

Sliding into Seniorhood

by Kim E. Ruyle

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Sliding into Seniorhood

Cast of Characters

<u>MATT</u>	Male, 50s; devil-may-care industrial-organizational psychologist with a sensitive side. Walt's son.
<u>VALERIE</u>	Female, 40s; confident and presumptuous neuropsychologist and professor. Sherry's niece.
<u>SHERRY</u>	Female, 60s; recently retired high school Spanish teacher; determined to succeed in first community theatre acting experience.
<u>WALT</u>	Male, late 60s – 70s; retired professor of Latin American history and resident of Nob Hill Manor; refined and nattily dressed.
<u>BONNIE</u>	Female, 60s; a legend in the local community theatre scene; vivacious, provocative, and at times outrageous; an open book.
<u>EDDY</u>	Male, late 60s – 70s; retired plumber and Nob Hill Manor resident where he relishes a well-deserved reputation as a lothario.

Recorded with Doubling

<u>AIRPORT ANNOUNCER</u>	Offstage voice announcing flights over intercom.
<u>STAGE MANAGER</u>	Offstage voice prompting actors over intercom.

TIME: Present day; January – April timespan

PLACES:

- 1) **Detroit Sky Club**, Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport.
- 2) **Nob Hill Manor**, senior living facility, Twin Cities.
- 3) **Theatre Thalia**, community theatre, Twin Cities.
- 4) **Gulf View Resort**, clothing optional naturalist resort, Florida.

Synopsis

The paths of six intriguing characters intersect as they navigate the unpredictable and challenging twists and turns of aging. On the slide into seniorhood, they encounter relationships and experiences, some painful, some sensual, and some just downright silly. When all is said and done, will they find that life has left them with anything more than simple memories?

Sets

The stage is a composite of four compact minimalist sets. The first three sets are stationary. The fourth set is placed before the final scene.

Center Stage

1. Detroit Sky Club Two small tables, chairs, and a bar. On display, a board of flight arrivals and departures and sign displaying *Detroit Sky Club*.

Stage Right

2. Nob Hill Manor A sterile lounge with a card table centered in the room, and a couple of chairs. There is signage or other indication of the facility, *Nob Hill Manor*. Additional items, e.g., bland artwork and a potted plant, might reinforce the lounge setting.

Stage Left

3. Theatre Thalia Two small dressing tables facing downstage. When seated at their dressing tables, actors are looking into and through imaginary mirrors so they're facing the house. There is a racy poster or other signage referring to a production of *Calendar Girls*.

Apron or Down Center Stage

4. Gulf View Resort One or more chaise lounge chairs and a potted palm or other items to depict a Florida poolside setting.

Notes on Timing of Scene Changes

Except for final scene which requires some placement, scene transitions should be nearly instantaneous by shifting lighting from one set to another.

Scenes	When the Action Occurs, Suggested	Set
1; 4; 7; 10; 13; 17	Sunday evening; January 6 th	Detroit Sky Club
2; 5; 8; 11; 14	Sunday afternoon; January 27 th	Nob Hill Manor
3; 6	Tuesday evening; January 29 th	Theatre Thalia
9	Tuesday evening; February 19 th	Theatre Thalia
12	Wednesday evening; February 20 th	Theatre Thalia
15	Thursday evening; February 21 st	Theatre Thalia
16	Saturday morning; February 23 rd	Nob Hill Manor
18	Saturday morning, April 20 th	Gulf View Resort

SCENE 1

Detroit Sky Club. About 9 p.m. on a snowy Sunday evening in January. Valerie sits at a table studying an iPad as she nurses a drink. Her coat is draped over a chair. A carry-on bag is on the floor beside her, and her purse is on the table.

Matt enters with a briefcase and a computer case slung over a shoulder. He consults the flight schedule, goes to bar, turns with a drink, and looks around. He selects the table adjacent to Valerie, unloads his stuff, removes his coat, and sits.

Matt looks around, his gaze settling on Valerie. He studies her intently. Then, more intently.

MATT

Valerie? Is it really you?

VALERIE

Uh, yes. Do I know you?

MATT

Oh, my god! It's really you.

VALERIE

I'm sorry.

With drink, Matt excitedly moves to Valerie's table.

MATT

It's me! Matt!

VALERIE

I'm not sure –

MATT

Matt! It's Matt.

Valerie just shakes her head, no recognition.

MATT (CONT.)

Really? You're going to pretend you don't recognize me?

VALERIE

We've met?

MATT

Really?

VALERIE

What?

MATT

Oh, god. You're still pissed. I am so sorry. Really. I wish there was something I could say.

VALERIE

Relaxing a bit.

It's okay. I think you've got me confused. Pretty sure we've never met.

MATT

Met?! We were married for eight months!

CROSSFADE TO NEXT SCENE

SCENE 2

In the Nob Hill Manor resident lounge, it's Sunday afternoon, three weeks later. Walt sits at a table staring at a chessboard which is next to chocolate cake spiked with a single unlit birthday candle. Paper plates, plastic cutlery, and a book of matches are nearby. He clinches an unlit pipe in his teeth as he slowly moves one chess piece, then another.

Eddy, wearing nothing but slippers, boxer shorts, and an open bathrobe, pads silently into the room, stands behind Walt, and observes the imaginary chess game in progress.

EDDY

I like the horse.

WALT

Startled but doesn't take his eyes off the chess board.

Knight.

EDDY

What about it?

WALT

It's called a knight.

EDDY

Looks around the sunlit room.

It's three in the afternoon. You're losin' it man.

WALT

After a quick glance.

Why don't you put some clothes on and let me teach you some chess?

EDDY

My medal.

WALT

What?

EDDY

You seen it?

WALT

You mean your *medallion*? It's so big – not really a medal.

EDDY

Medallions are veal.

WALT

You wear it like jewelry.

EDDY

Maybe pork. Medallions are meat.

WALT

Okay. Okay. It's a medal, then. Where'd/ you leave it?

EDDY

/Beef or pork. Always meat.

A pause. Walt stares at Eddy's bare chest.

WALT

Where'd you leave it?

EDDY

Uh, bed post, most likely.

WALT

Narrows it down.

EDDY

Ladies don't like it bangin' against their rear end or belly when we're, you know...

Spreading robe. A couple of hip thrusts.

'Sides, it's a weight hangin' 'round the neck.

WALT

Heavy lies the crown.

EDDY

It's a *medal*.

WALT

Brass is heavy, I guess.

EDDY

Bronze, not brass.

WALT
I'm impressed. Plumbers know their alloys.

EDDY
Where the hell?

WALT
Think.

EDDY
Maxine gave it to me.

WALT
She your last conquest?

EDDY
A medal, see. For my performance.

WALT
But which was the last bed post?

EDDY
Ol' gal's grateful.

WALT
Of your attention.

EDDY
That I can still get it up.

WALT
Will you put on some clothes?

EDDY
I know! What's her name at the end of the hall? Uses a walker.

WALT
You're referring to Mrs. Maxwell? Betty Maxwell?

EDDY
Yeah, Betty. Right after lunch.

WALT
With the walker?

EDDY

Yeah, we hooked up after lunch. First, she eats a hearty meal. Turkey and mashed potatoes. Some apple cobbler. Then we get down to business.

Spreads the robe and spins in a circle.

And now... Now she's sleepin' like a baby.

WALT

Well, there you go.

EDDY

Ol' gal nods off after every meal.

WALT

Uh huh.

EDDY

Guarantee it. Sleepin' like a baby.

WALT

Mystery solved.

EDDY

Yeah. Betty's bedpost.

Eddy scampers to exit. Walt returns his attention to the chess board. Eddy returns momentarily wearing a large gold-colored medallion on a chain around his neck, bathrobe still open, and takes a seat.

WALT

Like a baby?

EDDY

Ol' gal's not my favorite, but I'm a giver.

WALT

A real humanitarian.

EDDY

I'm a freakin' Albert Switzer.

WALT

Schweitzer.

EDDY

How 'bout you? Wanna help me service these gals?

WALT

You're totally inappropriate, you know? Really. Who is servicing whom?

EDDY

Whom? You're askin' *whom*? Ya don't hafta be a professor in here.

WALT

It's a valid question.

EDDY

Guy's gotta take what he gets. 'Sides, the ladies 'preciate it. It's win-win. I get all the trim I want down the hall. Maxine, Dottie, Alice, even Betty with the walker. And I'm glad to share.

WALT

A real team player, aren't you?

EDDY

Tossin' my bread on the water.

WALT

So, you're not looking for reciprocity?

EDDY

The hell you talkin' 'bout, professor? I'm jes talkin' 'bout trim.

WALT

Trim is a nautical term, Eddy. As an ex-naval officer, I would prefer you use the word correctly.

EDDY

The hell you mean?

WALT

Trim. A balanced load to achieve the correct waterline.

EDDY

What is it, man? Johnson need a little starch? It's okay. It happens. And these gals don't mind goin' downtown to get the blood flowin'.

WALT

You don't know me, Eddy.

EDDY

I can still get it up three, four times a day long as I don't eject.

WALT

I was in the Navy.

EDDY

I fake it.

WALT

Lots of ports. Lots of ladies.

EDDY

The *ejectulatin'*. I fake it. They never know, and I got, you know, lotsa energy.

WALT

I get it. You've got stamina.

EDDY

Yeah! That's it. Stamina.

WALT

Stares at Eddy a moment, considering.

Eddy, have you seen my...? Have you seen my butt?

EDDY

Shocked to upright.

Damn. I never figured you for –

WALT

Listen to what I'm saying!

No response from Eddy.

You like bronze?

EDDY

Uh.

WALT

Bronze propellers?

EDDY

Okay.

WALT

I've got twin propeller screws tattooed on my rear end.

EDDY

No shit?!

WALT

Honest to god. A propeller screw tattooed on each butt cheek.

EDDY

Yeah? Let me see!

WALT

Bronze propeller screws.

EDDY

Twin screws. My god!

WALT

Yes. Used to say they were to drive my torpedo home.

EDDY

Your torpedo?!

WALT

I was in the Navy. So, don't think you can tell me about the ladies.

EDDY

Hell, Walt. You're my new hero.

WALT

I know about the ladies.

EDDY

No. I believe it. A guy don't draw propellers on his ass not knowin' the ladies.

CROSSFADE TO NEXT SCENE

SCENE 3

In the women's dressing room of Theatre Thalia. It's early evening, two days later; just prior to the second rehearsal of *Calendar Girls*. Sherry enters carrying a script. She sets it on a dressing table and, facing the house, looks into an unseen mirror. She unbuttons her blouse, opens it wide to reveal a low-cut strapless bra. As she turns side to side checking herself in the mirror, Bonnie enters, pauses to grin.

BONNIE

Why don't you let those honey globes out? Let 'em see the light of day.

Sherry, startled, pulls her blouse around her, plops into chair.

SHERRY

I feel fat.

BONNIE

Yeah, well next to you, I'm a hippo, yet I love the way I look. Explain that.

SHERRY

No puedo explicarlo.

BONNIE

In English, damn it. This is a theatre, not your Spanish class. Get in character.

SHERRY

Sorry.

BONNIE

And stop apologizing for everything.

SHERRY

When will we have to practice without clothes?

BONNIE

Rehearse! You practice the piano. In here we rehearse. And you can take your clothes off tonight, you want to.

Grinning and seductively removing her blouse.

Want me to light the way?

SHERRY

You want to take your clothes off?

BONNIE

All good actors are exhibitionists at heart.

Twirls her blouse and hangs it on a chair.

Might be highly introverted, but we're all just looking for an excuse to take off our clothes.

SHERRY

God. Not me.

BONNIE

What do you think acting is? It's all about vulnerability. You get on the stage and bare your soul. You let go of yourself. Your ego. Shed your skin. Doesn't matter if you have clothes on or not. When we're on the stage, we're all naked. Totally exposed.

SHERRY

It's so –

BONNIE

Liberating! Like going to a nudist camp.

SHERRY

Right. And I suppose you've –

BONNIE

Every spring! A naturalist resort in Florida. Perfect training ground for an actor. I go when I have a break between shows, usually in April. Work on an all-over tan and practice my vulnerability.

SHERRY

Really? I'd be mortified.

BONNIE

Why? Cause you think you somehow wouldn't measure up? Look. Go into any Wal-Mart and round up shoppers. Old ones. Fat ones. Thin ones... as if you could find a thin shopper in a Wal-Mart. Grandfathers. Grandmothers. Teachers. God, so many teachers. Teachers love to get naked. You'd fit right in.

SHERRY

Not teachers.

BONNIE

Don't teachers shop at Wal-Mart? Strip all those Wal-Mart shoppers of their clothes and sprinkle them around a sunlit pool, some palm trees in the background. There you have it. A bunch of naturalists relaxing in the sun. You won't see George Clooney or Scarlett Johansson.

SHERRY

It sounds so –

BONNIE

Homogenous, what it is. Sure, you've got some variety. But stripped of clothes, we're all pretty much equal. Arms, legs, bellies. Dicks and tits and butts. Lots of butts.

SHERRY

I couldn't.

BONNIE

You could! Come with me! In April, after our show. I promise. You won't feel fat.

SHERRY

You have to take off... Everything?

BONNIE

You're a total smoke show. Not that anyone would be overtly staring, but in that crowd, you'd be Venus. Aphrodite with a towel.

SHERRY

You can cover up with a towel?

BONNIE

To sit on. The only required accoutrement. Can't be parking a bare ass on a poolside lounge chair.

Circling Sherry, looking her up and down.

Yeah! Sherry the Smoke Show!

CROSSFADE TO NEXT SCENE

SCENE 4

Back in the Detroit Sky Club, continuing. Valerie and Matt are seated.

VALERIE

We've met?

MATT

Really?

VALERIE

What?

MATT

Oh, God. You're still pissed. I am so sorry. Really. I wish there was something I could say...

VALERIE

Relaxing a bit.

It's okay. I think you've got me confused. Pretty sure we've never met.

MATT

Met?! We were married for eight months! Long time ago but you can't have totally blocked it. I guess I have thickened up a bit.

VALERIE

Now amused.

No. You've definitely got me confused.

MATT

Henry Hall? Western Michigan U?

VALERIE

No.

MATT

Kalamazoo? 1987?

VALERIE

Considering. Now really amused.

1987... In 1987, I was 13.

MATT

But your sisters! Veronica and, uh, ...

VALERIE

I have a brother.

MATT

Victoria! Vee! All your names start with V.

VALERIE

Tossing back a laugh.

Well, my brother's name is Victor.

MATT

Really?!

VALERIE

Yes. Really.

MATT

Amazing. But you're the image... You've really aged well.

VALERIE

Well, I guess I have a doppelganger then. And maybe I'm not as old –

MATT

But your name is Valerie?

VALERIE

Life is full of coincidences.

MATT

Okay. Well, I feel like an idiot.

VALERIE

You're telling me... You really thought –

MATT

Yes. I did.

VALERIE

Mmm. You know... I thought –

MATT

Oh, hell. I'm sorry. I wasn't coming on.

VALERIE

No. I guess you weren't.

MATT

Disappointed, stands to leave.

Well, I'll let you get back to...

VALERIE

You don't have to leave.

Grins and gestures to the vacant seat.

Join me. My flight's delayed.

MATT

Mine, too.

Matt quickly moves stuff to Valerie's table and sits.

MATT (CONT.)

You're not going to Shanghai, are you?

VALERIE

God, no. Paris.

MATT

Lucky you.

VALERIE

I guess.

MATT

Damn Detroit weather.

VALERIE

Not as cold as Minneapolis, but more snow.

MATT

You're from Minneapolis?

VALERIE

Mmm.

MATT

I grew up there.

VALERIE

And now?

MATT

Bowling Green, Kentucky. I'm Matt. Nice to meet you.

VALERIE

Nice to meet you, Matt. I'm ... well, you know.

MATT

Yes, Valerie. My long-lost college girlfriend. Her twin, anyway.

Matt and Valerie clink glasses.

MATT (CONT.)

Weird. I still think of her as my girlfriend instead of my wife.

VALERIE

Mmm... I nearly hit a deer near there. Long time ago. I was driving my Camry.

MATT

You hit a deer in Kalamazoo?

VALERIE

Bowling Green. *Nearly* hit a deer. Didn't you say you live in Bowling Green?

MATT

You've been to Bowling Green?

VALERIE

Passing through. Road trip with a boyfriend.

MATT

Oh. A boyfriend.

VALERIE

Amused at his disappointment. Warming up.

Long time ago.

MATT

Oh, that's good.

VALERIE

Good?

MATT

Well, yeah. I mean... Good that it was a close call. You know, good that you didn't hit the deer.

VALERIE

Mmm.

MATT

I've had some close calls, too. Wisconsin's the worst for deer. Don't you think?

Shifts in his seat as Valerie just grins.

So, you live in Minneapolis. And what do you do?

VALERIE

Psychologist.

MATT

I – O?!

VALERIE

Uh...?

MATT

I – O psychology?

VALERIE

Oh, no. Neuro.

MATT

Neuropsychology. Very cool. Cutting edge stuff.

VALERIE

I think so.

MATT

Well, that would have been too weird.

VALERIE

What?

MATT

I'm an I – O psych.

VALERIE

Okay.

MATT

Yeah. Would have been weird if you were an I – O psych, too.

VALERIE

And what's weird about I – O psychology?

MATT

Not weird. Just another coincidence, I guess. Anyway...

Awkward pause.

VALERIE

So, Bowling Green...

MATT

What's really weird, I went to Bowling Green State for grad school. It's in Ohio.

VALERIE

Hypersensitive to weirdness, aren't you?

MATT

Uh...

VALERIE

What's weird about Bowling Green for grad school?

MATT

Oh. Well, it's in Ohio. I mean, I went to Bowling Green, Ohio, for grad school but ended up living in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

VALERIE

Not weird. Your destiny. For you, there's something about Bowling Green.

Beat.

You teach?

MATT

No, but I'll bet you do. Or research.

VALERIE

Both. Professor. U of M.

MATT

I knew it. You have a professorial air.

VALERIE

What? Stuffy?

MATT

What? No! No, no. Uh... *cerebral*.

VALERIE

You mean that as a compliment?

MATT

Dallying and looking her up and down.

Well, don't really know you well enough to comment on your appearance.

CROSSFADE TO NEXT SCENE

SCENE 5

Back in the Nob Hill Manor resident lounge,
continuing. Walt and Eddy sit a table.

EDDY

Your torpedo?!

WALT

I was in the Navy. So, don't think you can tell me about the ladies.

EDDY

Hell, Walt. You're my new hero.

WALT

I know about the ladies.

EDDY

No. I believe it. A guy don't draw propellers on his ass not knowin' the ladies. Hey! Maxine and Dottie'd get a kick. Let's go show 'em those tattoos!

WALT

Take it down a notch, will you? Can't we be gentlemen?

EDDY

I's a plumber. Never said I was no gentleman.

WALT

All this catting around, it gives your life meaning?

EDDY

Now you're gonna get all philosophic?

WALT

Shakes his head, turns pensive.

Eddy, do you have kids?

EDDY

Six. Believe it? All shit heels. Shit heels and pricks.

WALT

I've never seen them in here. Visiting.

EDDY

Robby's the worst.

WALT

What about grandkids?

EDDY

Six kids poppin' 'em out. They gotta bunch a miniature shit heels runnin' around, jes like 'em.

WALT

You know them? Your grandkids?

EDDY

Robby stole my truck, he was sixteen, and plowed it into a Jag.

WALT

Was he hurt?

EDDY

Big parking lot at a movie, one a those with bookoo screens.

WALT

A cineplex. Or is it multiplex?

EDDY

Big parking lot and the Jag parked all to itself mile away from the theater. The owner, poor dumb bastard, thought it'd be safe out there. *No asshole gonna be puttin' a ding in my door.* Didn't count on Robbie. Little shit. Drunk as hell, and drives my truck straight on a beeline, you know. Head on in a goddamn parking lot. Totaled the Jag. Messed up my truck.

WALT

I've only got two.

EDDY

Trucks or Jags?

WALT

Two kids. Never see my son. My daughter lives nearby with her kids. Two grandkids. Nearby, but still, almost never see them.

EDDY

Yeah, well...

WALT

It really bothers me. How are they going to know me? What does my daughter say about me?

EDDY

Kids. Whatcha gonna do?

WALT
But what's more important?

EDDY
Important than what?

WALT
Than our kids? More important than our grandkids?

EDDY
Damn, Walt. Soundin' like a wussy ol' grandma 'stead of a badass sailor, propellers on his –

WALT
You know who they are, don't you?

EDDY
Know who? *What?*

WALT
Your kids are *you*. Your kids. They're the way you live on. In the future. Your DNA. Your values. Your stories. Everything that you pass on to your kids. Your kids are your ticket to the future. Don't you think about that? Think about the future? Think about your legacy?

EDDY
Robby. The little shit's got my boat parked in his driveway.

WALT
You don't think about it?

EDDY
The boat?

WALT
Your legacy? You and I, we're not going to be around much longer.

EDDY
Stands, shakes his head, and makes as to exit.
Well, thanks, Walt. You know, you're one helluva motivational speaker.

WALT
Eddy!

Eddy pulls up short and turns around.

WALT (CONT.)
Come have a piece of birthday cake.

EDDY

Sporting big grin, moves to take a seat.

Now you're talkin'.

Walt begins to cut cake, but Eddy grabs his hand.

EDDY (CONT.)

Hold on professor. Gotta light the candle.

Walt leans back while Eddy lights the candle.

EDDY (CONT.)

Well. Go on then. Blow the sucker out.

Walt blows out the candle and serves a piece of cake while Eddy rises and dances a little jig singing an improvised line or two of a birthday jingle before sitting down to tuck into the cake.

WALT

Did you serve in the military?

EDDY

'64 I was in Nam. Semper Fi.

WALT

Our paths might have crossed. 1964, I was on a ship just offshore.

EDDY

Change the subject, will ya? Ya wanna talk about Nam, I'm gonna go see Maxine.

WALT

My grandkids don't know about my service. They don't really know me at all. I was a professor. I wrote books. Won awards. Thought I made a difference, but...

Eddy takes a moment to consider Walt's dilemma and sadness.

EDDY

Show 'em your propellers!

WALT

What?

EDDY

Hell, yeah. Impress with the kiddies with those twin screws on your butt.

WALT

No. That's not –

EDDY

Jumping up to creatively gesture.

Yeah! Grandkids braggin' you up at school! Give 'em a picture for show and tell! Lookit my grandpa! Those grandkids'll be center of attention! You'll be talk of the playground!

Walt just stares, uncomprehending.

EDDY (CONT.)

You got propellers on your ass! What else you need?!

CROSSFADE TO NEXT SCENE

SCENE 6

Back in Theatre Thalia dressing room, continuing.
Sherry sits at the dressing table. Bonnie stands.

SHERRY

You can cover up with a towel?

BONNIE

To sit on. The only required accoutrement. Can't be parking a bare ass on a poolside lounge chair.

Circling Sherry, looking her up and down.

Yeah! Sherry the Smoke Show! Hey! You should bring that new guy with you. What's his name? The professor.

SHERRY

Oh, god. Walt. No way.

BONNIE

Walt a bit uptight, is he?

SHERRY

No. We're not...

BONNIE

What?

SHERRY

Some issues. I don't know. He's got issues.

BONNIE

What issues?

SHERRY

All I can say, my *dislike* of Che Guevara doesn't equal his *hatred* for Che Guevara.

BONNIE

Che Guevara?

SHERRY

Everything was fine until a couple days ago. He brought up Che Guevara, a favorite topic. You know, Walt's specialty is Latin American history. Even wrote a book to, "*debunk the legend of a Marxist troublemaker who is largely responsible for the ongoing squalid state of Latin America.*" Anyway, I made the mistake of saying that you don't have to like his Marxist philosophy to respect his leadership ability. Oh, my god! He looked at me like I'd just shit in his soup bowl.

BONNIE

The hell?

SHERRY

You get it, don't you? I wasn't saying I liked the guy or agreed with his politics. But Walt is so damn intractable. He wanted me to exhibit the same burning hatred for the revolutionary that he feels.

BONNIE

That's not respect. You're a thoughtful adult and entitled to an opinion. Weren't you telling me the guy was respectful? Yeah. Those were your exact words. *"Walt is such a gentleman. So suave. So respectful."*

SHERRY

I'm not supposed to care, right? It's not supposed to hurt. I mean we've only been seeing each other a couple of months, but...

BONNIE

He can't get past this?

SHERRY

He sent me an email. Said he'd like to take a break.

BONNIE

By email? What an asshole. But no worries. It'll be a snap to find a couple of fellas to take to the nudist camp. It's best we have guys along. Keep all the other meat twinkies from sniffin' round.

SHERRY

Walt would never go anyway. He'd be self-conscious of his propellers.

BONNIE

What propellers?

SHERRY

No. He made me promise.

BONNIE

Yeah. Promise what?

SHERRY

Uh, he's got tattoos.

BONNIE

Propeller tats?

SHERRY

The man graduated Annapolis.

BONNIE

So, what's the big deal?

SHERRY

Deal is, the propellers are on his rear end.

BONNIE

Oh, my god! That's rich! A suave, cultured professor with ass tats.

SHERRY

Big bronze propeller tattoos. One on each butt cheek. I guess he was quite a lady's man when he was in the navy.

BONNIE

One in every port.

SHERRY

But now he's just so... So stiff.

BONNIE

Sounds like a dream.

SHERRY

Inflexible. Stubborn. A proud, pompous, narcissistic prick.

BONNIE

Well, much as I'd like to get a look at his tats, I'll give some thought to some guys we might invite to go with us.

SHERRY

Don't get your hopes up. You haven't convinced me that getting naked will improve my acting, and I can't think about anything but this show right now. I really want to break free, you know? To let loose and nail the part. Or, at least, not embarrass myself. But I'm really in over my head.

BONNIE

Pippi's a good director. You'll do fine.

SHERRY

You know her birthday's the same day as our cast party. We should all chip in and get her something.

Bonnie picks up a brochure from dressing table,
takes a seat.

BONNIE

How about a spa day? I was just checking out this new place on Nob Hill Boulevard.

SHERRY

What's it cost? A spa day.

BONNIE

Let's see... Ninety bucks for a Swedish massage.

SHERRY

How about a facial?

BONNIE

Wicked grin and suggestive gesture.

Oh, I love facials.

SHERRY

What's it cost?

BONNIE

Also, ninety bucks. Okay, they got something they do with hot rocks. It's one twenty.

SHERRY

Is there a discount for a package? You know, a manicure, massage, facial?

BONNIE

Oh! Oh! Here we go! They do vaginal rejuvenation!

SHERRY

You're awful! Pippi would be mortified.

BONNIE

Wow. Nine hundred and ninety bucks.

SHERRY

We could get a nice cashmere sweater.

BONNIE

Cashmere sweater's nice. A cashmere cooz, even better.

SHERRY

Get real. If the entire cast chips in, we could do a really nice sweater.

BONNIE

Says it's minimally invasive. Like some guys I know.

SHERRY

Please, just stick to the basic services.

BONNIE

No. Listen to this. They *traumatize the vagina to build scar tissue*. You hear that? Vaginal traumatization.

SHERRY

Please put that away. I'll poll the rest of the cast about a gift. Right now, I need to concentrate on the rehearsal.

BONNIE

Traumatization for the vag. Isn't there an app for that? Craig's List or Tinder, maybe?

SHERRY

Bonnie, please. I can really use your help. I'm completely out of my element here. The audition was just a lark. I came on a dare and didn't dream I'd get a part. I wasn't even trying.

BONNIE

Ha! That's the way it goes. You were relaxed.

SHERRY

Last night, I stunk up rehearsal. I can see, Pippi's thinking she made a mistake in casting me.

BONNIE

First piece of advice, learn your lines and get off book soon as possible so you can free your brain to just be in the moment. To react. The best actors never really act. Everything is a reaction.

SHERRY

I'm not sure –

BONNIE

Don't act. React! That's not a cliché! If you're not trying to remember your lines, you can concentrate on what you're feeling. You'll be able to emote. If you're thinking your character's thoughts, you'll react. Naturally.

SHERRY

The lines I can learn, but –

BONNIE

It's finding the right emotional state. Remember what I said about vulnerability?

SHERRY

You think I'm not feeling vulnerable? I'm scared to death. I don't need to feel more vulnerable. I need confidence.

BONNIE

The reason you're scared is because you're protecting your ego. That's not vulnerability. When you let go of the ego, that's when you get confidence. You'll grow two wings.

SHERRY

Wings?

BONNIE

The great paradox of acting. With vulnerability comes confidence, the two wings! That's how an actor flies straight. So, listen to what I'm saying. Embrace vulnerability. Drop the damn ego so you can become your character. If you're in character, you just react to your cues. It's not really acting! It's reacting.

SHERRY

You make it seem so easy. So natural.

BONNIE

Just like getting naked. What could be more natural?

CROSSFADE TO NEXT SCENE

SCENE 7

Back in the Detroit Sky Club, continuing. Valerie and Matt are seated. Matt, cocky, a man on a hunt. Valerie, also in the hunt, plays it coy and maintains a semblance of professionalism, at least for now.

MATT

Well, don't really know you well enough to comment on your appearance.

VALERIE

Can't be too bad if you married me in a former life.

MATT

Definitely attractive. *Very* attractive.

Matt raises his glass. Valerie clinks it with a smile.

MATT (CONT.)

So, you're into the brain? Dorsal lateral prefrontal cortex. Basal Ganglia. All that good stuff.

VALERIE

Supposed to impress me?

MATT

No...

Coy smile.

Maybe.

VALERIE

Mmm.

MATT

And the Four Fs. You know, for survival. Uh, fight, flight, feed, and, uh... Fool around.

VALERIE

Leaning in, quietly.

Fuck.

MATT

What?!

VALERIE

Not enough to fool around. You have to... *Fuck*... For survival. I think that's from Sarpolsky, the Four Fs.

MATT

Enjoying this.

Fuck. For survival. Yeah.

VALERIE

Survival's more than breathing. It's also about passing along our genes.

MATT

No, I get it. I'm all about survival. Survival in all four dimensions.

VALERIE

Not a very rich life if you're only surviving. You want to do more than survive, don't you? What about self-actualization?

MATT

I prefer a partner.

VALERIE

I said self-actualization, not self-gratification.

MATT

That's exactly what I mean! Exactly what I want! Self-actualization... With a partner... In all four dimensions.

VALERIE

You're missing my point...

A pause and a smile.

No. You get it, don't you? You're choosing to ignore my point.

Matt responds with a shrug and big smile.

PA ANNOUNCER (OFF)

For those passengers waiting on the departure of Flight 853 to Paris. Estimated departure is now eleven oh five p.m.

VALERIE

Couple more hours.

Matt gulps his drink and stands.

MATT

Time for another glass. What're you drinking?

VALERIE

I've already had two.

VALERIE (CONT.)

Failing to suppress a smile as Matt just shrugs.

Bourbon. Straight up.

MATT

Bourbon! You go, girl.

Matt goes to bar. Valerie pulls a compact from her purse, checks herself out. Musses her hair a bit. Plumps her breasts. Matt returns momentarily and sits. They clink glasses again.

VALERIE

So, what about me do you find attractive?

MATT

I said *very* attractive.

Off Valerie's skeptical look.

What? You don't believe me?

VALERIE

Biologists say attraction is based on the anticipated quality of progeny produced by a coupling.

MATT

Wow.

VALERIE

I'm a bit past my prime.

MATT

Or just coming into it.

VALERIE

Not for producing progeny.

MATT

But for coupling.

VALERIE

I take it your cortical coupling region is well developed.

MATT

Pretty normal size, I think.

VALERIE

I'm talking about the brain.

MATT

Oh.

VALERIE

We'd have to place you in an F-M-R-I scanner to know for sure.

MATT

So, what you're saying... Uh... A guy only wants to fool around with...

VALERIE

Nubile.

MATT

Okaaay...

VALERIE

Child-bearing.

MATT

Wait. Aren't humans different?

VALERIE

Different?

MATT

From animals?

VALERIE

Their brains are.

MATT

So, humans can fool around for the pure enjoyment?

VALERIE

Sure.

MATT

Animals don't?

VALERIE

Generally, no.

MATT

Too bad for them.

VALERIE

Failing to suppress a smile.

Yes.

MATT

Married?

VALERIE

Divorced.

Big smile.

But not from you. Not in a previous life.

MATT

No. Guess not.

VALERIE

Awkward pause. Shifting gears.

What did you do?

MATT

Do? When?

VALERIE

You said you were sorry. When you first came over.

MATT

Oh, yeah. Uh... I was a shit.

Off Valerie's confusion.

We were young, and I was thinking with my pecker.

CROSSFADE TO NEXT SCENE