

TRUE LOVE

---

A play

By Julia Cameron

SCENE 1

Entryway. The foyer of a ranch-style home. A man in a wheelchair and a woman hovering nearby.

SCOTT

Listen! They're beautiful, don't you think?

We hear birdsong.

MARA

I don't hear a thing.

SCOTT

Then you're not listening. There! Now you can hear them!

We hear birdsong again.

MARA

You and your birds.

SCOTT

It's spring. Have a joyous heart.

We hear birdsong.

MARA

You have a joyous heart. It's still chilly.

SCOTT

Warmer than it was.

MARA

Not warm enough.

SCOTT

There! Listen to that trill. It's thrilling.

MARA

I've got better things to do than listen to your racket.

We hear birdsong.

SCOTT

Racket! You should hear what they say about you.

MARA

Did you take your medicine?

SCOTT

“Did you take your medicine?” Of course I took my medicine. I won’t ask why you ask.

MARA

It starts like this. You get all wound up over some trivial something and the next thing you know you’re flying.

SCOTT

I’m fine. And birdsong is not trivial.

We hear birdsong.

MARA

I found a dead mouse in the middle of the kitchen floor.

SCOTT

You could have told me.

MARA

I picked it up and put it in the trash. You would only have sympathized.

SCOTT

They’re just so tiny.

MARA

There! There you go. I’m the one who found it. I’m the one who had to pick it up.

SCOTT

I’m sorry. It must have been upsetting.

MARA

Damn right it was upsetting. Where there’s one, there’s more. I’ll have to buy traps. I’ll have to bait them with peanut butter--

SCOTT

Smooth or crunchy?

We hear birdsong.

There. You see. MARA

A little joke. SCOTT

You and your jokes. MARA

I'll bait the traps. SCOTT

You use too much peanut butter. It only takes a dab. MARA

You've got a mind like an elephant. SCOTT

Meaning? MARA

It's a decade since we last had mice. A decade since I overdid the peanut butter. SCOTT

One little dab. That's all. MARA

I can do it. You set the traps. SCOTT

I'll set a dozen. MARA

I overdo the peanut butter. You overdo the traps. SCOTT

We want to get them all. MARA

One mouse hardly constitutes "them all." SCOTT

We hear birdsong.

MARA

Better safe than sorry. Oh, now I hear them.

SCOTT

I think they have a nest on the portal.

MARA

Out of the wind.

SCOTT

Exactly. There's someone at the door.

MARA

It's Cary. He said he was going to stop by.

SCOTT

I'll get it.

MARA

(exiting)

I'll freshen up.

SCOTT goes to the door. He opens it to CARY,  
who wears a t-shirt and jeans.

SCOTT

Come in. You'll freeze.

CARY

Right. It's not spring yet. I don't know what I was thinking.

SCOTT

Your mother found a dead mouse.

CARY

Where?

SCOTT

In the kitchen.

CARY

Yuck. Where there's one there's more.

SCOTT

That's what your mother said.

CARY

You'll set the traps?

We hear birdsong.

SCOTT

That's the plan. Listen! They've been at it all day.

CARY

Pretty. Where's Mom?

SCOTT

Putting on lipstick. You're a special occasion.

CARY

Mom. Birds. Mice. It's a menagerie.

SCOTT

I think we should get a puppy.

MARA

(entering)

And I tell him that's too much work. I'd have to walk it. Hi, Sweetheart.

CARY

(kissing her)

Hi, Mom.

SCOTT

The exercise would do you good.

MARA

Easy for you to say.

SCOTT

(to Cary)

I'm thinking a Bernadoodle, half Burmese mountain dog, half poodle. Hypoallergenic. And cute. You've never seen so cute.

MARA

Big. Giant. Humongous.

CARY

I like a big dog.

MARA

Then you walk it. Come over once a day. We'd see more of you.

CARY

I was here last week.

MARA

For five minutes.

CARY

I had theatre tickets.

SCOTT

Speaking of which, how was the show?

CARY

Adequate. Not worth the price of the tickets. Two hours waiting for the lead to kill himself.

SCOTT

Cheery.

MARA

You could have stayed for dinner.

CARY

I grabbed a hot dog on the way into the theatre.

MARA

I made pot roast. Your favorite.

CARY

I heard you found a mouse. A dead mouse.

MARA

Still twitching. I spared your father the details. I picked it up with a paper towel and threw it in the trash.

CARY

Good for you. Where there's one there's more.

MARA  
That's what I told your father.

SCOTT  
Enough, you two. Listen to the birds.

We hear silence.

CARY  
Silence. Your birds are muted.

SCOTT  
They stop at twilight.

MARA  
And start at dawn. I'll need earplugs.

CARY  
Good idea, Mom.

SCOTT  
Philistines. Let me get on my computer and show you the puppies.

MARA  
No fair. Two against one.

SCOTT  
(to Cary)  
You'll love them.

MARA  
Dinner at seven.

CARY  
Roast mouse.

MARA  
Go with your father.

SCOTT  
Puppies ahoy.

## SCENE 2

In the open dining room area. At the table  
assembling mouse traps.

MARA

A little dab. Just a speck.

SCOTT

It takes more than a speck. Specks are nearly invisible.

MARA

Okay. More than a speck. Like I said, a dab.

SCOTT

In the olden days, we used cheese. My mom minced little pieces.

MARA

Cheese is unwieldy. Peanut butter is better.

SCOTT

Who discovered mice like peanut butter?

MARA

Who knows. Don't get it on the tablecloth.

SCOTT

It will wash out.

MARA

Just be careful. Is that too much to ask?

SCOTT

I am careful but peanut butter is messy.

MARA

I knew I should have done them myself.

SCOTT

I'm doing fine.

MARA

You're making a smear.

SCOTT

Ignore it. It's hard not to make a smear.

MARA

I'll have to change the tablecloth.

SCOTT

Use the one with the poinsettias.

MARA

It's out of season. That's a Christmas cloth.

SCOTT

No wonder I like it so much. I only see it two weeks a year.

MARA

I'll use the one with the daffodils. It is spring. Or nearly. The weatherman predicts snow tomorrow and Tuesday.

SCOTT

Nonsense.

MARA

I've changed channels. He's more often right.

SCOTT

It's the predicting part that I hate. Why not let it be a surprise?

MARA

I like knowing what to expect.

SCOTT

Snow. Pity the poor fruit trees. They'll all go brown.

MARA

Don't lie the knife on the tablecloth!

SCOTT

It was smeared already.

MARA

We don't need more.

SCOTT

Sorry. Mea Culpa.

He balances the knife on the peanut butter jar.

MARA

You've done all twelve?

SCOTT

Done. An even dozen and we've still got half a jar left.

MARA

Better than last time with your big globs.

SCOTT

Do puppies like peanut butter?

MARA

I wouldn't know. *I* like peanut butter.

SCOTT

I'll put it in the fridge. You've got some pita bread left.

MARA

If it weren't so fattening I'd eat it all the time.

SCOTT

You look fine.

MARA

I'm up two pounds.

SCOTT

They don't show.

MARA

They do to me. I've got love handles.

SCOTT

You look fine.

MARA

Maybe throw the jar out. Besides, it's crunchy. I like smooth.

SCOTT

Creamy, they call it?

MARA

Whatever. We're not getting a puppy.

SCOTT

I'd walk it.

MARA

You'd get all tangled.

SCOTT

It would learn. It's half poodle. That means smart.

MARA

I'd end up walking it in the meanwhile.

SCOTT

You'd love a puppy.

MARA

Would not. Not love a puppy.

SCOTT

You've got five weeks to adjust to the idea.

MARA

No.

SCOTT

I put down a deposit. I'd hate to lose the money.

MARA

How much?

SCOTT

Plenty. Bernadoodles don't come cheap.

MARA

You call her back and cancel.

SCOTT

She's a she. How'd you know?

MARA

It takes a woman to handle a litter. Litters plural if she's a breeder.

SCOTT

Cary said he'd help out.

MARA

I can't believe you went behind my back.

SCOTT

I didn't go behind your back. You know me well enough to know when I have the bit between my teeth.

MARA

You're saying a puppy was inevitable?

SCOTT

Something like that. You'll love it.

MARA

Does it have a name?

SCOTT

It's a she. I'm thinking "Tulip."

MARA

Well, I have to admit that's a good name. Oh, dear, I'm softening already. Five weeks you said?

SCOTT

I've got a picture on my computer.

MARA

Later.

SCOTT

I knew you'd be a sport.

### SCENE 3

Cary, Mara and Scott are at the dinner table.

CARY

You spoil me, Mom.

MARA

That's a mother's job.

SCOTT

Can I quote you on that?

CARY

Pot roast two weeks in a row.

MARA

It's how I lure you over here.

CARY

And it works. But I'd come just to see you and Dad.

SCOTT

You went six weeks once without a visit.

MARA

Seven. But who was counting?

CARY

I was in love. Kathy could only see me on weekends.

MARA

Now that you're living together we get to see you.

CARY

Now I see Kathy seven days a week.

MARA

She's welcome here. I'd just set another place.

CARY

I'll tell her. But she does her schoolwork Sunday nights.

SCOTT

We could always do Saturday, right, Mom?

MARA

I'm a creature of habit.

CARY

Does that mean Saturdays are out?

MARA

Of course not, dear. I'll just have to adjust. We can't expect Kathy to change her routine.

CARY

You make her sound so rigid.

MARA

You're the one who makes her sound rigid.

CARY

She's got a heavy class load, that's all.

SCOTT

We could swing Saturdays.

MARA

I'd have to shop Fridays.

SCOTT

We'd adjust.

MARA

Speak for yourself.

CARY

Let's not squabble. Kathy would love to be here.

SCOTT

A PhD in the family.

CARY

Dad. How did you know? I was waiting for the right time to tell you.

MARA

Do I detect a secret?

CARY

The cat's out of the bag. We're getting married. She really will be the PhD in the family.

MARA

Married! You've only been living together six months.

SCOTT

Congratulations are in order. Aren't they?

CARY

Double congratulations. She's pregnant.

MARA

Oh my Lord!

SCOTT

Your mother means "that's wonderful." Just a surprise.

MARA

When is she due?

CARY

Christmas Day. That is, if we got our day count right.

MARA

Christmas Day and a birthday the same day. What a gyp.

SCOTT

Your mother is full of good cheer.

CARY

I hadn't thought of it that way, Mom. Maybe Kathy has .

MARA

Tell Kathy we send our double congratulations.

CARY

She was nervous about my telling you.

SCOTT

No need.

CARY

That's what I told her but she doesn't know you very well.

MARA

No. Hardly.

SCOTT

We'll remedy that. Dinner next Saturday. We'll celebrate.

MARA

I can't do pot roast a third time.

CARY

Make your fried chicken. Kathy loves fried chicken.

MARA

Anything to please the queen.

CARY

You'll like her, Mom. Once you get to know her.

MARA

Fried chicken it is then.

SCOTT

A PhD who eats fried chicken and doesn't worry about cholesterol. I like her already.

MARA

Don't neglect the carrots, son. A pot roast isn't a proper pot roast without carrots.

CARY

Kathy forgot the carrots. I told her pot roast was my favorite and she made one but not like yours.

MARA

But she's a cook.

CARY

Not like you.

MARA

I'll say thank you. But she tries.

CARY

Yes. "Tries" is the right word.

SCOTT

She's not here to defend herself.

MARA

Well, I'm glad she tries. Your grandmother taught me.

CARY

Maybe you could give her a few tips.

MARA

We'll see. Cooks can be touchy.

CARY

You'll see, Mom. You're sensitive. You'll like her.

SCOTT

We like her already. After all, she's your choice.

MARA

Better than what was her name? Karen.

SCOTT

Let's let sleeping dogs lie.

CARY

Karen was okay.

MARA

Just not the one. Thankfully.

CARY

You never let on--

MARA

I kept my opinion to myself.

CARY

Now you've scared me. I need you to like Kathy.

SCOTT

And I'm sure we will. Right, darling? Your mother agrees with me.

MARA

Saturday at seven. Drinks at six.

CARY

We'll be here. Thanks, Mom.

MARA

You're very welcome. More pot roast?

CARY

Not seconds. Thirds.

MARA

You flatter the chef.

CARY

Good. I aims to please.

#### SCENE 4

Open living room area.

There they go again--

SCOTT

We hear birdsong.

SCOTT

I think there are more of them this year.

MARA

They do sound louder.

SCOTT

I'm glad you're listening.

MARA

Anything to please you.

SCOTT

Maybe we could take a walk?

MARA

You mean a roll.

SCOTT

If you don't mind.

MARA

It does you good to get out.

SCOTT

It does us both good.

MARA

Yes.

SCOTT

You're a good sport.

MARA

I don't mind, really.

SCOTT

Or is it guilt?

MARA

I'm over all that. I happened to be driving.

SCOTT

That's what I always say. Our roles could have been reversed. You could have been the one injured.

MARA

But I wasn't. So why should I mind giving you a little push?

SCOTT

I'm the guilty party. The burden is on you.

MARA

Let's change the subject.

SCOTT

You're right. We'll never talk it through.

MARA

If we couldn't talk it through in therapy why should we try on our own?

SCOTT

The therapy helped. It must have.

MARA

I kept saying it was my fault.

SCOTT

Yes. You felt so guilty.

MARA

Still do if you want to know the truth.

SCOTT

It wasn't your fault. We were broadsided. She was drunk.

MARA

I should have seen her coming.

SCOTT

Here we go. "I should have." "I could have." You shouldn't have and couldn't have. She ran a light. We're lucky we survived.

MARA

There you go. Upbeat.

SCOTT

One of us has to be.

MARA

Go ahead. Say it. "Accidents happen."

SCOTT

Well they do.

MARA

Obviously. But why it had to happen to us. To you.

SCOTT

Accidents happen.

MARA

You were training for that marathon. And doing so well.

SCOTT

Don't remind me. I was quite the runner.

MARA

Yes. You were. I was flabbergasted.

SCOTT

So take me for a spin. Maybe we'll spot the birds.

### SCENE 5

Foyer area, moving toward the living room.

SCOTT

Kathy. Do you like the birds?

KATHY

Oh, yes. They're lovely. We don't have so many at our place.

SCOTT

They go from dawn to twilight. All day.

KATHY

Cary told me you were a bird lover. Me too.

SCOTT

The hummingbirds are back. We haven't put the feeder out but they remember where it goes.

KATHY

Really.

CARY

I told her I'd put a feeder up at our place.

KATHY

I can't wait. But they don't sing.

SCOTT

No. They're just decorative.

MARA

If you'll excuse me, I'll get dinner on.

SCOTT

Time for another drink? Or are you abstaining?

KATHY

Yes, thank you. Can I help you?

MARA

No need.

CARY

Did you make biscuits?

MARA

Cornbread. Great with fried chicken.

SCOTT

I'll say. Cary, why don't you help your mother?

CARY

"No need," she said.

SCOTT

That was to our special guest.

CARY

All right. You entertain Kathy.

My pleasure. SCOTT

No need to entertain me. I'm fine. KATHY

No morning sickness? SCOTT

Only in the morning. By now I'm fine. KATHY

Mara had it around the clock. SCOTT

I'm fine. Really. KATHY

Cary said your course load was too heavy. SCOTT

Heavy. Not too heavy. I like my classes. KATHY

Tolkien on Chaucer? He said. SCOTT

Yes. My professor is a specialist. He has a book coming out with Oxford Press. KATHY

Very prestigious. SCOTT

Yes. We're lucky to have him. An internationally known medievalist. KATHY

He's lucky to have you-- so enthusiastic. SCOTT

It's kind of you to switch dinner to Saturday. Sunday nights I'm swamped, I'm afraid. KATHY

So Cary told us. SCOTT

KATHY

I suppose I could start earlier but I've always been a procrastinator.

SCOTT

Not anymore. Evidently.

KATHY

I'm sorry?

SCOTT

I mean a bun in the oven so fast.

KATHY

I knew you'd be upset.

SCOTT

But I'm not. Neither is the wife as near as I can tell. It's just you didn't waste any time.

KATHY

We weren't really trying-- but accidents happen. I know it must seem fast to you. It seems fast to us too-- but happy.

SCOTT

Happy is what counts.

KATHY

I'll tell Cary you said that. I know he was nervous about telling you. We both were.

SCOTT

No need. We're happy for you.

KATHY

I'll tell him that, too. Ah, listen, the birds are saying goodnight.

We hear prolonged birdsong. Mara re-enters.

MARA

Dinner you two.

KATHY

It's my favorite. Fried chicken.

MARA

Goody. Come along.

KATHY  
(to Scott)

Can I help you?

SCOTT

Thanks. I'll manage.

SCENE 6

Bedroom area.

SCOTT

So what do you think?

MARA

She liked my fried chicken.

SCOTT

And?

MARA

And she ate potatoes. She's not worried about gaining baby weight.

SCOTT

C'mon. What gives?

MARA

All right. I liked her. What's not to like?

SCOTT

We had a nice chat. She likes her Chaucer prof.

MARA

You had a proper conversation. With me she was all manners. The chicken is delicious. The cornbread is delicious. Even the potatoes.

SCOTT

She was nervous. That's all.

MARA

I'd be nervous too. Knocked up so fast.

SCOTT

I told her we were happy for them.

MARA

Speak for yourself.

SCOTT

What? You're not happy?

MARA

She was just so nice.

SCOTT

Like I said. She was nervous.

MARA

It made me wonder. That's all. What's she really like behind closed doors so to speak.

SCOTT

Why you can't take her at face value! Nice is nice. I liked her.

MARA

Well, you got to talk about Chaucer. With me she was all sweetness and light.

SCOTT

Maybe she is all sweetness and light. Maybe nice is just nice.

MARA

And Cary waited on her hand and foot.

SCOTT

Of course he did. She's pregnant.

MARA

You didn't wait on me-- not that I recall.

SCOTT

I waited on you. If memory serves.

MARA

I'd give my eyeteeth for a nice chat with her about Chaucer.

SCOTT

She probably thought you'd be happy with a compliment or two.

MARA

The future looms before me.

SCOTT  
Meaning?

MARA  
No real conversation. Nicey nice.

SCOTT  
You're impossible. If she hadn't liked your chicken you would have complained about that.

MARA  
I'm just saying what makes her tick? She has Cary wrapped around her finger.

SCOTT  
Nothing wrong with that. I'm wrapped around your finger.

MARA  
Funny.

SCOTT  
Nothing wrong with young love.

MARA  
So you're voting "Yes"?

SCOTT  
Yes. I liked her. And you, oh cynical one?

MARA  
We'll see. But remind me no more fried chicken.

### SCENE 7

Living room.

MARA  
I think it's brave of you to check the traps.

CARY  
Well, Dad can't do it and neither can you, though for differing reasons.

MARA  
I'm a coward I'm afraid.

CARY

Just squeamish.

MARA

It's kind of you, really.

CARY

I'm glad you used the old fashioned kind not glue traps.

MARA

Snap! Sudden death. Better than glue traps with their lingering demise.

CARY

Did I tell you we had a mouse at our place? The cold weather brings them indoors for warmth. I set two traps but only caught one mouse. Let's hope you have similar luck.

MARA

I set a dozen traps. I can tell you where. Everywhere, I think.

CARY

Behind the couch. Behind the piano. Under the kitchen sink. Behind the bookshelf.

MARA

To name just a few. I put them everywhere. In the library. In the bedroom closets.

CARY

I'll get started. You might want to sit somewhere neutral.

MARA

No place feels neutral.

CARY

What about the dining room? No traps there?

MARA

No place to hide one. The dining room it is.

CARY

You scooted the living room couch by yourself?

MARA

Yes. And the piano.

(exiting)

I'm retreating to neutral territory.

CARY

(scooting the couch)

Ah! Here's one. I think I'll need a trash bag.

MARA

(from the other room)

Under the kitchen sink but watch out for the traps there.

CARY

Whoops! Here's another one! You set two traps behind the couch?

MARA

(from the other room)

I don't remember. I put them everywhere.

CARY

(loud)

So I'll look everywhere.

### SCENE 8

Scott and Mara are in the living room.

MARA

I'm telling you it was terrible. He found five.

SCOTT

Well, where there's one there's more as you said.

MARA

Fine. We're infested!

SCOTT

Five dead mice. Who knows? Maybe the body count will deter the others.

MARA

The others. So you do think there's more.

SCOTT

I didn't mean that.

MARA

But you said it. I've got the jitters. One mouse was bad enough but *five*!

SCOTT  
We'll set more traps.

MARA  
And catch five more.

SCOTT  
We'll get rid of them.

MARA  
I'm telling you it was terrible. Cary said one was still alive.

SCOTT  
He shouldn't have told you.

MARA  
He was a hero. You slept through the purge.

SCOTT  
Next time I'll hold your hand.

MARA  
See what I mean? "Next time." Once was bad enough.

SCOTT  
We'll set more traps. We'll have Cary back again. You'll see.

MARA  
Five!

SCOTT  
That's probably all of them but we'll set those traps just in case.

MARA  
Just in case.

SCOTT  
I can't say anything right.

MARA  
Just in case we have hundreds.

SCOTT  
We do not have hundreds. You'd spot them.

MARA

Brrrr. A grey flash. I'll see them everywhere.

SCOTT

We'll set more traps. We'll have Cary back. I guarantee you a mouse-free house.

MARA

Yikes!

SCOTT

What? What is it?

MARA

I think I saw one.

SCOTT

Nonsense.

MARA

Out of the corner of my eye.

SCOTT

The corner of your eye is your imagination. You're safe. The mice aren't going to get you.

MARA

Promise?

SCOTT

Promise.

### SCENE 9

Foyer area.

CARY

One. That's a lot better than five.

MARA

One's still too many.

CARY

We'll set more traps. We're winning.

MARA

Your father said we need more peanut butter. We've gone through a whole jar.

CARY

I'll get another jar and more traps too.

MARA

Where did you find it?

CARY

You don't want to know.

MARA

Yes. Yes I do.

CARY

All right. All right if you insist. Your bedroom closet.

MARA

Yikes. I could have put my foot in a shoe.

CARY

It wasn't after a shoe. It was after the peanut butter.

MARA

Your father told me to put a trap in the closet.

CARY

He was right. I'd have skipped it.

MARA

Your father said in the bathroom.

CARY

I'd have skipped that too. Your husband thinks like a mouse.

MARA

Don't say that.

CARY

It's true.

MARA

All I need to do is to start thinking of him as a mouse.

Scott rolls his wheelchair into the foyer.

SCOTT  
Get any?

MARA  
One. But it was in my closet.

SCOTT  
Knew it!

MARA  
Don't. Cary was just saying you think like a mouse.

SCOTT  
Thanks, son.

CARY  
It's a good thing.

SCOTT  
Did you check the bathroom?

CARY  
Not yet. I'll go have a look.

Cary exits.

MARA  
What makes you think of the bathroom?

SCOTT  
Intuition.

MARA  
That's spooky.

CARY  
(from the bathroom)  
Got another one! Way to go, Dad.

SCOTT  
They're looking for food. Did I mention we're out of peanut butter?

MARA

You told me. I told Cary. He'll pick some up and traps.

SCOTT

Another dozen should do it.

Cary enters carrying a trap.

CARY

Mangled. The guy in the bathroom was smashed.

MARA

Spare me the details. Get it out of here. Use a trash bag.

SCOTT

We owe it to my peanut butter technique. As your mother says, "a dab."

CARY

Good job. You do the dabs. I'll set the traps. Mom, are you okay?

MARA

Don't set it on the table.

CARY

I'll get a bag.

He exits toward the kitchen.

MARA

Like father like son.

SCOTT

You're just squeamish.

MARA

I'll never forget the last time. Your crawling under things after them.

SCOTT

Sorry not to be able to now.

MARA

So many things.

So many things I can't do?  
SCOTT

I didn't say that.  
MARA

You almost.  
SCOTT

Really. You do so well.  
MARA

We need a cat.  
SCOTT

You're allergic.  
MARA

SCOTT  
And we're getting a puppy. Four weeks and counting. You're sure you don't want to see a picture? Their eyes are almost open.

Surprise me.  
MARA

SCOTT  
They're darling. They're starting to look like puppies and not like guinea pigs.

Surprise me, I said.  
MARA

SCOTT  
The mice will be gone by the time the puppy arrives.

Promise?  
MARA

Promise.  
SCOTT

SCENE 10

Kathy and Mara sit in the living room.

KATHY  
It's good of you to see me.

MARA

Of course.

KATHY

I usually miss my mother but now more so.

MARA

You said she passed four years ago?

KATHY

I was just finishing college. She would have been proud.

MARA

I'm sure that's true and she must be proud now.

KATHY

Oh no. She would have wanted me married first.

MARA

She was conservative?

KATHY

Yes. Very. When I found out I was pregnant the first thing I thought was "Oh, dear, Mom would disapprove."

MARA

I'm sorry. No wonder you were afraid to tell us.

KATHY

Yes. Cary told me it would be fine but I didn't believe him.

MARA

And now?

KATHY

I'm just so grateful for your support.

MARA

It's the least we can do. After all, it's joyous news.

KATHY

I'm just so glad you feel that way.

MARA

Well we do. It took us by surprise is all.

KATHY

And us.

MARA

It took me four years to get pregnant. We had about given up hope.

KATHY

And along came Cary.

MARA

We wanted more children but were lucky to have one.

KATHY

Scott said you were sick around the clock.

MARA

I'm afraid so. My doctor said it was a good sign-- a healthy baby.

KATHY

I'm afraid I'm okay by ten.

MARA

Well that's why it's called "morning sickness."

KATHY

All I want to eat is pineapple and oatmeal.

MARA

I wanted pickles. Bread and butter pickles. We were frantic I wasn't getting enough nutrition.

KATHY

But you were. Cary was healthy?

MARA

Cary was fine, just huge, nine pounds, ten ounces.

KATHY

That is big. Was he late?

MARA

Just plump. Like I said, a huge baby.

KATHY

I'm due Christmas Day. Cary may have told you.

MARA

Yes.

KATHY

I'm hoping to come early-- or late.

MARA

May I ask you why?

KATHY

I feel like it's cheating. A birthday and Christmas Day all in one. What a gyp.

MARA

Why that's just what I said.

KATHY

If I'd planned it--

MARA

One big celebration. Look at it that way.

KATHY

Yes. That's better. You're such an optimist.

MARA

Oh no. My husband told me to think of it that way. He's the optimist.

KATHY

Cary takes after him. I'm more the pessimist.

MARA

Like me. Well, one of each makes a good balance. That's what my husband says.

KATHY

It's nice hearing you talk of him. My mother couldn't find a good thing to say about my dad. I was in my twenties before I forged my own opinion of him. Not bad. Just distant.

MARA

But you've told him your news?

KATHY

Yes.

MARA

And he was pleased?

KATHY

Neutral. He said not to wait for the wedding. He didn't want to look foolish walking someone pregnant down the aisle.

MARA

That's what he said?

KATHY

Verbatim.

MARA

Ouch.

KATHY

He was joking. He said it was good my mother had passed on.

MARA

Joking again?

KATHY

No. I think he meant it. There was a reason they divorced.

MARA

So your father will do the honors. Dare I ask? Have you set a date?

KATHY

That's why I wanted to see you. What do you think of a month from now? I shouldn't be showing.

MARA

A month is enough time for getting organized.

KATHY

Twenty. Just our closest friends.

MARA

We've got just enough room.

KATHY

I wasn't thinking here. We could rent a hall.

MARA

We insist. Cornish Hens, rice pilaf, a cake. We'll keep it simple. Do you approve?

KATHY

Oh, yes. But I wasn't expecting you to have to fuss.

MARA

We insist. We insist.

SCENE 11

Cary enters. Scott is at the door.

CARY

Your songbirds are out.

We hear a trill.

SCOTT

They've been at it all day.

CARY

We've got a few.

SCOTT

We've got plenty. A whole chorus.

CARY

Kathy loves them.

SCOTT

Thatta girl.

CARY

She says she can't nap for listening.

SCOTT

That's true. In the winter I can catch a few Z's. Not now.

CARY

Where's Mom?

SCOTT

You should know. She and Kathy went shopping for baby things.

CARY

It occurs to me that Mom is taking a real interest in this baby.

SCOTT

Your mother was never as tough as she cracked up to be.

CARY

All these years I thought you and Mom were a case of opposites attract. You being the softie.

SCOTT

Nah. Underneath I'm tough as nails. So. Down to business. You brought the guest list?

CARY

Twenty on the nose.

SCOTT

Your mother will be pleased. She's been worrying.

CARY

Five tables of four. That's assuming everyone accepts.

SCOTT

You've got the addresses?

CARY

Mom cracked the whip.

SCOTT

She wants my help tonight. She wants the invitations in tomorrow's mail. It's a close order drill.

CARY

You said it. Yesterday she took Kathy shopping for a dress. They didn't find one.

SCOTT

Tell me about it. Your mother was in tears.

CARY

How hard can it be? A white dress.

SCOTT

Apparently she and Kathy had differing tastes. A mix of the two seems possible to me. They'll take another stab at it tomorrow. Meanwhile I'll wait with bated breath. It seems to me your mother is more nervous about your wedding than she was for our own.

CARY

Kathy appreciates all the fussing. Her own mother wasn't so motherly.

SCOTT

So your mother told me. We're glad to be able to pitch in.

CARY

I find I'm getting nervous. We took a crack at writing vows.

SCOTT

In our day we didn't take such a hand in things. Vows were handed to us. We did as directed.

CARY

Kathy thinks it's important we write our own. Of course, she's the writer of the two of us.

SCOTT

We'd better get on the traps before your mother gets home.

CARY

You're right. I got a fresh jar of peanut butter.

SCOTT

And I've learned my lesson. "A little dab will do ya." Shall we?

### SCENE 12

Living room. Mara holds aloft a wedding gown.

SCOTT

So it's beautiful but tell me again why we've got it here?

MARA

Superstition. It's bad luck for the groom to see the dress.

SCOTT

That is superstition! I'm glad you and Kathy found something you could agree upon.

MARA

Not exactly. I just realized it was her wedding, not mine.

SCOTT

So you don't like the dress?

MARA

Between you and me. There was another one, much nicer.

SCOTT

But this one is Kathy's choice?

MARA

Exactly. And a bargain. Not that we were quibbling over price. The veil was what cost a pretty penny.

SCOTT

And that's with the bride.

MARA

No. It's being altered. We pick it up in a week.

SCOTT

I wouldn't have thought a veil would be altered. I'm thinking one size fits all.

MARA

It looked better shortened.

SCOTT

Ah.

MARA

You'll see. Just to her fingertips. Longer looked droopy.

SCOTT

We can't have a droopy bride.

MARA

No.

SCOTT

The bakery called. I said you'd call them back.

MARA

I better. It's nearly five.

SCOTT

They were double checking the frosting. Buttercream?

MARA

I told them very specifically.

SCOTT

Better safe than sorry. What other kind of frosting is there?

MARA

Meringue. It's prettier but not so tasty. I want tasty.

SCOTT

Agreed.

MARA

Remind me tomorrow to double check the florist.

SCOTT

Stephanotis. White roses. Baby's breath? I overheard you.

MARA

Yes. And a few gardenias.

SCOTT

Flowers on every table?

MARA

Yes. We want to be festive.

SCOTT

I ordered the champagne. Veuve Cliquot. A case and a half. That should be plenty.

MARA

Your call.

SCOTT

Four bottles per table.

MARA

Good. What's a wedding without enough champagne?

SCOTT

It's shaping up to be quite a party.

MARA

I haven't heard back from four people. Remind me not to have a resentment about young people and their manners.

SCOTT

There's still time.

MARA  
You're awfully easygoing.

SCOTT  
One of us has to be.

MARA  
If you're saying I'm high strung--

SCOTT  
It's not every day you throw a wedding. Nerves just show you care.

MARA  
Like I said. You're awfully easygoing.

SCOTT  
Cary said he's getting nervous. Trying to write the vows has him on edge.

MARA  
Understandably. I told Kathy he was just spooked. He's not a writer. She is.

SCOTT  
In our day it was simpler.

MARA  
I don't remember our vows. What did we promise?

SCOTT  
I think to love and cherish for the rest of our lives. In sickness and in health. Maybe in poverty and prosperity.

MARA  
No. I don't think money was included.

SCOTT  
In sickness and in health then. You promised and you've kept your promise.

MARA  
Don't start. Of course I kept my promise. I loved you.

SCOTT  
You never thought you'd be saddled with a cripple.

MARA  
I said don't start. You're still you.

SCOTT

Some of me. And you're the long suffering wife.

MARA

Don't, Darling. Our life is good.

SCOTT

All right. You're right. Self pity is the rim of the glass. Poor me, poor me, pour me a drink.

MARA

I'm so proud of you.

SCOTT

For not drinking?

MARA

For everything.

SCOTT

Ordering the champagne gave me a vicarious thrill.

MARA

Really?

SCOTT

Yes really. I'll have ginger ale. It looks the same.

MARA

I'll have ginger ale too.

SCOTT

That's not necessary.

MARA

My choice. What's good for the gander is good for the goose-- or however that goes.

SCOTT

Just so you don't feel martyred.

MARA

I don't. I tell myself I'm a lucky lady. I make gratitude lists and-- not to be too mushy-- you're on the top of my list.

SCOTT

I'm flattered. But you're on the top of mine.

MARA

You see? We're a good match.

SCOTT

Yes, a good match.

SCENE 13

Foyer.

CARY

It's a good thing I've still got the key.

KATHY

I feel funny. Like we're breaking and entering.

CARY

They'll be home soon. I told them we'd be here at 3.

KATHY

I still feel funny.

CARY

It's fine. You'll see. They know I've got the key.

KATHY

If you say so. Maybe we should sit in the living room.

CARY

Wherever. The game's still on. I want to catch the last quarter.

KATHY

You're a fanatic.

CARY

A fan.

KATHY

You'll probably want to watch during our honeymoon.

CARY

What's a honeymoon for? It's during playoffs.

KATHY

Call me codependent. I'll watch it with you.

CARY

You're marrying a red-blooded American male. Of course I watch.

KATHY

Oops! They're home.

Scott and Mara enter. She pushes his wheelchair  
into the foyer.

KATHY

(calling out)

Hello! We're here!

MARA

Hello you two!

SCOTT

I told your mother you had a key.

CARY

And I told Kathy you'd expect me to use it.

MARA

Have you been here long?

CARY

No.

KATHY

Yes.

SCOTT

Make yourselves comfortable.

CARY

I want to catch the end of the game.

SCOTT

We're losing. I had it on the car radio.

CARY

I was forbidden. "Too distracting when I drive," I quote the little lady.

KATHY  
I am not “the little lady.”

MARA  
Not yet. You get used to it over time.

SCOTT  
As if I’d dare to call you that!

MARA  
You two go in the den and catch your goddamn game.

SCOTT  
(to Cary)  
You heard the little lady. Let’s go.

Scott and Cary exit, leaving Mara and Kathy to themselves.

KATHY  
“The goddamn game”-- So you don’t get used to it?

MARA  
I’m a football widow.

KATHY  
I’ve been trying to watch with him.

MARA  
That’s one solution. I tried it for awhile.

KATHY  
I don’t know how long I’ll last. The playoffs fall during our honeymoon.

MARA  
I hope you don’t plan to compete.

KATHY  
I shouldn’t say this but sex seems sexier game time.

MARA  
So you do compete.

KATHY  
Maybe a little. Do you?

MARA

I'm afraid my days of competition are over.

KATHY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry. Really--

MARA

Of course you're curious. Everyone is. They want to know, you know, if we can still get it on, after the accident, that is.

KATHY

Really. It's none of my business.

MARA

Well we can. Ot with the athleticism of yore but we can.

KATHY

I admit. I'd wondered.

MARA

So now you know.

We hear Scott and Cary roaring from the door.

MARA

We're too far behind to catch up.

KATHY

Thank you for telling me. You didn't have to.

MARA

But I did. You're family-- or nearly.

KATHY

I appreciate your candor.

MARA

Honesty really is the best policy.

KATHY

Not in my family.

MARA

Well you're our family now. Any other questions?

KATHY

Can you teach me to make pot roast?

MARA

With pleasure, my dear. With pleasure.

SCENE 14

Bedroom.

MARA

Sweetheart, I have a confession to make.

SCOTT

You've taken a lover.

MARA

I'm serious.

SCOTT

So confess. I'm all ears.

MARA

I did something I shouldn't perhaps have done.

SCOTT

And? I'm waiting.

MARA

I told Kathy that we have sex.

SCOTT

That's it? She could have assumed.

MARA

But she didn't. She asked me-- sort of.

SCOTT

Well we do have sex. What's the harm in her knowing?

MARA

I just thought-- after I blurted it out-- that you might want more privacy. Was I wrong?

SCOTT

On balance, no. But I trust your judgment. I don't second guess you.

MARA

I second guess myself.

SCOTT

No need. Maybe in your position I'd have done the same thing. I think privacy may be over-rated. Honesty may be a greater value.

MARA

So you're not angry?

SCOTT

I'm not angry. After all, Kathy is family. And I don't believe in family secrets.

MARA

I should have asked you.

SCOTT

Not in the heat of the moment.

MARA

No.

SCOTT

Discretion has never been your long suit.

MARA

Oh dear. Am I about to be lectured?

SCOTT

It's part of your charm. You always call a spade a spade.

MARA

Blunt. It's a character defect.

SCOTT

Let's just say you're plainspoken. Did you give her details?

MARA

I'll leave that to you.

SCOTT

Ah. Do I detect the faint glimmering of humor?

MARA

It's 'cause you let me off the hook.

SCENE 15

Scott, Mara, Cary and Kathy are at the dining room table.

MARA

You do the honors, Kathy.

KATHY

Pass the plates.

SCOTT

Am I to understand this is Kathy's meal?

CARY

Pot roast.

KATHY

Under Mara's tutelage.

CARY

Thanks, Mom.

MARA

Your fiancée was a good student.

KATHY

You first Mara.

MARA

Some of everything, carrots especially.

KATHY

Coming up.

CARY

Me second. I'm starving.

KATHY

Everything? Long on potatoes?

CARY

You know your man.

KATHY

Scott, your turn.

SCOTT

Onions. And everything else.

KATHY

I'm last but not least. The secret ingredient is beef bouillon.

MARA

Hush! All these years I never told them.

KATHY

Sorry. It just caught me by surprise, but it's perfect.

CARY

My sentiments exactly. I predict a long and happy future filled with pot roast.

MARA

Fried chicken next.

SCOTT

You've got quite the repertoire.

KATHY

I love your fried chicken.

MARA

Next Saturday at four. Round two. Mara's menu.

KATHY

Fried chicken beats out oatmeal and pineapple.

MARA

My cravings stopped in my second trimester.

KATHY

I'll let you know. Did your ankles swell?

MARA

I was spared.

KATHY

I think I'm in for the full catastrophe.

MARA

The more symptoms you've got, the healthier the baby. That's what Dr. Barly always said.

KATHY

His voice to God's ear.

MARA

There's truth to the old wives' tales.

KATHY

Well then we've got one very healthy baby on board.

CARY

I keep telling her she looks radiant.

KATHY

Thank you but I already feel clumsy. Is it true that you start to waddle?

MARA

Maybe a little.

KATHY

When does that set in?

MARA

Third trimester. Of course by then you're big as a horse.

SCOTT

All I remember is great sex.

MARA

Ah yes.

SCOTT

Forgive my saying it but there's something very sexy about a pregnant woman.

CARY

Dad!

MARA

I think we've said enough.

KATHY

But I want to know what to expect!

CARY

You heard the man. Great sex.

SCENE 16

Mara and Kathy are in the living room.

MARA

Put your feet up, dear.

KATHY

I forget. It does help.

MARA

I'll bet you are vain about your ankles.

KATHY

Used to be. Not now.

MARA

What about some toast with strawberry jam?

KATHY

That does sound good.

MARA

It will only take me a minute. Use the hassock. Use the phone.

KATHY

I should call Cary.

MARA

I'll be back in a jiffy.

She exits. Kathy tugs the hassock closer. She reaches for the phone, punching in a number.

KATHY

(into phone)

Is that you? It's me. I haven't been gone that long. I have? I'll be home for dinner. Chicken pot pies. The good ones. You can set them out. Maybe time got away from us. We went to three baby stores! Wait til you see my loot. Four bags full. We're going to have one well-dressed baby. Your mother was wonderful. So decisive. Yes well I needed the help. I liked everything. I'm having a little snack here. I'm eating for two. The snack for the baby. The chicken pot pie for me. How did you do with the painting?

I'm glad we picked yellow. It's happy for either sex. What? No I still don't want to know. Half the fun of it is the surprise. Besides it's fun picking names for both.

Mara enters with a tray.

MARA

Say hi to my son.

KATHY

Your mother says hi. She agrees with me it's more fun not knowing.

(to Mara)

He wants to talk to you.

MARA

Hello, sweetheart. Wait til you see our haul. What? Next time you'll go with? Well there will be a next time. Baby shopping is addictive. That's right. Three stores and there's two more we didn't get to. Look. I've got to go. I'm playing hostess.

(to Kathy)

He wants to say goodbye.

KATHY

(into phone)

Give me 45 minutes. If I'm not home put the pies in at 375. What? You'll manage. I'll be home in a jiffy. Bye, Honey.

MARA

Eat your toast before it gets cold.

Kathy takes a bite of toast./

KATHY

Yum!

MARA

I confess. I made the jam myself. Scott is addicted to it. So to feed his jones I make a batch every couple months.

KATHY

I don't suppose you can teach me?

MARA

Cary likes apple butter.

KATHY

I suppose you make that too?

MARA

Actually, yes. Don't worry, you'll catch on.

KATHY

You're a hard act to follow. I barely cook.

MARA

He told me he fell for your words. He says you're a poet. Quite a poet.

KATHY

Amateur.

MARA

My point is it wasn't your cooking he fell in love with.

KATHY

I could kill him. Poetry is my guilty secret.

MARA

Not anymore. Tell you what. I'll teach you apple butter, you teach me a sonnet.

### SCENE 17

Cary and Scott are in the living room.

We hear birdsong.

CARY

Your songbirds are at it again.

SCOTT

I've been enjoying them all day.

CARY

They probably sense they have an appreciative audience.

SCOTT

Maybe. But I think they sing for the joy of it, audience or not.

CARY

I've put up a bird feeder at our place and it works. I got special seed for songbirds and they've actually come.

SCOTT

Your mother keeps our feeder full. She knows how much joy they bring me.

CARY

Kathy loves them too. She's always after me to listen up.

SCOTT

Your mother says she tunes them out. That they're a distraction. From what so important, I ask her. Oh, she says, my thoughts. I tell her the birds help me to think. And they do. Whenever I get down, the birds remind me to lighten up. The world is beautiful.

CARY

Kathy says their songs are like poems.

SCOTT

Maybe. Say, we'd better check the traps before your mother gets home.

CARY

I checked them while you were in the shower.

SCOTT

Ah. And?

CARY

Two. Down from five.

SCOTT

Two too many from your mother's point of view.

CARY

I think they get in under the sink. There's a hole by the pipes.

SCOTT

We need some steel wool.

CARY

I'll get some.

SCOTT

You've been a real help.

CARY

It's the least I can do with Mom so jittery.

SCOTT

Yes. You'd think they were rats. I actually think they're cute.

CARY

Don't let Mom hear you say that.

SCOTT

Don't worry. I know when to keep my opinions to myself.

CARY

That's a skill I need to learn.

SCOTT

You will. Marriage is a great teacher.

CARY

Kathy says I can't wait to disagree with her. Good thing she has a sense of humor.

SCOTT

Very necessary. At least one partner in a marriage needs one.

CARY

So I'm learning. Kathy and I joke that we agree to disagree. But on the big things we see eye to eye.

SCOTT

Another necessity. Your mother and I may seem like opposites but "seem" is the operative word.

CARY

You know, Dad, it feels good to me to get the lowdown from you.

SCOTT

Pardon me if I lecture. It's just that I find myself thinking of all the things I should have told you. You know, "before."

CARY

"Before" is how it feels. I'm sure about Kathy but it's still a big step.

SCOTT

Among the biggest. Of course you're doubling up. Marriage *and* baby. Either one changes your life. When you came along I wasn't ready. I found out just how self-centered I was.

CARY

Thanks for the warning. I'm trying to imagine life with baby.

SCOTT

Nothing prepares you. I mean you're focused on the pregnancy, the birth, and it never occurs to you that it's permanent. You're going to have that baby forever. I mean, look at me, you're thirty-four and you're still my little boy.

CARY

I like to think I've outgrown that status. But here I am, wanting any last words of advice.

SCOTT

Marriage isn't 50-50. Remember that. It's more like 75-25 with each partner sure they're the 75.

CARY

You and mom seem 50-50.

SCOTT

That's because we're both pitching in our 75.

CARY

Do you think you could tell all of this to Kathy?

SCOTT

I leave it to your mother. While they're bonding over shopping and cooking, I am sure she gets her two cents in.

CARY

Yes. They really didn't want me along today.

SCOTT

A good thing. I needed you. I'm afraid crawling after the traps is no longer my long suit.

CARY

Glad to lend a hand. Do we need to set more?

SCOTT

Sure thing. I'll fetch the peanut butter.

### SCENE 18

Open area between dining room and living room.

MARA

I don't know about you but I'm nervous.

SCOTT

What's to be nervous about. You've planned everything to a T.

MARA

What if something goes wrong. The judge doesn't show-- something.

SCOTT

He'll show-- if only to collect his fee.

MARA

I told Kathy she could dress here. I'll have to leave her alone or she'll catch my nerves.

SCOTT

I'm sure she has her own.

MARA

I don't know. She seemed cool as a cucumber.

SCOTT

That's "seemed." She's not going to let on to you any terrors.

MARA

"Terrors" is right. I'll need to help her with her veil. To get it on right.

SCOTT

I'm sure she'll welcome the help. You're a good stand in for her mother who wasn't evidently too motherly.

MARA

No. Evidently not. She says she never learned how to boil water.

SCOTT

No wonder she takes to you so.

MARA

She has, hasn't she?

SCOTT

I watch the two of you and I think "mother and daughter."

MARA

So it's not just my imagination.

SCOTT

Hardly. You always did want a daughter.

MARA

It's just that I would have known better what to do.

SCOTT

Stop it. You did well with Cary.

MARA

But it didn't come natural.

SCOTT

So now you've got your wish come true.

MARA

I taught her to make apple butter.

SCOTT

And pot roast. And fried chicken.

MARA

She's a natural. It's a pity her mother didn't teach her. She loves it.

SCOTT

Better late than never.

MARA

So you don't think I'm overbearing?

SCOTT

Never. She welcomes the attention. She's a thirsty plant.

MARA

It seems so but then I think-- that's it, isn't it? I think too much.

SCOTT

Let's just say you put that pretty head of yours to too much use.

MARA

This pretty head of mine worries.

SCOTT

My point exactly. Worry is not an action.

MARA

What is it they say about fear? "False Evidence Appearing Real"?

SCOTT

I say carry on. You're doing fine.

MARA

There you go again. Being the optimist.

SCOTT

Somebody has to do it.

MARA

Don't make me laugh.

SCOTT

Like I said. Somebody has to do it.

MARA

I love you. Somebody has to do it.

### SCENE 19

Living room.

MARA

So tell me how many?

CARY

We're doing better.

MARA

'Fess up. How many?

CARY

If you must know-- two. And I set more traps.

MARA

Two is two too many.

CARY

That's what Dad said you'd think.

MARA

Well he knows me, your father.

CARY

I put out traps and poison. I was nothing if not thorough.

MARA

Thank you, God.

CARY

So you still have the jitters.

MARA

Yes. And I won't defend myself. It's natural.

CARY

I set a trap in our kitchen. Kathy is as bad as you are.

MARA

I told you. It's natural. Women are scared of mice.

CARY

I didn't see it. Kathy saw it. She said it was a blur.

MARA

"The gray flash" I call it.

CARY

I'll have to tell her that.

MARA

It's snappier than "the gray blur."

CARY

So I just want you to know we're gaining on them.

MARA

"Them." Two is two too many. One is one too many.

CARY

The poison works. We had mice in my fraternity house and they were too clever for the traps so we tried the poison and presto! No more mice.

MARA

I want them gone for your wedding. Picture a gray flash scaring the bride.

CARY

So I've got a deadline. Emphasis on "dead."

MARA

Don't tell Kathy about my two mice. She'll be afraid to come over.

CARY

Mums the word.

MARA

I enjoy her visits so. And she's becoming quite the chef.

CARY

Can I tell her you said that?

MARA

As I told your father, she's a natural in the kitchen.

CARY

Last night she made pot roast.

MARA

Oh dear. You'll be sick of it.

CARY

Never. What about teaching her beef stroganoff?

MARA

Your second favorite?

CARY

Exactly.

MARA

I'll put it on the agenda.

CARY

Is it tricky?

MARA

A little. Nothing we can't handle.

CARY

You're quite the team.

MARA

Your father says "mother and daughter."

CARY

You know, Mom, I'm so glad you like her.

MARA

Oh. I more than like her.

CARY

It means a lot to me-- your approval.

MARA

And that means a lot to me-- that you want my approval.

CARY

I think she fits in with us. The family, I mean.

MARA

You made a good choice.

CARY

Oh. She chose me.

MARA

But you went along with her.

CARY

Yes.

MARA

I chose your father.

CARY

I always thought Dad was the pursuer.

MARA

I chased him until he caught me.

CARY

And voila! Here we all are.

MARA

Yes. Here we all are. Tell Kathy to come early on Saturday and I'll teach her the stroganoff.

CARY

Great, Mom.

MARA

You come early too. Your father is itching for some chess.

SCENE 20

Mara, Scott, Cary and Kathy are at the dining room table.

CARY

This is the best. It gives pot roast a run for its money.

MARA

Thank you and thank you.

KATHY

My lessons had better continue after we tie the knot.

SCOTT

It's a beginning not an ending. You'll officially be family.

KATHY

Yes I feel I'll not just be marrying Cary but everyone.

MARA

We feel the same. You're more than a welcome addition. You're a correction.

SCOTT

What my wife is saying-- no offense Cary-- she always wanted a daughter.

KATHY

I suppose it could be said I always wanted a mother. It's probably treason to say it but my mother just wasn't motherly.

MARA

I think it's important that you not feel disloyal. Keep your good memories and don't feel you have to choose.

SCOTT

Hear, hear. I second that notion.

KATHY

It's just that you make me feel so welcome.

CARY

You are welcome. I've heard it from each of them.

MARA

Seconds anyone?

KATHY

I'm eating for two. I'll take some.

CARY

Leave some for me. I'm eating for one but he's ravenous.

SCOTT

Don't be a piglet. I'll have some too.

MARA

I should have made a double batch.

KATHY

We need to save room for dessert. Cherry Cobbler.

CARY

Cherry Cobbler! Now this meal is over the top.

KATHY

I haven't had to have oatmeal in two days.

MARA

Congratulations! You're entering phase two, where everything tastes delicious.

KATHY

If I don't watch it, I won't be able to fit into my dress.

MARA

I think you'll have room to spare. It was big on you at the fitting, remember?

KATHY

That seems so long ago. So much has happened! Beef stroganoff! Cherry Cobbler.

SCOTT

And an impending puppy. Right after the wedding.

CARY

If I've got my facts right this is going to be one big puppy.

SCOTT

Seventy to ninety pounds if the breeder's specs are right.

CARY

So it will walk me not vice-versa.

MARA

A Bernadoodle. Do you think it will be more Burmese or more poodle? Calm or smart.

SCOTT

Calm *and* smart so the breeder says.

CARY

But a snuggler?

SCOTT

So the breeder says. Pick of the litter, affectionate.

MARA

Even I could love a snuggler.

SCOTT

Oh, you will. Mark my words, it will end up being your dog, not mine.

MARA

We'll see about that-- and we will see about that.

KATHY

The joint will be jumping-- two babies.

MARA

Oh, I think we'll manage. Cobbler, anyone?

### SCENE 21

Mara and Kathy are in the dining room.

MARA

I told you it would fit.

KATHY

Barely.

MARA

How are you going to do your hair?

KATHY

Up I think. I'll need help with the veil.

MARA

Yes. I'll be your extra set of hands.

KATHY

Much needed. And for the hook and eyes in the back.

MARA

This dress requires a lady in waiting.

KATHY

I didn't realize it was so complicated. It looks so simple.

MARA

It's lovely. And with your hair up and the veil just so it will be perfect.

KATHY

You liked the other dress better.

MARA

Actually, yes. But it's your wedding and this dress has grown on me. Now that I know you better. The other dress was too fussy.

KATHY

I've never been comfortable in girly-girly things.

MARA

Simple but striking-- a feminist wedding dress.

KATHY

Not so very. I'm taking his name.

MARA

I just assumed you'd want to keep your own.

KATHY

It hasn't been the happiest. In fact, until I met Cary I'd pretty much given happiness up.

MARA

And now look at you! The blushing bride.

KATHY

Yes. Sometimes I can't believe my luck.

MARA

Oh it's not luck. Cary said you chose him.

KATHY

I suppose I did. He was just so *nice*.

MARA

He is nice.

KATHY

My previous were jerks. Long on talent, short on character.

MARA

I'd like to think Cary has both.

KATHY

Oh he does. When I told him I was pregnant, I expected him to bolt. Instead, he proposed. And here we are. Do you think he will like the dress?

MARA

I think he will like you in it.

Scott enters the room.

SCOTT

Did I hear a question about the dress? It's lovely.

MARA

We're just having some last minute jitters.

SCOTT

I'm serious. The dress *is* lovely. Nothing too fussy. It makes you the center of attention, not like some dresses where you barely notice the bride.

MARA

You've given this some thought.

SCOTT

How else to fill idle hours when you girls were out shopping?

MARA

Are you saying you were bored without us?

SCOTT

“Boredom means you have no inner resources”-- that’s what my mother always said.

MARA

Your mother was right. Right, Kathy?

KATHY

I’ll have to mull that over.

MARA

Scared to take sides? I’ll tell you a family secret: Scott and I only appear to be antagonists. Deep down, where it matters, we agree. Which is why your cake has buttercream frosting not meringue.

SCOTT

Do you need a translator?

KATHY

No. I followed it.

SCOTT

Then you do belong in this family, young lady.

## SCENE 22

Scott and Cary sit over a chess board by a window in the living room.

SCOTT

Checkmate! I win but your mind wasn’t on the game.

CARY

Sure it was.

SCOTT

‘Fess up. What’s on your mind.

CARY

Chess. You’re just a better player.

SCOTT

You usually give me a run for my money.

CARY

OK. The wedding. I’ve got nerves.

SCOTT

I can understand that but the wedding will go fine. Kathy marches up the aisle. Her father hands her over to you. The judge says a few words about the sacred sacrament of matrimony. He invites you to say your vows. You say them-- maybe stumbling a little. That's to be expected. You finally spit them out. Kathy does hers or vice versa. I forget who goes first but the judge will cue you. Vows over he'll pronounce you husband and wife. Then you'll kiss the bride. Simple. What could go wrong?

CARY

I don't know. Something. Last night I dreamed I forgot my vows.

SCOTT

Not likely. Pretend you're back in high school debate. You were never at a loss for words.

CARY

What if someone protests. You know when they ask if anyone knows a reason we should not be wed.

SCOTT

You've invited twenty friends, not enemies.

CARY

I suppose you're right. I mean it's not likely anyone will protest.

SCOTT

No. It's not likely. In fact your friends will be rooting for you. Rooting for the holy state of matrimony.

CARY

If Kathy's nervous she hasn't let on.

SCOTT

No squabbles?

CARY

Come to think of it, she did pick a fight with me last night. I wanted lights out. She wanted to read. Sense and Sensibility-- even I know how it ends. A happy ending. Weddings all around. Oh. I just realized she might have been needing reassurance.

SCOTT

You bet. Any further fights are just par for the course.

CARY

Did you fight with Mom before your wedding?

SCOTT

She accused me of having second thoughts.

CARY

Ouch!

SCOTT

So I accused her of having second thoughts.

CARY

Double ouch.

SCOTT

We called it a truce right before the minister arrived.

CARY

Kathy and I should call a truce. At least neither of us is having second thoughts-- that I know of. She did make a joke about a "shotgun wedding." I told her it wasn't funny. She said, "just checking." She asked me, "If I weren't pregnant would you still marry me?" I told her the pregnancy was a bonus that's all.

SCOTT

Good answer.

CARY

I knew I wanted to marry her from our second date.

SCOTT

Some shotgun wedding.

CARY

The pregnancy just gave me an excuse to jump the gun.

SCOTT

You told her that?

CARY

Words to that effect.

SCOTT

You're doing fine. Just remember "lights out" are not fighting words.

### SCENE 23

Bedroom.

I'm sleepy.

MARA

I'm wide awake.

SCOTT

Let's compromise. I'll wake up a little. You'll get drowsy.

MARA

That's the key.

SCOTT

The key to what?

MARA

Marriage of course.

SCOTT

Of course. Why didn't I know? You're up for a big conversation.

MARA

Well, I've just been thinking. Cary mentioned that he and Kathy had squabbled.

SCOTT

Nervous. I hope you told him that.

MARA

I did. That is I think I did.

SCOTT

Are you worrying?

MARA

Not really. I do think it's just nerves.

SCOTT

You and I had nerves-- remember?

MARA

As I recall we were fighting over who had second thoughts.

SCOTT

You remember correctly. But then we called a truce. Did you tell him that?

MARA

SCOTT

Actually, yes, I think I did.

MARA

Then you have nothing to worry about. Usually I'm the worrier.

SCOTT

Don't start. If you worry and I worry we'll jinx the whole show.

MARA

Kathy is a worrier.

SCOTT

How do you know? She seems calm enough to me.

MARA

That's seems. She worried about the dress. We had to try it on again "just in case."

SCOTT

So that's what you two were doing. I wondered.

MARA

There was no reassuring her. She had to be sure. I'm wearing my blue silk dress. Do you think it's dressy enough?

SCOTT

It's not like we'll be in a church. I think it's fine. I'm wearing my gray suit. Does that pass muster?

MARA

All eyes won't be on us. We could show up in pajamas.

SCOTT

Now there's a thought.

MARA

I like your Brooks Brothers P.J.s. Quite dapper.

SCOTT

And your rose-colored nightie-- smashing!

MARA

That's what I love about you.

SCOTT

What? I'm dying to know.

MARA

You're an appreciator. There are men on whom that rose colored nightie would be wasted.

SCOTT

Don't talk about "men."

MARA

In theory, that's all.

SCOTT

That better be all.

MARA

Don't start. You have no course to feel insecure.

SCOTT

It's a side effect.

MARA

Of?

SCOTT

The accident of course. Before the accident I was a cocky bastard.

MARA

Before and after? To me you seem the same.

SCOTT

Thanks to my prayer life and some good therapy.

MARA

Before and after. You're still the man I love.

SCOTT

One of God's miracles.

MARA

No. There was never a question.

SCOTT

I asked you if you wanted a divorce. You hit me. That was my answer.

MARA

That was *my* answer. Frankly it never occurred to me-- divorce, that is.

SCOTT  
No one would have blamed you.

MARA  
It never occurred to me.

SCOTT  
At first it was so hard.

MARA  
Of course it was. It was quite an adjustment.

SCOTT  
“Adjustment.” What a polite well bred word. It was a catastrophe.

MARA  
We made the best of it. We still do.

SCOTT  
On the whole, I think we do well-- unless you’re faking.

MARA  
I should hit you again.

SCOTT  
Just testing.

MARA  
I love you, you silly goof.

SCOTT  
You’re the silly goof, loving me.

MARA  
So we both are.

SCOTT  
Yes, we both are-- silly goofs.

#### SCENE 24

Open area between dining room and living room. Scott, Mara, Kathy and Cary are rehearsing for the wedding.

SCOTT

The aisle will be about here-- narrow but passable. The chairs in rows on either side.

MARA

Imagine the aisle. Imagine the chairs.

CARY

Imagine the judge.

SCOTT

I'll be the judge. Imagine me standing at the top of the aisle.

KATHY

I'll imagine I'm on my father's arm.

SCOTT

Thatta girl. Now you step slowly up the aisle.

KATHY

Slowly? I want to rush to Cary's side.

MARA

Fight the impulse.

SCOTT

I'm the judge. I welcome you.

CARY

I welcome you.

KATHY

I'm welcomed.

SCOTT

Now I say a few words. Holy Matrimony, etc.

MARA

You need a bible. Where's our bible?

SCOTT

Imagine that I hold a bible.

CARY

I've got the rings. With no ring bearer we've got to improvise.

I want your ring.

KATHY

All right but I've got yours.

CARY

Imagine that it's time to say your vows.

SCOTT

Imagine that I remember mine.

CARY

And I mine.

KATHY

Now you exchange the rings.

SCOTT

Oh dear, I'm tearing up.

MARA

Imagine that you have a handkerchief.

CARY

This is just a rehearsal. I'll have one at the wedding.

MARA

Imagine you can kiss the bride.

SCOTT

Ah. My favorite part.

CARY

Cary pulls Kathy to him and kisses her thoroughly.

Well. Some things don't need rehearsal. Darling?

SCOTT

That's me.

MARA

Step close. I want to kiss my bride.

SCOTT

Mara steps in for a kiss.

