

tHE uGliEST bRide oF tHe mOnTh CLUb  
an ill-mannered comedy by  
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## Cast of Characters

- Wolfram: 41, a man of good means and intentions; trustfund wealthy. Light-hearted and friendly; extremely generous. He has an English accent.
- Veronica: 42. Independently wealthy, substantially alone. Overweight, dresses in flowing clothes. Dark hair and piercing, mascaraed eyes.
- Jean-Marie: 40, a literary agent. A faded Southern beauty with too much faith in make-up, she dresses younger than reasonable. Often petty, never stupid.
- Nick: 36, insurance executive. Acerbic, sensitive, on verge of a nervous breakdown.
- Ted: 38, owner of a chic west-side restaurant. Formal, cerebral. NICK's lover of ten years.
- Gerald: 46, bored. A man of leisure and unsound investments. Married six times, divorced five.
- Stephen: 26, in City Government. High strung, passionate, practical.
- Theresa: 30, a secretary. STEPHEN's wife. Plain, but serene; simple, but inscrutable.

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## Cast of Characters (cont'd)

### Scene

The setting is the impossibly high Manhattan high-rise luxury apartment of WOLFRAM WERNER, in a building with only one apartment to a floor, the elevator opening directly into each apartment. Off SR through a swinging door is a white and silver kitchen, seldom cooked in. The main playing area is a grey sunken living room. Elaborate flowers are set in several vases; expensive paintings hang on the walls – though not a lot, since they are large and spectacular, to suit the room's spaciousness. A large, curving sofa is laden with pillows and attended by several ottomans. A formal dining room can be glimpsed through an archway SR. The living room is two stories high; steps along the rear lead up to a long stretch of windows with a spectacular view of the West Side, the Hudson and beyond; since the apartment is on a high floor, the audience sees only sky; there should be a feeling of floating to the apartment. The front of the stage is a long line of windows – with a spectacular view that often catches the characters' attention. SL of these windows a sliding door leading to a large terrace, of which we can only see a small portion. USR is a sleek elevator door, with a nondescript door beside it, and between them a pedestal holding an unattractive antique Chinese vase. A large archway leads off from the living room to a hall leading to the rest of the apartment, to WOLF's bedroom and an assortment of other rooms. The rest of the apartment is gigantic, and largely unutilized. A door to a bathroom can be seen through the bedroom door, which is along an angle of the SL wall. The physical production should reflect the most fantastical elements of the script: this is not exactly the world we all live in. Casting should be multi-cultural, and actors with disabilities should be considered for inclusion in the cast. The set should be highly stylized, along with the costumes, reflecting the same relation to the real world as, say, high couture bears to the everyday clothes most of us wear. In other words, the sets and costumes should contain in them elements of outrageous humorous exaggeration; above all, the designers should have fun with the design. One possibility would be to do virtually all of the production in blacks, whites and greys – with the actors made up in a light pancake and a simple, but striking, sort of make-up that underscores the theatricality of the proceedings. Regardless of the stylistic choices which the production selects overall, the characters of THERESA and, to a lesser degree, STEPHEN, must be in sharp contrast to whatever stylization is adopted, they must be presented as simply and without affectation as possible. For example, in a production adopting the black/grey/white scenario, THERESA would be the only character whose make-up was natural and whose costume was in color, with her hand bag being her most

striking "element." In any production, THERESA's bag should stand out from the design of the rest of the production, but never in an ostentatious or tacky manner. It should have a magic and almost eerie quality to it, without overdoing any effects. It is more what happens with the bag that defines its strangeness, but it is important that the audience be able to relate to it as an ordinary object.

#### Time

Next spring.

ACT I

Scene 1

AT RISE, RONNIE asleep on the couch. WOLF enters from kitchen with a bowl of nuts, placing them on the coffee table near RONNIE. He putters around straightening things, picking up dust - even though the apartment is immaculate. Mahler's First plays in the background. WOLF takes a pair of ladies' shoes near the couch and hides them in the Chinese vase before returning to the kitchen. RONNIE's eyes pop open the moment she hears the door swing closed. RONNIE reaches out to take some nuts and accidentally upsets the bowl. She fakes sleep just as WOLF returns to the room. Crossing the room, he spots the spillage and stands over RONNIE and the accident.

WOLF

Good heavens, what happened here?

(Pause)

I say, a ghastly accident seems to have befallen my mixed nuts.

(Pause)

I just read in the Times online that a gigantic solar flare is on its way and it's going to wipe out the entire electrical grid. We're going to go back to the dark ages for a while. No cellphones, no refrigeration, no more reality TV. What do you think of that?

RONNIE

I still don't have a cellphone and I've always thought reality was overrated, so what do I care? It's no use speaking to me, Wolf, can't you see I'm sound asleep?

WOLF

Well, given you're not very sound awake these days, I'm pleased to hear your sleep is so well-balanced.

RONNIE

I wouldn't go that far.

WOLF

But you said-

RONNIE  
It's very rude to argue with a sleeping person, Wolf.

WOLF  
But not impossible.

RONNIE  
Good point.

WOLF  
Now back to my mixed nuts.

RONNIE  
Actually, I'm afraid they were depressed nuts. They flung themselves over the bowl's edge with a terrible cry of salty abandon.

WOLF  
You don't say?

RONNIE  
Of course not, I'm asleep.

WOLF  
Good point.  
(He picks nuts off the floor)

RONNIE  
What are you doing?

WOLF  
If you opened your eyes, you could see for yourself.

RONNIE  
But I'm asleep, Wolf.

WOLF  
Right. Ronnie, you're very convincing, when you're asleep.  
(Pause)

RONNIE  
What are you doing now?

WOLF  
I've torn off all my clothes, set my hair ablaze and am prancing about the room a la Isadora Duncan.

RONNIE  
(Rising)  
You lied. Ohmigod. I am awake. How disorienting.

WOLF

No, no, no! No need to get up, Ronnie. You've only had sixteen hours of sleep.

RONNIE

(Consulting her watch)

Fourteen. And three-quarters. Alright, fifteen. And a half. I hate you.

WOLF

What are old friends for?

(Returning to the kitchen)

Damn, Conchua! Damn, damn, damn!

WOLF exits with some trash

RONNIE

What, did the maid forget to dust under the stove again? Too bad you don't have a cat, Wolf, I would love to see you floss its teeth.

(Pause, a big sigh)

God, Wolf. I just can't seem to get enough sleep. There's nothing I can really rely on anymore. It's exhausting, living like this. I mean, I mean - yesterday, when I tossed the dirt onto Bunny's coffin...

(She starts to cry and laugh, covering her mouth)

... a ...a bird ...went...on my head. Bunny was the last surviving friend of father's he . . he was like the last person alive in my family. He would have laughed at a bird making a deposit on someone at a funeral. But, you see, they didn't laugh. The family. There I was, dressed in this cloud of black, with this huge white gob and I looked at Bunny's new wife - God, she's so young I was afraid she'd ask to hold my hand when we crossed the street - anyway, I thought she might at least smile at the crap on my head, but no, she ignored it. So I stepped back from the grave and handed the trowel to Bunny's nephew, Winston - I gave him my best pseudo-ironic-neo-sarcastic look, straight in the eyes - but he didn't have any pupils. Now, a pseudo-ironic-neo-sarcastic look is utterly lost on someone without pupils. I suspect sold them to buy coke. I smiled at him, as though I had no idea there was a bird sewer on my head and he said nothing. For one entire hour, I walked around like that and do you know that not one person leaned over and whispered to me "Ronnie, dear, do you realize you've got bird do-do in your hair?" Not even a pretend "What is that in your hair?" There was not a friend to be had anywhere ...oh, Wolf, there's no one now, except you.

(Pause)

I've had to build up so much nerve to ask you this. But, what ...what do you think about the two of us getting married? I'm serious. I know we're just friends, and

(MORE)

RONNIE (cont'd)

probably we're both absolutely beyond romance and sex, but - well, isn't marriage just the logical next step? I'm tired of flying all over the place, never having a real home. No one should live without at least the pretense of love. Wolf?

(Pause)

At least with each other we know where we stand.

(Pause)

Wolf? What do you think? Wolfie??

(WOLF re-enters)

WOLF

I'm sorry, I was taking out the trash, did you say something?

RONNIE

(Tragically)

That's a terribly pretty shirt. Is it silk?

(She cries)

WOLF

It's rayon, rayon. I swear to you. I do not do natural fibers. I am boycotting the natural world.

RONNIE

I can't tell you what that means to me. I'm sorry. It's just that Bunny's death . . . Bunny was . . . and now Bunny . . . with dear old Bunny dead . . . why are you laughing? Stop that!

WOLF

I'm sorry. I know that losing Bun--uh--Mr. Hamilton...

RONNIE

Bunny was his given name.

WOLF

'Foisted' is a probably more apt.

RONNIE

Bunny was . . . a great, great help to me. For one, he, oh, Bunny helped me with my money...Bunny was funny...

WOLF

Oh, my. What did Bunny do when his nose was runny?

RONNIE

(Regarding him tragically)

He blew it. And so did I: I never told him I loved him.

WOLF

Dare I remind you how much you loathed him most of the time? Personally, I always wanted to smash a banana cream torte into that dour little pinched face.

RONNIE

Oh, I know he was a bore and a pervert. But he was father's pervert! His last surviving pervert. You're the only one left now, Wolf. Friend, I mean friend.

WOLF

Thanks for the clarification. Don't be silly. You have oodles of friends.

RONNIE

Not even half an oodle. Not real friends.

WOLF

What nonsense.

RONNIE

It is not! We've no real friends, aside from each other. Everyone is out for something. Why, if you asked your so-called friends to choose between you and a pile of cash, they'd to a one take the cash!

WOLF

Nonsense.

RONNIE

Dollars and sense, Wolf.

WOLF

If you stayed in one place longer than three seconds, perhaps you'd have more friends. Why not stay with me a while, instead of rushing off? I never see you anymore.

RONNIE

I can't stop moving. If I landed somewhere for good, some great hand would come down from the sky and smash me to bits. Besides, New York hates me.

WOLF

New York doesn't care about anybody, that's different. Besides, I love you.

RONNIE

Oh, Wolf, do you?

WOLF

You're like a sister to me.

RONNIE

(Bursting anew into tears)

Oh, Wolf, why don't we...why don't...

WOLF

You've been drinking in the view again, haven't you? How much?

(She gestures 'a little bit.')

How much, really?

(Her hands go three feet apart)

Shame on you. Our guests will have to sip vigorously to catch up. They'll bruise their lips.

RONNIE

What "guests"?

WOLF

I notified you that we were having guests today. Perhaps you really were asleep, then. It's Club Day!

RONNIE

I thought you meant we were going to The Club for brunch. Oh, my. What kind of club? With members? People?

WOLF

Absolutely not! It's the Invertebrate Club. Six of my closest clams and mosquitoes. Whom do you think I've been cleaning for all morning?

RONNIE

The maid, of course. Oh, Wolf. People. Humans. Bipeds. I suppose that includes men? Wolf, I can't. I think I'll just go to my room and slip into a nice coma...

WOLF

No! I forbid you to mope with The Club festering nearby. Absolutely not. And as I am rumored to be your last remaining friend on this Earth, I cannot allow that. So: I've taken the precaution of locking your bedroom door.

RONNIE

That is a bluff.

WOLF

Leave geology out of this. You are going to face people, you are going to be charming, you are going to have fun, whether you like it or not.

RONNIE

I cannot face human beings today, Wolf. I'm going shopping.

WOLF

What about the sales clerks?

(Pause)

RONNIE

I'll go to Bloomingdale's. I'll call later to see if the coast is clear. What time do you expect to be done with your little "Club"? Where are my shoes? They were right here, I'm sure of it...

(WOLF goes to kitchen, reenters  
with a plate of cold hoers  
d'oeuvres)

Wolf!! Where are my shoes?

WOLF

Look at my new vase! Isn't it splendid?

RONNIE

Thirty grand for that?

WOLF

It's neo-Ming.

RONNIE

Is that what you call it? You've hidden my shoes.

(Going down the hall)

And you really have locked my room! I hate it when friends tell the truth.

WOLF

Oh, stay! What's the use of feeling pathetic by yourself? Misery loves company! The caterer brought tons of goodies. And. There's an old friend of yours popping by...

RONNIE

Oh, you taken to raising the dead? Save us both a lot of trouble, tell me who this "old friend" is.

WOLF

Oh, Ronnie, stay for brunch. They really are a splendid bunch. You'll meet Jean-Marie! Oh, Ronnie, she's, she's--well, words cannot describe her.

RONNIE

Back off, Wolf, you're getting enthusiasm all over the floor. Is she animal, vegetable or mineral?

WOLF

She's a literary agent! Talk about an endangered species. Though she currently has two hardcovers loitering near the top of the best-seller list: some novel about a horny secretary becoming queen of England in a spaceship or something, and the other is one of those delicious self-deception manuals disguised as self-help - you know: How To Eat Your Enemies For Breakfast and Be A Better Person - that sort of thing. Mind you, books are just business to

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WOLF (cont'd)

her, she wouldn't know real literature if it sat on her. She thinks a library is a prison for remaindered books. She's my dearest friend - you simply must meet her. You will adore one another, I'm sure of it.

RONNIE

What are you doing? Stop cleaning! It looks like you've been invaded by a pack of rabid maids, mouths foaming with cleanser, their legs like vacuum cleaner hoses...

WOLF

Should I ruffle things up a bit?

RONNIE

Relax. Sit.

WOLF sits, brushing couch with his hand

RONNIE

There is no dust on the couch, Wolf.

WOLF

You just can't see it.

RONNIE

There is no...!

WOLF

Yes, yes, you are absolutely correct. You must not be sitting at the right angle. No dust! There is no dust. None. That is light. A reflection. Not dust.

RONNIE

Wolf, can we talk for a minute?

WOLF

Oh! Has our entire conversation been telepathic again? I loathe it when that happens without my realizing!

RONNIE

Wolf. Thank you. I'm sorry. I'm edgy and humorless and despondent, and Christmas is still months away. But I have a little proposal I need to discuss with you before your little par-

The elevator rings. WOLF rises.

WOLF

What is it? Anything you ask.

RONNIE

Wolf, can you wait a minute before getting that?

WOLF

That would be rude. It's Jean-Marie. She's always first. I can't very well keep her waiting in the elevator.

The bell again.

RONNIE

(Startling, sotto voce anger)

THEN BY ALL MEANS OPEN THE FUCKING GOD DAMNED ELEVATOR WOLF, BEFORE YOUR GUEST EXPLODES AND ALL HUMANITY COMES TO AN END!

(Checking herself, a careful politeness)

You musn't be rude, Wolf. Pardon me, I need to find something to powder and then I think I'll lie down on your bed.

WOLF

We'll talk later, after we've had plenty to drink. Enough for a really good, retching cry together, O.K.? How's that sound?

The elevator bell again.

RONNIE

Like your elevator.

WOLF

Right on time!

WOLF presses a button, the elevator slides open. JEAN-MARIE holds a bakery box. They hug extravagantly.

JEANIE

Angel!

WOLF

Devil! What goodies have you brought this time? You shouldn't have.

JEANIE

Oh, my, I just never get over this view. Is that a plane down there? Oh. My. God. We're higher than heaven. I swear, the elevator up takes longer than the taxi over from my place. Is that New Jersey? It looks so much better from a distance. I swear I can see Kansas and my past lives.

WOLF

How was Trenton?

JEANIE

It's Newark, without the charm.

WOLF

Where's Eugene the Wonder Boy?

JEANIE

Oh, I'm so dumb sometimes, Wolfie! Take me out and shoot me!

WOLF

(Tossing her coat into his bedroom)

How about a drink, instead? I've got a lovely new Lambrusco on ice for you over here. Let me just...Voila!

(He uncorks it. JEANIE sips, gasps. Sips again. Groans. And again. Screams.)

I paid over sixty for that. Is it really bad, or is this just one of your gags?

JEANIE

I had to be sure. Trenton is looking better. That's like sparkling vinegar.

WOLF

May I?

(Sipping, he gasps also)

Oh, heavens, Fiasco Lambrusco, 1965. I have a presumptuous little Burgundy in the other room, if you'd prefer.

JEANIE

Does her mother know? I'd love to meet her.

Wolf heads into the kitchen.

WOLF

So, tell me about Eugene.

JEANIE

Oh-ho-ho. Where should I start? Remember that investment I made with him? Well, Darlin' Eugene turned out to be what I would call, were I not a lady, a scum-sucking con-artist sonofabitch. Not only did he get my money for those goddamn Uncle Wiggily Combo Pancake House Laundromats - which were as phony as the hair on his chest. Did you realize they make pectoral toupees? Well, not only did he bilk me and break my heart, no the fuck did not stop there. Oh, Wolfie, I let that man into more than my wallet and you know what I got for it?! Oh. How can a complicated woman like me contract something called Herpes Simplex? Why can't they call it something pretty...like Le Complexion de Bon Soir? I am dejected, defrauded, and periodically infectious! As if that weren't enough, my little writers are turning arty on me!