

Age 31 & 28

"Would you consider doing something else?"

"Well, I don't want to spend my time dealing Prozac to disaffected housewives or adding 'there there' to my repertoire."

"No, but it wouldn't hurt to patch up mental boo-boos for a while, would it?"

"Probably not. What brought this on?"

"...I guess I'm concerned about how dealing with so much trauma will have a long-term effect on you."

"I'm handling it okay, I think."

"For now."

"...I honestly believe I'm doing some good."

"No doubt there."

"Are you really worried about that?"

"Some...I guess I have ulterior motives, too."

"Oh? You think the VA is hindering my sexual performance."

"No."

"Good, because there's nothing that revs the glands like a group of damaged men wondering how it all went so wrong."

"Trauma is always loud. If it was a color it would be dayglo orange with purple stripes. If it was a person it would be a game show host."

"If it was clothing it would be a game show host's outfit."

"Exactly. Like a seventies' Pontiac with a bad muffler."

"The laugh track of a bad sitcom."

"Nice one, Trix."

"Merci, mon amour."

“Sometimes the greater the pain, the louder the discontent.”

“I can imagine.”

“What’s so...well, I hate to use the word tragic...discouraging about it is that the majority of the time these are acquired conditions—normal, healthy people who got in over their heads. Literally, I guess.”

“Are you going to be okay?”

“Oh, sure. Days like today aren’t unusual. At least once a week there’s a major malfunction somewhere. Part of the job.”

“I don’t know how you cope.”

“Believe it or not, I try to feel it.”

“Why?”

“Because it will only change me if I become so numb to it it seems normal.”

“You are a gentle soul, Honey.”

“I’ve grown a thick skin. Had to. Still have to decompress or I’d go nuts.”

“Well, we’re all snuggly in your bed, soft music in the background, a candle on the dresser, with nearly every inch of our skin in contact. I’d say that’s a pretty good way to decompress.”

“No, Baby. That’s Eden.”

“I love you, Brad.”

“I love you, too.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive.”

“Do you think it’s too quick?”

“Yes.”

“I know. Barely five weeks—weekends, actually...Well, we can’t take it back.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Is it slowly but surely or full steam ahead?”

“How about steady on.”

“Yeah. That’s good.”

“You make it easy.”

“Do I?”

“Lovely in every way.”

“You have such a gentle touch.”

“Your skin is so soft. I get lost in it.”

“...How many times do you think we’ve made love?”

“Fourteen.”

“You kept count?”

“So far. Each one memorable.”

“I guess you really do love me.”

“I’m just getting started, Baby.”

“I’ve had kids argue over grades. These are not essay questions. They’re not arbitrary. It’s math and chemical realities. There’s no subjectivity involved.”

“I’ll bet that’s frustrating.”

“I have to stop and think if I was that obtuse when I was eighteen, nineteen.”

“Maybe they think you’re a pushover because you’re so young.”

“No, they think I got where I am because I have large breasts.”

“And lovely ones, might I add.”

“If I was an old crone, or had a dick, I wouldn’t have to deal with this crap. No offense.”

“None taken. I never considered myself an old crone, though.”

Age 34 & 31

"I don't know why you're so upset."

"You're being dishonest."

"Because I didn't like the house?"

"Because you haven't liked any of the twenty we've looked at."

"You think I really don't want to move?"

"You don't. Why even bother to look?"

"Nothing we've looked at is really a starter home. They're putting down roots, no equity for five years, going into a lot of debt homes."

"So you're saying my tastes are too extravagant."

"I think maybe you want the trappings of settling down without actually settling down."

"What the Hell does that mean?"

"What if you get another job next year?"

"So?"

"We can't make a permanent decision and live like its impermanent."

"Is that really a word?"

"I think so."

"Do you doubt my commitment?"

"To Minneapolis, yeah. Which is what it would mean if we bought a house like

those we've looked at."

"You are so full of shit."

"I can't talk to you when you're like this."

"Jesus, Bradley, what do you expect?"

"I don't know. Why are you so angry?"

"Don't try to fucking analyze me."

"Okay, okay. I really hate that word."

"I don't fucking care."

Age 59 & 56

"You look beautiful in your dress."

"Thank you. I feel like a mummy."

"You're mother of the groom. It's your wedding, too."

"It's Sophie's mom's show."

"Well, weddings are always for the bride's mother."

"Do I look that old?"

"No, and don't be catty."

"Pretty soon I'll be as old as you."

"Funny. Your hair looks nice."

"The stylist does the color."

"You should let it go gray. It's becoming."

"Well, that's bullshit."

"Please. Not in church."

"Why would you want a gray-haired old lady?"

"I'm not going there with you."

"Don't you want me to look pretty?"

"You would look pretty with gray hair."

"You think I'm trying to hold onto my youth?"

"I said I'm not going there."

“You really think I’m still pretty?”

“Shhh.”

“What do you think about when we have sex?”

“Good Lord, Trixie. The wedding’s about to start.”

“You’re avoiding the question.”

“You. I think about you.”

“How I am or how I was.”

“It’s the same to me.”

“Oh. That’s sweet.”

“Thanks.”

“He’s too young to get married but doesn’t he look handsome in his tux?”

Age 62 & 59

“Why are we staying in a hotel?”

“Her parents are there.”

“I guess they beat us to the guest room.”

“I think we embarrassed them the last time, anyway.”

“Please. They need to grow up.”

“I told you they were in the room right next door and you still yelled Geronimo.”

“My man can still hit the afterburner.”

“You did it on purpose.”

“I was having an orgasm, Bradley.”

“We probably made our son impotent.”

“I’m not even sixty. What did he expect?”

“That his parents had cooled off in that department.”

“That’s a crock. I haven’t slowed down one bit.”

“I’m well aware.”

“If you can’t love somebody body and soul what’s the point?”

“Not everybody sees it that way.”

“What does that make me?”

“Magical.”

Age 73 & 70

“Baby, what is it?”

“I can’t remember.”

“What?”

“I can’t remember why I came into the room.”

“It couldn’t have been that important.”

“It’s just...weird.”

“Well, don’t fret about it. It’ll hit you in a minute.”

“Huh.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Is it time for our walk?”

“It’s snowing to beat the band.”

“Oh. Yeah, sorry. Went to another planet there for a second.”

“Want to take some coffee and sit out in the sunroom—watch it snow?”

“That would be nice.”

“All right, then. Where’d you put your mug?”

“I don’t know. I’ll have to look for it.”

“Trixie, you’re getting all worked up for nothing.”

“Things are right there one minute and I can’t hold onto them.”

“Your brain moves at the speed of light. Hard for you to land...here it is, on the counter. Come on, let’s sit for a bit.”