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Dramatic Publishing

EVERYTHING'S RELATIVE

by

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(EVERYTHING'S RELATIVE)

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EVERYTHING'S RELATIVE

A Comedy in Two Acts
For Three Men and Three Women

CHARACTERS

MARVEL BARRIE in her late fifties
FLOYD BARRIE . . . married to Marvel, in his late fifties
CHRISTINE DISH daughter of Floyd and Marvel
MATTHEW DISH married to Christine
JANELL DISH Matthew's mother, about fifty-five
IRA DIMMITT . . . a handyman, about eighteen or twenty

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A small town in Illinois.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

- Scene One: An apartment in Chicago at 6 a.m.
on a Saturday.
- Scene Two: Inside a small Illinois home, 1 p.m.
the same day.
- Scene Three: 2 p.m. in a bedroom of that home.
- Scene Four: 3 p.m. in the living room.
- Scene Five: 5 p.m. in the living room.

ACT TWO

- Scene One: 6 p.m. in the living room.
- Scene Two: 7 p.m. in the park.
- Scene Three: 8 p.m. in the living room.

ACT ONE

SETTING: *The bedroom of a Chicago apartment, typical of a double-income-no-kids couple.*

AT RISE: *It is 6 a. m. on a Saturday. The room is dark. An alarm clock rings and is quickly shut off. CHRISTINE DISH turns on a lamp and leaps from the bed. Immediately wide awake, She runs to the bathroom and emerges with a toothbrush in her mouth, pulls a suitcase out from under the bed and continues to brush her teeth. Still brushing, CHRISTINE walks to a dresser and begins pulling out clothes, suddenly stops and runs to the bathroom. She returns without the toothbrush and sends a lethal look towards the bed, where her husband MATTHEW still sleeps.*

CHRISTINE. Matthew, get your buns out of bed now. I want to leave here by six-thirty. (*Getting no response, CHRISTINE moves to the bed and pulls back the covers. MATTHEW immediately pulls the blankets over his head. With growing frustration, CHRISTINE pulls the blankets off of MATTHEW, who in turn pulls them over his head again. Annoyed, CHRISTINE jumps on top of the lifeless figure, and with her head a few inches from MATTHEW's, delivers the ultimatum.*) Matthew, if you're not out of that bed in 30 seconds, I won't stop at

Dunkin' Donuts for coffee. That means *five hours* of cornfields and cows without the aid of caffeine.

MATTHEW (*pushes back covers*). Christine Dish, you're a hard woman. But a good one. (*MATTHEW reaches for CHRISTINE, who pulls away.*)

CHRISTINE. You have 30 minutes to get ready. I want to be on the road by six-thirty. (*CHRISTINE gathers clothing and exits to bathroom. Off stage, annoyed.*)
You did it again.

MATTHEW. What?

CHRISTINE (*off*). You got little specks of toothpaste on the mirror.

MATTHEW. How do you know *you* didn't do it?

CHRISTINE (*off*). Because I don't do things like that.

MATTHEW. Obviously you're mistaken, since you *are* the only one who's brushed their teeth this morning. I'm not even out of bed.

CHRISTINE (*off*). This is from yesterday.

MATTHEW. How do you know?

CHRISTINE (*off*). Oh, I know.

(*CHRISTINE, wearing jeans and sweatshirt, emerges from bathroom carrying shampoo and other toiletry items.*)

CHRISTINE. Just like I knew you'd still be in bed. (*She packs items then moves to closet, opens it, and pulls out several sweaters.*) I hate packing a lot of clothes for two days. Actually, it won't even *be* two days. We leave this morning and come back tomorrow afternoon. That's more like 28 hours. Matthew, do you think I should pack a few sweaters?

MATTHEW (*moves to dresser and removes underwear and socks from a drawer and shoves them indifferently into the suitcase*). Sounds like a good idea, Christine. You know how drafty your mom and dad's house is. (*CHRISTINE returns the sweaters to the closet. She moves to the bed and begins unpacking what MATTHEW has shoved into the suitcase. CHRISTINE neatly folds each item and returns it to the suitcase. MATTHEW, in the meantime, sits on the side of the bed in pajama bottoms and begins the lengthy process of putting on a pair of socks as he talks with CHRISTINE.*) Why did we get out of bed at six o'clock on a Saturday to drive 300 miles to tell our families we're moving to Olympia, Washington so they can *not* talk to us for the weekend? (*CHRISTINE moves to bathroom and begins putting on make-up, moving between bathroom and bedroom as she talks. At one point she appears in the doorway with an eyelash curler, another time with a hair brush. MATTHEW, meanwhile, is still working on his socks.*)

CHRISTINE. I told you, my family is not going to give us a hard time about this. They'll hate to see us move so far away, but they want us to be happy.

MATTHEW (*stands and moves to closet*). Oh, I see. Meaning my mom doesn't.

CHRISTINE. Shall I give examples?

MATTHEW (*opens closet door*). If you can spare the time. Or were you planning to paint the apartment before we leave?

CHRISTINE. Ha! Paint? This place should be cleaned and burned.

MATTHEW. What's *that* suppose to mean? I thought you liked this apartment.

CHRISTINE. It's great if you're into early World War II.

MATTHEW. I don't know what you're talking about.

What does 1940 Europe have to do with our apartment?

CHRISTINE. Let me make this simple for you. Crumbling plaster. Peeling wallpaper. Bodies everywhere.

MATTHEW. Bodies?

CHRISTINE. Dead silverfish. Remember when we went on vacation and *you* left the pizza pan soaking in the sink? We came home and found hundreds of bugs with millions of legs—

MATTHEW (*crosses room and grabs CHRISTINE by the shoulders*). Christine, is this going to be a mini-series, or can you get to the point within the next 20 seconds?

CHRISTINE (*moves away*). The point is, this place has the charm of a Turkish prison.

MATTHEW (*bewildered*). How did we get onto this subject? One minute you're about to slice and dice my mom, and the next thing I know, we're in the trenches. (*Sits on bed, head in hands.*)

CHRISTINE (*pacing*). And since you've brought up the subject, what about your mom? Why does she buy me a box of Fannie May's every year for my birthday when she knows I'm allergic to chocolate? And I absolutely, positively *hate* it when she wraps my birthday present in Christmas paper. Is it my fault my birthday's in December? Would she use Christmas paper if my birthday was in July?

MATTHEW (*shrugs, mumbles*). Probably...(*Finally puts on his socks, stands and grabs a shirt from the bed and puts it on. It's a woman's blouse. He stares at the blouse, ponders the too-short sleeves, shakes his head.*) I've got to tell Mom to stop buying clothes for my birthday. (*Pauses, emphatically announces.*) It's not even the right size. (*Pauses, re-evaluates.*) It's kind of a nice

color, though. (*As CHRISTINE delivers the speech below, she impatiently crosses to MATTHEW's side and pulls the blouse off of him. She takes a shirt from the bed and helps him put it on. MATTHEW is still half-asleep and is little help. The entire episode resembles a strange dance, with MATTHEW waving his arms and turning in circles as CHRISTINE attempts to navigate the flailing limbs.*)

CHRISTINE. And when is she going to stop asking us why we don't have kids yet? Is that any of her business? I feel like she's a reporter for the *National Enquirer*. How would she like it if I asked why she never remarried? Your dad died in a car wreck when you were three years old. In the two years we've been married, she's never *once* had a date. I ask you, is *that* normal? Most people think love and relationships make life worth living. Your mom thinks they make soap operas worth watching. (*At last, MATTHEW is wearing a shirt that fits, and falls exhausted onto the bed.*)

MATTHEW (*sits up slowly and pulls CHRISTINE onto the bed*). You're acting crazy.

CHRISTINE (*leans against MATTHEW*). I know.

MATTHEW (*rubs her shoulders*). This happens every time we go home. Our families make you crazy.

CHRISTINE (*disgusted*). I know.

MATTHEW. What? Can it be? I just made two accurate statements not, mind you, merely within the same day but—call Mike Wallace—within a thirty-second interval. (*Slides off the bed and goes down on his knees, raising arms toward ceiling.*) Lord, take me *now*. I've had Christine's approval twice within two sentences. Can the rest of life offer a greater moment of joy and exhilaration than this?

CHRISTINE. When did you become such a smart-aleck?

MATTHEW. Am I not married to the connoisseur of caustic, the maven of mouth, the siren of sarcasm?

CHRISTINE. Okay, okay...so I'm a wit.

MATTHEW. Well, you're half right. (*Laughs.*)

CHRISTINE. Matthew! You used to be such a nice guy. What have I done to you?

MATTHEW (*assumes stance of boxer, bounces back and forth, swings at imaginary opponent*). I know how much you enjoy verbal duels. There's nothing like a slam-dunk to the ol' ego first thing in the morning to activate those killer instincts. You'll need that for the big family brawl.

CHRISTINE. Do you really think it'll come to that?

MATTHEW (*walks to a collection of baseball caps on the wall, selects one, puts it on*). I know it will. Just as sure as your mom will have an apple pie in the oven and sour dough cookies in the pantry, there's going to be a family argument. (*Looks in mirror.*) Christine, we've both quit promising jobs. We're moving 2,000 miles in the hopes of finding employment in a state that still has more trees than people. Besides making an interesting plot for a play, this situation is definitely guaranteed to annoy some relatives.

CHRISTINE. What do you think my parents will say?

MATTHEW. Let's wait until we get there and we won't have to guess. (*Looks in mirror.*) Does this hat go?

CHRISTINE. It certainly completes the ensemble. Matthew, please. I'm trying to talk about something important.

MATTHEW (*looks in mirror, takes off hat, replaces it on rack and selects another. Hat in hand, he turns to CHRISTINE*). I'm listening. Just last week, I learned to look in the mirror and listen at the same time. I don't

know why we have to talk about this. Why can't we just go. I thought you wanted to be on the road by six-thirty. (*Teasing.*) And we know how Christine hates to be late. (*Puts hat on, looks in mirror, seems pleased.*)

CHRISTINE (*paces*). How do you think my parents will take it? They don't like change. I don't see them often enough as it is. What happens when we live 2,000 miles away? And you know how Dad worries about everything. If it's not the Indians taking over the donut stores it's the price of pork shoulder. Now he'll worry about us starving, far away from family, with no income. We should've found jobs first.

MATTHEW. We tried that, remember? It's just too difficult. It's not easy to set up interviews when you live on the other side of the country. (*MATTHEW moves to dresser and pulls out shirts and pants, crosses to bed and shoves items into suitcase.*)

CHRISTINE. Don't do that! (*Takes clothes out of suitcase and begins re-folding.*) You know I hate it when you just shove everything in there. Never mind, I'll finish packing. Your jeans are on top of the hamper in the bathroom.

MATTHEW (*exits to bathroom*). Go ahead. I'm listening. Just last week, I learned to change clothes and listen at the same time.

CHRISTINE. At least I know Mom won't give us any trouble. Dad will be a real pain, because he's a pain about everything. What do you bet he starts quoting me the unemployment rate for Washington? He'll probably throw in the crime statistics too, and top it off with the cost of living. But at least we'll have Mom on our side. (*Finishes packing and closes suitcase.*) We'd better get going.

(MATTHEW enters wearing jeans.)

MATTHEW. Christine, I bet that after your mom finds out her baby girl is moving 2,000 miles away, she'll be so upset she won't even offer us lunch. In fact, she'll probably be so ticked off, we won't eat all weekend.

CHRISTINE *(laughs)*. What? No dessert? No apple pie? Even when President Kennedy died, we still had our cherry cobbler. You're talking about the farm belt, where it's a law that you have to serve meat and potatoes and dessert with every meal. Not global war nor presidential assassin will keep the meal from the table.

MATTHEW *(amused)*. But we're talking about something much worse than Mother Nature run amuck or a political murder. *(Puts his arm around CHRISTINE, gestures into distance.)* We're talking about two crazy kids in love who sell everything and move to the wilderness, depending on their talent, commitment and love to see them through. It's every parent's nightmare. *(MATTHEW picks up suitcase and CHRISTINE and MATTHEW exit. BLACKOUT.)*