Theodore's Pants

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Theodore’s Pants

A one act play

CHARACTERS

THEODORE BUXLEY: A 42 year old man. He moves awkwardly and is dressed in khaki pants, a white button-down shirt, and a brown and orange sweater vest.

EDITH BUXLEY: 68, Theodore’s mother. She is overweight and eccentric looking. Crazy. Wears a brightly colored, tacky mumu or bathrobe.

EDWARD: Theodore’s goldfish and confidante. His fishbowl is kept on the kitchen table.

SETTING

The second floor of the Meadowview Apartment building in the town of Shaden, Maryland where Theodore has just moved out of his mother’s apartment for the first time, and into his own apartment (which is right next door). Theodore’s apartment is plain except for the necessary furniture (all beige) and a poster of Tom Hanks from the movie Big. Edith’s apartment is tacky, busy, full of knickknacks (Jesus figurines, a porcelain baby doll collection, etc)

TIME

The present

(Theodore sits in his apartment on a beige kitchen chair at a beige kitchen table, empty except for a goldfish bowl with Edward swimming inside of it. There is banging on the wall from the room next door—it is Edith. BANG BANG BANG

THEODORE

(Spoken slowly to his goldfish, Edward.) YES, MOTHER! Holy cow, Ed. What could she want now?? What else could she possibly want? You’re lucky, you know. You know that, Buddy? It’s the truth. You don’t have to worry about pillows to match your couch. And ironing—holy cow. I just can’t get the creases to line up, you know? I run the iron back and forth, back and forth, back and...and I think I’m making a straight line, you know, and I put them
on, and I’ve got a line wrapping around my leg like a...I don’t know, like a candy cane stripe or something. How am I supposed to find a woman with squiggles going down my pant legs like that? Mother wants grandkids, you know. Four of them, she said. All girls. Named Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, and Sophia. You know that show, right? Golden Girls? Mom likes Blanche best. She says that a lady has to get hers, even if it’s just so she doesn’t forget she’s a lady.

(BANG BANG BANG on the wall, 
   Edith’s voice, yelling but still faint)

EDITH
Theodore, you get down here so I can hem your pants!

(Theodore sighs, examines his sloppily ironed khakis, pauses thoughtfully)

THEODORE
I don’t see what’s so wrong with my pants as they are...I mean, just the other day, I was tying my scooter up to the bike rack at work and I was carrying all this stuff, I mean, I had my helmet and my wrist pads and (beat) oh, and a shopping list, because I told mother that I would buy the vegetables for the dinner salad that night and...a flyer in my hand from the man in the omelet suit, you know, that breakfast place that I walk by, with the red paint on the door, well he gave it to me, and so I...well, I took it and I had all this stuff and I guess I lost my grip on one of my wristpads and it fell on the ground. And I bent over to pick it up, and, Holy cow, Ed, there was a man next to me whose pants were so long, I couldn’t even see his shoes! (laughs loudly, inappropriately) Now tell me Ed, tell me why my pants can’t be long like that? (beat) I suppose that’s a good point, Ed. I might trip on them. And then I’d have a hole, probably in the knee. But you know what, Ed? Just the other day, I was in the back of the store with Archie, and he was telling me about his niece, she was sick you know? She had shingles. And this man walked by, he was pushing a dolly. With Baby wipes, big boxes of baby wipes. And his pants had holes in the knees—both knees! And nobody said anything to him, Edward. Not a word. But maybe it’s because he had a beard. I don’t think people give much trouble to men with beards. Mother says that beards are for lumberjacks and ZZ top. But I don’t know, Ed. You think I could look okay with a beard?

EDITH

(charges through the door wearing a pink and teal mumu w/ peacocks on it)

(Yelling shrilly) Theodore Graham Buxley! (under her breath) So help me, sweet Lord Jesus Christ my Savior and Father, before I sew his ankles to his
pants. (yelling again) Get your fanny in my sewing room!

(Theodore walks towards the doorway, and Mother points accusingly at his pantlegs.)

And pick those up so you’re not dragging them on the floor.

y-y-yes, mother.

THEODORE

(Edith storms out of Theodore’s apartment, Theodore waddles after her, holding his pantlegs up by the knees. He turns around and looks sheepishly at Edward.)

(We see them walk down the hallway and into another apartment, Ediths. She points at his pants, and he slides them off to reveal white cotton briefs and argyle socks pulled halfway up to his knees. His arms hang at his sides like an apes. She begins to measure and pin.)

EDITH

You were talking to that damn fish again, weren’t you. What you need is a woman, Theodore. A real fine one, just like your mother. That will keep you busy...yes, dear. What you need is some estrogen. You know, your father always used to say that a man falls in love with a woman who reminds him of his mother. Wise man, he was. Yes, before he was killed by that bus—(stops abruptly, realizing what she has said)

THEODORE

What did you say? (Edith looks at him, and then looks away, fidgeting) Mother, what did you say?

EDITH

Oh Theodore, your father. He was...

(Theodore’s face looks increasingly concerned, puzzled)

Your father he was...Your Father, Edward, he was killed by...
THEODORE
Oh Geeze, Mother!! Out with it!!

EDITH (blurting)
He was killed by the number 4 bus at the corner of 12th and Weston. The bus driver, well I guess he dropped his ice cream cone, plop right in his lap, and when he bent down to get it, he...you know, well he—

THEODORE
You told me he died in the war!

EDITH
No darling, you misunderstood. I said "On the four". Like the number 4 bus.

THEODORE
Mother, you said he was a POW!

EDITH
No, darling. DOA. I said he was DOA.

THEODORE
Mother, you told me they sent him home with a flag!

EDITH
No dear. "In a bag". He was just so terribly...mushed...

THEODORE
Geeze, Mother! And all this time, you let me think he fought in Nam—

EDITH
Oh honestly, Theodore. I told you that when you were 5. I didn’t expect you to remem--Stand still, would you?

(she is holding Theodore's pants up to his legs, one hand pressed against his waist, and the other smoothing out his inseam. This is odd and inappropriate, but not done in a sexual manner. Theodore fidgets. He is quiet.)

Not that any of that matters, now. Doesn’t change anything, does it? He's still dead, right? Here, Try these on (hands him the pinned pants)
THEODORE

Yes, mother. Still dead.

EDITH

I think I’ll take the waist in, too. Looks a little baggy.

THEODORE

You—you know mother, the other day I was in the back of the store with Archie, and he was telling me about his trip to Atlanta, you know, I told you he won that drawing they had down at the traveling agency, and he won a train ticket down to Atlanta and back? Well, he went, and he was telling me about...well, he was telling me all about it and then this man came up and Archie stopped his story about Atlanta because he had to ask this man if he would cover his shift for him on Friday, because Archie has this mole under his chin that he has to get removed in case of...cancer, I suppose. And well, this man, the one that’s going to cover for him, he was talking and he dropped his pen on the ground and he bent down to pick it up and...mother, I saw his underwear. His pants were falling down and I could see his underwear. And they were black (beat). And, well, I guess I was just thinking...well, I just thought that maybe...

EDITH

Stand still, Theodore.

THEODORE

Yeah, well I was just thinking that maybe we...don’t have to take the waist in. Maybe we could just leave...m-my pants a little bit baggy on the top. And maybe we could buy...well, maybe I was thinking that I’d pick out the black underwear—

EDITH

Theodore, quiet. Now, are you a hoodlum? Or a lumberjack? I don’t think so. Turn around so I can pin the back. And I don’t want to hear another word about these pants. Are we clear?

(she begins to pin the back)

THEODORE

Yes, Mother.

EDITH

Now take those off. And try not to knock out any of the pins.

(Theodore slowly slides them down to his ankles, wincing slightly)

Give them here.
(She sits down at her sewing machine and begins working on them immediately. Theodore is standing next to her in his underwear looking lost)

THEODORE

Mother...can we talk about...

EDITH

No, Theodore. No we cannot talk about Edward. I’m afraid I already said too much.

THEODORE

But he’s my father! And a man has a right to know how is father died.

EDITH

No, no, what’s done is done. And a boy shouldn’t cloud up his head thinking about that sort of--

THEODORE

God dammit, Mother. I’m not a boy! Not even close! And if I want my pants hemmed, I’ll hem them myself! Holy cow, Mother! Enough already. (he walks towards the door)

EDITH

Where are you going?

THEODORE

I’m going home, Mother.

(he storms out of the room in his underwear. We hear Edith’s door slam, and now Theodore is back in his apartment. He stands front and center with his arms crossed, pouting.)

Can you believe her, Edward? I mean, can you believe that? My father didn’t die fighting in Vietnam, Ed. He got hit by a bus. Smack. Mother said he was mush. I bet his bones were so broke, that his arms flopped around like they were stuffed with Jello. Can you picture that Ed? (beat) I can. (beat) I’ve got to get some sleep, buddy. You should sleep, too. Tomorrow, I’m getting up early to clean your bowl. You’re getting a little bit sloppy there. Kind of a mess. And then I’ve got to go to work. (beat) Did I tell you that Archie’s niece has shingles?...I guess I did. But I didn’t tell you about Archie, about his trip to Atlanta. You know, he won train tickets and he went down there for a whole week—can you imagine that? Holy
cow—no work, for a week...he said that there were women everywhere. With legs up to here, he said (gestures at his belly button), and sometimes when he came back at, night there would be candy on his pillow...doesn’t that just sound magical, Ed? Maybe someday we can go to Atlanta. Just you and me. I could get you a carrying case with a handle. And I’d hold you right up against the window so you could look out the train and watch the trees go by. I bet you’d like that, wouldn’t you? You never got to see the world, huh. Trapped in a bowl of water your whole life. You only know what’s given to you—there’s nothing to take, nothing to decide. Sometimes, Ed, sometimes you break my heart.

(Theodore sits quietly next to Edward for a moment, and then gets up and runs through a doorway to the bathroom. He turns the bathtub faucet on and checks the temperature, and walks back out into the kitchen. He picks up Edward’s bowl and walks towards the bathroom.)

THEODORE
I think we need some breathing room, Ed. You and me.

(Theodore pours the contents of Edwards bowl (this includes Edward) into the running bathwater. He stands there looking down at the fish for a moment, and then starts taking the rest of his clothes off, saving his socks and his glasses for last. Naked, he steps carefully into the tub and leans back.)

And maybe it’s time I grew a beard.

CURTAIN

Ashley Christopher