

TAKE THE COUCH

By Connie Schindewolf

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TAKE THE COUCH

For Ray, Jamie, Allen, Mark, and Tina

TAKE THE COUCH

Take The Couch was originally produced at the Catherine Hickman Theater in Gulfport, Florida by the Gulfport Community Players in 2019. It was directed by Olga Kruse and featured the following cast:

Natalie.....Cynthia Hoffman
Steve.....Ron Goldstein
Martha.....Norma Caltagirone
Sarah.....Colleen Romero
Greg.....Nick Fokianos
Joy.....Eve O'Donnell
Peaches.....Shaheen Mamawala
Gary the Cop...Elvis Rosero

CAST: 3 Males, 5 Females

NATALIE	55ish, sarcastic, nervous, just wants a quiet weekend with Steve.
STEVE	55ish, doesn't worry as much as Natalie, loves her and wants to spice up their marriage.
MARTHA	75ish, Steve's mother, nosey, bitchy, critical, heavy drinker
GREG	30ish, Steve's son, handsome, has had drug problems, laidback, needs a job.
SARAH	30ish, married to Greg, has an infant and is a little overwhelmed by motherhood and Greg's family.
JOY	25ish, Natalie's daughter, emotionally immature.
PEACHES	30ish, very blonde, attractive with large breasts.
OFFICER GARY	30-55, curt, sarcastic, frustrated with paperwork.

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TIME: The present

PLACE: West Coast of Florida

SETTING: The entire play takes place in the living room/dining area of the Brummet family and on a small deck. A front door is centered upstage, small dining table upstage right, a small table is stage left of front door with many pictures on it. There is a chair upstage left, a couch downstage a little left of center. There is an end table to the right side of the couch, a coffee table in front. Upholstered chair to the stage left side of couch with a small table to the side. A small area downstage right is their deck, which can be accessed by a door (seen or not) stage right. When actors are on the deck, they cannot be heard by those in the house. Kitchen, garage, and door to side yard off stage right. Bedrooms off stage left. A TV is in front of the couch but can't be seen by audience.

NOTE: It would be nice to have two dogs on stage for just a moment, but it is not necessary. The small dog can be carried in a carrier, shown to the audience in the first scene, and then taken off. The audience will believe the dog is in the carrier or other room for the rest of the play. Also, the large dog can be brought in for a moment and then put in the side yard. The audience will believe it is there the entire time. If live animals are out of the question, a couple lines can be changed, and Snippet is always in the carrier, and Bark is immediately put in the side yard before Joy enters.

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ACT I
SCENE 1

Lights up and NATALIE and STEVE enter from front door.

NATALIE. *(Sounding like she's choking up.)* I can't believe our little baby has gone off to college. What are we going to do without her?

STEVE. Don't know. This house is so quiet.

NATALIE. No loud music.

STEVE. Both cars in the garage.

NATALIE. My credit card's still in my wallet.

STEVE. The refrigerator door won't be left open all the time.

NATALIE. Won't have to do laundry three times a week.

STEVE. Won't have to hide the liquor bottles every time she has friends over.

NATALIE. Or our prescription bottles.

STEVE. Right.

NATALIE. *(Sounding like she's about to cry again.)* I mean when we pulled away from her dorm, and she did that final little wave...

STEVE. And you yelled, "Don't forget to floss!" It was touching.

NATALIE. I'd already told her I love her like 100 times.

STEVE. My little Jessica all grown up. Greg's 500 miles away.

NATALIE. Joy's settled. Whatever will we do with ourselves?

STEVE. The nest is empty, girl!

NATALIE. *(She has taken her high heels off and sits on the couch.)* This mama bird just has one thing to say. YAHOO! *(Throws one of her shoes across the room and rubs her feet.)*

STEVE. WOOHEE! Freedom! I haven't felt like this since I was 19 and just bought a new car.

NATALIE. Why did you let me wear high heels to move her in?

STEVE. I'm not in charge of your wardrobe, sweetie. As a matter of fact, I'd like to see you wear less and less.

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NATALIE. You know I'm not going to look at a calendar, tablet, or Facebook, all weekend.

STEVE. (*Pulling her up from the couch.*) Good, because I have other things in mind.

NATALIE. Like what?

STEVE. You know.

NATALIE. Oh, you want to start working out already? Well you got the equipment. And I can start writing...maybe not today though. I have to have a topic.

STEVE. Guess again.

NATALIE. Well, we both want to travel, but that takes arrangements and money. We're going to have to save, but I can't wait to see the Grand Canyon.

STEVE. We have never had an empty house when you think about it.

NATALIE. You're right. Our families just merged.

STEVE. We've never exactly been the Brady Bunch.

NATALIE. That's for sure. But we gave it our best shot, didn't we?

STEVE. Do you remember that one weekend when Mom took the kids...what we did?

NATALIE. How could I forget? We went to that motel and watched dirty movies.

STEVE. That spiced up our lives a little, didn't it?

NATALIE. Steamy!

STEVE. Well, we are totally alone in the house, nothing to do, and I have a little surprise for you!

NATALIE. What?

STEVE. I ordered X-rated movies on cable.

NATALIE. You naughty boy! You know we're supposed to be on a budget.

STEVE. (*Fooling with the remote.*) Just for the weekend. Channel 117. I think it's already started. Let's see. Yes, here it is. Have a seat my scrumptious empty nester.

NATALIE. (*Sitting on the couch.*) And here I thought just having a glass of wine and being alone would be fun. I feel like a teenager about to break the law.

STEVE. No laws can be broken. We're consenting adults.

NATALIE. I consent, I consent! (*Already wide-eyed at what she sees.*) Oh my. They sure don't hide anything do they? How can they do that on camera?

STEVE. It is a profession you know...porn star.

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NATALIE. Do you think they get paid well?

STEVE. Uh huh. Whew! Look at that body! We don't even need the volume.

NATALIE. Oh please, no. I don't need to hear the grunting and groaning.

STEVE. Already has me in the mood.

NATALIE. They're wearing nothing but their jewelry and tattoos. Who knew you could put a tattoo there.

STEVE. I'm going to check you for tattoos I haven't found yet.

NATALIE. Well I certainly wouldn't put one there! Too painful!

STEVE. I could take the pain away.

NATALIE. Oh my God, look at that guy. I mean is he on steroids or what?

STEVE. Some kind of enhancer for sure.

NATALIE. How can they do that? *(She turns her head almost upside down, staring at the screen.)*

STEVE. Like this, my little lamb chop. *(He takes her in his arms and they begin passionately kissing. He is unbuttoning her blouse and she is unbuckling his pants when the doorbell rings.)*

STEVE. Shit!

NATALIE. *(Buttoning her blouse.)* I'll get it. Hit pause and I'll be right back...I mean right back, and then I'll be on my back!

(Steve hits pause, doorbell rings again and Natalie opens the door. In blusters MARTHA carrying her little dog in an upholstered carrier that is over her shoulder. Or, the dog could be out. She also carries two boxes of wine, which she thrusts into Natalie's arms. Natalie puts them on the table.)

MARTHA. Where's my Stevie? *(Natalie motions to Steve to turn off the TV which he does and quickly buckles his belt as Martha goes to him and hugs him.)*

NATALIE. Steve, look it's your mother and little Snippet. What a surprise! You really should have called first...so we could have had some snacks ready to go along with...your wine.

MARTHA. You must be so upset having to take your last baby off to school. I said to myself, Martha, you just need to go and cheer them up. They have to be devastated and so lonely.

STEVE. Mom, we're fine. We were just watching a little TV, you know, to take our minds off of things.

NATALIE. Yeah, we were starting to watch one of Steve's favorites...The Waltons.

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MARTHA. You're being brave for me I know. I remember when you left home...the first time...I cried for three days. And your father couldn't stand to be in the house. I don't know why. I guess it reminded him of you so much. Just started going to the Moose all the time.

STEVE. How are you, Mom?

MARTHA. Well, I'm coping. It's so lonely since your father died.

NATALIE. It has only been eight years.

MARTHA. Well Howard and I were very close, you know. And my asthma's back with a vengeance. I almost had to call an ambulance the other night.

STEVE. (*With concern.*) Mom!

MARTHA. But I'm all right. My arthritis is only really bad in the mornings.

NATALIE. That's good. (*Martha gives her a dirty look.*) Not that it's bad in the mornings. I mean that it isn't bad all the time.

MARTHA. But then when my bursitis kicks in, I can barely sleep at night. And the eye doctor says my cataract on my right eye is just about ripe enough for surgery. But don't you worry about me. I just had to come over and keep you company now that Jessica has gone away.

NATALIE. She's not dead you know. She'll probably come home for a weekend in October.

MARTHA. Natalie, would you be a dear and take Snippet out in the side yard? She may have to tinkle. Good thing it's fenced.

NATALIE. Nothing would make me happier than to watch Snippet tinkle. And so much better in the yard than in the house.

MARTHA. She doesn't have many accidents any more. (*Natalie takes Snippet and the carrier and exits stage right. Martha goes to Steve.*) How are you really, honey?

STEVE. I'm fine, Mom. Could you give us a little warning when you're coming next time? Natalie likes to straighten up you know.

MARTHA. I can't believe I have to wait to be invited to see my own son. She doesn't like me, I know.

STEVE. Nat? She adores you, Mom. Remember that special casserole she made you on Mother's day?

MARTHA. Well it had nuts in it, and they got stuck in my bridge. Didn't you ever tell her about my bridge?

STEVE. I guess maybe I didn't.

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NATALIE. (*Natalie returns.*) Snippet wanted to do some serious sniffing, so I left her there for a while.

MARTHA. Are you sure there aren't any hawks out there? Remember what happened to little Snarky?

STEVE. That was at our other house by the woods. She'll be ok.

NATALIE. Mom, where's your car?

MARTHA. Didn't I tell you? I had a little scrape with a parked car. Would you believe this old man tried to say it was my fault? Don't worry I wasn't hurt! It's in the shop and they dropped me off here. I mean it's so close to your house, and I live two hours away.

NATALIE. And they didn't have any auto body shops in your area?

MARTHA. Of course, but I knew you two needed me at this traumatic time of your lives, so I just decided to wait here until they get it fixed.

STEVE. How long will that be?

MARTHA. Probably Monday. You know they have to let the paint dry.

NATALIE. Of course, they have to let the paint dry!

MARTHA. Natalie, would you be a dear and get me a wine glass? And, Steve, my bag's just outside the door. (*Natalie disappears for a second stage right, and Steve brings in the bag. Natalie returns with a glass.*) Thank you, dear. Would you pour me a glass and put my wine in the fridge? I think I'll have the Cabernet. Of course it depends on what we're having for dinner.

NATALIE. Good question. What are we having for dinner, Steve?

STEVE. Uh, we were just so depressed over Jessica leaving that we hadn't really thought of eating.

MARTHA. I understand. (*Natalie exits stage right to kitchen. Martha pulls a sweater out of her bag and puts it on.*) Could you turn the thermostat up a little, honey? I've got a chill. (*Steve goes to thermostat as Natalie comes back with a glass of wine and hands it to Martha.*)

NATALIE. Please sit down, Mom.

MARTHA. (*Sitting.*) Thank you dear. Whew! That's better. Two hours is such a long drive now for an old lady like me. Why Howard and I used to drive all the way from St. Louis, remember?

STEVE. Yes, I remember.

MARTHA. Steve, would you put my bag in the guest room?

NATALIE. It's not really a guest room anymore.

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MARTHA. Has someone moved in with you?

STEVE. No, of course not.

NATALIE. We just decided to start another phase in our lives and thought with Jessica moving out, it was the right time. We had the bed taken out, and it's kind of become our hobby room. Actually they call them specialty rooms now.

MARTHA. Specialties? You guys don't have any specialties...you just work and you took care of Jessica.

NATALIE. Well I've decided I'm going to...to...write novel.

MARTHA. (*Finding it humorous.*) At your age?

STEVE. Mom, she's not that old. So we put a big desk in there for her. And I've decided I'm going to lift weights.

MARTHA. (*Almost choking on her wine.*) You? Lifting weights?

NATALIE. There's nothing wrong with my man wanting to get a little buff. So the room now has a big desk and a bunch of weight lifting equipment.

MARTHA. (*Rising and grabbing her bag.*) I'll just sleep in Jessica's room then.

STEVE and NATALIE. No!

MARTHA. I don't mind a twin bed.

NATALIE. Here's the thing. You can't find the bed. Her room is such a mess...clothes everywhere.

STEVE. We could never get her to clean it so we just finally gave up. Our bug sprayer won't even go in there anymore.

MARTHA. Why that's just nonsense. It can't be that bad. I'll just tidy up a little. (*She disappears stage left. Natalie grabs Martha's wine and chugs it. Martha screams and returns.*) Oh my God. What kind of parents are you two? To let her room get that bad! It smells like a locker room and...old pizza. Straight out of an episode of Hoarders is what it is! You need an intervention!

STEVE. It'll be all right. We figure she'll mature at school, and when she comes home again, she'll clean it up.

NATALIE. But we've made a pact that we are not going to clean it! It will have to be Jessica. Even though I'm missing lots of dishes, it's worth it to teach her a lesson.

MARTHA. Don't you think the lesson should have been taught when she was five or six? Then you could swat her butt and say, "Do it."

STEVE. Times have changed, Mom.

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MARTHA. They certainly have. *(To Natalie.)* Jessica and Joy are so spoiled that you're paying for it now.

NATALIE. And you think Greg wasn't spoiled? That mother of his never made him do anything. Laissez-faire type of parenting they called it. I call it neglect. He's the problem child much more than my girls.

MARTHA. Don't talk about my sweet grandson that way! He's happily married with a baby now, not living in sin.

NATALIE. Well if you're referring to Joy, I'm happy she's not rushing into marriage. You don't think Greg and Sarah were fooling around before they got hitched? What was it, seven months before little Nate was born?

MARTHA. Nate was premature.

NATALIE. I'm glad someone is some kind of mature around here, pre or otherwise!

STEVE. You know we all made mistakes with the kids, and no we're not always one big happy family, but we can try to be civil, ok?

MARTHA. Ok. If Jessica's room is not available, well there's nothing else for me to say except...I'll take the couch.

STEVE and NATALIE. No!

MARTHA. Why not?

NATALIE. We couldn't possibly ask you to sleep on the couch. Not in a million years!

STEVE. Absolutely not! We'll take the couch.

MARTHA. Nonsense. It's not even a pullout.

STEVE. Doesn't matter. We both fit and enjoy getting all snuggly. We insist! You'll take our bedroom, and you'll have your own bath.

MARTHA. All right then. I'll just freshen up a bit before dinner. *(Martha takes her baggage and heads stage left, which is also the direction of the master bedroom. Natalie drags Steve out on the deck so they won't be overheard. Soon as they get out there Snippet starts barking.)*

NATALIE. *(Looking into the yard and talking over the barking.)* Not only do we have to put up with your mother, but she brought that yappy little dust mop with her. You know I can't stand little dogs.

STEVE. Sorry, Nat. *(Barking stops.)*

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NATALIE. Oh great. Look, it's the peepers spying on us again through their upstairs window. Don't you dare grab my boob. They'll report a rape in progress again. That was so embarrassing. *(Natalie waves broadly to the neighbors.)*

STEVE. They must have heard the barking. At least they can't see into the side yard from there.

NATALIE. Ugh! Snippet's eating her own poop again. And, your mother will insist I let her lick my face.

STEVE. I'll let Snippet lick my face and then you won't have to.

NATALIE. You know she wasn't here five minutes before she was rubbing it in about Joy living in sin. Steve, you have got to get her out of here. Our movies, remember?

STEVE. I know, but I can't just kick her out.

NATALIE. I haven't cleaned our bathroom in a while I've been so busy, and she's in there right now probably taking notes on what a bad wife I am. Let's put her up in a motel. We can afford that for three nights.

STEVE. Can we?

NATALIE. Well you're the financial planner!

STEVE. I'm already spending money on the movies, and they've already started. I can't cancel them now. How can I tell her she has to go?

NATALIE. You say, "Mom, it's not a good time. You have to go." You remember what happened at Christmas? I'm already getting bad vibes.

STEVE. That was when Greg, Joy, and Brian were all here too.

NATALIE. And Bark. Don't forget that little tidbit.

STEVE. And Bark. But this will be OK, really. *(Martha walks through to get more wine.)*

NATALIE. But she's so demanding! It's like she can't even pour her own wine. She keeps us jumping the whole time. At least I'll get exercise because it's an aerobic workout.

STEVE. You just sit and relax. I'll wait on her.

NATALIE. Listen to yourself. Our first weekend alone in forever and you're going to kowtow to queen Martha the entire time when we could be having steamy, unbridled sex on our couch! *(Martha walks back into the room with her glass full. She sits on the couch.)*

STEVE. You're right. I'm talking about a poop-eating dog licking my face instead of you licking me all over, naughty Natalie. *(Steve tries pulling her close but she*

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resists. Martha drinks her wine and picks up the remote, looking at it up close like she doesn't have her reading glasses on.)

NATALIE. I'm just going to leave and go see...Judy for the weekend.

STEVE. No, no I beg you! Don't leave me with Mom alone! Please, I'll do anything. It'll be OK, I promise. You can put some snacks out, just some little cheese sandwiches or something. I'll help you make them. She's probably already had three glasses of wine by now. We'll keep pushing it, and after she eats, she'll just go to bed early.

NATALIE. I don't know.

STEVE. And then we'll just have to go to bed on the couch...with the TV on and the volume off, if you get my drift. We can still get the steam going, you know. Just a nice quiet, steamy weekend. *(Steve takes her in his arms and while they are hugging and starting to kiss, Martha has figured out how to turn the TV on. She looks at the screen with no recognition at first, then stares, stands, drops the remote, then her wine glass, which is empty and plastic, screams, and faints. Steve and Natalie come running in and go to her.)* Mom? *(Blackout.)*

SCENE 2

Setting is the same. It is 8:30 a.m. the next morning. Natalie and Steve are both in convoluted positions on the couch, sleeping. Their appearances are disheveled, but both have some kind of nightclothes on. One of them is snoring, loudly. The doorbell rings. Natalie opens her eyes, sees the TV, makes a face, jumps up and yells.

NATALIE. Steve, wake up! Someone's at the door! *(He stirs while she grabs a robe and puts it on.)* Where's the remote? *(Steve finds it and turns the TV off. He puts his pants on. Natalie goes to the door and opens it. GARY appears in full uniform.)* Why officer, Gary. Good morning. Won't you come in?

GARY. *(He enters.)* Mrs. Brummet.

NATALIE. Oh, I think you know me well enough to call me Natalie.

GARY. You know you're not leading a squeaky clean life if you know the officer who comes to your door by first name.

STEVE. What can we do for you?

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GARY. (*Consulting paperwork.*) I'm investigating a possible murder. At approximately 7:45 last evening we received a report of a very loud, piercing scream.

NATALIE. Let me guess. The reporters were the old geezers next door, right? They hate us.

GARY. Doesn't matter who it was. Did someone scream in total terror last night?

NATALIE. You thought someone might be being murdered last night, and you're just now getting around to investigating?

GARY. I wasn't on duty. They must have been very busy. This was on my desk this morning.

NATALIE. They just knew those old farts next door have called the police on us so many times and there's nothing to their complaints. We are law-abiding citizens and you know it. (*Martha enters carrying Snippet in the carrier.*)

GARY. Was there a loud scream last night?

MARTHA. There certainly was!

STEVE. (*Steve steps up, between Martha and Gary.*) Sergeant, this is my mother, Mrs. Brummet. Mom this is Sergeant Markam.

MARTHA. Nice to meet you. I screamed because...

STEVE. Because she was in my daughter's room and saw a mouse. Didn't you Mom? (*Natalie and Steve both give her glares.*)

MARTHA. Yes, I think there is a mouse...or rat somewhere around here. I screamed.

NATALIE. That's what happened. Just a little mouse, not a murder.

GARY. (*Taking notes and then starting to leave.*) All righty then, guess no harm was done here. See you soon...I'm sure.

NATALIE. Take care of yourself and the community. 'Bye now. (*She lets him out the door.*)

MARTHA. Who would have called the police, and why would you have me lie?

NATALIE. We have some incredibly bored neighbors who watch our every action.

MARTHA. Well what besides watching porn are you doing around here?

STEVE. Mom, we don't watch porn.

MARTHA. Natalie, could you be a dear and get me a cup of coffee. I can never figure out that Coujo thing of yours.

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NATALIE. Keurig.

MARTHA. That's it! Hazelnut decaf, remember?

NATALIE. Oh I remember. *(She exits to kitchen.)*

STEVE. Mom, about last night...

MARTHA. You're telling me The Waltons were on before that disgusting tangle of nakedness I saw?

STEVE. Yes. Someone made a mistake at that TV station I guess. We won't have it on that channel again for sure.

MARTHA. Well I would hope not. *(Pause.)* What channel was that?

STEVE. I don't remember, but we certainly will not be watching it again.

MARTHA. Well I think you should have told the policeman about it.

STEVE. We don't call the police on ourselves. We just let other people do it.

MARTHA. It's just a good thing I had a sleeping pill with me to take or I would have never gotten that awful image out of my mind. You know I haven't fainted in years. *(Natalie returns with the coffee for herself and Martha. She starts to hand it to Martha.)*

MARTHA. Will you just set it on the table? I'm going to take Snippet our first. Only one little accident during the night.

NATALIE. Only one? That's good. *(Natalie sets Martha's coffee on table and Martha exits to side yard through kitchen.)*

STEVE. Nat...

NATALIE. Don't say a thing. Just hide that damn remote! *(Steve hides remote under couch cushion. Natalie goes out on the deck to drink her coffee. Steve follows her. Snippet starts barking.)*

STEVE. We're lucky Snippet is such a small dog, you know, or Pete and Matilda over there would be complaining.

NATALIE. Oh they will. Yapping is annoying too. *(The barking stops.)*

STEVE. Last night wasn't so bad was it? After Mom passed out.

NATALIE. Oh we had a few moments of bliss.

STEVE. There's always tonight too you know.

NATALIE. Why do I have the feeling there might be complications?

STEVE. We're good as long as Pete and Matilda don't call the police again. Is that his head peeking over the fence?

NATALIE. That bastard! *(Snippet begins barking again.)* He has a ladder he climbs up on just to spy on us in the side yard.

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STEVE. All we wanted was a nice quiet weekend alone.

NATALIE. Jessica's texting me.

STEVE. Misses us already?

NATALIE. No, she hates her roommate...speaks Spanish all the time and ignores her.

STEVE. She'll adjust.

NATALIE. Were we rotten parents?

STEVE. No.

NATALIE. Your mother thinks so.

STEVE. We've spoiled them sure, but that's what parents do now. They'll mature.

NATALIE. You know after my divorce, I just felt so guilty about what I had done to Joy that I guess I did indulge her. Made me feel good, but it wasn't the right thing to do that's for sure. At least she seems settled now with Brian, thank God.

STEVE. I felt guilty about my divorce too. Nancy and I had already allowed Greg way too much freedom, and then I just went over the top I guess.

NATALIE. But Greg hasn't asked us for money in at least three months...right? Steve?

STEVE. OK, so I gave him \$1,000 two weeks ago. Just a loan. At least he's working now, but they have more expenses with the baby.

NATALIE. \$1,000? You know how strapped we are for cash right now. You could have run that one by me.

STEVE. Sorry.

NATALIE. I know it's hard to say no. *(Pause.)* Can you believe we're grandparents? *(Martha enters, picks up her coffee, goes to couch and looks around for remote.)* Your mother's in. *(Natalie and Steve enter living area.)*

MARTHA. I think I saw a head over the fence.

NATALIE. Really?

MARTHA. Now don't go making any big breakfast for me, Natalie. I'm watching my cholesterol. And where's your bleach?

NATALIE. Why?

MARTHA. I just need to spruce up your bathroom a little.

NATALIE. Under the sink.

MARTHA. I'm going to take a nice hot shower.

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STEVE. That will make you feel better. (*Martha exits to bedroom with Snippet in carrier.*)

NATALIE. We have some frozen sticky buns I can stick in the microwave I guess.

STEVE. I have a better idea. She's going to scrub every surface of our bathroom with bleach. That will take awhile, and you know she always takes at least a thirty-minute shower.

NATALIE. So, we waste a little water.

STEVE. (*Steve goes to couch and finds remote under cushion.*) No, I mean we could relax a little while Mum is showering.

NATALIE. I don't know.

STEVE. Come on; let's see what's on...the Waltons...or something else.

NATALIE. All right, John Boy. It's your mother in the house, not mine.

STEVE. Here. One's just starting. We even get the titles.

NATALIE. (*Sitting on couch.*) Look who's in this one. Bare Balls Brady and Clara Do Me Barton.

STEVE. They make up those names of course.

NATALIE. Ya think?

STEVE. I could do Clara all right.

NATALIE. I haven't decided if I like Bare Balls Brady yet. He hasn't turned around, but nice buns. Better than the sticky ones in our freezer.

STEVE. Come here, steamy Natalie. (*He starts to remove her clothes when the doorbell rings.*) Shit!

NATALIE. Here we go again!

STEVE. I'll get it. (*Steve goes to get the door. Natalie looks at the screen before turning it off and gasps when she sees Bare Balls Brady's face.*)

NATALIE. Steve? (*Steve has opened the door and GREG and SARAH are there. Sarah is holding a baby.*)

STEVE. Greg! And Sarah! And baby Nate! What a surprise! Come in.

NATALIE. (*Natalie has turned off the TV and she hides the remote in a vase.*) Come in. The more the merrier! (*They come in and NATE starts crying. Sarah hands him to Natalie.*)

SARAH. Go see Grandma. (*The baby is crying and everyone is staring at Natalie who tries rocking him to no avail. As the baby is wailing, the lights fade.*)

TAKE THE COUCH

SCENE 3

The setting is the same thirty minutes later. The baby is crying. Sarah, Greg, and Steve are seated. Natalie rocks the baby as she's been doing for a long time. The crying stops and the baby is finally asleep. Martha enters with her hair wrapped in a towel.

MARTHA. Natalie? Whoa! Is that my little angel? *(The baby starts whimpering and Natalie rocks him frantically again.)*

NATALIE. Shhhh!

GREG. Grandma!

MARTHA. *(Martha goes to Greg and hugs him.)* It's a family reunion! What are you two doing here? Worried about your Dad and you know...the empty nest syndrome? Me too.

GREG. Forgot all about Jessica taking off for school.

SARAH. We've been driving most of the night to get here. So, if we could bring our bags in and get some shuteye, it would be great. Natalie could you watch Nate for a couple of hours?

NATALIE. What's a couple of hours among family? Sure.

GREG. We'll get our bags. *(Greg and Sarah exit.)*

NATALIE. Steve, did you know about this?

STEVE. Would I have ordered...? Absolutely not!

NATALIE. Uh, I really need to talk to you...privately.

MARTHA. You're upset about your new grandbaby visiting? Let me see that precious thing. Come to Great Grammy. *(Martha takes the baby and he starts wailing again, and she trusts him back in Natalie arms. She rocks him and the crying stops.)*

NATALIE. Steve, what are we going to do? Where are they going to sleep?

STEVE. We'll think of something. Some weekend alone! *(Sarah and Greg enter with bags and start to bedrooms.)*

MARTHA. It's not a guest room anymore. *(They stop.)*

GREG. Jessica's room?

MARTHA. No. Her room's a landfill that's almost at capacity.

GREG. Dad?

STEVE. Mom's right.

TAKE THE COUCH

NATALIE. The Inn's full for Mary and Joseph but fortunately the baby's already here.

MARTHA. Now there's always a way. I said I'd take the couch.

STEVE. I've got it. We'll move the stuff out of our hobby room, and bring in an air mattress from the garage. Mom, you can sleep on the air mattress and Greg, Sarah, and Nate can take the master.

MARTHA. Well I guess. But once I'm down, I won't be able to get up.

NATALIE. *(Under her breath.)* Good. *(Then normal volume.)* We'll help you.

MARTHA. Well all right.

STEVE. Greg, go blow up an air mattress. *(Greg starts to go and turns back.)*

GREG. Uh, have I ever done that before?

STEVE. Never mind I'll do it. You and Sarah carry the weight lifting stuff out of the guest room to the garage. Natalie, you rock the baby, and Mom, maybe you could get some sticky buns out of the freezer.

MARTHA. I don't know where they are; that's a pretty big freezer.

NATALIE. Here, take Nate, and I'll get them. *(Natalie hands the baby to Martha, and he immediately starts crying. Martha goes out on the deck. Greg and Sarah go to the guest room. Natalie goes to the kitchen, and Steve goes to the garage.*

Martha tries singing to the baby, but nothing seems to work. Natalie walks in with a plate of sticky buns and sets them on the table. Steve comes in carrying an air mattress awkwardly. Natalie confronts him, and the singing and crying stops.)

I have to talk to you. What did you say Greg did when he was out in Vegas?

STEVE. He bussed tables and babysat stars' kids.

NATALIE. I think he might have done a little more than that.

STEVE. What do you mean?

NATALIE. Let's put it this way. He didn't need much of a uniform. *(Sarah and Greg walk through carrying weight lifting stuff, meet Steve who had the air mattress and they can't get through. They struggle and juggle and then pass, Steve going to the bedroom and Greg and Sarah going to the garage.)*

SARAH. Pick it up triple B.

NATALIE. *(Steve is back in and Natalie corrals him.)* Steve, I have some rather shocking news for you. When you were answering the door, Bare Balls Brady turned around and...

STEVE. Oh, you like him, huh?

NATALIE. Not at all. Not in that way. I mean Bare Balls Brady is...

TAKE THE COUCH

(Sarah and Greg come back through to get more stuff and disappear to the bedrooms. Martha comes in from the deck and hands the baby to Natalie.)

MARTHA. I have to dry my hair now, or it will get all those weird kinks. *(She grabs a sticky bun and goes off to bedrooms.)*

NATALIE. Maybe kinkiness runs in your family.

STEVE. What are you trying to say?

NATALIE. Steve, Bare Balls Brady is Greg!

STEVE. No!

NATALIE. Yes! *(Steve looks around for the remote and finds it in the vase, and he is about to turn the TV on. Natalie runs to him.)* You can't turn that on. Not in front of his son! I'll be a different show on anyway, but I am absolutely positive it was Greg.

STEVE. It did seem like he had lots of money last year. Remember the Christmas presents we got?

NATALIE. Who can forget a self-cleaning, stainless steel toaster oven with rotisserie, that bakes, broils, sautés, grills, and automatically flips burgers?

STEVE. *(Steve puts remote under a cushion.)* We can't let Sarah find out, she'll leave him and then where will he be?

NATALIE. Right here with us probably. We will not let Sarah find out! That is a priority! *(Greg and Sarah walk through with more equipment.)*

SARAH. What's a priority?

NATALIE. Sticky buns, that's what. Have one. *(They both grab one on their way to the garage.)*

STEVE. I've really never personally known anyone in porn before. It's so creepy to think my son...

NATALIE. I think my porn-watching days might be over. I'd always worry who I was going to see next. My boss, my hairdresser, our policeman...that's a bad thought. Not going there. *(Greg and Sarah return. Sarah takes baby who is asleep.)*

SARAH. You are so good with Nate. Want me to lay him down?

NATALIE. Sure.

SARAH. Great sticky buns by the way.

NATALIE. Thanks. *(Sarah heads to the bedrooms with Nate. Natalie gets a sticky bun with a napkin.)* Someone's buns have been sticky.

GREG. Huh?

TAKE THE COUCH

STEVE. So, Greg, how's the new job going? Better than the last one?

GREG. About that, Dad, I need to tell you something.

STEVE. I'm glad you're coming clean. (*Doorbell rings.*)

NATALIE. Well who could that be? Maybe Clara? (*Natalie answers the door. Gary steps in.*) It's our friendly policeman again. Sticky bun? (*Gary takes the sticky bun and eats.*) Gary, you remember Greg don't you? Of course you do. The neighbors called you to say he was smoking grass on the deck last Christmas. Remember?

GARY. Yes, I do.

GREG. If someone's smoking on the deck, it's not me. Grandma was out there though.

GARY. No one was smoking grass, that I know of. You have a car parked in the street.

STEVE. That's not against the law!

GARY. It is when it's facing the wrong direction.

NATALIE. Oh my God! Are you kidding me?

STEVE. Give me your keys, I'll move it. (*Greg tosses him his keys.*)

NATALIE. I'm going out too and see this horrible crime! (*Natalie, Steve, and Gary exit. Greg sits on the couch and looks around for the remote, finds it and turns on the TV. He smiles and then calls for Sarah.*)

GREG. Sarah!

SARAH. (*Entering.*) What?

GREG. I don't know what's going on here, but Dad and Nat have the x-rated channel. Look it's Right Angle Rick with Legs and More Lenore!

SARAH. Triple B, I don't really know your family I guess. (*She sits down by him and watches.*) Reminds me when I fell in love with you. And if you ever go back to porn we're done! You're all mine now, Brady. (*Natalie and Steve enter. They don't notice the TV on. Greg stands and goes to them.*)

GREG. Dad, you've got to know the truth. I've lost my job.

STEVE. Which job are you talking about?

GREG. Security guard. Got fired. Didn't know they did surprise drug tests. Sorry.

SARAH. And we just need a place to stay until he finds another one.

TAKE THE COUCH

MARTHA. *(Martha yells from off stage, and the baby starts crying.)* Can someone help me up? *(The door bangs open and in comes JOY and BARK, a large dog.)*

JOY. He left me, Mom. Brian left me! *(Joy comes straight in and catches what's on TV.)* Mom?

NATALIE. I can explain.

MARTHA. I said, can someone help me get up?

Joy starts to throw up behind the couch. She lets go of the leash; Natalie grabs it and takes Bark out to the side yard. Steve lunges for the remote and turns the TV off. Bark starts to bark. LIGHTS FADE.

END OF ACT I

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS - - ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM