

Hold On

by

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FADE IN

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

The beautiful grounds of a country club. A nicely arched stone bridge crosses a wide stream.

The windows of the main dining room display a wedding reception in full alcoholic swing.

INT. - MAIN DINING ROOM - DAY

Crowded and hot, with dancing, drinking, and all the usual sports.

CAPPY, dressed in a tuxedo that just doesn't quite fit him, stands yukking it up with four FRIENDS, brandy snifter in one hand and a cigar as thick as Ahab's peg-leg in the other.

To one side and slightly behind him stands RONNIE, dressed in a dress that fits her the way Cappy's tuxedo doesn't fit him, watching Cappy closely. They cannot see her.

CAPPY

I can see the Calvin Klein angle, but me, I'm a Fruit of the Loom guy --

FRIEND 1

Really?

FRIEND 2

Didn't know that about you.

CAPPY

Well, I am, so when she had me try them on --

FRIEND 3

Cappy with butt floss!

CAPPY

No, no, no -- these were bikinis.

FRIEND 4

Why do they call them "briefs"?

CAPPY

Listen! I mean, I love that she bought them, you know, for me -- but bikinis, you know, with this high leg hole --

Ronnie deliberately drifts into their view.

CAPPY

-- and my package just -- you know, like a bunch of grapes -- hanging --

All of them except Cappy see her.

CAPPY

Definitely Fruit of the Loom --

FRIEND 1

(toasts Ronnie)

But Cappy, you gotta love a woman who cares about your leg holes.

Cappy faces Ronnie, their eyes locked.

RONNIE

(to Friend 1)

That's what I always thought.

A suspended moment as Ronnie and Cappy lock eyebeams. Then Ronnie firmly pivots on her heel and marches out.

FRIEND 2

(to others)

Did you just get freezer burn?

(to Cappy)

Looks like your leg holes are gonna be quite lonely in the near future.

CAPPY

Oh, Ronnie'll be --

But he doesn't finish the sentence as he stares at the door where Ronnie left. The four friends toast their snifters to Cappy.

FRIEND 4

To the Fruit of the Loom.

EXT. - BENCH - DAY

Ronnie perched, the hem of her dress gathered into her lap, hugging her knees.

Cappy sees her, hesitates, then runs up and scoots in as if he's sliding into base.

CAPPY

Safe.

Ronnie does not even look at him.

RONNIE

Out.

CAPPY

Safe!

RONNIE

Out at home. Play ball somewhere else.

CAPPY

So you don't want me here?

RONNIE

Go away.

CAPPY

Free bench.

RONNIE

For human beings.

CAPPY

I'm not?

RONNIE

Not today.

(looks at him)

I cannot believe --

CAPPY

Ronnie, it's small stuff.

RONNIE

Begone.

CAPPY

Small potatoes.

She swivels to look at him, still hugging her knees.

RONNIE

You want to know some big potatoes, then? I've decided that Cappy makes me feel crappy, and for me to be healthy, I'm going to flush you out.

CAPPY

Flush me out.

RONNIE

An ultra high colonic. The enema to top all enemas. From stem to stern and back. It's the least the Fruit of the Loom deserves. And you deserve the very least.

They sit, silent, not at ease, but necessarily overly tense, either -- as if this is not a new conversation.

CAPPY

Finished?

RONNIE

With you.

CAPPY

Crappy Cappy.

RONNIE

Got a big hole in my personal ozone from your toxic waste. Time for you to be phased out.

CAPPY

Anything else?

RONNIE

When they passed out brains --

CAPPY

Ah, something from your second-graders.

She stops.

RONNIE

I'm not going to dance this jig any more.

CAPPY

C'mon --

RONNIE

I'm not.

CAPPY

C'mon, you're supposed to play out --

RONNIE

-- I get mad -- again! --

CAPPY

-- it brings out your best colors --

RONNIE

-- you sit there and soak up my spew --

CAPPY

-- such lovely spew, well-crafted --

RONNIE

-- we jig this over and over again, and I feel stupid seven different ways for saying what I feel, and you come off squeegee-clean and well-defensed, which I hate, and it's never going to change.

Pause -- air filled with faint 80s dance MUSIC from the country club, also a soft breeze.

RONNIE

Just for the record. You really hurt me back there.

CAPPY

Ronnie -- just guy stuff --

RONNIE

"Guy stuff" -- you don't even smoke.

CAPPY

Peer pressure.

RONNIE

You're not eighteen.

CAPPY

Out of my hands. But I didn't inhale.

RONNIE

I can't believe you said -- what you said.

Cappy goes to speak but she cuts him off with a hand gesture.

RONNIE

Why didn't you tell me you didn't like them?

CAPPY

Ronnie --

RONNIE

Why didn't you? I went to all this trouble, for your birthday, to buy you some nice French silk underwear.

CAPPY

Low-cut bikinis.

RONNIE

Excuse me, Mister Fruit -- how was I to know you held a distinct opinion about the rise of the leg hole?

CAPPY

They just rode -- up -- you know. Up. They weren't comfortable.

RONNIE

So why didn't you say something? You know, talk to me? Especially when I bought you some more for Christmas.

Ronnie holds up imaginary underwear -- a mocking tone.

RONNIE

"Oh, thanks honey! I really wanted
some more -- "

CAPPY

Just didn't want to hurt your feelings.

RONNIE

You don't even know what those are.

CAPPY

Yes I do --

Ronnie gets off the bench, torn between walking away and giving Cappy the one-two he deserves.

RONNIE

It wasn't that you told them. Macho it
up all you want with your buds. It was
how you made me look like an idiot for
wanting to do something nice for you.
Like I was this bubble-brained bubble
brain!

CAPPY

You're not --

Stops him.

RONNIE

Hup! As if I didn't know you. After
seven years. As if I didn't know you!
That's what hurt.

She sits. They both hang there, undecided.

CAPPY

Nice wedding.

RONNIE

Other peoples' usually are.

CAPPY

Am I still out at home?

RONNIE

Cappy --

CAPPY

Ronnie, don't --

RONNIE

What are we up to?

CAPPY

Jeez --

RONNIE

Seven years.

CAPPY

Good ones. Can we go back in?

She stares at him, sadness and determination on her face.

RONNIE

Not all good.

CAPPY

On average.

RONNIE

No.

CAPPY

Back?

RONNIE

I watched you today, a lot.

CAPPY

Go back?

RONNIE

As the priest blessed them, as everyone clapped, as people came up and just bathed in their happiness. And I realized that you and I will never have anything like that. Ever. Not the marriage necessarily. Just that kind of connection. In cigarus et brandius

veritas. We're holding on to nothing.
No trumps.

CAPPY

That's not true.

RONNIE

It's true, no matter what you say.

CAPPY

This isn't the first time. This has
come up.

RONNIE

I think it's going to be the last,
Cappy.

They sit in defeated silence. In the distance is the SOUND
of a speeding car approaching, the squeal of brakes, and a
crash. They sit up, suddenly alert.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB BRIDGE - DAY

A car has broken through the railing of the bridge and
teeters, half on, half off. The trunk has popped open.

INT. - CAR

An elderly woman in the driver's seat, paralyzed with fear.
An air freshener, hanging from the rear-view mirror and
sporting a smiling angel's face, pendulums wildly.

EXT. - CAR

Ronnie and Cappy run onto the bridge. Ronnie moves around
to the driver's side.

RONNIE

It's Jim's aunt, the one that smelled --

CAPPY

-- like fermenting apples.

Ronnie moves back to Cappy.

RONNIE

Right!

The car slides an inch forward. Cappy grabs the lip of the open trunk.

CAPPY

Grab! Grab!

Ronnie also grabs on, and they find themselves anchoring the teetering car by their own strength and weight.

CAPPY

See if we can keep it from see-sawing.
Ah -- hey -- what the hell's her name?

RONNIE

I called her "Red Delicious gone bad."

CAPPY

(yelling)
Granny Smith!

RONNIE

Granny Smith?

CAPPY

You're gonna be okay!

INT. - CAR

The old woman hears Cappy's "Granny Smith."

OLD WOMAN

He's coming to take me away! Oh, oh --

She starts rocking back and forth. The air freshener whips back and forth. She blesses herself.

OLD WOMAN

Our Father, who art in heaven --

EXT. - CAR

The car teeters because of the teetering old woman.

CAPPY

Christ! Jesus Christ!

INT. - CAR

OLD WOMAN

Hallowed be thy name --

The old woman hears the word "Christ!" and stops. She looks at the smiling angel's face on the air freshener.

EXT. - CAR

RONNIE

Help is on the way!

INT. - CAR

The old woman, now still, watches the smiling face, and it's as if Ronnie's words come from the grinning angel's mouth.

OLD WOMAN

Save me.

EXT. - CAR

The car settles, finally, and for a moment they can hear the world around them.

CAPPY

Someone must have heard it.

RONNIE

The band was pretty loud.

CAPPY

No one was bleeding from the ears.

RONNIE

I hope someone heard. What was she doing?

CAPPY

Probably a geezer spasm --

RONNIE

What are we going to do?

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

By this time, everyone is dancing wildly. Through the windows the car plainly hangs off the bridge, but no one notices.

RONNIE

My hands are going to decide this pretty soon.

CAPPY

I've given you many chances to exercise those hands. Not my fault if --

The car teeters again.

INT. - CAR

The old woman is dancing in her seat.

OLD WOMAN

He's going to save me, he's going to save me!

EXT. - CAR

Pulling down with all the weight they can command, they can just manage to keep the car in balance.

CAPPY

Settle down, Mrs. Appleseed!

RONNIE

My hands don't have much grip left.

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

The place is packed with gyrating dancers..

Friend 1 wanders to the window and sees, through blurred and alcoholic eyes, the car half-on the bridge and what looks like two fishing bobs in formal clothes hanging off the rear bumper.

EXT. - CAR

CAPPY

No one's coming.

Ronnie screams.

RONNIE

Cramp!

She shakes one of her hands violently in the air.

CAPPY

Warn me at least!

RONNIE

A spasm doesn't come with trumpets!
Christ!

INT. - CAR

The old woman hears "Christ" again, stops dancing, and pushes a tape into the cassette player. Out of it comes some syrupy Muzak of The Carpenters' "We Only Just Begun." She starts to sway to the rhythm.

EXT. - CAR

RONNIE

That hurt!

CAPPY

Yeah -- but he got it through the palm.

A look of intense annoyance from Ronnie. Cappy grins -- he is in his element.

CAPPY

You "knead" to make bread more often.
Get it? Knead? Build hand strength?

RONNIE

Shut up.

CAPPY

Just trying to lighten things.

The car rocks slightly, gently. Ronnie looks at Cappy's absurdly smiling face.

RONNIE

(hesitating)

Not what I expected to "come to hand"
when I came out here.

CAPPY

I guess we're "hanging on."

RONNIE

To Granny Smith.

CAPPY

Who had a geezer spasm. / Almost drove
her car --

RONNIE

Into a chasm. Wait! Wait! Another
one!

Takes her other hand off and shakes out a cramp.

INT. - CAR

At a peak in the music, the old woman hears Ronnie's yell,
and she matches it in trying to sing to the music, swaying
a little bit harder.

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

Friend 1 turns to the gyrating crowd and YELLS.

FRIEND 1

Hey, everyone, come look at this! I
just saw a see-saw! Haw, haw!

Friend 1 sees Ronnie shaking out her hand and, thinking
she's waving to him, waves back.

A few people turn to look at him, see him waving and
laughing wildly at his own joke.

FRIEND 1

Look at what we saw! I just saw a see-
saw. See-saw, see-saw --

The three other friends walk toward him. In the background the band plays a punk version of The Carpenters' "We've Only Just Begun."

EXT. - CAR

The car teeters.

CAPPY
She's running in the home stretch.

RONNIE
Sit still!

CAPPY
-- frisky, ain't she --

RONNIE
-- or the Social Security check --

CAPPY
-- she's probably buried a husband or
two --

RONNIE
-- gets it in the neck!

CAPPY
That -- was -- a -- good -- one.

They stabilize the car.

CAPPY
A reminder.

RONNIE
What?

CAPPY
Remember to shoot me when the dementia
sets in.

RONNIE
Right now, you mean?

CAPPY
The senile kind. Not the juvenile.

RONNIE

That means I'd have to wait around that long.

CAPPY

I guess it would at that.

They can vaguely hear an overly of The Carpenters from inside the car and from the country club.

INT. - COUNTRY CLUB

FRIEND 1

Is that what I think it is?

FRIEND 2

It is.

FRIEND 3

Should we go?

FRIEND 4

To the rescue!

Friend 4 jabs the air with his finger, and then makes a few bad John Travolta moves from "Stayin' Alive."

EXT. - CAR

CAPPY

This -- a good story for your class on Monday. This is good second-grade material.

RONNIE

I'd like a happy ending for them.

CAPPY

You want it over?

RONNIE

Not what I want. Just is. Well, life support, anyway.

CAPPY

I gotta agree, I guess.

RONNIE
Everything's been boiled down to
shoulds.

CAPPY
I take you for granted.

RONNIE
Granted.

CAPPY
And the underwear -- you're right, it
wasn't fair.

RONNIE
I should have asked.

CAPPY
We coast.

RONNIE
We're in Lazy-Boy recliners.

CAPPY
We're flipping the remote without a
tune.

RONNIE
We're shaving with old razors.

CAPPY
I know all your dances.

RONNIE
I know how you drive to the hoop.

CAPPY
So what do we do?

INT. - CAR

The old woman hears the TOCSIN of an emergency vehicle.
She looks at the smiling angel on the air freshener.

OLD WOMAN
The sound of angles.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB LAWN

The four friends gallop toward the bridge as if they are riding horses, whooping it up like the cavalry.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB ROAD

A fire engine blows along, lights and SIREN blaring.

EXT. - CAR

RONNIE

Someone must have called in. And here
come your men of war to the rescue.

The four friends pull to a halt and grab the car. They sit on the lip, and the added weight keeps the car stable.

Ronnie and Cappy shake out their hands as the fire truck pulls up and four beefy guys leap out. Two add their weight to the four horsemen.

EXT. - COUNTRY CLUB LAWN

The multi-hued wedding guests are streaming out toward the bridge, champagne glasses in hand.

INT. - CAR

Two helmeted official-looking faces peer inside. The old woman, seeing one, then other, YELLS out joyfully.

OLD WOMAN

My angles! My angles!
(to air freshener)
Thank you.

EXT. - BENCH

Cappy and Ronnie retreat to their original bench. The hubbub leaves them high and dry and alone for a moment.

CAPPY

I can come in to your class, and we can
do a show-and-tell.

RONNIE

Which part?

CAPPY

The "so what do we do" hopefully happy ending part.

Ronnie watches the ten guys pull the car back onto the road.

RONNIE

Maybe we should find another car to hold on to. You know, to finish the conversation.

She looks at him and LAUGHS.

RONNIE

Granny Smith!

CAPPY

Sweet and tart at the same time. Just like me.

The both watch the four friends high-five the people in the crowd.

CAPPY

Safe at home?

RONNIE

Call under protest -- for the time being.

They massage each other's hands as they watch the rescue efforts go forward.

FADE OUT