

1989

By Michael Rychlewski

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The Characters

**John 40's
Cynthia 40's
Larry 40's
Stephanie 40's
Jeff 15
Jill 17
David 40's**

The Time

1989 and 1996

The Place

**Cynthia and John's comfortable living and dining area
An exit to the kitchen/basement/garage
Stairs to the second floor
A front porch**

A large abstract painting of Cynthia's hangs on the wall up-center.

There is a photo of Cynthia's brother in uniform on a bookcase.

Bouncy well-known melodies might introduce each scene.

Important visuals from that pivotal year might be used.

SCENE 1: New Year's Eve, 1988

JOHN, CYNTHIA, LARRY and STEPHANIE stand and sing "Auld Lang Syne." There are some books strewn on the coffee table, including several large art books.

ALL

We'll take a cup o' kindness yet, for Auld Lang Syne. Happy New Year!

LARRY

To friends!

STEPHANIE

To health!

CYNTHIA

To family!

JOHN

To silence!

LARRY

Jesus, Jack! You really know how to kill a toast.

CYNTHIA

You've got something up your sleeve, John.

JOHN

Shall I? (*CYNTHIA gestures "go ahead."*) I'm taking a leave of absence.

STEPHANIE

Are you ill?

JOHN

Couldn't be better. It's my job. I'm burnt out.

LARRY

Welcome to the club.

JOHN

I walked in there the day after Christmas. "Tom, I need some time off." ... Three months!

STEPHANIE

What?

LARRY

Wow!

STEPHANIE

You're okay with this?

CYNTHIA

Totally. You know PR. Seventy hours a week. He'll have more time for the family now.

JOHN

And the best part is I'm not gonna look at TV or read any newspapers for three months.

STEPHANIE

No Sunday New York Times?!
No Jeopardy!?

LARRY

The Super Bowl!?!-
You're kidding!

STEPHANIE

So when does all this start?

JOHN

(looks at his watch) 42 seconds ago.

CYNTHIA

We made a list of things to do. Museums, movies. Family hikes. New recipes.

JOHN

(takes a book) "Cooking in Provence." *(reads)* Pan-Roasted Quail with Quinces and Figs.

CYNTHIA

And a perky Beaujolais!

LARRY

You guys must have done pretty well on that Japanese real estate thing.

STEPHANIE

I dunno, John. You don't seem the type who could just walk away from your job and relax.

LARRY

The Willie Horton ad! *(JOHN shakes his head)* A revolving door of killers!--

JOHN

That had nothing to do with it.

STEPHANIE

He never should have gotten into that tank.

LARRY

Well, hell. We got some news too. Not as dramatic.

STEPHANIE

They wanna do it!

CYNTHIA

Oh my God! You're kidding!

STEPHANIE

A ten minute slot. They said I could do some interviews too.

JOHN

Hey! That's great! So what's it called?

STEPHANIE

"Discovering Gardening." It's on cable. Nobody's gonna watch it.

CYNTHIA

We'll watch it.

LARRY

My wife the movie star!

STEPHANIE

I had to get back into something. Doing his accounts was getting old.

JOHN

See. Change of pace for you too.

CYNTHIA

When's the first show?

STEPHANIE

Mid-April.

JOHN

Great! I'll be finished with my "sabbatical." We can all see it together.

LARRY

(mocking) Sabbatical!?

STEPHANIE

No, no, no. ...Your *(searching)*...expedition!"

CYNTHIA

There you go.

LARRY

To where?

STEPHANIE

(droll) Why to his own North Pole, Dear. Don't forget to wear you mittens!

JOHN

Very funny. But it's interesting you should mention that cause I just took out a book on famous polar explorers.

LARRY

I thought you weren't gonna read anything.

JOHN

No! I'll read. Just no current events. Got some bios to start me off. Harry Truman. JFK! I'll find out who did it!

LARRY

(picks up a book) Huckleberry Finn!?

JOHN

I never read it. This is my chance. Look! *1,000 Famous Quotations!*

STEPHANIE

(takes it, opens to a page, pretends to read.) "Should I kill myself, or have a cup of coffee?"
Albert Camus! *(snaps the book shut)*

LARRY

Those French!

(CYNTHIA adjusts the photo of her brother.)

JOHN

(defiant of their mockery) And I'll exercise too! 100 sit-ups every morning! On some days I'll just *explore*. Find a subject I like and *immerse* myself in it. ...I'll listen to music again! Chopin!

LARRY

(hums notes of "The Funeral March") Dum-dum-da-dum Dum da-dum da-dum da-dum

JOHN

Fine! The Beach Boys.

CYNTHIA

(takes up an art book) We can get into art again.

JOHN

There you go.

CYNTHIA

Like London. We'd buy slides of paintings and project them on the wall. Pretend they were ours.

JOHN

We can do it right here. As a family. Sit on the couch, open a book, pick out a painting, and just...contemplate it. Picasso! Monet!

STEPHANIE

Your teen-aged children are going to contemplate art with you?!

CYNTHIA

Why not? Jill loves art. Maybe some of it'll rub off on Jeff.

JOHN

He flunked art first quarter.

LARRY

How can you flunk art?

JOHN

Flunked Biology too.

CYNTHIA

He's had a hard time. All his friends went to Lane. He doesn't even have a lunch table to sit at.

LARRY

Gotta have a lunch table.

CYNTHIA

I think this Bac program might be too much.

JOHN

Freshman year is always tough. Doesn't matter what program you're in. He'll be fine.

CYNTHIA

He spends the whole week-end sleeping, Jack.

JOHN

He's a teenager. They burn energy.

LARRY

Hey, speaking of London, how's your photographer buddy?

JOHN

David? He's great! Moved to Australia. Still freelancing. (*wistful*) He's got it made.

STEPHANIE

Are you sure the kids are okay with this "sabbatical?"