

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD

A comedy play in three acts

Written by

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YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD

Synopsis

Fort Myers, Florida. September 1994. Two aging brothers are reunited after a sixteen year old argument only to pick up on their sibling rivalry where it left off.

Seventy year old Max Stuart has sold the family business, an antique store in New York, and has moved to the Sunshine State with his wife of fifty-one years, Florence. Recovering from a heart attack has made Max feel old and useless, which has made him bitter and unforgiving.

As Florence tries to nurse him back to good health, Barney, Max's fraternal twin brother, shows up sixteen million dollars richer, with a twenty-three year old bride and a business opportunity for Max.

Barney, who has always been able to talk Max into anything, convinces Max to run one of Barney's video stores, which Barney has purchased with his millions. Max ends up humiliated when he gets talked into dressing up in a Donald Duck costume to promote some new Disney videos. This causes old hostilities to surface and the brothers are at each other again.

Barney's problems escalate when Trixie, his bride, announces that she is pregnant. This sends Barney to the hospital in what appears to be a heart attack of his own.

Florence has been running interference throughout this whole episode and manages to get Max and Barney alone so they can work things out, once and for all. After more sibling rivalry, they both realize that brothers should be like best friends and that there is nothing more precious than family.

CAST

MAX STUART.....a bitter, mean, resentful
70 year old retiree, recovering
from a recent heart attack.

FLORENCE STUART.....Max's wife; in her mid
sixties; patient,
understanding,
helpful and very witty.

BARNEY STUART.....Max's fraternal twin
brother. Happy-go-lucky;
wealthy and a real con artist.

TRIXIE STUART.....Barney's twenty-three year
old wife. A very pretty air-
head.

Scene

The STUART household in Fort Myers, Florida.

Time

September 1994

Act 1

Scene 1

SETTING:

We are in the STUART'S home
in Fort Myers, Florida.

AT RISE:

It is nine a.m. The kitchen
is to the right. The counter
faces the audience. There is a
kitchen table
and four chairs stage
right. The remainder of the
stage is dedicated to the living
room. A door leading to the
outside is on the left wall.
There's a staircase leading
upstairs upstage left. The
living room is inconsistently
decorated with a colonial piece
here, a modern piece there, etc.
FLORENCE is in the kitchen
preparing breakfast. MAX
enters. HE is dressed in a
flannel bathrobe and pajamas.
HE stops center stage to yawn
and stretch. HE feebly
enters the kitchen, pulls out a
chair facing the audience and
sits. FLORENCE turns and sees
him.

FLORENCE

Oh, good morning, Max.

MAX

(cranky)

Where's my breakfast?

(FLORENCE stops what she's doing and walks over to MAX to make her speech.)

FLORENCE

Where's my breakfast? Is that how we start our day? Where's my breakfast? How about something like, and how are you today, Florence? Or, did you sleep well last night, Florence? Don't you know the note you start your day on is the way your day will go? Now, what do you say? How about starting your day on a pleasant note?

MAX

You want me to start my day on a pleasant note?

FLORENCE

That would be nice.

MAX

Fine. (singing) Where the hell's my breakfast?

(FLORENCE walks back to the kitchen area.)

FLORENCE

Well, somebody got up on the wrong side of the Craftmatic this morning.

MAX

That's another thing. I hate that damn adjustable bed. The other night I rolled over on the controls and I spent half the night with my head between my feet. I felt like I was sleeping in a wallet.

FLORENCE

You know the doctor said that bed would be good for your heart.

MAX

Maybe for the heart of a contortionist.

(FLORENCE brings over a glass of orange juice to MAX.)

FLORENCE

Max, it's only been a year. You're getting stronger every day.

MAX

(disgusted)

Orange juice. Every day it's orange juice. Why must you give me orange juice every day?

FLORENCE

Because we live in Florida, Max. It's a state law. If you don't drink at least one glass of orange juice a day, the Citrus Commission will come in and take you out in cuffs. Now, drink your juice.

(FLORENCE walks back to the kitchen.)

MAX

What's for breakfast?

FLORENCE

Something different.

MAX

Not again. You know I hate it when you experiment in the kitchen.

FLORENCE

But you're going to love this, Max.

MAX

As much as I loved your hogshead cheesecake?

FLORENCE

This is different. Peanut butter waffles.

(FLORENCE brings over a plate of waffles.)

MAX

Peanut butter waffles?

(MAX pushes the plate to the side.)

MAX (continued)

Forget it.

FLORENCE

Why not? You've got to try different things.

MAX

Says who?

FLORENCE

Says me. Besides, this covers your morning requirement for protein.

MAX

Just bring me some eggs.

FLORENCE

You had your two eggs for this week already.

MAX

I thought it was two eggs a day.

FLORENCE

No, two eggs a day is why you ended up in the hospital, last year, while the doctors used your chest for French doors.

MAX

Then, just bring me some coffee.

FLORENCE

Now, you know what the doctor told you about coffee.

(MAX talks in unison with FLORENCE)

FLORENCE & MAX

It's bad for your heart.

MAX

This from a man who smokes three packs a day.

FLORENCE

How about if I make some decaf?

MAX

(getting up)

Forget it, Florence. Breakfast used to be my favorite meal. Now it's no eggs, cholesterol is bad for you. No coffee, caffeine is bad for you. No sex, exertion is bad for you.

FLORENCE

I don't remember the doctor saying no sex.

MAX

He didn't. That's one I made up.

(MAX walks into the living room and takes a seat on the sofa. In front of the sofa is a coffee table. There is a chair to the right of the sofa and a table along the back wall with a telephone on it. FLORENCE follows MAX into the living room. SHE stands there and stares at him.)

FLORENCE

So, this is the way you are going to be spending your day. Just hanging around the house in your bathrobe.

MAX

This is the way I spend every Sunday, Florence. I mean, a man is entitled to take a day off and just lounge around; and Sunday is my day.

FLORENCE

That's fine, except for two things.

MAX

What's that?

FLORENCE

Today is Thursday.

MAX

What's the other thing?

FLORENCE

This is the way you spend every day. Ever since you got out of the hospital, all you do is lay around the house. The doctor said you should be taking walks. The exercise would be good for your heart. He said you should be up to a mile a day by now.

MAX

How do you expect me to walk a mile a day if I can't have sex? Besides, I got enough exercise last week. What about that mile I ran?

FLORENCE

That's only because your bathrobe belt got caught in the car door as I was driving away.

MAX

I still say you knew I was running alongside of the car.

FLORENCE

Max, don't you think if I knew you were there, I'd have stopped?

(FLORENCE turns to the audience and smiles.
MAX picks up the T.V. Guide from the coffee
table. He turns to the crossword section.)

MAX

I think I'll do the crossword in the T.V. Guide until "Leave It To Beaver" comes on.

1-1-7

FLORENCE

It's nice to know that no matter how old one gets, one never loses his hunger for a challenge.

(FLORENCE walks back to the kitchen.
MAX looks for a pencil.)

MAX

Florence, I need a pencil.

FLORENCE

There's one in my pocketbook on the phone table.

(MAX goes over to the table. HE looks through the pocketbook and notices a letter. HE takes the letter out and looks at the return address. HE becomes enraged.)

MAX

Florence!

(There is no answer. MAX walks center stage and yells.

MAX

FLORENCE!!!

(FLORENCE rushes into the living room.)

FLORENCE

Yes, Max, what are you yelling about?

MAX

What is this?

(MAX holds the letter up.)

FLORENCE

I don't know. Let's take a look.

(FLORENCE takes the letter from MAX.)

FLORENCE

Well, gee, Max, it looks like a letter.

(SHE puts the letter to her ear.)

FLORENCE

It sounds like a letter.

(SHE puts the letter to her nose.)

FLORENCE

It even smells like a letter. Would you like me to taste it, too?

MAX

Why not? It'll probably be an ingredient for dinner tonight. Why didn't you tell me you got a letter from that bum?

FLORENCE

Because, first of all, your brother is not a bum, and secondly, I didn't get a letter from your brother, you did. It's addressed to you.

MAX

Well, I don't want to read any lies that bum has to write.

FLORENCE

Okay, I'll read it to you.

MAX

No! I don't want to hear the lies either.

(FLORENCE opens the letter.)

FLORENCE

I'll read it anyway.

MAX

NO!

1-1-9

(MAX puts his hands up to his ears and starts humming. HE walks around and sits on the sofa. FLORENCE takes his hands away from his ears.)

FLORENCE

Alright. Alright, I won't read it to you.

MAX

Why didn't you tell me I got a letter from that bum?

FLORENCE

Because I didn't get it until yesterday and I was waiting until you were in a good mood to tell you. But, then, you haven't been in a good mood since 1959. I'll just leave it here on the coffee table and if you want to read it, it'll be right there.

(FLORENCE puts the letter on the table.)

MAX

Well, forget it. I'll never want to read it.

FLORENCE

Max, it's been over fifteen years since you last spoke to Barney.

MAX

Fine, and I can go another fifteen years before I speak to him.

FLORENCE

You may not be here in another fifteen years.

MAX

Now you're getting the picture. Better yet, he should drop dead first. He's the reason I'm in this condition.

FLORENCE

Really.

MAX

Yes, really. Barney Stuart is the reason I had a heart attack. He's the reason I had clogged arteries. He's the reason I had quadruple bypass surgery.

FLORENCE

Really.

MAX

Well, what else could have caused it?

FLORENCE

How about seventy years of smoking? How about seventy years of sitting on your backside? How about seventy years of mayonnaise on everything you ate?

MAX

Sure, take his side.

(FLORENCE walks back into the kitchen.)

MAX

If Barney Stuart thinks I care about anything he has to say, he's crazy.

(MAX sits back down on the sofa. HE picks up the T.V. Guide and turns to the crossword portion. HE looks at the letter on the table. HE pushes it to one side. HE gets up and walks behind the sofa. He kneels behind the sofa out of sight. His head comes up slowly and focuses on the letter. HE walks around the other side of the sofa and sits in front of the letter. HE picks it up and pretends to stretch. When his arms separate over top of him, the letter comes out of the envelope, with a little help from his hands. He pokes at the letter with the pencil, until it opens. HE looks around to see if FLORENCE is watching. SHE isn't.)

1-1-11

(MAX picks up the letter and begins reading it to himself.)

BARNEY (O.S.)

Hiya, Brother. I guess you're pretty surprised to hear from me. Well, believe me, I wouldn't be writing if it wasn't important. I guess you heard that Betty and me are divorced.

MAX

You've been married so many times, I've lost track.

BARNEY (O.S.)

But then, I've been married so many times, you've probably lost track. Hey, I was shooting to tie Mickey Rooney's record, but it doesn't look that way now. Anyway, the reason I'm writing is because I got some bad news, recently, and I've got to talk to you before it's too late.

MAX

Before it's too late?

BARNEY (O.S.)

I know you're still mad about what happened a long time ago, but I hope we can iron that all out before I'm gone. Anyway, I'll be in the Fort Myers area on Thursday, the fifth. Please take time out to talk to me. I don't want to go to my grave knowing you hate me.

MAX

(shaken)

Going to his grave?

BARNEY (O.S.)

Love, your younger brother, Barney.

(MAX puts the letter down slowly.)

MAX

My brother's dying.

1-1-12

(MAX gets up with the letter and crosses to the kitchen. FLORENCE is wiping down the table. SHE notices that Max is upset.)

FLORENCE

What's the matter, Max?

MAX

I just read the letter from my dear, sweet brother.

FLORENCE

(confused)

Which brother is that?

MAX

Don't be so cruel, Florence. The only brother I have...Barney.

FLORENCE

You mean the same Barney that you wished would drop dead first?

MAX

Bite your tongue.

FLORENCE

What are you talking about?

(MAX hands the letter to FLORENCE.)

MAX

Barney is dying. Here, read it for yourself.

(FLORENCE reads the letter.)

MAX

And to think for the last fifteen years, I've refused to talk to him. When he gets here, I'm going to forgive him for everything. Even not coming to see me when I had my heart attack last year.

1-1-13

FLORENCE

I still can't get over the fact that you two are twins.

MAX

We are. Fraternal. I was born two minutes before him and he's never let me forget it. Always calling himself the younger brother.

FLORENCE

I've always said he looks younger than you.

MAX

(bugged)

It's only two minutes, Florence. That's all. Just two lousy minutes.

FLORENCE

The letter says he's going to be here today.

MAX

I know. Get this place straightened up. He can stay in the spare room.

(the doorbell RINGS.)

MAX

It's him.

FLORENCE

Calm down, Max. It's not the Grim Reaper. And, if it is, we'll tell him the spare room is taken.

(FLORENCE and MAX cross to the living room.)

MAX

(nervous)

You get the door.

(FLORENCE starts for the door.)

MAX

No, no, I'll get it.

(FLORENCE backs off.)

MAX

No, no you get it.

FLORENCE

If you don't knock it off...

(SHE holds up her fist.)

FLORENCE (continued)

you're going to get it.

MAX

Poor Barney. He's probably the walking picture of death.

(FLORENCE opens the door. BARNEY comes rushing in.)

BARNEY

Flo!

(BARNEY wears a bright, plaid sports coat over a loud polo golf shirt. His slacks are equally eye-catching. BARNEY picks FLORENCE up and swings her around. HE puts her down.)

FLORENCE

(to MAX)

If he's the walking picture of death, I want the name of his painter.

(BARNEY sees MAX standing center stage.)

BARNEY

(holding out his arms)

Max, baby.

(BARNEY rushes over and gives MAX a hug and then lifts him up.)

BARNEY

How's my older brother?

MAX

Barney, Barney, take it easy.

BARNEY

Don't tell me you're still sore.

MAX

Don't be silly, little brother. Come here. Sit down. How can I be mad at the only brother I have?

(MAX escorts BARNEY to the sofa. Barney sits.)

MAX

Here, let me make you more comfortable.

(MAX puts a small foot stool under BARNEY'S feet.)

MAX (continued)

How's that? Comfy?

BARNEY

(confused)

Well, yeah.

MAX

Let me fluff those pillows for you.

(MAX goes behind BARNEY and fluffs the pillows.)

MAX

Better?

BARNEY

Yeah, much better. You know, Maxie, I never expected this kind of greeting.

(MAX walks around and stands next to BARNEY.)

MAX

Why not, Barney? Okay, so we've had our differences over the years, but I'm your brother. Anything you want or need, I'll get it for you. You just say the word. I'm here for you one hundred per cent. I'll do anything for you.

BARNEY

I am a little thirsty.

MAX

Florence, get Barney something to drink.

FLORENCE

I'd have been disappointed if you hadn't said that.

BARNEY

Water will be fine, Flo.

(FLORENCE shakes her head and exits to the kitchen.)

MAX

What was I saying?

BARNEY

We've had our differences over the years.

MAX

Right. So, you left a few years ago to start a new life and left me alone with Mom and Dad. So what? I've always envied your free spirit, Barney.

BARNEY

Maxie, it hasn't been a few years. It's been more like, uh sixteen.

MAX

Sixteen, shmixteen.

BARNEY

Sixteen, shmixteen? Max, buddy, you were furious the day I left. I can't believe you're not upset.

MAX

Upset? About what?

(MAX walks behind BARNEY and massages his shoulders.)

MAX(continued)

I got used to being alone with Mom and Dad. Listening to their little aches and pains. Whining about this and that. Never giving me a moment's peace.

(MAX massages harder.)

Knowing you were out there living life to it's fullest, while I ran a broken-down antique shop. Hearing our parents wondering where the hell you were.

(massages even harder)

Never calling or writing. Watching those two poor old souls die within three months of each other and thinking how much better off they were than me.

(the massage becomes extremely intense)

Why would I be upset?

BARNEY

Uh, Max, you're squeezing a little too hard.

MAX

Uh, sorry, Barney.

(MAX stops what he's doing. FLORENCE enters with a bottle of water and hands it to BARNEY.)

BARNEY

Thanks, Flo.

(MAX sits next to BARNEY. FLORENCE sits in the chair to the right.)

1-1-18

MAX

So, what is it, Barney? Cancer? Liver?

BARNEY

What are you talking about? I'm as fit as a fiddle. But look at you, Max. You look like the walking picture of death.

FLORENCE

You mean, you're not dying?

BARNEY

(laughing)
Dying? Are you kidding? I've still got fifty more years in this old body.

(BARNEY goes to take a sip of water,
but MAX grabs it out of his hands.
MAX stands and kicks the foot stool
Out from beneath BARNEY'S feet.
BARNEY stands.)

MAX

Get out, you bum!!!

BARNEY

What?

MAX

You heard me. OUT!!!

FLORENCE

(standing)
Max, stop doing your Ralph Kramden impression and let's find out what's going on.

BARNEY

Didn't you get my letter?

(MAX picks up the letter.)

1-1-19

MAX

I've got it right here. And it says you want to iron out our differences before you're gone.

BARNEY

I do. I'm only here for two weeks.

MAX

What about this part where you say you don't want to go to your grave knowing I hate you?

BARNEY

I don't, Maxie. Let's face it, sixteen years is a long time. Maxie, is that what this is all about? You think I'm dying?

MAX

That would be wishful thinking.

BARNEY

I'm really touched.

MAX

I've been telling you that for seventy years. Okay, if you're not dying, what about not being able to reach Mickey Rooney's record for number of times being married?

BARNEY

Right. I got married again. But this time, it's for good. This girl has made me realize the errors of my ways. She's smart, level-headed and very good for me. In fact, she's right outside.

FLORENCE

Well, bring her in. Don't let her sit out there in this heat.

(BARNEY walks over to the front door and opens it.)

1-1-20

BARNEY

Come on in, Trixie.

MAX

Trixie?

(TRIXIE enters. SHE is very young and scantily clad.)

TRIXIE

Hi, everybody.

BARNEY

Everybody, this is the latest and final Mrs. Barney Stuart. Trixie, this is my sister-in-law, Florence.

(FLORENCE and TRIXIE shake hands.)

FLORENCE

(unsure)

It's, uh, very nice to meet you.

TRIXIE

My pleasure, I'm sure.

BARNEY

And this is my brother, Max.

(TRIXIE walks over to MAX in a very sexy manner. SHE takes his hand and rubs it.)

TRIXIE

Hi, Max. Barney told me I should treat you real good.

MAX

(pulling his hand away)

Get away from me.

FLORENCE

No offense, Trixie, but according to Max, the last time he was treated real good was in a German P.O.W. camp.

1-1-21

TRIXIE

Oh, that's okay. I still think he's cute.

FLORENCE

Well, let's all sit down.

(FLORENCE closes the door as BARNEY and
TRIXIE sit on the sofa. MAX sits to the
right.)

MAX

Barney, what about this part about the bad news?

BARNEY

Oh, that. I won the Pennsylvania Lottery.

(FLORENCE sits on the sofa.)

FLORENCE

That's bad news?

BARNEY

Well, not winning the money, but with the money I won, I
bought a chain of video stores.

FLORENCE

Okay, still not getting the bad news part.

BARNEY

I'm opening one in the Fort Myers area and I need someone
to run it.

(BARNEY looks over at MAX.)

MAX

Forget it.

BARNEY

Come on, Max. We ran Mom and Dad's antique store up north.

1-1-22

MAX

You mean, I ran Mom and Dad's antique store up north. I was the one who held that business together all those years. All you did was run around and make a fool of yourself.

BARNEY

Come on, Maxie. I was the idea man.

MAX

Some idea man. You don't have a buy one get one free sale in an antique store.

BARNEY

I'm offering you a chance to get off your duff and make some extra cash.

MAX

I'm doing very well, thank you, and there's nothing wrong with my duff.

(MAX gets up and heads for the hallway.
Barney gets up and walks around the room.)

BARNEY

Oh, yeah, Max, you're doing real well. I can tell just by looking around that you're just swimming in wealth. Who's your interior decorator? Fred Sanford?

MAX

Who's your tailor? Walt Disney?

(BARNEY joins MAX at the hallway entrance.)

BARNEY

Hey, Maxie, I'm sorry. Look, I didn't come here to start up some stupid sibling rivalry. I came here to offer you a business proposition.

MAX

We were in one business venture and it drove you away.

1-1-23

(TRIXIE walks to the hallway entrance.)

TRIXIE

Excuse me. You may not know this by looking at me, but I'm just a little naïve.

MAX

(Humming the "Twilight Zone Theme.")

Let's just say, you don't need a neon sign.

TRIXIE

Thanks. What I want to know is, why did you leave sixteen years ago, Barney?

MAX

Yeah, Barney, I'd like to hear this, too.

BARNEY

Okay. I had already helped you and Mom and Dad run that stinking antique store for twenty-five years. I was sick of it. I had seen part of the world during the war and I wanted to see the rest of it. One day, I packed my bags, walked out and never came back.

MAX

I never had a chance to tell you, Barney. I mean, what it was like being alone with Mom and Dad after you left.

(MAX crosses to center stage. BARNEY and TRIXIE follow him.)

BARNEY

Ah, it probably took them a couple of weeks before they even realized I was gone.

MAX

No, Barney, they cried. Every night, they cried. Not a single night went by that they didn't sit in that dark living room and cry. Do you know what it's like living with a couple of old people who do nothing but spend the whole evening blubbering? Whimpering?

1-1-24

MAX(continued)

Blowing their noses? Funeral homes wanted to hire them out as professional mourners.

BARNEY

So, what are you trying to tell me? That they cried every night, because I moved out?

MAX

No, Barney, because the day you moved out was the same day they cancelled Lawrence Welk. Yes, they cried because you moved out.

BARNEY

I find that hard to believe. But, even if it were so, let's forget about the past and look to the future. And the future is videos. This store would be yours completely. You won't see me anywhere around.

MAX

I can't hear you over that jacket, Barney.

(MAX exits upstairs.)

BARNEY

Very funny, Max. What a kidder. He's going in there and by the time he comes out, he'll have changed his mind.

MAX (O.S.)

No I won't.

BARNEY

See that? A kidder from the word go.

TRIXIE

Pussycat, we still have to find a hotel.

BARNEY

You're right, Trixie, honey. We'll be right back after we find a place to stay.

1-1-25

FLORENCE

Where do you think you're going? We've got a spare room. You and your, uh, Trixie will be our guests.

(BARNEY gives FLORENCE a kiss.)

BARNEY

Hey, Flo, you're great. I always said Maxie was the lucky one. I'm going up to tell him so.

(BARNEY exits. TRIxie sits on the sofa and begins twirling her hair and chewing gum. FLORENCE watches her in amazement. TRIxie notices FLORENCE watching her, smiles and stops what she's doing.)

FLORENCE

So, Trixie, would you like something cool?

TRIXIE

You mean, like tickets to Aerosmith?

FLORENCE

No, I meant something cool to drink.

TRIXIE

Yeah, sure. I have my taste buds all revved up for a nice daiquiri.

FLORENCE

Trixie, it's ten o'clock in the morning.

TRIXIE

(beat)

A banana daiquiri?

FLORENCE

How about revving your taste buds up for a nice cold glass of orange juice?

TRIXIE

You're the chef.

1-1-26

(FLORENCE and TRIxie enter the kitchen.
TRIXIE sits at the table to the left,
while FLORENCE prepares the juice.)

TRIXIE

You drink a lot of orange juice in Florida, don't you?

FLORENCE

Down here, it's the second most popular drink next to prune juice.

TRIXIE

Barney makes this really good drink. He mixes rye and prune juice together. He calls it a Whiskey-A-Go-Go.

FLORENCE

Sounds really different. So, how did you meet Barney?

TRIXIE

We met in Atlantic City at one of the casinos. He was at the craps table and I blew on his dice.

FLORENCE

Definitely an ice breaker.

(FLORENCE brings the juice over and sits
opposite TRIxie.)

TRIXIE

All night long, he kept winning as long as I was there. By the next morning, he was way ahead, so he asked me if I wanted to get married. He said I was the luckiest thing that ever happened to him. So, we drove to Maryland and got married in this cute little place. I think it was called "The Chapel Of Love And Other Unexpected Pleasures." Then, on the way to Las Vegas, for our honeymoon, we stopped in Pennsylvania and that's when he bought the winning ticket. Sixteen million dollars. That was six months ago.

FLORENCE

How was Las Vegas?

1-1-27

TRIXIE

I don't know. We never made it. As soon as he won the lottery, he started investing in companies and buying this and that. I kinda liked him better when he didn't have all that money.

(tastes her orange juice)

MMMM. This is terrific. How did you make it?

FLORENCE

Sorry, it's a family recipe.

(MAX enters down the stairs with BARNEY right behind him. THEY walk center stage.)

BARNEY

Come on, Max, I've changed. Even you can see that.

MAX

Oh, right, Barney, you've really changed. You write me a letter, scaring the hell out of me, making me think you're dying. Then you show up here, in perfect health, with a wife of about twenty-two.

BARNEY

She's twenty-three.

MAX

I was talking I.Q.

BARNEY

Max, that's not fair.

1-1-28

MAX

You know what's not fair, Barney? You coming here and trying to mend sixteen years worth of damage by bribing me with my own video store.

BARNEY

Max, Max, calm down. The only reason I wanted you to run the store is because you're the best man for the job.

MAX

Damn right, I'm the best man. You couldn't run a temperature.

(MAX enters the kitchen with BARNEY following.)

MAX

Florence, did you tell this bum and his twinkie, here, they could stay in our house?

FLORENCE

Yes, I did, Max.

MAX

Well, untell them, because they're not.

FLORENCE

Max, he's your brother.

MAX

My brother left sixteen years ago and I haven't seen him since. Let me tell you something, Barney, if it wasn't for me, Mom and Dad's store would have been a total loss.

BARNEY

Exactly, Max. I always said you were the brains of the family. Mom and Dad said so, too.

MAX

Then why did they always favor you? It was always, give Barney this, do that for Barney.

BARNEY

You know how it is with parents when it comes to the baby of the family. He always gets more attention.

MAX

Oh, knock it off. You're just two minutes younger than I am. Two damn minutes.

BARNEY

But, Max, I would have given up all that attention for just some of your brains. And, I mean that.

MAX

Well, if you had paid more attention to what you were doing, you could've been successful.

FLORENCE

(pointing to BARNEY)

Max, sixteen million bucks.

BARNEY

Yes, but, my success has come in the past six months and that was due to luck. Your success was due to your knowledge of business and hard work. Look at us, Max. I've been married five times and you just once. You have three kids and, what, five grandkids?

MAX

Six.

BARNEY(continued)

I've hopped from business venture to business venture. You stuck with the family business and kept it going. That's what I call successful.

(MAX crosses to the living room. HE thinks for a moment.)

MAX

So, what exactly is involved in this video store business?

(BARNEY crosses to the living room.)

BARNEY

It's a little gold mine, Max. Every sap that owns a VCR or DVD player and has a favorite movie is willing to spend their last three bucks to come in and rent it.

MAX

Yeah, but what do I have to do?

BARNEY

It's nothing, Max. We supply the movies. All you do is rent them out. Just keep a copy of the rental receipts.

MAX

Sounds pretty easy.

BARNEY

It is, Maxie.

MAX

And you wouldn't be anywhere in sight?

BARNEY

I'll be here for two weeks to get you started. You know, setting up, promotions, and then you're on your own.

FLORENCE

(crossing to the living room)

Max, you're seventy years old. It's time to leave the nest. And if you don't leave the nest, I'm going to push you out.

MAX

Where's the store?

BARNEY

In the Fort Myers Mall.

(MAX thinks for a moment.)

1-1-31

FLORENCE

Come on, Max, take a chance.

BARNEY

Yeah, Max, go for it.

(TRIXIE enters)

TRIXIE

Yeah, Max, don't be a party poop.

MAX

Can we take a look at it?

BARNEY

Right now, if you want.

(MAX takes another moment.)

MAX

Okay, I'll look. But I'm not guaranteeing anything.

(BARNEY, FLORENCE and TRIXIE all let out a happy cheer. MAX and BARNEY head for the front door.)

BARNEY

Great, Max, you won't regret it.

TRIXIE

Teddy bear, what about me?

BARNEY

Oh, uh, yeah, Trixie, get the bags out of the car and take them up to the room. We won't be long.

MAX

And remember, Barney, I don't like being pushed.

BARNEY

I promise I won't push.

(As MAX opens the front door, BARNEY is close behind and puts his hand on MAX'S back.)

MAX

You're pushing.

BARNEY

I'm not pushing.

(THEY exit)

MAX (O.S.)

Your hand is on my back, you're pushing.

BARNEY (O.S.)

I'm not pushing.

FLORENCE

Come on, I'll show you where your room is.

TRIXIE

If it's okay with you, I'm going to stay in a hotel.

FLORENCE

What are you talking about? There's plenty of room here and the rates are reasonable. For you and Barney, a thousand dollars a night.

TRIXIE

I'm leaving Barney.

(TRIXIE starts crying a loud and eerie cry.
FLORENCE tries to comfort her.)

FLORENCE

Please don't cry like that. The neighbors are going to think I'm strangling the cat.

TRIXIE

I'm sorry.

FLORENCE

Here, sit on the sofa.

(FLORENCE and TRIxie sit)

FLORENCE

Now, what is this crying all about?

TRIXIE

May I call you Florence?

FLORENCE

I almost insist on it.

TRIXIE

Well, Florence, maybe you didn't notice, but Barney has hardly spoken to me since we arrived.

FLORENCE

Yes he has. He told you to get the bags out of the car.

TRIXIE

That's what I mean. He only speaks to me when he needs something. It's been that way since we came into that blasted money. Now look at me. I'm swearing.

FLORENCE

It's probably just a phase he's going through.

(FLORENCE gets up and heads to the front door.)

FLORENCE

Come on, I'll help you get your bags.

(FLORENCE exits)

TRIXIE

You think he's not talking to me now, wait until he finds out that I'm pregnant.

(FLORENCE slowly backs into the room from
outside. TRIXIE stands and faces FLORENCE.)

TRIXIE

I told you he only speaks to me when he wants something.

(CURTAIN)

END OF ACT I

Act II

Scene 1

AT RISE:

The time is one week later.
We are in the same setting as ACT I. TRIXIE sits on the sofa, knitting what appears to be a blanket. SHE has her feet up on the coffee table. FLORENCE enters carrying a dust rag. SHE begins dusting the coffee table. When SHE gets to TRIXIE'S feet, she lifts them and dusts under them. SHE then places TRIXIE'S feet down and dusts them.

FLORENCE

What are you knitting? A rug?

TRIXIE

Well, it started out as booties, but it kinda got out of control. So, I'm working for a blanket. I can't remember how to finish, so I keep on going.

FLORENCE

Wonderful, Trixie. Right now there's a herd of sheep in their underwear somewhere giving you the finger.

TRIXIE

I'm hungry.

FLORENCE

So, what else is new?

TRIXIE

Call me strange, but I think your food is great.

FLORENCE

Thank you...and you are strange, but not any stranger than Max.

TRIXIE

Florence, is Max always so grouchy?

FLORENCE

(laughing)
Heaven's no. Sometimes he's even grouchier. Especially on the days we're out of Preparation H.

TRIXIE

Barney says you and Max met during World War Two.

(FLORENCE sits next to TRIXIE.)

FLORENCE

(smiling)
It was 1942. Max and Barney were getting ready to be shipped overseas. I was working in a local U.S.O., handing out donuts and coffee to the troops. And, I'll never forget Max trying to get my attention.

TRIXIE

What did he do?

FLORENCE

He stuck his tongue at me through a hole in a donut. Come to think of it, he wasn't cute. He was a pig. But, I was eighteen. I didn't know any better.

TRIXIE

Did he ask you out?

FLORENCE

Well, sort of. You see, we weren't allowed to date any of the troops. So, Max wrote a note and got hold of some tape. Then he came over and slapped my back, kind of inconspicuously, so no one would notice.

TRIXIE

What did the note say?

FLORENCE

It was so romantic. On one side it said, "Meet me in the parking lot at midnight, Cinderella."

TRIXIE

What did it say on the other side?

FLORENCE

"Kick me." Max's idea of a little joke. Unfortunately, that was the side that was facing out. I had three black and blue marks before I realized there was a note on my back.

TRIXIE

The little devil. Did you meet him?

FLORENCE

Right at the stroke of midnight. He picked me up in a silver coach with six white horses.

TRIXIE

(amazed)
Really?

FLORENCE

Actually, it was a 1932 Model "A" Coupe with a rumble seat. But, we had fertile imaginations back then. Come to think of it, my imagination wasn't the only thing that was fertile that night.

TRIXIE

You mean...

FLORENCE

Yes, in one night, I got introduced to sex, motherhood and a very interesting position in a rumble seat.

TRIXIE

You got knocked up before you were married?

2-1-4

FLORENCE

Don't look so shocked. Your generation isn't the first one to invent sex, you know. Sex has been going on for years...not in this house, but it's been going on for years. Besides, Max and I got married three days later. We didn't even know I was pregnant. Max left a few days later for France. I went down to the pier to see him and Barney off. I can still see Max, pulling out of the harbor, hanging over the rail, throwing up.

TRIXIE

Seasick?

FLORENCE

No, oyster omelet. I should've known right then, he was never going to like my cooking. Anyway, nine months later, little Susie was born.

TRIXIE

It sounds like Max was really a nice guy back then.

FLORENCE

Oh, he could be quite charming when he wanted to be.

TRIXIE

So, when did Max become such a grouch?

(FLORENCE gets up and dusts some more.)

FLORENCE

Right about the time that Barney left. Max developed a real bad attitude. He turned into a tyrant. He went from sweet, kind and considerate to mean, bitter and hateful. And, of course, the only people he could vent his frustrations on were his parents and me.

TRIXIE

So, how could you stay married to him?

FLORENCE

Husbands are like houses. You don't get rid of them just because they blow a fuse once in a while.

2-1-5

TRIXIE

Tell me about Barney. What were his other wives like? Why did he divorce them?

(FLORENCE sits next to TRIXIE.)

FLORENCE

Well, let's see. The first marriage ended because she drank. The second one ended because he drank. The third one ended because they both drank. And the fourth one, I don't know.

TRIXIE

I do. They got a divorce because she wanted a family. And now, when Barney finds out I'm pregnant, he'll divorce me.

(TRIXIE starts crying. FLORENCE tries to comfort her.)

FLORENCE

Trixie, don't you think it's about time you told Barney that you're pregnant?

TRIXIE

I can't, Florence. I told you. He'll divorce me.

FLORENCE

Don't you think he's going to be a little suspicious? I mean, in a couple of months, you're going to have a gut like a sumo wrestler. And, you've got to know that Barney's going to wonder, in a couple of years, who that little person is following you around the house.

TRIXIE

I don't know what I'm going to do.

FLORENCE

Trixie, the best thing for you to do is just tell him. If there's one thing about Barney, it's that he's very up front and open.

2-1-6

FLORENCE(continued)

He tells you exactly what's on his mind. So, if I were you, I'd be the same way. Be open and up front and tell him exactly what's on your mind.

TRIXIE

But, what do I say?

FLORENCE

Say something like, "Barney, remember the night that you thought you couldn't? Well, you did."

TRIXIE

Did what?

FLORENCE

(exhausted)

The Hokey-Pokey, Trixie. Look, I've got to start getting lunch ready for the boys. Why don't you give me a hand out in the kitchen?

TRIXIE

If it's near food, I'm there.

(FLORENCE and TRIXIE enter the kitchen.)

FLORENCE

So, you say you met Barney in Atlantic City. Were you born in New Jersey?

TRIXIE

I don't think so. I was a foster child. I lost my parents when I was five.

2-1-7

FLORENCE

(saddened)
Oh, I'm sorry.

TRIXIE

Yeah, they took me to a County Fair and I lost them in the crowd.

(FLORENCE hands TRIXIE some place mats. SHE puts them on the table.)

TRIXIE(continued)

It's alright, though, because I was adopted by my Uncle Billy in Maine. Everybody in Belgrade Lakes called him Uncle Billy. He was one of those people who you just thought of as your long, lost uncle. You know what I mean?

FLORENCE

Oh, sure. Max had an uncle like that. Everyone called him Uncle Sparky. In fact, it wasn't until a few years ago that we found out why he was called Uncle Sparky.

TRIXIE

Why?

FLORENCE

He was a pyromaniac.

(FLORENCE hands TRIXIE some silverware.)

FLORENCE(continued)

So, tell me a little more about this place. What is it? Belford Lakes?

TRIXIE

Belgrade Lakes in Maine. Uncle Billy owned a hotel right on the lake.

FLORENCE

That sounds nice. What was your Uncle Billy like?

2-1-8

TRIXIE

Oh, he would go out in the dead of winter, ice fishing in his underwear.

FLORENCE

Was he crazy?

TRIXIE

Oh, no. You see, every time he went ice fishing, he'd fall into the hole he cut in the ice. This way, he figured, he could fall in and keep a perfectly good set of clothes nice and dry.

FLORENCE

Didn't he freeze?

TRIXIE

Nah. He kept a flask of whiskey in the waistband of his B.V.D.'s to keep him warm. It wasn't always cold in Maine. In fact, in the summertime it was beautiful. I can still see all the activity on the lake; people skiing, boating, Uncle Billy scuba diving for his flask.

FLORENCE

Why do I feel like I should be saying, "Goodnight, Gracie?" I think I'll go into the other room and sit down. All of a sudden, I feel a little dizzy.

TRIXIE

Shoot, that comes naturally for me.

(FLORENCE and TRIXIE enter the living room.)

FLORENCE

You know, we still haven't come up with a solution to your problem.

TRIXIE

What problem?

2-1-9

FLORENCE

Try and stay with me on this, Trixie. You know, telling Barney that you're pregnant.

TRIXIE

I've been thinking and you're right. Barney is very understanding. He hardly ever loses his temper. Once, I locked the keys in the car and he didn't yell, or scream, or anything.

FLORENCE

Well, you see?

TRIXIE

I mean, why should he? I was in the car at the time.

FLORENCE

I knew there would be a logical explanation. So, are you going to tell him?

TRIXIE

I'm going to tell him, Florence. I'm going to be up front with him.

FLORENCE

Good for you.

TRIXIE

After all, when you get right down to it, what have I got to worry about? Barney's the sweetest, gentlest, most understanding man in the world.

(BARNEY storms through the front door.)

BARNEY

THAT MAN IS IMPOSSIBLE!!!

(BARNEY paces.)

FLORENCE

Don't look now, but sweet, gentle and understanding is home. Barney, where's Max?

2-1-10

BARNEY

Who knows? Who cares?

FLORENCE

Barney, stop pacing and tell me what happened.

BARNEY

What happened? What happened? I'll tell you what happened. That husband of yours is a jerk! That's what happened!

TRIXIE

(stepping up)

Pussycat, I've got something to tell you and I'm going to be up front.

FLORENCE

Uh, Trixie, let Pussycat have a chance to take a bite out of the furniture first.

BARNEY

I am so upset! My head is pounding! Mt head never pounds!

FLORENCE

Try talking to your wife for five minutes.

BARNEY

I ask him to do one simple thing for me. One simple thing. And do you think he would do it?

FLORENCE

It depends. What did you ask simple to do?

BARNEY

Flo, can I have a beer?

2-1-11

BARNEY

Sure, Barney. Sit down and relax.

(FLORENCE exits into the kitchen and gets a beer out of the refrigerator. BARNEY sits, but only for a second. HE jumps up and starts pacing again.)

BARNEY

I can't sit down! I am mad! I am furious! I could kill!

(FLORENCE enters the living room with BARNEY'S beer.)

FLORENCE

I guess this isn't a good time to ask about Max's vacation time, is it?

(FLORENCE hands BARNEY the beer.)

BARNEY

I can't believe that brother of mine. Here I hand him a gold mine on a silver platter.

FLORENCE

Barney, are you going to talk precious metals, or are you going to tell me what happened?

(BARNEY takes a big swig of beer.)

BARNEY

Okay. Okay. I'm calming down.

(BARNEY takes a seat on the sofa while FLORENCE sits in the chair to the right. TRIXIE sits next to BARNEY.)

FLORENCE

Alright, now what happened?

BARNEY

I'm all set to promote the new Disney videos we got in. So, I came up with this great idea. All that dopey brother of mine had to do was stand out in front of the store and get people to come in. That's all.

FLORENCE

Why would Max object to that?

(MAX enters through the front door wearing a big, fluffy, Donald Duck costume. HE walks center stage, until the initial shock is over. TRIXIE stands.)

TRIXIE

Gee, all of a sudden I have a craving for Peking Duck.

MAX

Well, Florence, don't you have something clever to say?

FLORENCE

Just this, do you still go to the bathroom standing up?

(FLORENCE and BARNEY laugh. THEY join MAX center stage.)

BARNEY

I think he looks great.

TRIXIE

I think he looks cute.

FLORENCE

I think he has lice.

(THEY all laugh except for MAX.)

MAX

Thanks to you, Barney, I'm the laughing stock of Fort Myers.

BARNEY

Hey, I was just trying to get your business off on the right foot.

FLORENCE

You mean, the right webbed-foot, don't you?

(THEY all laugh except for MAX.)

BARNEY

Maybe if you knew what you were doing, you wouldn't be the laughing stock of Fort Myers.

MAX

And what does that mean?

BARNEY

It means you have to promote a business to make it successful.

MAX

What do you know about success, Mr. Two-For-One-Sale?

BARNEY

I know if you had let me run the antique store the way I wanted to, we would have been set for life.

FLORENCE

Look, why don't we just sit down? You two have had these bad feelings for over fifteen years. I think if there's still some bad blood between you, now would be the perfect opportunity to get it out in the open and let's try to work things out.

MAX

What's to work out? The man is a nut.

BARNEY

I'm a nut? You're standing there in a duck suit and I'm a nut. That's a good one.

