



# THE EXIT STRATEGY CLUB

*A Dark Comedy  
That Illustrates  
Life is Worth  
Living*

# **THE EXIT STRATEGY CLUB**

by VICKI VODREY and CARLOS PEREZ

Based on the original stage play The Exit Strategy Club by Vicki Vodrey

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### CAST BREAKDOWN

Julie McArtor – Attractive, around sixty, owns an insurance agency, very social, married to Mike.

Mike McArtor – Good looking and fit, early sixties, owns a gym, laid back, married to Julie.

Roger Morrison-Wyatt – slender, mid-sixties, slightly hard of hearing, and recently retired, married to James.

James Morrison-Wyatt – Youthful looking, mid-forties, married to Roger.

Sidney Simon – Handsome, Jewish, around sixty, a CPA, single.

Lee Rennick – Pretty, just turned fifty, a veterinarian, single.

Synopsis: A group of elderly friends come together during the Christmas holiday for their monthly meeting to discuss their end of life strategies, which turns comically dark when a new arrival to the group ends up accidentally poisoned by one of the friends who planned to leave the group that evening by taking a drug overdose laced in his drink.

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## Act One

SETTING: A living room in the suburbs. It is furnished nicely but comfortably. There are scattered pictures of children, vacations, holidays and pets. It's the Christmas season and there are holiday cards from friends and family taped around one of the doorways, along with a black Christmas tree on a table in a corner that has been decorated with white sugar skull ornaments. There is a recliner that has a throw over it that is next to an end table. There is a large coffee table in front of the couch. A couple of nice folding chairs have been set up around the coffee table. There is a Disney bean bag in the middle of the room. Mike has his legs in it and is doing crunches and counting. Julie is on the phone, trying her best to not draw Mike's attention. Besides the living room, there are three entrances/exits, one to the kitchen, one to a bathroom and another to a bedroom.

JULIE

So, I've got to do something, and this is all I can think of. It's critical.

(pause.)

You can?! That would be wonderful! Can you bring one?

(She glances at Mike. He is lost in his own world.)

Oh, I hope that works out! But anything you think of has got to help. See you in a few!

(Julie looks at Mike.)

Really?

(Mike keeps count of his reps.)

MIKE

Eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four-

JULIE

Did you not hear me?

MIKE

Yeah, I heard. Eighty-three, eighty-

JULIE

Really?! Now?

MIKE

Eighty...eighty...

(He stops and gives her a dirty look.)

You made me lose my place.

JULIE

How can you even think about crunches when one of our best friends is so depressed?

MIKE

Sidney? He's always depressed.

JULIE

This is different. He called me and said he saw them walking down La Balsa today.

MIKE

Who?

JULIE

Cathy. With Rudolpho.

MIKE

Oh man.

JULIE

He said he felt like driving into the lake.

MIKE

Poor Sid.

(He takes a deep breath and starts crunches.)

One, two, three-

JULIE

Oh my, God! Don't you care?

(Mike stops and looks at her.)

MIKE

Sorry, but I've gotta make up for the calories I'll be eating and drinking tonight.

JULIE

Can't you be like a normal sixty-five -

MIKE

Sixty-four!

(He does more crunches.)

JULIE

For another week! Anyway, show some concern for your best friend!

MIKE

I am.

JULIE

And be like every other sixty-*four*- year- old man and have a little flab, for Pete's sake.

MIKE

Do I detect a hint of insecurity?

(He smiles mischievously.)

JULIE

You love my fat and we both know it.

MIKE

Do some crunches with me.

JULIE

No! They'll be here any minute.

MIKE

So? I thought we were hosting an orgy.

(He pulls her onto the bean bag. She tries to seem disgusted, but she fights smiling. He kisses her. She rolls off the "Frozen" bean bag.)

JULIE

Not unless it's you, me, Anna and Elsa.

MIKE

Hmmm...the Frozen princesses. They are pretty cute.

JULIE

Maybe I can find you a Disney blow up doll.

MIKE

Every guy's dream – making out with Snow White.

JULIE

I'm married to a perv.

(Mike stands, giving up the battle.)

MIKE

Hey, Disney gave her seven dwarves for company, and you call me a perv? Besides, you love it. Now, what can I do to help?

JULIE

Well, for one, drag your girlfriends and Olaf out of the middle of the room and toss them into the bedroom on the bed for now. They'll be here any minute. And put some suitable clothes on.

MIKE

Okay, hot stuff.

(Julie goes in the kitchen as Mike drags the bean bag into the bedroom.)

(Julie enters with a beautiful cheese tray just as Mike exits the bedroom, and there's a knock at the door.)

JULIE

Oh my God. Go get some clothes on!

MIKE

Why? It's just the guys.

(Julie seems flustered, then composes herself.)

JULIE

You...um...never know. Act like you've gone through puberty and change clothes.

MIKE

You're no fun.

(He exits to the bedroom, and Julie goes to the door and opens it. Roger and James are there with wine and flowers. They kiss each other on the cheek.)

JULIE

Aww, you two! You shouldn't have! Let me take those and get a vase. You can just toss your coats on the bed in the bedroom.

(James helps Roger off with his coat and takes them in the bedroom. James notices the black Christmas tree and walks over to it.)

JAMES

Oh my, but we are in a festive mood tonight. Merry Day of the Dead Christmas!

(Roger enters from the bedroom and goes up to James to look at the tree as well.)

ROGER

I told James that with us bringing these, you all would make a crack about "The Days of Wine and Roses," implying we drink too much. But he just looked at me vacantly and said he'd never heard of it. Then all I felt was old.

JULIE

It's a great movie.

(She heads to the kitchen.)

JAMES

Honey, I told you, I just don't know that many films from the forties.

ROGER

It was released in sixty-two.

(Julie returns. Roger looks at her and shakes his head.)

ROGER

He just keeps making it worse.

JULIE

Sweetie, you're only as old as you feel.

ROGER

Then that puts me at a hundred and two.

JULIE

Oh, you. Sit down.

ROGER

(pointing at tree)

Oh, Julie, I love it.

JAMES

You've outdone yourself this time. How appropriate.

JULIE

I just wanted to help set the mood.

JAMES

What's better than joy and death combined?

ROGER

How about joy by itself, doll.

JAMES

Okay, I'll give you that. But it is fun, especially for our get together.

JULIE

What can I fix you?

JAMES

I must warn you, Jules. He's in a mood.

JULIE

When isn't he?

ROGER

Well, fine. Knock a fella when he's down.

JULIE

Honey, we love ya, and we wouldn't have you any other way.

JAMES

Try thinking that at two in the morning when he's crying into his Glen Livet.

ROGER

What's the point of being married if one has no secrets?

JULIE

That's no secret. I've seen you that way before.

ROGER

When?

JULIE

Before James. Remember?

ROGER

Oh, yes. Probably numerous times.

JULIE

Yep.

ROGER

We come to you when we need a mommy.

JULIE

That's my role in life.

ROGER

Those problems of yore seem so trivial now.

JAMES

What kind of problems?

JULIE

Love problems.

(James looks at Roger. Julie goes to peak out the window.)

JAMES

Since when is love trivial?

ROGER

Really? It was pre-you. So definitely trivial.

(James pats his cheek, then looks at Julie.)

ROGER

What are you looking at, doll?

JULIE

Oh, nothing. Just watching for Sid. He's had a bad day.

ROGER

Sidney and the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad, day. He has more than his share.

JAMES

So, where's your hubs?

JULIE

Changing clothes, but he's taking his time.

(Julie yells towards the bedroom.)

Where's my hubs?

(Mike enters wearing fitted jeans, a baseball cap and a T shirt with a skull and crossbones on it.)

JULIE

You're wearing *that*?

MIKE

Why not? I thought I'd dress in theme.

JULIE

I didn't realize it was Dress as a Pirate Day?

ROGER

Where are your buccaneers?

MIKE

Under my buckin' hat.

(They're silent.)

You know. Ears? Where are my buckin' ears?

(He grabs his ears.)

MIKE

Under my buckin' hat?

JAMES

Oh, I get it now!

(He laughs. Roger looks at Julie.)

ROGER

Maybe we're too old to get it.

JULIE

Oh, I get it. It's just not funny.

MIKE

C'mon people! Seinfeld didn't have it this hard.

JULIE

Seinfeld has talent.

JAMES

Where *is* Sidney? He's supposed to bring our tax stuff with him that we'd left at his office.

(Julie checks her watch.)

JULIE

He should be here any minute. Actually, they both should.

(Julie catches her "slip".)

MIKE

Someone else is coming?

(Julie ignores Mike.)

ROGER

Both? Is he back with Cathy?

JULIE

Absolutely not, but he did see her today. With Rudolpho.

ROGER

Ouch! That had to hurt!

JULIE

Yes, and I'm worried about him. He's hit a new low.

ROGER

Oh my.

JAMES

So, who else is coming?

JULIE

Oh...just...someone I know.

MIKE

Julie, you didn't tell me anyone else was coming. Who did you invite?

(Julie hesitates.)

JULIE

Lee.

MIKE

Lee? Our vet? Why?!

ROGER

Lee who? Do we know her?

JULIE

No, I don't believe you've meet her. She's great.

(Suspicious, Mike won't give up.)

MIKE

Julie? Why did you invite our veterinarian?

ROGER

Did you say she's a vegetarian?

JULIE

No, our veterinarian.

ROGER  
Isn't that what I said?

JAMES  
She said *veterinarian*.

JULIE  
Actually, she's both. She's a veterinarian that's a vegetarian.

JAMES  
Oh, I just love alliteration. Well, that makes sense.

ROGER  
Not to me. Oh, well...

(Mike is still suspicious.)

MIKE  
Julie?

(Julie ignores him.)

Julie?

JULIE  
Oh, will you stop saying that!

MIKE  
Then answer me. Why'd you invite her tonight?

JULIE  
Okay! I invited her over to see if she could help Sid.

MIKE  
Does he know?

(Julie hesitates.)

JULIE  
No....

MIKE  
Does she know?

JULIE  
Yes! She knows all about Sidney!

JAMES

And she's still coming?

ROGER

We all have our special person, James. Just look at us.

MIKE

She must be a born masochist if she knows everything about Sid and still wants to meet him.

JULIE

Oh, stop it. I'm just trying to help.

MIKE

Well then, what could possibly go wrong?

ROGER

Does she know why we're all meeting tonight?

(Julie hesitates.)

JULIE

Well, no...but we can talk about all kinds of things! It doesn't have to be our typical meeting.

(All but Julie look at the black Christmas tree, then after a moment she notices them and follows their gaze to the tree and gets it.)

JULIE

Okay, so maybe I'll have to explain a few things to her.

JAMES

Just tell her we're all Goth, I'm sure she'll love it.

ROGER

Goth at our age, that should be interesting!

JAMES

You're only as Goth as you feel.

MIKE

Don't you think this is sort of a bad evening, or better yet event, to fix people up on a date?

JULIE

It's not a date!

JAMES

Besides, there's never a bad time for love, Mike.

JULIE

Thank you, James! I'm glad there's another true romantic here!

(The doorbell rings.)

MIKE

Let's see what's behind door number one!

(Julie opens the door. It is Lee. She is wearing a sweater with dogs and cats all over it, dog earrings, and carries a purse that has dogs and cats on it.)

JULIE

Lee! So good to see you! Aren't you cold with just a sweater?

LEE

Oh, no, I run hot all the time.

JAMES

Oh, how I wish Roger had that problem.

ROGER

Not now, James. We have company.

JULIE  
(to Lee)

Your sweater is darling!

LEE

Thanks! Courtesy of my family and customers. Teachers get gifts with apples on it. I get pets and livestock.

(Julie looks around Lee.)

JULIE

Are you alone?

LEE  
(looks behind her)

Yes. Was I supposed to bring someone? Everyone had left my office by the time we got off the phone. Is this a couples only affair? I thought—

JULIE

No, everything's fine. Don't get your panties in a twist.

ROGER

Oh, how I hate it when that happens.

JAMES

Not now, Roger.

JULIE  
(to Lee)

No, you thought correctly. I was just--oh well, let me introduce you to everyone. You know Mike.

LEE

Of course. Hi!

MIKE

Hi. Do I call you Dr. Rennick tonight?

LEE

Of course not. Call me Lee.

JULIE

And these are my friends, Roger and James. Guys, this is Lee Rennick.

ROGER

You were named after Lee Remmick?! She was my favorite actress!

JULIE

No, it's Rennick, Roger.

ROGER

That's what I said. Remmick.

(The ladies smile.)

LEE

You don't know how many times I've heard that. Mother probably did that as a joke.

ROGER

Take it as a great compliment, my dear. She was a great actress and a classy and beautiful woman.

LEE

Okay. I'll give mom a little slack then.

JAMES

Nice to meet you, Lee.

LEE

Thanks. Nice to meet you...what's your name again?

JAMES

James.

LEE.

James.

JAMES

How sad. I'm just one of those nondescript people that fade from people's minds. Along with my name.

LEE

Oh, not at all!

JULIE

How dramatic. You sound like Roger.

ROGER

We're together for a reason.

(James to Lee.)

JAMES

I'm just joshing you.

(He thinks in a teasing way.)

Come to think of it, Josh *might* be better.

(Lee notices the tree and starts to head toward it when Mike sees questions coming and quickly chimes in.)

MIKE

Well, what can I get for everyone? Lee?

(Lee turns back to him and Julie helps physically direct her away from the tree.)

MIKE

We have wine that our guests brought? A cocktail from the bar? A protein drink from the fridge?

ROGER

James and I will take some of the Chardonnay.

(Lee looks back at the tree again.)

MIKE  
Calling Lee?

(Lee glances at Mike.)

LEE  
(looking back at tree)  
Nothing for now, thanks.

MIKE  
I'll catch you later then. Hon?

JULIE  
I'll take a Seven and Seven.

MIKE  
Diet?

JULIE  
No!

(The doorbell rings again.)

Sidney!

(She looks at the group.)

JULIE  
He's extra devastated tonight. Let's keep it light and cheery!

(She turns to Lee)

JULIE  
Oh, don't let me give you the wrong impression, I'm sure you'll love him. He's just adorable.

(All of the rest of those in the room give each other a "What did she just say?" look.)

(Julie goes to the door and opens it. Sidney comes in dressed entirely in black With a black trench coat and black fedora. He is holding some papers. Lee reacts to his extremely good looks. Roger and James notice her reaction.)

ROGER  
I normally would hate someone that good looking, but I just can't because he does our taxes for free.

JAMES

And he's nice. Depressing as hell, but nice.

LEE

Why's he depressed?

ROGER  
(whispers)

Got a divorce a few months ago.

JAMES

Probably hurt his deductions.

(Julie brings Sidney over.)

JULIE

Sidney, you know everyone here but my friend, Lee. Lee, this is Sidney.

(They shake hands.)

MIKE

Wow, Sid. Do you always have to dress in black?

SIDNEY

Until something darker comes along.

JULIE

Let me take your coat and hat.

(She helps Sidney off with his coat and takes his hat and coat to the bedroom.)

ROGER  
(to Sidney)

Johnny Cash would be proud.

SIDNEY

Thank you. Thank you very much.

ROGER

That's Elvis Presley.

SIDNEY

Oh, right. Oh well, here are your papers.

(He hands them to Roger.)

Don't you think it's about time to e-file like everyone else?

ROGER

Never, my friend. I want to leave a paper legacy to my husband. It's more concrete.

JAMES

And I can always burn them if I'm desperate for heat.

JULIE

What can I fix you, Sidney?

SIDNEY

Got any Absinthe?

(Julie laughs too hard.)

JULIE

(to Lee)

He's always such a jokester!! He cracks me up!

SIDNEY

I do? I just thought I'd drink what's appropriate for our meeting.

MIKE

And dress like it. Like me.

(Sidney looks at Mike's shirt.)

SIDNEY

Is it Pirates of the Caribbean night?

LEE

Oh dear, is this a costume party? Julie, you should have told me.

JULIE

No, of course not.

LEE

I guess I could go as a crazy cat lady!

(The women laugh.)

SIDNEY

Are you?

(Julie gives Sidney a look.)

JULIE

Oh, you!

SIDNEY

Just trying my humor, which didn't work as usual. I didn't mean to be insulting. I love cats. Cathy hated them, you know.

LEE

How can anyone hate cats?

SIDNEY

Only a woman who is pure evil.

ROGER

Like Cathy?

SIDNEY

Like Cathy.

MIKE

C'mon Sid, whatchya drinking?

(Sidney ponders, then responds.)

SIDNEY

How about a White Russian?

MIKE

A White Russian?! We got cream, Jules?

JULIE

I do! That's such a fun drink, Sidney! Different! I'll get it.

(She exits.)

SIDNEY

What's making her so perky tonight?

MIKE

I think it's a woman thing.

(James suddenly starts singing from Fiddler on The Roof)

JAMES

(singing)

"Matchmaker, Matchmaker,

JAMES (cont'd.)

Make me a match,

(Then Roger joins in with him.)

ROGER and JAMES

Find me a find,  
catch me a catch

Matchmaker, Matchmaker  
Look through your book,  
And make me a perfect match”

(They finish with a flourish and wait for an applause that doesn't come. They give each other a disgusted look.)

JAMES  
(to Roger)

Critics.

SIDNEY

What was that about?

JULIE

Oh nothing. You know how they love to break out in song.

LEE

I thought it was rather fun. Do you do this sort of thing often?

JAMES

Only when the mood strikes, doll. Only when the mood strikes.

SIDNEY

Where's my White Russian?

JAMES

Have you tried Siberia?

JULIE

On its way, dear.

MIKE

Since when did you drink anything that girly?

SIDNEY

I didn't know it was.

(Julie comes in bringing the cream.)

ROGER

I don't think it's girly. None of our friends drink them.

JAMES

Our friends are too trendy. They're all up into every gin imaginable.

ROGER

Don't get me started on Monkey 47!

(James and Roger laugh wildly. No one else gets it, and Mike has his hand whoosh by his head to make the point.)

MIKE

Lee, you ready for a drink?

LEE

I'll have what Sidney is having. I'm such a lightweight. One will have me dancing on the tables.

JAMES

Great! We love musicals!

(Sidney pulls Julie aside from the others.)

SIDNEY

Does your friend know why we're meeting?!

JULIE

No. But she's fifty. She might have read the article in AARP.

SIDNEY

I just don't want--

JULIE

I know, Sidney. But the whole party doesn't have to be about death.

SIDNEY

Yes, it does! Tonight, it does! That's what I – we – are planning on, Julie. Why did you invite her?

JULIE

I...thought...you could use...

SIDNEY

Oh my God. You're fixing me up?

JULIE

No! I just think she might be able to help you.

SIDNEY

I'm beyond help.

JULIE

That's not true, and besides, this is what friends do!

MIKE

Hey, you two. What are you up to over there?

JULIE

Not a thing, babe.

MIKE

Here's your White Russians, Sid.

(He hands a drink to Sidney. Sidney picks up an ornate straw from the bar area. He walks away from the group, and facing the audience, he dumps the contents of a small baggie into his drink.)

SIDNEY

Well, this is it. To be or not to be, that is the question.

(He stirs his drink and walks back to the couch. Mike sees him.)

MIKE

Whatcha puttin' in there?

SIDNEY

Uh, protein powder.

MIKE

You?! What flavor? Let me have a taste.

(Sidney holds his drink protectively.)

SIDNEY

Sorry, this one's my own secret recipe.

MIKE

Take it to your grave, huh.

SIDNEY

You might say that.

MIKE

Fair enough.

ROGER

We're feeling shunned. Especially Lee. I think she's getting a little bored of my stories about going with Liberace to the Catskills.

LEE

Oh no! It's fascinating!

JAMES

Well, *I'm* tired of hearing it. For the twentieth time.

ROGER

Pure jealousy.

(Mike hands a drink to Lee.)

MIKE

Why don't we get some grub and talk about our...uh...wishes.

LEE

Wishes? Is it someone's birthday? I should have brought candles.

(Confused. they all look at her.)

JULIE

Lee, we're having just an itty bitsy short "meeting," if you will, before the rest of our festivities.

MIKE and SIDNEY

WHAT?!

JAMES

Festivities? Yay!

LEE

We're not going to talk about our wishes? That sounded so nice.

(Roger starts to sing.)

ROGER

"A dream is a wish your heart makes"

(James joins in singing.)

ROGER and JAMES

"When you're fast asleep."

MIKE

Man, you ain't a kidding when you say you love musicals.

JAMES

And Disney!

JULIE

So does Maggie!

(Mike glances at Lee and gives Julie an impatient look.)

JULIE

Lee, do you belong to AARP?

LEE

Yes.

JULIE

Do you read their magazine?

LEE

Never. Why?

(Mike talks with food in his mouth.)

MIKE

Because Julie plans dinner parties where we talk about how we want to die.

JULIE

I read it in AARP.

ROGER

We call it The Exit Strategy Club. We've been meeting like this for months. It's quite helpful.

LEE

Isn't that...kind of...depressing?

JULIE

Not at all! It's liberating and uplifting!

(Lee looks back at the tree and everyone follows her gaze.)

LEE

So is that the reason for...

JAMES

No, we're all Goth, that's all.

LEE

Goth what?

JULIE

Yes, that's the reason for the black Christmas tree with sugar skull ornaments.

LEE

I see...you're not going to sacrifice anyone are you? That's not why I was invited?

JAMES

(looking at Sid)

Depends on your definition of sacrifice.

JULIE

There are no sacrifices. We aren't Satanists and we aren't Goth. I just decorated the tree to fit the occasion, that's all.

LEE

I don't know...

MIKE

Ah, you can just listen since you're a virgin.

LEE

I am?

MIKE

A death planning virgin, that is.

JULIE

I apologize, Lee. I shouldn't have sprung this on you.  
(looks at Sid.)

JULIE (cont'd.)

But since you're here...

(Julie pulls her down on the couch.)

JULIE

We won't talk about dying for long. And you'll be surprised how much you learn!

LEE

If you say so....

(Julie has scooted Lee over to where she's close to Sidney. Julie moves Lee's drink so that now their glasses are almost touching each other. Julie notices Sid's drink.)

JULIE

Sid, you make me happy! You're using one of my special stirrers I bought the other day – that poopy Mike made fun of.

SIDNEY

Just trying to look festive like you said, Jules.

LEE

Oh, I love that little stirrer! I want YOUR drink!

(Sidney looks at her panicked.)

SIDNEY

You can't have it.

LEE

Geez. Okay. No need to crap your underwear over it.

JAMES

(looks at Roger)

Did someone mention crapping their underwear?

ROGER

Don't you dare.

MIKE

So? Who wants to start?

SIDNEY

I've gotta use the bathroom first.

JAMES

Mention crapping and suddenly everyone needs to go.

MIKE

Okay, but make it quick.

SIDNEY

Oh darn, and I planned to read “War and Peace” while I was in there.

JULIE

Just go, Sid.

(Sidney exits towards the bathroom and Julie looks at Sid’s drink.)

JULIE

Lee, why don’t you just go ahead and take Sidney’s drink. Sid can be temperamental at times, but he’s still a great guy. I think I have another stirrer somewhere if he wants it.

LEE

Well, if you’re sure.

(Julie switches the drinks and Lee takes a big sip. Julie goes to the bar to look for another stirrer and finds one.)

ROGER

I guess it’s only logical that I start since I have cancer.

LEE

Oh no! You’re dying?

MIKE

We all are, Lee.

LEE

You all are dying of cancer?!

(Julie comes back and sticks the stirrer in Sidney’s switched drink and joins them on the couch.)

JULIE

Of course, we’re not!

MIKE

Nah. I just mean, at our age, we’re all getting closer. We’re headed to that golden goalpost in the sky. Right?

LEE

I guess...

(Sidney enters, sits and picks up his drink protectively.)

SIDNEY

Your bathroom faucet has a slow drip. It'll end up costing you money.

JULIE

Okay, Ebenezer. Obviously, I should also heat my house with one lump of coal.

MIKE

Anyway, back on topic. Take you, Lee. You just turned fifty, right?

LEE

A few months ago. I'm officially middle aged. That calls for a drink!

(She takes another gulp.)

(Sid looks at her drink then at his and sees that they are now the same and takes a quick sip of his but can't tell if it's the same or not.)

JAMES

Right behind you, girl.

(James takes a sip of his wine.)

MIKE

(to Julie)

There's your mistake. You're not middle aged. You were middle aged at forty. The average age expectancy right now is around eighty, give or take a few. Not a hundred. Face it - you're over the hill.

LEE

Are you get togethers always this fun?

JULIE

Mike!!

ROGER

Yeah, don't scare the woman.

JAMES

You never talk to a lady about her age! *Or* her weight.

(James eyes Lee, then whispers to Roger.)

JAMES

My guess is one twenty-five.

ROGER

Her hips are telling me one thirty.

MIKE

Hey, she's fifty. It's something every player faces.

SIDNEY

She has reason to be scared. Life is sad and heartbreaking; it only increases with each sad year.

(He takes a drink.)

SIDNEY  
(to Lee)

Lee, may I taste your drink?

LEE

Well...

JULIE

I made them the exact same, Sid. I just gave her your straw, that's all?

SIDNEY

That's all?

MIKE

Don't be a lush, Sid. Julie can always make you another one.

SIDNEY

Yeah, but not exactly like this one.

ROGER

May we please stop talking about Sid's precious drink and move on to death?

LEE

Wow. I haven't been this depressed since watching "Old Yeller."

JULIE

Maybe she needs to be scared of *you* guys!

(She looks at Lee.)

I apologize for their abruptness.

LEE

That's okay.

(She looks at James.)

And you're close. I weigh one thirty-two.

JAMES

O.M.G. I'm horrified. I talk too loudly because Roger is hard of hearing.

(Roger looks at James.)

ROGER

Is nothing sacred? First, I crap my pants and now I can't hear. Can we please get back to my dying?

JAMES

Well, to be technical about it, it is in remission.

LEE

That's so nice to hear.

ROGER

But none the less, I'm dying.

LEE

Nothing like looking on the bright side of life.

MIKE

And that's nothing like it.

(Roger gives him a frustrated look.)

Sorry, Rog, go ahead, ball's in your court.

ROGER

Thank you, Mike. Well, James and I decided that going to Oregon is not for us.

LEE

Oh, I don't blame you. Their weather would make a crappy vacation.

(Roger gives her a pained look.)

LEE

I'm sorry, Roger. I didn't mean—

JAMES

It's okay. He's heard it all before from me.

LEE

(to Roger)

Oh dear, you were talking about Oregon, Roger?

JULIE

Oregon has the Death with Dignity Act.

LEE

Ohhhhhhh! I see! Death and dying and all that.

ROGER

Right. Thank you, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. Anyway. We've decided that we want every second that we can have together. Even if I end up loopy on morphine.

(James and Roger look at each other and smile.)

JAMES

I'll take him any way I can get him.

MIKE

But you don't take the drugs 'til you know you're about gone.

ROGER

I know that, Mike. But we must plan for it. We have our cats to think about. And you must become a resident, there are waiting periods...it's just not for us.

JAMES

He's not going because of me.

SIDNEY

But with drugs you don't linger. It's fast and it's over.

ROGER

Well, you know me. I've always loved watching a good death scene. Now I get to play one.

JULIE

You know we'll be here to help in any way we can, sweetie.

SIDNEY

And that goes for any of us, right?

JULIE

Of course.

ROGER

Actually, Lee might be able to help James and me!

LEE

In what way?

MIKE

You gonna have her euthanize you?

ROGER

Our oldest cat, Prissy, is sixteen. We thought we might have her put to sleep right before I die to be buried with me.

LEE

If she's healthy at the time, it's kind of a no-no. Also, it's kind of creepy.

ROGER

It's probably for the best. James will need lots of company.

(He points to each one of them.)

JULIE

We'll be there.

SIDNEY

Speak for yourself.

ROGER

What's that mean?

SIDNEY

Nothing. It's just that some of us might beat *you* to the finish line, you know. You might way overshoot what your docs have said and some us might...well...the roof might fall on us. You just never know.

(They all look up at the ceiling.)

MIKE

That's why we're preparing.

SIDNEY

Exactly.

(Lee fans herself.)

LEE

Is anybody else hot in here?

(A couple of them shake their heads.)

MIKE

Only Julie when she has a hot flash.

(Lee laughs too loudly. They all watch her. Roger looks at Mike.)

ROGER

She'd probably love your buccaneer joke right now.

(Lee slows down and has a little hiccup.)

But I must tell you! I did some Googling and did find out exciting news though!

(Roger and James get out their phones and pull something up.)

ROGER

Look! Disney Ever After – Magical Moments from Cradle to Grave! They're going to have Remembrance Properties! Isn't that incredible! It almost makes me excited to die.

(Sidney gets out his phone and Googles also. Rogers reads from his phone.)

ROGER

"In true Disney fashion, they will be places you can go visit with your loved ones forever in a joyous way. They're going to insert images of your loved ones onto the faces of animatronics."

(He looks up at them beaming.)

And you might be able to talk to your loved ones on the phone using the same technology they use in Turtle Talk with Crush!

(He places his phone on the table next to where Mike earlier had thrown his.)

JULIE

That sounds absolutely dreadful.

ROGER

Why?

JULIE

It's creepy, Roger. Who wants to go hear Grandma's voice at Disneyland? You go to the park and as you're leaving, Grandma's voice comes on and sings, "Now it's time to say goodbye to all our company. M-I-C –"

MIKE

“See you real soon. K-E-Y”

ROGER

“Why? Because we like you.”

(They all sing but Sidney, still looking at his phone. Lee is especially loud.)

“M-O-U-S-E.”

SIDNEY

It’s a hoax.

ROGER

What?

SIDNEY

It’s not true. It was an April’s Fool joke on a blog.

ROGER

You just had to go and burst my bubble.

SIDNEY

But the article underneath it says people really do throw ashes at the park. Top two rides that get ‘em are The Haunted Mansion and It’s A Small World.

(He puts his phone on table also for others to see. James puts his phone on the table. He and Roger give each other a fist bump.)

ROGER and JAMES

Yes!

ROGER

Haunted House, here I come.

JAMES

No, do Small World, then you’ll float around all those darling animatronics.

LEE

Prissy’s ashes can’t go with you then!!

(She looks at everyone.)

Cats hate water.

JULIE

Roger, are you kidding? We're going to take Maggie there next month and all I'm gonna think about is how many dead people I'm floating in as I go by those cute little Eskimo children.

LEE

I've never been to Disneyland.

(She talks in a baby voice.)

I'm a bewy, bewy depwived little girl.

ROGER

You're kidding! We must take you there while I'm still kicking.

LEE

Wonderful! I've always wanted to ride Indiana Jones!!

JAMES

Doll, doesn't everybody?!!

(She laughs loudly again. They look at her.)

LEE

I'm sorry. I'd swear I was having a bad acid flashback, but I've never had acid. I don't know what's wrong with me.

MIKE

I know exactly what I'm gonna do.

JAMES

What's that?

MIKE

Cryogenics.

ROGER

Oh my. Isn't that where they freeze you?

MIKE

You ought to look into it. There's rumors Disney did it.

JULIE

He's really hounding me to do it.

LEE

I've had a couple of patients that have tried it!

ROGER

They do it on pets?

(Lee to James and Roger.)

LEE

Let's experiment!

(Lee pulls cat treats out of her purse.)

LEE

Here, Pissy, Pissy, Pissy!

(Roger and James look at her.)

ROGER

Did she just say I'm pissy?

JAMES

It's *Prissy*! And she *hates* the cold!

JULIE

Lee, their cat's at home. Are you okay?

LEE

Of course, she is! I don't know what's wrong with me.

(She puts the cat treat in her mouth. They all make a face but Mike.)

What? I'm just trying what I give 'em.

(She fans herself.)

MIKE

James, you do realize Prissy'd be dead, right?

(Julie corrects him.)

JULIE

Cryonic suspended.

MIKE

Timing is of the essence. The moment the doctors give up on ya, they put you in an ambulance and whisk you to a facility in Michigan.

SIDNEY

If they're taking you to Michigan, the temperature there should preserve you.

JULIE

They put you in their long-term storage facility until science can cure what you died of. And you know what they embalm you with.

JAMES

What?!

JULIE

Anti-freeze.

MIKE

Cryoprotectant!

JULIE

I read it, Mike. It's anti-freeze!

MIKE

I don't care. I've worked on sculpting this body most of my life. I'm not gonna be burned up, or have worms eating on me. I'll come back and look like the Greek God that I am.

(James turns to Roger.)

JAMES

I think you should try it, honey!

ROGER

I'd feel like an old car in storage waiting for a part to come in.

(James turns to Mike.)

JAMES

Do they allow visitors?

SIDNEY

Why would you want to visit?!

JAMES

So, he doesn't get lonely.

SIDNEY

Of course. Why didn't I think of that?

(Lee is sitting there, playing with her hair, pulling it in front of her face.)

(She makes it into a mustache and pretends to be a pirate.)

LEE

Arrh, me hearties.

(She laughs out loud. And everyone just gives her a look.)

SIDNEY

Why do you want to be stored, for possibly several lifetimes, and come back? I'm trusting in an afterlife that's a lot more pleasant than this one.

MIKE

Man, Cathy really did a number on you, didn't she?

SIDNEY

Cathy has NOTHING to do with this.

MIKE

Yes, she does! You've been on a spiral downwards ever since you two split up.

SIDNEY

You don't know what you're talking about.

JULIE

Today's been a tough one for Sid.

(Sid stifles a sob. Lee looks at him sympathetically and pats his shoulder.)

MIKE

Today, yesterday, whatever. I told you that if you'd come to the gym with me, it would raise your endorphin levels.

SIDNEY

Lifting weights isn't the cure-all for everything, Mike. Sometimes there are other cures.

(He takes a drink then looks at it curiously. Why isn't it working? He takes another drink then feels his forehead.)

JULIE

It wasn't just Cathy leaving. It was because she left with Rudolpho.

(She looks at the group.)

And he saw them today. Walking together.

SIDNEY

Please, Julie. I can't talk about him.

LEE

She left him for another man?! That's so sad. I want to cry.

(She puts her head in Sid's lap. He is surprised.)

SIDNEY

Uh, what are you doing?

JAMES

I have a few ideas.

(Lee ignores them and starts singing into Sid's crotch.)

LEE

Your cheatin' heart  
Will make you weep.

(James looks at Roger.)

JAMES

Okay, we haven't tried that one.

(Lee sits up and looks at Sidney. Sidney stands Lee up and moves her to his right side. Lee doesn't even seem to register it. She's still looking to her right.)

I mean, I've been cheated on! It's so hurtful!

(She realizes she's looking at Roger.)

Where did Sid go?

(Roger turns her head towards Sidney.)

*There* you are!

ROGER

Cathy didn't leave him for anyone.

SIDNEY

Thanks, Roger!

ROGER

She just couldn't stand Sid.

SIDNEY

Thank you again, Roger.

LEE

Is Rudolpho her boyfriend?

JAMES

Rudolpho was his Afghan.

LEE

She took his blanket? And he even had a name for it.

(She leans on him and pats his head. They watch awkwardly.)

That's so wrong!

(Sid tries to politely scoot away from her.)

JULIE

Lee, Rudolpho was their dog. Remember? I told you on the phone.

LEE

Ohhhh. His Afghan *hound*!

(She howls like a hound then looks at everyone.)

LEE

They're beautiful.

JULIE

Lee, are you sure you're okay?

LEE

Fine. Fine. Perfectly fine.

(She takes a sip of her drink. Julie whispers to Mike.)

JULIE

My God! How much did you put in her drink?!

MIKE

Half a shot, I swear!

ROGER

Sid, have you told Cathy just how much having Rudy back would mean to you?

SIDNEY

Shhhh!! That was my special nickname for him! You know that. Don't you know how much it hurts when I hear someone else say it?! I thought gay men were sensitive!

ROGER

We are. I'm sorry, dear heart.

JAMES

Roger didn't mean anything by that, Sidney. We didn't know you were having this rough of a time over...you-know-who...

ROGER

Sid, I see Cathy at the salon sometimes. Want me to talk to her? Maybe you can arrange some type of joint custody or something.

MIKE

Seriously, guy – don't you think it's time to grow a pair? I'll go buy you another Afghanistan if that's all this is about.

SIDNEY

He's an Afghan, Mike!

MIKE

Yeah. Because he came from Afghanistan!

(Sidney looks at Julie.)

SIDNEY

Why are you with him?

LEE

Sidney's right!

(She pats Sid's arm. He stares at her.)

They're *not* called Afghanistans!

SIDNEY

See? And she's an expert!

(Lee is over pronouncing her words.)

LEE

Damn straight. They have the most beautiful hair. Thick, thick, thick, but so silky you can't believe it.

(She runs her hand through Sidney's hair.)

LEE

You pet them and their hair feels like the finest of threads. You run your hands through it, over and over. It's almost therapeutic.

SIDNEY

Yes! That's right. Not only did I lose my best friend – I lost my therapist.

LEE

How horribly, horribly, horribly horrible.

SIDNEY

Horribly horrible!

JULIE

Sid, I think it's time you got a new dog! That's why I invited Lee!

(Lee smiles enthusiastically.)

JULIE

Sid, I was going to have Lee bring you a dog tonight, but by the time she left, all the rescues were closed.

SIDNEY

I don't want a new dog! I can't replace Rudy! He was my best friend.

JULIE

Of course not, honey. You'd just be adding a new one into your life.

(She looks at Lee.)

Oh dear, I wish it would have worked out.

(Lee thinks and gets an idea.)

LEE

I know! I can do the next best thing! See all these breeds on my shirt? I can tell you all about them! You can pick the breed and I'll bring one to you!

JULIE

Better than online dating!

(Lee points to one on her chest.)

LEE

See this one? That's a pomer...pomer,,,ranium. They're very curious dogs. So cute, but with kinda a big ego. They're very proud little wee dogs and cock their head a lot when they listen to you.

(She looks at Sidney, cocking her head back and forth. The rest of the group watches her incredulously.)

And they are *very* yappy.

(She lets out a series of very short, high pitched, yappy barks.)

ROGER

Not that one. Too much like his ex.

LEE

Good to know! Then there's *this* one.

(She points to another on her chest, trying to see it.)

A hound! Very social! They love people, but they can be very stubborn. They're pretty loud. They even howl.

(She gives several loud howls. They watch her, while glancing back and forth at one another. She stops and takes deep breaths.)

LEE

Howling is hard work. Makes me even hotter. And thirsty.

(She takes another drink.)

SIDNEY

But I don't WANT another dog.

JULIE

She's just trying to help, Sid.

SIDNEY

There's no helping me, not after today! And there's no replacing Rudy!

LEE

Maybe a support group? They meet at the crematorium we use.

SIDNEY

Oh God...I always wanted to have our ashes buried together. Now it will never happen.

(Sidney takes his drink and downs a few gulps.)

MIKE

Wow. Drowning your sorrows?

(Sidney doesn't answer.)

Are you gonna want another?

SIDNEY

One is all it takes.

MIKE

I'm telling you, I don't make the drinks *that* strong.

JULIE

Why don't we change the subject and talk about something happier?

(They all just look at her.)

JULIE

Okay, fine! James, how do *you* want to die?

MIKE

This is happier?

JULIE

With this crowd, yes!

(She looks at James.)

JAMES

Well...I haven't thought about it that much with Roger being sick and all.

JULIE

Well, it sounds like you're behind. Let's plan it!

JAMES

I...I...don't know what I want for my funeral.

(She looks at Sidney who has his head in his hands, while Lee continues to look at dogs on her sweater and point them out to Sidney. Julie looks at James.)

JULIE

James, help us out here.