

Out of the Loop

by Jake Barnes

Ed wants to watch the last half of the football game. His wife wants him to mow the lawn. He mows the lawn. He is not happy about it, and he grumbles. Back and forth, back and forth. He cusses under his breath. Pauline keeps an eye on him. She stands outside by their mailbox talking with a neighbor. They chit-chat about this and that. What's new with you? How is the job going? How are the kids?

Pauline watches her husband. Kate notices the look on her face and asks her what's wrong. Pauline is puzzled. "What?" she asks. Kate nods at Ed's broad back. "You two having trouble?" she whispers.

Pauline laughs. "No more than usual," she says. "He's crabby, he's cheap, he smells bad, and I hate it when he breathes. Other than that, we're fine." The girls chuckle. They agree that married life is no bowl of cherries.

When Kate goes home, her husband asks her where's she been. Outside, she says.

