want to know what she'll do to me if I stay here.*

*Her plan for now though is to get me, Moony and Hercules settled in rooms in her place so that we get used to living here as a family? Pinch yourself gal? You know that you're awake but . . . this just can't be plausible – having a place to live without having to look for a place but . . . there's no way that I'm going to live in a house where a loco twitchy lives. No way. No way. No way.*

*Tell her that you don't have any money – which is the truth. You don't have any money. She won't want to have anyone stay here who can't pay to stay here. She can only have guests stay here free because if she didn't, then she would be using this place as a boardinghouse again and . . . keep thinking gal – there has to be a way to get away from the maniac who lives in this place.*

*We're going to open now the window in each room to air out the rooms so that the rooms won't be stuffy when it's time for us to go to bed tonight? The twitchy is really serious about you staying here. I don't want to stay here.*



*If wish that I didn't feel so . . . you've to tell twitchy that you can't help her – that you don't have any energy left in you to do anything.*

*Poor dear? What does she mean by that? She knows that I've to be really exhausted? But she knows that because I was able to drive as long as I did to do what I did for my friend who had died, that she knows that I've it in me to do whatever I set my mind to do – and that she's really proud to be able to get to know me and . . . it's wrong for her to laugh so loud at you for putting your hands over your ears. Tell her that she doesn't know you and that you're really glad that she's never ever going to get to know you. The witch has to have a big kettle someplace around here that she uses to . . .*

*Gal – just do what she's asking you to do – go over to the window and open it. Yah – sure. Ask twitchy when was the last time that this window was opened. Over twenty years ago? And she thinks that I'm strong enough to open a window that hasn't been . . . she'll have Hercules open the windows when he gets back? How does she know that he'll figure out how to get them open?*

*Do what she has asked you to do – help her take off whatever she has used to cover the bed. I'm to help her look for bed bugs? I thought that bed bugs were bad to have because they bite. Okay – she's hoping that she won't find any bed bugs because that'd mean that she'd have do what to her place? And she sure doesn't want to do that.*

*Guess not seeing something really small, black and moving is a good thing as . . . she's going to have you do what after we check out the other two rooms? You're going to help her take sheets, pillow cases, blankets, pillows, towels to the dryer to fluff up since the dryer should be off by the time that . . .*

*And I thought that being Stars maid was . . . okay – you know that you weren't Stars maid but . . . no one ever listens to me when I've told whoever to do something while Stars was always telling everyone to do whatever for her and they'd do it. Now I've got someone else telling me to jump for her – and you're doing it.*

*You should know by now that each time that you open your mouth to tell twitchy something, that she's going to just start laughing at you and . . . just be happy that she doesn't get mad.*

*And now we're going to the next room – which is where Moony will stay? Tell twitchy that Moony has always slept with you – that there's plenty room in the bed in this room for her to sleep with you. Now you've gotten the old twitchy shaking her head and looking at you like she can't believe what you're saying.*

*You know that you really don't have a choice – other than running out of the house as fast as you can and hope that there's someone out there who'll help you get away from the old twitchy, but to follow her.*

*This is a nicer room than the first room. This was her room when she was a kid? She understands why I really want to have Moony stay with me because she knows how lonely it gets because she doesn't have anyone around to talk to when she can't get to sleep but . . . come on gal – tell twitchy that if Moony is okay with sleeping by herself in a room that you won't try to convince Moony to stay with you. At least someone around here is feeling really happy right now – and it isn't you.*

*Here we go again – making sure that there're no bugs in this bed. Now she tells me that she completely cleans each room every spring and fall – that she doesn't expect to find bed bugs but . . . she's glad that she's going to have help now to keep her house as clean as she'd like it to be as it has been harder and harder to do alone?*

*Maybe if I start shaking my head while I'm looking at her that she'll get it that you're on to her. We're going upstairs now to where Hercules will stay?*

*The old twitchy has to be dreaming if she really thinks that she's going to get Hercules to stay here. The kid isn't going to let the old twitchy run his life – like she's already running your life.*

*Good grief – this house goes on forever. Ask her how many rooms are in this house. There's seven rooms in this place that were used for guests – plus two other rooms – one being the one next to where she used to stay and another room where she now stays – with each of the rooms having the name of the room above the room's door?*

*There's also a large sitting room and the room where we ate? If twitchy thinks that just because she fixed you a meal that you're going to be her slave for the rest of my life, she needs to start looking for someone else to be her slave. Tell her that you don't do housekeeping, that you can't cook and . . . what? I won't have to do housekeeping or cooking because once she starts having guests again, she'll hire gals to do the housekeeping and cooking?*

*Tell twitchy that she can't make you stay here – that you're planning to go back to where you grew up just as soon as you can – and that you're not going to let her stop you.*

*You just got ignored again. Tell twitchy that you don't like it when she pretends that she hasn't heard you – that you've seen enough of her dungeon – that . . . so why are you following her up some steps?*

*We're going to her favorite room? It's the room where Hercules will be staying? It's at the end of the hall on the left? Why is it that no one ever listens to me while I've to listen to everyone else give me a blow by blow account of what they did, are doing and going to do? Why? Accept it gal – everyone sees you as nothing more than a mousy loser.*

*This is room number nine? If this is supposed to be room number nine, why does the thing over the door of the room say self-control?*

*Wow – that's a big window in this room. Now I'm to go to the window because she said so. I'm to tell her what I see? If she doesn't stop bossing . . . what a view. That has to be the ocean. I'd come up here, too, every day if I lived in this place – just to . . . where did that breeze come from? The skinny window under the big window is open. How did she do that. Do I smell the ocean? Is that what the smell is? Ask twitchy what the sound is that you keep hearing. Waves? Do I enjoy thunderstorms? She has to know that everyone is scared of thunder. She really is goofy in the head if she really does come up here to watch the kind of light show that her god puts on for her to enjoy. Now you know that you've got to get away from this place. There's no way that I'm going to get caught in another place where a god is talked about.*

*Here we go again. Pull back whatever it is that she covered the bed with and . . . and now you're going with her to where she has the stuff that's she going to need for each room? She knows that we're really going to sleep well tonight? How does she know that?*

*You might as well keep jumping for the twitchy and do whatever it is that she orders you to do. You know it – sooner or later she's going to have you pull out that big pot and . . .*

*Do what she says – put your clothes in the basket that she's giving you, take the clothes to the room where she thinks that you're going to stay in and fold the clothes. I can use any of the drawers in the dresser in my room to put my clothes and the dresser in Moony's room to put her clothes? At least she's doing something herself – putting the stuff in the dryer that . . . what? She wants me to do what after I . . . fix her hair? Tell her that you can't do it. There's no way that you want to be any closer to her than what you are right now.*

*We'll use her bathroom to wash her hair? Ask her if she heard you when you told her that you can't fix her hair.*

*You should know by now that her answer to whatever it is that she's been asked is headshaking and a scary look like she's about to crack up into one of those weird laughing fits.*

*You could spend however long it takes for her to . . . by folding and refolding your clothes – and then Moony's clothes. Gal – come on – the scary twitchy knows that just one small drawer is all you're going to need for your clothes and an even smaller drawer for the clothes that Moony has.*

*Just get the shampoo and hair conditioner that you always use when you're washing a twitchy's hair. You probably should find the thing that you use to keep a twitchy from getting wet when you're washing her hair.*

*Another first time – washing a twitchy's hair while she sitting on a chair in a shower stall. Good – her shower has an attachment that you can use to wet her hair and then wash out the shampoo – something that that apartment that you were living in didn't have. It was fill up with water the bathtub that was there and . . .*

Maybe now Moony will give up trying to make you Sul's man. Moony knows now that she's braver than you.

You've got to open your eyes guy. She's yelling at you loud enough to open your eyes for the whole world to hear. And calling you daddy while she's . . . tell Moony that if she doesn't stop telling me to open my eyes that . . . open your eyes guy – stop being a wimp.

She has to get it – I can't open my eyes. They're stuck closed. I don't want to see what she thinks is so cool. There's no way that she can see the other side of the world.

We're stopping. I'm still alive. Start breathing again. Let me off this thing. No – no – no – the thing has broken down with me . . . quick – close your eyes again. I'm moving. The thing is working again. It better stop when we get to where I can get off this thing because if it doesn't . . . why do I feel like I'm going up again. Not again. You've got a choice guy – either open your eyes or listen forever to Moony yelling over and over again that her daddy can't see anything with his eyes closed.

Tell Moony that if she'll stop yelling that you'll open your eyes. That little turkey just called your bluff – she has stopped yelling. Do what you said that you'd do otherwise . . . how can anyone say that going way up in the air in a little bench is something that he or she really likes doing? These things need to be outlawed.

Thank goodness – finally. Promise the monster that you'll get her whatever she wants if she promises to leave the amusement area. Tell her that there's some stores not far away where she can find something.

Okay – let's go? If she's really thinking that when we come back through here on our way back to the old witch's house that she and I are going to go on those swings that're . . . no way. Not going to happen.

I made it. We're out of the danger zone of all things dangerous. Tell Moony that the store coming up has all kinds of trinkets that she can choose from.

Tell Moony that you'll buy her whatever she sees in this store that she'd like to have. What does she mean that this store has only junk in it. It's true but . . . the junk store where she always went to with her mother and mom mom had nicer stuff in it than what this place has? Guy – you need to get Moony out of this place. Everyone is staring at you like . . . I can't help it that Moony talks loud when she . . . and you've got to get her to stop calling you daddy.

Someone is headed your way. Tell Moony that we've got to go – that we can't stay here – that you've something really important that you've got to do – like right now.

You do know that Moony didn't believe a word of what you just said. She's obviously mauling over something. That can't be good. Now I'm to sit with her on that bench over there because she needs to tell me something? Are you really going to let a preschooler . . . humor her guy.

What's this with taking deep breaths? You've been a disappointment to her as a daddy? Tell her good – because you're not her daddy to begin with and you never intend to be.

Ask Moony if she heard you as . . . she knows that a daddy will want to do the things that his girl has asked him to do – and that he'll do it without crying like a little baby. You need to tell her first that you didn't cry doing any of the things that she wanted you to do with her. And secondly that because you're not her daddy, you can do what you want to do – that she has no right to tell you that you've to do what she wants you to do.

Tell her to stop looking at me like she really is sad that I'm a real sad sack. You know that you are but . . . and it's wrong for a daddy to tell lies? And she's embarrassed now because she chose a guy who lies to be the man for mom mom?

It's about time that something started to go right for me. Tell Moony that it won't hurt your feelings at all if she found another guy to be Sul's man. You can't let her know how glad that you'll be to be able to get back living the life that you were living – as frustrating as it was.

She wants to confess something to me? Tell her to go ahead as . . . what?

She knows how hard it is not to lie because she told a lie one time to mom mom so from now on, I'm not to tell anymore lies?

You're not going to win. Moony is totally convinced that her god told her that I was to be mom mom's man. This god thing is really, really getting on my nerves. Tell Moony that you don't want her to mention anything about her god anymore – that if she . . . is there a store nearby where she can buy something new for mom mom?

Tell Moony that you haven't seen any stores that sell new clothes. Too late. If she thinks that the first person who she asks about a place that sells clothes around here will know where there's a place, I'd take the bet that that person won't know.

It looks like guy that you'd have lost the bet. If there's a store just a little way further up and about a quarter of a block down the first street that we'll see, I sure don't remember seeing it.

Oh no – the loud, bossy Moony is back. Twenty years older and she'd fit right in with the four screeching macaws and the reigning office queen.

This must be the store as . . . good – it's not open. You weren't looking forward to . . . tell Moony to stop knocking on the door. Show her the sign that says what time that it opens – and that's still over an hour away. So she keeps knocking anyway. You need to sit her down on the next bench that you see and . . . someone would have to open the door to the place.

What is it that Moony doesn't get that the store isn't open yet? Now who's telling a story? That little tramp – telling the gal that daddy has to be where he works real soon.

It's fine. We can come in. She's really glad that she's finally met a dad who's willing to go shopping with his girl?

You saw that look. She'll kill you if you tell the gal that you're not really her daddy so . . . so how does a guy act like a daddy? This isn't going to work. You've got to do the best that you can.

It'd be nice to know what Moony is wanting to get for Sul. Ask her. The only clothes that Sul has are clothes that she has gotten at places that sell really cheap clothes that have been worn by someone else?

Oh great – here comes the gal who let us into the place. She'd have to ask if we've found something? I don't know who's kidding who here – you know that we're not going to get anything and the gal knows that we're not going to buy anything. Tell Moony that we've wasted enough of the nice gal's time and . . . what size clothes does my wife wear?

I've got to give credit to the kid – butting in – like she knew what I was going to say – that I don't have a wife. That was really smart though what Moony said to the gal – telling her that Sul would look really good in the type of clothes that the gal is wearing.

And here we go. She wants us to look at blouses first. Before the gal asks you – tell her that Sul probably wears something a couple of sizes smaller than what she's wearing. There's enough choices here to buy her a hundred different tops.

Thanks Moony – just what I wanted to do – pick out a blouse that I think that Sul will wear while she picks out a blouse that she knows that Sul will wear.

It's nice of the gal to want to help us but . . . asking me what color is Sul's favorite color, what she would wear the blouse for, what . . . just grab a blouse guy and get it out of the way. Make it a colorful blouse – one that has flowers on it. She needs something that'll make her look like she's got some life in her. Here's one that'll do. Show it to Moony. I guess shaking her head and shoulders back and forth with a smile on her face means that she's okay with it. Tell her that you like the one that she's holding. Then it's out of here.

We've to buy Sul pants, too? She has to have pants. The pair that she's wearing is the only pair that she has? Guy – stop questioning Moony. You've got the gal helping you looking at you now like you're some sort of dunce.

Tell the gal that Sul is about your height and really slim. How do I know what kind of pants that Sul wears? The pair that she was wearing were blue jeans. Guess I'm not going to get Sul blue jeans as . . . makes sense that the store doesn't sell blue jeans as . . . she might like something like these kinds of pants that go halfway between her knee and ankle.

A white pair would probably look really good with the blouse that you picked out for her. If Moony thinks that Sul would look better in that tan pair that she's carrying, tell her that we'll get that instead of this white pair. That look must mean that we're getting both pairs.

Thanks a whole lot sales gal – just what I want to do – spending the next hour helping Moony find something that'll fit her that she'd like to get. You know that the gal did what someone who's good at sales would do and that's to ask what she can find for Moony. And then the look that Moony gave you . . .

It looks like the gal – now that she knows that she's already got four things to ring up, is very ready and willing to help Moony buy out the rest of the store. Let them. There's a soft chair over there. Go sit in it, fall asleep and find yourself in your apartment waking up to a new day.

That didn't take long. Those really are a couple of cute outfits that they found. Just put everything on your card. There's not enough cash left from what the old gal gave me to cover everything.

Tell Moony that you like her idea of heading straight home so that she can show Sul what we got her and her new clothes. There's too many people though right now walking on the boardwalk for us to run really fast back to the house.

Ask Moony what she meant when she said that the only clothes that Sul has she has gotten from places that sold clothes that someone didn't want anymore. The clothes that her mother wore and what she wears also came from the same places because mama never wanted to waste money on buying new clothes because she knew that she could buy clothes for a dollar or less that were just as good as new clothes?

Talk about one happy little lady right now. Why did Moony have to grab your hand – telling you that a daddy is supposed to hold his girl's hand and that she's really glad now that you want to hold her hand? It must be okay to be holding Moony's hand by how many people smile at Moony. There's no way though that she's going to get me to start skipping with her down the boardwalk.

Living with a zombie definitely has not rubbed off on Moony. The kid has more get up and go than any kid that I've ever known or seen. I sure hope though that after everything shakes out that she'll get past really quick me not being her daddy.

The kid definitely though would make for an adventurous life if . . . it's the walking dead gal that . . . the thing is probably curled up – sound asleep, in that stuffed chair that she was sitting in when you and Moony left that falling down monstrosity.

Someone sure wants to get back to see Sul again. It's about the seventeenth time that Moony asked you if we're almost there. Tell Moony that we're lost and see what she does.

You did it again. You're about to get another lecture about what her expectations are of a daddy. Tell her that you told a fib when . . . what's a fib? Tell Moony that a fib is a little lie. And now you've got her shaking her finger at you. Cover your face – maybe she'll go away. Bad idea. Be glad guy that you're near the end of the boardwalk as not many people walk this far this way.

Tell Moony that the place where music was being played isn't far away. We'll talk later because . . . I've got to find a way to escape the little brat. It shouldn't be hard to back out into the street from where you're parked and . . . I'm to give Sul the clothes that I bought for her because I'm her man and she'll . . .

Why are you letting the skinny, bossy kid constantly tell you what you can and can't do? Tell Moony that if she really wants me to be her daddy that she has to let me be the boss – that little kids like her don't boss their dads.

*Focus gal on really rubbing in the shampoo. You know that it's something that twitchies liked you doing. Once you get her hair washed, you're going to have to give her a trim. Ask the twitchy when she last had anything done with her hair? No wonder her hair looks like it doesn't know what to do. You cut your own hair, too, – so . . .*

*It looks like twitchy's hair had some curls or waves in it at one time. Ask her if she has a hairdryer. I'm to get a hairdryer and whatever else that I need from what I . . . tell the old tramp that you're going to cut off all her hair if she doesn't stop being so bossy. I don't care how nice she has been. I don't care that she wants to help me. I don't care about anything anymore.*

*I'm so tired of always trying to do what someone else thinks that I need to do. I tried to please mother. And what did that get me? A mother who didn't want her daughter anymore. I tried to please Stars. And what did that get me? A kid who thinks that she's smarter than me. And she probably is. And now you've got a mouthy twitchy thinking that she has the right to stomp all over you because she fixed some food for you to eat and is giving you a place to sleep.*

*And now it's sweetie? Tell the old hag that you're not a sweetie – that she's never to call you that again.*

*If the old witch thinks that she can get you to vomit on her how horrible your life has been, it's not going to happen. Tell her that she has to tell you her sad tale before you . . .*

*Thanks? No one has ever asked her to tell her sad story before? I'm glad that she's had a really rough life.*

*It's been really hard for her to have to live all her life in this house this close to the ocean? What? And traveling to a different country each year because her husband made her go with him . . . I don't believe that. Tell her that. Did I just call her a liar?*

*You better go over to the piece of furniture that she's pointing to that's made of all glass. You really don't want to make her any angrier than what's she seems to be getting. Maybe she did go to different countries. She really does have a tag under each thing in her whatever that says what country it's from.*

*She's really glad that the slave driver finally croaked – that she really deserves a ton of medals for having survived living with him for fifty-two years? She couldn't make him happy no matter what she said or did? You probably don't want to tell the twitchy that you're surprised that her husband lived with her as long as he did.*

*She really regrets getting married when she was just eighteen because . . . how does she know that she could've done a lot better? Why would she want boys chasing her?*

*Tell her that she needs to stop shaking her head when she's talking as . . . her parents were strict with their kids? They wouldn't let them be out all night with their friends no matter what the occasion was? And they made them go to church?*

*The twitchy should be lucky that she had a father and a mother. Even though mother knew who your father was, she never told you. And church . . . since you've never been in a church . . .*

*And always having to have people here in this house when all she wanted to be was to be alone . . . tell her that you'll gladly leave just as soon as you finish with her hair.*

*She's glad that I'm wanting to leave? She was really glad when her kids left? She's wishing that her son would stop calling her while her daughter . . . and she's so tired of having to go downtown to eat something with her brother. How does she know that if she didn't spend lots of time with her brother that this town will fall apart?*

*Talk about someone getting agitated – the old twitchy is about to blow a fuse. Tell her that you're sorry that you asked her to tell you what her life has been like – that you're sorry that she has had such a hard life. Here's hoping that she'll calm down.*

*Why did you let Moony go with that creep? As soon as she gets back, we definitely are out of here just as soon as we get Birdie repacked. I don't care that Birdie doesn't have any gas left in her and that the tire that . . .*

*Oh would I like to shave all the hair off this old twitchy's head. She sure has been asking for it. And here I thought for a minute that she was a nice old lady. She sure fooled me.*

*You're going to have fun telling her about your sorry life. Maybe she won't be so snarky once you've . . .*

*Poor girl? That sure didn't sound like she meant it. It sounded more like she really didn't think that I'd had it as bad as I was trying to tell her.*

*Ask her how'd she'd feel if her mother tricked the guy who she was dating into getting her pregnant so that the guy would marry her – but instead of marrying her, the guy disappeared off the face of the earth leaving mother with a kid who she didn't want.*

*And now saying that she feels so sorry for you . . . you know that she doesn't. Turn the hairdryer on as high as you can and . . . she has no right treating you like a little kid who's always whining because she didn't get her way.*

*You're a whiner gal – you know that. Your mother taught you well. And you want to be just like mother?*

*Twitchy needs to get it – mother didn't want me. So what? Is that all that she's going to say? Aren't mothers supposed to like her kids? Stars liked Moony even after what Stars said happened to her. I still like Moony even though she never listens to me anymore – and I'm not even her mother.*

*Stars never ever yelled at Moony while mother was always yelling at me. Stars never talked mean to me like mother did. Stars never treated me like I couldn't do anything like twitchy is treating me. Stars made me feel like I could do anything that I set my mind on doing. How am I going to live without Stars?*

*Why does she want to know where mother is? Just tell her that you don't know – that you hope that you never see her again – that you hope that she's dead because if you were ever to see here again . . .*

*Now what's her problem? Of course, you really meant it. You wouldn't have said it if you didn't mean it.*

*There's no way for twitchy to know what it was like living for fifteen years in different places with someone who kept telling you how much you was keeping her from doing what she really wanted to do – that it was because of you that she had to give up her dreams.*

*What's my dream? That's none of twitchy's business. Tell her that. Tell her that just because she had dreams about doing things that she never got the chance to do, that . . . what? Why wouldn't I have believed everything that she said? Why did she ask me that? You heard her say that she's had an awful life.*

*She was what? Joshing me? Tell her that you don't know anything about who a Josh is. And I'm now a poor dear?*

*Why would she tell me something that wasn't true – thinking that I'd know that what she was saying was opposite to what it really was like for her.*

*She feels really blessed to have had a dad and a ma who were Christians? Good for her. And growing up in this house so close to the ocean – and always having new people to talk to almost every day – and having a guy marry her who enjoyed traveling as much as she did – and . . . tell her to stop talking. Put your hands over your ears. Smack her across the head with the hairdryer. Do it. Someone has to stop twitchy from messing up your life even worse than what it's already been messed up. She needs to be where loony birds are kept. Tell her that. And now she's laughing again like . . . tell her to stop laughing before you really do cut off all her hair.*

*How can she really like me? What's this with everything works out for the good for someone who loves . . . tell twitchy that there's no way that anyone is going to love me – and that things never work out no matter what she thinks. There aren't other gals out there like Stars who you know who cared about you. And there's no way that Hercules would look twice at you even if you thought that he was Mister It – which he definitely isn't.*

*Finish what you were doing. Clip off the dead ends and see where her hair begins to fall. Pretend that she's one of those dead twitchies who you and Stars were expected to make look at their viewing like they were sleeping.*

*Ask twitchy if there're any funeral homes around here? Tell her what you and Stars did – and . . . now I'm to get a couple of mirrors from my stuff so that she can see what I'm doing with her hair? You've got to admit that her hair looks a whole lot better than what it did.*

*Now what's twitchy's problem? Tell her that your arms are getting tired from holding a mirror behind her head so that she can . . . she has decided to do what? Do I see the room that's next to the door? Tell her that you're not blind – that . . .*

*It's filled with stuff that people left behind when they stayed in this place? She's going to have Hercules clean out the room once everyone is settled in this place and she's going to do what? I can't do that. My beautician's license only lets me . . .*

*Have I forgotten that her brother is the city's major – that there's not going to be any problem with me getting a license to do here what I just did with her hair? She knows that when her friends see her, that they're going to want to know who she went to because they're going to want to go to the same place.*

*And she knows that there's no city code that says that what you did to her hair can't be done here in this house – and she thinks that that room would be perfect for me to . . . tell her to forget it. Tell her that you don't need or want her help. Tell her that there's no way that you're going to let her make you one of her slaves.*

*Tell her that you don't want to look at the room – that you're out of here just as soon as you can leave – which hopefully will be tomorrow. This place has way too many ghosts hanging around in it. I know that it does.*

*How does she know that Moony and the kid will be here soon – and that once they get back here, that she's going to have the kid begin to eyeball what needs to be done to get this place up and running like it used to run. Talk about having dreams – the twitchy is living in a dream world if she thinks that the kid . . .*

*Tell twitchy that you're done with her hair and that you're now going to move all your and Star's salon stuff into your room. Leaving it where it is now isn't an option. Twitchy needs to get it.*

*It must be nice to always have to have one's way. It's like the old gal is deaf one moment and then the next moment, she's acting like she has heard the funniest thing that she has ever heard.*

*Come on Moony – you need to get back here – like right now. You should never have let Moony leave with the kid. You need her here. She'd know what to do next.*

*Tell twitchy that you're going to go where you went to to pour out Stars ashes in the water. Maybe Moony is there. Maybe Moony is waiting for you to go there to find her. Maybe Moony . . . Moony being scared? It's more likely that she's driving the kid wumpy – expecting him to do whatever it is that she wants to do and taking her wherever she wants to go.*

*Now twitchy is reading your mind. How did she know that you were wishing that . . . being out in the fresh air right now would be good. The twitchy didn't have to tell you about this place being stuffy. The air conditioner in this place hasn't worked for years? Great. I hope that she's right that the breeze off the ocean will cool off the place enough for us to sleep comfortably tonight.*

*I hope that wherever we're going isn't far as . . . you need to ask Moony someday how you really got to this house from where you parked Birdie. You had to have been totally out of it for who knows how long.*

*This must be where Moony and the kid went. Someone could easily get lost in the crowd of people who're walking everywhere on this board walkway. There's no way that I'll be able to find Moony in that mob.*

*Ask twitchy what she's planning to do. I'm to sit on this bench that's in front of where . . . why is she going into the place – and all the way to the front. Just go ahead you old twitchy – sit down on that bench that's up front and . . . and leave me out here all by myself. Thanks a lot. Just what I want to do – sit on a bench and listen to music that sounds like what Stars always listened to and stare at idiots in their underwear who're acting like they're having fun in the water and who're lying on the sand for whatever stupid reason.*



Just because we're close to the end of the boardwalk with hardly anyone ahead of us, Moony needs to get it that there's no way that I'm going to let her get me to run the rest of the way to the whatever's house. You've got to stop her guy once and for all telling you what to do.

Now she doesn't like it that I'm being mean to her because I won't do what she wants me to do. Great. Just let it go. There's no way that you're ever going to be able to convince the little scamp that she's wrong about anything.

Now she's happy because . . . she sees mom mom? How does Moony know that that's Sul who's sitting on the bench that's outside the last place on the boardwalk? From where I'm walking right now, whoever is sitting on the bench looks to me like one of those street urchins who're always hanging out in different places on and around the boardwalk.

Just let her go ahead and run to who she's convinced is Sul. The way that she and Sul are dressed and how they look along with the wreck that Sul is driving, they're probably living off the street right now themselves.

Maybe it is Sul. Whoever was sitting on the bench sure seemed to be glad to see Moony. The person talking to Moony now isn't the same lethargic Sul who . . .

It is Sul. That's not a happy look that she has on her face. The twitchy said that I'd be back in an hour with Moony and . . . you don't have to take her yelling at you. Give her the bag that you're carrying and head for your car. You can still make it to the office in time to run the demo model. You know that even if you had downloaded on their phones the ap which you've been using for the demos, there's no way that any of those airheads would take the time to learn the ap and . . . they're going to be very happy to see me again even if I look like . . . they're just going to have to understand that you got caught in something that you couldn't escape.

No – no. Run guy – run. Don't listen to her. Where did the old witch come from? She wasn't here just a second ago.

And now she's calling you Hercules. Just what you got up this morning to hear – a tongue lashing from a crazy old coon. Okay – tell her that you get it – an hour means an hour to her. Now you tell her real clear that you don't have to and that you're not going to put up with her treating you anymore like a little kid and that . . .

Now she's sorry that . . . and she wants me to forgive her because . . . tell her that she's right – that she has been very demeaning – that . . . forget it guy. You're never going to win when it involves gals. Okay – I know – your father was as hardheaded and in your face as . . . he was right – I really am the consummate lackey who gets to be every day run over by everyone.

Be a good little boy now and tag along behind everyone as they head for the house. Sul can stay mad at me for the rest of her life. Who cares? It sure isn't me.

How in the world though did she manage to drive a car to here from where the license plate on the old beat up thing says that it's from? I can see Moony doing it – even as a five year old, but Sul . . . the sad sack of a human being looks and acts like she has no clue what's happening around her – other than making sure that Moony is pegged to her side.

Whoop-dee-do guy – you're back at the old witch's house. Give Moony the bag of stuff that she and you got for Sul and find a way to escape the witch's dungeon.

Of course she has something that she wants me to do. Tell her that the only thing that you want to do is to go to the office and . . . we need to sit at the table so that I can take notes?

Tell her that you'll use you cell to take notes instead of having her get a pen and paper to . . . of course she already has a list started of what she'd like me to do.

The old gal must've been making up the list while you and Moony were out on the boardwalk. She could've at least put different clothes on as it's obvious that she had to have taken a shower while you were gone for her hair to look like it does right now.

See what happens if you tell her that because it seemed liked to you that she always liked having her hair go in all directions that you don't know what person who you're talking to right now – like is it the witch who obvious lives here or is there someone else who lives here who . . .

Am I saying that I like what Sul did with her hair? No way. There no way that anyone could take something that looked like a rat's nest into something . . . tell her that you know that she's wearing a wig – that there's no way that she's going to fool you.

Now what does Moony want? Sul is really, really happy with the clothes we bought her? She likes what I chose the best? Be glad guy that Sul likes what you picked out for her – instead of being glad that Sul likes what you picked out for her more than what Moony picked out for her.

Ask Moony if she likes the wig that the old lady is wearing. I'm silly? Tell her that you're not being silly. She has to be wearing a wig as . . . Sul can't be that good at . . . remember all the stuff that you had to bring in from the backseat of her car . . . that couldn't have been her stuff. Tell Moony that she's the one who's being silly – that you know that her mom mom can't do anything – let alone fix someone's hair like she did with the old goat's hair.

You better tell Moony that you believe her otherwise she'll never stop stomping the floor and insisting that I've got to believe her – even if I don't.

Tell Moony that it's none of her business where I get my hair cut – that I don't need her to tell me that I need to get my hair cut – and that there's no way that you'd ever let whoever mom mom is – okay Sul, touch your hair.

Your phone – you need to turn the thing back on and . . . come on phone – please stop pinging. How many messages are there anyway? And all the calls . . . don't go there. Don't go to feeling sorry for the gals. You were willing to teach them – or any one of them, how to use the ap and the program that you developed and wrote for putting together and showing off the models.

Just out of curiosity – check who sent the last text that's on your phone. Surprise, surprise – it's of course from generalissima – she has to be really desperate to say that she's willing to talk to her boss about giving me a raise and a bonus if . . .

Always the answer to everything – more money will always appease. How about generalissima showing me some respect. How about once in a while talking to me like I was a man instead of . . . a spider who dares show up in the office gets more attention from them than I do.

You've to admit it guy that the old gal cares that you're in her house – and that Moony cares that you're a guy who could be her daddy – which . . . Moony does have a real challenge ahead of her – finding a guy who'd be willing to live with a corpse. It sure isn't going to be me.

Am I ready? Guy – find the note icon and . . . she knows that this house has to be totally rehabbed?

Okay – this place needs to be completely rewired, needs all new pipes, refurbished or new bathrooms in each room and each room renovated plus an air conditioning/heating unit that'll cool and heat this place.

Now the outside? I'm to go outside and decide what needs to be done there? I can tell her right now that the first thing that needs to be done and that's to get rid of all the shrubbery that's around this eyesore of a place.

You probably shouldn't have told her that she'd come out ahead if she'd let you burn her place down. She has to know – if it's true that this house has been sitting here for close to a couple of centuries, that the foundation very probably has some serious issues.

I don't have to worry about the roofing? I sure hope that when she has this place reroofed every five years or so that she has the shingles from the last roofing first taken off as . . . you'll need to find a way to get on the roof to find out.

And I'm to take Moony with me when I go outside? Just let Moony come with you instead of . . . you know that the old gal doesn't want having a smart aleck five year old under her feet – telling her what to do, any more than you do.

I'm glad that Moony is having more fun than she's ever had. Ask Moony what she used to do for fun. She did things with mom mom? Sul and fun – there's no way that Sul knows what fun is. And how do you know? You're doing a really good job guy writing off someone you've just met. But . . . she comes across as being nothing more than an apparition. You carried her. A feather probably weighs more than her.

Sul would take her to a park where they would swing on swings – and she would go down a slide that was in the park? That's it? Ask her if Sul ever took her to a zoo or . . . what's a zoo?

Her mother was a lot of fun? She liked helping her mother fix meals because Sul does not like to eat? And she liked helping her mother wash the dishes because . . . ask Moony if Sul did anything where she used to live.

Her mother made Sul go to school because Sul needed to go to school – so Sul had to read a lot books?

Twitchies are fun? And you were supposed to know that twitchies are old or dead guys and gals? And she liked going once a week to the place where her mother and Sul met because the ladies who were there were there because their man didn't want them any more liked talking to her – and the other days going to places where old twitchies lived so that her mother and Sul could make old twitchies look younger – like Sul did to the old twitchy here, and she'd do things with them because they liked doing things with her?

She now really likes me being her daddy because she has a daddy who'll do fun things with her? And she's really glad that Sul now has a man because . . . guy – you should've learned by now that asking the little imp a question that she'll give you a whole lot more information than what you want to know.

Just do what the old lady wants you to do – find out what's wrong with the exterior of her place. Start by checking out what's in those bushes that're at the end of the sidewalk.

That's a sign. See if you can see what the sign says. Gift Boarding House? Is that what this place is called? Weird name for a place. The bushes and the sign need to go. This place if it's going to be used for whatever it is that she wants it to be used for needs to be rebranded.

Tearing out the sidewalk and . . . this area in front of the house could be turned into a really pretty patio area with chairs and tables covered with umbrellas. There's a view of the ocean from about a third of the area here in front of the house. The sound of waves hitting the shore can clearly be heard. This area definitely has been underutilized.

If the old lady thinks that I'm going to see what the foundation of her rundown firetrap looks like, she's dreaming. The place does need painting – that's for sure. Modernizing the front porch area is an absolute must. The porch looks like it's just about ready to fall off the house.

Those are weeds that're growing all around the house. They must've grown up between the pea gravel that looks like was used to cover the area around the house and on which vehicles could park. A bulldozer will need to get in here to . . . this would be the best area for vehicles to park.

The old house does look fairly solid from the outside. I don't blame it for looking a little tired. I know how it feels to be ignored. I also know what it feels to be proud. That's how I always feel when a model comes together with everything working like it's supposed to work. I can see this house having a proud look about it when it was filling up with people wanting to spend time here to be close to the ocean.

You know that deep down – you'd love to do a mockup of this place with all the things that need to happen to take it up to code and . . . it's been something that you've been wanting to do ever since you started seeing beautiful old mansions being torn down to make room for ugly hotels and overramped casinos. You've been wanting the chance to restore a place like this and now that you've the chance to . . .

How would I know what's in that whatever it is over there? Moony isn't giving you the chance but to go over there with her as . . . it probably was used as a garage at one time. The roof looks like a swayback horse. Check the door. Maybe it's not locked. It's locked. Try lifting up the garage door. And now you're flat on your back holding a piece of the door. You've lifted the door enough to . . . use the light on your phone and . . . whoa.

*It's happening again. When mother got tired of having me around, she left me at a place full of gals whose husbands were mad at them. When Stars got tired of fixing me, she died so that she could be with her imaginary friend Jesus. Now Moony has gotten tired of me not being able to do anything and has gone off with a guy who she's pretending is her daddy. Even the old twitchy couldn't wait to get away from me. What's the deal anyway with having to listen to music that . . . who goes around saying adoring or praise or love or . . .*

*Please whoever is playing that music – stop. Put your hands over your ears – maybe that'll help. Focus on the ocean – watch the waves. This is so dumb. You've got to do something. You can't stay sitting here all day.*

*If Stars hadn't . . . you'd be doing something right now to someone's hair. All you'd be thinking about would be how happy that the gal or guy twitchy will be with what you did to her or his hair. You know that you made the old twitchy look younger after you were done with her hair.*

*You need to get away somehow from the old twitchy. There's something about her that makes me think that you need to watch your back with her. This thing about you, Moony and the kid moving into her place – no one does that unless . . .*

*Accept it gal – unless you get up right now, go out on the road and . . . and where'd you go? You know that Stars would . . . gal – you've got to accept it – she's dead. What made her believe that I'd be able to live with her mouthy brat? Okay – Moony and I had to sleep together every night because . . . it made sense that Stars would sleep on that old beat up couch. She learned real quick that you getting up early in the morning to fix breakfast for everyone just was never going to happen so . . .*

*So – thanks Stars for letting me sleep until I had to get up in time to go wherever you said that we were going that day and you doing whatever it was that Stars had planned out for you to do that day.*

*Face it – if Stars hadn't made you do it, you wouldn't have finished high school and you would've have gone to beauty school. Getting good grades was easy; being around kids my age who . . . you've become an expert at being invisible. And doing that – making yourself invisible, has . . . you've got to stop trying to do everything that you can to escape being around other people. You don't have a choice now. You've got to help Moony just as Stars helped you. Be glad that Moony always wants to be with people versus . . .*

*You don't have a choice for now but . . . if the twitchy is willing to let you live in her house until you find another place to live . . . accept the fact gal that you'll have a nice room to sleep in until you're able to . . . and it'll give Moony a chance to have her very own room. Having the kid around though . . . you can hope gal that by this time tomorrow, that he'll be far, far, far away.*

*You know that you'd be fine with doing whatever once a week or so with twitchy's hair. She has to know where there're funeral homes around here where you can leave your name as someone who's willing to do whatever needs to be done to the hair of a dead twitchy.*

*This though setting up that room in her house where you'd do whatever with her friends' hair . . . she having friends – I doubt it big time. If there's anyone out there willing to hang out with a crazy twitchy – let alone call her his or her friend, that someone has to be just as off-the-wall as she is.*

*It's a good thing that there's some kind of thing shading this bench that I'm sitting on as it has to be getting really hot with the way that the sun is shining. Sprawling out on this bench . . . probably not a good idea. I'm so ready for a good night's sleep. It's been days since . . .*

*Tomorrow gal – tomorrow. You'll be able to think better tomorrow. The whacky twitchy will probably feed you – at least through tomorrow morning. You don't have to worry about finding something to eat for Moony. You'll even be able to take a long shower – something that you haven't done since you lived with mother. Taking a long bath back in the apartment was out of the question because it always seemed that just as you climbed in the tub, you had someone wanting to use the bathroom.*

*How does Moony know that it's me sitting on this bench. She's a mile away. Why does she have to be so . . .*

*Now Moony is running. She's going to run into someone – I know that she is. This always has to be about what she wants and what she wants to do has to stop before . . . and thinking that it's okay to yell as loud as she can as if she's the only one in the world . . .*

*If the kid walks any slower, it'll take him all day to get to where I'm sitting. I don't blame him. I wouldn't want to be caught having to talk with a gal like me or be around a kid who doesn't listen to anyone.*

*It must be nice to have had really, really, really, really, really lots of fun. And daddy is the bestest daddy in the whole wide world?*

*This can't be happening. Stars going to wherever it is that she says that she was going to was absolutely the very worst moment of my life – until now. There's no way that I want the kid to be in Moony's life – let alone in my life, but that's what's happening and I feel really, really, really, really, really sick to my stomach.*

*Tell Moony that just because she's really happy, that you're not going to be happy and that you're not going to jump up and down all over the place like she is.*

*What? No – he better not have. He better not have gone up with her on that wheel thing that goes around and around. Good – I'm glad that the kid was really scared. She knows that he was because he got all white and he had his eyes closed and . . . Moony being scared of something . . . you need to teach her to be scared of you.*

*She went on a what? The thing went up and down and made sharp turns and . . . she really liked it when the thing looked like it was going to go fly right out into the ocean but turned real quick at the last moment and . . . daddy was scared riding on that thing, too?*

*She needs to get it that there's no way that you're going to do whatever it was that she did with the kid. No way. Tell her to stop begging – that . . . about time the kid showed up. Talk about someone who looks like he's having the worst time that he's ever had in his life. He probably is.*

*Now what's Moony's problem. Hercules bought me something? And he let Moony buy me something, too? And he let Moony buy something for herself? Yah – sure – like he had a choice.*

*Tell Moony that you want her to sit down on the bench until twitchy is finished doing whatever it is that she's doing at the front of the . . . and tell the kid that you want him to leave and do what he has to do.*

*The twitchy has the worst timing in the world. She'd have to come out just as . . . and now we're all going back to her house whether we want to go there or not. Why does she want us to get settled in our rooms when . . . she has to know by now that the kid once he's able to escape her clutches will not show his face anywhere near this place. And there's no way that staying with that old coot is something that I want to do for any longer than I have to – which will be just as soon as I can find another place and am making the money to stay in the place.*

*Moony and school . . . Moony isn't going to be happy at all that she won't be able to start going to school when school starts up again in a few weeks. You sure wouldn't have liked it if mother had pulled you out of first grade a couple of weeks after you . . . like do you really think that Moony isn't going into a big time hissy fit when you tell her that she's going to have to wait a year before she starts going to school? She'll go into a serious meltdown if that happens to her. Stars – if you really are watching me like you said that you'll be doing from the place where you said that you're going . . . you're fooling yourself gal if you begin believing in the garbage that Stars kept trying to push on you.*

*If Moony doesn't shut up . . . this can't be her best time that she has ever had. She can't have forgotten her mother already. She has to know that I'm not able to do anything. When the kid gets the chance to . . . she'll never see him again. It's easy to see that the kid doesn't want to be anywhere near the old twitchy. And it should be easy to see that I don't want to be anywhere near him.*

*You don't have a choice but to . . . so stop whining about how bad that you have it. You know that this is exactly what Stars would be telling you right now if . . . how can things get worse? How could Stars always be so happy?*

*What was Stars thinking when she told me that she knows that I'll be a really good mother for Moony? I can't be a mother like Stars. Moony needs a mother who'll . . . I don't want to be Moony's mother. I don't want to be anything. I want to scream.*

*You know that Stars dying is your fault. It is. You needed to tell her that she wasn't to die. You needed to die – not her. Now I can't die. I've to take care of a kid who . . . Stars would be so disappointed with me if I don't. I don't want Stars disappointed with me after all that she has done for me.*

*You know that you wouldn't be missed if you stayed out here so . . . so why are you going into the house? Go to the room that . . . why are you staring at the sign that's over the door of this room? Stop it. Forget the sign and . . .*

*Twitchy is going to drive everyone crazy by the way that she keeps telling us all what to do. The kid's head must be about ready to explode by the way that he's rubbing it.*

*Why don't you just take Moony to the room where the old twitchy is making you stay in and then show Moony the room where the old twitchy thinks that she should stay in. For once you'll get the chance to tell Moony something instead of always having her . . .*

*First though I've got to find out right now what the kid and Moony bought me. Do I like them? Which one do I like the best? There it is again gal – you've gotten yourself trapped having to say something or do something that you absolutely don't want to do.*

*I've got to admit it that those are really nice clothes. They're just not me. You can't tell Moony that but . . . she should know by now that I'm fine with wearing clothes that someone else has worn. Plus why would I want to have something that looks as pretty as those clothes when there's no place for me to go to where nice clothes are worn.*

*You know gal that if you don't pick which top and slacks or whatever they're called that you like the best, Moony isn't going to stop saying please, please, please . . . lay out the clothes and . . . okay – this top with all the flowers and this white whatever is something that Moony probably picked out while the kid would think that I'd like something boring like this top and something that goes down to my ankles like this thing. Tell Moony that she did a good job picking out this top and whatever this is that you know might look nice on you.*

*That's the one that the kid picked out for me? That a sad look that Moony has right now on her face. She actually looks like she's about to cry. You know that she's not happy like she says that she is that you chose what the kid picked out for you to wear. It's true though that you also like what she picked out for you to wear.*

*If that's what she wants to do, let her go find the kid to tell him what outfit you liked the most. Take the other bag over to the room where hopefully she'll like to stay in alone and see what she got for herself. Lay what she got out on the bed so that . . . this is a lot of . . . how did she know what to get? You know that Moony has never been in a store that sells brand new clothes. I sure can't see Hercules helping her pick out stuff that she really needed.*

*You probably should find out what Moony is up to right now and what twitchy has planned for you. Maybe Moony has gotten on twitchy's nerves so much that the twitchy . . . it's more likely that the twitchy will get on Moony's nerves so much that she'll want to get away from this place.*

*She's leaving again. You can't let. . . you should've stopped them. Here we go again – wondering if you'll ever see Moony again. Tell twitchy that Moony isn't to go anyplace without first telling you where she's going – and that you don't want Moony spending any more time with the kid.*

*Hercules is checking the outside of the house? Moony went with him to . . . and I'm welcome to go out and . . . or I can go to the room where I'm to stay because . . . and I can take a nap until it's time to eat lunch or if I'd like to take a bath or a shower . . . go for the bath or shower gal before the old twitchy decides that you're going to help her do something that you've no clue how to do.*

*It'd feel so good to experience a hot shower again. It'd also be great to be able to sit in a tub of hot water with a good book and . . . and then to have a bed to sleep in again all by yourself. . . it's been at least four years since . . .*

Guy – that’s a really old car. It has to have been in this old garage for forever. Whatever it is, it has a rumple seat.

Now what’s Moony . . . stop her before she . . . who knows what’s all in there. For sure there’re mice in this place. Maybe rats, too, plus snakes and lots of bugs including spiders that . . . tell her that you’ll try to make the hole larger. Have her hold your cell while you try to break off more pieces from the garage door.

Someone sure thinks that she’s having her day being made. This though having a daddy who’ll do so many fun things with her . . . you’ve got to admit that you’ve never come close to spending a day like this – and the day has just started.

Being with the old man when he was taking down a building was something you liked doing when you were a kid as there was no way to know what’d be found in the building. If something wasn’t architectural, it was yours to do whatever with. Finding out that using the web that there always seemed to be a buyer for whatever you were trying to sell let you build a nest egg that gave you the chance to go to the school that you went to and to still have enough money left over to . . .

Come on door – give it up. Use that dead branch that’s on the ground over there and maybe you’ll be able to pry the door open enough to get into the garage. Here’s hoping that it doesn’t break while you’re pulling back on it.

I don’t blame Moony for wanting to help but . . . I don’t want her getting hurt if the branch suddenly snapped.

Good – the door is budging. Slide the limb in a little higher and . . . you’re winning. And someone is going to be a cheerleader someday the way that she’s jumping up and down.

Finally. It’s open far enough to slip under the door and see what’s inside this place. Ask Moony for your cell and tell her to be really, really careful – and that she needs to stay behind you. Just ignore her why and . . . a Hudson? There can’t be many old Hudsons out there. The first chance that you get – you need to get online and . . . that can’t be. It is. It’s an old Indian. This place is a goldmine.

This place is packed with all kinds of stuff – including all kinds of old beach stuff. And there’s some bikes. They’re tandems. There has to be at least a half a dozen. The tires are shot but . . . tell Moony that we need to go to the house and ask the old lady what’s up with everything in the garage. If she really wants to do what she’s claiming that she wants to do, this old garage will need to go and all the things in this garage . . .

If I’m half as filthy looking as Moony is right now . . . maybe you’ve found an out and she won’t let you back in the house. That’d be cruel. You know that you’re dying to find out what the stuff that’s in the old garage is worth.

You should know by now that there’s nothing going to stop Moony from telling blow by blow to anyone and everyone who’ll listen to her what a super-duper time that she’s having. I sure hope that the old lady is okay with me breaking into her old garage.

Just do what she told you to do – go use the bathroom over there and clean up as best as you can and then we’ll talk about what needs to be done outside – and then you can start looking at what needs to be done inside? In the meantime, she’s going to have Moony take a bath? She’s already filled the tub that’s in her room with water?

I get the feeling that Moony didn’t know that she had her own room to stay in. She seems fine though with staying by herself in a room – especially since it’s next to the room where Sul is staying. Sul must be in that room as . . .

And there goes Moony on her next adventure. That little lady is something else. She sure makes life interesting. I hope that it works out for Sul to be able to get her feet on the ground as quickly as possible so that she and Moony can begin living some kind of normal life together. You know that you’ve more than enough stashed away to help set Sul up in a place and for Moony to begin classes in a couple of weeks. Staying here with whoever the old lady is – I can’t let that happen. The old gal is totally off her rocker. She’s already put you in jeopardy of losing your job – as if that’d be the end of the world if that happened?

Go to the bathroom and . . . she can’t be expecting you to . . . if she thinks that you’re going to put on those shorts and that shirt that looks like . . ., she’s even crazier than you thought. Where did she get those clothes from anyway?

Tell the whacky crow that you've had it with her treating you like a little kid. She has really gone over the line this time. You need her to get it that thinking that you'd be okay with wearing something that . . . you need to get out of here before you say or do something that . . . that crackpot has really done it now – laughing at you like you've just said the funniest thing that she's ever heard?

She knew that I'd react the way that I did? She's glad that I'm going to be a part of her family? She's been missing having a man around? What's happening?

How many times has this old witch managed to trap . . . and what has she done with them? You need to get out of here. You can't leave though without Sul and Moony. All you can do now is to watch your back and make sure that she's not walking around with a knife in her hand.

I should at least use the bathroom to wash the grime off my hands, arms and face and . . . I know exactly what's going to happen when I finish cleaning up – the old lady will tell you what to do and you'll do it because . . . she really does have you buffaloed doesn't she guy?

You could lock yourself in this bathroom or . . . if you could figure out a way to reach the window above the stool and if you're able to get it open . . . forget it – escaping from this place isn't the answer. Escaping from the dictator of a father and getting the kind of schooling and training that you really enjoyed getting that you thought would be the answer to having something to always be excited about doing when you wake up in the morning only to end up with five dictators who've made you their pet slave to . . . and now you're in the hands of a wild lunatic who . . . go face her guy – get it over with.

Guess sitting at the table must mean that she expects me to sit at the table, too. Ask her about what's in the garage.

Ask her if she has any idea at all how much the old car and cycle are worth. She's right – I won't mind at all doing that. You know that when word gets out that there's a 1910 Hudson and an Indian that's well over a hundred years old sitting in a garage . . . don't go there guy. You'll be long gone before . . . and do you really want to miss the chance of personally putting your hands on a car and a bike that old?

What're you doing guy? The job that you have now gives you . . . is that what you really want – security? Security from what? All you're doing besides banking money is letting five tyrants run every second of your life. You know what you're going to be doing each day. Projects – putting together each model is always a new and different challenge but . . . they're in a way all starting to run together.

You've got the chance now to . . . and you're as crazy as she is if . . .

She wants to know so tell her your thoughts about what has to be done outside. If she doesn't like it that you think that every plant and bush, the sign and garage have to go – that both the front and back need to be scraped clean of all the rocks and whatever else was used for cars to park on and all that hauled away to someplace that takes fill and that the front is to be used for nothing more than for a large patio with large and small planters, walkways and places to sit and . . .

Asking her now if she knows the difference between asking someone to do something and telling someone to do something . . . come on – guy, you know that she knows that you've it in your mind exactly how you'd do it – so having it ready to see in a couple of hours would be nothing for you to do but . . . tell her that you'll have what you think the front should look like ready by noon if she'll first ask you to please do it instead of . . .

The old thing is worse than Moony. All she does when you dare to push back at her is to laugh even harder at me. And now this her having waited for years for this moment . . .

Please don't take away the sign? Ask her why. She has to know that Gift Boarding House doesn't make any sense. So people know this place by that name. They've got to be just as ancient as she is by now. I get that – that their kids would remember this place by that name, but . . . that look that she just gave you – include the sign guy. Now you know why her husband croaked. There's no way that you're going to get her to change her mind. Just be glad that she seems to be happy with the idea of turning the front of this place into a patio area.



She always thought that the area behind her house should be covered with some sort of paving for cars to park? Good. And about the garage – you need to tell her that lighting a match to it right now isn't an option because of all that's in it. Tell her that what she can get from selling the car and the bike alone would easily cover everything that she decides to do with the exterior of her property.

She's not worried about the costs to . . . the car and bike and everything else that's in the old garage is mine to do whatever with?

She right but . . . she can do whatever she wants to do with whatever is here – if she's in her right mind. Ask her about her brother and if he'd be okay with what she'd like to do. He's been wanting her to do this for a long time? And if I'm thinking that money is a problem – or paperwork – or . . . I'm not to be. There's that look again. You probably should not hint at money with her again.

We're going to my room now? My room? It's the room where I'll stay until what? I'm not getting married. Tell her that. That's crazy – me marrying Sul – no way. Tell her that she's got it all wrong if she thinks that . . . tell her that it's not your problem that Moony doesn't have a dad and that . . . we'll see? Tell her that a total stranger hasn't the right to tell another total stranger that he has to marry another total stranger just because she says so. So help me – if she says we'll see one more time . . .

Just go with the old cuckoo bird to where she says that your room is. You're getting the chance to at least see what the upstairs looks like. Guess you needed to know that there're six rooms upstairs and that my room is the end room on this side of the house – and that I'll be able to see the ocean from my room? Just what I want to do – spend time staring at the ocean. If you don't like the ocean, then why are you getting up every day before daybreak to walk the boardwalk?

The rooms all have names? My room is called self-control? And the room across the hall is called gentleness? That's the first thing that . . . all those weird names above the doors have to go. No one these days is going to want to stay in rooms that have those names. She can't really be expecting me to stay in this room – it has almost as much square footage as my apartment has.

I'm to get my things sometime after lunch from where I'm living – that's if I've the time, and . . . and if you thought guy that you'd get under the old coot's skin by sarcastically telling her thanks for letting you leave her dungeon without an armed guard so that you'll return; it didn't happen. And now telling you that she's glad that you're here right now because she has been really looking forward to this day . . .

Why did you let the old gal leave? Why didn't you follow her down the steps and . . . you could check and see if any of the windows open and if one does . . . that's probably her coming back up the steps to see what you're doing or to tell you . . .

That's not the . . . Moony was right when she said that Sul looks really pretty when she . . . she's gorgeous. You need to tell her that. A big beautiful smile and a thank you . . . and now telling you that you're to close your mouth and to stop staring at her? I can't.

Why did she grab your hand? She wants me to see something? Go – move your legs. Follow her? You don't have a choice with her pulling you and you're not wanting to let her out of your sight.

Why are we going in the room where Moony . . . I'm to look at the photo that Moony is holding? All this fuss to just look at a black and white photo that was recently taken of Moony? Now I'm to look at the black and white picture that's on the dresser?

That's Moony with . . . that sure looks like the old lady who haunts this old place. Take the photo out of the frame and . . . show Sul the names that're written on the back of the photo – plus there's a date when the photo . . . she knows who the little girl and the old lady are who're in the photo?

That can't be who . . . how does Sul . . . I'm to look now at what's above her door? Tell Sul that you've the same feeling right now, too, and . . .

*Good grief gal – why do you keep making your life more difficult than what it has to be? Why are you always trying to get someone else to make decisions for you. You’ve gone from always asking Stars what to do next to asking Moony to . . . just do both – spend some time soaking in the tub and then use the shower to wash your hair.*

*As often as you’ve relied on someone else – like mother and then Stars, to tell you what needs to be done and that I’m to do it, you need to stop Moony from telling you what she thinks that you should do about whatever. And if for whatever reason that the twitchy who lives here is able to get you and Moony to stay here, you need to . . . come on gal – stop fooling yourself – you’re the consummate patsy who’s always being taken advantage of by the whole world.*

*Push down the drain plug and start filling up the tub. When did the twitchy manage to without you seeing her doing it put soap, shampoo, hair conditioner and . . . bubble bath? What’s that? Just follow the instructions on the bottle and . . . now put a towel on the chair that’s next to the tub and get into the tub now that it’s full of water. You better check how hot the water is before . . . good – it’s warm enough for a good soak.*

*You know that you’d really enjoy sitting in the tub if you’d stop your mind from going around and around. You can’t go on reliving what happened to Stars. Stars always knew what to do. You never know what to do from one minute to another. Stars always planned. You never needed to think ahead to what you’d do the next day. Now that you’ve to make plans, you don’t have any idea how to begin now that you’ve done the last thing that Stars told you to do.*

*You made it here – didn’t you? Did you have a choice with Moony having her mother tell her that she was to make sure that you drove here so that you could dump Stars ashes in the ocean? You didn’t.*

*I’m never going to drive a car again. Never. My neck and shoulders are never going to stop hurting. I know – I know – twitchy had you do something with her hair. You were able to do that without your neck and shoulders hurting. So – why are you letting them hurt now? Stop it – lay back against the end of the tub and . . . now the tub feels like it’s moving. This is crazy.*

*Start letting the water out before . . . now turn on the shower – if you can figure out how to do it. Finally. You should’ve just taken a shower instead of . . . it feels so good to have the water beating down on my shoulders and back.*

*You need to get going on washing your hair. You need to be dressed when Moony gets back in the house. She’ll probably tell you that she can take a bath on her own but . . . you can show her how the shower works in case she might want to take a shower sometime before we’re able to escape the twitchy who runs this place.*

*You’ve probably scrubbed long enough on your head. You’re going to have to use up a half a bottle of conditioner to get all the tangles out of your hair. It has been before Stars . . . when you last washed your hair. It’s going to be nice to have some body back in it again.*

*How can a bath or a shower make me feel like a new person. You even have clean underwear to put on. Something else that Stars did for you – giving you what she wore when she was a teenager which she had outgrown.*

*Use the hairdryer that you used to dry twitchy’s hair. It’s over by the boxes of stuff that . . . if I remember right, that box over there has curling irons in it. The bag that you call a purse has a brush in it that’ll work to do what you want to do with your hair. Now plug in the hairdryer and curling iron in the outlet that’s by the mirror and . . .*

*This is one time that you’d be glad to have Moony around. She likes to work on hair just as much as you do – and she’s getting rather good at it. It always feels so good when she’s combing out your hair – and she knows how you like to wear it.*

*Go for it gal – put on that top and pants that the kid picked out for you. You know that you’ve really been looking forward to seeing how the clothes look on you. Use the scissors that’s in your bag to cut off the tags. Save the tags just in case . . . why? You know that you’re going to do whatever you’ve to do to . . . how did the kid do it – picking out something that I’d really like and that perfectly fits me.*

*Where did that thought come from – wishing that Hercules was here so that you could give him a hug? What's wrong with just thanking him? What's wrong with being nicer to him than what you've been?*

*I hope that twitchy didn't make the kid lose his job. If the job that the kid has is so good, you know that he'd be driving a lot newer car. The thing that he's driving looks older than Birdie. The kid probably doesn't have any more money than what you have – which is nothing.*

*The kid staying here – even for a night, not going to happen. And how do you know that? If Birdie had four good tires and if Moony and I could sneak past the twitchy, we'd be out of here. This place is really spooky. Twitchy has to be a real life witch.*

*For now gal – just be glad that you've a place to sleep – at least for tonight. You know that you're going to be eating something again here later today. You're not going to go hungry – at least for the rest of today. You might as well sit down in that rocker over there and . . . or you could go check on Moony. The whole world has to know that she and the kid are back in the house.*

*This place is as bad as the apartment was – always hearing through the walls the tenants on both sides of our apartment talking and arguing plus whatever it was that they were watching on TV. Moony learned real quick that she could get either her mom or me to pick her up if she began crying. It probably was good that Stars was so weird about never wanting to have a TV around where she lived. You know that you'd have spent all your time in front of it – just like you did when you lived with mother. Reading books really is a much better thing to do than watch TV.*

*You really need to talk to Moony about how loud that she always talks. She probably can be heard a mile away. She sure is excited about something. What's so exciting about an old car – or an old something else? You probably should go and tell Moony to keep the noise down because . . . why? There's no one else here – that you know of, other than you, the kid, Moony and the witch.*

*You probably should stop thinking of the old twitchy as a witch even if she does give you the feel of being one. Moony seems to be okay with her. The kid though . . . he looks like someone who gets stepped on by everyone. You should know. That was your world until mother decided to get rid of you by leaving you at a woman's shelter.*

*You were really, really lucky that Stars was talking to the supervisor of the place when . . . you know now that you probably would've ended up in a foster home if Stars hadn't called you her little sis and then . . . it didn't take long and you really did feel like you were Stars little sis. Then Moony was born. If mother had been half the mother than what Stars was, mother would still have been a horrible mother. Stars could do everything. She always knew what to do. Her god should've made me die instead of her.*

*Just stay for now in the room that you've been stuck in. I can see myself sitting in this rocker and reading a book. It's going to be strange sleeping alone tonight in that bed – that is if Moony is okay with sleeping alone in her room. Knowing Moony – she'll want to sleep alone. I'm not going to miss her trying to in her sleep push me out of the bed. And having a bathroom all to myself instead of with Moony and Stars . . . I really wish that twitchy wasn't so scary.*

*Now it's the kid who sounds animated about something. Would I've liked to have seen the witch's face when the kid told her that he thinks that this place should be burned.*

*It sounds like the kid is serious about thinking the outside of this place needs a complete do over. The yard really did have a lot of bushes in it. Fixing up the front in a way that guests would want to go out there to sit and talk seems like a good idea. I can't see the old twitchy being okay though with having a bulldozer come in and . . .*

*Why did she do that? What's the kid going to do with an old car and an old motorcycle plus everything else that's in an old garage that's apparently falling apart – that'll need to go, too? You'd have liked to have seen the kid's reaction, wouldn't you?*

*You probably should go out and tell Moony that she needs to take a bath. She has to be filthy. She also has to be wanting to put on the new clothes that she came home with from wherever she went with the kid.*

*You should know by now that twitchy is the one who's going to call the shots around here. Moony is going to take a bath right now because twitchy said so. I dare Moony to tell the old twitchy that she doesn't want to take a bath.*

*Here you go again gal – sitting in this room and missing Moony's reactions to seeing the room that she's to stay in tonight. Good – twitchy had filled up the tub with water. Trusting Moony though to let out or turn on the water to have it as full as she wants it before she gets into the tub . . . like Moony wasn't taking baths all by herself when you were living in the apartment.*

*You shouldn't be so happy right now gal that you don't have to be the one to be constantly making sure that Moony was doing what Stars wanted her to do. You know that Stars was always busy with doing whatever for us to live in that apartment but . . . okay – you really didn't mind reading books to Moony – or playing games with her – or going to the park with her.*

*Now I really wish that I could see the kid's face after hearing twitchy tell him that she's now going to show him the upstairs and the room where he's going to be staying. The poor guy has to be thinking right now that he has to be hallucinating – just like you know that you've been the past ten days or so.*

*You've got to stop hoping that Stars didn't really die – that her god really didn't want to take her to his home in wherever she always called it.*

*Why is someone knocking on my door? Moony? How did she know that you were . . . why isn't she in the bathtub? Tell her that you're glad that she doesn't need help anymore with taking baths. I've to see something first though before . . .*

*You're going to have to go with her. You know that you don't have a choice. Check the water in the tub. Maybe it's too hot or too cold and Moony wants you to . . .*

*You need to tell Moony to stop telling you that you've got to look at . . . that can't be Moony in the photo. That's an old photo. The young gal in the photo does look like Moony but . . . the photo was stuck in the frame of this picture? There weren't any photos or pictures on the dresser when you were in the room putting Moony's clothes in that dresser.*

*How does Moony know that that's twitchy in the picture. It looks like twitchy but . . . it can't be. Get the kid. Tell Moony that you'll be right back.*

*The kid better be in the room that twitchy said that she was going to put him. Good – he's . . . you've got to do something. This standing there gawking at you like he can't stop looking at you . . . grab his hand. You're going to have to start pulling him as . . . gal – you just had a guy tell you that you're really gorgeous.*

*There's no doubt by the way that Hercules is acting that he meant what he just said about you but . . . he has to see the photo and picture.*

*Get him to hurry. Come on gal – you know that the photo and picture aren't going to disappear but . . .*

*Show him the photo. Good – he thinks that the young girl in the photo looks like Moony, too.*

*Now what's Hercules doing? How did he know that the back that's holding the picture comes off? He's curious to see if there's something written on the back of the picture? Why would there be something written on the back of the picture when there's nothing written on the back of the photo? There's something on the back on the picture. You've got to tell Moony what's written on the back of the photo before she . . . tell her that the young girl in the photo and in the picture that was taken when she was about her age is her mother and that's Starlight in this picture with grammy witchy. Grammy witchy is probably the twitchy who . . .*

*There's a date on the back of the picture, too. That's twenty-one years ago. The sign above the door. You've got to show it to Hercules. Have him read it. Maybe he'll feel like I do now. He has it, too. I see it on his face.*

*Peace.*