

The Prisoner of Second Avenue

EDNA Edison, Mrs. Edna Edison... I've just been robbed... I just walked in, they took everything... Edison... I just walked in, I found the door open, they must have just left... 385 East 88th Street... Two minutes sooner, I could have been killed. Apartment 14A. I don't know yet. Television, the record player, books, clothing... They took lots of clothing. My dresses, my coats, all my husband's suits-- there's not a thing left in his closet... I haven't checked the drawers yet... Would you, please? Send somebody right away... I'm all alone. My husband isn't home from work yet... Mrs. Edna Edison. I could have been killed. Thank you.

She hangs up, then turns and looks at the room. She crosses the room, lifts a chair up and sets it right. Then she goes over to the bureau and starts to look through the drawers. As she discovers new things are missing, she sobs louder.

EDNA All right... Calm down... A drink, I have to have a drink.

She rushes into the kitchen, gets a glass and a few cubes of ice from the refrigerator, then rushes back out into the living room. She rushes to the bar and looks. There are no bottles.

EDNA The liquor's gone. They took the liquor.

She puts the glass down, slumps into a chair, and sobs.

EDNA Valium... I want a Valium.

She gets up and goes into the bedroom. We hear her searching through ransacked medicine chests. There are a few moments of silence, EDNA has probably fallen onto the bed, sobbing, for all we know.

The front door is unlocked and MEL enters. He carries his suit jacket and the New York Post. His shirt sleeves are rolled up and he looks hot. He closes the door and hangs his jacket in the closet. Consumed with his own thoughts, he doesn't seem to even notice the room. He moves over to the chair, falls into it exhausted, puts his head back and sighs... His eyes open, then he looks at the room for almost the first time. He looks around, bewildered. From the bedroom we hear EDNA's voice.

EDNA Mel? Is that you? Mel?

Mel is still looking at the room, puzzled.

EDNA appears cautiously from the bedroom. She comes in, holding a vase, and looks at MEL.

MEL Didn't Mildred come in to clean today?

EDNA *(puts the vase down)* Not today... Mondays and Thursdays.

MEL What happened here? ... Why is this place such a mess?

EDNA We've been robbed.

MEL looks at her in a state of shock. He slowly rises and looks at the room in a new perspective.

MEL What do you mean robbed?

EDNA Robbed! Robbed! What does robbed mean? They come in, they take things out! They robbed us!!!

He keeps turning, looking at the room in disbelief-- not knowing where to look first.

MEL I don't understand... What do you mean, someone just walked in and robbed us?

EDNA What do you think?... They called up and made an appointment? We've been robbed!

MEL All right, calm down. Take it easy, Edna. I'm just asking a simple question. What happened? What did they get?

EDNA I don't know yet. I was out shopping. I was gone five minutes. I came back. I found it like this.

MEL You couldn't have been gone five minutes. Look at this place.

EDNA Five minutes, that's all I was gone.

MEL Five minutes, heh? Then we'd better call the FBI, because every crook in New York must have been in here.

EDNA Then that's who was here, because I was only gone five minutes.

MEL When you came back into the building did you notice anyone suspicious looking?

EDNA Everyone in this building is suspicious looking.

MEL You didn't see anybody carrying any bundles or packages?

EDNA I didn't notice.

MEL What do you mean, you didn't notice?

EDNA I didn't notice. You think I look for people leaving the building with my television set?

MEL They took the television? A brand new color television?

EDNA They're not looking for 1948 Philcos. It was here. They took it. I can't get a breath out.

MEL All right, sit there. I'll get a drink.

EDNA I don't want a drink.

MEL A little Scotch. It'll calm you down.

EDNA It won't calm me down, because there's no Scotch. They took the Scotch, too.

MEL All the Scotch?

EDNA All the Scotch.

MEL The Chivas Regal too?

- EDNA No, they're going to take the cheap Scotch and leave the Chivas Regal. They took it all, they cleaned us out.
- MEL Sons of bitches. (*He runs to the terrace door, opens it, steps out on the terrace and yells out.*) SONS OF BITCHES! (*He closes the door and comes back in.*) All in five minutes, eh? They must have been gorillas to lift all that in five minutes.
- EDNA Leave me alone.
- MEL Sons of bitches.
- EDNA Stop swearing, the police will be here any minute. I just called them.
- MEL You called the police?
- EDNA Didn't I just say that?
- MEL Did you tell them we were robbed?
- EDNA Why else would I call them? I'm not friendly with the police. What kind of questions are you asking me? What's wrong with you?
- MEL All right, calm down, because you're hysterical.
- EDNA I am not hysterical.
- MEL You're hysterical.
- EDNA You're making me hysterical. Don't you understand? My house has just been robbed.
- MEL What am I, a boarder? My house has been robbed, too. My color television and my Chivas Regal is missing the same as yours.
- EDNA You didn't walk in and find it. I did.
- MEL What's the difference who found it? There's still nothing to drink and nothing to watch.
- EDNA Don't yell at me. I'm just as upset as you are.
- MEL I'm sorry. I'm excited, too. I don't mean to yell at you. (*starts for the bedroom*) Let me get you a Valium, it'll calm you down.
- EDNA I don't want a Valium.
- MEL Take one. You'll feel better.
- EDNA I'm not taking a Valium.
- MEL Why are you so stubborn?
- EDNA I'm not stubborn. We don't have any, They took the Valiums.
- MEL They took the Valiums?

EDNA The whole medicine chest. Valiums, Seconals, aspirin, shaving cream, toothpaste, razor blades. They left your toothbrush. You want to go in and brush your teeth, you can still do it.

MEL I don't believe you. I don't believe you!

MEL looks at her, then storms off into the bedroom. EDNA gets up and picks up a book from the floor.

MEL *(offstage)* DIRTY BASTARDS!!!

EDNA holds the book upside down and shakes it, hoping some concealed item will fall out. It doesn't.

Mel storms back into the living room.

MEL I hope they die. I hope the car they stole to get away in hits a tree and turns over and burns up and they all die!

EDNA You read about it every day. And when it happens to you, you can't believe it.

MEL A television I can understand. Liquor I can understand. But shaving cream? Hair spray? How much are they going to get for a roll of dental floss?

EDNA They must have been desperate. They took everything they could carry. *(shakes the book one last time)* They even found my kitchen money.

MEL What kitchen money?

EDNA I kept my kitchen money in here. Eighty-five dollars.

MEL In cash? Why do you keep cash in a book?

EDNA So no one will find it. Where else am I gonna keep it?

MEL In a jar. In the sugar. Some place they're not going to look.

EDNA They looked in the medicine chest, you think they're not going to look in the sugar?

MEL Nobody looks in sugar!

EDNA Nobody steals dental floss and mouthwash. Only sick people. Only that's who live in the world today. Sick, sick, sick people!

She sits, emotionally wrung out. MEL goes to her and puts his arm on her shoulder, comforting her.

MEL It's all right... It's all right, Edna... As long as you weren't hurt, that's the important thing.

EDNA Can you imagine if I had walked in and found them here? What would I have done, Mel?

MEL You were very lucky, Edna. Very lucky.

EDNA But what would I have done?

MEL What's the difference? You didn't walk in and find them.

EDNA But supposing I did? What would I have done?

- MEL You'd say, "Excuse me," close the door and come back later. What would you do, sit and watch? Why do you ask me such questions? It didn't happen, did it?
- EDNA It almost happened. If I walked in here five minutes sooner.
- MEL You couldn't have been only five minutes... It took the Seven Santini Brothers two days to move everything in, three junkies aren't gonna move it all out in five minutes.
- EDNA Seven minutes, eight minutes, what's the difference?
- MEL *(Opens the door, looks at the lock)* The lock isn't broken, it's not jimmed. I don't even know how they got in here.
- EDNA Maybe they found my key in the street.
- MEL *(Closes the door. Looks at her)* What do you mean, "found your key?" don't you have your key?
- EDNA No, I lost it. I thought it was somewhere in the house, but maybe I lost it in the street.
- MEL If you didn't have your key, how were you going to get back in the house when you went shopping?
- EDNA I left the door open.
- MEL You left the door open???
- EDNA I didn't have a key, how was I going to get back in the house?
- MEL So you left the door open? In a city with the highest crime rate in the history of the world, you left the door open?
- EDNA What was I going to do? Take the furniture with me? I was only gone five minutes. How did they know I was going to leave the door open?
- MEL They know! They know! A door opens, it doesn't lock, the whole junkie world lights up. "Door open, fourteenth floor, Eighty-eighth Street and Second Avenue." They know!
- EDNA They don't know anything. They have to go around trying doors.
- MEL And what do you think? They were going to try every door in this house except yours? "Let's leave 14A alone, fellas, it looks like a nice door."
- EDNA If they're going to go around trying doors, they have twenty-three hours and fifty-five minutes a day to try them. I didn't think they would try ours the five minutes I was out of the house. I gambled! I lost!
- MEL What kind of gamble is that to take? If you lose, they get everything. If you win, they rob someone else.
- EDNA I had to shop. There was nothing in the house to eat tonight.

MEL All right, now you have something to eat and nothing to eat it with... Why didn't you call up and have them send it?

EDNA Because I shop in a cheap store that doesn't deliver. I'm trying to save us money because you got me so worried the other night. I was just trying to save us money. Look how much money I saved us.

EDNA starts to pick up things.

MEL What are you doing?

EDNA We can't leave everything like this. I want to clean up.

MEL Now?

EDNA The place is a mess. We have people coming over in a few minutes.

MEL The police? You want the place to look nice for the police? You're worried they're going to put it down in their books, "bad housekeeper"? Leave it alone. Maybe they'll find some clues.

EDNA I can't find out what's missing until I put everything back in its place.

MEL What do you mean? You know what's missing. The television, the liquor, the kitchen money, the medicine chest and the hi-fi... That's it, isn't it? *(pause)* Isn't it? *(EDNA looks away)* Okay, what else did they get?

EDNA Am I a detective? Look, you'll find out.

He glares at her and looks around the room, not knowing where to begin. He decides to check the bedroom. He storms out. EDNA, knowing what to expect, sits on a chair and stares out the window. She takes out a hanky and wipes some dirt from the window sill. MEL returns calmly-- at least outwardly calm. He takes a deep breath.

MEL Where are my suits?

EDNA They were there this morning. They're not there now. They must have taken your suits.

MEL *(trying to stay calm)* Seven suits? Three sports jackets? Eight pairs of slacks?

EDNA If that's what you had, that's what they got.

MEL I'm lucky my tuxedo is in the cleaners.

EDNA It came back this morning.

MEL Well, they did a good job of it... Cleaned me out... Left a pair of khaki pants and my golf hat... Anybody asks us out to dinner this week, ask them if it's all right if I wear khaki pants and a golf hat. DIRTY BASTARDS!!!