



THE MOTHER LOAD

By Carol White



WINNER OF FLORIDA PEN WOMEN
ONE ACT PLAY

THE MOTHER LOAD

CAST:

David Manning in his 40's

Mother (David's Mother) in her 70's

Arthur* (Server) in his 40-s - 50's

SETTING:

Lobby of Del Boca Vista Senior Residence in Boca Raton FL.
Two Chairs and small table, glasses

TIME: Saturday Evening

Synopsis:

David has finally met the woman of his dreams, but his controlling mother is not at all pleased with the news. In addition, she's been making trouble at the senior residence facility where she now lives and is in danger of being evicted. In this humorous relatable conversation, they reach a happy ending.

*The role of Arthur can be played by a woman - Angela

At Rise: Lights up on David pacing in the lobby

MOTHER

(entering) Hello, dear. I hope I haven't kept you, but you're a bit early. Are you ready for dinner or a cocktail?

DAVID

Hello Mother, you look lovely. Isn't that the dress you bought when we went shopping? Please sit down. We'll go in for dinner in a few minutes.

MOTHER

(sitting) Thank you, dear. I always like to dress up for our Saturday night dinners! We're due in the dining room now...you know we have the five o'clock seating.

DAVID

I'm sure they'll hold our table. I want to talk to you about something first. I've invited someone here tonight.

MOTHER

You have? But Saturday night is our night, just the two of us. Well, I guess it's okay, even though if you'd given me notice, I could have changed our plans and accepted the Burke's invitation to their 50th anniversary party.

DAVID

But I specifically wanted the three of us to have dinner together tonight. (taken aback) Wait! What? The Burkes invited you to their anniversary party?

MOTHER

Why, yes dear...did you think your mother was a social outcast?

DAVID

Of course not, it's just that if I'd known about the party, I could have made other arrangements with...

MOTHER

Nonsense! And miss Saturday night dinner with my son even if he's bringing a friend. That's way more important than a silly party. As it is, you and I only have dinner once a week...

DAVID

And shopping every Wednesday, lunch in the dining room twice a week and...

MOTHER

Oh, I know, but you never come for the big Sunday brunch when everyone is here! During the week there's almost no one in the dining room at lunchtime, so who even sees that you're here?

DAVID

You do! Isn't that enough? We could always go out for lunch, that's what a lot of the residents do.

MOTHER

You know I don't like restaurants - so noisy these days. I can hardly hear anything over the roar of my tinnitus. Where's Arthur? I'd like to order a sherry.

ARTHUR

(arriving) Good evening, Mrs. Manning, Mr. Manning. Would you care for a cocktail?

DAVID

Make mine a scotch please, a double.

ARTHUR

Certainly, by the way, the prime rib's the special tonight...I'll make sure the chef saves an end cut for you, Mrs. Manning, I know that's your favorite!

MOTHER

Is the meat from that new butcher I read about?

ARTHUR

Of course, Mrs. Manning. Only the best for Del Boca Vista!

DAVID

I'm sure. Arthur, could I get that scotch please?

MOTHER

And what am I? Chopped liver?

ARTHUR

(exiting) Of course not, Mrs. Manning! I already put in the order for your sherry.

MOTHER

Now, who's joining us tonight? Your friend Joel? He's pleasant enough.

DAVID

No. Her name is Julia Stevens, and she's more than a friend.

MOTHER

(stunned) Julia? Who is this person?

DAVID

Joel introduced us. I never believed in love at first sight, but we're crazy about each other. I'm going to marry her.

MOTHER

(taking out her phone) What's Joel's number? I'll give him a piece of my mind!

DAVID

Put that away! Mother, you are NOT going to call Joel! He did me the biggest favor of my life! I've been a bachelor far too long. It's time.

MOTHER

Why is it that I haven't met her yet?

DAVID

You never liked anyone I've ever introduced you to. There was always something wrong. "Gold-digger" "too much makeup" "vegan" - shall I continue?

MOTHER

Well, call them again! I'll be more accepting this time! Even the girl with all that awful black eyeliner wasn't bad.

DAVID

Oh, you mean Paula? The woman who was working as a hospice nurse, but all you saw was the eyeliner.

MOTHER

Bring her around again - I'll arrange a makeover for her at a cosmetic counter. You can drop us off at Saks next Wednesday...why don't you give her a call right now!

DAVID

Paula's married and has two children. Listen please, I'm head over heels in love with Julia, and she feels the same about me. We've been together for three months, we're sure.

MOTHER

Three months and you've never said a word about her! Why is she coming here? Hmmph. Probably heard I was a rich widow.

DAVID

I'm going to ask her to marry me...tonight. I wanted you to be a part of the evening.

MOTHER

If this is such a special evening, why couldn't we have gone out to a restaurant? I hear Morton's is wonderful! Oh, what I'd give for a good steak even though one of my molars is giving me trouble.

DAVID

I'll take you to the dentist. Mom, you just said you don't like restaurants, and you like to eat early...that's why you chose the five o'clock seating. And the prime rib here is better than Mortons, and I don't even know if they serve before six.

MOTHER

Who said I like to eat early?

DAVID

When you decided to live here, you specifically told them you wanted the five o'clock seating. They offered you the six-thirty, but you wanted to eat early.

MOTHER

That was two years ago when I wasn't quite myself. Father was just gone, and he always made the arrangements for everything. He was the one who liked to eat early. But don't think that it isn't a rush for me to get ready! (beat) Oh look! There's the Burke party, all dressed up to the nines. Where do they think they are? I mean it's very nice here, but I'm sure it's not as fancy as Mortons.

DAVID

Believe me, Mortons isn't half as fancy as this place! Del Boca Vista is the "turducken" of senior residences! Independent, assisted, and nursing facilities...all rolled into one neat package.

MOTHER

(sighs) If only I'd heard about Julia before, I'd be at the Burke's table right now!

DAVID

But I want you to meet Julia!

ARTHUR

(arriving) Here are your cocktails and I've asked the hostess to hold a nice window table for you.

DAVID

Thank you. Arthur, after I leave tonight, perhaps my mother could join the Burke party - maybe for dessert or an after-dinner drink.

MOTHER

David! I can't beg my way over to their party after I declined the invitation!

DAVID

(ARTHUR exit shaking his head no) Well, maybe it's not such a good idea after all. I'm sorry about interfering...I didn't mean...

MOTHER

(standing) You didn't mean to embarrass me, but you did! I'll be right back...I'm going to powder my nose.

ARTHUR

(arriving swiftly) Mr. Manning, I'm glad you caught my drift, your mother wasn't invited to the Burke's party.

DAVID

So, I gathered. Why wasn't she invited? Is there a problem?

ARTHUR

Yes. My friend, Alvin, works down in the office and he told me what's going on. It seems your mother has what they call "severe anti-social" tendencies.

DAVID

Now wait a minute...she might be a bit of a snob, but...

ARTHUR

Mr. Manning...I'm only repeating what Alvin told me. He said she's been verbally abusive to a few of the residents; and they've already given her two warnings.

DAVID

Two warnings? Why wasn't I told of this?

ARTHUR

Both times she promised to stick to the rules, but now with the Burke affair...

DAVID

So, she wasn't invited to the party. That's not the end of the world.

ARTHUR

Alvin told me when she found out who was invited, she tried to talk them out of going - said the Burkes were cheapskates!

DAVID

Oh no! The third warning means an eviction! Do you think she could be declining, I mean mentally?

ARTHUR

Uh! No way! Your mother is as sharp as ever...she's just not too friendly to some of the residents. Your mother has a deluxe apartment, but frankly, there's no trouble filling those. The management doesn't want "troublemakers."

DAVID

I appreciate the information. Another scotch, please.

ARTHUR

(exiting) Yes, sir. Right away.

MOTHER

(entering and reseating) Well, I hope your...what was her name again...gets here soon. I wouldn't want them to run out of tonight's special.

DAVID

It's Julia and I want to discuss something else with you.

MOTHER

Haven't I had enough excitement for one night? And, by the way, I've decided to change my seating 'til the later one. So, next week, come at six-thirty.

DAVID

I can't come at all next Saturday. Julia and I have been invited to a wedding on Saturday night for one of her friends, our friends.

MOTHER

Well, this is a night of surprises.

DAVID

But after that, Julia's going to come to dinner here with me whenever we can on a Saturday night. We've already discussed it.

MOTHER

I see...and just why would Julia want to spend her Saturday nights in an "old-age" home?

DAVID

Del Boca Vista is hardly an "old age" home! It's a beautiful senior residence. The best Boca has to offer! And you didn't have to move here. You could have stayed in the house after Father...

MOTHER

(breaking in) How could I have stayed in that big house all alone? I don't want to burden you with everything, and I do like it here. I know sometimes I complain, but all the important things are done for me.

DAVID

You're not a burden to me at all.

MOTHER

But I still don't like your tricks of springing your girlfriend here tonight without any notice! If your father were here, he wouldn't like it either!

DAVID

But he's not here...

MOTHER

I don't need to be reminded that I'm a widow growing old without my husband.

DAVID

Mother, you weren't his widow. He divorced you.

MOTHER

He died a year later so I am a widow. I don't want to be known as a divorcee!

DAVID

Mom, you're not exactly Madame X, but fine, keep your widow status. Now, I know about the warnings.

MOTHER

Oh please, I'm perfectly capable of handling the situation here.

DAVID

They only give two warnings; the third one is an eviction notice.

MOTHER

I pay \$5000.00 a month for my apartment. How many people do you think can afford that?

DAVID

Quite a few, from what I hear; but what I really want is for you to be happy.

MOTHER

(sighs) I guess it hasn't been all that easy on you, being an only child, having all the responsibility.

DAVID

I never minded, my business is good, and I have the time. Things aren't going too well here, are they?

MOTHER

You didn't think your old mother could cause such an uproar.

DAVID

Mom, insulting the Burkes because you weren't invited to their party was inappropriate, if not downright nasty.

MOTHER

I felt so left out not being invited to the party, and now you're getting engaged. You could have taken Julia out tonight, just the two of you, and not be stuck here with me.

DAVID

I enjoy our evenings...it's just that sometimes, like next weekend, Julia and I will have other commitments, with friends.

MOTHER

Yes, friends. I suppose I could try making a few.

DAVID

It's better than making enemies. Julia and I will be happy to come to dinner here on Saturdays at the new "Late Bird" time! Six-thirty!

MOTHER

I'm not so sure about that yet. You see, there's a new man who recently moved here, and he's at the five o'clock seating. We've had dinner together twice, but I always tell him Saturday dinner is reserved for my son. So, I guess if you and Julia can't make it, I'll join Edgar.

DAVID

(Teasing) Edgar? Hmmm!

MOTHER

(standing) Oh hush, there's no time for that! I'll be right back, dear.

DAVID

Where are you going now? You've already powdered your nose, and Julia will be here any minute!

MOTHER

First, I'm going to order two bottles of champagne: one for the Burkes, and one for us. Then I'm going upstairs to change. I can't meet my future daughter-in-law wearing this old thing! And dear, since you can't make it next Saturday night, how about Sunday brunch?

CURTAIN