

# DECKING THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF FOLLY

by Gary Ray Stapp

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**SYNOPSIS:** The blending of two families becomes a challenging task for geriatric newlyweds, Evelyn and Gilbert, when their adult children suddenly find themselves step-siblings with nothing in common. And when the supercilious and conventional Halls meet the footloose and unfettered Boughs for the first time on Christmas Eve, there's little merriment for anyone as a family feud develops into a hilarious show-down filled with insults, angst, and humiliation. And thanks to the timely revelations of one surprise after another, there's plenty of folly for everyone.

**DURATION:** 120 minutes.

**TIME:** The present, Christmas Eve day.

**SETTING:** A Suburban Miami, Florida living room.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(7 females, 4 males)*

ANSEL HALL (m) ..... 40's, a cynical, pretentious, upper middle-class mama's boy. *(434 lines)*

MAUREEN HALL (f) ..... 40's, a witty, sassy wife and mother. *(270 lines)*

EVELYN HALL (f) ..... 60's, a candid and snarky fun-loving family matriarch. *(269 lines)*

GILBERT BOUGH (m) ..... 60's, a widowed happy-go-lucky family patriarch of modest means, but suffering from IBS. *(92 lines)*

CHIP HALL (m) ..... 40's, a quirky Casanova, perpetually engaged, but never close to being married. *(213 lines)*

KANDIE (f) ..... 20's, a bimbo. *(27 lines)*

JOYCETTE (f) ..... 40's, a likeable, but flirtatious five-time divorcee and aspiring gentleman's club dancer. *(162 lines)*

**WINKIE**

BOUGH-STRUDDLEHEIMER (f) 40's, a seemingly mousey woman, but blunt and sarcastic, married to a convict. (94 lines)

DIXIE BOUGH (f).....30's, a vociferous bachelorette exploring gender and sexual identity. (99 lines)

TORCH (m) .....20's, a gothic, rebellious young man. (72 lines)

RACHEL (f).....A college student and determined daughter. (43 lines)

**SET**

A living room in a comfortable mid-scale suburban home in Miami, Florida. A well-appointed room with a sofa, pair of chairs and coffee table at center, and accompanied by a settee and various chairs and small tables placed about the perimeter. Except for the presence of a few "oddities", the room is otherwise tastefully accented with a variety of items of holiday décor. At USC is the star of the room, a lavishly adorned Christmas tree standing before a feature wall with steps and a stairway disappearing behind it. At SL is the front door with an adjacent closet, and at SR is a doorway to the kitchen and out-of-doors.

**DEDICATION**

For my Daughter-in-Law, Jessie. Thank you for "blending" into my family.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1**

**SETTING:** *We are in the living room of the Ansel & Maureen Hall home, a comfortable house in a mid-scale suburban neighborhood in Miami, Florida. A well-appointed room with a sofa, pair of chairs and coffee table at center, and accompanied by a settee and various chairs and small tables placed about the perimeter. Except for a cardboard box sitting on the sofa, and the presence of a few “oddities”, the room is otherwise tastefully accented with a variety of items of holiday decor, though at USC is the star of the room, a lavishly adorned Christmas tree standing before a feature wall with steps and a stairway disappearing behind it. At SL is the front door with an adjacent closet, and at SR is a doorway to the kitchen and out-of-doors.*

**AT START:** *It is mid-afternoon on Christmas Eve day and a musical rendition of Deck the Halls blares as ANSEL goes about retrieving additional oddities from “The Box” and displaying them in various places around the room. He sings along.*

**ANSEL:** *(Singing.)* Deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la. Tis the season to be jolly, fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la ...

*MAUREEN enters at the front door overwhelmed with grocery bags.*

**MAUREEN:** Good grief, Ansel! Do you think you have the music loud enough?!

**ANSEL:** *(Unaware.)* La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la ...

**MAUREEN:** *(Crossing to kitchen.)* There’s another grocery bag in the car. Please bring it in right away. It has two half-gallons of ice cream.  
*(Exits.)*

**ANSEL:** La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la ...

*ANSEL crosses to the box on the sofa but notices the front door standing open. He crosses, singing with the music as he goes, peers outside, shrugs, closes the door and returns to his box of stuff and takes out another item. He looks at it and grimaces, then glances about the room for a place to put it.*

**ANSEL:** Fa-la-la-la, la-la-la-la (*Crosses to a table already occupied with a tasteful Christmas figurine. He swaps them, then steps back to assess.*) La-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la. (*Satisfied, he looks around for a place for the tasteful figurine, choosing to hide it in the closet.*)

**MAUREEN:** (*Enters from kitchen, stops and glares at ANSEL'S back.*) Ansel! What are you doing? ... Ansel!! (*She crosses and shuts off the music.*) Ansel!!

**ANSEL:** (*Startled.*) What?!

**MAUREEN:** What are you doing?

**ANSEL:** Decorating.

**MAUREEN:** I've already decorated.

**ANSEL:** You forgot some things.

**MAUREEN:** What things?

**ANSEL:** (*Nods to the box.*) Those things.

**MAUREEN:** Please, I beg of you.

**ANSEL:** We have an agreement.

**MAUREEN:** What do you want to do, Ansel, ruin my Christmas? Those things are hideous.

**ANSEL:** But—

**MAUREEN:** I don't want to discuss it again.

**ANSEL:** Well, to be honest, Maureen, you discussed it. I just listened. Silently.

**MAUREEN:** Where is the grocery bag?

**ANSEL:** What grocery bag?

**MAUREEN:** The one I left in the car! Did you not hear me?

**ANSEL:** Apparently, the music was too loud.

**MAUREEN:** So was the volume of your voice.

**ANSEL:** Heard me singing, did you?

**MAUREEN:** Is that what you're calling it.

**ANSEL:** Ouch. Keep it up, dear wife, and you'll get a lump of coal in your stocking.

**MAUREEN:** I'm fine with that. At least coal would be a step above that box of junk your mother gave us. Now hurry up and go get the last of the groceries out of the car. I have a million things to do before she arrives.

**ANSEL:** Okay, okay. (*Exits.*)

*MAUREEN looks at the box, then glances around the room spying the un-welcomed knick-knacks displayed about the room.*

**MAUREEN:** Seriously? *(She quickly gathers them and drops them in the box just as the cordless phone rings.)* Hello? ... Rachel! ... You did? Well, he probably didn't hear the phone. You know how loud he likes his Christmas Eve music. ... I didn't expect to hear from you again today. Change of plans, maybe? .... Oh, that's too bad ... No, no. Don't you worry about it ... *(Takes the box to the closet where she discovers her figurine, and annoyed, she returns it to its original location.)* Your father is not mad. He's just pouty. You know how he gets ... Oh, I see. Well, if Tim gets tied up with his family obligation, take my advice and don't wait for him. Just come on home. Don't spend Christmas Eve alone ... Alright, honey. Love you, too.

*MAUREEN hangs up the phone as ANSEL enters.*

**ANSEL:** *(Hands shopping bag to MAUREEN.)* Maureen, you bought strawberry ice cream! Does that mean you're making that ice cream pie with the chocolate Rice Crispi crust and roasted pistachios?

**MAUREEN:** Of course. *(With extreme sarcasm.)* It wouldn't be a Hall family Christmas Eve without it.

**ANSEL:** No, it would not. That's my favorite dessert, you know.

**MAUREEN:** There was never any doubt. It's your mother's recipe.

**ANSEL:** I don't know why you only make it just once a year.

**MAUREEN:** Because it's your mother's recipe. If you want it more often, she can make it for you.

**ANSEL:** Maureen, you don't have to be so testy.

**MAUREEN:** Ansel, you shouldn't have been re-decorating.

**ANSEL:** What about Chip?

**MAUREEN:** What about your brother?

**ANSEL:** He'll want dessert, too, you know. And he can't have ice cream. Remember, he's lactose intolerant.

**MAUREEN:** I remember quite well. Last year, I had to leave the windows open for three days because of his intolerance. Here's his dessert. *(She takes a box of Hostess HO-HO's from the bag.)* Ho-Ho's!

**ANSEL:** Well, that's festive.

**MAUREEN:** Tis the season. Ho-ho-ho! (*She exits to kitchen.*)

*ANSEL happily smiles, then notices his box is gone. He looks about, annoyed to discover his objects are missing.*

**ANSEL:** Really, Maureen?

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) What was that, dear?

**ANSEL:** Nothing. (*Looks toward the closet, suspecting.*) Have you heard from Rachel? (*Crosses to closet and takes out the box and re-distributes the knick-knacks.*)

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) Actually, she just called.

**ANSEL:** Please tell me she broke up with that Tom guy!

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) His name is Tim. And no.

**ANSEL:** I hate that guy.

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) You've never met him.

**ANSEL:** He's the reason she's not going to be home for Christmas Eve this year. In my book, that's enough not to like the guy.

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) Stop pouting.

**ANSEL:** I'm not pouting!

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) Your daughter has grown up. You're going to have to learn to share her with others. After all, she's a young college woman with a life of her own.

**ANSEL:** No, no, no—she can have a life of her own after Christmas. She should be here with us, not with some stranger who's—not us.

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) He's her boyfriend.

**ANSEL:** She doesn't need a boyfriend. Especially some college dude who has more testosterone than Charlie Sheen at a peep show.

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) Stop torturing yourself.

**ANSEL:** But we know nothing about him. What if he's one of those left-wing Democrats? What then?

**MAUREEN:** (*Steps into the doorway.*) I'm a Democrat. Are you trying to start an argument?

**ANSEL:** No.

**MAUREEN:** Good. Now stop complaining about someone you've never met. (*She disappears, then off.*) You never know, you might actually like him.

**ANSEL:** I won't like him.

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) No, you won't.

**ANSEL:** Rachel had better be here tomorrow. I will not share her on Christmas day with that Tom guy.

**MAUREEN:** (*Off.*) Tim.

**ANSEL:** Whatever.

**MAUREEN:** (*Enters.*) Shame on your mother. She should have taught you how to share better.

**ANSEL:** I know how to share—when I want to.

**MAUREEN:** Not according to your brother.

**ANSEL:** Chip is a liar. Always has been. And don't be shaming on my mom.

**MAUREEN:** (*Looks about.*) Speaking of your mother, why are those tacky things back out of the closet?

**ANSEL:** Maureen, they're gifts. They are not tacky things.

**MAUREEN:** They're hideous.

**ANSEL:** Okay, they are hideous, but Mom gave them to us. They're tokens of her affection.

**MAUREEN:** Uh-huh. Her affection for me is speaking volumes. Obviously, she doesn't like me very much.

**ANSEL:** I don't want to insult her. Or hurt her feelings. Mom's had enough disappointment with her divorce from Dad. Besides, we have an agreement. Her gifts come out of the closet whenever she comes to visit, but they stay hidden in the closet the other ninety-nine percent of the year.

**MAUREEN:** Ninety-nine percent?

**ANSEL:** Okay, that's a slight exaggeration. Still, if you ask me, she could visit us a little more often. I mean she only lives forty-five minutes away.

**MAUREEN:** I'm married to a momma's boy.

**ANSEL:** Lately, it seems like we've hardly seen her. What's it been, five... six weeks since her last visit?

**MAUREEN:** Your mother has a life of her own, just like your daughter. They don't need to see you every week.

**ANSEL:** (*A beat.*) That hurts my feelings.

**MAUREEN:** Sorry.

**ANSEL:** Really?

**MAUREEN:** Well, I'm ninety-nine percent sorry.

**ANSEL:** Now, you're exaggerating.

**MAUREEN:** Alright, you win. (*She takes an object from the box.*) You know, her gift-giving wouldn't be an issue if she had better taste. Here, put this over there next to the picture of my sister and me. Better yet, hide it behind the photo.

**ANSEL:** That works for me. So long as it's out. See, I'm easy to get along with. My momma raised a son who knows the art and science of marital compromise.

**MAUREEN:** Chip has never been married.

**ANSEL:** I was talking about me.

**MAUREEN:** Were you, dear?

**ANSEL:** Funny. You know when you call me dear, you sound just like my mother.

**MAUREEN:** Remember that when we go to bed tonight.

*Doorbell rings.*

**ANSEL:** That must be Mom!

*ANSEL hurries to a chair upstage where there is an ugly Christmas sweater lying across it. He puts it on over his button-down shirt.*

**MAUREEN:** Speak of the devil. She's early! (*Looks at her watch.*) Three hours early!

**ANSEL:** There's no such thing as early when it's family.

**MAUREEN:** Ansel, what are you doing?

**ANSEL:** Getting dressed, what's it look like?

**MAUREEN:** You're kidding me! You're actually going to wear that thing?

**ANSEL:** It was my gift from Mom last Christmas. I have to wear it. (*A beat.*) What? I'm her favorite.

**MAUREEN:** (*Crossing to door.*) No, you're not.

**ANSEL:** No, I'm not. But I'm her first born, so I'm obligated.

*Doorbell rings. MAUREEN pastes on a smile and opens the door.*

**MAUREEN:** Mother Hall! Merry Christmas Eve.

**EVELYN:** (*Walks past MAUREEN and direct to ANSEL and embraces him.*) Merry Christmas Eve, Ansel!

**ANSEL:** Mom!

**EVELYN:** Ansel, you look—*(A beat.)* festive.

**ANSEL:** Must be the sweater!

**EVELYN:** It's ugly, dear. I'm surprised your wife let you wear it. Take it off. We wouldn't want anyone I know to see you wearing that thing.

**ANSEL:** But... Mom, this was a Christmas gift from you... remember?

**EVELYN:** It was a joke, dear. Now take it off. *(She removes her light jacket to reveal a colorfully loud pantsuit and flashy scarf tied about her neck.)*

**ANSEL:** *(He is stunned upon seeing her.)* Ah, you do like to joke. *(Forces a laugh.)* Good one, Mom. That's—that's quite an outfit. Or is it a costume?

**EVELYN:** Isn't it marvelous?! *(She does a little tippy-toe spin.)* I just love it! I feel as young as fifty when I'm wearing it!

**ANSEL:** You're serious?

**EVELYN:** Of course.

**MAUREEN:** Add a couple of cones and she could be Madonna.

**ANSEL:** Mom, you really bought that outfit—on purpose?

**EVELYN:** I didn't buy it, dear. It was gift. From Dixie. She had to buy a whole new wardrobe and didn't need this anymore. Her loss, my gain!

**ANSEL:** Who's Dixie?

**EVELYN:** Now, where's my precious granddaughter?

**ANSEL:** Uh, she won't be here until tomorrow.

**EVELYN:** How disappointing. I so enjoy chatting with that girl. She makes me feel appreciated.

**ANSEL:** We all appreciate you, Mother. Besides, Maureen is here to chat with you.

**EVELYN:** Who?

**ANSEL:** My wife. *(A beat.)* Rachel's mother.

**EVELYN:** Oh. Of course, dear.

**ANSEL:** *(Indicates MAUREEN who still stands at the door.)* Say hi to Maureen, Mother. *(He steps away and removes the sweater.)*

**EVELYN:** *(Turns and crosses to her.)* Hello, Maureen.

**MAUREEN:** Hello Evelyn. *(Closing the door.)* You're here earlier than we expected.

**EVELYN:** Am I? (*Hands the jacket to her and begins to remove her scarf.*) Well, it's because I'm so excited! I have a big surprise for everyone! (*Hands her the scarf.*) I just couldn't wait to get here. Luckily, it's only a twenty-two-mile drive from my condo.

**MAUREEN:** Yes. (*Shooting a glare at ANSEL, before hanging the items in the closet.*) Much closer than when we lived in that serene and majestic land of northern Michigan, where deer and antelope frolic in the beauty of soft winter snow. Unlike the flocks of plastic pink flamingos melting away here in the humidity of Florida's December sun.

**EVELYN:** Also, if I'm a tad early, it's partly my driver's fault. He was speeding along at forty-five miles an hour!

**ANSEL:** That fast?

**EVELYN:** We had to make up for some lost time since we stopped by Joycette's house first.

**ANSEL:** Joycette? Who's Joycette?

**EVELYN:** Dixie's sister.

**ANSEL:** Again, who's Dixie?

**EVELYN:** She's Gilbert's daughter.

**ANSEL:** Who's Gilbert?

**EVELYN:** My—my driver.

**ANSEL:** Oh! Your cab driver. Do I need to go pay him?

**EVELYN:** No, son. He's retired.

*ANSEL and MAUREEN exchange looks.*

**MAUREEN:** Mother Hall, you must be exhausted. Why don't you sit down and I'll get you something to drink?

**EVELYN:** That would be lovely. What do you have?

**MAUREEN:** I have club soda, tea, Ginger Ale—

**EVELYN:** Eggnog? Do you have eggnog?

**MAUREEN:** Well, yes. But I thought we'd save the eggnog for this evening's festivities.

**EVELYN:** I'm an old woman. I may not even be alive this evening. (*She sits on the sofa.*)

**MAUREEN:** Not if Santa answers my letter.

**EVELYN:** Pardon me?

**MAUREEN:** Eggnog it is. (*Exits to kitchen.*)

**EVELYN:** Ansel, has your brother arrived yet?

**ANSEL:** No, Mom. (*Glances at his watch.*) Chip's flight from California probably just landed. So, he'll be awhile yet.

**EVELYN:** California. Piffle-puff! I wish Chip would move here to Florida so he could be closer to me.

**ANSEL:** Ditto. But, you know, he's too busy playing big-shot out on the West Coast.

**EVELYN:** I worry about him. I'm afraid he's going to get swallowed up by an earthquake or get bamboozled into making one of those Hollywood porno movies.

**ANSEL:** Yeah, I—I wouldn't worry about that if I were you.

**EVELYN:** I do worry. When Chip was born, the doctor said he had unusually large genitals.

**ANSEL:** Mom! Really?!

**EVELYN:** Unlike you, Ansel. Yours were normal.

**ANSEL:** Lucky me.

**EVELYN:** Of course, I haven't bathed him since he was a child, so who knows?

**ANSEL:** Well, you could probably ask any one of his two-dozen-plus ex-fiancés.

**EVELYN:** And did you say Rachel won't be here until tomorrow?

**ANSEL:** Yeah. Sorry. She had other plans for this evening.

**EVELYN:** Good for her! She must be enjoying the university.

**ANSEL:** A little too much, if you ask me. But maybe we can facetime with her a little later.

**EVELYN:** Facetime?

**ANSEL:** Yeah, talk to her on the laptop with a video call.

**EVELYN:** That's so nice. Technology is something else, isn't it? In my day, we went crazy when the portable electric hair dryer was invented.

**MAUREEN:** (*Entering with a mug.*) Here you go, Mother Hall.

**EVELYN:** What is it?

**MAUREEN:** Your eggnog.

**EVELYN:** Oh, no thank you, dear. It's too early for eggnog. Let's wait until this evening, shall we? By the way, I noticed, Maureen, you're decorating with that collection of *objet d'art* I've been gifting you for the past several years.

**ANSEL:** (*Crosses and picks up one of the objects.*) Of course! We love these little artsy... thingy-bobs... don't we Maureen?

**MAUREEN:** If love is blind, sure.

**EVELYN:** But that thing is hideous, Ansel.

**MAUREEN:** That's what I said.

**ANSEL:** Maureen!

**EVELYN:** Honestly, I can't believe you've actually kept all those garish little tchotchkes.

**ANSEL:** We've kept them because you gave them to us.

**EVELYN:** That's sweet of you, dear, but if I were you, I'd just stick them in a box and hide them in the closet.

*ANSEL and MAUREEN exchange looks.*

**EVELYN:** Or better yet, throw them away.

**MAUREEN:** Yes!

**ANSEL:** I don't understand, Mom. If you think we should throw them out, why did you give them to us in the first place?

**EVELYN:** They were revenge gifts, dear.

**ANSEL:** Revenge? For what? ... Why?

**EVELYN:** Because several years ago you and Maureen gave me a vacuum cleaner for Christmas.

**MAUREEN:** That was Ansel's idea.

**ANSEL:** That was an expensive vacuum! It came with fifteen attachments and a swivel head.

**EVELYN:** I don't like vacuum cleaners, dear, swivel head or otherwise.

**MAUREEN:** See! This has been all your fault.

**ANSEL:** It was a Dyson!

**EVELYN:** I didn't want an appliance as a Christmas gift from my son and daughter-in-law. A nice, framed photo of the two of you would have been much more appreciated.

**ANSEL:** Fine! We'll make an appointment with a photographer. But it won't be under the tree by tomorrow.

**EVELYN:** Then next year, dear. This Christmas I'd like a microwave, if it's all the same to you.

**ANSEL:** A microwave? (*To MAUREEN.*) I can't win!

**MAUREEN:** Welcome to my world. So, Mother Hall, just to be clear, these ugly, tacky, and tasteless—THINGS—you've given us—

**EVELYN:** They're crap, dear. Throw them out.

**MAUREEN:** Halleluiah! This could turn out to be my best Christmas ever!

*Doorbell rings.*

**ANSEL:** That must be Chip.

**MAUREEN:** I spoke too soon.

**ANSEL:** He's early, too.

**MAUREEN:** *(Sarcastic.)* There's no such thing as early when it's family. *(She exits to kitchen.)*

*ANSEL opens the door. GILBERT, wearing a bright Hawaiian shirt and a straw fedora stands at the threshold clutching an overnight bag.*

**GILBERT:** Hello!

**ANSEL:** You're not Chip.

**GILBERT:** I'm Gilbert. I'm looking for Evelyn.

**ANSEL:** Oh! You're the driver! I'm sorry, I assumed she paid you.

**GILBERT:** She didn't pay me anything.

**ANSEL:** Oh, well, let's see—*(He takes his wallet from his pocket and removes a couple of twenties.)* here you go. And I'll take the bag. *(They exchange money and bag.)* Merry Christmas! You can keep the change.

**GILBERT:** *(Surprised.)* Thanks! *(He stuffs the money in his pocket.)*

**EVELYN:** *(Rising.)* Gilbert! What took you so long?

**GILBERT:** *(Crosses to her, leaving ANSEL at the door.)* I went to the house next door by mistake. They sent me over here. Nice people. I didn't care for their dog, though. He kept humping my leg.

**ANSEL:** Mom? *(Nodding to the open door.)* Hello?

**EVELYN:** Ansel, don't just stand there. Close the door.

*ANSEL reluctantly closes the door.*

**EVELYN:** Gilbert, I want you to meet my son.

**GILBERT:** Which one? The dreamer, or the stuffed shirt?

**EVELYN:** The stuffed shirt. Ansel, this is Gilbert.

*GILBERT offers his hand, ANSEL hesitantly shakes it.*

**GILBERT:** Nice to meet you, Ansel. Your mother has told me a lot about you.

**ANSEL:** Really? That must have been an informative fifty-minute cab ride.

**GILBERT:** Say, could I use your bathroom?

**ANSEL:** Uh—well—

**EVELYN:** It's up those stairs. Second door on the right.

**GILBERT:** Thanks. My IBS is on the rampage again.

**ANSEL:** IBS?

**GILBERT:** Irritable Bowel Syndrome. *(He exits upstairs.)*

**ANSEL:** Nice.

**EVELYN:** So, what do you think?

**ANSEL:** I think there's a very strange man about to blow up my bathroom. Mom, who is that guy? I thought he was your cab driver?

**EVELYN:** Oh, no, dear. Gilbert doesn't drive a cab... anymore. He's retired. I met him at the condominium. He offered to drive.

**ANSEL:** He's ninety years old. And you let him drive you here?

**EVELYN:** Don't be silly, Ansel. He's sixty-eight, almost my age.

**ANSEL:** *(Intently stares at her for a moment.)* Mom, you're not like dating that ole geezer, are you?

**EVELYN:** I'm not dating anyone, dear.

**MAUREEN:** *(Entering from kitchen.)* So... *(Looks around.)* Where is he?

**EVELYN:** Upstairs using the restroom. His IBS is acting up again, poor thing.

**MAUREEN:** His what?

**ANSEL:** Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

**MAUREEN:** I thought Chip was just lactose intolerant?

**ANSEL:** Chip's not here.

**EVELYN:** Chip's at the airport waiting on his luggage.

**MAUREEN:** Then who's upstairs in my bathroom?

**ANSEL:** Well, he's not Santa Claus, I can tell you that.

**GILBERT:** *(Suddenly appearing at the top of the stairs.)* Say, do you have a magazine I could read? This is going to take a while.

**MAUREEN:** Who's that?

**EVELYN:** Gilbert. *(She finds a magazine from the rack by the sofa and takes it to him.)*

**MAUREEN:** Who's Gilbert?

**ANSEL:** A retired cab driver with an irritated bowel. Weren't you paying attention?

**EVELYN:** Here you go, Gilbert. *(Hands him the magazine.)*

**GILBERT:** A National Geographic! This is some heavy reading. I may be awhile. *(Exits.)*

**MAUREEN:** Ansel? What's going on?

*Doorbell rings.*

**EVELYN:** Oh, Goody! That must be them!

**MAUREEN:** Them? Them who?

**EVELYN:** I invited a few extra guests over for Christmas Eve. I knew you wouldn't mind.

**MAUREEN:** Why would I mind? *(Glares at ANSEL.)* Ansel?

**ANSEL:** Don't look at me! It's the first I've heard of it.

*Doorbell rings.*

**EVELYN:** Ansel, let them in for goodness sake. Or do you want me to do it?

**ANSEL:** I'll do it. I'll do it.

*ANSEL opens the door. JOYCETTE and WINKIE are there. JOYCETTE, with big earrings, big hair, and bright red lipstick wears a sequined mini-skirt and a yellow feather boa. WINKIE is a plain woman attired in a prudish brown dress, geriatric sweater, simple hat and shoes, and carries a crochet bag with needles sticking out. ANSEL reacts.*

**ANSEL:** Please tell me you're collecting for charity.

**JOYCETTE:** Sugar, we already dropped all our change into the little red bucket.

**WINKIE:** We're looking for Evelyn. *(Holds up a note.)* This is the address she gave us.

**JOYCETTE:** (Sees EVELYN.) Evelyn! (Pushes past ANSEL and rushes to EVELYN and gives her a big hug.)

**WINKIE:** Never mind. We found her. (Steps inside handing the note and her crochet bag to ANSEL, then crosses to JOYCETTE and taps her on the shoulder.) My turn.

*JOYCETTE releases EVELYN, while WINKIE stoically stands waiting.*

**EVELYN:** Winkie, I'm so happy you came! (Steps to WINKIE, hugs her, though WINKIE does not reciprocate.) I have a surprise for you, dear.

**WINKIE:** I don't like surprises. The last time I got surprised was when my husband got twenty years.

**EVELYN:** I'm sorry, dear.

**WINKIE:** I thought it would've been longer.

**JOYCETTE:** Evelyn, (Indicating her boa.) is there someplace I can hang this? I don't want it to get damaged. It's a gift... from an admirer.

**EVELYN:** We'll find someplace safe, dear. But first, introductions! Everyone, this is Joycette...

**JOYCETTE:** (Waves with her boa, feathers flying.) Hi!

**EVELYN:** And this is Winkie.

**ANSEL:** Winkie?

**EVELYN:** Joycette and Winkie, this is my son Ansel and his wife... (Thinks for beat.)

**MAUREEN:** Maureen.

**EVELYN:** Maureen!

**WINKIE:** HEY... YOU! (Marches to ANSEL and whisks her bag away from him.) Why do you have my purse?!

**ANSEL:** You gave it to me.

**WINKIE:** Sticky fingers, huh? (Motioning with her fingers to her eyes, then to his eyes.) I'm gonna have to keep my eyes on you.

**EVELYN:** Maureen—

**MAUREEN:** You remembered!

**EVELYN:** Do be a gracious hostess and give Winkie a hug.

**MAUREEN:** A hug?

**EVELYN:** Well, at least a handshake.

**MAUREEN:** Okay. (Crosses to WINKIE and offers her hand.) Hello.

**WINKIE:** (*Shakes MAUREEN'S hand.*) Hello.

*Still clasping hands, they look at each other curiously for a few beats.*

**MAUREEN:** Welcome to our home. (*Glances awkwardly at ANSEL.*)

**WINKIE:** Thanks. (*Ends the handshake, then immediately takes a bottle of hand sanitizer from her bag and slathers it on.*)

**EVELYN:** Ansel, be a dear, and help Joycette find a place for her—thingy.

**JOYCETTE:** Boa. It was a gift. I have an admirer! (*Struts to ANSEL and tickles his nose with the boa, before slinging it over her shoulder, feathers flying.*) These are real feathers!

**ANSEL:** You don't say?

**JOYCETTE:** I would die if it got crumpled!

**ANSEL:** How would you know?

**EVELYN:** Ansel, where are your manners? Shake hands with Winkie!

**ANSEL:** Sorry. (*Crosses and offers his hand.*) Nice to meet you. (*Aside to EVELYN.*) Happy?

**WINKIE:** We've already met. (*Shields her bag before aggressively taking his hand.*)

**ANSEL:** (*Quickly pulls away his hand and grimaces.*) What the hell?

**WINKIE:** Hand sanitizer. You can never be too careful.

**ANSEL:** (*To EVELYN.*) That's an understatement if I ever heard one.

**MAUREEN:** (*Picking up a couple of feathers before crossing and handing them to JOYCETTE.*) Here, Joycette... you're molting.

**JOYCETTE:** Huh?

**MAUREEN:** (*Crosses to closet and opens it.*) You can hang your boa in here in the guest closet.

**JOYCETTE:** (*Following her, then looks inside.*) I don't know, it looks cramped. And this is a—

**MAUREEN:** A gift. From an admirer. See, plenty of room.

**JOYCETTE:** Never mind, sugar. I'll just wear it. Besides, I might forget and leave it here, and the next thing I know, you're wearing it!

**MAUREEN:** No. No, I wouldn't.

**JOYCETTE:** Not that I would blame you. (*Appraises her.*) Obviously, your outfit could use a little razzle-dazzle, am I right? Tell you what. I'll see if Father Francisco can get you a fancy boa like this one. But not in yellow. We wouldn't want to be like twins, right?

**EVELYN:** Girls, where are the others?

**JOYCETTE:** I sent them to the liquor store. What's a party without a three-dollar bottle of wine? Am I right?

**EVELYN:** Oh, they didn't need to do that. I'm sure Maureen has plenty of cheap wine.

**JOYCETTE:** They didn't mind. I think they wanted to get some cigarettes, anyways.

**WINKIE:** And beer. I hope they remember to get some beer.

**JOYCETTE:** OMG, you people have got a really, really nice house! And I love, love, love your decorations! (*Spies one of the hideous décor objects.*) WINKIE! LOOK! (*Hurries across and picks it up.*) I have one just like this!

**WINKIE:** Yours is green.

**JOYCETTE:** Only mine is green. (*To MAUREEN.*) Wow, can you believe it? We have the same tastes!

**MAUREEN:** I can't say I'm shocked.

**JOYCETTE:** (*Spies framed photo and picks it up.*) I don't care much for this picture frame, though. A little too "blayzzay" for my taste. Cute girls. Are they yours?

**MAUREEN:** (*Crosses and takes the photo.*) No. That's a photo of me and my sister. It was taken when we were little... before... well, it's the only one I have, so please—I'll just take it. Thank you.

**ANSEL:** Mom? Uh—who are your friends?

**EVELYN:** Weren't you listening? Winkie and Joycette.

**ANSEL:** Yes, Winkie and—and Joycette. But who are they? How did you meet? And when are they leaving?

**EVELYN:** They're Gilbert's daughters.

**ANSEL:** (*To MAUREEN as if mystery solved.*) They're Gilbert's daughters.

**JOYCETTE:** Where is Pops?

**EVELYN:** They call him Pops. Isn't that adorable?

**ANSEL:** Only in certain parts of Georgia, I suspect.

**EVELYN:** Gilbert is upstairs in the bathroom.

**WINKIE:** Oh, then he's going to be a while.

**EVELYN:** He has a National Geographic.

**JOYCETTE:** We ain't gonna see him for two hours, maybe more.

Which gives us lots and lots of time to get acquainted. (*She slinks*

to ANSEL.) You're cute! Evelyn said you were a looker. And she wasn't kidding!

**EVELYN:** No, no, Joycette, not Ansel. I was referring to my other son, Chip.

**ANSEL:** Really?

**EVELYN:** Chip looks like a movie star. Don't be jealous, dear.

**JOYCETTE:** I dunno Evelyn, this guy's a keeper. I wouldn't throw him out.

**MAUREEN:** But then you haven't lived with him for twenty-three years.

**EVELYN:** I suppose he is a handsome boy, in his own way. Of course, I'm his mother. I have to say that.

**ANSEL:** Thanks, Mom.

**JOYCETTE:** (*Playing with his hair.*) Well, I think he's adorable.

**MAUREEN:** (*Stepping to them.*) But he's married. At least for a little while longer.

**JOYCETTE:** Nice shirt. (*She rubs her hands across his chest.*) But you look too stuffy all buttoned up like that. (*Begins to unbutton his shirt.*) Loosen up a little. Show some skin. You're never too old to get sexy and just, you know, let it all hang out.

**MAUREEN:** (*Re-buttoning ANSEL'S shirt.*) He's loose enough. And if he lets anything hang out, there will be a divorce.

**JOYCETTE:** (*Laughs.*) O-M-G! You are so funny, Maureen! Or can I call you Mo?

**MAUREEN:** No. No Mo, thank you.

**JOYCETTE:** Suit yourself. But listen, don't you worry. I'm not after your man. I'm just naturally flirtatious. Which is an important characteristic necessary for the advancement of my career.

**MAUREEN:** Don't tell me. You're an exotic dancer.

**JOYCETTE:** How did you know?!

**MAUREEN:** A wild guess. So, Joycette, could I get you anything? Like a cab? Or the phone number for a health clinic, maybe?

**JOYCETTE:** I could use a drink. You wouldn't happen to have Ginger Ale, would you?

**MAUREEN:** Yes, as a matter of fact—

**JOYCETTE:** OMG! I love, love, love Ginger Ale! Winkie, can you believe how much this la-tee-da lady and I have in common? Interior design and now Ginger Ale!

**MAUREEN:** I'll get you a glass. Uh... Winkie, would you like a refreshment as well?

**WINKIE:** Do you have beer?

**MAUREEN:** Uh—no. Sorry.

**WINKIE:** Then I'll wait.

**MAUREEN:** Alright then, I'll be right back... maybe.

**JOYCETTE:** Say, Maureen, how about I go with you?! We can compare notes and find out what else we have in common.

**MAUREEN:** Great.

*MAUREEN and JOYCETTE exit to kitchen, as EVELYN sits on the sofa. She looks up at ANSEL, clears her throat and nods toward WINKIE.*

**ANSEL:** So, Winkie, why don't you make yourself comfortable.

*WINKIE glares at him suspiciously, then sits next to EVELYN as ANSEL sits in a chair opposite.*

**EVELYN:** *(After several uncomfortable beats.)* Isn't this nice?!

**ANSEL:** Like stepping on a land mine, courtesy of the neighbor's dog.

**EVELYN:** Go on Ansel, ask Winkie something.

**ANSEL:** What do you mean, ask her something?

**EVELYN:** Engage her in conversation. Can't you see she's quite uncomfortable with the silence?

**ANSEL:** Okay. Uh—Winkie, is that your birth name?

**WINKIE:** Dunno. I was adopted.

**ANSEL:** Adopted?

**WINKIE:** Shocking, isn't it?

**ANSEL:** Yes... and no. So, your real name may be something else? You hope.

**WINKIE:** Maybe.

**ANSEL:** But your family, they call you Winkie? Interesting.

**WINKIE:** If you say so.

**ANSEL:** Well, if you ask me, you look like you could be an Ethyl... or an Agnes... or Broomhilda—

**WINKIE:** Whatever.

**EVELYN:** *(A beat.)* Go on.

**ANSEL:** It's your turn.

**EVELYN:** (*Scolding.*) Ansel!

**ANSEL:** Okay, okay! I see you have a wedding ring. You're married then?

**WINKIE:** Yes.

**ANSEL:** So, your husband... will he also be joining this party later?  
And please, please, say no.

**WINKIE:** No.

**ANSEL:** Score.

**EVELYN:** Winkie, tell Ansel where your husband is staying.

**WINKIE:** Florida State.

**ANSEL:** University?

**WINKIE:** Prison.

**ANSEL:** Florida State... Prison?!

**EVELYN:** Isn't that interesting, Ansel? Winkie's husband is a convict!  
We've never had a convict in our family before!

**ANSEL:** Before what?!

**EVELYN:** His name is Simon Struddleheimer.

**ANSEL:** Simon Struddleheimer? He... he sounds familiar.

**EVELYN:** He's an embezzler!

**ANSEL:** Oh, yeah! (*A beat.*) Jeeze—Louise! Isn't Simon Struddleheimer connected to organized crime?

**WINKIE:** Yes.

*Doorbell rings.*

**EVELYN:** Oh! That's probably the boys. Go let them in, Ansel.

**ANSEL:** (*Crosses to the door.*) Oh, gee. Who's this going to be? The Miami Mafia?

*Immediately, ANSEL slides the chain lock in place, then carefully opens the door and peers through the crack, as WINKIE takes out her crocheting and works on her project.*

**CHIP:** (*Off.*) Hey, hey, hey!

**ANSEL:** Chip! (*He quickly releases the chain and throws the door open.*) Am I glad it's you!

**CHIP:** *(He is an energetic casually GQ-attired playboy.)* And I'm happy to be me, Brother! Merry Christmas!

**ANSEL:** Yeah, yeah, yeah... *(Pulls him across the threshold.)* Get in here.

**CHIP:** Wait, hold on a sec. I got someone with me.

**ANSEL:** Again?

**CHIP:** Yeah. I met her at the airport.

**ANSEL:** Which? The departing terminal, or the arriving one?

**CHIP:** Departing of course. But—*(He leans toward ANSEL.)* in between, on the airplane, she and I got busy, if you know what I mean.

**ANSEL:** You're kidding?

**CHIP:** Nope. As of today, I have renewed my membership in the mile-high club.

**ANSEL:** One day, Brother, you're going to make internet news and not in a good way.

**CHIP:** Whatever. Prepare your eyes for a feast! This one's a trophy, I'm telling you. *(He calls off, beckoning.)* Kandie, come on in!

**ANSEL:** Kandie? That sounds about right. You have a type, you know that don't you?

**CHIP:** I have discriminating taste. So, whose old Bonneville is parked out front?

**ANSEL:** I'm guessing it's Gilbert's.

**CHIP:** Who's Gilbert?

**ANSEL:** You'll see.

*KANDIE enters dressed in heels, carrying a small purse. She is the epitome of a sexpot.*

**CHIP:** Here she is, my little cuddle cake. Kandie, Ansel. Ansel, Kandie.

**KANDIE:** Hi ya, Stretch.

**CHIP:** Kandie is a former Miami Dolphins' cheerleader! Can you believe it?

**ANSEL:** Yes. Hello Kandie. Join the party. *(He closes the door behind them.)*

**EVELYN:** *(Rising.)* Chipper!

**CHIP:** Mother! *(He crosses to her, and they share a brief and relatively unaffectionate hug.)* How are you?

**EVELYN:** Never better!

**CHIP:** You look fantastic! New clothes!

**EVELYN:** Do you like my outfit?

**CHIP:** Yeah! What gives? Did you get a new spark plug in your engine or something?

**EVELYN:** That's one way of putting it, I suppose. Chipper, there's someone I want you to meet, but at the moment, he's on the can.

**CHIP:** *(A beat.)* On the can? *(Looks at ANSEL.)*

**ANSEL:** He's also a trophy.

**EVELYN:** On the can. Well, that's what he calls it. He has funny little names for all sorts of things.

**CHIP:** Okaaay. Well, Mom, I have someone I want you to meet, too. *(Motions to KANDIE to join him.)* This is Kandie.

**KANDIE:** Hi ya, Grams.

**CHIP:** Mom, I have a surprise for you!

**EVELYN:** That's nice dear.

**CHIP:** Kandie and I... we're engaged!

**EVELYN:** That's not a surprise, dear.

**ANSEL:** Not in the least.

*WINKIE loudly clears her throat.*

**EVELYN:** Chip, I want you to meet Winkie.

**CHIP:** Winkie?

**ANSEL:** That's what I said. Question mark included.

**WINKIE:** Hello.

**CHIP:** Hi.

**WINKIE:** Did you bring beer?

**CHIP:** No. *(Side-steps to ANSEL.)* Who's that?

**ANSEL:** One of Gilbert's girls.

**CHIP:** Again, who's Gilbert?

**ANSEL:** He's the surprise Mom has waiting for you in the bathroom. *(Crossing to the kitchen.)* I'm going to let Maureen know you're here, and that you've brought your current temporary future bride with you. She'll want to make a toast, I'm sure of it. In the meantime, you can find out the identity of Winkie's celebrity husband and where he's currently residing, and why. *(Exits.)*

**KANDIE:** *(To CHIP as she crosses upstage.)* I don't think your mama likes me! *(Snubbed, she sits and takes a cellphone from her purse.)*

**CHIP:** *(Following her.)* Of course, she likes you. Don't you, Mom?

**EVELYN:** What's the point? *(Sitting on the sofa.)* Now, Chipper, come sit by your mother and tell me why you haven't moved away from that dreadful place you call home.

**CHIP:** *(Crossing to her and sitting.)* California is not a dreadful place, Mom. You should come visit me sometime and find out for yourself.

**EVELYN:** I would, but I'm afraid of earthquakes and casting couches.

**CHIP:** What?

**EVELYN:** Chipper, I don't like what you've done to your hair. You're not in a cult, are you?

**CHIP:** What? No. Look, Mom, don't you want to ask me about my fiancée?

**EVELYN:** Which one? Lucy or Mindy or Peppermint Patty? You have a long list.

**CHIP:** Shhssh, Mom, not so loud. I broke up with all of them. I'm talking about my new fiancée. Kandie.

**EVELYN:** Oh, I'm sorry. Not really.

**CHIP:** Not really? You're not really sorry?

**EVELYN:** No, dear. I'm sorry, I don't want to hear about your new fiancée Kandie. *(To KANDIE.)* No offense, dear.

**CHIP:** Why not?

**EVELYN:** Well, quite frankly, it would be a waste of my time. And at my age, I don't have a lot of time to waste.

**CHIP:** But, Mom, she's the one. I can feel it.

**EVELYN:** If you say so, dear.

*CHIP rises and steps away, frustrated, as MAUREEN enters carrying two glasses of ginger-ale.*

**MAUREEN:** Chip! *(She crosses downstage center.)*

**CHIP:** *(Meeting her and kisses her on the cheek.)* Merry Christmas!

**MAUREEN:** Silly. My name is Maureen. Not Merry. Merry was the name of one of your fiancées, remember?

**CHIP:** Ha-ha.

**MAUREEN:** *(Hands him a glass.)* Here.

**CHIP:** But speaking of which, Maureen, I want you to meet Kandie.

*KANDIE steps to them.*

**KANDIE:** Hi ya, sister.

**CHIP:** She's a former cheerleader for the Jacksonville Jaguars.

**KANDIE:** The Dolphins, not the Jags.

**CHIP:** I don't really follow football.

**MAUREEN:** Ansel told me you were engaged... again. *(To KANDIE.)*  
Congratulations. You must be a saint.

**KANDIE:** No. I tried out for the New Orleans squad, but... my interview didn't go as planned.

**MAUREEN:** I see. I think. No, by saint I meant that you must be extremely forgiving.

**KANDIE:** Oh, no. I'm not the forgiving type at all. Why would you think I am?

**MAUREEN:** Because you agreed to marry Chip, in spite of his chronic flatulence.

**CHIP:** I'm lactose intolerant.

**MAUREEN:** *(To KANDIE.)* He's lactose intolerant. But I'm sure you already knew that.

**KANDIE:** Actually, no. We haven't known each other for very long.

**MAUREEN:** Let me guess. Chip approached you this morning in the waiting area of your terminal at LAX and asked if you were related to Katy Perry or Angelina Jolie, then he engaged you in one of his titillating conversations where upon he expounded diatribe after diatribe of his many remarkable and exaggerated experiences of rubbing elbows with the Hollywood elite managing to break away from you just long enough to arrange for the two of you to sit together on your flight to Miami, where while up in the air he, like the jetliner, swept you off your feet until you landed safely into his arms having succumbed to that ever-mystifying experience of love-at-first-sight. Am I close?

**KANDIE:** That's amazing! Are you psychic?!

**CHIP:** I—I called ahead. I couldn't wait to tell her about you, Mandie.

**KANDIE:** Mandie?!

**MAUREEN:** Mindy.

**CHIP:** MINDY! No, no, Maureen. Not Mindy! Mandie! I mean Kandie! Kandie!

**MAUREEN:** Are you sure?

**KANDIE:** Sister, you really had me going for a second. Say, I just remembered something, Chunk—

**CHIP:** *(Insulted.)* Chip.

**KANDIE:** Do you still have my underwear in your pocket? *(She reaches for his pants.)*

**CHIP:** Not in front of my mother! *(He takes a pair of panties from his pocket and hands them to her.)*

**KANDIE:** Thanks. Oh, *(She opens her purse and takes out a leopard-print men's bikini brief.)* and here's your underwear back.

**CHIP:** Terrific. *(Embarrassed, he swipes them away and shoves them in his pocket.)*

**MAUREEN:** You two are obviously meant for each other. It's a shame it won't last. *(Hands KANDIE a glass.)* Here, for you.

**KANDIE:** Thanks.

**CHIP:** What happened to Ansel?

**MAUREEN:** *(Looks off.)* I thought he was right behind me. *(A beat.)* That little tart! ANSEL!

*Giggling, ANSEL stumbles into the room, buttoning his shirt. JOYCETTE is right behind him, tickling the back of his neck with her boa, and is unseen by CHIP, who is sipping from his glass.*

**ANSEL:** Stop it!

**MAUREEN:** I left the two of you unsupervised for all of ten seconds.

**ANSEL:** It was her. I did nothing.

**JOYCETTE:** *(Stepping from behind ANSEL.)* Relax, Maureen, I was just funning around with him.

**CHIP:** *(Immediately spews his drink.)* JOYCETTE!

**JOYCETTE:** *(Stares at CHIP for a beat.)* Hey! I know you!

**ANSEL:** You know her?

**CHIP:** No! No, no, no. I've never—never, never seen her before in my life.

**MAUREEN:** You just screamed her name—Joycette.

**CHIP:** No, no, it wasn't a scream. And—and I didn't say Joycette. Why would I say Joycette? *(Laughing nervously.)* I don't know her. What I said was, uh... uh... rejoice. That's what I said—rejoice. Re-JOICE! Tis the season!

**JOYCETTE:** (*Crosses to CHIP and begins to circle him, looking him up and down.*) I know you from somewhere. What's your name?

**CHIP:** My name? I—I don't have one.

**MAUREEN:** Chip. His name is Chip. But he'll answer to about anything if you show enough cleavage.

**JOYCETTE:** That doesn't sound right. I know you, I'm sure of it. But I called you something else.

**CHIP:** Noooo, no, no, no, no. You didn't call me anything because you don't know me. People often think they know me, but they don't. Not ever. Nope, they never know me.

**JOYCETTE:** Let me think. Where could I have met you?

**CHIP:** Nowhere. (*Laughs nervously.*) We—we've never met. I repeat: We have never met.

**JOYCETTE:** Sugar, I never forget a man's face. And I also have a good memory when it comes to other body parts. Say, would you mind taking off your pants?

**MAUREEN:** He wouldn't mind, but I would!

**JOYCETTE:** Oh well, don't you worry I'll eventually figure you out.

**KANDIE:** Who is this bimbo?

**JOYCETTE:** Who are you calling a bimbo, bimbo?

**EVELYN:** Now, now, girls... (*EVELYN steps between JOYCETTE and KANDIE.*) I have an idea.

**ANSEL:** Mother, don't be rude. This was just getting interesting.

**EVELYN:** Maureen, why don't all of us ladies go outside on the veranda. I think the girls would enjoy seeing your lovely gardens.

**MAUREEN:** Well, thank you, Mother Hall. That's a wonderful idea. I am rather proud of my flowers and plants.

**EVELYN:** Yes, you are, dear. Far more than you should be.

**CHIP:** No, I don't think that's such a great idea.

**ANSEL:** (*Smiling.*) Why not?

**CHIP:** Why not? Because. Because... Joycette and Kandie have nothing in common. Absolutely nothing.

**ANSEL:** In spite of stating the obvious that a three-hour relationship hardly qualifies you as an expert on Kandie, but if you don't know Joycette, how would you know they would have nothing in common? Unless you do know Joycette?

**CHIP:** Brother... shut up!

**EVELYN:** Chip, dear?

**CHIP:** Yes, Mother?

**EVELYN:** Can it. Now, come girls let's get some fresh air. Perhaps while we're away, the other boys will arrive. I want everyone together when I announce the surprise!

**CHIP:** Boys? What other boys?

**ANSEL:** Some of Joycette's people. Paying customers, if I had to guess. Would that be a good guess, Chipper?

**EVELYN:** You too, Winkie, dear. Come with us.

*EVELYN gathers the women and they ALL exit into the kitchen.*

**CHIP:** Ansel, what's Mom talking about? She said something about a surprise? What's with that?

**ANSEL:** No, no, no, little brother, that's not the mystery of the moment. First, you tell me what the heck THAT was all about.

**CHIP:** That what?

**ANSEL:** I'm not stupid! You might be, but I'm not. Joycette! You two know each other.

**CHIP:** Yes, yes, I know her. From a long, long, long time ago. We used to be engaged.

**ANSEL:** Tell me something I haven't already figured out.

**CHIP:** Okay. Years ago, when she and I were dating, she used to do some crazy stuff with me that involved hot wax.

**ANSEL:** Hot wax?

**CHIP:** Yes! Hot wax! She would light up like a hundred candles... had those little hellish torches sitting around on every flat surface in the bedroom.

**ANSEL:** And?

**CHIP:** And one time, when we were... extremely intimate, she drizzled hot melted wax all over it.

**ANSEL:** It?

**CHIP:** Yeah, it... *(Indicates his groin.)*

**ANSEL:** Oh! ...Ouch!

**CHIP:** No shit! I'm telling you, that crazy broad makes a voodoo witch look like Florence Nightingale! To this day, whenever I see a lighted candle, I break out in a cold sweat and then I get a woody! *(Suddenly grabs ANSEL by the shirt-front.)* We've got to get her out of here before she turns me into a wax trophy and puts my ass on display at Madame Tussauds'!

**ANSEL:** *(Pulls CHIP'S hands away, then slaps him across the cheek.)*  
Calm down!

**CHIP:** Sorry.

**ANSEL:** Okay, now listen. As scary as you think Joycette might be, we have a much bigger problem.

**CHIP:** A bigger problem? What?

**ANSEL:** Not what—who.

**CHIP:** Who?

**ANSEL:** Mom.

**CHIP:** Mom?

**ANSEL:** And her boyfriend.

**CHIP:** Mom has a boyfriend?

**ANSEL:** Maybe. She said she wasn't dating him, but I don't know that I believe her.

**CHIP:** Who is he?

**ANSEL:** He's the owner of the Bonneville.

**CHIP:** Who?

**ANSEL:** The guy in the bathroom.

**CHIP:** There's a guy in the bathroom? What's he doing in the bathroom?

**ANSEL:** Arts and crafts, what do you think? The point is, I think he's Mom's big surprise!

**CHIP:** A surprise boyfriend?! How could you let this happen? You were supposed to move down here from Michigan so you could keep an eye on her!

**ANSEL:** I didn't move down here to keep an eye on her. I moved here so I could watch out for her.

**CHIP:** Apparently, you've been sleeping on the job. How did she get a boyfriend? She lives in a retirement village, for chrissakes. *(A beat.)* God, I hope she's not pregnant.

**ANSEL:** Seriously?

**CHIP:** She's not back with that gang, is she? Tell me you got her away from them! What were they called, the Sensei Slicers?

**ANSEL:** The Silver Sneakers.

**CHIP:** Yeah! Them!

**ANSEL:** They aren't a gang. They're a geriatric exercise club, you idiot.

**CHIP:** Whatever. She's obviously out of control.

**ANSEL:** She's an independent woman. I can't control her 24/7.

**CHIP:** He wants her money. That's what he wants. He's younger than her, isn't he?

**ANSEL:** So she says.

**CHIP:** A boy-toy! Mom has hooked up with a boy-toy gold-digger.

**ANSEL:** He is not a boy-toy. But he's nothing like Dad. So I don't know what she sees in him, I just know something is not right.

**CHIP:** I'll tell you what's not right. The dude is after my inheritance.

**ANSEL:** Inheritance? Is that what you're getting un-glued about? Mom's welfare is what's important, you ingrate.

**CHIP:** Okay, they both matter to me. Just being honest, I'm counting on an inheritance. It's expensive living in California.

*GILBERT enters from down the stairs, carrying the magazine.*

**GILBERT:** That was a really good story about those Amazon mid-wife birthing doctors. Great pictures, too!

**CHIP:** Who's that?

**ANSEL:** Mom's boy-toy.

**CHIP:** He's not a boy-toy. He's a hundred years old.

**ANSEL:** Close. Gilbert! This is my brother, Chip.

**GILBERT:** Ah, the dreamer. Evelyn has told me all about you. (*Offers his hand.*)

**CHIP:** (*Firmly takes his hand and pulls him into a very close face to face stare.*) Has she now? Funny, she hasn't mentioned you at all.

**ANSEL:** Ease up, Al Capone.

**CHIP:** You got a last name, Gilbert?

**GILBERT:** Bough.

**CHIP:** Bough?

**GILBERT:** Yeah. Bough.

**CHIP:** Bough, like in bow-wow?

**GILBERT:** No.

**CHIP:** Spell it.

**GILBERT:** B-O-U-G-H. Like in a bough of holly. You know, the Christmas song.

**CHIP:** Uh-huh. Where do you live, Gilbert Bough?

**GILBERT:** Palmetto Bay.

**CHIP:** (To ANSEL.) That's where Mom lives, right?

**ANSEL:** Yes.

**CHIP:** Are you writing this down?

**ANSEL:** No.

**CHIP:** You should. Alright, Gilbert Bough from Palmetto Bay, what's your social security number?

**ANSEL:** Chip, that's enough.

*Doorbell rings, ANSEL crosses to answer.*

**GILBERT:** So, son, I like holding hands as well as the next guy, but you're starting to make me feel uncomfortable.

**CHIP:** Good!

**ANSEL:** Chip! Release! (Opens door.) Crikey!

**CHIP:** (Releases GILBERT'S hand, moves to ANSEL.) Who are they?!

**ANSEL:** Looks like Count Dracula and Pee Wee Herman.

*TORCH, wearing a scowl and dressed like a gothic thug, and DIXIE, dressed in men's jeans, a white un-tucked button-down shirt and tie, and her hair tucked under a backwards ball cap, and carrying a 12-pack of beer, enter through the door.*

**DIXIE:** Sup, bro? (Fakes a stomach punch toward ANSEL, then steps past him, pausing before CHIP.) Hey dude. (Punches CHIP on the shoulder, then crosses to GILBERT and kisses him on the cheek.) Hi ya, Pops.

**GILBERT:** How's my girl?

*ANSEL and CHIP exchange looks.*

**DIXIE:** I'm good, Pops, but don't call me a girl.

**GILBERT:** I forgot. This is going take me a while to get used to. *(To ANSEL and CHIP.)* Boys, this is my daughter—

**DIXIE:** Son.

**GILBERT:** Son. Dixie.

**DIXIE:** Dick.

**GILBERT:** Dick.

*ANSEL and CHIP exchange looks again.*

**GILBERT:** And this handsome young fella... you're still a fella, right?

**TORCH:** Yeah.

**GILBERT:** This young fella is my grandson... uh, what do we call you now?

**TORCH:** Torch.

**GILBERT:** That's right, Torch.

**ANSEL:** Torch?

*ANSEL and CHIP exchange looks a third time.*

**DIXIE:** I brought beer. Where do you dudes want me to put it?

**ANSEL:** Uh, Chip, would you take the beer into the kitchen, please.

**CHIP:** Glad to. *(He crosses and takes the 12-pack from DIXIE and moves toward the kitchen.)*

**DIXIE:** Want me to go with ya? We could knock out a couple of those before the girls even know it's here. *(Punches him on the arm.)*

**CHIP:** No! No, no, no, no, no... *(Quickly exits.)*

**GILBERT:** Where's Evelyn?

**ANSEL:** She went outside to the patio—

**GILBERT:** Good. I could use some fresh air, too. *(He starts to cross, but stops suddenly, pondering intently for several beats.)*

**ANSEL:** Gilbert? *(Steps toward him.)* Gilbert? Are you okay?

**GILBERT:** I think I'm getting a signal.

**ANSEL:** A—*(Glances at the others who shrug.)* A signal?

**GILBERT:** Yeah. Wait a second. *(A beat.)* Affirmative. I gotta go... again. *(GILBERT hurries up the stairs. After a beat a door slams.)*

**ANSEL:** *(To TORCH.)* So, uh, I gotta ask... You're not like "packing" are you?

**TORCH:** No. And neither is my Aunt Dixie.

**DIXIE:** Hey! You will call me uncle—Uncle Dick. Got that?!

**TORCH:** How about I call you Douche-Bag?

**DIXIE:** (*Gets in his face.*) Shut up!

**TORCH:** (*Reciprocates.*) You shut up!

**DIXIE:** Don't call me that, again! It's disgusting.

**TORCH:** If you're gonna be a guy, then you gotta talk like a guy. Guys call each other names like that.

**DIXIE:** (*To ANSEL.*) You're a guy, right? Do you go around calling other guys douche-bags?

**ANSEL:** No. No, I don't.

**DIXIE:** (*To TORCH.*) Stop messing with me! (*Jabs his chest with her finger.*) You will show me some respect, Junior.

**TORCH:** I don't gotta respect nothin' or nobody. Especially some whacko like you who can't decide if your plumbing is indoor or outdoor.

**DIXIE:** How dare you talk to me like that! I'm your aunt.

**TORCH:** I thought you was my uncle?

**DIXIE:** I am! Shut up! I'm going to tell your mom.

**TORCH:** I don't care. Go ahead.

**DIXIE:** I will. Where exactly can I find his mother?

**ANSEL:** Who's his mother?

**DIXIE:** My sister, Joycette.

**ANSEL:** Oh! That explains things... a little. (*Points off.*) She's that way.

*DIXIE exits to kitchen. ANSEL turns to look at TORCH, who challengingly stares back. Several beats pass.*

**ANSEL:** So, looks like it's just the two us.

**TORCH:** Okay, old man, so you can count. Am I supposed to be impressed? (*Starts wandering around picking up things and looking at them.*)

**ANSEL:** What—what are you doing?

**TORCH:** Just looking. Don't worry, I'm not gonna steal nothin'. (*Picks up a bauble.*) Except maybe this. (*Picks up another.*) Or this.

**ANSEL:** (*Crosses and takes objects away.*) Those are my wife's. I'm sure she would prefer that you didn't touch them.

**TORCH:** (*Moves away, casing the room.*) Why? Are they expensive?

**ANSEL:** No. (*Returns objects to original places.*) But they have sentimental value.

**TORCH:** What about this? (*Picks up one of Evelyn's "gifts", then sarcastic.*) Is this sentimentally valuable too?

**ANSEL:** Not anymore. That was a gift from my mother. Five bucks and it's yours.

**TORCH:** Pass. (*Sets it down and picks up MAUREEN'S old family photo.*) These your kids?

**ANSEL:** No. That is a photo of my wife and her sister.

**TORCH:** (*Gives him a disgusting look.*) Gross. Are you some kind of a pervert?

**ANSEL:** That picture was taken a long time ago when they were little girls. My wife was a grown woman when I married her.

**TORCH:** Is she hot?

**ANSEL:** What?

**TORCH:** Your wife. Is she hot?

**ANSEL:** Maybe—that's none of your business!

**TORCH:** I kinda got a thing for cougars.

**ANSEL:** I'm not discussing the attractiveness of my wife with—with the likes of you.

**TORCH:** Then what about her sister? Is she hot?

**ANSEL:** I don't know. I've never met her. They were foster kids, separated as children. My wife hasn't seen her sister since that picture was taken. Why am I telling you this? (*Takes photo away.*)

**TORCH:** Don't ask me, old man. I sure as hell don't care.

**ANSEL:** You know, you're—you're in my house—

**TORCH:** Whoop-de-do.

**ANSEL:** As a guest in my home, you could be a little more polite.

**TORCH:** I could, but I won't be. I don't even wanna be here.

**ANSEL:** That makes two of us.

**TORCH:** But I promised my mom thirty minutes, so don't worry your little pink panties into a bunch. After that, I'm outta here, old man.

**ANSEL:** (*Looks to the heavens.*) Why?!

**TORCH:** Why what, old man?

**ANSEL:** Why... I was just wondering about your old man... your father, I suppose he and your Uncle Simon Struddleheimer are Florida State roommates?

**TORCH:** I ain't got no dad.

**ANSEL:** Everyone has a father.

**TORCH:** I said I ain't got no dad! Now back off, old man.

*TORCH crosses upstage taking a stance, glaring at ANSEL. MAUREEN enters from the kitchen carrying an open laptop.*

**MAUREEN:** Ansel! Your daughter would like to say hi. She's on FaceTime!

**ANSEL:** You mean she's on Skype?

**MAUREEN:** Do you want me to throw my shoe at you?

**ANSEL:** *(He meets MAUREEN who shares the laptop screen with him.)* Hi Sweetie!

**RACHEL:** *(Off.)* Hi Dad! Merry Christmas Eve!

**ANSEL:** Merry Christmas Eve to you too. I wish you were here! Or—  
*(Glances at TORCH.)* maybe not.

**RACHEL:** *(Off.)* Mom said Grandma brought guests.

**ANSEL:** She brought a circus—

**MAUREEN:** Be nice.

**ANSEL:** Of very interesting people.

**RACHEL:** *(Off.)* Will they still be there tomorrow?

**ANSEL:** If even one of them is still here tomorrow, you and your mother might as well start planning my funeral.

**TORCH:** Hey! *(Holds up a framed photo of RACHEL.)*

**ANSEL:** *(To TORCH.)* Do you mind? We're trying to have a family conversation.

**TORCH:** *(Indicates the photo.)* I know her!

**RACHEL:** *(Off.)* Wait. Who was that?

**ANSEL:** Nobody. *(He leaves MAUREEN and quickly crosses to TORCH.)*

**MAUREEN:** I don't know who he is Rachel, but I am guessing he's one of your Grandmother's guests. *(Looks at TORCH.)* Either that, or we're being robbed by some gang member.

**ANSEL:** *(Takes photo away.)* Give me that!

**TORCH:** Hey, old man, I know that chick.

**ANSEL:** No, you don't.

**TORCH:** Yeah, I do.

**ANSEL:** (*Losing patience.*) Oh, really? (*Grabs TORCH by his jacket and drags him to face the laptop screen.*) Rachel! Do you know this hoodlum?

**RACHEL:** (*Off.*) Torch!

**TORCH:** Hi Babe.

**RACHEL:** (*Off.*) Torch, what are you doing at my house?

**ANSEL:** (*Staring wide-eyed.*) YOU KNOW HIM?!

**RACHEL:** (*Off.*) Uh—yes. But I can explain!

**TORCH:** Told you so. She's my girlfriend.

**ANSEL:** (*Choking.*) Over my cold, dead body.

**MAUREEN:** Uh—Rachel, what happened to Tim?

**RACHEL:** (*Off.*) He is Tim.

**TORCH:** Don't—like—Tim. Tim is lame. Torch is badass.

**RACHEL:** (*Off.*) I'm coming home, right now!

**ANSEL:** You bet you're sweet—

**MAUREEN:** Ansel!

**ANSEL:** —little missy, you're coming home! You—you have some explaining to do!

**RACHEL:** (*Off.*) And I'll explain when I get there. Bye!

**MAUREEN:** (*Peeking at ANSEL.*) Oh... dear.

**ANSEL:** Oh, dear, my ass.

**MAUREEN:** Ansel!

**ANSEL:** (*To TORCH.*) Get out of my house.

**MAUREEN:** No! Tim, stay!

**TORCH:** Don't—like—Tim.

**ANSEL:** I—don't—either.

**MAUREEN:** Enough! When Rachel gets here, you, Ansel Hall, are going to be calm. Do I make myself clear?

**ANSEL:** Well—

**MAUREEN:** Do—I make—myself clear?

**ANSEL:** But—

**MAUREEN:** Ansel!

**ANSEL:** Okay, okay!

**TORCH:** (*Snickers.*) Whipped.

**ANSEL:** Shut up!

*Blackout.*

END OF ACT ONE

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