

# STRING OF LIGHTS

*By Terry Earp*

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PUBLISHED BY

**ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING**  
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**STORY OF THE PLAY**

This is the story of two displaced people; Esther, an escapee from a nursing home, and Nathan, a young runaway who is fresh to the streets. Esther breaks into an apartment and feeds Nathan a meal he will never forget. Together they create memories that will take Esther into eternity and Nathan back home. About 30 minutes.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(1 w, 1 f)*

ESTHER PINSKY: An elderly woman.

NATHAN: A young boy about twelve. *(Although written for a boy, the role can be played by a girl.)*

**SCENES**

An alley.

A studio apartment.

**TIME**

The present. Late afternoon in winter.

**SETTING**

The setting for Scene 1 is an alley with a large garbage can. Scene 2 takes place in a studio apartment. It is simply furnished with the exception of a large number of photographs of people.

**STRING OF LIGHTS  
SCENE 1**

*(AT RISE: NATHAN is rummaging through a garbage can for food. HE occasionally finds something and takes a bite. ESTHER, an elderly woman holding two grocery bags, is watching him.)*

ESTHER: Dining out?

*(Startled, NATHAN jumps and makes a sound which in turn startles ESTHER causing her to drop groceries.)*

NATHAN: Geez, lady! Do you always go around sneaking up on people?

ESTHER: Honey, at my age I don't sneak ... I only squeak. I'm surprised you didn't hear me. Guess it's hard to hear things when your head's caught up in garbage.

NATHAN: I dropped some money in here.

ESTHER: Really? Well, while you're at it, see if you can find my American Express card in there.

NATHAN: Leave me alone.

ESTHER: You're new around here.

NATHAN: What makes you think that?

ESTHER: Your choice of garbage cans. There's a much better restaurant down the street.

NATHAN: I'm not eating this junk. I'm getting my money out.

ESTHER: *(Kicking it.)* That sure is a strange looking automatic teller machine. *(Picking up groceries.)* How about some help with these groceries since you're the one who scared me and made me spill them?

NATHAN: I'm the one who scared you?

ESTHER: You're real jumpy for a kid. Who's after you?

NATHAN: No one's after me.

*(NATHAN picks up cans of food though it's been a long while since he had any. He tries to stick a package in his jacket and ESTHER sees him.)*

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ESTHER: You don't need to steal food from me, son. If you'll help me carry these bags home, I'll fix you a nice dinner.

NATHAN: Thanks lady, but ... I've got plans.

ESTHER: Don't worry; I'm not going to turn you in.

NATHAN: I bet.

ESTHER: No, I mean it. I won't turn you in, if you won't turn me in.

NATHAN: Turn you in? What did you do?

ESTHER: I escaped. Busted out. Flew the coop.

NATHAN: From jail?

ESTHER: Worse. I was in a nursing home.

NATHAN: Nursing home? Are you sick?

ESTHER: Only if you consider old age a disease.

NATHAN: You look fine to me.

ESTHER: I am fine, very fine. But there's only one thing that keeps me from feeling great.

NATHAN: What's that?

ESTHER: Someone to have dinner with me. How about it?

NATHAN: (*Suspiciously.*) I don't know. Why would you want to feed me?

ESTHER: Because I don't want to eat alone tonight. Besides it sounds like your stomach is 6.1 on the Richter scale.

NATHAN: But ... you're a stranger.

ESTHER: True, and it's smart of you to be suspicious. I don't blame you one bit for being scared. I could be dangerous.

NATHAN: Yeah, well maybe I could be the one who's dangerous.

ESTHER: That's true. Are you planning to rob me and beat me up?

NATHAN: Of course not.

ESTHER: Have you posed for any of those "most wanted" pictures down at the post office?

NATHAN: No, I'm definitely not on any "most wanted" list.

ESTHER: Well, then I think we can both breathe easier. But if you don't want to join me for dinner, I understand.

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*(Starts to take her bag from NATHAN. He looks her up and down, looks inside the grocery bag he's holding and then looks at the garbage can.)*

ESTHER: Lesson number one. Take what you need when it's offered.

NATHAN: This sack does seem kind of heavy for you to be carrying around, lady.

ESTHER: Yes, it is, just a bit. If you want to help me, I'll be happy to feed you up a meal you won't soon forget. What do you say?

NATHAN: I say ... okay. Let's go, lady.

ESTHER: Young man, do me a favor.

NATHAN: What's that, lady?

ESTHER: Don't call me lady. It makes me nervous.

NATHAN: Anything you say ... ma'am. What should I call you?

ESTHER: Esther, Esther Pinsky. And, what's your name, young man?

*(Pause.)*

NATHAN: Just call me ... Jack.

ESTHER: Very well, Jack. Let's get a move on it. I'm hungry.

NATHAN: Me too.

ESTHER: Lesson number two, Jack. If you're going to be dining ala carte, try reading the restaurant reviews. They come out on Wednesdays.

*(NATHAN and ESTHER walk offstage together carrying groceries. BLACKOUT.)*

**End of Scene 1**

**SCENE 2**

*(ESTHER and NATHAN are walking in the door of a small apartment. It's a combination living room and kitchen and it is furnished comfortably. There are many photographs scattered throughout.)*

ESTHER: Thank you so much for the help, Jack.

NATHAN: You're welcome, ma'am. Where did you learn to pick locks like that?

ESTHER: It was one of my unscheduled activities at the nursing home. I used to go into people's rooms and look at their things.

NATHAN: Why?

ESTHER: To see what made them tick.

NATHAN: Why didn't you just ask them?

ESTHER: Because most of them can't remember their lives.

NATHAN: Whose apartment is this?

ESTHER: I don't know. I saw a lady with a suitcase leave here yesterday. So ... here we are.

NATHAN: *(Worried.)* What if she comes back?

ESTHER: Don't worry; she had a very large suitcase.

NATHAN: Where should I put these groceries?

ESTHER: On the counter.

*(NATHAN puts them on the counter as ESTHER takes off her coat.)*

ESTHER: *(Cont'd.)* Take off your coat and stay a while.

NATHAN: *(Removing his coat and laying it down.)* I hope she doesn't come back!

ESTHER: Would you care for some cookies before I start dinner?

NATHAN: Cookies? Yeah, that would be great!

ESTHER: How about some milk to go with them?

*(Takes milk carton and looks at it, comparing it to NATHAN's face as she crosses to him with milk in a glass.)*

## **End of Freeview**

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