

SMALL THINGS, EVERY DAY, by Tom Smith

Characters: Patricia 70
Stephanie 48, Patricia's daughter
Hallie 46, Patricia's daughter

Time/Place: Today. Patricia's condominium in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Running time: 80 minutes.

Patricia's husband Ron, who lives with Alzheimer's, can no longer take care of himself and has been placed in a Memory Care unit at a local senior facility. The family deals with this difficult transition and Ron's continual decline.

Just as a new normal seems to have been established, the family discovers that Ron has begun an intimate relationship with another patient. While Stephanie and Hallie are shocked and hurt by their father's betrayal, Patricia has a much different reaction, due largely to a long-held family secret.

Small Things, Every Day

Scene 12

The next day at Patricia's condo. Wine in two glasses. Stephanie pacing, a third glass in her hand. Hallie bursts in.

HALLIE

What is it? Why wouldn't you tell me on the phone? Is he hurt? Oh, God, is he—

STEPHANIE

He's fine! Calm down, Dad's fine. Sort of.

HALLIE

Why is there wine?

STEPHANIE

(Hands her a glass.)

You're going to want it.

HALLIE

(Putting it down.)

Just tell me why I'm here. I'm tired and— Where's Mom?

STEPHANIE

Working a funeral. She was supposed to be back a half hour ago.

HALLIE

So what is it?

STEPHANIE

We should wait. I don't want her thinking that everyone else knew before she did.

HALLIE

Steph, tell me! It's obviously about Dad.
Now you're pissing me off!

STEPHANIE

Ok. Just don't tell Mom you already know.

HALLIE

Know what? What's going on?

STEPHANIE

I got a call from Pacifica. There was a complaint lodged against Dad.

HALLIE

A complaint? About what? Mandy?

STEPHANIE

I wish.
I guess, for the past month or so, Dad's been having an affair with another resident.

HALLIE

Wait, what!?!

STEPHANIE

Carol somebody. She's in the choir. I think you met her once. She lives there with her sister.

HALLIE

Dad's having an affair? Like a sexual affair?

STEPHANIE

Yes.

HALLIE

How is that even possible?

STEPHANIE

I keep telling you, his body's fine.

HALLIE

Still, he's 70 years old!

STEPHANIE

Not in his mind. Hell, I'm 21.

HALLIE

How can he do this? To Mom?

STEPHANIE

I don't know. I mean, I'm telling myself this isn't him. For all we know he could be thinking that Carol is Mom. Or that he isn't even married.

HALLIE

Tell him to stop it! Immediately!
Jesus, we can't tell Mom about this, Steph. It'll kill her.

STEPHANIE

I went over last night. I asked him about Carol.

HALLIE

And...? What did he say?

STEPHANIE

He says he loves her. She's his girlfriend.

HALLIE

Oh, that's messed up...! He doesn't know what he's saying.

STEPHANIE

It's what he believes.

HALLIE

Did you tell him he was already married? That he needs to stop screwing other women?
(Tears well up in Stephanie's eyes.)
What?

STEPHANIE

He thought I was a nurse.

HALLIE

So what? He's thought that before.

STEPHANIE

No, he thought I was a nurse the entire time I was there.

HALLIE

So he was on one of his "outs."

STEPHANIE

The entire time, Hallie. He had no awareness that I was his daughter, not even for a moment. It's never been like that before. He's always come back. I was like a stranger to him.

HALLIE

Good days and bad days, Steph. Today's probably different. Two seconds after you left it could have been different.

STEPHANIE

But this was the first time he didn't—

HALLIE

This is about what Dad's doing to Mom, Steph, it's not about you! What the hell are we going to tell her?

STEPHANIE

Jesus, Hallie! You can't even give me any—

HALLIE

Hurt feelings, Steph, don't stack up against a forty-nine year marriage falling apart. God, what a prick! Especially if he knows what he's doing.

STEPHANIE

I don't think he does. Not really.

HALLIE

Why did they call you?

STEPHANIE

Carol's family met with June. She's the Facility Manager at Pacifica. They want to us to separate Dad and Carol. Carol's family said Dad's taking advantage of her.

HALLIE

Advantage? What, like, he's raping her?

STEPHANIE

That's not what they said, but it sort of felt like that.

HALLIE

What the— Jesus Christ!

STEPHANIE

They know nothing's being done against anyone's will. Carol says she's in love with Dad. And when June asked her about having sex with him, Carol said she did it because she wanted to.

HALLIE

So what's their beef? I understand that it's messed up, but if Carol and Dad want to screw each other there's nothing anyone can really do about it, right? I mean, they're both adults.

STEPHANIE

But neither one is all there. That's the concern. And Carol's family is very conservative. They don't want her having sex with anyone.

HALLIE

I don't want them having sex either. But what do they expect us to do about it?

STEPHANIE

They asked me to move Dad to another facility.

HALLIE

Pacifica said this, or—

STEPHANIE

Carol's family.

HALLIE

Screw them! We just got him in there. He was on that waiting list for— Absolutely not!

STEPHANIE

I know, I know!

HALLIE

No, screw them! They need to quit blaming Dad and tell their whore mother to keep her legs closed.

STEPHANIE

Hallie!

HALLIE

I'm sorry, but who are they to demand anything?

STEPHANIE

I agree with you. And Pacifica has no rules about it, so we don't have to do anything. Except, maybe, remind Dad he's already married.

HALLIE

He's equally to blame; I'm not saying he isn't. But, c'mon... They need to focus on their own damn family. Move Carol out of there.

(Grabs her wine.)

You weren't kidding I'd want this.

(Guzzles some down.)

What're we going to tell Mom?

(Stephanie throws her hands up.)

I don't think we should tell her anything.

STEPHANIE

We have to, Hallie.

HALLIE

No we don't.

STEPHANIE

Of course we do!

HALLIE

Why? And ruin her life? It'll be 50 years next month...

STEPHANIE

She'll find out. And don't you think she deserves to know?

HALLIE

No! Would you want to? If this was happening to you?

STEPHANIE

Probably not.

HALLIE

So why say anything?

STEPHANIE

Because it's this thing now. Carol's family is involved. What if Mom goes over and they confront her?

HALLIE

Like that's gonna happen!

STEPHANIE

It's not that big a place. I see the same families there all the time.

HALLIE

Go talk to Dad again. I'll go with you. We'll tell him to knock it the hell off and end things with Carol. We don't tell Mom. Problem solved.

STEPHANIE

He's not going to listen.

HALLIE

He has no choice: we're in charge! We took away his driver's license when it was time. We put him in Memory Care. We know what's best for him.

STEPHANIE

Do we? He's not the same person who moved in there seven months ago.

HALLIE

He's unable to make right choices, Steph. He's like a child. And it's our job now to parent him. He doesn't get a say in—

PATRICIA

(Entering.)

My God, there were a lot of people there. We just got through cleaning up.

STEPHANIE

Mom.

PATRICIA

They wouldn't leave. All the food was gone an hour ago; we quit refilling the iced tea. Bernadette finally had to ask them to leave.

(Noticing the wine.)

Why are you girls drinking?

HALLIE

It's just wine.

PATRICIA

It's not even four o'clock. Hallie, what are you doing here?

HALLIE

Steph asked me to come over after work.

PATRICIA

Why? What's this all about?

HALLIE

Nothing. As it turns out.

PATRICIA

That's not what Stephanie said on the phone.

(To Stephanie.)

You needed to talk about something important. I assume it's about your father?

STEPHANIE

Yes. I mean... It's nothing now.

PATRICIA

Then why were you so upset?

STEPHANIE

I don't know.

(Looks at Hallie for help.)

HALLIE

Steph went over to see Dad and he didn't recognize her. She got freaked out by it. That's all.

PATRICIA

One of his "outs?"

STEPHANIE

Yeah.

PATRICIA

Nothing any of us can do about that.

HALLIE

That's what I said.

STEPHANIE

Mom? Sit down.

Steph! What are you doing?
HALLIE

I have to, Hallie.
STEPHANIE

No you don't!
HALLIE

Yes, I do.
STEPHANIE

What's going on. Is your father ok?
PATRICIA

He's fine.
HALLIE

Then what?
PATRICIA

I got a call from Pacifica.
STEPHANIE

Steph! Shut up!
HALLIE

There was a complaint lodged against Dad.
STEPHANIE

What did he do?
PATRICIA

I don't know if I should say because it's going to upset you.
STEPHANIE

Jesus, Steph! Can't you just—
HALLIE

And I don't want to hurt you.
STEPHANIE

Someone tell me what the hell is going on!
PATRICIA

STEPHANIE

(Looking to Hallie for help.)

I can't do it.

HALLIE

Jesus Christ!

Dad's having an affair. With another Memory Care patient. Her family complained about it.

STEPHANIE

I found out yesterday. I went over to talk to him right away. It's obvious he doesn't know what he's doing. He didn't even know who I was. Maybe he needs different meds or something because he wasn't himself!

HALLIE

We didn't want to say anything. I'm still not sure why we did.

STEPHANIE

I couldn't look at her, Hallie, pretending like—

HALLIE

We agreed not to tell her! Two seconds ago!

STEPHANIE

I'm not a good liar, Hallie. Like you!

HALLIE

What the hell does that mean?

STEPHANIE

You lie about things all the time and don't even think twice!

HALLIE

Knowing when to keep my mouth shut is not lying.

STEPHANIE

It is too! If someone deserves to—

HALLIE

God, Steph, you're so full of—

PATRICIA

Shut up! Shut the hell up, both of you! I'm sick of your bickering.

(Beat.)

I already know about Carol and your father.

STEPHANIE

What?

HALLIE

You do?

PATRICIA

Yes.

And I approve.

(If an intermission is preferred, the lights fade to black. If not, the action is continuous into the next scene.)