

# **HOME**

By Jim Martyka

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**CHARACTERS:**

**MICHELLE – 30s, a concerned, caring but frustrated daughter**

**BILL – 60s, a sweet man battling dementia**

**SETTING: A house in Wisconsin**

*At lights up, MICHELLE sits at a table with her head in her hands, clearly distraught, fighting to keep herself together. She focuses on her cup of coffee. From off camera, we hear her father BILL mumbling to himself and occasionally out loud.*

BILL: I always thought you looked good in that dress. What? Ha! No sweetheart, only you. Yes. Blue is your color. Hahaha. The shoes? I don't...I...hey Mark, have you seen a pair of dark blue heels around?

MICHELLE: It's Michelle, dad.

*Bill walks into the room with his own cup of coffee and stares at her as if she's crazy.*

BILL: Yes, I know.

*Bill looks around and then looks back at where he came from, clearly confused.*

MICHELLE: Dad...

BILL: Hold on a second, Mark.

MICHELLE: Nope. Michelle.

BILL: Shh.

*Bill listens for a long beat and then starts laughing.*

BILL: Ha. Listen to her. She takes a few dance classes and suddenly she's Ginger, umm, Ginger....Gosh darn it...Ginger...

MICHELLE: Rogers.

*Bill jumps at the sound of her voice.*

BILL: Michelle, when did you get here?

MICHELLE: What? I've been here like...uhh, just now.

BILL: Do you want me to make you some dinner? I can fry up some fish and...

MICHELLE: NO! *(to herself)* dear God, stay away from the stove.

BILL: What?

MICHELLE: Nothing. I'm good, dad.

BILL: Aww, yes you are Shelley...always the good girl.

*Michelle smiles.*

BILL: How about a cup of coffee then?

*Michelle holds up her cup and Bill looks at it and then at the one in his hand, surprised.*

MICHELLE: Dad, sit down a sec. I want to talk to you about, umm, that place we talked about before.

BILL: *(exiting)* No time, Shelley. Your mother wants to go dancing. Ha. She takes a few classes and she thinks she's Ginger...uhh... Ginger...

MICHELLE: Rogers. Dad, Mom isn't here. She hasn't been for a long...

BILL: *(walking back in)* Now where did your mother scoot off to?

MICHELLE: Hell.

BILL: What?

MICHELLE: Shh. She'll be back in a sec. Please sit down.

*Bill sits and smiles at her.*

MICHELLE: Okay, now dad. Listen. I know you have your doubts. But it's a wonderful place. It's just gorgeous there. They've got a lake and they've got birds and other critters. They've got games, activities.

Horseshoes, dad. They have horseshoe tournaments. And you'd make lots of new friends. There's field trips, socials, dinners, the works.

*Bill smiles.*

BILL: It does actually sound kinda nice.

MICHELLE: Yes! Yes, it is and I think—

BILL: *(yelling)* What? Oh, it's just Shelley trying to get us on another family vacation. I know, I know. But you know your daughter. Any excuse to get out of town for a few days.

MICHELLE: Oh dear God.

BILL: Watch your mouth. *(yelling)* What? Oh, I'll ask. Mark, your mother wants to know if there's dancing.

MICHELLE: Yes. There's dancing.

BILL: She says yes, Ginger...uhh...Ginger...uhh.

MICHELLE: *(exploding)* Rogers. Rogers. Ginger Fucking Rogers.

*Bill suddenly looks confused and scared.*

MICHELLE: Oh God, dad. I'm sorry. I just. This has to stop. I can't do this anymore. I sit here and watch this and it's killing me. I just can't do it anymore. You need help. You need more than I can give you. It's time, dad. It's just time.

BILL: *(weakly)* Why?

MICHELLE: Why? Because you're hallucinating. You've called me Mark twice since I've been here even though Mark has been dead for a year. You're talking to mom even though she left a while ago. You don't know where you are or what you're doing. You can't remember things.

BILL: I remember things.

MICHELLE: Oh really? How about that you already made us coffee? Or that you haven't fried fish in years? Or that you busted your hip and you can't dance? Jesus Chris, dad, you can't remember...

BILL: Watch your mouth.

MICHELLE: AAAAHHHH!!!

BILL: I remember Crivitz.

*This stops Michelle in her tracks.*

MICHELLE: What?

BILL: Huh? Sorry, my mind was wandering. What were we talking about?

MICHELLE: What did you just say?

BILL: I don't...I don't remember.

MICHELLE: Yes you do. Just...

BILL: What's the best trip you remember us taking as a family?

MICHELLE: Dad, I can't do this.

BILL: Please, just...please.

MICHELLE: *(beat)* Yeah, Crivitz.

BILL: Do you remember what we did?

MICHELLE: *(fights to hold on through this)* I...I remember everything. I remember how much fun even the drive up was. Playing "I Spy" and how Mark couldn't ever figure out what we all saw. I remember the smell of the cabin, the smell of memories new and old. Everything was clean, pure, bright...the sky and the water. So crisp and clear you could drink right from the lake. It was silent and beautiful. It was just us and nature. I remember the deer walking right by us with no fear, the birds that would wake us up every morning and the loons that would put us to sleep at night. The fishing, the cooking, the games...the laughter. The love. We were so happy. It was just us and we were so happy. And even then, even as a little girl, I knew to hold onto this. That it might not ever be this perfect again. I remember...

BILL: ...you kids crawled into bed with us on that last night. The heater went out in the middle of the night and we pulled out the extra blankets. We shared stories with each other and all cuddled up together until you two fell asleep. And then, my gosh, the snoring! Your mother and I couldn't believe how two little squirts like you and your brother could snore like that. We crept out into the living room, giggling, feeling like a couple of teenagers trying to sneak out for the night. Your mother put on one of her old records very softly as I poured us a very late night cap. When I came back in the room, she looked at me and told me she loved me...and we danced.

MICHELLE: Oh dad.

BILL: I remember things, Shelley. I know that I'm losing my mind. But I still remember things. And I'm trying desperately to hang onto those memories like Crivitz because at the end of the day, my dear, that is truly all we have. You don't realize that until you start to lose them. If you put me in that home, I'll lose them for good.

MICHELLE: (*crying*) Okay dad. But let's pack you a bag anyway.

BILL: What?

MICHELLE: You and me are going on a trip. Just you and me. You're right. All we have are those memories and it's been a long time since you and I built a good one.

BILL: Where are we going?

MICHELLE: I don't know yet, wherever the road takes us.

BILL: Can your mother and Mark come with?

MICHELLE: No, but I'm sure you'll bring them anyway.

BILL: Oh wait, they can't go! They're both not with us any longer!

MICHELLE: Oh, good Go....gosh.

BILL: Geez, haha, sometimes I think it would just be easier for you if you put me in a home.

MICHELLE: Never dad. Never.

*Lights out.*