

THE MYRTLE BEACH FAMILY CAMPGROUND

by Marsha L. Grant (c) 2003

A two-act comedy based on the Grant family's misadventures while camping in Myrtle Beach SC: a stolen camper; marital squabbles; stormy nights and sunny days; the campground bigot; black leather bikinis? the French connection; alligators in water hazards; departing on the heels of a hurricane. Almost every word is true.

CAST

(5 women, 4 men)

Marsha, age 55 - 65
Ralph, her husband age 55 - 65
Bernie, age 65 - 75
Chuck, her husband age 65 - 75
Chris, their daughter age 40 - 45
Pat, age 50 - 60
Carmine, her husband age 50 - 60
Francine, French Canadian age 35 - 45
Pierre, French Canadian age 35 - 45

All action takes place on a bare stage. The time is present. Running time approx. 90 minutes without intermission. Costume suggestions: shorts, slacks, tops suitable for hot weather, comfortable and very casual.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1, Arrival
Scene 2, The Storm
Scene 3, The Morning After
Scene 4, Girl Talk

Intermission

Scene 5, Games
Scene 6, A Week Later
Scene 7, The Boys
Scene 8, Departure
Scene 1 - Arrival

[Open stage; optional cyc or backdrop painted with loblolly pines, myrtle trees, RV's and tents. A bathhouse exit may be included, but not necessary. Preset is a wooden picnic table with benches, commonly found at campground sites. It's not necessary, but helpful to the action to have hooks preset on which to rig a clothesline. At rise RALPH is struggling to put up a small nylon tent while MARSHA brings camping items in from off stage: a cooler, aluminum folding chairs, plastic floats, a large plastic storage tote that contains a coffee pot, mugs, tablecloth, dishpan, cooking pots, clothesline. Essential items include a tabletop propane cook stove, battery powered lantern, and a fan. They have been driving all day and are tired, hot, and hungry--not in a good mood.]

MAR: Did you read the instructions?

RALPH: Of course, I read them, but the poles aren't marked.

MAR: There are only 5 of them. How hard can it be? Where's the ground cloth? You have to put it down first. And ditch along the edges.

RALPH: I know that.

MAR: Where is it?

RALPH: Try the tote.

MAR: *(looks in tote)* I don't see it. You sure you packed it?

RALPH: Of course I packed it. Look in the tent bag.

MAR: *(looks in tent bag)* Not there, either.

RALPH: I'll find it after I get this damn thing together.

MAR: What seems to be the problem?

RALPH: I'm hot, I'm tired, and all the poles look alike.

MAR: It said on the box, even a child can do it.

RALPH: That's the problem. I'm not a child.

MAR: You're acting like one.

RALPH: *(his temper beginning to fray)* Do you want to do it?

MAR: No. If you recall, I suggested putting it up before we left home.

RALPH: What good would that have done?

MAR: Maybe something was left out.

RALPH: Like what?

MAR: I don't know... a bolt, or a screw...

RALPH: It doesn't use bolts and screws.

MAR: Maybe it should.

RALPH: You bought it.

MAR: I liked the picture on the box. And it's guaranteed.

RALPH: Well, this one doesn't make the grade. Let's take it back.

MAR: *(ignoring him & looking out toward the audience)* Don't you love the view from up here?

RALPH: *(sitting on the floor)* What view? I don't see anything but sand, scrub grass, and weeds.

MAR: Overlooking the lake, the strand, and then the ocean stretching out to infinity...

RALPH: Somewhere before infinity it bumps into Portugal.

MAR: It's like we're sitting in a penthouse. I bet it's 20 degrees cooler up here under these shade trees than down on the beach.

RALPH: Let's junk this and go find out.

MAR: We need to get it set up before it starts raining.

RALPH: It's not going to rain.

MAR: It always rains the first night we're here.

RALPH: Do you see any clouds?

MAR: No, but feel how still it is? It always gets still before it rains. Want something to drink?

RALPH: In a minute. I want to finish this first.

MAR: I'm going to miss camping next to Tony and Pat. I guess they've got their new RV parked with the other big rigs down on the strand.

RALPH: New York firemen get fantastic benefits.

MAR: I think they traded their house for the RV when he retired.

RALPH: Some of those RV's cost more than a house.

MAR: More than ours, I expect. Tony's only what? Fifty-five? Kind of young to retire.

RALPH: Firemen get burned out early.

MAR: Very funny! *(checks the cooler)* Darn, the ice is melted.

RALPH: Go down to the camp store and get some more.

MAR: I can't carry a 25-pound block of ice.

RALPH: Then get a bag of crushed.

MAR: They didn't have any last year.

RALPH: Well, maybe they do now. While you're getting the ice, get me a couple cans of cold beer.

MAR: They don't sell liquor here.

RALPH: Beer is not liquor.

MAR: It may be the official beverage of South Carolina, but they don't sell it at the camp store.

RALPH: Let me see those instructions again.

MAR: Where are they?

RALPH: Lying around here somewhere.

MAR: *(looking)* I don't see them. Did you leave them at home?

RALPH: *(blows his top)* NO, I DID NOT LEAVE THEM AT HOME!!!! I was just looking at them a few minutes ago.

MAR: What did you do with them?

RALPH: I don't know! Look!

MAR: I did. I don't see them.

RALPH: I'll take that drink now.

MAR: They're all warm.

RALPH: As long as it's wet, I don't give a shit.

MAR: Watch your language. Sound carries.

RALPH: *SHIT! SHIT! SHIT!* It's not like they haven't heard it before.

MAR: Feel better now?

RALPH: Immensely. Let's put all this back in the car and find a motel.

MAR: It's the peak of the tourist season. What are our chances of finding an empty room?

RALPH: Probably nil. Okay, third time's the charm. Get me the screwdriver.

MAR: Why do you need a screwdriver? I thought you just stuck those little plastic poles together.

RALPH: It isn't working. I need to drill the hole larger.

MAR: Then they'll fall out.

RALPH: (*tersely*) They're not going to fall out if I can't get them together.

MAR: You're hungry. Let's go get something to eat.

RALPH: Not till I'm finished. According to your weather prediction, it will be raining when we get back.

MAR: What difference does it make. At the rate you're going, we'll have to sleep in the car.

RALPH: Anything left in the cooler?

MAR: *(checks the contents)* One half of a soggy tuna sandwich. Yuk--the milk's sour. *(pointing offstage)* Oh, look! The Simpson's have arrived. What are they doing down there?

RALPH: That's where they always stay.

MAR: No, that's not their regular site.

RALPH: Maybe it was already taken.

MAR: For ten years they've used the same site. Chris is going to be furious.

RALPH: She's always ticked off about something.

MAR: Usually her father.

RALPH: I don't see how he and Bruce put up with those women for two weeks in a popup camper.

MAR: You don't mean that. Bernie's a sweetheart.

RALPH: But Chris never shuts up. *(CHRIS enters)*

MAR: Hey there, Chris. *(gives her a hug)* How are you? How was the trip?

CHRIS: Terrible. Two hours out of Detroit we had a flat, and so was the spare. Sat on the side of I-75 in the broiling sun for another two hours waiting for Triple A. Mom nearly passed out from the heat, Dad bitched the whole time, and I was dying to go to the bathroom.

MAR: Isn't the van air-conditioned?

CHRIS: Yes, but you know my father. He was afraid if I kept the engine running, we'd run out of gas. A forty-gallon tank, but we'd run out of gas. So I kept it on for ten minutes, off for ten. Then he was afraid that the engine would vapor lock since we weren't moving.

MAR: Better a vapor lock than a heat stroke.

RALPH: Car engines don't vapor lock anymore.

CHRIS: Tell that to Dad.

MAR: How's Bernie?

CHRIS: Mother is much better now, but she sits around the house too much. The doctor told her to get out and walk every day, but either it's too cold, too hot, too damp, too something... always an excuse.

MAR: Well, you don't take unnecessary risks after a hip replacement. What about the malls?

CHRIS: Too far. And we don't let Chuck drive except in an emergency. He'd get broad sided before he got a block from the house. Can you believe he got a warning ticket for driving too slow in a school zone? He's got no business behind the wheel. The man's 70, but thinks he's still 45. Caught him up on the roof last fall cleaning out the gutter. I told him to hire someone, but he refused--said it cost too much, so I offered to pay cause it was cheaper than him falling off and breaking his neck, but he said that Medicare took care of the doctor bills, so what difference did it make. I guess you heard about Bruce.

MAR: No. Where is he?

CHRIS: Don't know, don't care. We got divorced in January.

MAR: You're kidding?

CHRIS: Didn't Dad email you?

MAR: Not a word.

CHRIS: Well, he doesn't like to broadcast bad news. And Bruce was real bad news.

MAR: I had no idea.

CHRIS: That's because he behaved himself down here--well, except for last year, remember? Out drinking with Tony until two in the morning, woke up the entire campground babbling obscenities at the top of his lungs, then threw up all over the inside of our camper.

MAR: I remember. Still, a divorce? It's such a surprise...

CHRIS: Surprised us all. Came home from work one day, packed his clothes, and announced he was leaving. When I told Mother, she said she was glad to be shed of him, that his whole family was a bunch of drunks. And all these years I thought she liked him.

MAR: You didn't see it coming?

CHRIS: Classic case of denial. But now I'm glad he gone. I never realized how much I put up with until I didn't have to put up with it anymore.

MAR: His drinking?

CHRIS: Mostly. Both his brothers are alcoholics. Obviously, he's one, too, but I refused to see it. You know how he always had a cooler of beer at the campsite.

MAR: So do lots of people. It kind of goes with camping.

CHRIS: But Bruce didn't quit when he got home. You know, I don't think that in all the years we were married, I ever saw him without a drink in his hand. Geez, was I dense.

MAR: I'm sorry. Was it another woman?

CHRIS: He said not, but I found out later he had a girlfriend. Rumor has it they're going to get married any day now. She's got three kids. I give it six months. How's it going, Ralph?

RALPH: Not so good.

CHRIS: Too bad about your popup. I was just sick when I heard.

MAR: I was furious.

RALPH: Mostly at me.

CHRIS: Why?

RALPH: Because it was all my fault, of course.

MAR: I told you not to park it out in the north forty where we couldn't keep an eye on it. But you insisted. Nobody is going to steal a camper, you said. Ha!

CHRIS: Did your insurance cover it?

MAR: All but the \$250 deductible, and I covered that by claiming that my hand-made quilt was worth \$300. When they didn't challenge it I kicked myself for not making it four hundred.

RALPH: That, they might have challenged.

CHRIS: Think they'll ever find who stole it?

MAR: It's probably in California by now.

RALPH: Some Georgia cracker has probably made it his permanent residence.

CHRIS: That sounds like something Tony would say.

MAR: Have he and Pat arrived yet?

CHRIS: The girl at the desk said they've checked in. But now that they've graduated to an RV, I doubt we'll see much of them. RVers tend to look down on campers who don't haul their 2-bedroom, full bath, kitchen, and family rooms behind their matching customized vans.

MAR: I expect they'll spend more time here now that Tony's retired.

RALPH: Not the Tony I know. He lives for a fourteen-inch snow base on those Vermont mountains.

CHRIS: Pat doesn't ski and she's calling the shots. Want some help with that, Ralph?

RALPH: I'm almost finished.

CHRIS: Why didn't you guys get another popup?

RALPH: Marsha didn't want to spend the money. Acted like it would bankrupt us. We got the insurance check, for heaven's sake.

MAR: We looked, but I didn't like what I saw. We'll get one next year.

RALPH: Which leaves me fighting to get this Kmart special pitched before the first hurricane arrives.

CHRIS: You could have rented one, you know.

MAR: No, thank you! I've seen the campgrounds rentals. It would take the entire two weeks just to clean up the mildew.

CHRIS: Oh, I forgot to tell you. Mr. Clean has the campsite next to you. The one Pat and Tony had last year.

RALPH: You mean Pierre?

CHRIS: The same. What's his wife's name?

MAR: Francine. But she's not his wife. According to Pierre, they've been living in sin for 15 years.

CHRIS: Aren't they Catholics?

MAR: Lapsed ones, I guess.

CHRIS: Well, be careful that your wet towels don't blow over the edge of his site. He'll throw a fit.

RALPH: I don't *comprenez* French.

CHRIS: Just watch his body language.

MAR: He's always putting Francine down. Orders her around like she's his personal slave.

RALPH: (*grins*) The French are an enlightened race.

MAR: (*accusingly*) And what is that supposed to mean?

RALPH: (*quickly*) Nothing.

CHRIS: Don't let Tony hear you say that. His favorite mantra is "Canadians, go home!"

MAR: I think they give this place an international flavor.

RALPH: Only beachfront in the Carolinas where you hear three languages.

CHRIS: Three?

RALPH: English, French, and South Carolinian. Hey, y'all! (*Finishes setting up the tent.*) There. How's it look?

CHRIS: It's lopsided.

MAR: You forgot the ground cloth.

RALPH: If you two want to change it, be my guest. I'm going to find a cold beer. (*Exits. CHRIS picks up the tent while MARSHA lays the ground cloth down, and they reset it in a different place.*)

CHRIS: That's better.

MAR: Much. Let's go help your folks. *(She & CHRIS exit as LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.)*

Scene 2 - The Storm

[At rise the stage is dark except for lightning flashes, and the sound of rain and thunder. MARSHA & RALPH are inside the tent silhouetted by the battery powered lantern.]

RALPH: Do you want the last piece?

MAR: It's all yours. This is the worst pizza I've ever eaten. Where did you get it?

RALPH: Some drive-in down the road.

MAR: I thought you were going to that Greek place.

RALPH: It's ten miles away.

MAR: So?

RALPH: *(getting annoyed)* So, it's raining torrents out there. I couldn't see four feet in front of the car--fog was so thick the headlights bounced right back in my eyes.

MAR: Well, I wish we could see the ocean. It's exciting during a storm--those big breakers pounding on the sand.

RALPH: Just be glad we're on a hill, or those breakers would be pounding on our tent.

MAR: I'm about to melt. Open the window flap.

RALPH: What window?

MAR: This tent doesn't have one?

RALPH: You bought it. Didn't you check?

MAR: I didn't think about it at the time. Turn on the fan.

RALPH: In the middle of a thunderstorm?

MAR: Why not?

RALPH: The humidity is 110 percent in here. I'd electrocute myself.

MAR: Did you spill your coke?

RALPH: No, why?

MAR: My sleeping bag is wet.

RALPH: So is mine. We've got a leak.

MAR: We've got a river running through here.

RALPH: It's leaking in all four corners.

MAR: Stuff some towels in them.

RALPH: Where are they?

MAR: In the car.

RALPH: Great! I thought you were going to get everything in the tent while I was gone.

MAR: How could I get the towels if they were in the car with you?

RALPH: Where's the umbrella?

MAR: I don't know. Where are you going?

RALPH: To get the towels out of the car.

MAR: They'll get all wet.

RALPH: I'll wrap a plastic garbage bag around them.

MAR: They're in the car, too. So is the umbrella, now that I think of it. Wear your raincoat.

RALPH: I left it outside.

MAR: That was a dumb thing to do.

RALPH: You told me not to drip water in the tent, and it was dripping--a lot.

MAR: I've got to go to the bathroom.

RALPH: Good luck.

MAR: Do you think I'll get struck by lightning?

RALPH: That's a good possibility, yes.

MAR: What should I do?

RALPH: Run like hell.

MAR: *(beat)* Give me the coffee can.

RALPH: *(indignant)* It's got coffee in it!

MAR: This is an emergency!

RALPH: I think the rain's letting up some. Make a dash for the bathhouse while you can.

MAR: I left *my* raincoat in the car.

RALPH: Wear your bathing suit, then it won't matter if you get soaked.

MAR: Except that we don't have any towels to dry off with.

RALPH: I'll get the towels and meet you at the bathhouse.

MAR: One of us has to stay here and hold the tent down. Remember last year?

RALPH: We were in a popup last year.

MAR: I'm talking about the tenters.

RALPH: What about them?

MAR: Three of them got blown in the lake.

RALPH: They didn't use sand stakes. We'll have to chance it, cause I've got to go, too.

MAR: Might as well take the soap and shower off while we're there.

RALPH: We'll just get all sweaty again running back to the tent.

MAR: But it will be clean sweat.

RALPH: Are you ready?

MAR: In a minute. I'm looking for my toothbrush.

RALPH: Brush your teeth in the morning.

MAR: My breath smells like pepperoni.

RALPH: Who cares. So does mine.

MAR: You're getting the towels, right?

RALPH: I'm getting the towels.

MAR: Okay. Let's go. *(They kill the lantern light, dash out of the tent and exit as the lightning flashes and thunder rolls.)*

Scene 3 - The Morning After

[At rise RALPH is putting up a clothesline. During the following dialogue MARSHA hangs the sleeping bags and towels on the line, and unloads the storage tote arranging items on the picnic table. There is a coffee pot sitting on the cook stove. BERNIE enters and sits on the picnic bench.]

BERNIE: Did you survive the storm last night?

MAR: Everything is soaked.

BERNIE: The tent leaked?

RALPH: Like a sieve.

MAR: It's a lake in there.

RALPH: Help yourself to a cup of coffee, Bernie.

BERNIE: Thanks, but I just had one. Why don't you take all that stuff down the camp Laundromat and put it through the dryers.

MAR: Cause everyone else will be doing the same thing, and I don't want to waste the morning standing in line.

BERNIE: I've got some seam sealer if that will help.

RALPH: What would help is to get a decent tent.

MAR: We're only going to be using it for two weeks.

RALPH: That's what you said about the sleeping bags you bought ten years ago.

MAR: There's no sense throwing something away if it's still usable.

RALPH: Mine's not. The zipper's broken, and my feet hang out the end.

MAR: I'll fix it when we get home.

RALPH: You can't fix a broken zipper.

MAR: A replacement costs only two bucks; a new sleeping bag costs twenty.

RALPH: Ten years ago.

BERNIE: They cost three times that now.

MAR: Really?

RALPH: My wife refuses to accept inflation as one of those immutable facts of life. (*CHUCK enters*) Morning, Chuck.

CHUCK: Gonna be a hot one.

RALPH: But not as humid as yesterday. Good day to play golf. Are you ready to hit the links?

CHUCK: Packed the clubs, but I'm not ready. Haven't played since we were here last year.

RALPH: I've only been out a couple of times this summer. Should be an even match.

CHUCK: Have you talked to Tony?

RALPH: He'll play if Chris doesn't. He can't stand losing to a girl.

BERNIE: He bought a big RV.

MAR: So we heard.

CHUCK: How can he afford it?

RALPH: Traded in his house.

BERNIE: Do they plan to live in the RV full time?

MAR: They have three kids they can move in with. One for each season, and spend the summers down here.

CHUCK: Sounds like something Tony would do.

BERNIE: Why do you say that, Chuck?

CHUCK: You know those Italians.

BERNIE: I thought Pat was Irish.

CHUCK: Same thing.

BERNIE: Don't you love the way he explains things? Chuck, did you take your heart pill this morning?

CHUCK: Yes. And my blood pressure pill, and my arthritis pill, and my blood thinner pill, and a pill to make sure all the other pills work like they're supposed to.

BERNIE: You don't have to snap at me.

CHUCK: I'm not snapping. But you remind me every morning. There's nothing wrong with my memory.

BERNIE: Good! Then I won't have to ask the doctor to give you a memory pill. Did Chuck tell you about....

CHUCK: No, I didn't. Can't you see they're busy right now?

RALPH: *(pours himself a cup of coffee and sits in one of the lawn chairs while MARSHA continues to putter around the site getting things organized)* I've done all I plan to do this morning. In another half hour it'll be time for my nap.

BERNIE: Chuck, tell them the latest about your doctor.

CHUCK: Doc-tors, you mean.

RALPH: What about them?

CHUCK: You don't want to hear it.

RALPH: Yes, we do.

CHUCK: It's a long story. Pretty boring, really.

MAR: *(pouring a cup of coffee for herself)* Chuck, none of your stories are boring. What happened?

CHUCK: You guys need some ice? Chris got two bags this morning and we have some left over.

MAR: Sure, we can use it.

BERNIE: Chuck, if you're going to tell your story, just tell it, okay?

CHUCK: *(to Bernie)* You don't want to hear it again.

BERNIE: No, but now that you've started, don't leave them hanging.

CHUCK: I haven't started yet.

BERNIE: Then why did you mention it?

CHUCK: I didn't mention it. You did.

BERNIE: You're a senile old fool.

CHUCK: But she loves me.

BERNIE: Get on with it before I wring your neck.

RALPH: Tell the story, Chuck.

CHUCK: Okay, if you insist.

BERNIE: He didn't insist.

MAR: Yes, we do. Go ahead, Chuck.

CHUCK: Well... my knee was hurting so bad I couldn't walk across the room without help. So I went to my doctor and he poked around and asked, "Does it hurt." And I said, "of course it hurts. That's why I'm here." So he says I might have a torn cartilage and sends me down for an x-ray. I get the x-ray and wait around a couple of hours, and finally he tells me that the cartilage looks okay, but I should see a bone-specialist. I tell him it's probably arthritis, but what do I know. This was in January. I make an appointment with the bone-specialist who is so busy he can't see me until March. In the meantime my other knee starts hurting like hell...

BERNIE: ... and for six weeks he sat in front of the TV and complained.

CHUCK: I'm telling this.

BERNIE: Go on.

CHUCK: I finally see the bone specialist and tell him both knees are killing me now, so he takes some more x-rays, and I wait a couple of hours, and he says that I have fluid build-up from a sprain or something, and he wants to put me in the hospital so they can drain it. I tell him it's probably arthritis, but what do I know. My next visit is to the surgeon. He takes some more x-rays and says that the bone specialist is probably right. *Probably*, he says, like they're going to operate on me even though they're not sure what they're doing it for. I figure the guy needs the money so he can go to the Bahamas. Now I've been practically crippled since January, and nobody has done anything except take x-rays and send me to see another doctor. But they're so busy at the hospital, they can't schedule my surgery until April.

BERNIE: They do the surgery...

CHUCK: I thought I was telling this.

BERNIE: Go on.

CHUCK: So, they do the surgery, and guess what?

MAR & RALPH: What?

CHUCK: They didn't find anything wrong.

RALPH: You went through all that for nothing?

CHUCK: Yep. Four months of agony, I'm glowing in the dark, two ugly scars, and my knees are still killing me. So, I go back to see the first

doctor who needs another month to review the reports from the other doctors, and guess what he says?

MAR & RALPH: What?

CHUCK: Well, he says...

BERNIE: ... that Chuck was right all along.

RALPH: You mean...

CHUCK: Yep. I've got arthritis in both knees.

MAR: You're kidding?

CHUCK: Nope. Those were his exact words. So, he gives me some pills... *(CHRIS enters)*

BERNIE: ... that cleared up the inflammation in a few days, and his knees have been fine ever since.

CHUCK: I was going to say that.

CHRIS: Dad, are you boring everybody with that arthritis story again?

CHUCK: Ralph's not bored.

CHRIS: He's just being polite. Did you take your pills this morning?

CHUCK: All 25 of them. It's my joints that are failing, not my mental capacity.

BERNIE: We'll have them do a brain scan when we get home, just to be sure.

MAR: *(looking toward the audience, i.e. the lake)* Oh, look! There's the alligator. *(They all get up to look; RALPH gets binoculars from the storage tote.)*

CHRIS: I don't have my glasses. What are those people doing? *(RALPH hands her the field glasses.)*

BERNIE: Feeding it marshmallows.

CHRIS: It's against the law to feed the alligators in South Carolina.

CHUCK: Since when?

CHRIS: Since about ten years ago.

CHUCK: Is there a law against alligators feeding on people?

CHRIS: If you don't bother them, they won't bother you.

CHUCK: Has anybody told the alligators?

CHRIS: Really, Dad!

RALPH: That one is just a teenager. Wonder what happened to the big guy?

CHRIS: I heard they had to relocate it. It almost got some camper's dog.

MAR: It makes me furious when I think what they did to Oscar.

BERNIE: Oscar who?

CHRIS: Don't you remember, mom? Oscar was the big gator living in the marsh next to those cute little shops you liked to visit.

BERNIE: What happened to him?

CHRIS: They shot him.

MAR: He was there first, dammit! Practically a Myrtle Beach institution--never bothered a soul. But when they tore down those cute little shops to build an outlet mall over his swamp, they destroyed his habitat. He was too big to relocate, so they shot him.

BERNIE: I wonder when they'll start chipping away at our beachfront? Every year there's a new hi-rise crowding us in.

MAR: The day that they start blocking our view from this hill is the day we look for another campground.

RALPH: We've already checked out every campground from New Jersey to Florida, and this is the only one you like that has it's own oceanfront beach. Of course, there are the state parks, but you don't like cold showers. *(TONY enters with his bicycle.)* Tony! How have you been?

[They add lib greetings as TONY shakes hands with CHUCK and RALPH, and hugs the ladies.]

CHRIS: Where's Pat?

TONY: In the swimming pool with her exercise class. She'll be up to see you after lunch.

BERNIE: If she can tear herself away from her new friends with the fancy RV's.

CHUCK: How's retirement?

TONY: Beats working for a living.

BERNIE: Heard you got a new camper.

TONY: Pat's idea. She plans to spend more time down here and wanted her own shower.

MAR: I don't blame her. No matter how often they clean it, the bathhouse is a disaster.

BERNIE: It's the teenagers...

CHUCK: ... who don't flush the toilets...

BERNIE: ... leave their hair curlers lying in the sinks...

CHUCK: ... and litter the floors with stuff too gross to mention.

TONY: It's the Mexicans and the Frenchies. It's not their country, so why should they care? They come here acting like they're doing us a favor, don't speak our language, trash our parks and campgrounds, and then complain. I say, if they don't like it, *go home!*

CHRIS: Pierre and Francine have reserved your old campsite.

TONY: Soon, there won't be anybody speaking English, except us. Wonder what's he's driving this year?

CHRIS: Last summer he threw a fit when I leaned up against his little red sports car.

RALPH: Corvette.

CHRIS: Whatever. Of course, he was already fit to be tied when he arrived. He was doing 85 on a back road in North Carolina when the

local sheriff pulled him over for speeding. Then he got arrested when he started cussing out the county mountie in explicit French. Had to go back up there for a court appearance two weeks later, and boy, was he mad. Claimed the cops were a bunch of rednecks.

TONY: They should have locked him up and thrown away the key. One less Frenchie polluting our society.

RALPH: Like the pollution scandal in your neighborhood, Tony? I don't think the French Canadians were involved in that.

TONY: It was a local problem until the news media turned it into a national event.

RALPH: Since when is dumping toxic waste into the river not newsworthy?

TONY: The TV people blew it all out of proportion.

BERNIE: Kids were getting sick, Tony.

RALPH: You can't argue with him, Bernie. He's just getting in his digs because I'm a TV news photographer.

TONY: You've got to admit that half the stories on the news are made up. They do it to hike their ratings.

RALPH: I will admit that a lot of the local stuff is pure fluff, but I don't think the networks have to fabricate stories. There's enough going on in the world...

TONY: They try to make it more important than it really is.

CHUCK: A war is not important?

TONY: We wouldn't be involved in so many of them if the news media would just stay out of it.

BERNIE: I'll sleep better tonight, now that you've put things into perspective.

RALPH: Chuck and I are going to play a round of golf later today. You wanna go, Tony?

TONY: Where are you going?

RALPH: I thought we'd try the course in Loris. It's usually not very crowded, so we can take our time.

TONY: Gonna be hot out there.

RALPH: When is it not.

CHUCK: It's a gold mine for lost balls.

CHRIS: That's the only reason he plays. He's got a basement full of used golf balls.

MAR: What are you going to do with them, Chuck?

BERNIE: He doesn't know.

CHUCK: I do it just to upset Chris and Bernie. The signed ones will be worth something someday.

CHRIS: Not in your lifetime, Dad. I'll just have to throw them out when you die.

CHUCK: My daughter wants to bury me already.

CHRIS: Nobody keeps four bushels of used golf balls in their basement.

CHUCK: I haven't had a chance to go through them yet. When I do, I'll toss the ones I don't want.

CHRIS: When were you planning to do it?

CHUCK: When I'm not so busy seeing incompetent doctors who are just trying to finance their vacation plans.

CHRIS: Lay off the doctors, Dad. You don't help the situation because half the time you don't tell them what's the matter.

CHUCK: I tell them where it hurts. It's their job to tell me what's the matter.

BERNIE: That's enough, you two.

RALPH: Well, if I'm going to have the strength to swing a golf club this afternoon, I need my morning nap.

TONY: Who's driving?

RALPH: I will. Meet me here, say, one o'clock. That OK with you, Chuck?

CHUCK: Nothing has been OK with me for the last twenty years.

CHRIS: He'll be ready even if I have to bodily put him in the car. Mother could use a breather. *(She helps BERNIE up and they exit followed by CHUCK.)*

TONY: *(to RALPH)* Is Chris going, too?

RALPH: Relax, Tony. I didn't invite her.

BLACKOUT

Scene 4 - Girl Talk

[That afternoon. BERNIE and MARSHA are stretched out on lawn chairs in front of the tent, soft drinks in hand. PAT is seated at the picnic table plucking her eyebrows; CHRIS sits opposite her, shaving her legs.]

CHRIS: And then he says, "I want to have kids," like we hadn't discussed it a hundred times before, and he always nixed the idea out of hand. Well, if he marries that bimbo, he'll get what he wants--instant family. I hope they're bratty as hell and drive him to drink. Oh, I forgot. He's already a drunk, isn't he?

MAR: What about you?

CHRIS: What about me?

MAR: Kids. Did you ever want any?

CHRIS: Hell no! I'm looking forward to menopause. Besides, with Bruce's sperm, they'd have been born with fetal alcohol syndrome.

PAT: Do you have any in your class?

CHRIS: A couple. Most of them have Downs.

PAT: How did it go this year?

CHRIS: About the same. I have a new teacher's aid, and he's been great. BERNIE: What she means is that he's a gorgeous hunk--tight buns, great abs.

CHRIS: Mother, really! I hadn't noticed.

PAT: Like hell you didn't. Aids do all the grunt work, and get paid zilch.

CHRIS: They make pretty good money in Michigan.

PAT: Not in New York.

MAR: Then go back to school and get your license?

PAT: What for? I quit when Tony retired.

CHRIS: Then quit complaining.

BERNIE: How can you do that without shaving cream?

CHRIS: Forgot to bring any.

BERNIE: Use your father's. You'll scrape the skin off your legs.

CHRIS: No thanks. It smells like Pine Sol. How does Tony like retirement, Pat?

PAT: He thinks it's great... skis all day, goes hunting on weekends, plays golf, bikes...

MAR: What do you do?

PAT: Baby sit with the grandkids, shop the flea markets, and play bingo. We're thinking about going to Europe this fall--Ireland, Italy. Tony's still got some relatives over there.

CHRIS: Expatriates?

PAT: Ex what?

CHRIS: Never mind.

MAR: I want you to know that we were all on pins and needles until we heard that your boys were safe after 9-11. It must have been ghastly for you.

PAT: I knew my youngest was okay--the one who had just become a fireman. He called us right away and told us what was happening. The

older one works for MTA, and we didn't know until later that he was down in the tunnels at the time.

CHRIS: Did Tony go help out?

PAT: He worked behind the scenes the first week. Said it was like a war zone. Gave him nightmares, but he wouldn't talk about it. *(A moment of silence as they all remember.)*

MAR: Want another coke, Bernie?

BERNIE: No, I'm fine, thanks.

MAR: Anyone else?

PAT: Got something to snack on?

MAR: Not until we go to the grocery store. No, wait. *(She looks in the tote.)* Potato chips okay? They're kind of soggy. *(PAT takes them anyway.)*

CHRIS: I'm getting hot. Let's go for a swim.

PAT: The pool is wall-to-wall kids. And they're playing hard rock on the P.A. system.

CHRIS: Then lets hit the beach.

BERNIE: U.V.'s are at their peak right now. I'll wait till Chuck gets back.

PAT: See this scar on my nose? *(They all look.)* Basil cell. I had it removed last fall. Can't be too careful.

MAR: Anyone for *night* swimming?

BERNIE: That's when the sharks come in to shore.

CHRIS: I heard someone got attacked down by the fishing pier.

PAT: Chomp! Right through his leg.

MAR: Did he survive?

PAT: Yep. Those Frenchies have tough hides.

BERNIE: Speaking of French Canadians, did Margaret come down this year?

MAR: Haven't seen her, but she's probably here. They've spent every summer at this campground since the kids were toddlers.

BERNIE: How can she afford it?

PAT: She's got some bigwig job on the Montreal school board. And her husband's a stockbroker.

MAR: She told me, confidentially, that she gives up booze for the winter.

PAT: So, that's it! Every time I see her she's got a broken toe, a sprained wrist, a bum knee... I thought she was just accident-prone.

CHRIS: Exchange rate is lousy right now.

PAT: Didn't one of her daughters marry money... some guy she met here?

MAR: Kathy. Married a Furrows.

PAT: Of the Furrows who own most of Myrtle Beach, including this campground?

MAR: That's the one.

PAT: Must be nice.

BERNIE: Have you seen that rock on her hand?

CHRIS: Make that 3 rocks.

PAT: Obscene.

MAR: Obscenely jealous, is what you really mean.

PAT: What's she drive?

BERNIE: An SUV, I think.

PAT: You gotta hand it to 'em.

BERNIE: Hand it to who?

PAT: Those rich bastards trying to make out like they're just regular folks.

CHRIS: How many rich bastards do you know?

PAT: Don't have to know them personally. Read all about them in Woman's Day.

CHRIS: The ultimate authority on the rich and famous. When do we get to tour your new RV?

PAT: It's not new, and it's been one headache after another.

MAR: How so?

PAT: All the window seals leak, the toilet won't flush half the time, the hot water tank had to be replaced first time we took it on the road, and the air conditioner doesn't put out enough BTU's for the size of the unit. Trust Tony to pick the only lemon on the lot.

BERNIE: Are you going to keep it?

PAT: Don't have much choice now. Spent all the money we got for our house.

CHRIS: *(with a knowing look at MARSHA & BERNIE)* What about your kids?

PAT: They're OK, why?

MAR: Maybe you could move in with them. *(Crosses to clothesline to check the towels.)*

PAT: We plan to. But not until we get back from Europe.

BERNIE: They don't mind?

PAT: Why should they? We took care of them when they were growing up. Now, it's their turn to take care of us.

CHRIS: Don't look at me like that, mother. I have no intention of baby-sitting you and Dad when you reach your dotage.

BERNIE: Gonna dump us in an old folks home, are you?

CHRIS: You better believe it. I've got my career to think of.

BERNIE: My daughter is shameless.

PAT: Marsha, watch out for... (*MARSHA screams.*)... the fire ants.

[MARSHA hops back to her chair, and sticks her foot in the cooler. CHRIS grabs a towel off the line and helps her knock off the ants. They all add lib about the horrible fire ants, why doesn't the campground spray for them, etc. MARSHA dries off her foot; PAT tosses her a tube of skin cream.]

PAT: Try this. It will take the sting out.

CHRIS: Are you still teaching, Marsha?

MAR: For another year, at least. Trying to save enough to supplement social security and Ralph's pension when he retires.

BERNIE: I don't worry about money.

CHRIS: She thinks I'll just hand it over if she needs it. Dream on, old woman!

PAT: Don't talk to your mother like that.

CHRIS: I'll talk to my mother anyway I please.

BERNIE: She's upset with me right now.

MAR: Why?

BERNIE: Cause I'm getting old and feeble... not fun to be with anymore.

CHRIS: You got that right.

PAT: Did you read where deodorant causes Alzheimer's? It's got aluminum in it. I've quit using it altogether.

CHRIS: Don't believe everything you read, Pat.

MAR: Tell us about Bruce's girlfriend.

CHRIS: Obviously, she's a bitch.

PAT: How old is she?

CHRIS: A few years younger than Bruce. They work together--selling Caddie's to the Detroit rich. That's the one thing I'm going to miss.

MAR: Catering to the Detroit rich?

CHRIS: No, the Caddie. Every year the sales people get a new demo to take home.

PAT: Must be nice.

CHRIS: But not enough to put up with Bruce.

MAR: Did you make out all right--after the divorce, I mean?

CHRIS: Kept the apartment and the cottage on Lake Michigan. Didn't ask for alimony. I make as much as he does. Twenty-five years is a long time to be married to one man, only to have him blow you off without some advance warning.

BERNIE: I wasn't surprised.

CHRIS: Then why didn't you clue me in?

BERNIE: Wasn't my place to interfere.

CHRIS: Like you have a problem speaking your mind? Fess up, mom. You liked the guy.

BERNIE: I never said I didn't like him. I just didn't trust him.

CHRIS: Well, now you can quit pretending. We can sit around on rainy afternoons dissing Bruce, the goose. I wonder what he's been saying about me?

MAR: You don't want to know. (*PIERRE & FRANCINE enter*)

PIERRE: *Bon jour, Mesdames. Comment ca va?*

MAR: Pierre... Francine... *Je vais bien, et vous?*

FRANCINE: *Nous avons bien, aussi.*

PAT: Talk English.

MAR: Don't worry, Pat. Five years of high school and college French, and I just exhausted my vocabulary.

CHRIS: Did you have a good trip down?

FRANCINE: *Oui, mais nous...*

PIERRE: *(interrupting)* We make stop in Pennsylvania to see friends.

PAT: Any run-ins with the law?

PIERRE: *Mais non.* See my new truck. American Ford. Those red necks in North Carolina, they salute when I drive by--30 miles over speed limit.

MAR: Smart strategy. You still have the Corvette?

PIERRE: Traded it for truck. Montreal schoolteachers are not so rich like Americans.

CHRIS: I think we just got slammed.

PIERRE: Where are your husbands... Chuck, Ralph, Tony...

CHRIS: Bruce isn't with us this year.

PIERRE: He could not leave his work?

CHRIS: Oh, he's playing around, just not with me anymore.

BERNIE: Still running marathons, Pierre?

PIERRE: No. I teach about computers now. Sit at desk and get fat.

FRANCINE: *Regarde toi tu est gros comme un cochon.*

PAT: What did she say?

MAR: *(translating)* You are gross, like a pig.

PIERRE: *Tu et trois maigre, L'amour avec toi c'est comme fourir un poteau.*

MAR: *(loosely translating)* Making love to you is like, uh... she's skinny as a beanpole.

FRANCINE: *Toi, tu mange mange mange, est deviens gros comme un taureau.*

MAR: *(translating)* You eat, eat, eat, and grow fat like a bull.

PIERRE: *Un taureau a des balls, tu n'a pas de titons.*

MAR: *(translating)* A bull has balls. You have no tits.

FRANCINE: *Tu fais l'amour comme...*

MAR: *(translating)* You make love like... *(changes subject to diffuse the squabble)* How long will you be here, Francine?

FRANCINE: *Je ne sais...*

PIERRE: *(interrupting)* It is long drive. We stay one month.

CHRIS: Still got that bikini?

PIERRE: *Certainment.* American's are so... how you say?

MAR: Prudish.

PIERRE: That is silly. All bodies are beautiful.

BERNIE: You haven't seen mine yet

PAT: Speaking of bikinis, I ran into a motorcycle gang down at the Laundromat. Mom, pop, and three or four kids. All of them had tattoos up the wazao and wearing black leather thongs. *(beat)* Wonder what brand of detergent they use?

FRANCINE: *(looks to Pierre)* *Q' est-ce que ce? (he shrugs)*

BERNIE: How have been, Francine?

PIERRE: *Elle est bon rien.* Keeps trying to spend my money.

BERNIE: Let her speak for herself.

PIERRE: She not understand English so good.

BERNIE: I'll talk slower. How--are--you--Francine?

FRANCINE: *Tres bien, merci.*

PIERRE: She say, very well, thank you.

BERNIE: I caught the gist of it.

PIERRE: *Une femme devrait être enceinte, nu pied, est dans la cuisine.*

PAT: What did he say?

MAR: A woman belongs in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant.

BERNIE: Pierre, that's a rotten thing to say. Apologize to Francine.

PIERRE: She knows I only tease her.

FRANCINE: Pierre, he make joke.

BERNIE: Well, I don't think it's very funny! That's a pretty blouse, Francine. How do you stay so trim?

PIERRE: She eat like bird.

BERNIE: I'm talking to Francine.

FRANCINE: *Je ne sais pas*, Madame Simpson.

\
BERNIE: I'm Bernie, remember?

FRANCINE: *Oui*. Bernie.

PIERRE: Francine, *apportez-moi un tea avec la glace*. (bring me a glass of ice tea)

MARSHA: What's wrong with *your* legs?

PIERRE: You are angry with me, Madame?

CHRIS: You caught us at a bad time.

PIERRE: Please excuse, then. We talk later, no?

CHRIS: We talk later, yes.

PIERRE: *Viens, Francine, donnez moi plaisir.*

FRANCINE: *Au revoir*. (She & PIERRE exit.)

PAT: What did he say?

MAR: Something about Francine giving him pleasure, I think.

BERNIE: Who does that frog think he is? Orders her around like a... and they're not even married!

PAT: Frenchmen think they're God's gift to women.

CHRIS: And Italian men don't?

PAT: Just because you got shafted, doesn't mean all men are pigs. Now, Tony...

CHRIS: I don't want to hear about Tony. He's the biggest bigot on the campground. Probably in the whole state of New York.

PAT: Who's a bigot? Just listen to your mother. Frog? She still thinks it's 1945.

BERNIE: Girls, please....

CHRIS: Shut up, mother. This is between Pat and me.

PAT: If you weren't the world's bossiest broad, maybe Bruce...

[BERNIE & MARSHA quietly exit as PAT & CHRIS continue to rail at each other. LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK]

Scene 5 - Games

[That evening. MARSHA, RALPH, BERNIE, & CHUCK are seated at the picnic table setting up a Scrabble game.]

RALPH: Are you ready to get wasted, Chuck?

CHUCK: I don't like this game.

MARSHA: What would you rather play?

BERNIE: Don't pay any attention to him. He's in a crappy mood.

MARSHA: Bad day on the links?

CHUCK: I don't want to talk about it.

RALPH: He found a ton of golf balls, but the lady at the clubhouse wouldn't let him take them home.

MAR: I thought it was finder's, keepers.

RALPH: It's no big deal if you lose one, find one. But Chuck had two plastic bags full.

CHUCK: She said they belonged to the club, which of course they don't, then acted like they were in business just to sell used golf balls, which of course they're not.

RALPH: So, Chuck dumped them all in the parking lot.

MARSHA: You didn't?

CHUCK: I'm not going back there.

MARSHA: I don't think they'll let you. Dare I ask who won?

CHUCK: We didn't keep score.

RALPH: Tony maxed his strokes in a sand trap on the 7th hole, and slammed his wedge against a tree. On the 9th, Chuck drove the golf cart into a water hazard.

BERNIE: I warned you not to let him drive.

CHUCK: It was only a foot deep.

RALPH: But we had to wrestle it away from two alligators.

CHUCK: Other than that, we had a great time. I hope it rains tomorrow.

MARSHA: Where's Chris? Doesn't she like to play Scrabble?

BERNIE: Said she was going for a walk on the beach. She refuses to play board games with her father.

MARSHA: Why?

BERNIE: They always end up in an argument.

CHUCK: She says I don't follow the rules.

BERNIE: Well, half the time you don't.

CHUCK: I would if you didn't keep changing them.

BERNIE: I don't, but it helps to read them before you start playing.

CHUCK: I've played this game before.

BERNIE: Not since the last time we were here.

CHUCK: That was only a year ago.

BERNIE: You've lost a billion brain cells since then.

RALPH: Well, I bought an official Scrabble Dictionary. That should eliminate any problems.

BERNIE: Until Pat gets here. She almost started a riot at the Senior Center.

CHUCK: What happened?

BERNIE: Who knows. It was just a bingo game, but Pat claimed it was rigged. You'd have thought it was a life and death crisis. Must be a New York thing.

MARSHA: Will she be joining us?

BERNIE: She said she was. But you know Pat. She'll run into someone she knows, start talking, and forget.

RALPH: Then let's start without her. Everybody pick a letter.
(They do and he takes charge of the score pad) L.

MARSHA: S.

BERNIE: P.

CHUCK: F.

RALPH: You go first, Chuck. *(Chuck puts his letter in the center of the board)*

BERNIE: You have to draw first.

CHUCK: I know that. How many?

BERNIE: I rest my case. Draw seven, Chuck. *(he does, and the rest follow suit)*

RALPH: Gotta word there, Chuck? (*CHUCK plays*) H-E-L-P. That's nine doubled...18 points. Very good. Your turn, Bernie. (*BERNIE plays*) P-A-M. That's a proper name.

BERNIE: Oh, I meant to do this. (*changes a letter*)

CHUCK: P-A-T. It's still a proper name.

BERNIE: Pat, like pat the dog, pat of butter, not our Pat. A measly five points.

MARSHA: (*while RALPH takes his turn*) I wonder if Pat and Chris are speaking to each other yet.

CHUCK: Why wouldn't they be?

BERNIE: Marsha and I sneaked off before they started pulling hair.

CHUCK: Can't leave you girls alone for two hours without war breaking out. What happened?

BERNIE: I'm not sure. France versus Italy, I think

RALPH: Your turn, Marsha.

MARSHA: Just a minute. I'm thinking.

RALPH: Well, don't take all night.

MARSHA: What did you do?

RALPH: Pattern... nine doubled. eighteen points.

MARSHA: You took the double I wanted to use.

BERNIE: What have you got? (*she looks at Marsha's letters*)

CHUCK: You're not supposed to do that, Bernie.

BERNIE: Don't tell me what I can do.

CHUCK: Check the rules, Ralph. I'm sure it says you're not supposed to look at your opponent's letters. (*Ralph picks up the box top & checks the rules.*)

RALPH: Nope. Doesn't mention it.

CHUCK: In that case, let me see yours, Bernie.

BERNIE: *(hiding them with her hand)* Mind your own business.
(MARSHA plays) Tepid. That's a good word... eight points.

MARSHA: The "I" is triple so it's ten.

CHUCK: What's it mean?

MARSHA: Luke warm. Like our cokes. We need more ice, Ralph.

RALPH: I bought a block last night and another one this morning.

MARSHA: It's not my fault the refrigerator got stolen.

BERNIE: The one in the camper?

MAR: Yes, along with the cast aluminum table grill I bought ten years ago for eight dollars. I've looked everywhere and can't find another one like it.

RALPH: Don't start... Your turn, Chuck.

MAR: All our summer clothes, too. First thing I had to do when we got home was shop for underpants.

BERNIE: That's a shame. Play, Chuck. *(he does)* V-I-P. You can't use abbreviations.

CHUCK: Since when?

BERNIE: Check the dictionary, Ralph. *(he checks)*

RALPH: VIP is okay... nine points.

CHUCK: See, you don't know everything, old woman. Your turn.

MAR: Also lost my hand-held Hoover vacuum cleaner. And my L. L. Bean beach chair.

RALPH: All right, already! Play Bernie.

MAR: Every time I think of some stranger pawing through my personal things, I could cry. You remember those neat outdoor mats we had? They don't make them anymore.

RALPH: Marsha, that's enough! I'm sorry! Can we play the game now?

MAR: Whose turn is it?

BERNIE: Mine, and all I've got are vowels.

CHUCK: Well, do something.

BERNIE: How many words do you know that have all vowels?

CHUCK: Use a consonant on the board.

BERNIE: That's what I'm working on. (*she plays*) E- O- N- S. That's only six points and opens up a triple word score for Ralph.

CHUCK: Then don't use the S.

RALPH: Too late (*he plays*) That's 1,2,3,4,5 and 4 are 9, 10, 11, tripled--thirty-three points.

BERNIE: He's winning, Marsha. Do something.

MAR: I'm thinking, I'm thinking. Gone forever is that pique bathing suit with the appliquéd pink swan on the skirt.

BERNIE: The one your mother gave you?

MAR: For my birthday. And the white cotton nightgown with the smocking down the front. I bought it for \$30 at the Vanity Fair outlet store. One of a kind...

RALPH: It made you look pregnant.

MAR: It did not!

CHUCK: (*brightly, to change the subject*) Oh look! Mr. Clean has arrived. Would you look at that huge pile of pine needles.

MAR: He spent an hour sweeping the site before setting up his tent. Princess and the pea syndrome.

CHUCK: What did you girls do this afternoon? Sit around laughing behind his back?

BERNIE: After we finished laughing about you and Ralph.

CHUCK: Didn't know I was so funny.

BERNIE: You're a laugh a minute tonight.

CHUCK: What's he driving this year?

MAR: Traded his Corvette for a truck.

CHUCK: Well, don't anybody breathe on it.

RALPH: Are you guys going to play or talk?

MAR: Both. *(PAT enters)* Oh, there you are. Help me, Pat, I'm stuck. *(PAT picks up a couple of letter & plays them)* Darn! Why didn't I see that?

RALPH: Anthill is two words.

PAT: It is not.

RALPH: I'm sure it's two words.

PAT: Look it up. *(He does)* Oh, I saw Margaret today. She's got a cast on her arm. Said she tripped and fell in the bathhouse. Can you believe it? *(Beat)* What's it say, Ralph?

RALPH: You're right. Let's see--1, 2, 3 and 4 is 7, 8, 9 10 points.

MAR: All those letters and only ten points? Count again. *(He does)*

BERNIE: The motorcycle gang was at the pool this afternoon. Sitting under a black leather umbrella. Wonder how many cows had to die...?

MAR: How many, Ralph?

RALPH: Still ten points. Where's Tony?

PAT: Asleep in front of the TV. Did you see Mr. Clean's towels on the line? Exactly two inches between each clothespin. Do you think he uses

a ruler to get it just right? I'd go nuts living with someone that that.
Poor Francine.

CHUCK: She can leave anytime she wants to. They're not married.

BERNIE: Being married didn't stop Bruce.

PAT: How's Chris really taking it?

BERNIE: She's hurting. A lot.

CHUCK: If he ever shows his face again, I'll beat the crap out of him.

BERNIE: You'll do no such thing.

CHUCK: You going to stop me, Bernie?

BERNIE: He's half your age, old man. Staggering drunk, he could still take you down.

CHUCK: I'd like to see him try.

BERNIE: Talk some sense into him, Ralph.

RALPH: Are we going to play, or what?

PAT: So, play. Nobody's stopping you.

RALPH: It's your turn, Chuck.

CHUCK: I've got to use the bathhouse.

BERNIE: You just went.

CHUCK: Well, I've got to go again. *(stands)*

BERNIE: From now on, you're limited to one glass of ice tea.

RALPH: At this rate we'll be here till midnight. *(CHUCK grabs his chest & gasps in pain)*

BERNIE: What's the matter?

CHUCK: I think I'm having a heart attack.

BERNIE: No, you're not. You took your heart pill this morning. (*CHUCK gasps again & sits back on the bench*)

PAT: Bernie, I don't think he's faking. He's as white as a sheet.

MAR: Ralph, go call 9-1-1.

CHUCK: Bernie...

BERNIE: Take it easy. We're getting help.

RALPH: Where's the cell phone?

MAR: In the car.

PAT: I'll get Carmine. He knows CPR. (*exits*)

MAR: Breathe, Chuck.

BLACKOUT

Scene 6 - A Week Later

[CHRIS, BERNIE, PAT, & MARSHA are having their morning gab fest. PAT is painting her nails; CHRIS is bandaging her toes.]

MAR: Thank God it wasn't a heart attack.

BERNIE: Indigestion, but Chuck insisted that if it wasn't his heart, it had to be food poisoning.

PAT: Why did he say that?

CHRIS: He claims my potato salad was tainted.

BERNIE: I ate it, and didn't get sick.

PAT: Just goes to prove, women are constitutionally stronger than men.

MAR: Where did you read that?

PAT: Good Housekeeping.

BERNIE: Chuck doesn't like potato salad. He was just trying to ruin my vacation.

CHRIS: What's one vacation when you take three a year? You and Dad are trying to ruin my life.

BERNIE: It's not our fault Bruce walked out.

CHRIS: I'm not talking about Bruce, the goose. I'm talking about you and Dad.

BERNIE: What have we done now?

CHRIS: You're driving me crazy.

BERNIE: You should have fixed macaroni and cheese.

CHRIS: I spent the entire winter carting you back and forth to doctors' offices. You need a full-time nurse and chauffeur, not a daughter. Dad's hinting that I give up my apartment and move in with you.

PAT: Why don't you?

CHRIS: Are you kidding? I nursemaid mental cases all day. I'll be damned if I'll do it 24-7.

BERNIE: So now I'm a mental case.

CHRIS: No, I didn't mean that...

BERNIE: Just a burden... with a limp.

PAT: What limp?

CHRIS: I was joking, okay?

BERNIE: Then why isn't anybody laughing?

MAR: What with the toes, girlfriend?

CHRIS: Blisters.

PAT: Too much walking.

CHRIS: You could do with a little.

PAT: Tony likes his women well rounded. What you need is a boyfriend.

CHRIS: Someone independently wealthy and willing to drive my folks from here to eternity.

MAR: Funeral homes usually provide the hearse.

CHRIS: I'm too teed off with Bruce to look at another man.

PAT: What about the great abs on your assistant?

CHRIS: He's twenty years younger than I am.

MAR: So?

CHRIS: So, everybody's got great abs when they're twenty-five.

MAR: You're right. I could still find my bones when I was twenty-five.

BERNIE: I could touch my toes.

PAT: I had a waistline. (*FRANCINE enters*)

FRANCINE: *Bon jour.* Chuck, he is okay, *non?*

BERNIE: He's fine, Francine. Come... join us.

FRANCINE: (*looking back at her campsite*) *Por un minute.* Pierre, he come back soon and does not like to wait.

MAR: You going somewhere?

FRANCINE: *La plage--* the beach.

PAT: In the heat of the day?

FRANCINE: We like it, the heat. Winter in Quebec is long, *tres* cold.

MAR: Your English is much better.

FRANCINE: *Merci.* I practice.

MAR: Think I'll head down after lunch.

PAT: I hear that the ozone layer will completely disappear in five years.

CHRIS: Don't believe everything you hear, Pat.

MAR: My beach umbrella has a UV protection rating of 45.

PAT: You can still get burned.

MAR: I'll coat myself with tanning lotion and take my chances. I didn't drive 800 miles just to sit around the tent all day.

PAT: Go shopping. I'm heading over to the Good Will store at Cherry Grove. Need to find another bathing suit. Last week I bought Tony two pairs of shorts... brand new, for a dollar apiece. You should check it out.

MAR: Maybe I will.

PAT: Bernie, you wanna go?

BERNIE: If you find a suit with a size 14 bust and 60-inch hips, let me know.

PAT: You're not that big.

BERNIE: Only when I'm sitting.

PAT: How about you, Francine?

FRANCINE: *Pardon?*

PAT: No, you better not. Pierre couldn't find his peter without you to point it out. *(to MARSHA)* Don't translate that.

MAR: You still planning to host supper tonight?

PAT: Tony's fixing hamburgers on the grill.

CHRIS: What, no spaghetti?

PAT: Chris, you and Bernie bring the buns and a salad. Marsha's bringing dessert. Francine, you and Pierre are welcome to join us.

FRANCINE: *Merci, mais non.* We have date to go out.

PAT: Some other time, then. See you later, girls. *(exits)*

MAR: What can I fix for dessert that doesn't require cooking?

BERNIE: Ice cream.

CHRIS: Do you suppose Pat's ever seen the inside of regular department store?

MAR: She'd reel from sticker shock.

BERNIE: Can you imagine what a dollar bathing suit looks like?

CHRIS: She suffers from compulsive nickel and dime disorder.

FRANCINE: What this mean, nickel and dime disorder?

MAR: Cheapskate. (*Francine looks puzzled*) *Pauvre*.

FRANCINE: She is poor?

BERNIE: No, she just likes us to think she is. That way she avoids having to pay her share when we eat out.

MAR: Do you remember last year? She scoured all the empty camp sites for discards--broken aluminum beach chairs, pieces of garden hose, deflated floats--it looked like a junkyard beside her tent.

CHRIS: And it was still there when they left to go home. The trash men had to make two trips to haul it away.

BERNIE: Have you seen the inside of their RV?

MAR: Peeked in the door, but I haven't been given the tour she promised.

BERNIE: It looks like a second hand junk shop. She's must have cleaned out every flea market from here to New York--unbelievable!

CHRIS: Sounds like *our* camper.

BERNIE: I don't hoard junk.

CHRIS: No, ours just looks like the inside of a dirty laundry basket.

BERNIE: If you and Chuck picked up after yourselves....

CHRIS: We're on vacation, remember?

BERNIE: Well, you're on laundry detail tonight. I'm down to my last pair of clean britches.

CHRIS: Buy some more. It's cheaper than the Laundromat.

FRANCINE: *Oui*. It is *cher* to do wash here. Pierre wears bathing suit all time.

MAR: We've noticed.

BERNIE: I wouldn't let Chuck out the door in one of Pierre's bikinis.

MAR: Ralph, either.

FRANCINE: You don't like bikini?

CHRIS: On you, we like. But when a guy is afflicted with Dunlap disease...

FRANCINE: Dunlap? *Je ne comprend pas*.

MAR: When de belly dun laps over de belt, it's disgusting.

BERNIE: I don't mean to get personal, Francine, but why haven't you and Pierre gotten married?

CHRIS: That's personal, mother.

FRANCINE: Pierre has wife.

MAR: What?

FRANCINE: *Et une fille*--a daughter.

BERNIE: Don't tell me you all live together?

FRANCINE: *Non*. Pierre and his wife are, how do you say--separate--for long time.

CHRIS: They're divorced?

FRANCINE: *Non*. He cannot. She is good Catholic.

CHRIS: I see... I think.

FRANCINE: Chris, your husband *ne pas ici*. You are separate, *oui*?

CHRIS: Very. We're divorced.

FRANCINE: I am sorry.

CHRIS: I'm not.

BERNIE: Yes, she is. She just won't admit it.

FRANCINE: Your husband, he was mean to you?

CHRIS: Only when he was sober. Fortunately, he was drunk most of the time.

FRANCINE: *Je ne comprends pas.*

CHRIS: Neither do I. (*PIERRE enters*)

PIERRE: *Bon jour, Mesdames. Allons-y, Francine.*

CHRIS: Don't rush off. We've hardly had a chance to visit.

PIERRE: Your husbands, they play golf today?

MAR: At Waterway Hills. They're *persona non grata* in Loris.

BERNIE: I hope they only play nine holes. I worry about Chuck getting over-tired.

PIERRE: He is feeling better now, yes?

BERNIE: Cranky as usual.

PIERRE: You ladies go to beach *après- midi*?

BERNIE: Later, when the guys get back.

PIERRE: (sternly) *Francine, débrouille- toi, et fais mon diner, ma grosse paresseuse.*

FRANCINE: We see you later, *non*?

MAR: We'll see you later, yes. (*PIERRE & FRANCINE exit*)

CHRIS: What did he say?

MAR: Move your butt and fix my lunch, you lazy slob.

BERNIE: The big bully! Why does she put up with it?

CHRIS: Great sex. You've heard what they say about those Frenchmen.

MAR: Ninety percent talk, 10% action.

BERNIE: How would you know?

MAR: Read about it in Business Week.

CHRIS: Ten percent is better than nothing.

MAR: Then find yourself a boyfriend.

CHRIS: I don't want a boyfriend. That assumes mutual interests. All I want is a horny stud. Maybe I'll visit the topless joints tonight.

MAR: They closed down the one out on Highway 17. Apparently they were selling more than beer and bobbing boobs.

CHRIS: Just my luck.

MAR: Help yourself to another soft drink, Chris. We're fully stocked and they're ice cold. *(She does)*

CHRIS: You want one, mom?

BERNIE: No thanks. How's your family, Marsha?

MAR: Mother turned 85 in April, and is still trying to control my life.

BERNIE: Her health is good?

MAR: Like you, she had a hip replacement, which gives her the perfect excuse to stay put and be waited on.

CHRIS: Sounds like you, mom.

BERNIE: When have you ever waited on me?

CHRIS: All the time. Last night I fixed supper, washed up afterwards, helped you to the bathhouse, washed your hair, and then brought you a glass of lemonade.

BERNIE: Poor baby... she's so abused.

CHRIS: How are your boys, Marsha?

MAR: As well as can be expected, considering that one has been living in sin for fifteen years with a contemporary of his mother. And the other-
-well, every time I ask him what time it is, I get a lecture in quantum physics. Where did I go wrong?

BERNIE: Kids never turn out the way we hope.

CHRIS: Before you start on Bruce and me again, I'm leaving.

BERNIE: Where are you going?

CHRIS: For a long walk. See you later. (*exits*)

MAR: It appears we've been deserted.

BERNIE: Was it something I said?

MAR: The divorce must have really devastated her.

BERNIE: You don't know the half of it. Bruce was so low-key we never realized he had a serious drinking problem. And they were both so busy with their jobs... spent weekends and vacations with us or at their lake cottage with friends. Married twenty-five years, and I wonder if they ever really knew each other.

MAR: I suppose it's different if you have kids.

BERNIE: Chris blames it on Bruce, but I don't think she ever wanted kids, either. At first she was just too caught up in her career... and later... well, if you're dealing with handicapped children all day the last thing you want to do when you get home...

MAR: A friend of mine adopted two children when she and her husband were practically middle-aged. She confessed that they had never had a serious argument until the kids arrived. Maybe it's the arguments that cement a marriage.

BERNIE: In that case, Chuck and I are glued for life.

MAR: You and Chuck are the most "together" couple I know. You argue just to get a rise out of each other, and relish every minute of it.

BERNIE: You're probably right. I'd be lost without that old man.

MAR: And he without you. *(beat)* You know what I like about coming here? No phones, no appointments, nobody bugging me to do something...

BERNIE: No bathrooms to clean.

MAR: Whadda ya say we move here permanently? We'll sit on the beach, watch the waves roll in, the pelicans dive for fish, and ponder the meaning of life. *(beat)* You know, it should be cathartic, but introspection is not what's it's cracked up to be.

BERNIE: I know. I gave it up for Lent.

MAR: It's better to have someone like you to talk to, Bernie. Thanks for being a good listener.

BERNIE: Anytime.

MAR: It does you credit, Bernie, that your family takes vacations together. We took the boys with us everywhere when they were small. Now, they lead independent lives, which is good, I guess, but I wish our paths crossed more often.

BERNIE: Give it time. Kids don't appreciate their parents until they're no longer around.

MAR: That's not very comforting.

BERNIE: Sorry, but it's the best I can do on short notice. Look at the time. The fellows will be back in a few minutes. Think I'll take a shower and put on my bathing suit. I take more showers here in one day than I do in a week back home.

MAR: It's the humidity.

BERNIE: We're on vacation. What else is there to do.

BLACKOUT

Scene 7 - The Boys

[TONY, RALPH, & CHUCK are seated in front of the tent after supper.]

TONY: Have you noticed there's a lot more Blacks here this year.

CHUCK: They've got the biggest, fanciest RV's on the campground. Like the ones the rock stars travel in.

TONY: They should stick to their own beach instead of horning in where they're not welcome.

RALPH: I must have missed that paragraph in the brochure.

TONY: More Hispanics, too.

RALPH: That's language number four.

TONY: What language?

RALPH: Spanish.

TONY: What about it?

RALPH: English, French, South Carolinian... never mind. You want another beer?

TONY: No, I'm good.

RALPH: How about you, Chuck?

CHUCK: Doctor won't let me.

TONY: Did you watch CNN last night?

CHUCK: We didn't bring a TV.

RALPH: Don't have cable hookup.

TONY: How come? We do.

CHUCK: We're just p'or folks up here. Popups and tenters.

TONY: You could request a site down in the civilized section.

RALPH: And give up our view?

TONY: Well, they had a story on the news last night about the problems they're having in Africa. Ever since the government was taken over by Blacks, the country's gone down hill. People out of work, families starving, rioting...

CHUCK: So, you're saying it's all the fault of the Blacks?

TONY: What else could it be?

RALPH: They've been having economic problems in Africa for two hundred years; only it didn't affect the whites until recently. Now that it does, it makes news.

TONY: But why should we send them money? It's their problem. Let them solve it.

CHUCK: Some of our legislators feel the same way.

TONY: Still they vote to send billions of *our* money to help the poor blacks in Africa, while the states are going bankrupt. Where are their priorities?

RALPH: I think it's a bit more complex than that.

TONY: You don't read about the Chinese or Bulgarians giving it away.

RALPH: The Chinese have their own problems, and I haven't read anything about the Bulgarians since World War II.

TONY: Well, there was a big article about it in Sports Illustrated.

RALPH: The definitive source on international economics.

TONY: Of course, they're biased like all the news media, so who can you believe?

CHUCK: Then what makes you so sure they're right?

TONY: I don't. Just giving you my opinion.

CHUCK: Glad to have it clarified. So... how's retirement, Carmine?

TONY: Beats working for a living.

RALPH: Play any horseshoes?

TONY: Don't know how.

RALPH: What's to know. You just pitch it at a post. Practice makes perfect.

CHUCK: You playing in the tournament this year, Ralph?

RALPH: There's a bunch of old codgers who are real pros. I'll probably get eliminated in the first round. But it's fun to watch.

CHUCK: I'll take my chances with the sand castle contest.

TONY: Wonder if the artist is back.

CHUCK: You mean the one that carved the big whale and sphinx by the dunes last year? He was talented.

RALPH: Two years ago he sculpted a Labrador retriever with puppies. Reminded us of Sam.

CHUCK: All that work and it gets washed away at high tide. Seems like a waste of effort.

TONY: Well, everybody knows that *artistes* are either crazy or gay. Seen any Catamarans this year?

RALPH: Ocean's been too choppy. I guess you heard what happened to our favorite used-book store.

CHUCK: No.

RALPH: The guy who owned it got arrested for pushing dope, turned state's evidence, and is in the witness protection program. It was the best used-book store on the east coast. They sell fireworks there, now.

TONY: Get the dopers off the street, and they'll be a lot safer.

RALPH: What? The streets or the dopers?

CHUCK: Guns, too.

TONY: Guns don't kill people; people kill people.

RALPH: You a charter member of the NRA?

TONY: They tell it like it is.

CHUCK: Like what is?

TONY: Second amendment rights. That's what it's all about.

RALPH: If I remember my history correctly, the second amendment gives state militias the right to arm, not individuals.

TONY: Nobody's going to take my guns away from me.

RALPH: Don't think anybody has tried.

TONY: What do you think gun control is all about?

CHUCK: Getting automatic weapons out of the hands of kids.

RALPH: Read in the Sun-Times where some man shot a guy trying to break into his house and then was sued by the burglar.

CHUCK: Who won?

RALPH: Didn't say, but if Tony's right, it was probably just a media fabrication to hike ratings.

TONY: It's un-American.

CHUCK: What is?

TONY: People suing people for no good reason. Keeps the lawyers in business, and the insurance rates sky high. The average working slob can't win either way you look at it.

CHUCK: Move to Sweden--the worker's paradise. All your problems will be solved.

TONY: Is Sweden pro-America?

CHUCK: Last I heard. Might even be anti-Black, Hispanic, and Canadian. You'll think you've died and gone to heaven.

RALPH: On the other hand, it might also be anti-Catholic, Italian, and Irish. So, where would that leave you, Tony?

TONY: Just goes to show the whole world is going to pot. [*PIERRE enters*]

RALPH: Come join us, Pierre.

CHUCK: You and Francine spend the day on the beach?

PIERRE: Yes, it was very nice.

TONY: Not too hot for you?

PIERRE: We like it hot. Jump in waves to cool off.

CHUCK: How do you like driving a truck?

PIERRE: Big engine, much power. Francine does not like, so I have to take her to grocery store. *Mon Dieu!*

RALPH: I do all the grocery shopping.

PIERRE: Your wife, she does not drive?

RALPH: She drives, but not to the grocery store.

CHUCK: Ralph does all the cooking, too.

PIERRE: *C'est bon.* Men are best cooks, I think.

TONY: Don't tell Pat. The kitchen is her domain, and I stay out of it.

CHUCK: I don't tell Bernie anything. She tells me what to do.

PIERRE: You not man of house?

CHUCK: Not according to Bernie.

PIERRE: Bernie is funny lady. She is good to you, no?

CHUCK: She is good to me, yes. Anyway, it's too late to trade her in for a new model.

PIERRE: You make joke. You two--how you say-- fit together...

CHUCK: Like peas in a pod. Wish I could say the same about our daughter.

PIERRE: Chris, she is divorced now, Francine tell me.

CHUCK: 'Fraid so.

PIERRE: Is her idea?

CHUCK: Bruce's. He found himself a new girlfriend.

PIERRE: *C'est dommage.* I look at other women, but is too much trouble to start over.

TONY: You got that right.

PIERRE: What you do, Tony, now you retire?

TONY: Travel, visit friends, take it easy.

PIERRE: You not miss work?

TONY: Sometimes, but don't tell Pat. She's says I'm too old to chase fires. It's a young man's job.

CHUCK: You're not that old, Carmine. Start a new career.

TONY: Doing what?

RALPH: Foreign relations advisor to the President. *(CHUCK laughs)*

PIERRE: What so funny? Tony not good for job?

CHUCK: Only if you want the animals running the zoo.

PIERRE: I not understand.

RALPH: It's a joke.

PIERRE: Politics big joke in Quebec, *aussi.* Some people want only teach French in schools, some want teach French and English. Big fuss. Nobody happy.

CHUCK: We have the same problem in the States. Big fuss. Nobody happy.

PIERRE: Where your wives *ce soir*?

CHUCK: Out shopping.

PIERRE: Francine visit friend from Quebec. They have nice talk--all in French.

TONY: Why do so many Canadians come down here in the summer? Don't you have beaches in Canada?

PIERRE: Only to watch whales. Too cold for swimming.

TONY: Snowbirds.

PIERRE: *Pardon?*

TONY: That's what we call Canadians who come south for the sun.

CHUCK: Among other things.

PIERRE: You not want us to come?

TONY: Whatever floats your canoe.

RALPH: Tony's homophobic.

PIERRE: He does not like queers?

CHUCK: Among other things.

TONY: Did you read where South Carolina wants to fly the Confederate flag on the state capitol? Somebody ought to tell them they lost that war.

CHUCK: It's symbolic--to honor the Confederate soldiers who died in the conflict.

TONY: Killing yanks. They were traitors, pure and simple.

RALPH: Historians may argue that point.

TONY: What do *they* know.

RALPH: You're right. It's probably just media propaganda.

TONY: Can't believe anything you read anymore.

RALPH: Now that you've got so much free time on your hands, why don't you re-write the history books and set the public straight.

TONY: Somebody ought to do it.

CHUCK: While you're at it, you can voice your opinion on immigration policies.

PIERRE: Is sad, is it not, that so many aliens from Mexico not allowed in United States.

TONY: Illegal aliens. They take away American jobs.

RALPH: You planning to pick tomatoes, Tony?

TONY: You know what I'm talking about. Nobody speaks English anymore.

CHUCK: I'm glad we got that straightened out.

TONY: Nobody buys American anymore, either.

PIERRE: I buy American truck. What you drive, Tony?

TONY: A Toyota. (*CHUCK & RALPH laugh*) But it's made in the U.S.

PIERRE: Francine be back soon. I go start dinner. See you later, no?

RALPH: See you later, yes. (*PIERRE exits*)

RALPH: There goes a liberated male.

TONY: That's another thing that sticks in my craw--women's lib. Hell's bells! What more do they want? They vote, control the money, practically run the country... (*LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK as he ad libs invectives against females*)

Scene 8 - Departure

[BERNIE, CHUCK, MARSHA, and RALPH are sitting around a portable radio that is broadcasting hurricane warnings.]

BERNIE: What do you want to do, Chuck?

CHUCK: It's still a hundred miles out to sea. Might miss us altogether.

RALPH: I doubt it. We're right in its path. Most of the RV's down on the strand have already left.

MAR: They'd be swamped by the storm surge. We're safe up on this hill.

RALPH: From the surf, maybe, but not from the wind.

BERNIE: What's this one called?

MAR: Alberto. It's the first of the season.

BERNIE: Pat and Tony are still here.

CHUCK: All they have to do is hitch the trailer to the van and join the exodus.

RALPH: Traffic must be backed up for miles. It'll take hours to get off the island. *(Starts packing up camping items and taking them off stage.)*

BERNIE: I hate cutting our vacation short.

MAR: We'd be leaving the day after tomorrow anyway.

BERNIE: I know.

CHUCK: You can't go in the ocean if it's stormy.

BERNIE: I know.

CHUCK: You can't sunbathe in the rain.

BERNIE: I know.

CHUCK: So, we might as well leave.

BERNIE: There's the pool and the new lazy river.

CHUCK: You said you didn't like it.

BERNIE: What I said was, it didn't like me. I kept falling out of the inner tube.

CHUCK: What would you do if we stayed?

BERNIE: Shop the outlets.

RALPH: If the storm hits, the outlets will be closed.

BERNIE: Is he always this cheerful?

MAR: Only on Thursdays. I'm getting chilled. Did I pack a jacket?

RALPH: Don't ask me. *(CHRIS enters)*

MAR: I think it's in the car. Hey Chris, how's it going? *(exits)*

CHRIS: Mother, are you warm enough?

BERNIE: Toasty as a cinnamon bun.

CHRIS: Don't want you getting bronchitis again.

BERNIE: I won't.

CHRIS: That's what you said last year, and you were sick for a month.

BERNIE: I had pneumonia.

CHRIS: But it started with bronchitis.

CHUCK: Better get a sweater, Bernie.

BERNIE: Who asked you? *(MARSHA enters with jacket and gives BERNIE a sweater.)*

MAR: Just in case.

BERNIE: Everybody's so concerned about my health.

CHUCK: Don't want you dying on me, old woman.

BERNIE: I wasn't the one having a heart attack ten days ago.

CHUCK: It was food poisoning.

CHRIS: Indigestion.

MAR: What it's like down on the beach, Chris?

CHRIS: A few people out walking. A couple of guys fishing. Storm flags are up. Nobody is allowed in the water.

CHUCK: What are we going to do with all the fish still on dry ice? It'll spoil before we get home.

MAR: Feed it to the alligator. Oh, I forgot. It's against the law.

CHUCK: I won't tell.

RALPH: It was a paltry catch. The captain spent more time chasing the fish finder, than we did casting.

CHUCK: I figure it cost us about five bucks a bite.

CHRIS: But think of all the fun you had.

RALPH: Six hours of cold wind and ocean spray blowing in our faces. We were freezing.

MAR: Then why did you go?

CHUCK: Cause we're on vacation, and going deep-sea fishing is what people do on vacations.

CHRIS: Well, are we leaving or not?

BERNIE: I want to stay; your father wants to go.

CHRIS: Do I get a vote?

BERNIE & CHUCK: No!

CHRIS: In that case, I'm going for another walk.

BERNIE: Don't go far.

CHRIS: Just down to the pier and back. See you later. *(exits)*

RALPH: Can we make up our minds?

CHUCK: Where's Pierre and Francine?

MAR: Grocery shopping. They're not going to let a little old hurricane interrupt their vacation.

RALPH: I don't want to wait till the last minute.

MAR: We haven't been ordered to leave yet.

RALPH: Two years ago we waited till the last minute. Remember? Everything was soaked, and we had to drive all the way to Lumberton before we found a motel room.

MAR: It was high adventure. We'd never broken camp in a hurricane before. Next day the sun was out, nary a cloud in the sky. Bob was a fizzle. We should have stuck it out here.

RALPH: Well, this one is a hundred and fifty miles wide. It's not going to fizzle out.

MAR: Give it another hour. Maybe they'll downgrade it.

RALPH: In the meantime, it'll be 30 miles closer.

CHUCK: Why isn't the wind blowing?

RALPH: It's the calm before the storm. In an hour it could be at gale force.

CHUCK: Then I better take down the awning. (*PIERRE & FRANCINE enter*)

BERNIE: Wait till Chris gets back.

PIERRE: You are staying, *n'est-ce pas?*

MAR: We're thinking about it.

PIERRE: It's windy on the beach. Much colder, too.

FRANCINE: Pierre, *aidez-moi, s'il vous plait.*

PIERRE: In a minute. (*FRANCINE exits*) Francine will get towels off the line and fold up chairs. We have everything in plastic, so is safe from storm.

CHUCK: I wouldn't hold out much hope for a tent in 70 mph winds.

PIERRE: We here before when hurricane come. We not worry.

BERNIE: As I recall, General Custer said the same thing.

PIERRE: Excuse, please?

CHUCK: She's talking about us against the Indians, not the French. (*FRANCINE enters holding towels*)

BERNIE: Have a seat, Francine. Nobody is going anywhere yet.

FRANCINE: You not worried about storm?

MAR: We're worried. We're just not doing anything about it right now.

FRANCINE: You will stay, then?

CHUCK: It's under discussion.

FRANCINE: *Bon!* We have hurricane party in our tent, *non?*

BERNIE: I'm game.

PIERRE: *Francine, vous avez sens-de-sein.* I tell her she is idiot. No room in tent for so many.

MAR: But think how cozy it would be.

PIERRE: *Q'est-ce que ce cozy?*

MAR: It doesn't translate. *(PAT & TONY enter)*

PAT: You're not packed.

RALPH: The girls don't want to go.

TONY: Last I heard the winds were up to 65 mph.

CHUCK: Then it's technically still a tropical depression.

TONY: Sixty-five, seventy-five... you don't want to be here when it hits. Trees get blown down, you lose water and electricity. It's not even safe in the car.

RALPH: That's what I keep telling them.

PAT: We're hitched and ready to move out. Just came by to say good-bye.

BERNIE: How about a hello? We haven't seen much of you this week.

PAT: Well, you know how it is. We've been busy.

MAR: We only got in one game of Scrabble.

PAT: Wait till next year. I'll whip your butts.

CHUCK: If there is a next year. Bernie and I aren't getting any younger.

TONY: The future of Detroit may be in question, but I'll lay odds that you'll be here, same time, same place.

BERNIE: God willing.

RALPH: Where are you two headed?

TONY: We're going to visit some friends in North Carolina until the storm blows through; then we'll be back until the end of the month.

MAR: Are we invited?

PAT: You guys could wait it out in a shelter, and then come back for another week or so.

BERNIE: I'm willing, but Chris has to get home.

RALPH: Some of us are still employed.

PAT: I'm glad we don't have to worry about that anymore.

BERNIE: How come you didn't stop by and show us your new bathing suit?

PAT: They don't sell used bathing suits. It's against some dumb law.

BERNIE: I wondered about that.

PIERRE: Same in Quebec. Might transmit sexual disease.

BERNIE: Haven't Canadians heard of bleach?

PIERRE: *(shrugs)* They no take chances.

BERNIE: Neither does South Carolina, I guess.

PAT: *(pulls her camera out of her tote bag)* I want to get everybody's picture before we go.

BERNIE: Should have done it a week ago when we still looked presentable.

PAT: You look fine, Bernie. Now, come on everybody, line up. You, too, Francine, Pierre.

MAR: Let's wait for Chris.

PAT: Where is she?

MAR: Out walking somewhere.

TONY: She's done a lot of that this year.

BERNIE: It's therapy for her.

TONY: Too bad about Bruce.

CHUCK: You'll have to find some one else to get drunk with, Tony.

TONY: I don't drink anymore.

BERNIE: On the wagon?

PAT: He's on a diet.

BERNIE: Really?

TONY: A friend of Pat's told us about it. (*CHRIS enters*) All you eat are carbohydrates.

PAT: My friend swears by it.

CHRIS: Don't believe everything you hear, Pat.

PAT: There you are. Okay, everybody. Picture time.

BERNIE: How was the beach?

CHRIS: Didn't get that far. Aren't you listening to the radio?

RALPH: Trying to, if everybody would shut up.

CHRIS: We've been ordered to evacuate. Come one, Dad, we've got to pack up the camper.

PAT: Wait! I want to get everybody's picture.

CHRIS: Some other time.

CHUCK: Let her take it, Chris. This may be our final resting place.

CHRIS: It will be if you don't get moving.

RALPH: Pierre, that means you, too.

FRANCINE: *Allons, Pierre. Aidez-moi.*

PIERRE: They no make us leave.

FRANCINE: Then, *you* are idiot. (*exits*)

PIERRE: We meet in shelter, no?

BERNIE: No. We're heading back to Michigan.

PIERRE: (*shakes hands with the men*) Then, *au revoir, mes amis*. We see you next year.

CHUCK: If we're still among the living.

PIERRE: Always the joke you make.

CHUCK: That's *moi*. One big joke

CHRIS: Let's go, Dad! (*She escorts him offstage. PIERRE follows.*)

RALPH: Is everything out of the tent?

MAR: Everything but the sleeping bags. (*RALPH exits into tent*)

TONY: We'd better go, Pat.

PAT: (*Hugs the girls*) Well, take care. Drive carefully, and we'll see you next year.

MAR: You too, Pat... Tony.

BERNIE: Keep in touch.

PAT: I'll write if you do.

TONY: Let's go, Pat. (*Ralph crawls out of the tent with the sleeping bags & shakes hands with TONY.*)

RALPH: Stay out of the sand traps.

TONY: Don't start any wars. (*PAT & TONY exit; RALPH starts dismantling the tent*)

CHRIS: (*offstage*) Motherrrrrr!

BERNIE: I'm being paged.

MAR: I'll miss you.

BERNIE: Damn it, Alberto! We paid for 2 more days.

MAR: Better safe than sorry.

BERNIE: I think Chris will be better now. She needed to get away.

MAR: So did we all. Helps put our problems in perspective.

BERNIE: They'll still be there when we get home.

MAR: But we'll attack them with renewed vigor. That's what vacations are all about.

RALPH: Are you two going to sit there and talk, or help get things packed? We don't have much time.

BERNIE: Ralph, you worry too much.

RALPH: You girls have been chattering away ever since we got here. Haven't you run out of things to say?

BERNIE: Never. Especially about you and Chuck.

RALPH: Didn't know we were that interesting.

BERNIE: You're not. That's why we talk about you.

RALPH: Marsha, if you're finished with the coffee pot, how about putting it in the car.

MARSHA: Don't forget the clothesline.

RALPH: You get it. I'm busy.

CHUCK: *(entering)* They're now predicting it's going to hit the Outer Banks. Maybe we should stay.

RALPH: Have they rescinded the evacuation order?

CHUCK: Don't think so.

RALPH: Then we gotta go.

CHUCK: Don't tell Pierre. He'll fight to the finish to hold on to that spot. Bedamned the hurricane and South Carolina!

BERNIE: Let's stay and watch.

CHUCK: Come on, Bernie. Even the alligators don't want your tough hide.

BERNIE: *(kissing CHUCK on the cheek)* How come you're so sweet to me?

CHUCK: I'm too old to start over. *(MARSHA hugs them both)*

MAR: God Bless, and we'll see you next year.

BERNIE: When the snowdrifts are knee high, think Myrtle Beach...

MAR: When the temperature drops to zero, think warm sun and lazy days...

BERNIE & MAR: Think vacation!

CHRIS: *(offstage)* Motherrrrrr!

CHUCK: Hold your horses. We're coming. She's beginning to sound just like you, Bernie.

BERNIE: She's got your stubborn streak... bull-headed... no room for compromise.... *(they exit)*

MAR: *(watching them exit)* God love them.

RALPH: Who?

MAR: Chuck, Bernie, Chris, Pat, Tony... Can't wait till next year. *(The tent collapses on top of RALPH.)* What have you done to that poor tent?

RALPH: What about poor Ralph? This tent will never see another sunrise.

MAR: You didn't have to kill it.

RALPH: *(picks up the cooler & the coffee pot)* Grab the sleeping bags and get in the car.

MAR: *(gets the sleeping bags)* We can't leave it here like that.

RALPH: They'll blame it on the hurricane. Come on, let's go. *(They exit as LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK)*