

THE *BEST* DAY OF YOUR LIFE

A play

By Philip J. Kaplan

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CAST

RON, ages 19 - 60

WANDA, ages 19 - 60

CHUCK, 19 (played by the same actor as Ron)

JENNIE, 19 (played by the same actor as WANDA)

SCENES

Scene 1. Paper Napkins (1979). A restaurant.

Scene 2. Crazy in Love (1986). Backstage at an exhibition hall.

Scene 3. Red China (1995). A hotel room.

Scene 4. You'll Catch Your Death (2000). A hospital conference room.

Scene 5. What is it? (2010). A college laboratory.

Scene 6. The Best Day of Your Life (2020). A dressing room.

TIME

1979 through 2020

SET

The sets are suggested with a few props.

SYNOPSIS

Love takes time...and timing in this unromantic romantic comedy. Ron and Wanda seem meant for each other but after their disastrous first date in college, things aren't looking so good. Wanda is a brilliant, popular, chef in the making, while Ron is a film history nerd. It may seem like they will never see each other again, but over the next forty years their lives intersect again and again through sickness and health, poverty and wealth, and finally marriage. As fortunes change over time, perhaps they may finally end up together in the end...or will they? "It will definitely make you laugh and just might make you cry," Onstage Colorado.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Vintage Theatre: Denver, Colorado, 2019, [Review](#)

Winner of the Vintage Theatre New Comedy Festival

Arts Resources for the Tri-state: Huntington, WV, 2015, reading

BIOGRAPHY

Philip J. Kaplan is the author of HOLLYWOOD MUSICALS: BEST, WORST AND MOST UNUSUAL. He has also been published in three volumes of Best Ten Minute Plays (Smith and Kraus). Full Length plays include, THE BEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE, Vintage Theatre (2019), BUNNYBOY, The Growing Stage (2020), THE CUPCAKE CONSPIRACY (w/ C.J. Ehrlich), Rover DramaWerks (2015), Florentine Players (2017), I, VERMIN: A HOLLYWOOD SUCCESS STORY, NY Fringe Festival (2002), and DR. HYDRA AND THE EYE. Website: <http://philipkaplan.weebly.com>

The Best Day of Your Life

SCENE ONE. PAPER NAPKINS (1979)

Ron and Wanda are sitting at a table in a restaurant. They're both college students, age nineteen.

WANDA

I've never been to Lupo's.

RON

You have been at school for two years and have avoided the most popular cheap off-campus bar slash restaurant? How is this possible?

WANDA

Lucky, I guess.

RON

Oh. ... Appearances can be deceiving. It looks dirty and cheap, but ...

WANDA

I didn't mean -

RON

The pizza's really good. And by good I mean, OK. Very, very adequate. Do you want to go somewhere else?

WANDA

This is fine.

RON

Because we can -

WANDA

--This is fine. I heard it's popular.

RON

Staggeringly popular.

WANDA

So I'm happy to try it. I mean, it's not Il Provino, but -

RON

--What's Il Provino?

WANDA

An Italian restaurant in town.

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RON

Lupo's is Italian.

WANDA

An Italian restaurant with cloth napkins and clean silverware.

RON

Oh.

WANDA

Ozzie used to take me.

RON

Ozzie.

WANDA

Ex-boyfriend.

RON

Ex-boyfriend who took you to classy restaurants.

WANDA

I shouldn't have mentioned it.

RON

No. It's good to know how I'm failing.

WANDA

Failing?

RON

That's my attempt at a joke.

WANDA

Calm down, Ron. I don't want to go to Il Provino.

RON

Why?

WANDA

Because I like to try new things.

RON

Perfect! Because Lupo's slogan is, "Come here for the first time and it will be new." Almost everyone at Lupo's is here for the first time, because no one ever comes twice.

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WANDA

Is that a joke?

RON

If you're not laughing, then no.

WANDA

Not laughing.

RON

Then not a joke. Just a pointless story.

WANDA

How much of your short story was true?

RON

The one about the space aliens?

WANDA

No. The one about the family dinner.

RON

Oh that one. None of it.

WANDA

Really.

RON

Complete fiction. I don't have a brother and I don't know anyone who dropped everything and went to Tibet.

WANDA

I would never have guessed. That is super good writing.

RON

Thanks. What about yours?

WANDA

Totally true. I can't make anything up.

RON

Oh... so you're really a professional cook.

WANDA

I want to be. It's not that easy.

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RON

It was vivid. I never thought food preparation could be -- Ah... I am taking a super cook to a dive - we can go to a better place.

WANDA

No! I'm fine with Lupo's! Sometimes I want cloth napkins. Sometimes I want paper napkins! This is a paper napkin night.

RON

Paper napkins are a Lupo's specialty. They're sometimes better than the pizza.

WANDA

Ron, look at me. Take a deep breath. Exhale slowly. Good. I don't care where we eat. That's not the point of a date. Count to five before you say anything.

RON

Um -

WANDA

You don't need to impress me.

RON

Really.

WANDA

Yes. Just relax and be yourself.

RON

What if this is myself?

WANDA

Then you're a tense and nervous person.

RON

That's totally not who I am. But... oddly enough, that's how I thought I'd impress you. Just to be clear, you don't go for the guys who are tense and nervous.

WANDA

No.

RON

Totally misread you.

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WANDA

Another joke?

RON

You tell me.

WANDA

A little funny. But -

RON

--Finally!

WANDA

You don't have to impress me!

RON

I do! When you said you'd go out with me that was a temporary lapse on your part.

Beat

WANDA

Ron.

RON

So... where are you from?

WANDA

Ron.

RON

I get it.

WANDA

Are you sure?

RON

Yes.

WANDA

I am here with you. No one forced me. No one cajoled me.

RON

Right, but admit it. I'm not the kind of guy you normally date. What kind of guy was Ozzie?

WANDA

Nothing special. He plays hockey.

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RON

Ozzie Petrosh?

WANDA

Yes, Ozzie Petrosh.

RON

He's our star hockey player!

WANDA

He's a jerk.

RON

A super athletic jerk.

WANDA

I'm here with you, not with anyone else -- at Lupo's, not at any other restaurant. I'm having a paper napkin night -- don't make me regret it.

RON

Rodger that.

WANDA

And I did like your story.

RON

Thanks.

WANDA

Which is one of the reasons I'm here.

Beat

RON

Paper napkins. I can live with that.

Beat

RON

Are you going to the anti-apartheid rally?

WANDA

When is that?

RON

Tuesday at Four. South Campus.

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WANDA

Are you?

RON

Absolutely! If I finish my paper on the Treaty of San Stefano. If not, I'll be there in spirit. Apartheid is bad. It has to stop.

WANDA

Very bad.

RON

Yeah. It's important to make a difference.

WANDA

I almost went to the Seabrook nuclear power protest last year.

RON

I heard that was crazy.

Long pause.

RON

So, let me ask you. I went off the meal plan this year, and I've been cooking and I'm bad at it. Is there some sort of secret, Miss Power Chef?

WANDA

There's no secret. Anyone can do it.

RON

I can't. I can't even boil water without hurting myself.

WANDA

What's your normal dinner?

RON

Spaghetti and tomato paste.

WANDA

Sounds boring. Why settle for that?

RON

It's easy. And when I'm hungry --

WANDA

-too easy. Never settle for easy. When I started, I was a boring cook. It was open a can, mix it with another can.

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RON

Two cans? You still have me beat.

WANDA

Can cookery was my Dad's approach. I didn't know any better. Then one day I caught Julia Child on TV. And that was that.

RON

What was what?

WANDA

I kicked Dad and his cans out of the kitchen.

RON

What about your Mom?

WANDA

Mom left when I was nine.

RON

You were cooking dinner for your dad when you were nine?

WANDA

More like eleven.

RON

Still.

WANDA

I started with Eggplant pizza. I saw her make that on TV.

RON

Eggplant pizza. With or without anchovies?

WANDA

I was eleven. With. I'm kidding. I didn't start improvising until I was twelve.

RON

You go off recipe?

WANDA

I'm not a fan of recipes.

RON

How does that work? How do you know what to do?

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WANDA

Sometimes I don't. Sometimes I make mistakes and ruin dinner. But sometimes I make something original and it works. Of course a professional cook has to be predictable and precise. Too much heat and your burnt caramel sauce is just burnt. An extra teaspoon of salt can ruin your fish stew.

RON

You're making me hungry.

WANDA

Where is the waiter anyway?

RON

Slow service is part of the Lupo's experience. They'll get to us.

WANDA

This is inexcusable. We've been waiting fifteen minutes.

RON

They're a little disorganized.

WANDA

This is beyond disorganized. I'm going to speak to -

RON

--Oh, I think I see the waitress. She just gave the universal just-a-second hand sign.

WANDA

Service in my restaurant will be quicker than this.

RON

You'd be great running a restaurant. Can I be your first customer?

WANDA

That's super sweet.

RON

I guess you don't do Chinese food. If I was gonna own a restaurant, I'd want to own a Chinese restaurant. I wouldn't ever have to do takeout. I'd be there already.

WANDA

I want to run a French restaurant - that does not do takeout. But I'm not ready. I need to study. I need to

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learn. There's so much that goes into operating a restaurant. So much below the surface. Even at Lupo's.

Beat

RON

Hey, so what did you think of the movie? Wasn't it great? I love Fassbinder.

WANDA

It was fine.

RON

One of his best. Each one is more ambitious than -

WANDA

--Sort of long.

RON

Long?

WANDA

A little. Well a lot.

RON

The pacing is deliberate, that's on purpose.

WANDA

It felt like I'd fallen into a novel -- with all the subtitles.

RON

Subtitles? Oh, right, subtitles. But what about the camerawork? Fassbinder loves long takes.

WANDA

He does. They were really long. The long takes were very ... long.

RON

Fassbinder understands that film is all about motion. And the moving camera--

WANDA

--That's nice.

RON

Nice?

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WANDA

I'm glad you liked it.

RON

You didn't like it?

WANDA

Not really. Felt too much like researching for a term paper.

RON

Sorry.

WANDA

That's OK. It was an experience.

RON

What movies do you like?

WANDA

I don't know.

RON

C'mon, Wanda. What's your favorite movie?

WANDA

I don't have one.

RON

You can't pick?

WANDA

I don't see too many.

RON

Then name a movie you liked.

WANDA

Ozzie took me to - Alien. Did not like that. Grease. Who took me to that? Greg? No. Stanley! Definitely Stanley. Didn't like Grease. Oh, I remember. Jaws. I liked Jaws.

RON

Jaws!

WANDA

Yes. That was scary. "Need a bigger boat."

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RON

Jaws.

WANDA

What's the matter?

RON

Jaws is a manipulative piece of Hollywood trash!

WANDA

I liked it.

RON

That doesn't make it good.

WANDA

I thought it was good.

RON

If you like being clubbed over the head, then I guess its good.

WANDA

Then I guess I like that. I'd see it again.

RON

Not with me.

WANDA

No. Not with you.

Beat

RON

Oh.

Lights half-fade. When they come up Ron is walking Wanda home.

RON

Goodnight, Wanda.

Ron goes to kiss Wanda goodnight. She turns her head and Ron kisses her on the cheek.

WANDA

Night, Ron.

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They each walk to opposite ends of the stage to their respective rooms.

RON
(to himself)

Idiot! Stupid! What's wrong with me! I'm going to die a virgin.

Wanda picks up a phone and dials.

WANDA
Ozzie, it's Wanda. Are you doing anything now?

BLACKOUT

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SCENE TWO. CRAZY IN LOVE (1986)

The backstage area of an exhibition hall behind a curtain divider. A stack of empty cardboard boxes is in the corner.

*Wanda, now twenty-six, enters crying. She's wearing a tee shirt that says **Tasty Bites**. She stands still and tries to compose herself. She closes her eyes, puts her hands together in a prayer pose and takes a calming breath. But as she exhales.*

WANDA

No! You don't get to -

She catches herself and takes another deep breath. On the exhale.

WANDA

How long were they -

Again she catches herself. Again another deep breath, but this time she can't control herself and kicks ones of the boxes.

WANDA

When were you gonna tell me!

She picks up the box and gives it a good punch.

WANDA

You wait 'til I'm out of town! You fucking planned this!

She picks up box and talks to it.

WANDA

And the worst thing is you were too chickenshit to break up with me in person!

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Ron walks in and watches Wanda give a few good whacks to the box. Ron is dressed in a suit and tie. He tries to back away inconspicuously but Wanda notices him with a start.

WANDA

I'm sorry, Sir. I'm really sorry. This area is -

RON

--Off limits. I get that. I'm looking for a chair - they said there was a bench somewhere.

WANDA

Oh - that's - uh - that's - Ron?

RON

Omigod, Wanda! Wow! Wanda. Wow.

Wanda hugs Ron tightly. Ron is taken aback.

WANDA

It's super terrific to see you! You're so normal!

RON

Thanks. I guess.

Wanda lets go.

WANDA

I have to get back to work. It was super seeing you. It's been years.

(getting teary)

It's been years.

Wanda runs off. Ron stands perplexed. Wanda enters again. She sits on the floor and holds her head in her hands.

RON

Are you OK?

WANDA

(on the verge of crying)

Remember Marsha and Steve?

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RON

Marsha and Steve.

WANDA

They were crazy in love. Both psych majors.

RON

I didn't know any psych majors. I was a film major.

WANDA

They got married. Moved to California. They have a dog.
They're still crazy in love.

*Wanda looks at Ron, expecting an
answer.*

RON

Good for them.

WANDA

Good for them.

There is a long silence.

RON

I've been accused of not being the most perceptive person,
but I think you're upset about -

WANDA

-I need some alone time.

RON

Sure.

WANDA

Alone time. By myself.

RON

Rodger that. Nice seeing you, Wanda. Sorry I - well, sorry.
Hope you get over whatever -

WANDA

--Can you stop by booth 23, Tasty Bites. I - I - what's my
excuse? Can't be food poisoning. Not for a caterer.

RON

Flu?

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WANDA

Yeah. The Nico flu. I've got the Nico flu. Go tell them that you're an old friend - an old boyfriend - tell the blonde girl that you're my old - did we ever go out?

RON

Once.

WANDA

Really? Don't remember that.

RON

Once. One date.

WANDA

Huh.

RON

We went to Lupo's.

WANDA

Oh, Lupo's! You took me to Lupo's! That was so much fun. You're so sweet. Not like some people I know.

RON

Thanks.

WANDA

And we never went out again?

RON

I'm sure of that.

WANDA

Wonder why.

RON

No clue. I did call you a couple of times - like maybe eight. But hey, that's years ago, right?

WANDA

We were kids.

RON

Yeah. Who cares. Stupid kids.

WANDA

Now, it doesn't matter. Nothing matters.

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RON

I mean, I always kinda wondered. I liked you - who wouldn't - but I guess you - I guess I didn't click with you.

WANDA

You were such a nerd.

RON

Yeah, that's what I thought - and it still hurts. OK, so booth 20?

WANDA

23.

Ron starts to leave.

WANDA

Where are you going?

RON

Booth 23.

WANDA

Don't go.

RON

Aren't they gonna wonder where you are? I don't want you to lose your job.

WANDA

As long as I can blacken 100 fish in an hour, I'll keep this job.

RON

Why do you blacken fish? Are you mad at them?

WANDA

It's our signature dish. Personally, I hate it -- like putting a firecracker in your mouth. If I were doing a party, I'd go with the apricot glaze. Works on fish, works on chicken, super easy to make, always comes out the same. No one picks it. Too boring. But blackened fish, spicy at hell. You want a memorable party? You'll remember your tongue burning.

RON

Is blackened fish French? I remember you wanted to open a French restaurant.

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WANDA

When did I tell you that?

RON

In college.

WANDA

Well, that plan went to shit. French food is delicious, but delicious doesn't matter. You know what's more important?

RON

What?

WANDA

Sizzle. Looks. Even if it tastes horrible, you keep coming back. Your brain checks out ... you know it's bad ... but ... you still want ...

Beat

RON

S-o-o-o ... should I get back to the expo? Or ... do what we're doing - what are we doing?

WANDA

You can go. I'm OK.

RON

You're sure.

WANDA

Yes. It's just -

RON

What?

WANDA

What should I do? You can tell me the truth. What should I do?

RON

About what?

WANDA

Nico! Haven't you been listening?

RON

We barely know each other. You know that, right?

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WANDA

That makes you objective. What should I do?

RON

Ask someone other than me for advice.

WANDA

Don't be so negative.

RON

I'm really bad at this.

WANDA

You're smart. You're sharp. I can feel that about you. You can help me. What should I do?

RON

What's the question?

WANDA

What should I do about Nico?

RON

Wanda, I'm not Kreskin. Who's Nico?

WANDA

I've been living with Nico for a year. And I find out today that he's been seeing Candee behind my back. And Candee is the fucking blonde in Booth 23!

RON

Ah.

WANDA

Now that you know everything. Tell me what to do!

RON

That is a lot to take in.

WANDA

I don't want a deep analysis.

RON

Someone cheats on you. Someone who doesn't deserve you cheats on you. I know what I'd do.

WANDA

What?

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RON

Leave.

WANDA
(screams)

Leave? He left me! He left me! How in Claribelle can I leave him?

RON

Retroactively.

WANDA
Retroactively? What does that mean?

RON
I don't know. Just random words coming out of my mouth.

WANDA
I don't need words.

RON
Words are terrible. They're just awful.

WANDA
Ron! Take this seriously!

RON
You have this guy, Nico. He's bad for you and he just walked out. Do I have that right?

WANDA
Yes.

RON
He walks out on someone as beautiful and intelligent as you.

Beat
Leave him, that's my answer. I know he left you, but you can still leave him.

WANDA
Leave him.

RON
Yeah. Really leave him. Take control. That's what I meant to say in the first place. My brain just caught up with my mouth.

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WANDA

If I leave him first, even if it's retroactive, then he can't leave me. That makes sense. That's wise.

RON

Thanks.

WANDA

But I don't want to.

RON

Oh.

WANDA

And what about the next one? What happens when they leave?

RON

Next one? They won't leave.

WANDA

I have a terrible track record.

RON

There's something wrong with the guys then. It's not you.

WANDA

It **is** me!

RON

Well, maybe -

WANDA

--You think it's me?

RON

Maybe you're picking the wrong guys.

WANDA

You suck at giving advice.

Wanda starts crying. Wanda hugs Ron. Ron tries to pull Wanda off.

RON

You'll get over this. I promise.

WANDA

How do you know?

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RON

Because I'm an expert.

WANDA

On what?

RON

On not getting what you want.

WANDA

I want Nico to come back.

RON

I know.

WANDA

So what do I do?

RON

Change what you want. Want something you **can** get.

WANDA

I want crazy in love.

RON

If you want him to stay, then you just want crazy.

WANDA

Fuck you! You don't know anything about me! You don't know anything about Nico.

RON

I shouldn't have said anything.

WANDA

I want someone who doesn't want me! I want someone who's not good for me! I want blackened catfish! What do you have to say about that?

RON

Try the glaze instead.

WANDA

What does that mean?

RON

You said glaze was good.

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WANDA

Apricot glaze.

RON

Yeah.

WANDA

I want a boyfriend, not dinner.

RON

I mean go with someone safer, less exciting, more predictable.

WANDA

Someone like you.

RON

Not me, obviously.

WANDA

Obviously.

Beat

C'mon, keep talking.

RON

This is so not my thing.

WANDA

You're doing good, Ron. Tell me how Nico sucks.

RON

I've never met the guy -

WANDA

--You'd really like him.

RON

But only a jerk would walk out on you. And since Nico walked out on you, he must be a jerk. QED.

WANDA

Nico is a jerk.

RON

Exactly.

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WANDA

So that's your advice. Don't date jerks.

RON

It would be a short self-help book, but yeah. Don't date jerks.

WANDA

Can we talk about this later? Over dinner, maybe?

RON

I'd love to, but I can't.

WANDA

Why?

RON

I'm having dinner with my fiancé.

WANDA

Your what?

RON

Derica, my fiancé.

WANDA

Your fiancé? You have a fiancé! When were you going to tell me this?

RON

We're at a Wedding Expo. I didn't think I needed to.

WANDA

And Derica -

RON

She's in the lace booth right now. I couldn't take it. Do you know how many different shades of white there are?

WANDA

Congratulations.

RON

Thanks.

WANDA

Is she your soulmate?

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RON

What?

WANDA

Don't you know what a soulmate is?

RON

Of course I do.

WANDA

Is Derica your soulmate?

Beat

RON

Sure.

WANDA

You're lucky that you found your soulmate.

RON

That I am. And I should get back to her. She's probably having a doily emergency.

WANDA

What's she like? Your soulmate?

RON

She's great. Really great.

WANDA

That doesn't mean anything. What is she like?

RON

She's ... East German.

WANDA

What else?

RON

Uh ...

WANDA

Tell me about your soulmate. The woman meant for you.

RON

She's pretty.

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WANDA

More.

RON

Very pretty.

WANDA

That's not enough.

RON

She's ... she's a mechanic. She can fix a car.

WANDA

That's the best you can do? You can't describe the woman you love?

RON

She's a very practical, logical woman. Is that enough?

WANDA

You love her because she fixes cars and is logical.

RON

I don't know! Why do I have to do this?

WANDA

Nico loves me because I'm effervescent, like champagne. He says I have an old soul, but I'm always looking for something new. He likes that I read encyclopedias for fun.

RON

That's nice.

WANDA

What do you mean, that's nice!

RON

I mean, those are nice words.

WANDA

They're more than words.

RON

If you were still together, they'd be more than words. Since he left you, they're just words.

WANDA

Is Derica the only woman in the world for you?

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RON

The only woman.

WANDA

Yes.

RON

She's the woman I'm marrying.

WANDA

Because she's the only woman for you?

RON

Of course not. There are billions of women.

WANDA

Then why are you marrying her?

RON

I love her and ... she needs me And I need her ... and why should I keep looking? There's always gonna be someone who might be I don't want to talk about this.

WANDA

Crazy in love?

RON

Just in love.

WANDA

And what if -

RON

--I don't do what ifs.

Beat

WANDA

Go.

RON

You're sure?

WANDA

Yes. Shut up and go.

RON

Good advice. Ummm -

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WANDA

She's gonna wonder where you are. She's not the jealous type is she?

RON

She actually is. I gotta go. But Wanda, you're terrific. You'll --

WANDA

--Bye, Ron.

Ron pauses and then exits.

Wanda collects herself. She takes a deep breath. She picks up a box and faces it.

WANDA

Get the hell out of my life Nico.

She throws the box across the room.

That felt pretty good. I am terrific.

BLACKOUT

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SCENE 3. RED CHINA (1995)

A hotel room with a bed, a phone table and an offstage bathroom. The lights are off.

The door opens and Ron, now thirty-five, enters lugging a suitcase. He's wearing a heavy coat. He gropes around in the dark and finds a light switch. There is an unmade bed as well as some suitcases already in the room.

RON

Jesus Christ.

Ron is hesitant for a moment then throws his coat on the bed, goes into the bathroom and closes the door.

After a moment the phone rings. Wanda rushes into the room, knocking into Ron's suitcase. She is wearing a coat. She answers the phone.

WANDA

(on phone)

Hello? ... excuse me? ... No. ... No. What? Calm down. What's your name? ... Derica -- that's an interesting name. ... Derica, I don't know your husband. ... There's been some mistake. Call the hotel back, they'll get you the right room. ... Goodbye.

Wanda hangs up the phone.

RON

(from the bathroom)

Before you get panicked --

WANDA

What! Who's there!

RON

I thought this was my room and I needed to use the facilities.

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WANDA

Get out!

RON

I don't want to go into details, but that would not be a good idea right now. Two minutes then I'll be gone.

WANDA

I have a gun!

RON

I still don't want to go into details but that sort of talk isn't helping. Let's acknowledge we both want me out of this room.

WANDA

I'm getting the police.

RON

If that involves you leaving this room right now, that's perfect. I'll be gone when you get back.

WANDA

I'm not leaving you alone here.

RON

Then can you just chill? I'm almost done.

The phone rings again.

Wanda hesitates then answers it.

WANDA

(on phone)

Hello? ... Derica, I'm not with your husband. I don't know why they keeping connecting you with --

RON

--Did you say Derica?

WANDA

(to Ron)

Yes!

(into phone)

You did say Derica?

We hear the sound of a toilet flushing. Ron comes out of the

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bathroom hurriedly drying his hands on his pants. He pushes past Wanda.

RON

Excuse me.

Ron takes the phone.

Honey, hi. ... No. ... No. I don't even know who this person is.

Ron looks at Wanda.

Wanda?

WANDA

Ron!

RON

(on phone)

OK, I do know who this person is but -- Derica, honey. ... Honey. ... Honey. No...I did not break the pact. There's a mixup.... a bureaucratic mistake.

(beat)

Derica, you know I hate being away from you. I'm only in this miserable town because we need the money. ... Of course I would tell you the truth. We have a pact. ... Love you. Love to Chuck and Vera....I really do. ...

(to Wanda)

She wants to talk to you.

Ron hands the phone to Wanda.

Wanda listens for moment.

WANDA

(on phone)

No.... Yes, I will tell you if I do. Goodbye.

Wanda hangs up the phone.

What is this pact?

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RON

If one of us has an affair the other one can have one too.

WANDA

Whose idea was that?

RON

Hers. Sometimes I think she's looking for an excuse. Sorry to drag you into that.

Wanda takes off her coat.

WANDA

She's right to be prepared. Handsome man like you.

RON

Alone in wild, wild Milwaukee, where the beer roam free.

WANDA

Let's fix this.

Wanda picks up the phone.

Hello, front desk? There has been some horrible mistake, and you gave my room key to a stranger. ... 614.... Excuse me? ... How dare you blame me! ... I needed to stay another day. ... I don't actually care what my reservation said. ... An issue with your computers is your problem, not mine ... I'm not going to stay at this establishment ever again!

Wanda hangs up the phone.

Do they even understand the meaning of the term hospitality?

RON

You have my room in other words.

WANDA

They should be prepared for the unexpected. The hospitality industry is based on ... well...hospitality. They have to be accommodating.

RON

Within reason.

WANDA

(enthusiastically)

Look at you! I haven't even said hello. Hello!

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RON

Hi. You look great.

WANDA

What have you been doing with yourself? Did you go to the reunion? Can you believe it's been 15 years? What brings you to Milwaukee?

RON

Well --

WANDA

In Milwaukee with no place to stay.

RON

I'll find something.

WANDA

The front desk says the hotel is full. There's a Bowling convention.

RON

I can sleep in the hall, or find a bathroom to hide in. Don't feel guilty or responsible.

WANDA

Do you snore?

RON

No.

WANDA

Did you bring pajamas?

RON

Yes.

WANDA

Then we're gonna have a sleep over! You get the bed near the window.

RON

We're not going to break the pact, so I don't need to tell Derica about this.

WANDA

What happens in Milwaukee, Ron.

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RON

Seriously?

WANDA

No.

RON

I knew that.

WANDA

I'm helping a friend because I'm a nice person. I'm a nice person. Right?

RON

Of course you're nice.

Ron starts unpacking his suitcase.

WANDA

Aren't you sweet. Tell me everything. It's been years. I own a catering company, did you know that? We're in two states and expanding.

RON

Wow.

WANDA

It's called Sizzle. We are taking off like hotcakes. The secret is style. Everything we produce is beautiful and eye-popping. We're booked through 1997. 1997!

RON

Amazing.

WANDA

And we're crushing the competition.

RON

I'm glad I'm not competing with you.

WANDA

You bet. You'd lose.

RON

I get that.

WANDA

You'd be crushed.

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RON

A crushed caterer.

WANDA

The secret is hard work. And having style. And, OK, sometimes you have to be ruthless. But that's not the same as being heartless is it?

RON

I don't think so.

WANDA

You have to make hard decisions. There's no room for sentiment. I employ seventy-five people. They all depend on me. You put sentiment into the mix and you know what happens?

RON

You get crushed?

WANDA

Exactly.

Beat

RON

Are you OK?

WANDA

Why would you ask that? I'm super.

RON

It's nothing.

WANDA

You clearly meant something.

RON

You seem a little wound up, that's all.

WANDA

Maybe I am. My life is hard these days. A lot of responsibilities. Shoot! Do you see a pad anywhere.

RON

Yeah. Over there.

WANDA

Write this down. Kefauver. Ripe peaches. No Avocado.

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Ron hasn't moved.

WANDA

Ron!

RON

Oh, sorry.

Ron grabs the pad.

What was that again?

WANDA

Kefauver.

RON

(writing)

Kefauver. Like the Senator?

WANDA

Yes. Don't distract me. No avocado. Write it!

RON

No avocado.

WANDA

There was a third thing! What was the third thing?

RON

Peaches?

WANDA

Yes! Ripe peaches! Where am I going to get ripe peaches in November? Let me have it.

Ron gives her the pad. She puts it away.

WANDA

No rest for the weary.

RON

Take the night off. Rest.

WANDA

I try. It takes a lot of work to rest. I used to meditate. Now as soon as I start my to-do list pops up. Oh! Darn!

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*Wanda fishes for the pad of paper.
She writes something down.*

RON

More peaches?

WANDA

No. The McGuinness Wedding. They want red china.

RON

Red China? Is this a political wedding?

WANDA

No. It's family colors. Through genealogy they just discovered they're related to ... someone. It's not important. What's important is they called me this morning and they want all red. Napkins, table clothes, chairs and I forgot red china. Sometimes the pressure can get to you.

RON

Can we take the night off. Have you had dinner?

Long pause.

RON

What's the matter?

WANDA

I don't remember.

RON

Let's get dinner then.

WANDA

I had five meetings today and I skipped lunch. And I forgot about red china. And I didn't call Jennie! What time is it? It's too late! It's past her bedtime!

RON

Your daughter?

WANDA

I forgot to call her!

RON

Sounds like you could use a secretary.

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WANDA

I fired the last two. Lonnie thought I should have kept Irene, but --

RON

Lonnie?

WANDA

My husband.

RON

That makes sense. You're married. Why don't we go out to dinner and you can tell me all about Lonnie.

WANDA

That's a super idea, Ron. There's a Cajun restaurant near here. It's a little expensive, but it's my treat.

RON

You don't have to do that.

WANDA

Of course I do. I took your room and you're having financial problems.

RON

Whoa! Where'd you come up with that?

WANDA

I'm not deaf. I heard you on the phone.

RON

When I was talking to Derica?

WANDA

Yes.

RON

Oh. I didn't -- I mean -- OK. You're obviously doing better than me. But I'm OK. I'm fine.

WANDA

That bad. If I were to offer you some money, how much would you need?

RON

Even if I did need money --

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WANDA

--which you obviously do --

RON

--I wouldn't -- I mean -- I can't take -- No one offers money like that.

WANDA

I just did.

RON

Why?

WANDA

I'm helping a friend.

RON

And?

WANDA

Why does there have to be an and?

RON

Because we're not friends.

WANDA

Yes we are!

RON

I wish we were, but we're not. Let's just go out to dinner -- you can treat if it floats your boat -- you did steal my room. But I don't want to talk about money.

WANDA

Don't deflect. I'm a businesswoman. I'm direct. How much do you need?

RON

I've never been fond of the direct approach.

WANDA

And where has that gotten you?

Beat

RON

I need five thousand dollars.

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WANDA

Why?

RON

I'm on a tight budget and my daughter had some expensive emergency surgery.

WANDA

There, was that so hard?

RON

Yes.

WANDA

I can help. I can give you five thousand.

Beat

RON

You're not even talking about a loan. Why would you give me five thousand dollars?

WANDA

Because it's a nice thing to do. It's a spontaneous gesture. I have the money, you need the money. Right?

RON

You barely know me.

WANDA

We are college alums.

RON

What's my job?

WANDA

Your job.

RON

The thing I do to pay the bills. Or not pay the bills.

WANDA

You're... weren't you ... computers. You have something to do with computers.

RON

I'm a film professor. Adjunct film professor. My specialty is German cinema. That's why I'm in Milwaukee, by the way. I'm giving a lecture.

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WANDA

Of course. You loved movies.

RON

So I repeat. Why? That's a lot of money.

WANDA

Not to me.

RON

That's not helping. You just told me that you're a success, and I'm a bum. We clear on that?

WANDA

I'm coming off as condescending?

RON

Very.

WANDA

I didn't mean to.

RON

It's a sensitive subject.

WANDA

Of course.

RON

I'm happy you're so successful

WANDA

Thank you. I've really worked hard.

RON

It's a very nice offer, but no thanks. I'll get by.

WANDA

You're sure.

RON

Yes.

WANDA

You're not hoping something magical will happen? Reality is important, fact-based tough decisions. Even if people aren't going to like you. Even if someone gets hurt. You can't always be nice. Just today I negotiated a 15% cut