

FLORENCE

Oh, good morning, Max.

MAX

(cranky)

Where's my breakfast?

(FLORENCE stops what she's doing and walks over to MAX to make her speech.)

FLORENCE

Where's my breakfast? Is that how we start our day? Where's my breakfast? How about something like, and how are you today, Florence? Or, did you sleep well last night, Florence? Don't you know the note you start your day on is the way your day will go? Now, what do you say? How about starting your day on a pleasant note?

MAX

You want me to start my day on a pleasant note?

FLORENCE

That would be nice.

MAX

Fine. (singing) Where the hell's my breakfast?

(FLORENCE walks back to the kitchen area.)

FLORENCE

Well, somebody got up on the wrong side of the Craftmatic this morning.

MAX

That's another thing. I hate that damn adjustable bed. The other night I rolled over on the controls and I spent half the night with my head between my feet. I felt like I was sleeping in a wallet.

FLORENCE

You know the doctor said that bed would be good for your heart.

MAX

Maybe for the heart of a contortionist.

(FLORENCE brings over a glass of orange juice to MAX.)

FLORENCE

Max, it's only been a year. You're getting stronger every day.

MAX

(disgusted)

Orange juice. Every day it's orange juice. Why must you give me orange juice every day?

FLORENCE

Because we live in Florida, Max. It's a state law. If you don't drink at least one glass of orange juice a day, the Citrus Commission will come in and take you out in cuffs. Now, drink your juice.

(FLORENCE walks back to the kitchen.)

MAX

What's for breakfast?

FLORENCE

Something different.

MAX

Not again. You know I hate it when you experiment in the kitchen.

FLORENCE

But you're going to love this, Max.

MAX

As much as I loved your hogshead cheesecake?

FLORENCE

This is different. Peanut butter waffles.

(FLORENCE brings over a plate of waffles.)

MAX

Peanut butter waffles?

(MAX pushes the plate to the side.)

MAX (continued)

Forget it.

FLORENCE

Why not? You've got to try different things.

MAX

Says who?

FLORENCE

Says me. Besides, this covers your morning requirement for protein.

MAX

Just bring me some eggs.

FLORENCE

You had your two eggs for this week already.

MAX

I thought it was two eggs a day.

FLORENCE

No, two eggs a day is why you ended up in the hospital, last year, while the doctors used your chest for French doors.

MAX

Then, just bring me some coffee.

FLORENCE

Now, you know what the doctor told you about coffee.

(MAX talks in unison with FLORENCE)

FLORENCE & MAX

It's bad for your heart.

MAX

This from a man who smokes three packs a day.

FLORENCE

How about if I make some decaf?

MAX

(getting up)

Forget it, Florence. Breakfast used to be my favorite meal. Now it's no eggs, cholesterol is bad for you. No coffee, caffeine is bad for you. No sex, exertion is bad for you.

FLORENCE

I don't remember the doctor saying no sex.

MAX

He didn't. That's one I made up.

(MAX walks into the living room and takes a seat on the sofa. In front of the sofa is a coffee table. There is a chair to the right of the sofa and a table along the back wall with a telephone on it. FLORENCE follows MAX into the living room. SHE stands there and stares at him.)

FLORENCE

So, this is the way you are going to be spending your day. Just hanging around the house in your bathrobe.

MAX

This is the way I spend every Sunday, Florence. I mean, a man is entitled to take a day off and just lounge around; and Sunday is my day.

FLORENCE

That's fine, except for two things.

MAX

What's that?

FLORENCE

Today is Thursday.

MAX

What's the other thing?

FLORENCE

This is the way you spend every day. Ever since you got out of the hospital, all you do is lay around the house. The doctor said you should be taking walks. The exercise would be good for your heart. He said you should be up to a mile a day by now.

MAX

How do you expect me to walk a mile a day if I can't have sex? Besides, I got enough exercise last week. What about that mile I ran?

FLORENCE

That's only because your bathrobe belt got caught in the car door as I was driving away.

MAX

I still say you knew I was running alongside of the car.

FLORENCE

Max, don't you think if I knew you were there, I'd have stopped?

(FLORENCE turns to the audience and smiles.  
MAX picks up the T.V. Guide from the coffee  
table. He turns to the crossword section.)

MAX

I think I'll do the crossword in the T.V. Guide until "Leave It To Beaver" comes on.

1-1-7

FLORENCE

It's nice to know that no matter how old one gets, one never loses his hunger for a challenge.

(FLORENCE walks back to the kitchen.  
MAX looks for a pencil.)

MAX

Florence, I need a pencil.

FLORENCE

There's one in my pocketbook on the phone table.

(MAX goes over to the table. HE looks through the pocketbook and notices a letter. HE takes the letter out and looks at the return address. HE becomes enraged.)

MAX

Florence!

(There is no answer. MAX walks center stage and yells.)

MAX

FLORENCE!!!

(FLORENCE rushes into the living room.)

FLORENCE

Yes, Max, what are you yelling about?

MAX

What is this?

(MAX holds the letter up.)

FLORENCE

I don't know. Let's take a look.

(FLORENCE takes the letter from MAX.)

FLORENCE

Well, gee, Max, it looks like a letter.

(SHE puts the letter to her ear.)

FLORENCE

It sounds like a letter.

(SHE puts the letter to her nose.)

FLORENCE

It even smells like a letter. Would you like me to taste it, too?

MAX

Why not? It'll probably be an ingredient for dinner tonight. Why didn't you tell me you got a letter from that bum?

FLORENCE

Because, first of all, your brother is not a bum, and secondly, I didn't get a letter from your brother, you did. It's addressed to you.

MAX

Well, I don't want to read any lies that bum has to write.

FLORENCE

Okay, I'll read it to you.

MAX

No! I don't want to hear the lies either.

(FLORENCE opens the letter.)

FLORENCE

I'll read it anyway.

MAX

NO!

1-1-9

(MAX puts his hands up to his ears and starts humming. HE walks around and sits on the sofa. FLORENCE takes his hands away from his ears.)

FLORENCE

Alright. Alright, I won't read it to you.

MAX

Why didn't you tell me I got a letter from that bum?

FLORENCE

Because I didn't get it until yesterday and I was waiting until you were in a good mood to tell you. But, then, you haven't been in a good mood since 1959. I'll just leave it here on the coffee table and if you want to read it, it'll be right there.

(FLORENCE puts the letter on the table.)

MAX

Well, forget it. I'll never want to read it.

FLORENCE

Max, it's been over fifteen years since you last spoke to Barney.

MAX

Fine, and I can go another fifteen years before I speak to him.

FLORENCE

You may not be here in another fifteen years.

MAX

Now you're getting the picture. Better yet, he should drop dead first. He's the reason I'm in this condition.

FLORENCE

Really.

MAX

Yes, really. Barney Stuart is the reason I had a heart attack. He's the reason I had clogged arteries. He's the reason I had quadruple bypass surgery.

FLORENCE

Really.

MAX

Well, what else could have caused it?

FLORENCE

How about seventy years of smoking? How about seventy years of sitting on your backside? How about seventy years of mayonnaise on everything you ate?

MAX

Sure, take his side.

(FLORENCE walks back into the kitchen.)

MAX

If Barney Stuart thinks I care about anything he has to say, he's crazy.

(MAX sits back down on the sofa. HE picks up the T.V. Guide and turns to the crossword portion. HE looks at the letter on the table. HE pushes it to one side. HE gets up and walks behind the sofa. He kneels behind the sofa out of sight. His head comes up slowly and focuses on the letter. HE walks around the other side of the sofa and sits in front of the letter. HE picks it up and pretends to stretch. When his arms separate over top of him, the letter comes out of the envelope, with a little help from his hands. He pokes at the letter with the pencil, until it opens. HE looks around to see if FLORENCE is watching. SHE isn't.)

1-1-11

(MAX picks up the letter and begins reading it to himself.)

BARNEY (O.S.)

Hiya, Brother. I guess you're pretty surprised to hear from me. Well, believe me, I wouldn't be writing if it wasn't important. I guess you heard that Betty and me are divorced.

MAX

You've been married so many times, I've lost track.

BARNEY (O.S.)

But then, I've been married so many times, you've probably lost track. Hey, I was shooting to tie Mickey Rooney's record, but it doesn't look that way now. Anyway, the reason I'm writing is because I got some bad news, recently, and I've got to talk to you before it's too late.

MAX

Before it's too late?

BARNEY (O.S.)

I know you're still mad about what happened a long time ago, but I hope we can iron that all out before I'm gone. Anyway, I'll be in the Fort Myers area on Thursday, the fifth. Please take time out to talk to me. I don't want to go to my grave knowing you hate me.

MAX

(shaken)

Going to his grave?

BARNEY (O.S.)

Love, your younger brother, Barney.

(MAX puts the letter down slowly.)

MAX

My brother's dying.

1-1-12

(MAX gets up with the letter and crosses to the kitchen. FLORENCE is wiping down the table. SHE notices that Max is upset.)

FLORENCE

What's the matter, Max?

MAX

I just read the letter from my dear, sweet brother.

FLORENCE

(confused)

Which brother is that?

MAX

Don't be so cruel, Florence. The only brother I have...Barney.

FLORENCE

You mean the same Barney that you wished would drop dead first?

MAX

Bite your tongue.

FLORENCE

What are you talking about?

(MAX hands the letter to FLORENCE.)

MAX

Barney is dying. Here, read it for yourself.

(FLORENCE reads the letter.)

MAX

And to think for the last fifteen years, I've refused to talk to him. When he gets here, I'm going to forgive him for everything. Even not coming to see me when I had my heart attack last year.

