

DINNER FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

A STAGE PLAY

BY CHRIS CONNORS

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JAMIE, attracted to crazy men, but very sane

HAROLD, secret evangelist and kind soul until pressed

MARGIE, tired of marriage and alone

GERRY, a screw up and knows it

BRAD, a frat bro who never grew up

LACEY, an empty brained genius never recognized

MIKEY, an aloof man afraid of commitment

KAROL, a bright science teacher

LEONARD, the crazy neighbor

SETTINGS

The house: One main location transitioning between rooms.

Kitchen,

Living room,

Wine closet.

SCENE 1

MUSIC: 1812 OVERTURE

The near entirety of the Overture, played right up to the finale, but before we arrive at the conclusion, AN ABRUPT STOP.

CURTAIN OPENS.

FRONT DOOR OF SUBURBAN HOME

A lone door stage right.

(JAMIE (Late 20s, just can't pick a nice guy) and HAROLD (30s, seems nice enough) stand outside a closed door. Harold shuts off his phone - presumably the source of the music.

Jamie, about to knock pulls her hand back from the door.)

JAMIE

Oh. You stopped it.

(Harold doesn't understand)

HAROLD

(unsure)

Well, yeah, we're about to go inside. Would you like me to keep playing it?

JAMIE

No, you're right. It's just when you stop the song right before the finale it feels incomplete. I just get anxiety from the feeling that we've been building up to something and it was cut short.

HAROLD

I can keep playing it.

JAMIE

No, the moment's past.

HAROLD

Are you sure? You seem like you want to hear the end.

JAMIE

No, we're here. It's okay. Really.

HAROLD

Well, you know what. Now I want to hear it.

(Harold about to play the song when
THE DOOR OPENS-

MARGIE (30, White-picket fence life
accomplished) stands at the door
with a big smile)

MARGIE

Jamie! It's so good to see you. Come in.

JAMIE

Margie, hi. And this is Harold.

(Margie pays no attention to Harold
and waves Jamie in, shutting the
door on Harold)

SCENE 2

DINING ROOM, HOUSE

*A dining table stage center.
Chairs. Place settings set. Wine
uncorked.*

(Three couples at the table:

LACEY (late 20s, Burning Man regular, hippie born in the wrong era) and her husband BRAD (late 20s, Punk rocker with no musical talent but dresses to prove us otherwise)

KAROL (30, Smartest in every room, likes to prove it) and MIKEY (30, Wants to be the smartest in the room but he isn't, tries to hide it).

Margie finds her husband, GERRY (30, manipulative, secretive, lost himself after marriage) sitting at the table's head)

MARGIE

Look who I found on our doorstep.

(Harold enters)

GERRY

Peanut butter Jamie!

(Jamie rolls her eyes at the nickname, gives Gerry an uncomfortable hug

The group stands to greet, hug, kiss-

Harold enters and the group turns to recognize)

GERRY

Can I help you?

HAROLD

I'm Harold.

(Jamie, as if she's forgotten about
Harold)

JAMIE

Where are my manners, this is Harold.

(Gerry extends a hand)

GERRY

Nice to meet you Harold.

MARGIE

Can I grab anyone a drink? Jamie a nice Cabernet? Harry, red
wine?

HAROLD

Harold. Red wine would be great-

(Gerry throws an arm around
Harold's shoulder)

GERRY

I think Harry's a man that appreciates the finer things in
life. I got a bottle of Tullamore Dew with your name on it.

HAROLD

I could go for a whiskey.

(As Gerry and Harold exit)

GERRY

(re Harold)

Are you Irish? You look Irish?

HAROLD

German.

GERRY

Well, I hate German liquor. So tonight you're Irish.

(The men exit.)

The remaining group huddles at the table)

KAROL

This one's cute. What was his name?

JAMIE

Harold. He's a teacher.

LACEY

How did you guys meet?

JAMIE

The grocery store.

MARGIE

I thought you said you met at the doctor's office?

JAMIE

Nope. Grocery store.

SCENE 3

The liquor closet of Marge and Gerry's home. A small room, wine and liquor bottles stacked. The room small, tight. Gerry and Harold in close quarters.

(Harold browses the collection,
Gerry has other things on his mind
as he pours Harold a glass)

HAROLD

This is an impressive collection.

GERRY

Thanks. So how'd you and Jamie meet?

HAROLD

Online.

GERRY

Online. No shame in that. That's how a lot of people meet nowadays.

HAROLD

Yeah, well you know. It's hard these days to get out and meet someone. Especially as you get older. That scene gets further and further away from you-

GERRY

(doesn't care)

That's great. So let me ask you a question, Harry. Let's say you have some bad news to tell someone over the phone. Do you tell them right away, rip off the band-aid? Or do you get right to the point? No beating around the bush.

HAROLD

Well, I guess it depends on the news. If I'm calling because a family member passed away, I'd tell them right away. No beating around the bush.

GERRY

Right. Sure.

HAROLD

But if I'm calling to tell them they didn't get an apartment they bided on. Then yeah, a little chit chat.

GERRY

Are you in real-estate?

HAROLD

No, I'm a teacher. Fourth grade.

GERRY

Then why would you be calling to tell someone they didn't get an apartment?

HAROLD

Well, I thought the question was hypothetical.

GERRY

No, Harold. This is real life. Nothing hypothetical about it. Except the phone call.

HAROLD

Well, I'm not sure I can answer. It really depends on the situation.

GERRY

Let's say your calling to tell your friend your getting a divorce.

HAROLD

Oh, that's too bad. I'm sorry.

GERRY

Hypothetically.

HAROLD

But you said it wasn't hypothetical.

GERRY

Don't be so nosey.

HAROLD

I'm sorry. I'm not sure I understand-

GERRY

But you agree that's "pull the band-aid off" kind of news, right?

HAROLD

Well, sure. You might want to ask how they're doing first-

GERRY

I know how they're doing. My question is, do we eat first?

HAROLD

So this is something happening now? Or is it over the phone?

GERRY

Let's say now, hypothetically.

HAROLD

It might be awkward, but if it's that important...

(Gerry takes a sip of the whiskey
meant for Harold)

GERRY

I knew you'd agree with me.

(Gerry exits, no glass for Harold)

SCENE 4

*An oven, stove, kitchen
essentials.*

KITCHEN

(Margie examines a pie in the oven,
not ready yet she slides the pie
back in.

Enter Brad)

BRAD

Are we going to talk about this or just pretend it didn't
happen?

MARGIE

I can't deal with this right now.

BRAD

Margie-

(enter Gerry.

Brad makes a quick exit)

GERRY

What did he want?

MARGIE

Pie.

GERRY

Harold agrees with me by the way.

MARGIE

What the hell, Gerry! You told him?

GERRY

Relax. He doesn't know what I'm talking about. It was all hypothetical.

MARGIE

He's going to catch on.

GERRY

He's harmless.

MARGIE

We had an agreement.

GERRY

We didn't have an agreement. You made a deal with yourself and attached me to it.

MARGIE

I was up all night preparing this food and I'd like them to try my pot-roast first.

GERRY

That's insane.

MARGIE

Excuse me?

GERRY

It's going to be awkward the whole time. Let's just tell them now and let them leave if they want.

MARGIE

I want everyone to have a good time!

GERRY

Why? We only see them at these dinner party's and we all hate having them. Just let it die.

(Enter Harold, with a glass of wine.)

HAROLD

Sorry, where's the restroom?

GERRY

One or two?

(Margie gives a burst of frustrated air in a grunt)

MARGIE

Up stairs, first door on the right, Harry.

HAROLD

Harold. Thank you.

(Harold exits)

MARGIE

Can we not have this conversation now? Stick to the plan.

(Enter Mikey)

GERRY

You make it sound like we're spies.

MIKEY

Who's a spy?

GERRY

No one.

MIKEY

You guys have to tell me if your spies.

GERRY

If I was a spy, you'd never know.

SCENE 5

The dining room.

Table centered, places set, food on plates. Eight chairs and place settings.

A door upstage left.

(The eight at the kitchen table.
Food served.)

Faint emergency sirens ring out.
Fading to-)

MARGIE

Please, dig in.

GERRY

We're not going to wait for Lou and Amie?

KAROL

If you want the food to be ice cold.

MARGIE

If they wanted to eat with us they would've showed up on time. Twelve years we've been doing this. They've been late every time. So no, dig in, please.

GERRY

I have a proposition. Before we eat, I think the gentleman can all agree we should step into the family room to check out the score of the game.

MARGIE

Seriously? We just sat down.

BRAD

I second.

MIKEY

I'd like to check out PBS. There's a "Dark Money" documentary I want to see.

GERRY

Well, the game is priority one. But I'll take that as the gentleman are in agreement.

BRAD

Yes.

(The men exit to the living room.

Harold remains seated.)

LACEY

You better go with them. It's about to get all Vagina up in here.

(Harold looks to Jamie for the
okay)

HAROLD

Is that okay?

JAMIE

Oh, yeah, of course. Go.

(Harold exits.

The women awe in Harold's wake)

KAROL

He just asked for your permission to leave the table.

LACEY

He seems sweet.

JAMIE

He's a nice guy. So far.

MARGIE

What happened to Ken? Was his name Ken?

JAMIE

Kent. Yeah, he was crazy.

KAROL

You say that about all your men.

JAMIE

No like actually insane. I opened his medicine cabinet in his bathroom looking for mouthwash and he had jars of toenail clippings and human hair in there.

MARGIE

Eww. Was it his?

JAMIE

Does it matter?

KAROL

It might to the justice department.

JAMIE

When I confronted him about it he just said he was raised that way.

LACEY

He doesn't know any different.

MARGIE

Maybe you should cut these guys some slack. Nobody's perfect.

JAMIE

I have a knack for picking crazies.

KAROL

Harold seems nice.

JAMIE

He really is. Very sweet.

LACEY

Have you done the deed?

JAMIE

No. We've been taking it very slow. He hasn't even made a move.

KAROL

What date is this?

JAMIE

Fourth.

KAROL

Fourth date, wow. I expect a guy to make a move by the third. At least.

JAMIE

He doesn't seem interested.

MARGIE

Trust me, all men are interested.

LACEY

You're hot, girlie. He wants you. Trust me.

JAMIE

He just seems sweet. Which is nice but I'm starting to think if anything's going to happen I'll have to initiate.

KAROL

I made the first move with Mike.

MARGIE

We've heard this story.

LACEY

I want to hear it again.

SCENE 6

The TV room, one couch, one cushioned chair. One TV, static playing.

*Computer upstage right
accompanied by a chair.*

*Small table with landline
telephone upstage center.*

A window upstage left.

TV ROOM

(The four men. Brad and Mikey
seated. Gerry struggles with the
Television as static plays. Harold
stands, uncomfortable.)

BRAD

Try another channel.

GERRY

They're all like this.

BRAD

Did you forget to pay the cable bill?

GERRY

Marge pays it.

BRAD

Did Margie forget to pay the cable bill?

(Mikey stands, to the window, and
looks out onto the street)

GERRY

We set up automatic payments. It goes right out of our
account. So all she has to do is confirm.

MIKEY

Your neighbor's wearing a hazmat suit.

(Mikey is ignored.)

Harold takes out his phone to avoid
awkward, uneventful standing)

HAROLD

Do you have WIFI?

GERRY

Of course I have WIFI. It's FBI Van 5. Password: Criminal.

BRAD

Sick name.

HAROLD

It's not showing up on my phone.

MIKEY

Mind if I use your computer? I'm not getting reception.

GERRY

Yeah sure.

MIKEY

Some idiot is selling a vintage Superman comic for five bucks
on eBay. It's worth \$300, easy.

BRAD

Oh, snatch that.

(Mikey sits at the computer)

HAROLD

So how long have you and Margie been married.

GERRY

Eight years.

HAROLD

Wow. Congratulations.

(to Brad)

And how long have you and Lacey been married?

BRAD

Eight years. Met at their wedding.

HAROLD

Wait. You met at Margie and Gerry's-

BRAD

Met at their wedding. Eloped the next day. Been married eight years. When you know you know.

HAROLD

(re Mikey)

And how long have you and Karol been-
(a moments pause)

MIKEY

(without turning from the
computer)

Engaged. We've been engaged for six years.

HAROLD

Six years?

MIKEY

You don't have to get married right away just because your engaged.

BRAD

Yeah, wait six years.

MIKEY

Marriage is an act of the patriarchy.

HAROLD

Sure. Nothing wrong with waiting.

MIKEY

Yeah. I'm not getting a connection. Your WIFI is out.

(Gerry halts his struggle with the
television.

He goes to the landline phone and
puts the receiver to his ear.)

GERRY

Mother fucker.

(Gerry exits.)

BRAD

Are we not watching the game?

SCENE 7

The dining room.

*Table centered. Front door
upstage left.*

DINING ROOM

(The women gossip.

Gerry enters in a huff with the men
following)

GERRY

Seriously, Marge? You cancelled the internet bundle just to
make it harder on me.

MARGIE

Don't be ridiculous I'm not that petty.

GERRY

You knew you were moving out and you didn't pay the internet
bill.

JAMIE

Who's moving out?

KAROL

Why is Margie moving out?

LACEY

You guys are moving?

MARGIE

Don't be ridiculous. I'm not petty. Of course I paid the bill.

GERRY

Then why isn't the TV, landline or internet working?

MARGIE

How the hell should I know?

JAMIE

Wait. Why is Margie moving out?

LACEY

Why do you still have a landline?

MARGIE

Because we're getting a divorce.

(Silence.)

LACEY

Over the landline?

GERRY

Nice going. I wanted to wait until after dinner to break the news, but Margie just ruined our night.

(Margie stares daggers at Gerry.

Shakes her head in calm rage.)

MARGIE

Screw you.

(Margie exits in a huff.

Silence until-)

LACEY

Wait, who's getting a divorce?

JAMIE

Marge and Gerry.

(Marge enters with a bag, packed)

GERRY

Margie, don't storm out. Our friends came all this way.

MARGIE

I wanted to wait! But you dragged it out of me. So I'm leaving. Enjoy the dinner I made.

(Margie storms to the door with her bag)

GERRY

Marge. Come on. Don't be like this.

MARGIE

You make me like this!

(Marge opens the door revealing a
MAN IN A HAZMAT SUIT.

Margie SCREAMS and slams the door.)

JAMIE

What?

MARGIE

There is a man in a hazmat suit at the door.

GERRY

She's always looking for attention.

MARGIE

I'm serious, asshole.

BRAD

Like a hazmat suit. For like Ebola and stuff?

MARGIE

Exactly like that.

(A KNOCK on the door.

The group stands, approaching the door.

From outside, a voice.)

LEONARD (OFFSTAGE)

It's Leonard. Your neighbor.

GERRY

Why is Leonard in a hazmat suit?

MARGIE

Why do you think I would know that?

HAROLD

Well, we could let him in, and ask.

(The group exchange silent looks of question.

Gerry pries the door open.

LEONARD (40s, kind of guy who owns a hazmat suit) enters, in a hazmat suit.)

GERRY

Leonard. What's with the hazmat suit?

(Leonard takes off his gas mask.

Observes the set table and guests.)

LEONARD

Are you having a party?

MARGIE

Oh, yeah.

LEONARD

I must have missed my invite.

MARGIE

Well, it's kind of a couples thing.

LEONARD

So because Christa left I must not like to go to parties anymore?

MARGIE

No. It's just, I thought it might be weird for you-

LEONARD

Okay. I invite you guys to my game nights. But you don't invite me to your dinner parties.

GERRY

Leonard, what's with the hazmat suit?

LEONARD

You guys didn't hear? It was all over the news.

JAMIE

Hear what?

GERRY

Our TV isn't working. Marge forgot to pay the bill.

MARGIE

I paid the bill!

LEONARD

A bunch of dirt bombs were set off downtown. Before the TV cut out they said it might be a terrorist attack.

(SILENCE.)

LEONARD

If I were you, I'd get my hazmat suit on.

LACEY

What's a dirty bomb?

KAROL

A chemical weapon. How long do we have?

GERRY

What kind of person owns a hazmat suit?

LEONARD

I do. I own a hazmat suit.

KAROL

Leonard! How long do we have?

LEONARD

Before the news cut off they said two hours until the worst reaches the suburbs. That was about forty-five minutes ago. You guys should really put your hazmat suits on.

GERRY

We don't own a hazmat suit. What kind of person owns a hazmat suit?

LEONARD

Again, I do. I own a hazmat suit.

MARGIE

How bad?

LEONARD

CNN said six bombs were set off downtown. There were attacks in LA, New York, Chicago. Every major city in the U.S.

MARGIE

Jesus Christ.

HAROLD

Well he had nothing to do with it. I assure you.

JAMIE

Do they know who did it?

LEONARD

They didn't say. TV cut off before I could find out.

MIKEY

North Koreans. No doubt in my mind. Maybe the Russians. Probably North Koreans.