

JILL. (*Emotional.*) It's been a tough three months.
CARL. Three months?!

(*To MICHAEL.*)

You said three weeks.

MICHAEL. I did? I meant three months.

MOM. You haven't seen each other for three months?

GRANDMA. When your grandfather was in the army, I didn't see him for two years. I tell ya, when he got home, I was on him like a baboon on a banana.

MOM. Ya know what, I bet you two wanna have a little privacy since you haven't seen each other for so long.

STACY. Why don't we go in the kitchen so they can talk

GRANDMA. Again with the goin' in the kitchen?

MOM. C'mon, let's stuff the turkey.

(*Heads for the kitchen.*)

GRANDMA. (*Following MOM.*) That's a pose in hot nude yoga.

CARL, MICHAEL & STACY. (*Groaning.*) Ohhh.

MOM. Here we go.

(*MOM, GRANDMA, and STACY disappear into the kitchen. UNCLE BOB goes in the den. CARL stays.*)

You comin', Carl?

CARL. Sure. Because it's the unselfish thing to do.

(*He exits to the kitchen.*)

STACY. Brown nose.

(*Disappears into the kitchen.*)

(*MICHAEL and JILL are alone.*)

JILL. So...how is everything?

(*Whimpers.*)

Ohh.

(*Collects herself.*)

I'm okay, I'm okay.

MICHAEL. Are ya sure?

JILL. (*Holding back the tears.*) Yeah.

MICHAEL. So...what have you been doing the last three months?

JILL. Well, I've been at my parents'.

MICHAEL. So, you came back to...apologize?

JILL. What?!

MICHAEL. Okay, so that's a "no." No problem. So...do you wanna come back?

JILL. Why should I?

MICHAEL. Because...we're married?

JILL. You don't care about me.

MICHAEL. I do, too.

JILL. Prove it.

MICHAEL. Okay, fine... Could you first just tell me what I did to make you leave?

JILL. You don't know?

MICHAEL. No.

JILL. You spent ten thousand dollars on commemorative plates.

MICHAEL. It's about the money?

(*CARL bursts out of the kitchen, followed by MOM, GRANDMA, and STACY. MOM is carrying a seventh plate, napkin, and silverware for JILL.*)

CARL. You spent ten thousand dollars on commemorative plates?!

MICHAEL. Can anyone have a private moment around here?!

CARL. No. What kind of plates are they?

JILL. You know, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Star Trek*, Elvis Presley.

GRANDMA. Elvis Presley was not a good kisser.

STACY. You were with Elvis -

MOM. Don't.

GRANDMA. Your grandfather, now he was a good kisser. He kissed like he was snakin' a train.

MOM. Grandma.

GRANDMA. He could breathe through his ears.

EVERYONE. GRANDMA!

CARL. (*Typing on the computer.*) I didn't think anyone actually bought those plates.

(UNCLE BOB enters from the den, taking a swig of whiskey from his bottle.)

MOM. Carl, are you still writing?

(MOM sets the plate and napkin with silverware for JILL's place.)

CARL. Sorry, I'll wait 'til later.

(*He stops typing, leaves the computer open, and takes out the notepad and pen.*)

MICHAEL. (*Defensive.*) A lot of people buy those plates.

They're a collector's item, and an investment.

STACY. Not sure I would call 'em an investment.

JILL. He's obsessive compulsive. I just couldn't take his OCD.

MICHAEL. I'm not OCD.

STACY. It's more like a multiple addictive disorder.

MICHAEL. Right. Wait, no. It's not multiple, it's just three or four.

JILL. I mean, I thought all of that was over after his two stints in rehab.

UNCLE BOB. You went to rehab twice?! ...So did I. Up top.

(*Holds his hand up for a "high five" from MICHAEL. He doesn't get the high five.*)

MICHAEL. You were in rehab and you're drinking?

UNCLE BOB. I can stop at any time.

(*To JILL.*)

Continue with your plate story.

JILL. When he bought the plates, that was the last straw. He didn't change, he was the same person, and...I just needed a break.

MICHAEL. But I only needed the limited edition *Star Trek* Captain series to complete the set.

(*To CARL.*)

They only made, like, five of 'em.

(*To JILL.*)

Then I was done.

JILL. Is that true?

GRANDMA. Or is it the booze talking?

MICHAEL. I've been sober for five months.

MOM. Good for you, Michael.

(MOM sets the water glasses around the table.)

CARL. He never acted that way when we were growing up. I mean, he was a jerk, but -

MOM. (*Trying to cheer up the conversation.*) Christmas time, yaay, we have a contest, do something nice for somebody! Yaay!

JILL. (*To CARL.*) I don't know. Maybe it's the pressure of not being able to have kids. I mean, all our friends have kids. We're the only ones that don't. Maybe he was overcompensating.

STACY. (*To JILL.*) With plates?

MICHAEL. Feel free to direct the conversation to me.

GRANDMA. (*To MICHAEL.*) You just need to pull your head outta your butt and knock off that stupid plate business.

MICHAEL. Grandma, I'm just a little sensitive right now.

GRANDMA. Oh, honey, did I offend you?

MICHAEL. A little.

GRANDMA. Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. I mean, it's just words. It's not like getting hit by a howitzer on Normandy Beach on D-Day. It's just words, so why don't you suck it up, ya marshmallow.

MICHAEL. That went from an apology to an assault.

GRANDMA. Walk it off.

MICHAEL. I feel like I'm at boot camp.

UNCLE BOB. I'm gettin' a little excited, here.
MOM. Contest! Who's gonna win?!

GRANDMA. (To **MICHAEL.**) What are you, one of those people who wakes up every mornin', lookin' for somethin' to be offended by?

MICHAEL. No.

GRANDMA. Good. So, other than the plate business, are we good to go, or is there somethin' else?

MOM. (Sincere, cheery.) It's so nice to have everyone together.

JILL. (Emotional.) He killed Mr. Peepers.

CARL. He what?

STACY. Who's Mr. Peepers?

MICHAEL. Her pet gerbil.

GRANDMA. Dear Lord.

JILL. He was part of the family.

UNCLE BOB. And a good source of protein.

(He takes a bite of beef jerky.)

JILL. (Whimpers.) Ohh.

MICHAEL. I didn't kill him. He ran away.

JILL. You left the door open to his cage.

MICHAEL. I didn't leave the door open, he opened it himself with his little gerbil paws.

STACY. Impossible. They don't have opposable thumbs.

UNCLE BOB. Don't underestimate gerbils.

JILL. How can I ever trust you if you're gonna lie about Mr. Peepers?

MICHAEL. Well, you always said if you love something, let it go.

JILL. (Emotional.) I never said that.

GRANDMA. (To **MICHAEL.**) I think Mr. Peepers committed suicide.

(Gestures to **JILL.**)

JILL. (Cries.) Ohh.

MICHAEL. (To the others, re: **JILL.**) It's her hormones.

MOM. Who wants to decorate cookies?!

(Bailing, heading into the kitchen.)

UNCLE BOB. I do.

(He follows her into the kitchen.)

MICHAEL. It was just a gerbil.

JILL. How dare you.

(To **CARL.**)

I got Mr. Peepers so Michael would learn responsibility like the kind you have when you raise a baby. I guess we know what Michael would do to our baby. Leave the cage door open.

STACY. You would keep your baby in a cage?

JILL. It's a metaphor for our relationship. And right now, our relationship is crawling out of the cage door and getting eaten by a cat.

GRANDMA. (To **STACY.**) When did the cat come in?

STACY. So, is your relationship the gerbil or the baby?

GRANDMA. I am not following this.

MICHAEL. We're not gonna be eaten by a cat, honey. We'll figure it out. It'll be just like it was before.

JILL. Remember when you held my hand and kissed me in public?

MICHAEL. (Thinks.) No.

JILL. (Cries.) Exactly.

MICHAEL. I feel like I'm on trial, here.

CARL. Okay, let's just get to the bottom line. What does Michael have to do to fix things with you?

JILL. (Holding back tears.) I don't know.

CARL. Well, at least you have a solid plan.

JILL. Ya think so?

CARL. No! Why does anybody get married?! You can't win!

MICHAEL. You're telling me.

JILL. (Emotional.) That's what I'm talking about.