

RUNNING HOME

As the lights come up we find a young man – Steve - jogging from upstage right to center and turning till he reaches downstage center where he collapses in pain grabbing his lower leg.

Steve

Ow! I'm so stupid! Ow! I am so friggen stupid!

An "Old" man appears behind him seeing what has happened.

Tom

Better watch what you say, someone might believe you.

Steve

(startled) Hey!! I didn't know anyone was around here. I'm ok.

Tom

Yes sir, you look like you're just fine.

Steve

It's my own fault. I forgot to stretch before I ran and I have a cramp.

Tom

In a hurry to leave were you? Well, don't feel bad – same thing happens to me all the time. Why don't you just stay where you are and I'll run into the house for some liniment?

Steve

What house? There's nothing around here.

Tom

Well what do you know? That's news to me.

The old man smiles as he walks stage left. Curious – Steve very slowly follows the Old man. He is limping. Lights come up on a portion of what we assume to be a cozy living room. The “room” should consist of two comfy chairs and coffee table a bookcase or freestanding fireplace displaying many photographs upstage of the chairs. There is a Happy Birthday banner draped on the front of the bookcase and a tray on the coffee table displaying a tea pot, a cup and a plate of cookies)

Steve

(entering behind the old man) I never saw this place before. (The old man turns to see Steve) but I'm kinda new around here...

Tom

Well, friend, if you've made it this far - you might as well come on inside and sit down. Here – take the big chair next to the footrest. I'll be right back with that liniment.

Steve

Hey man – I mean sir – It's OK. I think I've worked it out. Doesn't hurt anymore.

Tom

Good to hear. Tell you what. I was about to indulge in a special treat before I found you – be back with another cup.

The old man goes into the kitchen. Steve looks around the living room and sees the family pictures and other momentos on top of the bookcase.. He stands and notices an old wedding picture he picks it up for a closer look

Tom

(re-entering with a cup) That picture is about the oldest thing in this house next to me.

Steve

I wish you'd stop sneaking up on me like that! Who is it?

Tom

That's a picture of mother and me.

Steve

Why do you have a wedding picture of you and your mother?

Old man chuckles to himself and takes picture in his hand.

Tom

This pretty young girl is my wife and that's the day we got married – sixty one years ago last January (he replaces the picture and sits) Here – this will cheer you up – some hot chocolate and some cookies.

Steve

Thanks. By the way my name is Steve.

Tom

Pleased to meet you Steve – I'm Tom.

Steve

Oh – Happy Birthday! (pointing to the Happy Birthday banner draped on the front of the bookcase) Or is it your wife's?

Tom

No – it's mine! (Tom takes a birthday noise maker out of his pocket and gives it a blow which makes Steve smile)

Steve

Cool! You know what - it's also my dad's birthday! His name is Steve too.

Tom

Well isn't that something.

Tom pours the hot chocolate.

Steve

Where is your wife?

Tom

Why she's out in the barn delivering a litter of kittens.

Steve

I thought cats just sort of took care things by themselves.

Tom

That's the way things are supposed to be but mother is worried about this one.

Steve takes a sip of his drink.

Steve

Say, this is real good. I never had hot chocolate like this before.

Tom

Old Family recipe. Big secret – saved for special occasions – like birthdays!

Steve

A hot chocolate secret?

Tom

Well – seeing, as were such old friends I'll tell you. It's mother's recipe. (overly dramatic) Guard this with your life.

Steve

Mother your mother or mother your wife?

Tom

Ah - mother my mother. OK here goes – you use half cream and half milk.

Steve

You mean like half-and-half? That's no secret ingredient – my mom uses it in her coffee.

Tom

Not even close. My mother was raised in the country with a family cow. Now when you

Tom (cont.)

get your milk fresh from the cow the rich cream floats to the top. Most of the time you use that cream to make butter. But when you have a special occasion – like MY birthday - you get to make Hot Chocolate!

First you break the chocolate into little pieces - chocolate doesn't always come ready in a can you know. Well – then when it's all melted in with the steaming milk you add just a touch of vanilla and finally you blend in the rich thick warm cream - beaten till foamy to give the drink it's substance. Half and half.

Steve

Oh – like a Starbucks Latte

No – like a hot chocolate from Kilkenny Ireland.

Steve

Is that where you mom is from?

Tom

Yes sir. She was just a young girl when she came to this country. She talked about her childhood all the time – and her Shanty Irish family.

Steve

Is that a bad thing?

Tom

(smiling) No – there's Shanty Irish and Lace Curtain Irish – Lace Curtain being the rich ones. My people come from humble beginnings. I bet your family has old stories too.

Steve

I guess – ah, maybe not. I don't know – my folks don't talk to me much and I never knew my grandparents or nothin'. What are these other pictures?

Tom stands and points out people in the pictures.

Tom

Well – let's see now. This is my Mother – taken on her first day in America. These are my wife's parents – Faie – that's my wife - is the little girl in the picture. This handsome young man in uniform is our son, Jack. He was killed during the invasion of Granada in 1983.

This is Jack's wife and our grandson. She and Jack were getting a divorce when he was killed and she had already moved to Florida to be with her Mom. We exchanged letters – even went to Florida to try to get to know our grandson. But laws were different then and we didn't have any rights. I understand we're now great grandparents.

Steve

My grandfather died in a war – but I don't know which one. Are you going to get to see the baby?

Tom

I hope so. Of course, he is not a baby anymore – I guess he'd be about your age. Divorce is a very sad thing.

Steve

I think my parents are going to get a divorce.

Tom

I'm sorry to hear that.

Steve

It's kind of weird to think about. I guess it will be all right. Some of my friends come from homes like that. You know divorced ones.

Tom

Have your parents talked to you about this?

Steve

I hear them fight. They fight a lot. My dad didn't come home last night – my mom was real mad.

Tom

I see. Is that why you left in such a hurry this morning – without stretching? (Steve just hunches his shoulders like he's is saying – I don't know)
Do you spend a lot of time alone, Steve?

Steve

I don't know.

Tom

Sure you do.

Steve

Yeah – I guess. I don't really have friends – you know – just guys I hang with at school and stuff. I mean kids like me OK – but I'm the new guy and I'm not good at talking to people.

Tom

You're talking to me.

Steve

Yeah – guess I am.

Tom

What made your folks move here?

Steve takes a cookie. He is perfectly relaxed.

Steve

My grandma's family was from around here and we sort of inherited the family home – They said it's a new beginning for us... whatever that means.
(studying Tom) You know – it's kinda wierd - when I first met you I thought you were like a hundred - but now you seem younger

Tom

I'm 84 year young –today!! (blows his noisemaker) How old are you?

Steve

I'm 14.

Tom

14? – perfect! Old enough to carry on an intelligent conversation and young enough not to be boring.

How about having me for a friend? I can't go running with you but I could be here when you get back.

Steve

I don't know (laughing) I never had such an OLD friend before. (Tom blows his noisemaker again).. and you're kinda immature! But since it's your birthday I say yes!

We hear a whistle in the background.

Steve (cont.)

What was that?

Tom

That was mother calling me from the barn. Kittens must be here.

Steve follows Tom Stage right as lights fade out on the home and up on an older woman sitting next to an old wooden box in an old shed

Tom (Cont.)

Here we are mother. This is my friend Steve.
Steve – this is Faie. What’s the Kitten count?

Steve

Nice to meet you. How is the Cat doing?

Faie

Nice to meet you too, Steve. The cat is just
fine and we have four new kittens.

Tom

Boys or girls?

Faie

It’s a little early to tell but I believe we have
3 girls and one boy. Minnie, Winnie, Penny
and Tom. He was the kitten causing all the
trouble don’t you know.

Tom

Good for you little Tom – make your
presence known. (he blows his noisemaker)

Faie

Am I going to have to take that thing away
from you...?again!!?

Steve

I've never seen anything so little before. We always had our animals fixed. Why are they so wet?

Faie

Their mother just gave them a bath. She a good little mother – needed very little help from me but I think she was glad I was here.

Steve

You mean she just licked them clean....
Gross.

Faie and Tom laugh.

Tom

Mother - I think it's about time you took care of us men. All we had for breakfast was hot chocolate and cookies and this is my birthday!! My birthday breakfast is the best, Steve. I look forward to it every year – but with you here it will be an extra extravagant Birthday party!! (blows his noisemaker)

Faie

(laughing) Why you old silly. Come on father – I'll take care of you. Steve, do you need to call your folks?

Steve

Probably. Can I do it in a minute – I want to watch the kittens. Which one is Tom?

Faie

The one in the middle.

Steve

(Giggling) Oh yeah – it kinda looks like him.

Tom

Thanks a lot. Come inside when you're ready.

Steve

You know – I noticed that you have a big hole in your roof. I could probably fix it for you – if you want me too. To protect the kittens.

Tom

Great! Lets talk about it at breakfast.

Tom gives Faie a nod of the head indicating that they should leave Steve alone and go back to the house

Faie

Father, you didn't bore that boy with your "hot Chocolate" story did you.

Tom

Of Course not...he wasn't bored! (after a moment) Did you see his eyes?

Faie

Right away. I would have known that face anywhere. I was almost afraid to talk. It's been such a long time – but those eyes! Looking at him – I don't know - it was like Jack finally came home. Does he know?

Tom

No – and I think we should leave it like that for now. (He smiles at a new thought) Steve is home and he doesn't even know it. My best birthday gift ever! Life is funny.

Faie

Life is sweet.

Tom puts his arm around her shoulders as they go towards the house.

Steve

Boy little Tom, you are a funny looking kitten. It's pretty cool - you and Old Tom have the same birthday!

We watch Steve smiling as the light fades

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