

THE EDWARD ALBEE PROJECT
(excerpt)

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

George	A squarish man in his early 40's. Not too tall, not too fat. Average.
Laura	George's wife. A classic beauty in her late 30's, but not looking a day over 30.
Tony	George's best-friend. An athletic man, vibrant, young-spirited. In his late 30's.
Cherie	Tony's wife. A seductive woman in her early 30's. Asian-American.
Dr. Koffi	George and Laura's therapist. An active man in his 30's. African-American.

TIME AND PLACE
Montauk, New York
Now

At rise: A grand living room
with a view of the ocean.
The ocean waves are heard
but not seen.

It is late in the afternoon;
the sun is hidden behind
gray clouds, casting shadows
inside the house.

LAURA sits rocking on a
chair. Across the room,
GEORGE, a couple of years
older than Laura, reads the
Sunday newspaper.

It is quiet between them.
From time to time, they
drink tea. George slurps,
annoying Laura.

LAURA

I guess the problem is that you bore me, George.

GEORGE

I'm glad to hear that, my dear.

LAURA

I mean, answer me this. When was the last time we did something spontaneous?

GEORGE

You said "spontaneous" did not do me well.

LAURA

I was mistaken.

GEORGE

Well, what would you like me to do?

LAURA

Honey, if I told you what to do and you did it, that wouldn't be spontaneous. I'm bringing this up tomorrow with Dr. Koffi. I think we're up to something critical.

GEORGE

You mean *you* are up to something critical.

LAURA

We, my dear, need some spontaneity in our lives. We, my dear, need to get out of this rut. What if we moved?

GEORGE

Again?

LAURA

Just think about it for a moment. Out of the blue—no planning—let's just sell this house and—

GEORGE

Move where?

LAURA

Anywhere!

GEORGE

I happen to like where we live.

LAURA

But we are not happy here. Couldn't we change, even if it's a little bit? Just enough to feel something *new* in our lives. For crying out loud, I'm feeling *frigid* George.

GEORGE

I hope you bring *that* up with Dr. Koffi.

LAURA

I'm sorry, what was that, honey?

GEORGE

You heard me.

LAURA

If my memory recalls correctly, and it usually *does*, I'm not the one with the sexual dysfunctions, George. If we're to bring anything up with Dr. Koffi, I think it should be *your* inability to bring *your* thing up...

GEORGE

Now that's enough.

LAURA

(*mocking.*)

Oh, not tonight, dear. I'm too tired. It's been a long day.

GEORGE

Stop it.

LAURA

What about it's been a long *year*? Even when you try your best, rather, when *I* attempt to do *my* best, I feel nothing. You don't do anything to me at all George; your desire and wanton add up to zilch. I feel more pleasure rocking on this chair—

GEORGE

Honey!

(pause.)

Would you like some more tea?

LAURA

I'd like some *sex* George. I'd like you to pay some attention to me. I have *needs*, my dear; not great ones, but nevertheless *vital*. I think it's not too much to ask, for you to touch your wife—now is it?

GEORGE

Of course not. Maybe later tonight.

LAURA

How about right now?

GEORGE

I said later.

George exits with the cups of tea. Laura rocks faster on her chair.

LAURA

How did this happen to us? When did we become so complacent? I've been wondering lately when we did this to ourselves. It isn't normal, I believe, to feel so sedated.

GEORGE

(off-stage)

I love you Laura.

LAURA

Blah-blah-blah.

George enters with two cups of tea. He sits down again and resumes his reading.

GEORGE

You're being impossible today. Did you take your medication?

LAURA

I don't want my medication! I want you to put your goddamn newspaper down and talk to me. Look at me George. Just look at me! What are you looking at?

GEORGE

You told me to look at you.

LAURA

I said: *what* are you looking at?

GEORGE

Why, my wife, of course. That's who I'm looking at.

LAURA

And do you love that person?

GEORGE

Certainly.

LAURA

Tell her more.

GEORGE

I love my wife, but she's losing her bearings, you see. She wants to run away from wherever she is, forgetting that we returned to our hometown last year, just to humor her. She also forgets that she *spontaneously* decided to live near the ocean, and that her husband had to manage moving for the second time within the same year just out of a *whim*. The thing is: she keeps running away from *herself*, no matter what city she lives in. To her, it seems easier to hold on to her grief than to enjoy herself. But I forgive my wife, especially when she blames me for everything that's been wrong in her life!

LAURA

Oh, dear... George, is that true?

GEORGE

Everything besides the fact that I love you.

LAURA

You bastard! You think you know me so well, George, but I have you nailed down to a T. To a T, I tell you, to a T. Do you want to know what your problem is?

GEORGE

Do I?

LAURA

You do. You always want to know what the problem is because God *forbid* there were no problems in your life. If there were no problems in your life, you'd have to pay attention to

yourself, or even worse, your wife. So even though there is so much to correct within ourselves, it is much *easier* to focus on problems which aren't your own. That's your problem George. You've been avoiding yourself—

GEORGE

I've been avoiding myself?

LAURA

And as someone who does love you, because I *do* in fact, love you, I want to help you *enjoy* your marriage so you can *be* with me!

GEORGE

But where should we do all of *that*, my dear? New York? Houston? Montauk?

LAURA

Anywhere where you can feel better and *fuck* me. All I want is for you to—George... George, are you even listening to me? *George?*

George puts his paper down.

LAURA

What's wrong? It seems like you've seen a ghost.

GEORGE

Laura... Edward's dead.

LAURA

What?

GEORGE

Here, look.

George gives Laura the paper.

LAURA

This is horrible.

The phone rings. George answers.

GEORGE

Hello?

LAURA

Who is it?

GEORGE

It's Tony. *Yes, we read the paper. We know it's horrible.*

LAURA

Tell him we need to do something about this.

GEORGE

We saw him last month at the theater. I can't believe that—

LAURA

George, ask him if he's doing anything about it?

GEORGE

He was so careful about his health—

LAURA

Ask him what we should do?

GEORGE

Hold on. Would you just let me talk?

LAURA

Give me the phone.

GEORGE

Just hold on one more minute—

LAURA

I want to talk to him!

GEORGE

Goddamn it! *Tony, we'll call you later.*

George hangs up the phone.

LAURA

Now why did you do that?

GEORGE

Why do I do anything, Laura? Because of you—*of you!*

LAURA

Now calm down, mister.

GEORGE

Please go take your medication.

LAURA

Oh, wouldn't you like that?! To have me all sedated, half dead, when I already feel dead inside! George, we have to do something about our marriage or I'm gonna' just... Just...

GEORGE

Just what?

LAURA

Kill you! (*beat.*) Or something like that.

GEORGE

I'm deader than Edward.

LAURA

That's not funny.

GEORGE

I'm not trying to be funny. I get sick of the sight of you. You make me want to gauge my eyes out. You make me want to chop my ears off. Why can't you be still?

LAURA

You want me to *still*? No way, honey, not this baby. I am here today, and I *will* be here tomorrow, and I will demand, for us to live a better life, George. I, unlike you, have not given up on life. I want us to stay on track and do the right thing. And when we're ninety and decrepit, I want us to look back at our lives and say to ourselves, now wasn't that a good run?

GEORGE

We've had a good run.

LAURA

We're still going, George.

GEORGE

What I'm saying is that it's been good so far.

LAURA

I'm not saying it hasn't.

GEORGE

No, you HAVEN'T? Laura, what exactly do you think you're complaining about when we go to therapy? When you complain about our sex life, our home, my career, *your family*, your *destiny*! Haven't you been saying that it has NOT been good enough? That no matter how much we've done and accomplished, we are just not done?

LAURA

We aren't. We have so much time ahead of us.

GEORGE

Too much I'm afraid.

LAURA

What if we die, George? What if we die just like him?

SCENE 2

Dr. Koffi's counseling room. Laura and George lie on two separate couches. DR. KOFFI sits on a chair between them, taking notes.

GEORGE

I don't want to die, Dr. Koffi. I didn't even realize it could happen to me! I could be gone any moment—just like that.

LAURA

He had an anxiety attack last night.

GEORGE

It was more than that—a panic attack! I'm suddenly very conscious about myself, but in an annoying, almost paranoid way.

LAURA

Schizophrenic.

GEORGE

Thanks dear.

LAURA

I'm just trying to help.

GEORGE

You aren't.

LAURA

It was *my* idea that we do something about it.

GEORGE

There is nothing we can do. Edward was our friend, not family. It's not up to us—

LAURA

He was very important to you.

GEORGE

Don't push me Laura.

LAURA

What?

GEORGE

You obviously want me to do something about it, but you're thinking about them.

LAURA

So what if I am?

GEORGE

This is about Edward!

LAURA

But you seem more upset that *he's* dead than *they're* dead.

GEORGE

Do you think I'm not upset that they're dead?

LAURA

They have names, my dear. *They* were our daughters, George. And as you said, Edward was just a *friend*, yet you seem to be more upset that *he's* dead—

GEORGE

They've been dead for a year now.

LAURA

Eleven months.

GEORGE

Almost a year.

LAURA

Do you hear that, Dr. Koffi? Listen to him. So cold. So distant. He has completely removed himself from the problem as if it didn't affect him at all. But I know it does. *I know he's upset.*

GEORGE

And how's that?

LAURA

Do you really want to know?

GEORGE

Oh, don't bring that up.

LAURA

Well, I certainly want something *up*, my dear. Dr. Koffi, George has sexual dysfunctions.

GEORGE

Laura!

LAURA

He can't get it up and he hasn't touched me for over a year.

GEORGE

Now that's enough.

LAURA

No—it's not. Do you wanna' know why you're so upset that Edward's dead?

GEORGE

Oh please...

LAURA

He's upset that Edward's dead because he looked up to him. Edward was cantankerous, yet despite his fuzzy mood, he was a true gentleman, free of this WASPY culture we grew up in. He genuinely opened himself up to life. Edward knew what he wanted and he found out how to get it, unlike George here, who has completely given up on life barely reaching his forties! Ever since we've known him, Edward kept on living the most plentiful life he could, while George stayed in the back row, listening to his stories and accomplishments in awe, admiring that he was so close to greatness, but envying that he couldn't be great himself.

GEORGE

Envyng?

LAURA

But that's OK! I envied him too. Edward was a happy man. Sure he had problems, God knows we *all* have problems, but he didn't get stuck in them, my dear.

GEORGE

Then why didn't you marry *him*?

LAURA

Because I fell in love with *you*, you twit. I had to fight with my mother during the three years we dated. She never really wanted me to marry you—

GEORGE

Your mother was a bitch.

LAURA

Watch your mouth.

GEORGE

And your father—

LAURA

Don't bring my father up in this conversation. We will *not* talk about my father.

GEORGE

Of course not, because we never do. Because you blame him—

LAURA

It was his fault.

GEORGE

It was no one's fault.

LAURA

Well, someone has to be held responsible.

GEORGE

It was an accident.

LAURA

He shouldn't have put them in the car if he was drunk.

GEORGE

It wasn't his fault. The other car—

LAURA

That's what *mother* says, that's what *father* says, but I'm sure it was his fault. I mean, he didn't even tell them to put their seatbelts on. They were jumping up and down the front seat when... WHEN THAT SON OF A BITCH RAN INTO MY BABIES AND TOOK THEM AWAY FROM ME! Christ... What are we going to do with our lives, Dr. Koffi? I'm too old to have more children. Even if I could, Mr. Limpy here can't get it up anymore!

GEORGE

Laura...

LAURA

I don't want to die alone! What if Mr. Limpy—

GEORGE

Would you stop calling me that?

LAURA

What if *Mr. Limpy* just drops dead on me one day and suddenly I have to deal with everything by myself? With no children, no family I could go to, I'd be alone. All alone!

GEORGE

I'm not going to die.

LAURA

Please, you have one foot in the grave already.

GEORGE

I resent that.

LAURA

You're going to die and I'm going to live and then I'll be alone, alone, alone!

GEORGE

She hasn't been taking her medications these days.

LAURA

I don't want to be sedated anymore. I want to be alive.

GEORGE

The pills are good for you.

LAURA

So says the quack. No offense.

DR. KOFFI

What will you two do about this?

GEORGE

About what?

DR. KOFFI

About Edward.

GEORGE

Nothing.

LAURA

No. Not nothing. We're going to the wake tomorrow.

DR. KOFFI

And then what?

LAURA

Tony wants to build a library in his name.

GEORGE

I don't think that's a good idea.

LAURA

I think it's a wonderful idea. We have nothing better to do with our time.

GEORGE

We could buy you a vibrator.

LAURA

George! I don't want a vibrator. I need *you* to touch me!

GEORGE

You see doctor? Laura is *desperate* to have sex. I think she even desires to have another child. But I'm too old. I'm too tired. I couldn't stand the idea of doing it all over again.

LAURA

Again? You barely did anything when they were born.

GEORGE

You never say anything nice about me.

LAURA

Oh, suddenly you want the niceties of life?

GEORGE

Yes, I would like for our lives to be nice.

LAURA

Weren't you the one who said our lives were nice *already*?

GEORGE

Not anymore. What I have figured out, doctor, is that Laura was this way even *before* they died. Last night, I thought about our days in love, which are always so vivid in my mind, full of innocence and joy, and the early years of our marriage, in which I did *not* have problems having sex with her. And it came to me: even then, during the early years of our relationship, **THIS** is what I have not been able to bear from Laura. This incessant need for perfection and order in our lives. I thought she'd get over it with the years. Maybe time would give her the wisdom to understand that there is no perfect order. I hoped that she'd learn to enjoy her life, but everything just got worse! Whenever things didn't go her way, everything became a fucking crime to humanity! Little does she know that disasters are part of our humanity, that death comes from left field, and that life is a daily gift.

LAURA

Life is for free, honey.

GEORGE

Tell that to your non-functioning uterus.

DR. KOFFI

George, why won't you help build this library?

GEORGE

First of all, it's all talk. No one has really asked me to do it yet.

LAURA

Don't worry. They will.

DR. KOFFI

I happen to be a big fan of his work.

LAURA

Edward was an amazing writer. He deserves the recognition. Besides, he's helped make this town a much livelier place.

GEORGE

More expensive you mean. But that's not the point. The point is: I loved him. He was a good friend. But I think you're right Laura, maybe it's time for us to start dealing with ourselves. What are we going to do wasting our time with a library? Maybe we should move again—

LAURA

What? Don't run away from this too. Tony is your friend. He needs your help. And you should do this for Edward. He deserves it, George. You need to help build this library—

GEORGE

I don't need to do anything.

LAURA

Why? Is it going to depress you to do it? Or will it make you jealous that people like Tony will build a memorial for Edward, but not for you?

GEORGE

Laura, we always do what you want. We've moved when you've wanted. Now I want to move.

LAURA

No George. No more moving.

GEORGE

You are so fickle. You were the one who wanted to move yesterday.

LAURA

Things changed since then.

GEORGE

How can you be so selfish?

DR. KOFFI

I'm sorry to interrupt you, but if I may, I'd like to go to Edward's wake with you two tomorrow.

GEORGE

I beg your pardon?

DR. KOFFI

Well... His work has always touched me, so I'd like to have a chance to thank him for that.

GEORGE

Wouldn't that be weird? To have our shrink at his wake?

DR. KOFFI

I don't think so. We often run into each other in public and it's not weird then, is it?

GEORGE

But they're gonna' think we can't deal with this alone.

LAURA

Don't be silly, George. Dr. Koffi, of course you can come.

GEORGE

What would we say? "We're sorry for the loss... Yes, he is our therapist..." No, I don't think so. I'm sorry, Dr. Koffi, but you can't.

LAURA

Of course he can. George, why don't you go to the wake by yourself? Dr. Koffi will come with me.

GEORGE

Why are we arguing this? We can say no to him.

LAURA

Our problems have nothing to do with the quack being there. No offense.

DR. KOFFI

Look at that. Time is up.

THIS PLAY HAS BEEN ABANDONED.

**BUT, IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ THE REST, PLEASE EMAIL ME AT
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THANKS!