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"I don't know if I want to get up....I don't know what time it is...I don't care..." She looks for Kleenex. Limp to chair in living room. "What is the temperature today? Feels cold" Must be at least 75. "I'm cold." Bring her a robe.

Holding TV remote upside down, she asks, always kindly, "What is wrong with this thing?" Explain remote. Turn on TV. Adjust sound. She is pressing the on and off button instead of the channel changing button. "I can't get anything on this thing." Voice rises. "I want to go back to the other, whatever we had. It was simpler. I don't like this." Explain that this remote is simpler than the other one. "Well, it isn't for me."

Voice from living room. "What day is it? Do we get the newspaper?" Go out to driveway. Bring in wet newspaper. "Where are my darn glasses?" Find glasses in bathroom. Notice kitty litter. Change kitty litter. Flush toilet. She puts on glasses and looks at newspaper.

"It is... oh yes, May. It's May 4th. It's May and raining. May showers bring May showers." We laugh. "Where are the roses that were in that vase?" I threw them out, mom, they were plastic and dusty. Ugly. "I loved those roses! I love roses!"
I'll buy you fresh flowers. "That's a waste of money. They look the same. I want those roses back in that vase!"

Shopping list: plastic roses

Did you leave the screen door open? We can't leave the screen door open." The cat needs to get out. "I don't want the kitty to go out!" The cat always goes out. "I do not want to lose that cat!" Bring eggs to her TV tray. "You shouldn't wait on me. I am getting to be a burden..... Is there coffee?" yes. "Is the screen door locked?" Bring coffee. Change channel. Explain remote. TV loud. Turn it down. "I can't hear it." Push TV closer to her chair. "Well, you didn't need to do that." She looks at her eggs. "I'm not hungry really. I just don't have the appetite I used to have, and that's a good thing." Eggs and toast disappear from plate immediately. "Did somebody knock on the door?" No.

Fifteen minutes later. "Did I eat breakfast? I should probably eat something." Bring her oatmeal and medications. "All these pills? I think I take too many pills. Is this a vitamin?" Explain pills. "Is this for my neck?" Her neck hurts. Call doctor for anti-inflammatory. Get heating pad from bedroom. "Oh dear, this heating pad is really too small to get around my neck, where it hurts, over here."

Shopping list: heating pad

Go to Wal-Mart for prescription refills. Not ready. Wander around store. Find plastic roses. Don't buy them. Buy large heating pad.

"It's too big! Look how big this is. Is this for my neck?" She asks politely. Wrap it around her neck. "Doesn't stay. It's stiff." Lost receipt. Tie heating pad around her neck with one of dad's old ties. "feels like cardboard." Safety pin towel on heating pad. Wrap around neck. "That pin sticks in my neck! This is not going to work...that's okay...do we have any of that...cream, any, cream for.....that cream?"

Shopping list: Ben Gay.

She winces, drops heat pad to the floor, limps to bathroom. "My ankle, today. I must have slept on it wrong.

"You have a bone chip."

"Maybe you should just take me out back and shoot me" We laugh.

"Do I hear someone knocking on the door?"

I check. No.

Burning smell in kitchen. Smoke alarm goes off. Open oven. Three pair of underwear on fire. Douse underwear with water. Hit smoke alarm with broom. Stops, then starts beeping again. Stand on chair, rip batteries from smoke alarm. "I was just trying to dry them. I am out of clean underwear."

Cat throws up on scatter rug. "It smells funny in here."

Shopping list: Lysol spray, underwear.

She spots mailman coming up the drive. Hour of letter opening. "What's this for?" Terminex. "Do we have termites? No, it's prevention. "That's a waste of money. Just don't leave food out." Squints at a telephone bill. "Where is my check-book?" These bills are paid, automatically. "Where is my check-book? What is my balance? Where is my balance?" Find checkbook. "What was this check for?" Wayne, the lawn man. "It says March. Is it March?" No, May. "We owe Wayne. Must be. The lawn looks terrible. He plants petunias. I love petunias."

Suggest she take a shower. "I dropped the soap again. I am going to slip in here and that will be the end of it!"

Shopping list: bath mat, soap on a rope

Steer her back to chair. "Today, my ankle. I must have slept on it wrong. Have you seen the kitty?" She picks up remote. "I know I probably asked you already, but how do you work this?" Explain remote. "Where are the roses that were in that vase?" Gone.

"What do you mean, gone?" They were all dusty. "What was dusty?"

She struggles with TV remote. "There's nothing good on TV anymore." Rent a movie from cable TV. Make popcorn. Rub her ankle with Ben Gay. Cut toenails.. Festering ingrown toenail.

Shopping list: gauze, Bactine.

She is frantically pressing remote. "How do I change the channel?" This is a movie. "I know

that, but I want to change the..I hate this thing..... this needs batteries.” Bring her TV dinner. “I’m not really hungry. I just don’t have the appetite I used to have and it’s a good thing, but I think I would like a drink. We’re out of vodka, and that’s a terrible thing because I don’t remember where the liquor store is!” I say, good thing I do. We laugh.

Shopping list: Vodka

Change sheets. “What are these sheets?” Explain new sheets. “Pretty. Where did you get them? Wal-mart. “Where are my old sheets?” I washed them. “Are they in the dryer?” We don’t have a dryer. “I thought we were going to get a dryer.” We are going to get a dryer but the house has to be rewired. “I thought we did that.” No, we had an electrician come and give us a quote. “How much can a dryer be?” The dryer is not the problem. It’s the re-wiring. “What’s wrong with it?”

Call electrician. Make appointment for next morning. Electrician comes while I am walking dog. “I don’t think we need an electrician,” she says to the electrician.

“I think I would like to sit on the porch.” Shuffles to porch. Studies cushions.. “We should hose these cushions, I used to take them out back with the hose and a scrubber” Cushions wet with mildew, soot, cat piss. I think it’s time to get new ones. “Don’t have to. You use the hose, you take them out back. The lawn is a mess. There are usually petunias. Where is Wayne?” Call Wayne.

Shopping list: porch chair cushions.

Cover lounge cushion with towels. Get newspaper and last of vodka. She toddles to the screen door and peers closely at squirrel lawn ornament. “His head...is his head...is that squirrel head gone?” I look. No. “Well, it must be the angle, but it looks like that squirrel doesn’t have a head. That’s an antique.”

Notice feces stains on back of her house dress. House dress stuck between her buttocks. Collect stained clothing. Sneak pile into garbage. Sit with her on the porch. “I need to go to bed now”

I tuck her into bed. Are you alright? “I’m fine. I’m just going to lay down a few minutes.” Do you want a window open? “Yes, it smells funny in here” She sleeps all day.

Sing song voice from bedroom in the middle of the night. “Kitty, kitty, kitty! Oh there is my kitty, on the bed, taking a nap. Kitty taking a nap? What a good, good kitty!” She coughs, breathes heavy, sleeps restlessly, groaning.

Next morning, she calls to me from bed. “Where did you put the braided rugs? Those rugs are antiques.” You get your walker caught in them. You’ll fall down. “Where are the rugs now?” In the backyard storage shed in plastic garbage bags. “They might get ruined out there.” No, they won’t. “They are going to get wet out there.” No, they won’t. “I want my rugs back. I’ll wheel around them!”

Bring rugs in and vacuum, go to bedroom to read. “This walker is a waste of money!” Gets walker wheels stuck in rug, shakes walker back and forth, violently, bends to adjust rug, groans, limps to her bed without the walker. “I don’t need that thing anyway.”

“Where are my slippers?” They’re old, worn out. I think we should throw them out. “We can spray them with something.” Spray them? “Or put them in the washing machine.” Won’t that ruin them? “I always have put my shoes in the washing machine.” I think these have had it.

“There is nothing wrong with these slippers!”

Next day, no rain. She doesn't get out of bed. She is barely breathing. Call doctor. Slippers hang on clothes line. Size of two tiny bananas - curled up toe to heel.

Shopping list: slippers, fresh roses.

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