

Hold On

by

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DESCRIPTION

Cappy and Ronnie, at the end of their seven-year relationship, suddenly have to keep a car teetering on the edge of a bridge from plunging in. Can they hold on long enough?

CHARACTERS

- Ronnie, female
- Cappy, same age, male

SETTING

- A wedding
- A roadside

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RONNIE is sitting on a bench, alone. She is dressed in a dress nice enough for a wedding. In the background, sound of occasional traffic. CAPPY runs up and sits down as if he's sliding into base at a baseball game. He is wearing a tuxedo.

CAPPY

Safe

RONNIE

Out.

CAPPY

Safe!

RONNIE

Out at home. Play ball somewhere else—like with your bar buddies back in there.

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. Not after today. After today you go back to your original tribe of baboons. I can't believe— Begone.

CAPPY

You're sweating the small stuff. Proven fact: Bad attitudes will kill you early.

RONNIE

And you won't? I've decided that Cappy makes me feel crappy, and in order for me to be healthy, I need to flush you from my system. An ultra-high colonic. The enema to top all enemas. From stem to stern and back. It's the least someone of your quality deserves. And you deserve the very least.

CAPPY

Finished?

RONNIE

With you. I've 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.

RONNIE

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

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

CAPPY

Ronnie, we were just exchanging guy stuff—

RONNIE

“Guy stuff:” Cigars so fat you looked like you were sucking on sawed-off billy clubs and brandy with a testosterone chaser. You don't even smoke.

CAPPY

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

RONNIE

And you attribute the high level of discourse to—

CAPPY

Just conversational riffing. Male mouth music.

RONNIE

Riffing. Riffing. I can't believe you said—what you said.

CAPPY

We were just telling stories.

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 B.V.D.—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? Especially when I bought you some more for Christmas.

CAPPY

Didn't want to hurt your feelings.

RONNIE

You don't even know what those are. Instead, I get the news flash from a bunch of gargling primates wreathed in blue smoke. A turkey basted with ridicule. The Portuguese in you will always leak out.

CAPPY

I'm not that Portuguese.

RONNIE

Except when you're in a room full of Silvas and Costas and Bettencourts with Portuguese brandy warm in the palm of your hand. Then you become the macho Mediterranean man who cares more about how to get your underwear off than the kind you wear. You didn't have to tell everyone I bought you those. Bought them twice. No, that wasn't it. 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! As if I didn't know you. After seven years. As if I didn't know you—that's what hurt.

They sit, undecided.

CAPPY

Nice wedding.

RONNIE

They usually are.

CAPPY

Am I still out at home?

RONNIE

Cappy—

CAPPY

Ronnie, don't—

RONNIE

What are we up to?

CAPPY

Jeez, I told you not to!

RONNIE

Seven years.

CAPPY

Good ones. Can we go back in?

RONNIE

Not all good.

CAPPY

On average. Back? Go back?

RONNIE

I watched you today, a lot. As the priest blessed them, as everyone clapped, as people came up to them 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

You're still mad. This isn't the first time. This has come up.

RONNIE

I think it's the last.

They sit in silence for several beats. In the distance is the sound of a speeding car approaching, the squeal of brakes, and a crash.

CAPPY

Christ, look at that! It's hanging off the bridge. C'mon.

They both stand.

RONNIE

It's Jim's aunt, the one that smelled like fermenting apples.

CAPPY

She's going for a header in the river if we don't do something. Grab!

RONNIE

What?

CAPPY

Anything. There. The trunk's popped.

They mime grabbing the open trunk of the car. They are holding the car up by their own strength and weight. It teeters.

CAPPY

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

RONNIE

I kept thinking of her as Red Delicious gone bad.

CAPPY

Ah, Jim's aunt. Granny Smith.

RONNIE

Granny Smith?

CAPPY

You're gonna be okay. Whoa!

The car teeters again.

CAPPY

Stay still in there you old fruit. Stay still—don't rock the car or we're all going down together. Help is on the way.

Several beats. They look around.

CAPPY

Someone must have heard it. I thought it was pretty loud.

RONNIE

The band was pretty loud.

CAPPY

Not that loud. People weren't bleeding from the ears yet.

Several beats.

RONNIE

I hope someone heard.

CAPPY

The band was pretty loud.

RONNIE

What the hell was she doing?

CAPPY

Probably a geezer spasm—you think the accelerator is the brake and it's off to the races. I read a story once where Mr. Senile USA drove through a plate-glass entrance into a mall.

RONNIE

What are we going to do?

CAPPY

What are our choices?

RONNIE

We could let go. Make room for the new generation. My hands are going to decide this pretty soon.

CAPPY

I've given you many opportunities to exercise those hands. Not my fault if—

The car teeters again, a little more wildly.

CAPPY

What's she doing in there—a full gallop? Settle down, Mrs. Appleseed.

RONNIE

My hands don't have too much grip left.

CAPPY

No one's coming.

RONNIE

Cramp!

She takes one of her hands off and waves it in the air. The car teeters. CAPPY teeters with it, stabilizes it.

CAPPY

Warn me at least!

RONNIE

A spasm doesn't come with trumpets!

RONNIE puts her hand back.

RONNIE

Christ, that hurt!

CAPPY

Yeah—but he got it through the palm. 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.

CAPPY

Well.

RONNIE

Well.

CAPPY

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

RONNIE

Me neither. I guess we're hanging on.

CAPPY

To Granny Smith.

RONNIE

Who had a geezer spasm.

CAPPY

Almost drove her car.

RONNIE

Into a chasm. Wait! Wait! Another one.

Takes her other hand off and shakes out a cramp. The car teeters again, even more wildly. RONNIE clutches madly.

CAPPY

She's running in the home stretch.

RONNIE
(yelling)

Sit still—

CAPPY

—frisky, isn'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. RONNIE shakes out her hand.

CAPPY

A reminder.

RONNIE

What?

CAPPY

Remember to shoot me when the dementia sets in.

RONNIE

Should do it right now, then.

CAPPY

No, the senile. Not the juvenile.

RONNIE

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

CAPPY

I guess it would. Man, I wish someone would hurry up.

RONNIE

Doesn't help that the band sounded like a car crash.

CAPPY

This'll be quite a story for your class on Monday. This is good second-grade material.

RONNIE

Assuming we don't have to go bobbing for apples. I'd like a happy ending for them.

CAPPY

Were you serious?

RONNIE

What?

CAPPY

You want it over?

RONNIE

It is. Not what I want. Just is.

Car teeters slightly.

CAPPY

Granny! You think it's over?

RONNIE

Well, life support.

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?

Sound of fire truck.

CAPPY

What's that?

RONNIE

Someone must've called in. Fire truck. And here come your Portuguese men of war to the rescue.

Voices approaching. They let go as, clearly, other hands take over to hold on to the car. They sit back on the bench. Voices out.

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" part.

RONNIE

Maybe we should find another car to hold on to. So we can finish the conversation. It seems to clear the mind. Granny Smith!

CAPPY

Sweet and tart at the same time. Safe at home?

RONNIE

Call under protest—for the time being.

They end by massaging each other's hands. Blackout.