

GET IN THE CAR

a new ten-minute play

By Andrea Lepcio

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Cast of Characters

Our Edith Twenty-six year old woman. She wears casual evening hat, gloves, purse circa 1956

Our Jackson Forty-four year old man. He wears loafers, no socks. Holds steering wheel.

Time and Setting

After

Dangerous Curve, Fireplace Road

Note: The characters are called "Our" because they are what we imagine as writer, performers and audience.

The accident can be mimed by the actors with "Our Jackson" holding the steering wheel. Alternatively, the car parts can be more elaborate. Perhaps a door is attached to him that he can lean on. Another door can be on stage for her to pick up when she gets in the car. Or, they could have a model car and model set of the curve that they manipulate. Perhaps projected by video. Or...whatever the presenters dream up.

At Rise: Our Edith stands by
the side of the road.

OUR EDITH

Papas tell girls, "Don't get in the car with him." Sometimes girls want to get in the car. Other times, they don't. Either way, often, - they get in.

Our Jackson enters holding a
steering wheel.

OUR JACKSON

Want to ride in my convertible Oldsmobile Coupe.

OUR EDITH

Mama told me not to ride with strangers.

OUR JACKSON

Jackson Pollock.

OUR EDITH

Edith Metzger.

OUR JACKSON

Now we're not strangers. Hop in.

OUR EDITH

That's not what happened. You had no need to charm me. And you didn't. I was your lover's friend. Here at her invitation.

OUR JACKSON

Visiting. Everyone's always visit. Ing.

OUR EDITH

The thing about being a house guest is that you want to follow proper etiquette. You want to be gracious. You want to be a pleasure. If at all possible, you want to do what your host asks of you.

OUR JACKSON

Get in the car, please.

OUR EDITH

When one visits a famous person, one is especially courteous. Whether or not one actually fawns, one certainly acts aware of the other person. Of their needs and mood. It's hard to feel more significant than the father of abstract expressionism. It's hard enough for a woman to feel more significant than a man. Imagine an unknown woman, known man. Abstract expressionism.

They see the lover, we don't.

OUR JACKSON
(To the unseen lover)

Get her in the car.

OUR EDITH
You wanted her in the car, so you needed me in the car, because she wasn't going to get in the car without me. You needed me to get in the car, so she would get in the car, so you could go home.

OUR JACKSON
Both of you. In.

Our Edith, resisting, moves toward Our Jackson as though pulled by the unseen friend.

OUR EDITH
(To her friend)
Couldn't we take a taxi? Or walk. It can't be that far. Maybe someone else could give us a ride? Can't we just let him go, meet him there? You go. I'll...

OUR JACKSON
Come on.

OUR EDITH
Someone's going to get hurt! That's what my Mama would say. She would say this is a situation that you can tell is going to end badly.

OUR JACKSON
That kind of situation, I had plenty of experience with. I never died before.

OUR EDITH
Were we all just hoping and praying? I must have been.

OUR JACKSON
Only so much is known or even knowable. People try to figure. The ones who knew me or thought they did. Those that only knew what they heard/thought. They can only imagine what happened. What I did or didn't do.

OUR EDITH
That's the thing. I did imagine. I saw you behind the wheel. However I or you or she got me to walk to the car, I was already imagining. As a child, I bit Herman Goering.

OUR JACKSON
I didn't know that.

OUR EDITH
You didn't know me.

OUR JACKSON
You were a stranger.

OUR EDITH
Ah, ah!

OUR JACKSON
You were her friend. Here to see her. Here to get out of
the City. Nothing to do with me.

OUR EDITH
I escaped Nazi Germany.

OUR JACKSON
I escaped Manhattan.

OUR EDITH
You broke the ice. Or so de Kooning said.

OUR JACKSON
I painted. And then I started selling paintings. I suppose, if
you read some biography, there would be quotes of what I said
before Bill said that. What I said after. Selling felt better
than not selling. Nothing felt better than painting. But
nothing felt particularly good. So I drank.

OUR EDITH
I managed a beauty salon. Women loved our shampoos. I knew how
to make every one of them feel special.

OUR JACKSON
You don't say.

OUR EDITH
In the evenings, I read philosophy and all kinds of stories. I
went to the ballet. Who knows what I might have done. Who I
might have given birth to. Loved.

OUR JACKSON
You might have gone on to break some ice yourself.

OUR EDITH
I didn't live to break the ice. You did.

OUR JACKSON
Don't you want to go home?

OUR EDITH

All the way back to my cold water flat or even my Mama and Papa's. Or Germany. When it's that late and life has already distressed you, sleep becomes the object. You were going to drive me to your home where I could pull the covers up tight. I knew I'd walk to the train station in the morning.

OUR JACKSON

We were almost there. So close.

OUR EDITH

Were we?

OUR JACKSON

We could've just as easily stopped there, instead of here.

OUR EDITH

Not just as easily, otherwise you would have.

OUR JACKSON

A car is a wondrous thing. To go fast, to pick up one's lover and her friend at the train station, to go to the store. To do nothing, but feel the power of the shaft turning shaft. That Oldsmobile was heavy. I had to push hard on the pedal to go. Heavy, but fast, rubber wheels skimming asphalt, top down, weight and sky.

OUR EDITH

We only see a small piece of life at any given time. A refraction of the whole.

OUR JACKSON

(Driving)

I can feel it.

OUR EDITH

Yet we have no choice, but to act anyway.

OUR JACKSON

People do things. That's what we do. Not always with the intent of doing them to someone else, or even ourselves. I had hands and feet and brains that painted and a mouth that drank.

OUR EDITH

It's odd to me, that all of your brothers were painters.

OUR JACKSON

Yeah.

OUR EDITH

You're the only Pollock most people know.

OUR JACKSON

I guess.

OUR EDITH

I'm footnoted in scholarly papers concerning your death.

OUR JACKSON

She lived to tell.

OUR EDITH

Your lover, my friend.

OUR JACKSON

Her memory ego-stained. Her ego memory-stained. Nothing is pure. She only knew what she knew and after the fact. She only remembered what she remembered, when she remembered it. And that memory and that ego likely mutated over the years. Memory used to mutate for me. And ego. The truth is very hard to know and impossible to hold on to.

OUR EDITH

What she said. What the authorities figured out. Means nothing to me. Memory is not my concern. My concern is loss.

OUR JACKSON

Death takes away more than life. It leaves people to make art of my destruction-

OUR EDITH

Our.

OUR JACKSON

Like that photographer. Jesum crow!! Still life. Two cans of Rheingold beer, a hubcap, my right loafer. Posed, rampantly obvious. The beer, the crash, the shoe. Front page of the Star.

OUR EDITH

Jackson Pollock, who in 1947 Williem de Kooning said broke the ice, died when his car crashed in East Hampton.

OUR JACKSON

Possible suicide. They said. They didn't know. They still don't.

OUR EDITH

August 11, 1956.

OUR JACKSON

I cooked steak. Argued. Drank. Drove. Crashed.

OUR EDITH

The father of abstract expressionism.

OUR JACKSON

It wasn't my first steak, argument, drink, drive, crash.

OUR EDITH

Also in the car with him were his young lover and his young stranger.

OUR JACKSON

Maybe that should be the rule. Don't let strangers get in your car.

OUR EDITH

That doesn't help me now.

OUR JACKSON

Get in the car.

OUR EDITH

The famous painter said or something to that effect. And though frightened, I got in. My legs carried me, my fingers and arms and friend helped. He was forty-four. I was twenty-six. He fathered abstract expressionism. I managed a beauty salon. He escaped Manhattan, I escaped Nazi Germany. He broke the ice. I bit Hermann Goering.

OUR JACKSON

These physicists measured some of my drip paintings, at different scales. The whole painting, and then a section, and then a dot. And, they proved, using arithmetic, that each painting was identical, at each of these scales. They said it had to do with the force of movement against the gravity against the paint. It's called fractal dimensionality. Nature's fingerprint. Which is exactly the way I experienced it.

OUR EDITH

It was supposed to be a parade and I liked parades. But instead there was this man with all these jewels stuck on him - medals I suppose. Papa said he was Goering. He walked by, waving, looking the crowd up and down. First my Papa, then my Mama, then me. He reached to pick me up. He was going to kiss me. You know politicians. He was ugly. I didn't want him to kiss me. So I bit him.

OUR JACKSON

Are you in?

Our Edith gets in the car behind the unseen girlfriend.

OUR EDITH

Yes. I still don't know why.

OUR JACKSON
(Relieved)

I'm finally driving.

OUR EDITH

So fast.

OUR JACKSON

Everyone knows this curve.

OUR EDITH

Do they?

OUR JACKSON

Fireplace Road. It's a dangerous curve.

OUR EDITH

Didn't you see it coming? I did.

OUR JACKSON

I'm holding the steering wheel, stepping on the accelerator, racing the curve.

OUR EDITH

I'm no backseat driver. You control the car. No one else.

OUR JACKSON

I hit the curve. It'll have to fly. Flying implies no collision. Until I hear the screaming and know. We will collide.

OUR EDITH

We will.

OUR JACKSON

Did I brake?

OUR EDITH

I don't know.

OUR JACKSON

If the car is in the air and you hit the brakes. What happens?

OUR EDITH

The wheels stop turning. I guess.

OUR JACKSON

We hit. What?

OUR EDITH

An embankment. Then we turned.

OUR JACKSON

Back again, across the asphalt. Then underbrush, under, sky over, still in the car, still in the car, we're all still in the car. There was no top.

OUR EDITH

No top.

OUR JACKSON

Four white oaks. I knew those trees. We hit.

OUR EDITH

Flipping end over end.

OUR JACKSON

I sailed out.

OUR EDITH

Yes.

OUR JACKSON

My lover too.

OUR EDITH

I did not sail.

OUR JACKSON

I hit a tree. A fifth oak tree.

OUR EDITH

I ended up in the trunk.

OUR JACKSON

How the trunk?

OUR EDITH

You think I know?

OUR JACKSON

Well, what? I'm trying to imagine.

OUR EDITH

Being a polite, well-raised young lady, I'm trying to help you.

OUR JACKSON

Thanks. Appreciate it.

OUR EDITH

The car...the hood must have opened. I must have fell...maybe I started to fly too, but the car caught me...

OUR JACKSON

You were in the backseat.

OUR EDITH

Let's think...if the hood opened, you'd think that would have blocked me.

OUR JACKSON

Pushed you back in the seat. But the car, you said, flipped.

OUR EDITH

So if I fell out of the back seat while the car was turning. I...must have fallen back into the trunk and then got smashed in when it landed. No one could see me.

(Pointing.)

You were there and she was there. But I was in the dark, hidden.

OUR JACKSON

You shouldn't have gotten in.

OUR EDITH

Escape sometimes ends in no escape.

OUR JACKSON

You're telling me.

OUR EDITH

Mama always said a car is freedom.

OUR JACKSON

Did she?

OUR EDITH

Freedom's her favorite word.

OUR JACKSON

Get in the car.

OUR EDITH

Get in the car.

CURTAIN