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"Mr. Gibson and Mrs. Simonoff"

(Lights up; it is late at night in an assisted living facility. Two lounge chairs sit opposite sides of a side table. The side table is littered with magazines and a small lamp sits atop it, possibly a small plant. MR. GIBSON, a very elderly man, enters from SR, shuffling in pajamas and slippers. Walking is a chore for him, but he manages it independently still. Halfway to the closest lounge chair, he stops to catch his breath and soon continues to the closest chair.

Just as he reaches it, MRS. SIMONOFF enters SL making use of a walker. Mr. Gibson sits in his selected chair, making grunts and groans someone of his age would normally. Mrs. Simonoff shuffles herself to her closest lounge chair. Mr. Gibson notices her approaching. He watches her as she makes her way to the chair, carefully positions herself in front of it and with the help of the walker, she lands herself slowly into the chair.

Mr. Gibson looks down at the table between them and sees a magazine which interests him. He picks it up and starts to flip through it. Mrs. Simonoff looks at him.)

MR. GIBSON

Can't sleep either, eh?

(Mrs. Simonoff says nothing and returns to stare at nothing in front of her. Mr. Gibson doesn't appear to care there was no response.

A moment passes.)

MRS. SIMONOFF

(loud) My husband is dead!

(Her volume startles Mr. Gibson.)

MR. GIBSON

Oh, yeah?

MRS. SIMONOFF

(loud) I didn't kill him!

MR. GIBSON

Good for you.

MRS. SIMONOFF

I think my daughter came to visit me today!

MR. GIBSON

(also loud) Why are you so loud?!

MRS. SIMONOFF

I left my hearing device in my room!

MR. GIBSON

Well, I didn't so you don't have to yell! I can hear you just fine!

MRS. SIMONOFF

(not as loud) Thank you.

(Mr. Gibson returns to his magazine.)

She got a new job. Very excited.

MR. GIBSON

Who did?

MRS. SIMONOFF

My daughter.

MR. GIBSON

Oh yeah? (pause) What is she doin'?

MRS. SIMONOFF

(long pause) I... I can't remember. (pause) I have problems remembering things.

MR. GIBSON

Well... That's good and bad I guess, right?

MRS. SIMONOFF

Good and bad?

MR. GIBSON

At least you have a chance to forget the bad things.

MRS. SIMONOFF

The bad things.

MR. GIBSON

The things you would rather forget anyway.

(Mrs. Simonoff doesn't understand.)

Okay, for example... What's the worst thing that happened to you today?

MRS. SIMONOFF

(Thinks.)

I can't remember.

MR. GIBSON

Exactly. You're welcome.

(Mrs. Simonoff looks at Mr. Gibson as he flips the magazine pages.)

MRS. SIMONOFF

You have pretty eyes.

MR. GIBSON

(Snickers.)

My wife used to say that.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Is she...?

MR. GIBSON

What?

MRS. SIMONOFF

You know... Around? Still?

MR. GIBSON

(pause) I'm not sure.

MRS. SIMONOFF

You're not sure.

MR. GIBSON

I have a bit of a memory problem myself.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Oh... I'm sorry.

MR. GIBSON

It's fine. I don't remember any of the bad things either.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Do you have any kids?

MR. GIBSON

I think I have two, but... (pause) I'm just not sure anymore.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Do you have any family that visits?

MR. GIBSON

There's people who visit, yes. (pause) I'm never solid on who they are though. (pause) They're very nice people though. At least I think so. They might be assholes, I don't know.

MRS. SIMONOFF

(Snickers.)

You're funny. (pause) Have I seen you here before?

MR. GIBSON

Well, if you don't know the answer to that, I won't either.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Good point. (pause) How do you know if you're happy?

MR. GIBSON

What do you mean?

MRS. SIMONOFF

Sometimes I struggle to remember so much, I'm never quite sure if I'm happy. How do you know if you're happy when you can't remember what you're happy about?

MR. GIBSON

Your daughter came to see you. She has a new job she's excited about. You seemed happy about that. THAT you remembered.

MRS. SIMONOFF

I mean more...in general. If you can't remember your own life, how do you know it's a good one?

MR. GIBSON

(Thinks.)

Now THAT's a good question.

MRS. SIMONOFF

So how do you know if you're happy?

MR. GIBSON

Well...for me... I guess I just think about the day I had. If today was a good day, I feel happy. That's all I can focus on anyways, so I guess...that's what I go by. And then, hopefully tomorrow will be a good day too.

MRS. SIMONOFF

What if tomorrow is a bad day?

MR. GIBSON

I'll forget it soon enough anyways.

MRS. SIMONOFF

(pause) Doesn't it bother you there are gaps in your memory?

MR. GIBSON

There's nothing I can do about it, anyways.

MRS. SIMONOFF

They bother me.

MR. GIBSON

(pause) You ever drink too much whiskey one night and the next morning you can't remember parts of it? Same thing.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Mmmmm, how I miss whiskey.

(Mr. Gibson glances around him, reaches around to the backside of his pajama bottoms and pulls out a silver flask. Mrs. Simonoff sees him and gasps with delight.)

You're naughty.

(Mr. Gibson unscrews the top of the flask and takes a quick swig. He leans his head back and sighs. He offers the flask to Mrs. Simonoff.)

I knew I liked you for a reason.

(She takes the flask and stops before taking her swig. She sniffs.)

Where were you hiding this? It smells like Cortisone.

MR. GIBSON

Just fucking drink it.

(Mrs. Simonoff does so. The strength of the whiskey gives her a shiver.)

Thatta' gal.

(She hands it back to him. He knocks another back quickly, tightens up the cap and hides it behind him.)

MRS. SIMONOFF

That was good. Thank you.

MR. GIBSON

Not a problem.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Is this when I take my top off and dance on the coffee table?

MR. GIBSON

Now is the time to do it. I doubt either of us will remember it come tomorrow.

(Mrs. Simonoff snickers.)

So why can't YOU sleep?

MRS. SIMONOFF

Had a bad dream. You?

MR. GIBSON

Same.

MRS. SIMONOFF

Do you have them often?

MR. GIBSON

Often enough. You?

MRS. SIMONOFF

Not really. At least I don't think I do. (pause) Wanna' know what it was about?

MR. GIBSON

Your bad dream?

MRS. SIMONOFF

Yeah.

MR. GIBSON

Is it juicy?

MRS. SIMONOFF

Juicy?

MR. GIBSON

Is there any sex in it?

MRS. SIMONOFF

How would a bad dream have sex in it?

MR. GIBSON

I've had sex that felt like a bad dream. Why not the other way around?

MRS. SIMONOFF

No. There was no sex.
(Mr. Gibson gives an exhausted sigh.)

MR. GIBSON

I guess.

MRS. SIMONOFF

It was about my mother. She was young, but she couldn't speak. She needed something and I couldn't get it out of her. She was in a panic. You could see in her eyes how scared she was. I badly wanted to help her, but...I couldn't. There was nothing I could do. Really rattled me and couldn't get back to sleep.

MR. GIBSON

I'm sorry.

MRS. SIMONOFF

(pause) Why can't YOU sleep?

MR. GIBSON

I farted and woke myself up.

MRS. SIMONOFF

(pause) I'm sorry.

MR. GIBSON

Not as sorry as I am. I could miss a birthday waiting for that funk to clear out of my room. I fear for the life of my plants.

(Mrs. Simonoff stares at him a moment, then she starts to chuckle. Her chuckle continues and develops into a laugh. Soon her laugh turns into a belly hollar. She is in tears with hilarity.)

Mr. Gibson watches her and starts to smile at her delight. Her laughter makes him chuckle.)

Are you okay?

MRS. SIMONOFF

I may have peed myself a little.

(Now it's Mr. Gibson who busts out a belly laugh. They share a moment in laughter and eventually quiet down. Mrs. Simonoff wipes tears from her eyes.)

MR. GIBSON

You have a nice laugh. (pause) Thank you for that.

(Soon, he returns to his magazine as Mrs. Simonoff catches her breath.)

Good day.

(Lights down.)

End of Scene One