

When I Fall in Love, It Will Be....

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Cast of Characters

Ed Ferris, 60s-70s, his wife has dementia

Florence Campbell, 60s-70s, her husband has Alzheimer's disease

Synopsis

Two devoted spouses of dementia patients strike up an unlikely friendship when they discover what's going on behind the scenes at their partners' assisted living facility.

Place: a bench outside an assisted living facility that bears the sign: Memory Care Unit. Time: the present.

(Florence is sitting on the bench with a photo album and a bakery box. She is sobbing. Ed exits from the assisted living facility with the Sunday comics under one arm. He hesitates to approach her, then changes his mind.)

ED

Pardon me. Can I--

(He offers her a hanky.)

It's clean.

FLORENCE

My husband's—

(She continues to sob and shakes her head no.)

ED

Did he uh, pass?

FLORENCE

Worse. He's carrying on with another woman. In there.

(She opens the photo album, pulls one out and waves it in front of Ed.)

Our forty fifth wedding anniversary. Don't we look happy.

(She tears up the photo, rummages in the album and selects another, then tears that one in little pieces.)

ED

Is he a patient?

FLORENCE

Yes. Didn't take HIM long or HER. The slut.

ED

Would it help to know it's the disease?

FLORENCE

Really? It doesn't seem to have affected his penis any.

ED

(He laughs.)

Hearing is supposed to be the last to go, but I'm sorry. I don't mean to minimize what you're going---

FLORENCE

He's doing with her what he stopped doing with-with..... I want to—to—

(She tears up another photo.)

ED

Shake her? Shake him?

FLORENCE

Both.

ED

You're new at this.

FLORENCE

My husband's been here less than a month. Been taking care of him at home until I--

ED

Just couldn't any more.

FLORENCE

My son insisted.

ED

Sounds like you have a good son who cares about you and your husband.

FLORENCE

Yes. Are you a doctor?

ED

No. My wife's a patient here too.

FLORENCE

Oh.

(She stops mid-tear.)

I'll bet she keeps her hands to herself.

ED

She used to be quite the lady. Pearls. Gloves. Quoted from Emily Post.

FLORENCE

Used to be?

ED

She's, uh, changed.

FLORENCE

We were high school sweethearts. Now he doesn't even recognize me most—

ED

That hurts.

FLORENCE

Easy to say unless you've---

ED

We're sitting on the same bench.

FLORENCE

I thought he'd be safe here.

ED

My wife used to walk down the street in the middle of the night – not always in her pajamas. She can't do that now and I'm grateful for it.

FLORENCE

Security's one thing, but I expect more than that. I blame the staff for all this carrying on.

ED

What do you want them to do?

FLORENCE

Break it up. Have them act like civilized adults.

ED

The staff are caring, well trained and conscientious. People, including old people, need affection. It's that simple. If they tried to control the situation, the old farts would be back at it when the staff are out of sight.

FLORENCE

You're very tolerant. I can't bear to look at the two of them without—

ED

It takes time to-to—put things in perspective.

FLORENCE

How long? Exactly.

ED

My wife's been here two years and was at home for two before that. It's been a humbling experience.

FLORENCE

You sound like a minister.

ED

(He laughs.)

Not even close.

FLORENCE

Social worker then.

ED

(He laughs.)

Retired salesman.

FLORENCE

All the salesmen I know are very competitive. But not when it comes to your wife. I don't--

ED

She's not herself. If she were mentally alert and able bodied, I'd act differently.

FLORENCE

Like me. The jealous--

ED

Possibly. Enough about me. You look like a teacher.

FLORENCE

Retired accountant. When things are out of balance, we – I – get a little crazy. Scratch that. A lot crazy.

ED

You visit him every day?

FLORENCE

Yes.

ED

You need to take care of yourself too. Take a break now and then. The staff, well, it's what they do and they do it well most of the time.

FLORENCE

I felt so guilty bringing him here, now I'm so angry with him, I can't see straight.

ED

For years my wife had reason to be angry with me. She was above average and I was a below average husband. Now it's payback time.

FLORENCE

My husband is--was above average.

ED

And faithful?

FLORENCE

Yes. I believe so.

ED

And you?

FLORENCE

None of your

ED

There's no secrets or pretense here.

FLORENCE

Among the patients. The rest of us may not want to be so-so--

ED

Transparent? Honest? Like you've been just now.

FLORENCE

An exception. What's your name?

ED

Ed. Yours?

FLORENCE

Florence. Flo to my friends.

ED

The atmosphere here is very infectious. I don't mind telling you my wife is on her third boyfriend.

FLORENCE

How do you stand it?

ED

Nancy looks so happy when the two of them are together. She hasn't smiled this much since our daughter got married.

FLORENCE

Nancy? Nancy Ferris?

ED

That's right. Howard's your –

FLORENCE

Yes.

ED

Nancy's alive and she still cares. A beautiful thing.

FLORENCE

Not to me.

ED

Understandable. It got easier after boyfriend number one died.

FLORENCE

Did you put poison in his oatmeal?

ED

He died in his sleep....with a smile on his face.

FLORENCE

You're light years ahead of me.

ED

The fortunate thing about short term memory loss? Nancy didn't grieve like you and I might. In a short time, she moved on to man number two. It was a blessing. She knew something was missing and acted on it.

FLORENCE

I doubt I'll ever look at this situation the same as you.

ED

You need a distraction. I read the comics.

FLORENCE

And I toss them in the recycling bin – unread.

ED

Maybe it's time to reconsider. Nancy likes your husband best.

FLORENCE

(She cries quietly.)

Me too. She has good taste.

ED

You have your memories. Above average, you said.

FLORENCE

I was counting on a future together.

ED

Me three. What's in the box?

FLO

Cupcakes. Howard's favorite. Chocolate with white icing. Today's his birthday.

ED

It's good of you. But he won't remember.

FLO

It helps me to try to keep things as normal as possible for as long as--

ED

I understand. Are you going in then?

FLO

My son and granddaughter will be here in a few minutes. I can't let him see his father carrying on with-with your wife in a corner of the room.

ED

He's an adult.

FLO

My granddaughter is five. She loves her Pop Pop. Help me. Won't you?

ED

I can break it up, but it won't be pretty. Nancy has taken to screaming.

FLO

Please, Ed, I can't.

ED

I'll do my best. Would you like to have a cup of coffee some time? There's a shop within walking distance. Excellent cupcakes and bagels. Quiet. No drama.

FLO

Howard--

ED

Won't know the difference.

FLO

What would we talk about?

ED

The basics. How's your day going. Mine. Stuff like that.

FLO

I don't know.

ED

How many of your friends are rowing the same boat as you?

FLO

None.

ED

Nancy has a hair appointment every Friday morning at ten. I take her for ice cream every Sunday after lunch. You could see your husband at those times without interference.

FLO

Thank you. Does it get any easier?

ED

Some.

FLO

I drink tea.

They have that too.

ED

[They both go inside.]

END OF PLAY