

THE MIDVALE HIGH SCHOOL FIFTIETH REUNION

By

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TOM TERRES – Late Sixties

BETTINA BELKNAP - Late Sixties

MALE ACTOR – Must play a range from 17 to 70 in various memory scenes

FEMALE ACTOR – Must play a range from 18 to early sixties in various memory scenes

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action is continuous.

It takes place at the Midvale High School Class of 1954 Fiftieth Reunion and in TOM and BETTINA'S separate memory spaces.

Everyone else at the reunion is invisible to the audience, but not to TOM and BETTINA WHO interact with them easily.

A large open space with a banner across the back that reads WELCOME MIDVALE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF '54 – 50TH REUNION. There are a few tables covered in white cloths and a few folding chairs at each to suggest all the invisible tables that surround a dance floor.

To the Left and Right of the central playing area are two neutral memory spaces, blacked out during the action in the center. The lights bang on there when a memory is activated..

As the lights come up on the central area, we hear a dance band playing *Blue Velvet* and the low hum of voices as if in a crowded room, although no one is visible.

TOM TERRES appears adjusting HIS nametag while HE negotiates a drink. HE is in HIS late sixties. He stands to the side of the dance floor space and surveys the crowd. Suddenly HE is bumped from behind.

TOM

Oh!

(To the invisible bumper)

...It's OK. Didn't spill a drop. . .There's more of a crowd than I expected. . .I don't know. I guess I thought more of us would be dead . . .You're Mark Rothbein. . .You sat in front of me in Accelerated English. . .Yeah. I thought they were going to teach us how to talk faster, , ,No. Just joking. . .

(Holding out HIS nametag and bringing it closer to the invisible MARK)

Tom Terres. Why the hell didn't they make the print on these things jumbo? Everyone's going to be staring at everyone else's chest as if they're giving each other physicals.. .So what have you been doing the last fifty years?. . .No, that's OK. Go get yours. I just got mine on the way in.

(Indicating drink)

We're all going to need them.

(MUSIC ends. Scattered Applause. We hear the crackle and hiss of a microphone)

MALE VOICEOVER

OK, all you alumni and boosters. Welcome to the 50th Reunion of the Midvale High School Class of '54. Let's have a big hand for the Class of 2005 Rainbow Dance Band.

(Scattered applause. TOM tries to applaud without putting down HIS drink)

They usually play alternative rock, but tonight it's strictly our music. I'm Warren Chrisman and I'll be your host for the evening along with Wilma Bulky. You all remember Wilma. She recited Rudyard Kipling's *If* at graduation. We'll be breaking in every once in a while with announcements, requests and, of course, the big contest later on. Any announcements now, Wilma?

FEMALE VOICEOVER

Just to remind everyone that we have two bars open. You can get your coupons at the reception desk.

MALE VOICEOVER

We can always count on Wilma for the important stuff. Now everyone enjoy yourselves, meet old friends, make new ones.

(Loud feedback that quickly disappears. TOM sees someone a little further away, smiles and nods, looks away. Looks back. Smiles again. Approaches.)

TOM

I bet we know each other.

(Peers at the name tag)

Oh, sure! Helen Vandermann. You were smiling. You couldn't have recognized me . . . Really? You did? . . . I wonder if that's a good thing. . .

(Shaking HIS head)

Helen Vandermann. . . Harris? It says Van. . . Oh, of course. They put our high school names on these things. . . Is he here? . . . Where? . . . The one in the blue blazer? . . .

Looks nice. . . All the way up from Florida? . . . Well, I'm not surprised. You were a real booster. Very peppy. . . No, peppy. I don't think preppy was a word then. . .

Well, it's great to see you're still peppy. . . I remember. . .

(Turns around in response to someone who has tapped HIM on the shoulder)

Hi. . .

(Peers at the name tag.)

Jim Borio. . . I'm sorry. I'm drawing a blank. . . Oh, for chrissake, of course. You kept trying to get me to join the Young Christians Club. . . What? . . . You didn't. . .

(Laughs)

Well, if you had a crush on me, you were probably the only person in the whole school. . . Really? . . . Hell of a new world, isn't it? . . . Is he here? . . . Where? . . . In the blue blazer? . . . Looks nice. . . Thirty years. . . Wow. . . Congratulations. . . No, that's OK. I'll catch you both later, I'm sure. I've got to. . .

(Indicates drink)

TOM (Cont'd)

Hey, you take care now.

(HE wanders off to get a refill. BETTINA BELKNAP appears on the opposite side of the room carrying a drink. SHE is in her late 60's. SHE surveys the crowd.)

BETTINA

(To HERSELF)

Oh, boy.

(Smiling and greeting various people who pass HER.)

Hi. . .Hi. . .Hi. . .

(Someone comes up to HER)

Hi. . .

(Peers at his chest. Shocked)

Dickie Wolfson! . . .You're not. . .Of course I remember you. We were lab partners. We had to stick together because we always smelled of formaldehyde. . .I was sure you were going to become a scientist. . .

(Laughs)

Not because you smelled like one. . .You were so smart. . .What kind of contractor? . . .Really. I keep thinking I should get my kitchen redone. . . .

(Responding to someone behind HER)

Hi. . .Bettina Belknap. Don't try to read it. . .And you're. . .Harriet Wendelheim! . . .Of course I do. You were the only one in our home room who liked gym. . .You still look fit. . .What have you been doing with yourself since field hockey?. . .What's a motivational speaker?. . .Oh, I bet you're great at it. . .Me? I'm. . .No, go ahead. I'll catch up with you later.

(Catching someone passing)

Freddie Hostadter? That's incredible. I did that without even looking at your. . . Bettina Belknap. . .You were in the vocational track. Wore your cigarettes rolled in the sleeve of your T shirt. Very sexy. And this is?. . .Really? You're his granddaughter? Thank God! I was afraid you were a trophy wife. . .Isn't this fun? Seeing how old everyone's gotten? . . .

(TOM returns with a fresh drink)

TOM

Tom Terres. . .You used to have a band, played at all the dances. . .

BETTINA

You used to go with Ginnie Burkhalter. I always wondered what happened to her.

TOM

I don't think these kids get our music. . .

BETTINA

Early onset? What a shame.

TOM

You played a mean trumpet. . .

BETTINA

(Someone new)

Will Packard. Of course I do. . . You took those terrible pictures of me for the yearbook. . .

TOM

You still play? . . . Wow. . . Really? . . . Ever think of playing it on Sunday instead of giving a sermon? . . . I think the younger ones are doing stuff like that. . .

BETTINA

The French Club. The Science Club. Student Officers and Valedictorian. . . I was either squinting or I had my mouth open, or I was just starting to smile and it looked like I was in pain.

TOM

Playing guitar and singing folk songs. Why not a trumpet?

BETTINA

No. I forgive you.

TOM

(Someone new)

Tom Terres.

BETTINA

(Someone new)

Bettina Belknap.

(Music ends. TOM and BETTINA, still on opposite sides of the room, make way for people leaving the dance floor)

TOM

Hi. . . Tom Terres.

BETTINA

Bettina Belknap. Hi. You still dance beautifully. . . Of course I remember. . . Hi. Nice to meet you. You should have seen him then. They always made room when he and Erica Frankenheimer did the jitterbug.

(TOM and BETTINA are backing toward each other through all this.)

TOM

Hi. Tom Terres. . .No, I was never on the track team. . .Oh, boy, am I sure. . .
(THEY are about to run into EACH OTHER when THEY turn,
startled at how close THEY are.)

TOM and BETTINA

Oh!

TOM

Close one.

BETTINA

I didn't realize. . .

TOM

It's OK. I've been bumping into people ever since I got here.

BETTINA

It's more crowded than I thought it would be.

TOM

I guess the Fiftieth is a big one.

BETTINA

Everyone wants to show off that they're still alive.

TOM

Tom Terres.

BETTINA

Bettina Belknap. I'm sorry I don't. . .

TOM

It's OK. There wasn't much about me to remember. I knew who you were, though.
I'm sure everyone does.

BETTINA

I don't think so.

TOM

Valedictorian. Class Secretary. . .

BETTINA

But I had to get my brother to take me to the prom.

TOM

If I'd only known. I guess that was the thing with popular girls. Everybody thought you were already taken.

BETTINA

Who did you take?

TOM

I didn't go. I figured everybody was taken. Of course, I just found out that I could have gone with Jm Borio. He just told me that he had a crush on me.

BETTINA

You're gay?

TOM

No. But he is. And here I am. Talking to the most popular girl in the class. You never know when success will finally come your way.

BETTINA

I bet there was something I would have remembered about you.

TOM

I kept pretty much to myself.

BETTINA

Clubs? Sports?

TOM

I had a poem printed in the literary magazine.

BETTINA

What was it about?

TOM

How I hated keeping to myself.

BETTINA

This is the first one of these I've gone to.

TOM

Me too. Why this time?

BETTINA

Oh. Well. . .My husband died eight years ago.

I'm sorry.

TOM

Maybe it had something to do with that.

BETTINA

Was he class of '54?

TOM

Oh, no. He was private school all the way.

BETTINA

Preppy.

TOM

Did we use that word then? Anyway, I've been forcing myself into situations like this just to keep going. What about you?

BETTINA

Impulse. I guess I wanted to do a reality check on my memories.

TOM

I thought you kept to yourself.

BETTINA

Doesn't mean I wasn't watching.

TOM

You're going to be disappointed. Memory is a tricky thing. Very unreliable.

BETTINA

You say that with such authority.

TOM

I'm a neuroscientist. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to blurt that out.

BETTINA

Nothing to be ashamed of.

TOM

I'm not. It's just. . .when I tell people it usually stops the conversation dead.

BETTINA

It's not going to stop me.

TOM

BETTINA
Are you here with someone?

TOM
(Shakes HIS head)
Still keeping to myself. It's gotten to be a lousy habit. So what does a neuroscientist do? Besides warn strangers not to rely on memory?

BETTINA
You're not a stranger. You're a classmate.

TOM
Nobody ever called me that before. It has a nice ring to it. So do you do research or teach or just look inside people's heads?

BETTINA
I'm on a research team at John Hopkins.

TOM
What kind of research?

BETTINA
Memory.

TOM
Ah. And everything becomes clear. So you're doing research in a very unreliable field.

BETTINA
The most unreliable.

TOM
Why? I mean, why is it unreliable?

BETTINA
It's complicated.

TOM
Give me the Neuroscience for Dummies version.

BETTINA
I don't think. . .

TOM

I'm serious. I'm interested.

BETTINA

I don't think we're supposed to have a serious conversation here.

TOM

It's OK. We were all conformists in 1954, even the ones who wore sneakers and thought they weren't. We can break the rules now. So, here I am remembering you. . . .

BETTINA

OK. But I was mainly stored in your pre-frontal cortex. So I was already mixed in with other long-term memories and everything in there gets changed by new memories when those get stored. I'm sure that most of the things you remember about me were really mixed up with someone else. And right now you're storing me up in your hippocampus – at least I hope you are – which is where short term memory goes before it moves to the cortex and becomes long term and mixes with the other memories.

TOM

And becomes unreliable.

BETTINA

Right. So memories are just the stories from the past we tell ourselves in the present.

TOM

(Indicating the room)

Something like this must be a bonanza of uncertainty for you.

BETTINA

You get used to it.

TOM

I know what you mean, though. One of the things I always remembered was how we were all golden – that the class of '54 was going to conquer the world because we were the best ever. The smart ones were going to change it and the peppy ones were going to cheer them on. So far I've met three insurance salesmen and one minister.

BETTINA

One motivational speaker and one remodeling contractor.

TOM

And one neuroscientist. You're a breath of fresh air.

BETTINA

And you?

TOM

I own an independent bookstore. I've had it for forty years.

BETTINA

So you're one of those unsung heroes. Standing up for the good things in life when they're under assault.

TOM

I'm in a college town. You'd be surprised how many people still like to turn pages and use bookmarks.

(Music starts again)

Your glass is empty. Do you want a refill?

BETTINA

Light scotch and water.

TOM

That's what I'm having. But not light and no water.

BETTINA

A hell of a lot better than chaperoned punch.

TOM

I wouldn't know. Don't go away.

BETTINA

I won't.

(A small beat between THEM)

TOM

Good.

(HE leaves. SHE looks after HIM, then turns to watch the dancers.)

BETTINA

(To someone who has approached HER)

Hi. . .Your nametag is. . .

(SHE indicates that it has flipped)

No, I'm not going to guess. Did you hide it on purpose? . . .Well, turn it around. .

.Bobby Thompson? . . .Oh my. Oh,my God. . .

Yes, I damn well do remember you.

(THE LIGHTS BANG UP ON BETTINA'S memory space. YOUNG BETTINA is working at a lab table. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON is heard calling outside the space).

	YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
Bettina!	(Off)
	YOUNG BETTINA
Hi.	
	YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
	(Coming in)
What are you doing here?	
	YOUNG BETTINA
I have to finish this assignment.	
	YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
Mr. Guaraldi lets you stay here alone?	
	YOUNG BETTINA
It's a biology lab. Nothing's going to explode.	
	YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
It's Friday. There's a pep rally.	
	YOUNG BETTINA
I want to finish this.	
	YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
You should go to the pep rally. People will think you're disloyal. Or conceited.	
	YOUNG BETTINA
Nobody will notice.	
	YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
Do you want to go to Helen Vandermann's party tomorrow night?	
	YOUNG BETTINA
It's Friday, Bobby. You don't ask a girl on Friday to go out on Saturday.	
	YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
You're not free then.	

Yes, I'm free. That's not the point.

YOUNG BETTINA

What's the point?

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

You're not supposed to know I'm still free on Saturday night if it's Friday.

YOUNG BETTINA

How come you're still free?

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Jeez, Bobby. . .

YOUNG BETTINA

I think it's because everybody thinks you're a brain. A lot of guys don't like smart girls.

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

So how come you asked out?

YOUNG BETTINA

I'm not afraid of brains.

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Well, I can't go out with you, anyway.

YOUNG BETTINA

Why not?

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

You're a junior.

YOUNG BETTINA

So?

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Seniors don't go out with juniors. It makes them look desperate.

YOUNG BETTINA

Serena Kunkel told me you think I'm good looking.

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

She used to be my best friend.

YOUNG BETTINA

Oh. When did she stop? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Just now. YOUNG BETTINA

Oh. So do you? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Do I what? YOUNG BETTINA

Think I'm good looking. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

For God's sake. . . YOUNG BETTINA

So you do. . . YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

I still won't go out with you. YOUNG BETTINA

We could go to the pep rally together. That wouldn't be like a date. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

I've got to finish this. YOUNG BETTINA

I could stay here with you. Nobody's around. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

If you want. YOUNG BETTINA

Maybe I can help. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Have you taken bio lab yet? YOUNG BETTINA

You could teach me. What are you doing? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Dissecting a frog. YOUNG BETTINA

Let's see. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

I've already made the incision and pulled everything back.
(HE moves in more closely.) YOUNG BETTINA

Wow. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Now I have to name all the parts I can see in this diagram. YOUNG BETTINA

Is it a male or a female? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

A female. YOUNG BETTINA

How can you tell? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

See this? It's the egg sac. YOUNG BETTINA

You really are smart. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Finding the egg sac doesn't make me smart. Mr. Guaraldi told us to look for it. So we could tell if it's a female. YOUNG BETTINA

How do you tell if it's a male? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Bobby. . . YOUNG BETTINA

Are you sure you don't want to go out with me tomorrow? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Yes, I'm sure. YOUNG BETTINA

Then how about we neck in here? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Ha-Ha. YOUNG BETTINA

Have you ever necked in an empty classroom? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

What else did Serena Kunkel tell you? YOUNG BETTINA

Nothing, I swear. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Right. YOUNG BETTINA

What's that thing? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON
(Putting HIS arm around HER as HE peers at the frog)

It's the heart. YOUNG BETTINA

Doesn't look much like the stuff we get on Valentine's Day. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

It's the real thing. YOUNG BETTINA

Yeah. YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Be careful. I've got an exacto in my hand. YOUNG BETTINA

So why don't you put it down? YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

I've got to. . . YOUNGBETTINA

There's nobody here.
 \ (HE kisses HER.)
 \

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Bobby. . .

YOUNG BETTINA

What? Didn't you like it?

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Quit it.

YOUNG BETTINA

Come on. It's exciting to neck in an empty classroom. I won't tell anyone.
 (HE puts HIS hand on HER breast.)
 It will be our secret.
 (HE kisses HER again. This time, SHE responds.)
 Maybe I can give you a biology lesson, too.

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Don't expect a home run.

YOUNG BETTINA

How do you know about that? Only guys are supposed to know about that.

YOUNG BOBBY THOMPSON

Just don't.

YOUNG BETTINA

We'll see.
 (THEY kiss more insistently. HE pulls up HER dress with one hand. THEY sink to THEIR knee, still kissing, then THEY are on the floor.. The lights go out. And come back on the Reunion space)

BETTINA
 (Picking up exactly where SHE left off)
 Where did your looks go? . . .I mean I wouldn't have recognized you. . .Don't laugh
 . . .What are you doing here? This is Class of '54. . .You didn't. Roberta Parsons? . . .
 Where is she? . . .She's blonde now? . . . All the way from Florida? . . .Are you retired?
 . . .Agent or salesman? . . .You were always pretty persuasive. . .No, I'm not retired
 . . .Neuroscientist. . .OK. It was good to see you, too.
 (SHE shakes HER head as SHE watches him go off.)

MALE VOICEOVER

OK, folks. Listen up. We need some volunteers for the dance competition. If you're interested in becoming the King and Queen of the Fiftieth Reunion, give your names to me or Wilma.

(TOM returns with drinks.)

TOM

Here we go. Jim Borio stopped me on the way. Introduced me to his partner. They've been together thirty years.

BETTINA

I just met Bobby Thompson. Did you know him?

TOM

He was a junior. What's he doing here

BETTINA

He married Roberta Parsons.

TOM

Bit of a numskull, as I remember.

BETTINA

I let him deflower me on the floor of the biology lab.

TOM

No!

BETTINA

Can you imagine? At least, I think it was the biology lab. I was going to ask what he remembered – if he remembered it at all. But he disappeared as soon as I told him what I do now. I could have made the whole thing up.

TOM

Out of fragments from your cortex.

BETTINA

You really are a fast learner.

(Pause)

TOM

I was thinking on my way back how lucky it is that I ran into you. I felt like I was the only one here who came alone.

You didn't have anyone. . .?

BETTINA

No.

TOM

You're not married, then.

BETTINA

Was.

TOM

Oh, I'm sorry. Died?

BETTINA

Fled.

TOM

(LIGHTS BANG UP ON TOM'S memory space. TOM, in HIS thirties, and ELLEN TERRES wearing clothes of the late 70's)

I tried, Tom

ELLEN

I saw you trying.

THIRTIES TOM

You didn't help.

ELLEN

I warned you when we left New York it might not be for you.

THIRTIES TOM

I have to get out from under these books. I'm surrounded by these fucking books.

ELLEN

Maybe if we had a kid.

THIRTIES TOM

Something else to trap me. Judy Collins left her family to become a singer.

ELLEN

You want to become a singer?

THIRTIES TOM

ELLEN

ELLEN (Cont'd)

No! I don't know what I want. I just want out of this.

THIRTIES TOM

I understand.

ELLEN

You don't!

THIRTIES TOM

All right. I think I understand, then.

ELLEN

I don't give a shit if you understand.

THIRTIES TOM

I know.

ELLEN

You don't know.

THIRTIES TOM

It would be better if you stay until you find out what you want.

ELLEN

I can't breathe here.

THIRTIES TOM

Where are you going to go?

ELLEN

Somewhere that isn't a musty bookstore in Maine.

THIRTIES TOM

Maybe you could go back and finish college.

ELLEN

You're not even trying to stop me.

THIRTIES TOM

DO you want me to?

ELLEN

Christ!

ELLEN (Cont'd)

(Pause)

Did we ever love each other?

THIRTIES TOM

I don't know. I think so. You were the first girl I ever wanted to marry. I was happy when you said yes.

ELLEN

Girls were supposed to be engaged by their junior year. Time was running out.

THIRTIES TOM

You could have finished. I would have waited.

ELLEN

I couldn't stand college. You were my excuse to get out.

THIRTIES TOM

Oh.

ELLEN

Besides, you were so laid back. I thought that was cool. I was too young to know the difference between laid back and passive. Even now. I tell you I'm leaving and you act as if it isn't even a surprise.

THIRTIES TOM

I knew you were going to leave five years ago.

ELLEN

And you didn't say anything.

THIRTIES TOM

I like being with you?

ELLEN

You'd be more upset if you lost the store.

THIRTIES TOM

I'll never give up the store.

ELLEN

That's the most hurtful thing you've ever said to me.

THIRTIES TOM

Well, you did just tell me that you married me to get out of college.

ELLEN

Wow. That almost sounded as if you were starting a fight.

THIRTIES TOM

I don't like to fight.

ELLEN

Don't I know it.

THIRTIES TOM

I hated it when my parents fought.

ELLEN

Don't give me that psychological crap. You just don't care about me – or anyone else. All you care about is. . .this! These!

THIRTIES TOM

I was hoping you would learn to care about them, too.

ELLEN

Well you bet on the wrong horse. I'm going home to Yonkers, decide what I do next. I'll think more clearly there.

THIRTIES TOM

In Yonkers?

ELLEN

I've got a lawyer, a friend of my parents.

THIRTIES TOM

You can have everything but the store and the books.

ELLEN

Surprise, surprise.

THIRTIES TOM

That should make it easier for you.

ELLEN

And for you. Ten years wasted and I can't even cry.

THIRTIES TOM

Well, good luck, then.

(LIGHTS out and back on the room)

TOM

It's funny. I remember when she told me she was bailing out as if it were a single time. But now you've got me thinking that there must have been a lot of little times over ten years and I've just mushed them all together into one big memory.

BETTINA

I've made you self-conscious.

TOM

No. It's good. I like to think about things in a new way.
(Someone comes up to the table)

Hi. I'm Tom Terres.

BETTINA

Bettina Belknap.

TOM

We're not a couple.

BETTINA

Just for the moment

TOM

(To BETTINA)

Sorry.

BETTINA

(To the other person)

What do you need a couple for?

TOM

Oh. No. I don't dance.

BETTINA

Oh, I don't think so. . . Really? Your idea? . . . You're Warren Chrisman, the guy who's been making the announcements. Now I remember you. You were the one who was always organizing something.

(To TOM)

Do you want to be King of the Reunion?

TOM

Not unless you want to be Queen.

(THEY both laugh)

BETTINA

Try Bobby Thompson and Roberta Parsons.

(To TOM)

I want to see who leads.

TOM

(To Warren)

Thanks for asking. Good luck.

(THEY watch him leave.)

BETTINA

That's just the kind of thing I was afraid of.

TOM

It's the first time anybody's asked me to run for office.

BETTINA

Serena Kunkel nominated me for proms queen. I lost to Ginny Burkhalter.

TOM

It couldn't have really mattered.

BETTINA

Freddie Hofstadter told me she had early onset Alzheimer's. There was just an instant when. . . I was so ashamed.

TOM

So it did matter. If you want you can try again.

BETTINA

You said you don't dance.

TOM

I don't much. But I'm willing to help you out.

BETTINA

Can you imagine? All these people trying to relive their adolescence? Who would want to?

TOM

I think high school was the peak experience for a lot of them.

BETTINA

God, how sad. What did they do with all those other years?

TOM

When did you peak?

BETTINA

I don't know that I have yet. I still have some important work to do.

Nobel Prize? TOM

That would do. BETTINA

I was joking. (Laughs) TOMMY

I'm not. BETTINA

Wow. You want do something that important. TOM

Yes. I also want revenge. BETTINA

(LIGHTS UP on BETTINA'S memory space. BETTINA in her twenties and an ACADEMIC OFFICER in his fifties.)

You know this is very unusual. ACADEMIC OFFICER

What is? YOUNG BETTINA

Not that many girls want to go beyond the Bachelor's or even finish once they're assured of their MRS. ACADEMIC OFFICE

I'm very interested in psychology. YOUNG BETTINA

We don't do Freud here, you know. We're more behavioral. Pigeons pecking for food and that sort of thing. Cutting edge. ACADEMIC OFFICER

I want to study the brain. YOUNG BETTINA

But that's hard science. ACADEMIC OFFICER

I know.

YOUNG BETTINA

Girls can't do hard science.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

You've seen my undergraduate record.

YOUNG BETTINA

It's very impressive.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

Thank you.

YOUNG BETTINA

You're a very attractive young woman. Your teachers must have enjoyed having you in class.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

I'm a top student. I want a Ph.D and I want to do research.

YOUNG BETTINA

On the brain.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

Yes.

YOUNG BETTINA

You'll have to get a Masters first. That takes two years.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

I know that.

YOUNG BETTINA

And you'll need at least another four, probably more, before you finish your dissertation.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

You're not telling me anything I don't know.

YOUNG BETTINA

Getting a graduate degree in neuroscience is more than a full time job.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

Yes.

YOUNG BETTINA

And what about the children?

ACADEMIC OFFICER

What children?

YOUNG BETTINA

You're planning to get married and have children, aren't you?

ACADEMIC OFFICER

I majored in biology, not home economics.

YOUNG BETTINA

But you are planning to marry.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

Someday. Maybe.

YOUNG BETTINA

So there you are.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

Where is that?

YOUNG BETTINA

Well, we can't afford to educate our Ph.Ds and then have them disappear into a husband and kids. That's a waste of resources, and it takes up a space that a man could follow through on.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

I'm not planning to disappear.

YOUNG BETTINA

That's what all the bright young women say. But I've seen it happen over and over.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

What are you telling me?

YOUNG BETTINA

You seem to be one of those bright young women. I think you know.

ACADEMIC OFFICER

I've suddenly turned stupid. Tell me what you're saying.

YOUNG BETTINA

ACADEMIC OFFICER
We can't accept you in the program.

YOUNG BETTINA
Because I might get married?

ACADEMIC OFFICER
You may be naïve about the amount of work.

YOUNG BETTINA
I just stopped being stupid. You're telling me that I can't do graduate work here because women aren't allowed to. . . .

ACADEMIC OFFICER
We have some women.

YOUNG BETTINA
. . . unless they're ugly and unmarriageable.

ACADEMIC OFFICER
Now you're becoming emotional

YOUNG BETTINA
Another thing graduate students aren't supposed to be. Everyone on the biology faculty knows me. They encouraged me.

ACADEMIC OFFICER
This is a top tier research institution. . .

YOUNG BETTINA
(Overlapping)
That's why I want to study here.

ACADEMIC OFFICER
(Overlapping)
. . . There's a reason for that.

YOUNG BETTINA
The faculty, yes.

ACADEMIC OFFICER
Our graduate program is very selective. You might have better luck at a place a notch or two lower. I'm sure you would get very strong endorsements from our faculty. That should make it even easier.

Is this policy? No women?
 YOUNG BETTINA

Of course not.
 ACADEMIC OFFICER

Or do you just want to avoid the cost of putting in more bathrooms.
 YOUNG BETTINA

That's not funny.
 ACADEMIC OFFICER

Sure isn't. Philip Judgely, Dick Armisted, Robert Finkel and Dennis Linahan are all graduating with me and they've been accepted. They all have GPAs lower than mine.
 YOUNG BETTINA

Numbers aren't everything.
 ACADEMIC OFFICER

Unless you need them to be.
 YOUNG BETTINA

I have another appointment coming in.
 ACADEMIC OFFICER

Let them wait.
 YOUNG BETTINA

You don't want to get a reputation for being unreasonable.
 ACADEMIC OFFICER

Or emotional. Or attractive.
 YOUNG BETTINA

I'm sure you'll find another place.
 ACADEMIC OFFICER

(LIGHTS OUT and back up on the Reunion.)

Revenge?
 TOM

It's a long, familiar story.
 BETTINA

Your eyes when you said revenge. TOM
 What? BETTINA
 They went somewhere else. TOM
 Really? BETTINA
 Just for an instant. Was that a memory? TOM
 You're very good. BETTINA
 So I was right. TOM
 It was just like you said. A lot of different memories turned into one especially nasty scene and a few I-should=have-saids. I think I'd like to dance with you. BETTINA
 You want to compete in the. . .? TOM
 No. BETTINA
 Then why would you. . . TOM
 They're playing a slow song. It shouldn't be hard. BETTINA
 OK. But I don't understand why all of a sudden. . . TOM
 (THEY get up and HE escorts to the dance floor. THEY work THEIR way around the other invisible dancers and then start to dance. TOM dances very smoothly and leads HER expertly.)
 Hey, you're good. BETTINA

TOM

It's a slow song.

BETTINA

No. You know what you're doing. You told Warren you don't dance.

TOM

I don't.

BETTINA

But not because you don't know how. You lead like a dream.

TOM

Ellen and I took lessons.

BETTINA

That was your wife's name? Ellen?

TOM

(Nods)

She insisted. She thought it might get me out of the bookstore more. She was surprised I was such a good pupil. Then she got angry because I was better than she was. So we never went out. That's why I told him I don't dance.

BETTINA

So what was your peak experience? It obviously wasn't high school. Or dancing lessons.

(HE doesn't respond)

Well?

TOM

I'm embarrassed to tell you.

BETTINA

We're dancing. Everything that happens on the dance floor stays on the dance floor.

TOM

It was when I won my first Edgar.

BETTINA

What's that?

TOM

It's like the Pulitzer Prize for mystery writers.

BETTINA

You write mysteries? They're the only thing I read besides scientific papers. Tom Terres. I thought I knew every mystery writer in the world.

TOM

I use a pen name.

BETTINA

Which is? You're blushing. Come on. I want to know if I've read your stuff. Tom?

TOM

Amanda Prescott.

BETTINA

You're kidding. I've read everything Amanda Prescott's. . .Why?

TOM

I wanted the anonymity. I thought that would throw people further off the scent. Besides, I had a female detective.

BETTINA

But there's that picture of Amanda Prescott on the jacket.

TOM

The one in the cocktail lounge. You remember it?

BETTINA

I remember it well. Very sophisticated.

TOM

There's a guy at the bar in the background. His face is sort of in shadow.

BETTINA

He's sort of looking at her. . .Oh, for God's sake. That's you.
(SHE starts to laugh.)

TOM

It was sort of a joke we decided on. The editors and I.
(HE joins HER.)

It worked. So we used that idea with all the book jackets. Look at all of them. You'll see me lurking in the background. You'll recognize me now.

BETTINA

I never would have. . .

(Shaking HER head.)

BETTINA (Cont'd)

I'm dancing with Amanda Prescott. I love her books – your books. The writing is so good.

TOM

Thanks.

BETTINA

Death Comes in Threes. That was the first one I read.

TOM

It's the first one I wrote. Just after the divorce.

BETTINA

You had an instant fan. I snatched each one up as it came out. In hardback.

TOM

Wow.

BETTINA

But the Edgar. How did you. . .?

TOM

I accepted it for Amanda and read the speech she'd given me.

(THEY have stopped dancing.)

Did you want to. . .?

BETTINA

Sure. Let's sit down. I found out what I needed to.

TOM

About my books.

BETTINA

(Smiles)

No.

TOM

What, then? Now you're blushing.

BETTINA

Nowadays I dance with men to find out if they have anything on them.

On them? TOM

Pacemaker, colostomy bag. . . BETTINA

I don't have anything like that. . . TOM

I know. BETTINA

I feel like I've just been frisked. TOM

You have been. BETTINA

I didn't feel a thing. TOM

I've become an expert. BETTINA

So I passed some sort of test. TOM

Sure did. BETTINA

I'm not very good at this sort of thing, but I think that means you want to get to know more about me. TOM

Sure do. BETTINA

Wow. TOM

How about I get the next round? BETTINA

No, I can. . . TOM

BETTINA

I'll do it. Same again?

(HE nods. SHE takes the glasses and leaves.)

TOM

(Alone)

Wow.

FEMALE VOICEOVER

Just to let you know: The buffet is going to open in about ten minutes, folks. Melanie Frizzoli Murphy has left her copy of the 1954 Yearbook next right next to the buffet table. She's asking that everyone sign their picture. It'll be fun for you to look through it, too, if you can stand seeing what you looked like then.

(Feedback. Someone appears in front of HIM)

TOM

Hi. . .I'm sorry. Someone's sitting there. . .It's OK. . .Its just. . .I think we want to be alone. . .Oh, nothing like that. Well, maybe something like that. . .Thank you. I didn't know anyone was watching. . .I haven't danced in years. . .No. I don't think we're going to compete. . .OK. Thanks for understanding. . .

(The person leaves)

What the hell is going on?

(LIGHTS bang up Tom's memory space. A YOUNG WOMAN in HER twenties is stacking books on a display table.)

YOUNG WOMAN

Mr. Terres? How many of these do you want me to stack?

(TOM Appears. HE is in his forties.)

FORTIES TOM

Let's see.

YOUNG WOMAN

I can get some more from the back.

FORTIES TOM

No. That looks good. You can replenish as they sell.

YOUNG WOMAN

You think they're going to sell?

They always do.

FORTIES TOM

What do people see in Amanda Prescott?

YOUNG WOMAN

You don't like her.

FORTIES TOM

I tried reading her once 'cause we're always featuring her. I couldn't see what all the fuss was about.

YOUNG WOMAN

Could you figure out who did it?

FORTIES TOM

I never got that far.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh. Well, I guess you could think of them as really only puzzles with a story.

FORTIES TOM

I just wish people would read better stuff. I mean, that's why I love. . .why I love working here. All the really good stuff I can get to read. I see you reading all the good stuff too.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ever think that Amanda Prescott is the one who makes all the good stuff possible?

FORTIES TOM

Some day I'm going to have my own bookstore. I won't stock Amanda Prescott.

YOUNG WOMAN

You think she's that bad?

FORTIES TOM

Well, it's peculiar, but as far as I read, I thought, this is a woman who doesn't know anything about how other women feel.

YOUNG WOMAN

Really?

FORTIES TOM

Her detective kept reminding me of a boy I dated in high school who turned out to be a real loser. Why should a woman detective remind me of him?

That should have kept you reading, maybe. FORTIES TOM

No. It was all just too jejune. YOUNG WOMAN

Jejune. FORTIES TOM

Very jejune. YOUNG WOMAN

Uh-huh. Well, just tell the people who buy the book to enjoy it. Don't mention anything about jejune. FORTIES TOM

I didn't mean to upset you. YOUNG WOMAN

It's OK. FORTIES TOM

I'd never want to upset you. YOUNG WOMAN

I'm not upset. FORTIES TOM

It's just. . . YOUNG WOMAN

Is something wrong? FORTIES TOM

No. No. YOUNG WOMAN

FORTIES TOM

You've been working here more than two years. I think I can tell when something's bothering you.

I'd better set up the cash register. YOUNG WOMAN

We've got fifteen minutes before we open.	FORTIES TOM
I've got to. . .	YOUNG WOMAN
Are you unhappy here?	FORTIES TOM
(Quickly) No. No. I love. . .I love it here.	YOUNG WOMAN
The hours? The pay?	FORTIES TOM
It's all fine.	YOUNG WOMAN
What, then?	FORTIES TOM
(Starting to crack) You're almost as bad as Amanda Prescott.	YOUNG WOMAN
What's that supposed to mean?	FORTIES TOM
At understanding women.	YOUNG WOMAN
There's something I don't understand?	FORTIES TOM
I . . .	YOUNG WOMAN
(Impatient) What?	FORTIES TOM
I love you.	YOUNG WOMAN
(Slight pause)	

Oh. Well, that's very sweet.

FORTIES TOM

I mean I'm in love with you.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Longer pause)

Oh.

FORTIES TOM

Is that all?

YOUNG WOMAN

Nobody's ever said that to me.

FORTIES TOM

You're such a wonderful person.

YOUNG WOMAN

How old are you?

FORTIES TOM

Twenty-six.

YOUNG WOMAN

And I'm forty-seven.

FORTIES TOM

What difference does that make?

YOUNG WOMAN

Twenty-one years.

FORTIES TOM

YOUNG WOMAN

It's the 1980's. There are plenty of relationships – even marriages between older men and younger women. Half my college friends married their professors. And none of them was as handsome or as cultured as you.

(HE doesn't know how to respond. There is a short silence.)

I guess I shouldn't have said anything.

FORTIES TOM

(Quickly)

No. No. I'm glad you did.

YOUNG WOMAN

I've ruined everything. I just couldn't. . . I couldn't keep it in anymore. I hoped. . .

FORTIES TOM

What?

YOUNG WOMAN

I hoped if I finally said something you might admit you felt the same way. It was stupid of me. I'm sorry.

FORTIES TOM

I'm. . .

YOUNG WOMAN

What?

FORTIES TOM

Well, you know I'm fond of you.

YOUNG WOMAN

Fond.

FORTIES TOM

I like you very much. You're an excellent worker, the best assistant I've ever had.

YOUNG WOMAN

You're making it worse.

FORTIES TOM

Well, I'm not very good at this kind of thing. I never thought. . . I mean, nobody's ever. . .

YOUNG WOMAN

You ever noticed anything.

FORTIES TOM

I thought you loved the bookstore as much as I do.

YOUNG WOMAN

I do. That doesn't mean. . .

FORTIES TOM

What?

That I can't be in love with you. YOUNG WOMAN

In love. FORTIES TOM

Yes. Yes. In love. I said it. I can't take it back. YOUNG WOMAN

(Bewildered)
How can you love two things at once? FORTIES TOM

Are you going to let me go now? YOUNG WOMAN

Where? FORTIES TOM

Are you going to fire me? YOUNG WOMAN

Why? FORTIES TOM

I just told you I'm in love with you. YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, you'll get over that. FORTIES TOM

My God, you're as bad as Amanda Prescott. Don't you know anything about human feelings? YOUNG WOMAN

I think I do. I mean, I'm not very good at them, but I think I know something. FORTIES TOM

Some day it's going to happen to you. I only wish I could be around to see what happens when it does. I'll go open the register. YOUNG WOMAN
(LIGHTS OUT and up on the Reunion. BETTINA is just returning with the drinks.)

BETTINA

The bar's starting to get crowded. Everyone's realizing they have nothing to say to each other after "How many kids?" and passing around pictures of grandchildren that all look alike.

TOM

Nobody asked me that. You think it shows that I don't have any kids?

BETTINA

Well, you look less tired than everybody else.

TOM

I didn't ask you, either.

BETTINA

I didn't give you a chance. Two. In their thirties. On their own. No pictures. Now that's taken care of.

TOM

Is it?

BETTINA

Yup.

TOM

I bet they're as accomplished as you are.

BETTINA

File closed.

TOM

Oh. OK. We'll save it for another time.

BETTINA

Another time?

TOM

I hope so.

BETTINA

That sounded almost smooth.

TOM

Must be the scotch. Do you want to leave? We could go somewhere where it is less crowded.

Are you coming on to me?

BETTINA

I don't know. I've never done that. Am I?

TOM

Looks like it

BETTINA

Sorry.

TOM

Don't stop. You might get lucky.

BETTINA

Ladies, gentlemen, classmates, husbands, wives and guests. The buffet is now open.

FEMALE VOICEOVER

It's going to get quiet now.

BETTINA

Everyone's lining up at the buffet.

TOM

Makes it easier not to talk. Do you want to. . .?

BETTINA

No. I want to know more about you. Your husband. . .

TOM

Too soon.

BETTINA

What did he. . .

TOM

OK. (SHE put her hand up to stop HIM and shakes HER head.)

(LIGHTS BANG up on BETTINA'S memory space. BETTINA is in HER late fifties. CARL, HER HUSBAND, is in HIS seventies. They are having cocktails in the living room.)

Where should we eat tonight?

CARL

French?
FIFTIES BETTINA

That's too long to walk.
CARL

We can take a cab.
FIFTIES BETTINA

I don't like taking cabs such a short distance.
CARL

Indian just around the corner.
FIFTIES BETTINA

I'll be up all night.
CARL

Order in? Maybe we should have a cook. Let her make the choices every night.
FIFTIES BETTINA

Italian place. It's just the right distance.
CARL

I'll make a reservation.
FIFTIES BETTINA

No need. They're never busy this early. It's the old people's hour.
CARL

Stop that.
FIFTIES BETTINA

I was talking about me.
CARL

I know. And I wish you'd stop obsessing about it.
FIFTIES BETTINA

Can't help it. You'll see.
CARL

You're perfectly healthy and capable. The only thing wrong with you is that you retired.
FIFTIES BETTINA

Had to. CARL

No. FIFTIES BETTINA

You always contradict me. CARL

You always say the same thing. FIFTIES BETTINA

I couldn't stand CARL
(FIFTIES BETTINA joins in)

all those young people coming in and mucking everything up. CARL AND FIFTIES BETTINA

Well, it's true. They're going to destroy the industry with their hedge funds and derivatives and tranches. CARL
(Pause)

How was your day?

We got the NIH grant renewed. FIFTIES BETTINA

How long? CARL

Three years. FIFTIES BETTINA

Very good. CARL

Thanks. FIFTIES BETTINA

Three more years on brains tissue that stores all our deepest, darkest secrets. In my day you would have been looking for the ego, the superego and the id in all that muck. CARL

What's the matter with you tonight? FIFTIES BETTINA

I went over all the accounts today. CARL

Did you enjoy that? FIFTIES BETTINA

You sent him money again. CARL

I used my own account. FIFTIES BETTINA

He's twenty-six. He can't come running to you every time he wants. . . CARL

Needs (Overlapping) FIFTIES BETTINA

Even worse. CARL

I can't be as heartless as you. FIFTIES BETTINA

Five thousand dollars. What did he say it was for this time? CARL

He's going into a startup with a friend. FIFTIES BETTINA

Five thousand dollars doesn't get you a partnership. CARL

It's just an investment. FIFTIES BETTINA

You know it's not. CARL

I believe in him. FIFTIES BETTINA

CARL

If you believed in him you'd let him struggle on his own.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I can't be cruel to my own son.

CARL

You're helping him fail. That's cruel enough. He'll be back to you in a month, two at the outside.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I know how hard it is for him to ask me.

CARL

It may have been once.

FIFTIES BETTINA

You don't know how sorry he sounds.

CARL

Because it works.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I can't discuss this with you.

CARL

You know what he's "investing" in.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I don't understand those things.

CARL

Listen to me. He will never get real help as long as he knows he can depend on you for his next fix.

FIFTIES BETTINA

He's not an addict.

CARL

He's a gambler.

FIFTIES BETTINA

It's not the same.

CARL

It's exactly the same.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I don't see holes in his arms.

CARL

He can't walk past an OTB without going inside and blowing his last installment.

FIFTIES BETTINA

He's in pain. I can't stand to see my boy in pain.

CARL

You're an intelligent woman. You understand so much about human beings – about the brain, for chrissake. How can you be so dense about this?

FIFTIES BETTINA

I have a heart, too.

CARL

And your heart tells you to keep him in diapers.

FIFTIES BETTINA

You had no business looking into my accounts.

CARL

Why do you do it?

FIFTIES BETTINA

I told you. . .

CARL

You give me all kinds of reasons and I don't believe any of them.

FIFTIES BETTINA

Then stop asking.

CARL

Neither does Stephanie.

FIFTIES BETTINA

You talk to Stephanie about this?

CARL

She's his older sister. She might have some ideas.

FIFTIES BETTINA

That must make her feel great, having you consult about her problem brother. Just like old times. Two against one. You want to know why Ricky's fucked up – *if* he's fucked up? Because you always favored your logical, bloodless daughter over him. And all he ever wanted was to please you.

CARL

Fine. Tell him to pull himself together. That'll please me.

FIFTIES BETTINA

He's trying.

CARL

He's not. He doesn't have to.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I can't help myself.

CARL

You might as well go into the next OTB with him. Then you can have the pleasure of watching him medicate himself.

FIFTIES BETTINA

Please stop.

CARL

He's a manipulator.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I love him.

CARL

You just wish you did.

(This stops HER. Silence.)

FIFTIES BETTINA

(Tentatively)

That's not. . .

CARL

You never loved Ricky. Or Stephanie. Never even liked them.

I liked Stephanie. Until she read Ayn Rand.

FIFTIES BETTINA

Don't be funny.

CARL

I'm not. Sixteen. Just the wrong time.

FIFTES BETTINA

Look at me. Did you ever love Ricky?

CARL

Of course. . .Every mother loves. . .

FIFTIES BETTINA

You can't make up for not loving him this way.

CARL

I think it's time to go to dinner.

FIFTIES BETTINA

You're destroying him out of guilt. The less you like him, the more you give.

CARL

Now you're a psychiatrist.

FIFTIES BETTINA

Am I wrong?

CARL

How could you be wrong? You're older and wiser than I am.

FIFTIES BETTINA

And dying.

CARL

Obsessing again.

FIFTIES BETTINA

Not this time.

CARL

(Pause)
What are you telling me?

FIFTIES BETTINA

CARL
 Roger told me today.

FIFTIES BETTINA
 He called you?

CARL
 He came by. It's one of the perks of have a doctor who's your oldest friend.

FIFTIES BETTINA
 What did he tell you?

CARL
 Pancreatic cancer. Inoperable

YOUNG BETTINA
 How long?

CARL
 Months. Maybe less. It's why I was going over our accounts. I need to put everything in order. I'm sorry. I couldn't decide how to tell you. Now I guess I did.

FIFTIES BETTINA
 I didn't see anything wrong with you. I thought if you were cranky or tired it was because you were. . .

CARL
 Old.

FIFTIES BETTINA
 (Overlapping)
 Retired. Why didn't you say something?

CARL
 I didn't want to distract you.

FIFTIES BETTINA
 I don't. . .

CARL
 From your work.

FIFTIES BETTINA
 Is that what you think of me?

CARL

It's what I know of you. You love your work.

FIFTIES BETTINA

And you.

CARL

(Shakes HIS head.

You're comfortable with me. It's all right. I'm grateful for that. It was part of the bargain when I married you.

FORTIES BETTINA

Where do you get these ideas?

CARL

From your eyes. They light up when you talk about your work.

FORTIES BETTINA

And when I talk about us.

CARL

Then they're pleasant.

FIFTIES BETTINA

What else did Roger say? What can we do?

CARL

Nothing. It's already metastasized.

FIFTIES BETTINA

Carl. . .

CARL

It's all right. I know you care.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I do.

CARL

And I'm grateful for that. I was always grateful for your marrying me, too.

FIFTIES BETTINA

I love you.

CARL

We were both too old for romance. Neither of us was very good at it, anyway. But we managed, didn't we?

FIFTIES BETTINA

I have to do something for you.

CARL

(Smiling)

You see?

(LIGHTS OUT and up on the Reunion)

TOM

I have to admit something. I'm getting the shakes. Just like in high school.

BETTINA

It must be this place.

TOM

Did girls ever get the shakes? I always wondered that.

BETTINA

Some of us.

TOM

You?

BETTINA

I think they came with crushes. I never had a crush.

TOM

Not even Bobby Thompson?

BETTINA

God, no. He was a creep. A hunky creep, but a creep. No crushes.

TOM

Same here.

BETTINA

Then why would you get the shakes?

TOM

General principle.

BETTINA
This reunion may be trickier than we thought it would be.

TOM
What's your favorite color?

BETTINA
(Mystified)
What?

TOM
What's your favorite color?

BETTINA
(She gets it and laughs)
Blue.

TOM
Mine, too. Who's your favorite actor?

BETTINA
Robert Mitchum.

TOM
Mine, too. What's your favorite season?

BETTINA
Autumn.

TOM
Mine too.

BETTINA
(Starting to realize THEY mean it.)
What's your favorite song?

TOM
Blue Velvet.

BETTINA
Mine too. What's your favorite television show?

TOM
Sid Caesar ad Imogene Coca.

Oh. BETTINA

What's yours? TOM

Jack Benny. BETTINA

Oh. TOM

(Pause)

I hate television.

Me too. BETTINA

Something going on here? TOM

I don't know. BETTINA

MALE VOICEOVER

While you're chowing down. . .Remember that everybody? Chowing down? Well, while you're chowing down we're going to announce the winners of the evening's questionnaire.

Oh, Christ. BETTINA

What questionnaire? TOM

Didn't they give you a questionnaire? BETTINA

No. TOM

They gave it out with the nametags. BETTINA

Somebody must have recognized my name: the guy who kept his head down, doesn't need a questionnaire. TOM

MALE VOICEOVER

Wilma is here to help me read out the winners. Wilma? Read the first winner.

FEMALE VOICEOVER

Thanks, Warren. The winner for the most grandchildren goes to Sondra Murphy McConnell.

(Applause)

MALE VOICEOVER

How many, Wilma?

FEMALE VOICEOVER

Sixteen!

(Oooh's and applause)

MALE VOICEOVER

Do you think she sits for all of them, Wilma?

FEMALE VOICEOVER

I'm not sure she can even stand!

BETTINA

Is that who we really were?

TOM

It's all coming back.

BETTINA

The way you remember?

TOM

A little more embarrassing.

BETTINA

You see? We weren't embarrassed then.

MALE VOICEOVER

What's next, Wilma?

FEMALE VOICEOVER

The couple married the longest. Willie Scott and Andrea D'Ambrosio Scott. Fifty years.

MALE VOICEOVER

Stand up you lucky couple!
(Cheers)

FEMALE VOICEOVER

They married right after graduation and they're celebrating their golden anniversary with us. But they can still stand up!

BETTINA

Good Christ. How does that make you feel?

TOM

Like I want to keep my head down again.

BETTINA

Don't you dare.

(LIGHTS BANG UP on TOM'S memory space. YOUNG TOM is sitting at a library table writing. Books strewn all over the table. ELINOR DeHAVILAND comes in.)

ELINOR

Is this seat taken?

YOUNG TOM

No.

(HE clears HIS books to make room for HER)

ELINOR

I'm Elinor DeHaviland.

YOUNG TOM

I know.

ELINOR

Like Olivia deHaviland.

(No response)

She was Melanie in *Gone With the Wind*. Did you see *Gone With the Wind*?

YOUNG TOM

Yeah.

ELINOR

Don't you think it's the most beautiful movie ever made?

YOUNG TOM

I guess.

ELINOR

You guess! “As God is my witness, I will never go hungry again!” I could cry right now remembering it.

(SHE takes out a movie magazine)

I hate study hall, don’t you?

YOUNG TOM

Lets me get my homework done.

ELINOR

What are you writing?

YOUNG TOM

Report for history.

ELINOR

Is that why you’ve got all these books?

(YOUNG TOM nods)

Did you get them all from the library?

YOUNG TOM

Yeah.

ELINOR

Lot of books. What are you writing about?

YOUNG TOM

The industrial revolution.

ELINOR

What’s that?

YOUNG TOM

It’s a little complicated. That’s why I’m doing research.

(SHE gives up and starts reading HER magazine.)

ELINOR

Says here that every actor in Hollywood wants to make a movie with Grace Kelly. Do you like her?

YOUNG TOM

She’s OK.

ELINOR

I liked her in *High Noon*. Some people like Audrey Hepburn better. Do you like Audrey Hepburn?

YOUNG TOM

She's OK.

ELINOR

I think she's too skinny. And she talks affected. Grace Kelly talks natural. Who do you like?

YOUNG TOM

I don't know. I don't think about it.

ELINOR

What do you think about?

YOUNG TOM

I don't know. Stuff. The industrial revolution right now.

ELINOR

Are you a communist?

(HE looks at HER blankly)

Some people think you are.

YOUNG TOM

Why do they think that?

ELINOR

Because you're peculiar.

(HE shrugs)

I'm taking a big chance sitting next to you in study hall, you know. If anybody sees me, they'll think I'm peculiar, too

YOUNG TOM

You want me to move?

ELINOR

I just thought somebody ought to help you out.

YOUNG TOM

Am I in trouble?

You're not popular.

ELINOR

I know that.

YOUNG TOM

Doesn't it upset you?

ELINOR

No

YOUNG TOM

You see?

ELINOR

See what?

YOUNG TOM

I'd be really upset if I wasn't popular. It's peculiar not to be upset if you're not popular. That's why everybody thinks you're a communist.

ELINOR

I'm too young to be a communist.

YOUNG TOM

You might become one, though.

ELINOR

When I know more about them.

YOUNG TOM

You're not upset that people think you're a communist?

ELINOR

I didn't know anybody thought about me at all.

YOUNG TOM

Don't you think the communists are terrible?

ELINOR

No.

YOUNG TOM

ELINOR

Then I think you probably are and that's why you never talk to anybody. Some people think you're a homo, too. A lot of homos are communists.

YOUNG TOM

You think I'm a communist and a homo?

ELINOR

You don't like Grace Kelly.

YOUNG TOM

I don't think about Grace Kelly.

ELINOR

I'm just trying to be nice, you know.

YOUNG TOM

I'm trying to write a report.

ELINOR

Yeah. About the industrial revolution. That sounds communist to me. Except you're not Jewish.

YOUNG TOM

People think I'm Jewish?

ELINOR

I didn't say that.

YOUNG TOM

You said Jewish.

ELINOR

Because most communists are homos and Jewish.

YOUNG TOM

Really?

ELINOR

That's what everyone says. So it must be right. You ought to ask somebody out for a date.

YOUNG TOM

Why?

To show you're not a homo.

ELINOR

You want me to ask you for a date?

YOUNG TOM

That's insulting.

ELINOR

Sorry?

YOUNG TOM

It's insulting that you asked if I wanted you to ask me for a date.

ELINOR

OK.

YOUNG TOM

I said somebody. I didn't say me.

ELINOR

OK.

YOUNG TOM

I wouldn't ask a guy to ask me.

ELINOR

No. Of course not. I'm sorry.

YOUNG TOM

Don't apologize for not asking me.

ELINOR

(SHE gathers up HER things.)

I'm not that kind of girl. I'm almost pinned. I was just trying to be nice. I'm a nice person. I felt sorry for you.

YOUNG TOM

Well, thanks, then.

ELINOR

You've got a lot to learn about people.

(LIGHTS out and up on the reunion)

FEMALE VOICEOVER

Here's a special award.

Brace yourself. It'll be over soon.
 BETTINA

This is an award everyone voted on.
 MALE VOICEOVER

Except me.
 TOM

For the person who still looks the most like they did in 1954!
 FEMALE VOICEOVER

And the winner is. . .
 MALE VOICEOVER

Bettina Belknap!
 FEMALE VOICEOVER

Oh, fuck!
 BETTINA

Stand up, Bettina. Let's have a look at you!
 MALE VOICEOVER

Hide me.
 BETTINA

Too late.
 TOM

(BETTINA stands, manages to wave and smile.. Applause)

How about that, folks? Just like we remember you, Betty.
 MALE VOICEOVER

Nobody calls me Betty.
 BETTINA

(Under her breath)

Betty's a neuroscientist now.
 FEMALE VOICEOVER

We always knew you were a brain, Betty!
 MALE VOICEOVER

(Laughter. BETTINA sits down)

TOM

It's true, you know. You do look great.

BETTINA

Please. . .

TOM

I guess I lied before. I didn't just come to this thing on an impulse. I thought about it a lot.

BETTINA

What did you think?

TOM

I had this crazy idea about what it would be like to start again, not make the same mistakes now I'm older.

BETTINA

That's not so crazy.

TOM

You don't think so?

BETTINA

I think everyone thinks that when we realize we've gotten old enough to know better.

TOM

Did you think that?

BETTINA

No. I made my mistakes later.

(Responding to someone who has approached HER.)

Hi. Wilma. . .Thanks.

TOM

You were very funny up there. . .

BETTINA

He didn't. . .He sent you over?. . .I know. He never took no for an answer back then, either. . .No, I didn't mean about that. . .

TOM

How many dancers do you have?. . .

BETTINA

That sounds like enough.

TOM

What do the king and queen have to do? . . .

BETTINA

I'm not into crying with joy. . .Or wearing a tiara. . .

TOM

What kind of scholarship money?. . .In the King and Queen's name?. . .That's the first good thing I've heard tonight. . .I mean. . .

BETTINA

He meant it's very public spirited.

TOM

(To BETTINA)

What do you think?

BETTINA

It's a worthwhile cause.

TOM

(To Wilma)

Do you know if Elinor deHaviland is here?

BETTINA

Elinor deHaviland? Why would you want to know if she's. . .?

TOM

I once didn't ask her out for a date.

BETTINA

What?

TOM

Some day I'll tell you.

(To Wilma)

Where?. . .Over there?. . .With the guy in the blue blazer?

BETTINA

The one with the beehive?. . .I didn't know anyone still wore a beehive! It's a little grotesque.

TOM

Did you ever wear one of those?

BETTINA

I was too busy protesting. . .
(Answering Wilma)
Everything.

TOM

So what do you say? You want to send some kids to college and help me see if I can start over?

BETTINA

Help you get your head up?

TOM

Yes. And just for the hell of it.

BETTINA

(To Wilma)
Tell Warren just for the hell of it. . . You're welcome.
(THEY watch her leave.)

TOM

I guess we're committed now.

BETTINA

Just to the contest.

TOM

Of course. What were your mistakes?

BETTINA

Oh. . . Never letting myself go.

TOM

You said you did that on the floor of the biology lab.

BETTINA

That was just foolish.

TOM

What, then?

BETTINA

I was remembering before how the only thing I ever really loved was my work.

TOM

That's not a mistake.

BETTINA

Tell that to my dead husband and my two fucked up kids.

TOM

I like the way you curse.

BETTINA

Really?

TOM

I just say that to reassure you.

BETTINA

I don't need reassurance.

TOM

Maybe myself, then.

BETTINA

Freud said that love and work were the two things people needed to be healthy.

TOM

See?

BETTINA

He meant separately.

TOM

Oh.

(Pause)

You didn't love your husband?

BETTINA

Oh, he was swell. He was a sweet, sweet man. No. He loved me, though. I always wondered what it must be like to love somebody like that. Did you ever love somebody like that?

TOM

Like what?

BETTINA

He would look at me and his eyes would shine, and I would know that I was the only thing he was thinking about when he looked at me that way. And I knew how hard it

BETTINA (Cont'd)

was for him that I never looked at him that way. Did you ever look at anybody that way?

TOM

Only my books. I guess that's why Ellen fled.

BETTINA

Sometimes I would tell myself that nobody ever really loves anybody else that way, that it's something the movies told women about when we were in high school. But Carl would look at me like that and I knew it was a real thing that happens for some people. And I wondered why it never happened for me. He looked at me like that on our first date, and all I could do was take lab notes on him and think it looked like the data was positive. Oh, my. I was about to suggest another,

(Indicating HER drink)

but I don't think that's such a hot idea

TOM

I don't think we need it anymore..

BETTINA

I'm sure you have no idea of what I'm talking about.

TOM

I know exactly what you're talking about.

(Pause)

I have an idea.

BETTINA

Good. Anything to save me from being as embarrassed as I am.

TOM

Let's try looking at each other that way.

BETTINA

You mean now?

TOM

It will be like rehearsing.

BETTINA

For what?

TOM

Dancing.

Oh. BETTINA

Ready? TOM

But I don't know how to. . . BETTINA

Just for the hell of it. Right? TOM

Oh. BETTINA

Here we go. TOM
(THEY look at EACH OTHER)

I'm going to get the giggles. BETTINA

That's OK. TOM

Oh, dear. No, I'm not. BETTINA
(Long look.)

How's it going? TOM

I'm not thinking about anything else. BETTINA

Same here. TOM

Not even smiling. BETTINA

Me neither. TOM
(Fanfare from the band)

MALE VOICEOVER

OK, All you Midvale Alumni and Boosters, it's time for the main event. We've got five game couples competing to become king and queen of the reunion.

BETTINA

We should have had that drink.

TOM

I'm glad we didn't.

MALE VOICEOVER

Wilma, will you announce the judges?

FEMALE VOICEOVER

Sure, thing, Warren. We have three couples who have agreed to judge the dancers. Rondal Warlowski and Madison Park alumna Georgine Miller Warlowski.
(Applause)

BETTINA

She was pinned to Harvey Perlman.

TOM

Long time ago.

FEMALE VOICEOVER

Two Midvale alumni, Albie Grodner and Lizzie Wilson Grodner.
(Applause)

And last, but not least, Alumnus Jim Borio and his partner, Steven Moronowski.
(Oohs, aahs and applause)

TOM

Uh-oh.

BETTINA

What?

TOM

Looks like we may have a chance.

BETTINA

Oh God. No.

MALE VOICEOVER

While the dancers make their way to the floor, I'll remind you that the winners will have their names inscribed as the King and Queen of the Midvale High School Class of '54 Fiftieth Reunion and they'll be attached to the Midvale College Scholarship Fund – and if they want to put in a little extra nobody here is going to stop them. Now we're going to do this by elimination. The judges will tell Wilma which couple to escort off the dance floor and we want you to give every one a big hand as they leave. Are the dancers ready?

BETTINA

I don't know if I can do this.

TOM

Too late.

BETTINA

Maybe we should. . .

TOM

I lead. You just follow. And don't take that politically. Just keep looking.

(THEY go to the dance floor and start to dance. It is a medium tempo fox trot.)

BETTINA

You really are good.

TOM

And you're the easiest person I've ever danced with. Keep looking. And smile for all the people.

(HE leads HER into an intricate step that involves HER spinning out and back.)

BETTINA

Oh, my.

TOM

Well done.

BETTINA

I would have worn a skirt that flared if I'd known about this.

TOM

Who knew about anything?

(Sound of applause)

MALE VOICEOVER

Tim and Evelyn McCarthy, ladies and gentlemen. And now for a Rhumba.

(The music shifts to a Rhumba)

BETTINA

Oh, no.

TOM

Stay with me. It's all in the weight shift. . . You've got it.

(After a moment)

New York is halfway between Baltimore and Maine.

BETTINA

What?

TOM

We could meet there. On weekends and holidays.

(Applause)

MALE VOICEOVER

Rodney Macatsouris and Mira Papadopoulos! And now for a Lindy!

BETTINA

I can do this one!

TOM

You can do any fucking thing you set your mind to.

BETTINA

I like the way you curse.

TOM

Really?

BETTINA

You're getting the hang of it.

TOM

That's when I can't get down to Baltimore.

BETTINA

I could vacation in Maine.

Want to? TOM

I'm working on it. BETTINA

(Applause)

MALE VOICEOVER
Chris Waverly and Robin Prenderhoff, ladies and gentlemen. Time for a little nostalgia now. The Cha-cha!

(Music shifts)

Only one other couple. I think we're in trouble. TOM

They wouldn't dare. They're going to pull us out any second. BETTINA

I think Jim Borio's fixed it. TOM

He wouldn't BETTINA

He would. So are we going to remember this? TOM

We're doing it already. But it's a sure bet that your memories will be different than mine. BETTINA

Why? TOM

It's just the way it works. In ten years we'd have two different stories to tell about how we met here. BETTINA

Unless we had each other to check them out. TOM

They'd still be different. I'm going to have to retire some day. BETTINA

Not until you want to.

TOM

Of course not. But some day.

BETTINA

OK.

TOM

Baltimore is a lonely place to retire.

BETTINA

(Applause)

MALE VOICEOVER

James Kelly and Marion McAllister Kelly, ladies and gentlemen. A big hand for the runners up!

Oh, shit. No.

BETTINA

Afraid so.

TOM

MALE VOICEOVER

And now, all of your alumni and boosters, put your hands together for the King and the Queen of the Midvale High School Class of '54 Reunion, Bettina Belknap and Tom Terres as they dance the last waltz!

(SHE starts to laugh as HE sweeps HER into the waltz. More applause)

Congratulations, your highness.

TOM

You don't think we could really. . .

BETTINA

Why not? Royalty makes its own rules. Just keep looking.

TOM

(The applause swells. TOM and BETTINA laugh as THEY whirl. The waltz continues as

LIGHTS FADE