

HALF-A-LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Written by

Tom Stohlgren

Based on his stage play of the same title

Representation:
Eleni Larchanidou, LLM
Literary & Talent Manager
GREECE: +30-697-9619813
(WhatsApp, Viber)
USA: +1-714-702-5507
movieselenillm2014@gmail.com
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Half-a-love at First Sight

FADE IN:

INT. COLLINS HOME -- NIGHT

We SEE the family room of the rustic country cottage of GRACIE (60) and Denny (60) Collins, a newly retired, long-married couple who are engaged in a SQUABBLE. A stairway to the left rises to a guest bedroom. A gas-log fireplace separates bookshelves for his science books and her detective novels.

An old record-player from 1971 PLAYS Van Morrison from beneath a Christmas tree. A dozen roses ADORN a small table.

Bright, wealthy, (YOUNG) JENNY SHERITON (20), dressed in 1970s hippie bell-bottom jeans and white peasant blouse, BURSTS through the upstairs bedroom door, but Denny and Gracie CAN'T HEAR OR SEE HER.

YOUNG JENNY

Robby! Get in here. Now!

(YOUNG) ROBBY BELLINI (20), goofy, smiling, poorer, hippie in blue jeans, rock n' roll t-shirt, and leather boots BURSTS in the door behind Jenny, ALMOST FALLING over the banister.

YOUNG ROBBY

Whoa! What the hell we doing here, Jenny? We left a wild, tripping' rock 'n roll Christmas party for this dive?

YOUNG JENNY

We were summoned. We didn't have a choice. We're stuck in someone's head.

YOUNG ROBBY

Huh?

YOUNG JENNY

We're figments of someone's imagination. Somebody nearby just conjured us up in a daydream or night dream, or they took drugs or something. Looks like we landed in the next century.

YOUNG ROBBY

It's like I died and came back as John-Boy Walton.

(MORE)

YOUNG ROBBY (CONT'D)
 (looks around)
 Looks like somebody took a country
 dump!

They STARE from the top of the stairs. Puzzled.

YOUNG JENNY
 Don't recognize them. Do you? Look
 like somebody's parents.

YOUNG ROBBY
 Or grandparents. Can they see us or
 hear us?

YOUNG JENNY
 Not yet. They have to be almost
dreaming.

YOUNG ROBBY
Almost dreaming?

Young Jenny shakes her head in disgust, and is angry.

YOUNG JENNY
 Just drowsy or sleepy. Not deep-
 dreaming or sleeping, idiot. Don't
 ask so many questions!

YOUNG ROBBY
 It's nineteen-seventy-one.
 We're trained to ask
 questions. How can people
 afford gas at twenty-nine
 cents per gallon? Who would
 ever pay more than thirty
 grand for a new house? Where
 can I get a brewsky, a
 doobie, and a chic in a mini-
 skirt?

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)
 (ignoring Young Robby)
 I wonder which one is
 thinking about us?

Jenny STUDIES Gracie and Denny carefully, while Robby IS
 DISTRACTED by the music and DESCENDS the stairs. The
 youngsters are shocked to hear Denny and Gracie's voices.

GRACIE
 I miss the real fireplace in our
 first home. You about burned the
 place down monthly.

DENNY
 You bet your ash I remember those
 fires. Reminds me of dinner.

Gracie gives Denny the EVIL EYE. Jenny is ASTONISHED.

YOUNG JENNY
I know that voice.

YOUNG ROBBY
It's Van Morrison. Dig it.

YOUNG JENNY
No, you idiot. The old man! It's
Denny Collins, only his body got
near dead!

YOUNG ROBBY
It can't be! Looks like he was
speeding in a time machine. Who's
the old hag?

Denny and Gracie REMAIN OBLIVIOUS to the hippies.

DENNY
Edgy all night. Something wrong?

GRACIE
Tired of living way out here in the
country, just so you can become a
writer. At your age?

DENNY
Retired now. Need hobbies.

GRACIE
Take up golf or photography -- in
Big City!

DENNY
Could become a golf photographer,
but it's awfully dark out. I'll
need flash photography.

YOUNG JENNY
That's Denny! Know that sarcasm
anywhere. Retired? He's twenty! A
very wrinkled twenty. Why's he need
ironing? Maybe, we gotta nudge his
love life! Definitely having
issues, dude!

YOUNG ROBBY
Hey, it is Denny. My old best
buddy. Dude. I must be wasted. Now
he is my oldest buddy, by like
forty years. He should meet Gracie
Hartmann tonight. She's young.
That'll help.

(MORE)

YOUNG ROBBY (CONT'D)
 (points to the door behind
 him)
 Just left her at the wild party in
 there.

Young Jenny pulls at the door but it doesn't open.

YOUNG JENNY
 Can't. That's why we're here!

YOUNG ROBBY
 Huh! Why?

YOUNG JENNY
 Pay attention this time, God's-Gift-
 To-Organic-Farming. We're figments
 here.
 (points to Denny and
 Gracie)
 Figments of their imagination. We
 gotta nudge love in the right
 direction, or we can't go back to
 the 70s.

Young Robby freaks out and paces on the stairs.

YOUNG ROBBY
 We can't go back to our own lives?

YOUNG JENNY
 Not until we get somebody to fall
 in love with Denny.

GRACIE
 Don't have to write boring college
 textbooks in retirement. And why
 did you waste new, valuable pension
 money on roses? They don't last.
 Such a hopeless romantic.

YOUNG JENNY
 Who's the old bag?

DENNY
 It's unlike you, Sweetie. Gift of
 roses lasts forever. I'm a hopeful
 romantic, not a hopeless romantic!

GRACIE
 Don't get your hopes up tonight.
 Got a headache.

DENNY
 Take some acetylsalicylic acid.

GRACIE

For the millionth time, call it aspirin. How about becoming a gourmet chef? Buy a subscription to Cooking Lighter magazine. Make fake desserts with fake sugar. You could work anywhere, even Big City.

DENNY

No way! Fake sugar is like the fake fireplace, Host-less cupcakes, lemon maligned pie, or angel fool cake. I don't think so. And if our doctors find out we gained even two more pounds, they'll have us carted off in Metamucil-covered coffins, and cremated at two-thousand degrees for thirty minutes until condemned to a health spa!

YOUNG ROBBY

Good comeback, Denny. Still cool, dude, really old and prune-like, but cool.

Jenny DESCENDS the stairs and FOLLOWS Gracie, who IGNORES the snide comments, PACES, finishes her wine, PICKS up her mystery novel, and RECLINES in her chair.

GRACIE

Drink your wine, it's full of anti-oxidants and a little wine helps lower your blood pressure. Bea, your own daughter, the neurochemist, swears it's good for the memory, but I can't remember when she told us that. Can you? Why did you waste money on roses?

YOUNG JENNY

Uh, oh! They gotta daughter!

YOUNG ROBBY

I guess he never married Gracie Hartmann, huh?

YOUNG JENNY

Maybe if we took Denny to the party in there, he could see Gracie...

Young Jenny SCREAMS in horror. Young Robby ALMOST FALLS OFF the staircase again.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)

The old bag!

(beat)

It's Gracie! They did get married.
Denny looks old, and Gracie looks
ancient. If we're going to look
that bad someday, I'm going to
invest in sunglasses companies.

YOUNG ROBBY

Sunglasses?

Young Jenny slaps Young Robbie on the back.

YOUNG JENNY

Everybody looks better in the dark.

YOUNG ROBBY

Looks too late to help them. Geez,
don't pollute. Turn down the
lights! Gracie must be like sixty.
Eeeeew! Like, terminal!

DENNY

Why the roses?? It's THE night,
dear. The Night of One True Love.
We met exactly 40 years ago
tonight. Remember, at that wild
hippie Christmas party with Robby
and Jenny? I fell instantly and
deeply in love with you. And you
say the jury is still out. Ha!

YOUNG JENNY

Jenny? That's me. And Robby, that's
you. We're in big trouble.

GRACIE

December fifteenth. Huh. The
Christmas party. Right! Ridiculous
you to remember year after year.

Denny PLAYS an old record on the record player (Moon Dance,
by Van Morrison).

DENNY

We danced to this one, sweetie. At
the party, remember?

YOUNG JENNY

Of course, at their age, slow-
dancing is called 'structural
support.'

GRACIE
(mumbling)
Wrong night to break the news.

YOUNG JENNY
We heard that, Gracie. What news? I
knew she was hiding something.

DENNY
What news is that, dear?

GRACIE
I said, 'Pictured a long night
watching the news.'

DENNY
I thought your Bachelor and
Bachelorette show is on. Where all
the bachelorettes have broken
thermostats: they're too hot for
the hunky bachelor to pick one, and
too cold to each other. Not like
you, dear.

YOUNG ROBBY
Good one, Denny!

GRACIE
What do you mean by that?

DENNY
You're just right for me, Gracie,
since I first laid eyes on you.

GRACIE
You mean I'm not hot anymore, and
too cold to you?

YOUNG JENNY
Oh no. Gracie's gonna need more of
a nudge than we have time for.

DENNY
No sarcastic joke fight tonight.
It's the Night of One True Love. We
didn't cook 'Mean Cuisine' dinners
tonight! We didn't serve the Prozac
Grigio wine!

YOUNG ROBBY
She's bored royally. Living way out
in the country. This isn't a log
cabin, it's a log casket.

DENNY

You know what Minna Thomas Antrim said, 'Town folk know pleasures, country people joys.'

YOUNG ROBBY

This place wasn't built by Paul Bunyan, it was built by pall-bearers. Joys are for saps. She needs real pleasure!

Young Robby starts gyrating like a bachelor in heat.

YOUNG JENNY

Get your mind outta the gutter, pervert. They're not talking making whoopee.

GRACIE

Sydney Smith said, "I have no relish for the country; it is a kind of healthy grave."

YOUNG ROBBY

Told ya! They're gonna die!

DENNY

Don't want to keep you in a healthy grave. Unhealthy graves are the rage this year. Big City's dangerous! All those drive-by shootings.

GRACIE

Anyone driving by out here would be a welcomed change.

YOUNG ROBBY

Drive-by shootings our here? What? With a potato gun?

DENNY

That Bling-'n-Bobble Burglar sneaking into homes. Stealing jewelry in Big City.

GRACIE

No bling or bobbles 'round here!

DENNY

My gifts to you have been like burglar repellent. Should thank me.
(concerned)
You sound depressed.

YOUNG JENNY

She looks mildly depressed. Mild like Canadian salsa, not the Cubs-fan, ax-murderer kind of depressed. Glad it's not a real fireplace, so they don't own an ax.

GRACIE

Bea prescribed a sedative that's so mild that I could operate heavy machinery.

YOUNG ROBBY

Denny, buy her a tractor.

DENNY

Bea's the doctor! And, if you turn schizophrenic, I'll love you all.
(snickers)
That would be bigamy.

GRACIE

Very reassuring. That's why I can't get mad at you. Your zingers make me laugh like Robby does. He called. He's dropping by for a Christmas drink or three.

YOUNG JENNY

What? This can't be. Robby will see himself as an older dude.

YOUNG ROBBY

Drinks? Cool. We're not twenty-one yet.

DENNY

Better fix up the guest bedroom.
(points upstairs)
Now, rest up before your TV show.

Gracie mumbles as she looks away.

GRACIE

Maybe I will. We'll talk later about moving to a luxurious retirement community in Big City to be closer to Bea and medical care.

DENNY

I love the country. We're too young for an old-folks' home.

(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)
 If I don't make significant
 progress on the textbook tonight,
 I'll take up a new hobby for you:
 sky diving for seniors -- or is
 that called sky dropping?

Gracie CLOSES her eyes and drifts off, OBLIVIOUS. Young Robby
 EXAMINES his old best friend.

DENNY (CONT'D)
 If this was a sarcastic joke fight,
 I could have said, I might try to
 get the bedpan concession at the
 Retirement Home. I might form a
 rock n' roll band, the Grateful
 Near-Dead.

Young Robby LAUGHS. Young Jenny is HORRIFIED!

DENNY (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 What's bothering Gracie tonight?
 Who's called her today?

Denny examined Gracie's smartphone.

DENNY (CONT'D)
 Bea called at ten A.M., good
 daughter, musta been on break. She
 tries to help. Uh-ooh! Jenny
 called. Maybe she lost her
 broomstick and can't fly to pick up
 her alimony checks.

Young Jenny LEAPS to strangle Denny. Young Robby PULLS her
 back.

DENNY (CONT'D)
 Big City Realty? What's that about?
 Then Robby called. Probably lost
 his medical marijuana card again.

YOUNG ROBBY
 Wait! What's a medical weed card?

DENNY
 Regular day. Maybe she's just
 tired, like me.
 (closes his eyes)
 Maybe if I rested my eyes.

Denny and Gracie NAP. Young Jenny and Robby PACE. Denny
 suddenly AWAKENS to see the hippies in his family room.

DENNY (CONT'D)
Who are you? How did you get...?

YOUNG JENNY
(interrupts)
Hi, Collins. Remember us. Jenny and Robby. We're figments.

DENNY
Figments?

YOUNG JENNY
Figments of your imagination. Need to help Gracie fall in love again!

YOUNG ROBBY
Hey, Collins, how's it hanging? Remember when you saw Gracie Hartmann for the first time? You drooled!

DENNY
Is that you Robby? It can't be! You're young!

Denny HOPS out of his recliner, while Gracie SLEEPS.

DENNY (CONT'D)
Dear, look who's here. It's Jenny and Robby. They young!

Gracie remains ASLEEP.

YOUNG JENNY
She can't see or hears us, Denny. We're figments of your imagination, not hers.

DENNY
Am I dreaming?

YOUNG ROBBY
Dreaming since you saw Gracie. You thought you'd never get past her guard dog, Jenny.

Young Robby ALTERS his stance and CLEARS HIS VOICE like Aristotle. Jenny ROLLS her eyes.

YOUNG ROBBY (CONT'D)
We're here to give Gracie a nudge to fall back in love with you. Then, we'll be out of your hair, Dude.

YOUNG JENNY
 (looks back and forth at
 Denny and Gracie)
 You've really let yourselves go!

DENNY
 Very funny. It's called aging! Do
 your nudging to Gracie, and go.

YOUNG JENNY
 Not that easy. Matters of the heart
 have to be finessed.

DENNY
 How would you know? You've had
 three husbands.

The news SHOCKS Young Jenny. Young Robby LAUGHS. Young Jenny
 turns hopelessly SAD.

YOUNG JENNY
 I may not be able to help you.

YOUNG ROBBY
 You mean, we might get stuck here?

DENNY
 Jenny, what day is it? I'm
 confused.

YOUNG JENNY
 December fifteenth, nineteen-
 seventy-one. Don't freak me out.
 You called Robby three times from
 the pay phone at the gas station
 since she drove in. Gas is up to
 twenty-nine cents a gallon, so you
 conned Robby and me into driving
 you to the freakin' party tonight.
 (points upstairs)
 I don't expect Gracie to give you
 the time of day, because you're
 from the other side of the tracks
 like Robby.

Denny PLAYS a record on the old stereo; "In the Ghetto" by
 Elvis Presley.

YOUNG ROBBY
 How about playing some Stones,
 Moody Blues, or Led Zeppelin?

DENNY

No way! 'Stairway to Heaven' hits too close to home when you're our age. What do I look like Jenny?

Jenny examines Denny.

YOUNG JENNY

No longer that smart hippie with the big afro. More hair in your nose and ears than on your head. Skin like patchy leather, and baggy old clothes. But, let's introduce you to Gracie upstairs, so we can get out of this nightmare.

DENNY

(unconvinced)

So, she sees me at my age and she's a twenty-year-old?

YOUNG ROBBY

Duh! Albert Ein-stoned. Let's roll!

DENNY

This is crazy! I can't leave Gracie here all alone, and she needs her rest tonight, obviously.

Denny GLANCES over at his lovely bride.

YOUNG JENNY

Yeah right! It's Gracie at twenty or Gracie at sixty. Tough choice.

DENNY

But she's right there!

Jenny and Robby walk over and INSPECT Gracie.

YOUNG ROBBY

A granny or a babe. What will it be, Collins?

Robby SPOTS a photo of BEA, 30, a gorgeous doctor.

YOUNG ROBBY (CONT'D)

Hey, who's this knockout babe?

DENNY

Never mind. Keep away from her!

YOUNG JENNY

We're just trying to help.

DENNY
Jenny, pinch me.

Jenny PINCHES him, hard.

YOUNG JENNY
With pleasure.

DENNY
Ouch! I said pinch me, not tear the life from my body. That hurt! I don't understand this.

YOUNG ROBBY
Collins, did you take a handful of stupid pills? What don't you get?

DENNY
You're here, but you're young. I've been married to Gracie for over thirty-five years, and you think I'm just going to meet her tonight. I know what happens to both of you later in life, and you're coming to visit later tonight, in person, none of the figment stuff. I'm a retired chemistry professor! A scientist! I don't believe any of this.

YOUNG JENNY
Okay, Denny, you're confused. But we still have a job to do. We have to get Gracie to fall in love with you again, or we can't go back to the seventies.

DENNY
Those were fun times. You're right about that.

YOUNG ROBBY
I'm never right, dude. But I do need to take you to that party.

Young Robby POINTS upstairs. And Young Jenny GRABS Denny's hand and PULLS him up the staircase.

YOUNG JENNY

Let's go scum boys. I want to go on record that the only reason I agreed to go to the party tonight with you low-class flatland losers is because I'm going to have a few drinks. I plan to get a ride back to the '70s with a millionaire's son, the tall, dark, and handsome variety.

Still in SHOCK, Denny FOLLOWS the hippies upstairs. The three of them PEEK into his guest bedroom.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)

We're in trouble. It's just a bedroom.

Denny LUMBERS downstairs, SHAKING his head.

DENNY

And me, a learned man.

YOUNG ROBBY

Yeah, learned if you count one freakin' semester of Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Biology, and Introduction to Creative Writing. So far, you've mostly been freakin' 'introduced' to higher education. You got straight-As again, so why aren't you at the university?

DENNY

The tuition, fees, and the tuition, just to name three reasons.

YOUNG JENNY

You're still a smart ass, penniless, and aimless. Gracie's too good for you.

Young Jenny SPOTS the roses on the table.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)

Beautiful roses. Too bad they don't last.

DENNY

You'll have to trust me, I'll graduate with honors, get a Master's Degree, and later earned a Ph.D. in organic chemistry.

(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)
I become a professor, and marry
Gracie.

YOUNG JENNY
Right! What a dreamer!
(looks around)
Like to see this one on The Dating
Game!

INT. DATING GAME STUDIO -- DREAM SEQUENCE

Young Jenny and Robby become the game show hosts of the most popular game show on TV, The Dating Game, where three eligible bachelors compete sight-unseen for the opportunity to date a lovely bachelorette. Jenny GUIDES Denny and Two Handsome BACHELORS (20) to their stools. A life-size photo of a gorgeous twenty-year-old GRACIE appears.

YOUNG JENNY
It's the young, beautiful, and
wealthy Gracie Hartmann.

Robby WHISTLES and HOOTS.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)
Let's meet Bachelor Number One.
He's a tall, dark, handsome
millionaire doctor from Hollywood.

Young Jenny WHISTLES and makes CAT CALLS.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)
What a bod! Is that an Ar-money
suit? Do I smell success?

Young Robby CLAPS madly then acts like a LION TAMER toward Jenny.

YOUNG ROBBY
Back, ladies of the night, Back!

YOUNG JENNY
Let's meet Bachelor Number Two.
He's a taller, darker, hunk lawyer
billionaire Prince of Switzerland.

DENNY
Switzerland doesn't have a
monarchy. This is ridiculous.

YOUNG ROBBY

Careful Denny. He's a lawyer. He can sue you for defecation of character.

YOUNG JENNY

And now let's meet Bachelor Number Three. He's a crappy-dresser who lives in the country. But, he's funny, and we love him.

DENNY

Gee, thanks! You're too kind.

YOUNG JENNY

Remember, our bachelorette, Gracie Hartmann is gorgeous. She's too wise for sex-crazed boys, and she's nice. She has a hundred friends, but no steady boyfriend. She could get anybody she wants, and she seems patient enough to wait for the right prince to come along.

(to Denny)

Hmmm. I wonder which eligible bachelor she'll pick?

YOUNG ROBBY

My money is on the Prince-dude.

DENNY

She picks me. Honest.

Denny LOOKS at the beautiful picture of young Gracie, which FADES-OUT. He EXAMINES his middle-aged body. The dream ENDS.

INT. COLLINS HOME -- NIGHT

DENNY

This has got to be a dream.

YOUNG JENNY & YOUNG ROBBY

You're dreaming if you think Gracie marries you.

YOUNG JENNY

Come on, Robby. Let's go hatch a plan. We'll find a way to get Gracie to fall in love with Denny!

Young Jenny and Robby CHUCKLE as they HOP up the staircase and EXIT into the guest bedroom.

Gracie STIRS, HEARING the door shut. Next to the vase of roses, the phone RINGS and AWAKENS Gracie. Denny RACES over to answer the phone.

BEGIN PHONE CONVERSATION

DENNY

Hello.

JENNY (O.S.)

Hi, Collins, this is Jenny, put Gracie on, will ya?

DENNY

Hi Jenny, sure, but can I ask you something first? Is Robby with you?

JENNY (O.S.)

That's weird. Yes! Surprised me to drive us up to see you both for a holiday drink. We're halfway there. I called Gracie. She probably forgot to tell you.

DENNY

Can't wait to see you.

(he looks upstairs)

One more question. That night when you, Robby, and I went to that party where you two introduced me to Gracie, do you remember if you and Robby played The Dating Game in my apartment before the party?

Gracie GRABS the phone from Denny, who RACES upstairs to PEEK in the guest bedroom door. He SEES nothing.

GRACIE

You'll have to excuse my husband, he is going nuts in retirement way up in the country.

JENNY (O.S.)

Have you told him that you're selling the house to move to Big City? Did he go ballistic? He'll never move, will he?

GRACIE

Yes, I forgot to tell Denny you were driving up. We'll talk later.

Denny SULKS and slowly DESCENDS the stairs.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I'll tell him later. Don't want to hurt him.

(loudly as Denny nears)

Great. Can't wait to see you too.

JENNY (O.S.)

You haven't told him? Bad girl.

We'll help you break the news.

GRACIE

Bye, Jenny. See you and Robby soon.

DENNY

What are those two doing together?

GRACIE

They're both divorced, both lonely over the holidays but they won't admit it, and they both love our liquor cabinet. I mean company.

DENNY

Must have dozed off. Had a dream about and Robby and Jenny, here, as twenty-year-olds. I should write a play about it.

GRACIE

Like Arthur Write-us or Oscar Mild?

DENNY

It's Arthur Miller and Oscar Wilde. Chronicle our lives. Rekindle the fire in your hearth so to speak. I might use that line in the play.

Young Jenny POKES her head in from upstairs to LISTEN in.

GRACIE

You write organic-chemistry texts, not plays. You're crazy.

DENNY

It's not crazy. Can't have too many love stories in the world.

GRACIE

You do need a hobby. Hope you don't disappoint yourself, again!

DENNY

Taking risks is rewarding, like the risk I took to talk to you at that wild Christmas party forty years ago.

GRACIE

(enraged)

I came up to you after Jenny and Robby introduced us. You were shy and terrified. I asked you a simple question, 'What brought you to the party?' You said, "Robby Bellini's Chevy." What an idiot!

YOUNG JENNY

This is going to be impossible.

Young Jenny SLAMS the upstairs door. Denny grabs his laptop computer and TYPES furiously.

DENNY

That's right! I struggled to say something brilliant, mysterious, and alluring.

GRACIE

You asked me if I had a tattoo on my chest.

(smiling for once)

That was...

(beat)

Unexpected.

The doorbell RINGS. Young Jenny SCREAMS and PULLS Robby half way down the stairs. Denny SEES and HEARS them, but no one else can.

YOUNG JENNY

Come on, Robby. We gotta see this!

DENNY

It can't be Jenny and Robby.

GRACIE

If it's the grim reaper, I'll tell him you can't go until you finish your first play. That should hold him off for a few decades anyway.

DENNY

Very funny, dear. See if I invite you to opening night on Broadway.

Denny SMILES and TYPES away, as Gracie HEADS to the door with a worried look. She OPENS the door, happily SURPRISED to see her daughter, BEA, until she finds her drunk with a strange, wealthy, young WINSTON GABLES (30) in tow. However, Winston wears a name tag that reads "Dr. A. Richard Weatherbee."

BEA

Hi Mommy. Hi Daddy. This is Dr. A. Richard Weatherbee, a clinical shy-chiatrist. We met two months ago, I'm pregnant, and we're hoping to get engaged by night's end.

Young Jenny and Young Robby FALL BACK on the stairs. Gracie and Denny clumsily hug their drunken daughter, SHAKE HANDS with their new son-in-law-to-be, and return to their chairs to sulk. Bea STUMBLES toward the kitchen.

BEA (CONT'D)

I'll hunt us up a little wine or wish-key to shell-eberate.

YOUNG JENNY

(alarmed)

They do have a daughter -- a pregnant daughter! Robby, do you know what this means?

YOUNG ROBBY

She's loose as a goose?

YOUNG JENNY

Makes our job impossible!

DENNY

(annoyed)

Dr. A-dot Richard Weatherbee, I'm glad he wore a name tag. What's the "A" stand for, "Active?"

GRACIE

(yelling to the kitchen)

Bea, it took your father a month just to kiss me. How could you be pregnant?

WINSTON

(looking around the house)

Bridget wanted me to meet you.

DENNY

What do you know about Bea?

WINSTON

I learned that she's a young phenomenon in the field of neuro-chemistry on Alzheimer's patients to improve short-term and long-term memory. She likes drugs, I guess.

YOUNG ROBBY

Who doesn't?

Young Jenny gives Young Robby an EVIL LOOK as Bea STAGGERS in with wine, Irish whiskey, and glasses.

BEA

Let's have a little shell-ebriation, shall we?

YOUNG ROBBY

It looks like Bea started shell-ebriating earlier.

DENNY & GRACIE

Drinking with the baby?

BEA

Can't drink without him. I'll have my wish-key in a tippy-cup.

WINSTON

That Bridget, she's a quick wit, isn't she? Love that about her.

DENNY

We both know chemistry, Bea. That's not right. What's gotten into you?

BEA

Richard, here, just to name one.

Young Jenny LEAPS to STRANGLE Winston, but Young Robby PULLS her back to the stairs.

WINSTON

Such a kidder!

BEA

It was half-a-love at first sight, just like you and the momster. We met at a Halloween party. I fell for him in a heart-bleep. He's undecided about me. He dressed as the Three Musketeers, with two dummies dressed up and attached to his sides. I was the pregnant nun.

(MORE)

BEA (CONT'D)

How ironic was that? Not anymore.
Seduced by all Three Musketeers.

GRACIE

Bridget Collins, don't you talk
that way. We don't blame you,
Richard, Bea's always had a soft-
spot for dummies, based on her high
school boyfriends anyway.

Bea POURS herself another whiskey. Young Jenny, Young Robby,
Gracie, and Denny PACE. Denny is careful to avoid Young Jenny
and Young Robby.

BEA

But I love chocolate, and he was a
Three Musketeers, Mommy. Richard
was so sweet. He waited until I
drove him to my place. I tried to
jump him in the back seat, but he
took up all three seats, and I
insisted on seat belts.

DENNY

You should have insisted on
restraint.

YOUNG JENNY

Or a condom.

BEA

Oh Daddy, he'd never use kinky
restraints. You'd be proud of me. I
quickly found out which Musketeer
was the father. It's Richard here!
Anyway, he won't ask me to marry
him if he thinks you two have had a
boring, loveless relationship.

Everyone is DISHEARTENED. Bea HICCUPS, SLUMPS her head,
PAUSES for a few seconds -- then JERKS her head up with a
huge SMILE; excitedly.

BEA (CONT'D)

Gotcha, Daddy and Mom! This is my
new friend, Winston Gables. I'm not
pregnant or engaged. I made his
fake name tag at the hospital. It's
our third date, and he wanted to
meet you and see the house.

Young Jenny goes to CHOKE Bea, but Young Robby PULLS her
back. Denny and Gracie BREATHE a sigh of relief, HUG Bea, and
LAUGH nervously. Winston suspiciously CASES the house.

WINSTON

I'm so sorry, Dr. and Mrs. Collins, for Bridget's practical joke. It was easy for me because it's my business, I'm a professional Drama Therapist.

YOUNG ROBBY & DENNY

A what?

BEA

He calls me Bridget, Daddy. He helps people deal with the chaos of everyday life, return to their creativity centers, and...

BEA & WINSTON

Share esteem for self-esteem and share the stage to live your dream.

YOUNG JENNY

Oh brother!

BEA

Told Winston this was your Night of One True Love. December fifteenth! You bought roses for Mom. The gift of roses lasts forever.

WINSTON

Shame they wilt so quickly.

GRACIE

Be careful, Winston, Bea's like her father. He brought roses on our tenth anniversary of his Night of One True Love. I was sound asleep when he crawled into bed in a gorilla costume.

(to Denny)

You idiot!

DENNY

That was a mistake. I see that now.

GRACIE

Twentieth anniversary of his Night of One True Love, he presented me with a battery-operated self-inflating Sumo wrestler suit.

BEA

She wouldn't try it on, so I did. Didn't inflate properly.

(MORE)

BEA (CONT'D)

Party guests said I looked more like a prune than a Sumo wrestler.

DENNY

At that point, the romance went right out of the gift.

GRACIE

Romance? After twenty years together? A Sumo suit?

DENNY

I learned my lesson. 'Don't say it with sumo.' Who knew?

YOUNG JENNY & GRACIE

Childish and wasteful.

WINSTON

A flare for the dramatic!

BEA

He's never boring.

GRACIE

(angry at Bea)

Exactly like that stunt you pulled tonight with your new friend.

DENNY

Very funny. You really had us going. So, Winston, you're a drama therapist, like a William Shrink-spear, you could help give me ideas for the play I'm writing.

GRACIE

Denny did buy me one nice gift once, a tiny pair of diamond earrings after the sumo suit fiasco. But Bea, your fake pregnancy about killed me.

WINSTON

Bridget, we should not have come here tonight. If practical jokes are windows to the soul, then this is the house of panes.

BEA

Really, Winston? Windows to the soul? You don't believe that nonsense, do you?

WINSTON

A visit to my parent's in the
Hamptons would be conventional.
Introductions over high tea.

YOUNG JENNY

The Gables of the Hamptons?

Young Jenny FLIRTS and DANCES seductively for Winston, but he
can't SEE or HEAR her.

DENNY

We're the Collins's from lower Big
City. Our family recounts comical
stories, while chugging cheap wine.

BEA

High tea? Winston, are you rich?

WINSTON

I'd say well-off.

YOUNG ROBBY

I bet their butler has a butler.

WINSTON

I am self-supporting, but drama
therapy doesn't pay as well as my
parents would like.

YOUNG JENNY & DENNY

Shocking.

GRACIE

Poor Winston. I can see you getting
sucked in to the Collins' gravity
like I was forty years ago. It's G
equals m C squared. Gravity equals
Malarkey times the speed of Charm
squared. Irish malarkey is more
potent than whiskey.

YOUNG JENNY

Malarkey; innocent sounding speech
designed to mislead or impress.
Proof that Collins is Bea's father.

BEA

Winston, you promised to help Mom
relax tonight using that fake
hypnotism drama game.

WINSTON

There is nothing fake about drama therapy. We have a professional society, dues, and a journal, and everything!

DENNY

Like voodoo doctors? Voodoo Today. I hear that at their annual meetings, they hand out free pin cushions with every hex.

GRACIE

Don't pay him any attention, Winston. He would never understand holistic medicine, the power of positive thinking, or drama therapy. Or maybe it's just too hectic here tonight.

WINSTON

Please Mrs. Collins, I want to show Bridget what I do, how we create a P-C-L. Perfectly Calm Environment. It's like an emotional laxative.

DENNY

Emotional laxative? Like "Love thy enema?"

BEA

Or churn the other cheek.

DENNY

Heart-warming flotsam and rectum.

YOUNG JENNY

Robby, these two aren't helping.

YOUNG ROBBY

But they're funny.

GRACIE

(to Denny and Bea)
That's enough, you two.

WINSTON

Ignore those cynical disbelievers. Come sit over here, Mrs. Collins. The two of us can create a P-C-E or Perfectly Calm Environment. That's the key to drama therapy.

GRACIE

Call me Gracie, you're such a well-mannered boy, especially compared to these over-educated heathens. I'll try your drama therapy.

Winston and Bea LEAP from the couch. Bea STANDS behind the couch with Young Jenny and Young Robby. Gracie LAYS on the couch as if in a psychiatrist office. Winston SITS in Gracie's chair like a formal office visit. Denny and Bea are uncomfortable skeptics.

WINSTON

Mrs. Collins, I mean Gracie, relax and breathe deeply. Imagine a small, consistent flickering flame, like that delightful gas-log fireplace. You are getting...

YOUNG JENNY

(interrupts)
Ridiculous?

YOUNG ROBBY

Stupid?

BEA & DENNY

Gullible?

WINSTON

Tired.

Bea SHAKES her mother's arm, but she doesn't REACT.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

I assure you this is genuine. She is not hypnotized in the parlor-game sense. She is semi-voluntarily acting the part of a woman trapped between the states of sleep and awake. Mrs. Collins, how did you meet Mr. Collins?

DENNY

Forty years ago on this very night, the moon was as full as a big woman's arse.

YOUNG JENNY

This is not good.

WINSTON

Mr. Collins, we need a perfectly calm environment. Mrs. Collins, how did you meet Mr. Collins?

GRACIE

(slowly)

I was young, rebelling against my parents and their wealth. It was nineteen-seventy-one. I wasn't looking for a boyfriend. Our two dearest friends tried to set us up.

YOUNG ROBBY

That's us, Jenny.

WINSTON

Set you up?

GRACIE

Well, it wasn't my idea.

YOUNG JENNY

This is trouble.

BEA

Then Daddy won you over with Malarkey. How sweet!

WINSTON

(softly to BEA)

This is a classic case of H-M-R, Human Magnetism Repulsion, where Mrs. Collins was not drawn to your father as much as she was repulsed by her family's economic status. Relationships based on repulsion fail 89.3% of the time. I had two semesters of psychology.

BEA

What about the laws of attraction, infatuation, and hormone-induced lust? They were twenty, gorgeous, and in love!

WINSTON

We shall see. Mrs. Collins, what do you think Mr. Collins saw in you the first time you met?

GRACIE

I don't know. I can't travel back in time to ask him. I don't recall that night well.

YOUNG JENNY

Big trouble.

DENNY

I recall what I said, and what I wish I had said.

BEA

What did you want to say, Daddy?

DENNY

I gazed into her eyes. I wanted to tell her that I saw a warmth that was immeasurable, a kindness that was unfathomable, and a lifetime that I would be honored just to dream about sharing with her.

BEA

What did you say to her, Daddy?

DENNY

I asked her if she had a tattoo on her chest.

YOUNG JENNY & YOUNG ROBBY

We're dead.

WINSTON

Mrs. Collins, what did you see in Mr. Collins that night you met?

GRACIE

I saw a skinny, smiling boy with a big curly hair. I don't know.

WINSTON

A classic case of R-L-T-M, Repressed Long-Term Memory. It often follows unsavory memories.

BEA

What if Mom just doesn't remember that night perfectly? Forty years ago! Most people have incomplete memories. That's why I work on memory enhancing drugs.

WINSTON

We remember the extremes in life.
The very good and the very bad.
Drama therapy helps bring those out
2.3% percent of the time. Go on
Mrs. Collins, I mean Gracie.

GRACIE

The extremes do stand out. We had a
big snow storm in Big City when Bea
was born, but she came out smiling.
Later, we all would go Christmas
shopping in Big City, and stop and
get hot chocolate and donuts.

DENNY

Ha! That was twenty pounds ago.

YOUNG JENNY

I'll say.

GRACIE

Those were the lean years, living
on a young professor's salary up
here in the country and having to
turn our family room here into a
child day care center when Bea was
young, just to make ends meet.

BEA

I had a room full of kids to play
with every day. I thought you were
the best Mom in the world. So did
the other kids, Chelsea, Maggie,
Brett, and that poor homely kid,
Dillon. I loved it.

WINSTON

But you missed the individual
attention a child deserves. I was
an only child raised by nannies.
Can't recall any of them. It's sad.

YOUNG JENNY

Poor baby.

DENNY

(to Winston)

Our world is your imaginary stage
for your psychological benefit.

BEA

And while I saw dashing heroes in the Three Musketeers costume, you were reaching out for players, character actors, thespians.

YOUNG ROBBY

Thespians too?

WINSTON

Dr. Collins and Bridget, drama therapy is not about me, it's about your poor, troubled matriarch and others who cry out for help.

Gracie SNAPS OUT of her acting role.

GRACIE

I think I sold our house today.

Denny and Bea are shocked and stunned!

YOUNG JENNY

More trouble.

DENNY

How could you? It's Christmas!

GRACIE

Persuasive realtor and an eager buyer from Big City drove by last weekend. Mr. Tad Dooley drove by. Loved the house and setting. Offered us more than market value. I feel awful. Should have told you. But this is something I must do.

BEA

Mom, how could you? It's Christmas.

Denny, Bea, Young Jenny, and Young Robby remained STUNNED. Denny POURS himself an Irish whiskey, but doesn't drink it.

DENNY

Gracie, I've done a lot of stupid things in my life. After all these years of practical jokes, you've stuck by me. Wish you didn't spring it on me, but I'll stick by you if you want to sell the house. How much time do we have?

GRACIE

Denny, Bea, I'm so sorry. Don't know what came over me. I've wanted to move to an active retirement village in Big City for some time. The buyer, Tad Dooley, and the realtor are so motivated, they're driving up tonight from Big City with the contracts, and they hired a house inspector to complete a termite inspection tonight also. It's going to get crowded and hectic around here.

WINSTON

I'm here for you Mrs. Collins, I mean Gracie. I feel your pain. You feel A-C-D-C: Alone, Claustrophobic, and Disconnected.

YOUNG ROBBY

(to himself)
Wouldn't that be just A-C-D?

WINSTON

We took the D and the C from DisConnected. It's catchier.

YOUNG JENNY

What a set up for Collins.

DENNY

Your profession allows for C-R-A-P, Creative Acronym Progressions, where you take the C and the R from Creative...

BEA

(interrupting)
Daddy, be nice.

WINSTON

It's okay, Bridget. People once doubted pyramid energy, herbal supplements, touch healing, and Scientology, but they have egg on their faces now, don't they?

GRACIE

Winston, this drama therapy thing of yours might really work. I didn't have the courage to come right out and tell them.

(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I was more relaxed playing like I was hypnotized. Let's have tea in the kitchen. Maybe we can have another drama therapy session before everyone shows up.

Gracie and Winston STROLL happily to the kitchen. Everyone else WORRIES.

DENNY

Bea! What are we going to do? I'm worried about your mother.

YOUNG ROBBY

Jenny, what are you going to do?

BEA

Daddy, it's all under control. Winston leads his students from their own selfish dreams to a group's logical realizations and common goals. If you and I play along with very subtle cues that we don't want to sell the house, Mom will bend to the common good. Let's just hope Winston's drama therapy can perform miracles. Daddy, let's trust him.

DENNY

What's not to trust? He's someone you've dated three times, and I'm being asked to trust a quack practitioner of drama therapy, which appears to be as scientific as celebrity astrology. Add to that your mother's mid-life crisis, a visit from our wild friends, your Uncle Robby and Aunt Jenny, and a buyer, realtor, and house inspector. This will not be calm!

YOUNG JENNY

(yells, but only Young Robby hears her)

Don't worry everyone. I'll think of a way to get us out of this mess.

INT. COLLINS HOME - NIGHT

SUPER: "15 Minutes Later"

Denny and Bea PACE in the family room, while Young Jenny, UNSEEN AND UNHEARD, looks on from the top of the stairs. On the coffee table is a bottle of PILLS that look like common aspirin. Denny examines the pill bottle.

DENNY

All quiet on the western front.

BEA

Sulfur, Daddy.

DENNY

Sulfur?

BEA

Sulfur, so good. One of your old chemistry jokes.

YOUNG JENNY

What a couple of dorks!

BEA

We still have a calm environment for Winston's drama therapy.

DENNY

Before our company arrives, tell me a little more about that new memory drug you've created.

BEA

It's a potassium-charged lithium-phenolphthalein drug that simply switches the chemo-receptors for long and short-term memory, so early Alzheimer's patients can remember their loved ones.

DENNY

I foresee a Nobel Prize in Medicine. Any side effects? Potassium and lithium sounds like a happy laxative to me.

BEA

Only one rat out of ten thousand develop a mild case of diarrhea. My colleagues call it the "daydream drug" or "time-travel delight," because an Alzheimer's patient can visit past memories like a master tape. Awaiting FDA approval, but it's still not a miracle drug. The effects only last fifteen minutes.

DENNY

Too bad you can't use it on your mother. I know that if she remembered all the good times here, she wouldn't sell the house.

BEA

And you can only have one dose per day. Two or more cause hallucinations. I named the drug "Mnemosyne."

DENNY

After the ancient Greek goddess of memory.

BEA

Daddy, you're so smart. So, it can't be used by non-Alzheimer's patients. It may cause uncontrollable daydreams.

DENNY

But you'd never prescribe it for non-Alzheimer's patients, so no problem.

BEA

I'll put them in my purse, a woman's safe, hidden as a simple bottle of aspirin that no one will see them. The sanctity of the female purse has never been betrayed.

Denny hands the pills to Bea, who puts them in her purse.

DENNY

This plan of yours and Winston's. Go over it again.

YOUNG JENNY

Robby, get in here! Listen to their plan.

Young Robby JOLTS out from the bedroom.

BEA

We tell Mom that she needs to relax and think about all the good times associated with meeting you on your Night of One True Love.

(MORE)

BEA (CONT'D)

Then, Winston performs his magic with drama therapy, while you and I bring up pleasant memories from the past. Winston says it works every time.

DENNY

Drama therapy huh? I'm not so sure.

BEA

Once Mom recalls this home full of endearing family memories, not to mention her undying love for you, she won't sell the house.

Gracie and Winston STROLL in from the kitchen. Young Jenny RUNS downstairs and LOOKS into Bea's purse. Young Robby LUSTS for the new drug.

YOUNG JENNY

I have a better plan!

GRACIE

(to Winston)

Fascinating! Rich people do it?

WINSTON

Movie stars are drawn to drama therapy, because of everyone's deep need to act out problems to stay on the road to cerebral wellness.

YOUNG JENNY

Cerebral wellness is synonymous with Hollywood?

WINSTON

It's like a self-propelled dream come true. Many Hollywood stars have inquired about my clinic.

DENNY

Is it called the Betty Ford Clinic?

BEA

(to Denny)

Let's all be supportive.

GRACIE

There's nothing wrong with me. I just want to sell the house and move to Big City.

Gracie PUTS her hand on her head to SIGNAL a headache.

DENNY

Sweetie, let's see if Winston's drama therapy will soothe you.

GRACIE

Gotta slight headache. Maybe it will subside if we serve dessert.

DENNY

Winston and I will bring in the cheesecake. Then we'll get started. Come on, Winston.

Denny and Winston HEAD to the kitchen.

BEA

Mom, caffeine is good for a headache. Strong tea?

GRACIE

Tea would be nice. I'm nervous about the potential buyer, the realtor, and a house inspector coming. There's dust everywhere.

BEA

(exiting to the kitchen)
The inspector looks for rats and termites, not dust and dirt balls.

GRACIE

Speaking of dirt balls, your Uncle Robby is dropping by with Aunt Jenny for a holiday drink. Yes, a little tea would be nice.

Young Jenny and Young Robby are ANGERED by the comments. Young Jenny OPENS Bea's purse and POSITIONS the bottle of pills.

Gracie TAKES Bea's new memory drug, RETURNS the bottle, SITS in her recliner, and SLIPS into a happy trance of partial awareness.

Winston and Denny RETURN with cheesecake, and Bea RE-ENTERS with tea, which Gracie IGNORES.

WINSTON

We have a calm environment. Let's begin our drama therapy. Relax and breathe deeply. Imagine the small, consistent flickering flame in that delightful gas-log fireplace.

DENNY

I hate that thing.

BEA

Daddy, positives!

WINSTON

Thanks, Bridget. Now, where was I? The beautiful gas-log fireplace is flickering slower and slower. Dr. Collins, please describe that "Night of One True Love."

DENNY

Gracie, do you remember Robby in his red rock n' roll tie-die t-shirt, torn blue jeans and high leather moccasins; and Jenny in her bell-bottom dungarees and white peasant blouse? They took me to that party to meet you.

Young Jenny and Young Robby GRAB Gracie's attention as the doorbell RINGS.

The door flies open, and in STEPS buxom, stylish realtor, SALLY SWIFT (40), with her perspective home-buyer, dumpy, chubby TAD DOOLEY (40), in tow.

SALLY

Hi y'all.

DENNY

You must be the realtor?

Sally flirts with Denny, while LOOKING SUSPICIOUSLY around the house.

SALLY

And proud of it! World's second oldest profession.

DENNY

After prostitution?

SALLY

Needed places to work, y'all. I'm Sally Swift. Big City Realty. Roses? Nice touch. Houses with fresh flowers sell faster. I'm not from the South, but like saying y'all, y'all.

DENNY

This must be the prospective buyer.

SALLY

Damn right, y'all. This is Tad
Dooley, who is hot to buy.

(looking at Gracie)

You must be Gracie Collins. So nice
to meet y'all.

Sally SHAKES Gracie's lifeless hand.

Young Jenny SNARLS at Sally, but Young Robby likes her and
tries to FLIRT. No one SEES or HEARS Young Jenny and Young
Robby, except Gracie.

DENNY

I'm Gracie's husband, Denny, and
this is our daughter Bridget, we
call her Bea, and her friend,
Winston Gables.

WINSTON

There goes the calm environment.

SALLY

Winston Gables of the Gables from
the Hamptons? Is Mrs. Collins dead?

WINSTON

Why, yes. I mean, we're from the
Hamptons, but no, Mrs. Collins is
not dead. Just relaxed.

SALLY

Looks deader than my ex-
husband's...

DENNY

(interrupting)

Winston, let's put the drama
therapy on hold.

YOUNG ROBBY

I'd like to put the realtor chick
on hold.

WINSTON

I may visit the rest room. My
stomach seems to be acting up.

DENNY

It's just down the hall on the way
to the kitchen.

WINSTON exits uncomfortably to the bathroom.

SALLY

I'll just take a quick look around,
then I'll take Tad. Y'all make Tad
feel as at home as a fire alarm in
Hell 'til I get back.

As Denny and Sally EXIT to the kitchen, Tad SITS on the couch
between Young Robby and Young Jenny.

YOUNG ROBBY

Gracie, you're looking hot tonight.
How about a kiss hello?

GRACIE

(looking at Tad and Robby)
I'm not gonna kiss you, you sex-
starved Romeo.

TAD

I didn't ask for a kiss, Ma'am. I'm
just buying your house.

GRACIE

(to Jenny and Robby)
And why are you so attractive?

TAD

I work out at the Big City Gym one
night a month every January.

BEA

Mom, that's no way to talk. I think
you're more tired than we realized.
You just met this man tonight.

YOUNG JENNY

Gracie, let's ditch the old folks.
Come upstairs to the party, and
meet Denny Collins. You don't know
him.

GRACIE

You're wrong, you know. I've known
him for years. He's laid me more
often than a union bricklayer.

Bea STARES into Gracie's eyes, Tad is very PUZZLED.

Young Jenny and Young Robby are HOLDING BACK laughter.

BEA

That's ridiculous!

YOUNG ROBBY

Such a kidder, Gracie. Denny is a joker too. He doesn't drink or smoke pot, but tonight, you'd think he was a tad high.

GRACIE

Tad high?

TAD

Hi, Ma'am.

YOUNG JENNY

Denny is like the smartest kid we both know. One B in high school.

GRACIE

B isn't that bad.

BEA

Thanks for sticking up for me.

YOUNG ROBBY

That Bea chick in hot!

Sally and Winston RE-ENTER the family room.

GRACIE

(to Tad and Young Robby)
If you go near my little girl,
Denny will kill you!

SALLY

Tad's seated. To make improper advances, you have to move.

GRACIE

Yes, I've got to move! I simply must move to Big City.

BEA

That didn't work well.

YOUNG JENNY

We're going to need a new plan.
Come on, Robby, we gotta move.
Quick!

Young Jenny PULLS Young Robby upstairs to the guest bedroom. Everyone HEARS the door shut and LOOKS UP. Gracie SNAPS out of her dreamlike trance. Denny RETURNS from the kitchen.

GRACIE
 (a little groggy)
 We've just got to move.

SALLY
 You bet y'all do! That's why I'm
 here. That's why Mr. Dooley's here.

BEA
 Mom, are you okay?

GRACIE
 Never felt better. For a moment, I
 was daydreaming that Robby and
 Jenny were here, but they were
 young again. Isn't that strange?
 Must be because they're visiting
 tonight.

Denny STARES upstairs at the bedroom door, then at Gracie.

DENNY
 What did Jenny and Robby say?

GRACIE
 Said that I had to move.

Denny SLUMPS in disappointment.

DENNY
 (whispering to BEA)
 This drama therapy thing isn't
 working like we'd hoped.
 (aloud to Gracie)
 Whatever you say, Sweetie.

SALLY
 Where is that house inspector? He
 was supposed to be here.

BEA
 (to Denny)
 Daddy, it's not Winston's fault. We
 didn't have a calm environment for
 effective drama therapy.

DENNY
 Drama therapy, witch doctor, psycho-
 medicine man, whatever. Okay, I'll
 play along. Let's look for the
 first sign of calm, but I can't
 believe you are falling for this
 unscientific nonsense.

BEA

I'm just keeping an open mind,
Daddy, that's all, for Winston's
sake, and for Mom's sake.

DENNY

An open mind is fertile ground.
(mumbles)
But so is a field of horse poop.

Young Jenny PULLS Robby through the upstairs door. Everyone HEARS the door open and shut, but no one HEARS or SEES the hippies.

YOUNG JENNY

Got it? All we have to do is
sabotage the sale of the home.

YOUNG ROBBY

Got it. Leave it to me.

YOUNG JENNY

Remember, only subtle hints.

The Doorbell RINGS. Gracie ANSWERS the door. Bea and Denny MEET privately behind his recliner. Young Jenny RACES to the door to see the handsome young man, DILLON DANIELS, 30, in dirty workman's overalls.

GRACIE

Come in. You must be the inspector.

YOUNG JENNY

Wow! He can inspect me any time!

YOUNG ROBBY

Very subtle.

DILLON

Hi, Mrs. C, Dillon Daniels here.
You can't be too careful though
with that Bling-'n-Bobble Burglar
on the loose. Don't you recognize
me? You were my baby-sitter right
here when I was five years old.

GRACIE

Why, yes, Dillon Daniels. That was
only for one school year, while
your mom worked. Then you moved to
Big City. How's your mom?

DILLON
She loves her new retirement
community in Big City.

SALLY
See! I really need y'all to sign
that inspection sheet, so we can
sell this place to Mr. Dooley.

DILLON
Yes, ma'am. If you don't mind, I'll
poke around. Done in no time.

Dillon SEES Bea, and he is SMITTEN.

DILLON (CONT'D)
Bea-Wee! Nice to see you again.

Bea is SHOCKED that Dillon is handsome.

Gracie NEGLECTS to shut the front door all the way.

BEA
Dill Pickle? The poor homely kid?

DILLON
It's me. Still poor and homely.

BEA
Oh Dillon, I didn't mean that. It
slipped out. You're not the kid I
remember. You remember my dad?

DILLON
Of course. Hi, Dr. C. I still
remember those horrible chemistry
jokes. Why did the sodium chloride
get arrested? Assault.

DENNY
I remember you well. You and my
daughter were two peas in a pod.

BEA
This is my friend, Winston Gables.

DILLON
Nice to meet you, sir.

WINSTON
Ah. Respect.

BEA

And I assume you know the realtor,
Sally, and this is our prospective
home buyer, Tad Dooley.

Denny SLUMPS again after hearing the words 'home buyer.'

Dillon SMELLS the Christmas tree and SMILES. Then he SPOTS
the roses and DASHES over to SMELL them.

DILLON

Hello, everyone. What a great
Christmas tree and beautiful roses.
Roses last forever, ya know. Hey,
Bea-Wee, you and I were at the same
Halloween party. I saw you, but you
probably didn't see me. I was a
ghost. You were the pregnant nun
and your friend, Winston, was
dressed as the Three Musketeers.
Very dramatic costume, Winston.

Winston proudly moves between Bea and Dillon.

WINSTON

I saw you. You had on a white sheet
over your head, and a huge colorful
box around your waist and legs. I
didn't get it.

BEA

Winston, Dillon was obviously
dressed as a literary pun.

(beat)

The Ghost of Christmas Present,
from Charles Dickens.

DILLON

Right you are, Bea-Wee. Nobody got
it. Had to explain it all night. I
was too shy to re-introduced myself
to you. Besides, I was outnumbered
three to one by the Musketeers, and
couldn't use my never-aloud pickup
lines.

BEA

Your never-aloud pickup lines?

DILLON

Yes, like, 'Did I scare the Dickens out of you?' Or 'I can't tell your future, but how would you like to make it in the present?' I would never say them aloud, because pickup lines are degrading.

SALLY

Right. That's why y'all are still single. And you're not rich, so bye-bye. Don't y'all have an inspection to complete?

DILLON

Right. Shouldn't take long. I'll start poking around upstairs.

Denny, Gracie, and Tad immediately LOOK upstairs. Young Jenny RACES upstairs, stopping at the top to look down.

DENNY & GRACIE

No!

DENNY

Why not start in the kitchen?

DILLON

The kitchen it is. Aside from the gas-log fireplace, Dr. C. and Mrs. C., why are selling this comfortable country cottage?

WINSTON

Mrs. Collins needs the hustle and bustle of Big City. Nightlife. The theater.

GRACIE

It's the same retirement village as Dillon's mother. I need a change.

SALLY

Change is good, but large bills are better. Get on with the inspection.

Dillon STOPS before he exits to the kitchen. Winston NUDGES closer to Bea, who is EYEING Dillon. Dillon LEAPS back to Bea, and GRABS her two hands.

DILLON

Bea-Wee, at the Halloween party, I really thought you were pregnant and I didn't want to step between you and your Three Musketeers.

BEA

Winston and I are...

GRACIE

(interrupting)

Engaged. And she is pregnant. She told us earlier this evening.

BEA

What? Mom? I told you that earlier, but...

YOUNG JENNY

(interrupting)

Your kind of girl, Robby.

DILLON

(to BEA)

You forgot that you were engaged and pregnant?

Bea's ATTENTION turns to her mother's failing memory, as Dillon SULKS toward the kitchen FOLLOWED by Gracie.

GRACIE

Dilbert, I'll show the kitchen.

BEA

(to Denny)

Oh no! Mom called Dillon 'Dilbert,' and she forgot what I told her less than an hour ago. Rapid short-term memory loss. Maybe she's getting Alzheimer's.

DENNY

Her memory was flawless yesterday. Maybe she's tired and nervous about selling our home. In any case, I don't see how Winston's drama therapy can help.

The wind SLAMS the front door that Gracie left open. Everyone LOOKS at the door.

SALLY

What's going on here? Is y'all's place haunted or something?

(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

Don't believe it Tad.

(flirting with Denny)

Mr. Collins is just hesitant to sell. It'll pass like a bean burrito. You'll sell, won't ya Sugar? It's not haunted, is it?

Denny LOOKS upstairs.

DENNY

Just by memories. Gracie and I have two best friends since high school. They call and visit frequently, and stay upstairs in the guest bedroom. They're both suffering from soured marriages, but we love them, despite their immature antics. You'll see. They've invited themselves up from Big City for a holiday drink.

Young Jenny and Young Robby PANIC.

YOUNG JENNY

What? We can't see ourselves in the future. It would be disastrous!

YOUNG ROBBY

Or deeply depressing!

WINSTON

It sounds like they act out youthful fantasies to postpone the inevitable. We call that "Rejuvenalization."

DENNY

Rejuvenalization or not! At times I see a young, wild Robby Bellini in his red rock 'n roll tie-dye T-shirt, torn blue jeans, and tall leather moccasin-type boots so real that I could touch him with his hippie Don Juan look and carefree attitude. And I see our semi-spoiled friend, Jenny Sheriton in bell-bottom dungarees and a white peasant blouse with her teasing, gold-digging ways. They're trouble, I tell you! You'll see!

BEA

Daddy, you're scaring our guests. We're trying to stay calm.

(MORE)

BEA (CONT'D)

Can I talk to you upstairs in the
guest bedroom, in private?

Denny WANDERS about the room and appears momentarily
unstable. Bea DRAGS him upstairs and INTO the guest room.

Sally HOLDS her head as a tension headache develops. She
NOTICES Bea's purse. Young Jenny POSITIONS it so Sally sees
the aspirin bottle.

SALLY

Young Mr. Gables and I don't see
any hippies. Mr. Dooley will buy
this place if that inspector ever
finishes. It's giving me such a
headache. And there is always an
aspirin in a woman's purse.

WINSTON

I agree. Hand me one of those
aspirins. I like Bridget, but her
parents appear, well, unstable with
this talk about hippies. For a
chemist, his equations seem out of
balance.

Sally and Winston SWALLOW a pill. Sally LOOKS at Tad, who
LOOKS like he could use as aspirin too. Young Jenny LAUGHS.

SALLY

Tad, take an aspirin.

TAD

Can I have two?

SALLY

You're the customer.

Sally RETURNS the pill bottle to Bea's purse and a few
seconds later, all three are in a TRANCE-LIKE STATE on the
couch STARING at Young Jenny and Young Robby, dressed exactly
as described by Denny.

YOUNG JENNY

You don't want this house. It's
haunted.

YOUNG ROBBY

Go home to Big City.

Young Jenny FLIRTS with Tad and Winston. Young Robby SITS
next to Sally and PUTS his arm around her.

YOUNG ROBBY (CONT'D)

If I told ya you had a nice body,
would you hold it against me? Did
Denny tell you about me, the
Italian Stallion! Robby Heart-
thRobby! The Bellini Supremey?

SALLY

Denny described you perfectly as
two young hippie trouble-makers,
but it won't work. You and your old-
lady floozy can hightail it back to
your love generation.

YOUNG JENNY

You must be wasted. I'm not his old
lady. He only wishes. I'm too much
woman for him, and those two boys
you're with look too stoned to do
me any good.

Young Jenny SQUEEZES between Tad and Winston on the couch.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Jenny. Either of you rich?

TAD

Hi, I Dream of Jenny. Ha! Get it? I
Dream of Jenny, like Jeanie.

WINSTON

Miss Jenny, I'm Winston Gables, of
the Hampton Gables.

YOUNG JENNY

Whatcha do for a living, Winston?

WINSTON

I'm a certified Drama Therapist.

JENNY

So, you don't have to work.
Inheritance, huh? Me too.

WINSTON

You're exactly right. Children from
well-do-to parents understand each
other. Are those diamond earrings?

Gracie and Dillon ENTER from the kitchen. They cannot SEE or
HEAR Young Robby and Young Jenny.

SALLY

(looking in Robby's and
Dillon's direction)

Play your cards right, and you just
might get lucky tonight, kid, I'm
feeling a little frisky, and we
could go out on the town with the
eight percent commission on the
house I get from Tad here, or
anything else I can get my hands
on.

Tad HOLDS his stomach in sudden discomfort. Then Winston
GRABS his stomach. Then Sally GRABS her stomach.

TAD

Enjoyed meeting you. I'll be in the
bathroom if anyone needs me.

GRACIE

It's just down the hall and to your
right. Can I bring you anything?

TAD

Air freshener, extra toilet paper,
a long novel perhaps.

WINSTON

That's odd! I have to go too.
Please hurry, Mr. Dooley.

SALLY

Very odd. I'm right behind y'all.
Do y'all have another bathroom?
Didn't see one poking around.

GRACIE

One always seemed enough.

YOUNG JENNY

Wish we could stay down here at
your little porta-party, but we're
running out of time.

Tad, Winston, and Sally HEAD to the bathroom.

Young Jenny DRAGS Young Robby to the upstairs bedroom door.
Seconds later, Denny and Bea COME OUT and HEAD downstairs as
Dillon STARES longingly at Bea.

DENNY

How's the inspection going?

DILLON

Fine, Dr. C. No structural weakness, and only a few minor pests, but you have slightly low water pressure in the bathroom.

DENNY

(looks upstairs)

Do you think the pests caused the low water pressure?

BEA

Daddy, be nice! Where are our guests, Mom?

GRACIE

Lined up to test our water pressure. Something they ate?

DILLON

Bea-Wee, remember when you and I were five years old, and we had the chicken pox together, so Dr. C. had us take an oatmeal bath together, and you asked for maple syrup?

BEA

How can you possibly remember that long ago? My memory is spottier, and I study the memory. Can I get a blood sample from you?

DILLON

I remember like it was yesterday. Your Princess Barbie room, your Easy Bake oven, your eyes, your smile. I remember you tried to make me a chocolate chip cookie in your little oven and the light bulb burned out. You cried, and I ate the dough to make you feel better.

GRACIE

Dillon, you're just as bad as Denny. He remembers every date that we ever had, and every one of our 'firsts;' first hug, first kiss, first, we'll you know. He brings up memories as easy as burps.

Bea HUGS her dad.

BEA

That's Daddy, a hopeless romantic.

DILLON
 You mean, hopeful romantic, don't
 you?

GRACIE
 See what I mean? Dillon, dear, why
 don't you finish the inspection?
 I'll check on our guests.

Gracie RACES toward the bathroom.

DENNY
 You have a great memory Dillon.
 Remember who puts the kids to sleep
 and delivers colorful baskets full
 of chocolates in spring?

DILLON
 Yes, sir, the Ether Bunny.

BEA
 Do remember all of Daddy's silly
 chemistry jokes?

DILLON
 Happy times. We should remember
 best -- the best life has to offer.

DENNY
 Bea, I'm sure Dillon needs to
 inspect the attic. Show him where
 the crawl space is in the guest
 bedroom?

BEA
 Okay, but I hope he finds rats, so
 we can't sell the house.

DENNY
 I'll get some cheese.

Denny HEADS to the kitchen.

Bea LEADS Dillon to the top of the stairs, but STOPS short of
 the guest bedroom. Bea TURNS and SITS at the top of the
 stairs.

BEA
 Dillon, I'm not engaged or
 pregnant. I'm just seeing Winston.
 It's only our third date.

DILLON

Good! How can you possibly know someone before dozens of dates? Is this your third date including the Halloween party?

BEA

Including the Halloween party.

DILLON

There were three of him that night. Did that count as three dates?

BEA

Dillon, be serious! Mom didn't know what she was saying when she told you I was pregnant and engaged. Her memory has been on the fritz. She tried Winston's drama therapy, but it didn't work.

DILLON

Imagine that! And so many Hollywood movie stars depend on it.

BEA

Drama therapy confused her somehow. Was supposed to help her remember all the good times in this home, and rekindle the fire in her heart for my dad.

DILLON

Your mom's just stressed about selling the home. She's not losing her memory. She stopped calling me Dilbert, Darwin, and Daren.

BEA

Winston and I have really messed things up. She's more intent on selling the house, and Daddy will go along with it, even if it breaks his heart.

Denny RETURNS from the kitchen with a plate of cheese chunks and starts TOSSING them around the room.

DENNY

Bea, I'll bet my cheese is more helpful than drama therapy. Whatever our guests ate is keeping them lined up at the bathroom.

DILLON
How can I help, Dr. C.?

DENNY
(jokingly)
Find some rats or termites in the attic, and hide the toilet plunger. Just kidding. Do your regular inspection. Spreading the cheese was just for fun.

DILLON
You got it Dr. C. I have to be honest about my work. I have to call a spade, a spade; dry rot, *Serpula lacrymans*; and termites, *Coptotermes formosanus*, if that's what I see.

Bea does a little FLIRTING of her own.

BEA
Dillon, I'd love it if you reported a little more than you see with those lovely eyes of yours. Who's to say whether a ter-mite or might not?

DILLON
Good one Bea-Wee, but it's already a little strange around here. Lying would only add to the confusion.

Dillon and Bea HEAD into the upstairs guest bedroom as Gracie RE-ENTERS the family room with a WORRIED look.

GRACIE
Our guests keep coming out of the bathroom and getting right back in line. Do you think we should have added a second bathroom years ago?

DENNY
Should have added a pay toilet.

GRACIE
How is the house inspection going? Dillon seems to have grown up into a nice young man.

DENNY
Yes, an honest house inspector. Don't worry. The home will sell.

Gracie gives Denny a small HUG.

GRACIE

Thank you for supporting me. It's been a confusing night. I do hope you and Bea are okay with selling this old house. I'm happy for Bea, her fiancé, and baby on the way, and I want you and I to try Winston's drama therapy again tonight, so he knows we love him.

DENNY

But, she's not preg...

GRACIE

(interrupting)

I know Winston needs a calm environment to work, and I don't see how it could get anymore hectic around here.

We hear a '59 Chevy motor ROAR outside.

DENNY

Gracie, Sweetie, I hear the unmistakable roar of the Chevy!

Denny races to the front door, and swings it open.

DENNY (CONT'D)

That's Robby and Jenny. There goes any chance of calm.

GRACIE

Oh dear, not now. I didn't think they would get here until the buyer, the realtor, and the inspector were gone.

DENNY

No problem, Sweetie. One weak holiday drink each, and they'll be back on the road to Big City.

GRACIE

Good idea, dear. One quick watered-down holiday drink, then off they go. Wise friends make safe roads. We can't just rush them.

Older ROBBY BELLINI (60), BURSTS in the door with a SMILE. He is in terminal mid-life crisis, dressed like a pimp on the prowl. Jenny Sheriton, (60), who has had as many plastic surgeries as husbands, also is FILLED with lovable SMILES.

ROBBY

Hey Collins, how's it hanging?
Merry Christmas. Get me a beer. I
totally restored the Chevy. It
reminded Jenny of Blood, Sweat, and
Tears.

DENNY

Or Burritos, Sweat, and Beers?
Merry Christmas, you two.

ROBBY

Hey Collins, make it two brewskies.
I'm feeling lucky tonight.

JENNY

Robby, you freak, this isn't a
date. You're not getting me for
Christmas. Hi Denny! Your perverted
pauper idiot friend brought me here
to buffer the news about selling
this shack. Poor Gracie. But, all
Robby talked about all night was
the Viagra he took.

Everyone STARES at Robby's groin.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I'd sue for false advertising. Hi,
Gracie, darling, I agree with you.
Denny, dear, bring me a double
scotch, no ice. Where's my
goddaughter the drug-doctor? Why
didn't she become a plastic
surgeon? My ex-husbands could have
sent the alimony checks directly to
her.

DENNY

It's good that you two could visit
on the Night of One True Love. I'll
get the drinks.

Denny SCURRIES to the kitchen.

JENNY

Your old man's pretty calm for you
selling the house right from under
his feet and moving to Big City.

GRACIE

Yes, he even stayed calm when Bea said she was pregnant and engaged.

JENNY

My goddaughter's pregnant? And Engaged? Poor thing! Where is she?

GRACIE

She's up in the guest bedroom with the house inspector.

ROBBY

I'll kill him! Where's my beer? Does Collins know? Who does this guy think he is?

GRACIE

Her fiancé is Winston Gables. He's second in line at the bathroom. Diarrhea.

Jenny SEES the roses and WANDERS over to them.

JENNY

Winston Gables of the Hampton Gables? Can I have him when she's through with him? Rich people get indigestion, not diarrhea. Nice roses! I wish they lasted longer.

ROBBY

Wait a minute! You mean Bea's up in the bedroom with some other guy, while the guy who knocked her up is taking a dump?

GRACIE

I'll see how the poor dear is doing.

ROBBY

He's doing all right. Doing, doing, and doing. Good thing ya got roses.

Gracie EXITS toward the bathroom, while Denny ENTERS from the kitchen with a beer and a small glass of scotch.

JENNY

So, Collins, you don't mind that your daughter is knocked up, and engaged to the richest family in the Hamptons?

DENNY

Bea is not pregnant or engaged. Bea was pulling our leg earlier tonight. Gracie is a little confused, that's all. It's Bea's third date with Winston. Bea is helping the house inspector. They're old friends. They used to bathe together.

JENNY

You're being far too understanding tonight, Denny. My goddaughter wouldn't bathe with strange men. Have you been hitting the hooch?

DENNY

Half a glass of wine. They were kids in Gracie's day care.

ROBBY

Half a glass of wine? You party animal, Collins. No wonder you're not fighting the move. The night life is calling you. You devil!

JENNY

Do you have anymore scotch? My glass leaked.

ROBBY

I could use another brewsky, Collins. Make it three. I'm hoping to get lucky.

Robby CHECKS his crotch. He winks at Jenny, who ROLLS HER EYES.

JENNY

You're not getting lucky, you freak, and you're the designated driver, remember.

ROBBY

Make it two beers, Collins. I've been designated to drive women wild. And they have a guest bedroom, Sheriton. You'd think you'd be a little looser after three marriages.

JENNY

Forget about it, Robby. Denny, dear, my glass has a crack in it.

DENNY

I'll get the drinks, but Gracie wants to concentrate on selling the house. The buyer and realtor are here. Here she comes, she'll fill you in. I guess we're moving.

Denny RUSHES out, as Gracie RACES in from the same hallway.

GRACIE

I'd like you to meet my realtor.

Sally and Tad ENTER the room, HOLDING their stomachs in slight pain. They COLLAPSE into the recliners.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Sally Swift and Mr. Tad Dooley, these are our dearest friends, Jenny Sheriton and Robby Bellini from Big City.

Robby HOPS over to schmooze with Sally.

ROBBY

Call me Robby. And call me again if your husband gets hit by a bus.

SALLY

Oh, I'm not married, Sugar.

JENNY

I know you, Ms. Swift. And you knew my lying, cheating, second husband. No hard feelings. There was nothing hard on that man, and your deal on our house during the divorce was amazing. I got it all.

SALLY

I don't remember selling y'all's house. Was that a while ago?

JENNY

One husband ago for me, and about two cup sizes ago for you.

TAD

Cups of what, Ms. Sheriton?

GRACIE

I'm sorry Tad. She doesn't mean anything by it. She needs more scotch. Calms her down.

SALLY

(turning to Robby)

This is strange. I saw you here earlier tonight as a young man.

TAD

The lady was here too, but younger and sweeter. Both looked about twenty.

ROBBY

I'll have whatever they've been drinking or smoking.

Denny ENTERS from the kitchen carrying a bottle of beer for Robby and a taller glass of scotch for Jenny.

DENNY

I see everyone's getting along. Can I get anyone a drink? Dessert?

Winston RETURNS from the bathroom HOLDING his stomach.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Can I get anyone anything else; refried beans? Green apples? Tall glass of prune juice?

Winston GRABS his stomach and RACES back to the bathroom.

GRACIE

Bea's fiancé has indigestion.

ROBBY

Hot to trot, hey? Our little girl can sure pick 'em. Did she fall in freakin' love at first sight like Collins did with you?

GRACIE

Three dates. I'd call that impulsive.

JENNY

About as impulsive as selling your home at Christmas? That gas-log fireplace evaporated my scotch. Gracie?

GRACIE

(ignoring Jenny, to Sally)
I'm glad Mr. Dooley wants the house.

(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

The retirement village in Big City
will be closer to Bea and our
friends, here.

Sally STARES at Robby and Jenny and remembers the hippies.

SALLY

(to Robby)

Now I remember! You were dressed in
a red rock 'n roll tie-dye T-shirt,
blue jeans, and tall moccasin
boots.

(to Jenny)

And you were in bell-bottom
dungarees and a white peasant
blouse hung off your shoulders.

DENNY

Perhaps it's only that I described
them to you earlier.

TAD

But they're so old now.

JENNY

Get rid of this guy will you.

Bea BOUNCES in from the upstairs guest bedroom.

BEA

Uncle Robby, Aunt Jenny, I thought
I heard your voices. Thank you for
coming. Selling a home is stressful
and I thought you should be here.

ROBBY

There's my little drug doctor.

BEA

You've met everyone?

JENNY

Yes, Darling, including your rich
fiancé, Winston Gables. He's
perfect. Handsome, employed...

ROBBY

(interrupting)

Hunched over in pain, taking dump
after dump. He's a keeper.

BEA

He has a great sense of humor. He helped me with a little charade tonight. I announced I was pregnant and engaged.

GRACIE

You're not pregnant?

BEA

Mom, I told you that I was joking.

JENNY

But engaged, right? The Hamptons, old money, new drinks, unlimited plastic surgeries, no need to work.

BEA

Aunt Jenny, I love my work. I help people with memory problems.

JENNY

I don't want to remember my husbands, Darling. As long as they remember the alimony checks. Denny? Scotch?

DENNY

Jenny? What did you and the Italian Stallion plan on accomplishing?

ROBBY

We're here for immoral support. I brought the Viagra.

JENNY

To help you decide to move. This is no life for Gracie. Death by boredom. Who'd buy this dump?

TAD

I will. But, speaking of dump, I need to tour the facilities.

Tad STUMBLES to the bathroom.

Sally grips her stomach in pain.

SALLY

(to Robby)

You're obviously about 60, but I can't help seeing you as a young hippie. I'm not up for a wild Christmas party.

ROBBY

Don't worry, honey, I'm up for one.

Winston HOLDS his stomach as he RETURNS from the bathroom.

WINSTON

(to Jenny)

I feel like I've entered a time warp, but I believe I've met you before, but you looked twenty.

Jenny SWOONS and NUDGES closer to Winston.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

My mind is tricking me into seeing this woman as younger, nubile, and wanton.

Jenny SWOONS more.

BEA

(looking at her purse)

The mind plays tricks at times.

SALLY

I'd swear they were younger too!

BEA

We all have temporary lapses of selective memory, recalling people, places, and events that please us.

WINSTON

That's the power of drama therapy. Dr. Collins, Mrs. Collins, drama therapy can make you feel younger.

DENNY

Winston, drama therapy may be helpful to some, but such claims must be fully tested under carefully controlled conditions to be proven scientifically.

Dillon INSPECTS the walls with a flashlight, LISTENING in.

GRACIE

My future son-in-law, Weston, is right. Let's try drama therapy.

BEA

Weston, Mom?

Bea looks PUZZLED at her mom's memory issues. Dillon LOOKS SADLY at Bea and EXITS.

WINSTON

It's Winston, Mrs. Collins. But if everyone commits to maintaining a P-C-E, perfectly calm environment, then I'm willing to try a D-R, Dramatic Reenactment, of the night you met your husband.

DENNY

A dramatic reenactment? Okay, if it'll help Gracie.

GRACIE

Will costumes help? Denny and I kept some of our old clothes.

BEA

I'll grab candles. We have lots of old records. This could be fun.

JENNY

Collins, we'll need a few more drinks to imagine away the last forty years. Snap to it. We've got a dramatic reenactment to perform.

SALLY

Taking a walk down memory lane isn't good for selling the house. Mr. Dooley and I will have no part in this charade.

GRACIE

(angry)

Oh yes you will, or we're not selling! You'll be convincing participants in the drama reenactment, costumes and all. I owe it to my husband. If Winston and Bea think that drama therapy will settle my feelings, we will do it, and so shall you!

JENNY

On second thought, this is crazy! Who wants to return to nineteen-seventy-one? My boobs will shrink. Not as bad as Sally's, but...

WINSTON

(interrupting)

Ms. Sheriton, it's important to 'Share esteem for self-esteem and share the stage to live your dream.' Let's decorate, get into costume, and meet back here in fifteen minutes.

DENNY

I'm exhausted and getting a headache. Any aspirin handy?

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD BY COLLINS DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

OFFICER PATTY BLACK, a feisty big-boned African-American policewoman, SITS in her squad car TYPING into a laptop computer. She IGNORES her RADIO update from a male DETECTIVE (50) at headquarters in Big City.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

Officer Black, have you been listening? The Bling-'n-Bobble Burglar may strike in the country next.

OFFICER PATTY

I'm listening. Ten whatever.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

He or she could sneak into a wild Christmas party without even being seen. Like that Halloween party.

OFFICER PATTY

Those photos you sent were horrible. Everybody was in costume.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

Like you always say, 'Everyone is a suspect.' Especially at wild parties.

OFFICER PATTY

I'm well aware of that. Folks in the country may not have expensive jewels, but they throw some weird holiday parties.

Officer Patty LOOKS DOWN the Collins's driveway to SEE an unusual assortment cars and trucks.

BACK TO:

INT. COLLINS HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

We see a hastily decorated family room as a HIPPIE PARTY. The lights are dimmed, CANDLES are burning. An old record plays "I Feel the Earth Move" - by Carol King. All wear typical seventies dress. Denny has a sash for a belt. Tad in a tie-dye T-shirt, and Sally in a frumpy peasant frock clashing with her high heels.

DENNY

Ms. Swift, thanks for the aspirin.
You women are so much more prepared
than men.

SALLY

Women are always prepared, Sugar.

Tad and Sally CAST their eyes briefly at Bea's purse. Denny is holding a PILL.

DENNY

(to Sally)

All so Gracie feels right about selling our home. She wants to be receptive to our daughter's new boyfriend, and he's anxious to show everyone that drama therapy is the cornerstone to cerebral wellness. So, we'll reenact the night we met in nineteen-seventy-one, we'll say that as long as we're together, where we live isn't important, and that will be that. Gracie will feel fine about selling the house. Winston will feel great about his chosen career. Bea will feel fine about Winston. Jenny and Robby will be happy just to get another drink. Tad will get the house, and you'll get the commission.

SALLY

What could go wrong, y'all?

Denny SWALLOWS the pill.

Robby ENTERS from the kitchen wearing a red rock 'n roll tie-dye T-shirt, torn blue jeans, and leather moccasins.

Winston is UNCHANGED.

ROBBY

Check out the Italian Stallion. The duds shrunk a little.

DENNY

Or the dude expanded. Robby, you look great. I remember that look like it was yesterday. Winston, are you not dressing up?

WINSTON

I'm the director, or D-R-F, Drama Reenactment Facilitator, the tour guide to self-realization.

DENNY

Mr. Director, you don't mind if I mostly sit back in my recliner and build my self-esteem by osmosis?

TAD

What the heck is osmosis?

DENNY

Active absorption across membranes.

SALLY

It's not the "men brains" that are their most active parts anyway.

Denny FADES quickly into a TRANCE-LIKE state.

DENNY

Not men brains, it's active absorption across...

Gracie and Bea ENTER arm-in-arm from the kitchen hallway.

GRACIE

I see Denny's fallen asleep through his own Night of One True Love. You all make wonderful hippies.

BEA

Daddy, wake up! Uncle Robby, you look great. Aunt Jenny will be down in a minute.

WINSTON

Places everyone. Places on the set! You all look marvelous.

(MORE)

WINSTON (CONT'D)

Drift back to nineteen-seventy-one.
Cue the old records.

DENNY

Just resting my eyes. Duh, it's
nineteen-seventy-one, and I OD'd on
a half a glass of wine.

BEA

This is wildly fun, playing dress-
up in my parent's old hippie
clothes. How do I look, Winston?

WINSTON

This is not about personal looks.
It's a professional dramatic
reenactment. Now everyone, take
your places.

Bea is mildly DISAPPOINTED with Winston.

ROBBY

We don't know where our places are,
you idiot. Are you on some kind of
power trip like Nixon was?

WINSTON

Good job, Mr. Bellini! That's the
spirit! Right! Nixon! Good one.

Older Jenny OPENS the upstairs bedroom door and WALKS
GRACEFULLY down the stairs.

ROBBY

Wow, Sheriton, you look amazing.
Far out. You haven't aged a minute,
and this isn't the beer talking. If
it was the beer talking, you'd be
making my bud-wiser. Your Heine-ken
sit on me anytime. You're good for
what ails me.

(points to the roses)

I got you these roses for ya. They
last forever.

BEA

Geez, Winston, did you hear that?
Why didn't you react that way when
I came in the room bra-less?

JENNY

Hey Robby, you look pretty handsome
yourself. I remember that old red T-
shirt. Good job, Winston.

WINSTON

Please everyone. Listen for your direction here. Dr. Collins will now set the stage, as it were.

GRACIE

Winston, we have two Dr. Collins's in the house.

WINSTON

Oh yes, I'm sorry, I meant no disrespect, Bridget. Can I call you Denny, sir?

DENNY

I'm no doctor. I'm in junior college, dude. Far out, it's nineteen-seventy-one.

Bea PLAYS a record, 'Maggie May' by Rod Stewart. Upon HEARING the music, Young Robby and Young Jenny ENTER from the upstairs guest bedroom door. Only Denny can HEAR and SEE them.

YOUNG ROBBY

Hey, Collins, where have you been?

YOUNG JENNY

Why do you stay here with these funky country people, and some weird old people dressed like us? There's a wild holiday party upstairs.

Denny looks around with his head spinning.

DENNY

Wow! Robby and Jenny, it's so good to see you again. Young and old. Jenny and Robby. Robby and Jenny.

JENNY

Sure, we've gained a few pounds, Denny...

YOUNG JENNY

(interrupting)

You're freaking us out, Collins. Let's split before Robby hooks up with the cute bra-less chick. They crashing our party, dude?

WINSTON

Okay, Denny, set the stage for us. It's a party right, December fifteenth, nineteen-seventy-one. Many attractive young people are seeking self-esteem.

DENNY

Like looking into the future.

GRACIE

You've missed the entire point, Denny, as usual. This is the past.

YOUNG JENNY

Two of these old folks look eerily familiar, but looks like their time has run out.

YOUNG ROBBY

Dump these old broads, Denny, and let's move. What do ya say?

WINSTON

Denny is alone and lonely, and Gracie needs to meet him on this so-called Night of One True Love.

YOUNG JENNY

Wait! Maybe this dork in the monkey suit knows what he's talking about.

GRACIE

I was hoping to meet a young, vibrant man tonight, energetic and full of life, not someone slumped in a recliner, and incapacitated by a half a glass of wine.

DENNY

(groggy, to Gracie)

I'm not moving. Love is for the warm and willing. I'm warm if she's willing.

GRACIE

(sarcastically)

Isn't that sweet?

YOUNG JENNY

Isn't that disgusting, pandering to a cradle-robbing old lady? She's old enough to be your mother.

ROBBY

(at old and young Jenny)
 Yep. Gracie's looking pretty hot tonight, while Denny looks like a wasted bag of horse poop. But, my eyes are glued to that red-hot chick, Jenny Sheriton.

JENNY & YOUNG JENNY

Dirty old man!

YOUNG ROBBY

That's what you get for shaking that booty at the old folks' home.

DENNY

We're too young for the old folks' home. I'm not moving!

GRACIE

It's not an old folks' home, it's a young retirement community. Do we have anything in common anymore?

BEA

You have me!

WINSTON

Wonderful participation. Sally, Tad, join in. Dance or something.

Winston PUTS on a record, 'Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?' ~ by Chicago.

YOUNG ROBBY

This is like a bad Twilight Zone.

SALLY

Denny, you'd better move your butt, or you may lose Gracie forever.

YOUNG JENNY

The old trailer-trash-babe's right.

TAD

I feel a little gassy. Mind if I step out for a minute?

YOUNG ROBBY

Hey, Jenny, that's the guy for you. Rich real estate investor, gassy!

GRACIE

Mr. Dooley, go look around. It's gonna be your home soon, anyway!

Tad STEALTHILY SLIPS out to the bedroom hallway.

Old Jenny whispers to old Robby.

JENNY

Robby, we're running out of time to sabotage the sale of the home.

Young Jenny FOLLOWS Tad into to bedroom hallway.

DENNY

I don't trust him. He looks gassy.

SALLY

Mr. Collins, Sugar, Mr. Dooley offered to put down ten-thousand dollars cash as earnest money, but I trusted him.

GRACIE

Denny, what's gotten into you? You've become jaded.

BEA

He's just tired, that's all!

WINSTON

I'll remind everyone, we're trying to build each other's self-esteem. Positive comments only, please.

ROBBY & YOUNG ROBBY

Lighten up, Winston!

YOUNG ROBBY

Right on, older hippie dude.

JENNY

Wow, Robby, you sound just like you did decades ago.

YOUNG ROBBY

I wasn't born decades ago. You old people must be wasted.

SALLY

Winston, what should I be doing? A flower power hippie dance?

JENNY

Good idea. Like a party. I get it.

Sally DANCES in front of Denny, to SEDUCE him into selling the house.

Jenny DANCES SEDUCTIVELY in front of Robby and Young Robby.

ROBBY & YOUNG ROBBY

Shake it, don't break it, baby.

Puzzled, Young Robby still DOESN'T RECOGNIZE old Robby.

BEA

Winston, I'm not sure how any of this helps to raise self-esteem.

Winston ENJOYS the dancing. Young Jenny RUSHES IN from the bedroom.

YOUNG JENNY

You were right-on Robby, that Tad dude was gassy.

Young Jenny begins to DANCE SEDUCTIVELY next to the older Jenny in remarkably similar motions.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)

(whispering to Denny)

Denny, that older floozy is after your family jewels.

DENNY

(stands abruptly)

No one gets my family jewels tonight!

GRACIE

Ms. Swift is just acting her part, Denny. I'm sure she isn't after your family jewels.

ROBBY

Jenny, how about going after my family jewels tonight?

JENNY & YOUNG JENNY

Drop dead, pervert!

Robby and Young Robby begin DANCING with the Jennies, again in remarkably similar motions.

BEA

Winston? Don't see how any of this is helping.

WINSTON

Needs a perfectly calm environment.

YOUNG ROBBY

If these old people want a calm party, they're psycho.

YOUNG JENNY

Robby, we're out of time. Denny is coming to.

Young Jenny GETS IN Denny's face.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)

Collins, you need to go after the woman of your dreams, or you'll lose her forever!

Denny is GROGGY and inadvertently STARING at Sally, who is still dancing seductively before him.

DENNY

Woman of my dreams is right here!

Gracie EYES Denny for making a move for Sally.

Young Robby and Young Jenny hop upstairs SHAKING their heads. At the top of the stairs, they STOP and LOOK DOWN.

YOUNG ROBBY

Wish we could help Collins.

YOUNG JENNY

We're not full-time figments. Unless someone whips up a dream, or takes drugs, we're out of here. Denny's on his own.

YOUNG ROBBY

For such a bright guy, he sure is an idiot tonight.

Young Robby and Young Jenny SHAKE their heads in disgust, and EXIT into the upstairs guest bedroom.

Gracie STOPS the music. Everyone STOPS DANCING as Denny SNAPS out of his trance.

GRACIE

Winston, Bea, Denny, maybe we should try drama therapy again later when it's more peaceful around here.

DENNY

Fine idea. I was a little tired. Excuse me, I have to go.

GRACIE

Denny, go ahead. Run. Run out on us. This is only the most important decision we'll make in decades, and you want to go.

DENNY

Gracie, I have to go to the bathroom. Did you have to use that many runs? I would have expected something more sarcastic from you like 'A man's gotta do, when a man's gotta do.' Or 'Check your punctuation, I think you're overdoing your colon.'

Denny RACES to the bathroom.

GRACIE

You're being a royal pain in the butt tonight. You deserves a king-sized case of diarrhea.

BEA

Mom, don't get into another sarcastic joke fight with Daddy. One day, you and Daddy are going to take your jabs seriously. Winston, I'm sorry, this isn't like my parents.

GRACIE

I'm sorry everyone, we joke back and forth, but it doesn't last long. I'm upset. I'll apologize to Denny, and bring everyone hot tea.

Gracie HEADS toward the kitchen. Bea and Winston MOPE.

JENNY

Never seen one of Denny and Gracie's sarcastic joke fights.

(MORE)

JENNY (CONT'D)

It's milder than my husbands' fights where we threw china and crystal instead of sarcasm, but glasses and dishes end up in the garbage can, while cuts from sharpened humor might leave lasting scars. I could use a little scotch.

ROBBY

Never seen either of them mad, except the night Denny gave Gracie the sumo suit, but hey, it's Christmas. Let's party. Get me another beer.

Sadly, Tad trudges in from the bathroom hallway.

SALLY

What's the matter Mr. Dooley? Are the rooms too small?

TAD

Only had a second to look. Been in the bathroom all night.

BEA

Take my word for it. It's a loving house. A very loving house.

TAD

I may need to lie down.

BEA

Try my parents' room. I guess you've got to try it to buy it.

WINSTON

What was that, Bridget?

BEA

Not in your case, Winston. What would Mama say?

WINSTON

Leave Mama out of this. She would have disinherited me if she had seen your parents tonight. Everyone seems so...

BEA

(interrupting)
Unpredictable?

JENNY

Uncouth?

ROBBY

Unstable?

WINSTON

Unworthy.

Bea glares at Winston.

BEA

My parents are a lot of things, but they certainly aren't unworthy. Give 'em a chance. They'll be fine.

SALLY

Everything will be fine when we finish that inspection, sell this house, and get out of here. Mr. Dooley, be a dear and try and rush along that house inspector.

TAD

Yes, I'll check his progress, and the size of the upstairs room. No second bathroom, huh?

Tad TRUDGES upstairs and ENTERS the guest bedroom door.

JENNY

So, Winston, how rich is Mama, the matron saint of the Hamptons?

ROBBY

Do your parents fight? Ever try this drama therapy crap on them?

BEA

Winston, don't pay my uncle and aunt any attention.

WINSTON

I don't mind. Mama and Father never fight. They have everything they need. Wanted me in the family business. Discouraged law and medicine. 'You can't make a good living on the destitute or dying,' they say.

ROBBY

'Cept if you're a mortician.

WINSTON

Middle class couples fight over pennies. Upper class realizes that fights lead to divorce, which costs millions. Not economically viable.

BEA

Economically viable? Hate to share my feelings if it wasn't economically viable.

JENNY

Gracie and Denny would love each other if they had seven bucks together, like they had when they got married.

BEA

You gotta play by the heart strings, not the purse strings.

ROBBY

I'm siding with Baby Bea on this one, Winston. It's better to speak your mind than save a dime. Ooh, catchy.

SALLY

Winston, I'm on your side. Well-to-do people need not apologize for being financially aware.

Tad DEJECTEDLY RETURNS from the upstairs bedroom, while Denny STUMBLES in from the bathroom.

BEA

Daddy? Are you feeling okay?

DENNY

Must have been something I ate. Odd that Gracie's stomach is okay, because we eat the same things. Lucky I got to the toilet in time.
(beat)

Uh oh!

TAD

Uh Oh!

SALLY

Uh Oh!

WINSTON

Uh. Oh!

Denny, Tad, Sally, and Winston RACE each other to the bathroom again.

BEA

I'll find the anti-diarrhea meds in my parents' room.

Bea JETS to the bedroom.

JENNY

What the hell is going on around here? Did everybody mass order the green apples and prune juice?

ROBBY

Must have been an order to go.

(beat)

What if it's the flu? I could be stuck here for days in the guest bedroom. Got any aspirin, Sheriton?

JENNY

There's some in my purse, which is in your Chevy. I'll bet Baby Bea has some in her purse right here. Women are always prepared.

ROBBY

You can't break in Baby Bea's purse. It's like a sanctuary.

JENNY

Cut the crap, Robby. It's not a sanctuary. A woman's purse is like a medicine cabinet, a portable office, and a beauty salon.

ROBBY

Okay, hand me a freakin' aspirin will ya, so I don't get the runs?

JENNY

Hold your horses. We'll just return the aspirin bottle right where we found it. A purse is a woman's sanctuary, you know.

Robby and Jenny wink at each other, and quickly take one pill each, and sit in a TRANCE-LIKE state on the couch.

Young Robby and Young Jenny exit the upstairs guest bedroom. They STAND before the older versions of themselves.

Dillon COMES OUT the upstairs guest bedroom and begins to INSPECT the walls around the family room. He can only SEE and HEAR the older versions of Robby and Jenny.

YOUNG JENNY

Get a load of these two old fogies.

(to Jenny)

This is why they invented makeup.
If I looked this bad, I'd check the
expiration date on my butt, shack
up with a plastic surgeon.

Older Jenny LIFTS her hippie blouse to Dillon's SHOCK.

JENNY

My second husband was a plastic
surgeon. He gave me these.

DILLON

Very nice, Ma'am. You can put your
blouse down.

YOUNG ROBBY

(to older Robby)

Look at this old guy. Like the new
warnings on cigarettes, they should
put warnings on clocks and
calendars; caution, time makes you
old, gray, fat, and ugly.

ROBBY

Hmmm. Cause for a moment of self-
reflection, brought on by a figment
of my imagination. I was an
irreverent self-involved young man.
Luckily, I wised up after I got
divorced.

(beat)

Boy, this drama therapy thing
really works!

DILLON

Do you mean it, Mr. Bellini?

ROBBY

Nope! It's really a bunch of horse
poop. Don't be such a dupe.

DILLON

Thanks for the cautionary note.

JENNY

(to Young Jenny, but in
Dillon's direction)

(MORE)

JENNY (CONT'D)

Who are you? Is this some kind of
twisted seventies hippie revival?
You've got that 'I'm a tramp
looking for free love' look.

Young Jenny lunges to CHOKE Jenny, but Young Robby PULLS her
back.

DILLON

I'm Dillon Daniels, Ma'am. The home
inspector. These are my work
overalls.

YOUNG ROBBY

Leave it to the older generation,
chugging the booze and complaining
about things that don't matter.

ROBBY

(in Dillon's and Young
Robby's direction)

Just a young handsome punk trying
to score with the ladies tonight. I
know the type! I'm their king. You
look awfully familiar, but I have
had a few beers.

DILLON

We've never met. I've got a good
memory.

JENNY

(in Young Jenny's and
Dillon's direction)

I used to look like you. Great
legs. Tight butt. Muscular thighs.
Those don't last forever, you know.
Now I get everything alimony can
buy. Tummy tucks, face lifts, and
Botox. It's been great for getting
laid. You ought to think about it.

DILLON

Don't think so, Ma'am.

YOUNG ROBBY

Yeah right! Only Hollywood movie
babes do that. You might wanna cut
back on the sauce.

YOUNG JENNY

(to Jenny)

Look lady, not all boys care only about looks. Tummy tucks? What's your stomach look like, a zipper?

JENNY

(to Young Jenny and Dillon)

You don't see any scars, do you? Gracie knows. Where's Denny?

Jenny FLASHES her stomach again, and Dillon is SHOCKED.

DILLON

He's in the bathroom. You can put that shirt down again, Ma'am.

JENNY

I heard that Denny's been making eyes with the ladies, and it's not Gracie.

ROBBY

Denny, a womanizer? Huh? And he called me the Italian Stallion.

YOUNG ROBBY

Hey, that's my nickname. Denny and some chick, who is not Gracie?

JENNY

Denny's fooling around?

JENNY & YOUNG JENNY

What's Denny looking for?

ROBBY

What every man looks for.

JENNY

Passion?

ROBBY

Sex.

YOUNG JENNY

A Commitment.

YOUNG ROBBY

Sex.

DILLON

Termites! Are you two okay?

YOUNG JENNY
 (to Young Robby)
 We're out of time again, Robby.
 Their imaginations are running out.
 Back upstairs, quick!

JENNY
 Wait. Who is the tramp who Denny's
 been seeing? The harlot. Gracie
 will scratch her eyes out.

YOUNG JENNY
 (grabs Young Robby's hand)
 I agree! I need to warn Gracie.

Young Robby and Young Jenny RACE to the guest bedroom.

Bea RACES in from the kitchen with a handful of anti-diarrhea pills, just as older Robby and Jenny SHAKE their heads, COME OUT of their drug-induced stupor, and GRAB their stomachs.

DILLON
 Bea, these two have been acting a
 strange, but I can't baby-sit them.
 Need to inspect the basement.

Dillon RUSHES to the kitchen. Bea SPEAKS apologetically.

BEA
 They're Dad and Mom's oldest
 friends. I call them my uncle and
 aunt. They're very nice with a real
 flare for the dramatic.
 (after Dillon is gone)
 Don't remember you being that cute.

Bea TURNS to see Winston, Sally, and Tad TRUDGE slowly into the family room from the bathroom hallway.

BEA (CONT'D)
 Speaking of flares for the
 dramatic.

WINSTON
 Bridget, the toilet is clogged.

JENNY
 I've got to warn Gracie.

TAD
 It's just a clogged toilet.

JENNY

No, I mean about Denny and the other woman.

(to Winston)

This your new boyfriend? Or fiancé? Baby Bea? Engaged and pregnant? It's given me an upset stomach.

ROBBY

Me too! Sad news about Collins, the cheater.

SALLY

What's this? A cheating husband? Y'all know that nothing sells homes faster than a cheating husband.

BEA

What, Aunt Jenny? That's ridiculous. Daddy would never cheat on Mom. And no, I'm not engaged or pregnant, but yes, this is my new friend Winston Gables, you met him earlier. Don't you remember?

JENNY

I only sort of remember him, Dear. But a reliable source says Denny is seeing a younger woman.

ROBBY

That's how I lost my wife.

TAD

You saw her with a younger woman?

ROBBY

No, I was talking about the clogged toilet. I worked late a lot, I was never home to fix little things around the house. One day, boom, a clogged toilet, and I wasn't there. She left me. I learned my lesson.

WINSTON

Always come home early to your wife?

ROBBY

Never miss burrito night. And be a good roommate. Now, my stomach feels like burrito night.

JENNY

I lost one husband to another woman, but I got my last husband by being the other woman, so I'm even.

TAD

You still married?

JENNY

No, he died of a ruptured hernia. Luckily, the detective couldn't match my shoe prints.

(beat)

Oh, my stomach is killing me.

BEA

Uncle Robby, Aunt Jenny, those were untrue, completely random stories. Uncle Robby, your wife ran off with an oil baron. Aunt Jenny, your drinking, womanizing husbands were robbing you blind. Why make up stories for these house guests?

ROBBY

I'm a little confused in the head, I guess. It's my stomach.

JENNY

Me too. What's going on? Are we losing our minds, or just the last few meals?

WINSTON

I'm confused, Bridget. And it's getting too hectic for me around here, can we go back to Big City?

BEA

No! We're going to get to the bottom of this. Aunt Jenny, where did you get such a silly idea that my dad was fooling around?

JENNY

Two young people, like Robby and me, only younger, saw Denny and a home-wrecker at a party.

ROBBY

That's what we heard. With my own two eyes.

BEA

What young people? What party?

SALLY

We should lower the offer for this place. I think it's haunted.

TAD

Ms. Swift, it's not right to seek gain on the misfortunes of others.

SALLY

Those are 'missed' fortunes not 'misfortunes.'

BEA

Stay out of this, Ms. Swift! None of your business.

SALLY

Selling homes is my business. Who are these delightful older people, Dear?

BEA

These are my parents' dearest friends since high school. They live in Big City also. Why don't you remember that? You were introduced to them earlier tonight.

SALLY

The memory may be sagging a little. Thank God nothing else is.

Gracie SILENTLY ENTERS from the kitchen.

BEA

Uncle Robby, Aunt Jenny, are you sure my dad is seeing a younger woman?

ROBBY

Yes, as freaky as it sounds, our friends saw him at a party without Gracie.

BEA

That doesn't prove anything.

JENNY

Seen in a bedroom. If that's innocence, I'm still a virgin.

Denny SAUNTERS in from the bathroom. Sally has her back to Denny and does not HEAR him come in.

SALLY

Looks like the Professor was getting a little extracurricular activity, bonus points, and a graduate class in anatomy.

DENNY

What's going on? Ms. Swift, why are you saying those things about me? Robby, Jenny, whatever you've heard, it's not true. Bea, Gracie, you've got to believe me! I'd never hurt you.

GRACIE

Damn you, Denny! First, my daughter finds out she's pregnant and engaged to a drama queen, and now you're fooling around with a younger woman! What else could go wrong tonight?

Dillon RETURNS from the basement with a DRAWN face.

DILLON

Well folks, I'm afraid I have some bad news. I found bats in the attic and snow rats in the basement.

SALLY

(hysterically)

Bats and snow rats? They'll have to be exterminated before we can sell the house. This will delay the sale, Mr. Dooley. I can't believe it! This is horrible!

DILLON

Just kidding. I found bats in the attic, but they were old baseball bats, and there's snow rats in the basement. Get it? There's no rats in the basement. It was a joke. Everything checked out fine.

GRACIE

(sobbing)

I'm ready to sign the papers now.

SALLY

They're in my car. I'll get them.

The mood and the room DARKENS.

INT. COLLINS HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

SUPER: "Five minutes later."

Everyone remains in their hippie costumes. Gracie, Sally, and Tad SIGN real estate papers.

Robby, Jenny, and Winston sit on the couch, CHINS DOWN.

Bea and Dillon stand face-to-face in front of the gas-log fire place, STARING into each other's eyes.

Denny PACES.

WINSTON

Bridget, there's nothing more we can do here. Can you drive me home?

ROBBY & JENNY

Yeah. Go home, Winston.

BEA

Dillon? What did you say a minute ago?

DILLON

I, I, I was just saying, it's so strange that I didn't get to see you for so many years, then I see you two times in six weeks, and you're in costume both times.

BEA

Yes, and you thought I was pregnant both nights, but I wasn't, I mean, I'm not. I don't know why Mom insists that I am. Winston would never try anything without first introducing me to his parents in the Hamptons.

WINSTON

Can we go home yet?

ROBBY & JENNY

Yeah. Go home, Winston.

DILLON

I mean, there's been a lot going on here tonight, what with Dr. C. in trouble and all.

BEA

I don't believe that rumor for a second. Daddy's not a cheater. He's the most loyal, monogamous person on earth. I believe him.

DENNY

Thanks, darling Bea, I can always count on you to trust me.

DILLON

I trust you too, Dr. C.

ROBBY

I need to use the crapper again. What'd you put in the beer?

Robby BOLTS to the bathroom.

JENNY

Robby, be a gentleman for once in your life and let me use it first. What'd you put in the scotch?

Jenny BOLTS to the bathroom.

WINSTON

I feel the grumbling also? Maybe it was the tea?

Winston WIGGLES to the bathroom, legs pinched together. Denny STOPS PACING for a moment, then continues PACING.

DILLON

(shyly)

Bea-Wee, please don't take this the wrong way, but I haven't been able to get you out of my mind since the Halloween party. Your same wonderful smile, sweet and innocent, even for a pregnant nun! I was smitten by you when we were five, and have been all night. Is it getting hot in here?

BEA

It's the gas-log fireplace. What a nice thing to say. I have to admit, seeing you again is very special for me. When we were five, you were my first love, and the first cut is the deepest.

The timing is MAGICAL. Rod Stewart's song "The First Cut is the Deepest" is next up on the old record stereo.

DILLON

And seeing you in that hippie costume takes my breath away. Wow!

BEA

Well, seeing you in overalls. Wow back! This house inspector business of yours, do you make ends meet?

Dillon SUSPICIOUSLY LOOKS around the house.

DILLON

Have to supplement my income.
(beat)
My real passion is inventing.

BEA

Inventing? That's a relief. I thought you were going to tell me you were the Bling-'n-bobble Burglar. What have you invented?

DILLON

There's the k-fork, a fork with a serrated-edged knife on one side to cut bacon. The drawback was everyone cut one side of their mouths. Then, there was the lawn fertilizer that burned the butts of dogs, but it also stuck to shoes and burned rugs. Then there was a door-light breaker switch that turned on your lights as you opened a door, but the lights went out again when you shut it again. I'm not very good at it yet, but I will be someday.

BEA

You'll be a wonderful inventor someday like Benji Franklin or Tommy Edison. It is getting hot in here.

Robby and Jenny ENTER from the bathroom hall, shivering.

ROBBY

It's freakin' freezing in here.
Hey, you two, put another metal log
on that stupid gas-log fireplace,
and put on another hot record will
ya?

JENNY

I'm freezing too. Denny is pacing
to keep warm. Robby, cover us with
a blanket on the couch.

Denny PACES, while Robby and Jenny SNUGGLE under the blanket
on the couch.

Bea and Dillon WHISPER, while Bea puts on record, "Black
Magic Woman" by Santana.

The doorbell RINGS. Denny opens the door and a powerful
African-American policewoman, OFFICER PATTY (30) enters.

OFFICER PATTY

Evening, folks! I'm Officer Patty
Black from Big City. We have reason
to believe a jewel thief is working
his or her way from Big City to the
countryside. Got a tip that the
thief targets houses having holiday
parties. Saw all the rigs outside,
and come to warn you. Be on the
lookout.

DENNY

Have a description of the thief?

OFFICER PATTY

Male. Or Female. Short. Or tall.
Close-set beady eyes. The criminal
type, always on the run. Just
kidding! We got nothing. Bad
photos, nothing caught on video.

JENNY

All my ex-husbands have been caught
on video. Rules them out.

ROBBY

If the burglar's on the run,
they'll be here. Everybody here has
the runs.

Winston STUMBLES in from the bathroom. Officer Patty JUMPS on
his back, FORCES him to the floor, and FRISKS him.

WINSTON

What's the meaning of this? I demand an explanation!

DENNY

He doesn't have close-set beady eyes, or the criminal look, but he's got the runs. He's an idiot, but he's not a thief.

OFFICER PATTY

I know, but he was cute, so I jumped on his bones and frisked him up. I can do that. Policewoman.

(beat)

Just messing with y'all.

WINSTON

It's very exciting, but Mama mustn't ever find out.

ROBBY

That's just plain kinky, Winston.

JENNY

He's a frisk-me little fellow, isn't he?

ROBBY

I bet he drops the soap in the clubhouse shower on purpose.

JENNY

Careful with that nightstick, Officer.

Officer Patty is playfully PATTING DOWN Winston, who ENJOYS the tickling.

OFFICER PATTY

Truth is, I'm not a very good policewoman. Oh, I'm pretty good at frisking handsome young men, but I've never arrested anyone. It pays the bills, but my heart is in writing detective stories.

DENNY

Detective stores? Maybe you could decipher what happened here tonight.

OFFICER PATTY

That's easy. The two by the gas-log fireplace didn't come here together, but they're sure going home together.

Winston's eyes LUST for Officer Patty.

BEA & DILLON

Really?

OFFICER PATTY

And I refrain from judging people, but the two on the couch hate each other and love each other at the same time. He's a bum and she's a bitch, they've never made love, but they like being stuck under that blanket together.

DENNY

Very perceptive, Officer. What about the young man you've been patting?

OFFICER PATTY

He's a rich, spoiled virgin, whose Mama doesn't approve of anyone, let alone any girl he brings home. Likes acting, but no good at it.

WINSTON

(still smiling)
Gee, thanks.

OFFICER PATTY

And he could report me to my supervisor for behavior unbecoming of an officer of the law, but he won't, because he secretly desires I put the hand-cuffs on him.

WINSTON

Hand-cuffs? Gotta a Taser too?

ROBBY

Hey copper, did you say your name was Claire, Clair Voyant? Bea, get a load of your sicko boy-toy.

JENNY

Wait 'til Mama hears about this!

BEA

What's that, Aunt Jenny? I wasn't listening.

DENNY

Okay, Officer Patty, I'm impressed by your powers of observation, but as a practicing Sherlock Country-Holmes and an aspiring mystery writer, surely you could deduce what else happened here tonight.

Like Sherlock Holmes, Officer Patty PROWLs around the family room, SMELLS the air, and LOOKS for more clues. Denny is intrigued and FOLLOWS her around. She confronts Denny.

OFFICER PATTY

Peeking through the window on the way to the door, I saw you pacing and thinking deeply. You're an educated, romantic man by the looks of the laptop computer, science books on the shelves, vocabulary, and fresh red roses in the vase. However, you are troubled by a life-changing event, and since the person you bought the roses for is not in the room now, I deduce that she is the reason for your despair.

DENNY

Right so far.

OFFICER PATTY

There's a van for an exterminator parked outside, probably belonging to the handsome gentleman in the overalls who is undressing your braless daughter with his eyes. That's a nice photo of your daughter on the table.

ROBBY

She's good.

WINSTON

She's a goddess.

OFFICER PATTY

Exterminators typically work normal business hours under daylight conditions, so you either have a pest emergency, or you're quickly trying to sell your house.

DENNY

Right again.

OFFICER PATTY

The only urgency I see from the exterminator is in regards to your daughter, so you must be selling the house. You were a hippie after high school, when you met your wife, and y'all reenacted that period playing some twisted dress-up game tonight. Y'all look very nice. Your name is Dr. Denny Regan Collins, and you're worried and distant, but in my written report, I'll describe you as melancholy.

DENNY

Right on all counts, Officer, but how did you know my name, especially middle name, and title?

OFFICER PATTY

Ran your plates outside.

(beat)

But, something else has gone on here. The beautiful fresh roses, my favorite flowers, your old friends showing up, the re-enactment of some kind, and the smell from the bathroom.

(beat)

I've always had an over-active imagination, but something strange is going on here, y'all. Something very strange indeed. However, I must be moving on. I've got to keep protecting the other very strange citizens of our fine county.

Officer Patty DUSTS OFF Winston's clothes, as he GAZES into her eyes like a puppy.

Sally and Gracie STOMP in from the kitchen with signed real estate papers in hand.

SALLY

Hi, Officer. Are y'all playing dress-up too? Are y'all gonna bust some heads at this peace rally here tonight? Peace, love, dope! Are you gonna hall these hippies downtown for smoking mari-hoochie?

(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

We just closed the deal on the house, y'all, let's celebrate!

GRACIE

Denny dear, I wanted to tell you in private, I'm so sorry, and we still need your signature on all the papers, and I'm going to miss our home more than I can imagine right now, but I know it's the right thing to do. Bea, you understand?

(to Officer Patty)

Did someone call the police?

DENNY

(sadly)

I'll sign. Whatever you want, dear. No one called the police, this is Officer Patty Black from Big City making a courtesy call.

Denny reluctantly BEGINS TO SIGN the papers.

OFFICER PATTY

Courtesy call, my ass. What's that smell?

SALLY

That's Mr. Tad Dooley, who's buying the place. Stopped off at the bathroom. Small stomach problems.

OFFICER PATTY

That's not a small problem. That smell is not a figment of my imagination.

DENNY

That's it! The figments of my imagination. Where are they when I need them?

Young Jenny and Young Robby ENTER from the upstairs door, but no one can SEE or HEAR them.

YOUNG ROBBY

It's the pigs! The cops! Party got busted! What do we do now, Jenny?

YOUNG JENNY

I'm not sure, but Denny and Gracie need our help. Come on!

Young Jenny and Young Robby RACE downstairs to lead Officer Patty, who continues looking for more clues.

Young Jenny LEADS Office Patty over to Bea's purse.

YOUNG JENNY (CONT'D)

Open it. Open it!

Denny somehow HEARS the message from Young Jenny.

DENNY

The diarrhea! Bea, what could have caused so many people in one house to get diarrhea?

BEA

Right, Daddy. We didn't share the same food, it probably isn't bacterial or viral, because we came from several households.

DENNY

That's right, the odds would be astronomical.

OFFICER PATTY

I'd say it's astronomical! I can smell it from here.

DENNY

Bea, check those pills in your purse.

OFFICER PATTY

What's all this about?

DENNY & BEA

Potassium-charged lithium-phenolphthalein!

Bea EXAMINES the pill bottle in her purse.

BEA

Daddy, you're right! Most of my pills are gone!

Young Jenny PRETENDS to be ashamed of herself.

DENNY

I suspect that some of you, or all of you, violated the sanctity of a woman's purse, stole Bea's experimental drug for Alzheimer's patients, probably thinking it was aspirin. How many of you took a pill from Bea's purse tonight?

Robby, Jenny, Sally, and Winston RAISE their hands, and LOWER their heads.

BEA

But diarrhea was such a rare side effect in the memory enhancing drug in rats, it's hard to believe it could induce so many cases tonight.

ROBBY, JENNY, SALLY, & WINSTON

Believe it!

DENNY

Bea, darling, don't worry! I'm sure the prescription will work fine on bona fide Alzheimer's patients.

GRACIE

Yes, darling, Denny and I had very mild stomach aches tonight, and we didn't take any.

(beat)

Oh, yes I did. I'm sorry, Bea.

WINSTON

Ms. Swift gave me a pill too. From Bridget's purse.

OFFICER PATTY

I could bust y'all for violating the sanctity of a woman's purse.

JENNY

You'd have to bust Robby and me too. We're sorry, Bea! Needed an aspirin to fight off the flu, and I thought you wouldn't mind.

BEA

It's okay, Aunt Jenny, Uncle Robby, and Ms. Swift. I'm more disappointed in the outcome. Some of you had alcohol, some didn't. I can't figure it out.

ROBBY

We stopped at the Big Burrito Shack on the way from Big City.

SALLY

Hey y'all, Mr. Dooley and I stopped there too. The giant beefy burrito with black beans was on special.

DILLON

I made myself a vegan dinner, and I feel fine.

BEA

Really, Dillon, you're a vegan, and you have to cook for yourself. Poor dear! Cooking for one is hard!

DENNY

Point is that Mr. Dooley is still on the pot, and it might not have been your new memory medicine, Bea.

SALLY

Mr. Dooley took two doses of the memory medicine. So what?

OFFICER PATTY

Memory medicine? What happened when all y'all took it?

DENNY

Well, I have an active imagination like you Officer Patty, and I got this crazy idea about writing a play about the night Gracie and I met, and I conjured up visions of Robby and Jenny the way they looked that night forty years ago. They were figments of my imagination.

Young Jenny and Young Robby PRANCE proudly around the room.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Then, after I took what I thought to be an aspirin, I conjured them up in my memory again.

JENNY

Hey, they were figments of my imagination too.

(MORE)

JENNY (CONT'D)

I saw Robby and me as young punks too, but the Robby-like kid was loud, loaded, and rude, and the me-like kid was skinny, sarcastic, and a tiny bit bitchy, so I didn't recognize them.

Young Jenny and Young Robby STOP PRANCING.

OFFICER PATTY

What a shocker.

ROBBY

Me? Loud, loaded, and rude? I saw a freak in a similar red rock 'n roll tie-dye T-shirt, with a chick who looked like a bitchin' young Jenny, but the boy was stoned, and socially irresponsible.

Young Robby goes to STRANGLE the older Robby, but Young Jenny pulls him back.

OFFICER PATTY

Totally unpredictable.

SALLY

Okay, this is very strange y'all. Mr. Collins described the young versions of Robby and Jenny right before I took the medicine, and I swear that I saw and heard them plain as day. They came out of the upstairs guest bedroom room. The young man was hitting on me.

JENNY

That's our Robby. Chip off the old block. Hey, the hippies we saw came out the upstairs guest bedroom too. So, was it the drugs Bea gave us that had us trippin'?

SALLY

The drugs y'all gave me made me hallucinate.

BEA

The drugs I gave you?

OFFICER PATTY

Technically, the drugs were stolen. Want to press charges, Ms.?

BEA

Good heavens, no. It's Christmas!

OFFICER PATTY

Ms. Swift, you stole prescription medicine, distributed stolen property, are guilty of using the word "y'all" when you're clearly not Southern, and you dressed like a cheap hooker to influence the sale of a house. I'd remain quiet if I were you. All y'all seem to have very active imaginations, and before I go, I'd like to remind you that over time memories and figments of your imagination often get tangled in the gray matter upstairs. Alcohol and drugs just make it worse. If you're not careful on the roads out there, it will be y'all's own faults.

DENNY

That's right, Officer. The road to hell paved with your own ass-faults.

GRACIE

(ignoring Denny)

Yes, Officer. Thanks for stopping by tonight.

Officer Patty BEGINS TO LEAVE, as Tad returns from the bathroom. Officer Patty STOPS as if she recognizes him.

ROBBY

Something still smells rotten, doesn't it?

JENNY

You're right for once, Robby.

OFFICER PATTY

(to Tad)

Have I seen you before?

TAD

Before what? I'm Tad Dooley, from Big City. I'm buying this house.

SALLY

Mr. Dooley has been a wonderful client.

(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

He acts quickly, all in a week, doesn't bicker about the price, and gives himself tours of the house.

OFFICER PATTY

He gives himself tours of the house. Huh? Mr. Dooley, did you take any pills of any kind tonight?

TAD

I took an aspirin that Ms. Swift gave me from that purse. Two aspirin?

OFFICER PATTY

Explains the diarrhea. Did you see two young hippies in the room?

TAD

Yes, I did, come to think of it. They came from upstairs.

DENNY

Bea, I see what happened. When non-Alzheimer's patients take your memory medicine, recent suggestions or detailed descriptions of people become planted memories. They seem as real as long-term or short-term memories. They all saw the young versions of Robby and Jenny as figments of their imagination, because I described them in detail right before they took the pills.

OFFICER PATTY

How long does the effect of the memory medicine last?

SALLY, TAD, JENNY, & ROBBY

Fifteen minutes! Then you get the runs.

DENNY

The Big Burrito food probably helped give you the runs, the medicine you took without asking played the memory games on you.

OFFICER PATTY

I'd like to try one of those pills. Might help my memory.

BEA

I'm afraid that would be unethical and dangerous. It's prescription medicine specifically for Alzheimer's patients.

Tad SIGHS with relief. Officer Patty WALKS over to Bea and WINKS so no one else SEES it.

OFFICER PATTY

As a doctor, you could write me a prescription. You don't want to impede an investigation, do you?

Acknowledging the wink, Bea GIVES Officer Patty a pill, which she PRETENDS to swallow, but THROWS it down the open neck of her shirt instead.

BEA

Officer Patty, you are taking the medicine at your own risk.

JENNY

You go, girl!

WINSTON

She runs the risk of going all the night on the toilet.

OFFICER PATTY

Sweet of you to be concerned, Winston. I take risks on the job every day. I'm down with the risk.

Officer Patty SITS in Gracie's recliner, GLANCES at her watch, and pretends to slip into a deep trance. She STARES up at the guest bedroom door.

Young Robby and Young Jenny RUN upstairs to open and SLAM the door. They run down the stairs next to Bea and Dillon. No one can HEAR or SEE them.

Officer Patty LOOKS in the direction of Bea and Dillon, and, coincidentally, Young Jenny and Young Robby.

OFFICER PATTY (CONT'D)

Oh, so there y'all are. You two young hippies have been causing a lot of trouble. Smoking that dope and partying all night long!

YOUNG ROBBY

Sheriton, we're so busted.

YOUNG JENNY

She doesn't see us. Watch this.

Young Jenny MAKES FUNNY FACES and TAUNTS Officer Patty.

GRACIE

I was hoping to thank the younger versions of Robby and Jenny personally. They introduced me to Denny on this very night forty years ago. Denny was head over heels in love from that very first Night of One True Love.

YOUNG JENNY & YOUNG ROBBY

How sweet!

Young Jenny HEADS over to HUG Gracie and Denny, but Young Robby GRABS her arm and PULLS her back to the staircase.

TAD

I don't see anybody.

DILLON

I heard them from the attic. Guest bedroom was busy tonight.

OFFICER PATTY

Well then, get on with it you two. Introduce Gracie to Mr. Collins and get on with it. Then stop bothering these nice people. You ghosts could go when your work is done.

YOUNG ROBBY

Collins, that's Gracie. She should be your main squeeze. You're a nerd now, but she still loves you.

YOUNG JENNY

Gracie, that's Denny. He'd move to the ends of the world for you. He always will.

Gracie goes and HUGS Denny in a ROTE manner.

SALLY

What's that? I don't hear or see anything.

BEA

Look, they've met. Everybody should be happy now, right?

TAD

Ghosts, my butt. Let's get out of here, Ms. Swift. This is nonsense!

OFFICER PATTY

What's that? Mr. Dooley wants to be tickled into an uncontrollable mass of spaghetti. Now? Right now? As a group? Okay, if you say so.

Young Jenny and Young Robby SNEAK toward Tad but suddenly DISAPPEAR. Tad begins to GYRATE and WIGGLE WILDLY, and finally FLOPS to the floor. Two very small diamond earrings SPILL from his pocket. Everyone is SHOCKED.

GRACIE

Those are my tiny diamond earrings. I'd know them anywhere. They are my only pair. Denny gave them to me after the sumo suit fiasco. Mr. Dooley, how could you?

Officer Patty BOUNCES up and HANDCUFFS Tad.

OFFICER PATTY

His name isn't Tad Dooley, it's Johnny Gentellow, the biggest jewel thief in a five-state area. He's known as the Big City Bling-'n-Bobble Burglar. I got his picture on the wanted list, but he changes his appearance, and these hippie clothes threw me off. You have the right to remain silent.

JENNY

Way to go, Officer Patty!

TAD

You can't arrest me. That was an illegal search and seizure.

OFFICER PATTY

Oh, I didn't search you. Those imaginary hippies must have tickled their hippie friend on their own accord. You have the right to an attorney...

SALLY

(interrupting)

You mean, the house isn't sold?

OFFICER PATTY

We can add fraud to Mr. Gentellow's long list of crimes.

ROBBY

Plus, he stinks!

WINSTON

Officer Patty, do you have anymore handcuffs? We'll take 'em off before meeting Mama and Father. Can you come to the Hamptons with me next week? Please, say you can!

Officer Patty HANDCUFFS Winston. He is ELATED.

WINSTON (CONT'D)

You don't mind, do you, Bridget? This is Drama Therapy that keeps on giving. I guess this is goodbye. Officer Patty, you will come up the meet Mama and Father, won't you?

OFFICER PATTY

Great way to celebrate catching the Big City Bling-'n-Bobble Burglar. Let's hit the road. Mrs. Collins, before I get on with protecting the good people of this fine county, I can't help but notice how much trouble all these people went through for y'all. You got them beautiful roses that last forever, y'all's own daughter visited you from Big City, y'all got all these friends visiting, and they all dressed up for y'all in funny old hippie clothes. They all love ya, baby. But that Dr. Collins, he has it bad. All night his eyes been sayin' that he loves the crap outta y'all.

WINSTON & TAD

Poor choice of terms.

Officer Patty ESCORTS the two handcuffed gentleman out the front door, amid WAVES and FAREWELLS.

SALLY

I can't believe I was fooled by Mr. Dooley.

(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

Boy, the look on that Bling-'n-Bobble Burglar's face, when all he found were those puny little diamond earrings, after searching through the whole house. He probably couldn't find y'all's diamonds without a microscope. He must have been so upset. I'll have to find another home buyer.

GRACIE

First, Ms. Swift, you should have asked him for identification or conducted a credit check. You brought a professional cat burglar into our charming chateau. Second, you wouldn't recognize a romantic gesture if it burst your silicone sales pitches. My hopeful romantic husband gave me those diamond earrings years ago, following the admittedly poor gift of the self-inflating sumo wrestler suit, but at least he makes me laugh. And he makes me laugh and smile a lot every day. He brings me flowers twice a month or so, quite irregularly, just to say I love you, which he tells me every day, two or three times a day. He loves me. Since that first party forty years ago tonight, he's done so much to keep the fires lit. Ms. Swift, don't bother coming back, because you're not selling our country love nest.

(beat)

No one is.

ROBBY

Hey, Jenny, that's our Gracie. I've never seen her so fired up and hot for Collins.

DENNY

What sweet things to say, Gracie.

SALLY

Honey, selling birth control pills at a convent would be easier than trying to sell this haunted rustic dump with one shit-hole.

ROBBY

Hey, Jenny, why don't we show Ms.
Not-so-Swift the door.

Jenny and Robby each take an arm and gently SHOVE Sally out the door. They give each other HIGH FIVES, but HOLD the hands together for an extended time. Jenny SURPRISES Robby by kissing him. Young Jenny and Young Robby suddenly REAPPEAR, but no one can HEAR or SEE them.

JENNY

Denny, Gracie, may we stay in your
guest bedroom tonight? I'm not sure
Robby should drive.

ROBBY & YOUNG ROBBY

Drive the ladies wild!

YOUNG JENNY

Is everyone losing their mind?
We're just a figment of your
imagination! Come on, Robby, we
gotta head upstairs. It's time for
us to disappear.

YOUNG ROBBY

Do we have to go? I like it here.

YOUNG JENNY

How many times do I have to tell
you? We can only stay if real
people conger us up in their
memories. Look at those lovebirds
down there. It's the best feeling
in the world!

YOUNG ROBBY

This being a figment of someone's
imagination wasn't half bad either,
even with you.

Young Jenny SHAKES her head in disgust, and PULLS Young Robby into the bedroom.

Older Jenny and older Robby are a few steps behind them, as Aretha Franklin's record "Oh Me Oh My" PLAYS softly in the background.

Denny is SLOW-DANCING with Gracie, and Bea is slow-dancing with Dillon.

ROBBY

Bea-Wee, we approve of Dillon, even if he is just a termite inspector. Merry Christmas, everyone.

BEA

Dillon's an inventor too!

JENNY

He can't invent undying love! Your daddy already cornered the market there! Wow. What a magical night!

(looks at Denny and Gracie)

Maybe it is the Night of One True Love!

(whispers to Robby)

I just wish Gracie would tell him.

ROBBY

Tell him what?

JENNY

Tell him that she loves him.

Jenny and Robby LOOK DEEPLY into each other's eyes.

ROBBY

Maybe it doesn't have to be said out loud.

JENNY

Robby, it's the only thing that has to said out loud. It's the one thing the world needs to know.

Jenny and Robby KISS LIGHTLY at the top of the stairs before OPENING THE DOOR to the upstairs bedroom.

DILLON

Good night, Ms. Sheriton and Mr. Bellini. Merry Christmas.

Jenny and Robby KISS PASSIONATELY, enter the bedroom, and SHUT the door. Everyone HEARS them shout.

ROBBY

I love you, Jenny Sheriton

JENNY

I love you, Robby Bellini.

Young Robby SPRINGS out the guest bedroom door.

YOUNG ROBBY
Has anyone conjured us up,
Sheriton?

YOUNG JENNY(O.S.)
No, they haven't. Get your nosy
butt back here.

Young Robby SULKS as he RE-ENTERS the guest bedroom.

Bea and Dillon, and Gracie and Denny remain SLOW DANCING.

GRACIE
Bea darling, you must be exhausted.
Working all day, then driving all
the way out here to the country.

BEA
Actually, Daddy called me yesterday
to remind me that tonight was his
Night of One True Love, and to
drive up for the holidays. He was
worried about you. He said you
sacrificed your whole life to raise
two kids: him and me. You could
have picked any career, but you
chose to raise us. You rock!

The SPOTLIGHT turns to Gracie and Denny. This time, Gracie
WOOS Denny.

GRACIE
Oh, Denny, please forgive me for
tonight. Hey, that young Jenny I
imagined tonight wanted me to ask
you a question.

Upon HEARING her name, Young Jenny POPS OUT of the upstairs
bedroom door. Gracie LOOKS UP at her, then back at Denny.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
What brought you to the party
tonight?

DENNY
Robby Bellini's Chevy. Do you have
a tattoo on your chest?

Upon HEARING his name, Young Robby POPS OUT.

GRACIE
That was a horrible pick-up line.
It should have been a never-aloud
pick-up line.

Gracie HUGS Denny like a long-lost friend.

YOUNG JENNY

It's a start.

YOUNG ROBBY

Not much of one.

DENNY

Oh Gracie, it's okay. From the first time I saw you, I saw a warmth that was immeasurable, a kindness that was unfathomable, and a lifetime that I would be honored just to dream about sharing with you. It doesn't matter where we live as long as we're side by side.

YOUNG ROBBY

Or front to front.

YOUNG JENNY

Robby, shut up and listen.

GRACIE

Denny, I've learned something tonight. I didn't always show it. I didn't always say it, but I love you, Denny Collins.

(shouts)

I really love you. In fact, tonight, I'm falling head-over-heels.

YOUNG ROBBY

It's the heels-over-head position that always gets me.

YOUNG JENNY

We can go now, Robby. Our work is done here. What a Christmas party!

Young Robby and Young Jenny exit, holding hands, into the guest bedroom door. Everyone hears the door shut.

DILLON

I must have left that door open.

BEA

Just roll with it Dillon. It's the Night of One True Love, anything can happen.

DILLON

Love at first sight. I thought it was a Hollywood movie gag.

DENNY

Believe me, it happens like spontaneous combustion, and nothing can put out the fire.

GRACIE

Or it burns slowly but relentlessly until you magically realize that you complete each other.

DENNY

Dylan said it best. "If not for you, winter would have no spring."

GRACIE

"Couldn't hear the robin sing?"

DENNY

"I just wouldn't have a clue"

GRACIE

"Anyway it wouldn't ring true"

DENNY

"If not for you."

Gracie gazes lovingly into her husband's eyes. She kisses him, somewhat hesitantly, as though it is the first time.

Bea puts the record "If not for you" by Bob Dylan.

BEA

Ha! Mom fell in love.

Gracie gazes at Denny and the roses.

GRACIE

I, I, I think so. What beautiful roses. And they last forever. Is it getting warm in here?

DENNY

Dear, we've had a long night. Why don't we turn in, and leave this holiday party to these youngsters?

GRACIE

Great idea, sweetheart. I've got a lot of catching up to do.

DENNY

You know, tonight's activities may make for a fun play.

GRACIE

Not as much fun as I'm going to be tonight. You gotta do what you gotta do keep the fires lit.

Gracie pulls Denny by the hand to their bedroom.

Bea pulls Dillon onto the couch.

BEA

Dillon, I think it's already happened to me. I can't explain it, but I feel like buying you a completely useless comical gift, like a hula girl lamp or a travel iron. I feel like picking you a handful of dandelions. I want to fall asleep in your arms in front of this hypnotic fire.

DILLON

Call me old-fashioned, but I prefer to ease slowly into relationships.

BEA

You can't get much slower. It's been twenty-five years since we took our first bath together.

DILLON

I'm still not sure if I believe in love at first sight.

BEA

But, I do, and that's what counts! I'm patient. I'll wait.

Bea laughs and pulls a blanket over the two of them on the couch.

BEA (CONT'D)

Under the blanket!

DILLON

You're obviously Dr. C.'s daughter.

Young Jenny peeks out of the upper guest bedroom.

YOUNG JENNY

Oh yeah, dudes and dude-etts, you should probably know that Robby and I decided that we were too young to screw up our friendship. We made a secret pact to meet exactly forty years from tonight, and see how it goes. Thanks mostly to us, Collins and Gracie are probably getting it on under that blanket. Far out! Maybe it's not about the roses or the fireplace. A wise woman once said "You gotta do what you gotta do to keep your fires lit." Well, what are you waiting for? Use the figments of YOUR imaginations. Go do what ya gotta do to keep the fires lit!

FADE OUT:

THE END