

Group Scene

Ben | Jess / Brian / Bill / Nancy

The sudden sound of several sharp gunshots.

BEN. Jesus Christ, // what is that—

JESS. Oh my god—

Now it's recognizable as the TV next door.

BILL. The lady next door watches crime shows all day.
Over there, they've got a dog, yappy little thing.
Nothing to be done 'til they ship them off to Rose Court.

JESS. Rose Court?

BILL. This is independent living.
Rose Court is the next stop on the line,
It's more of an assisted situation.

JESS. Got it.

BRIAN. There's a medical facility—

BILL. You stay until you... *(Die.)*

BEN. Okay, Dad, let's come sit with Mom—

BILL. It's one-stop shopping.
And then in the cafeteria
They put your picture up there on the bulletin board
With all the other news.
So it's like, "Okay, everyone, so it's gonna rain Friday,
Ed is this week's bingo champion,

Sheila's started a new book club,
Sam and Joanie are dead."

JESS. Okay, Bill—

BILL. I'm taking a class.

They got classes here.

I've been doing stand-up comedy.

I'm starting to think, if I wasn't a pharmacist,

I would've been a stand-up comedian.

Anybody want to hear a joke?

BEN. No, Dad, definitely not.

BRIAN. Not right now, Dad.

NANCY. God, no.

JESS. One thing I've been thinking about is the fact that

You've both been through a lot of transitions recently.

Moving here, packing up the old house—

Also, fifty years, that's a big milestone.

And I don't know if we marked that enough,

Or, like, celebrated enough—

BRIAN. I made a video.

JESS. That's right.

BRIAN. Did you guys even watch it?

JESS. Yes.

Yes,

We did.

NANCY. I watched it, Brian.

BRIAN. Thanks, Mom.

NANCY. It was very good.

BRIAN. Thanks.

JESS. Obviously talking about all this stuff

Can feel awkward, even painful.

Communicating.

Honestly, when I work with couples in my practice

We often start with just trying to make eye contact, or hold hands—

BILL. (*With great disdain.*) Hold hands?

sation

JESS. When was the last time you two held hands?

NANCY. // I don't know...

BILL. I don't think so.

BEN. Guys, hold hands.

JESS. Don't push them.

BEN. They can hold hands.

JESS. But they don't have to right now.

Fear is normal.

BILL. Fear? I'm not afraid of it.

I can hold anybody's hand.

BEN. (*Sharper, like a coach.*) Guys. Guys.

Come on.

BILL. Fine, what do I care.

Bill and Nancy very awkwardly hold hands.

It's agony.

Ben looks to Jess like: "This is progress."

JESS. Okay, how does that feel?

NANCY. Fine.

BILL. Stupid.

JESS. Now Nancy, if I were your therapist—which obviously—

But I have done this a lot,

I have helped a lot of people avoid a lot of loneliness and regret—

So, anyway, the next exercise would be for you to try telling Bill,

What you want—

NANCY. I want a divorce.

JESS. Sorry if I wasn't clear—I meant physically.

I meant, what kind of touch do you want?

What feels good? Hard? Soft?

With just the fingertips or the entire hand.

NANCY. Um...

Soft.

BEN. Go ahead, Dad.

Touch her hand softly.

NANCY. (*Laughing.*) It tickles.

JESS. (*A breakthrough.*) This is great.
Humor is fantastic.

BILL. My arm is getting tired.

JESS. Okay, that was great, that was actually great,
You both tried, and, you know,
I know a lot of couples that couldn't even do that.

BEN. Good job, guys.

JESS. And just to say, holding hands, rubbing a loved one's back,
cuddling—

These are just a few ways to be intimate in the later years—
We could also talk about exploring the imagination, fantasy, role-
play—

BEN. Okay, babe.

JESS. All I mean, is I don't imagine they ever—
Did you and Bill ever talk about that kind of—

NANCY. // No, I don't think so.

BILL. Nope.

BEN. Okay.

NANCY. I'm happy to.

JESS. Sure, wow, okay, that's very brave—

BRIAN. Mom, if you want us to leave, // so you can—

BEN. Yeah, we'll be... Somewhere else.

NANCY. It's fine.

I'd like you to stay in fact.

I'd like you to stay.

So. Okay... Um...

My biggest fantasy is.

Well... I would... I would like...

(*Thinks, then.*) I'd like to eat dinner alone.

In a restaurant.

I've never done that before.

BILL. Are we done?

JESS. Okay Bill, I can really feel your anger.

Brian exhales.

Yours too, Brian, // if I'm being honest.

BRIAN. Thanks, that's great.

JESS. And that is some of what you are going to have to unpack,
If we're going to understand what's happening here.

In any marriage, there are lots of little disappointments over the years.

BEN. Yep.

JESS. Ben?

BEN. That was just me agreeing with you, just saying yes.

JESS. Right.

My point is, anger is understandable.

Nancy sort of threw out a hand grenade, by jumping right to divorce

Didn't you, Nancy?

Nancy?

NANCY. I'm sorry,

I just don't understand what we're doing here.

BILL. Neither do I, neither do I.

BRIAN. Wait. Hold up.

What is it Mom?

Mom? Are you okay?

Is it that...

You don't remember what you did?

NANCY. What do you—

BEN. You don't remember what you did, // Mom, is that it?

BRIAN. *(To Ben.)* Shhh. *(More gently.)* Mom.

It's okay, now, did you forget what happened?

Did you forget what // you did, Mom?

JESS. Let her speak.

BRIAN. Mom.

Do you know who this is?

Do you know who this person is?

NANCY. I, um... I think... I think... It's...

JESS. It's all right, Nancy.

NANCY. That's Cousin Lou.
That's Louise's son.

BRIAN. Cousin Lou? No, no, this is, this is—

BEN. She's fucking with us.

Mom, you are fucking hilarious, you still got it,
I love you.

BRIAN. That's funny. That's really funny.

JESS. Brian, please—

BILL. Was she kidding?

JESS. // She was kidding.

NANCY. I was kidding. It was a joke.

BRIAN. It's not funny, Mom, we're very concerned.

BILL. Since when does she kid.

NANCY. I kid.

BILL. She does not kid.

BRIAN. Who is Cousin Lou?

NANCY. You don't have a Cousin Lou.
It was a joke.

BILL. What is she joking for?

I'm the funny one,
I've always been the funny one—

NANCY. (*Preparing to go.*) Well, this has been great.