

# TAKE AN UMBRELLA IT'S RAINING

## Cast in Order of Appearance

Ernie Bissell            a bellboy, a young man in his 20's  
Katherine Harris       a woman in her late 60's  
George Harris           Katherine's husband

**Narrator:**        Welcome to Room 329 in the Van Dyke Hotel, one of the less frequented Hotels in lower Manhattan. Voices are heard outside the room then a moment later the bellhop enters carrying a small overnight suitcase.

**Ernie:**            Well, here you are Mr. and Mrs. Harris. Room 329. We call this the river room because it overlooks the East River. You can see the Brooklyn Bridge if you crane your neck.

**Narrator:**        The bellhop looks at the couple standing in the doorway. Katherine is wearing a corsage pinned to her coat and George has a white carnation. He is clutching an umbrella in his hands.

**Ernie:**            Hey folks are you coming in? This is the room you wanted, right? 329?

**Katherine:**      Yes. Yes. This is it. I can see it now. They changed the wallpaper, and it threw me. And also, it has a bathroom. Last time we were here it didn't. Remember, George?

**George:**        I....I think so.

**Ernie:**            Geeze, lady. They put in attached Johns sometime in the fifties. When were you last here?

**Katherine:**      (Proudly) January 14, 1944. Our honeymoon.

**George:**        Best night of my life. I'll...I'll never forget that.

**Katherine:**      No, you won't. Not as long as I'm around.

**Ernie:**            Then you folks are celebrating an anniversary?

**Katherine:**      Yes, we are. Fifty years.

**Ernie:**            Wow! Fifty years? That's great. That's a real record isn't it?

**Katherine:**      Oh, not so much. My parents were married for sixty-five and my grandparents for nearly 70.

**Ernie:** No kidding? My family wasn't so lucky, not in love anyway. My old man cut out a year after I was born, and my granddad died the knot four times before he croaked. Err, died. Me and Angie are hoping to break the chain.

**Katherine:** I'm sure you will. How long have you been married?

**Ernie:** (Glances at his watch) As of eight o'clock tonight seven and a half hours.

**Katherine:** My lands, boy. What are you doing here? You should be on your honeymoon.

**Ernie:** Yeah. Tell that to the management. We got married in New Jersey at noon. Had just enough time to ride the subway into work. My wife works here, too. She's a maid. Not too good a start for a marriage, is it?

**Katherine:** It's not how you start the marriage, Ernie, it's what happens at the finish line that counts. Did you hear that George? This young man just got married.

**George:** Is that so? What's he doin' here, then? He should be locked up in a room.... Doin' it with his wife.

**Katherine:** (Shocked) George!

**George:** What? What did I say? On our wedding night I didn't stand around talking to the bellhop, did I?

**Katherine:** No, dear but things were a lot different then. We didn't have much time. There was a War on. You were being shipped out in three days.

**George:** Yes....the War. Nasty thing, wars. (to Ernie) Don't start one. Not if you can help it. Honeymoons are better.

**Ernie:** Yes sir, I believe that. (To Katherine) And ours is starting just as soon as I get off work.

**Katherine:** Oh? And When's that?

**Ernie:** It's supposed to be at eleven, but I might have to pull a double. The guy who has third shift just called in sick. His wife's havin' a baby and he's not feeling so good.

**George:** (Confused) His wife is having a baby and he's sick? That doesn't sound right.

**Ernie:** It would if you knew rick. He's kind of sensitive, you know? He's been having labor pains for the past two weeks.

**George:** He doesn't sound sensitive. He sounds weird.

**Ernie:** Yeah. Well, maybe he is, a little. It's for sure his timing is for shit. Oops pardon the language, Mrs. Harris.

**Katherine:** (laughs) Well, I'm sorry your plans have been spoiled but you'll weather this storm. Sometimes.....waiting even makes it better.

**Ernie:** Yeah, sure. We got at least 50 years for a honeymoon, right?

**Katherine:** Right. At least that.

**Ernie:** Well, I hope you enjoy your stay. Room service is open until eleven and Angie, I mean the maid will be in with your towels in a little while. Oh, my name is Ernie, if you need anything.

**Katherine:** Thank you, Ernie, you've been very nice. Here's a little something for all your trouble. (Gives him money from her purse.)

**Ernie:** Geeze, fifty bucks? Hey lady, thanks but I can't take this.

**Katherine:** Why not? Isn't it good? I got it from the bank.

**Ernie:** Well, yeah, sure...the bill is legit....but....

**Katherine:** Oh dear.....isn't it enough? I haven't given a tip in so long I'm afraid I'm out of practice. What is the going rate these days?

**Ernie:** At the Van Dyke? It sure isn't fifty bucks. I usually get subway tokens.

**Katherine:** Well, put this to good use then. Buy your wife some flowers. Take her out to breakfast.

**Ernie:** Yeah, maybe I will. Thanks. Say I have an idea. Would you like a different room? We have the honeymoon suite on twenty. It's a lot bigger and it's empty. The night clerk wouldn't care.

**Katherine:** No. This room is fine. In fact, this room is why we came to the Van Dyke in the first place.

**Ernie:** Okay. Suit yourself.

**Narrator:** The bellhop goes to George who is testing out the mattress with the umbrella. He touches George's arm gently.

**Ernie:** Why don't you give me the umbrella, Mr. Harris? I'll hang it up in the closet.

**George:** (Pulls away) No, no. That's all right. I need it.

**Ernie:** (joking). I know the hotel is old, but the ceilings don't leak. At least not on the third floor. And anyway, it's ten degrees outside. The only precipitation we're going to get is snow and you don't need an umbrella for that.

**George:** Don't be so sure. You never know when you'll need an umbrella. (Clutches the umbrella and sits on the bed) It's not just for rain. It's not just for that. You'll see. You'll find out. I....I....have to use the bathroom.

**Narrator:** George, now extremely agitated runs into the bathroom with the umbrella.

**Ernie:** Yeah, well, if you say so. Say lady, I mean, Mrs. Harris is he okay? Are you going to be okay?

**Katherine:** I'll be fine. I've been fine with that man for 50 years. Don't worry. My husband has some problems. He forgets things and it upsets him but a kinder, gentler man you'll never meet. He's just a little touchy about the umbrella.

**Ernie:** Okay. I'll take your word for it. Memory problems, huh? I had an uncle who'd forget stuff. He used to get lost....had to have a tag with his address on it hangin' around his neck.

**Katherine:** Alzheimer's?

**Ernie:** What?

**Katherine:** Did your uncle have Alzheimer's disorder?

**Ernie:** I don't know. Maybe. He died when I was little.

**Katherine:** (Brightly, looking out of the window) Look you can see the boats from here. The lights are lovely. It's just the way I remembered it. (Softly) The umbrella was an inside joke. We saw a play once....I forget what it was called....but one of the characters was a shy little girl who had trouble expressing herself. Whenever someone she loved left her, she'd always say "take an umbrella, it's raining." What she meant was "be careful when you leave me, because I love you." George and I loved that play and we started using the line ourselves. At first it was just a joke. Whenever one of us left the other we'd say, "Don't forget the umbrella. It might rain." It became a term of endearment. A way of expressing our love without anyone knowing. Then two years ago after George was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he began carrying the umbrella with him all the time. We never discussed it, but I knew why he started doing it and why he does it now. He carries the umbrella so he won't forget.

**Ernie:** Forget what, Mrs. Harris?

**Katherine:** That he loves me.