

For Old Time's Sake

by

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Setting

A suburban living room.

Time

Present.

Cast

MARK - Man in his late 30s-40s.

DIANE - Woman in her late 30s-40s

(As DIANE places various personal possessions into cardboard boxes, MARK leans against the frame of a door and watches her.)

MARK

I seem to remember you having a lot more stuff than this.

DIANE

I did have a lot more stuff than this. Ten years ago I could hardly walk through a mall without wanting damn near everything I saw: vibrating back scratchers, glass wine stoppers, DVD collections of old TV shows...just stupid crap. Remember that cast iron wok I bought?

MARK

I think you used it once.

DIANE

Exactly. Stupid. So, it's gone. Along with all of that other garbage. Such is the beauty of garage sales and e-Bay.

MARK

So what changed?

DIANE

I guess I did. I got tired of having things, so I just got rid of them.

MARK

And now you're getting rid of me too.

MARK

Mark...

MARK

I'm sorry if that hurts your delicate sensibilities, but that's exactly what you're doing.

DIANE

Okay, fine. That's exactly what I'm doing.

MARK

You never used to agree with me that easily either.

DIANE

Well, either I got smarter or more beaten down. Take your pick.

MARK

I just can't believe I'm standing here watching you do this. I never thought my life would turn into this particular cliché. Fall in love, get married, live with wife for twelve years, until she leaves me for a younger man. It's just so...

DIANE

Evil? Predictable? Asinine? Help me out here.

MARK

Diane, he's fifteen years younger than you.

DIANE

I'm aware of that. And that makes it...?

MARK

Pathetic. Quite frankly. It makes it pathetic.

DIANE

Okay.

MARK

You don't see that?

DIANE

No. What makes it pathetic isn't his age, although I'm sure you can find plenty of people to agree with you.

MARK

Then--

DIANE

What makes it pathetic is this. Why do I want to be with him? Because I miss you.

MARK

That makes no sense.

DIANE

It makes perfect sense. I miss you. What do I see in Carlos? Someone who reminds me of you. Why do I want that? Because you don't remind me of you any more.

MARK

What is that supposed to mean?

DIANE

It means I miss you wearing a certain shirt just because you know I like it. I miss you saving half a candy bar for me. Miss the long car rides, where our only goal was to see if we could get lost so we'd have to find a motel room somewhere.

MARK

That's what this is about?

DIANE

Absolutely that's what this is about.

MARK

That's puppy love stuff.

DIANE

Which is why people love puppies, I suppose.

MARK

So what you're saying is, over the years, I matured a little and you didn't.

DIANE

Or, I kept my sense of romance and adventure and you didn't. Again, take your pick.

MARK

God forbid you should never spend another night in a Red Roof Inn in the middle of nowhere.

DIANE

I happen to like Red Roof Inns in the middle of nowhere. And you know what I like even more? What happens inside the rooms in a Red Roof Inn in the middle of nowhere.

MARK

This isn't just about you and what you like. Have you thought about what our families will think? Our friends?

DIANE

Sure.

MARK

And apparently you don't give a rat's ass.

DIANE

If they want to disapprove, if they don't want to talk to me, then they won't. It's their call.

MARK

They won't! They're going to think you're making a fool of yourself!

DIANE

Because he's younger than me.

MARK

Fifteen years younger than you! When you were in college he was in pre-school!

DIANE

That seems to be a real sticking point for you. Don't fall in love with someone younger than you. How is that any different than saying a white person can't fall in love with a black person? Or a Jew can't fall in love with a Muslim? Or two men can't fall in love? Or two women?

MARK

You can't compare--

DIANE

People are always ready to disapprove of any relationship that falls outside of their comfort zone. But love is love. It doesn't know what gender you are, what race or religion you are, and it sure as hell doesn't know what age you are.

MARK

You're missing the point.

DIANE

As usual. Why don't you enlighten me?

MARK

You want to know why his age pisses me off? Because I can't compete with that. I can't. My abs, my libido, they can't compete with his. He is out of my league. And do you know how that makes me feel? Helpless. Like a turtle flipped on its back waiting to bake to death under a hot sun. I mean, you knew I was going to age, right? That tends to happen to people.

DIANE

I think you're the one missing the point.

MARK

Oh, come on, Diane! He's gorgeous! A little unconventional looking, but he's gorgeous. He's young and fresh and--

DIANE

--likes being in the same room with me and likes talking to me and likes doing things with me. He's clearly Satan incarnate.

MARK

You're deluding yourself. You are. For Christ's sake... honestly, I feel like I'm talking to a chimpanzee who found a flashlight. Ooh, shiny! Me likee!

DIANE

Thanks. I'm a chimp and Carlos is a flashlight.

MARK

Diane--

DIANE

You know, I don't think it's absolutely necessary for me to be the bad person here, but if it's that important to you, sign me up.

MARK

I'm not saying that you're a bad person! I'm saying...

DIANE

What?

MARK

Relationships evolve. They should evolve. What you have with someone when you fall in love is not what you're going to have twelve years later.

DIANE

So when you say evolve, what is that a euphemism for? Wither? Rot? Spoil?

MARK

Once you get past the lust and the excitement what keeps people together? It's a sense of friendship. Of connection. Of comfort. It's having a responsibility towards the other person.

DIANE

I do have a sense of responsibility.

MARK

Really? Which one of those boxes did you pack it away in?

DIANE

There needs to be more than that. More than just a feeling of obligation in a relationship. Is that what you want? Someone you feel obliged to be with?

MARK

I want...well, it doesn't matter what I want. But I would like to understand what you're doing. At a superficial level, sure, I get it. You want the newer, flashier model. But at any level deeper than that, I don't. And maybe there is no deeper level. Maybe it's purely superficial and I'm an idiot for thinking there's anything more to it.

DIANE

Why am I doing this? It's like my Mom used to say, "You're a long time dead." The first time I heard her say that, I must have been sixteen or seventeen, and I thought it was pretty funny. It was a joke. But the older I get, the less of a joke it becomes.

MARK

So, the moral of the story is, shack up with hot guys while you can?

DIANE

Forget it. I can't try and explain something you don't want explained.

MARK

You know, maybe I should have expected this. Maybe everyone should expect this. It's the way of the world, right? If a piece of cheese turns into a moldy piece of crap after a few months you don't get mad at it. That's what cheese does. That's cheese being cheese. It's the same with human beings.

DIANE

Sure. If that makes you feel better.

MARK

I don't feel better. I feel sick. We spent years building a life together and now what? You're in a one bedroom apartment with him and I'm in this house by myself? You two should move in here. I'm the one who should get the apartment.

DIANE

This is your house.

MARK

Our house.

DIANE

No. Every renovation, the new garage, the finished basement, every carefully selected faucet is yours. Once you "matured" and I became less interesting, this house became your passion and you spent half the weekend at the hardware store.

MARK

But you helped with all of that.

DIANE

Sure. I helped you move furniture and unscrew things. But that wasn't for me. It was for you.

MARK

So you don't like the house?

DIANE

No, I do. You've got great taste and you put a lot of time and work into it and it's a wonderful house. It really is. You should be proud of it. You are proud of it.

MARK

Yes, I am. But I thought I was doing it for us.

DIANE

Maybe you were. Maybe it felt that way to you. But it didn't feel that way to me. I feel like I dropped out of the equation a while ago.

MARK

So how do you think the equation will go with Carlos? The same way? Twelve years and out? Does he know that's coming down the pipeline?

DIANE

Nobody ever knows what's coming down the pipeline. A truck driver could fall asleep behind the wheel, cross the median and crush my car into a tin can on my way to Carlos'. Not that you'd mind.

MARK

Don't say that. Don't ever say that.

DIANE

I'm sorry. That was...I'm sorry.

MARK

Maybe a fender bender. Maybe a wreck that totals your car but you walk away from. Something like that. Some kind of cosmic justice...if only I believed in cosmic justice, or...

DIANE

What?

MARK

You know what I'm thinking? If only I could run the tape back. If only someone could stop it and point to a bit and say, "Here. Right here, you screwed up." Do you think that would have made a difference?

DIANE

I don't know. Maybe I should have said more. Maybe instead of letting you putter around in the basement, I should have dragged you into the car and taken you out to a midnight movie or pool hall or a strip joint.

MARK

You want to go to a strip joint?

DIANE

Not on my own. For the most part, I don't see the point of them, honestly. It's like going to a restaurant to look at food. "Ooh, that looks good! That looks tasty!" Then you go home without eating anything. But going to a strip joint together might have been fun. Because then I would have gone home with you.

MARK

Then maybe we should have done that...or things like that.

DIANE

Yeah. Maybe.

(DIANE tapes up the last box.)

MARK

Is that it?

DIANE

That's it.

MARK

It just seems like there should be more than this.

DIANE

I don't need any more than this.

MARK

Apparently, you do.

DIANE

You want to vent a little and rip on Carlos for a few minutes? Or me?

MARK

No. What's the point? I mean, I hate to say it, but...good job. You made a handsome young man fall in love with you.

DIANE

Which clearly indicates some kind of mental deficiency or childhood trauma on his part.

MARK

I wasn't trying to say that. But...

DIANE

...you don't know what he sees in me.

MARK

Something like that.

DIANE

Maybe it's what you used to see.

MARK

You think so?

DIANE

I don't know. I wish I had a good answer for you.

MARK

I wish I had a good question.

DIANE

Then let me ask a question. Do you think I'm happy about this? Do you think when we stood next to one another and got married this is what I wanted?

MARK

No. I just thought...hoped, that we'd be better than this. But I guess we're not.

DIANE

I don't think we're all that bad. Either one of us. Maybe we should be. Maybe this would be easier if we hated one another.

MARK

I'm working on it.

DIANE

No, you're not.

MARK

No. No, I'm not.

(DIANE picks up one of the boxes. MARK picks up one as well.)

DIANE

What are you doing?

MARK

Helping.

DIANE

Why?

MARK

Let me help you, all right? I can't just stand here and watch you move out.

DIANE

Really, I can do it by myself.

MARK

We can all do it by ourselves. But my Mom had an expression too. "Don't just stand there like a knotless thread."

DIANE

That's a good one.

MARK

So let me help you.

DIANE

For old time's sake?

MARK

For old time's sake.

(They stand looking at one another, not moving. Lights fade.)

THE END.