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The Happy Ones

by Julie Marie Myatt

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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**The Happy Ones was commissioned and first produced
By South Coast Repertory**

THE HAPPY ONES was first produced by the South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California on September 27, 2009. The performance was directed by Martin Benson, with scenic design by Ralph Funicello, costume design by Angela Balogh Calin, lighting design by Tom Ruzika, sound design by Paul James Prendergast, and dramaturgy by John Glore. The production stage manager was Jennifer Ellen Butler, and the associate director was Oahn Nguyen. The cast was as follows:

MARY ELLEN HUGHES Nike Doukas
GARY STUART Geoffrey Lower
WALTER WELLS Raphael Sbarge
BAO NGO Greg Watanabe

THE HAPPY ONES was the winner of the 2009 Ted Schmitt Award for the world premiere of an Outstanding New Play – Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle.

CHARACTERS

Walter Wells

Bao Ngo

Minister Gary Stuart

Mary-Ellen Hughes

SETTING

Orange County, California

TIME

1975, 1976

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

U.S. Declaration of Independence

ACT 1

Scene One

(Lights up on:)

(The living room of the beautiful new suburban/planned community home of WALTER WELLS. It's August, 1975.)

(A large family portrait hangs over the couch. A Sears-style posed photograph.)

(The sound of kids playing outside.)

(WALTER WELLS sets up the house for a party. He organizes his liquor bottles. Admires his bar. He shouts toward the kitchen.)

WALTER. How's it going in there? Honey?

(He listens.)

Margaret? You ready?

MARGARET. *(offstage)* Put on some music, will you please?

WALTER. What?

MARGARET. *(offstage)* Music please?

WALTER. You need help?

MARGARET. *(offstage)* I need some music and a cocktail, please!

WALTER. You need help? People are coming any minute –

MARGARET. *(offstage)* Cocktail, honey! And please get the kids out of the pool!

(WALTER opens a sliding glass door.)

WALTER. Hey kids! Get out of the pool! Time to get dressed! People are coming soon!

KIDS. *(offstage)* No!

WALTER. Yes. It's your mother's birthday. C'mon now.

KIDS. *(offstage)* No!

WALTER. OK. Three more minutes. Then I want you to come in and get dressed in your good clothes. And please don't get water everywhere coming in here.

(He watches the kids. Claps his hands.)

WALTER. Nice swimming there, Danny! Looking good, son! Don't, don't...don't forget to breathe. Hey, Lisa! Lisa! Make sure your brother breathes, will you, sweetheart? And be careful. No, no running.

LISA. *(offstage)* Did you see my dive, Dad?

WALTER. I sure did. That was wonderful. That's what you call a swan dive. Fantastic.

LISA. *(offstage)* I'm gonna do it again.

WALTER. OK. But careful. No crazy stuff. I don't want you to get hurt.

*(WALTER closes the door and puts a record on his new stereo. Admires his stereo, cleans off a speck of dust. A rock song, something like "Spirit in the Sky" by Norman Greenbaum plays loud.)**

(WALTER moves with the music.)

(He tries one of the appetizers on the table. And then another.)

(He makes martinis. Shakes it to the music. Tastes it. Delicious.)

(Pours two glasses.)

(Little dance.)

(He checks on the kids again. Opens door.)

Two more minutes! Swim like you mean it!

(He closes the door.)

(Straighten a picture.)

(Little dance. Grabs cocktail to bring to Margaret.)

(The doorbell rings.)

Honey?

*Please see Music Use Note on page 3.

MARGARET. (*offstage*) I'm not ready!

WALTER. They're here.

MARGARET. (*offstage*) Get that please!

WALTER. You want me to bring me your –

MARGARET. (*offstage*) Get the door, Walter!

WALTER. Happy Birthday!

MARGARET. (*offstage*) I'm not ready!

WALTER. I love you!

(The doorbell rings again.)

(He exits to get the door.)

(Music plays softly under the next scene.)

Scene Two

(Outside a church.)

(WALTER stands with the MINISTER GARY STUART, waiting for, and waving to, the congregation as they arrive. GARY wears sunglasses.)

GARY. Great party last night.

WALTER. Wasn't it fantastic?

GARY. Man. Whew.

WALTER. I think that was our best one yet.

GARY. Definitely. Whew. You survive alright?

WALTER. I never felt better. You?

GARY. The sermon could be on the brief side this morning.

WALTER. What's the topic?

GARY. Moderation.

(GARY adjusts his sunglasses.)

Where's Margaret?

WALTER. Still in bed. We finished the gin.

GARY. Ah.

WALTER. Danced until five. Then watched the sun come up from the roof. Who was that in the pool with you last night?

GARY. Mary-Ellen Hughes.

WALTER. Who's that?

GARY. Divorced. Just moved to the neighborhood. That green house.

WALTER. She likes to have a good time.

GARY. Yes, she does.

(silence)

Yes, she does.

WALTER. Didn't Margaret look gorgeous last night?

GARY. Extremely.

WALTER. She is getting more beautiful by the day and I'm getting more middle-aged.

GARY. Yep.

WALTER. The kids are lucky they take after her.

GARY. They are.

WALTER. Sweet, good-looking.

GARY. Polite.

WALTER. You think so?

GARY. Oh yeah. Absolutely.

WALTER. I appreciate that. Really, you think so?

GARY. Absolutely.

(GARY waves to someone offstage.)

WALTER. I think they're polite and well-mannered, but you know, no one's ever really honest with you about your kids. They'll lie to your face.

GARY. How many martinis did I have last night?

WALTER. I couldn't tell you.

GARY. You were the bartender.

WALTER. I lost count.

(GARY pulls back his collar.)

GARY. Do I have a hicky on my neck?

WALTER. What was her name again?

GARY. Mary-Ellen.

WALTER. I think I found her top in the pool this morning.

GARY. Really?

WALTER. Where'd you meet her?

(GARY waves to another person offstage.)

GARY. I married her and her ex years ago.

(WALTER waves to the same person.)

He was an hour late. He refused to repeat after me. Then he dropped the ring on the floor, and asked her to pick it up.

WALTER. Did she?

GARY. Nope. Nope. Longest ceremony of my life.

(They both wave to a few people offstage.)

GARY. *(cont.)* But now. She's here in town. Free as a bird.

(silence)

Free as a bird.

(GARY waves to one more person.)

(WALTER takes it all in; this beautiful day, his great life.)

WALTER. You know....we have got it made, Gary.

GARY. Yes we do.

WALTER. Beautiful women. Beautiful children. Great neighbors. Fantastic jobs. Gorgeous weather.

(GARY feels a wave of nausea; still suffering his hang-over.)

GARY. Praise God.

WALTER. Praise California.

(silence)

WALTER. This is living.

GARY. Yes, it is.

WALTER. Seriously. This is the dream right here. We got it.

(WALTER puts on his sunglasses.)

This is it.

Scene Three

(Wells Appliance Store)

(WALTER takes inventory.)

(Phone rings.)

WALTER. Wells Appliance. Oh, hello, John. How are you? How are the kids? Uh huh...Uh huh...Fantastic. Wonderful. Yes. How many you need?...Uh huh...We've got it. Yep, got that too. I'll have it sent over this afternoon. You're off Euclid, right? Brookhurst. Darn it. That's right. I knew that. Brookhurst...OK then. Sure will. Say hello to Helen. Uh huh. Bye. Bye.

(He hangs up.)

(The phone rings again.)

Wells Appliance. This is Walter. Well, how are you, Sandra? It was a fantastic party. Thank you. Yeah. Uh huh. I know...We all tied one on...Uh huh...Uh huh...Yeah...That dishwasher's working out for you then? Wonderful. Marvelous. Oh you do? Great. Well, we have the fridge in Avocado. Yeah. Want me to put that on lay-away for you? Sure. Sure. I can do that. No problem. Fantastic. OK. OK then. Tell Richard I'll see him on the golf course on Saturday. Uh huh. Uh huh. Wonderful. OK. Uh huh. You too. Bye Bye.

(He writes down the order.)

(The phone rings again.)

Wells Appliance...Yes. I have Prince Albert in a can. But I'm sorry, he can't be reached at the moment.

(He hangs up.)

(The phone rings again.)

Wells Appliance...Listen, actually, he's *on* the can, and he's asked you to please not bother him again. He doesn't like to talk about it, but I'll be frank with you, kid. He's extremely constipated. And interruptions such as these ruin his concentration.

(He hangs up.)

(The phone rings again.)

WALTER. *(cont.) (British accent)* Prince Albert here... This is extremely poor timing –

(his own voice) This is Wells Appliance. This is Walter Wells... No really, seriously, this is him, I'm Walter Wells... Yes... Yes... What?

(silence)

Are, are you sure it was my family...

(He sits down, listening.)

Where?...

(long silence)

I'm, I'm still here.

Scene Four

(GARY enters in a black suit and help dress WALTER for the funeral. GARY ties WALTER's tie, adjust WALTER's shirt collar, and helps WALTER put on his own black suit jacket.)

Scene Five

(Wells living room)

(WALTER enters in his black suit.)

(That large family portrait smiles into the room.)

(He looks around at his perfect, empty house.)

(His daughter's Barbie doll left on a shelf.)

(His son's fake sword on the floor. Next to a tiny car.)

(His wife's shoes beside the couch.)

*(He sits down on his couch, unsure of what to do next.
Lost.)*

*(He finds one of his son's toys in the cushion of the
couch.)*

Scene Six

(Hospital)

(BAO NGO lays in bed connected to machines and IVs. One arm is broken. His face is bruised. Bandage on his chest.)

(WALTER enters.)

(He meets eyes with BAO.)

(silence)

(More silence, as WALTER tries to figure out what to say next.)

(WALTER slowly approaches him.)

WALTER. The signs told you it was the wrong way.

(silence)

It was the wrong way. Can't you read?

(silence)

They weren't doing anything to hurt you. They were just trying to get home.

(silence)

That's all.

(silence)

Couldn't you have stayed home? Huh? Is that too much to ask? Stay home. Stay away from the car. Stay away from the freeway. Stay away from my wife. Stay away from my kids. Stay away from my life. If you had never come, I would have my family...so go...Go back to Vietnam...No one wants you here.

(BAO begins to pull out all the needles and wires.)

Hey. Hey.

(WALTER rushes over and tries to stop him.)

What are you doing?

BAO. I want to die.

WALTER. Stop that.

BAO. I want to die.

WALTER. Stop.

BAO. No.

(WALTER grabs BAO's hands.)

WALTER. Nurse!

BAO. Kill me.

WALTER. Nurse!

BAO. Kill me. Please.

WALTER. No.

BAO. I don't want to live anymore.

WALTER. Too bad. Nurse!

BAO. Please.

(The men stare at each other.)

I have enough.

(silence)

I'm sorry.

(WALTER lets him go.)

(BAO rips at his bandages. More wires.)

(WALTER grabs him again.)

WALTER. Nurse!

BAO. Let me die.

WALTER. Nurse! Goddamnit!

BAO. Let me die now. I have had enough.

(WALTER holds him down.)

WALTER. Nurse!

BAO. I've had enough.

WALTER. Nurse!

(WALTER continues to hold him on the bed.)

BAO. Please. I've had enough.

WALTER. Nurse!

Scene Seven

(Wells living room.)

(Night.)

(WALTER sits drinking with GARY on the couch.)

(Long silence.)

(GARY refills their glasses.)

WALTER. I have done everything right in my life. Everything.
Haven't I?

GARY. Yes.

WALTER. I am the luckiest man I know. I've won every raffle
I ever entered. Could play every sport I ever tried.
(Except lacrosse.)

(GARY nods.)

Elected class president in my high school *and* college.
Got the girl of my dreams. Got a son *and* a daughter.
Right?

GARY. Yes.

WALTER. Built my own business. Nothing bad has ever
happened to me. I have been a good citizen. A good
husband. A good father. A good business man. A good
Christian. A good neighbor. Haven't I?

GARY. Yes.

(silence)

WALTER. Was it not enough?

GARY. Of course, that's not the –

WALTER. Was I too happy?

GARY. No.

WALTER. Is it just my turn?

GARY. No.

WALTER. Was it little Danny's turn? Or Lisa's? Or Margaret?
They were just sweet, innocent people. Harmless. How
could they deserve that?

GARY. They don't – they didn't.

WALTER. What kind of God lets a man go the wrong way on a fucking freeway exit, hit three innocent people head on, and then *live*? Huh?

(silence)

GARY. The same God that lets bombs drop on his people, I guess. I don't know.

WALTER. Don't give me that bullshit.

GARY. I don't understand why God does what he does –

WALTER. I didn't drop those bombs.

GARY. I know –

WALTER. My family didn't.

GARY. I know.

WALTER. Don't bring the war into this. I had nothing to do with that. That man's people has nothing to do with me.

GARY. I know, I just –

WALTER. Is this how they teach you to counsel the grieving in seminary? Seriously, they give you a manual or something –

GARY. I'm sorry, I'm terrible at this, I know, but I'm just –

WALTER. *Unitarians*. Typical.

GARY. All I'm trying to say...what am I trying to say?...

(silence)

Hating that man will do you no good, Walter.

WALTER. What page is that on in the manual? 44?

GARY. It was an accident.

WALTER. I know –

GARY. He is suffering, too.

WALTER. You don't know what this feels like –

GARY. You're right. I don't. I can only imagine that it is more painful than I could ever imagine.

WALTER. It's worse.

(GARY finishes his drink.)

GARY. I think God is a real asshole sometimes. I really do. Which makes me useless at this part of my job. But, hating the man that killed your family, won't get you anything. Nothing worth keeping. You're a better person than that.

WALTER. How do you know?

(The doorbell rings.)

(Neither man makes a move.)

(It rings again.)

WALTER. Please get that.

(GARY goes to answer the door.)

WALTER. Tell them I'm not taking visitors.

(WALTER looks around his house.)

(GARY returns with a casserole.)

WALTER. You've got lipstick on your lips.

GARY. It was Mary-Ellen.

(He wipes his lips.)

WALTER. What is it?

GARY. Tuna something.

WALTER. Gezz.

GARY. What?

WALTER. There are four of those in the fridge already.

GARY. It's the thought –

WALTER. In what world does a man whose just lost his entire life want to eat canned tuna with noodles and mushroom soup? Tell me?

GARY. I will tell her you loved it.

WALTER. Why don't you take it.

GARY. No.

WALTER. Take it.

GARY. I don't want it.

WALTER. Please.

GARY. She made it for you.

WALTER. Take it.

GARY. She made it for you.

WALTER. Just take it.

GARY. I don't want to.

WALTER. She's a terrible cook, isn't she?

(silence)

GARY. She is very creative...in her cuisine.

WALTER. Margaret is a fantastic cook.

(silence)

She was wonderful, wasn't she, Gary?

GARY. One of the best women I've ever met.

WALTER. And my kids? They were perfect, weren't they?

GARY. Absolutely.

WALTER. I had everything I wanted. Everything.

(silence)

And he killed it.

Scene Eight

(Wells living room)

(Morning)

(The door bell rings.)

(WALTER is crashed out in his clothes on the couch.)

WALTER. What?

(The door bell rings again.)

What? Dammit. What?

(MARY-ELLEN enters with a bag of potato chips.)

MARY-ELLEN. The door was open so...I let myself in. Obviously.

(She smiles.)

Mary-Ellen. Hughes.

(She reaches out to shake his hand.)

I was at your party, but we didn't get a chance to meet.

WALTER. I remember.

MARY-ELLEN. What did I do?

WALTER. Uh –

MARY-ELLEN. Did I make a fool of myself?

WALTER. No –

MARY-ELLEN. Is that why you remember me? Did I do something embarrassing?

WALTER. No –

MARY-ELLEN. I asked Gary what I did because actually I blacked out that night, and I didn't realize I had blacked out until I couldn't remember how I got home the next morning, and then Gary said he brought me home, so I thought, well, he's a minister so I guess he wouldn't lie, would he?

WALTER. No.

MARY-ELLEN. What'd I do?

WALTER. Nothing.

MARY-ELLEN. Did I kiss you?

WALTER. No.

MARY-ELLEN. Did I take my shirt off?

WALTER. No.

MARY-ELLEN. Are you sure? It's blue. I can't find it –

WALTER. Uh huh.

MARY-ELLEN. Did I sing?

WALTER. No –

MARY-ELLEN. Did I dance real sexy? I've been known to do that too.

WALTER. No.

MARY-ELLEN. Are you sure?

WALTER. Yes.

(She smiles, wipes her forehead.)

MARY-ELLEN. New girl doesn't want to look like a floozy. I mean, I'm divorced and that's bad enough, but you know, acting like a drunk stripper doesn't help me make friends with the women in the neighborhood.

WALTER. I guess not.

MARY-ELLEN. Doesn't hurt with the men though.

WALTER. No.

MARY-ELLEN. And that's not a come on. Honest. It's just a fact.

WALTER. It is.

MARY-ELLEN. I'm not proud of it. But, I like to have fun
What can I say. Shoot me. You only live once.

(silence)

I like your house.

WALTER. Thank you.

MARY-ELLEN. I think you've got a nicer floor plan than I've got. Of course, it's just me, so I don't need all those bedrooms....

(MARY-ELLEN looks at the large family portrait. Making her way into the conversation....)

MARY-ELLEN. (*cont.*) I'm so sorry about what happened, Walter. Really. You must be...you just must be unbelievably sad.

(*silence*)

My baby brother was killed in Vietnam five years ago and I didn't get out of bed for two months. It was awful. And no one understands what you're going through. No one.

WALTER. No.

MARY-ELLEN. I lived on saltine crackers. That's all I could eat. And vodka. Lost fifteen pounds. I guess there was an up-side. And my marriage went to hell. Actually, that was an upside too. He was kind of a jerk. He had money, but did not like to have fun. So I learned. The hard way. But, divorce bought me a house. Another upside. That silver lining is blinding! Anyway...enough about me.

(*She hands him the potato chips.*)

I forgot to put these on your casserole. You're supposed to crunch them up and put them on top.

WALTER. Thanks.

MARY-ELLEN. I prefer to layer them in.

WALTER. I see.

MARY-ELLEN. I ate half the bag last night. Sorry.

WALTER. That's fine.

MARY-ELLEN. "Can't eat just one."

(*She smiles.*)

I should have brought you some coffee. You want me to make a pot?

WALTER. No, no. That's OK.

MARY-ELLEN. Please. It's the least I could do. Standing here, jabbering on about myself first thing in the morning. I'll make you a pot of coffee before I go.

WALTER. No –

MARY-ELLEN. Sit.

(She exits into the kitchen.)

(WALTER sits back down on the couch with the chips.)

(He keeps looking toward the kitchen, finally she emerges with a plate of banana bread.)

I love your kitchen. I'd kill for that new oven. OK. So. Coffee is on. And here's a little something to go with it. The name "Carol Martin" was taped to the side of the foil, which makes me assume she made it and wanted you to know she made it. She clutches her husband like a cheetah every time I walk by, and refuses to talk to me in complete sentences, or look me in the eye, but, it appears she can bake a decent banana bread.

WALTER. You really didn't need to –

MARY-ELLEN. Please please.

(She grabs his shoulders.)

Now listen to me, Mr. Walter Wells. Here's what I want you to do: Cry your guts out. Stay in bed. Don't shower. Don't bathe. Drink heavily. Smoke dope. Pop pills. Chew tobacco. Do whatever you need to do, but don't you dare be ashamed of how sad and lonely and angry you feel. Alright? It's no one's business how you do this.

WALTER. OK.

MARY-ELLEN. And call if you need anything. Really. Because I love to drink and smoke and cry, and I'm really good at all three. Together or separate. I'm a pro. But that's not a come on, Walter. Honest. I'm seeing Gary. You know that, right?

WALTER. I do.

MARY-ELLEN. Did he tell you that?

WALTER. Not in so many words, but yes.

MARY-ELLEN. What did he say?

WALTER. Well –

MARY-ELLEN. I really have no idea how that man became a minister. Honest. He's about as close to a saint as I am. And the only reason either of us gets on our knees is not for God, I'll tell you that much.

(Checks her watch.)

Shoot. I gotta get to work. My boss is a clock watcher. You take care of yourself. I mean it.

(She rushes out.)

(WALTER lays back down on the couch.)

*(“Long As I Can See the Light” by Creedance Clearwater Revival plays.)**

*Please see Music Use Note on page 3.

Scene Nine

(Wells Appliance)

(WALTER looks over his bills.)

(The phone rings.)

(He turns down the radio.)

WALTER. Wells Appliance...No.

(He hangs up.)

(Phone rings again. He answers it.)

You gotta get a new joke, kid. This "Prince Albert in a can" is a little long in the tooth, you know – Oh hello, Pete. Sorry about that. I got this regular crank caller.... I appreciate that...Well, I was home, but I couldn't stay away from work, you know how it is...Business can't run itself...uh huh...uh huh...Right...What can I do for you?...Uh huh...yeah...what size you looking for?

(BAO enters.)

Is, uh, is, is this going to be billed to the contractor or the housing development?...OK...Great...Listen, this is all fantastic. I just need to help a customer real quick, can I call you back?...OK, I'll call you back. Thanks, Pete.

(WALTER hangs up the phone.)

WALTER. What do you want?

BAO. I, I want to talk to you.

WALTER. Why?

BAO. I want –

WALTER. I don't want to talk to you.

BAO. This is a very nice store.

WALTER. And if you want to buy an appliance, you can go somewhere else.

BAO. No. I don't want your appliance. But they are very nice.

(silence)

BAO. (*cont.*) If wanted an appliance, I would buy it here.

(*silence*)

I would.

WALTER. You decided not to kill yourself?

(*BAO shows him his wrists. Bandages on each.*)

What happened?

(*BAO smiles.*)

BAO. I'm a coward.

(*WALTER just looks at him.*)

I want to help you.

WALTER. You want to help me? Do what?

BAO. I don't have money, but in Vietnam I have many skill.

I am a doctor.

WALTER. Not interested.

BAO. And I'm a good cook too.

WALTER. I don't need a doctor or a cook.

BAO. I can also make a garden. Grow food.

WALTER. I go to the store for that.

BAO. I know how to paint pictures.

WALTER. I have enough pictures.

BAO. I can clean house.

WALTER. I don't need a maid.

BAO. I can wash your car.

WALTER. You're not going near my car or house or life –

BAO. I can cut hair.

WALTER. Knock it off.

BAO. I can sew.

WALTER. Knock it off.

BAO. I am a good dancer –

WALTER. I said, knock it off.

(*silence*)

If you've come here looking for a job, you have a lot of
fucking nerve.

BAO. I don't want a job.

WALTER. I don't have anything to give you.

BAO. I don't want anything –

WALTER. I gave you my family, isn't that enough?

(silence)

BAO. I want to give you something.

WALTER. No.

BAO. Please. I will not ask you to forgive me. I will not ask. I know I'm going to hell. I am sorry for what I do to you. Let me give you something.

WALTER. No.

BAO. Please.

(BAO gets on his knees.)

Please. I must give you something. If I have to live, let me give you something.

WALTER. Get up –

BAO. I'm alive, so I give you something to help you. I give you something. Food. Can I give you food?

WALTER. Get up.

BAO. I'll make you food, OK?

WALTER. Get up.

BAO. Please let me give you something, OK? I clean your house.

(WALTER pulls him off the floor.)

(BAO hangs on WALTER's arm.)

Please. I need to give you something. Before I go to hell.

WALTER. Just stop the hell talk. Please. I really don't like it –

(The phone rings.)

(WALTER answers.)

Wells Appliance...Can I call you back, Gary?...I'm fine...I can't talk right now...I'll call you back.

(He hangs up.)

(BAO lets go of WALTER.)

(The two men aren't sure what to do next.)

BAO. Please. I want to die. I try. I can't die. OK. So I think. What can I do? I can help this man. I give him something. Anything. Please.

WALTER. Listen...

BAO. Please.

(silence)

WALTER. You can't, you can't repay me for killing my family. It doesn't work that way.

BAO. I'm not repay. Not that. I just want to give you something. Please –

WALTER. Let me put it more bluntly: I'm not interested in having any contact with you. At all.

BAO. OK.

WALTER. OK.

BAO. You don't need to see me. I help you, but you don't need to see me. That's good plan.

(WALTER sighs loudly.)

BAO. Good plan, OK?

WALTER. No. Not a good plan.

BAO. Yes. I come to your house when you're not there. You never see me. I'm invisible.

WALTER. How about you leave now, and I never see you again.

BAO. Not a good plan. No.

WALTER. I don't want to see you.

(The telephone rings.)

BAO. I am invisible. I promise.

WALTER. Wells Appliance...Gary –

BAO. Please.

WALTER. I told you I'd call you back. I'm fine...Stop bugging me.

BAO. I'm invisible.

(He hangs up.)

(The phone rings again.)

WALTER. I AM FINE, GARY!

(BAO is back on his knees, begging.)

BAO. Please.

(WALTER hangs up the phone.)

Please. I help you.

WALTER. Get up.

BAO. I'm invisible.

(The phone rings again.)

I have to help you.

WALTER. Get up. Please.

BAO. I have to help you.

(BAO is holding on to WALTER, begging.)

WALTER. Jesus Christ.

BAO. Please. I'm invisible. I promise.

(The phone rings again.)

Scene Ten

(Wells living room)

(WALTER enters and sits in front of the TV with a plate of Vietnamese food.)

(There are fresh flowers on the table.)

(GARY enters with MARY-ELLEN.)

MARY-ELLEN. Smells good in here.

WALTER. I didn't hear the doorbell.

GARY. Oh, we didn't ring it.

WALTER. Why not?

GARY. The door was unlocked.

MARY-ELLEN. What is that?

WALTER. I don't know what it's called. I really wish you'd ring the bell –

MARY-ELLEN. Is it Chinese?

WALTER. Uh. Yeah.

GARY. Where'd you get it?

WALTER. I bought it.

GARY. Looks good.

WALTER. I'd really like to be alone.

MARY-ELLEN. Can I try it?

(WALTER pushes it towards her.)

WALTER. Don't you two have other things to do?

GARY. No.

MARY-ELLEN. This is delicious. Oh Gary, try it.

WALTER. Seriously, I really want to be left alone.

GARY. Wow. I've never tasted anything like that.

MARY-ELLEN. That just says more, doesn't it?

WALTER. It's late. I want to go to bed.

GARY. Spicy.

WALTER. Please.

GARY. Wow.

WALTER. I want to go to bed.

MARY-ELLEN. Oh, Walter. We just went to hear Joan Baez at Melodyland. Oh my goodness, you should have gone. She was wonderful.

GARY. Mary-Ellen –

MARY-ELLEN. “The water is wide, I cannot get over, and neither have I wings to fly...”

GARY. Mary-Ellen –

MARY-ELLEN. “Give me a boat –

(WALTER *exits.*)

GARY. I told you Walter gave me the tickets.

MARY-ELLEN. No you didn’t.

GARY. Yes. I did. Margaret had bought them for their anniversary.

(*silence*)

MARY-ELLEN. Well. I’m a jerk.

GARY. Yeah.

(*silence*)

MARY-ELLEN. I don’t remember you telling me that.

GARY. I did. Let’s go.

(MARY-ELLEN *looks around room.*)

MARY-ELLEN. Did Walter get a housekeeper?

GARY. Not that I know of.

MARY-ELLEN. Looks awfully clean in here.

GARY. Maybe he cleaned it.

MARY-ELLEN. Fresh flowers? He didn’t buy those.

GARY. Someone probably gave them to him.

MARY-ELLEN. Now? No. It’s too late for that.

GARY. Why –

MARY-ELLEN. Is he seeing someone?

GARY. Who?

MARY-ELLEN. A woman?

GARY. No.

MARY-ELLEN. How do you know?

GARY. His wife has been dead two months.

MARY-ELLEN. So.

GARY. So, he's not that kind of man.

MARY-ELLEN. He's in mourning.

GARY. I know –

MARY-ELLEN. People do things. I mean, what about me. I'm not the kind person that sleeps for forty-eight hours at a time, mumbles, and plucks out both eyebrows, but I did that when I lost my brother.

GARY. You did?

MARY-ELLEN. Walter could be filling his emptiness with a woman.

GARY. He worshipped Margaret.

MARY-ELLEN. So?

GARY. No woman could ever fill her shoes.

MARY-ELLEN. Well, she doesn't have to fill Margaret's shoes, Gary. She just has to be a warm body.

GARY. He wouldn't do that.

MARY-ELLEN. How do you know?

GARY. Let's go.

MARY-ELLEN. Something's different.

GARY. It's none of our business.

MARY-ELLEN. What?

GARY. I don't want to talk about this.

MARY-ELLEN. Gary.

GARY. I don't want to talk about it.

MARY-ELLEN. He's your best friend.

GARY. So was she.

(He exits.)

(She continues to look around.)

(And follows him out.)

Scene Eleven

(Wells living room)

(BAO examines the room. He picks up various items: A baby picture. Barbie doll that is still on shelf. A vase. A bowling trophy. Fake fruit. [He smells it. Then bangs a fake apple on a table. Wood?]) He wanders over to a shelf full of books and photo albums.)

(He takes one of the albums and sits on the couch, looking through it.)

(WALTER enters.)

WALTER. What are you doing?

BAO. I'm just looking.

WALTER. Stop.

BAO. I just –

WALTER. Put that down please.

(BAO closes the album. Looks at his watch.)

BAO. I'm sorry, I didn't know it was so late –

WALTER. This isn't working for me.

BAO. It is a beautiful family.

(WALTER takes the albums from him.)

I have only one photo of my family.

WALTER. Well, I'm sorry to hear that.

(WALTER puts the albums back on the shelf. Rearranges the things BAO moved, exactly as they were.)

BAO. What is that fruit for?

WALTER. Decoration.

BAO. But you can't eat it –

WALTER. Listen, I'm not comfortable with you going through my things.

BAO. I was just looking –

WALTER. Margaret was very particular about her decorations. I don't want you touching them –

BAO. I just looked –

WALTER. Don't touch anything.

BAO. OK –

WALTER. Is this what you do when you come here? Sneak through my life?

BAO. No.

(WALTER just looks at him.)

No. I promise.

WALTER. This was a bad idea. Give me the key.

BAO. No.

WALTER. I wasn't thinking clearly –

BAO. No. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I won't look at your pictures again. I promise. I just want to see your family.

WALTER. Why?

BAO. I won't look again. I promise. I'm sorry. I won't touch anything.

(BAO heads for the door.)

WALTER. What were you looking for?

BAO. Nothing.

WALTER. Money?

BAO. No.

(silence)

No. I won't do it again. I promise. I'm sorry.

WALTER. Where do you live?

(BAO keeps walking for the door.)

BAO. I'm sorry.

WALTER. Where do you live?

BAO. Saigon.

WALTER. I mean here in Garden Grove.

BAO. I live with my cousin.

WALTER. Where?

BAO. Bixby Avenue.

WALTER. I assume you take the bus now?

(BAO stops.)

BAO. Yes.

WALTER. Do you have a job?

BAO. Yes.

WALTER. Where?

BAO. I work at night.

WALTER. Where?

BAO. A bakery. My cousin's friend –

WALTER. I thought you said you were a doctor.

BAO. I am.

(silence)

There is soup in the kitchen.

(BAO exits.)

(WALTER adjusts the decorations. Again.)

Scene Twelve

(Wells Living Room)

(WALTER, GARY, MARY-ELLEN sit watching television.
A laugh track can be heard.)

(GARY and MARY-ELLEN laugh.)

(WALTER is distracted.)

GARY. Walter loves this show. Don't you, Walter.

MARY-ELLEN. I just think it's hysterical.

GARY. Funny. Huh?

(They both look at him.)

Lifts the old spirits, doesn't it?

(They keep looking at him.)

(WALTER pushes a smile.)

(They return their attention to the TV.)

MARY-ELLEN. I'd date that Tim Conway in a heartbeat if he wasn't so short.

(They keep watching.)

MARY-ELLEN. He is fun.

GARY. How do you know he'd date you?

MARY-ELLEN. What are you saying?

GARY. Nothing, I just –

MARY-ELLEN. I'm not good enough for Tim Conway?

GARY. I just find it a bit presumptuous of you to assume he would date you just because you want to date him.

MARY-ELLEN. Worked on you.

GARY. Well –

MARY-ELLEN. Clearly, I'm irresistible.

GARY. I'm not famous.

MARY-ELLEN. So you can't speak for a famous person, can you. You don't know what famous people would or wouldn't do.

GARY. I guess not –

MARY-ELLEN. But, they want the same things we do, Gary.

GARY. Maybe, but –

MARY-ELLEN. They want to have a good time and have wild sex and eat good food. Just because I'm not a millionaire doesn't mean Tim Conway wouldn't want to spend time with me. Take me to dinner. Show me the town.

GARY. Maybe –

MARY-ELLEN. Besides, it would be *me* turning him down remember. I wouldn't want to lead him on because I just don't see myself in a long-term serious relationship with a terribly short man.

GARY. What –

MARY-ELLEN. It's bad for the back, all that leaning down. And I like high heels. I'd choose the heels over him. I like to be honest up front.

(GARY just looks at her.)

It's only fair. Right, Walter?

GARY. What if I wanted to date Carol Burnett?

MARY-ELLEN. Oh, please.

GARY. What?

MARY-ELLEN. She'd never date you.

GARY. Why not?

MARY-ELLEN. Why would she drive all the way down here, from Hollywood, to have a date with you?

GARY. Same reason Tim Conway would come down see you.

MARY-ELLEN. No.

GARY. Why not?

MARY-ELLEN. She could have anyone. Tim Conway, on the other hand, being short as he is, and balding, has fewer options.

(GARY gets up.)

GARY. So what's wrong with me?

MARY-ELLEN. Nothing.

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