

Lights up on ASHLEIGH, standing on the side of the road. She is the picture of a perfectly put-together young lady, save for the palpable anxiety that we can see is bubbling inside her; even so, she has a smile plastered on her face. She waves frantically at an approaching car.

ASHLEIGH: Hi excuse me?!? Hi!! (Sound of the car slowing down and pulling up to her.) Hi, um. (She makes a gesture for "please roll down your window." Sound of the window being rolled down. With a big smile, like the gracious hostess.) Hiiii. Thank you so much for stopping. I'm so sorry to bother you, I'm just having a little bit of a problem, I'd love your help, I'm so sorry, I never do this, it's just... kind of an emergency—oh no don't worry, it's not the end of the world or anything, I'm fine it's just—oh, this is so embarrassing— (She chokes on her words; she is suddenly emotional.) —Oh it's just so hard to ask for help! (Beat. She collects herself quickly.) I'm sorry. I don't know what got into me. Excuse me. So: thank you so much for stopping here's the thing: I just, as I was driving—I'm going over to my mother's house—(Points to her car in the distance.)—yup that's me, right over there, the Prius, uh-huh—so, as I was driving, I just...

Accidentally killed my husband. (Grimaces.) I know, it's so embarrassing, I just— (Suddenly remembers something.) Oh! My gosh, I can't believe it, I forgot to introduce myself, I'm so sorry, how rude. (Sticking out her hand.) I'm Ashleigh, what's your name? Susan? That's my mother's name! No I

am not kidding, it really is! And what's your name? Jerry? That's my brother's name! No don't get too excited Jerry I was kidding that time. (Laughs loudly at her own joke.) So anyway: I just killed my husband, and I was wondering if you guys—

—Oh, well that's a good question, I'm sorry, I should've explained that right away: what happened was, we were driving over to my mother's house—I said that—and we were just sort of joking around, and he was, you know, joshing with me about how bad a driver I am, and I got kind of peeved, 'cause—well, I don't know why, I'm usually very even-tempered, but things have been sort of tough lately— (Gets sort of emotional again, tries not to let it show.) —and anyway I got sort of peeved, and I said: "Well if you hate the way I drive so much why don't you get out of the car?" and he said "Maybe I will" and I said, "Good, then do that," and I pulled over, and he got out, and then, as a joke, sort of, I sort of pretended to like you know, hit him with the car, but here's the thing I actually *am* a pretty bad driver, and here's the thing I *did* hit him, and I definitely didn't *mean* to, but then I thought, Well hey, people get hit by cars all the time, I didn't hit him that hard, I'm sure I didn't do any serious damage, but here's the thing: I did. (Grimaces.) Yeeeeeah. You know it's the sort of thing that could happen to anyone, but when it happens to you, you're like AAAAAAH WHAT DO I DO?!?!?!? You know? So what I'm wondering is: would you guys mind if I just kind of loaded him into your backseat, and we could just drive him over to the hospital real quick? It'll just be real quick—I have to be somewhere myself in half an hour—

I'm sorry?

Oh, well I can't very well put him in *my* backseat, I've got both the kids back there.

Yeeeah, I do, two little ones. Little Susan and Little Jerry! No just kidding those aren't their names. But that reminds me actually—and I hate to be needy—but do you guys have any babysitting experience? I'm so sorry I hate to be needy but as I said things *have* been sort of tough lately, and—

(Sound of the car pulling away.)

Oh no, wait what? Oh no no no wait, don't—what are you—*what?!*

(Sound of the car retreating into the distance. ASHLEIGH looks after the car, forlorn. After a few moments, to herself.)

I guess that's what I get for asking for help.

END OF PLAY

36 RUMSON ROAD

Barbara Wiechmann

36 Rumson Road premiered at Home for Contemporary Theatre and Art in New York City as part of their Midnight Madness Festival in 1991. It was directed by the author with the following cast:

JONI Michael Houston
SONIA Jeanne Dorsey