

DANCING WITH THE FRIGIDAIRE

(a trio in six scenes)

by
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SCENE I

Bare Stage except for a refrigerator.

KAREN ENTERS.

SPOTS the refrigerator.

Music: "It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To."

Karen dances with the refrigerator.

10 Seconds.

Teresa ENTERS, sees Karen dancing.

TERESA

Nowheresville, man! [*Pause*] Bury me nice. Will you?

KAREN

No. Not that.

TERESA

Oh. Teenage Karen?

KAREN

Yeah, I'm teenage Karen. Be teenage Teresa

TERESA

I'm teenage Teresa. [*acknowledges refrigerator*] Wow. May I?

Karen graciously allows Tina to CUT IN. Teresa dances with the refrigerator.

Five seconds. Karen CUTS back in. Teresa backs up, out of breath.

TERESA

Wows-ville, Pennsylvania!

KAREN

Look at it. It's fantabulously radioactive

TERESA

Your parents are so--

KAREN

I know

TERESA

--not square. I mean, a green Frigidaire!

KAREN

A lime-green Frigidaire. Look at the size of that handle

TERESA

It's so shiny too.

KAREN

I'm dancing with my very own Frigidaire.

TERESA

Oh oh oh. Stroll with it! Stroll with it!

KAREN

Change the thing! Change the thing!

*Teresa changes the music to The Stroll. Karen STROLLS with the refrigerator.
Teresa helps.*

TERESA

Oh my god. You're Patty Duke.

KAREN

I wanna be cousin Cathy. Where's my velvet barrette?

TERESA

Use mine. *[Teresa removes her barrette and takes her time placing it in Karen's hair.]* Wait till Ronnie sees your hair. And your Frigidaire. You going to let him dance with it?

KAREN

No. And don't you tell him I was dancing with the Frigidaire

TERESA

Why not?

KAREN

He'll get jealous

TERESA

Of a refrigerator?

KAREN

Remember when I practiced French-kissing with the garden hose?

TERESA

Oh, yeah. He didn't like that.

KAREN

Neither did I. But don't ever tell Ronnie that. Come on. Two-sies--

They both dance with the refrigerator. Teresa STOPS dancing, and becomes HER MOTHER.

TERESA

[as Mother] Karen!

KAREN

What, mother?

TERESA

[as Mother] Are you dancing with the Frigidaire?

KAREN

No, mother

TERESA

[as Mother] Sounds like a herd of tap-dancing buffalo in there

KAREN

That's just Teresa walking

TERESA

[as Mother] Is she pretending to be Troy Donahue again?

KAREN

No. Mother!!

TERESA

[as Mother] Good. Stop dancing with the Frigidaire! You'll break it

Karen opens freezer; removes two popsicles. Hands one to Teresa.

KAREN

I'm going to let Dirk french me after supper

TERESA

Karen! You can't mean that. Who's Dirk?

KAREN
Ronnie

TERESA
Why do you call him Dirk?

KAREN
Frenching Dirk is dirtier than frenching Ronnie. In fact it's practically filthy.

RONNIE ENTERS

RONNIE
What's going on?

TERESA
[*points*] Teenage Karen and Teenage Teresa

KAREN
You be Teenage Ronnie.

RONNIE
[*teenage Ronnie*] What's going on?

TERESA
Nothing

KAREN
We weren't dancing with the Frigidaire. We got a Frigidaire

RONNIE
What 'ya know? A Frigidaire. You better not be dancing with it

TERESA
You are so claustrophobic, Ronnie Morgan

RONNIE
What does that mean?

TERESA
Look it up

RONNIE

No

TERESA

Catastrophically claustrophobic!

RONNIE

Shut up

KAREN

Ronnie Morgan you are not allowed to tell Teresa to shut up

RONNIE

Yes, I am

KAREN

No, you're not

RONNIE

Yes, I am

KAREN

Says who?

RONNIE

Says me

KAREN

Because you're a year older you think you're my father. Think you're the boss of me

RONNIE

I can boss the entire world around if I want to. I just joined the Marines.

KAREN

The Marines?

TERESA

That's like the Army

RONNIE

No, It's not *like* the Army. Because it's the Marines. Compared to the Marines, the Army's like... summer camp...for fairies.

KAREN

But what if there's a war?

RONNIE

Then I'll get killed and stuff

KAREN

Oh, Ronnie!

RONNIE

Pipe down. There ain't going to be no more wars, Karen. President Kennedy won't allow it. Boy, girls are so fucking stupid

Karen and Teresa GASP loudly.

KAREN

Oh my God. You said

TERESA

The "F" word.

RONNIE

I'm a Marine. I'm gonna say it and I'm gonna do it 'til my pecker falls off.

KAREN/TERESA

Ronnie!!!!

RONNIE

[*as Father*] What's going on in there?

KAREN

Nothing, Father.

RONNIE

[*as Father*] Nothing is silent. I heard stuff. That's not nothing. Is that Ronnie? [*as Ronnie*] Yes, sir. It's me. [*as Father*] I hear you just joined the Marines. [*as Ronnie*] I did, sir. [*as Father*]

Get in here so I can shake your hand. Leave the girls. They're stupid. [*as Ronnie*] See? Girl plus girl Equals stupid.

Ronnie EXITS.

SCENE II

Karen OPENS the refrigerator, pulls out two black cardigan sweaters. She hands one to Teresa, and puts the other one on.

TERESA

Where are we now?

KAREN

Ronnie's funeral luncheon

TERESA

How old are we?

KAREN

Let's see. Ronnie died two years after Marty. Fifty-two

Karen and Teresa are both fifty-two now. Karen looks in the refrigerator.

KAREN

This thing needs a new something or other

TERESA

Talk to Barry Weinstein. He's right outside there. At the table on the porch. Next to Doris Martin. He'll fix your Frigidaire

KAREN

Or try to sell me a brand new used one

TERESA

You *need* a brand new used one

KAREN

No. My mother gave *me* this Frigidaire. Debbie got the china. Teddy got the silver pattern. I got the refrigerator. And a couple of ashtrays. Did you sleep with Ronnie?

TERESA

[*as Mother*] Karen?

KAREN

Yes, Mother?

TERESA

[*as Mother*] Is Teresa in there with you?

KAREN

Yes, Mother.

TERESA

[*as Mother*] Tell her she left her pocketbook on the radiator

KAREN

You left your pocketbook on the radiator

TERESA

So I did. I'd better go and fetch—

KAREN

Is it true?

TERESA

What's that?

KAREN

Did you sleep with—?

TERESA

No. [*she points inside refrigerator*] What's that?

KAREN

Nancy Costello

TERESA

Nancy Costello?

KAREN

Yeah. She brought those cold cuts. That's all she ever brings. When Marty died she brought cold cuts then too. *Oscar Meyer*

TERESA

I remember. Still in that round plastic wrapper. Crazy. It runs in the family. Did you know her Joyce is up at the CMC again. Seventh Floor Psyche ward? I heard she ran naked down Main Avenue with Nancy chasing her. Imagine chasing your crazy naked teenage daughter down Main Avenue. Past the Cathedral. During a First Holy Communion procession. Those poor kids grew up fast that day. And they was all wearing white, too. A shame--

KAREN

Did you sleep with my Ronnie?

TERESA

[*as Mother*] Karen! What's going on—

KAREN

Shut up, Mother. [*to Teresa*] Ronnie told me the two of you hooked up. If it's true, I want to hear it coming out of your mouth.

TERESA

Yes! It's true. No use lying. He's dead.

KAREN

When?

TERESA

When did he die or when did I sleep with him?

KAREN

I know when he died. I was there. I want to know when you slept with him. With my husband

TERESA

I didn't do it a lot. Just a couple a two three times. The day he joined the Marines for instance

KAREN

What?

TERESA

It was a momentous day. He wanted to celebrate. And you forgot to french him

KAREN

When else?

TERESA

The day after Marty was born

KAREN

Excuse me!

TERESA

It was a momentous day. He wanted to celebrate. And you were all tied up with that caesarian business.

KAREN

When else?

TERESA

About—a week ago

KAREN

In the hospital?

TERESA

Yeah

KAREN

He was in a coma.

TERESA

He's got fingers Ain't he?

KAREN

Teresa!!

TERESA

Karen!! What about you and Big Jack?

KAREN

You were getting a divorce

TERESA

We never got one. Big Jack just up and died instead

KAREN

That was a coincidence. How did you find out about Big Jack and me, anyway?

TERESA

Big Jack told me. He got polluted at that Carmichael kid's First Holy clambake and blurted out the whole thing.

Ronnie ENTERS, wearing a FLANNEL BATHROBE, holding a tray of cold cuts.

RONNIE

Where do you want these?

TERESA

[to Ronnie] Wait. Which Ronnie are you? Not Dead Ronnie.

RONNIE

No. New Father Ronnie.

TERESA

Oh, okay.

Teresa EXITS. Ronnie shows the tray of cold cuts to Karen.

RONNIE

Where?

KAREN

In here. [*opens the refrigerator door*] Why doesn't anyone bring cheese to a funeral?

Karen EXITS. Ronnie places the tray in the refrigerator.

SCENE III

New-Father Ronnie in his robe, rummaging in the refrigerator. Teresa ENTERS; she is young Adult Teresa.

TERESA

Hello, New Father Ronnie--

RONNIE

Brand spanking new father--

TERESA

Hello brand spanking new father. How's Karen?

RONNIE

Still sliced up.

TERESA

When is she coming home?

RONNIE

Day after the day after tomorrow, they say.

TERESA

Long day?

RONNIE
The longest

TERESA
Want to go upstairs?

RONNIE
I just came from upstairs. I'm hungry.

[*Pause*]

TERESA
What's the latest on the baby?

RONNIE
Marty. His name is Marty.

TERESA
What's the latest on Marty?

RONNIE
They say they're not sure—

TERESA
Not sure about what?

RONNIE
They think he's a dwarf.

TERESA
Because he's so tiny?

RONNIE
Exactly.

TERESA
But all babies are tiny

RONNIE
Not like this. His head is the same size as the rest of him

TERESA
I'm sorry

RONNIE
Not your fault. But if it's true-- If he is-- [*Pause.*] What's that poor kid gonna do? What am I going to do?

TERESA
Change the subject. Don't talk about it. Tell me about 'Nam. You know, get that off your chest. And then you can deal with all that other stuff.

RONNIE
Were you there?

TERESA
Where?

RONNIE
In 'Nam?

TERESA
No--

RONNIE
Did you pick-off a couple of gooks on a lazy Thursday afternoon just for the hell of it?

TERESA
No, of course I--

RONNIE
Watch your buddies die in a swamp full of shit alligators?

TERESA
Of course, I didn't--

RONNIE
Then why the *fuck* are you talking about it?

TERESA
Do you want to go upstairs. With me?

RONNIE

Let me grab some cheese first.

TERESA

Hurry. We've only got two days

Ronnie finds cheese, EXITS, leaving Teresa.

SCENE IV

Karen ENTERS in her funeral sweater. Tosses the other funeral sweater to Teresa.

KAREN

[to Teresa] We're Mid-forties.

*Karen OPENS refrigerator, sticks her head in the freezer, and WEEPS.
Teresa, wearing her funeral sweater, engulfs Karen.*

TERESA

Oh, honey—

KAREN

I thought I was ready

TERESA

No one is ever ready to lose-- [releases Karen] Wait. This is Marty's funeral, right?

KAREN

Yes.

Teresa ENGULFS Karen again. Karen lets loose with sobs.

TERESA

Oh, honey—

KAREN

I thought I was ready

TERESA

No one is ever ready to lose a child

KAREN

I don't know what to do. I don't know how to be. Everything I do. Every little act is a lie. This is killing me. This will kill me. If this is what you want, God. Then, please, finish me off. Let me die

TERESA

Stop. Don't allow this moment to be a memory of today

KAREN

Help me erase it then. Do something I'll remember with a sigh

Teresa tenderly kisses Karen on her lips. Karen pulls away.

TERESA

You're lucky you had him for as long as you had him

KAREN

I'm not lucky. You're lucky. You're the lucky one. You never had a baby. You'll never have to feel what I'm feeling.

TERESA

You're right. Luckily I never had a baby. But I do have an imagination. Remember the commotion you caused when you left your favorite Barbie on the *Tilt-a-Whirl*? I imagine that's what it must feel like Losing a child--

KAREN

Thank you for being petty on the day of my son's funeral

TERESA

You're welcome

Ronnie ENTERS in a suit. He hugs Karen, and indicates for Teresa to leave.

Teresa EXITS. On the way out she mouths, "I love you" to Ronnie. Ronnie hugs Karen even closer. Karen WEEPS.

RONNIE

There there. Being a dwarf ain't all that bad. We'll get him special training. And a step stool

KAREN

Step stool—? This is *Marty's* funeral.

RONNIE

Oh. I thought this was the day the doctors told us--

KAREN

No. This is the day we buried him

Ronnie quickly changes ties, and hugs Karen, who weeps.

RONNIE

He had a good life. We gave him a good life

KAREN

I know. I just wish it was longer

RONNIE

I know. I know. Now, dry your eyes. Father Brunette's out there. He has a few questions about Marty. For the eulogy. All I ask is that you tell him to keep it short

KAREN

I can't. Will you do it? I don't think I can bear it

RONNIE

But I don't. I don't know nothing about him

KAREN

You know nothing about our dead son?

RONNIE

I know what he wasn't. You'll have to fill in the rest.

Teresa ENTERS with two packets of bologna.

TERESA

Look. Nancy Costello brought two dates. Oscar and Meyer.

*Teresa tosses the bologna in the refrigerator. EXITS, mouthing, "I love you," to Ronnie.
Karen notices...*

TERESA

--both. I love you both.

Teresa EXITS. Karen's rage begins...

SCENE V

Karen moves into position. Her anger is Intense.

KAREN

Five years before you died!

Ronnie moves into position. His anger is Intense, too.

RONNIE

This is five years before I died?

KAREN

Yeah!

RONNIE

Forty-eight. I'm forty-eight. Right?

KAREN

Yeah.

RONNIE

This is when we had it out?

KAREN

Yeah.

RONNIE

Let's go!

KAREN

You start!

RONNIE

You and Jack?

KAREN

You and Teresa!

RONNIE

You and Big Jack.

KAREN

You and Fat Teresa.

RONNIE

It's your fault.

KAREN

My fault?

RONNIE

Yeah. You weren't! Teresa was!

KAREN

I weren't what?

RONNIE

Around. You were off somewhere...hating me

KAREN

I was off somewhere raising your son--

RONNIE

The son you ruined--

KAREN

He wasn't my fault. Blame your diseased Vietnam whores

RONNIE

I came back clean

KAREN

I was sorry to see that

RONNIE

What? Sorry I came back clean?

KAREN

Sorry you came back.

RONNIE

That was unspeakable

KAREN

Well I just spoke it.

RONNIE

I'm done talking to you.

KAREN

I can't even look at you.

RONNIE

You know what this means?

KAREN

Yes. You don't love me. You never loved me

RONNIE

No. It means I have to kill Jack. I don't want to kill Jack. He owes me a thousand bucks. But now I gotta kill him. Thanks to you

KAREN

Thanks to you and Teresa! Oh, I can't wait to get my hands on her

Karen heads out...

RONNIE

Where are you going?

KAREN

We're having dinner with Big Jack and Fat Teresa tonight. Remember? It's their fucking anniversary.

RONNIE

I forbid you to tell Fat Teresa that you know that we did it.

KAREN

And I forbid you to kill Big Jack. Bring the cheesecake. It's in the Frigidaire

Ronnie and Karen EXIT.

SCENE VI

Karen ENTERS, wearing a frayed funeral sweater.

KAREN

Sixty-five. I'm sixty-five. Turned sixty-five on the day you died. [*opens refrigerator*] Stupid Frigidaire. Joyce Costello. Remember. Nancy's crazy daughter? She brought me cold cuts. She dropped them off a week ago. Just in case someone dies, she said. You died the next afternoon. And here they are. Ready to go. She should go into the Psych business. It'd be a dance to the bank. You were a good dancer. Taught the Frigidaire a few steps. Taught my Ronnie a couple a steps too. We never spoke a word after Ronnie's funeral.

Teresa ENTERS.

TERESA
Why is that?

KAREN
Because you slept with my husband

TERESA
You slept with mine

KAREN
That couldn't be helped. I needed to teach you a lesson

TERESA
You needed to teach *me* a lesson?

KAREN
Yes

TERESA
Lesson learned. Except-- What's the big fuss? For you it was an affair. For me it was a night off. And where do you get off being better than me? All those years--

KAREN
I beg your pardon?

TERESA
See? "I beg your pardon." You were always being better than me. And on purpose. Better grades. Better looking. Better Barbies. My God, you had Ronnie. And a Frigidaire! I had a secondhand icebox. Adult onslaught acne. And a husband with ungodly foot odor. Of course I slept with Ronnie. I wanted something that belonged to you

KAREN
Were you always this dramatic?

TERESA
Always. You're the implacable one

KAREN
You were jealous of me.

TERESA

I was not jealous of you. I wanted to *be* you.

KAREN

Not me. Don't be me. I don't want that responsibility. Besides, I'm exhausting. Keep being Teresa. You'll sleep more as Teresa. Yeah. Be Teresa. Be Teenage Teresa. Be her now--

TERESA

No

KAREN

Why not?

TERESA

Because Teenage Teresa is still mad at Teenage Karen

KAREN

For what?

TERESA

For not loving me. We could have spared ourselves years of savage thoughts, a lot of heartache, and a couple of husbands--

*Karen opens the Frigidaire, as if trying to find a place to hide.
She stares inside.*

KAREN

Huh.

TERESA

What is it?

KAREN

I see. It all. Hamburger ketchup mayonnaise lettuce milk eggs popsicles formula birthday cake RC Cola six Stegmeirs Mom Dad Ronnie Leftover Lasagna Big Jack a forty-year old jar of mustard...Marty...and cold cuts. Layer upon layer of cold cuts. [*she eats a cold cut*] Oh my God that is so delicious.

Karen hands a cold cut to Teresa, who turns it down.

TERESA

People should bring cheese to funerals.

KAREN
Or mashed potatoes.

TERESA
Mashed Potato! Yes!!

Music: "Mashed Potato."

KAREN
No. I'm tired of dancing in the face of death with nothing but the light from a lime-green Frigidaire to guide me on the dance-floor.

Teresa changes the music to: "It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To."

TERESA
Better?

KAREN
Yes.

TERESA
Two-sies?

KAREN
Okay.

They both dance with the refrigerator. Ted Seconds. They're dancing with each other now. Ten Seconds. They stop dancing. Karen moves in to kiss Teresa. Teresa pulls away.

TERESA
Too late. See you around.

KAREN
Where you going?

TERESA
Nowheresville, man! [*Pause*] Bury me nice. Will you?

KAREN
No. Not that.

Karen watches Teresa EXIT. She turns to the refrigerator, looks inside, then closes the door, and dances with it.

SLOW FADE to BLACK

THE END