

WHAT'S TO BECOME OF ME?

by Tom Tift

GENRE: Drama

SYNOPSIS: An elderly nursing home resident receives a visit from her grown daughter, who is struggling to find a sense of direction in her empty-nest life.

DIRECTOR'S TIP: The actress playing Mom has one of those deceptively difficult tasks. She must remain genuinely still throughout the scene, her gaze set on one point on the horizon, and yet still seem to be "present." If she can pull this off, her stillness offers a captivating foil to the daughter's agitation.

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 2

TOPIC: Purpose

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Jeremiah 29:11

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Sermon

CHARACTERS:

MOM—elderly woman, confined to a wheelchair

DAUGHTER—mid-forties

PROPS: Wheelchair, blanket, satchel, child's growth chart

COSTUMES: Contemporary, appropriate to ages of characters

SOUND: One wireless mic

LIGHTING: General, warm, suggesting outdoors

SETTING: An outdoor courtyard at a nursing care facility

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A woman, perhaps in her forties, enters, pushing an elderly woman in a wheelchair. The woman in the wheel chair stares blankly ahead throughout the scene.

Here we are, Mom. Just what Delores promised—a sunny spot. *(Pause)* She seems nice. I can tell they're taking good care of you here. *(Slight pause)* I'm thankful for that. *(Pause)* You warm enough? *(She fidgets awkwardly with the blanket covering her mother's lap.)*

Oh, I can't wait to show you this. I couldn't believe it. *(She pulls, from a satchel, a rolled-up paper.)* When Kelly left for Florida State last month—and by the way, you're going to have to help me with this “empty nest” thing...Anyway, when Kelly left we decided to redo her room. Same thing we did for Mark his freshman year. You remember? *(Longer pause)*

So I met with a decorator and picked out carpet and colors—all that stuff. And then I went in to clean out the room and look what I found. *(She lets the paper unroll—it is a child's growth chart.)* It's her growth chart! The one you gave her when she was—what, two? Or maybe three? She's eighteen, and there it was; she'd never taken it down! *(She brings it closer for her mom to look at, spreading it across her lap.)*

Look, here she was at six. And seven. And I love this—that big growth spurt she had between eleven and twelve. Can you believe it!? She was the tallest kid in the sixth grade. And she hated it. *(Slight pause)* It's the last mark on the chart. *(Pause)*

I remember, when I was little, you just marked my height each year on the doorframe in my bedroom. In the house on Juniper Street, remember? You ever miss that old place, Mom? I do. That was a great house. *(Pause)* You okay, Mom? *(Teasingly)* You with me here? *(She begins to roll the growth chart up again.)*

Kelly's lucky, you know? To have this thing. When she gets to the place in life where I am, she'll have concrete evidence of a time in her life when she was growing. When she was becoming something. Oh, Mom, I've forgotten what it feels like. I get up every morning at the same time, eat the same breakfast, kiss the same husband goodbye, go to the same job, work with the same people. I go out to eat at the same restaurants, order the same things, attend the same church, sit in the same pew, say the same prayers.

(Pause, followed by a rueful chuckle) The other night I was watching one of those cable TV networks. I think it was “The Old and Not Very Good Black and White Movie Channel.” There was this really awful movie on, a melodrama. *(A gentle, teasing barb)* The kind of thing you used to like. And the sweet young thing has just gotten word that her fiancé is missing and presumed lost at sea. And she gazes at the heavens and clinches her fists and cries out with tears in her eyes, “What's to become of me?”