

An excerpt from

LOVE SUCKS

a romantic comedy by Rich Orloff

Characters

DONNA, 30

TOM, early thirties

PHIL, 73

ROSE, early seventies

Setting

San Diego. The recent past.

TOM and DONNA, two singles in their early thirties, have recently met at a health club. They've also befriended PHIL and ROSE, a couple (married 49 years) who just moved to San Diego. The older couple enjoy hearing about how the younger two view such subjects as sex and relationships, and the younger two enjoy the perspective the older couple offers.

In this scene, Phil and Rose have invited Tom and Donna to their apartment for dinner. Phil is a retired electrical supply salesman, Rose is a housewife, and Tom is an aeronautic engineer. Donna works at a job she doesn't care about, but she also volunteers for the San Diego chapter of Women for Equality.

Tom enters, carrying a bottle of wine.

TOM

Donna will be a little late. Her meeting's running over.

PHIL

You're in for a treat tonight.
Rose has cooked something special.

TOM

What did she make?

PHIL

I don't know.
(to Rose:)
What did you make?

ROSE

If you don't know what it is,
how do you know it's special?

PHIL

If you cooked it, it's special.

(to Tom:)

This woman is the greatest cook in the world.

ROSE

(to Tom:)

49 years. I hope you're paying attention.

PHIL

This isn't flattery. I mean it.

ROSE

Yes, dear.

PHIL

(to Tom:)

I've told her a thousand times, "If you ever stop cooking, I'm out of here."

ROSE

That's Phil's idea of terms of endearment.

TOM

This is a nice place you've got.

PHIL

Two bedrooms. One for us, and one for the unknown children.

TOM

Why do you always talk about your children like that? You just moved here; I'm sure they'll visit.

PHIL

I want a guarantee in writing.

TOM

I don't get it. You're both so great. I don't get why you and your kids have such problems.

ROSE

We didn't raise you.

TOM

Didn't you raise them well?

ROSE

I think we were too strict.

PHIL

We were too lenient.

ROSE

We demanded too much.

PHIL

We spoiled them rotten.

TOM

If you had to do it over again,
what would you do differently?

PHIL

Instead of having kids, I'd raise sheep.

ROSE

How often do you see your parents, Tom?

TOM

Well, uh, they, uh –

ROSE

Oh, I'm sorry. Are they still alive?

TOM

I - I'm not sure.

PHIL

You're not sure?

TOM

My mom died when I was in college,
and my dad, he left us when I was ten.

ROSE

And he didn't stay in contact?

TOM

Even those years he was around, he wasn't around
much. I don't think he was built for marriage.

ROSE

It must be hard, not having your folks around.

TOM

I'm used to it. I mean, on holidays I miss
them. And when my rockets go up. Part of
me would still love to take them to a launch,
just so I could say, "Look what I did!"

ROSE

I'm sure they'd be very proud.

TOM

I think so.

Donna enters. She carries a large handbag.

DONNA

Hi. Sorry I'm late.

PHIL

Come on in.

TOM

How was your day?

Tom and Donna kiss.

DONNA

Grueling. I look forward all week to Saturday,
and then I spend all day Saturday in a meeting.

TOM

Did they like the final draft of your report?

(to Phil and Rose:)

Donna wrote this brilliant report
comparing the news stories assigned
to male and female TV reporters.

DONNA

Well, I didn't write it alone. It was a group effort.

TOM

Everyone helped research it, and then
she wrote nineteen drafts.

ROSE

I hope they liked it.

DONNA

Eventually. First we had to have a long
discussion about whether the adjectives
I chose were too biting, insufficiently biting,
or just biting enough. Fortunately,
most of the report survived intact.

PHIL

The amount of time you give them,
they should pay you.

DONNA

Nobody at WE gets paid, except for the regional director.

PHIL

Then they should make you regional director.

DONNA

I'm afraid the job's filled with someone more capable than I'll ever be.

PHIL

You know, with that attitude, you'd never make it in electrical supplies.

ROSE

(disapproving)

Phil.

PHIL

Why sell yourself short? I bet you're *very* capable.

DONNA

Thanks, Phil.

TOM

So they spent all afternoon going over your report?

DONNA

Oh, no. That was just one item on the agenda. Then we discussed how to respond to the *California Sports* tenth anniversary swimsuit issue.

PHIL

What's wrong with the *California Sports* swimsuit issue?

DONNA

Eleven months out of the year, *California Sports* reports on football, baseball, hockey, fishing, you name it. But one month of the year their big sport is young, scantily-clad women in seductive poses.

PHIL

So you're upset they don't spread these pictures out evenly through the year.

TOM

I'm so glad I didn't say that.

DONNA

The point is, what do women in bikinis have to do with sports?

PHIL

Maybe they're swimmers.

DONNA

They're not. The whole issue is an excuse for near-pornographic pictures of women.

TOM

(to Rose and Phil:)

It's also their most popular issue of the year.

DONNA

What galls me the most isn't the pictures; it's that the rest of the year they spend maybe five per cent of their coverage on female athletes. It's like this is the *only* way they view women.

TOM

What do you think, Rose?

ROSE

I haven't seen the magazine.

Simultaneously:

DONNA

I happen to have a copy with me.

TOM

I have a copy in the car if you'd like to look at it.

DONNA

You do?

TOM

There's more to the magazine than just those photographs.

DONNA

But you told me you find sports boring, Tom.

TOM

I wanted to read the interview?

DONNA

I'm sorry, but that's the reason men give for buying *Playboy*.

TOM

Okay. I saw it on the newsstand,
and I decided to get it.

DONNA

I see.

PHIL

You should've stuck with the interview line.

TOM

I couldn't. I just realized there
are no interviews in the magazine.

PHIL

You still should've stuck with it.

TOM

Look, Donna, you want me to be
honest with you, don't you?

DONNA

Of course, I want you to be honest. I just
don't want you to think the way you do.

ROSE

I'm going to have to buy this magazine.

Donna reaches into her handbag, gives a copy to Rose.

DONNA

Here.

TOM

Look, honey –

DONNA

Tom, doesn't the way they treat women
bother you?

TOM

Well, yeah, but –

DONNA

Then how could you buy it?

TOM

What can I say? My brain and my other
body parts have different standards.

PHIL
(looking at the magazine:)
I think this is totally unfair.

DONNA
Thank you, Phil.

PHIL
When I was young, girls never looked like this.

TOM
"Women", Phil.

ROSE
Why is this girl on all fours?

PHIL
Maybe she lost a contact lens in the sand.

TOM
(to Donna:)
What do you suggest be done about
these magazines: Ban them?

DONNA
Of course not. But buying it, it's as if
you're telling them what they're doing is okay.

ROSE
This swimsuit costs more than our color TV.

PHIL
Yes, but I'm sure it gets better reception.

TOM
Donna, as long as guys lust after pictures
like these, they'll continue to exist.

PHIL
Boy. If they had had this magazine
in my youth, I would've never had to
subscribe to *National Geographic*.

TOM
See what I mean?

DONNA
You think my concern about this is silly,
don't you?

TOM

Donna, you know how much I admire
the work you do.

DONNA

But?

ROSE

There should be more magazines filled
with young men in skimpy swimsuits.
That's the answer.

DONNA

But what, Tom?

TOM

But nothing.

ROSE

Who'd like some wine?

DONNA

But what?

ROSE

(serving Tom a glass)

Have some wine.

PHIL

Interesting magazine.

Phil hands the magazine back to Donna.

TOM

(to Donna:)

You'll love this wine. The grapes were
stomped on equally by men and women.

Donna throws the magazine at Tom, causing him to spill his glass of wine.
For a moment, everyone is frozen in shock.

ROSE

Don't worry. Everything's Scotchguarded!
