

Jack, Wanda, and Ben

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JACK walks into the house carrying groceries. He looks around.

JACK

Wanda! Wanda!

He waits; no response.

Wanda?

Slowly, WANDA steps out of the kitchen. She looks terrified and confused.

WANDA

Jack?

JACK

Wanda! Are you OK?

WANDA

Oh, Jack!

She hugs him tight, nearly in tears. JACK, confused, squirms underneath her and the groceries.

JACK

Wanda...is everything all right?

WANDA

She releases him:

Oh yes, yes Jack. Everything's fine, now that you're here.

JACK puts the groceries on a chair and scratches his head.

JACK

What, is there a spider in the kitchen; you want me to....

He trails off. WANDA continues to stare.

Well, I'm back from the supermarket...back from the bank....

WANDA

Oh, Jack, you've been gone so long....

JACK

Well, I was an extra five minutes at the bank....

WANDA

Oh Jack, for me it was so much longer! It was a lifetime!

She looks up.

Why, Jack? Why did you leave me for so long?

JACK

Well honey, I wasn't gone for more than forty-five minutes. It's ten minutes there, ten minutes back, and then the time for shopping; I think I made pretty good time, actually....

He looks at her. He is at a loss.

I—I missed you....

WANDA

Oh Jack, I missed you! I more than missed you, I—

She stops and holds her hand to her face.

Oh.

JACK

What?

WANDA

Jack...Jack, things have changed since you've been gone.

JACK

I know; Detroit got a field goal. I was listening in the car.

WANDA

No, things have changed for me; for...us.

JACK

Wanda, what are you getting at?

WANDA

It's so hard to say, I...Jack, you were gone!

JACK

For forty-five minutes!

WANDA

You were gone, and I didn't know if you'd be back....

JACK

Wanda, I'm really confused. I was gone, but now I'm back. What does all this mean?

WANDA

Oh Jack, I don't know how to tell you this, but—

BEN

From offstage:

Wanda? Wanda, are you there?

JACK

Looking up:

Who's that?

BEN walks onstage. He puts his arm around WANDA.

BEN

Who's that?

JACK is reeling. WANDA gasps.

WANDA

Oh, Ben....

JACK

Ben?!

WANDA

Ben, this is Jack...my first husband....

JACK

First?! Wanda!

BEN

Oh...I thought he disappeared.

WANDA

He did!

JACK

I didn't!

WANDA

Ben, I thought he was gone; you knew that!

BEN

I know, Wanda, I know....

He hugs her and eyes JACK. JACK explodes.

JACK

Wanda! An hour ago we were sitting in the kitchen, eating dinner! Together! Are you trying to tell me that in forty-five minutes you had me declared missing, then dead, then remarried?!

WANDA

Well I never declared you remarried, though for all I knew...

JACK

Wanda! You married...?

He motions to BEN.

BEN

Ben?

JACK

Ben?!

WANDA

Jack, what else could I have done? You were gone, and I couldn't stay a widow forever....

JACK

Forever?! It was FORTY FIVE MINUTES!

He puts his hands on his knees and his head down, and takes a deep breath.

Wanda, I'm sorry, but I'm just so confused....

WANDA

I know Jack, so am I....

JACK

I don't understand what could make you think I wasn't coming back...I don't understand him!

WANDA

Ben?

JACK

Ben! Where did he come from?

WANDA

Well...Jack...Ben helped me deal with your disappearance. He was there for me when no one else was. Jack, one thing led to another, and....

JACK

One thing led to another?! Wanda, I barely had one thing lead to another! I went from the bank to the store!

WANDA

Jack, Ben is my husband now....

JACK

Forty-five minutes.... Wanda, our wedding ceremony alone was longer than forty-five minutes!

BEN

Jack.

JACK

Still to WANDA:

This makes no sense to me, Wanda. I have no idea—

BEN

Jack.

JACK

—how you could come up with a new husband in an hour. That's like getting a pizza—

BEN

Jack!

JACK turns. BEN slaps a hand on his shoulder.

Let up a little, OK?

JACK

Yeah, I'm sorry, Wanda. I just....

He looks at WANDA in total desperation. WANDA is very uncomfortable.

BEN

Wanda, why don't you finish up in the kitchen? I'll talk here with Jack.

She nods.

WANDA

To JACK, with sadness:

It's just been so long....

WANDA exits. JACK slowly turns to BEN.

JACK

Ben, Ben, this is insane....

BEN

It must seem that way, Jack.

JACK

Yeah, I don't think you know how confused—

BEN

I think I do, Jack. You seem as confused as Wanda was when I first met her.

JACK

Sighs:

When you first met her. Fort—Forty-five minutes ago....

BEN

Granted, it was a whirlwind romance. But when I first saw her, standing there so helpless...I just fell for her immediately. She's just got those eyes. And when she smiles....

Snaps back into focus:

Well, I guess you would know.

JACK

With contempt:

Yes, the memories are fresh in my mind.

BEN

Jack, it's tough! But she had it tough, too.

JACK

She had it all spelled out for her! I told her I was going to the store! I told her I'd be back in half an hour!

Beat:

I told her I loved her.

He sighs.

How...how's she been?

BEN

Excuse me?

JACK

Wanda. You said she was distraught before?

BEN

Yeah. She really missed you. But she got over it.

JACK

She's...she's happy with you?

BEN

Yeah.

JACK

So...where do I fit in?

BEN exhales.

BEN

To tell you the truth, Jack, I don't really know.

JACK

I know—I know this seemed like forever for Wanda. But Ben, you've got to understand; this is all happening so fast for me.

BEN

It must be.

JACK

I didn't expect so much to happen in the time of one car trip. And then to come home and...I really don't know if I'm coming or going....

He looks around and sighs.

I...I guess I'm going.

BEN

Nods:

That's what's probably for the best. She's got her life.

JACK

Ben, take good care of her. For me.

BEN

These things happen, Jack; good luck....

JACK nods and heads for the exit. He takes one last look before going offstage. BEN shakes his head.

BEN (cont.)

Poor guy....

WANDA reenters. She goes to BEN.

WANDA

Ben?

BEN

Jack just left.

WANDA

Ben, oh my God....

BEN

What?

STEVE

From offstage:

Vonda? Vonda are you there?

STEVE enters and puts his arm around WANDA.

WANDA

Ben, I have something to tell you....

BEN

Dismissive:

No....

WANDA

No?

BEN

Wait a second.

WANDA

Wait?

BEN

Just wait, Wanda.

WANDA

No, Ben; this can't wait. This is important!

BEN

Important? Wanda, this is a joke!

WANDA

A joke?

BEN

To STEVE:

What's your name?

STEVE

Extending his hand:

I'm Steve.

BEN

To WANDA, ignoring STEVE:

You want me to think there's something going on between you and Steve. I understand; after you've been married for so long you feel there's a tendency to act out. A seven year itch. Give or take seven years.

WANDA

Ben, I don't understand. I'm married to Steve.

BEN

Oh, I'm not going to believe that.

WANDA

Ben, you disappeared from my life! I had to move on.

STEVE

Come on Ben; leave Linda alone.

BEN

You've picked a winner here, Wanda.

WANDA

Oh, Ben, how can you be this cruel?

BEN

Honey, you're repeating yourself. Remember Jack?

WANDA

Remember Jack? Of course I do. And he was much kinder than you're being right now. And even he ran out on me—twice! But Ben, you act as if you just don't care.

BEN

I'm finding it hard to sympathize, Wanda. In those dozens of seconds that we spent apart, I never stopped loving you. But in that time, you doubted me. And then this happened.

Indicating STEVE:

And Steve, if you don't mind, I'd like a private moment with my wife.

STEVE

But—

BEN

Just go on back to the kitchen and wait for her there.

STEVE

I know—

BEN

It's the least you can do for me.

STEVE

But she'll forget about me.

BEN

Third time's the charm, Steve; try your luck.

BEN shoves STEVE towards offstage. STEVE takes WANDA's hands.

STEVE

I'll be right here for you.

WANDA

I know, Steve.

STEVE

I love you, Brenda.

STEVE exits.

WANDA

Ben—

BEN

Look at me, Wanda.

He goes to her, taking her head in his hands. He stares at her.

I know it's going to take you a while to get over Steve. He's gone now. But I'm here for you; I always have been. Even when you didn't know it.

WANDA

Ben, what are you talking about? Steve is in the next room.

BEN

Oh?

WANDA

He's waiting in the kitchen. You just told him to.

BEN

Oh.

WANDA

You're the one I have to worry about. Steve is the good husband.

BEN

Wanda, I thought when you turn around—

WANDA

Oh, Ben, listen to me! I have two husbands!

BEN

Three.

WANDA

Oh, God! Ben, I need to ask you—and don't be insulted—but I need to know: Do I just have bad taste in men?

BEN

I never thought so before.

WANDA

And that doesn't mean you're bad, Ben; you're not. But I'm making my life a mess. I move too fast.

BEN

Maybe you do.

WANDA

And now look at me. I'm a...trigamist. Oh, Ben....

She begins to cry. BEN comforts her.

BEN

Honey....

WANDA

I'm OK. I'm sorry; I'm OK....

She dries her eyes.

BEN

How long did you know Jack?

WANDA

Jack?

BEN

Before you married him. How long were you together?

WANDA

It felt like a long time; maybe it wasn't. It was less than a year.

BEN

We were together for less than a year.

WANDA

I know some people wait longer, but it felt so certain. We were still a young couple when he went away. You don't think—?

BEN

What?

WANDA

I don't even want to say this; it's so unlike Jack. You don't think he was seeing someone?

BEN

No, Wanda; in the time he was gone? I don't think so.

WANDA

Really?

BEN

He said forty-five minutes? He wouldn't have gotten much done.

WANDA

That would be a relief if it wasn't for everything else that's happened between us. Poor Jack. But Ben, I've learned something: you can't go backwards. You can't.

BEN checks his watch.

BEN

Remember Steve?

WANDA

Of course I do; he's in the kitchen. Why do you ask?

BEN

Losing it:

Because—Wanda, we've spent more time talking right now than you've ever spent with Steve.

WANDA

So?

BEN

And you call him your husband?

WANDA

He is.

BEN

I won't believe you, Wanda. I know whose husband you are. And when you were in the kitchen, when you were in the next room, I didn't talk about anything but you. I don't see the difference.

WANDA

Oh, so to you, time apart doesn't seem any different than time together?

BEN

No, Wanda, that's not what I'm say—

WANDA

You think that abandoning me is OK just as long as you give a thought to me every now and then. To your wife!

She grabs the groceries and starts offstage.

BEN

Where are you going?

WANDA

The eggs are going bad. You didn't put them away.

BEN

Wanda.

She stops.

We've never fought before.

WANDA

We've never done a lot of things before, Ben.

JACK bursts in. He carries a handful of random objects.

JACK

Wanda!

WANDA

She sinks to her knees:

Oh, I can't take another husband!

JACK continues straight towards WANDA.

JACK

Don't worry about the groceries, Wanda; just stand up. You need to look at this.

He fumbles through a series of objects.

Now first, this is us. This is a picture of us from last summer. We're together on the beach. So that's within the year. If you want something recent, this is the slip of paper they give you at the bank. I got it tonight—a half hour ago. It has the date right here. And this is an ice scraper. I know it's not recent or sentimental, but it goes in your car, not mine. So I'm returning it.

WANDA

Jack....

JACK

Oh, Wanda! I should have so much more! In the car, I should have more about us, but there's nothing. Then I think maybe it's my imagination. That I'm thinking there's more to our marriage than really exists.

WANDA

Jack, I remember the beach, the ice scraper, everything. And they all have meaning—for us. Only now I have...other meanings, too.

JACK

To BEN:

How could you put her up to this?

BEN

Don't talk to me. Talk to Steve.

JACK

Steve?

STEVE

Entering:

Did somebody call me?

JACK looks at STEVE, then says to WANDA:

JACK

Another one?

WANDA

Oh, Jack!

JACK

Wanda, Steve and Ben: these aren't relationships. These are cries for help. You can't love them. Not like we love each other. You can't stay like this.

BEN

I agree. You're going to have to choose.

JACK

Choose?

BEN

You've got your pick of husbands, Wanda. Choose one of us and the other two will leave forever.

JACK

But there's only one serious choice. Wanda, really.

BEN

You can make your case first, Jack.

JACK approaches WANDA.

JACK

I can't say anything else. Just think of the years we've spent together. That's all.

JACK steps back and motions for BEN to approach.

BEN

To WANDA:

In terms of experience, I can't compete with Jack. But Wanda, I was your husband in a time of crisis. You know you can count on me. Maybe you can say the same thing about Jack. Or Steve. But you know me, Wanda. And I know you.

STEVE approaches WANDA.

STEVE

Yolanda, you spun the wheel, it landed on me. I don't know what else to say. Besides, possession is nine-tenths of the law.

STEVE turns to BEN.

That's it.

BEN

Well, Wanda: these are your husbands. It's up to you now.

WANDA

Oh, Ben!

WANDA collapses into BEN's arms, sobbing. BEN comforts her, but takes this as a sign he's won. STEVE looks dejected. JACK is outraged.

JACK

Wanda!

BEN

It's OK, Wanda; it's OK. You've made the right choice.

WANDA

But Ben, I can't make any choice! I've lost you and Jack before. How can I choose to lose you again?

BEN

Wanda—

WANDA

This is too much, too soon. I need time.

JACK

Now she needs time....

WANDA

Ben, Jack, Steve: I'm going away. I'm going on a trip so I can get things sorted out. When I come back, I want you waiting here for me. Except Steve.

She looks at him.

Sorry.

STEVE starts to say something, but decides against it. He slinks out towards the kitchen. WANDA approaches JACK and BEN.

WANDA (cont.)

This is hard. I don't like it one bit, and of course, neither do you two. But it's what I need.

JACK

I'd like to say I could understand, Wanda. But if this is what you want, I'll try.

BEN

So will I.

WANDA

Thank you.

JACK

Where will you go?

WANDA

I don't know. Anywhere. Now.

JACK

But you need to pack.

WANDA

No, I'm going to get in the car and drive. And I'm going to do it now.

She looks at them.

BEN

Goodbye, Wanda.

WANDA

I won't be long.

WANDA exits. BEN looks at JACK. JACK begins to unload and sort groceries from the bag.

BEN

She's right, you know. It won't take her that long. Especially the way Wanda does things; she may make up her mind before tomorrow morning. So don't get too worried.

JACK

What if she meets somebody?

BEN

What if she meets many somebodies? This is Wanda we're talking about. At this point we just have to trust her.

JACK

Ben, that forty-five minutes I was gone, how long did it feel to you?

BEN

Forty-five minutes.

JACK

Just like any other forty-five minutes.

BEN

No, no Jack; that's where you're wrong. It wasn't like any other period of time in my life at all. Not with Wanda. It felt longer. To her it was longer. And it was long enough to tell me I loved her. How long was it for you? Before you knew you loved her?

JACK smiles.

JACK

It was love at first sight.

BEN

That's all it takes.

JACK

Taking some groceries into his arms:

Ben, I had you pegged wrong. I didn't think you could know Wanda. But you do.

He motions to the items still on the table.

Can you give me a hand?

BEN

Sure.

He grabs some of the remaining groceries.

What a day, huh?

JACK

What an hour.

BEN

For me it's been an hour with Wanda. It may be the only hour I get. That means something.

JACK

Nods:

I wouldn't give up a minute.

BEN

She's beautiful.

JACK

She's captivating.

BEN

She's Wanda.

They exit. WANDA returns.

WANDA

Jack? Ben?

No response.

Ohhh, not again...!

But before WANDA breaks down, STEVE enters.

Steve?

STEVE

Shhh...

STEVE approaches WANDA and kisses her. She kisses him back. Silently, they exit. BEN and JACK return from the kitchen, unaware. They grab the remaining groceries.

JACK

Ben, no matter what happens, when I was out getting these groceries, I'm glad you were with her.

BEN

Wanda needs someone.

JACK

You make a good someone.

BEN

Thanks.

They exit. Lights fade.